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Abbreviations

ADS	Archaeology Data Service
ASPNS	Anglo-Saxon Plant-Name Survey
BML	British Medieval Latin
BSBI	Botanical Society of the British Isles
CGL	<i>Corpus Glossariorum Latinorum</i>
CNo.	Catalogue Number
COD	<i>Concise Oxford Dictionary</i>
DMLBS	<i>Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources</i>
DOE	<i>Dictionary of Old English</i> (Toronto)
DOEPN	<i>Dictionary of Old English Plant Names</i> (online)
DOEWC	<i>Dictionary of Old English Web Corpus</i> (online)
DOI	Digital Object Identifier; <i>Dictionary of the Irish Language Based Mainly on Old and Middle Irish Materials</i>
DOST	<i>Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue</i>
DSL	<i>Dictionary of the Scots Language</i> (online)
EDD	<i>English Dialect Dictionary</i>
EPNE	<i>English Place-Name Elements</i> (A. H. Smith)
Gk, Gr.	Greek
HTOED	<i>Historical Thesaurus of the Oxford English Dictionary</i>
IPA	International Phonetic Alphabet
LAE	<i>Linguistic Atlas of England</i>
Lat	Latin
MCOE	<i>Microfiche Concordance to Old English</i>
ME	Middle English
MED	<i>Middle English Dictionary</i>
MHG	Middle High German
MLG	Middle Low German
ModE	Modern English
ModIce	Modern Icelandic
ModLG	Modern Low German
ODEE	<i>Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology</i>
OE	Old English
OED	<i>Oxford English Dictionary</i>
OF	Old French
OHG	Old High German
OI	Old Irish
OIce	Old Icelandic
OLD	<i>Oxford Latin Dictionary</i>
ON	Old Norse
OS	Old Saxon
PASE	<i>Prosopography of Anglo-Saxon England</i> (online)
PIE	Proto-Indo-European
PN W	<i>Place-Names of Wiltshire</i> (J. E. B. Gover et al.)
PN Wo	<i>Place-Names of Worcestershire</i> (A. Mawer et al.)

RCHM(E)	Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments (of England)
TLL	<i>Thesaurus Linguae Latinae</i>
spp.	species (botanical, singular)
ssp.	species (botanical, plural)
TOE	<i>Thesaurus of Old English</i>
VEPN	<i>Vocabulary of English Place-Names</i>

Short Titles

Old English source texts may be indicated by short titles assigned by the *Dictionary of Old English* and *Microfiche Concordance to Old English*, which refer to specific editions of the texts. They occur particularly in the appendices, and examples include: Lch II (1); Med 3 (Grattan-Singer). The key to these references can be found at the DOE website under ‘Research Tools’ then ‘List of Texts’. See <http://www.doe.utoronto.ca>.

Botanical Latin

Plant-names in botanical Latin aim to provide an international identification for a particular plant or group of plants. They are followed by abbreviations indicating the botanist who assigned and/or reassigned the name, and the most common abbreviation is ‘L.’ indicating ‘Linnaeus’, the famous Swedish botanist. Examples include: *Bellis perennis* L. (daisy); *Betula pendula* Roth. (silver birch).

Dates

Manuscript dates are often given in a form beginning ‘s.’ (for *saeculo* ‘in the century’). Some examples follow:

- s. xiⁱⁿ beginning of the 11th century
- s. xi¹ first half of the 11th century
- s. xi^{med} middle of the 11th century
- s. xi² second half of the 11th century
- s. xi^{ex} end of the 11th century

Old English *Safene*: Untangling Native and Exotic Junipers in Anglo-Saxon England

C. P. Biggam

1. Introduction

There is a remarkable degree of agreement on the meaning of Old English (OE) *safene* (various spellings, see Appendix A1). It is defined by Clark Hall (1960) as ‘savine (a kind of juniper)’, and by Bosworth (1898) as ‘savine’ (under *safine*).¹ Bierbaumer interprets *safene* with the botanical Latin name of *Juniperus sabina* L. (Bierbaumer 1975–9: II.100; III.198),² and the *Thesaurus of Old English* (TOE) lists *safene* under ‘juniper’, as one of the entries under the heading ‘Particular trees/shrubs’. It may seem perverse to reconsider such a unanimously agreed definition, but questions still arise. Why is there, apparently, an established name in Old English for an exotic juniper (*Juniperus sabina*)? If the name refers to the native, rather than the exotic juniper, why is it adopted from Latin? Does *safene* refer to a plant or (since it features strongly as a medical ingredient) a plant-based medicine? If it refers exclusively to an exotic juniper, how was it obtained in Anglo-Saxon England?

The method of investigation pursued below is to present various types of information which can be retrieved from the extant texts (Sections 2 to 8), and then to consider the results together in Section 9. Later sections attempt to place this evidence in the context of Anglo-Saxon society, with particular consideration of trade, medicine, a place-name, and manuscript illustration. Finally, it is hoped that a more acceptable understanding of *safene* is presented in the conclusion.

¹ *Safene* does not appear in the 1921 *Supplement* to Bosworth and Toller, nor in the 1972 *Addenda and corrigenda*. Definitions of Old English words in this paper are taken from the *Dictionary of Old English* (DOE) where possible. Publication is currently in progress, and, at the time of writing, has reached ‘G’. For words not yet included, my source is Clark Hall (1960). Definitions are not necessarily cited in full in this paper. With reference to Modern English (ModE) *savin* or *savine*, it is defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) as ‘1. A small bushy evergreen shrub, *Juniperus sabina* ... 2. The dried tops of this shrub, used as a drug.’

² The contents of Bierbaumer (1975–9) form the basis of the *Dictionary of Old English Plant Names* (DOEPN), located at <http://oldenglish-plantnames.org>, where the plant entries have been revised under the direction of Peter Bierbaumer in Graz, Austria and Hans Sauer in Munich, Germany. See under *safine*.

2. Citations

The *safene* catalogue contains twenty-eight entries,³ two of which are queried (?Safene 22 and ?Safene 23). Not all the entries, however, represent independent instances of the use of *safene* (see Appendix A2: Related Citations) so, when this has been taken into consideration, the catalogue contains twenty-two independently used and unqueried cases of *safene* surviving in Old English texts. Again excluding the two queried items and the four related citations, there are twenty references classified under the heading ‘Medicine’, one under ‘Glosses’, and one under ‘Glossaries’.⁴

3. Descriptors

Descriptors in ASPNS word-studies are words or phrases which directly qualify a plant-name, thus providing information on some aspect of the plant so named. All the descriptors of *safene* are phrases concerned with its medicinal properties, so they are considered in the section on medicine below (Section 14).

4. Collocations

Safene occurs with OE *dūst* ‘dust, powder’ in Safene 4, which will be further discussed in Section 14.1, and it also occurs with OE *dūn* ‘hill, mountain’ in ?Safene 22 and ?Safene 23, which will be discussed in Section 13.

5. Translations

When functioning as the translation of a Latin lemma, OE *safene* interprets *sabina* (also spelt *savina* and *sauina*) or *herba sabina* (also *herba savina*).⁵ The *Oxford Latin Dictionary* (OLD), concerned with Classical Latin, defines *herba sabina* as ‘the shrub savin, *Juniperus sabina*’ (under *Sabinus*, sense 1b), and there appears to be no change in meaning in insular medieval Latin, as the *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources* (DMLBS) defines *herba sabina* as ‘savin (*Juniperus sabina*)’ (under *Sabinus*, sense 2).⁶ It is clear, therefore, that there is no obvious conflict between definitions of the Latin and Old English versions of these cognate plant-names.

³ See Appendix A1: Safene Catalogue, and Appendix A3: Rejected Items. The source of the information for Appendix A1 is the *Dictionary of Old English Web Corpus* (DOEWC). All references in this article which take the form ‘Safene [number]’, for example, ‘Safene 10’, refer to the item with that number in Appendix A1.

⁴ Medicine: Safene 1–5, 7–19, 27–28; Glosses: Safene 20; Glossaries: Safene 21. (Of the related citations, Safene 24–6 consist of two glossary entries and a gloss, and the two queried items are classified as land records). For a fuller account of what constitutes a related citation in ASPNS research, see Wotherspoon on *hymlic*, Section 2, in this volume.

⁵ *Sabina*: Safene 21 (24–6); *savina*: 12–13; *sauina*: 20; *herba sabina*: 7; *herba savina*: 27–8. Catalogue numbers in brackets indicate related citations (see Appendix A2).

⁶ Where possible, the source used for British medieval Latin is the DMLBS, but this dictionary is in process of publication, having reached ‘Syr’ at the time of writing. For words which have not yet been published, my source is Latham (1965). Definitions are not necessarily cited in full in this paper.

6. Secondary associations

Associations of *safene* are defined as those plant-names which are not presented in the Anglo-Saxon texts as synonyms of *safene* (as, for example, may be the case in a translation relationship) but appear to have some relationship of equivalence, or possibly even an *uncertain* translation relationship. In practice, associations usually occur in glossary entries in which a Latin lemma (headword) is translated by an Old English interpretation, and a further word or words occur in an uncertain relationship with the lemma. These additional words may have been added at a later date, or be the result of erroneous copying, or they may be perfectly good alternative translations of the lemma. Their relationship to the first Old English interpretation is referred to as an ‘association’, in an effort to avoid assumptions about their role and origin. There are none extant for *safene*. There are, however, examples of *secondary* associations.

6.1 *Antirina*

The relationship referred to as a secondary association occurs when a common translation of *safene*, in this case Latin *sabina*, has a different Old English or Latin translation or association in an Anglo-Saxon text, but that such words never appear in the company of *safene* itself. Secondary associations are also most commonly found in glossary entries. In this consideration of *safene*, two secondary associations occur in the Laud herbal glossary (MS Oxford, Bodleian Library, Laud Misc. 567).⁷ *Sabina* occurs four times in this glossary, in addition to the example occurring in Safene 21, and all five entries are listed below:⁸

Antirina .i. sauina	Stracke 1974: 23, entry 67
Antiria .i. sauina. brateos	Stracke 1974: 25, entry 143
Brates .i. sauina	Stracke 1974: 27, entry 212
Brateos .i. sauina	Stracke 1974: 27, entry 240
Sabina .i. sauine	Stracke 1974: 59, entry 1299 (Safene 21)

Clearly, the two secondary associations are *antirina* and similar forms, and *brateos* and similar forms.

Antirina seems to have an obvious connection with the form *antiria*, but neither of them is a recognized Latin plant-name. Stracke identifies these two names with *ateron* on the basis of glossary entries in which this word is also associated with *sabina* (Stracke 1974: 121). *Ateron* is another word which does not appear to be a recognized plant-name in either Latin or Greek.⁹ Stracke directs the reader to glossary entries published in the *Corpus glossariorum Latinorum* (CGL), and when this source is consulted, it is clear that, like many others, this presumed plant-name is severely garbled in surviving manuscripts. Among the forms recorded in CGL which are interpreted by *sauina* or *sabina* are *artiron*, *atiron*, *asterion*, *antission* and *ametisto*.¹⁰

⁷ The manuscript is dated to the twelfth century (Stracke 1974: 5), but it is clear from certain misunderstandings apparent in the text that the scribe was copying an earlier Anglo-Saxon document containing unfamiliar letters like *thorn* and *wyn* (*þ* and *p*).

⁸ All the forms of *sabina* ending in *-a* have been taken to be Latin, since not every entry in the Laud Glossary has an Old English interpretation. It must be admitted, however, that the form *sauina* can be found in Old English prose, as in Safene 10 and 11. This may represent an early stage of naturalization, as Campbell writes that first-declension Latin nouns (ending in *-a*) normally become feminine weak nouns (ending in *-e*, as in *safene*) when adopted into Old English (Campbell 1962: 219).

⁹ It is not in the OLD, Souter (1949), or the DMLBS, nor is it in Liddell and Scott (1996).

¹⁰ *artiron* (CGL III.549); *atiron* (III.535); *asterion*, *antission*, *ametisto* (all three in III.552). *Atiron* occurs in MS

Whatever the origin and correct form or forms of these words may be (see also Section 12.1 below, concerning *asterion*), I suggest they do not have the same origin as *antirinalantiria*. My suspicion is that another gloss recorded in CGL on the same page as some of the above forms, indicates the true origin of the *antirina* forms. That gloss reads *anterinon .i. caput canis* (CGL III.552, line 26).

