

## The boundaries of Godmersham in Kent as described in BCS 378

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Walking the bounds of an Anglo-Saxon estate in the field, where this is still possible, has always been considered both an illuminating part of onomastic research and a useful exercise for students of English place-names. When the present writer was a student in the English department at University College in London in the fifties Professor A. H. Smith used to take his students on such a walk. He usually chose the boundary clause of the Anglo-Saxon estate, today the parish, of Godmersham (*godmæres ham*) in Kent. This is inscribed together with the boundary clause of the neighbouring estate and parish of Challock (*cealfa locum*) on the reverse of a charter which is a record from the synod of *Clofesho* setting forth the recovery by Archbishop Wulfred of land at *Oesewalum* (Easole) in Kent in the year 824, printed as BCS 378. This is considered to be an original charter, published in OSF III 14 (see Sawyer 1434). The estates of Godmersham and Challock both belonged to Christ Church, Canterbury, which obtained them by charter in 822 and 833 (BCS 372 and 412, Sawyer 1620 and 1482), so the endorsement would seem to have been written somewhat later than the actual charter. For Smith the Godmersham boundary clause in BCS 378 was an interesting text from an onomastic point of view and, moreover, the present parish boundaries presented no great difficulties for a person who wanted to walk them in the field and the place was situated within convenient distance from London by train.

The text under notice reads as follows, with Old English punctuation preserved but with numbers added (see also fig. 1):

Hæc sunt territoria terræ. octo aratorum in Godmæres hám quam dedit Beorhtulf rex Merciorum Uulfredo archiæpiscopo. ærest fram æsce (1) norð to stættingforda (2). ðanon norð be ea (3) to dreaman uuyrðe (4) on fisc pól (5). ðanon east rihte be suðeuueardan bradan lea (6). swa be suðan pur wuda (7). be pytlea (8). to uuincelcumbe (9) on ðat sol (10). of ðan sole on ða ealdan stræte (11). ðanon

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This article was first published in Swedish in *Namn och Bygd* 53 (1965). I have been asked several times by my friends in England to publish it in English. Through the recent researches of Paul Cullen new material has come to light which leads to a reconsideration of the extent of the Anglo-Saxon estate of Godmersham to the south. I am grateful to him for generously allowing me to quote him on this point and include old spellings which he has found.

on middan stán mere (12). ðanon on gerihte on cynges lim fine (13). of ðære fine niðer ofer hean leah (14) and lang mele uueges (15) on ðone hean æsc (16) be norðan wol tune (17). swa on bisceopesðorn (18). ðanon west ðurh suð tun (19) on middan hyrst (20). ðanon suð up be ea (21) on norðan bord dæne (22). ðanon on neolan mere (23). of ðam on middan hearcincg mere (24). ðanon on sacecumb (25). swa on fearn edisc (26). swa to æsce (1).

J. K. Wallenberg discusses the bounds of Godmersham in *Kentish Place-Names* (1931: 145 ff.). Wallenberg's pioneering work is worth great respect. He identifies several of the boundary marks and examines them both from an etymological and a semantic point of view. Today the discussion can be taken a bit further, since new material has come to light in local archives which makes it possible to locate a few more points. In a couple of cases I shall also suggest new interpretations.

The situation of the ash, which is the first point in the survey (*fram æsce*), cannot be decided without the help of other points in the boundary. The first points which can be identified without any difficulty are *dreaman uuyrðe* (4) and the *ea* 'water, river' mentioned immediately before (3). *Dreaman uuyrðe* is the farm Trimworth in the neighbouring parish of Crundale on the Godmersham boundary (*Dreamwurthe* c. 1090 Dom Mon, *Tremewrth* 1218, *Tremesworth* 1237, *Tremeworth(e)* 1254, 1262, 1278, 1279, etc. KPN 149). The river is the Stour, on which Trimworth is situated and which serves as parish boundary between Godmersham, Crundale and Wye (see the map fig. 2). The ash and *stættingford* (2) are evidently to be found somewhat further to the south.

