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Saxon South Cerney

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Probably because of an unfortunate combination of errors in the major reference work on Saxon charters of Gloucestershire, the importance both of the royal diplomas related to the settlement at South Cerney and of the estate itself has been neglected.¹ As the parish now reaches its millennium it seems appropriate to redress this.

It is, presumably, a typographical error that gives the date of the Cerney charter in Grundy's *Saxon Charters and Field Names of Gloucestershire* (London, 1935) as 909 when the charter (S896) quite clearly ends with the words '*Acta est praefata donatio anno ab Incarnatione Domini nostri Ihesu Christi DCCCCXCIX. . .*'.² The dating and authenticity of Saxon charters has been the subject of a good deal of learned debate and though most recent regional studies have not followed Grundy it is disappointing that some still do.³ In fact the events referred to in the Cerney charter actually took place some years before 999 and both they and the given date of the document are matters of some interest.

Perhaps even more important is that the principal protagonists involved in the disagreement, the resolution of which is reported in the charter, are identified by Grundy as 'Aelfsi' and 'a lady named Eatflaed' and he uses this as a peg for a footnote discussing Saxon land tenure. Unhappily he fails to relate the document to another composite charter (S937)⁴ and, because of the inaccurate reading (or reporting) of one of the names, the eminence and importance of those involved and the wider significance of the episode have been ignored.

The charter of 999, *Carta Regis Adelredi de Cerne*, begins by declaring that the purpose of the document is to provide firm and reliable information, necessary because of 'the uncertainty of the future'.⁵ Therefore 'I, Aethelred, king of all Britain', grant 15 '*cassatos*' of land at 'Cyrne', together with 'all appurtenances, namely meadows, pastures and running waters' to the monastery at Abingdon, with the land to be exempt from all taxes save only those for (military) expeditions, for arming the troops and for the restoration of bridges.

Thus far the charter is unexceptional. It proceeds, however, to explain the circumstances which have precipitated dispute over 'this fertile estate attached "*de illis villulis*" of Cyrne'. This could be no more than a phrase to cover several farmsteads but it could mean that there were already, as now, two 'small settlements' within the estate of Cerney. A certain Earl Aelfric—not, it will be appreciated, Aelfsi, but an identifiable late Saxon nobleman—had seized the land from the matron Eatflaed. In charter S937 and in later references which almost certainly refer to the same individual, she is named 'Eadflaed' and this form is used hereafter. Aelfric had incorporated the land into his own possessions, and 'many terrible, pitiable and miserable sins [or crimes] were committed'. That this is not some little local incident is then made clear since, 'on the unanimous advice of all the best men of the kingdom, at the royal town . . . called Cirencester, it was ordered that Aelfric most go . . . into exile' and he, and his heirs, must be stripped not only of the land at Cerney but of all the rest of his estates. The charter then declares that Aethelred had, graciously, restored the estate to Eadflaed for the rest of her life and bestows it thereafter on the monastery of St. Mary at Abingdon. There follows, as Keynes points out, a

clear statement that this charter replaces any previous declaration concerning the land and is not to be overturned on petition to the courts.⁶ Any person seeking to interfere with 'our generous gift' is threatened with hellfire and eternal damnation! Finally '*his terminis circumcincta clarescit*' and indeed there follows a detailed description tracing the parish or estate boundaries from landmark to landmark until the whole has been, in effect, circumnavigated. Remarkably these boundaries remain largely identifiable and unchanged to this day.

The significance of what might otherwise be thought minor is underlined by the witness list: King Aethelred, the Queen Mother Aelfthryth, the king's son Athelstan,⁷ the archbishops of both York and Canterbury, eleven bishops, four ealdormen, six abbots and assorted royal kinsmen, and ministers.

