BERNWOOD: CONTINUITY AND SURVIVAL ON A ROMANO-BRITISH ESTATE

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Dr Baines here reviews the evidence for the status of Bernwood and its inhabitants in the period during which Roman Britain was turning into England. He concludes that there is a persuasive case for regarding it as a multiple estate of Celtic origin, and that the echoes of the associated administration and jurisdiction can be discerned faintly in the late middle ages and even, in attenuated form, into the present century. He suggests that Bernwood remained British, with British institutions, because the local Britons had made common cause with their English neighbours, the Hwicce, and because when these were absorbed by Mercia it became a Mercian royal estate.

"Estates tend to last in one form or another, whoever may own them and whatever language their owner may speak".[1] A characteristic form of major land unit in medieval Wales, and hence probably in sixth-century Britain, was the multiple estate with a secular focus (the court or *llys*), a church focus (the *llan*) and sharing of functions between the different component or dependent settlements. The multiple estate commanded all the resources required to sustain its economy: arable, pasture, meadow, woodland, water and hill or marsh grazing.[2] These resources were allocated between the lord, the free tenants and the bondmen, and both free and unfree tenants rendered well-defined services, though in an economy where technology and mass production had collapsed the surplus available from the producers to support those who lived without productive labour was relatively small. The Welsh laws deal fully with the case where the lord was a king or prince, and take the division of functions between the court and the church for granted. The prince's greater reeve (the *maer*, from Vulgar Latin *maior*, "steward") organized labour services and the collection of various kinds of tribute, which were handed over to the lesser reeve at the *maerdref* for the maintenance of the court of the local ruler. These renders might comprise crops or stock or might be in processed form – meal, meat, cheese, honey, mead, bragget or ale.[3]

In late Saxon times, and after the Norman Conquest, the royal manor (later manorial borough)[4] of Brill was the centre or *caput* of just such an estate. This claim requires justification in some detail. The ecclesiastical centre was the church at Oakley, on which the church at Brill (as distinct from the royal chapel there) and other churches at Boarstall and Addingrove were dependent. The third centre, the steward's fortified manor-house, corresponding to the *maerdref*, was at Boarstall, the *burh-stall*, though *borg-stall* "place of security" is equally appropriate; the two words were already confused in the tenth century.[5]

In 1346 the bailiwick of the forestership of Bernwood was held by the service of the petty serjeanty of keeping the forest and paying to the seneschal 50s. a year;[6] this payment (40s. for the forester's office, 10s. for his land) seems to represent the relationship between the lesser and greater reeve. By 1452 the forester was also seneschal and his custody extended "a Stonyforde usque ad aquam le Burne currentem inter Stepleclaydone et Paddebury" – that is, from the river Thame at

Shabbington to the river Bune or Birne north of the Claydons.[7] These ancient bounds cover the woodland district of north-west Buckinghamshire up to the bounds of the liberty of Chetwode. Rents in Middle, East and Botolph Claydon and in Ickford were parcel of the manor of Boarstall which was held with the bailiwick of the forestership.[8]

The office of keeper of Bernwood Forest, with a hide of land called the Deerhyde at Boarstall, is said to have become hereditary by Edward the Confessor's time; it was recognised in 1266[9] that the *Derhyde* and the bailiwick of the forest had been held since that time by the heirs of one Nigel (Niel) but that after the Norman Conquest they were disposessed by the family of Lisures. This account seems generally acceptable, though the story that Nigel slew a great boar is an onomastic legend to account for the name Boarstall, and duplicates a corresponding tradition at Chetwode.[10] The editor of the Boarstall Cartulary doubted whether the office was hereditary before the mid-twelfth century.

The forester demanded agricultural services, protected the forest and collected agistment charges *ab antiquo debitis* from a dozen villages, some of them in the form of hens, eggs and bushels of oats. He enjoyed various perquisites, including windblown trees, deadwood, cattle which were estrays, nuts in the demesne woods and wax and honey from wild bees.[11] His charter of office was a great black horn which is still preserved; it was said in 1487 to have been given long before the conquest of England.[12] Finally, in 1611, shortly before Bernwood was disafforested, a full grant was made by the King to the lord of Boarstall of his ancestors' lands in the Forest, with other lands once held there by religious houses.[13]

Various services were rendered to the royal manor of Brill from lands within and outside the bounds of the royal forest as perambulated in 1298;[14] these were much more restricted than those of the wooded area over which the seneschal of Bernwood asserted jurisdiction in 1452. No doubt the demesne had been progressively reduced; the royal grant of Wotton Underwood to Forthred in 845[15] is the earliest recorded such alienation, but Wotton remained within the purlieus of Bernwood and its lord paid 2s. a year for pasturing cattle within the Forest. Oakley within the bounds owed

plough services, but so did several villages outside, including Arncott and Murcott in Oxfordshire. Payments from other villages seem to represent commuted services. Land in Swanbourne paid rent measured in pots or jars of honey; this archaic render seems to have perplexed the homage jury in 1252:[16]

"Item quod quedam terre in villa de Swanebourne, quondam pertinentes dicto manerio, solebant reddere manerio de Brehull quon*dam* ollam mellis sed nesciunt quantum ten*ementum* nec [quo] tempore".

The Abbot of Woburn was still paying 13s. 4d. a year in 1535 for his land in Swanbourne in lieu of a bowl of honey. In 1353 some rents were still being paid with reference to grain and cheese (precium quarterii frumenti iiiis., precium [ii] casearum iid.).[17]

To survive into and through the Middle Ages, a multiple estate such as Bernwood had to come into and remain in the hands of the Crown, which could ensure that its economic functions were fortified by legal privileges; but its origin must be sought in a past which was far beyond the memory of man when documentary evidence begins. Critical to this question is the name of the forest, recorded in the A-text of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle s.a. 921 (for 917) as *Byrnewuda*, a dative implying nominative *Byrnewudu* (less often needed). A lost transcript of the A-text, made between 1014 and 1032 and edited by Abraham Wheloc before it was burnt in 1731, has the form *Burnewuda*.[18] From the twelfth century onwards the forest is usually *Bernewuda* or *Bernewode*, though *Brenewode* also occurs, with an occasional late form *Barnwood*.[19] Its derivation has been debated for three centuries, since Dr Plot suggested that Bicester (*Bernecestre* in Domesday Book, but then also *Burnecestre, Berencestre*)[20] was so called "from Bern-wood or forest[21] . . . upon the edge whereof it was then seated, nor is it now far off". Dr White Kennett, quoting this opinion in 1696, objected that Bicester was three miles from the border of the forest, but he conceded that "the town of Berncester might owe its name to the same reason as Bernwood did", the first element of both being *beorn* "an epithet of dignity and remark".[22] This would correspond to British *penno-* "chief", making Bernwood, "a wooded tract of the widest extent and greatest eminence", a translation of Penchet, the British name of the forest (discussed

