

# The Boundary and Woodlands of Shotover Forest c. 1298

BY EDWARD ROBERTS

## THE BOUNDARY

In the 13th century the boundary of Shotover forest, which then included the parish of Headington as well as the modern Shotover and Stowood, was a matter of dispute.<sup>1</sup> About 1298 this dispute was settled by a perambulation<sup>2</sup> which established a boundary that remained virtually unaltered until the 19th century. This continuity can best be demonstrated by comparing the identifiable items of the perambulation with a map of the external boundary of the parishes of Headington, Shotover and Stowood as it was shortly after 1800.<sup>3</sup>

## ITEMS FROM THE PERAMBULATION<sup>4</sup>

*Incipit ad molendinum quod vocatur Sotelescote mulle<sup>a</sup>*

The modern Sescut Farm by the Cherwell.<sup>5</sup>

*Usque Edenebroke<sup>b</sup>*

Containing the first element of the name of Headington,<sup>6</sup> this is the modern Bayswater Brook which runs along the northern boundary of that parish.

*Et sic usque Stodefold<sup>c</sup>*

Stetfield in 1703 when it flanked most of the boundary between Elsfield and Wick, a hamlet in Headington.<sup>7</sup>

*Et sic per fossatum usque Eldendone<sup>d</sup>*

Eldendone can be identified with a field called Hillingdon in 1703.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *V.C.H. Oxon.*, v. 278; E. Evans, 'The Manor of Headington', *O.A.S. Rep.* (1928), 177-88.

<sup>2</sup> Closely similar versions of the perambulation may be found in Bodl. MS. Top. Oxon. c 113, ff. 94-95; *Eynsham Cart.* (O.H.S. LI), II. 96; *Boarstall Cart.* (O.H.S. LXXXVIII), 179.

<sup>3</sup> The following maps have been used to reconstruct the boundary of 1800: Bodl. Wood Eaton tithe award map, 1786; Bodl. Horspath tithe award map, 1847; Bodl. MS. Top. Oxon. c 175, f. 51; sketch map of Forest Hill manor, 1825; *ibid.* c 289, f. 226b; map of part of Forest Hill in 1723; All Soul's Coll. MS. map of Wheatley, 1593; O. R. O. Beckley incl. award, 1831; O.S. maps 25 in. (1881), xxxiii. 4, 7, 8, 11, 12, 15, 16; xxiv. 1, 5, 9, 13, 14; xxxix. 3, 4; xl. 1, 2.

The following misleadingly show coppices, which were extra-parochial after the disafforestation of 1660, as parts of the parishes proper: O.R.O. incl. award maps of Headington, Islip, Noke, Wheatley; Bodl. MS. Grantham's map of Elsfield (1703).

<sup>4</sup> Unless stated otherwise, taken from the *Boarstall Cart.* 179-80; modern identifications made from O.S. maps 25 in. (1881), xxxiii. 7, 8, 12. Letters indicate position on map on p. 71.

<sup>5</sup> M. Gelling, *The Place-Names of Oxfordshire* (English Place-Name Soc. xxiii, 1953), I. 170.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* 16.

<sup>7</sup> Bodl. MS. Grantham's map of Elsfield, 1703.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*; *P.N. Oxon.*, I. 170.

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*Et sic per usque Hangeresende per boscum de Ellesfeld*<sup>EL</sup>

Hanger was a field just inside Wood Eaton<sup>9</sup> which was said to be 'modici valoris' in 1366.<sup>10</sup> 'Boscum de Ellesfeld' may have been the modern Ridings wood which also lies along the boundary between the landmarks of Hillingdon and Hanger. 'Per hayam' may be connected with 'bytwenetheheye', pasture held by Gilbert de Ellesfeld in the forest in 1338.<sup>11</sup>

*Et sic inter Boscum de Wodetone*<sup>WE</sup> *et Stowode*

The modern Wood Eaton wood was 34 acres in extent in 1881, but in 1366 it measured 96½ acres and must have covered most of the land in the parish east of the brook that rises in Stowood.<sup>12</sup>

