

Wheathampstead 1060 AD

Bounds: entirely south of the River Lea

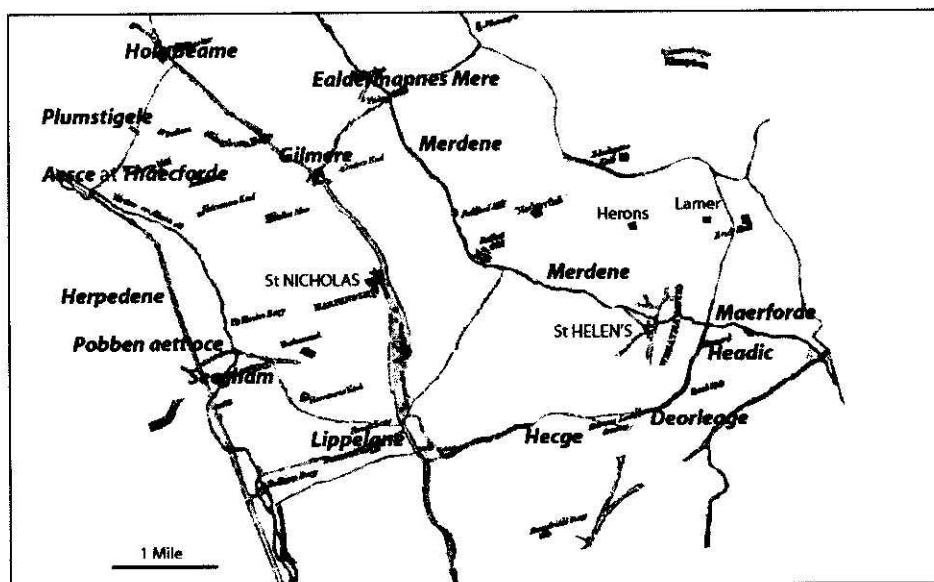
Victor S. White

Victor White here offers a fresh reading of the earliest document held at HALS, the 1060 chirograph of Edward I concerning his gift of the manor at Hwaethamstede to St Peter's Westminster. Comparing this to information about the same manor in Domesday 1086 raises some interesting questions about changes in the manorial, later the parish, boundary. This unique Anglo Saxon charter was last discussed in Hertfordshire Past, issue 4, Spring, 1978 in an article by Dr Ian Freeman.

The Anglo-Saxon words 'herpedene' and 'merdene' at face value take on the meanings of 'military road' and 'boundary valley' respectively. An interpretation of the bounds of the land in Wheathampstead granted to St Peter's Westminster in 1060 using 'herpedene' as an appropriate stretch of Watling Street and 'merdene' as a stretch of the River Lea is offered for consideration. Thus, the bounds of the land set down in 1060 become relevant to an area south of the River Lea within what was, or what became, the parish of Wheathampstead and did not comprise what became the whole parish.

1060 AD Wheathampstead / Westminster Land Transfer

The Bounds interpreted as being wholly south of the River Lea.



This figure was produced using the Dury and Andrew's Map of Hertfordshire, circa 1776.

If the Plumpath was the section of the R211 that lead to Plummers (R211, the Friars Wash on Watling Street/Ermine Street link-road) i.e., to the south of the accepted boundary, then the hollow tree was a waypoint where the R211 met the R213 north of Shire Mere near Kinsbourne Green.

The Domesday Book of 1086 records a priest at Wheathampstead. The entries place the whole 10 hides at Wheathampstead for both 1065 and 1086 in the ownership of St Peter's, Westminster. This reflects the 10 hides gifted in 1060. By 1217 the parish of Wheathampstead in the see of Lincoln contained both the Rectory Manor, that provided support to the Parish Church of St Helen's, and Wheathampstead Manor, each holding land both north and south of the River Lea; and certainly by 1225, Kinsbourne Manor.¹ A dispute between the Bishop of Lincoln and the Abbot of Westminster about their respective rights is documented.² A sense that the river was a boundary once having different landlords on opposite banks comes from these disputes on jurisdiction that continued into subsequent centuries.

Hegaestanestone

An immediate awkwardness with the proposals herein is how to accommodate the data held in Domesday. If Wheathampstead Manor lands were south of the Lea in Domesday, where was the balance of lands, that in time completed what became the parish of Wheathampstead, then listed? A glance northwards across the Lea to neighbouring Kimpton identifies a partition under Kimpton into one section named *Kamintone* and three sections under *Hegaestanestone* (Hexton). The *hegaestanestone* entries attract attention. Support for an evolving premise was found among the pages of the *Victoria County History*. The VCH observed that subsequent documentation seems to have lost sight of some holdings counted at *Hegaestanestone* in Domesday.

