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The Wheathampstead (Herts.) charter-bounds, A.D. 1060: a corrected text and notes on the boundary-points

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ABBREVIATIONS OF COUNTIES AND EPNS COUNTY SURVEYS

Co	Cornwall
Ha	Hampshire
He	Herefordshire
K	Kent
La	Lancashire
Nb	Northumberland
Sf	Suffolk
So	Somerset
Wt	Isle of Wight
CPNE	<i>Cornish Place-Name Elements.</i>
EPNE	<i>English Place-Name Elements, Parts 1 and 2.</i>
PN BdHu	<i>The Place-Names of Bedfordshire and Huntingdonshire.</i>
PN Brk	<i>The Place-Names of Berkshire, Parts 1, 2 and 3.</i>
PN Bu	<i>The Place-Names of Buckinghamshire.</i>
PN Ca	<i>The Place-Names of Cambridgeshire and the Isle of Ely.</i>
PN Ch	<i>The Place-Names of Cheshire, Parts 1–5.</i>
PN Cu	<i>The Place-Names of Cumberland, Parts 1, 2 and 3.</i>
PN D	<i>The Place-Names of Devon, Parts 1 and 2.</i>
PN Db	<i>The Place-Names of Derbyshire, Parts 1, 2 and 3.</i>
PN Do	<i>The Place-Names of Dorset, Parts 1–4.</i>
PN Du	<i>The Place-Names of County Durham, Part 1.</i>
PN Ess	<i>The Place-Names of Essex.</i>
PN ERY	<i>The Place-Names of the East Riding of Yorkshire and York.</i>
PN Gl	<i>The Place-Names of Gloucestershire, Parts 1–4.</i>
PN Hrt	<i>The Place-Names of Hertfordshire.</i>
PN Le	<i>The Place-Names of Leicestershire, Parts 1–7.</i>
PN Li	<i>The Place-Names of Lincolnshire, Parts 1–7.</i>
PN Mx	<i>The Place-Names of Middlesex (apart from the City of London).</i>
PN Nf	<i>The Place-Names of Norfolk, Parts 1–3.</i>
PN Nt	<i>The Place-Names of Nottinghamshire.</i>
PN NRY	<i>The Place-Names of the North Riding of Yorkshire.</i>
PN Nth	<i>The Place-Names of Northamptonshire.</i>
PN O	<i>The Place-Names of Oxfordshire, Parts 1 and 2.</i>
PN R	<i>The Place-Names of Rutland.</i>
PN Sa	<i>The Place-Names of Shropshire, Parts 1–9.</i>
PN Sr	<i>The Place-Names of Surrey.</i>
PN St	<i>The Place-Names of Staffordshire, Part 1.</i>
PN Sx	<i>The Place-Names of Sussex, Parts 1 and 2.</i>
PN W	<i>The Place-Names of Wiltshire.</i>
PN Wa	<i>The Place-Names of Warwickshire.</i>
PN We	<i>The Place-Names of Westmorland, Parts 1 and 2.</i>
PN Wo	<i>The Place-Names of Worcestershire.</i>
PN WRY	<i>The Place-Names of the West Riding of Yorkshire, Parts 1–8.</i>

THE WHEATHAMPSTEAD (HERTS.) CHARTER-BOUNDS, A.D. 1060:
A CORRECTED TEXT AND NOTES ON THE BOUNDARY-POINTS

The recent discovery¹ of a contemporary text of the charter (Sawyer² No. 1031) which recorded the grant by King Edward the Confessor to Westminster Abbey of an estate of 10 hides at Wheathampstead (Herts.) in A.D. 1060 has demonstrated certain deficiencies in the accuracy of the associated boundary-recitation as printed from a late cartulary copy in PNHrt 313. The text of the boundary-recitation given in the contemporary mid eleventh century MS is therefore presented *infra* with collation to the cartulary fourteenth century copy supplied where differences occur. The text as printed PNHrt 313 is not only from the later MS but has been inaccurately transcribed in places and should therefore be replaced by the text given hereunder. A translation of the boundary-recitation and brief notes on the various boundary-points follow.

- MSS: A. Hertsfordshire Record Office, D/ELw Z22/4 (s. xi med.)
B. Westminster Abbey Muniments, Muniment Book 11,
fo. 204r (s. xiv)

Text from A collated to B. Where MS A is damaged then readings are supplied from B and placed within brackets. The bracketed numbers are not in the MS but are used here to indicate the various boundary-points and to refer to the discussion below.