*Et sic usque Longerudyngesende que est inter Stowode et Cowaliz*<sup>IS</sup>

Cowaliz or Islepewode was described as a large wood and must be identified with the woodland which in Domesday Book is said to measure 1 league by ½ league.<sup>13</sup> This is approximately 720 acres,<sup>14</sup> or most of ancient Islip south of the River Ray. Thus the wood must have bordered the Ray which was formerly called the Yight.<sup>15</sup>

*Et sic usque Thremeren inter Stowode et boscum Henrici Tyeys*<sup>NO</sup> *et boscum abbatis de Westmonasterio*

The Abbot of Westminster's wood was Cowaliz<sup>16</sup> (see above). Henry Tyes held Noke Manor and his wood was almost certainly the modern Noke Wood.<sup>17</sup> Noke Wood was some 100 yards from the boundary as it was in 1800.

*Ad capud bosci Iohannis de Sancto Iohanne*

This wood remains unidentified. The two woods of John de St. John which seem to have been most concerned with the dispute over the forest boundary were called Hornle and Sydle.<sup>18</sup> In 1620 they were called Horley and Sidley, and they are now Holly and Great Wood.<sup>19</sup> Since they were situated in the centre of Stanton St. John and were separated from the ancient forest boundary by Woodperry hamlet, neither could have been the wood referred to in the perambulation.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Shown on Grantham's map of Elsfield and consequently listed under Elsfield in *P.N. Oxon*, i. 170.

<sup>10</sup> *Eynsham Cart*, ii. 18.

<sup>11</sup> *Boarstall Cart*, 171.

<sup>12</sup> *Eynsham Cart*, ii. 18.

<sup>13</sup> *Boarstall Cart*, 173; *V.C.H. Oxon.*, i. 422; Islip entry.

<sup>14</sup> Maitland, *Domesday Book and Beyond* (1897), 432.

<sup>15</sup> *V.C.H. Oxon.*, vi. 206, 212; *Boarstall Cart*, 180. This suggests that 'boscus Yight', referred to in 1342, might be an alternative name. On the other hand there is the difficulty that although Islip Wood was ancient demesne the jurors of 1342 spoke of Yight wood as in the king's hands: *Boarstall Cart*, 173.

<sup>16</sup> cf. *V.C.H. Oxon.*, vi. 212.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, vi. 269.

<sup>18</sup> *Boarstall Cart*, 180.

<sup>19</sup> *V.C.H. Oxon.*, v. 288.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 287. Dr. W. O. Hassall suggests that 'capud bosci' may refer to Stowood, in which case the problem is avoided.

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*Et sic usque Bardescroft de Stoford*

Stowford was a hamlet in the extreme south-west of Stanton<sup>21</sup> where Robert Bastard lived in 1279.<sup>22</sup>

*Usque ad pontem de Stoford<sup>f</sup>*

Stowford Bridge must have been on the site of the modern Bayswater Bridge which is just south of Stowford Farm.

*Et sic usque Sanden<sup>g</sup>*

No doubt the site of the modern Sandhills Estate.<sup>23</sup>

*Usque Lynhale<sup>LY</sup>*

Lynhale, or Hinhale in 1279, was Studley Priory's wood.<sup>24</sup> In 1670 it was represented by two furlongs called Long and Short Lynehill.<sup>25</sup> On a map of 1825 they are called Long and Short Linings and drawn a few yards north of the boundary.<sup>26</sup>

*Et sic usque Byondebroke<sup>BY</sup> inter boscum domini regis et boscum de Forsthull*

Byondebroke was the wood of the Abbot of Osney.<sup>27</sup> From its position just beyond the brook from Forest Hill and between Lynhale and Wodemanneshull, it must be identified with the Big and Little Abbot's Wood of 1825.<sup>28</sup>

*Et sic usque Wodemanneshull<sup>WO</sup>*

Woodmanhill is marked on a map of 1723.<sup>29</sup> Both Studley and Osney owned portions of this wood in 1279.<sup>30</sup>

*Et sic usque Farnewellebroke atte Grovesende<sup>h</sup>*

In 1723 The Grove was drawn between Woodmanhill and what must have been Farnewellebroke.<sup>31</sup>

*Et sic usque Halenghtonehache<sup>i</sup>*

A small quarry, drawn astride the boundary in 1593 and called Hollam Hatch, was still a boundary mark in 1660.<sup>32</sup> The original meaning of the name was presumably 'Holton Quarry', or perhaps 'Holton Gate'.

