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THE EARLIEST SUFFOLK CHARTER

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GENERALLY SPEAKING, THE surviving texts of Anglo-Saxon land charters are concentrated on Wessex and the West Midland shires. The further east and north the county, the thinner becomes the evidence. Moreover, the range of variation is substantial. Whereas pre-Conquest royal diplomas survive (usually in late copies) for well over half the parishes of Wiltshire and a third of Worcestershire, we have but one authentic text for Nottinghamshire, and virtually nothing for Lincolnshire. Suffolk is fortunate to possess a number of early writs and wills, which were preserved in the abbey archives of Ely, Ramsey, and above all Bury St Edmunds, but the authentic texts of only four early land charters have come down to us, and of these King Edgar's grant of Chelsworth is unique. Not only is it the earliest royal diploma for a Suffolk estate, but the charter is excellently preserved in the original. No other pre-Conquest grant of land in Suffolk survives in this way.

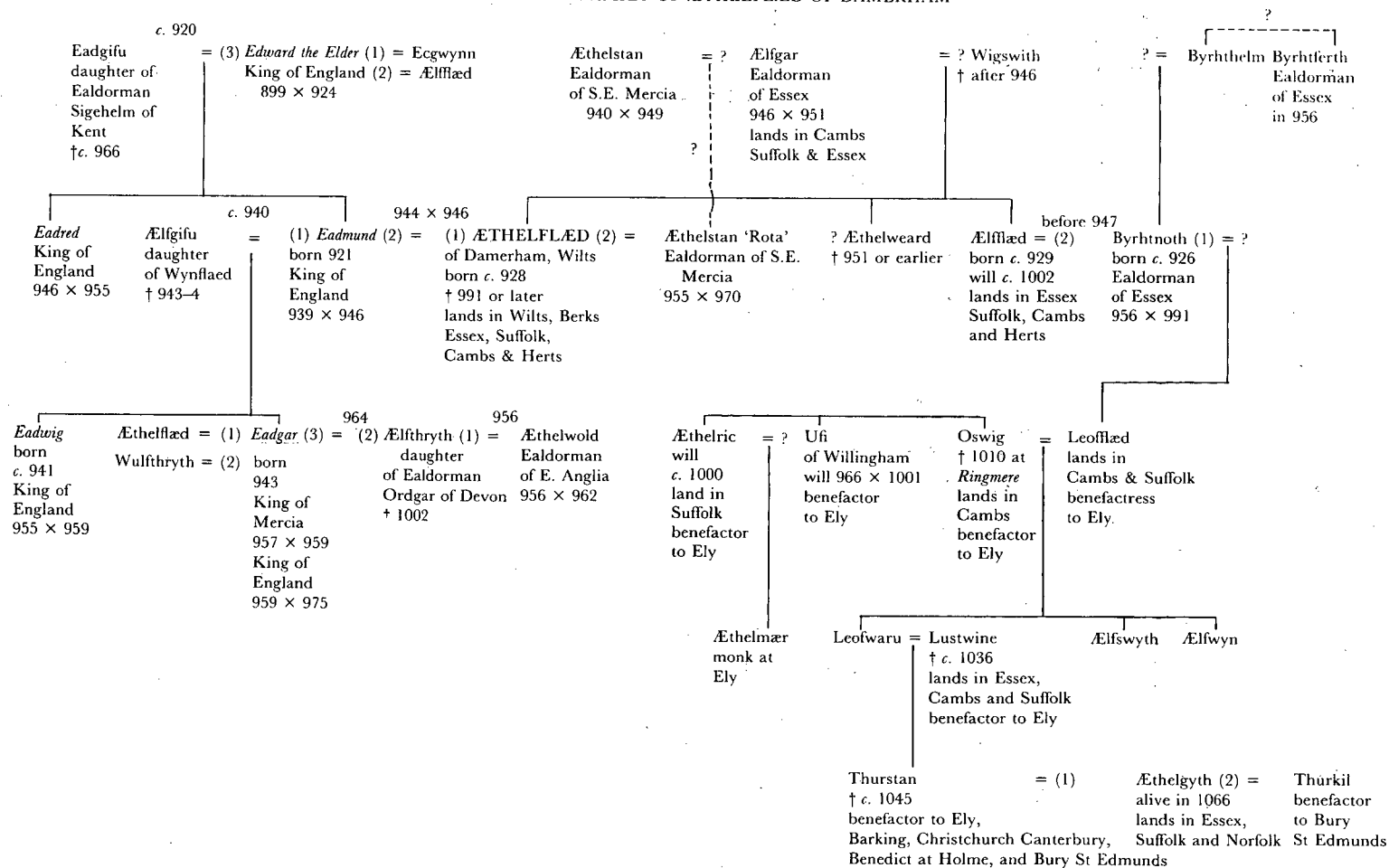
The recipient of Chelsworth was Æthelflæd of Damerham, who had been the second wife of King Edmund, and who was therefore the stepmother of King Edgar, who granted her the estate. A good deal is known about her and her family (see pedigree, Table 1).¹ She was the daughter of Ælfgar, ealdorman of Essex from 946 to 951, and the elder sister of Ælflæd, who became the second wife of Byrhtnoth, ealdorman of Essex from 956 until his death at the battle of Maldon in 991.

Æthelflæd survived until at least 991, and an early copy of her will was preserved, together with those of her father and sister, at Bury St Edmunds. One of the most interesting features of these wills is the evidence they provide of the family's intention to endow a major monastery at Stoke-by-Nayland, where their ancestors were buried.² This intention is first revealed in Ealdorman Ælfgar's will, dated at the latest 951, and much of the will of his daughter Ælflæd is concerned with her desire to implement her father's wishes. The projected endowment comprised seven properties in Essex, six in Suffolk, and one in Hertfordshire (see map, Fig. 32), and is our earliest evidence for lay participation in the English Benedictine reformation, which did not really get under way until 964.

In the event, for some reason unknown to us, the family's plans for Stoke were frustrated, and the endowment was dispersed well before the Norman Conquest. We can only surmise what part King Cnut may have played in this. Instead of Stoke, the site chosen for the major Suffolk monastery of the Benedictine reform was at Bury St Edmunds, where a small collegiate minster had been founded in the early years of the 10th century to house the relics of St Edmund, the last English king of East Anglia, who had been martyred by the Danes in 870. Although Bury was not fully established as a monastery until 1020, when King Cnut placed monks there, its endowment had been increasing gradually throughout the 10th century. The shrine of St Edmund was established at Bury in the time of King Athelstan (924–39), and his successor King Edmund, the first husband of Æthelflæd of Damerham, is said to have granted privileges to the community in 945.³ It is not surprising that King Edmund should wish to venerate the tomb of his namesake, and the objections which have been raised on diplomatic grounds concerning the authenticity of his alleged charter of privileges can be shown to have no foundation. Moreover, the boundary clause of King Edmund's charter follows the *banleuca* boundary of the later abbey, and its witness list is impeccable.

