Deerhurst’s Earliest Patrons: Æthelmund and Æthelric

By MICHAEL HARE

The Anglo-Saxon minster church of St Mary, Deerhurst, Gloucestershire (OS Nat. Grid SO 870299) is one of the outstanding buildings to survive from the Middle Saxon period (Fig. 1). Recent art-historical study of the sculpture and painted remains has indicated a date in the first half of the 9th century for the main phase of building.1 The testament of Æthelric, a document bearing the date 804, tells us that Æthelric bequeathed four estates to Deerhurst, a bequest which apparently took effect in the early 820s. The context suggests that in all likelihood Æthelric’s father, Æthelmund, had also been a patron of Deerhurst. The historical and art-historical evidence thus allows for the possibility that it was the patronage of Æthelmund and Æthelric which enabled the minster community at Deerhurst to enlarge their church and to create the surviving monument with notably more art in situ than any other English building from the pre-Norman period. The aim of the present essay is to explore the available evidence for both Æthelmund and Æthelric.

Æthelmund – the prosopographical problem

The name Æthelmund occurs in a Mercian context in various sources between 767 and 802. However, an account of ‘Æthelmund’ is by no means straightforward, as scholars are not in agreement that all these occurrences relate to a single person. In the following account I will deal first with references to Æthelmund, son of Ingeld, who is found in documents bearing the dates 767 and 770. Secondly I will consider the Æthelmund who received a grant of land in 793×6, together with documents dated 804 and 824 concerning the inheritance of his son, Æthelric. Thirdly I will discuss the various references to an Ealdorman Æthelmund, who occurs from the mid-790s until 802. Late medieval evidence from Gloucester and from Glastonbury will also be considered. I will argue that in all likelihood there was a single Æthelmund, but that the evidence does not permit certainty on this point.

Much of the evidence to be considered comes from the archives of the bishops of Worcester, whose diocese included most of Worcestershire, Gloucestershire to the east of the Rivers Severn and Leadon, and a large part of south and west Warwickshire. The territory of the bishopric

corresponded closely in extent to the kingdom of the Hwicce, which by the late 7th century was a sub-kingdom of Mercia.  

Æthelmund son of Ingeld

We are first concerned with a pair of charters dated 767 and 770. The 767 charter (S58) survives only in two 17th-century transcripts of a lost original from the Worcester archive. Under the terms of this document Úhtred, who is described as *regulus* of the Hwicce, granted five hides of land at Aston in Stoke Prior (Worcestershire) beside the River Salwarpe to his faithful minister Æthelmund. The grant was made with the consent of King Offa of Mercia (757–96), and Æthelmund had freedom to dispose of the land as he wished. Recent discussions of this text have

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all accepted the more complete of the two transcripts as a faithful copy of an authentic original document.4

The second charter (S59) survives as a single sheet.5 This document is dated 770 and is also a grant by Æhtred (again with the consent of King Offa) to Æthelmund of the same five-hide estate, but on rather different conditions. Under the terms of S59, Æthelmund did not have freedom of disposal, but could only leave the land to two heirs after him; after the death of two heirs the estate was to be given to the church of Worcester together with the title-deeds. The circumstances in which S59 was produced have attracted much recent discussion. Michelle Brown has suggested on palaeographical grounds that the document is more likely to have been written in the early 9th century than in 770; she has drawn particular attention to the similarity of the script to that found in the Book of Cerne (Cambridge University Library, MS L.I.I.10), written in the 820s or 830s.6 At around the same time, Patrick Wormald advanced reasons for considering the document to be a forgery concocted in the early 9th century; he also suggested a specific context for the production of this forgery, relating it to a dispute concerning the inheritance of Æthelric son of Æthelmund in Westbury and Stoke (discussed below).7 Patrick Sims-Williams subsequently suggested that S59 might in fact be a revised copy of a lost charter of 770, issued late in the reign of King Offa.8 The most recent contribution to the debate is an analysis by Francesca Tinti of the early charters concerning Aston in Stoke Prior. She has shown that the specific context suggested by Wormald is not tenable, but is also inclined to consider S59 in its extant form as belonging to the early 9th century; she concludes that the precise circumstances in which S59 was produced cannot be reconstructed with certainty, but advances a possible alternative scenario (see note 46 below).9

In both the 767 and the 770 documents, Æthelmund is described as the son of Ingeld, who in turn is characterised (in the past tense) as having been an ealdorman (dux et prefectus) of King Æthelbald of Mercia (716–57).10 Ingeld is not recorded in any other source, but that need occasion no surprise given the scarcity of narrative sources for Æthelbald’s reign and the small number of surviving charters issued by Æthelbald with witness lists (especially for his later years).11 Ingeld


5. S59 (BCS203); there is a translation in English Historical Documents c. 500–1042 [hereafter EHD], ed. D. Whitelock, Eng. Hist. Documents 1, 2nd ed. (London, 1979), no. 74 (pp. 502–3).


11. For charter attestations of laymen during Æthelbald’s reign, see S. Keynes, An Atlas of Attestations in Anglo-Saxon Charters, c. 670–1066, ASNC Guides, Texts and Studies 5 (Cambridge, 2002), Table VII.
bore a name familiar from early Germanic legend and literature, the prince of the Heathobards who occurs both in Beowulf and Widsith; the surviving poetic texts are of much later date as transmitted to us, but in 797 Alcuin famously wrote to Speratus (probably Bishop Unwona of Leicester), protesting at the use of pagan song at the episcopal dinner-table and adding ‘Quid Hinieldus cum Christo?’, ‘What has Ingeld to do with Christ?’.

After the grants of 767 and 770, there are no references to anyone by the name of Æthelmund until the 790s. In the intervening period the sub-kingdom of the Hwicce had come to an end; the last reference to a member of the dynasty occurs in the late 770s. The fact that we have no surviving references to any individual by the name of Æthelmund during the 770s and 780s does not mean that the person or persons called Æthelmund discussed in this paper were not active during these decades; in particular charters of this period rarely list lay witnesses below the rank of ealdorman.

Æthelmund father of Æthelric, and his family

In 793×6 King Offa issued a charter (S139) in favour of his minister Æthelmund; under the terms of S139, Æthelmund received a substantial estate of 55 hides at Westbury beside the River Avon (i.e. Westbury-on-Trym, Gloucestershire). S139 survives as a single sheet original and also in a copy in Worcester’s early 11th-century cartulary, Liber Wigorniensis. S139 was issued by Offa at a synod held at Clofesho; the date of 793×6 is established by the witnesses, and it seems likely that the synod in fact took place in 794. S139 has been accepted by all authorities as genuine, and the single sheet would seem to be contemporary with the grant.

There is, however, a complication as Liber Wigorniensis preserves the text of another charter concerning Westbury (S146), also undated but again to be assigned on the basis of the witnesses to 793×6. Under the terms of S146, Offa granted to the church of Worcester 60 hides at Westbury and a further 20 hides at nearby Henbury; the grant was to take effect after the death of Offa and of his son Ecgfrith. No reference is made in S146 to Æthelmund or his family. Patrick Wormald

13. An Æthelmund does occur as a witness in a document datable to 757×75, but this would appear to be due to a mistake on the part of the compilers of Liber Wigorniensis: see below n. 78.
15. The evidence is clear from Keynes, Atlas, Table X.
16. S139 (BCS274). The site of the later settlement and church of Westbury was on the Trym, a minor tributary of the Avon; the estate granted by S139 must have extended southwards as far as the north bank of the Avon, as it did in later centuries.
18. The fullest discussion is in Scharer, Die angelsächsische Königsurkunde, pp. 274–8.
19. S146 (BCS273); translation in EHD, ed. Whitelock, no. 78 (pp. 507–8).
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has argued that S146 is an early 9th-century forgery made in the context of the dispute over the inheritance of Æthelmund’s son, Æthelric.20

If we discount references to the ealdorman called Æthelmund, we hear nothing further of Æthelmund during his lifetime. However, two further documents are concerned with the inheritance of Æthelmund’s son, Æthelric, and tell us much more about the family. The first (S1187) bears the date of 804 and outlines the dispositions which Æthelric made after his father’s death;21 the second (S1433) is an account of a dispute settlement in Oct. 824 made after Æthelric’s own death.22 The bishops of Worcester and their community were the victors in the dispute settlement; the two documents which we have were evidently drawn up by the Worcester community and both are preserved in Liber Wigorniensis. S1187 is also preserved in the two late 11th-century Worcester cartularies, the Nero-Middleton cartulary and Hemming’s cartulary.23 The text in the Nero-Middleton cartulary is abbreviated, but the versions of S1187 in Liber Wigorniensis and in Hemming’s cartulary are very similar; if the two cartularists worked independently from a lost original (as Neil Ker thought), then we have a fairly reliable text for this crucial document.24

S1187 is in the form of a nuncupative will on the part of Æthelric and is a composite document, reporting the proceedings of two synods separated by a few years, the first held at Clofesho and the second held at Aclea. It is unclear whether the date of 804 relates to the first or second of these two synods. There seems no reason to assume that Æthelric’s testamentary dispositions were made when he himself was on the point of death; a bequest to his mother is noted as being effective ‘if she live longer than I’. Æthelric’s testament begins with a statement that he had been summoned to appear at a synod at Clofesho with the deeds of the estate at ‘Westminster’, which he had received from his kinsmen; ‘Westminster’ is evidently an alternative name for Westbury-on-Trym, and the name indicates that a religious community existed there.25 At the synod it was acknowledged that Æthelric was free to dispose of the land and of the title-deeds as he wished; presumably there had been a challenge to his inheritance which was refuted. Æthelric then declares that he had entrusted the land and the associated title-deeds to his friends while he made a pilgrimage to Rome.26 Æthelric states that on his return, ‘I received back my land and repaid the price as we previously agreed, that we might be mutually at peace’. He then observes that a few years later (post paucos annos), a further synod was held at Aclea and that he gave evidence as to how he wished to dispose of his inheritance.

20. Wormald, ‘Charters, law and the settlement of disputes’, pp. 152–7, where he suggests that the forgery could have been based on a genuine charter in respect of Henbury (at p. 156 n. 30); Wormald, How do we know so much about Anglo-Saxon Deerhurst?, pp. 2–7, 20–2. Scharer (Die angelsächsische Königsurkunde, pp. 277–8) is inclined to see S146 as containing indications of later date, and S146 could well have been interpolated on more than one occasion.

21. S1187 (BCS313); translation in EHD, ed. Whitelock, no. 81 (pp. 512–13).

22. S1433 (BCS379); translation in EHD, ed. Whitelock, no. 84 (pp. 516–17).

23. The abbreviated version of S1187 is printed as BCS314. On Worcester’s two late 11th-century cartularies, see Tinti, Sustaining Belief, pp. 125–47.

24. Ker (‘Hemming’s Cartulary’, p. 68) concluded that faithful copying, rather than dependence, explains the close similarities between texts such as these. The main difference between the two texts is that Liber Wigorniensis gives no hidage for Westbury, whereas Hemming’s cartulary gives a figure of 43 hides (on the varying hidages assigned to the Westbury estate, see Tinti, ‘The Reuse of Charters’, p. 133; Tinti, Sustaining Belief, pp. 203–7); Hemming’s cartulary also has an abbreviated witness-list.

