

The  
**SWINFORD CHARTER**

(S579) of AD 951-9

by

K James BSc(Hons), MSc, PhD, FIAP

# The Swinford Charter (S579) of AD 951-9:

A new interpretation of the boundary clause  
and thoughts on the origin of Oldswinford and Pedmore  
parishes

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K James BSc(Hons) MSc PhD FIAP

(email: [kjames\\_sd@hotmail.com](mailto:kjames_sd@hotmail.com))

The Swinford charter represents the grant of a parcel of land, by King Eadred (or, arguably, Eadwig or Edgar) to his minister Burhelm. The charter estate (i.e. the land granted to Burhelm) was carved out of a larger area called Swinford, which encompassed the present-day centres of Kingswinford, Stourbridge, Lye, Wollescote, Oldswinford, Norton and Pedmore.

The bounds of the land conveyed to Burhelm are described in the charter's boundary clause by means of a series of waypoints or landmarks. Together these seem to represent an area which is approximately coincident with (most of) the ancient parish of Oldswinford and which may, arguably, extend eastwards and southwards to encompass parts of Cradley and Pedmore as well.

The charter (no. 579 in Professor Peter Sawyer's catalogue of 1968) is written in a mixture of Latin and Old English (OE), with OE being used primarily for the boundary perambulation. Bridgeman (1916) was the first to translate the entire charter, but he did not attempt to trace the boundary clause. As many of the landmarks referenced therein no longer exist today, analysis presents a number of difficulties. Grundy (1928), Chambers (1978), Hooke (1990), Richardson (1997) and Pritchard (1997+) have published their own interpretations of the boundary clause, and two of these (Grundy and Hooke) have provided new and original translations from OE. In some important respects there is little consensus between these researchers on the exact course of the boundary, particularly along its southern edge.

The present proposal for the route of the charter bounds is based upon many of these researchers' published notes (particularly the translation provided by Hooke (1990)) as well as some additional observations from new map and field work. Several new conjectural landmark identifications are described. These correspond well with the available landscape evidence, and result in a continuous and logically explainable boundary route that deviates significantly from the pattern of later parish boundaries.

## Introduction

The charter's boundary clause describes a route that apparently circumnavigated the estate granted to Burhelm. The route consists of twenty eight separate segments, each segment ending in a specified landmark (or waypoint). Modern English translations and interpretations of each of these segments are listed in the next section, *Translation of the Elements of the Boundary Clause*.

It is widely agreed that the charter's boundary *partially* matches the bounds of the ancient parish of Oldswinford. However, there are differing views on the degree of correspondence between the two and, consequently, on whether the charter takes in any part of the surrounding estates and parishes as well.

## Local parishes and estates

Until the 19th century, the primary land divisions in the vicinity of the charter estate consisted of county, diocesan and parish boundaries. The parishes were generally composed of (and probably derived from) one or more estates or manors with which they shared their outline boundary pattern. The origin of the local manors and parishes is still uncertain - in terms of both dates and the mechanisms of their formation. It is believed, however, that many English parishes were established in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, although some parishes seem to have been formed considerably later. Often the parishes were, at least partially, based upon an earlier pattern of landholdings and *parochiae* of early minster churches. In some cases these (generally larger) landholdings can be traced back to the time of the Anglo-Saxon charters and, indeed, they may have derived from much earlier territories - even Roman *pagi* and Iron Age (sub-)tribal regions. One such territory was that of Husmere. This was mentioned in a charter of 736AD - see Hooke (1990) - and, even at this early date, it appears to have been of some considerable age, possibly representing an ancient (probably Dobunnic) (sub-)tribal region. It seems to have encompassed much of the northern half of the later county of Worcester and was probably named after a moot site (meeting place) in the vicinity of what is now Ismere in Wolverley.

The charter estate probably resided entirely within Worcestershire - although it is not entirely clear which of these land units was established first. The first documentary sources mentioning Worcestershire were written in 1038, but there are indications that the county may have arisen in the early tenth century as an administrative framework for raising the military resources needed to expel the Danes. It is possible that the county developed over a period of time, gradually adjusting its form and administration to embrace fiscal and judicial functions as well as changes of ownership of its component parts.

Ownership and affiliation played important roles in determining which estates became incorporated into a county; and, as a result, detached parts of shires (i.e. portions of one county completely surrounded by the land of others) were not uncommon. Examples in the local area included Dudley (part of Worcestershire embedded within Staffordshire), Halesowen (part of Shropshire surrounded by Worcestershire and Staffordshire), and Clent (part of Staffordshire surrounded by the land of Worcestershire and Shropshire). At Domesday, Clent (which included Broom and Rowley Regis as unnamed chapelries) and Tardebigge were in Worcestershire, though (for reasons which we will come back to later) they were fiscally linked to Staffordshire. Soon after 1086 they were transferred entirely into Staffordshire, though Tardebigge was eventually transferred into Warwickshire in 1266.

Worcestershire seems to have shared large parts of its eastern and northern boundaries with the earlier diocese of Worcester, which had been formed some time between AD 663 and 680 to serve the kingdom of the Hwicce (which later become a sub-kingdom or province of Mercia). The diocesan boundaries probably followed those of the Hwiccan kingdom, which was founded by Penda, King of Mercia between c632 and 655 AD to administer the people and lands of several existing British tribal regions (perhaps including the Husmerae).

According to Hooke (1985) the northern limit of the Worcester diocese probably corresponded closely to the northern boundary of Worcestershire; and King (1996) postulates that the northern boundary of the Hwicce (and by implication, the early diocese) probably extended a few miles further north and east than the post-Domesday county, thereby encompassing Enville, Kinver, Kingswinford, Dudley and Rowley Regis.

In the vicinity of Swinford, the medieval county boundary followed the course of the River Stour until 1974, dividing Oldswinford parish between Worcestershire and Staffordshire. As illustrated in figure 1, the southern part of the parish - which according to Chambers (1978) seems to have been coextensive with Oldswinford *manor* - lay in Worcestershire while the northern part (Amblecote manor) resided in Staffordshire. Despite its division between shires, the whole of Oldswinford parish belonged to the Worcester diocese. Of the neighbouring ancient parishes, Pedmore and Hagley lay in Worcestershire, while Kingswinford (including Ashwood) and Kinver resided in Staffordshire. To the east, the estates of Cradley and Lutley (both in Worcestershire and part of the Worcester diocese) belonged to Halesowen parish (originally in Worcestershire) until the 18th and 19th centuries respectively. During those centuries, the county and parish boundaries were, of course, documented precisely upon detailed Enclosure, Tithe and Ordnance Survey maps. The parish bounds would, no doubt, have been subject to occasional minor revision over the centuries since their inception, but it is probably safe to assume that their 18th and 19th century outlines are broadly representative of the parishes' original form and, thus, of the bounds of the manors from which they were, presumably, derived.

As already indicated, there is very little known about the origin of the local manors and parishes, and it is hoped that a detailed study of the Swinford charter's boundary clause might throw some light upon this important question.

*Figure 1 depicts a divided Kingswinford. The red boundary line represents the whole of Kingswinford ancient parish (as documented in the nineteenth century), but it seems possible that in earlier times the eastern part of this region, around Ashwood Hay (shown hatched), was under different ownership and might not have been part of Kingswinford's early land-holdings.*

*The Domesday book lists a vill called Haswic which is believed by some scholars to have been at, or near, Ashwood. The main evidence for this is the similarity between the two place names: the prefix 'Has-' probably derives from OE aesc meaning ash tree. However, there is no obvious evidence on the ground of a deserted settlement near Ashwood today, but if Haswic was at or near that location it may have been a very ancient settlement, possibly being contemporary with the Roman marching camp at the nearby site of Greensforge, or perhaps even with nearby Iron-Age pits and supposed field system that may be indicated by crop marks in aerial photographs (English Heritage monument number 1571809). By 1086, Haswic seems to have been abandoned, being listed in the Domesday book as waste "because of the King's Forest". That forest would have been the Norman forest of Kinver, the area around Ashwood (i.e. Ashwood Hay) being a hedged part of the royal hunting ground. The word Hay refers to such an enclosure.*

*Just as the identification of Haswic with Ashwood remains unproven; the boundaries of Haswic's land are even more uncertain, and the division shown in figure 1 is purely conjectural. The line depicted here derives from the probable boundary of the medieval Ashwood Hay deduced from the apparent limits of Kingswinford's medieval field systems (as recorded on nineteenth century maps). This boundary line should not be confused with the modern boundary of Kingswinford (also now the western edge of Dudley Metropolitan Borough). This latter line was actually established in 1935, when the rural part of Kingswinford parish (most or all of Ashwood Hay) was transferred to Kinver. It is worth noting that the high ground of Ridgehill Wood and Friars Gorse, which marks the course of the modern boundary, might also have made a convenient territorial marker in the first millenium. For that reason the supposed Haswic-Kingswinford boundary could conceivably have lain a little further west than indicated in figure 1.*



## ***Previous interpretations of the boundary clause***

Some previous interpretations of the boundary clause appear to have assumed at the outset that the estate conveyed was a precursor of either Oldswinford parish or Oldswinford and Pedmore parishes combined (excluding Amblecote in both cases). They have thus tended to follow the known boundaries of the relevant ancient parishes quite closely, with only minor deviations here and there. This approach seems to provide a good fit to the charter estate's northern and western boundaries, which coincide with prominent geographical features (e.g. the River Stour). However, the eastern and southern boundaries are more problematic. It is important to note that all researchers report difficulties in identifying several key landmarks in the southern boundary; and it seems that two features in the later landscape (i.e. the 19th century Oakleigh House and the Wallcroft field marked on Bach's 1699 map) might have misled some researchers into believing the charter estate corresponded approximately to the outline of Oldswinford parish. I make that statement with the greatest of respect for those researchers because these place names do, on the face of it, seem to provide a clear match to two of the charter's landmarks. We will see later, however, why these attributions may have been questionable.

Dr CGO Bridgeman in 1916 was the first to translate the charter into modern English. Bridgeman identified the charter estate as representing either Kingswinford or Oldswinford, although he did not attempt to trace the boundary clause.

In 1928, Dr GB Grundy (who did not cite Bridgeman's work) provided a more extensive translation. He also recognised that the boundary clause represented an area in the general vicinity of Oldswinford parish. This was clearly a fundamental step, as were several of his waypoint identifications. However, there do seem to be a few shortcomings in Dr Grundy's conclusions, or at least in his explanation of how he arrived at them. Lack of fine detail is perhaps to be expected in his article because it covered a large number of charters spanning the whole county of Worcestershire. Nevertheless, as the first academic to analyse the Swinford charter's boundary clause, his work forms the background (and perhaps a starting point) for subsequent investigations, so it is important to understand its potential limitations.

Specifically, Dr Grundy appears to unequivocally assign locations near to the Oldswinford parish boundary to about half of the charter's waypoints, yet in most of these cases he does not provide much evidence for his assertions, nor does he explain in any detail his reasons for making them. It would seem that his primary source of landscape information was 19th century OS mapping. No other cartographic sources are cited in his article; and it is implied within his paper that he may not even have visited the locations he assigned to the charter's waypoints. Moreover, it is difficult to understand Dr Grundy's interpretation of the final three waypoints, which exclude Wollaston from the charter. In all probability, the perfectly straight boundary line on which he says these waypoints lie was established many centuries after the charter, and possibly even as late as 1780. This point was also noted by Chambers (1978). Figure 2 illustrates the boundary and waypoint locations envisaged by Grundy. Notice the omission of Wollaston and the cluster of waypoints near the middle of the southern boundary.

Overall, it seems that, having recognised the correspondence between a *few* of the charter's waypoints and the Oldswinford parish boundary (or 19th century subdivisions thereof), Dr Grundy assumed that the charter represented the estate or manor that formed the template for the whole of Oldswinford parish (with the exception of Amblecote). However, difficulties in matching waypoints 16, 17 and 18 to the parish boundary caused him to conclude that there had probably been "some modification in the boundary" along its southern edge.

Chambers (1978) believed that this was "a good deal of understatement of the truth". In an attempt to address this difficulty he tentatively suggested a short detour from Grundy's route. This took him briefly northwards along the Clatterbatch (brook) to exclude a fraction of Oldswinford from the estate. Mr Chambers noted significant uncertainties in this part of the boundary clause, as well as in Grundy's interpretation of the north-western corner of the boundary (which Chambers nevertheless followed). Figure 3 illustrates the boundary suggested by Chambers (1978) which he based largely upon Grundy's observations. Note the

unfeasibly close grouping of waypoints in the region of his "Oldswinford detour", which suggests that the detour may be too short in extent.

*Figure 2 (as well as figures 3, 4, 5 and 7 which follow) uses as a base map, the first edition of the 6-inch OS County Series map of Worcestershire published in 1888 (surveyed 1882). This has been chosen because it can be easily compared with today's landscape, yet it also depicts many ancient landscape features, some of which undoubtedly date back to the Anglo-Saxon period and before. In particular, the OS map shows several brooks and streams that have since been obscured by 20th century development.*

*For reference, the 19th century boundaries of Oldswinford parish and Pedmore parish have been outlined in red on each figure. The bounds of the charter estate proposed by each of the researchers are defined by the areas tinted green, cyan, blue, pink or yellow.*

*In all of these figures, the pointers represent the waypoints of the charter's boundary clause according to the numbering scheme used in the present document. Note that this is the same as used by Hooke (1990), but differs slightly from the numbering schemes used by some other researchers.*

Hooke (1990) provided new translations of some elements of the boundary clause as well as several key waypoint identifications (which we will come back to later). These led her to suggest a new course for the southern boundary, which is shown in figure 4. She began by following the Oldswinford parish boundary and then, to accommodate the "awkward" section in the middle of the southern boundary, proposed a route that runs south towards Wychbury Hill and Pedmore. Richardson (1997) also followed a similar boundary route.

By including part of Pedmore parish in the charter estate, Dr Hooke suggested that this might help to overcome a discrepancy between the manse and hideage assessments quoted, respectively, in the charter and in the 1086 Domesday survey. (Again we will discuss this discrepancy in more detail later.)

Perhaps partly because of this discrepancy, Pritchard (1997+) favoured a boundary that takes in almost the whole of Oldswinford and Pedmore parishes combined (see figure 5). In spite of this, she still encountered significant difficulties in matching the charter's boundary clause to the Pedmore parish boundary in the middle of its southern edge.

Generally speaking, it is possible to find plausible candidates for some of the waypoints near to the parish boundaries, but attempting to fit *all* of the waypoints into a coherent parish-based pattern produces a less-than-convincing result.

## ***A new interpretation of the boundary clause***

Because of the difficulties faced by previous researchers in matching the charter to 18th and 19th century parish boundaries, it is sensible to question whether the bounds of the charter estate really were the direct precursor of the local manor and parish boundaries, or whether the pattern of local parishes resulted from some later planned revision of estate boundaries.

One only has to look at the boundary lines depicted in figure 1 to gain a sense of planning in the layout of Oldswinford, Pedmore and Hagley parishes and the estates that made up Cradley and Lutley (both formerly in Halesowen parish). The shape of the parishes; the continuity of the southern boundaries of Oldswinford parish and Cradley; the continuity of the eastern and western boundaries of Oldswinford, Pedmore and Hagley parishes; the fairly uniform size of the parishes, and the fact that the parish boundaries divide in two several major landscape features (Oldnall, Foxcote and Wychbury hill fort) are all suggestive of a

degree of planned and authoritative land allocation rather than of mere piecemeal granting of estates.

To presume at the outset that the charter bounds entirely describe the later parish boundaries would seem to be an unwarranted assumption. For this reason, the following proposal makes no attempt to adhere to parish boundary lines (except where such a correspondence is virtually beyond doubt), and instead is based solely upon the match between the charter's boundary clause and probable elements of the Anglo-Saxon landscape.

Figure 6 depicts the topography and watercourses of the area together with likely Anglo-Saxon settlement sites and roads. The principal east-west (Kinver-Halesowen) route is shown, as is the ancient north-south salt-way (along the line of the modern A491), which appears to date back to the Iron Age or earlier. The figure also shows other tracks that would probably have existed, in some form, at the time of the charter. Bear in mind that the routes shown are based upon the assumption that their locations had persisted with little change until the 1882 OS survey (from which the 1888 six-inch maps were derived), which of course might not be an entirely valid supposition. Figure 6 should not, therefore, be taken as a full and accurate representation of the Anglo-Saxon route-ways. Indeed, there were undoubtedly many other minor roads and tracks (not shown in figure 6) running between the settlements of the area, as well as tracks linking them to various important features of the local landscape.

Of more relevance would have been the contours, streams and areas of marsh-land represented in figure 6. These would have strongly influenced the early pattern of land use and settlement as well as the course of the charter estate's boundary; and for this reason, careful scrutiny of these features is potentially useful in matching the landscape to the various waypoints of the boundary clause.

The new boundary proposals are illustrated in figure 7 which, like figures 2 to 5, is plotted on the 6-inch OS base map of 1888. Several relevant landscape features and field names from other maps and documentary sources (notably 19th century tithe maps and Bach's 1699 plan of the Parish of Oldswinford) have also been transcribed onto figure 7.

The figure shows two alternative routes for the eastern boundary: one which follows the parish boundary, and a conjectural route (supported by equally persuasive landscape evidence) that deviates along the *eastern* arm of the Salt Brook into Cradley to encompass most of Oldnall hill.

The southern boundary illustrated in figure 7 is also somewhat different from previous interpretations. It encompasses much of the (later) Oldswinford and Pedmore parishes, while *excluding* their settlement centres and agricultural land. This is certainly at odds with the presumption that the charter estate and Oldswinford parish are coincident and coextensive, yet it does possess a degree of logical self consistency; fits the landscape evidence well; provides a plausible solution to the difficulties encountered by Grundy (1928) and Chambers (1978), and circumvents the apparent need to accommodate seven waypoints within just a ¾ mile stretch of the parish boundary.

