

AN EARLY MEDIEVAL SECULAR AND ECCLESIASTICAL ESTATE: THE ORIGINS OF THE PARISH OF WINSCOMBE IN NORTH SOMERSET

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INTRODUCTION

Winscombe lies just inland from Weston Super Mare on the north side and at the west end of the Mendip Hills in the north of the historic county of Somerset, some 24km (15 miles) south west of Bristol (Figs 1 and 2). The modern civil parish is an odd shape looking rather like a butterfly on its side (or a cottage loaf – Knight 1915, 15). This shape was rather more obvious before boundary changes reallocated parts of the parish to neighbouring parishes in the 20th century (Fig. 1).¹ In this paper the original parish, as shown on the tithe map in 1839 will be considered. How and when this land unit was first defined will be discussed as will the situation in 1086 when the Domesday survey was undertaken. A late Saxon lay estate can be reconstructed belonging to Aelfswith, the wife of the ealdorman of Hampshire, Aelfheah. It is also suggested that there may have been either a large early medieval royal estate in the area based on Banwell, of which Winscombe was a part, or a series of smaller independent discrete estates, in late Saxon times.

Today the main settlements in the parish are Sandford in the northern half and Winscombe in the centre. The latter is a misnaming as it is really a development of the hamlet of Woodborough; the original Winscombe is 1km to the south-west on the north side of the hills where is situated the medieval parish church. Elsewhere in the parish are the hamlets of Barton (presumably the *beretun* of the Banwell estate), Sidcot, Winterhead and Dinghurst (Fig. 1). Altogether in the past it is possible to distinguish around 19 separate settlements in the

parish in a land unit of 4157 acres/1682ha. Three of these cannot be located with certainty and are only known from documents; two are lost or deserted and are only located by field names.²

Winscombe is first recorded in the 10th century.³ King Edgar (king of the Mercians and Northumbrians 957–9 and king of the English 959–75) (Lapidge *et al.* 1999) is said to have granted 15 hides of land at Winscombe to a woman called Aelfswith between 959 and 975 (ie sometime during his reign; she is wrongly called ‘queen’ in some charters and by Collinson 1791, 612). The estate subsequently passed to Glastonbury Abbey and was held by the abbey as a 15-hide estate in the Domesday survey of 1086 (see below; Thorn and Thorn 1980, 8:2). What do we know about this woman and what was meant by ‘Winscombe’ at this early date?

The name Aelfswith is relatively well recorded in the 10th century for a lay person, especially a woman, though it is important to remember the caveat that more than one person might have had the same name at that time. Nevertheless the main aspects about her life seem to be reasonably clear and certain. She was the wife of Aelfheah, who was ealdorman of Hampshire from 959 to 970 (Williams *et al.* 1991, 8), whom she seems to have married before 940 and become a widow (and a nun) by 970 when presumably he had died. She may have been a pious person anyway as she is sometimes referred to as a ‘religious lady’ in the charters. Her husband held estates all over southern England, particularly in Wessex. Some of these were held with Aelfswith, while other estates clearly belonged solely to her,

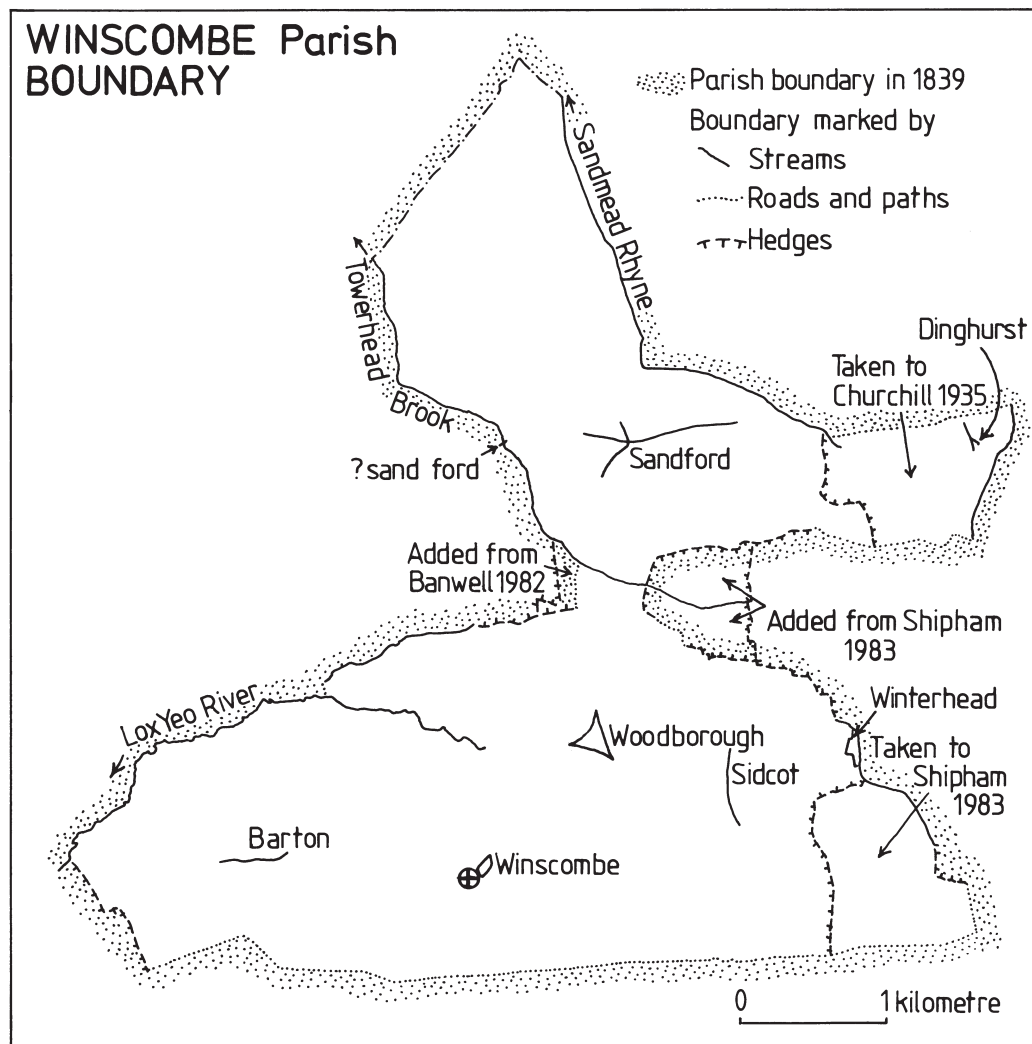
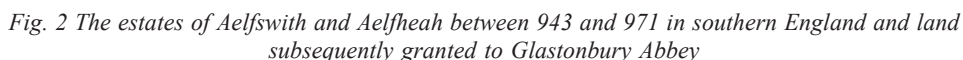


Fig. 1 Winscombe parish boundary in 1839 from the tithe map, with subsequent changes in the 20th century

such as Winscombe. Others she inherited when her husband died, like Batcombe in Somerset. Aelfheah made a will listing his property and where it should be allocated on his death. This is undated but must relate to sometime between 968 and 972. From the information contained in this will and from the Anglo-Saxon charters which survive, the estate which Aelfheah and his wife Aelfswith held across southern England in the mid to late 10th century can be reconstructed (Fig. 2). Aelfheah may have died by 970 as in that year Aelfswith is described as 'widow and nun' when she is granted some land at

Idmiston in Wiltshire. It was not uncommon for aristocratic widows to take the veil and end their days as nuns in the major monasteries of Wessex in the pre-Conquest period. Grants of land often accompanied the move of the widow into the nunnery providing an endowment for her upkeep, or they could just live as widows in secular society, but as 'vowesses'. The estate at Idmiston is near the Anglo-Saxon nunnery at Amesbury so she may have ended her days as a nun in there. We do not know when she was born, when she was married or in what year she died. One son of Aelfswith and Aelfheah is



We do not know if Aelfswith ever lived in or even visited Winscombe. As her husband was ealdorman for Hampshire, a high-ranking official acting in the king's name and on the king's behalf (Lapidge *et al.* 1999, 152), they were probably based in or near Winchester – the royal centre at this time. Her

The charter granting the land to Aelfswith does not contain boundary clauses referring to the bounds of her land so we cannot be quite sure what the extent of 'Winscombe' was in the mid-10th century.⁷ However, a little later in 1068, two adjacent estates are defined with boundary clauses, at Banwell to the west and Compton Bishop to the south. As their boundaries march with Winscombe we can get some impression of the outline of the block of land and some detail of features in the landscape at that date (Figs 3 and 4).

