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The Badby and Newnham (Northamptonshire) charters

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ABBREVIATIONS OF COUNTIES AND EPNS COUNTY SURVEYS

Co	Cornwall
Ha	Hampshire
He	Herefordshire
K	Kent
La	Lancashire
Nb	Northumberland
Sf	Suffolk
So	Somerset
Wt	Isle of Wight
CPNE	<i>Cornish Place-Name Elements.</i>
EPNE	<i>English Place-Name Elements, Parts 1 and 2.</i>
PN BdHu	<i>The Place-Names of Bedfordshire and Huntingdonshire.</i>
PN Brk	<i>The Place-Names of Berkshire, Parts 1, 2 and 3.</i>
PN Bu	<i>The Place-Names of Buckinghamshire.</i>
PN Ca	<i>The Place-Names of Cambridgeshire and the Isle of Ely.</i>
PN Ch	<i>The Place-Names of Cheshire, Parts 1–5.</i>
PN Cu	<i>The Place-Names of Cumberland, Parts 1, 2 and 3.</i>
PN D	<i>The Place-Names of Devon, Parts 1 and 2.</i>
PN Db	<i>The Place-Names of Derbyshire, Parts 1, 2 and 3.</i>
PN Do	<i>The Place-Names of Dorset, Parts 1–4.</i>
PN Du	<i>The Place-Names of County Durham, Part 1.</i>
PN Ess	<i>The Place-Names of Essex.</i>
PN ERY	<i>The Place-Names of the East Riding of Yorkshire and York.</i>
PN Gl	<i>The Place-Names of Gloucestershire, Parts 1–4.</i>
PN Hrt	<i>The Place-Names of Hertfordshire.</i>
PN Le	<i>The Place-Names of Leicestershire, Parts 1–7.</i>
PN Li	<i>The Place-Names of Lincolnshire, Parts 1–7.</i>
PN Mx	<i>The Place-Names of Middlesex (apart from the City of London).</i>
PN Nf	<i>The Place-Names of Norfolk, Parts 1–3.</i>
PN Nt	<i>The Place-Names of Nottinghamshire.</i>
PN NRY	<i>The Place-Names of the North Riding of Yorkshire.</i>
PN Nth	<i>The Place-Names of Northamptonshire.</i>
PN O	<i>The Place-Names of Oxfordshire, Parts 1 and 2.</i>
PN R	<i>The Place-Names of Rutland.</i>
PN Sa	<i>The Place-Names of Shropshire, Parts 1–9.</i>
PN Sr	<i>The Place-Names of Surrey.</i>
PN St	<i>The Place-Names of Staffordshire, Part 1.</i>
PN Sx	<i>The Place-Names of Sussex, Parts 1 and 2.</i>
PN W	<i>The Place-Names of Wiltshire.</i>
PN Wa	<i>The Place-Names of Warwickshire.</i>
PN We	<i>The Place-Names of Westmorland, Parts 1 and 2.</i>
PN Wo	<i>The Place-Names of Worcestershire.</i>
PN WRY	<i>The Place-Names of the West Riding of Yorkshire, Parts 1–8.</i>

THE BADBY AND NEWNHAM (NORTHAMPTONSHIRE) CHARTERS,
A-D. 944 AND 1021-3.