At the time of the Domesday Survey ... At a subsequent date there seem to have been only two manors in Hexton, namely one held in demesne by the abbey, and the other the manor of the rectory, and it appears probable that the other holdings either were not manors or became merged in the abbey manor.³

Domesday Book. Entry for Kimpton, half hundred of Hitchen⁴

Tenant in Chief 1086 || Saxon Holder 1065

S = could sell without the Lord's leave; u.t. = under tenant; a = averagium, carrying service.

A. Bishop of Bayeux, u.t. Ralf, 2 Frenchmen. || Alveva, Earl Morcar's mother S

B. The King, u.t. the King's socman. || Monastery of St Albans socman S

C. Geof. de Bech, u.t. Ralf. || Alric mother of Asgar, u.t. a, soc in Hitchen, u.t. S sine soca.

D. Ab. St Albans Demesne (4 hide), u.t. G. de Bech ½ h.; Englishman 3. || Church of St Alban

(Modern name)	Kimpton	Hexton		
(Domesday name)	<i>Kamintone</i>	<i>Hegaestanestone</i>		
	A	B	C	D
Mill value shillings	8	-	3½	3½ (for 2 mills)
Woods for pigs	800	-	-	-
Meadow car.	¾	-	½ stock pasture.	2 stock pasture.
1 meadow carucate is pasture for a team of 8 oxen thus ¾ is sufficient for 6 oxen.				
Hides	4	¼	1	8¾
Team Lands	10	½	1½	12
£ Value 1065	15	⅙	2	16
Quando Receptum	12	⅙	½	12
1086	12	⅙	1½	17½
Plough Teams	(+n = could be n more teams)			
demesne mens'	2 (+1) 7	½ -	½ -	4 (+1) 3(+4)
Villein bordar cottar serf	12 2 3 5	1 - -	- 2 2 -	13 3 3 4

Note: Entry A is recorded as developing into the manors of Hockinghanger, Parkbury and Leggatts (VCH).

Domesday values, Lay Subsidy 1307 and 1334^s

	1065	Q.R.	1086	1307 names		1334 L.S.
Flamstead	240s	180s	220s	93s-7½d	52	165s-8½d
Wheathampstead	600s	320s	320s	104s-0½d	74	Wh+T'st
Titburst	180s	72s	72s	18s-10½d	11	151s-0d
Kimpton	300s	240s	240s	83s-8¼d	43	94s-8¼d
Hexton	363s-4d	251s-6d	381s-8d	38s-6d	23	69s-3¾d
Redbourn	410s	362s	655s-4d	65s-9d	62	110s-8d
St Paul's Walden	370s	370s	410s	59s-8¾d	40	77s-5¾d

It may be that two, or perhaps all three, of the entries under *Hagaestanestone* were in that part of Wheathampstead parish north of the Lea encompassed by the boundary hedge and the River Lea

Against the trend of place name documentation, 'Cam mim tone' – 'River Mim settlement' – is offered for consideration as Kamintone (Kimpton), where the Mimram oozes from the ground. In a similar vein Hegaestanestone may represent 'Hedge Road settlement', Stanes – Stones being representative of a Roman road, as elsewhere. That is, the area delimited by approximately the R211, the 'Saxon Hedge of Wheathampstead' and a Roman road cutting through into Wheathampstead on route to Verulamium, i.e. the northern and eastern boundaries proposed for Wheathampstead when it contained Bride Hall (Viatores R21a), or without Bride Hall (a little west of Viatores R221).⁶ The ending 'ton' originally meant 'fence or hedge' and became enclosure, then a settlement.⁷

Modern Hexton sits astride the Icknield Way in a northern finger of Hertfordshire. It is separated from Kimpton by the parishes of Lilley, Offley and King's Walden; all three are named and separately assessed in Domesday. Under the entry for Hexton, the VCH identifies: 'In 1905 there were 903½ acres of arable land, 301½ permanent grass, and 108½ woodland'. For Kimpton it states that 'Nearly the whole of the parish is given up to agriculture, 2,506 acres being under the plough; 682 acres are permanent grass, and some 168 acres are woodland'. Against this background, the values in Domesday imply that not all the 1086 agricultural acreage evolved to lie within the modern confines of Hexton.

