

ANGLO-SAXON MANORS OF THE UPPER ITCHEN VALLEY: THEIR ORIGIN AND EVOLUTION

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ABSTRACT

The origins and evolution of the Anglo-Saxon manors of the Upper Itchen valley are discussed; the relevant charters are re-examined. It is suggested that the upper Itchen represents an ancient territory, as defined by the manors in question. It is also argued that 'Worthy' was the centre of this territory. A sequence of land division and nomenclature is proposed.

INTRODUCTION

The landholdings of great ecclesiastical foundations have inhibited the interpretation of Anglo-Saxon manorial and territorial evolution in Hampshire. By the time of the Conquest, much of the land around Winchester had been amassed in four large, composite estates: Old Minster's Chilcomb, New Minster's Micheldever, the Bishop of Winchester's Easton, and the king's Barton Stacey. These four estates dominated the late Saxon and medieval landscapes of the Winchester region, and one might assume that each one broadly represents an older, perhaps pre-Christian, land unit. This assumption is challenged, however, by a re-examination of the extant Anglo-Saxon charters for the manors of the upper Itchen.

The upper Itchen valley extends from the riverside manors of Abbots Barton and Winnall north of Winchester to the confluence of the Alre and Candover near Alresford. Twelve manors of varying size and importance comprise the land of the upper Itchen. Eleven have villages or hamlets by the river bank: the four Worthys, Chilland, the two Itchens, Easton, Avington, Yavington, and Ovington. Only Littleton lies some distance from the valley bottom. At Domesday, the manors were

recorded as seventeen holdings in the hands of six different lords; jurisdiction fell into six separate hundreds (Munby 1982). Determining how landholding and territorial units evolved to create the palimpsest of manors, estates, and hundreds recorded in Domesday Book calls for re-evaluating interpretations made by G B Grundy in the 1920s, and revising some of them in the light of recent archaeological, toponymic, and historical findings (Grundy 1921-8).

THE PRE-CONQUEST CHARTERS AND THEIR INTERPRETATION

Let us examine those upper Itchen charters that may be reinterpreted. Seven pre-Conquest charters have survived, of varying reliability. The south side of the Itchen has two charters for Easton and one for Avington (Fig 1), while on the north side, there are five for the several Worthys (Fig 2). In addition, charters for Crawley, Wonston, and Micheldever list points along the northwest watershed line.

S1275. Eight hides at Eastune (871-77) (Sawyer 1968).

Bounds:

The landes gemaers aet Eastune.

*Lith of ycenan in earne baecce aef swa andlang baecce utt on
thaet gaet aeft be than andheafdan od thone midlestan
beorg.*

*Aeft was on edeswyrthe eastewearde aeft ut on tha roda on
heringslea eastewearde.*

Aeft utt on tha furh on smalan dune eastewearde.

Aeft utt on tha furh de Wulfred het.

And nifan aeft of dune on tha dene swa on thone mylensteall.