It is suggested that *antirina* and *antiria* in the Laud herbal glossary originated in the plant-name *antirrinon* (ἀντίρρινον) in Greek, adopted into Latin as *antirrinum*, both names indicating ‘the antirrhinum or snapdragon’ (OLD). What possible connection could there be between the snapdragon and a juniper? I suspect there is only one, and that is the proximity of the entries for these two plants in the *Herbarium* of Pseudo Apuleius. This herbal text is considered to be a Latin compilation of the fourth century, and it contains information from various earlier Greek and Latin medical works. Although some early copyists believed it to be the work of Apuleius Madaurensis, this attribution is not now accepted, and the unknown author is often designated ‘Pseudo Apuleius’.¹¹ Whatever its origin, the *Herbarium* was known in Anglo-Saxon England, and was translated into Old English (De Vriend 1984).¹²

Entry no. 87 in the Old English *Herbarium* is headed *sauine* in Old English, and the immediately following entry (no. 88) is headed *hundes heafod*. In the text of the latter entry, the reader is told that the plant is also called *canis caput*, both names meaning literally ‘dog’s head’. *Canis caput* was a common synonym for *antirrinum*. The Old English text makes no mention of *antirrinum* in any form, but versions of the Latin source text clearly show that the name *antirrinum* occasionally migrated, in the copying process, to the neighbouring plant entry. The herbal tradition in the Mediterranean region often included lists of plant-name synonyms in several languages, and this gave ample scope for confusion, especially where a plant illustration separated two entries, and some copyists associated its caption with the wrong entry. It can be seen in Howald and Sigerist (1927: 155) that, in certain Latin manuscripts of Pseudo Apuleius, the form *antirinon*, as well as other possibly related forms, occur in the list of synonyms for *herba sabina* as well as in the list for the neighbouring *canis caput* entry. It seems likely that such a tradition was the ultimate source for the two *antirina*-type glosses found with *sauina* in the Laud herbal glossary. If this is correct, *antirrinum* is an erroneous translation of *sabina*, and the variety of forms in which it occurs, some far removed from the expected spelling, suggests that the Anglo-Saxons, and possibly even southern Europeans, were often quite unaware of this plant’s true identity. For this reason, and because of the obvious phonological similarity between OE *safene* and Latin *sabina*, I doubt the often-observed relationship with *antirrinum* would have misled Anglo-Saxon physicians.

6.2 *Brateos*

The second secondary association is *brateos* and related spellings. *Brateos* is found in the DMLBS as *brathy*, ‘savin (*Juniperus sabina*)’, a word adopted from the Greek *brathy*

Montecassino, Archivio della Badia 69 (s.ix), and the others occur in MS Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Reginae Christinae 1260 (s.x).

¹¹ See Collins (2000: 166) for a concise discussion of the authorship of this text, and her reasons for preferring to use the name ‘Apuleius Platonius’ for the unknown author. For more detail on the authorship of this work, see Voigts (1978).

¹² Modern English translations can be found in Pollington (2000: 248–377) and Van Arsdall (2002), and a facsimile edition is available of the only surviving *illustrated* Anglo-Saxon manuscript of this work (D’Aronco and Cameron 1998).

(βράθυ), ‘savin, *Juniperus Sabina*’ (Liddell and Scott 1996). Clearly this particular secondary association is perfectly compatible with the dictionary definition of *safene*.

7. Textual contrasts and comparisons

This section is concerned with cases in which *safene* appears in the company of other plant-names in a relationship which suggests contrast or comparison. Such relationships have the potential to suggest differences from or similarities to other plants, although the information is rarely unambiguous. In the case of *safene*, contextual contrasts occur in lists of ingredients involved in herbal remedies, and logic suggests that, whatever *safene* may be, it will not be the same as any of the other plants in the list. Unfortunately, however, logic is not a strong factor in plant-names, and various circumstances could, theoretically, result in the same plant being listed twice. Where there are two or more folk names for the same plant, for example, a scribe copying the remedy could have added a synonym to the list in an effort to be helpful. A further difficulty occurs where a single plant-name refers to more than one botanical species, and this may cause some semantic overlap between them (see Biggam’s introduction, Section 1, in this volume). For these reasons, and others, it is necessary to treat evidence from contextual contrasts with caution.

Safene is in an apparently contrastive relationship with a large number of other plant-names: a rough count has produced a total of over 120. With such a large number involved, coupled with the fact that *safene* often appears in long lists of plant-names which could have been added to medical recipes at any time in the history of the text, only the most frequently occurring will be discussed in this section. The most commonly occurring plant-name contrast with *safene* is *salfie* ‘sage’, occurring six times.¹³ The reason for this relatively high total, however, undoubtedly reflects the requirements of alliteration. In five of the six references in which these two names occur together, they are immediate neighbours, either in a list of single plant-names, or in a list of paired names, as in *Safene* 9: *Salfige 7 safine, bisceopwyr 7 boðen, finul 7 fifleafe*, ‘Sage and savine, marsh mallow and *boðen*, fennel and creeping cinquefoil’ (Pettit 2001: I.30–1). In the sixth reference (*Safene* 17), *saluie* and *sauine* are separated by only one plant-name, *aðelferþincwyr*, which raises the suspicion that this name may be a later insertion.

Five other plant-names occur five times each with *safene*, and they are *betonice*, ‘betony’; *bisceopwyr*, ‘marsh-mallow’ (also ‘betony’ and ‘bishop’s wort’); *fēferfuge*, ‘any of several plants used as a febrifuge, especially the common centaury’; *rūde*, rue; and *wermōd*, ‘wormwood’.¹⁴ All these plants offer a clear contrast with savine, so do not challenge the interim definition for *safene*.

8. Etymology

The etymology of *safene* is straightforward. The word is an anglicization of Latin *sabina*, which refers to the Sabine region of Italy, to the north-east of Rome. The region was called *Sabinium* in Latin, being named after the Sabini, an early Italian tribe. The Sabine region is

¹³ *Safene* apparently contrasts with *salfie* in *Safene* 5, 8, 9, 17–19.

¹⁴ *Safene* apparently contrasts with *betonice* in *Safene* 8–10, 17, 18; with *bisceopwyr* in 2, 8, 9, 17, 19; with *fēferfuge* in 2, 8, 9, 15, 19; with *rūde* in 2, 9, 17–19; and with *wermōd* in 1, 8–10, 14.

hilly, and provides an ideal habitat for the savine juniper. Thus the etymology of OE *safene* is not particularly revealing.

9. Consideration of the basic data

In most ASPNS plant-name studies this section is used to tackle contradictions in the categories of the basic data discussed above. Very often, the conclusion indicated by one category appears to contradict that indicated by another. In the case of *safene*, however, there are no incongruities at this stage at all, although final conclusions can only be reached after discussion of the queried placename in Section 13, and the medical references in Section 14. The interim conclusion, therefore, is that *safene* was savine, that is, *Juniperus sabina* L.

10. Obtaining *safene* in Anglo-Saxon England

As the evidence for the interpretation of *safene* all points to savine, it would seem that this particular plant-name study is a simple one. However, in the context of savine (*Juniperus sabina* L.) in Anglo-Saxon England, a serious problem immediately occurs, namely, that the plant is not native to England. Anyone in England requiring savine for whatever purpose would not be able to simply make their way to a suitable habitat and gather the plant. So, could they obtain it, and, if so, how? I propose, firstly, to investigate whether Anglo-Saxon physicians had access to *Juniperus sabina*, which I shall henceforth call ‘savine’, and/or its products. Secondly, I will investigate the possibility that OE *safene* also denoted a plant that was not savine.

As a first step to considering whether the Anglo-Saxons could have obtained savine, in any form, the citations have been scrutinized for information as to the nature of the exotic ingredient called *sabina*. The first consideration is whether the Anglo-Saxons knew it was a plant. In cases where an exotic plant product is imported, as an oil, for example, it is possible for the recipients to be unaware that it was obtained from a plant. This is not the case with *sabina*. First of all, Safene 16 (*Sauine*) consists of the caption to a plant illustration in the Old English *Herbarium*. As this is a text translated from Latin, and including copies of southern European illustrations, it does not prove that the plant was known in England, but it does show that, at least for those with access to an illustrated text, it would have been clear that *sabina* was a plant. This evidence is supported by the examples of *safene* being described as a *wyrt*, normally translated as ‘plant’,¹⁵ but also appropriate to denote certain types or parts of plants, such as ‘vegetable’, ‘spice’ or ‘root’.

If *sabina* was clearly a plant, certain remedies make it clear that, at least in those cases, plant-parts were involved rather than processed plant-products like powder or oil. Safene 9 lists a large number of plants, including savine, and then instructs ‘shred up all the plants together very small’ (*ða wyrta ealle gescearfa swiðe smale tosomne*) (Pettit 2001: I.32–3). A powder or oil can also be excluded in the case of Safene 11, a remedy for dizziness (*ad vertiginem*). The physician is instructed to boil some plants in wine, including savine, and then, after the liquid has been used to wash the patient’s head, the warm plants, except the savine, are to be bound to his or her head all night (*nim siððon þa wyrtas wærma alla wiðutan sauina 7 bind to þam heafde alla niht*). Although the savine is excluded from the binding, it is clearly one of the ‘warm plants’ which have been boiled.

¹⁵ Safene 1, 9–11, 13, 15, 18, 27–28.

The purpose of describing the above cases is to indicate that Anglo-Saxons had some part of the actual plant available to them,¹⁶ as opposed to a processed product such as savine powder. It does not mean, however, that they did not make savine powder themselves, and there are several recipes which show that they did.¹⁷ It is evident from these cases that, where a powder was required, Anglo-Saxon physicians had the basic raw material to hand, namely, the appropriate plant-parts. Safene 3, for example, instructs ‘take savine, grind to powder’ (*genim safinan, gnid to duste*) (Cockayne 1864–6: II.100–1), while Safene 5 informs the physician that a number of plants, including savine, should be ‘together ground to powder in a mortar’ (*aetsomme on mortere gegnide to duste*) (Cockayne 1864–6: II.294–5).

So far, the evidence from the Anglo-Saxon texts suggests that actual plant-parts of a plant called *safene* were the usual raw material for preparing a medicinal recipe requiring this herb. If the Anglo-Saxons were using savine, therefore, they must have been importing the crucial parts, or growing the exotic plant themselves. It seems clear that the part of the plant used in medicine was the leaves, and, through the ages, the tender spring growth of the leaves is often specified.¹⁸ Maud Grieve, a well-known early twentieth-century herbalist, provided synonyms for her plant-name headings in *A Modern Herbal* but, for ‘Savine’, her only synonym is *Savine Tops*, in which the concept of a medicine seems to be dominant over that of the whole plant (Grieve 1974: 717). It should be noted that Grieve refers to ‘fresh dried tops’ of *Juniperus sabina* (see note 18), and, although ‘fresh’ sounds like the opposite of ‘dried’, I take it to mean that the herbalist should gather young spring leaves, and then dry them for use in other seasons, presumably without loss of efficacy. These would make suitably small and lightweight consignments for transporting to England from the Continent. Voigts gives several early medieval references to the exchange, delivery and purchase of herbs between various Continental monasteries. She concludes ‘commercial trade in medicinal herbs and control thereof certainly occurred in the early Middle Ages alongside the more informal exchanges of churchmen and religious houses’ (Voigts 1979: 260).

While parts of the savine could, in theory, have been imported into Anglo-Saxon England, by means of monastic or secular commerce, there is also a distinct possibility that the whole plant may have been cultivated there. At first sight, it appears we have evidence for this in the *Colloquies* of Ælfric Bata. Intended as a schoolbook to help boys learning Latin, this work takes the form of Latin conversations between a monastic schoolmaster and his pupils. One conversation concerns the orchard where the boys had picked apples, possibly without permission (there is a difference of opinion on this matter between the boys and the gardener). When the schoolmaster asks what trees grow in the orchard, the boys reply: ‘These trees grow there: box [and] ash ... fig, holly, birch, palm, savin, broom, cornel, thorn or buckthorn’ (*Ibi crescent hae arbores: buxus et fraxinus ... ficus, ulcia, populus, palma, sabina, genesta, cornus, sentes uel spinae*; Ælfric Bata 1997: 156–7; translated by David W. Porter). The presence of *sabina* in this list suggests, therefore, that it grew in certain monastic gardens in England

¹⁶ Although this evidence for Anglo-Saxon practice could be considered of doubtful use where it occurs in translations from southern European texts, there are also cases of plant-part use from texts which are largely Germanic in origin, such as *Lacnunga* (Safene 2, 9) and Bald’s *Leechbook* (Safene 3, 5). See note 66 for information on these two texts.

¹⁷ Safene 2–3, 5–6, 12–13, 27–28.

¹⁸ For example, the Latin translation of Alexander of Tralles specifies *sabinae viridis libra*, ‘a pound of tender *sabina*’ (as the plant is an evergreen, it makes no sense to translate *viridis* as ‘green’) (Alexander of Tralles 1556: 627; Bk XI). In 1931, Mrs Grieve recommended ‘Fresh dried tops of Juniperas [*sic*] Sabina collected in spring’ (Grieve 1974: 717), and Stuart specifies ‘young green shoots’ (Stuart 1979: 82).

but, apparently, so did the palm-tree, which indicates that this text is not always to be taken literally. Ælfric Bata had been a pupil of Ælfric, Abbot of Eynsham (c. 950–c. 1010) who had written several works to help in the teaching of Latin, and one of them was a classified glossary of Latin words which included a section entitled ‘Nomina arborum’, or ‘The Names of Trees’ (Zupitza 1880: 312–3). It is clear from the order of the tree-names in Ælfric Bata’s educational work that he simply inserted his old master’s tree-list into his colloquy to offer his pupils an extended vocabulary in the subject (Ælfric Bata 1997: 157, note 301).

