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Charters and the Landscape

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The initial results of a study of charter boundaries were presented at Durham in 1978.[1] The study was then primarily concerned with the Worcestershire evidence. Subsequent forays through the charters of much of the rest of the country have confirmed many of the ideas that had already emerged at that stage, and have also provided more detailed insight into the use of charters for an understanding of settlement and land-use history.

It was clear from the beginning that the charter evidence, limited as it was to short topographical descriptions and boundary perambulations, provided further evidence of the different types of landscape regions revealed by the work of Professor Darby and his colleagues on Domesday Book.[2] Moreover, the charters showed such regions in an entirely pre-Norman context, in a period of considerable change. Although the basis for such regional landscapes had always been the natural topography and its resources, the Anglo-Saxon period was a formative one which experienced massive changes in, for instance, the organization and location of arable land, on the one hand, and the regeneration of woodland, on the other. On both of these the charter boundary-clauses have much to say.

Little can be gained, however, by rushing to the nearest Ordnance Survey map. An essential pre-requisite for all such work is the many hours spent poring over individual charter solutions and relating these to later historical and cartographic evidence. To some extent all interpretation remains subjective, but at least such detailed work

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[1] D. Hooke, 'Anglo-Saxon landscapes of the West Midlands', *JEPNS*, 11 (1978–79), 3–23.
[2] *The Domesday Geography of England*, edited by H. C. Darby, 7 vols (Cambridge, 1952–77).

enables one to present reasons for both the methodology and the interpretation.

REGIONS OF INTENSIVE ARABLE FARMING

One type of region which becomes prominent through the medium of the charters is that in which arable cultivation was both widespread and intensive, if not the dominant form of land-use. Charters remain the chief source of evidence for the introduction of open-field agriculture. In such a type of organization, the peasantry of a township held fragmented plots of land scattered throughout a number of large fields held in common by the whole community. As far as can be understood at present, the strips were elongated, reflecting the shape of holding most easily ploughed by a team of oxen pulling a heavy plough; the team turned at the end of each strip, on the headland. In medieval times the land was frequently thrown up into high ridges separated by furrows, and the latter would also help to demarcate the group of strips held by one peasant from those of his neighbour. In the absence of any form of underground land drain, they also served the invaluable purpose of removing surplus surface water.

There are, however, problems in interpreting the charter evidence of arable cultivation above those involved in translating correctly the various terms used. When Rackham produced his map of the distribution of arable terms, he did not relate it very obviously to a map showing the distribution of charters or of charter boundary-clauses.[3] Goodier's map, while not entirely accurate, shows the paucity of boundary clauses surviving for Eastern England.[4] This is the very area where the ultimate planning of open fields is known to have taken place, giving rise to the enormously long strips which extended from a settlement nucleus to the parish boundary. The date of origin for this system of organization is as yet unknown. The area is not without open-field terms in Rackham's map, but is far surpassed, not unnaturally, given the evidence analysed below, by a strip of land extending from Dorset through Wiltshire and Berkshire into Worcestershire and south-west Warwickshire. Much of this lies in

[3] O. Rackham, *The History of the Countryside* (London, 1986), p. 175.
[4] D. Hill, *An Atlas of Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford, 1981), p. 24, based upon work by A. Goodier.

areas of a chalk downland or clay vale topography. It may be worthy of note that one Yorkshire charter, for Newbold, also refers to lands lying in 'every other acre' in the tenth century (BCS 1113, Sawyer 716), and another, for Normanton in Nottinghamshire, refers to 'every third acre' of land in the same century (BCS 1029, Sawyer 659).

Several facts affect the interpretation of the charter evidence. Reference to arable in charters is biased toward regions where extensive areas of arable were being cut by the township boundaries of the Anglo-Saxon period. The date of origin of these boundaries is not known for certain, but the open fields appear to be related to the individual townships. A short digression is needed here to explain the processes which were under way.

It is a disquieting thought that the details of open-field organization only begin to appear when charters themselves become more detailed in the later Anglo-Saxon period. However, it is likely that the information is reasonably accurate, because all the archaeological evidence so far seems to confirm that settlement was becoming nucleated within the individual township at about this time, inextricably linked with the reorganization of agriculture. Some have argued that population increase was a strong causative factor, and Thirsk saw the necessity to control common grazing of waste and harvest stubble as an important contributory factor, once population increase and extension of the arable had led to a shortage of pasture for domestic stock, including plough oxen;[5] others have stressed the sharing of land between those who had cleared it,[6] and recently Higham has suggested that the number of plough oxen could be kept to a minimum if farms were located in a central village.[7] It is important to recognise that reorganization seems to have taken place within the individual township unit, the forerunner of the Domesday manor, thus coming into effect with the fragmentation of larger estates.[8] In such

[5] J. Thirsk, 'The common fields', *Past and Present*, 29 (1964), 3-25; *eadem*, 'The origin of the common fields', *Past and Present*, 33 (1966), 142-47.
[6] T. A. M. Bishop, 'Assarting and the growth of the open fields', *Economic History Review*, 1st series, 6, no i (1935), 13-29.
[7] N. Higham, 'Settlement, land use and domesday ploughlands', *Landscape History*, 12 (1989), 3-43.
[8] H. Fox, 'Approaches to the adoption of the Midland system', in *The Origins of Open-Field Agriculture*, edited by T. Rowley (London, 1981), pp. 64–111.

circumstances, the motive behind reorganization might be the wish to improve the efficiency and revenues of the individual manor.

On the chalk downlands, in particular, an enormous acreage of land had been under the plough in Roman times, and any boundaries drawn across such land would inevitably have had to carve their way through pre-existing field systems. The natural way to carve up the land was, indeed, to create linear estates running down the escarpments to the vales below. Places along the Jurassic escarpment of the Cotswolds and Yorkshire Wolds would be in a similar situation. It is not surprising, therefore, that the greatest incidence of references to arable cultivation come from those chalk/limestone areas with an abundance of charter material.

But if current theories are correct, the open field should have come into being within the individual township, after its boundary had been demarcated. How then should the apparent shape of the boundaries, in right-angled turns, be influenced by fields not supposed to be present when these boundaries were demarcated, unless, of course, the boundary related to later subdivision within a township? Either boundaries only acquired such irregular shapes at a later date, or they were influenced by pre-existing field patterns. A study carried out by the present writer in the Vale of the White Horse, earlier in Berkshire but now in Oxfordshire, may throw a little light on this.[9] It shows the boundary of the estate of Hardwell (Sawyer 369) making its way through a pre-existing field system made up of large, square-shaped fields in such a series of right-angled bends (Fig. 1).[10] Moreover, these are described in the charter by such terms as *æcer*, *furh*, *forierð*, etc. The large square fields are related to an extensive field system which may be of Roman date and which is shown, by the presence of hollow-ways, to be totally unrelated to the later parish pattern.

