Anglo-Saxon Estates in the Vale of the White Horse

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SUMMARY

On the southern side of the Vale of the White Horse the land rises steeply from the clay vale to the chalk downland. By late Anglo-Saxon times the area had been divided into a number of narrow, elongated estates, each incorporating a portion of the valley land, the scarp face, and a substantial area of the higher chalkland. Many of these estates were to be the subject of late Anglo-Saxon land grants, a number of the grants accompanied by detailed boundary surveys. The charters and related boundary clauses are of considerable interest in that they reveal information about land-use at the time at which they were compiled; they also cast some light upon the process of estate demarcation, for the grants did not always concern entire parishes. The present paper examines a number of charters which refer to the three adjacent parishes of Woolstone, Uffington and Kingston Lisle, although a fuller enquiry into the charter evidence available for a wider area in the Vale will be the basis of a forthcoming paper.[1] An appendix describes finds from a Romano-British and Iron Age site at Fawler Copse.

ESTATE UNITS

Circa AD 931 Æthelstan, then ealdorman of East Anglia, granted an estate at *Uffentune*, Uffington, to the church of St. Mary at Abingdon (Fig. 1).[2] The grant, however, appears to have failed to take effect,[3] for in AD 953 King Eadred is found granting the same estate to his 'minister', Ælfsige and Ælfsige's wife, Eadgifu.[4] Although this second estate, assessed at some 33 *cassati*, is said to lie at *Æscesburh*, the boundary clause of the charter, which is of undoubted authenticity, quite clearly encompasses the same estate as that described in the earlier grant. *Æscesburh* was the name given by the Anglo-Saxons to Uffington Castle, a major Iron Age hillfort which dominates the top of the escarpment on the west boundary of Uffington. The boundary between Uffington and Woolstone originally ran through the middle of the fortified area, and the name *æt Æscesbyrig* was also attached to estates in Woolstone parish in AD 856, AD 944 and AD 958.[5] The name may mean 'the *burh*, or

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[1] D. Hooke, 'Regional Variation in Southern and Central England in the Anglo-Saxon Period and its Relationship to Land Units and Settlement', in D. Hooke (ed.), *Anglo-Saxon Settlements* (forthcoming).

[2] P.H. Sawyer, *Anglo-Saxon Charters, an Annotated List and Bibliography* (1968) (hereafter S), S. 1208; W. de Gray Birch, *Cartularium Saxonicum*, 3 vols. (1885–99) (hereafter B), B. 687/8; App. 1.

[3] M. Gelling, 'The Old English charter boundaries of Berkshire', in *The Place-Names of Berkshire* (hereafter *PNB*), iii.i (E.P.N.S. li, 1976), 676–7.

[4] S. 561, B. 899, *PNB*, loc. cit.; App. 1.

[5] S. 317, B. 491; S. 503, B. 796; S. 575, B. 902; App. 1; M. Gelling, *Signposts to the Past: Place-Names and the History of England* (1978), 194, 201–2.
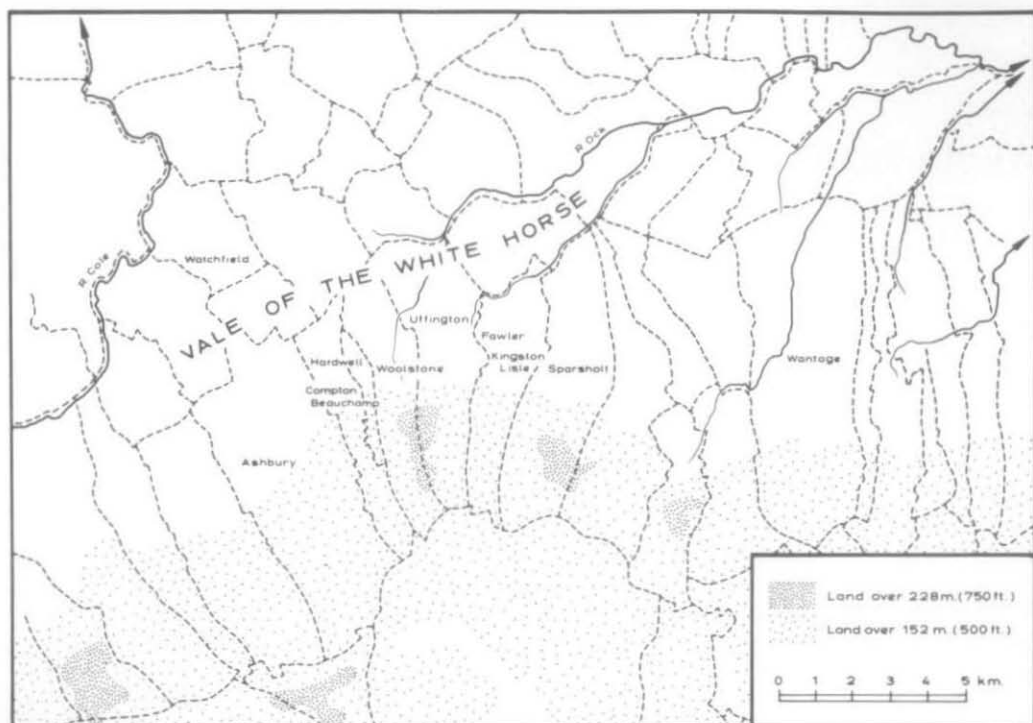
Fig. 1.   Estate patterns in the Vale of the White Horse, Oxfordshire.

fortification, of Æsc'. As Gelling notes, Uffington Castle is 'the most impressive of the Iron Age hill-forts on the Downs' and a related name *Æscesdun* seems to have been applied to the whole line of the Berkshire Downs *c*. AD 900.[6] The whole of Uffington had become a possession of Abingdon Abbey by 1086. The manor had been assessed at 40 hides TRE, some seven hides in excess of the 10th-century estate granted to Ælfsige and his wife, and its exact constitution is not clear. In common with many other church estates, the hidage assessment was reduced in 1086, in this case to 14 hides. An estate at Balking, in the Vale beside the River Ock, was associated with Fawler in a grant of AD 963[7] in which King Edgar granted lands to his chamberlain, Æthelsige; but Balking, with Woolstone, was to remain a chapelry of Uffington in medieval times, implying that Uffington had become the major ecclesiastical focus.

