

THE CHARTER OF 903 AD

On display is a copy of the original 903AD Charter (Stowe 22) which is now in the British Library. For map see page 2.

The original “landbooks” or title deeds of Eardorman Aethelfrith, the governor of the manor, were destroyed by a fire. To prevent false claims which relatives or strangers might produce he was given permission by the King to recreate the Parish’s boundaries from memory to ensure that his daughter, Aethelgyth, received the estate he had given her.

The parchment Charter is written on both sides. The Latin text on one side tells the story of how the papers were lost and the Anglo-Saxon side describes the landmarks which define the parish boundary.

The Anglo-Saxon side of the Charter translated by F. G. Parsons:

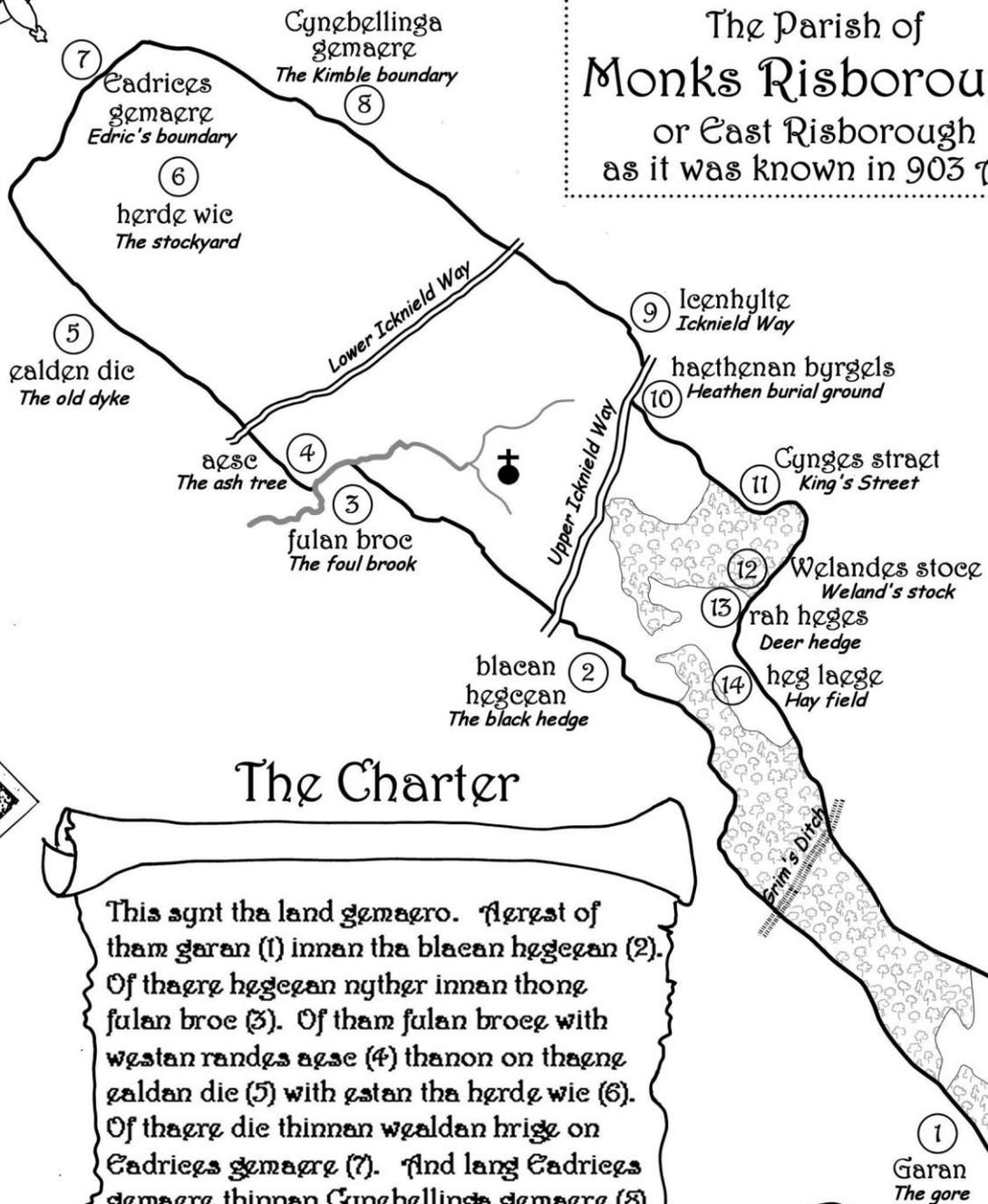
“These are the landmarks. First from the Gore to the Black Hedge. From the hedge down to the Full(Foul) Brook. From the Full Brook, on the west side of the Ash Tree on its bank, to the Old Dyke, west of the Dairy Farm or Stockyard. From the Dyke, to the Wooded (Wealda’s) Ridge on Edric’s Boundary. And along Edric’s Boundary to the Kimble Boundary. And along the boundary to the Ickniel Way. And along the Ickniel Way, by the heathen burial ground to the King’s Street. Up and along the Street to Wyland’s Stock. From the Stock down and along the Deer Hedge”. Thence “to the Hay field (or clearing). From the field down and again to the Gore”.

The charter was witnessed in the first line by King Edward the Elder (son of Alfred the Great), Ethelred & Ethelflaed, the Lord and Lady of the Mercians, and the Archbishop Plegmund of Canterbury. The second line is of bishops and the third and fourth lines the son, brothers and relatives of the king.

The Latin side of the Charter translated by F. G. Parsons:

In the nine hundred and third year, and the sixth indication, of the incarnation of the Son of the Father, enthroned on high, who rules and governs all things in Heaven and on Earth. Seeing that all the title deeds of the Alderman Aethelfrith have been destroyed by fire, the Alderman has been obliged to ask King Edward as well as Aethelred and Aethelflaed, who at this time hold way over the Mercians, and of all the leading men of the Mercians that they should allow the writing of new deeds. They have therefore agreed unanimously that new deeds should be written as far as he (Aethelfrith) could remember the old ones by heart. Even if he could remember but very little it might be useful, in confirmation of other evidence, in preventing his being annoyed by the production of other (forged) deeds or by deeds which relatives or strangers might produce as having been carried away or stolen at the time of the fire or at any other time. For as we know that all things happen in this world are apt to slip, more or less quickly, from the memory of mortal man unless they are recorded in documents. As so we have commanded that in this deed, there be made known the facts relating to the land at East Risborough, in quantity thirty cassata, which Athulf has granted his daughter Ethelgyth, as her own hereditary estate, with liberty to dispose of by will”.

The Parish of
Monks Risborough
 or East Risborough
 as it was known in 903 AD



The Charter

This synt the land gemaero. First of
 than garan (1) innan the blacan hēgezan (2).
 Of thære hēgezan ngyther innan thone
 fulan broc (3). Of than fulan broc with
 wēstan randes aesc (4) thanon on thære
 zaldan die (5) with zetan the hērdz wie (6).
 Of thære die thinnan wēaldan hrige on
 Eadrics gemaere (7). And lang Eadrics
 gemaere thinnan Cynzebellinga gemaere (8)
 and lang gemaere thon Icenhylte (9).
 And lang Icenhylte oth thone haethenan
 byrgels (10). Thanon on Cynge's stræt (11).
 Up and lang stræte on Welandes stoez (12).
 Of the stoez ngyther and lang rah hēgels
 zst (13)...on hēg laegz (14). Of thære leage
 ngyther thæt est on thære garan.

