

# EALDORMAN BYRHTNOTH AND THE BRAYFIELD CHARTER OF 967

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*Cold Brayfield and Brafield on the Green both have claims to be the Bragenfeld granted by King Edgar in 967 to Byrhtnoth, ealdorman of Essex, who was to be the hero of the battle of Maldon. The derivation of this difficult name is discussed; it is considered to relate to a tract of land cleared from Yardley forest and including the sites of both villages. Reasons are suggested for the grant, and for the absence of a hidage assessment and of a boundary survey. The charter, preserved in an Abingdon cartulary, is placed in its historical context, and shown to be based on a landbook of 964 granting land at Cookley (Worcs) to Byrhtnoth, with significant textual differences, probably made at his instance. The dating of diplomas by the year of grace and the indictional year is discussed.*

In 967 King Edgar, with the consent of the Witan, granted to his ealdorman Byrhtnoth an estate in the locality called *Bragenfeld*. The original membrane has not survived, but the charter was copied into a thirteenth-century cartulary of Abingdon Abbey.<sup>1</sup> The transcript has no boundary survey and lacks a numeral which would have stated the assessment in hides, so that the suggestion that the grant relates to Cold Brayfield, made by D. and S. Lysons<sup>2</sup> and accepted by Mawer and Stenton<sup>3</sup> and by Sawyer,<sup>4</sup> is open to challenge. Brafield on the Green in Northamptonshire was proposed as an alternative by Ekwall<sup>5</sup> and by Margaret Gelling,<sup>6</sup> and this identification has been strongly defended by C. R. Hart.<sup>7</sup> Hart pointed to a connection, evidenced by Domesday Book,<sup>8</sup> between tenements in Brafield and the adjoining manors of Whiston and Denton, where Ramsey Abbey had a holding of 3 hides, described in its alleged foundation charter of 974<sup>9</sup> as a gift from Byrhtnoth. There is no other evidence for such a gift, and this charter has long since been exposed as a post-Conquest forgery,<sup>10</sup> but it may incorporate a genuine list of benefactors. The Ramsey Chronicle<sup>11</sup> asserts that Byrhtnoth, assembling his forces to fight the Danes, could not secure hospitality and provisions at Ramsey and thereupon transferred his gift at Whiston to Ely Abbey, but that he repented of his

decision when dying on the field of Maldon (11 August 991) and also gave Ramsey one hide at Denton. The contemporary poem on the battle<sup>12</sup> leaves no time for Byrhtnoth to make a nuncupative will between his death-wound and his memorable last words; however, the Ramsey account may reflect not what he then said but what his widow did to fulfil his known or presumed intentions. In the same decade, another widow, Ælfhild, confirmed to Ramsey land said to have been left to the Abbey *viva voce* by her late husband Ælfwold.<sup>13</sup>

We can agree that *prima facie* there is a good case for the uplandish Northants Brafield as well as for the Bucks riverside village. They have always shared the same name<sup>14</sup> and *Bragenfeld* could well have been a district originally including both, which in 967 was largely cleared (perhaps after earlier depopulation) but not yet fully settled or re-settled. The present series of papers on the Anglo-Saxon land charters of Buckinghamshire has suggested that when the king, with the consent of his council, released royal rights to a subject, his object in some cases may have gone beyond securing support, or rewarding faithful service. He may have wished to promote the settlement, or the closer and more orderly settlement, of land on or near the internal frontier, which often 'lay not in

the wide open spaces but in the heart of long-settled [Midland] shires among the forests'.<sup>15</sup>

### *The Text of the Charter*

The charter is wholly in Latin. It has been printed by Kemble,<sup>16</sup> Stevenson,<sup>17</sup> Birch<sup>18</sup> and Pierquin,<sup>19</sup> and presents no textual difficulty.

+ In nomine domini nostri Ihesu Christi. Anno ab incarnatione domini nostri Ihesu Christi .DCCCCLXXVII . indictione .x. ego Eadgar divina allubescence gratia rex et primicerius Anglorum aliquantulam ruris partem ab accolis aestimatam mansiunculis in loco qui dicitur aet Bragenfelda meo comito Beorhtnotho liberam praeter arcem, pontem expeditionemque, in perpetuum ius libenter admodum concedo, quatinus diebus vitae suae possideat, et post se cuicumque voluerit haeredi derelinquat. Quod si quisque, quod non optamus, huiusce donationis cartulam adnichilare temptaverit, coram Christo se rationem redditurum agnoscat. Et huius doni constipulatores extiterunt quorum inferius nomina caraxari videntur.

+Ego Eadgar rex Anglorum hoc donum largitus sum

+Ego Dunstan archiepiscopus consensi et subscripsi

+Ego Oscytel archiepiscopus consensi et subscripsi

+Ego Aelfuold episcopus consensi et subscripsi

+Ego Aetheluuold episcopus consensi et subscripsi

+Ego Alfstan episcopus consensi et subscripsi

+Ego Uuinsige episcopus consensi

+Ego Osuuold episcopus consensi

+Ego Osulf episcopus consensi

+Ego Eadelm episcopus consensi

+Ego Alfere dux

+Ego Aethelstan dux

+Ego Alfeh dux

+Ego Ordgar dux

+Ego Byrhtnoth dux

+Ego Atheluuine dux

+Ego Byrhtferth minister

+Ego Atheluuueard minister

+Ego Aelfuuine minister

+Ego Orduuald minister

+Ego Athelsige minister

+Ego Aelfuuold minister

+Ego Uulfstan minister

+Ego Aelfelm minister

### *Translation of the Charter*

The following translation is offered:

+ In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. In the year 967 from the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ, the tenth indiction, I Edgar, by the divine grace and pleasure king and superintendent of the English, very gladly grant a small part of the countryside (*or* of a rural estate), rated by (its) neighbours at [ ] hides, in the locality which is called Bragenfeld, to my *comes* Byrhtnoth, free (from dues and services) except for (the construction and maintenance of) strongholds, (the maintenance of) bridges and the military levy, in perpetual right, in order that he may have and hold it for the days of his life, and afterwards leave it to whatever heir he wishes. But if anyone, contrary to our wish, should attempt to annul this charter of our gift, let him recognise that he must render an account before Christ. And there came forward the fellow-stipulators of this gift, whose names may be seen written below.

+I Edgar, king of the English, have bestowed this gift

+I Dunstan, archbishop (of Canterbury) have consented and subscribed

+I Oscytel, archbishop (of York) have consented and subscribed

*Bishops:* Ælfwold (Crediton), Æthelwold (Winchester), Ælfstan (London) have consented and subscribed. Winsige (Lichfield), Oswald (Worcester), Oswulf (Ramsbury), Eadhelm (Selsey) have consented.

*Ealdormen:* Ælfhere, Æthelstan, Ælfheah, Ordgar, Byrhtnoth, Æthelwine

*Thegns:* Byrhtferth, Æthelweard, Ælfwine, Ordwald, Æthelsige, Ælfwold, Wulfstan, Ælfhelm

### *The Cookley Charter of 964: a Source of the Bragenfeld Charter*

Professor Dorothy Whitelock has pointed out that there are similarities in the phrasing of the present charter (S750) with S726, described by Sawyer as a lost original by Edgar to the same donee. This is a grant of land at Cookley in Wolverley, Worcestershire, which was in the cathedral archives at Worcester in 1703, when it was printed by G. Hickes,<sup>20</sup> who regarded it as an apograph (an exact transcript of the original). Sir Frank Stenton<sup>21</sup> thought that the 'lost

original' was an eleventh-century copy. There is no reason to doubt its authenticity, nor the exactitude of Hickeys' transcription. His main interest was in its intermixed Saxon and Gallic letters, with two forms of the long s in addition to the rotund s. To show the extent of correspondence between the two texts, the words common to both are italicised below. Abbreviations have been extended.