*Aet swa of ther mylenstaelle andlang ycenan aeft on earne
baecce.*

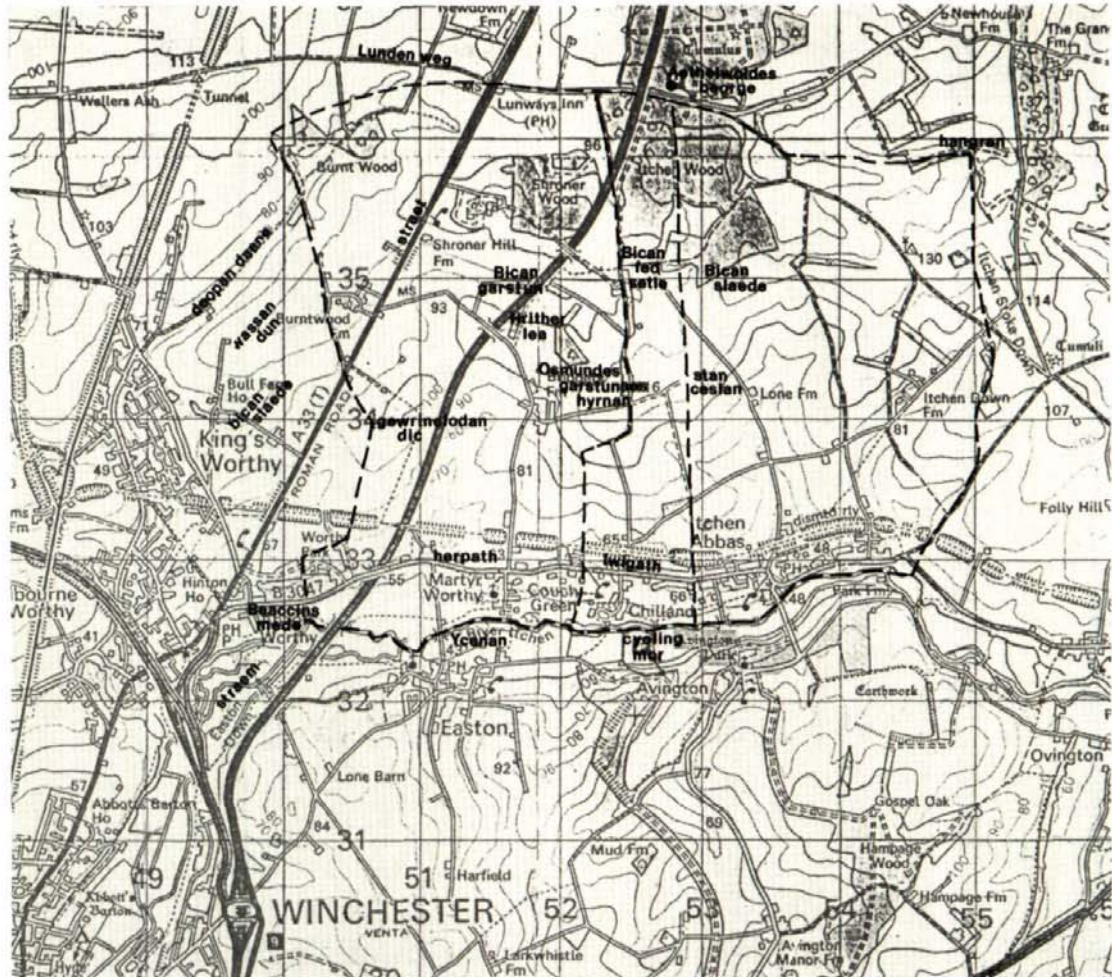


Fig 1. Anglo-Saxon landmarks on the north bank of the Itchen. (Crown copyright reserved)

Grundy identified this tract as a detached portion of Easton parish on the far side of Avington (1921, 88). The eight hides is an unlikely assessment for those lands, and the landmarks do not correspond well to the topography. As he pointed out, the key to identifying the charter boundary is the landmark *smalan dun*, which also appears in a tenth-century Avington charter, on its border with Easton. In that charter, Grundy identified *smalan dun* as that ridge approaching the Itchen across from the hamlet of Chilland (1921, 97).

Both 'small downs' are in charters defining Easton's border and both are at approximately the same distance from the river Itchen, as illustrated in the following comparison. It is logical to assume that they refer to a single landscape feature and that the boundary clause of S1275 describes Easton itself.

Itchen South Bank Charter Bounds Equivalency:		
S1275 Easton (871-77)	S699 Avington (961)	S695 Easton (961) (Sawyer 1968)
<i>Itchen</i>	<i>stremes</i>	<i>Eadmunds weir</i>

<i>mylenstead</i>	<i>ealdan byrig</i>	<i>ealdan byrig</i>
	<i>mearc</i>	<i>dic dean</i>
	<i>haethenan byrigelsan</i>	<i>ethenan</i>
<i>byrigelsan</i>	<i>mearc</i>	<i>mearce</i>
	<i>herpath</i>	<i>port stret</i>
<i>smalan dun</i>	<i>smalan dun</i>	<i>smalan dun</i>
<i>furh (reversed)</i>	<i>hwitan dic</i>	<i>dic</i>
	<i>mearc</i>	<i>mearce</i>
<i>roda on heringlsea</i>	<i>higan holtes dic</i>	
<i>edeswyrth</i>		<i>blak lacu</i>
<i>midhertan beorg</i>		
<i>andheafdan</i>		
<i>anlang baece</i>		
<i>eama baece</i>		

