

Old Records of Monks Risborough

PART 1

BY

F. G. PARSONS, D.Sc., F.S.A.

AUTHOR OF

"HISTORY OF ST. THOMAS'S HOSPITAL"

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OLD RECORDS OF MONKS RISBOROUGH

THE following records of Monks Risborough began as lectures given at the Princes Risborough Institute and elsewhere in the neighbourhood.

It is said, and I think truly, that he who learns most from a book is the writer, and doubtless a lecturer learns more from preparing his lecture than he can hope to hand on to his listeners, but the main thing which lecturing has taught me is that after the lecture has been given the giver learns much more than he knew before from the discussion which follows, as well as from later criticism and references sent him to new literature. It is this feeling which makes me write the following records of places and of things which have happened, or there is reason to believe have happened, in Monks Risborough Parish, and I have chosen these four and a half square miles of English soil partly because I live here and I think know it really well, partly because I shall be writing for people who also know it well, and partly because it has so many relics of the past, of more than mere local interest, within its bounds that it gives a very wide range of choice.

The publication of these Records in parts is meant to give them elasticity and to seek further knowledge. Elasticity, because if they are of interest to others they may be drawn out or, if the reverse, allowed to contract. Increased knowledge, because I hope that many records and traditions, which I know are stored up in old letters, deeds and memories, may be told to me and thus included later in the series.

In following the story of Monks Risborough, formerly called East Risborough, it must be borne in mind that, in an administrative sense, there is no such parish to-day, since it has lately become part of its greater neighbour, Princes Risborough. This, however, hardly matters, for our story deals with the Parish of St. Dunstan's Church, the bounds of which have changed little during many hundred years and enclose it now almost as definitely as when John Hampden knew it. Administrative or lay parishes are comparatively modern things, of no great historic interest, while ecclesiastical parishes often are very old and almost always have interesting associations with the past.

This certainly is true of Monks Risborough, for it is full of records of days gone by, records some of which we see around us every day, though, because they are so well known, we do not always pause to think how interesting they are. Here, for instance, are some of the things which have interested me and about which I hope to talk hereafter, as one thing leads to another. Other links with the past of course there are, but these cover such a wide range of interests and such a wide range of time that they will give us plenty about which to think.

1. Palaeolithic, Neolithic and Bronze Age implements.
2. The Cradle Way (hill-top track).
3. Tumuli (? Iron Age).
4. Upper and Lower Icknield Ways.
5. An Early Saxon Cemetery.

6. Grim's Dyke.
7. The Whiteleaf Cross.
8. A Saxon Charter dated A.D. 903.
9. Vestiges of a very old road called the King's Street.
10. The route of the Great Danish Army to Reading.
11. St. Dunstan's Church and its Records.
12. The route of William the Conqueror's march after the Battle of Hastings.
13. Many letters between the Prior of Christ Church Monastery at Canterbury and his bailiff at Monks Risborough in the fourteenth century.
14. The campaign between the Royalists and Parliamentarians in the time of Charles I.

Most of these subjects have already been treated in various publications, though not always by people who knew the ground as well as we do. In any case it is well to sum up our knowledge from time to time, for, though each day makes the date of these things more distant, research and discussion enable us to grasp their meaning and understand them a little better as the years pass.

THE PRESENT BOUNDS OF MONKS RISBOROUGH PARISH

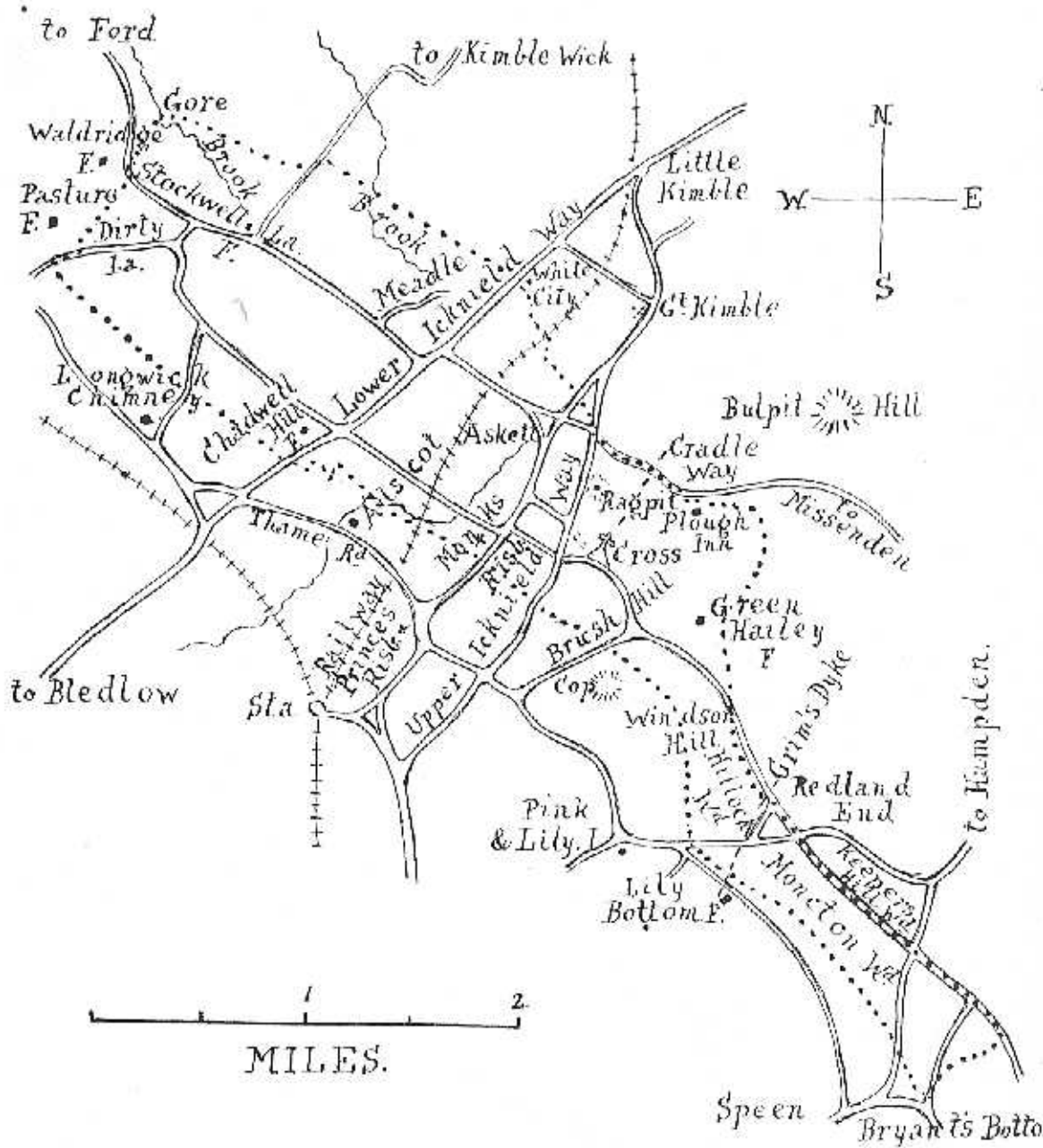
My experience is that very few of my fellow dwellers in the parish know the whole of it thoroughly or can tell with certainty where the boundaries lie, unless these are close to their homes. It will therefore be worth while, before we consider the records of the past, to make a tour round the parish boundaries as they are to-day, and I hope that the accompanying map will be plain enough to enable those interested in historic events to localise their sites and surroundings without difficulty.