Indeed, only relatively short segments of the charter boundary seem to coincide with the later parish bounds. This occurs primarily along major pre-existing boundary features where boundary reuse is not unexpected. Elsewhere however, the boundaries of the charter estate and the parish seem to be markedly different. If the present interpretation is correct, it may tell us something about the nature of the King's gift. Either he wished to retain Oldswinford and Pedmore settlements (and their agricultural lands) as sources of income within his own estate (together with Wychbury Hill and perhaps Hagley and an area of valuable oak woodland), or these assets had already been granted away to some unknown owner before the date of the charter. More interestingly, the proposed charter bounds may even be indicative of local territorial divisions that pre-dated, or coexisted with, the charter estate.

The following pages describe this new interpretation of the charter's waypoints, but first we will list them in sequence together with their translations from Old English.

## Translation of the Elements of the Boundary Clause

Reproduced below are the individual boundary segments listed in the charter's boundary clause. The original Old English (OE) form is followed by the translation into modern English as quoted by Hooke (1990). There are also a few additional notes on translation and interpretation from other sources. The numbered markers shown in figure 7 correspond to the end (destination) points of each of these boundary segments.

1. *Ærest on sPynford*  
[First to Swine Ford]
2. *of sPynforda on pecges ford*  
[from Swine Ford to Pecg's Ford]  
According to Perry (2000), Pecg's Ford means Pig's ford.
3. *of pecgesforda on ðeonfanford*  
[from Pecg's Ford to (the) Robbers' Ford (or Deep Ford)]  
*ðeonfanford*, pronounced theonfanford, is translated as thieves' or robbers' ford.  
Alternatively, *ðeonfan* might be a corruption of *deop(an)*, meaning deep.
4. *of deonfanforda in deonflincford*  
[from Robbers' Ford (Deep Ford) to Deonflinc Ford]  
Pritchard (1997+) quotes a translation of *deonflincford* as "Deon's Bank Ford".
5. *of deonflincforda in holan bæce*  
[from Deonflinc Ford to (the) hollow batch]  
The term "hollow batch" may refer to a valley or a small stream.
6. *of holan bæce in eorh brycge*  
[from the hollow batch to the earth bridge (or causeway)]
7. *of eorh brycge in tigPellan*  
[from the earth bridge to (the) *tigwellan*]  
The name *tigwellan* may be derived from OE *tigel* meaning crock or tile. Smith (1956b) states that in place names *tigel* is usually an allusion to a place where tiles are made. Grundy (1928), Chambers (1978) and Pritchard (1997+) translate *tigwellan* as "tile (or potsherd) spring".
8. *þ spa in ymman holig*  
[then thus to Ymma's holly]
9. *of ymman holigne in cudan dene*  
[from Ymma's holly to Cuda's valley]
10. *of cudan dene on ða ðic bufan foxcotun*  
[from Cuda's valley to the dyke above Foxcote]  
Cuda may have been the name of a pagan (Dobunnic) goddess (Yeates (2008)), but in this instance it probably represents a personal name.
11. *7long dices to þam broce*  
[along (the) dyke to the brook]
12. *to þam stangedelfe*  
[to the stone-digging]  
According to Smith (1956a) *(ge)delf* usually refers to a "an excavation where stone and minerals were obtained", and *stangedelf* to a stone quarry.

13. *of tham stangedelfe be þære efese to Palacrofte*  
[from the stone-digging by the eaves (of a wood) to Welshmen's croft]  
Hooke (1990) states: *wala (Pala)* is the genitive plural of OE *walh*, meaning "a Welshman"; and relates this to the field names Wall Croft, and Lower & Upper Wall Ridding recorded on the 1846 Tithe Map of Pedmore. An alternative translation given by Grundy (1928) is: "from the stone-digging by the hill-foot to ... croft".
14. *of Palacrofte in þone suðeran holan bæce*  
[from Welshmen's croft to the southern hollow batch]
15. *ſlong bæces Pið neopan eostacote*  
[along the batch to below *eostacote*]  
*eostacote* may be a misspelling of *Preosta Cote*, priest's cottage. Pritchard (1997+) quotes an alternative translation of *eostacote*: East Cottage.
16. *ſlong dices in grendels mere*  
[along the dyke to Grendel's mere]  
*grendels mere* might refer to "the pond of the gravelly stream", but is probably an allusion to the mythical character in the story of Beowulf. Grundy (1928) and Chambers (1978) use a different translation of *grendels mere*: Green Lea Pond.
17. *of grendels mere in stancofan*  
[from Grendel's mere to (the) stone chamber]  
Grundy (1928) suggests stone cove(s) as the translation for *stancofan*.
18. *of stancofan ſlong dune on stiran mere*  
[from (the) stone chamber along (the) hill to *stiran mere*]  
The name "*stiran mere*" may be "sturgeon's mere" from OE *styr(g)an*, meaning sturgeon.
19. *of stiran mere on þa strete*  
[from *stiran mere* to the street]  
Though street (*strete* or *stræte*) often refers to a Roman road, it was frequently used in the late Anglo-Saxon period to describe any paved or urban road (Smith (1956b)).
20. *ſlong stræte on þa stapelas*  
[along (the) street to the posts]
21. *of þan stapulum on Pindofer*  
[from the post to Wind Edge]  
In this context, "Edge" probably means a "flat topped ridge" or "the tip of a promontory" (Hooke (1990)). Grundy (1928) and Chambers (1978) translate this as Wind Bank.
22. *of Pindofere in acleg*  
[from Wind Edge to oak lēah (wood)]
23. *of aclea to lusedune*  
[from oak lēah to *lusedune*]  
The OE translation of *lus-* is louse, so previous investigators have suggested "louse hill" for *lusedune*. Chambers (1978) tentatively suggests that *lusedune* could be a misspelling of *lusðune*, which might be translated as "lus-thorn" or spindle tree. A more likely interpretation is that *lus-* is used here in the sense of something small or insignificant (Smith (1956b)), thus *lusedune* is a small hill.
24. *of lusedune on sicanbyrig*  
[from louse-hill to ?Sica's fortification]

25. *of sicanbyrig on þa stræte*  
 [from ?Sica's fortification to the street]  
 The street (*stræte*) is a paved, probably Roman, road.

26. *et long stræte to meredic*  
 [along (the) street to (the) boundary dyke]

27. *of mæredice on sture*  
 [from (the) boundary dyke to (the) Stour]

28. *1long sture þ eft on SPinford*  
 [along (the) Stour so that [it comes] back to Swine Ford]

Note that several OE characters are reproduced in the foregoing quotations from the boundary clause; and the reader is referred to table 1 for a basic guide to their pronunciation and meaning.

**Table 1. Pronunciation of Old English Characters**

Character	Name	Pronunciation / Meaning
1	Tironian nota	Vernacular shorthand for Latin "et" / English "and"
þ	Thorn	Hard "th" as in "that"
ð	Eth	Soft "th" as in "thistle"
æ	Ash	Hard A sound, as in "bat"
ƿ	Wynn	W sound as in "well"

## Suggested Boundary Route

### ***The northern boundary (waypoints 1 to 5)***

*While there is some uncertainty over the exact locations of most of these waypoints, all researchers seem to agree that the northern section of the estate's boundary coincides with the River Stour. As Perry (2001) says, it is likely that the fords referred to in the boundary clause were located near to the points where roads cross the Stour today. Two alternative interpretations of the northern boundary (interpretations A and B) are listed below.*

#### **Northern boundary interpretation A - Beginning at the A491**

*It is generally assumed that the first ford listed in the boundary clause - the Swine Ford - was sited near to the crossing point of the A491 Stourbridge-to-Kingswinford road. This road was part of an ancient salt route which ran from Droitwich, (via Pedmore, Oldswinford, Stourbridge High Street and Lower High Street) to Kingswinford and beyond, and would have been a major feature of the Anglo-Saxon landscape. As the area was named after one of its fords, it is likely to have been the most used or well-known one - i.e. the ford on the main through route - so it seems reasonable to believe that this ford is the charter's Swine Ford.*

##### **1a. First to Swine Ford**

As indicated above, it is probable that the Swine Ford would have been located on the Stour at, or near, the point where the present-day A491 Stourbridge-to-Kingswinford road bridges the river.

##### **2a. From Swine Ford to Pecg's Ford**

Pecg's Ford might have been sited in the section of river overlooked by the ridge on which Bedcote settlement was located (i.e. opposite the present-day Stepping Stones and Bedcote Place, near the confluence of Clatterbatch Brook and the Stour). A bridge is shown in this vicinity on the Amblecote Estate Plan of 1769 and the 1782 survey by Court and Blackden. The 1921 6-inch OS map shows a ford in this location, and a modern footbridge exists about 100m west of Stamford Road today.

##### **3a. From Pecg's Ford to (the) Robbers' Ford [Deep Ford]**

As proposed by Grundy (1928), this may have been located near to where today's Bagley Street bridges the Stour. Pritchard's (1997+) alternative translation of *ðeonfanford* as Deep Ford leads her to favour Chambers' (1978) suggestion of Dudley Road at Lye because of the greater depth of the river at that location.

#### **Northern boundary interpretation B - Beginning at Wollaston**

*It is interesting to note that the final waypoint (28) seems to return us from Dividale Common (waypoint 27) all the way along the Stour back the starting point without mentioning any further fords. Yet there would probably have been one or more fords in the stretch of river between Dividale Common and the present-day A491 (waypoint 1a). A ford near to the confluence of the Dividale Brook and the Stour is implied in the 1733 boundary perambulation of Oldswinford parish (reproduced with interpretation by Chambers (1978) and Cochrane (2005)); and there was probably also a ford near to the settlement of Wollaston. Indeed, one might expect the latter ford to have been of sufficient importance to be mentioned in the boundary clause and, for this reason, an alternative starting location is suggested below.*

### 1b. First to Swine Ford

This ford might have been located close to the settlement of Wollaston, which was originally built around the eastern end of Vicarage Road - see Perry (2001). It would have provided direct access to the Oldswinford-Kingswinford road (part of the ancient salt route and now the A491) as well as to the settlement of Amblecote. The ford would probably not have been far from Wollaston Hall. The latter stood near the northern end of the present-day Apley Road until 1927. According to the History of Wollaston Group (2004), there is a reference to Wollaston Hall (probably on the same site) in a "deed of sale of the reputed Manor of Wollaston...which is dated c1230". It is conceivable the site is somewhat older than this, perhaps being occupied in the late Anglo-Saxon period. The name Wollaston certainly seems to be of Anglo-Saxon origin. Plans by Bache (1699), Court and Blackden (1782) and Whitworth (1774), as well as a 1766 canal plan by James Brindley (reproduced by Langford (1992)), all show a bridge a little way to the north of Wollaston Hall, near the line joining Apley Road with Coalbourn Lane, and this might have replaced an earlier ford.

Photograph 1, from Google Maps (<http://maps.google.co.uk/>), indicates the site of the early Wollaston settlement and of Wollaston Hall, together with the probable location on the Stour where it was forded by a track linking Wollaston to the Oldswinford-to-Kingswinford road.

### 2b. From Swine Ford to Pecg's Ford

If waypoint 1b is correct, Pecg's Ford would probably have been located near to the crossing point of the present-day A491 Stourbridge-to-Kingswinford road. Perry (2001) states that Pecg's Ford means simply pig's ford; and if that is the case one wonders to what extent the names Swine Ford and Pecg's Ford might have been used interchangeably by the area's Anglo-Saxon inhabitants, and what degree of precision (or ambiguity) should be attributed to the use of these names in the charter's boundary clause.

### 3b. From Pecg's Ford to (the) Robbers' Ford [Deep Ford]

As waypoint 2a - i.e near Bedcote.

## Northern boundary - The remainder

*The site of the remaining ford on the Stour (waypoint 4) is also uncertain. Fortunately, the location of the final waypoint (5) of the northern boundary is more clearly identifiable.*

### 4. From Robbers' Ford [Deep Ford] to Deonflinc Ford

Deonflinc Ford is possibly where the A4036 Dudley Road now crosses the Stour at Lye.

### 5. From Deonflinc Ford to (the) hollow batch

There is little doubt that the hollow batch is the Salt Brook, the course of which lay partly on the eastern boundary of Oldswinford parish and partly within the (possibly later) estate of Cradley. The brook is now largely hidden from view by 19th and 20th century development.

Hooke (1990) refers to a field named Dean Ford shown, on the 1843 Tithe Map of Cradley, approximately 250m north-east of the confluence of the Salt Brook and the Stour. She suggests that this field name might be linked to the charter's Deonflinc Ford. To reconcile the difference in location between the two, Pritchard (1997+) suggests the Salt Brook may have followed a different course in the Anglo-Saxon period, but this seems unlikely given the topography of the landscape shown in figure 6. A more probable explanation (if Deonflinc Ford, the Salt Brook and Dean Ford are, indeed, related) is that the area from which the 1843 Dean Ford field takes its name might have extended further west to the Salt Brook at the time of the charter, and that this area had subsequently been divided up and partially renamed.



## ***The eastern boundary (waypoints 6 to 10)***

*Hooke (1990) and others have suggested that waypoints 6 to 8 lie along the boundary between Oldswinford parish and Cradley. Given the available evidence, this is entirely plausible, but the same evidence could, just as convincingly, be interpreted as a route that ventures some way into Cradley to encompass Oldnall hill and most, or all, of the agricultural land that may have lain upon it. Accordingly, two possible routes are presented below. Photograph 2, from Google Maps (<http://maps.google.co.uk/>), illustrates, on a modern aerial image, the course of both arms of the Salt Brook, together with two options for waypoint 6, the earth bridge, and waypoint 7, the tigwellan.*

### **Eastern route A - Following the parish boundary**

*This route, which follows the eastern boundary of Oldswinford parish, is almost identical to that suggested by Hooke (1990) and other researchers.*

#### **6a. From the hollow batch to the earth bridge [or causeway]**

The location of the earth bridge is unknown. It is shown in figure 7 at a point where there is a narrowing of the stream valley, which seems a logical place for such a construction. Alternatively, the earth bridge might have been a little way to the south of this marker - perhaps a few metres east of where the present Hayes Lane meets the Lye-to-Halesowen road. Clearly some sort of bridge or causeway would have been useful along the Anglo-Saxon predecessor of this road. Although the exact location of the early road is not known, it is likely, given the local topography and the position of stream valleys and springs, that it ran close to the line of the present Lye-to-Halesowen road.

#### **7a. From the earth bridge to (the) tigwellan**

The contours of the land suggest that a spring, draining into the Salt Brook, might have existed near the point indicated. The boundary perambulation of Oldswinford parish recorded in 1733 notes a Well Leasow just a few tens of metres south of marker 7a; and The Moors, a field name recorded on the 1843 Tithe Map of Cradley, also indicates a watery site in the vicinity. The geology of the area is compatible with tile and brick making, with marls, sandstone, fireclay, glacial sand deposits and a thick coal seam all present within a 100m radius. Indeed a brick works, clay pit and mine shafts are shown within this area on the 6 inch OS County Series map of 1888.

#### **8a. Then thus to Ymma's holly**

The location of Ymma's holly is not known. As holly trees are fairly transient entities in the landscape, and there is no other documentary evidence to help, the positioning of this marker on figure 7 is purely speculative. However, if we assume that the charter estate and (later) parish boundaries roughly coincide along this eastern edge, one might expect a waypoint near to the indicated location in order to mark the abrupt left turn in the boundary.

## Eastern route B - Encompassing Oldnall hill in Cradley

*There is evidence of occupation over several millennia in the area around Oldnall and Foxcote. Artefacts and crop marks suggest Romano-British settlement and agriculture here. Although there is no direct evidence of Anglo-Saxon occupation, it seems likely that an area which had proved attractive to both Roman and medieval farmers would have been in continual use throughout the intervening period. Its name may derive from the Saxon Oldenhall (Perry (2001)), and if it was, indeed, the site of an Anglo-Saxon farmstead it seems logical that the charter estate would include or exclude all of it, rather than dividing it in two as the parish boundary appears to do. The suggested route for the charter boundary would neatly separate Oldnall's cultivated land from the field systems belonging to Cradley's other three early settlements: Overend, Netherend and Cradley / Lyde (perhaps originally called Middlend - see Hemingway (2005)).*

### 6b. From the hollow batch to the earth bridge [or causeway]

Before being hidden by 19th and 20th century development, the principal arm of the Salt Brook extended past (i.e. south of) the line of the (present day) Lye-to-Halesowen road where an earth bridge or causeway might have been sited. The abrupt change in gradient here might explain why the road (and perhaps the earth bridge) developed at this point on the brook: it was sufficiently far up the stream valley for the latter to have narrowed enough to cross, yet the road was at a low enough elevation for its lateral gradient to permit easy transit.

### 7b. From the earth bridge to (the) *tigwellan*

The 6-inch Ordnance Survey map of 1888 shows a spring in the location indicated on figure 7, near the top of Tanhouse Lane. The spring undoubtedly fed the Salt Brook via a streamlet running down the western side of the lane. This might be of some significance as the whole watercourse would have provided a continuous demarcation feature between waypoints 5, 6b and 7b (see figure 6). With regard to the site's suitability for tile making, its geology consists of grey clays and coal seams; with further deposits of marls, fireclay and thick coal seams located nearby.

### 8b. Then thus to Ymma's holly

There would probably have been many holly trees in the landscape, so in order for Ymma's holly to be a meaningful waypoint, it is likely that it would have been a distinctive or well-known tree. Familiarity with this landmark would have been more likely if the Anglo-Saxon inhabitants of the area had encountered it regularly, which suggests it may have been located in a prominent or public place. A position on, or near, a well used road or track is one possibility, and with this in mind, a site near the main Kinver-Oldswinford-Halesowen road (Oldnall Road) is suggested - perhaps somewhere close to, or just east of, the present-day Whynot Street (i.e. the hamlet of Parkside shown on the 6-inch 1888 OS map).