+ *Anno ab incarnatione domini nostri Ihesu Christi DCCCCLXIII. ego eadgar divina allubescence gratia rex et primicerius albionis ruris quandam particulam binis ab accolis estimatam mansiunculis beorhtnope comiti mihique prae quibusdam ceteris dilecto liberam preter arcem pontem expeditionemque pro sua largiflua meritorum Inpensione in loco qui vulgari fame dicitur culnan cliff ut temporibus vitae suae felicissime utatur. hisque transactis in perpetuum ius heredi cuicumque placuerit derelinquat libenter admodum largitus sum. Quod si quisque quod non optamus huiuscae donationis scedulam vel in minimo infringere temptaverit hoc ni digno prius demperit penitentine se sentiat peremitter passurum in cruciamine. Et his limitibus praefatae telluris particula quaqua versum circumgirari videtur* [There follow detailed bounds in English]

Hi testes praefatae videbantur largitiuncule quorum inferius titulatim nomina carraxari videntur

+Ego eadgar rex hoc donum largitus sum

+Ego dunstan archiepiscopus consensi et subscripsi

+Ego oscytel archiepiscopus consensi et subscripsi

[and eleven bishops, five ealdormen and six thegns]

This text may be translated as follows:

+ In the year 964 from the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ, I Edgar, by the divine grace and pleasure king and superintendent of Albion, have very gladly bestowed a certain little piece of countryside (or of a rural estate) rated at two hides by (its) neighbours, upon Byrhtnoth, (my) *comes* and dear to me for certain other reasons, free (from dues and services) except for (the construction and maintenance of) strongholds, (the maintenance of) bridges and the military levy, in return for his copious merits, in the locality which in common parlance is called 'Culna's cliff', that in his lifetime he may use it most happily, and when this is completed he may leave it

to whatever heir he wishes, in perpetual right. But if anyone, contrary to our wish, should attempt to infringe this charter even in the slightest, let him suffer perpetually in torment unless he has first worthily repented and made amends for this. And the aforesaid little portion of land is seen to be bounded on all sides by these limits [Bounds in English follow]

These witnesses of the aforesaid little gift appeared whose names with their offices may be seen written below.

+ I Edgar, king, have bestowed this gift

+ I Dunstan, archbishop (of Canterbury) have consented and subscribed

+ I Oscytel, archbishop (of York) have consented and subscribed

*Bishops:* Ælfstan (London), Wynsige (Lichfield), Æthelwold (Winchester), Oswald (Worcester), Ælfwold (Sherborne), Ælfwald (Crediton), Eadhelm (Selsey), Beorhthelm (Wells), Oswulf (Sonning (Ramsbury)),<sup>22</sup> Ælfstan (Rochester), Athulf (Elmham)<sup>23</sup>

*Ealdormen:* Ælfhere, Æthelstan, Ælfheah, Beorhtnoth, Æthelwine

*Thegns:* Byrhtferth, Ælfwine, Ordwald, Æthelsige, Ælfwald, Wulfstan

Whoever drafted the *Bragenfeld* charter in 967 surely had the Cookley text before him. He followed it precisely in the royal title and formula of assent, the dating clause, the reservation clause and the introduction to the sanction, but he made the following significant changes:

- (i) He inserted an express invocation of the name of Christ, previously included only implicitly in the dating clause, in which, however, it was retained. The omission of a pious proem, and placing the date at the beginning, are associated with a group of charters designated by Hart<sup>23a</sup> as 'Dunstan B'.
- (ii) He omitted the phrases praising Byrhtnoth, leaving the grant without any stated motive, except that implied by *comes* 'companion' which at this date could still mean rather more than *dux* 'ealdorman, earl'.
- (iii) He slightly toned down the stress on the smallness of the king's gift.
- (iv) He rejected the extravagant threat of perpetual torment for even the slightest attempt to infringe the grant, and substituted a warning that whoever seeks to annul the charter must answer for it before the Lord. The English equivalent would be 'wite he wip God'. There are precedents in

King Offa's exchange of Harrow for Wycombe in 767<sup>24</sup> and in other unimpeachable eighth-century charters,<sup>25</sup> but the temperate language is more probably due to the grantee's good sense than to his knowledge of early Mercian practice.

- (v) He reduced the pomposity of the charter and improved its *dictamen* by eliminating barbarous words and correcting the spelling.
- (vi) He altered *testes* 'witnesses' to *constipulatores* 'fellow-participants (in an agreement)'.

All these changes are readily explicable if they were made by Byrhtnoth himself, or by someone acting on his instructions. The first made good the absence of a Christian proem; the second manifests his modesty; the third his courtesy; the fourth his moderation; the fifth his good literary taste and the last his view (which was probably Dunstan's) of the Witan's share in decision-making.

#### Notes on the Translation

The title *primicerius* is taken from the civil service of the Roman Empire in the fifth and sixth centuries, when it denoted the head of a department, perhaps originally with military connotations.<sup>26</sup> In the Theodosian Code<sup>27</sup> of 436, the *primicerius notariorum* is the chancellor or chief secretary, and the designation is frequent in Justinian's Code.<sup>28</sup> It was not an imperial title, and its apparent use as such in Anglo-Saxon charters of the mid-tenth century may have arisen from some misunderstanding by the innovative draftsmen who called the king *imperator* or *basileos*, the title of the Eastern Emperor. E. E. Barker<sup>29</sup> thought that it was not certain that *primicerius* was genuinely used after 956, and stressed that later it often occurred in forged charters; thus he regarded the present charter as dubious, but he admitted that the use of the style is no criterion for judging the genuineness of any charter. The occurrence of a formula in genuine diplomas is surely not offset by the use which later forgers made of it.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, its use seems particularly applicable to Edgar's relationship to Mercia, where he had been elected king at the age of 14 in 957, displacing his improvident brother King Edwy. The title occurs in his Mercian charters of 958.<sup>31</sup> An earlier paper<sup>32</sup> has sought to elucidate the obscure and complex court politics of the period. On 9 May 957 Edwy still claimed to be king of all Britain, but his bestowal of *Helig* (probably Ely) proved ineffective,<sup>33</sup> and his subsequent grants all relate to land south of the

Thames. The kingdom was reunited in 959 on Edwy's death, but in Mercia Edgar's regnal years were still reckoned from 957.<sup>34</sup> It was not until Pentecost 973 that Edgar was crowned at Bath by the two archbishops, apparently after some form of fresh election,<sup>35</sup> marking the consummation of English unity (including monetary uniformity). Yet in the Chronicle entry<sup>36</sup> recording his death two years later he is described as friend (*wine*) of the West Saxons but only as protector (*mundbora*) of the Mercians. He was only 32, though even this was *plenus dierum*.<sup>36a</sup>

The use of *accola*, *aestimare* and *mansiuncula* will be discussed below in connection with the missing hidage.

The Cookley charter includes some of the pretentious and artificial words which characterise the inflated Latin cultivated since Athelstan's time by the king's clerks: *largiflua*, *inpensione*, *penitemine*, *cruciamine*, *largitiuncule*, *titulatim*. *Allubescence* had to survive as part of the royal title; otherwise these barbarisms are eliminated in the Brayfield text, though even this includes a few words in senses which are rare or unknown in classical Latin. *Derelinquare* 'to leave, bequeath', seems a distinctively Christian usage; it originally meant 'to abandon, desert'. *Ratio* is an account rendered, rather than a reason, but this sense is as old as Plautus.<sup>37</sup> *C(h)araxare*, from the Greek, should mean 'to engrave, inscribe', but in charters must be 'to write'. *Extiterunt* must be taken as *extiterunt* (from *existo*) 'came forth, appeared', literally 'stepped out', though transferred senses are quite classical, and the form required occurs in Cicero.<sup>38</sup> Both forms occur in other 'Dunstan B' charters, and the lack of the *s* can be taken as a feature of the 'lost original'. One sense of *sisto* is 'I appear before a court on the appointed day'.<sup>39</sup> In the context of the charter we may take it that the members of the Witan did not merely vote, but came forward<sup>40</sup> in order of precedence to give their assent, becoming *constipulatores*.