The western part of Woolstone, which had been granted as a 20-*cassati* estate *æt Æscesbyrig* to Aldred in AD 856, was re-granted to Wulfric, the 'minister' of King Edmund, in AD 944.[8] It was not, however, until AD 958[9] that Wulfric also acquired the eastern section, also described as lying *æt Æscesbyrig*, and it was presumably under his ownership that the estate became known as *Olvricestone*, 'Wulfric's estate', first recorded under this

[6]   *PNB* i (E.P.N.S. xlix, 1973) 3; C. Plummer (ed.), *Two of the Saxon Chronicles Parallel* (1896), 28.
[7]   S. 713, B. 1121.
[8]   S. 561, B. 899; S. 317, B. 491.
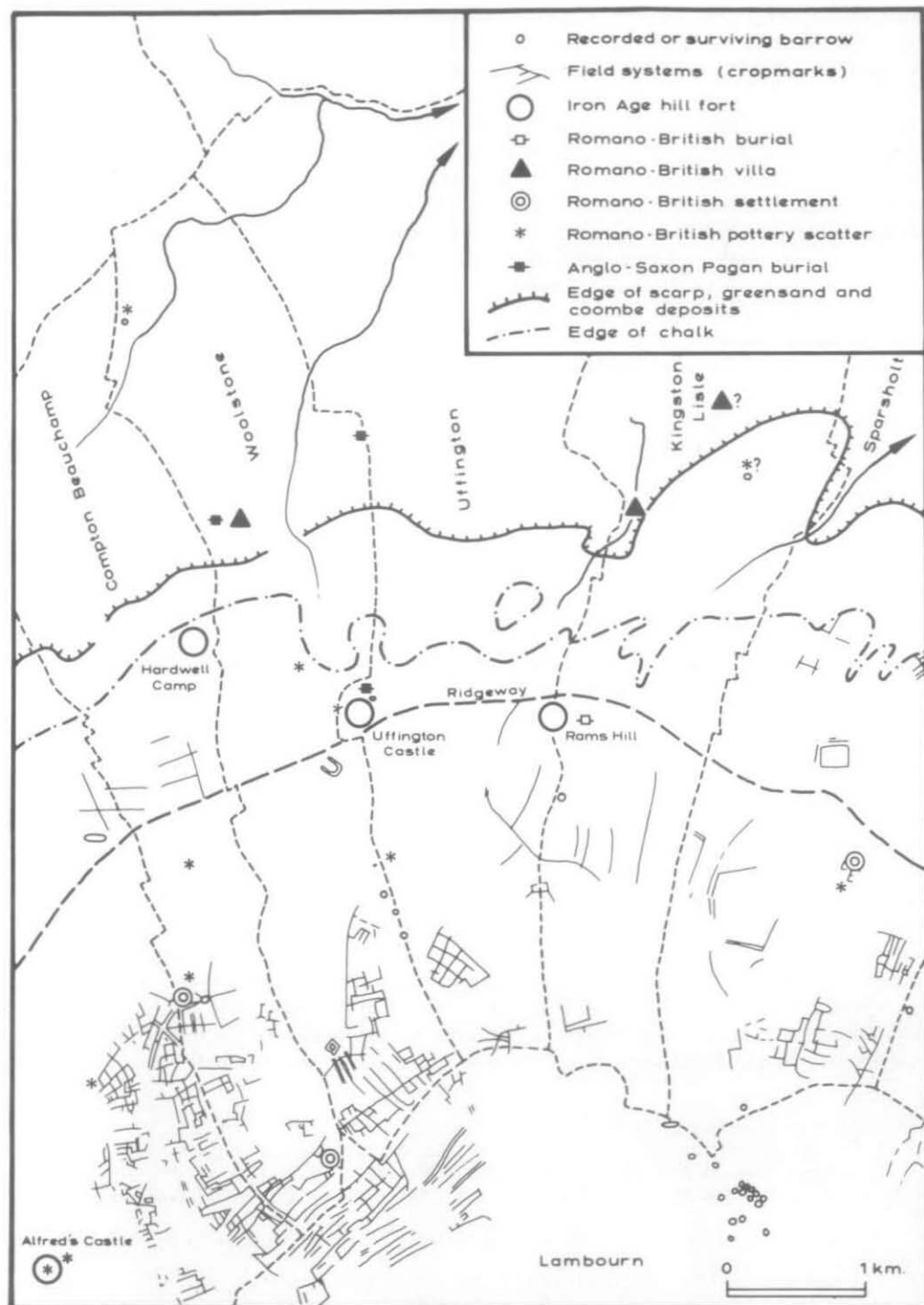[9]   S. 575, B. 902.

Fig. 2.   The area around Uffington: archaeological features.

name in the Domesday Survey of 1086.[10] At that time, however, the manor seems to have remained divided, for a 20-hide manor was held by the Bishop of Winchester, in 1086 reduced to 10 hides, and 20 hides may have been included within the Abbot of Glastonbury's Ashbury estate. The parish of Kingston Lisle, to the east of Uffington, was similarly divided longitudinally before Domesday, for in AD 963 King Edgar granted a 10-*mansæ* estate *æt Speresholte* to his chamberlain, Æthelsige, and the boundary clause reveals that this was the western section of the present parish of Kingston Lisle, probably coterminous with the township of Fawler. By 1086 this estate was claimed by Abingdon Abbey, allegedly with the king's consent, having passed from a former owner, Edric, to his son who was a monk at Abingdon. Other estates at *Cingestun* (7 *mansæ*) and *Kingestune* (20 hides) were acquired by the Abbey in the later 10th century. Although these may have been at Kingston Lisle, identification cannot be certain[11] and of these, only Fawler remained with the abbey in 1086.

It is not clear from the pre-Conquest charters when the area was first divided up into the rectangular-shaped holdings upon which the ecclesiastical parishes were based, but in the late prehistoric period the area seems to have formed a less fragmented territorial unit. So-called 'Celtic' field systems, which appear to have remained in use well into the Roman period, are cut across by the later estate boundaries. Only a limited number of Roman settlement sites are known from the area of the three parishes examined here, including one known villa and two possible villas, together with several smaller 'native' settlements (Fig. 2), but these show little obvious direct relationship to present-day administrative boundaries. Attention has been drawn to the incidence of pagan Anglo-Saxon burials found upon, or near to, estate boundaries in some regions of south-central England, particularly in valley areas fringing chalk upland.[12] Upon this basis, some[13] have argued for a system of land allotment taking place in the 7th century, by which time these regions had passed under Anglo-Saxon rule and when the practice of boundary burial seems to have been fashionable. Earlier burials not on boundaries are known at Watchfield, only 3km. to the north.[14] In this region, pagan Anglo-Saxon burials have been located on Stockholm Farm, near the western boundary of Uffington, and secondary in a barrow near Uffington Castle on Whitehorse Hill. Further pagan burials have been located on the site of a Roman villa near, but not on, the western boundary of Woolstone.[15] No additional burials have yet been discovered within the estate units but the evidence from such a limited area cannot be considered adequate to confirm or negate the apparent boundary/burial relationship.

Although evidence from one part of the country is not necessarily indicative of conditions elsewhere, the present writer[16] has noted the frequent use of the OE *hlāw* term to describe a tumulus constructed or reused for Anglo-Saxon burial, while *beorg* was often used for prehistoric tumuli (or tumuli-shaped hills). In this area *dude beorh* appears to contradict this association, for it was the name of a barrow on Whitehorse Hill, in the vicinity of a recorded Anglo-Saxon burial. However, the name seems to have referred to a barrow which was not used by the Anglo-Saxons, who made their interments in a smaller, less prominent,

[10]   P. Morgan, *Domesday Book, 5, Berkshire* (1979), 2.1.