*Et sic usque Baustakebroke Netherende et sic per fossatum usque Kyngeswodebroke<sup>j</sup>*

There are only two brooks between the definitely identified boundary

<sup>21</sup> *V.C.H. Oxon.*, v. 286.

<sup>22</sup> *Rot. Hund. (Rec. Com.)*, ii. 713.

<sup>23</sup> cf. *P.N. Oxon.*, i. 31.

<sup>24</sup> *Rot. Hund. (Rec. Com.)*, ii. 717; *Boarstall Cart.*, 173.

<sup>25</sup> Bodl. MS. Top. Oxon. b 122, f. 20.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, c 175, f. 52. Personal observation reveals that the ancient field pattern at this point was destroyed by the construction in the eighteenth century of a new road, now the A 40. Consequently it is impossible to say precisely where Lynhale originally lay and hence whether the boundary has been altered.

<sup>27</sup> *Boarstall Cart.*, 173.

<sup>28</sup> Bodl. MS. Top. Oxon., c 175, f. 52.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, c 289, f. 226b.

<sup>30</sup> *Rot. Hund. (Rec. Com.)*, ii. 717.

<sup>31</sup> Bodl. MS. Top. Oxon., c 289, f. 226b.

<sup>32</sup> All Souls Coll. MS. map of Wheatley, 1593; Bodl. MS. Top. Oxon., b 117, f. 58b.

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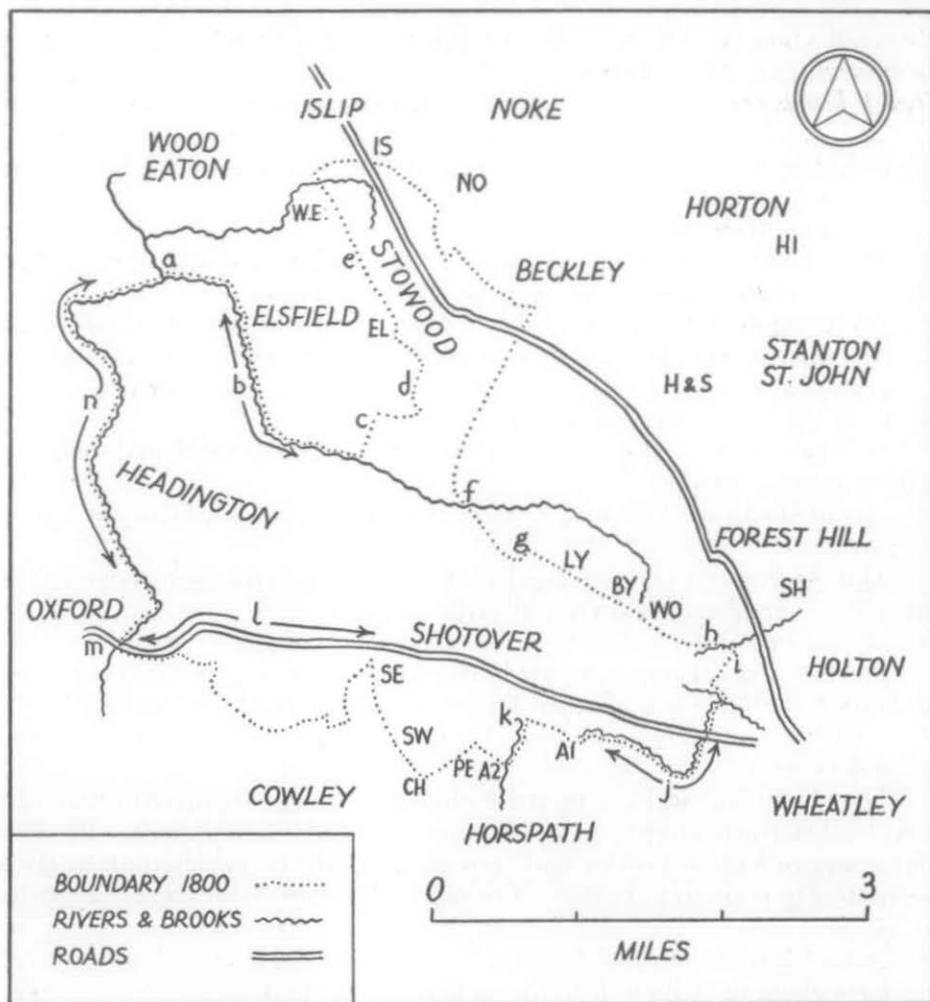


