

# The Saxon Origins of Ansty

Aldred ten in *ANESTIGE*. III. hid. Tra. ē. II. car. quæ ibi s̄t cū. i. seruo 7 i. uillō. 7 III. bord.  
Ibi molin redd. xxv. den. 7 v. ac siluæ 7 v. ac p̄ti. 7 II. q̄z pasturæ. Val. xxx.  
Aldred ten in *WERVETONE*. x. hid. Tra. ē. III. car. q̄z ibi s̄t cū. v. seruis. 7 III. uill  
7 III. bord. Valuit 7 uat. c. fol. Has. II. tras tenuer Bricno 7 *Aluwin* T.R.E.

Aldred holds 3 hides in ANSTY. Land for 2 ploughs which are there,  
with 1 slave and  
1 villager and 3 smallholders.  
A mill which pays 25d; woodland, 5 acres; meadow, 5 acres;  
pasture, 2 furlongs.  
Value 30s.

Walter ten de. W. *ANESTIGE*. Aluric 7 Vluuard tenb  
T.R.E. 7 geldb p. VII. hid. Tra. ē. IIII. car. De ea s̄t in dñio  
.v. hidæ. 7 una v træ. 7 ibi. II. car. 7 II. serui. 7 VI. uilli 7 IIII.  
bord cū. II. car. Ibi molin redd. v. fol. 7 xvi. ac p̄ti. 7 xv. ac  
siluæ. Pastura dim leu lō 7 III. q̄z lat. Valuit 7 uat. c. fol

Walter holds ANSTY from Waleran. *Aelfric* and *Wulfward* held it  
before 1066; it paid tax for 7 hides. Land for 4 ploughs,  
of which 5 hides and 1 virgate of land are in lordship; 2 ploughs  
there; 2 slaves;

6 villagers and 4 smallholders with 2 ploughs.  
A mill which pays 5s; meadow, 16 acres; woodland, 15 acres;  
pasture ½ league long and 3 furlongs wide.  
The value was and is 100s.

The fact that the manor of Ansty in the Hundred<sup>1</sup> of Dunworth is mentioned twice  
in the Domesday Book enables us to learn that there were three Saxon lords who  
held parts of the manor before the Norman Conquest in 1066. They were Alwin,  
Aelfric and Wulfward. <sup>1</sup> [Hundreds of Wiltshire](#)

Alwin owned 15 other places in Wiltshire before the conquest; Aelfric appeared  
to have held about a dozen manors in Wiltshire before the conquest and  
Wulfward held 3 other manors all in south Wiltshire. Almost all of these Wiltshire  
settlements still exist today and they all display Saxon origins as determined by  
prefixes in the place name such as **bury, ford, ham, ley, mere, ton, wick**. These  
prefixes generally refer to the landscape setting they were in. Early Saxon  
settlements reflected the name of a Saxon Chieftain; later settlements reflected  
the landscape setting.

More about Anglo-Saxon place names here: [Anglo-Saxon Discovery](#)  
Or [Anglo-Saxon Place Names](#)

Ansty bucks the prefix trend because at that time Ansty was referred to as  
'Anestige'.

This interesting name, with variant spellings, Anstie, Anstey and Ansty, is also of  
Saxon origin and is locational from any of the various places named with the Olde  
English pre 7th Century "anstiga", from "an", one, plus "stig", a path, especially a  
narrow footpath or one up a hill.

This probably refers to one or more of the paths that ascended the Downs  
immediately to the south of the village, later linking in with the old Saxon  
'Herepath' (a military road) that ran from west to east along the crests in the 9<sup>th</sup>  
Century. The name Anestige suggests the roots of Saxon Ansty are certainly pre  
7<sup>th</sup> century.

Much more interesting information can be found here:  
[Historical Gazetteer of Local Place Names \(Ansty\)](#)

After the Norman conquest in 1066, Alwin and Aelfric appear to have lost all of  
their manor estates (they possibly died fighting in some skirmish or even the  
Battle of Hastings itself) but although Wulfward no longer held Ansty he was still  
running a manor in the Hundred of Alderbury in the east of Wiltshire in 1086.