It is obvious that the assembling of such a council and the exiling of an ealdorman implies something rather more than his having annexed a few hides of land. In fact what it is all about is made plain in the composite charter, undated, but generally accepted as being of the same year as, or very soon after, the one already considered.⁸ Here the estate at Cerney is identified as one of three—the others being in Warwickshire at Wormleighton and Farnborough—seized by Aelfric Puer from Eadflaed, a widow. Moreover Aelfric, a 'major criminal' is accused of crimes against 'all my people' and, in turning his province against the Crown, of committing treason, which is, therefore, the reason for his banishment. The undated charter also reveals that Aethelred is intending that Eadflaed's three estates, together with another at 'Perry' in Oxfordshire, the subject of an entirely separate section of the charter, shall, in due course, pass to the monastery at Abingdon. The reason for this is spelt out: it is compensation because Aethelred is reclaiming from the monastery various estates, once part of the royal lands, which had been specially assigned to the maintenance of aethelings, the royal princes.⁹

Before discussing what this tells us of events at Cerney on the Wessex–Mercia (or modern Wiltshire–Gloucestershire) border in the late 10th century, it is necessary to consider the geographical and political contexts of both the area and the time. The present village of South Cerney lies at the tip of a ridge of higher ground which rises south of Cirencester. Recently a number of small scale archaeological investigations within the modern village have shown that, as might be expected, it overlies the medieval settlement, though at present evidence for the pre-Conquest period is slight. The ridge is bounded on the west by the river Churn, which also runs around the southern extremity of the scarp. It is the last, minor, foothill of the Cotswolds. The relative height of the ridge above the flood plain, which extends for miles to the south, east and west, is obscured by 20th-century housing and development though it is still noticeable if the village is approached from the west along the road from Kemble. Even now there is a commanding view across the Thames valley, and in earlier times the ridge must have afforded a significant vantage point. The estate of Cerney as described in the charters is considerably larger than the ridge alone and it stretches deep into the valley, as far as the Thames, and includes the area later occupied by the small settlement of Cerney Wick.

The Upper Thames between Cricklade and Ashton Keynes is clearly far too small a river to have constituted any sort of physical barrier. Nevertheless it seems likely to have been a symbolic line between rival princes of the region and there are many reports of the area being fought over in Saxon times.¹⁰ The Cerney lands lie, therefore, at exactly that point where the rival ambitions of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms of Wessex and Mercia were likely to meet. This was, in Stenton's words, 'a debatable land'.¹¹

The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* account of the post-Roman centuries is, in the opinion of most modern commentators, unreliable and may be little more than an attempt by the later rulers of Wessex to legitimise claims to Mercian territory.¹² However even if the detail and chronology

are dubious the fluctuations in political control described probably do represent the instability that existed. It is possible that Wessex did indeed control the area around Cirencester until Penda brought it under Mercian authority in the early 7th century. From time to time Mercian (or Hwiccan) princes may well have sought to establish themselves across the river Thames, on the far, southern side, as, it is claimed, Ethelmond and later Beornwulf tried in the early 9th century.¹³ Bassett has established that the heartland of the Hwicce and later of Mercia lay further north but argues that it would have been sound policy to create a Mercian province in south Gloucestershire thus providing either a springboard for expansion or a buffer against the aggression and ambition of Wessex.¹⁴

Reference has already been made to the reliability of early charters and many are clearly of doubtful authenticity. However some charter evidence, accepted as secure, does reinforce a picture of the lands immediately around Cerney being part of a border zone. Thus Somerford Keynes and Ashton Keynes, the two settlements immediately south-west of Cerney are variously under the authority of Mercia and of Wessex albeit at quite distinct periods in the 8th and 9th centuries.¹⁵ On the other hand Poulton, Barnsley, Eysey and Latton, to the north and east, were part of Winchcombeshire, a county which seems to have emerged from the Mercian province of the Hwicce. In the shiring process, Winchcombeshire was dismembered and most of the southern area and settlements were incorporated into Gloucestershire. However while this was indeed what happened to Barnsley, the other places were not. Eysey and Latton formed a tongue of Wiltshire protruding north into Gloucestershire, as they still are, while Poulton—well inside the former Mercian lands—became a detached island of Wiltshire within Gloucestershire. The determining factor seems to have been the allegiance of the particular landholder at the time shire boundaries were determined.¹⁶

Asser described Cirencester as being in the southern part of the Hwicce kingdom and thus of Mercia.¹⁷ However Cricklade, only a few miles to the south, but across the Thames, was one of the defensive burhs established by the rulers of Wessex in the late 9th or early 10th centuries to form a border against the marauding Danes.¹⁸ Cirencester and Cricklade are, and were, separated by the parish of South Cerney.

