

# The Burgage Plots of Thame, 1150-1340

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## SUMMARY

*This study looks at the history and development of the burgage plots in Thame, Oxfordshire, from the setting up of the New Town in the late 12th and early 13th centuries. It is suggested that the north side plots were carved out of possible Anglo-Saxon oval religious enclosures. Plot sizes and boundaries are discussed and where possible their positions suggested. Plot subdivisions are analysed. Burgage tenure, tenants and trades are considered. Manorial boundaries are described, as is the impact of the re-alignment of the roads on markets and fairs. The purpose is to establish as far as possible the original boundaries of the plots, their sizes in relation to each other and surrounding land, and the subsequent history of the burgage plots. The study uses new evidence from the Rousham Archive.*

This study arose from work recently undertaken into the history and significance of the plots of three houses in High Street, Thame, namely numbers 107, 108 and 109 High Street. These three properties lie on the north side of the High Street, in the vicinity of the widening of the street for the market area. Thame is well known for the existence, and survival, of burgage plots, particularly on the south side of the High Street; they are an important archaeological and historical document for the study of the town. This is discussed at length in the work of Bond, Rodwell, Airs and Turner as well as the *Victoria County History*. However, as the large-scale Ordnance Survey maps show, the three plots at numbers 107, 108 and 109 High Street, and the immediately adjacent plots, show a significant difference from those elsewhere in Thame, in that they are very short. They are also of varying widths, and, compared with the south side plots, narrow (see Fig. 2 for plot locations).

The question must therefore be asked: Why? Also noticeable from the OS plan is the presence, on the north side of the High Street, of two roughly oval pieces of open ground, the eastern one of which forms the northern – i.e. back – boundary of the three plots (see OS maps 1881 and 1897, Figs. 1 and 2). The questions which came more obviously to mind are these:

- were the three plots, and adjacent plots, always this short, i.e. did the open ground to the rear pre-date the laying out of the New Town with burgage plots, or were they subsequently shortened?
- what, therefore, is the significance of the open ground to the rear?
- were the plots always narrow, or is the varied width evidence of subsequent subdivision?

The evidence which may solve these puzzles can be found in the Rousham Archive and the Oxfordshire Record Office. The Rousham Archive is a collection of medieval charters covering the medieval holdings of the bishops of Lincoln, which passed into private hands when the bishop sold the manors of Thame, along with other local holdings, in 1547.<sup>1</sup> These charters are almost all Deeds of Gift, which means they record the sale and transfer of land. Some at least of the New Thame burgage plots are recorded this way; other tenements

<sup>1</sup> G. Clarke, *The Book of Thame* (1978), 14.



Fig. 1. Ordnance Survey map 1881, showing the layout of the burgage plots and market place in the New Town of Thame.

recorded are situated in Old Thame and Priestend. Thus they can provide a comparison of sizes, and some information on the dates by which some plots had been subdivided. The earliest 106 of the charters have been searched, covering the period c. 1150 to 1340, and the relevant abstracts are listed in Appendix 1.

Oxfordshire Record Office holds the original Inclosure Award and maps for Thame.<sup>2</sup> Inclosure here was late (1826) but the evidence of the Award and of the boundaries of the plots shown on the maps is significant for this study. Other material will be referenced as appropriate.

### THE EARLY HISTORY OF THE THAME MANORS

Old Thame possibly dates back to the 7th century and formed part of the estate of the bishop of Dorchester, along with the manors of Banbury, Cropredy, Great Milton and Dorchester.<sup>3</sup> The large-scale Ordnance Survey maps of the 19th century (Figs. 1 and 2) clearly show the existence of two oval – or near oval – pieces of ground. John Blair has discussed the interpretation of these Anglo-Saxon figure-of-eight enclosures at Thame, suggesting that one served a religious function and one a secular function; and that the minster churches attracted settlement and trade to the place.<sup>4</sup> C.J. Bond has extended the discussion to show Thame's emergence as a 'central place' in the area.<sup>5</sup> Other examples can be found in Bampton and Binsey.

The larger, westernmost, oval has the old parish church at its western side; the smaller one, to the east, abuts on, and once may well have included, the sites which are the subject of this study. Throughout the 19th century this smaller oval piece of ground contained fields. The smaller oval is defined along its western, northern and eastern boundaries by roads – Bell Lane, Aylesbury Road and North Street respectively; but if it was once a near regular oval, it has been truncated along its southern portion by the Market Place and associated burgage plots and buildings. The significance of this is discussed below.

The burgage plots under consideration, and those immediately adjacent, appear to have been taken out of one of these ancient oval enclosures, and this may account for the fact that they are shorter than the plots on the south side. The religious associations of the place may have inhibited the total destruction of the enclosure when the plots were laid out.

At Domesday in 1086 the New Town had not yet been carved out of the manor of Thame; the entry for Thame reads:

The bishop holds Thame himself. 60 hides. Of these, he has 27 hides in his revenue; his men-at-arms have others. Land for 34 ploughs. Now in lordship 5 ploughs; 5 slaves. 27 villagers with 26 smallholders have 19 ploughs. A mill at 20s.; from the meadows 60s. Value before 1066 £20; when acquired £16; now £30.

Of the land of the manor of Thame, Robert holds 10 hides from the bishop; Saewold 4 hides; William 3 hides, Alfred and his associate 6 hides. In lordship 10 ploughs. 16 villagers with 21 smallholders and 8 slaves have 10 ploughs. Total value £10.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Oxfordshire Record Office, QSD/A vol. 56, Thame Inclosure.

<sup>3</sup> *VC.H. Oxon.* vii, 170.

<sup>4</sup> J. Blair, 'Minster Churches in the Landscape', in D. Hooke (ed.), *Anglo-Saxon Settlement* (1998), 35-58.

<sup>5</sup> C.J. Bond, 'Central Place and Medieval New Town: the Origins of Thame, Oxfordshire', in T.R. Slater (ed.), *The Built Form of Western Cities* (1990), 86-9.

<sup>6</sup> J. Morris (ed.), *Domesday Book*, vol. 14, *Oxfordshire* (1978), 5-6.



Fig. 2. Ordnance Survey map 1897. The hatched area shows the position of Nos. 107, 108 and 109 High Street, Thame.

Thame here refers to Old Thame. Airs, Rodwell and Turner suggest that the *novus burgus* of New Thame was developed during the 1140s along with the establishment of the prebendal house, and point to the earliest, unsubstantiated, reference to a market in 1183-6.<sup>7</sup> Others, as discussed below, incline to later dates in the early 13th century. The Rousham charters are no help here, since the first, dated about 1150, is for land in Pikedcroft, outside the new town. The second, dated about 1250, is for a burgage plot but is clearly after the likely foundation dates (see Appendix 1).

The agricultural lands of the manor of Thame surrounded, but were separate from, Old Thame. Old Thame itself was a small but important central place around the church, which in the 7th and 8th centuries was the mother church of three other churches, gave its name to the Hundred, and may well have had an episcopal palace.<sup>8</sup>

New Thame was formed out of the manorial lands, and did not affect the size and extent of Old Thame. It was formed from a block of land some three-quarters of a mile long and in excess of 1,000 feet wide, covering about 50 acres. This land was divided lengthways by a road – the High Street, including the Market Place – with a wider piece of land, some 700 feet in width, on the south side, and a narrower piece, 300 feet in width or less, on the north (see Figs. 1 and 2). This northern piece of land appears, as we shall show, to have been constrained by existing plots, both at the extreme western end, where it abuts Old Thame, and by the smaller oval piece of ground. Priestend, at the western end of the new town and the prebend of Lincoln, was a separate manor in its own right, with its own field system.

#### TRADE AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW THAME

Alan Harding defined 13th-century towns as 'specialised communities for the promotion of trade, the practice of religion and the exercise of secular government'.<sup>9</sup> This description certainly fits Thame. Beresford shows that there was a relatively even spread of new towns founded between 1050 and 1230; New Thame was part of that pattern.<sup>10</sup> The towns with their markets were becoming significant as a means of regular local trade. They brought in good profits for the lord of the manor, and the manorial custom whereby the tenants had to carry the lord's goods could be adapted to have goods carried to market. The Crown itself benefited by charging fees for grants of rights to hold markets, and then charging to confirm them at a later date. Harding notes that in *Bracton on the Laws and Customs of England* it was stated that 'a new market [was] harmful at law if it was held within two days of an existing market, and within six and two-thirds miles of it'.<sup>11</sup> The distance allowed sufficient time for traders to get to the market, buy and sell there, and get home in the day. This statute seems to have been used successfully to crush attempts to start markets at Long Crendon (1218), Haddenham (1294), Worminghall (1304) and Brill (by 1317) which all challenged Thame.<sup>12</sup>

New Thame was not unusual in being founded by a bishop. Locally, Banbury was another creation of the bishop of Lincoln while Witney was developed by the bishop of Winchester.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>7</sup> M. Airs, K. Rodwell and H. Turner, 'Thame', in K. Rodwell (ed.), *Historic Towns in Oxfordshire* (1975), 147.

