Interim report on the identification of the Anglo-Saxon hunting lodge at *Bicanleag*

(Revised version, June 2016)

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Abstract: The evidence relating to a meeting of the West Saxon royal council at a hunting-lodge at 'Bicanleag' in 904 is reviewed and discussed. It concludes that 'Bicanleag' is most likely to be identified with Bickleigh near Silverton in Devon. Further analysis of settlement morphology, roads and glebe in their historical context concludes that the royal hunting-lodge and its associated enclosure lay within the modern village of Bickleigh, probably within the areas marked by the churchyard, the parsonage, Church Green and the orchard adjacent to Petty Croft on the tithe map of 1842.

1: Introduction: the royal council held at *Bicanleag* in 904

Three royal charters (S 372-4) by King Edward the Elder of Wessex and a fourth (S 1286) by Bishop Denewulf of Winchester all purport to have been issued during a meeting of the *witan*, or royal council, held in 904 at a royal 'hunting lodge' (*venatoria villa*) at a place named as *Bicanleag*. These charters are preserved only in later copies and only one has yet been edited to modern standards (S 374; Miller 2001: 40-3), but provisional editions of the other three are available (Birch 1885-93: nos. 604, 612, 613). Current opinion is that the contents of all four charters are essentially authentic (Keynes 1994: 1144-5; Keynes 1996: 17 n11; Miller 2001: 43-4).

No formal identification of *Bicanleag* has yet been published, although those who have ventured an opinion have either favoured Bickleigh near Silverton, Devon (Finberg 1953: 16; Wormald 1999: 436), or allowed that Bickleigh near Plymouth, Devon, is also possible (Sawyer 1983: 298-9; Miller 2001: 43), or else opted solely for the latter (Hill 1981: 87; Higham 2008: 141). None of these writers has set out the reasons for their opinion, however. The present interim report (in advance of formal publication elsewhere) therefore reviews the evidence relating to *Bicanleag* and places the question as to its identification and location on a more secure academic foundation.

2: The place-name *Bicanleag* and possible locations

The name-form *Bicanleag* is a compound of two Old English elements, **bica** (in an oblique case *bican*) and **lēah**. The second element **lēah** usually means 'woodland clearing' but in

some contexts can also mean 'wood' or 'pasture' (Smith 1956: **2** 18-20; Gelling & Cole 2000: 237-9). The first element **bica** could formally represent the Old English personal name *Bica* but the frequency of its occurrence in place-names renders it far more likely to be the word **bica*, which seems originally to have meant 'beak' and then developed the sense of 'point' (Smith 1956: **1** 33-4; Parsons *et al.* 1997: 96). The most probable interpretation of the name-form *Bicanleag* is therefore 'pointed clearing'.

The Old English compound *bica(n)-lēah* underlies at least five English place-names. In addition to two of the Bickleighs in Devon, namely those near Silverton and Plymouth noted above (Gover *et al.* 1931-2: 224, 554), there are: Bickley in Yorkshire (Smith 1928: 96); Bickley in Worcestershire (Mawer *et al.* 1927: 53); and Bickley in Kent (Wallenberg 1931: 10). A possible sixth instance at Bickley in Cheshire is more debatable (Dodgson 1972: 6-8). Of these six places, those in Yorkshire, Worcestershire and Cheshire can be disregarded because they lay in areas under Scandinavian or Mercian rather than West Saxon control in 904 and so would not have been locations for a meeting of King Edward's royal council. Bickley in Kent was a minor place in Bromley parish and is not separately recorded before the thirteenth century, while Bromley itself appears to have been in private hands from 862 until it passed to the bishop of Rochester in or after *c.*973 (S 331; S 1511; Whitelock 1930: 26-9, 128-32; Campbell 1973: xvi-xvii, xx n3, 29-30, 50-3); these circumstances render it highly unlikely that that Bickley in Kent was the location for the council meeting in 904. This leaves the two Bickleighs in Devon as the only viable candidates.

3: The two Bickleighs in Devon: which was *Bicanleag*?

3a: Context for discussion

At first sight there appears little to choose between these two possibilities. Each was the named focus for an estate in private hands by 1066 and with a fiscal assessment of one hide in Domesday Book (DB fos. 105v, 111v; §§ 15,61 and 21,19), and each was or became the focus for an ecclesiastical parish. More significantly, in each case there are indications that they had constituted peripheral parts of royal estates before passing into private hands. Documentary evidence for this is lacking but support for it is provided by the evidence from administrative topography together with parallel developments elsewhere in late Anglo-Saxon England. In Wessex, from the late eight-century onwards, there was a policy of granting out peripheral parts of royal estates, on an either temporary or permanent basis, to members of the secular elite as well as to ecclesiastical institutions; this fragmentation of royal estates was one of the factors in the manorialisation of the late Anglo-Saxon landscape (Bassett 1989: 19-21; Yorke 1995: 245-9). Such grants were often made initially to thegns and other royal officials involved in the administration of the parent royal estate, and these

former relationships between core and periphery can be reconstructed from topographic, Domesday and other evidence (Lavelle 2004: 11-20; Baxter & Blair 2006). For Bickleigh near Silverton this relationship was to the royal estate at Silverton while in the case of Bickleigh near Plymouth the relationship was to the royal estate at Walkhampton (see below). It was not unprecedented for meetings of royal councils to be held at such peripheral parts of royal estates (Lavelle 2005: 160-7).

3b: The context for Bickleigh near Plymouth

Bickleigh near Plymouth is first recorded in Domesday Book (DB fo. 111v; §21,19). It was then an estate in Walkhampton (later Roborough) Hundred assessed at one hide and with an estimate of eight ploughlands, and in 1066 had been held by one Beorhtmær and valued at twenty shillings. It was the only Domesday estate within the medieval ecclesiastical parish of Bickleigh and lay roughly 4¾ miles to the south of the administrative centre of the royal estate and hundred at Walkhampton.