No doubt the exact boundaries of all parishes have undergone modifications and adjustments at different times; land which at first was extra-parochial has been added as it was reclaimed, and during the long period of enclosure, lasting from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries, the large open fields have been gradually replaced by smaller ones separated by hedges and ditches. These have often needed some little adjustment of the boundary, here a little given to, and there a little taken from, the adjoining parish, so that boundaries which once were straight lines, where no natural boundary such as a stream or old road was used, now often show a zig-zag contour, since it was not desirable that the holder of an enclosed field should be under the spiritual guidance of, and should have to pay tithes to, two parish priests.

And so it is important to state clearly that the boundaries of St. Dunstan's Parish here described are those defined on the Ordnance Survey maps of 1922 when the ecclesiastical and administrative parishes were identical.

The parishes on these maps were, no doubt, largely copied from the old Tithe and Enclosure Award maps kept in the parish churches, and the latter of St. Dunstan's has now been placed for safe keeping in the County Council Office at Aylesbury.

Saxon land deeds usually begin their list of landmarks at the most northerly point, following them round clockwise, and I think it will be well if we adopt the same plan and start our perambulation or "beating the bounds" at the most northerly point. There is now, luckily for them, no longer any need to beat



MAP I. THE PRESENT BOUNDARIES OF MONKE RIBOROUGH PARISH.

small boys at the chief landmarks, in order that they may remember them when they become men ; but in tracing the boundaries of Monks Risborough to-day, on foot, we have difficulties to face of which our forefathers knew very little.

It is not so easy, for instance, to find even a farm labourer to-day who knows exactly where the boundary runs, or who has not been confused by the recent changes in the administrative parishes—these things mean so little to him now, where once they meant so much, and even when the line is evident the hedges are so well kept that one cannot creep through without doing damage, and thus the nearest field gate, which may not be very near, must be sought.

Usually it is best to ask the farmer to allow the parish boundary to be followed, and I have never met with anything but kindly help when I have done so, but this of course means an extra journey to the farm. It is hardly possible, I think, to follow conscientiously the bounds of Monks Risborough Ecclesiastical Parish, which are some fifteen miles round, without walking twenty to thirty miles, though it is true that where a road forms the boundary the journey may be made in a car.

On the Ordnance Map the most northerly point of Monks Risborough Parish is found on the edge of a field called "The Gore," belonging to Stockwell Lane Farm. Here there is a little stream which runs northward from the farm and at this point is remarkable for having two sharp, rectangular bends in it, each of which leaves a triangular projection in the boundary of the field, and it is to these, I have little doubt, that the field owes its name, for to our Saxon forefathers a "gore" meant a triangular piece of land in which the heavy plough of those days, with its team of eight oxen, could not be turned. We still use the term in dressmaking to denote a triangular insertion of material.

That the stream is small now means little, because so much water from the hills has been diverted in these times by water works and numberless wells that streams are much smaller than when the gores were named ; but the fact upon which I want to lay stress is that the most northerly point of the parish lies in the neighbourhood of two fields still called the Gores and corresponds to the most northerly of the two sharp bends in the stream.

From this point the parish boundary runs in a south-easterly direction along a straight, uninterrupted hedge until the road running from Stockwell Lane to Kimble Wick is reached. This it does not cross directly, but runs a little to the left, as far as a hedge on the opposite side, after which it resumes its south-easterly course for two or three hundred yards and then crosses a stream rather larger than the last. This is the Meadle Brook, which is also crossed here by a footpath from Meadle to Kimble Wick. I want to call special attention to the spot because it figures again in a Saxon Charter.

After this an almost perfectly straight hedge would be followed, if the transverse hedges allowed, for nearly a mile, until the Lower Icknield Way is reached, where a cottage, called the "White City," marks the boundary, and all this time the route has been nearly due south-east and the hedge marking it might almost be ruled on the map with a ruler. If a compass is not handy the line may be kept by walking towards Bulpit Hill in the distance.

Having passed straight across the Lower Icknield Way a footpath is found running along the right-hand side of the hedge which forms the eastern boundary of the great Lee Field belonging to Askett Farm, as far as the Aylesbury railway line.¹ Two changes, however, in the route will now be noticed, for the hedge

¹ More detail of this region will be found on the larger scale map facing p. 16.

followed is irregular and no longer the straight line to which we have become accustomed; then, too, its general direction is some degrees south of the south-easterly line and no longer heads for Bulpit Hill but for Longdown. I think these points are important and that they suggest a rectification, perhaps during the Inclosure time, of the original boundary between Monks Risborough and Kimble Parishes, a suggestion which our later reading of the Charter of A.D. 903 bears out.

The footpath and boundary cross the railway midway between the Old Grange and Askett Farms, and then the latter runs along the hedge bounding the Hook meadows until the main road from Risborough to Kimble is crossed, about a hundred yards on the Kimble side of the Black Horse Inn at Askett. From here to the Upper Icknield Way the boundary runs an irregular course, passing to the right of a bungalow and to the left of the allotment gardens, always accompanied by hedges, until the unsurfaced part of the "Way" is reached some forty yards from the point at which it is crossed, at the corner of the golf links, by the Askett-Missenden Road. It accompanies the Icknield Way for these forty yards to the cross roads, after which the Askett-Missenden Road forms the boundary as far as Lower Cadsden.¹ Until a century ago these cross roads were the site of the executions for sheep stealing, and the road leading to Cadsden is still known among the country folk as Gallows Lane.

My own belief, which I do not wish to press for more than it is worth, is that Monks Risborough Parish did not originally extend farther into the hills than the Upper Icknield Way, but took this road as its limit and that the object of the deviation from a straight south-easterly line, which was noticed at the Lower Icknield Way, was gradually to bring the boundary to the cross roads and thus to allow it to follow almost uninterruptedly the Cadsden Road at a time when the long, tail-like extension of the parish into the hills was added. At present, however, we are only concerned with the parish boundaries as they are to-day.

After leaving the cross roads the boundary, which up to this point has run among fields and has only been marked by hedgerows, now follows the middle of the road. Clearly, therefore, the road must be older than the boundary, and this we may easily believe when we notice that it leads to one of the passes through the hills to Missenden.

As we walk along it we notice the land rising up on each side, though the road itself is level, and about a quarter of a mile from the cross roads, the Cradle Way crosses the road, coming out of the gate of a house called "Cradle Combe" on the left and entering a gate into the golf links opposite.

Leaving the Cradle Way behind, the boundary continues along the middle of the road until the Plough Inn at Lower Cadsden is reached, just before which the modern highway runs slightly to the left, over the shoulder of Bulpit Hill and past Longdown Farm. This is quite a new road, and therefore the boundary does not follow it, but continues straight on, past the "Plough," along a lane which leads into the woods and the traveller must be careful not to turn to the right, up Thorne Lane, after passing the "Plough."

