5

Land flows

Introduction

Starting with rivers, this book has gone on to consider other material forms and layouts that incorporate or make use of water flow. In this chapter it will be asked – can perspectives and techniques of archaeology of flow be applied to landscapes away from rivers, and to the archaeology of sites that seemingly have little to do with water as such? What other kinds of flow run through landscapes? How do these intersect with rivers and associated flows of water examined so far?

The answer to the first question is yes. Patterns of flow occur not just in water, but also in other parts of the natural, technological and cultural worlds. Flow manifests itself in moving air, shifting sand, ever changing cloud formations, stampeding animal herds, swarming bees, shoaling fish, and flocking birds (Ball 2009a). It can also be found in music, spoken and written language, electric circuits, computer networks and information superhighways. When we speak of 'streams of information' or 'political currents', we are partly using metaphors: but we are also expressing something real about how things move and change. Information really does flow. Systems of ideas really do run in currents. Traffic really does stream. People moving through crowded station concourses or university quads really do move in flows. The frenetic buying and selling of money in a stock exchange really can on occasions exhibit turbulence. As anthropologist Anna Tsing puts it:

> Imagine an internet system, linking up computer users. Or a rush of immigrants across national borders. Or capi-

> tal investments shuttled to offshore locations. These worldmaking 'flows'… are not just interconnections but also the recarving of channels and the remapping of the possibilities of geography (Tsing 2000: 327).

There have always been flows and currents of one kind or another in human life, and physical traces of these are manifested in artefact assemblages, landscapes and townscapes at different scales of analysis. In referring to global flows on a large spatial scale, Tsing is simultaneously looking at relatively short time-scales. But flows of materials can occur on much smaller spatial scales and much longer time periods too. In his examination of the archaeology of personhood, Chris Fowler examines the 'flows of substances' in gift exchange that can cross the fluid boundaries of persons, and the flows of ancestral substances that may be understood to pass from body to body across generations in mortuary practices (Fowler 2004: 20, 67). Material property can flow as heirlooms through many generations along paths of descent, and even apparently solid material like stone can flow from one building to another over periods of hundreds of years through multiple phases of use, demolition and re-use.

Paths of ancient flows that pulsed through people's lives hundreds or thousands of years ago can be found in the archaeological record. Indeed, it is difficult to make much sense of most archaeological evidence without understanding it at least partly in terms of fluid movements, eddies, currents and flows.

Roads as channels and conduits

Roads are obvious examples of non-water landscape features that are very much to do with flow. In many respects roads behave like rivers, sometimes taking a meandering form that is straightened out from time to time. It is well known that motor traffic on roads today can be analysed and made sense of (and thus controlled) by applying models of flow, which assume that the traffic behaves like a continuous fluid. But such models are

not just relevant to the movements of cars and trucks: flow has been part and parcel of travelling since long before the motor engine was invented.

Consider for example the medieval hollow-ways that streak the hillsides and plains of many parts of Europe (Hindle 2008: 8-17; Muir 2000: 95). Most of these roads have never been constructed as such: rather they have been eroded by flow. In this case it was the flow of people, their animals and carts – not water – that was the primary force in their creation. Yet so similar were they to rivers and streams in their basic form that they often became water conduits too. Water erosion speeded up the hollowing-out process, and made some lanes muddy and impassable. When this happened alternative routes were taken by the people travelling along them, leading in some places to formation of river-like patterns of braided channels, branching and converging. Such features could be said to be half-rivers, half-roads – an intermingling of natural and cultural forces. But actually they are outcomes of much more complex assemblages of material flows (movements of people, animals, soil, dung, wheeled vehicles, goods, rain, wind, channelled water, cultural traditions, and so on), all mixed up together within dynamic processes of landscape change.

Hollow-ways are a type of archaeological feature found throughout the world. Many are still in the process of formation. Wilkinson (2007) compares present-day patterns of cattle trails around villages in Mali and Ivory Coast (West Africa) with tracks radiating out from Near Eastern tell sites of the Early Bronze Age. Not all should be seen as being wholly cultural phenomena; they have been partially shaped by water as well as by human and animal flows, and are thus enmeshed to some extent with local hydrology. Wilkinson gives instances of how hollow ways intercepted flowpaths of water across the landscape. In one example he describes how water was channelled by hollow-ways away from the central tell settlement site by radial paths down into meandering wadis or streams in the surrounding landscape. In another example, hollow-ways bring water and alluvium in towards the settlement from the

surrounding area, creating a curious 'halo' effect around it on aerial photos (Wilkinson 2003: 112; 2007).

