10

MOATED SITES IN THE WEALDEN LANDSCAPE

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Abstract. This chapter looks at the general class of moated sites, of which Bodiam, Scotney and Ightham can be considered particularly large and complex examples, in the context of the Wealden landscape of south-east England as a whole. A general discussion of the literature on moated sites is followed by a discussion of 'what do moats do?' in terms of lived experience.

One of the most striking common features of the sites examined in this volume is the way that the flow of water was altered and manipulated in their surrounding landscapes for various purposes. Bodiam, Scotney and Ightham can all be classified as 'moated sites'. Ditches were dug around the main dwelling and filled with water at each site, suggesting that this use of water, for whatever purpose, was an important element of elite identity in the region. (The well drained site of Knole is not suitable for a moat). This common use of water raises a further question, however: how best to understand these sites in the context of the hundreds of other moated sites in the region? If we designate them as 'elite', linking their archaeological signature to the legal or social status of their owners, what does that imply for sites with similar signatures but whose owners may have had different statuses?

In what follows, I examine the broader geographic scope of moated sites in the surrounding region of the Weald. By putting sites like Bodiam, Scotney and Ightham in a wider landscape context through the lens of moated sites, it is clear that they are particular examples of a much wider phenomenon stretching across space, time and social status. Moats, of course, are not the only similarity between the landscapes of the above sites and others in the region, but moats are one of the most common and readily identifiable features found at many different types of sites during the Middle Ages. In addition, thanks to the efforts of previous surveys such as those conducted by the Moated Sites Research Group (MSRG) the presence and location of medieval moated sites in the Weald is relatively well-documented and can be correlated with other spatial variables using Geographical Information Systems (GIS) software.

This chapter contributes in two ways to our understanding of the medieval landscape. First, a comprehensive survey of moated sites in the Weald has not yet been conducted. Examining the similarities and differences between conditions in the Weald and other regions can shed light on the moat-building phenomenon more broadly as well as help us understand individual sites like Bodiam, Scotney and Ightham in a new light. Second, the following analysis seeks to advance our theoretical and interpretive approach to regional analyses of moated sites. Previous studies have contributed greatly to our understanding of 'why moats exist'. This question is usually framed in terms of environmental factors and the functional utility of moated sites (Emery 1962; Taylor 1972; Le Patourel 1973; Aberg 1978; Le Patourel & Roberts 1978; Aberg & Brown 1981; Barry 1981; Verhaeghe 1981; Wilson 1985; Martin, D. 1989; Martin 1990; Jones 1999; Fradley 2005; Platt 2010a). I draw heavily on this body

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of research in order to understand 'why moats exist' in the Weald, but I also seek to understand the effect that moated sites have on the social landscape after they were dug. In short, I also ask 'what do moats do?' when taken collectively as a regional phenomenon (see also Johnson 2015). My discussion is divided into two parts centring on these two questions.

In studying south-eastern England as a unit of analysis, this study recognises that a region is in danger of being

> *inadequately conceptualized in the sense that both its temporal relations (connections with the past and future) and spatial relations (connections with other areas at the same scale and at larger and smaller scales) are unspecified*
>
> (Marquardt & Crumley 1987: 9)

While the moated sites in this survey can be studied at the regional scale *in toto* with certain variables, this approach is also multiscalar and multitemporal, shifting from the household to the parish and back to the region while embracing the past and future of moated sites. The data discussed consist of 257 identified moated

sites from the counties of Kent, Sussex and Surrey gathered from the National Heritage List, English Heritage Archive and from the East Sussex HER held by East Sussex County Council. It should be noted that this is not a complete list of moated sites in south-eastern England; many sites are yet unidentified and undocumented in databases and still others have been lost to the archaeological record. However, it can serve as a general outline for moat-building trends.

I will first briefly outline the history of moated-site studies, highlighting the strengths and limitations of previous approaches. Then, I will present and compare the distribution of moated sites to various environmental, historical and social factors to describe the Weald as a set of affordances related to moat construction in order to understand basic reasons 'why moats exist'. Then, to describe 'what moats do' at the scale of individual experience and meaning, moated case studies are briefly examined as active features of the landscape. In addition to Bodiam and Scotney, I include other pertinent case studies from the immediate area such as The Mote near Iden, Glottenham in Mountfield, and Share Farm in Horsmonden. I discuss
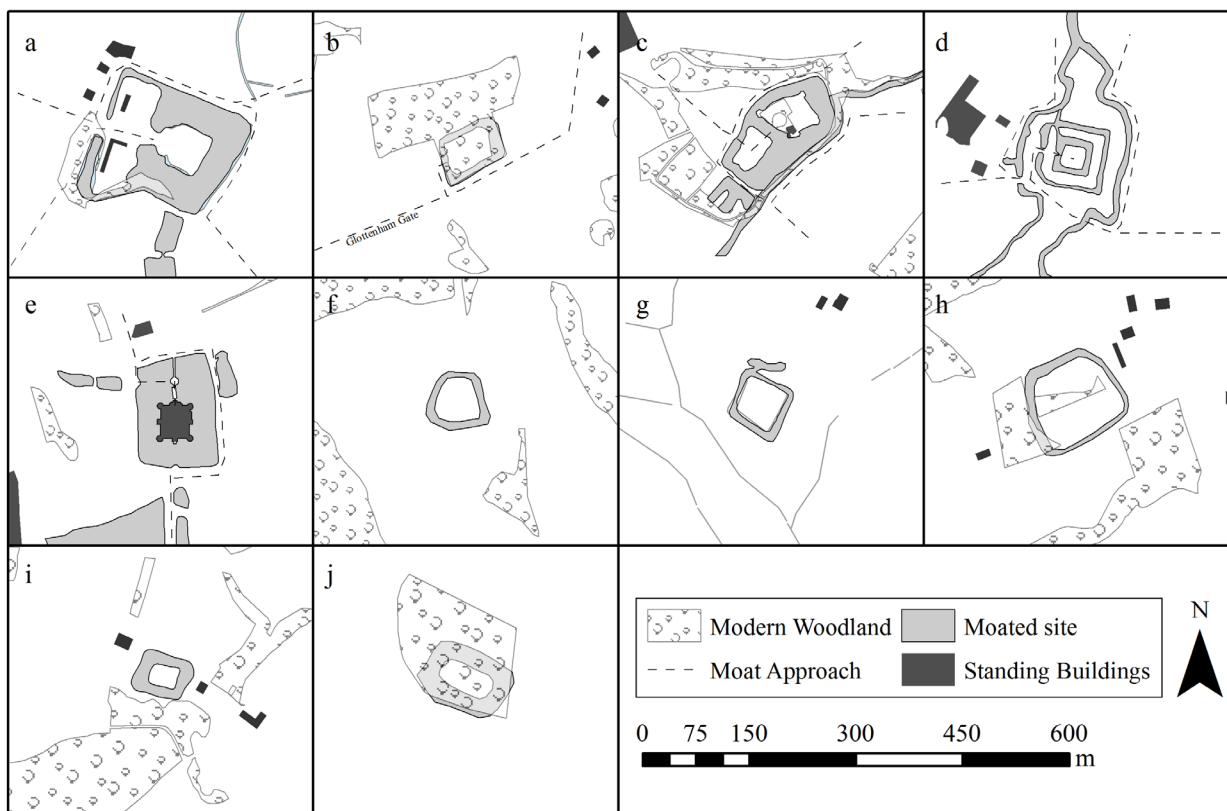

Fig. 10.1: Selection of individual moated sites in south-eastern England. (a) The Mote (East Sussex, TQ 900239), (b) Glottenham (East Sussex, TQ 726221), (c) Scotney (Kent, TQ 689352), (d) Share Farm (Kent, TQ 715392), (e) Bodiam (East Sussex, TQ 785256), (f) Bodiam Homestead (East Sussex, TQ 784264), (g) Lowden (Kent, TQ 854294), (h) Palstre Court (Kent, TQ 882283), (i) Furnace Farm (Kent, TQ 738348), (j) Old Conghurst (Kent, TQ 763280).