The ninth-century boundary descended from the small down via a dean (valley) to a mill site on the river. By the tenth century, however, the boundary between Easton and Avington was more closely defined as descending from *smalan dun* to the *herpath* (highway), then along the *mearc* (boundary balk) to the heathen burials, then along the *mearc* to the old enclosure (bury), on the Itchen. The *mearc* was a bank raised up to 'mark' an existing territorial division. Such features were generally restricted to the open field or flat land, and were not necessary where other landmarks could be followed easily, such as a narrow ridge (*smalan dun*). The *ealdan byrig* at the river may represent later changes to a site that had formerly been noted for its mill. Many such changes must have occurred during the period of Viking raids in the late ninth century.

South of the *smalan dun*, the boundary followed a series of ditches, banks or balks, furrows and headlands, apparently through open fields and edging some woodland until turning north and west to reach the stream that entered into the Itchen. The Eagle Brook (*eama baece*) must be the same water course as the Black Stream (*blak lacu*), and there is only one possible site for such a feature, the now dry valley bottom that remains the western boundary of Easton parish, where the Tithe Award map recorded a Black Lake Field in the early nineteenth century.

S351. Eight mansae at *Worthige* (939) (Sawyer 1968).

Bounds:

Aerest of icenan
To iwigath
To stan ceaslan
Forth to bican slaede
Swa forth to athelwodes beorge
Forth to aethelines hangran
Thanon to cyrringe
Forth to than coppedan thorne
Forth ubanathan ea
Utan cyoling mor.

The reconstruction of the eight hide estate at the east end of *Worthige* should start, following the parochial division on the Itchen, at the unidentified *iwigath*. This is likely a scribal error for *herpath*, but if not, it could be a muddled reference to the large pagan Saxon cemetery at Worthy Park, the original entry concerning not *iw* (yew), but *wiga* (warrior) or *wig* (idol, altar) (see above). Grundy's identification of *stan ceaslan* as the villa ruins near the parochial division is still valid. *Bican sled* refers to the upper part of the valley that is called *bitan slaed* between Martyr and Abbots Worthy, passing through Bull Farm, Burntwood Farm, and Chillingham Farm. The next point, Athelwold's barrow, is more problematic. It is unlikely to be that barrow appearing on the first edition 1" O.S. map and the source of the Tithe Award map "Burrough field" for the field north of the one containing the villa remains. This would place it south of Bica's valley. It is possible, however, that *athelwoldes beorg* lay in the present Itchen Wood, where the hundred boundary crossed to the northeast. But the most likely candidate is 'R4', the multiple Bronze Age barrow north of the Lunway that was excavated in 1974, and was presumably the burial mound noted as lying on the corner of the Martyr Worthy estate (S273) (Fasham 1979).

Identifying this manor depends on the direction of the boundary from here onward. If clockwise (to the east), it is Itchen Abbas; if counterclockwise (to the west), it is Chilland. The next point is *aethelines hangran* (hanging wood). It may refer to its ownership by an Aethelwine, or possibly its association with a

prince (*aetheling*). If the bounds ran clock-wise, the 'hanger' ('hanging wood') should be north or east of the last point. A similar landmark does appear on the southeast portion of the Micheldever boundary clause (S360): *on weard hangran*. Its location may have been a wood shown on Isaac Taylor's 1759 map. This wood no longer exists, but it stood then north of the Itchen Stoke Down and west of the Grange estate. The elevation there (451' OD) is the highest for several miles around, a perfect place for a watch post, the *weard hangran* of the Micheldever charter. A boundary that ran westward would find Itchen Wood, Shroner Wood, and Rotherly Copse, none of which are especially elevated over the countryside around.