As Wessex flourished so the old borders became less significant. Indeed they must have appeared obsolete after 911 when King Edward of Wessex acquired control of the lands of the deceased ruler of Mercia, probably with the intention of stifling Mercian independence permanently. However, perhaps more because of individual opportunism and ambition than of political conviction, in the mid 10th century there was a re-emergence of Mercian consciousness and some re-assertion of old territorial unities.¹⁹ In 940 King Edmund recreated the rank of ealdorman of Mercia and conferred it on a West Saxon nobleman, Aelhelm, who served as a principal adviser to the monarchy until his death in 951. Aelhelm's family—he had at least five children—achieved a range of high offices, several becoming ealdormen of various provinces. Of them one son, Aelfhere, and a daughter, Aethelflaed, are of particular relevance to the estates at Cerney.

Although already a significant figure in the royal service, Aelfhere was not appointed ealdorman immediately on the death of his father. However when he was, in 956, it was the beginning of a quite remarkable development of Mercian authority. Aelhelm had been one of three ealdormen in Mercia, each responsible for a province. Aelfhere, however, rapidly assumed control over the whole—by the simple process of persuading the Crown not to fill the other ealdormanships as they fell vacant—and seems to have harboured ambitions well beyond the official boundaries of Mercia. His closeness to the Crown is demonstrated by the senior position his name is given in the diploma witness lists of the time. He was given many estates by a grateful monarch including, for our purpose most significantly, ten '*mansae*' at Wormleighton in 956 by

Eadwig.²⁰ This gift provides the only clue to Aelfhere's possible marriage. He appears not to have had children but some thirty years after this grant, just after his death, the appeal by the 'widow Eadflaed' over, *inter alia*, Wormleighton suggests that she had been his wife. It is clear that Aelfhere's power and ambition provoked hostility. Much later the chronicler William of Malmesbury accused him of abusing his power by pillaging the monasteries and, worse, of plotting, with Queen Aelfthryth, the murder of the young King Edward in 975 in order to instal her son Aethelred. There is, however, little satisfactory evidence that Aelfhere was unusually predatory in regard to monastic lands and none that he had any part in Edward's death.²¹ He was, however, a major influence on, and very close to, Aethelred and this too has implications for Cerney.

Aelfhere died in 983 and was immediately succeeded as ealdorman of Mercia by Aelfric Cild (or Puer) the husband of Aelfhere's sister, almost certainly Aethelflaed.²² Aelfric is known to have been a man of property and influence, whose family estates were in Huntingdon and East Anglia. Both for him and Aethelflaed's family their marriage must have appeared a most advantageous union: for Aelfric an alliance with the powerful princes of Mercia and for the Mercian ealdormen a buffer against Anglian ambitions or even a springboard for their own. Such plans as there were collapsed because following the treason referred to in the charters Aelfric was banished after only two years in office. This abruptly ended the Mercian revival and, indeed, no new ealdorman of Mercia was created for twenty years.²³

We can, however, clearly see the relationship between the protagonists named in the South Cerney charters and how this apparently insignificant estate came to be involved in such major political conflict. The precise state of Mercian inheritance law as it affected widows at the end of the 10th century is unknown. However, it would seem probable that the practices codified by Cnut *c.* 1020 represent something akin to those in place in Aethelred's reign. Thus it was probably the custom for a husband on the post-nuptial morning to make his wife a gift which she kept in the event of his decease unless she remarried within a year of his death. There was also a widespread practice by which a widow's portion was established in advance but Cnut's laws ordered that property should be 'justly' shared between widow, children and 'close' kinsmen, 'each in the proportion which belongs to them'.²⁴ The scope for argument is obvious. Since the alienation of folcland required the king's assent anyhow, it was obviously sensible and indeed necessary for a testator to secure royal approval for the proposed terms of any bequest or gift of land or property. In fact it was not unusual for people of rank and wealth to appoint a protector to ensure that the terms of wills were honoured and disputes over entitlement resolved.²⁵ What more natural then that Aelfhere, ealdorman of Mercia, place his trust in his friend, and protégé, King Aethelred himself?