Bishop Theodred of London, who had charge of the East Anglian diocese, endowed Bury

TABLE 1: THE FAMILY OF ÆTHELFÆD OF DAMERHAM



C.R.H. 1984

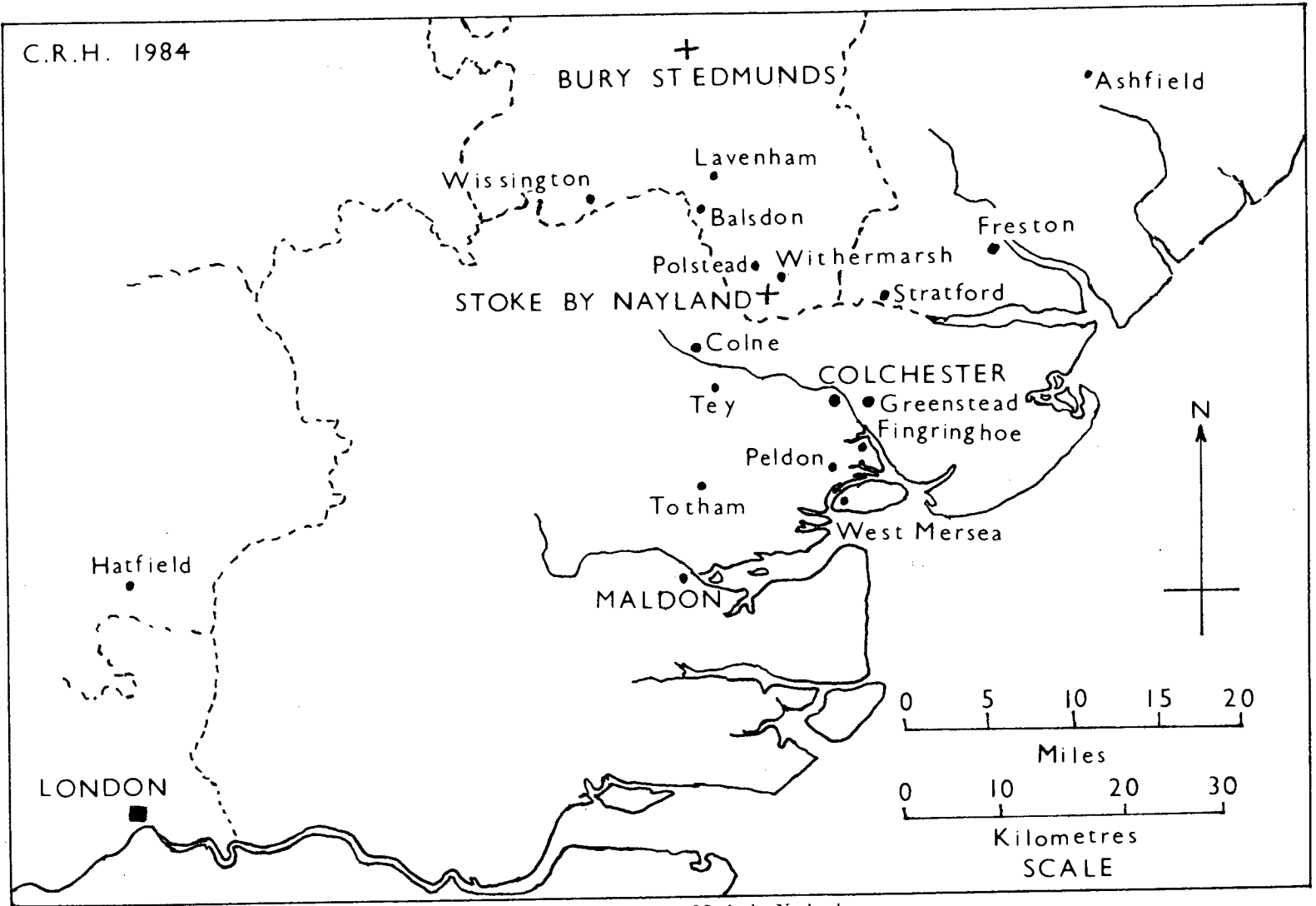


FIG. 32 - The endowment of Stoke-by-Nayland

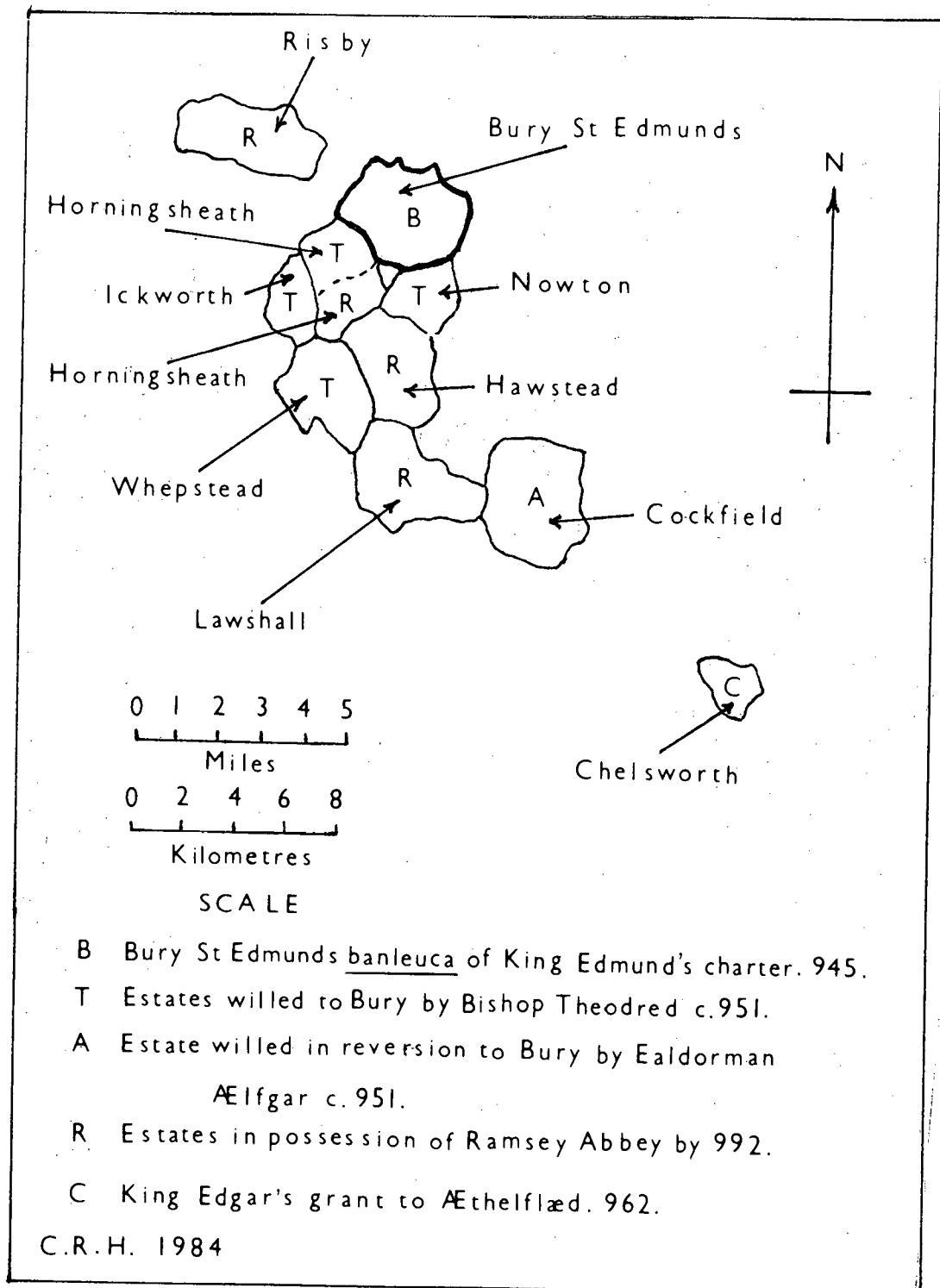


FIG. 33 – Ramsey estates and the early endowment of Bury St Edmunds.

St Edmunds in 951 with Whepstead, Nowton, Ickworth, and part of Horningsheath,⁴ and at about the same time Æthelflæd's father Ælfgar left the reversion of Cockfield to Bury (see map, Fig. 33). King Edmund's elder son Eadwig gave it the important estates of Beccles and Elmswell in 955–57, before he lost control of the territories to the north of the River Thames.⁵ King Edgar's gift of Chelsworth has to be seen in the light of these endowments, for it is clear from examination of the diplomatic that the grant was made for religious purposes. This can only mean that as with Cockfield, the reversion of Chelsworth after Æthelflæd's death was intended for Bury St Edmunds. She left it to this foundation in her own will, with the proviso that her sister Ælfflæd and her brother-in-law Byrhtnoth should enjoy these two estates while they lived.⁶ As with the estates reserved for Stoke, the family's interests had first been protected. A glance at the map will show that Æthelflæd's family were already in possession of much of the territory surrounding Chelsworth before King Edgar's grant (Fig. 34). Most of the lands of the East Saxon ealdordom were concentrated in the area extending from Bury St Edmunds south eastwards down to the Colchester region.⁷ Stoke-by-Nayland where the family's ancestors were buried lay in the midst of all this. Ealdorman Byrhtnoth's interest in these properties was due to his marrying into the family. It is not generally appreciated that when he died fighting the Danes at Maldon in 991, Byrhtnoth was defending not only the interests of his country, but also those of his wife, whose estates surrounded the battle site.⁸ Most of Byrhtnoth's own ancestral lands lay in a compact group surrounding Cambridge. This may explain why his ealdordom included Cambridgeshire; his father-in-law Ælfgar does not appear to have had jurisdiction there. By contrast, the estates of the East Anglian ealdordom lay mostly in Huntingdonshire. The strength of this ealdordom was buttressed by grants of jurisdiction over Holland to the north of the River Welland,⁹ and over the five and a half hundreds of Wicklaw in East Suffolk,¹⁰ which were probably the ancestral lands of the East Anglian kings, for the territory included Rendlesham, Snape, and Sutton Hoo.

