

THE BOUNDARIES OF MONKS RISBOROUGH

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In 903 the Mercian Witan authorised ealdorman Æthelfrith to replace a lost landbook for East Risborough. The resulting record is here edited and translated; its authenticity is defended, the bounds are identified, and the meaning of 'heathen burial place' in charter bounds is considered. 90 years later the estate was mortgaged: the nature of this transaction is examined, and a genuine memorandum of reconveyance is extracted from a spurious charter.

Before the Reformation, Monks Risborough could claim to be the most highly privileged liberty in Buckinghamshire, almost a regality. As a parish, it was within the exempt jurisdiction of the Archbishop of Canterbury, and with Halton it constituted a deanery outside the diocese of Lincoln [1]. As a manor, it was held by the Prior of Christ Church, Canterbury, and was for many purposes outside the county. Its lord and his tenants owed no suit to the hundred or even the shire courts. If they were fined in the king's courts the fines went to the Prior, who also claimed the chattels of felons and outlaws, and maintained his own gallows [2]. Monks Risborough was 'a Liberty of itself and therefore ye Sheriff of the County ought to have no processes within this Mannor, but only the Bayliffe of the Mannor' [3]. These regalian rights were mostly of 11th century origin [4], but the first step towards creating a privileged jurisdiction had been taken by a king of Mercia some time in the 8th or 9th century. The date and the terms of his charter are unknown, since it was destroyed by fire shortly before 903, when King Edward and the Mercian Witan authorised its replacement and thereby created a new root of title.

The Monks Risborough charter [5], no. 22 (formerly numbered 21) of the Stowe manuscripts in the British Museum, now the British Library, is noteworthy on at least five other accounts. It is among the most characteristic of the somewhat sparse public records of the

reign of Edward the Elder; it illustrates the position of the Crown north of the Thames in the last years of Mercian autonomy; its subsequent movements throw unexpected light on the nature of the Anglo-Saxon mortgage; it is the first Buckinghamshire charter to give fully detailed bounds of the estate concerned; and it provides the first record of the immense and ancient hedge separating the two Risboroughs, to which the method of hedge-dating proposed by Dr. Max Hooper [6] has been applied, with interesting results.

The charter is not a grant of land or privileges in the usual sense; it is a recognition by the King and by the rulers of English Mercia of a landbook for East Risborough which had been lost in a fire which had destroyed all ealdorman Æthelfrith's muniments. He was given permission to rewrite them from memory, and a *cartula* was drawn up confirming that this estate had been validly given by Athulf to his daughter Æthelgyth in hereditary right. The bounds of the estate and the witness list are given on the back of the document in another handwriting; this was not unusual in landbooks until c. 900 [7].

As it stands, this charter has most of the usual features of a solemn royal diploma, though it takes the form of a record of proceedings in the Mercian Council. It is not clear whether Æthelfrith ever attempted to reconstruct the original landbook; later owners of East or Monks Risborough were clearly

satisfied that this official record of what was effectively a legislative act gave them an unquestionable title. This is the first charter in the area soon to become Buckinghamshire to include a detailed boundary clause in the form customary in the much more numerous royal grants of the middle and later years of the 10th century. The bounds of the estate later called Granborough, within the St. Albans liberty, were set out by Offa in 792, but they are particularly simple (two watercourses, a deer-fence and a Roman road) [8]. The vernacular charter of 845 relating to Wotton Underwood, another Canterbury peculiar, defines only the corners of the estate [9]. Thus it seems unlikely that the lost charter, another Mercian grant of roughly the same period, included a dozen *landgemæru*. The bounds of an estate were common knowledge; the land involved lay *iuxta notissimos terminos* [10] round which the grantee and the king's servants could walk or ride with local guidance. The record of such a circuit, and indeed the charter as a whole, were in principle only a supplement to the fading memory of mortal man. The bounds of Monks Risborough were no doubt settled long before 903, but the description in the charter must be taken as relating to their state at or soon after that time.

The Text of the Charter

The text of Stowe 22 has been printed in the collections of Kemble [11] (cited as K), Thorpe [12], Birch [13] (cited as B) and Pierquin [14]. Kemble did not print the boundaries, but they were given in the Museum catalogue of selections from the Stowe MSS [15] in 1883. The charter was included in the Ordnance Survey Facsimiles [16], and Dr. F. G. Parsons [17] published a photographic reproduction with a transcript and commentary in 1936. There is an independent witness to the Latin text; it is almost identical with that of a similar record [18] by which King Edward, at the request of Æthelfrith, confirmed his title to Wrington in Somerset. This is dated 904; the indiction points to 903, but may have been simply copied from the Monks Risborough charter. Close agreement between texts from

two unconnected archives strengthens confidence in both. The Wrington charter was edited by Birch [19] from two 14th-century cartulary copies, and will be cited as W.

Stowe 22 needs hardly any emendation, though a few words are doubtful; the abbreviations can readily be extended, the letters supplied being italicised. The resulting text is as follows. Uncertain readings are in square brackets.

Line

1. Regnante In perpetuum et mundi monar-
chiam gubernante altithroni patris sobole
2. qui cælestia simul et terrena moderatur.
Illiū etenim incarnationis. anno.
dccc^o
3. iii. Indictione vero sexta. Contingit quod
ædelfrido duci omnes hereditarii libri
4. ignis vastatione combusti perierunt; Tali
igitur necessitate cogente predictus
5. dux rogavit eadweardum, ædelredum
quoque et ædelfledam qui tunc prin-
cipatum
6. et potestatem gentis merciorum sub pre-
dicto rege tenuerunt. Omnes etiam sena-
tores merciorum
7. ut ei consentirent et licentiam darent
alios libros rescribendi; Tunc illi una-
nimiter omnes devota mente consenser-
unt ut alii ei libri scriberentur eodem
modo
9. quo et priores scripta erant In quantum
eos memoriter recordari potuisset.
10. Si vero quoslibet recordari minime
potuisset. tunc ei ista kartula in
11. auxilio et adfirmatione fieret. ut nullus
eum contentiose cum aliis libris
12. affligere valuisse. nec propinquus
nec alienus quamvis aliquis homo
aliquem
13. de vetustis libris protulerit quem prius
fraudulenter vel in hora ipsius incen-
14. dii vel alio quolibet tempore per furtum
abstraxisset. Novimus namque quod
omnia
15. quæ in hoc mundo contingere solent
aliquando citius aliquando vero

16. tardius ex memoria mortalium delapsa deveniunt. nisi in scedulis litterarum characteribus adnotantur: Quapropter in hac kartula Innotescere. ratum
17. atque gratum satisque commodum duximus de illa videlicet terra et p̄am easteran
18. hrisan byrge cuius quantitas est .xxx. cassatorum quod eam adulf ædelgyde
19. filiæ suæ cum hereditaria libertate inpropriam ac perpetuam donavit hereditatem:
- (Verso).
21. +Dis synt p̄a land gemæro. Ærest of p̄am garan innan p̄a blacan hegcean. of p̄are hegcean nyper innan pone fulan brōc of dām fulan broce wiþwestan randes
22. æsc þanon on p̄are ealdan dic widwestan p̄a herde wic. of p̄are dic þæt innan.
23. wealdan hrīc on eadrices gemære. andlang eadrices gemære þæt innan cyne-
24. bellinga gemære andlang gemære þæt on icenhylte. andlang icenhylte op þone
25. hædenan byrgels. þanon on cynges stræt. up andlang stræte on welandes
26. stōcc. of þam stocce nyper andlang rrahéges [dæt] on heg leage of dære leage nyper
27. dæt eft on dæne garan.
28. + eadweard rex. + eadelred. + ædelflæd.
29. + [plegm]und archiepiscopus. + wilferd episcopus.
30. + wigmund episcopus. + werferd episcopus. + eadgar episcopus.
31. + wig[hel]m episcopus. + ceolmund episcopus.
32. + ædelweard. + osferd. + ordlaf comes. + ordgar comes. + beorhtulf comes.
33. + ælfwyn. + ædelferd comes. + ælfwold comes. + ædel[m abbas?] + cynelm abbas.
34. + ead[nod] minister. + ælfred minister. + ælfere minister. + eadric minister. + ædelwald minister.

Endorsements
Regnante

adulf dedit eastren risberge. edelgide filie sue.
.latine.

+N° 21.

Stowe Ch. 22

Variant Readings

1. Inperpetuum : in perpetuum B; imperpetuum W.
3. Ethelfritho W.
5. Edwardum W
et Elredum et Ethelfledam W.
6. merciorum: ciorum interlined in MS; Merceorum W
8. consenserunt: concesserunt W.
rescriberentur K.
12. valuisset: voluisset W.
13. vel in hora: in hora B; vel hora W.
16. cedulis W.
17. annotantur W.
18. comodum W.
19. cassatorum: cassatae K; cassatorum B, W. The noun is properly second-declension masculine.
ædelgydæ K, B.
20. ac: ad K, B.
22. wiþwestan: wiþ westan B.
23. widwestan: wid westan B.
27. [dæt]: perhaps [ef]t.
33. ead[nod]: perhaps ead[wig].