All this goes to show the extent to which flowing water is inextricably intermeshed with landscape features that might at first sight appear to have nothing to do with water. But let us leave this aside, and stick to the idea of roads as channels for human flow. Conceiving of roads in this way involves a subtle shift in the way we look at towns and villages. Instead of focusing on solid structures made of brick, stone or mud – the built fabric of a settlement – our attention shifts onto *the spaces in between*, through and along which movement occurs. It also changes our view of structures along the course of roads. Lines of buildings on either side, whatever other purposes they may serve, also function in part as banks or sides, directing traffic flow along a fixed and stabilised course. When a broad town street comes to be infilled with buildings, either through organic growth or as part of a deliberate planning exercise (a common occurrence in medieval and post-medieval towns in Britain), these present an obstacle to flow as surely as weirs or dams in a river. The flow now has to find its way through a network of smaller streets between and around the infilling buildings. The speed of flow may slow down, but the density of flow will increase, as more people try to pass through constricted spaces: flows coming in from different directions may create congestion (as in a crowded market-place) and even, on occasions, turbulence (as in violent political demonstrations). Gateways obstruct and facilitate flows as surely as sluice-gates do. Alleys, arches, tunnels, stairways, corridors and passages are conduits of flow as surely as streams or rivers are.

Of course the flows referred to here are comprised mainly of conscious, thinking, reflecting individuals – taking with them their vehicles, animals, goods, artefacts, etc. – embarked upon specific errands for particular reasons. Unlike running water, people are not restricted by gravity to a single direction of flow; they can move uphill as well as down and in more than one direction at the same time: indeed, look at any crowded stairway and you will see that they often organise themselves into

two streams of traffic heading different ways. This may partly come about just by virtue of each person trying not to bump into anyone else. Yet clearly there are other more subtle influences at work too. Written notice-boards, direction-markers with arrows or other signs on, kerbs, lines marked out on the road, maps, spoken language and gestures from other people – as well as physical channels and barriers – may all have significant effects on movement of persons. Intangible cultural rules and etiquette might also restrict or direct movement along particular lines – as, for example, in a slow-moving flow like a queue (and here it is worth considering contemporary material layouts that are connected with queues – from turnstiles at football stadiums to the zig-zag lanes made from moveable barriers linked by extendable plastic tape, used to form and process flows at airports, banks and post offices).

On the other hand, people are making creative decisions from moment-to-moment about where they want to go, sometimes ignoring rules and resisting popular currents to move against dominant flows. These are the 'wandering lines' or 'efficacious meanderings' of de Certeau (1984: xviii) that undercut the strategic designs of the planners of social space (Ingold 2007: 103). Paul Graves-Brown (2007) describes how contemporary flows are channelled along particular routes through suburban shopping centres, leaving 'non-spaces' in the designed landscape where people are not supposed to walk. But he also points to the informal paths through hedges and flowerbeds transgressing such negatively constituted areas despite the attempts of those in authority to block entry.

> Normally speaking we tacitly accept the many boundaries and non-spaces that are created in the urban landscape, but when the sanction of these boundaries becomes inconvenient we overcome our tendency to conform (Graves-Brown 2007: 80).

Motor traffic is a more regulated kind of movement, yet one in which road signs, flyovers and underpasses, traffic lights, deci-

sions, gears, oil, plans of journeys, tyres, embodied skills, tarmac surfaces, anticipations, changes of mind, and so on, are all mixed up together in a dynamic entanglement of materials, surfaces and ideas. It is the sum total of all these things and processes that produces the collective flows and counter-flows channelled through layouts of towns and villages. By analysing material layouts, something of former patterns of flow – perhaps even the rationales and ideas of the people who planned and controlled them – can be deduced. Something of the experience of people moving through a townscape can be reconstructed.

Flows of people through landscapes can be quite extended in time and space. Consider for example the medieval pilgrimage routes across Europe to Rome and other religious centres. Hundreds of miles long, some of these routes were trodden by pilgrims for well over a thousand years, and are still in use today. The stream of pilgrims not only linked together existing towns and villages; it also stimulated development along the route – providing the rationale for increased trade and commerce, further urban foundation and growth, building of churches and shrines, setting up of hostelries to serve the needs of travellers, and so on. The existence of flows over such broad sweeps of time and space presents opportunities for archaeologists to study landscape as something other than static, solid landform.