The existence of the Chelsworth charter raises many interesting questions concerning land tenure in Suffolk before the Norman Conquest. Few of them can be answered safely, but it is important to consider the issues all the same. Were the Danes completely dispossessed from land ownership in Suffolk after its recovery by Edward the Elder? This seems hardly likely when one considers what happened when a fresh wave of Danish incursions commenced during the reign of Æthelred the Unready; the new invaders received substantial assistance from their kinsmen who were descended from the Viking settlers of 870. Yet we may infer from the boundary clause of the Chelsworth charter that five of the adjacent estates (later Domesday manors and ecclesiastical parishes) were all in possession of landowners with English names in 962. It may be that a good deal more of the descendants of the early Danish settlers were left in possession of their estates in Norfolk than in Suffolk. Certainly we have much less evidence concerning land tenure in Norfolk than in Suffolk during this period. A clearer picture may emerge when the English Place Names Society's volumes for the two counties eventually appear in print.

Were estates in Suffolk normally conveyed by royal charter in the century and a half before the Norman Conquest? This appears to be unlikely. Such charters as have survived all concern gifts to religious foundations and to their important lay benefactors. Certainly for West Suffolk after 1020, one would suppose that land transactions were settled at the court of the Liberty of Bury, held at Thingoe. Here, it may be argued, the royal writs would be read and implemented, and separate royal diplomas would not then be necessary as evidence of title. Perhaps this is why the texts of so many writs and so few charters have survived in the Bury archives.

Does the term *mansae* in the Chelsworth charter represent a hidage assessment? From the



FIG. 34 - Estates of Æthelflæd's family.

mention of similar assessments for other estates in early Suffolk wills, one must assume this to have been the case. Indeed, it seems likely that every Suffolk estate had a hidage assessment imposed on it soon after King Edward the Elder recovered the county from the Danes. The earliest authentic reference to hides in Suffolk occurs in Bishop Theodred's will, dated 946 × 951; the latest is found in Edmund Ironside's gift of Lakenheath to Thorney Abbey in 1015 × 1016.¹¹ We may perhaps assume that a hidage assessment imposed by King Edward the Elder or King Athelstan was abolished by King Cnut. So far, no-one has established a possible relationship between such an assessment and the system of taxation one encounters for Suffolk in Little Domesday.