[11]   S. 778, B. 1260; S. 1216, B. 1262; S. 1866, F.E. Harmer, *Anglo-Saxon Writs* (1952), 543.

[12]   D. Bonney, 'Pagan Saxon Burials and Boundaries in Wiltshire', *Wilts. Archaeol. Nat. Hist. Mag.* lxi (1966), 25–30; 'Early Boundaries in Wessex', in P.J. Fowler (ed.), *Archaeology and the Landscape, Essays for L.V. Grinsell* (1972), 168–86.

[13]   A Goodier, 'The Formation of Boundaries in Anglo-Saxon England, a Statistical Study', *Med. Arch.* xxviii (1984), 1–23.

[14]   R.A. Chambers and C. Scull, report in *Med. Arch.* xxviii (1984), 238.

[15]   A. Meaney, *A Gazetteer of Anglo-Saxon Burial Sites* (1964).

[16]   D. Hooke, 'Burial Features in West Midland Charters', *J. Engl. Place-Name Soc.* xiii (1980–1), 1–40.

barrow nearby. There are, however, numerous other *hlāw* sites mentioned in the charters. They include *hodes hlæwe/hoden hlæw*, 'Hod's tumulus', and *þa stanhlæwe/stan hlæwan*, 'the stone tumulus', upon the Uffington/Kingston Lisle boundary, the first surviving as an unexcavated tree-covered earthwork today, and *hundeshlæwe/hundes hlæw*, 'hound's tumulus', and *hafeces hlæwe/hafoces hlæw*, 'hawk's tumulus', upon the Uffington/Woolstone boundary, both probably to be identified with known Bronze Age barrows not known to be associated with secondary burial. The latter are also referred to by the term *beorg* in the East Woolstone charter. The evidence remains insufficient to support the Anglo-Saxon boundary/burial association. Indeed, *bæahhildæ byrigels*, 'Beaghild's burial-place', on the western boundary of Woolstone to the north of Cowleaze Farm, is a barrow which has produced goods including a bronze pin, a jet ornament and shale ring of unproven but probable Romano-British date.[17] Kemble[18] suggested that OE *byrgels* with a personal name might indicate a pagan Anglo-Saxon burial site, perhaps on a site previously used for earlier burial, but the evidence is inconclusive. A 'heathen burial' site is also recorded on the internal Woolstone boundary but has not been linked with archaeological dating evidence.

LAND-USE WITHIN ESTATE UNITS

The charters are important in that they help to indicate the area which lay under arable cultivation in the 9th and 10th centuries and suggest how the regional economy was apparently closely linked with estate demarcation.

a) *The chalk downs*

Just over half of the land incorporated within the Anglo-Saxon estates consisted of high downland, much of it composed of Middle Chalk deposits with the Upper Chalk preserved only on the highest parts of the downs. Until recent years, extensive Celtic field systems survived on the upper downs in the southern parts of the parishes in this area, their lynchets frequently running directly across estate boundaries. Their use is likely to have been contemporary with the occupation of the hillforts, but numerous smaller enclosures are also now being revealed by cropmarks detected by aerial photography. The major fortified site, Uffington Castle, is situated on the highest point of the chalk scarp, at 261m. on Whitehorse Hill. It lies beside a major prehistoric routeway known as 'The Ridge Way' and from it there are extensive views northwards over the Vale. The horse figure carved into the hillside nearby is undated. The dramatic nature of the area obviously attracted the Anglo-Saxons and the pagan burials from here have been noted above. The hillfort itself is the *Æscesburh* of the charters, and the boundary clause of Uffington runs *into æscesbyriges suðgeate. and swa ut æt þam norðgeate*, 'to Ashbury's south gate and thus out at the north gate', while the prominent chalk outlier or Dragon Hill seems to have been called *æceles beorh/eceles beorh*. Gelling[19] notes that *eceles* could have been the genitive of a personal name or could be derived from *eclēsia*, the British word for a Christian church. Compounded with the word

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[17] SMR 7982, 9565; H. Peake, *The Archaeology of Berkshire* (1931), 106, 236; *Berks. Archaeol. J.* xlii (1938), 105–6. But the Anglo-Saxon burials on Whitehorse Hill were also accompanied by a Romano-British brooch: SMR 7903, 10731.

[18] J.M. Kemble, 'Notes of Heathen Interment in the *Codex Diplomaticus*', *Archaeol. J.* xiv (1857), 119–39.

[19] *PNB*, iii, 683.

for a barrow the former is perhaps most likely, although Christian shrines appear to have been established near other hillfort sites, apparently Christianizing a former pagan place of worship.[20] A smaller fortified hillfort also lies in a scarp-top position, similar to that of Uffington Castle, on Rams Hill, only one and a half kilometres to the east. This seems to have been a less strongly fortified, and perhaps initially less long-lived, site although a square-ditched enclosure containing Romano-British burials abuts on to it.[21] Again, the Uffington boundary runs *in to hremmesbyriges norðgeate. þurhut þa byrig. ut æt þam suðgeate,* 'to the north gate of Raven's Camp, right through the camp, out at the south gate'. Constantly under cultivation, the site is not well-preserved today. The ridgeway which followed the line of the escarpment and passed near both of these camps is referred to in the charters as the *hrycwæg.* Although *burh* was occasionally confused with forms of *beorg* in the charters, *paddebyrig,* literally 'toad camp', is a further fortified site referred to in the Uffington bounds near the south-eastern corner of the parish. Here aerial photography has revealed a rectangular enclosure, of probable Iron Age date, with remnants of an associated field system.[22] This lies in the south-western corner of Kingston Lisle parish on the northern side of a small valley which drains south-eastwards. *Lauercebyrig,* 'lark camp', in the same charter may be a reference to an enclosure (or barrow, neither identified) which lay on Uffington Down to the south of Uffington Castle.[23] Several other undated enclosures lie on the downland but are not referred to in the boundary clauses. A further large hillfort, Hardwell Camp, lay on the brow of the escarpment in Compton Beauchamp parish and is referred to in a charter of Hardwell[24] as *telles byrg,* 'Tell's camp'.