Walkhampton is not recorded before Domesday Book (DB fo. 100v; §§1,19-22) but was then recorded as being in King Edward the Confessor's hands in 1066 and was included in 'The king's demesne [or 'lordship'] belonging to the throne' in the Exeter Domesday (Exon fos. 83r, 86v-87r; pp. 75, 79-80). The Exeter Domesday also includes a note, omitted by the Domesday Book scribe, to the effect that the three parts of Walkhampton 'paid the farm of one night' (Exon fo. 87r; p. 80; Thorn & Thorn 1985: §1,21n), an archaic formula implying that it had been a royal estate for a long time before 1066 (Yorke 1995: 243). Yet the different parts of the Walkhampton estate as it existed in 1066 – with Walkhampton itself in the northern part of the hundred but with smaller outliers on the Tamar estuary in the southern part – were also given hidage assessments, which is unusual for a royal estate of long standing. The solution seems to be that these outlying, southern parts of the royal estate represented later additions, probably in the early tenth century and connected with King Edward the Elder's strategy to defend the coasts and estuaries of Wessex against the ongoing threat of Viking attacks, as seems to have been the case with his acquisition of nearby Plympton minster (S 380; Fleming 1985: 253; Gore 2016: 64-5).
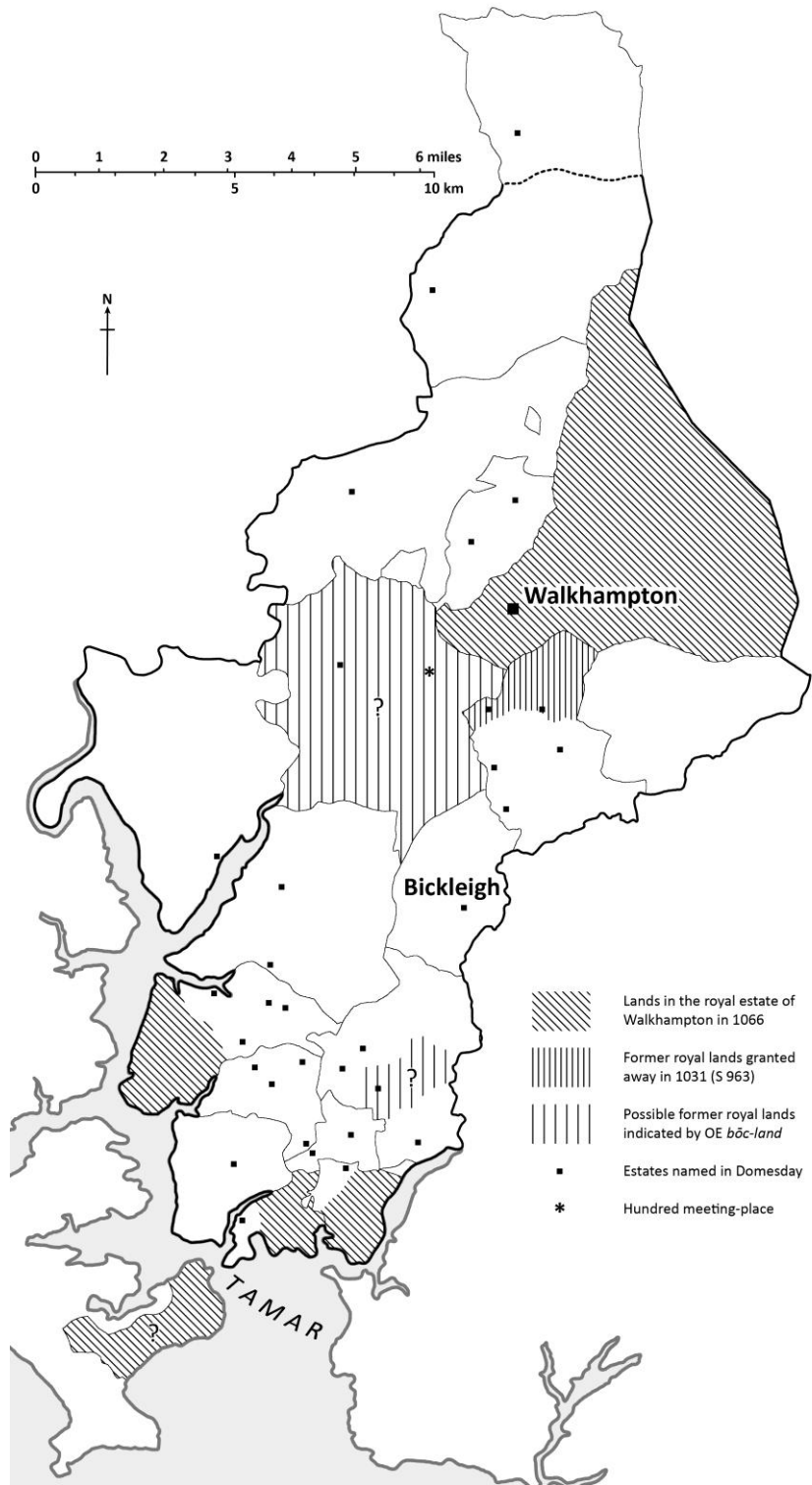
Figure 1: Bickleigh near Plymouth in relation to the royal estate at Walkhamhampton in 1066; also shown are the extent of Walkhampton (later Roborough) Hundred in 1086 and the boundaries of ecclesiastical parishes (NB: to the same scale as Figure 2).

There are further indications that the original focus for the Walkhampton estate lay in the northern part of the hundred. A grant of royal land at Meavy by King Cnut in 1031 (S 963; Hooke 1994: 196-200) lay adjacent to the south of Walkhampton and had presumably been a part of the royal estate before that. Similarly, the place-name of Buckland Monachorum to the west of Walkhampton derives from Old English *bōc-land* 'land held by royal charter' (Gover *et al*. 1931-2: 225; Parsons *et al.* 1997: 120), which implies that it had once been royal land and, from its size and location, a part of the Walkhampton estate. Egg Buckland in the southern part of the hundred also derives from Old English *bōc-land* (Gover *et al*. 1931-2: 227), although in this instance the grant may have been a more recent one in that the prefix Egg derives from Hece, the name of the man recorded as holding this land in 1066 (DB fo. 109v; §17,69). It has also been suggested (Hooke 1994: 7, 103-4) that Whitchurch, lying to the north-west of Walkhampton, was the estate at *Hpitan cyrican* named in King Alfred's will, although it is more probable that this refers to Whitchurch Canonicorum in Dorset (S 1507; Keynes & Lapidge 1983: 320).

Within this context, it is not unreasonable to suggest that Bickleigh near Plymouth might also once have been part of the royal estate of Walkhampton, although the evidence is not conclusive. It lay immediately to the south of Meavy (although was not immediately adjacent to the part of Meavy granted in 1031) and was bordered on the north-west by the parish of Buckland Monachorum, which appears to represent former royal land.

3c: The context for Bickleigh near Silverton

Bickleigh near Silverton is first recorded in Domesday Book (DB fo. 105v; §15,61). It was then an estate in Silverton (later Hayridge) Hundred assessed at one hide and with a mill and an estimate of eight ploughlands, and in 1066 had been held by one Alweard and valued at forty shillings. It was one of two Domesday estates within the medieval ecclesiastical parish of Bickleigh (the other was at Chitterley in the south of the parish) and lay roughly 2¾ miles to the north of the administrative centre of the royal estate and hundred at Silverton.

