

The first thing I wish to consider is the relationship between the boundaries described in the charters and settlements. These give a strong impression of what I wish to term 'Hollow Estates' with the predominant settlement dispersed to the peripheries of the landscape unit. I am aware that this must be controversial given two possible objections. The first is that by using charter boundary evidence we run the risk of falling foul of the 'Polo Effect' (Jon Kissock, pers. comm.) whereby the use of charters in this manner causes a concentration on features used to define the boundaries which by definition are on the periphery and therefore can produce the impression of an empty central region. This does not apply in this case since within my study area only three boundaries are partially defined by reference to buildings: Emricorua/Lann Cinmarch boundary (JG Evans, 1893, 166) which mentions Chepstow Castle under the name *mainaur tnoumur*, Villa Crucou Morcant which has a stone built, or possibly 'chieftain's', house (JG Evans, 1893, 262) and Villa Merthir Theodorici which has a kiln, Welsh *otyn*, (JG Evans, 1893, 143, 369) within it which should also form part of the boundary of Emricorua, Chepstow. However, once these estates are mapped on the ground it becomes clear that in most cases the settlement pattern is genuinely focused on the frontiers. This of course is the second contentious aspect in that in most cases these boundaries are ones that I myself am proposing based on a comparison of the charter information with the geomorphology of the region concerned and therefore have not yet been subject to full academic scrutiny.

However, even if I am incorrect as to some of these boundaries in the case of two, Lann Cinmarch/Emricorua and Villa Crucou Morcant, the charters are quite explicit that an important structure lies close enough to the 'estates' limits to be used to define it. The exact significance may be argued, if *ty faenor* has the later Welsh meaning of a 'chieftain's' house then it proves that in at least some cases the highest status residences did not occupy central position which in the case of Villa Crucou Morcant (figure 1) is particularly instructive since it does not appear to occupy/dominate a communication route strongly suggesting that it has been positioned to neutralise something on the other side of the boundary of which Mouton Chapel (figure 1:1) is a relict feature. If however *ty faenor* has its literal meaning of a stone house then we must still consider this evidence for a very high status building being described within the boundary clause given the paucity of stone buildings in Wales at the time. This pattern is again seen if we consider the structures associated with some

local estates with Bishton Castle (figure 2), assuming it really is a castle since Prior (2004, figure 45) thought it a geological feature, being located close on the boundary of Lancatgualatyr, and indeed one could argue that the Cistercian Moat of Grangefield itself is located where it is in relation to Lancatgualatyr's border (figure 2) rather than being central to its own 'estate'. In a similar manner the motte associated with Ager Cemais lying at ST 389 939 occupies a frontier position while both Castell Conscuit (figure 3:1) and Villa Merthir Tewdric (figure 4) have mottes positioned just outside their borders thereby constraining their frontiers. This apparent correlation between earlier and later medieval features admits of two explanations either the land divisions described within the *Liber Landavensis* had a significant effect on the later settlement patterns or these 'estate' descriptions are themselves considerably later than they purport to be. Given the amount of later Latin usages that appear within these charters I personally prefer the latter and consider that these descriptions are themselves most likely to be of the post-1100 landscape.

What then of the churches which after all is the subject of this conference? The charters themselves actually have very little to say with, within my study area, only Castell Conscuit explicitly defining the 'estate' as containing two churches (JG Evans, 1893, 235. However, if we follow the same methodology of mapping known medieval churches against the boundaries we again see a pattern whereby many of these important buildings are located near to the frontiers of estates. This is particularly apparent in the case of Villa Crucou Morcant where no less than four churches/chapels ring the border although all lie external to it (figure 1). At least two of these, Runston (figure 1:3) and St Pierre (figure 1:2), are associated with manor houses thus reinforcing my earlier comments regarding the frontier distribution of *tai faenorau*. Similar patterns can be seen with Villa Merthir Tewdric (figure 4) and Castell Conscuit (figure 3). It might also be suggested for my proposed boundaries for Lann Mihacgel Lichrit where, although in this case there is a magnate core by Edward I's reign (Pettifer, 2000, 146) compatible with a central place estate model, the boundaries again seem constrained by important buildings just outside them including Lanvaches, the chapel of St Michael and possibly Cas Troggy which if so is more likely to relate to a previous ecclesiastical centre than the early fourteenth century castle.

