From the *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society*

**The Anglo-Saxon Charters of Stoke Bishop: a study of the boundaries of Bisceopes stoc**

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2002, Vol. 120, 107-131  

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The Anglo-Saxon Charters of Stoke Bishop: a study of the boundaries of Bisceopes stoc

By DAVID H. HIGGINS

Part 1. The Stoke Bishop charter of A.D. 883

It is only with certain caveats and provisos, historical and geographical, that the pre-Conquest territory of Bisceopes stoc, with which this study is concerned, can be connected with the modern parish of Stoke Bishop (north-west Bristol), from which nevertheless the well-known Anglo-Saxon charters take their name. As will be seen, the 'Stoke' under consideration (O.E. stoc = outlying farmland, dependent settlement) was far larger territorially than the subsequent 19th-century parish of Stoke Bishop, whose area in remote times, with other substantial land, 'Bishop's Stoke' once included.

The charter of 883 (Finberg 83),2 witnessed by King Alfred, is the instrument by which the abbot and community of Berkeley ceded part of their wide Mercian estates to the Crown. The alienated portion was the above-mentioned land 'at Stoke', which had earlier been part of the royal vill of Westbury. The settlement at Westbury by 1534 had become known as Westbury-on-Trym.

Before 883 the book-land of Westbury had enjoyed a chequered history. In a charter to be dated between 793 and 796 (Finberg 50), King Offa of Mercia granted 60 hides of Westbury land, unspecified in the document as to boundaries, to the church of Worcester, to be transferred after his own demise and that of his son Æcgfrith. The land in question had been in the hands of Offa's family since his grandfather had won a grant from King Ethelbald of Mercia in 717 × 757 (Finberg 17). Yet we may assume an earlier history for Westbury, with its future important minster (founded before 804), from charters of neighbouring settlements: both Hembury and Aust were granted to the church of Worcester by King Ethelred of Mercia in 691 × 699 (Finberg 6), when Westbury must have already been established.

The later history of Westbury appears confused by the fact that Offa issued another charter in 793 × 796 (Finberg 49), granting 55 (unspecified) hides at Westbury to his thegn Ethelmund. The anomaly so far remains unresolved,3 but subsequent charter evidence implies royal reversion of Worcester's rights established in 793 × 796; by 804 all of Westbury, or at least the bulk of it, is in the hands of Ethelmund's heir. It is in this early 9th-century charter (Finberg 53) that Stoke is mentioned for the first time. Here Ethelmund's son, Ethelric, undertook to leave to his mother Ceolburga, abbess at Berkeley, the lands inherited from his father at Westminster (Westbury) and Stoc, with reversion to the church of Worcester, rather than to Berkeley, at her death. In 824, some years after Ceolburga's death, Berkeley minster, in respect of its perceived loss of Ceolburga's Westbury estate to Worcester, laid claim to it unsuccessfully at the synod of Clofeshoh. Finding against Berkeley, the synod confirmed Westburh (sic, Westbury) as the possession of the church of Worcester (Finberg 62), but by some unrecorded arrangement or subterfuge, that part of the Westbury estate known as Stoke passed into the
hands of the Berkeley community. This is confirmed in the records 59 years later, when the abbot and community of Berkeley minster successfully petitioned Ethelred, ealdorman of Mercia, for the release of all minster lands from royal feorm and other dues. In the preamble of the rescript, the above-mentioned charter issued in 883, the ealdorman officially removed the dues, except for the customary three of military service, fortress and bridge repair, together with the fines for theft in cases of so-called simple compensation ('price for price') payable to the victim. Also the king's food-rent was remitted, the whole in consideration of a once-for-all composite fee: the perpetual surrender to the Crown of 12 hides of the minster's land aet Stoco and 30 mancuses of gold.

Ethelred, with the consent of King Alfred and the Mercian council, then proceeded to grant to Cynulf, son of Ceoluht and probable grandson of Ceolburga, abbess of Berkeley, the 12 hides at Stoke, with the same immunities, for the period of three lives, with remainder to Worcester, one of the favourite foundations of the king. Stoke, which would suitably be renamed Bisceopes stoc by the time of the charter of 984 (Finberg 130), was duly reunited at some time after 883 with the Westbury estate of the see of Worcester, in the hands of which both remained. Re-examination of the landmarks of the 883 charter, one of the subjects of this article, indicates that the 12 hides of ('Bishop's) Stoke' comprised two substantial parcels of land, separated by the narrow strip of Berkeley minster's estate of 7 hides and one virgate in Westone (the later tithing of King's Weston). It will be shown in this study that the two areas in question (denominated Stoke I and II) were to correspond in all respects to the later tithings of Stoke Bishop (which included Redland and Cotham) and Shirehampton (which included Avonmouth) within the ancient ecclesiastical parish of Westbury-on-Trym. Strictly speaking, therefore, the 883, 969 and 984 charters, known traditionally as 'the charters of Stoke Bishop', should be designated 'the charters of Bishop's Stoke', employing the historical name which defines the whole of Westbury's ancient stoc land. Understandable confusion would then be avoided. It remains to be noted that Bisceopes stoc afforded its ecclesiastical affix by 984 (see above), was recorded simply as Stoco in the Domesday survey (1086), a member (membrum) of Westbury manor in the hundred of Brenty. The manor itself still remained in the possession of St. Mary's of Worcester.

The text of the 883 charter, with suggested translation and numbering of the landmarks, is:


Despite the subsequent silence of Grundy (1935–6), the disagreement and disparagement of Lindley (1959), and the somewhat grudging acknowledgement of Everett (1961), the Revd. C.S. Taylor's grasp and understanding of the charter (1900) emerges as swift, comprehensive and, except in one controversial particular, probably correct. Grundy made no reference to Taylor's article, and preferred to work from the Anglo-Saxon text and (it may be alleged) from maps alone; he ignored local evidence, both on the ground and in print. As far as local research is concerned, he would have gained much. Taylor, although an amateur, is by far the best writer amongst the authors who have written on the charter in question, and his Anglo-Saxon scholarship, displayed elsewhere in a long life dedicated to local history, is quietly impressive,
even though subject to some inevitable qualification over the passage of years. A thoughtful
perusal of Taylor, however, would have saved Grundy and his follower Lindley from the cardinal
misunderstanding of the charter’s initial landmark. This led to a serious distortion of the whole
orientation, necessitating Grundy’s extraordinary dismemberment of the order of the landmarks
and his misleading of a too compliant Lindley. Lindley, who came across Taylor’s article during
the later phases of the drawing-up of his paper, found it ‘brief and very cursory’, although, to
his credit, he allowed it a certain plausibility.

Taylor’s thesis deserves to be quoted in full:

Hazel Well was the source of the stream near Springfield; and the boundaries are in three parts,
the first marking the southern limit of the Stoke Bishop tithing, where it joins Bristol and Clifton;
the next marching down the Avon on the west of the tithing to Sea Mills, and then crossing
Shirehampton Park, and passing by Penpole across the marsh to the Severn to mark the eastern
limit of Shirehampton tithing; and finally the line starts again from Springfield to the deep pits
on Durdham Down at the top of Parry’s Lane, which are, no doubt, old lead-diggings; thence
along the lane to Clack Mill, the Mill Pool of the boundaries, and then along the Trym to the
Avon, to mark the northern boundary of Stoke Bishop tithing ... With the exception of Sweordes
Stone, all the points can be identified with fair certainty, Waldeswell being very probably Mother
Pugsley’s Well on Kingsdown, and Eowcombe the Gully on Durdham Down ... Lead was dug
on Durdham Down more than a thousand years ago ... 10

Lindley found some good in Taylor’s hypothesis, but could not on the whole recommend it.
Lindley, in effect, was mistaken in understanding the three parts of the charter’s list as circuits
and (worse) in assuming that Taylor had done so too. Taylor had not. Essentially he had thought
in terms of boundaries which identified two areas, while himself instinctively equating those areas
with the tithings of Stoke Bishop and Shirehampton respectively. He saw the boundaries as
being in three parts: the southern (1–6), defining the limits of Redland, Cotham and Durdham
Down; the western (7–10), defining the western edge of Stoke Bishop tithing and, extended, the
eastern edge of Shirehampton tithing; and the northern (11/1 ‘again’ –14), the Stoke Bishop
tithing border against both Westbury and King’s Weston tithings. Dealing with the southern
boundary first (see Fig. 1), Taylor unerringly identified the first landmark of the charter, 1.
baesswell, as lying in the extensive grounds of Springfield, an estate, now under modern housing,
that Lindley surprisingly stated he could not locate. However, it is clearly marked on an O.S.
map of 1904 in the south-eastern corner of Westonbury tithing, at its juxtaposition with Stoke
Bishop tithing. Here rose the major source or spring (O.E. wæfjella) of the stream which waters
the charter’s 2. baesdene. Haesdene was in Taylor’s view the valley (O.E. dene) through which
flowed the waters of now Cran brook, which lends its name to modern Cranbrook Road and
Cranside Avenue in Redland. Taylor was also the first to suggest the identification of 3. waldes
well as Mother Pugsley’s well on Kingsdown, which now lies athwart the foundations of the
back garden wall between 2 Clare Road and 10 Nugent Hill, near St. Matthew’s church. To
this author’s mind, this is Taylor’s only interpretation of the charter’s landmarks which is open
to serious doubt (see below), although, to be quite fair, he omitted this precise identification
from a later article on the whole subject of Bristol’s parochial boundaries. 11

Neither Taylor, Grundy, Lindley nor Everett could locate swordes stan (4. Sword’s stone)
with any certainty. Grundy suggested that it lay between Parry’s Lane and Coombe Dingle, in
a field called Sitting Stones (now buried beneath modern housing), but as his orientation in this
part of the Anglo-Saxon survey is suspect, his proposal must be discounted. Lindley’s surmise,
following Taylor as far as he could, that Sword’s stone lay in front of Redland Chapel is wide
of the mark on any rational understanding of Taylor’s survey. 12 The present author’s estimation,
which vindicates Taylor’s implied location of the stone (despite his uncertainty), is given below.
Taylor’s orientation provided a location for *S. eow cumb* as the ‘Gully on Durdham Down’, but he passed over discussion of the name’s later phonological development to *Walcumbe*, by which it is now known. Lindley provided a solution which was developed by Everett: *eow cumb* (lit. ‘yew coombe’) > *Yookham slade* (in a lease of 1608) > *Oakham slade* (in a lease of 1702) > *Walcumbe slade* (in the later O.S. designation). *Walcumbe* probably reflects the epenthetic [I] which the later Bristol dialect interpolated or appended to unclosed final tonic and atonic syllables, suitably illustrated in Bristol’s own name < *Bricstow*. Lindley himself balked at the implication of error in his own orientation and opted for the ‘weaksurmise’ that Yewcombe may once have lain in the lower Trym valley. As bad, Lindley finally misrepresents Taylor’s identification of the gully as *eow cumb* and criticises Taylor’s location of it as ‘both vague and unlikely’. In fact Taylor specifies ‘the Gully on Durdham Down’ (author’s italics; there is only one, the others are old quarries), not as Lindley has it, a gully ‘somewhere on Durdham Down’.
Taylor had seen the *stoc* land of late Anglo-Saxon Westbury, defined in the 883 charter, in terms of the later medieval tithings of Stoke Bishop and Shirehampton. Before embarking on the Shirehampton (Stoke II) part of his survey (7–10), Taylor correctly defines the western boundary of Stoke Bishop (Stoke I) as lying from a point (6) beneath the ‘gully’ of 5. Walcombe slade on Durham Down, then along the Avon bank to the mouth of the Trym (14). From here he traces a north-westerly line along the neutral territory of the bank as far as the water-edge boundary stone on the eastern boundary of Shirehampton tithing at 7., then inland on the same bearing across Shirehampton Park to 8. ‘Ridge lea’ and 9. Penpole, and finally ‘across the marsh to the Severn’ at 10., thus defining ‘the eastern limit of Shirehampton tithing’. The itinerary from the Avon to the ‘crossing [of] Shirehampton Park’ is vague of course, but the general picture (to be refined by Grundy, Lindley and Everett, though with minor discrepancies; see below) is absolutely sound. Taylor’s ‘northern boundary’ (11–14) begins at 1. Springfield (his correctly surmised *baestwell*) to march on a south-westerly course straight to 12. the ‘Lead diggings … the deep pits on Durham Down at the top of Parry’s Lane’. Lindley, at odds with Taylor, correctly stated that no authority had hitherto identified these pits as lead workings. However, this was some years before the appearance in 1974 of the British Geological Survey of Bristol (O.S. sheet 264, 1:50,000). Whilst it did not plot lead veins at the top of Parry’s Lane on Durham Down, the survey showed the occurrence there of a narrow crop of Black Rock Limestone. This is similar to the crop found in Leigh Woods on the far side of the Avon Gorge opposite Clifton Down, where the survey marks lead veins at O.S. Nat. Grid ST 55307390. The geology therefore, as Dr. David L. Speedyman (Department of Geology, University of Bristol) has informally confirmed, supports Taylor’s hypothesis that the Parry’s Lane quarry was prospected for lead in remote times and was denominated a *lead gedelf* by the surveyor of the charter of 883. Taylor’s survey then proceeds uninterrupted to 13. *myl pal*, seen as Clack Mill on the Trym, then down the Trym to 14. the river Avon (*in Asene stream*) at Sea Mills, a solution which has the symmetry and clarity of a Euclidian proof.

Neither Grundy nor Lindley can offer as much. Taylor had spontaneously read the 883 charter in terms of the tithing boundaries, whereas the later commentators had not, with deleterious consequences for their solutions. Grundy failed to include the Redland and Cotham areas (see Fig. 2), which according to the earliest surviving recorded perambulation of Westbury-on-Trym parish (1803, with extracts also from the 1790 circuit) had been part of the tithing of Stoke Bishop. He mercilessly re-arranged the order of the landmarks and interpolated (even to Lindley’s incredulity) one other to fit his theory. He took in a segment of King’s Weston territory which in 883 belonged to Berkeley and finally grouped his landmarks *Hazel well—Hazel dene—Lead workings* so closely together as to suggest an unpersuasive proximity, quite at variance with the spacious, measured intervals of all the other landmarks in the charter.

Lindley’s error in his 1959 examination of the 883 charter (see Fig. 2) was to accept unquestioningly the general orientation of Grundy. He therefore began, like Grundy, at the foot of Walcombe slade, the presumed *baestwell*. Rightly perceiving, from observation, that the slade had never enclosed a spring, he nevertheless posited that the hot spring at the New Hotwells site, despite lying at a distance of some 300 m, must have been the *Hazel well* of the charter. Once the same starting point had been determined by Lindley, of course, all else ineluctably followed Grundy. Like Grundy, Lindley assumed that Walcombe slade was *baeslde*, while the now covered Parry’s well, at the top of Parry’s Lane (O.S. Nat. Grid ST 57007585), was the charter’s *waldes well*. With Grundy, Lindley then passed down Parry’s Lane to the junction of the road to Shirehampton. Unlike Grundy, Lindley opted for the left fork, which soon arrives at the entry to Ebenezer Lane, to carry him to *myl pal*, the Trym at Clack Mill, rather than taking
Grundy’s right fork which leads to Coombe Lane and eventually Coombe Dingle higher up the Trym. In this instance, Lindley was quite certainly correct. Whether or not he knew it, for he does not state as much, the line of Ebenezer Lane is in fact the old tithing boundary and now the boundary of the modern parish of Stoke Bishop. Lindley appositely remarks that the lane had in stretches the appearance of an Anglo-Saxon maer bank, and he is probably correct. In his search for eow cumb, he tentatively suggests, having rejected the Coombe Dingle trajectory of Grundy, that there may have been a plantation of yews in the lower Trym valley, now drowned, though he admits it a ‘weak surmise’. Lindley can throw no more light on swordes stan than that offered by Grundy, although the Sitting Stones field, which Grundy posited as its site, like his location of eow cumb in Coombe Dingle, must be ruled out if Grundy’s line from Parry’s Lane to Coombe Dingle is rejected.
Lindley remarked ruefully that it would have been desirable ‘to follow the charter literally’ and make landmarks 11 (i.e. 1 again)–14 a ‘fresh line enclosing another area’ but he fatally concluded that the gully/Walcombe slade (his and Grundy’s baestwell) could not logically be refuted as the commencement of the new circuit. He is thus led straight to the nearby old lead workings on Clifton Down, near the junction of Ladies’ Mile and Stoke Road, as the location of the lead gedelf, and since he must end at the Avon, he is forced to the conclusion that the itinerary 11–14 was a repetition of landmarks 1–6. He was almost led to rethink the whole exercise on the basis of Finberg’s suggestion that the Redland and Cotham area was meant and he even considered that Cran brook might have played a part. However, at this point of his survey he was seeking an alternative location for the Mill Pool and could not find any evidence for a mill site on the Cran: ‘the Redland circuit, then, seems to be ruled out quite definitely’. Essentially, with the exception of the Ebenezer Lane excursion, Lindley had to opt for Grundy’s picture but he could not contemplate Grundy’s interpolation of Ridge lea between Mill pool (13) and Avon (14). At best, Lindley could read this part of the picture with Finberg’s eye: that 11 (1 again)–14 was essentially ‘a sort of postscript’. The original Anglo-Saxon surveyor, he suggests, must have seen that his first attempt was quite inadequate and therefore gave ‘two more items which anyone with knowledge of the ground would see came in the appropriate place’. Lindley’s survey of the 883 charter ends with a tantalising consideration of Taylor’s article, only to reject once more Taylor’s entire orientation, since it was ‘unlikely that a central area would be specified after first an eastern and then a western one’. Lindley had not grasped that Taylor, working from three boundary lines, had identified only two areas, Stoke I (Stoke Bishop tithing), and Stoke II (Shirehampton tithing).

Everett’s article of 1961 is heavily reliant on Taylor. She avows finding him ‘almost as difficult to follow as the charter itself’, but then archly reinstates him, adding some circumstantial evidence which is not without merit, only to abandon the master over the identification of the lead workings. Lindley, as has been stated, thought incorrectly that Taylor had specified three separate areas. Everett reinstated Taylor’s two: ‘the present Stoke Bishop together with most of Redland and Cotham, and the Shirehampton-Avonmouth area’.

