PLACE, LANDSCAPE AND GENTRY IDENTITY IN

LATE MEDIEVAL LEICESTERSHIRE, *c*.1460-1560

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This thesis is dedicated to the memory of

Muriel Bridger and Eric Bridger.

For Hatfield and Hever.

What we have loved,
Others will love, and we will teach them how.

William Wordsworth, *The Prelude* (1850)

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VOLUME 1

I call them gentylmen that be
Born to grete landys by inherytaunce
As myn auncestours by co[n]tynuaunce
Have this [500] yere of whom now I
Am desendid and cocommyn lynyally
Beryng the same name and armys also
That they bare this [500] yere agoo
Myn auncestours also haue euer be
Lordys knyghtes and in grete auctoryte

John Rastell, *Of Gentlynes and Nobylyte* (1525)

But two things cannot be rightly put together without a third; there must be some
bond of union between them. And the fairest bond is that which makes the most
complete fusion of itself and the things which it combines.

Plato, *Timaeus* (*c*.360 BC)

As of these iiii elements here below
Whose effectis dayly appere here at eye

John Rastell, *The Nature of the Four Elements* (*c*.1518)

Abstract

This thesis examines the role of place and the landscape in the construction and expression of gentry identity in late medieval Leicestershire. Land has been said to be the gentry's most prized possession, and the myriad ways in which the gentry have influenced the landscape have received substantial attention, particularly in an architectural and recreational context. But the multi-faceted influence of the gentry's lands on their identity, especially in the broader context of place, remains to be explored. The thesis addresses this lacuna through an innovative interrogation of litigation records, probate records and the inquisitions *post mortem* amongst others using digital visualisation and analysis. It considers the different approaches that can be taken to resolve the neglect of place in gentry studies. During this historical period of transition and development, ancestral and economic ties preserved and encouraged inter-generational gentry interests in the places occupied by them, and propelled gentry interaction and behaviour where they overlapped. The thesis offers a reconstruction of the Leicestershire gentry's landscape, comprising territorial extents and changing land use during the period. Together, this evidence shows that the relationship between the gentry and place was carefully cultivated throughout the gentry's lives, and culminated in their final statement in death. Ultimately, this thesis demonstrates that the gentry's affinity with and interpretation of the world around them shaped who they were, who they wanted society to think they were, and who they believed themselves to be.

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Glossary

Arable   Land for ploughing and crop cultivation.

ArcMap   GIS software created by Esri.

Inquisition(s) *post mortem*   Formal inquiries conducted by the county escheator into the freehold land(s) of deceased individuals, known as the tenant-in-chief, who held their land(s) directly from the king/queen.

Final concord(s)   Fictional lawsuits designed to generate a formal record of freehold land conveyance in the court of Common Pleas. Also known as feet of fines.

Kernel density   A type of spatial analysis in GIS which estimates the probable distribution of a sample of data.

Meadow   Land turned over to grass for hay or pasture.

Microsoft Access   Relational database software by Microsoft.

Parvenu(s)   A term for gentry 'newcomers'.

Pasture   Land for grazing animals, especially cattle or sheep.

Primary place(s) of affiliation   The nucleus of gentry territories.

Viewshed analysis   A type of spatial analysis in GIS which estimates the area visible from a particular location.

Wood   Land wooded with trees, cf. woodland.

Abbreviations

BHO   British History Online (www.british-history.ac.uk)

BL   The British Library

BLV   Beresford's Lost Villages (www.dmv.hull.ac.uk)

GBPN   Gazetteer of British Place Names (www.gazetteer.org.uk)

GIS   Geographic Information Systems

IPM(s)   Inquisition(s) *post mortem*

JP(s)   Justice(s) of the peace, also known as commissioners of the peace

PPA(s)   Primary place(s) of affiliation

ROLLR   Record Office of Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland

TLAHS   *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society*

TNA   The National Archives

VCH   *Victoria History of the Counties of England* series

VCH (Leics.)   *The Victoria History of the County of Leicester*

Notes on the text

Dates have been converted from regnal years and from the 'old style' to the 'new style'; the start of the year is taken as 1st January and not 25th March, which was the start of the legal year until 1752. Place-names and gentry individuals should be assumed to belong to Leicestershire and the Leicestershire gentry respectively unless stated otherwise.

Introduction: place, landscape and gentry identity

> Since it was clear that any investigation of the attitudes of landowners must start with their dealings with their most prized possession, their land, it became apparent that a thorough examination of the gentry's management of their estates was essential.[1]

Christine Carpenter's observation of the landed society of fifteenth-century Warwickshire fittingly described the importance attached by gentry families to their lands. From territorial acquisition and defence to estate management and consolidation; from agricultural profit to recreation in parks and forests, their lives were dominated by this landed relationship. Generally speaking, in explorations of this relationship, historians have focused on gentry biographies, politics and economy, where lands seemingly existed only as impersonal assets to be acquired, manipulated and built upon. Concerning the latter, Alexandra Walsham warned against making distinctions between the built and natural environment for this period and concluded that it would be 'artificial to do so … the boundaries between these categories were conceptually hazy and blurred'.[2] By considering gentry lands solely in the context of possession, then, a half-finished, anachronistic and arguably limited perspective emerges. Surprisingly little attention has been paid to the significance of the places and spaces which hosted these 'prized possessions'.

This thesis makes an important contribution to gentry studies by questioning whether the gentry's relationship with their lands existed beyond a source of revenue. Certainly, possessed lands' role in the construction of gentry identity is clearly evident in contemporary writings. John Rastell's play, *Of Gentlynes and Nobylyte* (1525), staged a debate between a knight, merchant and ploughman, wherein the knight stated, 'I call them gentylmen that be / Born to grete landys by inherytaunce / As myn auncestours by co[n]tynuaunce / Haue had this [500] yere of whom now I / Am desendid'. Rastell's knight saw his enduring connection with these ancestral lands and his 'grete stock' as a

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[1] C. Carpenter, *Locality and Polity: A Study of Warwickshire's Landed Society, 1401-1499* (Cambridge, 1992), p. 3.

[2] A. Walsham, *The Reformation of the Landscape: Religion, Identity and Memory in Early Modern Britain and Ireland* (Oxford, 2012), p. 5.

qualifier for his own gentility and wealth, substantiated by his ancestors' 'grete auctoryte' and capacity for being 'gret rulers'.[3] A critical observation made by the same knight later in the play, 'So possessyons began [and] were furst found / Uppon a good [and] resonable ground', further implies a sense of place.[4] There can be little debate, then, that land was a cornerstone of gentry identity; the relationship between the gentry and their lands was specific to place. Despite the development of landed interests further afield, ancestry enticed the gentry to a congenital location. Ancestral ground played host to territorial displays of the gentry's identity; their sense of belonging, continuation of lineage and construction of legacy manifested in place.

Broadly speaking, a study has not been exclusively dedicated to a county-based gentry network using the landscape history approach, that a reciprocal relationship of influence has existed – and exists – between humans and the natural world. As Walsham has shown, the built and the natural world did not exist independently of one another.[5] This thesis is primarily occupied with the role and significance of place in the construction and expression of gentry identity, but the environmental influences of landscape, namely its character and structure, are also considered where appropriate. Leicestershire has been chosen due to its size, central geographical location and topographical composition. Its environment was relatively tame and prone to very few natural disasters. There was a minor risk of flooding and the obvious danger of fire, but almost no chance of other devastating phenomena such as the landslides, rock falls, bog bursts or cave collapses evident elsewhere in England. What Oliver Creighton and Terry Barry have defined as a 'midland-centric' view amongst landscape historians should not detract attention from studies in the area.[6] Setting our study in Leicestershire compared to a more topographically diverse or 'unstable' environment such as the Lincolnshire fens or mountains of Westmorland, deliberately places the focus first and foremost on the gentry.

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[3] J. Rastell, *Of Gentlynes and Nobylyte* (London, 1525).
[4] Ibid.
[5] Walsham, *Reformation of the Landscape*, p. 5.
[6] O. Creighton and T. Barry, 'Seigneurial and elite sites in the medieval landscape' in N. Christie and P. Stamper (eds.), *Medieval Rural Settlement: Britain and Ireland, AD 800-1600* (Oxford, 2011), p. 87.

Historiographical review

This literature review concentrates on the broader historiographical framework of the thesis. The review begins with a justification of the time period chosen for this thesis. It is followed by an appraisal of a popular economic method used for defining the gentry, and warns of the danger of simplicity in our understanding of the relationship between the gentry and their lands. The discussion then moves to explore the county unit, from the impact of the county border to scepticism concerning the existence of a 'county community'. These concerns are framed within an advocation for 'place' and 'network' as feasible alternatives. An outline of the key terms within the thesis – 'identity', 'place' and 'landscape' – precedes an assessment of place and landscape literature in the context of gentry studies. It promotes the application of approaches prevalent in landscape studies to gentry studies and *vice versa*.

Rejecting the late medieval/early modern watershed

Those who subscribe to historiographical watersheds might be tempted to place the end of the late medieval period in a Leicestershire field on the morning of 22nd August 1485.[7] This study rejects the practicality of this late medieval/early modern watershed, and treats the late-fifteenth and early- to mid-sixteenth centuries as a continuous time period. In doing so, it avoids what Ronald Hutton described as the 'value judgements' placed on both the late medieval and the early modern period by the 'political and cultural tensions of previous centuries'.[8] The thesis title refers to 'late medieval Leicestershire' for ease of reference, but the thesis ends its focus during the traditional 'early modern' period. Andy Wood observed that the trend for late medieval studies to end in *c.*1450 and early modern studies to begin from *c.*1560 has produced a 'substantial lack of a developed social history' between *c.*1450 and 1560.[9] With the exception of L.A. Parker's thesis on enclosure in Leicestershire, *c.*1485-1607, the studies closest in period which have focused

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[7] E.T. Jones, '1492 revisited' in R. Hutton (ed.), *Medieval or Early Modern?: The Value of a Traditional Historic Division* (Newcastle, 2015), p. 45.
[8] Hutton, *Medieval or Early Modern?*, p. 3.
[9] A. Wood, 'Afterword' in J. Bowen and A. Brown (eds.), *Custom and Commercialisation in English Rural Society: Revisiting Tawney and Postan* (Hatfield, 2015), p. 252.

on the Leicestershire gentry end in 1485 and recommence in *c*.1677.[10] By placing our study between *c*.1460 and *c*.1560, we can capture the social, political, economic and religious experience for four generations of the Leicestershire gentry, and can thus address Wood's lacuna.

Defining 'the gentry'

In 1983, Eric Ives noted in the preface to his study of the fifteenth-century Leicestershire lawyer, Thomas Keble, that 'elites are not in vogue ... But in England, to the Civil War and beyond, the elite group did matter'.[11] Gentry studies have become increasingly popular within the last 20 years. The gentry, roughly speaking, occupied the position immediately below the nobility and above the yeomanry, comprising knights, esquires and gentlemen. K.B. McFarlane argued that those below the peerage were discounted from the nobility from the fourteenth century, thus leading to the emergence of the gentry.[12] Sumptuary legislation in 1363 and the Statute of Additions (1413) have been used to indicate the state's legal recognition of the esquire and the gentleman respectively, although Peter Coss stressed that neither piece of legislation can be treated as definitive markers of gentility.[13]

A favoured method for defining the gentry has been undertaken on the grounds of income. This approach acts as a preliminary, and indeed necessary, method for defining the gentry given the importance placed on the relationship between status and income during our period. Evidenced in 1363, sumptuary legislation, for example, regulated the social hierarchy by restricting certain luxurious goods such as apparel and food on the grounds of income. But its constant revision between 1510 and 1533 reflected the government's 'considerable uncertainty' over the parameters of income-based status.[14] In *c*.1532, the

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[10] L.A. Parker, 'Enclosure in Leicestershire, 1485-1607' (unpub. PhD thesis, University of London, 1948); E. Acheson, *A Gentry Community: Leicestershire in the Fifteenth Century, c.1422-c.1485* (Cambridge, 2002); N. Paterson, 'Politics in Leicestershire, *c*.1677 to *c*.1716' (unpub. PhD thesis, University of Nottingham, 2007).

[11] E. Ives, *The Common Lawyers of Pre-Reformation England: Thomas Kebell: A Case Study* (Cambridge, 1983), p. viii.

[12] K.B. McFarlane, *The Nobility of Later Medieval England: the Ford Lectures for 1953 and Related Studies* (Oxford, 1973), p. 275.

[13] P. Coss, 'Knights, esquires and the origins of social gradation in England', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5 (1995), p. 155.

[14] J.C.K. Cornwall, *Wealth and Society in Early Sixteenth Century England* (London, 1988), p. 10.

'Acte for Reformacyon of Excesse in Apparayle' split gentry status groups on the grounds of income; different fabrics were restricted by income gradations of £100, £40, £20 and £5 *per annum* or above.[15]

The *c.*1532 statute included 'landes and tenementes rentes fees annuities or other yerely profittes' and thus makes it difficult to establish the value of different income streams. The ambiguity of income and status gradation has led historians to concentrate on landed income as an alternative method of definition, extracted from documents such as subsidy returns and the inquisitions *post mortem*. Simon Payling defined his early fifteenth-century Nottinghamshire gentry as 'all lay, non-baronial landowners with an income of £5 *per annum* or more from freehold property'.[16] A higher income of £10 *per annum* or more from freehold property was adopted by T.B. Pugh, whilst Deborah Youngs used the more specific definition of £40 *per annum* for a knight, £20 for an esquire and £10 for a gentleman.[17] Julian Cornwall aptly noted that the subdivisions of gentry status were 'as numerous as those of the peerage … and noticeably more complex'.[18] They were also less clear-cut. Chris Dyer's definition highlighted the broad parameters of gentry income, and comprised 'the whole of the lesser aristocracy, from knights through esquires to the lesser lords, and which therefore includes those with landed incomes as high as £200-£300, and at the lower end even dipping below £10'.[19] There are potential pitfalls in the economic definition, however. Eric Acheson has drawn attention to the reported status of two Leicestershire men, for example; both had incomes of £6 per year but one was considered a gentleman and the other a yeoman.[20]

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[15] J. Raithby (ed.), 'An Acte for Reformacyon of Excesse in Apparayle', 24 Hen VIII, *Statutes of the Realm, 1509-1545*, 3 (London, 1871), pp. 430-431. The third gradation of £20 was summarised as 'Persons having £10 a Year' by the editor, but the main text stated 'xx li'. The latter was adopted as the editor's note appears to have been a typographical error.

[16] S.J. Payling, *Political Society in Lancastrian England: The Greater Gentry of Nottinghamshire* (Oxford, 1991), p. 3.

[17] T.B. Pugh, 'The magnates, knights and gentry' in S.B. Chrimes, R.A. Griffiths and C.D. Ross (eds.), *Fifteenth-Century England, 1399-1509: Studies in Politics and Society* (Manchester, 1972), pp. 96-97; D. Marsh [Youngs], 'Humphrey Newton of Newton and Pownall (1466-1536): a gentleman of Cheshire and his commonplace book' (unpub. PhD thesis, Keele University, 1995). Published as D. Youngs, *Humphrey Newton (1466-1536): An Early Tudor Gentleman* (Woodbridge, 2008).

[18] Cornwall, *Wealth and Society*, p. 12.

[19] C. Dyer, *An Age of Transition?: Economy and Society in England in the Later Middle Ages* (Oxford, 2005), p. 97.

[20] Acheson, *A Gentry Community*, p. 41.

This thesis adopts Youngs's method by establishing, for those whose status is not stated explicitly in the primary sources, a threshold of £10 for a gentleman, £20 for an esquire, and over £40 for a knight.[21] This section has illustrated the problems and inconsistencies in historians' efforts to reach an absolute economic definition for the gentry. But whilst this land-based definition is in part informed by contemporary practice, illustrated by the sumptuary laws, it is largely based on who historians have believed the gentry to be. It is difficult to trace continuity or change amidst the rising tide of economic parameters as more studies are undertaken. Further, in isolation, this economic approach exacerbates the risk of perceiving the relationship between the gentry and land as being *solely* commercial. There is a danger of simplicity. We must thus consider alternative points of access to the role of place and landscape in the gentry's understanding of who they were. Shifting our attention towards place, then, the county unit – frequently a favoured parameter for gentry studies – is the next logical step for our argument.

Gentry studies and the county unit

Whilst a number of county-based studies have been dedicated to the gentry, few exist for our period.[22] Coverage has been significantly affected by document survival. The popular correspondence of the Pastons of Norfolk, Stonors of Oxfordshire and Plumptons of the West Riding of Yorkshire span the years 1290-1552, but no such equivalent exists for

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[21] This calculation is based on the approximate income recorded in our gentry's inquisitions *post mortem* and extracted from the returns for the forced loan of 1542. See The National Archives (henceforth TNA), TNA, Exchequer: King's Remembrancer: Particulars of Account and other records relating to Lay and Clerical Taxation, E 179/133/134. Chris Dyer rightly pointed out that land valuations in the inquisitions *post mortem* were 'derived from a complex combination of environmental and market forces'. See C. Dyer, 'Landscape, farming and society in an English region: the inquisitions *post mortem* for the West Midlands, 1250-1509' in M. Hicks, *The Later Medieval Inquisitions Post Mortem: Mapping the Medieval Countryside and Rural Society* (Woodbridge, 2016), p. 68. Matthew Holford argued against the dismissal of these valuations as a deceptive source of economic information, and the escheators' apparent tendency to underestimate land values does not detract from their illumination of landowners' approximate annual income. See M. Holford, '"Notoriously unreliable": the valuations and extents' in Hicks, *Later Medieval Inquisitions Post Mortem*, pp. 117-144.

[22] Other studies include the individual based, family based and thematic perspectives. See for example Youngs, *Humphrey Newton* and Ives, *Common Lawyers*; N. Saul, *Death, Art and Memory in Medieval England: The Cobham Family and Their Monuments, 1300-1500* (Oxford, 2001) and E. Noble, *The World of the Stonors: A Gentry Society* (Woodbridge, 2009); M. Mercer, *The Medieval Gentry: Power, Leadership and Choice During the Wars of the Roses* (London, 2010) and N. Saul, *Lordship and Faith: The English Gentry and the Parish Church in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 2017).

Leicestershire.[23] Michael Bennett and Susan Wright placed their respective studies of Cheshire, Lancashire and Derbyshire in the fifteenth century, echoed by Carpenter's analysis ten years later for Warwickshire.[24] The majority of work undertaken on this topic across our period, broadly defined, lies within theses. In 1985, Peter William Fleming dated his study of the Kentish gentry to 1422-1509.[25] Almost ten years later, John Chynoweth's study of the Cornish gentry covered 1485 to 1603.[26] Twelve years after Chynoweth's thesis, a regional approach was used by Jon Denton to consider the east-midland gentleman, 1400-1530.[27] Chris Bovis used the Gascoigne family of Yorkshire to consider the relationship between gentry and identity between *c*.1309 and 1592.[28] These historians have drawn upon a broad range of sources such as probate wills, tax returns, deeds and the inquisitions *post mortem*; the gentry experience is evidently accessible despite the absence of substantial correspondence survival.

Bovis observed that county boundaries comprised a range of spaces occupied by different populations and administrative structures with varied topographies and transport networks, which impacted upon gentry behaviour.[29] He noted, quite rightly, that the county unit has attracted attention from political and economic historians. This is illustrated, for example, by Carpenter's seminal study of the Warwickshire gentry.[30] Admittedly, there are difficulties with the county unit. Qualifying families as 'Leicestershire' gentry becomes problematic when considering that they might also qualify as gentry of Leicestershire's seven neighbouring counties, for example. Yet Bovis's suggestion that the county unit should be rejected as the foundation for a study

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[23] See N. Davis (ed.), *Paston Letters and Papers of the Fifteenth Century*, 1-2 (Oxford, 1971-1976); C.L. Kingsford (ed.), *The Stonor Letters and Papers, 1290-1483)*, 1-2 (Cambridge, 1919) and J. Kirby (ed.), *The Plumpton Letters and Papers* (Cambridge, 1996).

[24] M.J. Bennett, *Community, Class and Careerism: Cheshire and Lancashire in the Age of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (Cambridge, 1983); S.M. Wright, *The Derbyshire Gentry in the Fifteenth Century* (Derby, 1983); Carpenter, *Locality and Polity*.

[25] P.W. Fleming, 'The character and private concerns of the gentry of Kent, 1422-1509' (unpub. PhD thesis, University College of Swansea, 1985).

[26] J. Chynoweth, 'The gentry of Tudor Cornwall' (unpub. PhD thesis, University of Exeter, 1994).

[27] J. Denton, 'The east-midland gentleman, 1400-1530' (unpub. PhD thesis, Keele University, 2006).

[28] C.M. Bovis, 'The Gascoigne family, *c*.1309-1592: gentry and identity' (unpub. PhD thesis, University of York, 2017).

[29] Bovis, 'The Gascoigne family, *c*.1309-1592', p. 22.

[30] Carpenter, *Locality and Polity*.

because the 'significance of socio-cultural networks is indefinable through these divisions' must be challenged.[31]

John Beckett's comment that 'the physical boundaries of a region can be a shifting phenomenon' is another reminder of the arbitrary nature of the county border.[32] The modern boundaries of Leicestershire were not drawn until the nineteenth century, but at certain locations they would have been partially recognisable to contemporaries of our period. The earliest Leicestershire maps by cartographers Christopher Saxton (*c.*1540-*c.*1610) and John Speed (*c.*1551-1629) show clear similarities with their modern counterparts, especially where natural or ancient features – such as rivers or Roman roads – were followed.[33] The county unit is limited only by historians' perceived permeability or impermeability of its borders. This is again reflected in Carpenter's work, who observed that 'Warwickshire itself was a rather artificial creation ... ties fostered by geographical proximity ... would create groups that straddled the county boundary'.[34] Similarly, this thesis does not subscribe to the county boundary as an impermeable border; rather, it accepts that gentry networks indisputably spread across regions, but maintains the importance of the county as an administrative and political unit which informed the culture of local gentry.

However, the confines of a doctoral study require the application of certain parameters for the formation and delivery of a coherent argument. Previous Leicestershire studies have used a range of methods to identify the *Leicestershire* gentry specifically.[35] The gentry's role as prominent landowners has naturally produced land-based definitions. Grenville Astill pruned non-Leicestershire gentry by removing 'men who had minor interests in Leicestershire compared with their involvement in other counties in terms of

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[31] Bovis, 'The Gascoigne family, *c.*1309-1592', p. 22.

[32] J. Beckett, *The East Midlands from 1000AD* (London, 1988), p. 2.

[33] The role of topographical features as representations of the county border and their consequential impact on gentry landed interests are discussed further in Chapter 2, 2.3.

[34] Carpenter, *Locality and Polity*, p. 290.

[35] See Acheson, *A Gentry Community*; G.G. Astill, 'The medieval gentry: a study in Leicestershire society, 1350-1399' (unpub. PhD thesis, University of Birmingham, 1977); D. Baldwin, 'The political influence of the Hastings Family in the Midland Counties, 1461-1529', (unpub. PhD thesis, University of Leicester, 1991); Paterson, 'Politics in Leicestershire'; P.S. Shipley, 'The Leicestershire gentry and its social and cultural networks, *c.*1790-1875' (unpub. PhD thesis, University of Leicester, 2010).

amounts of land or governmental activity'.[36] Comparatively, Acheson rejected candidates whose 'holdings in Leicestershire were secondary to more extensive manors held in other counties' but included women on the grounds of income and marital status.[37] Astill's and Acheson's methodologies, and indeed of this thesis to an extent, speak to Bovis's concern regarding predefinition. This thesis recognises that gentry interests transcended the county border, but prioritises those gentry whose primary interests were in Leicestershire. This is a decision made on the grounds of government- and self-identification, which is discussed in further detail in 1.3.7 below. Bovis offered the family-based study as an alternative to the county-based study, and argued that it presents an opportunity for increased focus on gentry identity specifically. Yet it cannot inform our understanding of the concept and influence of place without the context of multiple familial case studies. By retrieving data from those with an administrative and familial attachment to Leicestershire, we can extract varying aspects of the gentry experience.

A county community?

The gentry's ties with their home counties have led some historians to conclude the presence of a county community, particularly in the context of political and administrative connections. The concept of a county community was first proposed by Alan Everitt for the gentry society of seventeenth-century Kent, and has attracted a considerable amount of attention in gentry historiography and local history more generally.[38] Borrowed by medievalists from scholars working with seventeenth-century gentry communities, the concept has generated criticism on the grounds that 'medieval' and 'early modern' societies were fundamentally different in terms of social and political composition. The tendency for seventeenth-century studies to focus on the office-holding elite, for example,

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[36] Astill, 'A study in Leicestershire society', pp. 4-5.

[37] Acheson, *A Gentry Community*, p. 39.

[38] See A. Everitt, *The Community of Kent and the Great Rebellion, 1640-60* (Leicester, 1966). John Marshall saw W.G. Hoskins and H.P.R. Finberg, previously respective heads of the Department of English Local History at the University of Leicester, as agreeing that community was at the heart of local history. See J.D. Marshall, *The Tyranny of the Discrete: A Discussion of the Problems of Local History in England* (Aldershot, 1997), p. 14; pp. 63-79. For advocates of the community concept, see Bennett, *Community, Class and Careerism*, pp. 21-40; M.J. Braddick, *Political Culture in Later Medieval England* (Manchester, 2006), pp. 68-80. For a discussion of its criticism, see J. Eales and A. Hopper (eds.), *The County Community in Seventeenth-Century England and Wales* (Hatfield, 2012), p. 12.

cannot be mapped on to earlier centuries without alienating a substantial proportion of gentry society; members from almost half of our gentry families were not named as justices of the peace (henceforth JP/s), for example.[39]

Acheson consistently referred to community as a matter of fact, reflected in his book title.[40] Indeed, very little if any of the book directly addresses the issue. Conversely, according to Carpenter, 'there is a strong case for banning "community" from all academic writing … its use is often not just a matter of slack thought but expresses an implicit hankering for some mythical past'.[41] Carpenter's name has become synonymous with what Elizabeth Noble described as 'jettisoning any use of the term "community" … [which] has been used imprecisely and is riddled with theoretical confusion'.[42] Daniel Williams had drawn attention to the unreliability of 'community' only a decade prior to Carpenter, but did not reject the concept entirely.[43] He argued for the presence of an atypical Leicestershire community during the civil wars of the late fifteenth century. Williams highlighted the impact of the county's joint shrievalty with Warwickshire and the private franchise created by the Honor of Leicester in the creation of 'an important and discernible *ultra comitatum* community of economic and social ties'.[44]

It is important to consider the implications of the term 'community'. For the Cornish gentry, Samuel Drake adopted the term 'commonalty' as an alternative to 'community', and suggested that it is a more representative term for the 'collective interactions represented by the county'.[45] The earliest recorded citation of 'community', defined as a 'body of people or things viewed collectively', pre-dates our study, as does the later definition of 'a body of people who live in the same place, usually sharing a common

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[39] See Volume 2, 'Leicestershire gentry families'. Only 43 (49%) of the 87 gentry families included in this study had members named on commissions of the peace.

[40] Acheson, *A Gentry Community*.

[41] C. Carpenter, 'Gentry and community in late medieval England', *Journal of British Studies*, 33, no. 4 (1994), p. 340.

[42] Noble, *The World of the Stonors*, p. 9.

[43] D. Williams, 'From Towton to Bosworth: the Leicestershire community and the Wars of the Roses', *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society* (henceforth *TLAHS*), 59 (1984-85), p. 28.

[44] Ibid., p. 29.

[45] S.J. Drake, 'Since the time of King Arthur: gentry identity and the commonalty of Cornwall, *c*.1300-1420', *Historical Research*, 91, no. 252, p. 239.

cultural or ethnic identity'.[46] Both definitions seem appropriate. But this thesis does not subscribe to the argument that a gentry 'community' can be limited to geographical boundaries. Neither does it suggest that the gentry interests – landed, economic, political and administrative – were entirely immune to county influences. Rather, it argues that by considering the gentry as a 'network', and by framing this network in the context of 'place', a more accurate view of the gentry experience emerges. A 'network' recognises an inter- and intra-county connectivity, and avoids the county-bound connotations of 'community'. 'Place' is both ubiquitous and localised; it is both the county and the manor. In its most simplistic form, it is the study of location and locations, and thus accommodates both collective and individual perspectives. Before we discuss place as a concept, however, we must first consider gentry 'identity' and the role that land has played in its construction. The next section will demonstrate that characteristics common to individuals and families, such as the possession or inheritance of substantial lands, contributed to gentry status beyond the economic definition.

Land and the construction of gentry identity

This section specifically introduces the concept of identity, and outlines the dominant stances taken towards identity from the perspective of gentry studies. It highlights the role of land as a common element in the construction of gentry identity, and reflects on individuality *versus* collectivity in gentry expression. The Latin term *identitas* derives from *idem*, 'the same'; the earliest known use of 'identity' was by John Bale in 1545, defined by the *OED* as the 'quality or condition of being the same in substance, composition, nature, properties ... absolute or essential sameness; oneness'.[47] This thesis interprets identity as being the product of social, political and, significantly, geographical processes common to certain individuals and families. The trait of 'sameness' was illustrated by John Rastell's knight in the thesis introduction ('I call them gentylmen that be / Born to grete landys by inherytaunce') through the shared commonality of substantial landed inheritance.[48] We have also observed substantial variance amongst historians' use

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[46] The two definitions date to 1395 and 1426 respectively. See 'community, n.', *Oxford English Dictionary Online* (henceforth *OED*), Oxford University Press (2019), 'www.oed.com/view/Entry/37337' [accessed 20th February 2019].

[47] 'identity, n.', *OED* (2019), 'www.oed.com/view/Entry/91004' [accessed 18th February 2019].

[48] Rastell, *Of Gentlynes and Nobylyte*.

of the land-based economic definition for the gentry. Yet the emphasis on land adopted within economic definitions, especially beyond its role as a vehicle for economic incentive, seems conspicuously absent from our understanding of who the gentry were.

Coss identified land ownership as a primary component of gentry identity, and suggested that 'there can be no doubt that a capacity for collective self-expression is a vital ingredient of the gentry'.[49] More recently, Jeffrey Jerome Cohen commented that 'ancestral blood binds collective histories to individuals, ensuring that the body is never merely personal but is always shared'.[50] Common features of the gentry collective – such as an intimate involvement with land – certainly underpinned gentry membership, and thus had a discursive impact on the gentry's self-perception and self-expression. The practice of deliberately exhibiting recognisable characteristics infers self-consciousness within the gentry's identity construction; it suggests that land, for example, was actively acquired in an effort to attain or maintain gentry status. However, Michael Hicks argued that certain behaviours in English political culture reflected self-conscious, subconscious *and* unconscious principles which were each equally influential in determining social activity in English political culture.[51]

These principles were ultimately circumstantial, shaped by 'nurture, by formal education, example, social contact and environment'; the gentry perspective cannot be comprehensively established objectively nor in the face of fragmentary – and frequently impersonal – document survival, but in its reconstruction we must take these elements into account.[52] The acquisition of land was also circumstantial and dependent on inter-gentry status; Penny Summerfield concluded that individual experience has historically been a product of the social processes of which it is part, but that generalisation should be avoided when considering a collective group.[53] We will therefore strike a balance between treating the gentry as individuals and as a collective.

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[49] P. Coss, *The Origins of the English Gentry* (Cambridge, 2003), p. 10.
[50] J.J. Cohen, *Hybridity, Identity and Monstrosity in Medieval Britain* (Basingstoke, 2006), p. 15.
[51] M. Hicks, *English Political Culture in the Fifteenth Century* (London, 2002), p. 6.
[52] Ibid.
[53] P. Summerfield, 'Subjectivity, the self and historical practice' in S. Handley, R. McWilliam and L. Noakes (eds.), *New Directions in Social and Cultural History* (London, 2018), p. 37.

Gentry, place and landscape studies

We have seen that the concept of identity is – and was – largely constructed around the notion of 'sameness'. Conformity with criteria such as land ownership created the gentry's sense of social and cultural belonging as individuals and as a collective. However, gentry identity was not fixed; it could change across lifetimes and generations. One of the most powerful influences was the accumulation or reduction of land. Its most obvious impact was an increase or decrease in economic revenue, through gaining access to certain types of lucrative agriculture or industry, or the loss of rental income. Comparatively, landed transactions could herald changes in visual expression, such as the architectural construction or destruction of a gentry manor. This section develops our previous discussion of gentry studies by bringing landscape studies into the conversation, where we can illustrate the benefits of the 'place' perspective. Place is shown to be an appropriate common denominator for studies of both the gentry and the landscape; it brings different facets of the gentry experience – often separately studied – together.

We must first define what is meant by 'place' and 'landscape'. Both are ubiquitous yet seemingly ineffable terms, and frequently escape explicit definition in historical studies. The oldest known definition of 'place' derives from the Latin *platea*, which signified a street or courtyard. Since at least the mid-thirteenth century, an alternative definition has developed to include 'a particular part or region of space; a physical locality, a locale; a spot, a location'.[54] The concept of 'landscape' first emerged in the seventeenth century to denote an artistic picture designed to represent aesthetic inland scenery.[55] A definition comparative to historians' interpretation of 'landscape' – 'a tract of land with … distinguishing characteristics and features, esp. considered as a product of modifying or shaping processes' – was not coined until the nineteenth century.[56]

Landscape studies has traditionally been the preserve of local history. It was pioneered by W.G. Hoskins in *The Making of the English Landscape,* published in 1955. His work made the case for in-depth studies of the social impact on landscape; in Hoskins's words, 'to show how man has clothed the geological skeleton during the comparatively recent

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[54] 'place, n.', *OED* (2019), 'www.oed.com/view/Entry/144864' [accessed 19th February 2019].
[55] 'landscape, n.', *OED* (2019), 'www.oed.com/view/Entry/105515' [accessed 25th February 2019].
[56] Ibid.

past'.[57] The *Victoria County History* series has adopted a similar approach by including physical geography in its parish histories. Indeed, Beckett described the impact of the series as driving 'local historians away from studying just the manor and the church towards … reading the past through landscape, artefacts and a range of other disciplines … [and] the evolution of the people rather than just the manor house'.[58]

Our study complies with Matthew Johnson's comment that the landscape 'is a two-way process', which echoes observations first made by the earliest cultural geographer, Otto Schlüter, in 1908.[59] Schlüter defined two forms of landscape: the natural *Urlandschaft*, which existed before human influence, and the *Kulturlandschaft*, landscape created by human influence.[60] Our study is mostly concerned with the latter. The latter interpretation of landscape is predominantly a visual concept, formed by the conscious observance of cultural influences on a particular tract of land. The concept of place is far more immersive; it is formed by the *experience* of cultural influences with varying levels of consciousness. There are obvious difficulties in recreating the gentry experience in the absence of explicit testimony. But as Dick Harrison noted, 'our best way of approaching the problem is to observe their activities from a spatial point of view'.[61]

Place and gentry culture

This thesis thus interprets 'place' as being a specific, experienced geographical location given meaning by social and cultural values. As Nicola Whyte observed, we can better understand the relationship between identity and the landscape 'by considering its development as part of a dynamic social process, based on a complex interaction of material and mental structures'.[62] The importance of material culture is illustrated in Tim Cresswell's description of place as being a combination of 'material things … meanings

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[57] This was written in the book's first introduction, originally published in 1955. See W.G. Hoskins, *The Making of the English Landscape* (Dorset, 2013), p. 14.

[58] J. Beckett, 'Topography and landscape history: the role of the Victoria County History', *Landscape History*, 32, no. 2 (2011) p. 62.

[59] M. Johnson, *Ideas of Landscape* (Oxford, 2006), p. 162.

[60] P.E. James and G. Martin, *All Possible Worlds: A History of Geographical Ideas* (New York, 1981), p. 177.

[61] D. Harrison, *Medieval Space: the Extent of Microspatial Knowledge in Western Europe during the Middle Ages* (Lund, Sweden, 1996), p. 17.

[62] N. Whyte, *Inhabiting the Landscape: Place, Custom and Memory, 1500-1800* (Oxford, 2009), p. 165.

… and practices'.[63] Indeed, a recent interpretation of material culture included 'the things with which people interacted, the spaces in which they did so, the social relationships which cluster around their associations … far beyond focussed object studies'.[64] The inclusion of place in the construction and expression of gentry identity balances the tendency for 'landscape' to be interpreted through the material environment of castles, manor houses and parks, although these remain important components. Scholars such as Briony McDonagh and Creighton have shown that sites of architectural expression should be considered in their broader social and geographical context, for example.[65] As this thesis will show, the expression of material culture was the visual culmination of the gentry's sense of place; it should be considered alongside other important elements of gentry identity such as office-holding, land ownership and territoriality.

We can test the relationship between place and material culture by observing the junctures at which the two fused together. This thesis defines places as being composed of both internal and external spaces, which comprised both the built and the natural world. Bruce Campbell noted that landowners exercised 'a considerable environmental influence', a nod to their involvement in the stewardship of certain floral and faunal resources, and observed that they were 'acutely conscious that land also had an amenity value'.[66] The visual element of gentry identity was influenced by the natural world around them. Yet, according to Adrian Franklin, 'in Tudor and Stuart England … English rural life was lived cheek by jowl with the natural world but humanity was categorically and emotionally removed from nature'.[67]

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[63] T. Cresswell, *Place: An Introduction* (Chichester, 2015), p. 186.
[64] C. Richardson, T. Hamling and D. Gaimster (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Material Culture in Early Modern Europe* (Abingdon, 2017), p. 4.
[65] See for example B. McDonagh, '"Powerhouses" of the Wolds landscape: manor houses and churches in late medieval and early modern England' in M. Gardiner and S. Rippon, *Medieval Landscapes* (Macclesfield, 2007), pp. 185-200; A. Longcroft, 'The importance of place: placing vernacular buildings into a landscape context' in P.S. Barnwell and M. Palmer (eds.), *Post-Medieval Landscapes* (Macclesfield, 2007), pp. 23-38; O. Creighton, *Designs upon the Land: Elite Landscapes of the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, 2012); M. Hansson, *Aristocratic Landscape: the Spatial Ideology of the Medieval Aristocracy* (Stockholm, Sweden, 2006); Creighton and Barry, 'Seigneurial and elite sites' in Christie and Stamper, *Medieval Rural Settlement*, pp. 63-80.
[66] B.M.S. Campbell, 'The land' in R. Horrox and W.M. Ormrod (eds.), *A Social History of England, 1200-1500* (Cambridge, 2006), p. 200.
[67] A. Franklin, *Nature and Social Theory* (London, 2002), p. 32.

Franklin's observation is difficult to subscribe to, given the categorical evidence for the gentry's awareness of – and attachment to – the world around them, illustrated in the role it played in adorning their most precious probate bequests, for example. Sir John Aston bequeathed a pair of gilded salts to his son, Edward, with a bulrush, 'the bullrede', on the lid.[68] Robert Brokesby, esquire, bequeathed 'a countyrpoynt of vardure' to his son Richard.[69] Verdure was a 'rich tapestry ornamented with representations of trees or other vegetation'.[70] Roger Radcliffe, esquire, bequeathed, amongst other items, a cope of 'crymsyn velvet embrowdered w[i]t[h] rosys of golde' to his step-son.[71] The natural world contributed to the aesthetic dimension of material goods; the gentry were not the only branch of contemporary society to recognise it. But this brief probate evidence alone shows that the natural world was part of the expression of gentry culture.

Thesis structure and research questions

At the core of this thesis is a study of the Leicestershire gentry, *c*.1460-*c*.1560. Through the lens of place, it explores how the gentry's experience of national events affected their cultural construction and expression, from civil conflict and economic inflation to changes in religious policy. This thesis responds to Carpenter's concern that 'the ties that bound the gentry to each other and to the locality have been treated impressionistically and not at any great length'.[72] It argues that those ties took the form of place; place was the common denominator in binding the gentry to a common culture. The main research questions are thus focused on the exploration of the different dynamics of the relationship between gentry and place to support this argument. Lands were indeed amongst the gentry's most prized possessions, but what did they *mean*? What was their cultural value?

The thesis structure is divided between six thematic chapters. They highlight the ways in which the political, economic and religious changes alluded to above influenced gentry identity in the context of place. Each chapter is based on popular approaches used in

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[68] TNA, Prerogative Court of Canterbury and related Probate Jurisdictions: Will Registers, PROB 11/21/103.
[69] Record Office for Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland (henceforth ROLLR), Wills and Inventories (henceforth W&I), 1531/14.
[70] 'verdure, n.', *OED* (2018), 'www.oed.com/view/Entry/222456' [accessed 24th July 2018].
[71] TNA, PROB 11/27/198.
[72] Carpenter, 'Gentry and community', p. 365.

gentry studies: local/central administration and the social network (Chapter 1); landholding and territoriality (Chapter 2); economy and agriculture (Chapter 3); behaviour and interaction (Chapter 4); architecture (Chapter 5); and commemoration (Chapter 6). The chapters are organised on a scale of macro to micro; they commence with a national perspective, and close with the tomb. Each chapter exhibits different elements of the gentry's affiliation with place. Together, they ask how place influenced who the gentry were and who they believed themselves to be.

The thesis consists of two volumes. The second volume is a companion volume, which contains a list of Leicestershire gentry families and three series of maps. The maps are available for reference as required in conjunction with the main volume, comprising gentry residences taken from Henry VIII's general pardon of 1509, the territories of JPs, and compositions of gentry land uses.[73]

Methodology for key primary sources

This section offers an overview of the key primary sources and digital methodology used in the thesis. A contextual source discussion is provided in the introduction of each chapter; this section gives a broad overview of the strengths and limitations of our three main datasets: probate wills, court records and the inquisitions *post mortem*. The majority of the documentary sources used are held centrally by The National Archives (TNA) and are supplemented by additional sources held by the Record Office for Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland (ROLLR). State records can illuminate local dynamics as much as their regional counterparts in the local archives.[74]

Each of the three source categories reflects different elements of the gentry's involvement with their lands: the wills of wealthy southern gentry with widespread landed interests were proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury; contest over the acquisition of and entitlement to lands were fought in the courts of Chancery and Star Chamber, and the lands held at the deaths of Crown tenants, often comprising the gentry, were assessed in

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[73] The reader is advised to refer to the digital copy of the thesis if the maps are of interest, where the document can be enlarged within PDF software.

[74] The decision was taken to avoid manorial court records as it was felt that they reflect the general workings of the manor, and given the difficulties in establishing differences between the influences of individuals versus manorial custom, other types of documents were prioritised.

the inquisitions *post mortem*. The merits of additional sources such as patent rolls, final concords, probate inventories, surveys, building accounts, archaeological remains and the antiquarian record are discussed in each chapter where appropriate.

Probate wills

Probate wills have received the most scholarly attention of the three source types. They represent a broad cross-section of society and can be used to explore a diverse range of topics including but not limited to welfare provision, gender, estate planning, emotion and religion.[75] The gentry's wealth makes them particularly well represented even when limited to Leicestershire. Amy Erickson commented that wills 'convey only the testator's intentions, not what actually happened'.[76] Neither can wills provide a complete picture of material goods, offer an accurate total sum of the deceased's possessions or replicate a social network in its entirety. But they can, as this thesis will demonstrate, illuminate gentry testators' priorities at death; who their kin and family were; how their houses might have been furnished and structured; the types of implements and animals used in their agriculture; the variation in bequests made to individuals; the parish church and religious houses, and the types of burial requested after death. These approaches were all products of the testator's desires, with which we are most concerned, and not what the executors were able to action.

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[75] This list comprises works written within the last ten years but is by no means exhaustive. See M.G.A. Vale, *Piety, Charity and Literacy Among the Yorkshire Gentry, 1370-1480* (York, 1976); C. Dyer, 'Poverty and its relief in late medieval England', *Past & Present*, 216, no. 1 (2012), pp. 41-78; P.C. Maddern, 'A market for charitable performances?: bequests to the poor and their recipients in fifteenth-century Norwich wills' in A.M. Scott (ed.), *Experiences of Charity, 1250-1650* (Ashgate, 2015), pp. 79-104; S.E. James, *Women's Voices in Tudor Wills, 1485-1603: Authority, Influence and Material Culture* (Farnham, 2015); J. Rose, 'Medieval estate planning: the wills and testamentary trials of Sir John Fastolf' in *Laws, Lawyers, and Texts Studies in Medieval Legal History in Honour of Paul Brand* (Leiden, 2012); L. Liddy, 'Affective bequests: creating emotion in York wills, 1400-1600' in M. Champion and A. Lynch (eds.), *Understanding Emotions in Early Europe* (Turnhout, 2015), pp. 273-289; N.J. Verrill, 'The religion of the Yorkshire gentry, 1509-31: the evidence of wills', *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal*, 86, no. 1 (2014), pp. 169-192; N.J. Verrill, 'The religion of the Yorkshire gentry: the evidence of wills', *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal*, 88, no. 1 (2016), pp. 176-193.

[76] A. Erickson, 'Using probate accounts' in T. Arkell, N. Evans and N. Goose (eds.), *When Death Do Us Part: Understanding and Interpreting the Probate Records of Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2004), pp. 103-104.

Courts of equity: Chancery and Star Chamber

The records of the courts of Chancery and Star Chamber take priority in this thesis. This is partly due to the increasing popularity of these courts during our period at the expense of the common law courts such as Common Pleas, King's Bench and the Exchequer. Marjorie Blatcher has drawn attention to William Holdsworth's assessment of activity within the common law courts, who calculated that, between 1465 and 1525, activity within the courts of Common Pleas and King's Bench had reduced by three fifths, whilst cases in the Exchequer had fallen from 77 to two.[77] Blatcher concluded that, whilst Holdsworth's methodology had mistakenly used skewed parameters, the courts 'could not reverse a tendency which persisted until its nadir in 1524-5; they picked up again, but with great difficulty, and then began to soar into prosperity in the 1550s'.[78] This loss of business logically reduces their representation of gentry interests during our period. The reduction of activity observed by Holdsworth and Blatcher corresponded with an increase within the courts of Chancery and Star Chamber. Leicestershire representation within the court of Chancery is far more substantial than Star Chamber, illustrating its popularity.[79]

Cases in Chancery and Star Chamber tended to move more rapidly than their common law counterparts. The equitable nature of Chancery and Star Chamber, for example, meant that decisions were not made on lengthy legal precedent. Instead, decisions were made on the grounds of conscience. The speed of the courts' processes led Blatcher to comment that 'no genuine suitor who had a choice would have gone to the king's bench or common pleas if he could have sued in chancery'.[80] Similarly, John Guy made a compelling case for the influence of Thomas Wolsey on the ascendancy and emergence of Star Chamber as an established court of the realm.[81] Wolsey revived the councils in

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[77] W.S. Holdsworth, *A History of English Law: The Common Law and its Rivals, 1485-1700* (London, 1945), pp. 252-263 quoted in M. Blatcher, *The Court of King's Bench, 1450-1550: A Study in Self-help* (London, 1978), p. 12.

[78] Blatcher, *Court of King's Bench*, p. 20.

[79] The records of King's Bench are comparatively inaccessible as they have not yet been catalogued by county and the time constraints of the thesis. They are available via the Anglo-American Legal Tradition website (http://aalt.law.uh.edu/), and future studies of gentry and landscape would benefit from their use. There are approximately *c.*80 separate records belonging to Star Chamber cases involving the Leicestershire gentry compared to *c.*210 in Chancery.

[80] Ibid., p. 26.

[81] J.A. Guy, *The Cardinal's Court: The Impact of Thomas Wolsey in Star Chamber* (Brighton, 1977), p. 65.

the north and in Wales, for example, geographically increasing prospective litigants' access to the court.[82]

Cases must be treated with caution, however. Allegations were often inflated to suit the courts' jurisdiction. As Carpenter summarised, 'they have their own common form and it can be difficult to disentangle truth from allegation, or from an accusation framed within the available legal forms and often by the advice of a lawyer'.[83] The allegations made cannot always be taken at face value, but the geographical places concerned are less ambiguous. The type of litigation brought, by whom, and its location are sufficient for our enquiries. As with wills, we are more preoccupied with the gentry's intent, and less so with the actual outcome. Furthermore, the majority of the courts' records were written in English, which increases the probability of extraneous yet valuable detail emerging in their pleas and depositions.

The main body of Chancery evidence is comprised of petitions made to the court, recorded in bills. Timothy Haskett suggested that the lack of attention afforded to Chancery is due to the sheer volume of cases that it produced.[84] From 1991, a project at the University of Victoria, the 'Early Court of Chancery in England, 1417-1532' recorded the name, role, occupation and residence of 24,671 individuals active in Chancery. It was ongoing in 2004, but its outcome is unclear.[85] More recently, David Gould demonstrated Chancery's use for landscape history in place of the more traditional focus on its judicial administration.[86] Chancery bills formed his analysis of rabbit warren distribution across England and Wales. They supported a patchy archaeological record to show that rabbit

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[82] Blatcher, *Court of King's Bench*, p. 28.

[83] C. Carpenter, 'The lesser landowners and the inquisitions post mortem' in M. Hicks (ed.), *The Fifteenth-Century Inquisitions Post Mortem: A Companion* (Woodbridge, 2012), p. 48.

[84] T. Haskett, 'The medieval English court of Chancery', *Law and History Review*, 14, no. 2 (1996), p. 245.

[85] See M. Benskin, 'Chancery standard' in C. Kay, C. Hough and I. Wotherspoon (eds.), *New Perspectives on English Historical Linguistics*, 2 (Glasgow, 2004), p. 32. Selected results are discussed in Haskett, 'Court of Chancery', pp. 281-311. Access to the project's database appears to be restricted, and investigations by The National Archives are ongoing.

[86] See for example, H. Kleineke and J. Ross, 'Just another day in Chancery Lane: disorder and the law in London's legal quarter in the fifteenth century', *Law and History Review*, 35, no. 4 (2017), pp. 1017-1047; I. Williams, 'Developing a prerogative theory for the authority of the Chancery: the French connection' in M. Godfrey, *Law and Authority in British Legal History, 1200-1900* (Cambridge, 2016), pp. 33-59.

warrens were most numerous in eastern England.[87] Certainly, a substantial number of Chancery disputes were land-based such as allegations of unlawful entry. These claims usually commenced with a form of peaceable land transaction, such as an enfeoffment or deed, which one party no longer upheld at the expense of the other.[88] The loss of or threat to livestock and consequential financial difficulties were commonly purported.

The court of Star Chamber emerged during the reign of Henry VII from a conciliar role and supplemented the courts of common law.[89] As we have seen, its business steadily increased during the early Tudor period in parallel with its judicial activity under Thomas Wolsey.[90] It is highly unlikely that these records represent the full dataset for Leicestershire given that many Star Chamber records are either lost or yet to be identified. Some are held at the British Library and in private collections. Of the Star Chamber entries relating to the Leicestershire gentry in The National Archives' catalogue, two per cent relate specifically to enclosure disputes; two per cent to unlawful hunting; 21% to alleged affray, riot and assault with possible agendas of disputed land entitlement at their core; 26% to disputed land entitlement as the alleged primary concern, and 29% to alleged forcible entry, ouster and trespass. The remaining 20% handle allegations of perjury, distraint of goods, disputed verdicts amongst other topics.

Star Chamber cases were instigated with the submission of a bill of complaint, outlining the plaintiff's concerns. Articles for interrogation, or interrogatories, were drawn up by the plaintiff and defendant to be put to the opposition. An answer by the defendant was usually given to the bill of complaint followed by a replication from the plaintiff. This could be followed by a further rejoinder from the defendant, and in some cases further answers afterwards, known as a rebuttal, a surrebuttal and so forth. Depositions were given in support of each party. They were taken from individuals representing a broad

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[87] D. Gould, 'The distribution of rabbit warrens in medieval England: an east-west divide?', *Landscape History*, 38, no. 1 (2017) pp. 25-41.

[88] Prior to the Statute of Wills (1540), enfeoffment was essential in testators' land distributions pre- and *post mortem*. See Chapter 2, 2.6.2.

[89] For the operation of Star Chamber, see J.A. Guy, *The Court of Star Chamber and its Records to the Reign of Elizabeth I* (London, 1985).

[90] Guy, *The Impact of Thomas Wolsey in Star Chamber*, p. 65. See also J.A. Guy, 'Wolsey's Star Chamber: A study in archival reconstruction', *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, 5, no. 3 (London, 1975), p. 169. The article was republished in J.A. Guy (ed.), *Politics, Law and Counsel in Tudor and Early Stuart England* (Aldershot, 2000).

spectrum of society, and were given in answer by the witness to a series of interrogatories submitted by the plaintiff and defendant respectively. They would commence with the individual's name, age, place of residence and a reference to their status.

Arguably, it is the depositions that furnish the most useful evidence given the wealth of detail contained within. Star Chamber cases – and particularly depositions – have been employed in studies of contemporary violence and gentry family feuds, and Charles Phythian-Adams used them to consider the rituals of social behaviour.[91] However, Heather Falvey has drawn attention to the danger of treating depositions at face value; without the context of additional case evidence, depositions 'are merely the final stage in a protracted process ... interrogatories are no less significant ... they too were prompted by witnesses' recollections'.[92] Where depositions have been used, care has been taken to incorporate supporting material, including the case interrogatories where possible.[93]

Inquisitions *post mortem*

Our final category is the inquisitions *post mortem* (henceforth IPM/s).[94] IPMs detail enquiries into those lands which the tenant held in demesne as of fee, i.e. held directly of the Crown, and which were heritable by their heirs. The gentry are particularly well represented; most Leicestershire gentry estates comprised freehold land. Michael Hicks has drawn attention to the IPMs' reputation as 'the single most important source for the study of landed society in later medieval England'.[95] Bruce Campbell and Ken Bartley

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[91] See for example, F.W. Brooks, *Yorkshire and the Star Chamber* (Beverley, 1954), pp. 1-11; R.B. Manning, 'Patterns of violence in early Tudor enclosure riots', *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies*, 6, no. 2 (1974), pp. 120-133; R. Turvey, 'Politics, patronage and the abuse of power: the gentry and the court of Star Chamber in early modern Carmarthenshire', *The Carmarthenshire Antiquary*, 52 (2016), pp. 24-32; C. Phythian-Adams, 'Rituals of personal confrontation in late medieval England', *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester*, 73, no. 1 (1991), pp. 65-90.

[92] H. Falvey, 'Relating early modern depositions' in C. J. Griffin and B. McDonagh (eds.), *Remembering Protest in Britain Since 1500: Memory, Materiality and the Landscape* (Cham, 2018), p. 99. Falvey observed that interrogatories offer a record of the question(s) put to the witnesses, yet highlighted clerks' tendencies to insert clauses themselves to clarify the witnesses' response(s). For a close analysis of the reliability of interrogatories, see ibid., pp. 86-98.

[93] See Chapter 4, 4.5, for example.

[94] For a more detailed definition see the Glossary.

[95] Hicks, 'Description', *Fifteenth-Century Inquisitions Post Mortem*.

described them as 'the source that comes closest to the Domesday Survey in the range of tenurial, land use and economic information'.[96]

Surprisingly, to date the IPMs have not been applied exclusively to a study of the gentry and landscape. They are used below, for example, to approximate the geographical borders of gentry territories, and to record their changing land composition over time as a reflection of gentry interests. IPMs were organised on a county-by-county basis, and recorded every Crown tenant who held Leicestershire lands, including non-Leicestershire gentry. The Leicestershire IPMs have not received specific attention for the period.[97] IPMs for the Leicestershire gentry have been identified by cross-referencing them with other sources, such as wills, where the name and status is usually known. The thesis uses the IPM abstracts calendared and produced for the reign of Henry VII, and the original documents for the reigns of Edward IV, Richard III and Henry VIII.[98]

Carpenter warned that for the historians hoping to use the IPMs 'for the gentry as a group, the exercise is repellent … the documents themselves are in some cases torn and/or faded, and in more instances than one would like rendered almost illegible'.[99] Certainly, the lands and associated values recorded in the IPM of Thomas Neele, esquire, for example, are obscured and only partially legible.[100] The document must also be translated post-transcription. Using existing transcriptions for this approach, either in secondary texts or the calendar volumes for the reign of Henry VII, can be problematic when faced with substantially abbreviated extents.[101] Margaret Yates's recommendation that IPMs should be used 'in conjunction with other sources of evidence, and with a realistic

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[96]   B.M.S. Campbell and K. Bartley, *England on the Eve of the Black Death: An Atlas of Lay Lordship, Land and Wealth, 1300-1349* (Manchester, 2006), p. 4.

[97]   Abstracts of Leicestershire-specific IPMs have not been published compared to other counties. A brief list of IPMs returned to the courts of Chancery and Wards was composed for 1509-1649 in W.G. Dimock Fletcher (ed.), *Notes on Leicestershire Inquisitions Post Mortem* (Leicester, 1884).

[98]   State copies of the IPMs are held at The National Archives. They were returned by the county escheator to Chancery and the Exchequer, and after 1540 transcripts were also sent to the court of Wards and Liveries. The calendared and original IPMs have been processed into a database, permitting quantitative and visual analysis in MS Access and ArcGIS.

[99]   Carpenter, 'The lesser landowners' in Hicks, *Fifteenth-Century Inquisitions Post Mortem*, p. 50.

[100] TNA, Court of Wards and Liveries: Inquisitions Post Mortem, WARD 7/18/38. The quality of the IPM copies vary across the Chancery, Exchequer and Wards series, with the latter two generally in better condition. Illegibility has reduced the total sample from approximately 180 IPMs to 134.

[101] See for example the IPM of Thomas Neele in G.F. Farnham, 'Prestwold and its hamlets in medieval times', *TLAHS*, 17 (1931-32), p. 55.

acknowledgement of what they can and cannot reasonably be expected to reveal' is a fair assessment.[102] It must also be remembered that IPMs cannot paint a complete picture of gentry interests; they represent the absolute minimum of lands held. Leases, for example, were not freehold and thus not recorded by the jurors. Wills can go some way to recovering lost data where lands are specified in bequests, but they cannot rebuild the picture entirely.[103]

Over 500 land descriptions exist within our IPMs, which were taken between 1461 and 1592. Landholdings often overlapped with the landed interests of the church and state. The majority of lands were held of the Crown, followed by other Leicestershire gentry, the nobility, monastic landlords, secular clergy, unknown landlords, and non-Leicestershire gentry.[104] The tenurial hierarchy was not exclusively a 'top-down' arrangement. Knights could hold lands of esquires, for example.[105] IPMs usually recorded the services due to a lord in return for the tenure of land. The most common service in the Leicestershire IPMs was knight-service, for which an often-trivial fraction of a knight's fee, such as ⅓, ⅛, or even less, was owed. Knight-service was a remnant of English military feudalism; a knight's fee was deemed to be a sufficient amount of land to support a knight, and was offered in return for military service. Dyer argued that, by 1550, the nature of this transaction 'played little part in social relations'.[106] Certainly, the frequency that 'que servicia ignorant' ('service unknown') appears in the Leicestershire IPMs suggests that the nature of service was of small consequence.

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[102] M. Yates, 'The descriptions of land found in the inquisitions post mortem and feet of fines: A case study of Berkshire' in Hicks, *Fifteenth-Century Inquisitions Post Mortem*, p. 145.

[103] Sir William Turville's will (TNA, PROB 11/32/575), mentioned only his manor of Aston Flamville, but his IPM listed lands in nine separate places (TNA, Exchequer: King's Remembrancer: Escheators' Files, Inquisitions Post Mortem, Series II, and other Inquisitions, Henry VII to Elizabeth I, E 150/1149/3). The will of his father, John (TNA, PROB 11/15/287) bequeathed land in five places whilst his IPM (TNA, Chancery: Inquisitions Post Mortem, Series II, and other Inquisitions, Henry VII to Charles I, C 142/20/8), listed lands in 16 places. The discrepancies may reflect sentiment; fathers would have had different geographical preferences for their children. See Chapter 2, 2.5.

[104] The later dates are included to allow for the deaths of gentry who were living during the thesis period. IPMs were usually taken within or around a year since death, although some took considerably longer. The statistics are: Crown (175: 35%); Leicestershire gentry (112: 22%); nobility (90: 18%); religious (50: ten per cent); unknown (50: ten per cent) and non-Leicestershire gentry (30: six per cent).

[105] See the IPM of Sir Thomas Pulteney, TNA, E 150/1145/9. Amongst others, in addition to holding lands in Skeffington of the King *in capite* for 100th of a knight's fee; lands in Rolleston of Henry Grey, marquess of Dorset, as of the honor of Winchester for fealty, and lands in Kilby of George Hastings, earl of Huntingdon for fealty, he also held lands in Billesdon of Nicholas Purefoy, esquire, for 13s rent and fealty. Owing fealty, a promise of loyalty to a socially superior lord, had also become anachronistic.

[106] Dyer, *An Age of Transition?*, p. 2.

Digital methodology

This section illustrates how digital methods have been used by this thesis to advance our understanding of the Leicestershire gentry in late medieval England. The role of computers in medieval studies was pioneered in 1946 by Roberto Busa's *Index Thomisticus*, a tool for the linguistic and literary analysis of the writings of Saint Thomas Aquinas.[107] Studies of social and economic history first turned historians' attention towards computers, primarily for quantitative analysis.[108] Through the expanding provision of software and training, scholars of local history are increasingly using digital methods of analysis to process their own research, even within the relatively short confines of the thesis period. A relational database lies at the heart of this thesis. It comprises over 7,000 separate instances of people, representing more than 3,000 individuals and approximately 900 gentry, and nearly 3,000 instances of place, representing nearly 500 places in Leicestershire alone, manually extracted from primary material across the period. Analysis using Geographic Information System software (GIS) has produced a new lens for observing the gentry 'on the ground'.

Microsoft Access

The collation, analysis and eventual visualisation of the primary source data would not have been possible on this scale without a relational database. Databases permit analysis across vast datasets, which is particularly helpful in the construction of a large-scale prosopography. The thesis database was built by the author using Microsoft Access, a database management system, which allows the user to assemble, query and analyse a limitless amount of data. Calculations can help to answer historiographical questions, such as using IPM data to estimate gentry income per status group, or the changing acreages of pasture during periods of enclosure.

The export feature on Discovery, The National Archives' main catalogue, permits individual downloads of search results in an Excel format. These downloads include information such as the main series, title, description and date of each entry, and were

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[107] A. Gilmour-Bryson (ed.), 'Computers and medieval studies' in *Medieval Studies and the Computer: A Special Issue of Computers and the Humanities* (New York, 1979), p. 1.

[108] S. Denbo, 'Afterword: digital history' in Handley, McWilliam and Noakes, *New Directions in Social and Cultural History*, p. 255.

imported into the database. Material such as names and places were then manually extracted for analysis at a later stage. Relational databases are structured by a series of tables, each representing different data categories such as people or places. Each table can contain any number of user-defined fields. The relationships between each table must be established in preparation for data querying and analysis. The most common relationship type is known as a 'one-to-many', where, for example, one source can contain many places, and one place can contain many different types of land, such as arable or pasture.

Data was first extracted and entered into the database. 'Messy' data was sorted into categories such as first name, surname, status, role, and so on. Contemporary spelling and regnal dates were also standardised to suit the restrictive conditions of Access. For example, entering the surname 'Turville' using contemporary spellings such as 'Turvyl' or 'Turvell' to find entries relating to Sir William Turville would return nil results. Pre-decimal currency was converted to a decimal value to run accurate mathematical operations such as the addition of acreages or finding the mean value of knightly incomes, for example. Similarly, the spelling and structure of place-names, such as the inclusion or exclusion of an affix, has changed substantially. We shall return to the methodology of place-name identification shortly. A helpful feature of Access is the form, a user-friendly interface which was built and adapted to suit the different types and stages of data entry.

Having established the basic structure and content of the database, data was queried with user-defined parameters such as 'where did esquires hold meadow in Leicestershire?' or 'what was the composition of land held in Lowesby between 1500 and 1510?' The relational database can be invaluable in drawing connections between data that might otherwise have been missed manually, such as 'which sources does Sir William Turville appear in, and what was his role?' Care must be taken in result interpretation, such as cross-checking individuals with the same names. Gentry children were often given family names, evidenced in the abundance of Johns and Everards in the Digby family, for example.

Historical GIS

Despite the impersonality of records such as the inquisitions *post mortem*, they harness a wealth of material relating to location, and are thus suitable for digital methodological approaches such as the use of a Geographic Information System (GIS). GIS permits location-based questions to be asked and visualised. It presents a perspective which is simply invisible in a list of place-names and in the absence of contemporary estate maps.[109] ArcGIS was the chosen software given the amount of training available for those approaching GIS from a historical perspective, and its compatibility with Microsoft software such as Excel and Access.[110] Projecting places onto a map allows trends to be viewed, identified and discussed more easily, such as the distribution of gentry territories (Chapter 2) or the bequests made to parish churches (Chapter 6). The distributions were analysed using two visual analysis tools, viewshed analysis and kernel density estimation. Viewshed analysis produces an area that is visible from a certain location, whilst kernel density estimation produces probable distribution based on a sample of data, such as the boundaries of an area occupied by a gentry territory (Chapter 2).

All place-names were cross-referenced and standardised. The difficulties of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century place-names are mostly related to spelling or abbreviation. Popular Leicestershire suffixes and affixes such as 'Ashby-' could refer to Ashby de la Zouch, Ashby Folville, Ashby Magna or Ashby Parva, whilst 'thorp' was used as both suffix and affix in 24 places. 'Gloreston', 'Glourston' and 'Glowystone' all related to Glooston, for example.[111] Some place-names have since changed slightly, such as 'Kerkby apon Wrethek' (Kirby Bellars) or beyond modern recognition in 'Clydon Moreton' (Gilmorton).[112] This study is thus indebted to the place-name scholars whose research has made the task of identification less daunting. Barrie Cox's doctoral research into the place-names of Leicestershire and Rutland has been invaluable during the identification

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[109] The earliest estate map for the period dates to the late sixteenth century. See Chapter 5, Figure 5.19.
[110] I am grateful to the Institute of Historical Research, University of London, and the Summer School in GIS for the Digital Humanities, University of Lancaster, for such valuable and helpful training. I am especially indebted to Professor Ian Gregory, University of Lancaster, for his patience and guidance in creating the first maps from my thesis data.
[111] TNA, Court of Star Chamber: Proceedings, Henry VIII, STAC 2/10/16-19 & 21; C 1/54/376; C 1/50/239.
[112] TNA, C 142/11/91; ROLLR, DG21/29.

process, as have his later volumes for the county published by The English Place-Name Society.[113] Certain place-names are not always possible to corroborate definitively, however. This thesis proposes that the gentry experience of landscape was usually localised within a particular region, thus references to certain place-names such as 'Stretton' are most likely to relate to identifiable places nearby, but allowances must be made for a margin of error.

There is also the problem of places which have disappeared entirely from the modern map. As with place-names, invaluable progress has been made in the identification of deserted medieval sites, pioneered by a field trip organised by M.M. Postan in 1948 to Knaptoft and Hamilton in Leicestershire. The meeting sparked an interest in these sites, eventually leading to Maurice Beresford and John Hurst publishing their findings of identified and listed deserted places.[114] Dyer described Beresford's work as being 'probably more influential than any other early work on deserted villages'.[115] His contribution is reflected in the Beresford's Lost Villages project at the University of Hull (BLV, www.dmv.hull.ac.uk). The project was designed to make the gazetteer compiled by John Sheail and based on the findings of Beresford and Hurst accessible. The entries for Leicestershire are partially complete, but the provision of grid references has played a significant role in the preparation of data for geographical analysis. Where appropriate, the maps below use the parish boundaries recorded in the 1851 census to show geographical context where individual place-names would crowd the data.

The Gazetteer of British Place Names (GBPN, www.gazetteer.org.uk) is a place-name index made available by The Association of British Counties. It includes searchable and downloadable data for over 50,000 places in the UK, but only comprises modern place-names. A copy of the gazetteer was augmented to include missing places, such as those identified by Beresford and Hurst, and using the grid referenced data made available by the BLV website. The grid references included in the GBPN gazetteer use the four-digit system, which puts place markers at the bottom left of the grid square. The six-digit

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[113] B. Cox, 'The place names of Leicestershire and Rutland' (unpub. PhD thesis, University of Nottingham, 1971); B. Cox, *The Place-Names of Leicestershire*, 1-7 (Nottingham, 1998-2016).

[114] M. Beresford, *The Lost Villages of* England (Lutterworth, 1954); M. Beresford and J. Hurst (eds.), *Deserted Medieval Villages: Studies* (New York, 1972).

[115] C. Dyer and R. Jones (eds.), *Deserted Villages Revisited* (Hatfield, 2010), p. 5.

system is most commonly used by organisations such as Ordnance Survey, which puts markers in the centre of the grid square. This leaves a maximum margin of error of 1.4km (0.86 miles), which matters little for our purposes.

Ian Gregory observed that historical GIS uses 'values that are typically expressed to a far higher degree of precision than the accuracy of their measurement can really support'.[116] This is shown where locations and associated land compositions have been described in contemporary documents; manors could still vary dramatically in size, and it is a near-impossible task to pinpoint the exact location of, for example, 'one messuage and 15 virgates of land in Long Whatton'.[117] Yates warned against the search 'for modern levels of accuracy in the descriptions … their purpose was to provide enough evidence to identify the property being conveyed'.[118] The same can be said for the IPMs; they furnish an excellent example of the difficulties of precision. Land compositions during this period were often hidden amongst lawyers' summaries, where amounts and types of land were given but followed by a series of places in which those lands were held. Sir William Turville, for example, held '26 messuages, one windmill, 1,000 acres of land, 30 acres of meadow, 300 acres of pasture … with appurtenances in Aston Flamville, Sharnford, Walton on the Wolds and Burton on the Wolds'.[119] Aston Flamville is adjacent to Sharnford, and Walton on the Wolds to Burton on the Wolds, but the two pairs are approximately 20 miles apart. The land descriptions in these lawyer summary IPMs were thus discounted from the dataset.[120] The remaining data comprises the legible IPMs for the Leicestershire gentry, recording lands (and associated place-attributable descriptions) held in the county, where deaths occurred within the thesis period, and which contain projectable GIS data.

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[116] I.N. Gregory, *Toward Spatial Humanities: Historical GIS and Spatial History* (Bloomington, 2014), p. xii.
[117] TNA, E 150/1146/2.
[118] Yates, 'Descriptions of land' in Hicks, *Fifteenth-Century Inquisitions Post Mortem*, p. 148.
[119] TNA, E 150/1149/3.
[120] The removal of the 'lawyers' summaries' IPMs reduces the land composition dataset by 33% from 869 to 576 individual entries.

Chapter 1: Putting the gentry in their place

1.1 Abstract

This chapter introduces the reader to Leicestershire and its gentry, and provides essential context for the remainder of the thesis. It begins with an overview of Leicestershire's characteristics during the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, and considers its physical composition, infrastructure, general population, economy and religious representation. The second half of the chapter introduces the Leicestershire gentry to the discussion. It outlines the county's administrative framework and demonstrates the gentry's involvement in local politics and military affairs. Using the numbers of gentry appointed to commissions of the peace during our period, it charts the increasing reliance of the Crown on local gentry for governance in the localities. Ultimately, it explores initial evidence for the significance of place in gentry identity through our gentry's administrative and professional ties within and beyond their county.

1.2 Leicestershire: A midland county

1.2.1 Geology and topography

Landlocked Leicestershire is bordered by seven counties. Bissected from north to south by its primary river, the Soar, its elevation ranges from over 270 metres above sea level at Bardon Hill to 24 metres at Bottesford in the Vale of Belvoir. The county is also centrally divided by its bedrock geology; the Lias Group to the east comprises mainly mudstone, siltstone, limestone and sandstone, whilst its western counterpart is formed of Triassic rocks of mudstone, siltstone and sandstone (Figure 1.1). Leicestershire's geological diversity can be said of the east midlands region more generally.[1] The belt of Jurassic limestone which runs from the south-west to the north-east of England is evident in Northamptonshire and a substantial part of eastern Leicestershire, for example. Joan Thirsk's observation that Leicestershire variations in the economic use of arable, the

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[1] Beckett, *East Midlands*, p. 5.

prevalence of open-field enclosure, and especially the use of wasteland 'was almost complete in Leicestershire in the sixteenth century, when it had hardly begun on the neighbouring Lincolnshire cliff and heath' neatly summarises the regional variation of geological composition and its impact on land use.[2]
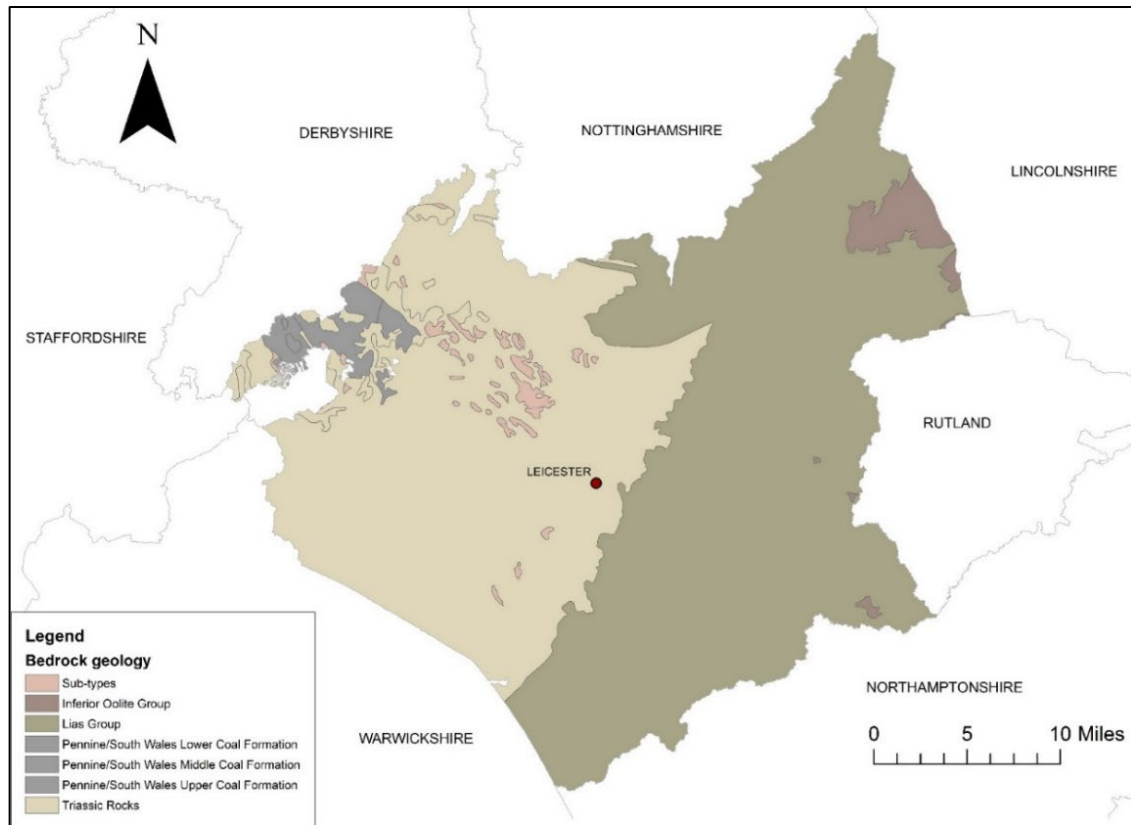
Figure 1.1 Leicestershire's geological composition.

The economic impact of local geology appears to have emerged in local income. Shillings paid per square mile in the 1524/5 lay subsidy differed either side of the Soar; eastern Leicestershire paid between 20 and 39 shillings per square mile, whilst areas to the west paid less than 20 shillings.[3] Geological differences also created an eastern and western distinction on the surface, regions which have been described by W.G. Hoskins as being 'strikingly divided'.[4] The soils of western Leicestershire, for example, are so heavily

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[2] J. Thirsk, *The Rural Economy of England* (London, 1984), pp. 29-31.

[3] A.R.H. Baker, 'Changes in the later middle ages' in H.C. Darby (ed.), *A New Historical Geography of England* (Cambridge, 1973), p. 196.

[4] W.G. Hoskins, *Midland England: A Survey of the Country Between the Chilterns and the Trent* (London, 1948), p. 5.

laden with clay that it was heavily used heavily in local vessel production in Potters Marston in the western hundred of Sparkenhoe, *c.*1100-1300. The finished products were widely distributed across Nottinghamshire, Northamptonshire and Warwickshire.[5]

Figure 1.2 The view from the highest natural elevation in Leicestershire at Bardon Hill, looking south-west towards the Warwickshire border, where the topography levels out. Photograph taken by author.

Figure 1.3 A typical view of the 'wolds' of north-east and eastern Leicestershire, taken near Saxelbye. Photograph taken by author.

Figure 1.4 The view from Ashby Parva, close to Leicestershire's southern border with Warwickshire, across the Soar valley. The hills of Charnwood at the northernmost border can be seen in the distance. Photograph taken by author.

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[5]   D. Sawday, 'Potters Marston ware', *TLAHS*, 65 (1991), p. 34.

1.2.2 Historical importance and occupation

By the late eleventh century Leicestershire's administration was divided into the four wapentakes of Framland, Gartree, Goscote and Guthlaxton. The addition of Sparkenhoe in 1346, and the division of Goscote into East and West Goscote, created the six hundreds recognisable by our period (Figure 1.5).[6]
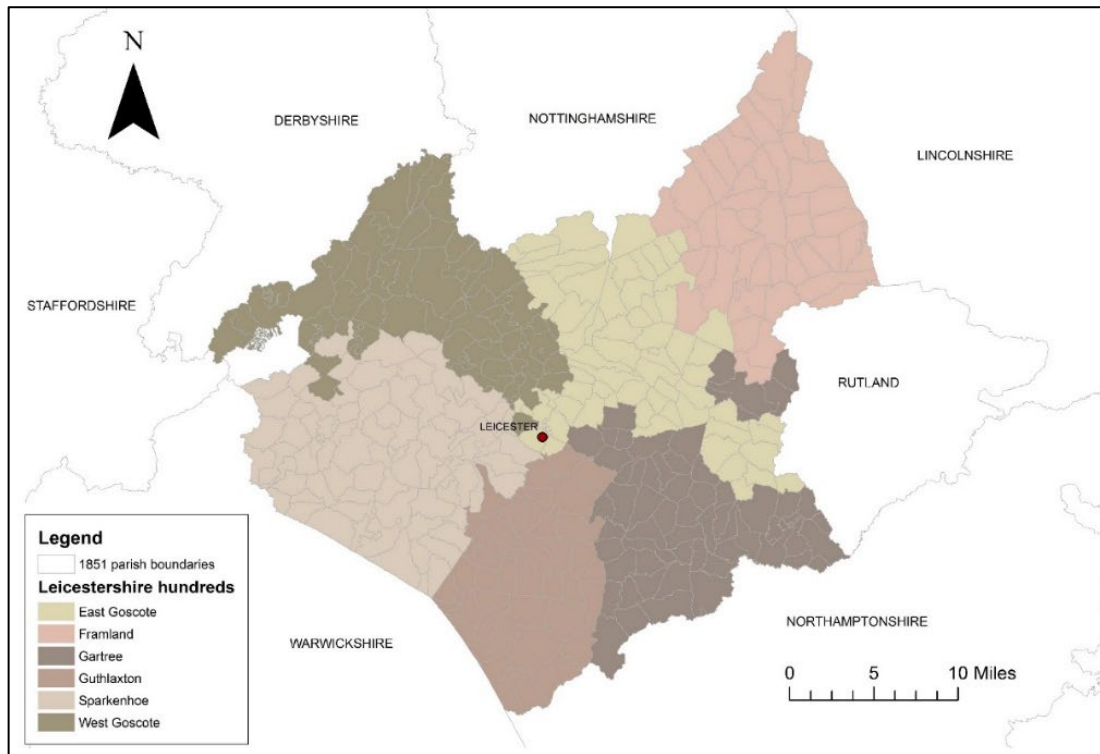
Figure 1.5 Leicestershire's hundreds.

Leicestershire's midland position offered strategic importance for efficient and effective central governance, first recognised by the Romans and followed by a historic succession of ruling elite.[7] Leicester was one of five fortified centres under Danish rule.[8] Evidence for Leicestershire's strategic importance lies in the Norman castles built in the major midland centres of Leicester, Nottingham, Lincoln and Stamford.[9] Norman influence also created administrative inter-county ties in the joint shrievalty of Leicestershire and

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6 Fifteenth- and sixteenth-century taxation assessments often referred to the hundred of Goscote despite the division. See TNA, E 179/133/144, for example.
7 Acheson, *A Gentry Community*, pp. 7-8.
8 H.C. Darby, 'The Anglo-Scandinavian foundations' in Darby, *New Historical Geography*, p. 36.
9 Beckett, *East Midlands*, p. 54.

Warwickshire, which continued until 1566.[10] It was one of nine boroughs recorded in the Domesday Book, and was then the only east midland town that could compare with the major towns in Lincolnshire, with 300 houses and a population of between 1,000 and 2,000.[11]

1.2.3   Infrastructure and travel

The county's primary river, the Soar, was largely unnavigable, and was described as a stream by John Leland in the sixteenth century.[12] Michael Drayton painted a languid picture of the river in his *Polyolbion*:

> And her a Channel call, because she is so slow.
> The cause is that she lies upon so low a flat,
> Where Nature most of all befriended her in that,
> The longer to enjoy the good she doth possess:
> For had those (which such speed that forward seem to press)
> So many dainty meads, and pastures there to be,
> They then would wish themselves to be as slow as she.[13]

The relatively flat topography of central Leicestershire thus affected the Soar's flow. The Soar was unnavigable but not without use. The IPM of Lady Joan Aston, taken in 1526, recorded fishing rights in the Soar at Wanlip, north of Leicester.[14] In 1546 a case was brought to Star Chamber by Ralph Swillington, esquire, against Francis Shirley, esquire, concerning fishing rights in the Soar at Sutton Bonington on the Leicestershire-Nottinghamshire border.[15]

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[10]   Williams, 'From Towton to Bosworth', p. 29.
[11]   Beckett, *East Midlands*, p. 53.
[12]   Leland, *Itinerary*, Toulmin Smith, 1, pp. 16-19. Contemporary definitions of 'stream' allude either to a continuous course of water, or to the 'flow or current of a river; force, volume of direction of flow'. The *OED*'s evidence for the latter is taken from William Dunbar's description in *Golden Targe* (1508) of 'a ryuir [that] ran wyth stremys'. See 'stream, n.', *OED* (2018), 'www.oed.com/view/Entry/191400' [accessed 24th July 2018]. Leland described the Soar as 'the great streame of Sore River'; the adjective 'great' suggests size. His observation that it was 'creping aboute half the toune' of Leicester, however, referred to its slow flow, according to contemporary definitions of the verb 'to creep' ('To move softly, cautiously, timorously, or slowly'). See 'creep, v.', *OED* (2018), 'www.oed.com/view/Entry/44164' [accessed 24th July 2018].
[13]   M. Drayton, *Polyolbion, and the Harmony of the Church*, R. Hooper (ed.), 3 (London, 1876), p. 158.
[14]   TNA, E 150/1131/6.
[15]   TNA, STAC 2/32/83.

Northern Leicestershire could access trade and communication via the river Trent, navigable from the Humber's estuary in Yorkshire to Burton on Trent on the Staffordshire-Derbyshire border. The Trent was so important for the midland economy that a fine was introduced in the mid-thirteenth century to deter anyone from impeding passage.[16] Certainly, the primary Trent crossing into the north-eastern and western midlands at Swarkestone Bridge, in reality a causeway over a mile in length, attracted gentry custom and patronage. The importance of this causeway as a meeting place for trade is evidenced in the building accounts of Kirby Muxloe castle in the hundred of Sparkenhoe, and more generally in the patronage of a Leicestershire esquire. The building accounts, commissioned by William Lord Hastings, recorded a purchase made in 1481 of 'two ffrestones bought at Swareston Bryge for the bridge at Kerby'. A later entry in April 1483 listed a payment made to a mason for 'squaring divers stones at Swarston Bryg' for machicolations at the castle.[17] In 1535, Richard Cave, esquire, of Stanford on Avon on the Leicestershire-Northamptonshire border, bequeathed 'one hundredth pounds or two hundredth pounds sterling or more ... to be made after the patron[age] of Swarston bridge' in his will.[18]

The remnants of the Roman road network gave medieval Leicestershire's inhabitants access to and beyond the midlands (Figure 1.6). The Fosse Way entered at the county's south-west border, ran through Leicester, and left at the north-eastern border. It provided access to Exeter at its most south-western point, and to Lincoln in the north-east. The King's Highway, also known as the Fen Lanes, provided further access from Leicester, eventually joining Watling Street. Watling Street, which ran from London to Chester via Ryknield Street, dictated Leicestershire's border with Warwickshire, and provided access to and from the south-west of the county.[19] To the east, Ermine Street, approximately ten miles from the market town of Melton Mowbray, permitted routes to London, Peterborough, Lincoln and York. In the twelfth century the Fosse Way, Watling Street

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[16] Beckett, *East Midlands*, p. 68.
[17] A. Hamilton Thompson, 'The building accounts of Kirby Muxloe castle, 1480-1484', *TLAHS*, 11 (1913-20), pp. 260, 309. Machicolations were defensive openings in battlements.
[18] TNA, PROB 11/27/273. The stone bridge at Swarkestone was also referred to as 'Swarston Brugge' in 1483. A.H. Smith (ed.), *The Place-Names of Derbyshire, Part Three* (Cambridge, 1959), p. 661.
[19] The tangible boundary of Watling Street had a direct impact on the landed interests of certain Leicestershire gentry, see Chapter 2, 2.4.2.

and Ermine Street comprised three of the king's four highways, thoroughfares which enjoyed special royal protection, and thus reflect Leicestershire's longstanding integration with and connection to the wider infrastructure of the medieval kingdom.[20]

Figure 1.6 Major Roman roads and primary rivers in Leicestershire.

1.2.4   Population and economy

Leicestershire's population compared favourably with its county neighbours.[21] It was amongst the more densely populated counties in England.[22] In 1377, its population totalled approximately 47,500; in 1545, 61,000, and in 1563, 35,000-44,000.[23] The

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[20]   The fourth road was the Icknield Way, not to be confused with Ryknield Street. The protection was no longer exclusive to the four by the thirteenth century, outlined in Bracton's thirteenth-century treatise *De Legibus et Consuetudinibus Angliae (On the Laws and Customs of England)*. See V. Allen and R. Evans (eds.), 'Introduction: roads and writing' in *Roadworks: Medieval Britain, Medieval Roads* (Manchester, 2016), p. 15.

[21]   Its total area of 511,340 acres ranked 28th out of the 40 English counties included in the 1831 census.[21]

[22]   Baker, 'Changes in the later middle ages' in Darby, *New Historical Geography*, p. 192.

[23]   These figures are based on a combination of taxpayers and estimated household numbers by W.G. Hoskins and R.A. McKinley, and must therefore be treated as estimates. See W.G. Hoskins and R.A. McKinley (eds.), *VCH Leics*, 3 (London, 1955), pp. 132-141. John Hatcher observed an 'exceptionally

population of its county town, Leicester, was 4,375 in 1450 and 3,550 in 1550.[24] Leicestershire, Northamptonshire and Nottinghamshire suffered substantial depopulation after the plague at an estimated 1.4 villages per 10,000 acres.[25] Tax assessments in Leicestershire were cut by 38% from 1334 to 1445, reflecting the impact on the population.[26] Robin Glasscock's line of assessed wealth from York to Exeter placed Leicestershire south of the line, amongst the wealthier part of the country.[27] But the 1334 lay subsidy returned an approximate wealth of £13.7 per square mile, ranking nearly £5 less than − and making it comparatively poor to − the north-of-the-line county of Gloucestershire, for example. Leicester was the only taxation borough in the county, a common feature amongst midland counties.[28]

1.2.5 Market towns and industry

Thirty-seven markets in Leicestershire were founded between 1249 and 1349.[29] In Leicestershire only the towns of Melton Mowbray and Belvoir had known market privileges before 1200. Another 23 settlements had gained similar rights by 1300. Market Harborough, created in *c.*1167 from a royal demesne at Great Bowden, was 'deliberately located on the Leicester-Northampton road ... the whole plan, with its wide, funnel-shaped main street leaving plenty of room for the market and the annual fair, emphasized the importance of commercial activity'.[30] By the early fourteenth century, it was one of the four most significant trading centres in the county alongside Melton Mowbray, Loughborough, and Ashby de la Zouch. The south Derbyshire and Leicestershire coalfield, which penetrates approximately ten miles into Leicestershire and is centred on Ashby de la Zouch, has been exploited since the thirteenth century, and mining activity

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high' marriage rate during the mid to late sixteenth century, which 'could only result from exceptionally high mortality', and supports the downward trends in the figures between 1545 and 1563 at least. J. Hatcher, 'Understanding the population history of England, 1450-1750', *Past & Present*, 180 (2003), p. 100.

[24] Beckett, *East Midlands*, p. 355.

[25] See table in M. Beresford and J.G. Hurst (eds.), *Deserted Medieval Villages* (Lutterworth, Leicestershire, 1971), p. 39. These east midland counties follow the East Riding of Yorkshire (1.7), Oxfordshire (2.1), Warwickshire (2.3) and the Isle of Wight (3.1).

[26] Beckett, *East Midlands*, p. 79.

[27] R.E. Glasscock, 'England circa 1334' in Darby, *New Historical Geography*, p. 141.

[28] Ibid., p. 179.

[29] Beckett, *East Midlands*, p. 62.

[30] Ibid., p. 61.

there had increased dramatically by 1600.[31] Slate has been quarried in the western region of Charnwood Forest since the mid-thirteenth century, and ironstone and limestone in the eastern parts of the county since the twelfth century. Instances of quarrying at the granite outcrop in the west around Enderby have been dated to the late fifteenth century.[32]

The cloth trade was a vital part of the economy of medieval Leicester; in 1202 it was the fourth most prosperous town in the trade behind Lincoln, York and Beverley. The wool prices in the county were amongst the highest returned in a valuation of 1343.[33] By the mid-fifteenth century, the midland counties had experienced the first wave of enclosure as abandoned arable land was converted to grass and pasture. Enclosures supported the thriving wool industry, making cloth less enterprising; the clothiers of central Suffolk 'appear to have relied on the wools of the Midland counties, particularly Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire and Cambridgeshire'.[34] The wool trade, however, encouraged associated industry in the town and county. Clothing and leather trades accounted for almost half of Leicester's trades amongst freemen in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.[35] By the mid to late sixteenth century nearly 60% of Leicester's industry was occupied with leather crafts, textiles and agriculture.[36]

1.2.6   Religion

The archdeaconry of Leicester was founded *c.*1092.[37] Twelve individuals held the archdeaconry during our period, many of whom held other offices simultaneously, often comprising both Church and State.[38] By the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* of 1534, 198 benefices

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[31]   Beckett, *East Midlands*, p. 161.
[32]   Parker, 'Enclosure in Leicestershire', p. 7.
[33]   Glasscock, 'England circa 1334' in Darby, *New Historical Geography*, pp. 161-163.
[34]   Thirsk, *Rural Economy*, p. 218.
[35]   D. Charman, 'Wealth and trade in Leicester in the early sixteenth century', *TLAHS*, 25 (1949), p. 96.
[36]   F.V. Emery, 'England circa 1600' in Darby, *New Historical Geography*, p. 275.
[37]   T.Y. Cocks, 'The archdeacons of Leicester, 1092-1992', *TLAHS*, 67 (1993), p. 27.
[38]   John Morton, for example, briefly held the post from 1478-1479. At the time he was also Master of the Rolls (1472-79), held two other archdeaconries, and multiple prebends and benefices. He was appointed Bishop of Ely in 1479, and later became principal advisor to Henry VII. Comparatively, Stephen Gardiner held the Leicester, Worcester and Norfolk archdeaconries simultaneously (Leicester from March to December 1531). He was secretary to Thomas Wolsey and later to Henry VIII. See Cocks, 'Archdeacons of Leicester', pp. 31-34.

were listed in the archdeaconry of Leicester.[39] Leicestershire became part of the Diocese of Lincoln in the late eleventh century.[40] The county was split into seven rural deaneries before 1220, which, in addition to the deaneries of Akeley, Leicester and Sparkenhoe, roughly comprised the ancient hundred divisions of Framland, Gartree, Goscote and Guthlaxton. At this time the archdeaconry contained 203 parishes, ranging from nine in the Leicester deanery to 43 in the deanery of Guthlaxton.[41] By 1535, Akeley, Framland, Gartree, Goscote and Sparkenhoe had experienced little change. Guthlaxton had lost three parishes, and the number of parishes in the deanery of Leicester had reduced from nine to seven.

The county's religious houses were mainly established in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The Augustinian orders – the canons regular, canonesses, Eremites and hermits – account for almost half of the county's total, the rest made up from a variety of other orders comprising Benedictines, including the Clunaics, Cistercians and Premonstratensian canons; Dominicans, Franciscans and the Knights Hospitallers and Templar. Four of the 21 religious establishments – Aldermanshaw Priory, Charley Priory, Rothley Temple and Hinckley Priory – were dissolved before the Reformation. Five of the remaining 18 were dissolved before 1536, and the rest were dissolved during the second round of suppression post-1538.

1.3 Who were the Leicestershire gentry?

1.3.1 Local government and administration

By our period, government in the localities required the co-operation of local influencers who constituted the county unit. It comprised a judicial and administrative hierarchy populated by local nobility and gentry, including a substantial number of our Leicestershire gentry.[42] The sheriff, appointed by the Crown, presided over the shire court. Leicestershire and Warwickshire shared a joint shrievalty between the twelfth and

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[39] W.G. Hoskins, 'The Leicestershire country parson in the sixteenth century', *TLAHS*, 21 (1939-40), p. 90.

[40] W. Page (ed.), *VCH Leics*, 1 (London, 1907), p. 357.

[41] Page, *VCH Leics*, 1, p. 399.

[42] See Appendices, 'Leicestershire gentry families'.

sixteenth centuries, and men were appointed from both counties.[43] Gentry individuals were appointed to royal commissions, such as gaol delivery, subsidy collection and musters. JPs also exercised judicial authority. Our period saw the power of JPs increase substantially with changes in policy under Edward IV and Henry VII. By the late fifteenth century their authority superseded the county sheriffs', although the sheriff's shire court retained political significance.[44]

The absence of any commissions of sewers amongst the Leicestershire commissions is directly related to the county's topography. It bestowed responsibility on local men, usually gentry, for the maintenance of drainage infrastructure in lowland coastal regions vulnerable to flooding such as Norfolk, Kent and Lincolnshire.[45] The natural environment was thus separated from administration for the Leicestershire gentry. Other administrative duties, such as the commission of the peace, formed an important part of gentry identity, however, and cultivated regional affiliation. In 1566, George Vincent, esquire, bequeathed at least 20d, if not two shillings, 'for that I have byn a iustice of peaxe and a meddler in the hunderth of Sp[ar]kenho that ev[er]y towne and p[ar]ishe w[i]t[h]in the saide hundereth have to theire com[m]on boxe'.[46]

Another essential administrative component was the county escheator. They generated the IPMs by enquiring into escheated lands on the Crown's behalf with locally appointed jurors. Escheators and jurors usually occupied a lower social or political rank than the sheriff or JP, but they too were chosen from the local gentry. Indeed, shrieval families often held the posts of escheator and JP, and *vice versa*. Escheators were occasionally

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[43] Two exceptions occurred in 1163-64 and 1194. The date for the genesis of the joint shrievalty is unknown, but it is generally agreed to have been during the reign of Henry II. See W.G. Hoskins and R.A. McKinley, *VCH Leics*, 2 (London, 1954), p. 91.

[44] The shire court kept the county in touch with central politics and elected parliamentary representatives. See Acheson, *A Gentry Community*, p. 77.

[45] The impact of Leicestershire's environment on gentry identity and interaction is discussed in further detail in Chapter 4. For the importance of water management and the commissions of sewers in medieval and early modern England see J.E. Morgan, 'Flooding in early modern England: Cultures of coping in Gloucestershire and Lincolnshire' (unpub. PhD thesis, University of Warwick, 2015) and M. Gilbert, 'The changing landscape and economy of Wisbech hundred, 1250-1550' (unpub. PhD thesis, University of Leicester, 2017).

[46] TNA, PROB 11/48/391.

younger sons of powerful families, perhaps as an introduction to their political careers.[47] They were more likely to be chosen from the countywide gentry stock, whereas jurors were selected on a geographical basis, preferably in proximity to the escheated lands.[48] The jury were summoned by the sheriff and managed by the escheator, who had been directed to undertake his enquiry by the writ *diem clausit extremum*, 'by the oath of honest and law-worthy men … by whom the truth may best be known'.[49] The parameters for jury selection were relatively broad. They were required to be 'sufficiently local to be knowledgeable as to the relevant facts … [and] sufficiently comfortably-off to be immune to the attractions of bribery'.[50]

By the mid-sixteenth century, commissioners were the Crown's eyes and ears.[51] In 1521, a commission of concealed lands requested an enquiry into any escheated lands possessed of the king that had been concealed during the IPM process, and which the heir had since obtained. Sir William Skeffington was one of the individuals appointed for a regional enquiry across Leicestershire, Staffordshire, Derbyshire, Cheshire and Shropshire. He was also appointed alongside Sir John Digby, Ralph Swillington and William Wigston on the Leicestershire commission. Any concealed lands found initiated a writ of *scire facias* against the tenant, and the Crown would then seize the lands back.[52] Insurrection by manorial tenants also attracted the attention of gentry informers. In 1539, Sir William Turville wrote to Cromwell to inform him that one of his tenants, Robert Lucas, refused 'to doe hys grace syrvyce apo[n] the see' under Turville. He saw it as his 'boundyn duyte' to advise Cromwell that Lucas had used seditious words in response to Turville's threat of punishment, having allegedly said that 'yt ys noe tyme now for the kyng to hang men for yf he dowe he wyll repynt yt'.[53]

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[47] For example, Sir William Skeffington, a leading member of the Leicestershire gentry, was appointed sheriff in 1508-09, 1515-16 and 1521-22. His son, Thomas Skeffington, esquire, was the county escheator in 1539-40.

[48] Jurors were not exclusively gentry, but they were rarely below the rank of gentleman.

[49] Quotation taken from M. Holford, '"Thrifty men of the country"? The jurors and their role' in Hicks, *Fifteenth-Century Inquisitions Post Mortem*, p. 202.

[50] Ibid., p. 206.

[51] This was especially the case during the Reformation. See, for example, John Beaumont's role as Cromwell's informer in Chapter 5, 5.3.

[52] M. McGlynn, *The Royal Prerogative and the Learning of the Inns of Court* (Cambridge, 2003), p. 280.

[53] TNA, SP 1/152/27, *SPO*.

1.3.2 The Leicestershire JPs

We have seen the importance of local commissions and that, by the advent of the Henrician Reformation, the Crown was reliant on information from the local gentry. This section charts the rise of this influence from the mid-fifteenth to the mid-sixteenth centuries. Members of the local gentry were increasingly represented in commissions of the peace per county, which A.L. Brown perceived to be one of the major changes in the implementation of justice at the turn of the fifteenth century.[54] Steven Gunn argued that the strength of the local gentry networks was such that Henry VII's 'new men' – a 'distinctive group of lawyers and administrators at the heart of Henry VII's regime' – engaged with them as a 'cornerstone of the king's provision of justice'.[55] The remaining number was populated by influential statesmen, such as Gunn's 'new men', who did not necessarily hold a localised interest in the county.

Seventeen out of 51 Leicestershire gentry families were named on a commission three times or more, and 13 families were named at least four times.[56] The Hastings family appeared on every commission sampled, whilst the Greys appeared on consecutive commissions from 1494 onwards. Members of the Pulteney, Brokesby and Neele families were each named on nine commissions. An explanation for the best represented families in commissions of the peace lies with the national politics of the period. The Pulteneys, for example, were recorded on nine commissions across the period. They are less perceptible during the reign of Edward IV, but did not disappear; Sir Thomas Pulteney was pricked as sheriff in 1478 and served as JP from 1482 to 1485.[57] Similarly, the Brokesby family appeared on commissions of the peace from 1448 to 1545; the frequent appointment of William Brokesby and Bartholomew Brokesby as sheriffs indicates the family's proximity to the Crown during the reign of Henry V. Indeed, the Brokesbys held lands of the Duchy of Lancaster in northern Leicestershire, and William Brokesby was recorded as being 'king's esquire and marshall of the king's hall'.[58] However, the

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[54] A.L. Brown, *The Governance of Late Medieval England* (Stanford, California, 1989), p. 122.

[55] S. Gunn, *Henry VII's New Men and the Making of Tudor England* (Oxford, 2016), p. 55.

[56] A sample of these families are used to explore the significance of politics and territory in Chapter 2.

[57] Acheson, *A Gentry Community*, p. 247.

[58] C.A. Robertson, 'Local government and the King's "affinity" in fifteenth-century Leicestershire and Warwickshire', *TLAHS*, 52 (1976-77), p. 40.

marriage between one John Brokesby and the daughter of Sir Leonard Hastings, Joan, in addition to William Lord Hastings acting as trustee for Bartholomew Brokesby, infers a Yorkist sympathy, too.[59]

Table 1.1 contrasts the total number of JPs for Leicestershire with those who qualify as 'Leicestershire' gentry specifically, and their proportion per commission.[60] Changes at the national level are revealed to have influenced administrative composition in the localities. It shows that the total number of JPs was slightly higher in 1448 compared to the following sample in 1464. Given that the 1448 commission was made during the uncertain period of unrest during the Hundred Years' War and Henry VI's reign, it is possible that the figure for 1464 reflects an increased stability with the Yorkist ascendancy, with the total number of JPs remaining relatively steady in 1477 and 1483. By 1485, however, a 40% increase in the total number of JPs appointed to the Leicestershire commission suggests that Richard III was using it to ensure loyalty amongst those appointed. Indeed, the increase coincides with the percentage of Leicestershire gentry dropping by half; the commission was populated with an influx of those closest to Richard III such as John Howard, first duke of Norfolk and Sir William Catesby. This was not a Leicestershire-specific phenomenon, given their appearance amongst the other surviving commissions for 1485. Indeed, it was rare for every county to receive a commission at the same time, or during the same year.[61] JPs were generally appointed with specific reason such as a vacant post or need for more numbers.

The total number of Leicestershire men amongst the commission of September 1485, the first after Henry VII's ascendancy, evidences a change in Crown policy towards JPs. The increased proportion of Leicestershire gentry suggests that he placed importance on local and non-local representation. The latter half of Table 1.1 suggests that Henry VIII had once again changed royal policy towards the JPs. With an average of 34 appointments to JP from the sampled commissions for his reign, the average had more than doubled from

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[59] J.S. Roskell and L.S. Woodger, 'Brokesby, Bartholomew (d.1448), of Frisby on the Wreake, Leics.' in J.S. Roskell, L. Clark and C. Rawcliffe (eds.), *The History of Parliament: the House of Commons 1386-1421* (London, 1993), pp. 371-373.

[60] The numbers for 1464 and 1477 relate to the reign of Edward IV, and do not include Henry VI's brief return to the throne in 1470-1471.

[61] A.S. Bevan, 'Justices of the peace, 1509-1547: an additional source', *Historical Research*, 58, no. 138 (1985), p. 242.

16 appointments per commission for 1448-1494. Certainly, the increase in the number of commissioners coincided directly with the increase of specifically Leicestershire gentry. The proportion of Leicestershire gentry, too, appears to have stabilised by the mid-sixteenth century, with an average of 60% for the four sampled commissions during Henry VIII's reign.[62]
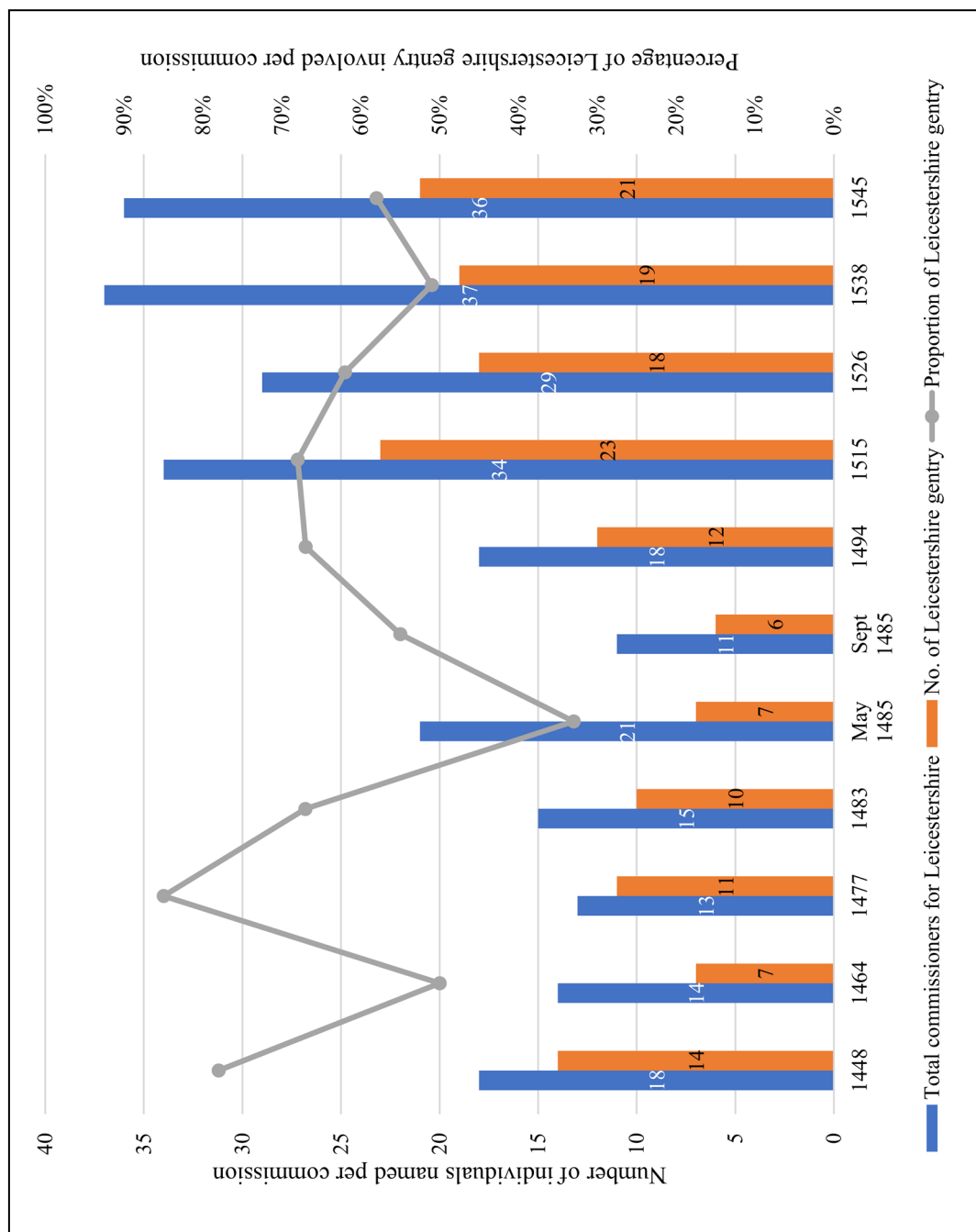
Table 1.1 Numbers of JPs commissioned for Leicestershire, 1448-1545.

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[62] This is for a range of 51% (1538) to 68% (1515), compared with 33% (May 1485) and 85% (1477).

1.3.3 Military service

Having outlined the gentry's involvement in local governance and administration, the discussion now turns to their military service. The responsibilities of the gentry were not confined to the county alone. It is during our period, according to Maurice Keen, that gentry society became considerably demilitarised with a notable shift towards legal activity and county administration.[63] Indeed, for the fourteenth-century gentry, Andrew Ayton argued that there were 'more men of gentle blood taking up arms than were engaged in shire activities'.[64] But beyond responsibilities for county administration and governance, there are multiple references to the Leicestershire gentry's involvement in the Crown's domestic and foreign military affairs. According to Leland, Sir Everard Digby of Tilton on the Hill was killed on the field at the battle of Towton in 1461, and six members of the family fought for Henry Tudor at the battle of Bosworth, Leicestershire, in 1485.[65] Sir Ralph Shirley was made a banneret by Henry VII for his valour at the Battle of Stoke in 1486.[66] In 1544, Sir John Villers made his will 'intending by gods grace shortly to passe the sees into the realme of ffraunce to serve the kings maiestie in his warres agaynst the frenche kyng'.[67] George Ashby, esquire, died at the Battle of Pinkie Cleugh near Musselburgh, Scotland, in 1547.[68]

Military references also appear relatively frequently in sixteenth-century probate wills for the Leicestershire gentry. In 1544, George Ashby bequeathed goods to his son, John, 'if it please god to sende hym home agayne from the kings grac[iou]s warres'.[69] Anne Swillington, the daughter of Sir William Turville, referred to several military objects in her will, comprising:

> seaven jackes and steele coates one sherte of male fowre pare of allmeyn ryvetts
> vi pare of splintes and eight sallettes … three hand gonnes two crosbowes syx

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[63] M. Keen, *Origins of the English Gentleman* (Stroud, 2002), p. 10.

[64] A. Ayton, 'Edward III and the English aristocracy at the beginning of the Hundred Years' War' in M. Strickland (ed.), *Armies and Warfare in Medieval France and Britain* (Stamford, 1998), p. 200.

[65] Leland, *Itinerary*, Toulmin Smith, 2, p. 18.

[66] J. Nichols, *The History and Antiquities of the County of Leicester*, 3, pt. 2 (London, 1804), p. 710.

[67] TNA, PROB 11/30/317.

[68] W. Burton, *The Description of Leicestershire, Containing Matters of Antiquity, History, Armoury and Geneaology*, 2nd ed. (London, 1777), p. 12.

[69] TNA, PROB 11/30/253.

bills two steele cappes and fowre sheef of arrowes twoo bowes one stele saddell and my best stoned horse.[70]

She bequeathed them to John Digby, esquire, of Stoke Dry in Rutland. Amongst them may have been the armour and weapons bequeathed by her father to her brothers in 1549.[71] Similarly, Anthony Faunte, esquire gave 'his holbard [and] murrin' to one George Villers.[72] Bequests of military objects conveyed the honour associated with military identity. The Crown's military policy is evident well into the reign of Elizabeth I in 1592, when Brian Cave bequeathed 'armor and weapons appertayninge to the warres'.[73] Martiality thus remained an inherent part of gentry identity, illustrated in their service at home and abroad, and in their style of commemoration *post mortem*.[74]

Service was frequently organised on a county basis, reinforcing the gentry's ties with their home county. The muster commission issued by Henry VIII's government in 1539 to the Leicestershire hundreds of Framland and Goscote requested men 'most mete [and] able to serve the King in his wars, with harness'. The men were viewed by Sir John Digby; Anthony Brokesby, esquire and Nicholas Jackson, gentleman, the muster commissioners for Framland, and Francis Hastings, earl of Huntingdon; Sir John Villers; Sir Henry Poole, John Beaumount, esquire, and Thomas Grey, the Goscote commissioners.[75] In June 1548, John Beaumont, George Vincent, Francis Cave, Robert Caitlyn and Edward Griffin, esquires, were on the list of Leicestershire men to remain at home 'incase of advauncment forward of thole shere be ordred' in response to a French invasion.[76] In 1549, the Leicestershire gentry were not directly involved in the suppression of Kett's rebellion, Francis Hastings, second earl of Huntingdon, was directed to

> Be ready with the Leicestershire gentlemen to repress any attempts in the beginning. Lest the people believe … that you would overrun them before they commit evil, keep to your houses; you will thereby be less charged.[77]

[70] TNA, PROB 11/49/180.
[71] TNA, PROB 11/32/575.
[72] ROLLR, W&I, 1588/75. A morion was a brimmed helmet, and a halberd was a combination of a spear and a battle-axe. See 'morion, n.1', *OED* (2018), 'www.oed.com/view/Entry/122252' [accessed 24th July 2018] and 'halberd, n.', *OED* (2018), 'www.oed.com/view/Entry/83367' [accessed 24th July 2018].
[73] TNA, PROB 11/80/375.
[74] See Chapter 6, 6.5.5.
[75] TNA, SP 1/146/1, *SPO*.
[76] TNA, Secretaries of State: State Papers Domestic, Edward VI, SP 10/4/30, *SPO*.
[77] TNA, SP 10/7/85, *SPO*.

1.3.4 Noble influences

Eric Acheson observed an absence of noble influence in Leicestershire until the late fifteenth century with the ascendance of the Grey and Hastings families; this section traces their ascendancy and consequential influence in the county, evident in the extract above concerning Kett's rebellion. This period also coincides with the ascendancy of the Manners family, earls of Rutland, whose family seat was based at Belvoir, Leicestershire under Thomas Manners, first earl of Rutland. In 1538, the heads of the Grey, Hastings and Manners families were unfavourably described as

> The marquess Dorset, 26, young, lusty, and poor, of great possessions, but which ... are not in his hands, many friends of great power, with little or no experience, well learned and a great wit ... The earl of Rutland, of like age [50], of great power, with small wit and little discretion ... The earl of Huntingdon, of 60 years, of great power, little discretion and less experience.[78]

In contrast with the Greys, the marquesses of Dorset, and Hastings, the earls of Huntingdon, Manners had very little interaction with the Leicestershire gentry.[79] He focused his attentions – in the midlands at least – towards Rutland, Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire.[80] The Manners were an ancient Northumberland gentry family. Their departure to their Leicestershire seat at Belvoir Castle was facilitated by the marriage between Sir Robert Manners and Eleanor Roos, a wealthy heiress with substantial lands in Norfolk, Suffolk, Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire, Yorkshire and Leicestershire, including Belvoir, in 1469. Contemporary politics delayed the Manners' ascendancy, however. The Lancastrian Roos family were attainted by Edward IV and their lands redistributed to Yorkist supporters, including William Lord Hastings in

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[78] Gairdner, *Letters and Papers*, 13, pt. 2, 1538 (London, 1893), p. 279. The author and purpose of the document are unknown, but it was accompanied by a series of documents – possibly gathered as criminal evidence – which detailed the author's methods for reconciling Henry VIII with the Catholic faith. See W.M. Brady, *The Episcopal Succession in England, Scotland and Ireland, AD 1400 to 1875*, 3 (Rome, 1876), pp. 493-495.

[79] He intervened in their politics on occasion. In 1538, for example, he wrote to Thomas Cromwell on behalf of Leonard Skeffington, esquire, of Skeffington, Leicestershire and his men at Nottingham in support of his request for due wages as 'they be po[r] men and this good tyme of [Christian]mas nere at hande'. TNA, SP 1/127/64, *SPO*.

[80] The earl was involved in suppressing the Lincolnshire Rising in 1536 alongside Francis Hastings, second earl of Huntingdon.

Leicestershire.[81] The attainder's reversal by Henry VII showed favour to the family.[82] They built on this foundation to acquire the favour of Henry VIII, who bestowed the title of earl of Rutland on Sir Thomas Manners, Sir Robert's grandson, in 1525.

Both the Grey and Hastings families were propelled from the gentry to the nobility during the reign of Edward IV.[83] The Greys held the title of marquess of Dorset from the creation of the first marquess, Thomas Grey, in 1475, until the death of the third marquess, Henry Grey, first duke of Suffolk, in 1554.[84] The Hastings family, under William Lord Hastings, was granted the title of Baron Hastings in 1461. Sir Leonard Hastings, William's father, was heavily involved in Leicestershire administration, serving as JP from 1448 until his death, as sheriff in 1453, and as an MP for the county in 1455.[85] At the height of his career William Hastings was appointed Lord Chamberlain to Edward IV.[86] He was also charged with maintaining English diplomacy as Lieutenant of Calais.[87]

Acheson argued that, under Hastings, 'the authority of the nobility within the shire became concentrated in the hands of one man'.[88] William Huse Dunham and Theron Westervelt have both considered Hastings's use of indentured retainers as evidence for bastard feudalism.[89] Westervelt concluded that affinity to William Hastings rested on local society instead of the affinity being a product of contemporary politics more

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[81] Attainder was commonly used during the conflict to ensure the swift destruction of an opponent, essentially ensuring the landed and legal death of an individual and their family. See J.R. Lander, 'Attainder and forfeiture, 1453 to 1509', *The Historical Journal*, 4, no. 2 (1961), pp. 119-120.

[82] J.R. Lander calculated that approximately 65% of fifteenth-century attainders passed by parliament reversed; the probability of reversal was greater for those of higher rank whose estates were more valuable. Comparatively, Henry VII rarely reversed attainders in their entirety to ensure loyalty. See J.R. Lander, *Conflict and Stability in Fifteenth-Century England* (London, 1977), pp. 103, 177.

[83] Their gentry origins, however, were maintained by certain family members. Chapter 4 demonstrates how the dominance of the Greys and Hastings filtered through the families' lower ranks and manifested in a struggle for authority in Leicester Forest, see Chapter 4, 4.3.

[84] Henry Grey was not created duke of Suffolk until 1551.

[85] Acheson, *A Gentry Community*, p. 234.

[86] His political importance was reflected in his burial location at St. George's chapel, Windsor, only metres from Edward IV's tomb.

[87] For further detail on Hastings' military and diplomatic intervention at Calais see E.L. Meek (ed.), *The Calais Letterbook of William Lord Hastings (1477) and Late Medieval Crisis Diplomacy, 1477-1483* (Donington, 2017).

[88] Acheson, *A Gentry Community*, p. 16.

[89] T. Westervelt, 'The changing nature of politics in the localities in the later fifteenth century: William Lord Hastings and his indentured retainers', *Midland History*, 26, no. 1 (2001), pp. 96-106 and W. Huse Dunham, *Lord Hastings' Indentured Retainers* (New Haven, 1955).

generally.[90] The affinity's impact on our Leicestershire gentry was limited and more midland-centric than county-centric. The patronage of the house of York, however, shifted the power balance in the localities in terms of landholdings and office-holding. This is especially evident in Leicestershire. Richard Hastings, esquire, brother to William Lord Hastings and the King's servitor, was granted lands in 1462 at Coleorton, Goadby and Congerstone and 'all lands and possessions late of John Beaumont, esquire ... by reason of an act of forfeiture', including those belonging to Beaumont's wife after her death.[91] In 1464, William Lord Hastings received the lands of the Lancastrian lords Sir William Beaumont, second viscount Beaumont, Thomas lord Roos, ninth baron Roos and, indirectly, of William Phelip, sixth baron Bardolf.[92] The Hastings family's Yorkist allegiance was rewarded with Lancastrian property and titles in Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire, Warwickshire, York, London, Sussex, Bedfordshire, Berkshire and Middlesex, raising them from the gentry ranks to the nobility, along with the newly acquired barony of William Hastings. The majority of the lands received were in Leicestershire.[93]

The Greys ascended through their affinity with the house of York. Elizabeth Woodville, the widow of the Leicestershire knight Sir John Grey of Groby, and mother of Thomas Grey, first marquess of Dorset, married Edward IV in 1464. But members of both the Greys and the Hastings fell under Richard III; individuals from both sides were executed, including William Hastings. The consequent rivalry was abiding but not absolutely destructive; both families maintained their presence in local and national politics well into the seventeenth century. Both Leicestershire and midland gentry were dragged into their conflict. A letter written in June 1525, at the height of the tensions between them by Lord John Grey to Sir Thomas Lucy, a member of the Warwickshire gentry, directed Lucy to 'inquere secretly … howe that my lorde Hastyngs syv[a]unts do intende to order them selfs agynst us'.[94]

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[90] Westervelt, 'The changing nature of politics', p. 102.
[91] H.C. Maxwell Lyte (ed.), *Calendar of the Patent Rolls Preserved in the Public Record Office*, 1 (London, 1897), p. 187.
[92] Ibid., p. 354. William Phelip's daughter, Elizabeth, had married John Beaumont, esquire (d.1461).
[93] Ibid., pp. 103-104.
[94] TNA, SP 1/234/461, *SPO*. For further background to the dispute, see Chapter 4, 4.3.

1.3.5 Gentry patronage and service

Having established the ascendancy of the leading families of the county, this section focuses on the significance of patronage in Leicestershire's social network within and beyond its border, from the Crown – incorporating the Duchy of Lancaster – to the lower gentry. The Greys, Hastings and Leicestershire gentry writ large were evidently acutely aware of the opportunities afforded to them by royal patronage. William Lord Hastings's son, Edward Lord Hastings, was appointed to Henry VII's Privy Council in 1504. The title of earl of Huntingdon was recreated for William's grandson, George Hastings, by Henry VIII in 1529. Members of the Grey and Hastings family had key roles at the funeral of Jane Seymour in 1537: Thomas Grey, second marquess of Dorset assisted in carrying the Queen's corpse during the funeral procession, and Francis Hastings, the heir of George Hastings, earl of Huntingdon, amongst others, bore a canopy over her body at Windsor.[95]

Further down the hierarchy, two members of the Leicestershire gentry, Sir William Skeffington and Lord Leonard Grey, served consecutively as Lord Deputy of Ireland between 1529 and 1540.[96] In 1526, Roger Radcliffe and Everard Digby were listed as gentleman ushers in the King's household; Bartholomew Haselrigg, esquire, was a 'sewer of chamber out of wages', and John Shirley, esquire, was listed as the 'cofferer of the household for St George's feast' and was paid £50 for his services.[97] In 1556, Robert Strelley, esquire, requested that a 'faire cupp of golde to the value of one hundreth poundes' be made and given to the queen, Mary I, 'as a remembraunce of my humble duetie and syrvice unto her highnes'.[98] His wife, Frideswide Strelley, was also one of her ladies-in-waiting.[99]

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[95] Gairdner, *Letters and Papers*, 12, pt. 2, 1537 (London, 1891), p. 372.
[96] FitzGerald, ninth earl of Kildare, briefly held the position between 1532 and 1534. He married Elizabeth Grey, the sister of Thomas Grey, second marquess of Dorset and Lord Leonard Grey. See S.G. Ellis, 'Fitzgerald, Gerald, ninth earl of Kildare (1487-1534), *ODNB*, 'http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/9555' [accessed 18th July 2018].
[97] TNA, SP 1/37/53, *SPO*.
[98] TNA, PROB 11/36/374.
[99] Frideswide Strelley is said to have been the only lady-in-waiting who doubted the Queen's anticipated pregnancy. See T. Borman, *Elizabeth's Women: The Hidden Story of the Virgin Queen* (London, 2010), p. 161.