This pattern reappears if we consider the distribution of churches mentioned in the papal privileges and the fourteenth century financial returns with respect to their parishes where Caldicot, Llanfihangel Rogiet, Portskewett, Rogiet and Sudbrook all lie at the peripheries of their 'parish' territories. In the case of some churches which at first sight are more centrally located, e.g. Bishton (figure 2), if we compare their locations with the flood plain of the Severn as revealed by elevation and alluvium we see that the most significant geographical feature of churches is that most seem to lie not only on, or near, socially constructed, whether secular or parish, boundaries of landscape units but are also associated with the interface of agricultural and wet land (figure 5). This is particularly noticeable east of Collister Pill which the 1613 survey of the Duchy of Lancaster reveals was not protected by sea defences until the post-medieval period (TE Jones, 2006, 14) meaning Caldicot (figure 5:6), Llanfihangel Rogiet (figure 5:4), Mathern (figure 5:12), Portskewett (figure 5:9), Rogiet (figure 5:5) and St Pierre (figure 5:11) Sudbrook (figure 5:10) 'churches' would all lie on tidal inlets within the saltmarsh. Although to the west of Collister Pill the land was inned much earlier (Rippon, 1996, 66; DH Williams, 1990, 91 fig 12; 2001, 230-1) this land was still wet enough to be described as the wet place, *iglible/igulible*, and the marsh, *icorr*, (JG Evans, 1893, 182) when the bounds of Lancatgualatyr were drawn up and there are still a notable number of churches occupying this interface position. By the fourteenth century there are four churches actually located on this alluvium: Goldcliff, Nash, Porton and Whitson (JG Evans, 1893, 322) which would seem to confirm the presence of sea defences although it leaves open the question as to whether those churches located above the wet lands are in fact earlier, something the charters cannot themselves demonstrate since the use of *corrs* to describe the marsh (JG Evans, 1893, 182) and the apparent stability of the reen system implies it is not a salt marsh therefore suggesting that the western end of the Caldicot Levels had already been inned by the time this charter boundary was compiled.

The usual explanation for such settlement patterns is that these represent outlying chapels positioned to serve outlying settlements necessitated by population growth (Genicot, 1965, 19, 21). Locally it has been suggested that these mark bond settlements located on the poorer land whether, following von Thuenen's model, as a result of the land being economically marginal due to its distance from the central 'market' or, following the multiple estate

model, the land is otherwise unproductive but is being exploited for specialised resources that are required by the estate's core. This seems unlikely for two reasons.

The first of these is that these churches are mostly associated with the local manor house which suggests that they were the devotional centre of the landscape unit rather than serving outlying lower status settlements especially since at least one such unit, West End in Caldicot, seems to lack a church which must cast doubts on the provision of outlying places of worship locally. This is supported by the architecture since it is again unlikely that the surviving structures which are both stone built and extremely large by local standards would have served lower status communities while the elites worshipped in now lost structures that would have been by comparison more ephemeral. If that were to have been the case it would be unique in human cultures.

The second is the dedications of these churches. It has been suggested that we can spot the lower status settlements since their churches are dedicated to 'Celtic' saints rather than universal ones (Bowen, 1969, 205-6; Fenn, 1977, 20; GRJ Jones, 1961, 127, 128). Although locally there is little evidence against which to test this hypothesis what there is will not support it, certainly many of those dedications known to 'Celtic' saints are of higher status sites. Most significantly the two estates most closely associated with the bishops of Llandaff themselves, Bishton and Mathern, both have 'Celtic' dedications, Cadwalader and Tewdric respectively assuming that Lancatgualatyr refers to the Venedotian king and saint of that name. Other examples from the *Liber Landavensis* would include the unlocated St Bride's of charter 235b and the monasteries of Caerwent (W Davies, 1978, 124; Knight, 1971, 35; Knight and Lane, 1988, 37, 38), Lancinmarch and St Arvan's. Indeed some of these may have had very high status affinities given that Caerwent may actually have been an abbey (GRJ Jones, 1972, 379) while the name *ecclesia* being appended to Castell Conscuit/St Brides (JG Evans, 1893, 235) and Lann Cinmarch (JG Evans, 1893, 165) means these 'Celtic' dedications may actually be the mother churches of a *commote* (Pearce, 2004, 141). This should not really be a surprise since of the four saints Llandaff itself was dedicated to three saints were 'Celtic' and only Peter was a universal.

The upshot of this is that we can be reasonably certain that these churches do not mark low status settlements but in fact the converse applies. Therefore we can be confident that in the majority of cases the focus of settlement is actually on the frontiers of landscape units rather than central to them. This raises two questions: Why? And so what? It is my contention that in part these are a reflection of cultural aspects as expressed in the Welsh Laws meaning that Central Place Theories lack general applicability to medieval Wales, as indeed they do across most human cultures (Gommans, 2002, 201).