Moreover, there could have been the complication of trying to separate Mercian lands from those of Aelfhere and his family. One of the functions of wills and charters was to resolve such a point. There existed the precedent of an earlier royal will which carefully defined and safeguarded the distinction between the '*propria hereditas*', the family estates, and those lands and titles which were attached to the rank or office held by the testator.²⁶ It may well be significant that the Cerney charter (S896) accuses Aelfric of taking the land and '*sibi in propriam hereditatem usurpavit*', trying, in other words to incorporate it into his own family estates. Since we know that Wormleighton had been granted to Aelfhere and that after his death the widow Eadflaed claimed to have been dispossessed of it, several hypotheses may be proposed. First, as the charter associates Cerney with Wormleighton, but not with Perry, it is probable that both estates were part not only of the same dispute but also of the same legacy. Second, since Aethelred restored the two estates to her, it is also probable that Eadflaed had a justifiable claim to them and, as has already been suggested, that she was Aelfhere's widow. Equally it is not possible that Aelfric

was 'seizing' what he could have argued was actually his either because of kinship or because the estates belonged to the ealdormanship?

Indeed the Aelfhere–Aelfric–Eadflaed situation is comparable to that which arose over the slightly later will of Aethelgifu. Her wish to dispose of the lands bequeathed to her by her husband was challenged by his kinsmen and she had to secure royal assistance to confirm and protect her rights.²⁷

In any event for Eadflaed, the logical person with whom to lodge an appeal would have been Aethelred. For the king it was extremely helpful to be able to intervene and to assert the royal authority over potentially dangerously powerful subjects. As Wormald has pointed out a principal function of a charter was to demonstrate proof of acquisition and of rights. It was a means by which kings could formally remove land from those dead or out of favour and bestow it elsewhere.²⁸ It was very much in the Crown's interest to be able to confiscate, hold in trust and re-assign land thus simultaneously upholding the law, depriving opponents, rewarding supporters and enhancing the position of the monarchy²⁹—and the Crown's interest might, in turn, explain the injunction in the Cerney charter annulling older charters or precedents.

The admonition suggests that, just as for Wormleighton, there had been earlier charters relating to the estate at Cerney, though—unlike for Wormleighton—it is not clear how and when either the princes of Mercia, or Aelfhere and his ancestors, acquired the land. However, given its strategic situation, Cerney could well have been regarded as important in maintaining the buffer zone at the southern extremity of the Hwiccan–Mercian state, and thus as somewhere over which the Mercian rulers would have wanted to maintain, at least, influence if not direct control.

It was not unusual for boundaries of estates³⁰ recorded in charters in the region to follow natural or physically distinct features.³¹ This is true for almost all of the boundary of Cerney. However, at the northern end, the boundary breaks away from the river Churn on the west and the Roman Ermin Street on the east and runs along the '*fyrb*' or furrow across the '*Mor*'.³² Since the Churn and Ermin Street meet a relatively short distance further north, this artificial line must surely reflect a boundary between different landholders recognising either an existing or an agreed division of property. It has been argued both that the existence of settlements known as North and South Cerney suggests a single administrative unit centred on Cirencester³³ and that there is a trend in the late Saxon period for large estates to be fragmented into smaller units.³⁴ The 15 '*cassatos*' at Cerney represent a large estate but the boundary line to the north certainly suggests that Cerney had at some time been part of an even larger unit perhaps stretching out from the 'royal town' of Cirencester itself. Moreover, though one must be cautious in drawing too many inferences from the charters, it is perhaps significant that by relating the land to '*illis villulis*' there is an implication, as has already been noted, that something more than a mere farmstead, existed within the estate. There is little archaeological evidence, yet, which could establish where any Saxon settlement might have been, though a substantial fragment of a lava quernstone, of a form not uncommon in late Mercian times, was recently excavated close to the centre of the modern village.

