Hide Hill in Malden and the de Malden family

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The two small fields, which today survive as the Sir Joseph Hood Playing Fields near Motspur Park station, in the London Borough of Merton, and the adjoining horse pastures behind Green Lane primary school, Worcester Park, in the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames, are welcome oases of green space in the midst of suburban housing. However, the origins of these two fields, and the reason why the parish and hundred boundaries intersect with such mathematical precision at this spot, are as yet unclear. Three possible explanations are considered here: that this was the location of an ancient meeting place; that the boundaries represent the division of former intercommoning; or that these fields had formed an early Anglo-Saxon 1-hide holding divided in the mid-12th century. This study also attempts to unravel the confusion that 20th century historians created concerning the descent of the de Malden family who held this land in the 12th century.

Green Lane primary school, Worcester Park (TQ 22764 66800), is in the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames, although a map on the official website of the neighbouring London Borough of Sutton places the site of the school within that borough. In fact, the modern boundary runs in front of the school, although it previously lay between the buildings and its grounds. A short distance to the east the road fronting the school becomes a bridleway alongside Morden Cemetery and North East Surrey Crematorium in the London Borough of Merton, while a path heading north alongside the school grounds leads into the Sir Joseph Hood Playing Fields at Motspur Park, also in Merton on the northern side of a ditch that marks the boundary. This area has been a junction for boundaries for centuries, with the ancient parishes of Cheam, Malden, Merton and Morden converging here, as well as the Hundreds of Copthorne, Kingston, Brixton and Wallington.

However, the boundaries do not merely meet here; they seem to have been manipulated in order to do so (fig 1). The Beverley brook formed the parish boundary between Malden on the west and Merton on the east, and yet the field in which the school is situated is to the east of the brook. The parish boundary between Merton and Morden ran in an almost straight line from the river Wandle in the east towards the Beverley brook in the west, but then plunged sharply south to include the present Sir Joseph Hood Playing Fields within Merton parish. These two adjoining fields are each around 30 acres (12ha) and both are almost square. Three possible explanations have been suggested for these boundaries.

The name of Motspur Farm, situated immediately to the north-west of these two fields and commemorated in the modern locality of Motspur Park, might suggest that this ancient junction was the site of a meeting place or ‘moot’ (gemot), especially as another nearby property was known as Mootes Farm by the 17th century. However, ‘Motspur’ was originally ‘Motes Firs Ferm’ on estate maps of 1623 and 1627, although the sketch map reproduced as figure 2 uses the later spelling of Motts Furse Farm. All known forms of the farm’s name end in ‘s’, indicating a genitive from a personal name, and the personal name Mot is attested in the area from c 1350. Experts further explain that the original Mr Mot cannot have derived his surname from a meeting place because ‘mot’ as a place-name is never found on its own, but only in compounds.1

An alternative explanation for these unusual boundaries is that this area had once been intercommoned by the adjoining communities. The land opposite the school to the south of Green Lane was within Cheam Common until enclosure in the early 19th century, part of a

1 SHC: 258/1/44 (dated 1657), 258/1/51 (1668), 258/1/58 (1672), 258/1/68 (plan of 1768): Rymill 2012, 45.
2 MC: MCR/G/MAL/9/1–2.
3 Gover et al 1934, 64.
4 Jeremy Harte, pers comm.
5 Ibid.
vast expanse of common pasture shared by the manors and parishes of Cheam, Cuddington, Ewell, Malden and Morden, known for centuries as Sparrowfeld. It is reasonable to assume that at one time the common pastures had extended to the north of the road and that these carefully drawn boundaries reflect division among the manors when they were ‘privatised’. This seems particularly likely with regard to the adjoining property to the east within Morden parish and Westminster Abbey’s manor of Morden.

By the 16th century a block of 80 acres (32.4ha) in Morden, together with the two adjoining 30-acre fields in Malden and Merton, had become part of Merton Priory’s Hobalds estate (fig 1). At least part of this Morden property was given to Merton Priory in the 1230s by members of the de Walton family, after several years of dispute over dower and dowry rights.⁶ A 1225 custumal of Westminster Abbey’s Morden estate records that William de Walton held a virgate of free land from the abbey,⁷ later described as being in ‘Westmorden’⁸ (now known as Lower Morden), although records of a 1231 case before the Curia Regis calls

