

## **FWP48**

iwb 18/10/96

### ***Window 9***

This Window contains the modern village of West Overton. However, as noted elsewhere in this study, this village is the amalgamation of two manors, those of East and West Overton. The dividing line between these two manors and their land is shown on the Window 9 map in red (1). Being two separate entities until relatively recently, they have different histories and are thus treated separately below.

#### ***West Overton***

##### ***The Saxon & Domesday Estate***

In 972 AD, King Edgar granted 10 hides of land ÆT VUERTUNE (West Overton), at CYNETAN, to lady Ælflæd (S784). As in 1086 this land was part of the Wilton Abbey estate it is probable that this lady was, or became, a nun there. Indeed, King Edgar had a great attachment to Wilton as in about 960 he sired a daughter, Edith, later St. Edith, by the one of the young girls being educated at the abbey, Wulfthryth (VCH, 231). Edgar was a generous benefactor, granting a total of 56 hides and 2 mills in 968 (VCH, 232). By Domesday, Wilton Abbey held 231 hides and ½ virgate in Wiltshire with a gross income £246 15s, the highest gross income recorded for any nunnery in England (ibid, 233).

In the time of the Domesday survey, West Overton paid geld for 10 hides and there was land for 4 ploughs. Of this land 7 hides and ½ virgate were in demesne with 2 ploughs and 2 serfs. Elsewhere on the estate there were 3 villeins and 8 bordars and the remaining 2 ploughs. A mill paid 10s and there were 5 acres of meadow, 20 of pasture and 20 of woodland. It was worth 100s. (VCH, ii, 129). The Geld Roll assigned the Abbess 7 hides of land.

We have mention, therefore, of 13 people farming 7 hides and ½ virgate in demesne and thus 2 hides and 3½ virgates outside. 20 acres of woodland is about the same as Fyfield's, although West Overton has ten acres less of pasture, no doubt because Fyfield has a larger area of Downland. West Overton has 2 acres more of pasture than Fyfield, but 10 less than East Overton and whereas East Overton had land for 7 ploughs, West Overton has land for 4, the same as Fyfield. This, considering West Overton was a 10 hide estate and Fyfield is a 5 hide one, suggests more land was under cultivation in Fyfield relative to West Overton and possibly East Overton as well. That is to say 4 ploughs work 5 hides in Fyfield, 4 ploughs work 10 hides in West Overton and 7 work 15 hides in East Overton. Overall, it would appear that West Overton, with less pasture and, relatively speaking, less land under plough, had fewer or poorer resources than East Overton and Fyfield from this early date, even with its greater hidage than Fyfield.

#### ***Mill***

West Overton did have a mill in 1086, however, which increased the value of the manor by 10s. Richard Cuffe (d.1504) held a water-mill and some land freely in West Overton and paid a yearly rent of £1 2s. to Wilton. Held by John True in 1567, then Robert Smith by 1631, William Smith sold a farm with a water-mill and windmill attached to Stowell Smith of Overton before 1730. A mill is evident on the late 18th century maps (2) next to its leat. Edward Pumphrey was recorded as the owner in 1821, when, in accordance with the Inclosure Award, he was paid £27 yearly to turn out water to irrigate the water meadows of East Overton. According to VCH (198) it seems to have fallen into disuse in the mid-C19th, though is noted as 'Overton Mill' on Smith's map of 1885. Mill Ham, the land adjoining the mill, was common pasture in 1783. It is unknown whether the mill stood at the same point throughout its history.

#### *Churches & Burials*

In 972 AD there was, or had been, a church at West Overton as the West Overton charter begins at the *chiricstede*, the site of a church, at a point between Lurkeley Hill (SU 121665) and the ford, now bridge, across the Kennet at SU119676 (Costen 1994, 98). The church would have been on the eastern side of the boundary line and could therefore have been around SU 119674, near the 16th century Orchard Farmhouse or, and this appears more likely, in an area around SU 121670, referred to on a map of 1794 as 'Church Ditch' (3). A church was still standing in West Overton in the 13th century as in 1291, after several decades of financial difficulties, the deacon at the Abbey of Wilton is recorded as having had a portion of £1 13s 4d out of West Overton church (VCH, iii, 236). Whether the Saxon *chiricstede* was where the medieval church was positioned, or whether the new church lay within the new village further east, is unknown, though I would think it far more likely that the medieval church stood in the 'new' village.