Translation

The following translation is offered:

Reigning for ever and governing the monarchy of the world, the offspring of the Father enthroned on high, who at the same time rules (or sets bounds to) things in the heavens and on earth. Since in the 903rd year of His incarnation, and truly in the sixth induction, it happened to ealdorman Æthelfrith that all his hereditary landbooks perished, consumed by the devastation of fire; therefore compelled by so great a necessity the aforesaid ealdorman asked King Edward and also Æthelred and Æthelflæd, who then held dominion and power over the Mercian people under the aforesaid king, and also all the elders of the Mercians, that they should agree and give him permission to rewrite other books. Then they all unanimously with devout mind agreed (or conceded) that other books should be written

in the same way as the former were also written, to the extent that he might have been able to recollect them from memory. Even if he could remember only a little of them, this little charter should then be made for him in assistance and confirmation, so that no one should be disposed to afflict him contentiously with other books; neither should any neighbour or stranger or any other man bring forward anything out of the old charters which he may first have fraudulently abstracted, either at the time of the said fire or at any other time by theft. For indeed we know that all things which happen in this world are wont, sometimes faster, sometimes indeed more slowly, to become lost to the memory of mortal men unless they are noted down in written characters in documents.

Wherefore we have made it known in this little charter validly, acceptably and opportunely enough concerning this land, namely 'at the eastern brushwood-covered hills' (*or* at East Risborough) of which the extent is of 30 hides, that Athulf has given it to Æthelgyth his daughter with hereditary liberty for herself in perpetual inheritance.

+These are the land-boundaries. First, from the gore into (*or* along in) the black hedge. From that hedge downwards into (*or* along in) the foul brook. From the foul brook to the west of the ash-tree on the bank, thence into (*or* in) the old ditch to the west of the herdsman's buildings (*or* dwelling). From that ditch so as to come on to the ridge of (*or* in) the wood on Eadric's boundary. Along Eadric's boundary so as to come on to the boundary of the Kimble-folk. Along (that) boundary so as to come on to Icknield. Along Icknield as far as the heathen burial-place. Thence on the king's street. Up along (that) street to Weland's stock (tree-stump). From that stock downwards beside the roe-deer fence. Then to the hay glade. From that glade downwards so as to come back to the gore.

Notes on the Text and Translation

The Latin is much more straightforward than in later 10th-century charters, of which a fair example is the Olney grant [20], opening

with the same words. In both the invocation of Christ has no main verb.

In the context *moderatur* (line 2) perhaps carries its literal meaning 'sets bounds to'.

The Wrington text has been followed in line 12, and in line 8 it gives a reasonable alternative.

Schedula occurs in Cicero [21] with the sense 'a small leaf of paper' (diminutive of *shedua*) but in line 16 *in scedula* means simply 'in documents'.

Ratum atque gratum in lines 17, 18 looks like a rhyming tag; Cato has *multa beneficia ratisima atque gratissima* [22].

The primary meaning of *commodum* (line 18) is 'just in time' but this is too strong here. In line 19, *Athulf* was taken by Dr. Parsons [23] as a short form of *Æthelfrith*, who in that case would be seeking protection for his daughter's title to East Risborough; but it ought rather to be the contracted form of *Æthelwulf*. In that case Athulf could well be King Edward's maternal uncle, who died in 901, and we might suppose that his daughter *Æthelgyth* had married *Æthelfrith*, or alternatively that *Æthelgyth* was *Æthelfrith's* daughter and had married Athulf's son. Sawyer [24] indexed her as daughter of *Æthelfrith*, *dux*, but did not identify Athulf with *Æthelfrith*. It is possible to read lines 19, 20 in this way, but the endorsement certainly takes *Æthelgyth* as Athulf's daughter. East Risborough was probably a marriage gift to her.

The exact sense of the English text (lines 21-28) is best discussed in connection with the particular bounds.

Some Witnesses of the Charter

Æthelred [25] had been ruler of the Mercians since 883 under King Alfred's overlordship. In 886 Alfred had entrusted him with London, then newly recovered from the Danes, and with adjoining territory which included the Chilterns. About this time he married Alfred's eldest daughter *Æthelflæd* [26]; on his death in 911 she continued to rule as Lady of the Mercians, and played a decisive part in the offensive against the Danes. She

built new fortresses every year; in 917 she captured Derby, and the next year took Leicester without a fight. Only her untimely death in June 918 prevented the submission of York. Her daughter Ælfwyn [27], who appears in this witness list among the *comites*, succeeded her, but in December 919 King Edward carried Ælfwyn off to Wessex and brought all Mercia under his direct rule.

Plegmund, archbishop of Canterbury from 890 to 919, was a West Mercian. A letter from Pope Formosus shows that by 896 he was actively promoting Christianity among the Danish settlers [28]. Wigmund was bishop of Lichfield. Werferth, bishop of Worcester since 873, had translated or paraphrased the *Dialogues* of Gregory the Great for King Alfred – ‘clearly and beautifully’, wrote Asser [29].

Æthelweard was presumably Alfred’s younger son, described by Asser as ‘given over to the pleasures of literary studies’ [30]. Ordulf is described as *princeps* in another contemporary charter of this group, confirming his possession of Stanton St. Bernard [31]. In 900 and 901 he had been involved in complicated exchanges with the Malmesbury community, involving a lease for five lives [32], and with the see of Winchester [33]; most of the land involved was in Wiltshire.

Æthelfrith witnessed his own charter, and among the five thegns was Eadric, whose estate of Waldridge bordered Monks Risborough on the north; he was a thegn of Æthelflæd, who in 916 granted him land at Farnborough in Berkshire, bought from Wulfslaf [34]. Ælfred was probably the reeve of Bath who died in 906 [35].

The Authenticity of the Charter

The full text of the Monks Risborough charter has been available for a century. In 1895 Napier and Stevenson [36] accepted it as original. In 1923 Armitage Robinson [37] declared it at least a contemporary copy. Mawer and Stenton relied on it in *The Place-Names of Buckinghamshire* [38], but considered it an 11th century transcript. F. G. Parsons [39]

identified the estate as Monks Risborough, correcting Birch, who had assigned it to Princes Risborough, but some of his readings were wrong and he did not wholly succeed in elucidating the bounds. In 1955 Sir Frank Stenton [40] pronounced that none of the charters attributable to Edward the Elder was preserved in a text written in or soon after his reign. P. Chaplais [41] also declared the charter not to be contemporary, though perhaps with genuine elements, and in 1968 Professor P. H. Sawyer [42] quoted the judgment of T.A.M. Bishop, who had previously collaborated with Chaplais, that the manuscript was of the 10th century, but not contemporary.

Thus the present weight of opinion seems to point to a date nearer the end of the 10th century than the beginning, even for the Latin text. When Monks Risborough and its charter were temporarily alienated by Canterbury in 994 [43] it would have been natural to make a copy. There is no reason to suppose the Stowe MS. not to be a faithful transcript of the original of 903. Stenton himself clearly accepted this view. The best evidence comes from the Wrington confirmation, which corresponds almost *verbatim* though not *literatim* with the Monks Risborough text. It was obviously convenient to Æthelfrith, and not prejudicial to the Crown, for all his lost muniments to be dealt with at the same time, and two of the resulting diplomas have come down to us. The Wrington charter is preserved only in late copies [44], but its text has a line of descent through Glastonbury quite independent of the Monks Risborough charter. The common source of their Latin texts must surely be a record of the Mercian Council.

This argument cannot of course be applied to the boundary clauses. In place of the conventional ‘Dis synt þa land gemaro’ Wrington has ‘Hii sunt termini prefati ruris a rege recuperati’ which may suggest that there Æthelfrith had to seek the restoration of his land as well as the replacement of his landbook. The bounds which follow in the 14th-century copies are in something approaching Middle English, but such updating was natural and

legitimate. The Monks Risborough bounds are in West Saxon; in particular, *wealdan hrige* has the West Saxon *weald* 'wood' as its first element, although all the later forms of Waldrige have Anglian *wald*.

The conclusion is that the Monks Risborough charter is a 10th-century West Saxon copy of an official Mercian document of 903, which authorised Æthelfrith to reproduce all his lost landbooks from memory. Probably, however, he was content to obtain authenticated copies of the Witan's decision, one for each estate. To each of these a survey of the boundaries was added, then or later, though probably not much later, and this was thereafter regarded as an integral part of the charter. It was noted in 994 that the Monks Risborough bounds were in Saxon script and Saxon idiom.

The one element of a normal landbook which Æthelfrith still lacked was an anathema threatening the wrath of God against anyone infringing the grant. Such a clause was added to complete or reinforce the Wrington charter, and was attributed to Edred (946–955) and the body described as 'totus senatus Anglorum'. It is rather to the credit of the Monks Risborough text that it has no such interpolation.

The Occasion of the Charter

The Monks Risborough and Wrington confirmations do not stand alone. From 900 until the end of 902 King Edward was distracted by the rebellion of his first cousin Æthelwold (son of Alfred's elder brother) who was accepted as king by the pagan Danes of Northumbria and induced the Danes of East Anglia to break the peace, so that they harried all over Mercia and into northern Wessex [45]. Æthelwold was killed at the battle of the Holme, and during 903 Edward could turn his attention to legislation and civil administration.