25. For the history of Westbury’s minster and its later development, see N. Orme and J. Cannon, Westbury-on-Trym: monastery, minster and college, Bristol Record Society, 62 (Bristol, 2010).

26. The context of Æthelric’s Roman pilgrimage has been explored recently by Gem, Deerhurst and Rome.
Æthelric’s detailed dispositions follow, beginning ‘These are the names of those lands which I will give to the place which is called Deerhurst, for me and for Æthelmund my father, if it befell me that my body shall be buried there: Todanhom. 7 æt Sture. Screfelb. 7 Cobbanleh on condition that that community carries out their vows as they have promised me’. Patrick Wormald argued plausibly that the provisions in S1187 implied not only that Æthelric wished to be buried at Deerhurst, but also that his father had already been buried there;27 there seems every likelihood that Æthelmund had in his turn also been a benefactor of Deerhurst. Unfortunately the vows made by the community are not specified, but there can be little doubt that they would have included worthy commemoration both for Æthelmund and for Æthelric.28 Very similar arrangements are found in a grant of land made to the cathedral community of Canterbury by Archbishop Wulfred (805–32) shortly before the end of his life. Wulfred specified that the community should commemorate him through almsgiving, psalm-singing and the celebration of masses; he also stressed that the grant was conditional upon the maintenance of all the (unspecified) acts and statements previously agreed.29

It is unfortunate that no hidages are given for the four estates granted to Deerhurst. A large part of the endowment may have been in the Stour valley.30 Domesday Book gives evidence that the church of Deerhurst had once held a number of estates in this region. In the lower Stour valley Deerhurst had formerly held Preston-on-Stour (assessed at 10 hides) with a further 15 hides at Welford-on-Avon just downstream from the confluence of the Stour and the Avon. In the valley of the upper Stour and its tributaries the former holdings of Deerhurst comprised Sutton-under-Brailles (5 hides), Upper Lemington (3 hides) and Todenham (8 hides), the one place in Æthelric’s bequest which can be identified with certainty. Three further estates lay in the upper reaches of the Evenlode valley, just across the watershed from the Stour: Little Compton (12 hides), Moreton-in-Marsh (½ hide) and Bourton-on-the-Hill (10 hides).31 These scattered estates in and around the Stour valley may represent the fragmentary remains of much larger holdings granted by Æthelric at Todenham and æt Sture. In any event Deerhurst’s holdings in this area render it

27. Wormald, How do we know so much about Anglo-Saxon Deerhurst?, p. 3.
28. It is possible that the Worcester scribe who produced S1187 may have omitted certain details which were not relevant to Worcester. Æthelric’s full testament might for instance have provided hidages for the estates bequeathed to Deerhurst; it is also possible that it might have spelled out the vows made by the community at Deerhurst.
30. There are several English rivers by the name of Stour, and the river in question here is now commonly called the Warwickshire Stour (though historically only one bank of the river was in Warwickshire for much of its length before modern alterations to county boundaries). The river is a tributary of the Avon; it flows in a northerly direction, joining the Avon about two miles south-west of Stratford-upon-Avon.
likely that Æthelric was indeed buried at Deerhurst and that his bequest took effect. The estates at Screfleh and Cobbanleb cannot be identified.

After dealing with Deerhurst, Æthelric’s testament then leaves 11 hides of land at Bromsgrove and Feckenham (both Worcestershire) to Wærfrith for his life, the land to pass to Worcester on his death; Wærfrith’s identity and his relationship to Æthelric are unknown. There is evidence, discussed below, that Worcester did obtain Bromsgrove, but held it only briefly. Æthelric next bequeathes a substantial estate of 30 hides at Over (under Ofre) to the minster at Gloucester; Over is opposite Gloucester on the west bank of the Severn. This bequest is also mentioned in Gloucester’s own archives (discussed below).

Æthelric then turns to the final part of his bequest which he evidently expects to be less than straightforward. He leaves to his mother, Ceolburg, the land at ‘Westminster’ (i.e. Westbury-on-Trym) and at Stoke for her life, the land to pass to Worcester on her death; the Stoke in question is with little doubt to be identified as Stoke Bishop (Gloucestershire), which at the time of Domesday Book was a member of Westbury-on-Trym. Æthelric clearly expects that Ceolburg would experience trouble from the ‘Berkeley people’ (Berclingas), and he makes detailed provisions for his mother’s protection, involving first the bishop of Worcester and then the archbishop of Canterbury; in addition the bishop of Lichfield and two of his ‘close and most faithful friends’ are stated to have copies of the charter. The A-text of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle contains an entry under 805 (recte 807) which relates that, ‘In this year King Cuthred died in Kent, and Abbess Ceolburg and Ealdorman Heahberht’. It seems highly likely that the Ceolburg mentioned in

32. It may also be noted that at the time of Domesday, the large manor of Tewkesbury likewise included outliers in the Stour valley, namely 7 hides at Clifford Chambers and Wincot in the lower Stour valley and 3 hides at Lower Lemington in the upper Stour valley: GDB, fo. 163v; DB Glos., nos. 1.29, 37, 42. It has been suggested that the Tewkesbury holdings derive ultimately from a subdivision of the estate of Deerhurst church: S. Bassett, The Origins of the Parishes of the Deerhurst area, Deerhurst Lecture 1997 (Deerhurst, 1998), pp. 15–18. For a useful map of the Deerhurst and Tewkesbury estates at the time of the Domesday survey, see A. Williams, ‘A West-Country Magnate of the Eleventh Century: the Family, Estates and Patronage of Beorhtric Son of Ælfgar’, in Family Trees and the Roots of Politics: the Prospography of Britain and France from the Tenth to the Twelfth Century, ed. K.S.B. Keats-Rohan (Woodbridge, 1997), pp. 41–68, at 52 (map 1).

33. As Patrick Sims-Williams has pointed out, Screfleh might perhaps be Shrewley (Warwickshire) or Shrawley (Worcestershire): Sims-Williams, Religion and Literature, p. 375. Screfleh is the reading in Liber Wigorniensis and the Nero-Middleton cartulary; Hemming’s cartulary gives the name as Scræfleh.

34. GDB, fos. 164v and 174; DB Glos., no. 3.1. Tinti, ‘The Reuse of Charters’, pp. 129–33, shows that S59 relating to Aston in Stoke Prior cannot have concerned the Stoke mentioned in this document and also that it could not have been misunderstood in the following centuries as referring to Stoke Bishop. A minor complication is provided by the fact that at the time of the Domesday survey, Worcester claimed another manor called Stoke (later Stoke Gifford) as a (detached) member of its Westbury estate: GDB, fos. 164v and 168v; DB Glos., nos. 3.1, 50.2. This Stoke was disputed between the bishops of Worcester and the Giffard family, a controversy which was to last for some two centuries before finally being settled in favour of the bishops: J.S. Moore, ‘The Gloucestershire section of Domesday Book: geographical problems of the text, part 2’, Trans. BGAS, 106 (1988), pp. 87–106, at 91. Nothing is known as to the pre-Conquest tenure of Stoke Gifford by the bishops of Worcester; by contrast Stoke Bishop is unequivocally mentioned in three other pre-Conquest documents in the Worcester archive (see notes 50, 52 below).

the annal is indeed Æthelric’s mother (see further discussion below and also Appendix 1); in all probability she had entered the religious life after Æthelmund’s death, a common choice for royal and aristocratic widows at this period.36

Some further information about Ceolburg is provided by John of Worcester in his Chronicle, written in the first half of the 12th century. The earliest recensions of John’s Chronicle simply repeat the report of her death contained in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, but in the later recensions of the chronicle, John adds that Ceolburg was abbess of Berkeley.37 This is not something which would readily have been deduced from the terms of Æthelric’s testament with its provisions for Ceolburg’s protection against the ‘Berkeley people’, and much ink has been spilled in attempts to explain this difficulty.38 However, it is far from certain that John’s information was reliable. It may very well be, as Patrick Sims-Williams has suggested, that this additional information was based on a hazy memory (or perhaps a careless reading) of Æthelric’s testament.39 In this connection it is worth making the point that Berkeley is the only nunnery known to have been active in the diocese of Worcester in the 11th century,40 although Berkeley was no longer a nunnery in John’s day, he would certainly have known of it, and this knowledge may have predisposed John to conclude from Æthelric’s testament that Ceolburg was abbess of Berkeley. If John was mistaken in describing Ceolburg as abbess of Berkeley, then she may well have been abbess of Westbury, as Sarah Foot and Richard Gem have recently suggested.41

Æthelric was indeed right to foresee trouble from the ‘Berkeley people’, as Patrick Wormald has pointed out, though since his mother seems likely to have predeceased him, the trouble apparently occurred after his own death rather than after his mother’s.42 Under the year 822 (recte 824) the A-text of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle records that ‘In this year two ealdormen, Burghelm and Muca, were killed. And there was a synod at Clofesbo’.43 S1433 is Worcester’s account of the proceedings at this synod in respect of the estate at Westbury. Like Æthelric’s testament, S1433 is a composite document, for it describes both the judgement at the synod and a subsequent oath-swearing 30 days later at ‘Westminster’ (i.e. Westbury).44 S1433 is dated 30 Oct. 824 (which could be the date either of the synod or of the subsequent oath-swearing).

Æthelric may have been dead for at least a year and perhaps longer by this time. An endorsement in Old English to a charter of 803 may be dated between the accession of Bishop Heahberht of Worcester in 822 and the deposition of King Ceolwulf (821–3) of Mercia in 823; the endorsement (which is mainly concerned with Inkberrow, Worcestershire) notes that Ceolwulf solicited the

41. Ibid., II, pp. 40–1; Gem, Deerhurst and Rome, 2.
42. Wormald, ‘Charters, law and the settlement of disputes’, pp. 155, 157; Wormald, How do we know so much about Anglo-Saxon Deerhurst?, p. 3.
43. Anglo-Saxon Chronicle 822 A (= 824); Anglo-Saxon Chronicle MS A, ed. Bately, p. 41 (text); Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, ed. Whitelock et al., p. 40 (translation).
44. S1433 uses both ‘Westbury’ and ‘Westminster’ in its terminology.
estate at Bromsgrove from the Worcester community. It is probably to be inferred that when this endorsement was written, Æthelric had died (as also Wærfrith to whom Bromsgrove had originally been left for his life) and that Worcester had then acquired (or attempted to acquire) the estate at Bromsgrove in line with the provisions of S1187.

It is also worth noting that the 824 synod seems to have been the first held since 816, largely because of the bitter conflict over the Kentish minsters between King Coenwulf (796–821) of Mercia and Archbishop Wulfred (805–32) of Canterbury, who was suspended from office for almost six years during this period. The final resolution of the dispute over the inheritance of Æthelric may thus have been held over until a fresh synod was convened.