William the Conqueror enabled his half brother Odo to become Bishop of Bayeux. In 1067 Odo was made Earl of Kent. In 1082 he was imprisoned, his lands in England reverted to the crown and he was stripped of his earldom, though he remained the Bishop of Bayeux. The Domesday entry for Kimpton was taken from a roll that had not caught up with the recent reversions of Odo's properties to the crown.

Over and above customary dues, the agricultural community was adversely affected in the years approaching the Domesday assessment of 1086.

1082. This year the king seized Bishop Odo; and this year also was a great famine ...

1083 ... And in the same year also, after mid-winter, the king ordained a large and heavy contribution over all England; that was, upon each hide of land, two and seventy pence.⁸

There are many reasons why the vill to vill ratio of the 1307 Lay Subsidy tax should not be in a similar proportion to the ratio of valuations in Domesday. Setting aside the detail of such arguments, Hexton stands out as being particularly lowly placed in 1307 both in tax due and head count based upon the expectation generated from Quando Receptum (the amount paid) in Domesday. The values are expressed in shillings and not pounds and shillings for ease of visual comparison.

The modern parish straddles the River Lea, a one-time boundary of Danelaw. It may be that an administrative area that became the parish of Wheathampstead did encompass both banks of the Lea prior to being divided by the Danelaw border, at a subsequent date the separated parts being re-united to form approximately its previous acreage, though not necessarily reverting to the possession of the heirs of former holders of the subsets of land.

As an aside, Wulfwig was bishop of Dorchester-on-Thames before the conquest and he died a year after it. His successor was Remigius, a Norman. The see was moved to Lincoln c.1072.

It is outside the scope of this present interpretation to examine how the strings of land ownership unravelled to become embraced in the historic parishes of Hexham, Lilley, Offley, King's Walden, Kimpton, Wheathampstead, Redbourn and Flamstead. However, it may be sufficient to show a degree of instability arising between the Domesday text and the constituent parts of historic parish lands. This raises the possibility that there may be some reason to support the premise that the bounds of the land set down in 1060 were relevant to an area south of the River Lea within what was, or what became, the parish of Wheathampstead, though they did not comprise what became the whole parish. Further alternative interpretations of the bounds are of course, invited.

Land Boundary: Wheathampstead/Westminster Land Transfer of 1060 AD

15)

- i) This syndon tha land gemaeru into hwaetha[m-damage]stede. fram maerforde(i)
i) These are the land boundaries of Hwaetha[m]stede. From Maerforde (i)

16a)

16b)

16c)

- ii) to thaere headic . & fram thaere hea[d-damage]ic aefter daene into deorleage . fram deorleage[sic, l^ge] & langhecge ther[bar on top vertical of 'thorn' b = th, the or ther] hit [preferred to - thaet hit] cymth to lippelane . fram lippelane to sec[g-damage]ham . & fram (ii)

- ii) to the *Headic*, & from the *Hea[d]ic* along the vale [dene = narrow wooded valley OED – or path, 'In the Northern Gospels *paeb* is an alternative gloss with dene.' Bosworth-Toller A-S.D.] into *Deorleage*, from *Deorle[a]ge* all along the hedge [or – from *Deorle[a]ge* and Long Hedge (or High Hedge)] whither it cometh to *Lippelane*, from *Lippelane* to *Secg[h]am*, & from (ii)

17a)

17b)

17c)

iii) secgham to pobbenaettoce . & fram bobbenaettoce to herpedene . fram herpedene to tham aesce to thaecforde . fram tham aesce to plum[sti - damage]gele . fra[damage]m (iii)
iii) *Secgham* to *Pobben-aett-oce*, & from *B*[sic, b not p]*obben-aett-oce* to *Herpedene*, from *Herpedene* to the Ash tree at *thaecforde*, from the Ashe tree to *Plum[sti]gele*, from (iii)

18a)

18b)

18c)

iv) plumstigele to tham[thani?, prefer bad m] hole beame . fra[line over a] than hole beame to gilmore . fram gilmore to thaes ealdermannes mere . fram thaes ealdermannes mere into merdene [damage] (iv)

iv) *Plumstigele* to the *hole beame*, from the *hole beame* to *Gilmore*, from *Gilmore* to the *Ealdermannes Mere*, from the *Ealdermannes Mere* into *Merdene* (iv)

