

have survived it is known there were duties called the *Trimoda*,¹⁹ incumbent on all landowners, which included the maintenance of bridges, roads and fortifications as well as supplying men to fight the king's cause. The burden of maintaining a ford here would be borne by the estates that later evolved into these four parishes. There are willows growing today here at what does seem a rather gloomy place. The valley floor is narrow with steep sides with no signs of a ford today. Just upstream is Sheepford Bridge, whilst just a little downstream is Deppers Bridge, the name Deppers stemming from Deep Ford indicating the river was forded in this area.

The legendary Freomund was an aristocrat and a warrior who if Camden is to be believed died at a ford. We could surmise a warrior prince would not be travelling alone and would be surrounded by a body guard of theigns and other soldiers. The assistance of the Danes would be needed together with a large element of surprise to ensure success in any assassination attempt. An ambush at a remote and difficult place, such as this ford, might present the ideal location.

Now it can be imagined, following a surprise attack at this ford, after his body guards have been slain, a defeated and perhaps wounded Freomund attempts to flee towards Harbury but is captured. He forgives his enemies in true Christian fashion before they decapitate him. His murderers repent and take his remains to Offchurch. His loyal body guards are buried where they fell. By a most curious coincidence, just above this old ford within the parish of Bishops Itchington there was once a field called Deadman's Bury.²⁰

The seemingly mute wall paintings in the north transept of Burton Dassett church, may in fact be conveying a message that they are now the only surviving visible memorial to the legendary Freomund, prince and martyr.

*Past hope, whilst Freomund lived, to speed of wished regality,
All secret and unworthy means he plots to make him dye
With naked sword, prophane, slaine he, assaileth cowardly
His lord unwares, and as he lay, behead him cruelly,*

¹⁹ See *The Governance of Anglo-Saxon England*, by H.R. Loyn, concerning the *Trimoda* or *trinoda neccesitans*, pp.33-34.

²⁰ See 1838 Tithe Map for Bishops Itchington and also 1850 Greaves estate map, which would seem to place Deadman's Bury at OS 393585 along the parish boundary, *i.e.* adjacent to part of the northern section of the route described above.