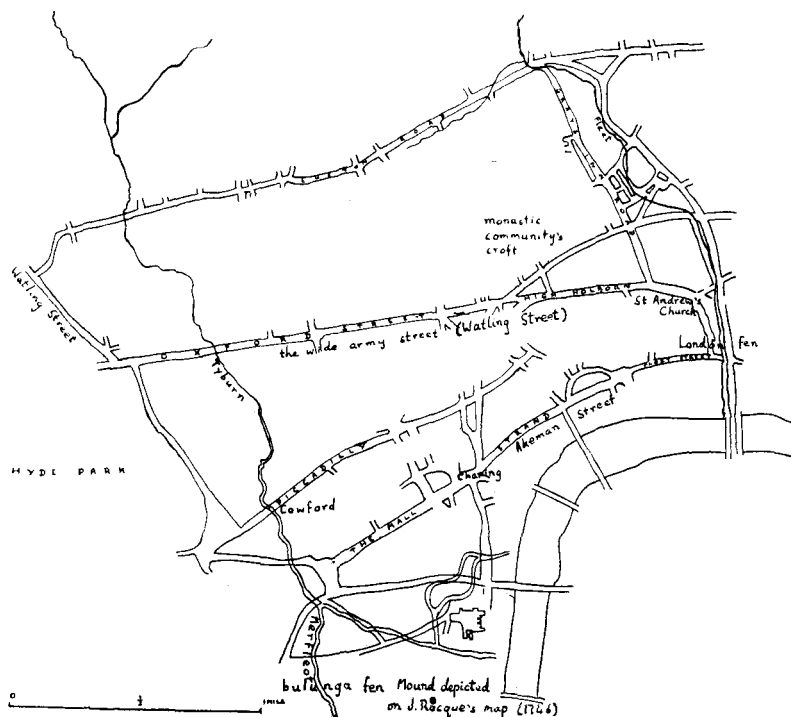


THE BOUNDARIES OF THE WESTMINSTER CHARTERS

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No. 1048 in Birch's *Cartularium Saxonicum* is a charter of King Edgar, composed in the year 959, which records the king's gift of an estate to the church of St. Peter at Westminster, and gives the boundaries of the land in question. No. 1351 in Birch is an expanded form of the same charter, with substantially the same boundaries. Also preserved among the



Westminster muniments is a charter, perhaps some 50 years later in date, which records that the monks of Westminster have bought a *berewic*, or farm, from King Ethelred. This later charter, which has survived in a copy dated about 1306, is printed in J. Armitage Robinson's *Gilbert Crispin, Abbot of Westminster*, Cambridge, 1911, pp. 167 ff. It gives boundaries

which obviously include the land conveyed in King Edgar's charter and the newly added farm which is on the north boundary of the earlier estate. The two sets of boundaries are given below, with a translation and notes. The Old English letters Þ and ƿ have been replaced by *th* and *w*. The words *pollene* and *bulunga* cannot be translated, as their meaning is not known.

Those landmarks which can be placed with sufficient certainty are marked on the accompanying sketch map, which is based on the first map in *A History of the County of London*, Vol. I, Victoria County Histories, 1909; *bulunga fenn* and *lundene fenn* appear to have stretched along the lower halves of the Tyburn and the Fleet. The Fleet is not mentioned, possibly because the edge of London fen was a more realistic eastern boundary to the estate. The bounds of King Ethelred's charter do not use the Thames as a southern boundary, but run instead along the Roman road: it may be suggested tentatively that the ground between the Roman road and the river was marshy, so that the road was the more realistic boundary, although King Edgar's charter is careful to make it clear that the north half of the river belonged to the Abbey. Both sets of boundaries exclude the western part of the present city of Westminster, i.e., the later manors of Ebury and Hyde.

KING EDGAR'S CHARTER

Ærest up of temese andlang merfleotes to pollene stocce swa on bulunga fenn of tham fenne æfter thær ealdan dic to cuforde of cuforde upp andlang teoburnan to thære wide here stræt æfter thære here stræt to thære ealde stoccene sancte andreas cyricean swa innan lundene fenn Andlang fennes sud on temese on midden streame andlang stremes be lande and be strande eft on merfleote.