Dis syndon^a þa land gemæru into hyæthamstede^b. fram (1) mærforde to (2) þære^c headic. 7 fram þære headic æfter (3) dæne^d into (4) deorleage^e. fram deorleage^f 7 lang (5) hecge þæt hit cymð^g to (6) lippelane. fram lippelane to (7) secgham. 7 fram secgham to (8) pobbenættoce^h. 7 fram bobbenættoceⁱ to (9) herpedene. fram herpedene to (10) þam æsce to þæcforde. fram þam æsce to (11) plums(ti)gele. fram plumstigele to (12) þam hole beame. fram þan hole beame^j to (13) gilmere. fram gilmere to (14) þæs

1. By Mr Peter Walne, County Archivist of Hertfordshire, among papers at the Rothamsted Experimental Station, Harpenden. It was deposited at the Hertfordshire Record Office in 1967 and now bears the following accession number: D/ELw Z22/4. F. Barlow, *Edward the Confessor* (1970) 334-5 prints the full text of the charter in a modernised form.
2. P. H. Sawyer, *Anglo Saxon Charters, An Annotated List and Bibliography* (Royal Historical Society 1968) The contemporary manuscript was discovered too late for inclusion in this list.

ealdermannes mere. fram þæs ealdermannes mere^k into (15) m(e)rdene 7 sƿa (into (16) mæ)rforde^l.

(a) *sindon* B; (b) *into. hƿathamstede* B; (c) *þare* B; (d) *dene* B; (e) *Deorleage* B; (f) *deorleage* B; (g) *cimð* B; (h) *sēcƿham to pobbenælfloce* B; (i) *pobbenælfloce* B; (j) *fram hole beame* B; (k) *eldermannesmere* B; (l) *into mærforde* B (*sic*, not as PNHrt 57, 313)

Translation

'These are the land-boundaries belonging to Wheathampstead. from (1) the boundary ford to (2) the high ditch. and from the high ditch following (3) the valley into (4) the deer clearing. from the deer clearing along (5) the hedge so that it comes to (6) the steep lane. from the steep lane to (7) the rushy water-meadow. and from the rushy water-meadow to (8) Pobba's (*or* Bobba's) *nattock*. and from Pobba's (*or* Bobba's) *nattock* to (9) the harp-valley (*or* the *here-þæc* valley). from the harp-valley (*or* the *hereþæc* valley) to (10) the ash-tree near to the ford where thatch is got. from the ash-tree to (11) the plum-tree stile (*or* slope). from the plum-tree stile (*or* slope) to (12) the hollow tree. from the hollow tree to (13) *gilmere*. from *gilmere* to (14) the ealdorman's pool (*or* boundary). from the ealdorman's pool (*or* boundary) into (15) the boundary valley (*or* the pool valley, *or* the mare valley) and so into (16) the boundary ford.'

Notes on the boundary-points³

The boundary-recitation begins in the east of the estate, at point (1/16) on the River Lea, and proceeds in a clockwise

3. A brief and in many ways inadequate discussion of the boundary is to be found PNHrt 54-5. A more satisfactory discussion is that given pp. 3-10 in *Wheathampstead and Harpenden I, The Settlement of Wheathampstead and Harpenden* (Harpenden and St Albans Workers Educational Association 1973), referred to here as 'WEA'. Other abbreviations used in the present discussion are as follows: DEPN- E. Ekwall, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Place-Names* (4th ed. Oxford 1960); EPN- *English Place-Name Elements*, ed. A. H. Smith (E.P-N.S. XXV-VI, 1956); 17th Harpenden- the 17th century boundary of Harpenden (Hertfordshire Record Office D/ELw Z3), printed WEA Appendix IB; Margary- I. D. Margary, *Roman Roads in Britain* (3rd ed. London 1973); Viatores- The Viatores, *Roman Roads in the South-East Midlands* (1964). Elements given in bold type are all to be found in EPN. The letters PN with a county abbreviation refer to the relevant E.P-N.S. county volume.

direction. Points (2-9) are south of the River Lea, point (10) is associated with a ford over the same river in the west of the estate, and points (11-15) take in the northern part of the grant.

