TWO DOCUMENTED PRE-CONQUEST CHRISTIAN SITES LOCATED UPON PARISH BOUNDARIES: ‘Cada’s minster’, Willersey, Gloucs., and ‘the holy place’, Fawler in Kingston Lisle, Oxon. (Figs. 2 and 3)

There are many references to burial tumuli in the boundary clauses of pre-Conquest charters and these have long attracted comment.1 Many of the tumuli noted must have been seen by the Anglo-Saxons as little more than convenient boundary markers but those which had been used for pagan Anglo-Saxon burial, together with byrgels, ‘burial-site’, must surely have conveyed a sense of ritual to the late Anglo-Saxon occupants of the estates upon which they lay. Other sites which may have been associated with pagan ritual also existed, such as tyes mere, ‘the mere of Tiw’, on the boundary of an estate at CoJtune in N. Worcestershire.2 Associated with the Anglo-Saxon god, Tiw, this pool may have lain near the source of the R. Arrow on the Lickey Hills, but no archaeological evidence has yet been forthcoming. It lay near the northern boundary of the Anglo-Saxon kingdom of the Hwicce and it may be significant that a second site associated with the god, the so-called ‘Red Horse of Tysoe’, lay on the southern boundary.3 Few Christian sites are noted in the charters. Although numerous churches were being established in this period, these normally stood well within the estates in association with settlement nuclei and, consequently, were rarely described in boundary perambulations. Some are, however, mentioned in the boundary clauses and several of those mentioned in West Midland clauses can be identified as known churches. The church of St Peter at Worcester is included in a lease of the estates of Perry and Battenhall near Worcester by Bishop Oswald to his clerk, Wulfgar, in A.D. 969.4 This does not, however, occur as a boundary landmark, unlike the church of St Martin, located in the extreme north-east of the burh, which appears as paere cyrean in an early 11th-century boundary clause of the Perry estate.5 There are other references, however, which do not refer to known churches, or even known Christian sites, where the archaeological implications of the site are of particular interest.

‘CADA’S MINSTER’

The first site to be discussed is ‘Cada’s minster’, a landmark upon the boundary which divided the parishes of Broadway, Worcestershire, and Willersey, Gloucestershire. The earliest reference to the site is contained in a boundary clause of Broadway, an estate allegedly restored to the abbey of Pershore in 972.6 The authenticity of this charter has been questioned by some authorities but a copy survives in a 10th-century manuscript.7 The minster site is referred to again in two later boundary clauses compiled by the church of Evesham. Many of the clauses emanating from this source are spurious in some way and several appear to have been compiled at a later date than that claimed. S. 1599, K. 1368 again refers to Cadamynyster upon the Willersey/Broadway boundary. This undated boundary clause seems to have been compiled in the 11th century.8 Another Evesham charter9 claims
an early 8th-century origin but is again of later 11th-century date, post-dating the undated clause in origin. Here the site is referred to as cademunstre.

It is not unusual to find references to minsters in pre-Conquest documents. The charters, in particular, frequently record their foundation and endowment. Normally, however, they were established at the foci of estates and occupied a prominent position within the ecclesiastical hierarchy. Some of the early minsters appear to have been established to serve extensive folk territories and/or royal estates. They were staffed by a

![Diagram of Cada's minster](image)

**FIG. 2**
Location of 'Cada's minster', Willersey, Gloucs.

team of priests whose duty it was to serve the surrounding district or parochia. These often supported a small monastic community. Additional minsters were founded in the more developed regions, often with royal patronage, each building up its estates through a process of endowment, purchase, or other form of acquisition, and although many passed through periods of neglect and decay, the majority remained as recognizable religious centres in the later Anglo-Saxon period. By the early 11th century, however, the term minster was apparently being used to refer to a church quite different in status to that of a monastery and in the laws of Æthelred the term is used to refer not only to a principal church (heafodmynstre), but also to a church of medium rank (medemran mynstre) and even some of lesser rank. The use of the term in the West Midland clauses need not necessarily, therefore, indicate the presence of a major monastic site.

There can be few doubts surrounding the location of the feature itself (Fig. 2). The Broadway boundary climbed the scarp face of the Cotswold escarpment (as it does today) and was marked by a furrow. This seems to have separated the arable lands of Broadway
from those of Willersey. A deep ditch lying between double banks which separated the medieval fields of the two parishes can still be seen on the upper slopes of the escarpment, although it is less distinct at lower levels, and this seems to mark the line of the furrow noted in the 10th-century document. The minster occurs as the following landmark, before the boundary runs on pa ege, ‘to the edge’, an obvious reference to the rim of the scarp face. The boundary clauses of Willersey also run in a clockwise direction and therefore make their way down the Cotswold scarp. Having run around the long southern extension of Willersey parish, which takes in an area of land on the crest of the escarpment, the boundary meets and follows the western ramparts of Willersey Iron-Age hillfort (on long wealles) before coming to Cadanmynstre. It then plunges downhill to a black pit or black pool noted as a ‘dirty pit’ in the earlier Broadway clause. There can be little doubt that the minster site lay near the north-western corner of the hillfort.