## Eastern boundary - The remainder

*The next two waypoints are common to routes A and B, and complete the charter estate's eastern boundary.*

### 9. From Ymma's holly to Cuda's valley

It is probable that this waypoint represents the stream valley now named Lutley Gutter. *Cuda* seems to have been a personal name, but not one of Anglo-Saxon origin. According to Yeates (2008) it is the name of an ancient British goddess (of the late-Iron-Age Dobunni tribe) that was associated sometimes with watercourses. The valley of Lutley Gutter actually extends much further east (downstream) than the marker on figure 7, as well as a little further west towards a spring near Foxcote. It is not known how far up or down the valley this waypoint might have been. Near to the parish boundary the land is flatter and the stream is

more akin to what has been termed elsewhere in the charter a hollow batch (*holan bæce*) rather than a valley (*dene*). This implies the waypoint could have been some way to the east where Lutley Gutter becomes more valley-like.

Waypoint 9 might even have been near to Fatherless Barn, which is the site of an ancient farmstead demolished in the mid twentieth century to make way for a housing estate. Fatherless Barn was, according to local belief, the site of an Anglo-Saxon hall occupied (in the mid-eleventh century) by Withgar, Cradley manor's last Saxon lord, although the present author is unaware of any archaeological or documentary evidence to support this. If such a high-status building had existed here at the time of the charter, any accompanying holly tree would probably have been familiar to the local population.

The field names "The Meers" and "The Skirts" - both indicative of boundary locations - are recorded on the 1843 Tithe Map of Cradley, abutting the parish boundary north west of waypoint 9 (see figure 7). One might wonder whether "The Meers" relates to an estate boundary, perhaps even that of the charter estate. However this name is probably derived from the OE *gemære* (which refers to a boundary field) and is often used for a field near a parish boundary (Field (1993)). In addition, according to Hemingway (2005), the fields in this region date from the 13th century, so it is unlikely such a field name would be indicative of a nearby tenth century charter boundary unless it happened to have been subsequently redesignated as part of the parish boundary.

#### **10. From Cuda's valley to the dyke above Foxcote**

Most of the previous researchers turn west at this point to follow the Oldswinford-Pedmore parish boundary. This decision seems puzzling if one takes the word "above" in the charter's translation at face value. The land does not rise significantly to the west. The only nearby land that is appreciably higher than Foxcote is to the south, lying along the eastern end of the Pedmore-Hagley parish boundary. As illustrated in photographs 3 and 4, field boundaries still run east to west along the ridge of high ground towards Hodge Hill. It is unknown whether they date back to the Anglo-Saxon period. They are clearly of some antiquity, but have obviously been repaired and renewed in much more recent times; and it is impossible to know their age without firm archaeological evidence.

## ***The southern boundary (waypoints 11 to 25)***

*The southern boundary of the charter's estate seems to have engendered the greatest disagreement between researchers. The boundary route suggested here follows a sequence of waypoints around Oldswinford settlement and its cultivated land. This area would, thereby, have been excluded from the estate, together with Pedmore and its agricultural land, and Wychbury Hill fort. Photograph 5 shows the principal waypoints of the southern boundary superimposed upon a modern aerial image from Google Maps (<http://maps.google.co.uk/>).*

### **11 (a & b). Along (the) dyke to the brook**

It is not known how far the dyke ran, or indeed which brook is referred to. There are two possibilities. If, at the summit of Hodge Hill the dyke turned south west along the shallow slope of Hodge Hill to marker 11a, it is probable that the brook in question is the one running through Hodge Hole Dingle, eventually emptying into Ludgbridge Brook. Alternatively, if the dyke terminated near the summit of Hodge Hill, it is likely that the brook referred to is a lesser one running to the east of Hodge Hill Farm (on the 1888 6-inch OS map) and which is fed by a spring near marker 11b. This brook is now hidden underground and runs along the line of Hodge Hill Avenue before joining Ludgbridge Brook at the bottom of Brook Holloway.

### **12. To the stone-digging**

The exact location is unknown. If interpretation 11a (above) is correct, it is likely the stone-digging lay near to the brook flowing through Hodge Hole Dingle. On the other hand, if interpretation 11b is correct, there is perhaps a little more uncertainty in the location of marker 12. It is probable, however, that the stone digging was somewhere close to the point indicated in figure 7. Outcrops of red marls and sandstones lie close to the surface on the hillside west of the brook. A field named Quarry Field is depicted on the 1846 Pedmore Tithe Map at this point. The quarry was, according to Scott (1832), still in use and producing a "calcerous breccia" during the 19th century; and stones (perhaps waste from the quarrying process) still litter the ground today.

### **13. From the stone-digging by the eaves (of a wood) [or hill-foot] to Welshmen's croft**

Hooke (1985 and 1990) suggests that a wood probably existed in the area during Anglo-Saxon times, and might have reached as far south as Quarry Field (waypoint 12) and another field to the west named Wall Croft on the 1846 Tithe Map of Pedmore (waypoint 13).

Route A suggested by Pritchard (1997+) follows the same line between waypoints 12 and 13, but for a different reason: the translation of "... *be þære efese*..." as "...by the hill-foot...". The hill referred to would have been the ridge joining Hodge Hill to Wychbury Hill.

Both routes terminate near Pedmore's Wall Croft field. This name probably derives from *Palacrofte* in the boundary clause (pronounced walacroft), meaning Welshmen's croft or farm. The Pedmore Tithe map of 1846 also shows, immediately to the north, fields named Upper and Lower Wall Ridding, whose names almost certainly share the same derivation as Wall Croft. (Ridding derives from the Old English word *ryding* (Field (1993)), or *rydding* (Smith (1956b)), which means a clearing in woodland or land assarted from adjacent waste.)

A possibly related field, spelled Wallcroft on Bach's 1699 plan of Oldswinford parish, is located a few hundred metres to the north. Some researchers have assumed that this field, rather than Pedmore's Wall Croft field, is the one referred to in the charter, presumably because it lies close to the parish boundary.

#### 14. From Welshmen's croft to the southern hollow batch

The term "hollow batch" refers to a stream valley, and in this case it is likely to have meant the southern - or more accurately, the south-western - arm of the Clatterbatch (brook) running through Ham Dingle. This brook starts at a spring on the northern edge of Wall Croft field and, as shown in figure 6, drains northwards through a small, but steep sided, valley.

#### 15. Along the batch to below *eostacote*

Grundy (1928) states that *eostacote* has no meaning, and interpreted this word as a misspelling of *Preosta Cote*, meaning priest's cottage. It does, however, seem an unlikely mistake to make: omission of a vowel or consonants from the middle of the word might be explicable, but it is harder to believe that a scribe would accidentally *omit* the initial consonants of a word.

If the intention really was to refer to a priest's cottage, this might have been located at the top of Chawn Hill, near to the site of the later Prescott House. Until it was demolished in 1965, Prescott House stood at the junction of Chawn Hill and Grange Lane (the A4036). The location is named Prescott on Brettel and Davies' 1827 plan of Oldswinford, but it is not named on earlier plans by Bach (1699) or Court and Blackden (1782). The distance of Prescott from the Clatterbatch (about 500m) led Grundy (1928) to propose that the supposed *Preosta Cote* might have existed somewhere on Doctors Hill rather than on Chawn Hill.

Another possibility is that the word *eostacote* is related to *Eostre*, the Anglo-Saxon goddess of spring, though this derivation seems a little unlikely. Alternatively, *Eota* refers to Jutland, and it is conceivable that a building belonging to a person of Jutish descent represents the (misspelled) origin of *eostacote*. Pritchard (1997+) refers to a more plausible interpretation of *eostacote* as meaning "East Cottage" (from *éast cote* or *éastan cote*). This would again represent a misspelling, though of a more likely kind. If this interpretation is correct, East Cottage might have been located near the eastern edge of the Oldswinford settlement - south of Chawn Hill, perhaps near Ham Farm (shown on the 6-inch OS map of 1888).

Whichever location we assume here for *eostacote* (or *Preosta Cote*), we would have to depart from the "hollow batch" at some point adjacent to the section of Ham Lane (today called Old Ham Lane) that runs roughly east-west. The most easterly of these departure points (indicated by marker 15 on figure 7) would result in the boundary cutting across to Old Ham Lane near the present-day White Leys Close.

#### 16. Along the dyke to Grendel's mere

Hooke (1990) and Richardson (1997) turn south at this point. By proceeding southwards though, it is very difficult to make subsequent waypoints fit the landscape, and many southerly routes end up dividing Pedmore and/or its agricultural land in two. However, a route north *around* the settlement and agricultural land of Oldswinford seems more promising. It is not known with certainty where the dyke ran, but Bach's 1699 map of the Parish of Oldswinford shows a sweeping curved boundary that starts just north of Ham Farm (near the southern end of the present-day Shaftesbury Avenue). The boundary feature extended north-west for about 650m, towards the lower (western) end of Chawn Hill, passing just north of the present-day Halfcot Avenue. This feature terminates the adjoining field boundaries and is somewhat longer and more continuous than the latter. These characteristics are all sometimes indicative of a greater age. It is, therefore, conceivable that this long boundary feature represents the dyke referred to in the charter (or perhaps some artefact thereof). According to Aston (1985), long field boundaries or dykes in the landscape can often represent the edges of settlements or vills, and it seems possible that this waypoint's dyke marked the eastern boundary of Oldswinford settlement.

By the time of the OS County Series survey in 1882, only the southern third of the boundary feature remained, but in 1699, its northern end veered towards the Clatterbatch (brook) where the valley widens - i.e. in the vicinity of the present-day Church Road, Castle Grove and

Stourbridge Junction railway station. The topography of the land here would have made it ideal for damming the brook to form large fish ponds (see figure 6); and indeed, one or more fish ponds existed in the area until at least the 1950s. Therefore, it is suggested that this location - or perhaps a little further downstream, north of Brook Road - would be a good candidate for Grendel's mere. It is conceivable that irregular field boundaries in both locations - see Bach (1699) and Court and Blackden (1782) - might be represent the fingerprint of ancient fish ponds.

Photograph 6 shows the southern end of Stourbridge Junction railway station in around 1907, or a few years earlier. It is taken from the south-west (looking north-east) with Chawn Hill in the background. There is, of course, no sign of the supposed dyke at this date, but it would have run from right to left behind the railway track, part-way up the slope of the hill, veering closer to the track as it reached Chawnhill House (the large building behind the station). A pathway runs underneath the embankment, with the Clatterbatch (brook) beside it. The brook continued to the left of the photograph towards a fishpond located in the grounds of "The Castle" (now a cul-de-sac named Castle Grove). The Castle and the pond are depicted in photograph 7 (also taken around 1907) which looks north-westwards across the pond.

Hooke (1990) refers to another (she says, dubious) translation of *grendels mere* as "the pool of the gravelly stream". In this context it is interesting to note that an "Old Gravel Pit" is marked on the 1888 OS map about 350m from the stream. It is, however, difficult to say whether any of the associated deposits would have found their way into the stream, as the geology in the area is very fragmented (see British Geological Survey (1975)), with the stream passing through a variety of different marls and sandstones.

## 17. From Grendel's mere to (the) stone chamber

The location and nature of the "stone chamber" are not known. Previous researchers have suggested that it might have been the remains of a prehistoric (probably bronze age) burial chamber, or an Iron Age guard house on Wychbury Hill. However, such features are no longer visible and there is no direct evidence for them being the charter's "stone chamber". Regrettably, the present suggestion is supported by equally flimsy evidence, although it does result in a boundary pattern that can be explained in a meaningful way, and which fits very well with the route suggested by the neighbouring (more evidence-based) waypoints.

No route from Grendel's mere to the stone chamber is specified in the charter, so it is likely that the direction to take was clear at the time, perhaps following an established track or roadway. An obvious candidate for this is the ancient road between Kinver and Halesowen. The modern roads Glasshouse Hill and Heath Lane lie close to this route. Bach's 1699 plan indicates that the present line of Heath Lane probably post-dates the open field system in the area. Thus, the tenth-century incarnation of this road may have followed a somewhat different course, but whatever course this was, it seems likely that it delineated the charter's boundary between Grendel's mere and the stone chamber.

For reasons that will become clear when we discuss waypoint 18, it seems likely that the stone chamber lay somewhere on the sandstone escarpment extending south from Hanbury Hill and along Love Lane. Its western gradient is steep - perhaps steeper, in parts, during Anglo-Saxon times than it is now - and it is not inconceivable that the precursor of Heath Lane ran in an irregular, or zig-zag, manner up this slope to facilitate the passage of carts and animals around rocky outcrops. Photograph 8 (taken in Mary Stevens Park at the edge of Love Lane) illustrates how steep parts of this escarpment might have been.

We do not know what form the stone chamber took. The word chamber implies an enclosure open, perhaps, on only one side; and structures such as a cave or rock cutting are obvious possibilities. Grundy (1928) suggests a slightly different translation: cove(s), which might imply a less enclosed structure such as a nook or natural recess in a rock face.

One possibility is that the stone chamber was some form of shelter cut into the escarpment near the forerunner of Heath Lane. This would be consistent with Smith (1956a) who states that one of the more likely meanings for the place-name element *cofa* (in the waypoint's

*stancofan*) is a shelter. The bedrock here consists of Triassic Lower Keuper sandstone overlying Bunter Series mottled sandstones, both of which would have been relatively easy to work: these very same strata were quarried at Hanbury Hill; and similar sandstone outcrops have been worked at other local sites to produce the iron-makers' caverns at Wolverley, the Wain House at Caunsall, Kinver's Holy Austin Rock Houses, and the now-obliterated caverns at Holloway End (Scott, 1832).

Turning to the alternative translation proposed by Grundy (1928), it is also conceivable that a natural recess or "cove" existed on the face of the escarpment. It is clear from the escarpment's profile that the Keuper sandstone at the top of the escarpment is responsible for the steepest part of the rock face. These rock strata dip away to the NNW at an angle of about 10 degrees, and the edges of the Keuper sandstone beds might have formed a small cliff face in places along the escarpment. The British Geological Survey's *Solid and Drift Map* of 1975 shows a clear V-shaped notch in the western edge of the Keuper beds, the apex of which is located just a few metres north of the junction of the present-day Heath Lane and Love Lane. Assuming this is a purely natural feature (and not a man-made post-Anglo-Saxon artefact) this rock formation may well have given rise to a similarly shaped recess in the cliff face. Perhaps this was the "cove" referred to in the charter. It is, of course, conceivable that a natural feature of this type might have been enlarged by Anglo-Saxon, or earlier, inhabitants of the area to form something more akin to the "chamber" in Hooke's (1990) translation.

There are also two further possibilities for the identification of the stone chamber or stone coves along the line of the Keuper sandstone escarpment. Both of these would indicate a site on, or near, Hanbury Hill, which is located about 250m north of the modern Heath Lane.

The first possibility is that the stone coves might have been the remains of an early phase of the aforementioned quarrying at Hanbury Hill. In that case we might infer that, at the time of the charter, the quarry had become temporarily disused, otherwise the waypoint would probably have been referred to as *stangedelfe*, as in waypoint 12.

The second possibility arises from the early name of Hanbury Hill. Until the 19th century, Hanbury Hill was called Yearnebarrowe Hill, or variants thereof (see Wood (1837), Chambers (1978), Haden (1988) and Perry (2001)). "Yearne" might derive from OE *earn*, meaning eagle, but the ending "barrowe" is perhaps of more relevance here. According to Gelling (1997), the term often referred to a natural hill, but in some instances "barrowe" was used to mean a man-made (often ancient) mound. This *could*, therefore, indicate the presence of a prehistoric barrow on the high ground between Hanbury Hill and Heath Lane; and such a barrow, if opened, might reveal some form of stone chamber.

There is additional indirect evidence to support the hypothesis of a barrow near this location. Barrows were sometimes used as community meeting places or places of worship by pagan Iron-Age and Romano-British people; and pagan religious sites were frequently adopted for Christian worship in the mid-Saxon period (see Yeates (2008)). According to Aston (1985), such hill-top sites then tended to be re-named after either St Michael or St Catherine and "proximity to significant springs or wells may also indicate an early [previously pagan] site". Interestingly, there was, indeed, a nearby spring named St Catherine's Well (the name surviving on later documentary sources as Cafferwell Close, Catherwell Field, Catherwell House and Catherwell Saw Mill - all in the vicinity of Union Street, near Hanbury Hill). The combination of "-barrow" and "St Catherine's" place names might be indicative of a reused prehistoric barrow (perhaps incorporating a stone chamber) located roughly 100 to 250 metres north of Love Lane - but there is, unfortunately, no hard archaeological evidence to substantiate this hypothesis.

If the stone coves (or chamber) were, for whichever reason, sited on Hanbury Hill, it might be that Grendel's mere (waypoint 16) was also a little further north than so far envisaged - perhaps near the present-day Red Hill Close or Red Hill School's playing fields. Like Hanbury Hill, Grendel's mere may even have abutted the later (1366) boundary of Bedcote manor (a sub-manor within the manor of Oldswinford), perhaps indicating reuse, in the 14th century, of a then 400 year old boundary.

Although there is no evidence to indicate the exact site of the stone chamber, there is good reason to believe that it was located on the sandstone escarpment within about 250m of the present-day junction of Love Lane and Heath Lane. It is probable that such a location, in conjunction with neighbouring waypoints, would be consistent with the charter estate excluding (as one unit) the settlement of Oldswinford *and* its agricultural land. Even by 1699, Oldswinford's fields had extended little further west than the bottom of the Love Lane escarpment. More tellingly, Bach's 1699 map provides clear evidence of medieval strip cultivation in the fields east of Love Lane (i.e. nearer to Oldswinford's centre), whereas most of the fields which had developed west of Love Lane showed no sign of strip farming and are, therefore, more likely to be post-medieval in origin. For this reason, it is probable that the proposed boundary line (waypoints 16 to 18) would have excluded most, if not all, of Oldswinford's cultivated land from the charter estate.

### **18. From (the) stone chamber along (the) hill to *stiran mere***

Some previous boundary interpretations have tended to assume that the hill in question is Wychbury Hill. This is roughly circular in plan; and the difficulty one faces with this assumption is deciding upon the direction meant by the phrase "along the hill".