The other points are less identifiable. The field name 'churn' near Bridgets Farm in Martyr Worthy is probably descended from Anglo-Saxon *cyrring*. This boundary clause could then be following the division between Martyr Worthy and Chilland, but *cyrring* may have been a more common term in this vicinity, perhaps used for the many track intersections or turnings, like the ones on Itchen Stoke Down. The bounds return to the Itchen and descend to the boundary of Chilland. The difficulty is that Chilland is too small for eight hides, but Itchen Abbas is too large, with twelve hides at Domesday. All in all, given the fact that the order of boundary points is much more frequently clockwise than counter-clockwise, the 939 charter likely refers to some of the lands of Itchen Abbas (Hooke 1981, 43). The reference to *Ceoling mor* – the watermeadows of Chilland – also suggests that this tract is not Chilland, because charter boundary clauses commonly identify landmarks not by their relation to the granted lands, but by reference to neighbouring populations or estates. A land grant is therefore normally placed in the context of the territory surrounding it.

S309. Three *mansae* at *Worthige* (854) (Sawyer 1968).
Bounds:

Of icenan andlang thaera dic
Up to thaere hylle

Andlang thaere dic
Eft sona up to heofod stoccan
Andlang straet to lusan thorne
To deopan delle
Up to kinges stane
Up to holan stane
Up to fyrd geate
To wic herpathe
And lang wic herpaethes aeft to kynges stane
To ysan pyttan
To twelf aeceran
Ut for(th) bufon scortan hlince aet thaes furlanges ende
And saw forth to thaere byrig
And saw into hydiburnan.

S273, S340. Five *cassati* at *Worthige* (825) (868) (Sawyer 1968). Bounds:

Aerest der sae dic utt scaet aet tham bihtae baetweog igtunae
+ aestune
Thonan theowres ofer thanan bradan haerpath thae ligeth to
worthig forda + to alresforda
Thaet on igsaelmearce + eastuninga
(S340: Thonne forth to osmundaes garstunae hyrnan)
Thonan forth oth bican gerstunae hyrnan
Thonan forthe healf girth be westan tham beorgan thaet
adolfan waes
Swa utt to straet
Thaet up to wassan dunae
Thweores ofer tha dunae to deopan daene
Thaet thweores ofer tha daene on bitan sled suthewearth +
westewearth oth thaes ealdaermannaes mearce
Andlang thaes aldermannaes mearcae oth thiccan thornaes to
than land gemaere oth bisceopes mearcae
Thaet forth andlang rode forth on icenan.

S304. Three *cassati* in *Wordi* (854) (Sawyer 1968).
Bounds:

Aerrest on dic
Thonne upp with hlith geates
Thonnae on bradan hearpath
Thonnae on healfan dell
Thonnae on eafan hling
Thonne thueras ofer suran daenae
and thueras ofer foran dune
On thaes hlinces dende
Thonnae on aenae thorn be westan hrither lea
Thonnae upp to wuda
Thueres ofer tha daene
Thonnae ofer the straete
On thiccan thornas
To thaes ealdermannaes mearce
Thonnae andlang thaere mearce oth bisceopes mearce
Thonnae andlang bisceopes mearce utt on ycenan.