After a few hundred yards the lane opens out into one of the dells or "bottoms" which give such delightful variety to the Chiltern scenery. All around are hills or combes and from this point the woodland tracks branch off in different directions. The one which we have to take is known as the "Killington Track" and continues the south-eastern line already followed; it

¹ More detail of this region will be found on the larger scale map facing p. 16.

is really an old road and is still used as such by the woodmen in carting timber. In summer it is a green tunnel and one may almost expect to meet John Hampden riding along it once more, on his way from Hampden House to Great Kimble Church.

Thus, walking on a soft carpet of leaves, we follow this old road through the thick beech woods, the hills on each side growing higher as we go, until the track divides, and we are careful not to take the one on the left which leads to Longdown Farm. The one straight on, which we follow, now becomes more and more of a ravine with sides so steep that it is difficult to climb them, though, until now, the track itself has been almost level.

Now, however, the gradient begins; but it is quite an easy one, and as the ravine gradually bears to the right its sides become less steep, until at length they fade away altogether and a very short lane on the left, ending in a field gate, shows where the way to Sollingers Farm, Hampden and Missenden used to run. Soon after this the boundary leaves the middle of the track, which now has become a mere bridle path; but it is marked by a ditch so overgrown by brambles that it cannot be followed without great difficulty, though, since it is never more than a few yards from the bridle path, its position cannot easily be lost. All this time the path has been gradually creeping up, but so gently that the climb from 450 to 800 feet, is accomplished with little exertion.

Where the wood ends the path leads along a short lane with a gate at its end which opens into one of the fields of Green Hailey Farm, on the 800-foot level; and to the right of it, about two hundred yards away, is Green Hailey Farm House. It is usually held that Hailey is the Saxon *Heg Leagh* or hayfield (see "Place Names of Bucks," p. 171), but the older inhabitants still call it Green Alley and say that in their fathers' time it was always so called. Alley is not unknown in woodland districts elsewhere; there is Spriggs Alley, for instance, near Bledlow, and it is possible that in this case local tradition may be more accurate than documentary evidence.

As I shall have to return to this derivation of "Green Hailey" again, I will content myself now by pointing out that it lies on the highest point reached by the hills in these parts and that it is impossible, therefore, to get to it without going up hill.

Passing through the gate, the boundary runs straight on, across the meadow, until it nearly reaches the road which has come up the hill past the Cross and is, no doubt, part of the old "King's Street" described later; but just before meeting the road the boundary turns sharply to the left and accompanies it, first on one side, then on the other, until Redland End is reached, and this crossing from side to side suggests that in modern times the road has been straightened.

At Redland End the boundary is well to the right (west) of the road and here Grim's Dyke leaves Monks Risborough for Hampden Parish, after a course of less than half a mile in the former. The dyke itself is not noticed from the road, but is clear enough in the wood on the left, just before the little Mission Hall is reached.

A little farther on a cross road is passed, and after this the boundary keeps to the middle of the road, which runs straight on in a south-easterly direction, between Keeper's Hill Wood on the left and Moncton Wood on the right, for about a mile, until another cross road appears. When this is passed the road

and the boundary continue their course for another quarter of a mile to just beyond the point at which a small road to Speen leads off to the right. Here, close to Bryant's Bottom, the boundary comes to the end of its long south-easterly course, leaves the road and makes a semicircular curve to the right, along a hedge, until it joins the small road just mentioned, which it accompanies for half a mile until Speen village is almost reached, running now in a south-westerly instead of a south-easterly direction. Here, close to Speen and at the south end of Moncton Wood, is the southernmost end of Monks Risborough Parish, and now the return journey to the Gore begins and the boundary runs north-west.

For a mile and three-quarters there is no difficulty in tracing it, since it corresponds with the south-west edge of Moncton Wood; indeed the wood occupies the whole width of this part of the tail-like extension of the parish into the hills, an extension which at one place is little more than a furlong wide. Following the actual boundary on foot is not very easy, but it may be kept in view from a narrow road, just passable by motor car, running from Speen to the Pink and Lily Inn, nearly parallel to it and actually joining it at Lily Bottom Farm, close to which Grim's Dyke is seen entering the parish.

As the "Pink and Lily" is approached the boundary leaves the road and edges away to the right, skirting the western edge of the beautiful garden on Parslow's Hillock and then follows the edge of Hillock Wood, which is the northerly continuation of Moncton Wood; indeed, in all this return journey, hitherto, it is remarkable how the boundary separates the cultivated area of Princes Risborough Parish from the woodland area of Monks Risborough.

Ahead and a little to the left, Risborough Cop, a mound-like elevation, is seen and the boundary, after passing over the shoulder of Windsor Hill, crosses the Cop Hill, as the road leading from Princes Risborough to Green Hailey is called, two or three hundred yards north-east of the "Cop." It is well worth leaving the boundary for this short distance and climbing to the top of Risborough Cop for the sake of the view, which is so instructive.

Looking back from this in a south-easterly direction, along the boundary already followed, Parslow's Hillock and the "Pink and Lily" are seen on the skyline about a mile away, while to the south-west the Wain Hill, above Bledlow, stands out sharply three miles away. One now realises that these three miles cut across the funnel-shaped mouth of the Wycombe Gap, the largest and easiest pass through the Chilterns into the Vale of Aylesbury from the south. One realises, too, that the boundary traced from Parslow's Hillock has followed the side of the hills as they recede to form the eastern side of this pass, leaving Princes Risborough Parish in possession of the fertile land of the Vale, and Monks Risborough of the chalk hill on which beech woods grow so well.

Returning to the boundary where it crosses the Cop Hill Road and climbing a short but stiff rise on the opposite side, close to a disused chalk pit, a magnificent panorama of the Vale of Aylesbury opens out and the ecclesiastical boundary between the two Risboroughs may be traced with a compass and field-glass, almost back to the Gore; though, unless the country is familiar, a map also is needed.

From this point the boundary is marked almost entirely by hedges; but it will be noticed that they zig-zag a good deal and thus form a contrast to the perfectly straight hedge with which the parish started its boundary from the Gore. We must remember, however, that in the early days hedges were very

few and that their object was to protect the cultivated area from the wild beasts, chiefly deer, of the uncultivated regions.

Then the land was cultivated on the open, three-field system, with baulks of unploughed ground to separate the holdings of the different tenants, and when a protective blackthorn hedge was needed it was naturally straight; but from the time of Henry VIII to the early part of the nineteenth century enclosures were being made and small fields, separated by hedgerows, took the place of the great common fields. When a parish boundary was originally marked by a long, straight deer-hedge or by a road, its line could not well be changed, but in other parts, where the division was an imaginary line from one natural object to another, the new enclosures did not always follow this exactly and slight rectifications of the boundary were agreed upon, which gave it a broken contour such as this view presents. The whole subject will, I hope, be clearer when the neighbourhood as it was in 903 is dealt with later.