The Hastings family appear more frequently than the Greys as Leicestershire gentry patrons, perhaps reflecting their dominance in the county during the period. Their ascendancy and proximity to the Crown is reflected in the will of Lady Katherine Hastings, the widow of William Lord Hastings, who referred to 'a faire prymar which I had by the yesture of queen Elizabeth'.[100] Lady Katherine attracted gentry deference and respect. In 1500, Thomas Keble, serjeant-at-law, bequeathed his salt of gold, book of Froissart and two pieces of black velvet to her, 'beseching hir to haue me in hir rememembraunce and praieers … and to take this poor bequest in grace'.[101] Keble also requested prayers for her deceased husband.[102] Hastings patronage also wielded administrative influence. In 1506 Robert Jakes, gentleman, made Katherine's daughter-in-law, Mary Hungerford, lady Hastings, one of his probate supervisors.[103] The family's influence on the Leicestershire gentry was enduring. In 1588 Anthony Faunte, esquire, bequeathed 'a ringe [a] velvett saddle … [and] a caste of hawks' to Sir George Hastings, fourth earl of Huntingdon.[104] The Hastings family also employed the legal services of the local gentry. Richard Neele, justice of the Common Pleas, was steward of the lordships of Ashby, Loughborough and Shepshed for William Lord Hastings.[105] Sir Richard Sacheverell was the receiver-general to William's son, Edward Lord Hastings, by 1499.[106] Thomas Jakes was general attorney for Edward and his wife in 1499-1500.[107] Michael Purefoy was general surveyor to Francis Hastings, second earl of Huntingdon, in 1544-45.[108] Similarly John Beaumont, esquire, worked for Francis Hastings as his attorney and correspondence bearer.[109]

The Duchy of Lancaster wielded influence in the county by appointing a substantial number of Leicestershire gentry to its administrative positions. By our period the Duchy

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[100] TNA, PROB 11/14/93.
[101] Ives, *Common Lawyers*, p. 427.
[102] Ibid., p. 429.
[103] TNA, PROB 11/15/292.
[104] ROLLR, W&I, 1588/75.
[105] J.H. Baker, *The Men of Court, 1440 to 1550: A Prosopography of the Inns of Court and Chancery and the Courts of Law*, 2 (London, 2012), pp. 1145-1146.
[106] Ibid., p. 1346.
[107] Ibid., p. 936.
[108] Ibid., p. 1273.
[109] TNA, SP 1/87/22, *SPO*.

wielded less control, mostly tenurial, than it had a century earlier. In 1399, Henry Bolingbroke, duke of Lancaster, acquired the Crown, and thus brought the lands of the Duchy of Lancaster into Crown hands, and those of his heirs. The Duchy held substantial landed interests in the midlands region; the honors of Tutbury, Peverel, Tickhill and Leicester extended across Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire and Leicestershire. The possession of the honor of Leicester made the Duchy the largest landowner in Leicestershire.[110] James Bothwell observed that in Leicester, the co-operation of the townspeople and the power of the Lancastrian dynasty was reflected in the development of Leicester Castle and the walled precinct of the Newarke.[111] The hereditary arrangement established by the accession of Henry IV was severed, generations later, by that of the Yorkist king Edward IV. Yet its position as an established entity meant that it remained a valuable institution for the Crown, and the tenurial rights of its tenants were unchanged.[112] Indeed, Jon Denton suggested that the pattern of Duchy landholdings maintained a regional cohesion across the east midlands in the fifteenth century.[113]

The influence of the Duchy was still felt despite its assimilation with Crown interests, and is particularly evident amongst the local gentry. For example, Sir Ambrose Cave was the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. Sir Everard Fielding was the steward of Leicester honor for the Duchy in 1485.[114] Thomas Brokesby, esquire, was the deputy steward of the Leicester honor for the Duchy by 1509 and in 1519.[115] The position was also held by Thomas Jakes, esquire, in 1511.[116] Sir Richard Sacheverell was the feodary of the Leicester honor for the Duchy between 1529 and 1534.[117] Sir John Digby was the receiver

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[110] See L. Fox, *The Administration of the Honor of Leicester in the Fourteenth Century* (Leicester, 1940). The Leicestershire gentry certainly held substantial lands of the Duchy during our period. Between 1469 and 1563 it – and the Crown *by proxy* – appears frequently as the gentry's landlord. Multiple manors and lands were recorded as being held 'of the King as of the honor of Leicester, parcel of the Duchy of Lancaster' in our gentry IPMs.

[111] J.S. Bothwell, 'Making the Lancastrian capital at Leicester: the battle of Boroughbridge, civic diplomacy and seigneurial building projects in fourteenth-century England', *Journal of Medieval History*, 38, no. 3 (2012), pp. 335-357.

[112] R. Somerville, *History of the Duchy of Lancaster*, 1 (London, 1953), pp. 230-231.

[113] Denton, 'The east-midland gentleman', p. 35.

[114] Baker, *Men of Court*, 1, p. 661.

[115] Ibid., p. 372.

[116] Ibid., 2, p. 936.

[117] Ibid., p. 1346.

between 1485 and 1533, and shared the position with his son, William, from 1519.[118] The Duchy also promoted and elicited the gentry's legal knowledge. It retained Ralph Swillington, gentleman, as an apprentice of the law, for example.[119] Michael Purefoy, a local gentleman who became an esquire during his lifetime, was the primary attorney in the Court of Duchy Chamber in 1536.[120]

1.3.6 Law, land ownership and a network of trust

The legal profession clearly brought opportunities for social advancement with it. But the gentry's involvement in the legal profession and their role as prominent landowners also impacted on their relationships with each other. This section will consider the role of the legal profession in gentry interaction, particularly in the context of land ownership, acquisition and defence. Gentry attorneys were the custodians and enablers of their fellow gentry's landed pursuits. Trust was an essential component of gentry society, and it operated both upwards and downwards within the gentry hierarchy. For example, Robert Burrough, gentleman, of Burrough on the Hill, took advantage of his involvement in London's legal network by naming 'my welbelovyd Edward Mountague one of the kings syriaunts at the lawe', Sir Edward Montague of Boughton, Northamptonshire, as one of his executors.[121] Montague's social and professional status made him a beneficial connection to have. Comparatively, good legal service from the lower gentry ranks was rewarded. Sir John Villers of Brooksby showed his gratitude for the legal services of Michael Purefoy, esquire, of Fenny Drayton by bequeathing a house to him in Talby, Lincolnshire, which 'in considaracion of his good counsaill to me before this tyme impended and given shall have to him and his assignes for terme of his lif'.[122]

Gentry education was extremely important in the preservation of the family's future. Patrick Wallis and Cliff Webb have drawn attention to the gentry's multiple concerns of 'preserving or even improving their social status, conserving the family's lands as a viable

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[118] Ibid., 1, p. 593.
[119] Ibid., 2, p. 1492.
[120] Ibid., p. 1273.
[121] TNA, PROB 11/26/194. Sir Edward Montague was appointed Lord Chief Justice of the court of King's Bench in 1539, and Lord Chief Justice of the court of Common Pleas in 1545. See J.H. Baker, 'Montagu, Sir Edward', *ODNB*, 'http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/19006' [accessed 27th May 2018].
[122] TNA, PROB 11/30/317.

estate, and securing future incomes'.[123] Nicholas Orme argued that education was especially needed amongst the leaders of society, evident in contemporary literature.[124] Money was put aside to facilitate the successful advancement of sons and relatives into landownership or their intended profession. Sir Thomas Cave referred to his having paid £20 to his nephew, Matthew Cave, 'for his chardges and keping in Flaunders a yere at learning the languages as yt appearyth by my brother Anthonyes accompt'.[125] Sir John Villers requested that his bastard son 'be contynually kept at his lernyng firste to have his gramer and afterwarde the lawes of this realme'.[126] Similarly, John Smith, esquire, wished for his wife to bring his children 'upp in lernyng untyll they be of thage of xxi yeres'.[127] Richard Cave, gentleman, willed that his children 'shalbe kept to lernyng'.[128] William Faunte specifically referred to apprenticeship being an alternative income for his younger sons. He asked that 'if all my boyes do lyve and not hable to be maynteyned to shcole by theire stocke and landes then I will two of the youngest of theym shalbe made prentices at London … and the eldest save one to be kept at lernyng the lawe of the realme'.[129] His eldest was clearly intended to maintain the family lands at Foston.[130]

The legal expertise evident in the majority of Leicestershire gentry families, and their protection of their landed pursuits in their wills, is detectable in their careful preservation of legal documentation. This was essential if rival claims to land were to be successfully defeated. For example, in a case alleging unlawful enclosure at Croft, Leicestershire, Sir William Turville made multiple references to letters patent concerning his rights to lands there.[131] Christopher Villers, esquire, referred to deeds in his will concerning the lease of his tenements in London.[132] Roger Radcliffe, esquire, mentioned them in the context of

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[123] P. Wallis and C. Webb, 'The education and training of gentry sons in early modern England', *Social History*, 36, no. 1 (2011), p. 36.
[124] N. Orme, 'Education and recreation' in R. Radulescu and A. Truelove (eds.), *Gentry Culture in Late Medieval England* (Manchester, 2005), pp. 64-67.
[125] TNA, PROB 11/41/34/1.
[126] TNA, PROB 11/30/317.
[127] TNA, PROB 11/30/610.
[128] TNA, PROB 11/27/284.
[129] TNA, PROB 11/42B/627.
[130] The role of eldest sons in the preservation of family interests is discussed further in Chapter 2, 2.4.1.
[131] TNA, STAC 2/28/57. This case is handled in detail in Chapter 4, 4.5.
[132] TNA, PROB 11/27/102.

his wardship of Nicholas Clooney of Spalding when bequeathing his custody and lands to his brother Geoffrey.[133]

It was important to make the descent of lands from one generation to the next run as smoothly as possible. William Ashby, esquire, bequeathed to his son, George, 'a great coffer w[i]t[h] evidents and writings contanyng or belonging to his inheritaunce of landes and tenements at lowesby', for example.[134] Thomas Waldram, esquire, requested that his executors deliver to his son, John, 'all suche specialties and wrytings as I have of his / So that Syr Will[ia]m Turvylde knight and he make a gen[er]all quy[et]nice to myn executours of all … demands p[er]sonall'.[135] Similarly, Ralph Sacheverell, esquire, requested that one John Hunt 'have the custodie and keping of all my evidenc[e]s untill suche tyme as my saide sonnes come to the full age of xxi yeares ... that wrytinge shalbe made of all suche evidenc[e]s that be delivered to the said Mr John Hunt'.[136] The will of William Faunte offers a fascinating insight into the lengths to which the gentry went to preserve their deeds and papers. He requested for them to be kept

> in cheiste or cofer to be provided with thre locks to remayne one w[i]th her with Mr Bale Mr Wright the other the cofer to remayne and be sett in savetie … all my evidence shall savelye be lockid in my cheiste in my studie whiche wilbe locked with thre keyes … my wif shall have one key Mr Bale one and Mr Wright one other key and my wif to have the key of the mydle most locke and that none shall medle amongest my evidence nee see theym But one that is of worshippe and substancyally lerned as utter barester or one that hathe nedde in court excepte my bedfellowe Mr Purfrey and all the thre key kepers be present.[137]

Furthermore, Faunte placed his faith in his 'very trustye frende' Frideswide Strelley by giving her rule over his primary lands in Foston until his son came of age.[138] Her influence at court made her a valuable connection. He also took her advice concerning his son's marriage, alongside the advice of other fellow gentry, George Vincent, esquire, Edward Vincent and George Purefoy, and named one of his daughters after her.[139]

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[133] TNA, PROB 11/27/198.
[134] TNA, PROB 11/29/304.
[135] TNA, PROB 11/28/7.
[136] TNA, PROB 11/42B/668.
[137] TNA, PROB 11/42B/627.
[138] Ibid.
[139] Ibid.

1.3.7 Residential preferences

Thus far, this chapter has considered the county's organisation from the perspective of central government. It has shown that a number of the gentry – at all levels of the hierarchy, from gentleman to earl – were engaged in royal and local patronage, especially in a legal capacity. This section maintains the perspective of central government by drawing attention to a general pardon granted in 1509. Building on our discussion of the gentry's activity within and beyond the county border and the criticism of a county-based identity discussed in the thesis introduction, it uses the pardon to test the presence of a county identity amongst the Leicestershire gentry.[140]

In April 1509, Henry VIII granted a pardon 'for all things except debt' to an extensive list of people.[141] The list of individuals sheds light on gentry activity within and without Leicestershire; names, status and, significantly, residences are included.[142] The residences are given as place-names, which have been processed and visualised using GIS. The figures below illustrate the primary and secondary residences with which the Leicestershire gentry were affiliated – according to central government – in the general pardon.[143] The GIS technique appears to suggest a county-centric identity based on the geographical location of primary and secondary residences.[144] For comparison, the residences of a Derbyshire esquire, John Fitzherbert, have been included in Figure 1.7. The family had acquired their only Leicestershire manor, Upton, through his parents' marriage.[145] The clustering of the family's remaining residences, with the exception of his secondary residence at Ripon in North Yorkshire, illustrate a clear Derbyshire connection.

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[140] Each family name had been identified as belonging to the Leicestershire gentry prior to this exercise based on inquisition *post mortem*, court and probate evidence.

[141] J.S. Brewer (ed.), *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII*, 1, 1509 (London, 1862), p. 1. Some people were excluded from the list, including Thomas Grey, marquess of Dorset, see ibid., p. 5.

[142] The statuses given in the figures represent the individual's status at the time the general pardon was issued. William Turville was accorded esquire status in 1509 but had attained knightly status by his death in 1549, for example.

[143] Primary residences were written in the present tense in the original manuscript and are denoted with a star in the figures. No attempt has been made to comply the evidence with a Leicestershire focus; the mapped places are those given after each member of the gentry who held Leicestershire residences.

[144] The full set of maps generated from the general pardon can be viewed in Volume 2.

[145] J.H. Baker, 'Fitzherbert, Sir Anthony (*c*.1470-1538)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (hereafter *ODNB*), Oxford University Press (2004), 'http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/9602' [accessed 5th May 2018].
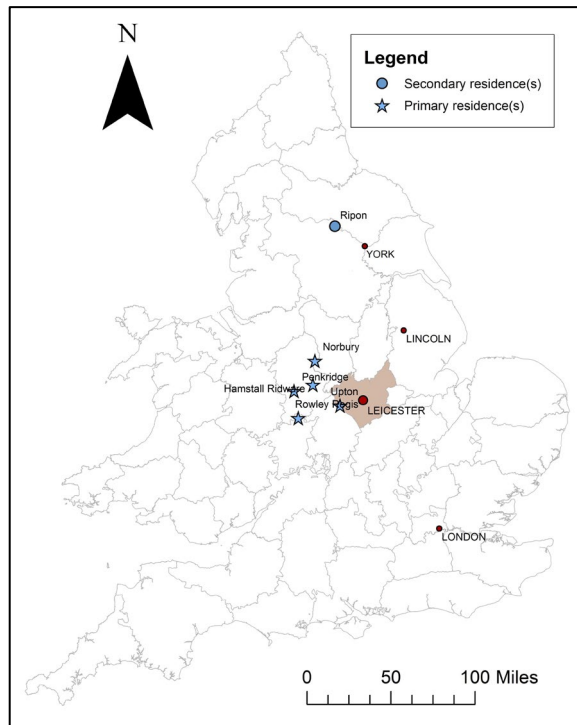
Figure 1.7 Places listed for John Fitzherbert, esquire of Norbury, Derbyshire, in the general pardon.

In contrast, the substantial representation of the Brokesby family evidences their Leicestershire-focused residences (Figure 1.8 to Figure 1.11). This is also supported by the probate evidence: in the wills of father and son William Brokesby (1526) and Robert Brokesby (1531), esquires, both described themselves as being 'of Sywoldby' [Shoby], their primary residence identified in the pardon.[146] It is interesting to note the clustering of primary residences of Robert Brokesby (Figure 1.9) in Leicestershire and in the north-east of England which, combined with evidence in the court of Chancery, certainly suggests that he was litigiously active there. We will return to this phenomenon shortly.[147]

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[146] ROLLR, W&I, 1524/7; 1531/14.
[147] TNA, C 1/947/50.
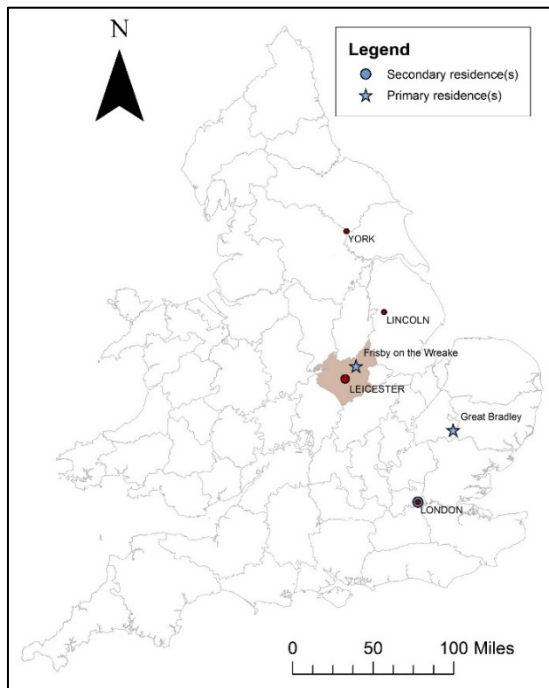
Figure 1.8 Places listed for Bartholomew Brokesby, esquire, in the general pardon.
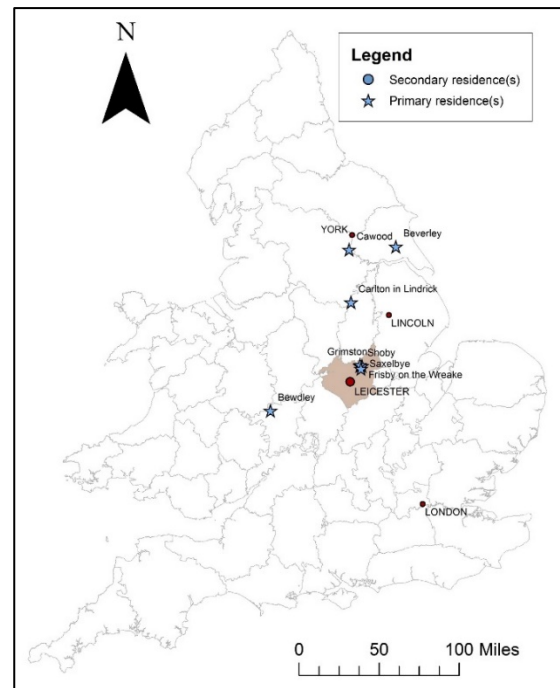
Figure 1.9 Places listed for Robert Brokesby, gentleman, in the general pardon.
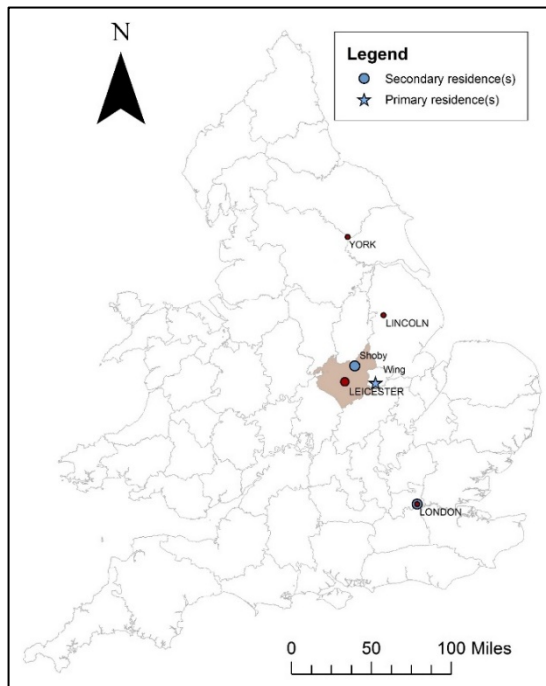
Figure 1.10 Places listed for Thomas Brokesby, gentleman, in the general pardon.
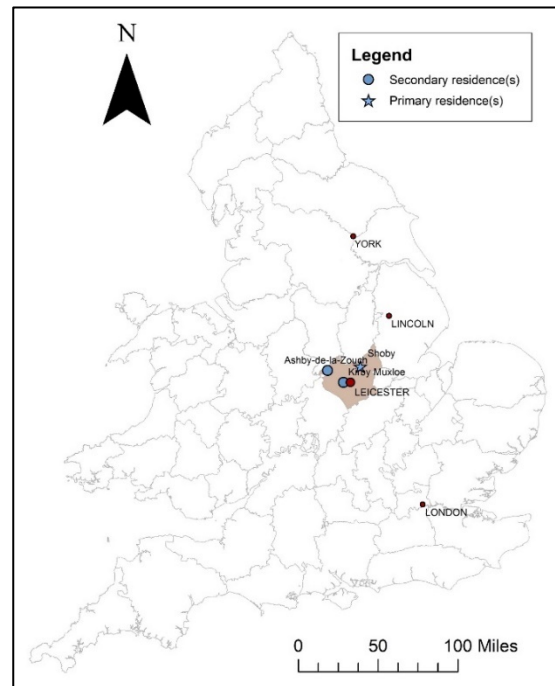
Figure 1.11 Places listed for William Brokesby, esquire, in the general pardon.

The collection of pardon rolls reveals that the majority of the Leicestershire-based gentry were identified by the government as being geographically affiliated with Leicestershire by their primary or secondary residences. There are some exceptions, however, based on associations with other counties. It supports the argument against the impermeability of the county unit. Figure 1.12 represents the residences given for Sir John Aston. According to the pardon, his primary residence was in Staffordshire. This is supported by his administrative and political interests in the county; he was appointed on six occasions as MP for Staffordshire and pricked as the county sheriff three times.[148] His regional affiliation with Staffordshire is also evidenced by his bequest made to Lichfield cathedral, and not to Lincoln.[149]

However, Sir John also had connections with Leicestershire, evidenced in the secondary residence of Wanlip. He was the county's sheriff in 1510-11, and his marriage to Joan Littleton brought the manor of Wanlip into the family.[150] By the death of their son, Sir Edward Aston, in 1568, the family's ancestral association with Wanlip is identifiable in his request to be buried in the parish church there, where Sir Edward's maternal great grandparents were also buried.[151] His mother had made the same request.[152] The Aston case study proves the strength of the Leicestershire connection across generations.
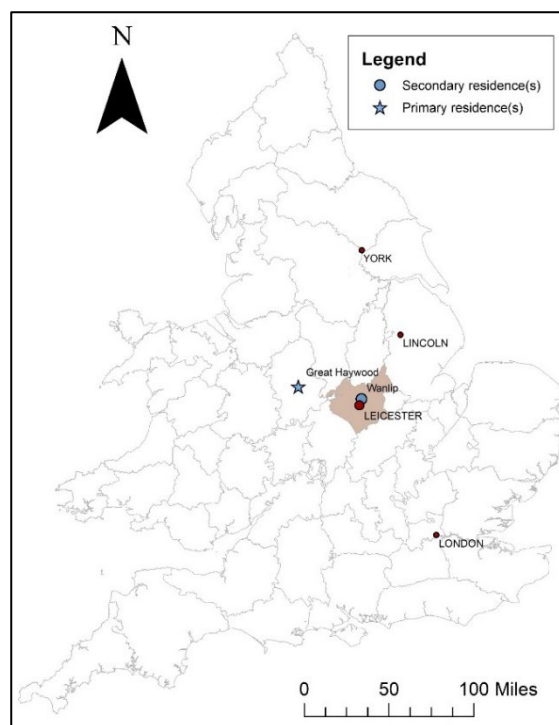
Figure 1.12 Places listed for Sir John Aston in the general pardon.

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[148] J.B. Boddie, *Virginia Historical Geneaologies* (Baltimore, 1975), pp. 272-273.

[149] TNA, PROB 11/21/103. The diocese of Coventry and Lichfield encompassed all or parts of the five archdeaconries of Chester, Coventry, Derby, Salop and Stafford.

[150] It also brought the manor of Tixall, Staffordshire.

[151] This is despite his identifying himself as being of Tixall in Staffordshire. (TNA, PROB 11/91/584).

[152] TNA, PROB 11/22/326. It is difficult to establish whether these requests were honoured. There is a monument to the memory of Sir John and Joan in the church of All Saints in Leigh, Staffordshire, but the date of Joan's death is left blank. Further, there is a chest tomb to the memory of Sir Edward Aston in St Mary's church in Stafford, Staffordshire, but his body may have been interred at Wanlip. The significance of burial locations is discussed in further detail in Chapter 6.

Comparatively, the map of Sir Ralph Shirley's residences (Figure 1.13) show four primary residences; two in Leicestershire at Staunton Harold and Wanlip, and two in Derbyshire at Shirley and Melbourne.[153] The Shirleys were originally a Derbyshire family but had moved their *caput honoris* to Leicestershire by 1423 with the acquisition of the manor of Staunton Harold. They maintained their Derbyshire connections, however; Sir Ralph Shirley was the constable at Melbourne, and was the steward of Appletree hundred.[154]
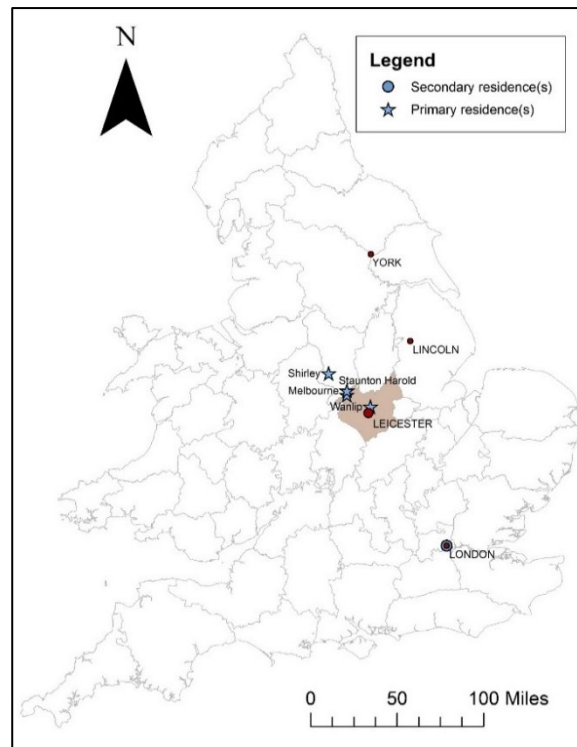
Figure 1.13 Places listed for Sir Ralph Shirley in the general pardon.

1.3.8 The Leicestershire gentry in London

By treating the Leicestershire gentry in a non-Leicestershire context, we receive a more representative picture of the gentry experience; professional and administrative tasks often took them beyond the county border. This section builds on the previous analysis of the pardon roll evidence. Affiliation with Leicestershire is emphasised by proving that, despite holding offices, primary and secondary residences over the county border, a Leicestershire connection was maintained. London was an enticing prospect; almost half of our pardoned gentry held a residence there.[155] William Hastings, esquire, Thomas Jakes, gentleman, William Turpin, gentleman, and Robert Vincent, gentleman (Figure 1.14 to Figure 1.17) held primary residences in London. William Hastings and Thomas

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[153] It is possible that Sir Ralph's third wife, Lucia, was the daughter of our Sir John Aston, and not the Sir John Aston of Atherton mentioned in antiquarian literature, hence the Wanlip residence. See for example, E. Brydges, *Collins's Peerage of England; Genealogical, Biographical, and Historical*, 4 (London, 1812), pp. 93-94.

[154] Acheson, *A Gentry Community*, p. 248.

[155] Ten out of 22 individuals held a primary and/or a secondary residence in London.

Jakes also held primary residences in Leicestershire, whilst William Turpin and Robert Vincent held secondary residences there.
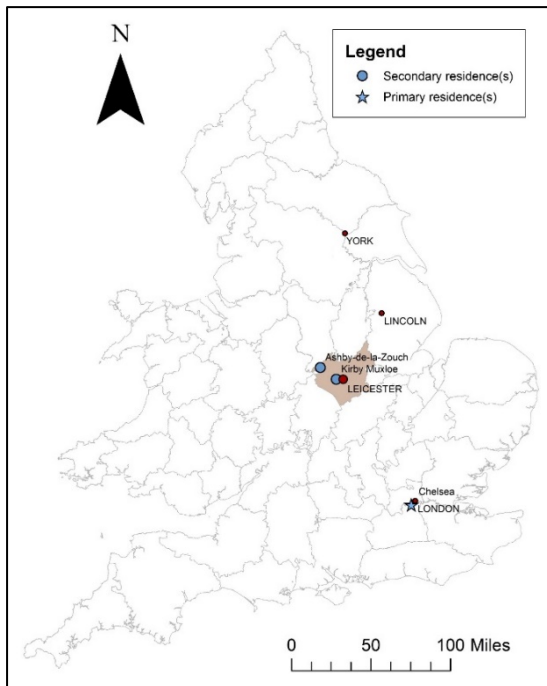
Figure 1.14 Places listed for William Hastings, esquire, in the general pardon.
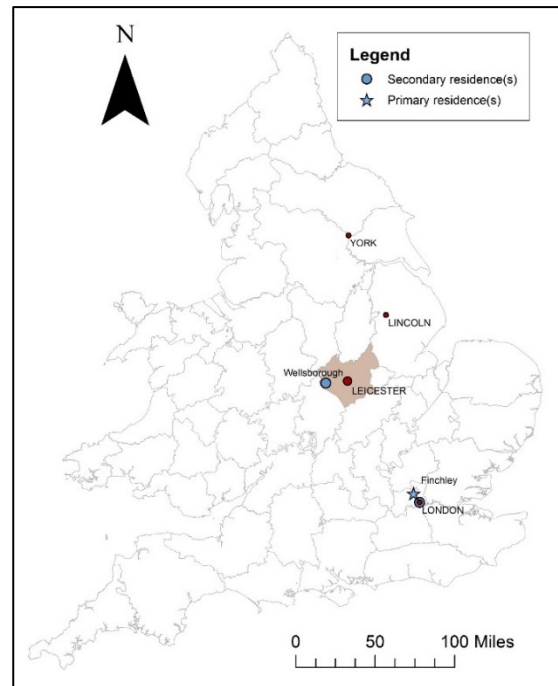
Figure 1.15 Places listed for Thomas Jakes, gentleman, in the general pardon.
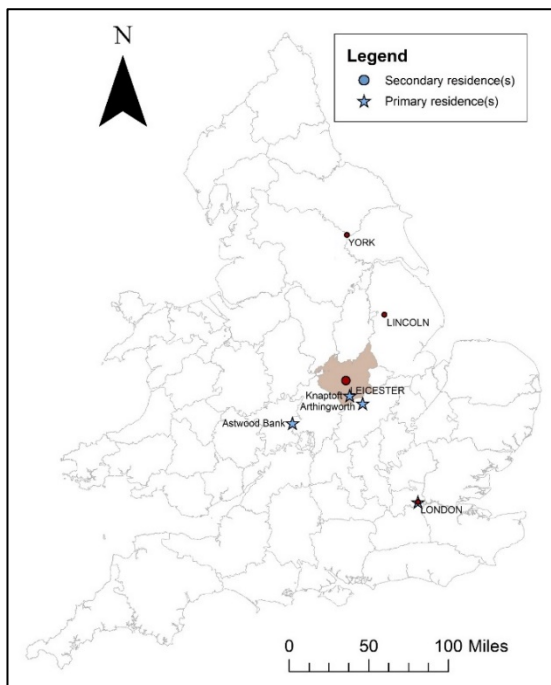
Figure 1.16 Places listed for William Turpin, gentleman, in the general pardon.
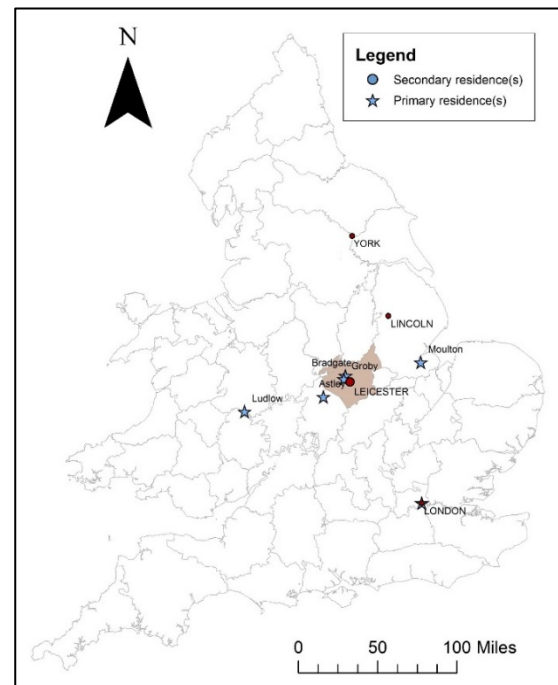
Figure 1.17 Places listed for Robert Vincent, gentleman, in the general pardon.

It appears to have been the legal profession which exercised such a magnetising influence on the Leicestershire gentry. The majority of those mentioned above were professionally involved with London's Inns of Court.[156] Thomas Brokesby, esquire, for example, was admitted to the Inner Temple, *c.*1500.[157] His kinsmen Robert Brokesby, Thomas Brokesby II and William Brokesby were also lawyers of Gray's Inn and the Inner Temple.[158] Thomas Jakes, gentleman, bequeathed books to the Inner Temple in his will, and established a legal scholarship at Merton College, Oxford.[159] He also bequeathed substantial amounts of money to London churches, presumably due to his time there as an attorney.[160] Sir Richard Sacheverell practised from Gray's Inn.[161] Ralph Swillington of the Inner Temple, sponsored Sir William Skeffington at the beginning of his career. He held numerous Leicestershire positions; he was JP from 1507-25, the steward of Leicester for the bishop of Lincoln in 1509-10, and a commissioner of gaol delivery in 1512, 1514 and 1525.[162] William Turpin, esquire, was of Lincoln's Inn. He was also retained by Edward Lord Hastings between 1499-1500, appointed Leicestershire JP between 1511-15, and the sheriff of Leicestershire and Warwickshire in 1512-13.[163] Whilst Sir William Turville does not appear himself, his grandson, Richard Turville, esquire, was a member of the Inner Temple.[164]

The attraction of London has also been observed by Denton in his study of the east midland gentleman. He used a number of case studies to suggest that 'numerous local men either partially or fully moved their interests to London through the pursuit of the law'. It was not this simplistic, however. Denton used the case of Henry Sothyll, a

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[156] A significant proportion of Leicestershire gentry who were not named in the general pardon were also legally active. See both volumes of Baker, *Men of Court*, 1-2. Sir Thomas Pulteney I was a member of the Inner Temple (ibid., 2, p. 1271), as was William Ashby of Lowesby, esquire (ibid., 1, p. 231), William Faunte, esquire ibid., p. 659) and Sir Everard Fielding. Sir Everard Fielding's sons, Peter and Humphrey, were also attorneys and members of the Middle Temple and Inner Temple respectively (ibid., pp. 660-661). John Beaumont, and his son Francis after him, was also a member of the Inner Temple. (ibid., pp. 287-288).
[157] Ibid., p. 372.
[158] Ibid.
[159] Ibid., 2, p. 936.
[160] TNA, PROB 11/18/47.
[161] Baker, *Men of Court*, 2, p. 1346.
[162] Ibid., p. 1492.
[163] Ibid., p. 1567.
[164] Ibid., p. 1567.

Leicestershire esquire, who described himself in his will as being of Stockerston, Leicestershire, but requested burial in London as proof of his movement of interest to the capital. Sothyll's father, another Henry, was JP for Leicestershire on at least two occasions (1477 and 1483), which suggests that the ancestral connection was strong enough to influence the younger Henry Sothyll's self-identification with Leicestershire. It should be noted that he requested for his burial to take place in London 'if it so shall happen that god of his m[er]cy doo send for me w[i]t[h]in the said citie of London'.[165] It is equally significant that he also bequeathed money to his wife for mass and dirige in the parish church of Stockerston; he wanted his soul to be remembered there. Furthermore, Sothyll also paid 6s 8d to the parish church of Stockerston for forgotten tithes – taxation of a tenth of income from landed produce – which was payable to the local parish church. Sothyll's IPM revealed that he held the manor of Stockerston, along with 12 messuages, 300 acres of arable and 100 acres of land there.[166] No IPM evidence has survived to suggest that Sothyll held any lands in London, although he did hold lands in Lincolnshire.[167] This was not, therefore, a total movement of interests; whilst professional ties attracted Sothyll's interests to London, ancestral and economic connections kept one foot in Leicestershire.

Professional connections with London also manifested in mercantile and administrative pursuits. Sir John Skeffington and his brother, Sir William Skeffington, appear to have had a strong affiliation with the ancient parish of St Botolph without Aldgate in London. Sir William was named on a commission for searches in London in 1524, 1525 and 1528 for the district there comprising 'St Katharine's, Towerhill, Estsmythfeld, Whitchappell, Shordiche and Hoxton'.[168] Sir John, an alderman of London and merchant of the Staple of Calais, requested burial in the 'churche of the crossed freres besids the Towre of London', and made the friars his executors.[169] He bequeathed £50 'towards their charges

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[165] TNA, PROB 11/14/568.
[166] TNA, C 142/19/151.
[167] TNA, C 142/19/90.
[168] The 1528 commission directed searches to uncover unlawful gambling and possession of weaponry at midnight for one hour 'and meanwhile to be kept very secret'. The times and dates of the searches were subject to change, probably to maintain secrecy. TNA, State Papers, Henry VIII: General Series, SP 1/234/430, SP 1/33/146, SP 1/236/5, *State Papers Online* (henceforth *SPO*), Gale, Cengage Learning, 2018.
[169] TNA, PROB 11/21/648.

of the new buyldynge'.[170] According to an earlier version of his will, Sir John lived in the nearby parish of St Mary Woolnoth.[171] He maintained his Leicestershire connections, however, evidenced in his bequest of a suit of vestments to the church of Skeffington 'where I was born … w[i]t[h] myne armes to be sett on the crosse therof for a memory of the value of £6 13s'.[172]
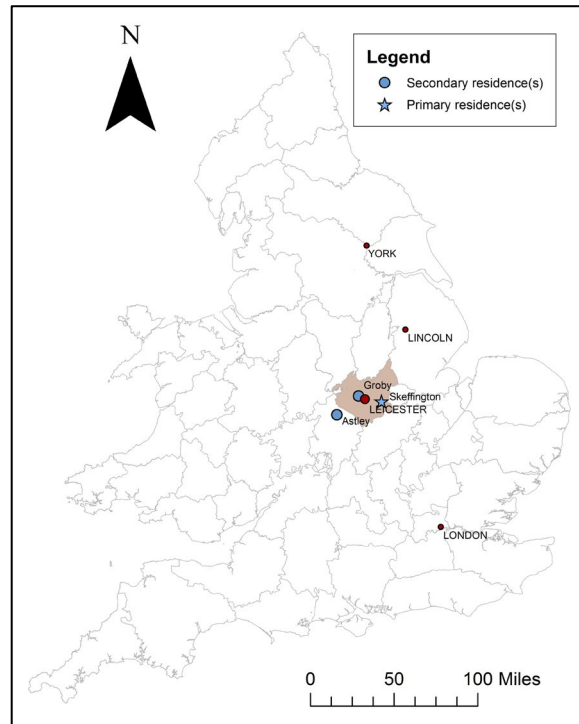
Figure 1.18 Places listed for William Skeffington, esquire, in the general pardon.

1.4 Conclusion

This chapter has put the Leicestershire gentry into the context of their county. Leicestershire was small but not insignificant; its position in the heart of England and connection to ancient road networks influenced its historical significance. Access to the major national towns and cities assisted the gentry in travelling beyond the county border, and likely influenced their social and professional networks. This was also encouraged by central government's increasing tendency, particularly by the turn of the fifteenth century, to use local gentry to maintain order in the localities. The county-based structure

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[170] TNA, State Papers, Henry VIII: Folios, SP 2/b/42, *SPO*.
[171] Ibid. Sir John Skeffington was a merchant of the Staple of Calais.
[172] TNA, PROB 11/21/648.

of central governance encouraged the gentry's sense of a county identity. However, this chapter has also shown that a county identity was not strictly limited to one county; the 'Leicestershire' gentry also had ties as far as Yorkshire. There has also been clear evidence of the Leicestershire gentry's engagement with military service, which reveals that this remained a component of gentry identity well into the late sixteenth century.

Gentry patronage was not limited to the Crown. This chapter has demonstrated that local and national ties of service stretched from the bottom of the gentry hierarchy to the Crown at the apex. At each rung of the ladder the gentry knew their place. The gentry's involvement in the legal profession, for example, underpinned their social network within and beyond the Leicestershire border; it influenced their relationships and facilitated career advancement. Trust was an essential component of gentry society. Chapter 2 will take this approach further to consider the impact that gentry litigation had on the social network; legal knowledge both preserved and threatened landed interests.

Chapter 1 has focused on the gentry's relationship with their county from the perspective of central government. This was an essential first step to take in the understanding of the relationship between gentry and place. But it has largely considered the gentry as a collective, and as the thesis introduction demonstrated, the gentry should also be encountered on an individual basis. We have seen strong evidence for the gentry's county affiliation despite their interests beyond the county border; the discussion will now turn to the gentry's affiliation within it by focusing on a series of gentry territories in Leicestershire. It will build on our examination of the impact of government administration on the gentry's sense of place through the lens of certain Leicestershire JPs and their respective family territories. The location of their ancestral landholdings which – as this chapter has shown – the gentry were well-equipped to acquire and defend in a legal capacity, created clusters of inter-county geographical affinity. They formed a fundamental component of gentry identity, which was embedded in place.

Chapter 2: Territories and territoriality

2.1   Abstract

This chapter explores the role of place in the construction of gentry identity by assessing it through the lens of territory and territoriality. The previous chapter gave evidence in support of the gentry's county identity from the external, central perspective, and argued for the permeability of the county border. This chapter focuses more closely on the perspective from within; the extent and boundaries of gentry influence on the ground are treated in the context of Leicestershire's border and in relation to each other. Our main case studies for this chapter are a sample of gentry families whose members were commissioned as JPs during our period. These case studies have been chosen to test how socially cohesive judicial office-holding was in the context of landholdings and territorial ownership. The chapter thus confronts the relationship between public office-holding and territoriality. It argues that the social dynamics of the administrative hierarchy are most detectable when framed by the territorial construction, consolidation and interaction exhibited by our chosen gentry families. The value of the gentry's territorial landholdings was economic, but, as this chapter will demonstrate, it was also influenced by intense notions of ancestry and legacy. These undercurrents had a direct impact on gentry interaction. A brief discussion of the digital methodology behind the territories' creation is followed by an overview of economic, professional and topographical influences on their structure. The discussion then considers how the gentry attempted to direct the future development of their territories through inheritance, and shows that consequential 'fault lines' erupted when these agendas clashed.

2.2   Introduction

Fifteen years have passed since Peter Coss identified the role of place in gentry identity by concluding that, in addition to land ownership and social differentiation, the 'remaining characteristics of the gentry ... can be encapsulated in a single word – territoriality'. He suggested that gentry territoriality – association(s) with particular territorial location(s) – was composed of four elements: 'collective identity, status

gradation, local public office and authority over the populace'.[1] To date this observation remains untested; as far as the author is aware, no attempt has been made to explore the relationship between gentry territoriality and their role as figures of public authority from a geographical perspective.

Coss wrote that the gentry sought to 'exercise collective social control over the populace on a territorial basis, reinforcing individual status and power' through 'a collective identity, and collective interests which necessitate the existence of some forum, or interlocking fora, for their articulation'.[2] Similarly, Paul Groth argued that the landscape comprises 'a social group and its spaces, particularly the spaces to which the group belongs and from which its members derive some part of their shared identity and meaning'.[3] The emphasis on the social collective endangers the individual perspective, however. As discussed in the thesis introduction, gentry collectivity was an inherent part of their identity, but individuals and families must also be considered independently. A shared identity does not translate to an absence of discord within that group, as this chapter will show; without drilling down into the finer detail of individual case studies, the broader view of gentry territoriality can become distorted.

This distortion becomes evident through an exploration of the definition of 'territory' and 'territoriality'. The *OED* draws upon John Lydgate's *Fall of Princes* (*c*.1439) for the two earliest known uses of 'territory'. The first concerns the 'extent of the land belonging to or under the jurisdiction of a ruler, state, or group of people', and the second to a 'tract of land, or district of undefined boundaries; a region'.[4] In the context of identity formation, these definitions resonate with Richard Jenkins's observation that 'collective identities are usually located within territories or regions'.[5] However, in the context of gentry studies, these definitions suggest a singular gentry territory, relating to those lands held by the county gentry collective: the gentry's Leicestershire. Yet the realities of gentry territoriality problematise this approach. A more representative definition can be found

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[1]   Coss, *Origins of the English Gentry*, p. 9.
[2]   Ibid., p. 9.
[3]   P. Groth, 'Frameworks for cultural landscape study' in P. Groth and T.W. Bressi (eds.), *Understanding Ordinary Landscapes* (New Haven, 1997), p. 1.
[4]   'territory, n.1', *OED* (2018), 'www.oed.com/view/Entry/199601' [accessed 25th July 2018].
[5]   R. Jenkins, *Social Identity* (London, 2004), p. 26.

within zoology, which defines 'territoriality' as 'a pattern of behaviour in which an animal or group of animals defends an area or resource against others of the same species'.[6]

The gentry, then, had to defend their landed interests against competition from their own 'species'. Territorial boundaries were constructed per gentry family or individual, and not by the gentry collective. Boundaries fluctuated according to family or individual agency within each generation. The overlapping of gentry territories is arguably reminiscent of 'plate tectonics'; 'fault lines' emerged where territorial frontiers intercepted. Proximity to or overlap with neighbouring territories, for example, could encourage positive interaction or agitate long-established rivalries. The fluctuation of territorial borders and its implications for identity construction have been summarised by Doreen Massey:

> The nature of places, and of senses of place, is not static ... but dynamic, always subject to further negotiation ... these ongoing makings of place and sense of place have effects – on politics, on the equally complex negotiation of the identity of a community, on the economic realm, on social relations within and beyond a place ... for individuals and for groups.[7]

The reference to negotiation is particularly relevant; the gentry's defence of resources against their own 'species' manifested in court where competition was negotiated.

The gentry are ideal case studies for testing Massey's observation concerning the impact of place on local politics. It contributes to an argument posited by Keith Wrightson and Patrick Collinson, who, building on the work of Adrian Leftwich, argued that power, space and resources resided at the heart of politics.[8] This chapter places the focus on gentry families whose members were commissioned as JPs and on the differences in the structure and composition of territories between them; their collective political identity as judicial administrators and their representation of local authority conforms with Coss's components of gentry territoriality. However, it is not the intention to suggest that gentry families whose members were commissioned as JPs were more inclined towards

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[6] See 'territoriality, n.', *OED* (2018), 'www.oed.com/view/Entry/199595' [accessed 12th September 2018].
[7] D. Massey, 'Preface' in I. Convery, G. Corsane and P. Davis (eds.), *Making Sense of Place: Multidisciplinary Perspectives* (Woodbridge, 2014), p. xiv.
[8] See A. Leftwich, *Redefining Politics: People, Resources and Power* (London, 1983); P. Collinson, *De Republica Anglorum, or, History with the Politics Put Back In* (Cambridge, 1989); K. Wrightson, 'The politics of the parish in early modern England' in P. Griffiths, A. Fox and S. Hindle (eds.), *The Experience of Authority in Early Modern England* (London, 1996), pp. 10-46.

territoriality; instead, JP families are used to show how territorial proximity could simultaneously reinforce and threaten the JPs' social network within the county.

2.2.1 Sources

Processing the IPMs with GIS is an approach that was pioneered by Bruce Campbell and Ken Bartley. They used fourteenth-century IPMs to illustrate land use and manorial composition during the period.[9] By mapping gentry territories on the ground, we can observe the extent to which territorial composition was governed by ancestral inheritance and economic profit. Both galvanised the gentry's profound sense of ownership. Where possible, IPMs taken for those who appeared most frequently across the period are mapped to generate family-based landholding distributions.[10] The JPs are well represented in probate, land conveyance and litigation records, which offers sufficient contextual evidence for interpreting their activity and interaction beyond the IPMs.

Maps of gentry territories have been created by extracting IPM data and visualising them with GIS.[11] It is only by mapping individual gentry territories, and not simply describing them as a unified mass of gentry landholdings, that we can see their interaction and distribution over time. This approach only estimates the areas of territorial influence and thus does not represent the actual boundaries of the gentry's estates. Dick Harrison used a similar methodology to illustrate the distances travelled by a cross-section of society in medieval Somerset.[12] We might suggest that this is actually a more realistic view of the gentry's experience of the landscape. The possession of arable or pasture at a distance from the primary territory reflected ownership as much as the primary territory itself. The spaces used to travel to and from these satellite parcels of land were another component of the territory, which is also reflected in Harrison's study.

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[9] Campbell and Bartley, *England on the Eve of the Black Death*.

[10] Families who had individuals named three times or more across the period are included to limit the dataset parameters. To avoid confusing the distribution map, the families of Grey and Hastings are omitted; the extent of their landholdings would obscure the remaining dataset. Further, the Sacheverell and Sherard families have been removed from the enquiry due to the absence of their IPMs.

[11] The extent of gentry territories was created by the 'kernel density estimation' function in ArcMap. It estimates the *probable* area covered by a particular variable, in this instance, manorial lands held by the gentry.

[12] See Harrison, *Medieval Space*, pp. 81-176.

2.3 Territorial structures

There is much to be said for the gentry's own self-identification for establishing the core of their respective territories. Their perspective is crucial for the interpretation of geographical significance. We lose this angle if we consider landholdings in isolation; a knight may hold multiple manors in one county, but with which place did he most identify? Clauses in probate wills shed some light on the places to which the gentry saw themselves belonging to. 'I William Assheby of Lowesby esquier' is a representative example.[13] Lay subsidies, muster rolls, commissions, legal records and general pardons also recorded the gentry's primary places of habitation or affiliation (hereafter known as PPA/s). PPAs were the gentry's equivalent of the government's methods of identification demonstrated by Henry VIII's general pardon in Chapter 1. The PPA was the nucleus of gentry family identity and their primary territory. They are an ideal point of departure for a discussion of territorial structure and composition.

Before drawing any conclusions, however, we must first consider how much choice the gentry actually had in their territories' structure. For example, by the mid-sixteenth century the Pulteneys, based at their PPA of Misterton, held lands in the adjacent manors of Pulteney and Walcote. In 1220, the chapels of Pulteney and Walcote were recorded as belonging to the church at Misterton.[14] That the three eventually comprised Misterton parish suggests that the Pulteneys held a territory largely dictated by predetermined parochial structures. Grants of monastic lands after the Dissolution made to other Leicestershire gentry families such as the Caves, for example, also conveyed pre-established compositions.[15]

Territorial structures could also be influenced by previous owners or occupants. The Neeles' involvement at Prestwold and the Kebles' possessions in Humberstone below were facilitated and substantially augmented by advantageous marriages, wherein the territorial structures had been predefined. Marital decisions were largely influenced by political and social standing, but they did also comprise an element of choice based on

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[13] TNA, PROB 11/29/304.

[14] Nichols, *History and Antiquities*, 4, pt. 1, p. 305.

[15] J. Gairdner and R.H. Brodie (eds.), *Letters and Papers*, 18, pt. 2 (London, 1902), p. 236. Amongst the lands granted to Francis Cave, esquire, were 'all lands in Baggrave late in occupation of the late abbot of Leicester which belonged to St. John's of Jerusalem and the preceptory of Dalby and Rotheley'.

individual or family agenda. Further, land could be purchased, which also reflected choice. Sir Richard Sacheverell, for example, paid 1,300 marks for the manor of Lubbesthorpe and appurtenances.[16] Chris Dyer suggested that gentry purchases offered territorial stability, for whom the 'attraction of the purchase of land for gentry who had acquired cash from the law, office, or war lay in the safety and stability of their assets, and the steady return that they received'.[17] The next section will use a sample of four JP families to illustrate four models of territorial structure, and shows that the gentry's economic and professional interests played their part.[18]

2.3.1   The Beaumont family

The family PPA was often the favoured location for the focus of a gentry family's influence and expression of identity.[19] Our first case study shows how a family's territory could be composed of an ancestral nucleus with economic outposts. The Beaumont family held a manor at their PPA in Coleorton to the north-west and another manor at Goadby Marwood to the south-east between at least 1461 and 1538.[20] Their territory is shown in Figure 2.1.[21] Goadby Marwood provided the main economic return. The IPM for the JP John Beaumont, esquire, in 1461 recorded a return of only 40s from Coleorton compared to £20 from Goadby Marwood.[22] A bequest of 3s 4d by another John Beaumont, esquire, also JP, to the high altar of Coleorton reinforces it as the nucleus of the family territory.[23] His IPM, taken in 1532, recorded 1270 acres of arable, 600 acres of pasture, 300 acres of meadow and 100 acres of woodland at Goadby Marwood.[24] Six years later, his nephew, Richard Beaumont, esquire, identified himself as being of Coleorton but held a watermill,

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[16] TNA, PROB 11/25/187.

[17] Dyer, *An Age of Transition?*, p. 108.

[18] The full set of territorial maps can be viewed in Volume 2.

[19] They can often be identified by concentrations of architectural or commemorative material culture, see Chapters 5 and 6.

[20] There had been a connection between Coleorton and Goadby Marwood since *c.*1195 under the lordship of William de Quatremars. See G.F. Farnham, 'Coleorton and Goadby Marwood', *Leicestershire Medieval Village Notes*, 4 (Leicester, 1933).

[21] TNA, C 140/2/18; C 142/60/20.

[22] TNA, C 140/2/18.

[23] ROLLR, W&I, 1531/14. The church was also the burial location for multiple members of the family.

[24] The escheators' brevity may have omitted land composition, but the inclusion of acreages for Goadby and not for Coleorton in the same IPM favours the economic argument. TNA, C 142/60/20.

seven messuages, the capital messuage, the advowson and 269 acres of arable, 88 acres of meadow and 40 acres of pasture at Goadby Marwood at his death.[25]
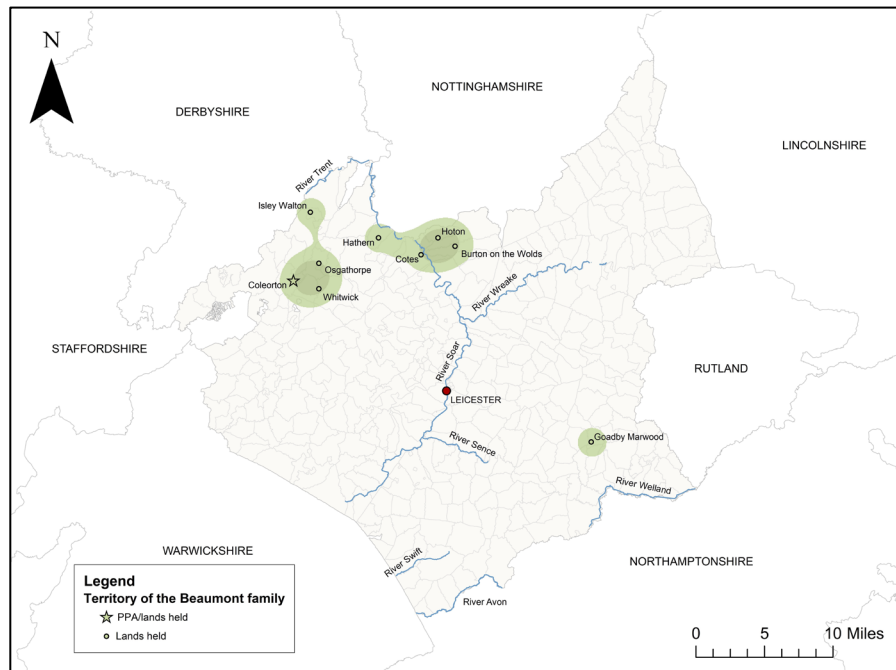
Figure 2.1 The territory of the Beaumont family, c.1461-1538.[26]

2.3.2 The Turville family

The Beaumonts' territory was smaller and more compact compared to those who attained knightly status during the period, such as the Turville family (Figure 2.2). The fifteenth-century Turvilles were less politically active than their sixteenth-century descendants; between 1422 and 1485 they held no county offices.[27] In contrast, John Turville, esquire, had received the office of park keeper in Barn Park, one of the chief forest offices in Leicester Forest by 1506, which he bequeathed to his wife in 1506.[28] His son, Sir William Turville, served on every commission of the peace between 1515 and 1545. They are amongst the oldest of our families; in 1310 one Ralph Turville was identified as being of Normanton, alias Normanton Turville.[29] The Turvilles' territory was centred on the

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[25] TNA, PROB 11/27/425, C 142/60/20. The extent comprised 16 separate parcels, which suggests that the Beaumonts were leasing their lands.

[26] TNA, C 140/2/18, C 142/60/20.

[27] Acheson, *A Gentry Community*, p. 255.

[28] TNA, PROB 11/15/287; L. Fox and P. Russell, *Leicester Forest* (Leicester, 1948), pp. 42-43.

[29] Farnham, *Medieval Pedigrees*, p. 6. During our period, the Turvilles were buried at both Thurlaston and Aston Flamville. The earliest monument at Thurlaston dates to the fourteenth century. For further detail see Chapter 4, 4.5, and Chapter 6, 6.4.1.

manors of Thurlaston, Normanton Turville and Aston Flamville. The addition of the Turville family name to Normanton reflected their longstanding affiliation.[30] This can also be seen in the manor of Aston Flamville, brought into the Turville family by marriage in the fourteenth century.[31]

Reminiscent of the Beaumonts' territory, the Turvilles' territorial structure proposes evidence for their economic focus across the period. Between 1506 and 1561 their meadow at Thurlaston had increased fivefold, from 60 to 340 acres, and their arable nearly threefold from 526.5 to 1500 acres.[32] The outlying territories held by John Turville, esquire, in 1506 had almost completely disappeared by his grandson's death in 1561.[33] By 1563 their substantial acreages of meadow and arable appear to have been enclosed into 17 gardens and 17 orchards, and 1,000 acres of heathland. In contrast to the Beaumonts, then, the Turvilles' PPA at Thurlaston wielded sufficient return, and they were able to adapt their economic land use there to suit their own preferences.
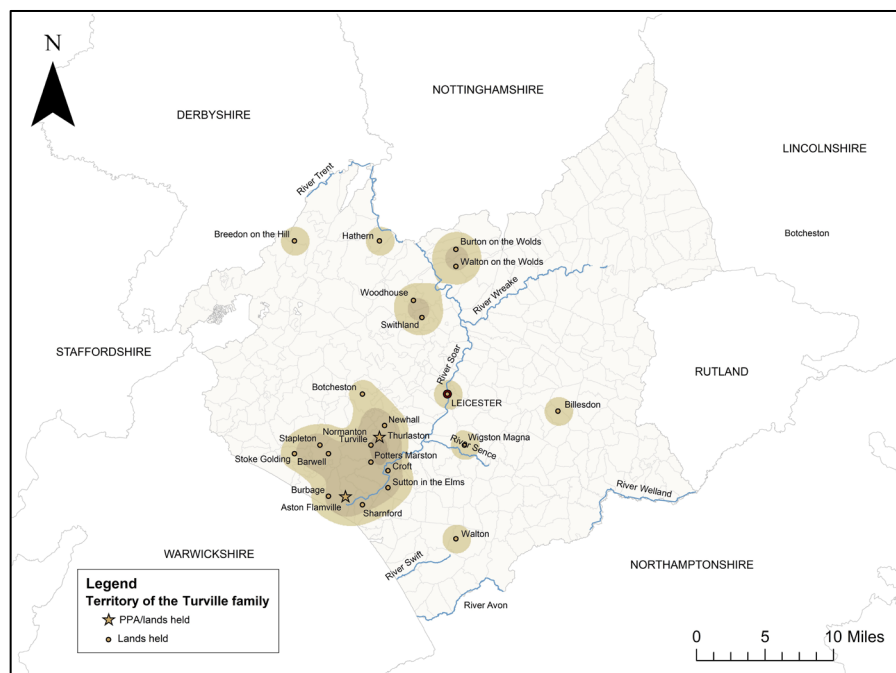
Figure 2.2 The territory of the Turville family, c.1506-1563.[34]

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[30] For a discussion on relationship between place-names and seigneurial families see R. Jones, 'Thinking through the manorial affix: people and place in medieval England', in B. Sylvester and S. Turner (eds.), *Life in Medieval Landscapes: People and Place in the Middle* Ages (Oxford, 2012), pp. 255-271.
[31] Acheson, *A Gentry Community*, p. 254.
[32] TNA, C 142/20/8; E 150/1160/1.
[33] The land use composition of the family's territory is discussed in further detail in Chapter 3, 3.3.2.
[34] TNA, C 142/20/8, E 150/1149/3, E 150/1160/1, E 150/1160/2, E 150/1161/14.

2.3.3 The Neele family

The Neeles' territory reflects the influence of professional advancement, and can be defined as the *parvenu* model (Figure 2.3). By the fifteenth century the legal profession offered territorial, administrative and financial gain.[35] The Neeles' territory had a distinct double nucleus of two PPAs by the sixteenth century; one in the north of the county at Prestwold, the other to the east at Keythorpe. Prior to their move to Prestwold, the Neeles appear to have resided at Shepshed, approximately six miles to the west near Charnwood Forest.[36] The northern holding of Prestwold had been adopted as their initial PPA by the mid-fifteenth century; Sir Richard Neele, serjeant-at-law and later a Justice of the Common Pleas, had acquired the manor through his marriage to the daughter and co-heir of William Ryddynges of Prestwold, in *c*.1448. He had been appointed as JP and a justice of gaol delivery for Leicestershire in the same year, and appeared frequently on midland commissions. The Leicestershire and midland focus of his legal and political career required the establishment of a local base.

Thirty years later, the family again expanded their territory through marriage. In *c*.1480, the marriage of Sir Richard's son, Christopher, brought the southern interests into the family with the manorial acquisition of Keythorpe and lands in Keythorpe, Tugby, Goadby and Billesdon. He died seised of the manors of Prestwold and Keythorpe in 1526.[37] By establishing themselves at Prestwold comparatively later than other members of the Leicestershire gentry, and acquiring the lands at Keythorpe within the space of a generation, the Neeles had acquired two PPAs. It was different to the 'satellite' arrangement seen above in the Beaumonts' territory at Coleorton and Goadby Marwood. This is further evidenced in the Neeles' burial choices. Sir Richard was the first of the family to be buried in the parish church of Prestwold alongside his wife, Isabel. Only two generations later, his grandson, Richard Neele, esquire, was buried in the parish church at Tugby in 1574.

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[35] Ives, *Common Lawyers*, p. 32.
[36] Farnham, 'Prestwold and its hamlets', pp. 5-6.
[37] TNA, E 150/1131/7.
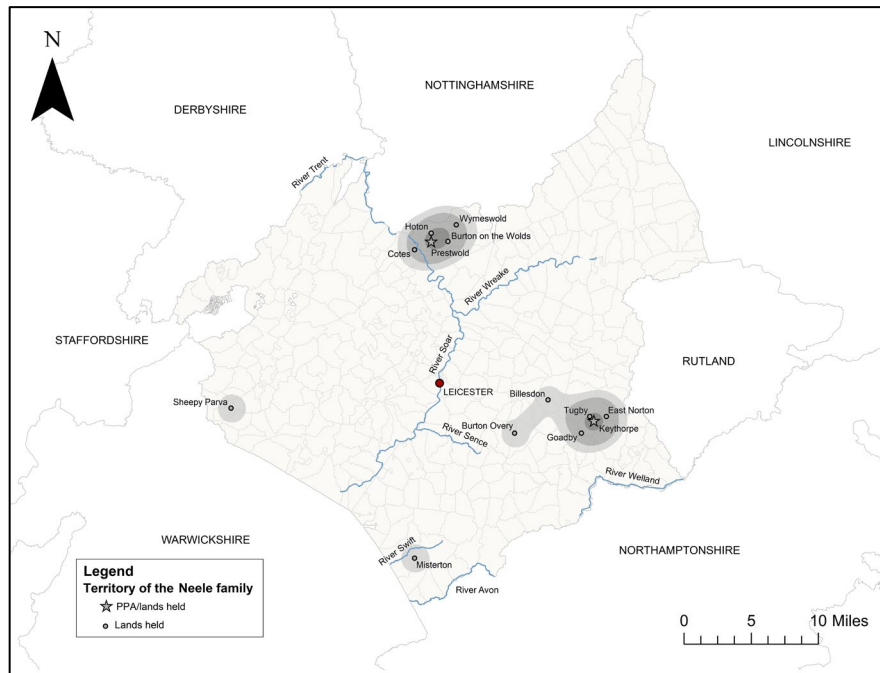
Figure 2.3 The territory of the Neele family, c.1526-1577.[38]

2.3.4 The Keble family

The Kebles offer another excellent example of the *parvenu* model at a more concentrated scale (Figure 2.4). Similar to the Neeles, the legal profession facilitated their territorial expansion. The family ascended on the county stage from the early fifteenth century under Walter Keble, esquire, through the now familiar method of marriage to a wealthy heiress. The family's primary historian and biographer, Eric Ives, noted that 'his ancestry was undistinguished and his fortune small; his prosperity was almost entirely owed to his [legal] service to the house of Beauchamp, which … opened the way to a lucrative marriage'.[39] His son, Thomas, would later ascend in the legal services of a prominent Leicestershire family, the Hastings, and to the rank of serjeant-at-law. The consolidated territory surrounding the Kebles' PPA of Humberstone, evident in Figure 2.4, shows the landed outcome of the family's advantageous marriages, and their professional connection with Leicester.[40]

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38 TNA, E 150/1131/7, C142/116/107, E 150/1158/5, WARD 7/18/38.
39 Ives, *Common Lawyers*, pp. 23-30.
40 Ibid., pp. 135-136.

The substantial concentration of lands in and around Leicester and northwards up the Soar Valley is remarkable for a family of predominantly esquire status.[41] The outlying lands at Ashby Parva and Burton on the Wolds were relatively small economic outposts.[42] They comprised less than 100 acres of arable and 12 acres of meadow at Ashby Parva, and only 26 acres of arable and four acres of meadow at Burton on the Wolds, and remained stable across four generations.[43] The family's substantial involvement in the wool trade was concentrated within the primary territory. Thomas Keble's inventory reveals that he kept most of his sheep at Thrussington, Potters Marston, Rearsby, Humberstone and Stretton.[44] Potters Marston, where Keble had purchased an 80-year lease, was the only property beyond the territory.[45] As Ives observed, 'owners now wanted compact properties, to facilitate management and to make improvement possible … most of his [Thomas Keble's] purchases were of some size or else were near to the land he owned'.[46]
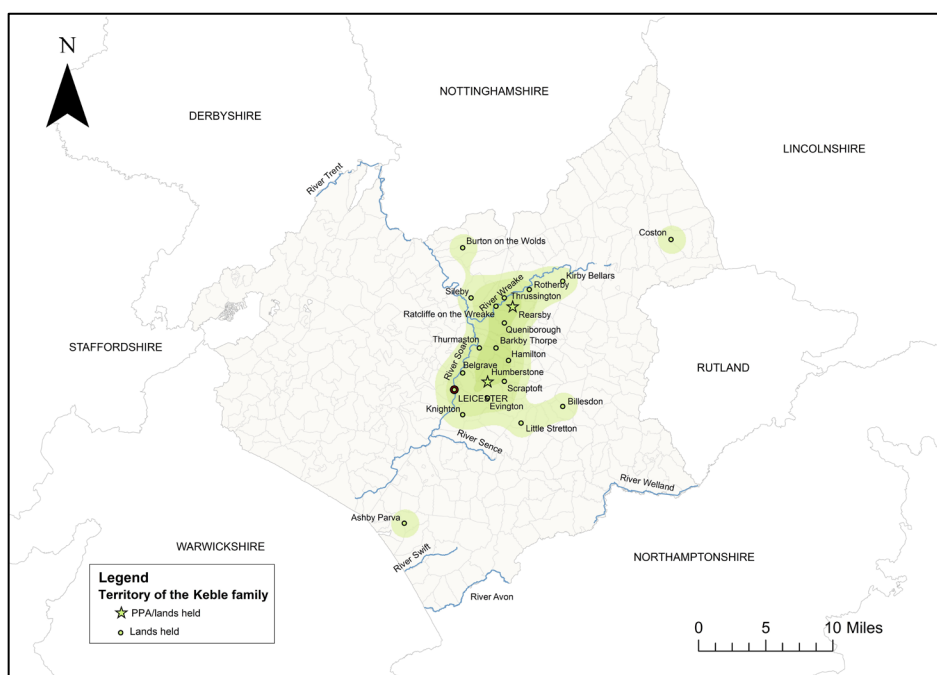
Figure 2.4 The territory of the Keble family, c.1486-1570.[47]

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41 Compare the Kebles' territory to the Beaumonts', for example.
42 Even these smaller interests required safeguarding. In 1482, Thomas Keble defended 200 acres of land in Ashby Parva against one of the villagers. See Ives, *Common Lawyers*, p. 34.
43 TNA, C 142/2/9, E 150/1116-1/19, E 150/1130/6, E 150/1157/2.
44 Ives, *Common Lawyers*, Appendix B, pp. 440-442.
45 Hence the absence of Potters Marston from the IPM.
46 Ives, *Common Lawyers*, p. 343.
47 TNA, C 142/2/9, C 142/15/108, E 150/1116(pt. 1)/19, C 142/39/99, E 150/1130/6, WARD 7/6/133, E 150/1157/2, C 142/157/94.

2.4 Topographical influences on territorial structure

The case studies above have shown four models of territorial structure based on status, profession and the families' historical presence in the county. Yet the topographical dimension of gentry territories must also be considered. This section shows how gentry territories should be considered individually and together to reveal potential topographical influences, such as the presence of different land types or proximity to the county border. Joan Thirsk concluded that works on medieval estates have illustrated that 'land ownership, land distribution, tenure, and agricultural prices do not alone account for regional eccentricity, that some of its causes lie deeper, in soil and physical environment'.[48] Eric Acheson's study of the early fifteenth-century Leicestershire gentry used a brief selection of maps to illustrate chief topographical influences on manorial distribution. It was suggested to be 'very much a reflection of topographical realities' based on a correlation between gentry landholdings, river basins and watersheds.[49] He attributed the lords Roos's absence of interest in the county's administration to the geographical isolation of his manors in the north-east, but paid little attention to the social implications.[50]

In his study of regional frontiers in the east midlands, Alan Fox argued for a relationship between topography and cultural construction. He used Charles Phythian-Adams's theory that regional societies were largely defined by major drainage basins and other physical features, creating cultural frontiers, to propose an informal frontier around the Leicestershire-Lincolnshire border.[51] Christine Carpenter's study of the late medieval Warwickshire gentry identified geographical features which affected the gentry's social network. Regions dictated by the density or sparseness of the Arden Forest, proximity to market towns and the availability of road networks, for example, were argued to have influenced gentry interaction. She suggested that, compared to landscapes comprising enclosed or difficult terrain such as the Arden Forest, 'more open country relationships

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[48] J. Thirsk, 'The content and sources of English agrarian history after 1500', *Agricultural History Review*, 3, no. 2 (1955), p. 68.
[49] Acheson, *A Gentry Community*, p. 45.
[50] Ibid., p. 18.
[51] See A. Fox, *A Lost Frontier Revealed: Regional Separation in the East Midlands* (Hatfield, 2009).

might be less concentrated and range across a wider geographical area'.[52] This appears to have been the case in Leicestershire.

Figure 2.5 illustrates the JPs' territories across Leicestershire, organised by family, which have each been allocated a unique colour. They include the four case studies discussed in the previous section. It demonstrates the focused distributions and subsequent overlap of gentry territories.[53] Clusters and scatters are clearly identifiable. A band of occupation stretches from the south-west to the north-east, with a notable absence directly west of Leicester. There are some interesting parallels and comparisons to be drawn with Acheson's observations in early fifteenth-century Leicestershire. Similarly, the Wreake valley in the north-east attracted substantial attention, whilst the vale of Belvoir in the extreme north-east and the Charnwood Forest region to the north-west of Leicester were also sparse.
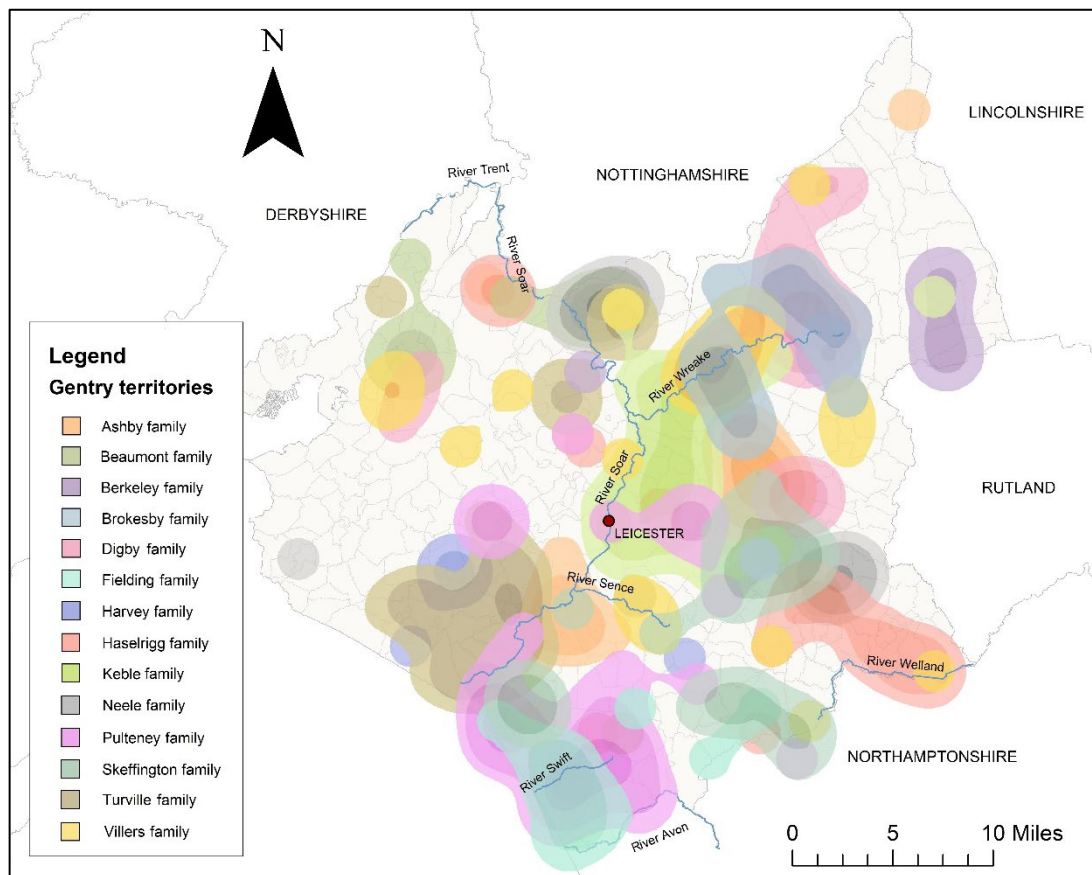
Figure 2.5 JP territories in late medieval Leicestershire.

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[52] Carpenter, *Locality and Polity*, pp. 295-298.
[53] It comprises 49 IPMs dating between 1461 and 1577, with an average of four IPMs per family.

We can find an explanation for these distributions amongst Leicestershire's contemporary antiquarian evidence. The development of the gentry's individual, family and society based self-awareness is evident in their local histories, which also 'provide useful material which helps us to understand how the gentry … related to their environment'.[54] John Leland visited only select parts of Leicestershire during his travels in the 1530s, but commented on 'good [pas]ture and corn groun[de, but all champaine] and litle woode'.[55] By 1587, William Camden noted that it was 'all a champain country, rich in corn and grain, but for the greatest part deficient in woods'.[56] Most significantly, in 1610, a seventeenth-century descendant of our Leicestershire gentry, William Burton, esquire, of Lindley, recorded that

> The north-east, and south-west parts are much alike, both good soil, and apt to bear corn and grass, and having better store of fuel; yet, of the two, the south-west is the better furnished. In the north-east side, is that rich vale of Belvoir … which for goodness and depth of soil, is accounted inferior to none adjoining; yet by reason of the low situation, it is sometimes damaged with rain, moisture, and humid weather.[57]

Burton was the county's primary antiquarian, and his observations have furnished a substantial part of our understanding of contemporary Leicestershire, from dominant families to soil types and land use across the county.

When compared to Figure 2.5, these observations suggest that there was indeed a correlation between Leicestershire's physical composition and the distribution of the JPs' territories. Towards the end of the sixteenth century, the region to the east of Watling Street at the Leicestershire-Warwickshire border, south-west of Leicester, was no longer the modest concentration identified by Acheson for the earlier period.[58] Here we find the dominance of the Pulteneys, whose territory extended downwards to the county's southernmost tip, and was directly overlapped by the territory of their parochial neighbours, the Fieldings. Similarly, there is a marked absence at the Leicestershire-Rutland border compared to Acheson's distributions. Care must be taken in interpreting

[54] J. Broadway, *"No Historie so Meete": Gentry Culture and the Development of Local History in Elizabethan and Early Stuart England* (Manchester, 2006), p. 208.

[55] J. Leland, *The Itinerary of John Leland in or about the Years 1535-1543*, L. Toulmin Smith (ed.), 1 (London, 1907), p. 98.

[56] W. Camden, *Britannia: Or a Chorographical Description of Great Britain and Ireland*, 1, E. Gibson (ed.) (London, 1722), p. 532.

[57] Burton, *Description of Leicestershire*, p. 2.

[58] Acheson, *A Gentry Community*, p. 45.

these apparent changes. Acheson's study was based solely on manorial distribution, whereas our study includes all landholdings from one acre at the bottom of the spectrum to a whole manor at the top. It has also extracted territories from a longer period.

2.4.1 The Pulteney family: territorial expansion

Mapping the Pulteneys' territory across generations can be used to explore the two contrasting observations made by Acheson and this study, supporting the usefulness of the IPM-based approach in the process. The Pulteneys had been based at Misterton, approximately one mile from the market town of Lutterworth, since the thirteenth century.[59] In 1335, Adam Napton granted Sir John de Pulteney of London the reversion of lands in Misterton and the adjacent manor of Pulteney, his birthplace, from where the family had taken their name.[60] A family member was named on almost every commission of the peace between the late fifteenth and mid-sixteenth centuries except the commissions of 1448 and 1477. The minor landholdings recorded at Misterton in John Pulteney's IPM of 1493 had dramatically increased by the time his son's IPM was taken in 1507, which returned lands and rents in 14 places and five manors in Pulteney, Cotes de Val, Claybrooke Magna and Ullesthorpe.[61] In 1540, John Pulteney's grandson, another Sir Thomas Pulteney, held the manors of Misterton, Cotes de Val and Ullesthorpe, and lands and rents in 23 places, including 1,000 acres of pasture in Pulteney.[62] The family's Leicestershire lands had increased again by the death of John Pulteney's great-grandson, Francis Pulteney, esquire, in 1549.[63]

These descriptions are biographically informative, but they do not reflect the territorial distribution of the family's interests on the ground. Figure 2.6, Figure 2.7 and Figure 2.8 illustrate the landholdings recorded in the IPMs for both Thomas Pulteneys and Francis

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[59] Astill, 'A study in Leicestershire society', p. 326; G.F. Farnham, *Leicestershire Medieval Pedigrees* (Leicester, 1925), p. 52.

[60] Nichols, *History and Antiquities*, 4, pt. 1, p. 307.

[61] TNA, C 142/8/35; C 142/20/13. John Pulteney held one messuage and two virgates of land at Misterton at his death. The difference may reflect the limitation of using the IPMs for this purpose, given that they cannot represent a full reconstruction of the gentry's landed interests.

[62] TNA, C 142/63/36. The family's involvement in Leicestershire enclosure and associated disputes are discussed in further detail in Chapter 4, 4.5.

[63] TNA, E 150/1149/8. His IPM does not mention manorial landholdings in Misterton or Pulteney, but he bequeathed manors there to his wife. See TNA, PROB 11/32/128.

Pulteney.[64] A sample of their east midlands lands (Figure 2.7) also reflect the holdings of the second Sir Thomas Pulteney in Warwickshire and Northamptonshire.[65] There is a clear expansion towards the county's central region by the mid-sixteenth century. The security offered by the Pulteneys' administrative service facilitated their territorial acquisition. They appear far less frequently in the court records compared to other Leicestershire gentry.[66] By including the family's general landholdings in addition to their manorial property we can, in part, account for Acheson's modest distribution near Watling Street in the fifteenth century. Further, mapping the IPM evidence across generations reveals their distinct territorial expansion northwards.
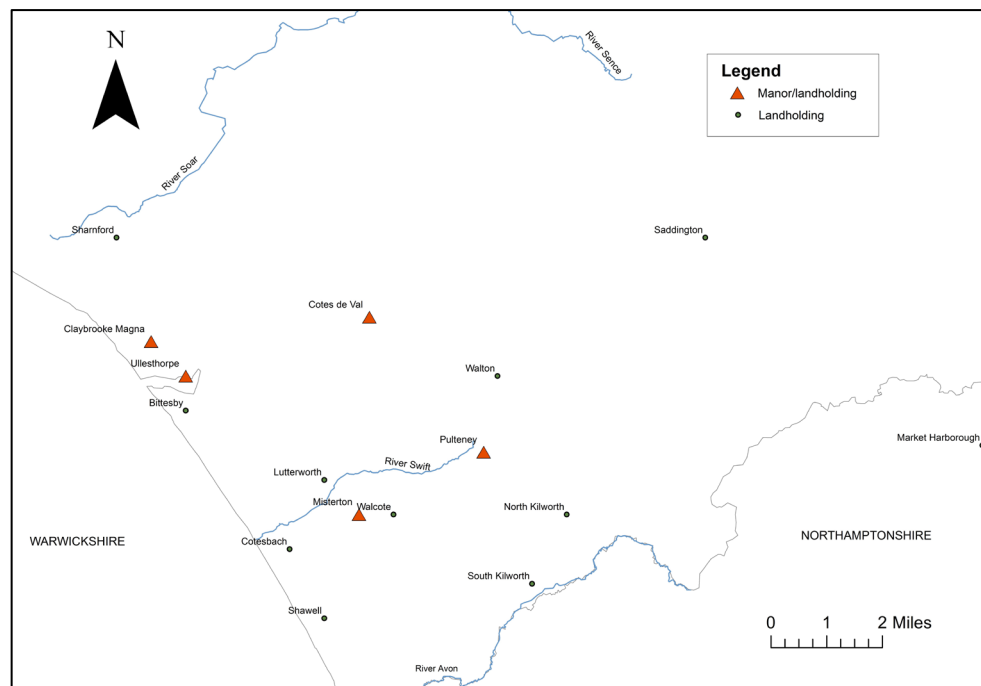
Figure 2.6 Landholdings of Sir Thomas Pulteney, 1507.

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[64] The Pulteneys are discussed again in Chapter 3 in the context of changing land uses, see 3.3.2.
[65] TNA, C 142/63/36, E 150/1222/4, E 150/1222/6.
[66] The relationship between JP litigation and regional affiliation is discussed in further detail below. The only known land-based litigation involving the Pulteneys comprised a defence in an inheritance dispute *c*.1486-1515 concerning lands in Market Bosworth in the court of Chancery (TNA, C 1/181/43), and an enclosure dispute in 1547 over lands in Croft against Sir William Turville in Star Chamber (TNA, STAC 2/25/38 and STAC 2/28/57).
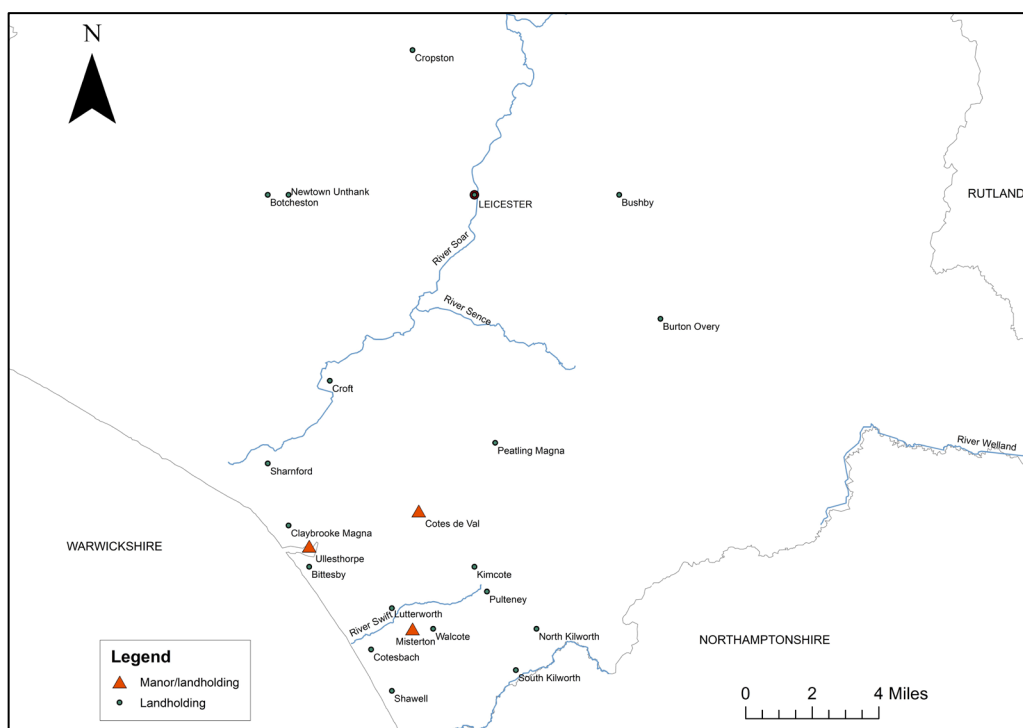
Figure 2.7 Landholdings of Sir Thomas Pulteney, 1541.
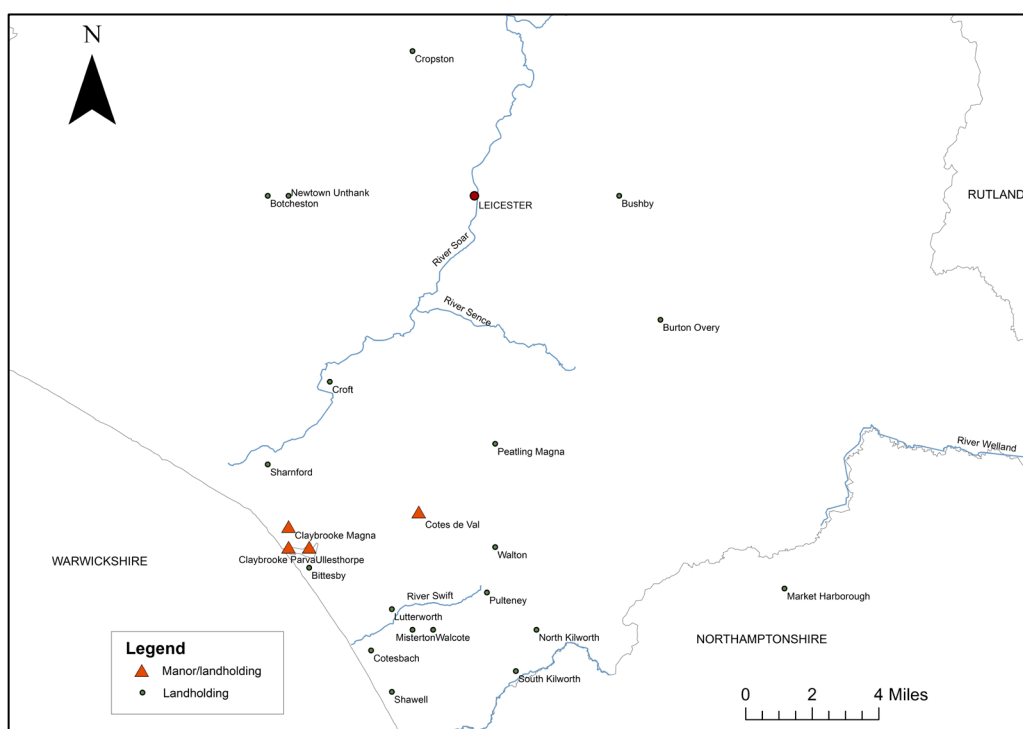
Figure 2.8 Landholdings of Francis Pulteney, esquire, 1549.

2.4.2 The Pulteney family: beyond the county border

The Leicestershire focus and the county-by-county organisation of the IPMs obscures gentry landholdings beyond the Leicestershire border. The IPM evidence shows that the Pulteneys' lands were focused towards the Leicestershire-Warwickshire and Leicestershire-Northamptonshire borders at the southern-most tip of the county. Figure 2.7 illustrates that Sir Thomas held very few lands over the southern Leicestershire border. It is an interesting contrast to the 'gradual blurring' at the Leicestershire-Warwickshire border during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries described by Jon Denton, instigated by the counties' joint shrievalty.[67] The 'on the ground' approach presents a possible theory for this pattern. Figure 2.9 draws attention to the physical markers which dictated the county boundary: the Roman Watling Street and the rivers Avon and Welland. As physical representations of the county border, these features appear to have shepherded the Pulteneys' attention towards Leicestershire.
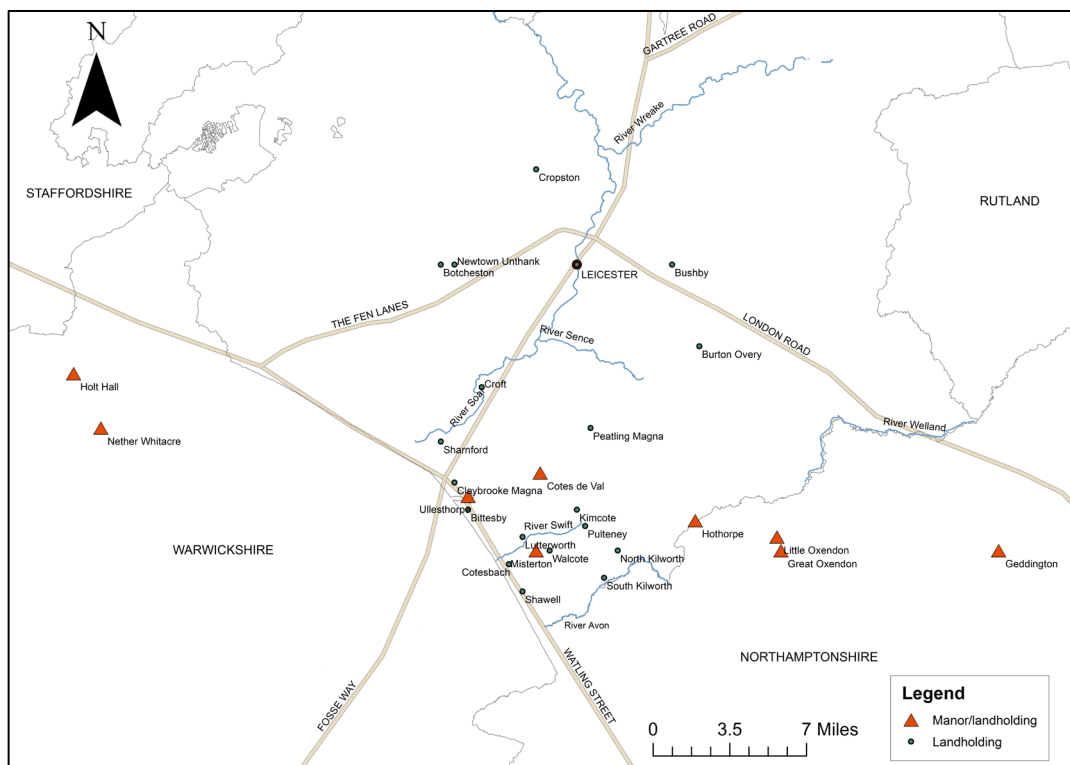
Figure 2.9 Border topography and landholdings of Sir Thomas Pulteney, 1541.

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[67]   Denton, 'The east-midland gentleman', p. 34.

2.5 Inheritance and territorial construction

Thus far, we have encountered social, political and topographical influences on gentry territories. Inheritance was another major influence in the formation of gentry territories. This section will consider how JP families used inheritance to cultivate and direct the development of their territories; the smooth descent of land was essential for the survival of a family's legacy. The contest of property by multiple inheritors could splinter the family territory, potentially reducing its wealth, status and political standing in the county. Richard Cave, esquire, attempted to protect his bequeathed lands from family rivalries by threatening disinheritance:

> my mynde and wille is that every of my said sonnes and daughters and childern and all other p[er]sones to whom I have willed or bequeathed ... shall holde theym selfes contented w[i]t[h] suche legacies and bequests ... w[i]t[h]out demaunding or requiring any other thinge / And yf they or any of theym or there childern or any other p[er]sone or p[er]sones by there procurement ... doo any thinge to the breche or interupc[i]on by sute or otherwise of this my will that then they ... and there childern shall take noo benefite nor profite ... but all such legacies and bequests as I have made to theym ... shall be ... utterly voide and of noon effect ayenst theym and their childern.

The dissemination of freehold lands by will was illegal before the Statute of Wills (1540). Earlier testators had found a loophole by enfeoffing friends and neighbours of the lands which they wished to bequeath. The land (in theory, not always in practice) would then be regranted to the testator's designated beneficiaries. They were legally bound to do so by the enfeoffment, or else the transaction would be void and the lands returned to the feoffor or their heirs.

Conveying lands in this manner permitted landowners to 'escape from the inflexible certainty of the legal rules of succession' and effectively to choose their beneficiaries.[68] But it was only the uses of the lands, that is, the profits, revenues and benefits, and not their legal title, which were conveyed. The legal title remained with the feoffees to uses – essentially, trustees for a specific purpose – thus accounting for subsequent litigation where the title was disputed. It also reduced the amount of obtainable revenue for the tenants-in-chief and the Crown by distributing the uses amongst a large collective of feoffees. The Statute of Uses (1536) attempted to restore this wealth to the tenurial apex

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[68]   J.H. Baker, *An Introduction to English Legal History* (London, 2002), p. 252.

by limiting the legal title of lands to beneficiaries only, not feoffees. Profits of wardship, for example, were returned to the Crown. It was unpopular, as it 'imposed compulsory primogeniture on a society which had accustomed itself to wills'.[69] The Statute of Wills (1540) was a reversal of royal policy. It permitted freehold lands to be bequeathed but retained substantial revenue for the Crown. After 1540, therefore, the geographical situation and development of a gentry individual's interests could be partially influenced by bequests made to them.

We will now consider how these bequests looked on the ground. The Leicestershire wills support Laurence Stone's observation that 'eldest sons usually inherited the great bulk of the estates of peers, gentry and yeoman farmers … younger sons were often left small landed estates'.[70] Territorial size and dissemination facilitated provision for younger sons, daughters, and more distant relatives. Bequests to eldest sons or male relatives preserved the focus of the family's territory. Indeed, Sharon Teague argued that this phenomenon was more common amongst those who held lands by feudal tenure, thus the gentry, whose choices were 'strongly shaped by the rules of English common law and custom'.[71] Knights appear to have been particularly concerned with the geographical specificity of their bequests. Their lands were distributed more broadly than esquires or gentlemen, often far beyond their home county.[72] The importance of lands within or in proximity to the primary territory can thus be analysed based on the nature of the testator's relationship with the specified beneficiary. We will focus on three case studies taken from the knightly JP families of Digby, Fielding and Villers.[73]

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[69] Ibid., p. 256.

[70] L. Stone, 'Social mobility in England, 1500-1700', *Past & Present*, 33, no. 1 (1966), p. 37.

[71] S. Teague, 'Patterns of bequest within the family: testamentary evidence from the ecclesiastical registers of Canterbury and York, *c.*1340-1440' (unpub. PhD thesis, University of Toronto, 2013), p. ii.

[72] This is not a general rule. Esquires and gentlemen often held land over the county borders, but knights were more likely to hold them in more than one county. The range of potential beneficiaries was also dictated by chance; whether sons had been born or survived, for example. Thomas Ashby of Quenby, esquire, had only one surviving son at the composition of his will, who therefore received the primary lands. Comparatively, Nicholas Beaumont of Coleorton, esquire, had four sons but limited lands, and therefore bequeathed them to his eldest son. They had frequently acted together in land transactions, such as the mortgaging of his leased manor and coal mines at Bedworth, Warwickshire. See ROLLR, W&I, 1500-1519/2; TNA, PROB 11/68/466. For a discussion of knights' geographical allegiance to Leicestershire, see Chapter 6, 6.4.2.

[73] These case studies have been chosen based on the number of landed bequests in their wills. The wills in question were made by Sir John Digby of Ab Kettleby (1529), Sir Everard Fielding of Lutterworth (1515) and Sir John Villers of Brooksby (1545). TNA, PROB 11/31/309, PROB 11/18/114, PROB

2.5.1 The Digby family

By the sixteenth century, the Digby family had expanded their primary territory in the county of Rutland further into Leicestershire. A cadet branch thus emerged with one foot either side of the Leicestershire-Rutland border, with Leicestershire PPAs, such as Ab Kettleby and Tilton on the Hill, evident amongst the branch's family members. The Digbys' proximity to the county border with Rutland is shown in Figure 2.10.[74] Sir John Digby of Ab Kettleby was the third son of Sir Everard Digby of Tilton on the Hill, who had served as JP for Leicestershire from 1511 and Rutland from 1524 until his death in 1540.[75] Sir John Digby was similarly successful; he was elevated to knight marshal of the King's household as a reward for his service to Henry VII, and it was probably this Sir John who was appointed as JP for Leicestershire in 1526.[76]
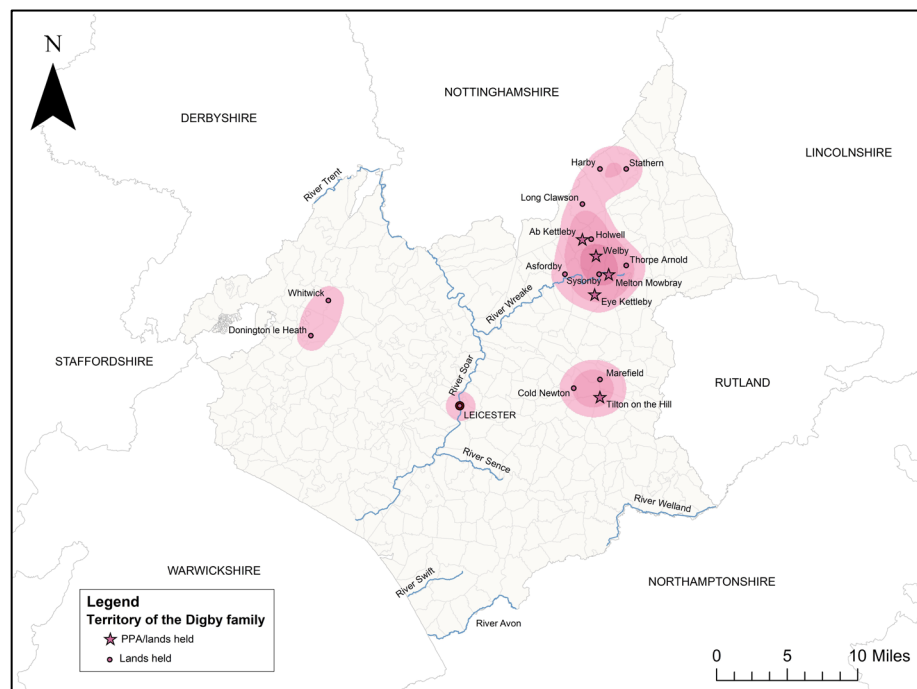
Figure 2.10 The territory of the Digby family, c.1510-1556.[77]

11/30/317. The broader context of the families' fifteenth- and sixteenth-century territory is used to accommodate the absences of Digby and Fielding IPMs.

[74] The county-by-county organisation of the IPMs and time constraints on research has forced prioritisation of Leicestershire IPMs. The Digbys' involvement in Rutland is partially illustrated in the bequests made by Sir John Digby of Ab Kettleby below, see Figure 2.11.

[75] D.F. Coros, 'Digby, John (by 1508-48), of Ab Kettleby, Leics.' in S.T. Bindoff (ed.), *The History of Parliament: the House of Commons 1509-1558* (London, 1982), pp. 43-44.

[76] Brewer, *Letters and Papers*, 4, 1526, p. 900.

[77] TNA, E 150/1117/8, E 150/1148/4, E 150/1155/2.

According to his will, Sir John used enfeoffment to request that his feoffees conveyed the property back to his preferred beneficiaries after his death. Amongst his feoffees were prominent members of both Leicestershire and Rutland gentry. Figure 2.11 illustrates the geographical distribution of his familial bequests made to his wife, Sanchia; grandson and heir, John, the son of Sir John's first and deceased son William; surviving son, Simon; and daughter-in-law, Helen. The first and most important observation to make is that he bequeathed lands and possessions at his PPA, Ab Kettleby, to his wife, grandson and heir, and daughter-in-law.[78] His bequests to his wife and grandson comprised the manor and capital messuage, a close, gardens, orchards, yardlands and a watermill, whilst his daughter-in-law was bequeathed a second close. At South Luffenham, Rutland, the PPA of Sir John's eldest and late son William, lands were bequeathed to his wife and second eldest son. It appears that Sir John was setting up his grandson and heir to take over the legacy of the Leicestershire Digbys by promoting his influence at Ab Kettleby, reflecting the strength of primogeniture. He ensured that his grandson maintained involvement in the majority of his Rutland lands except North Luffenham and South Luffenham. The family heir was kept close to the PPA.
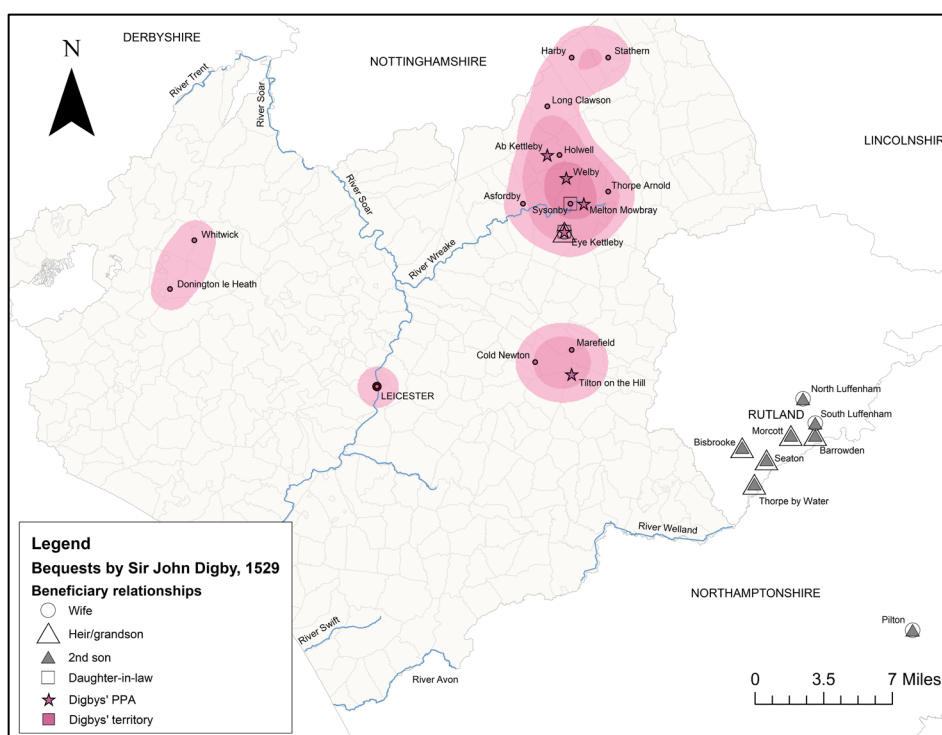
Figure 2.11 Bequests made by Sir John Digby, 1529.

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[78] It appears that his grandson, John Digby, was the son of Sir John's eldest son William. The rules of primogeniture placed him ahead of Sir John's second son, Simon.

2.5.2 The Fielding family

The crucial relationship between the heir and the PPA as the nucleus of familial territory is also evident in the will of Sir Everard Fielding of Lutterworth. Similar to the Digbys at the Rutland border, the Fieldings held substantial lands over the county border in Warwickshire. Their interests, and Sir Everard's bequests, are illustrated in Figure 2.12. The family had held lands in Lutterworth since at least the thirteenth century.[79] They had acquired the manor of Newnham Paddox, Warwickshire, in 1433.[80] Sir Everard's bequests suggest that he was encouraging his family's involvement in Warwickshire affairs by bequeathing lands there to his eldest son and heir. Sir Everard orchestrated his younger sons' interests to remain in and around Leicestershire, but predominantly south/south-eastwards and extending into Northamptonshire. Indeed, 30 years later we learn from the will of Sir William, Sir Everard's eldest son, that he identified his PPA as Newnham Paddox in Warwickshire, not Lutterworth.[81] Ten years after his father's death Sir William was named as a JP for Warwickshire, not Leicestershire, in 1526.[82] He maintained his connections with Lutterworth. In 1516 he granted certain lands and tenements in Willey, Warwickshire, almost adjacent to the Leicestershire-Warwickshire border, to the Lutterworth parish church for charitable uses.[83] His marriage to Elizabeth Pulteney ensured that the family kept a foothold in Leicestershire politics.

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[79] Nichols, *History and Antiquities*, 4, pt. 1, p. 251.
[80] Acheson, *A Gentry Community*, p. 230.
[81] TNA, PROB 11/31/690.
[82] Brewer, *Letters and Papers*, 4, 1524, p. 954.
[83] Nichols, *History and Antiquities*, 4, pt. 1, p. 259.
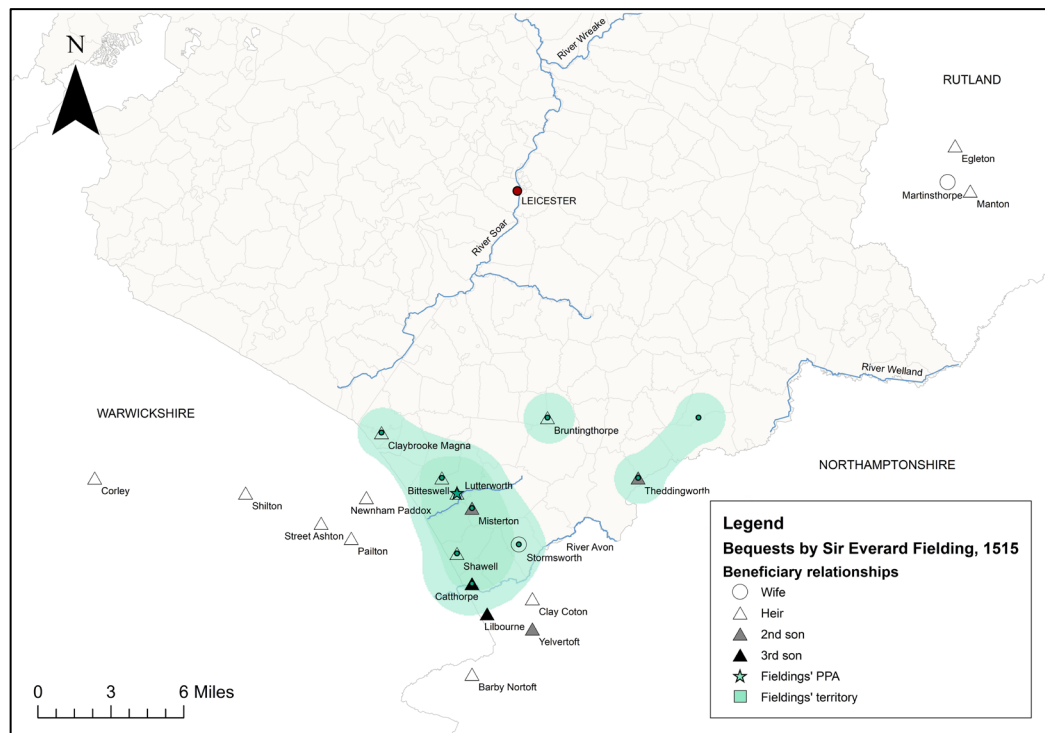
Figure 2.12 Bequests made by Sir Everard Fielding, 1515.

2.5.3 The Villers family

The structure of the Villers' territory was scattered across the county in comparison to the Fieldings and the Digbys, illustrated in Figure 2.13. Similar to the Digbys, however, was the Leicestershire-centric outlook for his family's descent. The Villers were a Nottinghamshire family, but had established themselves in Leicestershire from at least the thirteenth century.[84] They had first acquired lands at Brooksby, later their PPA, in the early fourteenth century.[85] Sir John Villers was amongst the leading Leicestershire gentry. He was named as JP for Leicestershire from 1515 until his death; on five subsidy commissions; on the ecclesiastical commission in January 1535; and as the sheriff of Leicestershire and Warwickshire in 1531-1532 and 1537-1538. He was one of the special commissioners appointed to suppress the Lincolnshire risings in March 1537, and was a staunch supporter of the Hastings faction.[86] Sir John's involvement in putting down the

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84 Coros, 'Villers, Sir John' in Bindoff, *History of Parliament: 1509-1558*, p. 527.
85 Nichols, *History and Antiquities*, 3, pt. 1 (London, 1800), p. 189.
86 Coros, 'Villers, Sir John' in Bindoff, *History of Parliament: 1509-1558*, p. 528. The Villers' involvement in a political dispute between the Greys and Hastings in Leicester Forest is discussed further in Chapter 4, 4.3.

risings was facilitated by his political standing in the midlands, and by his family's territorial presence in Lincolnshire. The IPM taken for his father in 1507, another Sir John Villers, recorded small but dispersed landholdings there.[87] Our Sir John was at least 20 years old at his father's death; his minority would have lasted only months. By his death in 1545, then, there was sufficient time to expand his family's territory in Leicestershire.
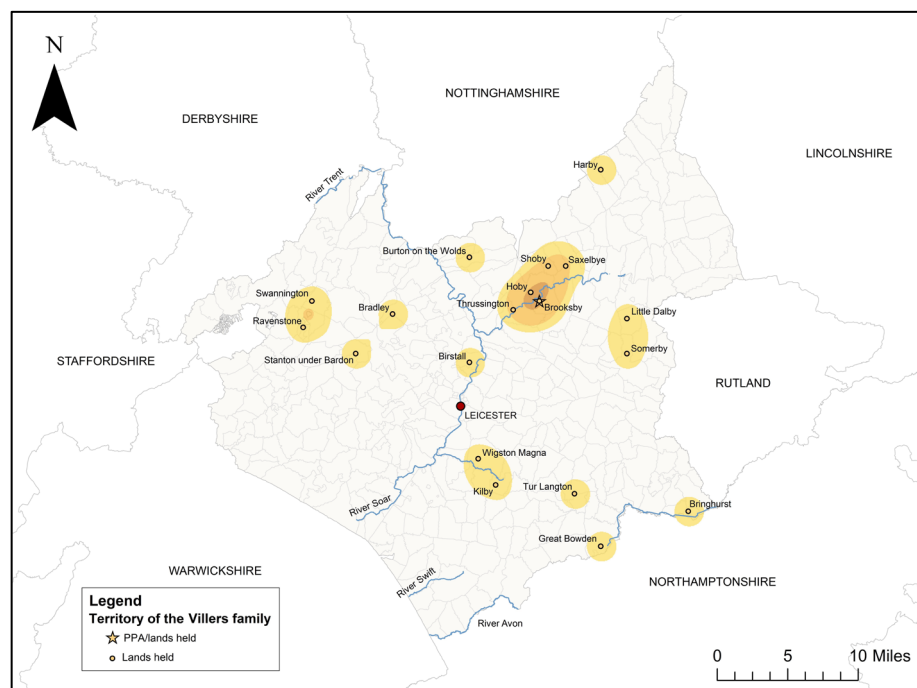
Figure 2.13 The territory of the Villers family, c.1507-1563.[88]

Figure 2.14 below demonstrates that Sir John bequeathed the majority of his Leicestershire lands to his brother and heir, Edward Villers. His only son, John Villers, was a bastard and was therefore unable to inherit the family's primary territory. His Lincolnshire connections are evident in his bequests to his daughter; his sister received minor lands in Birstall, to the north of Leicester, as did his bastard son. The most intriguing bequest, however, was that of the lands, tenements, meadows, pastures, yardlands and croft in Rotherby to Elizabeth Twyford, his mistress, and the mother of his bastard son. Of all the lands involved in Sir John's bequests, Rotherby was the closest to the family's PPA at Brooksby, lying less than half a mile to the north. His will revealed

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[87] TNA, C 142/20/146.
[88] TNA, C 142/20/146, E 150/1142/5, E 150/31/113, C 142/74/137-1, E 150/1157/10, WARD 7/10/20.

that his bastard son, John, was underage; Sir John made financial and landed bequests to him so 'that he be contynually kept at his lernyng firste to have his gramer and afterwarde the lawes of this realme'.[89] His future was important and carefully planned. This is reflected in the bequests made to his mother. Their directly adjacent position to Brooksby, the nucleus of the family territory, suggests that Sir John was manoeuvring her and, by default, John, into an influential position. Further, a bequest to Elizabeth of 'the fetherbedd that she lyeth on' at Brooksby infers that she and the young John were a continuous presence there.
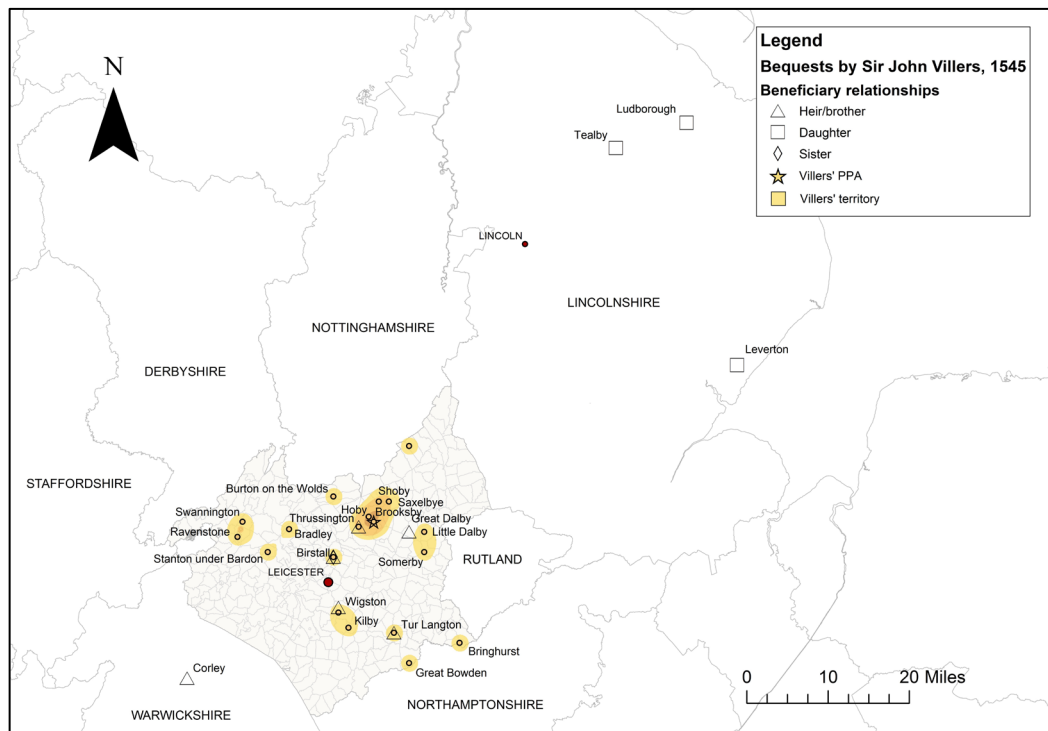
Figure 2.14 Bequests made by Sir John Villers, 1545.

Placing the IPMs in a probate context has therefore demonstrated that bequests were made with the family's territory in mind. It reinforces the importance of the PPA; there was a direct correlation between bequests' proximity to the territorial nucleus and the projected intention by the testator in the context of family legacy. Undoubtedly, the course of inheritance did not always run smoothly, evident in Chancery bills. The chapter will now consider gentry litigation, which had an equally significant and revealing role in the territorial context.

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[89] TNA, PROB 11/30/317.

2.6 Territoriality and the social network

According to Phythian-Adams, it was the establishment of lineage and perpetuation of inherited legacy that created a family's territorial association, not local society, which appeared to him to be 'quite transitory' in comparison.[90] This section develops Phythian-Adams's argument by proposing that the proximity of gentry territories could influence the local social network. This is evident in the formation of important social connections such as marriage and enfeoffment, which, as it will be shown, impacted on the gentry's landed agenda. This section also challenges Phythian-Adams's observation, however, by proposing that local gentry society *did* exert an influence on territorial association, illustrated by challenges to claims of landed entitlement in the court of Chancery. It argues, therefore, that the local gentry network both reinforced and challenged gentry territories and *vice versa*. The leading gentry families in Leicestershire wielded judicial and political power, but friction could emerge amongst the social cohesion brought about by these shared characteristics as soon as land – and family territories by association – became part of the equation.

As stated above, marriage was an important mechanism in the acquisition of land. It signified family alliances and expanded territorial influence where lands exchanged hands. Marital decisions thus required careful planning – and protection. They could offer lucrative matches and provided social and landed incentives. But they were also vulnerable; the wrong match could bring disgrace or dishonour. John Shirley, esquire, bequeathed 40s *per annum* to each of his daughters provided that they did not marry 'suche p[er]sones as shalbe to them disp[ar]yssement'.[91] One method of ensuring a beneficial match was to find it within a 'tried and tested' social alliance. In 1532, the Dean of Salisbury issued a dispensation to allow the marriage of Thomas Skeffington and Anne Ashby 'though they are within the third and fourth degrees of consanguinity'.[92] Another option was to attach a condition. Thomas Farnham, esquire, bequeathed the wardship of his daughter Katherine to his 'deare frende' Nicholas Beaumont, esquire.

[90] C. Phythian-Adams (ed.), *Societies, Cultures and Kinship, 1580-1850: Cultural Provinces and English Local History* (London, 1996), p. 19.

[91] ROLLR, 26D53/1947. With thanks to Dr Matthew Tompkins for sharing his transcription of the document.

[92] J. Gairdner (ed.), *Letters and Papers*, 6, 1533 (London, 1882), p. 105.

However, he did so 'uppon the condicion that he … shall after enioye in marriage my saide daughter to Thomas Beamounte his sonne and my godson or to some one of the sonnes of the said Nicholas Beamounte which she the saide Katheren shall lyke best'.[93] That Thomas Farnham was allowing his daughter to choose the son she liked best suggests that for him, the most important alliance was between the two families, and not the individuals.[94]

2.6.1   Geographical proximity

Marital matches, probate beneficiaries, executors, witnesses, feoffees, legal partnerships and even household servitude appear as common gentry relationships. Of course, these relationships were not exclusive to families who lived near each other, but geographical proximity played its part. On occasion, beneficial matches caused the gentry to look further afield; in addition to the Farnhams, the Villers and the Skeffingtons also married into the Beaumont family, who were based in the north-western region of the county at Grace Dieu and Coleorton (Figure 2.1 above). Yet the collective administrative responsibility shared by JPs clearly made neighbourhood alliances a convenient and powerful political prospect. The marital alliance between Elizabeth Pulteney, the daughter of Sir Thomas Pulteney and Sir William Fielding, for example, consolidated the families' influence in the region surrounding their respective PPAs in the south-west.[95]

Figure 2.15 illustrates the territorial proximity of four of our JP families, namely the Ashbys, Brokesbys, Digbys and Villers. They are joined by the Skeffingtons, who were also JPs but very few of their IPMs have survived; this part of the county's social network would be incomplete without them. The families appear most commonly in each other's wills as beneficiaries, followed by witnesses, executors and supervisors, often exclusively with little or no reference to any other Leicestershire family. The latter three roles were crucial in the administration of bequests. Probate responsibilities required a great deal of trust which, as we have seen in Chapter 1, was an integral part of gentry society.[96] A

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93   TNA, PROB 11/45/239.
94   Katherine married Thomas Beaumont in accordance with her father's wishes. See P. Watson and B. Coates, 'Beaumont, Sir Thomas I (*c.*1555-1614), of Stoughton Grange, Leics.', *History of Parliament Online: the House of Commons 1604-1629* (2010), 'https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1604-1629/member/beaumont-sir-thomas-i-1555-1614' [accessed 12th August 2018].
95   Figure 2.5 above illustrates their proximity.
96   See Chapter 1, 1.3.6.

witness could testify to the nature of bequests made; executors and supervisors played a key role in the distribution of bequests after the testator's death. The roles were most commonly given, although not exclusively, to sons, brothers and wives. The Brokesby and Villers gentlemen, such as Richard Brokesby of Melton Mowbray and George Villers of Hoby, and the knight Sir John Villers, named only their families as beneficiaries, witnesses, and so on. Sir John named his brother, Christopher, as his executor, and vice versa.[97]

Appointing individuals beyond the immediate family circle, and indeed, of a different status was a statement of confidence and trust. William Villers, esquire, named Richard Brokesby, gentleman, as his sole executor. The Skeffingtons were a prominent political and social influence in the county. Sir William Skeffington was named as a subsidy commissioner in 1514 and 1515; he was a JP from 1501 until his death, and pricked as the sheriff of Leicestershire and Warwickshire in 1515-1516 and 1521-1522. His two wives both came from the Digby family.[98] Sir John Digby of Ab Kettleby named Sir William Skeffington amongst his probate supervisors; one John Brokesby was listed as a feoffee, and Anthony Brokesby, Richard Brokesby and William Ashby were probate witnesses.[99] In 1531, a final concord transaction involved members of the Ashby, Digby, Skeffington and Villers families.[100] Geographical proximity, social improvement and political advancement had established strong connections in the region.

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[97]   ROLLR, W&I, 1546/29; 1565/52; TNA, PROB 11/30/317, PROB 11/27/102.
[98]   S.M. Thorpe, 'Skeffington, Sir William (by 1467-1535), of Skeffington and Groby, Leics.' in Bindoff, *History of Parliament: 1509-1558*, pp. 319-320.
[99]   TNA, PROB 11/31/309.
[100] TNA, Court of Common Pleas: Feet of Fines Files, Henry VIII – Victoria, CP 25/2/24/152.
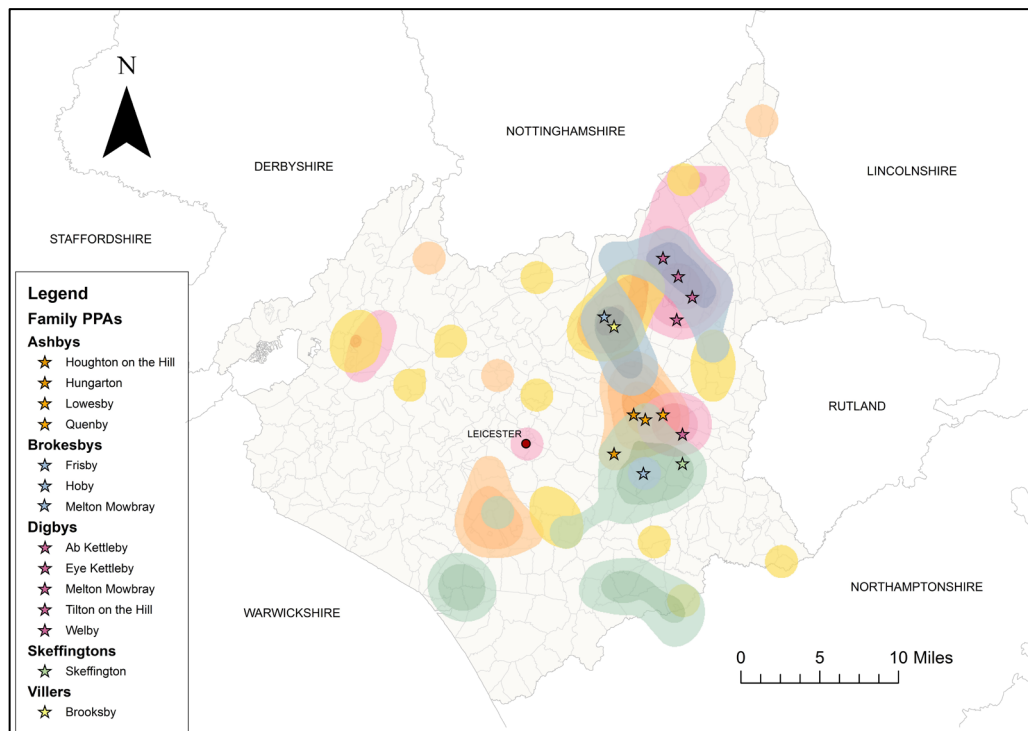
Figure 2.15 The territorial network of the Ashby, Brokesby, Digby, Skeffington and Villers families.

2.6.2 Territorial fault lines

The discussion above has demonstrated that territorial proximity encouraged and established inter-gentry alliances. This section concentrates on inter- and non-gentry disputes in the territorial context, informed by bills of complaint brought to Chancery. The intimate socio-political network amongst the JPs complicated the descent of land. The trust expressed by one family towards another, by making one or more members feoffees and executors, made them vulnerable to dispute. Obstruction by feoffees and executors, especially concerning wills, was a common allegation.[101] By the fifteenth century these cases were often brought to Chancery since, according to John Baker, 'the feoffees were clearly bound by ties of conscience which were not recognised in the courts of common law'.[102] By the late fifteenth century, conscience has been argued to be 'the

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[101] For a detailed discussion of the role of Chancery in testamentary disputes see J. Biancalana, 'Testamentary cases in fifteenth-century Chancery', *Legal History Review*, 76 (2008), pp. 283-306. Biancalana suggested that the conscience-based jurisdiction of Chancery gave it authority in such cases.