In an archaeological study of the Camino de Santiago de Compostela in northern Spain, Julie Candy explores experiences and life-worlds of medieval pilgrims who travelled by foot and pack-animal along the track towards Santiago (Candy 2009; 2005). She argues that the Camino is 'so much more than a line on a map which links dots signifying individual "sites" or landmarks along the way'. Instead the track has a clear directionality to it, which both results from and generates flow. It is envisaged as 'a sequence of places, unfolding through time and space' and 'a succession of experiences: of sights, smells, remembrances and associations that come to mind via the walking body within a dynamic, resonant landscape' (Candy 2005: 4).

This is getting close to the kind of moving perspective that Mark Twain, in piloting a steamboat, took up on the unfolding and shifting shape of the Mississippi. Landscapes that might otherwise be visualised from stationary points of view – as in maps and landscape paintings, for example – look completely different when reconfigured by the flow of the observer's own embodied and situated movement through them. A pilgrim on the Camino passing through the town of Puenta La Reina, at the end of the main street,

> would emerge from the dark, narrow, enclosed space up onto the high six-arched bridge … The sense of space and light on the bridge, in contrast to the gloom, noise, confinement and tunnel effect of the town, marked another transition as the pilgrim continued on his or her way (Candy 2005: 6).

Here it is not so much monuments and sites that are taken to be of the greatest importance, but rather the journey *through* and *past* such places – the transitions between them in the context of a larger movement or flow. In this respect, towns and villages and buildings are understood, not just as places in their own right, but also as landmarks, ports of call, resting-places, half-way houses, refugios, or 'stops' *en route*.

An important part of Candy's method was to walk the Camino herself, in order to get that sense and perspective of an embodied, situated perceiver moving through the landscape or townscape. The approach is partly inspired by the phenomenological method of Christopher Tilley in walking the Dorset Cursus (Tilley 1997). But there are important differences. In the case of the Camino there has been a more or less unbroken if constantly changing tradition of pilgrimage along the route – a continuity of flow – since the medieval period. Tilley, on the other hand, had the more difficult task of envisaging flows that ceased in prehistoric times. The Dorset Cursus, moreover, has largely vanished from the landscape as seen from an embodied perceiver on the ground. It is best seen

on maps and aerial photographs, which Tilley referred to as he walked. Like roads and other channels of movement, the linear form of the Dorset Cursus, with high banks on either side, imparted a direction upon movements and perceptions of embodied individuals traversing the landscape. It was literally a 'conduit of movement' (Tilley 1997: 199).

Tilley's version of phenomenology, while influential, has drawn considerable criticism (Fleming 1999; Brück 2005). Perhaps the most controversial part of his argument is the assumption of a partial correspondence between the experience of a person walking the route today and someone walking it thousands of years ago. This implies, according to Ian Hodder and Scott Hutson (2003: 119), the positing of a 'universal body' that denies the cultural specificity of human experience. Yet this is to slightly miss the point. It is true that there is no such thing as a universal body, for human bodies are socially and politically as well as naturally constituted, and are always historically situated. What Tilley succeeded in doing was to shift the terms of reference for theoretical issues like these, overturning the static viewpoint of much archaeological theory and bringing the flow of movement back into the archaeological perspective itself – *interpreting the landscape from a flowing and moving point of view*.

Many theoretical issues are transformed when they are put in the context of movement, and the question of the universal body is no exception. Even allowing for variously shaped bodies, cultural variations in posture and gait, different historical circumstances, and accepting that walking is a learned, social activity as well as a partly genetically ordained predisposition, the bipedal form of locomotion presents certain possibilities and constraints which to some extent can be regarded as commonalities of human experience. The pull of gravity upon the body when walking uphill, the shift in stance that is necessary when starting to walk downhill, the way it is necessary to lean slightly back rather than forwards so as not to fall headlong down the slope, the changing position of hills on the horizon in relation to the eyes if the head is turned around to view the

landscape from an upright walking stance, and so on – these are all examples of flowing movements that would have been part of walking the Cursus in Neolithic and modern times alike, despite the great changes in the landscape and the very different cultural contexts in which it is perceived and interpreted. Tilley was right to note how material structures in the landscape can channel movement and thereby structure the flow of perception of people (including the archaeologist) moving through.