You can find out much more about this topic here: [Open Domesday](#)

There are also other local Saxon connections that help prove their link with our local area. The well-known fortification 'Castle Ditches' just over a mile to the north of Ansty was referred to as 'Wilburg' or 'The Briton's Fort'. Wilburg is a name derived from Germanic origins meaning 'will protect' – that is, fortification.

Cholden Hill just above Ansty (near Waterloo farm) comes from the Chalden Hill: Chalden is the Saxon for Calf. Indeed on an OS 1:10560 map in the 1920s this area was referred to as Caelfa Dun or Calves Down.

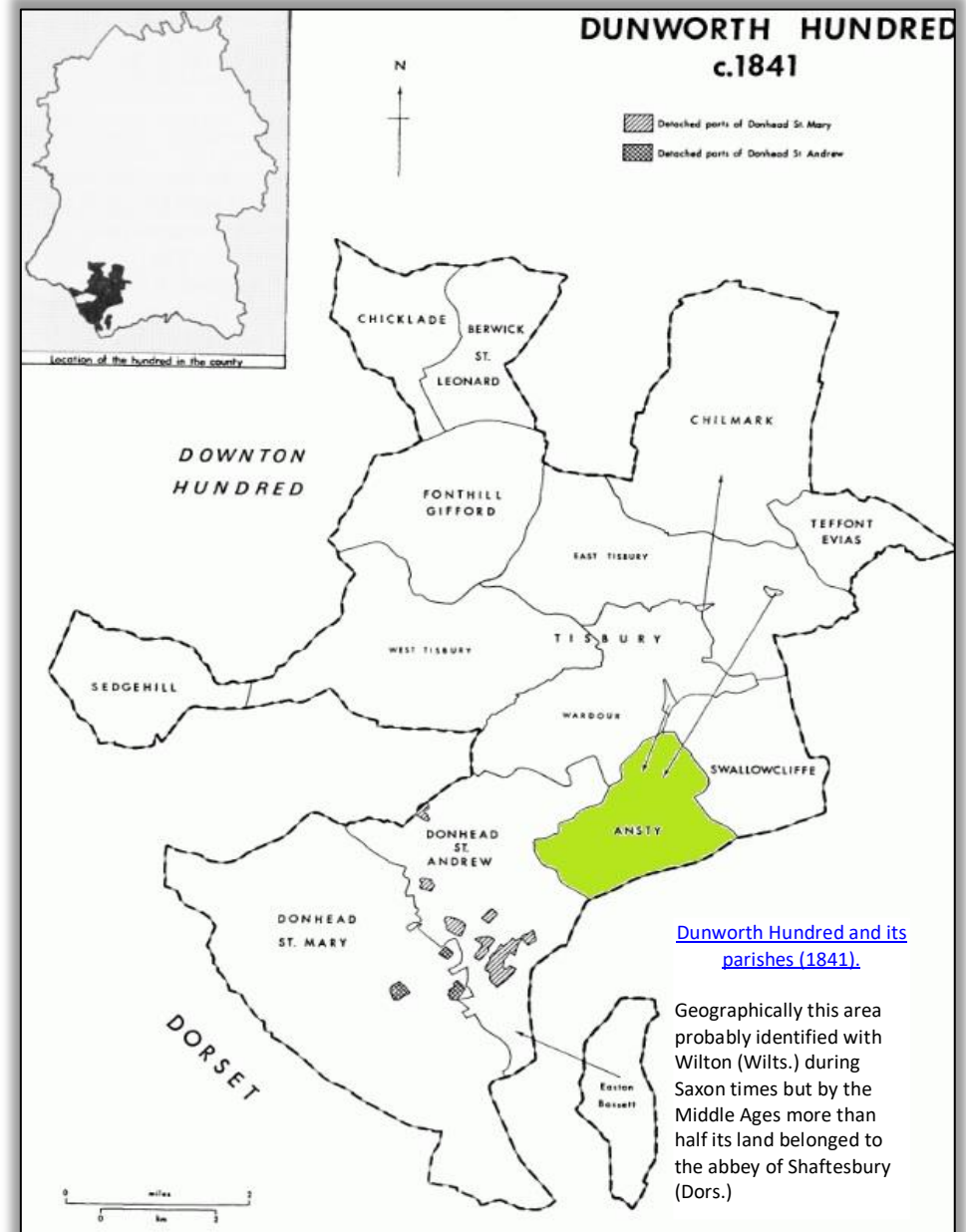
On the slopes of Swallowcliffe Down, right on the border with Ansty Parish was a round barrow with a supplanted burial of a Saxon female of high status. Indeed this site was referred to as the Posses Hlaewe. According to George Speake who wrote a book on behalf of English Heritage about the excavation of this site in 1966 he suggested this site was recorded in the boundary clause of a local Anglo Saxon charter. He further submits that 'Posses' or 'Poss' might represent the name of the landowner on whose land the former Bronze Age Barrow was sited between the seventh and tenth centuries. There might even be an original connection to the old Wilton Abbey – in effect a Saxon monastery which was founded around 773.

