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“Charter Bounds on the 1:25,000 Provisional
Edition”

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The Charles Close Society was founded in 1980 to bring together all those with an interest in the maps and history of the Ordnance Survey of Great Britain and its counterparts in the island of Ireland. The Society takes its name from Colonel Sir Charles Arden-Close, OS Director General from 1911 to 1922, and initiator of many of the maps now sought after by collectors.

The Society publishes a wide range of books and booklets on historic OS map series and its journal, *Sheetlines*, is recognised internationally for its specialist articles on Ordnance Survey-related topics.

Charter Bounds on the 1:25,000 Provisional Edition

Rob Wheeler

... there is at least one feature in the countryside which is of Saxon origin and often remains more or less intact. I refer to the boundary banks of large Anglo-Saxon estates, which one learns to recognise by laboriously tracing the points named in the surviving charters. This exercise gives one a truer and more detailed knowledge of the English countryside than any other pursuit, not excluding fox-hunting. By the time one has scrambled over hedges, leapt across boggy streams in deep woods, traversed narrow green lanes all but blocked with brambles and the luxuriant vegetation of late summer, not to mention walked along high airy ridges on a day of tumultuous blue-and-white skies with magnificent views of deep country all round – by the time one has done this, armed with a copy of a Saxon charter and the 2½-inch maps, the topography of some few miles of the English landscape is indelibly printed on the mind and heart.

Thus wrote W G Hoskins in *The making of the English landscape* in 1955. Hoskins was immensely influential, the prime mover of the ‘Leicester school’ of local history. ‘Solving’ a charter in this way is not easy – Hoskins reckoned that it typically took two years – and some familiarity with Old English tends to be helpful. Nevertheless, a few hundred amateurs attempting to do so, combined with many hundreds more walking the bounds of charters already solved, might have boosted sales of the struggling 1:25,000. There are apparently 840 charters for which boundary perambulations survive, most being in Wessex and the West Midlands,¹ so there was scope for a lot of sheets to benefit.

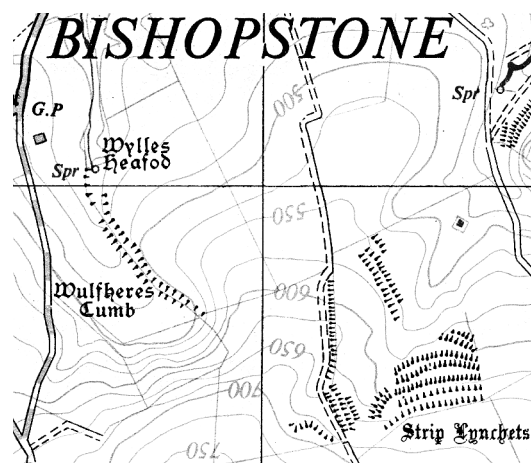
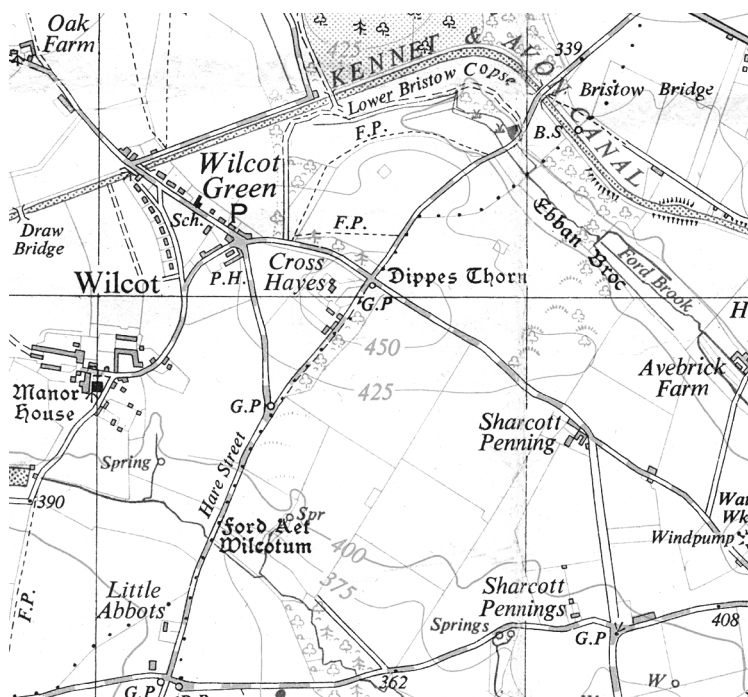
One of those who followed this pursuit was O G S Crawford, who took a mere six months to solve Bedwyn and Burbage in Wiltshire.² In an area where such charters are numerous, topographical names derived from solving one charter might help to solve an adjoining one. And what better place could there be to record such names than the 2½-inch map itself? This would involve a certain stretching of the existing definition of an antiquity, but no doubt the Ordnance Survey’s Archaeology Officer would be able to arrange it. And undoubtedly the 1:25,000 sheets for east Wiltshire contain a number of Anglo-Saxon names applied in Gothic font to features which are not within the normal definition of antiquities but which are the sort of feature one encounters in the boundary clauses of charters.