Of all the successors of Alfred, Edward the Elder was the least inclined to alienate land or grant privileges, either to the Church or to his own ealdormen or thegns, but there were certain claimants whom he could not ignore, among them Asser, bishop of Sherborne, his father's biographer [46], the *familia* of

Malmesbury, a historic centre of learning [47], and the New Minster just consecrated at Winchester [48]. There were also various claims by those whose lands had been ravaged and whose landbooks were lost, stolen, burnt or spoilt [49]. Perhaps the most interesting of the resulting 'reparations' or confirmations relates to Eaton in Oxfordshire [50]. The King, with Æthelred 'dux et dominator Merciorum' and his wife Æthelflæd 'cum testimonio epis coporum et principum aliquorumque senatorum sibi subjectorum', ordered a book to be rewritten for Wigfrith on the same terms as the old, 'id est in perpetuum hereditatem', because the old book had been lost 'quocumque modo'. If it came to light it was to be proscribed and interdicted except in favour of Wigfrith and his heirs. In fact the lost grant [51], made by Burged, king of Mercia, in 864, had been at Worcester all the time; its text is in Heming's Cartulary [52], and underlies a purported grant of the same land to St. Mary, Worcester by Athelstan in 929 [53]. An unexplained survey of the same estate in the Abingdon archives [54] was apparently made in ignorance of the bounds in the Worcester charter [55]. The whole tangled story illustrates the hazards to which estates and their documents of title, even the most solemn royal diplomas, were exposed during the Danish wars, especially as there was no central record of Mercian grants.

Edward seems to have dealt with all outstanding claims for reparation or reward by 904; the West Saxon chroniclers found nothing worthy of mention that year, and the Mercian Register only a lunar eclipse. In 905 or 906 Edward made peace with all the army of East Anglia and Northumbria *æt Yttinga forda* [56]; modern historians call it Tiddington, but its present name is Tiddingtonfoot on the boundary of Buckinghamshire and Bedfordshire, south of Linslade. Some contemporaries thought that Edward made peace *for næde* [57], 'necessitate compulsus' [58]; others, that the peace was made just as he intended [59]. The Danes advanced their border from the Luton-Bedford line, laid down by the treaty

between Alfred and Guthrum (c. 886) [60] to the river Ouzel, where the new treaty was made, and which soon became a county boundary. On the other hand, it is clear that thereafter Englishmen could buy land in the Danish territory from which the earlier treaty had excluded them, and that Edward and Æthelred encouraged or ordered some of their more trustworthy thegns to do so [61]. It seems likely that Danes were similarly permitted to settle in English Mercia; Ulfr who gave his name to Owlswick in Monks Risborough may well have been among them, and there was considerable Danish settlement in the central Chilterns.

Edward issued a few landbooks in 909 [62], and then no more. In that year the Danes broke the peace and Edward and his sister, the Lady of the Mercians, embarked on the reconquest of the Danelaw, for which they needed all their resources. On Æthelred's death in 911 Edward succeeded to London and Oxford and all the lands belonging to them [63], so that when in 914 he fortified Buckingham he could create what became a new county to support it. He died in 924; Athelstan's accession opened the floodgates of royal bounty and necessitated the creation of a writing-office, where his new clerks composed pompous charters in the worst traditions of Malmesbury Latinity.

The Identification of the Bounds

The charter bounds of Monks Risborough are in the repetitive form 'First, from A to B; from B to C; ... from Z back to A', though with some additional particulars on the way. The whole boundary is divided into eleven sections. Of these, two are defined by reference to the boundaries of neighbouring estates (one is further described as on a wooded ridge), two by highways, and others by a great hedge, a muddy brook, an old ditch and a deer-fence, while two are described simply as *nyper*, 'downwards', and in the remoter woodland areas there is some lack of definition. In addition to the linear features, there are three landmarks on the boundary, a gore, a heathen

burial place and a tree-stump with cultic associations. The boundary is said to pass to the west of an ash-tree by the brook and an outlying group of herdsman's buildings.

(1) *ærest of þam garan innan þa blacan hegcean*

(First, from the gore into (or along in) the black hedge)

In the *Liber de Hyda*, which gives Middle English and Latin translations of the boundary clauses of New Minster charters, *ærest* is rendered 'Begyn fyrst' or 'Imprimis incipe', with an actual procession in mind. If the estate became a parish, such a ceremony would take place at Rogationtide; but Monks Risborough church is dedicated in honour of St. Dunstan and was presumably not in existence in 903.

The starting-point is as far as possible from the village centre; as at Wotton Underwood and Olney, it is at the southernmost point of the estate (grid reference 846 997). The gore is a spear-shaped (*gār* 'spear, javelin') or acute-angled corner where Monks Risborough projects into the valley of North Dean. The triple boundary of Monks Risborough, Hughenden and Princes Risborough is about 60 yards to the north-west, and Princes Risborough parish has a more pronounced gore at this point. Five roads or tracks converge here, coming respectively from Great Hampden, Bryant's Bottom, Hughenden via North Dean, Speen and Princes Risborough; a fit location for a *mearcgemot* on the hundred boundary.

One might have expected 'ærest on þone garan; of þam garan innan...' to indicate that the party assembled at the starting-place and then set out. There was however no convention on the point, though the Wrinton bounds begin in this way: 'Erest on preosteselwe, of preoste selwyn on wrythewey ...' The Monks Risborough text suggests an immediate start.

From the gore the boundary follows the edge of College Plantation and Monkton Wood until it slants into Lily Bottom at Iron-beech Kiln (831 015). At this point it crosses

Grim's Ditch (Grimsdyke) almost at right angles, but as usual that earthwork is ignored by parish and estate boundaries. At 828 019 the boundary divides the hamlet of Parslow's Hillock, a name almost certainly derived from *hill-work* [64], a Chiltern term for rights exercised by the Icknield villages in certain woodlands which provided timber for building and wood for fencing and firewood. The Hillock Wood of Monks Risborough, like the *timber slæd* of Radenore [65], is near the escarpment, thus avoiding a long haul up the dip-slope. The Monks Risborough custumal provides that 'the Homestall though all ye Land be sold from it shall yet have common for a yard Land and the Hellworth' [66].

The words *innan þa blacan hegcean* mean that the boundary runs first into the Black Hedge and then in it; they do not indicate how far south the hedge extended in 903. Where the boundary was originally marked out through heath, scrub or woodland, it would have taken the form of a fence or ditch. From Parslow's Hillock north-north-east the present hedge is obviously old. On the right it is separated from Hillock Wood by a ditch and a bridlepath. On the left there was until recently a field which has now been planted with larch. The Natural History Section of the Bucks Archaeological Society made a careful survey of 480 yards of this part of the hedge; their results, given in an Appendix, point to a late 10th or 11th century date for its planting. In view of the uncertainty attaching to the regression equation used, the results are not formally inconsistent with the charter date, but they suggest that this section may have been planted appreciably later. As the bank is on the Princes Risborough side of the ditch, it was presumably constructed by that estate, not as a joint enterprise. Further, this was clearly a hawthorn rather than a blackthorn hedge. On balance it seems unlikely that it was part of the Black Hedge in 903.

At 828 023 the boundary hedge turns sharp left and runs downhill to the base of Windsor Hill at 826 025. This last section of the hedge

has been completely grubbed, and the hedgebank and ditch are overgrown with nettles, brambles and raspberries. The boundary climbs through woodlands of fairly recent origin over the shoulder of Windsor Hill in a number of short straight alignments; the ditch, which formerly bounded a Monks Risborough common, is still traceable, but the hedge is gone, though there are some very old hawthorns on its line.

From near the northern foot of Windsor Hill the hedge is, and must always have been, a well-marked feature in the landscape, and from this point northwards it has been fully surveyed. From 825 029 to 822 030 the hedge is aligned with great precision on the summit of Risborough Cop; it runs straight across a dry combe, with the arable of Princes Risborough on the left and grassland on the right. The species count points to a late 9th or 10th century origin for this section, and is quite consistent with its having existed at the charter date, though it would then have been new; but where the hedge reaches the 600 ft. contour it curves to the right and continues at or near that level as far as the col, where it rises to cross the escarpment between Risborough Cop and Brush Hill, the *hrisenan beorgas*. It might be expected that a very old Anglo-Saxon boundary hedge would follow the contour of the land; in contrast, artificially straight alignments would suggest either a later or an earlier date for the boundary, which might well antedate the hedge along it.

The species count for this part of the hedge places it in the 8th century. The difference of about 200 years between its date and that of the straight stretch further back is better determined than the absolute age of either, since any error arising from the application of the Hooper formula to local conditions would affect both similarly.

This ancient hedge has the appearance of never having been cut or trimmed; in places it is nearly 30 feet wide, and looks like a belt of high scrubwood, with a few well-grown trees.