THE BANWELL CHARTER (Fig. 3)

The first of these to be considered is Banwell a large village and parish to the west of Sandford and north of Winscombe. In 1066 Banwell was a large estate belonging to King Harold.⁸ It subsequently passed to the Bishop of Wells who held it in 1086 (Thorn and Thorn 1980; 6:9). The entry in Domesday Book shows that Banwell was a 30-hide estate, of which six hides were in the bishop's demesne. Importantly the entry also shows that there were a number of dependent but distinct holdings inside the Banwell estate, which were enumerated in 1086. These were Serlo's 3 hides, Ralph's 5½ hides, Roghard's 5½ hides, Fastrad's 1 hide, Bofa's 1 hide and Alfwy's 1 hide. Thus 17 hides are accounted for as tenant estates. Most of these are easily big enough to be parishes in their own right. Other settlements in the area that have no entries in Domesday Book include Christon,⁹ Weston-super-Mare, Locking, Puxton and Churchill. It is likely that some of these were included in Banwell at this time and therefore are hidden in the subsidiary holdings.

The medieval parish of Banwell was much larger than the early modern parish and it included: Christon, a chapel in 1496,¹⁰ Puxton, a chapel in 1449 (Weaver 1901, 17), Puttingthrop, otherwise known as St George's, a chapelry in 1548 (Green 1888, 74) and Churchill, which had a *capellanus de Cerceles*, 1174–91, and was also a chapelry (Maxwell-Lyte and Holmes 1894, 128). This group of parishes, with Banwell, may be a remnant of a much older *parochia*, the estate served by a minster church, though Stephen Rippon has made a convincing case for Puxton being formerly part of the Congresbury estate (Rippon 2006, 141–2).

The Banwell Charter appears in volume II of the *Liber Albus* in the Cathedral Library at Wells. The *Liber* was mostly copied in the 15th century, but contains much earlier material relating to the cathedral and its lands and churches. Among these documents is the charter to the bishop from King William, dated 1068, granting the estates of Banwell and Compton (Bishop) to the bishop (Douglas and Greenaway 1968, 601–3). The bounds of Banwell are quoted here and Compton Bishop follows below.

Text and translation

Wells Cathedral. Dean and Chapter Manuscripts, *Liber Albus* II (xv/xvi) fo 246. AD 1068 (HMC 1907, 431; see also Dickinson 1877, 49–64).

Dis is ðære XXX hyda boc æt Banawelle þe willhelm cyng gebocade s(anc)to Andrea ap(osto)lo in to þam bistoprice æt welle aon ece yrfe. xxx mansus in loco qui a solicolis Banawelle

Dis syndan þa land gemæro æt Banawelle. Ærest æt hylfbroces eawylluc east on þone cumb eall abutan losaleh swa west on þone cumb & swa west of ðam cumbe to bibricge. of bibricge into ture broc. of turebroke into locxs. of loxs into bridewell to pantes hyd forð. to fule welle ut on þone mære. of ðam mere on ealden wrinn into catt widige up forð be cing roda æst in þone wrinn æft streame forð. þ hyt cymð in þone hyls broc up þ hyt cymð æft inne þa eaa wylme.

This is the 30-hide charter for Banwell which King William gave to St Andrew and into the possession of the bishop at Wells. Thirty mansi at the place called Banwell.

These are the bounds of the land at Banwell. First at the source of hill brook, east to the combe. All round Losa's wood. So west to the combe. So west from the combe to by-bridge. From by-bridge to boar's brook. From boar's brook to the river Lox [now the Lox-Yeo river]. From the river Lox to bridewell. To the ford at the one hide farm in the hollow - ponteshide. To foul spring. Out to the pond. From the pond to the old [river] Wring. Into the cat withy bed. Up from there by king's rood east to the [river] Wring and once more along the stream. Then it [the boundary] comes to hill brook. Then it comes up once more to the source of the stream.

Commentary

We can trace these bounds on the ground and they are marked on Fig. 3.

1. *hill brook source*. This is the start of the bounds at Springhead farm (ST 4659/5938) where the Langford stream rises. That this is the Hill brook is clear from the last point (16 below).¹¹
2. *east to the combe*. The modern boundary does actually run east to a point just above Burrington Combe at ST 4750/5899
3. *round Losa's wood*. The modern boundary runs round Mendip Lodge Wood.
4. *west to the combe*. This brings the boundary to

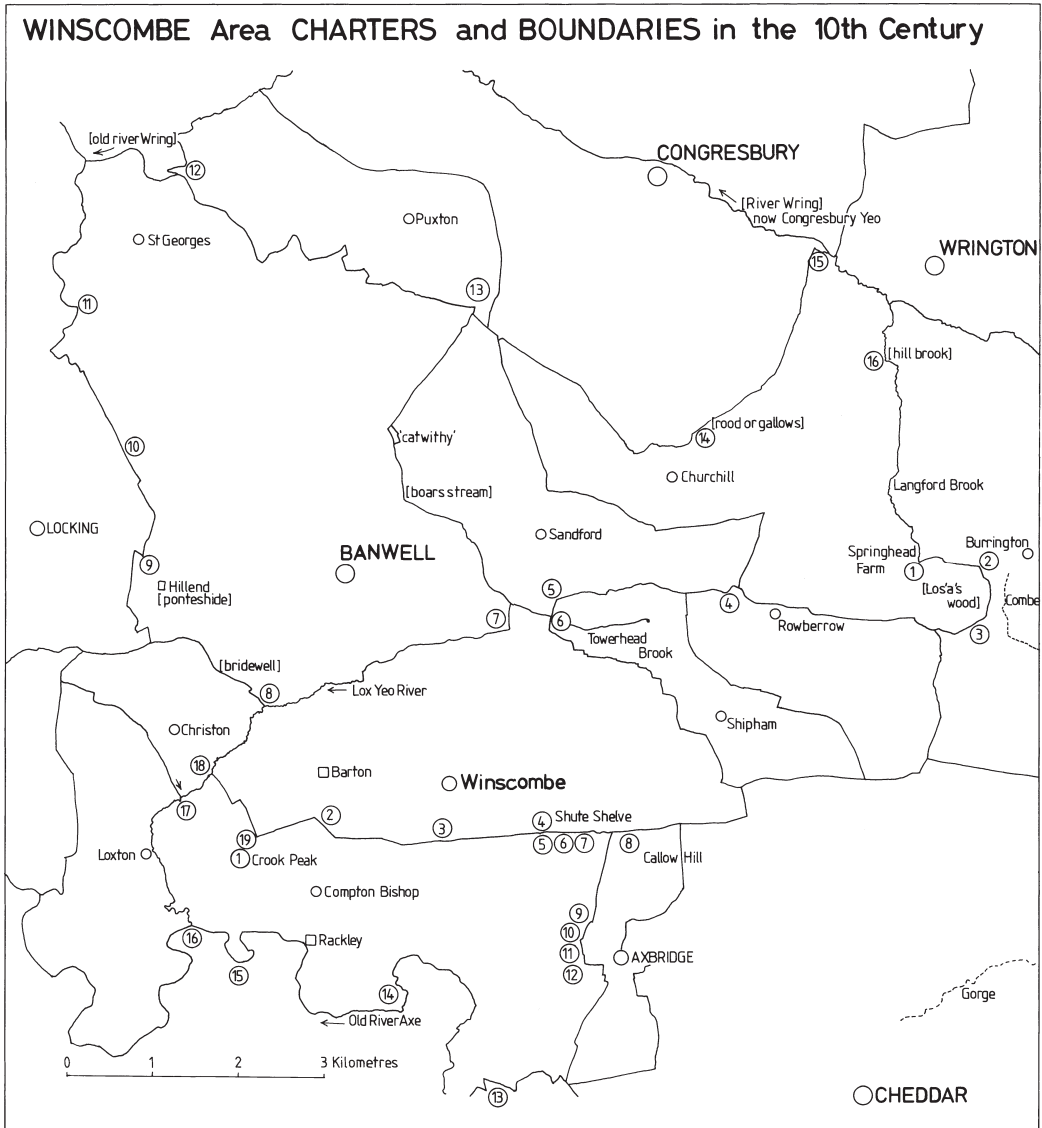


Fig. 3 Anglo-Saxon charters and their boundaries in the Winscombe area of north Somerset; Circles with numbers correspond to the places discussed in the text – the Banwell charter to the north and the Compton Bishop charter to the south; Winscombe boundary from the tithe map of 1839, most of the other boundaries mainly from Ordnance Survey maps of the 1880s

- the combe up which the modern A38 main road runs at ST 4464/5877
5. *west of the combe to bibrige*. This must have been somewhere along the hillside of Lyncombe Hill and Sandford Hill, following the boundary between Sandford and Shipham which is marked by Lyncombe Lane.¹²
 6. *to boars stream*. The boundary then runs down to meet the Towerhead brook either at its source near ST 4231/5865 or close to the modern Broadleaze Farm at ST 4188/5886. This is the first point of positive identification. This is the Towerhead brook, which is from the Old Welsh *twrc*, a wild boar. The boundary runs south up