KING ETHELRED'S CHARTER

Ærest of than hlawe into theoburnan north anglang teoburnan to Cuforda of Cuforda to wætlinga stræte east andlang stræte to tham setle of tham setle on hinan croftes ge mære thanon south to than ealdan stræte of thare stræte eft to watlinga stræte andlang stræte to thare ealdan werhrode thanan to thas ealder mannes ge mære thanan suth rihte to akemanne-stræte west andlang stræte to cyrringe thanon eft on thone hlawe.

TRANSLATIONS

First, up from the Thames along the boundary stream¹ to *pollene* tree-stump: so to *bulunga* fen: from the fen, following the old ditch, to Cowford²: from Cowford, up along the Tyburn to the wide army-street³: along the wide army-street to the old wooden church of St. Andrew⁴: so into London Fen: along the fen southwards to the Thames to the middle of the river⁵: along the edge of the river⁶ to the boundary stream again.

First, from the mound⁷ to Tyburn: northwards along Tyburn to Cowford: from Cowford to Watling Street⁸: eastwards along the street to the dwelling-place: from the dwelling-place to the boundary⁹ of the monastic community's croft: thence southwards to the old street¹⁰: from the street back again to Watling Street: along the street to the old gallows: thence to the aldorman's boundary: thence southwards straight to Akeman Street¹¹: westwards along the street to Charing: thence back to the mound.

NOTES

1. The boundary stream is probably the most westerly branch of the lower Tyburn, which formed the boundary between the manors of Ebury and Westminster. Old English *flōt* may here be used in the more precise sense "estuary," the reference being to the mouth of the Tyburn.
2. Cowford was the spot where Akeman Street crossed the Tyburn. The marked dip in Piccadilly near Half Moon Street still shows how the land near here sloped down to the river.
3. This is the Roman road to the west approximately represented by the present Oxford Street and High Holborn. *Here-stræt* is synonymous with *here-pæth*, "army path," which the Anglo-Saxons applied to any important road, and which is the first element of the place-name Harpford (Somerset and Devon).
4. The old church of St. Andrew is assumed to have been near the north end of Shoe Lane, in the same position as the later church.
5. I.e., the Abbey would have rights over the northern half of the river.
6. *Be lande and be strande* is a conventional phrase of which there is no need to translate both nouns. Old English *strand* is here used of the whole length of the river bank from the mouth of the Fleet to Chelsea. The street now known as The Strand is first recorded by that name in 1185.
7. In *The Place-Names of Middlesex*, English Place-Name Society, 1942, pp. 222-3, it is suggested that this mound may have been the one which gave name to Tothill, "look-out hill." There can never have been a natural hill here, and the reference must have been to some artificial mound or barrow. A mound of some sort is depicted on J. Rocque's map of 1746, south-west of Horseferry Road.
8. The name Watling Street is here applied to the "wide army-street" of the earlier charter, roughly the modern Oxford Street and High Holborn. Watling Street was usually the name given to the road to St. Albans, which ran into this one near Marble Arch. It is suggested in the Historical Monuments Commission's volume on Roman London (p. 53) that this use of the name Watling Street seems to show that, at any rate in Ethelred's time, the Oxford Street road was considered primarily as the continuation of the St. Alban's road.
9. It is suggested in *The Place-Names of Middlesex*, p. 223, that the bounds turn north at the point where the present Oxford Street, Tottenham Court

Road and Charing Cross Road meet. The bounds then go round the newly added *berewic*, which was the Westminster part of Tottenham, later represented by the parish of St. Giles in the Fields. The monks' *berewic* (here referred to as *hinan croft*) perhaps extended north as far as Tavistock Square. The bounds then turn south again.

10. The old street, presumably the remains of some Roman road, has not been identified.
11. This charter is an important piece of evidence for the existence of a second Roman road to the west, roughly on the line of the modern Strand, here called *Akemannestræte*, presumably because it led in the direction of Bath, known to the Anglo-Saxons as *Acemannes ceaster*. There is no connection between this road and the Verulamium-Bath road, still called Akeman Street. There is a discussion of the Roman roads in this part of London in *Roman London*, Royal Commission on Historical Monuments, 1928, pp. 53-5.