

PORTESHAM

ANGLO SAXON VILLAGE

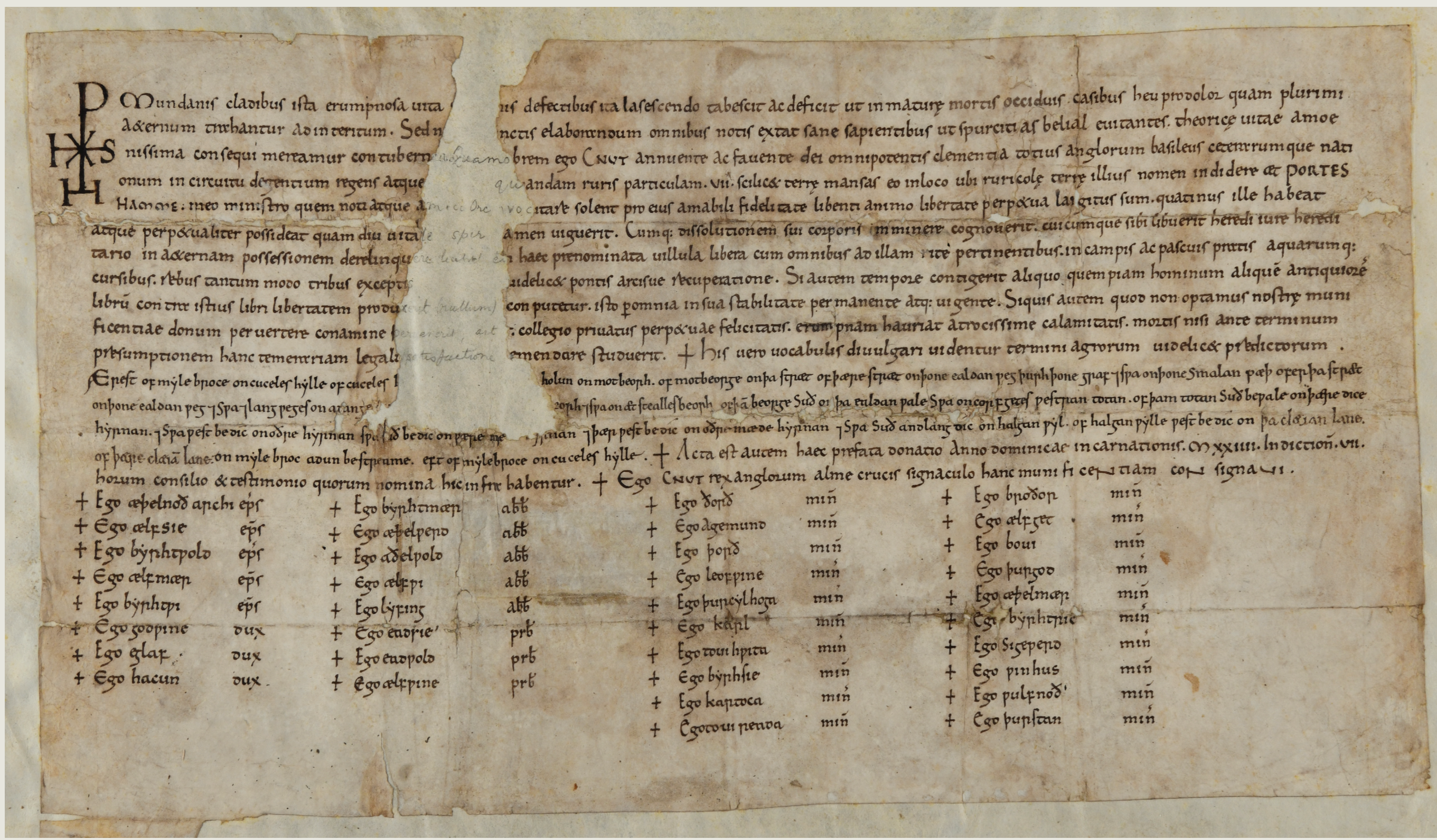
A copy of KING CNUT's Charter granting 7 hides of Porteshamme to his servant, Orc in AD1024

There is evidence of human habitation in and around Portesham from Neolithic times but this charter is the first written record of the area being named as 'Porteshamme'.

It describes the boundaries of the parish and is reproduced here with kind permission from the Ilchester Estate.