The account in S1433 relates that at the synod, ‘a certain dispute was brought forward between Bishop Heahberht [of Worcester] and the community of Berkeley concerning the inheritance of Æthelric, son of Æthelmund, that is to say the minster which is called Westbury’. It is reported ‘that the bishop had the land with the title-deeds, just as Æthelric had ordered that it was to revert to the church of Worcester’. The synod confirmed Worcester in its possession of Westbury, and it was decreed that the bishop ‘should swear the land into his possession with an oath of the servants of God, priests, deacons and many monks’. After giving the list of witnesses of the synod, S1433 then lists the names of ‘the mass-priests who stood and were concerned in the oath’; a list of 56 names follows, comprising 3 abbots, 47 priests and 6 deacons. In addition a note in Old English mentions that ‘at the oath at Westminster there were as many as 50 mass-priests and 10 deacons and 160 other priests’; by ‘other priests’ we should in this context understand clerics in lesser orders. In Patrick Wormald’s words, ‘the bishop had evidently rustled up a fair proportion of his diocesan manpower in his own support’. The judgement in S1433 refers to Westbury only, and no reference is made to Stoke Bishop.

Although Worcester obtained Westbury in 824, other evidence indicates that the Berkeley community retained an interest in this part of southern Gloucestershire. In 883 the abbot and community of Berkeley were granted certain privileges by Ealdorman Æthelred of the Mercians in exchange for 12 hides at Stoke Bishop; Æthelred leased the 12 hides to Cynulf, son of Ceoluht.


46. Tinti, ‘The Reuse of Charters’, pp. 134–8, has pointed out that Aston in Stoke Prior (the subject of S58 and S59) lay very close to Bromsgrove and that its name (the ‘east tīn’) was probably coined with reference to Bromsgrove, the centre of a major estate. She tentatively suggests that Aston may have been subsumed within the 11 hides of Bromsgrove and Feckenham by the time of Æthelric’s death, and that S59 may have been produced by the Worcester community in order to protect its interests in that part of the estate; she does, however, emphasise that other scenarios remain possible. This suggestion depends on Æthelmund son of Ingeld being one and the same as Æthelmund father of Æthelric.


48. The Old English word prēost was often used to refer to clergy in lesser orders; the Old English equivalent of the Latin word presbyter was messe-prēost.

for three lives; at the end of the three lives, the estate was to pass to the bishopric at Worcester.\textsuperscript{50} It is possible, as Ann Williams has suggested, that Cynulf son of Ceoluht was a kinsman of Ceolburg and that the transaction in 883 ‘concerned the narrow line between the personal possessions of the founding family and the lands which they assigned to the support of their church’.\textsuperscript{51} Stoke Bishop had probably been part of the estate at Westbury granted to Æthelmund in 793×6 and was certainly part of the Westbury estate in the late 10th and 11th centuries.\textsuperscript{52} It is also worth noting that at the time of the Domesday survey, the vast royal manor of Berkeley included four detached members adjacent to the Westbury estate, namely Almondsbury (2 hides), Horfield (8 hides), (King’s) Weston (7 hides and 1 virgate) and Elberton (5 hides).\textsuperscript{53} The Domesday manor would seem to have its origins in the former holdings of the minster community of Berkeley.\textsuperscript{54} It would be foolhardy to suggest that any of these estates were necessarily acquired by Berkeley as early as the 9th century, but their existence does perhaps hint at the possibility that the pattern of patronage in the Westbury area may have been more complex than that which is visible from the Worcester sources; it is possible that some of these estates in the Westbury area were acquired

50. S218 (BCS551); partial translation in Select English Historical Documents of the ninth and tenth centuries, ed. F.E. Harmer (Cambridge, 1914), pp. 53–4. It is interesting to note that the bounds of S218 include a lead mine (\textit{lead gedelf}) located on or close to the boundary between Westbury and Stoke Bishop. This rare resource may have been one of the reasons for the especial importance of Westbury; lead from the mine was doubtless used in architecture, but the principal importance of the Westbury mine is likely to have been the supply of lead for boiling-pans for use in the brine-pits at Droitwich, where high-quality salt was produced in large quantity: J.R. Maddicott, ‘London and Droitwich, c. 650–750: Trade, Industry and the Rise of Mercia’, \textit{Anglo-Saxon England}, 34 (2005), pp. 7–58. According to the latest analysis of the difficult Stoke Bishop charter bounds, this lead mine is likely to have been on Durdham Down in the vicinity of OS Nat. Grid ST 572756; this location is on the northern side of Stoke Bishop only a mile south of the church at Westbury: see D.H. Higgins, ‘The Anglo-Saxon Charters of Stoke Bishop: a study of the boundaries of \textit{Bisceopes stoc’}, Trans. BGAS, 120 (2002), pp. 107–31, at 111.

51. Williams, ‘An introduction to the Gloucestershire Domesday’, p. 32. Though not explicitly stated, the argument is presumably based on the recurrence of the Ceol- element in the personal names; names in Ceol- are, however, fairly common in 8th- and 9th-century Mercia, as reference to the Prosopography of Anglo-Saxon England (PASE) database will show: see <http://www.pase.ac.uk>, accessed 30 Dec. 2011.

52. For instance a late 11th-century list in Old English in the Nero-Middleton cartulary of grants in favour of the church of Worcester refers to ‘Westbury and Stoke’, showing that the Worcester community thought of them as being part of the same estate: Tinti, \textit{Sustaining Belief}, p. 134 n. 158. Two hides in Stoke Bishop were leased by Bishop Oswald of Worcester to his \textit{minister} Æthelweard in 969 and a further three hides to the same beneficiary in 984: S1317 (BCS1236) and S1346 (KCD646). For the Domesday evidence, see n. 34 above; no hidage is provided by Domesday Book, but a schedule of hidages dating to shortly before 1086 was entered in \textit{Liber Wigorniensis} and gives a figure of five hides for Stoke Bishop: \textit{Hemugi Chartularium Ecclesiae Wigorniensis}, ed. T. Hearne, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1723), I, pp. 83–4; for discussion of this schedule, see \textit{DB Glos.}, notes on WoA (unpaginated). The much larger hidage assigned to Stoke Bishop in 883 is explained by the fact that the bounds show that the 883 lease also included Westbury’s detached member of Shirehampton.

53. \textit{DB Glos.}, fo. 163; \textit{DB Glos.}, no. 1.15. This point is discussed further and illustrated with a map in Hare, ‘Anglo-Saxon Berkeley’. The map of south Gloucestershire at the back of \textit{DB Glos.} also gives a good idea of the complexity of the geography.

from Æthelmund or from his or his wife’s kindred.\textsuperscript{55} In any event there would seem to have been longstanding competition for lands in this corner of Gloucestershire between the bishop of Worcester and the community of Berkeley.

As already noted, the forgery S146 (purporting to date from 793×6) was argued by Patrick Wormald to have been produced in the early part of the 9th century with the situation following Æthelric’s death in mind; as he pointed out, the implication is that the bishop of Worcester was by no means sure of winning his case. He also stressed how much of the background remains unclear, given that the surviving documentation is all from the Worcester archive; we do not, for instance, know the case put forward by the Berkeley community in support of their claims. What is, however, clear is that the case ‘vividly illustrates the determination of England’s Carolingian prelates to challenge proprietary rights in religious communities by taking them under episcopal control’\textsuperscript{56}.

**Ealdorman Æthelmund**

We may now turn to the Æthelmund who appears as an ealdorman, seemingly the ealdorman who administered the territory of the Hwicce on behalf of the Mercian kings. From the first half of the 790s until his death in 802, Æthelmund is regularly recorded as an ealdorman in the witness lists of charters and of the remarkable series of synodal documents produced at this period;\textsuperscript{57} some of these documents are forgeries, but in all cases the forgers do at least seem to have had access to genuine witness lists of the period. The attestations span the last years of King Offa (757–96), the short reign of his son, King Ecgfrith (July to Dec. 796) and the early part of the reign of King Coenwulf (796–821); Æthelmund attests variously as *dux*, *prefectus* and *princeps*.\textsuperscript{58}

Æthelmund’s attestations may be listed as follows:

**S136** and **S138**.\textsuperscript{59} These two charters of King Offa for St Albans are both manifest forgeries. The witness-list of S136, though interpolated, and the dating clause are probably based on an authentic synodal charter of Offa, issued at Chelsea possibly in 793.\textsuperscript{60} Æthelmund attests in second place of 10 ealdormen, but in this case, it seems that the forger has not preserved the original order of witnesses, as ealdormen who normally attest above Æthelmund are beneath him in this list.\textsuperscript{61} The witness-list of S138 is based on a different source and would seem to emanate from a council held by Offa *æt Beoranforda*; the dating information in the charter is inconsistent but

\textsuperscript{55} The name of Almondsbury is likely to derive either from ‘Æthelmod’s *burh*’ or ‘Æthelmund’s *burh*’; while it would be tempting to ascribe the origin of the name to the Æthelmund who received nearby Westbury in 793×6, the early forms of the name suggest that a derivation from the name Æthelmod is in fact more likely: A.H. Smith, *The Place-Names of Gloucestershire*, 4 vols., Eng. Place-Name Soc. 38–41 (Cambridge, 1964–5), III, p. 105.

\textsuperscript{56} Wormald, ‘Charters, law and the settlement of disputes’, pp. 152–7 (for the quotation, p. 157); Wormald, *How do we know so much about Anglo-Saxon Deerhurst?*, pp. 2–7, 20–2. Wormald also argued that S59 was forged in the same context, but as noted above, this view can no longer be sustained.

\textsuperscript{57} On the synodal documents of this period, see Cubitt, *Anglo-Saxon Church Councils*, pp. 205–34.

\textsuperscript{58} On the terminology used, see Thacker, ‘Some terms for noblemen’.

\textsuperscript{59} *Charters of St Albans*, ed. J. Crick, Anglo-Saxon Charters 12 (Oxford, 2007), no. 1 (pp. 109–19) and no. 3 (pp. 124–31).


\textsuperscript{61} Keynes, *Atlas*, Table X.
suggests the early to mid 790s, while the witness-list is consistent with a date between 787 and 796.Æthelmund attests S138 in sixth place of 13 ealdormen.

**S139** and **S146**. Both of these documents from the Worcester archive concern grants of land by King Offa at Westbury-on-Trym datable to 793×6; these documents were discussed above, as Æthelmund minister was a beneficiary of S139. Æthelmund witnesses S139 in fifth place of 12 ealdormen and S146 in fourth place of nine ealdormen.

**S132**. This charter survives as a single sheet of 10th-century date and purports to be a grant of land by Offa to Christ Church, Canterbury dated 790 (but with a regnal year which would indicate 795) made at a synod in London. The document is not authentic in its present form, but is apparently based on a synodal document of the 790s. The witness-list would be compatible with a date of 795, and Æthelmund witnesses in fifth place of 12 ealdormen.