Following Taylor, Everett takes the clockwise direction, traditional in Anglo-Saxon surveys, from Springfield for the first tranche (1–6), whereas Grundy and Lindley, who should have known better, located baestwell in such a way that an anticlockwise movement was unavoidable. Everett nevertheless has surprising errors: she confused Ashley brook (running north–south on the east side of Ashley Down to join the Frome at Baptist Mills) with Cran brook, both in the text and her accompanying map, and placed the Ashley brook pumping station at the unindustrialised southern end of Cran brook near Zetland Road. But she appears to mean the Cran brook, as she correctly refers to its being the ‘Gully or Watercourse’ recorded in the 1803 perambulation of Westbury parish. Again following Taylor, though without acknowledgement, Everett proposed Mother Pugsley’s well as waldes well, noting that the 1803 perambulation took a line near the site of the well. Misconstruing O.E. wald as Grundy, Lindley and even Taylor (by implication) had done and as more recent commentators would do (see discussion below), she compounded the common error by citing the frequency of Wood- prefixes in the street names in the Cotham/Redland area in support of Taylor’s idea. Then, ignoring Taylor, who properly defines the southern limits as adjoining Bristol and Clifton, Everett makes straight from 3. Mother Pugsley’s well (waldes well) to the top of 5. Walcombe slade, rashly enclosing an unwarranted slice of Clifton, an estate which was almost certainly in existence by 883 (see below), while assuming that 4. Sword’s stone lay somewhere along that line. She then descends to the Avon at 6.
For the second of the boundaries of Stoke I (11–14), Everett again proposed a clockwise direction. It is not clear why she elected to do this, other than in order to demonstrate, in an act of scholarly supererogation, the ‘proper’ movement which is quite unsupported in the charter at this point. She thus moved west down the Avon from 6. to the Trym mouth at Sea Mills, followed the Trym up to myl pul at Clack Mill, then turned south-eastwards to what she mistakenly supposed was the site of old lead workings near the water-tower on Durham Down and finally returned north-eastwards to the spring of her ‘Ashley brook’ (in fact the Cran brook).

Apart from three inexplicable aberrations (the confusion of Ashley brook with Cran brook, the reversal of the order of landmarks of the third tranche 11–14 and the trespass into Clifton estate lands), Everett showed sense in following Taylor’s general orientation and accepting most of his landmarks. However, she failed in the latter regard by ignoring his rationally persuasive location of the lead workings and produced an unconvincingly narrow waist or corridor in the configuration of Stoke I. At the same time Everett opted strongly and eloquently for the only landmark that Taylor probably incorrectly identified, waddes well, which with him she took for Mother Pugsley’s well.

All four authors concur that the 883 charter enclosed broadly Shirehampton tithing within landmarks 7–10 of its survey. The points of contention arise in the detail. Taylor, with the tithing boundaries always in mind, was as usual grandly correct: his line ran from Avon bank at Sea Mills (14) along the (as it were) neutral territory of the Avon bank, to move inland at some point (it would have probably been the existing boundary stone at 7), then across Shirehampton Park. His line then passed by 9. ‘Penpole’ (the precise point on the ridge is not specified) and ‘across the marsh to the Severn’. Grundy, who had moved (following his arbitrary re-ordering of the landmarks) from Mill pool/Clack Mill on the Trym (myl pul) via Ridge lea (briggleah identified as Penpole ridge) south to the Avon, then from the Avon back to Ridge lea again, had, as we have seen, unwarrantedly enclosed a whole segment of Berkeley’s book-land at King’s Weston. Thereafter his trajectory via pen pau to the Severn is correct, but requires comment.

As has been said, Grundy surmised, although without total conviction, that pen pau should be interpreted as ‘(Cattle)pen stream’ (pen pul), understood as ‘the stream that flows northwards from near Penpole Point along the modern boundary for some 5 or 6 furlongs’ and thence to the Severn: i.e. the now badly degraded Shirehampton rhine. Lindley, having correctly dismissed Grundy’s unwarranted interpolations, took pen pau as simply Penpole (as did Taylor)—a name that was ‘formerly applied to the tip of the King’s Weston ridge where it turns due west’ (author’s italics), and still survives in a wood on its southern slope’. Lindley is only partially correct. ‘Penpole’ certainly still survives in the name of the wood but also in the name of the point at the western tip of the entire ridge above Shirehampton (Penpole Point is marked by a monument adjacent to the trigonometrical point). Grundy’s translation of the feature’s name as ‘Cattlepen stream’ appears rather strained: rather, pen pau suggests a common tautological hybrid, deriving from Celtic *penn* (hill, head, end) + O.E. *pauf* < *peal* (ledge, hill-slope), an element found also in *Paulton*, North Somerset. The ridge is Shirehampton’s most prominent landscape feature; it is hard to believe that the charter’s surveyor could have ignored it as a landmark.

Lindley, who now belatedly brought to mind Taylor’s equation of charter landmarks with tithing boundaries, noted what he thought was a discrepancy in the 1803 perambulation of Westbury. It appeared to him to take the boundary on a more northerly course from Penpole ridge to the Severn, along what earlier cartographers had (incorrectly) called an ‘ancient mere bank’. Careful scrutiny of the text of the perambulation, which, because pursued on foot traces a necessarily tortuous course to circumvent the many minor rhines intersecting the area, shows that the perambulators invariably returned to follow the major ‘Public Water Course’ (the
Shirehampton rhine itself) to, properly, the Severn at Elbury pill. Perplexed, Lindley finally opted for the line of the boundary according to the Shirehampton tithe map of 1841, which he noted agreed with the 6" O.S. map of 1904 (Glos. LXXI). Both confirm that the Shirehampton rhine marks the tithing boundary. Grundy's line along his so-called 'Cattelen stream' (the Shirehampton rhine), despite the misunderstanding of its meaning, is therefore a reliable guide to the northern edge of Stoke II.

Finally Everett, like Lindley, begins the Shirehampton section at the traditional beginning of the old perambulations, 'at Lamplighter's Hall at the passage slip against the Avon and opposite Pill', but mistakenly identifies this location as the charter's starting point 7. of Afsene stream eft. Unlike Lindley, who investigated the detail, Everett then offers no more comment than that her line broadly follows the trend of the 1803 perambulation to the Severn.21

A comparative investigation of the earlier studies therefore pleads for the total re-instatement of Taylor's orientation and (see below) for all but one of his specific identifications of the Anglo-Saxon landmarks. What follows is further critical discussion of each of the landmarks identified by Taylor. As has been said above, with his intimate knowledge of the history and topography of the area around 1900, Taylor unerringly elected the Springfield estate, situated in the south-eastern corner of Westbury tithing close to Stoke Bishop tithing, as the location of the first landmark of the charter: haestwell. This spring, now culverted beneath roads and housing and severely depleted, still feeds the Cran brook. In less developed times, this watercourse became prominent at its junction with a feeder from the north-east, just at the 200' contour on the 1904 O.S. map. From here the course of the brook is still visible in the allotments behind the modern Cranbrook Road (access through the entrance in Cairns Road). It runs south-eastwards down the valley which is arguably the haesdene of the second landmark of the charter.

Springfield, as has been said, is close to the point where the boundary of Stoke Bishop tithing joined that of Westbury tithing. The junction is mentioned in Wilkins's edition of the perambulation of 1803.22 Most Anglo-Saxon surveys adopted a clockwise orientation and Taylor's choice of Springfield may well have been influenced by this fact (something ignored by Grundy and Lindley despite Grundy's mitigating excursus on the subject).23 Confirmation of Taylor's haesdene is provided by the location of a Hazelton ("haesttun") Farm on the eastern rim of the Cranbrook valley (O.S. Map 1:500, Glos. LXXI.12,14, surveyed 1879–92). The farmhouse has been demolished but its name was given to Hazelton Road (Horfield Parish) which traverses the site.24 Taylor would have had the opportunity to consult the O.S. map but, if he did, he did not refer to it in his article. Also, the hazels, which were clearly the distinguishing feature of the flora of this valley, are still to be seen in the allotments referred to above and along the narrow tract of uncovered bank of the brook, behind the houses of lower Cranbrook Road (visible from Elton Road).

There is only one landmark of the 883 charter which it can be argued that Taylor mistook. Followed alone by Everett in 1961, Taylor identified 3. waldeas well as lying on Kingsdown at a spring known from the 12th century as Lady Well, St. Mary Well or Virgin Well and from the 17th century as Mother Pugsley's well. The spring, still productive although very depleted, had a long and distinguished pedigree in Bristol's folk-lore and history. It was of sufficient productivity in 1129 to provide, by conduit, the water for St. James's Priory in the town below. Later it watered the Royalist stronghold of Prior's Fort as it held out against Parliament-occupied Montpelier during the First Civil War in 1645, while mutely witnessing the death of Mr. Pugsley in whose fields it rose.25 It was an amenity of considerable public use in that high and otherwise waterless part of Bristol, and must always have been an important feature in the landscape from the earliest times. The major objection to this identification, however, is that
Mother Pugsley's well lies some 150 m outside the line of the perambulation of 1803 and is not, despite the recorder's sensitivity to historical features, even mentioned en passant in that account. Quite correctly, the city plans of both Rocque (1742) and Ashmead (1828) mark the well as lying at precisely this distance from the Westbury/Bristol city boundary.

More recent scholarship 26 has identified waldes well of the charter with Jacob's Well at O.S. Nat. Grid ST 57687285. Mr. Russell notes that Jacob's Well, a boundary mark between medieval Bristol and Clifton parish, was described as Wodewell in a charter of c. 1200, and that Jacob's Wells Road had long been known as Wood Well Road before its renaming in the 19th century. Thus, if his identification were correct, the boundary of Stoke Bishop would have lain 'somewhat further south-east than the known tithing boundary' of later centuries. There is an attractive neatness in this proposal. However, there are two objections to Russell's conclusion. The less weighty is the technical: Russell's definition of the baesldene-waldes well leg of the 883 boundary, some 2.4 km, makes it extremely long compared to the average of the charter—with the final stretch bereft of a lead-in landmark in the ambiguous area of Brandon Hill. Of more weight is the linguistic objection, hitherto unremarked by commentators. The sense of waldes well is not the same as wodewell. The former derives from O.E. wald: wold, upland or down, landscape morphology irrespective of botanical cover. The latter derives from M.E. wode (< O.E. wudu): wood or woodland, botanical cover irrespective of the land's morphology. The semantic implication of waldes well therefore perfectly relates to the upland setting of terrain such as Kingsdown, but emphatically cannot relate to the setting of the narrow valley (formerly known as Sandbrook or Woodwell's Lake) between Clifton and Brandon Hill, in which Jacob's Well/Wood Well (wodewell) is situated. Previous commentators' ready acceptance of waldes well as 'Woodland Spring', perhaps misled by modern German Wald, has been seriously flawed.

Where then did the charter's waldes well lie? From the indisputable linguistic evidence of its name, it must have lain at some height upon the feature of a down. There is therefore only one other possible candidate—one that has been either entirely overlooked (Taylor, Grundy, Lindley and Everett) or briefly considered only to be dismissed (Russell), 27 but which actually fulfils both the semantic and technical criteria of the charter. This spring is Bewell's well. Its name, possibly derived from Bee well, 28 is now almost entirely forgotten, but it lay on Kingsdown, at an even higher and more conspicuous point than Mother Pugsley's well. Situated on the summit of St. Michael's Hill (O.S. Nat. Grid ST 58157391), hard by the road (Cotham Hill) which from earliest times led to Henbury and Aust, Bewell's well was to be found a few metres to the north of prehistoric Bewell's tum, amongst a cluster of several historic features marking the shared boundary of the late Anglo-Saxon royal estate of Barton (which included nascent Bristol) and Westbury. The features, besides Bewell's well itself and Bewell's tump (the latter's site, now part of the grounds of Cotham House and the adjacent homeopathic hospital, clearly marked in Ashmead's plan of 1828), included Bewell's cross (one of Bristol medieval crosses, repaired in 1525; the remains were dismantled in 1829 when Cotham New Road was built); boundary stones CB 20–23 (recorded in the city metes of 1373, 29 in Rocque's 1742 plan, by Barrett in 1789, 30 in Ashmead's 1828 plan and in the 1803 perambulation of Westbury-on-Trym 31); the civic gallows (in commission c. 1228–1805); and St. Michael's gate of 1749–1867 (see Fig. 3). Only the first feature, Bewell's well itself, belonged unquestionably to the era of the 883 charter, but Bewell's tump, lost to archaeology, may very probably have featured also in the 9th-century landscape. The later cross and the gallows are not entirely irrelevant: they speak of the high symbolic significance always accorded by Bristolians to this historic landmark. Bewell's well had not only been useful, it had also always been meaningful.

To these considerations should be added the fact that the next landmark of the charter, Sword's stone, sited on the highest part of Durham Down, would have been visible from
Bewell’s Well and Bewell’s Tump: The Tump lay in the grounds of Cotham House, and is marked in Ashmead’s Plan of 1828. The well lay in Bewell’s Croft, and is now filled and covered. Its situation is described by W. Barrett in *The History and Antiquities of the City of Bristol* (1789), p. 106: ‘Boundary Stone 21: ...pitched near the Greenway [modern Hampton Road] Gate on the NE side of Bewell’s Well’.

Fig. 3. Part of Ashmead’s 1828 plan of Bristol, which includes his locations of Bewell’s Tump, the city boundary and the numbered boundary stones. Additions by this author include Bewell’s Well and Bewell’s Cross and the gallows all at their surmised positions.

Bewell’s well on the crest of Kingsdown at its higher western end. From Pugsley’s well, on the other hand, the view of Sword’s stone was certainly obstructed by the ridge of Kingsdown itself. Also of note is the fact that Bewell’s well lay closer than Pugsley’s to the boundary of Clifton, whose manor lands have historically lain adjacent to Bristol’s and Westbury’s.\(^{32}\) A yet more weighty argument, perhaps a conclusive one, in favour of Bewell’s well is the fact that in the Bristol charter of 1188, drawn up three centuries after the charter under discussion, the *metes* of Bristol are reduced to the essential minimum of four, and Bewell’s well, rather than any other landmark in the vicinity, is selected: ‘Inter Sanbroc et Bewell. et Britheuebrige. et Fontem In Itinere iuxta Aldebiriam. de Cnolle’\(^{33}\).

The precise location of *sweordes stan* has also remained a matter of speculation. It must have lain at some point along the line from the spring on Kingsdown to *eow cumb* (5. Walcombe Slade) on Durdham Down. Taylor proposed that in this part of its trajectory, the 883 boundary (of Stoke I) ‘marked the southern limit of the Stoke Bishop tithing where it joins Sea Mills and Clifton’. Taylor’s line, which Everett misconstrued but this author allows, therefore ran from
waldes well on Kingsdown to the point where it turns, hard by the present water-tower on the crown of Durham Down, to follow the existing old boundary stones westwards to Walcombe slade. It is not unreasonable to assume that Sword’s stone once stood at the point of turning, now occupied by a group of three boundary stones. Its name is intriguing. If swordes is the oblique case of sword (sword) and not of some personal name, it carries implications of an historic nature. The stone may have been sword-shaped or cleft, in some Arthurian sense, as by a sword. It may have been so named because it lay alongside the Roman military road from Sea Mills (Abona3) to Bath (Margary no. 54). This was known as the eald bearpath (‘old army-path’) in the 984 charter (see below, Part 2). More persuasively perhaps, the stone may have been the meeting place at which justice was done, the sword being, in historical literature, the supreme symbol of secular authority and judgement. In the Anglo-Saxon period moots gathered for the dispensing of justice at significant points on boundaries: ‘neutral territory for the people coming from their various settlements’.

Burial mounds, trees, streams, fords and standing stones were selected as the meeting points. A shire moot in the 11th century ‘sact at Aegenothes stane’. If the Sword’s stone of the charter were such an assembly point, already established by 883 on ‘neutral territory’, lying as Taylor implied on the crown of Durham Down, where the boundaries of Westbury and Clifton have traditionally coincided, a terminus ante quem is also suggested for the establishment of the manor of Clifton.

From what has gone before, landmark 5. eow cumb (lit. ‘yew combe’) must be acceptable to the present author without demur as Walcombe slade on the western edge of Durham Down, where yew-trees are still a prominent feature. Everett’s note on the conservative micro-climate of the slade is still of interest. Arrival at the Avon (6. in Afene stream) completes the first (or, for Taylor, the southern) boundary of Stoke I.

The next band of landmarks 7–10 dealing with Shirehampton tithing (Stoke II) provokes discussion on the precise sense of of Afene stream eft (‘from Avon again’). This had worried Grundy, who assumed exactly the same point of departure on the river bank as that of arrival on the previous leg. He therefore felt obliged to alter the entire order of the charter’s landmarks at this juncture, adducing scribal error. It did not worry Lindley or Everett, who were armed with the practical solution contained in an actual ‘beating of the bounds’ recorded in the 1803 perambulation of Westbury-on-Trym. Taylor may have laid eyes on this also, although Wilkins’s edition was twenty years away and Wilkins himself judged that he had been fortunate in procuring the original from a worthy parishioner. Taylor himself, however, as a clergymen, would have been familiar with the practice of perambulations. In the case of continuous features such as rivers (here), roads and earthworks, where the feature bears the same name at all points on its course, from ‘the feature again’ may well signify departure from a point on the feature which is different from the point of arrival specified in the previous leg. This perhaps rather lax but common practice amongst early surveyors is unquestionably the one employed both in this and the 984 charter (see Part 2, below).

The Anglo-Saxon surveyor’s route therefore arguably recommenced at the apex of the horse-shoe bend of the Avon at Shirehampton (7. of Afene stream eft), presumably at an ancient ‘stone’ indicated on the 1904 O.S. map which marks the eastern limit of the Shirehampton tithing. This lies a few yards west of a stone marking the western limit of the old tithing of King’s Weston, which is now subsumed in the modern ecclesiastical parish (created 1929) of Sea Mills. The route then struck north-west up through the present Shirehampton Park, crossed the Shirehampton road at the junction with what is now Penpole Lane and ascended through an open field (8. briggleab), of which a fragment still remains, on to the now wooded ridge of 9. pen pau (Penpole), thence along the ridge in a westerly direction to strike north over it at c. 80 m short of the present trigonometrical point. From there it descended to the foot of the ridge (where a
boundary stone is recorded on the 1904 O.S. map), struck north-west again over what was marsh, followed the now depleted Shirehampton rhine (Grundy’s probably mistranslated but topographically useful ‘Cattlepen Stream’) and finally terminated at Elbury pill on the Severn, just north of the present docks.