The source or sources of Abbot Ælfric’s tree-list, and his other lists too, are unknown in detail, but the encyclopaedic works of both Isidore of Seville (*Etymologiae sive originum*), and of Pliny the Elder (*Naturalis historia*) would have supplied all the specific tree-names in Ælfric’s vocabularies.¹⁹ Thomson makes the point that Ælfric clearly rejected a large number of the names included in Isidore’s and Pliny’s encyclopaedias, and he believes that the selection was made on the basis of what would have been useful for Ælfric’s students to know in their everyday monastic life. He writes that ‘it [Ælfric’s *Glossary*] is therefore hardly likely to contain anything, leaving aside a few harmless pedantries ... that was not in use at the time’ (Thomson 1981: 158). When Thomson’s suggestion is applied to the tree-list in Ælfric’s *Glossary*, it is clear that it contains the names of trees that would have been familiar to English students, such as the oak and ash, but also more exotic species such as the fig and the palm. Some belonging to the latter category would have been needed by the students to understand biblical passages, so, as with the native species, they fulfil Thomson’s criterion of usefulness in monastic life. *Sabina* is a particularly interesting case, since savine is not native to England, nor does the word *sabina* appear in the Latin Vulgate Bible.²⁰ It is suggested, therefore, that Ælfric included the *sabina* in his vocabulary for monastic schools because it was a familiar plant in certain English monastic gardens.

Anglo-Saxons did, of course, travel to southern Europe, for example, as pilgrims to Rome and even Jerusalem. It is most probable that some of them were monks or nuns with a special interest in, or responsibility for medical care in their monasteries in England. Some may well have travelled with an eagerness to find an explanation for some of the plant-names mentioned in the herbal manuscripts in their libraries. Nothing would be more natural for such individuals than to take cuttings and seeds, or even uproot young plants from the wild, or receive them as gifts from the monasteries in which they stayed en route, in order to cultivate them in their monastic gardens at home. Voigts discusses recorded cases of the exchange of herbs, spices and seeds between ecclesiastics and monasteries, although none appears to relate conclusively to young plants or cuttings for cultivation (Voigts 1979: 260). It is known, however, that savine can thrive in England, since Grieve confirms this (1974: 717).²¹

¹⁹ Judging from the botanical index in the edition of Isidore by Oroz Reta and Casquero (1982–3), Ælfric could have obtained all but four of the tree-names from this source (the exceptions are *corilus* (*corylus*), *ulcia* (*ulex*), *sabina* and *genesta*). He could have obtained his entire list of tree-names from Pliny, but it would have been more difficult to collect them from various sections in the *Naturalis historia*. Some names may, of course, have been gathered from other Latin texts and from glossaries.

²⁰ I have checked two concordances to the Vulgate, under the spellings *sabina* and *savina*, and got no hits on either database (*ARTFL Project ...; Nova Vulgata ...*). Klotz considers that the savine was the intended plant in Jeremiah 17.6 and 48.6, where the Authorized Version reads ‘heath’ (Klotz 1990: 1714, under *juniper*). The word in the Latin text is, in both cases, *myrice* which has been translated with various shrub-names in different texts. My concern in this paper is, however, with the lexeme *sabina*.

²¹ A sixteenth-century Scottish ballad suggests that savine was cultivated in monastic gardens at that later date. In one version of the ‘Ballad of the Queen’s Marie’, the King, who has made pregnant one of his wife’s (Mary Queen of Scots) ladies-in-waiting, seeks savine, a well-known abortifacient: ‘The King is to the Abbey gane, to pu’ the

Finally, Cameron's opinion on the ingredients which feature in the medical recipes of Bald's *Leechbook* is relevant here. He writes 'From works which were used the compiler made a careful selection of remedies for which ingredients were likely to be available to English practitioners' (Cameron 1993: 43). *Safene* is one of the ingredients which Bald selected (Safene 3–5, 8).

There is no reason to suppose that every physician in Anglo-Saxon England used the same methods to obtain savine, assuming they *did* obtain it. It is possible that there were areas in which savine shrubs did not thrive, even when cosseted, and physicians in such places may have had to import their savine tops from the Continent, if they could not obtain supplies from elsewhere in Britain. It would seem reasonable to suggest, however, that savine was obtainable in Anglo-Saxon England.

11. The manuscript illustration of *safene*

This is not the end of the story, however, since certain pieces of evidence give the impression that the Old English word *safene* was not *always* used for savine. That evidence consists of a manuscript illustration, later semantic evidence, and a place-name. It is not inherently unlikely that *safene* could indicate more than one plant, since folk plant-names rarely denote a single species in all regions, as do modern botanical Latin names. Folk names indicate a particular aspect or quality, such as broad leaves, or the ability to cure indigestion, and the name is then applied to any plant which fulfils the criterion (see Biggam's introduction, Section 1, in this volume). The intention now is to consider each of the three pieces of evidence listed at the beginning of this paragraph and attempt to ascertain whether they are incompatible with the identification 'savine'.

The first piece of apparently contrary evidence is the only illustration of *safene* which we know was available to the Anglo-Saxons, although, of course, there may have been others which are not extant. The depiction of *safene* occurs in the only surviving illustrated manuscript of the Old English *Herbarium* of Pseudo Apuleius (MS London, British Library, Cotton Vitellius C.iii, s.xi¹ or xi med.).²² The painting is simple and clear, although partially damaged (Doane 1994: 1.4, fiche 2.44; folio 45r). It shows five stems growing out of the rootstock in fanned-out form. Each stem is bare of leaves for about a third of its length nearest the root, but they then produce leaf-growth which continues to the top of the stems. Four of the five stems remain single for their entire length, but one of the stems branches into two, with leaf-growth on each one. The leaf-growth is represented by many short lines on either side of the stems. These closely-packed lines are parallel to each other, and diagonal to the stems; in other words, they give the impression of growing upwards towards the light. They are best interpreted as acicular (needle-shaped) leaves.

The savine (*Juniperus sabina* L.) has scaly, overlapping leaves which are very unlike

Abbey tree, to scale the babe frae Marie's heart; but the thing it wadna be' (Quiller-Couch 1939: 440). Another version is slightly different: 'She's gane to the garden gay, to pu of the savin tree' (Hatfield 1999: 52). I am grateful to Maggie Scott, Scottish Language Dictionaries, and Ruth Tittensor, Countryside Management Consultancy, for discussing with me whether the phrase *abbey tree*, in the first version, might represent a form of (*s*)*abine*, but we found insufficient evidence to make such a suggestion.

²² Pre-Conquest manuscript dates in this paper are taken from Gneuss (2001). See 'Abbreviations' for an explanation of the form of manuscript dates often appearing in this volume. See Section 6.1 for information on the background of the Old English *Herbarium*.

needles, and are similar to those of other members of the cypress family (Cupressaceae) (Godet 1993: 130–3), so does this illustration suggest that at least some Anglo-Saxons identified the word *safene* with a different plant? This is possible, but it does not rule out the savine because, in its *juvenile* state, the plant has spiky leaves which only turn scaly as they mature (Bean 1970–88: 8.493). Furthermore, since it is the young spring growth that is recommended as a medical ingredient (see note 18), a plant in its juvenile state may have been equally prized. The illustration cannot, therefore, be taken as evidence that this particular plant was not savine.

12. Later semantic evidence

12.1 *Asterion*

The second source of suspicion that the word *safene* could indicate a plant other than savine, comes from later manuscripts. The *Middle English Dictionary* (MED) interprets *savin(e)* as having three senses, the first being savine, the second indicating ‘? the plant *Aster amellus*’, and the third indicating ‘? the dwarf elder or danewort’. Note that the second and third senses are both queried.

Taking the ‘*Aster amellus*’ sense first, the citation given in the MED is actually in late *Old English*, although appearing in a manuscript of the late twelfth century (MS London, British Library, Harley 6258B).²³ The text is, once again, the *Herbarium* of Pseudo Apuleius, and the plant-entry producing this queried sense of Middle English (ME) *savin* is *asterion*. Old English translations of the *Herbarium* often provide more than one name for a plant.²⁴ In such cases, they may specify the Greek and Latin names, for example, ‘the Greeks call [this plant] *cotiledon* and the Romans [call it] *umbilicum ueneris*’ (*ðe Grecas cotiledon 7 Romane umbilicum ueneris nemnað*; De Vriend 1984: 90, entry XLIV). Alternatively, they may offer the Latin followed by the English name, the latter usually introduced by the phrase ‘and by another name’, as in ‘which is called *radiolum* and by another name *eforfearn*’ (*þe man radiolum 7 oðrum naman eforfearn nemneð*; De Vriend 1984: 124, entry LXXXV). The entry for *asterion* in three of the four extant manuscripts of the Old English *Herbarium* belongs to a group of entries in which the text prepares the reader for an English name, but does not supply one. The *asterion* entry begins ‘This plant which is called *asterion* and by another name [X]’ (*Ðeos wyrft þe man asterion 7 oðrum naman [X] nemneð*; De Vriend 1984: 104, entry LXI). The ‘X’ indicates the position of an intended English name which was never provided. In the fourth surviving manuscript of the Old English *Herbarium* (MS London, British Library, Harley 6258B), however, that name *was* supplied, so that the first line reads ‘This plant which is called *asterion* and by another name *sauine*’ (*Ðeos wurft þe man aste(ri)on 7 oþru[m] naman sauine nemneð*; De Vriend 1984: 105; Doane 1994: 1.7, fiche 1.18; folio 2r).²⁵

²³ See De Vriend for the argument that the language of this manuscript is Old English, rather than Middle English (De Vriend 1984: xxxi). For descriptions of the manuscript, see De Vriend (1984: xxviii–xliv) and Doane (1994: 44–51). Middle English is the phase of English usually dated to between c. 1100 and c. 1500.

²⁴ This is a much abbreviated version of the tradition seen in early Greek and Latin herbals in which a list of synonyms is given for each plant. The synonyms are from various ancient languages, and they tended to be confused and distorted by later copyists to whom many of the words were unfamiliar.

²⁵ I read the initial letter of this phrase as *Ð*, whereas De Vriend reads it as *þ* (De Vriend 1984: 105). The manuscript has *mam* as an error for *man*, and abbreviates *oþrum*. The first plant-name was written as *asteon* but *ri* was added above by the same, or another contemporary scribe (De Vriend 1984: 105, with explanation on p. lxxxvi).

Asterion is Greek for ‘little star’, and, without its diminutive suffix, the name is *astēr* (ἀστήρ). The word was adopted into Classical Latin as *aster*, and the OLD definition for it is ‘A plant, prob[ably] *Aster amellus*’, so this may be the source of the MED definition. The common name of the *Aster amellus* L. is ‘Italian aster’ or ‘Italian starwort’, a plant which, like many of the daisy family (Asteraceae) to which it belongs, has a star-shaped flower-head. The plant is not native to Britain.²⁶ Would this version of the *Herbarium* text cause an Anglo-Saxon physician to apply the name *safene* to the Italian aster? This seems most unlikely for the reasons that follow.

In what appears to us to be the ‘normal’ version of the Old English *Herbarium*, that is, in three of the four manuscripts, a gap was left where an English plant-name should have been supplied. Clearly, no English name was known by the translator, not surprisingly, for this foreign plant. In one manuscript tradition of the *Herbarium*, however, a scribe was able, no doubt triumphantly, to fill in the gap, and a later copy of his/her work is still extant. Where was this English name found? A distinct possibility is that *asterion* was found in a synonymous relationship with Latin *sabina*, in a Latin-Latin glossary. Examples of such glossary entries can be found in Continental works such as the entry *asterion i. sauina* in the manuscript Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Reginae Christinae 1260, dated to the tenth century (CGL III.552, line 24), and the slightly less recognisable entry *atiron idest sabina* in the ninth- or tenth-century manuscript Montecassino, Archivio della Badia 69 (CGL III.535, line 51). It is, of course, possible that the source of the *Herbarium* copyist’s information had already been translated into a Latin-Old English glossary entry reading (hypothetically) *asterion i. safene*.

From the scribe’s point of view, his or her insertion of *safene* into the *asterion* entry was ‘authorized’ by a glossary, and s/he must have believed that these words were synonyms for the same plant. If the scribe was aware that an independent entry for *safene* appeared elsewhere in the *Herbarium* text, the most obvious assumption would be that an earlier scribe had mistakenly divided the original account and provided *asterion* with a separate entry.²⁷ From a physician’s point of view, all that was required to correct this error (if it was indeed an error) would be to add *asterion*’s single remedy to the three attributed to *safene*, and there is some indication that this is exactly what was done. *Asterion* is claimed to cure the ‘falling sickness’ (Latin *caducus*; OE *fylleszocnysse*), usually interpreted as epilepsy. It can be seen in Section 14.2 below that three *safene* citations (from two texts) concern a remedy *ad vertiginem (capitis)*, ‘for dizziness (of the head)’ (*Safene* 10–12). If this term is accepted as another way of describing ‘falling sickness’, it had clearly been added to the repertoire of *safene* at some earlier stage.

There is almost nothing in the plant description of *asterion* that would preclude an interpretation of *safene*. The plant is said to grow between stones, and in rough places, and it produces berries.²⁸ More awkward to accept would be the statement that the flowers shine at night like the stars in the heavens. This originates, of course, in an attempt to explain the *asterion*’s Greek name, but, since no-one would know of any plant that really did this, it is unlikely to have suggested an alternative identification. Those Anglo-Saxon physicians who

²⁶ I am grateful to Allan Hall of the University of York for information on *Aster amellus*. It is listed in Clement and Foster (1994: 327) as an alien.