The royal estate at Silverton is not certainly mentioned by name in King Alfred's will, originally composed between 872 and 888 but with the bequests apparently revised shortly before his death in 899 (S 1507; Keynes & Lapidge 1983: 173-8; Miller 2001: 3-12), although it has been suggested that it is represented by the estate called *Mylenburnan* in the will (Keynes & Lapidge 1983: 320). It was however recorded by Domesday Book as being held by King Edward the Confessor in 1066 (DB fo. ; §1,7), and like Walkhampton it too had been part of 'The king's demesne belonging to the throne' (Exon fos. 83v-84r; pp. 75-6). At that time the Silverton estate included the royal lands in Thorverton and Cullompton (Thorn &

Thorn 1985: §1,7n). As Cullompton was one of the estates named in King Alfred's will, it is therefore possible that Silverton was then regarded as an adjunct to Cullompton in the same way that in Domesday Book Cullompton was regarded as an adjunct to Silverton. The Domesday entry for Silverton (DB fo. 100r; §1,7) states that 'it is not known how many hides are there because it never pays geld [or 'tax']', which implies that Silverton was held by the West Saxon kings from an early date and had remained in royal hands thereafter (Stafford 1980: 493; Yorke 1995: 243); an apparent transcription error in the Exeter Domesday entry, perpetuated by the scribe of Domesday Book, suggests that Silverton also 'paid the farm of one night' (Thorn & Thorn 1985: §1,7n).
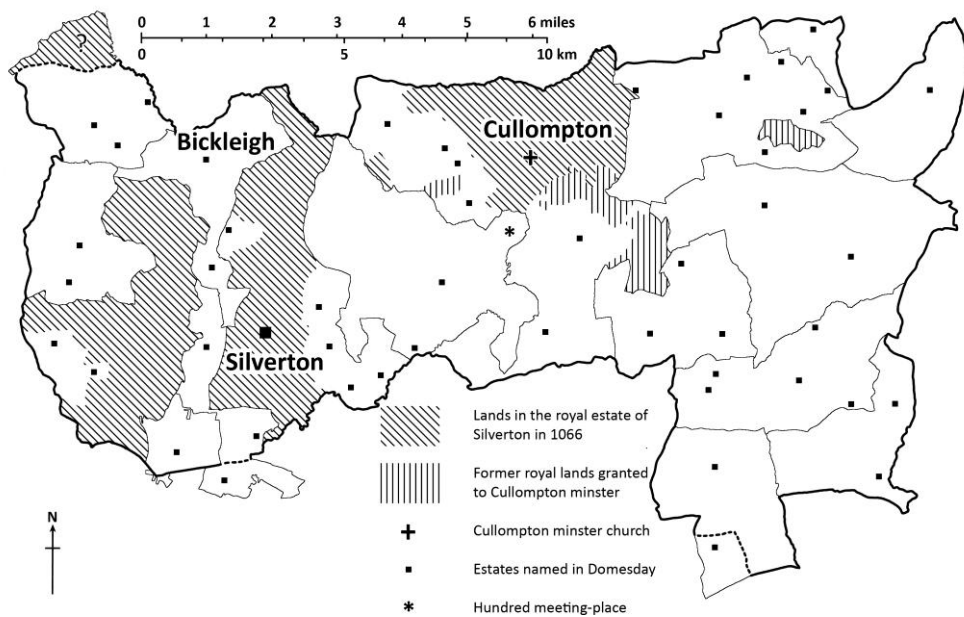
Figure 2: Bickleigh near Silverton in relation to the royal estate at Silverton in 1066; also shown are the extent of Silverton (later Hayridge) Hundred in 1086 and the boundaries of ecclesiastical parishes (NB: to the same scale as Figure 1).

The disposition of the Silverton estate as it existed in 1066 suggests that much if not all of the land in the western and northern parts of Silverton Hundred was originally in royal hands. Further support for this suggestion comes from the lands held by the minster church at Cullompton before it was acquired by Battle Abbey after the Conquest (Searle 1980: 80-3). The minster itself lay within the royal estate in 1066 and was then in the hands of one Thorbert (DB fo. 104r; §9,1), probably a royal clerk (cf. Blair 2005: 363-4); but its lands lay mainly adjacent to those of the royal estate and clearly represent grants of previously royal land. The only uncertainty is whether the Silverton/Cullompton royal estate had originated as a single unit or represented the merger of two originally separate royal estates, both for the reasons noted above and because the pre-Conquest history of Bradninch, the estate and

parish dividing the two halves, is unknown. In either case, however, there was obviously a close administrative relationship between these two parts.

Within this context, it is highly likely that both Bickleigh near Silverton and Chitterley in the southern part of Bickleigh parish had originally been parts of the royal estate of Silverton. Furthermore, the eastern boundary of Bickleigh is formed by a narrow part of Silverton estate and parish extending north to the hundredal boundary, and this too points to Bickleigh having been detached from the royal estate. Although the historical evidence is again circumstantial, both it and the topographical evidence are much stronger than was the case with regard to Bickleigh near Plymouth.

3d: Analysis and other meetings of the royal council

The evidence discussed above indicates that Bickleigh near Plymouth may have originated as part of a royal estate focussed on Walkhampton and that Bickleigh near Silverton was more probably originally part of a royal estate focussed on Silverton. Although this tips the balance of probability more in favour of identifying *Bicanleag* with Bickleigh near Silverton it cannot be regarded as doing so conclusively. The question as to which of the Devon Bickleighs was the *Bicanleag* of 904 therefore becomes a question of whether Silverton or Walkhampton was the royal estate within whose bounds the royal council met.
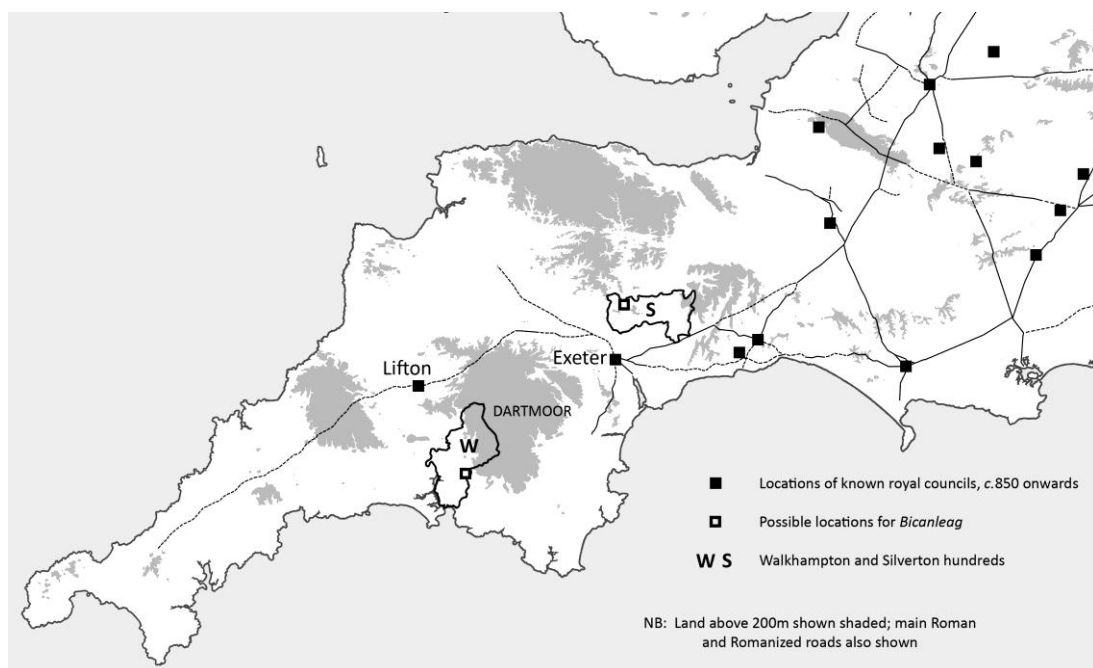

Figure 3: Known meeting-places of royal councils in south-western England before the Norman Conquest.