From the present observation point, high up on Brush Hill, the hedge on the left which marks the boundary is traced downward toward the Vale, running directly north-west. The place at which it meets the Upper Icknield Way is quite clear, though the boundary does not cross the Way directly but accompanies it for a hundred yards or so to the right, and then resumes its north-west course, along another hedge, to the road from Princes Risborough to Askett. Here it fades away among some buildings, which are too far off to be identified yet with certainty.

Before leaving this excellent bird's-eye view from the crest of Brush Hill, the relative positions of Princes Risborough, Monks Risborough, Whiteleaf with its Cross, Askett and the Wainhill near Bledlow should be determined and a hedge looked for, running from opposite the foot of the Cross to join the boundary at right angles, about half-way between the view point and the Upper Icknield Way; it may be identified by its running parallel to and a little above a row of houses which have lately sprung up in the Westfield Road. At present I shall only ask the observer to picture the landscape before him with all the hedges except this one blotted out and to notice what a good protection it would make against deer from the wild, scrub-covered Brush Hill, above it, entering the pleasant pasture or arable land below. When next we meet it as the "Roe Deer Hedge," more than a thousand years earlier, this use for it will be better appreciated.

One more landmark, the tall brick chimney of the saw-mills at Longwick, may be noticed, standing two and a half miles away, in a north-westerly direction; it is of interest because the boundary passes a little to the right of it.

Now, passing down the boundary hedge, the hill part of the parish is gradually left behind, the Icknield Way is crossed and then the footpath from Whiteleaf to Princes Risborough, until, skirting the right-hand side of the grounds of "The Paddocks," the road joining the two Risboroughs is reached. On the opposite side of this road is a house called "Ristcombe," and the boundary runs just to the left of this. Then, continuing its north-west course, it crosses the railway after less than half a mile, and here it meets the footpath from Monks Risborough, which it accompanies as far as the little stream which flows from that village. Here it leaves the path and accompanies the stream towards Alscot for a hundred yards or more; then, crossing the stream, it makes for the Lower Icknield Way, taking three more sharp bends to the left before reaching it. Though hedges mark the whole of this part of its course it is no easy matter to give a recognisable direction for the point at which the "Way" is crossed.

What has happened is that the boundary here has adapted itself to the numerous small enclosures which have been made out of the original great, unenclosed "Cross Field," which was part of Monks Risborough Manor and Parish, and it therefore lies on the west side of all the fields which are named "Cross" in the enclosure award. This information, I fear, will hardly help any but an old inhabitant and, since there is now no administrative boundary between the two Risboroughs and since the tithes have been commuted, it is becoming more and more difficult to pick up the disused boundary marks. Perhaps the simplest way of finding the point at which the boundary crosses the Lower Icknield Way is to identify the farmhouse called Chadwellhill, standing back a little way from the farther (north-west) side of the road, and then to walk along the road in a south-westerly direction for about a quarter of a mile, keeping a good look out for a stone set in the grass verge on the left-hand side. This is the old boundary mark, which has not yet been removed, as have so many of the others now that Princes and Monks Risborough have become one administrative parish. There is no inscription on the stone, which probably was placed there before the days when parish landmarks had their initials carved upon them, but it shows the point at which the Lower Icknield Way is crossed by the boundary.

Having crossed the road, the boundary still runs north-west, across a large field in which there was once a boundary stone to mark it, until it reaches the hedge on the opposite side. Here, if a course due north-west has been taken across the field, it strikes a long, straight hedge without any indentations running north-west for more than a mile, thus suggesting that, like the hedge along which the boundary started from the Gore, it was there before the fields which it separates were enclosed.

It runs nearly parallel to the Longwick Road, which is only a quarter of a mile away on the left and is marked by the tall chimney of the Longwick saw-mills, which was noticed from the crest of Brush Hill. At last it crosses the road running from Longwick to Owlswick, which is known locally as Bar Lane, and the 1922 Ordnance Survey map makes it pass through some allotments before doing so. These have now been done away with and the nearest fixed point is a culvert over which the road crosses a stream. The inhabitants regarded this as the parish mark, but really, according to the map, the boundary is about a hundred and twenty yards on the Longwick side of it.

After this it runs an almost straight north-westerly course for nearly a mile, still parallel to the Longwick-Thame Road, until it strikes a green lane which runs into the right-hand side of this road, opposite the road to Ilmer. This is known as Dirty Lane, a name up to which it does its best to live, for it is only possible for motors in very dry weather.

The boundary reaches it about three hundred yards from its junction with the Longwick-Thame Road, where a footpath crosses it, and this is the end of the long south-west side of the parish, which has been followed in a north-westerly direction from Speen for more than six miles. After this the boundary turns north-east for nearly a mile until the Gore is once more reached; it accompanies Dirty Lane for about a hundred yards and then leaves it, opposite Pasture Farm, to accompany a hedgerow which leads it to the entrance gate of Waldridge Manor, as Upper Waldridge Farm is now called.

Here the road leading from Meadle to Ford takes a turn to the right and forms the parish boundary for about three hundred yards, after which it turns to the left

and the boundary leaves it at this corner and runs along a hedge for four hundred yards until the Gore, the point from which we started, is reached and the prambulation comes to an end. In this north-west segment of the boundary the land rises somewhat between Pasture and Waldrige Farms and then slopes down to the level of the stream.

MONKS RISBOROUGH A THOUSAND YEARS AGO

In the British Museum is an original Charter (Stowe, 22) which has received very little notice from historians. It is dated A.D. 903 and deals with the grant of an estate in "Easteran Hrisanburge" (East Risborough) by a Saxon nobleman (dux—probably the Latin equivalent of Ealderman), named Ethelgyth or Athulf, to his daughter Ethelgyth. Unfortunately Birch, in his book on Saxon Charters, ignoring the fact that this one deals with *East* Risborough, described it as Princes Risborough, but I think that no local inhabitant who cares to follow the Charter word for word will have any doubt that it is Monks Risborough which was intended, though, of course, in 903 its ownership by the monks of Canterbury had not begun.

It was, I think, Sir James Berry who first noticed this mistake of Birch, and he asked me, since I live on part of the estate once Ethelgyth's, to see whether any of the landmarks of 903 are still to be discerned. In some ways, perhaps, he might more wisely have chosen a non-resident, the risk of whose judgment being warped by local patriotism would have been avoided; but since, after all, the question mainly interests dwellers in the neighbourhood, the advantage of seeing objects and places as they see them is likely to be a very real one.

So often I have tried to interest archæologists who only know the district from the Ordnance Map and perhaps a hurried visit or two, as to the meaning of this Charter and have gathered much help from them in the interpretation of its wording; but when it came to the position and identification of hedgerows, streams and vestiges of old roads and tracks their want of all real knowledge of the lie of the land made it impossible to discuss the subject fully or to make my points clear.

This explains the reason for my having given so much space to the description of the parish bounds as they are to-day, for I feel sure that Ethelgyth's estate corresponded, at least in part, with the present Ecclesiastical Parish of Monks Risborough.