<sup>8</sup> For further discussion of the idea of the central place, see Bond, *op. cit.* note 5, 86-93.

<sup>9</sup> A. Harding, *England in the Thirteenth Century* (1993), 106.

<sup>10</sup> M. Beresford, *New Towns of the Middle Ages: Town Plantation in England, Wales and Gascony* (1967), 328-31.

<sup>11</sup> Harding, *Eng. in Thirteenth C.* 108.

<sup>12</sup> Bond, *op. cit.* note 5, p. 93.

<sup>13</sup> Airs, Rodwell and Turner, *op. cit.* note 7, pp. 53, 179.

The foundation of his six new towns by the bishop of Winchester provides instructive comparisons,<sup>14</sup> though Thame was more successful than some of these. Other examples were Chelmsford, created by the bishop of Salisbury in 1199-1201, and New Salisbury in 1219. Monastic foundations appeared in this period too. The abbot of Eynsham founded Eynsham in 1215; the priors of Tynemouth and Durham founded North and South Shields 1225-35. Most were however founded by secular lords including the king.<sup>15</sup> Beresford described the typical layouts and expansion patterns for the new towns, drawing a distinction between those laid out on a grid pattern such as New Salisbury and those like Thame which were not, and which showed 'a much lower level of ambition. When the plots alongside the market place were taken up, their founders' plan was completed and... any further expansion was virtually ruled out'.<sup>16</sup> At Thame, as we shall show, some of the plots were not taken up until later, and maybe, as Bond suggests, some were not taken up at all.<sup>17</sup>

Clarke suggests that the New Town at Thame was laid out in the 1220s. The bishop had established a Tuesday market as early as 1183-4, probably as an informal prescriptive market. He was granted general rights to hold fairs and markets on his manors in 1215.<sup>18</sup> He held a hiring fair which became famous as a horse fair on 11 October (Michaelmas Day old style), and another, known for its cattle sales as well as the pleasure element, on the Tuesday of Easter week.<sup>19</sup> The weekly market and the fairs could prompt the early development of the town, since the traders would need some permanent base in the town if they were to trade successfully, so the plots might have been laid out after 1215 to provide for them. The markets were confirmed in 1227.<sup>20</sup>

There is a useful reference in the Hundred Rolls to the fact that Bishop Hugh de Welles had erected houses in 1221 in the market place to increase his rents;<sup>21</sup> they had six occupiers in 1255.<sup>22</sup> The Hundred Rolls next record 18 shops erected from 1251 onwards 'in the market of Thame in the king's highway, to the harm of the royal dignity'.<sup>23</sup> In 1279 they report that 'the bishop of Lincoln has raised a hundred feet of houses in the middle of the market place so that his rents might increase'.<sup>24</sup> The implication here is that there was market encroachment already appearing, probably as temporary stalls in the road became permanent. The Oxford to Aylesbury road, which formed the king's highway, had been diverted from its old course to the west of Old Thame in 1219 in order to ensure that all travellers passed through the new market place,<sup>25</sup> so the new shops two years later indicate that trade was thriving.

The bishop of course increased his income by establishing the market and fairs; he had the right to the market tolls of package and stallage, and all other tolls on goods brought into the town by outside traders. He made money from the fines imposed for unruly behaviour

<sup>14</sup> M. Beresford, 'The Six New Towns of the Bishop of Winchester, 1200-55', *Medieval Archaeology*, iii (1959), 187-215.

<sup>15</sup> Harding, *Eng. in Thirteenth C.* 120.

<sup>16</sup> Beresford, *New Towns of Middle Ages*, 154.

<sup>17</sup> C.J. Bond, 'Medieval Towns', in G. Briggs, J. Cook and R.T. Rowley (eds.), *The Archaeology of the Oxford Region* (1986), 139.

<sup>18</sup> *V.C.H. Oxon.* vii, 178.

<sup>19</sup> H. Lupton, *The History of Thame and its Hamlets* (1860), 9.

<sup>20</sup> *V.C.H. Oxon.* vii, 178.

<sup>21</sup> *Rotuli Hundredorum*, ii, 31.

<sup>22</sup> *V.C.H. Oxon.* vii, 179.

<sup>23</sup> *Rotuli Hundredorum*, ii, 37.

<sup>24</sup> Beresford, *New Towns of Middle Ages*, 156, quoting *Rotuli Hundredorum*, ii, 30.

<sup>25</sup> *V.C.H. Oxon.* vii, 178.

on fair and market days. These were paid at his manor court. Some merchants paid him 'Luke's pence' as a form of voluntary exaction in order to buy off any arbitrary demands which the bishop, as their manorial lord, might decide to make.<sup>26</sup> He gained easy money from the burgage plot rents whereby a small area of land could be made to yield useful income. The *VCH* quotes the increased income arising from the markets, fairs and the new burgages as 75s. for the rents of assize plus an increase of 4s. 9d. from the new burgage tenements, and £17 4s. 1½d. for the issues of the borough.<sup>27</sup>

The success of the new town as a trading centre can be seen in the taxation figures. In 1327 Old Thame had 50 taxpayers paying £5 3s. 6d. between them, while New Thame had 67 taxpayers paying £6 7s. 11d.<sup>28</sup> The total tax was £11 11s. 5d. from 116 individuals. Even allowing for families to be added, it is clear that Thame was a relatively small place; its population might have been about 500. In 1334 the tax assessments were £3 7s. 9d. for Old Thame and £9 2s. 8d. for New Thame, giving a total tax yield of £12 10s. 5d.; the gap had widened.<sup>29</sup> Comparisons show that New Thame was relatively successful locally. In 1334 Charlbury paid £3 4s. 6d., Eynsham £3 9s. 4d., New Woodstock £3 16s. 7d., Watlington £5 6s. 0d., Henley-on-Thames £6 0s. 6d., Deddington £9 10s. 4d., Bicester Market End £10 19s. 10d., Witney £11 18s. 6d., Chipping Norton £14 14s. 4d. and Banbury £17 5s. 6d.<sup>30</sup> Oxford, at £91 7s. 10d., and with a suggested population of 5,000 in 1300, easily outstripped anywhere else in the county. But on the national scale it was very little, when London as richest paid £11,000. Bristol paid £2,200 on a suggested population of 15,000. Coventry's assessment was £750, Boston's £1,100. Derby paid £300.<sup>31</sup> Beresford suggested that there were 325 taxpayers in Thame in 1377.<sup>32</sup>

The significance of the market for the standing of Thame in the county can be seen in Bond's five-tier hierarchy, even though this was devised on 19th-century evidence.<sup>33</sup> Thame in the 13th century would have fitted in the third tier. Market trade was supported by the erection of a market cross (destroyed in the 16th century), and a market hall (built about 1684)<sup>34</sup> where the courts were held. The market was paved in 1550 by the churchwardens.<sup>35</sup> Medieval markets were laid out according to the goods sold, and the surviving street names of Buttermarket and Cornmarket are a reminder of this. Other names now lost reflected what was sold here: Cock Row, Sheep Row, Butcher Row and Drapery Row were probably sections of the High Street. Hog Fair lay to the west of Spring Close Road. Butcher Row was established by 1377, when 'le Bocher rew' is mentioned in the Rousham charters.<sup>36</sup>

Some of the tradesmen's names have come down to us to support the street name evidence. Geoffrey Taylor in 1255,<sup>37</sup> and Ralph Tayllour in 1313,<sup>38</sup> would have lived in Drapery Row. John le Nappere, mentioned in 1314 and probably dead by 1324, would have

<sup>26</sup> Clarke, *Book of Thame*, 19.

<sup>27</sup> *V.C.H. Oxon.* vii, 179.

<sup>28</sup> Clarke, *Book of Thame*, 20.

<sup>29</sup> R.E. Glasscock (ed.), *The Lay Subsidy of 1334* (1975), 243-4.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.* 236-45.

<sup>31</sup> Harding, *Eng. in Thirteenth C.* 126-7.

<sup>32</sup> Beresford, *New Towns of Middle Ages*, 267.

<sup>33</sup> Bond, *op. cit.* note 5, p. 85.

<sup>34</sup> Lupton, *History of Thame*, 10.

<sup>35</sup> Clarke, *Book of Thame*, 20.

<sup>36</sup> Rousham Archive, N204.

<sup>37</sup> *V.C.H. Oxon.* vii, 179.