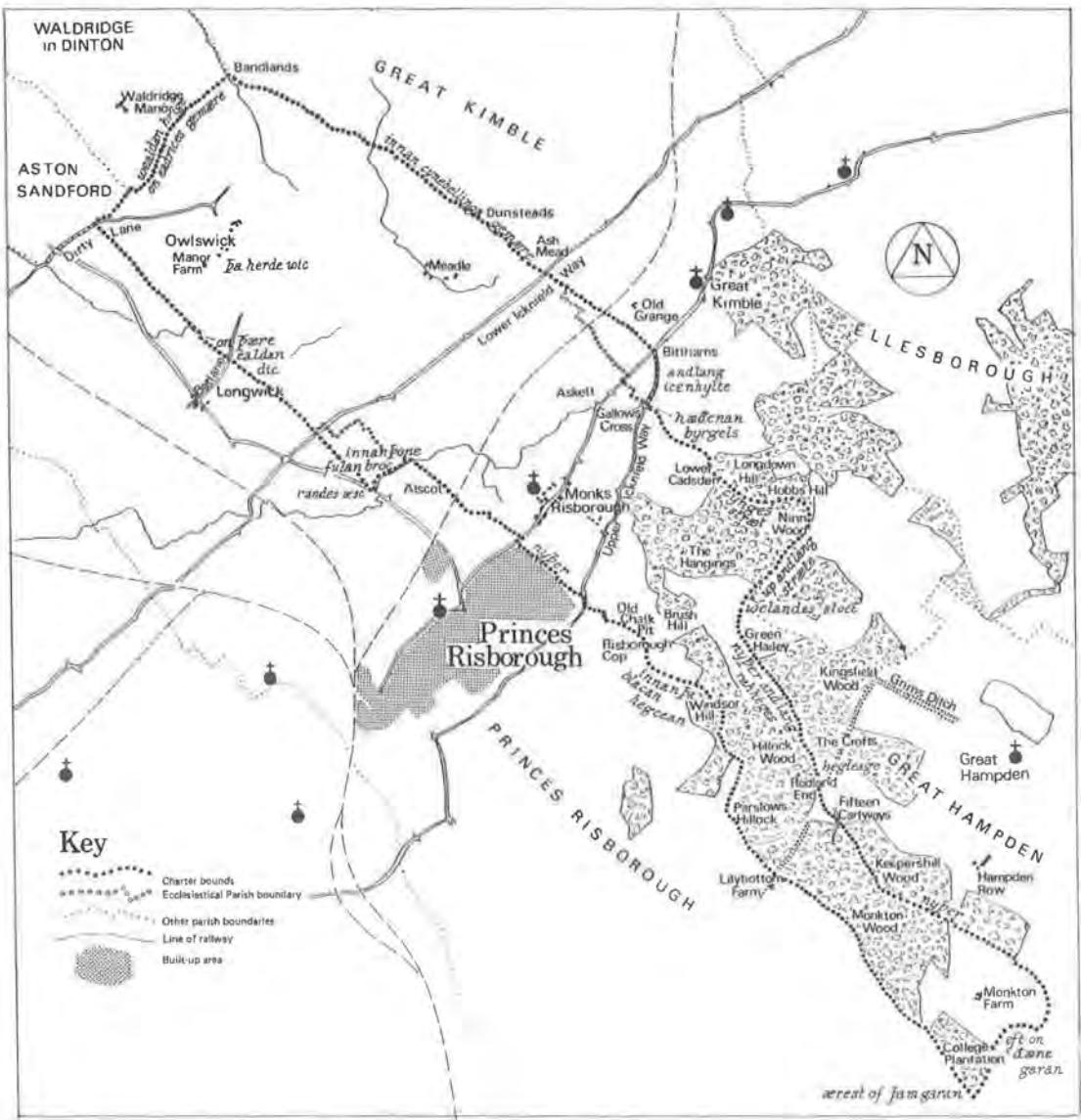


Fig. 1 The Boundaries of Monks Risborough

On closer inspection it appears to be a double hedge with a central ditch, in some places well defined. Probably the lords of East and West Risborough joined in constructing a double dyke (*twifealda dic*) along part of their common boundary behind the scarp, in the way described and illustrated by W. G. Hoskins [67]. Later this was extended southwards as land was cleared for cultivation. Ine's legislation of 688–694 on cattle trespass [68], which would have applied to this area in the early 8th century, would supply a sufficient motive for this undertaking.

From Windsor Hill to the escarpment the hedge originally planted appears to have been of blackthorn, accounting for its name, and in part also for its width, as the suckers would rapidly encroach on the field. Blackthorn makes a strong and durable hedge, but is less satisfactory than the common hawthorn. It was perhaps chosen because the sloes make a drink and medicine, and the bark can be used for tanning. Further, it was a holy and ominous plant in the Midlands; in some parishes the ashes of a crown of blackthorn, burnt in the open field, were annually scattered over the lands [69].

The Black Hedge crosses the col at 820 033 and passes through an area of small chalk pits. By the custom of Monks Risborough 'the Tenants may take Chalk and Clay for their necessary uses from ye hills' [70]. The hedge then runs through the brushwood (*hris*) which gave the Risboroughs their name before plunging down the hillside towards the Icknield Way. This part of the hedge gives a score in good agreement with the contour section, indicating an 8th century date, but when the hedge enters the arable the count at once decreases, several species fall out and the estimated date is in the 11th or 12th century. The next bound provides an explanation.

(2) *of þære hegcean nyþer innan þone fulan brōc*
(From that hedge downwards into (or along in) the foul brook).

At the charter date, the Black Hedge ended somewhere on the hillside, apparently at about 818 034. The boundary then runs down through the arable to the Upper Icknield Way at 816 035, northwards along it for about 100 yards, then still downwards into the Vale until it reaches the brook at 805 046, and then downstream. It is probable that the area was cultivated in the settlement period, and indeed long before, and that even when the Risboroughs were separated there was no permanent hedge. North of the railway there is a double hedge with a central ditch for about 120 yards (807 043); after that the ditch runs on the west side, leaving the hawthorn hedge in Monks Risborough. The species count points to an age of four or five centuries for the double hedge; the presence of field maple is consistent with this. In the next field the parish boundary leaves the present hedge and crosses the bridle road from Askett to Alscot before reaching the brook; when visited, its line could be distinguished by a slight difference in the herbage. The boundary then turns downstream, so that *nyþer* remains correct. The two parishes share the brook, so that *innan* is applicable. The 'foul brook' is a tributary of the Thame, British *Tama* 'dark', in contrast to the chalk streams whose clarity gave name to the British Wendover and the English Shirburn.

(3) *of ðam fulan broce wipwestan randes æsc*
(From the foul brook to the west of the ash-tree on the bank)

The translation follows Bosworth (s.v. *rand*) [71] who however added a query; but *wipwestan* occurs in the sense required in King Alfred's translation of Orosius: [72] *ponne wipwestan Alexandria pære byrig Asia and Affrica togædere licged*.

Rand occurs in several Germanic languages with the sense 'border, edge, brink' which is required here (with genitival construction) though in Old English the usual meaning is 'shield'. The brook is flowing southwest, and the sense is that the boundary turns rightwards away from the stream when it has passed an

ash-tree on the bank. The ash must have been distinctive, and that tree occurs only once in the hedge surveyed in (2) to the north of the railway. A report to the Board of Agriculture in 1813 states that the ash does not flourish below the Icknield Way.

The modern boundary of Monks Risborough leaves the brook after less than 100 yards and traverses Cross Field with six right-angled turns (two of them apparently occasioned by a single selion) before it reaches the Lower Icknield Way. Lipscomb's map shows eight such turns. At some stage the parish boundary appears to have been changed, perhaps more than once, to conform to changes in ownership. It seems likely that the charter bounds ran downstream as far as the Risborough-Thame road, leaving Alscot (Ælfsige's cottages) in Princes Risborough. The suggested site for the ash-tree is at the west corner of the grounds of Alscot Lodge, on the north-west bank of the stream.

(4) *panon on pære ealdan dīc widwestan pa herde wic*

(Thence into (or in) the old ditch to the west of the herdsman's buildings).

There is a depression in the field running north-west from the site suggested for *randas æsc* (801 044) heading for the point where the modern parish boundary reaches the Lower Icknield Way (797 048). This is surely the line of the 'old ditch'; perhaps it was already silting up. In the field north of the Way the boundary follows a very slight depression on the same alignment. *Dīc* is here feminine, probably because it is a negative feature; a ditch, not a dyke, in agreement with Kemble's suggestion that this is a case of natural gender [73].

From 797 048 the boundary continues north-west until it meets a greenway, now called Dirty Lane, at 780 064. The line has the gentle curvature to be expected in an early boundary, and it is respected by the hedges on either side. Its dominance is now more apparent on the map or from the air than on the ground. The parish boundary, still separating

the two Risboroughs, crosses from one side of the present hedge to the other no fewer than seven times, implying that different sections of the boundary were hedged by owners or farmers on alternate sides, no doubt at different periods, much later than the date of the charter. A 300-yard stretch north of Bar Lane (the Longwick-Owlswick road) has been surveyed, as far as a blackthorn thicket; it appears to be of 14th or 15th century date. For part of this distance the ditch has been restored and is flowing.

The translation 'herdsman's buildings' assumes that *wic* is a neuter plural, as is usual, but it could be taken as feminine accusative singular, with the sense 'dwelling, quarters'; evidently it was so taken c. 1210, when Henry de la Wike [74] was a subtenant here. The name of his co-tenant Thomas Berewike suggests another form which the name might have assumed. *Herde wic* is a description rather than a formal place-name; it should have developed to *Hardwick, but instead it was replaced by Owlswick. Probably Owlswick Manor Farm on slightly rising ground at 788 061 occupies the original site. The first element is the Scandinavian personal name Ulfr; determined efforts to anglicise this to Wulf were finally unsuccessful. Danish settlement in central Buckinghamshire would not have been permissible in 903; under the treaty between Alfred and Guthrum no one, slave or free, was to go without permission into the army of the Danes, 'any more than any of theirs to us', and traffic in cattle or goods was permitted only if hostages were given. The treaty was 'for the living and those yet unborn', but it lasted less than a generation, and after the peace of Tiddingford the Danelaw boundary was no longer an iron curtain.