FIG. 11  
The boundary and woodlands of Shotover Forest.

marks of Halenghtonehache and Akermere. These must be the two mentioned in the perambulation. The boundary joins the nether end of one and follows the other up to Akermere.

*Et sic usque ad capud inferius de Akermere<sup>A1</sup> iuxta Kyngswodebroke*

Akermere was a wood which the Templars held of the Earl of Cornwall.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>33</sup> *Rot. Hund.*, II. 716. It is said to be in the Earl of Cornwall's own hands in 1279, but the presumption is that the Templars were his tenants for the whole of the manor: cf. *V.C.H. Oxon.*, v. 178.

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It was still a boundary mark in 1660 when it was called Acre Mead.<sup>34</sup> This was the modern Acre Mead Hill of 1847.<sup>35</sup>

*Usque le Redediche ascendendo ad boscum de Templo et sic descendendo per boscum Templi*

The wood of the Templars was, it is presumed, Akermere (see above). The boundary followed the 'red' ditch, ascending and descending because the wood crowned a hill.<sup>36</sup>

*Et sic usque ad Akermerebroke<sup>k</sup>*

There is only one brook between the definitely identified boundary marks of Akermere and Peryhale, so this must be Akermerebroke.

*Et usque dictum le Rededych inter boscum Iohannis de Scaccario et boscum de Templo*

An ancient red ditch runs beside Akermerebroke.<sup>37</sup> On one side it apparently came from the Templar's Akermere and on the other it went to a wood belonging to John de Scaccario.

De Scaccario's wood was also called Akermere and is mentioned soon after in the perambulation.<sup>38</sup>

*Et sic per le Mereweie inter boscum de Shotover et Horspath et sic ad summum caput de Akermere<sup>A2</sup>*

This Akermere wood belonged to John de Scaccario (see above). The 'mereweie' or boundary track still exists today.

*Et sic usque Chalffe<sup>CH</sup> per le Merehegge inter Peryhale<sup>PE</sup> et Chalffe*

Peryhale was a Templar Wood in Horspath and is now pasture land called the Perils.<sup>39</sup> Chalffe was another Templar wood probably in Cowley.<sup>40</sup>

*Et sic usque viam regiam<sup>l</sup> que ducit versus Oxoniam et sic per eandem viam usque Parvum pontem de Oxonia<sup>m</sup>*

The via regia must have been the old road through Shotover to Oxford.<sup>41</sup> It evidently formed a large part of Headington's southern boundary. By 1800, a large area of ancient Cowley had been engulfed, the boundary running far to the south of its position in 1298.<sup>42</sup> Parvus Pons' or Petty Pont is now Magdalen bridge.<sup>43</sup>

*Et sic usque Charwelle<sup>s</sup> usque ad molendinum quod vocatur Sotelescotemullea*

Back along the Cherwell to the modern Sescut Farm.