This author’s understanding of the third transcribe of the charter’s landmarks corresponds to Taylor’s interpretation of the northern boundary of Stoke I. Beginning once more at Springfield (the baestwell of 1), the boundary ran uninterrupted in a westerly direction to the lead gedelf (12) at the top of present Parry’s Lane, descended the lane, then passed along the mere bank (Ebenezer Lane) to the Trym at the Clack Mill site, proposed by Taylor, thereafter by common consent, as the location of myl pul (13). From there the boundary passed down the Trym, the frontier of more than one parish and tithing as well as the eastern limit of the ancient Berkeley estates, to the river Avon (in Afene stream 14).

Part 2. The Stoke Bishop Charters of A.D. 969 and 984

‘Stands yet the wall-stone, hacked by weapons’: The Ruin

In time, and in accordance with the provisions of the charter of 883, the 12 hides of Crown land act Stocce duly reverted to the church of Worcester. These hides comprised two parcels of land which this study has designated Stoke I and II, corresponding respectively to the later tithings of Stoke Bishop and Shirehampton in the parish of Westbury. Portions or, as argued in this article, a single portion of the land became the subject of charters drawn up by Worcester in 969 and 984. In 969, in the reign of King Edgar, a charter (Finberg 117) was issued by which the reforming bishop Oswald granted to his minister Ethelward 2 mansae of land act Stocce, defined by six boundary marks, for 3 lives, with reversion to Worcester. Fifteen years later, in 984, a charter (Finberg 130) was issued in the reign of King Ethelred, by which Oswald, then both archbishop of York and bishop of Worcester, granted to the same Ethelward, then his miles, 3 mansae at Bisceoper Stocce, defined by 12 boundary marks, with reversion to the see of Worcester after three lives. Here the affix ‘of the bishop [of Worcester]’ is used for the first time.

It is interesting and probably significant (the point will be developed below) that the two charters under consideration involve the same parties, Oswald and Ethelward, and were issued close in time to each other. However, the surveyors of these charters were almost certainly not the same. Their work is strongly contrasting in style and efficacy: the 969 charter appears jejune, almost a sketch, while the 984 charter displays quality of style and a finer professional competence. Issues raised by a critical comparison of the two charters also concern, most importantly, their scope and meaning. Do they define different portions of territory, which is Lindley’s thesis, or conceivably delineate more or less the same portion of book-land? The principal aim of this part of the study of the charters is to demonstrate that the two areas in question, which this author identifies as lying within Westbury’s Stoke I, are most probably, for the most part, identical. A secondary aim is to show that the boundaries, contra Lindley, respect the provisions of the charter of 883.

The matter of the charters, with this author’s translation and numbering of landmarks, is as follows:

The Charter of A.D. 969

Aerest on aesc wellan (First to 1. Ash spring), of aesc wellan west on the balas (from Ash spring west to 2. the nooks), thanon on dinninges graves wyrt truman (thence to the beginning of 3. Dinning's grove), th(anon) swa on Swepelan stream (thence to 4. the river Swepel), of Swepelan streame west be
wudu riman on readan wege sутbweardan (from the river Swepel westwards by the edge of 5. the wood to 6. the Red Way on its southerly course), of readen wege west eft in aesc wellan (from the Red Way west back to 1. Ash spring).

The Charter of A.D. 984

_Aerest on thaes heges byrnan be westan Stoece_ (First to I. the corner of the stockade on the west side of Stoke), of _tham on the ealdan dic on baran maere northbwrde_ (from there to II. the old earthwork [then] northwards to III. the old boundary), of _baran maere innan filidlege northwarte_ (from the old boundary into the north part of IV. the open field), of _filidlege northwarte in thone bolan bruc_ (from the north part of the open field to V. the sunken brook), of _thaen bolan broce innan Sweoperlan stream_ (from the sunken brook to VI. the river Sweoperl), of _Sweoperlan straeme on dinninggrafes wytrtruman_ (from the river Sweoperl to VII. the beginning of Dinning’s grove), of _dinninggrafes wytrtruman eall swa se dic sceot on esig maedwae wearde_ (from the beginning of Dinning’s grove to where VIII. the rampart aims at IX. the military watch-tower in the meadow), of _esig maedwae eall swa that ealde ritbig sceot up on thone aeddan hearpeth_ (from garrison meadow to where the old rivulet aims up at X. the old military road), of _thaere aeddan hearpeth up on tha ealdan dic with Stoes weard_ (from the old military road up to XI. the old earthwork towards Stoke), of _thaere ealdan dic eal swa se hege sceot be Stoece_ (from the old earthwork to where XII. the stockade comes out by Stoke), _westan eft on thaes heges byrnan_ (westwards back to I. the corner of the stockade).

For Lindley the charters appeared above all to define two separate pieces of land, with a shared boundary along one of their sides (see Fig. 4). To interpret thus, he had to take certain liberties with the text. The shared boundary conjectured by him ran down what was known by Stoke Bishop villagers, before the development of their area, as ‘the glen’ (present Glen Drive and its semi-detached houses occupies the upper part of this). Along the glen ran a stream (984 charter’s _ealde ritbig_) which, passing through Sea Mills wood, entered the river Trym. To address the problems raised by Lindley’s interpretation of the 969 charter, his location of 2. _the bales_ (nooks) appears flawed. These, Lindley maintained, lay ‘in the angle of the glen’, at presumably the abrupt bend half-way along its course, where the valley bottom turns at a right-angle to the north-west (between present Avon Vale and St. Hilary Close). However, this simple angle in the rivulet’s course is hardly substantial enough to embrace the notion, conveyed by the Anglo-Saxon _plural_ noun, of a complex of wooded nooks in a generally winding river setting. Naturally, having embarked on this orientation, Lindley was bound to pursue his line down the glen to the lower end at Sea Mills wood (otherwise correctly identified by him as the setting of 3. Dinning’s grove) and finally to the river Trym (4. Swepel stream, also correctly identified, even if ‘stream’ is strictly a mistranslation). Ekwall had already made the identification in 1929, although Lindley appears not to have consulted his work. 

In what follows, Lindley can only proceed by insisting upon scribal error. Assuming erroneously that the charter invited him to cross the Trym (of _swepleran straeme west_) into what was the King’s Weston end of Berkeley’s Weston lands, Lindley substituted the charter’s west for east. This expedient, however, resulted in a highly unlikely dog-leg in the itinerary at landmarks 3–4–5. Uncertain also as to the sense of _readan_ (red or reedy?) in landmark 6 (readen _weg_) but pressed for a solution on the last leg of his perambulation, Lindley opted for ‘reedy’, and proposed that the boundary followed a line along what was then a wooded bank (5) to the mouth of the Trym. His route continued upstream along the bank of the Avon, in wet and reedy conditions, then east (miscorrecting for the second time) into the valley of Old Sneed Park, to close the circuit at the starting point, Ash well in Stoke Bishop. This last proposition, based upon a miscorrection, is clearly without foundation, and in addition infringes the territorial integrity of Old Sneed Park, which, from earliest recorded times (1274), had been treated in legal documentation as an area strictly unto itself (Sneed or Sneyd < O.E. _snaed_: ‘cut off’).
Lindley’s treatment of the 984 charter is also questionable at important junctures of his itinerary. Leaving imprecise the nature and function of what he understands as simply the ‘hedge’ (bege) at the starting-point ‘west of Stoke’ (I), Lindley then mistook the language of the text and assumed that II. the eald dic, ‘old earthwork’, lay to the north of III. bar maer, the ‘old [Lindley: ‘grey’] boundary’. The text, properly understood, surely states the reverse. Nevertheless, Lindley correctly identified (contra Grundy) his ‘grey boundary’ as the green lane (present Ebenezer Lane), which, as we have seen, he correctly proposed as lying along the line from the Lead diggings to the Mill pool on the Trym (see Part 1, above). Lindley believed that what he called the ‘hay-field’ (IV. filidleab, obl. case filideage < filid ‘in open country’ + leab ‘clearing in wooded
land') lay under new housing, whereas in fact most of it (except a northern segment) forms the present playing-fields of Stoke Lodge. A larger error on Lindley's part was to assume that V. bol broc, the 'sunken brook', is the Westbury branch of the Trym. This is untenable, firstly because the Trym itself cannot be described as a brook (Oxford English Dictionary, 'a small stream'). It is properly, as the charters indeed have it, a river: the Sweoped/Sweoperl stream (O.E. stream = 'river': cf. Aften stream, the river Avon, in the 883 charter). Secondly, and more importantly, the Westbury branch of the Trym lies well within Westbury lands, from which Stoke, with presumably its settlement of that name, had been separated either in or before 824. Given the royal endorsement of the 883 charter (it was witnessed by King Alfred), it follows that any theoretical speculation on the matter must take account of its provisions. It is certain that following at the heels of the surveyors of 969 and 984 would have been the agent of the Berkeley estate on the west side of the Trym, whose land was squeezed between two blocks of Worcester's stoke land and who would have been very wary of any disturbance of ancient boundaries that this new book-land, if ill-defined, might cause. That the competent surveyor of the 984 charter might also have blundered from stoke land northwards into the substantive manor land of Westbury, as Lindley assumes he had, is highly unlikely.

Having correctly identified VII. dinningegræf (Dinning's grove) as the lower end of Sea Mills wood in the glen, Lindley embarks on an inconclusive excursion on the meaning of enig in the phrase on enig maegode weardy, with the syntactically implausible suggestion that the adverb efn (‘exactly’) should be substituted (see discussion below). This is presumed as another professional error of the Mercian surveyor or scribe, repeated, moreover, in the following clause. It might be remarked at this juncture that if Lindley's scribe was not infallible, he was at least consistent. Lindley then follows the northern rim of the glen eastwards from 'Dinning's grove', along present Druid Stoke Avenue. Situating landmark IX. enig maegode weardy, his 'look-out', on its rise, he acknowledges the course of X. the cald bearpath ('old military road'; i.e. the Roman road, Margary no. 54, at the north end of Mariners Drive) as it passes the abrupt angle of the glen, but fudges the charter's strict connection of the road with the glen's 'old rivulet'. Lindley states his uncertainty over the identity and location of the next landmark XI. cald dic, 'old earthwork', while misconstruing up on tha caldan dic to mean 'to the sloping dyke'. Finally he mistakes the sense of westan (the correct meaning is 'westwards' not 'from the west') but closes his circuit properly enough at the starting point, I. the corner of the 'hedge' (sic) in Stoke Bishop settlement.

Consulting the 883, 969 and 984 charters, with the O.S. 6" map published in 1904 at hand, it is possible to envisage the landscape as it might have appeared around the settlement of Stoke Bishop in the late Anglo-Saxon period. The village—in all probability of Mercian Anglians of Hwiccan stock—was then concentrated around a small lake or pool, some 40 metres long and 8 metres wide. This, still a prominent feature on the 1904 map, did not last long into the 20th century (it is now filled and paved). From the evidence of the 984 charter, drawn up in the time of the Danish raids in Ethelred's reign, the early settlement was defended by a stockade (I. se bege), which may have been contained on its north side by Druid Hill and Sunnyside, on its south side by the present footpath running broadly east–west between the lower end of Hollybush Lane and Stoke Cottages behind Kewstoke Road, on its east side by Hollybush Lane, and on its west side by the pre-1926 line of Stoke Hill as it ran past Stoke Cottages. The settlement's valuable pool was fed by local springs, the source of which was the ample drainage from the surrounding fields and wooded slopes. Pumps in the back gardens of village houses marked on the 1904 map just north and east of the pond would have tapped such resources. One of those springs, in all probability, would have been the Ash spring (I) of the 969 charter. Other prominent man-made features of the 10th-century landscape lying beyond the stockade of
the settlement would have been the earthworks for defence or boundary-marking, the probably substantial remains of the Roman port and minor town of Abona at Sea Mills, and the Roman roads. At least two of the last would have still remained considerable features of the territory of Stoke I, the one leaving the site of the Roman town on its route towards Durham Down and Bath (Margarly no. 54), the other leading via Henbury and Cribbs Causeway to the colonia of Gloucester (Margarly no. 541). Another Roman road leaving Stoke Bishop territory at Sea Mills is suggested by P. Ellis. It led in a north-westerly direction across the Trym, probably at the site of the old bridge in the O.S. map of 1904, via King’s Weston (camp and villa) and Blaise, to join Margary no. 541 at Henbury.

A major natural feature of the area remained the Trym, the river which importantly clinches the close relationship of the two charters. The river still retains considerable stretches of secluded woodland along its winding banks, which would well qualify as 2. the balas (nooks) of the 969 charter (see below). A short distance to the north of the settlement of Stoke Bishop lay IV. the filidleab of the 984 charter, the ‘open field’ typical of a late Anglo-Saxon nucleated village, largely surviving in the Stoke Lodge playing fields. From the village pool would have issued, in some vigour, the ealde ritbig (old rivulet) of the 984 charter, coursing westward down the steep valley of the glen towards Sea Mills, to join the Trym near Abona.

The 984 charter, when compared to that of 969, offers essential differences and similarities. The later charter has twice as many landmarks as the earlier and, chosen with more discernment, they are less ambiguous; the lands delineated are valued differently (three mansae in 984, two in 969), and the styles of the two pieces are quite distinct in quality. Beyond the similarity of their origin and purpose, certain key features and boundary marks are arguably the same. However, transposing the itineraries from charter to map, it is clear that the surveyor of the earlier document, with an economy of effort to match his spare style, cut certain corners and produced ambiguities: what particular nooks (balas) along the Trym he had in mind remain uncertain (they are a common feature along the river and, wisely, are not made landmarks in the later, more discriminating charter). To judge from the evidence of the charter of 984, it could be said that the author of 969 may well have intended to indicate those at the junction of the bol broc (sunken brook) with the Trym, rather than those below Millpill Bridge which are equally possible. This discrepancy would not have been trivial, as the whole of the open field of IV. filidleab would have been potentially excluded from the grant. Similarly, the route of the 969 itinerary along 6. the Red Way would have cut out a portion of the field containing Abona at Sea Mills (see below). If intentional exclusions in 969, the later charter’s survey would have been not only to clarify the terms of the earlier, but also to rectify them.

This author’s proposal for the itinerary of the charter of 984, with further commentary on the 969 charter where called for, is as follows (see Fig. 5):

First to I. the corner of the stockade on the west side of Stoke
This corner of the settlement’s stockade may have lain where Taggart’s Jubilee Memorial Fountain (1897) now stands, at the foot of Stoke Hill to the west of the vanished pool, where three ancient tracks would have converged. The Ash spring (I.) of the 969 charter probably lay (contra Lindley) on the north-east side of the pool, where several household pumps were recorded on the O.S. map of 1904.

From there to II. the old earthwork (eald dic) [then] northwards to III. the old boundary (har maer)
The discriminating use of the qualifiers eald and har in the 984 charter’s Anglo-Saxon text should be noted. Eald dic (landmarks II., X., XI.) clearly stands (to use the terms of linguistics) in
Fig. 5. The Stoke Bishop Charters of 969 and 984: landmarks of Higgins.

opposition to _se dic_ (VIII.). The qualifier _eald_, lit. ‘old’, carries also the familiar, endearing and proprietorial sense of the vernacular. _Eald dic_ means therefore ‘the old earthwork’, in the sense of ‘our (old) earthwork’ or ‘our people’s (old) earthwork’. Used without a qualifier, a different sense of the noun _dic_ obtains, implying a different earthwork. Thus landmark VIII. _se dic_ arguably refers not to the ‘familiar’ outer earthworks of the Stoke Bishop settlement, but to what we might term the ‘other’ ramparts. These, from the evidence of the 984 charter’s text, stood at some distance from the settlement around the site of _Abona_, and were arguably the outer defences of the Roman town. _Eald_, on the other hand, qualifies both _rithig_ and _hearpath_, because
of their close proximity and familiarity to the inhabitants of the settlement. Notably, the qualifier is not attached to the sweepel/sweoperl stream (the river Trym), perhaps because that major water course lay at some distance from the settlement and was not in its customary protection. This discriminatory usage of the qualifier in the 10th-century Anglo-Saxon text proposes, therefore, a theme of local defences: the timbered stockade around the settlement area (thtes hege), an outer defensive ring of probably stockaded earthwork (eald dic), and the outer ramparts (se dic) of the doubtless abandoned and ruinous minor Roman town of Abona.

From a consideration of the reconstructed 10th-century landscape, it is possible to speculate that the ‘old earthwork’ (II. eald dic) of the outer defences of Stoke Bishop may also have extended westwards along the northern rim of the deep cleft of the glen to integrate with the outer defences of Abona. The main lines of the outer earthworks of Abona are clear enough from the evidence of the 984 charter, on three sides of the site, but what of their extension on the eastern side? Here the configuration of the glen at Sea Mills catches the eye and the question naturally poses itself as to how this awkward natural feature was militarily integrated. It could not, in any case, have been ignored for other reasons: its stream must have provided the nearest source of fresh water for the early Roman garrison and even the later town, where no well shafts appear in the archaeology. Some defensive strategy for Abona must have been devised to embrace the glen for this reason and also to neutralise possibilities for ambush and surprise attack, particularly in the early phases of the Occupation fort which preceded the development of the town. The probably artificial steepness of the glen’s sides were remarked upon by A.T. Martin in 1888, on the basis of an earlier examination by Seyer (1821). The (broadly) southern rim of the glen skirting the site of Abona appeared to Martin to provide eastern ramparts for the Roman town, but Seyer also noticed the pronounced escarpment of the glen’s northern rim. Indeed aggressive access to the glen from the north must have been as critical a defensive consideration as aggressive egress from the southern edge of the glen towards the fort. From the evidence of the 984 charter, this conjectured Roman defensive measure along the northern rim of the glen may have also ‘anchored’ a wider defensive system for the later Stoke Bishop settlement itself.

Any sensible defensive measures undertaken in the 10th century must have taken account of the possibility of an enemy’s landing at what remained of the Roman dock on the Trym — indeed, the charter’s record of a watch-tower overlooking it confirms its enduring strategic importance.