The old administrative area of Dunworth [Hundred](#) of which Ansty parish was a part also had its roots in Saxon times. In due course the vast estates that existed in Dunworth belonging either to the abbeys of Shaftesbury or Wilton were parcelled up into the parishes we see today. There is still a 'Dunworth Copse' just to the north of Ansty.

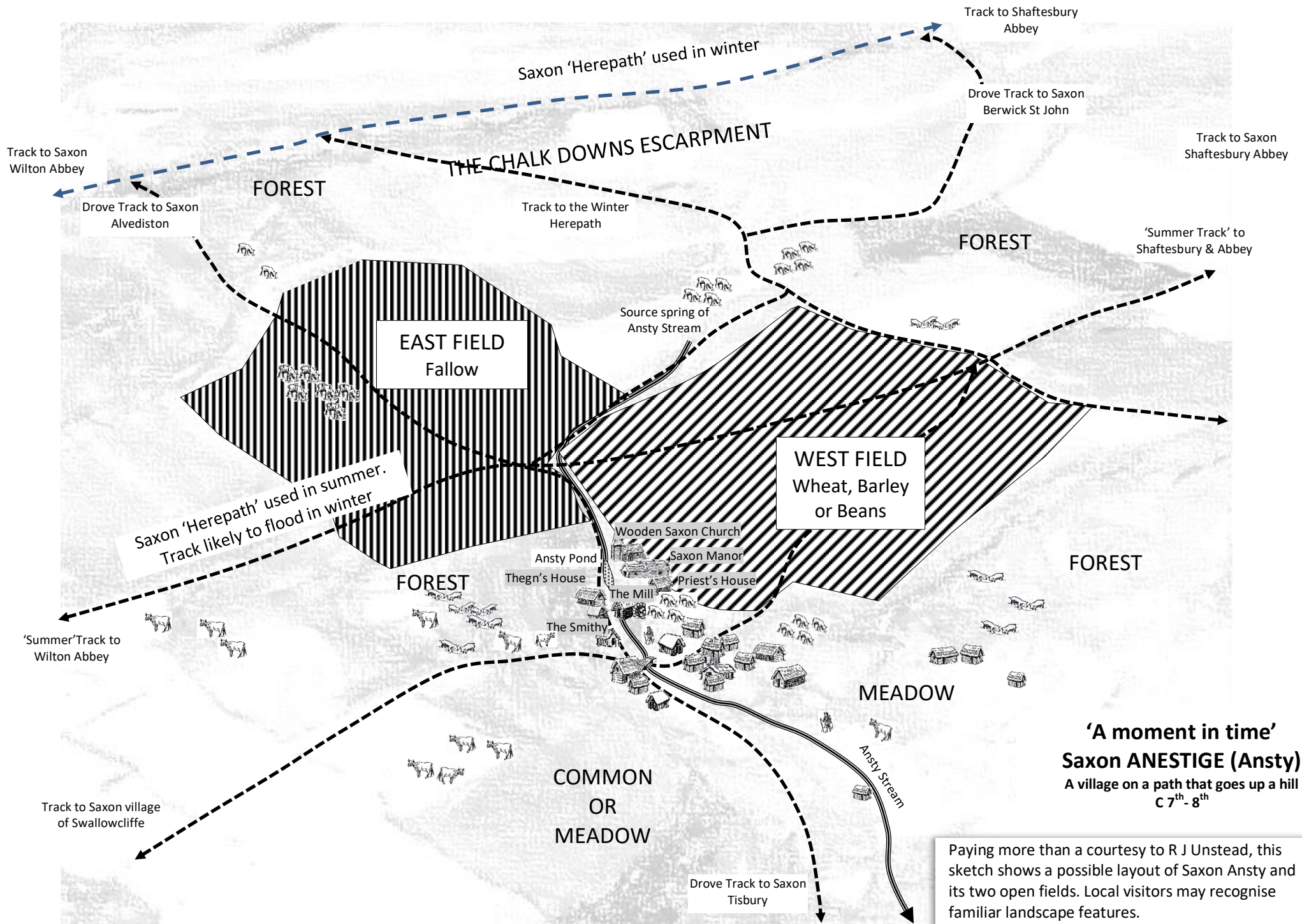
Lastly our Parish had a clearly identifiable medieval field system lasting almost into the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. This medieval field system would have had its origins rooted back into the very foundation of Ansty by Saxons. A fictitious picture from one of my old primary school history books by R J Unstead (Looking at History) stylises the general rudiments of a small Anglo Saxon village – even down to mentioning the river Nadder! Such elements can still be readily recognised in Ansty today if one takes the time to 'read' the landscape surrounding them.