The Charter is written on two sides of a parchment. On the front, in very contracted Latin, is the deed itself, while on the back, in Anglo-Saxon, which all men then might understand, are the landmarks, many of which, I submit, are still traceable. I do not intend to give either the Latin or the Saxon text in full. They will be found in Birch's "Anglo-Saxon Charters," and the authorities of the British Museum have kindly allowed me a very perfect reproduction of the originals for which I propose to ask the Rector to grant a place among other documents in St. Dunstan's Church. For present purposes, therefore, a translation will probably be all that is needed.

Translation of the Latin side of the Charter :

"In the nine hundred and third year, and the sixth indiction, 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 Æthelfrith have been destroyed by fire, the Alderman has been obliged to ask King Edward as well as Æthelred and Æthelflæd, who at this time hold sway over the Mercians, and of all the leading men of the Mercians that they should allow the re-writing of new deeds.

They have therefore agreed unanimously that new deeds should be written so far as he (Æthelfrith) 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 we know that all things which happen in this world are apt to slip, more or less quickly, from the memory of mortal man unless they are recorded in documents.

And so we have commanded that in this deed there be made known the facts relating to the land at East Risborough, in quantity thirty cassati, which Athulf has granted to his daughter Ethelgyth, as her own hereditary estate, with liberty to dispose of by will."

In the above Edward the King is speaking not only to his living subjects, but to all who shall come after them in East Risborough, including ourselves who live here now. We must notice, too, that Alderman Æthelfrith or Athulf is directed to set down all that he could remember of the older Charter which had been burnt and that therefore the present Charter is only a record of his memory of one older than A.D. 903, though how much older we do not know.

We must realise that the landmarks which follow are only those which Athulf could remember; some may have been forgotten, some even misplaced, but enough are there to enable those of us who walk every day over some part of the land once his to recognise many of his landmarks even though more than a thousand years separate us from him.

There are two points in this translation which need a word or two of explanation. The first is that I have rendered the Latin word "Dux" as Alderman instead of as Earl because Earl or Jarl was originally a Danish title and had not in 903 been adopted by the English. The second point is the question of the modern equivalent of thirty cassati. Henry of Huntingdon ("Historia Anglorum"), Du Cange ("Glossarium Mediæ Latinitatis") and Seebohm ("The Village Community") all agree that a cassate meant a hide, and Seebohm tells us that in Bucks a hide contained 120 acres. Thirty hides, therefore, would equal 3600 acres or 5.63 square miles, and it is interesting to notice that in Domesday Book, Monks Risborough Parish is assessed at thirty hides. These measurements will be considered again when the boundaries of Ethelgyth's estate have been described.

Translation of the Anglo-Saxon side of the Charter :

"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 Icknield Way. And along the Icknield Way, by the heathen burial place, to the King's Street. Up and

along the Street to Weyland'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."

Witnesses :

- + Eadweard rex. + Eathelred. + Ethelflæd. + Plegmund arcep. + Wilferth episc.
+ Wigmund ep. + Werferth. ep. + Eadgar ep. + Wig(hel)m episcopus.
+ Ceolmund ep.
+ Æthelweard. + Osferth. + Ordlaf co. + Ordgar co. + Bcorhtulf co.
+ Ælfwin. + Æthelferth co. + Ællwold co. + Athelmer ep. + Cynelm abb.
+ Eadnoth? m. + Ælfred m. + Ælfere m. + Eadric m. + Æthelwald m.

This list of twenty-five witnesses is interesting because of the importance of so many of them. In the first line are Edward, the King, then his brother-in-law and sister, Ethelred and Ethelflæd, the lord and lady of the Mercians, since Risborough in those days was in Mercia, then Plegmund the archbishop whom King Alfred loved, and lastly Wilfred, a bishop whose see I do not know.

The second line is altogether filled by bishops. There are Wigmund of Lichfield, in whose see Risborough then lay, Werferth whom William of Malmesbury calls Herefrith, bishop of Worcester, a friend of Ethelred and Ethelflæd, then Edgar of Hereford?, then a partly obliterated name which Birch thinks is Wighelm, and, lastly, Chelmund of Rochester.

In the third line are Ethelward, the king's favourite son, who was said to resemble his grandfather, King Alfred; then Osfrith, probably the king's brother, then Ordlaf and Ordgar, whose names so often appear together in Saxon charters about this date, and, lastly, Bertwulf, of whom I know nothing save that Ordlaf, Ordgar and he are called "Comites," which probably means aldermen.

In the fourth line is Elfwin without any title, as if he were of blood royal, though perhaps, since he is among the comites, his title may have been omitted; then Ethelfrith, who is here styled "comes" and is probably the giver of the estate, then Alderman Ellwold. One bishop, Athelmer, perhaps Athelm of Wells, is in this line, and after him Kenelm, the Abbot of Evesham.

The fifth line contains nothing but names of Thanes ("minister"), among whom we find Edric, possibly the owner of the landmark which separated his property from that of Ethelgyth.

It will be noticed that this Saxon side of the Charter was drawn up by a different hand to that of the Latin side, because names which end in "frith" are here spelt "ferth" and Ethelfrith is styled "comes" instead of "dux." It must not be thought that these are the actual signatures of the witnesses, for they are all in the same hand and, doubtless, some of them were quite unable to sign their names. What probably happened was that each signatory placed his or her finger upon the cross which stands before the name and attested that the document was a true statement of the case and that, this having been done, the name was filled in by the scribe. We may, I think, feel quite sure that each witness was actually present at the granting of the Charter. It seems unlikely that so many distinguished people were called together to witness a not very important grant of land such as this, and the question arises whether it were not signed at a

meeting of the Great Council or Witenagemot, held somewhere in the neighbourhood in 903. I have not hitherto been able to find any record of such a meeting and dare no more than hint at its possibility.

Now if we follow the Saxon landmarks which Ethelfrith remembered it will not be very long, I think, before we recognise places which we have already traversed in our perambulation of the parish boundaries of Monks Risborough, and it may be that others may share my belief that the land granted to Ethelgyth by her father Ethelfrith corresponded, at least in part, with what was later to become the parish of St. Dunstan's Church.

The most northerly point in the Charter of 903 is the Gore, just as it is in the Parish of Monks Risborough in 1936.

Then, working clockwise along the Black (blackthorn?) Hedge, we come to a stream called in Saxon "The Full or Foul Brook." Personally I prefer "Full" to "Foul" because had it been the latter there should have been an accent over the "ful" which is not present in the Charter.¹ This, however, is not of great importance, though it is important to remember that the parish boundary, soon after crossing the road from Stockwell Lane to Kimble Wick, reaches the Meadle Brook. There was an ash tree there in Ethelgyth's day, a thousand and thirty-three years ago, which has been translated "Rand's Ash," though I would suggest that "randes æsc" might just as well be translated, "The ash tree on the bank," and that this would be a more likely rendering.