A key factor to be considered here is that of the logistics involved in meetings of royal councils (on which see further below). A meeting of the royal council not only had to be at a place with sufficient resources to supply and accommodate such a gathering (Sawyer 1983: 286; Lavelle 2005: 156-7); it also had to be at a place to where those attending from other parts of Wessex could travel not only safely but with relative ease, and in this latter respect the Dartmoor massif presented a considerable obstacle. The other known meetings of the royal council during the early years of King Edward's reign were at Winchester (Hampshire) in 900, at Axminster (Devon) and Southampton (Hampshire) in 901, and at Milton (Kent) and Southampton again in 903; there may also have been meetings at Exeter (Devon) and Warminster (Wiltshire) during this period, but the dates of these are not certain (Wormald 1999: 431-2). If this survey of royal councils is continued through to the end of the Anglo-Saxon period, then it is notable that almost all of the meetings held in Devon were in the vicinity of either Exeter or Axminster (*ibid.*: 431-4, 436). Only once was a meeting held to the west of Dartmoor, at Lifton in 931 during the reign of Edward's son Æthelstan, which was exceptional because of the attendance of two of the Welsh kings (S 416). It is apparent from this survey that Silverton, within easy reach of Exeter and to the east of Dartmoor, fits the known pattern of royal meeting-places during the late Anglo-Saxon period whereas Walkhampton does not. On balance, the available evidence as presented and discussed above therefore renders it probable that the *Bicanleag* at which the royal council met in 904 is to be identified as Bickleigh near Silverton, Devon.

4: Where in Bickleigh (near Silverton) was the royal 'hunting lodge'?

On onomastic grounds alone it is reasonable to presume that the royal 'hunting lodge' of 904 lay in the northern part of Bickleigh parish associated with the Domesday manor called Bickleigh (*Bichelie*: DB fo. 105v; §15,61) rather than in the southern part of it associated with the Domesday manor called Chitterley (*Chiderlie*: DB fo. 105v; §15,60). Other than the four *Bicanleag* charters there is no documentary evidence relating directly to Bickleigh earlier than that in Domesday Book; indeed, even after the Conquest Bickleigh is rarely mentioned in surviving documentary records before the fourteenth century. However, in the absence of early documentary evidence we can turn to that provided by settlement morphology and in particular by the network of routeways passing through Bickleigh. When considered within the context of what we know about the administrative and ecclesiastical arrangements in central Devon as revealed by Domesday Book and other sources, these provide us with valuable clues as to the pre-Conquest history and development of Bickleigh.

5: Early routeways through Bickleigh

5a: Route 1 – Exeter to Tiverton (and Taunton)

In the pre-Conquest period, as now, Route1 was the main route through Bickleigh. From the south it led from the city of Exeter and from the administrative focus of the royal estate at Silverton, passing through Bickleigh to Tiverton (another royal estate recorded in King Alfred's will, albeit in the hands of Earl Harold's mother in 1066: S 1507; DB fos. 100v-101r; §1,35) and thence to Taunton and beyond. The easiest route north was Route1a, via the ford (and later bridge) across the River Exe at Bickleigh and then following the west bank of the river before re-crossing the Exe on the approach to Tiverton.
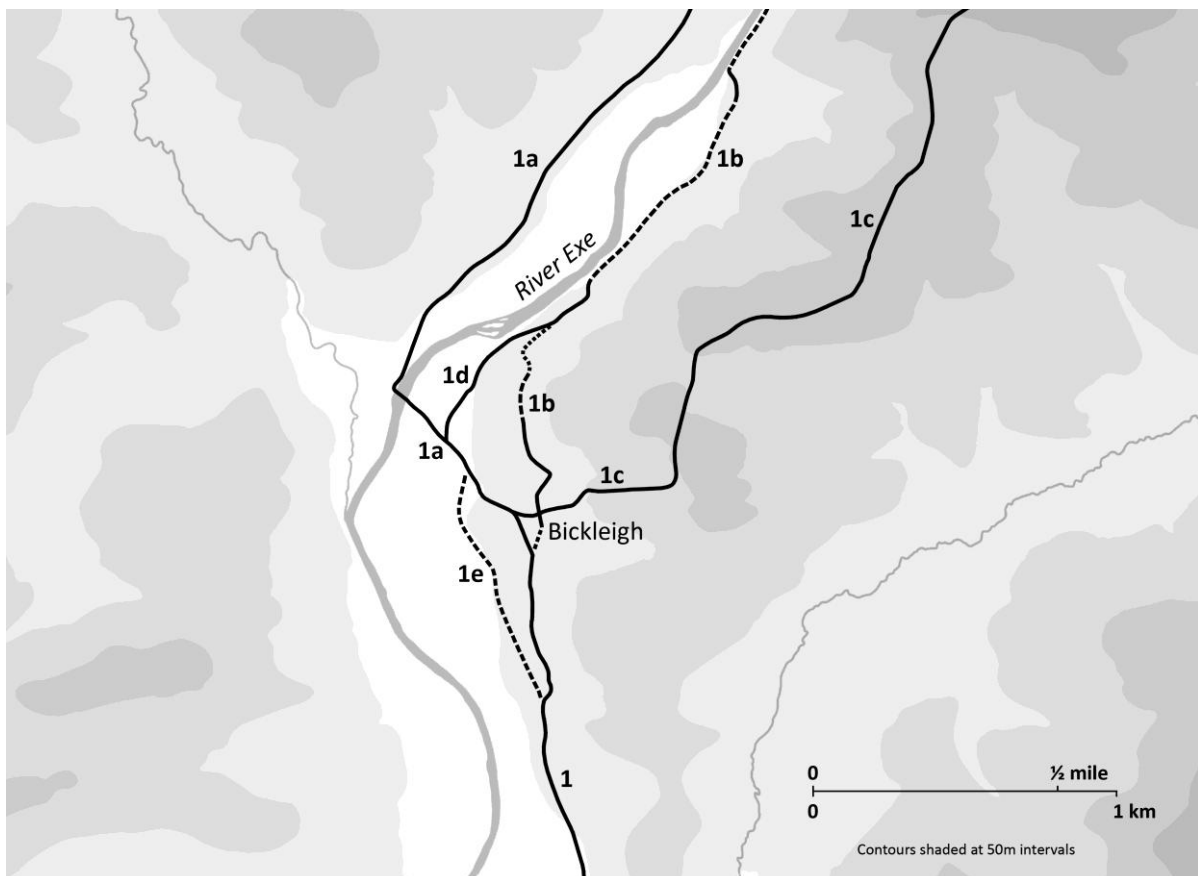

Figure 4: Variants of Route 1, Exeter/Silverton to Tiverton, through Bickleigh

Route1b and Route1c provided alternatives, however, particularly at the times of year when the river was too high to ford safely before the bridge was built. Route1b appears to have followed the contours through Bickleigh and then the east bank of the river before crossing the River Lowman to the south of Tiverton. After the first bridge was built at Bickleigh there was no longer a need for Route1b as an alternative for long distance travel and it fell out of

use, although parts of it remained in local use or survived as field boundaries into the modern period.