In other instances, subdivision of estates in the Anglo-Saxon period might also lead to similar patterns. The arable referred to in the charter bounds is, however, well and truly Anglo-Saxon arable land, and it is unlikely that this land ever went out of cultivation. In the Anglo-Saxon period the higher parts of the downland parishes were

[9] D. Hooke, 'Regional variation in southern and central England in the Anglo-Saxon period and its relationship to land units and settlement', in *Anglo-Saxon Settlements*, edited by D. Hooke (Oxford, 1988), pp. 123–41.
[10] *PNBerks*, p. 684.

undoubtedly under pasture, and here the boundaries slice through Celtic field systems without any attempt to follow earlier field boundaries. Much of this land remained under pasture throughout the medieval period, and has only been broken up over the last few decades. The distribution of arable terms used in charter boundary-clauses may indeed reflect Anglo-Saxon agricultural practices, but is influenced by the nature of the topography and estate pattern.

Indeed, boundary clauses do not necessarily detect the arable land, even when it was extensive. The Upper Thames Valley around Sutton and Long Wittenham was one of the most prosperous regions of Berkshire at the time of the Domesday survey; there were at least two ranges of timbered buildings sufficiently large to be termed 'palaces' in the Anglo-Saxon period. Yet the boundary clauses refer more to streams and dykes in this low-lying valley area.[11]

One other point that has been confirmed by continuing studies is the tendency for detached parcels of land to be granted to individual townships from within once-composite estates. The Bishop of Worcester's estate at Stratford-upon-Avon may be presented as an example of this. A minster church may have been established at Stratford as early as the late seventh or early eighth century, when 33 *cassati* at Shottery were granted to the church of Worcester by Offa of Essex (Sawyer 64). The boundary clause seems to omit the land immediately around the minster, certainly established there by the ninth century, and includes land on the north bank of the Avon which was later lost to the minster. Adjacent to the east, Hampton Lucy appears to have been administered as a separate ecclesiastical estate. Within the estate of Old Stratford, township-estates were to be separately recognised and leased out. Their boundaries frequently show the type of angular turns noted above, and the general north-west/south-east alignment of nineteenth-century and present-day field boundaries may also reflect the fossilized survival of an ancient rectangular field-pattern. There are references to apparent strip fields here by the late Anglo-Saxon period. An eleventh-century lease of Bishopton by Bishop Leofsige to his minister, Godric, in 1016 (KCD 724, Sawyer 1388) refers to a furrow which apparently divided the open fields of Bishopton from those of Old Stratford, and to headlands

[11] Hooke, 'Regional variation', *ibid*.

along the northern boundary of Bishopton, including a 'barley headland'. A croft on the western boundary seems to suggest that open fields did not cover the whole of the farmed area. Bishopton, however, seems to have lacked some necessary resources, and was also granted fifteen acres of meadow on the river-furlong opposite Tiddington, eight and a half acres on Shottery water-meadow, twelve acres of ploughland between the river and the dyke at the stone-digging, and Ælfric's wood (Fig. 2.). These tracts all seem to lie within the greater area of the ecclesiastical parish of Old Stratford. This allocation of land within a once-larger estate unit is typical of many such arrangements.

There is today good reason for studying regional variation in the landscape. Under the pressures of large-scale urbanisation and modern farming techniques, many areas are in great danger of losing any individual character. The subtle characteristics of their historic landscapes have, or are being, irretrievably lost. When, and if, refurbishment becomes possible, as land is set aside from agricultural production, it is obviously useful to know something of a region's original character in order to avoid the monotonous 'sameness' which threatens the landscape today.

The once-wooded landscapes of Arden in north-west Warwickshire have been carved by the motorways which not only cause such visual impact, but produce incessant noise which carries for miles. More insidiously, hedge removal and loss of hedgerow trees destroy the pattern of small irregular fields which characterised the region from medieval times, the small fields well-adapted to the pastoral type of farming which predominated. Like north Worcestershire, this was an area of dispersed settlement almost devoid of village clusters, but today there are constant demands by property developers for land on which to build the urban satellites they call 'new villages'. These would carry the urban suburbs outwards from the conurbation for many miles, into what is now open countryside. Already much of the urban fringe consists of semi-rural countryside, blotted with sports grounds, riding-stables, garden nurseries, decayed farms and sporadic areas of housing. It is only a short step from this to the housing developments demanded by a population which wishes to live in 'green' surroundings, and the many business parks demanding land alongside the new motorways. In the face of such pressures, it is reassuring to note that the Countryside Commission, using Warwickshire for a pilot

study, has put forward a report on methods of landscape assessment which will take into serious consideration the historic features which help to maintain regional identity.[12]

WOODLAND REGIONS

Where there has been considerable modern development, it is not always possible to examine the features noted in the boundary clauses. Some areas, however, remain relatively lightly settled. Along the border of Berkshire and Hampshire is a band of infertile soils which vary from heavy clays to light sands and gravels, produced largely on Eocene Beds overlain with glacial drift. The River Kennet, draining this area, meanders across a marshy flood-plain. The Hampshire side of the boundary was less prosperous at Domesday, with an average density of only two plough-teams per square mile when an area such as the Thames Valley had double that number. This seems to have been an area of mixed heathland and woodland at the time of the Norman Conquest, the woodland being registered as swine-rent, which makes its true quantity difficult to judge. By medieval times the land south of the border in Hampshire formed part of the Forest of Pamber. In Berkshire the forest of Kintbury spread over the south-western corner of the county. It was in the southern strip of Berkshire that a strong incidence of the term *haga* was noted, and for reasons already argued fully in print, it was concluded that this term was by no means a synonym for the terms used to describe a hedge.[13] Not only does the term occur in quite different geographical regions in whatever part of the country it is found, with a little overlap in transitional regions, but it also occurs in a number of boundary clauses together with the term *hecg*, although relating to quite different parts of an estate. A more detailed plot of the boundary clauses in part of this zone showed the *haga* boundaries to be running for several miles along the boundaries of estates, often in areas where manorial lords were later given licence to impark for deer-hunting.

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[12] Countryside Commission, *Assessment and Conservation of Landscape Character: The Warwickshire Landscapes Project Approach* (Cheltenham, 1991).
[13] D. Hooke 'Pre-Conquest woodland: its distribution and usage', *Agricultural History Review*, 37 (1989), 113–29.