[102] Baker, *English Legal History*, pp. 249-251. Chancery disputes concerning different forms of entitlement to land are discussed in further detail below.

hallmark of the medieval Chancery'.[103] Our cases suggest that these ties became weaker as attractive properties descended amidst increasing claims. As lands passed between generations and into new marriages and remarriages, the ties of conscience were diluted.

A sample of our JPs has been taken according to their presence in Chancery.[104] The figures below portray the locations of contested places overlaid onto gentry territories. The green bolts represent places where the family were plaintiffs, and the red bolts where they were defendants.[105] Inter-gentry suits illustrate the impact of an intimately connected social and political network on Leicestershire equity. Non-gentry suits reflect the type of resistance encountered by the gentry, particularly in proximity to their PPAs. By considering litigation in the context of gentry territories we can conclude the extent of territorial influence. Varying degrees of relationship emerge. Figure 2.16 shows that there is relatively little correlation between the location of the Digbys' territory and their Chancery disputes. It is interesting to note, however, that the only instance where they brought action occurred at their PPA at Melton Mowbray. Comparatively, the Turvilles' litigation map (Figure 2.17) indicates that two out of three cases requiring defence occurred at their PPAs of Aston Flamville and Thurlaston.[106]

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[103] D.R. Klinck, *Conscience, Equity and the Court of Chancery in Early Modern England* (London, 2010), p. 13.

[104] This comprises the families of Brokesby, Digby, Haselrigg, Keble, Neele, Turville and Villers.

[105] Red and green lightning bolts on the same map illustrate contested places, not inter-family disputes, unless otherwise stated.

[106] The anomaly relates to the descent of the manor of Shearsby from Sir Henry Sacheverell to his younger brother Ralph Sacheverell, esquire, in *c*.1544. Ralph alleged that John Turville, esquire, the son of Sir William Turville, had obtained the deeds to the lands and had interrupted the descent by unlawfully occupying the property. TNA, C 1/1161/1.
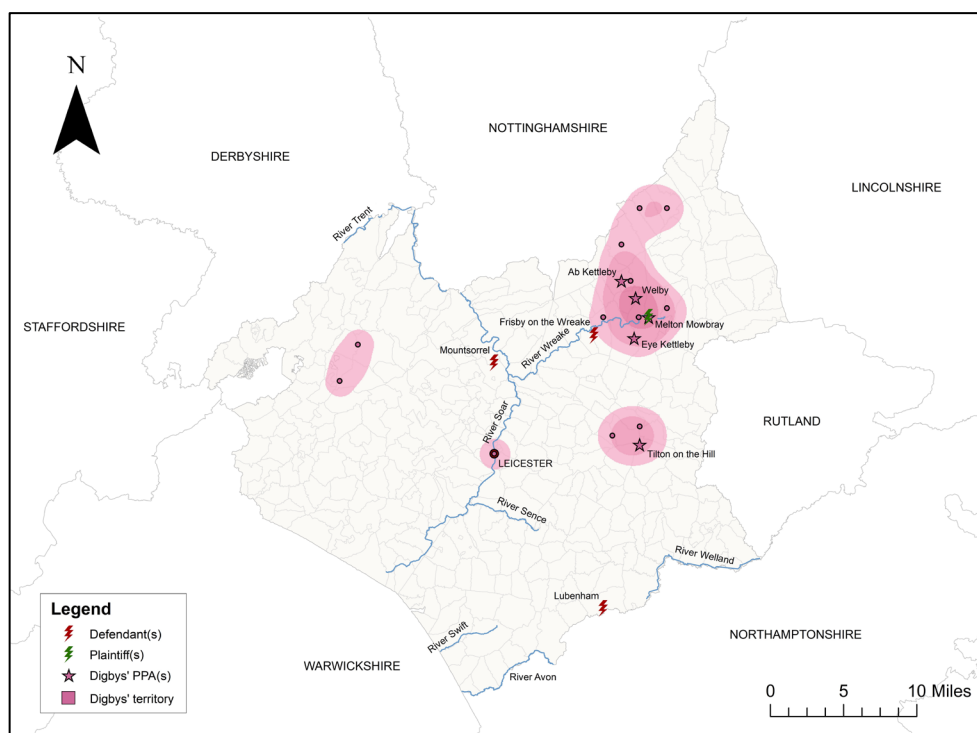
Figure 2.16 Litigation and places involving the Digby family.[107]
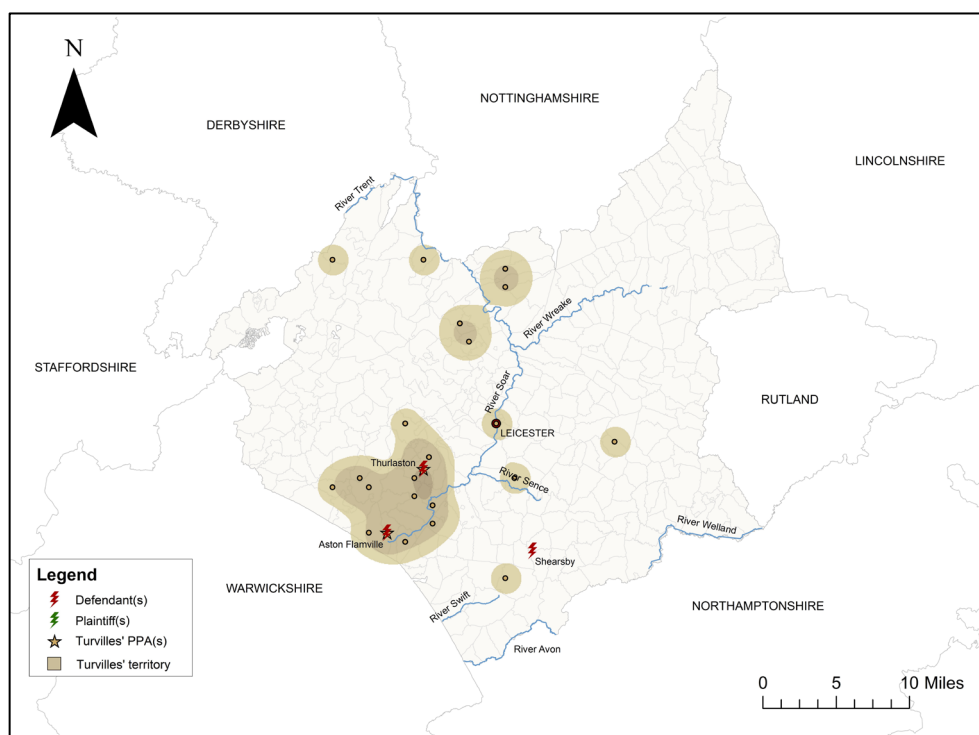
Figure 2.17 Litigation and places involving the Turville family.[108]

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[107] TNA, C 1/1215/34-37, C 1/1226/51, C 1/527/31, C 1/876/34.
[108] TNA, C 1/324/35, C 1/967/75, C 1/1161/1.

The Turvilles' combined defence at Aston Flamville and Thurlaston offers an insight into social resistance from tenants against the gentry's assumed privileges at their PPAs.[109] The case was brought by Robert Cross, husbandman, against Sir William Turville, his wife Jane, and their son and heir, George. Cross alleged that Sir William and George had forcibly entered onto his property in the parish of Thurlaston, which they had leased to him in return for 40s, and 31s 8d yearly, and had driven away his horses. Cross, or at least, his lawyer, was careful to point out that Sir William was 'a man of greate possescions habitites and instaunces', and that he was 'butt a poore man'.[110] In response, Sir William had used his judicial powers as JP to action a suit of trespass against Cross.[111] The Turvilles' perceived territorial entitlement, especially at their PPA, was augmented and exploited by Sir William's position as JP.[112]

This is also evident in another case brought to Chancery against Richard Neele, esquire, at Tugby. We have seen above that the Neele family had two PPAs within their territory in the north and east of the county at Prestwold and Tugby respectively. Their litigious pattern, evident in Figure 2.18, is intriguing; they appear to have defended their western territory, and brought action in their northern territory. The Tugby dispute provides another insight into defiance of the gentry. The parish vicar, James Lax, claimed that 'were the p[re]cyncte … of the seyd p[ar]ysche extend throwe out Tugby Cathorpe and Est Norton … and hys p[re]dycessors vykers of the seyd churche have … ben peassable seased' of 100 acres of glebe land, tithes of lambs and wool, lesser tithes and 13s 4d of yearly rent in the parish and out of the manor of Tugby, Richard Neele, esquire, had 'interuptyd and threteynyth contynuably' their occupation. Similarly to Robert Cross, the vicar alluded to Neele's 'great riches kynred [and] fryndsshyp w[i]t[h]in the seid countye' compared to his 'poverte' as his justification for approaching the court. That Lax and Cross had managed to bring action against Turville and Neele in Chancery, and stressed their inferior social and financial position whilst doing so, reinforces its role as a court of conscience observed by Biancalana, Baker and Klinck, discussed above. It also illustrates the Turvilles' and Neeles' sense of entitlement at their respective PPAs.

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109 TNA, C 1/967/75-76.
110 Ibid.
111 Ibid.
112 The social impact of Sir William Turville's landed activity is discussed further below. See Chapter 4, 4.5.
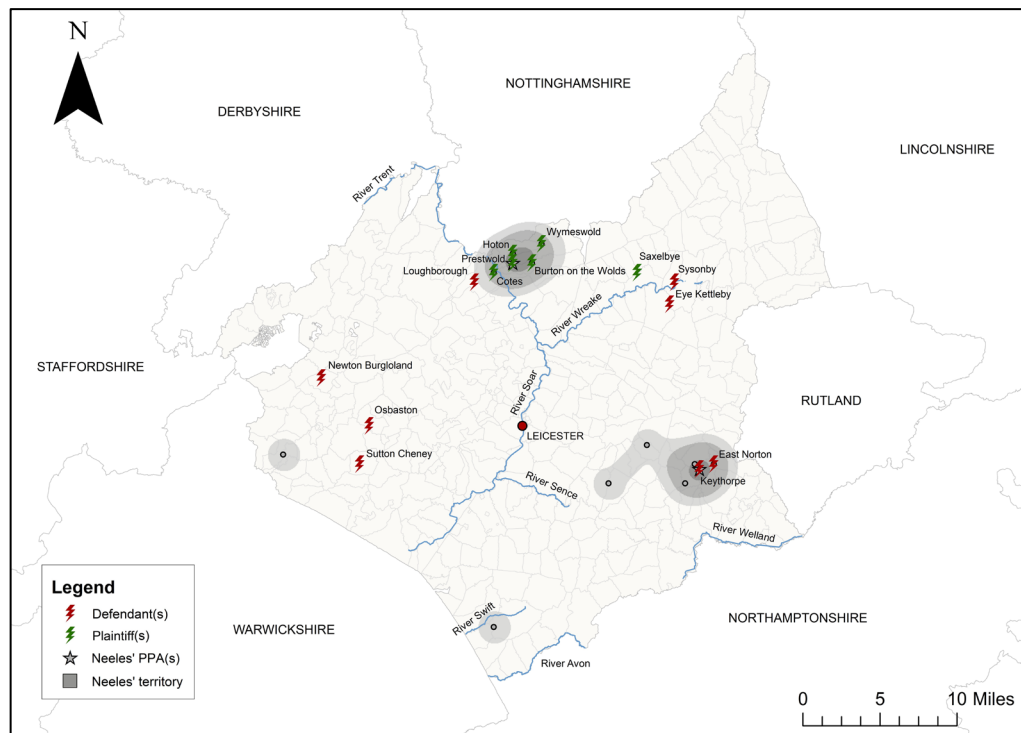
Figure 2.18 Litigation and places involving the Neele family.[113]

PPAs certainly seemed to attract litigation; the gentry were more sensitive about these sites and were quicker to defend their interests there. The majority of places over which the Brokesbys had to defend themselves fell within, or in substantial proximity to, their primary territory in the north-east (Figure 2.19). Their PPA at Shoby featured prominently. This is largely due to the litigation being brought by and against members of the same family. In *c*.1544-1551, Anthony Brokesby, esquire, made a bill of complaint against his own son and heir, Robert Brokesby over a messuage and land in Shoby.[114] Another occasion saw the same Anthony bringing action against one Ambrose Wolley, citizen and grocer of London.[115] Brokesby had made a bargain and sale with Wolley of lands in Shoby, with an annual value of £24, in return for £200. Allegedly, the bargain and sale would be voided upon repayment; it was a form of loan. But Wolley had only paid £100 to Brokesby, and asserted his rights to the lands there. It is clear that the Brokesbys' lands at Shoby were sufficiently substantial to warrant Anthony Brokesby's action over them, and to pay for the Chancery suits. The Brokesbys' maintenance of their

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[113] TNA, C 1/55/250, C 1/56/236, C 1/58/5, C 1/81/58, C 1/134/9, C 1/151/2, C 1/1147/65-66, C 1/1148/17-18, C 1/1200/34, C 1/1243/20-24, C 1/1513/89.
[114] TNA, C 1/1174/60.
[115] TNA, C 1/1175/37-41.

litigious interests in and around their primary territory infers a regional outlook, largely dictated by the size and location of their PPA.
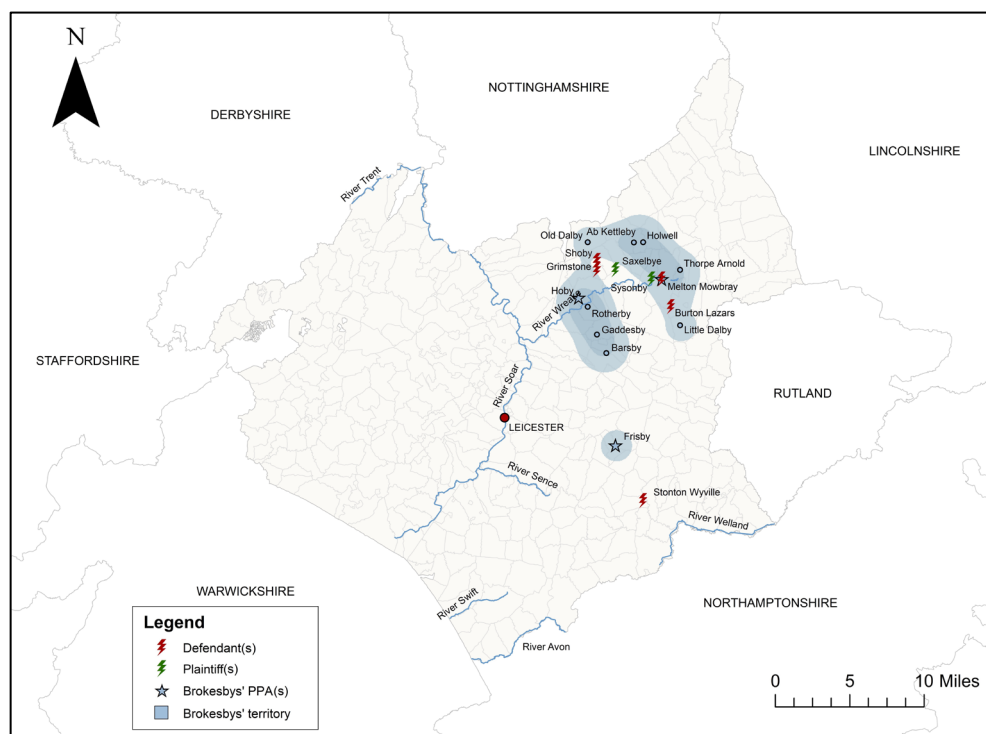
Figure 2.19 Litigation and places involving the Brokesby family.[116]

The Villers were the least litigious of the group in terms of the number of cases in which they feature, but they reveal the inter-generational complications which arose from probate legacies (Figure 2.20). The first case was brought by one Jasper Barcock, husband of Lucy Keble, against Leonard Villers and Alice, his wife.[117] Alice was previously married to the late Thomas Keble of Humberstone, serjeant-at-law. It concerned the legacy of his son, Walter Keble. Walter's will had requested that 300 marks coming out of those manors' profits should be given to his two daughters, Lucy and Anne.[118] Before his death, Walter had also made Sir John Villers, another Thomas Keble (possibly his brother) and Thomas Harvey his executors, who had then proceeded to take the profits for themselves, and had paid only a small fraction to Walter's daughters.[119] The problem

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[116] TNA, C 1/306/26, C 1/730/1, C 1/734/66, C 1/736/7, C 1/954/36-37, C 1/1102/50, C 1/1174/60, C 1/1175/37-41, C 1/1489/20-23.

[117] Leonard Villers was the brother of Sir John Villers of Ab Kettleby.

[118] There are some discrepancies here between the family's genealogy given in the Chancery bill and that given in Ives, *Common Lawyers*, p. 27. They may relate to different members of the same family with the same name.

[119] His choice of executors reflected the social network prevalent amongst the Leicestershire JPs.

continued after the death of Thomas Keble, whose widow and executrice, Alice, had married Leonard Villers who had also withheld payment.

Not long afterwards, the dispute arose again over the profits of the manors of Humberstone, Hamilton and Cossington. This time the action was brought by Francis Keble, son and heir of Walter Keble, against Edward Hastings and the aforementioned Leonard Villers.[120] Francis Keble was a minor at his father's death, and his wardship was purchased by the Sir John Villers mentioned above, who was also a distant relative.[121] According to the bill, Edward Hastings and Leonard Villers were Sir John's executors, and had wrongfully taken the manors' profits for themselves after his death. Figure 2.5 above shows the proximity of the Keble and Villers estates. The places concerned were at the heart of the Kebles' territory. It will also be remembered that Humberstone was their PPA. The Villers' perceived encroachment into the Kebles' territory was largely created and dictated by intermarriage with other gentry families, which itself was a mechanism for territorial expansion.
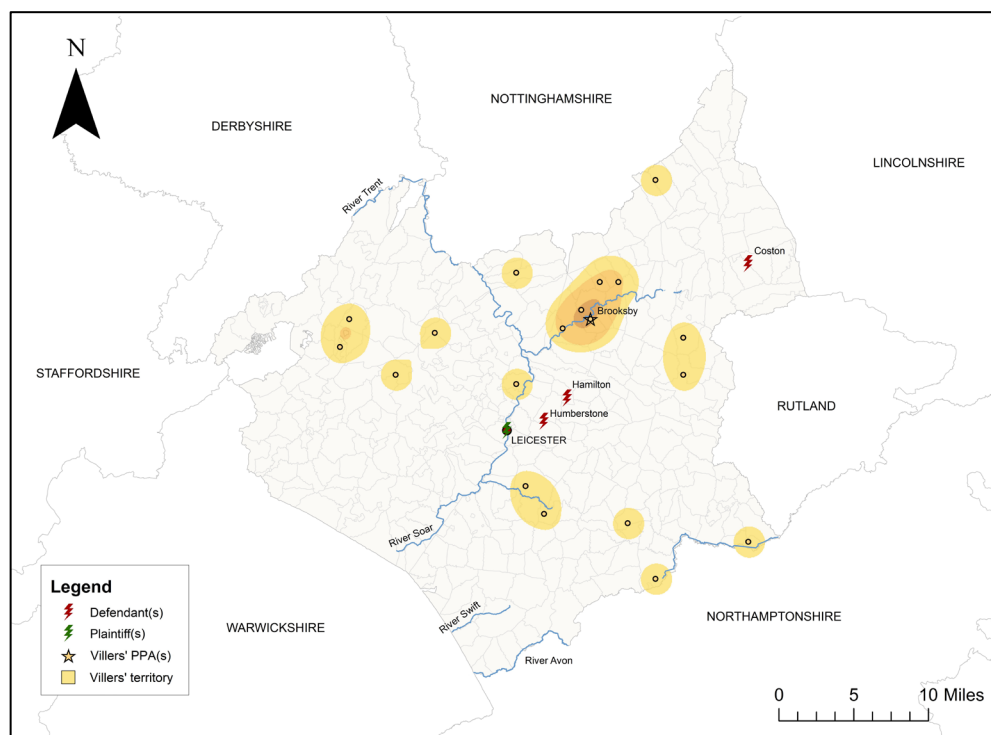
Figure 2.20 Litigation and places involving the Villers family.[122]

[120] TNA, C 1/1180/18.
[121] Francis's grandmother, Alice, had married Sir John's brother, Leonard.
[122] TNA, C 1/1516/9-11, C 1/1175/21, C 1/1180/18, C 1/1194/2.

The concentration of places over which the Kebles were plaintiff in Figure 2.21 proposes that the family's legal background equipped them to bring action against encroachments onto their territory. Figure 2.22 suggests that the Haselriggs were their primary contenders. In fact, the majority of the lands evident in the two figures were involved in one suit, and was actually an inter-family Keble dispute.[123] The Haselriggs were operating in the capacity of feoffee. The case is evidence for the complications which could arise when enfeoffments were used to bequeath land. The primary plaintiff, Sir Ralph Egerton, was a Cheshire knight. He had married Margaret, the widow of Thomas Keble, serjeant-at-law. His fellow plaintiffs were Francis Keble, son of Walter Keble, and his uncle, Thomas Keble. The defendants were Eustace Braham, who had married Millicent, the widow of Walter Keble, and Thomas Haselrigg and Christopher Blount, both feoffees to uses. Haselrigg and Blount had been dragged into the conflict because Walter Keble had enfeoffed them, presumably due to Francis's minority, and with the intention that they would convey the substantial number of lands involved back to him when he came of age. It is clear that Walter Keble's widow, and his feoffees, felt that they were entitled to the lands. Equally, the plaintiffs, especially Sir Ralph Egerton, felt that they should assume control of those lands. The social structure, therefore, was influenced in part by landed entitlement, and in part by geographical proximity. Socio-political undercurrents created fault lines where gentry territories were contested, and gentry agendas of preservation and expansion were resisted.

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[123] TNA, C 1/501/4.
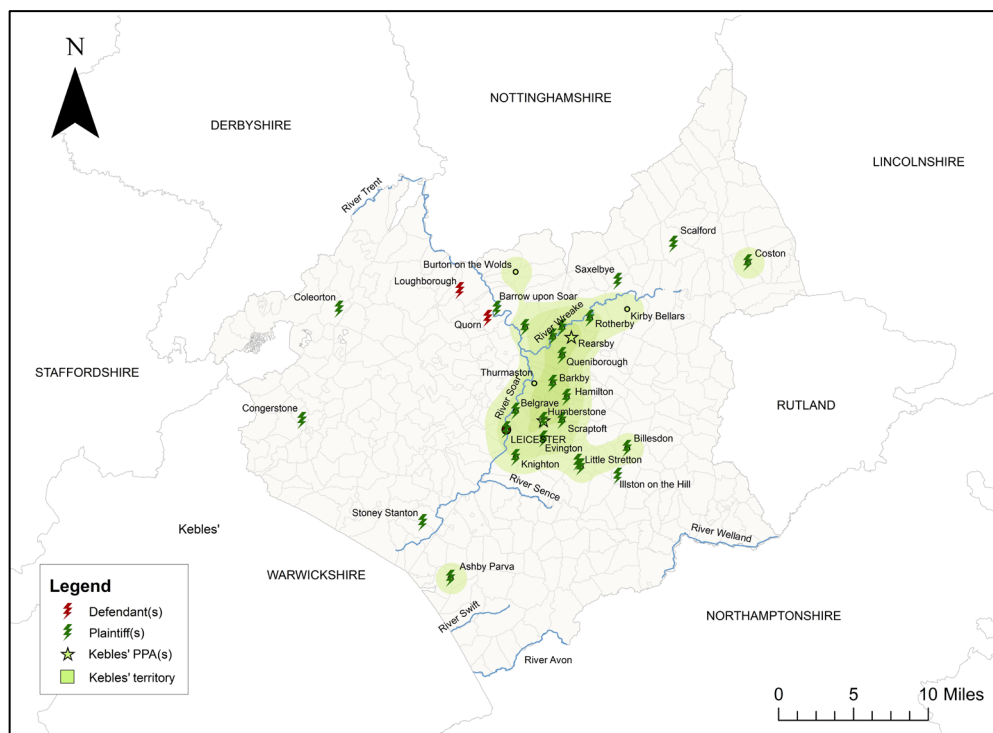
Figure 2.21 Litigation and places involving the Keble family.[124]
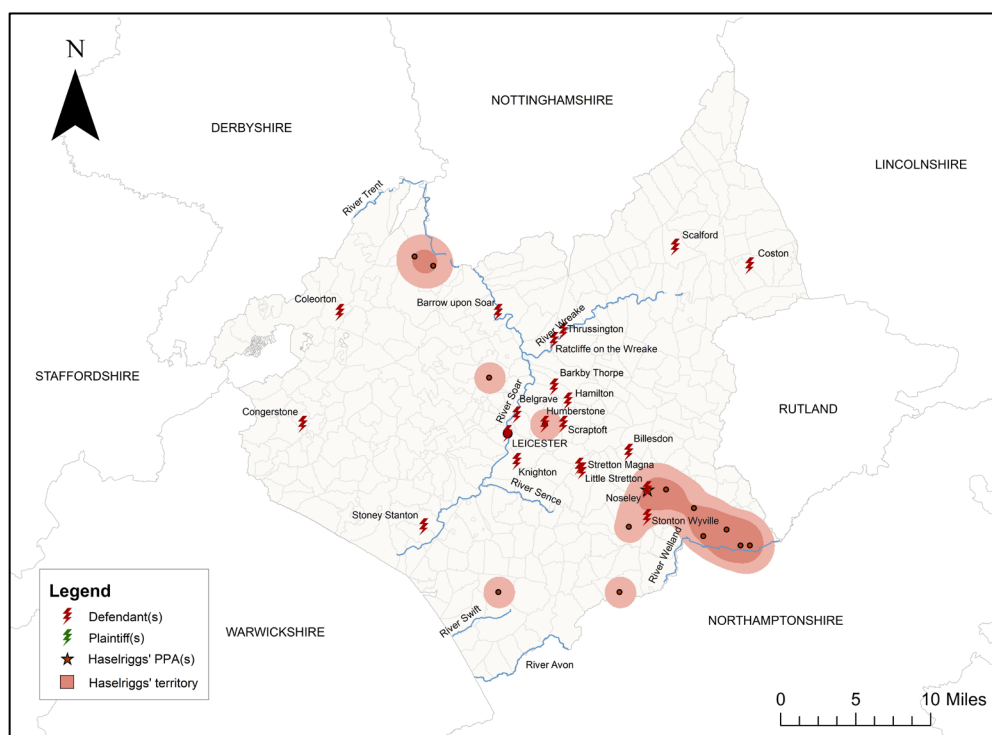
Figure 2.22 Litigation and places involving the Haselrigg family.[125]

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[124] TNA, C 1/42/89, C 1/58/128, C 1/61/73, C 1/72/24, C 1/410/48, C 1/501/4, C 1/1147/65-66, C 1/1156/48, C 1/1180/18.

[125] TNA, C 1/306/26, C 1/472/27, C 1/501/4, C 1/982/90, C 1/1157/1, C 1/1265/8.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that the estimation and visualisation of gentry territories can lend an alternative perspective to the common characteristics of gentry identity. It has illustrated the importance of putting gentry action and interaction into a geographical dimension. Gentry landholdings were clustered around the PPA, reinforcing its role as the nucleus of the family territory. The gentry self-identified with these places in statements of affiliation, evident in their wills. By viewing these territories in isolation from and in the context of each other, this chapter has shown that the cultural value of gentry territories could overrule those made by the shared identity of JP office-holding.

PPAs and gentry landholdings formed gentry territories, or spheres of influence. The findings of this chapter suggest that Coss's observation – that office-holding and collective identity formed the gentry's sense of territoriality – might require readjustment. The discussion above has shown that the cohesion created by office-holding and collective identity was vulnerable to, rather than a part of, gentry territoriality. This has been demonstrated in the gentry's efforts to direct the future development of their territories through inheritance. Problems were encountered when those entrusted to oversee the smooth descent of land were encumbered by their own sense of entitlement. Gentry territories were also threatened by individual family agendas, evident in the action brought to the court of Chancery. Mapping the consequent litigation has revealed a correlation between gentry territories and where the gentry chose to assert or defend their landed interests, reinforcing the role of the PPA as a territorial nucleus.

This chapter has explored the cultural value of gentry territories and has advanced the argument for the significance of place. It has shown that the gentry were determined to preserve their territorial interests against a backdrop of changing family circumstances, such as professional advancement or the division of the family territory. We have briefly touched upon the economic value of gentry territories. This requires further investigation which will be addressed in the next chapter. Chapter 3 builds on the discussion above to consider how the gentry responded to changes in the contemporary economic climate, with specific reference to their agricultural interests. It will be shown that the gentry could adapt to preserve their financial income, thus ensuring the protection of their family legacy, whatever the cost.

Chapter 3: Land use, agriculture and husbandry

3.1 Abstract

This chapter examines the role of economy in the construction and expression of gentry identity, with particular reference to agriculture. The previous chapters have developed our understanding of how gentry identity was informed by administrative, political and territorial influences, underpinned by the cultural construction of place. Economy – or resource management – was also a fundamental part of gentry culture. We will explore different aspects of the Leicestershire gentry's involvement in agriculture, a practice heavily dictated by the county's topographical suitability for mixed husbandry. The chapter begins with a focus on the gentry's land use from the perspective of status and chronological change. It shows that the social hierarchy shaped agricultural interests, which were also subject to personal preferences and contemporary economic trends. The next section uses probate evidence to assess the gentry's approaches to agriculture, and demonstrates the different techniques used by the gentry to ensure the maximum exploitation of their estates. These sections build the foundation for the final section of the chapter which considers how the practical importance of agricultural animals also enhanced their sociocultural value. Together, these approaches argue that, in addition to offering economic incentive, the gentry's agricultural experience was an important component of their cultural identity.

3.2 Introduction

In the editors' introduction to *Gentry Culture in Late Medieval England*, Raluca Radulescu and Alison Truelove asked, 'We may assign individuals to the gentry by virtue of their socio-economic standing, but what else drew them together as a group?' The remainder of their volume discussed what the editors appear to have seen as non-socio-economic elements of gentry culture.[1] Contributions to the volume comprised chapters on gentility, chivalry, politics, education and recreation, literacy, literature, cultural networks, religion, music and visual culture. There was no specific reference to place,

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[1] Radulescu and Truelove, *Gentry Culture in Late Medieval England*, pp. 1-2.

landscape or economy. Yet as this thesis has already shown in the application of 'place' to gentry identity, these elements should be not treated as being distinct from economic concerns. Chapter 2 demonstrated, for example, that gentry territories maintained an economic dimension; the landed and ancestral values of certain landholdings influenced social behaviour.[2] We cannot split gentry culture into socio-economic and non-socio-economic parts; economy was as much a part of gentry culture as politics or education. In support of this argument, this chapter applies the lens of place to two major economic narratives in gentry studies: the advent of enclosure, and engagement with direct demesne farming.

Enclosure and direct demesne farming were two predominantly agricultural concerns which have particular relevance to Leicestershire given its topographical suitability for agriculture, and in particular for mixed husbandry. This observation was not lost on contemporaries:

> The countrey enclosed I prayse,
> the tother liketh not me.
> for nothing the welth it doth raise,
> to such as inferior be.
> Where all thing in common doth rest,
> corne fielde with the pasture and mede,
> Though commen thou doe for the best,
> yet what doth it stande thee in stede?
> Example by Leicester shire,
> what soile can be better than that,
> For any thing hart can desire.
> and yet it doth want ye se what,
> Mast, couert, close pasture, and wood,
> and other things nedefull as good.[3]

Thomas Tusser's observation of Leicestershire was first published in his revised edition of *A Hundreth Good Pointes of Husbandry* in 1570. His admiration for the county's soil was in sharp contrast to his disappointment in the comparative absence of enclosure and wood. The suggestion that Leicestershire's soil could have produced 'any thing hart can desire' alluded to the importance of agricultural enterprise in England at that time, which was heavily influenced by the presence or absence of suitable environmental conditions. The Cornish gentry, for example, were able to manipulate their local supply of tin –

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[2]   This will be discussed in further detail in Chapter 4, where the convergence of economic and ancestral entitlement had a direct impact on gentry behaviour.
[3]   T. Tusser, *A Hundreth Good Pointes of Husbandry* (London, 1570).

mineralised granite – to profit from the mining industry. Similarly, the Derbyshire gentry took advantage of local lead deposits, as did their counterparts in iron-rich Sussex.

Leicestershire's suitability for agriculture was exploited by the gentry to generate landed revenue, despite Tusser's apparent belief that they had not yet reached the county's maximum potential. Data extracted from IPMs indicates that the Leicestershire gentry gained a substantial proportion of their income from leasing out their demesne lands.[4] However, there is also evidence, particularly amongst the probate record, that suggests that certain gentry were also practising a combination of crop- and animal-based husbandry. They are reminiscent of Chris Dyer's general observation that a proportion of the fifteenth-century gentry had 'adopted a new style of directly managed demesne production … which combined a cultivation of grain with animal husbandry' by the sixteenth century.[5] For Nicola Whyte, 'renewed population growth, inflation, and advance of a more sophisticated market economy motivated farmers to develop more competitive methods of production that both suited their particular local environments and their access to market centres'.[6]

The advent of this new style went hand-in-hand with enclosure, which, as Clive Holmes and Felicity Heal commented, was a 'prerequisite to the maximisation of the landlord's profit, whether the intention was to convert the land to pasture and establish a sheep-ranch, or to attempt a more productive arable exploitation deploying the latest technologies'.[7] Joan Thirsk argued that 'the dramatic change in the direction of agriculture' evident by the turn of the fifteenth century – illustrated in the return of certain members of the gentry towards direct demesne farming – was as much influenced by rising food prices as it was by 'a mounting bookish interest in classical agriculture'.[8] There was a substantial amount of contemporary literature available to the entrepreneurial

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[4] The IPM of Sir William Turville included the names of his tenants, some of whom were from the local gentry, for example. TNA, E 150/1149/3.
[5] Dyer, *An Age of Transition?*, p. 103.
[6] Whyte, *Inhabiting the Landscape*, pp. 12-13.
[7] F. Heal and C. Holmes, *The Gentry in England and Wales, 1500-1700* (Basingstoke, 1994), p. 110.
[8] J. Thirsk, 'Making a fresh start: sixteenth-century agriculture and the classical inspiration' in M. Leslie and T. Raylor (eds.), *Culture and Cultivation in Early Modern England: Writing and the Land* (Leicester, 1992), pp. 15-17.

gentry, such the chapter in John Fitzherbert's *Boke of Husbandrye* which contained information for 'a short informacyon for a yonge gentylman that entendeth to thryve'.[9]

Profitability was clearly a priority in the gentry's agricultural enterprise, but it was not without criticism. It brought reward for the ruthless landowner at the expense of the locality, especially where common ground had been enclosed. This attracted the attention of the state. A contemporary definition of enclosure described it thus:

> It is not taken where a man doth enclose and hedge in his own proper ground, where no man hath commons, for such inclosure is very beneficial to the common-wealth; it is a cause of great encrease of wood ... when any man hath taken away and enclosed any other mens commons, or hath pulled down houses of husbandry, and converted the lands from tillage to pasture. This is the meaning of the word, and so we pray you to remember it.[10]

The loss of common lands was very much a social concern. This was imaginatively expressed by the lawyer and statesman Sir Thomas More in his satirical treatise, *Utopia* (1516). He lamented that

> your sheep that were wont to be so meek and tame, and so small eaters, now, as I heard say, be become so great devourers and so wild, that they eat up, and swallow down the very men themselves. They consume, destroy, and devour whole fields, houses, and cities. For look in what parts of the realm doth grow the finest, and therefore dearest wool, there noble men, and gentlemen, yea and certain Abbots, holy men no doubt, not contenting themselves with the yearly revenues and profits, that were wont to grow to their forefathers and predecessors of their lands ... leave no ground for tillage: they inclose all into pastures ... [and] leave nothing standing, but only the church to be made a sheephouse.[11]

More's comments show that enclosure was a social concern for its implementers as well as those affected.[12] There is a glimpse of these moral concerns in the will of William Faunte, esquire. He advised his sons against enclosure at Cold Newton, 'althoughe they

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[9] J. Fitzherbert, *The Boke of Husbandry* (London, 1533). The authorship of the *Boke of Husbandrye* has been much debated, see R.H.C. Fitzherbert, 'The Authorship of the "Book of Husbandry" and the "Book of Surveying"', *The English Historical Review*, 12, no. 46 (1897), pp. 225-236. Based in Norbury, Derbyshire, Sir Anthony Fitzherbert (1470-1538) is generally accepted to have been the author. He was named as a commissioner of the peace for Leicestershire four times between 1524 and his death in 1538, making him a part of the local social network. It is quite possible, therefore, that the Leicestershire gentry would also have been familiar with Fitzherbert's work on husbandry.

[10] 'Instructions to the enclosure commissioners appointed June 1548, and Hale's charge to the juries impanelled to present enclosures' in R.H. Tawney and E. Power (eds.), *Tudor Economic Documents*, 1 (London, 1951), pp. 39-44.

[11] T. More, *Utopia*, S. Bruce (ed.), *Three Early Modern Utopias: Utopia, New Atlantis and the Isle of Pines* (Oxford, 2008), pp. 21-22.

[12] The impact of enclosure on the lower branches of society is discussed in Chapter 4, 4.5.

be lordes of the mano[r] of Newton that they shall not improuve theym ne enclose any of the netes pasture there frome the poore inh[ab]itaunts'.[13] Faunte's concern appears to have been anomalous amongst our probate dataset.

It is interesting to note that More interpreted enclosure as being a disruption of an ancestral tradition, where participants were 'not contenting themselves' with the profits which were 'wont to grow to their ... predecessors'. This thesis is particularly preoccupied with the intense affiliation with place created by gentry ancestry. More's comments were a direct attack on this relationship. They struck at the heart of this interpretation of gentry identity. There is little evidence to suggest that an ancestral connection with certain types of husbandry, such as a preference for arable, was preventing the gentry from adapting to the economic climate. Heale and Holmes suggested that successful estate management was another method of continuing family legacy; it was a skill that 'fathers sought to impress upon their heirs, essential to financial success'.[14] Indeed, financial return was an essential part of family survival; it funded rental payments to the Crown, litigious battles over land, and eventually, the immortalisation of gentry identity *post mortem* in bequests, chapels, tombs and monuments. The notion of legacy suggests that there were social undercurrents to the gentry's involvement in agriculture and husbandry. This chapter will explore these undercurrents, and will argue that the gentry's ability and willingness to adapt to the economic climate reflected their determination to fund the continuation of family legacies.

3.2.1 Sources

Using a similar methodology to Chapter 2, this chapter uses the extents of IPMs to estimate gentry land use across our period. The calculations of approximate acreage below include both acres and virgates. Interpreting the size of land components, such as the translation of virgates to acreage, is difficult given the regional size variation across England. The recognised average is approximately 30 acres per virgate.[15] Margaret Yates's work on Berkshire returned a size range of 20 to 48 acres per virgate.[16] Charles Billson attributed this variation to soil type and quality, and suggested that higher soil

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[13] TNA, PROB 11/42B/627.
[14] Heal and Holmes, *Gentry in England and Wales*, p. 104.
[15] 'virgate, n.', *OED* (2019), 'www.oed.com/view/Entry/223723' [accessed 1st March 2019].
[16] Yates, 'Descriptions of land' in Hicks, *Fifteenth-Century Inquisitions Post Mortem*, p. 148, fn. 15.

quality would produce lower acreages per virgate. He placed the size of Leicestershire virgates well below the national average, inferring good soil quality.[17] Based on the average size of 12.6 acres returned by the enclosure commissioners for the county in 1517, virgates have been translated to acreages using an average of 13 acres.[18]

Probate wills can be used to estimate the level of gentry engagement with husbandry. Despite his conclusion that this is a 'clumsy way of judging their commitment', Dyer conceded that wills do hold valuable information on gentry agriculture. His sample of 63 gentry wills proved in the archdiocese of York between 1485 and 1500 revealed that only 17% contained references to direct agricultural production.[19] The Leicestershire sample of 106 wills written between 1481 and 1598 contains 22%.[20] As Dyer has, quite rightly, pointed out, 'a knight or esquire active in commercial agriculture was capable of writing a will without bequeathing animals or dung carts to his relatives, supporters, and servants!'[21] Clearly, wills are not comprehensive; they cannot be a like-for-like alternative to inventories, but they are far from useless. They can shed light on the finer detail of interpersonal relationships, such to whom certain goods were bequeathed. It will be shown below that the animal context can provide evidence for the interaction between the gentry and their household, and the gentry and their animals. Wills can also contribute to the reconstruction of estate management methods through references to certain implements or structures. This is also the case with probate inventories.

Probate inventories offer a glimpse, albeit limited, into the agricultural methods used by the gentry. The inventory of John Beaumont, esquire, for example, recorded the geographical locations of where he kept some of his animals. Beaumont had appointed two men, Burley and Mason, to keep sheep at Osgathorpe with 80 hoggs, and wethers numbering '[100] lacking one' at Castle Donington. At Peckleton, adjacent to the Leicester Forest, he kept 20 steers, ten heifers and one old ox.[22] It is certainly possible that Beaumont used his ancestral knowledge of Leicestershire to inform his keeping of

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17 C. Billson, 'The open fields of Leicester', *TLAHS*, 14 (1925-26) p. 7.
18 I.S. Leadam (ed.), *The Domesday of Inclosures, 1517-1518* (London, 1897), p. 227, fn. 2.
19 Dyer, *An Age of Transition?*, p. 109.
20 The two samples are difficult to compare directly given the differences in total number and timespan, and the ambiguity of how 'direct references' are defined, but they demonstrate the usefulness of the approach.
21 Dyer, *An Age of Transition?*, p. 109.
22 TNA, Exchequer: Treasury of the Receipt: Miscellaneous Books, E 36/148.

certain animals in various locations. It makes for a tempting conclusion concerning the knowledge of appropriate landscapes and environments, of soil composition and topography, for several types of husbandry. The reference to his keeping rye is a good example; 'rye was not a common crop and was generally found only where the ground was especially suitable'.[23]

3.3 Geographical and chronological variations in land use

3.3.1 County hundreds and the gentry hierarchy

This section explores the distributions of land use across Leicestershire, firstly by status and secondly by hundred, and investigates how the gentry were operating within the county's regions. Based on William Burton's seventeenth-century observation of suitability for grass and corn in the north-east and south-west, we might expect, for example, that the gentry based in the north-eastern hundreds of East Goscote and Framland, and those in the south-western hundreds of Guthlaxton and Sparkenhoe, were more inclined towards arable farming. Yet this composition could also support sheep rearing. It will be seen that knights, esquires and gentlemen did not always conform to the same approach, thus social position could override topographical influences.

Figure 3.1 illustrates the proportionate land compositions held per gentry status group between 1465 and 1575.[24] The total distribution clearly shows a very low proportion of wood, and a relatively low proportion of meadow, compared to arable and pasture. Whilst the proportions of arable, meadow and pasture are relatively evenly distributed between the knights and the esquires, the gentlemen account for a substantial proportion of the arable held, and the women held the majority of woodland. The gentlemen's apparent preference for arable suggests that those further down the social hierarchy may have been more likely to engage in arable-based agriculture, a theory to which we will return below.

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[23]   Parker, 'Enclosure in Leicestershire', p. 9.
[24]   Women have been included as a separate category; it is difficult to confidently assign a specific gentry status to them without it being explicitly expressed in the documentary record.

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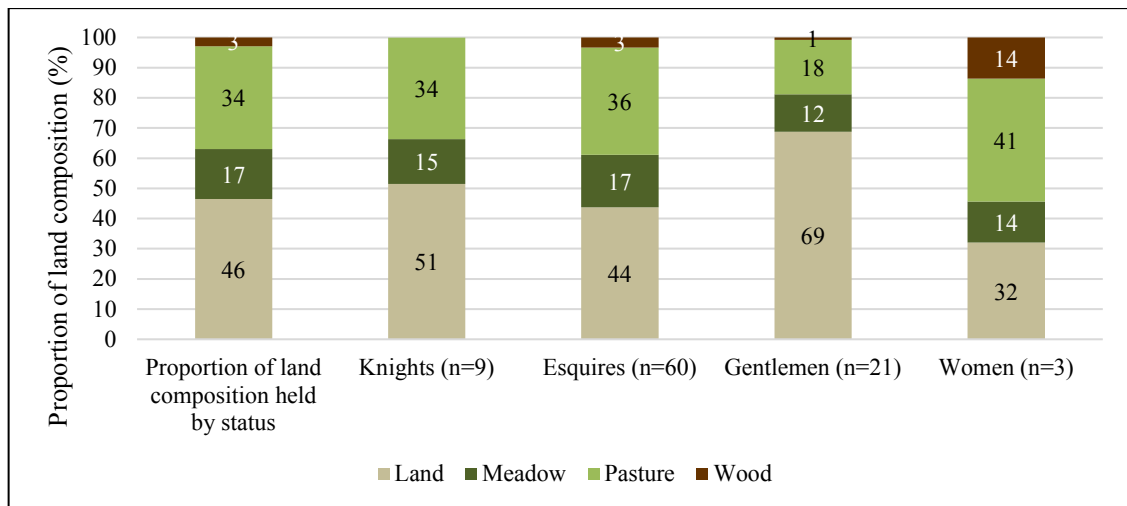
Figure 3.1 Proportionate land compositions held per gentry status, 1480-1579.

To put the above proportions into perspective, Figure 3.2 presents the proportions of landholding knights, esquires, gentlemen and women in each hundred according to our IPM dataset. Esquires form the highest proportion in all hundreds, most notably in East and West Goscote and Gartree. Knights appear to have avoided the hundreds of Gartree, Sparkenhoe and West Goscote altogether, although this may be accounted for by their smaller numbers and increased probability of holding manors – whose composition was rarely described by this period – instead of parcels of land.
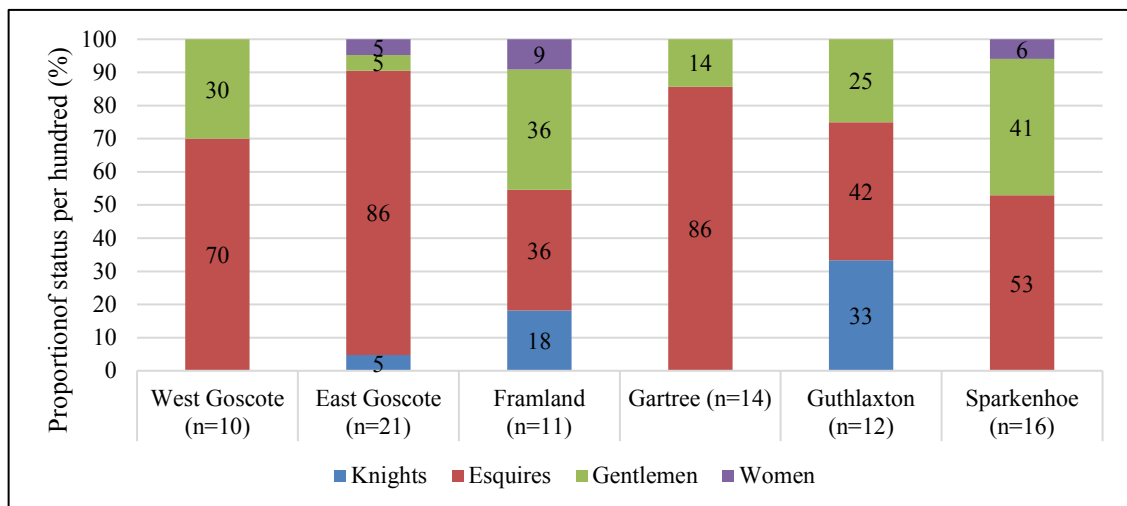
Figure 3.2 Gentry status distribution per Leicestershire hundred, 1480-1579.

Splitting the county into its hundreds emphasises the county's regional characteristics.[25] The distribution of land use across the status groups for each hundred are illustrated in

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25   For a modernised map of Leicestershire's hundreds see Chapter 1, Figure 1.5.

Figure 3.3. In the absence of any data for knights or women, the lands in West Goscote show a marked difference in the distribution of arable and pasture between esquires and gentlemen. The hundred was predominantly arable with very little woodland. Moving eastwards, the land distributions in East Goscote were more evenly balanced by type, with arable and pasture being the most common, followed by meadow and wood. This is reflected in the remaining four hundreds. West Goscote is exposed as an anomaly in the county's character. It suggests that Charnwood Forest and its wastelands, and the penetrating coal seams at the north-western borders, had more of an impact on gentry interests in the area than the higher elevations and region described as 'Dalby woode' by John Speed in East Goscote. In East Goscote the esquires tended to hold slightly more pasture than arable, again echoing Burton's comment on the north-east of the county being suited for corn and grass. Indeed, esquires accounted for over 85% of the gentry population in East Goscote, exposing the preference for arable of the one East Goscote gentleman holding identifiable lands there, William Ashby, reflected in his IPM.[26]

Gentlemen's preference for arable is also evident in the north-eastern hundred of Framland. The land held by the four gentlemen there comprised 80% arable, 11% pasture and nine per cent meadow, mirrored in John Leland's note that it was 'very plentiful of good corne and grasse', and in the Guthlaxton hundred, where the three gentlemen held all arable.[27] The comparative balance between the composition of land held by the Gartree esquires and gentlemen is reflected in the observation made by John Leland, who travelled 'from Bellegreve to Ingresby ... partly by corne, pasture and woddy ground'.[28] As he reached the hundred's southern border, near Medbourne, he complimented its 'mervelus goodly medow'.[29] The final observation to make is the substantial increase of wood evident in the Sparkenhoe hundred. The wood belonged to Philippa Harvey, widow, and was part of the manor of Peckleton, on the south-west border of Leicester Forest. The woodland in the region comprising Leicester Forest was not limited to the Forest boundaries.[30]

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[26] TNA, E 150/1121/6.
[27] Leland, *Itinerary*, Toulmin Smith, 1, p. 98.
[28] Ibid., p. 20.
[29] Ibid., 4, p. 21.
[30] The proximity of gentry interests to the boundaries of Leicester Forest was not always harmonious, demonstrated in the litigation brought against Sir William Turville, who had been permitted to empark land adjacent to the Forest, for unlawful hunting within its borders. See Chapter 4, 4.6.
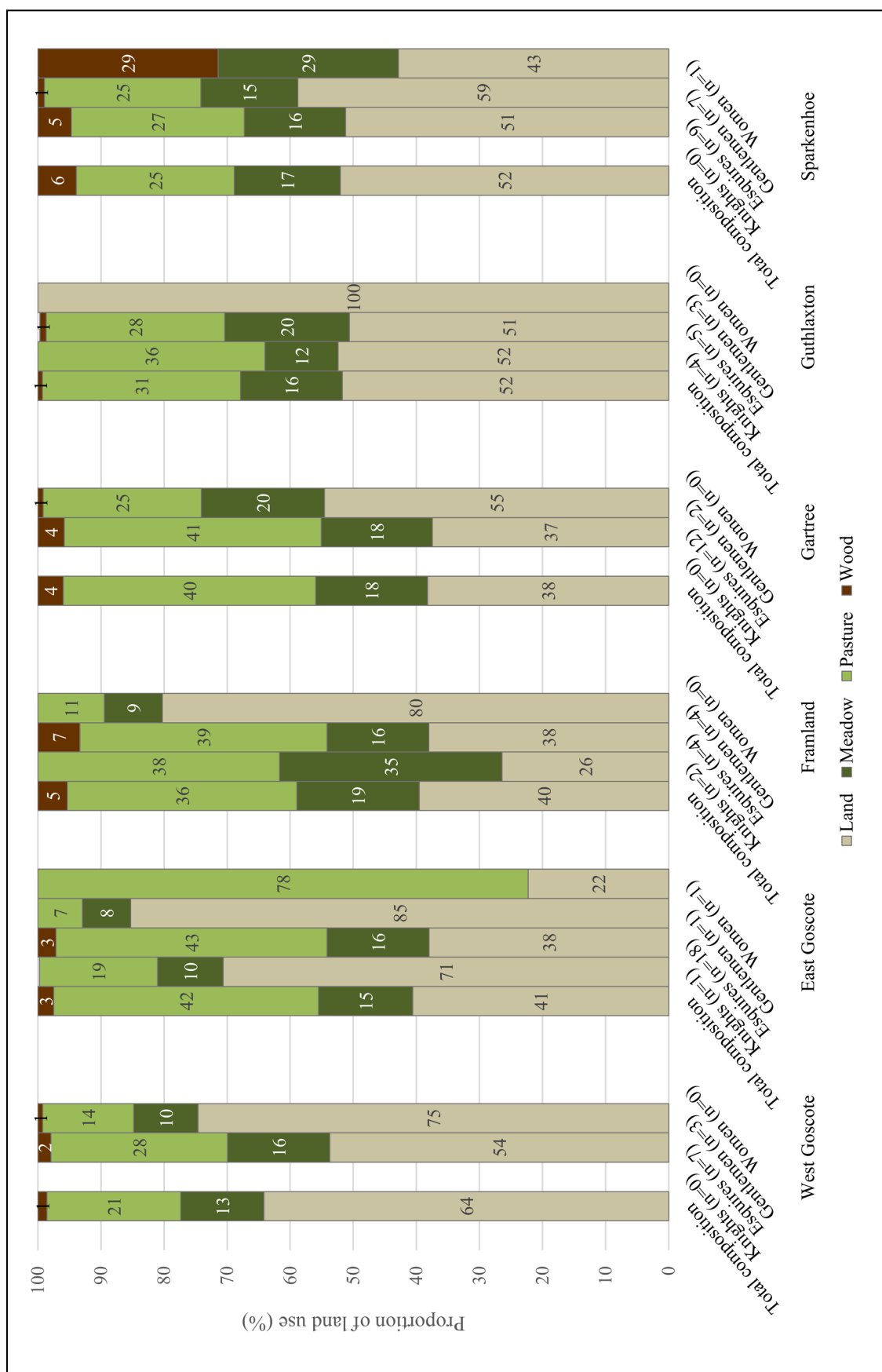
Figure 3.3 Proportionate land use compositions held in the Leicestershire hundreds by gentry status, 1480-1579.

3.3.2 Transitions in land use

We have seen that inter-gentry status groups maintained different priorities in land use. Mapping the IPM data on an individual basis permits detailed analysis of how different members of the gentry were composing and, arguably, operating their estates, with particular reference to how this was changing over time. The figures below illustrate a selection of visualised gentry estates based on IPM evidence. They have been selected for their ability to shed light on certain features of gentry land distributions in the context of composition, status and chronological transition.[31]

The adaptation of approaches to estate management was essential for the exploitation of different environments. For example, Thirsk suggested that, as an unnavigable river, the Soar effectively blocked access to market in some parts of the county, which 'had no suitable river to carry grain to markets and therefore its crops were fed to animals who then walked there'.[32] Building on the territories discussed in Chapter 2, land compositions comprising arable, pasture, meadow and wood are mapped below to illustrate changing trends in gentry agriculture over time and between regions and status groups.[33] This section will reveal that, whilst the environment wielded certain preconditions on gentry agriculture, the gentry were still able to adapt their estate compositions to suit the economic climate. Arguably, the IPMs can illuminate these changes, albeit tentatively.[34] For example, there is possible evidence of a movement from arable to pasture at Catthorpe, to the extreme south-west, demonstrated in the IPMs of the Fielding family, where their holding of 24 acres of meadow, 200 acres of arable and 40 acres of pasture in 1515 had become 24 acres of meadow and 200 acres of pasture by 1548.[35]

The IPMs can also balance More's contemporary narrative of the gentry leaving 'only the church to be made a sheephouse'.[36] Crops formed a substantial part of local agriculture, particularly to the west of the Soar. The suitability of this soil type for peas and beans was advised by Fitzherbert: 'Thou shalt sowe thy peas upon the cley grounde, and thy beans

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[31] The full, enlarged set of composition maps generated from the IPMs can be viewed in Volume 2.
[32] J. Thirsk, *England's Agricultural Regions and Agrarian History, 1500-1750* (Basingstoke, 1987), p. 43.
[33] For a definition of these land types see the Glossary.
[34] As discussed in the introduction, IPMs listed freehold land only, and cannot replicate gentry interests in their entirety.
[35] TNA, E 150/1122/2 and E 150/1148/2.
[36] More, *Utopia*, Bruce, *Three Early Modern Utopias*, p. 22.

upon the barley grounde: for they would have ranker grounde than pease'.[37] By the end of the sixteenth century, Barton in western Leicestershire had adopted the affix '–in le Bean(e)s', indicating the region's suitability for that particular crop.[38]

There was a similar soil composition seven miles to the west at Appleby Magna. In 1374, the inventory of Sir Edmund Appleby of Appleby Magna listed 170 quarters of wheat, barley and peas, and 78 quarters of rye, drage, oats and peas at Netherseal some three miles away at the Derbyshire border.[39] Just over 150 years later, the IPM taken in 1529 for Richard Appleby, esquire, a descendant of Sir Edmund Appleby, recorded nearly 200 acres of arable but only 12 acres of pasture at Appleby Magna. It suggests that the trend towards legume cultivation had continued there.[40] The Applebys at Appleby Magna illustrate some evidence for an arable preference. The estate of Richard Appleby, esquire, in Figure 3.4 clearly indicates a clustering of his lands on the county's western border. They are predominantly arable, supporting the Applebys' preference for legume cultivation.
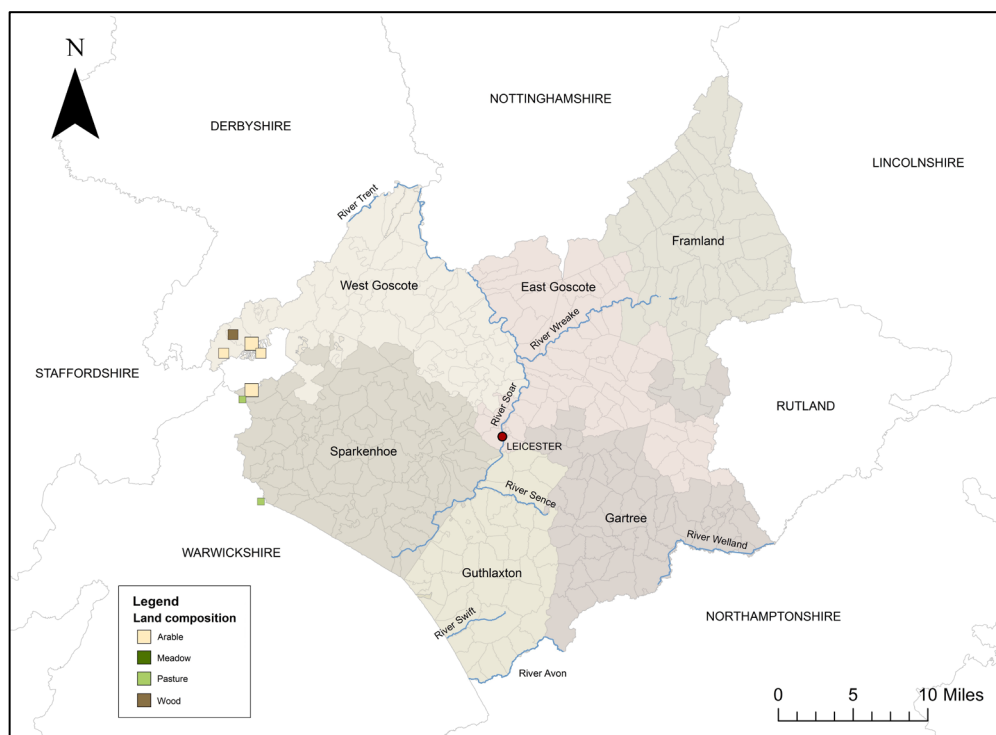
Figure 3.4 The estate composition of Richard Appleby, esquire, in 1529.[41]

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[37] Fitzherbert, *Boke of Husbandry*. Barley is a more tolerant crop, suitable for light and heavy clays.
[38] Cox, 'Place names of Leicestershire and Rutland', p. 534.
[39] Astill, 'A study in Leicestershire society', p. 31.
[40] TNA, E 150/1133/11.
[41] TNA, E 150/1133/11.

In contrast, the estate of George Ashby, esquire, (Figure 3.5) was distributed on a larger scale. His primary pasture lands were held at his *caput honoris* at Lowesby to the east, whilst the south-western distribution of his arable lands suggest an opportunistic, outward-looking agenda.
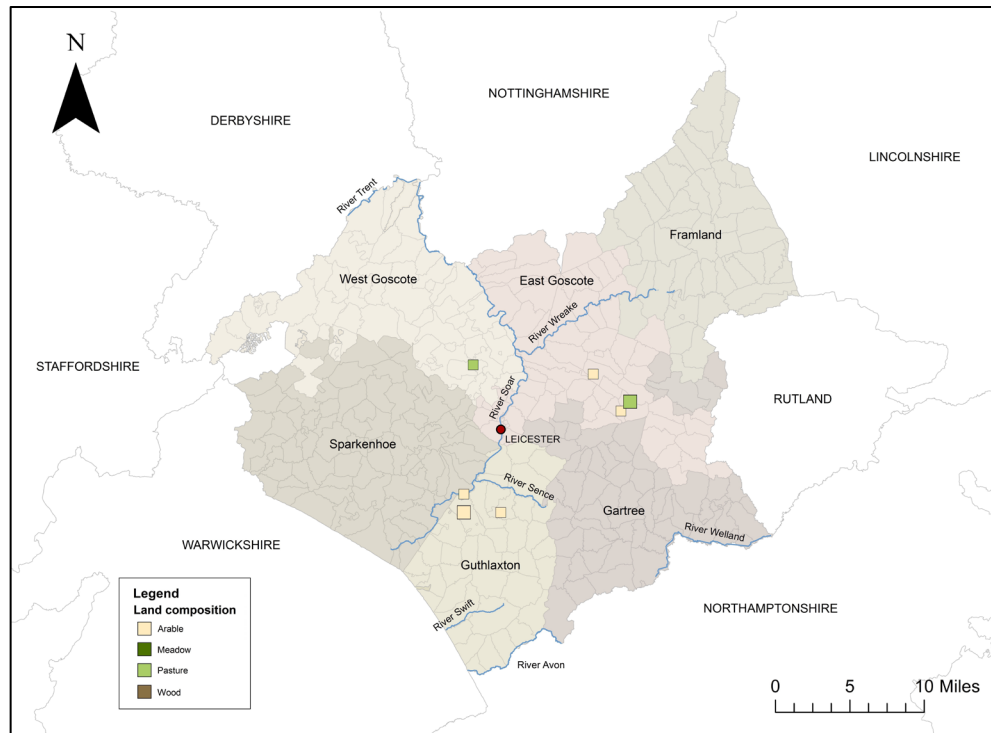
Figure 3.5 The estate composition of George Ashby, esquire, in 1544.[42]

A family's interests could remain constant in location yet change in composition, illustrated by the two clusters of the Neele family's territory at Prestwold and Keythorpe (Figure 3.6, Figure 3.7 and Figure 3.8). This is particularly evident in the IPM of Christopher Neele, esquire.[43] We can see that Christopher Neele was using his Keythorpe estate (the south-east cluster) predominantly for arable, where he held 182 acres of arable, 49 acres of meadow and pasture, and 20 acres of wood. By the death of his grandson, Richard, in 1558, the amount of arable held at Keythorpe had diminished by almost three quarters to only 50 acres. The meadow and pasture had dramatically increased – more than quadrupled – to a combined total of 270 acres compared to the 49 acres recorded at Christopher Neele's death, and Goadby had become the preferred location for arable. Meanwhile, the composition of their main estate towards the north of the county fluctuated in size and structure, reflecting the different priorities of each generation.

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[42] TNA, C 142/71/165.
[43] It also impacted the Neeles' litigious interests. See Chapter 4, 4.4.
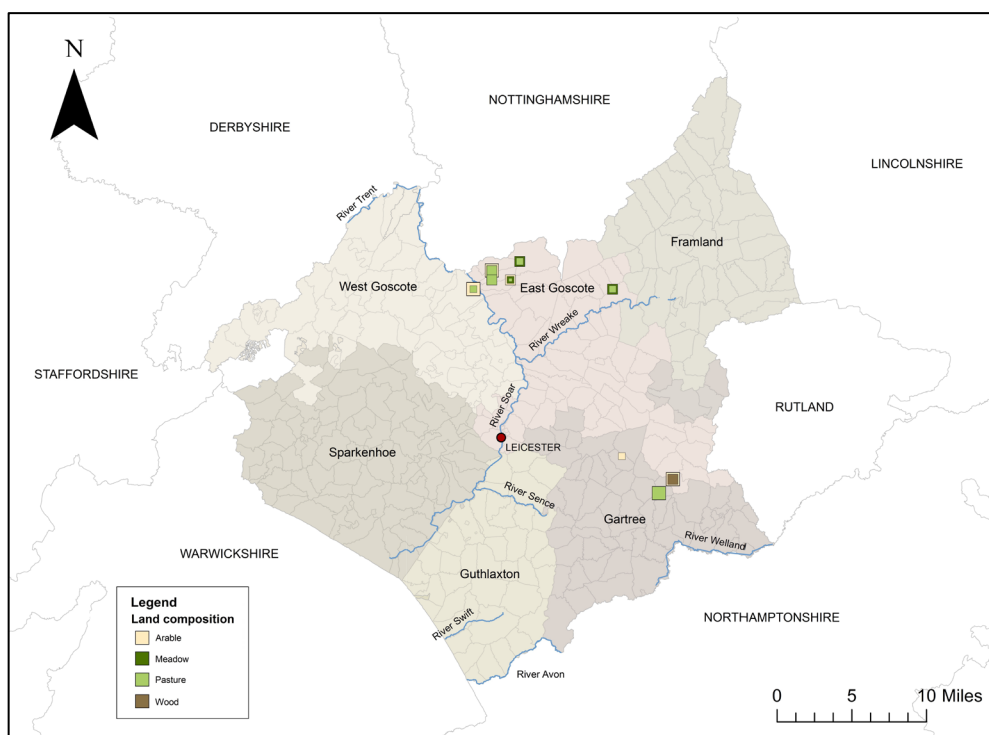
Figure 3.6 The estate composition of Christopher Neele, esquire, in 1526.[44]
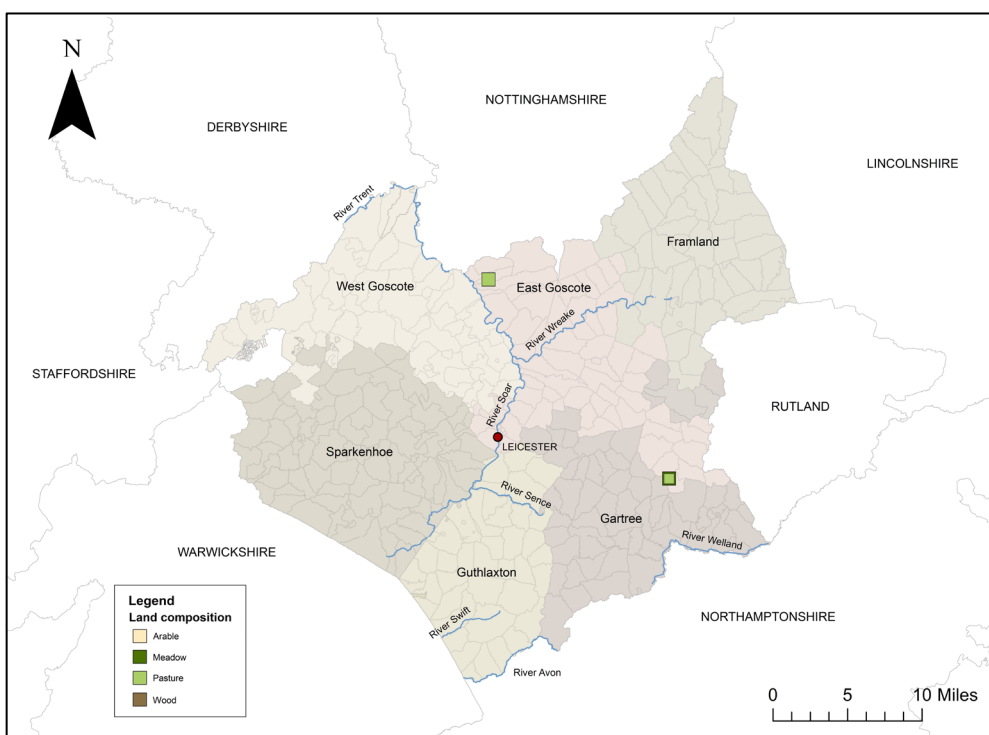
Figure 3.7 The estate composition of Francis Neele, esquire, in 1560.[45]

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[44] TNA, E 150/1131/7.
[45] TNA, E 150/1158/5.
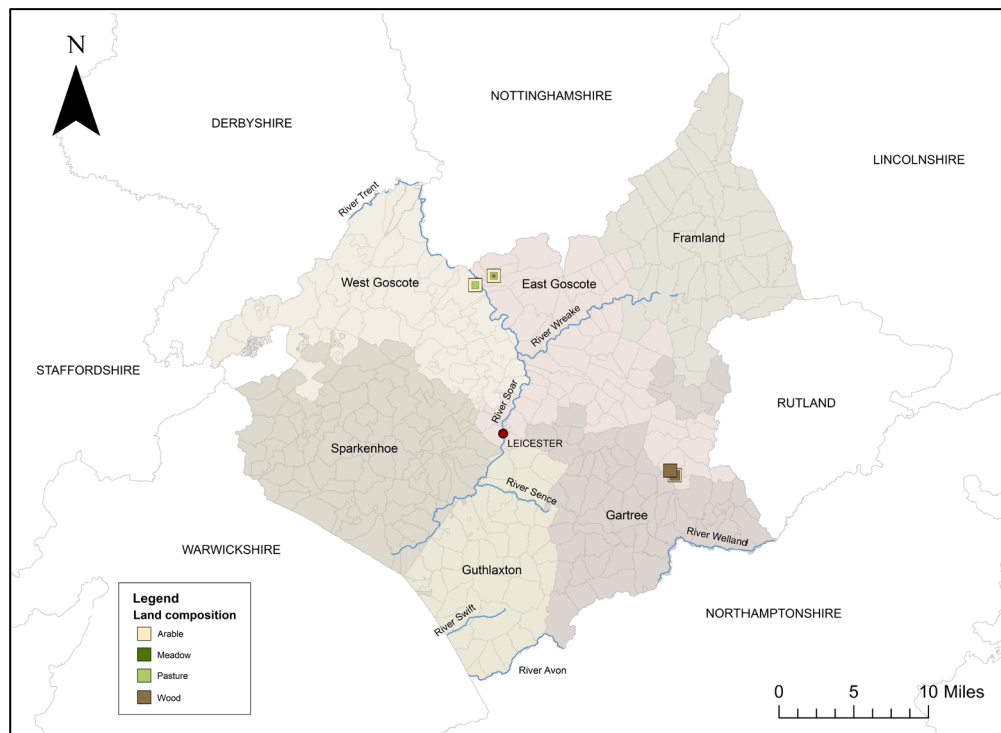
Figure 3.8 The estate composition of Thomas Neele, esquire, in 1577.[46]

The inter-generational patterns continue in the examples furnished by the Pulteney family (Figure 3.9, Figure 3.10 and Figure 3.11). From the very minor arable-based estate of John Pulteney, gentleman (Figure 3.9), to the extensive and varied estate of his grandson, Sir Thomas Pulteney II (Figure 3.11), they were an ambitious family. The changes in the type and distribution of their estates across the generations are reflected in their change of status. The most dramatic change occurred with the family's acceleration to knighthood under Sir Thomas Pulteney I (Figure 3.10); by the death of his son, some fifty years later very few changes had been made. Despite their elevation in status, the geographical location of the estates extended within a comparatively small radius to the estate of Christopher Neele, esquire, for example. Status did not correspond directly with geographical distance. Rather, the Pulteney's concentration of landholdings at the southern-most tip of the county consolidated their territory there and may have been economically beneficial for their involvement in the wool industry. It is also of interest that their pasture lands – arguably with the most financial incentive during this period – were in close proximity to their PPA.

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[46] TNA, WARD 7/18/38.
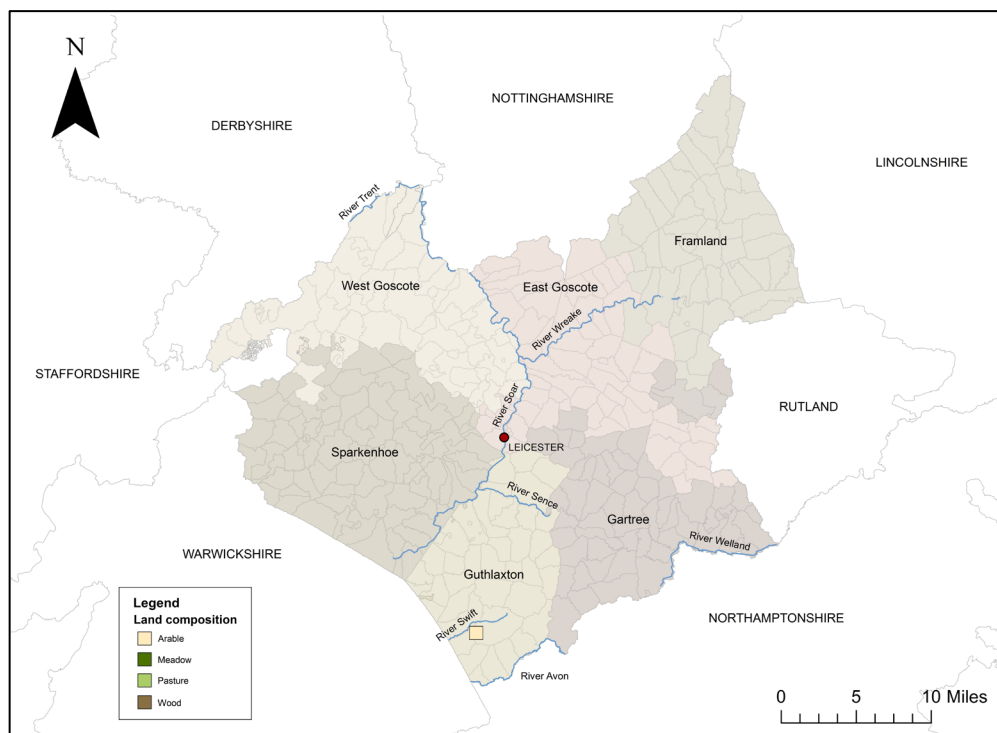
Figure 3.9 The estate composition of John Pulteney, gentleman, in 1493.[47]
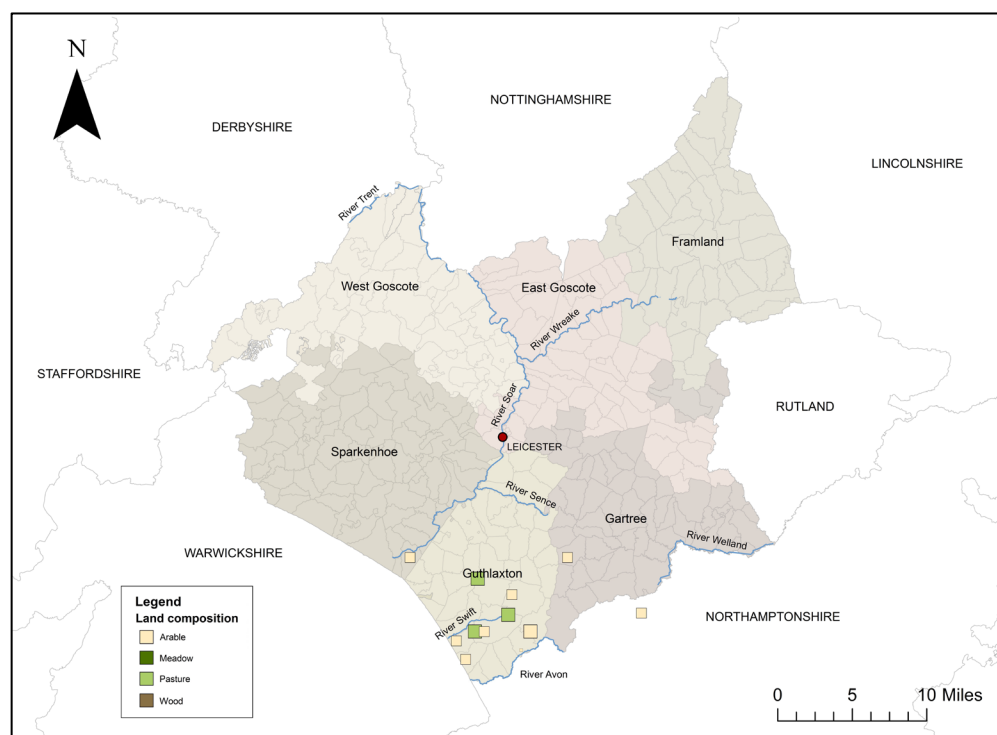
Figure 3.10 The estate composition of Sir Thomas Pulteney I in 1507.[48]

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47 TNA, C 142/8/35.
48 TNA, C 142/20/13.
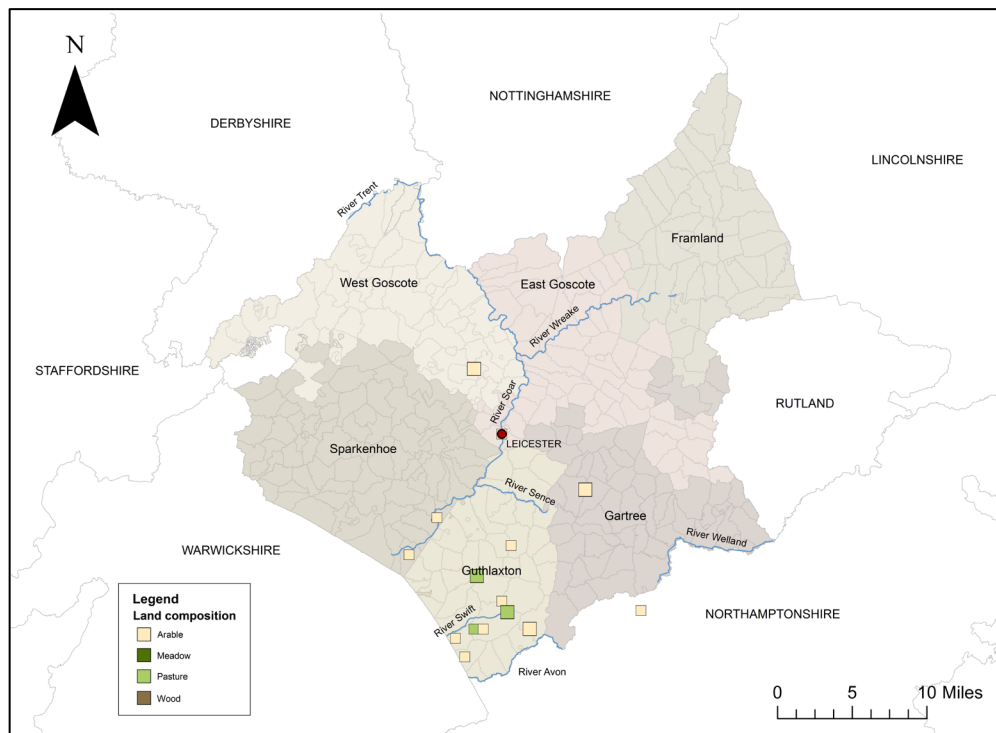
Figure 3.11 The estate composition of Sir Thomas Pulteney II in 1541.[49]

The estates of John Turville, esquire, and William Staunton, gentleman (Figure 3.12 and Figure 3.13) offer an interesting insight into how two members of the gentry prioritised different combinations of land composition, perhaps reflecting their agricultural preferences. John Turville's estate was focused to the south-west of the county, the region praised most by Burton for having good soil, and for its ability to produce corn and grass. William Staunton's estate was located to the north-west of the county. Both Turville and Staunton held mostly arable in each location. In those areas, however, Turville prioritised pasture whilst Staunton favoured meadow, suggesting that he was more engaged with arable farming.

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[49]   TNA, C 142/63/36.
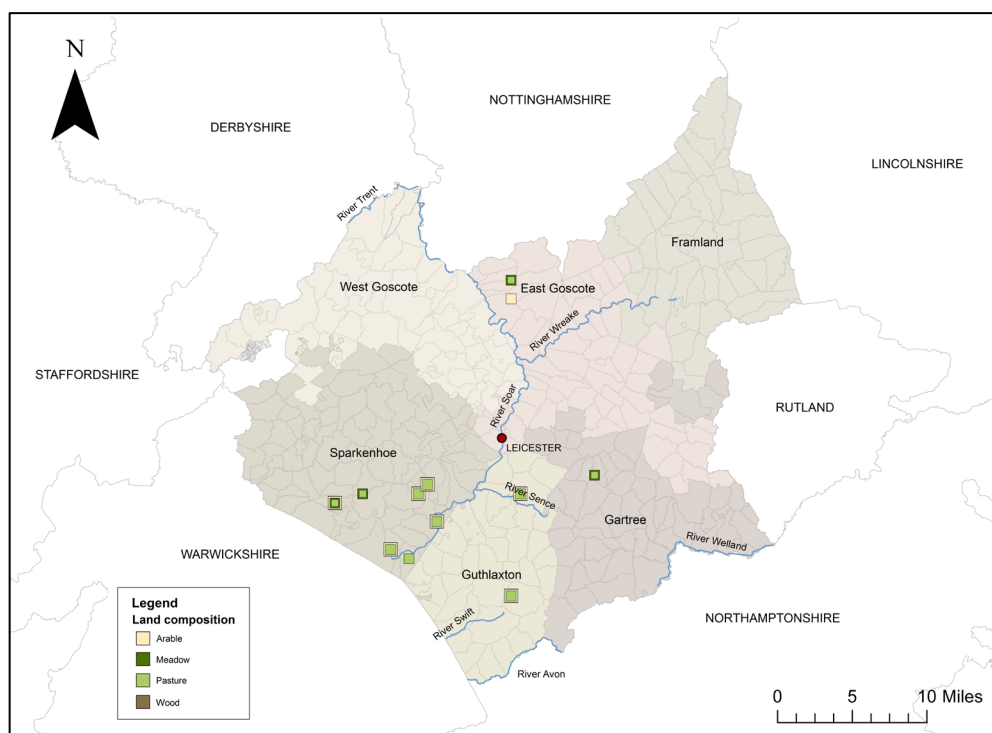
Figure 3.12 The estate composition of John Turville, esquire, in 1506.[50]
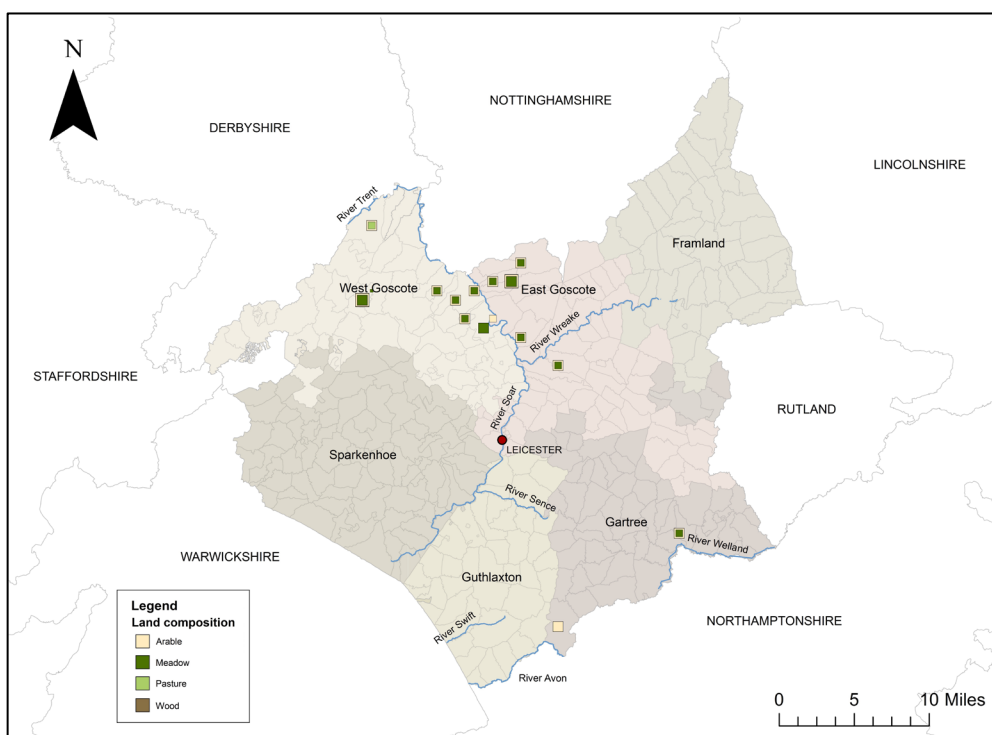
Figure 3.13 The estate composition of William Staunton, gentleman, in 1531.[51]

[50] TNA, C 142/20/8.
[51] TNA, E 150/1134/3.

3.3.3　Enclosure and land use patterns

We will now put the different types of land use into the context of enclosure. The phase of enclosure most closely associated with the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries was largely concentrated in the champion landscapes of the midlands, where open fields were enclosed to create closes of pasture amidst arable lands. This contrasted with its thirteenth-century counterpart, which occurred primarily in non-champion areas of the uplands, wetlands and woodlands.[52] This section shows how IPM data can be used to compliment the enclosure narrative for our period, relating both to speed and geographical distribution. According to L.A. Parker, 'enclosure was overwhelmingly the work of the squirearchy'.[53] We would expect, therefore, that the phenomenon is likely to emerge in the gentry's IPM evidence.[54] Certainly, the IPM evidence shows that the conversion to pasture did not remove the presence of arable. The complexity of landholding distribution amongst the gentry made enclosure a fragmented and consequentially slow process, leaving large swathes of arable intact.[55]

This section thus improves our understanding of enclosure-related gentry activity by observing changing land use compositions. Figure 3.14 illustrates the composition of land use evidenced in 56 gentry IPMs, from 1480 to 1529. There is a heavy presence of arable land. Comparing these IPMs to later counterparts shows how gentry land use was changing, perhaps reflecting the gentry's adaption to the economic climate of inflation and subsequent increasing prices. The dataset for 1530 to 1579 shows a clear movement towards a combination of arable, meadow and pasture throughout the county. Despite their clear limitations, the IPMs remain an invaluable source for understanding geographical patterns and distributions, shown in the recorded acreages of arable, meadow, pasture and wood taken from gentry IPMs between 1480 and 1579. The larger proportions of general land use in the north-east and south-west appear to echo the distributions of the JPs' territories discussed above in Chapter 2.

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[52]　C. Dyer, 'Conflict in the landscape: the enclosure movement in England, 1220-1349', *Landscape History*, 28, no. 1 (2006), pp. 21, 31.

[53]　Parker, 'Enclosure in Leicestershire', p. 84.

[54]　Ibid.

[55]　T. Williamson, *Shaping Medieval Landscapes: Settlement, Society, Environment* (Macclesfield, 2003), pp. 2-3.
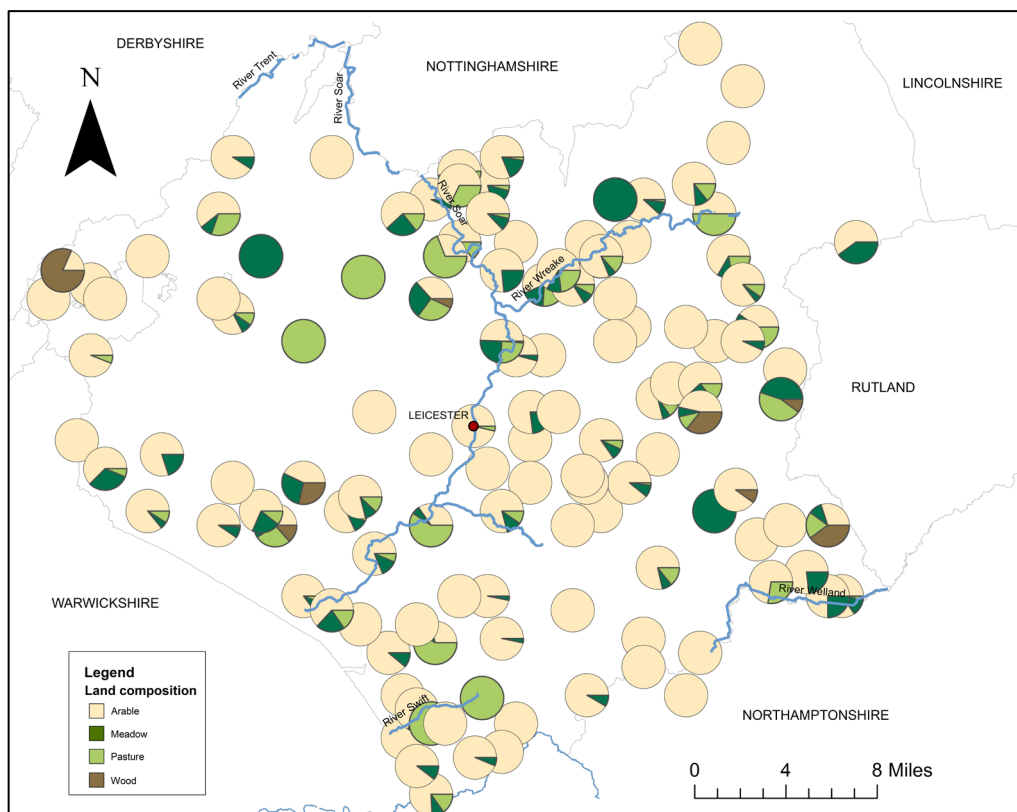
Figure 3.14 Compositions of land use per identifiable place-name taken from Leicestershire gentry IPMs (n=56), 1480-1529.
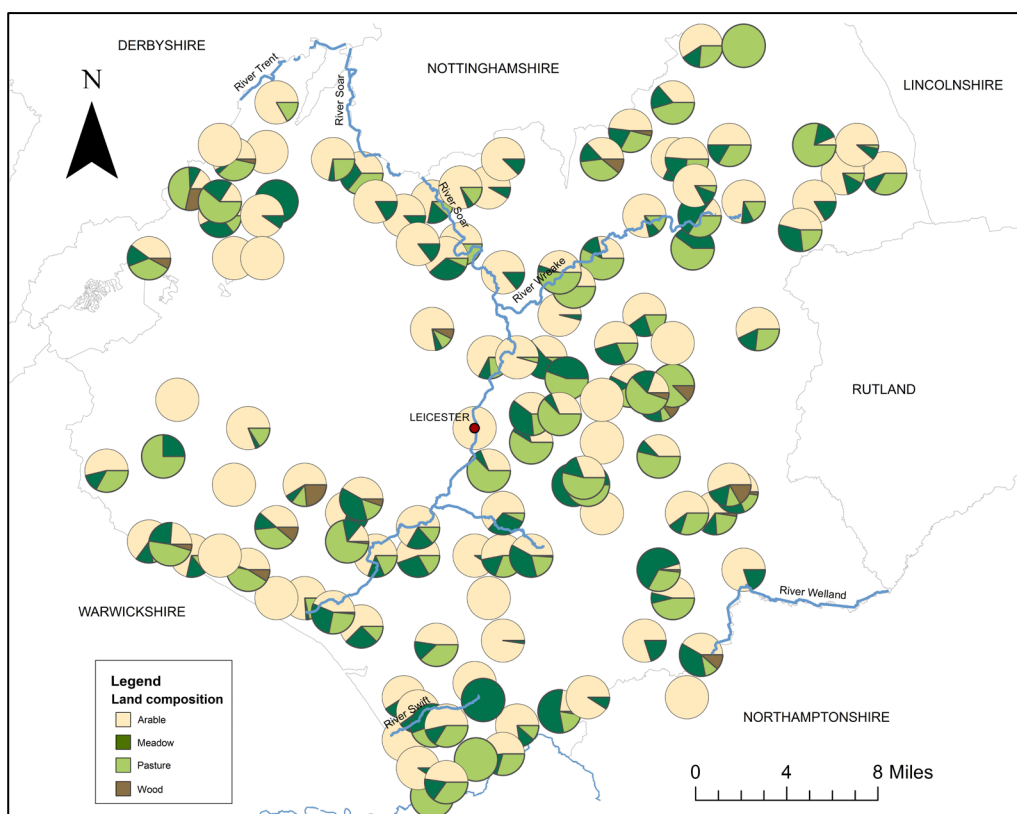
Figure 3.15 Compositions of land use per identifiable place-name taken from Leicestershire gentry IPMs (n=80), 1530-1579.

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Moreover, the IPM evidence supports Parker's suggestion that 'if a line is drawn from Elmesthorpe through Leicester to Melton Mowbray in the Wreake valley ... the area south and east of it contains most of the parishes enclosed in the early Tudor period'.[56] By overlaying Parker's enclosure line over John Speed's seventeenth-century map of Leicestershire (Figure 3.16), the clusters of pasture appear to conform to this pattern. Speed's map also serves to show the locations of the forests of Charnwood and Leicester on the north-western and western side in the hundreds of West Goscote and Sparkenhoe, which account quite neatly for the 'gap' in gentry land use evident to the west.

Elmesthorpe is located on the southern border of the Charnwood 'gap', whilst Melton Mowbray is to the east of Leicester, at the southern border of a much smaller gap, although a gap nonetheless, on the eastern side of the county. The topographical influence on the suitability of land for different forms of agriculture should not be underestimated. The gaps in the pasture distribution occur in the areas of highest elevation, which also appear to have been less suitable for most agricultural land uses as far as gentry interests were concerned.[57]
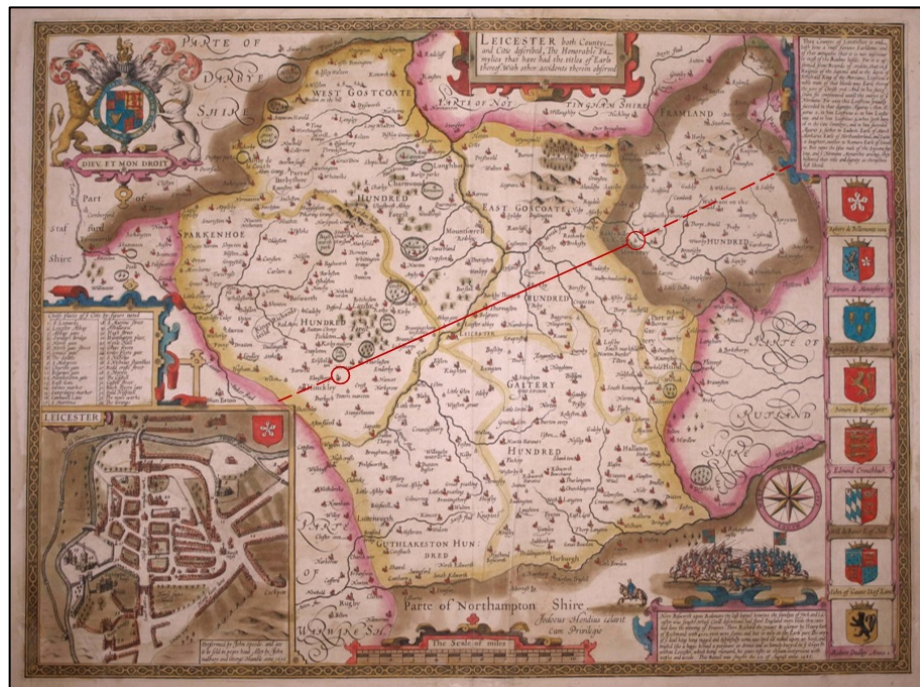
Figure 3.16 John Speed's map of Leicestershire and Parker's line of enclosure.

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56 Parker, 'Enclosure in Leicestershire', p. 4.
57 References to furze and heath in the Leicestershire gentry's IPMs are minimal, and were not located specifically within areas of higher elevation nor in proximity to the Charnwood region.

3.3.4 The pace of enclosure

The increasing pace of midland enclosure in the sixteenth century culminated in the popular uprising of the Midland Revolt by 1607, which spread from Northamptonshire and into Warwickshire and Leicestershire.[58] IPM evidence alone cannot identify explicitly lawful versus unlawful enclosure, but it can provide comparative evidence for the pace of enclosure during our period. Parker and Isaac Saunders Leadam independently concluded that there were different rates of gentry enclosure in Leicestershire. Leadam wrote that 'judging from the low rate of increase in the decade 1501-1510, the tendency to inclose to pasture was checked by the fall in the price of wool from 6s ½ d to 4s 5 ¾ d the tod … In all classes of inclosure there is a fall in the septennate 1511-17, amounting in the aggregate to 63.45 per cent'.[59] Parker's enclosure gathered strength in the late fifteenth century and had reached its peak by 1500-10.[60] The discrepancies may be accounted for by the types of documents used. Leadam favoured the Chancery reports returned by the commissioners tasked with investigating enclosure in 1517, whilst Parker used the Exchequer memoranda rolls of the King's Remembrancer and Lord Treasurer's Remembrancer.

Interpreted tentatively, the evidence may be able to support one theory over the other. It must be remembered that the IPMs reflect gentry land use at death, and cannot be used to identify when enclosures took place without additional context from other sources. We must first observe trends across the period, however. Figure 3.17 illustrates the amounts of arable, meadow, pasture and wood extracted from the gentry IPM data between 1480 and 1579. The amount of woodland appears to have remained relatively constant. Despite the turning over of land from arable to pasture in the narrative of enclosure, the amount of pasture recorded in the IPMs experienced a surprisingly gentle increase across the period. However, the distributions of arable and meadow show a sharp contrast; they appear to have decreased and increased at a comparatively fast rate. Meadow was permanently covered with grass to be mown for hay, and was particularly popular for the

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[58] See B. McDonagh and J. Rodda, 'Landscape, memory and protest in the Midlands Rising of 1607' in Griffin and McDonagh, *Remembering Protest in Britain Since 1500*, pp. 53-80; S. Hindle, 'Imagining insurrection in seventeenth-century England: representations of the Midland Rising of 1607', *History Workshop Journal*, 66, no. 1 (2008), pp. 21-61; L.A. Parker, 'The agrarian revolution at Cotesbach, 1501-1612', *TLAHS*, 24 (1948), pp. 41-76.

[59] Leadam, *Domesday of Inclosures*, p. 223.

[60] Parker, 'Enclosure in Leicestershire', p. 28.

pasturing of livestock, whereas arable was limited to the plough and the growing of crops. Figure 3.17 suggests that there was a correlation between the two, which appears to support the rise of mixed husbandry amongst gentry land use observed by Dyer, discussed in the chapter's introduction.
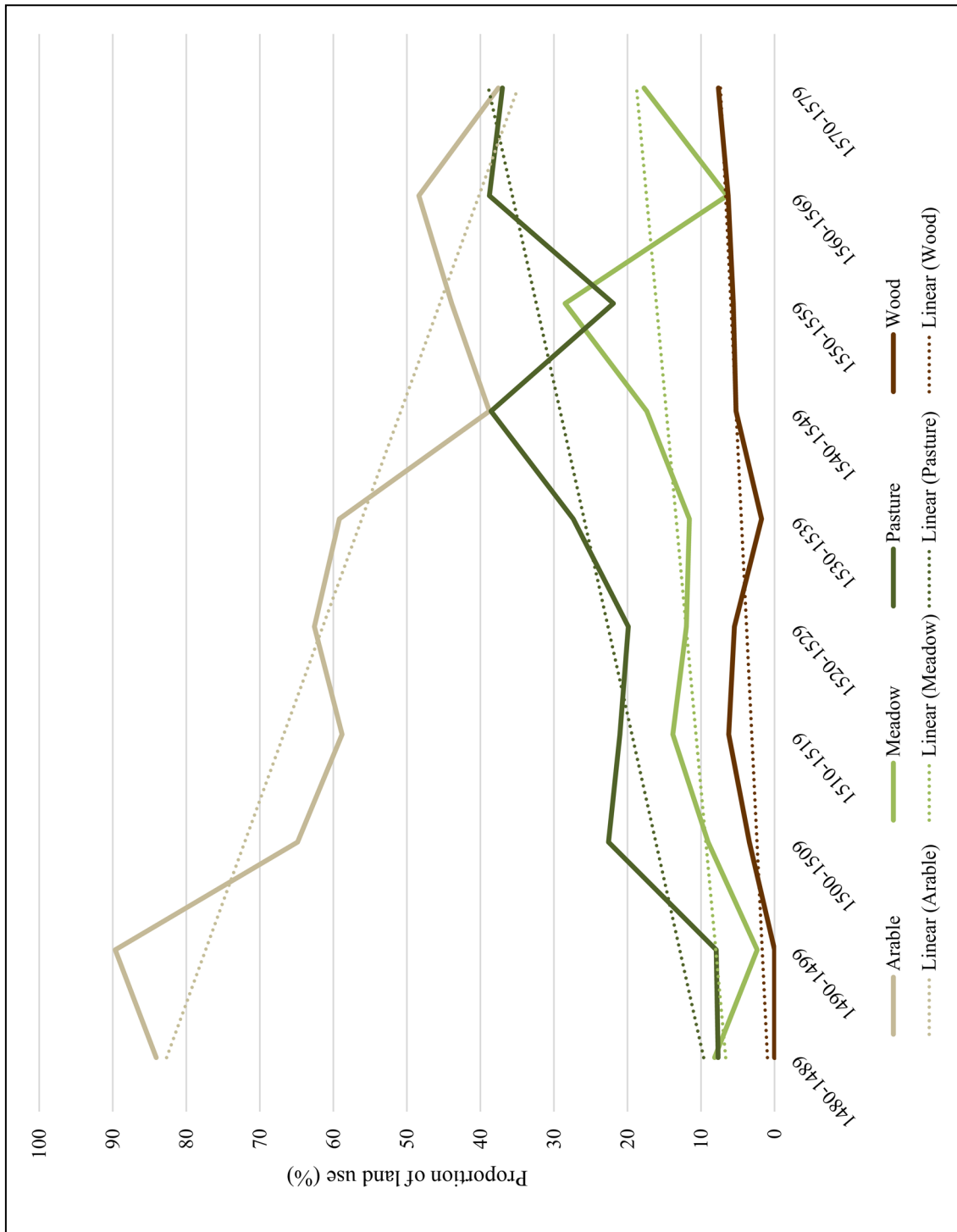
Figure 3.17 A timeline of land composition in Leicestershire taken from gentry IPMs, 1480-1579.

By contrasting our data with Figure 3.18, a map of Leicestershire enclosure built from the evidence in Parker's thesis, we can begin to relate the previous discussion to potential enclosure activity on the ground. The most intensive decade of enclosure in Parker's map was 1511-1520. The IPM data does not correspond directly; it shows a sudden increase in meadow and contrasting decrease in arable during the following decade from the 1520s onwards, until the peak of respective increase and decline in 1550. But we must remember that the IPMs reflect the type of land use at the time of death; an elevation in will-writing amongst the Leicestershire gentry during the 1530s and 1540s suggests that this period saw the deaths of an earlier generation.[61] The IPM evidence, therefore, correlates with Parker's thesis.
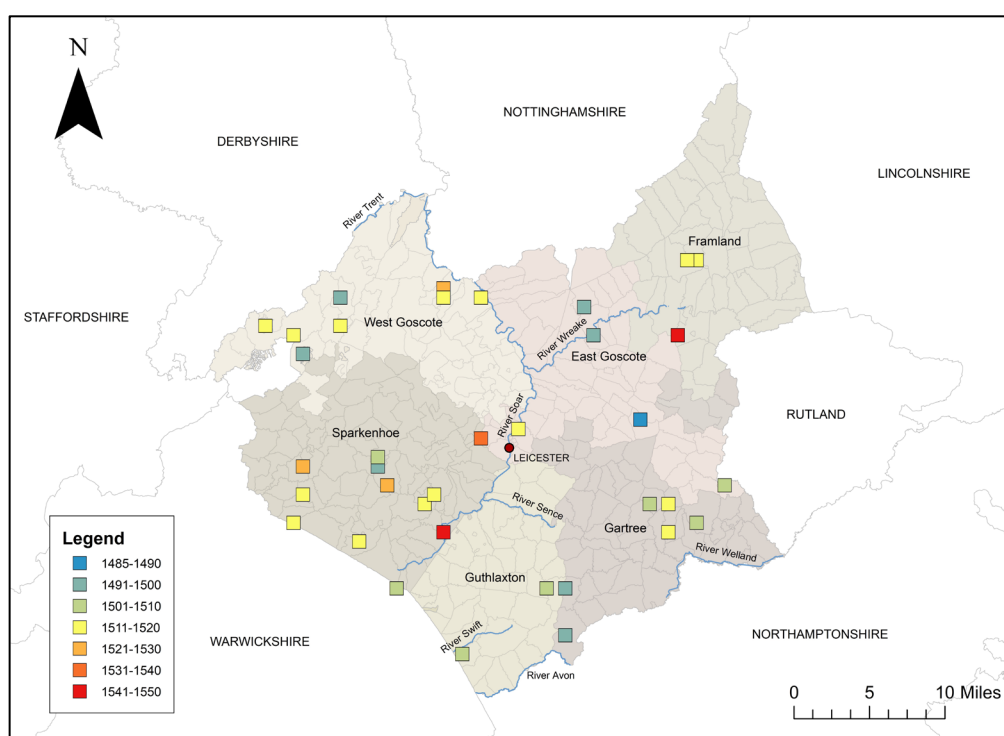
Figure 3.18 Parker's incidences of enclosure in Leicestershire, 1483-1550.[62]

We must also consider the geographical distribution of Parker's evidence. As he noted, the majority of enclosure during the earlier period, 1500-1509, took place south of his line between Elmesthorpe and Melton Mowbray (Figure 3.16 above) in the hundreds of Gartree and Guthlaxton. The majority of the latter period of enclosure, from 1511 onwards, occurred north of the divide, and was predominantly focused in the hundreds of

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[61] The reason behind the increase in will-writing is discussed further in Chapter 6, 6.2.2.
[62] Parker, 'Enclosure in Leicestershire'.

Sparkenhoe and West Goscote. We can propose, then, that incidences of enclosure were subject to changing gentry enterprise which could override topographical suitability. As the financial incentives of enclosure became increasingly apparent during the period, the gentry with western landholdings enclosed their lands despite the heavily clayey soils there. However, we must also bear in mind that, according to Parker, only eight per cent of the county was enclosed between 1455 and 1607. Enclosure may not therefore be as apparent in the IPM evidence due to the small scale and limited amount of data.[63] We must turn, therefore, to alternative evidence for estate activity, which can be found in gentry wills and inventories.

3.4   Gentry approaches to agriculture

3.4.1   Status and direct demesne farming

This section uses probate evidence to explore estate income and activity within the gentry hierarchy, and tests Thirsk's and Dyer's theories that the gentry were returning to direct demesne farming at the turn of the fifteenth century. The relationship between status and income was significant; estate revenue was thus an important reflection of social status. In John Rastell's *Of Gentylnes and Nobylyte*, a treatise on social inequality, the knight exclaims, 'I am a gentylman I wold ye know / And may dispend yerely v.C. mark land / And I am sure all that ye haue in hand / Of yerely rent is not worth v. markys'.[64] This statement appears to suggest that in the early sixteenth century, knights such as Rastell's were inherently focused on rental income. Rodney Hilton used the correspondence left behind by the Pastons, Stonors and Plumptons to argue that 'even the middling-sized landlords seem to have been dependent on rent rather than the production on income … [they] only very occasionally refer to farming practice'.[65] Similarly, Mark Overton suggested that 'gentlemen were most unlikely to engage in the manual activities of

[63]   Emery, 'England circa 1600' in Darby, *New Historical Geography*, p. 264.

[64]   Rastell, *Of Gentlynes and Nobylyte*.

[65]   R.H. Hilton, 'The content and sources of English agrarian history before 1500', *Agricultural History Review*, 3, no. 1 (1955), p. 16.

farming'.[66] Moreover, Grenville Astill concluded that, for his mid- to late-fourteenth-century Leicestershire gentry, rental income formed most of their revenue.[67]

Yet we must also consider the expenditure of those funds acquired from rental income. For example, the reference in the will of Robert Brokesby, esquire, to his lands' profits being put towards the maintenance of his lands elsewhere – to 'repare' them – suggests that the funds were being invested back into estate enterprise. On occasion the gentry actively discouraged the leasing of their lands after their death. Thomas Bradgate, gentleman, bequeathed his farm in Peatling Parva to his wife if she did not 'let nor grant it to ferme to any other in parte or in holl' for term of her life.[68] If historians will use the presence of rental income to justify an absence of direct estate management as Hilton suggested, the picture must be balanced with contextual evidence. We will now turn to probate evidence, which exists for the agricultural activities and management encountered on the gentry estates across the period, and arguably in a less 'clumsy' fashion than Dyer suggested.[69]

Agricultural produce and implements were often bequeathed, making them a part of the gentry's continuation of legacy. In 1531, Robert Brokesby bequeathed 'to Thomas Broksby my brother all my crope of corne growing and [tha]t now is sauen apon the grownd and v horses w[i]t[h] the cart and the geres' at Shoby.[70] His reference to certain crops having been sown indicates his knowledge of the agricultural activities there, and the mention of his horses, carts and gears suggests that he played a part in it. Similarly, Ralph Purefoy, esquire, bequeathed the crop of oats, barley and peas at Fenny Drayton 'that I have sowen on the lande' to his daughter and son-in-law in 1550.[71] In 1538, Robert Burrough, gentleman, bequeathed his 'croppe of corne and hey, and all my cattall corne and hey householde and howsholde stuff, horses, cartes and carte gere, plough and plough gere, harrowes and all my corne, peace and all other my grayne, and all my shepe' to his grandson.[72] In 1559, 'corne haye woll lambe … comyng and growing within the parishe

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[66] M. Overton, *Agricultural Revolution in England: The Transformation of the Agrarian Economy, 1500-1850* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 40.
[67] Astill, 'A study in Leicestershire society', p. 32.
[68] ROLLR, W&I, 1539/22.
[69] Dyer, *An Age of Transition?*, p. 109.
[70] ROLLR, W&I, 1531/14.
[71] ROLLR, W&I, 1550/33.
[72] TNA, PROB 11/26/194.

of Lowesby' was bequeathed by William Faunte, esquire, of Foston, to his children.[73] Ambrose Belgrave of Belgrave, gentleman, was involved in husbandry requiring fencing, having bequeathed 'all my hovels pales rayles and postes' to his son, along with 'all man[er] of plankes rakes and mangers w[i]t[h] stales for oxen and kyne' in 1571.[74]

John Turville, esquire, may have been encouraging arable farming at Thurlaston, Normanton Turville and Croft when he bequeathed 4d and a plough to each of his tenants, and a plough to 'every free holder and cotyar of the same townes' in 1506.[75] Richard Cave, esquire, requested that his son would permit his two brothers 'to have grasse and pasture in the said felde of Cokhilles [Elkington, Northants.] for twelve geldings winter and somer ... so that they take the same to their owne use only w[i]t[h]out letting the same or any parte therof to any p[er]son or p[er]sones'.[76] Amongst a large number of sheep bequests considered in further detail below, in 1504, John Woodford, esquire, of Ashby Folville, bequeathed 'to every of my sonnes xl shepe with ther woll', for example.[77] William Faunte's will contained instructions for his executors to manage his estate after his death by taking stock annually, requesting that 'yerely twise in the yere my executours … shall take a viewe of all my catell and see theym merked the woll wayed and solde and the proufetts yerely boked of all my catell and goodes solde aswell by my wif'.[78]

The will of William Villers, esquire, furnishes a revealing example of what was needed for, *verbatim*, the 'maynten[a]nce of husbondre'. He bequeathed to his daughters

> my corn greyn [and] strawe hey catell horse marris colts follis geldyngs excepteth my lyttyll mare [and] too colts oxen sterrs heyferrs kye [and] cattle … swyn [and] all man[er] of carts [and] cart gerris weyn [and] weyn gerrs horse gerrs and all man[er] plowe tymbre huy[n] [and] unhuyn [and] also all leitherrs … all man[er] of myn irren teyms [and] irren warrs ov[er] my workehowse or els where [and] all other thyngs ov[er] my seid workehowse or ov[er] any howse or place necessarye [and] mete for the maynten[a]nce of husbondre.[79]

This extract illuminates the husbandry practices of an esquire. It demonstrates that hands-on husbandry was not limited to those of gentleman status. His IPM lists 2,000 acres of pasture, 1,000 acres of land, 500 acres of meadow and 24 acres of wood at Brooksby, and

73   TNA, PROB 11/42B/627.
74   ROLLR, W&I, 1571/58.
75   TNA, PROB 11/15/287.
76   TNA, PROB 11/27/273.
77   TNA, PROB 11/14/236.
78   TNA, PROB 11/42B/627.
79   ROLLR, W&I, 1560/47.

600 acres of meadow, 300 acres of pasture and 120 acres of land at Kilby. Where his 'workehowse' was located is not stated explicity, but it is likely to have been at Brooksby, given the amount of land held there, in addition to his request for burial in the parish church of Brooksby, and his description as being of Hoby in the adjacent parish.

3.4.2   Landscape and agricultural activity

We have seen substantial evidence for the gentry's participation in husbandry, particularly amongst the lower branches of the hierarchy. This section considers evidence for the gentry's knowledge of the suitability of various environments for their agricultural activity. A considerable number of Leicestershire gentry wills offer evidence for the types and locations of resources kept and used. Frideswide Strelley, for example, requested in 1565 that the profits 'of any wodsales to be made by my executours aswell of and in those my woods called Shiltonmarshills wode in Ulvescrofte … in all those my wodes called the olde springe borrowewod and all other my wodes in Chareley' should be used for the payments of her debts, charitable giving, and bequests to family and friends.[80] Both Ulverscroft and Charley were in the bounds of Charnwood Forest, where Ralph Sacheverell kept 18 pigs 'runynge in the forest and olde felde'.[81] Roger Radcliffe, esquire, of Withcote, bequeathed his mark of swans to his brother Geoffrey called 'the bownde copples' in 1538, inferring wetlands.[82] Similarly, William Faunte, esquire, of Foston, bequeathed amongst other possessions 'my swanne mark in the fennes and swannes about my house' to his son and heir.[83]

Soil composition also played its part. William Faunte's IPM recorded 1,100 acres of land, 620 acres of pasture, 340 acres of meadow and ten acres of wood at Foston, thus sufficient resources of land and meadow for his growing of corn and hay.[84] At Fenny Drayton, Ralph Purefoy's cultivation of oats, barley and peas suggests that he was using the loamy and clayey soils there to his advantage. The soil composition at Fenny Drayton is surrounded by seasonally wet soils to the east, with areas of naturally high groundwater in Warwickshire to the west. Cultivation there was thus in accordance with Fitzherbert's

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[80]   TNA, PROB 11/48/317.
[81]   TNA, PROB 11/42B/668.
[82]   TNA, PROB 11/27/198.
[83]   TNA, PROB 11/42B/627.
[84]   TNA, E 150/1157/5.

recommendation that oats should be sown 'specially vpon lyght grounde and drie, howe be it they wylle growe on weter grounde, than any corne else', and that barley 'wolde be sowen vppon lyghte and drye grounde'.[85] It supports Dyer's conclusion drawn for the fourteenth-century gentry in Gloucestershire, Suffolk, Norfolk and Devon, in that the production methods used were regionally influenced. Certain agricultural specialisations were discouraged on the basis that the gentry usually supplied their households directly from their estates, and thus could only access and cultivate the resources which could be supported there.[86] That crop cultivation is evident in three separate regions of Leicestershire supports its overall suitability for agriculture, but the diverse types allude to the subtler variations of its composition.

Topographical variation could influence the practicalities of estate management, evidenced in the will of Sir John Digby of Eye Kettleby. Situated to the south-west of the market town of Melton Mowbray, Eye Kettleby straddles a terrain comprising a varied elevation range of approximately 100ft. The following extract describes his bequests to his wife, and details the watery features present at Eye Kettleby, in addition to hedging references:

> all my gardeyns orchards wood yards and nete yards water mylne and milne holmes ... and also the parke with the poles ... the neste medowe on the west side of the same mano[r] place the est medowe in two closes of the north syde of Melton Lane and all landes ten[emen]ts medowes lesues and pastures in Ketalby aforesaid with all the hedges aboute and within all and every the premises from the est ende of Melton Lane to Kyrkby Bridge [Kirby Bellars] of the northe side downe to the rever there … I will that my daughter Elyne Mountigue late wif to my sonne … have two closes in Eketulby … one of them is called the hall close and thother close … with all the hedges.[87]

Sir John Digby's references to the pools suggests a substantial amount of water at Eye Kettleby, also evident in the reference to 'Kyrkby Bridge' and the river nearby. The frequent mentions of the meadows there also indicate watery composition, in addition to the absence of any references to arable land at Eye Kettleby in his IPM, which lists only 150 acres of meadow and 225 acres of pasture.[88] Taken in conjunction with the later bequest of 200 sheep to his grandson, John, it is quite possible that Sir John was able to

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85   Fitzherbert, *Boke of Husbandrye*.
86   Dyer, *An Age of Transition?*, p. 99.
87   TNA, PROB 11/31/309.
88   TNA, E 150/1148/4.

pasture his sheep at Eye Kettleby despite its watery composition. The only alternative pasture for his 200 sheep, presumably not representative of his whole flock, was his 210 acres of pasture at the similarly wet Sysonby, situated across the River Wreake to the north-west of Eye Kettleby. Comprehension of the local environment was essential for successful estate management.

The IPM and probate evidence thus supports the Leicestershire gentry's involvement in mixed husbandry. It tallies with Dyer's observation of the gentry's engagement with 'new types of agrarian enterprise in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries'.[89] Probate agricultural references are predominantly, but not exclusively, found in those belonging to esquires and gentlemen, especially concerning equipment. Dame Joan Aston, the widow of Sir John Aston of Wanlip, bequeathed 'a carte and a wayne bounded with iron and the halfe of my plough tymber' to her son Sir Edward, for example.[90] To deduce an absence of direct agricultural involvement amongst the higher-ranking gentry on this evidence alone, however, would be wrong. A more rational argument must be based on the degree of their involvement – from direct to indirect – instead. Amongst the cattle of Sir Ralph Shirley were 12 draught oxen, two wains and 70 sheep, suggesting that, albeit indirectly, he was involved in mixed husbandry to an extent.[91]

Engagement with different types of husbandry necessitated careful management. Sir Ralph Shirley's inventory also included a counting house, inferring estate management in the allocation of space for accounts and 'a cupborde with evydens'. However, Sir Ralph's propensity for estate management was in sharp contrast to the alleged apathy of his son, Francis Shirley, esquire, whose heirs 'complained that he "did little or no wyse at all meddle in the government of his estate, other than with his horses, hounds and deere in his Parke ... wherein he took greate delight"'.[92] This episode suggests that animals were of little interest to the gentry unless they were of economic or recreational importance. However, this chapter will show that animals also played a positive role in successful estate management through the cultivation of social relationships, to which the chapter will now turn.

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[89] Dyer, *An Age of Transition?*, p. 109.
[90] TNA, PROB 11/22/326.
[91] E.P. Shirley, *Stemmata Shirleiana; or the Annals of the Shirley Family* (London, 1873), pp. 418-421.
[92] Heal and Holmes, *Gentry in England and Wales*, pp. 98-99.

3.5 Bequests and animal husbandry

Thus far, IPM and probate evidence have illustrated how the gentry adapted their land use to suit economic and topographical trends. Careful planning and adjustment ensured sufficient financial revenue, yet it reveals little about why these efforts were so important. This section will concentrate on the social dynamic of the gentry's agricultural activity, with particular reference to the importance of animals in the administration and intended legacy of gentry estates. Animals were at the heart of gentry enterprise; they were used for travel, sale, transportation, meat and, evidently in the case of Francis Shirley, recreation. They were bequeathed to family members, associates and servants to convey gratitude, economic influence and socio-political affiliation.

3.5.1 Animals and regionality

Naturally, different animals were suited to particular environments. Before we draw any conclusions concerning why certain animals were bequeathed and to whom, we must first consider possible environmental influences. Of course, the animals bequeathed were not necessarily held at the PPA, but as we shall see during the rest of the chapter, they do reflect the testators' agricultural preferences. Figure 3.19 illustrates the total numbers and geographical distribution of sheep and cattle bequeathed based on the testators' stated PPAs in their wills. Bequests made by gentry testators positioned within the Soar valley were predominantly of cattle, and follow the route of the low-lying river almost exactly. The highest numbers of cattle are evident in the north-eastern region on the border of the East Goscote and Framland hundreds, inferring that region's suitability for pastoral farming. There were also minimal bequests of sheep made by gentry testators to the west of the Soar. Moreover, the highest numbers of sheep were bequeathed by testators residing in the higher upland areas of the county. The composition of the gentry's land use and, importantly, where lands were held, affected the type of animals they could keep and consequently bequeath. However, we might also suggest that Figure 3.19 supports our working conclusion of the Leicestershire gentry's involvement in mixed husbandry; William Burton's seventeenth-century observation of high quality grass and soil in the north-east and the south-west correlates with the frequency of combined bequests of both cattle and sheep to the west of the Soar.
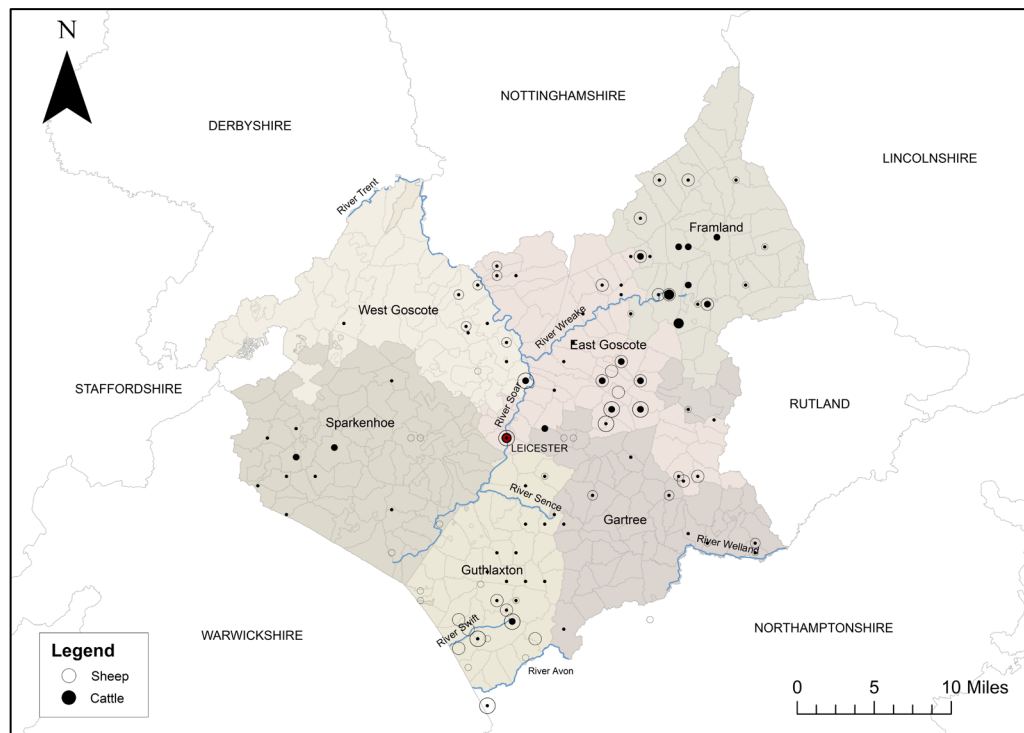
Figure 3.19 The geographical distribution of sheep and cattle bequeathed by Leicestershire gentry testators.