- the brook to a point where the brook makes a sharp turn to the east.
7. *to the Lox*. Here the boundary runs on and joins a small stream which becomes the Lox.
 8. *to bridewell*. The boundary runs along the Lox to a point near Christon where it meets a small stream which is probably the bridewell. This stream is crossed by a lane in Christon which is called 'bridewell lane', on the OS 1st Edn six inch map Somerset Sheet XVII N.W. Bridewell itself is in Hutton parish, where there was a *bridewell* as a field-name in the tithe apportionment.
 9. *to the ford at ponteshide*. The modern parish boundary with Hutton has a large oblong projection into Hutton, suggesting a major modification. The charter bound seems to run directly to *Ponteside* or *pantes hide* a place which is now lost.¹³
 10. *to foul well*. This point may well be a stream, since the word *wylle* was frequently used to describe the stream as well as the spring which fed it. The current boundary follows the Grumblepill Rhyne, which as its name suggests, is an artificial drain. This is however, an ancient drain. The Banwell moors were drained by Act of Parliament between 1799 and 1813 (Williams 1970, 164) and the rhyne was still the boundary in 1834, suggesting that it had served as a boundary before the enclosure.
 11. *to the pond*. The boundary would have run up the Foulwell/Grumblepill, which may not have been as straight as it is now, to a pond. All trace of this is lost.
 12. *to the old river Wring*. The parish boundary now follows a line which takes it round to the north of St Georges and this is probably the line of the charter. The Old river Wring is probably marked by the sinuous bound around Brimbleworth Farm. The bound is now following a ditch, which could well be an old river course. This would take the boundary to meet the present course of the Yeo at ST 3877/6494. Stephen Rippon (pers. comm.) suggests that this bound is the old Wrinn – the Bourton Town Rhyne on Puxton's southern boundary. The use of the name 'Wring' for the river is attested in S 371 where it is *on wring* and also gives its name to Wrington.
 13. *to the cat withy bed*. This point seems to be at the north end of Winscombe.¹⁴
 14. *to the king's rood or gallows*. This is probably close to the point in modern Churchill called 'King Road', ST 4346/6061. It is possible that a rood or even a gallows, stood beside the road here, marking the boundary of Congresbury and Churchill.¹⁵ Congresbury was royal property in 1066 (Thorn and Thorn 1980; 1:21) and remained so until the time of King John (Bennett 1885, 12, 1, 38–9).¹⁶
 15. *east to the R Wring*. The boundary now runs north-east to meet the Congresbury Yeo (the Wring) at ST 4549/6292.¹⁷
 16. *along the Wring to Hill brook*. The modern boundary does not quite meet the river Wring, but turns east a few metres short and meets the river at the point where the Langford Brook joins it. The Langford Brook is thus the 'hill brook' of the charter, which it ascends to the spring (see Point 1 above).

Discussion

The charter follows the bounds in the normal clockwise fashion. In general the bound seems to follow the ancient parish boundaries quite closely. It includes Churchill and St Georges, but it does not include Puxton (which was probably part of Congresbury) and Christon which were also inside the medieval parish. However the major surprise is that it includes Sandford, now part of Winscombe parish. As noted above, Puxton in 1449, and Churchill in 1174–91 were medieval chapels of Banwell, as was Christon in 1496. This suggests that these places may already have had chapels before the Conquest. Sandford also had a chapel, but it was a dependency of Winscombe, which suggests that it was a post-conquest foundation.

Puxton clearly had a military tenant by 1086 and Robertus Pukerel was military tenant of Wells in 1166 (Red Book 1896), so Puxton was already outside the Bishop's immediate control by the mid-12th century, if not earlier (for a detailed discussion of Puxton's early history see Rippon 2006, 140–2).

Christon, is mentioned here because of its ecclesiastical relationship to Banwell but it was not included in the Domesday survey (but see note 6). It had certainly passed into secular hands by 1185 (Collinson 1791, 578), suggesting that it was regarded as part of another larger estate.¹⁸ The absence of any mention also tends to suggest that it had not been granted to a military tenant by 1086. Locking is also not in Domesday Book and does not seem to have been included inside the charter boundary and had probably also not been enfeoffed by 1086.¹⁹ It was granted to the new Woodspring Priory around 1210 by the Courteney family

(Collinson 1791, 596). Both estates had no discernable tenurial connections with the bishop's estates.

THE COMPTON BISHOP CHARTER (Fig. 3)

Text and translation

30.1 Wells Cathedral. Dean and Chapter Manuscripts, Liber Albus II (xv/xvi) fo 246. AD 1068 (HMC 1907a, 431)

Dis synd in þa land gemæru into cumbtune. ærest on hryges torr of hryges torre east on þone smalen weg &lang wæges on ealmes feald eastwearde swa &lang wæges on þone scyte swa on ðone norðernna weg on þa stygela and swa &lang weg on ceorce roðe of ðære roðe on ufewealde calewen. swa rihte. nyðer on þa sand seapas. þone rihte on þone holan weg &lang wæges on ceolc broc &lang broces uton reod ræwe on axa to wæde þær swa &lang eaa to wiht hyrste of ðære hyrste on þa blindan ea. swa æft on axa &lang streames on loxan &lang loxan up cyrces gemæro & on bertones gemæru swa up ofer duna eft on hriges tore. & æt hiwist þæra V hyda C æcere mæde be suðan heawican & et Ceodder mynster VIII heordes & þ gemena land uf bufan melc wæge & eall seo wyrð on sundran &se wudu of ðam forðe up &lang ceodder cumbes on hean næss of ðam næse on þa gemær ac on eadbrihtescumbe &lang cumbes æft þ hyt cymð ut on þone fold.

These are the bounds of the land at Compton. First to ridge torr. From ridge torr east to the narrow road. Along the road to the east side of elm-tree fold. So along the road to the slope. So to the more northerly road. To the stiles and so along the road to the cock-clearing [or wood]. From that clearing [or wood] upwards onto bald hill so straight down to the sand pits. Then straight to the hollow way. Along the way to chalk brook. Along the brook out to the reedy hedgerow. to the [river] Axe at a wading ford thither. So along the river to a wood. From the wood to the blind river. So once more to the Axe along the stream to the [river] Lox. Along the Lox up to the boundary of Christon and to the boundary of Barton. So up over the hill to ridge torr. And the household [has] five hides and 100 acres of meadow beside the southern hiwisc and

at Cheddar Minster nine herds [of animals]. And the common land above milk-way and all the separate farm and the wood. From the ford up Cheddar Combe to the high promontory from the promontory to the boundary oak. To Eadbriht's combe along the combe until it comes out to the fold.

Commentary

We can trace much of the route on the ground and the points are shown on Fig. 3.

1. *ridge tor* – This is pretty obviously the modern Crook Peak, the rocky tor at the western end of Wavering Down. The modern parish boundaries leave Crook Peak firmly inside Compton Bishop.
2. *east to the narrow road* – This might be the footpath which comes up over the hill from Barton in Winscombe to the north and goes down the combe into Compton Bishop. The bishop founded a small 'New Town', a port on the Axe at Rackley in Compton Bishop, in 1189 (Beresford 1967, 484). This may have been the road to Rackley from Banwell. It would have been very steep and impassable to all but pack-animals and foot-passengers.
3. *along the road to the east side of elm-tree fold* – this point cannot now be identified though it may have been somewhere in the vicinity of Hill Farm.
4. *along the road to the Shute (slope)* – This point was schute in 1318–19 (Wells, Lib Alb. I. 206) and survives as the modern Shute Shelve.²⁰
5. *to the more northerly road* – there is no choice of roads here now. The track which marks the modern boundary crosses the modern main road and continues eastward. It climbs through a little wood.
6. *to the stiles* – this cannot now be identified. Probably a place where there were walls with stones to climb them. Such a wall might be intended to control sheep.
7. *to the cock-rode* – this would be a place where woodcocks were netted (see Smith 1956, 104). The implication again is that this part of the boundary was in woodland though it cannot now be pinpointed accurately.
8. *upwards onto bald hill* (OE calu = bald or bare). The hill is still called Callow Down.²¹
9. *straight down to the sand pits* – this place cannot now be identified.
10. *straight to the hollow way* – again a lost point.

11. *along the way to chalk brook* – another lost point.
12. *along the brook to the reedy hedgerow* – another lost point. These points probably carry the boundary round the edge to the 10th-century burh of Axbridge. The modern boundary follows the course of the Ellenge stream to the Axe, but the drainage of the moor here was radically altered in the middle ages and the boundary between Axbridge and Cheddar was easily changeable.
13. *to the river Axe at the wading ford* – this point is now lost. This is probably where the boundary meets the old course of the Axe, where it forms the boundary with Weare parish.
14. *along the river to a wood* – another unidentified point probably somewhere in the Cross area.
15. *to the blind river* – there is a bow of the Axe, cut off by an artificial cut to the west of Rackley. It may be that the cut had already been made when this boundary was surveyed.²²
16. *to the Lox*. The river Lox Yeo flows into the Axe and now forms a boundary northward for much of its length.
17. *along the Lox to the boundary of Christon* – the boundary passes along the river, passing the point where the Christon bound meets it.
18. *and the boundary of Barton* – This is where the Winscombe boundary leaves the Lox Yeo.
19. *so up over the down to ridge tor* – this carries us straight up the hill to Crook Peak. It seems likely that the boundary followed the modern boundary to the foot of the hill, where the waste began and then made a bee-line to the starting point.