In her article 'Landscapes on-the-move', Barbara Bender argues that the ways in which people on-the-move engage with landscapes are neglected in landscape studies (see Urry 2007 for the wider point that issues of mobility have been left out of social scientific debate in general). Referring to nomadic tribes in Mongolia and contemporary Roma in Europe, Bender strongly challenges the view that such people are 'dis-located' or 'out-of-place'. On the contrary, they shift the central axes of their worlds every time they move tents or caravans. Far from being unattached, their attachment is to a moving, shifting landscape rather than a static one (Bender 2001). This is not to deny, of course, the very real sense of dislocation that refugees and other displaced persons may feel.

Pastoral nomads may leave little or no trace in the archaeological record, though that is not always the case. Certainly their footprint is lighter than that of sedentary groups, and Wilkinson gives the example of Omani sheep-herders who simply live beneath a convenient tree (Wilkinson 2003: 173). But 'nomad architecture' can be distinctive, with camps containing numerous specialised areas and fixtures in characteristic configurations. In theory it should be possible to reconstruct paths of nomadic groups from the distribution of such material traces across landscapes – by 'following their tracks', as it were.

Even landscapes of those who stay put – such as town-dwellers and sedentary farmers – are also on the move. Bender alludes to contemporary 'forces that pass powerfully through – television, radio, tourists, commodities, armies' (Clifford 1992: 103), not to mention digital, mobile phone and other emerging

technologies. But as we have seen, powerful flows and currents passed through medieval and prehistoric worlds too. Landscapes change, and not just as the result of human action upon it. Changing, flowing landscapes are prime movers and shakers of human life and always have been. By switching our attention from solid and static landforms onto the 'fluxes and flows of materials', as Ingold (2008: 3) entreats us to, we begin to glimpse the 'creative entanglements' of people and landscapes.

Funnels

Landscape flows are bound up with movements of animals as well as people – often both together. Animal husbandry is of central importance to pastoral and nomadic societies, and until industrialisation the same was true of countries like Britain and the United States. Herds of animals were driven short distances between farms and markets on a network of local drove roads, and taken on much longer journeys on larger transhumance routes that crossed vast tracts of countryside. Although patterns of flow varied from place to place, animals were typically taken to upland pastures in summer and brought back down to lowland valleys in winter, often over long distances.

Cattle, sheep and horses are all herd animals by instinct that, when herded together, move in a flowing manner. Somewhat different to the interaction of particles of running water, animals in a herd each respond very quickly to movements of neighbouring animals, giving rise to flow-like patterns. Look at a herd of cattle being driven quickly through a narrow space and you will observe currents moving at different speeds within the overall flux, eddies that form and disappear, currents that spiral or eddy back around the side to rejoin the general flow. Bottlenecks will form as animals try to squeeze through constricted spaces, creating turbulence and waves – as the forelegs of some animals climb up onto the haunches of others – slowing down one current and speeding up others on either side.

Herders (along with the horses they ride, or the sheepdogs to

whom tasks can be reliably delegated) are skilled at manipulating flow in relation to particular sets of material layouts. Many kinds of archaeological structure were designed to enable, channel, contain or obstruct currents and flows of animals. It becomes easier to recognise and interpret such structures when it is realised that control of flow is a primary function. Thus Francis Pryor describes Bronze Age field systems in Eastern England, the central arteries of which were drove-roads feeding into and out of stockyards, fields, or other kinds of enclosures. Funnels formed by curving ditches, hedges and banks on either side were constructed and used by herders to direct animals through gates into corners of fields, and thence through a series of narrow linear pens and paddocks where animal sorting and exchange could take place. These were landscapes of flow, central to the economy and the community. As a sheep farmer as well as a well-known archaeologist, Pryor interprets them not as static structures or layouts, but as embedded material components of dynamic farming and social practices, with animals being moved around the environment in controlled flows and streams (Pryor 1996).

The droveways that Pryor refers to above are little more than 10 to 20 metres wide. In central Italy during the medieval period, however, shepherds and their huge flocks of sheep traversed a network of *tratturi* or drove-roads which had a standard width of 111 metres – these often being situated within even broader linear corridors of land up to 1 kilometre wide. Smaller droveways called *tratturelli*, up to 40 metres broad, linked the main routes. These in turn are linked by still smaller droveways. Every year, great rivers of sheep were taken along *tratturi* to upland pastures in Abruzzo province in summer and brought back to the plains of Puglia in the autumn – a distance each way of several hundred kilometres – leaving behind a veritable archaeology of flow. *Tratturi* boundaries were rigorously measured and marked out to exact specifications (presumably with ditch and bank, though excavations are needed to verify this), testifying to the fact that these flows were tightly managed and controlled.