*Stættingford* was no doubt a ford across the Stour. After this point the boundary follows the river (*be ea*). The parish boundary and the river are separated for a short distance south of Trimworth, but it is possible that the boundary here follows an earlier stretch of the river. This was suggested by the English place-name scholar John McN Dodgson, who had studied the historical topography of this area. He also believed that a detached part of Godmersham, close to Wye town to the south of the present parish, was originally united to the main part and that the detached parts of Boughton Aluph and Wye (which today separate Godmersham and its detached part) formerly belonged to Godmersham. However, in a recent study of this boundary Paul Cullen has come across new evidence which suggests that the detached part of Godmersham was in fact not included in the charter bounds in BCS 378.

In order to find a plausible site for *stættingford* (2) we have to follow the river (= the boundary) southwards, and Dodgson thought that the most likely site of the ford was the point where the boundary of the detached part of Godmersham and the Stour meet (see fig. 2), but in the light of recent research it seems to have been a bit further to the north along the river. The ash (1), with which the survey starts, is likely to have marked the corner where the eastern boundary



joins the western boundary coming from Soakham (25), to which we shall return towards the end of our perambulation (see fig. 2).

*Stættincgford* offers no easy etymology. Wallenberg discussed it at some length and before him Karlström. The latter considers it identical with (*oð*) *teting ford* 940 (BMF III 10, m. 10th c. Sawyer 464) BCS 753, a point in the boundary of *oswolding tun*, which has not been identified, but which was clearly situated in this area (Karlström 1927: 151). Karlström argues that the correct form was *teting*, formed from the OE personal name *\*Tetta*. He compares (*æ*) *tettincgleage* 963 (OSF III 30, l. 10th c. Sawyer 717) BCS 1101. A woman's name *Tette* is well evidenced (Boehler 1930: 231). This name or the masculine *\*Tetta* is considered to be the first element of the place-name Tedburn in Devonshire, recorded as *tettan burnan* 739 (m. 11th c.) Crawf 1 (DEPN s.n.).

Wallenberg (KPN 148) thinks the suggested identity of *stættincgford* with *teting ford* is "almost conclusive", but he proposes that *stættincg* represents the more original form, whereas *oð teting ford* may result from reduction of the heavy consonant cluster *ðst* to *ðt*, in phrases with the preposition *oð*. This gives Wallenberg the chance to explain the first element as a river-name formed from the same stem as the Middle English verb *stete* 'push, shove; hurl oneself, fall violently'. He mentions a number of related words from other Germanic languages, all related to the Proto-Germanic stem *\*staut-*, *\*stūt(t)-* from the Indo-European root *\*stud-* 'push, beat'. Such a name might have referred to one of the small tributaries which flow into the Stour immediately south of Trimworth. It should be noted that the spelling *æ* for *e* is not uncommon in Kentish charters, so this variation in *stættincg-/teting* would cause no difficulty.

Wallenberg believes that corrupt forms are more likely in BCS 753 than in BCS 378, because the former document has the scribal error *done* for *dene* or *dune*. But it is doubtful if such a small amount of Old English text as found here can be used in this way to decide whether *stættincg-* or *teting* represents the original form. Wallenberg locates the ford at the mouth of one of the small tributaries to the Stour just south of Trimworth. A person who walks along the Stour cannot help making the reflection that a river-name with the meaning 'the one that hurls itself or falls violently' would be highly out of place here, where the Stour and its tributaries slowly wind their way through the flat landscape. Of our two alternatives, Karlström's derivation from the OE personal name *\*Tetta* would seem to take precedence.

Let us now return to *dreaman uuyrðe* (4), the spelling for Trimworth. The first element is undoubtedly an OE personal name *\*Drēama*, formed from the stem of OE *drēam* 'joy, song, music'. *\*Drēama* would be a regular hypocoristic form of, for instance, *Drēamwulf* (OET 555). *\*Drēama* is also assumed to be the first element in Drimpton Do (DEPN s.n.). The existence of the OE personal name *Dremca* is also worth noting (Redin 1919: 156). In PNK (383) Wallenberg