How long Eadflaed was able to enjoy the lands restored to her by the charters at the end of the 10th century is not known. However it seems not impossible that the reason for recording the precise details of the estate some fifteen years after the decisions taken about both it and Aelfric's fate might have been that Eadflaed had died and it had become necessary to clarify exactly what the monks of Abingdon were to acquire. To some extent this notion is reinforced by two brief references in the Abingdon cartulary to legacies from a '*nobilis matrona*' Eadflaed. The first comes after a charter of 1015 and before a summary of the reign of Aethelred who died in 1016. This apparent dating needs to be treated with caution, however, as the reference

is part of a group of entries, some of which refer to events years earlier. The date would match the Eadflaed of the charters. The second reference occurs in a section concerned with Abbot Orderic, 1052–66, which might appear confusing. However it is quite obvious that despite minor differences in detail both references relate to the same person and a single bequest. She leaves to the monastery a number of valuable objects—reliquaries and religious texts adorned with silver and gold, a silver chalice and vestments for the clergy—together with estates all in the vicinity of Abingdon. The explanation for the second entry of this bequest may well be, as has been identified elsewhere in the cartulary, an attempt by the compiler to ‘assert and confirm the authenticity’ of the abbey’s title to land. It is perhaps relevant to note that the later reference names one estate not detailed in the earlier entry.³⁵ Although Aelfhere was a benefactor of Glastonbury, where he was buried, he had also endowed the monastery at Abingdon,³⁶ a fact which may even have influenced Aethelred’s grant in 999. It is not improbable that his widow would leave her estates to the same monastery.

The concentration of estates in the area raises the question of whether they were the ‘*propria hereditas*’ of Eadflaed herself. Just as Aelhelm’s other children had advanced the family status by shrewd alliances, was Aelfhere married to someone whose connections might make more secure the south-eastern perimeter of the old Mercian province? Certainly the name prefix ‘Ead’ was favoured in Wessex. Alternatively, was Cerney simply a part of the ‘morning gift’ held by a widow who had remained unmarried for a year after the death of Aelfhere?

That Cerney passed to Abingdon we know because c. 1050 the then Abbot Spearhavoc was persuaded to exchange Cerney for the promise of an estate at Easton, near Lewknor, in Oxfordshire. The implication in the abbey’s report is that Spearhavoc had been duped by Stigand, the bishop of Winchester and archbishop of Canterbury.³⁷ The transfer of Cerney had been, the chronicler asserts, for a fixed term but Stigand neither yielded Easton nor returned Cerney. That this was so is borne out by a note inserted in the Domesday Book entry for Cerney—the monastery of Abingdon claimed title to the manor but ‘all the county testified that Archbishop Stigand had held it for ten years’ before the Conquest.³⁸ Although William the Conqueror allowed the archbishop to retain some of his personal estates until his death, in 1072, Cerney was not among them and Domesday Book records that it had been held by William FitzOsbern (d. 1071). The reason that Cerney was still coveted was probably not simply for its strategic location. It will be recalled that the adjective used to describe the estate in the original charter (S896) was ‘fertile’. Stigand had extensive personal estates including a good many in Gloucestershire, some 85 hides or so, but according to the Domesday survey South Cerney was distinctly more valuable in £s per hide than any of the others, no doubt because of the extensive meadows which would make it a prize worth securing.

David Walker describes Cerney, in the post-Conquest years, as ‘a most important manor’³⁹ and until there was political stability, which removed its strategic value, and the subsequent breakup of the manor it continued to be prized. Given its location and the political turbulence of the Saxon centuries, Cerney must have been an integral part of the buffer zone between the core of Mercia and the border of Wessex. Even in the 10th century it was part of an area where the conflicting ambitions of the provincial nobility met. We should not, therefore, be surprised either that the evidence of the charters suggests a close connection between Cerney and the ealdorman of Mercia and his family or that a new ruler should try to take it under his own authority. The charters and the Abingdon cartulary make plain the agricultural value of the land.

It appears that Cerney was sufficiently important for nobles to seize it illegally, go to law and petition the king to obtain it, or attempt to acquire it by cunning and duplicity. The unravelling

of the Saxon charters demonstrates that the strategic and agricultural value of Cerney had been appreciated some time before the Norman Conquest, rather earlier and rather more than has hitherto been recognised.