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⁶ WAM: 1915*, Book 11 f 169h; TNA: CP 25/1/225/10; TNA: KB 26/108 rot 7: CalCRR XIV entry 1346; TNA: KB 26/109 rot 13: CalCRR XIV entry 1841; images and translations of these and the following documents are available at www.mertonhistoricalsociety.org.uk/projects/manorial+documents (Accessed 5 October 2012).
⁷ WAM: 9287; BL: Add Charter 8139.
⁸ WAM: 1915*, Book 11 f 169b.
Fig 2 Hide Hill, Malden. ‘Motts Furse Farm’, ‘Hobbals Land’, ‘Appledoore’ and the ‘North Feilde’ are all shown on a map of Malden in 1627 by Sir Henry Lambert (1933, 37), based on originals in the archives of Merton College, Oxford: MCR/G/MAL/9/1–2. Mootes farmhouse was opposite Fulbrookes, according to a 1768 plan (SHC: 258/1/68).
the land a carucate rather than a virgate. The customary virgate in Morden was 20 acres (8.1ha), so the 80 acres of Hobalds within Morden would have equalled a carucate or hide. Barbara Harvey, in her study of the abbey’s estates, notes the link between free tenure and colonisation of former ‘waste’ or common pasture:

[M]ost of the tenants who ever held agricultural land by one of the free tenures in the demesne manors probably owed their good fortune to a colonising situation. In this respect, the estates of Westminster Abbey were not, of course, unusual: assarting and freedom quite commonly advanced together in the early Middle Ages, and this for reasons which are easily discovered. A landlord who refrained from imposing the burdens of villein tenure on new lands in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries suited himself as much as his tenants. The extent of his demesnes may now have been more or less settled, and the services that should maintain it more or less apportioned between the virgates already in existence. He did not always need the extra services that an extension of villeinage would have provided; indeed, the wisdom of relying wholeheartedly on customary services for demesne needs was already in question. Further, a heavy burden of rent and services, such as villein holdings often bore, might make the work of colonization, expensive as it could be, impracticable; it would also repel many new settlers. Long-term as well as short-term considerations seemed to point to free tenures, or at least to the cash option instead of labour rent, if villein tenure was insisted upon.

If de Walton’s Morden land had been privatised from former common pasture, it would seem reasonable to assume the same origin for the adjoining two plots. The similarity of the holdings within the three parishes, and the rectilinear outline of the boundaries, could well indicate that this was an area of former intercommoning carefully apportioned among the neighbouring communities.

However, a third possibility arises from the name of the Malden field within which the modern school stands. In 1553, the earliest known maps of the area were produced in an attempt to settle a dispute between tenants of Cheam and tenants of Morden regarding rights within Sparrowfield Common. The first map was deemed to be inaccurate, and commissioners were appointed to visit the site ‘to make and note every parte therof and all the boundes and lymyttes of the same’. The commissioners’ plan or ‘plott’ labels this field within Malden ‘Hyde Hyll’ (fig 3), and this name, often spelled as ‘Hide Hill’, recurs in leases from the 17th to the mid-19th centuries and also on Malden maps of the same period.

Nevertheless, the name is much older than the 16th century. A legal dispute that reached the king’s courts in 1206 refers to ‘that field of Malden which is called Hide’, which had been given to Merton Priory in two halves by the litigant’s grandfather and father respectively, as detailed below.

It is generally agreed that a hide was considered to be land sufficient to support one family – Bede’s ‘terra unius familiae’. In addition, it has been suggested that it is the land of ‘the normal freeman’ and that it is the land worked by one plough. The word seems to have related originally to assessment of the value of a property rather than its size, particularly the

9 TNA: KB 26/108 rot 7: CalCRR XIV entry 1346; KB 26/109 rot 13: CalCRR XIV entry 1841.
10 WAM: 9297; BL: Add Charter 8139.
11 Harvey 1977, 113.
12 TNA: MPB 1/25/1–2.
13 TNA: E 315/122 mm 95, 94a.
14 SHC: 2575 box 3 bundle G; K85/2/51, K85/2/76, K85/2/87-89, K85/2/303; MC: MCR/G/MAL/9/1–2; SHC: 2739/1, 2473/1/44.
15 TNA: KB 26/42 rot 7: CalCRR IV pp 148–9.
16 Charles-Edwards 1972, 3–33.
value as expressed in the public obligations owed to the king.\(^{17}\)