Central Place Theories are a development of von Thuenen's circles model that seek to explain why economic activity spreads from a core by adopting the deterministic approach of linking such spread to a trade off between economies of scale which exerts a pressure to centralise and constraints caused by communication technology that incentivise dispersal of functions (Algabe, 2007, 347). This explanation is equally valid for the Multiple Estate model as it is to the concentric rings of von Thuenen's model. If however we look to the Welsh Laws we find a socially constructed pressure on settlements to disperse in addition to any technologically determined ones.

The dominant factor here is the provision for settling disputes over the 'ownership' of lands contested between neighbouring units. Once it had been determined that neither party had the right of self determination based on status the law is quite clear that developed land will give precedence over undeveloped land. Therefore, if party A has any form of building on the land in question and party B does not party A will be able to claim this land for their settlement/family. If neither party had any structures then the party ploughing the land gained precedence over the party claiming it for other uses (Ellis, 1926, 262). In a similar manner these laws also ensure that higher status settlements should be located at the frontiers of estates rather than lower status ones since if the two disputants are a freeman and an unfree one the freeman wins the right of self determination based on superior social status.

These provisions strongly suggest that the Central Place Theory can only apply under special circumstances where these laws operate since any landscape units that were organised according to the economic rational that underpins Central Place Theory would inevitably lose out whenever disputes

arose over land holding to ones organised on the frontier model owing to the former only having low status peripheral occupations on the disputed territory while the latter would have higher status claimants and uses having pushed the agricultural and settlement base out to the physical limits of their territory. This interpretation is supported by the frequency with which medieval Welsh corn drying kilns are found at the margins of estates (Britnell, 1984, 193) as indeed one is in the bounds of Villa Merthir Theodoric (JG Evans, 1893, 369).

That these patterns continued to affect settlement into the later medieval and post-medieval periods is suggested by consideration of the Lordship of Caldicot as it stood in the early post-medieval according to the 1613 survey (TE Jones, 2006) and a 1759 map made for Capel Hanbury (Gwent Record Office: GRO D.1670.69). From this it can again be seen (figure 6) that there is a strong tendency for the more important buildings to be placed at the peripheries. This is even more noticeable when it is remembered that Caldicot actually represents the combined remnants of several lordships at least two of which, West End (figure 6:1) and Dewstow (figure 6:2), have their manor houses located near to the frontier. Given that Caldicot was a high ranking lordship from the mid-twelfth century the pattern of settlements within the neighbouring lordships strengthens my argument for 'Hollow Estates' locally since even if the *caput* of Caldicot itself was more centrally located the *caputs* of the lower ranking estates surrounding it obviously were not. Although I concede that this may not be a function of legal aspects of the society's functioning but based on transport since these are mostly located on major routeways that date back to at least the Roman period judging by their association with Roman and pre-Roman archaeological features (TE Jones, 2006, 51ff).

In conclusion I propose that the pattern of churches, *tai faenorau* and castles within Gwent Iscoed means that locally we should no longer look for reasons why settlements dispersed and subdivided but accept this as normal and instead consider that nucleation around magnate cores were the unusual settlement types which need explanation. This is an important methodological shift since it means that we need to look for special conditions to explain such nucleation rather than accepting it as part of the march of progress. These special conditions may be related to the need for security,

although African parallels suggest this can also cause dispersal of already nucleated settlements (Kusimba, 2004, 66), or based on the Caldicot example may imply that landscape units organised in accordance with Central Place Theory, including the Multiple Estate, were of higher status than neighbouring units organised on frontier lines.

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Illustrations

Key:

Cross: ecclesiastical building, church or chapel.

Circle: 'high' status secular building such as a manor house or *ty faenor*.

Hashes: earthworks denoting either Iron Age entrenchments, figure 3:3, or medieval moats and motte and bailey works.

?: location or exact status uncertain.