The area which was studied in closest detail, however, lies further to the south-west, near Andover, where the chalk is heavily overlain with a sticky clay-with-flints soil. This is an area that was under arable cultivation throughout the Roman period, but from which agriculture retreated well before medieval times, when the area lay within the Forests of *Dygherlye* and Finkley, extensions of the Wiltshire forest of Chute. All early maps show the area thickly wooded, and today the ancient field lynchets and enclosures are lost in heavy undergrowth, but the date at which woodland regeneration took place has yet to be established. There are numerous *leah*-names in the area, and some promising work on lichens suggests that it may have been already wooded in the early medieval period.[14] An interesting feature here is that many of the estates were initially in royal hands, although some of the southernmost estates, like Whitchurch and Hurstbourne Priors, were to be alienated to the church of Winchester in the late eighth and early ninth centuries. Faccombe, in the heart of this zone, remained a royal estate, and was the morning-gift of Wynflæd, the grandmother of kings Edwy and Edgar.

In this area, the charters are full of *haga* features (Fig. 3), often running along boundaries for many miles, such as the one which separated the estates of Crux Easton and Woodcott and Litchfield from St Mary Bourne. Crux Easton was held by a huntsman in 1086, and late forest perambulations show that the westernmost *haga* boundary of St Mary Bourne was coincident with the boundary of Finkley Forest as it was recorded in 1298.[15] It has been argued that there was no legal forest, as such, before the Norman kings introduced the concept, but this is arguable, to say the least. Legal forests were already established in the Frankish kingdoms by the seventh century, and this country was rarely slow to follow continental practices to some degree. It is particularly interesting, therefore, to find the term *haga* also occurring along the boundaries of Fulda territories, in what is now Germany, in 801,[16] coinciding with the boundaries of the royal forests of Bramforst and Zunderhart in 980. Metz, writing in the mid-1950s,

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[14] *Ex inf.* Hampshire and Isle of Wight Naturalists' Trust Ltd.

[15] *Proceedings of the Hampshire Field Club and Archaeological Society*, 9 (1921–25), 262–63.

[16] *Urkundenbuch des Klosters Fulda*, edited by E. E. Stengel (Marburg, 1958), pp. 399–400.

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was convinced that 'the connection between king's forests and "Hagen" . . . is in some way proved'.[17]

No such claim is made for the English *hagan*. The word occurs frequently, and is often found in relation to quite small areas of enclosed woodland, but it does appear that one of its possible usages was to denote a boundary fence around an area set aside for hunting, as in this marginal zone of northern Hampshire. Indeed, related, but not directly derivative, words continued to be used for nets and fences used in hunting in medieval times. One way of catching deer was to drive them towards gaps in a fence, where a net (called a 'hay') would be spread or archers would be waiting. A Norman *haia* was an enclosure, probably paled, in which deer were taken. The word *haga* itself implies 'enclosure', either when used to refer to a defensive enclosure around a lord's fortress or within the newly-defended *burh*s of southern and midland England, and frequently might mean little more than 'enclosed wood'. Where it occurs in large numbers, however, it seems to be providing specific information about the nature of the Anglo-Saxon countryside.

Along the southern boundary of the royal estate of Faccombe (KCD 1290, Sawyer 1539) 'the white *haga*' is represented by a particularly fine earthwork, the nomenclature explained by the presence of flints in the surface soil. Here excavations of the manorial centre showed a nucleus of halls, private apartments and kitchens established in the ninth century, set within a vast area of prehistoric fields.[18] A manorial hall was erected at Faccombe-Netherton in the late tenth century, and replaced by another after the Norman Conquest and yet another in 1280, when Faccombe became the main residence of a local landed family. There were swine-pastures at Faccombe in 1086, and Faccombe Woods later remained part of the Forest of Chute. The excavation revealed the greatest quantity of deer antler, from the native red deer, in the period immediately following the Norman Conquest, but there was a gradual change to the taking of fallow deer, widely introduced by the Normans because they were easier to manage within the limits of deer-parks. In this area we seem to be seeing a landscape

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[17] W. Metz, 'Das "gehagio regis" der Langobarden und die deutschen Hagenortsnamen', *BzN*, 5 (Heidelberg, 1954), 41–42.

[18] J. R. Fairbrother, 'Faccombe Netherton', *Archaeological and Historical Research*, I (City of London Archaeological Society, 1984).

that was adapted in the Anglo-Saxon period from one of diminishing agriculture to one of quite a different kind.

THE SOUTH-WEST PENINSULA

The final section of this paper deals with what would seem to be another region of varied landscapes, one in which the charters also reveal the very different characteristics produced by the natural environment. The charters of the South-West Peninsula are perhaps rather reticent about actual land-use, but are full of details about the landscape itself. One can compare, for instance, the charter bounds of *Peadingtun* (BCS 1323, Sawyer 1547) on the heights of Dartmoor with those of other estates in rather gentler surroundings. The bounds of the former cannot be traced precisely, but cover enormous distances, with references to hills, springs and archaeological features which are difficult to identify today. There is a mention of one of those very characteristic Dartmoor features, the granite tor, in the *eofede tor* which might be an early name for Haytor, *Idetordoune* in 1566, but there are other possible identifications.[19] The archaeological features include something which gave rise to the name Soussons in Manaton, derived from 'seven stones', and an unlocated hillfort, *hord burh*.

There are other charters which cross similarly desolate ground in Cornwall, particularly on the Goonhilly Downs of the Lizard Peninsula. Here, at St Keverne, parts of a large British monastic estate seem to have been granted into secular hands in the tenth century (BCS 1197, Sawyer 755, 832),[20] and on the higher moorland two sets of bounds run to the cross, actually termed 'the hag's cross', which gave rise to the name Crousa and possibly stood on St Keverne Beacon. Kestlemerris, incorporating the Cornish term *castell* 'village, tor', is now a farm-name, and there was an earlier prehistoric settlement nearby. Barrows are referred to on several occasions, and it seems likely that one such reference is to a cist known as the 'Three Brothers of Grugwith'. Other groups of barrows formed landmarks on the long eastern boundary of the estate of Tywarnhayle (Sawyer 684), a manor

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[19] *PNDevon*, p. 476.
[20] B. L. Olson, *Early Monasteries in Cornwall* (Woodbridge, 1989), p. 95 and 109; Sawyer 832, printed in J. Earle, *A Hand-Book to the Land-Charters and other Saxonic Documents* (Oxford, 1888), pp. 295–97.

which encompassed much of the parishes of Perranzabuloe and St Agnes, extending from Penhale Point on the north southwards to Nancekuke. On this occasion, solution of the boundary-clause was facilitated by the existence of a number of seventeenth-century boundary surveys preserved in the Duchy of Cornwall Office at Buckingham Gate, and in the British Library, London.[21] They had been used by several earlier writers, notably Charles Henderson, but never reproduced in print and fully analysed,[22] which is something the present writer hopes to do in the near future. Again, several tors, one known as *carn peran*, 'St Peran's tor', are noted on the eastern boundary of this estate. Another cross or crucifix is referred to in the Tywarnhayle boundary clause, possibly the one still there today, standing on the boundary near the ruins of the church of St Piran, which may have been built to replace St Piran's oratory, at some stage overwhelmed by blown sand.