**S148** and **S149**. These two charters, which survive in later cartulary copies, were issued by King Ecgfrith during his short reign in the second half of 796. They were probably both issued on the same occasion, an assembly stated in S148 to have taken place at Bath. Both texts seem to have an authentic core. S149 is in favour of Malmesbury, and Æthelmund witnesses in second place of six ealdormen (of whom the last is West Saxon rather than Mercian). S148 is from the Worcester archive and is in favour of Ealdorman Æthelmund himself; it will be discussed further below. There are only three ealdormen as witnesses, and Æthelmund attests in second place.

**S153, S155 and S1186a**. These three documents date from the early years of the reign of King Coenwulf and are from the archive of Christ Church, Canterbury; all three documents survive in contemporary or near-contemporary copies. S153 is probably an early copy of a lost original, written in its present form in the 820s. The original grant was issued at a synod of Clofesho in 798 and relates to a grant of land in Kent; Æthelmund attests in fifth place of 11 ealdormen. S155 was issued at a council held at Tamworth in 799 and survives as a single-sheet original; Æthelmund attests in third place of 12 ealdormen. Finally S1186a is an endorsement added to an earlier charter at a synod at Chelsea in 799×801; the document was originally issued by King Offa in 767. Æthelmund attests the endorsement in second place of 11 ealdormen.

The picture of Æthelmund afforded by the witness-lists is of a middle-ranking ealdorman under Offa, perhaps achieving rather more senior status under Ecgfrith and Coenwulf. It is unclear when Æthelmund was first appointed as ealdorman. Most of the surviving witness-lists from

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63. See notes 16 and 19 above. The lay witnesses in S139 are without title, but all attest other charters as ealdormen (Keynes, *Atlas*, Table X). S146 is probably a forgery (as discussed above), but the witness-list is unproblematic.
64. S132 (BCS265); *Charters of Christ Church, Canterbury*, ed. Brooks and Kelly, no. 25.
66. S148 (BCS278).
69. S153 (BCS289), S155 (BCS293) and S1186a (BCS201); *Charters of Christ Church, Canterbury*, ed. Brooks and Kelly, nos. 26, 29 and 16 (b).
72. S106 (BCS201); *Charters of Christ Church, Canterbury*, ed. Brooks and Kelly, no 16 (a); Cubitt, *Anglo-Saxon Church Councils*, pp. 278–9.
73. The ealdormen are here unstyled, but all the lay witnesses can be traced as ealdormen in other documents (Keynes, *Atlas*, Tables X and XVII).
Mercian documents of the 780s contain only a small number of laymen. The only extensive lists of ealdormen as witnesses from this period all emanate from a synod held at Chelsea in 789, if Æthelmund was not included among the witnesses at Chelsea through absence or for some other reason, he could have been appointed well before his earliest attestation in surviving witness-lists. Ealdorman Æthelmund was also the beneficiary of one of the charters which he witnessed (S148). Under the terms of S148, King Ecgfrith granted three hides at Huntena tun to his faithful princeps, Æthelmund. The use of the term princeps was often used to denote an ealdorman of senior status, and its use here would tend to support the evidence of the witness-lists. S148 was preserved in Liber Wigorniensis, immediately following an earlier charter (S63) in respect of the same estate datable to 757±75 issued by Ealdred, a sub-king of the Hwicce. Worcester must have acquired a copy both of Ecgfrith's charter and of the earlier charter relating to this estate. The location of Huntena tun has not been established, though Finberg has proposed that it is likely to have been in southern Gloucestershire, perhaps in the vicinity of Charfield. It will be argued below that Huntena tun probably became a member (perhaps detached) of Worcester's Westbury-on-Trym estate; Finberg's suggested location is possible, but most of southern Gloucestershire was later in the Forest of Kingswood, so the identification of a place called Huntena tun (the tun of the hunters) is unlikely to be easy.

Ealdorman Æthelmund's death is recorded in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, the only reference to him in a narrative source. The A-text annal for 800 (recte 802) reads as follows:

Her Beorhtric cyning forþferde 7 Worr aldormon; 7 Ecgbryht feng to Wesseaxna rice. 7 þy ican dege rad Æthelmund alorman of Hwicciom ofer æt Cynemær's ford; þa mette hine Weoxstan alorman mid Wilsætum. Þær wearþ micel gefeoht 7 þær begen ofslægene þa aldormen, 7 Wilsætan namon sige.

In this year King Beorhtric and Ealdorman Worr died, and Ecgberht succeeded to the kingdom of the West Saxons. And that same day Ealdorman Æthelmund rode over [the Thames] at Kempsford from the province of the Hwicce. And then Ealdorman Wiohstan with the men of Wiltshire met him, and a great battle took place, and both ealdormen were killed and the men of Wiltshire had the victory.

74. Keynes, Atlas, Table X.
75. Cubitt, Anglo-Saxon Church Councils, pp. 272–3. Three witness-lists survive from this synod, one from the Worcester archive, S1430 (BCS256), and two from Rochester, S130 and S131 (Charters of Rochester, ed. A. Campbell, Anglo-Saxon Charters 1 (London, 1973), no. 14 (pp. 16–17) and no. 13 (pp. 15–16)). S1430 includes a witness whose full name has not survived, but which ended ...mundi. This could perhaps be an early attestation of Æthelmund, but it might also be one of the two ealdormen named Ealhmund who attest charters at this period (one of whom does witness S1430); see Keynes, Atlas, Table X.
76. For the likelihood that this charter contains an authentic core, see note 68 above.
77. Thacker, 'Some terms for noblemen', pp. 203–5. Æthelmund also attested S132 as princeps, but no significance should be attached in this instance to all 12 ealdormen are assigned this title.
78. S63 (BCS218). The last two witnesses (Æthelmund and Eadgar) of S148 also occur in Ealdred's charter. As Anton Scharer has pointed out, these two witnesses were probably added in error to the cartulary copy of S63 by a Worcester scribe who had both documents in front of him: Scharer, Die angelsächsische Königurkunde, p. 257.
79. H.P.R. Finberg, The Early Charters of the West Midlands, Studies in Early English Hist. 2, 2nd ed. (Leicester, 1972), no. 29 (pp. 37–8) and no. 51 (pp. 42–3).
The annal does not expressly say that Æthelmund was ealdorman of the Hwicce, though the context suggests that this is likely to have been the case; moreover S148 (in respect of Huntena tun) shows him holding land which was in all likelihood in the diocese of Worcester. The precise casus belli is unknown. It may well be, as Barbara Yorke and Simon Draper have suggested, that long-term competition between Mercia and Wessex for control of lands to the south of the Rivers Thames and Avon underlies Æthelmund's invasion. In the shorter term it seems highly probable that Æthelmund's incursion across the Thames border into Wiltshire should be seen in the context of the succession to the West Saxon kingdom. Ecgberht came from a different line of the West Saxon royal dynasty to Beorhtric (786–802), and there may well have been a delay between Beorhtric's death and Ecgberht's succession. Beorhtric had been married to King Offa's daughter, and the Mercian kings may have exercised substantial influence on the West Saxon kingdom during his reign. Offa and Beorhtric had certainly collaborated to have Ecgberht exiled for three years, probably from 789, and Ecgberht seems to have caused problems for Offa's rule in Kent. Beorhtric's wife, Eadburh (Offa's daughter), left a most unfavourable reputation in Wessex, and her position after Beorhtric's death could have been a further cause for Mercian concern.

The Mercians may thus have had good reason to intervene in the West Saxon succession, in which case Æthelmund was presumably acting on behalf of King Coenwulf. While this scenario is attractive, other possibilities should not be ignored; Æthelmund's incursion into Wiltshire might have been no more than an opportunistic raid at a time of weakness on the part of the West Saxon kingdom. Further evidence of tensions between Mercia and Wessex at around this time is perhaps provided by a document (S154, preserved in Liber Wigorniensis) under which Abbot Balthun purchased freedoms for his monastery of Kempsey (Worcestershire); the dating clause indicates that S154 was issued in 799 at a meeting at Coleshill, but adds that on this occasion, peace was made between Kings Coenwulf and Ecgberht. Either the date or the reference to Ecgberht would seem to be incorrect, and the interpretation of this aspect of S154 is far from easy. Patrick Sims-Williams has dismissed the reference to the peace treaty as 'an antiquarian addition'; the inclusion of historical detail to give the reader reassurance is indeed a feature of some forgeries in Liber Wigorniensis, but is not in itself grounds for suspecting a document, as Julia Barrow has pointed out.


83. It has often been suggested that Beorhtric was no more than a client king of Mercia: see for instance Cubitt, Anglo-Saxon Church Councils, p. 209. However, for a very different perspective, see S. Keynes, 'England, 700–900', in The New Cambridge Medieval History II: c. 700–c. 900, ed. R. McKitterick (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 18–42, at 34–5.


86. S154 (BCS295).
DEERHURST’S EARLIEST PATRONS

out.\(^{87}\) Traditionally Coleshill (Warwicks.) has been seen as the site of the peace-meeting, and this is certainly plausible, for Coleshill was a minster church.\(^{88}\) More recently Simon Keynes has pointed out that the Coleshill in question might be Coleshill (Berkhs.), only a short distance from Kempsford.\(^{89}\)

The battle of Kempsford has received surprisingly little attention from historians, and is discussed further in Appendix 2.

Late medieval evidence from Gloucester and Glastonbury

Additional evidence for Æthelmund and Æthelric is to be found in Gloucester Abbey’s archive; the records in question are all of late medieval date and present many problems, but seem to preserve at least some reliable information concerning early benefactors of Gloucester. The earliest source is Gloucester’s late 13th-century cartulary, which contains a letter addressed to Pope Eugenius by Abbot Thomas of Pershore c. 1150, giving evidence in the longstanding quarrel between Gloucester Abbey and the archbishops of York over the manors of Northleach, Standish and Oddington (all Gloucestershire). Thomas lists various benefactors, mentioning one source of benefactions as coming from a certain ‘Ælmundo ingeldinc’;\(^{90}\) this is likely to refer to Northleach which is mentioned in later records as having been given by Æthelmund.

The remaining Gloucester records all date to the time of Abbot Walter Frocester (1382–1412). The register compiled in Frocester’s time begins with a charter purporting to have been issued by King Æthelred of Mercia (674×5–704), followed by a list of benefactors and their lands. This list includes 30 hides at Æoport and 35 hides at (North)leach given by ‘Ælmund ingelding’; Æoport is, as Finberg commented, one and the same as Over.\(^{91}\) The Historia, written by Abbot Frocester himself, consists of a chronicle, followed by a list of benefactions with a concluding list of benefactors. The chronicle is confused in its account of the early history of the house, but includes the statement that ‘Edelmund’ (here styled subregulus) gave 30 hides at Over and 35 hides at Northleach; the concluding list of benefactors names ‘Athelmund Ingelding’ as the donor of 30 hides at Over.\(^{92}\)

It is, however, the list of benefactions which contains the most interesting evidence. The entry concerning Over reads as follows:


91. S70 (Æthelred’s charter, BCS 60) and S1782 (the list of benefactions, printed in Historia et Cartularium, ed. Hart, I, pp. lxii–iii); the reading ‘ingelding’ is mine (Hart gives the name as ‘in Geldinge’). On the name Æoport, see Finberg, The Early Charters, no. 41 (p. 40).