<sup>38</sup> Rousham Archive, N51.

sold cloth here.<sup>39</sup> Three ironmongers are recorded: Reginald Iremongere was in business in the last quarter of the 13th century and his son Edmund Le Iremongere followed in 1310 and 1314. William Eiremonger is mentioned in 1316.<sup>40</sup> Lorimers made spurs and bits. Thame had Robert Lorimar in 1313 and 1314, and John le Lorimer in 1317 and 1331.<sup>41</sup> Their shop was one of 18 in the middle of the High Street; the 1331 charter describes a messuage which once belonged to Roger de Thame as adjacent to the High Street 'which has the tenement of John le Lorimer in the middle of it'.<sup>42</sup> Given the medieval preference for grouping shops, it is possible that the ironmongers were also in the central shops. There was a family of vintners: John le Vyneter in 1313, and his son John le Vinciter junior also in the trade in 1318. By 1325 John senior was dead, since John junior no longer needs to be described as such.<sup>43</sup> Henry Bereman supplied the less expensive end of the trade and presumably brewed his own beer in 1313.<sup>44</sup> Trade was further supported by John le Chapman in 1316,<sup>45</sup> and Gilbert le Cartere in 1313.<sup>46</sup> Gilbert would have brought goods into Thame and distributed them for purchasers, while John would have served the smaller outlying farms and hamlets by taking goods round to sell. Clarke notes that there were 20 victuallers in the town in 1587.<sup>47</sup>

Thame had its craftsmen too. Alexander the Carpenter was working there some time between 1225 and 1250.<sup>48</sup> The mill was worked by William the Miller in 1280<sup>49</sup> and by Osbertus Prophete miller in 1319,<sup>50</sup> though it is not clear whether this was the Domesday water mill or the later windmill; they might have worked either. In 1310 Robert the Farrier is mentioned,<sup>51</sup> and in 1313 'Henry called the Smith of Moreton' bought a tenement in Thame.<sup>52</sup> Henry le Tannere would not have been a popular neighbour in 1318 because of the effluent and smell from his business, and he may have had something to do with the 'stinking pool' on Walter de Crendon's land in 1320.<sup>53</sup> (There is no evidence for this link however, and other trades could well have produced it.) The identifiable trades compare reasonably with the list given by Harding for Coventry in 1280, though Thame was nothing like as rich: Coventry had locksmiths, needlers, goldsmiths, broochmakers, girdlemakers, mirrorers, soapmakers, butchers, clothworkers, vintners.<sup>54</sup>

The names mentioned in the charters also show the geographical range which centred on New Thame. Some holders of burgage plots are from the town, such as Robert de Thame mentioned in charter N2, c. 1250. Local names form the majority; out of 46 of the charters studied which mention places of origin, 69 give Thame references for one or more parties to the charter. Thirty-six give non-Thame places of origin. In both cases, some people are named more than once. Where the places can be identified, distances to New Thame are

<sup>39</sup> Ibid. N56, N72.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. N20, N40, N55, N60.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid. N51, N56, N62, N82.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid. N82.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. N51, N63, N73.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid. N53.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. N60.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid. N53.

<sup>47</sup> Clarke, *Book of Thame*, 20.

<sup>48</sup> *V.C.H. Oxon.* vii, 179.

<sup>49</sup> Rousham Archive, N12.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid. N65.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid. N42.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid. N50.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid. N63, N67.

<sup>54</sup> Harding, *Eng. in Thirteenth C.* 124.

shown in Table 1. The byname information from the charters could be used for further study by comparison with, for example, lay subsidy records to establish the extent of immigration, as Hilton has done for Stratford-upon-Avon.<sup>55</sup>

TABLE 1. DISTANCES TO THAME FROM PLACES OF ORIGIN

Place	Miles
Hertford (Herts)	39
Donnington (Berks)	30
?Drayton (Oxon)	25
Oxford	12
Aylesbury (Bucks)	9
Wheatley (Oxon)	8
Stokenchurch (Oxon)	7
Long Crendon (Bucks)	3
Haddenham (Bucks)	3
Towersey (Oxon)	2
Moreton (Oxon)	1
North Weston (Oxon)	1

Harding states that the usual market area was within a radius of six to eight miles,<sup>56</sup> but the radius of Thame's market area seems to have been smaller, at between four to six miles. Though New Thame was attracting settlers and traders predominantly from its hinterland, a substantial minority originated from further afield. If Laurence de Ulseby who is mentioned *c.* 1275<sup>57</sup> was from Ulceby in Lincolnshire, the only remotely similar place name, he had travelled 114 miles.

#### THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE OXFORD TO AYLESBURY ROAD

The road layout around the smaller, truncated, oval piece of ground, which includes the site which is the subject of this study, is discussed by Bond; in particular, he discusses the diversion of the Aylesbury to Oxford road in 1219, carried out to encourage travellers to pass through the New Town and its market area. He suggests that the original Aylesbury to Oxford road reached Thame, on the north, at Lashlake House, turned west to pass the church on its northern side, and then followed the line of the present road to Priestend.<sup>58</sup> The new diverted road appears to proceed in two swooping curves, one apparently following the eastern boundary of the larger oval piece of ground, containing the church, and the second – requiring a right angle turn – along the northern boundary of the second, smaller oval piece of ground, to link into the line of the pre-existing North Street.

<sup>55</sup> R. Hilton, *A Medieval Society: the West Midlands at the End of the Thirteenth Century* (1966), 183-4; see also D. Postles, "Nomina Villanorum et Burgensium": Oxfordshire Bynames before *c.* 1250, *Oxoniensia*, liv (1989), 319-25.

<sup>56</sup> Harding, *Eng. in Thirteenth C.* 123.

<sup>57</sup> Rousham Archive, N7.

<sup>58</sup> Bond, *op. cit.* note 5, pp. 95-6.

It is not unusual for lanes to follow field boundaries, but for an important diversion to follow such an awkward line suggests that the oval pieces of ground were of such significance – even if we do not fully appreciate the details of it today – that they were to be respected, even by the bishop, and even for the significant commercial development of Thame. In the same manner, their significance may well also have inhibited the formation of the burgage plots along the north side of the High Street at this point. The closes which occupy the part of the smaller oval to the north of the north side burgage plots are shown on the Inclosure Map as occupied by John Eeles and Thomas Hedges (Fig. 3). This land was to remain part of the Old Thame manor, and never belonged to New Thame; it is worth noting that while Old Thame, Priestend, North Weston and Sydenham all had their own field systems, New Thame never did. This is why, although these closes face on to an important road, no trade development took place there. Trade development was confined to New Thame.

When the town was created, the bishop cut out the area from Old Thame and all the land so set out was put to burgage plots. This does not mean that the burgesses could not hold land in the fields; the charters show that many of them took up manorial holdings as well as their burgage plots. Charter N82 for example shows that Roger de Thame held six messuages in New Thame, as well as cottages and a substantial land holding in the fields and meadows, which belonged to Old Thame manor.<sup>59</sup> His holding is in line with the custom of holding a mixture of free tenements and villein lands. Many larger towns such as Leicester and Coventry continued to have fields and commons apportioned in the usual way between different burgesses.

The Inclosure Map shows that the closes bounded by Bell Lane and North Street on three sides, and the burgage boundaries on the south side, were part of Old Thame. The map itself notes that 'The Leasehold Old Inclosures coloured Red upon the Plan are the property of the Earl of Abingdon'<sup>60</sup> (see Fig. 3, closes occupied by J. Eeles). None of these ancient enclosures is included in the Award; they were already in private ownership. The boundary for Thomas Hedges's land is coloured yellow for contrast, but again it indicates that this land is freehold and in private ownership. Similarly with the path shown on the Inclosure Map through the two sections of Eeles's land; it was part of these private lands and does not feature either as a public or a private road in the Award. If there was ever any rear access from the north side burgage plots, it was by private agreement with the owners of the land. The implication is that the rear boundary of the north side plots is the boundary set out when the town itself was laid out, and has been so ever since; it was the boundary between the manors of Old Thame and New Thame. It should be noted that the burgage plot boundaries are not shown in full, if at all, on the Inclosure map; they are simply not relevant as they do not form part of the manors being inclosed. The late date of the Inclosure evidence supports the persistence of the manorial boundary. A comparison with the 1910/11 Valuation Survey map<sup>61</sup> shows that the ancient manorial boundary had not changed at all since 1826.

<sup>59</sup> Rousham Archive, N82.

<sup>60</sup> Oxfordshire RO, QSD/A vol. 56, Thame Inclosure Award and Maps (1826).

<sup>61</sup> PRO, IR 126/6/1-846: Inland Revenue Valuation Office, Finance Act 1910, Record Sheet Plans for Oxford & District.



## BURGAGES AND BURGESSES

Burgage tenure was a characteristic of urban property holding, initially developing to provide protection for traders within the boundaries of a castle or monastic house. Because the holders of these plots could not provide the usual labour services as well as managing their trade, they paid money rents instead, and Beresford gives a full discussion of burgage rents.<sup>62</sup> Harding states that the common rent for boroughs founded in this period was 12d.<sup>63</sup> and it will be seen later that this was a common figure for New Thame. He notes that holders could 'dispose of their tenements more freely' than other manorial tenants, but not absolutely freely; they still had to seek at least the nominal permission of the bishop. The collection of charters in the Rousham Archive appears to be the bishop's record of sales, with the seals signifying permission. The ability to sell without permission was a valued right; it saved the parties to the purchase the customary fines. Harding quotes King John in 1200 making Dunwich in Suffolk a 'free borough' which specifically included the right to sell burgage tenements without seeking permission.<sup>64</sup>

The detail in this section is mainly taken from the Rousham charters, and they may clarify some of the questions raised by Bond in 1990. Certainly the archive forms the 'exceptional survival of property records' which he saw as necessary to understanding the development of Thame.<sup>65</sup> The usual form of the charters covers, in order, the parties to the deed, the giving of the property, the property description, the type of tenure, the rents and services due, the term of the gift and any conditions imposed, the warranty for the property transfer, the consideration (the price or rent), the attestation of the original owner, the witnesses, the date and the seal. Most still carry the seal of the bishop or the dean and chapter of Lincoln.