From its beginning in ‘Dinning’s grove’, hard by the Trym, the conjectured earthwork of the glen’s northern rim would have taken an eastward course parallel perhaps with the start of the Roman road from Abona to Gloucester (Margary no. 541). If the present author’s thesis is correct, the rampart continued eastwards across present Druid Hill on the north side of Stoke Bishop village to join the ‘old earthwork’ (II. eald dic) at the opening of Hollybush Lane. Thence the defences probably turned southwards with the lane as far as the junction with present Eastmead Lane. From here its course may have been westwards along Eastmead Lane, where hints of a possible escarpment are visible in frontage gardens, then across Stoke Hill (road) to terminate at the Sea Mills–Bath road (Margary no. 54) at Mariners Drive.

Landmark III. har maer (‘the old boundary’), as already stated, lay to the north of II. the ‘old earthwork’, not as Lindley proposed to the south. Meaning literally the ‘grey’ boundary (as Lindley correctly has it, although without comment), the phrase’s qualifier bar signifies ‘hoary’ in the metaphorical sense of ‘old and respected, venerable’ (cf. the conservative English of the Authorised Version: ‘Thou shalt rise up before the boary head, and honour the face of the old man’, Leviticus 19.32). Har is formulaic, the common component of a stylem found in early charters, employed as an attribute of objects marking a boundary-line (cf. ‘... of than haran stane on thonne haran withis’, in a charter for Kemble of A.D. 999: Oxford English Dictionary, 2nd edition, under boar). Stoke Bishop’s bar maer is therefore the ‘old and respected’ boundary,
sanctioned by authority a century earlier in the charter of 883. Remains of this mere bank are still prominent in the lane (Ebenezer Lane) along the northern edge of the Stoke Lodge playing fields.

*From the old boundary* (har maer) *into the north part of IV. the open field* (filidileah)
The common ‘open field’ of the settlement lay, as stated, on the south side of Ebenezer Lane and is now represented by the playing fields of Stoke Lodge. The ‘north part’ lies under the housing of Cheyne Road, towards its junction with Bell Barn Road.

*From the north part of the open field to V. the sunken brook* (hol broc)
The ‘sunken brook’ is certainly to be identified as the short tributary stream of the river Trym at O.S. Nat. Grid ST 55607684. Running south-westwards into the river, it is still accessible from the junction of Coombe Bridge Avenue and Bell Barn Road. The dell would have given, as it still gives today, easy access to the balas (nooks) of this part of the Trym’s course, in the terms of the 969 charter.

*From the sunken brook to VI. the river Sweoperl*
Only the river’s name in its two forms requires comment. Both Trym and Sweoperl/Swepel are Old English formations. Ekwall, having noted the first use in Westbury-on-Trymme (1534), proposed Trym < *Trum* (‘firm, strong’) + *Σ*on suffix.\(^{45}\) For Sweoperl/Swepel, he proposed (s.v. ‘Swepel’) that, in the absence of other evidence, the name probably applied to the Trym below its confluence with the Henbury arm (a conclusion with which this author conditionally concurs \(^{46}\)). From a linguistic point of view, Ekwall noted that the forms were unique and probably ‘untrustworthy’, while Sweoperl was phonologically preferable to Swepel. If so, this has implications for the limited competence, again, of the 969 surveyor. Ekwall proposed no less than ten allegedly cognate forms from Old Norse, Middle English and Old High German in order to establish a relationship with the Cheshire dialect form *swipple* (‘supple, nimble’). In his discussion of the name, he admitted that he was working from the map, without the benefit of personal acquaintance with the area. An etymology which is both less contrived and more agreeable to the topography is to understand Sweoperl as an attributive compound noun, deriving not, as Ekwall would have it, from an ‘hitherto unrecorded O.E. adjective *swipol/sweopol*, but from *swōrō* (‘neck’ or ‘col’) + *pyl* (‘stream’): cf. Swerford (Oxfordshire) < *swōrō* + forð.\(^{47}\) The neck or col in question is arguably the saddle between the prominent features of King’s Weston Hill and Coombe Hill, from which wooded gorge the Henbury Trym emerges on its southerly course to Sea Mills and the Avon. The derivation would then run *swōrō-pyl > *swōrēpel > sweoperl*, with the common Old English metathesis of [r]. That the metathesised [r] appears altogether lost in the text of the 969 charter (Swepel) may indicate not an intermediate mutation (the dating sequence precludes this), but that the surveyor had not been altogether scrupulous (or sharp) enough in his transcriptions from his respondent’s local dialect.

*From the river Sweoperl to VII. the beginning of Dinning’s grove*
‘Dinning’s grove’ (modern Sea Mills wood at its lower end), as already noted, is a landmark common to both the 969 and the 984 charters. With the references to the Trym, it importantly confirms the common orientation of the charters in this part of their surveys.

*From the beginning of Dinning’s grove to where VIII. the rampart (se dic) aims at IX. the military watch-tower in the meadow* (on esnic maedwea weard)
As has been suggested, the context suggests that the surveyor’s course from VII. Dinning’s grove lay along VIII. se dic, the ‘other’ (i.e. probably Roman) rampart, in its curved course
west > south > east, to the site of the military (nesig) watch-tower on the southern elevated edge of the 'garrison (nesig) meadow' of Abona. The precise location of the tower is confirmed in the following clause in the text (see below).

The exact meaning of nesig requires comment. Used twice in identical form in the charter, and in successive clauses, it is unlikely to have been, as Lindley suggests, a scribal slip. On syntactical grounds, it is also unlikely that the adverb efnæ ('exactly, strictly') was intended, as in Lindley. And yet nesig presents problems, since it is not noted in current Anglo-Saxon word lists. It is probably an attributive formation derived from substantive efnæ + -ig affix: cf. mihtig (mighty) < miht; bælig (holy) < bæl. That efnæ (man-at-arms, soldier, servant, boy) is a productive root, capable of further transformation, is shown by the accepted attributive efenlic ('manly, valiant'). Hence nesig = 'of the soldier, military (attrib.)'.

It follows that IX. the nesig weard was a military watch-tower, either of Anglo-Saxon construction (if so, probably in timber) or the remains of a Roman tower on the southern outer rampart (VIII. secie) of Abona in a still usable state of preservation. An argument in favour of the tower's Roman origin is that both it and the meadow containing the remains of the Roman town shared, to the Anglo-Saxon mind, a similar defensive and warlike quality: both are nesig.

From the evidence of the charter, the tower would have risen on the summit of the ridge at 38 m above O.D. overlooking the Trym and the Avon, a location occupied from the 16th century by Old Sneed Park House. It would have afforded, for Roman and Anglo-Saxon alike, an all-round view unobtainable from the lower-lying riverside site of Abona and would have permitted the early sighting of hostile shipping along the Bristol Channel. To the south it would have watched the approaches from Durham Down, along the Bath–Sea Mills road (Margaroy no. 54), still usable in the days of these charters and known as the eald bearpath ('old military road', see below).

This 10th-century designation of the meadow of Abona, defined by the nature of its contents as 'military', with the arguable survival of a Roman watch-tower in what strongly appears as an outer rampart, suggests several important conclusions which, because of the obscurity of the two later charters, have not been available so far to historians and archaeologists of the Roman port. The most important of these is that Abona indeed possessed a town wall. This is a contentious area in archaeological thought: only Ellis in his report on the 1968 excavations at site 20 in Sea Mills (51 Roman Way) believed that enough evidence had been found to suggest that a wall and ditch once existed, against all earlier thought on the matter.46 Here in the charters is what now may amount to eyewitness evidence. Even an Anglo-Saxon could tell the difference between the footings of ruined domestic buildings and the foundations (or more) of a town's defensive wall: the 'military meadow' of Abona had surely contained at least one significant, recognisably military feature. Martin's anecdotal evidence, gained from Seyer, that Sea Mills had earlier been named Portchester (where caestor/ceaster denotes a walled town), suddenly gains in attraction.50

Equally, attention now needs to be paid to the possible role of Abona in the late 4th-century defences of the Bristol Channel, within the defensive strategy of Britain's west coast as a whole.51 Coin-finds of 408 (Arcadius) indicate the town's viability at this date.52 Abona, then still a ferry port for South Wales, may have functioned at least as a well-defended auxiliary naval port with a coastguard look-out function (connected to the possible Blaise Castle signal-post) for the Roman fleet when operating in the Bristol Channel.53 The use of a watch-tower at Abona in Anglo-Saxon times also argues for continuity—the military use of the site of Abona from Roman times into the era of the Viking raids.

The itinerary of the charter of 969 'from the Swepel stream westwards by [5.] the edge of the wood', confused Lindley as has been remarked. It is possible, however, to construe a proper
westerly course as the charter demands. Immediately upstream of the former bridge on its probably Roman site, indicated by the 1904 map, the Trym turns abruptly due west before continuing south (but still in the western quadrant) to the Avon. One has then to assume—indeed as Lindley himself did—the existence of woodland on the Sea Mills river bank at this point, with a footpath along its edge (be wudu riman). This would have taken the 969 surveyor to a probable opening in the ramparts on the north side of ‘garrison meadow’, where, ‘leading south’ (not as Lindley mistranslates ‘on the south part of red/reedy way’) the Red Way began its course to Bath. A.T. Martin’s excavations of the prominent agger of the Roman road from Sea Mills to Bath (Margary no. 54), a mile distant on Durdham Down, is instructive at this juncture. His investigation revealed, beneath a top layer of large stones forming the road’s surface, ‘a layer, some six inches deep, of reddish looking earth ... reddish soil’. With hard and extensive use, and in disrepair, the surface paving having been eroded or dispersed, the road would have revealed its substratum of compacted red soil for considerable stretches of its course: hence the ‘Red Way’ of the landscape in 969. It is interesting that the more cultured author of the 984 charter, with a sense of historical continuity, referred to it in its time-honoured role as the ‘old military road’ (X. eald bearpath).

From [the watch-tower in] garrison meadow to where the old rivulet aims up at X. the old military road
The surveyor’s route from [the watch-tower in] ‘garrison meadow’ to the ‘old military road’ is described in terms of the direction of flow of the ‘old rivulet’ in the adjacent glen beyond the road itself. The flow would have been that of the stream before the abrupt bend, as it bore down from the east to a point below the road (thus the rivulet, as the charter has it, properly ‘aims up’ at the road). The line of this leg of the route confirms, with a sort of back-bearing, the precise siting of the watch-tower. With his back to the watch-tower, the surveyor would have followed along what remained of the conjectured southern outer earthwork of Abona in a direction opposing that of the flow of the upper stream, until he reached the road.

The surveyor of the 969 charter, on the other hand, probably stepped on to the beginning of the road, his ‘Red Way’, through some break in the northern earthwork on the bank of the Trym, to follow its prescribed southerly course to his next turning-point. If he had done exactly what is recorded in the text, he would have cut off that sizeable portion of Abona’s ‘garrison meadow’ lying between the road and the conjectured outer rampart (se dic) along the Avon bank. This may have been intentional. Alternatively, one might assume that he was cutting corners once again, and simply intended that the whole meadow through which the road passed should be included in the inventory (a slovenliness that had to be rectified, it could be argued, in the more substantial ‘follow-up’ charter of 984).

From the old military road up to XI. the old earthwork (eald dic) towards Stoke
The 984 charter indicates that ‘the old military road’ would have emerged from the southern outer ramparts of Abona, in the 969’s southerly direction. In the modern setting, this would be hard by the Upper Lodge (now St. Christopher’s) of Old Sneed Park House on Old Sneed Park (road). The course of the Roman road (Margary no. 54) then descended south-eastwards past the present Lower Lodge before rising along the walled footpath of Mariners Drive towards the parish church of St. Mary Magdalene. It is just short of the church’s site that the surveyor of 984 would have reached the Roman road’s junction with Stoke Bishop’s conjectured outer defensive earthwork, XI. the eald dic, as it pursued its circuit on the southern side of the settlement.

The 969 charter is entirely uninformative at this point of the itinerary. Therefore nothing prevents the surmise that the earlier surveyor would have taken the same route as his more scrupulous colleague fifteen years later.
From the old earthwork to where XII. the stockade comes out by Stoke
This implies a course eastward along the ‘old earthwork’ across Stoke Hill, to its junction with Eastmead Lane, then along that lane’s conjectured earthwork to the Hollybush Lane embankment. Thereafter, the surveyor’s route would have descended in a direction west of north along the lane’s earthwork to arrive at its intersection with the stockade (se bege) of the Stoke Bishop settlement.

The 969 charter is, unsurprisingly, more perfunctory: ‘from the Red Way west back to (I) Ash spring’. It is not inconceivable, given the lack of intermediary landmarks in the text, that the route was the same as that in the 984 charter, finally turning into the western quadrant (i.e. west of north) along Hollybush Lane, to arrive back at Ash spring. Indolently, the 969 surveyor may simply have confirmed the final (westerly) direction of this part of his perambulation.

Westwards back to I. the corner of the stockade
The final leg would have taken the surveyor of 984 from the junction of Hollybush Lane and the stockade, westwards along the stockade’s southern edge, to arrive back once more at the starting point (I.), where Tagart’s Jubilee Memorial Fountain now stands.

Compared with the finer detail, the more professional approach and style of the A.D. 984 charter, the text of the 969 document is rough-hewn and minimalist. That the later charter is indeed a re-working of the earlier—on the grounds of the 969’s positively misleading economy—is, of course, a matter of conjecture. Lindley correctly identified the general setting of the charter’s survey as lying in Stoke I (Stoke Bishop), but there is no doubt that he erred over the basic orientation of the 969 charter. With the best possible motive of making the charters’ itineraries fit into a comprehensible whole, he conceived of the area of the 969 grant as neatly related to (but emphatically not the same as) that of 984. It is this author’s belief that Lindley was wrong in his interpretation of both itineraries. He admitted that he was not an expert in the field—his civil engineering skills, if they lent him some confidence on the ground, were clearly not matched by his linguistic or historical insights. Unwilling to come to terms with what might have been the working assumptions of the Anglo-Saxon surveyors, he assumed too easily a lack of professionalism on their part. Finally, Lindley failed to reconstruct a convincing context for the landscape of 10th-century Stoke Bishop, into which to ‘earth’ the charters. Of course, the 969 charter is a conundrum: its surveyor undoubtedly cut corners (even cheated on his perambulation) and arguably produced data so inadequate that the charter may well have given rise to legal dispute. On the other hand, the 969 charter may have been, despite its shortcomings, broadly correct in its intentions and may have purposely implied that the two areas of the ‘open field’ and the south-west portion of ‘garrison meadow’ were not part of Ethelward’s deal at that time. In which case, the 984 charter’s object was not only to elucidate the earlier document, but also to put those additional tracts of land on record, while reasonably enshrining an increase in the rateable value from the two mansae of 969 to the three of 984. But this author is left with the lingering suspicion that it was not so, and that, rather than incorporate new marginal territory, the 984 charter simply redeline the same area in more exact detail, either at the request of an ageing Ethelward, harassed by fifteen years of boundary disputes, or at the behest of the bishop of Worcester, who, looking to a future reversion and a further lease, believed that the land of the church’s original grant in 969 had been undervalued by half.

Acknowledgements
The author would like to thank Caroline Heighway for bringing the subject of the Stoke Bishop charters to his attention, and both Caroline and Professor Keith Branigan (University of Sheffield) for their comments and encouragement.
Notes

1. In linguistic discussion of O.E. nouns out of their context, the author uses the conventional nominative rather than the oblique case. For example nom. stoc rather than obl. stocce, nom. Afene stream rather than obl. Afene stream, nom. Brigestow rather than obl. Brigestowe, nom. filidleab rather than obl. filidleage, and so on.

2. The numbering of the charters is that in H.P.R. Finberg, The Early Charters of the West Midlands (Leicester, 1961).


5. Ibid. 164d.


10. Ibid. 27.


13. Ibid. 106.


16. Ibid. 104–5.

17. Everett, ‘Re-interpretation’, 175.

18. Wilkins, Boundaries, 9.


21. Wilkins, Boundaries, 12.

22. Ibid. 9.


24. For further confirmation see also J.R Russell, ‘The Archaeology of the Parish of Clifton, with a note on the 883 Boundary Survey of Stoke Bishop’, Bristol and Avon Archaeol. 16, 85.


29. N.D. Harding (ed.), Bristol Charters 1155–1373 (Bristol Record Soc. 1), 156–7.

30. W. Barrett, The History and Antiquities of the City of Bristol (Bristol, 1789), 106.

31. Wilkins, Boundaries, 11.


33. Harding, Bristol Charters, 8–9.

34. Abona rather than Abomea is the preferred form here, following the usage of O.S. 1:625,000, Historical Map and Guide: Roman Britain (4th rev. edn., 1994).

35. C. Heighway, Anglo-Saxon Gloucestershire (Alan Sutton and Gloucestershire County Library, 1987), 60.


38. The Ruin is an anonymous Anglo-Saxon poem of probably the 8th century, in which the poet contemplates the imposing remains of an unknown Roman town in the early English landscape. See M. Alexander The Earliest English Poems (Penguin Books, 1966), 30, 1.18.
39. In Lindley's 'Charters' (note 7. supra), no map is included. The map of Fig. 4 is this author's reconstruction.

40. *Wyrthrwm* (lit. 'root') suggests 'beginning' rather than Lindley's 'end'; see N. Davis (ed.), *Sweet's Anglo-Saxon Primer* (1953), 129.

41. E. Ekwall, *English River Names* (1928), s.v. 'Swepel'.

42. Westbury's *Stoc* appears to have been in existence at least by 824, even though its boundaries were not defined before 883 (Finberg 83). The church of Worcester was confirmed in its possession of Westbury at the synod of Clofeshoh in 824 (Finberg 62), but its stoke land could not, it appears, have been included in the grant. This is indicated by the fact that in 883 the Berkeley community, as stated in the preamble of Part 1 of this study, was able to bargain with its land *set Stoc* in the deal to divest itself of royal dues on its other estates.


45. Ekwall, *English River Names*, s.v. 'Trym'.

46. It seems logical to propose that what Ekwall called 'the Henbury arm of the Trym' may also itself have been known as the Sweoperl/Swepel. Deemed a tributary of the Trym, the arm descends southwards through the gorge between King's Weston Hill and Coombe Hill in the present Blaise Castle estate. In modern O.S. maps this is designated Hazel Brook, a name the cartographers based not upon local usage but on the erroneous interpretation of the 883 charter by Thomas Kerslake, a generation before Taylor, who took the gorge in question to be *Haesldene*. For a fuller discussion and bibliography see Russell, 'Archaeology of Clifton', 84.