92. Historia et Cartularium, ed. Hart, I, pp. 4, 122. I have taken the figure of 35 hides at Northleach from Gloucester, Dean and Chapter, MS. 34, fol. 1r; Hart gives a figure of 38 hides. Hart did not see the Gloucester manuscript, and I have not had the opportunity to consult the two manuscripts which he did use.
Anno Domini octingentesimo quarto Æthelric, filius Edelmundi regis, cum consenso sinodali invitatus ad sinodum, dedit triginta manentes in Overe ecclesiae Sancti Petri Gloucestriae, et donum patris sui confirmavit, tempore clericorum ibidem degentium.93

In the year 804 Æthelric, son of King (sic) Æthelmund, having with the consent of the synod been summoned to a synod, gave 30 hides at Over to the church of St Peter, Gloucester, and confirmed the gift of his father, in the time of the clerks then living there.

The wording clearly indicates that this record derives from a copy of Æthelric’s testament, for S1187 includes the words cum conscientia synodali invitatus ad synodum. In all likelihood Gloucester had once had its own copy of S1187 (or of a very similar document produced at the same time). It is, however, a moot point whether the use of the phrase referring to a synod derives ultimately from Gloucester’s own early records or whether Gloucester was able to supplement its own sparse archive with relevant information from Worcester at a much later date.94 It is no great surprise to find that Gloucester listed Æthelmund as the initial benefactor; Æthelmund could well himself have given Over to Gloucester, his son Æthelric retaining a life interest.95 The several references to Æthelmund as ‘Ingelding’ (i.e. son of Ingeld) would, if taken at face value, indicate that the father of Æthelric was indeed one and the same as the son of Ingeld. However, while this is a valuable indicator, it must be recognised that the records of early benefactions to Gloucester are so confused that we cannot exclude the possibility that two individuals of the same name have been conflated. S1187 (Æthelric’s testament) establishes that Over was indeed granted to Gloucester by Æthelric; if Northleach was likewise given by a member of the same family, they would seem to have been generous donors to Gloucester.96

It also seems likely that a Mercian by the name of Æthelmund was a benefactor of Glastonbury Abbey (Somerset) towards the end of Offa’s reign. There are two relevant sources which provide similar, but not identical, information. The Liber Terrarum, a list made in 1247/8 of the contents of a lost Glastonbury cartulary, records a grant by King Offa of a place called Inesuuyrth, described as inixa Hunespulle, to an unnamed layman, who subsequently gave it to Glastonbury.97 The second source is the De antiquitate Glastonie ecclesie, an account of Glastonbury’s territorial acquisitions begun by William of Malmesbury probably in the late 1120s but much interpolated in the later 12th and 13th centuries. According to the De antiquitate, King Offa gave an estate of 10 hides at Ineswirht to Abbot Beaduwulf of Glastonbury in 794, and Æthelmund gave one hide at Hunespulle with Offa’s consent; in the summary of grants in the same source, the 10 hides are stated to be

93. Historia et Cartularium, ed. Hart, I, p. 104. The entries concerning Northleach in the list of benefactions (ibid., pp. 93, 103–4) are concerned with post-Conquest developments only.
95. It was suggested above (n. 28) that the Worcester scribe who first produced S1187 may have omitted from the text some information which was not relevant to Worcester; the dispositions concerning Gloucester in S1187 may originally have been more complex than the brief sentence in the version known to us.
96. Æthelmund and Æthelric are also listed as donors in the Chronicle of Gregory of Caerwent; Gregory was a 13th-century monk of Gloucester, whose chronicle was excerpted by Lawrence Nowell in the 16th century. In Gregory’s chronicle Æthelmund’s gift of Over and Northleach is recorded in a list of benefactions at the end of an annal dated 681 recording the foundation, while Æthelric’s gift of Over is entered under the year 729 (London, British Library, MS. Cotton Vespasian A.v., 195r).
at Ineswurth.\textsuperscript{98} It has variously been proposed that Inesuuyrth may be Innsworth near Gloucester with Hunespulle a lost place in the same vicinity or that Hunespulle is Huntspill (Somerset) with Inesuuyrth a lost place in that vicinity; Susan Kelly favours Huntspill as more probable.\textsuperscript{99} She also argues that in the latter part of Offa’s reign much of northern and central Somerset may have been incorporated into the Hwiccian province of the Mercian kingdom, perhaps reclaiming land which had once been ruled by Offa’s predecessor, Æthelbald (716–57); she considers that ‘there is a good chance that the Æthelmund associated with Huntspill was the man of that name who was ealdorman of the Hwicce’.\textsuperscript{100}

It is interesting to note that a fragment of a stone panel of late 8th-century date from Glastonbury bears fret ornament very similar to fret ornament on impost and hood-mould fragments from Berkeley.\textsuperscript{101} Richard Bryant suggests that the Berkeley and Glastonbury fragments may have been carved by the same hand. If the Æthelmund whose family would seem to have been associated in some way with the minster at Berkeley was also the patron of Glastonbury, then his patronage might provide a partial explanation for these sculptural links.

**How many Æthelmunds?**

Leaving aside the unsatisfactory Gloucester material, none of the sources discussed above provides an explicit link to demonstrate that (1) Æthelmund son of Ingeld, (2) Æthelmund father of Æthelric, and (3) Ealdorman Æthelmund are one and the same person; the evidence may be construed in more than one way. Varying conclusions have been reached by recent scholars who have considered the problem. For instance Anton Scharer was of the opinion that the ealdorman was a separate individual distinct from the father of Æthelric, but that the father of Æthelric


\textsuperscript{99} Abrams, Anglo-Saxon Glastonbury, pp. 142–3, 147–8; Charters of Glastonbury Abbey, ed. Kelly, pp. 33, 537. Susan Kelly (pers. comm. dated 21 Dec. 2011) remarks to me that the identifiable estates in the extant and lost early charters of Glastonbury are strongly concentrated in Somerset and the immediately adjacent parts of surrounding counties; most unidentified estates should probably be sought within this core area.

\textsuperscript{100} Charters of Glastonbury Abbey, ed. Kelly, pp. 26–37 (with the quotation at p. 33).

\textsuperscript{101} The Glastonbury panel was excavated in 1928, but is now lost and known only from a photograph: R. Cramp, Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture, VII: South–West England (Oxford, 2006), pp. 157–8, ill. 251; the Berkeley fragments have been published and discussed by R.M. Bryant, Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture, X: The Western Midlands (Oxford, 2012), pp. 129, 132–3, ills. 10–12, 21–4.
was perhaps also the son of Ingeld.\textsuperscript{102} On the other hand Patrick Wormald considered that the ealdorman was ‘almost certainly’ the father of Æthelric.\textsuperscript{103}

Ingeld is named as the father of Æthelmund in the grants of 767 (S58) and 770 (S59) relating to Aston in Stoke Prior, but no other details are available to indicate the ancestry of the individual or individuals named Æthelmund. Ingeld is not mentioned in his own lifetime in the relatively well-documented sub-kingdom of the Hwicce, and his antecedents perhaps lay elsewhere. It is possible that he was linked by marriage to the Hwiccian dynasty; however, as Patrick Sims-Williams has pointed out, the charters of 767 and 770 in the name of Uhtred for Æthelmund son of Ingeld betray no trace of kinship.\textsuperscript{104} The names Æthelmund and Æthelric, though common enough, are found in the early 8th century in the royal dynasty of the Hwicce.\textsuperscript{105} While this might indicate a relationship to the earlier royal house, it might equally represent the use of names with resonant associations on the part of an aspiring local family in the territory of the Hwicce.

Recent research has done much to clarify the documentation concerning the lands held by Æthelmund son of Ingeld and by Æthelmund father of Æthelric (see above). Aston in Stoke Prior was not associated with Æthelric’s bequest of Westbury and Stoke Bishop, though it is possible that it was included in his bequest of Bromsgrove and Feckenham. However, both Æthelmund son of Ingeld and Æthelmund father of Æthelric held lands which were in the possession of the cathedral community at Worcester in the early 9th century. In both cases Worcester seems to have felt sufficiently uncertain about its ability to maintain its hold on these lands that it resorted to the production of forged documentation in the early 9th century. In the case of Westbury and Stoke Bishop, the threat is explicit and came from the Berkeley community; in the case of Aston the threat which prompted the production of forged documentation is less clear, but may have come from the king.

In respect of Æthelmund father of Æthelric and Ealdorman Æthelmund a point concerning terminology must first be considered. It was noted above that under S139 of 793×6, Offa granted Westbury to Æthelmund minister, while the list of ealdormen witnessing this grant also includes an Æthelmund.\textsuperscript{106} Although the term minister would usually apply to a thegn rather than to an ealdorman, Alan Thacker has shown that at this period, ealdormen were sometimes described as ministri;\textsuperscript{107} there is thus no difficulty in principle in seeing the Æthelmund minister who was the beneficiary of this charter as one and the same as the ealdorman who witnessed it. Ealdorman Æthelmund was both a beneficiary and a witness of S148, discussed above.

If it is to be argued that Æthelmund father of Æthelric is one and the same as Ealdorman Æthelmund, the chronological difficulties which arise under S1187 (Æthelric’s testament)
must be considered. If they are one and the same, then it seems likely that both the councils mentioned in S1187 took place between Ealdorman Æthelmund's death in 802 and Ceolburg's death in 807, as Ceolburg was still alive at the time of the second council (always assuming that the Abbess Ceolburg who died in 807 was indeed Æthelmund's widow); one of these two councils took place in 804. Scholars have fretted much about whether this chronology allows sufficient time for the few years (paucos annos) mentioned in S1187 as the interval between the two councils. It was such chronological difficulties that led Anton Scharer to argue that there were indeed two separate individuals by the name of Æthelmund in the 790s. However, the reference to an interval of ‘a few years’ may mean no more than that the scribe who drew up the existing composite text of Æthelric's testament did not have the date of one of the synods to hand and was a little hazy as to the precise timescale. Another explanation has been put forward by Simon Keynes, who favours the date of 804 as referring to the second council at Aclea rather than the first council at Clofesho; he comments in relation to the first council that ‘there is no reason to suppose that Æthelric, if the son of Ealdorman Æthelmund, was necessarily acting in the aftermath of his father's death’. However, it should be borne in mind that Æthelric had attended the earlier council with the title-deeds of the Westbury estate, and the most natural interpretation is that Æthelmund was dead at the time of the council of Clofesho.

No final resolution of these chronological problems is possible, but some further evidence can be brought to bear on the identity of the individuals under discussion by considering the structure of Section F of Liber Wigorniensis, the cartulary drawn up at Worcester under the auspices of Archbishop Wulfstan (1002–23) of York, who was also bishop of Worcester from 1002–16. Sections A to E of the cartulary contain documents which relate respectively to the counties of Worcestershire, Winchcombeshire, Oxfordshire, Gloucestershire and Warwickshire; each section is prefaced by a heading with the name of the county. Documents within each shire were grouped together on a geographical principle, so that charters concerning one estate (or parts of a composite estate) were placed in sequence. A geographical principle was also followed in the final section of the cartulary, Section G (which was concerned with episcopal leases).