Discussion

This is Compton Bishop parish much as it existed before late 19th-century changes to the boundary. The very small discrepancy on Wavering Down is explained by the fact that the hill was and in part still is common grazing. At the other end of the parish, the boundary with Axbridge has probably been affected by medieval drainage works. The boundary skirts Axbridge on the west in a way which suggests that the burh was already there when the boundary was drawn, perhaps suggesting that Compton was possibly an outlying part of Cheddar in the 10th century. This point is reinforced by the last part of the bounds, not followed here, which tell us that: ‘the (bishop’s) household has five hides and 100 acres of meadow at the southern *hywise*’ – this is suggested by Nash to have been near

Highbridge (Nash 1982) though this is a long way away beyond the river Axe and in a different hundred. It continues: ‘and at Cheddar Minster nine herds and the common land above Milkway (in Cheddar) and all the separate farm and its woodland’ and the bounds are then given – this looks like a farm with woodland, situated on the edge of the high ground above Cheddar, much like Carscliff Farm and others along the escarpment.

WINSCOMBE AND THE TWO CHARTERS

Following Morland, Thorn and Thorn make Sandford a part of Winscombe at Domesday (Thorn and Thorn 1980; note 8,2),²³ and they refer to the Glastonbury Feodary (Weaver 1910). Lesley Abrams (1996) suggests that Winscombe had belonged to Glastonbury since the time of Edgar and makes no mention of Sandford. She shows that the separation of Winscombe from Glastonbury began in the time of Bishop Savaric (1191–1205).

We are faced with a major problem in reconciling the fact that Sandford belonged to Glastonbury in 1086, and that the abbey continued to hold it until the early 13th century, with the Domesday entry. We cannot place the Banwell charter bound too late, because the language used would be appropriate to the 11th century, but would not fit with the 13th century. It would seem that the simplest way of reconciling the charter boundary with Domesday is to accept that it was drawn well before 1086. Thus we have a charter boundary which may represent Banwell as it was before the Winscombe grant was made to Aelfswith (S 1762) in the 10th century. But as Frank Thorn points out (pers. comm.) ‘as the charter bounds for Banwell exclude Winscombe they must date from a time when Winscombe had become a separate unit’. He suggests that the Banwell bounds were defined when it was granted (without Winscombe) to Winchester, then to Cheddar, that is in or after 904. Presumably the king retained Winscombe at that point.²⁴ The loss of Sandford might be ascribed to its removal by Edgar to add to Winscombe when Aelfswith made the grant to Glastonbury possibly after 970. This suggests that the charter bound was an earlier survey that was added to the 1068 grant. Frank Thorn also suggests that one way to explain the evidence we have is to see the Sandford area detached from Banwell after the charter of 1068 and somehow added to the Winscombe area by 1085–6. Perhaps this was engineered by Ralph Crooked Hands and he

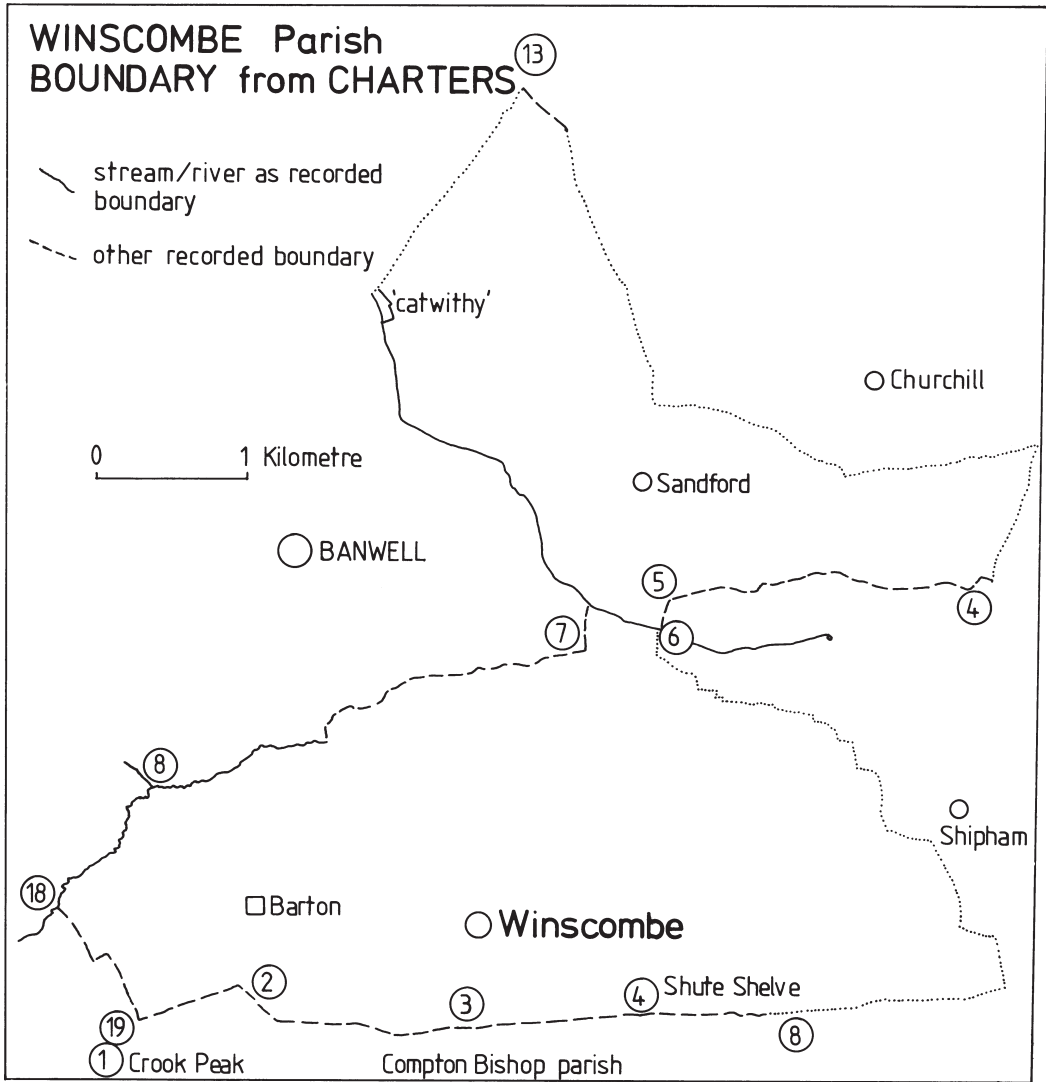


Fig. 4 Winscombe parish boundary from charters – points on the parish boundary mentioned in adjacent Anglo-Saxon charters for Banwell and Compton Bishop (Fig. 3); Winscombe boundary from 1839 tithe map

associated his holding with Glastonbury's land for some reason. More research is needed on Ralph Crooked Hand's holdings to resolve this matter (see below).

The 11th-century bounds of Winscombe parish (Fig. 4)

We can see from the two charters – for Banwell and Compton Bishop – with their recorded bounds that

a considerable length of Winscombe's later parish boundary, probably over 50%, is recorded in detail in 1068 and, as has been suggested above, these bounds could relate to the 10th century. These boundaries make it clear that the northern half of the parish was considered to be part of Banwell. The bounds run along Lyncombe Lane down to the Towerhead Brook at the present day Uplands Cottages. It is surely correct (see note 12) to interpret the charter as referring to a ridge here rather than a

bridge. It is difficult to see where a bridge would be sited unless it was over the Towerhead Brook itself whereas Lyncombe Lane runs along the upper slope of a great ridge of land looking over the valley to the south. Towerhead Brook still forms the western boundary of the northern half of the parish and it may have been the boundary with Banwell at this date. Where the main road which runs along the north side of the Mendips crosses it, may have been sited the 'sandy ford' after which Sandford was named. From Towerhead Brook the southern boundary of the Banwell charter followed the stream and then the Lox Yeo River on the north side of the southern part of Winscombe parish.

The Compton Bishop charter gives us a great deal of the rest of the circuit of this southern half of Winscombe parish, all except the eastern boundary with Rowberrow and Shipham. Crook Peak was regarded at this time as on the boundary between Winscombe and Compton. From this point, one boundary ran down to the Lox Yeo River, to a point further down its course than the points in the Banwell charter. To the east the boundary seems to have followed the ridge way along Wavering Down and alongside the existing King's Wood down to the watershed or col at Shute Shelve. Somewhere along this course must have lain the 'elm tree fold' perhaps near the later Hill Farm to the east of Wavering Down. To the east of Shute Shelve the boundary is still marked by a complex of linear earthworks alongside Callow Drive, though on the hill the course of the charter turns south to go around Axbridge.

At the northern tip of the parish of Winscombe, in the flat low-lying land north of Nye where the parishes of Banwell, Puxton, Congresbury and Churchill all come together, there may have been another point on the Banwell charter boundary. Somewhere in this area may have lain the cat withy bed or Cat Willow a possible unlocated point in this former vast featureless Levels area (but see note 14). There are field names on the 1840 tithe map for Winscombe a little south of this point (Figs 3 and 4) and the whole of this low-lying part of Winscombe may have had this name.