Many of the charter boundaries of the South-West are exceedingly difficult to trace with accuracy today, in spite of the work of many dedicated scholars. However, every small success adds to the picture, and in some cases shows where earlier explanations cannot stand. It has been possible, for instance, to identify the territory included within the charter of South Hams in Devon, granted by King Æthelwulf of Wessex to himself in 847 (Sawyer 298).[23] Rose-Troup, in 1929, had published a solution which carried the boundary from the south coast onto the heights of central Dartmoor.[24] Finberg queried this, but still included far too great an area of land.[25] It can be shown, in fact, that the grant concerned only the two peninsulas between the rivers Erme and Avon on the west, and between the Avon and the Kingsbridge estuary on the east. This is a fertile region, largely underlain by rich

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[21] British Library, Additional MSS. 24759, fos 126r–127v and 129r–131r; 24758, fo. 124; 18448, fo. 91; Duchy of Cornwall Office, map 944.
[22] C. Henderson, 'Ecclesiastical Antiquities', *Journal of the Royal Institution of Cornwall*, n.s. 3 (1957–60), 397–98.
[23] H. M. Petter, 'A charter of King Æthelwulf', *Devon Historian*, 29 (1984), 21–24; D. Hooke, 'Studies on Devon charter boundaries', *Report and Transactions of the Devonshire Association*, 122 (1990), 193–211.
[24] F. Rose-Troup, 'The new Edgar charter and the South Hams', *Report and Transactions of the Devonshire Association*, 61 (1929), 249–80.
[25] H. P. R. Finberg, *West-Country Historical Studies* (Newton Abbot, 1969), pp. 13–18.

red Devonian sandstones, which was, however, to be plundered by the sons of Earl Harold immediately after the Norman Conquest.

The work in Cornwall has been made that much easier by Oliver Padel's new dictionary of Cornish place-name elements.[26] Since Cornwall fell so late to Anglo-Saxon rule, its language was able to survive, and many of the pre-Conquest charters give the Cornish terms for landmarks—*carn* for the tors, **ker* for the 'rounds' (small fortified settlements) which figure so prominently in the boundary clauses of Trenowth and Tregellas, namely 'the witch's round' and 'the wide round' (BCS 1231, Sawyer 770).[27] Stones are indicated by the term *men* (spelt *maen* in the charters), and these too are frequent in the rocky granite regions.

Much of the peninsula seems to have been an area of scattered settlements and tiny village nuclei, the charters often naming settlements other than those recorded in 1086, and sometimes indicating settlements that have failed to survive.[28] In general, however, one is led through a maze of natural features which tell relatively little about the settlements themselves. A sample boundary clause is that of the great Crediton charter of 739 (BCS 1331, 1332, Sawyer 255), in which King Æthelred grants a vast territory to Bishop Forthere for the construction (or re-foundation) of a monastery (Fig. 4). Crediton had been the birthplace, in about 680, of St Boniface, who went on to become a missionary in the Frankish kingdom. The minster was founded under the auspices of the Bishop of Sherborne. The charter survives in an eleventh-century manuscript, but the boundary covers an area more extensive than that of the hundred of that date. It includes several parishes to the east of the River Creedy: Upton Pyne and Brampford Speke, and an irregularly-shaped extension in the south where it takes in the broken topography of the land drained by the River Teign, almost on the northern flanks of Dartmoor. This southern area was apparently an area fragmented into numerous tiny manors by 1086, many of them single-virgate holdings.

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[26] O. J. Padel, *Cornish Place-Name Elements*, EPNS LXVI–LXVII (Nottingham, 1985).
[27] D. Hooke, *The Pre-Conquest Charter-Bounds of Devon and Cornwall* (Woodbridge, forthcoming).
[28] D. Hooke, 'The mid–late Anglo-Saxon period: settlement and land use', *Exeter University Studies in History* (forthcoming).

Of the 79 charter-boundary landmarks, 37 refer to natural features. The southern boundary follows no obvious physical feature, but picks its way along streamlets and across intervening ridges, referring to the various ridges, coombs, springs and streams along its route. Where it crosses the deeply-incised streams of the region on several occasions the bounds refer to a *hlȳp* or 'leap', and the deeply-cut ravine of the headwater streams of the Yeo is called an *eorð geberst*. Many of the valleys are enclosed and hidden, and fit admirably Gelling's description of what she would expect a *cumb* to look like.[29] Such sheltered coombs were favourite places for the isolated farmsteads which are today scattered across the region. This is not always so, however, and although this charter also refers to one valley as a 'slade', the term *denu*, normally used to refer to a more open valley, was not in use in the South-West, and *swincumb* on the boundary of Colebrooke is a particularly open and featureless valley. Neither Devon nor Cornwall is rich in early cartographic evidence, and the search for surviving place- and field-names has been a difficult and time-consuming task. There are, however, quite a number of late boundary perambulations, like that of Tywarnhayle, which are of interest, if not always of any great assistance.

The western Crediton boundary is more closely related to the physical landscape, first following the River Troney northwards and then leaving that river where it swings eastwards to follow a ridge of higher land northwards, until it reaches the valley of the Shobrooke, a headwater stream of the Yeo. Having reached the Yeo, it ran up the Dalch for several miles, eventually crossing broken ground again to the Eastern Creedy. In the east it was bounded entirely by the rivers Creedy and Exe, apart from a long stretch of boundary which followed a major routeway. Indeed, routeways and associated features form some seventeen of Crediton's 79 landmarks, and the highway which marked the northern boundaries of the parishes of Newton St Cyres, Upton Pyne and Brampford Speke can be traced westwards through Copplestone and eastwards across the River Exe, crossing the Creedy by a bridge by the time of the charter. Another east–west route followed the northern boundary of Drewsteignton on the line of the present Exeter–Okehampton road. There are also many references to

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[29] M. Gelling, *Place-Names in the Landscape* (London, 1984), pp. 85–94.

fords in this area of numerous streams, and the area was obviously seamed with minor routeways.