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below); but *beorn* is recorded only as a noun, used in the poetic vocabulary for "man (*vir*), warrior, chief, hero". It can occur uninflected in placenames,[23] but here we should need *beorna*, genitive plural "of the warriors". This element is infrequent in place-names, but it was proposed by Dr Margaret Gelling in 1953 for Bicester, with a personal name Beorn(a) as an alternative; this is clearly possible for Bicester, but would hardly do for Bernwood, as a genitive *Byrnan* would not have been reduced to *Byrne* until well after the date of the surviving manuscript annal, which Stenton placed at *c*.950.

The alternative is that the first element in both names is Celtic, one of several British words for "hill", which became Welsh *bryn*, metathesized to *byrn* as in Malvern "bare hill" (*Malferna* 1086, with British lenition).[24] This suggestion, made by Ekwall, was adopted by Mawer and Stenton, who thought that "the British word was contained in the unknown Celtic name of the settlement at Alchester near Bicester, and passed from that into the Middle English forms of Bicester". However, Bicester can hardly be a transferred name, in view of the form *Alencestr'* for Alchester in the Sandford cartulary *c*.1160, which points to British *Alauna*.[25] It is not critical that the Roman town at Alchester can no longer be identified with one of the places of this name in the Ravenna Cosmography,[26] since *Alauna* or *Alaunus* is so common; it can refer to streams, settlements, persons (giving Welsh Alun) or Gaulish divinities. Suggestions as to its meaning include "brilliant", "holy", "mighty" or simply "good".[27]

Another trail was followed in 1982 by Rutherford Davis,[28] who sought to associate the *bryn* with *Brinavis* in the Ravenna list; but Dillemann[29] had already dismissed this as a ghost-name. What seems to have happened is that the fourth-century map followed by the Cosmographer (*c*.700) had $^{Duro}/_{brivis}$ for the locative of *Duro/brivæ* "town bridges" (the name of Rochester on Medway); that he failed to reunite the two parts, and miscopied the second as *Bravis*; that someone wrote a correction *iv* over the word, and someone else misread this as *in* and incorporated it into the name, finally giving the *Brinavis* of the fourteenth century Vatican manuscript, in which many of the 5,000 placenames are equally corrupt; thus for the other *Durobrivae* (Wa-

ter Newton) it has *Durobrisin* with *-isin* as a metathesis of *-inis*, itself miscopied from *-ivis*.

Returning to Bernwood; Ekwall had been sympathetic to Celtic etymologies, but became increasingly reluctant to accept them. In 1960 he proposed *byrgen* "burial place" both for Bernwood and for Bicester.[30] The original sense of *byrgen* was "burying" (from *burg* with noun-suffix *-en*) but it became concretely "grave".[31] The verb *byrgan* "to bury" can mean "to raise a mound" (cf. *beorg* "tumulus"; *beorgan* "to guard, shelter, preserve"). These divergent views, each with the support of eminent authorities, are perhaps not quite irreconcilable. It is suggested that the element is indeed Celtic, but that monoglot Englishmen heard the word from Britons, mistook it for the proper name of the forest and adopted it uncomprehendingly, adding "wood" and giving it a meaning in English, perhaps not the same meaning for different groups of settlers, or at different stages of settlement. Newcomers sometimes took over British elements into English (making them immune to subsequent changes in Celtic) and interpreted them to suit themselves. Finally, in late Old English *bern* or *beren*, "barn", reduced from *bere-ærn*, "barley-store",[32] *bearn* "offspring" and even *byrgen* could be confused with *beorn* and with each other.

The *bryn* which thus gave Bernwood its name would be the line of hills from Brill towards Oving, just as Malvern relates to a whole range; but in the name of the hill on which Brill stands, exposed to all the winds, the first element is probably late British *brēga*, Welsh *bre*, a less usual word for "hill"; apparently used especially for the most prominent hill in a district.[33] With the addition of *hyll* this became **Brehyll* and so *Burhella, Bruhella* in variant Abingdon texts of a writ of William the Conquerer issued at Brill in 1072, confusingly *Brunhelle* in Domesday Book (as if from *bryn*) but then usually *Brehulle, Brehill(a)* or *Bruhull*. The name remained disyllabic until the sixteenth century. It has been said that Brill in Cornwall has the same history, but there the leading authority regards the second element as probably Cornish **helgh* "hunt".[34]

Even though Bernwood was thus an English renaming of the forest, the newcomers also encountered its true name, which in the late sixth

century was almost certainly *Pencet* or *Penchet*, "chief wood" rather than "head of the wood", with the defining element preceding the defined, as was usual in Celtic until *c*.600. This was also the name of Clarendon Forest in Wiltshire;[35] in modern Welsh it would be Pencoed. British *cēton* denoted a forest or large wood (*silva*) rather than a small one (*nemus*, Welsh *celli*). Ekwall considered that *Penchet* became *Pauncet* through Norman influence, as Brill was a favourite royal hunting-lodge for red deer, and that the final *t* was then lost, as in Penge from *Penceat* and Trunch from *Trunchet*. The name is preserved in Panshill, an outlying part of the king's demesne wood which was the *healh* or corner of Penchet. The added element in this name is nearly always (*h*)*ale* in the medieval forms from 1230 onwards; the modern spelling obscures both the etymology and the pronunciation, which is better given by *Pansole* in Jeffreys' and Bryant's county maps, and even in Moule's map (1848). Two minor place-names relating to the British inhabitants of Bernwood have been noted by Dr Michael Reed: *Walecombe* and *Comberthornwaye*.[36] To these may be added *Wealabroc*, "Welshmen's brook" on the eastern boundary of Bernwood[37] following a minor Roman road for some distance; both the brook and the road are further discussed below. The words *Wealas* and *Cumbre* had the same ethnic connotation, but the latter was more polite.