47. Mills, *English Place-Names*, s.v. 'Swerford'.


The Anglo-Saxon Charters of Stoke Bishop: a study of the boundaries of Bisceopes stoc

By DAVID H. HIGGINS

Part 1. The Stoke Bishop charter of A.D. 883

It is only with certain caveats and provisos, historical and geographical, that the pre-Conquest territory of Bisceopes stoc, with which this study is concerned, can be connected with the modern parish of Stoke Bishop (north-west Bristol), from which nevertheless the well-known Anglo-Saxon charters take their name. As will be seen, the ‘Stoke’ under consideration (O.E. *stoc* = outlying farmland, dependent settlement) was far larger territorially than the subsequent 19th-century parish of Stoke Bishop, whose area in remote times, with other substantial land, ‘Bishop’s Stoke’ once included.

The charter of 883 (Finberg 83),2 witnessed by King Alfred, is the instrument by which the abbot and community of Berkeley ceded part of their wide Mercian estates to the Crown. The alienated portion was the above-mentioned land ‘at Stoke’, which had earlier been part of the royal vill of Westbury. The settlement at Westbury by 1534 had become known as Westbury-on-Trym.

Before 883 the book-land of Westbury had enjoyed a chequered history. In a charter to be dated between 793 and 796 (Finberg 50), King Offa of Mercia granted 60 hides of Westbury land, unspecified in the document as to boundaries, to the church of Worcester, to be transferred after his own demise and that of his son Æcgfrith. The land in question had been in the hands of Offa’s family since his grandfather had won a grant from King Ethelbald of Mercia in 717 × 757 (Finberg 17). Yet we may assume an earlier history for Westbury, with its future important minster (founded before 804), from charters of neighbouring settlements: both Hensbury and Aust were granted to the church of Worcester by King Ethelred of Mercia in 691 × 699 (Finberg 6), when Westbury must have already been established.

The later history of Westbury appears confused by the fact that Offa issued another charter in 793 × 796 (Finberg 49), granting 55 (unspecified) hides at Westbury to his thegn Ethelmund. The anomaly so far remains unresolved,3 but subsequent charter evidence implies royal revo-
cation of Worcester’s rights established in 793 × 796; by 804 all of Westbury, or at least the bulk of it, is in the hands of Ethelmund’s heir. It is in this early 9th-century charter (Finberg 53) that Stoke is mentioned for the first time. Here Ethelmund’s son, Ethelric, undertook to leave to his mother Ceolburga, abbess at Berkeley, the lands inherited from his father at Westmonster (Westbury) and Stoc, with reversion to the church of Worcester, rather than to Berkeley, at her death. In 824, some years after Ceolburga’s death, Berkeley minster, in respect of its perceived loss of Ceolburga’s Westbury estate to Worcester, laid claim to it unsuccessfully at the synod of Clofeshoh. Finding against Berkeley, the synod confirmed Westburh (sic, Westbury) as the possession of the church of Worcester (Finberg 62), but by some unrecorded arrangement or subterfuge, that part of the Westbury estate known as Stoke passed into the
hands of the Berkeley community. This is confirmed in the records 59 years later, when the abbot and community of Berkeley minster successfully petitioned Ethelred, ealdorman of Mercia, for the release of all minster lands from royal feorm and other dues. In the preamble of the rescript, the above-mentioned charter issued in 883, the ealdorman officially removed the dues, except for the customary three of military service, fortress and bridge repair, together with the fines for theft in cases of so-called simple compensation (‘price for price’) payable to the victim. Also the king’s food-rent was remitted, the whole in consideration of a once-for-all composite fee: the perpetual surrender to the Crown of 12 hides of the minster’s land aet Stocce and 30 mancuses of gold.

Ethelred, with the consent of King Alfred and the Mercian council, then proceeded to grant to Cynulf, son of Ceoluht and probable grandson of Ceolburga, abess of Berkeley, the 12 hides at Stoke, with the same immunities, for the period of three lives, with remainder to Worcester, one of the favourite foundations of the king. Stoke, which would suitably be renamed Bisceopes stoc by the time of the charter of 984 (Finberg 130), was duly reunited at some time after 883 with the Westbury estate of the see of Worcester, in the hands of which both remained. Re-examination of the landmarks of the 883 charter, one of the subjects of this article, indicates that the 12 hides of (‘Bishop’s) Stoke’ comprised two substantial parcels of land, separated by the narrow strip of Berkeley minster’s estate of 7 hides and one virgate in Westone (the later tithing of King’s Weston). It will be shown in this study that the two areas in question (denominated Stoke I and II) were to correspond in all respects to the later tithings of Stoke Bishop (which included Redland and Cotham) and Shirehampton (which included Avonmouth) within the ancient ecclesiastical parish of Westbury-on-Strym. Strictly speaking, therefore, the 883, 969 and 984 charters, known traditionally as ‘the charters of Stoke Bishop’, should be designated ‘the charters of Bishop’s Stoke’, employing the historical name which defines the whole of Westbury’s ancient stoc land. Understandable confusion would then be avoided. It remains to be noted that Bisceopes stoc, afforded its ecclesiastical affix by 984 (see above), was recorded simply as Stocce in the Domesday survey (1086), a member (membrum) of Westbury manor in the hundred of Brently. The manor itself still remained in the possession of St. Mary’s of Worcester.5

The text of the 883 charter, with suggested translation and numbering of the landmarks, is:


Despite the subsequent silence of Grundy (1935–6),6 the disagreement and disparagement of Lindley (1959),7 and the somewhat grudging acknowledgement of Everett (1961),8 the Revd. C.S. Taylor’s grasp and understanding of the charter (1900)9 emerges as swift, comprehensive and, except in one controversial particular, probably correct. Grundy made no reference to Taylor’s article, and preferred to work from the Anglo-Saxon text and (it may be alleged) from maps alone; he ignored local evidence, both on the ground and in print. As far as local research is concerned, he would have gained much. Taylor, although an amateur, is by far the best writer amongst the authors who have written on the charter in question, and his Anglo-Saxon scholarship, displayed elsewhere in a long life dedicated to local history, is quietly impressive,
even though subject to some inevitable qualification over the passage of years. A thoughtful perusal of Taylor, however, would have saved Grundy and his follower Lindley from the cardinal misunderstanding of the charter’s initial landmark. This led to a serious distortion of the whole orientation, necessitating Grundy’s extraordinary dismemberment of the order of the landmarks and his misleading of a too compliant Lindley. Lindley, who came across Taylor’s article during the later phases of the drawing-up of his paper, found it ‘brief and very cursory’, although, to his credit, he allowed it a certain plausibility.

Taylor’s thesis deserves to be quoted in full:

Hazel Well was the source of the stream near Springfield; and the boundaries are in three parts, the first marking the southern limit of the Stoke Bishop tithing, where it joins Bristol and Clifton; the next marching down the Avon on the west of the tithing to Sea Mills, and then crossing Shirehampton Park, and passing by Penpole across the marsh to the Severn to mark the eastern limit of Shirehampton tithing; and finally the line starts again from Springfield to the deep pits on Durdham Down at the top of Parry’s Lane, which are, no doubt, old lead-diggings; thence along the lane to Clack Mill, the Mill Pool of the boundaries, and then along the Trym to the Avon, to mark the northern boundary of Stoke Bishop tithing ... With the exception of Sweordes Stone, all the points can be identified with fair certainty, Waldeswell being very probably Mother Pugsley’s Well on Kingsdown, and Eowcombe the Gully on Durdham Down ... Lead was dug on Durdham Down more than a thousand years ago ... 16

Lindley found some good in Taylor’s hypothesis, but could not on the whole recommend it. Lindley, in effect, was mistaken in understanding the three parts of the charter’s list as circuits and (worse) in assuming that Taylor had done so too. Taylor had not. Essentially he had thought in terms of boundaries which identified two areas, while himself instinctively equating those areas with the tithings of Stoke Bishop and Shirehampton respectively. He saw the boundaries as being in three parts: the southern (1–6), defining the limits of Redland, Cotham and Durdham Down; the western (7–10), defining the western edge of Stoke Bishop tithing and, extended, the eastern edge of Shirehampton tithing; and the northern (11/1 ‘again’ –14), the Stoke Bishop tithing border against both Westbury and King’s Weston tithings. Dealing with the southern boundary first (see Fig. 1), Taylor unerringly identified the first landmark of the charter, 1. baestwæl, as lying in the extensive grounds of Springfield, an estate, now under modern housing, that Lindley surprisingly stated he could not locate. However, it is clearly marked on an O.S. map of 1904 in the south-eastern corner of Westbury tithing, at its juxtaposition with Stoke Bishop tithing. Here rose the major source or spring (O.E. wîfella) of the stream which waters the charter’s 2. baestdene. Haestdene was in Taylor’s view the valley (O.E. dene) through which flowed the waters of now Cran brook, which lends its name to modern Cranbrook Road and Cranside Avenue in Redland. Taylor was also the first to suggest the identification of 3. wældes well as Mother Pugsley’s well on Kingsdown, which now lies athwart the foundations of the back garden wall between 2 Clare Road and 10 Nugent Hill, near St. Matthew’s church. To this author’s mind, this is Taylor’s only interpretation of the charter’s landmarks which is open to serious doubt (see below), although, to be quite fair, he omitted this precise identification from a later article on the whole subject of Bristol’s parochial boundaries.11

Neither Taylor, Grundy, Lindley nor Everett could locate swordes stan (4. Sword’s stone) with any certainty. Grundy suggested that it lay between Parry’s Lane and Coombe Dingle, in a field called Sitting Stones (now buried beneath modern housing), but as his orientation in this part of the Anglo-Saxon survey is suspect, his proposal must be discounted. Lindley’s surmise, following Taylor as far as he could, that Sword’s stone lay in front of Redland Chapel is wide of the mark on any rational understanding of Taylor’s survey.12 The present author’s estimation, which vindicates Taylor’s implied location of the stone (despite his uncertainty), is given below.
Taylor’s orientation provided a location for *eow cumb* as the ‘Gully on Durdham Down’, but he passed over discussion of the name’s later phonological development to *Walcombe*, by which it is now known. Lindley provided a solution which was developed by Everett: *eow cumb* (lit. ‘yew coombe’) > *Yookham slade* (in a lease of 1608) > *Oakham slade* (in a lease of 1702) > *Walcombe slade* (in the later O.S. designation). *Walcombe* probably reflects the epenthetic [l] which the later Bristol dialect interpolated or appended to unclosed final tonic and atonic syllables, suitably illustrated in Bristol’s own name < *Brigstow*. Lindley himself balked at the implication of error in his own orientation and opted for the ‘weak surmise’ that Yewcombe may once have lain in the lower Trym valley. As bad, Lindley finally misrepresents Taylor’s identification of the gully as *eow cumb* and criticises Taylor’s location of it as ‘both vague and unlikely’.

In fact Taylor specifies ‘the Gully on Durdham Down’ (author’s italics; there is only one, the others are old quarries), not as Lindley has it, *a* gully ‘somewhere on Durdham Down’.
Taylor had seen the *stoc* land of late Anglo-Saxon Westbury, defined in the 883 charter, in terms of the later medieval tithings of Stoke Bishop and Shirehampton. Before embarking on the Shirehampton (Stoke II) part of his survey (7–10), Taylor correctly defines the western boundary of Stoke Bishop (Stoke I) as lying from a point (6) beneath the ‘gully’ of 5. Walcombe slade on Durham Down, then along the Avon bank to the mouth of the Trym (14). From here he traces a north-westerly line along the neutral territory of the bank as far as the water-edge boundary stone on the eastern boundary of Shirehampton tithing at 7., then inland on the same bearing across Shirehampton Park to 8. ‘Ridge lea’ and 9. Penpole, and finally ‘across the marsh to the Severn’ at 10., thus defining ‘the eastern limit of Shirehampton tithing’. The itinerary from the Avon to the ‘crossing [of] Shirehampton Park’ is vague of course, but the general picture (to be refined by Grundy, Lindley and Everett, though with minor discrepancies; see below) is absolutely sound. Taylor’s ‘northern boundary’ (11–14) begins at 1. Springfield (his correctly surmised *baestwell*) to march on a south-westerly course straight to 12. the ‘Lead diggings ... the deep pits on Durham Down at the top of Parry’s Lane’. Lindley, at odds with Taylor, correctly stated that no authority had hitherto identified these pits as lead workings. However, this was some years before the appearance in 1974 of the British Geological Survey of Bristol (O.S. sheet 264, 1:50,000). Whilst it did not plot lead veins at the top of Parry’s Lane on Durham Down, the survey showed the occurrence there of a narrow crop of Black Rock Limestone. This is similar to the crop found in Leigh Woods on the far side of the Avon Gorge opposite Clifton Down, where the survey marks lead veins at O.S. Nat. Grid ST 55307390. The geology therefore, as Dr. David L. Speedyman (Department of Geology, University of Bristol) has informally confirmed, supports Taylor’s hypothesis that the Parry’s Lane quarry was prospected for lead in remote times and was denominated a *lead gedelf* by the surveyor of the charter of 883. Taylor’s survey then proceeds uninterrupted to 13. *myl pul*, seen as Clack Mill on the Trym, then down the Trym to 14. the river Avon (*in Athe stream*) at Sea Mills, a solution which has the symmetry and clarity of a Euclidian proof.

Neither Grundy nor Lindley can offer as much. Taylor had spontaneously read the 883 charter in terms of the tithing boundaries, whereas the later commentators had not, with deleterious consequences for their solutions. Grundy failed to include the Redland and Cotham areas (see Fig. 2), which according to the earliest surviving recorded perambulation of Westbury-on-Trym parish (1803, with extracts also from the 1790 circuit 14) had been part of the tithing of Stoke Bishop. He mercilessly re-arranged the order of the landmarks and interpolated (even to Lindley’s incredulity) one other to fit his theory. He took in a segment of King’s Weston territory which in 883 belonged to Berkeley and finally grouped his landmarks *Hazel well–Hazel dene–Lead workings* so closely together as to suggest an unpersuasive proximity, quite at variance with the spacious, measured intervals of all the other landmarks in the charter.

Lindley’s error in his 1959 examination of the 883 charter (see Fig. 2) was to accept unquestioningly the general orientation of Grundy. He therefore began, like Grundy, at the foot of Walcombe slade, the presumed *baestwell*. Rightly perceiving, from observation, that the slade had never enclosed a spring, he nevertheless posited that the hot spring at the New Hotwells site, despite lying at a distance of some 300 m, must have been the Hazel well of the charter. 15 Once the same starting point had been determined by Lindley, of course, all else ineluctably followed Grundy. Like Grundy, Lindley assumed that Walcombe slade was *baesldene*, while the now covered Parry’s well, at the top of Parry’s Lane (O.S. Nat. Grid ST 57007585), was the charter’s *waldes well*. With Grundy, Lindley then passed down Parry’s Lane to the junction of the road to Shirehampton. Unlike Grundy, Lindley opted for the left fork, which soon arrives at the entry to Ebenezer Lane, to carry him to *myl pul*, the Trym at Clack Mill, rather than taking
Grundy's right fork which leads to Coombe Lane and eventually Coombe Dingle higher up the Trym. In this instance, Lindley was quite certainly correct. Whether or not he knew it, for he does not state as much, the line of Ebenezer Lane is in fact the old tithing boundary and now the boundary of the modern parish of Stoke Bishop. Lindley appositely remarks that the lane had in stretches the appearance of an Anglo-Saxon maer bank, and he is probably correct. In his search for *eow cumb*, he tentatively suggests, having rejected the Coombe Dingle trajectory of Grundy, that there may have been a plantation of yews in the lower Trym valley, now drowned, though he admits it a 'weak surmise'. Lindley can throw no more light on swordes stan than that offered by Grundy, although the Sitting Stones field, which Grundy posited as its site, like his location of *eow cumb* in Coombe Dingle, must be ruled out if Grundy's line from Parry's Lane to Coombe Dingle is rejected.
Lindley remarked ruefully that it would have been desirable ‘to follow the charter literally’ and make landmarks 11 (i.e. 1 again)—14 a ‘fresh line enclosing another area’ but he fatally concluded that the gully/Walcombe slade (his and Grundy’s baestwell) could not logically be refuted as the commencement of the new circuit. He is thus led straight to the nearby old lead workings on Clifton Down, near the junction of Ladies’ Mile and Stoke Road, as the location of the lead gedelf, and since he must end at the Avon, he is forced to the conclusion that the itinerary 11–14 was a repetition of landmarks 1–6. He was almost led to rethink the whole exercise on the basis of Finberg’s suggestion that the Redland and Cotham area was meant and he even considered that Cran brook might have played a part. However, at this point of his survey he was seeking an alternative location for the Mill Pool and could not find any evidence for a mill site on the Cran: ‘the Redland circuit, then, seems to be ruled out quite definitely’. Essentially, with the exception of the Ebenezer Lane excursus, Lindley had to opt for Grundy’s picture but he could not contemplate Grundy’s interpolation of Ridge lea between Mill pool (13) and Avon (14). At best, Lindley could read this part of the picture with Finberg’s eye: that 11 (1 again)—14 was essentially ‘a sort of postscript’. The original Anglo-Saxon surveyor, he suggests, must have seen that his first attempt was quite inadequate and therefore gave ‘two more items which anyone with knowledge of the ground would see came in the appropriate place’.10 Lindley’s survey of the 883 charter ends with a tantalising consideration of Taylor’s article, only to reject once more Taylor’s entire orientation, since it was ‘unlikely that a central area would be specified after first an eastern and then a western one’. Lindley had not grasped that Taylor, working from three boundary lines, had identified only two areas, Stoke I (Stoke Bishop tithing), and Stoke II (Shirehampton tithing).

