

# THE BOUNDARIES OF OVER WINCHENDON

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The bounds of Upper or Over Winchendon were appended to the foundation charter of St. Frideswide's, Oxford, which was re-established and endowed by King Ethelred in 1004, after the Priory Church had been burnt down when the Danes of Oxford were massacred. (It had a chequered earlier history; the original community of nuns was soon replaced by secular canons; regulars from Abingdon were introduced before 964, but the seculars were reinstated c. 975).

The foundation charter survives only in late and corrupt copies. Even the best text is at several removes from the pre-Conquest original. Three versions are given below. The first is as near as we can get from the extant texts to the late West Saxon original of 1004. The second gives the Middle English form in which the bounds were recited c. 1300. The third is a translation of the first. As it stands the first version is not classical or even grammatical, but it seems better not to normalise it. In particular, there is other evidence that dative plurals in *-an* instead of *-um* were becoming acceptable hereabouts by the late 10th century. The vowel *a* often stands for earlier *æ* (e.g. in *ærest*, *twæ*, *thæm*).

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- (a) This sondon thara .x. hida land [g]lemara into wincandone.
  - (b) This beth the x hide londe ymere in to Winchendon.
  - (c) These are the land-boundaries of the 10 hides at Winchendon.

The original name was probably *Winecandun*, Wineca's hill. The name Wineca is on record in Berkshire. Ekwall, however, suggests *wince*, 'reel, roller, pulley' as the first element. The local pronunciation, Wichendon, is probably as old as Domesday Book, though Domesday *ch* could represent medial *k*.

## 1. Ashulf's Well (742.154) and the Bury Ditch

- (a) Arest of æsculfes willan on tha biris (*for byrig?*) dic
- (b) Erest of asshulfes well in to byri(s)dyk
- (c) First from Aesculf's well (or spring) into (or along) the ditch of the Bury.

We start at the northernmost point of the parish, and the bounds as usual run clockwise. This is also the traditional point where the first day's perambulation of Waddesdon ends and the second begins. It is at the foot of the Avenue, where the Waddesdon brook emerges from Mortimer's Close. The Waddesdon perambulators have no map; they follow the directions of a small manuscript book, which is carefully preserved and produced every seven

years on Rogation Monday and Tuesday. In Winchendon the custom has not survived.

2. The Hundred Tree (745.153)

- (a) Of thara dic on hundrythe treow(e)
- (b) Of the dyk to undre the trowe (an interesting corruption)
- (c) From the ditch to the hundred tree

We follow the Bury ditch along the north side of Fridays Furlong to what was presumably the ancient meeting-place of the hundred of Waddesdon, still in use in 1004. But soon after 1007 the hundreds were grouped into threes for fiscal purposes, and Ashendon became the centre of the triple hundred. Thereafter the tree would have tended to lose its significance, except as a boundary mark.

3. The Two Moors (745.153 to 748.147)

- (a) Of than treowe on twam moram
- (b) Of the tr(e)owe in to more (the "two" being forgotten)
- (c) From the tree into two moors

The two moors were the unenclosed waste on both sides of the parish boundary, now included in the Great Park. This is confirmed by the field name Moor Close, found in both parishes. Perhaps there was inter-commoning, so that the two moors became one.

4. The Headland (748.147 to 749.145)

- (a) Of tham moran on th(am) heafodland
- (b) Of the more into the heved lande
- (c) From the moors into the headland

The grounds of the Manor House are just a furlong wide and probably represent a furlong (in the other sense) of the earliest open field of Over Winchendon. The headland on the parish boundary is represented by the S.W. edge of the wood called the Wilderness in Waddesdon parish.

5. The Two Springs and the Riddy (751.145, via 753.142 and 758.140 to 753.134)

- (a) Of tham heafodland on twam willan [ ] rithige
- (b) Of the hevedlond in to twam welle y rithie (*or*: in to well syke)
- (c) From the headland into the two springs of (*or* and) the riddy (small stream)

The text is difficult. The charter roll has 'toen' for 'twam' or 'twæm' (dative of 'two') but presumably the boundary runs *between* the springs. One could emend to 'tweon'. One of the springs would be that shown on the six-inch and 2½-inch Ordnance maps at 751.145 in Horse Pond Piece, south of Lane End. As the coombe has two heads, the other spring may have been somewhere near 750.144. The *rithig* is the tiny stream which now usually rises about 753.142 but may in 1004 have risen further up Long Hill, perhaps even at the springs.

In one late manuscript 'rithie' has been replaced by 'syke', a commoner term for a small boundary stream or ditch; but 'riddy' is the genuine Bucks dialect form, still in use in Linslade.

The modern boundary no longer follows the riddy, and its present line running across the fields and dividing Lower Farm looks artificial.

6. Beachenbrook (753.134 to 751.124)

- (a) Of *tham rithige* on *bican broce*
- (b) Of the *rithie* (*or sike*) in to *Bichenbrok*
- (c) From the *riddy* into *Bica's brook*

*Bica* was the founder of *Beachendon*, the next hilltop-village to the east, now unhappily reduced to one farm. The name was *Bichyndon* or *Bechyndon* until the 16th century, when the vowel was lengthened to avoid unpleasant associations, or perhaps under the influence of the word "beech".