A *stipulator* is party to a *stipulatio*, the usual written contract of the later Roman Empire, after the Emperor Leo's constitution of 472<sup>41</sup> had freed it from useless technicalities. It had originally been an oral but highly formal question and answer, implying a pledged word or oath; the stipulator was the questioner, as opposed to the promiser, but this distinction was not maintained. It was still the rule that the parties must come together, though from Justinian's

time a recital recording their presence was acceptable.<sup>42</sup> Here Byrhtnoth attends the Witan and assents to the grant to himself. The *constipulatores* are the parties to the agreement; the term is part of the formulation associated with 'Dunstan B'; this may have originated in 953-955 when King Eadred was ill or absent and his counsellors acted on his behalf, but it occurs sporadically down to 986. The term occurs again after Dunstan's death in a grant of 995 made by Æscwig, bishop of Dorchester,<sup>43</sup> with the consent of the king and his council. In continental usage, *adstipulari* was the act of those who joined in the execution of a (private) deed; Bede had used *astipulari* of the participation of the prelates (*pontifices*) in royal grants which he considered fraudulent.<sup>44</sup>

### *The Structure of the Charter*

The Anglo-Saxon landbook had originally been a solemn dedication of land to the service of God; *jus perpetuum* was *jus ecclesiasticum*. Even in the numerous tenth-century royal grants to laymen a religious sanction was still required; it was tending to become perfunctory, but some piety was needed to warrant the concurrence of the bishops, who could pronounce the judgment of God against those who defied the laudable intention of the king who reigned by God's will (exercised through human agency). In English landbooks, no temporal punishment is ever threatened. The present charter is short and simple, but includes all the elements which its draftsman, following convention, considered necessary. It begins with an invocation of Christ, without any further proem. Then, after a dating clause, with the year of grace and the fiscal indiction, the king states in the dispositive section that he concedes certain land to his *comes* (companion, associate). It was customary for kings to use the language of gift, even when consideration was involved. Words praising Byrhtnoth for his merits and for his distinguished public service were omitted on this occasion, probably at his own insistence. Next follows a clause of immunity, freeing the land from public burdens other than those specified in a reservation clause. The king then authorises Byrhtnoth to hold the land for his life (omitting *felicissime*) and then to leave it to whatever heir he chooses, a privilege which only the king could give. Then comes the sanction; this would more usually have been an anathema, threatening those who infringed the charter with exclusion from the

Church in this life and everlasting torments in the next unless they had made full amends, but here the damnatory clause is moderated to the admonition discussed above. There follows the sign of the cross, made or at least touched by the king's hand, and the crosses of his counsellors who consented to the grant. A bishop's corroboration ensured that violators were excommunicated in his diocese. Normally the charter would include a statement of the assessment in hides and a boundary survey in English, either incorporated in the text or appended to it; the significance of the absence of these will be considered below.

The king's grant is in the first person singular, up to the clause *quod non optamus*, which involves the magnates and makes the sanction their collective declaration. The same change to the first person plural occurs in the much more elaborate Linslade charter of the previous year.<sup>45</sup> The tense is present, except for the eschatocol; the execution and delivery of the charter is itself the gift, not merely evidence of a gift already made or to be made. This is not invariable; the Chetwode-Hillesden charter of 949,<sup>46</sup> also deposited at Abingdon, is in the third person and past tense throughout, the grantee, the king's reeve at Buckingham, having had it drafted by his diocesan<sup>47</sup> so as to make known the king's bounty. This use of the third person is usual in the series of alliterative diplomas to which that charter belongs, even when they were drawn up at the witenagemot.

### *The Dating Clause: an Excursus*

The present charter was executed in the year 967 of the Incarnation; this should mean between Christmas Day 966 and Christmas Eve 967, though Ælfric, writing in 990-994,<sup>48</sup> states that 'by our reckoning' the year begins on the first of January, the start of the Roman civil year. More properly, the years of the Incarnation should be reckoned from the Annunciation (Lady Day), 25 March; it was at Nazareth that the Word became flesh, rather than at Bethlehem nine months later. There is evidence that in the eleventh century (not the tenth) the Abingdon chronicler sometimes began the year with 25 March following (not preceding) our New Year's Day.<sup>49</sup> Strangely enough, our income-tax assessments still run from 5 April, the Gregorian equivalent of the Julian 25 March, with an eleven-day adjustment when the new style was adopted on 3/14 September 1752. Thus we use a religious date for the fiscal year, while it can be shown that Bede adopted a fiscal date, 24 September,

for the beginning of the ecclesiastical year. The charter bears the indictional date 10, placing it in the tenth year of a 15-year cycle which is traceable to the periodic revision of the Roman fiscal census. In the pontifical system attributed to St Gregory the Great, the indictional year was made to coincide with the year of the Incarnation, and it seems likely that this convention was fairly generally used in England in the ninth and tenth centuries. If so, the quoted indiction was a mere confirmation of the year of grace, using Bede's rule: add 3 to the date AD, divide by 15 and the remainder is the indiction of the year.<sup>50</sup> Alternatively, a current Easter table would probably give the indiction.

There were, however, two other conventions. In the Constantinopolitan practice, the indictional year began on 1 September, but in the imperial or Caesarean system, which was adopted in the Holy Roman Empire, it began on 24 September, so that the tenth year of the cycle ended on 23 September 967. In *De Temporum Ratione*, written in 725, Bede had prescribed the Caesarean practice: 'incipiunt indictiones ab viii kal. Oct.'<sup>51</sup> The eighth day before the kalends of October was 24 September, seven days before 1 October in our reckoning, but the Romans counted inclusively. There is evidence that this was already the practice in the northern monasteries. A critical case is the dating of the Synod of Hatfield, held on 17 September 680,<sup>52</sup> dated in the eighth indiction by Archbishop St Theodore of Tarsus; this was in 680 on either Caesarean or pontifical reckoning, but in 681 on the Constantinopolitan system, which therefore could not have been used by Theodore, despite his Greek background. The Council of Hertford on 24 September 673 was described by Theodore as held *indictione prima*;<sup>53</sup> perhaps significantly, this first council of the whole English church began on the first day of the first indiction of a new cycle on Caesarean reckoning.

In the tenth century most land charters were probably produced by a central secretariat which followed the king and the Witan round the country, and which would presumably have a consistent dating convention; but some diplomas were written in episcopal or monastic scriptoria where a bishop or abbot could control the drafting.<sup>54</sup> Indeed, Cyril Hart distinguishes the work of different ecclesiastical scriptoria.<sup>55</sup> In such cases the Caesarean convention may still have been maintained. Richard Vaughan concluded that the Winchester (Parker) Chronicle,

following Alfredian precedent, began its year on 24 September until 954, after which it adopted a Christmas convention.<sup>56</sup> There is some evidence that as late as 996 the Abingdon chronicler used an episcopal list which began the year on 24 September.<sup>57</sup> It is always hazardous to assume consistency of practice in an Anglo-Saxon context<sup>58</sup> and there are many cases where charters with the same year of grace have different indictions, but mistakes and errors in both forms of dating were too frequent for it to be safe to use the indiction to date any document more closely.

Where charters are in the same hand in different parts of England, it seems clear that the scribe was a royal clerk.<sup>59</sup> Drögereit considered that this was the case for the period from Athelstan to Edgar, but he could find no instance after 963.<sup>60</sup> Thereafter the engrossing of charters may have been increasingly left in private hands, and this may support the suggestion that Byrhtnoth had a greater voice in the drafting of his landbook in 967 than he had in 964, so that he could exclude words glorifying himself, or threatening squatters with damnation.

#### *Some Witnesses of the Charter*

The term 'witnesses' is customary and convenient, though the notables and especially the bishops who appended their crosses to the charter thought of themselves as strengthening its authority. Attestation implied participation in the grant. General laws were enacted and royal grants confirmed at the same meeting,<sup>61</sup> and both were legislative acts. The witnesses of the present charter included the two archbishops and three bishops who 'consented and subscribed', four bishops who simply 'consented', six ealdormen and eight thegns who are not credited with any formula of assent; but the triumphant sign of the cross of Christ was itself an 'adstipulation', the seal of Almighty God. Maitland said that 'the line which divides attestation from participation . . . would not easily be explained to a barbarian ealdorman'.<sup>62</sup> But these ealdormen were not barbarians, and when King Edwy crossed that line, the magnates of Mercia had deposed him.

No abbots were present, nor had they attended in 964 when the Cookley charter was approved; this may have been because of the strong anti-monastic feeling in Mercia. Four abbots attended in 965 when the Linslade grant was made, and even took precedence of the ealdormen, but that was a particularly

sensitive and important session. The revival of monasticism in Wessex and East Anglia, to which our literature, architecture, art and music owe so much, was only just beginning.

It would be otiose to summarize the career of St Dunstan, abbot of Glastonbury c.943, bishop of Worcester 957, bishop of London 959, archbishop of Canterbury 960-988. Bishop Stubbs' *Memorials of Saint Dunstan* has assembled the materials for a biography of this great statesman, who contributed so much to 'a conscious administrative reconstruction which has governed the development of English institutions from that day to this'.<sup>63</sup>

Oscytel was bishop of Dorchester on Thames 950-954 and archbishop of York 954-971; he appears to have exchanged sees with Archbishop Wulfstan at the instance of King Eadred, but as Wulfstan died in 956 it was later assumed that Oscytel had succeeded to York on that event. He died at Thame and was buried at Bedford; his successor at York was his kinsman St Oswald, who attests the present charter as bishop of Worcester, the see which he had held since 961 and which he retained in plurality at Edgar's instance until his death at Worcester in 992. His biography was written by a contemporary (probably Byrhtferth of Ramsey c.1000<sup>64</sup>) and long after the Norman Conquest he was honoured as patron and protector of Worcester, along with St Wulfstan, bishop 1062-95.