Everett’s article of 1961 is heavily reliant on Taylor. She avows finding him ‘almost as difficult to follow as the charter itself’, but then archly reinstates him, adding some circumstantial evidence which is not without merit, only to abandon the master over the identification of the lead diggings. Lindley, as has been stated, thought incorrectly that Taylor had specified three separate areas. Everett reinstated Taylor’s two: ‘the present Stoke Bishop together with most of Redland and Cotham, and the Shirehampton-Avonmouth area’.17

Following Taylor, Everett takes the clockwise direction, traditional in Anglo-Saxon surveys, from Springfield for the first tranche (1–6), whereas Grundy and Lindley, who should have known better, located baestwell in such a way that an anticlockwise movement was unavoidable. Everett nevertheless has surprising errors: she confused Ashley brook (running north–south on the east side of Ashley Down to join the Frome at Baptist Mills) with Cran brook, both in the text and her accompanying map, and placed the Ashley brook pumping station at the unindustrialised southern end of Cran brook near Zetland Road. But she appears to mean the Cran brook, as she correctly refers to its being the ‘Gully or Watercourse’ recorded in the 1803 perambulation of Westbury parish.18 Again following Taylor, though without acknowledgement, Everett proposed Mother Pugsley’s well as waldes well, noting that the 1803 perambulation took a line near the site of the well. Misconstruing O.E. wald as Grundy, Lindley and even Taylor (by implication) had done and as more recent commentators would do (see discussion below), she compounded the common error by citing the frequency of Wood- prefixes in the street names in the Cotham/Redland area in support of Taylor’s idea. Then, ignoring Taylor, who properly defines the southern limits as adjoining Bristol and Clifton, Everett makes straight from 3. Mother Pugsley’s well (waldes well) to the top of 5. Walcombe slade, rashly enclosing an unwarranted slice of Clifton, an estate which was almost certainly in existence by 883 (see below), while assuming that 4. Sword’s stone lay somewhere along that line. She then descends to the Avon at 6.
For the second of the boundaries of Stoke I (11–14), Everett again proposed a clockwise direction. It is not clear why she elected to do this, other than in order to demonstrate, in an act of scholarly supererogation, the ‘proper’ movement which is quite unsupported in the charter at this point. She thus moved west down the Avon from 6. to the Trym mouth at Sea Mills, followed the Trym up to myl pul at Clack Mill, then turned south-eastwards to what she mistakenly supposed was the site of old lead workings near the water-tower on Durham Down and finally returned north-eastwards to the spring of her ‘Ashley brook’ (in fact the Cran brook).

Apart from three inexplicable aberrations (the confusion of Ashley brook with Cran brook, the reversal of the order of landmarks of the third tranche 11–14 and the trespass into Clifton estate lands), Everett showed sense in following Taylor’s general orientation and accepting most of his landmarks. However, she failed in the latter regard by ignoring his rationally persuasive location of the lead workings and produced an unconvincingly narrow waist or corridor in the configuration of Stoke I. At the same time Everett opted strongly and eloquently for the only landmark that Taylor probably incorrectly identified, waddes well, which with him she took for Mother Pugsley’s well.

All four authors concur that the 883 charter enclosed broadly Shirehampton tithing within landmarks 7–10 of its survey. The points of contention arise in the detail. Taylor, with the tithing boundaries always in mind, was as usual grandly correct: his line ran from Avon bank at Sea Mills (14) along the (as it were) neutral territory of the Avon bank, to move inland at some point (it would have probably been the existing boundary stone at 7), then across Shirehampton Park. His line then passed by 9. ‘Penpole’ (the precise point on the ridge is not specified) and ‘across the marsh to the Severn’. Grundy, who had moved (following his arbitrary re-ordering of the landmarks) from Mill pool/Clack Mill on the Trym (myl pul) via Ridge Iea (brigcleab identified as Penpole ridge) south to the Avon, then from the Avon back to Ridge lea again, had, as we have seen, unwarrantedly enclosed a whole segment of Berkeley’s book-land at King’s Weston. Thereafter his trajectory via pen pau to the Severn is correct, but requires comment.

As has been said, Grundy surmised, although without total conviction, that pen pau should be interpreted as ‘(Cattle)pen stream’ (pen pul), understood as ‘the stream that flows northwards from near Penpole Point along the modern boundary for some 5 or 6 furlongs’ and thence to the Severn: i.e. the now badly degraded Shirleyhampton rhine. Lindley, having correctly dismissed Grundy’s unwarranted interpolations, took pen pau as simply Penpole (as did Taylor)—a name that was formerly applied to the tip of the King’s Weston ridge where it turns due west (author’s italics), and still survives in a wood on its southern slope’. Lindley is only partially correct. ‘Penpole’ certainly still survives in the name of the wood but also in the name of the point at the western tip of the entire ridge above Shirehampton (Penpole Point is marked by a monument adjacent to the trigonometrical point). Grundy’s translation of the feature’s name as ‘Cattlepen stream’ appears rather strained: rather, pen pau suggests a common tautological hybrid, deriving from Celtic *penn* (hill, head, end) + O.E. *paugh* < *peall* (ledge, hill-slope), an element found also in *Paudon* in North Somerset. The ridge is Shirehampton’s most prominent landscape feature; it is hard to believe that the charter’s surveyor could have ignored it as a landmark.

Lindley, who now belatedly brought to mind Taylor’s equation of charter landmarks with tithing boundaries, noted what he thought was a discrepancy in the 1803 perambulation of Westbury. It appeared to him to take the boundary on a more northerly course from Penpole ridge to the Severn, along what earlier cartographers had (incorrectly) called an ‘ancient mere bank’. Careful scrutiny of the text of the perambulation, which, because pursued on foot traces a necessarily tortuous course to circumvent the many minor rhines intersecting the area, shows that the perambulators invariably returned to follow the major ‘Public Water Course’ (the
Shirehampton rhine itself) to, properly, the Severn at Elbury pill. Perplexed, Lindley finally opted for the line of the boundary according to the Shirehampton tithe map of 1841, which he noted agreed with the 6th O.S. map of 1904 (Glos. LXXI). Both confirm that the Shirehampton rhine marks the tithing boundary. Grundy’s line along his so-called ‘Cattoppen stream’ (the Shirehampton rhine), despite the misunderstanding of its meaning, is therefore a reliable guide to the northern edge of Stoke II.

Finally Everett, like Lindley, begins the Shirehampton section at the traditional beginning of the old perambulations, ‘at Lamplighter’s Hall at the passage slip against the Avon and opposite Pill’, but mistakenly identifies this location as the charter’s starting point 7. of Afene stream eft. Unlike Lindley, who investigated the detail, Everett then offers no more comment than that her line broadly follows the trend of the 1803 perambulation to the Severn.21

A comparative investigation of the earlier studies therefore pleads for the total re-instatement of Taylor’s orientation and (see below) for all but one of his specific identifications of the Anglo-Saxon landmarks. What follows is further critical discussion of each of the landmarks identified by Taylor. As has been said above, with his intimate knowledge of the history and topography of the area around 1900, Taylor unerringly elected the Springfield estate, situated in the south-eastern corner of Westbury tithing close to Stoke Bishop tithing, as the location of the first landmark of the charter: hæstwél. This spring, now culverted beneath roads and housing and severely depleted, still feeds the Cran brook. In less developed times, this watercourse became prominent at its junction with a feeder from the north-east, just at the 200’ contour on the 1904 O.S. map. From here the course of the brook is still visible in the allotments behind the modern Cranbrook Road (access through the entrance in Cairns Road). It runs south-eastwards down the valley which is arguably the hæaslēne of the second landmark of the charter.

Springfield, as has been said, is close to the point where the boundary of Stoke Bishop tithing joined that of Westbury tithing. The junction is mentioned in Wilkins’s edition of the perambulation of 1803.22 Most Anglo-Saxon surveys adopted a clockwise orientation and Taylor’s choice of Springfield may well have been influenced by this fact (something ignored by Grundy and Lindley despite Grundy’s mitigating excursus on the subject).23 Confirmation of Taylor’s hæaslēne is provided by the location of a Hazelton (‘hœsttun) Farm on the eastern rim of the Cranbrook valley (O.S. Map 1:500, Glos. LXXI.12,14, surveyed 1879–92). The farmhouse has been demolished but its name was given to Hazelton Road (Horfield Parish) which traverses the site.24 Taylor would have had the opportunity to consult the O.S. map but, if he did, he did not refer to it in his article. Also, the hazels, which were clearly the distinguishing feature of the flora of this valley, are still to be seen in the allotments referred to above and along the narrow tract of uncovered bank of the brook, behind the houses of lower Cranbrook Road (visible from Elton Road).

There is only one landmark of the 883 charter which it can be argued that Taylor mistook. Followed alone by Everett in 1961, Taylor identified 3. wuldes well as lying on Kingsdown at a spring known from the 12th century as Lady Well, St. Mary Well or Virgin Well and from the 17th century as Mother Pugsley’s well. The spring, still productive although very depleted, had a long and distinguished pedigree in Bristol’s folk-lore and history. It was of sufficient productivity in 1129 to provide, by conduit, the water for St. James’s Priory in the town below. Later it watered the Royalist stronghold of Prior’s Fort as it held out against Parliament-occupied Montpelier during the First Civil War in 1645, while mutely witnessing the death of Mr. Pugsley in whose fields it rose.25 It was an amenity of considerable public use in that high and otherwise waterless part of Bristol, and must always have been an important feature in the landscape from the earliest times. The major objection to this identification, however, is that
Mother Pugsley’s well lies some 150 m outside the line of the perambulation of 1803 and is not, despite the recorder’s sensitivity to historical features, even mentioned en passant in that account. Quite correctly, the city plans of both Rocque (1742) and Ashmead (1828) mark the well as lying at precisely this distance from the Westbury/Bristol city boundary.

More recent scholarship has identified waldes well of the charter with Jacob’s Well at O.S. Nat. Grid ST 57687285. Mr. Russell notes that Jacob’s Well, a boundary mark between medieval Bristol and Clifton parish, was described as Wodewell in a charter of c. 1200, and that Jacob’s Wells Road had long been known as Wood Well Road before its renaming in the 19th century. Thus, if his identification were correct, the boundary of Stoke Bishop would have lain ‘somewhat further south-east than the known tithing boundary’ of later centuries. There is an attractive neatness in this proposal. However, there are two objections to Russell’s conclusion. The less weighty is the technical: Russell’s definition of the baeldene–waldes well leg of the 883 boundary, some 2.4 km, makes it extremely long compared to the average of the charter—with the final stretch bereft of a lead-in landmark in the ambiguous area of Brandon Hill. Of more weight is the linguistic objection, hitherto unremarked by commentators. The sense of waldes well is not the same as wodewell. The former derives from O.E. wald: wold, upland or down, landscape morphology irrespective of botanical cover. The latter derives from M.E. wode (< O.E. wudu): wood or woodland, botanical cover irrespective of the land’s morphology. The semantic implication of waldes well therefore perfectly relates to the upland setting of terrain such as Kingsdown, but emphatically cannot relate to the setting of the narrow valley (formerly known as Sandbrook or Woodwell’s Lake) between Clifton and Brandon Hill, in which Jacob’s Well/Wood Well (wodewell) is situated. Previous commentators’ ready acceptance of waldes well as ‘Woodland Spring’, perhaps misled by modern German Wald, has been seriously flawed.

Where then did the charter’s waldes well lie? From the indisputable linguistic evidence of its name, it must have lain at some height upon the feature of a down. There is therefore only one other possible candidate—one that has been either entirely overlooked (Taylor, Grundy, Lindley and Everett) or briefly considered only to be dismissed (Russell), but which actually fulfils both the semantic and technical criteria of the charter. This spring is Bewell’s well. Its name, possibly derived from Bee well, is now almost entirely forgotten, but it lay on Kingsdown, at an even higher and more conspicuous point than Mother Pugsley’s well. Situated on the summit of St. Michael’s Hill (O.S. Nat. Grid ST 58157391), hard by the road (Cotham Hill) which from earliest times led to Henbury and Aust, Bewell’s well was to be found a few metres to the north of prehistoric Bewell’s tum, amongst a cluster of several historic features marking the shared boundary of the late Anglo-Saxon royal estate of Barton (which included nascent Bristol) and Westbury. The features, besides Bewell’s well itself and Bewell’s tum (the latter’s site, now part of the grounds of Cotham House and the adjacent homeopathic hospital, clearly marked in Ashmead’s plan of 1828), included Bewell’s cross (one of Bristol medieval crosses, repaired in 1525; the remains were dismantled in 1829 when Cotham New Road was built); boundary stones CB 20–23 (recorded in the city metes of 1373 in Roque’s 1742 plan, by Barrett in 1789, in Ashmead’s 1828 plan and in the 1803 perambulation of Westbury-on-Trym); the civic gallows (in commission c. 1228–1805); and St. Michael’s gate of 1749–1867 (see Fig. 3). Only the first feature, Bewell’s well itself, belonged unquestionably to the era of the 883 charter, but Bewell’s tum, lost to archaeology, may very probably have featured also in the 9th-century landscape. The later cross and the gallows are not entirely irrelevant: they speak of the high symbolic significance always accorded by Bristolians to this historic landmark. Bewell’s well had not only been useful, it had also always been meaningful.

To these considerations should be added the fact that the next landmark of the charter, Sword’s stone, sited on the highest part of Durdham Down, would have been visible from
Bewell's Well and Bewell's Tump: The Tump lay in the grounds of Cotham House, and is marked in Ashmead’s Plan of 1828. The well lay in Bewell's Croft, and is now filled and covered. Its situation is described by W. Barrett in The History and Antiquities of the City of Bristol (1789), p. 106: ‘Boundary Stone 21: ....pitched near the Greenway [modern Hampton Road] Gate on the NE side of Bewell's Well’.

Fig. 3. Part of Ashmead’s 1828 plan of Bristol, which includes his locations of Bewell’s Tump, the city boundary and the numbered boundary stones. Additions by this author include Bewell’s Well and Bewell’s Cross and the gallows all at their surmised positions.

Bewell’s well on the crest of Kingsdown at its higher western end. From Pugsley’s well, on the other hand, the view of Sword’s stone was certainly obstructed by the ridge of Kingsdown itself. Also of note is the fact that Bewell’s well lay closer than Pugsley’s to the boundary of Clifton, whose manor lands have historically lain adjacent to Bristol’s and Westbury’s. A yet more weighty argument, perhaps a conclusive one, in favour of Bewell’s well is the fact that in the Bristol charter of 1188, drawn up three centuries after the charter under discussion, the metes of Bristol are reduced to the essential minimum of four, and Bewell’s well, rather than any other landmark in the vicinity, is selected: ‘Inter Sanbroc et Bewell. et Britheuebrige. et Fontem In Itinere iuxta Aldebinam. de Cnolle’.

The precise location of swordes stan has also remained a matter of speculation. It must have lain at some point along the line from the spring on Kingsdown to eow cumb (5. Walcombe slade) on Durdham Down. Taylor proposed that in this part of its trajectory, the 883 boundary (of Stoke I) ‘marked the southern limit of the Stoke Bishop tithing where it joins Sea Mills and Clifton’. Taylor’s line, which Everett misconstrued but this author allows, therefore ran from
waldes well on Kingsdown to the point where it turns, hard by the present water-tower on the crown of Durham Down, to follow the existing old boundary stones westwards to Walcombe slade. It is not unreasonable to assume that Sword’s stone once stood at the point of turning, now occupied by a group of three boundary stones. Its name is intriguing. If swordes is the oblique case of sword (sword) and not of some personal name, it carries implications of an historic nature. The stone may have been sword-shaped or cleft, in some Arthurian sense, as by a sword. It may have been so named because it lay alongside the Roman military road from Sea Mills (Abona) to Bath (Margary no. 54). This was known as the eald bearpath (‘old army-path’) in the 984 charter (see below, Part 2). More persuasively perhaps, the stone may have been the meeting place at which justice was done, the sword being, in historical literature, the supreme symbol of secular authority and judgement. In the Anglo-Saxon period moots gathered for the dispensing of justice at significant points on boundaries: ‘neutral territory for the people coming from their various settlements’.

Burial mounds, trees, streams, fords and standing stones were selected as the meeting points. A shire moot in the 11th century ‘saet at Aegenothes stane’. If the Sword’s stone of the charter were such an assembly point, already established by 883 on ‘neutral territory’, lying as Taylor implied on the crown of Durham Down, where the boundaries of Westbury and Clifton have traditionally coincided, a terminus ante quem is also suggested for the establishment of the manor of Clifton.

From what has gone before, landmark 5. eow cumb (lit. ‘yew combe’) must be acceptable to the present author without demur as Walcombe slade on the western edge of Durham Down, where yew-trees are still a prominent feature. Everett’s note on the conservative micro-climate of the slade is still of interest. Arrival at the Avon (6. in Afene stream) completes the first (or, for Taylor, the southern) boundary of Stoke I.

The next band of landmarks 7–10 dealing with Shirehampton tithing (Stoke II) provokes discussion on the precise sense of of Afene stream eft (‘from Avon again’). This had worried Grundy, who assumed exactly the same point of departure on the river bank as that of arrival on the previous leg. He therefore felt obliged to alter the entire order of the charter’s landmarks at this juncture, adducing scribal error. It did not worry Lindley or Everett, who were armed with the practical solution contained in an actual ‘beating of the bounds’ recorded in the 1803 perambulation of Westbury-on-Trym. Taylor may have laid eyes on this also, although Wilkins’s edition was twenty years away and Wilkins himself judged that he had been fortunate in procuring the original from a worthy parishioner. Taylor himself, however, as a clergyman, would have been familiar with the practice of perambulations. In the case of continuous features such as rivers (here), roads and earthworks, where the feature bears the same name at all points on its course, from ‘the feature again’ may well signify departure from a point on the feature which is different from the point of arrival specified in the previous leg. This perhaps rather lax but common practice amongst early surveyors is unquestionably the one employed both in this and the 984 charter (see Part 2, below).

The Anglo-Saxon surveyor’s route therefore arguably recommenced at the apex of the horse-shoe bend of the Avon at Shirehampton (7. of Afene stream eft), presumably at an ancient ‘stone’ indicated on the 1904 O.S. map which marks the eastern limit of the Shirehampton tithing. This lies a few yards west of a stone marking the eastern limit of the old tithing of King’s Weston, which is now subsumed in the modern ecclesiastical parish (created 1929) of Sea Mills. The route then struck north-west up through the present Shirehampton Park, crossed the Shirehampton road at the junction with what is now Penpole Lane and ascended through an open field (8. brigleah), of which a fragment still remains, on to the now wooded ridge of 9. pen pau (Penpole), thence along the ridge in a westerly direction to strike north over it at c. 80 m short of the present trigonometrical point. From there it descended to the foot of the ridge (where a
boundary stone is recorded on the 1904 O.S. map), struck north-west again over what was
marsh, followed the now depleted Shirehampton rhine (Grundy's probably mistranslated but
topographically useful 'Cattlepen Stream') and finally terminated at Elbury pill on the Severn.
just north of the present docks.
This author's understanding of the third tranebe of the charter's landmarks corresponds to
Taylor's interpretation of the northern boundary of Stoke I. Beginning once more at Springfield
(the baestwell of I), the boundary ran uninterrupted in a westerly direction to the lead gedelf (12)
at the top of present Parry's Lane, descended the lane, then passed along the mere bank
(Ebenezer Lane) to the Trym at the Clack Mill site, proposed by Taylor, thereafter by common
consent, as the location of myl pul (13). From there the boundary passed down the Trym, the
frontier of more than one parish and tithing as well as the eastern limit of the ancient Berkeley
estates, to the river Avon (in Afene stream 14).