The reconstruction of the early history of Bernwood depends critically on the annal for 571 in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle:

Her Cuþ-wulf feaht wiþ Bret-walas æt Bedcan-forda. & iiii. tunas genom. Lygeanburg. & Ægeles-burg. Bænesing-tun. & Egones-hám. & þy ilcan geare he gefor.

These are the original readings in the Parker manuscript (A); a hyphen represents a slight spacing between the elements of a compound word. A literal translation is as follows:

Now (in that year) Cuthwulf fought against (the) Britons at *Bedcanford* and took four towns, Limbury and Aylesbury, Benson (Bensington) and Eynsham, and in the same year he departed (this life).

This annal, the only one before the tenth century expressly relating to what is now Buckinghamshire, has been well discussed by Michael Farley.[38] The traditional view of the campaign was that

Cuthwulf was a prince of the house of Cerdic, who made a long march from Wessex; but the order and grouping of the names is against this, and the annal does not say that Cuthwulf was a West Saxon, still less their king, as J.R. Green[39] assumed. It credits Cuthwulf alone with the victory. Further, 571 does not conform to the leap-year convention (552, 556, 560, 568, 584, 592) in the West-Saxon annals, which thus give the sequence of events but not their absolute dating, an oral tradition having been fitted to Easter tables. This date and that of the next entry, the Dyrham campaign of 577, seem to have been ascertained independently, perhaps from British sources or a different tradition. The latter date is approximately cross-checked by references in the lives of Celtic saints (Maedoc,[40] Finnian[41]) and in Llandaff texts.[42] If the British victory at Mount Badon is rightly placed shortly before 500, the Chronicle dating implies that the subsequent "sorrowful partition with the barbarians", *lugubri divortio barbarorum*,[43] preserved British rule in and to the north of the Vale of Oxford and Aylesbury for over sixty years. Sir Frank Stenton was prepared to accept an intermission of this length in our area,[44] and the Celtic and continental sources support it. It is quite consistent with the continued presence of Anglo-Saxons, as *foederati*; Gewisse "trustworthy, reliable ones" looks like the equivalent Saxon term.

It would appear that in the mid-sixth century, Buckinghamshire belonged to some kind of south midland British state, where the collapse of any orderly central government had enabled or compelled the provincial governor of the Catuvellaunian *civitas* to become one of the *reges* or *tyranni* whom Gildas (writing *c*.540) denounced. Later Welsh sources called him Catraut and his kingdom Calchvynydd, the hills of chalk and limestone and the lands between them. His realm was protected, but also threatened, by his confederate forces until it was attacked by Cuthwulf, whom one interpretation of a conflated genealogy would make a leader of the Eslingas, settled in the Cambridge region since the late fifth century. After the battle of *Bedcanford*, which the tenth-century chronicler Æthelweard unhesitatingly identified with Bedford,[45] the English at Aylesbury (Walton)[46] and in and around Luton (Limbury) seem to have changed sides, opened their gates to their kinsfolk and joined Cuthwulf (and probably the English long settled at Abingdon) in taking Eynsham and Benson; the

latter may have replaced Dorchester-on-Thames in the annal, as the places are only two miles apart.[47] Thereafter the Vale was open to English expansion, but the conquerors were few in number; they had reason to fear a British counter-attack, and at first they would not wish to spread too widely. English settlers of varying origin probably prospected the whole of the Vale (but at first not Bernwood or the Chilterns) to decide which parts were most useful. The preferred areas were in general those where the soil was fertile and easily worked, and which were adequately and reliably watered by springs and streams. Such land had been equally attractive to their Romano-British and Iron Age predecessors, and had probably never fallen out of cultivation, or not for long. The heavier clays, the less attractive drifts and the waterless hill country could be left to the Britons, or allowed to revert to high forest, or to heathland on the poorer soils. The bubonic plague and subsequent relapsing fever of 547–551, following the famines and climate disasters of 536–546,[47a] may well have halved the British population: there was no need to displace the surviving British *rustici*, who probably continued on many self-sufficient post-villa estates without too much disturbance, though often with a change of masters and perhaps a further depression of status. Some of the British landowners may have succeeded in making terms with an English suzerain, especially by arranging intermarriages which preserved their own position for the time being.

Aylesbury became the capital of the Cilternsæte, the dwellers under and along the Chilterns. Names in -*sæte* mostly contain Celtic elements (*Elmet, Pencer, Wreoca, Magon, Aro, Dorn – sæte*) and may denote surviving sub-Roman territoral units. The eponymous Ægil, depicted on the Franks casket as defending his *burh*, may well be the sun-archer, the brother of Weland the Smith, either of whom a local war-lord who was not Woden-born could reasonably adopt as a mythological ancestor.

Cuthwulf died in the year of his victory, and Cutteslowe in north Oxford may be his tumulus. The Cutha of later annals, perhaps his heir, is the Cuthwine associated with Ceawlin of Wessex in the capture of Gloucester, Cirencester and Bath. In or about 584 the tide of conquest was halted at the battle of *Fethanleag*, Fethelee in Stoke Lyne near Banbury:[48] Cuthwine was killed and Ceawlin re-

turned in anger (*ierre*, "ire") to Wessex, taking much booty with him. Their opponents probably included the Anglian Hwicce of Wychwood and the Cotswolds as well as the Britons. William of Malmesbury,[49] presumably relying either on a local tradition or a more candid Chronicle text, regarded such an alliance between Angles and Britons as being responsible for the defeat and expulsion in 592 of Ceawlin, who died the next year.