²⁷ It would be easy to persuade oneself that this was the case since the *asterion* entry in the Harley 6258B manuscript has a synonym and plant-description but only one remedy, while the *safene* entry has no synonym or description, but three remedies.

²⁸ The extant manuscripts differ on whether the plant’s habitat should be *smēde* ‘soft, smooth’ or *unsmēde* ‘rough’ (De Vriend 1984: 104–5). The correct translation is ‘rough’ since the Latin original has *aspera* ‘rough’.

had access to an illustrated version of the *Herbarium* would, of course, find that the depictions of *asterion* and *sabina* were very different, suggesting they were different plants, but, as far as we know from surviving manuscripts, the illustrated tradition did not include the word *safene* in the *asterion* entry.²⁹

It seems most likely, therefore, that *asterion* was simply regarded as a synonym of *safene*, and the phonological similarity of Latin *sabina* and OE *safene* would, no doubt, ensure that *asterion* had a minor role. There seems little chance that any Anglo-Saxon physician would have used the word *safene* to refer to Italian aster.

12.2 *Ebel*

While the identification of the word *asterion* with *safene* appears to date back to the pre-Conquest period, the remaining associations with ME *savin* are later than the Anglo-Saxon period. The next association with *savin*, as recorded in the MED, is *ebel*, and this makes its first recorded appearance in the so-called *Synonyma Bartholomei*, a list of glosses appended to the *Breviarium Bartholomei*, written by John Mirfeld who died in 1407 (Hunt 1989: xlv). *Ebel* occurs in the glossary entry *ebel, i. savin* (Mirfeld 1882: 18). As can be seen from the three MED definitions of *savin* given above, the dictionary identifies *ebel* with Latin *ebulus*, ‘? the dwarf elder or danewort’. The DMLBS, however, identifies *ebel* as a different word (sometimes appearing as *hebel*), deriving from the Arabic *abhul*, meaning ‘Savin, dried tops of the shrub *Juniperus sabina*’ (Latham 1972: 48).³⁰ In the introduction to the first fascicule of the DMLBS, it is made clear that the dictionary benefits from the specialized knowledge of J. D. Latham, who has frequently carried out original research on the Arabic vocabulary which was adopted into medieval Latin (DMLBS, I.xii). On the basis of this information, it would seem that the association of the word *ebel* with *savin* does not involve a plant other than *savine*.

12.3 *Buterbesome*

Another association with ME *savin* occurs in a fifteenth-century manuscript of plant-name synonyms which includes the medical uses of each plant (MS London, British Library, Sloane 282, folios 206v–210r; Hunt 1989: xxxv–vi). The appropriate line reads ‘the Romans call this *savyne*, the English *buterbesome*’ (*romani vocant eam savyne, anglici buterbesome*; Hunt 1989: 230). Hunt points out that the plant-name *buterbesome* is one of the many which has been overlooked by major English dictionaries,³¹ so a satisfactory identification is currently elusive. I have been unable to find any other mention of this name, which I presume to be ‘butter besom’. *Besom* is defined in the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* (COD) as ‘a broom made of twigs tied round a stick’ (like a witch’s broom). It is possible, therefore, that *buterbesome* represents a version, including a minor spelling error in the first element, of the English plant-name *butcher’s-broom* (*Ruscus aculeatus* L.). This native plant is an evergreen prickly shrub with

²⁹ More puzzling, but not likely to introduce another plant into the equation is an entry in the Laud herbal glossary in which *asterion* is defined as *sal lucidu[m]* (Stracke 1974: 25, line 156). This is probably a synonym for *nitrum* (Schneider 1962) which refers to alkaline substances such as soda and potash.

³⁰ A gloss in the *Synonyma Bartholomei* reads *hebel, i. savina vel juniperus* (Mirfeld 1882: 23).

³¹ In 1989, Hunt mentioned that there was no corpus of Middle English plant-names at that date, and he presented a list of nearly five hundred names which had been omitted from the OED (Hunt 1989: xlvi–viii). The list includes *buter besome*. This plant-name is not in the MED either.

edible young shoots that have a bitter taste, and these are qualities shared with the juvenile savine, so this may have led to confusion.

To conclude this section, there seems to be no compelling reason so far, on the evidence from the manuscript illustration, or from later medieval records, for believing that any plant other than the savine was denoted by the words *safene* or *savin* in early or late medieval times.³²

13. The place-name *Safandun*

13.1 The charter evidence

The third and final piece of evidence which might suggest that the word *safene* was not always used of the savine is a single place-name in Dorset. The name consists of a first element, which is the supposed plant-name, combined with a second element which is *dūn* ‘hill, mountain’. ?Safene 22 occurs in the Old English bounds of a Latin charter of King Eadred, dated to 948 (Sawyer 534), in which the king makes a grant of land in Purbeck, a coastal region of Dorset, to Ælfthryth, a ‘religious woman’. The charter survives in the Shaftesbury Cartulary, compiled in the early fifteenth century (MS London, British Library, Harley 61, 3v–4v), but the text ‘appears to be authentic’ (Kelly 1996: 68).³³

The second section of the survey in the charter, detailing the western boundary of the grant, begins at the sea (*sa*), proceeds to a stone *tor* ‘rock, crag’, and then passes up the cliff (*clif*) to a ditch or embankment (*dich*). After this, the text reads *þanen north anlang safandune on þene richte herepath* (Kelly 1996: 67), meaning ‘then northwards along Safan-hill to the straight highway’. The meaning of this hill-name has always been problematic. Grundy (1935: 121) translates it as ‘Juniper Down’, and Mills (1977: 32) records that ‘Professor Löfvenberg suggests that the first el[ement] may possibly be OE *safene*, *safine* ‘savine’ (a kind of juniper)’.³⁴ The latest editors of this charter are Hinton and Kelly. Hinton translates *safandun* as ‘?Juniper Down’ (1995: 12), and Kelly writes ‘the first element is possibly *safene*, ‘safine’, a kind of juniper’ (1996: 70), but both editors refer to Mills (1977: 32) for this translation, who, in turn, refers to Löfvenberg’s opinion. Whether Löfvenberg knew of Grundy’s translation is not clear.

The second example of this place-name, listed here as ?Safene 23, occurs in the Old English bounds of a Latin charter of King Eadwig, dated to 956 (Sawyer 632), in which

³² In more recent times, ModE *savin(e)* was, apparently, used of other plants, including other juniper species. The OED notes that, apart from American and West Indian species, *savine* was also used of the sea wormwood (*Seriphidium maritimum* (L.) Polj.) and the dwarf juniper (*Juniperus communis* ssp. *nana* (Hook.) Syme). Allen and Hatfield state that the common juniper (*Juniperus communis* L.) was ‘widely known as savin’ (Allen and Hatfield 2004: 65), and I am most grateful to David Allen for sending me information about the dates of such references. The earliest example dates to 1670, in which John Ray records that the ‘low mountain-juniper’ (the dwarf juniper) is found on Mount Snowdon and the Westmorland hills, and in both places is called *savine* (Ray 1670: 182). Ray makes no mention of the name *savine* being appropriate for the more widespread common juniper. A few other references found by Allen occur in nineteenth-century sources. It seems unlikely this tradition dated back to Anglo-Saxon times, and, indeed, any early medieval herbalist reading Pliny, for example, would find that his entries for *herba sabina* (Pliny the Elder 1942–83: VII.74; Bk XXIV.102) and for *iunipirus* (1942–83: VII.44; Bk XXIV.54–5) were quite distinct; the first being listed among herbs, and the second among trees. Elsewhere, Pliny expresses doubt as to the correct classification of *sabina* although he still keeps it separate from *iunipirus* (1942–83: IV.438; Bk XVI.79).

³³ It is number 16 in Kelly’s edition (1996: 66–70).

³⁴ Löfvenberg’s comment was probably a personal communication to the editor, since he had read Mills’ book in typescript (Mills 1977: viii).

the king makes a grant of land to Wihtsige, his *minister*. The land is at Corfe Castle and Blashenwell, both in Dorset. As with ?Safene 22, the text survives in the Shaftesbury Cartulary (MS London, British Library, Harley 61, 16v–17v), and Kelly regards this text also as authentic (1996: 78).³⁵ Part of the eastern boundary of this grant is coterminous with the western boundary of the previously discussed charter, but here, the bounds are described from north to south, the reverse direction to that in the previous charter's description. In Eadwig's charter, the bounds leave the highway (*herepap*), heading southwards along the Sa[?]en-hill (*sa[?]endune*) to a ditch or embankment (*dich*), and, from there, to the cliff (*clif*) and then out to the sea (*se*).³⁶

The first problem is the spelling of the hill-name. The early fifteenth-century cartulary is the only extant source for these charters, and Kelly explains that they appear to have been copied from an earlier cartulary or cartularies, not from the original charters (Kelly 1996: xvi) so there would have been plenty of scope for faulty copying. Indeed, Kelly writes 'The charter-texts are in a generally poor state, consistent with repeated copying' (1996: xix). In addition, the Anglo-Saxon letter-forms have caused confusion on the part of the copyists.

The form of the hill-name in Eadred's charter is relatively clear.³⁷ I agree with Kelly that the reading should be *safandune* (Kelly 1996: 67). The only letter in doubt is the second *a*, which Birch (1885–93: File 4.P868) reads as *u*, and this is repeated by Grundy (1935: 121) and Mills (1977: 32). The letter is slightly rubbed, and I suggest this has caused the loss of the thin central horizontal line dividing the two lobes of an insular minuscule *a*. If the letter is taken to be a *u*, the clear horizontal stroke at the top is hard to explain.

The form of the same hill-name in Eadwig's charter is more problematic. It is clearly written, and easily transcribed as *sa[?]endune*. The letter marked here with a question-mark is also clear, but its significance is not. It appears to be a letter *wyn* (*p*) which was used in Anglo-Saxon times to indicate the sound later represented by *w*. At some point or points in the transmission of this charter text, most of the *wyn*s were replaced with *w*'s, but not all of them. To make matters worse, the Anglo-Saxon letter *thorn* (*b*), representing a *th* sound in modern orthography, is also indicated by the same *wyn*-like symbol. Kelly writes 'The scribe of BL Harley 61 does not distinguish between *wyn* (*p*) and *thorn* (*b*), and uses the same modified letter for each; she may not have recognised that there was a difference' (Kelly 1996: xix). Since the boundary clauses are full of basic English vocabulary beginning with the *th* sound, such as the ancestors of *the*, *then*, *this* and others, which must have been recognized by any scribe, it seems that the *wyn*-symbol would have been understood as indicating this sound. This suggests that the scribe of the Shaftesbury Cartulary would have read the hill-name as *sathendune*,³⁸ but the original Anglo-Saxon spelling of the hill-name may have included either *wyn* or *thorn*. The cartulary scribe had, presumably, not noticed that the same hill was spelt with *f* in another charter in the same cartulary. It may be argued that the *f*-spelling favours a *wyn*-spelling in Eadwig's original charter since both sounds involve a labial element.³⁹

If the first element of the hill-name were *safene*, an anglicized form of Latin *sabina*, the variant spellings are explained by Campbell in his discussion of later Latin loan-words into

³⁵ It is number 19 in Kelly's edition (1996: 77–80). Hinton doubts the validity of this charter (1995: 16).

³⁶ *of þanne herepap suth anlang sapendune on anne dich, onlang dich oþe clif, þanen ut on se* (Kelly 1996: 77).

³⁷ I am very grateful to Susan Kelly for sending me facsimiles of the relevant pages in the two charters, and for discussing the letter-forms with me.

³⁸ Mills has this reading (1977: 32).

³⁹ The intervocalic *f* in Old English was voiced, a sound represented in modern orthography by *v*.

Old English. He explains that the Classical Latin intervocalic stops of later loan-words are usually unchanged in the Old English written records, but Latin *b* produces variant spellings in adopted words. It would appear that *b* had a spirantal pronunciation which resulted in a spelling of *f* or *u* in the adopted form (Campbell 1962: 215–6).⁴⁰ But does the first element really represent OE *safene*?

13.2 *Safene* and common juniper

As shown above, *safandun* has been tentatively interpreted as ‘Juniper Down’ by the editors of the charters, and by place-name scholars. It appears, however, that they differ as to precisely which plant they envisage on the downs. Löfvenberg, in an opinion reported by Mills (1977: 32) and also Kelly (1996: 70), interprets the first element of the place-name as, possibly, savine, which Mills and Kelly both describe as ‘a kind of juniper’. It seems clear that they are referring to *Juniperus sabina* L. since it is unlikely they would describe the most commonly-occurring juniper in this way. Both Grundy (1935: 121) and Hinton (1995: 12), however, avoid the Modern English name *savine*, and simply interpret the plant, again with trepidation, as juniper. Grundy was certainly thinking of the common juniper (*Juniperus communis* L.) since he has a footnote reading ‘I do not know whether juniper still grows on the down here indicated; but that plant is of course a common feature of the downs of S[outh] England’ (Grundy 1935: 121, note C). Since the savine is not native to Britain, and the plant is, in this case, growing on coastal downs rather than in monastic gardens, it is far more likely that he is referring to the common juniper.⁴¹ In other words, the possible existence of OE *safene* in an English place-name raises the question of whether the word could denote the common juniper, as well as savine. To investigate this possibility, the first question is whether the geographical location would have been suitable to support common juniper growth, but first, that location must be ascertained.