Fig. 10.2: Part of the ditch surrounding the moated site at Bodiam (East Sussex, TQ 784264). Photo by Eric Johnson.

specific case studies detailing how the spatial structure of moats actively constitutes authority at the intersection of experienced, perceived and imagined space, an analysis derived from my previous work on the topic (Johnson 2015). In conclusion, my analysis returns to the regional scale to describe how moats result from and may have contributed to a wider distillation of power and authority in the political landscape of the Weald.

History of Moated Sites Research

Moated sites are a well-known archaeological feature of the medieval world (Figs 10.1 & 10.2). In one of the earliest studies in Yorkshire, Jean Le Patourel (1973: 1) defines moated sites as 'islands surrounded by ditches which in antiquity were generally, though not invariably, filled with water'. This definition remains consistent to the present, despite the wide variation in size, shape and character of moated sites (Creighton & Barry 2012). Research in the 1970s and 1980s led to an initial flourishing of documentation, classification and detailed regional studies of moats (Aberg 1978; Aberg & Brown 1981). Since the efforts of the Moated Sites Research Group (later merging with the Deserted Medieval Village Research Group under the new title Medieval Settlement Research Group (MSRG)), the number of moats identified in England has risen to roughly 5,500 and counting (Creighton & Barry 2012: 64). Although the most famous are visible at the high-status castles of the elite, the vast majority of moats are associated with smaller manorial centres or wealthy freeholding peasants. The term 'homestead moat' has been given to the sites that fall under a lower-status category (Taylor 1972; Le Patourel 1973; Aberg 1978; Le Patourel & Roberts 1978; Taylor 1984; Platt 2010a; Creighton & Barry 2012). However, the use of the term 'homestead moat' is ambiguous. It often does not differentiate

between what may be a peasant's dwelling place, a lesser manorial centre or even an ecclesiastical centre. While more complex moats often correlate to higher-status sites, only a close examination of a site's context will confirm its feudal association. Some higher-status manorial centres, for example, have simple, shallow moats, and many of course do not have moats at all.

Fewer than 700 moats have been excavated to some extent in England, a sampling which hovers around 12% (Gerrard 2003). Creating an accurate chronology can be problematic (Platt 2010a). Evidence for dating can come in the form of documentary references such as licences to crenellate or dateable finds in archaeological excavations. Licences to crenellate are medieval documents granting permission from the king or higher authority to the holder to fortify their property, but fortifications may have occurred at any point before or after the dated document and therefore provide only speculative evidence for the date of moat construction (see Coulson 1993 and 1994; also Davis 2007). Licences to crenellate are also not found at sites of a lower social status, skewing the data along class lines. Despite these issues, it is generally assumed that the greatest concentration of moat-building took place from 1200-1325 (Le Patourel 1973; Aberg 1978; Taylor 1984; Creighton 2009; Creighton & Barry 2012).

Creighton and Barry (2012: 65) accurately summarise the present state of literature on moated sites, showing how an explanation of the moat-building phenomenon has usually involved balancing perceived functional incentives (drainage; provision of fishponds and water supply; serious military defence/security against lawlessness) with social motivations (emulation of social superiors; status of moat possession; symbolic division from lower social orders). These explanations largely result from past regional econometric studies (Taylor 1972; Le Patourel 1973; Aberg 1978; Aberg & Brown 1981). In accounts of moats as 'one index of capital accumulation and reinvestment in ostentation and security' (Le Patourel & Roberts 1978: 48), or describing 'subsoil' as 'the decisive factor' in moat-building (Le Patourel 1973), econometric studies, as critiqued by Kosiba and Bauer (2013: 3), 'generally describe humans as rational actors who optimize their livelihood by maximizing socioeconomic gains and minimizing socioeconomic costs'.

If we are to advance our understanding of moated sites at a regional scale, these kinds of econometric approaches to regional analysis should be refined but not be jettisoned. It is important to explain the environmental factors that go into building a moated

site or their potential functional or social utility. However, two issues arise if our analysis ends here. First, we run the risk of falling into environmentally or functionally deterministic interpretations. Second, as Ian Hodder (1982: 207) explains, 'material culture does not reflect, it transforms the relationships in other non-material spheres'. We must seek to understand the ways in which moated sites transformed the political landscape in tandem with their production.

The Production of Moated Sites: from 'Cause and Effect' to 'Affordances and Relational Spaces'

In order to explain 'why moats exist' in the Wealden landscape without devolving into environmentally or functionally deterministic explanations, we can consider the Weald as a web of affordances bound up with specific environmental, historical and social contexts. The theoretical concept of affordances has been expanded and redefined (and muddied) along different ecological and anthropological lines (Gibson 1986; Ingold 1992; Llobera 1996; Gillings 2012; Hodder 2012). Clarifying (and perhaps simplifying) our understanding of affordances holds great interpretive advantages.

As I define it here, three factors distinguish an affordance from an environmental constraint or some cost reducing/gain optimising factor. The first benefit of the term affordance is apparent in its semantic realm. *Afford*, as synonymous with 'capable of yielding or providing', comfortably avoids determinism: what something 'allows for the possibility of' does not 'determine the existence of'. Second, as defined by various anthropologists, an affordance is not limited to the objective material world. Ingold (1992: 46), for instance, advocates for affordances 'as directly perceived by an agent in the context of practical action'. Summarising Gibson (1986), Gillings (2012: 604) notes that 'in the direct model of perception, the environment is laden with meaning that animals (like us) extract during the course of our sensory engagement with it'. The Weald, as perceived and experienced by a range of different people, does not consist of physical material reducible to attributes such as geology or elevation. Put another way, the Weald is a *place* as well as a material backdrop: 'personal and cultural identity is bound up with a place', and thus an analysis of landscape 'is one exploring the creation of self-identity through place' (Tilley 1994: 15). A third distinguishing factor of affordances is that they are fundamentally relational; in fact, some consider an affordance itself to be the act of encountering an object rather than the object itself (Gillings 2012). In this light, while affordances provide a specific (and subjective) context favorable

to a particular action such as moat construction, these contextual (and subjective) meanings can be negotiated in turn through this interaction. The transformative, recursive property of the landscape then brings my analysis to a second question: 'what do moats *do*?'.