To take two typical sheets, on the ‘A’ edition of SU16 we find (*Figure 1*) Ford Aet Wilcotum, Dippes Thorn, Ebban Broc, also (with 4-figure grid reference) Aepel Forda (1060), Brade Wyll (1061), Oxna Mere (1064), Eald Hereparth (1163), Eald Burgh (1164), Thorn Dun and Stanige Beorh (1165), Cyneta [River Kennet] (1168), Swana Beorh (1360), Pytteldene [Old English font] (1369), Wodnes Dic (1465), and Hyrs Lea (1566). On SU28, *Figure 2* shows Wulfheres Cumb and Wylles Heafod. One can also find Liden (2082), Lyde Cumb (2181), Smite (2186), Icenhilde Weg (2283), Smal Broc (2383) and Lenta (2384).

At first sight, we appear to have an example of the post-war Ordnance Survey playing its part in a burgeoning academic field, a role quashed by the modern focus on the mass market: of the fifteen names on SU16, only one (Eald Burgh) survived on the Pathfinder and Explorer, as a means of naming an otherwise nameless *Settlement*. But first appearances can be deceptive and further investigation changes the picture more than a little.

¹ There is a map of them in Kate Tiller, *English local history*, Stroud: Alan Sutton, 1992, 39.

² W G Hoskins, *Fieldwork in local history*, London: Faber and Faber, 1967, 36.



1:25,000 Provisional edition

Figure 1: SU16 (left)

Figure 2: SU28 (above)

Looking more closely at the dates, O G S Crawford's solution of Bedwyn and Burbage was complete by 1920.³ Checks on a sample⁴ of the names listed above indicated that they all appeared on the six-inch map in the mid-1920s and they were dropped when the County Series for that area was converted to National Grid sheet lines in 1960-61. That change was reflected in the 1:25,000 editions that appeared at the same time⁵ – long before the series had any aspiration to reach a mass market. So it would appear that Crawford was solving charters and names from charter bounds were appearing on the County Series long before Hoskins had introduced a wider audience to the subject. The names appeared on the 1:25,000 simply because they were transcribed from the County Series.⁶ One wonders whether some of Crawford's colleagues had been looking askance at the use of the County Series for recording place-name evidence long before 1960.

The Ordnance Survey had for many years indicated the Roman names, in certain cases rather dubious Roman names, of towns. The number of Roman towns is reasonably small and names are known for most of them. Also there is a clear divide between Roman times and the present day. In contrast, the features for which Anglo-Saxon names might be found are extremely numerous. Only for a proportion can we hope to recover an Anglo-Saxon name. More seriously, 1066 is an artificial divide: if Anglo-Saxon names, why not Norman-French, late medieval or even post-medieval names? Did Crawford's interest in old names extend to the early modern period?