Scatters of Romano-British pottery and corn-drying ovens found in association with the field systems suggest that these were in use into at least the 4th century AD, and Romano-British settlement sites associated with them have been identified in other parishes in the area. An enclosure which has produced Romano-British sherds lay near the western boundary of Uffington on the high downland to the south of Uffington Castle.[25] By the Anglo-Saxon period, however, the fields and their associated settlements appear to have gone out of use. At the site of the settlement recorded above, the charters refer only to a *stodfalde,* a 'stud fold' for horses. These were usually found in hilly, uncultivated regions, where sufficient land was clear for the herds to be pastured. The other landmarks referred to in this area in the charters also seem to indicate open pasture rather than cultivated ground, for they consist mainly of archaeological features or natural landmarks, the sort of features usually resorted to in less intensively developed regions.[26]

The various tumuli referred to have been already noted. Several dykes also occur. Some of them on the downland may be of prehistoric origin, for the *langan dic,* 'the long dyke', and the *sceortan dic/scortan dic,* 'the short dyke', lay on the Uffington/Woolstone boundary to the south of Uffington Castle. There is still a ditch and bank running along the boundary at this point, preserved on the southern side of Uffington Down. An *ealdan dic,* 'old dyke', appears to have marked the southern boundary of Woolstone parish where a lynchet survives but is coincident with a trackway leading south-westwards. Other landmarks included stones. Although a stone on the site of *tæt tucæn stan/Tædduces stane/tæt*

[20] D. Hooke, 'Cada's Minster, Broadway, Worcs.', *Bull. C.B.A. Churches Comm.* xviii (1983), 2–6.

[21] SMR 10557.

[22] SMR 12066.

[23] Only a cross-ridge dyke running across the boundary is known on the south side of the hill, SMR 7545 see below.

[24] S. 369, B. 601, *PNB,* iii, 684–6.

[25] SMR 7545.

[26] D. Hooke, *The Anglo-Saxon Landscape: The Kingdom of the Hwicce* (1985), 63–5.

taces stan, 'Tættuca's stone', is noted on modern six-inch Ordnance Survey maps at the southern end of the Woolstone/Uffington boundary, no sign of it remains today. Others, however, can be identified. The *mægen stan*, 'the great stone', is a large sarsen stone on the southern part of the Compton Beauchamp/Woolstone boundary and the *loddæræs sæccinge*, 'the beggar's pallet', is indeed a flat sarsen, shaped like a pillow, on the same boundary to the east of Compton Copse. A further stone stood beside the ridgeway further to the north. A number of hollows noted as boundary landmarks on the Uffington/Kingston Lisle boundary have not been identified but could have been ancient chalk pits or natural features.

Other natural features noted as landmarks on the downland included a slope, *pan hlide*, and *dunferðes hnesse/(dom ferðes hest)*, 'Dunfrið's headland', on Kingston Warren Down, and the *heandunæ*, 'the high hill', of Uffington Down on the Uffington/Woolstone boundary. *Fearnhilles sled*, 'the valley of the ferny hill', seems to have been a small valley on the west Woolstone boundary near Pingoose Covert, and Gelling[27] some years ago noted a distinct hollow on the site of *ponæ brystæ del*, 'valley or dell' compounded with a word derived from OE *berstan*, 'to burst'. Several *hlinc* features are also referred to on the west Woolstone boundary but there seems little reason necessarily to associate these with arable cultivation. The term seems to have been used for a steep slope resembling a step, whether of man-made or natural origin. The *uuon hlinc (wōh, hlinc)*, 'crooked lynchet', may still be traced along that part of the Woolstone/Compton Beauchamp boundary between the two stones referred to above, where a step has formed on the eastern side of the narrow dry valley, draining southwards, which is followed by the boundary. The lynchet is most pronounced where a trackway along the boundary has cut into the chalk.

An 18th-century map of Uffington suggests that at some stage in the later medieval period arable cultivation had extended all over the higher downland. The 1785 estate map indicates strips, probably ridge and furrow, extending to the southern boundary of the parish, although Kingston Warren Down was then known as 'The Green Down'.[28] Whitehorse Hill is not shown on this map. Similarly in Kingston Lisle, the 1785 map indicates ridge and furrow extending over the whole of the downland to the eastern boundary of Kingston Warren Farm. Similar evidence is not available for Woolstone but field-names again suggest widespread cultivation. Today the brown rendzina soils of the chalklands are classified as largely 'grade three' soils, partially limited in their potential by the exposed nature of the land, but their fertility is maintained by the liberal addition of artificial fertilizers. The downland region has obviously been one of intermittent arable cultivation, reaching a peak in pre-Anglo-Saxon times, at some time in the medieval period and again today. There is, however, little indication in the documents of intensive arable cultivation in the immediate pre-Conquest period. Both environmental and cultural factors may have been responsible for this. Some degradation of the chalk soils by the late Roman period is suggested, following the continuous intensive use of the land for cereal crops over many centuries. Continuous monoculture may have led to a substantial build-up, too, of insect pests in the soil.[29] The withdrawal of the Roman army and a collapse of the market economy may also have led to decreased demands for cereals but there may also have been a drop in population levels leading to a shrinkage of the cultivated

[27] *PNB*, iii, 680.

[28] 'A Map of Uffington in the County of Berkshire', 1785; Fawler and Kingston Lisle, 1785; and 'A Survey of Lord Craven's Estates', 1785: Berks R.O. Reading, D/EC P12, D/EC P13 and D/EC E13.