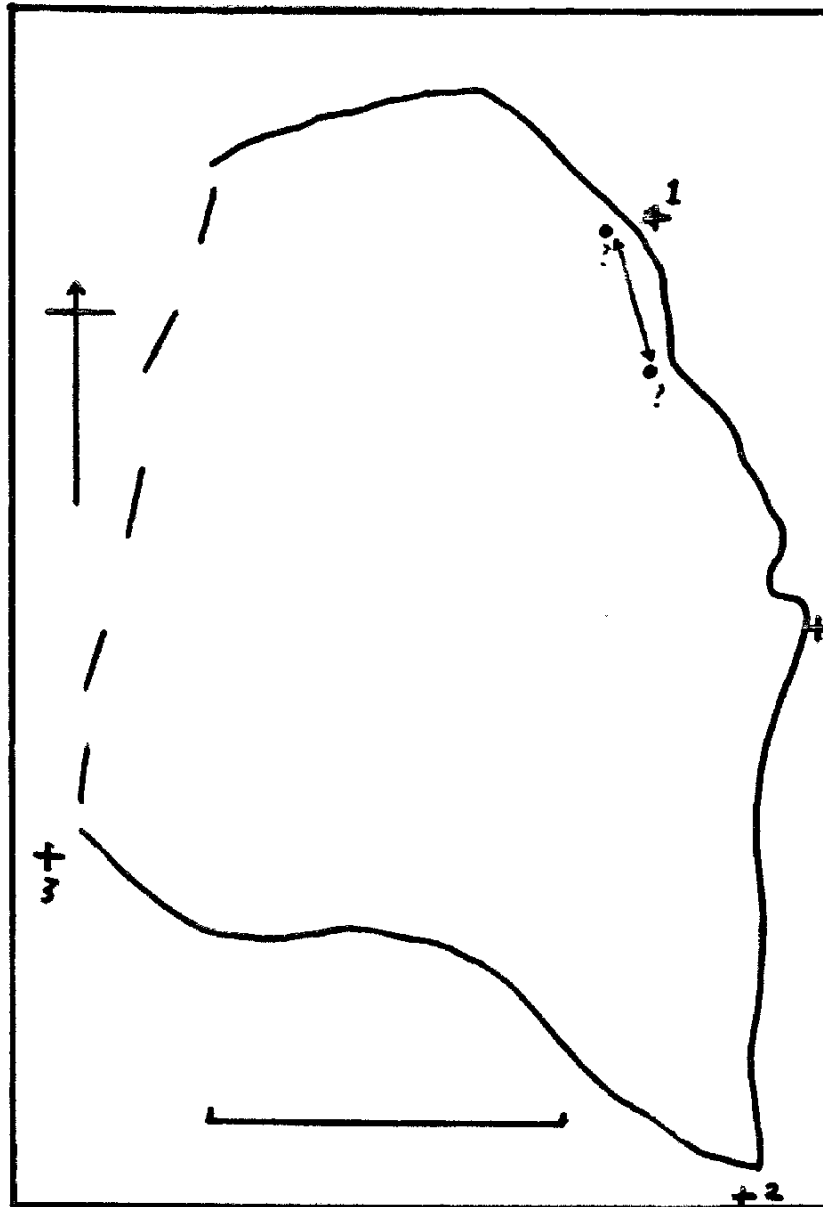


Figure 1: Villa Crucou Morcant, Trelenny, Monmouthshire.
1: Moun-ton Chapel, 2: St Pierre Church and Manor, 3: Runston Chapel,
Manor and DMV.