Crossing the stream, on the west side of this ash tree, the next landmark which Athulf could remember was "The Old Dyke, West of the Stockyard or Dairy Farm (herde wic)." This was my first real difficulty in comparing the Charter with the present parish; for, walking along the boundary of the latter, I could find nothing resembling a dyke. I remembered, however, that the modern boundary is deflected a little to the south soon after crossing the Lower Icknield Way at the cottage called "The White City." Up to this point it had followed a straight line from the Gore towards Bulpit Hill, but now it is directed towards Longdown, and it occurred to me that this deviation might be a later rectification and that the line of the old Charter continued its straight south-easterly course towards Bulpit Hill. So I followed this line and found that, just before reaching the railway, I came to a cattle pond which attracted my notice because running from it, away from the railway, were distinct traces of a ditch, and I noticed, too, that the nearest hedge, where the ditch came to it, showed a perfectly clear dip in its continuity. Moreover, a scattered row of trees grew along the course of the ditch. It is quite likely that originally it ran farther in a south-easterly direction, but all traces of its doing so have been obliterated by the cutting of the railway line. (See Map 2, facing p. 16).

To the west of it, on the other side of the line, stands the Old Grange Farm which is in the right position for the "Herde Wic" of the Charter of 903, and we know that many old farms have not changed their sites since Saxon days. Of course I am ready to admit that the evidences of the dyke are not very striking, but what else can one expect of a dyke which was old in 903? The pond I know is modern, for the owner told me that it was dug some thirty years ago and probably the depression of the ditch helps to keep it full.

I must not claim this evidence of an old dyke for more than it is worth, and

¹ Another suggestion has lately come to hand; it is that the Brook was used for "fulling" or cleaning and may possibly have driven a fulling mill.

the fact that I was looking for something of the sort along this line may have predisposed me to welcome anything which looked helpful ; still, I must point out that I had first searched for it along the line of the present boundary just as hopefully and found nothing.

Athulf's next landmark is "The Wealdan Hrige," which, one of our foremost authorities on Anglo-Saxon says, means Wealda's Ridge rather than the Wooded Ridge. There are two farms called Waldridge in the neighbourhood, but both are north of the "Gore" and more than two miles from our present position. Thus, in spite of the likeness of the name, I cannot think that either of them could have been meant. We must remember that we are now nearing the Upper Icknield Way, along a line heading for Bulpit Hill, and the land is steadily rising, for it will be seen later that the Upper "Way" is almost always above the 400 foot level. I confess that I have failed to identify the particular part of this rise which was associated with Wealda ; but the Charter tells us that it lay upon Edric's boundary, and it seems that he was a Thane who was Ethelgyth's neighbour and one of the witnesses shown in the last line of the Charter.

Then Ethelgyth's property ran along the Kimble (Cynebellinga) boundary to the Upper Icknield Way (Icenhylte), which it must have joined somewhere about the site of the present cottage known as "Bitthams," if my belief that it followed a straight line towards Bulpit Hill is well founded.

I should like, in passing, to turn aside for a moment to notice the way in which Kimble was spelt in A.D. 903. Nowadays it is thought very doubtful whether there is any association between Kimble and Cymbeline, the British King who is said by unsupported tradition to have been buried there in the early years of the Christian Era. Before we decide to take this view it is only fair to point out that the king's name was really Cunobelin or Cunebelin, and it is therefore a curious coincidence, if it be a coincidence, that the Kimble boundary should have been "Cynebellinga Gemara" in A.D. 903.

Having reached the Icknield Way, Athulf tells us that the boundary of the estate followed the "Way," past the site of the "Hæthenan Byrgils" (heathen burial place), until the King's Street was reached. My belief is that it used the Icknield Way as its south-eastern boundary as far as where Whitelcaf village is now, in which case the long, tail-like extension of the modern parish, as far as Speen, did not belong to Ethelgyth. I believe this because the landmarks which follow are so easily accounted for by doing so and also because the narrow tail in the hills was poor land, covered at that time by scrub (Hris), from which Risborough (Hrisanbyrig) took its name, and would have been of little use for agriculture.

On the other hand, a great authority upon Saxon charters has given his private opinion that the land covered by this Charter of 903 was practically identical with that of the whole of the modern parish. So great is my respect for his judgment that I propose later to see how well I can fit the landmarks into the parish bounds as they are now, though, of course, I am handicapped in having no definite publication on his part to help me.

Assuming then, in the first place, that Ethelgyth's property consisted of a rectangular strip of land, rather more than $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles in length from the Gore to the Icknield Way, and about $1\frac{1}{4}$ miles in width, and that its north-east side reached the Icknield Way, as has already been suggested, about the site of Bitthams Cottage, we next read that the boundary after this passed : "Along

the Icknield Way, by the Heathen Burial Place, to the King's Street." And I think that all these places can be accounted for without much difficulty.

From "Bitthams" it would have passed along the present unmade part of the Upper Icknield Way to the cross roads where it cuts across the Askett-Missenden Road, and then have continued to Whiteleaf. It will be noticed that Athulf says nothing about Whiteleaf, probably because it is a hamlet of much later date.

The site of the Heathen Burial Place may, I think, be found where the "Ragpit" is now, on the left side of the "Way" about three hundred yards from the cross roads and just beyond the house called "The Spinney." This chalk pit was dug about 1830, when the Upper Icknield Way was metalled, in order to provide the chalk and flints, known as rag, which were necessary. In digging it human remains were found and are noted upon the Ordnance map. The archaeological officer of the Ordnance Survey tells me that his notes record that in 1876 it was regarded as a Saxon place of interment.

Another light on this burial place comes from Sheehan's "History of Buckinghamshire," published in 1861. On page 187 he tells us that: "About thirty years ago" (*i.e.* about 1830) "a vast number of bodies were found near here (Whiteleaf) buried only a short depth from the surface. Each body had a separate grave and all were laid due east and west."