Route1c followed a steeper route out of Bickleigh. It too was probably used less for long-distance travel after the first bridge was built but, unlike Route1b, it retained its usefulness not only for local journeys but also because it provided the most direct route between Silverton and the former royal estate at Halberton. Halberton probably originated as a part of the Tiverton estate and was held by the queen's thegn Beorhtric son of Ælfgar in 1066, although it was again in royal hands by 1086 and was by then the focal point for its own administrative hundred (DB fo. 101v; §1,70).

Route1d may have developed as a variant of part of Route1b after the building of the first Bickleigh Mill, which was probably at some point between the eighth and early eleventh centuries (the mill is noted in the Domesday Book entry for Bickleigh). Route1e (the route followed by the modern road between Exeter and Tiverton and bypassing Bickleigh village) was developed as a turnpike in the early nineteenth century (Webb 2016: 7-8) and is therefore not relevant to the present study.

The Bickleigh terrier of 1602 refers to part of Route1 to the south of Bickleigh village as 'the highe waye to Exeter'. It also describes the part of Route1a leading from Bickleigh village to the bridge as 'the highe waye' and a part of Route1c near Henbere as 'the highe waye from Bickleigh to Tyverton', which implies that both Route1a and Route1c were then in use for the journey to Tiverton. Donn's map of 1765 (Ravenhill 1965) only depicts Route1a.

Two further references in the terrier of 1602 are slightly more ambiguous. One refers to a 'highewaye' forming the southern boundary of '2 acres more or lesse' of glebe called 'Perricrofts'. This can be identified with the 1½ acres of glebe called 'Higher Peticroft' and the 1 acre called 'Lower Peticroft' in the terrier of 1682, which in turn correspond to the part or all of the roughly 3¾ acres of glebe called Petty Croft Gardens [258] in the tithe apportionment of 1842; if so, then this implies that the 'highewaye' is the part of Route1c running uphill from Bickleigh village. The other reference in the terrier of 1602 uses the plural 'the highe ways' for the southern boundary of 'twoe orchardes, on either syde of the [Rectory] howse', and the plural here may be in reference to both Route1a and Route1c.

5b: Route 2 – Tiverton to Crediton

The most direct road between Tiverton and Crediton was to follow Route1a along the west bank of the Exe and then Route2 through the hills via Cadbury and Stockleigh Pomeroy.

However, the easier way was to continue south along Route1 and then re-cross the Exe by the fords either at Thorverton or, more probably, at Burrow in Stoke Canon; this latter route proceeded to Crediton by a road described as a *herepath* (Old English *herepæð* 'army road, highway') in several pre-Conquest charters (Hooke 1999: 97, 102, 103-4). These various routes to Crediton will have become more important after *c.*909 when the minster church at Crediton became the episcopal seat of the bishops of Devon (and sometimes Cornwall), until this was transferred to Exeter in 1050 (Probert 2011: 177).
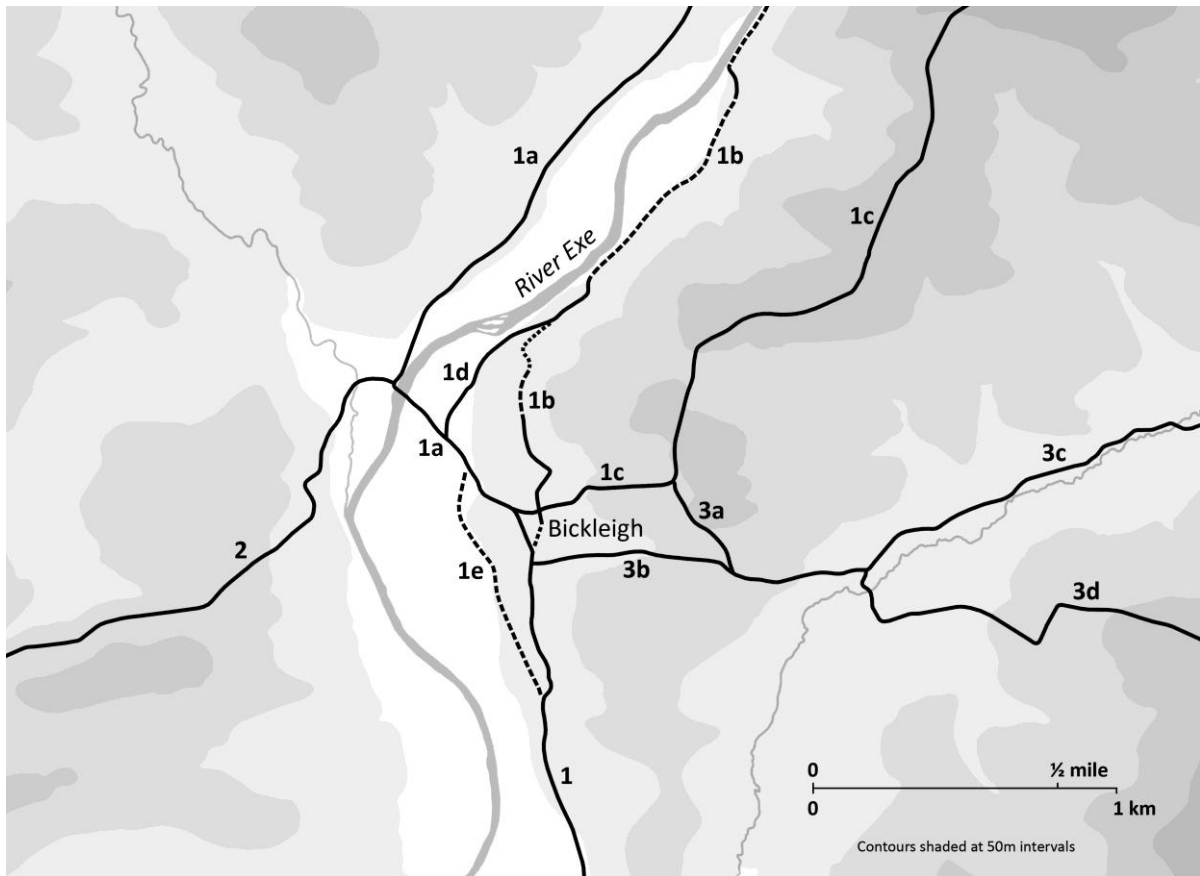

Figure 5: Route 2 to Crediton and Route 3 to Cullompton.