Owlswick became a separate manor, held by military sub-tenants after the Conquest, but until copyholds were finally enfranchised in 1925 those in Owlswick were subject to fines payable to the lord of Monks Risborough [75], then the Earl of Buckinghamshire as successor to the monks of Christ Church, Canterbury.

(5) *of þære dic p(aet) innan wealdan hrige on eadrices gemære*

(From that ditch so as to come on to the ridge of (or in) the wood on Eadric's boundary)

Pæt innan is taken as 'so as (to come, arrive) on to', the verb being understood; 'then, after that' would be possible, but the topography suggests a sense of purpose. The line of the old ditch continues north-west and ultimately becomes the main street of Aston Sandford, but at 780 064, the triple junction of the two Risboroughs with that parish, the Monks Risborough boundary turns across Dirty Lane (which separates Aston Sandford from Princes Risborough) and heads for the wooded ridge; probably no definition on the ground was needed, or was found practicable.

At 783 067 the boundary comes on to the ridge and meets the boundary of Eadric's estate of Waldridge. The rise is only some 35 feet, but in the Vale of Aylesbury this is noticeable enough, and the ridge is still marked by a line of trees. As J. M. Kemble justly said [76],

...the distinctions between even the slightest differences in the face of the country are marked with a richness and accuracy of language which will surprise all those who have not noticed a similar phenomenon in the remote provinces of England.

The identification with Waldridge is certain; as noted above, this is the only form with West Saxon *weald* instead of Anglian *wald*, but possibly the scribe or the copyist may have normalised the name, just as Kemble himself sometimes silently corrected his texts.

(6) *andlang eadrices gemære p(aet) innan cynebellingsa gemære*

(Along Eadric's boundary so as to come on to the boundary of the Kimble-folk).

Eadric was among the thegns who witnessed the charter. His *gemære* was the south-eastern boundary of the manor and township of Waldridge in the parish of Dinton. One would have expected *andlang gemæres* with the

genitive, but *andlang* occasionally takes the accusative. In this charter both cases occur, and perhaps a distinction was intended. When one is going along the boundary, or along a way which constitutes the boundary, we have the accusative; when the boundary runs by the side of a linear feature, we have the genitive. The shade of difference can still be expressed in dialect by 'along' and 'along of'.

The triple boundary of Waldridge, Great Kimble and Monks Risborough is at Bandlands (790 075), the northernmost point of Monks Risborough, where the Risborough boundary crosses the brook which separates Waldridge from Kimble. Adjoining fields are called the Gores, and this point was wrongly taken by F. G. Parsons [77] as the gore where the bounds begin, though this corner is not an acute angle.

The distinction between the boundary of an individual, Eadric, and that of a community, the *Cynebellings* or people of Kimble, probably means that Waldridge Manor was a single farm, as it is today, after having grown into a hamlet and decayed [78], while in contrast the Kimble land was already in common-field cultivation. The addition of *-ingas* to the name of the village implies that the inhabitants could be regarded as having a quasi-corporate identity.

Kimble was an important Romano-British estate centred on a major villa [79], and W. de G. Birch [80] commented "The patronymic name is evidently to be referred to Cynebeline or Cunobelene, the British king who tradition asserts was buried at Kimble". The tradition connecting this district with 'radiant Cymbeline' who once ruled it was upheld by Morley Davies [81] on the basis of this charter ('we can scarcely doubt that tradition is right'). Ekwall [82], however, derived the name from *cyne* 'royal' and *belle* 'bell-shaped hill', though the applicability of these elements is not obvious. The personal name Cunobelinos was revived in the 5th century [83], but the British language was rapidly breaking down into

Primitive Welsh under social stress, and by the end of that century the name would have become Cynfelyn [84]. There must have been a bilingual population in the Icknield belt – the name Wendover, 'clear streams', correctly transferred to English as a plural, is evidence of this [85] – and if this mixing antedated the lenition of British *b*, perhaps the traditional derivation is not absolutely discredited; English settlers may have seized on a local name to which they could give a meaning in their own tongue.

(7) *andlang gemære p(æt) on icenhylte*

(Along (that) boundary so as to come on to Icknield).

The Kimble-Risborough boundary can be taken as that of two great Romanised estates, but it need not then, or indeed in 903, have taken the form of a hedge or ditch; in the context, *gemære* may suggest that it did not. At present it is hedged throughout, but for much of its length by modern hawthorn hedges which do not warrant survey. A full count has however been taken between Further Kimblewick and Dunstead, a field close to Meadle, and one 210-yard stretch appears to be of 12th or 13th century date. The parish boundary repeatedly changes sides, and Lipscomb's map recognises and conventionally exaggerates this feature.

The boundary crosses the Lower Icknield Way at right angles at Ash Mead. The modern boundary then begins a stepped course to the right, with ten right-angled bends before reaching the Upper Icknield Way, the *icenhylte* of the charter. Such a boundary, determined by furlongs and selions in the open fields, can hardly be primitive, and F. G. Parsons [86] pointed out that the direct line is continued by two ponds and a hedge bank southwest of the Old Grange until it meets the Upper Icknield Way at the road junction by Bitthams Cottage at 822 055. This suggestion commended itself to the writer but was not followed by Dr. Reed [87].

The form *icenhylte* may be compared with

those in the Hardwell (Compton Beauchamp) charter of 904, another of the same group: *to Icenhilde wege, on Icenhilde weg* [88]. The name is not translated; it was probably as opaque in the 10th century as it is in the 20th.

(8) *andlang icenhylte op pone hædenan byrgels*

(Along Icknield as far as the heathen burial-place).

The Icknield Way was one of the great highways of England. It runs just above the spring-line, providing a route between the Upper Thames and East Anglia which was passable in all seasons, and traversing an area which was closely settled; for much of its length there is a village every mile or so. The charter boundary as here interpreted runs along the Way for 500 yards; the modern boundary follows it for less than 40 yards, which would not justify *andlang*.

In the past it seems to have been generally accepted that heathen burial-places were Anglo-Saxon graves of a time before the Conversion, and Sawyer [89] accordingly comments:

Many small estates also appear to have had very old boundaries even though they are first mentioned in the tenth century or later. This is shown partly by the use of heathen burials as boundary marks in charters. Whether the burials were deliberately made on existing boundaries or were later chosen as boundary marks, these references certainly show that the boundaries existed at a time when the heathen burials, most of which have disappeared without trace, were remembered or marked in some way.

This presupposes that scores of pagan burial sites, of the 7th century at latest, were still recalled as such in the 10th century but were then almost completely lost. In fact heathen burial was the fate of anyone who died unbaptised or out of the communion of the Church. A child

in danger of death was to be baptized at once 'that it die not heathen' (*dæt hit ne swelte hæden*) [90]. Many of the heathen burial-places which so often occur in the descriptions of boundaries are stated to be on ways of various kinds, and many are in or on streams, ditches or sikes. Three texts appear to be decisive:

Sawyer 744 (Up Piddle, Dorset, 966: 15th cent. copy):

on þane hapene berielese on midde þane punfold; of þanne punfold, on pidelen stremme.....

A burial place in the middle of a pinfold or pound must surely have been intended as a mark of disgrace.

Sawyer 820 (Crondall, Hants, 973: 12th cent. copy):

swa on done hædenan byrgels, ðonan west on ða mearce þær ælfstan lid on hædenan byrgels.

Ælfstan is likely to have been a 10th-century Englishman who died excommunicated or by suicide: a pagan who died three or four centuries earlier would not have been thus remembered.

Sawyer 1588 (Wanborough, Wilts: 12th cent. copy) provides an almost exact parallel to the Monks Risborough situation: ... up on icenhilde weg, on þæne hædenan byriels; of icenhilde wege innan pa cwealm stowe.

Those who died at the place of execution (*cwealm* is death or torment) would be buried in the Icknield Way nearby.

The heathen burial-place on the bounds of Monks Risborough is located at Gallows Cross (821 050) where the Cadsden road, formerly Gallows Lane, crosses the Icknield Way. Such a site could be ancient: Woden would have been involved in his capacities of guardian of good rule, of highways and of boundaries, and as god of the slain. Alternatively, the heathen burial could have been more recent. It was often a matter of concern whether someone

whose death was doubtful should have Christian burial – the alternative being heathen burial. In 995 Æthelwig, reeve of Buckingham, allowed Christian burial to two brothers killed in a fight after one of their men had stolen a bridle. Ealdorman Leofsige complained to King Ethelred that such men were wrongfully buried among Christians; but the King was unwilling to trouble his reeve and allowed the buried men to rest [91]. Had Æthelwig been less dear to him, or Leofsige less obnoxious, we might have had another *hædenan byrgels* on the boundary of Ardley.