Such broad linear spaces for flow were more than just tracks and routeways; they were linear pastures, providing grazing as well as passage for the animals. Immense herds traversing the *tratturi* were watered by linking routes in with springs and ponds at key points along the way, with streams specially diverted to create an interweaving pattern of land and water flows. Heavily regulated and under royal control in the Middle Ages (providing the basis for a lucrative wool trade), the transhumance system was still partially in use even in the early twentieth century. Its origins are thought to go back to Roman and prehistoric times (Christie 2008).

Similar systems of broad medieval droveways are known in Spain, where they were called *cañadas* and *cordeles* (Gómez-Pantoja 2004: 94). Britain too had its extensive droving routes and traditions right up to the late post-medieval period. Nothing of the scale and organisation of the *tratturi* and *cañadas* is known, but the former existence of such highly regulated systems is suspected. Landscape configurations of a similar scale are the funnel-shaped greens, commons and linear meadows studied by Susan Oosthuizen (1993, 2002). Still to be found fossilised within patterns of field boundaries today, these were integral parts of early medieval landscapes in Eastern England, though possibly originating much earlier as part of Roman or Iron Age transhumance practices. Whatever their date of origin, the characteristic funnel-shape can be taken to be indicative of flow through the landscape – the flow of animals under human control. Similar funnel-shaped configurations can be found in towns, especially leading in and out of marketplaces or river-crossings, and here it is clearly human as well as animal movement that was, and in many cases still is, being funnelled.

Less formalised trails formed by the movement of animals can be found in many parts of the world. Herds of up to 10.000 Texas Longhorns at a time were driven north from the Red River along the Chisholm Trail to supply beef to Kansas railheads – and from there by train to army posts, Indian reservations and industrial centres throughout the North after

the American Civil War (see the 1948 film *Red River* with John Wayne). The erosion caused by such vast numbers of animals must have seemed to rip the landscape apart. Now mostly erased by later ploughing, the many branches of the trail, and others like it, can still be traced in the landscape, especially in Oklahoma. Here most of the cattle followed the same route north from the Red River, with deeply rutted broad trackways funnelling in to ford streams and rivers at established crossing-points.

A focus on flow brings to light new classes of monuments, or old ones simply not considered significant before. Pounds, shepherds' huts, and sheepfolds are cases in point. Until the landscape artist Andy Goldsworthy started his extraordinary sculptural work on sheepfolds (as illustrated in his 2007 book *Enclosure*) these were the least fashionable of archaeological structures. Yet Oscar Aldred's account of *réttir* of Iceland makes clear the potential of studying human activity and social organisation (not to mention entanglements of humans, animals and environment) through archaeological examination of animal enclosures. *Réttir* are large sheepfolds constructed from stone or turf, but – as Aldred explains – so much more than simply for gathering sheep. In Iceland the term *rétt* means the social occasion of herding animals (a seasonal festivity and assembly of people as well as a farming activity) in addition to the actual material enclosure where the gathering takes place. In other words, these are monuments for the gathering of whole communities. In autumn sheep and horses are herded down from the upland summer pastures and brought into the central enclosure of the *rétt* to be sorted into the relevant stall – each of which belongs to a particular farm. Thus the layout of the *rétt* is both material reflection and reproducer of social organisation (Aldred 2009a, 2009b; Aldred and Madson 2007).

In representing the movement of sheep through the *rétt*, Aldred uses arrows to illustrate direction of flow. In describing the monuments, he draws attention to the funnel-like spaces from outer to inner enclosures, simultaneously enabling and constraining flows of animals. As he puts it:

> Sheep folds are markers of movement in the sense they are places that there is a gravity of movement towards … But they are also makers of movement, through flows that occur through the monuments (Aldred 2009).

Flow always has this double-aspect to it. Its form, density and speed is shaped in part by material channels through which it is directed, but at the same time it in turn shapes those very channels. Rigidly managed and controlled, flow can serve to reproduce social values and practices. Left to itself, however, flow is potentially destructive and will carve out new channels in unpredictable ways (as in a flood, or an animal stampede). For this reason, human and animal flow may be subject to strict regulation by order of law and payment of tolls, as well as by reinforcement of banks, hedges, ditches, fences and other material boundaries that channel and funnel movement.