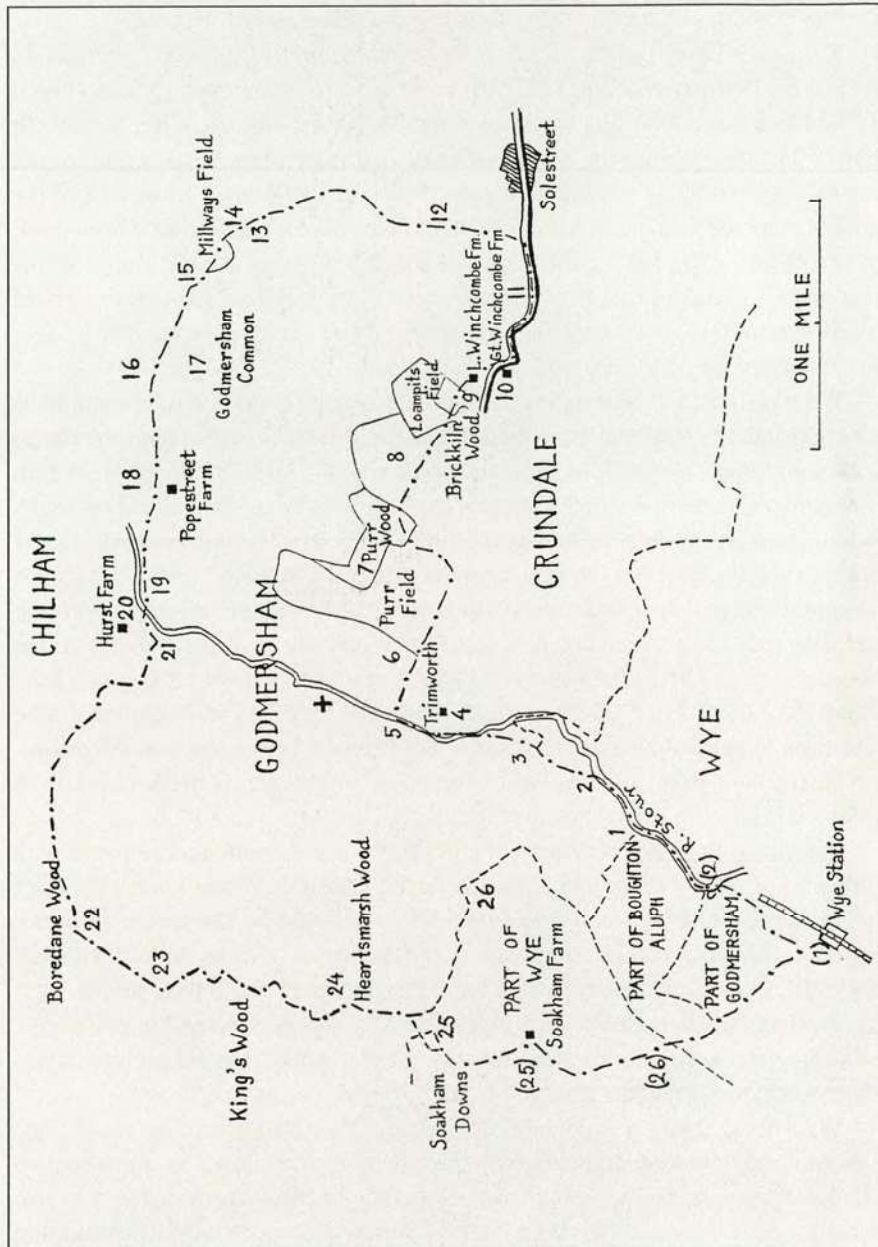


Fig. 2. Godmersham, Kent. The figures indicate the positions of the boundary marks as numbered in the text. Those within brackets show the extent of the southern bounds according to an earlier interpretation of the description in the charter.

says that he prefers derivation from the personal name and disclaims his earlier suggestion in KPN (149) that the first element might be a river-name *\*Drēame* 'the one that sings aloud', referring to one of the tributaries of the Stour.