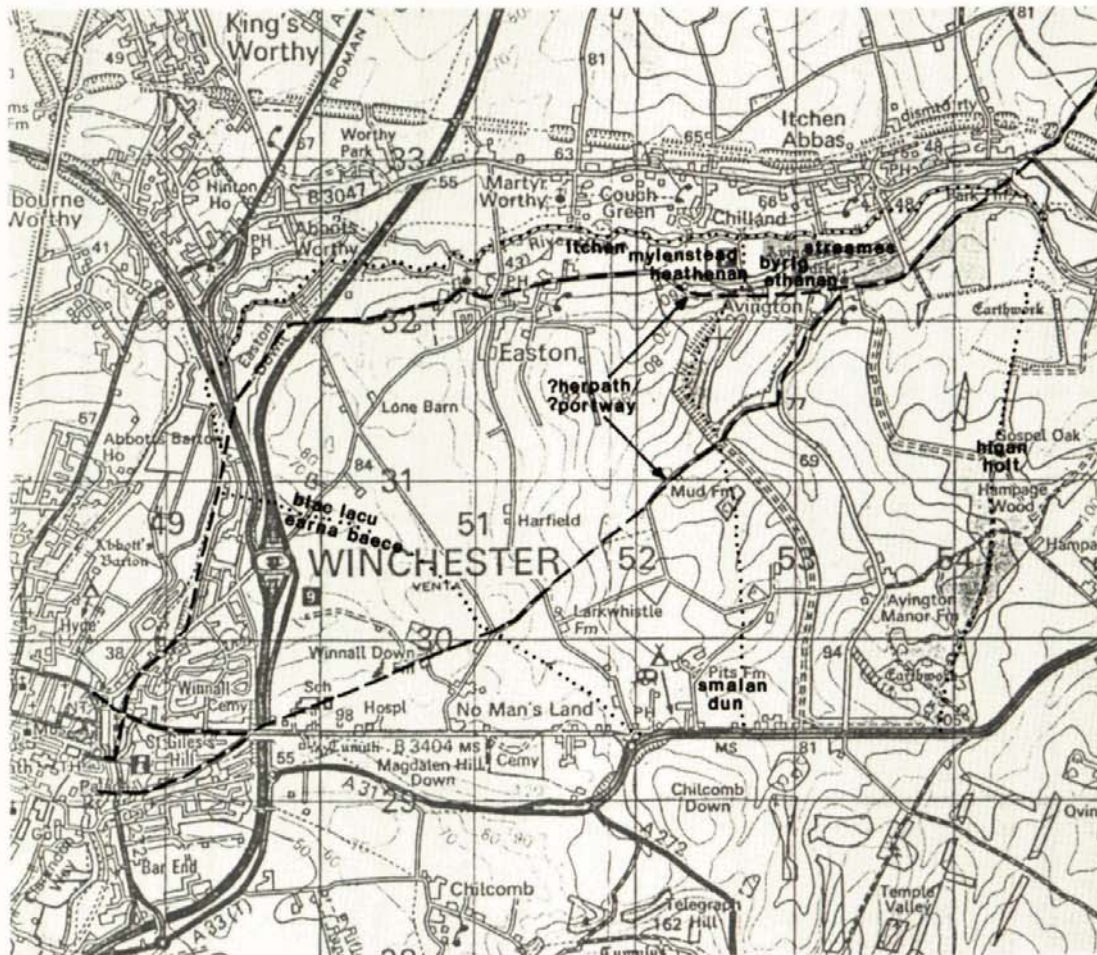


Fig 2. Anglo-Saxon landmarks on the south bank of the Itchen. (Crown copyright reserved)

S962. Five *cassati* in Worthy (1026) (Sawyer 1968).

Bounds:

Aerest on beoccing maede

On tha gewrincloda dic

To wassa dic dun ende

Thonne to deopan daene

Thanon to witan dic

Thonne to aenta dic

To thaere rode

To than smalan wege

Thanan to thaere haran apeldran

To stapol thornae

Thonnae to thaere baec

Utt on icenan

Adun on stream

Aeft on beoccing maede.

Comparison of the landmarks of the boundary clauses of charters S351, S304, S273, and S692 yields interesting patterns. The Lunway appears on only one of these charters, which suggests that most of these estates did not extend that far north, or that it was not always a clearly recognizable feature. Secondly, the same landmarks were not necessarily used for

describing the same boundary. But there are many instances of duplication. From these, a series of equations can be proposed: west S698 = west S692; east S692 = west S351 = west S273 = west S304. The other bounds are less certain, but it is possible that east S304 = east S273 = east S698 (? = west S351).

The boundary of the first western grouping is the former parochial division between Kings Worthy and Abbots Worthy. The second grouping is the present parish boundary between Abbots Worthy and Martyr Worthy, running southeast across a valley, over a down, across another valley, then across the Roman road to a series of boundary baulks or field lynches to where a small grove still stood on the early nineteenth-century first edition of the 1" O.S. map, continuing south from there by a further series of angle steps to reach Worthy Park and the Itchen. The zig-zag boundary is the *gewrinclodan dic* of S693 and the *ealdormannes mearce – thiccan thornas – bisceopes mearc* boundary of S273. S324 has this group out of sequence, while S273 reversed the *deopan deane* and the *wassan . . . dun*. S351 can be seen to share the landmarks here, with the *bican slaed* being the same valley as the *bican* (or *bitan*) *sled*. On the parish boundary by the site of the former grove (*thiccan thornas*?) are the remains of a Romano-British settlement that had stone-built foundations. This site is a satisfactory explanation of the *stan ceaslas* that Grundy sought to place at a Roman villa 1½ miles to east.