Notes

1. G. Grundy, *Saxon Charters and Field Names of Gloucestershire* (London, 1935), 61–4; S. Bassett, *The Origins of Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms* (Leicester, 1989), 20, warns against using the term ‘estate’ unless the land has been clearly defined in an authentic charter or document. Cerney clearly passes this test. The indispensable work of reference is P. Sawyer, *Anglo-Saxon Charters: An Annotated List* (London, 1968). In this article charters will be cited by their number in Sawyer preceded by S. The closest scrutiny of late 10th-century charters is S. Keynes, *Diplomas of King Aethelred 978–1016* (Cambridge, 1980).
2. The charters containing the South Cerney story appear in the Abingdon Abbey cartularies. These are preserved in a number of MSS., one of which is in the library of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, and the others in the British Library. The only printed edition of the cartulary is *Chronicon Monasterii de Abingdon*, ed. J. Stevenson (Rolls Series, 1858). This relied on two 12th-century MSS., B.L. Cotton MSS. Claudius C. ix and Claudius B. vi, but argued that the former was the more authoritative. However modern scholars have concluded that there was a now lost Abingdon house narrative on which both compilers relied: Keynes, *Diplomas*, 10; *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* 10, *The Abingdon Chronicle*, ed. P.W. Connor (Cambridge, 1996), xlvi. Moreover Connor has suggested that the compiler of B.L. Cotton MS. Claudius B. vi had a range of other MSS. from which to draw (Connor, *Abingdon Chronicle*, xxxii–xxxiii). Keynes has concluded that probably this MS. is indeed the better and this article has largely relied for the charter (S896) on B.L. Cotton MS. Claudius B. vi, ff. 91–2. A later copy of the charter, B.L. Cotton MS. Vitellius D. vii, ff. 35–6, gives the date as 929 but the error is clearly due to the mis-copying of the Roman numerals: DCCCCXXIX instead of DCCCCXCIX. The story of Aethelred and Aelfric is unarguably in the later part of the 10th century. All translations and their shortcomings are my own.
3. e.g. C. Gerrard, ‘Cyrnceastre: A Royal/Ecclesiastical Centre in the Early Medieval Period’ in *Cirencester: Town and Landscape*, ed. T. Darvill and C. Gerrard (Cirencester, 1994), 95.
4. B.L. Cotton MS. Claudius B. vi, ff. 89v.–90v.
5. P. Wormald, *Bede and the Conversion of England: The Charter Evidence* (Jarrow, 1984), 10, points out that Hlothere in a late 7th-century Kentish charter says ‘though the word alone should suffice as evidence, nevertheless, because of the uncertain condition of future times’ it is better to put everything in writing! He notes that some early Mercian charters use the same formula and, in effect, this is what Aethelred does several hundred years later.
6. Keynes, *Diplomas*, 201.
7. The witness lists differ slightly from one MS. to another and Eadred, another of the king’s sons, appears in one.
8. S937; Keynes, *Diplomas*, 96.
9. D. Dumville, ‘The Aetheling’, *Anglo-Saxon England* 8 (1979), 5–6; Keynes, *Diplomas*, 166; D. Dumville, *Wessex and England from Alfred to Edgar* (Woodbridge, 1992), 107–9.
10. The issue is considered by B. Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo-Saxon England* (London, 1990), in the sections on both Wessex and Mercia. See also Dumville, *Wessex and England*, 21.
11. F. Stenton, *The Anglo-Saxons* (Oxford, 1971), 202.
12. P. Sims-Williams, ‘Settlement of England in Bede and the Chronicle’, *Anglo-Saxon England* 12 (1983), 33–9.
13. Penda appears in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (ASC)*, ed. M. Swanton (London, 1997), 22–5; Ethelmond in *ASC.*, 58–9; and Beornwulf in *ASC.*, 60–1; Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, 121–2.
14. Bassett, *Origins of Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms*, 8–17.
15. S1169, S1507; T. Slater, ‘The Town and its Regions in the Anglo-Saxon and Medieval Periods’, *Studies in the Archaeology and History of Cirencester*, ed. A. McWhirr (Oxford, 1976), 88; D. Hooke, *The Anglo-Saxon Landscape: The Kingdom of the Hwicce* (Manchester, 1985), 16.