<sup>34</sup> Bodl. MS. Top. Oxon., c 289, f. 226b.

<sup>35</sup> Bodl. Horspath tithe award map, 1847.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*; O.S. map 25 in., XL. 1 (1881).

<sup>37</sup> Personal observation.

<sup>38</sup> The two Akermers (Akermele) are listed separately in 1279: *Rot. Hund.*, II. 716, 717; and distinguished as 'inferius' and 'summum' in the perambulation.

<sup>39</sup> *Boarstall Cart.*, 172; *P.N. Oxon.*, I. 178. Shown on Corpus Christi Coll. map (1605), published as coloured microfilm by MicroMethods Ltd.

<sup>40</sup> *Boarstall Cart.*, 180. For further confirmation of its being in Cowley: cf. *Rot. Hund.*, II. 713; Templars' property of Chalmsley; E. Evans, *O.A.S. Rep.* (1928), 178.

<sup>41</sup> It could not have followed the 1800 boundary which was a wild zig-zag: cf. *V.C.H. Oxon.*, v. 198.

<sup>42</sup> *V.C.H. Oxon.*, v. 198.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 261.

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TABLE

Names	Held by	Parish	Map
Boscus de Ellesfeld	John de Ellesfeld	Elsfield	EL
Boscus de Wodeton	Eynsham Abbey	Wood Eaton	W.E.
Etonwode			
Boydeneswode			
Cowaliz	Westminster Abbey	Islip	IS
Iselepewode			
(Boscus Yight)			
Boscus de Oke	Henry Tyes	Noke	NO
Hornle & Sydle	John de St. John	Stanton	H,S
Lynhale }	Studley Priory	Forest Hill	LY
Hinhale }			
Byondebroke	Oseney Abbey	Forest Hill	BY
Wodemannahull	Studley/Oseney	Forest Hill	WO
Akermere (inferius)	Templars	Horspath	A1
Akermere (summum)	John de Scaccario	Horspath	A2
Peryhale	Templars	Horspath	PE
Chalfle }	Templars	Cowley	CH
Chalmsley }			
Seyntioneswode 44	Hospitallers	In the forest	SE
Swaleenhulle 44	Littlemore Priory	In the forest	SW
Shaw } 45	Abingdon Abbey	Cuddesdon	SH
Sawe }			
Hildesdene 46	Godstow/Oseney	Horton	H1

### THE WOODLANDS

Since the perambulation established the forest boundary, it also made clear whether certain disputed woodlands lay inside or outside the forest. The preceding table presents the evidence on this subject from the perambulation itself, from a list of woodlands and their positions appended to the perambulation and also from two other contemporary sources.<sup>47</sup> Clearly the woods in the surrounding parishes were more numerous than they are today and covered a larger area. The woods listed above may have contained about 1300 acres, whereas today only some 300 acres remain.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Position based on *St. John's Cart.*, II (O.H.S. LXVIII), 397; *Cal. Chart. R.*, 1257-1300, 20; cf. Minchery wood in *V.C.H. Oxon.*, v. 183.

<sup>45</sup> Listed under Cuddesdon in 1279: *Rot. Hund.*, II. 718; according to the perambulation it was outside the forest. A probable site is ancient Cuddesdon's Vent estate near to which were the Shaw fields in 1847: Bodl. tithe award map, 1847.

<sup>46</sup> *Cal. Chart. R.*, 1226-57, 128; *Oseney Cart.*, IV (O.H.S. xcvi), 347. Not a disputed woodland but wrongly connected with Shotover in *V.C.H. Oxon.*, v. 279. Hildesdene lay in the extreme south-east of Horton.

<sup>47</sup> *Boarstall Cart.*, 171 ff.; *Eynsham Cart.*, II. 16ff.; *Rot. Hund.*, II. 713-17 *passim*. If this table is correct errors occur in *P.N. Oxon.*, I. 174: Yight, Boydeneswode and Hornle were neither in nor adjacent to the modern Shotover.

<sup>48</sup> This is, at best, an approximation.