By 1086 the hide, now treated as the equivalent of 4 virgates, was the standard unit of assessment used to describe the various estates in Domesday Book, which lists three estates in Malden. One was a detached estate at Malden Rushett, originally assessed at 2 hides but reduced to \(\frac{3}{4}\), held by William de Watteville from Chertsey Abbey.\(^{18}\) Another, assessed in the Confessor’s time at 8 hides but reduced to 4, was held by Robert de Watteville from Richard of Tonbridge, Earl of Clare.\(^{19}\) This estate included 1¼ hides held by ‘a knight’, with his own demesne and a villein and a bordar – perhaps the origin of the substantial compact property later known as Motspur Farm. The third estate was a hide disputed by several claimants.\(^{20}\)

\(^{18}\) Williams & Martin 2002, 78: f 32v: Surrey VIII; Rymill 2012, 60
\(^{19}\) Williams & Martin 2002, 82: f 35: Surrey XIX.
\(^{20}\) Ibid.
With so many hides in Malden in 1086, what was so special about one particular hide that it was to become known simply as Hide?

Research by Rosamond Faith suggests that Hyde names may represent ‘the oldest type of independent Anglo-Saxon farm, pre-dating the open field system’. Dr Faith cites many examples, several of which share similarities to Hyde Hill in Malden. Thus in Shaw-cum-Donnington, Berkshire: ‘The Hyde is an enclosed field of 33.5 acres [13.6ha] on a tithe map of 1842, the parish boundary, which elsewhere runs mostly along natural features, forming an anomalous detour to include it in the neighbouring parish’. A frequent feature is location ‘on the edge of the parish, in areas which were not involved in its main field system [...] Several of these parish-edge hides look as if they comprised blocks of land that had never been included in the common field system that formed around the village core’. She suggests that ‘when the parish boundary comes to be established it runs along their outer boundary in order to incorporate their arable and woodland within the parish.’

Most of the examples cited are from the Chilterns, and Dr Faith comments on the frequent occurrence of ‘feld’ names in that area, referring to open land, sometimes in large open spaces of heath or grassland used for common grazing – similar to Sparrowfeld – but also in large open arable fields.

The legal dispute that reached the king’s courts in 1206 reveals that Eudes de Malden, who had held the manor of Malden and other estates, had become a canon of Merton Priory shortly before his death and had given to the priory the advowson of Malden church and some land in Malden. Eudes’ gift of the advowson was confirmed by Richard of Ilchester, Bishop of Winchester 1174–89. The land in question was described as ‘half of that field of Malden which is called Hide, the other half of which his father William formerly had given to the same church with a certain Gilbert and with a messuage next to the same Hide’ (medietatem illius campi de Meldon qui vocatur Hida, cujus medietatem aliam pater suus Willelmuus eidem ecclesie antea dederat cum casdiam Gilleberto et cum masagio proximo eidem Hida). Eudes’ daughter and her husband argued that the grant was illegal as it was made after Eudes became a canon. In 1212 the two parties came to a compromise:

the aforesaid prior releases and quitclaims for himself and his successors to the aforesaid Brian and Gunnora and the heirs of Gunnora herself all right and claim that he has in the advowson of the aforesaid church with pertinents forever. And the aforesaid Brian and Gunnora his wife give and grant for the salvation of their souls and of their ancestors and their heirs to the aforesaid prior and his successors and the church of St Mary of Merton twenty acres land with pertinents in Malden, namely 11½ acres land which John Hog holds, and which are lying in the North field (Campo Aquilonali) of Malden; and 3½ acres, of which one lies in the eastern side of a culture which is called Sewardesheie next to a ditch of the aforesaid priory, and ½ acre of which lies in the same culture against the west and another ½ acre of which lies in the same culture against the west and 1½ acres of which lie in the field which is called Asolmescroft, the which 3½ acres the parson of the said church of Malden holds; and 2 acres which lie in the field which is called Sewardesheie and which Henry de Maudon holds; and in Asolmescroft ½ acre which John Witloc holds; and ½ acre in Sewardesheie as far as the west which Robert de Crois holds; and 1 acre in Sewardesheie which John of Cumbe holds; and in the same field of Sewardesheie ½ acre which Gilbert son of Saman’

22 Ibid, 34, cf p 36 ‘Shaw, Berkshire’.
23 Ibid, 35.
24 Ibid, 38.
26 TNA: KB 26/42 rot 3: CalCRR IV, 126.
28 TNA: KB 26/42 rot 7: CalCRR IV, 148–9.
holds; and in the same field of Sewardesheie ½ acre which Stephen de T..... holds; to have and to hold to the same prior and his successors of the same Brian and Gunnora and the heirs of Gunnora herself in pure and perpetual alms free and quit of all secular service and exaction.  