The charter evidence confirms that New Thame was established by the mid 13th century, but cannot provide close dating. As noted above, the earliest charter, dated about 1150, is for a croft in the manor called Pikedcroft.<sup>66</sup> Its general area can still be identified as the name has survived: it lies between Pound Street and Upper High Street around the East Street junction and stretched back towards the town; at that date it was outside either town. In 1318 it is mentioned again, as 'the Pykede croft'.<sup>67</sup> By the time of the Inclosure in 1826, the name had become Pickin Croft or Pickingcroft.<sup>68</sup> From both charter evidence and Inclosure evidence, this entire area was broken up into crofts and sold early into private hands, and the process was under way by the date of the earliest charter. Pound Street was an ancient access to the manorial pound, which is still marked on the Ordnance Survey maps.<sup>69</sup> Bond, in his analysis of the plot layouts, notes that these plots are less regular and much shorter, at 110 yards long, than in other area of the town.<sup>70</sup>

The second charter, from about 1250, refers to a messuage in the town of Thame (*in burgo de Thame*), meaning New Thame.<sup>71</sup> It is important to note that all the burgesses in New Thame were freeholders. Even at this early date, when some feudal dues were being commuted for money payments, it is unlikely that the bishop would attract the tradesmen

<sup>62</sup> Beresford, *New Towns of Middle Ages*, 60-71.

<sup>63</sup> Harding, *Eng. in Thirteenth C.* 117.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.* 117.

<sup>65</sup> Bond, *op. cit.* note 5, p. 102.

<sup>66</sup> Rousham Archive, N1.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.* N64.

<sup>68</sup> Oxfordshire RO, QSD/A vol. 56, Thame Inclosure Award and Maps (1826).

<sup>69</sup> Ordnance Survey map, 1881, 25 inch/mile.

<sup>70</sup> Bond, *op. cit.* note 5, p. 98.

<sup>71</sup> Rousham Archive, N2.

he wanted if he expected the usual feudal duties in addition to ground rents. The men who came to take up the new burgages would have been free men, not serfs, and this marked a considerable change in the nature of the population of Thame as a whole. The three deeds of gift from Walter de Crendon to Robert Cok in 1320 and 1321 specify that the burgage is held freehold:

One place and land with in the middle a stinking pool in the same place as my free tenement in the new town of Thame...<sup>72</sup>

One place of land which is called Watenal of the free tenements in the New Burgh of Thame...<sup>73</sup>

Other charters indicate the freehold tenure because they imply or state that the tenements have been inherited, and only freehold land could pass this way at that date. Harding describes the ability to leave land as the owner pleased as 'a precious right (which applied to no other landed property) of leaving the burgage by will outside the family'.<sup>74</sup> The ability to leave land by will without restriction also had a social dimension. We are familiar with the idea of primogeniture, which became the norm in later generations. But at this date, it was a privilege which could be granted or withheld by the feudal lord. The earl of Leicester granted it to the burgesses of Leicester, and they were justly proud of their new rights.<sup>75</sup> One of the marks of peasant or servile status was the inheritance of land by ultimogeniture. Older sons would have been sent out into the world, put to a trade if the money for an apprenticeship could be found. The youngest inherited the peasant holding, and with it the manorial obligations. If there were no means of sending the older sons out, the land might have to be split up between the sons; this gave decreasing economic value and kept all the family tied to the manor. Feudal lords who had 'an interest in preserving the integrity of tenements and the attached services tended to put their weight behind inheritance by one son',<sup>76</sup> frequently the youngest, thus maintaining the established social structure. The power of the manorial courts could be summoned to deal with any servile tenant or peasant who tried to claim he had the right to leave or sell his land freely.

The following examples show that the burgesses had the ability to leave and sell land freely in New Thame. In 1313, Denise the daughter of Robert Lorimer sold two shops 'which were previously the property of Robert my father'.<sup>77</sup> In 1316 Thomas Cangy sold his tenements 'that were given to me by Margaret my mother, situated in New Thame... given by her will'.<sup>78</sup> A quitclaim of 1324 from Radus [Ralph] 'son and heir' of Radus le Beel to Robert and Christiane Cokes indicates that the tenement referred to was inherited and therefore freehold.<sup>79</sup> A 1329 charter tells us that the neighbouring tenement, belonging to Michael Waffroure, was 'inherited'.<sup>80</sup>

Clearly many burgesses were successful businessmen who bought a good deal of property in the area, as did the Elys family who feature in a number of the charters. There seem to be three generations involved here, from the dates. Thomas and Robert may have been

<sup>72</sup> Ibid. N67, N68.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid. N69.

<sup>74</sup> Harding, *Eng. in Thirteenth C.* 122.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid. 128.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid. 96.

<sup>77</sup> Rousham Archive, N51.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid. N58.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid. N72.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid. N77.

brothers; they were buying at much the same dates. Thomas first appears about 1280, buying a tenement in New Thame. In about 1290, Robert bought an acre of arable land in the fields of Old Thame,<sup>81</sup> and so was presumably a free burgess in New Thame but a manorial tenant in Old Thame. Their sons, also Thomas and Robert, are then buying actively from 1307 to 1318 (Thomas) and 1307 to 1312 (Robert).<sup>82</sup> Thomas first built an estate in Old Thame, then sold a lot of property here to 'John son of Robert', who may well be his nephew.<sup>83</sup> He then built another estate in New Thame, which would have been more valuable property because of the trade. He presumably changed from being a manorial tenant to a free burgess, though we do not know whether he retained any Old Thame property. Robert meanwhile sold a burgage in New Thame to his daughter Agnes and William le Crey in 1309.<sup>84</sup> As he got older Thomas relied on his son John, and they jointly bought the burgage next to Thomas's in New Thame in 1330.<sup>85</sup> By 1332 Thomas was dead, since John alone bought a messuage in New Thame that year.<sup>86</sup> By then he owned at least five burgage plots with houses and appurtenances in New Thame, and a croft in Pykedcroft. The family seems to reflect the trend to a growing peasant land market which developed because of population pressure and demographic change.

The *VCH* quotes a survey of the bishop's estates made at some time between 1225 and 1250 which mentions 63 burgesses in New Thame. The rents paid by the New Thame burgage holders went to the bishop; even as freeholders they were not clear of manorial dues, in this case ground rent. The usual sum paid for a whole burgage was 12*d.* per annum. Several of the New Thame burgages paid this, but not all: a deed of gift of about 1280 shows that the ground rent for one half-burgage was 9*d.*<sup>87</sup>

#### EVIDENCE FOR THE DIVISION OF BURGAGES

The bishop's survey also shows that the burgages were being split. Most holders had one burgage, but Alexander the Carpenter had 3½ burgages, and another man had a half burgage.<sup>88</sup> Taking a generation as 25 years, this indicates that the plots were being divided even in the lifetime of their first owners, earlier than Bond's suggestion of the third quarter of the 13th century.<sup>89</sup> A deed of gift from about 1280 explicitly states that a burgage had been split, referring to it as 'that half burgage (*quodd dimid~ burgatum*) in New Thame'.<sup>90</sup>

It is important to note the distinction between a 'half burgage' and a 'half-acre burgage' (*unam dimidiam acram burgagii in Nova Villa de Thame*).<sup>91</sup> The half-acre burgages would have been on the south side. The half burgage is clearly a divided plot, and could be south or north; if the size is not given, it is impossible to tell. The burgage rights still applied when a plot was split. Another indicator of split plots may be the mention of more than one house on a plot.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.* N13, N18.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.* N27, N28, N30, N31, N33, N34, N44, N49, N61, N62, N64, N79.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.* N47.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.* N32.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.* N79.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.* N91.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.* N12.

<sup>88</sup> *VCH. Oxon.* vii, 179.

<sup>89</sup> Bond, *op. cit.* note 5, p. 102.

<sup>90</sup> Rousham Archive, N12.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.* N102.

Clarke states that there were 76 burgage plots in 1305, but that they 'seem to have been divided up at an early stage'.<sup>92</sup> Comparisons can be drawn with other towns during the late 13th and early 14th centuries, when population growth was making itself felt. In addition, successful towns tended to attract people who wanted to participate in the thriving trades. Harding notes that in Coventry by 1280 'pressure of incomers had caused about 80 of the 260 burgages to be divided, two of them into no less than 30 cottage plots'.<sup>93</sup> In Martham, a manor which belonged to Norwich Cathedral priory, there were 104 tenements in about 1220. By 1292 they had been split into over 900, with further subdivision to 2,100 small plots averaging a rood and a half each.<sup>94</sup> The continual subdivision of the plots in Thame was clearly part of a larger pattern.