After the West Saxons had been driven back, *conspirantibus tam Anglis quam Britonibus*, it is not clear which English overlord (if any) the British rulers of North Bucks obeyed during the next few years. Another Cuthwulf, son of a Cutha (but which?) secured the West Saxon throne in 597, and fought both Angles and Britons, whose alliance against a common enemy would facilitate a working agreement on boundaries. The Britons of Bernwood and the Chetwood may well have taken this opportunity to confirm their western frontier, perhaps at the holy oak on the county boundary where the bounds of the liberty of Chetwode begin and end;[50] the Rhyne Toll preserved its significance until the present century. One result of this association was that the Hwiccian rulers soon adopted the Christian faith of their British subjects and allies, while the West Saxons remained *omnes paganissimos* for another generation,[51] even though all these peoples came under the hegemony of a Christian king of Kent. In 601 the British bishops would not enter West Saxon territory, and St Augustine, first Archbishop of Canterbury, had to meet them at an oak on the Hwiccian frontier (The Oak at Down Ampney ?); the conference proved abortive.

The Kentish overlordship ended in 616, and it was probably during the following decade of unregulated land-taking that the Claydons, Quainton and Grendon Underwood came into English hands, the British inhabitants becoming or remaining servile. Although none of these later formed part of the king's demesne, they were within the forest jurisdiction and Bernwood Farm in East Claydon is a reminder of its extent. The evidence for English settlement in Buckinghamshire in the early seventh century, before the Conversion, comes partly from place-names and partly from physical evidence. Neither can be fully discussed here, but it is likely that once the leading Britons and their managers

adopted the English language the general population would be under social pressure to do likewise, and the experience of nineteenth-century Ireland during and after the famine shows how rapid such a process can be. The difference is that here not many Celtic place-names survived, except for rivers, forests, major hills and ruined Roman towns. The English are not likely to have learned much British, but these features would demand their attention. They had their own precise and detailed terminology for topographical features, and pioneers or later owners would often wish to call their lands by their own names (cf. Psalm 49:11). Topographical names predominate in the Chilterns, habitative ones in the Vale: but in Bernwood there are no names with the early habitative elements *hām*, *worth* or *ingas* (Oving is a seventh-century pagan site, but just outside the forest).

Anglo-Saxon graves and finds of the pagan period are the best evidence of settlement before (say) 650. There is a striking lack of such evidence in north-west Buckinghamshire, between the Thame and the Great Ouse, the district having remained in British hands until most of it was taken over by the Mercian crown as a royal forest, after Penda's accession in 626 and his foundation of a greater Mercia through his treaty with Wessex in 628. It may be associated with his alliance in 633 with Catwallaun of Gwynedd, the British high king. When the alliance was renewed in 642, Penda was overlord, establishing the Mercian supremacy which lasted until the ninth century.

The view taken here is that because the Britons had made common cause with their Anglian neighbours, the Hwicce, ever since 584, Bernwood survived the land-taking of the next half-century with its administration more or less intact, though there were some encroachments. Hogg of Hoggeston would seem to have acquired a woodland holding at Hogshaw,[52] which itself had a secondary settlement at Kitehall farther into Bernwood. Long Crendon had a detached woodland area, eight miles from the village, at Tittershall in the north-east corner of Wotton Underwood. The Creoda who gave his name to Crendon may have been Penda's grandfather who died in 593; the name is rare, perhaps unique, and Morris[53] has suggested that it was he who fought with British allies against Ceawlin. If so, there was a special reason for the recognition of his forest holding.

Another encroachment, evidenced by place-names, was not maintained. Addingrove, a hamlet of Oakley, is the wood associated with Æddi (with connective *-ing-* as in *-ingtun*), probably the pioneer who gave his name to Addington and Adstock on the Roman road mentioned above. His woodland was so near the centre of Bernwood that Penda or Wulfhere would find it necessary to keep it within the royal forest in the strictest sense, while tolerating encroachments already made on the outskirts. The appropriation of Bernwood by the Mercian Crown would not entail disruption, but rather conservation. The king would receive the renders and services previously due to the court of a British ruler at Brill, and the surviving British notables and their under-tenants would accept and even welcome the change as an effective protection against their neighbours to the east and north.

One remarkable feature of the estate is explicable in terms of a Welsh law which has no close Anglo-Saxon analogue. The Welsh legislation codified by Hywel Dda provided that in a bond settlement where a church was consecrated with the consent of a king, each bondman became a freeman that very night.[54] The Latin text indicates that the privilege was accorded when Mass had been said in the church and corpses buried in its precinct.[55] A mother church would normally serve all the component settlements of a multiple estate, though the court would have its own chapel. Here the mother church was at Oakley, but by an extraordinary arrangement that church was deemed to be in the parish of Brill, together with the churchyard and the parsonage with its garden and orchard.[56] Manumission by operation of law would thus take effect in Brill but not in Oakley itself, and it will be submitted that later evidence supports this.

In Edward the Confessor's time the king's manor of Brill to which Bernwood Forest was appurtenant included Brill, Boarstall, Kingsey, Kingswood and part of Ludgershall, later a separate manor. In 1086 there were in the royal manor 25 ploughlands but only two slaves, 6 per cent of the recorded individuals. No other estate in the hundred of Ixhill[57] had such a low ratio of *servi* to population. In Oakley and Addingrove the ratio was 15 per cent, in the other woodland vills from 10 to 24 per

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cent, and in the vills of Ixhill at a distance from the forest, with no recorded woodland, from 28 to 42 per cent. A test of significance is hardly necessary. These last vills were surely occupied by English settlers whose policy was to retain those unfree Britons who remained. Free Britons could move or be moved into the woodland area, as those farther north did into the Chetwood; but there the inner-most parishes are characterised by a high propor-tion of slaves, while in Bernwood the royal manor of Brill has the lowest percentage (even there the two *servi* may have been domestics). The Britons there, if originally unfree, had been manumitted, either by the king's act or by operation of law. The former explanation is *prima facie* supported by the absence of slaves in the great demesne manors of Aylesbury, Princes Risborough and Wendover, where the *servi* numbered respectively two, three and none; but in all these cases it can be shown that the manor came or reverted into the king's hands after being held in the tenth century by a notable who pursued the Church's policy of manu-mission.[58] In the two Wycombes, which on one reading of a charter of 767[59] had come into Offa's hands in exchange for Harrow, but which had been alienated by the tenth century, the *servi* and semi-servile *buri* numbered 18 per cent. Thus there is no clear evidence of a general policy of manumission on Mercian royal estates in Bucks, and the position at Brill calls for a local explanation.