The location of the minster or church in close proximity to the hillfort is of great interest and might indicate the survival in the Anglo-Saxon period of a Christianized pagan shrine. A parallel for such a development may be found at Uley in Gloucestershire, on the Cotswold crest to the south-west of Stroud, where an Iron-Age/Romano-British temple complex lying adjacent to the hillfort of Uley Burh was superseded in the 5th century by a building which appears to have been a Christian church. This phase of use lasted through the 6th century and possibly into the 7th. There is no record from documentary or archaeological evidence of the continued occupation of Willersey hillfort in the Romano-British period but the site is unexcavated and has only been subjected to the most cursory examination. Several similar sites in this area, such as that at Meon Hill some six miles to the north-west, have produced evidence of Romano-British settlement. Even if continuity of ritual usage is not necessarily indicated, pre-existing fortifications in other regions are also known to have been used subsequently as monastic valla.

The name Cada occurs elsewhere in Gloucestershire and is ultimately of British origin, derived ‘from the British theme catu-, ‘battle’; and it is possible that the name was applied to ‘a heroic figure in some way associated with hillfort earthworks’. The nearest occurrence in Gloucestershire, however, is in the name of Cadley Hill in Batsford, also in the N. Cotswolds, where ‘Cada’s hlæw’ may have been a tumulus. The name seems to indicate a British element in the population of the region and this is, indeed, one where there is evidence of British institutions surviving into the late 6th century. British/Anglo-Saxon cultural contact is also suggested by grave-goods from the cemetery located on Fish Hill in Broadway less than one kilometre to the south of Willersey. This lay beside a major routeway referred to in the Anglo-Saxon charter as a ‘salt-way’, a road which may have given its name to the estate of Broadway.

A single sherd of Anglo-Saxon pottery, apparently from a 6th-century cinerary urn, was also discovered at a site on the river gravels to the north-east of Broadway. This was found in association with a prehistoric and Roman occupation site, the extent of which has recently been indicated by cropmarks detected by aerial photography. While Romano-British sites are abundant in the vicinity, few Anglo-Saxon settlement sites have been identified in the West Midlands. There may, however, have been several settlement nuclei in Broadway parish, for the parish church, dedicated to St Edburgh (possibly referring to a sister of King Æthelred of the Hwicce who lived in the late 7th and early 8th century), stands over one kilometre from the present village where a stream drains down from the escarpment. The recorded presence of a priest in Broadway in the Domesday Survey suggests that a church had been established here by 1086 although the earliest fabric in the present building dates from the 12th century. Broadway remained an estate held by the church of Pershore at the time of the Domesday Survey, while Willersey at that date remained an estate of Evesham Abbey. A priest was also recorded on that manor and the parish church, with fabric dating from the 13th century, is dedicated to St Peter.

At present nothing further is known about the nature of ‘Cada’s minster’. If it stood on the Willersey side of the boundary, as seems likely, it lies in close proximity to a scheduled site and is not threatened by development. A detailed geophysical survey, however, might yield
useful information. For the moment, the site remains an enigma, but it is striking how it would have dominated the group of parishes carved out upon the scarp face in this area. One can only speculate upon its role in the ecclesiastical and historical development of the region.

'THE HOLY PLACE'

The second site also occupies a location on a scarp face overlooking a wide clay vale, but in this case it is the chalk escarpment of the Berkshire Downs which forms the southern rim of the Vale of the White Horse. Here a site referred to in 10th-century charters as *pere halige stowe/pere halgan stowe*, 'the holy place', lay upon the boundary between Uffington and Fawler in Kingston Lisle (Fig. 3). The estate of Uffington was granted c. 931 to the church of Abingdon by Æthelstan, ealdorman of East Anglia, but regranted in 953 by King Eadred to his 'minister', Ælfsga and Ælfsga's wife, Eadgifu. It was, however, held by the church of Abingdon in 1086. The estate immediately adjacent to the east was probably coterminous with the township of Fawler and in 963 was granted by King Edgar as a *10-mansa* estate *aet Speresholte* to his chamberlain, Æthelsige. By 1086 this estate, too, was claimed by Abingdon Abbey, allegedly with the king's consent, having passed from a former owner, Édiric, to his son who was a monk at Abingdon. No priest is recorded on either of these estates in 1086 but the fact that Uffington remained the mother church for a number of estates in the vicinity strongly suggests that the Domesday record may be incomplete.