#### BURGAGE PLOT SIZES

The *VCH* gives lengths of about 700 feet for the present south side strips, and about 300 feet or less for the north side,<sup>95</sup> whereas Bond's measurements for the south side show a fraction over a furlong (660 feet) long and an original standard width of about four perches,<sup>96</sup> giving an acre. The charters give evidence for comparison with this, and some indication of where the plots might be. The south side plots now are likely to be approximately half an acre, though they started as acre plots. The north side plots are more like a quarter of an acre, and as has been shown above, can never have been longer. It must be remembered that there was no statute acre at that date. An acre was what could be ploughed in a day, and depended on the nature of the soil. The south side plots seem to follow the pattern of the old field strips, even down to the slight curve needed to turn the plough.

Bond's 1984-5 measurements of plot widths show that nearly 40% of the frontages had widths equating to a perch or a multiple of it, implying that New Thame was laid out over former open fields and that plots had been subdivided.<sup>97</sup> We have not however tried to equate any of the plots described in the charters with any of his measured frontages.

Three deeds of gift describe burgage plots of one acre, all in New Thame. The first is from 1317, 'for one acre burgage with all its appurtenances'.<sup>98</sup> In 1318 a one-acre burgage (*unam acram burgagu:*) with houses and appurtenances was sold.<sup>99</sup> In 1325 another, with a house built on it, was the subject of a rental agreement.<sup>100</sup> These must have been on the south side.

The 1329 deed of gift for a piece of land measuring 75 feet long by 509 feet wide gives an area of  $3\frac{1}{2}$  roods, only half a rood short of an acre.<sup>101</sup> The deed states that it was in Priestend, and no buildings are mentioned. It is likely therefore that it is arable land in Priestend Field, which lay on the west side of the Thame and Shillingford road.

The deed of gift of about 1275 which confirms the existence of the new town with a reference to a half-acre burgage and appurtenances in New Thame (*in Nova Thame*) also gives the earliest indication of size.<sup>102</sup> Another burgage of half an acre is mentioned in the

<sup>92</sup> Clarke, *Book of Thame*, 19.

<sup>93</sup> Harding, *Eng. in Thirteenth C.* 125.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.* 94.

<sup>95</sup> *V.C.H. Oxon.* vii, 179.

<sup>96</sup> Bond, *op. cit.* note 5, p. 99.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.* 99.

<sup>98</sup> Rousham Archive, N61.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.* N63.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.* N73.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.* N77.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.* N6.

same year.<sup>103</sup> The next two occur in 1310 and 1316,<sup>104</sup> then there is a gap until two more references in 1338.<sup>105</sup> All these are in New Thame, and must have been south side plots.

One property was a little over half an acre (2.36 roods); in 1307 a deed of gift describes a tenement with buildings and appurtenances which measured 51 feet in length by 502 feet in width.<sup>106</sup> It was in Old Thame, and the length and width orientation suggests that it actually faced on to the Shillingford road and ran back alongside the High Street. It is significant for the type of holding that it is described as a tenement not a burgage.

All the remaining measurements except one must indicate split plots and some are very small areas of land. The half burgage quoted in the section discussing the evidence for the splitting of burgages measured 72 feet x 33 feet (2 perches wide by 4 perches 6 feet long), which gives 0.055 acres.<sup>107</sup> Three more examples are a plot of 69 feet x 19 feet (0.031 acres) sold in 1309,<sup>108</sup> another of 40 feet x 30 feet (0.111 roods) sold in 1312,<sup>109</sup> and a third of 38 feet x 12 feet (50.6 sq. yards) sold in 1307.<sup>110</sup> A fourth, 25 feet x 6 feet (16.6 sq. yards), was sold in 1320 along with a fifth of 17 feet x 6 feet (11.3 sq. yards).<sup>111</sup> These two were both purchased by Robert Cok. The following year, another piece of land was added to these two, measuring 26 feet x 1½ feet (4.3 sq. yards).<sup>112</sup> The three together amounted to 32.2 sq. yards. Any of these could have been on the north side.

Finally the small measurements in another charter, 22 feet x 1 foot, relate to a sale not of land but of access rights over Robert Hamund's land. Henry Cotenis is given the right to 'a certain place [in a] messuage of mine between my house and my sheepfold'.<sup>113</sup> It is just wide enough for Henry to walk along, presumably to gain access to his property which adjoins Robert's.

#### BURGAGE PLOT BOUNDARIES

As noted earlier, the north and south boundaries are not mentioned in the charters, but the east and west sides are described in some detail. One charter, however, does give useful information about the boundaries, and it can also serve to illustrate the full sequence of the relevant sections of the deeds of gift.

*Sciunt presentes et futuri quod ego Laur' de ulseby dedi concessi et hac presenta carta mea confirmam Thome filio Rici~ Elys de North Weston cl[er]ico pro quodam syncellus pecunie quam [nutrii?] dedit per manibus frontem unius dimidie acre burgag~ in nova Thame que iacet int[er] burgag~ Thome Everard ex parte una et burgag~ Rici- le Kene ex parte alt[er] et extendit sec ab alta strata usque ad quondam portam in fine curtilag~ Habend et tenend frontem d[ic]ti burg~ cum domibus sup[er]edificatis murre bundis et omnibus suis obique pertinentens d[ic]to Thome et heredibus suis ut suis assignatis. Libere quite bene et in pace iure et hereditat' in p[er]petuum...*<sup>114</sup>

<sup>103</sup> Ibid. N7.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid. N42, N60.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid. N102, N105.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid. N28.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid. N12.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid. N35.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid. N49.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid. N26.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid. N67, N68.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid. N69.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid. N16.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid. N7.

Know all men present and future that I Laurence de Ulseby have given and granted and by this my present charter confirmed to Thomas son of Richard Elys of North Weston cleric Late domestic chaplain of the peculiar [which property?] I give by my hands the frontage of a half acre burgage in New Thame which lies between the burgage of Thomas Everard on the one side and the burgage of Richard le Kene on the other and extending nearly from the High Street to the former gate in the boundary of the curtilage. To have and to hold the foresaid burgage with the houses built on it to the boundary wall and all other appurtenances of the said Thomas and his heirs and assigns The right to hold quietly well and in peace and his heirs in perpetuity...

Here is confirmation of the burgage frontages onto High Street, and of boundary walls to the plot as early as about 1275. The walls at this date would be stone not brick; there is plenty of stone available for use in the area. The stone bases for the existing brick walls which can still be seen in some of the plot boundaries may well be the remains of these early walls. This plot had had a gate at the rear of the plot, but it looks as though it was no longer used.

The two side boundaries are defined by the neighbours, Thomas Everard and Richard le Kene. Note that there is more than one house on the plot, which seems to indicate that it has been subdivided for tenancy though it is being sold as a whole. Definition by the neighbours as here is typical of these deeds, and the pattern seems to be that the neighbour on the east side is cited first, then the neighbour on the west. A deed of gift of 1310 indicates this: 'A tenement with appurtenances in New Thame between the tenement of Dioni [Denis] Pyron on the east and the tenement of Robert on the west'.<sup>115</sup> This east/west pattern has been used in reconstructing the plot positions in Appendix 2.

A 1331 deed of gift mentions the High Street again, and may refer to the group of buildings in the middle of the road; this messuage is 'adjacent to' the High Street where John le Lorimer has his shop.<sup>116</sup> Two more define the front boundary, both by reference to the same piece of property, Lusden's, which faces them.<sup>117</sup> The dates are 1307 and 1312 respectively.

One of the deeds from 1309 also gives interesting boundary information. Here the plot may have been the last one before the open country, for example the easternmost on the south side. The description does not fit any of the north side plots, which are confined by the two roads. It is in New Thame, a burgage with a house built on it between Richard Panlyn's tenement and 'the woodland of Henry Corteneye on the other'.<sup>118</sup> It may be a plot in the area that was never fully settled, as suggested by Bond.<sup>119</sup>

The remaining information on the neighbours of each of the burgage plots forms the basis for the attempted reconstruction of plots in Appendix 2.

## BUILDINGS ON BURGAGE PLOTS

As mentioned previously, the number of houses on a burgage plot may be an indicator of whether the plot has been divided. Twenty-six of the charters mention buildings of one sort or another. Seven refer to a single house, for example 'one burgage and a house built on it in New Thame'<sup>120</sup> in 1309. These do not seem to have been subdivided. The dates range

<sup>115</sup> Ibid. N37.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid. N82.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid. N26, N49.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid. N32.

<sup>119</sup> Bond, *op. cit.* note 5, p. 98.