It is perhaps remarkable to be able to reconstruct so much of the early boundary of the original estate of Winscombe when it does not have its own Anglo-Saxon charter with bounds attached. But it seems clear from the analysis presented here that Winscombe was viewed somewhat differently in the mid-10th century. If the interpretation of the boundary features is correct it would seem that the northern half of the parish, the Sandford area north

of Sandford hill on the Mendips, was in Banwell rather than Winscombe at that time. This is a suggestion also made by Stephen Rippon in his study of Puxton to the north of Winscombe parish (Rippon 2006, 129). Of course it fits with the place name evidence for Winscombe which suggests it means 'Wine's comb or valley' (Ekwall 1960, 525), seemingly a clear reference to the major topographical valley feature running from Christon and Loxton eastwards to be overlooked by Rowberrow and Shipham. But, as we have seen, it is difficult to reconcile the charter evidence with Frank and Caroline Thorn's interpretation of the Domesday entry for Winscombe which seems to include the Sandford area. Our suggestion that the boundary clauses must be a lot older than 1068, in fact predating the grant to Aelfswith, looks like an attractive one. So what we seem to have is a survey of the estate bounds reused when the king granted the estate. We could speculate about why there would be a boundary survey ready-made, but we do not know the reason. John Blair (pers. comm.) suggests a parallel to the later use of earlier boundary clauses in the Bampton (Oxon) charter of 1069. He queries whether the recycling of out-of-date bounds was something that happened particularly in the late 1060s when the old-style diploma was about to be abandoned.

The situation is rather easier to explain for the Compton Bishop material. Here it looks as if the southern boundary of the later medieval parish of Winscombe is more or less the same as that referred to in the charter.

Winscombe in Domesday Book 1086 (including material from Exon Domesday)

In 1086 Winscombe is a 15-hide estate belonging to Glastonbury Abbey (Thorn and Thorn 1980, 8:2). Within the area are a number of sub-holdings and although these are not separately named attempts have been made to identify them. From the main manor Roger of Courseulles held 2½ hides, Ralph Tortesmaines (Crooked Hands) 1 hide and 1 virgate and someone called Pipe held a ½ hide. In their notes to the Survey, Frank and Caroline Thorn say, following Stephen Morland (1964, 96) that Ralph's holding was at Sandford. Morland also identifies Roger of Courseulles' holding of 2½ hides as 'Loveshestesfee' and although the Loveseft family held land in Winscombe in the 13th century, nowhere in the vicinity is recorded as having this name, or indeed anything like it (Morland 1964, 96).

Another hide of Winscombe was held from the king by the Bishop of Coutances.²⁵ This was 'Wintreth' or Winterhead a hamlet on the border with Shipham. This together with Hutton and Elborough, we are told, had been held by the abbots of Glastonbury before 1066.

We can thus account for 14¾ hides of the 15-hide holding at Winscombe. Of this 9½ hides seem to be Winscombe itself, 1 hide was Winterhead and 1¼ hides were at Sandford. We cannot account for Pipe's ½ hide but the biggest anomaly is the 2½ hide estate at Loveseft. We would expect this to be readily identifiable – it is after all half of a 5-hide holding, a common size for the holding of a thane in the 10th and 11th centuries. Frank Thorn (pers. comm.) has suggested that it is Woodborough but this is well within Winscombe. Perhaps the 5¼ hides outside Winscombe accounted for everywhere north of the hill (Sandford Hill) and included Nye, Sandford and Dinghurst, an area that was regarded as a separate tithing in later times (Collinson 1791, 614). As this would then give us roughly 10 hides south of the hill at Winscombe (actually 10½) and 5 hides north of the hill around Sandford (actually 4¼), it looks as if the intention was to have a 5-hide unit north of the hill and two 5-hide units to the south.

Summary of the Domesday Survey for Winscombe

Winscombe 15 hides of which In demesne 4¾ hides; Peasants 4¾ hides
– making a total for Winscombe of 9½ hides
Bishop of Coutances 1 hide – Winterhead
Making a total of 10½ hides for Winscombe

Roger of Courseulles – 2½ hides – ?Loveseft?
Ralph Crooked Hands – 1¼ hides – ?Sandford
Making a total of 3¾ hides north of the hill
Pipe – ½ hide – ?unlocated
Making a total of 4¼ hides north of the hill if
Pipe's holding was in this area

A grand total of 14¾ hides for the Winscombe estate which should be perhaps be 15 hides

It is interesting to compare this with the sizes of other estates in this part of north Somerset in 1086. The really big estate in the Winterstoke Hundred area at the time of Domesday was Banwell at 30 hides. Next in size at 20 hides were the estates at Wrington, Yatton and Congresbury. All four of these estates had a church at the time that Domesday Book was

compiled in 1086. The next estates in size are Bleaddon and Winscombe at 15 hides each, neither with a church mentioned, followed by a 10-hide estate at Blagdon.

Within and alongside the large units were a number of 5-hide units – these included Hutton, East and West Harptree, Loxton and probably Kingston Seymour and Churchill at 5½ hides each. There is also the unnamed 5½-hide holding in Banwell allocated to Roghard. Other land units which were probably originally 5-hide estates include Shipham (4), Uphill (6½), Woodspring (6¼), Worle (6½) and possibly Milton and Ashcombe (2½ and 3½). These would be the size of holdings held by thanes in the area.²⁶

Three aspects need to be examined to help us understand the extent of early Winscombe. Firstly what was the land unit (in effect it would have been a royal estate) from which Winscombe was taken when it was granted by King Edgar to the noblewoman Aelfswith? What was the early estate structure of the Winscombe area and how is this manifested in the Domesday Book records? And thirdly do the later hundred and parish arrangements help us to postulate earlier arrangements?

AN EARLY MEDIEVAL ESTATE IN NORTH SOMERSET?

It is possible that the 'Winscombe' granted to Aelfswith had been part of a larger estate centred on Banwell.²⁷ We know that Puxton, a small village with a church to the north of Banwell, was a chapelry of Banwell in the Middle Ages (Rippon 2006, 140–2) as was the church at Churchill which lies to the east of the northern part of Winscombe parish (Maxwell-Lyte and Holmes 1894, 128). It is difficult to see how the northern part of Winscombe parish, the Sandford area, could not originally have been part of this same land unit, surrounded as it was on nearly all sides by Banwell parish and its dependencies. The Sandford area was also, as we have seen, within the area of the Banwell charter of 1068. Christon seems also to have been a chapelry of Banwell (notes 9, 10) lying west of Winscombe and south-west of Banwell.

Other areas may also have been part of a Banwell estate. The zig-zag course of the parish boundary between Shipham and Winscombe suggests that this boundary on the east side of Winscombe parish was drawn in part through a pre-existing field system of furlongs. This suggests that the two places were part

of the same holding and were once in the same land unit. So perhaps the estates at Shipham and Rowberrow were originally part of the Banwell estate and were cut off from it by the granting away of Winscombe. They are on the border with Cheddar so it is always possible that they were part of that estate, though topographically they look rather towards Winscombe, Banwell and the west than over the top of the Mendips to Cheddar to the south.²⁸

We have seen that Winterhead on the eastern boundary of Winscombe was a 1-hide unit within Winscombe in Domesday Book. The boundary here follows the stream between Shipham and Winscombe, and it also runs up through the middle of the small settlement here. It is possible that Winterhead existed as a settlement within a large estate before this part of the parish boundary was fixed. This might mean that Winterhead was a pre-mid 10th-century settlement and was only cut by the boundary when the land unit of Winscombe was defined and separated from a larger unit, perhaps in the grant to Aelfswith. There seems to be no post-Norman Conquest owner recorded as holding land on both sides of the stream. This would probably have been a necessary requisite for the development of the settlement on both sides of the boundary here later on. Winterhead was a place-name that was Old Welsh in origin. This alone would suggest great continuity from the 7th, down to the mid-11th century. The boundary might have been redrawn at some point, perhaps when Shipham was separated out.

In the later medieval sources all of these places lay within the Somerset Hundred of Winterstoke (Fig. 5). In 1327 and 1347 this included a range of diverse manors and parishes on the north and south sides of the Mendips, out in the Levels and at other places between (Dickinson 1889, 264–70; Morland 1990, 128). Was Winterstoke the remnant of a large pre-Conquest royal estate and if so where was the centre, the *caput*, of that estate? The name probably relates more to the hundred moot rather than to the estate.²⁹

Since the pioneering work of Glanville Jones in the 1960s, 70s and 80s, a general model has been developed which attempts to explain the appearance, organisation and eventual fragmentation of the large early land units of Anglo-Saxon England (Jones 1979). Some work on this topic has been carried out in Somerset (Costen 1988) and further research is underway.