To the south the burial places *haethene byrgils*, presumably of non-Christian Saxons (S784, in quadrant SU 1266) lay between 'Long Shaw' and Lurkeley Hill. To the north, on Overton Hill, a fifth century adult female, two sixth century warriors and two child inhumations in the barrow group north of the Roman Road indicate sub-Roman/ Early Saxon settlement in the area (Eagles 1986, WAM 80, 103-120).

#### *The Wilton Estate*

In spite of generous royal gifts through the 12th and 13th centuries, by the early 13th the abbey was in financial difficulties. In 1229, 1252 and again in 1276, the tenants of the abbey were requested to contribute towards the relief of the house and between 1256 and 1299 Henry III and Edward I made grants of oaks for rebuilding. By 1287, the prioress of Wilton was threatened with excommunication by the Dean of Salisbury if her debts of 13 marks was not paid immediately (VCH, iii, 236).

#### *The Manor*

In 1535, when part of the demesne was leased out at a fee farm rent (VCH, iii, 240), the manor was worth £21; £9 in rents and £12 from the farm demsne. At the Dissolution the manor passed to the Crown and in 1544 the manor was granted, along with most of the Wilton estates (VCH, iv?, 189) to Sir William Herbert, 1st Earl of Pembroke and his wife Anne. West Overton, along with Overton Heath, then descended with the Pembroke title.

At the time of a survey in 1567 it contained 168a. of arable and 7a. of meadow and supported a large flock. There were two downs within the manor; Cow Down of 100a., simply called the Down after the Inclosure in 1802, and Allens Down, of 40a, south of the Lockeridge Lane and partially wooded by Pumphrey Wood, called Allens Lower and Higher Grounds in 1783. George Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, was Lord of the Manor at Inclosure in 1802, being allotted 204 ac.

### *The Farm*

The Kingmans farmed here in the C17th, the Cooke family in the C18th. In 1631 the arable fields were called North, West or Little, and South Fields and the common meadow lay in South and Little Meads and in Northside and Southside meadows. Edward Pumphrey became tenant in 1784 and his family held West Overton farm, 232a., into the C19th. The Farm lay at the north side of the road through the village, where the 'PO' of the modern 1:25 000 map has been placed (6; SU 129680).

In 1631 it consisted of 'a dwelling house of four ground rooms lofted over, much ruined, a barn of 7 rooms, a cart house of 2 rooms, well repaired, a backside, garden and orchard (in all 1½ ac), closes of meadow called Short Close adjoining the dwelling house (2 ac), Long Close (3 ac) and the Penning (1 ac), a meadow called Custom Mead (12 ac)... and 274 ac of arable in the common fields [North Field 62 ac, West or Little Field 60 ac and in South Field 152 ac] and common pasture for 20 horses, 25 kine and 400 sheep... worth 100*l*.' This land is reflected in the land attached to the Fram on the 1783, 1794 and 1802 maps. That west of the Farm was called Home Grounds and Home Mead, though Custom Mead had, by 1783, become Custard Mead. The land to the north was also Home Mead, though Smith referred to it as 'Paddock' in 1885. Hyde and the 'coppice wood' are called Clerk's Lye in 1783 and Clarks Leigh in 1802, though today it is Pumphrey Wood, clearly reflecting the farmer's surname.

At the time of Inclosure in 1802, the demesne farmer, whose lands had been augmented by several copyholds by that date, was allotted 131 ac. By 1818, the former demense farm, then called West Overton Farm, had consolidated its holdings by acquiring the vast majority of the agricultural land as it managed 330ac. As West Overton Farm, a square, red-brick house of *c.* 1825 (VCH, 189), lies at the west end of the village road, it seems likely that early in the C19th the demesne farm buildings were abandoned in favour of this new position nearby. In the late C19th, as today, the farm was called West Overton Farm (Smith 1885). In 1977 it had 705 ac (VCH, 198).