It is clear that the land given to the priory in compensation for the loss of Eudes’ gift was in strips within the open fields of Malden, and was not part of the Hide Hill land, which was a discrete consolidated holding. One half of Hide was already being cultivated as a tenant holding when William de Malden gave both Gilbert and his land to Merton Priory, and one assumes that the other half was similarly cultivated as a separate tenant holding. The 1627 map of Malden depicts ‘Hobbals land’ as a compact holding in the south-east corner of the parish, well away from the open arable fields of the manor, the ‘North Feilde’ being the only one of these 13th century field names to appear (fig 2).

Similarly, the open field system in Merton was some distance to the north, while in Morden the tenant arable of Southfield was to the south-east and that of Bowhill Shott lay to the north-east beyond the Common Meadow (fig 1). Hobalds was always a compact unit, quite distinct from the open fields, though in the early 19th century it expanded to take in enclosures from the former Southfield during the reorganisation of the farms in Lower Morden. Hobalds Farm survived until 1890 when 125 acres (50.6ha) in Morden were sold to Battersea Corporation for the new cemetery. The tithe apportionments for the three parishes reveal that almost all the land was arable. Today the Morden land is a cemetery, the Merton land playing fields, and that part of Malden’s Hide Hill not occupied by the school is grazed by horses from riding stables in Green Lane.

Eudes’ motive for giving his half of Hide to Merton Priory is clear – he had decided to become a canon there. The reason for his father’s gift is not so obvious – perhaps this was the 1-hide estate that had been disputed in 1086, leading to a feeling of guilt on William de Malden’s part.

The later records reveal that by the 16th century the priory only held 30 acres (12.1ha) in Malden’s Hide Hill. The customary virgate in Malden was of 16 acres (6.7ha), so 30 acres would represent a half-hide. Does this indicate that the half of Hide given by Eudes was returned to Brian and Gunnora with the advowson, the area retained by the priory being that previously given by Eudes’ father, William? Alternatively, was William’s half-hide the adjoining 30-acre field in Merton, which is so similar in shape and size that a common origin seems certain? John Blair suggests that it was not until Richard of Ilchester’s episcopate that Surrey parishes crystallised and parish boundaries became fixed. Was the half-hide that had already been given to the priory by William de Malden adjudged to be in Merton, while the other half, as yet still held by Eudes, remained on the Malden side of the boundary? If they were both within what was to become the historic parish of Malden they would have been divided by the Beverley brook, which seems an unlikely situation, especially if Hide had originated as a single agrarian unit in the earliest Saxon period.

If the ‘field of Malden which is called Hide’ was an early Anglo-Saxon property it has survived for more than a millennium in these two tracts of open land, despite intense suburban development all around. Even if Hide had originated as a 12th century assart, it is a surprising survival. One 10th century feature in this area has long been lost. The bounds of the estate at Merton listed in a charter of 967 mention ‘benanberwe’ as a landmark in the south-western corner of Merton, so it would seem that there was then

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29 TNA: CP 25/1/225/3 (93): Feet of Fines Surrey 14 John. This final concord annulled the previous one (CP 25/1/225/3 (92)) that had given the priory ‘twenty acres land with pertinents which John Hog holds’.
31 Malden 1794: SHC: 2739/1, 2473/1/44; Malden 1839: SHC: 863/1/31/1/1-2; 894/1/1/1/1-2; Merton 1844: SHC: 863/1/32/1/1-2, published in MHS 1998a; Morden 1838: published in MHS 1998b.
32 Blair 1991, 72.
33 Ibid, 152-4.
a notable burial mound in the vicinity, though the most recent editor of the charter does point out elsewhere that ‘berwe’ could derive from either beorg, ‘barrow, hill’, or bearu, ‘grove’.  

Clearly the land in Morden was already in de Walton’s possession by c 1225, and the Malden land was under cultivation some decades before that, although the date of William de Malden’s gift to Merton Priory is not recorded. Unfortunately, 20th century studies of the family are seriously flawed, and generations have been conflated. The remainder of this study will attempt to untangle the confusions and identify the likely period for William’s gift.

**The de Malden family** (fig 4)

The de Wattevilles, who held the Malden estates in 1086, were still overlords under the Clares in 1264, when the estate was purchased for Walter de Merton’s educational foundation that became Merton College, Oxford, but they had subinfeudated them to the de Maldens during the 12th century. Although the de Maldens were members of a lower tier of nobility to the de Wattevilles, they held many estates elsewhere in the country, and had a claim to the Honor of Petworth in Sussex, under the lordship of Roger de Montgomery, Earl of Shrewsbury.