19a)

v) & swa [damage, from Ian Freeman – into ma]erforde. (v)

v) & so into [*Ma*]erforde. (v)

Bounds: Entirely South of the Lea: Indented, co-incident with Wheathampstead Parish

Common to either interpretation.

hwaetha[m]stede = Wheathampstead; *maerforde* = the boundary ford, Marford; *headic* = high dyke, now called 'Devil's Dyke'; *daene* = vale or path; *deorleage* (Deor = deer, or a general name for animal) = where Dyke Lane meets the Saxon Hedge at the edge of Nomansland Common; *deorleage[sic, l^ge]* & *langhecge* = from Deorle[a]ge all along the hedge, or – from Deorle[a]ge and Long Hedge (or High Hedge).

Anglo-Saxon Dictionary. Bos.T. = Bosworth-Toller (1898). Hall = John R. Clark-Hall (2nd edn. 1916).

Mills = A.D. Mills, *Dictionary of English Place Names*, OUP (2nd edn. 1998).

lippelane – Uncertain. Possibly a 'section of a road' – or 'Tanner's Lane' – or 'Lip (as in edge) Lane'.

e.g. – The 'Saxon Hedge' crossing the Harpenden/St Albans Road, at a point close to Beesonend Lane.

laeppa = lappet, piece, section, lobe, portion, district (Hall): *lanu* = a lane, a street (Hall).

lippa = lip as in mouth, Old English; edge (OED): *hliep* = deer leep, Old English (Mills).

lypenwyrhta = basket maker, tanner (Hall): *lypen-wyrhta* = A tanner, currier: (Bos.T.).

basket = *cawl m*, *cype f*, *leap m* – for keeping or catching fish. [Old English] (Hall).

currier = one whose trade is dressing and colouring leather after it has been tanned (OED).

lippelane – *W. & Harp.1* candidate is Redbourn Lane, [becoming Harpenden Lane near Redbourn], where the hedge met the lane near the demolished railway bridge, just east of the Ver.

secgham – In the neighbourhood of Redbourn–Harpenden Lane/Old Railway Line where the Old Hedge met the then position of the meandering Ver. One interpretation is the Sedge Stream, the Reed Bourne i.e. the Ver; alternatively a sedgy place full of reeds. *secghwaet* = sedgy, full of sedge or reeds (Bos. T.). *secg-hwaet*; adj. = vigorous or bold in using the sword [e.g. Beowulf] (Bos. T.). If *Secgh cam* or *ram* then Sedge Stream; *cam* = small river. The River Mimram rises over the hill in the adjacent Parish of Kimpton (*Kaminstone* of Domesday). *Cam* and *Mimram* are both river name survivals from a pre-Saxon world. The word *secgham* could be wholly of a pre-Saxon origin as the Old Celtic *seska* = sedge (Irish *scisg*, Welsh *hesg*) (OED -sedge). If so, the pre-Saxon name would have made the correct sense to Saxon ears.

secgham – The point on Watling Street called ‘Segam’ Ash tree [near Friars Wash] as recorded in the seventeenth century perambulation of Harpenden Parish, see *W. & Harp. I.*

pobben-aett-oce – Uncertain. ‘Plank-bridge by the oak’ is the preferred interpretation to thus provide, along with the ford after ‘Herpedene’, for transit of the River Ver in both directions within the defined bounds. *Pompren* [f] = footbridge or plankbridge [Welsh, modern?]. The area surrounding St Albans is a candidate for a Celtic administration continuing into the post-Roman era with some expectation of place name survival in legal documents of the new East Saxon masters prior to the Mercian overlords.

bobben = to knock against, to knock up and down [Middle E.] (OED). *pop(p)* = O.Eng. pebble (Mills).

pobben-aett-oce – Uncertain. At a point north of Annables between Friars Wash and the Luton / Harpenden Road, the A6, *W. & Harp. I.*

herpedene – The military road – Watling Street.

herpedene – the valley of the highway. The Luton/Harpenden Road, A6. The present boundary meets the A6 at OS 099169, *W. & Harp. I.*

aesce to thaecford – Perhaps ‘the ford’, assume a ford, possibly called Thaecford, at Friars Wash on the River Ver. *Thaec* = thatch (Hall). It appears to coincide with the point on Watling Street called ‘Segam’ Ash tree as recorded in the 17th century perambulation of Harpenden Parish, see *W. & Harp. I.*, i.e. same point as *Secgham* in ‘coincident bounds’.