Finally we may ask ourselves to what extent was the foundation at Bury monastic before Cnut placed monks there in 1020? The guardians of St Edmund's tomb kept muniments relating to their lands and privileges from the mid-10th century onwards. A substantial endowment had been built up already when the foundation received the reversion of Chelsworth and Cockfield in 1002. There is some evidence that by then it had become a satellite of Ramsey Abbey in Huntingdonshire. Ramsey had been founded in 969 under the lay patronage of Æthelwine *Dei amicus*, who was the ealdorman of East Anglia. A feature of its early history was its propensity for collecting together a small empire of satellite houses. Thurcytel, abbot successively of Bedford and Crowland, was related to Archbishop Oswald the founder of Ramsey; and Crowland, like Ramsey, received the bulk of its foundation endowment from the estates of Ealdorman Æthelwine. A nunnery at Chatteris in Cambridgeshire was founded by Eadnoth, the second abbot of Ramsey, who placed his sister there as abbess. He also founded a small cell at St Ives in Huntingdonshire, and both Chatteris and St Ives were endowed with estates by Eadnoth's family.¹² By 991 the small house at St Neots in Huntingdonshire was also under the patronage of Ealdorman Æthelwine. Leofgifu the lay patroness of St Neots was the sister of Oscytel, the successor of Thurcytel as abbot of Crowland, and the endowment of Crowland and St Neots was confirmed at a ceremony at Ramsey.¹³ Ramsey's interest in Bury St Edmunds antedated all these. The first life of St Edmund was written by Abbo of Fleury at the request of the Ramsey monks, while he was on a visit to their abbey in 985–87.¹⁴ By 992 at the latest, Ramsey had acquired as part of its own endowment four estates (Horningsheath, Lawshall, Risby and Hawstead) close to the *banleuca* boundary of Bury St Edmunds (Fig. 33).¹⁵ This cannot have been due to mere chance, and bearing in mind the franchise enjoyed by Bury, and Æthelwine's position as the local ealdorman, it seems very likely that the canons serving the collegiate minster there were under the spiritual direction of Ramsey.

All this empire building came to nought in 1016, when King Edmund Ironside was defeated by King Cnut at the battle of *Assandun*. The monks of Ramsey were present at the battle in support of the English side, and their abbot, his predecessor, and many of their lay patrons were killed there.¹⁶ When Cnut founded Bury as an abbey in its own right, he chose the anniversary of the battle of *Assandun* for the date of the consecration of the church of his new foundation, and we may safely assume that by then Ramsey's influence there had been completely extinguished.

APPENDIX

THE CHELSWORTH ROYAL DIPLOMA

A.D. 962. Edgar, king of England and ruler of all Britain, to the *matrona* Æthelflæd: 7 *mansae* at Ceorleswyrðe (Chelsworth), free of all but the three common dues. Latin, with boundary clause in English. (Plate X).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Manuscripts

1. Original diploma. Written in 962 or soon afterwards. British Library, Harley Charter 43 C 37. The text occupies the flesh side of the membrane, which now measures 410mm wide by 355mm long, having been cropped closely to the edges of the text, probably soon after the charter was written. The cropping has removed the prick marks, but traces remain of the horizontal rulings and of the single vertical ruling on the left hand side of the membrane. After cropping, but still in ancient times (and probably soon after the text was written), the membrane was folded forwards, three times horizontally and five times vertically. There is no contemporary endorsement. The four earliest endorsements were made on the outer panel of the folded charter, which was therefore kept folded between the late 12th and the 17th centuries. The membrane is in good condition, having been carefully repaired along the folds, probably early in the present century. All letters are legible; the only loss in the script of the main hand is the abbreviation mark which must have appeared above the second *u* of *suu* in the last line of the Latin text before the bounds.

The body of the text is in Latin but the bounds are in Old English. The script is English caroline minuscule throughout. It is best described in Bishop (1971, 9), where other surviving examples of the same scribe's work are listed. It is characterised by employing two forms of the letter *a*, one (by far the commonest) being the normal caroline minuscule and the other an unusual variant of square insular *a*, sometimes written very like a *u*. The whole charter appears to have been written by the same scribe in one session, with the single exception of the hidage of the estate, which was inserted later in the space (which was too large) preserved for it (line 6 of the facsimile). There is a single correction, probably late, to the spelling of the word *strete* in the penultimate line of the bounds. A mixture of ordinary and rustic capitals is employed for the names of the estate, its donor, and the recipient. Abbreviations are sparse, and limited to the Latin text. In the bounds, stress marks appear above two letters *o* and two letters *a*.

2. Copies in Bury St Edmunds Abbey cartularies:
 - a. *Nigrum Registrum de Vestario*. Late 12th century.
Cambridge University Library, Mm. 4. 19, ff. 90 verso – 91 recto.
 - b. General cartulary. Second half of 13th century.
Cambridge University Library, Ff. 2. 33, f. 46 verso.
 - c. *Registrum Album*. c. 1280–1300.
British Library, Additional Manuscript 14847, f. 17.
 - d. Cellarist's Register. c. 1430–1445.
Cambridge University Library, Gg. 4. 4, f. 304 recto and verso.

Facsimiles

1. E.A. Bond, *Facsimiles of Ancient Charters in the British Museum*, 4 vols (1873–78), 3, no. 25. Full size.
2. Plate X below, following p. 250. Half size.

Catalogues

1. C.R. Hart, *The Early Charters of Eastern England*, Leicester, 1966, no. 76.
2. P.H. Sawyer, *Anglo Saxon Charters*, London, 1968, no. 703.

Editions

1. W. Wotton, *Linguarum Veterum Septentrionalium Thesauri Brevis Conspectus*, London, 1708, p. 39, from MS 1.
2. J.M. Kemble, *Codex Diplomaticus Aevi Saxonici*, 6 vols, London, 1839–48; 2, no. 490; 3, p. 458 (bounds), from MSS 1, 2c.
3. J. Earle, *A Hand-Book to the Land-Charters and other Saxon Documents*, Oxford, 1888, pp. 200–01 (from edn. no. 2 above).

4. W. de Gray Birch, *Cartularium Saxonicum*, 3 vols, London, 1893; 3, no. 1082, from MS 1.
5. This edition is from MS 1. The original spelling is retained. Abbreviations are extended in *italic*. Punctuation as in the original.