Many examples of traces of controlled animal flow can be found in prehistoric landscapes too, and in arid as well as temperate parts of the world. Large oval stone enclosures called 'kites' (because of their resemblance to kites when seen from the air by pilots) are distinctive features of the desert in Syria, Jordan, Israel and Saudi Arabia. These have pairs of long antennae-like walls (having the appearance of kite-strings) stretching out across the terrain, often for hundreds of meters – interpreted by Wilkinson (2003: 175-6) as funnels through which great flows of gazelles and other wild migrating animals such as ibex, oryx or onager were herded towards a central kill-zone. Sometimes kites are linked together in complex chains across broad paths of annual migration, often at places where obstacles such as cliff-edges created natural funnels or bottlenecks in the flow of animals, increasing their number and density. In this sense the structures functioned rather like dams built across watercourses, diverting or funnelling the flow of animals into side-channels. In many cases the walls were not high enough to stop animals leaping over, yet succeeded in channelling them because the funnel was constructed so as to always appear as an opening in the walls, at

any given point of the animals' passage through, with the ultimate destination of the killing zone hidden from sight behind ridges until the last moment (Holzer et al. 2010).

The construction and use of such structures appears to extend through thousands of years from recent times back to the pre-Neolithic (Helms and Betts 1987; Fowden 1999). They are evidence not only of animal migration routes, but also of movement of groups of nomadic or semi-nomadic hunters who followed or intercepted the annual movement of animals – that is, of human as well as animal flows (or rather the entanglement of both). As with rivers, these material traces of flow testify to a complex intermeshing of natural and cultural forces over long periods of time.

Crossings and gatherings

Crossings of land-flow paths over water-flows (bridges), or water-flows over land-flow paths (fords/wades) are key locations in landscapes of flow.

The philosopher Martin Heidegger recognised that bridges do more than simply cross a river or make a connection between its two banks. 'The bridge,' he pointed out, 'gathers the earth as landscape around the stream' (Heidegger 1971: 152), reconfiguring the landscape in a new way. As Julian Thomas has shown, Heidegger has much to contribute to archaeological theory (Thomas 1996). But Heidegger is clearly wrong to insist that the gathering location never precedes the bridge. When he says, in that famous phrase, that 'the bridge does not first come to a location and stand in it; rather, a location comes into existence only by virtue of the bridge' (Heidegger 1971: 153), he overlooks the fact that in many cases bridges were built on the location of pre-existing fords.

A ford gathers the landscape around the stream in the same way as a bridge, though in a more fluid, less rigid and less visually imposing manner – requiring little or no investment in infrastructure. Like a bridge, it pulls in tracks and their human and animal traffic from many different directions to cross

the river at that particular point, like so many threads grasped tightly in the hand. Patterns of fields, houses, farms, and so on, come to be configured in relation to the roads that radiate into and out from the crossing-place. In many cases, then, the landscape has been 'gathered', in Heidegger's sense of the word, around that particular crossing-point, long before the bridge was built.

But we have seen that fords can shift and bridges can be destroyed by flood or left high and dry by shifting river courses, bringing about a wrenching and warping of the surrounding landscape as it undergoes – to paraphrase Heidegger – a *re-gathering* around the new crossing-place.

Many archaeological landscapes have been ruptured in this way. In the following example, Biggleswade is a small town of Saxon origin named after the 'wade' or ford across the River Ivel on which it was founded, and around which it developed. But the location of the ford has been forgotten, and the flows of people and animals that once used it forced to seek other routes. Centuries ago the ford was replaced by a new bridge about 1 kilometre to the north of the town, pulling roads towards it away from the old crossing. Paths of movement leading up to the former ford have long since been blocked, their material traces overlaid and hidden by later features.

Looking at the landscape on an Ordnance Survey map today, the River Ivel seems to divide rural landscape from urban townscape. There is no apparent connection between the town and the enigmatic monument on the other side of the river, discovered from aerial photos in the 1930s. Although classified as a ringwork of Norman date, a very shallow archaeology was encountered in the only excavation of the site, with traces of timber and wattle-and-daub structures dated by Saxo-Norman pottery. The curious segmentation of the supposed ringwork ditches – clearly visible on aerial photos but never adequately explained – casts doubt on the accepted interpretation (Edgeworth 2008: 22-3).