In spite of the high proportion of landmarks which are natural features, one gets an impression in many parts of Devon of a rather more developed landscape than is revealed in the Cornish charters. Hardly any Cornish charter omits a reference to marshland, and there are many boundaries which obviously pass over rather wild terrain. Dykes commonly marked boundaries in both counties, and on many occasions may have been similar to the turf-covered banks of earth and stones which are associated with many parts of Cornwall today.

The charters of Devon contain many more references to birds and animals, and even to plants, than the Cornish boundaries. In 22 sets of Cornish bounds, there are references only to thorn-trees and birch-trees, an alder swamp and pools with rushes, sedges and wild garlic (together with *alaw 'water-lily' in a charter place-name). References to animals or birds are fewer in the charters of Cornwall, but include a 'horse spring', a 'cattlefold', a 'cattle stone', possibly a 'mare's valley' and an 'ants' spring', and, in a place-name, a 'seal's rock'. A pool and a tor are associated, respectively, with the heron and the crow. In Devon there are 26 such references in the Crediton boundary clause alone, and three or four in most sets of bounds. The trees include oak, ash, alder, elder, birch, thorn, maple, holly, lime, pear, crab-apple, hazel, and many willows or withies. Broom is also noted, and lesser herbs include ferns, rushes, reeds and sedges, associated with pools, springs and streams, and a 'herb coomb' on the south-eastern fringe of Dartmoor which was perhaps more luxuriant in character than the wilder moorland above. This was still an untamed environment in many areas, and wolves were associated both with springs and a coomb, and presumably captured in the 'wolf pit' which lay on the Crediton boundary. Foxes and vixen are mentioned and, on two occasions, deer. Of domestic stock, pigs and sheep (including rams and lambs) are noted, although references to a 'calf's hill' and a 'ram's horn' probably refer to the shape of particular hills. As for birds, there are several references to hawks (a woodland bird), to a crow, a raven and possibly an eagle, and 'fowls' in general. Eels must have frequented the Eel Brook which flowed across the Meavy boundary on the west of Dartmoor, and it was probably salmon which were caught in the several breeding pools noted in the Exe on the boundary of

Topsham.[30] There were particularly valuable fisheries in the estuary here throughout the Middle Ages.

INTERPRETATION OF LANDSCAPE TERMS

Once the boundaries have been solved as closely as possible, it becomes feasible actually to examine features in the field. There is every possibility of identifying many of the landmarks far more precisely than when dealing with place-names alone. Studies in Berkshire and Wiltshire showed that *cumb* and *denu* were used with considerable precision there, and that the term *hlinc*, referring to a steep step of land, might be used for a man-made feature produced by ploughing away from a boundary, but could also be used for a steep natural bank, as it is today. In Berkshire the modern 'lynches' are steep banks left untilled, and hence covered in undergrowth, and they can be clearly identified in the same condition on post-medieval maps. In Devon, the use of the term *beorg* for a barrow-shaped hill is well-exemplified in the case of the 'white barrow' of the Culmstock charter (BCS 724, Sawyer 386), which is today known as White Ball Hill, as opposed to Red Ball Hill nearby.

THE NATURE OF BOUNDARY CLAUSES

With this body of evidence, it becomes possible to map the early landscape. However, it is essential to realise that the Anglo-Saxon had no map, and had to carry a mental picture of the countryside he was trying to describe. Gelling and Cole have admirably pointed out how the language itself could be used, by its very precision, to convey a clear image of the countryside to local and traveller alike.[31] Prominent hills could serve as landmarks along long-distance routes, their shapes signified by the names given to them. It is a fascinating exercise to walk a charter boundary, checking how intervisible the actual boundary landmarks are likely to have been to anyone perambulating an estate.

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[30] N. W. Alcock and I. Coombes, 'The Topsham charter', *Devon & Cornwall Notes & Queries*, 33 (1977), 324–27.

[31] Gelling, *Place-Names in the Landscape*, passim; A. Cole, 'The origin, distribution and use of the place-name element *ōra* and its relationship to the element *ofer*', *JEPNS*, 22 (1989–90), 26–41.

There are certainly areas where the boundary is extraordinarily clear, but this is not always so.

On the western boundary of the estate of Longdon in Tredington (BCS 1243, Sawyer 1321), in the Stour valley of Warwickshire, one part of the bounds runs 'northwards along the hill', here termed a *dūn*, where they follow the crest of a marked little hill rising to over 400 feet. They then veer around 'the head of the croft which lies by the stream', before running 'thence upwards along to the upper end of the hill so that it comes to the spring'. Even without any map, these features would open up before anyone walking the bounds, and the second *dūn* is clearly the next little hill to the north of Longdon Manor. It is of interest to note, in a second charter boundary of this estate, that when the second hill is approached from the north it is called an *ofer*. Obviously more fieldwork is needed to explain this.

Another charter boundary that has recently been followed particularly closely is that of Oldberrow in Warwickshire (Fig. 5). In fact, there are three separate boundary clauses for adjacent estates (BCS 124, 1111, Sawyer 79, 1307). The *dunan hyl* and *widan dene* of the southern boundary of *Teodecesleage* carry one to the *ulan wylle* and *osland mære/oslan mere* which mark the beginning of the Oldberrow clause, at the south-eastern corner of that parish. The southern boundary on the map looks as if it follows a rather artificial line, but when one walks *on long mores*, 'along the marsh', it is found that the marsh does turn in the angular fashion dictated by the lie of the land. At the head of the marsh it is but a short step to 'the broad road' of the next landmark. The 'rushy gore' is less certainly located today, now that all is drained, but its position can be guessed at, and 'the boundary oak-tree' has likewise long since disappeared; it probably stood beside the road where another parish boundary runs down to meet that of Oldberrow. The next few landmarks, two stone barrows (or hills) separated by a little dyke, offer no problems, and there is even a gravelly mound at the latter which might be the remains of an opened barrow. Much of this boundary remains clear today.

However, it would be difficult to follow the southern boundary of Ruin Clifford (Sawyer 1356), part of Old Stratford, without knowing beforehand the line to be followed.[32] Part of the route is flat and featureless, and having left 'the great road' at 'the rough slough', a clear enough low-lying area, following a brook to a green way, it would be very hard to see the valley which is the next landmark. Once found, its identity would, however, be certain, for it is overlooked by the 'broomy linch', now a steep grass-covered bank, of the following landmark, and the valley continues to the River Stour, which forms the whole of the western boundary. It must often have been in featureless terrain like this that the boundary surveyors resorted to such landmarks as trees and stones, although these often seem to have been boundary markers beside roads.