### *The Village*

As the *chiricstede* lay at the western edge of West Overton, it is likely that the early tenth century village straddled the eastern side of the Ridgeway and along the road to Wansdyke, possibly covering the area marked in black & red dashes (7). The land nearer the Kennet, where cottages stand at present, is referred to as Home Plot, Home Close & Home Mead, which is indicative not only of a piece of land, probably cultivated, in a river-side position, but also the site of a settlement (Smith 1970 i, 226-231; Gelling 1984, 43). However, it is clear that the main occupation has been to the west of East Overton, around the demense farm, for several centuries.

When this shift eastwards took place is unknown, although it may well have taken place before the charter of 972 AD, as the reference is to a 'church site', not a church, so the church may have already have been abandoned, and consequently the village as well, in favour of a new one 1km to the west. Moreover, the charter refers to a stone in front of the *burg gete* at the eastern edge of the bounds, showing a settlement lay there. I have been unsure whether this refers to the *burg* of East or West Overton, lying, as it does, right on the boundary of both settlements. The stone has to belong to West Overton, so it seems likely the *burg* did as well, and I would doubt that a charter would mention a feature of a neighbouring estate. It would seem very likely, therefore, that West Overton was a *burg* in 973 AD, compared to the *tun* of East Overton (939AD).

If a *Burg* indicates the entrance to a town or manor likely to be fortified, possibly by a bank and ditch (Smith 1970 i, 62; Biddle 1976, 128-9; Coleman & Wood 1988, 14), the possibility of a planned town arises here, or at least a larger settlement than a *tune* or *ham*. On the other hand, the difference may be only slight, even non-existent; that is to say that by the latter part of the tenth century *burg* had become more or less synonymous with *tun*. The *burg gete* stone must have been to the south of the ford and may have been at either the end of Frog Lane (SU 130682 or SU 132680). Indeed, a large stone is visible today embedded in the foundations of Yew Tree Cottage at the latter point.

My belief is that West Overton is a planned Saxon village. Its possible outline is shown in light blue on Map 9a. The estate boundary is shown as a red dotted line and the road and farm of the early 19th century in black. A hedge line was visible running from the crossroads to the eastern boundary, perhaps signalling an earlier road here.

The date of its creation is not known, although it is likely to have been between the mid or late-ninth century (Biddle 1976, 121 & 124) and 973AD. As a royal land-holding prior to this date, it seems likely that the *burg* of West Overton was constructed by royal demand, possible during the times of the Danish raids. A fortified settlement, just off the Ridgeway, would defend the important crossing point of the Kennet. The village, being less open to attack, would be safer to the east than on the Ridgeway itself and the present position would also allow a better view of the Ridgeway north and south. Indeed, it is likely West Overton played a role in the battle at East Kennet in 1006, when the Danish forces put the English levies to flight (ASC, 137).

#### **From here is PJF's work 20/6/95**

The awkwardness of the cross-roads, for example, immediately raises the suspicion that the W part of the present village street may be a 'late' re-alignment, perhaps to lead to the model farm at its W end. A glance at the current OS map as well as on the ground indeed suggests that the, or an, 'old' road may have led straight on westwards from the cross-roads along what has since become merely the back-lane behind the houses on the front street. The west end of that street is closed by West Overton Farm. Almost the whole of the C19 century model farmyard has been destroyed since our project began but the farmhouse of c1800 still stands rather grandly looking out over the River towards the Bell

Inn. So much for a superficial appraisal, though it turns out to be not too far from the history realised by a more considered examination.

To begin at the extreme W end of the village with West Overton Farm house: with its slate roof, Flemish brickwork, two storeys and double pile plan, it is one of the several Georgian 'country seat-type' houses scattered occasionally in our study area, indicative of a certain prosperity and a stating of social status during the Napoleonic period. The means, indeed social need, to do such was presumably being provided by the emergent 'winners' in the increasingly formalised rural hierarchy resulting from Enclosure. Listed Grade II, it is dated 'Late C18-early C19' but in fact we can be more precise. It is not present on the 1816 Enclosure Award map but is shown on the 1st ed. of the OS 25 inch map (18\)\ (but we must check whether it is on the Tithe Map; haven't I done a tracing thereof? If not, where is the original? in Diocesan Record Office? - and this applies to all the villages and other matters).