The next point is the *fisc pól* (5), a word evidenced as a gloss to Lat *vivarium* and *piscina* (Wright-Wülcker 178, 'fish-pond, stew' Latham 1965 s.v.) and found in The Lindisfarne Gospels, where *in piscinam* corresponds to *in þæt fiscpol* (St John V 7). At this point the boundary turns *east rihte be suðeuueardan bradan lea* (6), i.e. 'east along the southern part of the broad clearing'. If we look at the modern map, we find that the parish boundary leaves the river Stour a little north of Trimworth. After having run north (*norð*), it now turns at right angles to the river and runs straight east between cultivated fields and then takes us to a grove called Purr Wood, obviously the *pur wuda* (7) of the charter boundary. This shows that we are on the right track.

We translated OE *leah* in *bradan lea* 'clearing'. Theoretically it could have been translated 'wood', but in boundaries *leah* in fact more often seems to refer to 'a clearing' than 'a wood', as for instance Ekwall (1931: 100) already noted. In the Anglo-Saxon period a boundary was likely to run through woodland for much of its extent, which makes 'clearing' more likely as a boundary mark. In the present case the fact that the next boundary mark is 'a wood' (*pur wuda*) lends plausibility to this interpretation. An enclosed field south and east of which the boundary runs today immediately before Purr Wood has the name *Purr Field* (see the map. fig. 2). The Godmersham Tithe Award (TA) from 1839 gives *Purr Wood, Purr Wood Field* and *Purr Field Shave*. The original Purr Wood may once have been larger and also included this area. The small deviation that the boundary makes here from its east-west direction is topographically conditioned. It follows a ridge with a bend and may thus be old.

The name Purr Wood (*Purwod* 1535 KPN 149) should be compared with Purleigh in Essex (*Purlea* 998 Crawf 9, *Purlai* 1086 DB, *Purle* 1212, 1227) and Purley in Berkshire (*Porlei*, *Porlaa* 1086 DB, *Purle* 1243). These have been discussed by Ekwall, who interprets the first element as OE *pur* 'bittern' (Ekwall 1931: 80). It is a little uncertain which bird OE *pur* refers to. Outside place-names the word is only recorded twice in glosses, for Lat *bicoca* and *onocrotalus*. According to Ekwall the former probably means 'snipe', the latter 'bittern'. In any case OE *pur* denoted a waterfowl.

Wallenberg thinks it is doubtful if waterfowl ever frequented this wood since it is in a high situation comparatively far away from water. This may seem so today, but the water level was higher in the Anglo-Saxon period. *The Victoria History of Kent* says about the bittern: "Before the epoch of cultivation and drainage it probably bred in our marshes" (VH K I 289). It should be noted that the boundary marks which follow after Purr Wood are *pytlea*, *uincelcumb* and *sol*, which imply ground which has hollows, is in a low situation and wet.

The more exact situation of *pytlea* (8), from OE *pytt* 'pitt' and *lēah*, cannot be decided, but it appears that shortly after Purr Wood the parish boundary passes, in the following order, *Sawpit Field*, *Loam Pits* (1839 TA) and Brickkiln Wood (OS 6-Inch Map). The Crundale TA (1839) gives *Loampits*, *Loampit Shave* and *Loampitt Hole*. A field called *Brick Close* (1705 Deed KRO U47/1, T145, Bundle 1) formerly belonged to the neighbouring Eggerton Farm. These field-names show the existence of pits for various purposes, among others clay-pits for the making and burning of bricks.

The following *uuincelcumb* (9), which contains OE *\*wincel* 'nook, angle' and *cumb* 'valley' (orig. Celtic), refers to the valley in which Great and Little Winchcombe Farm are situated: *æt Wincel cumbe* 825 (BMF II 18, e. 9th c. Sawyer 1436) BCS 384, *ad Wincelcumbe* 825 (13th c. Sawyer 1436) BCS 385, *de Wynch(e)combe* 13th c., 1332, *de Wynhecumbe* 1292, 1313, etc. KPN 149 f.). This name has a counterpart in Winchcomb in Gloucestershire: *æt Wincel cumbe* 796–819 (BMF IV 6, Sawyer 1861) BCS 364, *ad Wincelcumbe* 897 (11th c. Sawyer 1442) BCS 575, etc. (DEPN s.n.). The first element is an OE word only known from place-names, but it can also be deduced from OHG *winkil* 'corner'. Ekwall interprets the compound as 'side valley, remote valley', but in both these cases the valley has a marked bend, which may be the reason for the name. The meaning of *sol* (10) might have been 'swamp'. It is recorded in the compound *heorotsol* 'stag's wallowing-place' and as a gloss for Lat *stagnum* 'pond, slough' 801 (13th c. Sawyer 268) BCS 282.