There is less ambiguity in the present interpretation because the hill in question is a linear feature: the escarpment extending from Hanbury Hill southwards and running immediately to the west of the modern-day Love Lane. As already indicated, this delineates the Keuper Sandstone beds of Oldswinford from the Bunter Series sandstone and pebble beds of the low lying heath-land to the west (now occupied by Mary Stevens Park, Bigmoor playing field, the western half of Stourbridge Golf course and much of Norton).

The assumed line of the charter boundary follows Love Lane southwards along the top of this escarpment. The fall to the west is around 20m and, even today, the escarpment is a very noticeable feature of the landscape. Moreover, moving "along the hill" (south along Love Lane) brings us directly to a lower lying marshy area containing a fish pond. Photograph 9 shows the pond which, today, abuts a house in Peartree Drive. The pond has clearly been enhanced by damming and small-scale quarrying, but it is quite possible that a smaller pool existed in this location during the Anglo-Saxon period, only being enlarged in more recent times. The pond lies just within Pedmore, but it is shown (though apparently smaller than today) on Brettel and Davies' 1827 plan of Oldswinford.

Immediately to the north-west of the present-day pond there was (until being drained in the 20th century) a flat boggy area crossed by numerous small streams. The whole area was referred to as The Moor in the 1733 Oldswinford boundary perambulation. Big Moor and Landing Moor fields are shown close to the fish pond on the 1846 Tithe Map of Pedmore; and (as mentioned above) "Bigmoor" survives today as the name of a (now drained) playing field in this location. A succession of dammed ponds existed just 320m to the west in the 18th century (see Court and Blackden (1782) and Hemingway (2005)), and another small pond is shown 300m NW on the 1888 6-inch OS map. If the present pool does not, itself, represent *stiran mere*, it seems highly plausible, because of the watery nature of the surrounding area, that *stiran mere* was located very close by.

### **19. From *stiran mere* to the street**

Other researchers suggest that the "street" mentioned in the charter is the A491 (Hagley Road). However, in the present boundary interpretation "the street" would, instead, have to be the B4187 (formerly A450) Worcester Lane.

Anglo-Saxon usage of the word *strete* or *stræte* (street) usually indicates a paved or surfaced, (rather than a mud track), so the "street" referred to here must have been an important route at the date of the charter. There is no way to know whether Worcester Lane was paved at that time, but if Hagley Road was paved (as other researchers assume), it seems likely that at least part of the former road was paved as well. Worcester Lane could have been the main route from the settlement of Oldswinford to Worcester, the diocesan centre and the later shire



town, but there are, perhaps, other reasons why road might have been surfaced at the time of the charter (see waypoint 22 below).

The exact point at which the charter boundary joined Worcester Lane is unknown, but if (as suggested here) the purpose of the boundary's circuitous route was to exclude the agricultural lands of Oldswinford and Pedmore, it is likely that the boundary would intersect Worcester Lane somewhere near the point shown in figure 7. It is also possible, of course, that the route to the "street" might have followed a line WNW up a small valley, along the later parish boundary (i.e. between the houses of the present-day Alderlea Close and Peartree Drive and then along Oakleigh Road).

*It is not known whether Worcester Lane followed its present-day course at the date of the charter. It is conceivable that, at one time, it did not deviate so sharply towards Hagley Road, but instead followed a straighter route towards the top of Rectory Road (as tentatively depicted in figure 6). As Worcester Lane now joins Hagley Road at the parish boundary, the deviation might have come about soon after the parish boundary was established - presumably some years later than the date of the charter.*

## 20. Along (the) street to the posts

Whether the posts were indicators of distance, direction or ownership, it is clear from the present context that they were located somewhere on, or near to, Worcester Lane. No evidence of their existence remains on the ground today, but if the interpretation of waypoint 21 (below) is correct, the posts would probably have been located near the junction of Worcester Lane and the precursors of today's Racecourse Lane and Redlake Road. The posts are referred to as *stapelas* in the charter; the OE root of this word is *stapol* and, according to Smith (1956b), its use in place names might indicate a post at a boundary, meeting place or a ford. The latter is perhaps of most relevance here as both Worcester Lane and Racecourse Lane would have forded a stream (that drained into the supposed *stiran mere*) just a few tens of metres south and west of the present road junction. The charter suggests there were two or more posts in the vicinity, and these might have marked the two fords as well as the road junction.

## 21. From the post to Wind Edge [Wind Bank]

The charter refers to this waypoint as *Pindofer*. Hooke (1990) favours "flat topped ridge" or "tip of promontory" as the translation of *ofer*, and the location suggested here fits that description perfectly. A north-facing promontory (or end of a ridge), now known as Rock Mount, protrudes from the side of a 20m high escarpment near the junction of the present-day Ounty John Lane and Racecourse Lane (see figure 6). The promontory is, indeed, flat-topped; and it occupies an exposed position: westerly winds blow almost unimpeded across the low-lying former heath- and moor-land to the west, and are then funnelled and intensified by the escarpment. Photograph 10, taken from just half-way up the side of the promontory and looking NNW over its shallower tip (now part of Stourbridge Golf Course), illustrates the height and exposed nature of this position.

## 22. From Wind Edge to oak lēah (wood)

According to Hooke (2011), *lēah* generally refers to a wood. Its use in the charters might not always indicate the presence of contemporary woodland (land use may have changed since *lēah* had become incorporated into an earlier place name), but where the word is compounded with a tree species it does seem to indicate the existence of a wood at the time of the charter. In the present context, at least, Hooke (1990) prefers the latter interpretation. We can only speculate upon the nature of this oak wood. It would probably have been managed woodland rather than a residual patch of wild wood. Indeed, it might have been some sort of wooded pasture, which would have been an important resource in the Anglo-Saxon period.

The 6-inch OS map of 1888 shows an Oakleigh House near to the Oldswinford-Pedmore parish boundary, and this has led some researchers to believe that it represents the location of oak lēah (waypoint 22). However, according to Haden (1988), this house was not built until 1870 and no earlier reference to the site of Oakleigh House or, indeed, to the name itself is known. As house names could sometimes be prone to a little fanciful invention (particularly during the Victorian era and thereafter), it is doubtful whether Oakleigh House can be considered reliable evidence of the Anglo-Saxon landscape.

Moreover, as Hooke (1985, 2008 and 2011) and Gelling (1992) point out, woodland (some of it oak) may have been extensive in the region at the date of the charter. Large areas remained, as part of the Norman Kinver Forest, for several hundred years, and Oveley Wood is shown within about one mile of this waypoint on John Speed's 1610 map of Worcestershire. The woodland has been intermittently cleared since the Anglo-Saxon period; and by the time of the first County Series OS survey of north Worcestershire (in 1882) only isolated areas survived - mainly in Pedmore and Hagley parishes. Because of the early extent of woodland, the "oak lēah" waypoint is not particularly helpful in establishing a precise location on the boundary.

However, there are a couple of clues to be found in 19th century maps of the area. Hooke (1990) makes reference to the field name Oak Leasow as a possible candidate for "oak lēah". In addition, a field named Barkers Oak (on the 1846 Tithe map of Pedmore) abuts the boundary between Pedmore and Hagley parishes.

It is not inconceivable that oak woodland extended between the two fields mentioned and perhaps some way to the north and south as well. Some of the longer (and probably older) field boundaries and tracks in the vicinity might even represent a fingerprint of the woodland's extent in the late Anglo-Saxon period (woodland was often hedged at the time of the charter), but in the absence of precise dates for the field boundaries this is just conjecture.

If we suppose that the area of woodland extended northwards as indicated by the diffuse green region on figure 7, the charter boundary would come into contact with the edge of the oak woodland on its way to the next boundary marker. This is consistent with the wording of the charter's boundary clause. It does not indicate a route through or along the edge (eaves?) of the wood, but instead simply says "...to oak lēah", which probably implies that the boundary makes contact with the wood at just one well-defined location.

One other piece of evidence supports the putative location of oak lēah. Its supposed northern boundary intersects Worcester Lane at a point exactly one mile by road from St Mary's church at Oldswinford; and this intersection lies adjacent to a field named Mile Oak (on the Pedmore tithe map). This might reflect the post-charter name of oak lēah, but more probably indicates that an oak tree surviving on the edge of the former woodland gave its name to Mile Oak field.

Photograph 11 shows, in a green tint, the area assumed to have been occupied by the southern part of this woodland. The photograph was taken from the Long Buckbury field on the Pedmore parish boundary (see figure 7), looking east towards Wychbury Hill.

*Did Worcester Lane (now the B4187) run through oak lēah at the time of the charter? Woodland was a valuable resource and was often hedged to control access for both people and animals, so it seems unlikely that a main road such as Worcester Lane would pass through oak lēah. Indeed, the 1845 Pedmore Tithe map and early 6-inch OS maps of the area hint that the route from Oldswinford settlement to Worcester might, at one time, have followed a more easterly course around the woodland. Aligning perfectly with the short north-south stub of Bromwich Lane, near its junction with Hagley Road (the A491), we see a long field boundary extending southwards towards the Pedmore-Hagley parish boundary. The field boundary could, perhaps, mark a southerly spur of Bromwich Lane as indicated in figure 8.*

*At the parish boundary - which may also have been the southern limit of oak lēah - there is, even today, a noticeable kink where Worcester Lane (in Pedmore) flows into Worcester Road (in Hagley). At that point the road widened and a corresponding discontinuity in the parish boundary line is marked on nineteenth- and early twentieth-century OS maps. Indeed the parish boundary line seems to be a continuation of the south-eastern edge of the roadway here, as though the boundary had once been delineated by an easterly extension of Worcester Road.*

*It is, therefore, conceivable that in earlier times Worcester Road (which, on its way north, had already circumnavigated one of Hagley's open fields) deviated to the east and then north to join up with Bromwich Lane. Circumnavigating oak lēah, this track may have formed the main route from Worcester to Oldswinford and Pedmore.*

*If that supposition is correct, the question then arises as to whether Worcester Lane in Pedmore existed at the time of the charter. We have so far assumed that it did, being the strete (i.e. made or paved road) referred to in waypoints 19 and 20. We have further assumed that it was paved because of its importance as the main route to Worcester. But that might not be a valid assumption if the present supposition of a link between Bromwich Lane (in Pedmore) and Worcester Road (in Hagley) is correct.*

*So, could there be another reason why Worcester Lane between Oldswinford and oak lēah was described in the charter as a made road (strete)? Possibly. Urban roads were sometimes referred to as stretes. But even if the road only served as an access route to oak lēah, some form of built-up surface would certainly have been beneficial to the carts and other traffic that would have been frequently needed to convey timber and other woodland resources towards Oldswinford and beyond. Such a service road, stretching between the settlement of Oldswinford and oak lēah (which later lay in the parish of Pedmore) would not be inconsistent with Oldswinford and oak lēah belonging to the same estate in the tenth century, as seems to be implied by the course of the charter boundary.*

### 23. From oak lēah to *lusedune*

The "-dune" element of this waypoint means hill or down, and the only feature in the vicinity that it might describe is Burys Hill, located near the southern end of Ounty John Lane. Relative to the already elevated landscape, Burys Hill is a low and shallow sided peak lying about 300 metres west of oak lēah. Photograph 12 was taken from Racecourse Lane, looking south. It shows the broad, flat-sided slope of Burys Hill (the assumed *lusedune*) in the distance. The hill's summit is just right of centre, and Ounty John Lane runs along the top of the tree covered escarpment to the left.

The OE word *lus* means louse, but according to Smith (1956b) it could have other meanings. In place names, it might represent a personal name, and, occasionally, it was used to describe something small or insignificant. The latter sense is most frequently to be found in the context of a hill or barrow. This adjective certainly describes Burys Hill quite accurately and seems to be a more likely etymology than the literal interpretation of "*lus*-" assumed previously.

*This meaning of 'lus' is not common, but examples of derived place names are known: Loosebarrow in Dorset and Luscott in Devon (Smith (1956b)). According to The University of Nottingham (2013) this usage of 'lus' might also underlie the name of a village near Leominster in Herefordshire called Luston. It is conceivable that it is also related to the settlement name Lusbridge (the pre-twentieth-century form of Ludgbridge at Wollescote) and might even have played a role in the derivation of the name of Lousy Wood, a narrow strip of woodland just north of the Stour near Prestwood, Staffordshire.*

Other interpretations have been proposed for *lusedune* however. Pritchard (1997+) has tentatively suggested that "lousy" might refer to land with a pig sty (after Field, 1989), or that the hill in question could have been louse shaped. The former suggestion might be consistent with the idea of the nearby oak *lēah* (waypoint 22) being a wooded pasture. It is also interesting that the terms "ount" (Haden, 1988) and "louse" have both been used locally to refer to a mole. The reader may wish to draw their own conclusions from this.

#### **24. From *lusedune* to ?Sica's fortification**

Most researchers agree that a likely site for this waypoint is on the high ground to the south of Burys Hill, near the fields named Great Buckbury, Barn Buckbury, Lower Buckbury and Long Buckbury on the 1846 Tithe map of Pedmore parish. The name ending "-bury" in "Buckbury" probably derives from OE *burh* (dative *byrig*) meaning a defended place (this is the reason for the translation of *sicanbyrig* to "Sica's fortification"). Place names with a "-bury" ending sometimes, but not always, refer to a fortification on a hill.

The geography of the vicinity would seem to make this a favourable location for a fortified settlement. The land falls away steeply to the south of waypoint 24, and this site also has access to a potential water supply: a stream valley begins a few metres away from this waypoint and eventually drains into the pools of Brake Mill Farm some 1200m south.

#### **25. From ?Sica's fortification to the street**

Here, "the street" is undoubtedly a reference to the Roman road running NNW from Droitwich to Greensforge and Wroxeter. This forms the western boundary of Pedmore parish and part of the western boundary of Oldswinford. As the Roman road is an extended feature, the main question here relates to the route taken from Sica's fortification to "the street". A route close to the Pedmore-Hagley parish boundary seems most likely, as this follows a natural boundary feature, along a gently sloping ridge down to the Roman road.

The tithe maps for Pedmore (1846) and Hagley (1838) both show fields in this vicinity that spanned the parish boundary. Whilst their northern ends reside in Pedmore, they appear to have belonged to Hagley parish. The boundaries of these fields are straight, which probably indicates they are the product of eighteenth century enclosures, and as the parish boundary line (which is also perfectly straight) bisects these field boundaries, it is possible that it represents an even later realignment. Whether the field boundaries that run roughly parallel to the documented parish boundary reflect an earlier division between Pedmore and Hagley parishes, or even date back to the time of the charter, is unknown.

## ***The western boundary, back to the start (waypoints 26 to 28)***

*The remainder of the boundary clause appears to follow part of the Roman road and then the ridge of high ground west of Norton, then to the Stour north of Wollaston, and finally along the river back to the starting point. The charter boundary seems to have run close to that of the modern parish and county, although it is likely that some minor adjustment of the boundary has taken place.*

### **26. Along (the) street to (the) boundary dyke**

Following a line roughly NNW, the first 850m of the Roman road ("the street") is now occupied by County Lane and a bridleway named Sandy Lane (which is also named County Lane on some maps). At the northern end of the bridleway, the Roman road intersects the junction of the present-day Broadway, Sugar Loaf Lane and Greyhound Lane. As illustrated in photograph 13, the Oldswinford parish boundary then takes a more northerly direction than the Roman road, which continues on towards Greensforge in an almost straight line.

*The names given to roads and tracks in this area can be misleading. The sandy track named Roman Road, which runs alongside Clent View Road, does not actually follow the line of the real Roman road. It is, in fact, the remains of an 18th century toll road and lies at an angle of about 12 degrees east of the first-century Roman road.*

*Roman Road (i.e. the 18th century toll road) is also known as Sandy Lane. This should not to be confused with the bridleway called Sandy Lane mentioned above which, unlike Roman Road, does run along the line of the first-century Roman road.*

It is instructive here to examine the parish boundary in the region between Sugar Loaf Lane and Dunsley Road. The 1888 boundary line (on the 6 inch OS map) is coincident with the modern county and parish boundary. However, it differs slightly from the boundary courses depicted on both Court and Blackden's 1782 map and Brettel and Davies 1827 map. It is also worthy of note that, with the exception of a few tens of metres at its northern and southern extremities, this 1.5km stretch of the parish boundary is completely straight. The northern end of the straight section joins the southern boundary of Wollaston township, which is also perfectly straight and, on the 1888 OS map, runs ENE past High Park Farm.

Straight boundaries are often a characteristic of 18th century re-planning; and the linearity of the abovementioned stretch of the parish boundary (together with the fact that it bisects several otherwise continuous 18th century field boundaries) is suggestive of a fairly late origin. (This part of the parish boundary might even be contemporaneous with the Wollaston township boundary defined in 1780, although no direct evidence for this is known.)

North of Dunsley Road, however, the parish boundary is more sinuous and follows the crest of High Park ridge. Photograph 14 shows substantial earthworks here that extend between Dunsley Road and Bridgnorth Road: a pair of banks and ditches, separated by about 20 metres, stretch along the top and western flank of the ridge. Even today the eastern bank stands 2 to 5 metres above the partially filled eastern ditch. Although the earthworks are substantial, they are masked by dense woodland and are yet to be recorded by English Heritage.

This system of banks and ditches is very likely to be the charter's boundary dyke (*meredic*); and if this is the correct attribution the modern parish (and county) boundary line here must also represent that of the charter estate. The ridge extends north of Bridgnorth Road, but any earthworks in this vicinity have been all but obliterated by the later Wollaston Ridge Quarry (now a SSSI with limited public access).

As illustrated in Photograph 13, the ridge of high ground also extends some distance south of Dunsley Road (although it is somewhat less pronounced, and less linear, in places). Whilst it

is conceivable that the boundary dyke also extended along this part of the ridge to the present-day Westwood Avenue, or possibly even further south onto the Norton housing estate, no sign of earthworks exists in this region today.