aesce to thaecford – ash tree at *thaecforde*. ‘The ash at the ford had become ‘Ashford Bridge’ by the seventeenth century, ‘Ashbridge’ on Dury and Andrews large-scale county map of 1776, where it is shown as the bridge across the Lea, just south of East Hyde, 128172.’ *W. & Harp. I.*

plumstigele – Plum Path – or Plum Stile – or weak possibility, Ploughman’s Path/Stile. If a stile then at a point north of Annables between Friars Wash and that part of the R213, co-incident with the Luton / Harpenden Road, the A6,

plume = plumtree [Old English]: *stig* = A path, footpath, narrow way (*Bos. T.*). The term became used for a stile (O.E. *stigel*) – a narrow path through a wall or hedge that a man, but not his animals, could pass through or over. *plovmand* = ploughman (Modern Danish Dictionary).

The Plumpath could have been the section of the R211 going to Plummers from Friars Wash.

plumstigele – ‘the stile, or possibly the steep ascent, marked by plumtrees’. Uphill, north-east of the Lea, to a corner of the parish, a little to the south of Plummers Farm, *W. & Harp. I.*

hole beame – The hollow tree. At the intersection of the parish boundary with Flamstead Parish and Bedfordshire on the Harpenden/Luton Road. If the Plumpath was the section of the R211 that lead to Plummers [R211, the Friars Wash on Watling St/Ermine St link-road] i.e. to the south of the accepted boundary, then the hollow tree was a way point where the R211 met the R213 north of Shire Mere near Kinsbourne Green. *hole* = as noun O. Eng. hole or hollow, as adjective deep or hollow; *beame* = O. Eng. tree trunk or timber beam (Mills).

hole beame – the hollow tree. On the Saxon Hedge Line north of Holcroft Spring – Ian Freeman.

gilmere – Co-incident with modern day Shire Mere, possibly gil[d] stone, a tax point; possibly the stone at the road junction. *gelaete* = junction of road(s) [Old Norse *laete*]: *ge-laete, es*; pl. – *laetu*; n. *Twegra wega gelaetu* meetings of two ways, (Bos.T.): *ge-lad, es*; n. = a way, path, road, course (Bos.T.).

gilmere – the yellow pool? On the Saxon Hedge at the N.E corner of Gustard Wood – Ian Freeman, 'The Boundary Hedge of Saxon Wheathampstead,' p.14, *Hertfordshire Past*, No. 4 Spring 1978. Near Blackmore End OS 171166 and 174164, *W. & Harp.1.*

ealdermannes mere – Earl's boundary (stone) – or Earl's pond, in the neighbourhood of Hyde Mill, the Herts/Beds boundary on the Lea. Alternatively where the R211 crosses the Lea downstream of Hyde Mill. *Gemaere, maere, mere, mear ...* = a boundary, also an object indicating a boundary; a landmark. (OED).

ealdermannes mere – ealderman's pool. Near Stocking Spring, nearby map reference 189166 is the conjunction of 3 separate hundreds – Ian Freeman. Near Harepark Spring where the parishes of Wheathampstead, Sandridge, Kimpton and Ayot meet, OS 191165, *W. & Harp.1.*

merdene – The boundary valley – the R. Lea. *mearc-denu* = a valley which serves as a boundary (Bos. T.).

merdene – the boundary valley. Difficult to reconstruct, possibly joins line of R221 or foot-paths to Marford, *W. & Harp.1.*

Acknowledgements

The line by line reproduction of the bounds contained within the 1060 AD chirograph of the Wheathampstead/Westminster Land Transfer is reproduced by courtesy of HALS.

Notes and References

1. *Victoria County History*, vol. 2 (1908), pp. 294-314.
2. *Wheathampstead and Harpenden*, 1, (1973) WEA, p. 35.
3. *Victoria County History*, vol. 3, pp. 352-354.
4. Abstracted from: F. H. Baring, *Domesday Tables for the County of Hertford*, (1961) Herts. Local History Council.
5. Data abstracted from: *Hertfordshire Lay Subsidy Rolls: 1307 and 1334*, edited by Janice Brooker and Susan Flood, vol.14, Hertfordshire Record Society Publications, ISBN 0952377934.
6. *Wheathampstead and Harpenden*, 1, (1973) WEA, pp. 15-18.
7. *Ibid.* p. 24.
8. *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, J. Ingram (translator) 1823.

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