As we have seen, at the time of Domesday Book the largest land units in the Winterstoke area – Banwell, Wrington, Yatton and Congresbury – had

a church in 1086 and it is likely that each of these churches was a minster. The next units in size – Bleadon, Winscombe and Blagdon do not seem to have had important churches. Already in these estates there are far more hides than the 100 we would expect if the later hundred reflected an earlier estate of 100 hides.

Some of the places included in the later medieval Winterstoke Hundred were described earlier as separate hundreds such as Congresbury or Cheddar. Others, alternatively, are listed as ‘free manors’ in 1327 or 1347 (Bleadon, Wrington). The ‘free manor’ status may well reflect the importance and clout of individual post-Domesday Book landowners, who wanted control of justice, and probably tax collection as well, on their estates. Clearly these descriptions reflect the earlier importance of some of these estates since many were originally royal property (for example, Cheddar and Congresbury). Their separate identification also reflects the status of the later owners. Bleadon belonged to the immensely wealthy bishops of Winchester, Wrington was granted to Glastonbury Abbey, and the bishops of Bath and Wells eventually acquired Banwell, Congresbury, Yatton and Cheddar. Each of these places seems to have more than local importance and so it might be asked, with so many apparently separate units, whether Winterstoke Hundred had a different origin than as a former royal estate.³⁰ Rather than seeing Winterstoke as a large estate that later fragmented into smaller separate units, is it possible that its origin actually lay in the amalgamation of a number of important but smaller discrete estates, separately identified and administered as small individual units? This is not a model that has been much alluded to in earlier research, though Stephen Rippon implied it in his study of Puxton in north Somerset (Rippon 2006). Frank Thorn comments (pers. comm.) that, ‘Hundreds are created by both fusion and fission. They arise in the mid-10th century as part of a drive for more efficient policing, justice and taxation. Essentially they are 100 hides (or 50, 150, 200) grouped around an accessible meeting-place. In Wessex, hundredal bounds were not imposed on the landscape, but took account of existing units. For every Bruton, Frome or Yeovil, where a single royal estate was split into three hundreds, there are cases like Winterstoke where existing separate estates were grouped in hundreds. The topography of the area would mean that the Worle group and Congresbury were cut off from the others by wetland or marsh; though men could get from there to the moot at Winterstoke, agriculturally it seems unlikely that

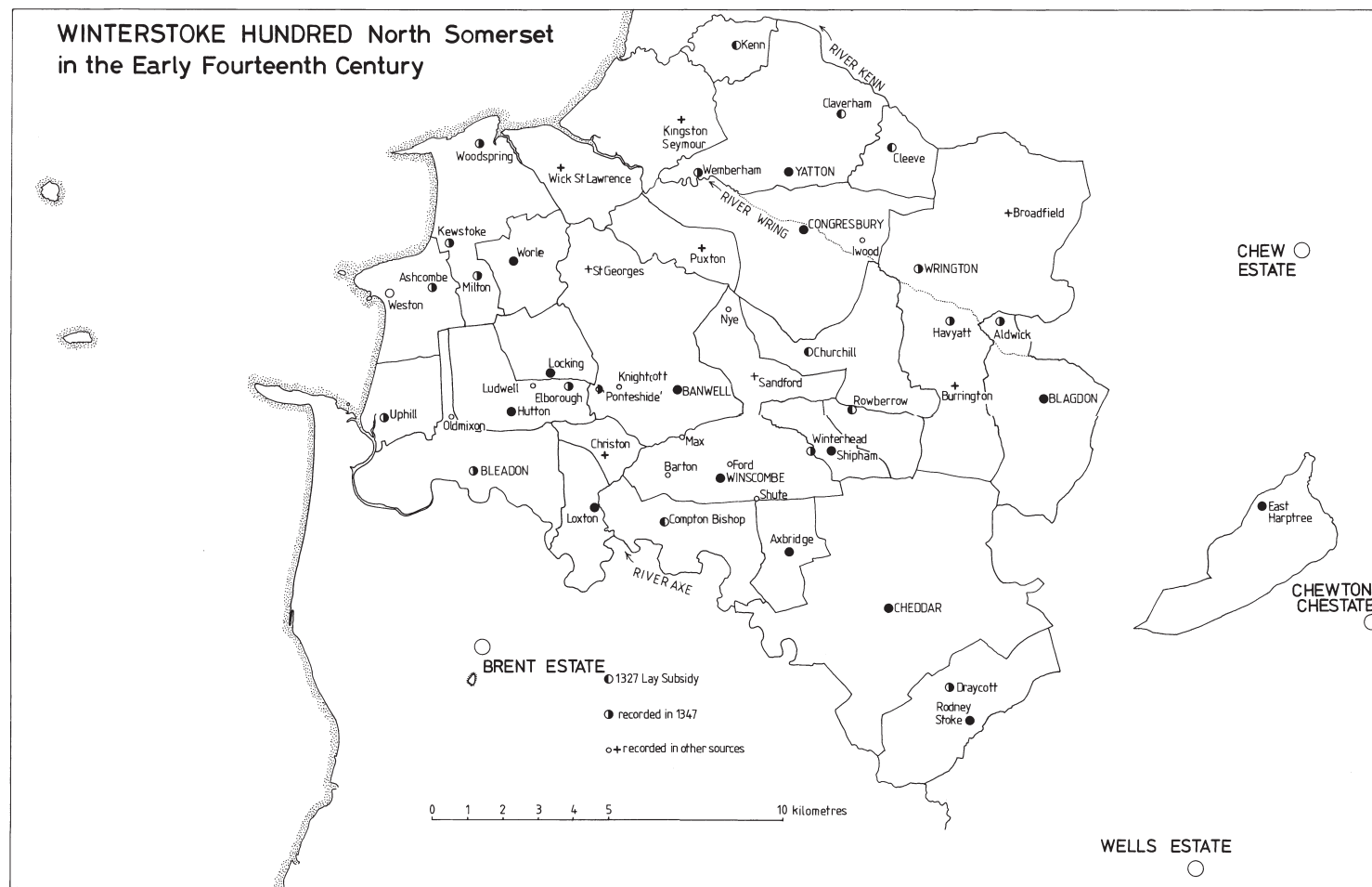


Fig. 5 Winterstoke Hundred in 1327 The places shown are from the 1327 lay subsidy in Dickinson 1889 and from Morland 1990 listing manors in 1347; boundaries mainly from the pre-1974 Ordnance Survey maps together with the 1880s Ordnance Survey maps.

these places were ever part of a single multiple estate.'

If this was the origin of Winterstoke Hundred, we can suggest a number of these estates with some confidence. Banwell was probably the most important and it looks as if it included Winscombe.³¹ Cheddar with Axbridge (which is clearly cut out of Cheddar) and Rodney Stoke, Congresbury (with Wick St Lawrence and probably Puxton originally) and Wrington (with Burrington) also seem to be clearly defined separate estates from early on. Yatton might have been part of Congresbury (see note 33). Bleadon may have been part of a larger unit, as, like Winscombe at 15 hides, it might have been too small to be run as a separate estate on its own; it came to the Old Minster at Winchester in 975. This leaves Blagdon and the estates around Worle to be accounted for. Blagdon was a large unit with 10 hides in 1086 but otherwise there seems little to suggest it was an important early estate. Indeed it looks like two 5-hide units each centred on the eastern and western parts of the village, only one of which now has a church. Worle on the other hand may have been a small estate centred on the hill at Worle with the early hillfort of Worlebury. The place name may well refer to the obvious topographical feature of the large flat-topped detached upland here rather than 'the woodgrouse wood' which is the usual interpretation of the name (Ekwall 1960, 534). The directional names Weston (super Mare) and Norton seem to relate back to a centre of greater importance at Worle itself (see also Rippon 2006, 136 for discussion of a possible Worlebury estate).

With such a range of small estates there was probably no one central *caput*, each estate having its own centre with barns and accommodation. Banwell as the biggest estate may have had a more elaborate centre, perhaps somewhere near the present church and the bishop's later medieval-manor house.

If however we were to envisage one single large royal estate centred on Banwell what would have been its probable bounds? The later hundred of Winterstoke was bounded on the north and south by the Rivers Kenn and Axe respectively, with the coast to the west. It stretched inland to the uplands (perhaps wooded?) bordering Ubley, Nymppnett and Thrubwell to the east. The uplands of the Mendips lay to the south and the plateau of Broadfield (where Bristol International airport is located now) lay to the north. Adjacent early estates included Chew and Chewton to the east and Cheddar-Axbridge and Brent to the south.

There are problems with detached pieces of this and other hundreds. Kingston Seymour was not included in Winterstoke Hundred in the middle ages, being a detached part of Chewton Hundred but it may have been attached here earlier if this was a coherent estate.³² Similarly Winterstoke Hundred included East Harptree which is detached away to the east; this must have been part of some other hundred to the east in earlier times, perhaps Chew.