It is possible to pinpoint *safandun* with some degree of accuracy. Grundy says ‘The Down is evidently the high down a long ½m. W[est] and N[orth]W[est] of Encombe’ (1935: 121). Hinton, taking the parish boundary as a guide, interprets the location of the down as being the flatter land at the top of the slope up from the sea, on the coastal side of the Kingston to Kimmeridge road (Hinton 1995: 13), while Kelly suggests that *safandun* ‘may be the spur now occupied by Westhill Farm (SY 952782)’ (Kelly 1996: 70). This means that Grundy and Hinton prefer the hill to the north-west of Encombe, while Kelly prefers the hill to the east.

Whichever hill is the correct one, the surface geology of both is limestone (Portland stone)⁴² and, after plotting both present and historical distributions of the common juniper in southern England, Ward notes that, in that area, the plant favours calcareous soils (chalk and limestones), and tolerates exposed places (Ward 1973: 169, 171, Fig. 3). Her map shows

⁴⁰ The use of *u* for Latin *b* can be seen, for example, in *Safene* 17 which has the form *sauine* for the adopted *sabina*. The use of *wyn* to represent this medial consonant would be reasonable.

⁴¹ In the context of southern England, I always refer to the sub-species *Juniperus communis* ssp. *communis* L. There is some doubt as to whether there are two or three other native British sub-species. A definite example is the dwarf variety (*Juniperus communis* ssp. *nana* (Hook.) Syme) which is now mostly confined to mountainous and coastal regions of the north and west of Britain. Some botanists recognize a third sub-species, *Juniperus communis* ssp. *hemisphaerica* (J. & C. Presl) Nyman, which occurs on low sea-cliffs in western Cornwall and Pembrokeshire (Stace 1997: 50).

⁴² Thanks are due to Ian West of the National Oceanography Centre at Southampton University for discussing the geology of these hills with me. Dr West’s website, ‘Geology of the Wessex Coast, Southern England’ is highly recommended. It can be found at <http://www.soton.ac.uk/~imw/index.htm>.

a record of juniper, dating to the period 1871–1920, in eastern Purbeck, no more than four miles from the further west of the two hills involved in this discussion. Clearly, either hill could have supported common juniper growth in the past, so the suggested identification of *safan-* with the common juniper is *botanically* possible.⁴³

It appears, therefore, that the place-name *safandun* suggests that OE *safene* could be used of the *common* juniper. While this possibility cannot be denied, the quality of evidence supporting it is very poor. Firstly, as far as can be ascertained, there is no other location in England which was named with the word *safene* in pre-Conquest times⁴⁴ so, if it *could* also have denoted the common juniper, which was much more widespread in England in the early medieval period than now, why was it not used, at least occasionally, elsewhere? Secondly, all other extant examples of *safene* refer to a medical ingredient, and are, apparently, never used of an entire plant (although see Section 13.4 below). Thirdly, the written evidence for the place-name is late, and the text has been shown to incorporate errors suggesting a lack of understanding of Old English. Finally, the available timescale from foreign word to naturalized English is rather short. *Safene* is a late borrowing into Old English, and, although dating cannot be precise, Campbell regards such words as having been derived from monastic Latin, rather than Vulgar (spoken) Latin (Campbell 1959: 200). This means that time must be allowed from the late adoption of this word for the *safene*, for its adoption by ordinary English speakers, then for its meaning to have been adapted by them to indicate a native plant, and then for it to have become so familiar and fully naturalized in English that it was used as a place-name element, and all this had to happen in time for it to be recorded in a mid tenth-century charter. While none of these objections disproves a connection with common juniper, taken together, they do, nevertheless, make the identification look somewhat dubious. Could there be another explanation for the first element of this place-name?

13.3 A Brittonic origin?

A tentative suggestion will now be made that the element *safan-* originated in the Brittonic language, in the word pronounced [savn], the ancestor of Modern Welsh *safn* ‘mouth’.⁴⁵ The cognate form in Late Cornish is *sawn* ‘cleft, gully, geo’, an element which is present in several place-names recorded from the sixteenth century on, in forms such as *Saven-*, first recorded from 1597, *Savan* from 1580, and *Savyn*, also from 1580 (Padel 1985: 205, 304). Although a coastal feature such as a gully sounds very appropriate for the Purbeck case, Oliver Padel has pointed out that this meaning cannot be attested before the late sixteenth century. Furthermore, this sense is not shared with Welsh or Breton, indicating that it does not date back to the common ancestor of the three languages (Padel, personal communication, 13.11.2006). If the Purbeck example really is Brittonic, it is best regarded as an independent case of a metaphorical sense of *Primitive* Cornish **savn* ‘mouth’. It is suggested that this topographical name was adopted by Old English speakers, who perhaps

⁴³ Ward shows that many former common juniper habitats are now devoid of the plant. She suggests that the main reasons could be the more intensive land-usage of modern times, and the lack of grazing by domestic animals which formerly kept other plant-growth under control, allowing the common juniper, which cannot tolerate shade, to flourish (Ward 1973: 178).

⁴⁴ There is no entry for *safene* in Smith (1956).

⁴⁵ The entire section on the Brittonic theory has benefitted immensely from the help of Oliver Padel who, nonetheless, should not be blamed for any of my own errors of judgement.

did not understand the meaning, and was compounded with OE *dūn* 'hill'.⁴⁶ This suggestion needs further consideration, and the first question which needs to be addressed is why the Brittonic name of the hill should be 'mouth' at all.

It was mentioned above that some scholars locate *safandun* to the north-west of Encombe, and others to the east. Although I have referred to the two possible locations of this point on the charter boundary as if they were separate hills, they are, in fact, the two ends of a single semi-circular ridge which is bisected by a steep-sided valley called 'North Gwyle' (Hyland 1978: 206). This runs north-eastwards to a valley-head situated only a short distance from the village of Kingston. At the other, southwestern end of the valley it broadens out into a natural basin known as 'The Golden Bowl'.⁴⁷ Encombe House stands in this position with a lake before it. A stream runs in a southerly direction from the lake, past Encombe Farm, and over the cliffs into the sea at a point which is called Freshwater Steps. At one time there was access to the beach from this point, but cliff erosion has now made that impossible.⁴⁸ The valley of the stream is called 'South Gwyle' on the 1889 Ordnance Survey map.⁴⁹ *Gwyle* is defined by Wright as 'a wooded glen near the mouth of a streamlet or winter torrent' (*English Dialect Dictionary* (EDD)), but Smith defines it as 'a ditch, a stream, a channel' and, having considered several cognate terms, he concludes 'In general, the meaning appears to be some kind of watercourse' (Smith 1956: I.206, under *goule*).

On the basis of the above geographical description, it is suggested that a mouth-like topographical feature of this valley was once metaphorically called a *savn*. The 'mouth' feature could have referred to the entry to the North Gwyle from the Golden Bowl, or to the mouth of the stream reaching the sea at Freshwater Steps. The extension of the name *savn* to the surrounding downland was, presumably, an Anglo-Saxon usage, meaning 'hill at a place called *Savn*'.

Some may wonder how this Brittonic element could have survived for so long, and, perhaps, have inspired a hill-name. An answer can be found in the great importance of the routeway through the Gwyles. Encombe not only once gave easy access to the beach on a coast where such a facility is rare but, at the other end, the valley-head is only about half a mile from Kingston, and from there, a direct route takes the traveller through the gap in the Purbeck Hills at Corfe Castle and on to Wareham which was once a major port on Poole Harbour. This route would have been of great importance to the shale industry which flourished, in particular, in Iron Age and Roman times.

Shale is a sedimentary rock composed of compacted mud and clays and, although it occurs elsewhere in Britain, archaeological evidence suggests that Purbeck shale was exploited above all others. It is easily worked and, when polished with beeswax, takes on a shiny black appearance very much like jet. A wide variety of manufactures is recorded from the Roman period, including armlets, rings, turned dishes and bowls, furniture and much more (Denford 2000; Calkin 1953). Judging from the archaeological records of numerous shale-working sites across Purbeck, the material was widely distributed after it had been quarried from the coastal region on either side of Kimmeridge Bay. At least one major quarry site, at Rope Lake Hole,

⁴⁶ Padel has pointed out that the Brittonic development *savn* > *savan*, *savyn* (epenthesis) is not dated to any earlier than the ninth century, but it could have been a development within English after *savn* had been borrowed at an earlier date.

⁴⁷ A description of this area can be found in Hyland (1978: 205–10).

⁴⁸ There was an easy descent in 1905 when Charles Harper, apparently with no problems, took his bicycle down Encombe valley and onto the beach, finding there a boat and bathing-machine (Harper 1905: 119–20).

⁴⁹ The map can be accessed online at <http://www.old-maps.co.uk> (search on 'Encombe').

was nearer to Encombe than to Kimmeridge (Woodward 1986), and some of the shale may well have been removed to the more distant working sites via the Encombe valley. Another reason for transporting the shale is that it is oil-shale which can be burnt as a fuel. It has long been known as 'Kimmeridge coal' and, in spite of giving off an unpleasant smell when burning, it has been used in domestic and industrial contexts, the latter extending into the early twentieth century (Denford 2000).

There may well have been even greater use of the Encombe valley than the preceding paragraph suggests. Allen, Fulford and Todd (2007) discuss the several industries of the Poole-Purbeck area in Roman times, and refer to them as a 'complex-agglomerative enterprise', in other words, an area of several interdependent industries. The products include Kimmeridge Clay Formation cementstone, which can be sawn to make decorative wall veneer and tesserae for mosaics (Allen, Fulford and Todd 2007: 175–8), burnt Kimmeridge Clay Formation shales, which are bright yellow, or dark red to orange in colour (2007: 178), Purbeck marble, which can be used for veneer, tiles and table-tops (2007: 178–9), a type of Romano-British black-burnished pottery (2007: 179–82), and salt, which could have been packed in the locally-made pottery (2007: 183). Poole-Purbeck has the densest distribution of Romano-British sites in Dorset, and the various industries would have required a considerable workforce.

In view of this history, the Encombe valley no doubt had an important role in the early economy of Purbeck. It seems not unlikely that Brittonic-speakers referred to the *savn* as giving access to an important routeway, and that English settlers, hearing this word, named the downland overlooking this feature as 'Savan hill'.

The suggestion that *safan*- represents an anglicized form of a Brittonic word implies the presence of Brittonic speakers in Purbeck contemporary with English speakers, and this situation can be reasonably suggested by means of archaeological, epigraphical and linguistic evidence consisting of a church and memorial stones. Five stones with inscriptions are today located in the present Lady St Mary Church, Wareham, either built into the fabric or on display in the church as loose stones (Cramp 2006: 118–24; plates 128–41; Wareham 5–9 inclusive, entries written by John Higgitt). Wareham is situated a short distance to the north-west of the Purbeck Hills. The inscriptions were found when the previous Anglo-Saxon church was demolished in 1840–41, and at least one of them had been built into the fabric of that church, so clearly pre-dating its construction.⁵⁰ So when had the church been built?

Unfortunately and inevitably, there are considerable dating problems, because the only evidence consists of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century descriptions and illustrations of what appears to have been an important Anglo-Saxon church. Taylor and Taylor consider that evidence and date the building 'possibly' to their Period C, which runs from 950 to 1100 (Taylor and Taylor 1965–78: II.634).⁵¹ Claims were later made that the demolished church had dated from the time of Aldhelm, who was Bishop of Sherborne from 705 until his death in 709 or 710 (RCHM(E) 1970: II.xliii–iv, 304–12) but, reviewing the situation in 1978, H. M. Taylor wrote 'On the evidence which is available I would not wish to amend our assessment of date as given in Vol. II: 634 but I would again stress its tentative nature' (Taylor and Taylor

⁵⁰ The circumstances of the discovery of four of the five inscribed stones, and their precise locations, were not recorded at the time (Cramp 2006: 118). The stone about which some details of finding were recorded is Cramp's Wareham 7 (with the *Catgug* inscription) which was found in the south arcade of the demolished church (Cramp 2006: 120).

⁵¹ For an explanation of their dating scheme see Taylor and Taylor (1965–78: I.xxv).

1965–78: III.1085). In 1992, however, Richard Gem dated the church to ‘somewhere around 800’ (Gem 1992: 41). This date is partly based on his belief that a painting of the Anglo-Saxon church interior shows architectural features that are similar to, but typologically later than those at Brixworth, Northamptonshire, a church which he estimates to be mid to late eighth century in date.⁵² Gem does not address Taylor and Taylor’s dating. On the evidence of pre-demolition descriptions and illustrations, and considering the opinions of the three specialists in this subject, the church can only be safely dated to the period between pre-800 and 1100. This broad range is not surprising, considering the lack of a standing building, so can the evidence of the inscriptions narrow down the possibilities?