As the southern limit of the dyke is unknown, this begs the question of exactly where the charter boundary left the Roman road (*strete*) for the boundary dyke (*meredic*) - i.e. the location of waypoint 26. The 1827 map indicates that the parish boundary ran along the Roman road and present-day field line to the west of the modern boundary until it intersected Swinford Lane, at which point it veered east towards the ridge top. Court and Blackden's earlier map (1782) shows a broadly similar course.

Given the topology of the land and the proximity of the ridge lines to the Roman road, there would appear to be three options for the location of waypoint 26: near the end of Sugar Loaf Lane (marker 26a); close to Westwood Avenue (marker 26b), or near Dunsley Road (marker 26c), with the first option seeming the least likely.

*The dyke's age is unknown, but it is conceivable that even in the tenth century it was of considerable antiquity. It was clearly a significant structure - both structurally and functionally - and at the time of the charter, it was evidently used as a boundary marker. Indeed, the probable line of the dyke (or at least part of it) has served to mark the parish and county boundaries for a millennium; and, if the present identification is correct, the same boundary line forms part of the western edge of the Dudley Metropolitan Borough today.*

*It is possible that the dyke's tenth-century function as a boundary marker was not its original purpose. Prior to the eighteenth century, the area seems to have been unenclosed heath land, so it is unlikely that the dyke began life as a mere field boundary. A pre-charter estate boundary is more probable; but, without hard archaeological evidence, it is impossible to say whether this might date back to the early post-Roman or Romano-British periods or even to the Iron Age. Indeed, the bank and ditch system here seem so substantial that one can't help but wonder whether it originally served some sort of defensive function.*

*At less than 1km long, the dyke on High Park ridge is short by comparison with many others in Britain. Bell (2012) suggests that some of the shorter dykes might have been intended "to control and to tax movement of people or goods, by forcing them to use designated routes". Dunsley Road, which lies adjacent to the (apparent) end of the dyke, seems to be an ancient route from Kinver, Whittington and Stourton (Perry, 2001); and a connection between this road and the dyke is one possibility.*

*Alternatively, the dyke may have served a similar purpose with respect to the nearby first-century Roman road. In a few locations in the Midlands (i.e. Derbyshire and Shropshire) and in Wales, dykes have been recorded which join or cross Roman roads. They consist typically of a single bank and ditch, vary from several hundred metres to a few kilometres in length, and appear to date from the late Roman or post-Roman / early Anglo-Saxon periods. The geography in the vicinity (see figures 6 - 8) would certainly have been amenable to such a use, but there is no known archaeological evidence to indicate whether this was the case.*

Clearly, at the time of the charter, the dyke was already an established boundary feature, and this might indicate that it represented the western edge of Swinford or of an older estate to which Swinford once belonged.

## **27. From (the) boundary dyke to (the) Stour**

Because the translation of the boundary clause (quoted by Hooke (1990)) uses the word "from" rather than "along", this would seem to indicate that the dyke stopped some distance short of the Stour, perhaps near the junction of the present-day Hyperion Road and Vicarage

Road (see photograph 15), where the Wollaston ridge gives way Dividale Comon and to the stream valley of the Dividale Brook. The former is now farmland and the latter is now hidden behind the houses on the western side of Kingsway.

**28. Along (the) Stour so that [it comes] back to Swine Ford**

This waypoint is not shown on figure 7, but it clearly returns us to the starting point of the boundary clause.

## Accuracy of the Proposed Boundary Route

Despite a few similarities with Chambers' (1978) and Hooke's (1990) interpretations, the boundary route proposed above differs markedly from those which have been published before. Consequently, the present proposal can only be justified by a high level of correspondence between the charter's boundary clause and the evidence available for each waypoint (i.e. field names, mapped field boundaries, geological, geographical and ancient man-made features on the ground).

One consequence of the present boundary interpretation is that (unlike in some previous proposals) the waypoints plotted in figure 7 are spaced at quite regular intervals. This is encouraging. Closely, or unevenly, spaced waypoints would have been regarded with some suspicion, unless there happened to be a small and obviously important (perhaps valuable) landscape feature to be circumnavigated. While the uniformity of the waypoint spacing is reassuring, it is not, of course, proof of overall correctness or of the accuracy of any individual waypoint.

To assess the accuracy of the interpretation as a whole we must consider how closely each waypoint conforms to the various evidential sources, as well as the number of consecutive waypoints that are well supported by the available evidence. A rudimentary, and somewhat subjective, comparison is facilitated by simply totalling the number of descriptive elements in the boundary clause that are consistent with at least one piece of landscape, place-name or geological evidence along the proposed course of the boundary. For the southern boundary alone, the present proposal is consistent with seventeen independent descriptive elements. This compares with eight consistent elements in the routes proposed by Grundy (1928) and Chambers (1978), and ten in the cases of Hooke (1990) and Pritchard (1997+). Indeed, in the present interpretation of the southern boundary, there are only two waypoints (17 - the stone chamber, and 20 - the posts) for which evidence is weak and circumstantial. Evidence for the remaining points on the southern boundary is generally good and, in most instances (points 10-14, 16, 18, 21-25), the suggested locations fit the boundary clause very well indeed.

The alternative eastern boundary route (Route B) is perhaps better supported by the landscape evidence than is the conventional "parish-boundary" route (Route A), although the difference in evidential quality here is insufficient to justify any firm conclusions.

Because of the large number of waypoints that are well supported by the available evidence; because the waypoints are distributed quite evenly and logically, and because there seems to be a credible explanation for the resulting shape of the boundary, I believe the proposed boundary route (summarised below) can be regarded with, at least, a small degree of confidence.

## Preferred Boundary Route

Based upon this author's subjective assessment of the accuracy of each proposed waypoint, the following boundary route is suggested as being the most likely:

<b>Northern Boundary</b>	Waypoint allocation A, starting at the intersection of the A491 and the Stour.
<b>Eastern Boundary</b>	Route B, encompassing the whole of Oldnall hill.
<b>Southern Boundary</b>	Route via waypoint 11a, then around Oldswinford settlement.
<b>Western Boundary</b>	Via waypoint 26c.

Figure 9 summarises the preferred boundary route. Other researchers may, of course, come to different conclusions, but I hope the suggestions presented here will make a useful contribution to the debate.



## Discussion

Before examining what the charter bounds might be able to tell us about the tenth century pattern of land usage and ownership in the area, it is useful to consider a few additional details about the charter's designation and origin.

### ***The name of the charter estate***

The charter estate was carved out of a larger area called Swinford (or Suineford). The modern names Oldswinford and Kingswinford almost certainly derive from "Swinford" (although other theories have been put forward). At the time of the Domesday survey, the charter estate - or, more probably, a modified variant of it - was still known as Swinford (Suineford); and it was not until the medieval period that documentary sources began to use the name Oldeswyneford (or variants thereof) for the parish, manor and settlement centre. Similarly, that part of Swinford north of the Stour which had been retained by the crown in AD 951x959 was referred to as Swinesford in 1086 (though the name was prefaced with the words "Rex tenet", The King holds). This area eventually became known as Swinford Regis then Kingswinford.

As the village now known as Oldswinford appears to have been omitted from the charter estate, this raises the question as to what its Anglo-Saxon precursor was called. It is conceivable that the settlement became known as Upper Suineford when it was eventually added to the estate in order to distinguish it from the original Suineford, the focus of which lay on lower ground nearer to the Stour. We know, of course, that Upper Swinford is the name of a 19th century subdivision of Oldswinford parish, but the term is considerably older than that. It is used in a 1733 boundary perambulation to refer specifically to the area around Oldswinford village; and it is possible that this name has a much earlier origin.

The charter itself doesn't have a formal title. It is usually referred to in the literature as being a charter for "Upper Swinford", "Oldswinford" or "Old Swinford" in Worcestershire. However, to describe the charter in such terms seems inappropriate: the original Anglo-Saxon document mentions only the name "Swinford"; and all three of the afore-mentioned place names post-date the charter by many years. More importantly, using the designations "Oldswinford Charter" or "Old Swinford Charter" (as some other researchers have done) might appear to pre-judge the question of whether the charter estate encompassed the Anglo-Saxon precursor of Oldswinford *village*. As we have seen, the charter bounds appear to exclude this settlement.

### ***Which king? What date?***

The PASE database (2010) indicates that there is some doubt over the identity of the king who made the grant to Burhelm. The Swinford charter refers (in latin) to the grantor being: *Eadred, king of the English and gubernator and rector of the surrounding peoples*. However, some academics believe the charter might actually have been issued by one of Eadred's successors: Eadwig or Edgar. Eadred's name appears to have been substituted for Eadwig's in at least one other Anglo-Saxon document; and the witnesses listed at the end of the Swinford charter seem to belong to the reign of King Edgar.

Eadred reigned as King of the English from AD 946 until his death in AD 955, when he was succeeded by Eadwig. Following insurrection in Northumbria and Mercia, Eadwig's brother Edgar acceded to the kingdom there, becoming King of the Mercians in AD 957. Two years later Eadwig died and Edgar became King of all the English.

The uncertainty over the grantor's identity leaves us with a corresponding uncertainty over the date of the Swinford charter. PASE (2010) quotes a broad potential date range of AD 951-9, but notes that one authority dates the Swinford charter to AD 958-9 - i.e. within the reign of King Edgar.

## Acreage and hideage assessments

One of the most useful inferences we can draw from the present boundary interpretation (if indeed it is correct) is that the settlement of Oldswinford and its agricultural land probably extended to about 150 acres (approx. one to two hides) at the date of the charter. Pedmore may have been a similar size.

There has been some discussion of the hideage assessments quoted in the charter and in the Domesday book entries for Oldswinford and Pedmore. Before commenting further on this, it is useful to review the meaning of a "hide" and compare this with the approximate areas of the land associated with local estates and parishes.

*A hide was a unit of cultivated (or ploughable) land area used as the basis for assessing tax liability. Introduced by the mid-Saxon period, it was supposedly the amount of land that could support one (extended) household and which could be cultivated by a single team of eight oxen in a ploughing season. It was not an absolute measure of land area and, for a number of reasons (i.e. the quality and fertility of the land being ploughed, as well as local custom), the number of acres in a hide tended to vary between about 48 and 240. As time went by, the physical size of a hide became more standardised and by the early Norman period, one hide was usually equivalent to about 120 acres.*

For the purpose of this comparison, we can assume a hide is approximately 120 acres, but whatever the assumed size of a hide (or of the supposedly equivalent *mansæ*), the *manse* and hideage assessments given in the charter and in the Domesday book represent only a small fraction (of the order of one tenth) of the total land of each estate. This is evident from a comparison of the acreages in table 2 with the Domesday book hideage assessments of the related estates: (King)Swinford - 5 hides; Amblecote - 1 hide; (Old)Swinford (not including Amblecote) - 3 hides; Pedmore - 3 hides.

The charter specifies that the estate conveyed to Burhelm contained six *mansæ*; and this has led some researchers to suggest that the estate granted would have included most of the area enclosed by the ancient parishes of Oldswinford and Pedmore (as documented in 19th century maps). This seems an obvious assumption, but it does not necessarily follow that the estate conveyed in the charter extended to cover almost the whole of Oldswinford and Pedmore parishes. As the various hideage (or *mansæ*) assessments account for only a small fraction of the land occupied by each parish, there is scope for a different interpretation.

**Table 2. Total acreage of local parishes (and parts thereof) calculated from 19th century Ordnance Survey mapping**

Parish or land unit	Area / acres
Kinswinford (incl. the later Quarry Bank and Brierley Hill UD)	7372
Amblecote (part of Oldswinford parish)	665
Oldswinford (whole parish, including Amblecote)	3369
Oldswinford parish south of The Stour only (i.e. excluding Amblecote)	2704
Pedmore parish	1510
Hagley parish	2431

The key question is whether the various settlements within the proposed bounds (i.e. Wollaston, Bedcote, Wollescote, The Lye, Foxcote, and perhaps Oldnall and other smaller settlements and farmsteads which probably existed at the time) could have made up the estate's six *mansæ*. It seems plausible: presumably each settlement was occupied by at least

one extended household and was more-or-less self sufficient, so would (by definition) account for about one hide each.

Hemingway (2005) refers to an early parochial map of Oldswinford (not seen by the present author) showing that Foxcote farm(s) were once entirely in the parish of Pedmore. That being the case, one may deduce that Foxcote would probably have extended to at least one hide in order to make up Domesday Pedmore's 3 hides.

Also, by the time of the Domesday survey, Oldswinford included only three hides. As it had seemingly gained its new settlement centre and agricultural lands, but lost Foxcote and (if the eastern boundary route B is correct) most of Oldnall by then, we may surmise that Oldnall must also have made a very significant contribution to the charter estate's hideage assessment.

It is interesting to note that it is easier to reconcile the hideage difference if we assume that Oldswinford settlement had not yet been incorporated into the estate or manor of Oldswinford by 1986. However, it is unlikely that the *mansæ* and hideage figures quoted in the charter in the Domesday book are sufficiently accurate to draw any conclusions from this observation.

## ***Ownership of the land excluded from the estate***

This is an interesting issue, and one that goes hand-in-hand with the question of whether the charter estate's bounds reflect an earlier, or co-existing (e.g. neighbouring), territorial division.

The estate gifted to Burhelm would, it seems, have included Bedcote, Lye, Foxcote, Wollescote, Wollaston, perhaps Oldnall, and possibly a few other minor settlements and farmsteads, as well as large areas of uncultivated heath and moorland in the west.

We know, of course, that the area of Swinford north of the Stour (i.e. Kingswinford) was retained by the crown. And, if the proposed extent of the charter estate is correct, it seems the settlements of Oldswinford and Pedmore, their associated agricultural land, plus Wychbury Hill, its fort and (possibly) an area of oak woodland south-west of Pedmore were also excluded from the estate. It is not immediately obvious who owned these assets at the time, but much of the surrounding area appears to have belonged to the crown.

During the reign of King Ethelred (AD 978/9-1016), Kingswinford (together with the manors of Clent and Tardebigge) were sold to Ægelsius, Dean of Worcester, by the King, so they were clearly all royal land prior to this sale.

Indeed, there appears to have been long-standing royal links between these three villas. Apart from the abovementioned simultaneous transfer to Ægelsius, the Domesday book records that the renders for Clent and Tardebigge were paid at Kingswinford. The most probable reason for such a practice is that they were all, at one time, in common ownership. It is possible that there are much more ancient links between Clent, Tardebigge and Kingswinford - and hence the pre-charter Swinford. These land units may, at one time, have been parts of a much larger (and probably quite ancient) estate that started to break up many years before the date of the charter, the charter representing only one step in the extended process of fragmentation.

As the pre-charter Swinford was in royal ownership it seems very likely, in light of the foregoing observations, that Clent was also owned by the crown at the time of the charter. It was certainly a royal manor at the time of the Domesday survey. It was also the *caput*, or principal manor, of the Worcestershire hundred of Clent, which probably dates back at least to the mid-tenth century. Additionally, according to Currie (1998) Clent appears to have been the location of an early minster church (with dependent chapelries at Broom and Rowley Regis). Such churches were commonly sited within royal estates during the mid-Anglo-Saxon period. The evidence would therefore seem to imply that, by the time of the Swinford charter, Clent had been a royal land-holding for several hundred years.

But what was the status of the land sandwiched between Swinford and Clent (i.e. Hagley and those parts of Pedmore that appear to have been excluded from the charter estate)? Was this land owned by the crown (indeed was it part of the pre-charter Swinford) or was it a separately held estate? Royal possession seems the most likely scenario, particularly when one considers Hemingway's (2005) speculation on the bisection of Wychbury hill fort by the, presumably later, parish boundary: "*Perhaps Pedmore and Hagley to the south had been royal land given the division of the [Wychbury] hill fort between the two*".

Assuming this land was, indeed, owned by the crown at the time of the charter, the king must have considered the settlements of Oldswinford and Pedmore sufficiently valuable (either financially or politically) to retain them within his own estate. Whether these areas (and indeed Lutley, Cradley and Hagley) were also components of the original Swinford must remain an unanswered, though interesting, question.

### ***Relationship of the charter estate to the documented Oldswinford and Pedmore manors and parishes***

There are clear similarities between the bounds of the charter estate and those of Oldswinford parish. However, if the boundary analysis presented here is correct, there are also important differences in the southern, and perhaps eastern, boundaries; and we should consider whether these differences can tell us anything useful about the origin of the parish.

The most obvious question is whether the parish dates from before the charter, or whether it is a later development. It seems most likely that Oldswinford parish (or, at least, the form of the parish that we recognise today) dates from after the charter. If it, and Oldswinford manor, had been in existence before, it is hard to see why a new estate (i.e. the charter estate) would include every part of the parish other than its main settlement centre, and why it might have included part of a neighbouring estate (Cradley) as well. And, of course, there is no mention of the parish boundary in the charter itself - unless *meredic* in waypoint 26 can be construed as such. This is, of course, consistent with evidence from other parts of the Midlands and elsewhere that many parishes came into existence after about AD 1000 - in some cases several hundred years after.

So if Oldswinford and Pedmore parishes *are* of a later date, one or more boundary changes must have occurred in order to yield the parish outlines that are familiar from 19th century mapping. Two new boundary lines would have to have been drawn to separate Oldswinford, Pedmore and Hagley; and the settlement now known as Oldswinford would, by this means, have been placed within its own parish.

But when and how did such changes come about, and how are the charter estate's boundaries related to the documented 18th and 19th century boundaries of Oldswinford and Pedmore manors and parishes?

The charter estate and surrounding land must have seen several changes of ownership in the century or so leading up to the Norman invasion: the beneficiary of the charter (in AD 951 to 959) was Burhelm; and prior to 1066, during the reign of Edward the Confessor, (Old)Swinford manor was owned by Wulfwin; Pedmore by Turgar (or Thorger); Amblecote by two individuals of Earl Alfgar; Hagley by Godric (a royal theign), and Kingswinford by King Edward himself. There is clearly some scope for adjustment of manor boundaries along with the various changes of ownership that took place during this period; and clearly by the time of the Domesday book (1086), Oldswinford, Pedmore, Amblecote, Hagley and Kingswinford were distinct and separate manors.