St Æthelwold signs as bishop of Winchester; he held that see from 963<sup>65</sup> until 984. His appointment as abbot of the decayed monastery of Abingdon by King Eadred shortly before 955 was a major step towards the monastic revival, and incidentally led to the survival of many landbooks, including the present charter and those for Linslade and for Chetwode and Hillesden, which had no connection with the endowments of Abingdon but were deposited there for safe custody. While at Abingdon Æthelwold was often the only abbot present at the Witan. Like Dunstan, he was a worker in metal; 'fecit duas campanas propriis manibus'.<sup>66</sup> Edgar needed him at Winchester; 'se biseop wæs bysig midþam cyninge', so 'busy' (preoccupied) that the Winchester community neglected its duties, according to his biography by Ælfric, who knew him well.<sup>67</sup> His death deprived England of a diligent, just and capable administrator, and exposed the young King Ethelred to advisers who acted in their own selfish interests.<sup>68</sup>

Ælfwold was bishop of Crediton from 953 to 972. It is remarkable that he was invited to sign first on this occasion; normally London and Winchester took precedence. Ælfstan is presumably the bishop of London 961-995, rather than his namesake the bishop of Rochester. Wynsige was bishop of Lichfield 964-973, and Eadhelm bishop of Selsey c.963-979/80.

From 951 (at latest) to 970 Oswulf was bishop of the see which included Berkshire and Wiltshire, the seat of which was eventually fixed at Ramsbury. In the present charter the sees are not named, but in 964 Oswulf was *episcopus sunnungnensis*, bishop of Sonning.<sup>69</sup> Florence of Worcester's list of bishops of this see (c.1225) is headed *Nomina praesulum Sunnungnensis ecclesiae*.<sup>70</sup>

Of the six *duces*, Ælfhere, ealdorman of Mercia from 956 to 983, naturally took precedence. He was of the royal house of Wessex,<sup>71</sup> and in Mercia, after the partition of 957, he was *potentissimus huius patriae dominator*,<sup>72</sup> Mercia being a *patria*. Ælfhere promoted the anti-monastic movement in Mercia, which was thoroughly popular. No doubt he thought of the monastic reformers as innovators, and of himself as defending the tradition by which a minster could be a community not of monks but of priests, serving an extensive *parochia*. His policy was two-fold:<sup>73</sup> first, to replace the monks by secular canons, many of whom were married; second, to appropriate part of the monastic lands and transfer them to those who could be trusted to resist any monastic restoration. St Oswald waited until 969 for the voluntary reorganisation of the mother church of Worcester on monastic lines,<sup>74</sup> and prudently took care to secure the consent of the ealdorman as well as the king to leases of Worcester lands. The king always had to rely on Ælfhere; the execution of Edgar's last code of laws was entrusted to caldormen Ælfhere and Æthelwine and Oslac, earl of Northumbria since 966.<sup>75</sup>

Æthelwine had been appointed ealdorman of East Anglia in 962; as a friend of the reforming party he was called *amicus Dei*. With the triumph of Ælfhere after Edgar's death, Oslac was banished, but Æthelwine retained office until his death in 992. He and Byrhtnoth helped St Æthelwold to recover endowments for the new Fenland abbeys when these were threatened by the upheaval of 975.

Ælfheah was Ælfhere's brother. In 956 King

Edwy had made him ealdorman of Hampshire and called him his 'very faithful *dux*'.<sup>76</sup> He had estates in seven counties. By his will, datable 968-971,<sup>77</sup> he left Aylesbury and Wendover to King Edgar, and his Wycombe estate to his kinsman Æthelweard the chronicler. His bequests to four monasteries show that he did not share his brother's views.

Ordgar first signs as *minister* in 958; he was ealdorman of Devon from 964 until his death in 971. Shortly before his promotion his daughter Ælfthryth had married King Edgar; Ethelred 'the Unready' was their son. She had previously been married to Æthelwold (d. 962), Æthelwine's predecessor as ealdorman of East Anglia.

Byrhtnoth, *dux praeclarus*, was ealdorman of Essex from 956 until his heroic death at Maldon in 991. He was clearly not a member of the royal family, whose names alliterated on a vowel. His estates have been studied by Cyril Hart.<sup>78</sup> In 956, while he was still a thegn, Edwy, described as 'basileon totius Albionis Domino dispensate . . . rex et primicerius istius insulae', gave him 10 hides at Tadmarton (Oxon.);<sup>79</sup> a further 5 hides there were granted to another thegn, Brihtric, obviously at the same witenagemot, as the witness lists are identical.<sup>80</sup> Presumably to mark Byrhtnoth's promotion to ealdorman (*princeps*) of Essex later that year in succession to Byrhtferth, he received the remaining 5 hides at Tadmarton by a charter written at the king's palace at Cheddar on 29 December 956;<sup>81</sup> no doubt the Witan met in the new hall. The first grant to Byrhtnoth was made by Edwy 'cum consensu meorum sapientum archontumque'; yet at the Christmas witenagemot, when the attendance was fuller, there is no such phrase. The headnotes in the Abingdon *Chronicon* indicate that all these estates were transferred to the Abbey with the king's consent. It does not seem necessary to reproduce these charters; in each of them the exordium is longer than the operative part. The anathema in the Christmas grant threatens violators with fetters among flame-vomiting troops of loathsome demons.

Despite Byrhtnoth's proud recklessness (*ofermod*) in allowing the Danes to cross the river at Maldon, he deserved the tribute of the finest battle-poem ever written in English.<sup>82</sup> One of its objects was to rebut the slander that when Byrhtnoth was killed all his companions fled.<sup>83</sup> The poet admits that 'more of them fled than was meet' but the ealdorman's

kinsmen, friends and hearth-companions fought on though there was no prospect of victory and not much hope of survival. The climax of *The Battle of Maldon* is the defiance of the aged retainer Byrhtwold, memorably translated by Gavin Bone, nor long before his own death in 1942:<sup>84</sup>

The will shall be harder, the courage shall be keener,

Spirit shall grow great, as our strength falls away.

One wonders how this superb summary of the Anglo-Saxon warrior's ethos could have been known, but the lost ending of the poem may have made this clear.

Byrhtnoth's wife Ælflæd was the sister of Æthelflæd of Damerham, King Edmund's second wife, who had left much of her considerable property to Byrhtnoth and Ælflæd for life, with reversion to various churches and religious houses.<sup>85</sup>

Of the eight thegns who assented to the present charter, six had witnessed the Cookley grant, and their ranking was unchanged. On both occasions Byrhtferth took precedence, as he did in the Linslade charter; he had been a king's thegn as early as 949. Prospectively the most important was Æthelweard; the name is common, but he was probably the member of the royal house of Wessex who was ealdorman of the western provinces, including Dorset, from 975 to c.998. He became a patron of learning and used a very good text of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle as the basis of his own Latin *Chronicon*. After the battle of Maldon he helped to negotiate peace with Olaf Tryggvason ('Anlaf' to the English) on behalf of King Ethelred and the Witan. It appears likely that he married Byrhtnoth's daughter, and that their son Æthelmær, ealdorman of the western provinces and founder or re-founder of Eynsham abbey, inherited lands from Byrhtnoth.<sup>86</sup>

Ælfwine witnesses charters from 956 to 973 and Wulfstan from 961 to 974. Æthelsige signs from 958 to 994, but did not become prominent until 984. He took advantage of King Ethelred's 'boyish ignorance' to appropriate Bromley, an estate of the see of Rochester,<sup>87</sup> and after other misdeeds, including the murder of a reeve who was defending the king's possessions, was deservedly deprived of all *dignitas* (office). One presumes that subscriptions in a lower position after 994 belong to a different Æthelsige.

New appointees normally began at the bottom of the list; thus Ælfhelm, whose name stands last, may be the *minister* who signs until 995, when he became earl or ealdorman of Northumbria; his son Wulfheah was old enough to be summoned to the Witan in 986. In 1006 Ælfhelm was murdered and Wulfheah blinded.

During the prosperous reign of Edgar the Peaceful, changes in the composition of the Witan were gradual, due to death or retirement, and policies could evolve peacefully, in contrast to the violent factional struggles which distracted the reigns of his sons. Æthelweard ended his chronicle with the death of Edgar, *rex admirabilis*, though he had intended to continue the narrative. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle texts are particularly meagre for Edgar's reign; 'war makes rattling good history, but peace is poor reading'.<sup>88</sup> *Incomparabilis Eadgarus* was well served by his triumvirate of saints, and was himself venerated as a saint at Glastonbury for a century.