[29] M. Bell, 'Valley Sediments and Environmental Change', in G. Dimbleby (ed.), *The Environment of Man* (B.A.R. 87, 1981), 85; P.C. Buckland, 'Cereal Production, Storage and Population: a Caveat', S. Limbrey and J.G. Evans (eds.), *The Effect of Man in the Landscape: the Lowland Zone* (C.B.A. Res. Rep. 21, 1978), 43–5.
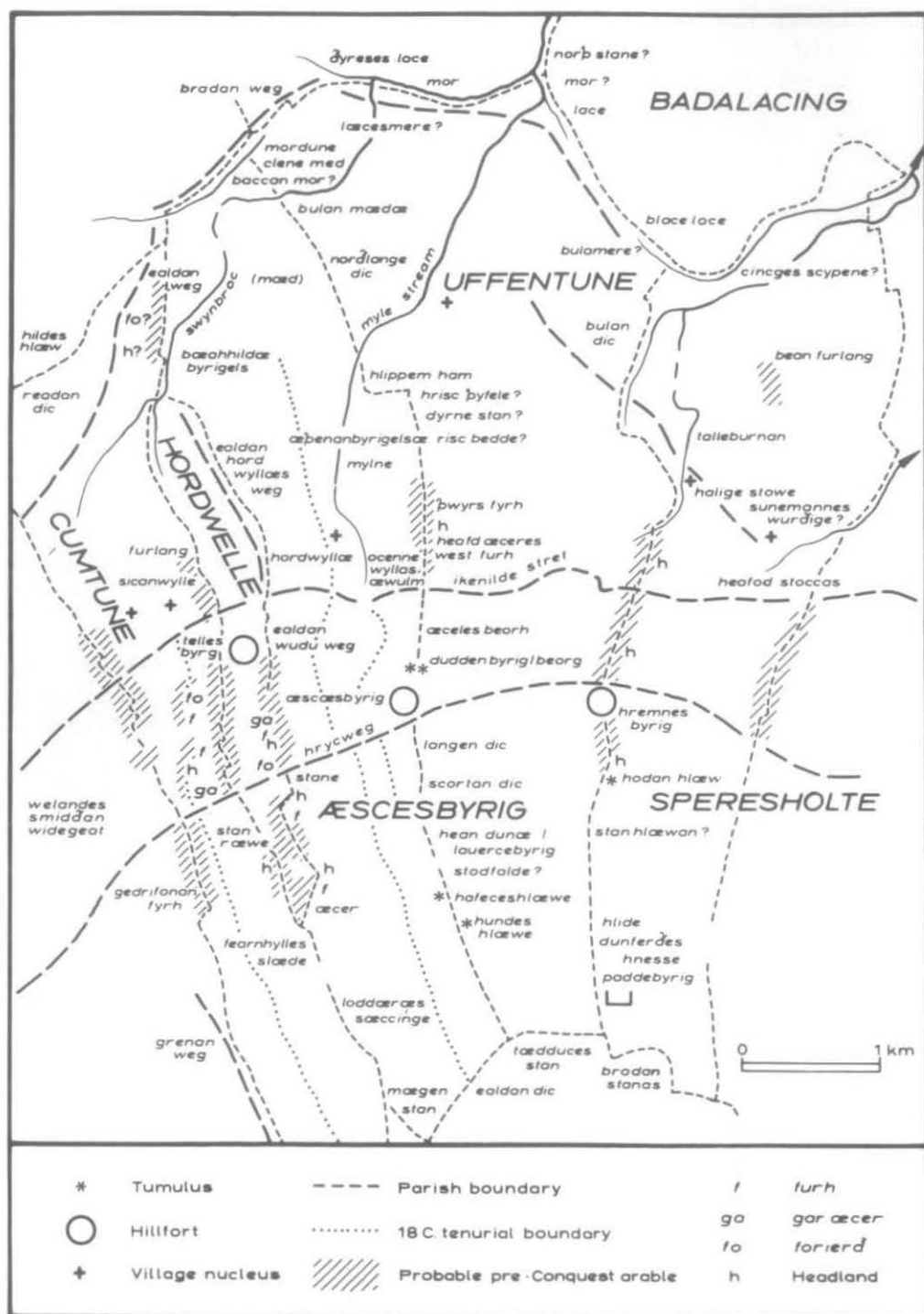
Fig. 3. The area around Uffington: selected Anglo-Saxon boundaries.

area in sub-Roman and early Anglo-Saxon times. Whatever the causes, there are few references to cultivation or woodland in this area in the charters of the three parishes discussed here. A 'way to the wood' is recorded on the eastern boundary of Hardwell, possibly with reference to a wood on the site of Hardwell Camp (see below), and rights in woodland are recorded in the charter grants of the Woolstone estates but no woodland is recorded on any of these estates in the Domesday Survey of 1086. One can only postulate that the upland region may have been used primarily for the pasturing of stock.

THE CENTRAL ZONE

Reference in the clauses to arable cultivation do, however, abound in a wide band stretching roughly from the 100m. contour at the foot of the escarpment up over the brow of the scarp face (Fig. 3). In Kingston Lisle and Uffington, references to agricultural terms cease near the two hillforts of Rams Hill and Uffington Castle, but they extend further south on the western boundary of Woolstone to reach part way down the dip slope. The land here falls away south-westwards from the heights of Uffington Down, Rams Hill and Kingston Warren Down, being for the most part below 200m., before rising again westwards in Ashbury parish. This region is crossed by the Icknield Way, referred to in the charters as *ikenilde streate*, a major routeway along the foot of the downs running from Wiltshire north-eastwards along the southern side of the Vale towards the royal vill of Wantage and on to the Upper Thames Valley, thus uniting the northern part of the West Saxon kingdom. The road runs through the most fertile section of the Vale, for on the lower slopes the soils of the Lower Chalk and Upper Greensand wash down to mingle with those of the Vale, resulting in a band of soils today regarded as 'grade two' in calibre – argillic brown earths or gleyic brown calcareous earths. While steepness may hinder cultivation on parts of the scarp slope, especially in the vicinity of Whitehorse Hill, the land tends to rise in a series of relatively gentle steps. Cultivation appears to have continued again on the land rising to the ridgeway.

This zone was not without settlement in Roman times. Indeed, field systems then probably continued downslope from the higher land, possibly with more regular fields at lower levels, only to be destroyed by later cultivation. In Woolstone a villa site with a number of tessellated pavements lay to the west of the present village, on the 100m. contour, and sherds of Iron Age date have also been found in the vicinity.[30] In Kingston Lisle parish a site to the north of the present village, near the northern margin of the main cultivated zone at 85m., has produced quantities of Romano-British sherds which may suggest a second farmstead in the area, and further Romano-British sherds have also been found in association with a large barrow between this site and the present village.[31] Of particular interest is a site near the present-day village of Fawler, in the western section of Kingston Lisle parish. The name of this settlement is derived from OE *flage, flōr*, 'paved floor', and numerous pieces of tesserae from a floor have indeed recently been found, in association with Romano-British pottery, mainly domestic jars and bowls of coarse ware (appendix 2). This site has produced quantities of Romano-British and (allegedly) Anglo-Saxon pottery in the past,[32] although none of this survives, and the more recent discoveries of worked flints also indicate an earlier prehistoric presence near the site. The

[30]   SMR 7316; W. Page and E.M. Calthrop, 'Romano-British Berkshire', in *V.C.H. Berks.* i, 222; *Oxoniensia*, xx (1955), 91; *The Antiquary*, x (1884), 133.
[31]   SMR 7292, 7546, 7930.
[32]   SMR 7894, 9000.

site lies on the Uffington/Kingston Lisle boundary where a brook drains down from the escarpment in a narrow coomb cut into the scarp face; the Uffington charters refer to it as *þere halige stowe/þære halgan stowe*, 'the holy place'. Medieval pottery from the site is mainly domestic ware of *c.* 1200–1400 AD, but it is remarkable that a site regarded for some reason as 'holy' in the 10th century should also have become the site of a medieval church, the Chapel of St. James. No foundation date is known for this, but it is recorded here by the 16th century, only to be demolished after 1733.[33]

By medieval times, a number of settlement nuclei had been established at the foot of the actual escarpment, usually tucked in beside a stream near, or slightly below, the springs emerging from the junction of the Lower Chalk and the Upper Greensand. Some of these springs are noted in the boundary clauses, such as *ocenne wyllas*, 'Ock springs', alternatively referred to as *þonæ æwulm*, 'the source of the stream', at the source of a headwater stream of the River Ock in Woolstone. The settlement nuclei seem often to be related to the narrow, elongated estate divisions noted in the late Anglo-Saxon charters and had probably come into being by the 9th and 10th centuries. Thus, Fawler lay within the western section of Kingston Lisle parish, a separate settlement nucleus to the west of the main village. Woolstone, on the other hand, was united by the 10th century under the ownership of the thegn Wulfric, and it may be significant that Woolstone parish contains only one major settlement, this bearing Wulfric's name. This may provide valuable insight into the process of nucleation which seems to have been taking place in this and many other areas in this period, and to the rôle of the people who gave their names, probably as manorial lords, to so many village settlements.[34] Uffington parish is unusual in that scarp-foot settlements include only a number of farms, Sower Hill Farm and Britchcombe Farm, while the main village, probably another relatively late nucleation, lies much further to the north. Boundary clauses rarely mention settlements, which were probably usually located well within the boundaries of the estates, but the Fawler clause refers to *sunemannes wyrðige/ sunemannes weorðig*, 'Suneman's enclosure or farm', upon the internal boundary between Fawler and Kingston Lisle, close to the later village nucleus.