The date of the associated parishes is less certain. We noted earlier that the regularity in the shape and size of Oldswinford, Pedmore and Hagley parishes might imply that their layout reflects a degree of authoritative planning rather than simply piecemeal evolution. Winchester (2008) points out that regular "planned" patterns of parish boundaries tend to date from the late Anglo-Saxon or very early Norman period when, in many parts of England, "the territorial

framework of the countryside was [being] rewritten". However, this is not a definitive rule-of-thumb; and according to Hooke (1985) the process of estate fragmentation (sometimes leading to regularities in the boundary pattern) seems to have begun somewhat earlier than this.

So when were the local manors and parishes founded? A clue to the origin of Oldswinford *parish* might be obtained from the events that followed the death of King Ethelred in AD 1016: those parts of the pre-charter Swinford north of the Stour that had been retained by the crown (i.e. Kingswinford, probably including Amblecote) saw an abrupt change of ownership. They were seized - together with Clent (presumably including Broom and Rowley Regis) and Tardegigge - by Ævic, Sheriff of Staffordshire, from Ægelsius\*, the Dean of Worcester, after the death of both Ethelred and Ægelsius\* in 1016. As a result, Kingswinford, Clent and Tardegigge subsequently became parts of Staffordshire.

When Hemming of Worcester documented these events in c1095, he did not mention Amblecote explicitly. But as Amblecote also became part of Staffordshire, it seems probable that it was amongst the lands seized by Ævic - probably being, at that time, an integral part of Kingswinford. Presumably the manor of Amblecote was then carved out of Kingswinford some time after 1016.

Despite the 1016 seizure, Amblecote remained in the Worcester diocese (which had been formed some time between AD 663 and AD 680). Indeed, the manor has resided within Oldswinford parish (part of the Worcester diocese) for most of its history; and it is tempting to speculate upon whether Amblecote's apparent separation from Kingswinford was somehow related to its ecclesiastical connections. This possibility raises the interesting question of whether the postulated division of Amblecote from Kingswinford was linked to the foundation of Oldswinford parish. If it was, that would probably put the date of the latter's formation - and perhaps also the boundary changes which gave rise to the neighbouring Pedmore parish - at some time after AD 1016. This might also be indicative of the dates at which the parish churches of St Mary's, Oldswinford and St Peter's, Pedmore were established (although it is quite possible that these churches developed from earlier religious sites, only becoming official parish churches after 1016).

Even if it were possible to accurately date the local manors and parishes, one should not assume that every metre of their boundaries also shares the same origin. Some parts are probably much older, being inherited from larger parent estates (e.g. Oldswinford's western boundary). And indeed some parts might be considerably younger: it is probable that, throughout their history, the parish boundaries will have been subject to occasional disagreement and revision (as evidenced, for example, by the 1733 Oldswinford boundary perambulation where two such disagreements are noted), finally resulting in the boundary forms recorded on the 19th century Tithe and Ordnance Survey maps.

With regard to these maps, it is interesting to observe that several small L-shaped steps exist in parts of the southern boundaries of Oldswinford and Pedmore parishes (see figure 7). Their shape obviously results from the parish boundaries following the edges of headlands and furlongs in each community's cultivated fields, and it almost certainly indicates that the agricultural lands of Oldswinford, Pedmore and Hagley abutted each other at the date(s) that the *L-shaped portions* of the boundaries became established.

\* PASE (2010) refers here to: Æthelsige, "deacon" of Worcester church and "one of the King's counsellors".

*What became of the charter estate? So far we have implicitly assumed that its boundaries were somehow modified to form the manors of Oldswinford and Pedmore, but we have no way of knowing whether that is correct. Perhaps the charter estate was dissolved completely or perhaps one or more fragments of the estate remained as identifiable land units within the new manor of Oldswinford. If the latter, that begs the question of what happened to those fragments and what status they held within the manorial system.*

*Many of the Anglo-Saxon charter estates were undoubtedly the direct precursors of entire medieval manors and parishes; and often the mutation from one to the other appears to have involved little in the way of boundary change. Clearly, that is not what happened in the case of the Swinford charter estate. An alternative scenario is exemplified by a small number of the Worcestershire charters which seem to represent estates that became subunits of later manors or vice versa; and one wonders whether something similar might have taken place here. What follows though is pure conjecture (some might say wild speculation), but it represents an interesting possibility nonetheless.*

*As we have seen, the settlement of Oldswinford was not included in the Swinford charter estate. Instead, the latter's main settlement and agricultural centres would most likely have been Bedcote (near the present day Stourbridge town) and Foxcote. The name of the estate (or a subsequent fragment of it) might well have reflected this; and interestingly there is a reference in the historical documents to an area called "Bettecote & Foxcote". This appears in a legal document (a Finalis Concordia) detailing the conveyance of a single messuage and  $\frac{1}{3}$  carucate of land to a gentleman named Geoffrey de Kynesdele in 1290. Chambers (1978) interprets this reference to "Bettecote & Foxcote" as evidence that the lands belonging to these settlements were contiguous in the late thirteenth century - i.e. that a tract of land must have stretched between these two settlement centres (perhaps including Lye and Wollescote) and that this tract was known (at least locally) as "Bettecote & Foxcote". Though its status is unknown, it was obviously a clearly identifiable land unit and of sufficient relevance in 1290 to be referred to in an important legal document.*

*According to Perry (2001), the sub-manor of Bedcote was formed in 1366, but its extent at that time is not recorded. The first description of its boundary was compiled by Bishop Lyttelton (in 1622) from depositions made during a court case of 1595.*

*Bishop Lyttelton's perambulation indicates that the 1595 boundary was very similar to those of the 1699 township of Stourbridge and the 1866 civil parish of Stourbridge (indicated respectively on Bach's 1699 plan of Oldswinford and the 1888 edition of the OS 6-inch County Series map). The major difference in the case of the 1595 boundary is that Bedcote manor's eastern limit extended significantly further towards Lye and Foxcote at that date. Chambers (1978) saw the apparent boundary change between 1595 and 1699 as part of a longer term process of fragmentation in which the 1595 Bedcote manor had been cleaved (perhaps when it was formed in 1366) from the larger "Bettecote and Foxcote" of 1290.*

*Extrapolating this hypothetical process further back in time, it is easy to imagine that the 1290 "Bettecote & Foxcote" might itself have been produced by fragmentation of a larger land unit, perhaps even the estate documented in the Swinford charter. This might not be as unlikely as it seems, because there would appear to be important similarities in the relevant boundary patterns. Firstly, the manorial centre of Oldswinford (i.e. the settlement) probably did not lie within the 1290 "Bettecote & Foxcote"; and, if the present boundary analysis is correct, it had also lain outside the charter estate.*

*Moreover, the course of the charter estate's boundary north of Oldswinford appears to be very similar to the boundary line of the 1866 parish of Stourbridge, the 1699 Stourbridge township, the 1595 Bedcote sub-manor, and in all probability the 1290 "Bettecote & Foxcote". We have already noted that the charter boundary might have followed the precursor of Heath Lane and Glasshouse Hill between waypoints 16 and 17 (i.e. Grendel's mere and the stone chamber), but it is clear from Bach's 1699 plan of Oldswinford that the present line of Heath Lane post-dates the open fields in this vicinity. At the time of the charter, this route-way probably followed a different line around the settlement's cultivated land. If (as seems most likely) it followed a more northerly course than the modern road, the route between Grendel's mere and the stone chamber (and hence the charter estate's boundary) may have lain very close to the southern boundary of the later Bedcote sub-manor.*

*When the new Oldswinford and Pedmore manorial boundaries were imposed upon the landscape, severe damage must have been done to the integrity of the charter estate; and, given the distribution of settlements and natural boundary features within the latter, a fragment encompassing the two main settlements (Bedcote and Foxcote) would seem to be a likely consequence. Whether this fragment had any official standing or administrative purpose, or whether its name (used in the 1290 Finalis Concordia) was just a colloquial term for a locally-recognised area within the manor is, like much of this section, a matter of pure speculation.*

## Concluding Summary

The new analysis of the charter bounds yields several interesting results. Firstly, the paved road (*strete*) in waypoints 19 and 20 is probably Worcester Lane (the B4187, formerly A450) rather than, as previously supposed, the A491 Hagley Road. The charter evidence implies that the paved section of Worcester Lane extended at least as far south as its junction with Racecourse Lane in the mid tenth century.

The western boundary of the charter estate appears to have corresponded closely to the later parish and county boundaries, although some minor differences are probable.

Of more significance is the finding that the charter estate's southern, and perhaps eastern, boundaries deviate considerably from those of the local manors and parishes. This is not inconsistent with the view that Oldswinford manor and the associated parish developed some years after the date of the charter (AD 951x959). Where the charter and parish bounds *do* coincide (i.e. where boundary lines appear to have been stable or reused) they tend to follow prominent landscape features such as the Stour, ridges of high ground and pre-existing boundary dykes.

Surprisingly, the charter's boundary clause appears to have excluded the settlement centre of Oldswinford and its cultivated fields. It had been formerly thought that the Swinford charter represented a direct precursor of Oldswinford manor and parish, but its markedly different boundary pattern indicates that the developmental links between them may be more complex than first envisaged. Clearly a significant degree of restructuring must have taken place in order to yield the documented (i.e. eighteenth and nineteenth century) outline of the parish.

Amongst the Worcestershire charters, there are a few instances where charter estates seem to represent sub-units of later manors or *vice versa* (e.g. Bickmarsh and Ullington, S 751 in Hooke (1990)), but it is thought unusual for charter bounds to cut markedly across manor boundaries unless they are outlining entire, perhaps pre-existing, sub-units of land. It is not known why the outline of Oldswinford manor differs so significantly from the Swinford charter bounds, but (if the solution presented here is correct) the evident realignment of the Oldswinford-Pedmore boundary clearly indicates a link between the foundation, or development, of these two manors. Moreover, the apparently planned nature of the local boundary pattern (figure 1) seems to imply a close connection with Hagley, Cradley and Lutley, and might even indicate that all five land units shared a common mechanism, or date, of origin.

The apparent form of the charter boundary probably reflects a combination of earlier territorial divisions and co-existing (neighbouring) ownership or tenure. The western boundary almost certainly represents an earlier division; and, indeed, waypoint 26 refers explicitly to a pre-existing *meredíc*, or boundary dyke which, the charter implies, stretched along the ridge of elevated heath land west of Norton and Wollaston.

To the south, the charter estate's boundary circumnavigated a "finger" of land that included Wychbury hill fort, the cultivated fields of Oldswinford, Pedmore and Hagley, and perhaps an area of oak woodland (the *acleg* of waypoint 22); all of which were distributed along the roads linking the ancient centres of Worcester and Droitwich to Penkridge and Stafford (now approximated in this region by the A491 Hagley Road and the B4187 Worcester Lane). Both roads appear to have been major and well used routes: the former being an iron-age (or earlier) salt-way; the latter a road of sufficient import to have been paved (near Oldswinford) at the time of the charter. King (2006) noted that "in the vicinity of Oldswinford, Stourbridge and Kingswinford, the field patterns seem to conform to the [Worcester-Stafford] road, as if they formed around it". Indeed, it is likely that both roads played a central role in the development of settlements and estates along their route. It is conceivable that all three of the abovementioned settlements, as well as Wychbury hill fort and possibly *acleg*, belonged to a single land unit established around this ancient road network. They may even have belonged to the pre-charter Swinford - perhaps being omitted from the charter estate because of the relatively high density (and hence value) of their agricultural land - but there is no documentary evidence to clarify their status or ownership at this time.



The course of the charter bounds around the settlement of Oldswinford suggests the extent of the latter's cultivated land. As we have seen, Oldswinford's fields probably reached no further than the Love Lane escarpment in the west; and their eastern limit could well have been demarcated by the dyke referred to in waypoint 16. If that assessment is correct, Oldswinford's cultivated land would have extended to no more than about 150 acres (approximately 1¼ hides) in the mid-tenth century.

In view of the apparent lack of correspondence between the bounds of Oldswinford parish and the charter estate along the latter's southern edge, there is no obvious reason to expect a correspondence elsewhere (apart from where the River Stour, ridges of high land and pre-existing dykes offer significant potential for boundary reuse). Thus, it seems prudent to regard the parish boundary as having no evidential value in itself; and an analysis based upon only landscape, place-name and geological evidence indicates two possible courses for the charter's eastern boundary: route A that follows the western arm of the Salt Brook (and the parish boundary); and route B, which traces the Salt Brook's eastern arm to encompass all of Oldnall hill.

The charter estate's cultivated land is specified as six *mansæ* in total. This compares to just three hides (about 360 acres) listed in Oldswinford's Domesday entry. The difference might be partially due to loss of the land between the conjectured route B and route A of the charter's eastern boundary - although such a migration of the boundary line could not explain the whole of the "missing" three hides.

The parish boundaries in this eastern region clearly respect the edges of pre-existing fields, resulting in "dog-legged" boundary lines where Oldswinford and Pedmore parishes meet the estates of Cradley and Lutley. Similarly, both parishes' southern edges exhibit numerous L-shaped steps around the furlongs and headlands that lay between the settlement centres of Oldswinford, Pedmore and Hagley; and this almost certainly indicates that the cultivated lands of each settlement abutted each other at the date the *L-shaped portions* of the boundaries became established. This date might not, of course, equate to the parishes' date of origin however. It is interesting to note that L-shaped steps occur primarily in those sections of the Oldswinford and Pedmore parish boundaries that deviate from the outline of the charter estate. The charter bounds were, it seems, routed around settlements and their associated fields, whereas the parish boundaries appear to have been designed to divide field systems and other important elements of the landscape (e.g. Oldnall and Foxcote settlements and Wychbury hill fort) in two.

The pattern of local manors and, perhaps, parishes may have developed in the late tenth or the eleventh century as a result of some form of local territorial restructuring overseen from a position of high authority. This clearly resulted in the major settlements - i.e. Oldswinford and Pedmore (and perhaps Hagley) - being assigned their own share of the local landscape. The intent might have been to roughly equalise each territory's size and value; and it is conceivable that Amblecote and the settlement of Oldswinford were added to the charter estate at this time in order to compensate for the loss of land in (the later) Pedmore parish and (possibly) Cradley. The division of Oldnall and Wychbury hill fort by the local parish boundaries might be evidence of a distribution of resources or of some compensatory element in the restructuring process.

The apparent omission of Oldswinford settlement from the charter estate raises a number of important questions: when did Oldswinford settlement become separated from Pedmore; was the eventual division of land here related to the formation of the parish(es); was it the result of a single boundary modification or a process of gradual evolution; and precisely what territory is represented by the Domesday entries for Oldswinford (Suineford) and Pedmore (Pevemore).

Evidently, the story of Oldswinford's origin is a convoluted one, and there are many outstanding issues to address, but it is hoped that the present study might offer some insight into the early development of this complex former region of north Worcestershire.

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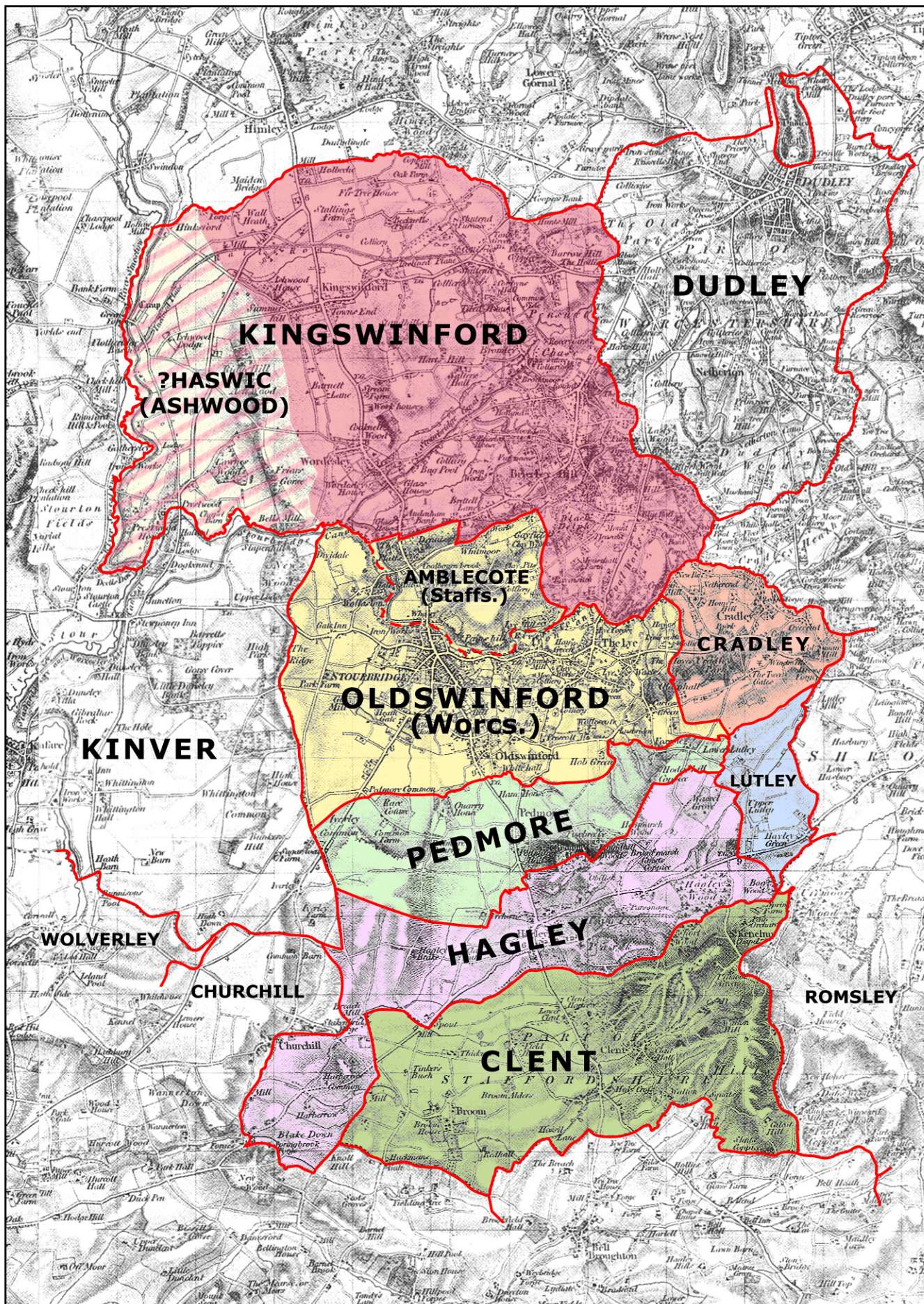