OE *stræt* (11) was chiefly used about Roman roads. After Winchcombe the parish boundary follows a road which may be the one referred to by *stræt* here. This may have been a westerly turning of the Roman Stone Street which runs north-south between Canterbury and Lympne and passes along the eastern side of the neighbouring parishes of Petham and Waltham. The road leads east into Crundale to the little village of Solestreet, the name of which seems to be a combination of the two boundary marks (10) and (11). Solestreet may be explained as '(the village on) the road which leads to the swamp', but Paul Cullen has found several occurrences of this name in Kent. As well as Solestreet in Crundale he has noted Sole Street in Cobham, Sole Street Farm in Frindsbury and Sole Street House in Selling. Instead of an *ad hoc* formation it should perhaps be explained as something more specific. Cullen draws attention to a suggestion by Alan Everitt (1986: 169) that *sol*, and later dial. *sole*, on the Kent Downland was used of man-made stock-ponds, and 'sole-street' may have been a drove-way by which cattle were led to a stock-pond.

Points (12) to (17) cannot be found on the modern map, but a study of older documents gives a few clues. It is clear that these points mark the eastern boundary of Godmersham. One part of it runs *and lang mele ueeges* (15). Almost in the north-eastern corner of the parish the TA (1839) gives an enclosure called

*Millways (Field)* and the road turns up also as a Middle English field-name (*melewaye*, *ate meleweye* 1285 CCC Reg. C, f. 210). The points (12) to (14) are evidently to be looked for south of here. The site of *stān mere* (12), from OE *stān* 'stone' and *mere* 'pond', must have been just north of the *stræt* (11). What 'stone pond' it was is difficult to guess, perhaps a *dew pond*, a type of artificial pond often lined with flints and stones and used in Kent in the old days to provide water for sheep. The water supply depended on rain and mist.

*Cynges lim fin* (13), from OE *lim* 'lime' and *fin* 'heap, pile' suggests that there was a lime-stone quarry nearby and there is one marked on the 6-Inch Map. There is medieval evidence for this boundary mark: *la limuine* 1258 CCC Ch. Ant. G 111, *le limwyne* 1274 CCC Ch. Ant. G(3) 166, 26, *ate lymvine* 1286 CCC Reg. C, f. 210 (with southern voicing of *f*). From this point we pass *nīðer ofer hean leah* (14) 'down across the high clearing' to the Millway (15), just mentioned, which we cannot leave without a few linguistic comments. Wallenberg gives three possible explanations for the first element of the OE form (*and lang*) *mele uueges*: OE *melu* 'meal, flour', *mæl* (Kentish *mēl*) 'mark, cross' and *mylen* (Kentish *melen* with loss of *n*) 'mill'. The Modern English form Millway and the close proximity of Thruxted Mill, speak in favour of the third alternative, although one should be aware that the loss of *n* has been seen as a problem. Such loss before various consonants in the Kentish dialect of Old English has been noted and discussed by several scholars (Ekwall 1931: 20 ff.; Tengstrand 1931: 174; Smith in EPNE I 10). Kökeritz quotes some examples which can serve as parallels in the present case: (*æt, to*) *Melebroce, melebroces* 956 (BMF III 21, m. 10th c. Sawyer 636) BCS 926 and *Melebroc* 1045 (BMF IV 31, m. 11th c. Sawyer 1008) KCD 781 for Millbrook in Hampshire. He says that the first element must be OE *mylen* 'mill' and explains the form as Jutish (Kökeritz 1940: ci). A more comprehensive study, which shows that the reduction of medial *an* in toponymical composition in Old English charters was both earlier and more widespread than we have thought is to be found in Sandred (1988: 131–153).