TEXT



Almus totius cosmi fabricæ conditor superna infimaque miro ineffabilique ordine collocans hominem tantundem quadriformi plasmatum materia *sancto* ad sui similitudinem inspiratum flamine cunctisque in infimis creauerat uno probandi causa excepto uetitoque, proficiens paradisiacæ iocunditatis amenitate cum sua coniuge luculentissime constituit. Qui *prohdolor* demoniaco instinctus spiramine sibi ac posteris in hoc erumpnoso deiectus sæculo mortem promeruit perpetuam.

Quam ob rem ego EADGAR totius brittaniæ gubernator et rector uni matrone cui uocabulum certa astipulatione *profertur*. ÆPELFLEÐ quendam telluris particulam. vii. uidelicet mansas liberaliter in æternam tribuo possessionem illo in loco ubi a ruricolis uulgariter CEORLESWYRÐE. prolatum est cum omnibus ad eandem terram rite pertinentibus pratis uidelicet campis pascuis siluis. et post suæ uitæ terminum heredi cui uoluerit derelinquat. Sit autem predictum rus omni terrene seruitutis iugo liberum tribus exceptis rata uidelicet expeditione pontis arcisue restauratione. Siquis uero hanc *nostram* donationem in aliud quam constituimus transferre uoluerit. sit ipse segregatus a consortio *sancte* dei æclesiæ necnon et a communionem omnium fidelium nisi prius hic ante obitum suum reus penituerit quod contra *nostrum* deliquid decretum. His metis rus hoc giratur.

Dis syndon þa land gemæro to ceorleswyrðe. Óf caforda 7lang cwyrnburnan þ hit cymð to mannan mearce þonne þanon 7lang wealc hyrste forð be ánan burnan þ hit cymð eft on mannan mearce 7 on asan þonne þanon 7lang heges þ hit cymð to anre dene þonne swa forð þ hit cymð on þone burnan þe scyt to culan fenne þonne swa forð 7lang þæs burnan þ hit cymð to óswiðes mearce 7 eadwoldes. þonne forð 7lang heges þe scyt of þam burnan þ hit cymð to stræte swa forð 7lang strete¹⁷ þ hit cymð Inn on mearcellan. onne forð 7lang mearcellan þ hit cymð þær cwyrnburna 7 mearcella sceotað togaedere þonne forð 7lang cwyrnburnan þ hit cymð eft in on cáford.

Anno dominicæ incarnationis dccccLxii. scripta est hæc carta his testibus consentientibus quorum inferius nomina notantur.

+ Ego eadgar	rex anglorum	concessi	+ Ego aþelwold	abbas	+ Ego aelfgar	<i>minister</i>
+ Ego dunstan	<i>archiepiscopus</i>	corroborau	+ Ego aelfhere	dux	+ Ego aelfwine	<i>minister</i>
+ Ego oscytel	<i>archiepiscopus</i>	confirmaui	+ Ego aelfheah	dux	+ Ego byrhtferð	<i>minister</i>
+ Ego osulf	<i>episcopus</i>	consolidau	+ Ego aþelstan	dux	+ Ego wulfhelm	<i>minister</i>
+ Ego byrhtelm	<i>episcopus</i>	consensi	+ Ego aþelwold	dux	+ Ego aþlewine	<i>minister</i>

Endorsements

1. *In an early 12th-century hand:* Carta Ædgarī regis de Cherlesworde cuidam Æffleade. *Continued in a later 12th-century hand: Que per Istam et per propriam cartam reddidit manerium sancto ædmundo.*
2. *In a late 14th-century hand:* Carta Edgar de Chrlesworde.
3. *In an early 18th-century hand (probably Humphrey Wanley's):* 43 C. 4 *scored through; written above in the same hand is:* 43 C. 3.
4. *In an early 18th-century hand, on the unfolded charter:* A. A. n.º 1.º
5. *In a later 18th-century hand:* CART. HARL. 43. C. 3.

TRANSLATION

He who founded the whole cosmos, above and below, with marvellous and unspeakably grand design, and placed therein the four forms of creation, made man likewise, entirely in His own sacred image, and breathed into him the breath of life with the most excellent intention that, provided he observed one single condition, he should be united with Him in the delightful amenities of Paradise. But alas! man became afflicted by the machinations of the devil, whereupon he and his progeny were cast down for ever into the mortal life of this world.

Wherefore I Edgar, ruler and leader of the whole of Britain, grant freely and in perpetuity into the possession of

a certain matron who is known by the name of Æthelflæd, a portion of land assessed at 7 hides in the place which is commonly known by the country folk as Chelsworth, with all the lawful appurtenances of that land, namely meadows, fields, pasture, and woods; and after the end of her life it is to go to the heirs to whom she wishes to leave it. Let the aforesaid estate be freed of all customary service, excepting only the three approved, namely military service, and maintenance of bridges and fortifications. Should anyone desire to transfer this our donation into hands other than those to whom we have made it over, let him be banished from the fellowship of Holy Church, and from the communion of all the faithful, unless he should first of all, before his death, do penance for whatever he has done in transgression against this our decree. These are the bounds that encircle the estate:

These are the landmarks of Chelsworth. From *Caford* along the mill stream until it reaches Manna's boundary, then from there along *wealc hyrste*, forth by a stream until it comes back to Manna's boundary and Asa's boundary, then from thence until it reaches a dene, then so forth until it reaches the stream that flows into *culan fenne*, and then so forth along the stream until it comes to Oswyth's boundary and Eadwold's boundary. Then forth along the hedge that flows from the stream until it reaches the street, and so forth along the street until it comes into the *mearcella*. then forward along *mearcella* until it arrives at the place where the mill stream and the *mearcella* flow together, then forth along the mill stream until it comes back into *Caford*.

This charter was written in the year of Our Lord's incarnation 962, with the consent of the witnesses whose names are noted below.

(The witness list which concludes the charter need not be translated here, but brief biographical accounts are supplied below.)

WITNESSES

The witnesses comprised a compact group of powerful men, all of whom were closely associated with the king. Together, they formed the core of the royal court. The biographies which follow are all condensed from accounts which appear in Hart, 1975.