Adam T. Smith (2003: 32), drawing from Lefebvre (1974), argues that landscapes are

> *encompassing not only specific places and monuments but also the stretches between them: physical, aesthetic, and representational…they are rooted in specific perspectives that advance particular ways of seeing, of living, and of understanding.*

As representations of specific worldviews and social orders, landscapes are cumulative of the spaces produced by individuals holding particular ideologies. Relational spaces define boundaries, arranging subjects, objects and spaces *in relation* to other objects (humans, animals, other structures, materials, etc.) and spaces (inside/outside, safe/hostile, civilised/natural, sacred/profane, warm/cold, etc.) in the physical world. The world of these relations is also anything but static; boundaries engender specific patterns of movement through space by delimiting how (or whether) bodies (both human and material) can ultimately travel from point A to B. When relational spaces are experienced and perceived, political ideologies are then internalised as they are embodied, reifying the social order they display (Hillier & Hanson 1989). However, just as 'ideology *per se* might well be said to consist primarily in a discourse upon social space' (Lefebvre 1974: 44), the cumulative production of new relational spaces can also actively resist, redefine or fragment prevailing political structures depending on the understandings of the producers and others' experience of relational spaces.

Why Do Moats Exist?

Environmental context

The Weald in south-eastern England can be described as an environmental region distinct in topography, geology and vegetation from its neighbours. While on the whole elevation is relatively low (max of 250 m above sea level), the terrain is marked by rapid changes in elevation, creating a constantly changing, hilly terrain. Topographic variability increases as one distinguishes between the Low Weald to the west, south and north wrapping around the High Weald (see Fig. 10.3). The Weald is also a wooded region and would have been even more densely forested at the start of the 13th century (Brandon 1969). By
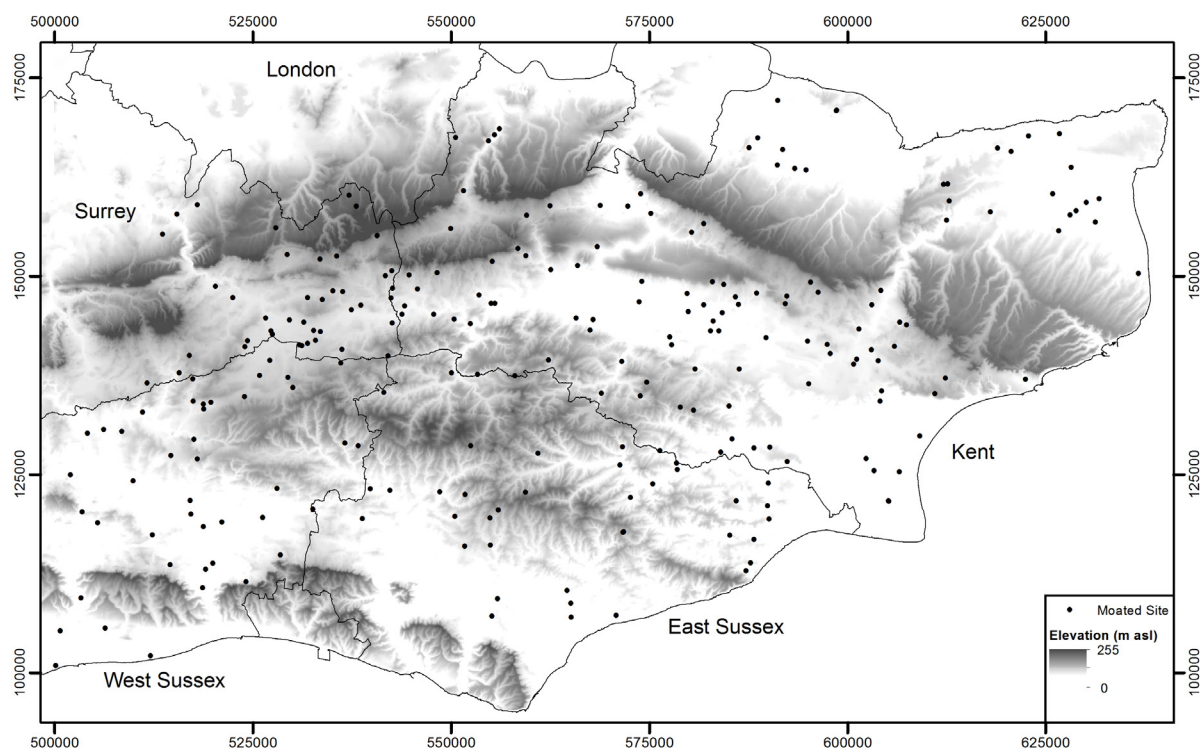
Fig. 10.3: Distribution of moats in south-eastern England, plotted against elevation.

minimising visibility and facilitating a greater degree of visual privacy, these two environmental factors combine to provide the phenomenological context of moat construction; vegetation and topography obstruct wide views normally provided by hilltops. Even today, after medieval clearances and modern agriculture have deforested a percentage of the medieval woodland, many moated sites cannot be seen until they are immediately encountered. The environment makes control over sightlines, seclusion and privacy possible, echoing notions of separateness embodied in the spatial structure of moated sites.

Past regional studies have noted the correlation between moated sites and lowland areas (Taylor 1972; Le Patourel 1973). This correlation holds true in the Weald (Fig.10.3). Approximately 70% of identified moated sites in south-eastern England lie less than 50 m above sea level, and 90% of identified moated sites are less than 88 m above sea level. Lowland areas facilitate the catchment of water flowing from higher elevations; in most cases, moats were fed by natural waterways in the landscape (unless a site was fed by a hilltop spring, as is the case at Glottenham in East Sussex (Martin, D. 1989)).

Geology is another environmental factor related to moat construction (Fig.10.4). Ninety percent of the moated sites in south-eastern England are seated in clay deposits, while only 10% are found in the chalk lands

to the north and south of the Weald. When compared to the total area of clay (60%) and chalk (40%) in the survey, this reveals an association between moated sites and clay geology. Clay is more impermeable to water than other soil types. Therefore, a clay bed for a moat retains water more effectively than chalk, allowing for greater control in constructing watery landscapes.

Social context

As has been implied thus far, the social status of an individual is another context which affords moat construction. The time, effort and labour required to dig moat ditches and manage the flow of water could have only been undertaken by those who had a degree of agency, authority and economic means. Understanding this social context first requires an abbreviated outline of medieval feudalism in relation to moated sites. The largest and most ostentatious moated sites in the Weald are found surrounding the castles and houses of the gentry such as Bodiam, Scotney, Glottenham, The Mote and others. For instance, Edward Dallingridge and Roger Ashburnham, owners of Bodiam and Scotney, were Keepers of the Peace in Sussex in the 1380s, along with William de Etchingham, builder of an important but now destroyed moated house at Etchingham and a relation of Robert de Etchingham, builder of Glottenham (Saul 1986 1-7; Martin *et al.* 2008).