Equally evocative in its position and architecture was the visually somewhat different corrugated-iron Wesleyan Methodist Chapel. This lay nearby, - and what offence that may well have caused, - formerly situated immediately S of the Farm and, significantly, right on the dog-leg of the road forced to turn S by the farmyard before going out into the open fields. Presumably the Chapel marked the very end of the village around 1840 where the back lane and main street joined. It was removed in the early 1960s (Pl. ££) and replaced by a bungalow, in its turn saying a lot about the later C20 in its positioning and remarkably undistinguished architecture (Pl. £1).

Farmhouse and Chapel have 'fixed' the W end of the village for a century and a half. The roads to and past them have been in existence longer, and indeed belong to a 'street pattern' in existence in 1802 and, presumably, earlier (map of West Overton Manor). The western, straight part of the village street existed then and so is not a C19 addition as surmised above; but it was merely the W-E part of a plan which also included a N-S road of which the northern half has since totally disappeared. It curved SW from the ford to form a T-junction with the W-E street and then run straight on southwards along a line now represented by a path only (CHECK). It intersected the 'back-lane' running E from the present cross-roads in the village centre which, at the time about 200 years ago, was probably not a cross-roads and certainly not **the** village of West Overton that we know. That did not exist. West Overton lay, a little rectangle of properties 150 m. W-E by 75 m. N-S, 100 m. across an unoccupied area W of today's cross roads. It was aligned along two W-E roads, each end closed by N-S roads running respectively from a bridge and a ford southwards to the fields.

Modern development has indeed replaced much that existed 35 years ago, though its control through Town and Country Planning has re-inforced the village morphology, even where new housing has filled in what were spaces. The S side of the W end of the village street has been replaced by such development; and the lane running S from the apparently minor cross-roads in the village centre has now become the major road, leading to what used to be the space occupied by South Farm. Now it is occupied by a development looking very much like TV's 'Brookside.' A splendid range of timber buildings enclosing

a farmyard opposite South Farm was already seriously delapidated in 1960 (Pl. \*\*) and has since been destroyed. That this former lane might possibly be of some antiquity is hinted at by the fact that it continues northwards from the cross-roads, passing two houses of C19 or earlier date aligned along this now little used and apparent *cul de sac*. It in fact leads down to the river, with a track leading away to the N on the other side. The inference is obvious. And a ford hereabouts is likely to be an old one, older probably than the usable ford 100 m downstream (which appears related to the water-meadows (*below* p. 00)). This northern lane of West Overton's village plan is in fact on the line of the boundary as defined in the C10 century by two Charters, respectively of West and **East** Overton (*below* Chap. 9).

***iwb***

The village went through several changes during the 18th and 19th centuries. The greatest change was to extend the main village street (from SU 13106804) through the gardens at the eastern edge of West Overton to create a main junction at the end of Frog Lane (SU 132680). This idea was obviously being considered in 1794, when the new road is penciled in, though it had not been established by 1802. It had been completed, however, by 1811. No buildings were demolished, it appears, to construct this new route, though it passed close by cottages at both ends of the new lane. One, at SU 131680, still stands ?? (well there's another in its place then).

Naturally, as with any good village, stocks were placed in the village. West Overton's stood in front of the demesne farm (SU 13006810) along the village's western road in 1811. A small pound stood on the eastern side of the road towards Overton Bridge, just SE of Overton Mill at the edge of Home Mead, at least between 1783 and 1819. The road south from the village crossroad (SU 13106804) led out to the Common Fields. Along its route, five cottages stood, in 1783 and 1811, though by 1925 they had been demolished. At the point where the lane meets the arable, it also meets the western boundary of East Overton. West Overton's boundary follows a lane westwards and then out to the fields to the south, making the lane which goes straight one from this crossroads in East Overton.