The names *ealdormannes mearc* and *bisceopes mearc* refer to two different portions of the Abbots Worthy–Martyr Worthy boundary between the *straet* and the *rode*, which was probably the point where the boundary crossed the *bradan herpath* along the north bank of the Itchen. The names suggest that these officials were responsible for the demarcation of the bounds at this point. It was perhaps their agents who oversaw what had been clearly such a difficult division of fields here, that it was called by Canute's reign the *gewrinclodan dic*, wrinkled or twisted dyke. This has some significance, because it shows that while the parish boundary between the manors of Abbots Worthy and Martyr Worthy does

indeed go back to the tenth century, it is not necessarily any older than that. The confusion of charter dates and provenances permits only the observation that there were two grants of Martyr Worthy lands to Hunsige, by Ethelwulf and Ethelred. It is possible that Ethelred's second decimation was indeed the moment when these Worthy lands began to be permanently separated from the Crown and from the large entity of Worthy (Finberg 1964).

Finally, S273 begins on the Itchen at the *bihlae* (corner, bend) between *Igtunae* and *Eastunae*, and the boundary runs north along *Igsaetmearce* and *Eastuninga*. These references are to both territories and groups, the *Igsaet* and the *Eastuninga* (the island dwellers and the folk of Easton). The 'island' in question is the hamlet of Ceoligland, now Chilland, east of Martyr Worthy village. Easton lies south of the Itchen, but the charter specifically indicates that the lands west of Chilland were considered part of Easton. Later, Edgar's grant S698 included both Abbots Worthy and Martyr Worthy as part of the church lands. As such, they may have been considered part of the Cathedral's Easton estate. Chilland was still a separate estate during the late tenth century, when Edgar purportedly confirmed to the Old Minster 64 *mansae* as a list of estates including Easton and Chilland. One might conclude, as did Grundy, that the Old Minster simply attached the lands of Martyr Worthy to their Easton manor, and that this situation is that reflected in the charter nomenclature. But – as in the case of the Chilland reference in S351 – it is not normal for landmarks of Anglo-Saxon manors to be given names relating to the property being transferred. The explanation should lie elsewhere, and it may be that the division between these groups represents an older division of the upper Itchen valley, whereby Easton controlled land on both sides of the Itchen east of Kings Worthy.

DISCUSSION

The above review and revision of charter clause interpretations reveals the manor/

estate boundaries of the upper Itchen valley to be old – often of Middle Saxon date – and usually coterminous with later medieval parish boundaries. Further, the internal evidence of charter terminology and toponymics suggests that the upper Itchen valley represents a devolution of an ancient territory, geographically definable as the watershed of the east–west course of the Itchen north of the Winchester Syncline. At the same time, the charters also record the slow amalgamation of some tracts into new units, the four late Saxon conglomerate estates owned by the four great institutions of Winchester. The external boundaries of the eleven Anglo-Saxon manors

reconstructs the extent of the older territorial unit, obviously predating the charters that describe its dissolution. I have elsewhere called such mid-Saxon valley units ‘archaic hundreds’, because combined estimates of middle Saxon hidation (*mansae* and *cassati*) of all the manors in a valley unit repeatedly yield total figures close to one hundred hides or its multiple (Klingelhöfer, forthcoming). The original assessment for the lands of a catchment area appears to have been one hundred hides, the figure given by reconstructed assessments for the upper Itchen valley (Klingelhöfer 1985, 543–54).