Now consider the same landscape following the discovery by Cambridge Archaeological Unit of a broad droveway, thought

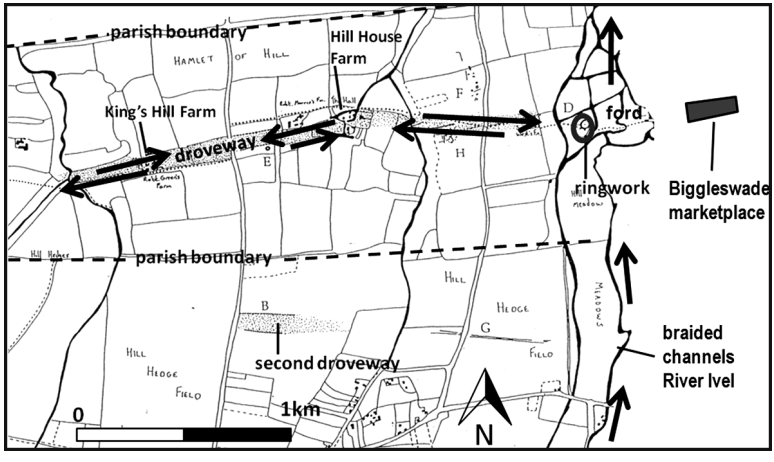

Fig. 5.1. A landscape reconnected: Anglo-Saxon droveway (base map by Mortimer and McFadyen 1999, Fig. 12, reproduced and added to by permission of the Cambridge Archaeological Unit).

to be of Middle to Late Anglo-Saxon date, crossing the valley from west to east (Mortimer and McFadyen 1999: 48-59). The droveway was exceptionally wide, being defined by two parallel ditches 70 metres apart. It ran through an unusual 'corridor' of parallel parish boundaries about 1 kilometre apart, and in this respect is remarkably reminiscent of the landscapes of the *tratturi* or *cañadas*. Not only does the course of the droveway point to the location of the former ford, where it crosses the river, it also provides a connecting path of flow between the town and the ringwork. It goes directly past the ringwork on one side of the river and lines up exactly with the broad funnel-shaped Biggleswade market-place on the other.

The breadth of the droveway indicates the size of herds driven along it and through the ford. It must have been a spectacular and noisy scene when a herd was taken through the braided channels of the Ivel – mud and water splashing everywhere, thin ice splintering, currents making new eddies and whorls as animal bodies entered the stream, steamy clouds of perspiration arising from backs of beasts swimming or wad-

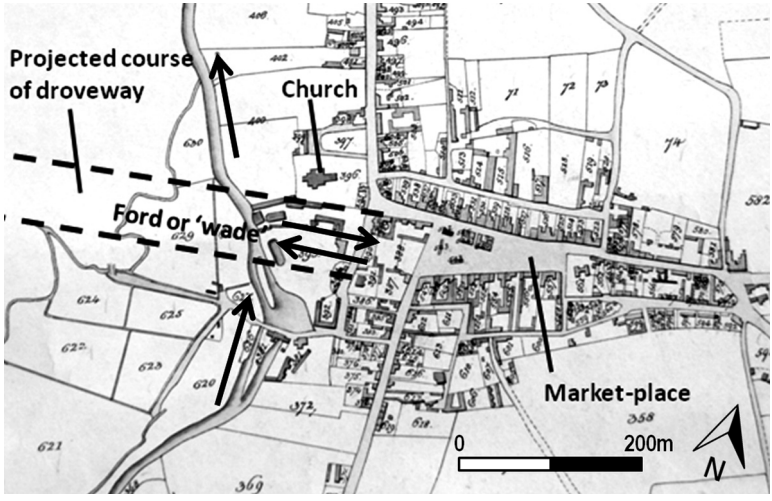

Fig. 5.2. A landscape reconnected: town and market-place (tithe map of Biggleswade 1838 used as base plan, by courtesy of Bedfordshire and Luton Archive and Record Service).

ing across, frosty breath from their nostrils, the calls of herders mixed in with the sounds of excited animals. It was a place of transformation between different states of matter, at the point where land and river flows intermeshed.

Almost every element of the landscape (market-place, town, ford, river, ringwork, parish boundaries, etc.) can now be radically re-interpreted in the light of interconnections with all the other elements. Previously thought to have been the result of late twelfth-century planning, the broad market-place is clearly directly on the line of what appears to be a much earlier linear feature (the droveway/ford). The course of the market-place *is* the course of the droveway. This invites a new theory of the origin and development not only of the market-place but of the town itself. It could be argued that the funnel-like shape of the market-place – the central space around which the layout of the town is based – is itself a structure of flow, at once shaping and shaped by the flowing energies that nourished urban development.