A back lane ran parallel to the main village street, and is clearly a direct continuation of the road from East Kennet. Further east, it met the East Overton boundary at the Frog Lane junction mentioned earlier (SU 132680), where its line continues into East Overton to St. Michael's. This southern back lane is a footpath today. Assuming this is part of Saxon planned village, another back lane at the back of the buildings to the north would be expected. Such a line can be traced behind the line of barns on the 1811 map to a point on Frog Lane (SU 13126815), today marked as 'The Withy Bed'.

A&D's map of 1773 does not show the lane W-E through West Overton, however, but simply a village running N-S along this road south. If this map reflects the nature of West Overton, then the road E-W, passed the farm, was constructed between 1773 and 1783. This, I believe, is unlikely as the farm would be cut off from the rest of the village, and *vice versa*. Nevertheless, the A&D maps, although very crude by today's standards, did indicate the existing roads and lanes as much as possible. This leaves a serious question yet to be answered; was West Overton a planned Saxon village on a rectangular pattern,

or was it a simple street village running N-S, with its E-W route built between 1773 and 1783 ?

#### *The Tenants*

The Tax List of 1332 lists 13 tax payers in *Overtone Abbatisse*, paying a total of 21s 3d. In 1567 the estate contained, besides 3 freeholders and 1 cottager, 11 customary tenants who paid annual rents totalling £7. There was the same number in 1631, though in 1706 there were 24 manorial tenants, the most substantial of whom held no more than 30a. In 1794, 17 tenants held 560a, most holding about 30a each. In 1802, 551a in the open fields and common meadows and pastures of West Overton were inclosed at the expense of the Earl of Pembroke. The *demesne* farmer was allotted 131a. and the earl's other tenants a total of 385a. Rents rose from £655 to £916 making available the capital for improvements (VCH, iv, 90). By 1818 West Overton contained two consolidated farms; the former *demesne*, West Overton Farm (330a.) and another, probably Park Farm at Overton Heath, (200a.) of which 10a. were water-meadows by the Kennet.

#### *Other Buildings*

A pigeon house must have once stood by the Kennet by the present bridge (SU 119676), as the map of 1783 notes a 'Pigeon House mead' to the east and south of what was then called 'Pigeon House Bridge' (4). The only buildings noted, however, in the late 18th C at the western side of West Overton, was XX Cottage with its outbuildings, owned by George and Mary Brown between 1783 and 1802. Along the north banks of the Kennet, to the east of Overton Bridge, four cottages stood belonging to Richard Mortimer, Ann Shipway and William Dobson, the fourth was a 'Parish House'. Cottages also stood on the site of the Bell Inn. These were marked on the 1802 map, and again in 1816, though by  
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#### *The River*

At the very eastern edge of the tithing, the river was forded and crossed by 'Four Bridges' (5) in 1783/1794/1802. In the tenth century this ford took a metalled road across it, as it is described as a *straetford* in the charter. The street was certainly a continuation of the *herpoth*, the modern Ridgeway. The *herpoth* was clearly a busy highway seeing as a stone bed to the ford was necessary. We also know that, much like today, elders grew along the banks of the Kennet. The starting point for the East Overton charter is at such a tree, possibly at the southernmost point in this part of the river (?SU 141684). After crossing the ford at East Kennet, but before reaching the Seven Barrows, another was used as a marker. These elders must have stood out or been fairly scarce to have been chosen as fixed points. At the east of the estate near the mill, the road north from the village crossed a ford where the present Overton Bridge stands, with a bridged pathway, across Mill Ham, visible just to its west.

#### *Arable & Pasture*

West Overton's arable land in the Saxon period is unknown, as nowhere in the West Overton charter are there any references to headlands or ploughland. It is likely, however, that it lay west of the village along the road to East Kennet and south of the village in an area called 'The Common Fields' in 1783/94, with a further possibility of some on

Boreham Down. Cultivation in 'The Common Fields' is assumed from the Saxon charter evidence which notes a *langan hlinc eastewerdne*, the east side of the long lynchet. This may well have been at SU 134668, where a still prominent hedge, called 'Lewis's Ground' in 1783/94/1819, forms part of the tithing boundary (8). This is also probably the *riht gemaere*, or straight balk, of the East Overton charter.