7. The River Thame (751.124 to 745.123)

- (a) Of *tham broce* on *tama*
- (b) Of *that brok* in to *tame strem(e)*
- (c) From the *brook* into the (river) *Thame*

The *Thame* has a Celtic name, *Tama*, probably meaning "dark, muddy" (cf. *Wendover*, meaning "clear streams"), which is first recorded in 672-4, but was no doubt borrowed over a century earlier. For one thing, the *m* was heard as such; by 575-600 it was considerably denasalized in Late British (or Primitive Welsh) and was nearer *v*, as in *Tavy*, *Teviot*. Further, the ending *-a* was lost in British by c. 550. Later borrowings of Celtic river-names were usually treated as indeclinable in Saxon.

Upper *Winchendon* now includes a small field called *Hadluck* to the east of the *Beachenbrook* at its junction with the *Thame* (751.124). This is a slight departure from the charter bounds; it may be the 3½ acres which the prior and convent were allowed to acquire in 1375, after an inquiry had found that this would not be to the King's loss.

8. *Ebbeslade* (745.123)

- (a) *Andlang tamæ* to *ebbeslade*
- (b) *Andlangs tame streme* to *Ebbeslade*
- (c) **Along the *Thame* to *Ebbeslade***

A *slæd* or *slad* is a breadth of greensward (often a water-meadow) in a valley, lying between woods or (later) between ploughed lands. The field-names of *Waddesdon* include *Shiplade* and *Thorn Slade*. The first element may be either the masculine personal name *Æbba* or the feminine *Æbbe*. There was nothing to prevent women from holding land, even quite early in the settlement period.

9. *Marwell* (743.126(?))

- (a) Of *tham slade* to *merwille*
- (b) Of the *slade* to *merwelle*
- (c) From the boundary-spring to the rough hill (*or mound*)

The boundary now turns away from the river and climbs the ridge. How far up the hill was the boundary spring in 1004? A small notch in the 300 ft. contour suggests 743.126, but the boundary itself has a kink at 742.127 (about 330 ft.).

10. Rowley (739.130)

- (a) Fram merwille to rугan hlæwe
- (b) Fro Merewelle to Rugslawe
- (c) From the boundary-spring to the rough hill (*or* mound).

There is another *rугan hlawe* in the boundaries of Chetwode and Hillesden, which gave its name to Rowley Hill and to one of the three hundreds of Buckingham. "Rough" was dialectally "row" rhyming with "dough". The hill at Winchendon is variously called Great Hill, Hillsbury Hill and Bulls Headland. *Hlæw* usually means an artificial mound, but it can mean an isolated hill. In this case either meaning is possible, or even both. This part of the boundary is marked by a good hedge-bank. The boundary twice changes from one side of the hedge to the other. There are some good lincs and ridge-and-furrow in this part of the parish.

11. The Foul Pit (736.133)

- (a) Of tham hlawe to (*or* on) thone fulan pitte
- (b) Fro the lawe (*or* lowe) to the foul putte (*or* fulpitte)
- (c) From the hill to (*or* into) the foul pit

The site of the pit is just north of the road, in a depression called Caddle Combe (caddle = confusion, mess). The boundary now goes round it, leaving the pit in Lower Winchendon.

12. Rushbrook (725.144)

- (a) Of tham pitte on risc broc
- (b) Fro the putte in to Rusbrok
- (c) From the pit into Rushbrook

The next mile or so is quite straightforward. Gallows Hill and Decoy Wood lie to the north, and another field name (The Grove) suggests that the woods used to be more extensive. To the west lies Watbridge (723.142) on the Ashendon-Winchendon bridleway, which though outside Waddesdon parish probably takes its name from the same Wott.

13. Waddesbrook (730.151)

- (a) Of risc(e) broce on wot(t)esbroce
- (b) Fro Rusbrok (in) to Wodesbrok
- (c) From Rushbrook into Wott's brook

Medieval variants are Woddesbroke, Wottesbrok, Wottisbrok; in 1625, Wadesbrook. Both the brooks have been diverted in the course of field drainage, but the boundary still winds in and out through Sampson's Meadow, Long Meadow (by Commonleys Farm), West Meadow and East Meadow, following the old course, of which only faint traces exist. The Rev. C. O. Moreton comments "The only sure indications are the crosses which are dug in the turf at the Rogationtide processions" (*Waddesdon and Over Winchendon*, S.P.C.K. (1929), p. 11).

14. Back to Ashulf's Well (742.154)

- (a) Of wotesbroce eft in to æsculfes willan

(b) Fro Wottisbrok est in to asshulfes well

(c) From Wott's brook back again to Aesculf's well (or spring)

'Est' (east) gives good sense, but the original almost certainly read 'eft' (back).

So the beating of the bounds of Over Winchendon would end where it began; and on the evening of Gang Monday the procession, their work done, would meet the Waddesdon "Pioneers" coming the opposite way, still with a day's journey ahead of them on the Tuesday. It is to be hoped that their meeting was amicable, and that they enjoyed suitable refreshment at the expense of their respective parishes.