A description of the bounds of the Badby charter (B.C.S. 792; K.C.D. 399; *Facsimilies of ancient charters in the British Museum* 2 (1877) 11) was published by Sir Frank Stenton in *The Place Names of Northamptonshire* (1933), 10-13. This and other Anglo-Saxon charters relating to the neighbourhood have recently been the subject of a study by members of an extra-mural class organised by the Adult Education Department of Leicester University. This work has confirmed Stenton's conclusion that the bounds described in the charter followed the external parish boundaries of a territorial unit consisting of the modern parishes of Badby, Newnham, Dodford and Everdon but has clarified his interpretation on a number of specific points. The bounds begin to the north-west of Badby at the little cloven hill (*lytlan toclofenan beorge*) which Stenton identified as the isolated hill known as Studborough Hill; this however is too far to the west of the present Badby/Staverton parish boundary to be an acceptable identification and the cloven hill is much more likely to be a steep sided re-entrant valley which lies on the parish boundary north-west of Badby at SP 546601. As Stenton says, the felon's slope (*wearge dune*) of the next boundary point must be the hill at the north-west corner of Badby parish known now as Big Hill (and formerly as Warriton Hill); however, the following portion of the boundary description which involves going north along a little dyke at the end of a wood incorporates an error of direction of 90° since in order for the boundary points to articulate in any meaningful way we must replace "north" by "east" here. The wood (*graf*) is still in existence and can be shown by numerous references to it in medieval documents under the name of West Grove to have formed part of the demesne woodland of Daventry manor. The wood is surrounded by a substantial wood bank but from the point at which the wood bank leaves the Badby/Daventry parish boundary to turn northwards at SP 555612 a second, slighter bank 5 m. wide and 50 cm. high can be traced for 70 m. following the line of the parish boundary; this might conceivably be the "little dyke" of the charter. The bounds then run to the eastern side of Fox Hill, when we come to an interpolation in the charter whereby Bishop Ælfric recorded his grant to Ælfwine and Beorhtulf of the *leas* and *hammes* to the north of the little dyke. Stenton regarded this as representing a deflection from the present parish boundary, but if the pattern of error established earlier at Big Hill is accepted and the "north" replaced by "east" then the

statement becomes completely intelligible as the grant to the two people named of the territory of Newnham because it is precisely at this point that the Newnham parish boundary runs up from the south to join that of Daventry. The use of the terms *leas* and *hammes* might represent an attempt to draw a distinction between open, cleared land and more enclosed land around the actual settlement. Then, as described by Stenton, the charter boundary continues along the northern limit of the present parish of Newnham, with a slight deflection northwards to Borough Hill camp (the *ealdan byrg*); the gate or gap (*geat*) referred to at this point is still marked by a causeway across the southern ditch of the hill fort. Thence, after travelling along Mazedale (*mæres dæl*) and Watling Street it makes its way *via* the present A45, the River Nene and the tributary stream known as the Blythe to Everdon bridge. The succeeding charter boundary points are correctly identified in the E.P.N.S. account (east from the bridge along the ditch to the heathen burial; from the burial north along the *wyrtruman* to the end of the hedge (or enclosure, *haga*) by the boundary of the men of Weedon), but a detailed field survey of the narrow tongue of land so described has shown that it is carefully marked on all sides by an earthen bank up to 1 m. high. The boundary then moves to the post on the east side of the clearing (*leah*) i.e. to SP 605567 where the parish boundary turns south again. We take the word *leah* here to mean "clearing"; although the area to the west of the parish boundary at this point is now wooded, ridge and furrow in the woodland indicates that some time in the past it has been under the plough. The boundary now goes southwards to the *stræt*; along the *stræt* to the *furh* which runs south to the great *stræt* at the source of the spring at the Snorscomb boundary. The parish boundary, marked by a very prominent bank 1 m. high with a ditch on its western side 50 cm. deep, leaves the *wyrtruman* to join the Everdon/Farthingstone road (the first *stræt*) at SP 604565; accompanied by a bank and ditch throughout, it follows this road for a short distance and then goes east and south to join the road which runs from Watling Street through Stowe to Preston Capes at SP 607563, presumably following the line of the *furh*. This point represents the south-eastern corner of the territory of Snorscomb as defined by the Tithe Map of 1839; there is no need to suppose with Stenton that "south" is an error for "north". The great *stræt* thus becomes the Stowe/Preston road along which the boundary travels to the ash tree (*æsc*) which of course cannot be identified now but might possibly have stood on the rise at about SP 603560. The charter now takes us from the ash along the street between the two *leas* on the old salt way to the *steorte*. In accordance with this the parish boundary travels along the Stowe/