The first known member of the family was Ivo, a Domesday tenant in Sussex. His son Alan married Aveline, heiress (probably daughter) of Hugh, son of the sheriff of Arundel and tenant at Petworth Robert fitzTetbald who died in 1087. Alan was dead by 1130, and Aveline married Reginald of Windsor. Alan’s and Aveline’s son Ido (Eudes) and his stepfather Reginald both witnessed a charter thought to date from 1139/40. This was during the troubled reign of Stephen, and Reginald and Aveline seem to have lost the Honor of Petworth at this time, although the de Maldens continued to press their claims.

In a Sussex case of 1200 Alan was described as the grandfather of Gunnora’s father (Alanus avus patris Gunnore), which would make her the granddaughter of Eudes I. However, in the 1206 Malden case quoted above, Gunnora’s husband twice describes Eudes II as the father of Gunnora (Eudo pater ipsius Gunnore; Eudonis patris G) and names Eudes’ father as William, so Gunnora would have been the great-granddaughter of Eudes I and great-great-granddaughter of Alan.

In 1240 a claimant to these Sussex estates is described as heir of ‘Gunnora de Maldon, sister of Eudes son of Alan’ (Gunnore de Maudon sororis Eudonis fil’ Alani). The Sussex historian, L F Salzman, interpreted this to mean that our Gunnora [II] was sister to Eudes II the grandson of Eudes I and great-grandson of Alan, assuming that this claimant, Sarah de Bavent, was Brian and Gunnora’s daughter. It would appear that Salzman was not familiar with the 1206 record in the *Curia Regis Rolls*, which clearly describes Eudes as *pater* not *frater*. Although Surrey historians C A F Meekings and P Shearman have since proved that Sarah de Bavent was daughter to Richard de Vaubadon (himself a claimant in 1225), they persisted in describing our Gunnora [II] as sister of Eudes II. The extant records do
not explain the basis of Vaubadon’s rights, but as the claim to Malden was from Gunnora I, it is possible that she had brought the manor into the family, presumably by marriage. The family obviously had a tendency to perpetuate family names, with three men called Eudes, and another Aveline among Gunnora’s heirs.

The same record of 1206 states that Gunnora II had been a ward in the custody of Robert son of Humfrey, so she would have been a minor when Eudes joined Merton Priory. This must have been before the death in 1189 of Bishop Richard of Ilchester, who had confirmed Eudes’ gift of the advowson of Malden church. She had married Brian by 1194 when they were jointly involved in a lawsuit against Henry de Percy regarding the Honor of Petworth. When Gunnora II died around 1225, both her sons, Brian II and Eudes III, had already died without issue, each leaving widows claiming dower in the family estates, so Gunnora is unlikely to have been born after 1180. In fact, her eldest son seems to have been of marriageable age by 1218. In 1227 a suit concerning family lands in ‘Stepleton’, Essex, reveals that Gunnora’s husband had taken the side of the barons at the end of John’s reign, and did not regain his forfeited estates until 1218. Their eldest son ‘placed himself in the prison of the bishop of Winchester in exchange for Brian, his father, therefore Brian the father gave all that land in Stapleton to Brian the son to dower Isabel his wife, because Hugh Sanzavar, the father of Isabel, had acquitted Brian the father of his ransom, namely £250’. Brian senior seems to have died soon afterwards, and was briefly succeeded by his two sons in quick succession. Salzman’s version of the family tree is emended in figure 4.

Fig 4 Hide Hill, Malden. The de Malden family.
Thus William de Malden's gift to Merton Priory of Gilbert's half of Hide would have been after the death of his father, who was living in 1139/40, and before the death of his son c 1188, so somewhere around the middle of the 12th century.

In the 1240s, Walter de Merton purchased the manor of Malden and other Surrey properties from the various claimants to the de Malden estates, and these manors eventually passed to Merton College, Oxford. & Walter also obtained from Merton Priory the remission of its claim to the advowson of Malden church. & The priory retained until its dissolution in 1538 its land at Hide Hill, as well as 16½ acres (6.7ha) called Appuldore in the north-east corner of Malden parish adjoining further Appuldore land in Kingston parish – possibly a holding created from, or by exchange of, the 20 acres (8.1ha) given in 1212. & Appuldore then became part of the adjoining Blagdon Farm in Merton, while Hide Hill and the rest of the Hobalds estate came into the ownership of the Garth lords of the manor of Morden until the late 19th century.

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