(9) *þanon on cynges stræt*

(Thence on the king's street)

The king's street is the Cadsden road, Gallows Lane, even though this sunken lane shows no sign of ever having been a metalled road of Roman origin, which is the usual meaning of *stræt*. Like the Icknield Way in (8), it is shared by Risborough and Kimble. Its course is determined by the valley bottom. *Cynges stræt* may mean no more than 'public road', the king's highway in a general sense, but a more specific meaning is suggested in (10).

(10) *up andlang stræte on welandæs stöcc*
(up along (that) street to Weland's stock (tree-stump, stake))

At Lower Cadsden (826 045) the boundary leaves the road over Longdown Hill and enters a deep combe, with Nin Wood to the south and Hobbs Hill or Kimble Hill to the north. This section of the *stræt* is called the Killingden or Killington Track (Kulendene in a deed of 1249–64) [92]. It almost meets the head of the Hampden valley, and provided a route across the escarpment at just over 600 ft., thus saving 100 ft. vertically compared with the present road; but this was not its main purpose. It swings to the right in Nin Wood and climbs The Hangings to a notable viewpoint and meeting-place at a height of 800 feet.

The boundary approaches Weland's Stock uphill and leaves it downhill, so that it must be at or very near 828 035, the triple boundary of Monks Risborough, Great Kimble and Great

Hampden, and the junction of five trackways. Until recently it was marked by a radio mast, no doubt erected here because the site overlooks the Hampden valley as well as the Vale of Aylesbury. Its choice as a cultic site would have been equally natural. Just to the east is a small horseshoe-shaped pond. Weland the Smith was the brother of Ægil, the sun-archer, whose name was regarded by J. R. Green [93] as the first element in Aylesbury. It is suggested that the 7th-century rulers of the *Cilternsæte* claimed descent not from the high gods but from one or other of these demigods, and that the king's street was the route from their *burh* at Aylesbury to this centre of their worship. Its name would have arisen after the capture of Aylesbury in 571 but before the Conversion some eighty years later. This is the only evidence for pagan worship in the Chilterns. It suggests that although the *subreguli* who continued to govern the *Cilternsæte* under the Mercian hegemony did not claim to be Woden-born, they could assert a descent sufficiently divine to make them kings. Weedon (Weodune in 1066) [94] must have been a centre of heathendom much nearer to Aylesbury, but it could not compete with this high place as the site for a sacred pillar.

(11) *of þam stocce nyþer andlang rahhéges*
(From that stock downwards beside the roe-deer fence)

The descent from Weland's Stock is only slight. A bridleway accompanies the boundary on the Risborough side as far as 829 031. The deer were in what became King's Field, now Kingsfield Wood. The Hampden estate has not been in the hands of the Crown since before the Conquest, but a 10th-century royal deer-park here is not unlikely, and the Hampden family themselves have never claimed an earlier date than 1043. Statements in a 16th century pedigree roll may go back to a lost writ of that date [95].

The compound *rah-hege* occurs often enough in the landbooks to rank as a common noun, 'deer-fence' rather than 'deer-hedge',

Ra(h) 'roe-deer' is always combined with the masculine *hege*, not the feminine *hecg*. In this charter the forms and genders are correctly distinguished.

360 yards of the present hedge have been surveyed, up to the point where it is lost in the wood, and the species count points to an 11th or 12th century date. The results are not wholly satisfactory, because parts of the hedge have been mutilated where it backs on to gardens, and part is overhung by mature trees, but on balance it seems likely that the hedge does not go back to 903, though the bank and ditch are older. The deer-fence is not itself the boundary, but runs close to it. It is tentatively suggested that in this charter *andlang* with the genitive should be translated 'beside', but that when it takes the accusative it means 'along'. The dictionaries recognise both meanings.

According to the *Rectitudines Singularum Personarum* [96], written shortly before the Conquest, thegns on some estates were responsible on the King's order for services connected with a deer-fence, but this would not have applied in Monks Risborough, at least after the charter of 994. In any case the hedge is definitely on the Hampden side, and if it existed then the geneats of that estate would have been required to maintain it.

(12) *[dæ]t on heg leage*
(Then to the hay glade)

The doubtful word could be *eft* 'afterwards'. The identification with Green Hailey is almost certain, but that name relates to a scattered hamlet. Most of the present cottages adjoin the deer-fence as did Green Hailey Common on which they were built, but *dæt* or *eft* implies that the original *leah* was further along the boundary. The Tithe Award shows a group of nine parcels of land described as crofts at 833 027, straddling the parish boundary, just where the hedge which now represents the deer-fence meets the road from Monks Risborough to High Wycombe. The site of these crofts is shown as a clearing in the woods on the 1922 six-inch map; it

has since been reafforested.

Heg is 'hay' but can also mean grass (for mowing) and the epithet 'green' may reinforce this. Matthew vi. 39 is translated 'Da be-bead se Hælend dæt dæt folc sæte ofer dæt grene hig'. The name indicates land which had been cleared for meadow rather than pasture.

(13) *of dære leage nyþer dæt eft on dæne garan*

(From that glade downwards so as to come back again to the gore)

Once the bounds re-enter the Chiltern woodlands they cease to be detailed, but 'downwards' is a sufficient direction for the next two miles. The Hailey crofts are just at the head of a dry valley which the boundary follows through Redland End (dividing that hamlet) to the road junction at 835 019 called Fifteen Cartways (only eight meet there now), down the road between Keepershill Wood and Monkton Wood and still downwards below Hampden Coppice to the triple junction of Monks Risborough, Great Hampden and Hughenden at 852 004. The deepening valley now becomes Bryants Bottom, and the boundary swerves out of it to the right in order to reach its starting-point. As *nyþer* is at the end of the line, a stop to improve the sense may be warranted; the translation would then be 'From that glade, downwards; after that, back again to the gore'. This would give a distinct mention of the last section, but not a description. Modern Rogationtide practice at Waddesdon suggests that even after a day's march the leading participants would break into a trot for the last few hundred yards.

The Vicissitudes of the Charter

Much the most likely time for the gift of Monks Risborough to the see of Canterbury was during Edgar's reign, and the dedication of the church may suggest that some acknowledgement was due to St. Dunstan. Eadgifu, Edward the Elder's widow, survived into Edgar's time; a vague tradition connects her with Halton, and the two manors may have come into the hands of Christ Church at the

same time. As Monks Risborough's status as bookland had been acknowledged, it could be transferred to the Church without special permission, and certainly by 994 the estate with its charter was in the hands of Sigeric, Archbishop of Canterbury. In that year a heathen army under Olaf Tryggvason, who aspired to the throne of Norway, and Swegen, son of Harold, king of Denmark, was repulsed from London on 8 September but ravaged along the coast of Kent and seized horses to ride inland. Sigeric was told that unless their demands were met in full they would burn his cathedral to the ground. Meanwhile, they continued to do indescribable damage (*un-asecgendlice yfel*) [97]. The Archbishop, *multis agitatus anxietatibus* [98], as well he might be (for the Danes kept such promises) and having not a single penny (*nec unum tantum nummum haberet*) took counsel and sent messengers to Æscwig, Bishop of Dorchester-on-Thames, begging him to send the money needed and offering to transfer Monks Risborough to him. Sigeric may well have read in his own archives [99] how Eadgifu's father Sighelm had raised money on the security of his estates, and how he had paid off his debts before leading the Kentish division of the *fyrd* to the battle of the Holme in 902, where he engaged the Danes against King Edward's repeated commands, and was killed.

Æscwig was deeply moved (*permotus*) by the Archbishop's plea, and sent his messengers back with 90 pounds of refined silver and 200 mancuses of the purest gold. The Danes were paid in full, and Sigeric gave Æscwig the landbook of Monks Risborough (*librum ruris praefati*) in the presence of the King and the Witan, who confirmed the transfer by a new charter [100] which exonerated the estate from all secular burdens except the invariable three, namely military service and the common responsibility for building bridges and fortresses (*expeditione pontis arcisve coaedificatione*). Subject to these liabilities, the exemption was complete, in great things and small, in (arable) fields, pastures, meadows and woods – the four kinds of productive land. The new grant

confirmed the boundaries in the original 'codicil':

Est autem praedictum rus talibus circumcinctum terminis qui continentur in originali codicello isto literis Saxonice et Saxonico idiomati conscripti, etc.

The eight bishops present joined in a tremendous anathema consigning all those who violated this privilege (*libertas, donatio libertatis*) to the flame-vomiting fire, with weeping and gnashing of teeth (*fletus oculorum* [101] *et stridor dentium*; the English would be *wop and toda grist-bitung*).

Æscwig secured the Witan's consent to his own grant [102] of Cuxham to his man Ælfstan, which the King subscribed at his request. The witness list is the same, and as the original survives it can be used to correct scribal errors in the register copy of the Monks Risborough charter. They share an error in the dating clause (995 for 994).

The King and his councillors, lamenting that all things were hastening to their ruinous fall, resolved to make peace to end the harrying. The Danes accepted 16,000 pounds in money, were provisioned by the whole West Saxon kingdom, took hostages and went into winter quarters at Southampton. Ealdorman Æthelweard (the chronicler) and Ælfheah, Bishop of Winchester, were sent to invite King Olaf to Andover, where he accepted confirmation (he must already have been baptised somewhere), promising King Ethelred, who stood sponsor, never to come back to England in hostility; and he kept his word [103].