3.5.2   Animals and status

In addition to regional variation, the type of animals bequeathed also differed between status groups, and thus can be interpreted to reveal agricultural preferences between them. Sheep were symbols of status based on their agricultural value, whilst horses appealed to the gentry for both practical and demonstrative purposes. Peter Edwards commented on the degree to which horses' status 'did not solely depend on the utilitarian functions they performed … because other animals had a practical value … What really raised their standing was their iconic appeal'.[93] The probate context of bequeathed animals infers a deliberate choice based on the testator's intended function of the animal. For example, Anthony Faunte, esquire, bequeathed a specific hawk, called Ringebell, to Sir George Villers. Hawks were often used for hunting game, thus Faunte's bequest alluded to his important status through the hawk's association with this elite sport. Comparatively, Robert Brokesby bequeathed 100 sheep to his brother 'as they shall fortune to cume out

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[93]   P. Edwards, 'Image and reality: Upper class perceptions of the horse in early modern England' in P. Edwards, K.A.E. Enenkel and E. Graham (eds.), *The Horse as Cultural Icon: The Real and the Symbolic Horse in the Early Modern World* (Leiden, 2011), p. 281.

of the pene'; the sheep were clearly meant for practical purposes, thus allocating them individually was less important.[94]

Quantitative analysis of our probate dataset offers insight into the significance of animals, evident in the type and number bequeathed, and the role, gender and status of the recipient. There are 3,424 animals represented specifically amongst the Leicestershire gentry's wills. Bequests of cattle, horses and sheep represent over 97% of the animal dataset.[95] Unlike probate inventories, the figure is less representative of the total number of animals held. Yet identifiable trends emerge; esquires, for example, were over three times more likely than gentlemen to bequeath sheep to their male relatives and associates, and twice as likely to bequeath horses.[96] Sons of esquires were the most common recipients, perhaps reflecting their desire to continue their legacy through agricultural practice, or to preserve the family's wealth for future generations. Gentlemen made almost equal numbers of bequests to male and female recipients across all three categories.[97] The actual number of animals amongst bequests made by gentleman was substantially different, however, with male recipients receiving twice the number of horses.

Figure 3.20 illustrates the proportionate distributions of cattle, horses and sheep bequeathed per gentry status group.[98] Esquires account for the majority of each animal type bequeathed, and proportionately more sheep than any other status group, whilst women and gentlemen bequeathed the highest numbers of cattle and horses respectively. These proportions tally with the types of land use described above amongst the IPM land compositions. The IPM evidence revealed that knights and esquires held similar proportions of arable, meadow and pasture, but gentlemen held 20% more arable than any other group.[99] Geldings, or castrated horses, were the most common type of horse to be bequeathed by gentlemen. They were castrated to improve their behaviour for riding or using agricultural equipment. Despite esquires bequeathing a higher number of geldings

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[94] ROLLR, W&I, 1558/75; 1531/14.

[95] The remaining three per cent is comprised of generic 'beasts', dogs, hawks, swans and swine.

[96] There are 22 bequests of sheep to male recipients compared to seven female recipients, and 21 male recipients compared to nine female recipients of horses. Sheep were the most popular animals bequeathed by knights and esquires in proportion to gentlemen and women.

[97] In terms of male to female ratios, the numbers are 5:4 for horse bequests, 3:2 for sheep and 1:1 for cattle.

[98] Proportions are used to avoid the data being skewed by the large numbers of esquires amongst the gentry population.

[99] See Figure 3.1.

overall – 24 compared to nine by gentlemen – both bequeathed an average of two per bequest. The discussion will now turn to consider how important these animals were in the construction and consolidation of gentry relationships.
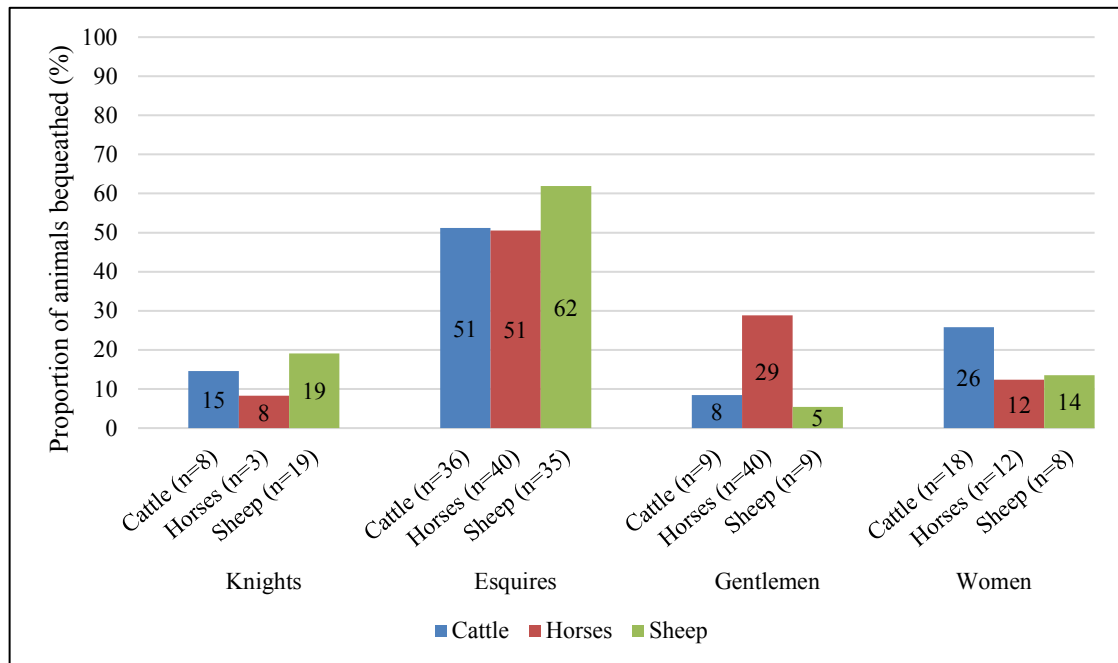
Figure 3.20 Distributions of animal bequests by status group, where n=the number of testators making the bequest.

3.5.3   Horses and gentry relationships

Horses were a particularly important animal from a practical and a sentimental perspective. The inventory of John Beaumont, esquire, of Grace Dieu, arguably offers the most detailed glimpse into the importance of horses. Beaumont's horses are listed individually, accompanied by a description of their colour, role, and intriguingly, their name. His 'horses for the sadle' were a bay horse named Gryffyn, a cole (black) horse named Kyne, a sorrel named Asyby, Beaumont's horse ('my m[aste]r his horse'), and a white horse named Dylks. Amongst his geldings were a cole horse named Kebill, four grey horses named Lyster, Eyre, Bradborne and Pease, two bays named Jackson and Hobbes, a white horse named Denham, two 'yonge geldings', a 'donne' and an unbroken sorrel. The importance and, perhaps, the origin of the horses is evident in their names, which were likely taken from the people who had either given or sold them to him. Certainly, Gryffyn, Asyby [Ashby], Kebill [Keble], Bradborne and Denham were names of Leicestershire gentry and wealthy yeomen families. There appears to have been a tendency amongst the Leicestershire gentry to purchase and sell their horses to each other. If the will of Thomas Farnham, esquire was properly executed, Beaumont would also

have received Farnham's bay ambling nag that he had bought from Roger Waldram, gentleman.[100]

A revised inventory taken after the one detailed above gives further information about Beaumont's named horses. There is a grey ambling gelding named Marshall, ten years old and priced at £4. We discover that Pease was seven years old, hipped, and valued at 40s; Bradborne was seven years old; Kebill was 13 years old, lame, spavined, and valued at 30s; Dylks was 13 years old with a value of 66s 8d; Eyre, the grey trotting gelding, was 14 years old, same value; Lystar, the white racking gelding, was seven years old, same value; an unbroken dun (brown), bald gelding, seven years old, same value; an unbroken young, small, sorrel colt, six years old, valued at 33s 4d; one trotting sorrel colt, two years old, 10s in value; one pied foal, two years old, 10s, and a trotting gelding named Tomson, seven years old, and valued at 66s 8d. The unbroken horses had not been given names, perhaps evidence that a more personal connection could only be realised once they had been tamed.

Increased age does not appear to have directly corresponded with decreased value, which was probably connected to the horses' potential usefulness rather than their age. By the second inventory, Pease was described as 'hipped', referring possibly to a dislocated or injured hip, or lameness from a disease in the hip.[101] Kebill was spavined, meaning he was affected by a hard, bony tumour in his joints. The two horses had either sentimental or blood value. Given that Beaumont was named on a list of men 'who furnish great horses' in July 1547, and of those tasked with providing 'light horses and demilances' in July 1548, it is quite likely that his pride and eye for finances and pedigree had kept Pease and Kebill alive.[102] Naomi Sykes highlighted Harriet Ritvo's argument for 'the case that pedigree animals, with their documented ancestry and racial purity, represented the very ideals that members of the elite wished to emphasize about themselves'.[103]

Horses were occasionally bequeathed by the gentry to express gratitude towards their estate personnel. This was an expensive gesture, and could ensure good service towards their successor(s). Christopher Villers, esquire, bequeathed 20s to his horse keeper,

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[100] TNA, PROB 11/45/239.
[101] 'hipped, adj.1.', *OED* (2018), 'www.oed.com/view/Entry/87137' [accessed 24th July 2018].
[102] TNA, SP 10/2/1; SP 10/5/55, *SPO.*
[103] N. Sykes, *Beastly Questions: Animal Answers to Archaeological Issues* (London, 2015), p. 48.

Maurice.[104] Anne Skillington left 40s and one of her best cows to her horse keeper, and Sir Ambrose Cave bequeathed £5 to his.[105] The relationship between Christopher Villers and his horse keeper, Maurice, was such that he left two horses to him, in addition to the 20s mentioned above, and forgave him 'all suche money and dett as he nowe dothe owe unto me'.[106] Of all the animals on an estate, horses were arguably the most practical. William Staunton, esquire, bequeathed to each of his servants a horse worth 20s 'or ells 20s to bye them and saddell and brydell beside', for example.[107] Roger Radcliffe bequeathed £60 to his servant Thomas Harte, £20 to two other servants, Chad Curson and John Green, and to each of them 'the horse, saddyll and bridell that he rideth on when he ridith in my company'.[108] Further, the generosity of the financial sum and bequest of very specific horses and associated property might be evidence for Harte, Curson and Green's involvement in the supervision of Radcliffe's estates.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter has shown that gentry involvement in agriculture was economically and socially valuable. It has built on the previous chapters to show that the financial income generated by gentry agriculture helped to preserve and protect individual and family interests. The ability to successfully manage an estate was perceived to be an essential skill; it ensured the preservation of family legacy for another generation. Subsequent income was re-invested into the estate, and the family's economic interests were maintained. As demonstrated in Chapter 2, the gentry were litigiously active, thus estate revenue could also fund the defence or acquisition of their territories.

Leicestershire's topography was naturally suited to mixed husbandry, and ensured that the local gentry could maintain, and indeed, increase their income according to the contemporary economic climate. Dyer described that the gentry were 'regarded as careful and adaptable managers, responsive to change, and indeed more likely to be personally

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[104] TNA, PROB 11/27/102.
[105] ROLLR, W&I, 1540/23; TNA, PROB 11/54/122. According to TNA's currency converter, in 1570 £5 could buy one horse, four cows, 15 stones of wool or five quarters of wheat. There are some gentry in the income hierarchy whose landed value *per annum* was less than this!
[106] TNA, PROB 11/27/102.
[107] TNA, PROB 11/23/314.
[108] TNA, PROB 11/27/198.

committed to production'.[109] We have seen that the Leicestershire gentry participated in enclosure, evident amongst changing proportions of land use in the IPMs. There is also substantial evidence that many of the Leicestershire gentry returned to mixed husbandry during our period, although those towards at the bottom of the gentry hierarchy were more likely to have been engaged with predominantly arable husbandry. This was illustrated throughout the gentry hierarchy in probate bequests of agricultural implements, particularly amongst the gentlemen and esquires.

That items of predominantly practical value featured heavily in gentry bequests demonstrates their cultural importance; both implements and animals were passed from generation to generation as a continuation of family income, tradition and bloodline. Whether it was through leasing, arable husbandry, or the breeding of horses, economic revenue was consistently important throughout the gentry hierarchy. This was particularly apparent in the analysis of probate evidence concerning animals. Animals had both economic and social value. They were an essential component of gentry income given their practical role on gentry estates, but they were also used to strengthen political, family and domestic bonds.

The gentry's economic activity had both a practical and social value. If we contextualise the above discussion with the previous chapters, the importance of place is beginning to emerge. Place was a cultural construction with different layers of meaning. Thus far, we have seen that gentry culture was composed of administrative, political and territorial influences, and we can now add economic incentive to the equation. Each gave meaning to particular locations. Common to these components was the gentry's determination to adapt and survive, and to continue their family legacy. The next chapter develops this idea further by exploring the evidence for its impact on direct social interaction. It will be shown that the administrative, political, territorial and economic undercurrents of gentry culture were emerging in gentry behaviour on the ground.

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[109] Dyer, *An Age of Transition?*, p. 97.

Chapter 4: Star Chamber, landscape and gentry behaviour[1]

4.1   Abstract

Thus far, this thesis has considered the influences of place and landscape in gentry identity from an administrative, political, territorial and economic perspective. This chapter develops this approach through an analysis of gentry behaviour as evidenced in court records. Building on the previous chapters, a series of case studies taken from the court of Star Chamber illustrate how ancestral entitlement, geographical proximity and economic incentive propelled gentry behaviour. We will encounter alleged dialogue, gestures and action from forest to field. In the process, this chapter will show how the gentry's attachment to place emerged in the court and on the ground, and how it was agitated by political, economic and social factors. The chapter is structured accordingly. It begins with the King's highway, a well-established thoroughfare in the south-west of the county, where the proximity of local landholdings exacerbated political tensions. The discussion then considers a case where economic rivalry, largely based on two families' ancestral entitlement to the same lands, was embodied in the movement of livestock. The next section focuses on enclosure as a method of estate improvement, and develops the impact of the relationship between ancestry and economy on the social hierarchy. The final case study handles the recreational aspect of gentry culture by drawing attention to the social implications of breaching territorial boundaries.

4.2   Introduction

The extract below details a representative encounter preserved in a Star Chamber deposition, given by William Barkby on the part of his master, Sir William Skeffington. The case will be discussed in further detail below, but it shows how these episodes can be interpreted to reveal the intense ancestral and economic undercurrents of gentry disputes. Skeffington brought the case to Star Chamber in 1496, against Christopher

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[1]   An earlier version of this chapter was published in the *Midland History* journal in 2017. See K. Bridger, '"It is no walking for thee in the high wey": gentry encounters, hierarchy and the Leicestershire landscape in the records of Star Chamber, *c*.1496-1547', *Midland History*, 42, no. 2 (2017), pp. 159-182.

Neele, esquire, Richard Neele's father, on the grounds of forcible entry and unlawful occupation of certain lands and tenements there.

> William Barkeby of Hungerton s[er]v[a]unt of thage of xxviii yeres sworne and examyned saith and deposeth that he by the com[m]andement of William Skevyngton pout in xl neet [cattle] into the said pasture uppon ii yeres past … this deponent there kept the same catall unto the tyme that Richard Neele and iiii of his faders Cristofer Neele s[y]rv[a]unts w[i]t[h] hym w[i]t[h] bowes and arrowes came unto this deponent and to oon Austen that kept the catall w[i]t[h] hym and bad theym to dryve theym oute and they wolde not so do and wheruppon the said Richard Nyell smote the said Austen w[i]t[h] his fyste on the cheke and then they p[er]ceyved that William Skevyngton was uppon an hille therby and reterned into the place of Keythorp and after ward came forthe agayne to the nombre of xx p[er]sones ... and drove oute the said catall into Gadeby felde.[2]

The composition of the land at Keythorpe made it an attractive site for economic profit, being appropriate for animal grazing and pasture. It thus attracted gentry interest and consequential contest.[3] Keythorpe hosted the earliest known instance of agricultural enclosure in Leicestershire by Thomas Palmer, esquire, in *c*.1456.[4] But at the heart of the case was the Skeffingtons' and Neeles' ancestral rights to Keythorpe; perceived territorial entitlement produced a particularly intense conflict. Driving animals into or out of contested land was a claim of ownership. Finally, the extract reveals that methods of land management were in part dictated by county topography. Sir William Skeffington's appearance on a hill nearby suggests that he was sufficiently familiar with his environment to use it for surveillance.[5]

Arguably, gentry interaction was also shaped by the appeal of certain landscapes. In rural areas with topographical variance such as at Keythorpe, gentry interaction was shaped directly by the landscape. Sir William Turville's enclosure activity at Croft, discussed in our third case study for this chapter, was probably influenced – although not necessarily

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2   TNA, Court of Star Chamber: Proceedings, Henry VII, STAC 1/1/7.
3   The composition at Keythorpe and the Neeles' holdings there have been considered above. See Chapter 2, 2.3.3 and Chapter 3, 3.3.2.
4   TNA, STAC 1/1/7.
5   The Skeffingtons' PPA was at Skeffington, approximately two miles away from Keythorpe. Sir William may have acquired his knowledge from his father who had, in turn, acquired it from his tenants. According to a deposition taken in *c*.1496, Emmet James, the widow of a servant to the Skeffingtons, deposed that 'hir said husbond said if the said Thomas Skevyngton wolde come to hym to Tukby … he wolde goo w[i]t[h] hym and shewe hym where his lande ley and tell hym to ev[er]y forowe of hit'. TNA, STAC 1/1/7.

dictated – by its topographical visibility and the adequacy of the local environment for enclosure. Moreover, woodland present in forests and parks, for example, offered ideal conditions for the keeping and hunting of game, attracting both administrative and recreational gentry interest. The suitability of local conditions produced litigation where the land was contested. Gentry behaviour was thus affected both by economic prospects and by the type of environment in which alleged altercations took place. Nicola Whyte argued that places were 'contested, and open to different, contradictory opinions'.[6] Interpretation of those places, such as a disputed manor at the centre of gentry litigation, was based on the litigants' clashing perspectives of entitlement.

Chapter 3 introduced the importance of animal bequests in gentry culture. Here, litigants' sense of entitlement will be shown to have manifested in their behaviour towards animals. Animals created a common seigneurial identity.[7] As discussed in the previous chapter, Anthony Faunte, esquire, bequeathed a number of hawks and horses in his will, many to leading men of the county.[8] The quality of stock was amongst the central components of gentry identity. A healthy flock of sheep or a well-stocked game reserve expressed wealth and power. Recreational pursuits, such as hunting and poaching, are another example of the gentry-animal relationship. Hunts took place on horseback, and dogs would find, chase and retrieve prey, which was often deer.[9] As Sir Keith Thomas summarised, 'blood was important; there was a social hierarchy among animals no less than men, the one reinforcing the other'.[10]

There is a long history of gentry conflict over lands and faunal resources. In 1304, Walter de Hoby was summoned to answer a plea for impounding two cows belonging to John de Villers of Brooksby.[11] In 1453, John Bellers, esquire, was alleged to have taken eight horses belonging to the abbot of Vaudey Abbey, Lincolnshire.[12] Richard Neele brought

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6 N. Whyte, 'Spatial history', in Handley, McWilliam and Noakes, *New Directions in Social and Cultural History*, p. 235.

7 Sykes, *Beastly Questions*, pp. 73-74.

8 ROLLR, W&I, 1588/75.

9 Mandy de Belin argued that foxes became the favoured quarry by the seventeenth century due to declining woodland and increased enclosure. See M. de Belin, *The Hunting Transition and the Landscape*, 1600-1850 (Hatfield, 2013).

10 K. Thomas, *Man and the Natural World* (London, 1984), p. 60.

11 Farnham, *Medieval Pedigrees*, p. 33. Impounding was considered a lawful response to criminal damages.

12 Ibid., p. 26.

action against one John Lammes of Wymeswold, tailor, for illegally hunting hares, rabbits, pheasants and partridges in his free warren at Prestwold in 1448.[13] Animals were a clearly marked and identifiable possession. Marking was commonly used to deter theft, or to protect against loss during common grazing.[14] In 1539, a case was brought to Star Chamber over the inheritance of Richard Beaumont, esquire, by his brother and executor, George Beaumont, and another of his executors, Sir John Villers.[15] Sir John had allegedly directed three of his servants to visit Grace Dieu, the home of John Beaumont, Richard's cousin, to take back 100 sheep which had previously belonged to Richard. One of the articles for interrogation enquired as to 'what bests or goods they or any of them toke awey from Gracedewe and whose goods they were and what m[ar]ke they had'.[16] In response, one of the servants, Robert Crosse, deposed that

> they toke a waye frome grace dewe a [100] shepe of the goods of Richard Beamount late decesyd and they had the m[ar]ke upon the[m] of Richard Beamonte howbeit he saithe John Beamont had blynded the said m[ar]ke the daye before w[i]t[h] his m[ar]ke but what his m[ar]ke was he cannot tell for the oone blynded the other.[17]

Sheep marking, therefore, had to be sufficiently distinctive to differentiate between individuals. That one mark had obscured the other to the point of illegibility suggests that a family-specific mark was used with other elements to identify family members. Hence the sheep were still recognisable as belonging to the Beaumont family, yet not to Richard or John specifically. John Beaumont's efforts to change his cousin's mark had apparently taken place the day before the alleged theft. He may have had advance warning; the distance from Sir John's PPA at Brooksby was approximately 15 miles from Grace Dieu. If the remarking was done in a hurry, adverse weather conditions may also have affected the legibility of the mark, given that wet wool did not retain marks as well.[18]

The Beaumont v Villers dispute illustrates the extent to which the gentry could recognise each other's animals, and thus how representative those animals were of their owners.

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[13] Ibid., p. 65.

[14] P.J. Bowden, *The Wool Trade in Tudor and Stuart England* (London, 1962), p. 19.

[15] ROLLR, W&I, 1537/20. The inheritance dispute may have influenced Nicholas Beaumont, Richard Beaumont's son, to put a substantial bond of £5,000 in place between his eldest son, Henry, and his three younger sons to ensure that Henry executed his will according to his wishes. See TNA, PROB 11/68/466.

[16] TNA, STAC 2/4/192.

[17] TNA, STAC 2/4/190.

[18] Bowden, *Wool Trade*, p. 20.

Some 20 years previously in 1519, Thomas Grey had written to Wolsey that 'Leicestershire is in great disorder. Two tame harts, with bells about their necks, belonging to his brother Leonard, have been killed in the night, and their heads set upon stakes' in the town of Leicester.[19] Naomi Sykes observed that 'the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are believed to represent the most sustained period' of violence towards animals.[20] The act was intended to shame the Greys by inferring that Leonard Grey was incapable of protecting his deer, simultaneously insulting his honour and dignity. It was allegedly ordered by the same Sir John Villers discussed above, who was a member of the Hastings faction. The ongoing dispute between the Greys and the Hastings had manifested itself in violence towards two easily-identifiable animals. The symbolism was twofold. Firstly, stakes were often used as boundary markers; their location in Leicester is unknown, but it was a clear expression of Hastings territory. Secondly, harts were common hunting quarry. Killing them inferred that the Greys could use the Hastings' animals for their sport; their death was a display of power.

4.2.1 Sources

Star Chamber records are amongst the richest documentary sources for the gentry's interaction with and within the landscape. As Heather Falvey noted, depositions 'provide glimpses of past scenes that would otherwise remain obscured ... [they] reconstruct past landscapes and ... identify the protagonists and the loops of association which drew them together in those landscapes'.[21] Contested usage rights are a common theme. Briony McDonagh and Carl Griffin have illustrated their usefulness in exploring property protests and commons disputes, and McDonagh has also drawn attention to the court's involvement in enclosure.[22] Similarly, Laura Lehua Yim used Star Chamber litigation to contextualise gentry conflict over water rights.[23] From a recreational perspective, Roger

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[19] Brewer, *Letters and Papers*, 3, pt. 1, p. 142.

[20] Sykes, *Beastly Questions*, pp. 133-134.

[21] Falvey, 'Relating early modern depositions' in Griffin and McDonagh, *Remembering Protest in Britain Since 1500*, p. 82.

[22] B. McDonagh and C.J. Griffin, 'Occupy! Historical geographies of property, protest, and the commons, 1500-1850', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 53 (2016), pp. 1-10; Brooks, *Yorkshire and the Star Chamber*, pp. 11-18; B. McDonagh, 'Making and breaking property: negotiating enclosure and common rights in sixteenth-century England' *History Workshop Journal*, 76 (2013), pp. 32-56.

[23] L.L. Yim, 'A watercourse "in variance": re-situating a sixteenth-century legal map from Ashbourne, Derbyshire', *International Journal for the History of Cartography*, 68, no. 2 (2016), pp. 147-163.

Manning considered the cultural implications of hunting and poaching.[24] This chapter combines these approaches to Star Chamber depositions to assess how place and landscape affected gentry interaction. Cases have been chosen where sufficient information has survived to reconstruct the nuances behind the litigation.

4.3 Geographical proximity: the King's highway

Gentry experiences and behaviour were determined by the degree of their influence upon and within the local landscape. This is reflected in our first case study, situated in Leicester Forest. The forest environment offered opportunities for social and political advancement; offices and keeperships – bestowed with royal patronage and each with their own responsibility for forest administration – held prestigious connotations. Leicester Forest did not become a royal forest until the turn of the fourteenth century.[25] It had been the preserve of the earls of Leicester until Henry Bolingbroke, third duke of Lancaster, ascended the throne in 1399 as Henry IV.[26] George Hastings, third Baron Hastings, later to become the first earl of Huntingdon, had inherited a monopoly of offices in the Honour of Leicester from his grandfather William Lord Hastings. They included the stewardship of the Honour in Leicestershire, Northamptonshire and Warwickshire; the office of chief forester in Leicester Forest, and the keepership of the Frith, outwoods in the King's chase, Baron Park and Hinckley Park, for which he received nearly £39 14s 4d *per annum*.[27] The King had promised those offices, however, to Thomas Grey, second marquess of Dorset if George Hastings died without issue.[28] The Greys' influence in the Forest was thus dependent on the fortunes of their most prominent rival in the county. Indeed, the relationship between offices held and the local landscape became apparent in the Duchy commission sent to resolve the Grey-Hastings rivalry. Both factions were commanded to remove their cattle from the Frith, the King's enclosed part of the forest,

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[24] R.B. Manning, *Hunters and Poachers: A Social and Cultural History of Unlawful Hunting in England, 1485-1640* (Oxford, 2011).

[25] It was also a profitable position. George Lord Hastings received nearly £40 *per annum* for his forest offices, for example. See TNA, DL 28/33/31.

[26] Fox and Russell, *Leicester Forest*, p. 12.

[27] TNA, DL 28/33/31.

[28] M.L. Robertson, 'Court careers and county quarrels' in C. Carlton (ed.), *State, Sovereigns and Society in Early Modern England: Essays in Honour of A.J. Slavin* (Stroud, 1998), p. 161. Robertson's article offers an excellent, detailed account of the different phases of the Grey-Hastings feud in Leicestershire.

and Lord John Grey was ordered to vacate Birds' Nest Lodge, the primary, fortified hunting lodge in the area.[29]

Leicester Forest was a sparsely-wooded environment, reported by the King's commissioners – comprising local gentry, including Sir Richard Sacheverell – in 1523, and was therefore suitable as a game reserve.[30] The state of the forest and its suitability for grazing, however, were inextricably linked; pasturing game and livestock in excess threatened timber production and stock.[31] The commissioners' recommendation that the King might 'for salvac[i]on of his said forest [and] game and also for com[m]oditie of countrey in tyme to com[e] to norisshe wood there ageyn' indicated probable over-grazing, and concerns for timber resources.[32] Grey v Sacheverell details numerous occasions of the gentry using Leicester Forest for the grazing of livestock, particularly Sir Richard Sacheverell. The gentry appear to have struck a successful balance between their own livestock management and timber cultivation in Leicester Forest, where 'the woods that be left there be growyng upon other mens grounds [and] not upon the kings grounde'.[33]

4.3.1 Landholdings and the social hierarchy

Daily business in the county increased the probability of direct interaction during travel or estate management.[34] The composition of gentry landholdings affected gentry interaction, as demonstrated in Chapter 2. Leicester Forest was situated within the borough of Leicester, comprising several manors and extending south-westwards into the county (see Figure 4.1).[35] The social standing of the Grey and Hastings families was reflected in the extent of land held by each family in the county. In relation to Leicester Forest, the Greys held substantial lands in the adjacent neighbouring manors of Glenfield and Groby, in addition to the Forest park of Beaumont Leys, whilst the Hastings-

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[29] Robertson, 'Court careers and county quarrels' in Carlton, *State, Sovereigns and Society*, p. 163.

[30] TNA, Duchy of Lancaster: Rentals and Surveys, DL 43/14/6. The other commissioners were Sir John Digby; Edmund Knightley, esquire, and John Burgoyn and Thomas Brokesby, gentlemen.

[31] Manning, *Hunters and Poachers*, p. 111.

[32] TNA, DL 43/14/6.

[33] TNA, STAC 2/12/259. It is a strong possibility that the 'other men' referred to comprised local gentry amongst others.

[34] For a detailed discussion of probability and spatial encounters see B. Hillier and J. Hanson, *The Social Logic of Space* (Cambridge, 2008), pp. 234-241.

[35] The forest markers represent place-names mentioned in a perambulation of Leicester Forest during the reign of Henry VIII. TNA, DL 39/5/14.

Sacheverell alliance held the manors of Braunstone, Lubbesthorpe and Kirby Muxloe. Each bordered Leicester Forest and the King's highway.[36]
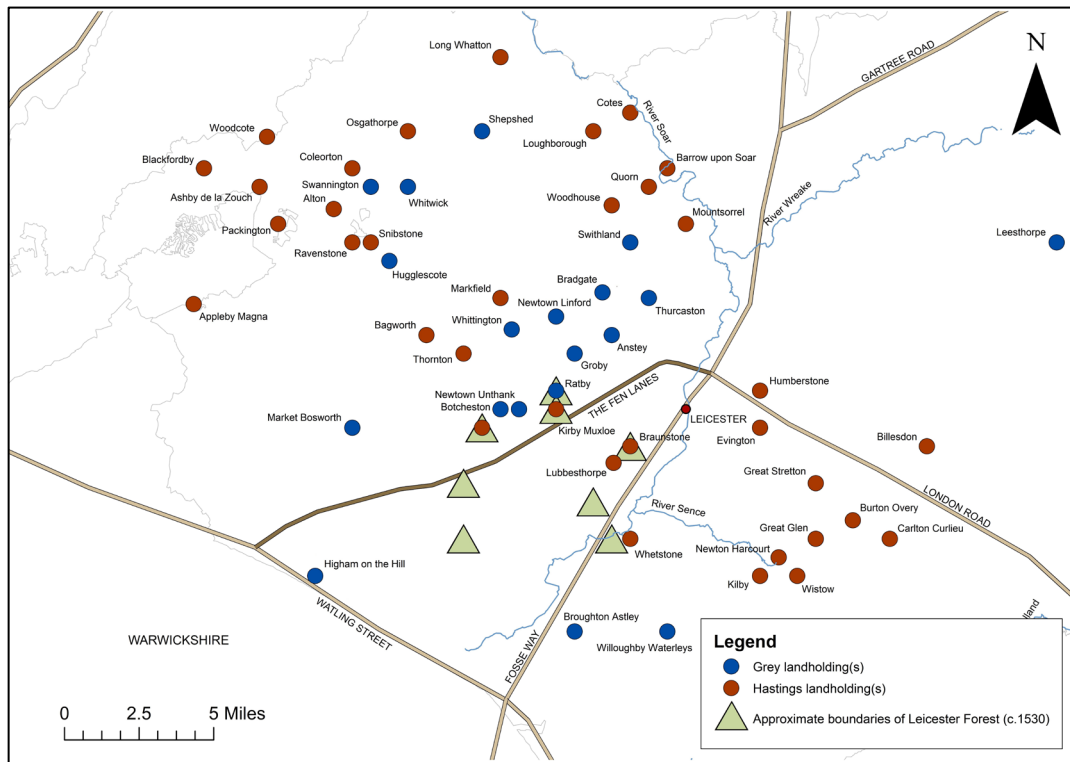
Figure 4.1 Leicester Forest, the King's Highway (the 'Fen Lanes'), and landholdings of the Greys and Hastings.[37]

The highway, which led from Leicester towards Earl Shilton in the south-west, was essential for estate management. The gentry usually lived in the countryside, given that their wealth and status depended on their agricultural estates, illustrated in the previous chapter.[38] As such, access to and from the Forest, and to the King's highway itself, was essential for fulfilling their administrative duties in Leicester and the county. According to *The Boke of Husbandrye*, 'euery ma[n] may go beside the hie way with theyr cariage at theyr pleasure'.[39] It would appear that this was not the case in Leicestershire.

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[36] This includes the supervised friths of Leicester, Braunstone and Glenfield, where rights of common pasture appear to have been held by those dwelling there. 'Reserved' territory refers to the remaining woodland encompassing the chase. See Figure 4.1 for the estimated boundaries of Leicester Forest and the location of the King's highway.

[37] The landholdings are calculated from IPM data extracted from TNA, E 150/1136/4; E 150/1146/5; E 150/1158/12; C 142/155/168. The boundaries of Leicester Forest are based on the place-names given in a perambulation of the Forest in *c*.1530 in TNA, Duchy of Lancaster and Justice of the Forest South of the Trent: Forest Records, DL 39/5/14.

[38] Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, p. 247.

[39] Fitzherbert, 'To mende a hye waye', *Boke of Husbandrye*.

The surviving evidence for Grey v Sacheverell details a series of events which took place in Leicester Forest and on the King's Highway, also known as the Fen Lanes, in 1525, six years after the hart incident. It records alleged interaction between the factions of Grey, under Thomas Grey, second marquess of Dorset, and Hastings, under George Hastings and his step-father Sir Richard Sacheverell. The friction between Sacheverell and the Marquess had already been seen in King's Bench in 1516, where information was filed against their retaining of servants.[40] Since his marriage to Lady Hungerford, Sacheverell's self-importance appears to have increased in parallel with his status. He was said to have 'used hymself in man[ner] of comparison w[i]t[h] the Lord M[ar]ques soo that the shire ever since hath been in grete division … to the grete p[er]t[er]baunce and inquietenesse of the King's subjectts dwelling w[i]t[h]in the same shire'.[41] The discontent brought about by Sacheverell's advancement reflects the importance of social balance in the gentry hierarchy.

4.3.2 Politics of gesture

The proximity of the highway environment exacerbated local tensions, evidenced in recollections of alleged direct gentry confrontation in the highway. It will be remembered that all surviving depositions for this case were given by the Greys' servants. One of them, John Gladwyn, deposed that fleeing from confrontation 'shuld bee dishono[r] to their maystre and shame to theym'.[42] This was apparently put into practice by another servant of the Greys', John Addington, who alleged that he was 'shuldered' by a servant of Sacheverell's, who then 'dep[ar]ted and gave this deponent a greate loke'.[43] Gestures, both initial and reciprocal, were essential components in the expression of status and the preservation of personal and familial honour.[44] Threats by the gentry were made most frequently towards inter- and sub-gentry social inferiors. Whether or not physical

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[40] E. Lodge, *Illustrations of British History … in the Reigns of Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary, Elizabeth and James I*, 1 (London, 1791), p. 28.
[41] TNA, STAC 2/12/262.
[42] TNA, STAC 2/12/268.
[43] TNA, STAC 2/12/296.
[44] See J. Walter, 'Gesturing at authority: deciphering the gestural code of early modern England', *Past & Present*, 203, no. 4 (2009), pp. 96-127. There are several documents which detail further episodes of intimidation and alleged violence between both parties, such as an affray in Leicester between Thomas Grey's cook and the servant of Hastings' lawyer, Thomas Brokesby, esquire, in TNA, STAC 2/12/265.

violence did occur in these disputes, they are sufficiently detailed to warrant credible suspicion of a confrontation.[45]

Another episode exhibits the influence of the Forest-highway environment on gentry behaviour. Dunham, one of the Greys' foresters, was appointed to protect forest resources, including game. An indenture with the King had made Thomas Grey responsible for the keeping and nourishment of at least 3,000 deer in Leicestershire's forests; game preservation was thus a family priority.[46] Dunham was sent by Lord Leonard Grey to watch a company of Sacheverell and his men on horseback on their way through the Forest, by proxy exercising the Greys' authority in the Forest. They were allegedly preparing to hunt in the King's reserved ground of the Frith after hunting in the nearby Barn Park. Afterwards, Dunham had attempted to ride away from the Hastings's company, but was prevented from leaving without Sacheverell's permission. He refused to obey the request of Sacheverell's servant, one Wigley, to go to Sacheverell:

> and then Wygley sayed to this deponent by godds blud knave thow shalt nat chose / Natw[i]t[h]standing, this deponent wold nat go to M[r] Sacheverell ... And thereupon this deponent rode from the sayd company thre or fowre landes brede / and then came oon George Villers galapyng on a horse w[i]t[h] a crosbowe bent and an arrowe in it and stepped before this deponent in the high wey and bad this deponent stande knave how far wolt thow go / To which George Villers this deponent sayed ... I trust ye wilnat stop me in the high wey / Wherunto the said George sayed by godds blud knave thow shalt speke w[i]t[h] M[r] Sacheverell ere thou go having then his crosbow bent upon his thigh w[i]t[h] an arrowe in it ... and so this deponent rode to the sayd M[r] Sachev[er]ell / and did off his cap to hym / and the sayd M[r] Sachev[er]ell sayed nev[er] a worde to this deponent but nodded his hed at hym.[47]

The gestures reinforce the importance of the politics of gesture in the maintenance of social position. Steven Shapin has drawn attention to sixteenth-century courtesy literature, which advised that there was 'no truer gentleman than one who was sovereign over his passions and who displayed his calm indifference to attempted injury and insult'.[48] The depositions illustrate a highly visible but equally reserved restraint amongst

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[45] A passionate debate on the history and presence of violence can be found in L. Stone, 'Interpersonal violence in English society, 1300-1980', *Past & Present*, 101 (1983), pp. 22-33; J.A. Sharpe, 'The history of violence in England: some observations', *Past & Present*, 108 (1985), pp. 206-216; L. Stone, 'A Rejoinder', *Past & Present*, 108 (1985), pp. 217-224.

[46] Robertson, 'Court careers and county quarrels' in Carlton, *State, Sovereigns and Society*, p. 161.

[47] TNA, STAC 2/12/296-297.

[48] S. Shapin, *A Social History of Truth: Civility and Science in Seventeenth-Century England* (London, 1994), p. 64.

the gentry when it came to direct confrontation. They reflect the tension created by the close quarters of the highway and Forest environment. George Villers, esquire, was the younger brother of Sir John Villers, mentioned above. He may well have played a part in the killing and display of the Greys' deer in 1519, but is said to have escaped punishment for his misdemeanours in the county due to his social standing.[49]

Villers's display of dominance was limited by expected social and *legal* behaviour. An act passed in 1515 included a penalty of £10 for using a crossbow 'for ev[er]y tyme so offending' for those whose landed income was less than 300 marks. Of the 128 Leicestershire gentry incomes extracted from the IPMs, only two, belonging to Thomas Grey, second marquess of Dorset and Francis Hastings, second earl of Huntingdon, were anywhere near that threshold. It did not, however, stop individuals such as George Villers from holding his loaded crossbow as a threat of violence. Villers's use of the term 'knave' indicated that he considered Dunham an inferior. His appearance reflects the inter-gentry hierarchy; Wigley was not, apparently, a sufficient show of force, but the situation did not require Sacheverell's physical intervention. By contrast with Addington's altercation in Leicester, the balance of power had been shifted in favour of the Sacheverell party without bodily contact. Leonard Grey had exerted his influence by sending Dunham to supervise on his behalf, but Sacheverell had asserted his own by forcing deference from Dunham.

Sacheverell's nod permitted Dunham to leave. As Sacheverell's inferior, Villers's literal step into the highway created a physical barrier; he exercised Hastings-Sacheverell authority by preventing Dunham's access to a space which should have been neutral. Dunham then alleged that Villers told him to 'go knave there as thy dere ar / for it is no walking for the[e] in the high wey'. It equated him with his deer, which were also quarry, and supports the gesture made towards Greys' harts in 1519. He responded that he would 'see Mr Sachev[er]ell and all his company go thorough the forest / and ... he wold reaport thair demeanure'.[50] The Hastings-Sacheverell faction appear to have felt more assured away from the Forest and in the town of Leicester, with Dunham allegedly being told

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[49]   Coros, 'Villers, Sir John' in Bindoff, *History of Parliament: 1509-1558*, pp. 527-528.
[50]   TNA, STAC 2/12/298.

'knave and ev[er] thow cu[m] in Leicester / thow shalt have thy hed broken'.[51] This was also reflected in the hart incident.

Livestock was essential for the preservation of the gentry's economic interests, and for the expression of their political and territorial interests. An embodiment of the friction caused by livestock occurred in a particular pinfold in Leicester Frith. The pinfold was used during the drift, defined as 'the driving of cattle within a forest to one place on a particular day, for the purposes of determining ownership etc.', usually in return for money or a favour.[52] The drift may have either taken place in early June or mid-September 1525. Given the context provided in the deposition, it is probable that the livestock mentioned here were indeed, distrained:

> the sayd M[r] Sacheverells s[er]vunt cam[e] agen for his mastres catell … and my lord leonard demanded that man whether he wold swere that they were M[r] Sacheverells catell or no and he sayed he wold nat swere for 100 li / And then the sayd s[er]vunt of M[r] Sacheverell sayed to my said Lord Leonarde his maistre wold have his bests and aske my lord no leve and yet wold nat swere for theym / And than my sayd Lord Leonard sayed the sayd Maister Sacheverell shuld nat have his catell w[i]t[h] his good wille except he wold swere they were his catell or else sum other p[er]sonne for hym yf he brought 500 personnes at his tayle.

This particular episode was a literal, physical act of possession, and of taunting behaviour by Grey towards Sacheverell. Distraint of cattle was a common punishment for wandering livestock; a penalty of 20d per beast was due in Leicester Forest during the drift.[53] The cattle was easily identifiable; custom regulations in Leicester Forest dictated that 'ev[er]y man shall brande their beysts w[i]t[h] their own towne brande or els w[i]t[h] the fleshe brande uppon peynof ev[er]y beyst … founde not branded xii d'.[54] The Leicestershire gentry had politicised the custom. Lord Leonard's authority over the pinfold reflected the contemporary make-up of inter-gentry family politics and responsibilities. Further, it gave him jurisdiction over the Hastings' livestock. The moving boundaries of rival gentry

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[51] TNA, STAC 2/12/299. The shift in power at Leicester in favour of the Greys prior to 1525 has been highlighted, amongst other events, by Mary Robertson in the appointment to dean of George Grey, younger brother of Thomas Grey, at the College of the Annunciation of St Mary in the Newarke, Leicester. The Hastings had long been benefactors to the College, with Mary Hungerford and Richard Sacheverell living in residence there. The result was at least a decade of conflict in the College and its grounds. See Robertson, 'Court careers and county quarrels', pp. 159-160.

[52] S.H. Skillington, 'Star Chamber proceedings', *TLAHS*, 12, no. 1 (1921), p. 137.

[53] TNA, Duchy of Lancaster: Various Accounts, DL 28/33/31.

[54] Ibid.

territories, personified by the wandering of their livestock, overlapped in parallel with their landholdings.

4.4 Economic rivalries: Skeffington v Neele & Ap Rhys v Neele

This case study explores gentry interaction in the rural manorial environment. Building on the importance of livestock, both ancestral entitlement and economic incentive influenced gentry behaviour. Andy Wood argued that by the end of the fifteenth century, the gentry had 'extended their personal estates such that seigneurial control over resources also extended control over space'.[55] This is particularly relevant here; Chapter 2 showed that the Neeles had acquired their second PPA of Keythorpe through marriage in *c*.1480.[56] 'High concentrations' of gentry interests were noted by Eric Acheson on the higher grounds of this region.[57] Combined with the observations made above in Chapter 2, we might expect an increased probability of gentry litigation there.[58] As we have seen above, geographical proximity also made direct social confrontation more likely. Travel was necessary in estate management, but in contrast with the King's highway, encounters were more likely to involve a much smaller group of individuals. The geographical scale of the estates belonging to this branch of gentry was much more localised than their counterparts at the upper end of the hierarchy. Charles Maier observed that 'territory tended to tangle the political and the economic domains: it provided a common but contested ground'.[59] Indeed, the two cases here were, as evidenced above, an inheritance dispute between a network of local families whose territorial interests overlapped.[60]

4.4.1 Territory and economy

The cases are indicative of the potential tension caused by the pasturing and grazing of livestock in the open-field environment where gentry agendas clashed. The earliest case, Skeffington v Neele, was brought to Star Chamber by Sir William Skeffington in 1496.

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[55] A. Wood, *The Memory of the People: Custom and Popular Senses of the Past in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2013), p. 237.
[56] See Chapter 2, 2.3.3.
[57] Acheson, *A Gentry Community*, p. 45.
[58] See Chapter 2, 2.6.2.
[59] C. Maier, *Once Within Borders: Territories of Power, Wealth and Belonging since 1500* (London, 2016), p. 84.
[60] For the locations of the Skeffingtons' and Neeles' territories, see Chapter 2, Figure 2.5.

He alleged forcible entry and unlawful occupation of certain premises at Keythorpe by Christopher Neele, esquire.[61] In short, Skeffington's and Neele's rival claims descended from their relation to Thomas Palmer.[62] By the advent of Ap Rhys v Neele, it appears that the Skeffingtons had abandoned their interests in Keythorpe.[63] The Palmer legacy appeared again; the claim descended as an inheritance dispute from land at Keythorpe belonging to Richard Boyville, which had previously belonged to Thomas Palmer. The lands descended to Boyville's son, George Boyville, who bequeathed them to Laurence, his wife, which eventually came to her and her second husband Thomas Waldram, followed by Laurence and her third husband Robert ap Rhys, plaintiffs in Ap Rhys v Neele. The two case studies exhibit a heavy preoccupation with the grazing, wandering and subsequent distraint of livestock and consequential violent gentry behaviour towards opposition ('wheruppon the said Richard Nyell smote the said Austen w[i]t[h] his fyste on the cheke').[64] Livestock resources were the economic embodiment of gentry identity: they augmented their wealth and consequentially rationalised their social standing; they exhibited their interests and successes in wider practices of husbandry, and justified the pursuit of land.

On the other hand, the permission to graze livestock in another's estate expressed allegiance. Having commented on his personal knowledge of the claimants and their landed possessions, John Freeman of Skeffington, yeoman, aged 60, detailed an exchange between Thomas Palmer and Thomas Skeffington, William Skeffington's grandfather, which he had witnessed during a visit:

> he herde the said Thomas Palmer desyre of the said Thomas Skevyngton to sell hym his said yerde lande in Keythorpe and the said Thomas p[ra]yed hym to have hym excused therof for he wolde not selle it by cause it was entailled unto hym but he wolde be contente to put in catall aft[er] the rate of his grounde and the said Thom[a]s Palmer said he had been as goode to have solde it unto hym and aft[er] the said Thomas Skevyngton put in yerely unto the said grounde duryng his life horse mares nette and shepe … and in lykewise Thomas

[61] It should be remembered that these allegations were often fictitious, and used to ensure that the case was heard.
[62] Parker, 'Enclosure in Leicestershire', p. 26.
[63] Individual assessments in the Parliamentary benevolence of 1545 listed Richard Neele as residing in Keythorpe, possibly reflecting the outcome of this case. TNA, E 179/133/147.
[64] TNA, STAC 1/1/7. The full extract was given in the chapter's introduction.

Skevyngton his son yerely duryng his lyfe put in catall in to the said towne of Keythorpe w[i]t[h]in the said closure.[65]

Skeffington's hesitance to sell the land to Palmer because he held it in fee tail is indicative of the family's determination to maintain their estate and presence in the area.[66] Skeffington's offer to pasture his cattle in Palmer's land at Palmer's rate was not just economically beneficial for both parties. It represented the affinity between them, and is evidence of the co-operation between two prominent members of the local gentry. Palmer's permission to grant Skeffington's livestock access to his close created a space in which two separate gentry identities could peacefully, and profitably, co-exist.

The allocation of certain spaces to different livestock, and their number, was of economic importance, and reflected an understanding of the local landscape.[67] Fitzherbert advised an approximate ratio of 1:5 for the pasturing of horses and cattle, and recommended that sheep could be introduced 'if there be grasse ynoughe'.[68] If there was not sufficient grass, or if pasture was limited, profits would be limited. In Ap Rhys v Neele, Richard Neele, grandson of Skeffington v Neele's Christopher Neele, conceded that the Boyvilles – and by descent Ap Rhys and his wife – had been awarded 'two lytle seu[er]all closes [and] com[m]on pasture for thre hundreth shepe in somer [and] two hundreth in wynter wythin the fylde of Keythorp[e]'.[69] Allegedly, the Boyvilles and their descendants had breached the agreement, putting in a greater number of sheep than permitted. The threat of overgrazing could be countered by a stint, a limited number of cattle allotted to a specific portion of land assigned to either pasture or common land, which appears to have been the case here.

4.4.2   Support from the locality

The type and number of livestock, when they were grazing and *where* they were grazing, were thus a priority for concern. They also reveal that local support was essential for successful claims of entitlement.[70] Indeed, the gentry and aristocracy would have been

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[65]   Ibid.

[66]   'Fee tail' deliberately limited the descent of property to specific individuals.

[67]   See for example, H. Fox, *Dartmoor's Alluring Uplands: Transhumance and Pastoral Management in the Middle Ages*, C. Dyer and M. Tompkins (eds.) (Exeter, 2012).

[68]   Fitzherbert, 'What cattell shulde go to gether in one pasture', *Boke of Husbandrye*.

[69]   TNA, STAC 2/23/256.

[70]   Wood, *Memory of the People*, p. 239.

aware of the importance of asserting themselves into local memory to ensure the preservation of their power and legacy.[71] Local inhabitants' knowledge was essential in the pursuit of a claim to land. Deponents for Ap Rhys v Neele were asked to describe where certain lands were in support of the plaintiffs' claim.[72] William Marshton of Slawston, husbandman, referred to a site 'lieng in a quart[e]r of the same felde callyd Davys busshies betwene Keythorpe towne and Norton adioyning to Norton felde and Comb close and was callyd Boyviles grounde'. John Jervis, husbandman of Thorpe Langton, spoke of 'a p[ar]cel of Keythorpe felde callyd Boyviles p[ar]te lieng at a place callyd Davyes busshe and good crofte adionyng to Norton gate on the oone p[ar]te and toward Halyton gate on the other p[ar]te and dyd abute upon Comb close in the west p[ar]te'.[73] By 1542, the Boyvilles' claim to Keythorpe rested with the deceased George Boyville's widow, Laurence, then married to Robert ap Rhys, both plaintiffs in the case. The parcel of land, though, was not referred to as 'Ap Rhys's part', insinuating that the identity of the Boyville family had become cemented in the landscape. That the sheep inherited by Laurence and her third husband, Ap Rhys, were still referred to as Boyville's and Waldram's flock in the depositions, shows that both animals and land could maintain their possessors' identities.

4.5 Enclosure and the locality: Croft v Turville

This case study develops the argument for the importance of support or resistance from the locality; it reveals the impact of the enclosure agenda of Sir William Turville on the manor of Croft, its associated gentry, and local inhabitants. Thus far, this thesis has treated enclosure as an agricultural innovation. But there were also social consequences of enclosure. This is especially evident at the local level, where the 'antagonistic ramifications' of enclosure emerged most explicitly.[74] Whyte suggested that this was largely due to the spatial consequences of enclosure, which dismantled the 'old customary landscape' and disrupted and changed places of meaning and significance.[75] Certainly, as

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[71] Hansson, *Aristocratic Landscape*, p. 104.
[72] TNA, STAC 2/34/1.
[73] TNA, STAC 2/23/256.
[74] Whyte, *Inhabiting the Landscape*, p. 6.
[75] N. Whyte, 'Enclosure, common fields and social relations in early modern Norfolk' in R. Jones and C. Dyer (eds.), *Farmers, Consumers, Innovators: The World of Joan Thirsk* (Hatfield, 2016), p. 65.

this case shows, Turville's attempted enclosure at Croft was centred on a particularly prominent hill in western Leicestershire. Turville's designs at Croft were probably influenced by the proximity of his family's adjacent ancestral manor at Normanton Turville, Thurlaston, which Turville had enclosed some thirty years previously.[76] George Yelby saw enclosure as a 'sign and symbol of a greater inclination and capacity to control the land in every sense'.[77] We might interpret Turville's actions, then, as being an effort to exert control within his ancestral territory.

In accordance with common practice, deponents frequently used their proximity to Croft Hill – clearly, an important feature in the landscape – and the length of their dwelling nearby to lend credence to their testimonies. The family were well known to the locality. Griffin and McDonagh argued that disputes such as this case study are evident throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and represent the 'gradual solidification of property rights and law'.[78] This had social consequences for those below the gentry, and for fellow gentry, too. Opposing Turville was a collection of freeholders in Croft: Humphrey Stafford and Francis Pulteney, esquires, Richard Whiteman, possibly the son of a local yeoman, and one John Smith.[79] The primary concern for both parties, according to the first article, was whether William held the manor of Croft itself. Without legally-held land, Turville did not have a case for lawful enclosure.

4.5.1   Resistance from the locality

The bill of complaint requested that Turville should 'no further p[ro]cede in the hedgyng or dychyng therof unto suche tyme as he shall shewe unto your maiestye or unto your most honorable counsell some reasonable [and] lawfull cause'.[80] Indeed, in 1533, legislation attempted to restrict enclosure for private pasture, which 'moveth and provoketh those gredy and covetous people so to accumulate and kepe in theire hands suche great porcions … of the land of this Realme frome the occupying of the poure

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[76]   Parker, 'Enclosure in Leicestershire', p. 76.

[77]   G. Yelby, *The English Revolution and the Roots of Environmental Change: The Changing Concept of the Land in Early Modern England* (New York, 2015), p. 3.

[78]   McDonagh and Griffin, 'Historical geographies of property, protest, and the commons', p. 5.

[79]   Humphrey Stafford, esquire, may have been the first son of Sir Humphrey Stafford of Surrey with extensive lands in Hertfordshire. His brother, Sir William Stafford, had married Mary Boleyn, sister of Anne Boleyn, in 1534. This branch of the Stafford family was distantly related to the powerful Staffords of Buckinghamshire. John Smith may have been the esquire based at Withcote in eastern Leicestershire.

[80]   TNA, STAC 2/28/57.

husbondmen'.[81] It appeared to be predominantly aimed at the gentry. The manor of Croft and other tenements appear in the IPM taken for Sir William's father, John Turville.[82] No lands or tenements in Croft are mentioned in Sir William's.[83] His probate will, too, shows no sign of any holdings in the manor, indicating that he may have lost the case.[84] Francis Pulteney's will, however, referred to the possession of land in Croft.[85] Whether or not Turville legally held land in Croft at the time, the significance of space in the area begins to emerge in the second article, which in brief enquired into the use of the land concerned. The debate was whether the land had been used for local husbandry beneficial to the parish, or for Turville's profit.

The bill of complaint for the case accused Turville of unlawfully enclosing waste ground and common pasture at Croft Hill. It warned that this enclosure would result in the 'utter dekaye [and] dystruc[i]on' of the manor.[86] The plaintiffs did not only oppose Turville in Star Chamber; uprising and conflict was threatened in Croft itself, too:

> [they] wolde be very sorye that they or theyr fermors or ten[a]unts should have occasyon to make any unlawful assemble or to comytt any ryott in the breakyng of the sayd hedge alredy made or in the resyst[a]unce of ... the sayd inclosure.[87]

That the plaintiffs, especially Francis Pulteney, threatened the peace is significant, given that Pulteney's grandfather, Sir Thomas Pulteney I, had enclosed land at Misterton and Pulteney in the south of the county, apparently leading to its depopulation.[88] Francis bequeathed lands in Pulteney to his executors, and further bequeathed a close to his youngest son, Gabriel, indicating that the depopulation had not included the neglect of the local gentry.[89] The similarity between Turville's actions at Croft and the Pulteneys' at Misterton and Pulteney indicates that it was not a concern for social welfare which led to the plaintiffs' complaint. This dispute was certainly economic; resistance from fellow gentry had disturbed Turville's enclosure agenda.

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[81] J. Raithby (ed.), 'An Acte conc[er]nyng Fermes and Shepe', 25 Hen VIII, *Statutes of the Realm, 1509-1545*, 3 (London, 1871), p. 451.
[82] TNA, C 142/20/8.
[83] TNA, E 150/1149/3.
[84] TNA, PROB 11/32/575.
[85] TNA, PROB 11/32/138.
[86] TNA, STAC 2/28/57.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Parker, 'Enclosure in Leicestershire', p. 58.
[89] TNA, PROB 11/32/128.

4.5.2 Landscape, power and memory

Beyond agricultural profit, this case was a campaign of individual expression, of a hold on land possibly for the value of the land itself, but arguably for the social – and visual – implications of such a possession in the face of opposition from fellow gentry. It has been suggested that the visibility of Croft Hill may have made it an excellent meeting place in centuries past.[90] Figure 4.2, albeit romanticised, illustrates the hill's distinctive elevation in the context of the surrounding landscape. Turville may have attempted to assert his dominance in the local area for its visibility, representing his authority.

Figure 4.2 An engraving of Croft Hill and the surrounding landscape.[91]

Turville's physical envelopment and control of space at Croft intruded upon the plaintiffs' intentions in the area, causing social friction and subsequent litigation. His visible expression of authority in the landscape was conspicuous, given that he was alleged to have already 'dychyd [and] hegyd wyth quyckesetts' and that 'the sayd hedge [and] dyche ys not yet thoroughly fynysshyd rownde abowt the sayd hyll'.[92] Quick-sets were permanent, living hedges, distinguishable from the dead hedges also used in enclosure.[93] They were often nursery transplants, instantly marking the new boundary. As Manning

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[90] W.G. Hoskins, 'Croft Hill', *TLAHS*, 26 (1950), p. 83.
[91] Nichols, *History and Antiquities*, 4, pt. 2, p. 1002.
[92] TNA, STAC 2/28/57.
[93] R.B. Manning, *Village Revolts: Social Protest and Popular Disturbances in England, 1509-1640* (Oxford, 1998), p. 26.

has argued, 'the physical presence of the enclosing hedge emphasized that trespass was an unlawful act'.[94]

As demonstrated at Misterton, the plaintiffs' own agendas had already led to depopulation and desertion in favour of agricultural and economic incentive. But the deponents, often those of a lower social rank such as servant or yeoman, were often people chosen from the local area, and thus had the potential to facilitate or deny gentry agenda. Wood suggested that the projection of a united front in the protection of common rights was one such method.[95] The significance of geography and local memory emerges again. Thomas Boughton of Sapcote, a deponent speaking for the plaintiffs, referred to his geographical proximity to Croft as means of verification. He deposed that he

> hath knowen by the space of l yeres and above that the said wast grounde called Craft hyll hath byn used as a comen grounde to all the ten[a]unts [and] inhabyt[a]unts of Craft aforsaid for asmuche as he hath dwelled all the said l yeres w[i]t[h]in a myle [and] a half of the said Craft.[96]

Unfortunately for Turville, the deponents who answered in his defence were not always experts in the matter at hand. When asked about his rights of free warren at Croft, Thomas Callice of Narborough admitted that he 'knoweth not what fre warr[a]unt meaneth'.[97] Furthermore, the deponents who answered the interrogations put forward by the plaintiffs were confident of Turville's guilt, reinforcing Wood's argument regarding a common front. Parker of Earl Shilton had: 'nev[er] herd that ev[er] the said S[y]r Willi[a]m Turvyle nor his auncesttors had any manno[r] in Craft by the space of lx yeres', whilst John Welch, also of Earl Shilton, was certain that

> by the space of lx yeres [and] more the said wast called Craft Hill hath not byn enclosed ne kept as any syv[er]all nor at any tyme before that ev[er] he herd of untyll w[i]t[h]in that ii yeres that S[y]r Willi[a]m Turvyle hath enclosed the same.[98]

The deponents who answered on the part of Turville were somewhat less assured in their replies, reinforcing the plaintiffs' case. Robert Frampton of Stoney Stanton, steward to Turville, was not sure 'whether his mayster hath any manno[r] in Craft or not but as he

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94   Ibid., p. 26.
95   A. Wood, 'Custom and the social organisation of writing in early modern England', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 9 (1999), p. 261.
96   TNA, STAC 2/28/57.
97   Ibid.
98   Ibid.

have hard his mayster saye he had a manno[r] there'. Richard Clement, another servant of Turville's, deposed that 'in some placs his maister hath scored tholde diche but whether it be so in all placs or no he knoweth not'. William Sherman of Croft, a tenant of Turville's, noted that 'he nev[er] sawe it dyched untyll nowe but there did appere a mention of a diche towards the lands', the 'lands' likely to have been the common ground at Croft.[99] Local memory appears to have worked against Turville and would against his descendants. The IPM for Richard Turville, William's son, refers only to certain messuages, lands, and the advowson of the church at Croft.[100] The family's determination to possess land at Croft would continue into the reign of Elizabeth I, where a descendant was accused of 'pretending and claiming to have a manor in Croft ... some other cottages he has there erected upon the waste ... to the great wrong ... of her Majesty'.[101]

In Croft v Turville, evidence against William was also given detailing the actions of his father, John Turville, esquire, reinforcing the importance of local memory and appeasement of the locality. Richard Claybrooke, parson of Frolesworth, had been 'am[er]rcyed for hunting in the feld of Craft' by William's father John Turville. William Turville's servant, Richard Clement, deposed and agreed that John Turville had amerced anyone who hunted conies on Croft Hill, and had hunted them for his own use and for his household for the last 20 years. Thomas Callice of Narborough deposed 'that he hard olde Mr John Turvile father to the sayd S[y]r Willi[a]m ... required s[y]rteyn of thinhabyt[a]unts of Craft to be good unto his game or ells he wuld enclose the hyll from them'.[102] That enclosure had been used as a threat may go some way to explaining the continued resistance against it amongst the inhabitants of Croft and the local area. The latter supports Wood's conclusion that, in the face of enclosure, poorer people defended their right to stability, continuity and familiarity in their locality.[103] From Turville's perspective, this enclosure attempt was initially a byproduct of unwanted activity but had become the catalyst for it.

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[99] TNA, STAC 2/28/57.
[100] Hoskins, 'Croft Hill', p. 90.
[101] G.F. Farnham and T.H. Fosbrooke, 'Potters Marston', *TLAHS*, 12, no. 2 (1921-22), pp. 174-175.
[102] TNA, STAC 2/28/57.
[103] Wood, *Memory of the People*, p. 245.

4.6   Hunting and recreation: Grace v Turville and Grey v Turville

This final case study uses evidence of emparkment, hunting rights and associated disputes to consider conflicting expressions of gentry identity and allegiance. The previous section showed that economic ventures such as enclosure threatened the peace of the social hierarchy. Hunting projected social status and could strengthen or threaten local gentry relations; accusations of game offences became more frequent in Star Chamber from the sixteenth century onwards.[104] The delicate relationship between honour and hierarchy appears in the park environment, along with the significance of game and gentry territories. Parks were distinctive spaces in the local landscape; by the sixteenth century they occupied substantial acreage with paled perimeters and frequently heavily wooded borders.[105]

A royal licence was required to empark land, making them an exclusive asset. Indeed, the role of the later park as a display of status has been given much attention to date.[106] From the mid-eleventh century to 1530, Leicestershire is said to have contained at least 34 parks, although they did not all exist at the same time; 29 of those 34 had been created by 1355.[107] Cantor identifies an emergence of 'amenity' parks during the late fifteenth century without embankments.[108] They were much larger than their earlier counterparts which comprised between 150 and 300 acres. Those established in Leicestershire from 1474 onwards ranged between 600 and 3,000 acres, enlarging pre-existing parks onsite.[109] Stephen Mileson highlighted the importance of treating parks as a part of a wider landscape with emphasis on those who created them, which forms the foundation of our argument below.[110]

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[104] Manning, *Hunters and Poachers,* p. 58; S.A. Mileson, 'The sociology of park creation in medieval England' in R. Liddiard (ed.), *The Medieval Park: New Perspectives* (Macclesfield, 2007), p. 16.

[105] Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, p. 201.

[106] Mileson, 'The sociology of park creation' in Liddiard, *The Medieval Park*, p. 13.

[107] L. Cantor, 'The medieval parks of Leicestershire', *TLAHS*, 46 (1970-71), pp. 11-12.

[108] Ibid.

[109] This case study is concerned with two separate parks at Newhall, Thurlaston (*c*.600 acres) and Groby and Bradgate (*c*.1500 acres). Newhall belonged to Sir William Turville, whilst the latter two belonged to the Grey family. The park at Bradgate is the only one to have survived, with a current acreage of 850 acres. William Hastings, first Baron Hastings, had received a licence in 1474 to empark the largest area at Ashby de la Zouch, (*c*.3,000) acres.

[110] Mileson, 'The sociology of park creation' in Liddiard, *The Medieval Park*, p. 13.

4.6.1   Disputed boundaries

In *c.*1515 the case of Grace v Turville was brought against Turville by the King's keepers, David Griffith, Walter Grace, and William Pickering. They alleged numerous episodes of unlawful hunting by Turville and his associates in the King's chase in Leicester Forest, and the attempted murder of the King's keepers to conceal the crime. The problem appears to have arisen directly from Turville's emparkment of land adjacent to the Forest. He was granted licence to empark 600 acres in Newhall and Thurlaston in 1515 despite the land being within the boundary of Leicester Forest.[111] Henry Grey, third marquess of Dorset, later claimed that the grant had been made because of his father's petition to the King as evidence for the affinity between the two families.[112] Manning's suggestion that Turville was poaching in Grey's parks at Bradgate or Groby, in turn relating these allegations to Grey v Turville in 1546, appears to have been incorrect.[113]

Documentary evidence suggests that Turville was hunting in the chase of Leicester Forest, adjacent to his park at Newhall, Thurlaston, and not at Bradgate or Groby.[114] The deposition given by Walter Grace, the King's keeper, implied distance from Bradgate; he had 'on a Monday at nyght accompanyed Mr Turvile home from Brodegate to his house'. Grace later referred to numerous occasions where he had stayed in Turville's household and joined him in the inspection of his park pales, conceivably relating to the letters patent granted in 1515.[115] Given that he was a plaintiff in the case, it is unlikely that Grace would have had cause for fabrication in support of Turville. Further, the text in this case refers to Turville as 'Willi[a]m Turvile esquier', rather than 'Syr Wyll[ia]m Turvyle' in Grey v Turville, indicating an earlier date.

Turville was certainly aware of the social and criminal implications of the accusations levelled against him. He was careful to reinforce that he had hunted on his side of the pale, and not within the Forest. He did not deny that he had been hunting, and claimed

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[111] Brewer, *Letters and Papers*, 2 (London, 1864), p. 193.
[112] TNA, STAC 2/12/259.
[113] Manning, *Hunters and Poachers*, p. 190.
[114] Both TNA, STAC 2/24/435 and STAC 2/22/207 were miscatalogued under other counties, but the author has proven that they relate to this case in Leicestershire. Both documents appear to be Turville's answers to the bill of complaint. The connection illuminates the context of STAC 2/26/169 and STAC 2/26/377, and gives them a date of *c.*1515 as stated in STAC 2/26/169. The issue has been rectified in the catalogue.
[115] TNA, STAC 2/22/207.

that one 'bucke was kyld yn the hoseld whiche ys this defend[an]ts owen sev[er]ell grounde and in his parke and noo p[ar]te of the chase'.[116] He admitted to hunting in Potters Marston, adjacent to Thurlaston, but claimed that it was 'a myle oute of any parte of the forest'.[117] On a separate occasion, Turville confessed to throwing a deer over the pale from his park and into the Forest chase, claiming that he had done so 'as the kepers had hanged the dere upon a tree w[i]t[h]in the pale of his p[ar]ke wych ys nowe part of the chase [and] so he caused it to be cast ov[er] the pale'.[118] The deer embodied Turville's right to hunt. Clearly, Turville's recent emparkment was problematic. His servant, Thomas Sparke, deposed against him and detailed two further occasions of unlawful hunting, one taking place near the Forest-park boundary, committed by Turville and his brother: 'as thei walkyd to the palers thei sawe vii or viii dere ... theyr they kyllyd a faune'.[119] That Turville's own servant had deposed against him is indicative of the higher power wielded by the Crown. On the second occasion, Turville 'causyd a brase of doggs to be putt att [the deer] ... and there they kyllde anodyr faune'.[120] Turville did not deny the accusations, declaring 'that they kylled a fawne but no does the same day and yn the same place whiche is out of the chase [and] his owen sev[er]ell grounde [and] w[i]t[h]in his p[ar]ke'.[121]

The Forest-park boundary was thus extremely important in the accusations against Turville. Another made against him alleged that he had 'so craftely hath sett his pale ... und[er] such banks and high plac[e]s of the said chace... [tha]t the kings dere may eysely lepe in to the said ground and when they be yn they can not gett unto'.[122] This was an efficient method of maintaining levels of game stock, given that deer were frequently lost by straying beyond the Forest boundary into adjacent territories.[123] But it appears that Turville may have deliberately sited his pale to increase the probability of the King's deer entering his park, intimating that Turville was deliberately targeting the King's deer, expressing associated connotations of entitlement. Taken in conjunction with the

[116] TNA, STAC 2/24/435.
[117] Ibid. Potters Marston is over ten miles from Bradgate, again reinforcing the probability that these records concern much earlier litigation than Grey v Turville.
[118] TNA, STAC 2/24/435 and STAC 2/26/169.
[119] TNA, STAC 2/26/169.
[120] TNA, STAC 2/24/435.
[121] Ibid.
[122] TNA, STAC 2/26/377.
[123] Fox and Russell, *Leicester Forest*, p. 44.

allegation of the attempted murder of the King's keepers, Turville's attempts to exercise his authority locally, possibly aggressively, were hindered – and retribution was threatened – by the dominant position of the Crown in the wider hierarchy.

4.6.2   Resistance from above

Thirty years later, a dispute arose between Henry Grey, third marquess of Dorset, Turville, and John Beaumont, esquire. That litigation appeared at all between Grey and Turville is somewhat surprising: Turville had been given the office of Master of Game by Thomas Grey, second marquess and Henry's father, who had bestowed the office 'for the specyall seale love & favour whyche he bore' towards Turville in addition to a yearly fee of 40s from the manors of Groby and Bradgate, two bucks in the summer and two does in the winter from the said parks.[124] The office expressed the affinity between the Turville and Grey families. The friendship continued with Henry Grey, who alleged Turville to be 'hys most deare [and] faythfull frend before any other wythin [the] ... seyd county', with their relationship involving 'semblable frendshyp love [and] amytye'.[125]

The bill of complaint was in response to Turville's allegation that Grey had withheld his due fees, broken the pales of Turville's park at his manor of Newhall, Thurlaston, and proceeded to hunt illegally there. In his bill of complaint against Beaumont, Grey reminded the court that 'at the specyall contemplac[i]on desyer & humble petyc[i]on of the seyd late marques gave & gra[a]unted lycence unto the seyd Syr Wyll[ia]m Turvyle to emparke & enclose the same to hys great pleasure & comodytye'.[126] He also claimed that Turville had received his fees. He did not deny that he had hunted at Newhall but protested that he was 'bolde bycause of the said auncient ffreendship and amyte betwene hym [and Turville] ... trustyng by the wey of ffreendship and neyberhode'.[127] The complexity of Leicestershire's social hierarchy thus exacerbated the 'fault lines' between overlapping gentry territories discussed above in Chapter 2.

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[124] Grey v Beaumont, TNA, STAC 2/12/259. This phase of the dispute was a bill of complaint against John Beaumont brought by Grey, alleging the role of Beaumont's legal advice in Turville's litigation against Grey (Turville v Grey, STAC 2/34/157). It precedes the interrogatories put to Turville in STAC 2/31/165 (Grey v Turville).

[125] TNA, STAC 2/12/259.

[126] Ibid.

[127] TNA, STAC 2/34/157.

The interrogatories put to Turville in return were heavily preoccupied with whether Turville had sought legal counsel from his cousin John Beaumont, esquire, after Grey's alleged misdemeanours.[128] Grey appears to have been far less genial towards Beaumont, apparent in the Privy Council's decision to command Grey to 'permit Beaumont to pass hither quietly' after he had threatened him at the Leicester sessions, a very public arena.[129] What seems to have been an amicable friendship between Grey and Turville was threatened by the complex nature of the local gentry network. The full potential of retribution towards Grey for hunting within Turville's domain was limited by his social standing and power in the county. Beaumont, however, was warned that he should 'know in better sort his superiors', reflecting the impact of the hierarchy on local litigation.[130]

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter has shown that gentry behaviour varied based on their perceived entitlement towards particular locations, again reinforced by the importance of place. Political and economic incentive certainly played their part. Towards the apex of the gentry hierarchy, the incentive in Leicester Forest lay in the array of office-holdings made available by royal favour. They reflected the power balance of local politics, and, of course, also improved financial return. Further down the hierarchy, the families involved in the conflict at Keythorpe and Croft were influenced by economic potential. Sir William Turville saw Croft Hill as a potentially enterprising site for enclosure, which also appears to have been recognised by the gentry plaintiffs who brought the action against him. At Keythorpe, the Neeles and the Skeffingtons were heavily engaged in the depasturing of each other's livestock. They saw the disruption of economic interests as a mechanism for asserting their own.

The cultural importance of the locations involved in these Star Chamber disputes changed according to the ancestral value placed upon them by different families and individuals. In each case, then, the gentry's sense of entitlement was exacerbated by territorial proximity. Each alleged altercation occurred in close proximity to gentry PPAs: the

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[128] TNA, STAC 2/31/165.

[129] Gairdner and Brodie, *Letters and Papers*, 21, pt. 1 (London, 1910), pp. 546-582, *BHO*, 'https://www.british-history.ac.uk/letters-papers-hen8/vol21/no1' [accessed 11th November 2017].

[130] N.G. Jones, 'Beaumont, John (d. in or after 1556), *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford, 2004), 'http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/1873' [accessed 13th May 2018].

King's highway in Leicester Forest was adjacent to the Greys' and Hastings' PPAs of Bradgate and Kirby Muxloe; Keythorpe was a PPA of the Neele family; Croft Hill was less than a mile away from the PPA of Sir William Turville, Aston Flamville, and the hunting disputes in the final case study at Bradgate and Thurlaston happened within Grey and Turville territories. The importance of physical territorial boundaries is reflected in their explicit relevance to the conflict, particularly evident at Croft and the hunting disputes at Thurlaston and Bradgate.

The preceding four chapters have illustrated the territorial importance of place, from the county perspective to direct social confrontation. PPAs in particular held substantial cultural value, which has been shown thus far from the perspective of political, social and economic engagement. But how were these territorial nuclei physically marked? How were family identities advertised to the locality? Our final two chapters will turn to the expression of gentry material culture. Together, Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 will argue that the intensity of the gentry's affiliation with place manifested most explicitly in gentry material culture, and culminated in their final statement of identity in death. Firstly, using the medium of gentry architecture, Chapter 5 will explore how sites of construction were used to express both ancestral connection and the strength of family legacy.

Chapter 5: Building identities

5.1 Abstract

This chapter considers the role played by architecture as a part of our narrative concerning the importance of place in the construction and expression of gentry identity. Architecture was a clear statement of gentry identity; it marked the territorial nucleus, and thus formed a focus for the manifestation of the gentry's material culture. This chapter is concerned with how gentry architecture was sourced, constructed and designed to reflect personal and family identity, social exclusivity and superiority, and ultimately, an affiliation with place. The locality – from its labour force to its materials, both raw and pre-existing – was an implicit component of architectural statements of gentry identity. The chapter is structured according to the different phases and implications of architectural construction. Firstly, the initial acquisition of property and construction on pre-existing sites are shown to have been politically influenced. These actions reflected an assertion of dominance in the area, and cemented the gentry's affiliation with those places where architectural construction was occurring. The chapter then assesses the impact of gentry construction in terms of labour and material acquisition, followed by an investigation into the logistics of building and sourcing materials. Finally, the chapter is placed into the context of external and internal size, structure and visual expression. Examples are taken from manor houses, castles and converted religious houses throughout Leicestershire.

5.2 Introduction

> Thens to Wiscumbe [Withcote] corne, pasture and wood a 4 miles. Mr. Radeclif buildid here a right goodly house apon Smithe's ground, that now dwellith yn it, and hath married a sister of the Caves. I take this to be one of the fairest housis in Leircestershire, and to the fairest orchards and gardines of those quarters: but it stondith lowe and wete, and hath a pole afore it, but al the vaine thereabout is goodly pasture.[1]

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[1] Leland, *Itinerary*, Toulmin Smith, 1, p. 21. Roger Radcliffe was the second husband of William Smith's widow, Katherine Hunt. Katherine was the ward of William Ashby of Lowesby, esquire. Her son, John Smith, is buried in the chapel at Withcote. It is unclear why Leland referred to Withcote as Wiscumbe; he may have mistaken it for Wycomb to the north of Melton Mowbray.

John Leland's description of the house built by Roger Radcliffe, esquire, illustrates the way in which architecture was perceived and appreciated by contemporaries. Nicholas Cooper suggested that this was one of its primary purposes.[2] Leland associated the property and its fair garden with Radcliffe personally, reflecting his status and wealth, which was augmented by its desirable proximity to water, deemed by his contemporary, Conrad Heresbach, to be 'the first needfull thing for a garden'.[3] He also approved of the abundance of pasture nearby.[4] The most important observation, however, is that Leland associated these features with Radcliffe's affiliation with Withcote. The discussion below argues that vernacular gentry architecture was a product of the places in which they were sited, reinforcing the gentry's affiliation with those locations.[5] It uses Leicestershire case studies to illustrate the acquisition, amendment, materials and style used to convey their identity in their construction.

Chris Dyer advocated a reconnection between vernacular architecture and landscape studies, having identified a disconnect since Hoskins's *Making of the English Landscape*. He proposed that W.G. Hoskins's main contribution was to show that 'buildings were not seen as examples of architecture, nor as space in which people lived, but as elements in the landscape'.[6] The sentiment was later echoed by Adam Longcroft.[7] This approach can be developed by treating gentry architecture as elements, and as *products*, of the landscape. This observation is not new in archaeological studies of vernacular architecture, but it has not yet been applied exclusively to a study of the gentry. Nick Finn, for example, identified a correlation between clay buildings and the heavy clay of the Lias Group prevalent in south-west Leicestershire.[8] There was certainly a symbolism in the type of material used: architectural styles and social exclusivity were reflected in the use of brick, or extravagant use of timber, for example.

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2   N. Cooper, *Houses of the Gentry, 1480-1680* (London, 1999), p. 3.
3   C. Heresbach, *Foure Bookes of Husbandry*, J. Wight (ed.) (London, 1578), p. 50.
4   There is an elevation range at Withcote of over 60 metres.
5   Gentry involvement with ecclesiastical architecture is discussed below in Chapter 6.
6   C. Dyer, 'Vernacular architecture and landscape history: the legacy of "The rebuilding of rural England" and "The Making of the English Landscape"', *Vernacular Architecture*, 37 (2006), p. 25.
7   Longcroft, 'Placing vernacular buildings' in Barnwell and Palmer, *Post-Medieval Landscapes*, pp. 23-38.
8   N. Finn, 'Mud and frame construction in south Leicestershire', *Vernacular Architecture*, 40, no. 1 (2009), p. 70.

Built expressions were facilitated and enhanced by management and control of the natural environment, and this was also necessitated by travel and public access through the landscape. For the gentry, amendment and construction of infrastructure was a part of their community responsibility. Richard Cave, esquire, requested that 'myn executours … w[i]t[h]in six yeres after my dethe ... geve to poure people or to high ways or to the marriage of poore maidens ... fourty poundes'.[9] Similarly, George Villers, gentleman, bequeathed 20d 'to the towneshippe of Howby aforesaid towards the rep[ar]ac[i]ons of their churche or highe waies'.[10] Frideswide Strelley also bequeathed £30 towards the 'mendinge of the highe waies leading from Ulvescrofte to Leic[ester]'.[11]

In an agricultural context, John Howe and Michael Wolfe argued for a blurring between the natural and the *cultivated* landscape.[12] This is also an important observation for the *architectural* landscape. Gentry residences and parish churches did not stand in isolation from the surrounding environment. They were a part of the gentry's experienced landscape.[13] This is effectively illustrated in a letter written *c*.1539 by the lawyer John Beaumont, esquire, to Thomas Cromwell. It concerned his newly acquired property of Grace Dieu priory, which

> the erle [of Huntingdon] doth labo[r] to take from me … [th]e seyd erle [and] hys sons do seke my lyffe … I have secret warnyng ... to weyre a p[re]vy cote whych ys not suffycyent for me hys power being environ my poore howse.[14]

The alleged antagonist was Francis Hastings, second earl of Huntingdon. Beaumont had worked for him as his attorney and correspondence bearer, and later married Elizabeth Hastings, the earl's cousin once removed.[15] The trouble may have arisen from the middle ground that Beaumont occupied in the Grey-Hastings conflict in the county.[16] Of interest

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9   TNA, PROB 11/27/273.
10   ROLLR, W&I, 1565/52.
11   TNA, PROB 11/48/317.
12   J. Howe and M. Wolfe (eds.), *Inventing Medieval Landscapes: Senses of Place in Western Europe* (Gainsville, 2002).
13   The concept of the gentry's experienced landscape is developed further below in the geographical location of bequests made to parish churches. See Chapter 6, 6.3.2.
14   British Library (henceforth BL), Cotton MS, Cleopatra E/IV, fol. 279. A privy coat was 'an armoured coat (usually of chain mail) worn concealed under ordinary clothing'. See 'privy, adj., n., and adv.', *OED* (2018), 'www.oed.com/view/Entry/151635' [accessed 24th July 2018].
15   TNA, SP 1/87/22, *SPO*.
16   He is known to have given legal counsel to Margaret Grey, the widow of Thomas Grey, second marquess of Dorset, despite acting against the family on previous occasions in Star Chamber. See TNA, SP 1/106/149, *SPO* and above, Chapter 4, 4.6.2.

here, though, is the reference to the earl's power being 'environ my poore howse'. Figure 4.1 in Chapter 4 above illustrates the Greys' and Hastings' landholdings. Grace Dieu is not marked specifically on the map, but it lay roughly between Osgathorpe and Whitwick.[17] Grace Dieu was surrounded by the Hastings' landholdings. His statement was meant quite literally; the gentry were acutely conscious of each other's presence in the local landscape

5.2.1 Sources

The primary sources used comprise physical and archaeological remains, contemporary accounts, inventories, wills and antiquarian engravings.[18] They can account for gentry architecture which has since been lost. Datable physical remains illustrate the styles of architecture and types of materials used, but they have often been obscured, or demolished entirely, by later construction. Building accounts offer insight where physical evidence is lost or difficult to interpret. The building accounts which have survived for Kirby Muxloe castle, for example, recorded the type and location of labour and materials used and contemporary building techniques. Inventories and wills facilitate the reconstruction of gentry households by listing rooms and material goods, revealing changes in structural style. They can also reveal the changing functions of rooms over time. Finally, antiquarian engravings have preserved otherwise lost information. When corroborated by physical, architectural or documentary evidence, they are invaluable for the reconstruction of gentry residences. Leland's *Itineraries*, for example, can be corroborated by antiquarian evidence, such as Figure 5.1, which shows the manor house of Withcote, its sixteenth-century chapel, and the pool Leland was referring to in the introduction above.
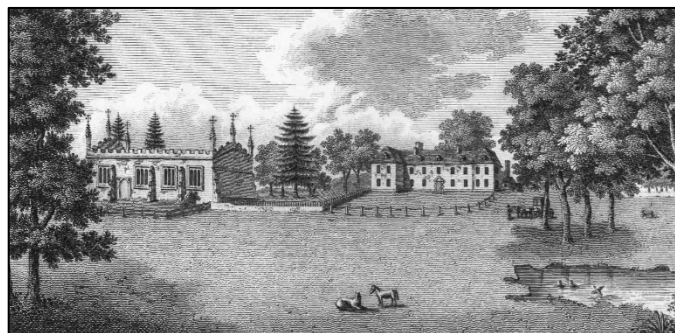

Figure 5.1 Withcote Hall (centre), chapel (far left) and Leland's pool (far right).[19]

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17 See Figure 5.2 below.
18 Physical and archaeological remains have been visited and photographed by the author where possible.
19 Nichols, *History and Antiquities*, 2, pt. 1 (London, 1795), p. 392.

The loss of physical evidence for Leicestershire architecture and construction is substantial. The Shirleys' residence at Ragdale was demolished in 1958, for example. The earliest extant evidence at Lowesby, Stanford on Avon and Staunton Harold, residences of the Ashby, Cave and Shirley families respectively, date to the seventeenth century; whilst the Neeles' residence at Prestwold dates predominantly from the nineteenth century with an eighteenth-century core. It is occasionally difficult to ascribe confidently architecture directly to our gentry, too, in the absence of supporting documentary material or the availability of physical inscriptions. The hall at Potters Marston, for example, structurally dates to the fifteenth century but there is little evidence to suggest which family was responsible for its construction. It will be shown, however, that sufficient evidence has survived to illuminate the gentry's use of and relationship with their architecture in Leicestershire. A distribution map of our case studies' locations is illustrated in Figure 5.2.
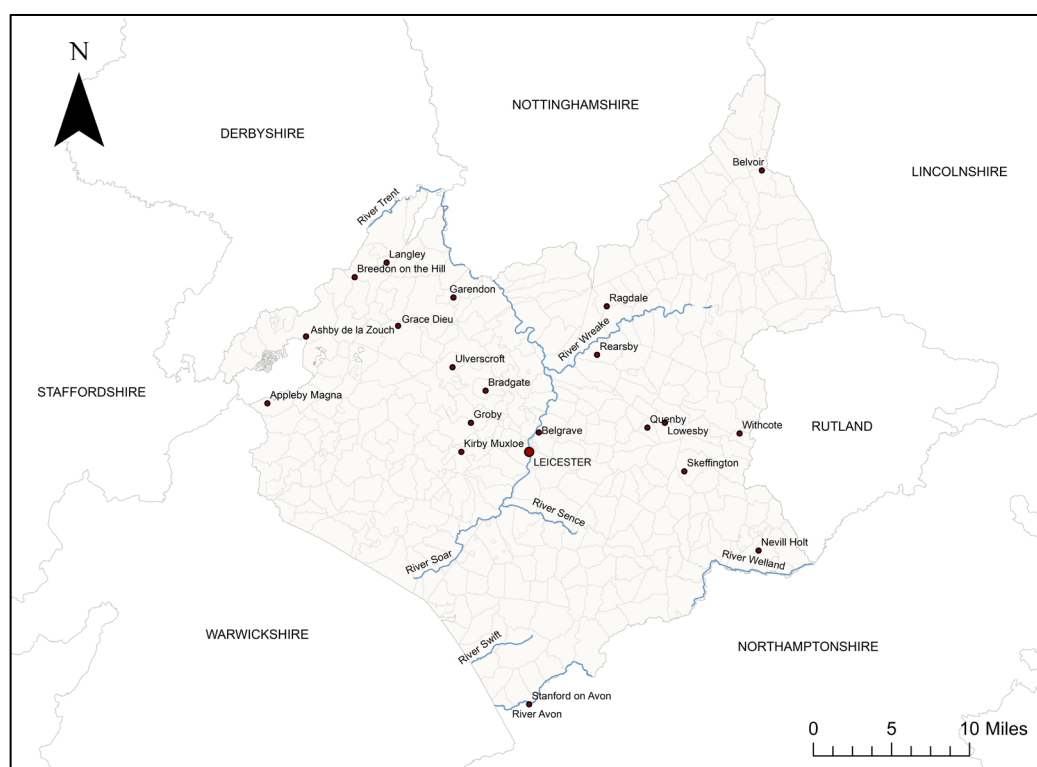
Figure 5.2 The locations of the Chapter 5 case studies.

5.3   Methods of property acquisition

We must first consider the types of property acquisition available to the gentry to avoid misinterpretation; it would be problematic to infer and interpret gentry choice of property location where there was none. Properties gained through political reward, inheritance

and purchase were the three most common methods. Lands and associated buildings were granted as a reward for political loyalty, illustrated by the impact of the Wars of the Roses on local tenure.

5.3.1 Property and civil warfare

Choice in specific property was limited but the opportunity was made possible by political allegiance. The Hastings family, for example, benefitted substantially at the accession of Edward IV in 1461 for their loyal service. In 1462 William Lord Hastings was granted the manor and lordship of Ashby de la Zouch (henceforth Ashby), a late possession of the attainted Lancastrian, James Butler, fifth earl of Ormond. He also profited from the fall of another Lancastrian, Thomas Roos, ninth Baron Roos, by receiving 'the honour, castle, manor and lordship of Bevour ... with the park there ... with the advowson of the priory of Bevour'.[20] Ten years later he and his heirs were granted the right to

> build their manors of Assheby de la Zouche, Bagworth, Thorneton and Kerby [Muxloe] ... with stone and mortar, and enclose, wall, crenellate, and furnish the same with battlements and machicolations; and that they may impark in Assheby de la Zouche three thousand acres of land and wood ... and in Bagworth and Thorneton two thousand acres, and in Kerby two thousand acres ... with power to make deer-leaps in each of the said parks.[21]

Royal favour thus facilitated local construction.[22] The significance of these grants for Hastings's physical presence in Leicestershire was threefold. They indicated Yorkist ascendancy by replacing Lancastrian influence; they gave Hastings permission to build embattled residences, themselves an expression of power; and some of his acquisitions provided building materials for Hastings's new projects.

5.3.2 Inheritance and architectural association

As we have seen above, primogeniture and hand-picked bequests left little space for individual agency amongst beneficiaries.[23] Manorial buildings are specifically mentioned in probate sources. John Woodford bequeathed to his servant and kinsman, Thomas

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[20] Maxwell Lyte, *Patent Rolls*, 1, pp. 103-104. For the use of attainder during this period see Chapter 1, 1.3.4, fn. 81 and 82.

[21] W.R. Cunningham, *Calendar of the Charter Rolls Preserved in the Public Record Office*, 6 (London, 1927), p. 242.

[22] The impact of Hastings's construction at Kirby Muxloe in terms of labour and material sourcing is discussed in detail below, see 5.5.

[23] See Chapter 2, 2.5.

Woodford, 'my howsse that I dwell in … [he] schaull have ii manyson howses w[i]t[h]in the towne of Lest[er]'.[24] Probate evidence reflected the significance of buildings in the composition of gentry identity; permanent structures – or those intended to be permanent – tapped into gentry notions of ancestry and legacy.

Inherited gentry manor houses contained heirlooms which had both practical and sentimental value. Ambrose Belgrave, for example, bequeathed 'all man[er] of eyrelomes in and aboute my man[er] howse in Belgrave w[i]t[h] all man[er] of glas and iron windows belonginge to the same manor' to his son.[25] Attempts to preserve association with an ancestral place gave established legacies the best chance of survival. Bequeathed objects could ensure that the household remained in one place. William Ashby of Lowesby, esquire, requested that relatively commonplace material goods such as sheets, carpets, hangings, brass potts, spits, and pothooks would remain to his son, John, 'to the ayde and succo[r] of this my mannor of Lowesby for ever'. His bequest of the 'hangings of the chamber of green and red ... [in] the chamber called the *new* building' infers that the Ashbys had recently improved their Lowesby property.[26]

Connections with the ancestral PPA could be maintained through architecture. Sir Everard Digby bequeathed to his son 'all my tymbr and stone to bylde at his pleasure'.[27] William Ashby's attempts to maintain his son's interests at Lowesby through moveable possessions also included bequests of construction material. His bequest of the 'swarid [sawn] tymber for bylding lying about my place at Lowesby ... all the tymbre to be as her lomes and the stone' suggests that William Ashby wished for his son to continue his work.[28] This is also evident in the Quenby branch of the Ashby family. Nikolaus Pevsner dated the earliest construction at the current house at Quenby to *c*.1615-20, and attributed it to William's relative, George Ashby.[29] The absence of an alternative manor house site amongst Quenby's earthworks suggests that Ashby's descendants had rebuilt on the site

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[24] ROLLR, W&I, 1543/26.
[25] ROLLR, W&I, 1571/58.
[26] TNA, PROB 11/30/253.
[27] TNA, PROB 11/28/396.
[28] TNA, PROB 11/30/253.
[29] N. Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Leicestershire and Rutland* (Middlesex, 1973), p. 211. George Ashby of Quenby was the cousin of Thomas Ashby of Lowesby, William Ashby's great grandson. He probably purchased the manor of Lowesby after Thomas's death in 1604, bringing the two manors under one branch of the family. See Farnham, *Medieval Pedigrees*, p. 48.

of the previous property.[30] In 1518, Thomas Ashby, esquire, described himself as being 'of Quenby', inferring that he was also in residence there.[31]

5.3.3 Purchase and political acumen

Purchase was another method of property acquisition. In contrast to inherited and granted properties, it incorporated an element of choice. The property market became healthier as the period progressed. The complexities of land tenure made private property purchases an arduous enterprise. Feoffees might refuse to release lands, for example. Contemporaries were certainly aware of the potential pitfalls of property purchase. A poem, dated to *c*.1500, warned the prospective buyer to

> See [tha]t the sellere be of age / And [tha]t it be in no morgage / Se wheder the land be bond or fre / and se the relese of eury feoffe / loke what quyt rent [the]r of out must goo / And what service that longeth [the]r to ... and [th]us should a wise p[er]chessour do / be hold well all thyng [tha]t longeth [the]r to / and if [tho]u wise p[er]chessor be / in x yere [tho]u shalt agayne y[ou]r money se.[32]

Refusal to complete a sale was a common complaint brought to Chancery. During the chancellorship of Archbishop William Warham, Thomas Harvey, esquire, brought a case against one Thomas Wright concerning a messuage in Aston Flamville.[33] Wright had sold it to Harvey and agreed payment. Unfortunately for Harvey, Wright had also put William Turville, then esquire, in possession of the same lands, generating grounds for a lawsuit.

The latter part of our period saw a huge influx of potential purchase into the land market. The Dissolution brought with it a new opportunity for landed advancement via purchase, gift and transfer. Elite interest was attracted by the influx of the properties and lands of the disbanded religious houses into the land market. The Court of Augmentations was established in 1536 to administrate the possessions and revenue of the recently dissolved religious houses. Requests for property acquisition inundated the King and Crown officials.[34] It was an attractive prospect for those seeking political dominance.[35] In

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[30] A. Green and R.T. Schadla-Hall, 'The building of Quenby Hall, Leicestershire – a reassessment', *TLAHS*, 74 (2000), p. 23.

[31] ROLLR, W&I, 1500-1519/2.

[32] J.D. Alsop, 'A late medieval guide to land purchase', *Agricultural History*, 57, no. 2 (1983), p. 164.

[33] TNA, C 1/324/35. The plea was addressed to Warham, which puts the case between *c*.1503-14.

[34] W.C. Richardson, *History of the Court of Augmentations, 1536-1554* (Baton Rouge, 1961), p. 35.

[35] Claire Cross suggested that Sir Edward Hastings, a younger brother of Henry Hastings, third earl of Huntingdon, purchased the site of Leicester Abbey from the Cave family in 1580 to supervise the town

September 1538, Thomas Manners, earl of Rutland, made his bid to Cromwell for the dissolved abbey of Croxton which had been dissolved only four days previously. He made his bid on the grounds that it 'lieth verie nere unto my poore hous of Bever ... I might have and enioye the same other by purchase or exchaunge'.[36] This again supports the theory of the gentry's awareness of their local landscape discussed in the chapter introduction. He followed his request with another letter, written on the same day, to Thomas Wriothesley, the King's secretary, for his 'helpe and furderaunce' in his cause, almost *verbatim*, and added that the acquisition was 'necessarie for me'.[37] Six months later the Crown granted Croxton, its church, rectory and possessions to Manners and his wife, Eleanor. It was amongst a substantial list of property including Rievaulx Abbey, Yorkshire, exchanged for two manors in Middlesex and one in Kent.[38] In 1541 he acquired Belvoir Priory and Garendon Abbey.[39]

The nobility were not the only material beneficiaries of the Dissolution. Thomas Grey, esquire, of Castle Donington purchased the site, precinct and lands of Langley Priory from the Crown in 1543 for £282 10s.[40] Similarly, John Beaumont, esquire, of Belgrave purchased the site of Grace Dieu Priory and its lands from Humphrey Foster, esquire for £460 in May 1539. Foster had purchased them from the Crown only two months previously for £500.[41] Grey and Beaumont were both Crown servants and were thus in a suitable position for a successful bid; Grey was described as the 'King's servant' in 1538 and again in 1543.[42] Whilst the gentry played a prominent role in the Dissolution as religious commissioners, there is some evidence of their support for their local religious houses. An unfavourable report of the nuns' behaviour at Grace Dieu by Thomas Legh and Richard Leighton in 1536 was countered the same year by the gentry commissioners' report that they were 'of good and virtuous conversation and living'.[43] Beaumont

of Leicester whilst his brother was away at court. See C. Cross, 'The third earl of Huntingdon and Elizabethan Leicestershire', *TLAHS*, 36 (1960), p. 8.

[36] TNA, SP 1/136/108, *SPO*.

[37] TNA, Wriothesley Papers, SP 7/1/41, *SPO*.

[38] Gairdner and Brodie, *Letters and Papers*, 14, pt. 1 (London, 1894), p. 251.

[39] Gairdner and Brodie, *Letters and Papers*, 16 (London, 1898), pp. 325, 498.

[40] ROLLR, DE 1107/232; Gairdner and Brodie, *Letters and Papers*, 18, pt. 2, p. 526.

[41] TNA, Court of Wards and Liveries: Deeds and Evidences, WARD 2/2/9A/2.

[42] Gairdner, *Letters and Papers*, 13, pt. 1 (London, 1892), p. 572; Gairdner and Brodie, *Letters and Papers*, 18, pt. 1 (London, 1901), p. 526.

[43] Gairdner, *Letters and Papers*, 10 (London, 1887), p. 497. It may also reflect Legh's and Leighton's agenda to exaggerate wrongdoings to justify suppression.

appeared frequently on religious commissions, including the survey of monastic houses in Leicestershire in 1536.[44] He was also an informer for Thomas Cromwell, Lord Great Chamberlain, alongside Sir William Turville. In 1537, Beaumont wrote to Cromwell to inform him that Thomas Syson, late abbot of Garendon, had said that the King 'should be expulsed oute of this his realm and in his reto[r]n agayn be slayn'. He alleged that his words 'encoragyd dyv[er]se p[er]v[er]se p[er]sons aygenst the lawes of god ther alegya[u]nce and dutyes to attempt rebellyon'.[45] In 1538, Beaumont was one of the commissioners appointed to dissolve Grace Dieu. He personally signed a pension granted to one of the priory's servants, Cecily Bagnall, alongside the King's agent, Thomas Legh on 27th October 1538.[46] The following day, Legh wrote to Cromwell from Grace Dieu to inform him that they 'have there also made an ende, and put Mr Beamond this berer in possession'.[47]

The quality of the religious house granted appears to have correlated directly with social status. In the 1536 survey of religious houses, Garendon, purchased by Thomas Manners, was described as 'being great, old, and partly ruinous'. Comparatively, Langley Priory was 'in reasonable reparation and a small old house', whilst at Grace Dieu 'the church, choir, and cloisters are fair, and the rest in good repair, but of no stately building'.[48] Their quality was also reflected in the value of the exchanges made and prices paid. Sybil Jack argued that the gentry's administrative involvement in the religious houses prior to the Dissolution influenced their acquisition afterwards.[49] Sir John Villers of Brooksby was the steward at Owston, Garendon, Langley and Kirby Bellars; Roger Radcliffe, esquire, was the rent collector at Owston. The rent collector at Kirby Bellars was one John

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[44] BL, Cotton MS, Cleopatra E/IV f. 336.

[45] TNA, SP 1/125/74, *SPO*. The abbot had been reported to Cromwell the previous year for what Elton described as 'prophetic utterances', and that the King 'roots up churches as the mole roots up the molehills'. See G.R. Elton, *Policy and Police: the Enforcement of the Reformation in the Age of Thomas Cromwell* (Cambridge, 2008), pp. 71-72.

[46] Gairdner, *Letters and Papers*, 13, pt. 1, p. 268.

[47] TNA, SP 1/138/37, *SPO*. Beaumont's career culminated in his appointment as Master of the Rolls in 1551. He surrendered the role and his lands the following year in disgrace, having speculated with the court's revenue and being in debt of £20,000 to the Crown. His lands were put into the possession of Francis, second earl of Huntingdon in 1553. N.G. Jones, 'Beaumont, John', *ODNB*, (Oxford University Press, 2004), 'http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/1873' [accessed 19th August 2017].

[48] BL, Cotton MS, Cleopatra E/IV f. 347.

[49] S. Jack, 'Monastic lands in Leicestershire and their administration on the eve of the Dissolution', *TLAHS*, 41 (1965-66), p. 14.

Digby.[50] It is possible that he was the same John Digby, esquire, involved in a dispute in 1535 with the abbot of Croxton, Thomas Greene, given that Croxton Kerrial, the former site of Croxton Abbey, was near to the Leicestershire Digbys' seat at Ab Kettleby and Tilton on the Hill.[51] The Abbey was dissolved only three years later. The purchases made by Manners, Grey and Beaumont discussed above, however, suggest that it was royal service and proximity, and not administration of the religious houses prior to the Dissolution, which dictated successful property acquisition.

5.4   Palimpsests

5.4.1   The architectural palimpsest

Having considered how property might be acquired, we will now explore where the gentry chose to build – or rebuild – their residences. Scholars have described the changing configuration of the landscape as a palimpsest, a manuscript comprising layers of earlier handwriting, first coined by Frederic William Maitland in 1897.[52] The same can be said for certain gentry residences, where a selection of the Leicestershire gentry had the resources to rewrite the local landscape as architectural palimpsests. For example, the Skeffingtons appear to have moved a house from Keythorpe to Skeffington. In 1496, John Cooper of Goadby deposed in Star Chamber that

> Thomas Skevyngton ... bought an house that was sette uppon certen grounde in Keythorp and led and caryed the same unto Skevyngton and ... bielded affeyre place in Skevyngton whiche at this day there remayneth.[53]

The Manners family had the financial means to go one step further. During his visit to Leicestershire, Leland observed that Belvoir Castle stood 'on the very knape of an highe

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[50]   Jack proposed that this John Digby was a younger son of the branch of the family at Stoke Dry, Rutland, but it is most likely that he belonged to the Leicestershire branch at Ab Kettleby, near Melton Mowbray. See ibid.

[51]   TNA, STAC 2/11/83-85.

[52]   F.W. Maitland, *Domesday Book and Beyond: Three Essays in the Early History of England* (Cambridge, 2008), p. 15. See also M. Bowden, 'Mapping the past: O.G.S. Crawford and the development of landscape studies', *Landscapes*, 2, no. 2 (2001), pp. 29-45; O.G.S. Crawford, *Archaeology in the Field* (London, 1953); W.G. Hoskins, *Local History in England* (London, 1984), p. 59; Johnson, *Ideas of Landscape*, p. 58; R. Muir, *The New Reading the Landscape: Fieldwork in Landscape History* (Exeter, 2000), pp. 5-6.

[53]   TNA, STAC 1/1/7.

hille, stepe up eche way, partly by nature, partly by working of mennes handes'.[54] In July 1541, Thomas Manners had paid workmen to remove two hills from his lands: 'the hill besides the cawsey bifore the porter's warde, and the hill of the bakside of the Greate Tower', possibly for aesthetic purposes to improve the view from the castle.[55]

5.4.2 Territorial affiliation

Architectural palimpsests are also evident elsewhere in the county, and reflect the gentry's determination to maintain their residence at their PPA. As shown above in 5.3.2, it was important to continue the connection with family ancestry through the preservation of physical fabric. The surviving late fifteenth-century gatehouse at the moated manor house of Appleby Magna, the home of the Appleby family, adjoins a timber-framed house dating to the late sixteenth century. The Applebys were not responsible for the later timber building; George Appleby, esquire, sold the manor of Appleby Magna in 1560.[56] But they had held the manor uninterrupted since *c*.1170, with many family burials in their chapel in the parish church nearby. The gatehouse can, therefore, be firmly attributed to them. Pevsner's observation that the manor house 'must once have been monumental and forbidding' is supported by Glover's eighteenth-century engraving in Figure 5.3, in which the gatehouse – and the later timber structure – can be clearly seen.[57] Similarly, despite the Sherards' house at Stapleford being mainly of early seventeenth-century construction, an inscription on its eastern front dated 1633 refers only to its 'repayring'. Placing the inscription in the context of the *c*.1500 windows and six statuettes, and the possible archaeological remains of an earlier manor house, it is likely that multiple generations of the Sherards were consistently improving the same site.[58]

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[54] Leland, *Itinerary*, Toulmin Smith, 1, p. 97.
[55] J.H. Round, *The Manuscripts of His Grace the Duke of Rutland Preserved at Belvoir Castle*, 4 (London, 1905), p. 311.
[56] G.F. Farnham and A. Hamilton Thompson, 'The manors of Allexton, Appleby and Ashby Folville', *TLAHS*, 11 (1913-20), p. 444.
[57] Pevsner, *Leicestershire*, p. 48. Nichols, *History and Antiquities*, 4, pt. 2, p. 430.
[58] Pevsner, *Leicestershire*, p. 236; N. Herbert, 'Freeby: Stapleford, Stapleford Park Hotel (SK 814 181)' in 'Archaeology in Leicestershire and Rutland 1997', *TLAHS*, 72 (1998), p. 168.

Figure 5.3 The moated house at Appleby Magna.

Kirby Muxloe offers the best evidence for manorial palimpsest construction. The Hastings family had acquired the manor in 1346 by the marriage of Sir Ralph Hastings, the grandfather of William Lord Hastings.[59] The survival of the late fifteenth-century building accounts for Kirby Muxloe castle clearly indicate the presence of an ancient manor house before construction started, which was incorporated into the castle structure. In December 1480, just over a month after construction commenced, a slater, Richard Godesalf, was paid 6d for eight days' labour 'working on the hall and divers chambers within the place'. In April 1481, the labourers Haukyn and Hudson were paid for 'cleaning the walls and timber within the manor', and by March 1482, Hudson and two additional labourers were paid for 'breaking le Basse Tours ... [and] taking down the walls of mydultowrs'.[60] Alexander Hamilton Thompson suggested that the features in the latter entry 'evidently belonged to the older manor-house and enclosure, the demolition of which now went on as the new work advanced'.[61]

John Beaumont's interest in Grace Dieu Priory also supports the argument for gentry attachment to place. Prior to the Dissolution, Beaumont spent substantial time in London due to his legal profession but maintained his presence in Leicestershire. In 1536 his cousin, Richard Beaumont of Coleorton, described him as being of Belgrave,

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[59] Nichols, *History and Antiquities*, 4, pt. 2, p. 622.
[60] Hamilton Thompson, 'Building accounts', pp. 218, 233, 264.
[61] Ibid., p. 264, fn. d.

approximately two miles to the north-east of Leicester.[62] His purchase of Grace Dieu was designed to make it his primary residence. The appeal of Grace Dieu, situated within the parish of Belton, probably lay in the adjacency of the parish of Thringstone and his childhood home. Not all religious houses obtained by the gentry were turned into residences, however. The Shirleys are said to have purchased the priory church of Breedon on the Hill as a burial place for himself and his successors.[63] Ulverscroft Priory was granted to Thomas Manners, earl of Rutland but there is no evidence of his construction.[64] He also left the site of Garendon Abbey untouched after the demolition of the main abbey site; according to John Nichols, the family later developed it into a secondary residence under Francis Manners, fifth earl of Rutland, by 1621.[65]

5.4.3   Recycling and preserving material identities

The political and religious upheavals of the late fifteenth and mid-sixteenth centuries made available many properties which might be plundered for their building materials. There is substantial evidence for the Leicestershire gentry using the sites previously occupied by religious houses for its materials and their self-improvement. We have seen above that Thomas Grey, esquire, had acquired the site and precincts of the priory of Langley. By 1564 he was building a house there, evidenced in a survey of the castle at Castle Donington. The surveyors reported on 16 February 1564 that they had received only one offer, from Thomas Grey, for the castle's site and materials 'for his building now in hand at his house of Langley within two miles, who is content to pay ... so that he may ... carry away the loose stones'.[66] Grey had died within a year, leaving his son a minor.[67]

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[62] TNA, PROB 11/27/425.

[63] Nichols, *History and Antiquities*, 3, pt. 2, p. 712. The family had previously used Garendon Abbey for their family burials, which had been dissolved and purchased by Thomas Manners, earl of Rutland. The implications of the Shirleys' purchase are discussed in further detail in Chapter 6, 6.4.3. The parishioners of Breedon petitioned Shirley for – and were granted – the right to use the priory church as a replacement for their parish church.

[64] He appears to have had little interest in the site, and sold it to Andrew Judd, lord mayor of London, in 1550. Judd alienated the priory and its lands to Henry Grey, third marquess of Dorset, duke of Suffolk, in 1552. After the Duke's execution and attainder, it reverted to the Crown, and was then granted to Frideswide Strelley, lady-in-waiting to Mary I and widow of Robert Strelley of Great Bowden, Leicestershire. See ibid., p. 1089.

[65] Nichols, *History and Antiquities*, 3, pt. 2, p. 799.

[66] G.F Farnham and A. Hamilton Thompson, 'The castle and manor of Castle Donington', *TLAHS*, 14 (1925-26), p. 68.

[67] TNA, C 142/142/101.

The Langley property remained with the family until it was sold in 1686.[68] Archaeological evidence dating to the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries suggest that Grey's son and grandson had continued building there.[69] It certainly had not been finished by his death, with Grey having described himself as being of 'Castell Donyngton parke' in his will. Interestingly, he bequeathed 'my clocke [and] bell with all that appartayneth to the same, as an herelome pertayninge to Langley' to his eldest son, Thomas.[70] It is likely to have been the same 'clocke with plomets of lede' listed amongst the priory's valuables in 1545, alongside over 50 metres of glass and three vestments of blue, red and green velvet.[71] We can conclude from this that the Greys had developed an attachment with the priory, and had absorbed it into their family's legacy.

5.5 Resources and local impact

We have established how and where the gentry chose to build, and the implications of legacy in their construction. This section focuses on the practicalities of gentry construction, paying particular attention to material acquisition. Connecting the processes of construction with the environment illustrates the symbiotic relationship between the gentry and the locality. Construction and reconstruction required the acquisition and manipulation of natural resources, and the knowledge and support of skilled tradesmen and labourers. Clerks and surveyors were essential in the supervision of finances, material transport and physical construction.[72] Financial and landed wealth were prerequisites for architectural expression. Limited access to money or lands could be countered by access to recyclable materials, which, as we have seen, could be facilitated by political power. The recycling of materials could symbolise the destruction of the 'other' where local politics were at play.

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68 S.P. Douglass, 'Langley Priory', *TLAHS*, 62 (1988), p. 18.
69 Ibid., pp. 26-28. Peter Liddle and Laura O'Brien have created a plan of the hall at Langley based on Douglass's observations. See P. Liddle and L. O'Brien, 'The archaeology of the abbeys and priories of Leicestershire', *TLAHS*, 69 (1995), p. 12.
70 TNA, PROB 11/48/274.
71 The list of valuables is reprinted in Douglass, 'Langley Priory', p. 17.
72 Part of the supervisory team at Kirby Muxloe castle, for example, comprised a clerk of the works, Roger Bowlott; a warden, Robert Steynforth; a master mason, John Cooper, and a surveyor for the carriage of materials.

5.5.1 Material gain

The building accounts for Hastings's castle at Ashby have not survived, but Leland's description of Hastings's visit to and consequent gutting of Belvoir Castle provides insight into his material sourcing. He had travelled there to

> peruse the ground, and to lye in the castel, [and] was sodenly repellid by Mr. Harington, a man of poure therabout, and frende to the Lord Rose. Wheraon the Lord Hastinges cam thither another tyme with a strong poure, and apon a raging wylle [he] spoilid the castelle, defacing the rofes, and takyng the leades of them ... [he] caryed much of this leade to Ascheby de la Zouche, wher he much buildid.[73]

Hastings's intervention accumulated lead provision for his construction at Ashby, but at Belvoir, 'the tymbre of the rofes onkeverid rottid away ... the waulles at the last grue ful of elders, and no habitation was there tyl that of late dayes the Erle of Rutland hath made it fairer than it ever was'.[74] By Leland's visit the Manners had recovered their ancestral lands and had rebuilt Belvoir Castle. The latter was due in part to Thomas Manners's acquisition of Belvoir Priory and Croxton Abbey after the Dissolution.

The Dissolution offered an opportunity for landed and architectural self-improvement. Similar to attainted properties at the end of the fifteenth century, dissolved houses offered substantial construction material. An entry in Manners's household accounts in May 1541 recorded a payments to 'Alexander Bell, plummer, for … taking downe the lede of the cloister at Belvoier, at 6d the dey … and to a labourer that helped hym to carie the lede to the house, 6d'. Mark Marston Norris suggested that, at Croxton, Manners repaired the manor house but destroyed the former abbey.[75] Manners was certainly in residence at Croxton in 1541, when a payment of 12d was made for 'flowrs for the wyndowes and dyvers other tymes for lak of jeneper ... for viii burthen [burdens] of risshis ageynst my Lorde's comyng home to Croxton from the Corte'.[76] An inventory taken at Grace Dieu

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[73] Leland, *Itinerary*, Toulmin Smith, 1, pp. 97-98. 'Mr. Harington' was Sir John Harington of Exton, Rutland. The Haringtons were a powerful Rutland gentry family with substantial influence in both Rutland and Leicestershire; Sir John's son, another John, would later enter the service of Thomas Manners, first earl of Rutland, a descendant of the Lord Roos.

[74] Ibid., p. 98.

[75] 'The first and second earls of Rutland and their part in the central and local politics of mid-Tudor England' (unpub. PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1995), p. 82.

[76] Round, *Manuscripts of His Grace the Duke of Rutland*, 4, p. 304. Manners might have used Croxton to break up his journey from London to Belvoir. The household accounts also refer to the rebuilding of the gallery next to Manners's lodging at Belvoir Castle, however. There is an argument for his using

Priory, immediately prior to Beaumont's occupation of it, referred to the 'the roffe, glasse, ieron, and pavement in the churche, the glasse and ieron in the stepull, the ieron and pavement in the cloyster' still being present onsite.[77]

5.5.2   Local impact

Building a gentry residence was far from discreet. Onsite construction and the transportation of materials required labour and horsepower, materials had to be purchased, construction was undertaken throughout the year, and the sheer amount of time taken to build made gentry construction a part of the local community. By the end of the building accounts for Kirby Muxloe in 1484, the castle was still far from completion.[78] Substantial work to recover construction sites from nature had to be undertaken which took time; oaks, ashes, elms and brambles were removed prior to and during construction.[79] In the space of four years, construction was infiltrating local place-names; in March 1483 a sawpit was mentioned at a place called Tymbur Hawe, which appeared again in June 1483 as the site of a storehouse.[80] Locals provided necessities; candles were purchased and horses were rented from local women such as Agnes Tydder and Margaret Whatson.[81] The surnames and parishes given of tradesmen, such as the carpenter Thomas Huckelscott, also referred to as Thomas Wryght of Hugglescote, can be used to identify where tradesmen at Kirby Muxloe came from.[82] Figure 5.4 illustrates the places of origin of the labour force based on surnames and parishes recorded in the accounts. It suggests a strongly Leicestershire-based workforce with a focus on the region around Kirby Muxloe.

Croxton as a temporary residence during construction at Belvoir, which places additional significance on his purchase appeal to Cromwell and Wriothesley on the grounds of geographical proximity.

[77] Nichols, *History and Antiquities*, 3, pt. 2, p. 654. This inventory is discussed again below, see 5.6.3.

[78] Construction soon ground to a halt after the execution of William Lord Hastings by Richard III in June 1483. Bricklaying stopped immediately, the first floor of the gatehouse was made habitable and its intended second floor was abandoned entirely. See Hamilton Thompson, 'Building accounts', p. 212.

[79] Ibid., pp. 215, 218, 232.

[80] Ibid. The place-name appears to have disappeared with construction activity. It derives in part from the OE element *haga* meaning a hedge or enclosure, which appears frequently in minor place-names in proximity to Charnwood Forest. Kirby Muxloe was on its southern border. See Cox, 'Place-names of Leicestershire and Rutland', p. 308. Cox's examples include 'Strathawe' in Kirby Muxloe (1462), p. 107; Holywell, 'Halynghawe' (1349), p. 380; 'Hosgothawe' in Thringstone (1272), p. 390, 'Litelhawe' in Shepshed (1477), p. 398 and 'Aldermanhawe' in Woodhouse (1350), p. 418.

[81] Hamilton Thompson, 'Building accounts', pp. 241, 258.

[82] Ibid., pp. 248, 283.
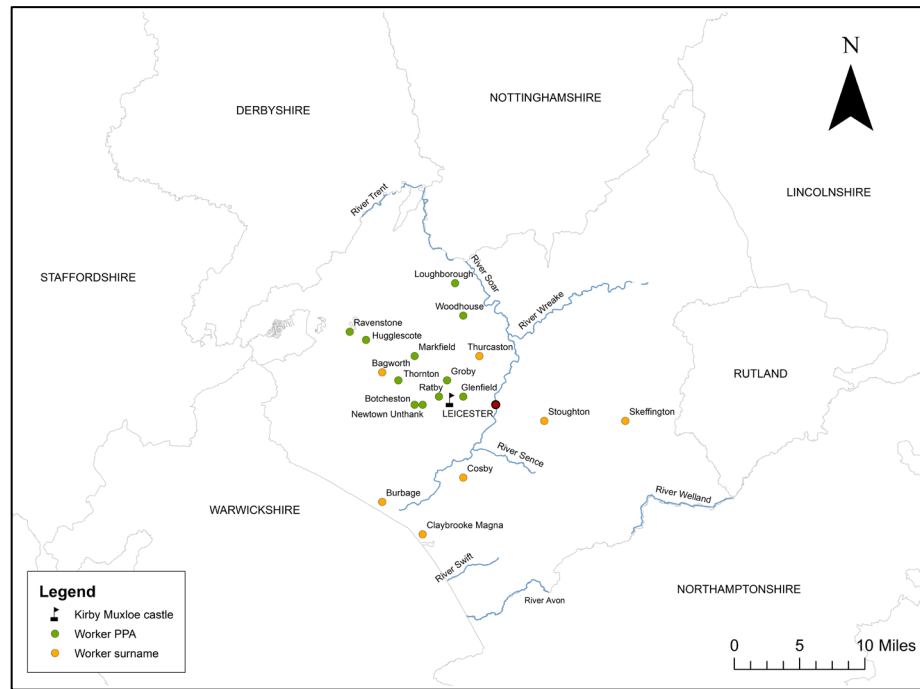
Figure 5.4 Places taken from workers' parishes (PPAs) and surnames in the Kirby Muxloe building accounts.

5.5.3 Logistics of building and sourcing

The majority of materials at Kirby Muxloe were not recycled but locally sourced, demonstrated in Figure 5.5. Hastings's landed wealth, garnered through political favour, gave him access to natural resources such as timber and stone.
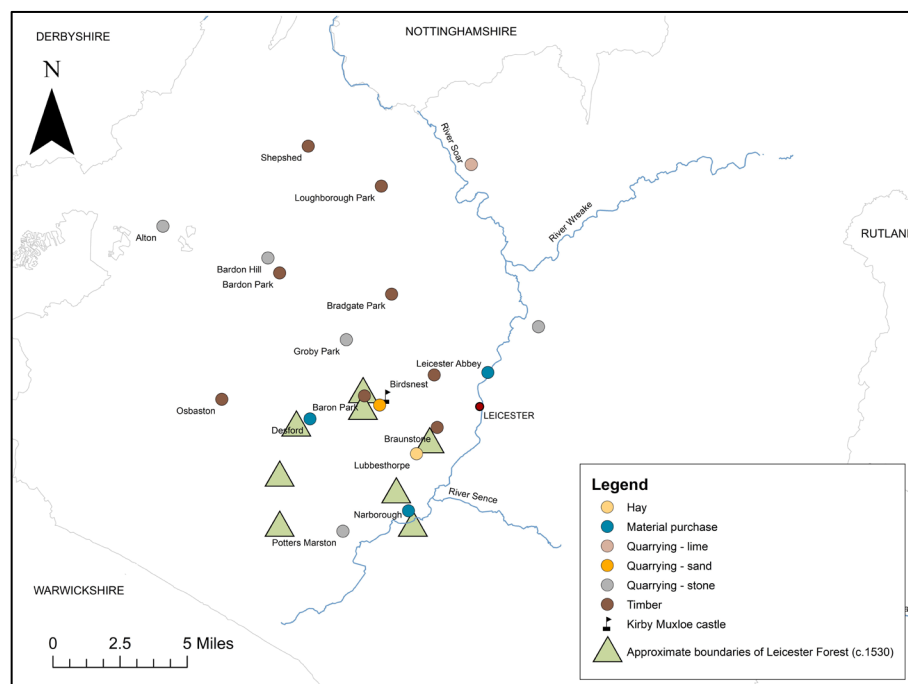
Figure 5.5 The locations of materials sourced during the construction of Kirby Muxloe castle in the Kirby Muxloe building accounts.

Cross-referencing the identifiable places in the building accounts with the lands granted to Hastings by Edward IV shows a clear correlation between the two. The manors and lordships of Shepshed, Loughborough, Whitwick and Markfield were granted to him in 1462. Shepshed, Loughborough Park, Bardon Park and 'the Waste', Whitwick, and Steward Hey, Markfield were listed amongst the sites for felling timber and quarrying stone.[83] The majority of stone was sourced from Steward Hey, with some freestone and roughstone quarried from Alton, ten miles to the north-west, on the road between Kirby Muxloe and Ashby.[84] The gathering of timber was overseen by a steward, John Doyle, who chose and marked specific trees in Osbaston Wood, Shepshed and Loughborough Park for felling.[85] The castle's drawbridge was constructed using timber from the Frith and Baron Park, both in Leicester Forest.[86] In March 1481, 15 cartloads of freestone were paid for by the township of Thornton, also en route between Ashby and Kirby Muxloe, 'for the love of my lord'.[87] Resources at Loughborough were the furthest distance from Kirby Muxloe, giving a total resource radius of ten miles. It is comparatively smaller to that found by Dyer at Murcott, Northamptonshire in 1432-33 for messuage reparations by the lord of the manor.[88] Timber was carried 11 miles from Lutterworth, Leicestershire; tiles 16 miles from Coventry, Warwickshire, and labour was sourced three miles away at Ashby St Ledgers, Northamptonshire.