#### *The Identification of Bragenfeld*

Professor Ekwall was the first to point out that the names Brayfield and Brafield must be identical, and that *aet Bragenfelda* might equally well refer to either. Sir Frank Stenton thereupon suggested that *Bragenfeld* denoted 'a wide area of country, probably a forest area of which Yardley Chase is the chief survivor'. As no personal name is known to explain the first element, Ekwall's view was that it might contain the old British name for that forest, for it is in just such districts that the old Celtic names survive.<sup>89</sup> As *feld* always refers to a tract of open land, as opposed to woodland,<sup>90</sup> Ekwall clarified his suggestion, to the effect that both villages were named from the same open country (no doubt cleared from the forest), their common name being '*feld by Bragen*'.<sup>91</sup> He also concluded that the first element was not a Celtic name for the forest but an English name for a hill, *bragen* being an alternative form of *brægen*, though from a different stem. *Brægen* is the usual word for 'brain' (*cerebrum*) but there is one West Saxon text, attributable to King Alfred, in which it translates *vertex* and means 'crown of the head'; Psalm 7:16, *in verticem ipsius iniquitas eius descendat*, 'on his brægn astige his unriht' (his wickedness falls upon his own pate).<sup>92</sup> Ekwall thereupon suggested a further transference to the meaning 'hill'. This seems likely enough if the reference is to a

rounded hilltop resembling a cranium, but, as Hart has stressed, this does not really suit the area. The *feld* is a gentle slope running down to the river Ouse, and even the Ouse-Nene watershed in Yardley Chase, called Arnho ('eagles' hoo') has no feature sufficiently prominent to warrant the name, still less to give its name to the whole forest.<sup>93</sup>

There is one other clear example of the element: *Bragenmanna broc*, in the bounds of Cotheridge (Worcs.),<sup>94</sup> presumably 'brook of the *Bragen*-men' who lived on the other side (*manna* can be the genitive plural of *mann*). Brentford (Grange) in Coleshill (Bucks, formerly a detached part of Herts), *Braynford* in 1337 and in quite recent pronunciation, may provide another parallel, but with first element *brægen*, not *bragen*. In the fairly common field-name Cat(s)brain(s)<sup>95</sup> named from a type of soil (clay with pebbles), *brægen* has transferred sense closer to its literal meaning.

Hart, envisaging a derivation which could apply to *feld* 'open country' did not accept the interpretations of *Bragen*-proposed by Ekwall and Stenton. He suggested *bræc* 'brushwood' or *\*bræcen* 'fern, bracken', related to the Old Norse *\*brakni*; this would be topographically appropriate for an area of rough grazing, but either form would have given a modern *ch* pronunciation, of which there is no sign. An Old English *bræcen* from *bracu* 'fern' is evidenced by one dubious Hampshire charter<sup>96</sup> which has the compound *on fearnbraca*; this would have given a *k* in modern English but would not have given *Bray-*. As Ekwall saw, we need the element *Bragen-* to explain the diphthong.

We may conclude that *Bragenfeld* denoted whatever area had been cleared from the forest, as the pressure of population led to settlement or resettlement away from the riverside; *Bragen*, which Sir Frank Stenton left as 'some old name' for the forest itself,<sup>97</sup> remains a mystery.

#### *The Missing Hidage*

In the Cookley charter, the agricultural potential of the land granted to Byrhtnoth is indicated by '*binis ab accolis estimatam mansiunculis*' (rated at two<sup>98</sup> hides by (its) neighbours). The words corrected to '*ab accolis aestimatam mansiunculis*' are retained in the present charter; Stevenson commented in 1858 that a numeral was missing (after *aestimatum*, he thought).

It was almost invariable for a royal charter to record the assessment in hides, which governed the public obligations of the estate. Normally the hidage would long since have been settled, but it appears that in this case it had yet to be determined, and that this had been or was to be done by neighbours. An *accola*, in relation to a *locus*,<sup>99</sup> is a resident neighbour, one settled by or near the place but not in it, as contrasted with an *incola*, a resident inhabitant, and an *advena*, a newcomer or stranger who comes to it.<sup>100</sup> Here *ab accolis* is used with great propriety to indicate that the productive capacity of the land granted was to be assessed by those who were already settled in adjoining townships. *Aestimare* is 'to value, appraise'; in this context 'rate' is perhaps the nearest modern equivalent.

The hide was in principle the land needed to support a free land-holding family. For land not yet fully settled, the fiscal hides, each of 120 fiscal acres, would reflect its prospective capacity rather than the number of family farms already established. *Mansiuncula* is a diminutive of *mansa*, the usual Latin word for 'hide'. Either term could be paraphrased as *terra unius manentis* (or *familiae*) even though the typical free householder, the normal taxpayer, might not yet be there. There is one independent occurrence of *mansiuncula* 'little dwelling'; St Jerome used it in the Vulgate for the chambers which Noah was commanded to make in the Ark,<sup>101</sup> and this could be the origin of its use in charters, especially Edgar's charters of 'Dunstan B' type.

It is suggested that the assessment for *Bragenfeld* had not been settled by men of the neighbouring vills when the charter, or perhaps what was in effect a file copy of it, was deposited by Byrhtnoth at Abingdon, a courtesy which the community would readily offer to an existing or prospective benefactor. In this context it may be relevant that Leofflæd, Byrhtnoth's daughter, executed her will<sup>102</sup> in triplicate; she retained one copy, deposited one copy with the king's treasury and entrusted the third to Ely, where her father was buried.<sup>103</sup> None of the three has survived, but the third was copied into the *Liber Eliensis*, fo. 74, which is still at Ely.<sup>104</sup> Many muniments entrusted to Abingdon have been preserved, even though the originals, including the present charter, were probably destroyed in 1327 when the townsfolk sacked the Abbey.<sup>105</sup> Happily most of these documents had been carefully transcribed in the preceding century into a revised and expanded chronicle-cartulary.<sup>106</sup>

The omission of the hidage may be connected with the absence of bounds. These were sometimes surveyed by or for the grantee after he had received his landbook, and appended by him to the text, or recorded separately. There are over sixty known examples of unattached boundary surveys,<sup>107</sup> of which ten were entered in either or both of the Abingdon chronicle-cartularies. As these were generally not selective, the presumption in this case is that no such survey reached Abingdon; and it may be that none was made. *Bragenfeld* could well have been regarded as common land where adjoining vills would share the grazing rights, the hidage being apportioned between them. Hart has identified what appears to be a somewhat similar case at Winterbourne Bassett (Wilts.),<sup>108</sup> where the five hides west of the *Winterburna* have bounds, but not the five hides east of the brook, being part of an extensive stretch of common land (pasture, not arable) on the Marlborough Downs.

#### *Settlements on the Feld*

Cyril Hart has commented 'By itself, the *Bragenfeld* settlement could never have answered for more than 5 hides, a small gift for a king to make to an ealdorman.'<sup>109</sup> One could reply that this was not the first or the only gift to Byrhtnoth, and that the average hidage in royal grants at this period was around seven.<sup>110</sup> The charter itself acknowledges the smallness of the gift, *aliquantulum ruris partem*; but this may be discounted as conventional courtesy, and the better view is that *Bragenfeld* was a much larger area than Brafield on the Green, if indeed that village existed in 967. Edgar was giving Byrhtnoth a tract of land within a district called by one name, a name which in this forested area implies assarting for settlement. Within this area new communities could arise. Dr Margaret Gelling, who regards *feld* as quasi-habitative,<sup>111</sup> takes the locative *æt Bragenfelda* to refer to a specific existing village settlement,<sup>112</sup> in which case a choice between the two claimants would have to be made; but in that case there would surely have been no difficulty about the hidage. In this area of late and dispersed settlement, habitation sites were easily changed. 'A new cluster of steads is formed; for housebuilding is not a lengthy or costly process.'<sup>113</sup>

The two villages called by the name of the district are about eight miles apart; *Bragenfeld* could well have included the sites of both. But the grant to

Byrhtnoth appears not to have included the whole of the *feld* between the forest and the Great Ouse. The northern part of the ancient parish of Olney, including Olney Hyde and Warrington, was still *feld* in 979, when it was granted by King Ethelred with part of his *numen* (jurisdiction, royal authority) to the overmighty ealdorman Ælfhere, described in a magniloquent charter<sup>114</sup> as 'exceedingly faithful to me, and joined to me by kinship'. The mid-tenth century was a favourable period for colonisation of natural woodland, and there may have been further clearance hereabouts between 967 and 979, but the fact that the *feld* was bounded by a *wyrtruma* or 'forest fence' (a timbered hedgebank with a perimeter track inside the wood)<sup>115</sup> strongly suggests that what is still the boundary of Yardley Chase had been defined well before 979. It naturally became the county boundary.