It is submitted that the peasants of Brill and its hamlets were freed in the seventh century by the operation of a Celtic law, operative in Wales in the tenth century but clearly archaic, as its inclusion in the Triads suggests. Their submission to a Mercian king at a time when he still depended on a British alliance stabilised the legal position, and when a church was built to serve Bernwood (Penchet) care was taken that it should legally remain within the demesne. The fairly low proportion of slaves in the rest of the forest and its purlieus can be explained by the resettlement of free Britons driven from their farms during the lawless years, the unfree labourers remaining behind. Other Britons fled into the Chetwood north of the Bune, where their experi-ence was less fortunate. In a group of contiguous vills (Chetwode, Barton Hartshorn, Tingewick and Hasley) over 40 per cent of the inhabitants recorded in 1086 were slaves. They may represent the last British area in North Bucks to be overrun.

North Marston and Oving had no slaves at all; this suggests that there the Britons were driven (or were allowed to move) across the *Wealabroc*, which then became their frontier, until they were swamped by an English migration into the Claydons. East Claydon was divided into four man-ors, and all the slaves were in the largest (as at Amersham and Hemel Hempstead) as was most of the woodland. When a leader divided the land, he might well keep the best of the spoils for himself. Thus Hoggeston had 21 per cent slaves, while Hogshaw had none.

In 792 King Offa granted a large area east of Bernwood, including Winslow, Granborough and Horwood (then still a *silva*) to the church of St Albans,[60] where Christian worship had been main-tained since its establishment in the fourth century. Even after 571, the pagans to whom Verulamium surrendered had not destroyed the church on the site of Alban's martyrdom (*c*.209)[61] though they dis-mantled his shrine.[62] We have Bede's testimony that works of healing did not cease.[63] Prayers for Offa, who surely needed them, were maintained at St Albans Abbey until the Dissolution.

The royal forest of Bernwood was within the area assigned to Oxford in King Alfred's time, and was therefore transferred from Mercia to Wessex by King Edward the Elder in 911. After Edward had founded the borough of Buckingham in November 914, Bernwood was included in the proto-shire which contributed to its defence.[64]

An important source for the subsequent years of Edward's war of reconquest is the A-text of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. The entries for 914-919 are wrongly dated 917-922, perhaps because a scribe misread xiiii as xuii;[65] but this should not discredit the Winchester annals peculiar to this text, which are a worthy continuation of the Alfredian Chronicle, containing "national and contemporary records of the finest and most authentic kind".[66] From 925 onwards all the Chronicle texts become meagre and fragmentary. One part of the very full annal for 917 (s.a. 920, wrongly corrected to 921) is as follows:

& þa eft swiðe raþe æfter þam hie feran eft út mid stæl-herge nihtes,[67]   & comen on un-ge-arwe men, &

genomon ún-lytel, ægþer ge on mannum, ge on ierfe, betweox Byrne-wuda & Ægles-byrig.

The commas are not in the original. The hyphens indicate spacings left by the scribe. A literal translation is as follows:

And then again very soon after that [the unsuccessful siege of Towcester in July 917] they [the Danish army of Northampton and Leicester] fared out again with (*or by means of*) a thieving force by night, and came upon unready men, and took not a few, both of men and of livestock (*or* property) between Bernwood and Aylesbury.

The use of *herge*, instrumental dative of *here* "army" (*hergian* "to harry") as opposed to *hlaþ* "crew, gang" implies a force of not less than 35 men.[68] The marauding force, probably much larger than this, could have used the Roman roads connecting Towcester with Fleet Marston, which was once a posting station on Akeman Street. The most direct route[69] has a straight section adjoining Bernwood, accurately aligned on Towcester, called Dead Man's Lane. This road runs through what is now very empty country, but in the tenth century it was still at least in part a "high street" or main road. The mention of *ungearwe men*, "unyare" (not prepared for attack), suggests that the ravagers, having made good speed *andlang hean stræte*,[70] may have ambushed a hundred moot or fair at Deadman's Corner, where nine ways from all townships of the hundred converge, and where considerable numbers of men and stock could well have assembled, before the moot-stow was transferred to Waddesdon.[71] The site perhaps originated with dealings on the frontier between Wine's Anglian folk around Winslow and the Britons relocated in Bernwood.

A natural outcome of the disaster of 917 would be new military and administrative arrangements so that men would no longer be unprepared. It is suggested that one result of the harrying may have been the strategic location of a large village on Akeman Street, which took the name of Waddesdon. There is no other such village between Aylesbury and Bicester, and settlement on the major roads had previously been avoided. The parish is a 30-hide unit of some 7000 acres with a 40-mile perimeter, which is still perambulated every seven years on Rogation Monday and Tuesday, with ap-

propriate ceremonies. The original settlement seems to have been well to the south of the present hillside village, on the Wade or Waddesbrook (*wot(t)esbroce*, 1004; Wottesbrook, Wottisbrook, Wadebrook, 1625). Wadebrook furlong and Waddycroft furlong (both 1625) are nearby. The Watbridge and the farm and fields named from it are downstream. The *biri(s) dyk* (for *byrig dīc*) of the St Frideswide charter[72] implies a Bury which was surely the home of the eponymous Wott, whose name seems to be unique; perhaps it was originally Weott.[73] The clustering of minor place-names derived from Wott near the Bury ditch is not far from decisive. Further, this southern brookside location is overlooked by an important burial site of the pagan period on Eythrope Farm, at the top of Cat Lane on Coney Hill, near an old oak tree[74] One shield boss found there was of Dr Tania Dickinson's Group 1.2, with a concave cone, a type which fades out after the mid-sixth century; another was of her Group 3, with a convex cone, a type which was just coming in from Kent under Merovingian influence.[75] If these were found together (the County Museum accession register is not quite clear on this) a date of deposition soon after 571 would be strongly indicated. The use of silver rivets may point to a founder's grave, overlooking his primary settlement. However, the name Waddesdon itself (Wott's hill) could always have referred to the great hill on whose levelled summit Waddesdon Manor now stands.