The payments made for the building materials at Kirby Muxloe which Hastings could acquire from his own properties were for their quarrying, felling or carriage, not for their purchase. Comparatively, materials such as iron for making wagons, and lime for mortar, for example, were purchased from Narborough and Barrow upon Soar.[89] Wagons for material carriage were made on-site; bricks were referred to as being carried by 'my lord's wains'. The use of wagons infers their suitability for Leicestershire's topography; they

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[83] Maxwell Lyte, *Patent Rolls*, 1, pp. 103-104.
[84] Hastings's tenure of Alton is unclear, but it appears in the IPMs of his grandson and great-grandson, the second and third earls of Huntingdon. See TNA, E 150/1146/5 and E 150/1158/12.
[85] Hamilton Thompson, 'Building accounts', p. 235.
[86] William Lord Hastings acquired substantial offices in the Duchy of Lancaster, including Leicester Forest which were inherited by his grandson. The Frith was the scene for the Grey-Hastings dispute in 1525 discussed in Chapter 4 above, and in Skillington, 'Star Chamber proceedings', pp. 129-158.
[87] Hamilton Thompson, 'Building accounts', p. 229. Hastings had acquired lands in and the manor of Thornton in an exchange with John Lovel in 1463. It comprised the manors of Bagworth and Thornton and lands at Thornton and Desford in exchange for Hastings's lands in Yorkshire. See Acheson, *A Gentry Community*, p. 23.
[88] C. Dyer, 'Building in earth in late medieval England', *Vernacular Architecture*, 39, no. 1 (2008), p. 68.
[89] Hamilton Thompson, 'Building accounts', pp. 218, 220, 231.

could navigate the higher elevations in the north-west, and the comparative absence of wetlands in the region reduced the risk of flooding. The bricks for Kirby Muxloe were made locally. A record of 'the carige of 61 lood fro[m] the fryth un to the kylne' puts the clay source within Leicester Forest.[90] There are no references to the transportation of materials via water, supporting the argument for the unnavigability of the Soar's waterways outlined in Chapter 1.[91] This may have hampered the speed of construction. Only 1.3 million bricks were placed during four years of construction.[92]

Figure 5.6 shows that bricklaying was a seasonal activity, which would have further delayed the process. During the construction of Tattershall Castle, in 1439-40, over four million bricks were made at Edlington Moor, and over two million were laid at the castle.[93] Edlington Moor is north of Tattershall Castle, and is bypassed by the navigable River Witham, which flows from northern Lincolnshire, near Grantham, past Tattershall and to the south-east coast at Boston. The use of a Soar tributary for the moat at Kirby Muxloe required careful preparation and supervision. In contrast to bricklaying, moat excavations and other labouring tasks such as the carriage of stone and garden preparations continued through the winter, reflecting Hastings's urgency to complete construction amidst his bid to mark his family's ascendancy in the county.
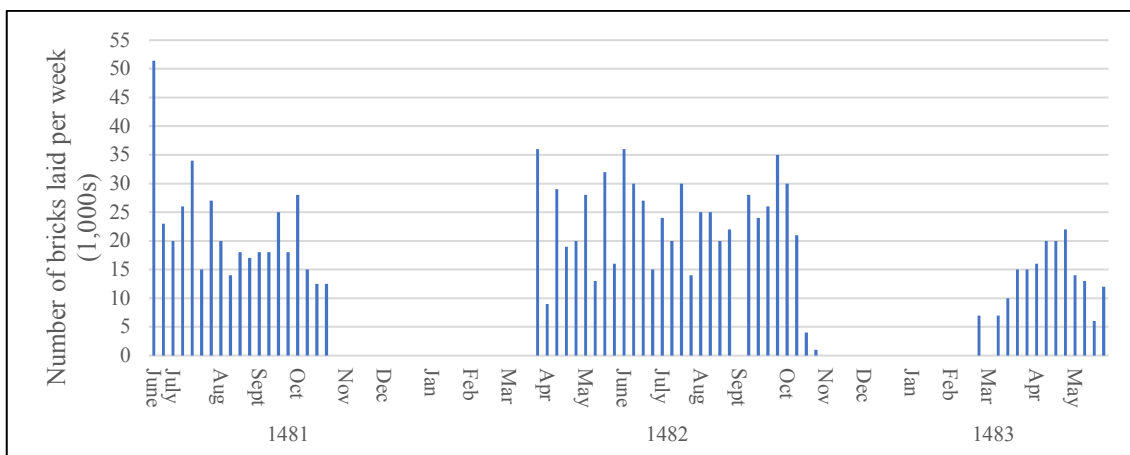
Figure 5.6 Number of bricks laid at Kirby Muxloe castle, recorded per week.

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[90] Ibid., p. 307.
[91] See Chapter 1, 1.2.3.
[92] A. McWhirr, 'Brickmaking in Leicestershire before 1710', *TLAHS*, 71 (1997), p. 43.
[93] W.D. Simpson, *The Building Accounts of Tattershall Castle 1434-1472*, 55 (Lincoln, 1960), p. 73.

The first mention of the moat was in October 1480, when the building accounts begin. Anthony Emery proposed that the moat was an earlier feature belonging to the pre-existing manor house, but this may be a misinterpretation of the building accounts' terminology. He conceded that the accounts 'make no reference to any earlier moat', and based his conclusion on moats being a common feature of fourteenth-century construction, the low-lying ground, and the brook nearby.[94] In October 1481, John ap Powell was paid as a 'workman at le Broke' whilst John Davye, John Hewe and Elias Davye were jointly paid 12d for four days' work 'at cleaning Lytyll Broke for a water-course and at directing the moat as far as the said water-course'.[95] A later reference to 'making the way for carts coming into le Waren mote' suggests that a 'mote' was actually a ditch or depression. We might propose, therefore, that the building accounts were referring to intended features, not to ones that already existed. The moat was a new feature; the men were working on the moat for almost a year, arguably suggesting a more substantial task than moat-widening.

The following week William Nevell, and John ap Powell, who appears to have been a supervisor given his higher wages, had joined the team in the moat. They were paid for working 'in the moat', not at or around it. Water had not yet been introduced, and activity was confined to digging and trenching of the moat and watercourse for redirecting the brook. John ap Gryffyth and Davy Johnson had joined them by January of the following year.[96] Later that month, the team were paid for working in 'le poole in le Dowr[e] Croft'.[97] Approximately one mile south-west from the castle site is a possible candidate for the pool: a natural body of water lying upstream from the moat.[98] It is formed by a south-west to north-west flowing Soar tributary which bypasses the castle site, eventually

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[94] A. Emery, *Greater Medieval Houses of England and Wales, 1300-1500*, 2 (Cambridge, 2000), p. 268.
[95] Hamilton Thompson, 'Building accounts', p. 215.
[96] With the exception of Nevell and Johnson, the surnames of these men appear to be of Welsh origin. See T.J. Morgan, *Welsh Surnames* (Cardiff, 1985), pp. 102, 126, 155, 178. The team did not comprise anyone with toponymic Leicestershire surnames, such as John Claybroke [Claybrooke Magna/Parva], labourer; Robert Skevyngton [Skeffington], Thomas Burbryg [Burbage] and John Coseby [Cosby], carters, and Robert Bagworth, sawyer. It is difficult to ascertain whether these men were imported labour from Wales, or if they had descended from Welsh settlers in England. Their apparent shared identity, combined with their skills in moat building and water management, infers that they had a skill which the Leicestershire men did not. Whilst this is conjecture, there is certainly a case to be made again for the impact of Leicestershire's topography on construction methods in the context of local skills.
[97] Hamilton Thompson, 'Building accounts', p. 221. The 'Dowr[e] Croft' may have referred to a rabbit enclosure.
[98] The pool now lies in the grounds of Kirby Muxloe Golf Club.

meeting the Soar five miles north of Leicester at Rothley. The work undertaken at the pool may have been to stop the water flow, permitting the redirecting of the brook downstream. In March 1481 the men were referred to as 'ditchers', corroborating the theory, and indicating that the ground had sufficiently thawed.[99] By August the team were involved in 'le Brooke kestyng', digging the course for the new brook, which was tested in September when two men were paid to watch for water in the castle moat.[100] This insight illustrates the skills required for environmental management and manipulation during gentry construction.

5.6 Size and structure

We have seen how buildings were acquired and constructed. This section focuses on their interior structures – and detectable amendments – over time. It is divided between manor houses, castles and religious houses. For the sake of this study, manor houses comprise properties which existed as such during our period. They were often inherited, and underwent minor changes compared to the castles and ex-religious houses. The castle and religious house discussed below were manorial residences at different stages of transition, controlled entirely by the gentry. The castle at Ashby had once been a manor house; conversely, the residence of John Beaumont at Grace Dieu was once a religious house. Dividing manorial residences into these three subcategories permits the use of different source approaches; inventories and wills illustrate the spatial and sentimental significance of rooms for their gentry occupants, for example. Room descriptors and contents, such as the 'wardrope [*sic*] chamb[e]r' or 'the chamber ov[er] the butterie that I putt my gownes in', reveal the significance the gentry attached to different spaces; how they were perceived and utilised, and can be interpreted to suggest how the gentry lived.[101] They can occasionally detail where the rooms were positioned within the house if sufficient context is provided.[102]

The structure of gentry residences is somewhat difficult to access. Post-period construction and varying survival rates of documentary evidence have rendered

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[99] Ibid., p. 224. Ditching could not be undertaken in a flooded or frozen moat.
[100] Ibid., pp. 248, 252.
[101] Shirley, *Stemmata Shirleiana*, p. 419; TNA, PROB 11/49/180.
[102] Anne Swillington's reference to her gown chamber being over the buttery, for example, is of little value unless the buttery can also be placed.

reconstruction a difficult task. Where enough information has survived, however, conclusions concerning the use and amendment, and thus consequential significance, of space can be drawn. This is useful, first, for understanding how the gentry lived; arrangements and divisions of space can be used to reveal their living requirements. The modification of religious houses into gentry residences, for example, illustrate two very different uses of space. Inventories and wills give clues as to the purpose of rooms and to an extent, their arrangement within the broader house structure.

Fashionable transitions in the gentry's use of architecture, particularly in terms of external and interior structure, can be detected across the period. Robert Liddiard distinguished between 'real' pre-fourteenth-century castles, which were realistically fortified and defensible, and military-style residences created during the late fourteenth to early sixteenth centuries.[103] John Goodall described these later constructions as being 'shorn of proper fortifications and caparisoned in crenellations … the "castrati" of castle studies'.[104] Chris Woolgar suggested that fortified houses were for show and reflected the changing nature of contemporary warfare which was less concerned with sieges, and more so with open conflict.[105] Chapter 1 has shown that our gentry were far from demilitarised, which is also mirrored in certain properties being realistically defensible, such as the Hastings' castles at Ashby de la Zouch and Kirby Muxloe.[106]

5.6.1   Manor houses

Scholars have used structures of gentry residences to infer the changing self-perception of the occupants of manor houses, and have noted the development of suites and series of rooms as early as the late thirteenth century.[107] Dyer suggested that the increasing separation between families and their servants illustrated 'profound shifts in family attitudes if not in family structures in the early modern period, perhaps beginning before 1500'.[108] Bill Hillier and Juliette Hanson proposed that the number of doors in a building correspond with intended levels of privacy; that pathways through a property reveal more

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[103] R. Liddiard, *Castles in Context: Power, Symbolism and Landscape, 1066-1500* (Oxford, 2005), p. 2.
[104] J. Goodall, *The English Castle – 1066 to 1650* (London, 2011), p. 5.
[105] C.M. Woolgar, *The Great Household in Medieval England* (London, 1999), p. 68.
[106] See below, 5.6.2.
[107] Woolgar, *The Great Household*, p. 48.
[108] Dyer, 'Vernacular architecture and landscape history', p. 5.

about the social perspective of its occupants than its physical structure.[109] The approach, known as access analysis, has found favour with archaeologists. Amanda Richardson observed an increase in private space between her thirteenth- and fifteenth-century case studies in Salisbury, Wiltshire, for example.[110] Comparatively, Chris King identified a 'considerable variety in the size and form of gentry houses' by our period.[111] Both investigations argued that horizontally-shared values amongst elite architecture were more influential in residential structures than vertical emulation by social inferiors.[112]

Jane Grenville warned against assumptions of social predictability, however. Two buildings with the same 'depth', that is, the same number of doorways between the exterior and interior, may not translate as identical social spaces: 'the perception of space and social action may vary between different groups within a society'.[113] This is certainly the case with the gentry. The houses of those involved in husbandry or the wool trade, for example, might comprise the principal domestic dwelling and associated buildings attached to the main house complex. Dyer highlighted the 'close relationship between consumption and production where the agricultural land and buildings lay adjacent to the manor house'.[114] Residential distance from agricultural lands varied amongst the gentry. Those higher up the gentry hierarchy were more likely to hold land across more than one county, and their primary residences were thus less likely to be in proximity to their productive lands.[115] Their houses would therefore have less rooms, rendering access analysis conclusions of depth less useful.

A distinction must also be drawn between gentry houses where the working spaces, such as agricultural or 'service' spaces, were integral to the house, and where they were kept separately from the domestic quarters. The inventory for Sir Ralph Shirley's house at Staunton Harold, for example, listed the domestic rooms first ('the Halle', 'the Great P[ar]lor', 'the Inner p[ar]lor', 'the Countyng Howse', 'the Grene Chamb[er]' *et cetera*),

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[109] Hillier and Hanson, *Social Logic of Space*, pp. 14-19.
[110] See for example, A. Richardson, 'Corridors of power: a case study in access analysis from medieval England', *Antiquity*, 77, no. 296 (2003), pp. 373-384.
[111] C. King, 'The organization of social space in late medieval manor houses: an East Anglian study', *Archaeological Journal*, 160, no. 1 (2003), p. 121.
[112] King, 'Organization of social space', p. 120; Richardson, 'Corridors of power', pp. 382-383.
[113] J. Grenville, *Medieval Housing* (Leicester, 1997), p. 20.
[114] Dyer, *An Age of Transition?*, p. 99.
[115] See the composition of the Beaumonts' territory discussed above in Chapter 2, 2.3.1, for example.

followed by the service rooms ('the Stable', 'the Kechyn chamb[er]', 'the Bruhowse Chamb[e]r', 'the Pantree', 'the Buttery' *et cetera*).[116] This was not a status-specific arrangement; it is also evident in the inventory of Matthew Brokesby, gentleman, but in reverse – the service rooms were assessed before the domestic rooms – suggesting that the service rooms may have been more accessible and thus the logical place for the assessors to start.[117]

Interestingly, the inventory taken at Rearsby for Anne Keble, widow, referred to items in 'the best chamber', '[th]e maydens chamb[e]r', 'the kytchyn chamber' and 'the closett', followed by the buttery, storehouse, larder, kitchen, day house and '[th]e olde kytchyn'.[118] The mention of 'the kytchyn chamber' amidst the domestc rooms, and later reference to '[th]e olde kytchyn', suggests that the room had been moved to be more accessible. Further, care must be taken in interpreting the size of rooms and spaces. Without physical evidence, sizes evident in room descriptions were relative to the descriptor. Sir Ralph Shirley's 'Great P[ar]lour' may have dwarfed Anne Keble's 'great chamber' at Rearsby.[119] With physical evidence, a substantial stable could indicate a number of carthorses for husbandry; the keeping of horses for breeding, or a household which received large numbers of guests and horses.[120]

Grenville outlined the typical twelfth- and thirteenth-century manor house plan as 'tripartite, consisting of a central open hall, with the solar or private apartment to one end, and the service rooms, separated from the hall by a passage, at the other end'.[121] There is good evidence for the adaptation of this structure by the sixteenth century in gentry inventories and wills. Room descriptors such as 'the gret parlo[r] benethe the hall for s[er]vants' and 'the gret chamb[er] byneth the halle' suggest that the Shirleys had split their hall into two floors by 1517.[122] Similarly, in 1531 and 1562 respectively, John Beaumont of Coleorton, esquire, and Anne Swillington, widow, both bequeathed items

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[116] Shirley, *Stemmata Shirleiana*, pp. 417-426.
[117] ROLLR, W&I, 1574/61.
[118] ROLLR, W&I, 1558 G-O/43.
[119] Shirley, *Stemmata Shirleiana*, pp. 417-426; ROLLR, W&I, 1558 G-O/43.
[120] Chris Woolgar has shown how different parts of households travelled at different speeds, thus a sizeable stable may have reflected a maximum capacity, rather than the number of horses usually kept at one time. See Woolgar, *The Great Household*, p. 188.
[121] Grenville, *Medieval Housing*, p. 89.
[122] Shirley, *Stemmata Shirleiana*, p. 420.

located in the 'chamber over the hall'.[123] The reference in Shirley's inventory to the great parlour being 'benethe the hall for s[er]vants' and additional detail given by all three testators, such as John Beaumont's bequest of 'the hy bede', shows that the gentry families often occupied the upper level. It supports Richardson and King's observations concerning an increase in private space by this period. Comparatively, the will of Robert Jakes and the inventory of goods belonging to Matthew Brokesby, gentlemen, referred only to items in 'my halle' and 'the hall'.[124] Their lesser status may have garnered insufficient funds to make such changes.[125]

However, at Lowesby, George Ashby, esquire, bequeathed to his wife 'the chamber that my father dide use to lye yn beneath the haule ... and a chamber that nexte therunto for her maide to occupie'.[126] His father, William Ashby, esquire, was over 70 years old at his death.[127] Here the hall/chamber layout was operating in reverse. The head of the house occupied the space below the hall; the hall was instead located above to accommodate him. He may have needed the chamber below the hall due to age-related infirmity; he had referred to his 'stuffe bedding and hangings' in the same set of rooms in his will in 1542 – 'my lodging chamber and the secunde chamber therto' – only two years earlier.[128] The space had become associated with Ashby's father. It had thus acquired increased status; Hollie Morgan suggested that the chamber was an appropriate space for the remembrance of ancestors and the visual expression of ancestry.[129] Interestingly, Melissa Auclair observed that 'rooms were highly gendered', and that male and female spaces differed substantially.[130] The custom of ancestry overruled gendered space on this occasion.

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[123] ROLLR, W&I, 1531/14; TNA, PROB 11/49/180. This John Beaumont was from the Coleorton branch of Beaumonts, and cousin to John Beaumont of Grace Dieu.

[124] TNA, PROB 11/15/292 and ROLLR, W&I, 1574/61.

[125] The approximate total value recorded in Brokesby's inventory was £120 compared to Shirley's of over £900. Jakes made financial bequests of approximately £5 compared to Shirley's £70; their wealth accounted for approximately ten per cent of his.

[126] TNA, PROB 11/30/253.

[127] N.M. Fuidge, 'Ashby, William (by 1470-1543), of Lowesby, Leics.' in Bindoff, *History of Parliament: 1509-1558*, pp. 340-341.

[128] TNA, PROB 11/29/304.

[129] H.L.S. Morgan, *Beds and Chambers in Late Medieval England: Readings, Representations and Realities* (Woodbridge, 2017), p. 40.

[130] M. Auclair, 'Coming into the closet: spatial practices and representations of interior space', *Shakespeare*, 13, no. 2 (2017), p. 149. For further discussions of gender and domestic space during this period see R. Delman, 'Elite female constructions of power and space in England, 1444-1541' (unpub. PhD thesis, University of Oxford, 2017); P. Goldberg, 'Space and gender in the later medieval English house', *Viator*, 42, no. 2 (2011), pp. 205-232 and A. Flather, 'Space, place and gender: the sexual and spatial division of labor in the early modern household', *History and Theory*, 52, no. 3 (2013), pp. 344-360. Goldberg and Flather questions concerning the divisions of gendered space in the household.

5.6.2 Castles

The castle at Ashby expanded upon the pre-existing manor house, accommodating individual preferences and requirements. Hastings added a new kitchen tower, tower-house, chapel and lodging court visible in Figure 5.7.
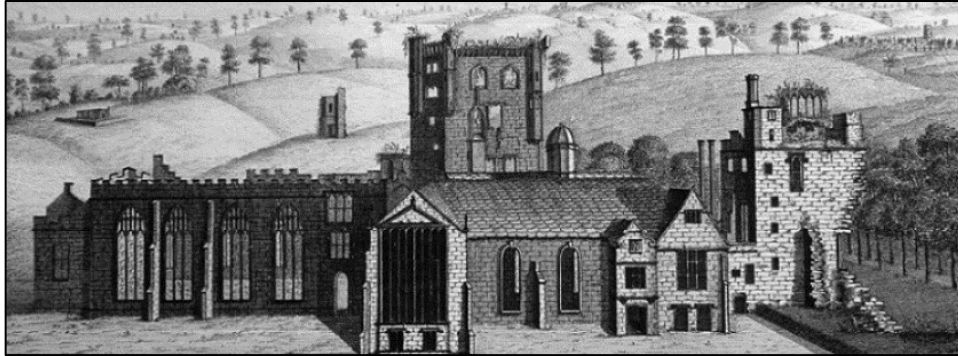
Figure 5.7 Ashby de la Zouch castle, comprising the kitchen tower (far right), the tower-house (centre rear), chapel (far left) and lodging court (centre front) in S. and N. Buck, Views of Ruins of Castles and Abbeys in England.

Ashby is perhaps better described as a crenelated manor house. This later emulation of earlier defensive styles, of what Michael Welman Thompson dubbed the 'non-functional, theatrical elements', supports the water moat at Kirby Muxloe being a later fifteenth-century addition and not an amendment.[131] At Ashby, Albert Herbert suggested that Hastings's construction was 'a mansion built in the fashion of a castle'.[132] But Anthony Emery concluded that it was 'physically capable of serving as a point of last resort', and it was certainly defensible as late as the 1640s.[133] The debate concerning Ashby's defensive ability is in part due to its exterior impression but is also informed by its interior structure.[134] The tower-house resembles a Norman keep, and its rooms were structured *per* floor: 'on the ground floor a large tunnel-vaulted room, above this the Kitchen with a rib-vault with ridge ribs and a large fireplace ... above that the Hall, and on the fourth floor the Solar'.[135] The intricacy and ornateness of its windows, internally and externally, increased as the floors progressed.[136] Placing the solar on the uppermost floor was the equivalent of the later gentry families living on the upper floor of the rooms constructed from the medieval hall discussed above. Emery's description of the tower-house as 'a

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[131] M.W. Thompson, *The Decline of the Castle* (Cambridge, 1987), p. 71.
[132] A. Herbert, 'Ashby Castle', *TLAHS*, 17 (1934), p. 200.
[133] Emery, *Greater Medieval Houses*, p. 215.
[134] The interior significance of Ashby is discussed in further detail below, see 5.7.1.
[135] Pevsner, *Leicestershire*, p. 52.
[136] Emery, *Greater Medieval Houses*, p. 214.

sequence of private apartments in vertical mode' alludes to the increasing privacy as the floors ascended.[137] Its elevation separated the family from the remainder of the castle.

5.6.3 Religious houses

The adoption of ex-religious houses as gentry residences required some substantial renovation, which is evident at Grace Dieu. The surviving archaeological evidence and the extensive inventories for Grace Dieu make it an excellent case study for an investigation into its occupants' changing requirements.[138] Further, it illustrates John Beaumont's response to the pre-existing structure. His financial state was wanting; changes had to be amendments only. The first inventory below was taken in 1538, prior to Beaumont's occupation of the site.[139] Pam Drinkall dated the second to *c*.1552 after his arrest for fraud. Table 5.1 details Peter Liddle's correlation of the two inventories.

1538 Inventory		**1552/3 Inventory**
Church		
Vestry		
Dorter	?=	Long gallery
Cloister	=	Two pieces of the cloisters
Chapter	?=	Mr Hastings [*sic*] chamber
Frater	?=	The hall/great chamber and other chambers
Knights [*sic*] chamber		Knights [*sic*] chamber
Inner chamber		Inner chamber at the other end of the dining chamber
Next chamber		Assorted chambers, inc. three pallet chambers, two
Inner chamber	?=	chambers, three clerks' chambers, the wainman's
Chapell chamber		chamber and the gatehouse chamber
Dining chamber	=	Dining chamber
Hall	=	Hall
Buttery	=	Buttery
Larder house	=	Pantry
Kitchen	=	Kitchen
Candle house	=	Tallow house
Brewhouse	=	Brewhouse and chamber over the brewhouse
Ale house		
Salt house	=	Fish house
Bake house	=	Bake house and chamber over the bake house
Kiln house	=	Kiln house
Smith's forge	=	Smith
East barn / west barn	=	Garner

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[137] Ibid., p. 181.

[138] I am indebted to the work of Peter Liddle and the late Mrs Pam Drinkall which made these conclusions possible. I am also grateful to Peter for drawing my attention to Mrs Drinkall's research and the associated inventories held at TNA, E 36/148.

[139] The inventory is reprinted in Nichols, *History and Antiquities*, 3, pt. 2, pp. 653-655.

		Gallery
		Slaughterhouse
		Chapel
		Nursery
		Mill
		Dairy
		Lower parlour
		Wheat larder
		Stable
		Workhouse
		Cellar
		Wardrobe
		Closet

Table 5.1 Collated inventories at Grace Dieu Priory taken in 1538 and for John Beaumont in 1552/3.[140]

As Liddle rightly pointed out, there are some detectable omissions in the first inventory, such as the servants' living accommodation, which make a direct like-for-like comparison problematic.[141] But by pairing the archaeological evidence with the similarity of room descriptions between the two, it is clear that there is substance to Drinkall's suggestions. Inventories were usually taken in a logical order to allow possessions to be correctly identified at a later date; we can thus be quite certain that the order of rooms listed were the same as the order encountered.

Beaumont's increase in the number of rooms is the most striking feature. The only space lost from the priory site accommodated the church and vestry. Unsurprisingly, the rooms designed for household maintenance, such as the dining chamber, hall, buttery, kitchen and brewhouse, remained the same between occupants. We see the additions of rooms designed specifically for a family residence, such as the nursery, wardrobe and closet. Room function had certainly changed. The priory's dorter, or dormitory, had become Beaumont's 'longe gallary', used for the presentation of his armour and chainmail.[142] The ornate chapter house, illustrated in Figure 5.8, had become known as M[aste]r Hastings chamber [*sic*], inferring a continuation of the room's function as the administrative centre of the complex.[143] There were changes to suit Beaumont's requirements; there were no

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[140] This table is based on a table reprinted in P. Liddle and R.F. Hartley, 'An archaeological survey of Grace Dieu, Belton, Leicestershire', LMAST 95/2 (Leicester, 1995), Appendix C.

[141] Liddle and Hartley, 'An archaeological survey of Grace Dieu', p. 8.

[142] TNA, E 36/148.

[143] This probably referred to Francis Hastings, second earl of Huntingdon. Hastings was the cousin of Beaumont's wife, Elizabeth.

animals listed at Grace Dieu in 1538, thus the dairy and stables accommodated Beaumont's large numbers of cattle and horses.[144] The division of pre-existing rooms is also evident. Three chambers once known as the inner, chapel and dining chambers became ten separate rooms. It is interesting to note, too, that the division of the cloister had not removed its religious identity. Whilst the second inventory suggests that it was used for storage in Beaumont's time, with references to 'ii carven cubburds / a litle burde / a olde carpett', that it was still known as the cloister illustrates that the building's old identity had not been fully erased.

Figure 5.8 The chapter house at Grace Dieu Priory, later known as 'M[aste]r Hastings Chamber'. Photograph taken by author.

5.7 Visual expression

The formation and expression of gentry identity was both discursive and material. It comprised the use and exhibition of recognisable, interpretable symbols with identifiable meanings, evidenced in heraldic displays in gentry architecture, for example. Heraldry was one of the primary vehicles for the individual and collective expression of gentry identity. It was an ideal device, therefore, to use in gentry architecture. Moreover, the use of long-lasting materials in their architecture, such as brick or stone, promoted the longevity of their family legacy. Expression was often undertaken to attract the attention

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[144] For a discussion of Beaumont's horses see Chapter 3, 3.5.3.

of fellow gentry, who, as Cooper observed, were 'all keen to demonstrate their wealth and their standing to each other and to their inferiors'. Cooper used Gervase Markham's observation that his book, *The English Husbandman* (1613), 'tendeth only to the use of the honest husbandman, and not to instruct men of dignity' to argue that 'gentlemen's houses are distinguished visually from those of the lesser ranks of society, however prosperous individuals might be'.[145]

5.7.1 Interior expression

Gentry residences were vehicles for expression; architectural interiors and exteriors were carefully designed to convey an image of ancestry, power and wealth. This section explores the interiors and exteriors of gentry houses in the context of materialistic, stylistic and environmental conventions. Probate inventories and bequests of goods illustrate the decorative interiors of gentry houses, from 'hyngings in the p[ar]lour ... rede w[i]t[h] herts lyons and fawcons' to 'pictures of King Phillipp and Quene Mary', and 'pictures of themperor and the frenche king', to a 'hanging of arys of the storye of Gollias'.[146] William Staunton, gentleman, bequeathed 'oon of my flaunders bedds', presumably a foreign import.[147] Lavish decoration in colourful, luxurious fabrics and furniture were mirrored in powerful and imposing exteriors such as the gatehouse at Appleby Magna discussed above.

Those further down the gentry hierarchy did not usually have the financial means for such displays, but material pride and possession was not exclusive to those of the highest status. It emerged in contemporary material culture, particularly in clothing. Sumptuary laws such as the 'Acte for Reformacyon of Excesse in Apparyle' (1532-33) restricted certain materials and colours to specific status groups: crimson, scarlet and blue velvet were limited to those of knightly status, whilst satin was exclusively for the use of those with an income of over £100.[148] In 1540, Thomas Pulteney, gentleman, bequeathed his velvet cape and his satin doublet to his brother, which may have belonged to his father,

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[145] N. Cooper, 'Display, status and the vernacular tradition', *Vernacular Architecture*, 33, no. 1 (2002), pp. 28-30.
[146] ROLLR, W&I, 1524/7; TNA, PROB 11/45/239, E 36/148.
[147] TNA, PROB 11/23/314.
[148] J. Raithby, Acte for Reformacyon of Excesse in Apparayle', pp. 430-431.

Figure 5.9 The brick staircase at Kirby Muxloe. Photograph taken by author.

Sir Thomas Pulteney.[149] Those of even lesser means had the option to leave financial and material bequests to churches as an alternative, but public, expression of their wealth and status.[150] Thomas Jakes, gentleman, bequeathed a vestment of silk 'with oure armes' to the parish church of Sibson, for example.[151]

Interior architecture conveyed power and status through rich craftsmanship, such as the gallery of oak at Belvoir Castle bearing the 'anticke' arms of the Manners, or the intricate brick spiral staircase at Kirby Muxloe (Figure 5.9).[152] The master mason at Kirby Muxloe, John Cowper, trained as an apprentice in the construction of Eton College, purported to be 'where the English tradition of fine brickwork was effectively founded'.[153] Cowper had also worked at Tattershall Castle, Lincolnshire for Ralph Cromwell, Hastings's Lancastrian equivalent. The emulation of Cromwell's construction at Tattershall equated Hastings with his financial and social standing.

Fine craftsmanship is also evident at Ashby, exemplified by the ornate stone fireplace in the solar, the uppermost room of the tower-house. The juxtaposition of Hastings's arms with the white rose of York and the royal sun-in-splendour reflected his political importance (see Figure 5.10). It is different to the less ornate, but by no means less distinctive, fireplace in the Great Hall (Figure 5.11). The

Figure 5.10 The stone fireplace in the solar at Ashby de la Zouch castle. Photograph taken by author.

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[149] ROLLR, W&I, 1540/23. This was probably the illegitimate son of Sir Thomas Pulteney of Misterton.

[150] This is discussed in further detail in Chapter 6.

[151] TNA, PROB 11/18/47.

[152] The phrase appears in a payment made to a labourer for assisting one Adrian Pole of Leicester 'to grynde colors when he made the anticke worke in the newe galory'. Round, *Manuscripts of His Grace the Duke of Rutland*, 4, p. 317.

[153] J. Goodall, *Ashby de la Zouch Castle and Kirby Muxloe Castle* (London, 2011), p. 19.

attractive and contrasting surrounding brick and rose-coloured stone would have drawn attention to its detail. It is also evident in Hastings's construction at St Helen's church nearby, drawing a connection between the buildings and Hastings's patronage of them.[154]

Figure 5.11 A fireplace in the Great Hall at Ashby de la Zouch castle. Photograph taken by author.

Natural building materials conveyed different types of architectural exclusivity. Cooper has drawn attention to excesses of timber display as 'a form of conspicuous consumption'.[155] Timber was readily available, but excessive use showed wealth. Comparatively, brick was an elite material; it was expensive, required careful craftsmanship, and its quality varied substantially. There was a flurry of brick building in the late fifteenth-century Leicestershire, evidenced thus far at Kirby Muxloe, but also apparent in Hastings's garden at Ashby, the Greys' construction at Groby Old Hall, and in the walls of Leicester Abbey.[156] There are further examples of early Tudor brickwork at Knaptoft Hall and the Greys' house at Bradgate, and mid-Tudor examples at John Beaumont's residence at Grace Dieu.[157] In contrast to the spiral staircase at Kirby Muxloe, and perhaps due to Beaumont's financial limitations, the brickwork fireplaces at Grace Dieu were added to the priory stone, illustrated in Figure 5.12 and Figure 5.13.

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[154] See Chapter 6, Figure 6.24.

[155] N. Cooper, 'Rank, manners and display: the gentlemanly house, 1500-1750', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 12 (2002), p. 293.

[156] Emery, *Greater Medieval Houses*, p. 252.

[157] There is an ongoing debate concerning the date of the brick construction at Bradgate. The 2017 season of the Bradgate Park Fieldschool (2015-2019), a student training and research excavation project run by the School of Archaeology and Ancient History at the University of Leicester, revealed several brick structures which placed the building's phasing into question.

Figure 5.12 A brick fireplace at Grace Dieu built by John Beaumont. The missing fireback has exposed the original stonework. Photograph taken by author.

Figure 5.13 Another fireplace at Grace Dieu which has undergone modern conservation. The priory stonework is again exposed by the missing Tudor brickwork. Photograph taken by author.

5.7.2 Exterior expression

As Oliver Creighton and Terry Barry argued, the distinctive architecture of gentry residences would have stood out from their local environment.[158] The exterior was equally as important as the interior, evident in the form and style of architecture used. Practical features such as chimneys and guttering advertised a higher quality of building and standard of living. The brick fireplaces at Grace Dieu, for example, were externally visible (see Figure 5.14). They were surrounded by local rubble stone, conveying an impression of simultaneous exclusivity and belonging. The use of local materials in self-improvement also increased an impression of local control. Between 1482 and 1483, two payments were made at Kirby Muxloe for soldering pipes for guttering, and for carrying

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[158] Creighton and Barry, 'Seigneurial and elite sites' in Christie and Stamper, *Medieval Rural Settlement*, pp. 63-64.

'2 loads of sand called flot sand for mixing with lime for Water Tabulles leying'.[159] They conveyed a similar sense of control over the natural environment for the improvement of private living conditions.

Figure 5.14 The external view of the fireplace and chimney seen in Figure 5.15. Photograph taken by author.

The main approaches to properties often hosted the most impressive displays. They would have been visible from the exterior and were thus in an ideal position for self-promotion.[160] Pevsner described the front bay window at Skeffington, for example, as a 'showpiece ... startling in its scale and its bare grandeur'.[161] The feature has been dated to *c.*1530, suggesting that it had been commissioned by Sir William Skeffington. It comprised panels containing shields and flag-staff holders, presumably for heraldic display (Figure 5.15). Its projection attracted attention to its owners' ancestry and status presented on the shields, which may also have included political affinities as evidenced in the fireplace at Ashby and in the heraldry above the north and south gates at Bodiam

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[159] Hamilton Thompson, 'Building accounts', pp. 314, 330. 'Water tables' were projecting ledges for draining rain water.

[160] By the turn of the century buildings such as the Greys' at Bradgate were becoming increasingly distant from the public sphere by being sited in removed spaces such as deer parks.

[161] Pevsner, *Leicestershire*, p. 198.

Castle in East Sussex.[162] Its physical dominance and use of stone inferred strength. The craftsmanship, as with the interior evidence at Kirby Muxloe, gave an appearance of wealth; in reality, Sir William Skeffington would die in substantial debt.[163]

Figure 5.15 The full-height bay window at Skeffington Hall in white ashlar (centre). Photograph © Nick and Derryn Cheatle, the current owners.

Similarly, the shield panels on the embattled porch at Nevill Holt, built in the mid-fifteenth century by Thomas Palmer, esquire, also contained space for heraldic display. Its crenelated appearance signified political and military power, and would be repeated at Ashby and Kirby Muxloe by William Lord Hastings, where it symbolised affinity with the king. Embattled architecture was 'an evocative way of proclaiming lordship and status to rivals and a wider community'.[164] The porch at Nevill Holt has been described as 'a mighty ... projection, equalling the oriel [window] in its consummate stone carving, if not in geometrical complexity' (Figure 5.16).[165] The intricacy of the porch and window stood

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[162] M. Johnson, 'Discussion: elite sites, political landscapes and lived experience in the later middle ages' in M. Johnson (ed.), *Lived Experience in the Later Middle Ages: Studies of Bodiam and Other Elite Landscapes in South-eastern England* (Oxford, 2017), p. 194.

[163] Lyons, 'Skeffington, Sir William', *ODNB* [accessed 27th July 2018].

[164] C. Creighton, *Castles and Landscapes* (London, 2002), p. 67.

[165] N.A. Hill, 'Nevill Holt: the development of an English country house', *Archaeological Journal*, 156, no. 1 (1999), p. 259.

out amidst the comparatively bare structure of the remainder of the hall.[166] Their substantial projection attracted attention to their presence, gave its owners' closer access to the natural environment outside, and when they were visible to external viewers, literally framed them with their own ancestry. Glass was expensive, thus larger windows expressed the owner's wealth.[167] Heraldic presentation in the windows' glass projected ownership, interpreted by Pamela Graves as a 'vivid signalling mechanism'.[168]

Figure 5.16 The embattled porch and oriel windows at Nevill Holt Hall, Leicestershire. Photograph © Neville Holt Community Arts.

The two examples at Nevill Holt and Skeffington were additions made to the pre-existing building. At Groby Old Hall, Leland described

> newer works and buildinges ... erected by the Lorde Thomas first Marquise of Dorset: among the which works he began and erected the foundation and waulles of a greate gate house of brike, and a tour, but that was lefte half on finishid of hym, and so it standith yet. This Lorde Thomas erected also and almost finishid ii toures of brike in the fronte of the house'.[169]

His observation has been corroborated by archaeological evidence of demolition being undertaken on-site between the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries; the brickwork

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[166] Emery, *Greater Medieval Houses*, p. 282.

[167] A. Clifton Taylor, *The Pattern of English Building*, J. Simmons (ed.) (London, 1987), p. 35.

[168] C.P. Graves, 'Social space in the English medieval parish church', *Economy and Society*, 18, no. 3 (1989), p. 312.

[169] Leland, *Itinerary*, Toulmin Smith, 1, p. 18.

has been dated as being contemporary with the demolition, suggesting that the Greys were modernising their residence with the addition of the latest fashionable material.[170] This was a comparatively inexpensive method of building improvement, and a cheaper alternative to the full-scale remodelling evident at Kirby Muxloe.

The gatehouse of Kirby Muxloe was not only made almost entirely of brick; its heraldic expressions were, too. This is also apparent in the Greys' structure at Groby, where a diapered device represents the arms of the Ferrers.[171] There is a substantial collection of figured ornaments in the brickwork at Kirby Muxloe, perhaps more legible to the contemporary rather than the modern external viewer (Figure 5.17).

Figure 5.17 The gatehouse at Kirby Muxloe. Photograph taken by author. The 'w' and 'h' are above the doorway, the Hastings maunch is at the far right, the ship is above the maunch at the top far right, and the legs of a man opposite at the top far left.

They symbolised different elements of Hastings's identity. His initials, 'W' and 'h', are at the top left and top right of the main doorway. The Hastings's heraldic device, the maunch, or lady's sleeve, is evident on the far right tower. There are also the two potentially militaristic ornaments of a ship and the lower half – the legs – of a man; it is incomplete, but was perhaps intended to represent a soldier (see Figure 5.18). The ship

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[170] Wessex Archaeology, 'Groby Old Hall, Groby, Leicestershire' (2011), pp. 34-35.

[171] This probably dates to the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century; the manor passed from the Ferrers to the Greys in 1445.

might be explained through Hastings's position as Lieutenant of Calais. A nod to the legacy of the family – to Hastings's fertility, perhaps – is also apparent in a heraldic jug (see also Figure 5.18).

Figure 5.18 The devices of the lower half of a man (left) and the heraldic jug (right) at Kirby Muxloe. Photograph taken by author.

Creighton argued that gardens were 'extensions of domestic living space into the realm of nature', reminiscent of the bay windows discussed above at Skeffington and Nevill Holt.[172] A late sixteenth-century estate map of Skeffington shows the proximity of the manor house to the church (centre left), and the extent of its orchard (centre right).
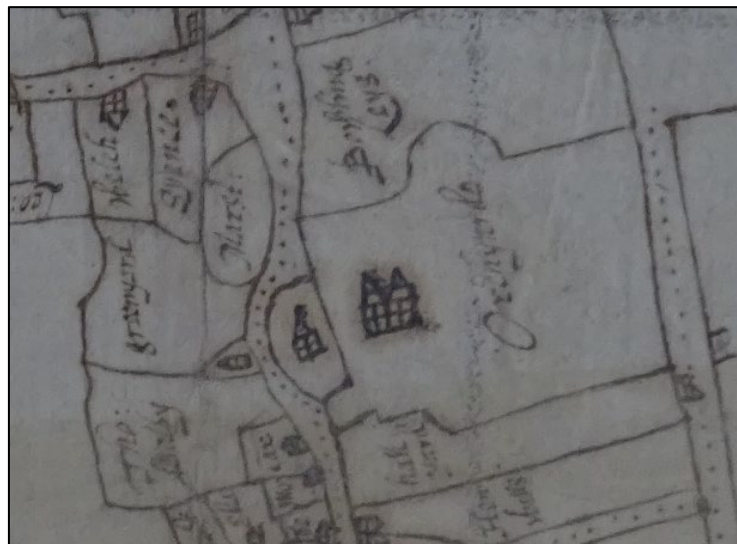
Figure 5.19 An extract taken from an estate map of Skeffington, c.1580. Photograph taken by author.[173]

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[172] Creighton, *Designs upon the Land*, p. 47.
[173] TNA, Public Record Office: Maps and plans, MR/1.

At Groby, the Greys had converted the ancient motte of the ruined Norman castle into their herbary.[174] The preparation of grafts from crab apple trees at Kirby Muxloe in November 1480 later became the castle's orchard.[175] *Ipso facto*, gardens were also extensions of gentry identity. Just as building materials were carved and shaped into simultaneously ornate and practical features, open spaces were enclosed into deer parks and gardens, shaped and tamed by paths and hedges.[176] Deer parks were meticulously designed to give an impression of an untamed, natural environment from the interior perspective; externally, they were elite, exclusive spaces, sectioned off by pales and fences. The intricate frieze over the embattled porch at Nevill Holt of beasts, angels and shields reflected the integral part that animals played in the cultivation and expression of gentry identity, also evidenced in fish ponds and animal enclosures. The importance of Thomas Manners's fish in the pond at the dissolved priory at Croxton was such as that he paid Trent fishermen from 'ii mylle beyand Newarcke with ther Trente nettes' to move them to Belvoir Castle, approximately three miles away.[177] At Kirby Muxloe payments were made for 'le dyging Pocoke yard' and 'moving le pale of the garden about pocokes yard'; peacocks were animals for elite consumption and display, and were an extension of Hastings's expression found in the brickwork above.

5.8   Conclusion

This chapter explored the role of architecture in the visual expression of gentry identity. It revealed how architectural displays were material statements of the gentry's connection with certain places; they marked the core of ancestral territories and established physical legacies. However, this chapter has also shown that these declarations of identity were subject to national influences, where properties were won and lost as a result of political and religious upheaval. Architecture exhibited both strength and vulnerability through the medium of the local stage.

Architecture was also locally sourced, from the provision of a labour force to the use of local materials. It was a direct product of the landscape, and illustrates the intimate relationship between gentry and place. The Skeffingtons, for example, chose to build their

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[174] Leland, *Itinerary*, Toulmin Smith, 1, p. 17.
[175] Hamilton Thompson, 'Building accounts', pp. 216, 219, 255.
[176] Ibid., pp. 238 and 261-262.
[177] Round, *Manuscripts of His Grace the Duke of Rutland*, 4, p. 328.

residence from local stone, thus reflecting their sense of belonging. It is extremely significant, too, that a substantial amount of the materials used in gentry architecture were recycled. Where materials had been acquired at the expense of an adversary it expressed dominance and superiority. But it could also reinforce the family's connection with their ancestry, evidenced in the bequests of building materials.

We have also seen the expression of gentry identity through the acquisition and manipulation of specific geographical locations. Sites were recycled, too, as palimpsests. The gentry's sense of place was articulated through the re-use of a common ancestral site, or the architectural 'rebranding' of a site affiliated with the previous occupant. Moreover, where gentry families were on the move, properties in close proximity to their original territories were highly desirable. This was illustrated by the cases of Beaumont and Manners, who both sought to acquire dissolved religious properties in close proximity to their respective PPAs, and demonstrating their magnetic influence.

Architecture offered an important opportunity for the expression of gentry identity; its construction and physical fabric reflected the successful navigation of political, economic, social and territorial waters in life. Yet there was a manifestation of gentry material culture that was, arguably, even more important: the body. In death, the final location of burial was the most explicit statement of identity that a gentry individual could hope to make. This is considered in our final chapter, to which we will now turn.

Chapter 6: Placing death and legacy

6.1 Abstract

This chapter explores the gentry's construction of identity in their approaches to death through a geographical lens. Its purpose is to stress the significance of place in the preparation for, at the moment of, and after one of the most important events in the gentry's lives: death. Alexandra Walsham described the post-Reformation landscape as being 'encrusted with signposts to the tangled religious histories of the nations that comprised it ... [it] helped early modern people to understand who they were and where they came from'.[1] We will consider, then, the junctures at which identity and place fused together. The potent combination of legacy, religion and the looming spectre of death forced the gentry to decide who they were; the place which hosted their last statement of identity played a critical part in the expression of that decision. It will be shown that a harmony between territorial allegiance and religious devotion was crucial in the design and execution of this final declaration of identity.

6.2 Introduction

This chapter builds on Nigel Saul's theory that chosen geographical locations affirmed territorial lordship, a theory which was explored in Chapter 2 through the ideas of Peter Coss.[2] It emphasises the local context in understanding the geographical significance of bequests to and burials within the parish church and other religious establishments, and in the broader county framework. Probate evidence, however, suggests that individual and collective legacy was expressed by both geographical and spatial association and disassociation, and not necessarily always where manorial lordship was maintained. Three main approaches are used to illustrate this point: the geographies of bequests made, the locations chosen for burial, and the physical methods of identity display. Bequests made to parish churches and intended burial locations are mapped, adding another layer to our understanding of territorial significance. Our discussion of the physical displays of

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[1] Walsham, *Reformation of the Landscape*, p. 567.
[2] Saul, *Lordship and Faith*, p. 161.

power and identity discussed in Chapter 5 is translated to the parish church exterior and interior. Together, these approaches reinforce our argument for the intimacy between gentry and place, which emerged most explicitly in death.

The role of death in the expression of gentry identity has received substantial scholarly attention, most notably in the field of church monuments and architecture. Monuments expressed different elements of the deceased's identity, and incorporated cultural, religious and political concerns. Saul's analysis of the monumental brasses belonging to the two cadet branches of the Cobham family of Cobham, Kent and Lingfield, Surrey, concluded that they reflected the Cobhams' anxieties concerning the transient nature of life, and their religious devotion.[3] Closer to home, Pamela King observed similar anxieties in the brass belonging to a member of our gentry, Ralph Woodford, esquire, of Ashby Folville.[4] Monuments were a strategic part of commemoration. As Sally Badham has shown, they recalled the good works of the deceased and encouraged prayer for their soul.[5] They could also reflect political identity. Matthew Ward illustrated the integral part that politics played by drawing attention to the prominence of the livery collar in funerary monuments, for example.[6] These approaches have added substantially to the processes and agency of gentry commemoration but have paid less attention to these expressions as being exclusive to and a direct product of place.

This period offers an opportunity to explore the impact of the Reformation for evidence relating to the significance of place. The gentry were affected by changes in religious policy: Sir Richard Sacheverell requested that pilgrimages should be undertaken 'where I have avowed to goo ... to our Lady of Walsingh[a]m to our lady of Doncastre to the Rode of Garradon and to Saint Margaret of Kettisbye ... also all other pilgremag[e]s that I have avowed'.[7] Gentry families often sent their daughters to religious houses: Sir

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[3] Saul, *Death, Art and Memory in Medieval England*, p. 249.
[4] P. King, 'Memorials of Ralph Woodford (d.1498), Ashby Folville, Leicestershire: the death of the author?' in J. Boffey and V. Davis (eds.), *Recording Medieval Lives: Proceedings of the 2005 Harlaxton Symposium* (Donington, 2009), pp. 182-188.
[5] S. Badham, *Seeking Salvation: Commemorating the Dead in the Late-Medieval English Parish* (Donington, 2015), p. 215.
[6] M. Ward, *The Livery Collar in Late Medieval England and Wales: Politics, Identity and Affinity* (Woodbridge, 2016).
[7] TNA, PROB 11/25/187.

Richard Sacheverell's sister was a nun at Langley Priory, and a relative of Thomas Ashby of Quenby, esquire, was a nun at Grace Dieu Priory.[8]

6.2.1 Sources

Evidence is taken predominantly from gentry wills held in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury records at The National Archives (TNA) and those held by the Record Office of Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland (ROLLR). This chapter considers burial preambles, which contained directions for the location and style of burial, and evidence for church-based bequests. A total of 107 wills are used with a date range of 1480-1596. Survival rates and identification difficulties mean that we cannot account for every will made during the period. Many wills were rejected from the sample where contextual detail is unable to qualify the testator as a member of the Leicestershire gentry. Thomas Villers's references to his two brothers, Christopher and John, and to the heraldic arms of the Villers family made him a likely gentry candidate, for example.[9] It was corroborated by John Nichols's genealogy of the family.[10] We cannot assume that a gentry surname evidenced a gentry testator, exemplified by the will of Richard Pulteney, husbandman.[11] But a sufficient sample has survived to permit conclusions concerning the gentry as individuals and as a collective.

6.2.2 Probate demographics

This section handles the demographics present in the probate data. Figure 6.1 shows the distribution of Leicestershire gentry wills by status. The proportionate majority comprises esquires (39%), closely followed by gentlemen (29%). Knights (15%) and female testators (ten per cent) are fewer in number. The 'other' category comprises testators with a different status at the time of will writing.[12] We shall see below that these distributions are also reflected in the IPM data, and are therefore an accurate representation of the proportionate numbers of each group.

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[8] BL Cotton MS, Cleopatra E/IV f. 336; ROLLR, W&I, 1500-1519/2.
[9] TNA, PROB 11/9/95.
[10] Nichols, *History and Antiquities*, 3, pt. 1, p. 1.
[11] ROLLR, W&I, 1564/51.
[12] This includes the first and second earls of Rutland (Manners) and marquesses of Dorset (Grey); William Lord Hastings; Roger Wigston, merchant, and Thomas Keble, serjeant-at-law.
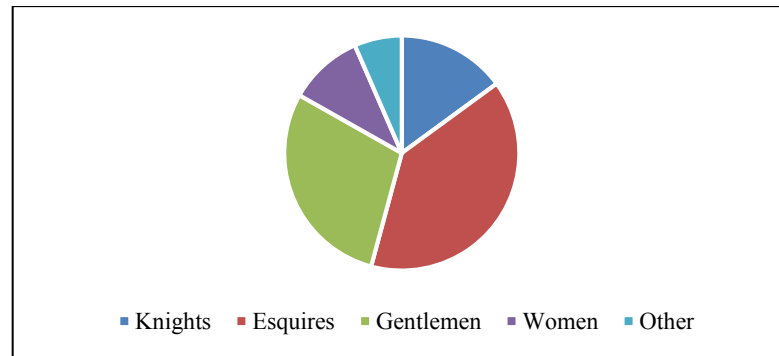
Figure 6.1 The status distribution of the Leicestershire gentry based on probate evidence, 1480-1596.The gender balance is skewed, unsurprisingly, towards a heavily male majority, evident in Figure 6.2. Women are severely underrepresented in contemporary wills.[13]
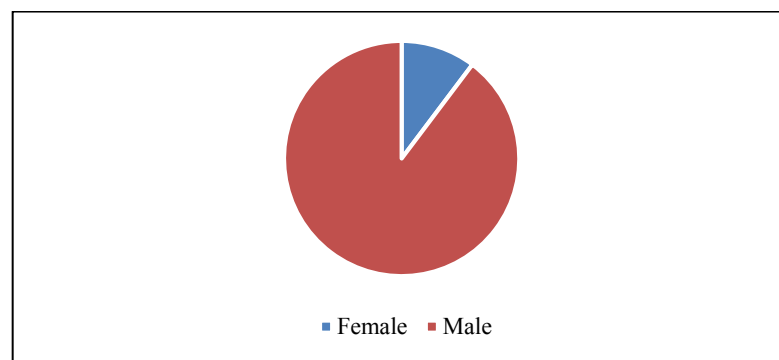
Figure 6.2 The proportion of male to female testators, 1480-1596.

By limiting the categories to knights, esquires, and gentlemen (Figure 6.3), we can cross-reference the status representation in the probate evidence with other gentry datasets used in the thesis to test their credibility. As an example, Figure 6.4 illustrates the comparative status representation present in the IPM data.
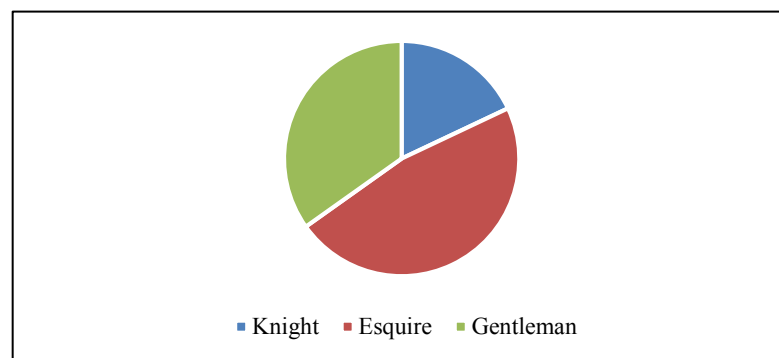
Figure 6.3 The proportion of knights, esquires and gentlemen in the probate dataset, 1480-1596.

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[13] Married women required their husbands' permission to write one. See Goose and Evans, 'Wills as an historical source' in Arkell, Evans and Goose, *When Death Do Us Part*, p. 47.
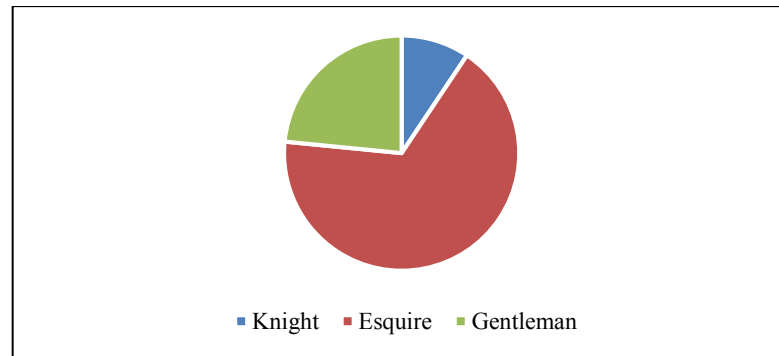
Figure 6.4 The proportion of knights, esquires and gentlemen in the IPM dataset, 1461-1592.

There are some population discrepancies between the probate and IPM datasets, but the trends are broadly the same. The increased representation of esquires at the expense of the knights and gentlemen categories can be explained by their comparatively large numbers within gentry society, and compared to gentlemen at least, the likelihood that they would hold their lands of the Crown. Richard Henry Tawney's argument for increasing social mobility amongst the gentry by the sixteenth century can be tested by comparing our data with earlier data for Leicestershire.[14] Figure 6.5 represents the status distribution of the Leicestershire gentry during the early to late fifteenth century according to Acheson's calculations incorporating 74 members.[15] Our IPM dataset represents 128 members. There are marginal changes in status representation; a decrease in knights (minus seven per cent) and increase in esquires (plus five per cent) and gentlemen (minus four per cent) suggests that the composition of the Leicestershire gentry population was relatively stable despite the substantial increase in their total number.
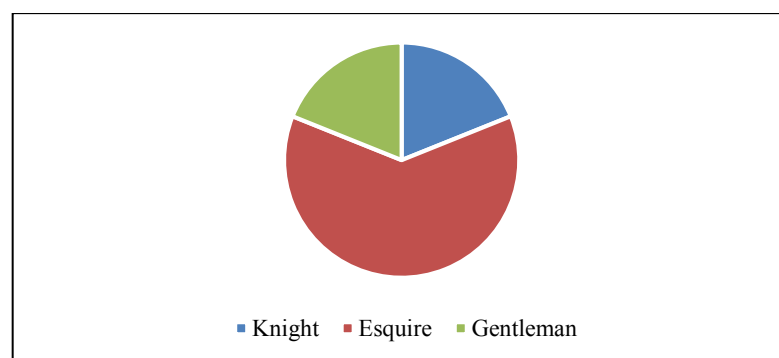
Figure 6.5 The status distribution of Leicestershire gentry according to Acheson, c.1422-1485.

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[14] R.H. Tawney, 'The rise of the gentry, 1558-1640', *Economic History Review*, 1, no. 1 (1941), p. 4.
[15] Acheson, *A Gentry Community*, pp. 204-208.

The similarities between Eric Acheson's data and our IPM dataset show that the probate dataset is more representative of knights and esquires than gentlemen. Knights and esquires were more likely to hold land in more than one county, thus their wills were better preserved amongst the copies held by the Prerogative Court of Canterbury.

There are also trends in the levels of will-writing. Figure 6.6 represents the number of wills written by Leicestershire testators across the period, contrasted with the date wills were proved for context. Wills were not always proved during the same year that they were written; there was often a year or so in-between. There are some exceptions. Sir John Aston, for example, wrote his will in 1500 before serving in France, but it was not proved until his death in 1523.[16] This is an important observation if anachronistic conclusions are to be avoided. The spike in will-writing between 1535 and 1539, and particularly during 1540-1544, could be interpreted as product of religious uncertainty during the Henrician Reformation, and may also have reflected the gentry's attempts to give legal footing to any newly-acquired monastic lands. The immediate reversal of the trend in the number of wills written and wills proved by 1545-1549, however, simply reinforces the observation that the year wills were written and proved were not always the same.

There are alternative explanations. The enactment of the Statute of Wills in 1540, which permitted the gentry to choose to whom they would bequeath their lands, increased the urgency of will writing and amendment. Wills could also be written in haste if death was at hand. In 1538, at the height of the Henrician Reformation, Thomas Sherard, esquire, wrote his will on the day he died, which was assumedly not the result of contemporary events.[17] Similarly, Richard Cave, esquire and Robert Burrough, gentleman, both wrote their wills only months before their deaths, inferring illness.[18] These spikes also coincided with the natural deaths of a demographic generation; the middle years are better represented than those at the beginning and end of our period. Ian Blanchard, Robert Steven Gottfried and John Hatcher have drawn attention to the population increase – to

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[16] TNA, PROB 11/21/103.
[17] TNA, PROB 11/27/215.
[18] TNA, PROB 11/27/284, PROB 11/26/194.

what Mark Bailey described as a 'demographic recovery' [19] – of the 1470s.[20] The average age of death for our gentry was 55; we can assume, then, that a considerable number of them were more likely to die during the 1520s and 1530s.
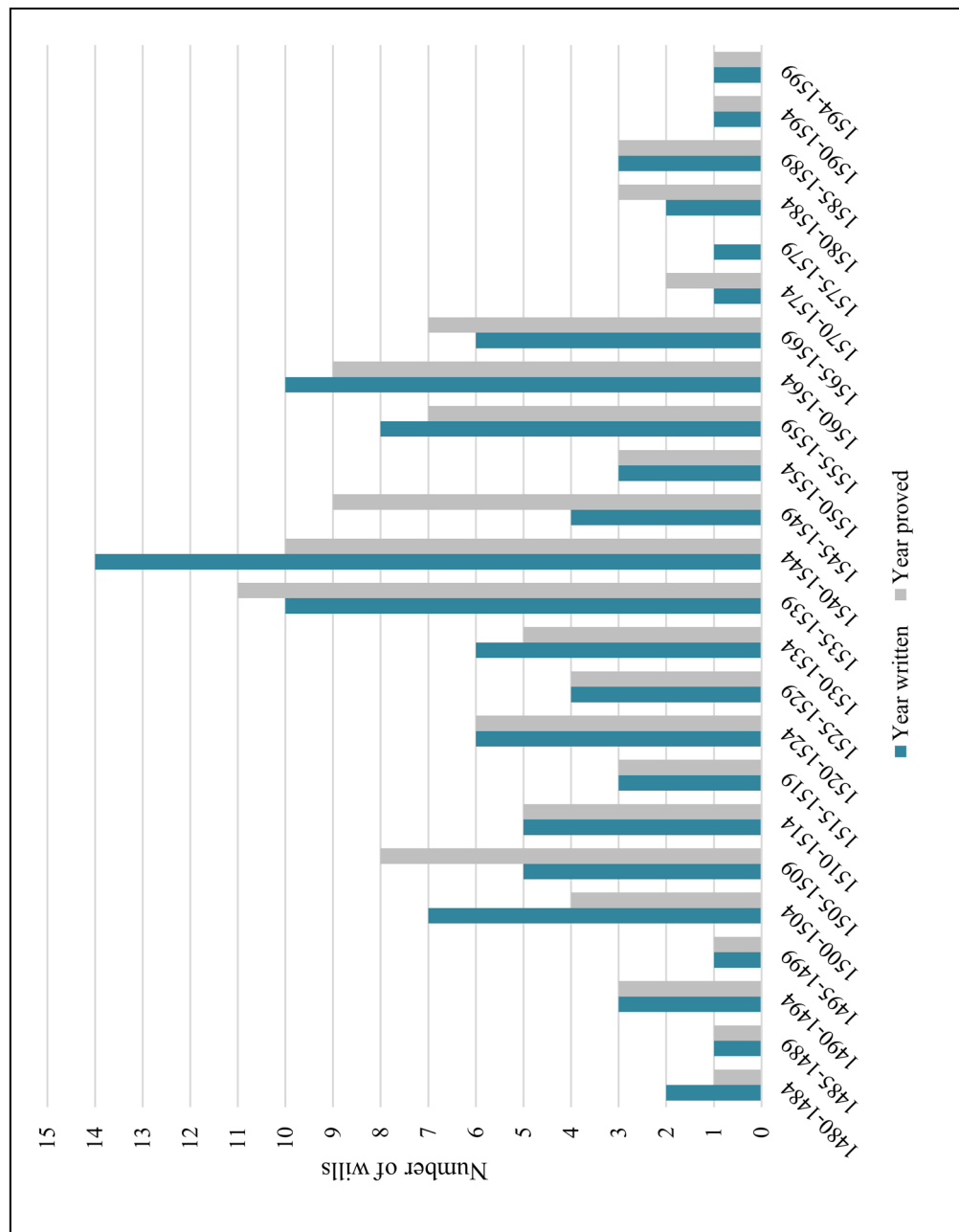
Figure 6.6 A comparative timeline of Leicestershire gentry wills, 1480-1599.

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[19] M. Bailey, 'Demographic decline in late medieval England: Some thoughts on recent research', *Economic History Review*, 49, no. 1 (1996), p. 6.

[20] I. Blanchard, 'Population change, enclosure, and the early Tudor economy', *Economic History Review*, 23, no. 3, 1970, p. 427; R.S. Gottfried, 'Population, plague and the sweating sickness: Demographic movements in late fifteenth-century England', *Journal of British Studies*, 17, no. 1 (1977), p. 13; J. Hatcher, 'Population in early Tudor England' in J. Hatcher, *Plague, Population and the English Economy, 1348-1530* (London, 1977), p. 63.

6.3 The geographies of gentry bequests

In 1543, William Ashby, esquire, made a bequest to 'certayn townes adioynyng' his PPA of Lowesby of 6s 8d to be

> dispoasid for my soule …to certeyn of the pourest p[er]sones ... by the discrecion of the curate and church wardeyns 3s 4d other 3s 4d residue to the priest clerk and for the bells and ringers and the priest or curate of the same to say dirige and mass at his owne church and to have to his parte of the said nobill fyve pence.[21]

Bequests such as this were common. It will be shown that the places named by testators generated a region of influence. The location of ecclesiastical beneficiaries, particularly parish churches, reflected the testator's sense of geographical identity. This is also evident in the decision to be buried within and without Leicestershire, discussed in further detail below. We will now turn to analyse the probate bequests made by the Leicestershire gentry, paying particular attention to their geographical implications. We have considered bequests made to friends, family members and acquaintances in Chapters 2, 3 and 5, which incorporated bequests of land, agricultural and material goods, and architectural evidence respectively. There was a tendency amongst gentry testators to specify certain churches and towns for their financial and material patronage *post mortem*; this section considers why particular locations were more attractive than others, and tests the assumption that it was always a broad-brush matter of local convenience or direct manorial influence.

The regional phenomenon coined here as the 'geography of bequests' has been recognised frequently, if briefly, by historians, but arguably less effort has been made to understand it. It was observed by Christine Carpenter, for example, who saw that in Warwickshire 'almost every testator ... made some sort of grant to the local church, and those with widespread lands ... to several', and alluded to the link between bequests and the primary manorial territory.[22] This was echoed by Malcolm Vale in his description of the 'obstinate provincialism ... usually within an area of territorial influence' displayed by the Yorkshire gentry.[23] Chris Dyer noted in Suffolk that 'testators often refer to places at some distance from their homes … John Staloun of Mildenhall in Suffolk made bequests to [seven]

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[21] TNA, PROB 11/29/304.
[22] Carpenter, *Locality and Polity*, p. 234.
[23] Vale, *Piety, Charity and Literacy*, p. 8.

churches … between and 10 miles from his'.[24] Briony McDonagh's analysis of the patterns of lay bequests made in the Yorkshire Wolds revealed that a quarter of testators 'made gifts to between one and nine churches or chapels other than their parish church, often in the local area', although this was not limited to the gentry.[25]

To posit explanations for this phenomenon, we must first consider the agency and patterns behind geographically-based bequests, the establishments bequests were made to, and the significance of those establishments in gentry lives. Gifts were predominantly given with religious incentive to show piety and devotion, but also reflected an increasing concern for social welfare.[26] In 1559 and 1565 respectively, Elizabeth Brokesby of Melton Mowbray and Frideswide Strelley of Ulverscroft, widows, bequeathed sums of money to the poor dwelling in specific places. Elizabeth Brokesby made equal bequests of 3s 4d to the towns of Scalford, Wycomb, Waltham on the Wolds, Thorpe Arnold and Burton Lazars.[27] There is a financial hierarchy evident in the bequests made by Frideswide Strelley, who ensured that the towns received more, and favoured the place of her husband's burial at Great Bowden. She bequeathed 40s to the poor in Great Bowden; 6s 8d in Little Bowden; 20s 8d in Market Harborough; 20s in Leicester, 10s to the alms house and 10s to the poor prisoners in the town gaol, and 6s 8d in Foxton, Gumley, Carlton Curlieu, Shangton, Cranoe, Welham, Weston by Welland and Stonton Wyville respectively.[28] Her IPM recorded her husband's properties in Great Bowden and Husbands Bosworth in addition to lands in Foxton and a substantial clustering in proximity to Charnwood Forest, but does not explicitly refer to any further township beneficiaries.[29] She had acquired the Charnwood lands with her possession of the dissolved priory of Ulverscroft nearby, but no bequests were made to any of the churches there.

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[24] Dyer, *An Age of Transition?*, p. 124.
[25] McDonagh, 'Manor houses, churches and settlements', p. 280.
[26] This concern for social welfare was not new, and was often influenced by government legislation. For a local example see J.S. Bothwell, 'The five giants: institutional hierarchy and social provision in later medieval Leicestershire' in W. Mark Ormrod (ed.), *Fourteenth Century England VII* (Woodbridge, 2012), pp. 131-152.
[27] ROLLR, W&I, 1559 A-J/45.
[28] TNA, PROB 11/48/317.
[29] TNA, C 142/144/96.

6.3.1 Impact of the Reformation

Soon into the reign of Edward VI there were government initiatives in place to encourage social welfare and to discourage making 'blind devotions' to the Church. Marjorie Keniston McIntosh has drawn attention to the impact of the religious reform implemented under Edward VI in 1547 on parochial welfare. Amongst its injunctions was a direction to the parish clergy to encourage generous contributions to the poor in their parishioners' wills.[30] Eamon Duffy observed that gifting in wills to the parish and diocesan church 'totally collapsed' during the reign of Edward VI. He suggested that its Marian resurgence was largely regional. He observed 'literally scores' of bequests to Northamptonshire churches from 1554 and a resurgence in Kent from 1555.[31]

The Leicestershire wills offer an insight into a potential resurgence of gift-giving in the county. Figure 6.7 contrasts the number of Leicestershire gentry wills written and proved with the number of ecclesiastical bequests comprising those made to Lincoln Cathedral, parish churches and religious houses. It is clear that bequests made to parish churches did not suffer as a direct result of the Henrician reformation, but there was a marked decline and consequent resurgence after the reign of Edward VI. It shows that the number of testators who made bequests to Lincoln Cathedral dropped proportionately from 50% to nil between 1545-1549 and 1550-1554, and had only increased to 11% by 1555-1559. This had increased to a third by 1560-1564, despite the emergence of the Protestant state, and remained relatively static for 1565-1569, after which no bequests were made at all. Comparatively, the number of gentry testators who made bequests to parish churches *increased* by eight per cent between 1545-1549 and 1550-1554, and again by 11% in 1555-1559 to account for 44% of wills made. By 1560-1564 it had reduced to 30%, and to 17% by 1565-1569. The Leicestershire evidence supports Duffy's observed collapse in gifting to the diocese church, from which the numbers did not recover, but challenges it in the context of bequests made to parish churches. Whilst the number of bequests made to parish churches did not resume its 1535-1539 peak of 70%, they achieved similar numbers to their pre-Dissolution proportions. It is reminiscent of the resurgent numbers recorded amongst Duffy's Northamptonshire testators.

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[30] M. Keniston McIntosh, *Poor Relief in England, 1350-1600* (Cambridge, 2011), p. 128.

[31] E. Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, 1400-1580* (London, 2005), p. 551.
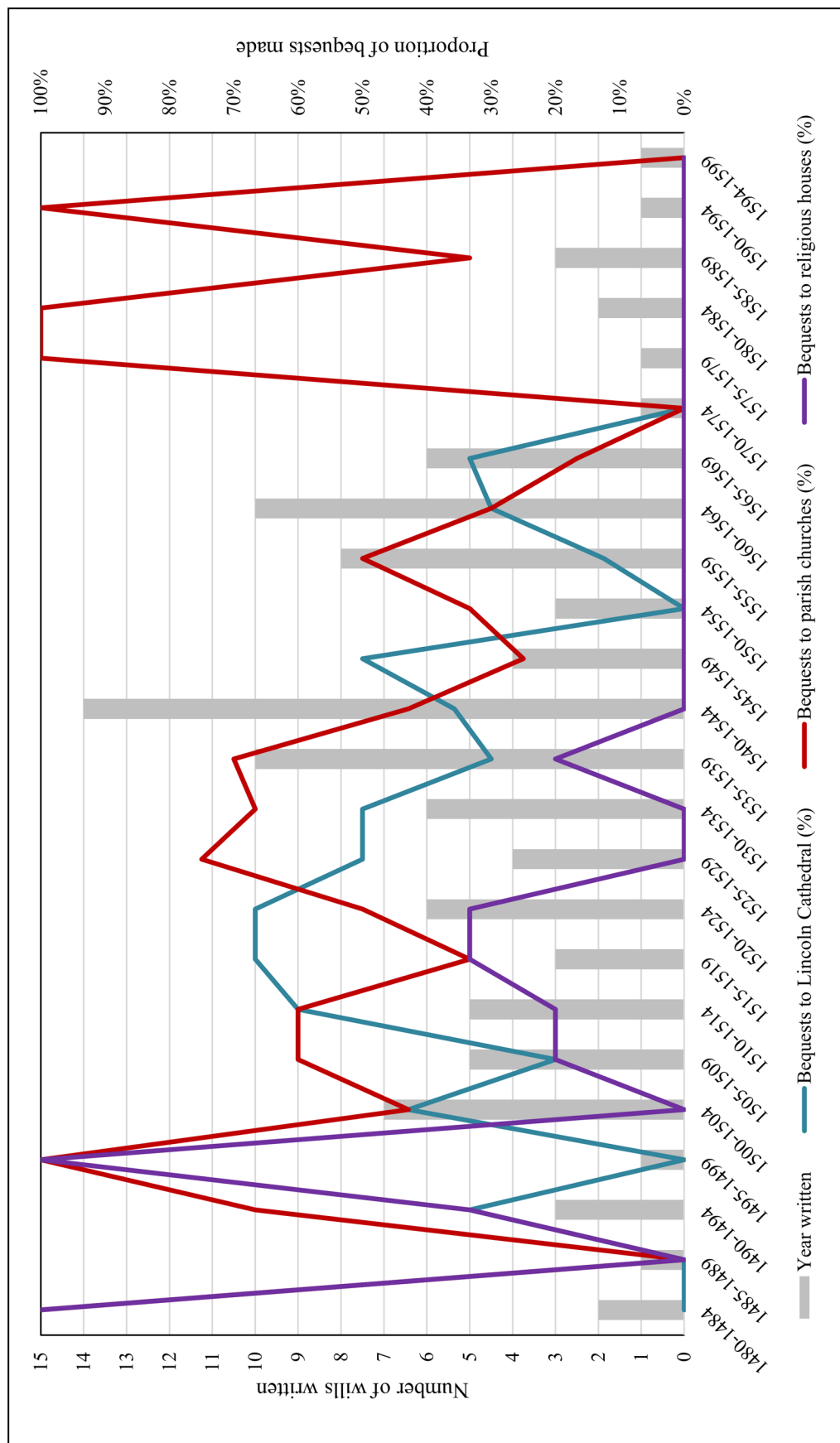
Figure 6.7 A timeline of wills and bequests to religious establishments, 1480-1599.

Unsurprisingly, a glaring result of the Dissolution of the Monasteries was the immediate cessation of bequests made to the religious houses by the Leicestershire gentry. The only post-Dissolution bequest made to a religious house was in 1558 by Sir Thomas Cave of Stanford on Avon. He bequeathed £200 to the rebuilding of Selby Abbey, Yorkshire, 'yf yt be redyfyed w[i]t[h]in twenty yeres nexte after my deceasse', a hint that testators were also grappling with England's uncertain religious future.[32] There is also evidence of gentry preservation of the religious houses' presence in their lives; in 1544, George Ashby bequeathed a suit of vestments that he had purchased at Leicester Abbey before its dissolution in 1538.[33] The Dissolution had, in addition to creating opportunities for political and architectural self-improvement evidenced in Chapter 5, ended a long trend of ancestral gentry patronage towards religious houses.[34] Almost half of our probate dataset – 44 out of 107 wills – were written before 1536. They illustrate the enduring relationship between the gentry and religious houses, which was predominantly devotional. Sir Thomas Cave's father, Richard Cave, esquire, had bequeathed five marks to the abbot, 20s to the master prior, 10s to every priest and 3s 4d to every novice at Selby Abbey in 1536, three years before its surrender.[35] The bequests were made in return for mass and dirige for his soul, his parents' souls, his wives' souls, and all Christian souls, as was the custom.

Bequests to religious houses were more widely spread geographically than parish churches. There were substantially less of them; in Leicestershire there was a ratio of 12 parish churches to each religious house. The geography of bequests made to religious houses stretched across the country. In 1525, William Staunton, gentleman, requested a total of 20 trentals, each comprising thirty requiem masses, 'at fyve places of the freres observ[a]nts'.[36] The five chosen houses were spread across Kent, Surrey,

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[32] TNA, PROB 11/41/34/1. It was not until 1618 that Selby Abbey was made the parish church of Selby by James I's letters patent, apparently too late to profit from Cave's bequest. According to Dugdale, the manor of Stanford had been held by Selby Abbey since the eleventh century. See W. Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum*, J. Bohn (ed.), 3 (London, 1848), p. 498. Sir Thomas Cave purchased the manor of Stanford from the Court of Augmentations in 1540 for £1194 31s 4d. The family's Yorkshire connection dated from at least the late thirteenth century when one Alexander de Cave was granted free warren in the manor of South Cave. See Nichols, *History and Antiquities*, 4, pt. 1, pp. 350-351.

[33] TNA, PROB 11/30/253.

[34] Chapter 5 has shown that it also played a key role in the construction of their architectural legacy.

[35] TNA, PROB 11/27/273.

[36] TNA, PROB 11/23/314. The Observant Friars were a reformed branch of the Franciscan order, known as the Friars Minor. They were supportive of Catherine of Aragon's suit in her marriage with Henry VIII, and he subsequently suppressed the branch in 1534.

Nottinghamshire, Northumberland and Yorkshire.[37] He expressed his devotion in a further request that the chapter houses made himself and his wife their brother and sister in return for 40s. There is some evidence that the gentry were influenced by geographical proximity in their bequests to religious houses, however. Richard Cave, esquire, discussed above, also bequeathed money to Pipwell Abbey in Northamptonshire, his ancestral county, in return for mass and dirige for his family's souls.[38] Similarly, Edmund Appleby of Appleby Magna on the Leicestershire-Derbyshire border made a gift to Gresley Priory, approximately six miles to the north/north-west of Appleby Magna, and closer than the cluster of religious houses to the north-east in north-west Leicestershire.[39]

6.3.2 Bequests to parish churches

The ancestral connections evident in the gentry's relationship with religious houses can also be identified in their relationship with the parish church. William Ashby of Lowesby, esquire, made bequests to repairs at his ancestral church at Lowesby 'wherin myn auncestres diverse ben buried and I my self purpose and desire the goode upholding of the same tenne pounds'.[40] The ancestral connection occasionally attracted gentry patronage beyond the county borders. Christopher Villers, esquire, bequeathed £15 to the church of Rand in Lincolnshire, 'where the bodye of my father liethe buryed', almost fifty miles from the family's PPA at Brooksby.[41] The IPM taken at his father's death in 1507 recorded lands held in Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire and Warwickshire, the primary lands being in Leicestershire and Lincolnshire, valued at £95 and £25 *per annum* respectively.[42]

The strength of the ancestral connection is reinforced by differences in the type and wealth of bequests made. They were a combination of material and financial gifts; a monetary sum could be bestowed for a specific reason, such as the gift of 40s made in 1507 by Sir Thomas Pulteney to Coombe Abbey, Northamptonshire, towards 'the glasyng

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[37] They were specifically in Greenwich, Kent; Richmond, Surrey; Newark, Nottinghamshire; Newcastle upon Tyne, Northumberland, and Mount Grace, Yorkshire.
[38] TNA, PROB 11/27/273.
[39] TNA, PROB 11/15/25.
[40] TNA, PROB 11/29/304.
[41] TNA, PROB 11/27/102.
[42] Coros, 'Villers, Sir John' in Bindoff, *History of Parliament: 1509-1558*, pp. 527-528.

of a wyndowe in the cloyster'.[43] Church improvements or 'reparations' were the most common reasons given for financial bequests. They could refer to any type of building work, and were not limited to repairs.[44] Sir Thomas Pulteney also bequeathed his 'best blacke velvett gowne w[i]t[h] the furre to make a sute of vestments' to his ancestral parish church at Misterton.[45] In 1539, his son, Sir Thomas Pulteney, bequeathed to the same church

> a whole suett of vestyments of violett velvett that is to say a cope and a vestyment and one other for the deacon and an other for the sub deaacon wherupon I will my armes shalbe sett upon the same vestyments … to ev[er]y of the churches of Bytteswell, Cosbyche kymbyllcott and North kylworth a vestyment of whyte damaske whereupon I will also my armes shalbe sett upon the same.[46]

The bequests of vestments were a direct interjection by the gentry into the relationship between the lay and the spiritual, ensuring that their heraldic arms – essentially, their identity – would become a part of the inextricable connection between piety and commemoration. It inferred a lay supremacy over the priesthood. There is a clear hierarchy of bequests in the fabrics referred to by Sir Thomas Pulteney. Velvet was more precious than damask. Velvet, and particularly purple velvet, was the legal preserve of knights with an annual income of over £100, whilst damask was permitted to be worn by those with an annual income of over £10.[47] In bequeathing the more valuable fabric – both in terms of money and status – to his ancestral church, he was showing it clear favour over the other listed churches and extending his mark of ownership over it.

As demonstrated by the Pulteneys at Misterton, the hierarchy of bequests was usually structured in favour of the ancestral church. Sir John Villers bequeathed 40s to his ancestral parish church of Brooksby, but limited his bequests to other local churches to 3s 4d for reparations, for example.[48] Comparatively, Richard Cave of South Kilworth, gentleman, who appears to have belonged to a cadet branch of the Caves of Stanford on Avon, bequeathed 10s to the reparations of the ornaments at South Kilworth, and made a

43 TNA, PROB 11/15/513.
44 P. Northeast, 'Suffolk churches in the later middle ages: the evidence of wills' in C. Harper-Bill, C. Rawcliffe and R.G. Wilson (eds.), *East Anglia's History: Studies in Honour of Norman Scarfe* (Woodbridge, 2002), p. 94.
45 TNA, PROB 11/15/513.
46 TNA, PROB 11/28/190.
47 J. Raithby (ed.), 'An Acte for Reformacyon of Excesse in Apparayle', 24 Hen VIII, *Statutes of the Realm, 1509-1545*, 3 (London, 1871), pp. 430-431.
48 TNA, PROB 11/30/317.

comparative gift of only 10d to the ornaments at Stanford on Avon, his ancestors' and relatives' burial place. His example reflects the impact of manorial dilution as families branched out, and the consequence of this movement on geographical perspectives across family generations. Discrepancies in families' burial locations were not always indicative of a cadet branch, or an abandonment of the ancestral tradition, however. Robert Vincent of Bradgate, gentleman, bequeathed money to the parish church of Newtown Linford because Bradgate did not have its own.[49] This is also evident in the will of John Woodford of Barsby, gentleman, who bequeathed torches to the local parish church of Ashby Folville; Francis Cave and Brian Cave of Baggrave and Ingarsby, esquires, both gifted money towards reparations at the church of Hungarton; and William Faunte of Foston, esquire, who also bequeathed money for reparations at the parish church of Countesthorpe.[50]

Geographical distance was often used to stipulate bequest locations, creating a radius centred on the PPA. Dame Joan Aston of Wanlip made a bequest of 6s 8d to 'every church w[i]t[h]in the space of iii myles' of Wanlip, representing 11 churches nearby.[51] Similarly, Robert Burrough, gentleman, of Burrough on the Hill, stipulated that 6s 8d should be given to 'every churche that bounds and markyth next unto the metes and bounds of this towne of Borowe'.[52] It was echoed in the wills of William Faunte of Foston and Robert Strelley of Great Bowdon, esquires, who requested that their respective gifts of £4 and 6s 8d be given to 'the fowre next townes adioyngynge to me' and 'every other towne and parisshe within three myles of the saide towne of Greate Bowdon'.[53] These wills were written between 1526 and 1559; we might consider, therefore, that the increasing geographical awareness amongst the gentry observed by Jan Broadway by the Elizabethan period had its precursor during the early sixteenth century.[54]

Clusters of bequests made by testators living in proximity to the county borders illustrate the borders' permeability. Thomas Saunders, gentleman, of Sibbertoft, bequeathed 3s 4d towards the reparations of 11 churches, including Sibbertoft, which were distributed

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[49] ROLLR, 44'28/83.
[50] ROLLR, W&I, 1543/26; TNA, PROB 11/66/161, PROB 11/80/375, PROB 11/42B/627.
[51] TNA, PROB 11/22/326.
[52] TNA, PROB 11/26/194.
[53] TNA, PROB 11/42B/627, PROB 11/48/317.
[54] Broadway, *Gentry Culture and the Development of Local History*, p. 207.

almost evenly between the two counties.[55] His marriage to Margaret Cave, daughter of Richard Cave, esquire, of Stanford on Avon, is evident in the distribution of his bequests, demonstrated in Figure 6.8. Those made to his wife's ancestral church of Stanford on Avon, and the churches associated with the cadet branch at North and South Kilworth, suggest that his marriage had expanded the boundaries of his geographical outlook.
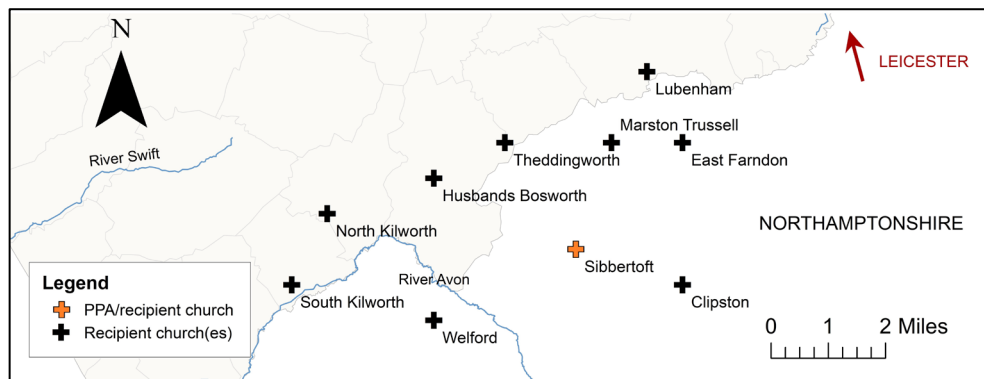
Figure 6.8 The locations of church bequests made by Thomas Saunders, esquire.[56]

Using Figure 6.8 as evidence, it should not be assumed that church bequests were always directed to those in closest proximity to the ancestral parish church. The pattern certainly appears to be evident in the bequests made by Robert Jakes, gentleman (1506), Sir Maurice Berkeley (1522) and Thomas Bradgate, gentleman (1539), illustrated in Figure 6.9, Figure 6.10 and Figure 6.11.[57]
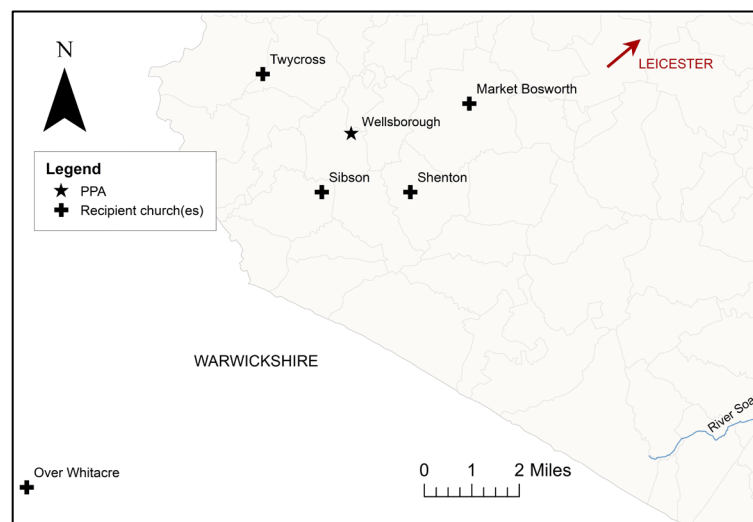
Figure 6.9 The locations of church bequests by Robert Jakes, gentleman.[58]

[55]   TNA, PROB 11/22/481.
[56]   Ibid.
[57]   TNA, PROB 11/15/292; ROLLR, W&I, 1522/5, 1539/22.
[58]   TNA, PROB 11/15/292.
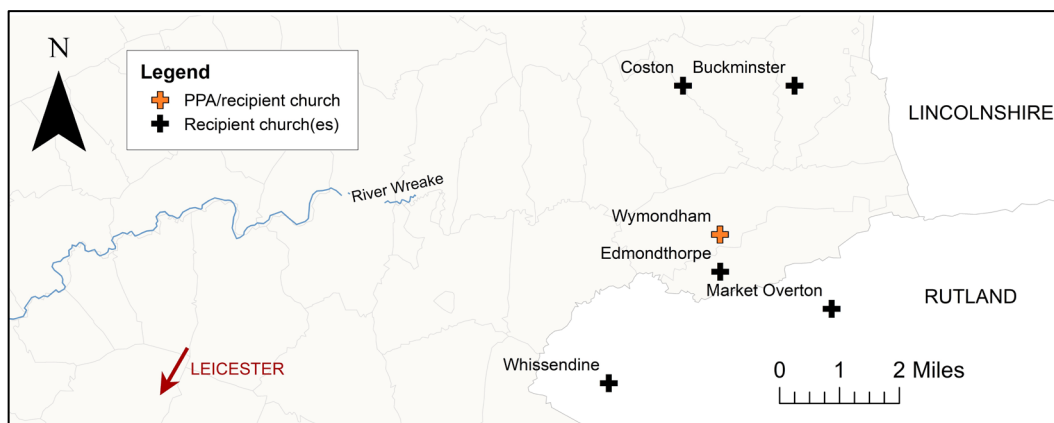
Figure 6.10 The locations of church bequests by Sir Maurice Berkeley.[59]
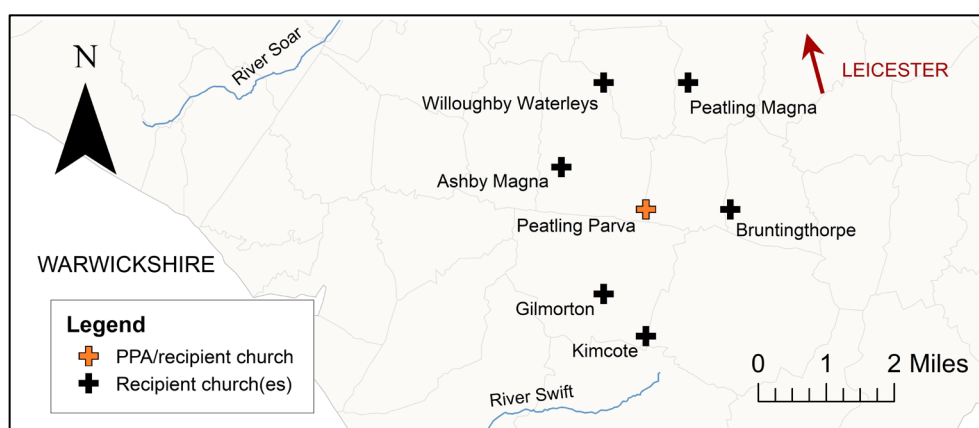
Figure 6.11 The locations of church bequests by Thomas Bradgate, gentleman.[60]

A closer look, however, shows that the closest parish churches did not always receive testators' gifts or patronage. Tenurial influence is another possible explanation, but by contrasting church bequest locations with lands listed in IPMs, a direct link cannot always be presumed. Figure 6.12 shows that the majority of churches which received bequests from Thomas Bradgate did not correspond directly with any manors or the lands held at his death; only the parish churches of Bruntingthorpe and Gilmorton received bequests where he held one messuage, a cottage, a dovecote and 13 acres of land, and eight cottages, one windmill and one close respectively.[61] He did not hold any manors, only small parcels, which rules out manorial influence. It is interesting to note, however, that the majority of churches which received bequests did fall within Bradgate's territory.

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[59] ROLLR, W&I, 1522/5.
[60] ROLLR, W&I, 1539/22.
[61] TNA, E 150/1143/6.
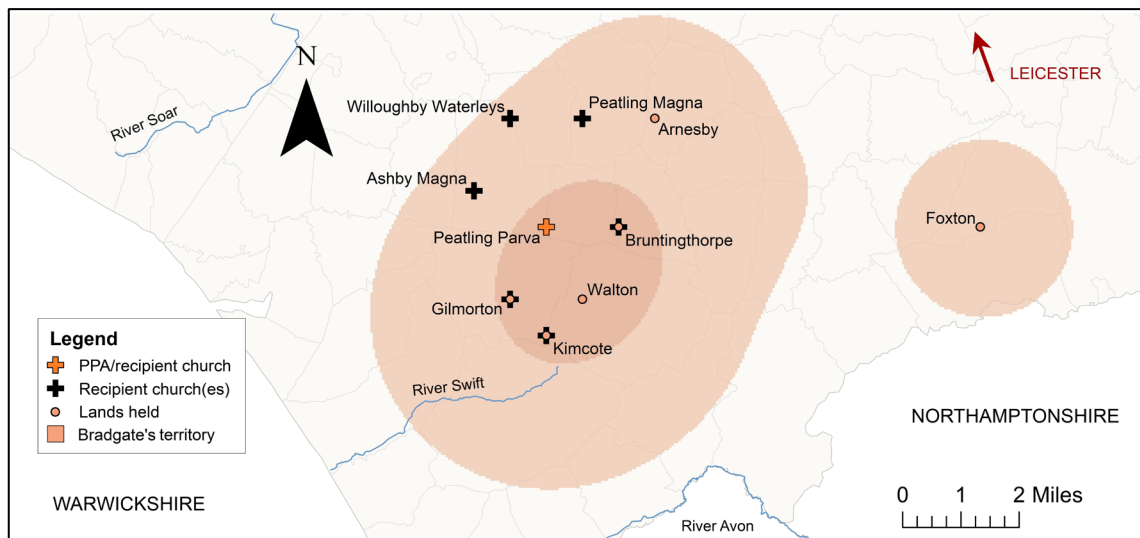
Figure 6.12 The church bequests and territory of Thomas Bradgate, gentleman.[62]

To establish that this was not a manorial or status-specific phenomenon, we can draw on the will and IPM of Sir Maurice Berkeley, illustrated in Figure 6.13. He held lands in only two places where he also made bequests: in Wymondham, where he held the manor, and Edmondthorpe, where he held 60 acres of land and 40 acres of pasture.[63]
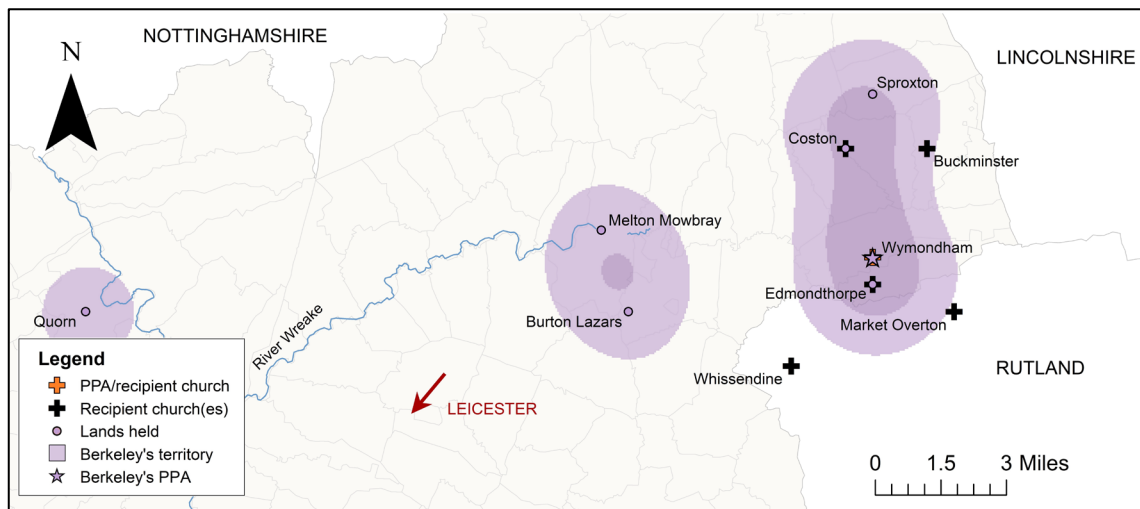
Figure 6.13 The church bequests and territory of Sir Maurice Berkeley.[64]

Visibility is another possible explanation, but a viewshed analysis of the churches within three miles of Sir Maurice Berkeley's ancestral church of Wymondham show that two

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[62] TNA, E 150/1143/6; ROLLR, W&I, 1539/22.

[63] TNA, E 150/1128/9. The lands at Coston were 200 acres of arable and 24 acres of meadow held by his son, William Berkeley, esquire, at his death in 1532. See TNA, E 150/1136/11.

[64] TNA, E 150/1128/9, PROB 11/15/292.

churches which received bequests, Whissendine, Rutland, and Coston, were completely obscured by the local topography (Figure 6.14).[65]
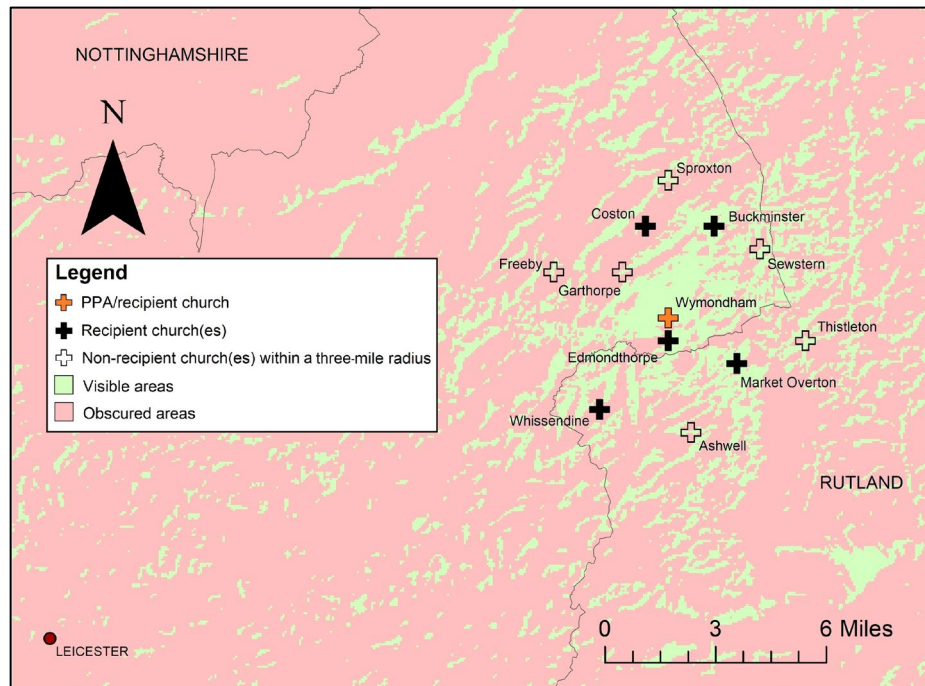
Figure 6.14 Viewshed analysis of churches within three miles of Wymondham.[66]

The wills of Rowland Digby (1521), esquire, and William Brabazon (1525), gentleman, illustrated in Figure 6.15 and Figure 6.16, support a revised approach to the question of visibility. They show that bequests could be weighted in a particular geographical direction.[67] In both cases they identified as Leicestershire testators, from Melton Mowbray and Eastwell respectively, and their church bequests were distributed towards the Leicestershire-Nottinghamshire border. Contextual evidence indicates that both men had links with Nottinghamshire. A Chancery case brought against Rowland Digby in 1493-1500 listed him as the 'underconstable' of Nottingham Castle.[68] William Brabazon's brother, Alexander Brabazon, lived in Ollerton, Nottinghamshire. Both were merchants of the Staple of Calais. It could be suggested, therefore, that certain church

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[65] The radius incorporates the calculation by thirteenth-century lawyers considered 6.66 miles to be an appropriate distance for one day's travel to market. These churches are thus estimated to have been realistically reachable without an overnight stay. See C. Dyer, 'Market towns and the medieval countryside in late medieval England', *Canadian Journal of History*, 31, no. 1, p. 25.

[66] TNA, PROB 11/15/292.

[67] ROLLR, W&I, 1520/3, 1521/4.

[68] TNA, C 1/192/24.

bequests were made to those places which were encountered most frequently within the gentry's experienced landscape.
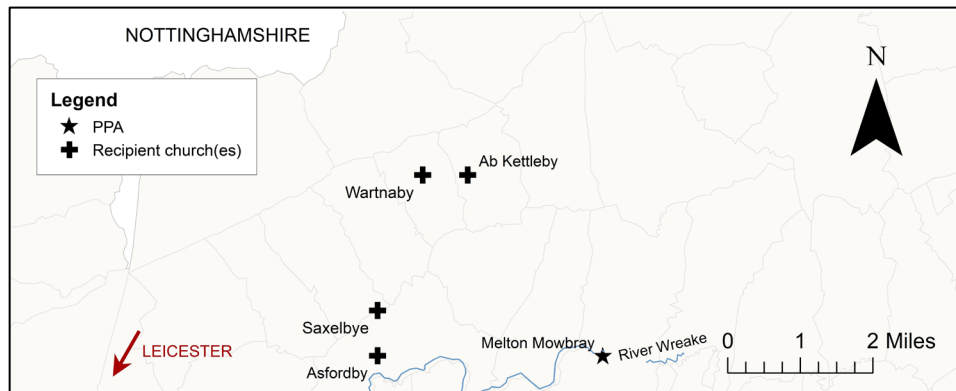
Figure 6.15 The locations of church bequests by Rowland Digby, esquire.[69]
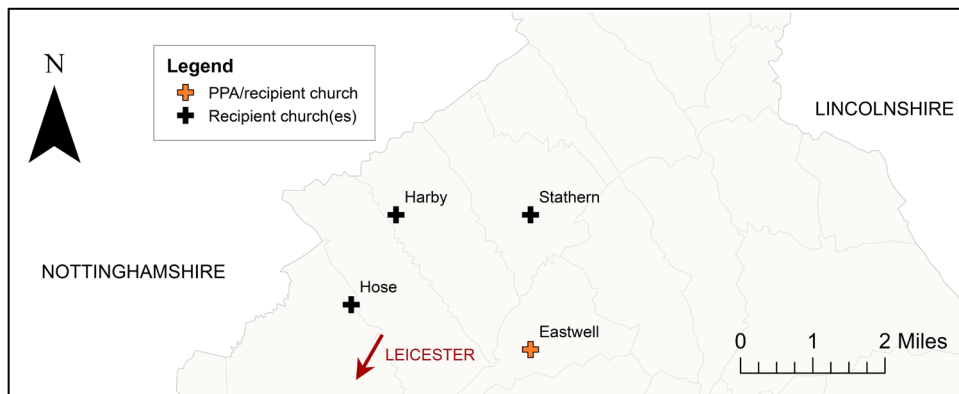
Figure 6.16 The locations of church bequests by William Brabazon, gentleman.[70]

6.4 Requested burial locations

For gentry testators, burial location was arguably as important, if not more so, than their distribution of lands and goods. Usually occupying the space in wills between the religious preamble and the list of material possessions for bequest, directions for burial were explicit and, in many cases, were detailed almost exhaustively. Remarkably little attention has been paid to the burial preamble. It has perhaps been overshadowed by the ongoing debates surrounding the interpretation of the religious elements of testamentary

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[69] ROLLR, W&I, 1520/3.
[70] ROLLR, W&I, 1521/4.

preambles.[71] Burial direction was designed to reflect the testator's identity and legacy, who they thought themselves to be, and who they wanted everyone else to think they had been. Its importance is evident in the wills of Richard Perwich of Lubenham and Thomas Sherard of Stapleford, esquires, who specified their burial location in great detail despite leaving very short wills, and left any goods and chattels unbequeathed to their sons with very limited specifics.[72] Thomas Sherard wrote his on the day he died:

> In dei nomine amen the sixt day of Marche in the xxix[th] yere of the reigne of our soueraigne lorde king henry the eight I Thomas Sherarde of Stapleforde in the countie of Leicestre esquier / doo make and ordeyn my testament and last wille under this maner of fourme that folowith first my body to be buried in Stapleford church in myn owne chapell upon the southside of the churche as concernyng my buriall and all observ[a]nc[e]s and every thing therto perteynyng I will that hit be disposid at the discrecion of Richard Sherard my sonne whom I make myn executour / and geve all my goods he to dispoase them at his discrecion These bering witnesse the vicar of Stapleforde Robert Syngleton clerk John Sherard Anne Dod and Robert Thorpe sealed and delivered to Robert Syngleton clerk for and to the use of Rich[ar]d my sonne In the presence of these parsones abovewritten the day and yere abovesaid.[73]

This section considers the geographical significance of our testators' requested location for burial. Leicestershire and non-Leicestershire locations were chosen by the county's gentry and expressed attachment to place based on the position held within the gentry hierarchy. Ancestral attachment, not simply tenurial possession, also dictated burial choice. The majority of gentry testators specified the parish church closest to their PPA, which as we have seen, often comprised their primary landholdings. The connection was such that it created a radius for prospective burial sites for certain gentry, such as John Woodford, esquire, who directed for his 'body to be buried in the church of ashbifolvill[e] ... yf I hap to discease within Leicestr ther or within x milis therof'.[74] This was echoed in 1525 by William Staunton, gentleman, who requested for his body to be buried in the parish church of Prestwold 'or w[i]t[h]in xiiii myles ... of it'.[75] The mileage was specific but difficult to interpret; it is possible that it was calculated based on a day's travel.

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[71] J.D. Alsop, 'Religious preambles in early modern English wills as formulae', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 40, no. 1 (1989), pp. 19-27; Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, pp. 504-523; M. Spufford, 'Religious preambles and the scribes of villagers' wills in Cambridgeshire, 1570-1700', reproduced in Arkell, Evans and Goose, *When Death Do Us Part*, pp. 144-157; M.L. Zell, 'The use of religious preambles as a measure of religious belief in the sixteenth century', *Historical Research*, 50 (1977), pp. 246-249.

[72] TNA, PROB 11/14/544, PROB 11/27/215.

[73] TNA, PROB 11/27/215.

[74] TNA, PROB 11/14/236.

[75] TNA, PROB 11/23/314.

Nevertheless, it was a permanent statement in death in its reinforcement of a territory which was so carefully cultivated in life. Generations of family burials are illustrated in testators' desires to be buried in the same place as their relatives. The Farnhams of Quorn, Caves of Stanford on Avon, Pulteneys of Misterton, Woodfords of Ashby Folville and Fieldings of Lutterworth are just a handful of examples. There were some exceptions, however; as we shall see, interruptions in ancestral burial locations were brought about by social ambition and religious upheaval.

Figure 6.17 illustrates the distribution of requested burial locations across the period. Wills requesting a specific burial location are contrasted with the total number of wills written. Religious houses and parish churches were the most common places for gentry burial and commemoration.[76] After the Reformation, certain religious houses were reassigned as gentry mausoleums, but the parish church was still favoured for Leicestershire gentry burials.[77] Of the 87 gentry testators who expressed a preferred burial location, representing 83% of the total dataset, two thirds chose a parish church.[78] It supports Duffy's observation that the parish church was the favoured burial location of the majority of late medieval 'middling and minor' gentry.[79] Certainly, over half of the Leicestershire knights chose a religious house or collegiate church for their burial, compared to only one esquire, and no gentlemen. It is interesting to note that the testators who did not specify a burial location were most prevalent between 1535 and 1544, with another spike occurring in 1555-1559. Directions for burial were usually more vague than entirely absent, arguably to safely navigate changeable religious policy. They comprised instructions such as 'my body to be buryed after the discrec[i]on of myn executours' (1535), 'my body to be buryed where yt please god in holy sepulchre' (1540) or 'my bodye to be buryed as a christen man ought to be' (1557).[80] They must be considered, however, in the context of the substantial numbers of testators who did request a burial location during those Reformation years.

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[76] As an example, evidence for gentry convent burials in Leicestershire after 1480 has not been found.
[77] See below, 6.3.1.
[78] 55 out of 87 testators opted for a specific parish church.
[79] Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, p. 132.
[80] TNA, PROB 11/27/425.
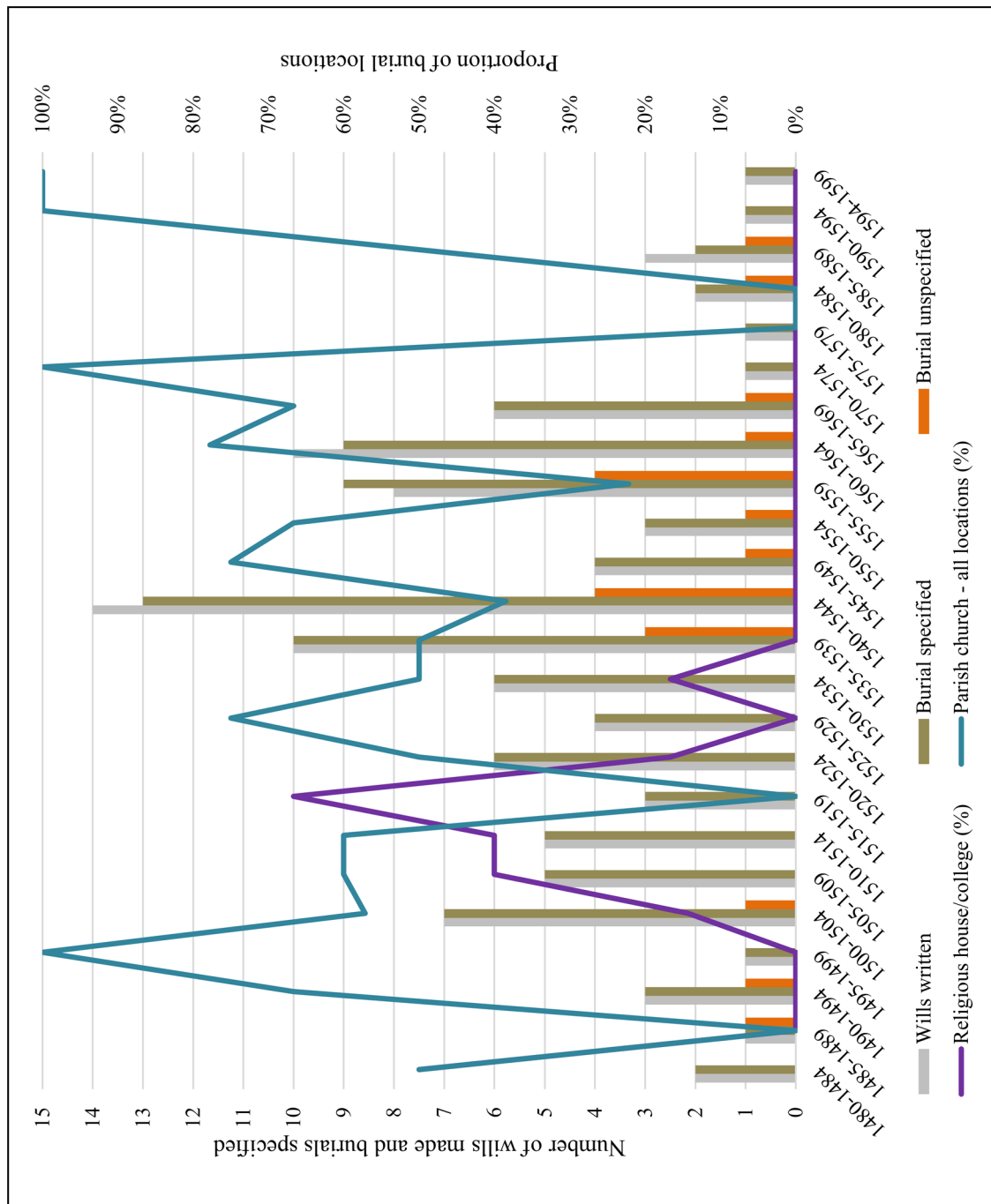
Figure 6.17 A comparative timeline of requested burial locations, 1480-1599.

6.4.1   Kin and family proximity burials

Affiliation with legacy manifested in myriad ways. The most obvious was a proximity burial, either in a church already associated with a family's identity or sited adjacent to an ancestor's tomb. Ancestral attachment could encourage gentry patronage towards a particular parish church, illustrated above in William Ashby's bequest to the church of Lowesby 'wherein myn auncestres divers ben buried and I my self purpose and desire the

goode upholding of the same'.[81] Christopher Daniell summarised the spatial significance of church burials, where the 'most holy area was the high altar at the east end; the holiness lessening towards the west end and into the churchyard'.[82] William Ashby also requested to be buried 'afore the rood loft', which offers a particularly interesting case study.[83] He may have shared Thomas More's near-contemporary belief that being able to envisage death 'would bring us to consider our position before God, and thereby to a proper remembrance of the four last things: "deth, dome, pain, and ioy"'.[84] The 'Day of Doom' was 'depicted above every Rood-loft … the general judgement of domesday would be anticipated for the individual at death'.[85] It is possible that he wished to be buried in proximity to the rood loft as a permanent reminder of the certainty of death and of judgement to those who saw it. It reinforces the connection between religious and gentry commemoration.

According to Duffy, death was 'the single most influential factor in shaping ... the physical layout and appearance of the buildings in which men and women worshipped'.[86] This often involved the construction and positioning of monuments and commemorative fabric. The legacy left behind by Ralph Woodford, who mourned the unpreparedness of his fellow men for death who did 'truste in long liffe and soo abide in impotence' contributed to the long-established legacy of his family at Ashby Folville, who had held the manor since the late fourteenth century.[87] Saul's suggestion that parochial burial was 'a way of bringing legitimacy to a new lordship' may have some resonance here.[88] The manorial affix of Ashby Folville – Folville – alludes to the family who had owned the property before the Woodfords. Ralph Woodford's request to 'have resting place within the chauncell of the parishe church of Ashby Folville ... to making of the whiche chauncell I have paid v marcs'[89] may have been an effort to consolidate the authority, identity and legacy of the incoming family. Ralph had set a precedent: his son, John Woodford, esquire, also wished to be buried in the chancel at Ashby Folville whilst Ralph's nephew

[81] TNA, PROB 11/29/304.
[82] Daniell, *Death and Burial*, p. 86.
[83] TNA, PROB 11/29/304.
[84] Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, p. 308.
[85] Ibid.*,* p. 309.
[86] Ibid., p. 301.
[87] TNA, PROB 11/11/394.
[88] Saul, *Lordship and Faith*, p. 169.
[89] TNA, PROB 11/11/394.

– another John Woodford, gentleman – instructed for his 'body to be bered w[i]t[h]in the p[ar]ysshe churche of owre lady in Assheby Folwell aforsed nye to the grave [and] tombe of my cosyn John Woodford'.[90]

A distinctive pattern which emerges amongst gentry women leads to an interesting conclusion concerning the relationship between geography and female gentry identity. Aside from the one Leicestershire widow who requested burial outside of the county, the remaining 12 women preferred to remain in Leicestershire *post mortem*. Amongst their traceable home counties were the adjacent counties of Nottinghamshire, Warwickshire and Northamptonshire, whilst others were from the more distant counties of Berkshire and Yorkshire. The social and political standing of the local gentry clearly permitted and fostered marital alliances with families across the country. That these women chose a Leicestershire burial suggests that they had adopted a Leicestershire identity, supporting Susan James's theory that women maintained a 'succession of overlapping identities ... any women who married overlay her birth identity with her marital one'.[91] Of the 15 testators and testatrices who expressed a desire to be buried near to kin or family, 25% were women, and all requested, specifically, burials near their husbands. By the time of her death, Frideswide Strelley had moved across the county from Great Bowden in the south, where she had lived with her husband, to Ulverscroft in the north, but she still requested to be buried 'in the same place where the harte of my late husbande ... is buried at Great Bowden'.[92] Rose Sherard described herself as being of Whissendine, Rutland, but wished to be buried in Stapleford near her husband.[93] Katherine Hastings, the widow of the Lord William Hastings, her second husband, did not ask for her body to be buried in the chapel of St George at Windsor alongside him. Instead, she opted for their family manor at Ashby de la Zouch.[94] That she did not show preference for her first husband's manor of Aldingham, Cumbria, again supports James's theory. William and Katherine's son, Edward, did request to be buried at Windsor alongside his father. It suggests that the male gentry population were better placed socially to maintain and continue their ties with their ancestral legacy.

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[90] TNA, PROB 11/14/236 and ROLLR, W&I, 1543/26.
[91] James, *Women's Voices in Tudor Wills*, p. 60.
[92] TNA, PROB 11/48/317.
[93] TNA, PROB 11/63/271.
[94] TNA, PROB 11/14/93.

Geographical disruptions to that continuation deliberately occurred, evident in Sir William Turville's request to be buried at Aston Flamville, not at the ancestral church of Thurlaston. The departure from family tradition was a conscious decision. Until his death in 1549, family members were buried and commemorated in the family chapel at Thurlaston. The earliest surviving monument dates to the mid-fourteenth century. The importance of Turville family legacy was expressed in the will of Sir William Turville's father, John Turville, esquire, who bequeathed a silver basin and ewer to him, charging him 'as he will answere afore god at the daye of dome that he shall bequeith them after his decesse to his son and heire apparent … to go from heire to heire while the woorlde endureth'.[95] They were keen to preserve and display their ancient descent, illustrated by their commission of a family pedigree in the seventeenth century.[96] As we have seen, it was common for individuals to make a specific request to be buried with or close to deceased family members. Sir William Turville's disruption of ancestral tradition was designed to cultivate his own. The movement to Aston Flamville was a statement of reconnection with the ancient family of Flamville. The manor had been acquired by the marriage of Richard Turville and Katherine Flamville, who had inherited the manor from her father, Sir William Flamville, in *c.*1396.[97] The Flamvilles had inherited the manor from the powerful Hastings family, with whom Turville may have wanted to reinforce his connection. This was certainly the case for one of Turville's fifteenth-century relatives, Sir William Flamville, whose heraldic device resembled the Hastings'.[98] The emblazoned arms on William Turville's tomb supports the argument for his renewed affiliation with the Flamvilles; the arms of the Turvilles and the Flamvilles impale the Warburtons', his second wife's family, illustrated in Figure 6.18.[99] It expressed his ancestral right to be buried at Aston Flamville, and boasted the families' connections. Heraldry was a permanent expression of the bonds of familial affinity.[100]

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[95] TNA, PROB 11/15/287. Unfortunately, the basin and ewer does not reappear in Sir William Turville's will. It is not absolute proof that he did not bequeath it to his son as his father had requested, however.

[96] 'The lineal descent of the family of the Turviles continued to John Turvile of Newhall Park esq. 1648', ROLLR, DG39/2022.

[97] L.S. Woodger, 'Flamville, Sir William' in Roskell, Clark and Rawcliffe, *History of Parliament: 1386-1421*, pp. 87-88.

[98] Nichols, *History and Antiquities*, 4, pt. 2, p. 450.

[99] The arms have not survived to the modern day but were clearly visible in 1793 when the engraving was drawn.

[100] Binski, *Medieval Death*, p. 105.
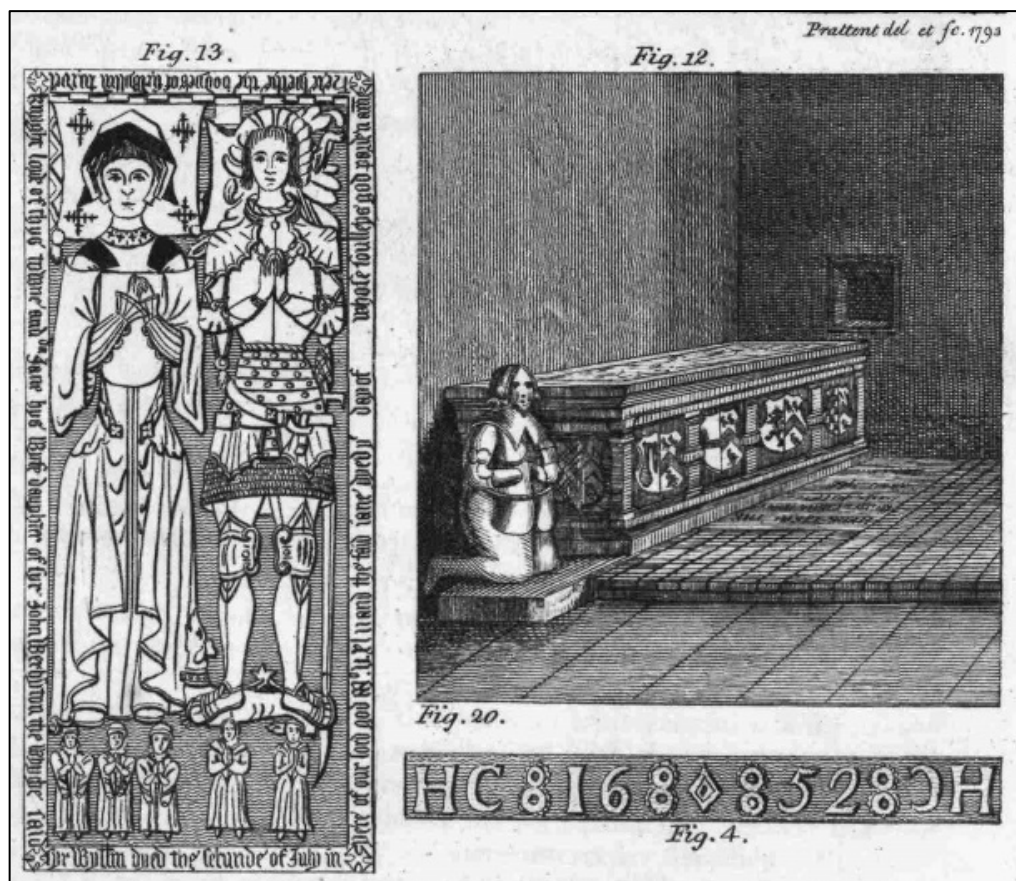
Figure 6.18 The tomb of Sir William Turville at Aston Flamville.[101]

6.4.2   Leicestershire and non-Leicestershire burial locations

It might be assumed that Leicestershire testators would exclusively request burial in their resident county, but this was not the case. Paul Binski wrote that 'the dead were normally buried in their parish of birth. But burial by its nature expressed, too, notions of loyalty and affection of a spiritual or institutional kind which could run against the ties of birthplace'.[102] This is an important observation when considering the presence or absence of a county identity amongst the gentry. Of the 87 members of the Leicestershire gentry who expressed a burial location preference, 72 (83%) wished to be buried in Leicestershire, illustrated in Figure 6.19.

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[101] Nichols, *History and Antiquities*, 4, pt. 2, p. 459.
[102] Binski, *Medieval Death*, p. 55.
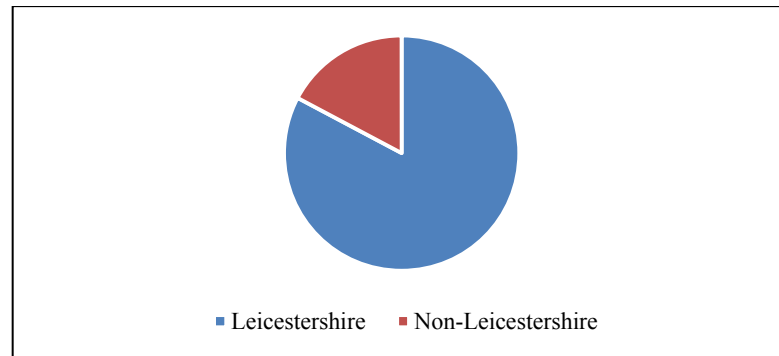
Figure 6.19 The proportion of Leicestershire and non-Leicestershire burials.

Analysis of those who chose a non-Leicestershire burial, particularly in terms of status distribution, sheds light on why a Leicestershire burial was not the only request amongst our testators, demonstrated in Figure 6.20.
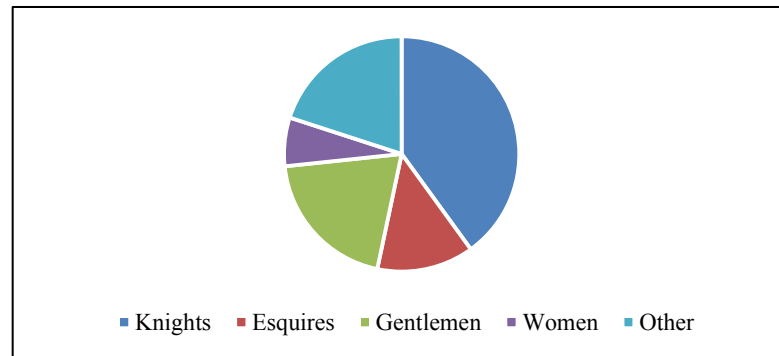
Figure 6.20 The status distribution of non-Leicestershire burials.

The majority were knights, comprising six of the original 16 knightly testators in the probate dataset (Figure 6.3). Indeed, every knight who did express a burial preference chose a non-Leicestershire site. Three out of seven testators in the original 'other' category opted for burial beyond Leicestershire. The knights and their requested burial locations were Sir Thomas Pulteney (1507), the Carmelite friary at Coventry; Sir John Skeffington (1524), merchant of the Staple of Calais, the Crossed Friars' priory in Aldgate, London; the father and son, Sir Everard Fielding (1515) and Sir William Fielding (1540), the precincts of the Dominicans at Northampton and the churchyard of St Edith's, Monks Kirby, Warwickshire, respectively, and two brothers, Sir Ambrose Cave (1568) and Sir Thomas Cave (1556), who both chose Stanford on Avon,

Northamptonshire.[103] The Caves requested their ancestral parish church, whilst the remaining four opted for religious or previously religious sites; St Edith's at Monks Kirby was converted into a parish church after the Dissolution, having been a Carthusian priory. The appeal of St Edith's is not hard to fathom; it was adjacent to the Fieldings' ancestral manor of Newnham Paddox, and the largest parish church in Warwickshire, reflecting territorial and visual power. Sir William Fielding had requested to be buried in the churchyard, but his monument was erected in the chancel; it shows no signs of weathering (Figure 6.21), which suggests that he was deemed sufficiently important for interior interment or at the very least, commemoration.