Names are given to villages to distinguish them from adjoining villages, but the early stage of the process may be awkward enough. In a Somerset charter<sup>116</sup> we have 'Middletun et oþer Middletun' rather than Upper and Lower Milton. In such a case the latter place was probably a colony of the former, as a new settlement on the waste or in the woods. In the settlement period a large district might bear a single name. Thus in Norfolk the name Burnham is shared by five villages; when given it would have related to the oldest of these, which claimed the whole territory. *Bragenfeld*, however, need not have related at any stage to a single group of households, and there is no presumption as to priority.

At Cookley, where the (very modest) assessment by neighbours had already been made, there are detailed bounds, but they relate to streams, ditches, hills, valleys, a windy ridge, paths, a ford, a wood, a stone, a spring, a post. Culna's *clif* is the river-bank. There is no indication that cultivation had reached the boundary, and it is quite likely that Byrhtnoth was expected to encourage settlement. In the present case, it is suggested that the intention of Edgar and his advisers was that Byrhtnoth should find settlers for his part of the *feld*. Much earlier, and on a larger scale, King Ine had allotted newly-acquired parts of Somerset to his *gesiths* so that they could put under-tenants on it; they were warned not to abandon the land until it had been brought into cultivation.<sup>117</sup> King Æthelwulf had pursued a similar policy in South Devon, fertile but sparsely populated, after 847.<sup>118</sup> Thus there were good precedents. This part of the Ouse valley on the border of Bucks and Northants

may well have been depopulated by Danish ravaging. In the temporarily more stable times of King Edgar, it would be natural and prudent for resettlement to be facilitated by a new allocation and hidation of the waste, and by fiscal concessions.

For these reasons, one questions Hart's suggestion that Cold Brayfield may not have been within the *feld* at all. If it were a secondary settlement colonized from Brafield on the Green, it would owe to that village its existence and its name, which might then be manorial rather than topographical. But would it not then have become part of Northamptonshire, perhaps a Brafield Thorpe? Its name is not indeed on record until the Pipe Roll of 1185 but, although not named in Domesday Book, what became the principal manor of Cold Brayfield has been identified by Professor Chibnall<sup>119</sup> with 2¼ hides returned under Lavendon, a grouping of hamlets and farmsteads for fiscal purposes in this landscape of gradual woodland clearance. It was held in 1086 by Gilbert de Blosseville from Countess Judith, who also had manors in Brafield, Whiston and Denton. On this unnamed holding there could be three ploughs, but they were not there; the working population was four bordars, and the valuation was only one pound. The situation had been the same at King Edward's death. Professor Chibnall has postulated a devastation in 1065 by marauding Danes from Northampton; there were other occasions in the preceding century which could have made Cold Brayfield a deserted village and deprived it of a distinctive name, despite (or indeed because of) the attraction of its riverside site. The Domesday returns for Clifton Reynes, just across the Ouse, show that there Gilbert de Blosseville had a holding which was manorially distinct but had no ploughs, only two bordars and no name of its own. It was about to become Newton Blossomville; its church is hardly later than 1100.

The grouping of households into 5- and 10-hide units or larger tax brackets arose from King Alfred's decision to base national liabilities, particularly military service, on such units, which were customary in Wessex. Its application during the tenth century to existing village communities in Mercia must have entailed fairly rough justice, but the lumpiness of the scheme would be less apparent where a 10-hide or larger grouping could be imposed on scattered farms or small hamlets. It would be desirable to specify one local landholder who could be made responsible for his neighbours, and at whose hall the necessary pro-

visions or other renders in kind could be collected and meetings could be held. The Domesday Lavendon, including Cold Brayfield, provides a clear example. Before the Norman Conquest what appears in the returns as its principal manor had been occupied by eight thegns, one of whom represented the group in the eyes of the Crown; he was a housecarl of King Edward, with a small holding of his own across the river. Once a manor-house had been thus designated, a parish church was likely to be built nearby; Lavendon church dates from the first half of the eleventh century.<sup>120</sup> One of the conditions on which a *ceorl* with 5 hides of his own could claim the rights of a thegn was that he had a church and a kitchen.<sup>121</sup> The existence of a church, together with population growth, agrarian co-operation and seignorial pressure, would favour nucleation and stabilisation of the village,<sup>122</sup> but a settlement such as Cold Brayfield, at a distance from the incipient centre, was quite likely to go its own way and become a separate parish; its church is mid-twelfth century.<sup>123</sup> The English were always more ready than the Celts to live close together, but they were ready to shift to a new site (within existing estate boundaries) after a generation or two if the old site was found unsatisfactory or had become insanitary, or after a disaster such as a plague or harrying. The stone-built church and the manor-house made such moves less likely. Parish boundaries became firmly fixed during the twelfth century, and manors were frozen by the statute *Quia Emptores* in 1290.

#### *The Immunity Clause*

The charter declares Byrhtnoth's land to be free from secular public burdens except for the three from which land was hardly ever exonerated: the provision of strongholds (*burh-bot*), the maintenance of bridges (*brycg-bot*) and liability for military service (*fyrð-faru*). Any tenth-century diploma which purports to grant exemption from this *trimoda* (or *trinoda*) *necessitas*<sup>124</sup> is at best suspect. In the present charter the immunity and reservation clause is in common form; by implication it entitles Byrhtnoth to exact whatever would, save for the charter, have been due to the Crown. He might well wish to encourage new settlers by financial incentives; in any case he could make his own bargain with present and future tenants. However, a grant made in 967 must be read subject to Edgar's legislation of the previous ten years, especially the Hundred Ordinance. When theft

was committed within a privileged estate, half the thief's property was to go to the hundred and half to the lord who enjoyed the immunity.<sup>125</sup> Otherwise the hundredors would have had little interest in pursuing cattle-thieves on bookland. This statutory provision was repeatedly extended. Whether by 967 an immunist could set up a court for his own bookland, as of right, without an express grant of jurisdiction, is still subject to some doubt. In 956 King Edwy had expressly conceded Archbishop Osmund's right to hold his own court for the great Southwell estate,<sup>126</sup> and in 959 Edgar as king of the Mercians and Northumbrians had recognised a similar privilege of private justice exercised by his faithful *matrona* Quen for Howden.<sup>127</sup> Fully developed manorialism as the standard form of local government and of law-enforcement at first instance was not far away.

#### *Conclusion*

Maitland, in what is still an invaluable commentary on the landbooks, conceded 'Now we are far from saying that the king never grants land that is waste and void of inhabitants, but it is plain enough that this is not the common case. The charter deals in the first instance with manses . . .'<sup>128</sup> It has been submitted that the *Bragenfeld* charter is one of the less common cases where the king granted waste land, mostly cleared for rough grazing, in fairly large quantities, and not as appurtenant to an existing village community. Its resources could be duly assessed by neighbouring vills. Edgar's object was not merely to reward Byrhtnoth but to give him an opportunity and an incentive to promote the development of such communities, two of which eventually took the name of the waste, when the plough had turned *feld* into open field. The inconvenience of the duplicated name would be less apparent in the tenth or eleventh century than in the twentieth.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## BRAYFIELD/BRAFIELD: THE WIDER CONTEXT

KEITH BAILEY

This is not the place to attempt a detailed historical and topological study of the area known as *Bragenfeld* (or Yardley Chase) which lies between the two Bra[y]fields, especially as it is mostly situated in Northamptonshire, and hence outside the strict purview of this journal. This note is merely intended to give some idea of the evidence which suggests an exceptional status for Yardley Hastings in what was clearly once an administrative unit, straddling the later, probably tenth-century, shire boundary. The boundary between English and Danish spheres of influence agreed by Alfred and Guthrum in 878 followed the Ouse in this area, leaving the later Bunsty Hundred in the Danelaw. This may have changed under the treaty of Tiddingford in 906, leaving the way clear for Bunsty to become tributary to the newly-founded *burh* at Buckingham after 914.<sup>1</sup>

This *Brayfield* unit may represent one of the three-hundred hide entities which formed the smallest groupings mentioned in the late seventh-century Tribal Hidage in Middle Anglia, but which were later subsumed in Mercia.<sup>2</sup> Such triple hundreds are common in many areas, including Buckinghamshire.<sup>3</sup> Together, Bunsty and Wymersley Hundreds (including the area separately rubricated under Collingtree Hundred in Domesday Book) cover an area of 61,000 acres (27,000 ac. in Bucks. and 34,000 ac. in Northants.), which is characteristic of several such *regiones*.<sup>4</sup>