Figure 1. Ancient parishes and estates in the vicinity of Swinford



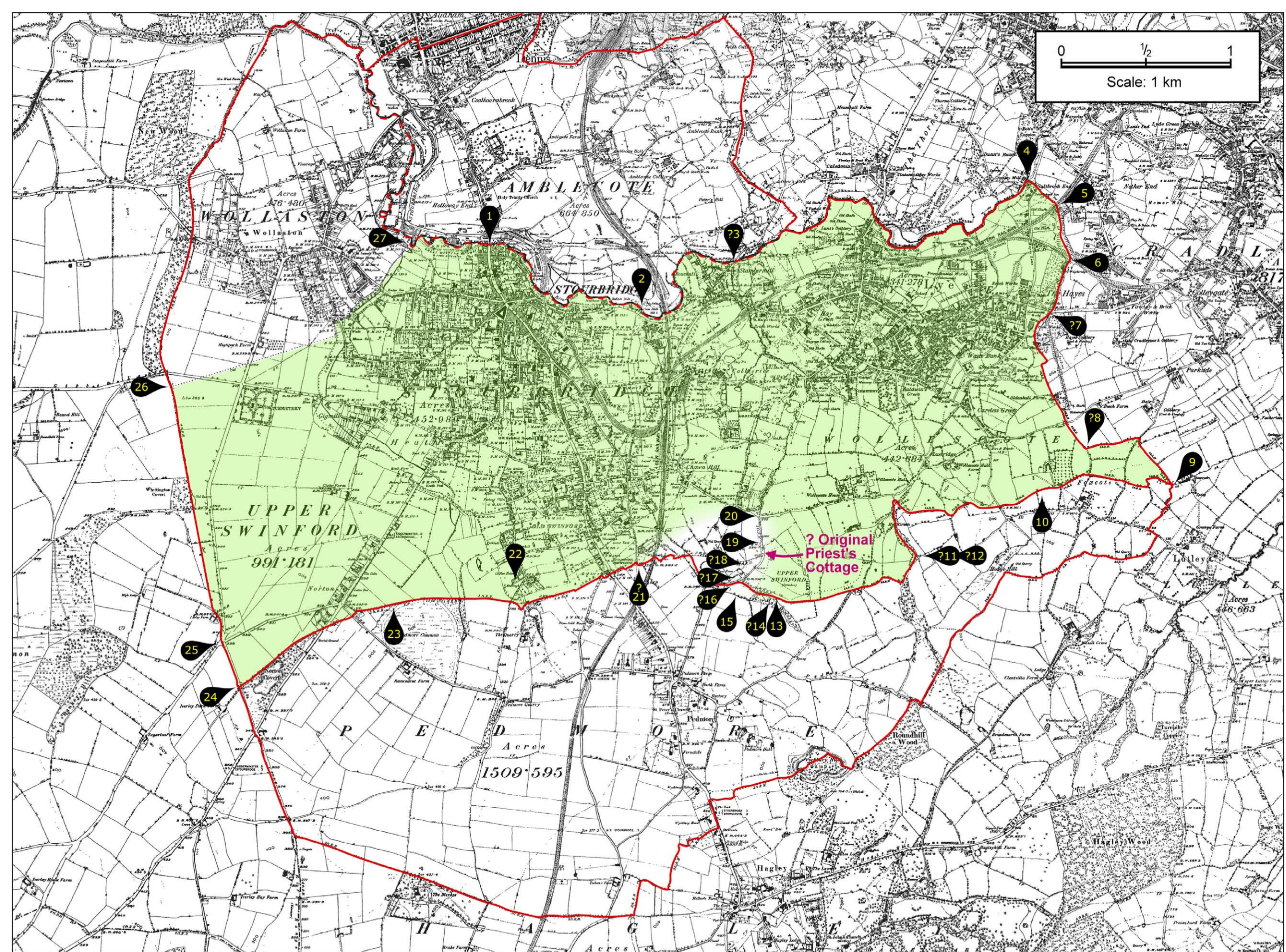


Figure 2. 951-9 AD Swinford Charter bounds with waypoints proposed by Grundy (1928) re-plotted on the 6-inch 1888 OS map



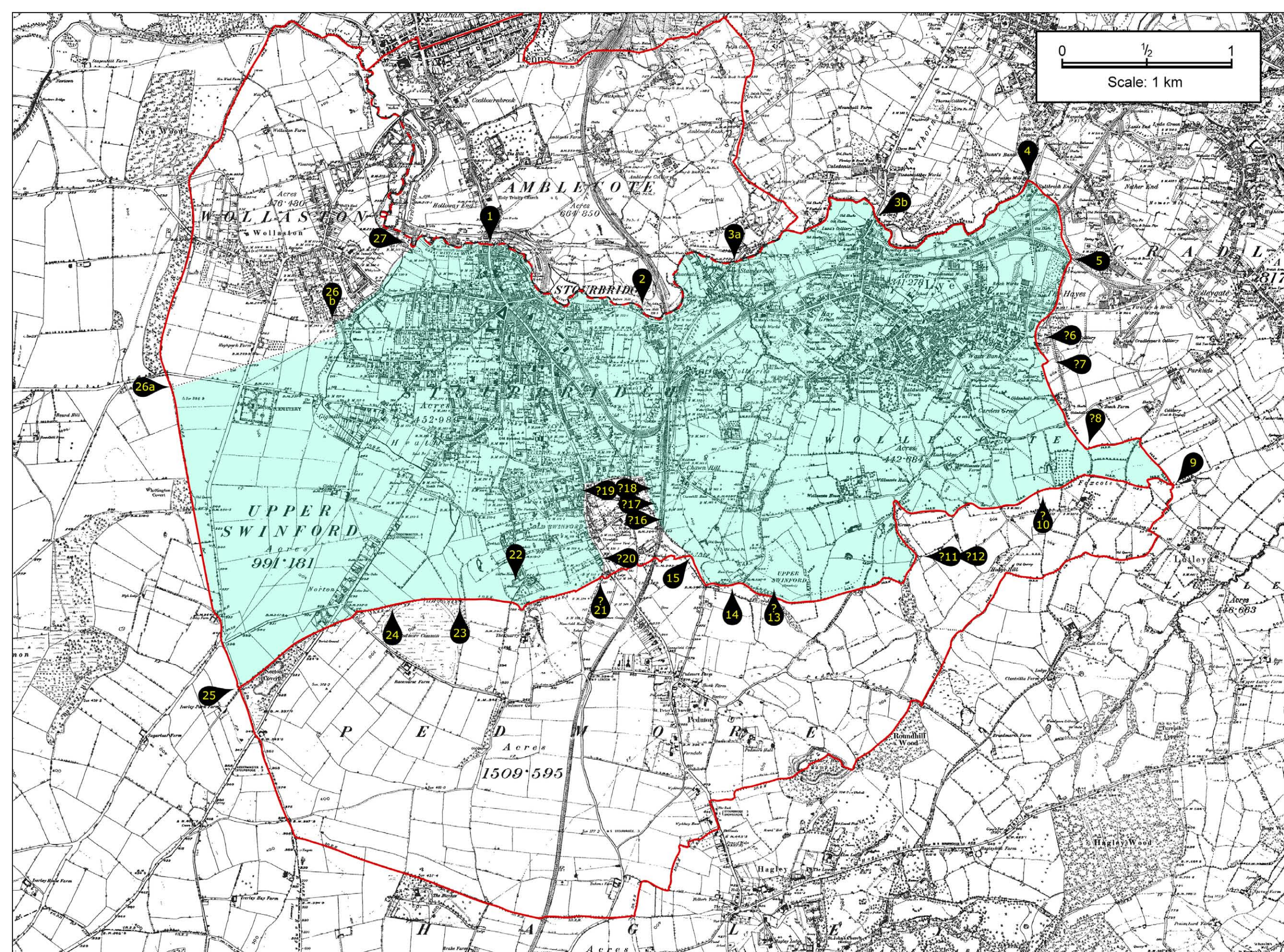


Figure 3. 951-9 AD Swinford Charter bounds with waypoints proposed by Chambers (1978) re-plotted on the 6-inch 1888 OS map



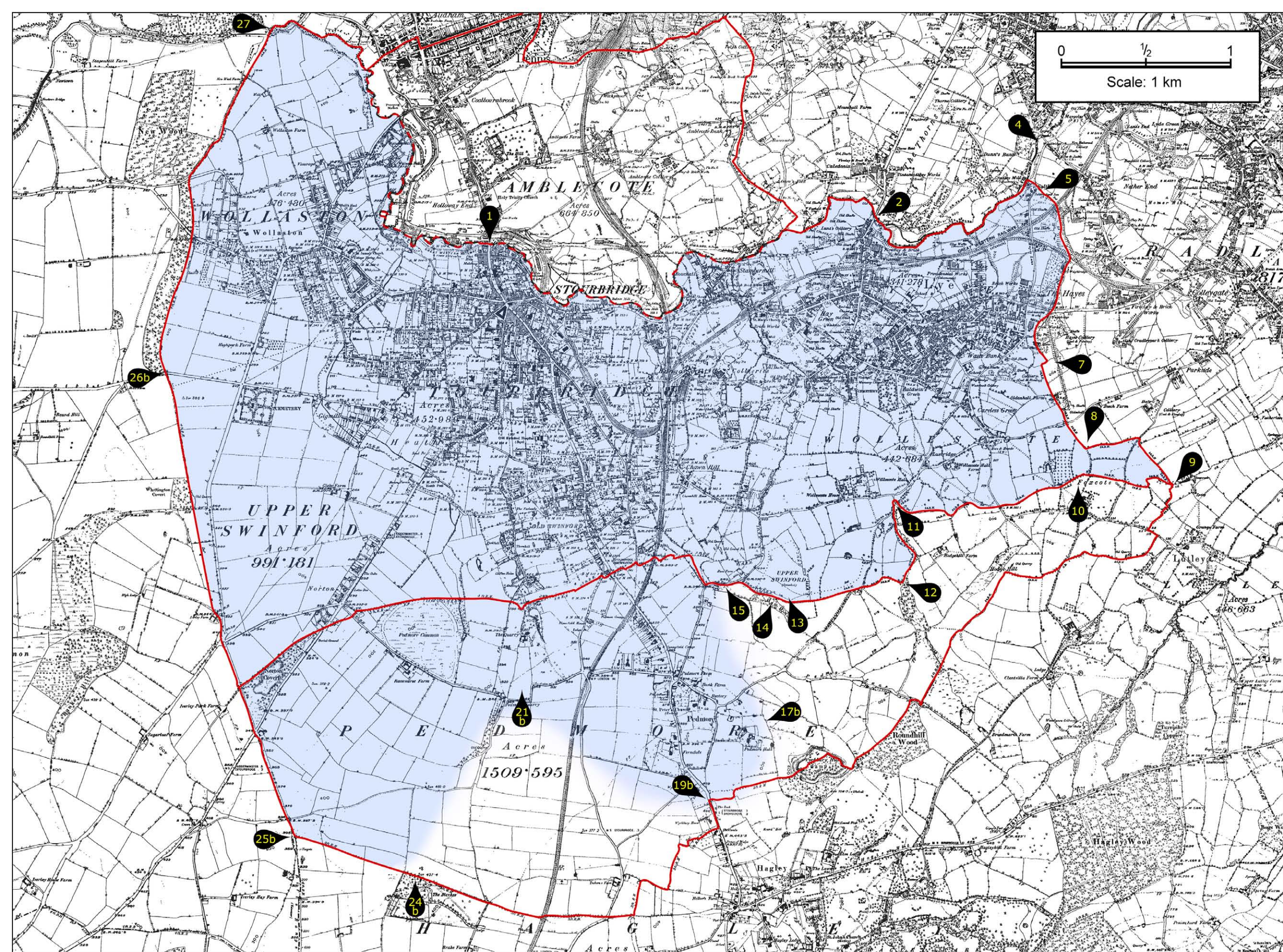


Figure 4. 951-9 AD Swinford Charter bounds with waypoints proposed by Hooke (1990) re-plotted on the 6-inch 1888 OS map



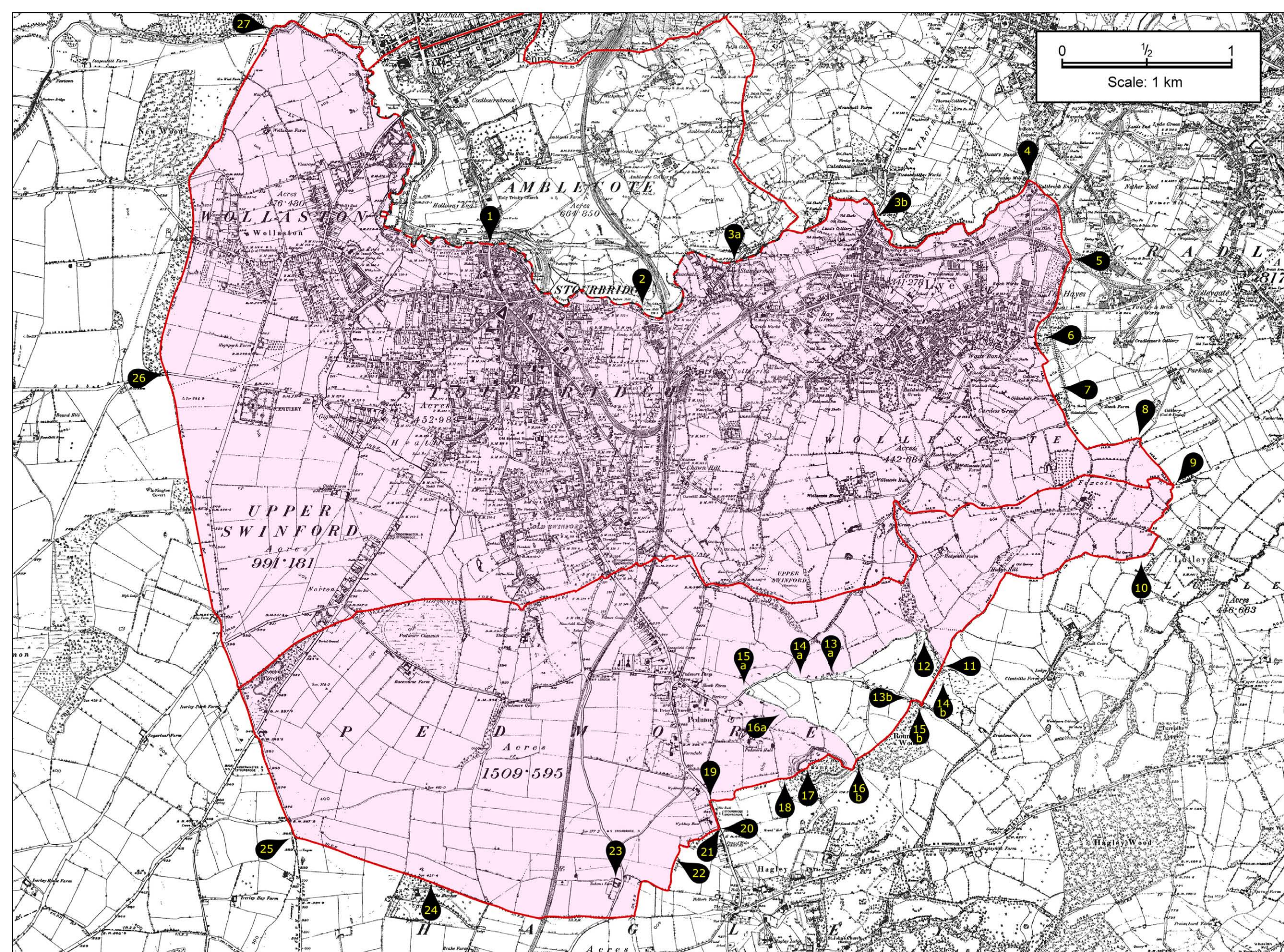


Figure 5. 951-9 AD Swinford Charter bounds with waypoints proposed by Pritchard (1997+) re-plotted on the 6-inch 1888 OS map