Figure 6.21 The alabaster tomb of Sir William Fielding and Elizabeth Fielding (née Pulteney) at Monks Kirby, Warwickshire. Photograph © Aidan McRae Thomson.

The dates of the knights' will-writing show that their decisions were not period specific but related to status. This is also evident in the testators within the 'other' category who requested a burial location beyond Leicestershire. They were William Lord Hastings (1481), who requested burial in the chapel of St George at Windsor, and referred to 'the kyng of his abundaunt grace for the trew service that I have don and at the lest entendid to have don to his grace hath willid and offred me to be buried in the college of chapell of saint George at Wyndesore' and the father and son, both Thomas Grey, first (1501)

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[103] TNA, PROB 11/15/513, PROB 11/18/114, PROB 11/21/648, PROB 11/31/690, PROB 11/41/34, PROB 11/54/122.

and second (1530) marquesses of Dorset, who opted for their chapel in their ancestral church in Astley, Warwickshire.[104]

By comparing the status distribution of those who did opt for a Leicestershire burial, evident in Figure 6.22, we can see that the remaining categories correspond almost directly with the distributions evident in the main dataset. The esquires (plus seven per cent), gentlemen (plus one per cent) and women (plus one per cent) experienced very little change; the increases, albeit minor, show that they were more likely to choose a Leicestershire burial. Gentlemen's territories were less extensive, thus they were less likely to be drawn away from the county. As we have seen above, women were more likely to request burial near to their husbands, and their ancestral connections were therefore superseded by their spouses'.
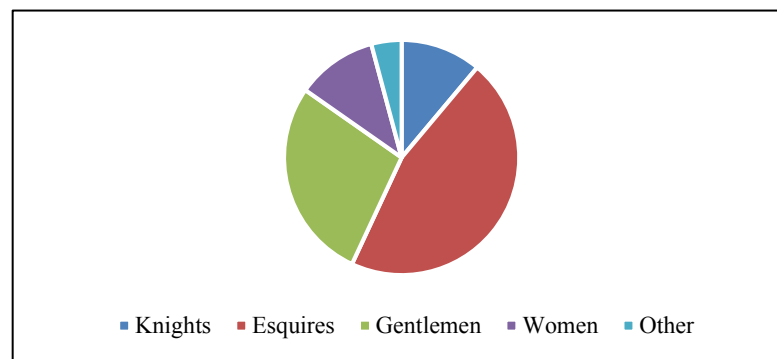
Figure 6.22 The status distribution of testators who requested Leicestershire burials.

6.4.3   Burial locations and the Reformation

The relationship between family legacy and place was important, both for well-established families in the county and *parvenus*. Whilst the population of the county was not static – many gentry families moved within the county, to it, and away from it during this period – newcomers began to arrive at a steadier rate with the influx of land into the

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[104] L. Boatwright, M. Habberjam and P. Hammond (eds.), *The Logge Register of PCC Wills, 1479 to 1486*, 1 (Knaphill, 2008), pp. 329-337; TNA, PROB 11/13/139, PROB 11/24/141. The manor of Astley had descended from the Astley earls of Warwick to the Greys' maternal ancestor, Joan Astley, who had married Reynold Grey, third baron Grey of Ruthin by 1420. His grandson was Sir John Grey of Groby who was killed at the second battle of St. Albans in 1461 and was the father of the first marquess. See L.F. Salzman (ed.), *A History of the County of Warwick*, 6 (London, 1951), pp. 15-22. The marquesses' decision to be buried there illustrates the importance of association with the highest ancestral status attained.

market post-Dissolution.[105] The Cave family, for example, were attracted from Northamptonshire into Leicestershire as a direct result of the Reformation although, as we have seen, certain members maintained their ancestral roots with Stanford on Avon. Francis Cave, esquire, had entered Leicestershire politics through his involvement in the suppression of its religious houses, and received a 21-year lease of Leicester Abbey and a substantial amount of its property in 1539. He later purchased the manor of Baggrave in 1543 which became the family's primary foothold in the county. Sir Ambrose Cave acquired the property of the former preceptory of Rothley in north Leicestershire amongst others. His brothers, Francis Cave and Brian Cave, esquires, also benefited from the sudden influx into the land market. By the time they came to write their wills in 1583 and 1592 respectively, Francis Cave identified himself as being of Baggrave, and Brian Cave of Ingarsby, property which had previously belonged to the lately dissolved Leicester Abbey.[106] The family's refocus towards Leicestershire is evident in certain members' choices of burial location; both Francis Cave and Brian Cave opted for burial at the nearby church of Hungarton.[107] Ambrose Cave, however, requested that if he died in London, his body should be returned to Stanford on Avon to fulfil his 'desier to be buried ... w[i]th my awncestours'.[108] The Cave monuments at Stanford indicate that Sir Ambrose, and his eldest brother, Sir Thomas, were both buried there.

6.5 Church architecture and monuments

Amendments to the church environment and its architecture were statements of wealth and influence. They simultaneously expressed religious devotion and social exclusivity. This section focuses on architectural and monumental construction and design. The increasing popularity of parish church burials identified above led to rival claims in a limited space.[109] Pamela Graves highlighted the impact of chapel construction within the church interior, and argued for a hierarchy based on visibility, not liturgy, such as the proximity to the altar.[110] Duffy suggested that there was an increasing privatisation of

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[105] A. Davidson, 'Cave, Francis (by 1502-83), of Godstone, Surr.; Baggrave and Leicester, Leics. and London' in Bindoff, *History of Parliament: 1509-1558*, pp. 595-596.
[106] TNA, PROB 11/66/161 and PROB 11/80/375.
[107] Ingarsby and Baggrave did not have their own parish church.
[108] TNA, PROB 11/54/122.
[109] Binski, *Medieval Death*, p. 88.
[110] Graves, 'Social space in the English medieval parish church', p. 316.

religious space amongst the gentry during the Reformation period.[111] Our evidence is taken from testators' requests and physical evidence in churches still visible today, the latter predominantly for style rather than location. Geoffrey Brandwood noted that 'nineteenth-century restorers transformed the appearance of all but a handful of churches in Leicestershire'.[112] The probate record can thus illuminate where a tomb may once have been positioned if it has since been lost or moved. Where the testator requested burial and commemoration is prioritised over where descendants or restorers thought they should be. The Turville monuments, for example, were removed from the family's chantry chapel in Thurlaston parish church to the north aisle (Figure 6.23).[113]

Figure 6.23 Relocated Turville monuments at Thurlaston church. Photograph taken by author.

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[111] Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, p. 131.

[112] G.K. Brandwood, 'To scrape or not to scrape? Plaster, stucco and Victorian church restorers in Leicestershire', *TLAHS*, 64 (1990), p. 73.

[113] J. Ordish Hulme, *The History of Thurlaston, Leicestershire* (London, 1904), pp. 43-45.

6.5.1 Location and the parish church

The parish church was a common site for gentry expression; this section considers the geographical implications of this relationship. Saul observed that, from the thirteenth century onwards, the gentry experienced an increased attachment to their local parish church based on their self-perception as important shire-based figures.[114] He argued that, despite its suitability for the projection of status and power, the parish church was 'first and foremost a religious institution'.[115] The gentry's relationship with the parish church has been much debated; Colin Richmond suggested that the focus of gentry religion was shifting away from it towards private domestic worship, whilst Carpenter used the probate record to argue for a resurgence in church-based devotion through the increasing establishment of chantry chapels.[116]

The gentry wielded administrative influence over the parish church by holding advowson, the right to present a particular individual for clerical appointment. The advowson was frequently the subject of gentry litigation, reflecting its importance.[117] It was often held in conjunction with the manorial parcel, and could be granted, inherited, or even purchased. Its connection with ancestral rights made the advowson a territorial convergence of both religious and tenurial responsibility. It could be held by multiple families at the same time, frequently with local interests. Advowsons could exert a geographical sphere of influence on gentry interests; those gentry wielded their own influence on that church in return. In 1494, for example, Sir Hugh Calveley granted the advowson of the parish church of Saxby to, amongst others, Sir Maurice Berkeley, William Ashby, esquire, and three members of the Sherard family.[118] The Berkeleys and the Sherards lived two miles away from Saxby, whilst the Ashbys were based approximately ten miles away at Lowesby.

The proximity of the parish church to gentry manors has been argued to have attracted gentry patronage. It played a prominent role in Saul's definition for and distinguishing

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[114] Saul, *Lordship and Faith*, p. 83.

[115] Ibid., p. 10.

[116] C. Carpenter, 'The religion of the gentry of fifteenth-century England' in D. Williams (ed.), *England in the Fifteenth Century* (Woodbridge, 1987), pp. 53-74; C. Richmond, 'The English gentry and religion, *c*.1500' in C. Harper-Bill (ed.), *Religious Belief and Ecclesiastical Careers in Late Medieval England* (Woodbridge, 1991), pp. 121-150.

[117] See for example, Entwistle v Brokesby, TNA, C 1/306/26.

[118] ROLLR, DE1431/189.

features of the 'gentry church', who argued that they would typically be sited close to the 'castle or manor-house of the lord whose ancestors had built it and whose descendants maintained it'.[119] McDonagh proposed that sites in proximity to parish churches were particularly attractive to prospective purchasers who were 'attempting to set themselves up as gentry'.[120] They were also provocative; multiple manors could be held by different landowners in one parish, making the parish church a site for rival display. In June 1519, a precursor to the Grey-Hastings rivalry in Leicester Forest, discussed in 4.3, manifested in the nearby parish church of Desford. Thomas Grey, second marquess of Dorset, wrote to Thomas Wolsey to complain that certain Hastings men 'went to Desseford Church and because mine arms stood higher than Lord Hastyngs one of them named William Pyckering brake them down and Sacheverell has done nothing to punish him for it, like no good and loving neighbour'.[121] Here the visual dominance of the Greys' arms antagonised the Grey-Hastings dispute. The reference to Sir Richard Sacheverell, the head of the Hastings family at that time, being 'no good and loving neighbour' confirms that the gentry were conscious of geographical implications within their social network.

By 1540, the parish church was cemented in its central parochial position. It was an effective tool for communication, recognised by central government and gentry alike. The act passed that year for 'abolishing div[er]sity in Opynions' dictated that a member of the parish clergy 'once in everie quarter of the yere at the least, shall openly playnlie and distinctly read this p[re]sent acte in the p[ar]isshe Churche … unto his or their p[ar]ishens then assembled together to hear devyne service'.[122] In 1556, Sir Thomas Cave willed that proclamations of his death should be made in the markets and churches of Leicestershire and Yorkshire 'that yf there be any parson or parsons [tha]t I have done wrong unto in any thinge / They and every of them shall resorte to myne executors'.[123] Stephen Mileson has shown that the church was also an important venue for socialising and conducting business.[124]

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[119] Saul, *Lordship and Faith*, p. 5.

[120] B. McDonagh, 'Manor houses, churches and settlements: historical geographies of the Yorkshire Wolds before 1600' (unpub. PhD thesis, University of Nottingham, 2007), p. 148.

[121] Brewer, *Letters and Papers,* 3, pp. 108-121, *BHO,* 'https://www.british-history.ac.uk/letters-papers-hen8/vol3' [accessed 7th April 2018].

[122] J. Raithby (ed.), 'An Acte Abolishing Div[er]sity in Opynions', 31 Hen. VIII, *Statutes of the Realm*, 3 (London, 1817), p. 739.

[123] TNA, PROB 11/41/34/1.

[124] S.A. Mileson, 'Mapping meaning in the later medieval landscape' in Hicks, *Later Medieval Inquisitions Post Mortem*, p. 87.

6.5.2 Visual display and the 'certeyntie and necessitie of death'

The parish church, then, was integral to gentry expressions of identity. Monuments, advowsons and the territorial relationship between the church and manor each exhibited different elements of gentry identity and influence. This was largely driven by the establishment, consolidation and preservation of family legacy being a primary gentry concern. Monuments and material bequests influenced parish church interiors and exteriors, advowsons impacted its administration, and manorial proximity had consequences for local politics and even the church's interior appearance. The gentry also focused their attentions on church exteriors. William Lord Hastings, for example, rebuilt the parish church of St Helens at Ashby de la Zouch (Figure 6.24) upon acquiring the manor from the Crown in 1462. The extent of his lordship was reflected in the use of the same materials in his reconstruction of the castle at Ashby de la Zouch nearby.[125]

Figure 6.24 St Helen's church, Ashby de la Zouch, Leicestershire. Photograph taken by author.

The above contention over the Greys' display of arms in Desford church touched on an important mechanism employed by the gentry – heraldic exhibition – in the construction of legacy. James suggested that political and social upheaval 'intensified the individual's

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[125] Examples of the material used at the castle are illustrated in Chapter 5, Figure 5.11 and Figure 5.12. For a detailed discussion of the power relationship between church and manor house, see McDonagh, '"Powerhouses" of the Wolds landscape' in Gardiner and Rippon, *Medieval Landscapes*, pp. 185-200.

need to establish identity and to control remembrance', which is demonstrated by gentry probate evidence across the period.[126]

Heraldic identity is also evident in bequests made as heirlooms. Thomas Villers bequeathed 'cuppes with the armes of the Vyllers in them' to his brother, nieces and nephews.[127] Similarly, Sir Thomas Pulteney bequeathed to his son-in-law and daughter 'one sylv[er] boll with a cover wherupon my armys be graven'.[128] Material bequests such as these were designed to continue gentry legacy in the face of the ever-present threat of death. Binski concluded that

> individual responses to traumas like death are ... conditioned and articulated by rituals that express pre-existing social arrangements and expectations ... in considering ritual we are considering not belief as such but behaviour; not what people thought but what they did.[129]

This argument is well illustrated by the gentry, who exhibited individual concerns regarding death, but despite their fears, responded by conforming to the well-trodden path of legacy construction. Gentry funerals were spectacles in themselves; they were an ideal opportunity for a final act of self-expression and power in the local community in the guise of social welfare. Ralph Woodford, esquire, requested 'that v power men … shall holde five torches a boute my herse the saide day of my buriall eche of theme to have a blake gowne with an hode of the same'.[130] Status increased the magnitude of the display; Sir Thomas Pulteney willed for his body to be buried 'with xxiiii torches and that every torche to have myn armes and xxiiii poore men to have xxiiii gownes and every man to have the lybarde hede bothe behynde and afore'.[131] Knights such as Pulteney could expect at least nine heraldic items to be provided for their funeral, including a standard, which for a knight was four yards in length, demonstrating the significance of visual display.[132]

Death played on the gentry's minds, exemplified by the will of Sir Richard Sacheverell, who dwelled on 'the certeyntie and necessitie of dethe to the which I and every other

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[126] James, *Women's Voices in Tudor Wills*, p. 59.
[127] TNA, PROB 11/9/95.
[128] TNA, PROB 11/28/190.
[129] P. Binski, *Medieval Death: Ritual and Representation* (London, 2001), pp. 50-51.
[130] TNA, PROB 11/11/304.
[131] TNA, PROB 11/15/513.
[132] J. Litten, *The English Way of Death: The Common Funeral Since 1450* (London, 1992), p. 175.

creature lyving is bounden and the uncerteyntie of the howre therof'.[133] Death could approach at any time, evidenced by the young Richard Villers, esquire, who referred to Cassandra Shirley, who 'if it please god to restore me to my form[er] health I entende to marrye and take to wif'.[134] Daniell observed that time on earth was 'infinitesimal compared to the life of the soul after death'.[135] Impending death catalysed the making of proper arrangements for the possessions left behind. Preparation was essential if goods and lands were to descend correctly. According to the will of Thomas Grey, second marquess of Dorset, the prospect of dying intestate was equal to the fear of death itself:

> there is nothing more certeyne to me then deathe and nothinge more uncerteyn then the houre and tyme therof, I dreadinge the said tyme, and wold not that I sholde dye intestate nor that eny strife variaunce or debate sholde growe or arise between eny maner of parsonnes for any of my manours londes ten[emen]tis and … my movable goodes that I shulde leve in this worlde.[136]

6.5.3   Architectural construction/reconstruction

Church reconstruction could be sustained across a lifetime. Sir John Digby of Eye Kettleby, for example, was responsible for the construction of the clerestory at St Mary's church, Melton Mowbray, in 1500, and the vestry there in 1532.[137] Architectural amendments could also be partnered with the reconstruction of the manor house.[138] This is evidenced in William Lord Hastings's rebuilding of the castle at Ashby de la Zouch and the parish church of St Helen's nearby. The gentry struck a careful balance between a suitably pious and commemorative environment for individual and family legacy.[139] In 1556, Sir Thomas Cave of Stanford on Avon bequeathed £10 towards ornaments and reparations to the chancel of Stanford on Avon. His further bequest of 40s for the 'reparacions of any other churche where yt shall please god to call me to hys mercy' ensured that the church environment would be suitably equipped for a burial of his

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[133] TNA, PROB 11/25/187.
[134] TNA, PROB 11/39/553.
[135] C. Daniell, *Death and Burial in Medieval England, 1066-1550* (London, 1998), p. 1.
[136] TNA, PROB 11/24/141.
[137] S. Clarke, 'St Mary's parish church, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire (SK 75276 19029)', University of Leicester Archaeological Services (2013), p. 12.
[138] Saul, *Lordship and Faith*, pp. 271-273.
[139] Ibid., p. 7.

status.[140] It marked the patron's authority for the benefit of the parochial community and local gentry alike.[141]

Architectural patronage could also affirm territorial dominance and entitlement. Ralph Woodford, esquire, wished to be buried in the chancel at Ashby Folville, and considered it important to record that he had spent over five marks – approximately £3 – to the 'making of the whiche Chauncell', and also bequeathed 40s towards the 'making of the steepill' at Ashby Folville.[142] The Woodfords were keen to prove their longevity and strength; their family cartulary celebrated 'howe that olde John off Wodford ... passed out of this world was v score yere [and] vii and he was a gentilman'.[143] Whether or not old John Woodford did actually reach the age of 107 remains to be seen, but his age and his status were markers of family pride. Jon Denton has drawn attention to the presence of woodsmen on the tomb of Ralph Woodford as 'rebuses, a play on the name Woodford ... [they] symbolise paternal identity'.[144] The descent of the Woodfords' inherited lands was not straightforward. Ralph Woodford's father had predeceased his grandfather, who had disapproved of his marriage to one Elizabeth Villers, and allegedly disinherited him in favour of his younger brothers as punishment. Nichols recorded a deposition by Ralph's son, who alleged

> that Syr Robert Wodford gauffe by fyne to hys younger [grand] sones the manours of Wyssurby, Brentyngby, Sproxton, Thorp Arnold, Burton St Lazarus, and Knypeton, to diserytt Raufe hys eldysde [grand] sone, bycause of a grouge ... be counsell of hys younger sones, he dyd burne two quarters of evidences yn Ascheby haule, as oulde men could testyfye; and then the said Raufe, after hys dyssese, enteryd yn the manour of Asscheby; and founde a dede ... my fader Rauff Wodford, shewed me the dede yn hys clousett by the grette chamber.[145]

Ralph Woodford had managed to acquire the manor of Ashby Folville despite his grandfather's disinheritance. This may account for his sustained rebuilding of the church there, and of the churches in proximity to his other manors of Brentingby and Sproxton. Further, Denton has observed that the family mausoleum had previously been at Thorpe

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[140] TNA, PROB 11/41/34.
[141] J. Denton, 'Image, identity and gentility: the Woodford experience' in L. Clark (ed.), *Of Mice and Men: Image, Belief and Regulation in Late Medieval England* (Woodbridge, 2005), p. 13.
[142] TNA, PROB 11/11/394.
[143] BL, Cotton MS, Claudius A/XIII.
[144] Denton, 'Image, identity and gentility', p. 11.
[145] Nichols, *History and Antiquities*, 3, pt. 1, p. 26.

Arnold; Ashby Folville was acquired by Ralph's grandfather through inheritance. He concluded that Ralph Woodford may have been the first of his family to have been buried there; it is reminiscent of Sir William Turville's movement to Aston Flamville, discussed above.[146]

Church construction was not exclusive to those at the apex of the gentry hierarchy. Whilst gentlemen were unlikely to be able to afford church rebuilding on a large scale, they could direct their funds towards a particular feature instead. The provision of windows, for example, often included images of the donor who had bequeathed them (Figure 6.25). Construction was thus subject to a sliding scale of publicity and privacy; amendments to the exterior fabric mirrored the importance of the internal visibility of monuments inside. The church steeple was thus an ideal focus for gentry patronage. In 1538, Robert Burrough of Burrough on the Hill bequeathed 20s to the chapel at Ilston on the Hill, approximately eight miles to the north-east of his ancestral

Figure 6.25 The donor windows commemorating the Cave family at Stanford on Avon. Photograph taken by Aidan McRae Thomson.

manor. He invested a comparatively substantial sum of £20 'towards the reparation and buyldinge of the steple of the churche of Borowe'.[147] It is quite possible that he intended to be the sole, or at least the primary, patron of the steeple. In *c*.1473, for example, the rebuilding of the steeple at St Edmund's church, Salisbury, Wiltshire, cost £26 9s ¼d.[148] The churchwardens' accounts for St Mary's church at Great Dunmow, Essex, recorded a total expense of £18 15s 9d in 1526-1526 for the rebuilding of their steeple, and in 1535 £17 12s 6d was raised for the rebuilding of the steeple at St Mary's church in Sutterton,

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[146] Denton, 'Image, identity and gentility', p. 13.
[147] TNA, PROB 11/26/194.
[148] J.C. Cox, *Churchwardens' Accounts from the Fourteenth Century to the Close of the Seventeenth Century* (London, 1913), p. 75.

Lincolnshire.[149] The modern parish contains a ground elevation range between 'nearly 700 ft [213 metres] in the north-east of the parish to 350 ft in the south-west', and the church is positioned to the north-west side of the main village street at approximately 600 ft [183 metres] above sea level.[150] The church – and its steeple – would have been an important landmark in the local landscape.

6.5.4 Monument location

We have seen how the gentry amended external church architecture, and thus move to consider their impact on its interior. As Binksi has pointed out, 'as churches began to fill with tombs, the placement and design of the tomb had to take into account the regard of the onlooker with ever greater efficiency'.[151] Figure 6.26 illustrates the proportional trends in requested burial locations within a parish church or its graveyard.[152] Contrasting the number of wills written with those containing burial specifics shows little correlation between the period and the inclusion of a burial direction. The categories are divided between the chancel; chapels; the graveyard; unspecified locations comprising those requesting a parish church without specifying a location within it, and 'other' locations which do not fit into the above, such as the choir, 'before the blessed sacrament', or 'afore the rode loft'.[153] Chancel burials appeared briefly during 1490 to 1509, with none between 1510 and 1529. They were at their peak in 1560-1564, when three out of ten testators, two gentlemen and an esquire, requested burial there. Two testators, Anthony Neele, gentleman, and George Turville, esquire, both writing in 1560, were attracted to the chancel by ancestral burials. Anthony Neele wished to be 'nere to Thom[a]s Nevell my predecessor' and George Turville 'joyninge to the tombe of my father'.[154]

The spatial division of the chancel and the nave embodied social division. The chancel implied exclusivity; it was the preserve of the clergy and contained the high altar. The rood screen separated the chancel from the nave and was therefore an important boundary

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[149] Essex Record Office, 'Receipts and disbursements, 1526-1595', D/P 11/5/1, f. 5v. I am grateful to Kate Cole, author of the *Essex Voices Past* website (www.essexvoicespast.com), for her permission to use this material; Cox, *Churchwardens' Accounts*, p. 277.

[150] J.M. Lee and R.A. McKinley (eds.), *VCH Leics* (London, 1964), p. 61.

[151] Binski, *Medieval Death*, p. 74.

[152] The lower numbers of wills at either end of the period obscure earlier and later trends in the data but serve as context for the period comprising 1500-1569.

[153] TNA, PROB 11/22/326, PROB 11/30/610, PROB 11/29/304.

[154] ROLLR, W&I, 1560/47, 1563/50.

between the two spaces. The request of William Ashby, esquire, to be buried 'afore the rode loft' can be interpreted in two ways.[155] It depends on his own physical – and social – perspective as to whether 'afore' the rood loft meant in the chancel, if approaching from the nave, or in the nave, if approaching from the chancel. If he deemed his family's standing in the county to be sufficiently important, and according to the pattern presented by the wills of John Woodford, esquire (1500) Ralph Woodford, esquire (1495), and Sir John Villiers (1544), then burial in the chancel was likely. He requested to be buried at the intersection between lay and ecclesiastical spheres. The location of a monument was intended to project a display of power and status to strengthen a family's standing in the local area. Chapel burials were at their most popular at the beginning of the period between 1500 and 1514 but experienced a comparative lull until 1550. Comparatively, it was not until 1510 that we see any references to 'other' locations which were relatively commonplace until 1544, after which there was a marked drop-off, somewhat accounted for by an increase in unspecified locations. In Leicestershire, chapel burials appear to have reached their peak between 1500 and 1520.[156]

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[155] TNA, PROB 11/29/304.

[156] This is interesting given Phillip Lindley's observation that some chantry chapels – chapels which hosted intercessory prayers for the dead – were converted to family chapels after chantries were suppressed in 1547. See P. Lindley, '"Pickpurse" purgatory, the dissolution of the chantries and the suppression of intercession for the dead', *Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, 164, no. 1, p. 298.
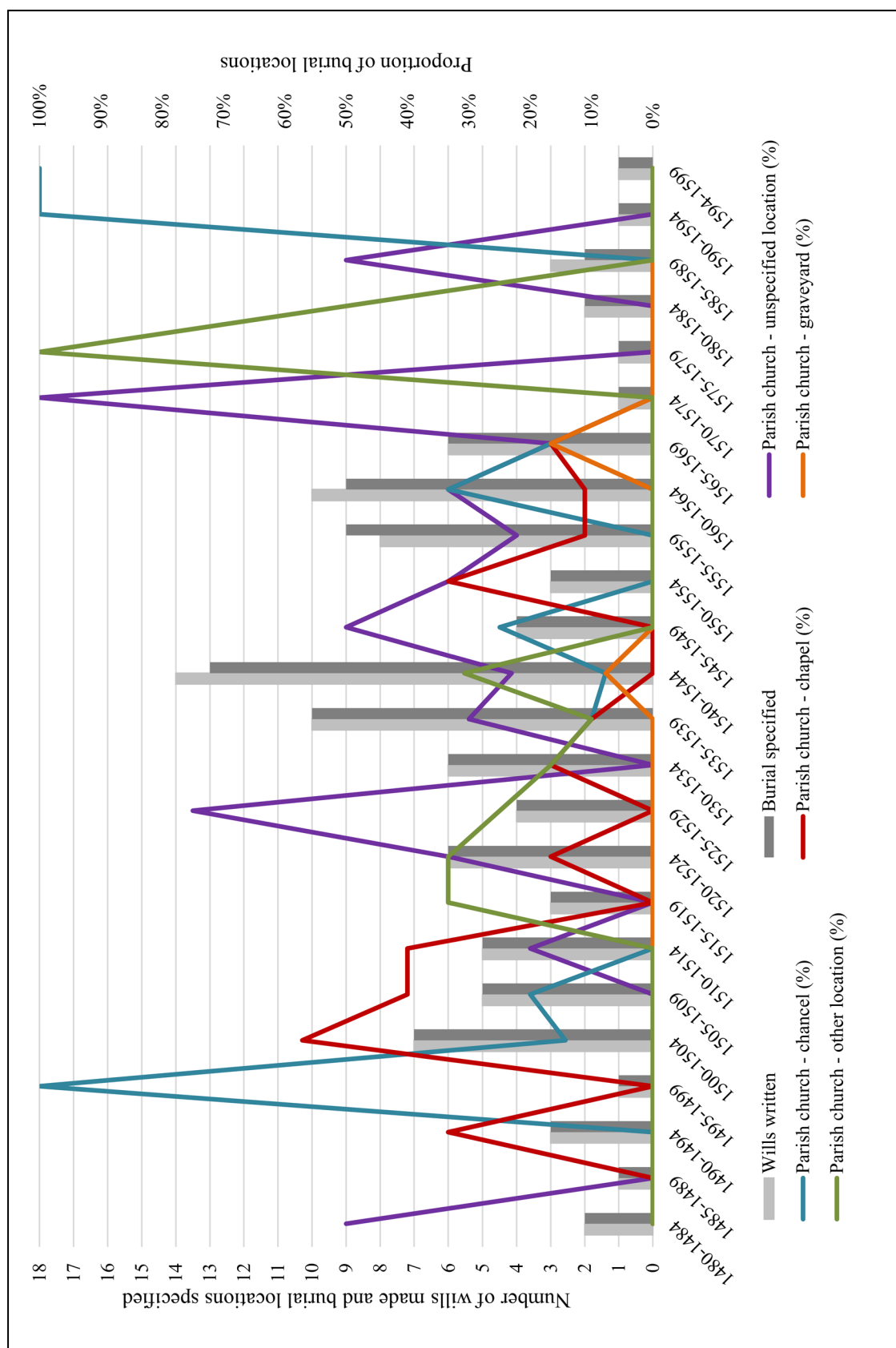
Figure 6.26 A comparative timeline of the proportions of wills made and burial locations requested, 1481-1598.

The Dissolution simultaneously created and destroyed burial locations. The Shirleys had purchased the site of Breedon Priory for their family mausoleum, for example, to replace their lost burial site of Garendon Abbey, which had been purchased by the Manners family. The dissolution of Garendon Abbey reveals the sudden severance and disruption of an established family identity. John Shirley's alabaster monument at Garendon appears in a list of unsold ornaments previously belonging to the Abbey, compiled in a letter by Francis Cave, esquire, to the ecclesiastical commissioners for the county, at a price of 10s.[157] The total price for two alabaster table tombs and one alabaster monument was £2 10s, compared to a total of £7 3s 4d for the Abbey's glazed windows. Neither were they protected by the incoming Manners family. The material value of these items was not influenced by their sentimental value. Nichols recorded a large number of coffins being found during archaeological excavations at Garendon, however, suggesting that bodies were left *in situ* whilst their monuments were removed.[158] It showed respect for the dead but disregard for their identity, and would have been a blow to family pride and honour.

The changing identity of the religious space rendered redundant spaces usable again. The Shirley family remained resolute to the Catholic faith after the Reformation.[159] Francis Shirley, esquire, grandson of the aforementioned John Shirley, was buried in his newly-acquired family sepulchre, the dissolved priory of Breedon, changing the burial traditions of the family until the eighteenth century. For those who had the financial means, the potential commemorative destruction threatened by the Reformation could be avoided. Thomas Manners, first earl of Rutland, physically moved ancestral family memorials and tombs dating from the late thirteenth century from Croxton Abbey and Belvoir Priory in 1538 to the parish church of Bottesford, which became the family's mausoleum until 1703 (Figure 6.27).[160] It included the early fifteenth-century tombs of father and son William de Roos (d.1414) and John de Roos (d.1421); their heads rest on a peacock, which was adopted as the Manners's heraldic charge (Figure 6.28) and (Figure 6.29).

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[157] TNA, Exchequer: Church Goods, Inventories and Miscellanea, E 117/14/48/1.

[158] Nichols, *History and Antiquities*, 3, pt. 2, p. 795.

[159] R. Cust, 'Catholicism, antiquarianism and gentry honour: The writings of Sir Thomas Shirley', *Midland History*, 23, no. 1 (1998), p. 43.

[160] Burton, *Description of Leicestershire*, p. 47.

Figure 6.27 The collection of Manners tombs at Bottesford. Photograph © Aidan McRae Thomson.

Figure 6.28 The tomb of William de Roos at Bottesford church. Photograph © Aidan McRae Thomson.

Figure 6.29 The tomb of John de Roos at Bottesford church. Photograph © Aidan McRae Thomson.

6.5.5 Monument materials and design

As illustrated by the alabaster de Roos monuments at Bottesford, the expression of status and importance of visibility were reflected in the types of materials and styles used for gentry monuments. Testators invested considerable sums of money into their monuments in the context of their annual income. In 1530, William Staunton, gentleman, bequeathed £6 13s 4d towards his monument at Prestwold; his annual income recorded in his IPM was approximately £38.[161] Probate evidence reveals that natural materials pervaded all aspects of the expression of gentry identity *post mortem*. Stone for construction; material bequests of gold, silver and pewter goods; wax for devotional offerings and funerary commemoration, timber for decorative family pews and alabaster for monuments were products of the local environment. The alabaster industry in Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire was responsible for the regionalisation of alabaster effigies which were most prevalent in the midland counties and northwards towards Yorkshire.[162] The images and detail used were often reproduced, which resulted in distinctive similarities across the midland counties. Saul has drawn attention to the strong resemblance of the table-tomb niches between the tomb of Robert Haselrigg, esquire at Castle Donington, Leicestershire, and those at Clifton Campville, Staffordshire; Duffield, Derbyshire and Ross on Wye, Herefordshire, for example, and attributed them on that basis to the work of Henry Harpur and William Moorecock of Burton on Trent.[163]

The survival of certificates for tomb design show that alabaster was specifically requested by the gentry. It was a geographically and financially exclusive material. In 1585, George Shirley, esquire, made a detailed agreement with Richard Royley and Gabriel Royley of Burton on Trent, alabasterers, concerning the tomb of his father, John Shirley, esquire of Staunton Harold at Breedon on the Hill (Figure 6.30). It requested that it be made of 'a very goode faire, well chosen, and durable allabaster stone', and described his requirements in exact detail:

> And on the upper part of the said tomb to make a very fair, decente, and well proportioned picture or portraiture of a gentleman, representinge the said John Shirley, with furniture and ornaments in armoure and aboute his necke a double cheyne of gold with creste and helmett under his heade, with sword and dagger

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[161] TNA, E 150/1134/3.

[162] A. Gardner, *Alabaster Tombs of the Pre-Reformation Period in England* (London, 1940), pp. 88-103.

[163] N. Saul, *English Church Monuments in the Middle Ages: History and Representation* (Oxford, 2009), pp. 70-71.

by his syde, a lyon at his feete, and as being upon a matte. And on the north side to make three decente, usuall, and well proportioned escutcheons, with comptments aboute every one of them, the first whereof shall contain the very trewe arms of the said John Shirley only; the second, the very trewe arms of the said John and Jane his wife, empannelled together; and the third, the arms of the said Jane only, with one frenche pilaster between everyone of the said escutcheons, and likewise at ye west and east end of ye tomb an escutcheon of the said John and Jane quartered together; the whole to be painted and gilt, with good and convenible oyells, golde, and culloures.[164]

Figure 6.30 The Royleys' tomb of John Shirley, esquire, at Breedon on the Hill. Photograph taken by author.

As demonstrated by John Shirley's tomb at Breedon on the Hill, and with the exception of husbands and wives, the gentry were individually commemorated. The style of commemoration, however, was largely informed by the gentry's collective awareness of group identity.[165] They were looking to each other – to their ancestors and neighbours – to establish their commemorative style. It is best illustrated in the prevalence of alabaster tombs for our period. They were most common amongst our gentry from the early sixteenth century onwards, but were clearly in use by the early fifteenth century, demonstrated by the de Roos monuments at Bottesford. The earliest Leicestershire example for our period is the elaborately decorated tomb of John and Katherine Turville at Thurlaston, the parents of Sir William Turville, built *c.*1509 (Figure 6.31).[166] John

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[164] ROLLR, 26D53/2571.

[165] Binski, *Medieval Death*, p. 102.

[166] For Sir William Turville's tomb see above, Figure 6.18.

Turville bequeathed ten marks – approximately £7 – for the erection of his tomb. His annual income was approximately £80.[167] It was likely undertaken by their son some years after his parents' decease, with observable similarities, such as the weepers and style of hair evident in the tomb of Robert Haselrigg, esquire, at Castle Donington, which dates to the early 1530s (Figure 6.32).

Figure 6.31 The tomb of John Turville, esquire and his wife, Katherine, at Thurlaston. Photograph taken by author.

Figure 6.32 The tomb of Robert and Eleanor Haselrigg at Castle Donington. Photograph © Pam Fisher.

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[167] TNA, C 142/20/8.

By comparing the Turvilles' tomb with the contemporary tomb made for Sir Everard Digby at Tilton on the Hill (Figure 6.34), it is clear that there were regional differences and indeed, differences in the style, quality and material used. Sir Everard Digby is depicted as a soldier, first and foremost, with a large proportion of his body obscured by his shield. This appears to have been a common trait for Digby tombs; an earlier tomb there shows a figure in a similar position (Figure 6.33).

Figure 6.33 A fourteenth-century Digby tomb, possibly Sir Kenelm Digby, at Tilton on the Hill. Photograph © Lionel Wall.

Figure 6.34 The tomb of Sir Everard Digby at Tilton on the Hill. Photograph © Lionel Wall.

The status of the deceased was also implicit in the style of clothing worn. Figure 6.35 depicts John Turville, esquire, in military attire. There is a stark contrast to the clothing of Thomas Manners, first earl of Rutland, at Bottesford (Figure 6.36), whose earl's coronet and sumptuous clothing are clearly visible.

Figure 6.35 A close-up of John and Katherine Turville's tomb at Thurlaston. Photograph taken by author.

Figure 6.36 The tomb of Thomas Manners, first earl of Rutland and his wife, Eleanor, at Bottesford. Photograph ©
Aidan McRae Thomson.

The raised effigy evident in these tombs were less common in Leicestershire. The
majority were incised tombs; a substantial number were alabaster table tombs, whilst the

rest, comprising the earliest examples, were brasses, which were often similar in style (and Figure 6.37 and Figure 6.38).

Figure 6.37 The brass memorial to John and Alice Boyville at Stockerston (c.1467). Photograph © Jean McCreanor, Flickr 'JMC4'.

Figure 6.38 The brass memorial to Geoffrey and Rose Sherard at Stapleford (c.1490). Photograph © Aidan McRae Thomson.

With the exception perhaps of the brass belonging to Ralph Woodford, esquire (Figure 6.39), which King interpreted as 'a statement of social position and of significant piety', the flat design of brasses and the incised memorial was 'self-consciously humble'.[168] They attracted attention but were less flamboyant – and less expensive – than the full effigies observed above. They were still carefully designed, however. Sir John Villers of Brooksby referred specifically to a stone 'nowe lying in the chauncel' of Brokysby church' for his parents' tomb, and requested that 'my said executours cause ii ymages of latyn their armes to be sitt in the same stone wyth scripture rounde aboute yt … I wyll that my said executours cause suche our other grave stone to be made for my self and of lyke valewe'.[169]

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[168] King, 'Memorials of Ralph Woodford', p. 183; Binski, *Medieval Death*, p. 89.
[169] TNA, PROB 11/30/317.
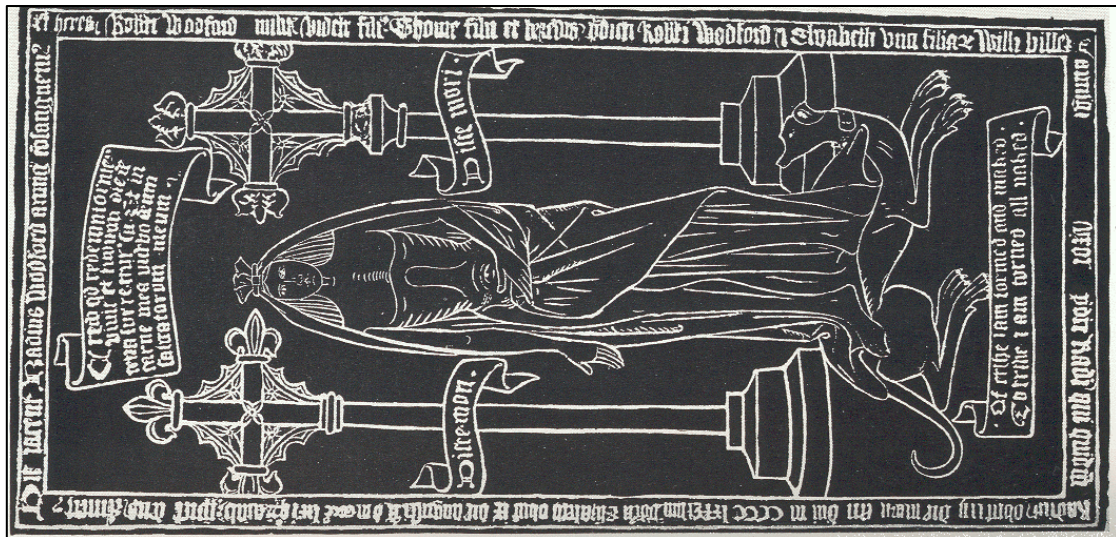
Figure 6.39 The brass memorial to Ralph Woodford at Ashby Folville (c.1498). Image © Monumental Brass Society.

The incised slab could be as exquisite as the full effigy, illustrated by the tomb of Nicholas Purefoy, esquire and his wife, Jane, at Fenny Drayton (Figure 6.40). The couple are depicted holding each other's right hand, with their left hands raised in blessing.

Figure 6.40 The tomb of Nicholas and Jane Purefoy at Fenny Drayton. Photograph taken from Wikimedia Commons.

The inferred humility of the two-dimensional tomb was explicitly stated by certain testators. Sir Maurice Berkeley of Wymondham requested for

> a stone off marbull to be leed on my grave with a sup[er]scripcion in copir or latyn specifyynge the day and yer[e] off my deth aft[er] the custome usid in other lyke grave stones for a remembraunce only off my soule to be prayd for and for

no vayn glory off the world and [tha]t the pykture off me my wyff and off our chyldr[e]n ... made also in copir or latyn [and] to be sett in the same stone.[170]

Sir Maurice Berkeley's abjection of 'vayn glory' was concern voiced by fellow testators. In 1581, Rose Sherard of Stapleford, widow, requested that she be buried 'withoute anye ceremoniall pompe pride or vaine glorie but to be honnestlie and decentlie brought to the grounde accordinge to my degree'.[171] The reference to her status was itself an expression of humility, and left it to her executors to decide what was deserved. In 1554, Robert Strelley of Great Bowden, esquire, requested that his executors organised his funeral and monument as 'apperteynithe to my calling and may be to the relief and compforte of my soule'.[172]

The bigger, more elaborate tombs were relative to the status of the deceased, but also expressed their concerns regarding the transitory nature of life. Thomas Grey of Castle Donington, gentleman, included explicit detail for his monument design:

> my bodie to be buried in the myddel of the chauncell of Castell Donyngton churche even before the lecturn … with a plane marbell stone over me to be sett uppon certaine pillors as the proporcion thereof shall serve beinge sett a boute one yarde highe, and underne[a]th the same in sighte to be made a lyvely picture of death for remembrance of all persons and creatures to beholde with suche epitaphs and picture graven in and uppon the saide stone as shalbe before my deathe devised or after by the devise and good discrecion of my executours, and for this my lyinge and buriall in the saide chauncell I geve six shillings eighte pence for the breakinge of the grounde there to be paide where it oughte to be paide or more if the custome be.[173]

He was describing a cadaver, or *transi*, tomb, being a monument comprising a living effigy above a decaying effigy of the deceased. The cadaver tomb of George Shirley, esquire, who had commissioned his father's tomb in 1585 above, was of a similar style, illustrated in Figure 6.41 and Figure 6.42. The cadaver tomb emerged as an artistic form of commemoration in the fifteenth century. Its macabre display has been suggested by Kathleen Cohen to have been a response by a society reeling from the Black Death.[174] King has shown, however, that the employment of cadaver tombs reached well into the

[170] ROLLR, W&I, 1522/5.
[171] TNA, PROB 11/63/271.
[172] TNA, PROB 11/36/374.
[173] TNA, PROB 11/48/274.
[174] K. Cohen, *Metamorphosis of a Death Symbol: the Transi Tomb in the Late Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (London, 1974), p. 4.

sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and observed the progression of the cadaver from a shrouded figure, evident in the brass belonging to Ralph Woodford (Figure 6.39 above) to the 'unshrouded skeleton on a straw mat' (Figure 6.42).[175] The unavoidable statement of wealth and status in the monuments described above reflected the self-perception of the gentry, but also showed that testators were anxious to achieve the salvation of their souls. In the crowded parish church environment, and in the absence of chantries after the Reformation, monument visibility increased the likelihood of it being noticed, and thus attracting prayer and respect for the deceased.[176]

Figure 6.41 The top half of the cadaver tomb of George Shirley, esquire, at Bottesford. Photograph taken by author.

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[175] P. King, 'Contexts of the cadaver tomb in fifteenth century England' (unpub. PhD thesis, University of York, 1987), pp. 41-42.

[176] Badham, *Seeking Salvation*, p. 225.

Figure 6.42 The bottom half of the cadaver tomb of George Shirley, esquire, at Bottesford. Photograph taken by author.

6.6 Conclusion

This chapter argued for the importance of place in the gentry's final statement of their identity. This was articulated in death through chosen burial places and the patronage of religious houses and parish churches. We have seen that these places were often chosen on the grounds of territorial and ancestral affiliation; it is not a coincidence that they were commonly the gentry's PPA. These locations can be identified by the presence – or indeed, intended presence – of tombs, monuments and architectural patronage. As demonstrated in Chapter 5, vernacular architecture was an important expression of identity, but this chapter has shown that the manifestation of gentry material culture pre- and *post mortem* was also carefully designed.

The previous chapters argued for the significance and influence of geographical proximity. In this chapter, we have encountered a more intimate type of proximity, where ancestral places provided a congenital location for family patronage and burial. The tombs of deceased family members were deliberately identified in gentry wills, reflecting the social and cultural importance of this association. However, as the chapters above have also shown, the construction and consolidation of gentry identity was vulnerable to the economic, social, political and religious fluctuations of contemporary England. Death was no exception. The Reformation created opportunities for social advancement for the gentry. But it also disrupted, sometimes devastatingly, gentry families' final declarations of identity. The dissolution of religious houses could sever their ancestral connection in the loss of ancient burial places. Of course, this also offered the chance of self-improvement to those who could afford it.

Ultimately, this chapter has shown that gentry material culture manifested most explicitly and intensively in those places associated with their deaths. This statement was cultivated across lifetimes and generations. The thesis has explored multiple components of gentry identity, from administration and politics to economy and architecture. The desire to protect, conserve and enhance family territories was ingrained into the gentry's lives from birth; their identity was created by and re-invested into the places from which they came in death. Then the cycle began again.

Conclusion: place, landscape and gentry identity

This thesis has addressed the 'substantial lack of developed social history' identified by Andy Wood during this period.[1] In doing so, it has advanced our understanding of who the Leicestershire gentry were by challenging the notion that the relationship between gentry and land was a matter of possession alone. It has raised the question of the relationship between gentry and place, and has suggested that closer attention should be paid to the myriad ways in which this relationship infiltrated the construction and expression of their identity. Places were cultural constructions composed of social, economic and political influences. This thesis has demonstrated, then, that place was a common denominator in gentry culture, and deserves to be treated as such. The conclusion commences with a discussion of the sources and methodologies used. The main body of the conclusion is structured by two primary contributions which the application of place has made to our understanding of gentry identity and culture: the cultural value of place in the construction and expression of gentry identity, and the continuities and changes evident across the period. The discussion is closed with an overview of the study's limitations alongside an appraisal of plausible areas for development and future research.

Sources and methodology

The Leicestershire gentry are sufficiently well represented in the documentary record to combine their individual perspectives into a collective prosopography. These conclusions have been reached by using a wide range and vast number of sources in innovative ways. Before this study, the use of IPM extents in the reconstruction of different land types across regions had not been applied specifically to the gentry. Neither had they been used to approximate the geographical borders of gentry territories, or to illustrate the changing distributions of gentry territories over time. Whilst care must be taken in the interpretation of acreages and land descriptions, the IPMs have enriched our understanding of how late medieval Leicestershire may have looked from the gentry perspective. Both approaches

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[1] Wood, 'Afterword' in Bowen and Brown, *Custom and Commercialisation*, p. 252.

have shown that the gentry exacted a tenacious grip on the bounds and composition of their territories, supported by additional data extracted from litigious and probate sources.

This thesis has also highlighted the ways in which two courts, Chancery and Star Chamber, can illustrate the impact of place on gentry behaviour. Chancery bills suggested how the 'fault lines' produced by overlapping territories affected gentry interaction, and illuminated the speed at which the gentry rose to defend those places closest to their territories' nucleus. Influenced by scholars' effective use of Star Chamber depositions in previous studies, these richly detailed sources have demonstrated that the gentry's intense sense of entitlement to ancestral or inherited lands was not limited to the courts at Westminster. It transpired on the ground in their behaviour towards each other, which changed in accordance with the social, economic or political importance of the environment in which the contest took place.

Established and less traditional methods have been applied to the substantial number of wills which have survived for the Leicestershire gentry. They can be used in a number of ways beyond the typical approach of religion or family relationships, although these methods are equally valid. This thesis has made the valuable – and arguably original – case that probate wills can portray the significance of place. The use of wills, particularly in a geographical context, has shown that place deserves a more prominent role in the lives of the gentry than it has previously been given. It is evident in statements of geographical affiliation, in the careful distribution of landed inheritance, in the social implications of bequests of objects and animals, and even in the final statement of burial. In conjunction with the territories illustrated by the IPM record, and the strong sense of entitlement apparent in gentry litigation, the probate evidence proposes that place played just as important a role in the deaths of the gentry as it did during their lives.

By adopting the lens of the county structure, the thesis has shown that the gentry did indeed exhibit a county-based identity. The protest of Henry Grey, marquess of Dorset, that John Beaumont, esquire, was 'agaynst the Erle of huntyngdon [and] the greatest nomber of the gentylmen wythin your seyd county of leycester to the great dysquyetnes of all the seyd countye' encompasses and conveys the sense that the county was perceived as a tangible unit by its gentry.[2] The influx of land and property into the market after the

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2   TNA, STAC 2/12/259.

Dissolution, for example, did not compel the Leicestershire gentry to abandon their county in favour of grander dwellings further afield. Instead, those who could afford to simply changed sites, or purchased properties whose materials could be recycled to augment their own. The gentry's county identity was largely based on administrative roles allocated by central government, but was significantly and extensively shaped by their ancestral ties and the county's topography. In the absence of established borders, the presence of topographical features such as rivers and ancient thoroughfares also engendered feelings of a shared identity.

The cultural value of place

Place provided a cultural sphere for the construction and expression of gentry identity. Through a discussion of material culture and the experienced landscape, this section will show how the thesis has highlighted the cultural value and impact of place. The thesis introduction noted that Tim Cresswell described place as a combination of 'material things … meanings … and practices'.[3] This definition has been evident throughout the thesis. The meanings that the gentry attached to certain places, explored in each chapter's theme, are shown to have emerged in gentry materiality and behaviour.

Material culture can be defined as the product of the role that objects played in the construction of identity and in its visual expression. This is particularly relevant to the gentry; the thesis has shown that sumptuary laws throughout the period consistently regulated the use of different fabrics for clothing on the grounds of financial income. Material culture has emerged throughout the thesis; objects were bequeathed with both practical and sentimental meaning. For example, we have seen that agricultural implements, from fence posts to wagons, frequently appeared in gentry wills. The sentiment in these objects was not in their practical function alone. It was in the encouraged continuance of certain agricultural practice and traditions. This was also evident in bequests of timber and glass for re-use in ancestral architectural construction; they reflected the endurance of place through physical association.

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[3]   Cresswell, *Place*, p. 186.

One of the closing arguments of this thesis was that the intensity of the relationship between gentry and place emerged most explicitly in death through the manifestation of material culture. Certainly, the gentry lived in a 'world in which people attached high importance to the outward display of the trappings of status and rank'.[4] Bequests made to parish churches, commissioning of tombs and chapels, amendments made to parish churches and even the transformation of a building's entire identity from religious to vernacular each illustrated how the gentry were preparing their territorial nucleus for the end of their lives. The location that they chose for burial was far more than simple convenience. It was a final statement of association at the centre of the lands in which the gentry had invested a substantial amount of time and money to protect.

Is it possible, then, to also consider land as a part of gentry material culture? The opening quotation of the thesis referred to it as the gentry's 'most prized possession'.[5] This thesis has built a strong case for perceiving land in three dimensions. It is important, however, that we do not forget that land was a possession, too, especially in the context of financial revenue, agricultural economy and court litigation. A substantial part of gentry society was grounded in perceiving and engaging with land as a material object. Yet, by considering lands as both possessions *and* places of cultural value, we have seen their impact on gentry identity from a more realistic perspective. This could only have been achieved by framing the chapters' general themes in the context of place.

This part of the discussion will highlight how the thesis has brought attention to lands as components of an experienced landscape. The 'three-dimensional' approach to land adds depth to our understanding of its influence on gentry identity. Certainly, the physical composition of Leicestershire impacted the gentry's lives; the absence of a navigable river meant that animals and the road infrastructure had to be relied upon for the transportation of goods, whether it was grain for market or bricks for construction. Travel has not been treated in isolation by the thesis, but it emerged in our initial discussion of the gentry's professional network. Involvement in the legal profession was shown to have attracted the gentry over the county border, to the capital and further afield. We have also seen how the tension created by the geographical proximity of gentry landholdings spilled over onto

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[4]   Saul, *Lordship and Faith*, p. 10.
[5]   Carpenter, *Locality and Polity*, p. 3.

the King's highway in Leicester Forest. Moreover, using probate evidence, the thesis tentatively suggested that travel may have had an impact on the churches chosen to receive burial requests, although this does require further investigation.

The gentry's perception and experience of landscape has also emerged in gentry correspondence and legal depositions. By considering gentry territories as experienced landscapes, we can arguably develop a more nuanced understanding of their cultural importance in the gentry's lives. In the case of the lawyer and esquire, John Beaumont, his fear of assassination by a member of the Hastings family was heightened by the proximity of Hastings landholdings to his own. Here a social dispute was magnified by Beaumont's physical awareness of his surroundings. This awareness was also illustrated in the Skeffington v Neele case at Keythorpe. It was only when Sir William Skeffington appeared on a hill near to the alleged altercation that the action stopped. Putting the reliability of the actual allegation to one side, this episode showed that Skeffington was physically surveying his estates.

Continuity and change

This thesis has drawn attention to continuity and change in the gentry experience throughout our period. This section addresses these themes in relation to the Leicestershire gentry in general and to the experiences of the respective branches of the gentry hierarchy. The thesis has shown that many elements of gentry culture remained the same despite changes at the national level such as economic inflation and changes in religious policies, evidenced in the application of each chapter's theme to consecutive generations of gentry families and individuals. Arguably, the chapters' themes would also be relevant to gentry of an earlier and a later period, showing their consistent role in the general construction and expression of gentry identity.[6] By framing these themes in the context of place, however, both continuities and changes emerge which reflect the

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[6] Despite the differences in time period, Grenville Astill, Eric Acheson and Neil Paterson all employed variant themes of landholding, economy and involvement in local government and politics in their studies of the Leicestershire gentry during 1350-1399, 1422-1485 and *c*.1677-*c*.1716 respectively. See Astill, 'A study in Leicestershire society'; Acheson, *A Gentry Community* and Paterson, 'Politics in Leicestershire'.

importance of ancestry and legacy. Without the common denominator of place, this section argues that the trends of continuity and change below would be less apparent.

The role of the gentry in local governance remained consistent across our period, as did their involvement in the legal profession. It reflects the importance of the gentry's judicial and legal responsibilities on both sides of the law. We have seen across the gentry hierarchy that the gentry were involved in the administration of justice as implementors and receivers, and in the legal profession as attorneys and clients. These roles often took them across the county border, but government- and self-identification has shown that the gentry were consistently associated with the county unit. Their involvement with the legal profession in particular illustrates the importance of landowning during the period. Land was the cornerstone of gentry identity; the gentry prioritised its defence and acquisition.

This thesis has demonstrated the political, economic and social importance of the gentry's lands, summarised in the significance that the gentry attached to their territories. This has been shown predominantly through litigation, where we have seen the impact of territorial disruption on the gentry's social interaction and economic activities within and away from the equity courts of Chancery and Star Chamber. The litigious representation of both gentlemen and esquires in the thesis database remains roughly consistent throughout the period. It is interesting to note, however, that knights appeared in Star Chamber as defendants twice as frequently than they did as plaintiffs, and particularly more so towards the end of the period. This suggests that, as the popularity of Star Chamber increased, knights' authority as leading landowners was being threatened by the aspirations of those amongst the lower branches of gentry society.[7] Beyond the walls of the courtroom and using digital methodology, the estimation of gentry territories on the ground has offered a geographical dimension to our understanding of gentry identity. As Robert Sack argued, territoriality was the 'backcloth of geographical context – it is the device through which people construct and maintain spatial organizations'.[8] Briony McDonagh proposed a continuity in the ways that medieval and early modern society understood space, landscape and territory.[9] This thesis has bridged these historical

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[7] John Guy observed the increasing popularity of Star Chamber during the period. See Guy, *The Impact of Thomas Wolsey in Star Chamber*, p. 65.
[8] R.D. Sack, *Human Territoriality: Its Theory and History* (Cambridge, 1986), p. 216.
[9] McDonagh, 'Manor houses, churches and settlements', p. 333.

watersheds to reach a similar conclusion; the importance of gentry territories remained constant across both time and status.

There are differences, however, in how the gentry were using their lands. This thesis has shown that each branch of the hierarchy gained financial revenue from their lands, but that there was a tendency towards leasing at the apex and towards mixed husbandry at the bottom. It has therefore contributed to the theory that certain members of the gentry were returning to direct demesne farming during our period. The changing composition of family estates reflected the gentry's ability to adapt to the different priorities of each generation, and to the fluctuating economic climate. Eric Acheson observed that the fifteenth-century Leicestershire gentry 'were not immune from the economic problems of the day, they overcame and survived these difficulties better than most'.[10] The composition of the Neeles' territory at Keythorpe, for example, showed a dramatic inclination towards pasture by the end of the period, which had been predominantly arable at its beginning. Similarly, the sizeable acreages of meadow and arable held by the Turvilles at Thurlaston and their territorial outposts had been enclosed into 17 gardens and 17 orchards by 1563. The estimated amount of gentry arable in Leicestershire declined as pasture rose. Gentry conflict over seemingly insignificant parcels of land – when placed in comparison to the 5,000 acres of pasture held at Ashby de la Zouch by Francis Hastings, earl of Huntingdon, for example – could transcend generations. That estate compositions could change but remained focused on the territorial nucleus reflected the importance of the ancestral connection, also evident in the sustained litigation over Keythorpe against the Neeles.[11]

The gentry, therefore, had the ability to adapt. They had to be confident but not complacent; they had to respond to changes in circumstance.[12] Raluca Radulescu and Alison Truelove noted that gentry culture was 'especially open to reinvention and redefinition toward the end of the medieval period'.[13] Gerard Harriss's doubt concerning Christine Carpenter's arguably sensational comment that 'momentary inattention could

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[10] Acheson, *A Gentry Community*, p. 200.
[11] TNA, E 150/1158/12; STAC 1/1/7; STAC 2/34/1.
[12] Heal and Holmes, *Gentry in England and Wales*, p. 381.
[13] Radulescu and Truelove, *Gentry Culture in Late Medieval England*, p. 14.

breed disaster', appears to be justified.[14] Yet it is true that the gentry were operating in unsettled waters; this thesis has consistently stressed that much of the importance of place lay in the establishment and consolidation of ancestry and legacy. Indeed, Harriss himself observed that 'land underwrote the family: ancient lineage was the expression of continuous landholding, and the foundation of a new lineage depended on the acquisition of sufficient land'.[15]

The gentry's determination to maintain their lineage manifested on the ground in their material culture. Jennifer Hole has drawn attention to the observation of the fourteenth-century Dominican friar, John Bromyard, that 'if they [the gentry] are asked why they spend more on horses, food, clothes and the pomp of this world, more than their land, rents and revenues are worth, their response is that for honour, family, blood and status they must show liberality'.[16] Albeit for an earlier period, Bromyard's remark arguably rings true for our gentry. The majority of gentry expenditure was generated by and re-invested into the acquisition and defence of land for the exhibition of their own identity, and was anchored in place. The gentry navigated changes in religious policy, agricultural methods, rising inflation and social discontent; amidst it all, their determination to protect and continue their ancestral connections remained. Land was indeed the gentry's most prized possession, but it was *place* that expressed who the gentry were, and who they believed themselves to be.

Thesis limitations and implications for future research

It is only by recognising the limitations of this doctoral study that possible avenues for future development can be established. This thesis stressed the importance of place in our understanding of gentry identity. Yet it has done so from the perspective of just one county. John Speed produced over 60 maps of individual counties in England and Wales in the early seventeenth century; there remains much work to be done. The thesis evidently maintains the strengths of the county-based approach. This was predominantly

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[14] G.L. Harriss, 'The dimensions of politics' in R.H. Britnell and A.J. Pollard (eds.), *The McFarlane Legacy: Studies in Late Medieval Politics and Society* (Stroud, 1995), p. 3; Carpenter, *Locality and Polity*, p. 287.
[15] Harriss, 'Dimensions of politics' in Britnell and Pollard, *The McFarlane Legacy*, p. 2.
[16] J. Hole, *Economic Ethics in Late Medieval England, 1300-1500* (Charn, 2016), p. 92.

in accordance with the methodology of contemporary of taxation records and governmental identification. But the focus on Leicestershire during our period eliminates the perspective of the gentry writ large. Inhabitants of different regions were subject to dominant aristocracies or duchies, proximity to international borders and alternative county topographies, for example. Based on the evidence in the chapters above, however, the author is convinced that the intense relationship with place found in Leicestershire will also be found amongst the gentry throughout England and Wales.

Our period and the Leicestershire perspective has resulted in certain types of sources being favoured over others. This has often been dictated by survival. Quarter sessions records for Leicestershire have not survived for our period, but the earliest cases for Middlesex, for example, date to the mid-sixteenth century. These records and other series, such as those produced by the court of King's Bench, may further illuminate the influence of place through local disputes. Moreover, had this study been undertaken for a different county, such as Norfolk, the correspondence of the Paston family may have offered an alternative perspective for the earlier part of our period. There are substantial volumes of unpublished gentry correspondence held in local archives which might further illuminate the relationship between gentry and place.

The influence of place on cultural identity cannot be exclusively limited to the gentry without further investigation. Studies have argued that the identity of the peasantry was also affected by their local environment, for example.[17] The omission of those groups occupying the social rungs above and below the gentry, the yeomanry and aristocracy was necessary for the volume of data to be managed within the timeframe of the thesis. Our encounters with the Leicestershire gentry certainly suggest that place was a prominent influence in gentry identity, but we cannot measure how gentry-specific this phenomenon was without further research. For example, we might predict that those at the apex of contemporary society experienced a lesser connection with place because the geographical concentrations of aristocratic landholdings were weaker. Neither were

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[17] See for example P.R. Schofield, 'Seals and the peasant economy in England and Marcher Wales, *c*.1300' in S. Solway (ed.), *Medieval Coins and Seals: Constructing Identity, Signifying Power* (Turnhout, 2015), pp. 347-358; S. Kilby, 'A different world? Reconstructing the peasant environment in medieval Elton', *Medieval Settlement Research*, 25 (2010), pp. 72-77; S. Kilby, *Peasant Perspectives on the Medieval Landscape: A Study of Three Communities* (University of Hertfordshire Press, in preparation).

aristocratic titles always geographically accurate; the seat of the dukes of Norfolk was in Sussex, and the Brandon dukes of Suffolk came from Cambridgeshire. Clearly, this observation requires further development, but it could suggest that 'placelessness' increased in parallel with social status during the period.

Finally, extending the time parameters of this thesis might illuminate how the relationship between gentry and place changed over time. Moving forward into the seventeenth century, scholars of this later period have tended to pay more attention to different manifestations of identity. Andrew Hopper observed, for example, a 'growing interdisciplinary engagement with the self-fashioning of early modern elites'.[18] Particular reference has also been made to influences of localism and regionalism during the period.[19] In Leicestershire alone, the allegiances of the Greys and the Hastings to the parliamentarians and the royalists respectively eventually polarised local society.[20] We have encountered how 'our' gentry responded to the civil and religious upheaval of their time through the medium of place. How, then, might their experiences of and affiliation with place have adapted to the troubled waters of the English Civil Wars?

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[18] A. Hopper, 'The self-fashioning of gentry turncoats during the English Civil Wars', *Journal of British Studies*, 49, no. 2 (2010), p. 236.

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LATE MEDIEVAL LEICESTERSHIRE, *c*.1460-1560

VOLUME 2

APPENDICES

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Table of Figures

Author's note

This volume is a companion volume composed of appendices. Its contents provide additional background context to the main thesis which permit the reader to see the full dataset for themselves. The first appendix details a list of the families defined as Leicestershire gentry by the thesis. It indicates where the families are represented in the source material, including the inquisitions *post mortem*, probate records, taxation and the courts of Chancery and Star Chamber. It is hoped that this information will give a sense of how the thesis has been constructed from a methodological perspective, and offers insight into how a comparative source-based study might be conducted. The remaining appendices are cartographic and represent the entire dataset of maps generated from the above primary material. They include gentry residences extracted from Henry VIII's pardon roll of 1509, and JP territories and gentry land use compositions reconstructed using the inquisitions *post mortem*. The reader should note that the territory and land use maps represent the freehold lands held at death only. The maps have been made accessible because it was felt that full transparency was important. Their provision shows that the samples in the thesis were not based on anomalous or unrepresentative data. As with Volume 1, this document is best viewed in a digital format for the magnification of images as required.

Leicestershire gentry families

Gentry surname	Court of Chancery	JP(s)	Deeds	Feet of fines	Inventories	IPMs	Court of Star Chamber	Taxation	Wills	GIS maps available		Pardon roll
										Territory	Land use	
Allen			✓			✓	✓				✓	
Andrew	✓		✓			✓			✓			
Ap Rhys							✓					
Appleby	✓			✓		✓			✓		✓	
Ashby*	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Aston	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓		✓		✓	✓
Babington	✓		✓			✓		✓	✓			
Beaumont*	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Belgrave	✓			✓		✓		✓	✓			
Bellers	✓	✓		✓		✓			✓			
Berkeley	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Boteler	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓		✓			
Boyville	✓	✓				✓	✓		✓			
Brabazon	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓		✓		✓	
Bradbourne						✓			✓			
Bradgate	✓					✓			✓		✓	
Brokesby	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Burrough	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Burton	✓			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Cave		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	

NB: Names marked with an asterisk (*) represent multiple branches of the same family.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Coton	✓			✓		✓		✓			✓	
Croft						✓					✓	
Curzon	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓			✓	
Danet	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓			✓	
Dansey	✓	✓	✓			✓		✓				
Danvers	✓			✓		✓		✓				
Digby*	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Entwistle	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓				
Farnham*	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓			✓	
Faunte	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓			✓	
Ferrers						✓		✓				
Fielding	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Flower						✓		✓			✓	
Foljambe	✓					✓	✓	✓				
Foster						✓						
Fowler	✓			✓		✓	✓	✓				
Grey*	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓			✓	
Harcourt	✓					✓		✓				
Harvey	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
Haselrigg	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
Hastings	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓				✓
Hotoft	✓	✓				✓		✓		✓		
Jakes	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
Keble*	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓		✓	✓	✓

Name	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Langham				✓	✓		✓		✓	✓		✓	✓
Langley				✓			✓		✓	✓			
Mallory							✓		✓	✓			
Manners				✓			✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
Marmyon		✓		✓		✓	✓					✓	
Moton				✓			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Neele		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Neville*		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Noble				✓			✓					✓	
Nowell		✓							✓	✓	✓		✓
Palmer				✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Perwych				✓			✓		✓			✓	✓
Pierpoint				✓		✓	✓		✓			✓	✓
Pulteney	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Purefoy		✓		✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Radcliffe*	✓			✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ruskin				✓			✓		✓			✓	✓
Sacheverell	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sapcote				✓			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Saunders				✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Seagrave				✓			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sherard		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Shirley	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Skeffington	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Skillington								✓				✓	
Smith*	✓		✓		✓		✓	✓		✓		✓	✓
Somersall	✓				✓		✓	✓					
Sothyll			✓	✓	✓		✓	✓				✓	
Staresmore	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓			
Staunton	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓					✓
Strelley	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Sutton	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Swillington	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Turpin	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Turville	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Villers*	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Vincent	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Waldram	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓				
Wightman		✓			✓			✓					
Wigston	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓					
Winter	✓		✓				✓	✓				✓	
Woodford	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓					
Wyville	✓						✓	✓					

Pardon roll residences
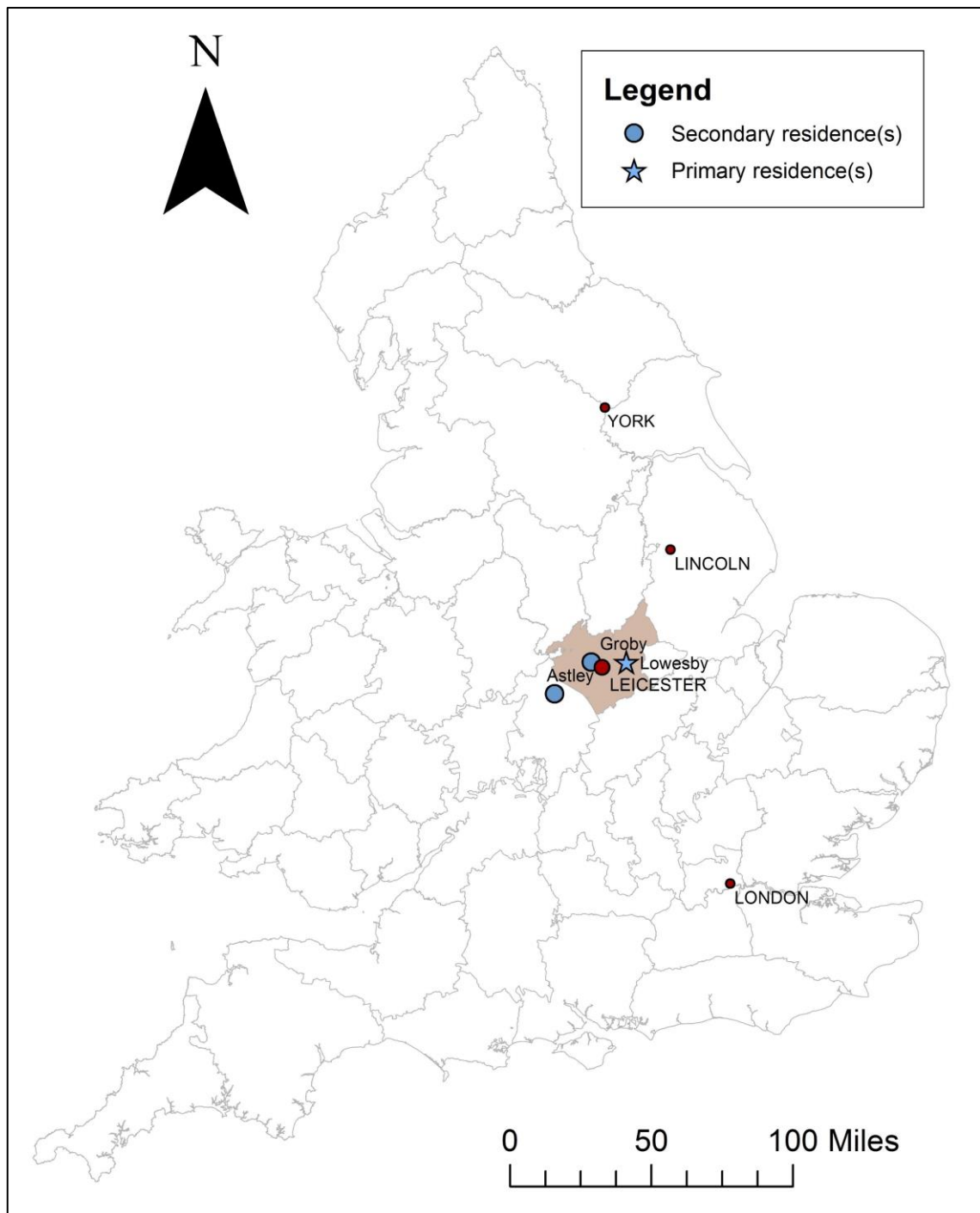
Figure 1 Places listed for William Ashby, esquire, in the general pardon.[1]

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[1]   J.S. Brewer (ed.), *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII*, 1, 1509 (London, 1862), p. 1.
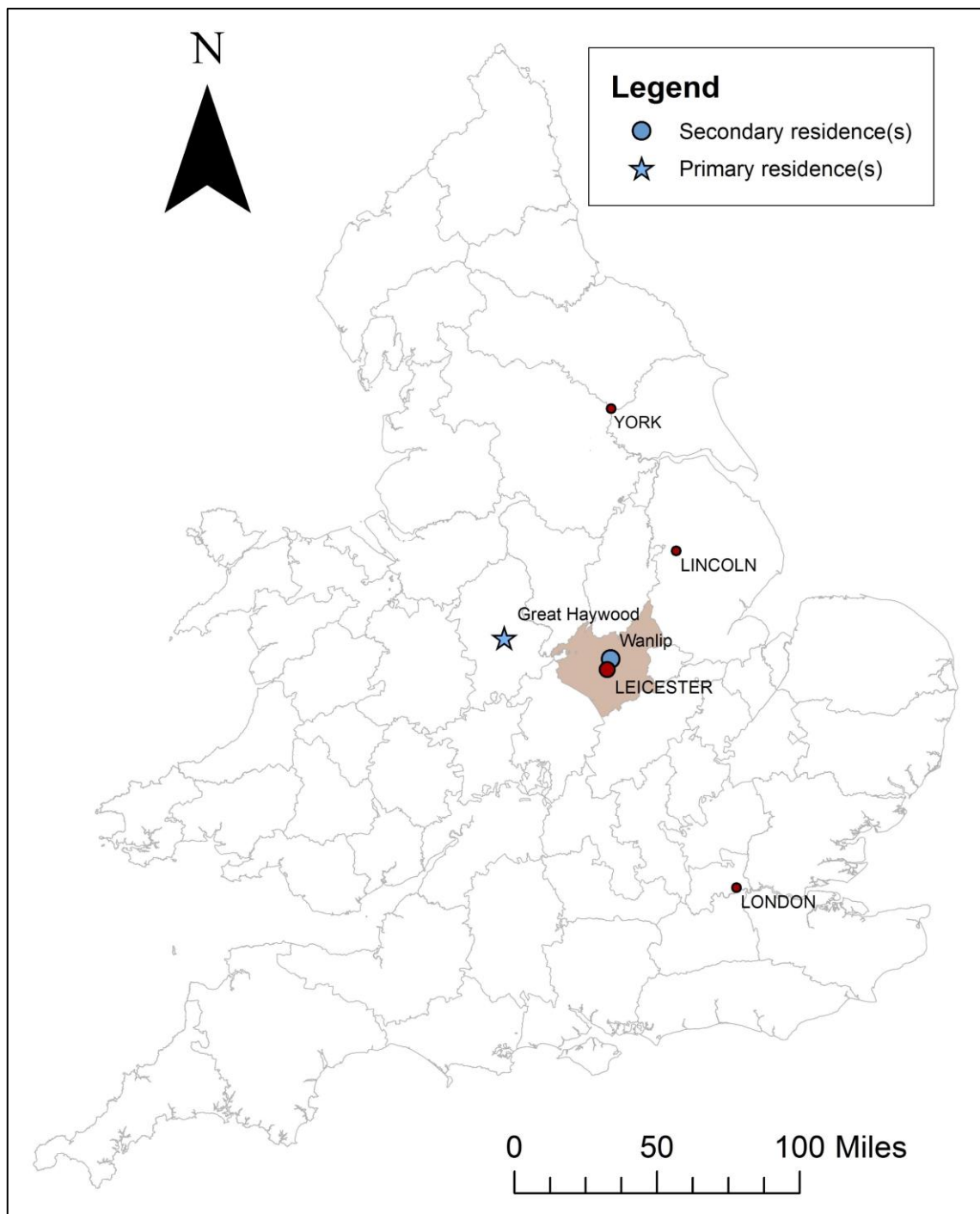
Figure 2 Places listed for Sir John Aston in the general pardon.[2]

[2]   Ibid.
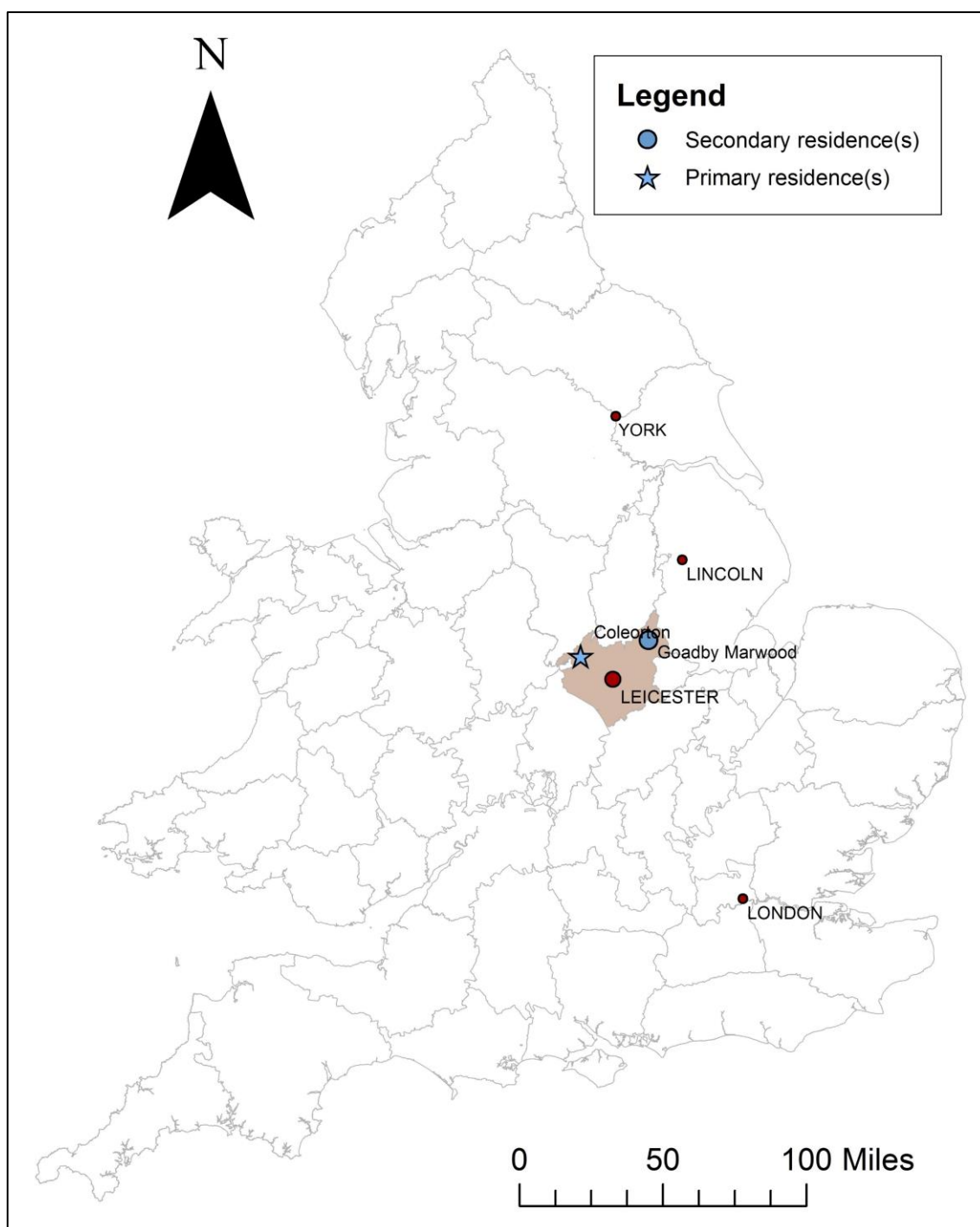
Figure 3 Places listed for John Beaumont, esquire, in the general pardon.[3]

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3   Ibid.

Figure 4 Places listed for Bartholomew Brokesby, esquire, in the general pardon.[4]

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[4] Ibid.
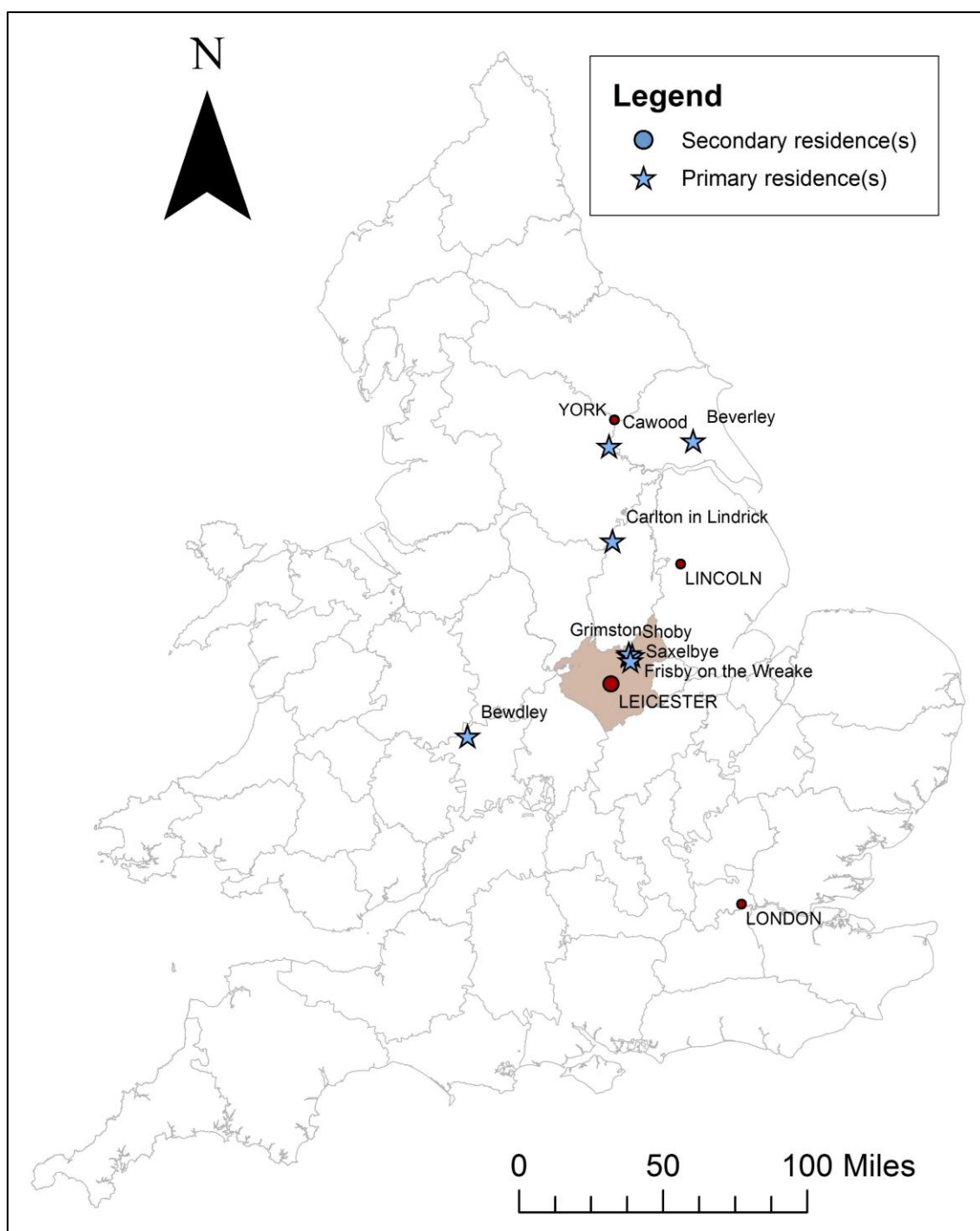
Figure 5 Places listed for Robert Brokesby, gentleman, in the general pardon.[5]

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[5] Ibid.
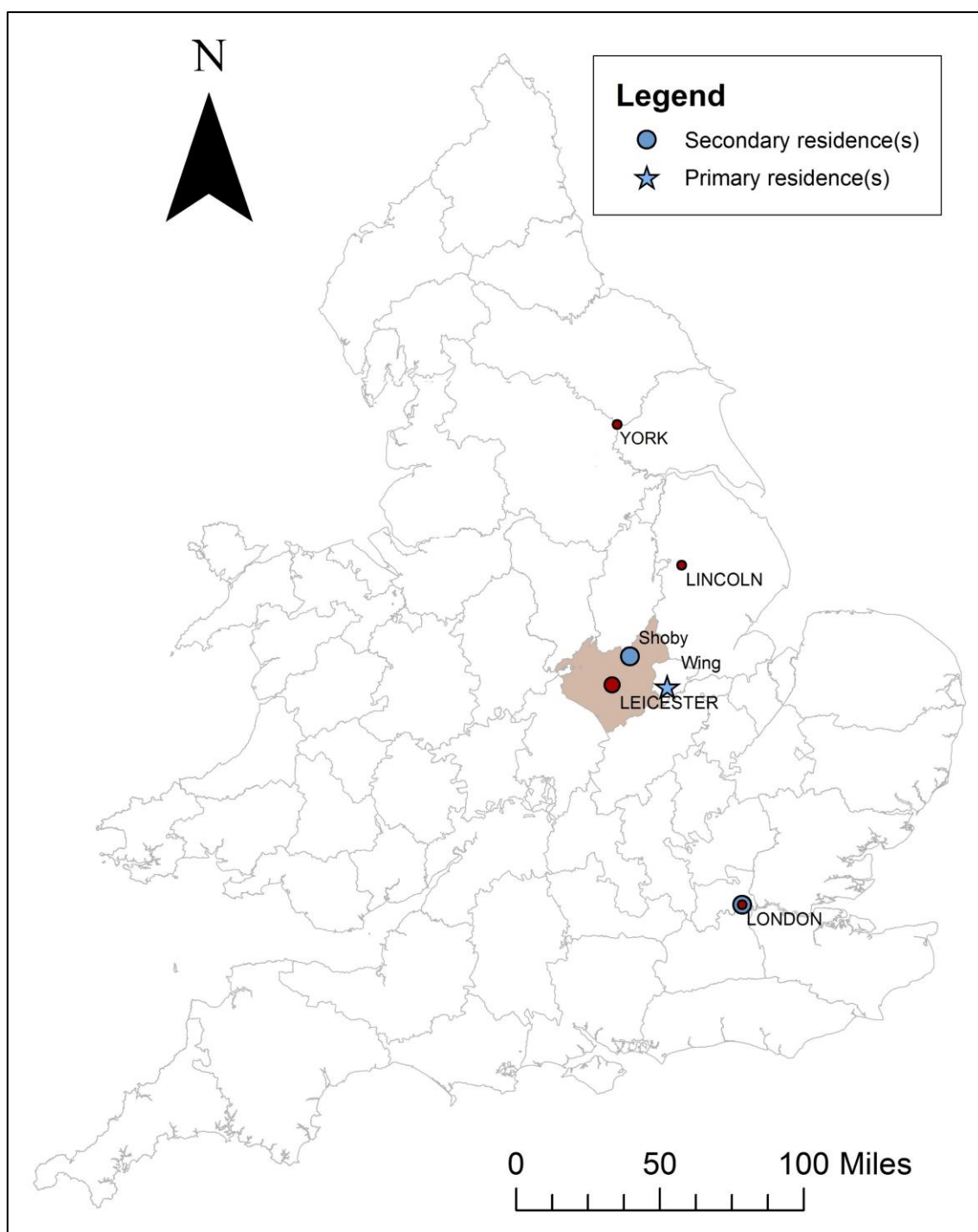
Figure 6 Places listed for Thomas Brokesby, gentleman, in the general pardon.[6]

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6   Ibid.

Figure 7 Places listed for William Brokesby, esquire, in the general pardon.[7]

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[7] Ibid.
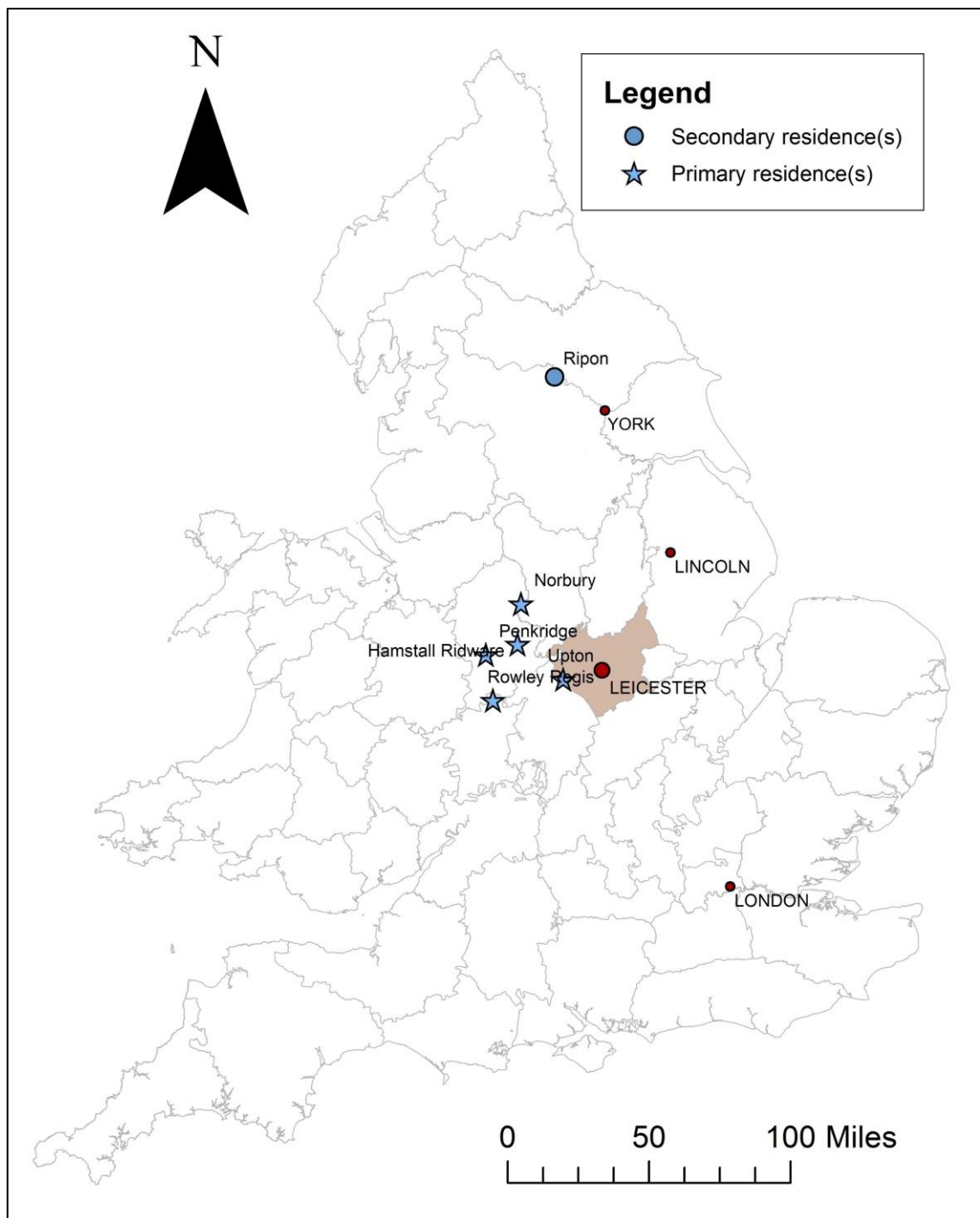
Figure 8 Places listed for John Fitzherbert, esquire, of Norbury, Derbyshire, in the general pardon.[8]

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[8] Ibid.
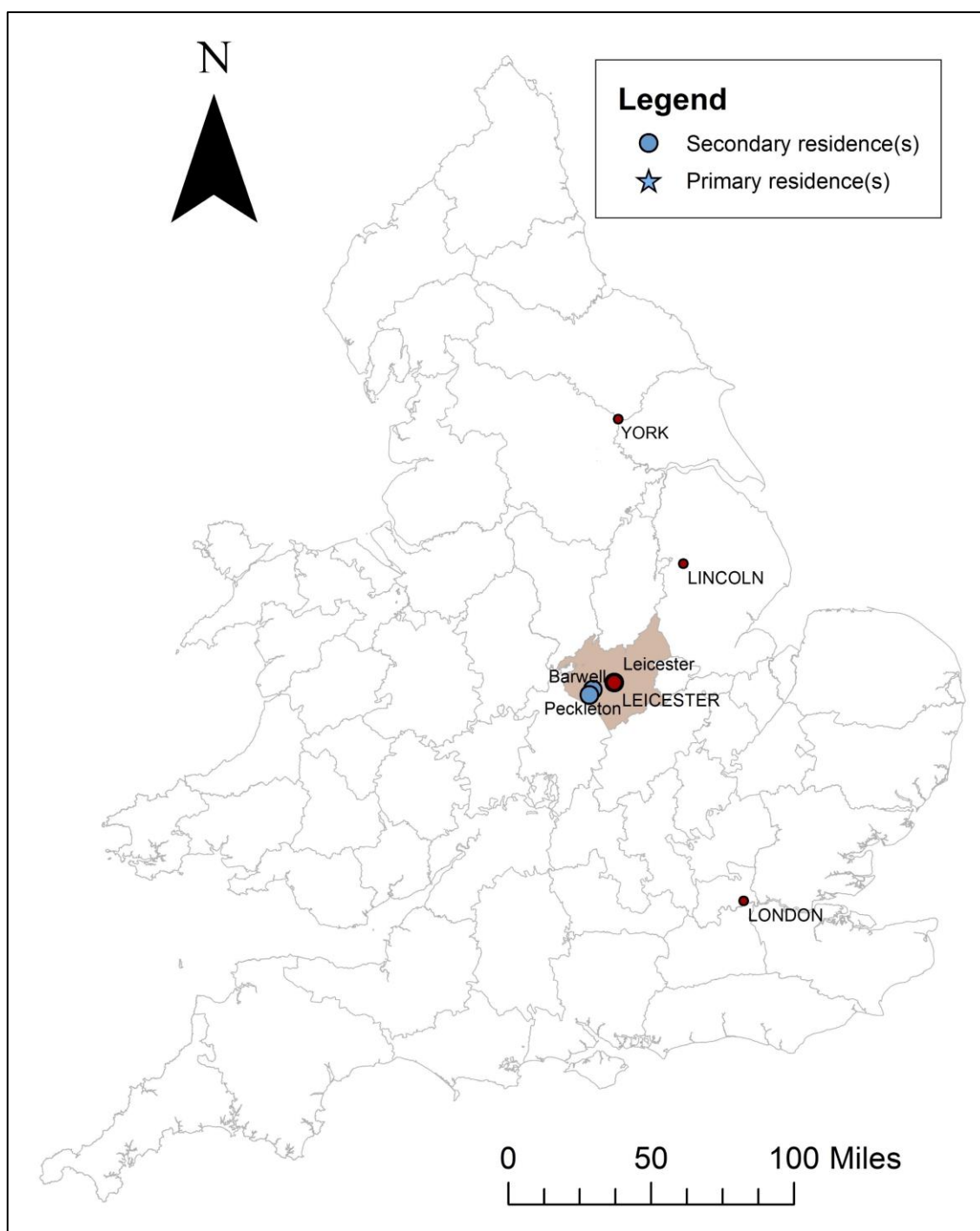
Figure 9 Places listed for Thomas Harvey, esquire, in the general pardon.[9]

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[9]   Ibid.
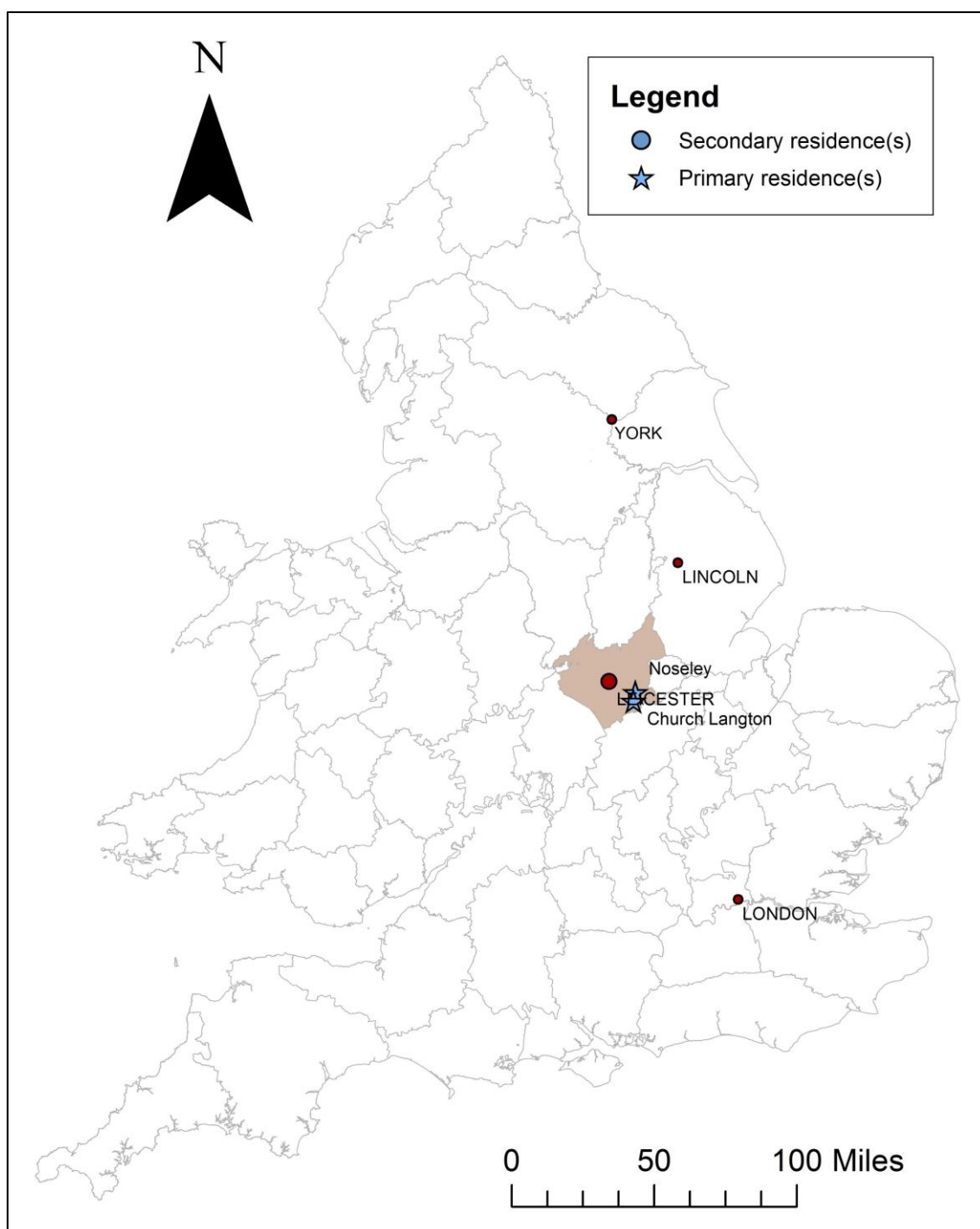
Figure 10 Places listed for Thomas Haselrigg, esquire, in the general pardon.[10]

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[10]   Ibid.
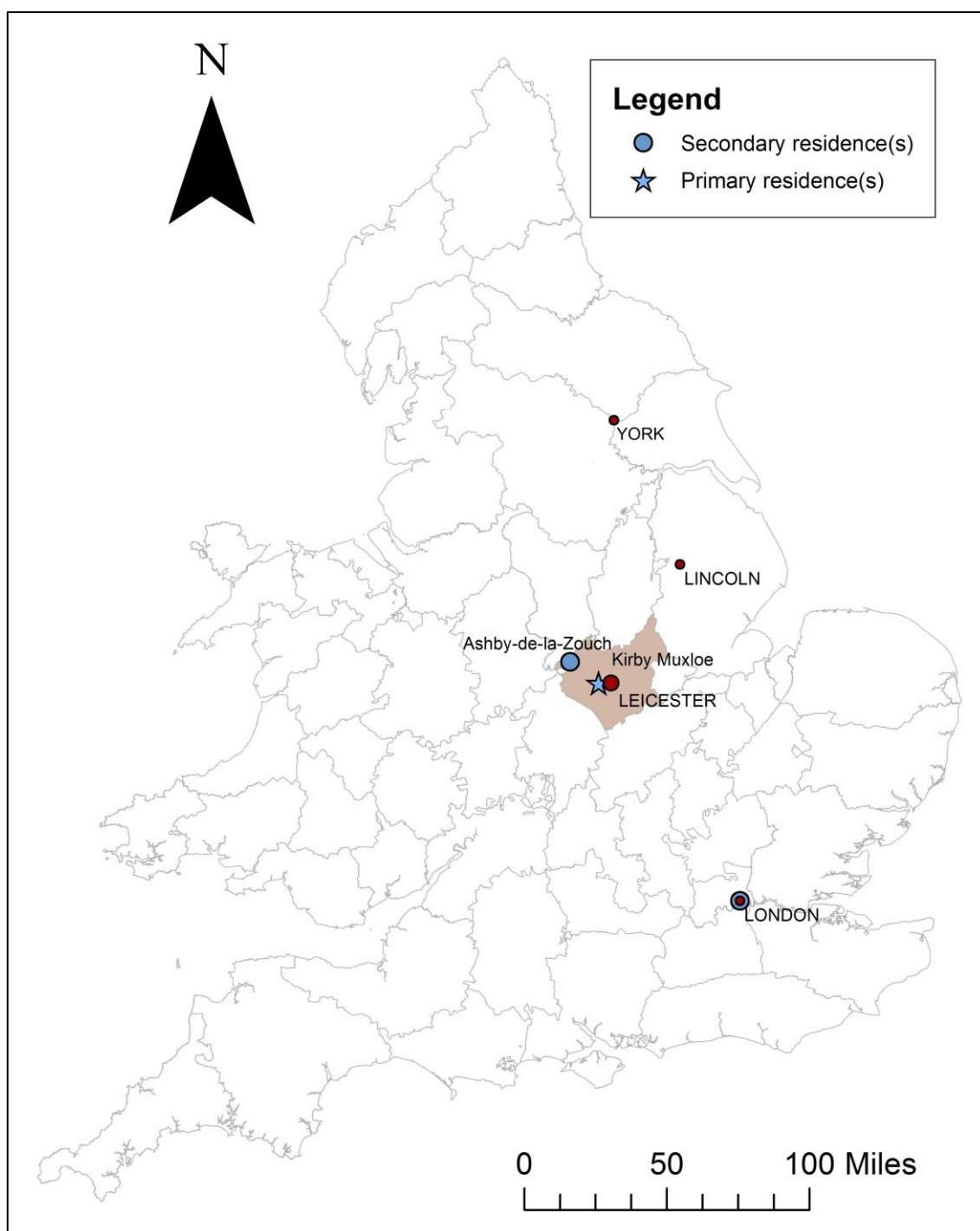
Figure 11 Places listed for Sir George Hastings in the general pardon.[11]

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[11]   Ibid.
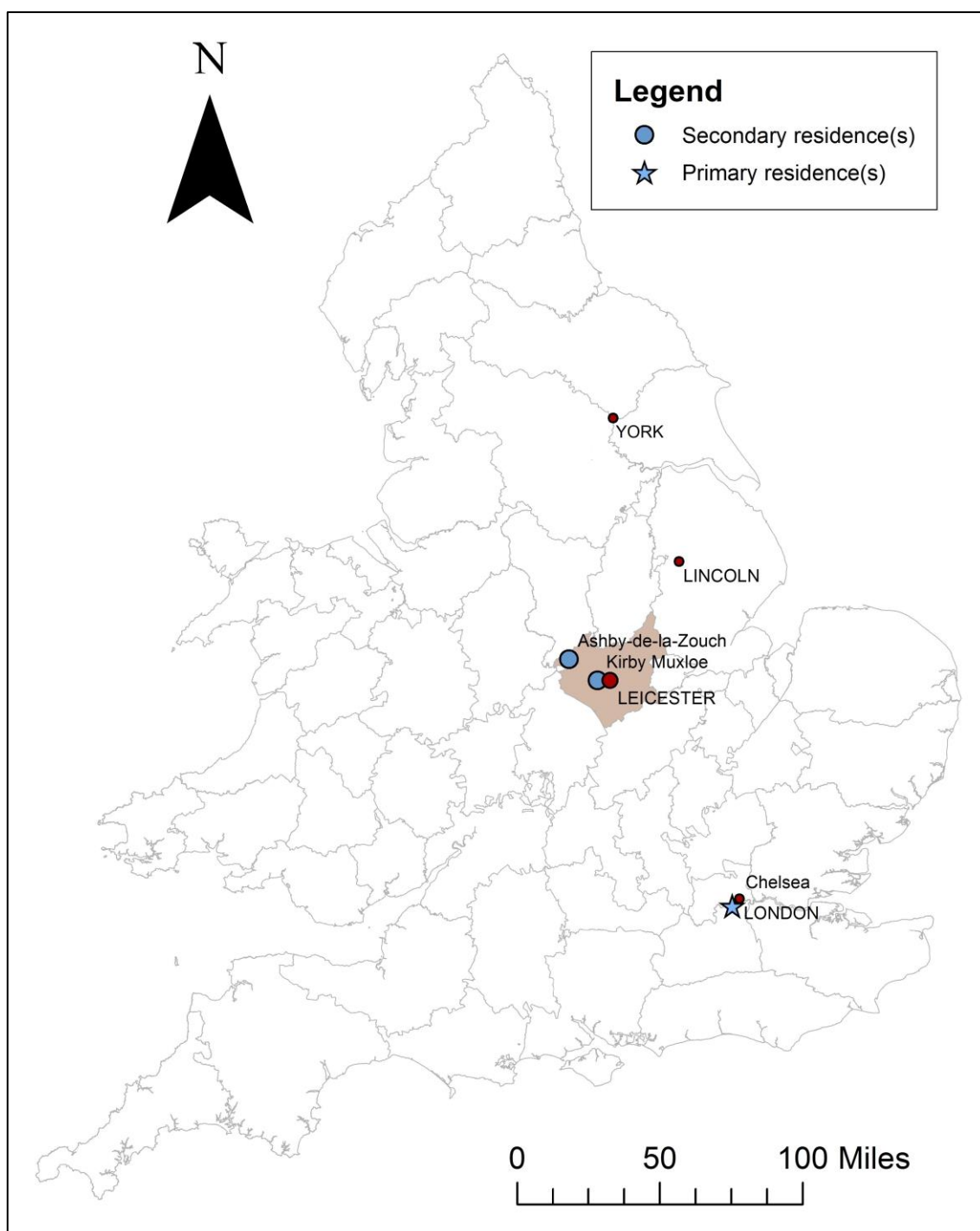
Figure 12 Places listed for William Hastings, esquire, in the general pardon.[12]

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[12]   Ibid.
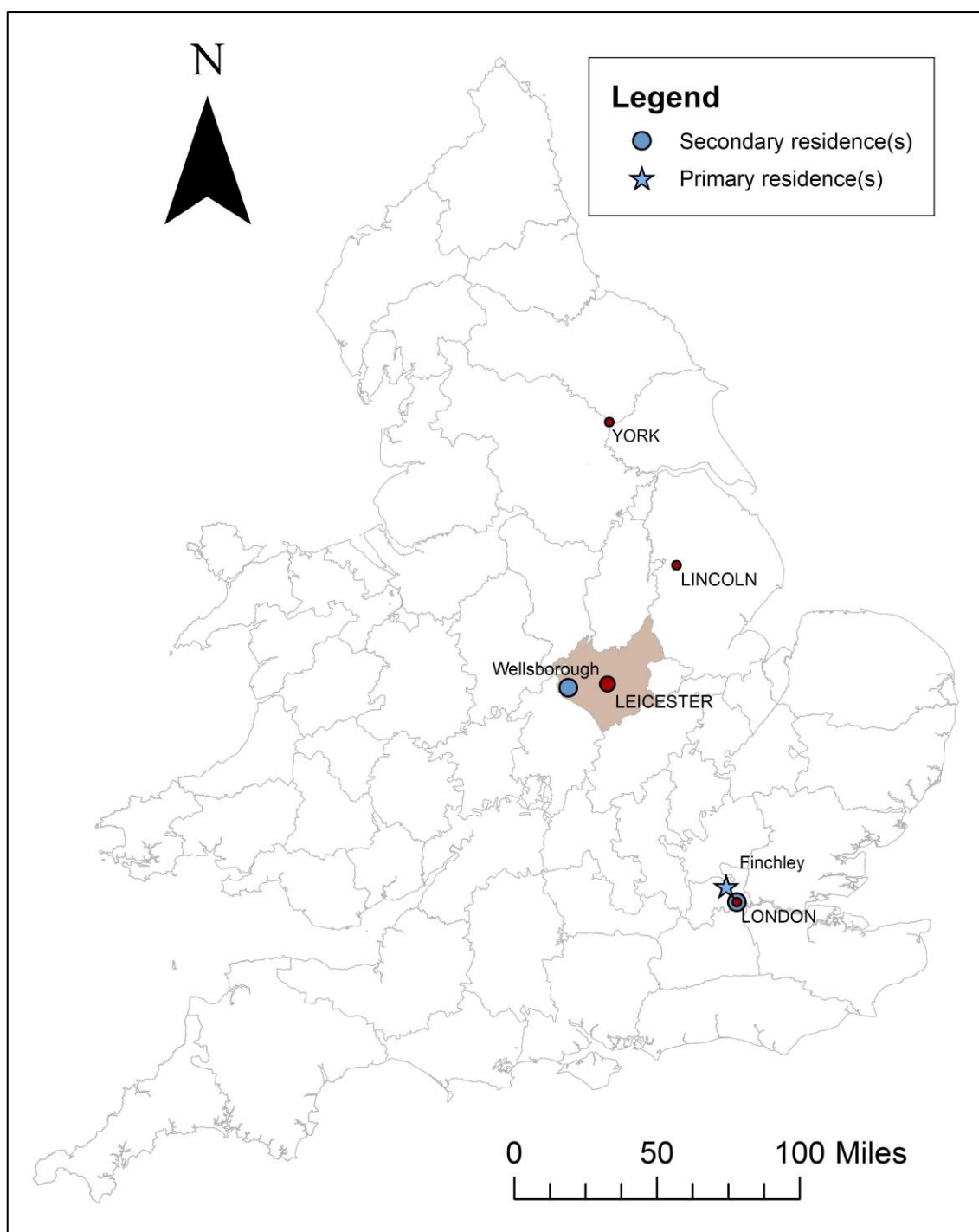
Figure 13 Places listed for Thomas Jakes, gentleman, in the general pardon.[13]

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[13] Ibid.
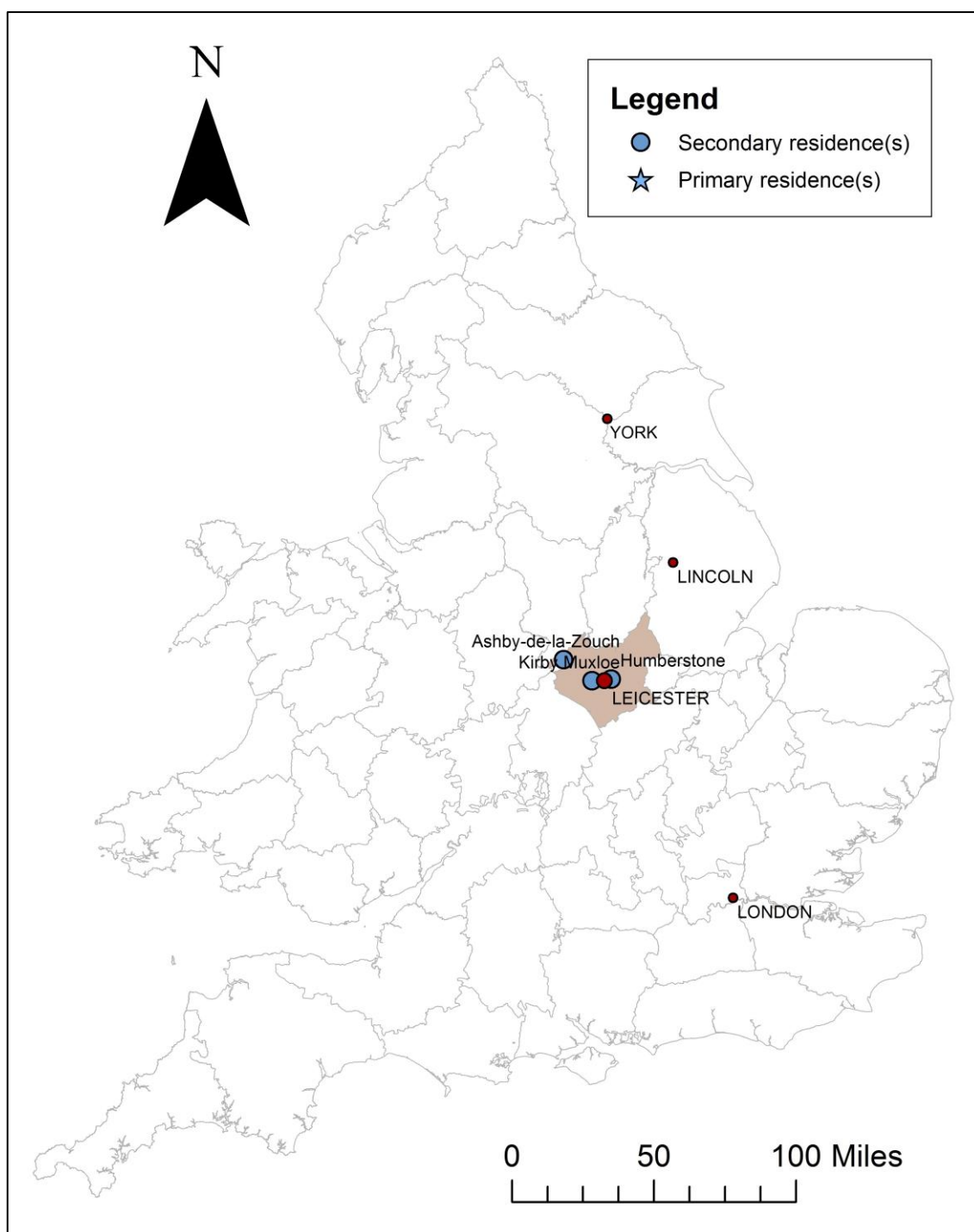
Figure 14 Places listed for Walter Keble, gentleman, in the general pardon.[14]

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[14] Ibid.
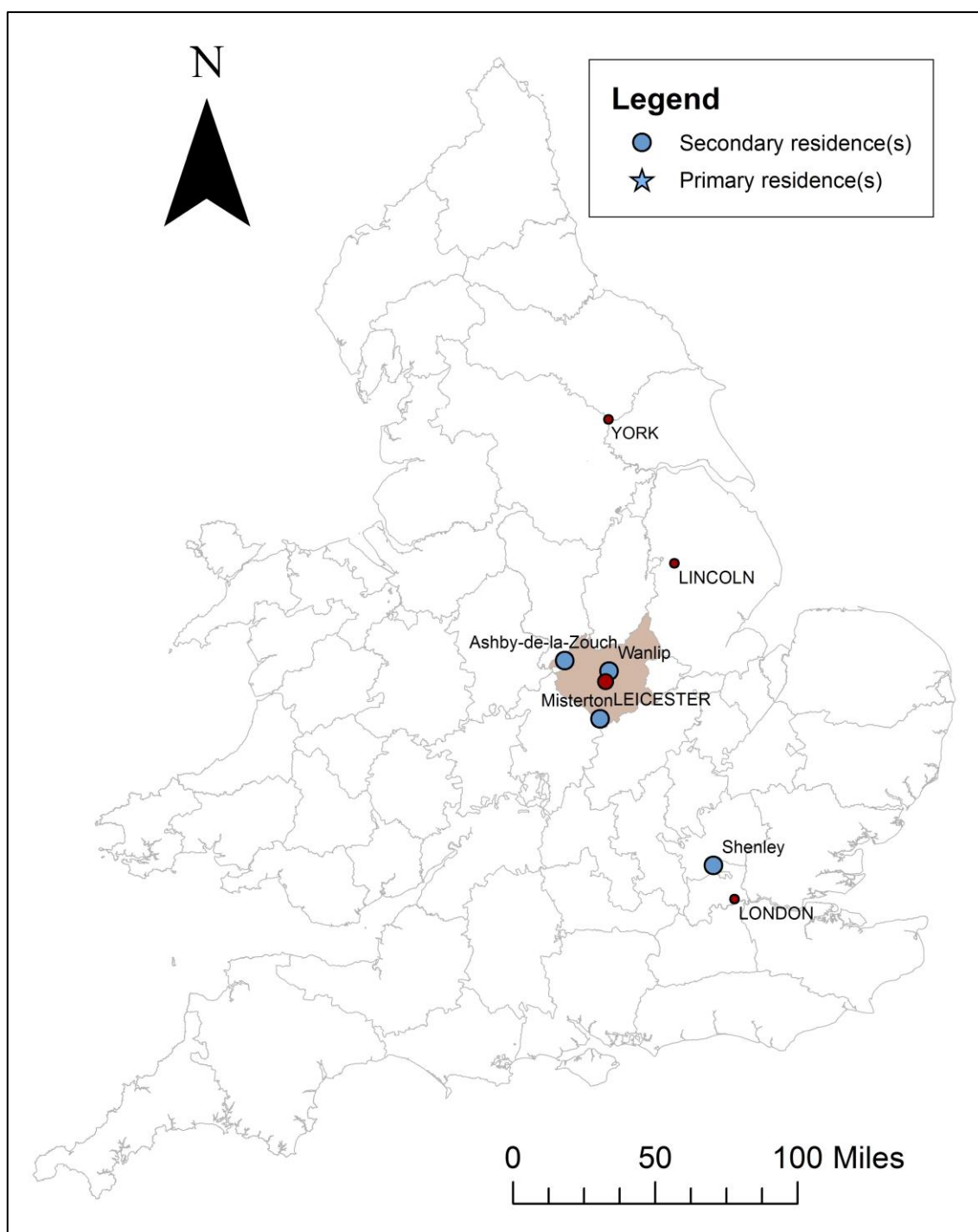
Figure 15 Places listed for Thomas Pulteney, esquire, in the general pardon.[15]

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[15]   Ibid.
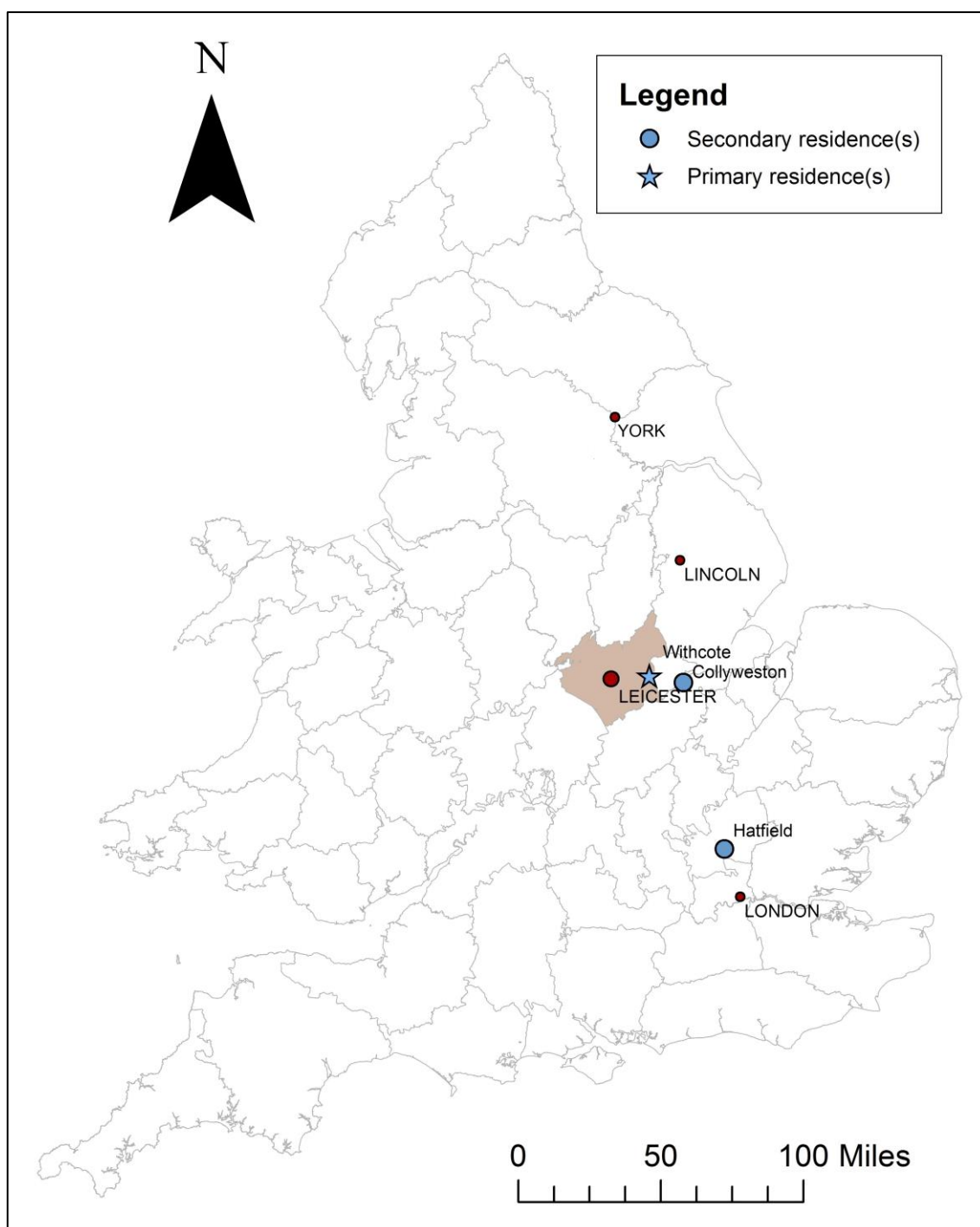
Figure 16 Places listed for Roger Radcliffe, esquire, in the general pardon.[16]