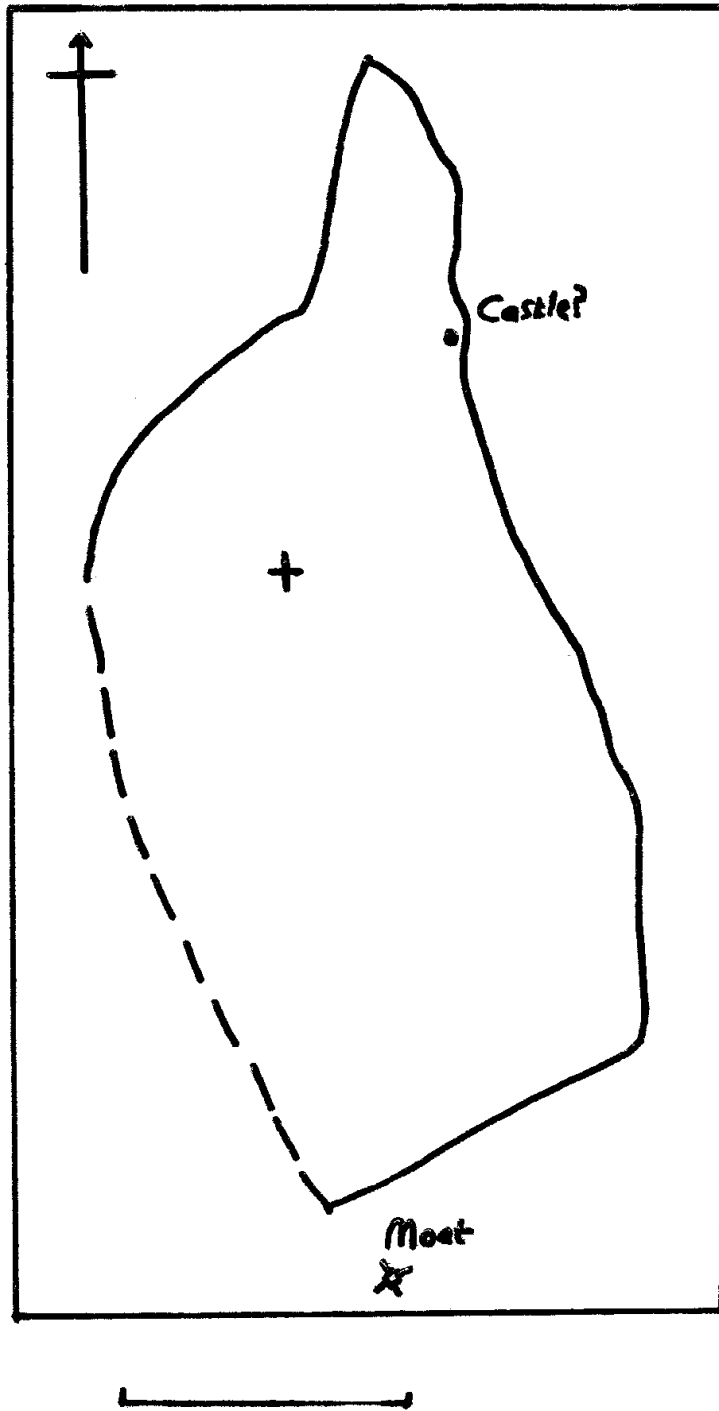


Figure 2: Lancatgualatyr, Bishton, Newport.