Edgar

King of Mercia summer 957 × September 959; king of England 1 October 959 × 8 July 975. Born in 943, he was the son of King Edmund and Queen Ælfgifu. His mother died in 943 or 944 (perhaps at his birth), and Edgar's father then married Æthelflæd of Damerham, the recipient of Chelsworth. Edgar's father was killed on 26 May 946. As an infant, Edgar was separated from his elder brother Eadwig, and fostered by Ælfwyn, the wife of Æthelstan 'Half King', ealdorman of East Anglia. He knew Abbot Dunstan of Glastonbury (who became archbishop of Canterbury, see below) in his childhood; later he was educated by Abbot Æthelwold of Abingdon (below).

Dunstan

Abbot of Glastonbury 940 × 946, bishop of Worcester and London 957 × 959, archbishop of Canterbury 959 × 19 May 988. Probably he held the sees of London and Worcester in plurality, until 961 and 964 respectively. Born c. 909 at Baltonsborough, Somerset, he was related to the royal family and had considerable influence on King Edgar. For his later biography, see Stubbs 1874.

Oscytel

Bishop of Dorchester 949 × 958, archbishop of York 956 × 1 November 971.

Osulf

Bishop of Ramsbury (Wiltshire and Berkshire) 950 × 970.

Byrthelm

Bishop of Selsey c. 957 × 963, ? bishop of Sherborne and Winchester in plurality 956-9 × 963.

Æthelwold

Monk of Glastonbury, abbot of Abingdon c. 953 × 963, bishop of Winchester 29 November 963 × 8 August 984. He was born c. 910. While at Abingdon he was made responsible for the education and upbringing of the ætheling Edgar, the later king, probably during the period 953 × 957. From 961 until his death, Æthelwold was in control of the royal chancery, which produced the land charters. Byrhtferth's *Vita S. Oswaldi* names Æthelwold as Edgar's principal counsellor. The early lives of Æthelwold are edited by Winterbottom, 1972.

Ælfhere

Ealdorman of Mercia 956 × 983. The most powerful lay magnate of his day, he was the son of Ealdorman Ealhhelm of Central Mercia, and brother of Ealdorman Ælfheah and of the discthegn Ælfwine (see below). See further for these three, Williams, 1982.

Ælfheah

Ealdorman of Wessex 959 × 971. Brother of Ealdorman Ælfhere (above).

Æthelstan

Ealdorman of South-East Mercia 955 × 970. Distinguished by the nickname *Rota* (? 'the Red') in S 582, a charter of 955. He was the husband of Æthelflæd of Damerham, the recipient of Chelworth, who survived him.

Æthelwold

Ealdorman of East Anglia 950 × 962. The son and successor of Æthelstan 'Half King', ealdorman of East Anglia, and the foster brother of King Edgar. He was married to Ælfthryth, daughter of Ealdorman Ordgar of the Western Shires; after Æthelwold's death she married King Edgar. See further Hart, 1973 (a).

Ælfgar

King's thegn, witnessed charters from 951 onwards. A West Saxon, close kinsman of King Edgar, who almost invariably headed the thegns witnessing Edgar's charters, and was therefore the most important official of his court. He died in Devon in 962 and was buried at Wilton. His brother Byrhtferth (below) was also a witness to the Chelworth diploma.

Ælfwine

King's thegn, witnessed from 956 to 970. He was the brother of Ealdormen Ælfhere and Ælfheah (above), and held estates in Berkshire. He headed the thegns witnessing King Edgar's charters when the brothers Ælfgar and Byrhtferth were absent from court.

Byrhtferth

King's thegn, witnessed from 949 to 970. He was a West Saxon, the brother of Ælfgar (above) whose office at court he appears to have inherited, because he regularly witnessed as first of the thegns after his brother's death. Together with his brother Ælfgar, he was given the title *consul* in S 692, a charter of 961.

Wulfhelm

King's thegn, a Mercian who rose to prominence after Edgar's election as king of Mercia in 957. He held estates in Staffordshire, and may have been an ancestor of Wulfric Spot, who founded the abbey of Burton on Trent in 1004.

Æthelwine

Witnessed as a king's thegn from 958 until 962 when he succeeded as ealdorman of East Anglia upon the death of his brother Ælfwold (above). He provided the foundation endowment of Ramsey Abbey in 969 and died on 24 April 992.

DIPLOMATIC

This was first analysed in 1935 in a seminal article by R. Drögereit (Drögereit 1935, 335–436), who identified five charters, all of the period 960–2, employing similar formulas and written by the same scribe, whom he described as 'Edgar A' (S 687, 690, 703, 706, and 717). All employ the same form of *chrismon* at the front of the text. Drögereit considered that 'Edgar A' was responsible for constructing the diplomatic of the charter as well as writing it, and he assigned the scriptorium to Abingdon. For further analysis, see Chaplais 1966; there is more discussion in Keynes 1980, 69–79, and in Hart 1975, 21–27.

Much controversy attends these various accounts, and those interested are advised to compare them carefully with each other. Apart from a few minor amendments, the views expressed here are those advanced in Hart 1975, where it was postulated that the Chelworth diploma was produced by a royal chancery based at Abingdon under

Abbot Æthelwold's direction. Æthelwold himself was probably responsible for the diplomatic. The scribe 'Edgar A' appears to have been Abingdon trained, and usually he worked in the abbey scriptorium; occasionally however he may have been peripatetic with the king. After Æthelwold's elevation to Winchester he (Æthelwold) appears to have retained control of the chancery, which became centred at the Old Minster; but as with the Abingdon period, chancery scribes trained at Winchester may have travelled with the royal court from time to time. In smaller numbers, extra-chancery texts of royal diplomas were produced at other centres, notably at Glastonbury, Bath, Worcester, and Christ Church, Canterbury. In many of these, Dunstan's direction is apparent. It is worth noting the significance of early contact with the king in his formative years; Abbots Dunstan and Æthelwold were King Edgar's tutors, and it cannot be mere chance that two of the three surviving charters of the reign of King Edward the Martyr (975–978) were written at Crediton, where Edward was under the tutelage of Bishop Sideman (S 830, 832; see also S 755, 770 for earlier charters in this style, perhaps also from Crediton).

Two specific points about the diplomatic of the Chelsworth charter are worthy of mention. First, the inflated proem seems to be entirely unrelated to the remainder of the text, and its purpose becomes clear only when the text is examined of another 'Edgar A' charter (S 690). This records an endowment of Abingdon by Edgar, and employs the same proem as the Chelsworth charter. Here however the dispositive clause following the proem runs as follows:

Quam obrem ego Edgar totius Britanniae gubernator et rector ut huius miseriae repagulum quam protoplastus inretitus promuerit, domini nostri Jhesu Christi gratia redemptus euadere queam quandam ruris particulam xxii. uidelicet cassatos. . .