Part 2. The Stoke Bishop Charters of A.D. 969 and 984

'Stands yet the wall-stone, hacked by weapons': The Ruin

In time, and in accordance with the provisions of the charter of 883, the 12 hides of Crown
land aet Stocce duly reverted to the church of Worcester. These hides comprised two parcels of
land which this study has designated Stoke I and II, corresponding respectively to the later
thankings of Stoke Bishop and Shirehampton in the parish of Westbury. Portions or, as argued in
this article, a single portion of the land became the subject of charters drawn up by Worcester
in 969 and 984. In 969, in the reign of King Edgar, a charter (Finberg 117) was issued by which
the reforming bishop Oswald granted to his minister Ethelward 2 mansae of land aet Stocce, defined
by six boundary marks, for 3 lives, with reversion to Worcester. Fifteen years later, in 984, a
charter (Finberg 130) was issued in the reign of King Ethelred, by which Oswald, then both
archbishop of York and bishop of Worcester, granted to the same Ethelward, then his miles, 3
mansae at Bisceoper Stocce, defined by 12 boundary marks, with reversion to the see of Worcester
after three lives. Here the affix 'of the bishop [of Worcester]' is used for the first time.

It is interesting and probably significant (the point will be developed below) that the two
charters under consideration involve the same parties, Oswald and Ethelward, and were issued
close in time to each other. However, the surveyors of these charters were almost certainly not
the same. Their work is strongly contrasting in style and efficacy: the 969 charter appears jejune,
almost a sketch, while the 984 charter displays quality of style and a finer professional
competence. Issues raised by a critical comparison of the two charters also concern, most import-
antly, their scope and meaning. Do they define different portions of territory, which is Lindley's
thesis, or conceivably delineate more or less the same portion of book-land? The principal aim
of this part of the study of the charters is to demonstrate that the two areas in question, which
this author identifies as lying within Westbury's Stoke I, are most probably, for the most part,
identical. A secondary aim is to show that the boundaries, contra Lindley, respect the provisions
of the charter of 883.

The matter of the charters, with this author's translation and numbering of landmarks, is as
follows:

The Charter of A.D. 969

Aerest on aesc wellan (First to 1. Ash spring), of aesc wellan west on the balas (from Ash spring west
to 2. the nooks), thanon on dinninges grafas wyrt truman (thence to the beginning of 3. Dinning's
grove), thanon swa on Swepelean stream (thence to 4. the river Swepel), of Swepelean streame west be
wudu rimon on readan wege suttweardan (from the river Swepel westwards by the edge of 5. the wood to 6. the Red Way on its southerly course), of readen wege west in aesc wellan (from the Red Way west back to 1. Ash spring).

The Charter of A.D. 984
Aerst on thaes beges hyrnan be westan Stoe (First to I. the corner of the stockade on the west side of Stoke), of than on the ealdan dic on haran maere norþweardne (from there to II. the old earthwork then] northwards to III. the old boundary), of haran maere innan fildeleage norþwearde (from the old boundary into the north part of IV. the open field), of fildeleage norþwearde in thane bolan broc (from the north part of the open field to V. the sunken brook), of thaem bolan broc innan Sweoperlan stream (from the sunken brook to VI. the river Sweoperl), of Sweoperlan stream on dinnigegrages wyrtruman (from the river Sweoperl to VII. the beginning of Dinning’s grove), of dinnigegrages wytrtruman eall swa se die scoet on esig naedwae wærde (from the beginning of Dinning’s grove to where VIII. the rampart aims at IX. the military watch-tower in the meadow), of esig naedwæ eal swa that ealde ritbig scoet up on thane aedlan bearpath (from garrison meadow to where the old rivulet aims up at X. the old military road), of thaem ealdan bearpatha up on tha ealdan dic with Stoes wæerd (from the old military road up to XI. the old earthwork towards Stoke), of thaere aedlan dic eal swa se bege scoet be Stoe (from the old earthwork to where XII. the stockade comes out by Stoke), westan eft on thaes beges hyrnan (westwards back to I. the corner of the stockade).

For Lindley the charters appeared above all to define two separate pieces of land, with a shared boundary along one of their sides (see Fig. 4). To interpret thus, he had to take certain liberties with the text. The shared boundary conjectured by him ran down what was known by Stoke Bishop villagers, before the development of their area, as ‘the glen’ (present Glen Drive and its semi-detached houses occupies the upper part of this). Along the glen ran a stream (984 charter’s ealde ritbig) which, passing through Sea Mills wood, entered the river Trym. To address the problems raised by Lindley’s interpretation of the 969 charter, his location of 2. the balas (nooks) appears flawed. These, Lindley maintained, lay ‘in the angle of the glen’, at presumably the abrupt bend half-way along its course, where the valley bottom turns at a right-angle to the north-west (between present Avon Vale and St. Hilary Close). However, this simple angle in the rivulet’s course is hardly substantial enough to embrace the notion, conveyed by the Anglo-Saxon plural noun, of a complex of wooded nooks in a generally winding river setting. Naturally, having embarked on this orientation, Lindley was bound to pursue his line down the glen to the lower end at Sea Mills wood (otherwise correctly identified by him as the setting of 3. Dinning’s grove) and finally to the river Trym (4. Swepel stream, also correctly identified, even if ‘stream’ is strictly a mistranslation). Ekwall had already made the identification in 1929, although Lindley appears not to have consulted his work.

In what follows, Lindley can only proceed by insisting upon scribal error. Assuming erroneously that the charter invited him to cross the Trym (of swepelan streame west) into what was the King’s Weston end of Berkeley’s Weston lands, Lindley substituted the charter’s west for east. This expedient, however, resulted in a highly unlikely dog-leg in the itinerary at landmarks 3-4-5. Uncertain also as to the sense of readjan (red or reedy?) in landmark 6 (readen weg) but pressed for a solution on the last leg of his perambulation, Lindley opted for ‘reedy’, and proposed that the boundary followed a line along what was then a wooded bank (5) to the mouth of the Trym. His route continued upstream along the bank of the Avon, in wet and reedy conditions, then east (miscorrecting for the second time) into the valley of Old Sneed Park, to close the circuit at the starting point, Ash well in Stoke Bishop. This last proposition, based upon a miscorrection, is clearly without foundation, and in addition infringes the territorial integrity of Old Sneed Park, which, from earliest recorded times (1274), had been treated in legal documentation as an area strictly unto itself (Sneed or Sneyd < O.E. snaed: ‘cut off’).
Lindley's treatment of the 984 charter is also questionable at important junctures of his itinerary. Leaving imprecise the nature and function of what he understands as simply the 'hedge' (bege) at the starting-point 'west of Stoke' (I), Lindley then mistook the language of the text and assumed that II. the cald dic, 'old earthwork', lay to the north of III. bar maer, the 'old [Lindley: 'grey'] boundary'. The text, properly understood, surely states the reverse. Nevertheless, Lindley correctly identified (contra Grundy) his 'grey boundary' as the green lane (present Ebenezer Lane), which, as we have seen, he correctly proposed as lying along the line from the Lead diggings to the Mill pool on the Trym (see Part 1, above). Lindley believed that what he called the 'hay-field' (IV. filidleab, obl. case filidleage < fidil 'in open country' + leab 'clearing in wooded
land') lay under new housing, whereas in fact most of it (except a northern segment) forms the present playing-fields of Stoke Lodge. A larger error on Lindley’s part was to assume that V. bol broc, the ‘sunken brook’, is the Westbury branch of the Trym. This is untenable, firstly because the Trym itself cannot be described as a brook (Oxford English Dictionary, 'a small stream'). It is properly, as the charters indeed have it, a river: the Sweoped/Sweoperl stream (O.E. stream = 'river': cf. Aifen stream, the river Avon, in the 883 charter). Secondly, and more importantly, the Westbury branch of the Trym lies well within Westbury lands, from which Stoke, with presumably its settlement of that name, had been separated either in or before 824. Given the royal endorsement of the 883 charter (it was witnessed by King Alfred), it follows that any theoretical speculation on the matter must take account of its provisions. It is certain that following at the heels of the surveyors of 969 and 984 would have been the agent of the Berkeley estate on the west side of the Trym, whose land was squeezed between two blocks of Worcester’s stoke land and who would have been very wary of any disturbance of ancient boundaries that this new book-land, if ill-defined, might cause. That the competent surveyor of the 984 charter might also have blundered from stoke land northwards into the substantive manor land of Westbury, as Lindley assumes he had, is highly unlikely.

Having correctly identified VII. dinningegraf (Dinning’s grove) as the lower end of Sea Mills wood in the glen, Lindley embarks on an inconclusive excursus on the meaning of esnig in the phrase on esnig maedwea wearde, with the syntactically implausible suggestion that the adverb efne ('exactly') should be substituted (see discussion below). This is presumed as another professional error of the Mercian surveyor or scribe, repeated, moreover, in the following clause. It might be remarked at this juncture that if Lindley’s scribe was not infallible, he was at least consistent. Lindley then follows the northern rim of the glen eastwards from ‘Dinning’s grove’, along present Druid Stoke Avenue. Situating landmark IX. esnig maedwea weard, his ‘look-out’, on its rise, he acknowledges the course of X. the eald bearpth (‘old military road’; i.e. the Roman road, Margary no. 54, at the north end of Mariners Drive) as it passes the abrupt angle of the glen, but fudges the charter’s strict connection of the road with the glen’s ‘old rivulet’. Lindley states his uncertainty over the identity and location of the next landmark XI. eald dic, ‘old earthwork’, while misconstruing up on tha ealdan dic to mean ‘to the sloping dyke’. Finally he mistakes the sense of westan (the correct meaning is ‘westwards’ not ‘from the west’) but closes his circuit properly enough at the starting point, I. the corner of the ‘hedge’ (sic) in Stoke Bishop settlement.

Consulting the 883, 969 and 984 charters, with the O.S. 6" map published in 1904 at hand, it is possible to envisage the landscape as it might have appeared around the settlement of Stoke Bishop in the late Anglo-Saxon period. The village—in all probability of Mercian Anglians of Hwiccan stock—was then concentrated around a small lake or pool, some 40 metres long and 8 metres wide. This, still a prominent feature on the 1904 map, did not last long into the 20th century (it is now filled and paved). From the evidence of the 984 charter, drawn up in the time of the Danish raids in Ethelred’s reign, the early settlement was defended by a stockade (I. se bege), which may have been contained on its north side by Druid Hill and Sunnyside, on its south side by the present footpath running broadly east-west between the lower end of Hollybush Lane and Stoke Cottages behind Kewstoke Road, on its east side by Hollybush Lane, and on its west side by the pre-1926 line of Stoke Hill as it ran past Stoke Cottages. The settlement’s valuable pool was fed by local springs, the source of which was the ample drainage from the surrounding fields and wooded slopes. Pumps in the back gardens of village houses marked on the 1904 map just north and east of the pond would have tapped such resources. One of those springs, in all probability, would have been the Ash spring (I) of the 969 charter. Other prominent man-made features of the 10th-century landscape lying beyond the stockade of
the settlement would have been the earthworks for defence or boundary-marking, the probably substantial remains of the Roman port and minor town of Abona at Sea Mills, and the Roman roads. At least two of the last would have still remained considerable features of the territory of Stoke I, the one leaving the site of the Roman town on its route towards Durham Down and Bath (Margary no. 54), the other leading via Henbury and Cribbs Causeway to the colonia of Gloucester (Margary no. 541). Another Roman road leaving Stoke Bishop territory at Sea Mills is suggested by P. Ellis. It led in a north-westerly direction across the Trym, probably at the site of the old bridge in the O.S. map of 1904, via King’s Weston (camp and villa) and Blaise, to join Margary no. 541 at Henbury.

A major natural feature of the area remained the Trym, the river which importantly clinches the close relationship of the two charters. The river still retains considerable stretches of secluded woodland along its winding banks, which would well qualify as 2. the balas (nooks) of the 969 charter (see below). A short distance to the north of the settlement of Stoke Bishop lay IV. the filideab of the 984 charter, the ‘open field’ typical of a late Anglo-Saxon nucleated village, largely surviving in the Stoke Lodge playing fields. From the village pool would have issued, in some vigour, the ealde rītbīg (old rivulet) of the 984 charter, coursing westward down the steep valley of the glen towards Sea Mills, to join the Trym near Abona.

The 984 charter, when compared to that of 969, offers essential differences and similarities. The later charter has twice as many landmarks as the earlier and, chosen with more discernment, they are less ambiguous; the lands delineated are valued differently (three mansae in 984, two in 969), and the styles of the two pieces are quite distinct in quality. Beyond the similarity of their origin and purpose, certain key features and boundary marks are arguably the same. However, transposing the itineraries from charter to map, it is clear that the surveyor of the earlier document, with an economy of effort to match his spare style, cut certain corners and produced ambiguities: what particular nooks (balas) along the Trym he had in mind remain uncertain (they are a common feature along the river and, wisely, are not made landmarks in the later, more discriminating charter). To judge from the evidence of the charter of 984, it could be said that the author of 969 may well have intended to indicate those at the junction of the hol broc (sunken brook) with the Trym, rather than those below Millpill Bridge which are equally possible. This discrepancy would not have been trivial, as the whole of the open field of IV. filideab would have been potentially excluded from the grant. Similarly, the route of the 969 itinerary along 6. the Red Way would have cut out a portion of the field containing Abona at Sea Mills (see below). If intentional exclusions in 969, the later charter’s survey would have been not only to clarify the terms of the earlier, but also to rectify them.

This author’s proposal for the itinerary of the charter of 984, with further commentary on the 969 charter where called for, is as follows (see Fig. 5):

First to I. the corner of the stockade on the west side of Stoke
This corner of the settlement’s stockade may have lain where Taggart’s Jubilee Memorial Fountain (1897) now stands, at the foot of Stoke Hill to the west of the vanished pool, where three ancient tracks would have converged. The Ash spring (1.) of the 969 charter probably lay (contra Lindley) on the north-east side of the pool, where several household pumps were recorded on the O.S. map of 1904.

From there to II. the old earthwork (eald dic) [then] northwards to III. the old boundary (har maer)
The discriminating use of the qualifiers eald and har in the 984 charter’s Anglo-Saxon text should be noted. Eald dic (landmarks II., X., XI.) clearly stands (to use the terms of linguistics) in
Fig. 5. The Stoke Bishop Charters of 969 and 984: landmarks of Higgins.

opposition to se dic (VIII.). The qualifier eald, lit. ‘old’, carries also the familiar, endearing and proprietorial sense of the vernacular. Eald dic means therefore ‘the old earthwork’, in the sense of ‘our (old) earthwork’ or ‘our people’s (old) earthwork’. Used without a qualifier, a different sense of the noun dic obtains, implying a different earthwork. Thus landmark VIII. se dic arguably refers not to the ‘familiar’ outer earthworks of the Stoke Bishop settlement, but to what we might term the ‘other’ ramparts. These, from the evidence of the 984 charter’s text, stood at some distance from the settlement around the site of Abona, and were arguably the outer defences of the Roman town. Eald, on the other hand, qualifies both rithig and hearpath, because
of their close proximity and familiarity to the inhabitants of the settlement. Notably, the qualifier is not attached to the sweepel/sweeper stream (the river Trym), perhaps because that major water course lay at some distance from the settlement and was not in its customary protection. This discriminatory usage of the qualifier in the 10th-century Anglo-Saxon text proposes, therefore, a theme of local defences: the timbered stockade around the settlement area (thes bege), an outer defensive ring of probably stockaded earthwork (eald dic), and the outer ramparts (se dic) of the doubtless abandoned and ruinous minor Roman town of Abona.

From a consideration of the reconstructed 10th-century landscape, it is possible to speculate that the ‘old earthwork’ (II. eald dic) of the outer defences of Stoke Bishop may also have extended westwards along the northern rim of the deep cleft of the glen to integrate with the outer defences of Abona. The main lines of the outer earthworks of Abona are clear enough from the evidence of the 984 charter, on three sides of the site, but what of their extension on the eastern side? Here the configuration of the glen at Sea Mills catches the eye and the question naturally poses itself as to how this awkward natural feature was militarily integrated. It could not, in any case, have been ignored for other reasons: its stream must have provided the nearest source of fresh water for the early Roman garrison and even the later town, where no well shafts appear in the archaeology. Some defensive strategy for Abona must have been devised to embrace the glen for this reason and also to neutralise possibilities for ambush and surprise attack, particularly in the early phases of the Occupation fort which preceded the development of the town.

The probably artificial steepness of the glen’s sides were remarked upon by A.T. Martin in 1888,44 on the basis of an earlier examination by Seyer (1821). The (broadly) southern rim of the glen skirting the site of Abona appeared to Martin to provide eastern ramparts for the Roman town, but Seyer also noticed the pronounced escarpment of the glen’s northern rim. Indeed aggressive access to the glen from the north must have been as critical a defensive consideration as aggressive egress from the southern edge of the glen towards the fort. From the evidence of the 984 charter, this conjectured Roman defensive measure along the northern rim of the glen may have also ‘anchored’ a wider defensive system for the later Stoke Bishop settlement itself. Any sensible defensive measures undertaken in the 10th century must have taken account of the possibility of an enemy’s landing at what remained of the Roman dock on the Trym—indeed, the charter’s record of a watch-tower overlooking it confirms its enduring strategic importance.

From its beginning in ‘Dinning’s grove’, hard by the Trym, the conjectured earthwork of the glen’s northern rim would have taken an eastward course parallel perhaps with the start of the Roman road from Abona to Gloucester (Margary no. 541). If the present author’s thesis is correct, the rampart continued eastwards across present Druid Hill on the north side of Stoke Bishop village to join the ‘old earthwork’ (II. eald dic) at the opening of Hollybush Lane. Thence the defences probably turned southwards with the lane as far as the junction with present Eastmead Lane. From here its course may have been westwards along Eastmead Lane, where hints of a possible escarpment are visible in frontage gardens, then across Stoke Hill (road) to terminate at the Sea Mills–Bath road (Margary no. 54) at Mariners Drive.