Sigeric took part no part in these last events; the Witan had praised his good deeds and anticipated his future reward, but he was worn out and died on 28 October 994 [104]. His successor was Ælfric, Bishop of

Ramsbury, in whose time Æscwig restored Monks Risborough with its landbook to Christ Church and the Archbishop. The reconveyance, in charter form [105], dated 995, was accepted by Professor Whitelock as genuine [106], but Dr. N. P. Brooks has commented [107]:

No defence is possible. The charter is verbally dependent upon K689 [the 994 charter] and was probably fabricated by the Christ Church cartularists to explain how they possessed an estate which the only charter they had showed as being alienated in 994. The date is impossible, since Risborough was bequeathed to Christ Church in Ælfric's will [he died on 16 November 1005] which was not preserved at Canterbury.

In fact the verbal dependence applies only to the exemption clause, the anathema, the dating clause and the witness clause, all of which were taken from the 994 grant. The interpolator did not add a witness list; there is none in the register. Kemble supplied such a list from the 994 charter, thus making Sigeric witness a document which recites his own death, but Canterbury cannot be charged with this absurdity, as Dr. Brooks recognised. What seems to have happened is that the cartularist, not having Ælfric's will, took a short memorandum received from Æscwig and attempted to inflate it into a solemn charter by additions taken from the earlier document. Thus the King's 'Hanc sane nostrae munificae concessionis' became Æscwig's 'Hanc meae munificae concessionis' which from a bishop to his archbishop would be unseemly. As regards the anathema, no doubt it seemed justifiable to make Æscwig repeat a commination which he had originally joined in pronouncing. The fabricator did not complete his work by inventing an invocation and pious proem; instead, he added a dating clause at the beginning, also based on the charter before him, in order to imply that the estate was returned forthwith. If we remove these additions,

what is left is as follows:

+Ego Æscwinus, Dorcestrensis ecclesiæ pontifex, redbo ecclesiæ Christi et Aelfrico archiepiscopo metropolitanæ sedis terra de Risberge cum libro eiusdem terræ pro salute animæ meæ; quam videlicet terram Sigericus archiepiscopus eiusdem ecclesiæ Christi, prædecessor præfati archiepiscopi Aelfrici, dedit mihi in vadimonium pro pecunia quam a me mutuo accepit. Ego autem timore dei compunctus pro spe salutis æternæ, ut præfatus sum, liberam eam redbo ecclesiæ, ad quem iuste pertinet.

This is simple and acceptable. There must have been some such document between 994, when Sigeric parted with Monks Risborough, and 1003–4, when Aelfric made his will leaving it to Christ Church, and thereby making it clear that it was thereafter to belong to the monastic rather than the episcopal endowment. Before the Conquest these were administered together, and Æscwig's memorandum had not distinguished the two. It must be dated before his death on 23 April 1002 [108] but perhaps not long before.

Thus, although Æscwig's 'charter' was concocted at Canterbury, it was not in substance misleading. In that part of it which he actually wrote he acknowledged that Sigeric had given Monks Risborough to him in pledge, in return for money which he had accepted from Æscwig as a loan. This is what the charter of 994 intended, but not what it actually said. It had granted the estate to Æscwig for his life and to whatever heir he pleased after him (not necessarily his successor as bishop); but for the sake of his soul he returned it to the church to which it rightly belonged. 'Liberam' does not necessarily imply that it was a free gift, especially as the Archbishop's will shows that he still regarded the people of Kent as being in his debt.

The terms of this reconveyance are of the first importance in understanding the nature

of the earliest English mortgages. In classical Latin, *vadimonium* is a solemn promise, usually secured by recognizance, to appear on an appointed day; but the word could be used less precisely. In Cicero [109], 'res est in vadimonium' means 'the matter is being dealt with by due process of law'. A transferred meaning in Apuleius [110] is 'an appointed time'. Here the meaning must be that there was a pledge secured by a promise. *Mutuum* is correctly used for a loan; more specifically, a loan of gold, silver or anything which can be weighed, measured or numbered, giving rise to a duty of the borrower to make over to the lender money or goods equal in quantity and quality at the time agreed [111].

It would appear that in West Saxon law, as in archaic Roman law, money could be raised on the security of land only by an outright conveyance of the land, with a wholly separate pact to reconvey it if the debt was duly repaid. Failure to return the land would no doubt be infamous, but ownership had already passed [112]. Until 1926 the English mortgage of land took this archaic form, though in substance it had been transformed by the equity of redemption. The first indication of this is Æscwig's insistence that he was bound in conscience to restore the estate.

Thus Monks Risborough was returned to Canterbury, with the old landbook and the benefit of the new charter. Any doubt concerning the interest of the Archbishop as against that of the community was removed by his will [113]. Whatever his own claim may have been, he left it to Christ Church as part of his burial fee or 'soul-scot';

+Her sutelað hu Aelfric arcebiscoop his cwyde gedihte. Ðæt is ærest him to saulsceate he becwæd into Christes cyrce ðæt land æt Wyllan, and æt Burnan, and Risenbeorgas...

This took effect in 1005. There is a purported charter of Ethelred [114] dated 1006 by which the King confirms to the monks of

Christ Church a great many estates, including 'Hrisebygan be Cilternes efese'; the Latin is 'Hrisebeorgam margine luci Cilterni villula', indicating that the eaves of Chiltern are the edge of the wood. Unfortunately the witness list of this charter points to a date early in 1002, and it then becomes very difficult to reconcile it with the terms of Ælfric's will made in 1003–4. The general view is that it was composed some 30 years later in Cnut's time, when the monks felt themselves threatened; but it remains good evidence for the famous and beautiful name of Risborough by Chiltern eaves.

By his will Ælfric forgave the people of Kent the debt which they owed him, and he left them a ship. He directed that all penalty enslaved men condemned in his time should be set free; this may indicate that the use of penal slaves to exploit Chiltern estates extended to Monks Risborough as well as the hamlets of Princes Risborough [115]. He left a crucifix to his successor Bishop Ælfheah, who refused in 1012 to allow a ransom to be paid for himself to the Danes who had plundered and burnt his cathedral. He was thereupon martyred, and is still honoured as St. Alphege.

Monks Risborough was now vested in the monastic community, but the Archbishop sometimes resided there with his *familia* and held courts. At some time between 1020 and 1038 (perhaps about 1033) Archbishop Æthelnoth came to an agreement [116] at *Hrisbeorgan* with a Dane called Toki(g) about the estate of Halton, which was to come to Christ Church on Toki's death. The witnesses included:

Ædelstan æt Bleddehlæwe [Bledlow], and Leofwine his sunu, and Leofric æt Eanengadene [unidentified] and feala oðra godra cnihta... and eall ðæs arcebiscopes hired ge gehadude ge gelawede

— all his retinue, ordained and laymen. The profits of the 30 hides of Monks Risborough were best realised by staying there for a time.

Toki repeated his promise concerning Halton to Archbishop Eadsige, c. 1045–50, when he sent his two *cnihtas* to *Hrisbeorgan* to represent him [117]. These records are not in charter form; they are vernacular memoranda, partly in the first person, entered for the Archbishop in the gospel book (*on disse Cristes bec*) [118].

There is a doubtful charter of Edward the Confessor [119] confirming the estates of Christ Church, which includes the entry 'innan Buccinghamsire be Cilternes efese, Hrysebygan'. In King Edward's time Asgar the Staller held the estate on condition that he should not alienate it from Christ Church, Canterbury, but in 1086 it was said to be held by the Archbishop himself [120]; this appears inconsistent with Ælfric's will, but when the monastic and episcopal estates were finally separated, Monks Risborough was held by the Prior of Canterbury in frankalmoign of the King in chief [121]. This proved unfortunate for Canterbury at the Dissolution, as it enabled Henry VIII to seize and alienate the estate [122].

The benefice did not pass with the manor; it remained with the Archbishop until the advowson was transferred to the Bishop of Oxford in 1837 [123]. The Archbishop surrendered his exclusive jurisdiction in 1841 [124], and thus the direct connection between Monks Risborough and Canterbury came to an end after nearly a thousand years.

APPENDIX

The Dating of the Boundary Hedges
In *The Buckinghamshire Landscape* [125], Dr. Michael Reed wrote concerning Anglo-Saxon perambulations:

The boundaries themselves are composed for long sections of hedges and ditches which may have been constructed especially for the purpose. These often still survive, and counts of the species of tree and shrub in these

hedgerows testify to their great age. The Black Hedge marks the boundary of Monks Risborough. It has been carefully studied by a group of naturalists and it contains on average 12.44 species in a thirty yard stretch. Such a score would suggest that the hedge may have been over two hundred years old when it was first mentioned in the charter of A.D. 903, implying a regulated, ordered landscape in the central Chilterns in the eighth century. The Black Hedge is exceptional in that it has been recorded and studied in this way. Its great size and the fact that it runs through a designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty would seem to indicate that its future is safe. Those hedges of the other recorded boundaries are not so fortunate, but are equally deserving of study and preservation.