5c: Route 3 – Cullompton to Bickleigh (and Bickleigh ford/bridge)

The route to Cullompton will have been particularly important in the period before Bickleigh had its own church with full parochial rights, because the minster church at Cullompton would have been where the population attended for the major religious festivals and for the Christian rites of baptism and marriage as well as burial (cf. Blair 2005: 303-4, 433-67); it is possible that there was also an intermediate period during which a secondary church was established at Silverton although this has yet to be confirmed. Route3 will have been important not only for the population of Bickleigh but also for those of Cadbury (via Route2)

and Cadeleigh (via Route4; see below) until such time as they also acquired independent parish churches. Route3a (via part of Route1c) and Route3b represented alternative ways to cross the ridge separating the Exe and Burn valleys and of which Route3b offered the slightly gentler gradient, after which Route3c continued along the Burn valley via Butterleigh to Cullompton and avoided the steep climbs required by other routes. A slightly more direct but steeper route was provided by Route3d. Donn's map of 1765 (Ravenhill 1965) does not show the western part of Route3 or Route3c but does depict Route3d eastwards from the point at which it crosses the Bradninch parish boundary, suggesting that by then Route3c had fallen out of use as a through-route.
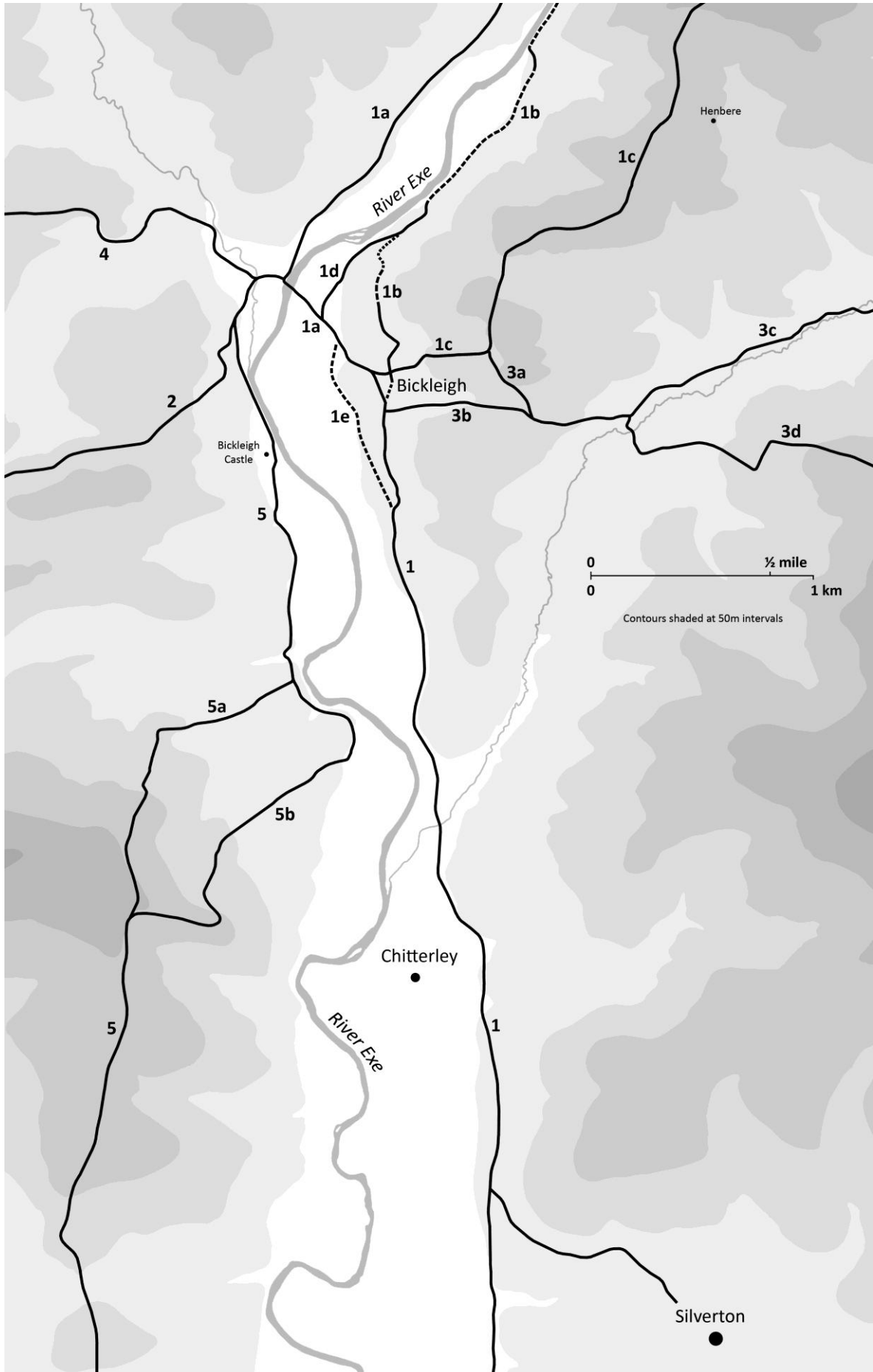
Route3b is referred to as 'the highway from Bickleigh to Colompton' forming the southern boundary of the '4 acres more or lesse' of glebe called Stockhayes in the terrier of 1602. This can be identified with the 4¾ acres of glebe called Stockhayes in the terrier of 1682 and with the glebe lands called Lower Stockhays (292), Higher Stockhays (293) and Stockhays Orchard (294) in the tithe apportionment of 1842, which together amounted to 4¾ acres. This suggests that Route3b was the main route used to Cullompton by 1602.

5d: Lesser routes

Route4 (via Route1a) provided access between Silverton and Cadeleigh and other estates in the north-western part of Silverton/Hayridge hundred; this may have included the royal land at Langley in Cadeleigh, which although technically an outlying part of the royal estate and hundred of Budleigh (DB §1,9 note) was perhaps for convenience administered largely from Silverton. Route4 (via Route3) also provided access between Cadeleigh and the minster church at Cullompton, as noted above.

The early status of Route5 is uncertain and it may originally have been only a local road rather than a through-route. Although it may have been an alternative route between Tiverton and Thorverton (with Route5b perhaps representing a deviation to take in Traymill after that mill was established), this would have been more easily achieved via Route1 and then fording the Exe via Rudway. However, Route5 will have increased in importance after the development of the Bickleigh Castle site as the manorial focus, probably in the post-Conquest period (see below).

Figure 6 (next page): Route 4 to Cadeleigh and Route 5 to Thorverton.

River Exe

1a

1b

1c

Henbere

1d

1a

1b

1c

3c

2

Bickleigh

3a

1e

3b

3d

Bickleigh
Castle

5

1

0   ½ mile

0   1 km

Contours shaded at 50m intervals

5a

5b

5

Chitterley

River Exe

1

Silverton

Finally, there were numerous minor roads and tracks connecting individual settlements and farms to this main network, such as those connecting Chitterley to Route1 or that connecting Henbere (from Old English *hēan-bearu* 'high small wood' or *hēan-bǣr* 'high wood-pasture') to Route1c. However, although important in terms of understanding secondary settlement morphology they are not directly relevant to the present enquiry.