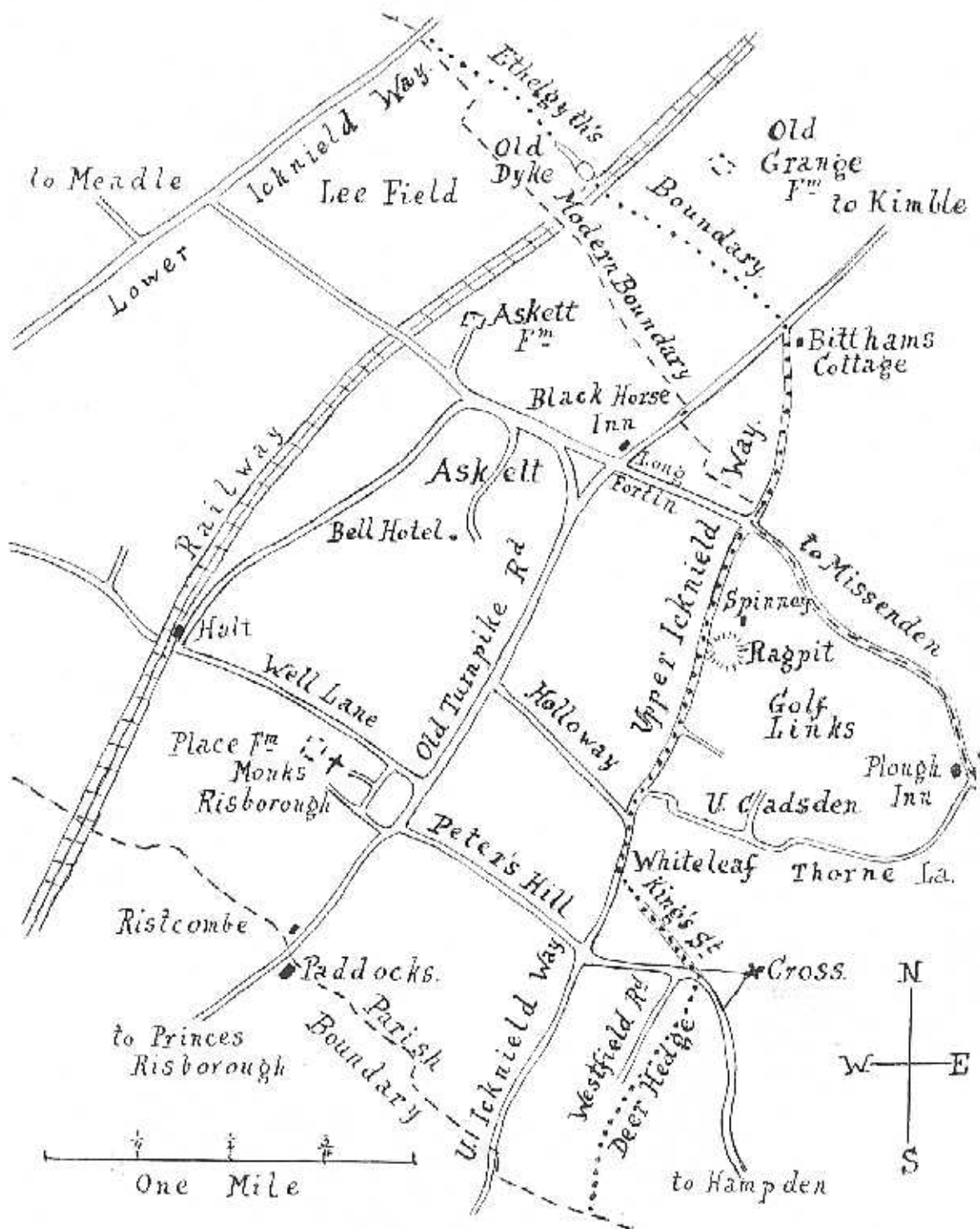
These burial places of Early Saxons are very numerous in the Chiltern region; they are found, for instance, at Lillesborough, Chinnor and Bledlow, as well as at Whiteleaf in this neighbourhood. The skeletons almost always lie on their backs, in parallel rows and only a few feet from the surface, just as Sheehan describes these; indeed I think that his description is accurate enough to convince anyone used to excavating Saxon burial grounds that this must have been one.

The point at issue, therefore, is whether the burial places mentioned by Sheehan, the Ordnance Survey and the Charter were identical, or whether there were two, or even three, Saxon cemeteries by the Icknield Way, near Whiteleaf. As a matter of fact it would be a most unusual and, in my experience, unparalleled thing to find a settlement of Saxons with more than one local burying place, and, so far as the evidence goes, there is only one point which could make us doubt for a moment that all three references were to the same place. It is that the great field between Whiteleaf and Princes Risborough used to be known as the "Burying Field," though no evidences of burials have come to light in the many foundations of houses which have been made in it near Whiteleaf in late years.

On the other hand, the three descriptions of the actual burial sites show nothing to throw any doubt upon their identity, since (1) the site spoken of by Sheehan was near Whiteleaf; (2) the site on the Ordnance map is near Whiteleaf and by the side of the Icknield Way; and (3) the Heathen Burial Place of the Charter is beside the Icknield Way, between "Bitthams" and the King's Street, which I hope to show runs through Whiteleaf.

I have put these facts before the reader at some length in order that he may estimate their worth as evidence. To me they seem as conclusive as archaeological evidence can hope to be, but I am quite prepared to find others who do not think that the "Ragpit" and the Heathen Burial Place have been identified as the same site with reasonable certainty, and so we pass on to the further landmarks in the hope of confirmatory or rebutting evidence.

The next link in the chain is the King's Street (*thanon on cynges stract*), which Athulf says that Ethelgyth's boundary passed up and along. It is very



MAP 2.—THE UPPER ICKNIELD WAY AND ETHELGYTH'S BOUNDARY.

important to notice that it is said to run up because the Icknield Way has the hills on its left side and the vale on its right, and thus we must look for a road, or remains of a road, running up from the left side of the "Way" beyond the Heathen Burial Place.

There are two small lanes leading to Upper Cadsden, neither of which seems to be of any great age, and it is not until the "Red Lion" public house in Whiteleaf village has been passed that an old road answering the needs of the King's Street is found. It lies in a wood in the grounds of Whiteleaf House as a quite unmistakable hollow way and is distinct enough to be marked upon the Ordnance map. Its actual junction with the Icknield Way has been obliterated by Whiteleaf Cottage, which is next door to Whiteleaf House; but from some little distance behind that it runs a south-easterly course for a quarter of a mile until it joins the road which runs from Monks Risborough to Green Hailey, at the foot of Whiteleaf Cross.

In visualising the scene as it was in A.D. 903 we must altogether blot out the picture of Whiteleaf village from our mind's eye, since it is a hamlet of much later origin, but we must notice carefully that after Whiteleaf Hill the line of the hills begins to recede to form one side of the funnel-shaped opening of the great Wycombe Gap or pass through the Chilterns.

The Upper Icknield Way continues its south-westerly course, across the mouth of this gap, towards the Wain Hill at Bledlow, where the Chilterns once more resume their normal height and direction, and travellers passing across the mouth of the gap, on their way to the ford across the Thames at Streatly, and thus into Berkshire, went down hill after leaving the site of the Whiteleaf village which was to be. They then crossed a fairly flat stretch of pasture land during their journey of three and a half miles between the two hills—Whiteleaf and Bledlow—which guard the wide mouth of the Wycombe Pass.

I cannot now interrupt my attempt to trace Ethelgyth's boundary by a detailed discussion upon the King's Street—this will follow in due course—but, assuming that I am right in identifying it with the hollow way behind Whiteleaf House, some reason must be sought for the boundary suddenly leaving the Icknield Way and running up and along the King's Street to Weyland's Stock. Such a reason, it seems to me, is to be found in Athulf's wish to follow the line of the hills when he marked out the boundary and thus to take as much fertile land as he could get. Hitherto the Icknield Way had formed a convenient boundary, since roughly it divided the poor soil of the hills from the deeper tilth of the vale; but after Whiteleaf Hill was passed the "Way" had cultivable land on both sides. By taking the King's Street, therefore, as far as Weyland's Stock, as his boundary, he was able to follow the line of the retreating hills and to include in his estate several acres of fertile land, which he would have lost had he still used the Icknield Way.