We are then taken *on ðone hean æsc* 'to the high ash' (16), which of course cannot be identified, but we can identify *bisceopesðorn* (18) and this suggests that points (16) and (17) were situated where the present parish boundary slowly turns to the west along Godmersham Common (see the map fig. 2). 'The high ash' may have stood where the boundary makes a slight bend north of Godmersham Common (16). In Dodgson's opinion, *wol tun* (17) may be a spelling for *wull tun* (personal information). It may be objected that OE *wull* 'wool' is a very unusual element in place-names (EPNE s.v.), and we have to assume that *u* could be spelled as *o* in this document. This is not such a great problem, for it is quite a common spelling in Middle English in proximity to *m*, *n*, *v* and *w* (Jordan 1934 § 37). It might thus refer to an enclosure for the shearing of sheep, but no certainty is possible. Wallenberg seeks the explanation in a counterpart of OHG

*wuol-* in OHG *wuollache* 'puddle where swine root' and compares OHG *wuolen*, MHG *wüelen*, ModHG *wühlen* 'burrow, root, turn up the ground, dig' and suggests that it referred to a place where the ground was rooted up, i.e. cleared or where swine burrowed (cf. Graff and Kluge s.v.). Alternatively he suggests the OE noun *wol* 'pestilence', an interpretation which goes back to Middendorff (1902: 152) and is not impossible, but the factual background is obscure.

*Bisceopesðorn* (18) can be connected with a definite place, i.e. Popestreet Farm in Godmersham, near the northern boundary. Popestreet Farm got its name from the medieval family *le Pope* 1262 etc. CCC Reg. C, f. 209. Members of this family are described as (Peter and William) *le Pope apud Thorne* 1313 (PNK 378). According to Dodgson this part of Godmersham went by the name of *Thorne* up to 1668. The name *Popestreet* turns up for the first time in 1671 (Court Roll PRO Eccl. 1/15/62). The boundary continues *west ðurh suð tun* (19), the exact location of which cannot be determined, but if we continue in the same direction, we get to Hurst Farm, on the Chilham side of the parish boundary. This indicates that we have reached the next point, *on middan hyrst* (20), from OE *onmiddan* 'at the middle of' and *hyrst* 'hillock, copse'. Wallenberg gives the following early spellings for Hurst Farm: *Estre* 1211–12, *Herst* 1253–54, 1284, *Hurste*, *Erste* 1261–62 KPN 151. Hurst Farm is situated on a wooded eminence which protrudes towards the Stour at the point where it is crossed by the boundary.

From this place the modern parish boundary passes along the Stour to the south-west, *be ea* (21), for a short distance before it turns west. It leads to *Boredane Wood* (TA), the first component of which corresponds to the *bord dæne* (22) of the charter boundary, which was left unidentified by Wallenberg. This is the point where the boundary changes direction again and turns south-west. In a medieval source we find the forms *Burdenn* 13th c., *Grete & Litol Boredane* 1477 CCC Reg. C, f. 203, 227. Cullen adds the following spellings from the same source (1477): *Bordane*, *Bordanehell*, *Boredanehell*, *Gretebordane*, *litolbordane*(e), *Lytylbordan*' (*hell* is the Kentish form for OE *hyll*). The implication of this compound of OE *bord* 'board, plank' and *denu* 'valley' is not immediately clear. *Boredane Wood* is situated where a valley stretches into King's Wood, which is situated on high ground. Wallenberg (KPN 151) interprets the second element as OE *denn* 'pasture', but both the form *dæne* and the topography speak in favour of OE *denu* 'valley'. Wallenberg's explanation is not very clear, for at the same time he seems ready to interpret *dæne* as 'valley' and suggests that *bord* refers to its sloping sides, which fits the topography. In Cullen's opinion, the valley is indeed striking enough to warrant the interpretation 'valley with steep slopes'. The spelling *æ* for *e* (*i*-mutation of *a*) before nasal is characteristic of Essex but not unusual in Kent either, where we find *æ* for *e* also in other positions, already commented on in the discussion of *stættingford* (Jordan 1934 § 33

Anm. 1). In his discussion of the obscure parish-name Borden (PNK 243 f.), Wallenberg makes an interesting comparison with the landmark (*ofer*) *bord dene* 956 (12th c. Sawyer 619) BCS 982, according to Grundy a valley called Bordean at Meon in Hampshire (see *Archaeological Journal* 83, 1926, 205 f.).