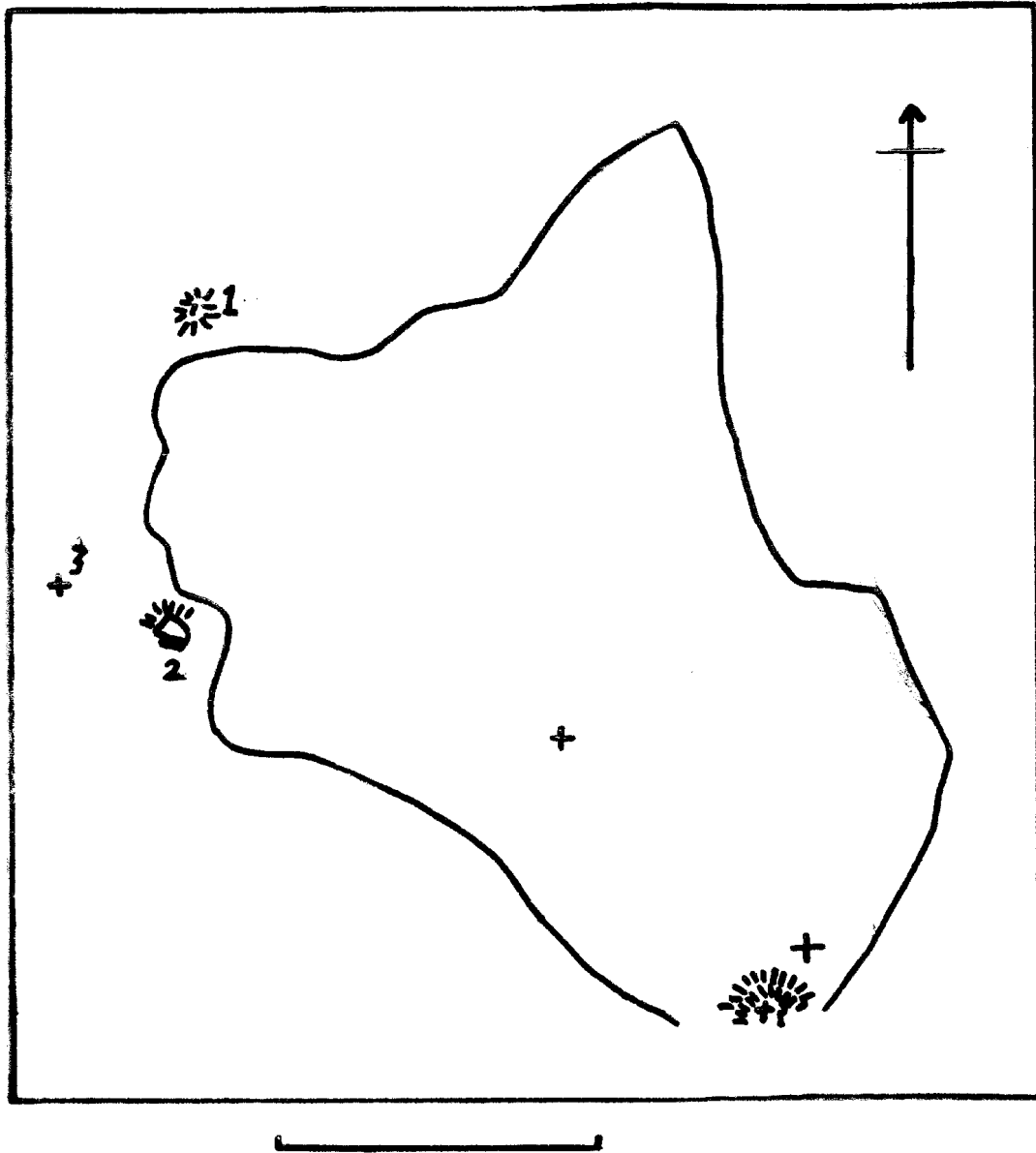


Figure 3: Castell Conscuit, Portskewett and Sudbrook, Monmouthshire.
1: The Berries, 2: Caldicot Castle, 3: Caldicot Church.