The charters also show that mills were being established on some of these estates by the 10th century, for a mill is recorded in Woolstone, established upon the *þam myle streame*, 'the mill stream', a tributary of the Ock, and it is clear that the mill stood upon the site of the later medieval mill, to the north of the village. By 1086 there were at least four mills functioning on the manors of Uffington, Woolstone and Fawler, two of these in Woolstone.

The charter evidence for arable cultivation mostly consists of references to particular types of landmarks using terms which have been shown to be almost consistently associated with some form of open-field agriculture.[35] Isolated references mean little, but here the concentration is sufficiently marked for the location of the early medieval fields to be suggested. The date at which 'medieval'-type furlongs and strip holdings originated has yet to be ascertained, but the charters suggest that a similar form of agriculture was in use by the 10th century in this zone. The agricultural lands of the estates were probably closely related to the settlements noted above by this period, with some form of open-field agriculture organized around each township nucleus. Fields named 'Blacklands' may indicate the accumulation of organic matter in the soil near a settlement, and are found near the present-day villages of Kingston Lisle and Sparsholt.

[33]   *V.C.H. Berks.* iv, 318.

[34]   M. Gelling, *Signposts to the Past: Place-Names and the History of England* (1978), 177–85.

[35]   D. Hooke, 'The Origins of Open-Field Agriculture: the Evidence from the Pre-Conquest Charters of the West Midlands', in T. Rowley (ed.), *The Origins of Open-Field Agriculture* (1981), 39–63.

The Uffington boundary passed from 'the holy place' in Fawler to first one headland and then another before reaching Rams Hill. These features coincide with 'stepped' boundaries, formed when a boundary was forced to negotiate blocks of established fields, although later 'straightening' seems to have removed the first headland and only the second is shown on the 1785 estate map. The charter references seem to confirm that the boundaries were already irregular in this way by the later Anglo-Saxon period. There is a further reference to a headland just beyond Rams Hill. The equivalent part of the western boundary of Uffington passes over higher land on Whitehorse Hill, and it is not until the boundary crosses the Icknield Street northwards that the charters again refer to arable land. After the street, the boundary runs *syððenes dunrihtes be þes heafd æceres west furh. dun ofer þa þwyrs furh* 'straight down by the west furrow of the head acre, down over the cross-wise furrow'. Once again, there are two steps in the boundary here, to the west of Sower Hill Farm, and the other Uffington charter and the east Woolstone charter refer to *þa and heafdu/þa and heafda*, 'the headlands', at this point. The western boundary of Woolstone also crosses this arable zone, and arable features are noted in the landmarks which occur between the Icknield Street and the Ridgeway and for some distance beyond. The western boundary of Woolstone runs from *þone brystæ del* (discussed earlier) *þanon and lang fyrh ænne æcer to þam hlince. ðanon on ða heafda on hrycwæg*, 'thence along the furrow one acre, to the lynchet, thence to the headlands to (the) ridgeway'. The charter for Hardwell in Compton Beauchamp adds a gore, a furrow and a headland, followed by further lynchets and furrows, and it is this additional charter which notes numerous similar landmarks between the Icknield Way and the Ridge Way, landmarks which include *ænne gar æcer, þere furh, anum andheafdum, anre forierðæ*, 'a gore-shaped acre', 'a furrow', 'a headland', and 'a projecting piece of ploughland' (or 'a headland at the end of plough strips'). Above the Ridge Way the boundary is indeed stepped, but between the Ridge Way and the Icknield Way it is now quite straight, with no indication today of the irregularities suggested by the pre-Conquest boundary clause. Where the steps survive, they seem to be closely related to the pattern of the ridge and furrow cultivation in the medieval fields, of which some may be traced on the ground, some may be reconstructed from air photographs, and some is shown on 18th- and 19th-century maps; but ploughing in this way may merely have responded to a pattern imposed by an earlier underlying field-system.[36]