A Waddesdon "hundred tree" was by the Bury ditch on the Winchendon boundary, and thus near the old site. In a Middle English text of the charter "on hundrythe treow(e)" is corrupted to "to under the trowe" altering the sense but preserving the speech-rhythm; thus there is good evidence of oral transmission between the eleventh and fourteenth centuries. If this was the hundredal centre, it may not have lasted long; soon after 1007 the hundreds were grouped into threes, and Ashendon became the centre of a triple hundred, which survived into the present century as a petty sessional division. When the hundred tree lost its significance as such, it remained a traditional bound; as such it has been replaced from time to time by a tree marked with a cross which has been renewed during the septennial processions. Defence against the Danes was only one of the factors that contributed to the development of compact, manorialized villages during the

ninth and tenth centuries, but it was a major reason for the general imposition of a seignorial super-structure facilitating that process, which however could only have free play where geography permitted and where conditions favoured it. The parish of Waddesdon could never have been cultivated from a single closely clustered village where the farmers lived, and free Englishmen as well as most Welshmen preferred to live on their own farms. Many outlying habitations survived or were revived.

Beachendon, Cranwell, Eythrope, Warmstone and Collett (Colwick) all became subordinate manors, still represented by single farms. The self-explanatory Westcott has become a separate civil parish, as has Woodham (a *hamm*, not a *hām*) once part of the royal forest of Bernwood, which was relinquished and dismembered by the Crown in 1623[76] after almost one thousand years.

APPENDIX

Wotton Underwood: Some Afterthoughts

In 845 King Berhtwulf of Mercia granted[77] to his thegn Forthred nine hides of land *in wudotune*, Wotton Underwood (the *wudu* "wood" being Bernwood)

in ece erfe him to hiobbanne & to siollanne ðaem ðe hit wille mið eaðmodre hernisse him to ge-eornigan, ofer his daeg

which in an earlier paper[78] was rendered as

in everlasting inheritance for him to hold and to grant to him who is willing to request it from him with humble service, after his day.

It seems justifiable to amend this translation as follows:

in everlasting inheritance for him to possess and to grant after his day (= on his death) to him who is willing to (*or* who shall) hold it from him with obedient (*or* friendly) service.

To hiobbanne is a dialectal form of *to habbanne* "to possess, hold as property", the sense II(2) (a) of *habban* in the supplement to the great Bosworth-Toller dictionary. *Siollanne* is from *sellan*, probably in sense II "to give what one is bound to give". It would appear that the verb *ge-eornigan* is better taken not as *geornian* "request" but as a variant form of *ge-earnian* (-*igan* is found in King Alfred's Boethius[79]). This is more or less synonymous with *earnian*, usually "earn, labour for"; but in 1930 the

youthful Dorothy Whitelock suggested[80] that "the word when used in connection with land sometimes refers to sub-tenure, and means 'to hold under someone else', possibly only when services were rendered in return for the land". This would suit the known contexts in wills[81], and it provides an acceptable meaning for *earningland* "land for which service was rendered" rather than Bosworth's "land earned or made freehold". In 1960 the editor of Clark Hall's dictionary admitted this sense with a query, and in 1972 the editor of Bosworth-Toller, who was usually more cautious, reported Professor Whitelock's interpretation and included a critical quotation "þat land, þat Sewine haueð to earninge,[82] referring to land which Sæwine held from Thurstan in return for service, but which was not to be granted to him; in fact Thurstan left it not to him but to the village church ("þat schal into tunkirke") though one wonders whether Sæwine was perhaps the parish priest, rendering spiritual service (cf. the pledge given to Mantat the Anchorite, recited in his will,[83] with which this whole discussion originated).

At Wotton Underwood, on this interpretation, the service was to be rendered during Forthred's life, and the land thus "earned" from him was to be conveyed as freehold after his death. This would not be automatic, and in any event required the king's consent, witnessed by the Witan. Normally a *landboc* empowered the grantee to leave the land to

whom he would, but evidently Forthred had not asked for this. His charter embodies a promise, if not a contract, that the estate should be surrendered to his sub-tenant(s), subject to faithful service. It is probably significant that the two hides *ut bi geht* "out along (the) Yeat", apparently mentioned as an afterthought, became a separate manor, Fieldham contrasted with Woodham.

The Mercian notables, especially the bishops, made themselves protectors of Forthred's laudable undertaking. His will is not extant, and given the charter it could well have been purely oral; the Anglo-Saxon will was in principle a formal declaration before witnesses, the written record (if any) being simply evidential, as with other jural acts. Whether the charter itself was the grant or only evidentiary documentation of the grant is not certain, and this lawyer's question may not have occured to the parties. After the first four words the scribe changed from Latin to archaic Mercian, using the first person (except for one slip) and the present tense; he was recording what was actually being said and done with due formality by the king and his counsellors in order first to create and transfer this bookland and then to strengthen and confirm the grant by ritual acts, placing it under the protection of Christ and a local saint - not named,

but the use of the relics of St Edith of Aylesbury or of her niece St Osyth[34] would seem appropriate. Perhaps the word in line 6 of the charter which the contemporary transcriber could not read was *reliquia*.

Ēaðmōd has different senses; on the one hand, it came to mean "humble, obedient" or at least "respectful"; on the other, it could mean "gracious, friendly, gentle", so that one could even speak of God's *ēaþmōdnes* towards the world, a semantic link being the humility and mildheartedness of Christ. (*Ofermōd* "proud" is the antonym). *Hernisse* (for *hȳrnisse*) is obedience or subjection, from *hȳran* "hear, obey", but it came to be used more generally for service in a broad sense (*ministerium*) and also concretely for something rendered as an act of obedience. In Matthew 17:24 *tributum vel censum* is *gæfle oððe hernisse*; in this context the Temple poll-tax is *gafol*, and *hernisse* some other toll or custom. In so far as Forthred took the king's place as lord of Wotton, some services previously due to the king would thereafter come to him, though some were still rendered through him to the king at Brill, the *caput* of Bernwood. Wotton Underwood ceased to be part of the royal forest, but remained within its purlieus.