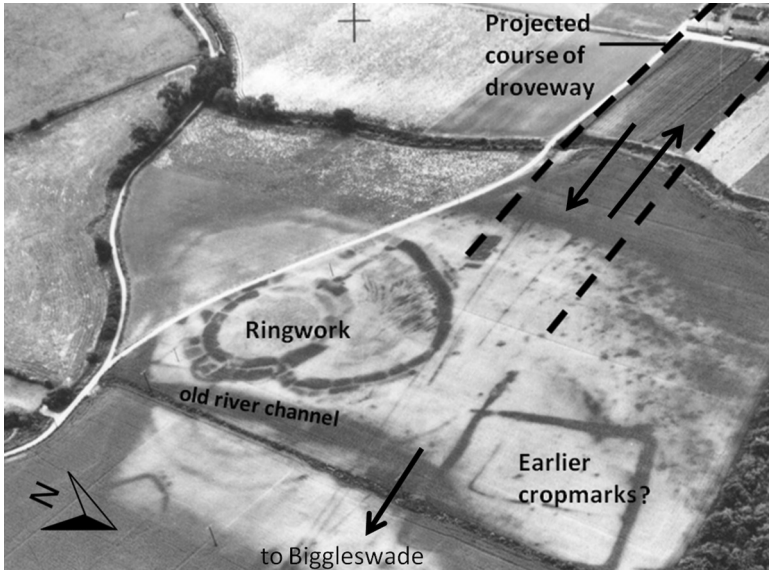

Fig. 5.3. A landscape reconnected: the 'ringwork' (1953 aerial photo, University of Cambridge Collection of Aerial Photography).

The so-called 'ringwork' located on the other side of the river (but formerly on a gravel island between braided channels) is also subject to reinterpretation in the light of the new discovery. It is no longer an isolated monument, separate from the town. It can now be seen to be directly on the route of the broad droveway at the very point where it channelled vast herds of animals across the river. The spiralling vortex-like form of the site brings to mind many other structures associated with flow of one kind or another. The way the spiral arm of the ringwork curves outwards to join the lines of droveway suggests channelling of flow from droveway to ringwork and vice versa. The same curving spiral arm also loops through a former river channel, and it is tempting to suggest that animals were being led through the stream as part of their journey into and out of the site (though excavation would be required to establish whether the different elements were contemporary). Standard

interpretation of the monument as a Norman ringwork disregards completely the unusual segmentation pattern visible in the 'ditches' and other anomalous evidence. An alternative view of the site in terms of its affordances for flow, however, might suggest that such patterns represent structures associated with enclosure, corralling and sorting of animals. The site may not be an exact replica of an Icelandic *rétt*, but could be something very like it in terms of general function – a place for seasonal gathering or assembly of people and animals at the point where land and water flows meet. Whatever the site is, it seems probable that it was connected with control of animal movement along the droveway, through the broad corridor of parish boundaries, into and out of the incipient town.

The case of the ringwork serves as a useful example of the kind of 'gestalt switch' that can be initiated by the perception of landscapes in terms of flowing movement. Look at it first of all as an isolated monument, unconnected to the town on the other side of the river, set within a landscape relatively devoid of flow. Thus conceived, it falls readily into our established system of site classification; we place it in the same category as other castle-like monuments on the basis of superficial surface resemblances, notwithstanding anomalous evidence such as segmentation of ditches. Now look at it again in terms of flow – not just flow of the river but also the flow of large herds of animals channelled along the droveway and through the muddy waters of the ford (a crossing or intermeshing of flows). When seen as part of those currents, the site is re-animated, re-configured, taking on alignments in space in relation to the principal axes of flow (the river and the droveway). Our attention is directed to those extraordinary aspects of the site that were formerly neglected. We begin to see, furthermore, how moving animal and human bodies might themselves acquire an alignment and direction of movement in relation to the physical structure of the site that directs their motion. Meanings that were formerly fixed become fluid once more. Radical reinterpretation becomes possible (for more detailed analysis of this landscape, see Edgeworth 2008).

Summary

This chapter has considered to what extent the artefacts, sites, buildings and layouts of land-based archaeology can be perceived and interpreted in terms of eddies, currents and flows. Many aspects of past human activity, from gift exchange to mortuary practices, movement of people to herding of animals, can be understood in terms of 'flows of substances' or 'flows of materials'. It was noted in particular that material traces of flows of people and animals, in the form of roads and tracks, are intermeshed with those of river flows to some extent. Places where different kinds of flow cross over or merge into each other, such as fords and bridges, are key places in landscapes of flow. Sites and monuments can be interpreted with regard to their affordances for flow. Considerations of flow can potentially transform interpretation of otherwise fragmented and disconnected landscapes.