However, it is difficult to ascertain for certain that this land directly south of the river was being cultivated, as, although the lynchet was noted, it was in fact located on downland; *scyfling dune* (S784) or simply *dune* (S449, marked on the map in yellow). It is thus possible that the lynchets these charters are referring to are 'Celtic' field lynchets, and not, therefore, necessarily to the results of ploughing in the historic period. Across the Alton Barnes to Lockeridge road, however, to the west of the stone markers on Boreham Down, or Tenants Down in the late 18th century, the land was being ploughed as we have a reference to the boundary being a *west heafdon*, or the west headland of the field (9, SU 139665). This headland, however, is from the *East Overton* charter, not West, just as to the north of the river, the *East Overton* charter notes its west headlands.

Similarly when it comes to the Saxon West Overton's pasture, the charter references are not as illuminating as those from the neighbouring estate. Two *dunne stanas* are noted at the very northern edge of the estate and, as noted above, there is *scyfling dune*. A tentative guess would place West Overton's pasture in the tenth century across the whole of their area north of the Kennet (*i.e.* more or less the whole of Window 8), with further grazing north (*scyfling dune*) and south (Boreham Down) of the Alton to Lockeridge road. The latter is noted as an area of tythe free downland in 1783 which led, in the east, up the hill to the woods and, round the western edge, nearly as far as Wansdyke. Further grazing was also presumably available along the meadows of the Kennet.

Consequently, this would leave West Overton's arable north of the East Kennet to West Overton road, up the hill as far as the West Overton to Alton Barnes lane (west of Hill Barn, SU 128666). This triangle of land, marked on Map 9 in light blue (10). It is probably the minimum, however, and I expect the tenth century arable extended further south and east. The possible extent of the tenth century pasture is marked in yellow.

At the time of Edward Pumphrey (late 18th-early 19th), West Overton Farm consisted of Farm Down and Upper, Middle and Lower Fields, along with Higher and Lower Penning, the drove between them and a sheep house, all north of the London-Bath road. Farm Down is described as being 'injured by great quantities of sheep bein drove (*sic*) over it to the washing pool' in 1783 (Window 8). The farm also held Home Ground, Home Mead and Custard Mead on both banks of the Kennet and a field, West or Little Field, covering 60 acres, also formed part of the West Overton land, though it is unclear whether this refers to the western part of North Field or the whole of the land west of the village. The manorial pasture was reckoned at 177a. and called Cow and Tenantry Downs, Mill Ham and Church Ditch in 1794. The arable south of the river, which was farmed by the tenants in strips, were divided into Ditch Hedge, Double Hedge and Windmill Field. Hookland, White Barrow Furlong and Hatch-gate Furlong are amongst the smaller fields recorded.



### ***The Woodland***

Over the centuries woodland clearance has reduced the acreage of Savernake Forest drastically. In this study area, part of Savernake, which today is some 3kms to the east, is preserved in Pumphrey Wood and Pickrudge. Evidence of forest clearance in the tenth century is demonstrated by the charter references (S784) to *ers lege*, now Hursley [Horse? lea] Bottom (SU 148662), *langan sceagan* (long shaw or narrow lea) and *lorta lea*, now Lurkeley [muddy? lea] Hill (SU 123663). *Langan sceagan* is more difficult to locate, but, as 'usually OE sceaga becomes Shaw' (Smith 1970, ii, 99), this 'long wood' may well have been in the area of the deserted village of Shaw, possibly near Shaw Copse or Boreham Wood, though the boundary line seems to follow the bridle way through the southern part of Pickrudge.

The woodland in Saxon West Overton is today reflected in Pumphrey Wood and Pickrudge, though in the Late Saxon period this area was called *scyt hangran*. Indeed, a derivation of this Saxon name survived into the 19th century with Upper and Lower Chichangles and Chichangles Ground (1783/1794/1802/1819; Gover et al., 306), possibly meaning the 'wood on the steep hill-side' (Smith 1970, i, 233). To the north of Upper Chichangles lay Hide Coppice (1783/94) or Hyde Copse (1819), Clark's Leigh and Allen's Wood (1783/94), all of which now make up Pumphrey Wood, renamed, no doubt, in the 1820s after the farmer at West Overton Farm.