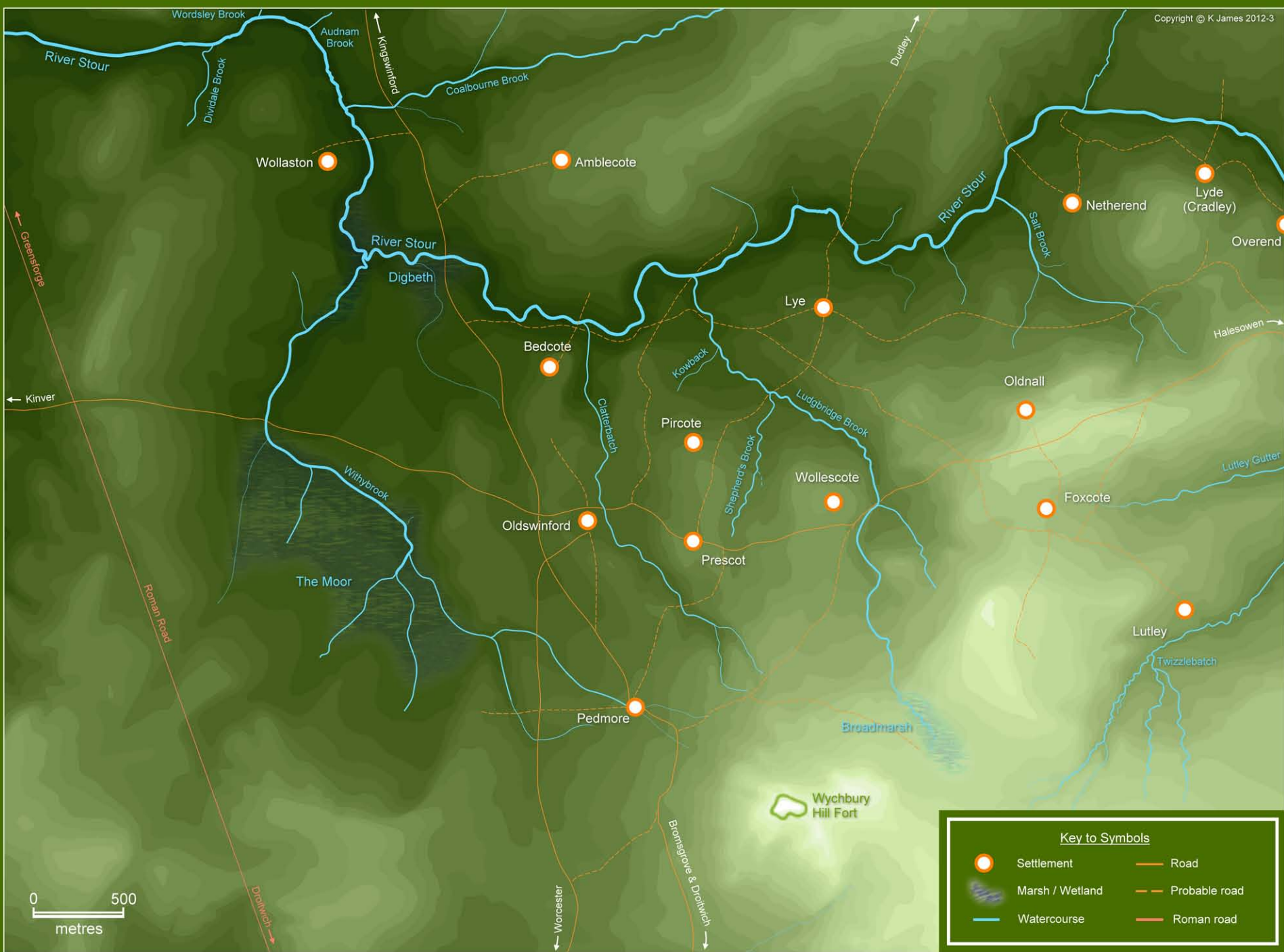
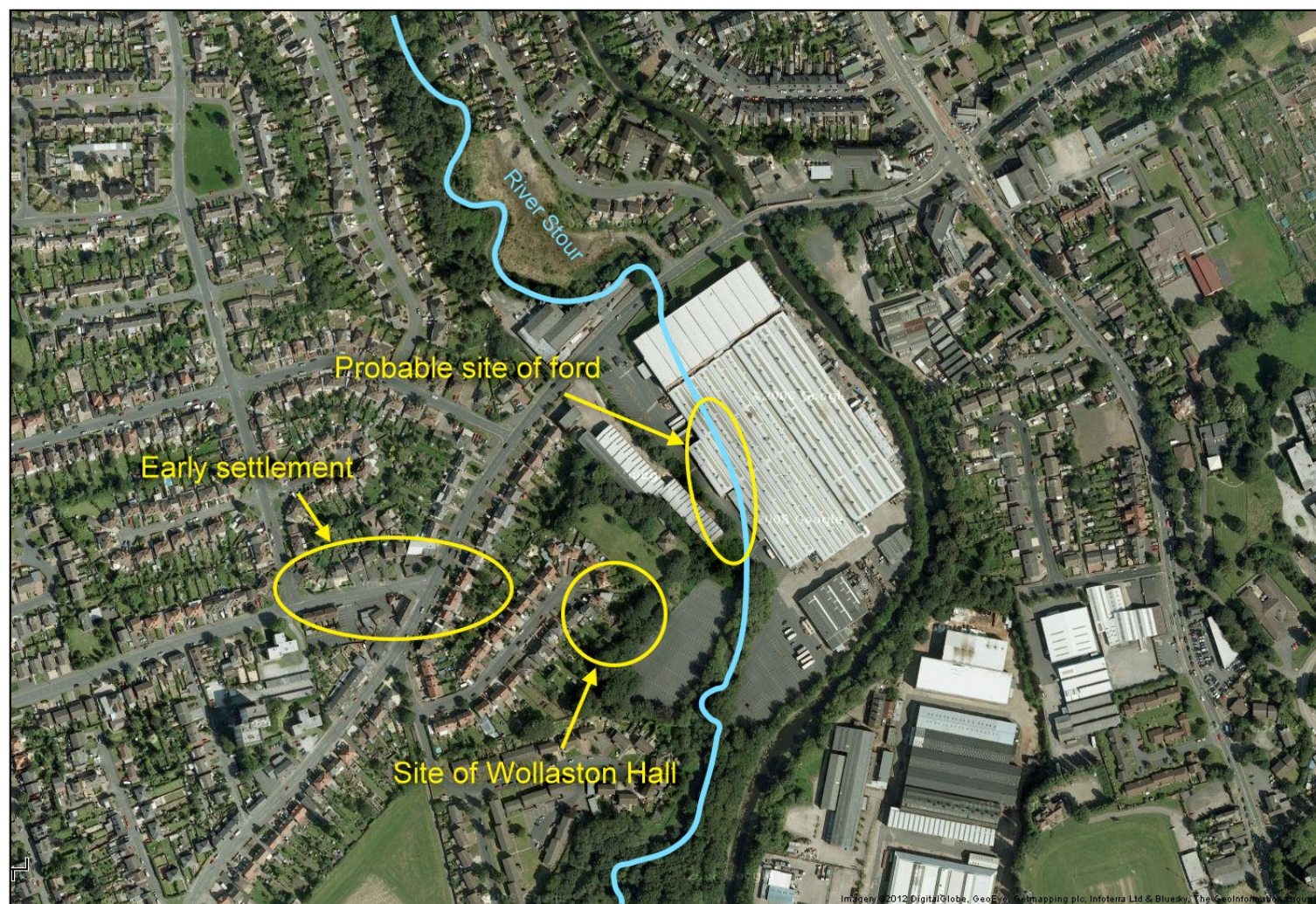


Figure 6. Principal tenth-century landscape features (excluding woodland and cultivated fields) of the area around Oldswinford settlement









Photograph 1. Site of probable ford at Wollaston





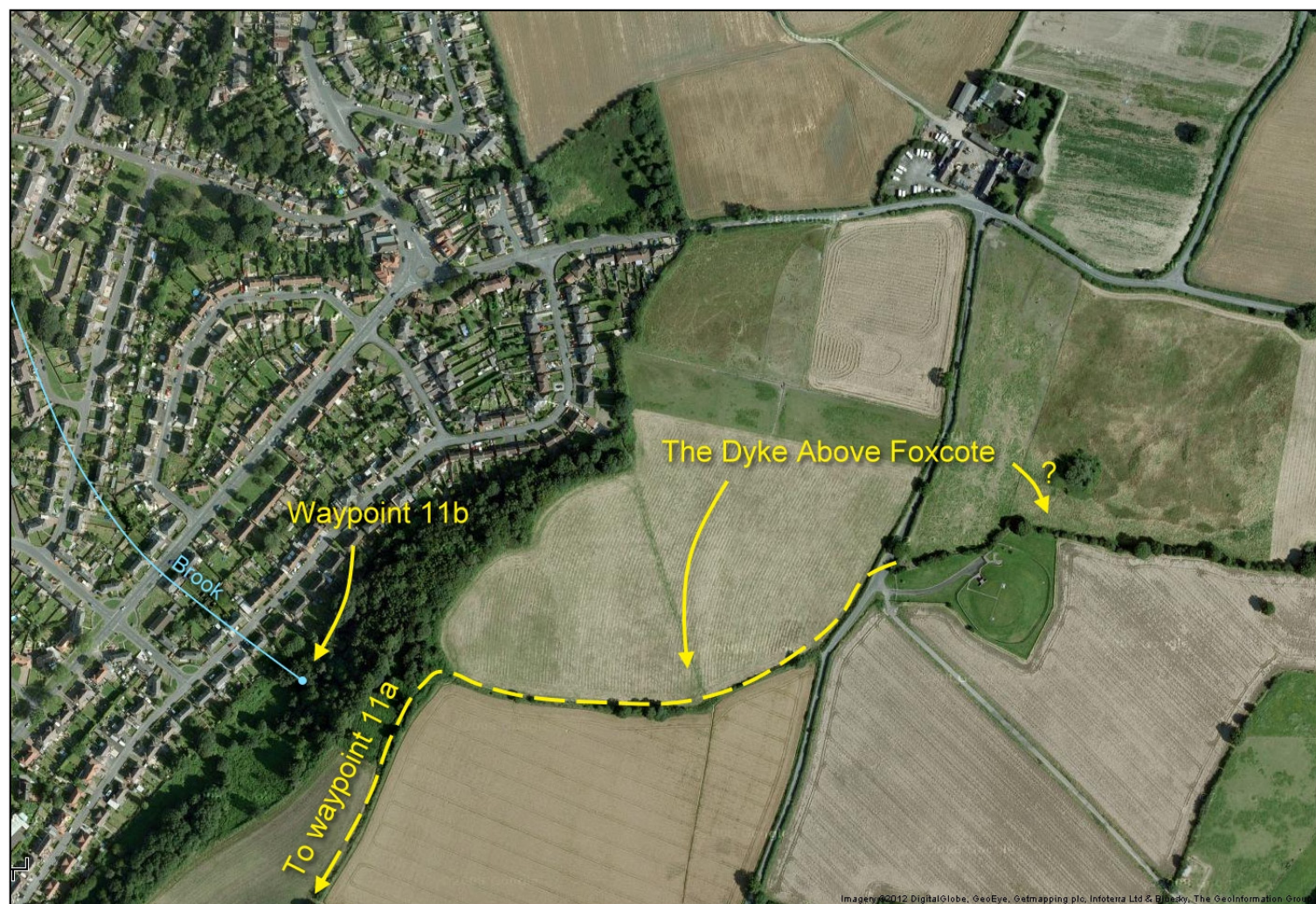
Photograph 2. Waypoints near the Salt Brook





Photograph 3. The dyke above Foxcote





Photograph 4. The dyke above Foxcote





Photograph 5. Principal waypoints of the central section of the southern boundary





Photograph 6. Postcard from 1907. Chawn Hill behind rail station; path and stream in front.



Photograph 7. Postcard from 1907. Fish-pond in the grounds of The Castle, Oldswinford.





Photograph 8. View from the Love Lane escarpment, looking westwards down its wooded slope into Mary Stevens Park





Photograph 9. The mere in Peartree Drive. The dam runs along the back edge of the pool in this photograph.





Photograph 10. View from the side of the supposed Wind Edge.





Photograph 11. Extent of the supposed Oak Leah (tinted green). Looking ENE from Long Buckbury field on the S Pedmore boundary.

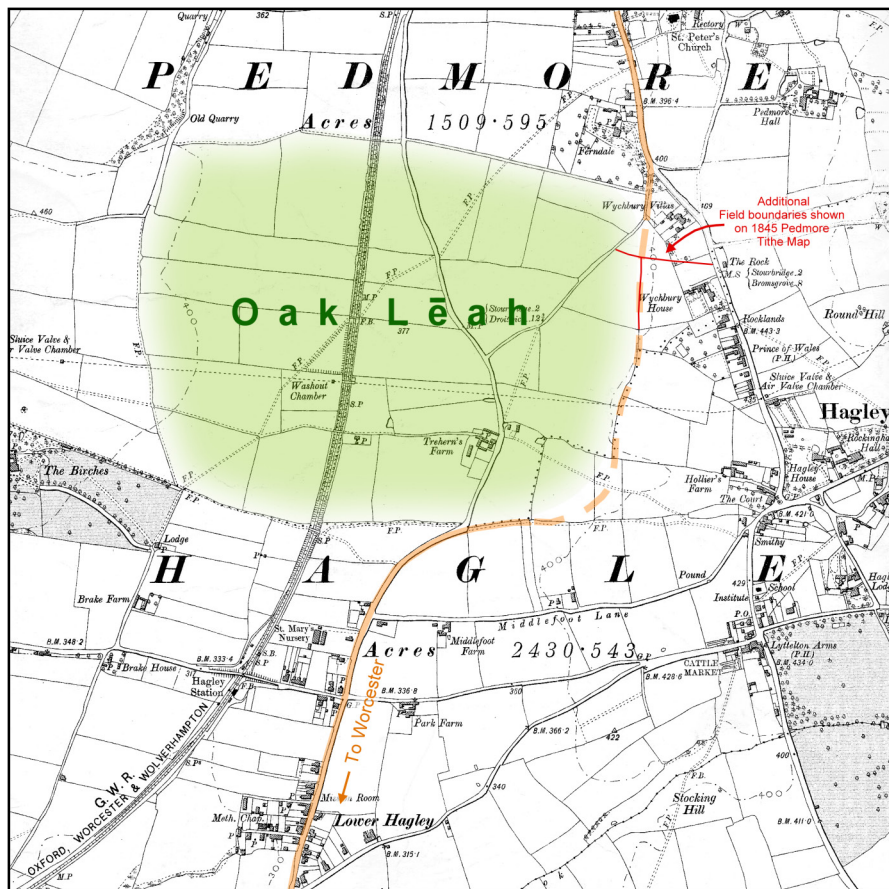


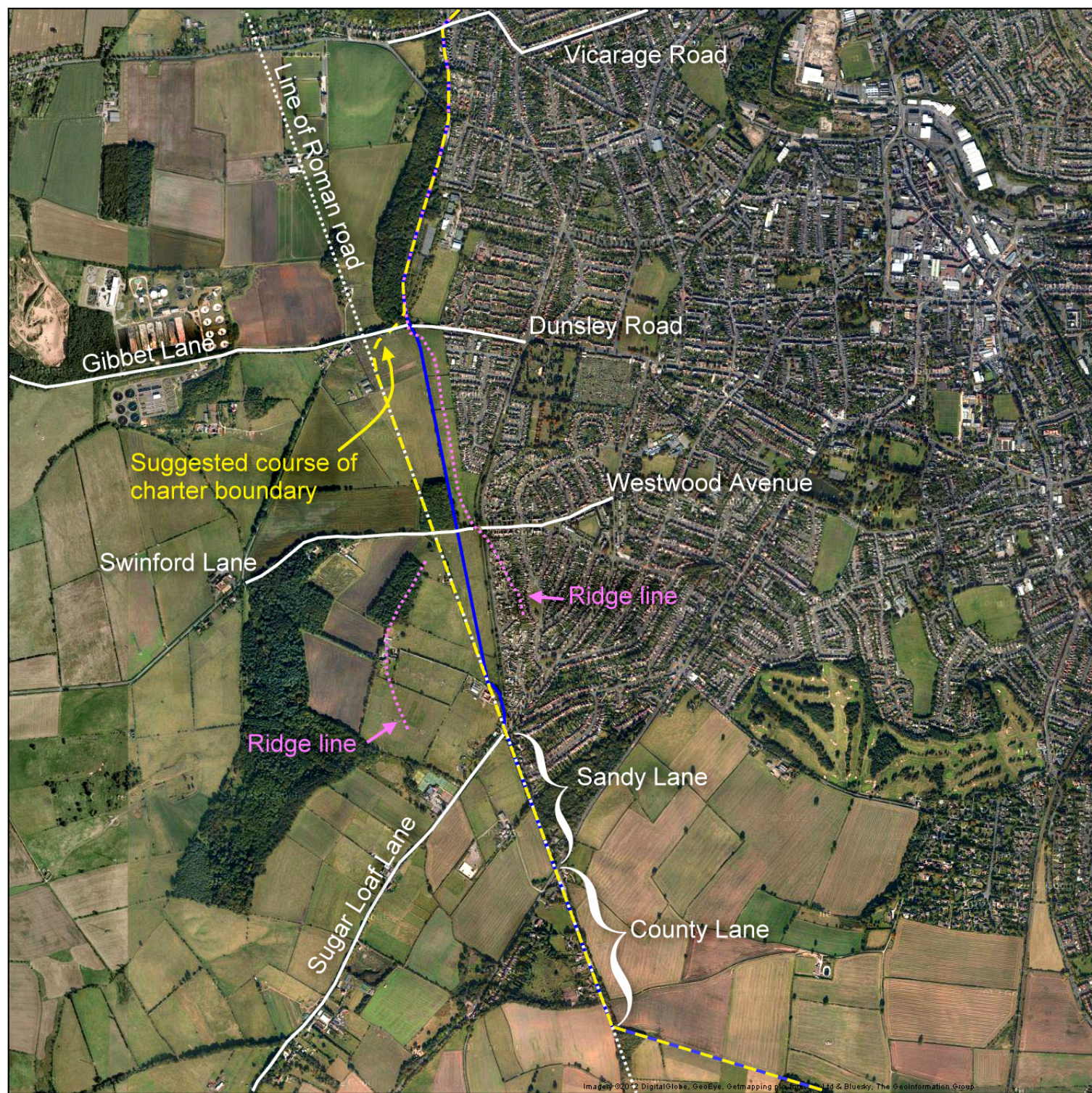
Figure 8. Conjectural tenth-century road circumnavigating oak lēah (on 1901 6-inch OS base map).





Photograph 12. Burys Hill (the supposed *lusdune*) right of centre, looking south from Racecourse Lane. Ounty John Lane lies on the wooded escarpment to the left.





Photograph 13. The Roman road linking the southern boundary to the western boundary dyke.





Photograph 14. The supposed *meredic* on High Park Ridge. The eastern bank is on the left and the western bank can be seen through the trees on the right.





Photograph 15. The route from the western boundary dyke to the River Stour via Dividale Brook.