In the foregoing excerpt, that part of the text shared with the Chelsworth charter is put into italic; the remainder explains that the gift is made in order to avoid (by the grace of Christ's redemption) the consequences of Adam's downfall. If the proem of Edgar's Chelsworth charter retains any meaning at all, we have to assume that this missing passage in the dispositive clause is implied. If so, the ultimate purpose of the Chelsworth donation was for the endowment of some ecclesiastical centre. The implication of this is discussed in the introduction to this paper.

The second point to notice is that the scribe was apparently unaware of the hidage assessment of Chelsworth at the time he drew up his charter. He left a space for it, and it was inserted later. It seems unlikely therefore that Æthelwold's representative was available at the time when the charter was written.

THE BOUNDS OF CHELSWORTH IN THE 962 CHARTER

The descent of the estate to Bury St Edmunds has been described above, and because of this we may be quite sure that *ceorlswyrdæ* in the 962 charter is identical with Chelsworth, Suffolk. The name is probably manorial (see Finburg 1964, 144, 'Charltons and Carltons'). The OE personal name *Ceorl* is found commonly from the 7th to the 11th centuries. *Ceorl's worth* (homestead, enclosure) could have originated either before the Danish settlement of 870–910, or possibly after the recovery of Suffolk by King Edward the Elder; an origin in the 7th century or earlier seems most likely.

This account of the boundary of Chelsworth rests mainly on an examination of the 1839–40 tithe maps and their corresponding awards for Chelsworth and its adjacent parishes. With the exception of Monks Eleigh, all these are kept at the Bury St Edmunds Branch of the Suffolk Record Office, which preserves also a manorial survey of Chelsworth dated 1632, which has been consulted. Other Chelsworth records kept at Bury proved unproductive for our purpose, as did the Bury St Edmunds Abbey cartularies preserved at Cambridge University Library and at the British Library. Other Chelsworth sources are listed in Copinger 1904–07. They include reeve's accounts of 1369–77, an extant in an *inquisitio post mortem* of 1438–39, and a Parliamentary survey of 1652–53 (all at the Public Record Office), and manorial court rolls of 1553–60 at the British Library. None of these have been consulted. We have however perambulated much of the boundary ourselves.

Our initial task was to test the possibility that (as with many other Anglo-Saxon charter boundaries) the present parish boundary of Chelsworth relates to those found in the charter. In conformity with custom in Anglo-Saxon charter boundary clauses, the perambulation is likely to be clockwise. We attempted first to locate the point on the boundary 'where the mill-stream and boundary stream run together'. This could be at either the east end or the west end of the village, but a check is offered by the firm location of *culan fen* in the charter bounds (see below). Given this clue, our perambulation of the boundary of Chelsworth in the 962 charter commences at Cakebridge, and runs in a clockwise direction on or near to the line of the present parish boundary of Chelsworth, which may be followed most conveniently on the 6 inch Ordnance Survey map (see Fig. 35):

1. *of caford*
from *caford*

Commencing at Cakebridge about half a mile west of Chelsworth church, where the road from Chelsworth to Monks Eleigh crosses the River Brett. A farm track previously called Mill Lane but now called *Cakebridge Lane* (tithe and O.S. maps) runs northwards from the road at this point. A field just north of the bridge is named *Cakebridge* in the Chelsworth tithe award of 1839, and the name *Cakebredds* is found in the 1632 survey at this point, in association with Mill Lane (below). The first element of *caford* in the charter may be OE **ca*, a cognate of Danish dialect *kaa*, a jackdaw. These birds are still common locally. Compounds of *ca* with *beorg* (Caber, Cumberland), *burna* (Cabourne, Leicestershire), *feld* (Cavil, East Yorkshire), *hyrst* (Keyhirst, Northumberland), and *wudu* (Cawood, Lancashire) all lie in the Danelaw and in the North. Chelsworth lay in the Eastern Danelaw. Confusion of the OE element **ca* with ME *cake* would arise from the appearance of the ford (later bridge) when the muddy banks dried out in summer.

2. *andlang cwyrnburnan thet hit cymth to mannan mearce*
along the millstream until it comes to Manna's boundary mark

The boundary between Chelsworth and Monks Eleigh parishes runs upstream in a north westerly direction along the River Brett for about one mile, until it reaches the common boundary between Chelsworth and Kettlebaston parishes. Monks Eleigh was already owned by Æthelflæd, the recipient of Chelsworth, as the wills of the family show. It is suggested that Manna was the landowner of Kettlebaston. The modern river name Brett is a back-formation from Brettenham, through which the river runs, three miles north of Chelsworth. There is no mill surviving on the section of the river forming the Chelsworth boundary, but an old mill leet is to be found 200 yards further upstream, at Wagger Farm, and two fields beside the river at this point are named Great and Little Millfield in the Kettlebaston tithe map (nos. 12 and 13 in the award). This part of the river Brett was called the Mill Stream, and the lane from Chelsworth to Wagger Farm was called Mill Lane, in the tithe awards of both parishes, and also in the 1632 Chelsworth survey. We are unable to offer a firm derivation for the name *Wagger*, but would tentatively suggest OE **wácor*, an osier, a willow twig.

3. *thonne andlang wealc hyrste*
from thence along *wealc* hurst

The Kettlebaston-Chelsworth boundary leaves the River Brett and runs north eastwards along field boundaries. A small coppice here, shown on the Chelsworth tithe map, may be a surviving remnant of a more heavily wooded district. Several of the coppices in this area contain old self-propagating woodland, and show no signs of having been plantations. OE *wealh* (adjective *welisc*) = foreigner, was used to denote native Britons, but in place-names (particularly in Eastern England) it is thought to bear more commonly the secondary meaning 'serf', 'slave'. We have been unable to trace the name in the tithe awards or in the 1632 survey.

4. *forth be anan burnan thet hit cymth eft on mannan mearce and on asan*
forward along a certain stream until it reaches the boundary between (the lands of) Manna and Asa.

OE *Asa* is a feminine name, but women often possessed property in their own right. At this point we have reached the high ground at the northernmost tip of Chelsworth parish, where the boundary with Bildeston begins. It is suggested that Asa held Bildeston.