Many moated sites, to judge from their size and general appearance, are found further down on the social scale, and fall into the national category of 'homestead moats'. In other parts of the country, for example Edward Martin's work in Suffolk, these sites would be immediately interpreted as the dwelling places of wealthy freeholding peasants. In the manorial system, a freeholding peasant was distinct from dependent or villein peasants by the labour or monetary debt owed to a manorial centre. A greater degree of agency, authority and accumulation was therefore afforded to the freeholding class, providing the social context for moat construction at the lower end of the social spectrum. Given that in some areas of England actual wealth disparities within the peasant class may not have aligned with freeholding or villein distinctions, Platt (2010: 125-6) suggests that even some wealthy dependent tenants may have dug ditches around their homesteads.

It is important to note that the situation in the Sussex Weald does not appear to correspond to this broader national picture. Unpublished documentary work by Chris Whittick and David and Barbara Martin has established in a very large number of instances that these smaller, less significant moated sites are in fact manorial or sub-manorial centres, however humble their appearance or similarity to homestead moats elsewhere in the country. It may well be the case that the moats found on the Kent side of the border follow a similar pattern.

The authority of an elite and his household was in part constituted by his military role within the feudal ideology. We can observe this process firsthand in medieval documents. For example, in 1318 Sir Edmund de Pashley, lord of the manor of Leigh in Iden, obtained a licence to crenellate his dwelling place of The Mote (Gardiner & Whittick 2011). Fig.10.5 is an illustration of The Mote in the capital letter of the document. This licence to crenellate flowed from a higher authority to Sir Edmund, granting him permission to construct a castle with crenellations at his dwelling place. A licence to crenellate in part produces the authority of the holder, and this production is conceptually linked to the permission to defend embodied by a moat. Of course, this type of formal permission was not required to construct a moat, but notions of 'defensibility' implied by a moated site still appropriate these meanings (Taylor 1972).

Historical context

Well before the majority of moats were built in England, the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle states that in 1086:

> [The King] *commissioned them to record in writing… 'What, or how much, each man had, who was an occupier of land in England, either in land or in stock, and how much money it were worth'… there was not one single hide, nor a yard of land…not even an ox, nor a cow, nor a swine was there left, that was not set down in his writ.*
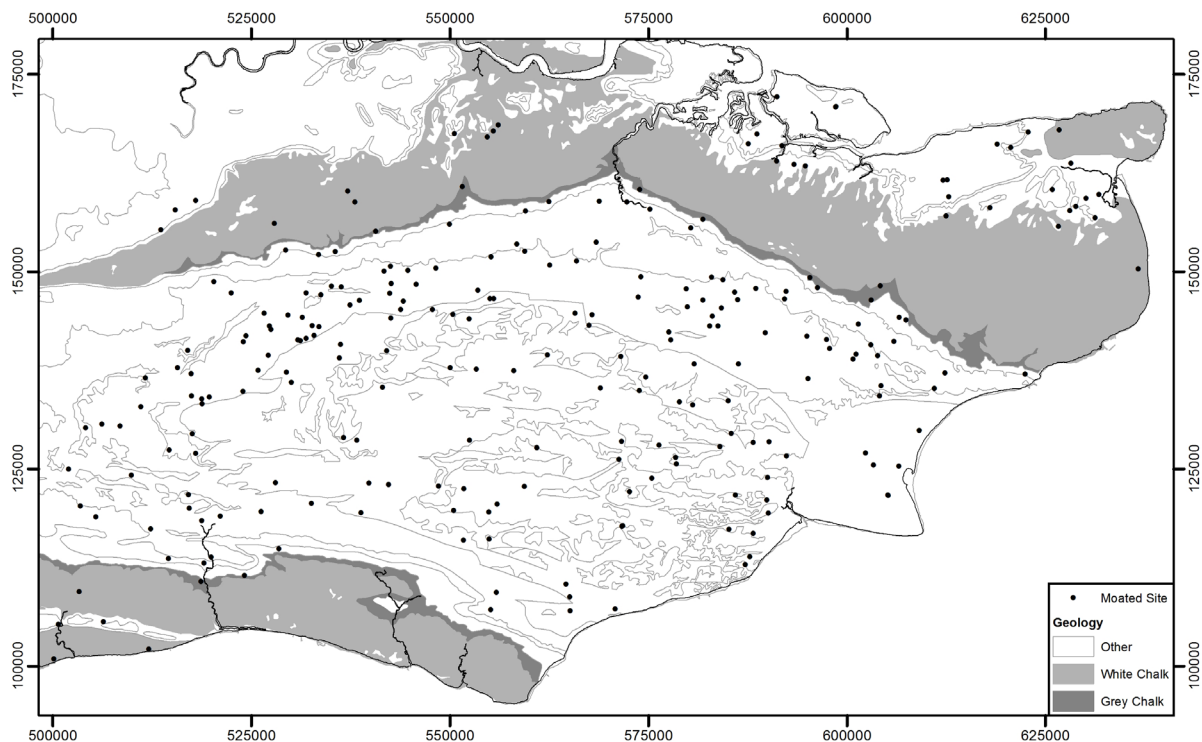

Fig. 10.4: Distribution of moated sites, plotted against underlying geology.

Fig. 10.5: A representation of a moated manor house and park in the initial capital of the licence to crenellate the dwelling place of 'La Mote' granted to Sir Edmund de Pashley in 1318 (ESRO ACC 7001). Source: Gardiner & Whittick 2011, frontispiece.

This record, known as the Domesday Book, defines the territory of the King as a sovereign totality, documenting taxation and population density. As a perceptual space of a burgeoning state, however, it is better described as an attempt to make a population of subjects visible. The places mentioned in Domesday Book are mapped in Fig.10.6. If this map is taken literally, the Weald appears as a relatively uninhabited region in 1086, and this is how previous generations of archaeologists and historians have often interpreted it. Fig.10.6 is a graphic representation of the traditional understanding of the Weald as a place of late colonisation and 'assarting', a symptom of the population rise and economic expansion of the 11th to 13th centuries in Europe (Brandon 2003: 43-52).

When the moated-site distribution is mapped on top of the Domesday record (Fig.10.6), Domesday mentions appear to be inversely correlated with moated-site distributions in the Weald. This apparent contrast has traditionally been interpreted in terms of two historical settlement dynamics in the Weald. First, it has been suggested that, as populations rose in the 12th and 13th centuries, more and more wealthy freeholding peasants began to colonise the less densely populated woodland of the Weald in both East Sussex (Brandon 1969) and Kent (Mate 2010a: 3). Studies have painted a general picture of increasing population densities, new settlements through assarting (the clearance of woodland for arable) and have cited moated sites as a key piece of evidence for this (Roberts 1964; Taylor 1972; Le Patourel 1973; Aberg 1978; Le Patourel & Roberts 1978; Aberg & Brown 1981). Second, as manors (in this view) expanded their jurisdiction after 1086, previous inhabitants of the Weald (those 'invisible' to the Domesday record) were not absorbed into the demesne lands of manors. Instead, these settlements were also treated as freehold (Witney 1990: 22). Thus, the traditional view has been that homestead moats are one index of a strong contingent of Wealden freeholding tenants. This traditional view, combined with the observation that 'The High Weald was largely the preserve of lesser gentlemen' (Fleming 2010: 222), has resulted in a perception by some scholars of a weaker institutional structure of manorialism when compared with other areas of England.