<sup>120</sup> Rousham Archive, N32.

from c. 1275 to 1338.<sup>121</sup> Two refer to 'houses', but as one of these (1316) deals with a group of tenements it is difficult to say whether all or any had more than one house: 'All my tenements with houses built and their appurtenances... in New Thame'.<sup>122</sup> The other from 1318 is much clearer: 'A one acre burgage with houses built on it and its appurtenances in New Thame'.<sup>123</sup>

The term 'appurtenances' includes a house, and nine charters use this terminology without specifying a house separately.<sup>124</sup> The dates range from c. 1275 to 1332. The 1316 group of tenements quoted above supports the inclusion of a house in this terminology. It is further supported by a deed of gift of 1324 which describes 'a tenement messuage with a house built on it in New Thame'; the deed is followed by the related quitclaim, also 1324, which describes the property as 'that tenement with all its appurtenances that is in New Thame'.<sup>125</sup>

Three charters specify 'premises', which is a very general term and could include a house as well as workshops, storage or stabling. But in each case it is a 'messuage with premises', so it is likely that there would have been at least one house there as well. The dates are 1311, 1333 and 1338[?].<sup>126</sup> One simply refers to 'a tenement with building', which could be anything.<sup>127</sup>

It seems therefore that there is only one case where the mention of more than one house can be used with any certainty as an indicator that a plot had been split.

There are two mentions of shops, in 1313 and 1314. In the former, Dion [Denise] the daughter of Robert Lorimar is selling 'two shops with all their premises and tenements in the ... New Town of Thame'<sup>128</sup> and her neighbours must also have had shops; one sold wine and the other was a tailor. In the latter, William Sireman sold 'one shop and appurtenances'.<sup>129</sup>

#### NEW BURGAGE PLOTS

There is some evidence that the pressure to expand caused more plots to be added to New Thame, though the conclusions offered here are only tentative; it could equally be that these plots were laid out at the start but not taken up until later, if at all. If they were, they may have been the plots to the east of Rooks Lane and fronting onto the Upper High Street, on the south side. No new plots could have been laid out on the north side of Upper High Street, since this is the area occupied by the ancient closes of Pickin Croft.

The first reference is from 1309, a deed of gift which clearly states that it is for 'one new burgage tenement' in New Thame.<sup>130</sup> The ground area, which is only 69 feet x 19 feet or 145.6 sq. yards, raises the question of whether it is one newly created by splitting an existing plot rather than by taking in new ground.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid. N7, N16, N32, N40, N62, N71, N73, N105.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid. N58.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid. N63.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid. N6, N37, N52, N61, N64, N65, N72, N86, N91.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid. N71, N72.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid. N44, N92, N101.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid. N76.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid. N51.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid. N56.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid. N35.

The other two seem to indicate more clearly that they really are new burgages. They are close in date, 1329 and 1332, which would make sense if more land had been divided up around then. The first is a deed of gift in which 'one half acre of arable land lying in burgage crofts' is sold.<sup>131</sup> Here, it is arable land therefore not built on yet, but it is a common size for a burgage plot and the deed describes it as such. The second is a quitclaim, referring to a property and its appurtenances 'in newly planted Thame'.<sup>132</sup> If this refers to the part of the town that was colonised in the 1220s, it seems an odd description so long after the event. It may again refer to further development of the town, perhaps a newly developed burgage on the land laid out in the first place but not taken up. If it was a new intake of land, its owners Alice and John Boys had built on it within two years.

## CONCLUSIONS

In the introduction we set out three questions to which we sought answers. The first was: Were the three plots, and adjacent plots, always this short, i.e. did the open ground to the rear pre-date the laying out of the New Town with burgage plots, or were they subsequently shortened? This was amplified in the second question: What, therefore, is the significance of the open ground to the rear?

It has been shown that it is possible to determine the size and extent of the north side plots in terms of their length; they all retain the length as set out when New Thame was established and their back boundaries formed the manorial boundary. Establishing the width of the burgage plots is more difficult than the length, because of later subdivision of the plots. It is also problematical to assign the charters to specific plots; an attempt has been made to reconstruct the plot layouts relative to one another (see Appendix 2), but as the charters assume that the plots faced on to the High Street and reached back to the rear field boundary, the north and south boundaries are rarely mentioned. The plots to the east and west sides are described in more detail, by reference to their owners. Where dimensions are given, they have been printed in bold type in Appendix 1. Only the smaller plots are candidates for the north side, but there is no evidence to indicate that any of the charters searched refer to this side. Further work on the later charters might enable specific north side plots to be identified.

The north side plots have always abutted on to the pre-existing fields from which the closes shown on the Inclosure Map and Ordnance Survey maps were taken. These closes may be as old as, or older than, the foundation of New Thame. The length of all the burgage plots both north and south in New Thame is as they have been since they were laid out, in or before the 1220s. The rear boundaries of the plots both north and south are the manorial boundaries created when New Thame was taken out of Old Thame manor.

The third question asked was: Were the plots always narrow, or is the varied width evidence of subsequent subdivision? The problem here for the north side plots is again that it has not proved possible so far to locate any of them with certainty. It is possible to determine whether, how and when some of the burgage plots were subdivided, from charter and other evidence. Some clearly were. However, charter evidence can only be produced from those plots which were the subject of deeds of gift. There is some evidence from the second quarter of the 13th century for other plots, but it is not usually possible to state exactly which burgage plot the evidence refers to.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid. N80.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid. N85.

For purposes of comparison, we looked at the larger and more regular burgage plots on the south side of the High Street. Given the limitations noted above, it is possible to see the extent and subdivision of some of the south side plots. Any which are one acre or half an acre must be on the south side, and some of the charters give the boundary measurements or state the acreage. Where this has been possible, it is indicated in Appendix 2 that the plot is a south side plot. In this respect, the south side is easier to place than the north.

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#### APPENDIX 1: ABSTRACTS OF EARLY CHARTERS FROM ROUSHAM ARCHIVE

There are 400 medieval charters for Thame in the Rousham Archive, of which these are the first 106. Almost all still have attached the seal of the dean and chapter of Lincoln, or the bishop of Lincoln. As the purpose of this research was to identify property boundaries in New Thame, details have not been included for those charters which did not mention them.

The information summarised here does not give a complete translation for each charter, only the descriptions of the property and the names of the people concerned. The charters cover the parties to the deed, the giving of the property, the property description, the type of tenure, the rents and services due, the term of the gift and any conditions imposed, the warranty for the property transfer, the consideration (the price or rent), the attestation of the original owner, the witnesses, the date and the seal. The quitclaim releases property rights from the seller to the buyer.

N1. c. 1150. Deed of Gift.

Osbertus son of Walter to Alice his sister. A croft in Thame called Pikedcroft.

N2. c. 1250. Deed of Gift.

William son of Robert de Thame to William Hamend. One messuage *in burgo de Thame*, previously in the tenure of Robert. The fine is paid to the bishop of Lincoln.

N3. c. 1272. Deed of Gift.

Reginald Referun of Thame to Thomas le Hasser of Thame. Land *in campo de Thame*.

N4. n/a

N5. n/a

N6. c. 1275. Deed of Gift.

Henry de Sackynchurch to Thomas Olyr of Thame, his heirs and assigns. One half acre burgage and appurtenances *in Nova Thame* lying next to the tenement of John le Viniers on the one side, a tenement of Walter Biloun on another side and a tenement of Capnaliles? [of the Chaplain's?].

N7. c. 1275. Deed of Gift.

Laurence de Ulseby to Thomas son of Richard Elys cleric. One half acre burgage in New Thame which lies next to the burgage of Thomas Everard on the one part and a burgage of Richard le Kene on another part extending nearly from High Street to the former gate in the boundary of the curtilage. To have and to hold from the frontage of the said burgage with a house built on it to the boundary wall.

N8. c. 1275. Deed of gift re 6 acres of arable land.

N9. c. 1275. Deed of gift re land in the fields of Thame.

N10. n/a

N11. n/a

N12. c. 1280. Deed of gift.

John son of William the miller of Thame to William Hamond. For that half burgage (*quodd dimid~burgatum*) in New Thame which lies between the tenement of William Hamond and the tenement of William de Kington which extends in width two perches (*duas perticacas*) and in length four perches and six feet (*quatt~pticacas et sex pedes*). Rent is 9d. annually.

N13. c. 1280. Deed of Gift.

Bagg~ son of Robert Hube of Chelinden to Thomas son of Bra~ Elys of Weston. One tenement in New Thame which is between the tenement of Goldeye [?Coldeye] on the one part and the tenement of John le Scerdere of the other.

N14. c. 1280. Deed of Gift.

For 1 acre in the field of Thame.

N15. n/a

N16. c. 1285. Deed of Gift.

Robert Hamund of Thame to Henry Cotenes of Thame. For a certain place [in a] messuage of mine between my house and my sheepfold containing in width one foot and in length 22 feet. [This is a grant of access rights over the strip of land.]

N17. c. 1290. Deed of Gift.

Phillip Pellipd... to Ruppean Remy and Alice his wife. A burgage in the New Town of Thame (*Nova Burgo de Thame*), bounded by the tenement of Walter de Thame on the one side and John Comcarer on the other.

N18. c. 1290. Deed of Gift.

John bishop of Lincoln to Robert Elis of Thame. One acre of arable in Thame.

N19. c. 1298. Deed of Gift.

Thomas son of Michael of Barmodeston to Thomas le Lassere of Thame and Matilda his wife. One acre of arable in Thame in the place called Losedenes Furlong.