This assessment was based on the simple count of certain plant species constituting the vegetation of the hedge-bank. Dr. M. D. Hooper had suggested that a hedge which is (say) one thousand years old would have about ten species of shrub in a 30-yard stretch. More precisely, observations on 227 dated hedges, spread over the southern and eastern counties from Devon to Lincolnshire, indicated that the average number of species of tree or woody shrub in 30-yard lengths was a good indicator of its age, the regression equation [126] being

$$\text{Age of hedge in years} = 110 \times (\text{average number of species}) + 30.$$

This relation would not apply in all conditions, but Dr. Hooper confirmed that this was the equation with the widest applicability in southern England [127].

The first botanical survey of the Black Hedge between Windsor Hill and the Kop Hill road was carried out in 1970 by the Natural History Section of the Bucks Archaeological Society. The results, together with the writer's

identification of the charter bounds, were made available to Dr. Reed and have become well known; they may indeed have had the beneficial effect which he indicated, but the conclusion needs modification in four respects. First, the original rule of thumb (one new species per century) should be replaced by the relationship quoted above. Second, the quoted average of 12.44 includes climbing and scrambling species; for the application of Dr. Hooper's formula, it is necessary to exclude bramble, ivy, bryony, honeysuckle and old man's beard from the counts. (There may be a good case for including them, as they are in competition with shrubs included, but then a different regression would be needed. The incidence of sub-species of bramble might well provide valuable auxiliary information [128]). Third, the survey has been extended both northwards and southwards along the Black Hedge, and to other hedges on the boundary. Fourth, there is no strong presumption that the Black Hedge is of uniform date; this is the simplest hypothesis, but it is not supported by the results now available. It appears that though part of the hedge was old in 903, part of it had either not been planted then or was quite recent. The name given to the old hedge would naturally be applied to later sections as cultivation extended into the Chilterns.

The results have been retabulated so as to proceed sunwise along the boundary. The first section for which a survey is available is from a point north of Parslow's Hillock where the boundary reaches the corner of Hillock Wood, some 50 yards along the bridleway, at the end of a holly hedge beside a private garden. For the next quarter of a mile the hedge runs N.N.E.; it has spread over the ditch into Hillock Wood in a number of places. The inspection on the ditch side was made from the bridleway running parallel to and about six feet from the edge of the ditch. In places the hedge is overhung with oak, beech, whitebeam, cherry and aspen trees, so that its growth has been depressed. There is a parallel footpath on what was until recently the field side, now planted with larch. The hedge

makes an almost right-angled turn downhill and is lost soon after it enters Hillock Wood,

though the ditch can still be followed. The record is as follows:

Table 1. West of Hillock Wood, from N. of Parslow's Hillock to S. of Windsor Hill.

Section	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	Total
Aspen			x	x													2
Beech	x	x	x		x	x	x			x	x	x	x	x		x	12
Blackthorn		x			x	x								x			4
Dogwood		x					x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	10
Hawthorn	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x		14
Hazel	x	x		x	x					x							5
Holly	x	x	x	x	x	x						x					7
Hornbeam				x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	12
Oak	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			14
Rose (Dog)	x	x	x							x	x		x	x		x	8
Rose (Field)	x	x		x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x		13
Sallow						x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x		9
Sallow (Common)											x						1
Wayfaring Tree												x	x				2
Whitebeam		x	x		x	x				x	x	x	x	x	x		10
Wild Cherry	x	x	x		x	x		x									6
No. of species	8	11	7	7	10	9	7	6	6	5	9	8	11	10	7	8	(129)

Thus the age of this section of the hedge may be estimated as $110 \times (129/16) + 30 = 917$ years, giving an estimated date of $1972 - 917 = 1055$ A.D. If however the untypical sections 8–10 are omitted, the estimated age becomes $110 \times (112/13) + 30 = 978$ years, giving date 994. The charter date 903 would be within the limits of variation, but as this is basically a hawthorn hedge, and as the incidence of the 16 species is widely different

from that found further north, beyond the barrier of Windsor Hill, it should be regarded as quite distinct from the Black Hedge proper.

On the north slope of Windsor Hill the hedge cannot be distinguished except near the base where it emerges into the fields. From this point to the Kop Hill road it was surveyed in 1970 in 25 thirty-yard sections, with the following results:

Table 2. The Black Hedge, from Windsor Hill to Kop Hill.

Section	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	Total
Apple					x										x	x	x	x	x	x					7	
Ash												x				x	x	x	x	x	x				5	
Beech	x			x						x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	10		
Blackthorn	x	x	x		x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	19		
Buckthorn (Purging)	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	23		
Dogwood				x	x	x			x	x					x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	12		
Elder	x	x	x	x	x	x				x					x	x	x	x	x					10		
Field Maple	x																			x	x				3	
Gelder Rose	x																								1	
Hawthorn	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	24		
Hazel	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	23		
Hornbeam	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	18		
Maple							x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	11		
Privet	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	24		
Rose (Dog)	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	24		
Sallow																	x								1	
Spindle		x																		x	x				3	
Sycamore															x										1	
Wayfaring															x											
Tree	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	22		
Whitebeam					x	x	x			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	12		
Wild Cherry						x				x	x														2	
No. of species	8	9	6	8	11	10	10	10	8	8	13	9	11	11	10	9	12	12	11	11	11	13	10	12	12	(255)

Thus the average number of species is 10.20, giving an estimated age of 1152 years and estimated date 1970–1152 = 818 A.D. This, however, ignores the difference between the straight hedge (section 1–10) and the contour hedge (sections 11–25), which hardly needs a formal test of significance. Sections 1–10 give an average count of 8.80, estimated age 998 years and date 972 A.D. However, in sections 3 and 4, adjoining a 10-foot gap, there are clear signs that the hedge has been damaged; excluding these two, the score is 9.25, the estimated age 1047 years and the estimated date 923, which is of course not significantly different from the charter date. In contrast, the next 15 thirty-yard sections of the hedge give

an average of 11.13 species, an estimated age of 1254 years and a date 716, pointing to a 7th or 8th century origin.

The ash and wild cherry are confined to the oldest part of the hedge, and the maple and crab-apple almost so; otherwise the distribution of different species is much the same in both parts of Table 2, and very different from that in Table 1, in which privet and purging buckthorn do not occur but oak, holly and sallow are prominent.

The part of the Black Hedge to the north of Kop Hill was surveyed in 1973, with the following results:

Table 3. *The Black Hedge, north of the Kop Hill road.*

<i>Section</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	<i>Total</i>
Apple		x			x		x					3
Ash					x	x	x	x				4
Beech	x											1
Blackthorn	x	x	x				x	x	x	x	x	8
Buckthorn (Purging)	x						x		x	x	x	5
Dewberry					x	x	x	x	x	x		7
Dogwood	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			9
Elder	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		11
Field Maple	x	x	x		x	x	x	x				8
Gooseberry				x	x							2
Hawthorn				x	x		x	x	x	x	x	7
Hazel	x	x	x	x								4
Holly			x	x			x					3
Hornbeam						x						1
Oak	x											1
Privet		x	x	x	x	x			x			6
Rose (Dog)	x		x	x		x		x	x	x	x	8
Rose (Field)	x						x					2
Spindle		x	x		x	x			x	x		6
Wayfaring Tree		x	x	x		x	x					5
Whitebeam	x				x							2
Wild Cherry				x	x		x	x				4
Wych Elm	x											1
No. of species	11	8	12	12	11	8	13	11	8	8	6	(108)

Sections 1–7 run through scrub; the hedge, now overgrown, has at some time been laid, but such management is not thought to affect diversification. The species count of 10.71 gives an age of 1208 years and an estimated date of 765, in good agreement with the date for the contour hedge. In sections 8–11 the hedge runs through arable land to the point beyond which it has been removed. The 1922 six-inch map shows it as extending along the parish boundary to the Upper Icknield Way.

The species count of 8.25 gives an age of 937 years and date 1036; if section 8 were omitted, as having been enriched by its immediate neighbours, the estimated date would be a century later. Thus the hedge separating the fields of the two Risboroughs is probably a post-Conquest extension of the Black Hedge.

In all these surveys there is some risk of under-enumeration, though with a group of experienced field naturalists the hazard is not serious.

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 103. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England* (2nd edn.) 372–3.
 104. K. Sisam, *Review of English Studies* vii. 10.
 105. S 1378.
 106. *Engl. Hist. Docs.* I. 527.
 107. M. Gelling, *The Early Charters of the Thames Valley*, 77.
 108. Cambridge, Trin. Coll. ms. O.2.1; Keynes, *op. cit.*, 258.
 109. M. Tullius Cicero, *Oratio pro P. Quintio*.
 110. Lucius Apuleius, *Metamorphoses*.
 111. *Institutes* III tit. xiv pr. (ed. T. C. Sandars, p. 327).
 112. For bookland, this occurred when the landbook was handed over: Keynes, *op. cit.* 33, n. 57.
 113. S 1488 (indexed as the will of the Archbishop of York).
 114. S 914.
 115. Evidenced by Ælfgifu's will, S 1484.
 116. S 1464.
 117. S 1466.
 118. Lambeth Palace 1370 fos. 114, 115.
 119. S 1047.
 120. Domesday Book i. fo. 143b.
 121. *Testa de Nevill* (Rec. Com.) 245.
 122. Pat. 33 Hen. VIII pt. 4; *L. & P. Hen. VIII* xvi. 947.
 123. London Gazette, 30 May 1837.
 124. *V.C.H. Bucks* i. 344, ii. 259.
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