The inscriptions are Latin memorials to people with, as far as they can be identified, Brittonic and biblical names, such as Catgug and Gideon, inscribed in letter-forms closely related to those used in other Celtic inscriptions. Radford and Jackson write that they ‘form a group which must be compared both epigraphically and prosopographically with the early Christian monuments of Wales and the south-west’ (Radford and Jackson 1970: II.310). An alternative explanation was put forward by McClure (1907), who suggested that the memorials commemorate Breton refugees from Scandinavian attacks on Brittany in the 910s. This suggestion has proved controversial. Radford (1978: 140) rejected it, but Dumville, in discussing the not inconsiderable Breton influences on Wessex, opines that Radford’s rejection of the Breton hypothesis is unconvincing (Dumville 1992: 157, note 104). John Higgitt has reviewed the arguments, and finds the late date required for the refugee theory difficult to accept (Cramp 2006: 122). Radford and Jackson dated the inscriptions to the period of the seventh century to c. 800 ‘or later’ (Radford and Jackson 1970: II.310). The stone that was certainly built into the Anglo-Saxon church fabric is the Catgug stone (Cramp 2006: 120–1; Wareham 7), which Cramp dates to the seventh to the early ninth century (?). This is based on the seventh- or eighth-century lettering, and on Sims-Williams’ assessment of the linguistic evidence as being appropriate for the period c. 800 to c. 960 or later.⁵³ The four other inscriptions, which may or may not have been built into the Anglo-Saxon church when found, are dated by Cramp to: the seventh century (Wareham 5: the Vidcu- stone); the seventh to eighth centuries (Wareham 6: the Iudn- stone); the seventh to early ninth centuries (?) (Wareham 8: the Deniel stone); and the ninth century (?) (Wareham 9: the Gongorie stone). The suggestion that the inscriptions referred to Bretons displaced by the Scandinavian attacks of the 910s on Brittany, would appear to sit uneasily with the evidence of the memorial stones. What does Wareham contribute to the consideration of the place-name *safandun*?

The Wareham evidence suggests that people with Brittonic names were buried there perhaps as early as the seventh century, but it must be remembered that the inscriptions are not necessarily evidence for living Brittonic speech since one does not always speak the language responsible for one’s name. Nonetheless, the earliest datings of the inscriptions are compatible with Probert’s study of language change from Brittonic to Old English in south-west England. His conclusions are that Brittonic survived in east Dorset into the mid sixth century, and perhaps after the mid seventh century. A few placenames in Dorset possibly indicate borrowings from Brittonic as late as the late seventh or eighth centuries. He writes:

⁵² Gem also uses the inscriptions as dating evidence, but I am here attempting to assess the architectural and epigraphic evidence separately.

⁵³ Sims-Williams suggests twenty-eight periods of early medieval Brittonic language development as evidenced on inscriptions (2003: 290–2). The Catgug inscription is placed in phases 21 to 28 (2003: 366, no. 1061/Dor.iii), the earliest date for Period 21 being c.800, and Period 28 being established by c. 960.

‘Overall, these data are consistent with a local transition from British to English control during the seventh century. Yet they can also be used to argue either for the presence of some Old English speakers by the late sixth century or for the patchy survival of Brittonic into the early eighth century; indeed, it may be that these are not mutually exclusive interpretations’ (Probert 2007: 243). The situation presented by Probert would certainly allow for the adoption of a Brittonic topographical name by English speakers, and their incorporation of it into the hill-name *safandun* at some point between the late sixth century and the early eighth century. This name was to survive into the tenth century at least.

13.4 *Safene* and *savine*

It is, of course, possible that, if the first element of *safandun* were actually OE *safene*, it indicated an association of the hill with genuine *savine* trees rather than common junipers, and archaeological evidence suggests a possible context.⁵⁴ The hill to the north-west of Encombe is marked by a modern obelisk, and records show that a Romano-British building was excavated there in 1954.⁵⁵ It was built of limestone blocks, and some surviving flagstones show it had a solid floor. The site produced occupation debris (food refuse and pottery), and waste material from the manufacture of shale armlets (Brown 1954: 80–1). Surface rubble suggests that the building may have stood in a compound (RCHM(E) 1970: II.599).

As for the other candidate hill, to the east of Encombe, traces of a building identified as Romano-British were found in Westhill Wood, as a result of fieldwalking in 1958.⁵⁶ Fragments of clay roof-tiles were found, along with evidence of occupation in the form of both samian (fine ware) and coarse pottery dating from the first or second century through to the fourth century. Also recorded is a coin of Carausius (c.293), and more shale waste (RCHM(E) 1970: II.600). This location is on the same hill-spur as Westhill Farm, mentioned by Kelly, but lies further south, towards Hounstout Cliff. It is possible that the owners of one or other of these buildings planted *savines* to remind them of their Continental homeland (if they were not Britons), to provide a romanized ‘fashion accessory’ for their property, or to provide an immediate source of medicine required by one or more of the occupants. The protection of a building or high wall might have been sufficient for the *savines* to flourish. Under these circumstances, a Roman place- or house-name based on Latin *sabina* may have survived long enough to be heard by Anglo-Saxon settlers.

14. *Safene* and medicine

It was pointed out in Section 2 that twenty items in the *Safene* catalogue are classified as being from medical texts and, in addition, there is an item which is a gloss, and another which is a glossary entry which both have their origins in medical texts.⁵⁷ The gloss, *Safene* 20, occurs in the same manuscript as the Old English *Herbarium* but is not part of that text. Six leaves of a later manuscript (MS London, British Library, Cotton Vitellius C.iii, folios 5–10 (s.xii)) have been bound in with the herbal, and one of these pages (fol. 10v) consists of a list of the

⁵⁴ An excellent source for such information is the Archaeology Data Service at <http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk>.

⁵⁵ Archaeology Data Service (ADS) ID EHNMR-650449 and NMRMIC-1544.

⁵⁶ ADS ID NMRMIC-1553. The building is described as a villa.

⁵⁷ This section has been read and commented on by G. H. E. Craig, SRN, SCM. I am grateful for her considerable help with the symptoms of certain medical problems.

chapter titles of the *De viribus herbarum* of ‘Macer’ (Ker 1957: 283–4). This work is a herbal text in Latin, written in poetic form, and first mentioned between 1120 and 1130, although it could have been written much earlier. The apparent attribution to Aemilius Macer, who died in 15 BC, is spurious, and the real author may have been Odo of Meung (Odo Magdunensis) who lived in the early eleventh century (Gough 1974: 285).

Just as the gloss has its origins in a medical text, so does the glossary item, Safene 21, which is found in the Laud herbal glossary (Stracke 1974: 59, entry 1299). In other words, leaving aside the two queried items relating to the place-name, all the extant examples of OE *safene* occur in medical contexts, provided plant-lists are considered to be, at least partly, medical in nature.⁵⁸

The next consideration is to ascertain what the Anglo-Saxons believed to be the healing properties of *safene*. This information is difficult to retrieve since many of the remedies involve long lists of plant ingredients of which *safene* is just one. It is easier to guess at the plant’s supposed properties from the cures in which *safene* is the only plant, or one of two or three ingredients.⁵⁹

The first remedy discussed here appears in the Old English *Herbarium*, and requires the patient to be given *safene* to drink, mixed with honey, or pounded and mixed with wine.⁶⁰ The Old English *Herbarium* text was translated from a Latin, southern European source,⁶¹ in which *sabina* was said to cure *morbus regius*, ‘king’s disease’. This was translated literally into Old English as *cynelic adl*, with the same meaning (Safene 13).⁶² ‘King’s evil’ was the name of a disease which, for centuries, was supposedly cured by the touch of a king, or contact with something he had touched but, unfortunately, it is evident that this was said of different diseases at different periods of history (De Vriend 1984: 308, with references). The Old English *Herbarium* clearly translates a Latin textual tradition which is close to that surviving in the manuscript Montecassino, Archivio della Badia, 97, which reads: ‘For king’s disease which is *aurigo*’ (*Ad morbum regium quod est auriginem*; De Vriend 1984: 127). *Aurigo* is assumed to be an error for *aurugo* ‘jaundice’, a word which is cognate with *aurum* ‘gold’, referring to the yellowish skin of someone suffering from this disease. Elsewhere in the manuscript, however, as De Vriend points out, the same word is clearly used of the feet. The phrase ‘For painful or “jaundiced” feet’ (*Ad pedum dolorem vel auriginosos*) is translated, in its entirety, into Old English as *Wið fotadle*, ‘For foot disease’ (De Vriend 1984: 307; 160–1). Whatever the author of the Latin text had in mind when he wrote *auriginosos*, it is clear that he thought he was referring to a foot problem, and that is also how the Anglo-Saxons understood him.⁶³

The English translator of the *Herbarium* proceeded to explain ‘*aurigo*’ to his English readers: ‘that is, in our language, a spasm of the sinews and a swelling of the feet’ (*þæt ys on ure geþeode þæra syna getoh 7 fota geswel*).⁶⁴ This is, presumably, how at least some of

⁵⁸ An argument could be made that Ælfric, for example, compiled lists of plants for the purposes of teaching Latin, not medicine, but the purpose was to teach the vocabulary that the students would need in their future monastic lives, and the plant-lists demonstrate the importance of herbal medicine in the role of the monasteries.

⁵⁹ Citations which come into this category are: Safene 3 (6), 4, 7, 10–13, 16, 27, 28. (Items in brackets are related citations.)

⁶⁰ The plant is probably also to be pounded if mixed with honey, but this is not absolutely clear.

⁶¹ See Section 6.1 for a brief description of this text.

⁶² Safene 7 occurs in the contents list of the *Herbarium*, so lists the same remedies on which Safene 13 expands. Safene 16 is the caption to the illustration in the same text.

⁶³ The ‘jaundiced feet’ may relate to the skin problems which *safene* was believed to cure. (See below.)

⁶⁴ A slightly different wording appears in the contents list of the *Herbarium*: ‘For spasm of the sinews and for swelling

the Anglo-Saxons interpreted ‘king’s disease’ but they clearly, and perhaps rightly, made no connection with jaundice. *Aurigo* is also translated as a spasm of the sinews (*sina togung*) elsewhere in the same manuscript (De Vriend 1984: 82–3). It, therefore, seems reasonable to interpret the Anglo-Saxon understanding of ‘king’s disease’, involving swelling of the feet, as probably gout (De Vriend 1984: 308), and what sounds like cramp (spasm of the sinews), although not a symptom of gout, may have been associated with the tensing of muscles with the sudden pain in the foot.⁶⁵

The Old English *Herbarium* also recommends *safene* as a cure for headache (*wip heafodece*; Latin: *ad capitis dolorem*; De Vriend 1984: 126–7; Safene 28). The plant is to be carefully pounded with vinegar and mixed with oil, and the resulting mixture is to be smeared on the head and temples.

The final *safene* cure in the *Herbarium* concerns *deadspringas* (Latin: *ad carbunculum*; De Vriend 1984: 126–7; Safene 27). The DOE defines *dēadspring* as ‘necrotic sore, ulcer, carbuncle’, and a carbuncle is an abscess (COD). The advice is to pound up *safene* in honey, and smear the mixture on the sore.

Two other Old English medical texts, Bald’s *Leechbook* and the *Lacnunga*, both offer a cure for skin problems which clearly derives from the same source.⁶⁶ The *Leechbook* remedy (Safene 3) occurs in a section containing twenty-eight cures ‘for every kind of skin eruption and swelling and pernicious disease’ (*wip ælces cynnes omum 7 onfeallum 7 bancopum*; Cockayne 1864–6: II.98–9). Although the *Lacnunga* cure (Safene 6) has the same introduction to its section, claiming twenty-eight cures (Pettit 2001: I.74–5, entry 87), it actually contains only thirteen (Cameron 1993: 46), so a scribe would appear to have copied this section from Bald’s work.

The *Leechbook* cure containing *safene* begins ‘For the same [problem]’, (*Wip þon ilcan*; Cockayne 1864–6: II.100–1), and in *Lacnunga*, it begins ‘Again’ (*Eft*; Pettit 2001: I.76–7). To find what the problem is, the previous remedy must be consulted and, in both texts, it begins in the same way as for the *safene* cure. It must be assumed, therefore, that ‘the same problem’ and ‘again’ refer to *two* remedies before the *safene* cure, and this reads *Wip omena geberste* in both texts.⁶⁷ Cockayne translates this as ‘Against bursting of erysipelalous inflammations’ (Cockayne 1864–6: II.101), implying that the treatment is to prevent the bursting, but Pettit takes a more neutral view, translating ‘for erysipelalous swelling’ (Pettit 2001: I.77). The definition of *geberst* in the DOE makes the ambiguity of this phrase clear: ‘of skin eruptions: bursting, breaking (or perh[aps] ref[erring] to the eruption itself of erysipelas, shingles, etc.)’.

of the feet’ (*Wip togunga þera sina 7 wip fota geswell*; De Vriend 1984: 15; Safene 7).

⁶⁵ As regards the possible connection of spasm of the sinews with cramp, it is worth noting that a panacea occurring in the *Lacnunga*, contains a list of the cures it is said to effect, and they are presented in head to foot order, as is common in medieval medical texts. The ‘contraction of the sinews’ (*sina getoge*), occurs between difficulty of urination and pain in the knee, which suggests the sinews concerned are in the thigh (Pettit 2001: I.118). While this may suggest the possibility of sciatica rather than cramp, it certainly appears to locate the problem in the leg. Symptoms of diseases in this paper have been checked in Macpherson (1995).