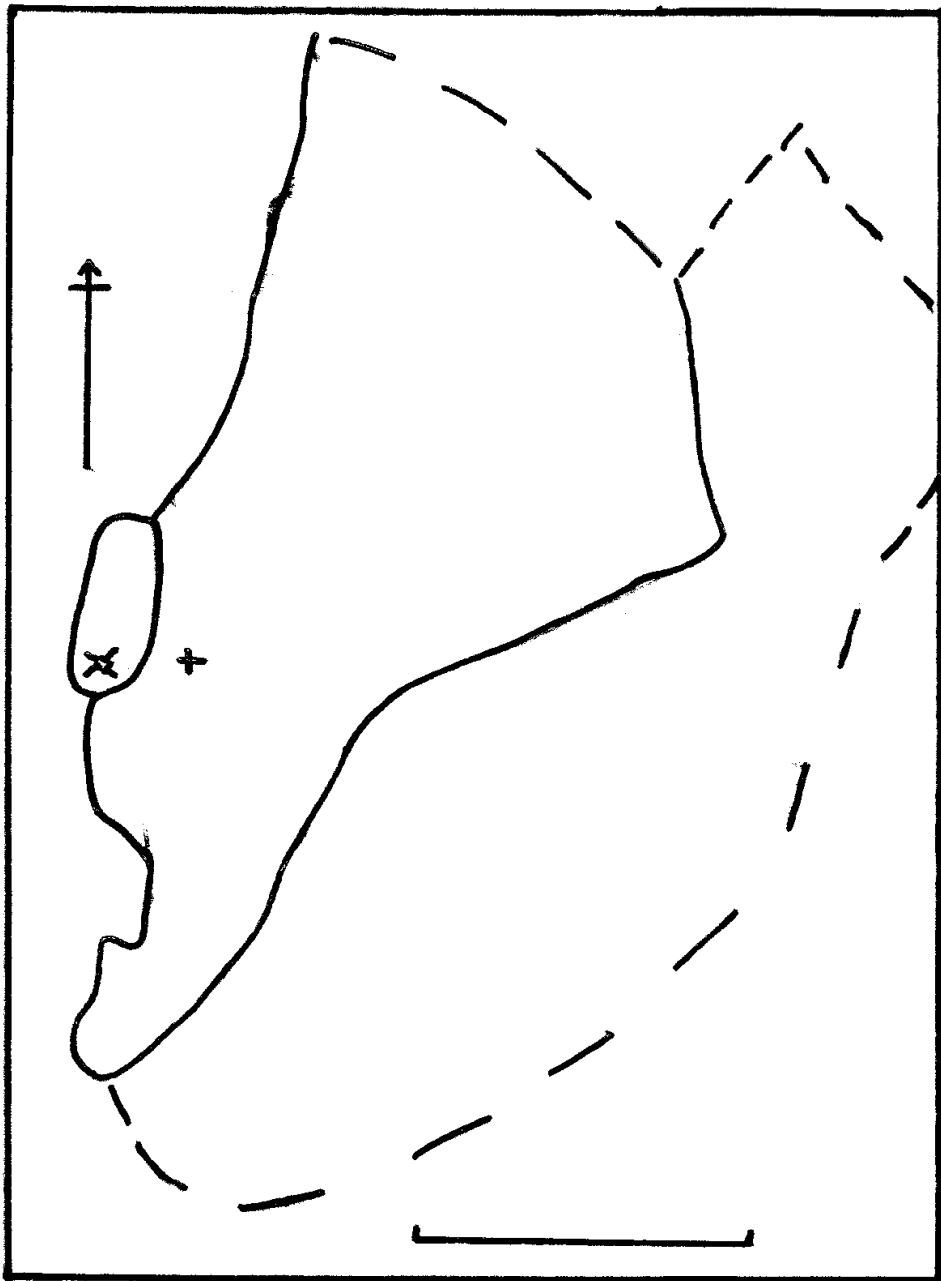


Figure 4: Villa Merthir Theoderic, Mathern, Monmouthshire, also showing Moynes Court Motte as a separate 'estate'.

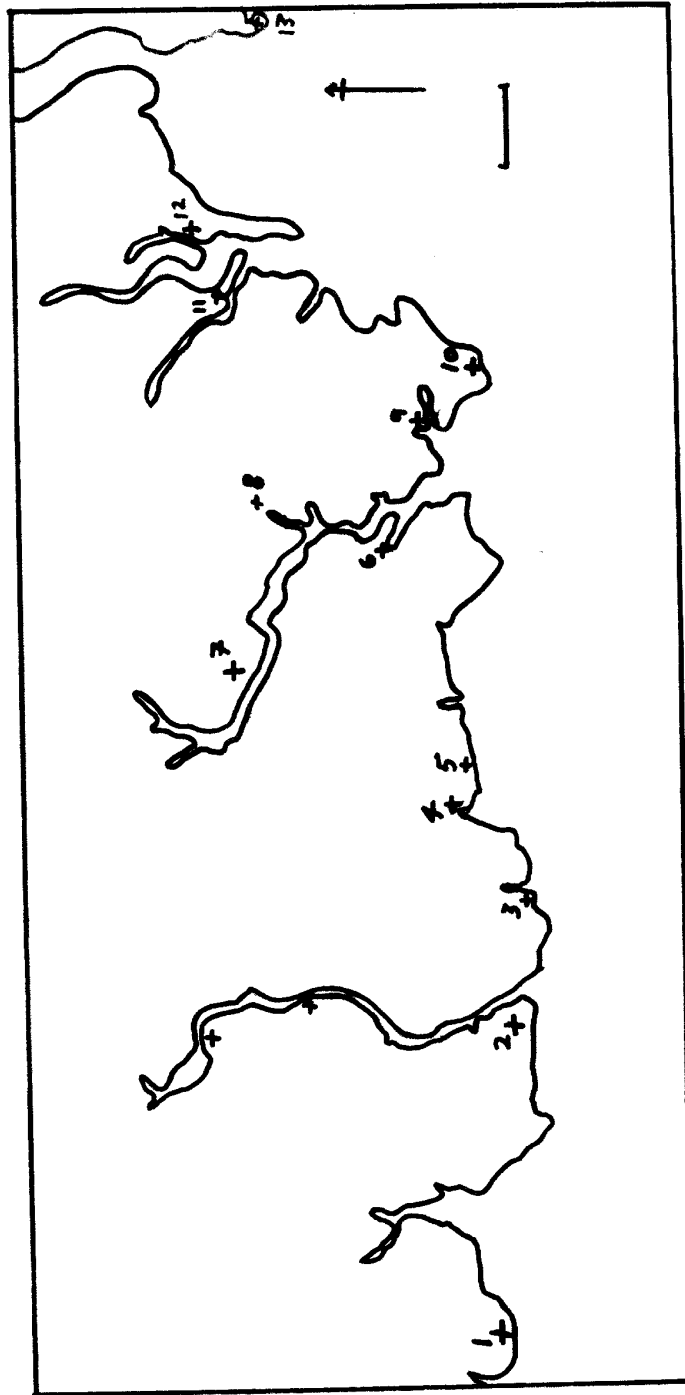


Figure 5: the relationship between churches/chapels and the limits of the alluvium.

1: Lancatgualatyr, Bishton; 2: Magor; 3: Undy; 4: Llanfihangel Rogiet; 5: Rogiet; 6: Caldicot; 7: Caerwent; 8: Crick; 9: Portskewett; 10: Sudbrook; 11: St Pierre; 12: Mathern; 13: St Tecla's.