Within this area, two parishes stand out as exceptionally large Yardley Hastings (with Denton) 5,742 ac. and Hanslope 6,453 ac. and these may mark minster churches. The church at the former has the potentially early dedication to St Andrew, while the latter was assessed at £46 13s 4d in 1291, the third most valuable church in Buckinghamshire.<sup>5</sup> Yardley church was not, however, especially valuable at £16 13s 4d, and it seems that by the thirteenth century it had yielded its position to Preston, the focus of the rural deanery, whose name (OE *preost, tun*, 'settlement associated with priest[s]') indicates a pre-conquest significance,<sup>6</sup> possibly as the part of the minster *parochia* responsible for supporting the priests based at Yardley. The basic elements of Yardley church, however, contain twice the average area of churches

in the deanery, further support for earlier minster status.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, Yardley had tenurial or ecclesiastical links with virtually every location in Wymersley Hundred in 1086, and this is often indicative of early administrative units.<sup>8</sup> (It is worth noting that these links do not extend to places in Collingtree Hundred. They do, however, include Brafield.) There is, unfortunately, no similar evidence for Bunsty Hundred to enable us to identify (a) if there were any links between a central place and dependencies, or (b) whether there were any links with Northamptonshire.

Place-name evidence shows that Yardley itself (OE *gyrda, leah*, 'woodland from which yards or spars are taken'), [Castle] Ashby (OE *æsc*, ON *by*, 'settlement by an ash tree'), and Wootton (OE *wudu, tun*, 'farm by the wood', or 'settlement specialising in woodland activities') are the only parish names in the area reflecting the importance of the extensive woodland area.<sup>9</sup> Most of the rest are compounded with *tun* and this may indicate a mid- to late-Saxon origin, although we must recognise that many earlier, dispersed settlements whose names have been lost may predate the nucleated villages which bear these names, especially in a woodland region.<sup>10</sup> In Bunsty Hundred, Gayhurst (OE *gat, hyst*, 'wooded hill frequented by goats') is the only parish name denoting woodland.<sup>11</sup> The Domesday Book indicates that the area was well wooded in the late-eleventh century.<sup>12</sup> The name Bunsty (OE *stow*, 'Buna's place') may echo an otherwise lost saint whose cult centred on this area, as *stow* often carries the connotation 'religious, holy place' and is unlikely to be linked with the name of a layman.<sup>13</sup>

A preliminary examination of a variety of sources indicates, therefore, that there is nothing to contradict Dr Baines's view that the two Brayfields take their name from relatively open land around the edge of a substantial tract of woodland whose name was *\*Bragen*, almost certainly of Celtic origin. This formed the core of a territory, probably focused on Yardley Hastings, and including originally parts of north Buckinghamshire which later became Bunsty Hundred.

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10. C. Plummer, *Two of the Saxon Chronicles Parallel* (1899) ii. 176
11. W. D. Macray ed., *Chronicon Abbatiae Ramesiensis* (1886) 116-17
12. *The Battle of Maldon*, in H. Sweet, *Anglo-Saxon Reader* (13th edn., 1954) 111-20
13. S1808, datable 990-c.1000
14. Though the medial -n- (or -m-) is more consistently present in Cold Brayfield
15. H. R. Loyn, *Anglo-Saxon England and the Norman Conquest* (1962) 332
16. J. M. Kemble, *Codex Diplomaticus Aevi Saxonici*, no. 1260
17. J. Stevenson, *Chronicon Monasterii de Abingdon* (1858) i. 300-01
18. W. de G. Birch, *Cartularium Saxonicum*, no. 1209
19. H. Pierquin, *Recueil général des chartes anglo-saxonnes* (1912) pt. 5, no. 25
20. G. Hickes, *Institutiones Grammaticae Anglo-Saxonicae et Moeso-Gothicae* (1703) 138-9. Hickes' text has been checked against the British Library manuscript Harley 4660 fo. 8v, a seventeenth-century copy of the lost Worcester text, which was used by Birch and by the editors of Dugdale's *Monasticon Anglicanum* in 1846 (i. 593, no. 27). This transcript has the heading 'Carta Eadgari Regis A° 964'; it emends a few spellings (praeter; cuicunque; hujusce; paenitemine; caraxari); it has *His* for *Hi* in the eschatocol, but with *s* under- and over-dotted, presumably for deletion; and it adds a note on *culnan clif*: 'tellus ista infra maneriū de Whulesley sita est. Wlstanus eps a Conquestore terram hanc acquisiuit a° .1067. & eclae Wig. dedit. vide Monast. T.1. p. 140'. The reference is to the first edition (1653) of *Monasticon Anglicanum*. The copy of the 1067 charter in B. L. Cotton Tiberius Axiij fo. 185v has variant readings of the bounds of Cookley, given by Birch, no. 1134
21. A. Mawer and F. M. Stenton, *The Place-Names of Worcestershire* (1927) 258
22. Sonning (Soninges 1068, Sunningas 1146) was an episcopal manor, but one is almost tempted to translate *episcopus Sunnungensis* as 'bishop of the Sunningas', the folk who gave their name to the ancient *regio* or *provincia* of Sunninges, evidenced in 672-4 (S1165). Berkshire was in existence by 860, and acquired its own bishop in 903 (W. Stubbs, *Registrum Sacrum Anglicanum* (1858) 13, 165); his diocese came to include Wiltshire, with its seat at Ramsbury
23. Emending *apulhelm hamensis* to *Apulf (h)elmhamensis*
- 23a. C. R. Hart, *The Early Charters of Northern England and the North Midlands* (1975) 19-22
24. S106, probably original
25. S58, S59
26. e.g. F. Vegetius Renuatus, *De re militari* 2. 21; Ammianus Marcellinus 18. 3
27. *Cod. Theod.* 11, 18, 1
28. *Cod. Justin.* 12, 28, 1 *et freq.*
29. E. E. Barker, 'Sussex Anglo-Saxon Charters', *Sussex Arch. Coll.* 88 (1949) 51-113, at p. 73
30. F. M. Stenton, *The Latin Charters of the Anglo-Saxon Period* (1955) 16
31. S676, S678
32. A. H. J. Baines, 'The Lady Elgiva, St Æthelwold and the Linslade Charter of 966', *Recs. Bucks* 25 (1983) 110-38
33. S646. By this date King Edwy had been reconciled with Cynesige, bishop of Lichfield, who had been associated with his kinsman Dunstan in the altercation at the coronation banquet in January 956, but Dunstan was still in exile
34. e.g. S723, dated 963
35. ed. H. Raine, *Historians of the Church of York*, i. 43-68. See C. Brooke, *The Saxon and Norman Kings* (1968) 368
36. A. S. Chron. (C) s.a. 975
- 36a. S937, datable c.999
37. M. Attius Plautus, *Aulularia* 1, 1, 6; 'tibi ego rationem reddam?' (do I render an account to you?)
38. Cicero, *De Republica* 2, 17 'cuius magnae exstiterunt res bellicae'
39. As in Ulpian, *Dig.* 2, 10, 1 'si reus non stiterit'
40. Cf. S1454, where the full number of oath-helpers (consacramentals) came forward: 'þæt wæs forþcom(en) cal se fulla': A. H. J. Baines, 'Wynflæd v Leofwine: a Datchet Lawsuit of 990', *Recs. Bucks* 32 (1990) 63-75, at p. 67
41. *Cod. Justin.* 8, 37 (38), 10
42. *Inst. Justin.* 3, 19, 12
43. S1379
44. *Epistola ad Ecgbertum*, in *Venerabilis Baedae Opera Historica*, ed. C. Plummer (1896) i. 417
45. S737; see note 32
46. S544
47. A. H. J. Baines, 'The Chetwode-Hillesden Charter of 949', *Recs. Bucks* 24 (1982) 133, at p. 12
48. Homily on the Circumcision, in B. Thorpe ed., *The Homilies of the Anglo-Saxon Church* (1844) i. 98
49. D. C. Douglas and G. W. Greenaway eds., *Engl. Hist. Docs.* ii (1953) 109; R. L. Poole, *Engl. Hist. Rev.* 16, 719-21
50. 'Si vis scire quota sit indictio, sume annos Domini, et adiiice tria, partire per xv, et quod remanserit, ipsa est indictio anni presentis'; *Venerabilis Bedae Opera*, ed. Giles (1843-4) vi. 130
51. Ref. 50, vi. 244
52. As the various regnal years confirm: Bede, *Hist. Eccl.* bk. iv, c. 17
53. Bede, *Hist. Eccl.* bk. iv, c. 5
54. For a full discussion, see S. D. Keynes, *The Diplomas of King Æthelred 'the Unready'* (1980) c. 2, especially 79-83; but cf. P. Chaplais, 'The Anglo-Saxon Chancery' in *Prisca Munimenta*, ed. F. Rongier (1973) 43-62
55. Hart, *Early Charters of Northern England* 17-41
56. *Engl. Hist. Rev.* 69, 59-66
57. D. Whitelock ed., *Engl. Hist. Docs.* (1955) i. 214 n. 2
58. Keynes, *op. cit.*, 138