Two pieces of evidence throw more light on this. The first is the sample sheet Crawford produced to indicate to his archaeological correspondents how they should mark up a six-inch map to show antiquities.⁷ This was an overprint on the 1901 edition of Wiltshire 29SW,

³ It appeared in the June 1921 issue of the *Wilts Archaeological and Natural History Magazine* (volume 49), but the map there is dated 1920.

⁴ Wiltshire 16NE and 35SW were checked.

⁵ SU16, edition B of 1961; SU28, edition C of 1960.

⁶ And transcribed wrongly in one case: Eald Hereparth at 1163 should read Eald Herepath.

⁷ Cambridge University Library CCS L24/26.

an area Crawford knew from his time at Marlborough and must have explored thoroughly while investigating his charter bounds. The sheet offers examples of annotation based on the physical inspection of antiquities, where initials and a date were required: B.C.D. 16/11/18, O.G.S.C. 6/12/1919, K.L.M. 7/11/21. This seems to suggest a production date of 1921 or 1922 for the sample sheet. Moreover the archaeological notes appear to be genuine ones: they are all embodied on the 1925 edition, albeit resurveyed and sometimes re-assessed. What is important for the question posed above is that information on old *place names* is also marked on the sample sheet. Some names come from an unspecified source of 1768; others from a tithe map of 1846. I have not been able to check whether *these* are genuine, but it would seem that the OS under Crawford was collecting place names from sources as late as the nineteenth century.

Now Crawford's influence within the Ordnance Survey was somewhat restricted. Crawford could mark up his six-inch sheets with as many place names as he wished, but one can imagine that those responsible for production of the large-scale plans might not have welcomed the idea of a vast increase in defunct place names on the printed maps. Consequently, Close's view on Anglo-Saxon antiquities as opposed to Roman ones that was reproduced in *Sheetlines* 81, 40, is highly relevant: 'Most of us ... would rather walk along a Saxon *hrycgweg*, or *herepath*, than along Watling Street or the Port Way.'⁸ One might doubt that the average map-purchaser could even get his tongue round a *hrycgweg*, but this was Close's view. So perhaps Close made the decision that 1066 was *not* an artificial division and that place-names of before that date ought to appear on the printed map.

Crawford's autobiography has evidence that tends to support this.⁹ He notes the OS provision of free copies of the six-inch map to scholars who could provide corrections and additions to the archaeological information as a system already in existence when he joined the OS in October 1920. Moreover he describes G B Grundy of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, as receiving these maps and making use of them for his work on charter bounds. The context of the statement is a description of Crawford's activities after his return from the war and before he joined the OS. The implication would appear to be that already in 1919 the OS was collecting information on minor Anglo-Saxon place names – presumably with a view to including them on the map. Close certainly had a particular interest in place names,¹⁰ whereas by 1920 Crawford's interest in them was perhaps being swamped by other interests: archaeological excavation and period maps are prominent in his autobiography; Kitty Hauser has recently drawn attention to some less conventional interests.¹¹ Curiously, none of the Anglo-Saxon place names from Crawford's 1921 paper ever appeared on the OS map.¹² Was that diffidence, or had Crawford himself come round to the view that old place names should be limited to Roman ones after all?

There is one practical implication from all this. Anyone with an aspiration to solve charter bounds should indeed follow Hoskins' advice to equip themselves with a 2½-inch map. More precisely, they should ensure it is an early state of the Provisional edition. There they may find the solutions of some eminent predecessors, appearing by courtesy of, probably, Sir Charles Close.

⁸ Col Sir Charles Close, *The map of England*, London: Peter Davies, 1932.

⁹ O G S Crawford, *Said and done*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1955, 151.

¹⁰ Crawford, *Said and done*, 158.

¹¹ Kitty Hauser, *Bloody old Britain*, London: Granta Books, 2008.

¹² Wiltshire 33SW, 37SW, 42NE, 42NE were checked.