A glance at the Ordnance map or, better still, a walk along the hollow way behind Whiteleaf House, will convince anyone that not only does it join, but directly continues the road running up the hill from the Cross to Green Hailey; and that the part of the present road leading from the Cross to Monks Risborough is a more modern diversion; we are, therefore, justified in assuming that the hollow way and the road continuing it up the hill are parts of an old road which in A.D. 903 was known as the King's Street. Perhaps I should make it quite clear that the disused road behind Whiteleaf House, here spoken of as a hollow

way, has nothing to do with the modern Holloway which leads from Whiteleaf village to Parsonage Farm. Later, when I come to deal with the King's Street, I shall bring evidence to show that it came from Aylesbury and ran obliquely across Ethelgyth's estate; the landmarks of the Charter, however, only tell us that her boundary followed it up the hill as far as Weyland's Stock (Welandes stócc) but give us no help as to what this Stock was like, nor where it stood, save that it was by the side of the King's Street.

I think it likely that the Stock was on the site of, or perhaps was the upright part of the Cross, but I must leave this speculation until the Cross itself is dealt with, since we are now only concerned with Ethelgyth's bounds. All that can be said at present is that her limit followed the King's Street up the hill, until the Stock was reached, in order to include some fertile land which would have been lost to her had the Icknield Way continued as the boundary. From our knowledge of the other landmarks we may be sure that the Stock, whatever and wherever it may have been, was a well-known, obvious and permanent sign.

The next direction which the Charter gives is: "From the Stock, downwards, and along the deer hedge (rah hég)." There is a hedge, already noticed in the account of the Parish Bounds, which runs down from the base of the Cross, along the foot of the hills, until it reaches the present boundary dividing Princes from Monks Risborough Ecclesiastical Parishes. It runs parallel to the Icknield Way and also parallel to a new road, called the Westfield Road, which is too modern to be marked upon the Ordnance map. Above, on the left of it, is the quite barren, scrub-covered Brush Hill, while below is the good pasture called the West Field, which it seems was Athulf's object to gain.

There is no need to doubt that some of our older hedges still stand where they stood in Saxon days, fresh saplings replacing those dying, and it is easy to understand how necessary a thick, deer-proof hedge would have been if the wild roe (rah) deer of the hills were to be kept from the cultivated fields below.

Where it reached the Princes—then West—Risborough boundary the south-east limits of Ethelgyth's rectangular estate came to an end and the long south-west side began, though about this side Athulf is very silent. It may be that the boundary of the adjoining royal estate of West Risborough was so well known that few special landmarks were needed. One only is given, perhaps in order to fix the angle between the south-west and the north-west sides of the rectangle; it is the hay field or clearing (hég leage), a name rather suggesting Green Hailey, though the Charter tells us quite definitely that it could not have been that place, because, on leaving Weyland's Stock, we were told to go down (nyther), and anyone with local knowledge knows that Green Hailey cannot be reached except by going up, since it lies on the 800-foot level which is the highest point the Chilterns touch in this region. Granting even that Green Hailey was originally "Hég Leage" (pronounced Hay Ley) and not "Alley," are we to suppose that it was the only "hég leage" in the neighbourhood or that there was not another which might be reached by following the wording of the Charter and going down to it? I know that in the "Place Names of Buckinghamshire" Green Hailey is identified on p. 171 with the "Hég Leage" of the Charter, but the author surely might have explained how one could possibly reach it by going down.

Unfortunately in the Charter there is a word largely blotted out before "Hég Leage," in which the letters "es" and "t" can just be seen. This word,

had it been visible, may or may not have been important, but we can only accept evidence which we can understand.

I think that from the structure of the last sentence of the Charter—"From the clearing [Heg Leage], down, thence again to the Gore"—that the "Heg Leage" probably was near the end of the perambulation, since the ground naturally falls to its lowest point where the stream which forms the Gore lies; and the Ordnance map shows an elevation above the 300-foot level which the present parish boundary crosses near Pasture Farm and from which the descent is quite appreciable. In any case, however, I fear that the "Heg Leage" of the Charter, though doubtless a well-known landmark in A.D. 903, cannot now be fixed with any certainty.

Having assumed hitherto that Ethelgyth's estate did not include the whole of the modern Ecclesiastical Parish of Monks Risborough, let us now consider the alternative theory that the two were identical.

Starting once more from the Gore, the north-eastern boundary would have run as before until it was deflected at the Lower Icknield Way and thus no trace would now be found of the "Old Dyke" in its course. When it reached the Upper Icknield Way it would have run along that road for only about forty yards before turning to the left to accompany the Missenden Road as far as the Plough Inn at Lower Cadsden. During its passage of these forty yards it must have passed the Heathen Burial Place, and yet, though a house has been built on one side and the ground deeply trenched for allotment gardens on the other, no signs of human remains have been found here.

The Missenden Road was, in this case, presumably the King's Street, though it does not conform to the Charter's requirement of running "up," until more than a mile has been covered. Somewhere in the woods, we must presume, was Weyland's Stock, because the Charter tells us that this was reached before the Clearing or Hay Field ("Heg Leage"), which the advocate of this alternative interpretation of the Estate thinks was Green Hailey. Since I want, so far as I am able, to look at things with his eyes, I would suggest that the best case might be made by assuming that Weyland's Stock was at the highest point reached, which is Green Hailey, and that the "Heg Leage" of the Charter, to which we are told to go down, was somewhere along the road leading to Redland End, though the descent is very slight.

By this arrangement we should have followed the requirements of the Charter, though very few landmarks would have been identified; but to my mind the most serious difficulty is that all the long tail of the present parish, reaching nearly to Speen and then back again to the Gore, a distance of nine miles at least, has to be described by the simple sentence: "From the Hayfield or Clearing, down; thence again to the Gore."

I have not wilfully suppressed any evidence upon which my fellow critic of the Charter relies; indeed, beyond his belief that the landmarks cover the whole modern parish, I do not know upon what facts he bases his belief, but if, when he comes to state his views, a good case is made out for including the long tail in the hills as part of Ethelgyth's estate, I shall be the first to welcome it.

There is one point which we should both take into account, for what it is worth, and of this I gladly make him a present, since it helps his view more than mine. It is that in the Charter Ethelgyth's estate is said to contain 30 cassati, and in Domesday Survey the Manor of Monks Risborough is assessed at 30 hides.

Since it seems that cassati and hides were the same, this should give some approximate size of the holding, if we accept Seebohm's evidence that the Buckinghamshire hide contained 120 acres. According to this Ethelgyth owned $120 \times 30 = 3600$ acres or 5.63 square miles.

Now if we draw a plan of the present Monks Risborough parish to an inch scale and plot it out on squared paper, where every inch is divided into tenths, we find that it only contains 4.56 square miles. In other words, Ethelgyth's estate was larger by a square mile than the whole present parish.

If, on the other hand, we make the Upper Icknield Way the limit of the estate, as I would do, it only contains about 3.3 square miles, which means that it was estimated in the Charter as nearly twice the size it really was. It is, of course, well known that both in Domesday Book and in Saxon Charters land measurements were notoriously inexact, and I am therefore disinclined to place too much reliance upon them.

Personally, in spite of these measurements, I still believe, until further evidence is forthcoming, that Ethelgyth's south-eastern boundary was the Upper Icknield Way, because otherwise we must ignore the Heathen Burial Place and the King's Street, and also because of the unlikelihood of her wanting a long corridor of unprofitable land, reaching to Speen, when the rest of her holding was a rectangle.