Archaic hundreds, such as the upper Itchen

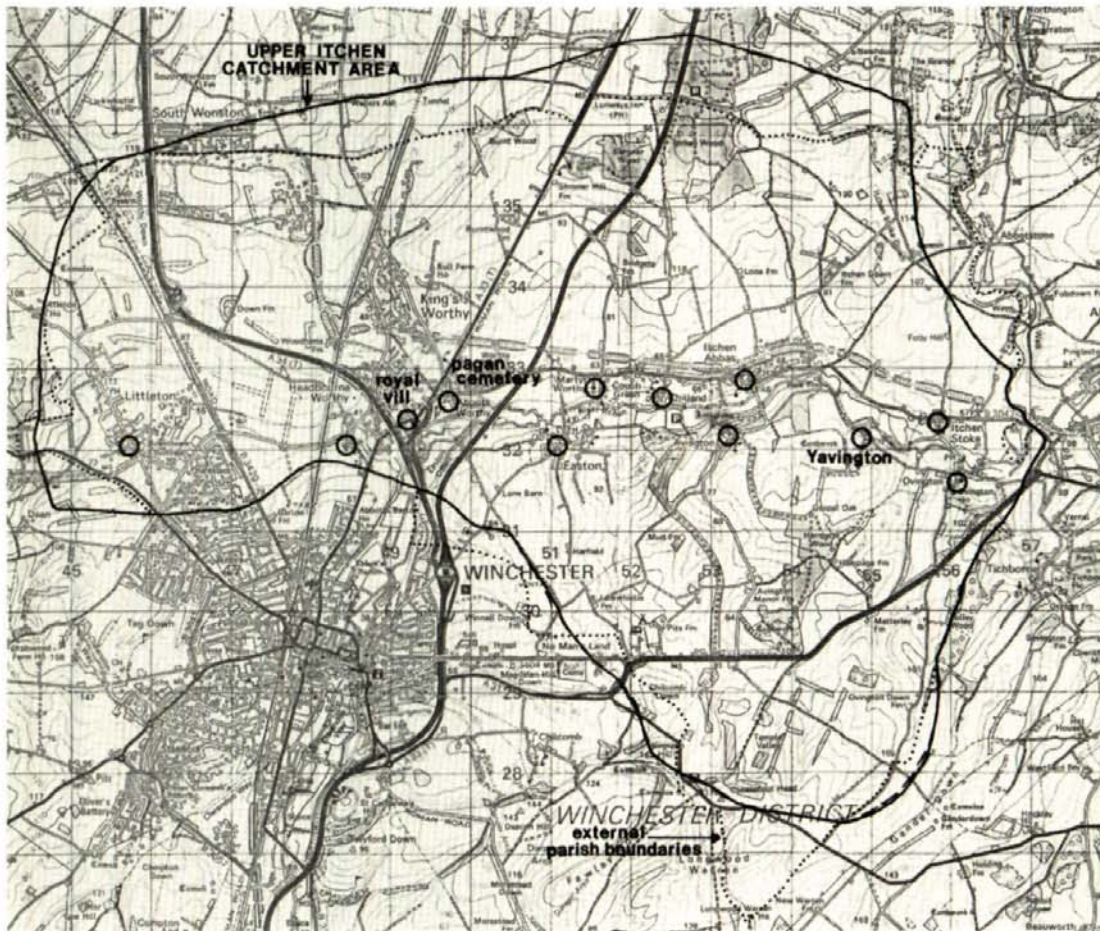


Fig 3. The Mid-Saxon archaic Hundred *Icen Worthy*. (Crown copyright reserved)

valley, were not in themselves tribal or folk groups, but were local divisions of such territories. The Saxons of the upper Itchen valley belonged to the *Gewissae* of Winchester, whose lands probably coincided with the catchment zones of the Itchen and Test rivers in the Chalk upland of middle Hampshire. Their territory most likely stretched from the *Wilsaetan* of the Wiltshire Wylde to the *Meonwara* of the southeast Hampshire Meon.

In the eighth century, settlement in the upper Itchen was generally dispersed, but there would have been a 'central place' for religious, political, and economic activities that concerned the community above the level of the household or extended family. In the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, the royal *tun* or *villa regalis*, where military obligation was rendered, royal tribute collected, and justice dispensed, has been the object of several studies, most recently by Peter Sawyer (1983). Although one cannot speak authoritatively, given the meagre documentary evidence, it seems likely that Sawyer's late Saxon network of royal estates extending throughout England was the remnant of earlier royal systems of local administration. The sense of family or lineage over clan or community, and a different status for 'Crown lands' and the king's personal or family's holdings, were but several factors in the transformation of Anglo-Saxon England. Competition among the kingdoms may have played an important role. With more centralized royal authority and larger administrative units accompanying the territorial expansion of the successful kingdoms, perhaps the local districts became obsolete.

