

## CROSSING BOUNDARIES - A REQUEST FOR EXAMPLES

Readers who attended the Forum's meeting at the Surrey History Centre back in March 2013 will remember Dr David Taylor recommending Tom Williamson's recently-published *Environment, Society and Landscape in Early Medieval England* as an important new reference work to help in the interpretation of medieval settlement and land-use patterns. I heeded his advice and read the book with great interest. It represents a condensation of many of his earlier groundbreaking books and essays, which is useful even for those familiar with Williamson's work already as it offers an accessible, concise statement of some key concepts drawn from multiple, often obscure works. One recurrent feature of Williamson's published research is the connection he makes between nucleated villages and the substantial meadow resources (as recorded in Domesday Book and other early documentary records) required to produce the hay to sustain the large numbers of oxen needed to form plough-teams to till the extensive arable lands associated with such settlements. Reading Williamson's latest articulation of this idea got me thinking about the situation in my home patch, Puttenham, and led me to reconsider the rationale for one important change to its early medieval landscape.

Cartographic analysis suggests that, prior to the mid-nineteenth century, many sections of the Puttenham parish boundary were undefined when running across open common land or through woodland, or else moved with changes in the lines of tracks. However, there is evidence for an earlier augmentation of the proto-parochial area. This is informed by the discrepancy between the present western and southern boundaries of the parish, accurately recorded in the eighteenth century but doubtless of medieval antiquity, and the description of a stretch of the eastern boundary of the adjoining Farnham estate in a tenth-century charter (Sawyer 382). The implication of the wording of the latter - *to ottan forda . swa to sumæres forda*, "...to Totford, so to Somerset Bridge..." - is that it followed the stream feeding the string of lakes associated with Hampton Park (though Cutt Mill Pond is an enlargement of a medieval mill pond) and thence the River Wey. This much has been proposed before (see PNS, 160; Currie 2001, 21-22) but no satisfactory explanation for why the boundary was changed has been advanced.

The change of the boundary line is likely to have occurred after 1086, for Domesday Book attributes a mere two acres of meadow to *Redessolham* (the precursor to Puttenham, remembered in the place-name Rodsall) and these can be accommodated in what nowadays is known as The Flashes valley, north of Lydling Farm. My own assumption had been that the impetus for the change had been the establishment the new manor/church/village of Puttenham, leading to the clearance of a large tract of heathland or wood pasture in its immediate environs for open-field agriculture. This upset the wider estate's arable-pastoral balance (or perhaps more accurately impacted too greatly upon the practice of the pastoral element) and the solution was to obtain an additional area of rough grazing land and append it to the nascent parish. This would have been land formerly within the vill of Elstead, part of the great episcopal manor of Farnham. At the time, as later, it had no shortage of such land and was most probably a sparsely-populated area of dispersed settlements. However, Elstead also had an abundance of existing or potential meadow resources (two acres of meadow there were granted to Waverley Abbey at the time of its foundation in 1128; Service 2010, 225). Reading Williamson's book suggested to me a more rounded explanation, with the primary benefit to Puttenham being the acquisition of

a section of river floodplain supporting managed meadow (or which could be converted into such) for the production of hay to feed the greater numbers of draught oxen required to cultivate its enlarged area of arable fields. The fact that, according to a terrier of 1765, a number of manorial and sub-manorial properties in the parish held areas of meadow close to the Wey suggests its tenure was not restricted to the manor and village of Puttenham.

There is good evidence for a similar thing having happened a mile or so to the north on the other side of the Hog's Back, in the shape of the westernmost portion of Wanborough parish. Again, the baseline is the tenth-century description of the Farnham estate boundary, more precisely its line as it ran between the final two named points (*on hlos wuda midde weardne . swa æft to . vii . dican*, "to the middle of pig-sty wood, so aft[er] to seven ditches"; for a discussion of their probable locations, see Briggs 2010). It would appear that at some point after the composition of the above description, the manor/parish of Wanborough came to acquire a considerable tract of land to the west of the old boundary and north of modern-day White Lane Farm. Topographically, the land is not suitable for use as meadow, so the explanation posited for Puttenham's extension cannot be applied here. Instead, the current use of much of the land in question for arable recommends it was obtained by Wanborough to be cleared for cultivation. It is conceivable this happened somewhat earlier than in my first example, since Wanborough was a very populous estate in 1086 and so may have experienced high demand for new land to cultivate that could not be met within its existing limits; the continued existence of extensive stands of ancient woodland in the parish suggest many areas were judged unsuitable. Alternatively, the purchase of the manor by Waverley Abbey *circa* 1130 may have been the catalyst for the extension of cultivation (Service 2010, 225 - as something of an aside, Waverley ownership may have opened up an abundant new source of hay for the estate.)

These two instances show two contiguous but separate manors-cum-parishes were able to command sizable chunks of land from a larger but less-populous neighbour to augment their agricultural economies. One of these parochial extensions secured an area of meadow for hay production (as well as a "bonus" tract of rough grazing), the other additional arable lands carved out of woodland. Of course, such arrangements may not have necessitated the revision of parish (or township) boundaries. Richard Savage showed to one Medieval Studies Forum meeting a map of Old Woking depicting lotted meadows on the Wey floodplain within the parish of Send (whose vast Domesday-era meadow resource is at odds with its non-nucleated settlement geography - perhaps it was geared to surplus hay production?) and this is nearer to the detached extra-parochial demesne holdings widely-encountered in late and post-medieval manorial extents. The purpose of this annexation of some of Send's vast meadow resource reveals it to be broadly analogous to the examples cited above; however, the lack of evidence for the associated manipulation of the parochial boundary recommends it be treated as distinct from them.

My request to all who read this note is to furnish me with further examples of such changes from Surrey or elsewhere. I am particularly interested in obtaining new instances of major revisions that encompassed significant resources for the benefit of one estate/parish (but seemingly not to the detriment of the other party involved), rather than the "neatening up" of hitherto-undefined boundaries. If John Blair (1991, 153) was correct and Surrey's parochial geography finished crystallising over the course of the twelfth century, such

adjustments should be on the cusp of documentary perceptibility and moreover may invite the advancement of specific explanations for why the additional resources were needed. Places with early boundary descriptions, or else abutting estates/parishes that have them, are not the only ones where such changes may be tangible, although by the same token such texts do provide a detailed and dateable starting point with which to compare the present or later historic situation. So far as I know, there is very little published research on the matter but potentially a wealth of examples out there. I look forward to hearing about a few of them.

### REFERENCES

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