(1 and 16) *mærford*. 'The boundary ford', ((*ge*)*mære*, *ford*). This is the name Marford PNHrt 57, now used with reference to a small settlement but originally describing a ford over the R. Lea at TL 185140. A Roman road (Viatores No. 221) crossed the river 70 yards east of the ford used in the boundary (Viatores 93-5, 479) at TL 186140 on an alignment which would take it into the centre of the Wheathampstead *oppidum* (see point 2), but the charter-boundary does not make use of this road and hence may be assumed to have preferred the western ford to the Roman one. The choice of ford used would have depended on which of two parallel dry-valleys were used to approach the river from the north: the eastern one carried the Roman road to the Roman ford, the western one (*merdene*, point 15 *infra*) carried the boundary to Marford.

(2) *seo heah dic*. 'The high ditch', (*hēah*, *dīc*) This is now called Devils Dyke PNHrt 7 (TL 183132-6), and was the western defensive ditch of the Belgic *oppidum* at Wheathampstead which when excavated in the early 1930's was found to have a vertical depth of 40 feet. See R.E.M. and T.V. Wheeler, *Verulamium: A Belgic and two Roman Cities* (Society of Antiquaries Research Committee, Report XI, 1936) 19-24 and plates V, VI, VIII-X.

(3) *dænu*. 'The valley', *dænu* is the ESax form of *denu*. This is the dry-valley along which Dyke Lane runs from (2) to (4) and at whose eastern end (in Sandridge parish) was situated *Dean Fd* in 1843 (TA 15/84 nos. 203-4).

(4) *deorleah*. 'The deer clearing', (*dēor*, *lēah*). Probably the common known as Nomansland PNHrt 58 (c. TL 170125).

(5) (*7 lang*) *hecge*. 'Along the hedge', (*hecg*). PNHrt 313, followed by Viatores 75, Barlow (see n. 1) 335, and WEA 3, 5 construe this phrase as a name *langhecge*, 'the long hedge'. However this interpretation is founded on the PNHrt reading *to langhecge* which is an error: MSS A and B both have *7 lang hecge*, 'along the hedge'. This hedge apparently marked the line of a disused Roman road (Viatores No. 210, and p.75) and is still discernible as a continuous hedgerow (WEA 3,5). Cf. Hedges Fm PNHrt 93 (TL 135111) in St. Michaels parish.

(6) *lippelane*. 'The lane at a steep place', literally 'the lane at a lip' from OE *lippa* 'a lip' and **lane**. WEA 5 places this at TL 113128 where the B487 road negotiates the steep descent to the R. Ver.

(7) *secgham*. 'The rushy water-meadow', (**secg**, **hamm**). This point is to be associated with (*an Ashe Tree called*) *Segam ashe* and (*a laune called*) *segame laune* in 17th Harpenden, and can be placed roughly TL 090148 (WEA 5).

For the equivalent stretch of boundary between points (6) and (7) 17th Harpenden and TA cross the R. Ver and proceed northwards along Watling Street (Margary no. 1e). Neither of these features is mentioned in the present perambulation however (as noted PNHrt 55, WEA 6). This omission of two major topographical features is curious. It may imply that the C10 boundary did not cross the R. Ver but proceeded from point (6) to point (7) along the east bank of the river and thus did not impinge upon Watling Street at all. This theory would need a boundary change to have occurred between C10 and C17, which is not impossible but of which no evidence has yet been found. A natural boundary on the R. Ver may have been an older line of jurisdiction than the Roman road on the west of the river, particularly in this area of Belgic occupation.

(8) *pobbe- bobbenættoc*. 'Pobba's or Bobba's *nattock*'. The word *nættoc* would appear to be the otherwise unrecorded OE antecedent of ME **nattok** EPN **II** 48-9 [***næt** 'wet', **-oc**], ModE dial. *nattock* EDD. Besides the instances noted EPN *loc.cit.* the ME form has also been found PNO 459, PNG1 **IV** 158. The meaning of *nættoc* may be something like 'patch of marsh grass', the noun-forming suffix **-oc** having a collective force analogous to the use of the **-et** suffix (*v.* **-et** (1) and K.I. Sandred, 'The Derivative Suffix, **-et**, **-ett(e)**', *Namn och Bygd* 55 (1967) 109-28). The **-uc**, **-oc** suffix is frequently used with plant-names, e.g. **hassuc** [**< *hasse**, **-uc**]. The form *pollenæstocce* PNHrt 313 is an error of transcription. The genesis of this error is connected with the name *pollene stocce* in the boundary of the Westminster charter (Sawyer no. 670), a copy of which appears in the same cartulary as text B of the Wheathampstead boundary.

The name of point (8) survives in Poplars Fm (Harpenden parish) PNHrt 40, *Long & Lt. Poplars* c. 1840 (TA 15/49 nos. 143, 146) and (*cloase called*) *poppletts*, (*cloases called*) *poplattes* 17th Harpenden. Its location is roughly TL 0916.