N20. c. 1300. Deed of Gift.

John son of Henry of Prp~mule of Thame to Edmund son of Reginald Iremongere of the same place. Land in the fields of Thame.

N21. n/a

N22. Old Thame. One acre of arable land in *villa et campus de vet~i Thame*, in the town and fields of Old Thame.

N23. n/a

N24. 1305. Deed of Gift.

Edward de Henkener to Ealfrid de Henkener one acre and a half lying next to Lampraes between my acre and pasture. [Other land in the fields is mentioned.]

N25. n/a

N26. 1307. Deed of Gift.

Richard le Rymour of Thame and Margere Trykenet his wife to William son of Nicholas[?] and Agnes daughter of John Snel. One piece of land with houses edifices curtilages and premises which lies in the New Town of Thame between the tenement of John Pede and the tenement of Goldeye [Coldeye?] and containing in front facing Lusden aforesaid 10 feet. And the curtilage containing in length two perches and five feet and in width twelve feet.

N27. 1307. Deed of Gift.

Margaret Walle to Thomas Elis. One messuage. [Deed nibbled by mice at one end.]

N28. 1307. Deed of Gift.

William Pirun of Thame to Robert Elys of North Weston. One tenement with buildings and appurtenances in Old Thame which stands next to the tenement of Philip Simons of Hertford. In length 51 feet and in width 502 feet (*quinquaginta et un ped...*, *C~quinta duos ped*).

N29. n/a

N30. 1309. Deed of Gift.

John de la Pole to Thomas Elys. One messuage, land and appurtenances in Thame, between the messuages of Hugo Elnid and the wife of William le Charet. Also various strips of arable.

N31. 1309. Deed of Gift.

Ossekus Le King of Thame and Agnes his wife to Thomas Elys of Thame. One acre of arable in Old Thame, bounded by Lamputtes on the one part and Thomas's land on the other.

N32. 1309. Deed of Gift.

Robert Elys of Thame and Ena his wife to William le Crey and Agnes daughter of Robert. One burgage and a house built on it in New Thame with the tenement of Richard Panlyn on the one side and the woodland of Henry Corteneye on the other.

N33. 1309. Deed of Gift.

Matilda Leheca~ and Henry le Hacere of Thame to Thomas Elys. One acre of arable in the meadow of Thame which lies in Losdene Furlong.

N34. 1309. Deed of Gift.

Roger son of Roger de Kenebelle of Thame to Thoms Elys of Thame. One messuage with premises in Thame which stands between the tenement of the aforesaid Thomas on the one side and the tenement of Thomas Hokedi on the other side.

N35. 1309. Deed of Gift.

Radus~ [Ralph] Hevedrus of North Weston and Johanna Morly of Thame to Walter de Freston and Martha his wife. One new burgage tenement (*una placeam terre de bgo~ tenem~t~ nvo*). It is 69 feet by 19 feet. It lies in New Thame between the tenement of John son of Rose Honde and the tenement of John Le ...

N36. n/a

N37. 1310. Deed of Gift.

John son of Ralph Cot of Thame to Robert Cot his brother of Thame. A tenement with appurtenances in New Thame between the tenement of Dioni [Denis] Pyron on the east and the tenement of Robert on the west.

N38. n/a

N39. 1310. An agreement. It refers to the New Town of Thame (*Nova Villa de Thame*).

N40. 1310. Deed of Gift.

John son of John Le Doyner of Thame to Edmund Le Yrnmonger of the same. One tenement with a house built on it which is in New Thame between the tenement of Richard Guner and the tenement of Edmund aforesaid which same tenement lies beside [the tenement of] John le Frere.

N41. n/a

N42. 1310. Deed of Gift.

Thomas Elys of Thame to Nicholas and Juliane Le Onyteer. One half-acre burgage in New Thame, lying between the tenement of Alan le M~cleward and the tenement of Robert le Farour [Robert the Farrier?].

N43. n/a

N44. 1311. Deed of Gift.

William son of Roger le Peritour of Thame to Thomas Elys. One messuage and premises in New Thame between the tenement of Roger le Man and the tenement of John Honde.

N45. n/a

N46. n/a

N47. 1311. Deed of Gift.

Thomas Elys of Thame to John son of Robert of Luthes. Three messuages, four tofts, 24 acres of arable and 22 acres next to the premises in Thame and North Weston.

N48. 1312. Agreement between Thomas le Hanser of Thame and Thomas Elys of Thame.

N49. 1312. Deed of Gift.

Adam Goldeye [Coldeye?] of the New Town of Thame and Dionis [Denise] his wife to Robert Elys of the same. One tenement in New Thame which is next to Radi le Peremtour of Thame. It lies facing Lusdenes which land bounds Richard le Rymour and the tenement of Roger Hafely. It is 40 feet long and 32 feet wide.

N50. 1313. Deed of Gift.

Robert Hamond of Thame to Henry called the smith of Moreton. A tenement messuage and premises in the New Town of Thame, lying between the tenement of Henry Corteneyes and the tenement of John of Radcot.

N51. 1313. Deed of Gift.

Dion [Denise] daughter of Robert Lorimar of the New Town of Thame to William Syreman of the same town. Two shops with all their premises and tenements in the said New Town of Thame [next to the property of] John le Vyneter senior and the tenement of Radi~ le Tayllour [illegible - torn] which were previously [the property of] Robert my father and on the other boundary John le Naperere of Feode. [William Pyron also mentioned.]

N52. 1313. Deed of Gift.

Robert Hamond of Thame to Henry called the Smith. A tenement messuage and appurtenances in the new town of Thame, between the tenement of Henry Coteneyes and the tenement of John de Rucoter.

N53. 1313. Deed of Gift.

John son of Gilbert le Cartere of the new town of Thame to Henry Bereman of the same. The tenement which Alice daughter of William de Crendon held. It lies between the tenements of the aforesaid Henry of Attington.

N54. n/a

N55. 1314. Deed of Gift.

John de Boys of the new town of Thame to Edmund le Iremonger of Thame. One half acre of arable land in Thame.

N56. 1314. Deed of Gift.

William Sireman of Thame to Walter de Crendon. One shop and appurtenances which I hold next to Robert Lorimer in the New Town of Thame between the tenement of John le Guner senior and the tenement with a certain boundary to John le Nappere. [William Pyron appears to be the tenant.]

N57. 1315. Land in the meadow of Morton.

N58. 1316. Deed of Gift.

Thomas Cangy of New Thame (*Nova Tham~*) to Robert Prophete of Denyngton. All my tenements with houses built and their appurtenances that were given to me by Margaret my mother, situated in New Thame between the tenement of William de Pappeworth and the tenement of Roger Dawe given by her will.

N59. n/a

N60. 1316. Deed of Gift.

Matilda relict of John Scrag of Thame to Thomas de Tauruseye [Towersey]. One half-acre burgage in New Thame which lies between the tenement of John le Chapman on the one part and the tenement of William Eiremonger.

N61. 1317. Deed of Gift.

Thomas son of Thomas Hardwyne of Thame to Thomas Elys of the same, for 10 marks. For one acre burgage with all its appurtenances in New Thame which lies between the tenement that is held by Hugh Golfynch on one side and a tenement of Nicholas de Wartone on the other.

N62. 1317. Deed of Gift.

Robert Hamond of Thame to Thomas Elys of the same. One place and land with a house built on it in New Thame which lies between the tenement of John le Lorimer and the tenement of Thomas Capun.

N63. 1318. Deed of Gift.

Walter Bener of Aylesbury to John le Vincter junior of Thame and Alice his wife. A one-acre burgage (*unam acram burgagu:*) with houses built on it and its appurtenances in New Thame lying between the tenements of John Pacy and the tenement of Henry le tannere.

N64. 1318. Deed of Gift.

Johna [Joanna] daughter of Henry Totteney of Thame to Thomas Elys of the same. One messuage with appurtenances in the Old Town of Thame standing between the tenement of William de Hadenham and the tenement of Henry de [le?] Artiz [Artizan?] that is to say (*videlitz*) near the Pykede croft.

N65. 1319. Deed of Gift.

Osbertus Prophete of Thame miller to Thomas Hokedy of the same. One messuage with its appurtenances in New Thame which is situated beside the tenements of the aforesaid Thomas and a tenement of Roger Dawes.

N66. n/a

N67. 1320. Deed of Gift.

Walter de Crendon cleric to Robert Cok of Thame. One place and land with in the middle a stinking pool in the same place as my free tenement in the new town (*burgo*) of Thame which lies between the tenement of the said Robert and my tenement. 17 feet by six feet (*in longitudine septe'decim pedes et in latitudine sex pedes*).

N68. 1320. Deed of Gift.

Walter de Crendon cleric to Robert Cok of Thame. Land [with stinking pool as above], which lies between my tenement and the tenement of the said Robert and containing in length 25 feet and in width 6 feet.

N69. 1321. Deed of Gift.