5e: Analysis in the context of the *Bicanleag* council

The witness-lists of the four *Bicanleag* charters show that the meeting of the royal council in 904 was attended by most of the senior West Saxon dignitaries. These included not only King Edward and his brother Æthelweard, the archbishop of Canterbury, the bishops of Winchester, Sherborne and London and the ealdormen representing the various West Saxon shires and regions but also more than a dozen of the senior thegns as well as numerous clergy. These dignitaries did not travel alone from their respective parts of southern England. It has been estimated (with reference to the council meeting held at Grateley, Hampshire, in *c.*925x930) that the dignitaries, their immediate retinues and others could easily have amounted to some four hundred people being in attendance at such council meetings (Lavelle 2005: 156). Although many of these could have been accommodated in temporary structures such as tents (Probert 2008: 9), all of them needed to be fed and provided for to an appropriate standard throughout however many days the meeting lasted. The supply of the quantities of fresh meat, bread, beverages and other provisions needed for such a large number of people would have placed a heavy burden on all but the largest royal estates, and it is likely that for the *Bicanleag* meeting the resources of the Silverton/Cullompton estate will have required augmentation from other royal estates in the immediate area such as Wonford (DB fo. 100v; §1,28), Tiverton and Halberton.

The relationships between the early routes relating to Bickleigh and their various functions discussed above strongly suggest, not unsurprisingly, that the area of the present Bickleigh village within which Route1 and Route3 (and through them some aspects of Route2 and Route4) intersect created a natural focal point for further activity. In particular, attention should be drawn to the function of these routes in connecting various pre-Conquest royal estates. In the present context of locating the royal 'hunting lodge' at *Bicanleag*, this area provides the most obvious place to start looking.

6a: Settlement morphology of Bickleigh village and dateable features

The first, early nineteenth-century maps of Bickleigh village reveal a small settlement of irregular agglomerated type, with incomplete development around a small green (Church Green) and irregular rows along the three principle roads leading away from the green to the south (Route1), the north-west (Route1a/Route4) and to a lesser extent the east (Route1c/Route3a). Development is mainly on the eastern and southern edges of the green, with the parsonage to the north and no indication that the western edge had ever been significantly developed; the parish church is offset and slightly uphill to the north-east. The initial impression given is that the original core of residential development was in the area to the east of the green and to the south of the church.

The limited evidence provided by extant buildings indicate that this picture of the village as it existed in the early nineteenth century is likely to be similar to that during the preceding century or more. Bickleigh House, the former rectory and parsonage, appears to be an eighteenth-century rebuilding on the site of an earlier predecessor to judge by the details as to its location provided by the terrier of 1602. There are few buildings earlier than the mid-eighteenth century, although a house and Willis Farm on the southern row along Route1 may represent redevelopments of medieval cores (Cherry & Pevsner 1991: 170; Webb 2016: 15); but of the extant buildings in the main village only the church is of certainly medieval date. There has not yet been a detailed fabric analysis of Bickleigh church but Pevsner (Cherry & Pevsner 1991: 170) dated the extant tower to the thirteenth century while the doorway and font have been dated to the twelfth century (Webb 2016: 14). The tower provides a secure *terminus ante quem* for the church on its present site but architectural details such as doorways could be re-used and fonts were potentially moveable so neither provides an absolutely secure dating. However, western towers were often later additions to extant, simpler churches (cf. Morris 1989: 255), which adds weight to the evidence provided by the doorway, and it is therefore reasonable to assume that the church has occupied its present site since at least the later twelfth century. This is closely contemporary with the building of the chapel at the Bickleigh Castle site on the western side of the Exe (Cherry & Pevsner 1991: 171-2; Waterhouse 2009: 6-7; Webb 2016: 7, 13) and suggests that the parish church was built or rebuilt as part of the same building programme as the chapel. This may accord with the suggestion by Richardson (2012) that the de Bekeleg family moved the manorial focus of the Bickleigh estate from the area of the village to the Bickleigh Castle site soon after they acquired the manor at some point between 1141 and 1175. It is of course possible that this building of the parish church in the twelfth century was in succession to an earlier stone or wooden church or chapel on the same site, but archaeological investigation would be needed to establish this one way or the other.

The other feature to be considered at this point is the disposition of the glebe lands as recorded in the terriers of 1602 and 1682 and as recorded and mapped by the tithe survey of 1842. There were outlying fields adjacent to Route1c on the higher ground to the north-east (named *Moorehayes* in 1602, *Morishes* in 1682 and *Moorushes* in 1842, apparently from Old or Middle English *mōr-(ge)hǣg* 'wet upland enclosure(s)', a valuable source of hay) and adjacent to Route1 to the south (named *Howndes Poole (Meadow)* in 1602, *Hownes Poole* in 1682 and *Hounds Pool* in 1842), but the bulk of the glebe lay close to the village itself. It occupied most of the area to the north of the Route1a-Route1c road, with another substantial area to the south of the church and to the north of Route3b. Several fields throughout the glebe have names relating to their resources or functions (not always the same as those given in 1842), such as the 'Moorushes' noted above, 'Stockhays', 'Perricrofts' (in 1602, from Old or Middle English *pirige-croft* 'pear-tree field', although corrupted to 'Petty Crofts' in later records) and 'Furze', and what the glebe represents is essentially a largely self-sustaining medieval farm in microcosm with areas for pasture, meadow, stock-rearing, arable, orchards and brushwood. This looks like the original 'living' allocated to the parish priest. An ecclesiastical council in 1102 decreed that no new church could be founded without adequate provision for the priest as well as the church and this seems to have been interpreted as meaning about one ploughland (Blair 2005: 408), which in the case of Bickleigh manor would represent one-eighth of its assessment at eight ploughlands as recorded in Domesday Book. The extent and location of the glebe relative to the centre of the village – dominating its northern half and with a significant area immediately to the south-east – is also the type of position in which the more important parts of the manorial demesne might be expected to lie. Although it falls short of absolute proof, this strongly suggests that the foundation of the parish church (and its glebe, established using part of the original demesne) was indeed associated with a move of the manorial centre from the village to the new Bickleigh Castle site in the twelfth century. It may still be the case that there was a chapel at Bickleigh before this, but if so then it is unlikely to have had parochial status; instead, it is more probable that until the second half of the twelfth century Bickleigh was still parochially dependent on Cullompton minster (or perhaps by that date on a secondary church at Silverton).