59. R. Drögereit, 'Gab es eine angelsächsische Königskanzlei', *Archiv für Urkundenforschung* 13 (1935) at p. 340, quoting W. H. Stevenson
60. R. Drögereit, *op. cit.*, at p. 402: "Nach 963 können wir kein individuelles Diktat mit mehreren Urkunden feststellen"
61. See S891
62. F. W. Maitland, *Domesday Book and Beyond* (Fontana ed., 1960) 297
63. W. S. Churchill, *Hist. of the English-Speaking Peoples* (1956) i, 104
64. M. Lapidge, 'Hermeneutic Style' in *Anglo-Saxon England* (1975) at pp. 91–5
65. Evidenced by three charters of 963: S710 and S718 before his elevation, S716 after it
66. *Chron. Mon. Abingdon* i, 345
67. *Ælfric's Lives*, ed. Skeat, i, 454–6, 470
68. See S876, S993
69. See note 22
70. See D. Whitelock, *The Place-Names of Berkshire*, (1973) i, 133, (1976) iii, 815, 840–4
71. Evidenced by S582 and S834
72. *Chronicon Abbatiae Eveshamiensis*, ed. Murray, 78
73. *Hist. Ch. York* i, 4439; *Chron. Abb. Evesh.* 78–9
74. *Engl. Hist. Docs* ii, 624–5, an official declaration by St Wulfstan summarizing Worcester history from 680 to 1092
75. IV Edgar c. 15
76. S639
77. S1485
78. C. R. Hart, 'The ealdorom of Essex', in *An Essex Tribute* (1957) 5781
79. S617; *Chron. Abingdon* i, 191–4
80. S618; *Chron. Abingdon* i, 194–7. B. L. Cotton Aug. ii, 43 is the original landhook
81. S611; *Chron. Abingdon* i, 197–200. The bounds begin and end at 'Edward's (water-)mill'. The original was preserved at Abingdon until the Dissolution. A sixteenth-century transcript was collated by J. Stevenson with the cartulary texts
82. See note 12
83. 'Byrihtnothus cecidit et reliqui fugerunt', *Hist. Ch. York* i, 456
84. G. Bone, *Anglo-Saxon Poetry* (1943) 35
85. S1494; printed as a Suffolk dialectal text in Sweet, *Anglo-Saxon Reader* (13th edn.) 188–9. The ealdorman's name appears as Bæorhtnoð
86. References in Bishop Eric Gordon, *Eynsham Abbey* (1990) 14
87. S864; restored to Rochester in 998 by S893
88. Thomas Hardy, *The Dynasts* (1910) pt. I, act 2, sc. 5
89. See note 3
90. Implied by the common formula *on wuda and on felda*: F. E. Harmer, *Anglo-Saxon Writs* (2nd edn., 1989) 431 *et passim*. See M. Gelling *Place-Names in the Landscape* (Dent, 1993) 235–245
91. E. Ekwall, *Concise Oxf. Dict. of English Place-Names* (4th edn., 1960) 59
92. Psalm 7:16; J. W. Bright and R. L. Ramsey, *Liber Psalmorum: The West-Saxon Psalms* (1907)
93. Cf. ref. 7, at p. 302
94. S1303; A. Mawer and F. M. Stenton, *The Place-Names of Worcestershire* (1927) 189
95. J. Field, *English Field-Names* (1989) 39
96. S378, dated 909
97. A. Mawer and F. M. Stenton, *The Place-Names of Northamptonshire* (1933) 144
98. Literally 'a pair of hides'; the use of the distributive numeral seems fanciful, unless it is meant to reinforce *particulam* ('little bit') to stress the smallness of the grant
99. *Locus*, according to the jurist Ulpian, is strictly used for a piece or part of an estate; 'stricte loquendo, locus non est fundus sed pars aliqua fundi', *Digest* 50, 16, 60. In these landbooks the best translation may be 'locality', part of a larger administrative land-unit (*rus*)
100. *Incolae, accolae* and *advenae* are contrasted in Plautus, *Aulularia* 3, 1, 1
101. Genesis 6:14. The meaning of the Hebrew word is uncertain
102. S1520
103. C. R. Hart, *The Early Charters of Eastern England* (1966) 48
104. E. O. Blake, *Liber Eliensis* (R. Hist. Soc., 1962) 157–8
105. F. M. Stenton, *The Early History of the Abbey of Abingdon* (1913) 43; *Engl. Hist. Rev.* 27, 727–38. In the same year (1327) rioters at Bury St Edmunds plundered the abbey and carried off documents
106. See note 1
107. S1540–1602
108. Ref. 103, pp. 253–4
109. Ref. 7, at p. 304
110. I owe this point to Mr Keith Bailey
111. M. Gelling, *The Place-Names of Berkshire* (1976) iii, 926
112. See note 6
113. Maitland, *op. cit.*, 575
114. S834, discussed by A. H. J. Baines, 'The Olney Charter of 969', *Recs. Bucks* 21 (1979) 154–84
115. A. H. J. Baines, 'Wyrtruma and Wyrtwala', *South Midlands Archaeology* 17 (1987) 102–10
116. S1042, dated 1065, is highly dubious, but good evidence on this point
117. Ine cc. 648, as interpreted by Maitland, *op. cit.*, 283–4
118. S298 as expounded by H. P. R. Finberg, *West Country Historical Studies*, 112–8
119. A. C. Chibnall, *Beyond Sherington* (1979) 111–2
120. Royal Commission on Historical Monuments, *Noth Bucks* (1913) 161
121. Added in *Textus Roffensis* to *Gepyncdo* c. 2, a compilation on status probably made by Archbishop Wulfstan, 1002–23
122. J. Blair ed., *Minsters and Parish Churches* (1988) 7
123. Ref. 120, p. 93
124. A convenient term, though the charter in which it occurs (S230) was discredited by W. H. Stevenson, 'Trinoda Necessitas', *Engl. Hist. Rev.* 29 (1914) 689–703
125. I Edgar c 2.1 A marginal note in C.C.C.C. Ms. 383 p.2 gives the reason: 'that men go without delay in pursuit of thieves'
126. S659
127. S681
128. Maitland, *op. cit.*, 303

## REFERENCES (The Wider Context)

1. I owe this suggestion to Dr Baines.
2. C. Hart, 'The Tribal Hidage', *Trans. Roy. Hist. Soc.*, 5th ser., xxi (1971), 133-57.
3. K. A. Bailey, 'The Hidation of Buckinghamshire II', *Recs. Bucks* forthcoming.
4. A. Everitt, *Continuity and Colonization* (Leicester, 1986), Part II *passim* for a discussion of such territories in Kent.
5. *Taxatio Ecclesiastica*, Record Commission, 1802.
6. J. E. B. Gover, A. Mawer & F. M. Stenton, *The Place-Names of Northamptonshire* (Cambridge, 1933), 150; A. H. Smith, *English Place-name Elements II* (Cambridge, 1956), 73.
7. The average size of the nave+chancel in Wymersley Hundred is 771 sq. ft., at Yardley this rises to 1,520 sq. ft.
8. G. Foard, 'The Administrative Organisation of Northamptonshire in the Saxon Period', *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Arch. and Hist.*, 4 (Oxford, 1985), 185-222.
9. *Place-Names of Northants.*, 142, 153.
10. C. C. Taylor, *Village and Farmstead* (1983), Chaps. 7 and 8.
11. A. Mawer & F. M. Stenton, *The Place-Names of Buckinghamshire* (Cambridge, 1925), 4-5.
12. H. C. Darby & E. M. J. Campbell (eds.), *The Domesday Geography of South-East England* (Cambridge, 1962), 165-9. Hanslope had woodland for 1,000 swine, Olney for 400.
13. *P. N. of Bucks.*, 5; A. H. Smith, *op. cit.*, 158-61.