To the south of Lower Chichangles and Chichangles Ground, which today, according to the 1:25000 map, forms part of Hursley Bottom (SU 147661), lay Pickrudge Woods. Pickrudge Wood appears to have been afforested between 1794 and 1802, as the map of 1783, although calling this area Pickrudge Wood, shows strip cultivation and describes it as covered 'by little wood in this lot'. The map of c. 1794 shows an area of scrub and wood, although the strips remain visible and by 1802 the area is wood, but again the strips are marked in. In 1819, however, no strips are marked on the map.

There are earlier references to this woodland in the Surveys of 1567 and 1631. The farmer and the tenants had herbage and pasture rights in a common of 30a. called Common Woods in 1567 and shared another common, called the Heath or Abbess Wood, in the south-east corner (later called Overton Heath or Savernake Park). At the same date, West Overton contained Wykeham Hassett, 4a., Allans (Coppice), 27a., and Checheangers (Coppice), 25a. which were considered disafforested lands of Savernake (VCH, 198). The Survey of 1567 also notes 'lez bottom de Hursley'. In 1631, the woodland mentioned included 'a coppice, underwood and woody ground called Allons Coppice (39ac)', 'a coppice, underwood and woody ground called Chichangles Coppice (46ac)' and '6 ac of coppice wood or woody ground adjoining Hyde', though both Hyde (8ac) and Clarks Lye (8ac) are described as pasture (XXX, 77-8). This points to the central area of Pumphrey Wood (SU 139659 to SU 144664) being for grazing, with a roughly wooded and coppiced area surrounding it; a woodland which had grown in size between 1567 and 1631.

*Mere grafe* (S784), 'Pond Grove', is now at the very western edge of Wools Grove, with the pond in question likely to be the large pit still very much in evidence at SU 143663 and marked on the late 18th century map.

#### *Overton Heath*

Savernake Park, later called Overton Heath, was a separate area of land about a mile to the east of the south-eastern corner of the tithing of West Overton. Originally it seems to have formed part of an estate at Oare (S424. Grundy, 1919, 320-21) granted to Wilton in 934 AD by King Athelstan (VCH, 232). As it had once lain within the forest it remained tithe-free. In 1783 it was described as 'extraparochial' (WRO, 2203). This connection with Wilton may explain why it was not considered part of East Overton nor, it seems, any other tithing, but was to be shared amongst the Wilton estates.

The abbess was given permission in 1221, 1224 and 1233 to take wood from her woodland within the royal forest of Savernake. In 1246, however, she was pardoned for assarting 19 ac. in the forest and in 1280 the abbess was again found to have reclaimed land for tillage in the Rainscombe area which she was ordered to enclose (VCH, iii, 237). Between 1231 and 1246 Henry III gave permission for the abbess to take over a hundred trees from her wood in Savernake (VCH 234). The result of this assarting and taking of wood may well have lead to creation of the land called Overton Heath or Abbess Wood, which in the late 18thC was common land. Interestingly, at that date it was still called a *Wood* even though it was clearly heathland.

In 1783/1794/1802 it contained a farm, now called Park Farm (SU 165651), run by Thorpe Chamberlaine. Several pits are also clearly marked, as is a stable in 1783, but a cottage owned by Mrs Martin in 1794, next to Stable Ground and Common Ground, alongside the Marlborough to Oare road. Mrs Martin farmed Stable and Common Ground, but by 1802 it was part of the Farm, again indicating This cottage is called Yew Tree Cottage today (SU 168649).

#### *The 20th century*

In 1917, Reginald, Earl of Pembroke, sold West Overton Farm to JHE Poole, Pickrudge and Pumphrey Woods to F Spearman and Park Farm at Overton Heath to G Spearman. The woodland was sold in 1940 to the Forestry Commission.