THE VALE

A substantial portion of the three parishes under discussion is made up of the lower land of the Vale, a region predominantly of clay soils draining northwards to the River Ock. Although deposits of Lower Greensand cap the Kimmeridge Clays in the north of Uffington parish, giving patches of ferruginous sands which form islands of slightly raised ground, much of the Vale is low-lying and the bulk of it is floored with the heavy soils of the Gault Clays. Many streams drain from the escarpment, and the charters suggest that in Anglo-Saxon times there were large areas of undrained marshland. The Uffington clause, for instance, notes that after circumventing the sandy outcrop of *mordune*, 'the hill in marshland' (now known as 'Alfred's Hill'), the boundary ran *þwyrt ofer þene mor. innan þwyrsmere midrihtes*, 'across over the marsh straight to (the) ?crosswise mere'. The second Uffington charter shows that it then met another mere and continued along two further areas of marshland. There were additional meres in the area which have not survived today and also references to a *riscbedde*, 'rush-bed', and a *hriscþyfele*, 'rush thicket', indicating
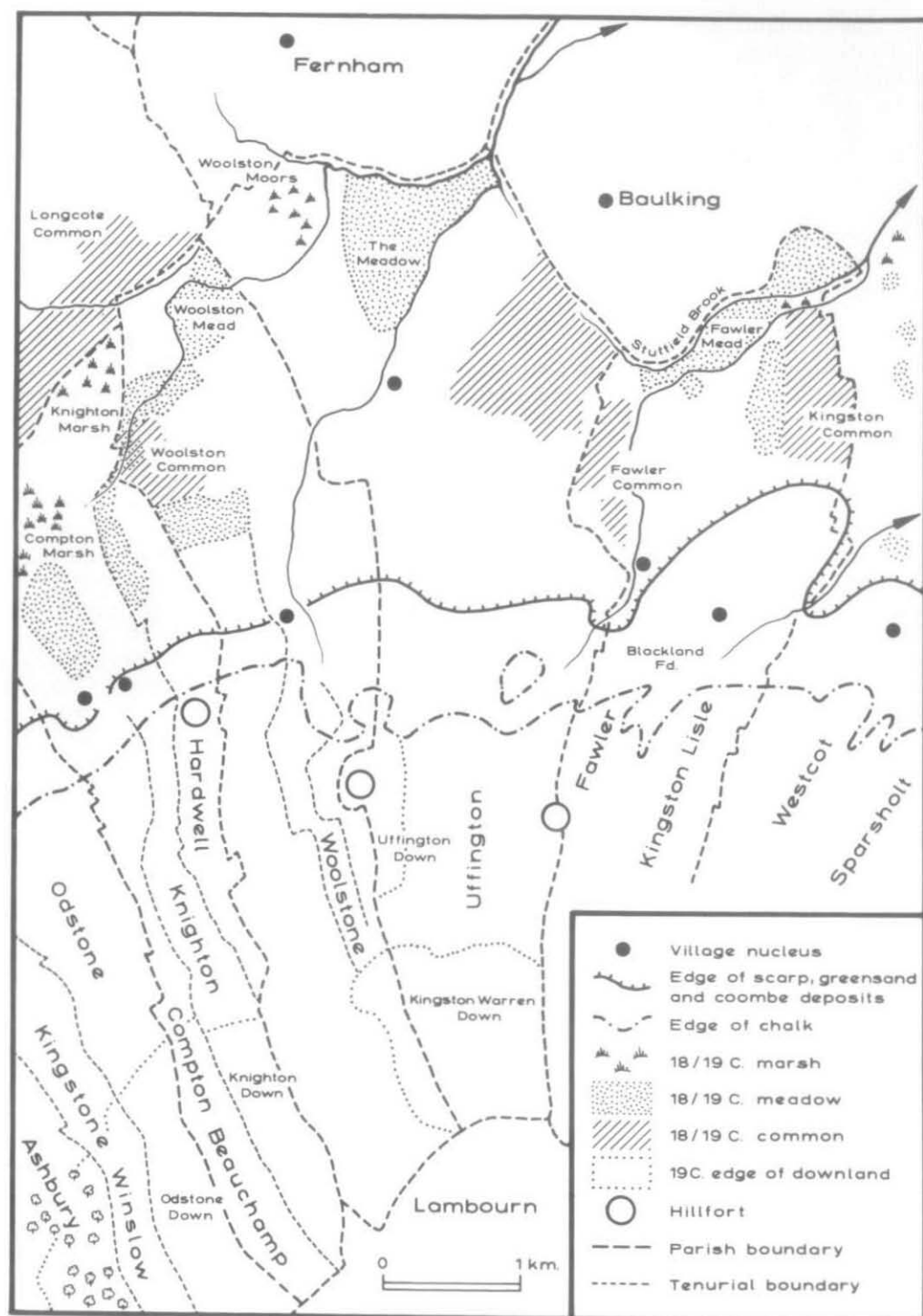
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[36] Hooke op. cit. note 1.

Fig. 4.   The area around Uffington: 18th- and 19th-century land use.

damp ground. Some of the boundary dykes, like the *norðlange dic*, 'the northward dyke', which ran along the northern part of the western boundary of Uffington, and *bulan dic*, 'Bula's dyke', on the eastern boundary, may have facilitated drainage.

Although a large area in the north of Uffington parish was still known as 'Woolston Moors' in the 19th century (Fig. 4),[37] the region was not all marshland, for the charters refer on several occasions to meadowland. *Hlippen ham* in Uffington may have been a *hamm* in the sense of 'a water-meadow', to the south-west of the present village, and the field-names Great and Little Ham are recorded near here in the 19th century. Further north lay *bulan mædæ/bulemed*, 'Bula's meadow', and *þa clene med*, 'the clean meadow', later to be known as Prestham, 'priest's water-meadow'. A further meadow is recorded in Woolstone in the vicinity of the later Woolstone Meadow. The Domesday Survey also indicated large, carefully measured, acreages of meadowland on these manors in 1086,[38] with 212 ac. noted in Kingston Lisle, together with a further 50 ac. in Fawler, 85 ac. in Uffington and 150 ac. on the Bishop of Winchester's manor in Woolstone. Field-names, as indicated, show that much of the northern area was used as meadowland in historical times, the meadows providing valuable crops of hay which were needed for the winter feeding of stock. Large common meadows and areas of common pasture survived in Uffington and Kingston Lisle until their enclosure in the 18th century. That stock-rearing or dairying was also a not unimportant feature of the early medieval economy is suggested by a reference to *ðes cincges scypene*, 'the king's cow-sheds', which stood near the north-eastern Fawler boundary, not far distant from the Stutfield Brook. This may have been the forerunner of the dairy-farm in Kingston Lisle recorded in 1086[39] which paid a rent of six weys of cheese annually to the king. The grant of Fawler by King Edgar to Æthelsige, his chamberlain, in AD 963, also adds *an hyrde wic æt baþalacing*, 'a herding establishment at Balking', again indicating stock rearing in the Vale. One hide of land and 12 ac. of meadow were associated with this farm.

Arable land was not absent from this northern zone, for the Fawler charter also refers to a *bean furlang*, 'bean furlong', at the foot of the Greensand spur to the west of the present Kingston Common Farm. This may have been on the site of the later Lynch Field and the following landmark, *snelles hlince*, 'Snell's lynchet', was probably the steep slope of the scarp which rises up to the present village and which carries Lynch Coppice upon its flanks today. There is also an area of arable which has not been precisely located near the *swynbroc*, 'swine brook', in Hardwell. This probably lay on slightly raised ground to the west of the present Cowleaze Farm.

At some stage in the medieval period, trackways or droveways led up from the lowland meadows to the upper downland. One such route, *þonæ ealden hord wyllæs wæg*, 'the old Hardwell way', is recorded along the western boundary of Woolstone in the 10th century and survived as Hardwell Lane. It continued southwards as *þone ealdan wudu weg*, 'the old way ?to the wood', but, as noted above, the wood may have been the forerunner of Hardwell Wood, covering the Iron Age hillfort of Hardwell Camp. Field evidence shows that at one time a track continued on towards the Ridge Way; but the charters show no indication of this, and this is the line of boundary which appears once to have negotiated cultivated land before being subsequently straightened. Another ran between ancient field-systems along the Ashbury/Compton Beauchamp boundary and was referred to in the

[37]   19th-century maps of the three parishes are deposited at the Berks. R.O., Reading. They include the Uffington Tithe Award, 1846, D/D1 134/1 and farm maps D/EC E 19/20/23/30/33/37–41.

[38]   *V.C.H. Berks.* i, 306–7.

[39]   P. Morgan, *Berkshire Domesday*, 1.32.

charters as *þone grenan weg*, 'the green way',[40] upon the higher downland. The charters make few other direct references to such tracks, although a trackway later ran along the Compton Beauchamp/Woolstone boundary where the charter records 'the crooked lynchet'.

