

THE SAXON CHARTER OF SUNBURY-ON-THAMES

THIS charter is available in *Land Charters and Saxon Documents* (1888) collected by John Earle, who took it from *Anglo-Saxon MSS.* photozincographed by Col. A. C. Cooke (1881). It is a good document, in the possession of the Dean and Chapter of Westminster, but is of a date somewhat later than that ascribed to it. The supposed date is A.D. 962 (Eadgar). Earle places the MS. among his Secondary Documents—MSS. of centuries IX to XI.

All Old English letters have been replaced by their modern equivalents.

This sindon tha land gemæro¹ to sunnanbyrig. Ærest on sunnan hyg thanon andlang streames on crudan scypsteal thanon ofer tha mæde² on eclesbroc³ andlang broces on tha mearclic andlang dices on hwæte dene northweardre of hwæte dene⁴ on tha othre mearclic andlang dices on cottes hyrst⁵ westweardre of cottes hyrste on riscmere of riscmere on ead-bryhtes hlæw of tham hlæwe on thonon on mearcwill of mearcwille on duddes byre of duddes byre on thone clofenan beorh of tham beorghe on sunnan hyg.

At the outset we are met with a difficulty created by the presence of the unusual word *hyg*. Earle takes this to be a misspelling for *byrg*, *byrig*, dative of *burh*. The objection to this is that the word occurs twice in this short passage. It is possible that *hyg* is connected with the series (*ge*)*hæg* "enclosed piece of land, meadow," *haga* "fence, fenced enclosure," *hege* "hedge." Of these the first and last have usually survived as "hay," while *haga* remains as "haw." We should then translate *byrig* by "stronghold" and *hyg* by "enclosure." Incidentally, the name "Hawfield" has survived at Sunbury close to the presumptive site of Sunna's *burh*.

A second difficulty follows—on *crudan scypsteal*. There is a prejudice in some quarters, notably among the able Swedish writers on English place-names, against translating words such as *crudan* by a personal short-name instead of a descriptive adjective. Here it is difficult to find an adjectival meaning for the word, which occurs again in CURBRIDGE OXON *Crudebrige* 1216-1307 and possibly in CURLSWOOD PARK Kent *crudes*

silba BCS 536. If the first syllable of *crudes* is identical with that of *crudan*, a good case seems to be made out for a personal short-name Cruda. We must imagine a man called Crud (strong noun, genitive *crudes*) possessing a more familiar name Cruda (weak noun, genitive *crudan*, cf. *sunman*). We should then translate "Cruda's boat place."

TRANSLATION

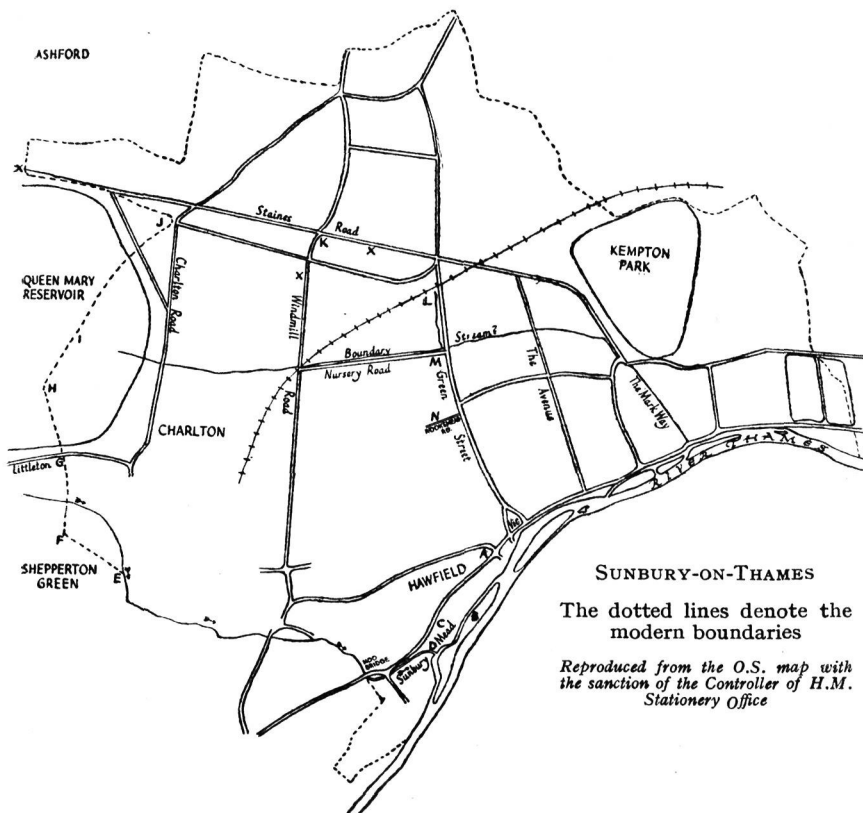
"These are the land boundaries at Sunna's hold. First (A) at Sunna's haw (enclosure), thence along the stream [Thames] to Cruda's boat-place (B), thence over the mead (C) to (D) Ecclesbrook [R. Ash], along the brook to the boundary dike (E), along the dike to the north part of (F) Wheatendene (the wheat valley), from Wheatendene to the other boundary dike (G), along the dike to the western side of Cotteshurst (H), from Cotteshurst to the rushy pool (I), from the rushy pool to (J) Eadbryht's burial mound, from the burial mound to the elder stump (K), thence to the boundary well (L), from the boundary well to Dudde's byre (M), from Dudde's byre to the barrow with a cleft (N), from the barrow to Sunna's haw (A)."