There can be no doubt as to the location of 'the holy place'. It appears to have lain on the Fawler side of the boundary, where a brook drains down from the escarpment in a narrow

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**FIG. 3**

Location of 'the holy place', Fawler in Kingston Lisle, Oxon.
coomb cut into the scarp face. The brook was known as the *talleburnan*, and the second Uffington boundary clause notes that the bounds ran *panne on talleburnan and ponon to berne halgan stowe and suu up andlang broees*, to *apelfees mearece weste wearde*, 'then to the *talleburnan* and thence to the holy place and thus up along the brook to the western part of Æðelfrīð's boundary' (the western boundary of Fawler in Kingston Lisle). In the first Uffington charter, the landmark after 'the holy place' is a headland, noted before the boundary reaches the Icknield Street. This coincides with one of the arable fields of Fawler known in the 18th century as 'West Hill Field'.

Unlike 'Cada's minster', 'the holy place' occupies a scarp-foot position only a short distance from the medieval village of Fawler. The name of the latter is Old English *flage, flor*, 'paved floor', and the accuracy of the Old English name has recently been dramatically proved by the discovery of numerous pieces of tesserae on the site of the 'holy place'. These had been collected by the owner of the land over a number of years but only became known after enquiries made by the present writer working on the pre-Conquest boundaries of the area. The tesserae appear to represent part of a floor of Romano-British date, and, associated with large quantities of domestic coarse ware, seem to indicate a villa site. Again, knowing that some villas were apparently associated with Christian practices, one can only speculate what degree of cultural continuity might be indicated by the Anglo-Saxon description of the site as 'holy'. Equally strikingly, the site was to become that of a later Christian building. A quantity of medieval pottery from the site, dating from c. 1200 to 1400, appears to be of a domestic nature, consisting largely of cooking vessels, but the chapel of St James had been founded here by the 16th century, only to be demolished after 1733. Today the site lies beneath the garden of a modern house and is in no immediate danger of disturbance.

Other unidentified Christian sites include the *ciric stede*, 'church place', which lay upon the eastern boundary of an estate at Dyrham in Gloucestershire, and has yet to be investigated. The two sites described in this paper suggest that all references in pre-Conquest charters to ritual or religious sites merit close investigation, although their full significance may not yet be apparent.

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**NOTES**


3. D. Hooke, The Anglo-Saxon Landscape, the Kingdom of the Hwicce (Manchester, 1985), 40. Detailed solutions of West Midland boundary clauses are at present being prepared for publication by the present writer.

4. S. 1327; B. 1240.


6. S. 786; B. 1282.


9. S. 860; B. 125.


NOTES AND NEWS


16 Burrow, op. cit. in note 14, 52.


20 Hoek, op. cit. in note 3, 24-28.

21 F. and C. Thorn (eds.), Domesday Book, 16, Worcestershire (Chichester, 1982), 9-4; Domesday Book, 1 (Record Commission, London, 1783), f. 175b, c.

22 S. 1208; B. 687.

23 S. 561; B. 899.

24 S. 713; B. 1121.

25 P. Morgan, Domesday Book, 5, Berkshire (Chichester, 1979), 7-38; Domesday Book, 1, f. 39b.


30 S. 786; B. 1282.

A 'VIKING-AGE' GRAVE FROM CAMBOIS, BEDLINGTON, NORTHUMBERLAND (Figs. 4-6)

During 1859 a cist burial containing three bodies, an enamelled disc-brooch and a bone comb was excavated at Cambois, Bedlington, Northumberland.1 The material was acquired by the Revd Greenwell, whose notebooks reveal that it had been obtained from a Dr Ward of Blythe, who reported that a tumulus on the E. side of the R. Wansbeck had been excavated: the brooch was 'lying by a skeleton interred at full length with the head to the east encased in clay', with a line of stones placed round the body.2 Of the bones, only the skulls survive: Dr Rosemary Powers (Natural History Museum) has kindly informed me that one may be that of a woman, aged 45-60, the other two probably those of males, one in his 20s and one in his 40s.

The Disc-Brooch (Fig. 4)

The brooch is cast copper-alloy, about 43.5 mm in diameter. It contains a raised central roundel with champevén enamel surrounding a bird with something in its beak, probably a branch. The details of the bird are picked out by rows of small punched dots. There is a border of punched dots on the central roundel which is set in a wider border of a running design cast in relief. The design is hard to interpret, but suggests a running border of fish-like heads with gaping mouths and pellet eyes. The outside edge is decorated with close-set incised lines.

The underside of the brooch is concave, and plain apart from a slight concretion on one side suggesting the attachment of some sort of clasp. On the outermost serrated border is a minute hole, possibly too small to take a thread or chain sturdy enough to support the weight of the brooch.

It has often been claimed that the Hyde Abbey, Winchester and Cambois brooches are from the same mould3 although as Hodges noted,4 the Hyde Abbey brooch is smaller. This could be a result of differential shrinkage to the clay mould of the original wax or lead model, or more likely because a product of the initial mould was used as a model for the Hyde brooch, the design on which is more indistinct through wear. The details of its bird, however, appear to be executed in incised lines rather than dots. The back of the brooch contains obvious signs