Congresbury with its dependent chapelry of Wick (St Lawrence to the west, and probably including Puxton) may well also have been part of this big Banwell estate in early times particularly as Puxton, a chapelry of Banwell appears to have been cut out of Congresbury (Rippon 2006, 140–2), and there were clearly close ecclesiastical links between Congresbury and Banwell at the time of Alfred (Stevenson 1959). If this was the case the later parishes of Yatton, Cleeve, Claverham and Kenn might all have been part originally of Congresbury – an idea suggested by Ian Burrow many years ago when he was trying to predict the likely territory of the hillfort of Cadbury Congresbury.³³ Other tenurial links suggest that there was formerly a larger more coherent unit such as the land shared in Puxton with Kewstoke and Congresbury.

Along with Congresbury much of this Banwell estate was granted eventually to the Bishop of Wells (Finberg 1964, 153, 249); it passed from royal, presumably Wessex royal ownership, to episcopal rule of the new Somerset see established in 909. Before that time some parts of the estate had already been relinquished. Some were granted to the great monastic institution of Glastonbury Abbey (Wrington), some to other ecclesiastical owners (Bleadon). But others went to faithful royal supporters such as the wife of ealdorman Aelfheah, Aelfswith, as other pieces of the former Banwell estate were granted away to lay people in the 10th century.

Our best solution might be to see this area of north Somerset as having a number of discrete estates. Some of these were large and extensive like Banwell, others were single units like Wrington. But it is difficult to argue that there was a single large coherent early estate unit and so perhaps the hundred which we see in the 11th century was an amalgam of several smaller earlier estates. Locally the same may be true elsewhere. Brent is granted to Glastonbury in the 7th century (S 1671) and is later considered a separate hundred, and Chew was a discrete *parochia* when the obligations of the surrounding chapelries were considered in the 18th century (Aston 1985, 49).

DEVELOPMENTS IN THE 12TH AND 13TH CENTURIES

In the later Middle Ages, Winscombe belonged to the dean and chapter of the cathedral at Wells. How did it get passed from the ownership of the great monastery of Glastonbury Abbey to the equally prestigious institution of Wells Cathedral?

The changeover centres around the activities of Bishop Savaric (Fitzgeldewin) of Bath and Wells (1191–1205) and his successor Bishop Jocelin (or Jocelyn) (1206–1218).³⁴ Savaric was an extremely ambitious churchman, becoming Bishop of Bath in 1191 and manoeuvring to become archbishop of Canterbury a little later. In this he did not succeed but he managed to get King Richard I to agree to an annexation of Glastonbury Abbey to the See of Bath and to proclaim himself abbot of Glastonbury and bishop of Bath. This arrangement was confirmed by Pope Celestine III in 1195 and 1196 (Carley 1988, 25–6) though there was a great deal of argument and trouble over the arrangement in succeeding decades. The bishop took over more than ten manors of the abbey after 1202 so the estates of the two institutions seem to have been combined.

Following the death of Savaric and the appointment of Jocelin as bishop in 1206 there seems to have been an attempt to restore the position of the abbey to what it had been before. After the lifting of the papal interdict (1213) King John gave Bishop Jocelin the right to appoint a separate abbot for the abbey in 1215. During the period when the two institutions had been run together much of the land of the abbey had been transferred to the estate of the bishop. Although the takeover by the bishops of the abbey was ultimately unsuccessful, disputes over the land that had been seized by Wells continued all through the 13th century. Wells is known to have seized land at a number of manors including Winscombe, but Glastonbury Abbey eventually recovered most of them in 1219; this did not include Winscombe.³⁵ We can perhaps suggest then that Winscombe passed from Glastonbury Abbey's ownership to that of the bishops sometime between 1191, the appointment of Savaric, and before 1215 when the abbey began to regain control of its lands.

Winscombe remained a possession of the Bishops of Bath and Wells for around 30 years. During this time it would have been one of a number of their estates in this area which included Banwell, Compton Bishop, Axbridge and later Cheddar. But in 1239 Bishop Jocelin granted the Winscombe estate to the dean and chapter of Wells cathedral together with

the advowson of the parish church.³⁶ It was to remain with the dean and chapter for over 400 years.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ The north-eastern 'arm' of the parish was transferred to Churchill parish in 1935, thus uniting the settlements of Churchill and Dinghurst. In 1982 the piece of Banwell parish between the dismantled railway and the main road at the narrow 'neck' of the parish was included in Winscombe parish and Broadleaze Farm was transferred from Banwell to Winscombe parish. In 1983 the western end of Shipham parish either side of Towerhead Brook was transferred to Winscombe near Uplands cottages and the south-east of Winscombe parish, including Winterhead Hill Farm, was transferred to Shipham. These changes effectively meant a change of county for parts of Winscombe as, after 1974, Shipham was in Somerset but Winscombe was in North Somerset.
- ² It is intended to discuss the medieval settlements of Winscombe in a future article.
- ³ The information in the following sections is derived principally from Finberg 1964, Sawyer 1968 and Abrams 1996; for Sawyer charters the convention of S + charter number is used.
- ⁴ We are grateful to John Blair for this reference.
- ⁵ Though Lesley Abrams suggests it was during the reign of King Edgar which seems too soon after it was granted to Aelfswith in the first place.
- ⁶ There are references to other unidentified estates which were probably in Somerset at *Pendesclive, Sutton and Weston*.
- ⁷ It is possible that it was only the southern half of the later parish – see discussion below – as the northern half seems to have been in Banwell in 1068; By Domesday Frank and Caroline Thorn (1980) think Winscombe does include the northern area with Sandford.
- ⁸ The estates held by Harold before the death of Edward the Confessor were of at least three kinds: (a) those inherited from his family (which may of course have originated as grants from King Edward or his predecessors to the house of Godwin); (b) those that he held by virtue of his being earl; (c) those that he had seized. Banwell belonged to this last group. An outline of the earlier history of Banwell and Compton Bishop shows that both were granted by Edward the Elder in 904 to Winchester (rated at 20 hides each). They were transferred by the same king (904x925) to the community at Cheddar in exchange for Carhampton (Finberg 1964, 128–9). Of this latter grant one version allots 20 hides to Banwell and 10 hides to Compton

- Bishop, which is likely to be correct, as Banwell (which must represent both Banwell and Compton Bishop) is rated at 30 hides in Domesday. Banwell, rated at 30 *mansae* (which must encompass Compton Bishop), appears to have been subsequently in King Edgar's hands (Finberg 1964) then was given (with Congresbury) before 1033 by an unnamed king to a man called Duduc who gave it to the Church of Wells. However, the grant was either never carried out or was revoked, because Harold seized them (Frank Thorn, pers. comm.).
- ⁹ Christon is suggested as Serlo de Burcy's 3-hide holding in Banwell by Stephen Morland (1964, 97). We know of no other suggestions for the other holdings though there are plenty of settlements in Banwell and its dependencies of Churchill and Puxton which could fill the bill; it is possible that one of the holdings was some distance away near Brent Knoll (Nash 1982, 212–5). Michael Costen suggests that Christon was originally part of Bleadon, along with Hutton and Loxton and this idea is supported by Stephen Rippon (pers. comm.). Hutton appears as two holdings in Domesday Book one held by Glastonbury (Thorn and Thorn 1980; 8:38) and the other by the Bishop of Coutances (Thorn and Thorn 1980; 5:10; 8:38), but had been Glastonbury land in 1066. Lesley Abrams concedes that there is no way of knowing when or how Glastonbury obtained Hutton (Abrams 1996, 143). Physically it seems probable that Christon and Loxton belong together and that they would fit most appropriately with Bleadon on the western side of the River Lox. Perhaps they were already dependent estates of Bleadon when Bleadon was granted to Winchester. Bleadon has two charters. The first S 606 dated 956, is a charter of King Eadwig to a layman Aethelwold and this is in the Winchester Chartulary. The second, which is a grant to Winchester Old Minster by King Edgar in 975, is spurious. If the first is a real charter then the three estates could have been hived off and Hutton, given to Glastonbury in Aethelwold's time and Loxton and Christon granted to other thegns in return for services. The rest of Bleadon (most of it) was then granted to Winchester. At that early date a small settlement like Christon may not have had a church or chapel. Its secular owner may have built a chapel to emphasize his status as a new landowner. He may have turned to Banwell to provide baptismal and burial services, simply because of the prestige of the church there.
- ¹⁰ Christon was known as *Cruchestone* in the later Middle Ages and was clearly a chapelry of Banwell; it is also possible that Uphill was connected with Christon and perhaps was also a chapelry of Banwell (Members of the Council 1894, 68–9; Weaver 1901, 339).
- ¹¹ Some of the points on the Banwell charter boundary are also recorded in the charter with bounds for Wrington S 371 This has been studied and the points on the boundary identified by Frances Neale and others (Neale *et al.* 1969)
- ¹² The rendering (by Michael Costen) of the boundary puts this point on top of a hill, so a bridge seems highly unlikely. However the manuscript is unequivocal with *bricge*, a bridge, clearly indicated. A mistranscription at some point (such as the *Liber* in the 15th century) might mean that the original was *hrycg*, a ridge. A double transcription error would give an original spelling *hihricge*, high ridge. However '*bibricge*', must stand.
- ¹³ Ponteside is now lost, but was a Domesday manor (Thorn and Thorn 1980; 21:80) when it was a small estate of only half a taxable hide, and was worked by a single slave. It was described as Ponteshide *iuxta Bannewelle*, 1317–18 (Feet of Fines), but may have been in either Hutton or Locking. It occurs as a surname in the Lay Subsidy for Banwell in 1327 – Alice Pontyessde (Dickinson 1889, 267) and as a manor in 1347 'Panteshede' (Morland 1990, 128). There is a small stream, much affected by modern drainage, which separates Elborough from Locking and this may be the '*pant*'. There was a river in Essex called the '*pantan stream*' (Gordon 1937; line 68), now the river Blackwater (Ekwall 1968, 319). This is an Old Welsh river name. If this is the case then the ford over this stream probably allowed crossing at a point which was not too boggy. This may have been close to ST 37375/59364 or at Hillend in Banwell on the border with Hutton.
- ¹⁴ *Catswithy* occurs on the 1791 White map of Winscombe as *Catwithy* and *In Cathwithy*, and on the 1839–40 tithe map of Winscombe as *Cotwithy*.
- ¹⁵ The word here might be either *rod* – a clearing or *rôd* – a rood or gallows. In both cases this is a feminine noun and so if it is in the dative case it should be rode. It seems likely that the modern spelling 'road', with the long vowel, indicates that on balance this is rood or gallows.
- ¹⁶ The royal tenure had not been continuous as, like Banwell, Congresbury had been granted before 1033 by an unnamed king to Duduc, who intended it for the church of Wells but it was seized by Harold. Harold had also turned it into a (manorial) hundred, like several of his other estates in Wessex (Frank Thorn, pers. comm.).
- ¹⁷ This boundary is on the Wrington charter (Neale 1969, 87–108).
- ¹⁸ Frank Thorn (pers. comm.) thinks that Christon was originally in the Bleadon-Loxton estate.