Indeed, there are some boundary markers which might never be seen and might only have been known by someone with a prior knowledge of the boundary. At the north-western corner of Oldberrow, the bounds run 'thence to five boundaries'. Today only three boundaries are known at this spot, but it is doubtful if there was any physical indication of their presence. Other bounds run along or to 'the boundary of the people of . . .', and here again the line of the boundary must have been common local knowledge. Many of the earliest Kent charters are of this type, but the phraseology continued to be used after boundary surveys had become filled with fine detail. It is possible, of course, that some form of marker was in use, in the same way that crosses were cut into tree-bark or scratched on stones to mark boundaries in later centuries.

The nature of the landmarks themselves has been discussed elsewhere,[33] but here it is sufficient to note how this great wealth of topographical detail has contributed to an understanding of the historic landscape.

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[32] Printed in *Hemingi Chartularium Ecclesiae Wigorniensis*, edited by T. Hearne (Oxford, 1723), pp. 197–99.
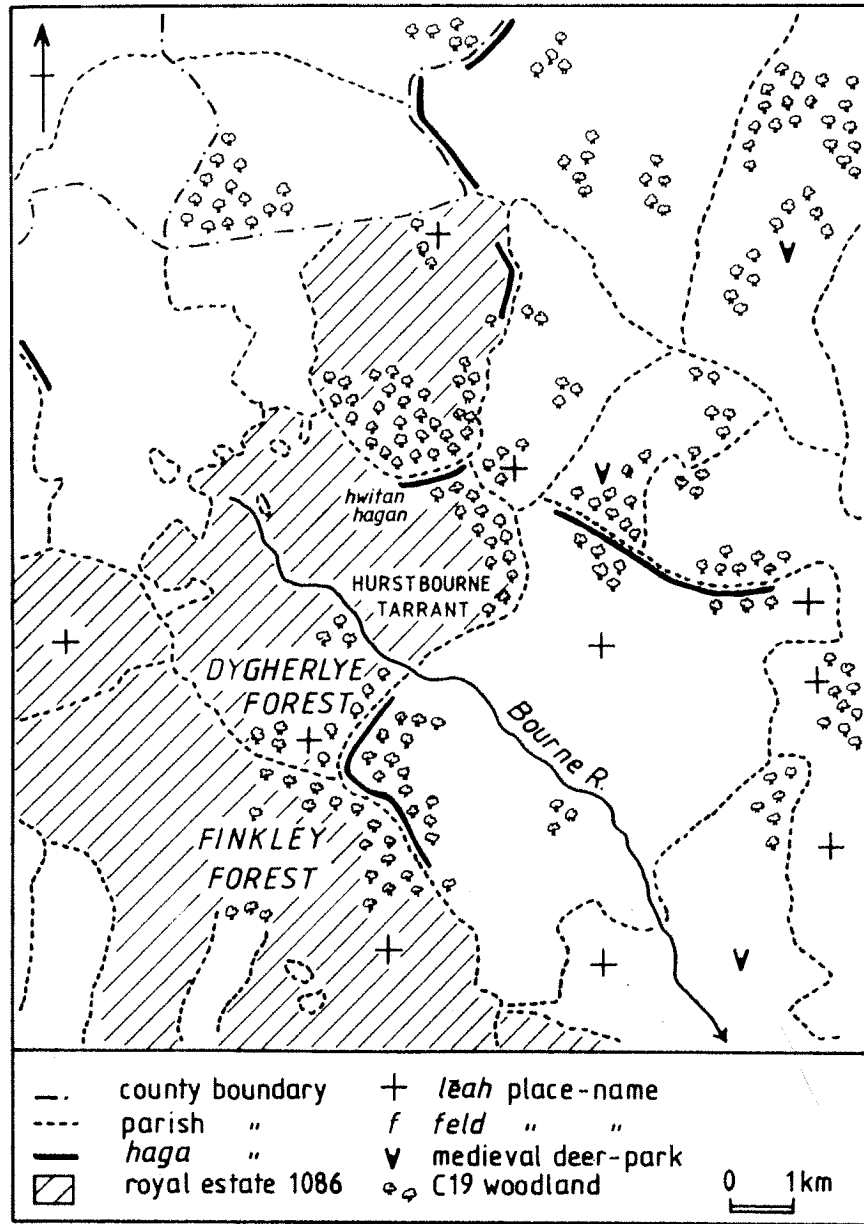
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[33] D. Hooke, *Anglo-Saxon Landscapes of the West Midlands: The Charter Evidence*, British Archaeological Reports, British series, XCV (Oxford, 1981).
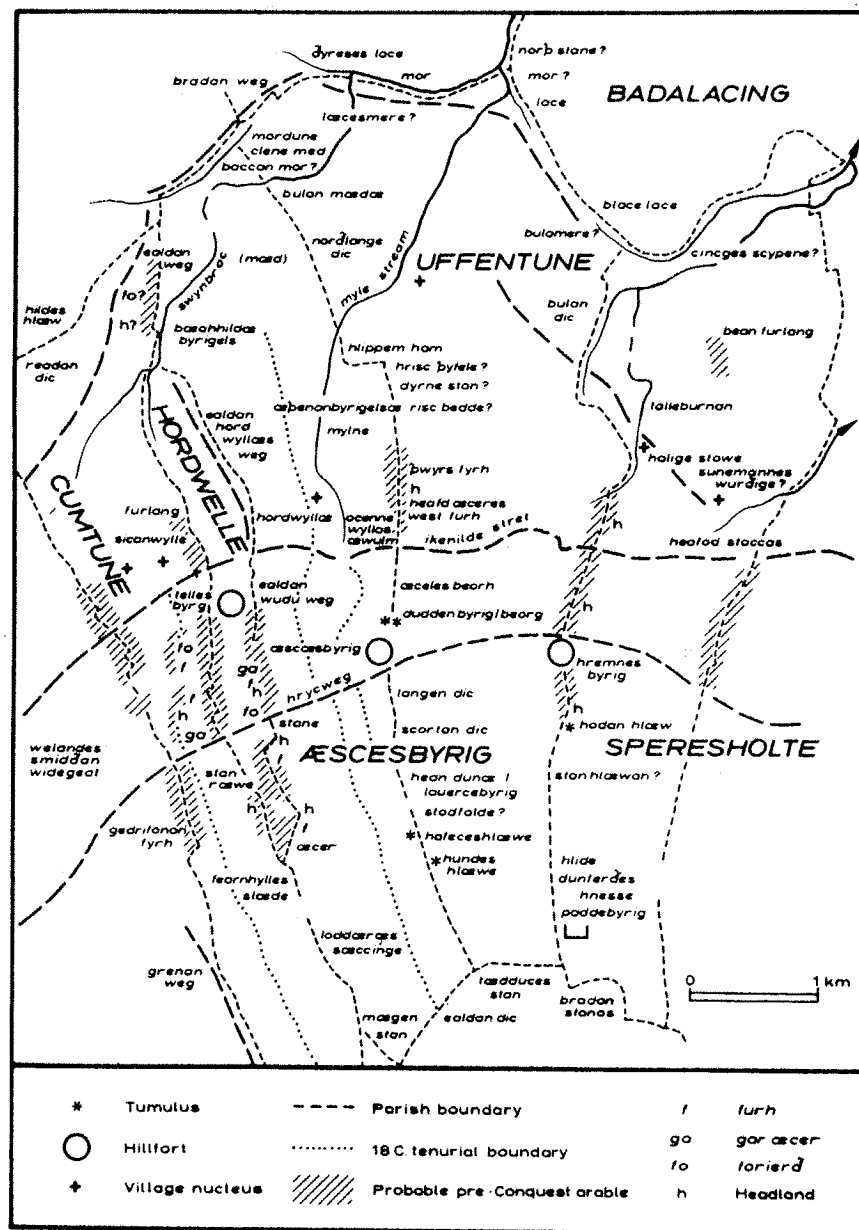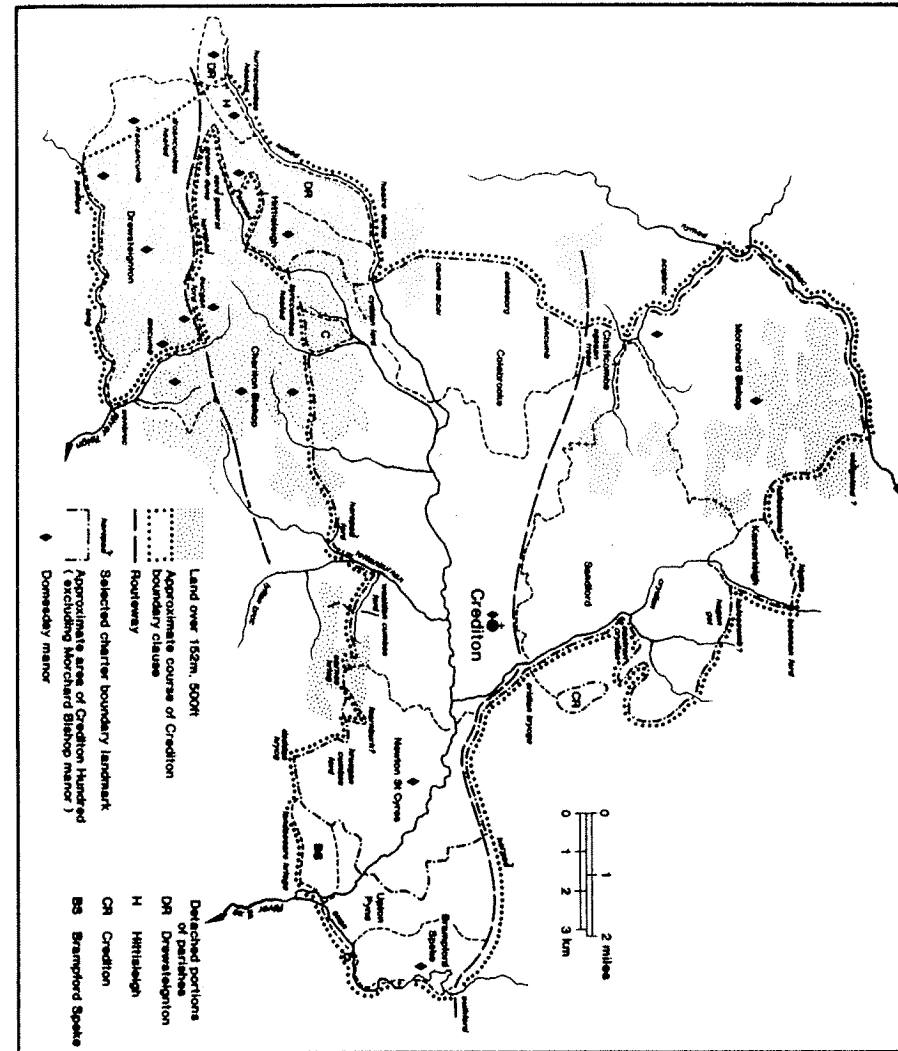
Map 1
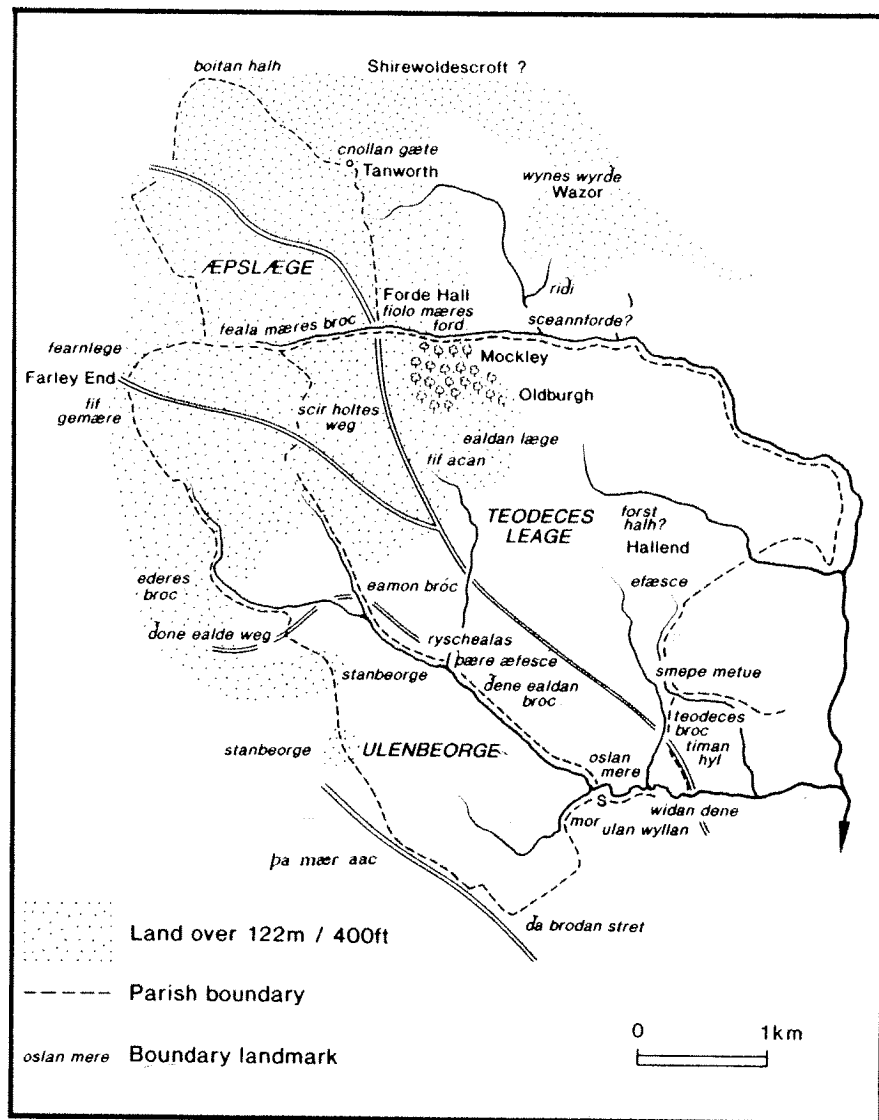Estate boundaries and charter surveys in the Vale of the White Horse.
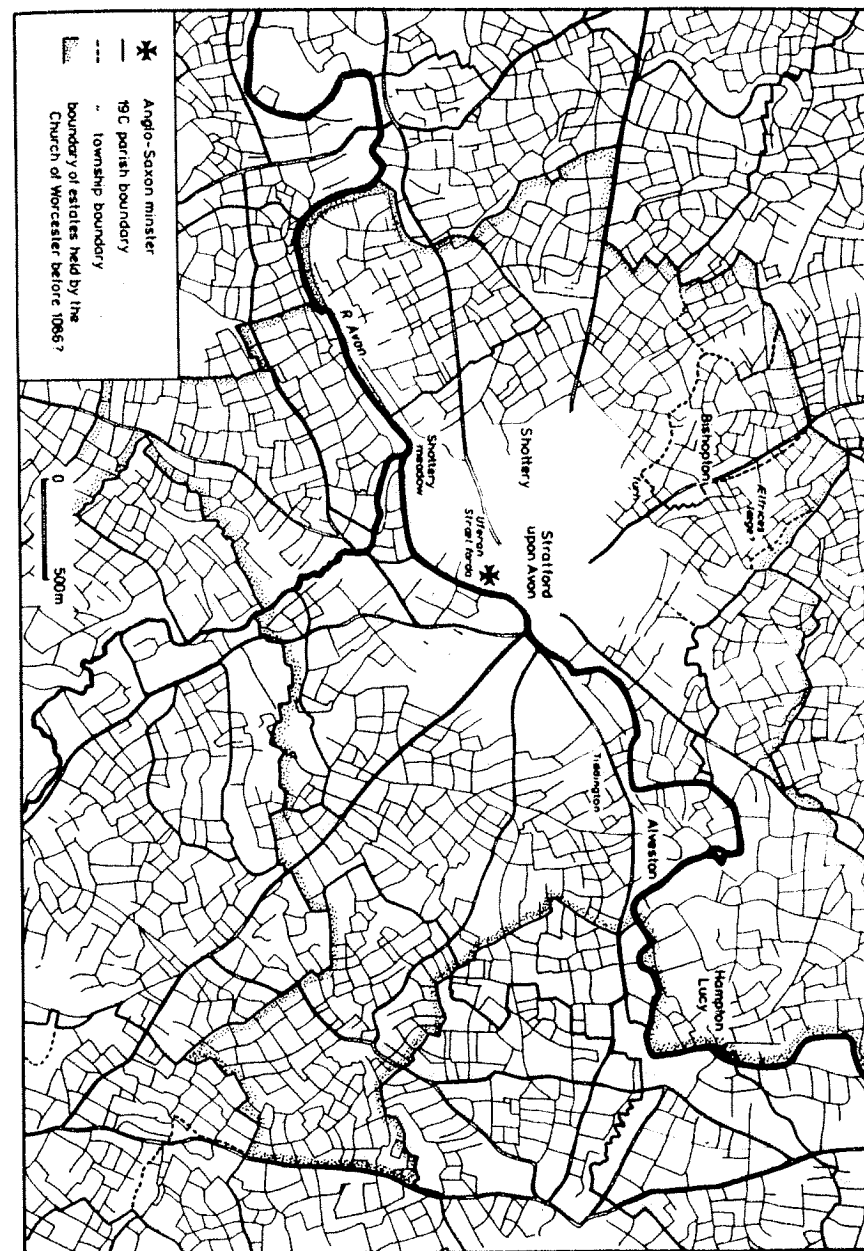
Map 2
The pre-Conquest estate of Old Stratford, Warwickshire.