*Neolan mere* (23), from OE *nēol*, *neowol* 'deep' and *mere* 'pond', was not identified by Wallenberg, who discusses the etymology and, after comparisons with related words in Continental and North Germanic, finds that the word may also have had the meaning 'dark, misty', whereas Middendorff only quotes it as 'deep'. Cullen connects *neolan mere* with a place called *Black Sole* in a perambulation dated 1674 (Morris 1842) and suggests that the *mere*, perhaps when slightly dried up, might be the type of feature which suits later Kentish dial. *sole* 'a pond or pool of standing water' (EDD). Wallenberg did not identify *hearcincg mere* (24) either. However, a few field-names have since turned up with which it should no doubt be connected. The TA (1839) gives an area called *Heartsmarsh Wood* on the western boundary of Godmersham, and in earlier documents we find: *Herkmere*, *Herkmeresgate* 1453 Survey (Muhlfeld 1933), *Harkmere* 1667 Deed KRO U 352/T 38/2, *Hartsmarsh* 1815 Knight's Survey (information from John McN Dodgson). As Karlström (1927: 166) has shown, the first element can be derived from a personal name. He suggests OE \**Hēahrīc*, found in *hærices hamm* 909 (12th c. Sawyer 377) BCS 625, Hampshire. Boundary marks such as *herces næs*, *herces dic*, *herces get* 956 (l. 12th c. Sawyer 627) BCS 973, Somerset, may also be noted. Wallenberg accepts this explanation but as an alternative etymology he postulates a river-name from the stem *hark-*, found for instance in MLG *harken*, Swed *harka* 'clear one's throat, scrape, scratch', Icel *harkask* 'make noise' (KPN 152). Since I have not been able to find traces of a water-course here, I give preference to the derivation from a personal name.

*Sacecumb* (25) survives in Soakham Farm and Downs. In spite of the modern form it is clear that Soakham is a name in OE *cumb* 'valley'. It is evidenced in several early documents: *Sacumbe* 1254, 1272–1307, *Socumbe* 1292, 1313, *de Socumbe*, *-combe*, *-coumbe* 1327, 1332, 1334, 1346, 1347, etc. KPN 153. Wallenberg explains the first element as OE *sacu* 'conflict, dispute', in Middle English replaced by *soc* from OE *sōc(n)* 'jurisdiction, right of taking fines', found in the expression *sac and soc* used to denote 'certain rights of jurisdiction, which by custom belonged to the lord of the manor' (KPN 153). Instead of postulating this somewhat obscure development I prefer to derive the Middle and Modern English forms from a word with long OE *ā*. With Holthausen I connect *sace* in *sacecumb* with OHG *seich* m., MHG *seich* m., *seiche* f., MDu *seic*, *seec* m., *seike* f. 'urine'. According to Schade the original meaning was 'herablaufende oder herabgelaufene Feuchtigkeit'. The steep side of the valley from Soakham Downs towards the river Stour in its bottom would seem to have been a natural place of drainage for King's Wood in its high situation. Below Soakham Farm a few

minor watercourses today run down into the Stour. A form like *sācecumb* would have developed to *sācumb* naturally through haplology, thus creating the basis for the Middle and Modern English forms.

After *sācecumb* the boundary survey takes us to *fearn edisc* (26), from OE *fearn* 'fern' and *edisc* 'enclosed pasture, park', which may have been a fairly large area. According to Cullen *fearn edisc* survives in the Wye TA (1841) as *Lower* and *Upper Fairness* on the Godmersham boundary near Bilting, and it turns up as *Fearne's* in 1674 (Morris 1842). In the Godmersham TA (1839) the name of the field which adjoins *Fairness* has been altered from *Finnis Field* to *Fannis Field*, apparently a late corrupt survival of *fearn edish*. Cullen concludes that the Old English boundary follows the modern boundary exactly at this point (rather than including Soakham Farm). The detached part of Godmersham does not appear to be included in the charter bounds, as we believed earlier. The final short stretch of the boundary from (26) back to where we started cannot be determined. We still do not know the exact position of the ash (*swa to æsce*). The altered positions of figures (1) and (2) on the map are only tentative.

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