However, this view needs some qualification, at least for the Sussex Weald. Fig.10.6 should not necessarily be seen as an objective record, but rather as a map of gaps in political knowledge (Hauser 2008) in 1086. It does in fact depict a Wealden landscape that is at least partly populated, but not one that is visible to state authority in a straightforward way. Unpublished documentary work by Chris Whittick and David and Barbara Martin has established that the general pattern in the Sussex Weald is one of fragmented manorial holdings. Manors often had their centres outside or on the margins of the Weald, on the coast or in the river valleys. These manors then also had fragmented holdings within the Weald at some distance from their centres. It is not clear whether these outlying holdings were always disclosed to the Domesday commissioners, but when they were, they appeared under the general heading of the 'parent' manor. Consequently they do not appear on Fig.10.6.

David and Barbara Martin point out that in the Rape of Hastings,

> *all 'unclaimed' land was deemed to be demesne of the overlord of Hastings Rape. Where colonisation took place the colonising lord quickly established it as a manor held by him direct of the rape's overlord. Except for pockets of woodland and heath, by the 16th century only residual areas of wasteland remained, but even these were still considered by the overlord to be demesne of the rape and were leased out accordingly, a practice which continued into the 19th century*
> *(David and Barbara Martin, pers. comm.)*

The proliferation of moated sites, in this revised view, is not to do with a class of freeholding peasants but is rather an index of the fragmentation of manorial holdings across the Weald; manors are indeed weaker in the Weald, but this is to do with their fragmented and dispersed nature. It should be stressed that

> *this revision does not mean that the Weald was heavily populated at Domesday: it was not, and it certainly experienced higher levels of colonization in post-Conquest years than did the adjacent coastal areas. But it was not as empty of people as previous scholarship has implied, nor were those who did occupy the area free from manorial control: instead the manorial lords of these people resided at a distance, as did the bulk of the manors tenantry*
> (David and Barbara Martin, pers. comm.)

The broader point remains, then, that the agency to construct a moat is, in part, afforded by the Weald as a landscape which historically was one of greater invisibility from state power and therefore greater political autonomy than other areas in England.

The historical context of moat construction also provides a set of symbolic meanings appropriated by a moat. The owners of moats for instance may also be appropriating a (real or imagined) past military function of watery boundaries. After deconstructing

the defensive utility of moated sites Christopher Taylor (1972: 246) suggests that 'their origins may lie in the pre-Conquest ringworks which were probably built for protection around the homes of thegns] at a time when defence was a necessity'. In a critique of Taylor, Colin Platt has recently asserted the necessity of moat's defensive function for moat owners (Platt 2010a). While the debate over the conscious intent of moat owners and defensive utility distances us from how moats were perceived and experienced, we cannot ignore the symbolic importance of defence in medieval life: 'The 'militaristic' conceptions of late fourteenth-century warfare were…intimately bound up with… ideas of masculinity, knighthood, and martial valor, ideas that were historically transient' (Johnson 2002: 30). Notions of defence, conceived symbolically, are therefore inextricable from those of status and gender, and the historically transient martial meanings are embedded in moats, regardless of whether the owner consciously built a moat in reaction to 'endemic lawlessness' (Platt 2010a: 128) or with 'the desire to show off his prosperity' (Taylor 1972: 246).

What Do Moats Do?

I have briefly described some of the environmental, historical and social contexts affording the act of moat construction in an effort to better understand 'why moats exist' in south-eastern England, but the life of
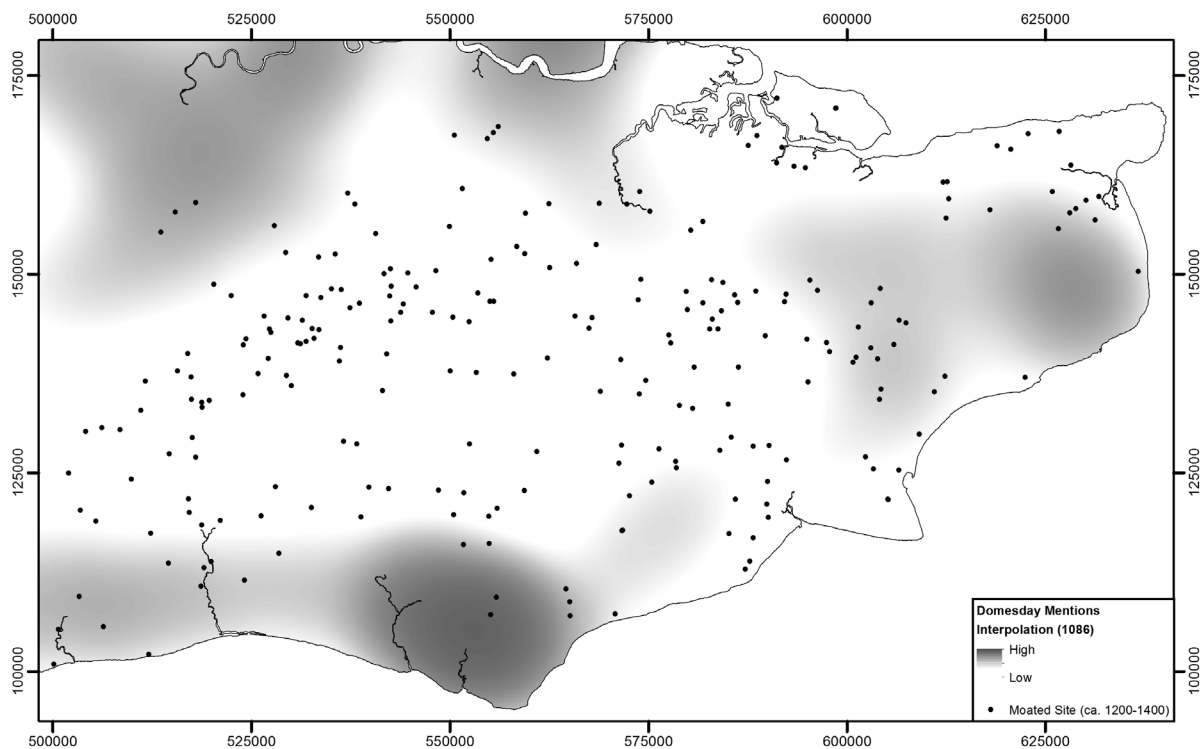