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[16]   Ibid.
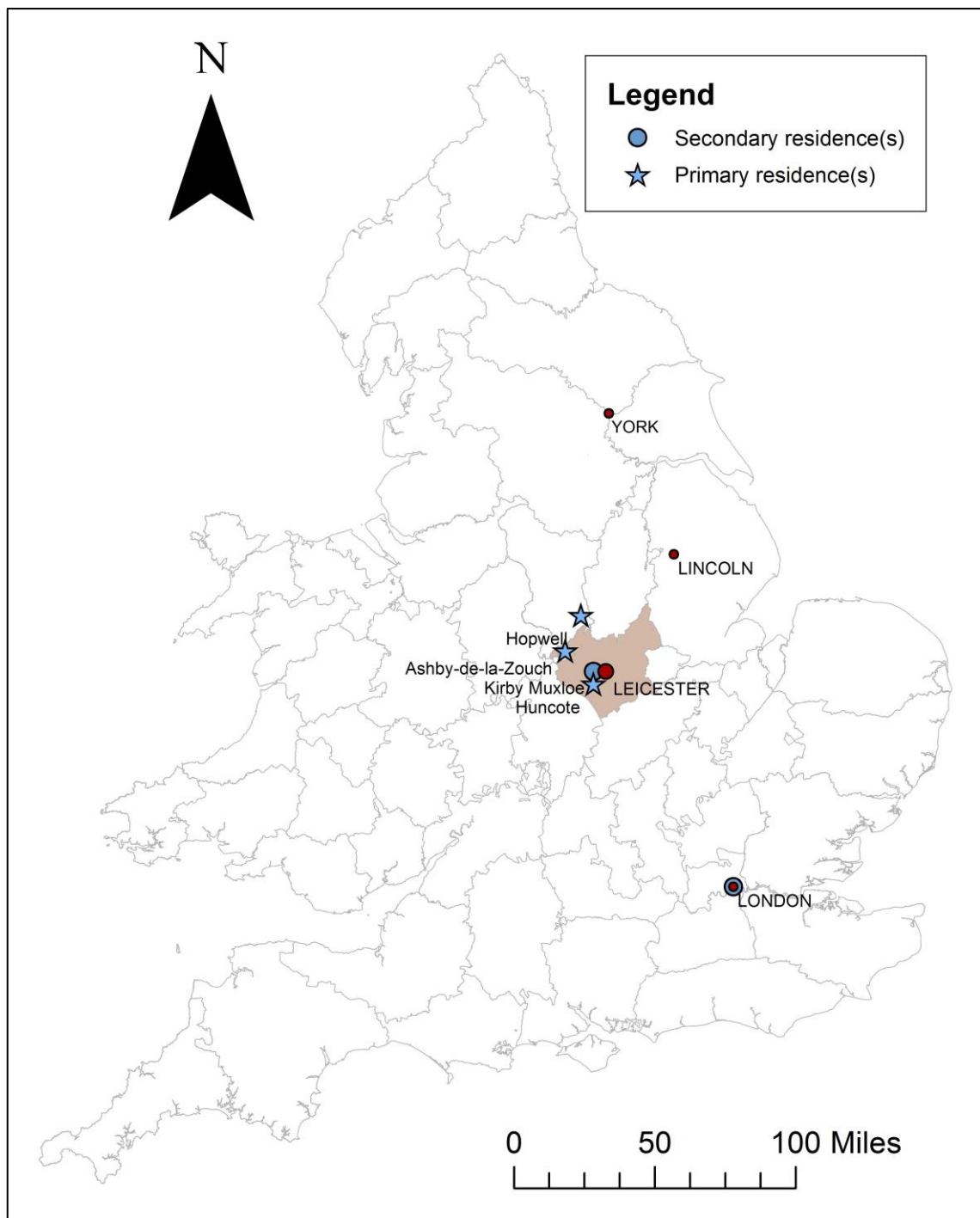
Figure 17 Places listed for Sir Richard Sacheverell in the general pardon.[17]

17   Ibid.
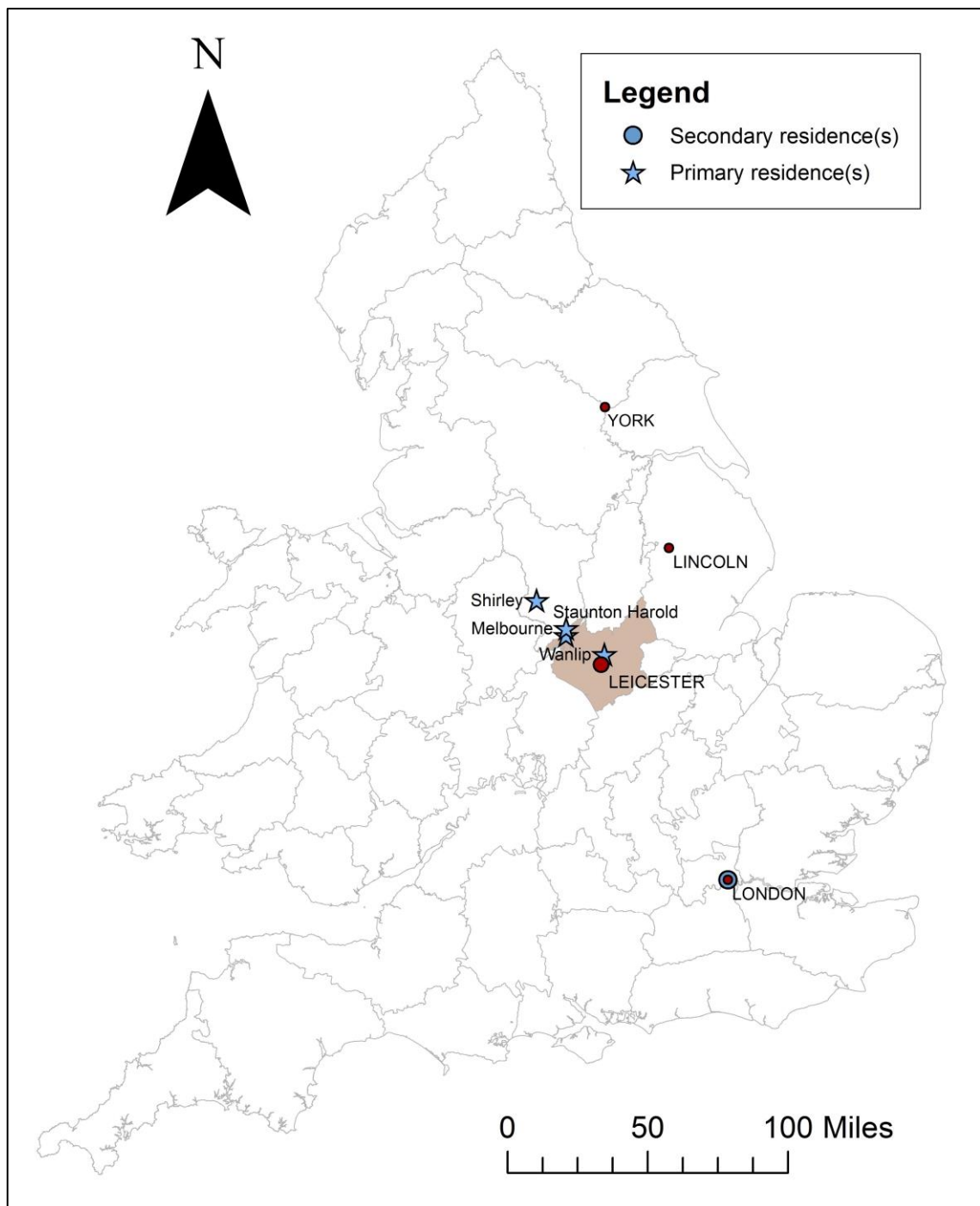
Figure 18 Places listed for Sir Ralph Shirley in the general pardon.[18]

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[18]   Ibid.
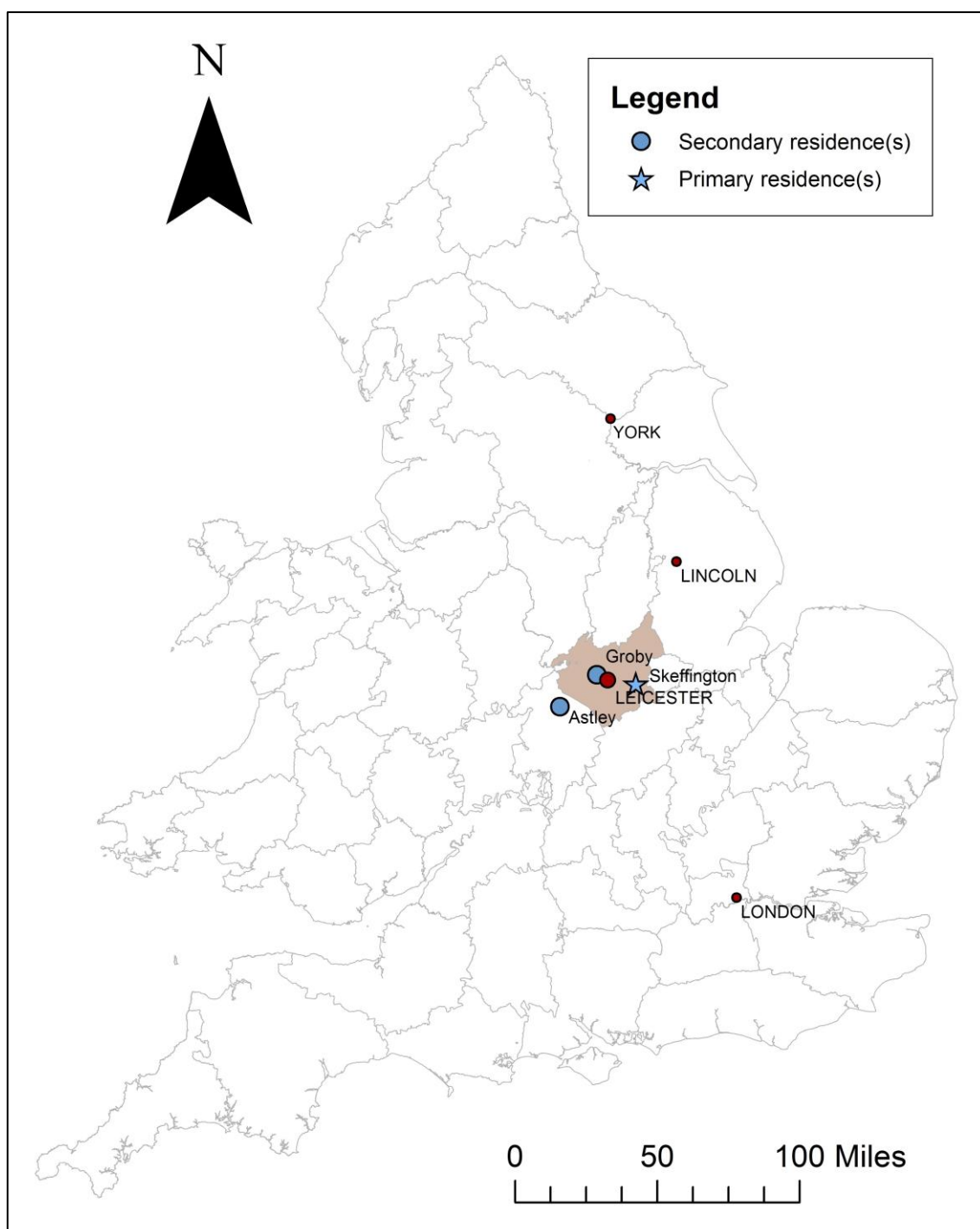
Figure 19 Places listed for William Skeffington, esquire, in the general pardon.[19]

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[19]   Ibid.
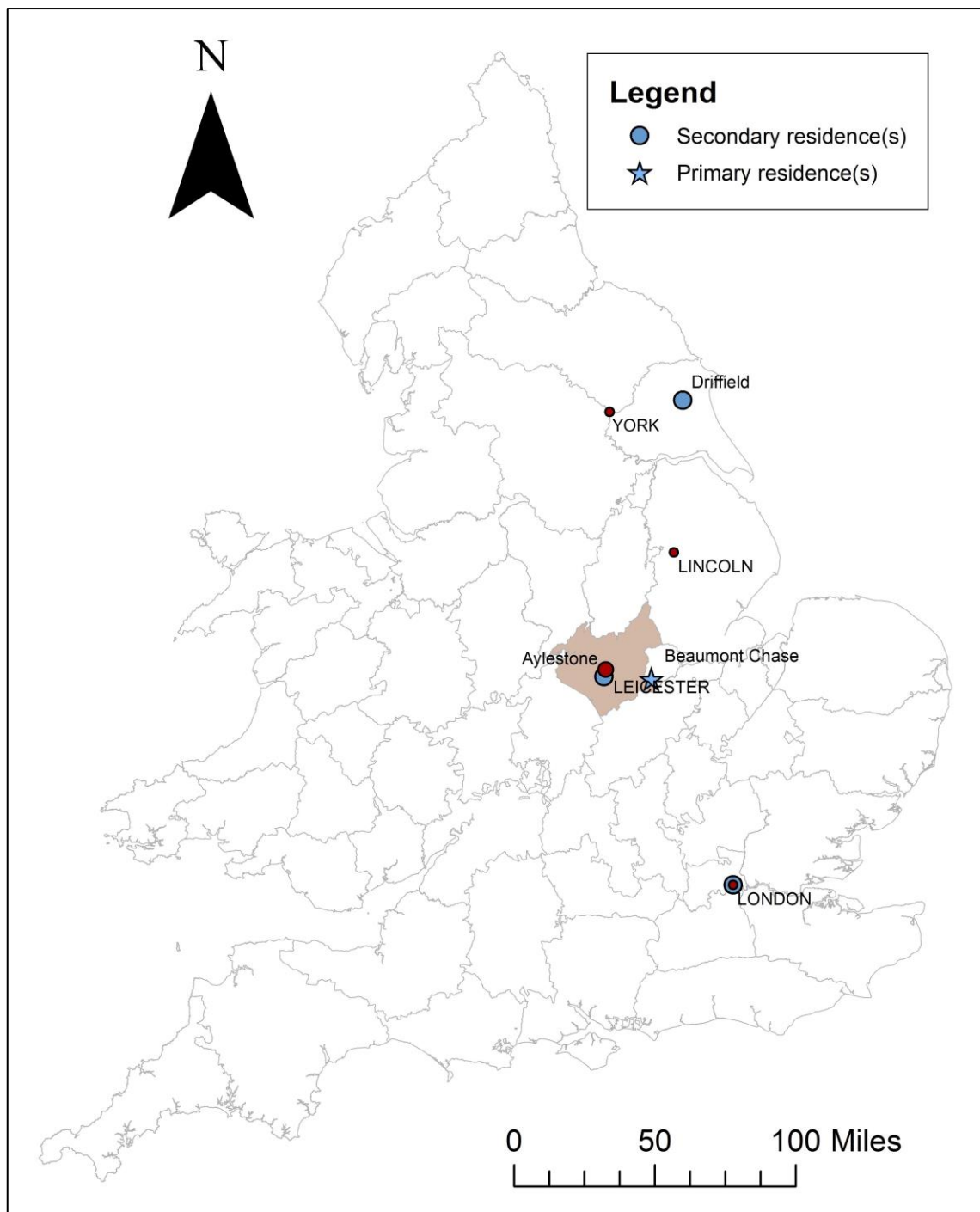
Figure 20 Places listed for Ralph Swillington, gentleman, in the general pardon.[20]

[20] Ibid.
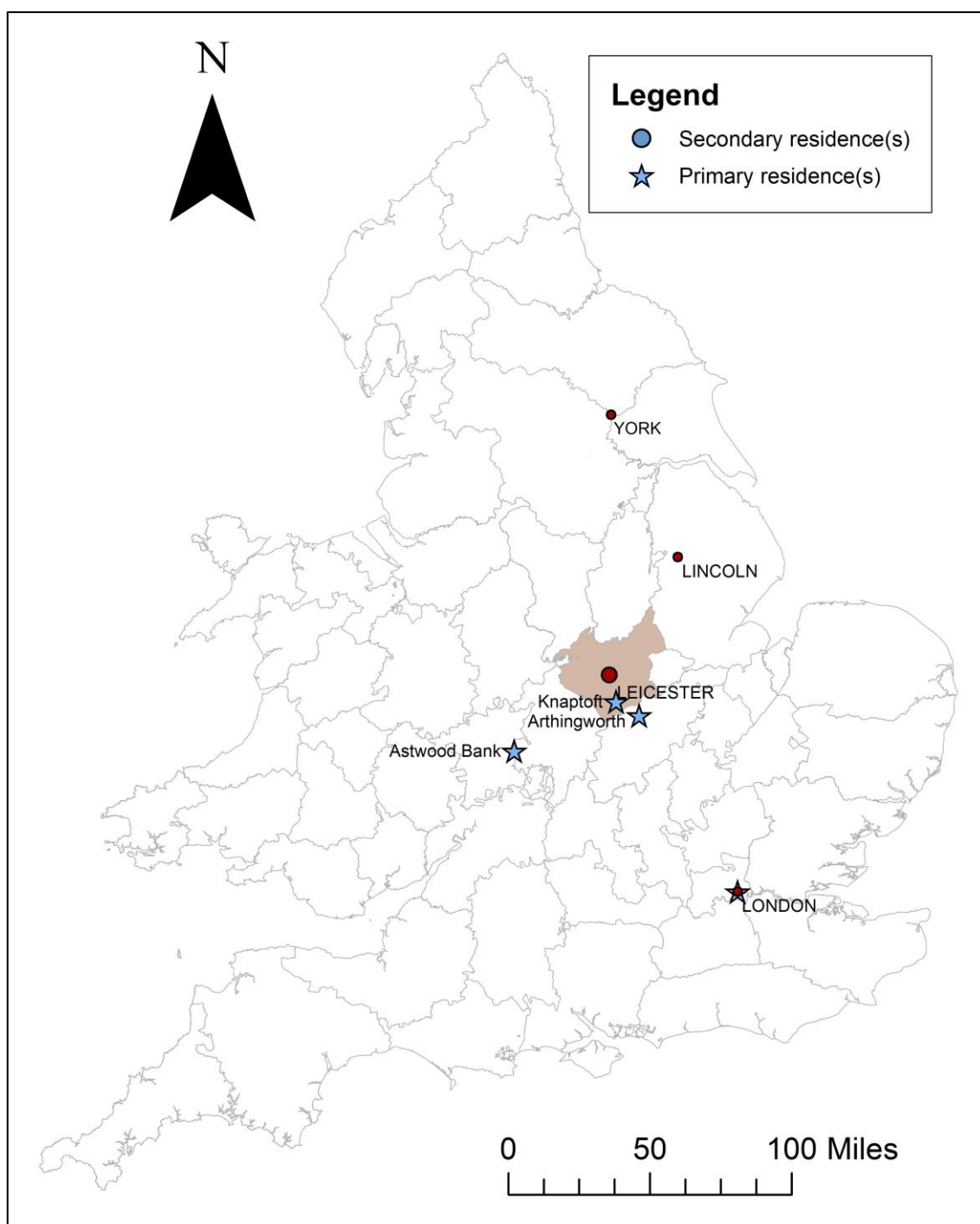
Figure 21 Places listed for William Turpin, gentleman, in the general pardon.[21]

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[21] Ibid.
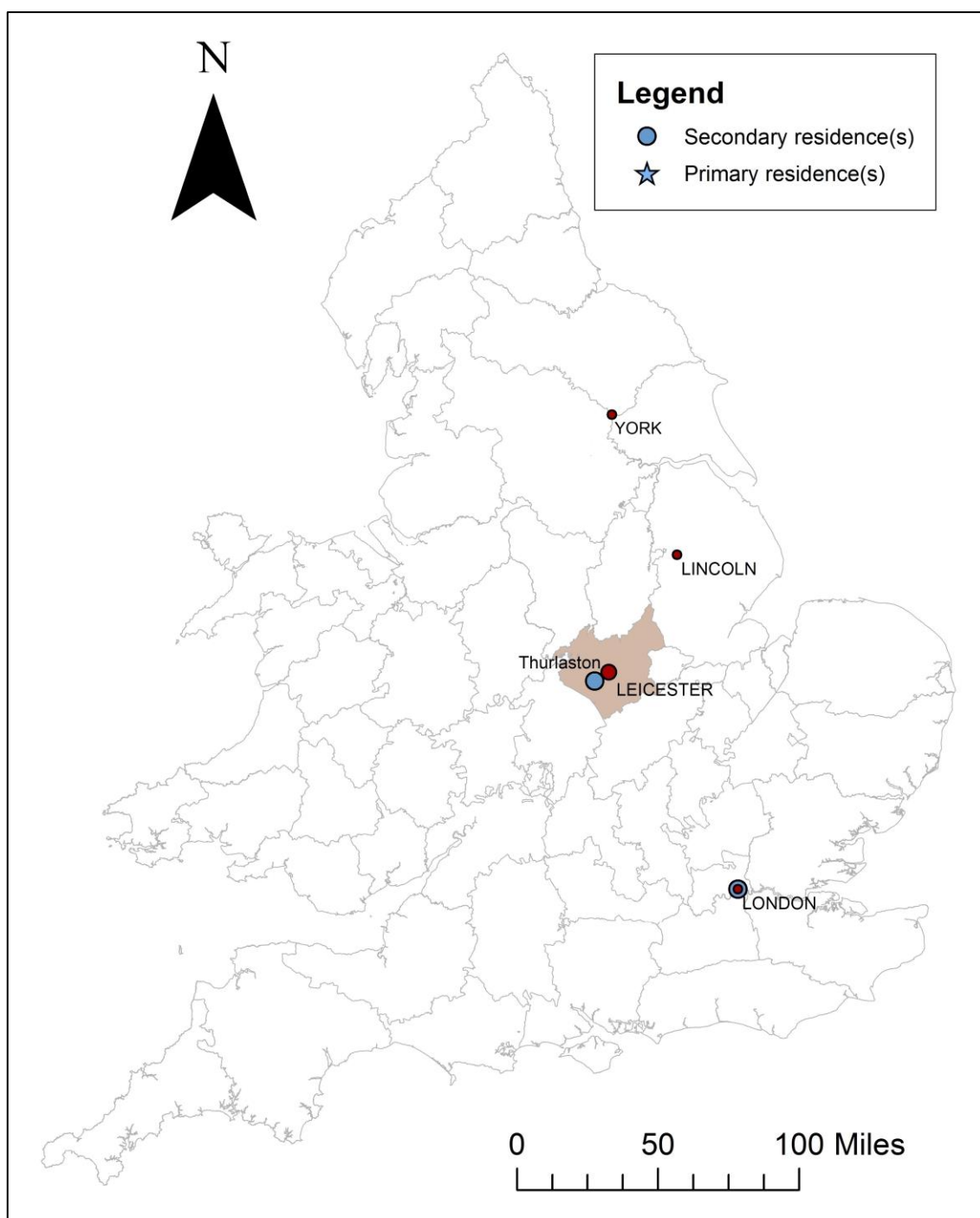
Figure 22 Places listed for William Turville, esquire, in the general pardon.[22]

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[22]   Ibid.
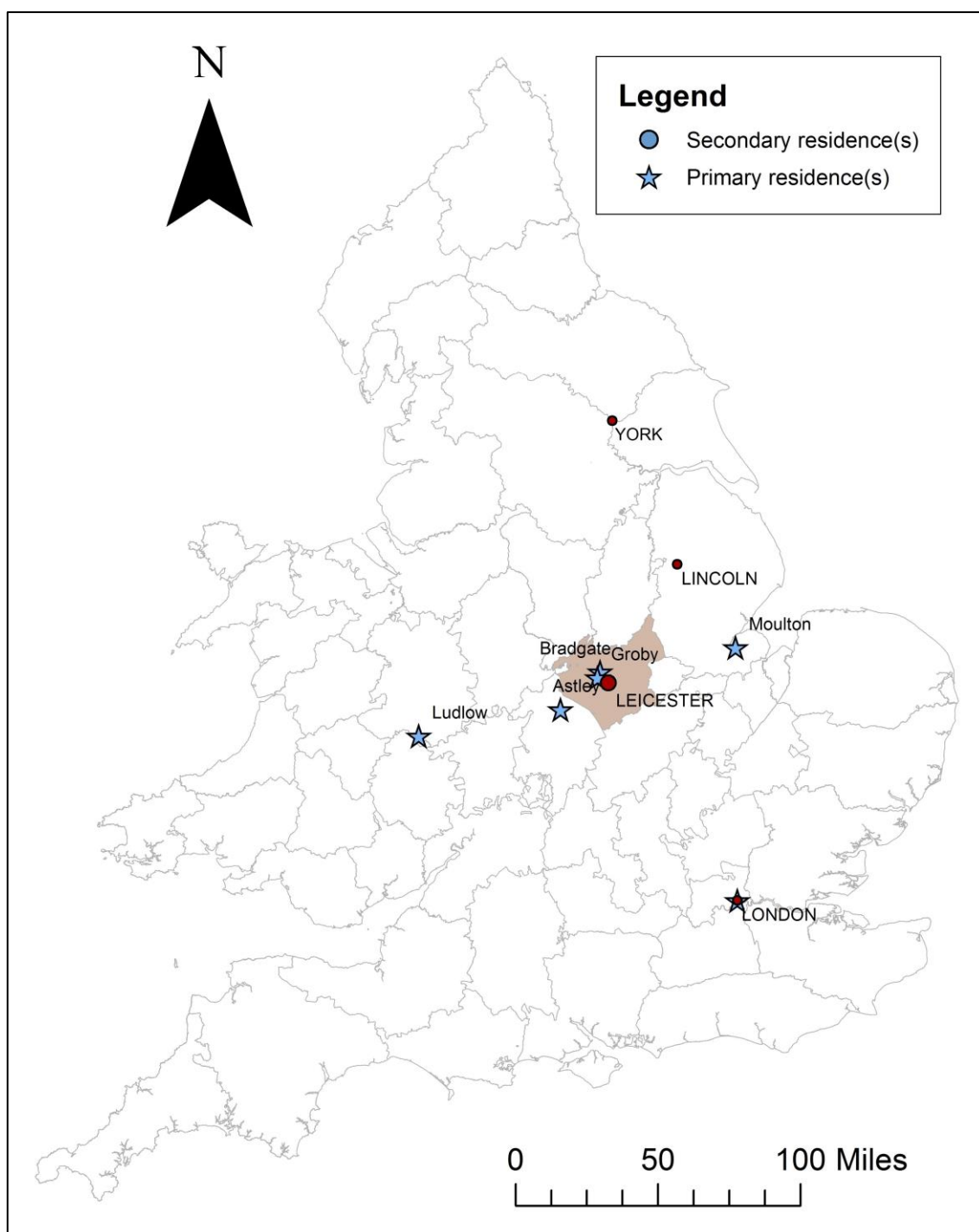
Figure 23 Places listed for Robert Vincent, gentleman, in the general pardon.[23]

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23 Ibid.

Gentry territories
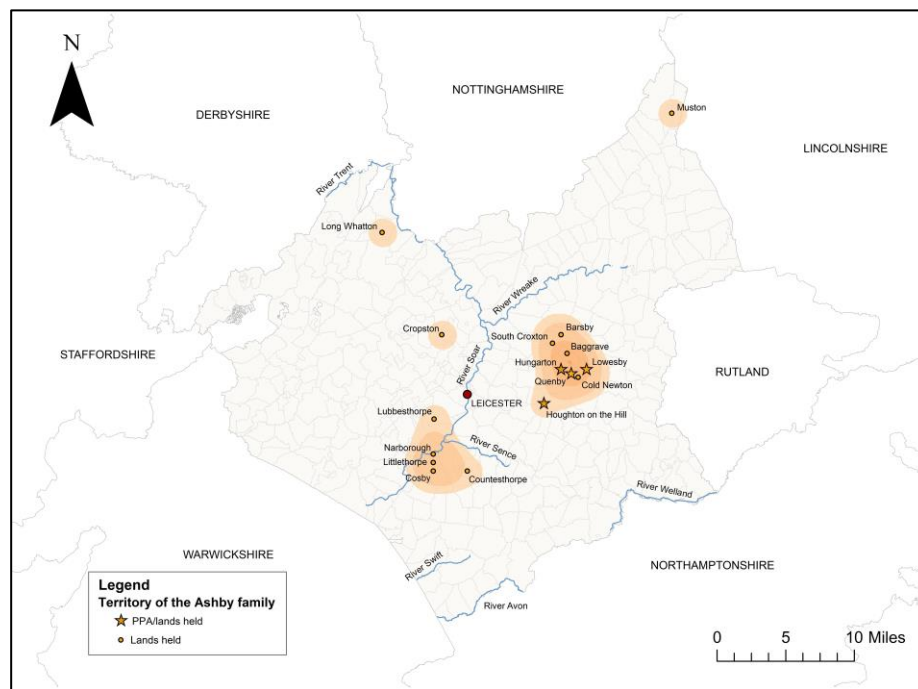
Figure 24 The territory of the Ashby family, c.1467-1559.[24]
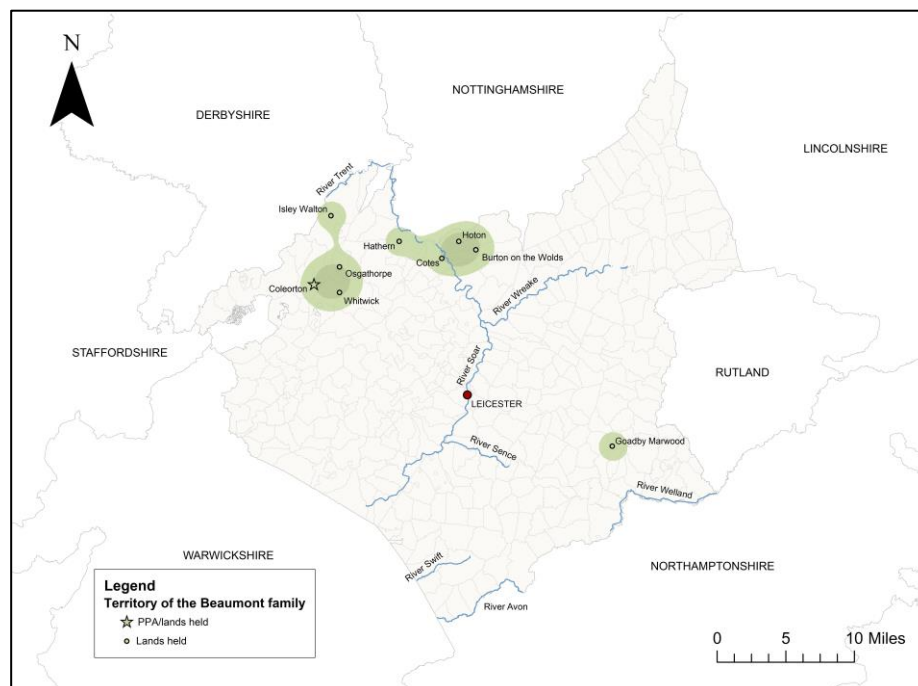
Figure 25 The territory of the Beaumont family, c.1461-1538.[25]

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[24] TNA, C 140/23/14, C 142/14/91, E 150/1121/6, E 150/1145/10, C 142/71/165, C 142/116/108, E 150/1157/3.
[25] TNA, C 140/2/18, C 142/60/20.
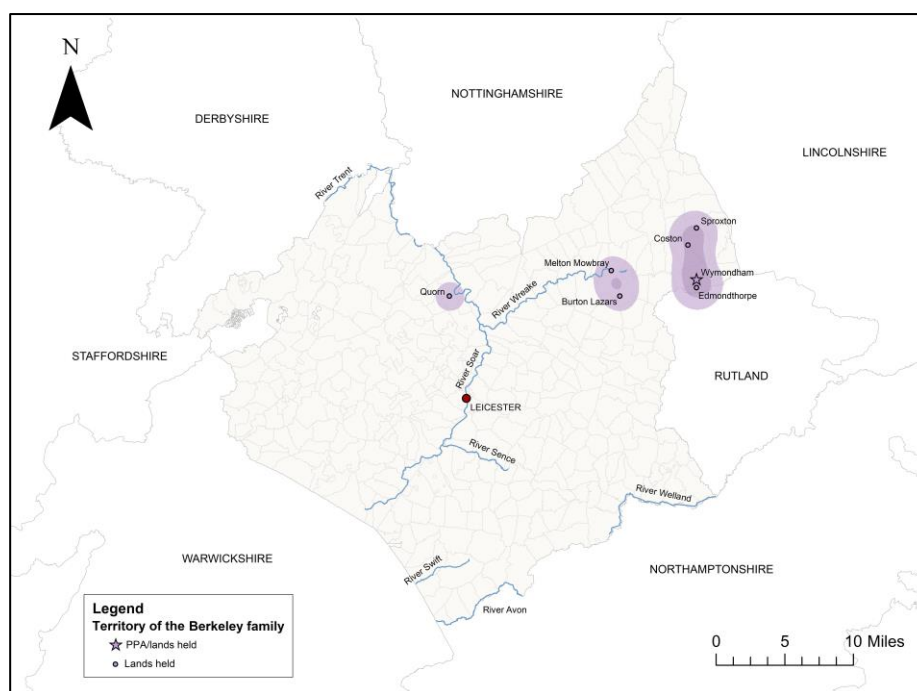
Figure 26 The territory of the Berkeley family, c.1523-1532.[26]
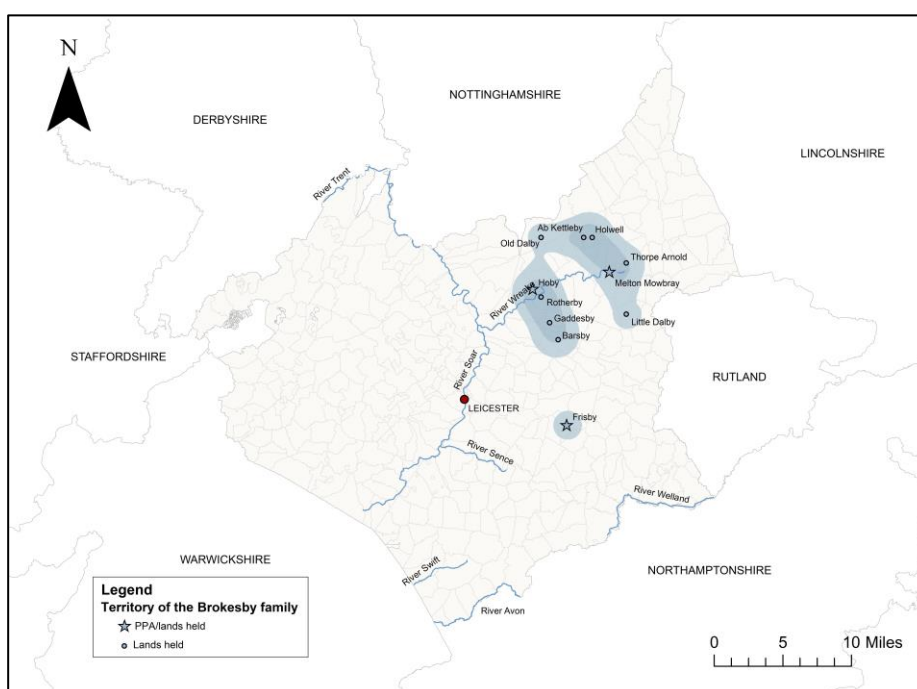
Figure 27 The territory of the Brokesby family, c.1484.[27]

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[26] TNA, E 150/1128/9-10, E 150/1136/11.
[27] TNA, C 141/5/13.
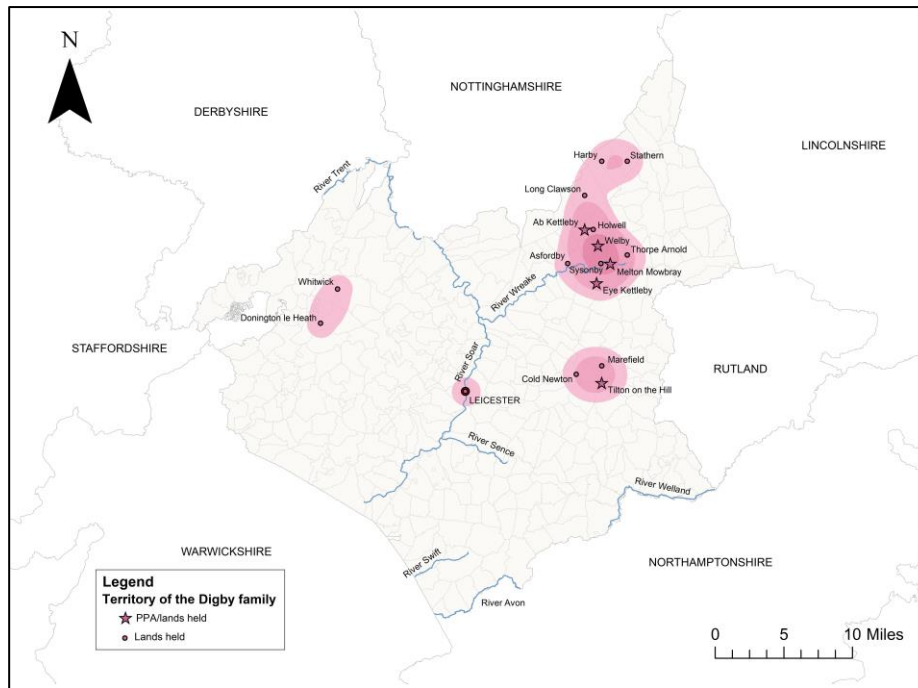
Figure 28 The territory of the Digby family, c.1510-1556.[28]
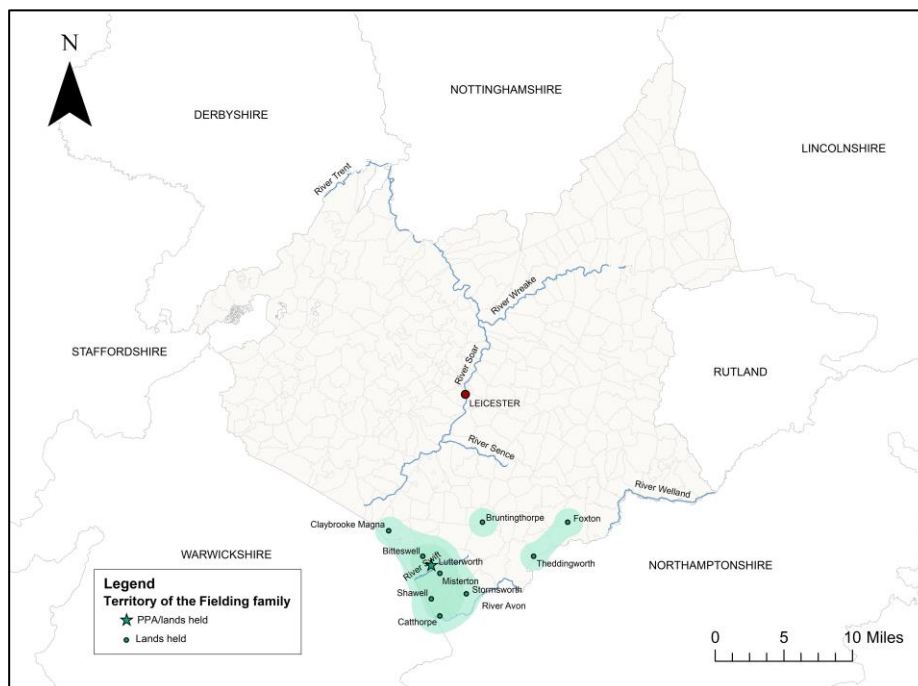
Figure 29 The territory of the Fielding family, c.1515-1548.[29]

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[28] TNA, E 150/1117/8, E 150/1148/4, E 150/1155/2.
[29] TNA, E 150/1122/2, E 150/1148/2.
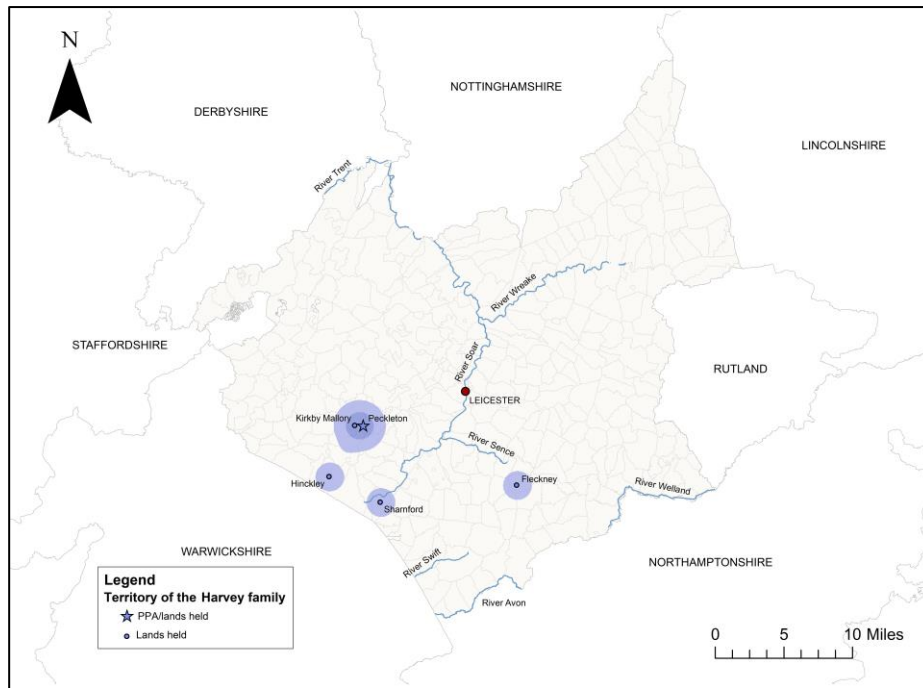
Figure 30 The territory of the Harvey family, c.1517-1544.[30]
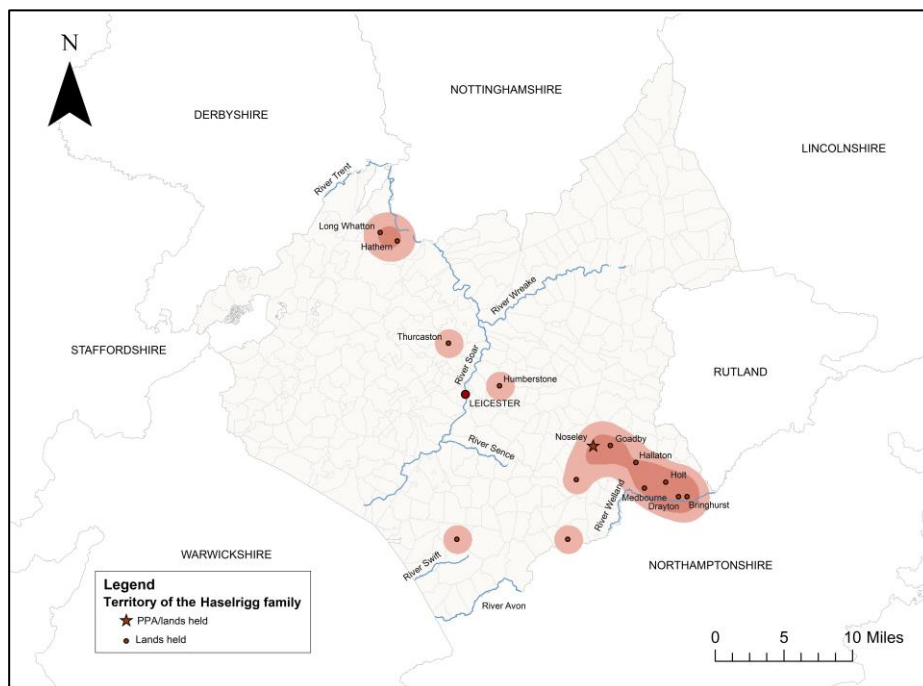
Figure 31 The territory of the Haselrigg family, c.1467-1565.[31]

[30] TNA, E 150/1123/1, E 150/1146/3.
[31] TNA, C 140/24/25, C 140/49/25, E 150/1140/3, E 150/1222/7, E 150/1222/7, WARD 7/10/87, C 142/143/77.
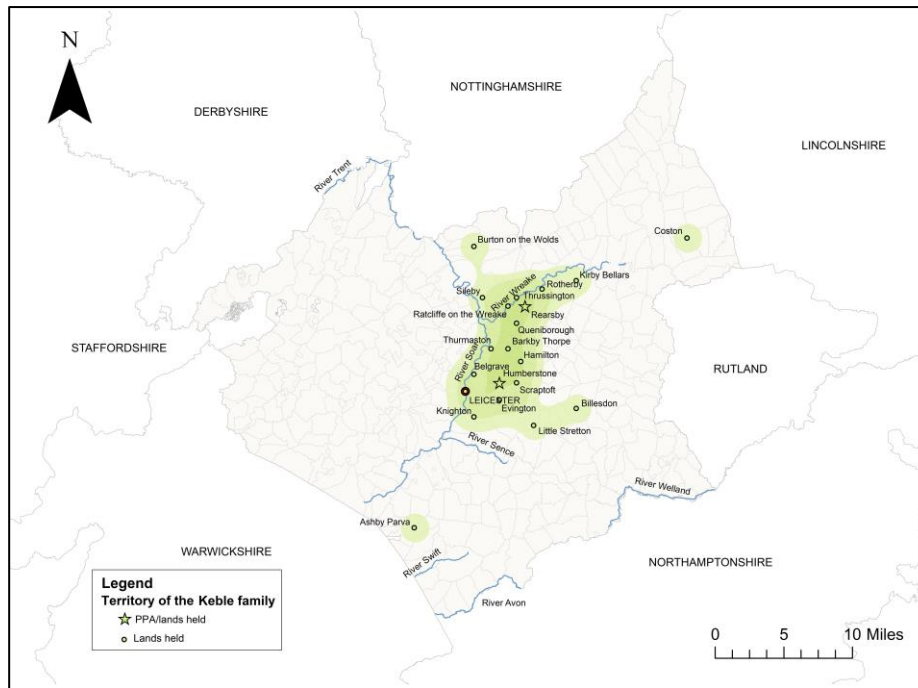
Figure 32 The territory of the Keble family, c.1486-1570.[32]
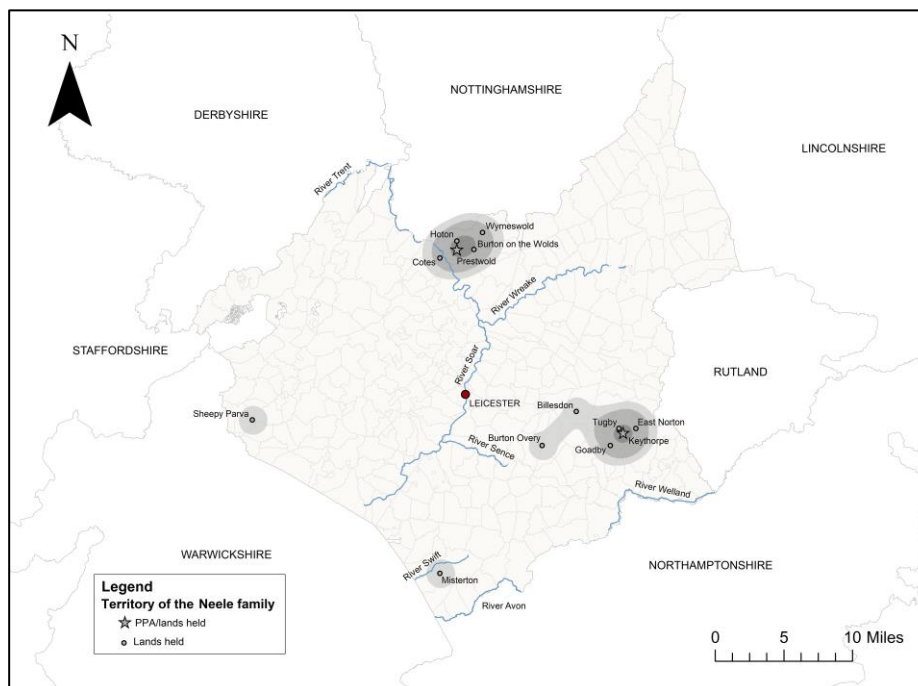
Figure 33 The territory of the Neele family, c.1526-1577.[33]

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[32] TNA, C 142/2/9, C 142/15/108, E 150/1116(pt.1)/19, C 142/39/99, E 150/1130/6, WARD 7/6/133, E 150/1157/2, C 142/157/94.

[33] TNA, E 150/1131/7, C142/116/107, E 150/1158/5, WARD 7/18/38.
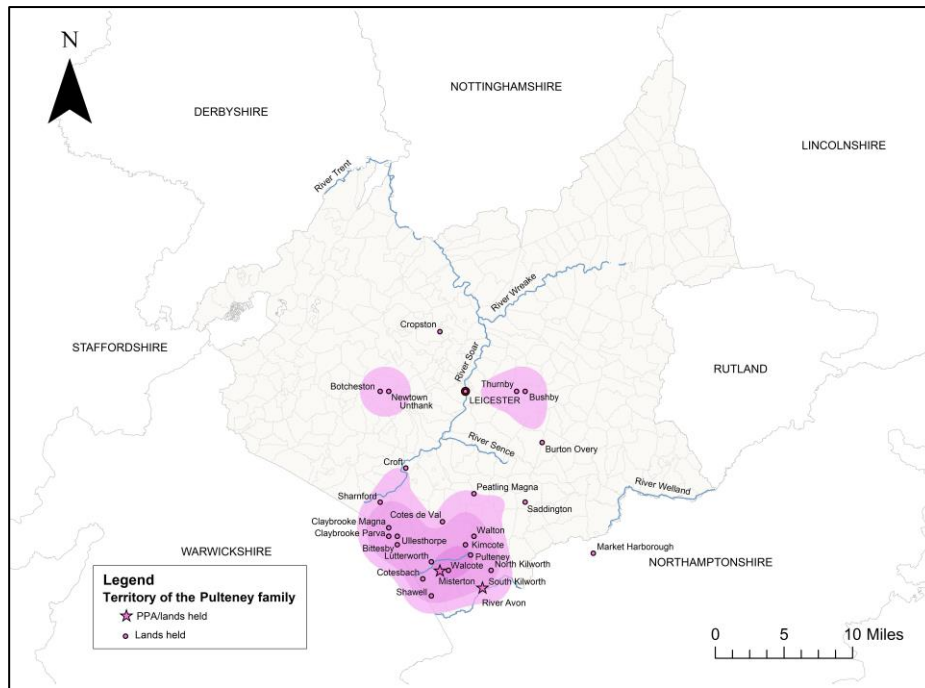
Figure 34 The territory of the Pulteney family, c.1493-1549.[34]
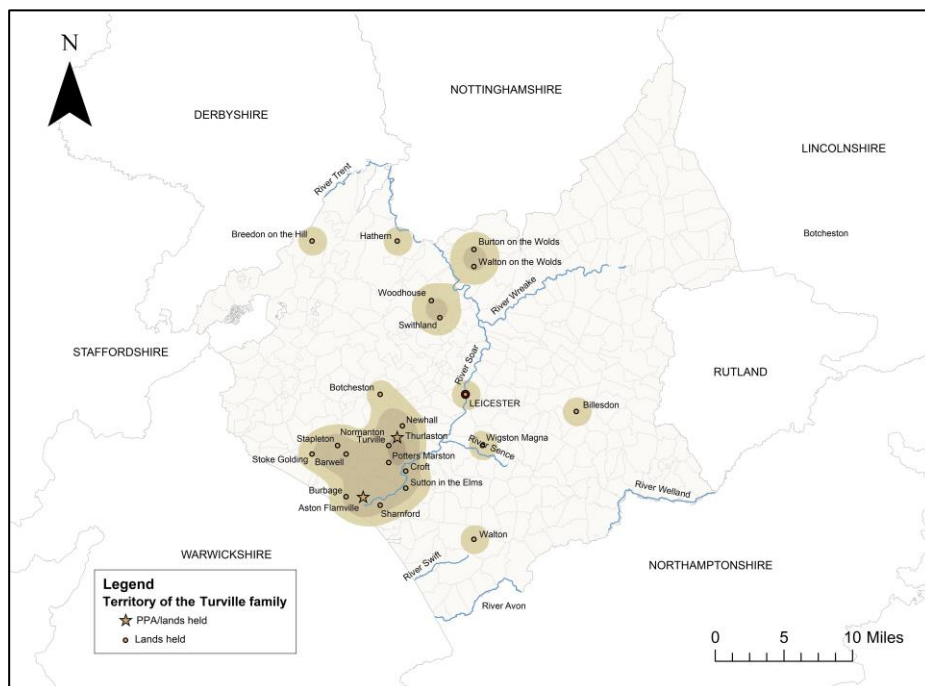
Figure 35 The territory of the Turville family, c.1506-1563.[35]

[34]   TNA, C 142/8/35, C 142/20/13, C 142/63/36, E 150/1149/8.
[35]   TNA, C 142/20/8, E 150/1149/3, E 150/1160/1, E 150/1160/2, E 150/1161/14.
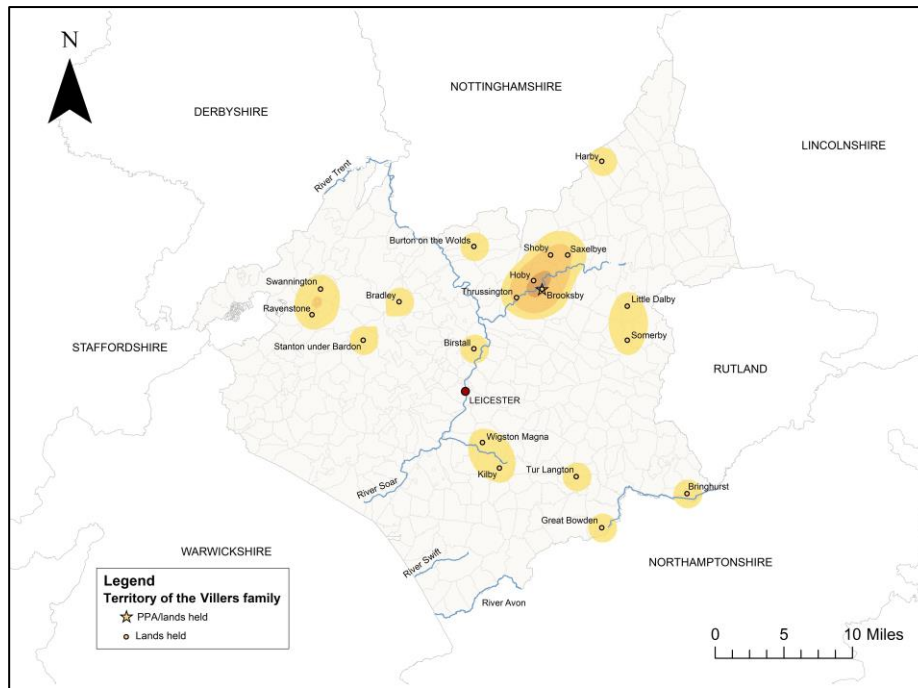
Figure 36 The territory of the Villers family, c.1507-1563.[36]

[36] TNA, C 142/20/146, E 150/1142/5, E 150/31/113, C 142/74/137-1, E 150/1157/10, WARD 7/10/20.

Compositions of gentry land use
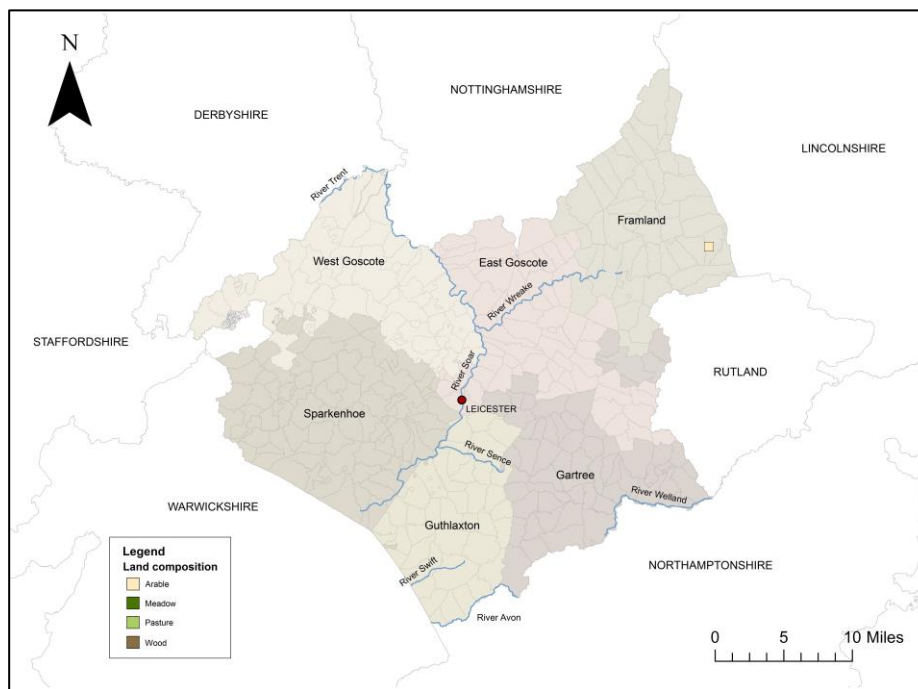
Figure 37 The land use of Henry Allen, gentleman.[37]
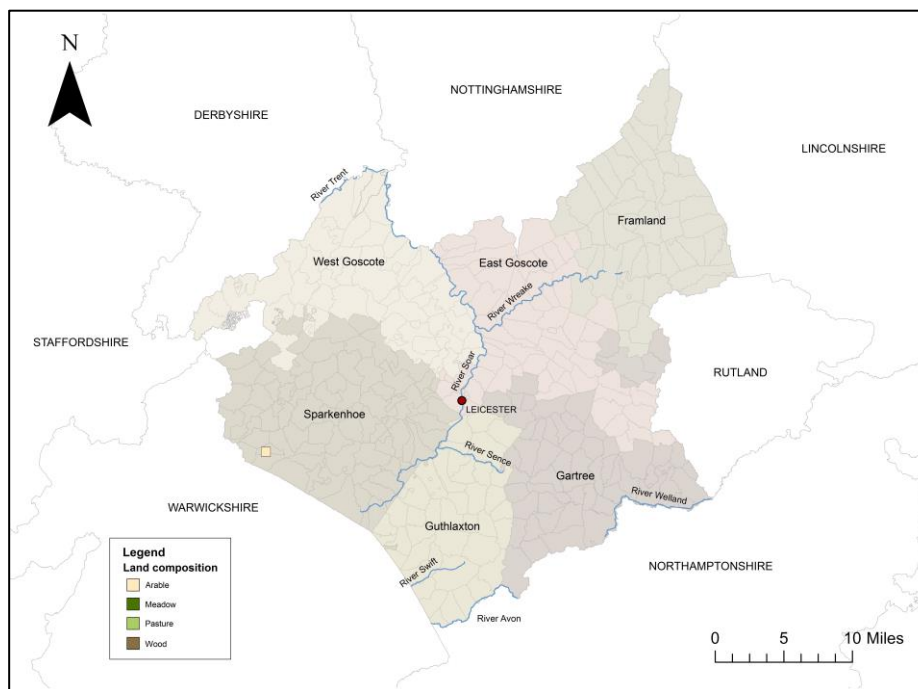
Figure 38 The land use of Edmund Appleby, esquire, in 1506.[38]

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[37] TNA, E 150/1150/9.
[38] TNA, C 142/19/9.
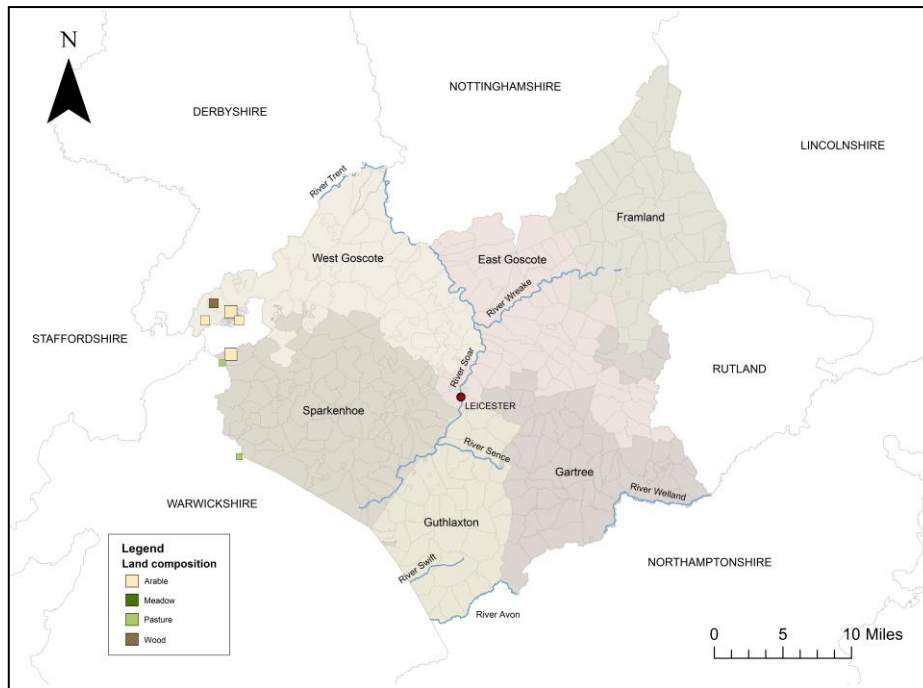
Figure 39 The land use of Richard Appleby, esquire, in 1529.[39]
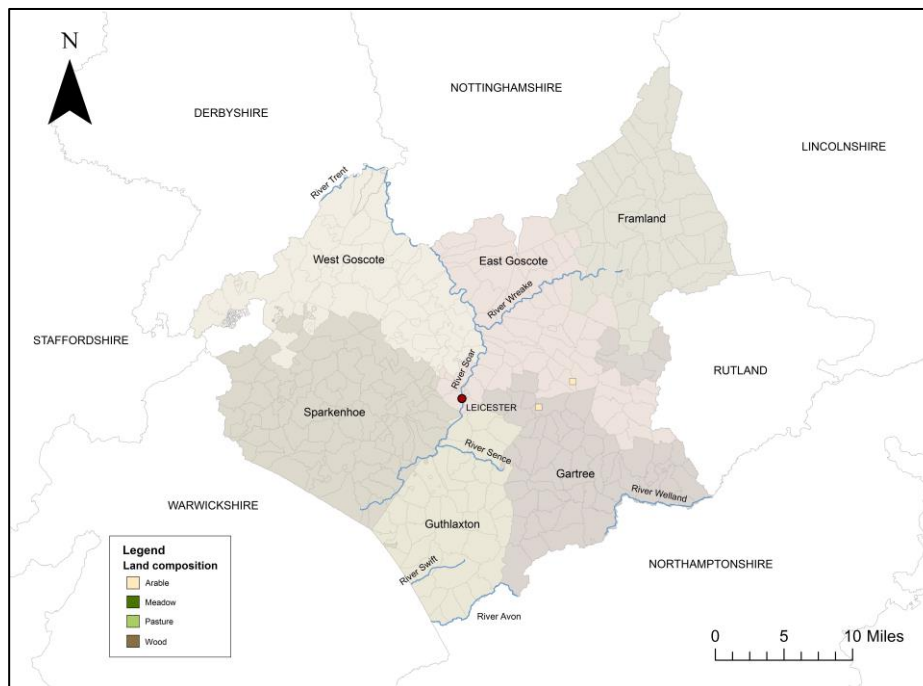
Figure 40 The land use of William Ashby, gentleman, in 1514.[40]

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[39] TNA, E 150/1133/11.
[40] TNA, E 150/1121/6.
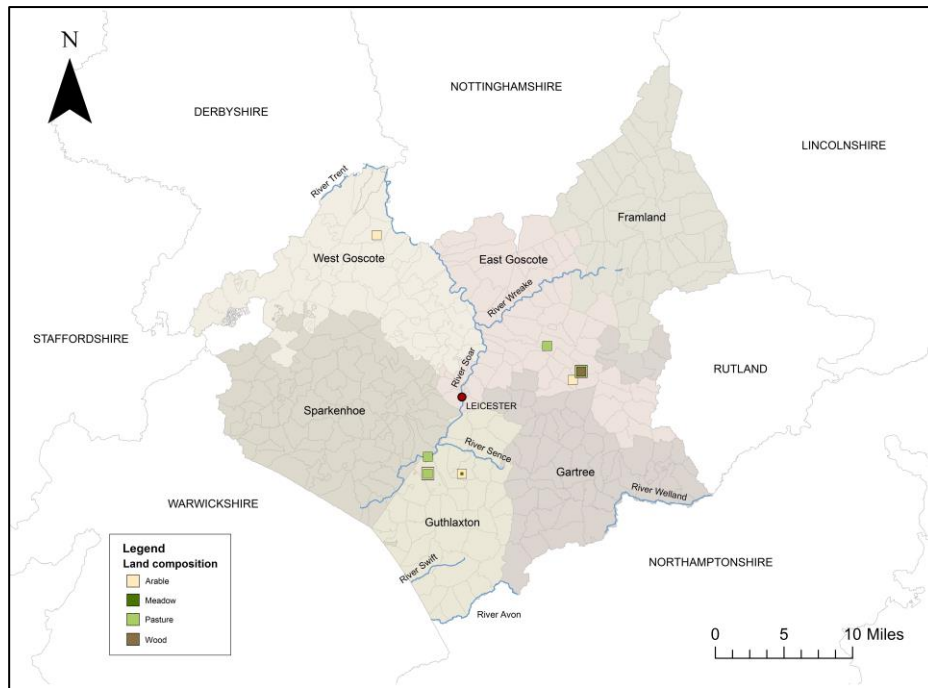
Figure 41 The land use of William Ashby, esquire, in 1543.[41]
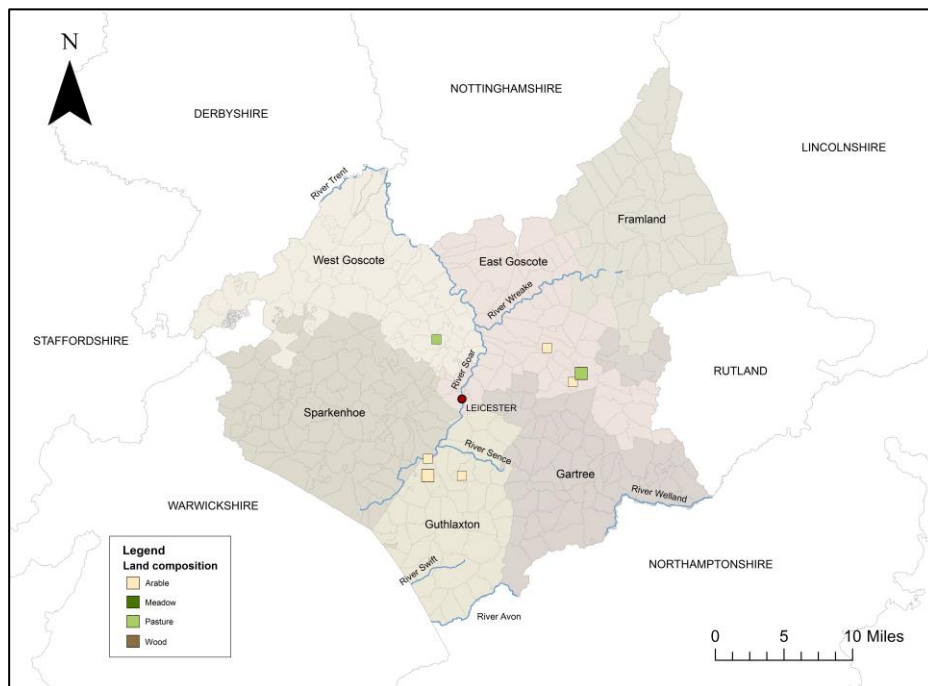
Figure 42 The land use of George Ashby, esquire, in 1544.[42]

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[41] TNA, E 150/1145/10.
[42] TNA, C 142/71/165.
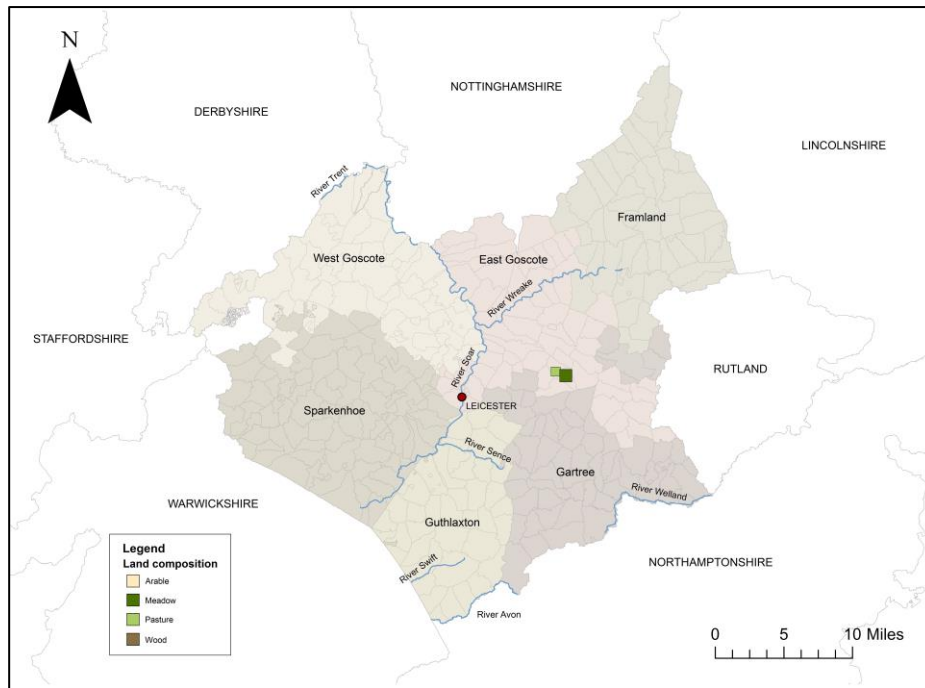
Figure 43 The land use of Robert Ashby, esquire, 1558.[43]
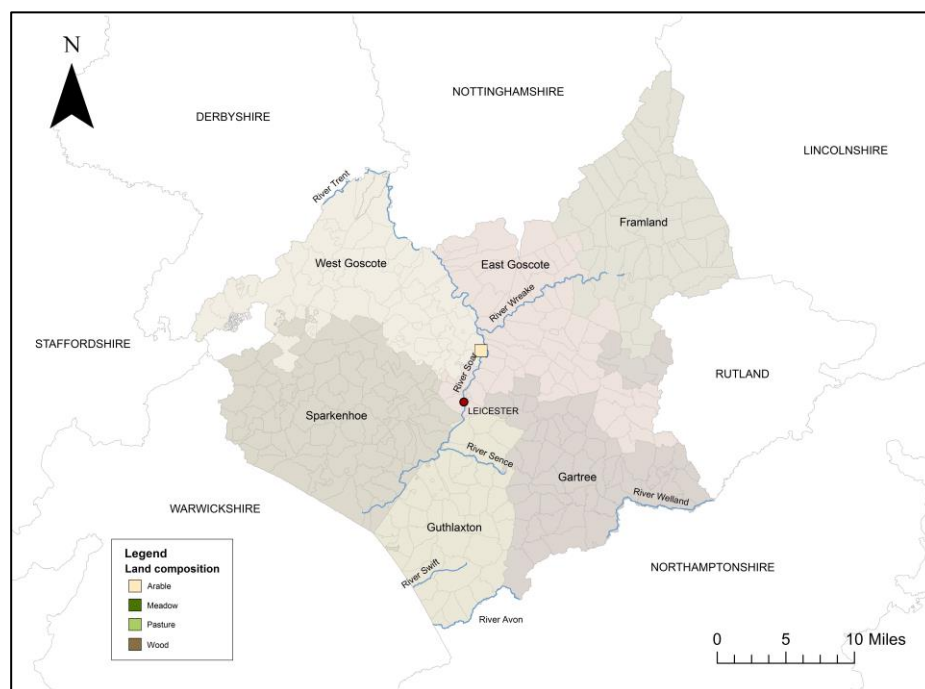
Figure 44 The land use of Dame Joan Aston in 1526.[44]

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[43] TNA, C 142/116/108.
[44] TNA, E 150/1131/6.
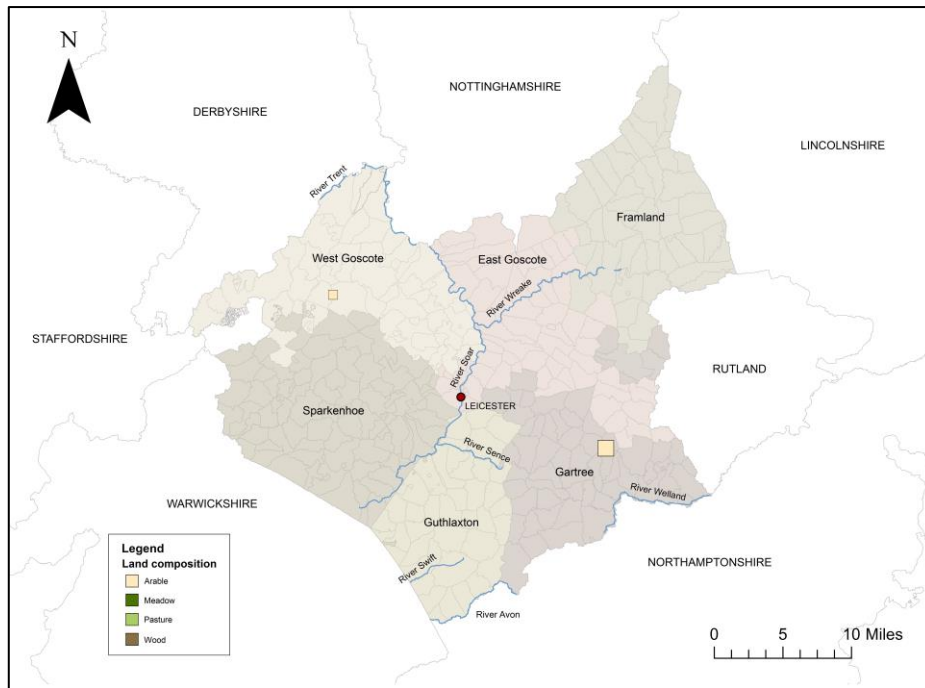
Figure 45 The land use of John Beaumont, esquire, in 1461.[45]
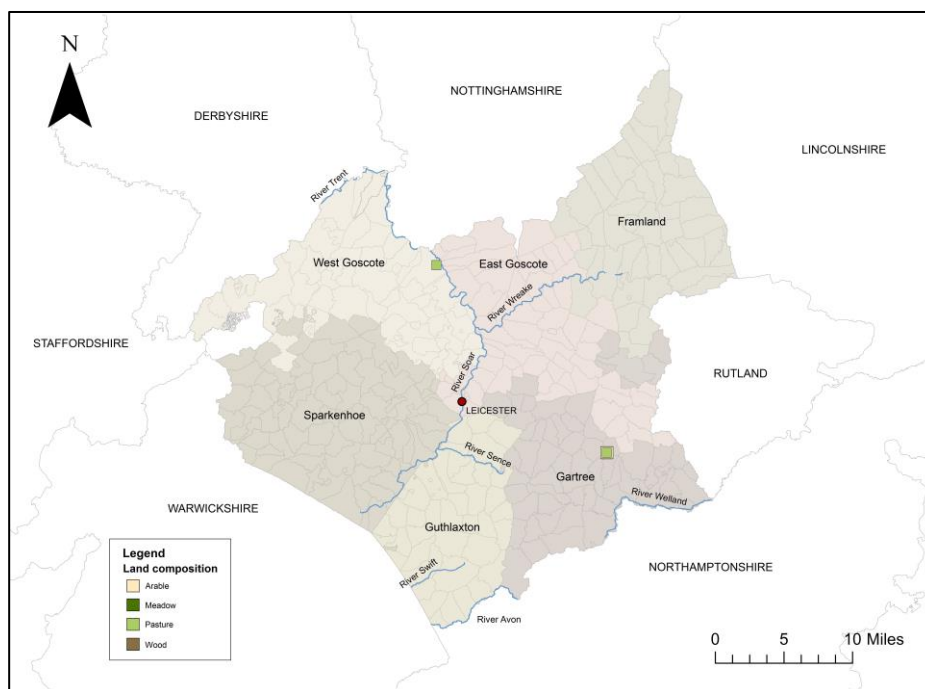
Figure 46 The land use of Richard Beaumont, esquire, in 1538.[46]

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[45] TNA, C 140/2/18.
[46] TNA, C 142/60/20.
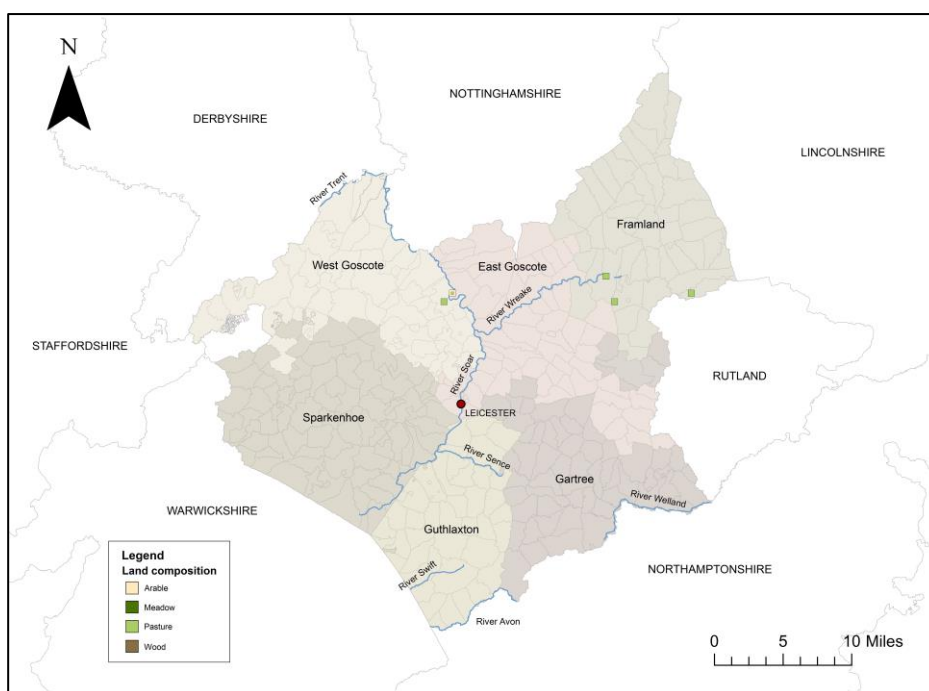
Figure 47 The land use of Sir Maurice Berkeley, in 1523.[47]
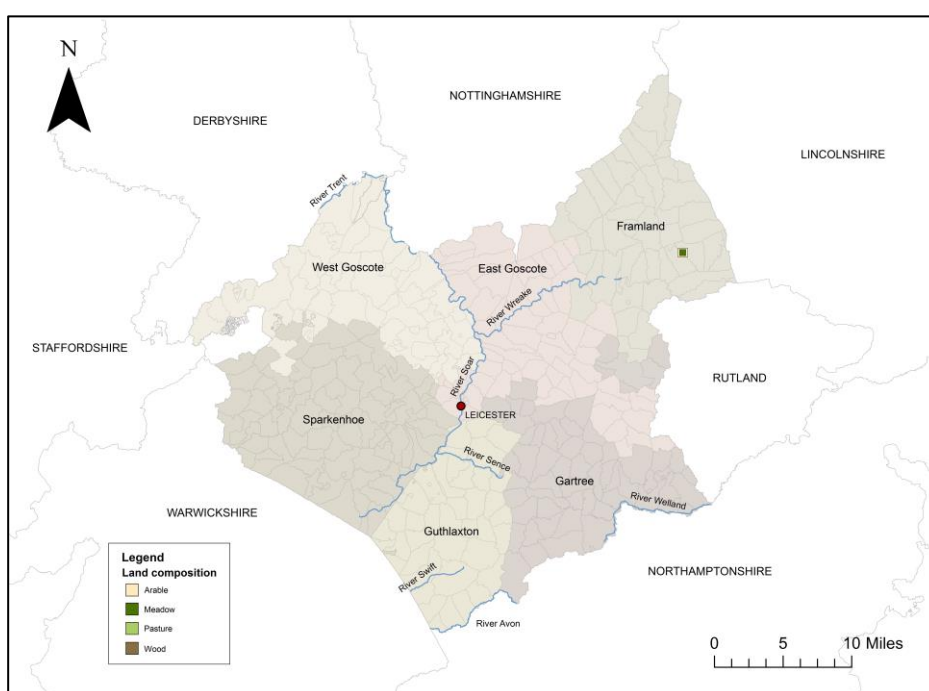
Figure 48 The land use of William Berkeley, esquire, in 1532.[48]

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[47] TNA, E 150/1128/9-10.
[48] TNA, E 150/1136/11.
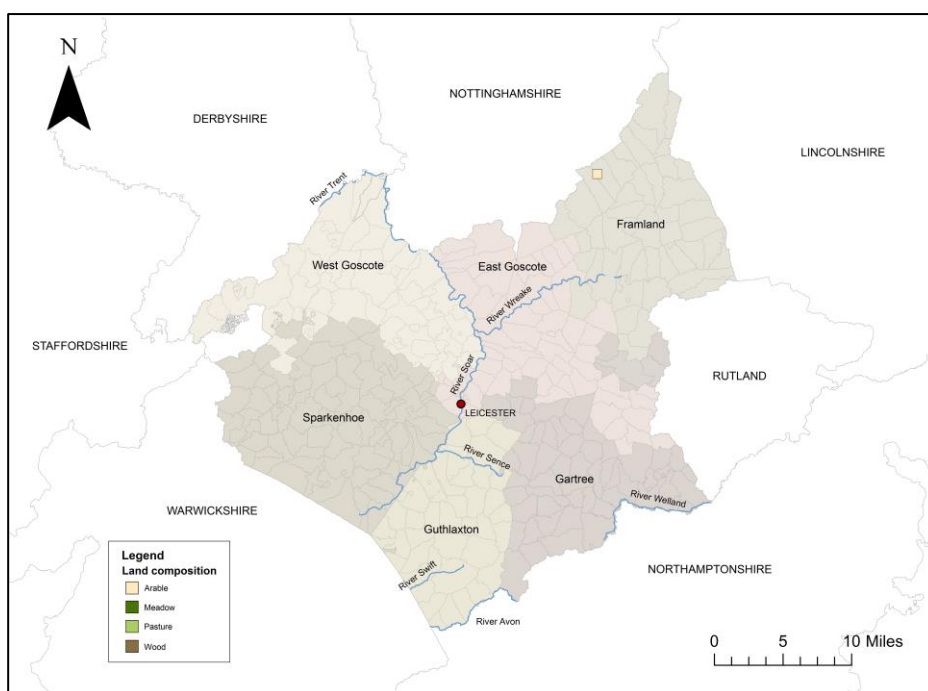
Figure 49 The land use of Maud Brabazon,widow, in 1490.[49]
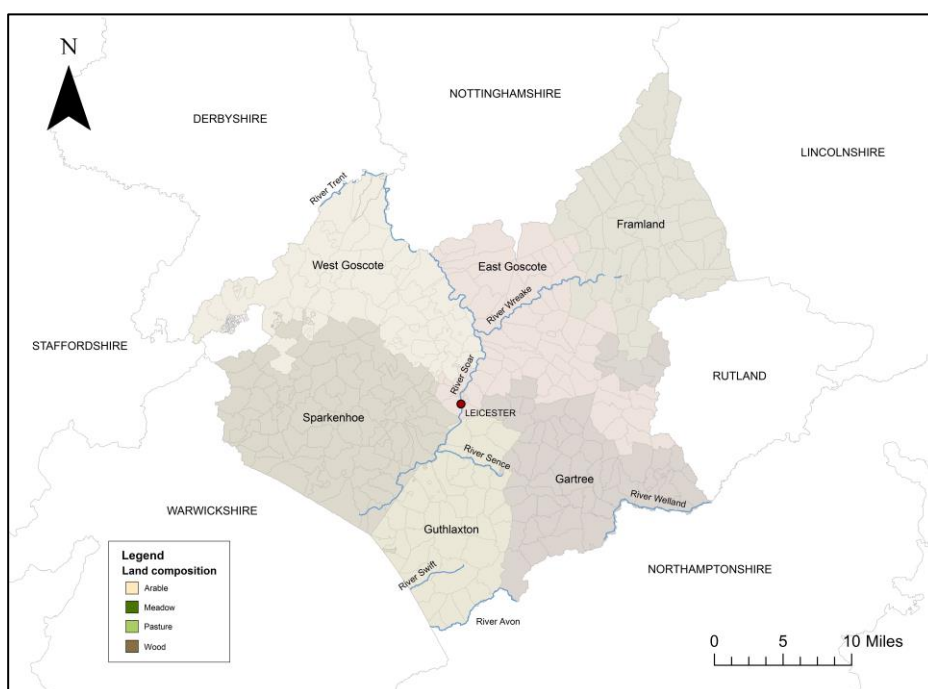
Figure 50 The land use of Thomas Bradgate, gentleman, in 1539.[50]

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[49] TNA, C 142/6/58.
[50] TNA, E 150/1143/6.
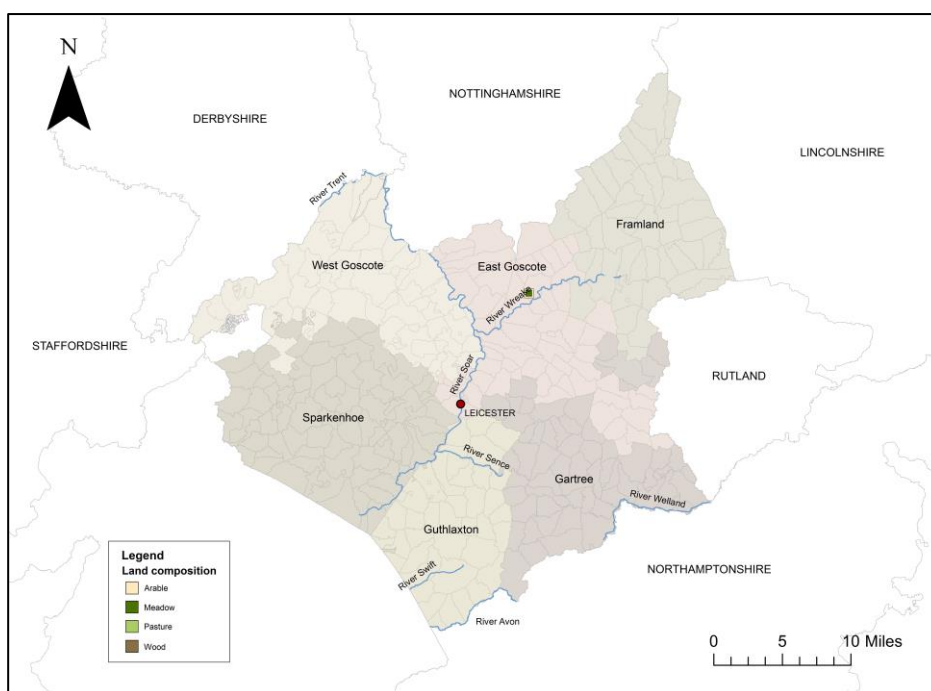
Figure 51 The land use of John Brokesby, esquire, in 1484.[51]
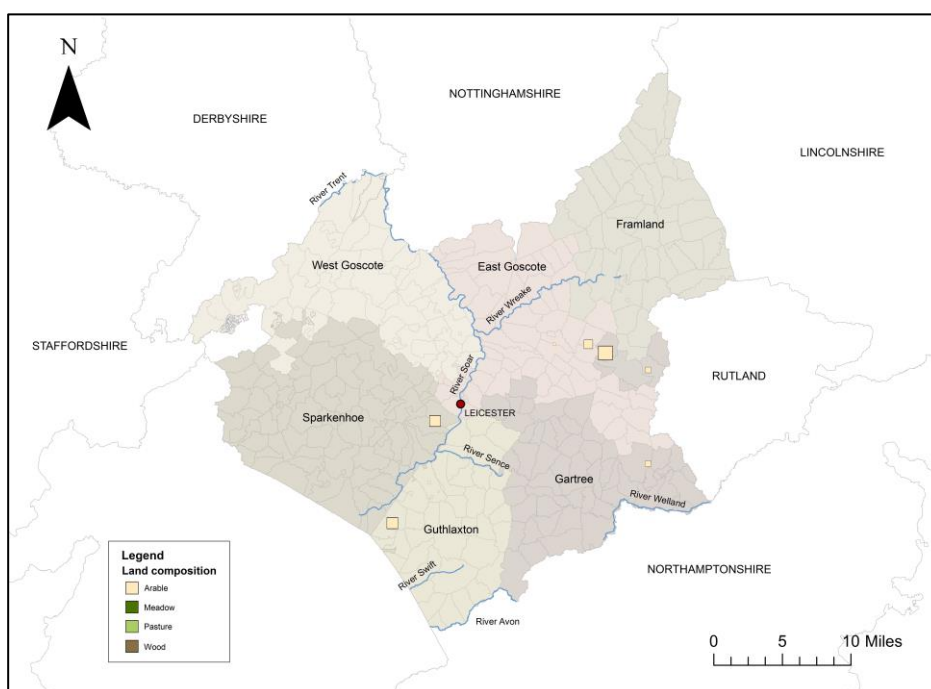
Figure 52 The land use of Henry Burrough, esquire, in 1495.[52]

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[51] TNA, C 141/5/13.
[52] TNA, C 142/10/116.

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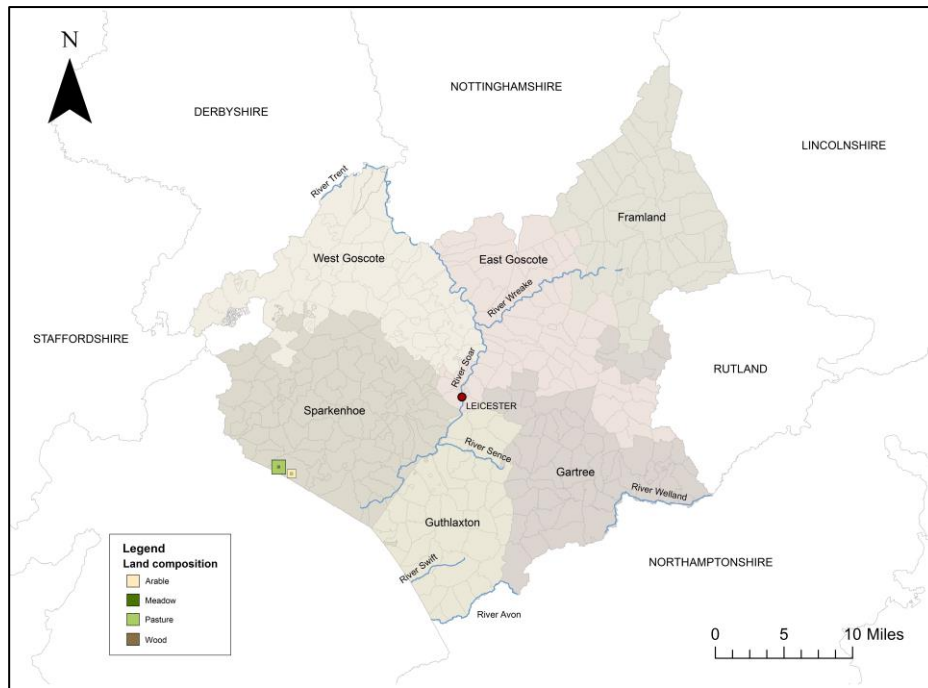
Figure 53 The land use of James Burton, gentleman, in 1544.[53]
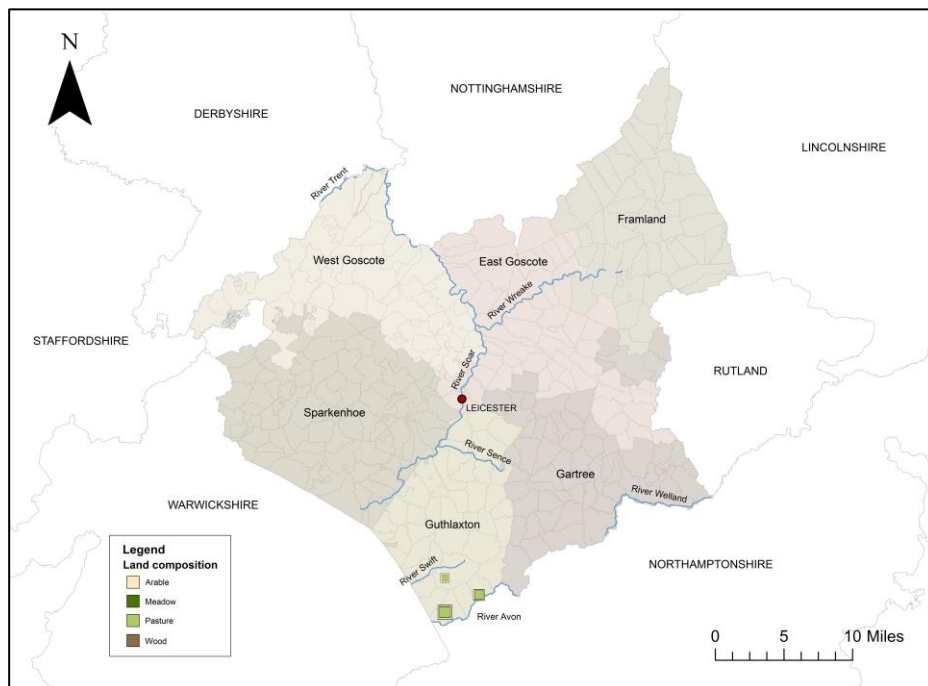
Figure 54 The land use of Sir Thomas Cave I in 1558.[54]

[53]   TNA, E 150/1146/4.
[54]   TNA, C 142/116/95.
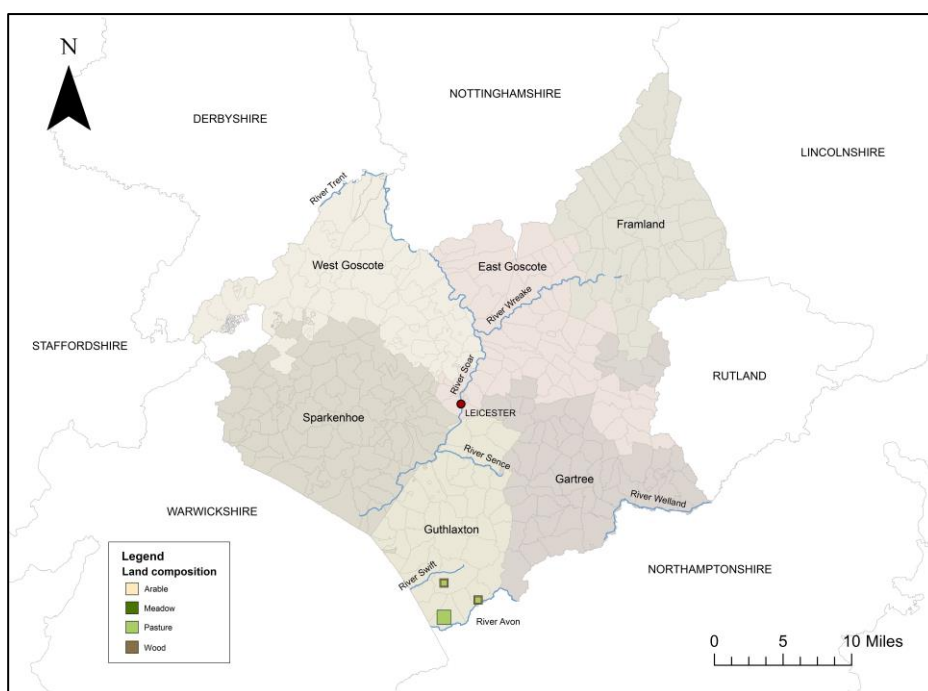
Figure 55 The land use of Richard Cave, esquire, in 1561.[55]
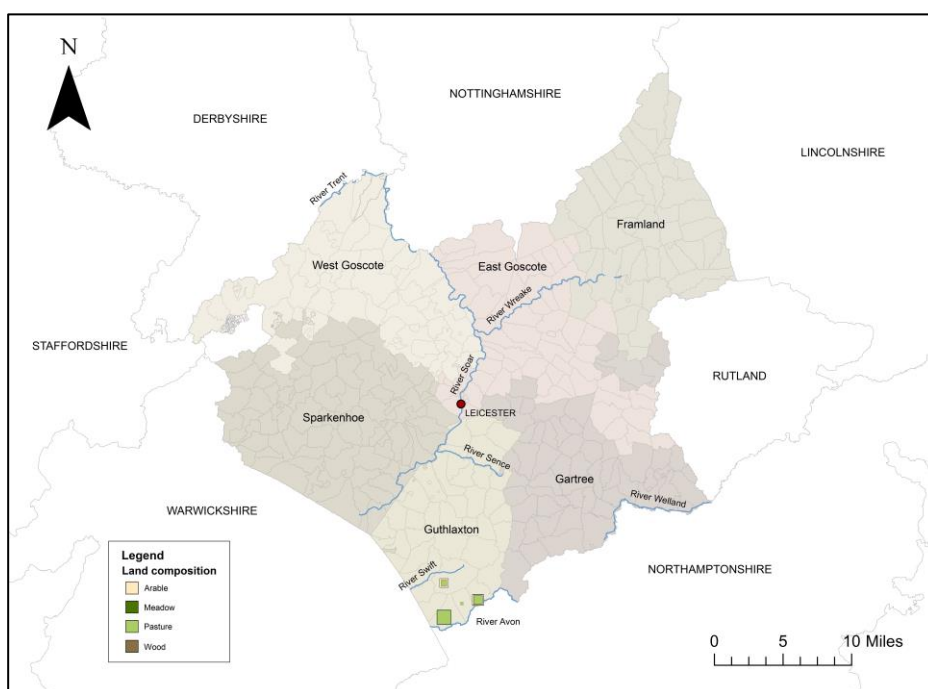
Figure 56 The land use of Sir Thomas Cave II in 1573.[56]

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[55]   TNA, E 150/1159/9.
[56]   TNA, WARD 7/14/55.
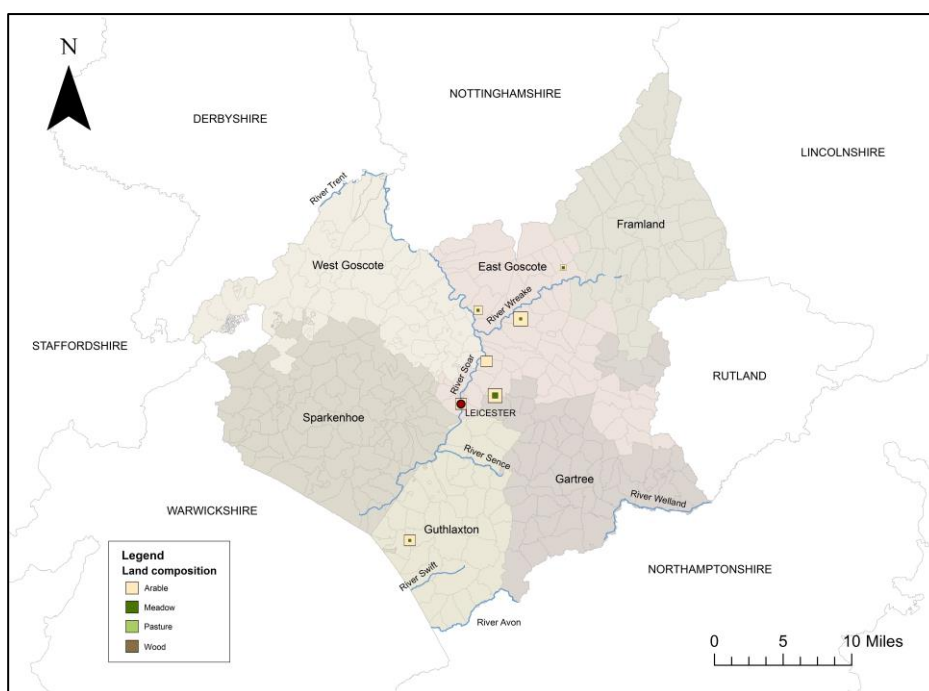
Figure 57 The land use of Thomas Coton, esquire, in 1506.[57]
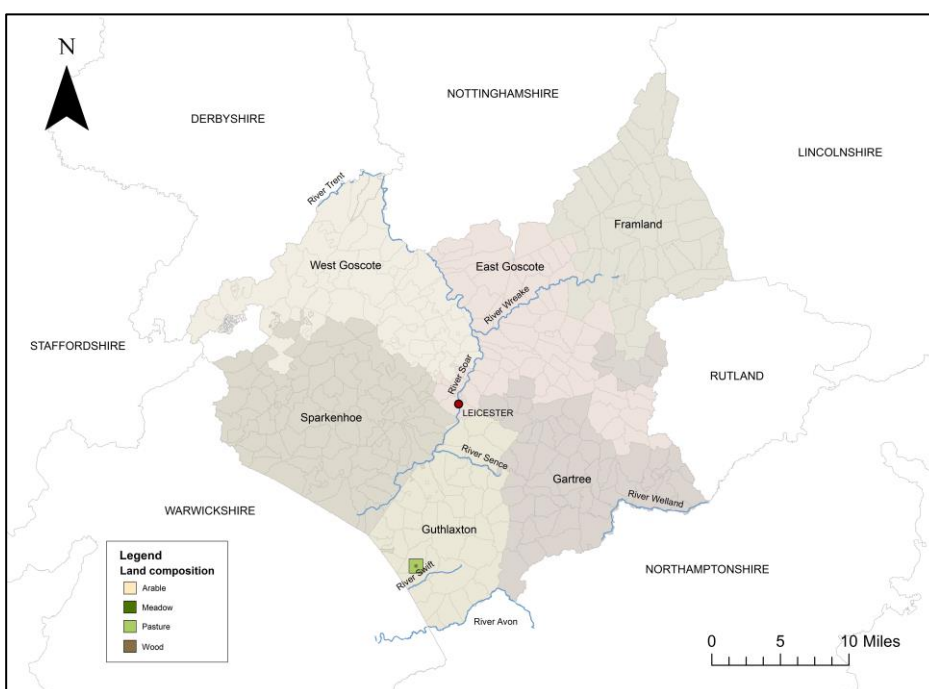
Figure 58 The land use of Thomas Croft, gentleman, in 1570.[58]

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[57] TNA, C 142/19/126.
[58] TNA, WARD 7/12/38.
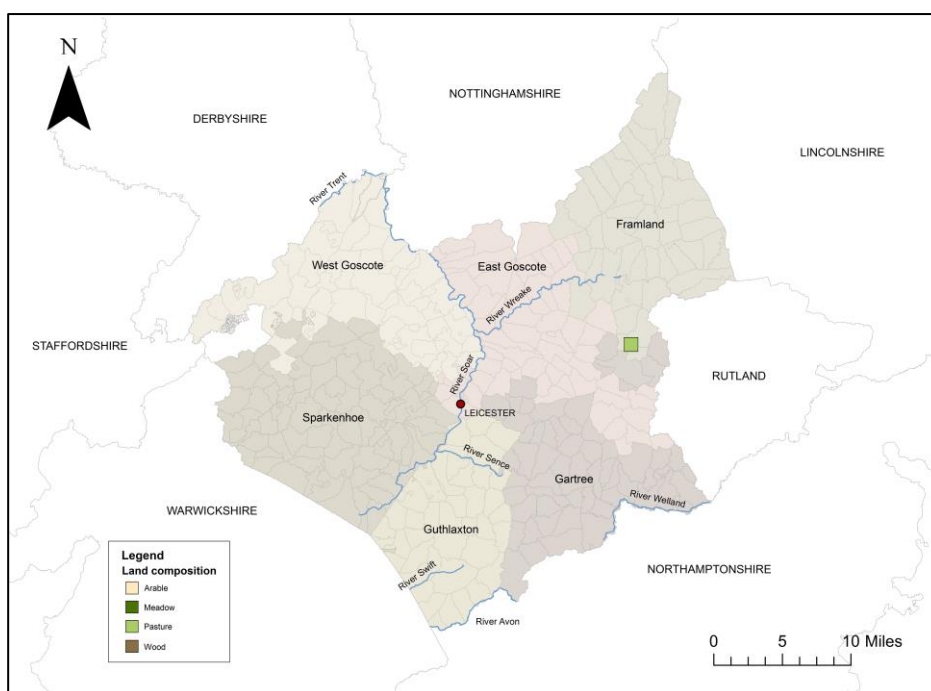
Figure 59 The land use of John Curson, esquire, in 1517.[59]
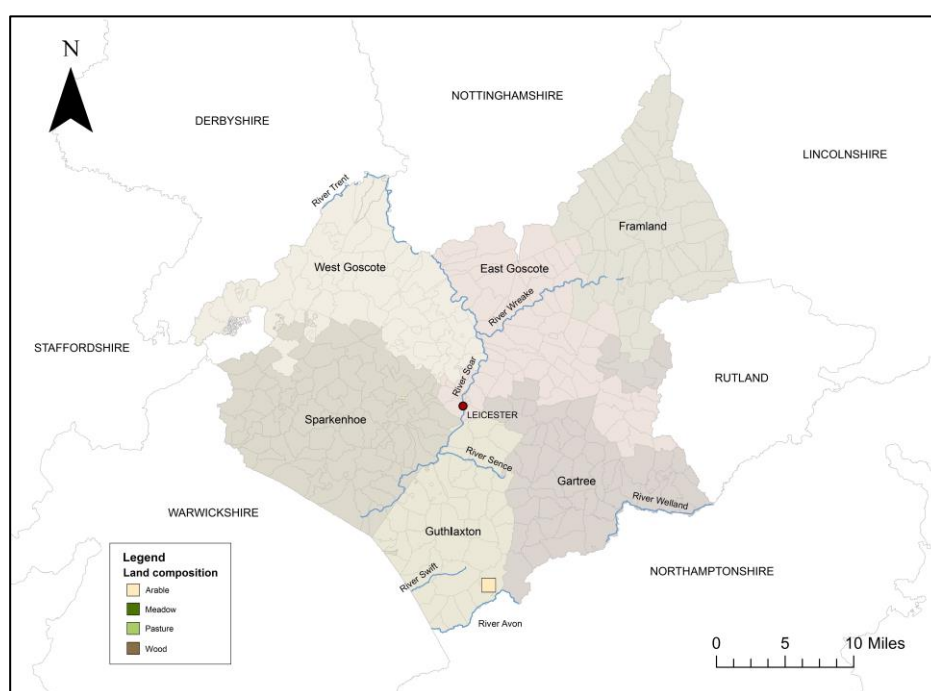
Figure 60 The land use of John Danet, esquire, in 1494.[60]

[59]   TNA, E 150/1123/4.
[60]   TNA, C 142/10/104.
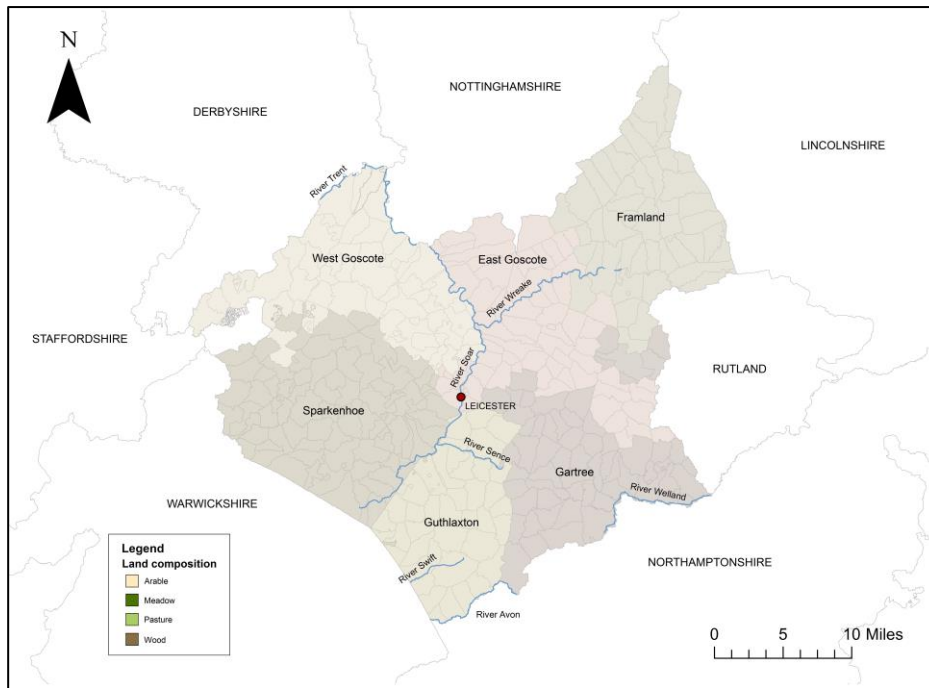
Figure 61 The land use of Gerard Danet, esquire, in 1520.[61]
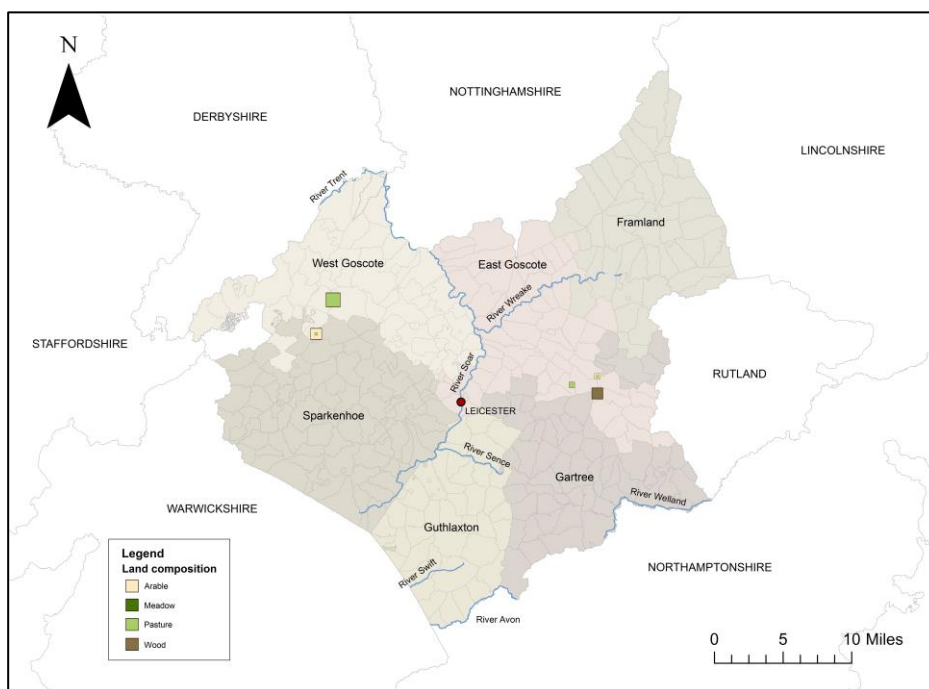
Figure 62 The land use of Everard Digby, esquire, in 1510.[62]

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[61]   TNA, E 150/1126/2.
[62]   TNA, E 150/1117/8.
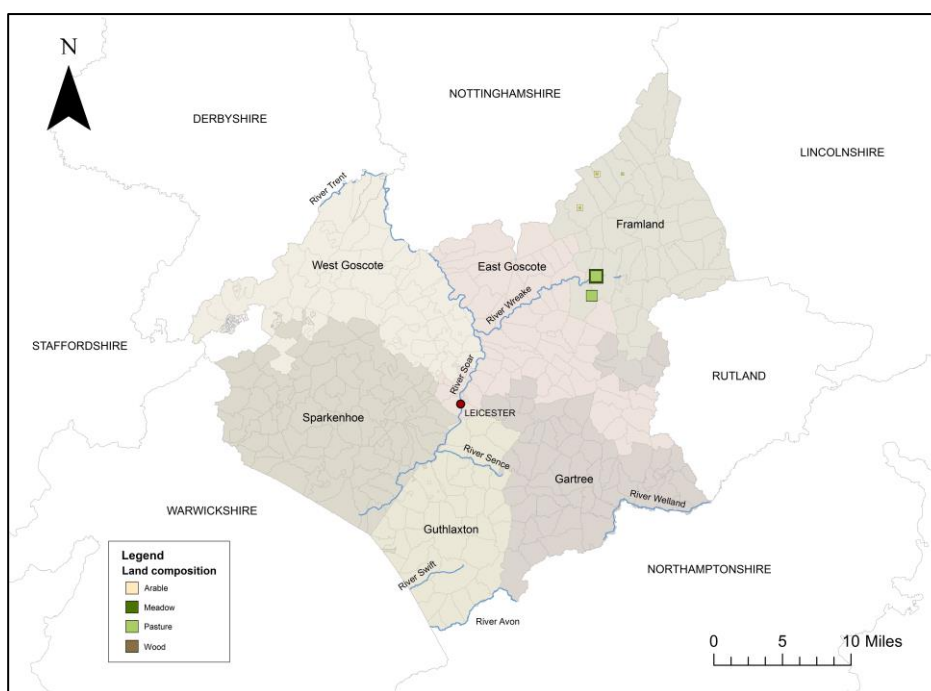
Figure 63 The land use of Sir John Digby in 1548.[63]
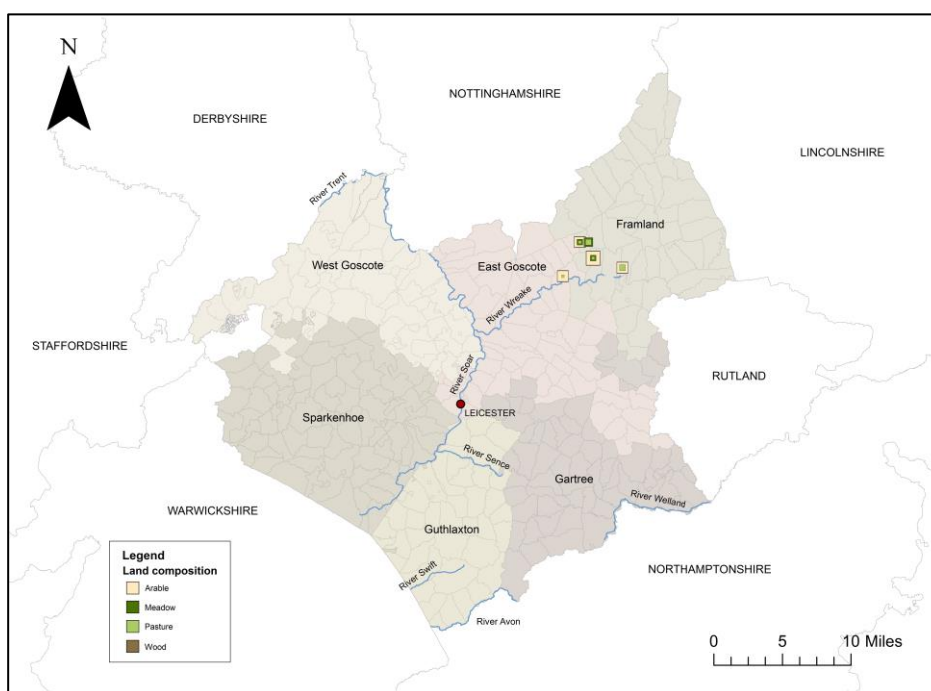
Figure 64 The land use of John Digby, gentleman, in 1556.[64]

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[63] TNA, E 150/1148/4.
[64] TNA, E 150/1155/2.
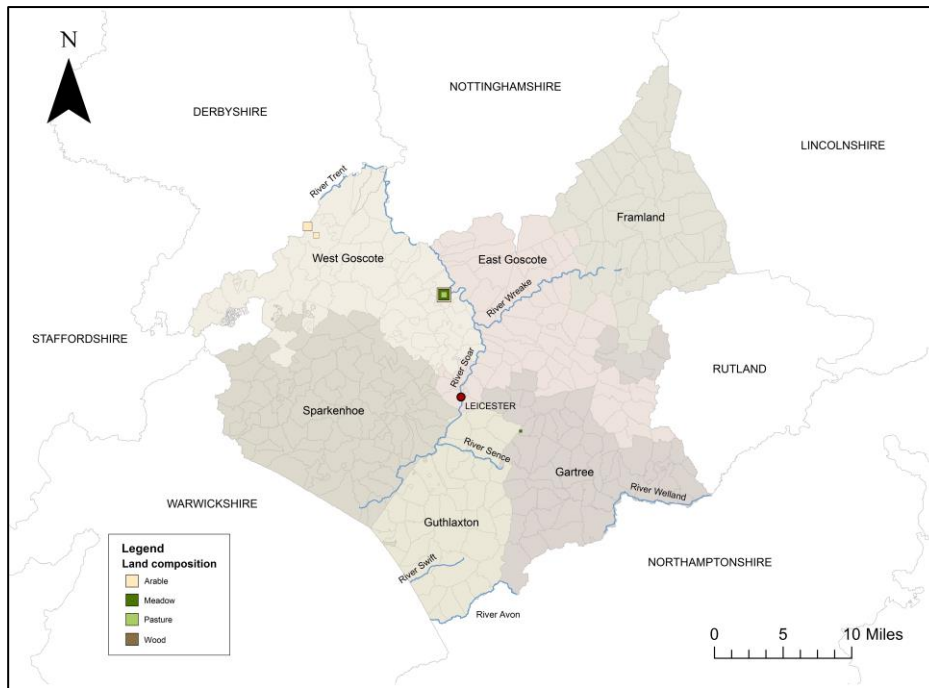
Figure 65 The land use of Thomas Farnham, gentleman, in 1562.[65]
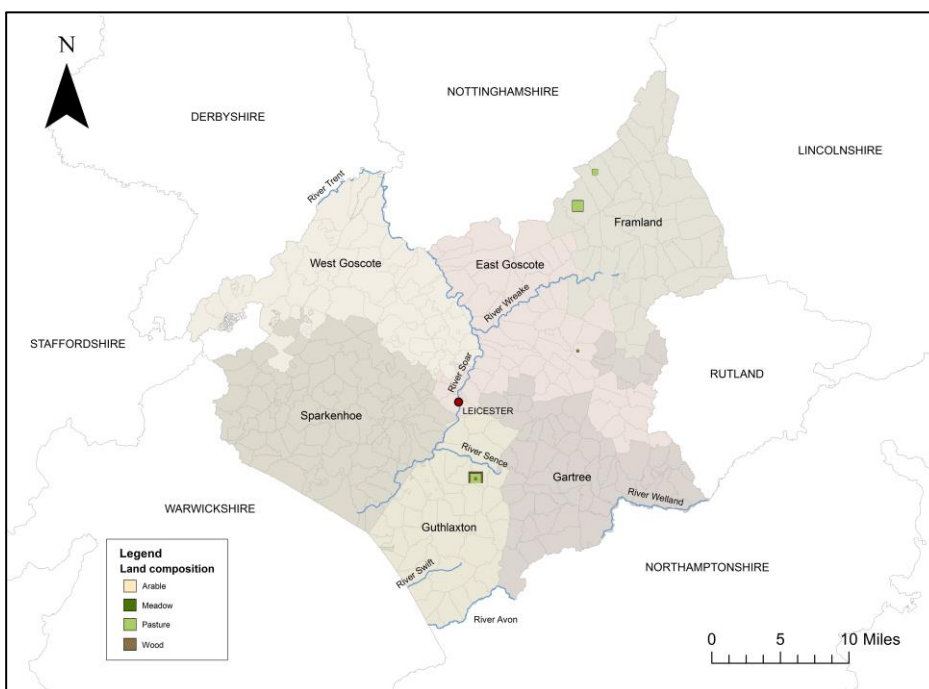
Figure 66 The land use of William Faunte I, esquire, in 1561.[66]

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[65] TNA, E 150/1160/3.
[66] TNA, E 150/1157/5.
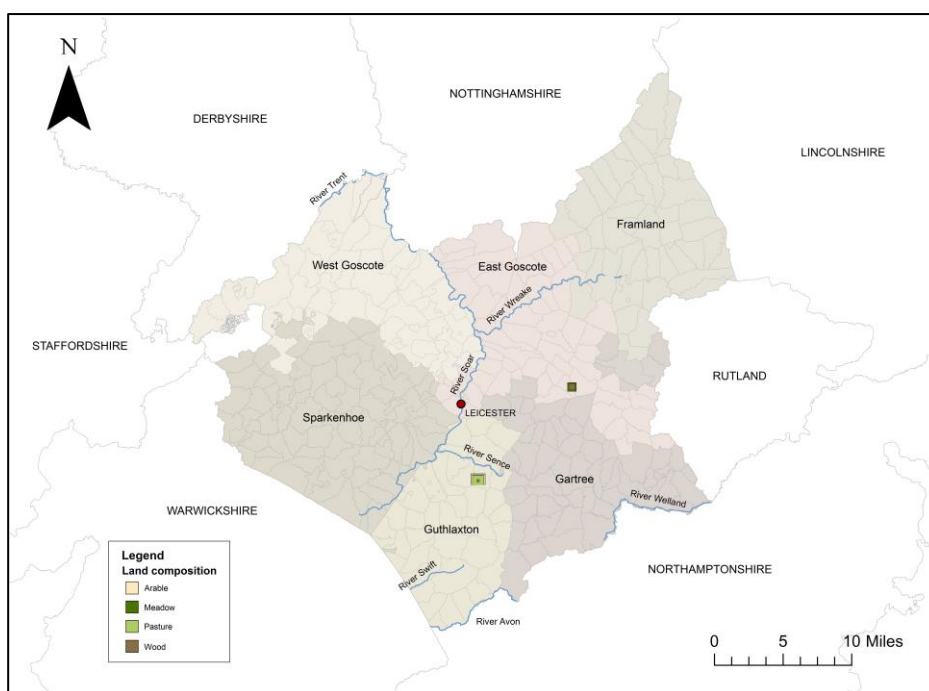
Figure 67 The land use of William Faunte II, esquire, in 1575.[67]
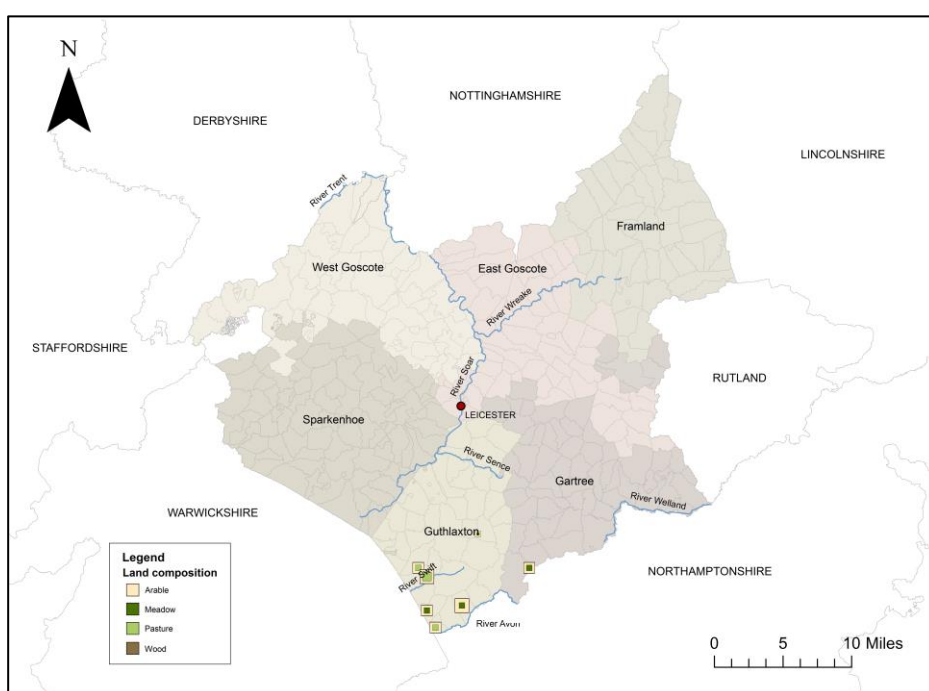
Figure 68 The land use of Sir Everard Fielding in 1515.[68]