Map 3
North Hampshire: features associated with woodland and hunting.

Map 4
The estates of Crediton minster.

Map 5
Charter boundary-clauses in Warwickshire Arden.

Murdoch Mackenzie's Charts
as a Source for
Irish Place-Names

Breandán S. Mac Aodha
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Over half a century before the first Ordnance Survey maps of Ireland were compiled, Murdoch Mackenzie the elder (d. 1797)[1] completed the remarkable feat of mapping the entire Irish coastline. Earlier he had undertaken similar hydrographic surveys for the British Admiralty along the West Coast of Scotland and in the Orkney and Shetland Islands. His principal works included *Orcades* (eight charts dating to the period 1747–50), *Treatise on Marine Surveying* (1774), *Charts of the West Coast of Scotland* (1775–6), and *Ireland* (fifty-nine charts dated between 1775 and, posthumously, 1800).[2]

His charts, compiled in haste with the aid of a compass, provide a crude but recognizable outline of the coast. Much of the drawing was probably done by eye, so that distortions were inevitable, particularly in areas where his sloop remained but briefly, so that few soundings and sightings were taken. Thus the south coast of Gorumna Island in Connemara is depicted almost as a straight line, whereas in reality there is a large embayment towards the west, while his Mweenish Island bears little relationship to the true shape. Many features are not drawn to scale, e.g. Lettermore is shown as large as Gorumna, whereas it is barely half the size. Places remote from the high sea were least well observed. Thus the mighty fiord-like inlet of Killary is but a pale shadow of itself, and the north coast of the Corraun Peninsula is reduced to a straight line. But these defects are of little account except from a hydrographic point of view. What makes these maps fascinating to the toponymist is that they contain a large corpus of names, many of which were not previously recorded. Most of these names relate to

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[1] A brief account of Mackenzie (mis-spelled McKenzie) will be found in *The Dictionary of National Biography*, edited by L. Stephen and S. Lee, XII, 604.
[2] R. V. Tooley, *Tooley's Dictionary of Mapmakers* (1978), p. 409.