Fig. 10.6: Density of mentions of places in Domesday 1086, plotted against distribution of moated sites.
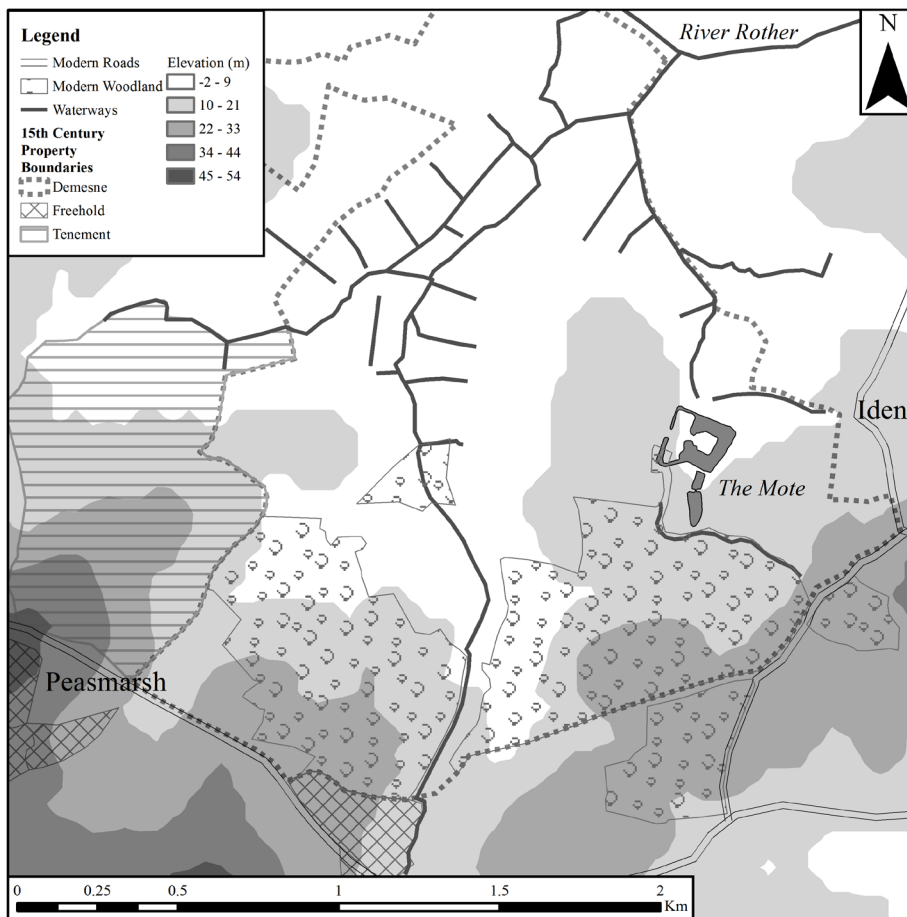
Fig. 10.7: Landscape context of The Mote, near Iden (East Sussex, TQ 900239). Based on work by David and Barbara Martin in Gardiner & Whittick 2011.

a moated site does not end at its inception. Therefore, my analysis continues with the question 'what do moats do' as features in the landscape. Even as authority and agency is afforded to individuals in specific contexts, I argue that moats then actively contribute to the agency and authority of those inhabiting their inner islands. The scale of analysis shifts to individual case studies to examine the recursive constitution of power at the 'intersection of space with experience, perception, and imagination' (Smith 2003: 72-3; see also Lefebvre 1991).

Moats as experienced

Examining survey evidence from The Mote near Iden, we can immediately see similarities between its moat and other elite moated sites such as Bodiam and Scotney. Fig.10.7 illustrates the 17th-century field boundaries reconstructed using historical documents from the manorial centre at The Mote (Gardiner & Whittick 2011). These boundaries have likely remained close to their 14th-century counterparts. The Mote, as the place of court hearings and tax collection, was a locus of authority for Iden and Peasmarsh, a place approached and navigated by a range of people of different social classes, both peasants under the jurisdiction of the manorial household as well as other visiting elite

households. The demesne fields of the manor for instance may have been worked by dependent peasants indebted to The Mote through labour.

Surviving earthworks at The Mote provide evidence for what the moat does as an experienced space (Johnson 2015). Moats increase the time and effort required to travel to the innermost island. Simultaneously, the placid surface of the water flattens the surrounding topography, maximising the visibility of the vicinity surrounding the island. In its present state, the inner island of The Mote is clearly delineated by a partially water-filled ditch, and a single piece of upstanding masonry marks the possible location of the former gatehouse structure. Two subsidiary moat 'arms' branch to the north-west outlining a second space within their boundaries, presumably the outer court. An outer or lower court (sometimes called a base court) is a common feature of moated sites and could have contained subordinate houses for servants, stables, granaries or barns (Rigold 1968). At Iden, in fact, 'a single timber wall of a barn still survives on the outer enclosure, now incorporated into the modern farm buildings. The wall may date to the 1470s', and a 'lower court' is mentioned in account documents from 1480 (Gardiner & Whittick 2011: xlvii). The Mote would have been approached from

either the village of Iden to the east, Peasmarsh to the west, or the River Rother to the north, as suggested by David and Barbara Martin (See Fig.10.7, and see also Gardiner & Whittick 2011: lxxxi).

The boundaries of the spaces produced by a moat are relatively static, but the bodies navigating their spatial layout are in constant motion. The order established by this spatial layout is thus maintained through movement. As to the depth of the inner and outer courts, movement reinforces the spatial and social order with a temporal order: first/posterior/lower court → second/anterior/ upper court. At higher-status sites, an itinerant elite's household would process to the inner court on different occasions. The repeated performative act of entering a castle—drawn out by the moat—helped constitute the status of social actors as the landscape was both stage and reality for social practice (Johnson 2002). This is especially clear at Bodiam Castle where the processional route is tightly delineated and visibly unobstructed across the narrow bridge to the small octagonal island and then turning south to cross a second bridge and pass under the castle gate. For those experiencing the greater or lesser mobility defined by the moat and class, this order is internalised as it is embodied and the authority of those within is actively (re)produced.

Moats as perceived and imagined

According to Adam T. Smith, the perceived dimension of landscape

> *is a space of signs, signals, cues, and codes—the analytical dimension of space where we are no longer simply drones moving through space but sensible creatures aware of spatial form and aesthetics*
> (Smith 2003: 73)

Here moats become laden with meaning and subjectively interpreted by the range of people navigating their boundaries. It must first be noted that moated meanings varied greatly along gender, class, age and literacy lines (Johnson 2002: 29). Therefore, the following suggestions should not be taken as uniform medieval interpretations of moats, but they do provide a context to help us understand broadly how they may have been perceived and understood as their spatial order was experienced. Moated meanings are rooted in the representational spaces of the medieval world such as texts and imagery.

The medieval world was thought to be made up of four basic elements: earth, air, fire and water. In the body, different balances of these substances led to distinct

temperaments. In strictly dichotomous gendered discourse, women were associated with water; they were cold and changeable while men were considered hot and dry. Roberta Gilchrist notes that

> *Under the medieval feudal system…the accumulation of property in land required monogamy and inheritance by primogeniture (inheritance through the eldest male). Female fidelity, and its display through the physical confinement of women, became essential to the perpetuation of successful lineages*
> (Gilchrist 1999: 112)

In a patrilineal and patriarchal society, a watery moat may have been a metaphor of sexual seclusion, (explicitly or implicitly) protecting the fidelity of the woman within, thereby cementing the power and authority of the household. It is clear from documents that the medieval elite were concerned with the fidelity of wives, but this was also probably important for freeholding peasants in order to retain their freeholding status.