5. *thonne andlang heges that hit cymth to anre dene*
from there along hedges until it reaches a valley

More precisely, Smith (1956) suggests for *dene* 'the deep wooded valley of a small stream', but Dr Margaret Gelling in a recent lecture noted that its special characteristics were those of a 'long, narrow, curved valley, with steep sides'. The boundary runs downwards along several hedges to the valley of a small stream which forms a loop south of Bildeston Grove, beneath the Bildeston parish church. The valley itself is not steep here, but the boundary ditch is remarkable, being in some sections up to 8ft deep and 10ft wide, with old hedgerows on either side.

6. *thonne swa forth thet hit cymth on thonne burnan the scyt to culan fenne*
then onwards until it reaches the river that flows to the hollow fen

The boundary runs down the Bildeston Brook to the west of the Bildeston-Hadleigh road, B 1115. *Culfen Meadow* in the 1632 Chelsworth survey has bounds which locate it here. Five of the low-lying water meadows here are named *Culphin* in the 1839 tithe award of Chelsworth, and the name *Culphen* is still in use locally today. The fields on the opposite side of the river at this point are called *Fen meadows* in the Nedging tithe award.

7. *thonne swa forþ andlang þæs burnan þæt hit cymth to oswithes mearc and eadwoldes*
 thence along the stream until it reaches the boundary of (the lands of) Oswyth and Eadwold
 Bildeston Brook runs down into the River Brett at Nedging Mills. Below this point the Brett forms the boundary between the parishes of Nedging and Semer. It is suggested that Oswyth (another woman) held Nedging, and Eadwold held Semer.
8. *thonne forþ andlang heges the scyt of tham burnan þæt hit cymth to stræte*
 then forth along the (hedged) dykes that are drained by the river, until it reaches the street
 A footpath runs south west from the River Brett, along field boundaries between Chelsworth Common and Semer Wood, to join the road from Hadleigh to Lavenham at Canada Houses (6 inch map). In the countryside, OE *stræt* implies a metalled road, usually Roman. One of us (A.G.S.) suggests that the portion of this street called Clay Hill (6 inch map) was a Roman road, which originated as part of the centuriation of the *colonia* of Colchester. This topic will be developed separately in a later article.
9. *swa forþ andlang strete þæt hit cymth inn on mearcellan*
 forward along the street until it runs into the *mearc*
 In Anglian dialect generally, OE *mercels* means a boundary, but here it is applied specifically to a boundary stream, the Lavenham Brook, which runs into the River Brett at this point. Downstream at Shelley, just before it joins the River Stour, the River Brett itself was called *mercyl* in the will of Æthelflæd's sister Ælflæd (Whitelock 1930, 40).
10. *thonne forþ andlang mearcellan þæt hit cymth þær cwyrnburna and mearcella sceotath togædere*
 then along the boundary stream until it comes to (the junction) where the mill-stream and the boundary stream flow together
 Downstream along the Lavenham Brook to where it joins the River Brett.
11. *thonne forþ andlang cwyrnburnan þæt hit cymth eft on caford*
 then forward along the mill stream until it comes once more to *caford*
 Returning upstream along the River Brett to Cakebridge on the Chelsworth–Monks Eleigh road, where the bounds began.

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NOTES

- 1 The pedigree reproduced as Table 1 has been constructed mainly from wills. Those of Æthelflæd and Ælflæd survive as B.L. Harl. charter 43, c. 4, an almost contemporary copy, from the Bury archives. The wills of Ælfgar and Thurstan survive in the 13th-century Bury cartulary, C.U.L. MS F. f. 2. 33, ff. 46 and 49. All these are edited in Whitelock 1930. Latin translations of parts of the wills of Byrhtnoth, Oswig, Leofflæd and Lustwine appear in the 12th-century *Liber Eliensis*, of which the earliest version survives in T.C.C., MS 0.2.1. The *Liber Eliensis* has been edited by Blake (1962). The best surviving information concerning the West Saxon royal house at this period is contained in the 12th-century chronicle formerly attributed to Florence of Worcester, of which the best text is C.C.C., MS 157, poorly edited by Thorpe (1848). A new edition by Dr P. McGurk is awaited; meanwhile, see Hart 1983, 251–315. Ealdorman Æthelwold's connection with the royal family is recorded in the 13th-century Ramsey Chronicle; Bodl. MS Rawl. B. 333 (ed. Macray 1886).
- 2 Hart 1980, 94–102.
- 3 C.U.L., MS F. f. 2. 33, f. 20, ed. Birch 1885–99, no. 808; see Hart 1966, 54–58.
- 4 Bishop Theodred's will survives in C.U.L. MS F. f. 2. 33, f. 48 (see note 3 above), ed. Whitelock 1930, no. 1.

- 5 This gift is recorded in several early medieval lists of donors to Bury St Edmunds, preserved in Bury cartularies. Of these, C.U.L. MS E. e. 3. 60 dated 1333 has been edited by Hervey (1925).
- 6 Hart 1966, 59–60.
- 7 The lands of the East Saxon caldordom can be partially reconstructed from transactions recorded in the *Liber Eliensis* and the *Chronicon Abbatiae Ramesiensis* (see note 1 above); together with a number of individual pre-Conquest charters, listed in Hart 1973 (a), 115–44. See further, Hart 1987, 57–84.
- 8 Scragg 1981.
- 9 Recorded in the oldest recension of the Thorney Abbey foundation charter, preserved in the Red Book of Thorney, C.U.L. Add. MS 3020, ff. 13–15, ed. Hart (1966), 165–72, 180–81, and see further Hart 1973 (b), 138–43.
- 10 Recorded in the *Liber Eliensis* Book 2, c. 41 (see note 1).
- 11 Red Book of Thorney, ff. 16–17, see note 9. Ed. Hart 1966, 198–203.
- 12 Most of the evidence for this derives from the *Chronicon Abbatiae Ramesiensis*, see note 1. It is discussed in Hart 1964, 61–67.
- 13 Macray 1886, 96.
- 14 B.L. MS Cotton Tiberius B ii, ff. 2–19, best edited by Winterbottom (1972).
- 15 Macray 1886, 81–84.
- 16 Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, C text, *sub anno* 1016.
- 17 Corrected to *straete*, not necessarily by the main hand.

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Abbreviations for MSS

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| B.L. | British Library. |
| Bodl. | Bodleian Library, Oxford. |
| C.C.C. | Corpus Christi College, Oxford. |
| C.U.L. | Cambridge University Library. |
| Harl. | Harleian Charters. |
| Rawl. | Rawlinson MSS. |
| T.C.C. | Trinity College, Cambridge. |