At the beginning of Section F, a space was provided for a heading, but was left blank. This section contains fourteen documents as set out in Table 1. Many of these documents have already been discussed above; questions of authenticity are not relevant for present purposes as regards

108. Scharer, Die angelsächsische Königsurkunde, pp. 276–7; see also on the associated problems Wormald, ‘Charters, law and the settlement of disputes’, p. 154, n. 26; Sims-Williams, Religion and Literature, p. 38 notes 115, 116 and p. 174 n. 146; Cubitt, Anglo-Saxon Church Councils, p. 281.
109. For a modern example of the phrase ‘a few years’ employed to mean ‘about two years’, see É. Ó Carragáin, The City of Rome and the World of Bede, Jarrow Lecture 1994 (Jarrow, 1995), p. 3.
112. The structure of Liber Wigorniensis has been the subject of a penetrating analysis by Tinti, Sustaining Belief, pp. 85–125. The same geographical principle was followed in the (fragmentary) Nero-Middleton cartulary: ibid., pp. 125–36.
the remaining items. The last three documents (nos. 82 to 84) are miscellaneous items, which were probably omissions (or thought to have been omissions) from the earlier sections.113

At a date which must be only very shortly after the compilation of Liber Wigorniensis, marginal rubrics were added giving the name of the estate or estates to which each charter pertained; the rubrics are in a hand which has been identified as that of Archbishop Wulfstan himself.114 It is these rubrics which are the key to the interpretation of Section F.115 Among the first eleven items (nos. 70–81), eight relate without doubt to the complex multiple estate held by Worcester at Westbury-on-Trym at the time of the Domesday Survey (nos. 70–4, 77 and 79–81); Henbury, Stoke Bishop,

113. S103 had in fact already been included (by a different scribe) in the Gloucestershire section (no. 67 in the table in Baxter, ‘Archbishop Wulfstan’, pp. 196–7). It is difficult to understand why the two Gloucestershire items (nos. 82 and 84) were not included in the blank pages at the end of the Gloucestershire section. The document concerning ‘[A]lhmunding tun’ (no. 83) would properly have been included in the Winchcombeshire folios, but only six lines of space were left at the end of this section.


115. The places named in documents in Section F have been mapped by J. Whybra, A lost English County: Winchcombeshire in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries, Studies in Anglo-Saxon Hist. 1 (Woodbridge, 1990), map X(F) (p. 44). However, for present purposes, the map is misleading as it includes places of purely incidental interest to the Worcester cartularists such as Todenham, bequeathed to Deerhurst under S1187. The rubrics are a much better guide to the interests of the cartularists.
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Yate and Aust are all included in the Westbury entry. A further item (no. 78) concerns *Heanb’u*, either Henbury (Gloucestershire) or Hanbury (Worcestershire), together with Stour in Ismere; the rubric simply names *Heanburh*, and the context suggests that Wulfstan’s cartularists seem likely to have considered the document as concerning Henbury. The two remaining documents (nos. 75 and 76) relate to the unidentified *Huntena tun*, which could well also have been part of the Westbury estate (perhaps, like Yate, one of Westbury’s detached members).

A case can thus be made to suggest that the main purpose behind the compilation of Section F was the creation of a dossier of documentation relating to Worcester’s major estate at Westbury-on-Trym. In that light it is no surprise to note that the first document listed in Section F is S1433, the account of how Westbury was finally adjudged to Worcester at a synod in 824; S1433 is immediately followed by S146 (the forgery under which King Offa granted 60 hides at Westbury to Worcester) and then by S1187 (the testament of Æthelric).

The Worcester cartularists thus seem to have considered *Huntena tun* to be a member of the Westbury-on-Trym estate. The likely implication would be that the estate granted under S148 to Ealdorman Æthelmund in 796 had at some stage passed into the hands of Worcester and had become attached to the multiple estate at Westbury. The simplest explanation of the facts would be that Ealdorman Æthelmund was indeed one and the same as Æthelmund father of Æthelric and that *Huntena tun* passed to Worcester along with Westbury as part of Æthelric’s inheritance. An alternative scenario should not, however, be overlooked. It is possible that the Worcester cartularists did not know where *Huntena tun* was located. If so, they might have equated Ealdorman Æthelmund of S148 with the father of the donor of Westbury-on-Trym; they could thus have included *Huntena tun* in error in Section F of *Liber Wigorniensis*.

Æthelmund is not an uncommon name, and the possibility that there were two or even three individuals of this name cannot be excluded on the available evidence. However, if the beneficiary of S139 was not the ealdorman, this would involve positing a scenario in which there were two very powerful laymen by the name of Æthelmund, who were both active...

116. *GDB*, fo. 164v; *DB Glos.*, no. 3.1.
117. S1411 (BCS220); a 12th-century list of benefactions names the place granted in this charter as *Northeanburh* (i.e. Hanbury, Worcestershire): W. Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum*, ed. J. Caley, H. Ellis and B. Bandinel (6 vols. in 8, 1817–30 and 1846), I, p. 608. Finberg considered that the context in *Liber Wigorniensis* made it more likely that Henbury (Glos.) was intended: Finberg, *The Early Charters*, no. 28 (p. 37). Sims-Williams supported Finberg’s view, noting that the 20 hides assigned to *Heanb’u* in S1411 corresponded to the hidage in S146 (to which one might object that the scribe had only shortly before copied S146 and may therefore have adjusted the hidage in S1411 to correspond with S146): Sims-Williams, *Religion and Literature*, p. 149 n. 32; see also Tinti, *Sustaining Belief*, pp. 203–4 (for the differing hidages assigned to Henbury). In my view the location of Hanbury in central Worcestershire not very far from Stour in Ismere makes it likely that the original document referred to Hanbury. However, for present purposes, what is important is that the context suggests that the cartularists of *Liber Wigorniensis* believed that S1411 related to Henbury.

118. The one pre-Conquest document relating to Worcester’s Westbury estate which is not included in *Liber Wigorniensis* is S77 (BCS75), a lost single sheet known only from early modern transcripts. Under the terms of S77, King Æthelred of Mercia (674–5–704) granted 30 hides at Henbury and Aust to Worcester. The charter is not authentic in its present form, but it is not clear when the lost single sheet was produced: Scharer, *Die angelsächsische Königsurkunde*, pp. 152–3; see also Abrams, *Anglo-Saxon Glastonbury*, pp. 50–1 for evidence that Aust was at some stage disputed between Worcester and Glastonbury. Worcester had many other charters which were not included in *Liber Wigorniensis*; for comment, see Baxter, ‘Archbishop Wulfstan’, p. 171 n. 28.

119. The production of detailed early estate histories of the component parts of the multiple Westbury estate would be a rewarding, if difficult, exercise.
in the mid-790s in the territory of the Hwicce and who also died within a few years of one another. Such coincidences do arise often enough in early medieval history. Nevertheless I incline tentatively to the view that in this case, it is a more economical hypothesis to assume a single Æthelmund. Ingeld had been an ealdorman of King Æthelbald, so it would hardly be surprising if his son eventually achieved the same rank in the course of a long career.

The Elmstone Hardwicke cross-shaft

At the church of St Mary Magdalene, Elmstone Hardwicke, Gloucestershire (OS Nat. Grid SO 920261), there is a cross-shaft which displays spiral ornament identical to that found on the font at Deerhurst, some four miles to the north-west (Fig. 2). The Elmstone Hardwicke cross-shaft was with little doubt carved by the same hand as the font. The spiral ornament cannot be closely dated, but the font has other decorative details for which a date in the first half of the 9th century has been argued. By extension a similar date can be argued for the cross-shaft.

Fig. 2. The Anglo-Saxon cross-shaft at Elmstone Hardwicke. The cross-shaft was originally rectangular, but was later converted to an irregular octagon in plan. Photograph: Richard Bryant.
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The place-name Elmstone (which relates specifically to the church) is likely to derive from ‘Æthelmund’s stone’. As the cross-shaft at Elmstone Hardwicke was carved at a date close to the lifetime of the patron of Deerhurst of that name, I have tentatively suggested elsewhere that it may be part of a monument erected by Æthelmund father of Æthelric or more probably to commemorate him after his death. I have also proposed that it was in turn this monument which gave rise to the place-name Elmstone;\(^{120}\) for further discussion of the landscape context, see Appendix 3 below.

Conclusion

While some uncertainties remain, it is evident that Deerhurst’s early patrons were powerful thegns and in all likelihood ealdormen and the close kinsmen of ealdormen. If the ‘Period IV’ church at Deerhurst does indeed belong to a period not long after 800, the patronage of Æthelmund and Æthelric would provide a suitable context for the art and architecture which can still be seen today.

It should be borne in mind that the account offered here is heavily conditioned by the surviving sources, above all material from the archives of the bishops of Worcester. As Patrick Wormald has emphasised, there is much that is hinted at in the documents concerning the inheritance of Æthelric that remains obscure.\(^{121}\) We only know of those lands held by Æthelmund (whether one or more individuals) and by Æthelric which are mentioned in documents which finished up in ecclesiastical hands. Their landholdings are likely to have been much more extensive, and Æthelric’s testament will not have dealt with those lands over which he did not have the right of free disposal.\(^{122}\)

Our picture is also skewed by the fact that evidence from other parts of Mercia is extremely scanty at this period, and it is thus difficult to compare the career(s) of the individual(s) under discussion with other Mercian ealdormen and powerful thegns. However, the evocative name of Ingeld and the death of Ealdorman Æthelmund in battle should remind us that there was much more to the career of important laymen in the age of Offa than land grants, pious benefactions and witness-lists.

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\(^{122}\) Specifically Æthelmund’s testament will have made no reference to ‘folkland’, that is to say land held according to customary or ‘folk’ law; such land was not alienable outside the kindred.
Appendix 1

The inheritance of Æthelric and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*

The A-text of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* is an extremely meagre source for the years from 756 to 828 (recte 758 to 830).123 Over a period of 73 years, there are only 35 years with annal entries, and three of these are concerned purely with continental (Frankish and papal) matters rather than English affairs. Dorothy Whitelock wrote of this section of the *Chronicle* that the compiler ‘used a Mercian source, to which he added some West Saxon material’.124 The West Saxon material included a couple of fairly long annals towards the end of this section under the years 823 (recte 825) and 827 (recte 829). The remaining annals are all much briefer; the annal for 800 (recte 802) quoted above (p. 163) is one of the two longest of the annals, and most are notably shorter.