REFERENCES

1 G.R.J. Jones, "The Role of the Reeve as a factor favouring continuity" in H.P.R. Finberg ed., *The Agrarian History of England and Wales* I. ii (1972) at p. 376

2 P.H. Sawyer ed., *Medieval Settlement; Continuity and Change* (1976) p.7

3 G.R.J. Jones in *Agr. Hist. E. and W.*, I. ii, especially pp. 301, 380; *Med. Settlement* 15ff. K. R. Dark, *Civitas to Kingdom* (1993) 148-149 stresses that there is no textual evidence for British multiple estates earlier than the ninth century, but he admits that some archaic features of the Welsh laws could go back to the sixth. More work is needed on the Welsh and Breton law-texts. In any event, renders in kind would be natural enough in the absence of a monetary market economy

4 The governing council consisted of twelve *probi homines: Rot. Lit. Claus.*, i. 8, 189; Assize R. 55 m.23, 62 m.5. The borough, which included Boarstall, is last mentioned in 1316: *Feudal Aids* i. 114

5 T. Wright (ed. R.P.Wülcker), *Anglo-Saxon and Old English Vocabularies* (1884) 205, 36

6 H.E. Salter ed., *The Boarstall Cartulary* (1930) no. 548: cf. no. 204

7 *Boarstall Cartulary*, no. 605, at p. 195. The 1298 perambulation began at Stonyford: no. 575, p. 181

8 *Boarstall Cartulary*, nos. 363,365

9 *Boarstall Cartulary*, no. 562; ,*Cal. Pat. 1266-72*, p. 15 (Pat. 51 Hen. III m. 33, no. 101); *Vict. C. Hist. Bucks* (1927) iv. 11

10 *V.C.H. Bucks* (1927) iv. 163-4; *Recs. Bucks* (1863) ii, 151-5

11 *Boarstall Cartulary*, nos. 560, 567, 605, 609

12 *V.C.H. Bucks* iv. 11 n. 34; White Kennett, *Parochial Antiquities* (1818 edn.) i. 70-2

13 Pat. 8 James I pt. lix, no. 134

14 Trans. *V.C.H. Bucks* (1908) ii. 132 from Exch. Accts. Forest Proc. K.R, bdle 1, no.8

15 P.H. Sawyer, *Anglo-Saxon Charters* (1968) no. 204 (cited as S 204); A.H.J. Baines, "The Boundaries of Wotton Underwood", *Recs. Bucks* (1979) xxi. 141-153

16 *Boarstall Cartulary*, no. 608

17 *Boarstall Cartulary*, no. 609; for the Woburn rent, *Valor Eccl.* iv. 213

18 Cott. MS. Otho B. xi; Appendix to *Baedae Venerabilis Historia Ecclesiastica Anglorum*, ed. A. Wheloc (Cambridge, 1644). A transcript of this lost transcript is said to be at Dublin: C. Plummer, *Two of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicles Parallel* ii (1899) p. xcviii, citing Horst, *Engl. Studien* xxiv. 8, 9

19 Forms in A. Mawer and F.M. Stenton, *The Place-Names of Buckinghamshire* (1925) 132

20 Forms in M. Gelling, *The Place-Names of Oxfordshire*

(1953) i. 198 and Introd. p. xvii

21 Plot adds "mentioned by Bede, Florilegus and Wigornensis" but this seems to be an error as regards Bede

22 White Kennett, *op. cit.* i. 37

23 A.H. Smith, *English Place-Name Elements* (1956) ii. 30

24 A. Mawer and F.M. Stenton, *The Place-Names of Worcestershire* (1927) 210; cf. Burn from Cornish **bren*

25 Gelling, *PN Oxon* i. 241 and Introd. xvi n. 2

26 This identification was accepted by I.A. Richmond and O.G.S. Crawford in their edition of the British section of the Ravenna Cosmography. *Archaeologia* xcii (1949) 1-50, and by *PN Oxon*, but was refuted by A.F. Rivet and C. Smith, *The Place-Names of Roman Britain* (1979) 243-7

27 Rivet and Smith, *loc. cit.*; J. Pokorny, *Indogermanisches Wörterbuch* (1959) 31

28 Rutherford Davis, *Britons and Saxons: the Chiltern Region 400-700* (1982) 155

29 Dillemann, *Archaeologia* cvi (1978) 61-73; Rivet and Smith, *op. cit.* 191, 346

30 E. Ekwall, *Concise Oxf. Dict. of English Place-Names* (4th edn., 1960) 39, 41

31 *Engl. Place-Name Elements* i. 57, 73, 151

32 Skinner, *Etymol. Angl.* favoured *bern* "a grange or repository of corn" for Bicester, but White Kennett called this "a trifling fancy"

33 As suggested by O.J. Padel, *Cornish Place-Name Elements* (1985) 30, s.v. *bre*; confused in Welsh and Breton name-phrases with *bren* (Welsh *bryn*)

34 Padel, *op. cit.*, 128

35 J.E.B. Gover, A. Mawer and F.M. Stenton, *The Place-Names of Wiltshire* (1939) 12-13

36 M. Reed, *The Buckinghamshire Landscape* (1979) 74

37 S 138

38 M. Farley, "Saxon and Medieval Walton, Aylesbury: Excavations 1973-4"; *Recs. Bucks* xx (1976) 153-290, at pp 174-5; more fully, Rutherford Davis, *op. cit.* 62-68

39 J.R. Green, *Short Hist. Engl. People* (ed. A.S. Green, 1911) 12. A late gloss in the E-text makes Cuthwulf Ceawlin's brother; they may well have been brothers-in-arms after 571

40 C. Plummer ed., *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae* (1910) 17. The campaign occured while Maedoc was St David's pupil, c. 575-585

41 W.W. Heist ed., *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae* (1965) 8. Finnian, who attempted to mediate between Britons and Saxons, died soon after St Cadoc, who died *c.* 580

42 See J. Morris, *The Age of Arthur* (1973) 228-9; he concluded that Ceawlin's defeat by Mouric at Tintern Ford occured in the early 580's. It is naturally not mentioned by English chroniclers

43 Gildas, *De Excidio Britonum*, 10. 2

44 F.M. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England* (2nd edn., 1947) 27

45 Æthelweard, *Chronicon*, bk. I c.15, for which the only authority since the MS. was burnt in 1731 is H. Savile's edition (1596) f. 475r. A Frankfurt reprint of 1601 is in Eton College Library. In A. Campbell's edition (1962) 13, *Bedanforda* is emended to *Bedcanforda* to agree with the Chronicle A-text, but Hodgkin (*Hist. Anglo-Saxons*, 3rd edn. (1952) i. 189), following Lethbridge, accepted the reading *Bedanforda*, which is also that of the B-text, written soon after 977. If however the *Biedcanforda* of the E-text is original, it can be related to the neighbouring Biddenham (*Biede(n)ham* 1086), *Biedca* being a pet-form of *Bieda* (so