THE BOUNDARIES

What follows is an attempt to reconcile the modern with the ancient boundaries of Sunbury as indicated in the charter. It should be mentioned at once that the early bounds are much more restricted than those of to-day. This is made clear in the Latin preamble to the charter, which is not included here because it adds to our knowledge in only one point. This point however is important because it supplies a check on the area of the place. The land at Sunbury which Eadgar granted to his kinsman Ælfheh was 10 *cassati*, that is, 10 hides. The area of the hide varied with the district. In the *Dialogus de scaccario* it measured 100 acres, a figure which may be taken as a rough average guide, giving an area of about 1,000 acres for Saxon Sunbury. The area of the place to-day is 2,660 acres.

One other point may be mentioned before we leave the preamble. It sets forth that the land is free of all dues except three, expeditions, the repair of bridge and the maintenance of the castle. This clause seems at first sight to point to the existence of a bridge at Sunbury, but is in fact a stereotyped phrase embodying the *trinoda necessitas*, to which all holdings were liable in Saxon times.

The site of Sunna's hold is an obvious one, that of the vicarage, which occupies a very marked piece of rising ground opposite to the church at the southern end of Green Street. Somewhere between this spot and the eastern tip of the modern Hawfield the letter A may be placed, with B on Thames Conservancy Island. C is Sunbury Mead, which must be crossed to reach D, the mouth of the Ecclesbrook or River Ash. The boundary



follows the stream, over what is to-day the Hoo Bridge, to the Boundary Dike at E, thence to the northern part of the Wheat Valley at F, and so to the second Boundary Dike at G. This dike crosses the Ash and runs into the southern wall of the reservoir and, according to the pre-reservoir O.S. maps, ran north towards the centre of the reservoir, then turning north-east. The line then ran to the western end of Cotteshurst at H, to the Rushy Pool (I), which may have been near the source

of the Boundary Rivulet, and so to J,* which is Eadbryht's Burial Mound. This, if correct, is a particularly interesting identification, for we find here on the Sunbury Award map a field described as "How Close." The word *how* is not common in S. England, but it is identical with the Norse word *haugr* denoting a "burial mound." Muriel Press' translation of *The Laxdale Saga* (Temple Classics), Chapter VII, relates that "Unn was carried to the howe (burial mound)"—*til haugs*—"that was made for her." The burial was of the type laid bare at Sutton Hoo, for "she was laid in a ship in the cairn, and much treasure with her, and after that the cairn was closed up."

It is suggested that the point K lay to the south of the Staines Road. Point L is not so easy to fix owing to the fact that *will* or *wielle* may mean "brook" or "well." South of Kempton Park a streamlet runs north following a path called the Mark Way and then turns west, as shown on the map. Since *mark* means "boundary," it is tempting to identify the *mearcwill* with this brook. But the latter does not run in the right direction. Let us therefore take the meaning of "well." South of the railway bridge over Green Street is a point where, during recent excavations for the laying of a feed-pipe to the new filter-beds, grouting to a depth of 60 feet had to be undertaken to check the flow of water from an ancient spring which may have been the boundary well. This identification, if correct, gives the position of L.

From L an old ditch running to Nursery Road, where it joins the "Boundary Rivulet," may indicate the line of the Saxon boundary. A short way to the south of Nursery Road an early-Victorian house called Duddingstone may well preserve the tradition of Dudde's byre (M). Finally, to the south-west of M, in the garden of 22, Rooksmead Road, is a mound large enough to hold the roots of two large old yew trees. If this artificial heap represents the remains of an ancient barrow, the point N may tentatively be placed here to mark the position of the barrow with the cleft.

The advice and help of Miss Winifred Husbands and Mr. R. Quirk of University College, London, and of Miss Florence Harmer of the University of Manchester have been greatly appreciated.

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* W.H.T. places this further to the west.

NOTES

1. The word *(ge)mære* "boundary" sometimes survives in such names as Mare Street, Hackney.
2. Sunbury Mead (Cary's map of Middlesex, 1801).
3. Cf. "Plan of the Parish of Ashford otherwise Echelford," i.e. the map of the Ashford Enclosure Award, 1811 (Middlesex Record Office).
4. The name "Wheatendown" appears in a View of Frank Pledge for the Manor of Sunbury, 11th May, 1778 (Middlesex Record Office), but with no indication of its whereabouts.
5. "Wood."