The evidence of the charters is that land-use was closely adapted to the topography in the early medieval period, and probably better attuned to the natural resources than in preceding periods. Cropland, meadowland and pasture were integral features of each estate unit, and there seems to have been adequate summer pasture for flocks and herds on the open downland above the cultivated fields. This can only have been attained either as a product of diminishing demands upon agriculture brought about by reduced population levels or reduced marketing demands, or by the adoption of different methods of organizing agriculture. It is likely that all these factors were involved, the fragmentation of estates in itself creating the necessity for increased self-sufficiency within each individual estate unit. The success of the methods involved is shown by their apparent continuation into much later times.

APPENDIX 1: THE CHARTERS[41]

AD 856 (S. 317, B. 491, Gelling C I): Grant of land *æt Æscesbyrig* (Uffington Castle) by King Æthelwulf to Aldred, his *minister*: 20 *cassati æt Æscesbyrig*; bounds of west Woolstone.
AD 903 (S. 369, B. 601, Gelling C III): Grant of land at Hardwell in Compton Beauchamp by King Edward to *Tata Æthehumflo*; 3 *manentes æt Hardwelle*; bounds of Hardwell.
c. AD 931 (S. 1208, B. 687/8, Gelling C IV): Grant of land at Uffington by Æthelstan, *senator* (ealdorman), to St. Mary's Abingdon; *Uffentune*; with bounds of Uffington.
AD 944 (S. 503. B. 796, Gelling C I): Grant of land at *Æscesbyrig* (Uffington Castle) by King Edmund to Wulfric, his *minister*; 20 *mansæ* at *Æscesbyrig*; bounds of west Woolstone.
AD 953 (S. 561, B. 899, Gelling C V): Grant of land at *Æscesburh* (Uffington Castle) by King Eadred to Ælfsige, *minister*, and Eadgifu, wife of Ælfsige; 33 *cassati* at *Æscesburh*; with bounds of Uffington.
AD 958 (S. 575, B. 902, Gelling C II): Grant of land *æt Æscesbyrig* (Uffington Castle) by King Eadred to Wulfric, his *minister*; 20 *mansae æt Æscesbyrig*; with bounds of east Woolstone.
AD 960 (S. 687, B. 1055): King Edgar to Wulfric, his *minister*, restoration of lands forfeited for some offence, including *Æscesburuh* (Uffington Castle).
AD 963 (S. 713, B. 1121, Gelling C VI): Grant of land at Sparsholt, Balking and a mill at 'Hurgrove' in Drayton by King Edgar to Æthelsige, his chamberlain; 10 *mansæ æt Speresholte*; with bounds (Fawler in Kingston Lisle); 1 *mansa* with 12 *agri* at Balking, a mill at 'Hurgrove' with 12 *agri* belonging to it.
AD 970 (S. 778, B. 1260): Grant of land at Kingston by King Edgar to Brihteah, his deacon; 7 *mansæ* at *Cingestun*.
AD 971 × 980 (S. 1216, B. 1262): Record of a purchase by Abbot Osgar of Abingdon from Ealdorman Ælfhere of Mercia of land at 'Kingston'; 20 hides *æt Kingestune* (?Kingston Lisle).
AD 1042 × 1066 (S. 1866, Harmer, *Writs*, 10): Writ of King Edward confirming to the church of Abingdon land at Sparsholt given by Edric's son, a monk at Abingdon (western part of Kingston Lisle).

APPENDIX 2: RECENT FINDS FROM A ROMANO-BRITISH AND MEDIEVAL SITE AT FAWLER IN THE PARISH OF KINGSTON LISLE, THE VALE OF THE WHITE HORSE with contributions from I. HORNBROOK (Field Section, Oxford County Museum), L.S. GREEN and M. MELLOR (Oxford Archaeological Unit).

The site lies at Fawler Copse in Kingston Lisle parish, centred on grid reference SU 321878. The finds have been collected over a number of years by the owner of the site, Mr. J.I.M. Stewart.

Stone material: Fragments of chalk, flint, limestone and sandstone have been recovered, one piece of limestone bearing incised lines. Thirteen shaped tesserae represent part of a paved floor, likely to be that which gave rise to the place-name Fawler, the name of the nearby medieval village.

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[40]   S.564, B.908. For further discussion of this charter see Hooke op. cit. note 1.
[41]   Cited by reference to number in Sawyer, Birch and Gelling opp. cit. notes 2 and 3.

The flints (Ival Hornbrook): Some 13 flints have been found, 61.53% of them are frost spalls. A further 38.47% are knapped and worked pieces of flint; of these three are scrapers and one is a punch. Out of the total of 8 frost spalls, 74.50% have been deliberately worked; 5 are scrapers, while one is a possible engraver. The preferred period of 15.38% of the flints would be the Neolithic, that of the remaining 84.62% the Bronze Age.

The pottery (L.S. Green and M. Mellor): Almost equal quantities of Romano-British and medieval wares have been found in recent years at Fawler Copse, the 'holy site' referred to in the pre-Conquest charters. For each period, most of the sherds are of coarse domestic wares (jars, bowls and cooking-pots).

The Roman material is made up predominantly of coarse reduced ware of local origin (probably from the Oxford kilns), some of it bearing simple incised decoration in the form of incised hachures, 'V'-shaped designs and concentric circles. Jars of various types and a lesser number of bowls are present. Three sherds of Oxford red/brown colour-coated ware dating from after 240 AD, one of which is a mortarium sherd, have been identified.[42] Also present are small quantities of Dorset black-burnished I (jars and a flanged bowl) and some shell-tempered pottery which includes a standard late Roman jar form with a hooked rim. While body sherds make up 61% of the total, 29% are rims and 10% bases (84 sherds in total). With the stone fragments, an additional piece of flue-tile confirms the presence of a building, possibly of villa-type.

The medieval pottery is again of a domestic character, made up largely of sherds from storage jars and cooking vessels. It is predominantly in a chalk-and flint-tempered ware made in East Wiltshire but marketed over a wide area of Oxfordshire (Oxford type AQ). It includes some sherds with combed and applied strip decoration. The forms are cooking/storage vessels, shallow pans and deep-sided bowls, jugs and firecovers. 76% of this group consists of body sherds, 13% of rims and 11% of bases (63 sherds in total). The remaining sherds (11) include jugs made in a finer sandy fabric, and decorated with white slip. This was marketed throughout southern Oxfordshire and along the Kennet Valley (Oxford type AG), A few sherds are from jugs made at Brill, Bucks. (Oxford type AM).[43] This group includes sherds bearing a pronounced greenish-yellow lead with copper glaze. The date-range of the medieval ware is probably *c.* 1200–1400 AD.

Additional items include one piece of glass, a large iron key and pieces of door furniture, together with several other small iron and metal items (not ancient).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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[42]   C.J. Young, *The Roman Pottery Industry of the Oxford Region*, B.A.R. 43 (1977).

[43]   Oxford fabric types discussed in *Oxoniensia*, xlv (1980), 160–82.