Christian missionaries were often rewarded with the foundation of a church at a king's *tun*, and it is now accepted that the district served by the royal vill became the *parochia* of a collegiate 'mother church' (Hase, 1988). *Minster parochiae* no doubt existed throughout the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, and John Blair has convincingly argued for a systematic division of Wessex into *parochiae* in the reign of Caedwalla and Ine, *circa* 700 (Blair 1988, 1–20).

The central place of the upper Itchen valley was at 'Worthy', a centre of considerable local

status, with a royal *tun* at Kings Worthy and an important pagan Saxon cemetery at Abbots Worthy (fig 3). Worthy means 'enclosure', and here must refer to an early Saxon military enclosure or royal compound. A number of Anglo-Saxon royal centres have the element 'worth(y)', for example, Tamworth, Derby (North Worthy), and Ixworth, as well as important ecclesiastical sites that suggest previous royal centres: Polesworth, Brixworth, Worksworth, and Bury St. Edmunds (*Beadrices-wyrth*) (Klingelhöfer 1985, 490–1). Could their locations near – but not within – Roman towns reflect an origin in a late or sub-Roman military camp, the focus of the regional Anglo-Saxon army and the source of power for its commander, chief, or king – and of his descendants?

Based on the reconstruction and observations presented above, a sequence of land-division and nomenclature can be proposed:

1) *Circa* 700, the entire upper Itchen valley was a single territorial unit called Itchen. The river gives its name to the two villages here, and nowhere else along its length.

2) At the same time or soon thereafter, a habitative name, Worthy, was transferred from the central place to the valley unit as a whole. As late as Domesday Book, many hundreds had alternative names: one applying to the hundred as a territory and one taken from the site of its moot (Klingelhöfer 1985, 467–8).

3) By the ninth century, settlement had begun to coalesce at locations whose names reveal their dependency upon a central 'Worthy'. Across the river, east of Kings Worthy, grew the eastern settlement, Easton, which at one time may have controlled both sides of the valley immediately east of Kings Worthy. Away from the river, at the western extremity of the 'Hydebourne' valley, grew the self-descriptive hamlet of Littleton.

4) At the same time, or somewhat later, the south bank of the Itchen east of Easton was divided into three manors, Avington, Yavington, and Ovington. The three place-names have personal name elements that suggest these communities took their identities (or were given them by the recording clerks) from

some sort of lord, an aristocratic superior who dominated the tract of land or who had been granted it as a landholding.

5) The last stage witnessed the two remaining blocks of land north of the river, 'Worthy' and 'Itchen', divided into particular manors. In most instances, their secondary names reflect ownership: Kings, Abbots, Martyr, Abbas. This stage may not have been fully completed by the time of the Domesday Survey, where binomens do not appear.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, the upper Itchen valley of the mid-Saxon period was an archaic hundred, occupied by people perhaps best called the 'Itchen-folk'. Its central place, Worthy, had a major early Saxon pagan cemetery and was later an important royal manor. From the eighth century onward, blocks of land were

'booked', or privatized, by charter until by 1066, only Kings Worthy remained to bear the traditional tribute, the 'feorm', for the upkeep of the royal court. Boundary clauses in the charters defined the economic units they conveyed, the manors that here were based upon the agricultural innovation of cooperative, open-field farming and its concentration of the workforce into nucleated villages. The reassessment of the upper Itchen valley charters reveals a consistent pattern of manorial development, the fission of a single territory or great multiple estate that splintered into unitary manors, many of which were attached in the late Saxon period to the four conglomerate estates around Winchester. The charter boundaries of the upper Itchen valley thus offer testimony of a landscape divided and redivided in a process that transformed Wessex from a land of tribe and folk into one of lord and manor – and finally into one of fief and honour.

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