Anglo-Saxon boundary clauses are descriptions of the boundaries of land in old English or Latin, recorded in charters from the 7th to the 11th century, like the land registry plans of today.

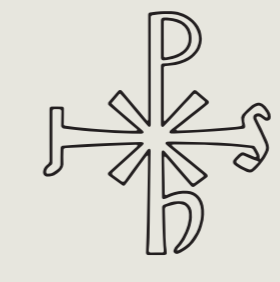
Typically, they walk the reader clockwise around the perimeter citing features over which the boundary passes, crosses or follows:



- Aereost of Mylebroce on Cuceles Hylle. **"From Mill Brook to Cucele's Hill"**
Near the SW corner of the parish to the WSW of Portisham village is a small brook called the Mill Stream. Cucele's Hill must be the hill on the west boundary now called White Hill.
- Of, etc., on Holum. **"From Cucele's Hill to the Hollows"**
The Hollows is the valley over the head of which the west boundary passes just north of White Hill.
- Of, etc., on Motbeorh. **"From the Hollows to the Barrow where the Moot meets"**
This Barrow is a burial ground at the NW corner of the parish boundary about 3 furlongs from the Grey Mare and her Colts.
- Of, etc., on tha Straet. **"From the Moot barrow to the Made Road"**
The Straet is the ridgeway which forms the west part of the north boundary just beyond the summit of Blackdown. It is part of the great south ridgeway of the county extending from the Devonshire to the Hampshire borders.
- Of, etc., on thone Ealdan Waeg thurh thone Graf. **"From the Made Road to the Old Way through the Grove"**
- And swa on thone Smalen Paeth ofer tha Straet on thone Ealdan Weg. **"And so to the Narrow Path over the Made Way to the Old Way"**
These two landmarks must be considered together because their wording presents some difficulty. The topography of the north boundary seems to explain the difficulty to a certain extent.
- And swa andlang Weges on Atange. **"And so along the Way to..."**
The text of both these landmarks is corrupt and nothing can be made of them.
-Earh **"And so to the Barrow at the Cattle Stall"**
- And swa on Aet Stealles Beorh. **"From the Barrow south to the Old Wall"**
- Of, etc., suth on tha Eadlan Wale. **"So to the Western Cottages of Corfe Gate"**
This is a significant landmark. In the Feudal Aids of 1303, Corton is called Corton and Corveton. The first element in the name is the same as that in Corfe Castle. It means a "notch" or "col" in a ridge; and both Corfe and Corton are situated at very marked cols in ridges. Nor can there be any doubt that the name Coryates near Corton was originally Corf-gete.
- Swa on Corf Getes Westran Cotan. **"From the cottages south by the Wall to the Angle in the Dyke"**
- Of, etc., suth be Wale on thaere Dice Hyrnan. **"And so west by the Dyke to the other Angle"**
- And swa west be Dic on othre Hyrnan. **"So south by the Dyke to the Corner of the Mead"**
- Swa suth be Dic on thaere Maede Hyrnan. **"And then West by the Dyke on the other corner of the Mead"**
- And thaer west be Dic on othre Maede Hyrnan. **"And so south along the Dyke on the Holy Spring (Stream)"**
- And swa suth andlang Dic on Halgan Wal. **"From the Holy Spring west by the Dyke to Clay Lane"**
- Of, etc., west be Dic on tha Cleian Lane. **"From the Clay Lane to Mill Brook down the stream"**
- Of, etc., on Mylebroc adun be streame. **"Once more from Mill Brook to Cucele's Hill"**
- Eft of, etc., on Cuceles Hylle.

The latter Landmarks correspond so closely with the present Portisham - Abbotsbury boundary that it is possible to determine them with confidence.

According to HUTCHINS Vol 2 pages 757/8 and The Proceedings of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society Vol 59 1937



The character at the beginning of the charter represents the Chi-Rho symbol, created by superimposing the first 2 letters, XP, of the Greek word for Christ (Chi Rho Iota Sigma Tau) and adding the Latin abbreviations I = Iesus (Jesus) S = Salvator (Saviour) H = Hominum (Humankind). You might be interested to learn that Jesus in Hebrew means "Yahweh" or "God Saves".



With grateful thanks to villager Jo Hearton, retired of the Dorset History Centre, Archivist Dr Mark Forrest and County Archivist Sam Johnston for their invaluable knowledge, advice and research.
Catalogue reference D/FSI Anglo Saxon Charter 2 Recto.