Preston road between Henwood and Mantles Heath; both these woods are shown as having clearings between them and the road on the early 18th century Eayre Map of Northamptonshire. An estate map shows that by 1758 the zone between Mantles Heath and the road had been planted with trees, but the southern part of the wood was still called "the old Wood". The old salt way was a road which left Watling Street at Astcote Lodge and which ran south of Grimscote and Litchborough to join our great street at SP 593554, just to the west of Mantles Heath. This road is a parish boundary for much of its length and a pair of fields in Farthingstone parish immediately to the north of it at SP 617539 are shown as Great and Little Salt on an estate map of 1836. This salt road ran north of Preston Capes and Charwelton, *via* Priors Marston to Droitwich. As stated by Stenton, the *steorte* is the triangle of land formed by the stream known as King Brook, the Blythe and the road from Preston Capes to Newnham (marked as Oxford Lane on Ordnance Survey maps); this zone is clearly marked as the *Sturts* on a map of Fawsley of 1741. From SP 586553 to its junction with the King Brook the parish boundary is marked by a bank 1 m. high with a ditch on its eastern side 50 cm. deep. From the *Sturts* the charter boundary runs along the dirty brook (the King Brook) to the Blythe; it then travels westwards along the Blythe until a stream (*lacu*) runs out into it above the stone bridge. The stone bridge will have been a predecessor of the bridge carrying Oxford Lane over the Blythe at SP 574564. *Lacu* will be the tributary stream which runs into the Blythe from the north-west at SP 573565. The charter then takes us north along this stream to the *dic*, and then along this *dic* to the way that runs in the valley to Fawsley. Today the stream disappears into the ornamental lake known as Big Waters at SP 569565. On the north-eastern side of Big Waters from SP 568568 a massive bank runs parallel to the present road from Fawsley to Everdon; this will be the *dic* of the charter. The *dic* runs eastward to reach Oxford Lane at SP 573569; here it met a track which ran through a hollow from Everdon to Fawsley. The track is traceable on air photographs and represents the "way that runs in the valley" of the charter. The points just described do not lie on the present parish boundaries and seem to define triangular areas exchanged between the parishes of Fawsley and Everdon. There then follows a sentence in the charter which obviously baffled Stenton: "at Fawsley Bishop Ælfric ordered us to measure to the *ealdan dic*". However, an examination of the field archaeology of this area makes the meaning quite clear, because it is precisely at this point that the *dic* we have been following joins another massive bank running north-south along the Fawsley/Everdon parish boundary. This remarkable earthwork must be the *ealdan dic*

of the charter and can be traced running round practically the whole of the perimeter of Fawsley parish. The charter boundary now goes along this *dic* to the way that runs up to the ridge, along the ridge to the way that runs from Fawsley to Badby for a little distance, then from the apple tree which stands to the west of the way through the clearing to the great hazel thicket. This means that the boundary follows the *ealdan dic* northwards to the point at which Oxford Lane, which runs parallel to it on the east, meets the crest of the steep ridge which marks the southern edge of Newnham parish at SP 575579. It then turns west to follow the crest of this ridge overlooking Newnham; the *dic* accompanies it until it peters out at SP 573580. However, the boundary continues to follow the crest of the ridge to a hollow way which runs north-west/south-east through Badby Wood; this will be "the way that runs from Fawsley to Badby". The charter boundary goes northwards along this hollow way "for a little distance", to SP 567586 in fact, where another hollow track can be faintly seen running south-west towards Hazley Knob, which must be the "great hazel thicket". The charter then takes us from the hazel thicket along the slope (*adun*) to the black rushes, from the rushes to the little hedge at the way which runs from Badby to Charwelton, along the way to the stream that runs to Fawsley at the ford and then westwards along the stream to the way which runs to Staverton along the south of the old fortress at Badby. The precise location of the black rushes cannot be determined now but the way from Badby to Charwelton is represented by a hollow way running from Badby village through Badby Wood in the direction of Church Charwelton, the predecessor of the present village of Charwelton on the A361. The parish boundary follows this track from the southern boundary of Badby Wood at SP 559579 to a ford in the stream running to Fawsley at SP 558575. The charter boundary then turns west to follow this stream to a point at SP 540 582 south of the hill fort on Arbury Hill; the initial portion of this stretch does not quite coincide with the present Fawsley/Badby parish boundary, which has been displaced a little to the north towards Down Barn. The "way to Staverton" is represented by a stretch of ground free of ridge and furrow which runs along the parish boundary on the Catesby side; it is marked as a track on the Badby Enclosure Map of 1779. The text of the charter now tells us to go west along this way till alongside the great ditch to the west of the fortress; then along this ditch north-westward to the cloven hill to the north-west of Badby. Following the pattern of error established earlier "west" should be replaced by "north" and "north-westward" by "north-eastward" thus making the charter and parish boundaries coincide exactly to bring us back to the point from which we started.