(9) *herpedenu*. 'The harp-valley' or 'the *herepæð* valley', the valley (*denu*) which gave its name to Harpenden PNHrt 37-8, and which carried Viatores no. 213, now the road A6. If the first element is *hearpe* 'a harp' this does not refer to the shape of the valley but may mean 'the valley with a *hearpe*, or sieving device' (*hearpe* (iv)) but this is perhaps unlikely. The best explanation would be to take (as WEA pp.6-7) *herpe-* to be a reduction of *herepæð*- 'a military road, a highway' (referring to Viatores no.213), cf. Harptree So DEPN 221. The 1196 P form *Harpendene* given under Harpenden DEPN 220 refers to Harpsden O, as did the 1198 P form dismissed from the first edition of DEPN by PNHrt 37 n.3.

(10) *se æsc to pæcforde*. 'The ash-tree near to the ford where thatch was got', (*æsc*, *pæc*, *ford*). The ford over the R. Lea at the place later called *Ashford Brigge* 17th Harpenden, located as TL 128172 (WEA 7).

(11) *plumstigel*. 'The plum-tree stile or slope', (*plūme*, *stigel*). Probably to be located roughly TL 1418 near Gt. & Lt. Plummers PNHrt 16 (Thomas *de Plummere* 1272 WAM).

(12) *se hol beam*. 'The hollow tree', (*hol*², *bēam*). WEA 8 suggests a location near Raisins Fm PNHrt 58, roughly TL 1516.

(13) *gilmere*. The final element of this name is probably *mere*¹ 'a pool'. The first element is not readily identifiable but may be **gill* used in a manner not hitherto noted. **gill* usually has the meaning 'deep narrow valley' when found either as a simplex p.n. or in final position in a compound, and then describes a pronounced topographical feature. No such feature is obvious at this point in the boundary and thus, if the first element of *gilmere* is indeed **gill* we may have to look for a further meaning for this element when used as the first part of a compound name. In the compound *gilmere*, if the second element is *mere*¹ we might postulate a sense 'deep, or steep-sided, pool'. Doubtless knowledge of the exact location of *gilmere* would be of use in this discussion but unfortunately it has not yet been pinpointed. Cf. Blackmore End PNHrt 16 (Kateryne *de Blakemere* 1296 SR) at TL 171166.

(14) *þæs ealdermannes mere*. 'The ealdorman's pool or boundary', (*aldorman* and *mere*¹ or (*ge*)*mære*). Perhaps to be associated with Lamer Ho. PNHrt 56 (John *de la Mare* 1279 WAM), and roughly

located TL 1816. WEA 9 draws attention to the spot nearby (TL 191165) where four hundred-boundaries meet.

(15) *merdene*. 'The boundary valley *or* the pool valley *or* the mare valley', ((ge)mære, or mere¹ or mere² with denu). There are two dry-valleys in the area TL 1814, but *merdene* was probably the western of the two which leads more directly to the R. Lea at Marford while the eastern one carries Viatores no. 221 to the Roman crossing east of Marford (see point 1 *supra*).

(16) as (1) *mærford*.

The estate of 10 hides granted to Westminster Abbey in A.D. 1060 included the greater part of the modern parishes of Wheathampstead and Harpenden. It was situated on either side of the River Lea and within the angle formed by two major Roman roads (Margary nos. 1e and 21a) neither of which was mentioned in the Anglo-Saxon boundary, although no. 1e may have been used at the western side of the estate as the route between points (6) and (7).

The use of the Belgic earthwork known as the Devils Dyke as a boundary marker in preference to the minor Roman road (Viatores no. 221) nearby represents the continued use of a pre-Roman land division in the Saxon period, but it would be unwise to make too much of this apparent continuity since it would be only sensible to use the hugh ditch as the boundary of an estate in preference to the impermanent feature represented by this particular Roman road. The use of the River Ver in preference to Watling Street (suggested p. *supra*) would be more remarkable in this respect, if it could be proved.

In its wording the boundary-description is less detailed as to the line to be followed between points than are some other OE boundaries. In this respect it has more in common with later medieval manorial boundaries which usually content themselves with a mere listing of the places on the edge of the estate without any indication of the line between them. This present boundary is also notable for the scarcity of both personal-names and elements denoting cultivated land, suggesting that when first recorded in this form it ran between incultivable, and therefore marginal, plots of land.

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