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[67] TNA, C 142/171/79.
[68] TNA, E 150/1122/2.
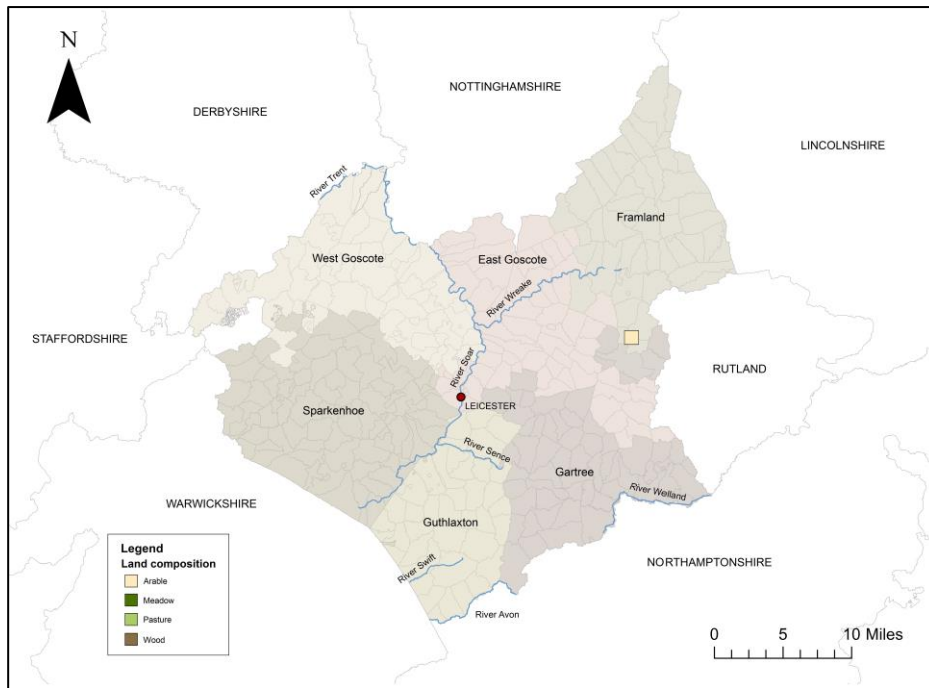
Figure 69 The land use of Roger Flower, gentleman, in 1532.[69]
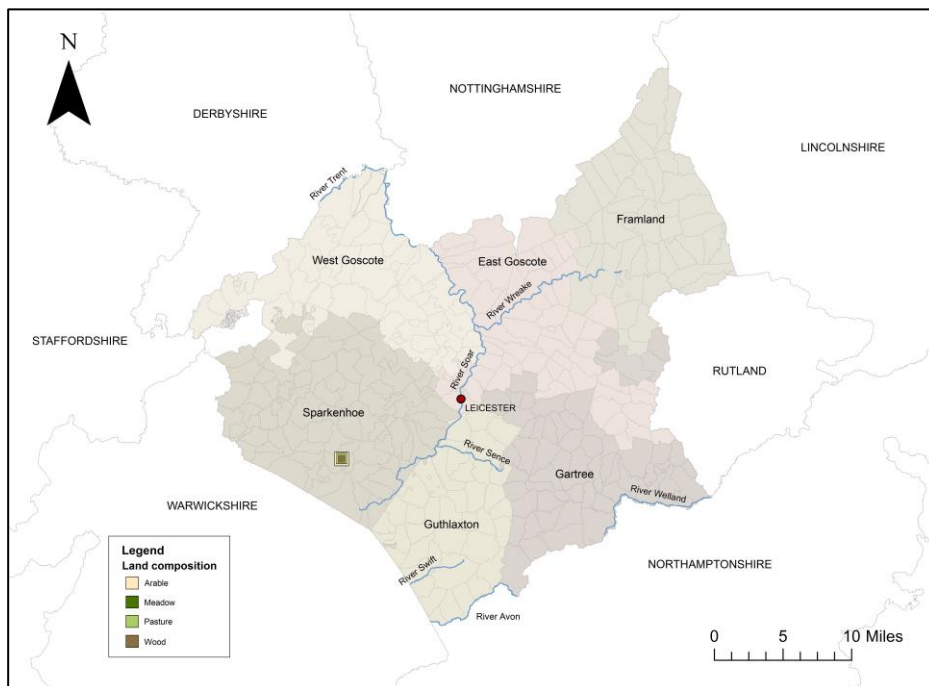
Figure 70 The land use of Thomas Grey, esquire, in 1507.[70]

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[69] TNA, E 150/1136/7.
[70] TNA, C 142/20/121.
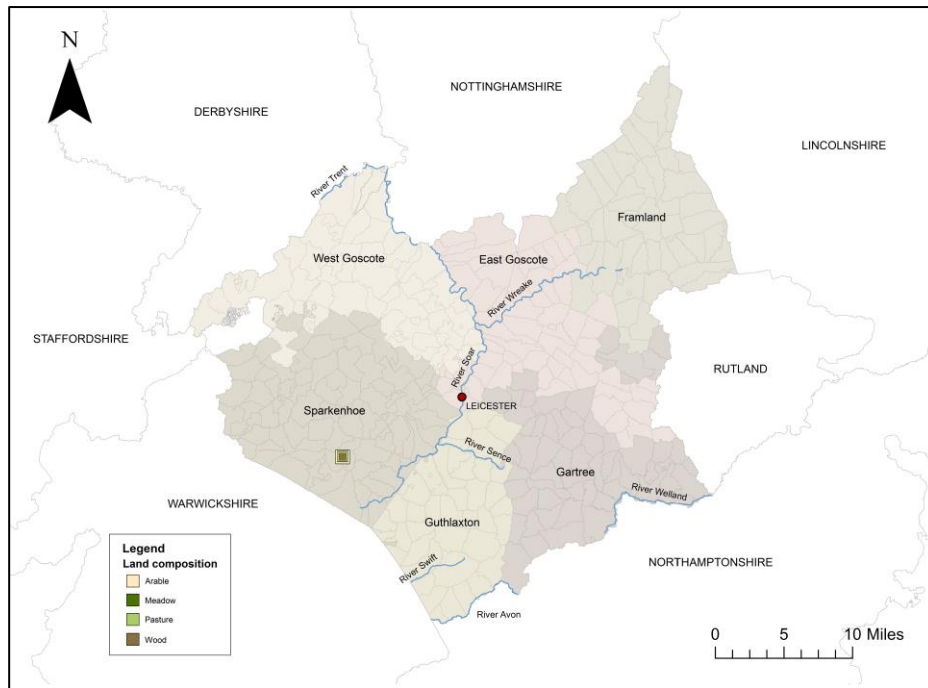
Figure 71 The land use of Lancelot Grey, esquire, in 1533.[71]
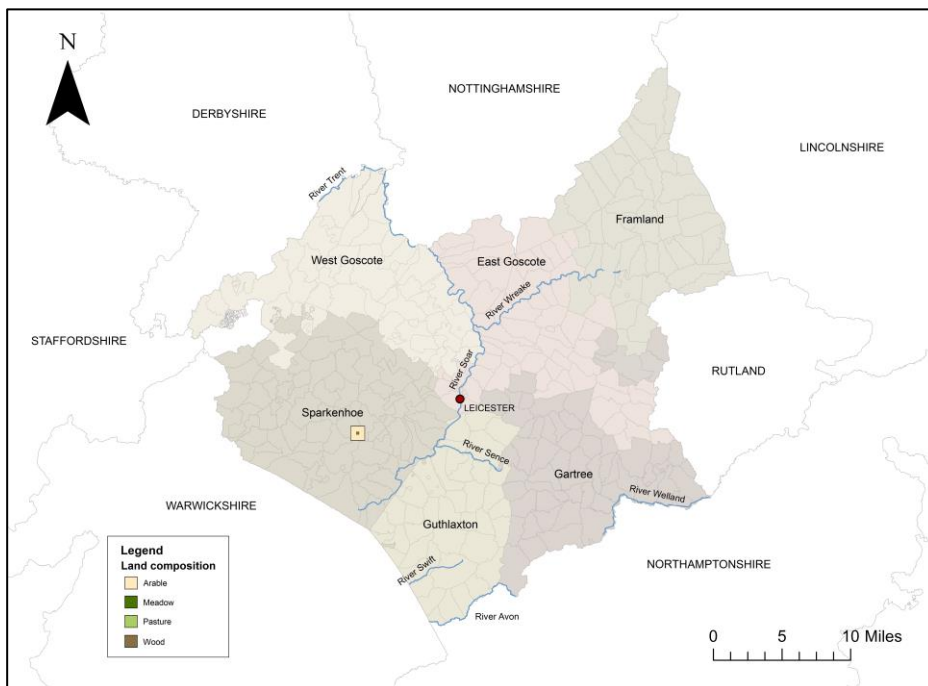
Figure 72 The land use of Philippa Harvey in 1517.[72]

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[71]   TNA, E 150/1136/6.
[72]   TNA, E 150/1123/1.
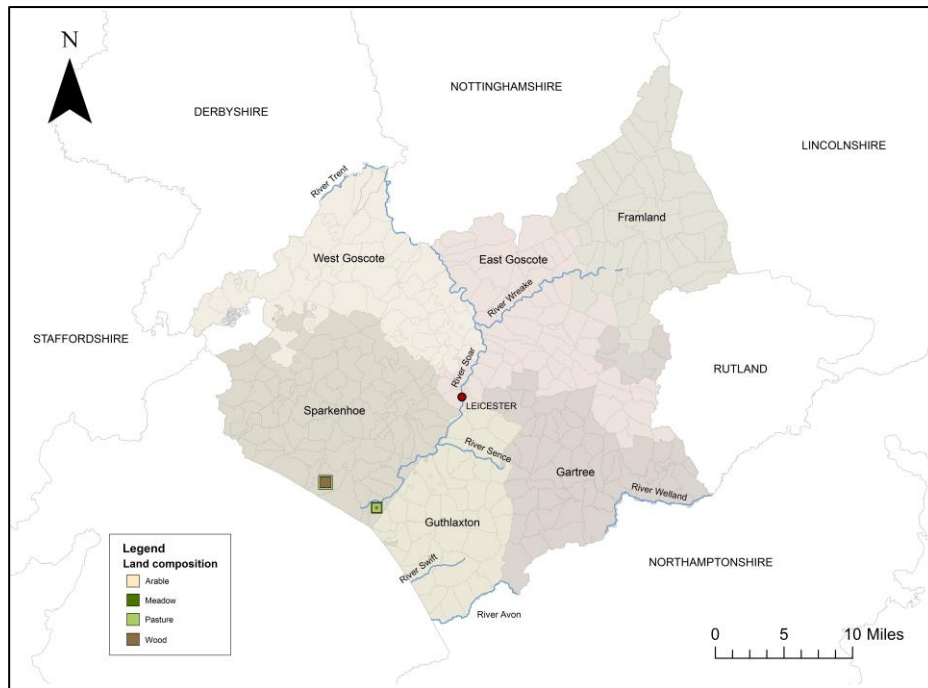
Figure 73 The land use of Thomas Harvey, esquire, in 1544.[73]
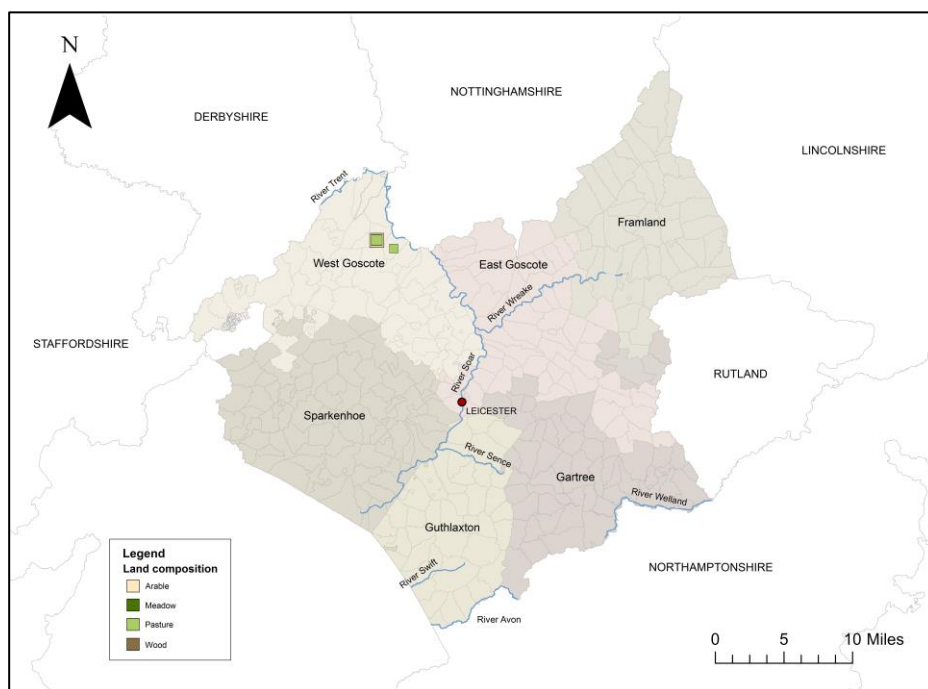
Figure 74 The land use of Robert Haselrigg, esquire, in 1536.[74]

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[73]   TNA, E 150/1146/3.
[74]   TNA, E 150/1140/3.
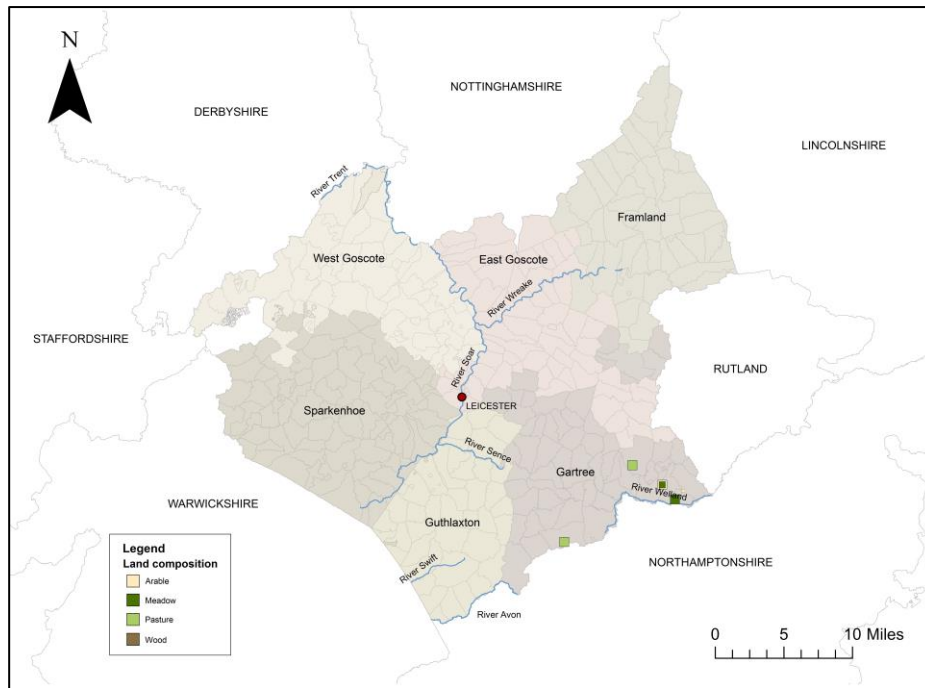
Figure 75 The land use of Thomas Haselrigg, esquire, in 1541.[75]
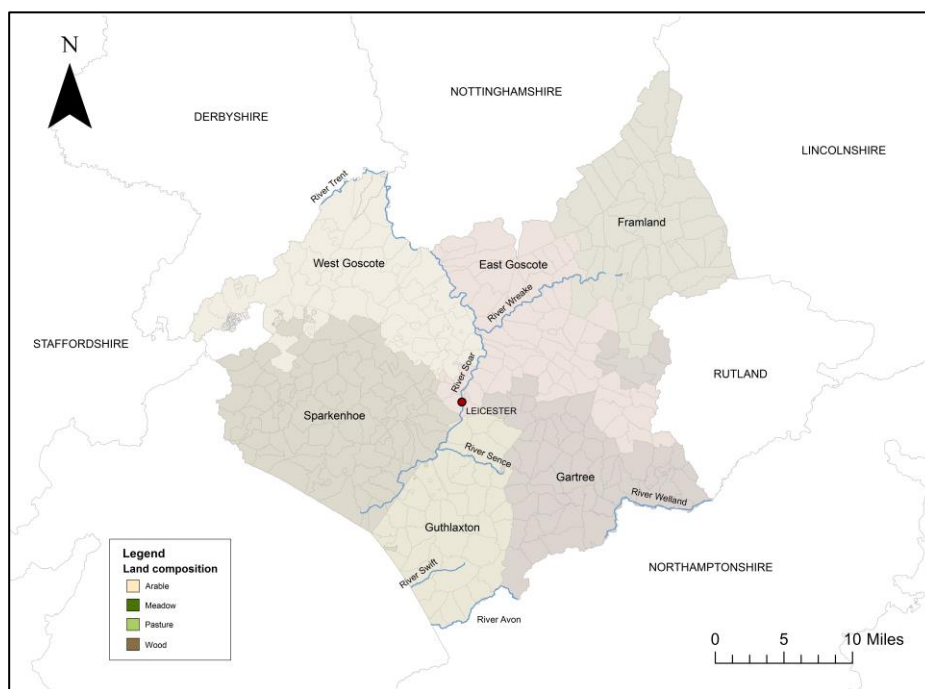
Figure 76 The land use of Bartholomew Haselrigg, esquire, in 1565.[76]

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[75] TNA, E 150/1222/7.
[76] TNA, WARD 7/10/87.
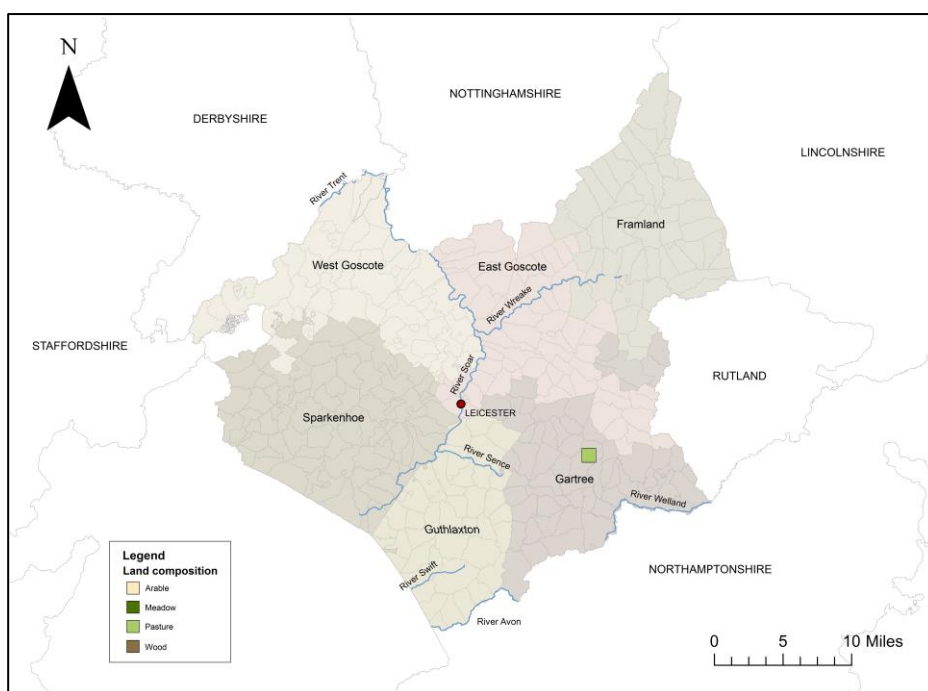
Figure 77 The land use of Miles Haselrigg, gentleman, in 1565.[77]
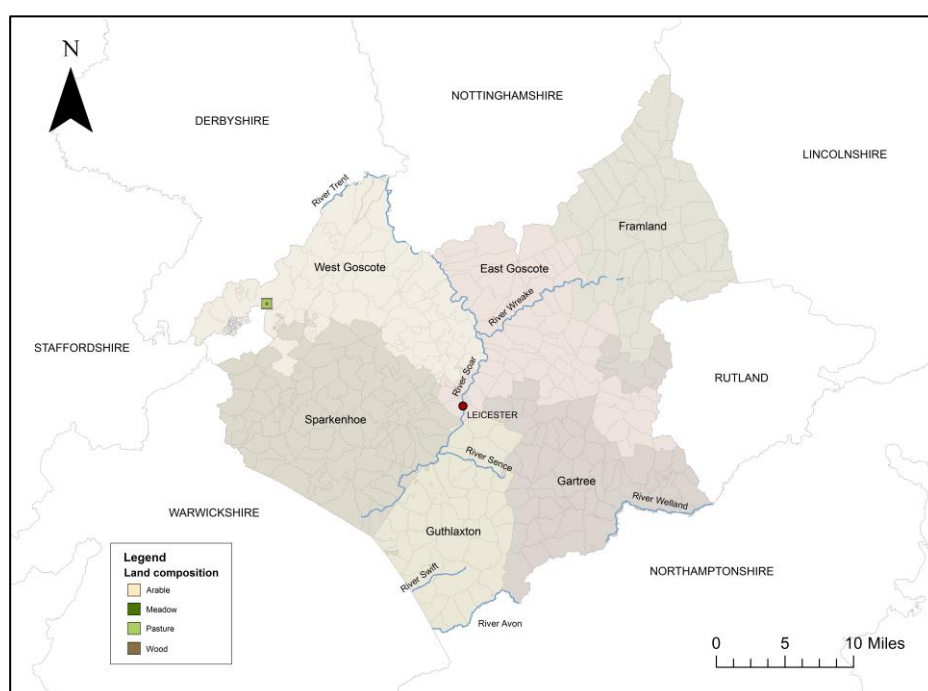
Figure 78 The land use of George Hastings, earl of Huntingdon, in 1544.[78]

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[77] TNA, C 142/143/77.
[78] TNA, E 150/1146/5.
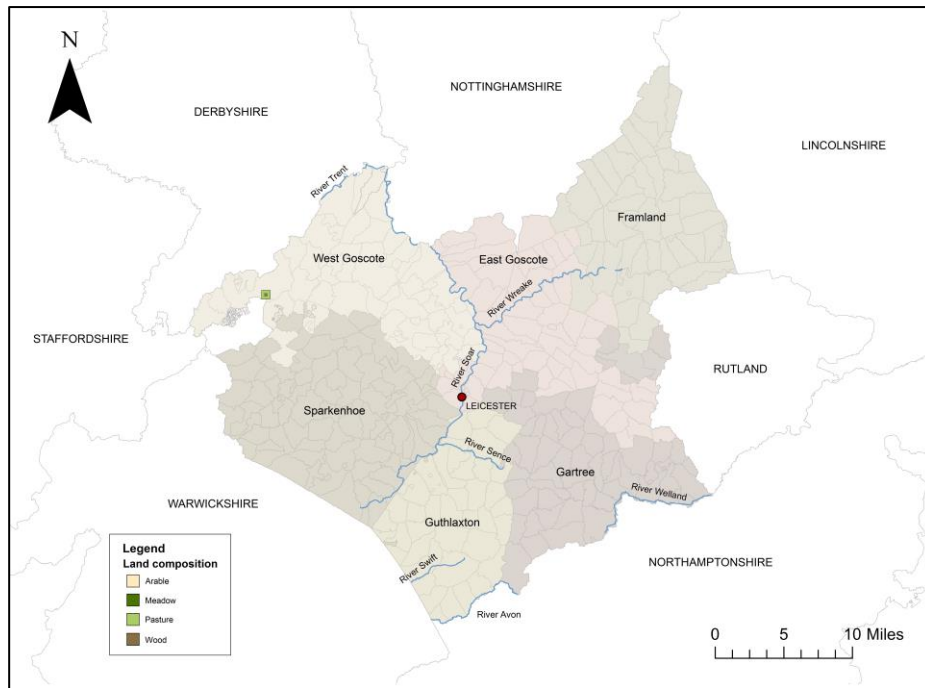
Figure 79 The land use of Francis Hastings, earl of Huntingdon, in 1561.[79]
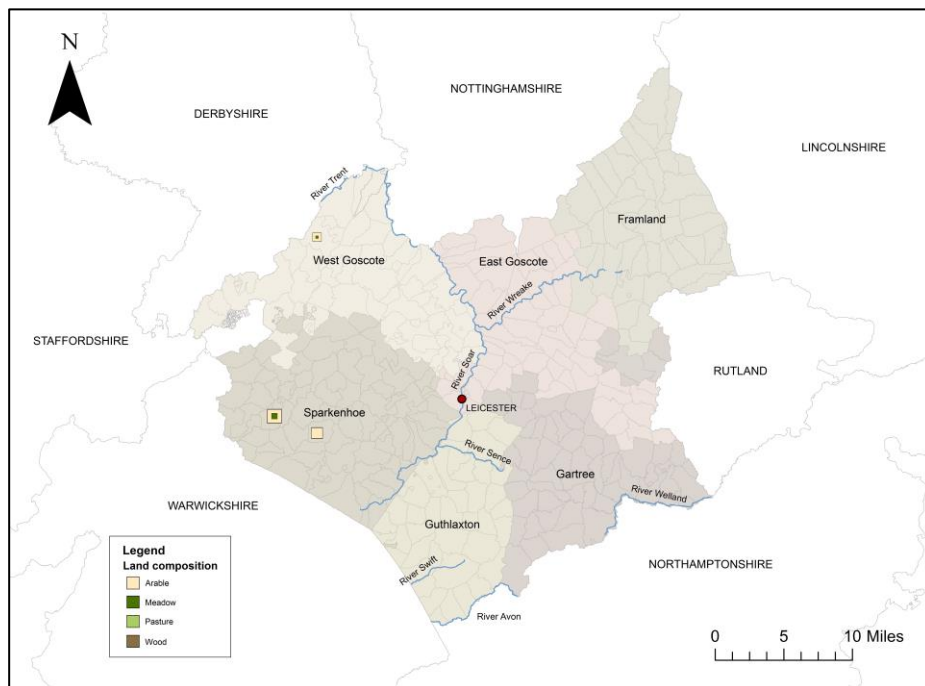
Figure 80 The land use of Robert Jakes, gentleman, in 1506.[80]

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[79] TNA, E 150/1158/12.
[80] TNA, C 142/20/116.
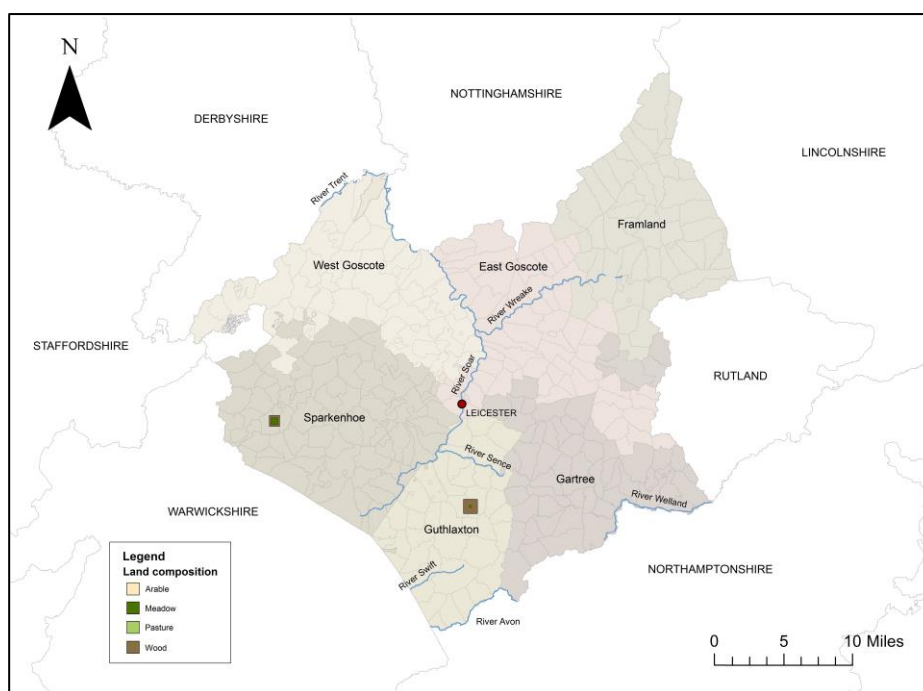
Figure 81 The land use of Thomas Jakes, gentleman, in 1518.[81]
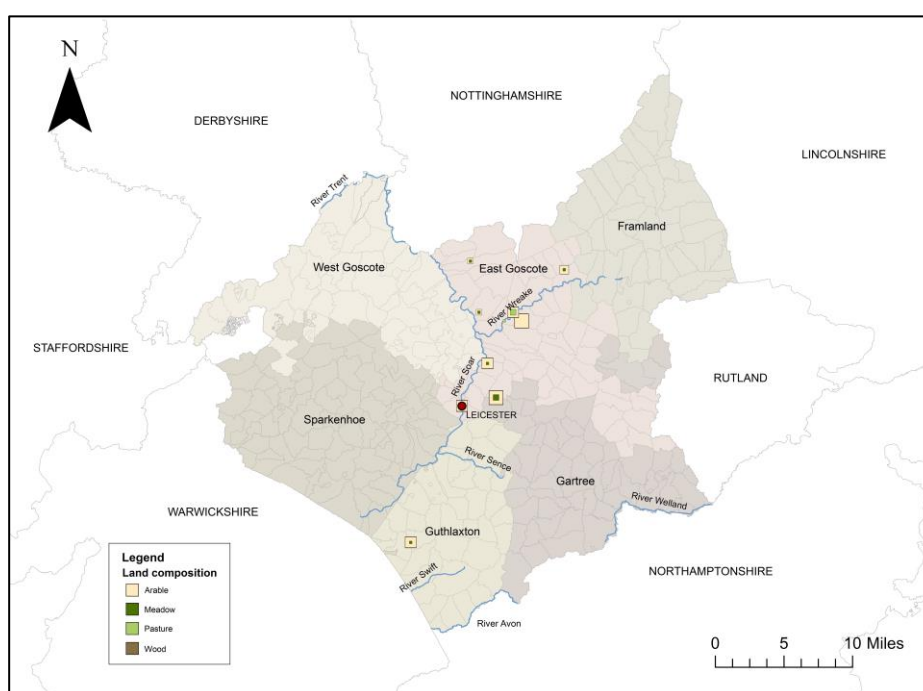
Figure 82 The land use of John Keble, esquire, in 1486.[82]

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81 TNA, E 150/1124/8.
82 TNA, C 142/2/9.
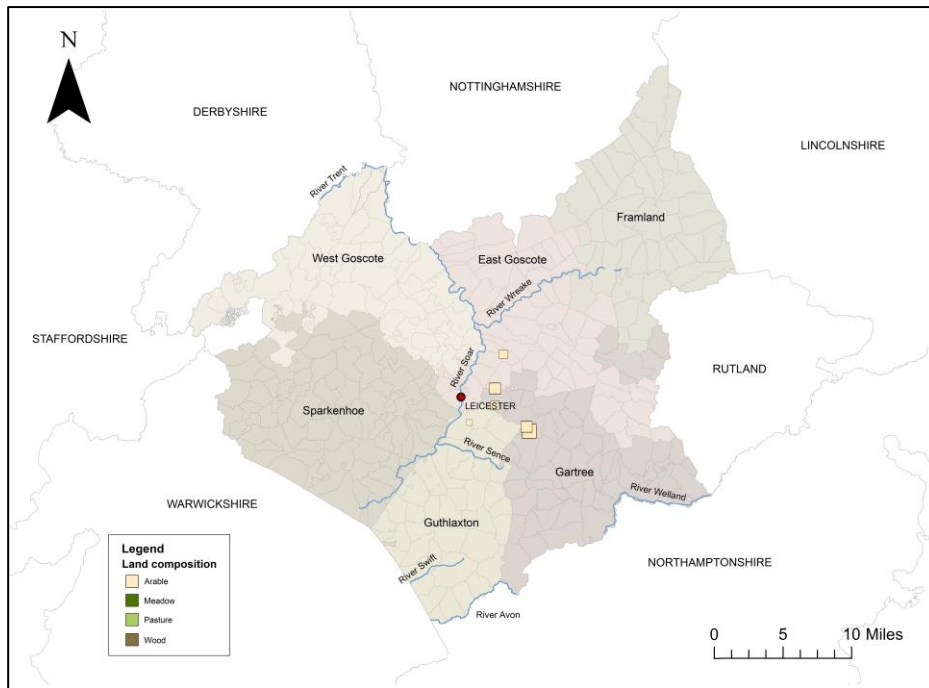
Figure 83 The land use of Thomas Keble, serjeant-at-law, in 1502.[83]
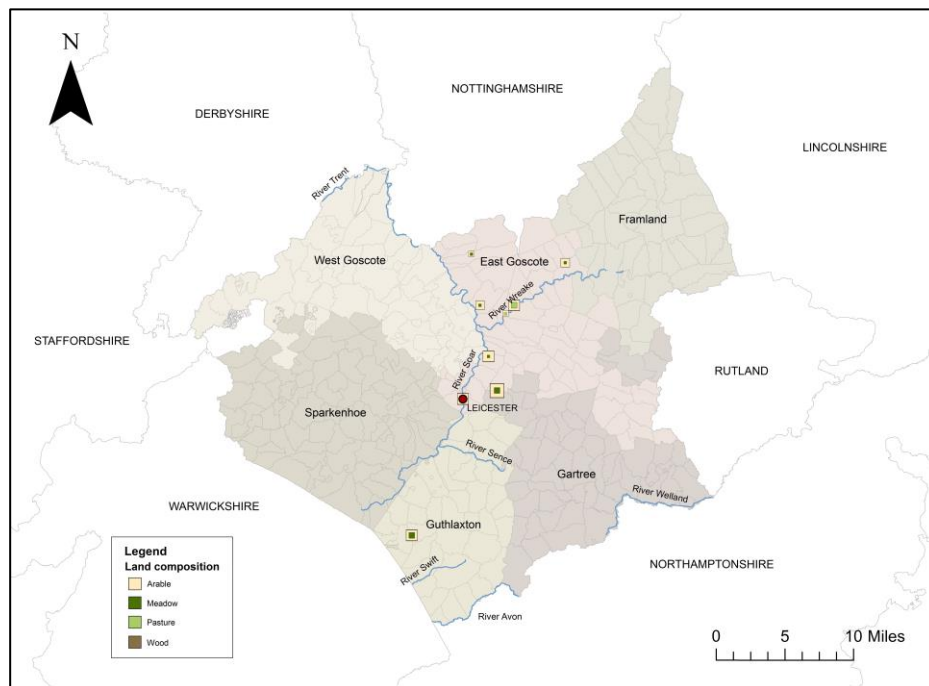
Figure 84 The land use of George Keble, esquire, in 1506.[84]

[83] TNA, C 142/15/108.
[84] TNA, E 150/1116(pt.1)/19.
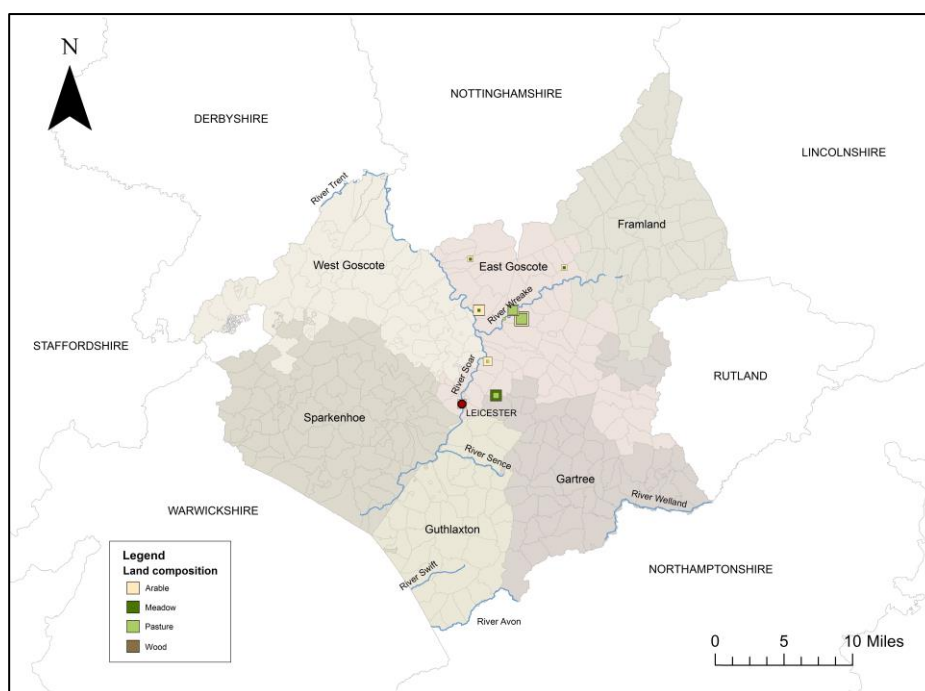
Figure 85 The land use of Thomas Keble, esquire, in 1525.[85]
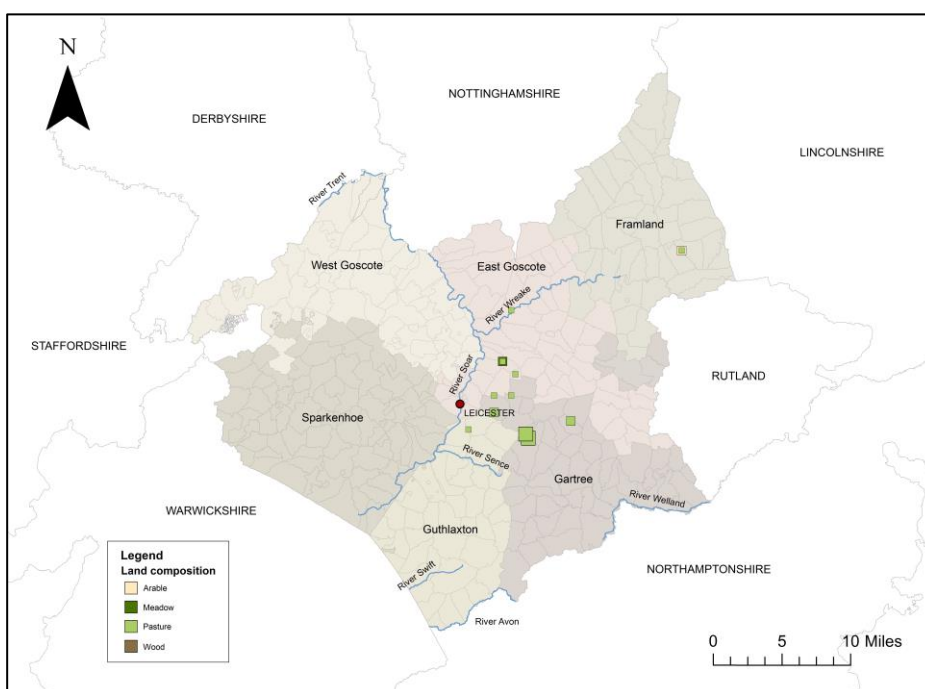
Figure 86 The land use of Henry Keble, esquire, in 1570.[86]

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[85]   TNA, E 150/1130/6.
[86]   TNA, C 142/157/94.
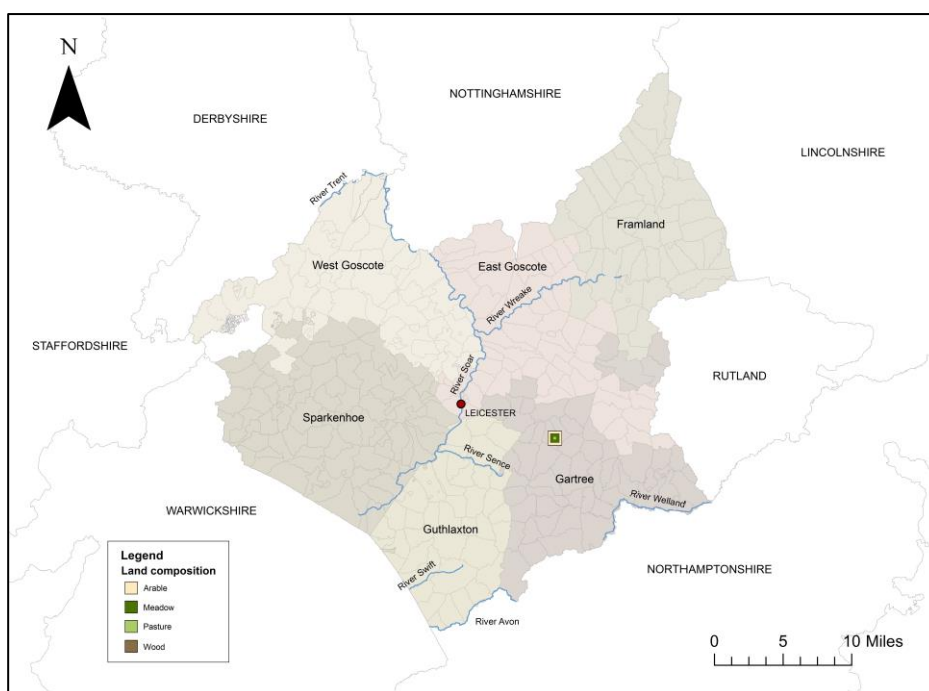
Figure 87 The land use of William Marmyon, esquire, in 1521.[87]
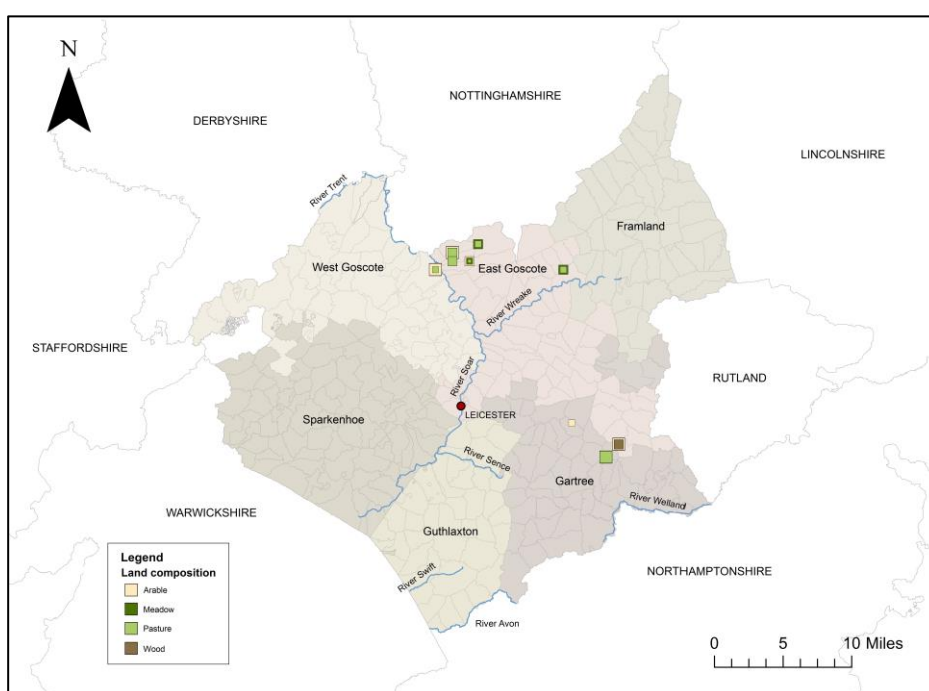
Figure 88 The land use of Christopher Neele, esquire, in 1526.[88]

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[87] TNA, E 150/1127/8.
[88] TNA, E 150/1131/7.
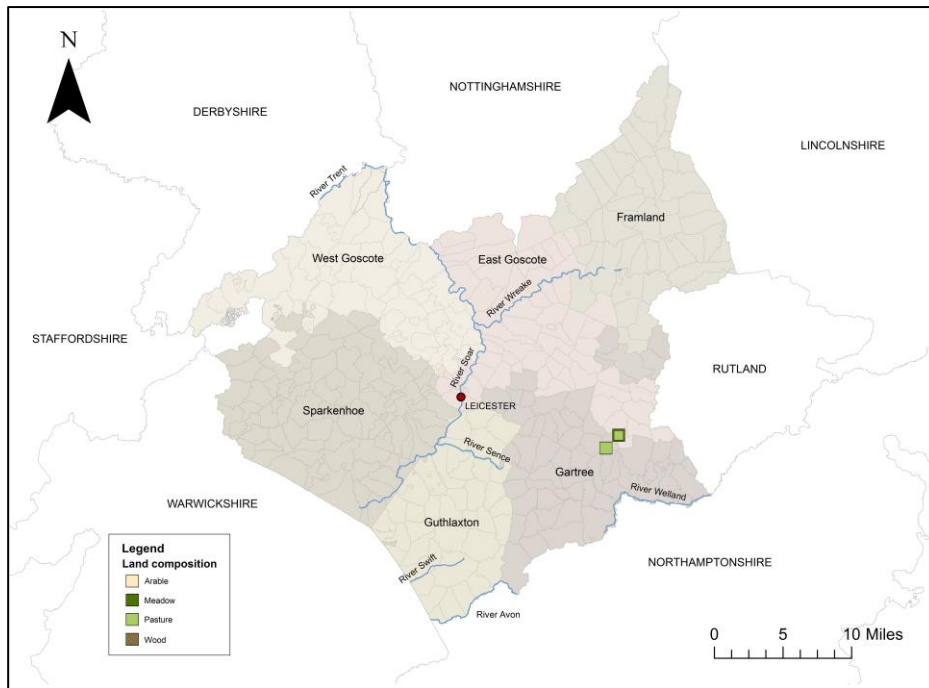
Figure 89 The land use of Richard Neele, esquire, in 1558.[89]
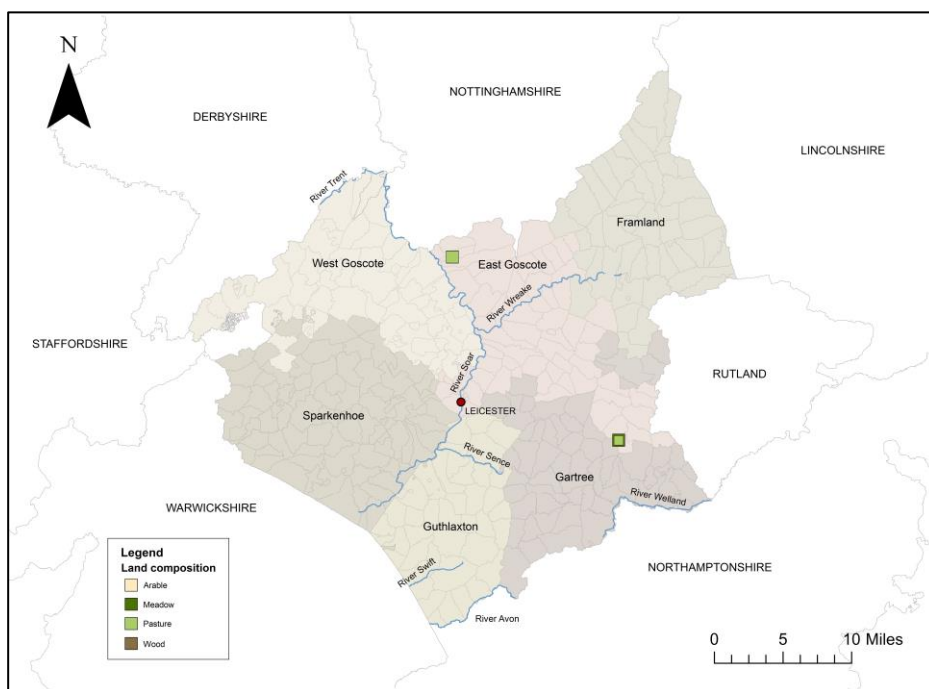
Figure 90 The land use of Francis Neele, esquire, in 1560.[90]

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[89]   TNA, C142/116/107.
[90]   TNA, E 150/1158/5.
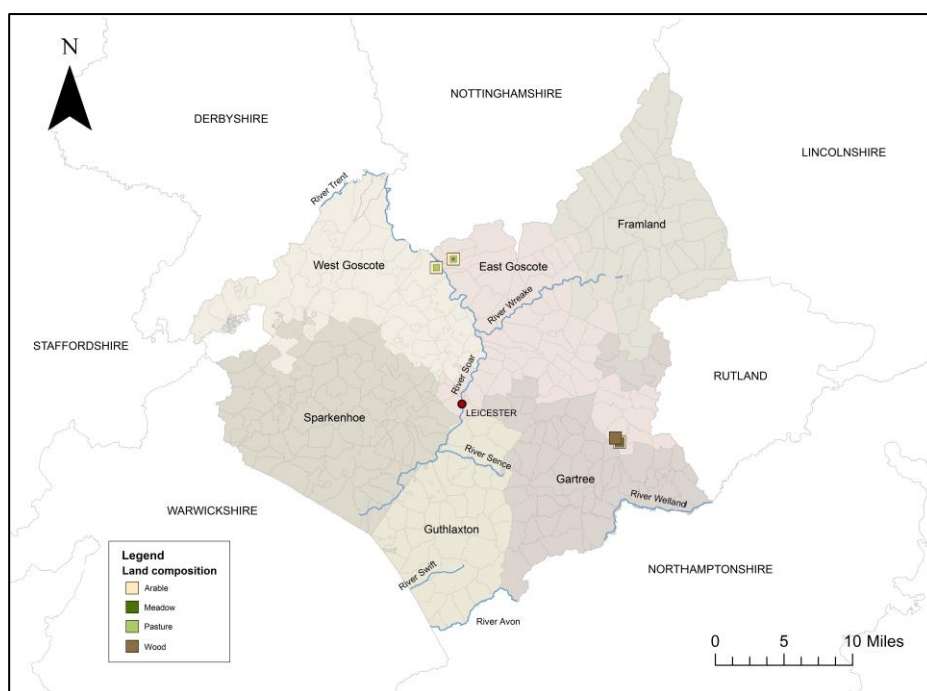
Figure 91 The land use of Thomas Neele, esquire, in 1577.[91]
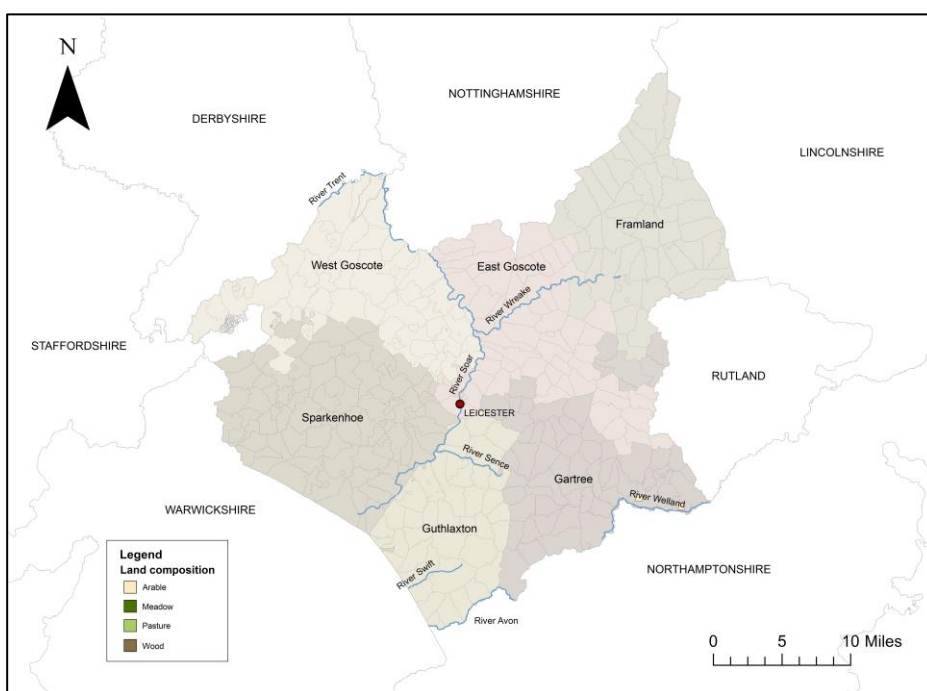
Figure 92 The land use of William Neville, gentleman, in 1498.[92]

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[91] TNA, WARD 7/18/38.
[92] TNA, C 142/12/21.
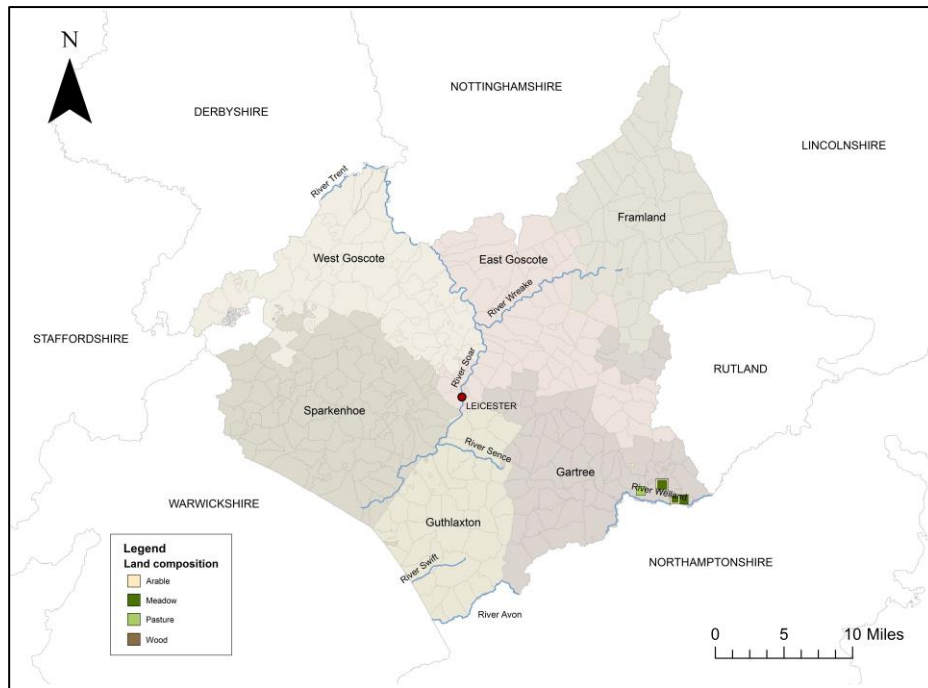
Figure 93 The land use of Thomas Neville, esquire, in 1503.[93]
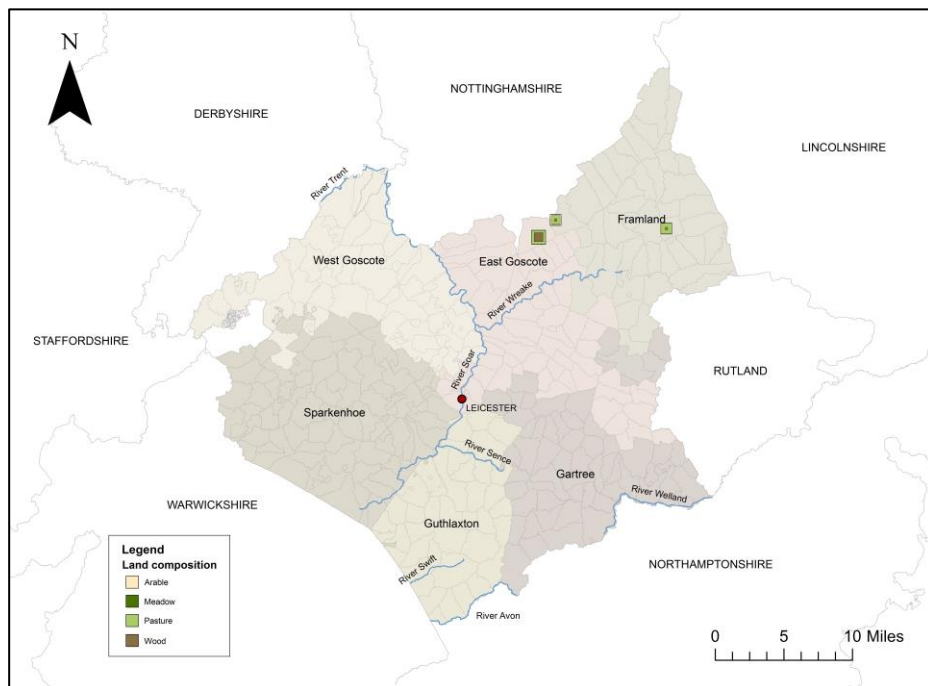
Figure 94 The land use of Andrew Nowell, esquire, in 1563.[94]

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[93] TNA, C 142/17/14.
[94] TNA, WARD 7/10/63.
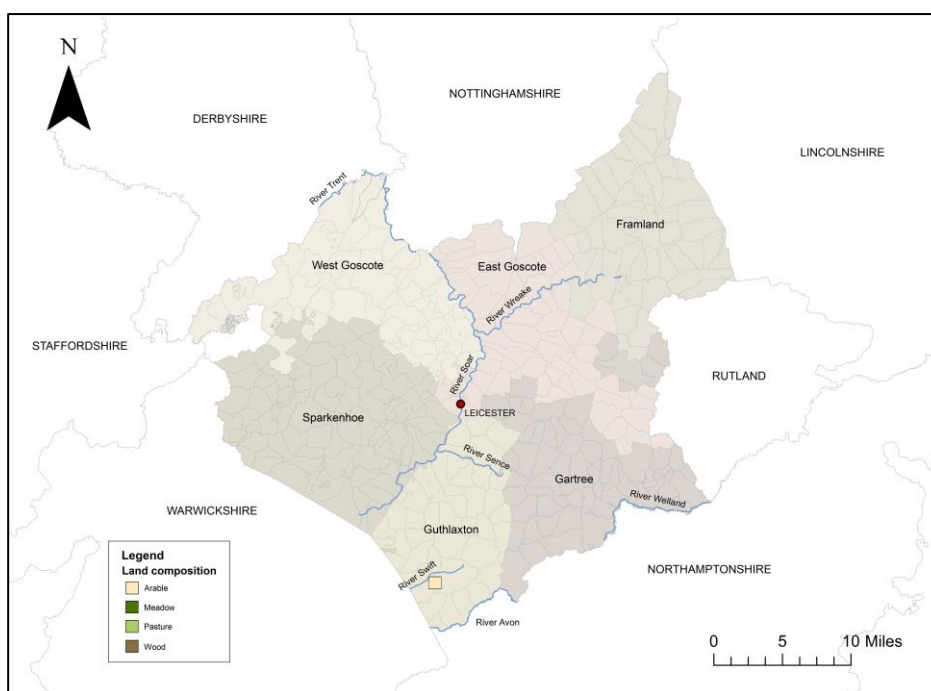
Figure 95 The land use of John Pulteney, gentleman, in 1493.[95]
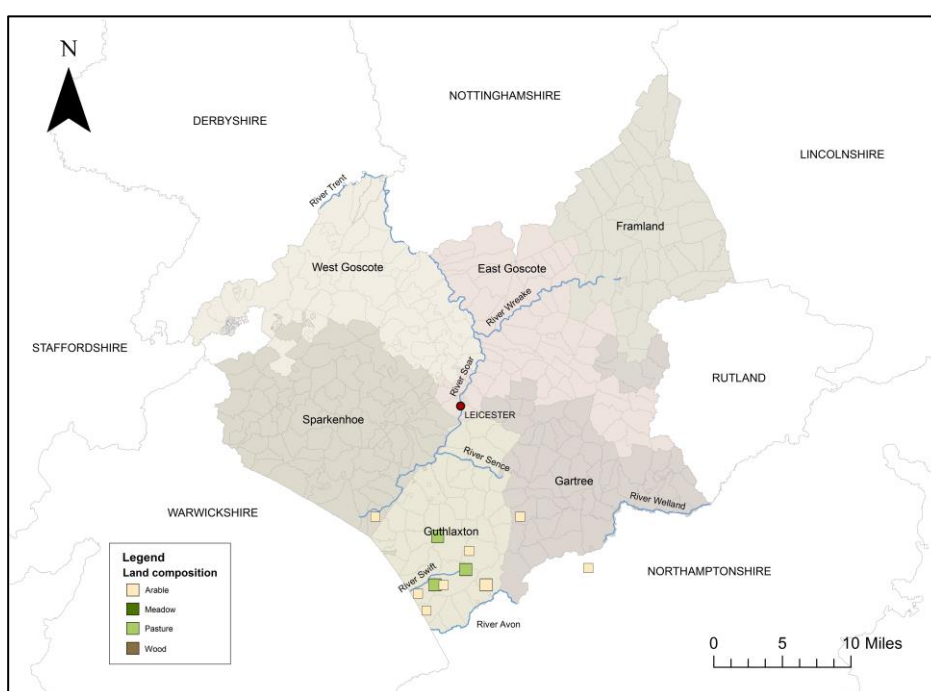
Figure 96 The land use of Sir Thomas Pulteney I in 1507.[96]

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[95] TNA, C 142/8/35.
[96] TNA, C 142/20/13.
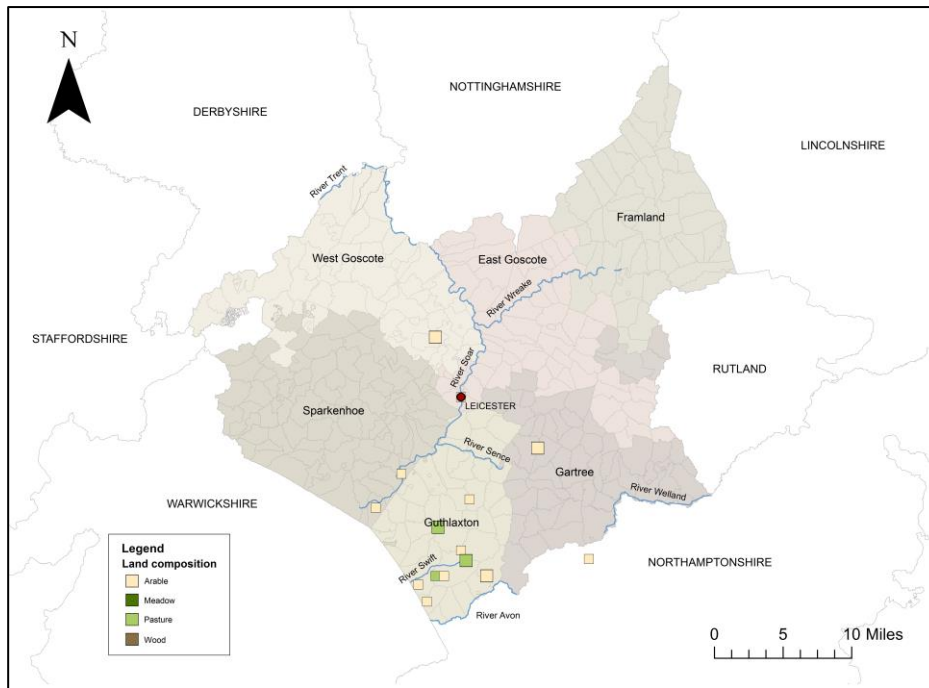
Figure 97 The land use of Sir Thomas Pulteney II in 1541.[97]
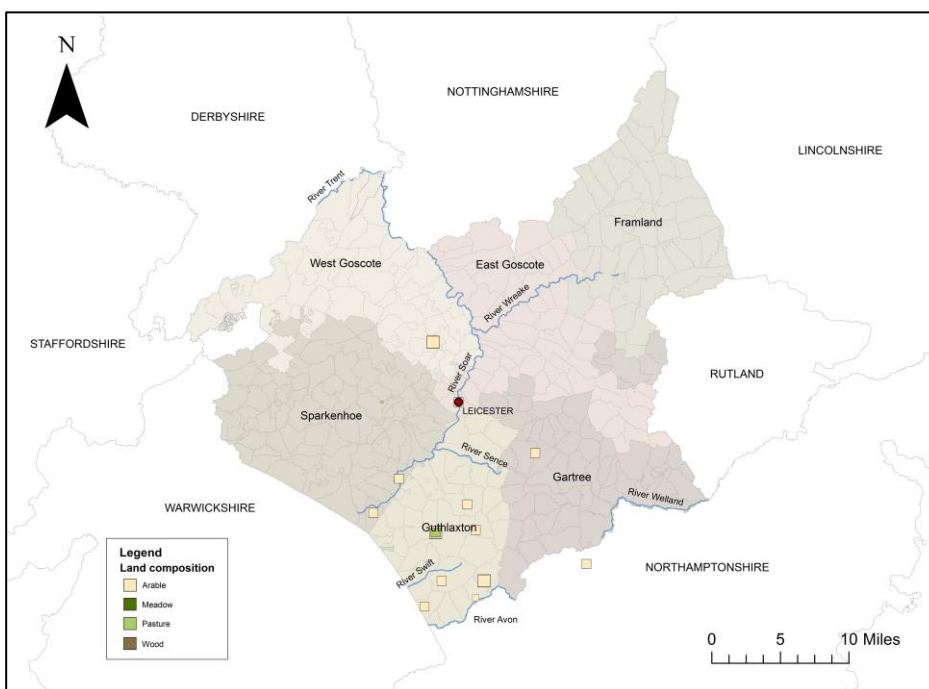
Figure 98 The land use of Francis Pulteney, esquire, in 1549.[98]

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[97]   TNA, C 142/63/36.
[98]   TNA, E 150/1149/8.
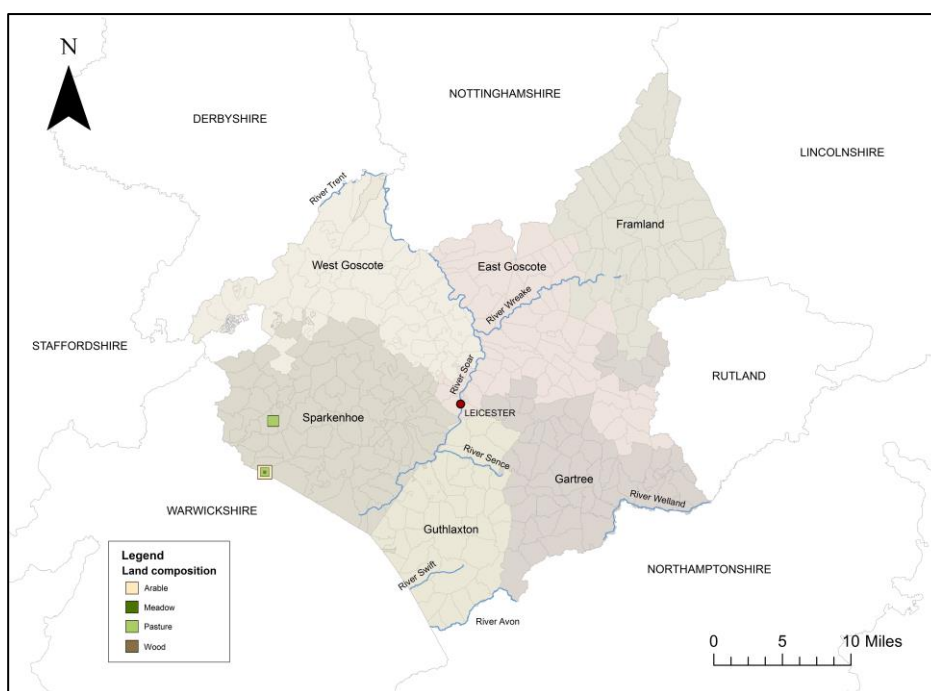
Figure 99 The land use of Thomas Purefoy, esquire, in 1538.[99]
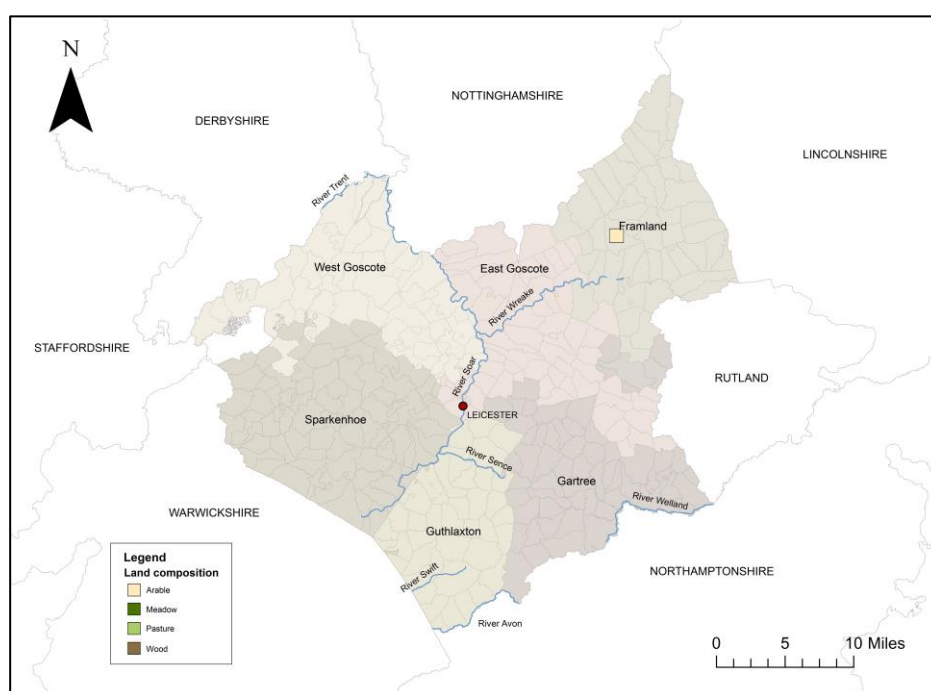
Figure 100 The land use of Thomas Seagrave, gentleman, in 1507.[100]

[99] TNA, E 150/1143/16.
[100] TNA, C 142/20/111.

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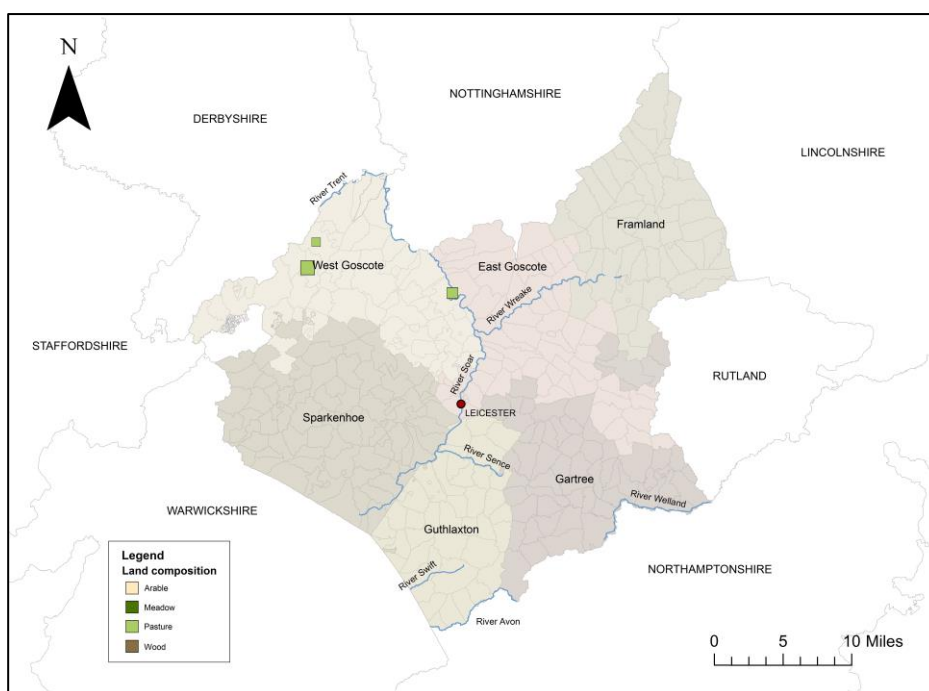
Figure 101 The land use of Ralph Shirley, esquire, in 1466.[101]
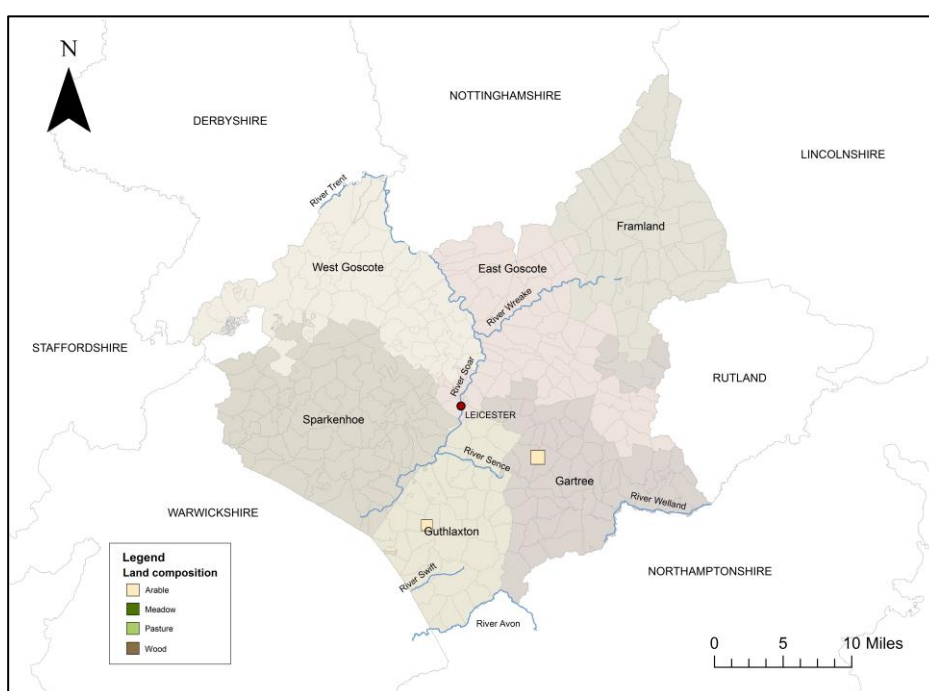
Figure 102 The land use of John Shirley, esquire, in 1486.[102]

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[101] TNA, C 140/19/18.
[102] TNA, C 142/1/94.
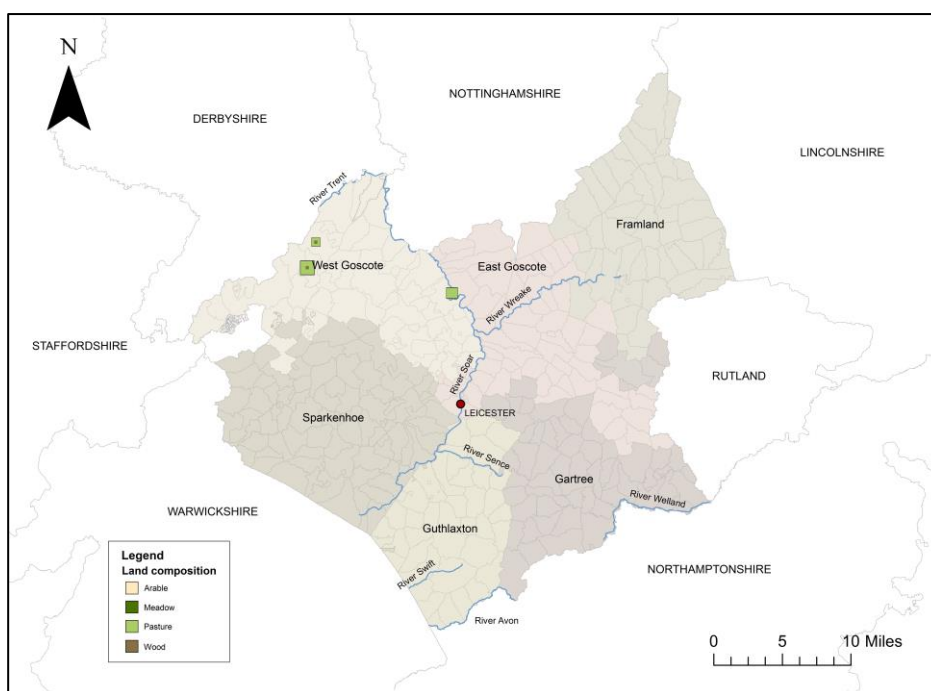
Figure 103 The land use of Ralph Shirley, gentleman, in 1534.[103]
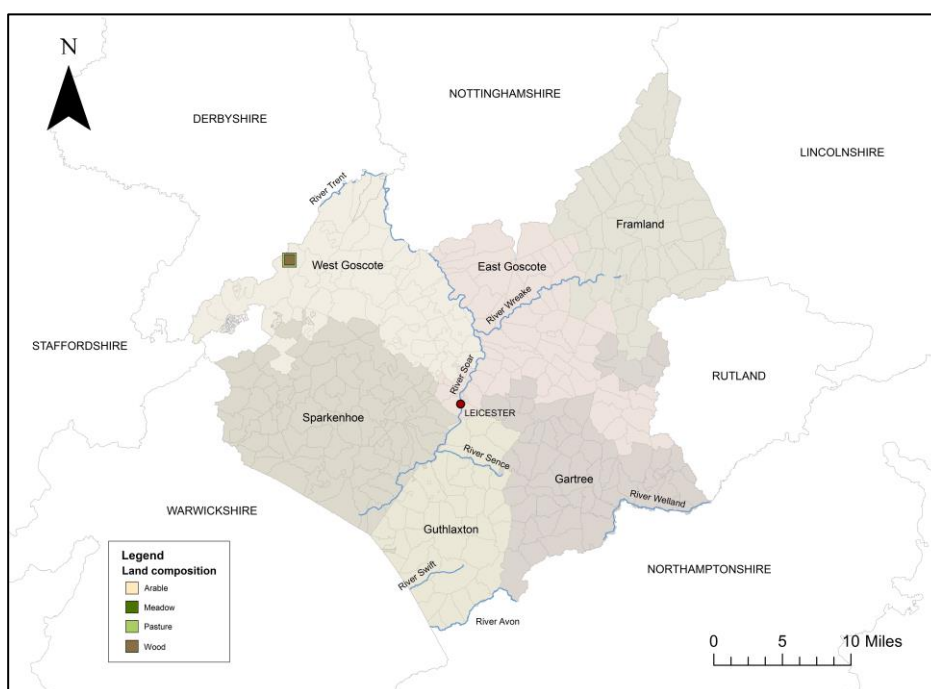
Figure 104 The land use of Francis Shirley, esquire, in 1571.[104]

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[103] TNA, E 150/1138/2.
[104] TNA, C 142/161/90.
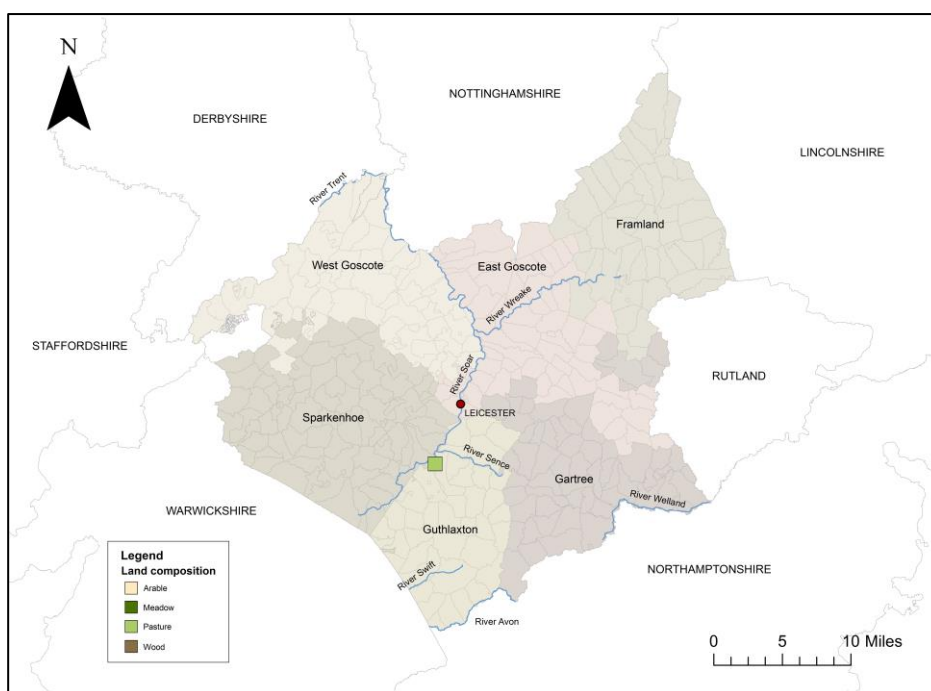
Figure 105 The land use of Elizabeth Skeffington, widow, in 1510.[105]
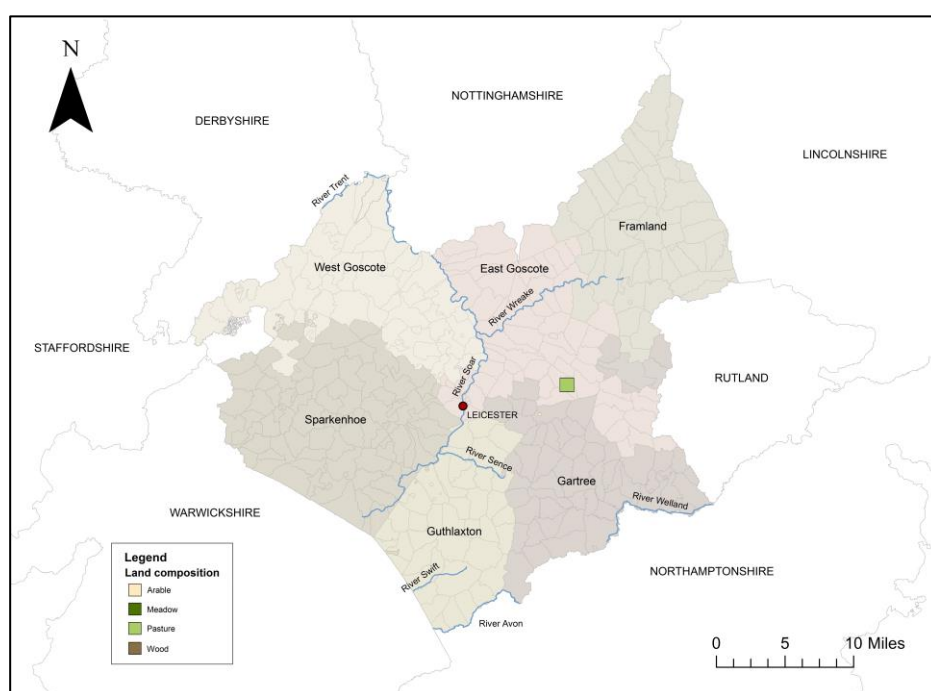
Figure 106 The land use of Anne Skeffington, widow, in 1536.[106]

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[105] TNA, E 150/1117/4.
[106] TNA, E 150/1140/1.
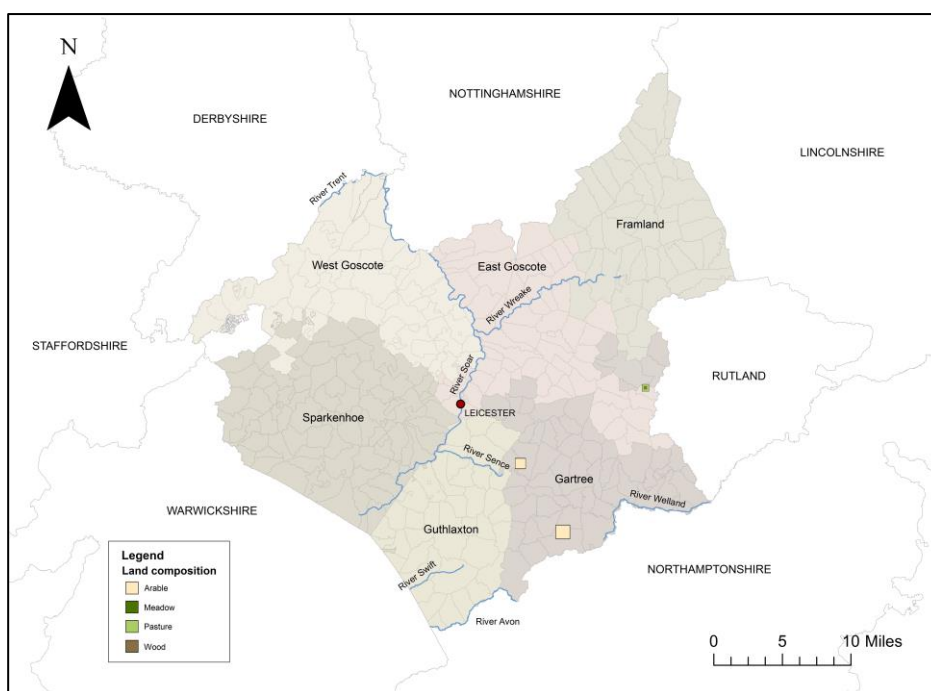
Figure 107 The land use of William Smith, esquire, in 1508.[107]
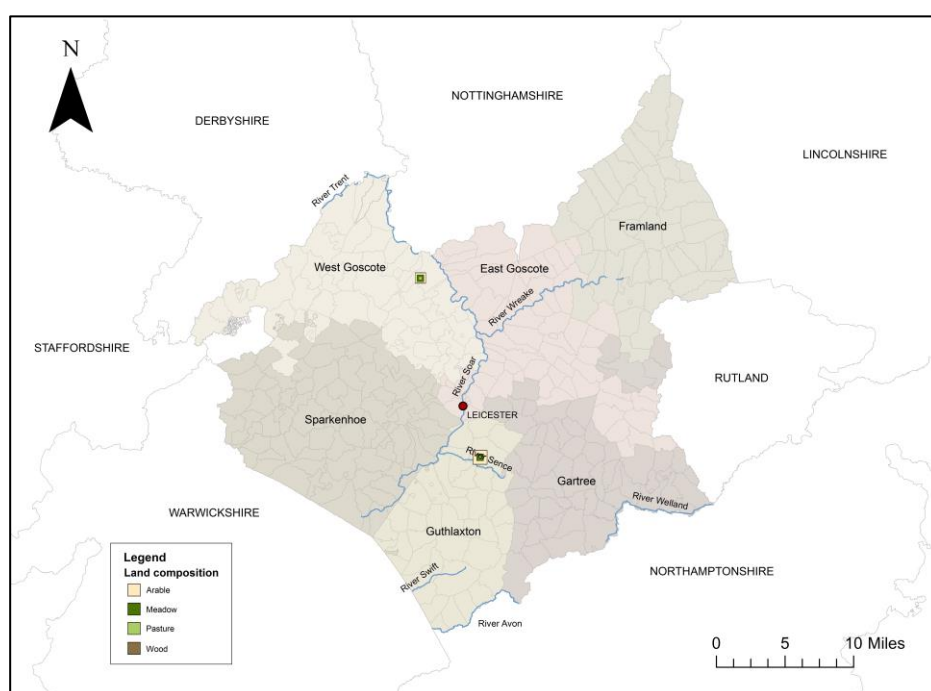
Figure 108 The land use of Henry Smith, esquire, in 1513.[108]

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[107] TNA, E 150/1116(pt.1)/14.
[108] TNA, E 150/1120/4.
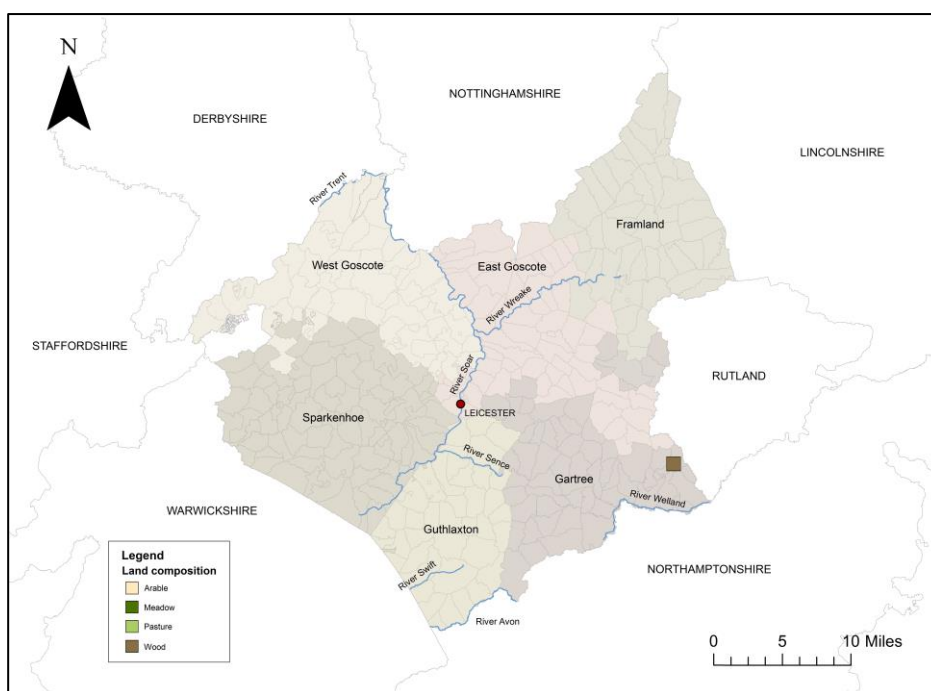
Figure 109 The land use of Henry Sothyll, esquire, in 1506.[109]
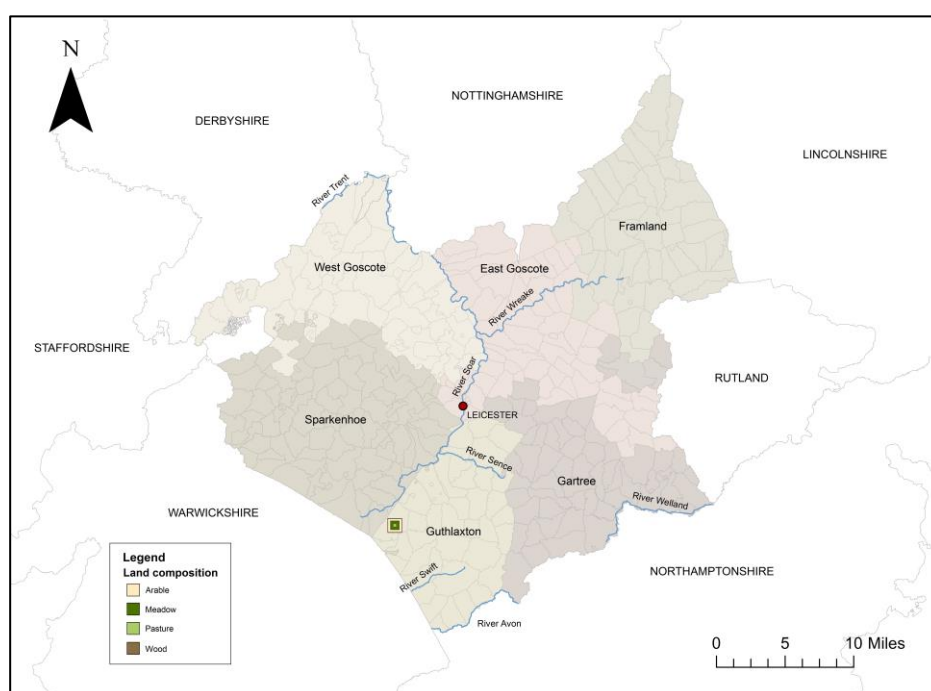
Figure 110 The land use of John Staresmore, esquire, in 1550.[110]

[109] TNA, C 142/19/151.
[110] TNA, E 150/1150/12.
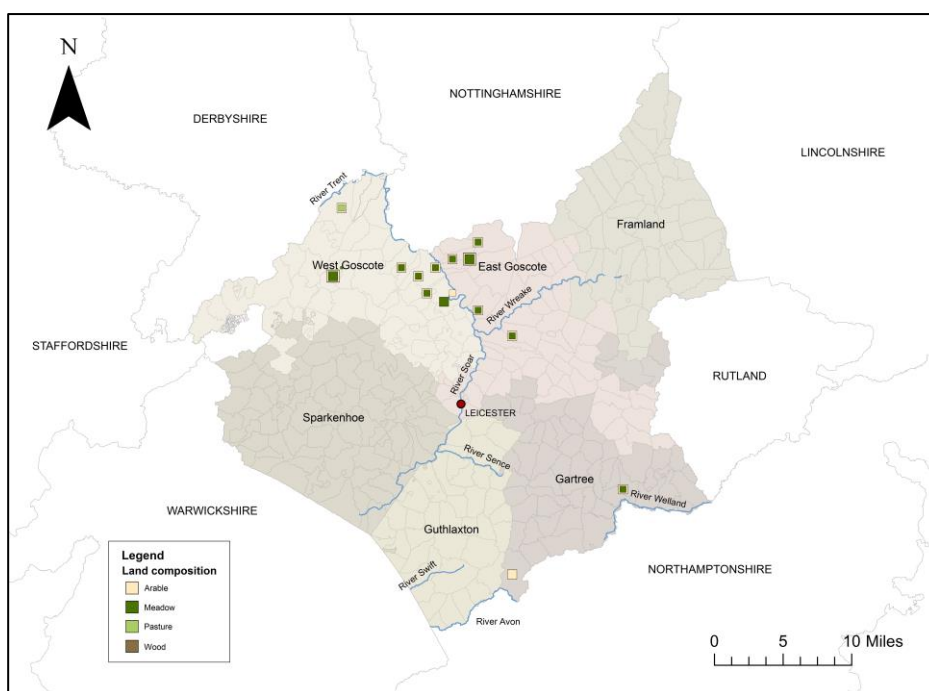
Figure 111 The land use of William Staunton, gentleman, in 1531.[111]
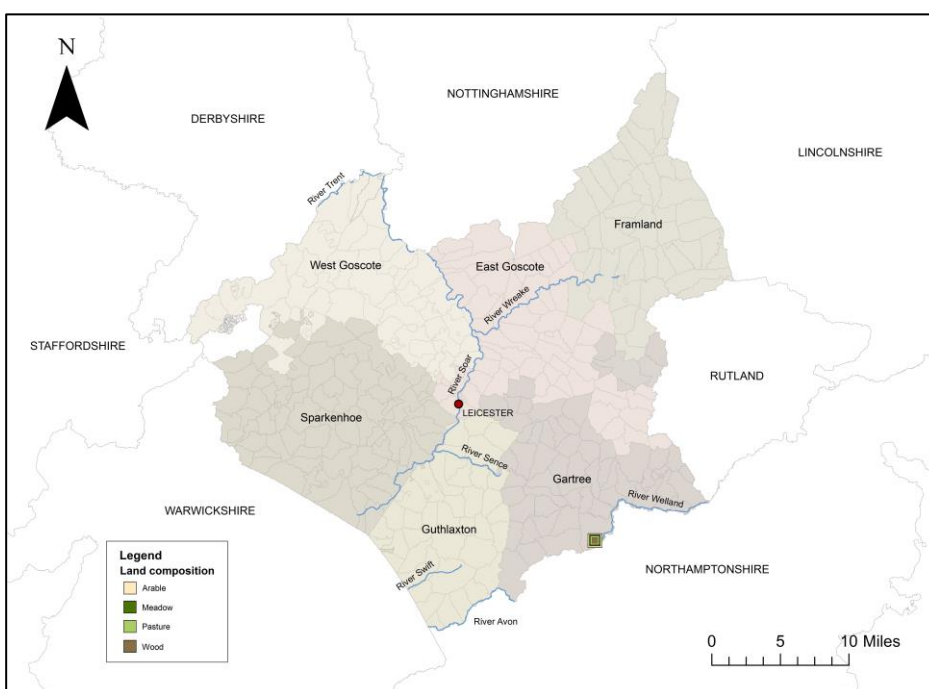
Figure 112 The land use of Robert Strelley, esquire, in 1554.[112]

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[111] TNA, E 150/1134/3.
[112] TNA, E 150/1154/7.
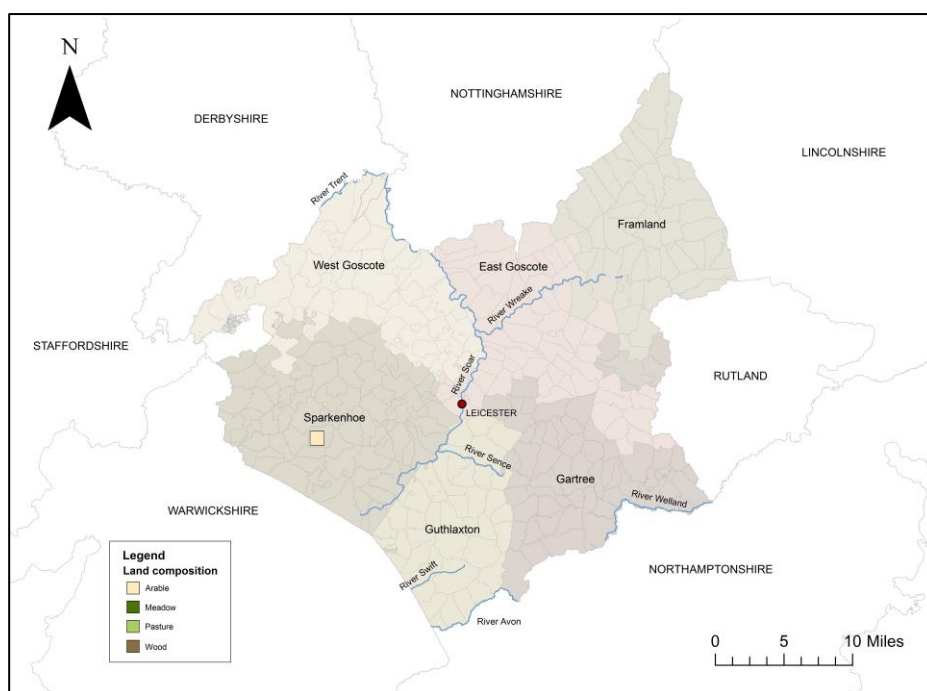
Figure 113 The land use of Nicholas Sutton, esquire, in 1532.[113]
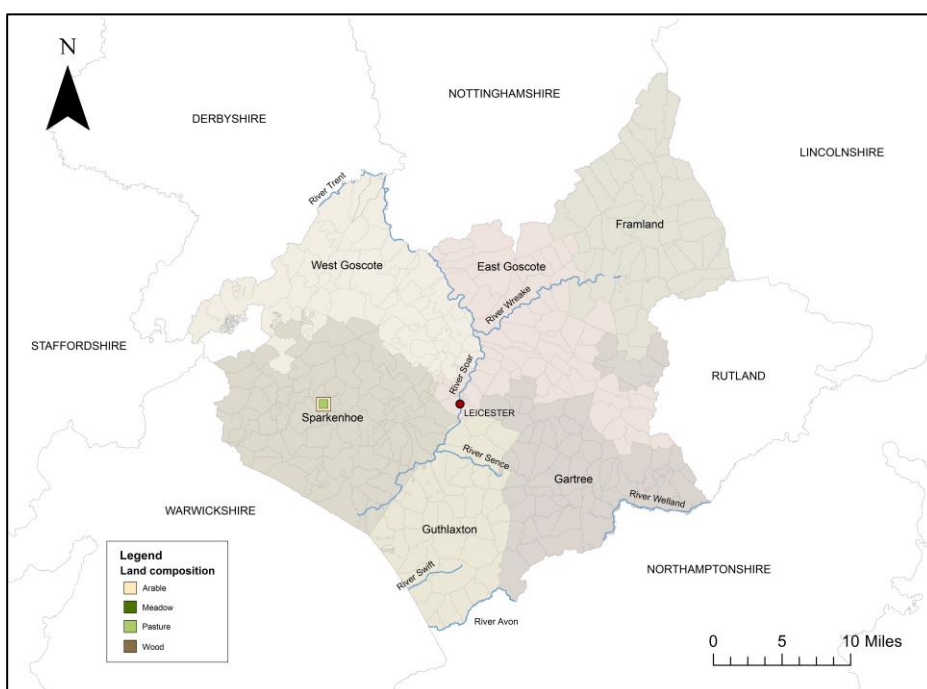
Figure 114 The land use of John Sutton, esquire, in 1546.[114]

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[113] TNA, C 142/52/78.
[114] TNA, E 150/1147/1.
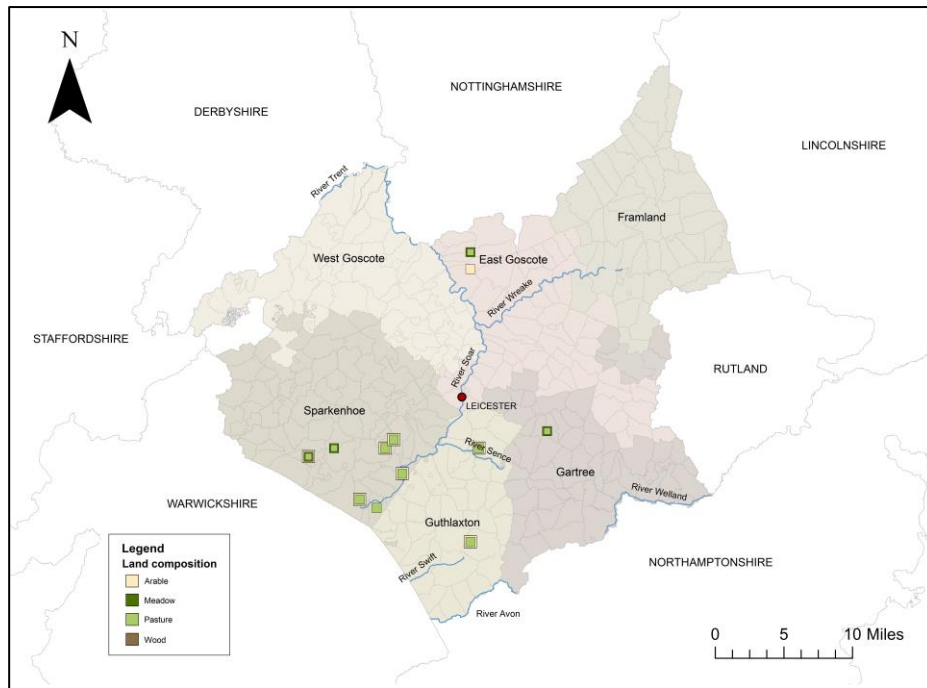
Figure 115 The land use of John Turville I, esquire, in 1506.[115]
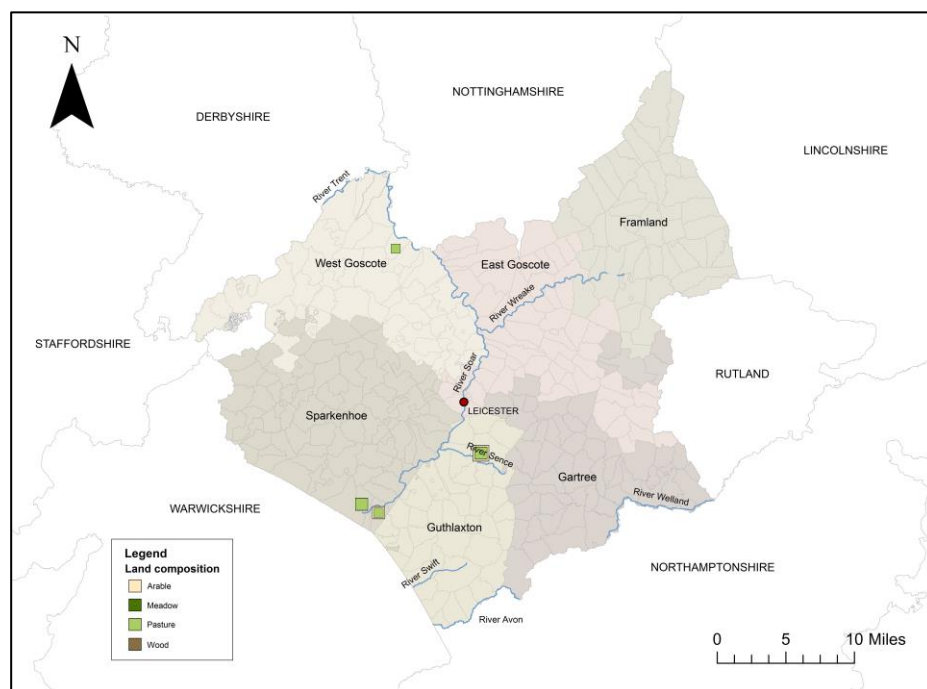
Figure 116 The land use of Sir William Turville in 1549.[116]

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[115] TNA, C 142/20/8.
[116] TNA, E 150/1149/3.
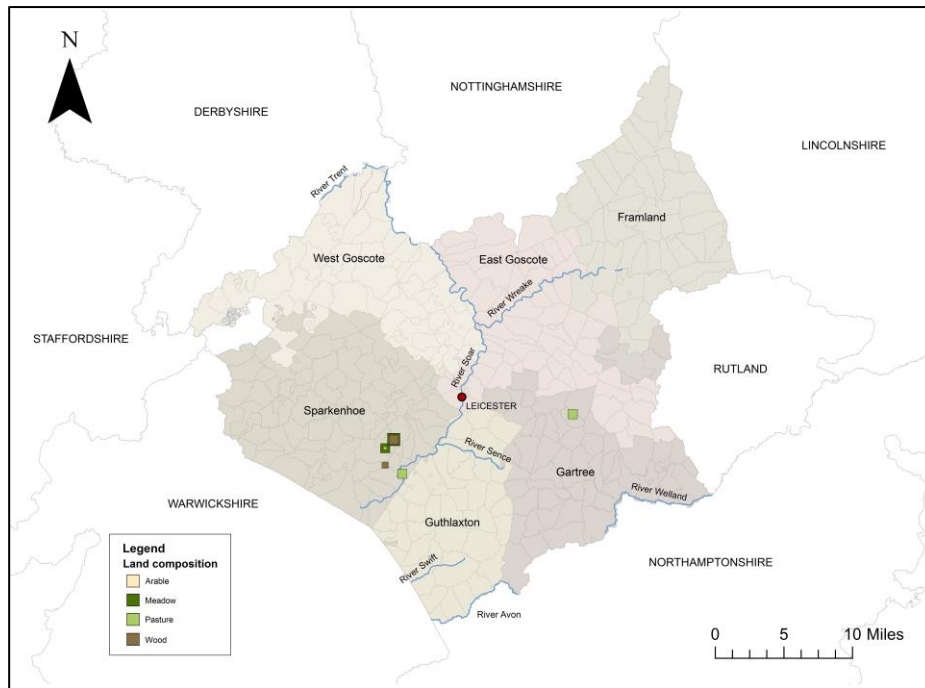
Figure 117 The land use of John Turville II, esquire, in 1561.[117]
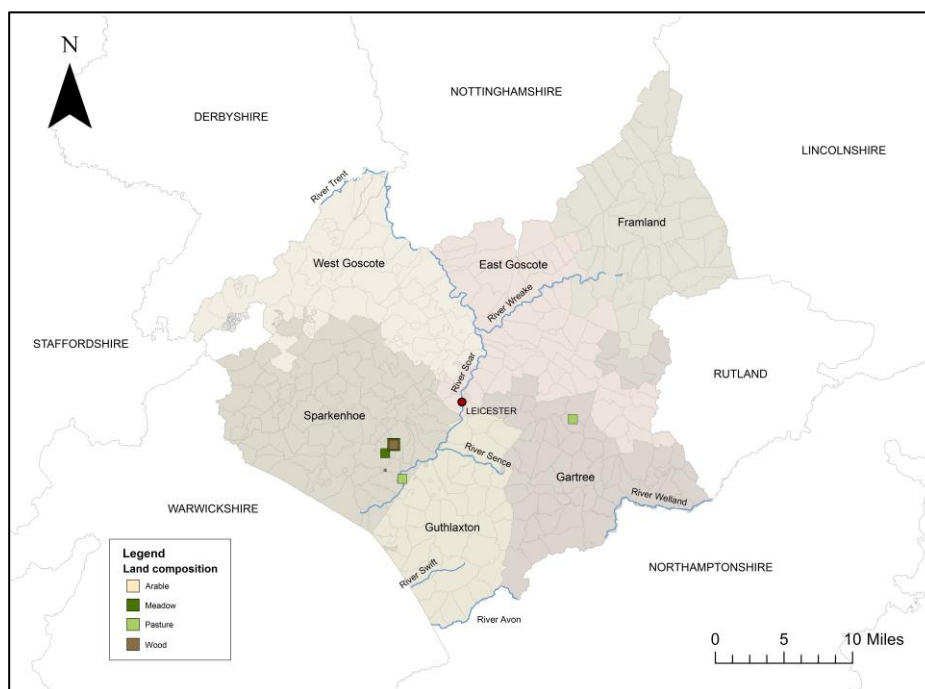
Figure 118 The land use of Richard Turville, esquire, in 1563.[118]

[117] TNA, E 150/1160/1.
[118] TNA, E 150/1161/14.
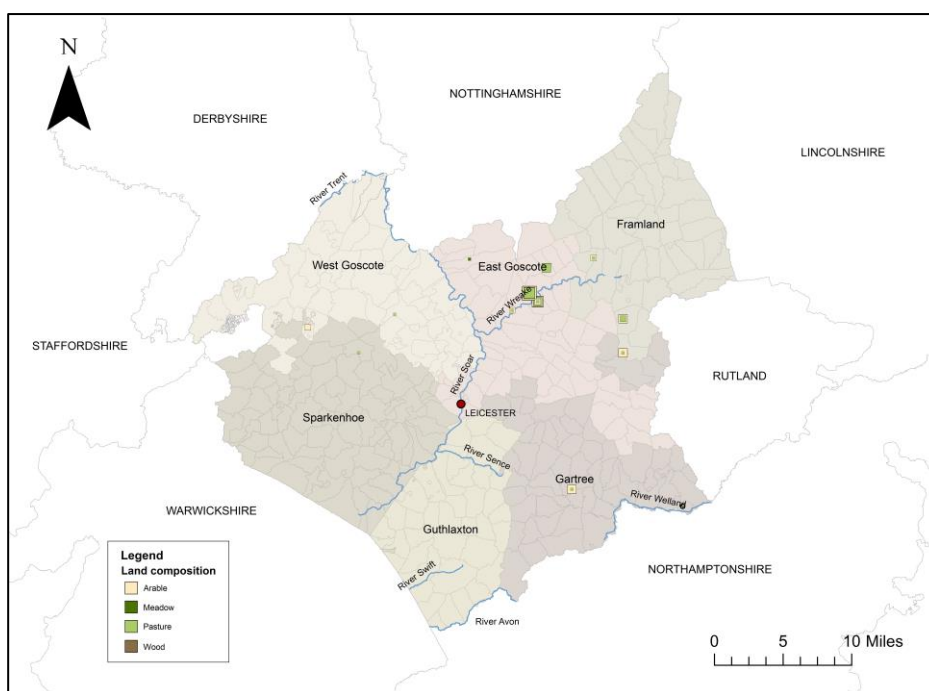
Figure 119 The land use of Sir John Villers in 1507.[119]
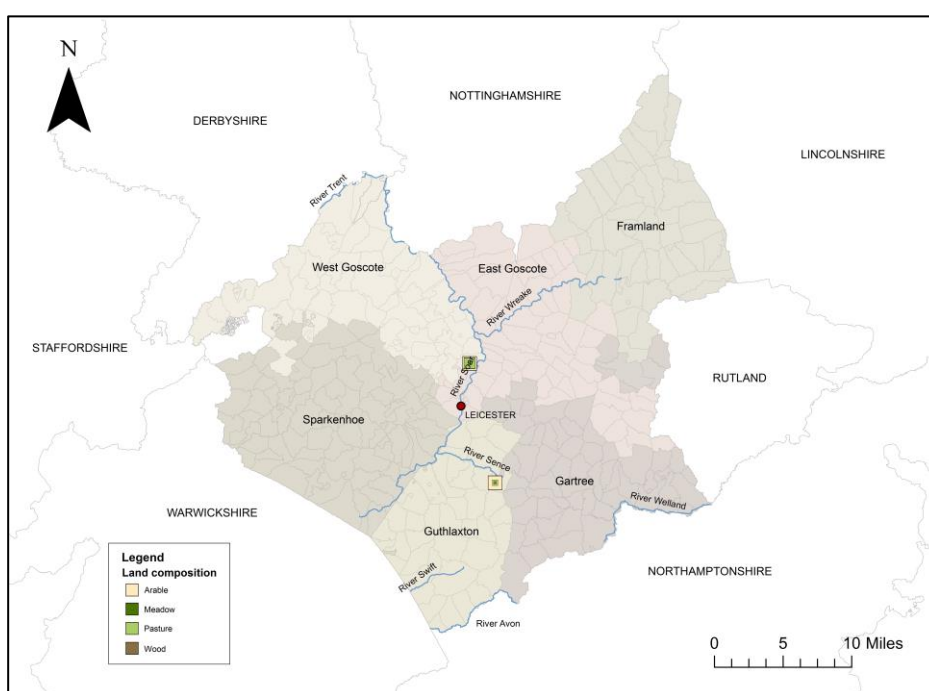
Figure 120 The land use of Christopher Villers, esquire, in 1538.[120]

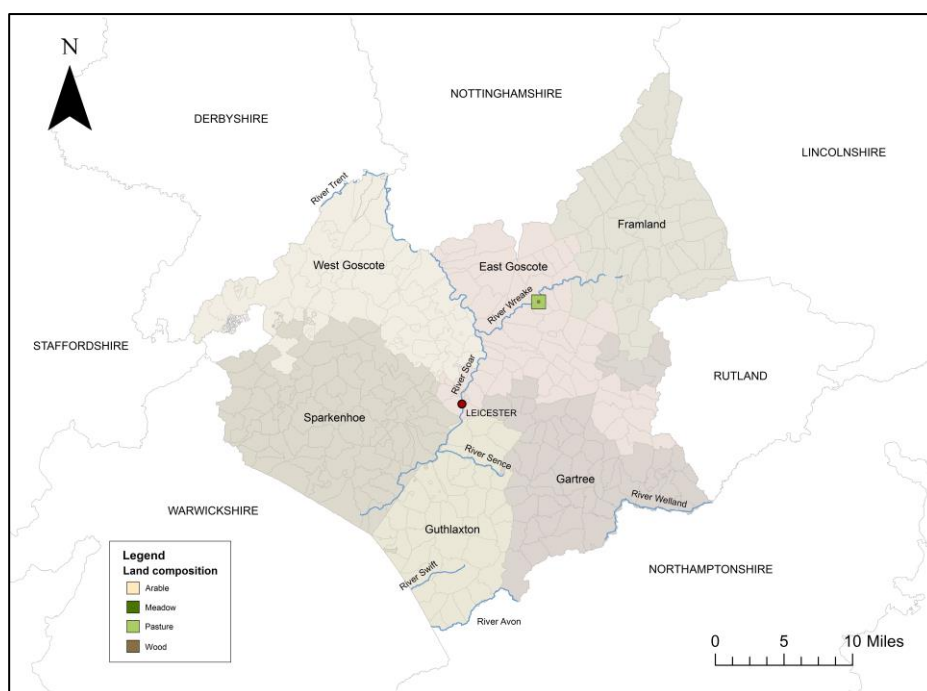[119] TNA, C 142/20/146.
[120] TNA, E 150/1142/5.

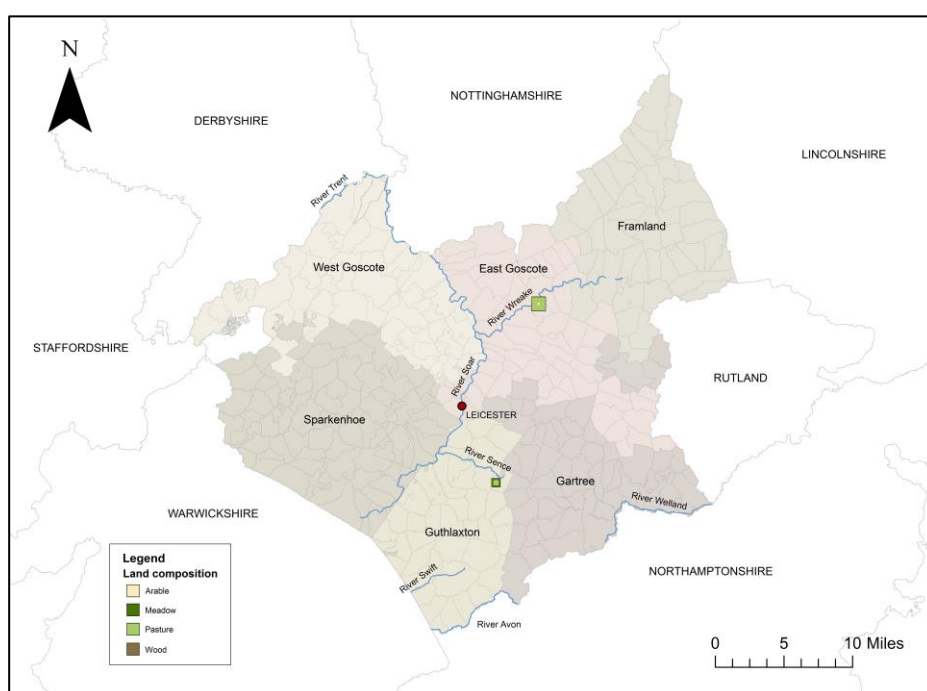*Figure 121 The land use of George Villers, esquire, in 1547.*[121]

Figure 122 The land use of William Villers, esquire, in 1559.[122]

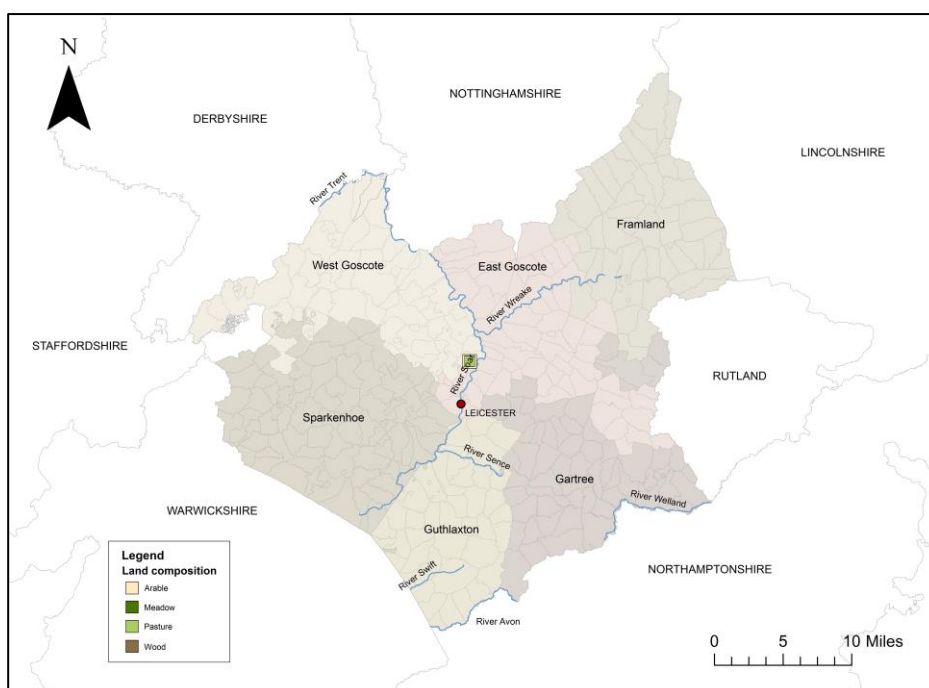[121] TNA, C 142/74/137-1.
[122] TNA, E 150/1157/10.

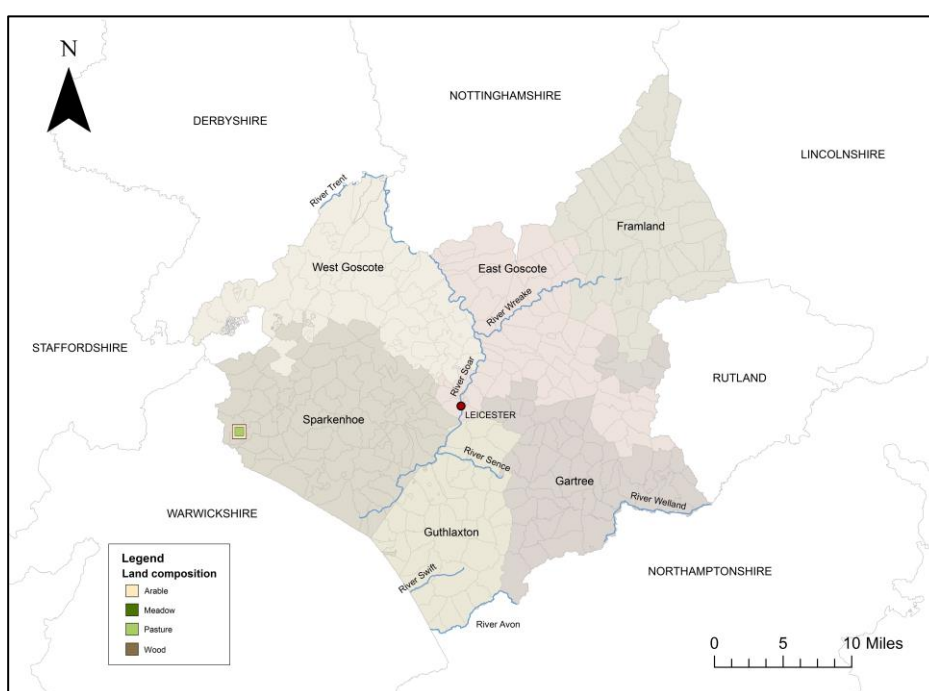*Figure 123 The land use of Richard Villers, gentleman, in 1563.*[123]

Figure 124 The land use of John Vincent, gentleman, in 1565.[124]

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[123] TNA, WARD 7/10/20.
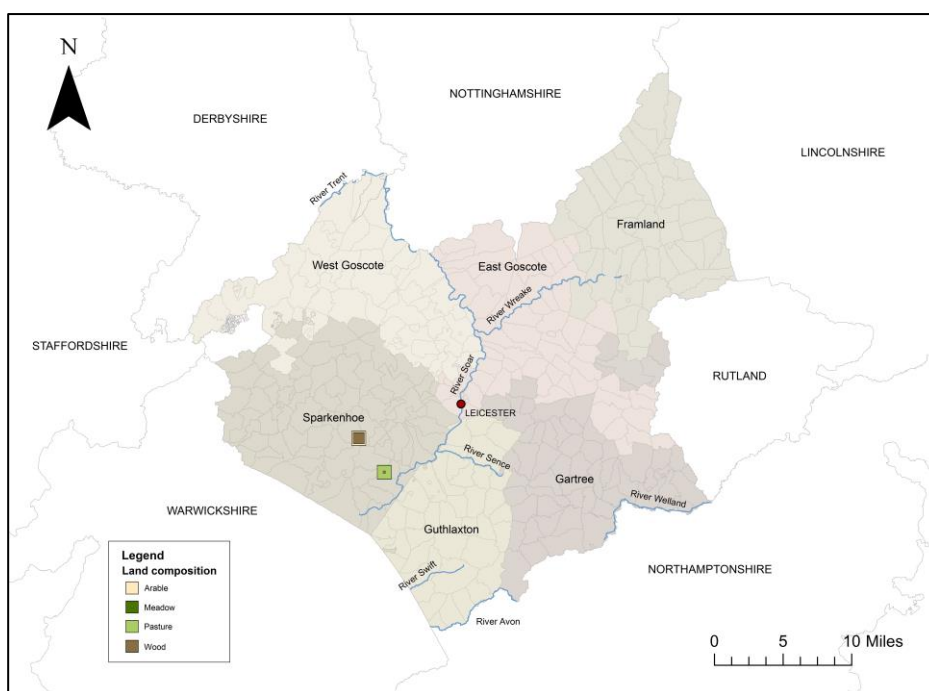[124] TNA, C 142/144/99.

Figure 125 The land use of George Vincent, esquire, in 1566.[125]
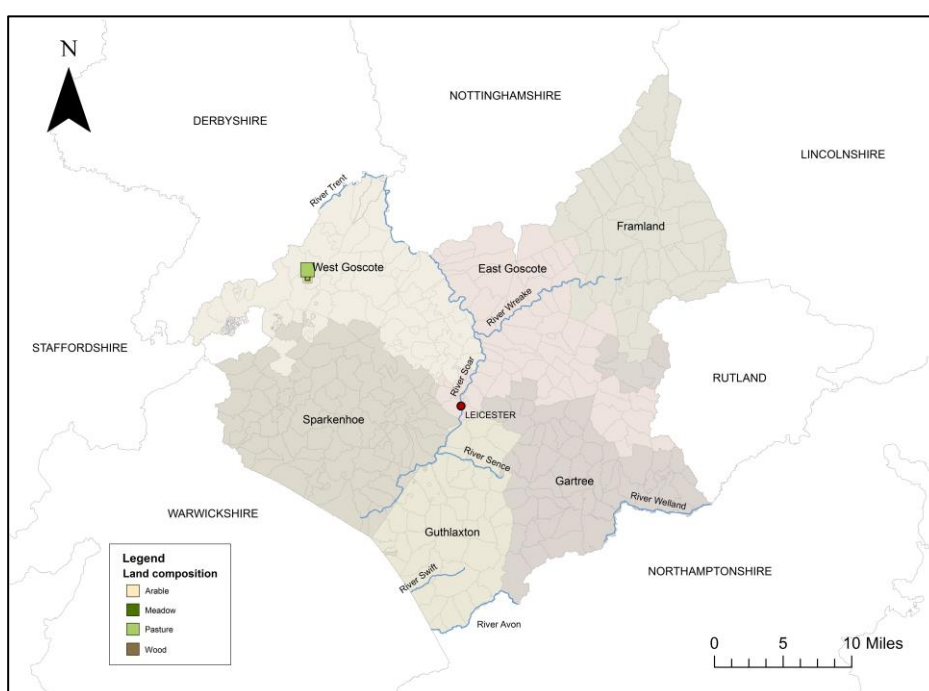

Figure 126 The land use of Robert Winter, esquire, in 1543.[126]

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[125] TNA, C 142/144/97.
[126] TNA, E 150/1145/8.

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