The Newnham charter of 1021-23 (K.C.D. 736) was considered by Sir Frank Stenton in the same volume (*Place Names of Northamptonshire* 26). In general we agree with him that the first portion of this charter is practically impossible to follow owing to later changes in the boundary between Badby and Newnham.

From the point at which this boundary strikes the parish boundary of Daventry at SP 572611 we are also in agreement with his analysis except that the "port street" mentioned towards the end of the charter may not be the present A45 Weedon to Coventry road but rather the road which leaves this main road at SP 605602 to run *via* Newnham and Staverton ultimately to Warwick; it is marked as *Poart Way* on the pre-enclosure map of Newnham of 1764. This road, joining Northampton and Warwick, may actually have been of greater importance than the present main road.

A document not considered by Stenton in the *Place Names of Northamptonshire* is a perambulation of parishes of Badby, Newnham and Dodford, undated and attached to no charter, which was preserved in the archives of the Abbey of Evesham (K.C.D. 1356). This circuit starts from the west of *Baddan Byrig* due north to the post; then from the post to the felon's slope between the two hills. The general sense of the document means that *Baddan Byrig* denotes the hill fort on Arbury Hill; the felon's slope will be the south-west corner of Staverton Wood on Big Hill, as in the Badby charter of 944 AD. This set of bounds then proceeds east along the ditch to the dirty spring; from the spring to Fox Hill and then northwards on the old deer track to the spring, from the second spring to the old hart's wallowing place (*ealde heortsole*), from the wallowing place to the hill, from the hill to the wood and from the wood to the willow tree spring. In general these boundary points agree remarkably well with those of the charters of 944 and 1021-3 except that an error of direction means that "northwards" must be replaced by "eastwards" in this section of the circuit and the wood (*graf*) is represented by a clearing (*leah*) and a furrow in the other two documents. Continuing its similarity with the charter of 944, the circuit proceeds from the spring to the *stodfald* (i.e. the hill fort on Borough Hill), from the *stodfald* to the quarry (*stangedelf*; the same point is *mær pytt* in the 944 charter), thence to the boundary spring, and along the boundary valley (*mæres dene*) to Watling Street; it then follows Watling Street to the ridge way (*ricwege*; the A45) and proceeds along this until it reaches the post opposite Dodford (the little hill where the post stood in 944), where it turns to run to the brook. The

boundary then follows the brook (the River Nene) until it comes level with Newnham when it turns to run along open land (*slædes*) to the dyke at the wood. This means that the boundary follows the present parish boundary from south of Newnham at SP 580593 to SP 575579 where the *ealde dic* of the 944 charter turns to run westward along the crest of the ridge overlooking Newnham. This circuit then proceeds eastwards along the *dic* until it comes to the wood.

"Eastwards" must obviously be an error for "westwards" in this section of the circuit which also supplies a possible clue in understanding why the *ealde dic* peters out at SP 573580; perhaps as the document indicates it ran into woodland at this point. This then will be the *gravesende* or wood's end which gave the hundred of Gravesend its name; Mangrove, the traditional meeting place of the hundred court, lies a few yards to the east and today is represented by a prominent clump of trees. The circuit then tells us to proceed westward to the ford and then up along the brook until it comes level with *Baddan byrig*; then in a somewhat jumbled sentence we are told to go westward from the brook again on to the west of *Baddan byrig*. The ford will be the one mentioned in the charter of 944 at SP 558575 and the considerable distance between this point and the preceeding one can be explained by the existence of a substantial tract of woodland between them at the time the document was drawn up. Along this stretch the boundary described is evidently that of the 944 charter; the "westward" of the final sentence should be converted to "northward". This document, with its clear indication of the existence of greater areas of woodland and its use of the name *Baddan byrig* to denote the hill fort on Arbury Hill rather than the village of Badby is clearly the earliest of the three in question.

A full description of the charter boundaries, together with maps and an analysis of their importance for the topographical history of the area has appeared in *Northamptonshire Archaeology* 12 (1977).

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