Unstead was a prolific author and was 'of his time'. The pictures he used (often line drawings) were inspirational and the text was simple and clear and without bias. His writings were less about kings and queens and more about the lives of

ordinary people, their homes, work and holidays. He wrote for children, not educationalists. Unfortunately in the late 1970s he fell out of favour.







**‘A moment in time’**  
**Saxon ANESTIGE (Ansty)**  
A village on a path that goes up a hill  
c 7<sup>th</sup>- 8<sup>th</sup>

It is difficult to deduce the boundaries of early field systems in Ansty because there are no documents available to explain how and such field changes took place.

We have but one small ‘Celtic’ field dating from the Bronze Age up on the top slopes of Middle Down near the eastern parish boundary. This field is typically small and rectangular and butts up against a cross dyke ‘boundary marker’ in an area that has other signs of habitation from Neolithic to Iron Age times. We can only surmise the location of the East and West ‘open’ fields from Saxon times based on evidence deduced from early maps of the post Medieval 3 field system drawn up in 1769 by the Arundell Family’s Wardour Estate which owned Ansty from 1594 until 1946. There will be more on this period in another ‘chapter’.

Some modern field boundaries in Ansty still fit the map boundaries of 1769 – but there is precious little evidence that these once large open fields were toiled over by many generations of Ansty folk for well over 1,000 years. Of course rudimentary farming took place much earlier – but it was the Saxons who really set the template for the modern farming practices we are all familiar with today.

Further reading: [Historic England Field Systems](#)

# Anglo- Saxon Charters

Here are a few very local examples of ancient Anglo-Saxon charters. It shows just a glimpse of how the Saxons laid the foundations of many of the customs and practices we still see today in modern England.

S 1539. Will of Wynflæd concerning land at Ebbesborne, Wilts.; Charlton (probably Horethorne, Somerset); Coleshill, Berks.; Inggeneshamme (perhaps Inglesham, Wilts.); Facombe, Hants; Adderbury, Oxon.; and at Chinnock, Somerset; the beneficiaries including Shaftesbury and Wilton.

S 850. A.D. 984. King Æthelred to Shaftesbury Abbey; confirmation of 20 hides (mansae) at Tisbury, Wilts., and woodland at Sfgcnyllebar (? Sedgehill bær).

S 357. A.D. 871x877. Alfred, king, to the church of Shaftesbury; grant of privileges and of land at Donhead (St Andrew and St Mary),

S 1256. A.D. 759. Cyneheard, bishop (of Winchester), and Cynewulf, king, to Ecgwold, abbot, and his familia at Tisbury Minster, Wilts.; confirmation of 30 hides by Fontmell Brook, Dorset, acquired by a predecessor of Ecgwold from another monastery.

S 468. A.D. 940. King Edmund to Garulf, minister; grant of 9 hides (mansae) at Swallowcliffe, Wilts.

S 881. A.D. 994. King Æthelred to St Mary's Church, Wilton; grant of 10 hides (cassati) at Fovant, Wilts.

S 357. A.D. 871x877. Alfred, king, to the church of Shaftesbury; grant of privileges and of land at Donhead (St Andrew and St Mary), Wilts.; Compton Abbas, Sixpenny Handley, Gussage (St Andrew)

Source: [Online Catalogue of Anglo-Saxon Charters](#)