Apart from some brief comments by Audrey Meaney, the Mercian material has received surprisingly little discussion.125 It is therefore of interest to note that no fewer than three of the annals contain material which potentially bears on the inheritance of Æthelric son of Æthelmund, namely the annals discussed above for 800, 805 and 822 (recte 802, 807 and 824), dealing with the death in battle of Ealdorman Æthelmund, the death of Abbess Ceolburg and the synod of Clofesbo. This may be coincidence, for we are concerned with important people engaged in important events. The battle of 802 will probably have lived long in the memory; the annal recording the battle is unlikely to be of purely Mercian origin in its present form and might well conflate both Mercian and West Saxon material (possibly including a contribution from oral tradition). In particular the statement at the end of the annal that ‘the men of Wiltshire had the victory’ may well be a gloss on the part of the West Saxon compiler of the *Chronicle*. The synod of 824 was apparently the first such synod since 816 following the discord between King Coemwulf of Mercia and Archbishop Wulfred of Canterbury; S1433 (Worcester’s record of the synod’s decision in respect of Westbury) expressly notes that there were many other discussions (*in alia plura colloquia*).126

It is, however, the annal recording the death of Abbess Ceolburg which is noteworthy, for in recording the death of an abbess, the annalist is departing from his usual practice. The A-text does contain a few annals of 7th- and early 8th-century date concerning abbesses who were founding figures of the English church, mentioning Æthelthryth of Ely and Hild of Whitby, both well-known from the Venerable Bede’s *Historia ecclesiastica*.127 The last such figure to be mentioned is Cuthburh, the annal for 718 recording her foundation of Wimborne; Cuthburh does not feature in Bede, but it is doubtful that she came from the same branch of the West Saxon

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126. The resolution of a dispute between Archbishop Wulfred and Abbess Cwoenthryth of Minster-in-Thanet in favour of the archbishop at the same synod was recorded in S1434 (BCS378): *Charters of Christ Church, Canterbury*, ed. Brooks and Kelly, no. 56.
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dynasty as Ecgberht and his grandson Alfred. These early abbesses were all saints with well-established cults. Between 718 and the early 890s when the Chronicle as we know it was first put together, Ceolburg is the only abbess to be mentioned in the A-text (and the picture is no different in other recensions). The Chronicle is equally reticent on the subject of abbesses in later centuries; the only directly comparable annal is found in the C-text annal for 982, which mentions the death of two abbesses in Dorset.

Some special factor would thus seem to have operated to have produced the inclusion of the obituary notice of Ceolburg in the Chronicle. It could for instance be that the Ceolburg in question was especially famed for the sanctity of her life. In that case, it would be unlikely that the annal was referring to the widow of Ealdorman Æthelmund, as she would presumably only have entered the religious life some five years before her death. There is certainly no surviving evidence for a cult of a saint by the name of Ceolburg.

There may be some benefit in pondering whether it is not entirely coincidental that the A-text of the Chronicle preserves three entries relevant to the inheritance of Æthelric. A perusal of the surviving Worcester documentation of the second half of the 8th century and of the first quarter of the 9th century leaves one in little doubt that the dispute over Westbury was of supreme importance to the community.

The provisions of Æthelric’s testament (S1187) mean that Worcester would come into possession of Westbury and Stoke Bishop after his own death and the death of his mother; it is, however, not improbable that Worcester already had an expectation during the lifetime of Æthelric that it would ultimately acquire Westbury and Stoke Bishop (just as Over may have been granted to Gloucester by Æthelmund, but was retained by Æthelric for his lifetime). If so, Worcester needed Æthelric, his widow Ceolburg and his son Æthelric to die in order to lay hands on the Westbury and Stoke Bishop estates. The deaths of the same three persons were perhaps also necessary for the grant envisaged under Worcester’s forged charter (S59 of 770) in respect of Aston in Stoke Prior to take effect. Two of the annals under discussion may very well report the first two deaths, while the third records a synod which decided the final fate of the Westbury estate after the third death. Worcester would potentially have good reason to record these events (perhaps in Easter tables), and it is thus worth asking whether the annals in question are based on information recorded at Worcester, which at a later stage found its way into the Chronicle.


129. Anglo-Saxon Chronicle 982 C; Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, ed. Whitelock et al., pp. 80–1. For comment on this annal, see S. Keynes, ‘King Alfred the Great and Shaftesbury’, in Studies in the Early History of Shaftesbury Abbey, ed. L. Keen (Dorchester, 1999), pp. 17–72, at 49–50; and for the suggestion that the annal was composed by the chronicler, Æthelweard (who corresponded with his distant cousin, Abbess Matilda of Essen), see L. Whitbread, ‘Æthelweard and the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle’, English Historical Review, 74 (1959), pp. 577–89. The rather fuller 11th-century annals record abbesses involved in a number of unusual events; Abbess Leofrun was captured by the Danes along with Archbishop Ælfheah in 1011, the abbess of Leominster was involved in a liaison with Earl Swein in 1046 and Queen Edith was entrusted to the abbess of Wherwell in 1051: Anglo-Saxon Chronicle 1011 CDE, 1046 C, 1052 (= 1051) D; Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, ed. Whitelock et al., pp. 91, 109, 120.

130. For the possibility that there was more than one Ceolburg, see Sims-Williams, Religion and Literature, p. 176. However, Ceolburg is not a common name in the surviving sources; the PASE database (see n. 51 above, accessed 24 Dec. 2011) records no other person of this name, though women account for well under 10% of the persons recorded. Nevertheless, it would be something of a coincidence if two separate persons of this name both made an appearance in the first decade of the 9th century.
Some or all of the other annals relating to Mercian affairs could also derive from Worcester, though the only annal which is of specifically Worcester relevance is the record of the death of Bishop Milred under 772 (recte 774). Frankish and papal matters are reported in five annals during the period in question; the bishops of Worcester would have been well placed to learn of such continental affairs, as they had active trading interests and property in London by the middle of the 8th century.\(^{131}\)

It should of course be noted that there is much else of Worcester interest which does not appear in the annals for these years. The deaths of Milred’s four successors are not recorded, nor are several synods at which Worcester’s interests were discussed, not least the earlier synods at which Æthelric’s inheritance was debated.\(^{132}\) All that can be said here is that if the annals for these years derive from another Mercian centre, then there must be at least as many omissions for that alternative centre.

The annalist compiling the *Chronicle* in the early 890s was clearly short of material for the period from the 750s to the 820s and must have been grateful for any material on which he could lay hands; the apparently anomalous inclusion of the death of Abbess Ceolburg may in effect be due to his desire to fill a blank page. There is a broad consensus among modern scholarship that the *Chronicle* ‘was compiled in and disseminated from the court of King Alfred the Great’.\(^{133}\) It is not difficult to see how material from Worcester might have reached the compiler of the *Chronicle*, for Alfred’s Mercian assistants included Bishop Wærfrith of Worcester (869–72–907–15).\(^{134}\)

A tentative case can therefore be advanced for a possible Worcester contribution to the A-text of the *Chronicle* for the period from the 750s to the 820s, but it should be stressed that the case as set out above is dependent upon certain suppositions. Most notably it depends on the assumption that the Ealdorman Æthelmund who died in 802 was one and the same as Æthelmund, father of Æthelric; as discussed, this identity is not improbable, but cannot be regarded as established beyond doubt. The case also depends on the assumption that the Abbess Ceolburg who died in 807 was Æthelmund’s widow. As Simon Keynes has recently commented, ‘There is always a danger of joining up dots without good cause’.\(^{135}\)

**Appendix 2**

**The battle of Kempsford AD 802**

Ealdorman Æthelmund’s death at the battle of Kempsford in 802 was discussed above. As the battle seems to have been closely linked to the accession of King Ecgberht of Wessex, who established


132. For a convenient list of synods with details of the parties involved, see Cubitt, *Anglo-Saxon Church Councils*, Appendix 1, pp. 247–95.


134. Alfred’s Mercian assistants are named in Asser, *Vita Alfredi*, c.77 (ed. Stevenson, pp. 62–3 (text); Keynes and Lapidge, *Alfred the Great*, pp. 92–3 (translation)). Another of Alfred’s assistants, the priest Wærwulf, apparently also had some association with the diocese of Worcester, for in 899 Bishop Wærfrith leased an estate near Bibury (Glos.) to Wærwulf ‘on account of our ancient association and his faithful friendship and obedience’ (S1279 (BCS580)).

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the dynasty which was to rule first Wessex and then the united English kingdom, it is perhaps surprising that the battle has received so little attention from historians.

The annal in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* records the place at which Ealdorman Æthelmund crossed a ford into Wiltshire rather than the actual site of the battle. There is no doubt that the *et Cyneumeresforde* of the annal is to be identified with Kempsford (Gloucestershire). Kempsford is on the north bank of the Thames at a point at which the river has always constituted the boundary between Gloucestershire and Wiltshire, and it appears in Domesday Book as *Chenemeresforde*. As the annal records the crossing-place, it may be legitimate to infer that Æthelmund and his Hwiccian force did not penetrate deeply into Wiltshire. Indeed it is possible that the annalist intends us to understand that Ecgberht’s accession, Æthelmund’s crossing of the river and the battle itself all took place on the same day; the annalist was of course writing some 90 years after the event and we do not know how reliable his source or sources may have been.

The exact date of the battle cannot be ascertained, but the time of year can at least be suggested. Ecgberht’s death is recorded in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* for 836 (*recte* 839), and it is stated that he had ruled for 37 years and 7 months. His accession to the kingship is recorded in annals which are likely to be based on sources using a year beginning on 25 Dec. or 1 Jan. This would suggest that Ecgberht’s accession and thus the date of the battle took place before the end of May 802. It may be possible to refine the date a little further. In 838 Archbishop Ceolnoth of Canterbury reached an agreement with King Ecgberht and his son Æthelwulf concerning the restoration of land at ‘Malling’. After Ecgberht’s death in 839, the agreement was confirmed before the end of the year first by King Æthelwulf at a council held at Wilton and secondly by a synod of Southumbrian bishops held *æt Astran*. Ecgberht’s death must have taken place at least six weeks before the end


137. *GDB*, fo. 169; *DB Glos.*, no. 60.1.

138. The *Chronicle of Æthelweard*, written c. 980, does seem to place the battle at or in the vicinity of the ford, saying that Wiohstan and the men of Wiltshire met him there (*ibi*): *The Chronicle of Æthelweard*, ed. A. Campbell (London, 1962), pp. 27–9. Æthelweard is here following the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* fairly closely and it seems unlikely that he had any additional information; the turn of phrase is probably no more than his own interpretation of the annal. John of Worcester's 12th-century *Chronicle* follows the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* for the most part, but omits the death of Ealdorman Worr and states that Æthelmund’s incursion took place on the date of King Beorhtric’s death; it seems likely that this is purely an inference on John’s part: *The Chronicle of John of Worcester* II, ed. Darlington and McGurk, p. 230.