16. C. Taylor, 'The Origin of the Mercian Shires', *Gloucestershire Studies*, ed. H. Finberg (Gloucester, 1957), 42; Slater, 'The Town and its Regions', 86–7; J. Whybra, *A Lost English County, Winchcombeshire* (Woodbridge, 1990), 86.
17. Hooke, *The Anglo-Saxon Landscape*, 14.
18. Dumville, *Wessex and England*, 21.
19. A. Williams, 'Principes Merciorum Gentis', *Anglo-Saxon Studies* 10 (1982), 143–72; *Biographical Dictionary of Dark Age Britain*, ed. A. Williams *et al.* (London, 1991). The work of Dr. Williams in clarifying the family and history of Aelfhere has been fundamental to this study—though interpretation and hypothesis are, of course, entirely my own responsibility.
20. B.L. Cotton MS. Claudius B. vi, ff. 55v.–56v. (S588); Hooke, *The Anglo-Saxon Landscape*, 141.
21. Keynes, *Diplomas*, 169–73. As both Keynes and Williams, 'Principes Merciorum Gentis', 166–7, point out much of the criticism of Aelfhere stems from St. Oswald and the monastic mafia whose own efforts to amass land and influence inevitably brought them in conflict with the lay nobility.
22. The identification of Aethelflaed stems from the will of Wynflaed, c. 950, who included among her beneficiaries a lady of this name, identified as daughter of Ealdorman Aelhelm. Irrelevantly, but charmingly, Aethelflaed acquired a 'twilbrokenan Kyrtle', a linen coat and a length of linen cloth. There is some debate over the kyrtle, an undercoat often in bright colours. Does twilbrokenan mean it was made of two badger-skins or in a distinctive broken patterned weave? Cf. D. Whitelock, *Anglo-Saxon Wills* (Cambridge, 1930), 11–14; G.R. Owen, 'Wynflaed's Wardrobe', *Anglo-Saxon Studies* 8, (1979), 199, 204–11, 222; Williams, 'Principes Merciorum Gentis', 117.
23. Keynes, *Diplomas*, 128, 197–8; Williams, 'Principes Merciorum Gentis', 171.
24. Whitelock, *Wills*, 111, 181; D. Whitelock, *English Historical Documents* (Oxford, 1955), 1, 465 ff.
25. Whitelock, *Wills*, xxxv; Williams, 'Principes Merciorum Gentis', 149.
26. Dumville, 'The Aetheling', 22–3.
27. Whitelock, *Wills*, 20–3.
28. Keynes, *Diplomas*, 197–201.
29. Wormald, *Bede and the Conversion*, 22.
30. N. Brooks, 'Anglo-Saxon Charters', *Anglo-Saxon Studies* 3 (1974), 223–4, rightly urges caution with regard to boundaries in Saxon charters not least because some appear to be post-Conquest additions to earlier documents. Happily Cerney can be regarded as sound.
31. Hooke, *Anglo-Saxon Landscape*, 54, 58–68.
32. Details of the bounds are set out and discussed in Grundy, *Saxon Charters of Gloucestershire*, 62–4. The furrow as a boundary is considered in C. Dyer, *Lords and Peasants in a Changing Society* (Cambridge, 1980), 26, and Hooke, *Anglo-Saxon Landscape*, 193.
33. Slater, 'The Town and its Regions', 91; Hooke, *Anglo-Saxon Landscape*, 76.
34. Dyer, *Lords and Peasants*, 29; Hooke, *Anglo-Saxon Landscape*, 54.
35. Eadflaed's gift is in B.L. Cotton MSS. Claudius B. vi, f. 105 and v., and Claudius C. ix, f. 126.
36. S1216; Williams, 'Principes Merciorum Gentis', 159, 166–7.
37. B.L. Cotton MS. Claudius C. ix, f. 129. The report actually says that Stigand 'extorted' Cerney 'by skilful pleading'. The author is rightly cautious in the words he uses to define Stigand's status. The papacy never recognised his advancement by the king to the archbishopric, the previous holder being still alive but having fled. Indeed William the Conqueror shrewdly allowed Stigand's expulsion from office to be by the pope's representatives rather than by the invading Normans.
38. *Domesday Book No. 15: Gloucestershire*, ed. J. Moore (Chichester, 1982), 61.2.
39. D. Walker, 'The Honours of the Earls of Hereford', *Trans. B.G.A.S.* 79, 176.