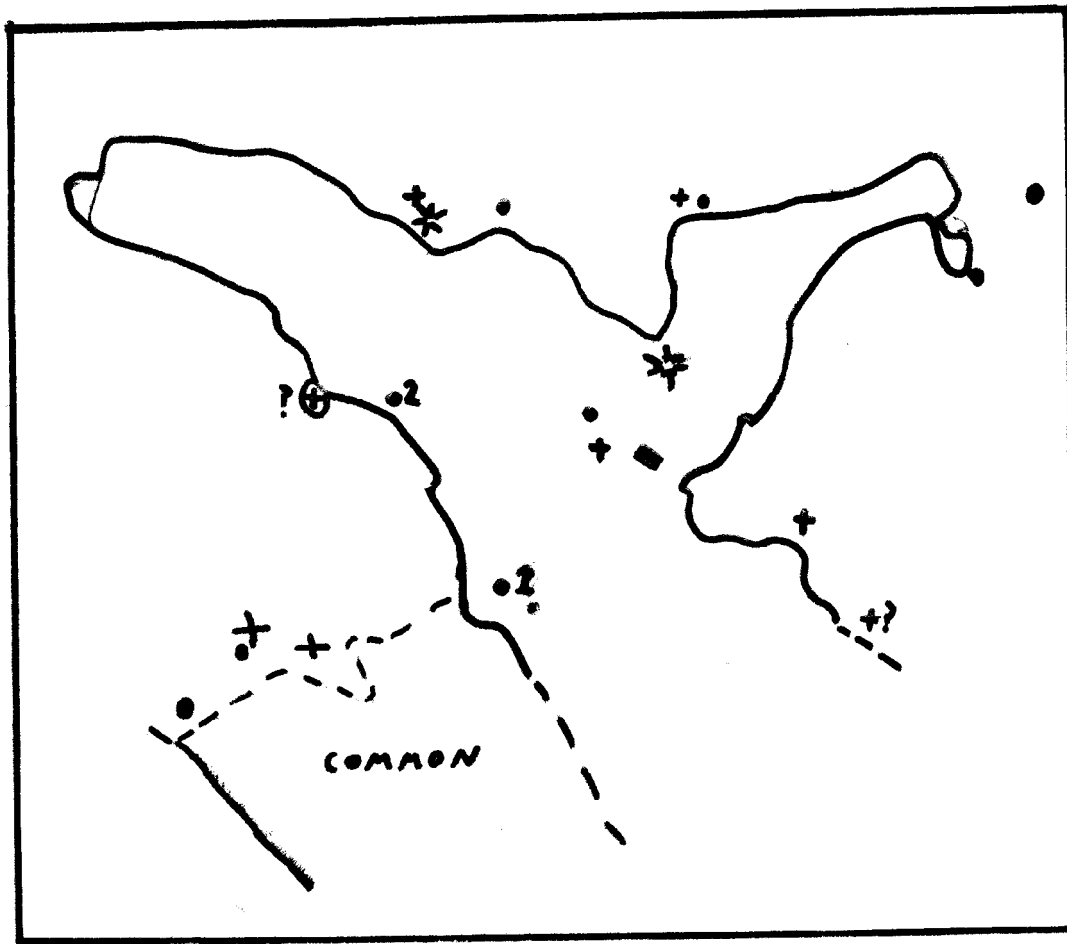


Figure 6: the relationship between high status buildings and the frontiers of the post-medieval lordship of Caldicot.

ABSTRACT

This paper discusses how estates in Gwent Iscoed, now southern Monmouthshire and Newport, claimed by the see of Llandaff, form a framework which was still being followed by the settlement pattern in the later medieval period. In particular, it focuses on how frequently churches, and indeed higher status secular settlements, of this period can be shown to be located on the borders of these estates. By doing so, the paper proposes a model whereby the medieval landscape in south east Wales was dominated by estates which invert the classic models of central places surrounded by outlying regions each of progressively lower economic importance and/or multiple estates. Instead, it substitutes a model whereby the most important activities occurred on the geographical peripheries located around what was essentially a hollow core. This, it is argued, is exactly the settlement pattern we should expect if the Welsh Laws regarding cadastral disputes were being followed.

BIOGRAPHY

Timothy Edward Jones graduated in 1990 with a BA in Archaeology from University of Wales, Cardiff, and spent several years working as a freelance archaeologist, mainly as a landscape surveyor, in the UK, Africa, Europe and the Middle east before taking an MA in Archaeological Science at Bradford. After graduating he continued as an archaeologist until 2000 when due to disabilities he went back to college and obtained a BSc in Geological Oceanography from the University of Wales, Bangor, and an MA in Historic Landscapes from University of Wales, Newport. Currently he is studying for a PhD on the dating of the boundaries within the Book of Llandaff at Newport.