- ¹⁹ The descent of Locking to the Courtenay family suggests that in 1086 it was held by William Falaise. Morland (1990, 128) is probably right in suggesting that it is the 3 hides added to Woodspring in Domesday (Thorn and Thorn 1980, 27:3). These in turn may have been stolen from elsewhere, perhaps from Worle (Frank Thorn, pers. comm.).
- ²⁰ This site is still called Shute Shelve. It is a pass between two hills with a long straight run down to the plain below, now used by the A38 trunk road.
- ²¹ The hill is still called Callow Down, OE *calu*, 'bald'.
- ²² This is probably an oxbow of the river which had become cut off by movement of the river course on the very flat marshy land here or diverted as a result of the development of Rackley as a port.
- ²³ Frank Thorn comments (pers. comm.) that the charter bounds are the authority; it is unlikely that Sandford was transferred to Winscombe from Banwell while the hidage of Banwell remained the same. Therefore Morland's evidence perhaps needs to be re-examined. Ralph Crooked Hands holds both from the abbot at Winscombe and from the bishop at Banwell, so, on the face of it, it is possible that he held Sandford as part of Banwell.
- ²⁴ If in Banwell-Winscombe we have respectively religious and secular *caputs*, in granting Banwell to Winchester the king was giving away the minster, while retaining (for a time) the secular part. Nick Higham has suggested similar arrangements for many of the early medieval estates in Cheshire (1993, 126–76) where ecclesiastical and secular hundreds are formed from earlier divided estates.
- ²⁵ Thorn and Thorn 1980, 8:2 'The bishop of Coutances holds one hide of this manor's land from the king; Brictric held it freely before 1066, but he could not be separated from the church; 5:12 Herlewin holds Winterhead from the Bishop. Brictric held it before 1066.
- ²⁶ Frank Thorn (pers. comm.) suggests that it can be a mistake to seek 5-hide units universally. He has tried to show (Thorn 2005) that some of these odd hidages are the product of the division of larger units. In this case, Woodspring, Kewstoke, Milton, Worle, Ashcombe, and Uphill, all of which had odd hidages, add up to 30 hides 3 virgates, and this was presumably originally a 30-hide unit, an assessment imposed on an area that has an apparently clear topographical unity. The Bleadon group (Bleadon, Hutton, Elborough, Loxton) add up to 28 hides and were probably another 30-hide unit, while what might be called the Banwell-Winscombe group (including Blagdon) amount to 60½ hides. These figures are bedevilled by the possibility of figure errors and omissions and also by double counting. He suggests that *Ponteshide* and Winterhead are actually counted twice. These round figures of 30, 30, 60 are not necessarily estates, but are units of assessment as part of the hidation of a royal domain or a shire, but, in some cases, unit and manor may be the same. It might be that we are dealing with three primitive manors: Worle, Bleadon and Banwell-Winscombe and their members.
- ²⁷ John Blair reminds us of the grant by Alfred to Asser of Banwell (and Congresbury) as, 'evidence for the long term status of Banwell as a minster used to support royal clerical servants' (John Blair, pers. comm.)
- ²⁸ Frank Thorn comments (pers. comm.) that it seems quite likely that Banwell-Winscombe was the centre of a 60-hide estate that occupies the end of what became Winterstoke Hundred, or, in pre-hundredal terms, it touched the land of Chewton. This means that Blagdon would be included. He does not see Cheddar as part of the equation. It is true that it was later in Winterstoke Hundred, but perhaps only as its importance declined. In 1066, Wedmore had been a member of Cheddar, so he thinks that, though its land extended to the ridge of the Mendips, it essentially looked southwards, and was in some sort of relationship with Bempstone Hundred to the south.
- ²⁹ It is possible to reconstruct the contents and so the bounds of Winterstoke Hundred for 1086 with some certainty. It was bounded on almost two sides by the sea. Otherwise its northern boundary was the Congresbury Yeo. From it the line ran west of Wrington (thus excluding it), past around Blagdon, which it included, to the ridge of the Mendips, then probably dipped down Shute Shelve (excluding Axbridge-Cheddar), to the river Axe, encompassing Compton Bishop, Loxton, Bleadon and Uphill. Frank Thorn (pers. comm.).
- ³⁰ John Blair (pers. comm.) gives us a possible parallel in the 30-hide estate at Witney (Oxon) first mentioned in a charter of 969 and again perhaps an artificial entity formed by breaking off bits of older surrounding territories.
- ³¹ As we have seen, Frank Thorn (pers. comm.) has suggested (note 24) that the centre of the hundred was the Banwell-Winscombe estate. He notes that Anderson (1939) connects Winterstoke with Winterhead which was part of the Winscombe estate. Early forms of the hundred name in *Wine-* might imply a more direct connection with Winscombe though Anderson suggests that these early forms are mistranscriptions of forms in *wintre-*. (Though, as noted above, this may be Old Welsh.) It could well be that pre-hundredally Winscombe was the centre of the area. There are many examples of moots being on royal manors though not named from them.

Depending on exactly when Edgar gave Winscombe away, it might briefly have been the royal manor that controlled the hundred.

- ³² Frank Thorn (pers. comm.) is inclined to think that the dependence of Kingston Seymour on Chewton Mendip was early, and that the link was accepted when the hundreds were laid out. One has to allow for the possibility that, at a very early stage, the major royal manor in the area was Chewton (centre perhaps of 500 or so hides) and that the link with Kingston Seymour was too strong to allow the latter's incorporation into another hundred. Was the reason for the link transhumance (access to the salt marshes)? If what became Somerset was really once dominated by a small number of enormous royal estates, it would be necessary for them to develop satellites, and it is possible that places like Banwell-Winscombe were the next stage. A handful of royal manors could 'administer' Somerset but managing the rural economy would require smaller units.
- ³³ Ian Burrow suggested that the estate dependent on the hillfort at Congresbury might include Yatton, Claverham and all the land up to the River Kenn (Aston and Burrow 1982, 97; Rahtz *et al.* 1992, 225).
- ³⁴ For Bishops Savaric and Jocelin see Carley 1988, 25–30; Abrams 1996, 12, 249.
- ³⁵ The Bishops of Wells are known to have seized at this time land at Ashbury, Badbury, Berrow, Blackford, Bocland, Christian Malford, Cranmore, Damerham, East Brent, Kyngtone, two manors at Lim, Meare, Pucklechurch, Sturminster Newton and Winscombe. All of these were recovered later except Blackford, Cranmore, Pucklechurch and Winscombe (Watkin 1947, 73–89; Abrams 1996, 12).
- ³⁶ Collinson 1791, 613. It should be noted that the boundary between the land of the rector and that of the vicar (and therefore presumably of the great and little tithes?) is shown on the tithe map of 1839–40 for Winscombe. The vicar drew tithes from the Winterhead, Sidcot and Heale areas; the rector from Winscombe, Barton and Woodborough; the situation north of the hill in Sandford is not clear.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

David Bromwich for help with source material, references and photocopies; Teresa Hall, Caroline Thorn, Stephen Rippon, and John Blair for useful comments; Frank Thorn for extremely detailed and thought-provoking notes, elaborating many of the points made here – we have included many of his comments in the end notes.

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