The image in the capital letter of The Mote's licence to crenellate (Fig.10.5) depicts an idealised manorial complex, complete with hunting grounds for deer and rabbit, a chapel for the pious owner and a curiously interwoven flow of fish in the surrounding moat. It is no surprise that the chapel is the focus of this image; Sir Edmund Pashley had founded the chapel of Leigh in 1304 and transferred it to The Mote in 1320 (Gardiner & Whittick 2011). The interwoven flow of fish in the moat is depicted beneath the chapel centrepiece of the image, reinforcing the religious authority of the site bound up in its moated representation. Power and authority were also associated with production and consumption at a manorial centre. As is clear in the case of carefully regulated medieval deer parks, 'hunting opportunities available to any individual depended…on social rank' (Creighton 2009: 100). The consumption of fish from the moat or associated fishpond was a specifically elite activity.

The social relationships defined by feudal order may have been naturalised by the moat as a feature of the landscape. The water filling these ditches was considered a fundamental element of the medieval world, part of the natural order. Moats appropriate the powerful permanence and barrier qualities of natural waterways for specific social ordering. Much like the elite practice of capturing deer into a deer park with a pale, moats draw the natural world into the cultural. The spatial relationships produced by moats may have been perceived as fundamentally as the medieval conceptions

of earth, air, fire and water and as temporally static as rivers that feed them. Indeed, moats' ubiquity in the archaeological record today is a testament to their lasting physical presence. The naturalising attributes of moats are most obvious at the site near Share Farm in Horsmonden, Kent. Classified as a 'double concentric' moat and bounded by a fork in the river, here the river actually *is* another moat in the sense that the experience of moving across the river boundary is essentially the same as the movement across the 'artificial' boundaries of the double concentric moat. The pattern of movement delineated by the river and moats contributes to the naturalisation of the social order.

All this being said, the meanings of moated sites could easily be manipulated for subverting dominant social relationships and furthering individual agendas. For instance, the historical record of The Mote suggests some doubt as to the legitimacy of Margaret de Basing and Edmund de Pashley's marriage in the early 14th century. Upon Edmund's death, both Margaret de Basing and another woman — Joan of the Greyly family — claimed to be his widow. According to Joan, Margaret murdered Edmund and two of her alleged stepchildren in order to legitimise the inheritance of the Pashley estate to her children of a previous marriage. Despite legal cases brought against Margaret, the manor of Mote passed to her sons in 1341 (Saul 1984; 1986: 86). Margaret's occupation of the manor house and its impressive moat may have been one factor reifying Margaret's bounded sexual relationship with Edmund, bolstering her claim to inheritance over Joan despite its possible illegitimacy (Johnson 2015: 248-9).

The Wealden Political Landscape

I have detailed in part 'why moats exist' and the set of affordances producing the agency of an individual to construct a moat, and I have explained 'what moats do' at the household scale to (re)produce the authority of their owners. In conclusion, I return to the regional scale to ask 'what do moats do' as they constitute the wider political landscape. As a spatial and social discourse, the political ideology of feudalism rigidly defines classes such as gentry, yeoman, freeholder, etc. In reality, however, the political economy of medieval England and its associated identities were more fluid, negotiated in part through marital ties, military service, economic accumulation, and so on. Wealden lesser gentlemen, for instance, often 'led lives not very different from the non-gentle yeomen immediately beneath them' (Fleming 2010: 221). In addition to the freeholding squatters already occupying land in the Weald before the 13th century, some tracts of land were 'opened up by individual enterprise and partitioned into freehold and customary farms' in the 13th century (Brandon 1969: 141). The fragmentation of manorial holdings noted above may have contributed to a more permeable notion of social boundaries. According to some historians of the Weald, peasants may have also had a more comfortable degree of economic autonomy relative to other regions in England:

> [in the late 13th century] *a new wave of pioneers entered the forest in larger numbers…On their small farms they planted fruit trees, grew oats and legumes, and kept animals. They also utilized the resources of the woods around them*
>
> (Mate 2010a: 3)

All of these factors combine to produce a landscape where power and authority was diffused and dispersed across a larger group of people and a relatively 'weaker' institutional structure of manorialism.