139. See n. 84 above.

140. K. Harrison, ‘The beginning of the year in England, c. 500–900’, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 2 (1973), pp. 51–70. Harrison argues that the evidence of S273 (BCS389) and S272 (BCS390) suggests that Egcbherht came to the throne after 19 Aug. 802 (*ibid.*, p. 65); the dating-clauses of these charters relate that they were originally issued on 19 Aug. and subsequently confirmed on 26 Dec. The charters in question belong to a group from the Old Minster at Winchester purporting to date from the mid-820s, but which are not authentic in their present form. A date of 825 seems more likely than 826 for the dating-clause in the genuine charter which probably underlies these texts; in that case the implication would be that Ecgberht came to the throne before 19 Aug. 802. See H. Edwards, *The Charters of the Early West Saxon Kingdom*, BAR British Series 198 (Oxford, 1988), pp. 150–5 and 160–1; S. Keynes, ‘The West Saxon Charters of King Æthelwulf and his Sons’, *English Historical Review*, 109 (1994), pp. 1109–49, at 1110–11.

of the year and probably quite a bit earlier for these meetings to have taken place; synods were not uncommonly held in Oct. or in the first half of Nov., though doubtless they could be held later if essential. Moreover, it has already been noted that Ecgberht is not likely to have succeeded immediately to the West Saxon kingdom on the death of Beorhtric in 802. This would mean that the battle is unlikely to have taken place before mid-Jan. at the very earliest and probably later still. Taking all these factors into account, we can suggest outside dates for the battle between mid-Jan. and mid-April; a date between mid-Feb. and mid-March would seem most likely.

At Kempsford the River Thames is less than 12 miles (as the crow flies) from its source, and it is not yet a great river. It is likely that there were a number of available fording points along this stretch of the Thames, and the choice of Kempsford requires consideration. As described by the Rev’d A B Mynors in 1935, the ford at Kempsford was far from easy to use. It was entered below the present Manor Farm, which was to the south of the church (Fig. 3); it was then necessary to follow the north-east (Kempsford) bank for some 150 yards before shallower water was reached, at which point there was a gravel bed across the river leading to the meadows on the southern bank in the parish of Castle Eaton (Wiltshire). The ford was destroyed by a dredging operation in 1978. If the ford had the character described by Mynors in 802, then it is difficult to see how Æthelmund could have crossed with more than a small contingent to the Wiltshire bank. However, it is not unlikely that the character of the river-bed underwent some change in the course of a period of more than 1100 years.

As the Victoria County History has noted, the ford seems to have had little impact on the topographical development of Kempsford. The site of the ford immediately adjoined Kempsford Manor Farm, all that remains of a major manor-house which formerly stood on this site. In Domesday Book Kempsford appears as a significant manor of 21 hides held in 1086 by Arnulf of

144. Information provided by Michael Stone of Chippenham Museum and Heritage Centre (Feb. 2010).
145. In addition to natural processes (which could perhaps have involved both some shift in the course of the river and erosion of the ford), the effects of human intervention should not be underestimated. John Blair has made the point that considerable hydrological change will have resulted from the construction in the period from the 11th to 13th centuries of bridge-causeways at sites like Castle Eaton and Hannington (respectively about one mile upstream and downstream from Kempsford): J. Blair, “Transport and Canal-Building on the upper Thames, 1000–1300”, in Waterways and Canal-Building in Medieval England, ed. J. Blair (Oxford, 2007), pp. 254–94, at 271. Before the opening of the Thames and Severn Canal in 1789, the Thames was navigable for small boats between Lechlade and Cricklade, doubtless by means of flashlocks; this may also have had an impact on the character of the ford.
146. A road leading from Cirencester (Gloucestershire) to Highworth (Wiltshire) seems to have been a more significant factor in the development of Kempsford; this road crossed the Thames at Hannington Bridge a little under one mile to the east of Kempsford: Victoria History of the County of Gloucestershire VII, ed. N.M. Herbert (Oxford, 1981), p. 97. I am grateful to the anonymous referee for the suggestion that the force led by Æthelmund could have used the crossing at Hannington and for drawing my attention to the description of Hannington Bridge by Thomas Baskerville in 1692 (London, British Library, Harley 4716); Baskerville describes how carts, wagons and coaches forded the river at this point alongside the narrow bridge. It is also possible that more than one ford was used if Æthelmund was accompanied by a sizeable force. Nevertheless the explicit statement in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle that Æthelmund ‘rode over at Cynemær’s ford’ should not in my view lightly be set aside.
Fig. 3. The River Thames at Kempsford. St Mary's Church (at the bottom left-hand corner) is the parish church of Castle Eaton; the village lies immediately to the south and south-west. Reproduced from the Ordnance Survey 6 in. map, 2nd edition (1903).
Hesdin; before the Conquest it had been held by Osgod from Earl Harold. There is no public access to the ford on either bank, and the site of the manor-house seems likely to have precluded any general access in earlier centuries. By the same token there is now no trace of any track or path, let alone a causeway, leading from the ford on the Wiltshire side. The use of the ford may in practice have been restricted to the occupants of the manor-house. Finds from the site of the ford do, however, attest to its use from the Iron Age through to early modern times. It is tempting to suggest that the choice of Kempsford as the crossing-point in 802 was determined by the existence of an early strongpoint on the site of the manor-house, though this must remain speculation in the absence of any archaeological excavation. When Mercia and Wessex were separate kingdoms, Kempsford would have occupied an important strategic position on the Thames. It seems likely that the eponymous Cynemær was associated in some way with this putative early focus.

Opposite Kempsford there is a large meadow on the southern (Wiltshire) bank of the Thames; this meadow stretches for about a mile along the south bank of the river from Castle Eaton village in the west to a point just east of Kempsford. Local tradition holds this large expanse of meadow (a little over 94 acres in size) as the site of the battle of 802. This tradition seems to derive at least in part from a discovery made in 1670. The earliest source for the discovery that I have traced is the Gloucestershire antiquary, Sir Robert Atkyns; in his account of Kempsford, Atkyns states that 'In the Year 1670, Iron Bitts for Horses, much eaten with rust, and larger than are now used, were found in plowing up the Ground, where this Battle was supposed to have been fought'. Atkyns does not himself identify the site further, but more recent sources are emphatic that it was the Castle Eaton meadow and add spearheads to the discovery. Horse-bits are of course an unlikely indicator of the site of a 9th-century battle; though the participants doubtless rode to battle (as indeed the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* expressly states in respect of Æthelmund's crossing of the Thames), any battle would have been fought on foot at this date. It is sometimes stated that the Castle Eaton meadow was actually called ‘The Battlefield’. However, the tithe award of

147. *GDB*, fo. 169; *DB Glos.*, no. 60.1. On Osgod, who was one of Earl Harold's commended men, see Williams, ‘An introduction to the Gloucestershire Domesday’, p. 19. Kempsford may once have been part of a larger 50-hide estate together with Fairford (21 hides) and Quenington (8 hides) to the north: *GDB*, fos. 163v, 167v; *DB Glos.*, nos. 1.50, 39.12.

148. I am extremely grateful to Mr R.G. Spackman of the Manor Farm for allowing me to examine the site of the ford from his garden.

149. During the investigations in 1978 (see next note), a search was made for a causeway, but without success (information from Michael Stone).

150. In the dredging operations of 1978, the silt deposited on the river-bank was examined in an archaeological exercise undertaken by Michael Stone, and an extensive series of finds ranging from the late Iron Age to the early modern period was made; additional finds are also believed to have been made by metal-detectorists. The recorded finds included 226 items of metalwork (including several items of Anglo-Saxon weaponry), as well as pottery, tiles and other material; on the metalwork, see P.A. Mahon, *The investigation and analysis of metallurgical finds dredged from the River Thames at Kempsford* (unpublished report, 1998, copy at Chippenham Museum and Heritage Centre). Some of the finds may have come from further upstream and become caught against the shallows on the upstream side, but the majority seems likely to derive from the ford itself. The finds are now at Swindon Museum. I am very grateful to Michael Stone for discussing the discoveries made in 1978 with me.

151. R. Atkyns, *The Ancient and Present State of Glostershire* (London, 1712), p. 489. I have looked at the most likely Gloucestershire and Wiltshire sources for accounts of this discovery, but I have not conducted exhaustive searches, and further material may well exist.

152. For instance Mynors, ‘Kempsford’, p. 194.

1841 simply describes it as ‘Thames Meadow’. On balance it seems improbable that these local discoveries and traditions provide any reliable information about the site of the battle in 802.

Æthelmund’s immediate target may well have been Highworth, situated about 3½ miles to the south-east of Kempsford. Simon Draper has suggested that Highworth was a major royal estate centre of Middle Saxon date and that it is also likely to have been the site of a minster church. Wiobstan may well have chosen Highworth as the centre from which his defence was organised. There can be no certainty, but the site of the battle is most likely to be sought between Kempsford and Highworth.

It remains to discuss the evidence for other participants in the battle. Little is known of Wiobstan, the ealdorman of Wiltshire who was Æthelmund’s opponent. He appears as a witness in only one document, a grant by King Beorhtric of Wessex dated 801 to Ealdorman Lulla of land at Crux Easton (Hampshire); this document is preserved in a 13th-century Abingdon cartulary. Though the charter has certain difficult features, it would seem to be essentially authentic, and its witness-list is certainly acceptable for the given date. It should be added that in a 15th-century verse poem, the Wilton Chronicle, Wiobstan appears (under the name Erle Wolstone) as the founder of the church of Wilton; according to the poem, this church was later converted to a nunnery by King Ecgberht in 830 at the request of the otherwise unrecorded ‘Elburwe’, purportedly Wiobstan’s widow and Ecgberht’s sister. In her discussion of the foundation of Wilton, Barbara Yorke has sagely commented that ‘the poem as a whole does not inspire confidence in its historical accuracy, and one is left with the suspicion that the author was making creative use of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle entry for 802 in which the first reference to the Wilsaetan appears’.

In later hagiographical tradition, St Ealhmund (or Alkmund) is also stated to have been killed at the battle of Kempsford. As David Rollason has shown, this tradition arose through a mistaken reading of the Chronicle of John of Worcester. In reality Ealhmund was killed in 800 (rather than 802) by order of King Eardwulf of Northumbria.

Appendix 3

The landscape setting of the Elmstone Hardwicke cross

In my recent discussion of this cross, I considered its possible landscape setting. I suggested that it may have stood at a cross-roads, but was unsure as to the route followed by the road from Tewkesbury to Cheltenham before the creation of the turnpike road through Uckington.

in 1726. A useful transcript by John Fendley of the papers of the Gloucestershire antiquary, Abel Wantner (1639–1714), has recently become available. Wantner compiled an account of the principal roads of the county and gives the route from Tewkesbury to Cheltenham as running via Gupshill, The Harrow, Elmstone and Swindon. The road running from south to north through the parish is not listed by Wantner, as he does not describe roads which head out of the county, but this seems likely to have been an ancient road from Gloucester to Evesham (Worcestershire). There is therefore some merit in the suggestion that the Elmstone Hardwicke cross may have stood at a cross-roads, though it would be foolish to regard evidence from c. 1700 as establishing with certainty the pattern of roads some 900 years earlier; in particular the foundation of a church at Elmstone, perhaps in the 10th or 11th century, may well have influenced the course of roads in the vicinity.

163. Wantner’s account of the main roads of the county will be found in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Top. Glouc. c. 2, fols. 94-100v; Wantner also notes an alternative ‘upper way’ running north of the River Swilgate through Stoke Orchard. John Fendley’s typescript is in the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society Library in Cheltenham, with Wantner’s account of the main roads transcribed in Appendix 4.