Walter de Crendon cleric to Robert Cok of Thame. One place of land which is called Watenal of the free tenements in the New Burgo of Thame, and which place lies between the tenements of myself and the tenement of the said Robert and containing in longitude 26 feet (*viginti et se pedes*) and in latitude one and a half feet (*ped et dimid*).

N70. n/a

N71. 1324. Deed of Gift.

Walter said to be of Crendon of Thame to Robert Cok of Thame. A tenement messuage with a house built on it in New Thame between the tenement of Robert Cok and the tenement which John le Nappere once held.

N72. 1324. Quitclaim.

Radus son and heir of Radus le Beel of Thame to Robert Cokes of Thame and Christiane his wife and their heirs. For that tenement with all its appurtenances that is in New Thame between the tenement of John le Nappere lately held and the tenement of the said Robert and Christiane.

N73. 1325. Rental agreement.

John le Vyneter of New Thame to William de Draycote. He is renting a tenement for 10s. per year in the New Town of Thame, that is to say, a one-acre burgage (*una acra burgagii*) with a house built on it which lies in the said town of New Thame between the tenements of Roger de Oxonia [Roger of Oxford] and Robert Elys.

N74. n/a

N75. 1327. Rental agreement.

John son of Thomas Elys of Thame and Agnes who was the wife of Roger le Man. She is renting land in Thame. [see N76]

N76. 1327. Deed of Gift.

Robert Deneyze vicar of Thame to Agnes lately the wife of Roger le Maan. One tenement burgage, the said tenement with building is in New Thame between the inherited tenement of Michis [Michael] Waffour on the one part and the tenement of John Colles of Whateleye on the other part.

N77. 1329. Deed of Gift.

John son of John de Ranle to John in le Hurne of Thame. One place and land lying next to me in Priestend between the land of John de Ranle and John in le Hurne and containing by estimation 75 feet and in width 509 feet.

N78. c. 1330. n/a

N79. 1330. Deed of Gift.

Nicholas Burgeis of Tame to Thomas Elys and John Elys his son. One burgage messuage with buildings etc in New Thame between the tenement of Nicholas Daras and the tenement of the aforesaid Thomas.

N80. 1329. Deed of Gift.

Thomas son of Michael le Waffour of Thame to John Colles of the same and Alice his wife. One half acre (*unam dimid' acram*) of arable land lying in burgage crofts between the land of Thomas Gosefot and the land of Alice of Attinton.

N81. 1330. Deed of Gift.

Alice daughter of Matilda le Waffour of Thame to John Colles and Alice his wife. One messuage with its appurtenances in New Thame, the said messuage is between the tenement of Galfri [Godfrey?] Cortirs and the tenement which was Roger le Man's.

N82. 1331. Deed of Gift.

Roger son of John de Thame to Thomas de Verdun. 6 messuages, 5 cottages, 27 acres of land, 7 acres of meadow, 6 acres of pasture, various other properties. For 28 shillings, and rendering an offering of one rose per annum [for the property in Thame] at the same time with the messuage that was once mine adjacent to the High Street which has the tenement of John le Lorimer in the middle of it (*per mediu Tenementa Johis le Loremer*) [i.e. John's shop is one of those in the middle of the road.]

N83. 1331. Quitclaim.

Roger son of John of Thame, and Thomas de Verdun. For all lands and tenements, homages, rents, services, with free liberties... of mine in the town of New Thame and Old Thame.

N84. n/a

N85. 1332. Quitclaim.

Alice lately the wife of John de Boys of Thame, and John Atte Crouch of Thame. For one 'Cepe' [unidentified property] with appurtenances in newly planted [i.e. colonised] Thame (*in nova Thame plantata*) between my burgage and the burgage of the said John.

N86. 1332. Deed of Gift.

William son of John le Dachesseed to Micho [Michael] Caras and Matilda his wife. One messuage with appurtenances in New Thame which once was Galfridi Atte Grove's.

N87 - N90. n/a

N91. 1332. Deed of Gift.

Agnes sometime wife of Roger le Maan of Thame to John son of Thomas Elys of Thame. One messuage with appurtenances in New Thame which is situated next to the messuage which was John Colles's.

N92. 1333. Rental agreement.

Ceal Gilbert of New Thame and Thomas de Verdun, for a messuage and premises in New Thame.

N93 - N100. n/a

N101. 1330 [1338?] Deed of Gift.

Richard ...ond [worn; Hamond?] of Thame to John le Verder and Johanne his wife. One messuage and premises situate in New Thame between the tenement of William de Oxford on the one side and the tenement of Thomas son of Richard de Aylesbury on the other.

N102. 1338. Deed of Gift.

Thomas Fryton of Thame to Radulphus of Thame chaplain. One half-acre burgage in New Thame (*unam dimidiam acram burgagii in Nova Villa de Thame*) situated between the tenement of Thomas Friton on the one part and the tenement of Nicholas Davas on the other.

N103, N104. n/a

N105. 1338. Deed of gift.

Radulphus of Thame chaplain to Thomas Friton and Matilda his wife. One half-acre burgage with a house built and all other appurtenances in New Thame (*unam dimidiam acram Burgagii*) between the tenement of Nicholas Davas on the one part and the tenement of the said Thomas on the other.

N106. n/a

## APPENDIX 2: BURGAGE PLOT RECONSTRUCTIONS

These reconstructions have been made from the Thame charters in the Rousham Archive. Each deed of gift gives the name of the vendor, indicated here as (1); the name of the purchaser, indicated as (2); the name of the neighbour to the east and the neighbour to the west. If more than one sale of the same plot occurs, subsequent purchasers are numbered in sequence. Neighbours for each purchase are grouped with the vendor. Though it is possible to group some plots together, it is not possible to identify which plots they are. Only the charters which can be used for reconstruction are represented here; if a charter cannot be fitted into a larger pattern it is not included.

E	(1) William s Robert de Thame	(2) William Hamond 1250
	(1) John s William the Miller	(2) William Hamond 1280 Small plot, North possible
W	William de Kington	

Reconstruction 1

Radi le Peremtour 1312		John Fede 1307
(1) Goldeye 1280	Lusdens	(1) Richard le Rymour & wife 1307
(2) Adam Goldeye & wife		(2) William s Nicholas & Agnes d John Snel
(3) Robert Elys 1312		Small plot
Small plot		Goldeye 1307
(1) Bagg s Robert Hube		Richard le Rymour & wife 1312
(2) Thomas s B Elys 1280		Roger Hafely 1312
John le Scedere 1280		

## Reconstruction 2

Richard Panlyn	
(1) Robert Elys & Ena	(2) William le Crey & Agnes d Robert Elys 1309
Henry Courteney's woodland	
(1) Robert Hamond	(2) Henry the Smith buys 2 bits then access rights
John of Radcot	

## Reconstruction 3

Richard Guner	
(1) John s John le Doyner	(2) Edmund le Yremonger 1310
Edmund le Yremonger	
John le Frere	

## Reconstruction 4

Reconstructions 5, 6 and 7 show a group of families in effect exchanging lands. It looks as though the Colles family was consolidating their holdings.

Michael Waffrour
(1) Robert Denyze vicar (2) Agnes wid Roger le Man 1327
John Colles

#### Reconstruction 5

Thomas Gosefot
(1) Thomas s Michael le Waffrour (2) John Colles & wife 1329 Half acre; south side
Alice of Attington

#### Reconstruction 6

Galfri Cortirs
(1) Alice d Matilda le Waffrour (2) John Colles & wife 1330
(1) Roger le Man 1311 (2) Alice wid Roger le Man 1330 (3) John s Thomas Elys 1332
(1) William s Roger le Pentour (2) Thomas Elys 1311
John s Rose Honde
(1) Radus Hevedrus & Joanna Morley (2) Walter de Freston & wife 1309 Small plot
John le Doyner

#### Reconstruction 7

Henry of Attington
(1) Alice d William de Crendon (2) John s Gilbert le Carter (3) Henry Bereman 1313
Henry of Attington

#### Reconstruction 8

John le Vyneter snr	
(1) Denise d Robert Lorimer	(2) William Syreman 1313
(1) Robert Lorimer	John le Nappere owner, William Pyron possibly tenant of rear of Lorimer's plot, so split burgage
(2) Radi le Tailleux pre 1313	
(1) William Sireman	(2) Walter de Crendon 1314
John le Guner snr	

## Reconstruction 9

(1) William de Pappeworth 1316	(2) Thomas Hokedy 1319
(1) Thomas Cangy (2) Robert Prophete 1316	(3) Osbert Prophete 1319 (4) Thomas Hokedy 1319
Roger Dawe throughout all above changes	

## Reconstruction 10

"Adjacent to High Street" so possibly the end of the centre shops	
(1) Roger & John de Thame	(2) Thomas de Verdun 1331
John le Lorimer	
(1) Robert Hamond	(2) Thomas Elys 1317
Thomas Capun	

## Reconstruction 11

Thomas Friton		
(1) Thomas Friton	(2) Radi de Thame	Half an acre; South side
Nicholas Davas		
(1) Radi de Thame	(2) Thomas Friton 1338	Half an acre; South side
Thomas Friton		

## Reconstruction 12

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