I argue that greater concentrations of homestead moats in the Weald – whether owned by freeholding peasants or lesser elite – may be an index of economic and political autonomy diffused to lower classes, as has been more or less argued by others working in different regions (Emery 1962; Le Patourel 1973; Le Patourel & Roberts 1978). As I have shown, the Weald is a specific environmental, historical and social context which affords the agency to construct a moat. However, I also argue that moats, as experienced, perceived and imagined relational spaces transform, and perhaps magnify, afforded authority into normative reality (Johnson 2015). Fig.10.8 illustrates the boundaries of modern parishes (a comparable artefact of medieval parishes) relative to the location of moated sites and topography in the High Weald. Many lower-status sites are situated near the parish boundaries, mirroring Edward Martin's findings in Suffolk (Martin, E. 1989). There is a clear correlation here, though precisely what it means is unclear, as parish boundaries do not equate to manorial boundaries in much of the Weald. It may be that the power of the elite was weaker at the periphery of territorial boundaries, a context (combined with environmental factors such as topography shown in Fig.10.3) affording the act of moat construction. While this political affordance was by no means permanent, moated sites then reified the authority of their owners for the reasons outlined above. Those occupying the inner islands, while perhaps not ideologically defined as members of 'the elite', may have been perceived as having a degree of religious authority, or retaining a monogamous wife and securing a 'free' bloodline, or as having obtained some degree of privilege to defend one's home.
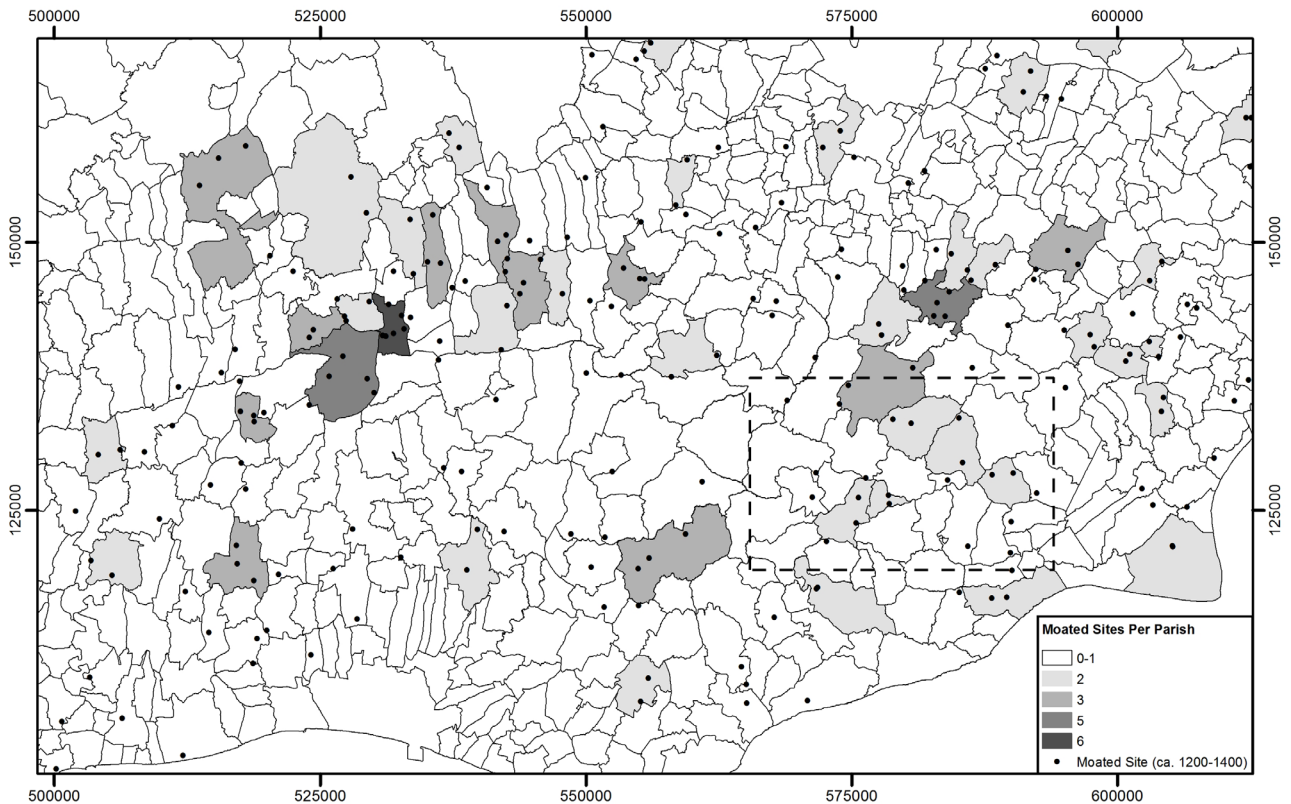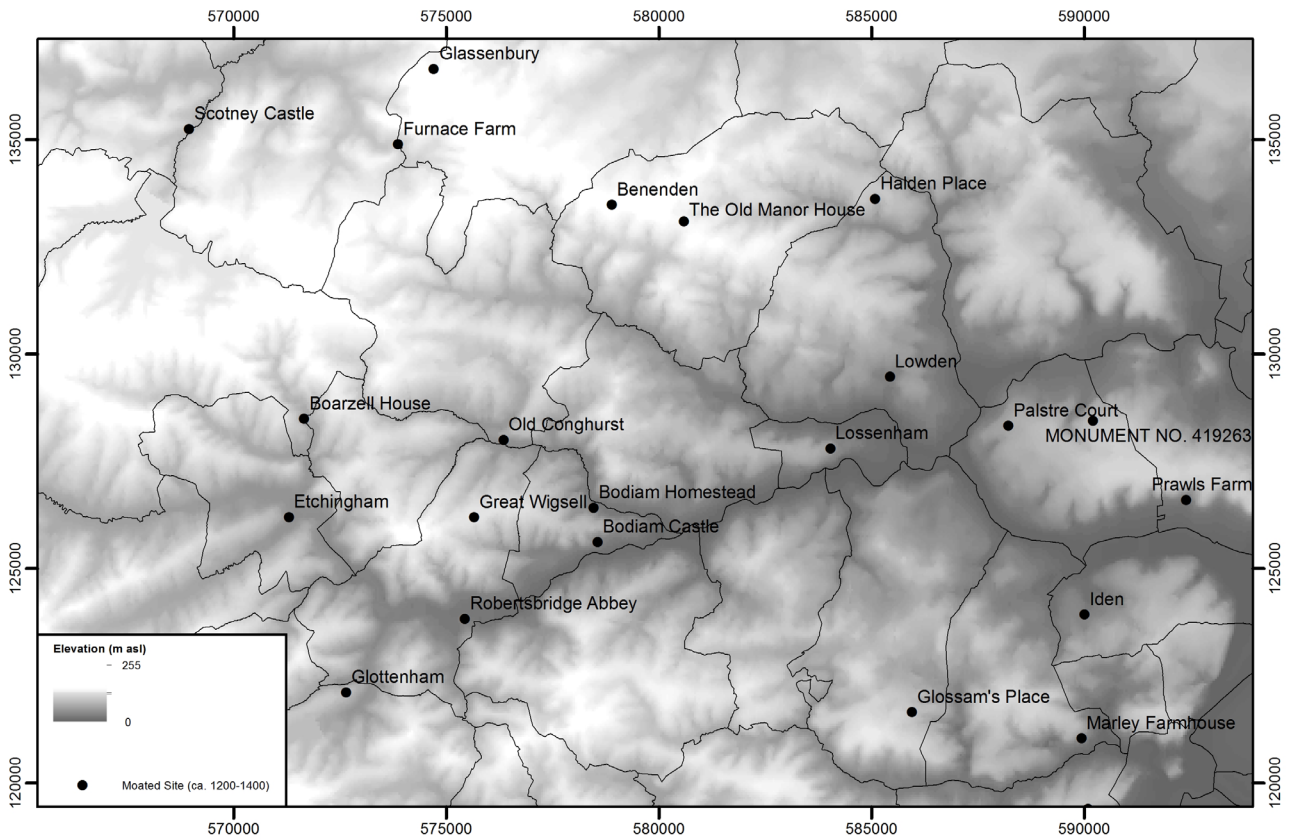
Fig. 10.8: Moated sites in relation to parish boundaries. Above: inset of the Eastern Weald. Below: distribution of moated sites within parish boundaries.

In conclusion, we can compare these parishes to the region as a whole. Fig.10.8 displays the number of moated sites found within each parish. Shaded parishes contain at least one moated site, and darker parishes contain greater concentrations. The exact percentage of non-manorial moated sites in Fig. 10.8 is unknown, but at least some of these moats likely surrounded freeholding peasant's dwellings. The clustering of moated sites of a manorial status indexes the unconsolidated nature of manorial holdings in the Weald. Thus, on both accounts this map suggests the geography of political fragmentation as viewed through the distribution of moated sites. It should be noted that Fig.10.8 does not accurately describe where power was diffuse so much as where moats may have contributed to political diffusion. Nor does this map seek to describe the dynamics of power between parish boundaries, but rather, it reveals possible differential fragmentation *within each parish* as produced by moated sites.

Of course, Fig. 10.8 flattens the dynamic temporality of the Wealden landscape. Hard dating evidence for the vast majority of moated sites is limited; a more accurate picture may not be possible without extensive excavations. Additionally, the Black Death (1348-50),

as a major historical event, signaled a radical change in medieval demographics and slices through the tail end of moated-site chronology displayed here. As others have noted (Le Patourel 1973; Taylor 1984; Platt 2010a), the phenomenon of homestead moat-building sharply declines if not disappears after the mid-14th century. Several of the moated sites discussed here, however, date to the later 14th century. They are certainly not unique in their complex use of water to communicate and reify certain social relationships. It is possible that these 14th-century moats draw on the longer social history of moated-site production in the broader landscape as a claim to authority in the eastern Weald after the dramatic decline in population in 1348.

I have shown using GIS methodology how we can reconstruct the Weald as a set of affordances arising from specific environmental, historical and social contexts. In the process, I have avoided conclusive statements about the intention of individuals at the moment of moat construction in terms of either a symbolic fashion statement or a defensive feature. Rather, an analysis of the experienced, perceived, and imagined moat opens up the discussion to how political ideologies were expressed 'on the ground' and how the landscape then shaped people in the past.