The disposition of the glebe in conjunction with the early routeways and other aspects of settlement morphology strongly suggest that the lord's residence of the Domesday manor of Bickleigh will have been in the vicinity of the intersection of Route1a/Route4, Route1b and Route1c/Route3a. It most probably lay somewhere in the areas that on the 1842 tithe map are marked by the churchyard [289], the parsonage [265], Church Green [266] and the orchard [263] adjacent to Perry Croft [258], with secondary residential development in the areas immediately to the south of this manorial residence. It is also reasonable to presume that this manorial site developed from or close to that of the royal 'hunting-lodge' after Bickleigh was alienated from royal possession at some point during the tenth or early

16

eleventh centuries. Before proceeding to any final conclusions, however, it is necessary to consider another possible aspect of the early settlement morphology at Bickleigh.
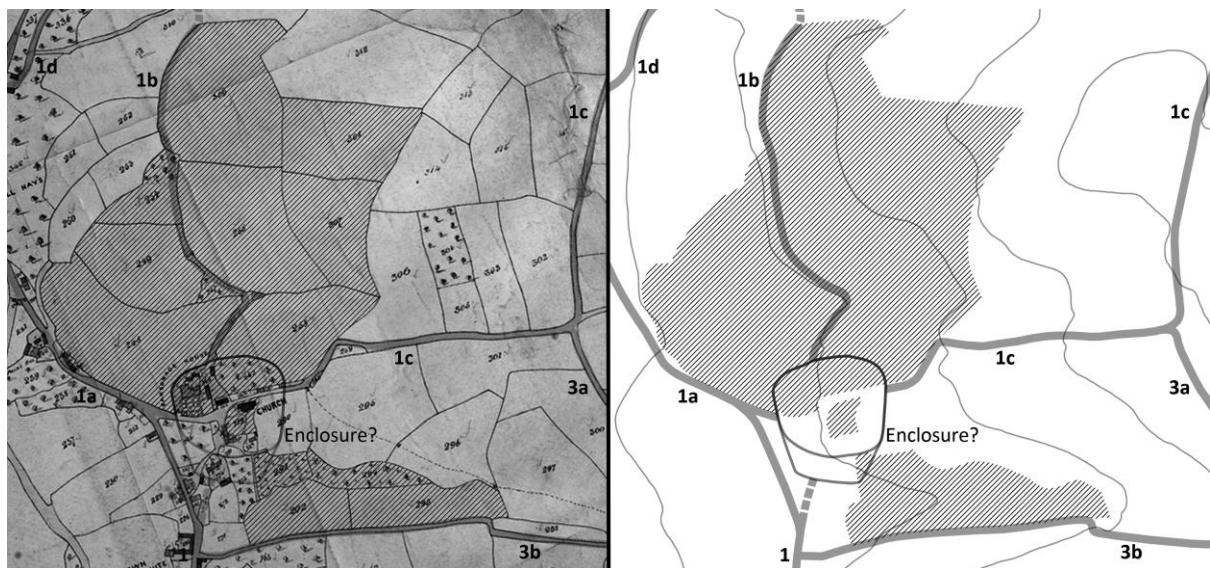
Figure 7: The area of Bickleigh village, showing the early routeways discussed above (numbered), the extent of the glebe lands (hatched) and the location of the putative enclosure discussed below. The left-hand map shows these details overlain on the tithe map of 1842, while the right-hand map shows the same details in relation to contour lines plotted at 25m intervals. Note that the outlying portions of glebe (at Moorushes to the north-east and at Hounds Pool to the south) lie outside the limits of this map.

6b: The putative 'enclosure' at Bickleigh

It has been suggested that traces of a large sub-ovoid enclosure can be detected at Bickleigh and that these may represent the extent of the manorial centre prior to this being relocated to the Bickleigh Castle site (Waterhouse 2009: 1; Waterhouse 2015; Webb 2016: 11-13). Two versions of the landscape data have been offered, one based on the boundaries recorded by the 1842 tithe map and the other, similar but extending slightly further to the south, on the basis of aerial photographs and surviving earthworks. This putative 'enclosure' has not been tested archaeologically; as noted by Webb (2016: 15), the trial trenches of an archaeological evaluation of Church Green (Hughes 2013) did not coincide with the line of the proposed enclosure, although they did yield limited evidence of occupation from perhaps the eleventh century onwards.

In the absence of more detailed archaeological assessment it is not possible to establish the date or even the existence of this putative enclosure. Nevertheless, an enclosure associated with the royal hunting-lodge and the later manorial complex at Bickleigh would not be

unexpected. The only excavated royal site of the period is that at Cheddar, Somerset, the first phase of which was built in the late ninth or early tenth century (Rahtz 1979; Blair 1996: 108-20). Here 'the hunting-lodge was the cuckoo in the nest' (Blair 2005: 326-7), with the royal enclosure developing within a larger minster enclosure and used for meetings of the royal council in the mid-tenth century. Lesser parallels are offered by the two excavated manorial sites of the period, at Raunds in Northamptonshire (Cadman 1983; Boddington 1996) and at Faccombe Netherton in Hampshire (Fairbrother 1990), both of which also featured halls with associated enclosures; it is perhaps notable that the Raunds site included a small church or chapel, as did the second phase at Cheddar. Given the apparent importance of the intersection of early routeways at Bickleigh, another possible and more local analogue from elsewhere within the Silverton royal estate might be 'The Bury' (from Old English *burh* 'stronghold, manor') at Thorverton, which Hoskins (1955: fig.5) suggested as the original nucleus of the Anglo-Saxon estate there and was paralleled by 'The Bery' at Silverton, although more work would be needed to examine these suggestions further.

7: Conclusions

On the basis of the available evidence, as examined and discussed above, the most viable identification and location for the royal hunting-lodge at *Bicanleag* where the West Saxon royal council met in 904 is in the village of Bickleigh near Silverton, Devon. This places it, with a few others such as Cheddar (Somerset) and Grateley (Hampshire), within an important small group of known Anglo-Saxon royal meeting-places that were in rural rather than urban contexts.

Further examination of the early routeways passing through Bickleigh and connecting it with locally important places in Anglo-Saxon Devon, together with the evidence provided by the glebe lands allocated to the parish church at the time of its foundation, suggest that the original focal point for the manor after it passed into private hands lay near the centre of the village, most probably within the areas marked as the churchyard, the parsonage, Church Green and the orchard adjacent to Petty Croft on the tithe map of 1842. This renders it highly likely that the royal hunting lodge at *Bicanleag* had been located in the same area. A possible enclosure demarking the same area may add weight to this identification, but the identification presented in this report is not dependent on this.

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Abbreviations used

DB   Domesday Book, cited by folio from the edition and facsimile by Williams & Erskine 1986-92, and by section from the edition of the Devonshire folios (with notes) by Thorn & Thorn 1985.

Exon   Liber Exoniensis (including Exeter Domesday), cited by folio and by page from the edition by Ellis 1816.

S   Sawyer charter, cited by number from Kelly *et al.* 1999.

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1682 terrier   *Bickleigh. A Terrier of the Parsonage and Glebe Land, 20th March 1682* (Devon Record Office).

1842 tithe map Tithe map and apportionment for Bickleigh parish, 1842 (Devon Record Office).

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