C.J. Copley, *The Conquest of Wessex in the Sixth Century* (1954) 178). No other alternative to Bedford has been proposed

46 If Walton were from *wēala-tūn*, it would imply that the inhabitants were British when the name arose, but no trisyllabic **Waleton* or the like occurs among the dozen forms earlier than 1250. Derivation from *w(e)ald* would require extensive woodland in the neighbourhood; environmental evidence is against this. This leaves *w(e)all* 'wall, defensive rampart', perhaps no more than a bank

47 An *-ingtun* name in the Vale could hardly have been current in 571. Benson was the site of a major battle in 779, and was a *villa regia* in 887 (S 217). Dorchester ceased to be an episcopal see *c.* 685 and declined into a village

47a Evidence summarised in 'Faces of Castrophe', *Br. Archaeological News*, No. 14 (June 1994) 5

48 *bosco de Fetheléé* in 1198, *Feet of Fines for Oxfordshire 1198-1291*, ed. H.E. Salter (1930); *PN Oxon* i (1958) xviii–xix, 238-9. Here the archaic *feþa* is probably "battle" rather than "host", H.P.R. Finberg, *The Formation of England 550-1042* (1974) 23 suggests that Ceawlin's wrath was excited by an attempted insurrection of the Gewisse

49 *Gesta Regum*, ed. Stubbs, i. 21

50 S 544; see A.H.J. Baines, "The Chetwode-Hillesden Charter of 949", *Recs. Bucks* xxiv (1982) 1-33, at pp. 2, 18

51 Bede, *Hist. Eccl.* iii c.7

52 A.H.J. Baines, "The Winslow Charter of 792 and the Boundaries of Granborough", *Recs. Bucks* xxii (1980) 1-18 at p. 6

53 Morris, *op. cit.*, 299

54 *The Laws of Hywel Dda*, 105

55 *The Latin Text of the Welsh Laws*, 132

56 Exch. Dep. Mixed Co., Trin. 1650 no. 2

57 Brill, though apparently extra-hundredal, was locally in the hundred of Ixhill. The moot-stow was on or near a Romano-British site; *V.C.H. Bucks* ii. 10

58 S 1484 (Princes Risborough); S 1485 (Aylesbury, Wendover)

59 S 106. Ekwall's identification of *wichama* in *ciltinne* is rejected by Dr M. Gelling (pers. comm. 23 August 1993) but this needs further discussion elsewhere

60 S 138; and see ref. 52, at p. 2

61 J. Morris, *Hertfordshire Archaeology* (1968) c.1, corrected an error in dating in which Bede had been misled by Gildas, who however admitted (c. 10, 1) that his linking St Alban with the persecution under Diocletian was conjectural ("ut conicimus")

62 *Vita Offae Secundi* (ed. Wats) 983

63 Bede, *Hist. Eccl.* i, c.7

64 A.H.J. Baines, "The Danish Wars and the Establishment of the Borough and County of Buckingham", *Recs. Bucks* xxvi (1984) 11-27, at p. 21. For the relevant text of the Burghal Hidage, see D. Hill, *Medieval Archaeology* xiii (1969) 84-92

65 C. Plummer, *Two of the Saxon Chronicles Parallel*, ii. 116. The dates were emended by Florence of Worcester

66 Plummer, *op. cit.*, Introd. p. cv

67 *nihtes* "by night", an adverb like German *nachts*, is found in the Chronicle from 876 to 1101

68 Laws of Ine (688-726) c. 13.1 (trans. *Engl. Hist. Docs.* I, no. 32, at p. 366); adopted by Alfred the Great as part of his code, and widely circulated during the tenth and eleventh centuries

69 See ref. 52, at p. 12. A gravel road such as this would survive

only through almost continuous use: O. Rackham, *Hist. of the Countryside* (1986) 257

70 Cited from an unpublished tenth-century survey of Winslow with Granborough and Little Horwood, which has survived through a seventeenth-century transcript

71 See ref. 52, at p. 10

72 S 909, granted on 7 December 1004, after the burning of the Priory Church when the Danes of Oxford were massacred in 1002. See A.H.J. Baines, "The Boundaries of Over Winchendon", *Recs. Bucks* **xix** (1972) 169-173

73 cf. O.S. Anderson (Arngart), *The English Hundred-names* (1936) iii.4

74 C.O. Moreton, *Hist. of Waddesdon and Over Winchendon* (1929) 33; Rutherford Davis, *op. cit.* 142. The site is variously referred to as Winchendon II, Upper Winchendon or Eythrop, but it is clearly within the bounds of Waddesdon

75 T. Dickinson and H. Harke, "Early Anglo-Saxon Shields", *Archaeologia* **cx** (1992) 74-5

76 *V.C.H. Bucks* (1908) **ii** 137

77 S 204

78 A.H.J. Baines, "The Boundaries of Wotton Underwood", *Recs. Bucks* **xxi** (1979) 141-153, at p. 143

79 King Alfred's Anglo-Saxon version of *Boethius de Consolatione Philosophiae*, ed. S. Fox (1864) 40

80 *Anglo-Saxon Wills*, ed. D. Whitelock (1930) 178

81 Including S 1367, S 1458, S 1519

82 S 1531; *A.-S. Wills*, 80

83 S 1523; *A.-S. Wills*, 66. Mantat calls himself "God's exile" (*godes wræcca*); his name looks continental-Germanic

84 Keith Bailey (*Recs. Bucks* **xxxi** (1989) 43) accepts that St Osyth's bones were enshrined at Aylesbury minster soon after her martyrdom at Chich. Dr R.P. Hagerty (*Recs. Bucks* **xxix** (1987) 129) considers that their temporary translation to Aylesbury was not before *c.* 884. They agree, as against Hohler (*Recs. Bucks* **xviii** (1966) 68) that there was only one St Osyth; saints are not to be replicated beyond necessity. St Edith's body, at least, was at Aylesbury all the time, but her cultus was overshadowed by that of her niece. A feast on 3rd June would agree well with the suggested date of the witenagemot in 845