⁶⁶ Bald’s *Leechbook*, composed in Old English in two parts, is a classified compilation of cures from various Mediterranean sources and, presumably, traditional Germanic medicine, although the latter influence is difficult to determine. For a description of this text, see Cameron (1993: 42–5), and for the edited text, see Cockayne (1864–6: II.2–298). *Lacnunga*, also written in Old English, is less well-organized, and less accurate than Bald’s work. It is a commonplace book, in which cures were recorded as they were encountered, and it is valuable to modern medical historians as demonstrating the more superstitious side of Anglo-Saxon medicine. For a description, see Cameron (1993: 45–7), and for the edited text and Modern English translation, see Pettit (2001).

⁶⁷ *Wip* is spelt *wið* in *Lacnunga* (Pettit 2001: I.76).

In other words, the treatment may be for the eruption *before* the swellings have burst, or after. *Ōman* is defined by Clark Hall (1960) as ‘eruptions of the skin, erysipelas’, and *erysipelas* is defined in the COD as ‘a skin disease caused by a streptococcus and characterized by large raised red patches on the face and legs’. Without further evidence, *ōman*, in this remedy, cannot be translated by the disease-specific term ‘erysipelas’, since the exact causes of diseases were not usually understood in the early medieval period.⁶⁸ The generic term ‘skin eruptions’ has been preferred in this paper.

It does, in fact, seem unlikely that true erysipelas was involved in the *safene* cure. Erysipelas was popularly known as ‘St Anthony’s Fire’, and it is often caused by eating bread made from fungally-affected rye. The resulting sore, red patch is slightly raised in relation to the healthy skin, and can cover a large area, so it does not consist of individual swellings. Such swellings are, however, involved in the remedy which occurs two entries before the *safene* cure, and which introduces a number of cures relating to the same medical problem. This interpretation results from the instruction to make four cuts around and outside the eruption, and then let it run (*læt yrnan* in both texts). This seems highly suggestive of a treatment for an abscess, or other individual swelling, rather than a swollen patch. The *safene* cure in both the *Leechbook* and *Lacnunga* instructs the physician to grind the savine to a powder, mix it with honey, and smear it on (Cockayne 1864–6: II.100; Pettit 2001: I.76).

These are the only cures in which *safene* is the single plant ingredient, so it is evident that it was considered a remedy for spasm of the sinews (cramp? or sciatica?), swelling of the feet (gout?), headache, ulcers, abscesses, and skin eruptions in general. Would these remedies have worked? The treatment of skin problems with savine is accepted today, as Stuart writes: ‘Now only used externally, with care, as a stimulant dressing for blisters, wounds, ulcers, and to remove warts’ (Stuart 1979: 82). In the early twentieth century, Mrs Grieve wrote that ‘it is useful as an ointment and as a dressing to blisters in order to promote discharge; also applied externally to syphilitic warts, and other skin trouble’ (Grieve 1931: 718).

14.1 *Safene* with *eorþgealla*

Next to be considered are remedies in which *safene* is used along with one or two other plants only. In Bald’s *Leechbook* can be found some remedies for problems of the spleen, including hardness of that organ (*Wip heardnesse miltes*) (Cockayne 1864–6: II.250–3). *Safene* is an ingredient in a drink which is part of the treatment (*Safene* 4). The physician is to boil ivy leaves in vinegar, and then boil some bran in the same vinegar. The resulting substance is to be put into a bladder and the bladder tied to the sore or painful place. Then a drink is to be prepared for the patient by pounding or grinding ‘earth-galls’ to powder so as to make three or more spoon measures. To this should be added three spoon measures of *safene* powder (*dūst*), and three spoon measures of ‘boiling pitch’, and the whole mixture should be sieved. The patient should be given a spoon-full of the mixture in wine after a night’s fast. If s/he has a fever, however, s/he is to receive the mixture in cooled-down hot water, to prevent the pitch remaining (combining?) with the other powders.

The ingredients of the drink include *eorþgealla*, defined by the DOE as ‘common centaury’ (*Centaureum erythraea* Rafn.) or, in other cases, ‘yellow-wort’ (*Blackstonia perfoliata* (L.)

⁶⁸ This is not to say that Cockayne and Pettit translate wrongly, since the adjective *erysipelatous* can mean either ‘pertaining to’ or ‘of the nature of’ erysipelas (OED). Indeed, in his glossary, Pettit adds ‘or similar affliction’ to Clark Hall’s definition of *ōman* (Pettit 2001: I.249).

Huds.) or ‘yellow centaury’ (*Cicendia filiformis* (L.) Delarbre).⁶⁹ All three plants are members of the Gentian family (Gentianaceae) and are native to Britain.⁷⁰ The rather alarming ‘boiling pitch’ (*weallende pic*) is explained by Cockayne as an error resulting from a misunderstanding of Latin phrases such as *ex picato mero*, ‘from pure pitch-flavoured wine’ which occurs, for example, in a spleen remedy recorded by Marcellus of Bordeaux (Marcellus Empiricus), in his late fourth-century compilation entitled *De medicamentis liber* (Marcellus of Bordeaux 1889: 238; Section 23.41), a text known to the Anglo-Saxons (Cameron 1993: 68). It is also distinctly possible that the translator has misunderstood a reference to what is often called ‘Cade Oil’. This is a dark reddish-brown, sometimes almost black, oily substance with a smoky aroma which is obtained from the wood of (mostly) *Juniperus oxycedrus* L., a juniper native to the Mediterranean region. Fernie describes the oil as ‘resembling liquid pitch’, mentions that it is also called ‘Juniper tar’, and explains that it is used for skin problems (Fernie 1914: 273). This ingredient, however, since it is not a plant, will not be considered further in this paper. As regards the plants, why were they considered appropriate to cure hardness of the spleen? Did they complement each other in some way?

‘Hardness’ of an internal organ is most usually associated with cirrhosis of the liver, but the remedy involving *safene* and *eorþgealla* specifies the spleen. This organ is located behind the stomach, in a high position in the abdomen on the left side (from the patient’s point of view) and, in its normal state, is usually not palpable (possible for the physician to feel). Several medical problems, however, can cause the spleen to become enlarged (the condition of ‘splenomegaly’) sufficiently for the physician to detect, and there is a tendency for it to become firmer to the touch the longer the condition lasts.

The name *eorþgealla* is a compound term consisting of *eorðe* ‘earth’ and *gealla* ‘gall, bile’, but it appears to be a literal translation of the Latin plant-name *fel terrae* ‘gall of the earth’ (centaury). Since the liver produces bile, some of which is stored in the neighbouring gall-bladder, it is no surprise that *eorþgealla* is involved in treating the liver. Bile passes through the bile ducts into the intestine, where it aids in the digestion and absorption of food. Should this passage of bile into the intestine be hindered or obstructed for any reason, bile is then absorbed by the blood and lymph, and deposited in various body tissues, resulting in the distinctive yellowish skin of the sufferer from jaundice. That jaundice indicated a liver problem seems to have been understood by the Anglo-Saxons, since one of their terms for jaundice, *gealādl* ‘bile disease’ indicates this.⁷¹ It is logical, from the medieval point of view, therefore, that *eorþgealla* is included in remedies for the following: hardness of the liver (‘for the palpable hardness of the liver’, *wiþ þære gefelan heardnesse þære lifre*; Cockayne 1864–6: II.206–7);⁷² for a burst liver-abscess (‘for the liver-ulcer when the pus-filled swelling bursts’, *wiþ þære lifre wunde þonne se swile gewyrsmēd tobyrst*; Cockayne 1864–6: II.202); for liver disease (*wið liferadle*; De Vriend 1984: 80); in a drink which is almost a panacea, and which is a remedy, among many other things, for pain in the liver (*wið liferwerce*); for flowing gall (*wið seondum*

⁶⁹ Bierbaumer defines *eorþgealla* as common centaury only (Bierbaumer 1975–9: I.56), with a cross-reference to *centaurea*. The DOEPN (Bierbaumer revised) defines *eorþgealla* as common centaury, yellow-wort or ‘knapweed, a species of’ (*Centaurea* L.).

⁷⁰ English flower-names used in this paper are from Dony, Jury and Perring (1986), with any differences from the DOE stated, and botanical Latin names are from Stace (1997).

⁷¹ As Pettit points out (2001: II.344), *Leechbook III* contains a statement that jaundice is caused by flowing bile: ‘For the yellow disease which comes from flowing bile’ (*Við þære geolwan adle sio cymð of seondum geallan*; Cockayne 1864–6: II.314).

⁷² Cockayne translates *gefelan*, not as ‘palpable’ but as ‘sensitive’.

geallan); and for the yellow disease (*wið ... þære geolwan adle*) (Pettit 2001: I.118). There is certainly also a spleen remedy ('For a spleen-sick man', *Wiþ milte seocum men*; Cockayne 1864–6: II.248), but the *eorþgealla*, true to its name, is primarily a remedy for liver problems. Why is it occasionally involved in treatments for the spleen?

It must have been very difficult for ancient and medieval physicians to understand internal medical problems, and it is reasonable to ask how they would be able to attribute certain symptoms to problems in the liver or the spleen.⁷³ It seems most likely that what modern physicians refer to as 'palpation' is the key to this question. It has already been mentioned that hardness/enlargement of the liver or spleen can be detected by feeling the abdomen, and the Old English phrase mentioned above, which can be translated as 'the palpable hardness of the liver' (*wiþ þære gefelan heardnesse þære lifre*) may suggest that this form of examination was known. I suggest it is significant for the understanding of early liver and spleen treatments that some patients have problems with both organs at the same time, and that this can be detected by physical examination. Splenomegaly can be caused by several diseases,⁷⁴ and one of them is hepatitis (liver disease). Such a patient can suffer from the enlargement of *both* organs (a condition known as 'hepatosplenomegaly'), and this may well have created problems for early physicians in attempting to distinguish between them. Taking these points into consideration, it is not surprising that the symptoms attributed to a diseased liver and a diseased spleen became, to a considerable extent, conflated. For this reason, it is suggested that, although *eorþgealla* is clearly a remedy for liver problems, medieval physicians may have regarded a physically detectable enlarged spleen as a related problem.⁷⁵

14.2 Safene with *aprotane*

Another plant which occurs with *safene* is *aprotane*, defined by the DOE as 'the plant southernwood'. This plant-name was adopted from Latin *habrotonum* 'southernwood' (DMLBS) and is the *Artemisia abrotanum* L., which is not native to Britain (Stace 1997: 731). It occurs with *safene* in the *Peri Didaxeon* (Safene 12), a late twelfth-century text which is either in Old English, or a form of English transitional towards Middle English (scholars differ on this matter), but is normally at least mentioned in works on Anglo-Saxon medicine (Cameron 1993: 64). The remedy is a drink *ad vertiginem capitis*, which is usually translated as 'dizziness in the head'. The drink is made from savine, southernwood, pepper, honey and wine.⁷⁶

⁷³ I am here assuming that much ancient and medieval medicine is based on observation and experience, a view which is increasingly accepted. It is true, of course, that superstitious and/or ineffectual elements exist in the extant treatments, but such elements are usually obvious, involving, for example, chants, particular numbers or colours, and so on (Bonser 1963: parts 3, 5 and 6).

⁷⁴ Cirrhosis of the liver, for example, involves a build-up of fibrous tissue which eventually impedes the blood flow in the portal vein, the vessel which carries the blood supply to this organ. This causes portal hypertension (high pressure) which, in turn, causes splenomegaly (see The Hepatitis C Trust at <http://www.hepcuk.info>, under 'Portal hypertension'). Cameron suspects malarial infection to be the cause of enlargement and hardening of the spleen (Cameron 1983: 176).

⁷⁵ It may be relevant that the EDD records the term *milt-hole* in dialectal English, meaning 'the space between the ribs and the pelvis'. In other words, the abdomen as a whole was popularly referred to by a term for the spleen (*milt*), which indicates, even at a much later date, a certain vagueness in connection with this area of the body.

⁷⁶ Also dealing with *vertigo* are Safene 10 and 11 which both occur in a recipe '*ad vertiginem*' inserted into the same manuscript as the illustrated Old English *Herbarium* (MS London, British Library, Cotton Vitellius C.iii). Savine is accompanied in this recipe by three other plants: *betonica*, *wermod* and *merc* (Cockayne 1864-6: I.378). See Section 10 for details of the Safene 11 remedy, and see Section 12.1 for a suggestion that 'dizziness' may refer to epilepsy ('the falling sickness').

Aprotane appears in several other diverse Anglo-Saxon remedies: for hardness of the liver ('for the palpable hardness of the liver', *wip þære gefelan heardnesse þære lifre*; Cockayne 1864–6: II.206); for an inward stitch (*Wip instice*; Cockayne 1864–6: II.274);⁷⁷ for dimness of the eyes (*Wið eagna miste*; Cockayne 1864–6: I.28); for chest pain (*Wip breost wærce*; Cockayne 1864–6: I.58); for 'hiccough' (*wip geohsan*; Cockayne 1864–6: I.62);⁷⁸ for ulcers (*Wip springe*; Cockayne 1864–6: I.80); and for the following from the *Herbarium*: hardness of breathing (*Wyð nyrwyt*); sciatica (*wið banece*); difficult urination (*wið þæt man earfoðlice gemigan mæge*); pain in the side (*Wið sidan sare*); poisons (*Wið attru*); snakebite (*wið nædrena slite*); 'cool fever' (*wið þone colan fefor*); bites of venomous spiders (misunderstood as a type of snake) and scorpions (*Wið ... spalangiones 7 scorpiones*); and sore eyes (*Wið eagena sare*; De Vriend 1984: 176).