Landmark III. bar maer (‘the old boundary’), as already stated, lay to the north of II. the ‘old earthwork’, not as Lindley proposed to the south. Meaning literally the ‘grey’ boundary (as Lindley correctly has it, although without comment), the phrase’s qualifier bár signifies ‘hoary’ in the metaphorical sense of ‘old and respected, venerable’ (cf. the conservative English of the Authorised Version: ‘Thou shalt rise up before the boary head, and honour the face of the old man’, Leviticus 19.32). Hár is formulaic, the common component of a styleme found in early charters, employed as an attribute of objects marking a boundary-line (cf. ‘...of than haran stane on thonne haran withis’, in a charter for Kemble of A.D. 999: Oxford English Dictionary, 2nd edition, under har). Stoke Bishop’s bar maer is therefore the ‘old and respected’ boundary,
sanctioned by authority a century earlier in the charter of 883. Remains of this mere bank are still prominent in the lane (Ebenezer Lane) along the northern edge of the Stoke Lodge playing fields.

From the old boundary (har maer) into the north part of IV. the open field (filidileah)
The common ‘open field’ of the settlement lay, as stated, on the south side of Ebenezer Lane and is now represented by the playing fields of Stoke Lodge. The ‘north part’ lies under the housing of Cheyne Road, towards its junction with Bell Barn Road.

From the north part of the open field to V. the sunken brook (hol broc)
The ‘sunken brook’ is certainly to be identified as the short tributary stream of the river Trym at O.S. Nat. Grid ST 55607684. Running south-westwards into the river, it is still accessible from the junction of Coombe Bridge Avenue and Bell Barn Road. The dell would have given, as it still gives today, easy access to the balas (nooks) of this part of the Trym’s course, in the terms of the 969 charter.

From the sunken brook to VI. the river Sweeperl
Only the river’s name in its two forms requires comment. Both Trym and Sweeperl/Swepel are Old English formations. Ekwall, having noted the first use in Westbury-on-Trymme (1534), proposed Trym < *Trium (‘firm, strong’) + *fón suffix.45 For Sweeperl/Swepel, he proposed (s.v. ‘Swepel’) that, in the absence of other evidence, the name probably applied to the Trym below its confluence with the Henbury arm (a conclusion with which this author conditionally concurs46). From a linguistic point of view, Ekwall noted that the forms were unique and probably ‘untrustworthy’, while Sweeperl was phonologically preferable to Swepel. If so, this has implications for the limited competence, again, of the 969 surveyor. Ekwall proposed no less than ten allegedly cognate forms from Old Norse, Middle English and Old High German in order to establish a relationship with the Cheshire dialect form swipple (‘supple, nimble’). In his discussion of the name, he admitted that he was working from the map, without the benefit of personal acquaintance with the area. An etymology which is both less contrived and more agreeable to the toponomy is to understand Sweeperl as an attributive compound noun, deriving not, as Ekwall would have it, from an ‘hitherto unrecorded O.E. adjective swipol/swepol’, but from swéora (‘neck’ or ‘col’) + pyl (‘stream’): cf. Swerford (Oxfordshire) < swéora + ford.47 The neck or col in question is arguably the saddle between the prominent features of King’s Weston Hill and Coombe Hill, from which wooded gorge the Henbury Trym emerges on its southerly course to Sea Mills and the Avon. The derivation would then run swéora-pyl > *swéorpel > sweeperl, with the common Old English metathesis of [r]. That the metathesised [r] appears altogether lost in the text of the 969 charter (Swepel) may indicate not an intermediate mutation (the dating sequence precludes this), but that the surveyor had not been altogether scrupulous (or sharp) enough in his transcriptions from his respondent’s local dialect.

From the river Sweeperl to VII. the beginning of Dinning’s grove
‘Dinning’s grove’ (modern Sea Mills wood at its lower end), as already noted, is a landmark common to both the 969 and the 984 charters. With the references to the Trym, it importantly confirms the common orientation of the charters in this part of their surveys.

From the beginning of Dinning’s grove to where VIII. the rampart (se dic) aims at IX. the military watch-tower in the meadow (on esnic maedwae wearde)
As has been suggested, the context suggests that the surveyor’s course from VII. Dinning’s grove lay along VIII. se dic, the ‘other’ (i.e. probably Roman) rampart, in its curved course
west > south > east, to the site of the military (*esnig) watch-tower on the southern elevated edge of the 'garrison (*esnig) meadow' of *Abona. The precise location of the tower is confirmed in the following clause in the text (see below).

The exact meaning of *esnig requires comment. Used twice in identical form in the charter, and in successive clauses, it is unlikely to have been, as Lindley suggests, a scribal slip. On syntactical grounds, it is also unlikely that the adverb *ēfne ('exactly, strictly') was intended, as in Lindley. And yet *esnig presents problems, since it is not noted in current Anglo-Saxon word lists. It is probably an attributive formation derived from substantive *esne + -ig affix: cf. *mihtig (mighty) < *miht; *bālig (holy) < *bāl. That *esne (man-at-arms, soldier, servant, boy) is a productive root, capable of further transformation, is shown by the accepted attributive *eslīc ('manly, valiant'). Hence *esnig = 'of the soldier, military (attrib.)'.

It follows that IX. the *esnig weard was a military watch-tower, either of Anglo-Saxon construction (if so, probably in timber) or the remains of a Roman tower on the southern outer rampart (VIII. se die) of *Abona in a still usable state of preservation. An argument in favour of the tower's Roman origin is that both it and the meadow containing the remains of the Roman town shared, to the Anglo-Saxon mind, a similar defensive and warlike quality: both are *esnig.

From the evidence of the charter, the tower would have risen on the summit of the ridge at 38 m above O.D. overlooking the Trym and the Avon, a location occupied from the 16th century by Old Sneed Park House. It would have afforded, for Roman and Anglo-Saxon alike, an all-round view unobtainable from the lower-lying riverside site of *Abona and would have permitted the early sighting of hostile shipping along the Bristol Channel. To the south it would have watched the approaches from Durham Down, along the Bath–Sea Mills road (Margary no. 54), still usable in the days of these charters and known as the *eald bearpath ('old military road', see below).

This 10th-century designation of the meadow of *Abona, defined by the nature of its contents as 'military', with the arguable survival of a Roman watch-tower in what strongly appears as an outer rampart, suggests several important conclusions which, because of the obscurity of the two later charters, have not been available so far to historians and archaeologists of the Roman port. The most important of these is that *Abona indeed possessed a town wall. This is a contentious area in archaeological thought: only Ellis in his report on the 1968 excavations at site 20 in Sea Mills (51 Roman Way) believed that enough evidence had been found to suggest that a wall and ditch once existed, against all earlier thought on the matter. Here in the charters is what now may amount to eyewitness evidence. Even an Anglo-Saxon could tell the difference between the footings of ruined domestic buildings and the foundations (or more) of a town's defensive wall: the 'military meadow' of *Abona had surely contained at least one significant, recognisably military feature. Martin's anecdotal evidence, gained from Seyer, that Sea Mills had earlier been named Portchester (where *caester/coaster denotes a walled town), suddenly gains in attraction.

Equally, attention now needs to be paid to the possible role of *Abona in the late 4th-century defences of the Bristol Channel, within the defensive strategy of Britain's west coast as a whole. Coin-finds of 408 (Arcadius) indicate the town's viability at this date. *Abona, then still a ferry port for South Wales, may have functioned at least as a well-defended auxiliary naval port with a coastguard look-out function (connected to the possible Blaise Castle signal-post) for the Roman fleet when operating in the Bristol Channel. The use of a watch-tower at *Abona in Anglo-Saxon times also argues for continuity—the military use of the site of *Abona from Roman times into the era of the Viking raids.

The itinerary of the charter of 969 'from the Swepel stream westwards by [5.] the edge of the wood', confused Lindley as has been remarked. It is possible, however, to construe a proper
westerly course as the charter demands. Immediately upstream of the former bridge on its probably Roman site, indicated by the 1904 map, the Trym turns abruptly due west before continuing south (but still in the western quadrant) to the Avon. One has then to assume — indeed as Lindley himself did — the existence of woodland on the Sea Mills river bank at this point, with a footpath along its edge (*be wudu riman*). This would have taken the 969 surveyor to a probable opening in the ramparts on the north side of ‘garrison meadow’, where, ‘leading south’ (not as Lindley mistranslates ‘on the south part of red/reedy way’) the Red Way began its course to Bath. A.T. Martin’s excavations of the prominent *agger* of the Roman road from Sea Mills to Bath (Margary no. 54), a mile distant on Durdham Down, is instructive at this juncture. His investigation revealed, beneath a top layer of large stones forming the road’s surface, ‘a layer, some six inches deep, of reddish looking earth ... reddish soil’. With hard and extensive use, and in disrepair, the surface paving having been eroded or dispersed, the road would have revealed its substratum of compacted red soil for considerable stretches of its course: hence the ‘Red Way’ of the landscape in 969. It is interesting that the more cultured author of the 984 charter, with a sense of historical continuity, referred to it in its time-honoured role as the ‘old military road’ (*X. eald bearpath*).

From [the watch-tower in] garrison meadow to where the old rivulet aims up at X. the old military road
The surveyor’s route from [the watch-tower in] ‘garrison meadow’ to the ‘old military road’ is described in terms of the direction of flow of the ‘old rivulet’ in the adjacent glen beyond the road itself. The flow would have been that of the stream before the abrupt bend, as it bore down from the east to a point below the road (thus the rivulet, as the charter has it, properly ‘aims up’ at the road). The line of this leg of the route confirms, with a sort of back-bearing, the precise siting of the watch-tower. With his back to the watch-tower, the surveyor would have followed along what remained of the conjectured southern outer earthwork of *Abona* in a direction opposing that of the flow of the upper stream, until he reached the road.

The surveyor of the 969 charter, on the other hand, probably stepped on to the beginning of the road, his ‘Red Way’, through some break in the northern earthwork on the bank of the Trym, to follow its prescribed southerly course to his next turning-point. If he had done exactly what is recorded in the text, he would have cut off that sizeable portion of *Abona’s* ‘garrison meadow’ lying between the road and the conjectured outer rampart (*se dic*) along the Avon bank. This may have been intentional. Alternatively, one might assume that he was cutting corners once again, and simply intended that the whole meadow through which the road passed should be included in the inventory (a slovenliness that had to be rectified, it could be argued, in the more substantial ‘follow-up’ charter of 984).

From the old military road up to XI. the old earthwork (*eald dic*) towards Stoke
The 984 charter indicates that ‘the old military road’ would have emerged from the southern outer ramparts of *Abona*, in the 969’s southerly direction. In the modern setting, this would be hard by the Upper Lodge (now S. Christopher’s) of Old Sneed Park House on Old Sneed Park (road). The course of the Roman road (Margary no. 54) then descended south-eastwards past the present Lower Lodge before rising along the walled footpath of Mariners Drive towards the parish church of S. Mary Magdalene. It is just short of the church’s site that the surveyor of 984 would have reached the Roman road’s junction with Stoke Bishop’s conjectured outer defensive earthwork, XI. the *eald dic*, as it pursued its circuit on the southern side of the settlement.

The 969 charter is entirely uninformative at this point of the itinerary. Therefore nothing prevents the surmise that the earlier surveyor would have taken the same route as his more scrupulous colleague fifteen years later.
From the old earthwork to where XII. the stockade comes out by Stoke

This implies a course eastward along the 'old earthwork' across Stoke Hill, to its junction with Eastmead Lane, then along that lane's conjectured earthwork to the Hollybush Lane embankment. Thereafter, the surveyor's route would have descended in a direction west of north along the lane's earthwork to arrive at its intersection with the stockade (se bege) of the Stoke Bishop settlement.

The 969 charter is, unsurprisingly, more perfunctory: 'from the Red Way west back to (I) Ash spring'. It is not inconceivable, given the lack of intermediary landmarks in the text, that the route was the same as that in the 984 charter, finally turning into the western quadrant (i.e. west of north) along Hollybush Lane, to arrive back at Ash spring. Indolently, the 969 surveyor may simply have confirmed the final (westerly) direction of this part of his perambulation.

Westwards back to I. the corner of the stockade

The final leg would have taken the surveyor of 984 from the junction of Hollybush Lane and the stockade, westwards along the stockade's southern edge, to arrive back once more at the starting point (I.), where Tagart's Jubilee Memorial Fountain now stands.

Compared with the finer detail, the more professional approach and style of the A.D. 984 charter, the text of the 969 document is rough-hewn and minimalist. That the later charter is indeed a re-working of the earlier—on the grounds of the 969's positively misleading economy—is, of course, a matter of conjecture. Lindley correctly identified the general setting of the charter's survey as lying in Stoke I (Stoke Bishop), but there is no doubt that he erred over the basic orientation of the 969 charter. With the best possible motive of making the charters' itineraries fit into a comprehensible whole, he conceived of the area of the 969 grant as neatly related to (but emphatically not the same as) that of 984. It is this author's belief that Lindley was wrong in his interpretation of both itineraries. He admitted that he was not an expert in the field—his civil engineering skills, if they lent him some confidence on the ground, were clearly not matched by his linguistic or historical insights. Unwilling to come to terms with what might have been the working assumptions of the Anglo-Saxon surveyors, he assumed too easily a lack of professionalism on their part. Finally, Lindley failed to reconstruct a convincing context for the landscape of 10th-century Stoke Bishop, into which to 'earth' the charters. Of course, the 969 charter is a conundrum: its surveyor undoubtedly cut corners (even cheated on his perambulation) and arguably produced data so inadequate that the charter may well have given rise to legal dispute. On the other hand, the 969 charter may have been, despite its shortcomings, broadly correct in its intentions and may have purposely implied that the two areas of the 'open field' and the south-west portion of 'garrison meadow' were not part of Etheleward's deal at that time. In which case, the 984 charter's object was not only to elucidate the earlier document, but also to put those additional tracts of land on record, while reasonably enshrining an increase in the rateable value from the two mansae of 969 to the three of 984. But this author is left with the lingering suspicion that it was not so, and that, rather than incorporate new marginal territory, the 984 charter simply redefined the same area in more exact detail, either at the request of an ageing Etheleward, harassed by fifteen years of boundary disputes, or at the behest of the bishop of Worcester, who, looking to a future reversion and a further lease, believed that the land of the church's original grant in 969 had been undervalued by half.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Caroline Heighway for bringing the subject of the Stoke Bishop charters to his attention, and both Caroline and Professor Keith Branigan (University of Sheffield) for their comments and encouragement.
Notes

1. In linguistic discussion of O.E. nouns out of their context, the author uses the conventional nominative rather than the oblique case. For example nom. _stoc_ rather than obl. _stoe_, nom. _Afene stream_ rather than obl. _Afene stream_, nom. _Brigstowe_ rather than obl. _Brigstowe_, nom. _filidcæb_ rather than obl. _filidleage_, and so on.

2. The numbering of the charters is that in H.P.R. Finberg, _The Early Charters of the West Midlands_ (Leicester, 1961).


5. Ibid. 164d.


10. Ibid. 27.


13. Ibid. 106.

14. H.J. Wilkins, _The Boundaries of the Ancient Parish of Westbury-on-Trym, Bristol_ (Bristol, 1920), which includes ‘The Account of the Perambulation of May 1803, by the Reverend Thomas Broughton, Vicar’.


16. Ibid. 104–5.

17. Everett, ‘Re-interpretation’, 175.


22. Ibid. 9.

23. Grundy, _Saxon Field Charters_, 231.

24. For further confirmation see also J.R Russell, ‘The Archaeology of the Parish of Clifton, with a note on the 883 Boundary Survey of Stoke Bishop’, _Bristol and Avon Archaeol._ 16, 85.


29. N.D. Harding (ed.), _Bristol Charters 1155–1373_ (Bristol Record Soc. 1), 156–7.

30. W. Barrett, _The History and Antiquities of the City of Bristol_ (Bristol, 1789), 106.

31. Wilkins, _Boundaries_, 11.


33. Harding, _Bristol Charters_, 8–9.

34. _Abona_ rather than _Abonæ_ is the preferred form here, following the usage of O.S. 1:625,000, _Historical Map and Guide: Roman Britain_ (4th rev. edn., 1994).

35. C. Heighway, _Anglo-Saxon Gloucestershire_ (Alan Sutton and Gloucestershire County Library, 1987), 60.


39. In Lindley’s ‘Charters’ (note 7. supra), no map is included. The map of Fig. 4 is this author’s reconstruction.

40. Wyrt truma (lit. ‘root’) suggests ‘beginning’ rather than Lindley’s ‘end’; see N. Davis (ed.), Sweet’s Anglo-Saxon Primer (1953), 129.

41. E. Ekwall, English River Names (1928), s.v. ‘Swepel’.

42. Westbury’s Stoc appears to have been in existence at least by 824, even though its boundaries were not defined before 883 (Finberg 83). The church of Worcester was confirmed in its possession of Westbury at the synod of Clofeshoh in 824 (Finberg 62), but its stoke land could not, it appears, have been included in the grant. This is indicated by the fact that in 883 the Berkeley community, as stated in the preamble of Part 1 of this study, was able to bargain with its land aet Stocce in the deal to divest itself of royal dues on its other estates.


45. Ekwall, English River Names, s.v. ‘Trym’.

46. It seems logical to propose that what Ekwall called ‘the Henbury arm of the Trym’ may also itself have been known as the Sweoper/Swepel. Deemed a tributary of the Trym, the arm descends southwards through the gorge between King’s Weston Hill and Coombe Hill in the present Blaise Castle estate. In modern O.S. maps this is designated Hazel Brook, a name the cartographers based not upon local usage but on the erroneous interpretation of the 883 charter by Thomas Kerslake, a generation before Taylor, who took the gorge in question to be Haeslende. For a fuller discussion and bibliography see Russell, ‘Archaeology of Clifton’, 84.

47. Mills, English Place-Names, s.v. ‘Swerford’.


50. Martin, ‘On the Roman Road’, 60; M. Gelling, Signposts to the Past (Phillimore, 1997), 151.

51. For background to the late 4th-century defences of the west coast of Britain see S. Frere, Britannia (1987), 344–5; K. Dark, From Civitas to Kingdom (1994), 44–5.