While it is hard to detect any particular pattern in these cures, there seems to be a distinct connection with poisons: poisons in general, snakebite, venomous spiders, and scorpions. Other symptoms may also be connected with poisoning. The 'cool fever' occurs in one of the sections on poisons in the *Herbarium*, situated between snakebite and *spalangiones* (thought by the Anglo-Saxons to be snakes). Pliny writes, under *habrotonum*: 'very effective against those creatures whose venom causes shivering and chills' (*efficacissimum contra ea quorum veneno tremores et frigus accidunt*; Pliny the Elder 1942–83: VI.274–5; Bk XXI.162),⁷⁹ clearly linking these symptoms with poisoning. The words *frigus* and *tremores* seem to have been interpreted as 'cool fevers' by the Anglo-Saxons, and a glance at a medical dictionary under 'Fever' explains why: 'The onset of a fever is usually marked by a rigor or shivering' (Macpherson 1995: 189).

Less marked is a connection with the chest: chest pain, hardness of breathing, and 'hiccough', and another connection with sharp internal pain: 'inward' stitch and sciatica, perhaps also including 'difficult urination' (the pain of cystitis?) and 'hardness of the liver'. With regard to the liver, 'Large numbers [of Hepatitis C sufferers] get sharp pains over the liver ... Occasionally the pains in the upper part of the abdomen spread to the rest of the abdomen. This can cause generalised abdominal pains that can result in quite severe discomfort'.⁸⁰

14.3 *Safene* with multiple plant ingredients

In all the remaining *safene* citations, the plant-name occurs in a list of ingredients of at least three other plants, but sometimes including many more, for example, over thirty-six plants in *Safene* 17. Such lists do not offer a chance of identifying what Anglo-Saxon physicians considered to be the properties of *safene*. There is a much better chance of achieving this by considering the cures in which *safene* has few companions or none at all. Nonetheless, the descriptors of *safene* (the medical problems) in the remaining references will now be briefly considered.

⁷⁷ The *Leechbook* contrasts this 'inward stitch' with a stitch which is not inwards (*stice butan innode*; Cockayne 1864–6: II.274–7). For this reason, Cockayne's translation with 'inwards' seems better than 'internal' (Clark Hall 1960), since all stitch is an internal pain, but the 'stitch' which southernwood is supposed to cure must be deep inside the body.

⁷⁸ This is clearly something more serious than the annoying, short-lived hiccough with which we are all familiar.

⁷⁹ Translated by W. H. S. Jones.

⁸⁰ Quoted from The Hepatitis C Trust website at <http://www.hepcuk.info>. See 'Symptoms of chronic infection with Hepatitis C' by Graham Foster.

Firstly, there are some generalized remedies which only provide limited information. Safene 5 is a cure in Bald's *Leechbook* which involves *safene* and two other plants: *salfie* 'sage' and *wurma* 'a plant used for dyeing', along with the plant-products myrrh and white incense or frankincense. The 'remedy' (a drink) they are intended to effect is a general preventative which, therefore, gives us little information about the individual plants. The recipe is 'for the same' (*to þon ilcan*) which must refer to the purpose of the previous remedy which is 'to keep the body in health' (*To gehealdanne lichoman hælo*; Cockayne 1864–6: II.294). Safene 9 occurs in the *Lacnunga* in an extremely elaborate remedy involving a large number of plants, incantations and prayers: 'For a holy salve' (*To haligre sealf*; Pettit 2001: I.30–7, entry 63). Safene 17, also in *Lacnunga*, occurs in a long plant list, described as 'the green salve' (*seo grene sealf*), but lacking instructions or further description (Pettit 2001: I.10, entry 15).

The remaining multiple plant cures are a little more helpful. Safene 1, in *Leechbook III*, concerns an ointment 'for bite' (*wiþ bite*), and this noun can refer to the bite or sting of any animal, a cut from an edged weapon, or ulcerous sores⁸¹ (Cockayne 1864–6: II.312). As with Safene 17, *safene* occurs in a long list of plants without instructions as to how to prepare the remedy, and with no further information. Safene 2, in the *Lacnunga*, involves a drink 'for the ears' (*wið earon*; Pettit 2001: 80, entry 106), but it is not specified what the ear problem is. Safene 8, 14 and 19 present remedies for *þeor* (*ðeor*).⁸² The medical problem named *þeor* or *þeorād* in the Anglo-Saxon medical texts is not fully understood, but Cameron suggests that it refers to a dry roughness of the skin, probably the result of a vitamin deficiency or allergy, and, by extension, to a sensation of roughness internally, for example, in the eyes or the respiratory system (Cameron 1988: 129; 1993: 96).⁸³ None of the three *þeor* recipes with *safene* clarify the specific problem. Safene 15 is an ointment recipe in the *Lacnunga*, *wið micclum lice 7 bringcadle*, which Pettit translates as 'for swollen body and (?)chest-disease' (Pettit 2001: I.70–1, entry 80).⁸⁴ Safene 18 occurs in a recipe in the *Lacnunga* for a *lungensealf*, 'lung ointment' (Pettit 2001: I.20, entry 34) and, finally, Safene 10 and 11, in an individual recipe added to the illustrated *Herbarium* manuscript, refer to a wash for the head 'for dizziness' (*ad vertiginem*; Cockayne 1864–6: I.378).

14.4 The medical role of *safene*

The *safene* cures discussed in the above parts of Section 14 can now be tabulated, showing their catalogue numbers, and omitting any that do not mention a specific disease or part of the body. Remedies in which *safene* is the sole plant ingredient:⁸⁵

⁸¹ This is based on the DOE definition, but Cockayne translates as 'cancer' (Cockayne 1864–6: II.313).

⁸² Safene 8 is a drink in Bald's *Leechbook* (Cockayne 1864–6: II.120); Safene 14, occurring in *Lacnunga*, does not specify the form of the remedy but it is one of a group of seven cures for *þeor*, five of which are drinks (Pettit 2001: I.58, entry 74); and Safene 19, also in *Lacnunga*, does not specify the form of the remedy (Pettit 2001: I.100, entry 144).

⁸³ See also Biggam (2003: 218–20) for the use of *aspe* bark in the treatment of this problem.

⁸⁴ The word which Pettit reads as *bringcadle* is problematic. It has also been interpreted as *hringcadle* and *[c]ringcadle*, with definitions such as epilepsy, ringworm, shingles, back-disease (?), and chest-disease. Pettit explains and discusses the various efforts to understand this word (Pettit 2001: II.167–8). I have adopted Pettit's suggestion of chest-disease, but with a question-mark.

⁸⁵ Numbers in brackets indicate related citations (see Appendix A2).

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3, (6)	skin eruptions	Bald: <i>Leechbook</i> ; <i>Lacnunga</i>
13	spasm of sinews	<i>Herbarium</i>
13	swelling of feet	<i>Herbarium</i>
27	ulcer/abscess	<i>Herbarium</i>
28	headache	<i>Herbarium</i>

Remedies which include *safene* and one or two other plant ingredients:

4	hardness of spleen	Bald: <i>Leechbook</i>	+ <i>eorþgealla</i>
12	dizziness	<i>Peri Didaxeon</i>	+ <i>aprotane</i>

Remedies which include *safene* and more than two other plant ingredients:

1	bite, sting, cut, ulcer	<i>Leechbook III</i>
2	ears	<i>Lacnunga</i>
8	dry roughness of skin, sensation of internal roughness	Bald: <i>Leechbook</i>
10, 11	dizziness	Recipe 5.8
14, 19	[as for 8 above]	<i>Lacnunga</i>
15	swollen body, ?chest disease	<i>Lacnunga</i>
18	lungs	<i>Lacnunga</i>

It has been shown above that modern herbalists accept the value of savine for the treatment of skin problems such as blisters, wounds, ulcers and warts. Grieve specifically referred to its use as a dressing ‘to blisters in order to promote discharge’ (Grieve 1931: 718). Several contexts in which savine appears suggest that its main property was believed to be the ability to expel things from the body. In many cases, this is a scientifically supported belief. Stuart describes savine as a ‘powerful uterine stimulant’, emmenagogue and irritant (Stuart 1979: 82). It has been known for centuries that the plant could act on the uterus. Dioscorides mentions this in the first century AD: ‘they [savine leaves] expel embryos/fetuses’ (Dioscorides 2005: 59; Bk I.76), while Pliny points out that ‘it brings away the dead foetus’ (Pliny the Elder 1942–83: VII.75; Bk 24.61).⁸⁶ In the following centuries, the considerable use of Dioscorides’ and Pliny’s texts ensured that this aspect of savine, along with others, remained well-known, for example, in William Turner’s *A new herball* of 1562, the author writes ‘they [savine leaves]... dryve furth also the byrth’ (Turner 1995: II.270). John Gerard in 1633 bluntly lists the plant’s capabilities in this area, saying it can ‘draw away the after-birth, expell the dead childe, and kill the quicke [living]’ (Gerard 1975: 1378). The Old English medical texts make no mention of this aspect of *safene*, and this may have been due to the sensitivities of monkish scribes. As Stuart mentions, the plant is also an emmenagogue, that is, it encourages menstruation (similarly not mentioned in Anglo-Saxon sources). These properties, however, along with the driving out of pus from ulcers, reinforce the impression of a tradition that this plant drives things out of the body.

If *safene* were considered an ‘expeller’ by the Anglo-Saxons, then its inclusion with centaury in the liver/spleen remedy makes sense. If the complete cure in which *Safene* 4 is involved is considered again (it is described in Section 14.1 above), then it is interesting that a bladder (presumably from an animal) is to be filled with a substance composed principally of vinegar and bran and tied to the painful area caused by a spleen problem. It is not too imaginative to suggest that Anglo-Saxon physicians interpreted an enlarged and hardened spleen as being full of some unwanted substance. The bladder represents the superstitious or sympathetic element of the remedy (presumably representing the swollen internal organ),

⁸⁶ Translated by W. H. S. Jones.

and the drink of centaury and savine can be interpreted as a combination of a liver-/spleen-curing plant (centaury) with an ‘expelling’ plant (savine) to get rid of the substance in the spleen. This seems entirely logical, whether or not it was effective.⁸⁷ Speculating further, the purpose of *safene* in the recipe ‘to keep the body in health’ (*Safene* 5; see Section 14.3) may also be to expel anything harmful to the body before it causes a problem.

Consulting the table of remedies at the beginning of this section, and armed with a clue as to the medieval view of *safene*, there appears to be an overall logic in most cases. The proven efficacy of savine as an irritant which draws out pus from skin diseases and infections must be the reason for its presence in the remedies for ulcer/abscess (*Safene* 27), skin eruptions (3 (6)), and bite, sting, cut, ulcer (1). Although *þēor* has been defined as a *dry* roughness of the skin, implying there is no pus to be drawn out, it may be that *safene* had become known as a skin treatment in general, perhaps explaining its presence in catalogue numbers 8, 14 and 19, and also, possibly, for the ears (2). It is clear that the dry roughness indicated by *þēor* was extended to a sensation of internal roughness, and this may be the explanation for the lung treatment (18), and the chest disease (15), although the latter is a problematic word.

While the connection of *safene* with skin diseases and infections is ancient and efficacious, it would appear that, over the centuries during which these remedies were copied, described verbally, classified and reclassified, a normal process of semantic shift and extension took place, just as it tends to do with other vocabulary. In some cases, *safene* became associated with skin problems in general, and then even with internal problems which felt like the roughness seen on unhealthy skin. It appears that, in other cases, bearing in mind the ability of *safene* to drive out pus and other material from wound infections, stings, blisters and so on, it was assumed it could also drive out the unknown substances involved in other swellings. Thus it was used to treat swelling of the feet (13), a swollen body (15), and, probably, hardness of the spleen (4).

The remaining remedies are for spasm of the sinews (13), headache (28) and dizziness (10, 11 and 12). There will always be inexplicable elements in medieval cures, partly as a result of error, and also as a result of beliefs we do not currently understand, such as elements of superstition. It is possible, although sheer speculation, that the two head-problems listed here may relate to a belief that the heads of sufferers were filled with some unwanted substance or demon causing obstruction or mischief, and this should also be considered for the ear-treatment (tinnitus?). This sense of obstruction, pressure or mischievous presence is the usual explanation for cases of ancient trepanation (perforation of the skull) which is a well-known archaeological phenomenon. It is assumed that a hole was made in the skull to let out a substance or evil spirit causing problems for the patient. It may be that *safene*, identified as an ‘expeller’, was also believed to deal with problems contained within the skull.

15. Conclusion

It has been argued above that *safene* indicates *Juniperus sabina* L., that is, savine. As this is not a native plant in Britain, Anglo-Saxons may have imported dried savine tops for medical purposes, and some monasteries may have cultivated the plant in their gardens. The name

⁸⁷ It probably *was* effective for several abdominal problems, as Wren writes that ‘Centaury [common centaury] is widely used in disorders of the upper digestive tract, in dyspepsia, for liver and gall-bladder complaints and to stimulate the appetite.’ It is also said to have ‘some antipyretic activity’ (reduction of fever) (Wren 1988: 69–70).

safene is clearly an anglicization of the Latin name, *sabina*, although its late arrival in English is indicated by the appearance of some Latin forms in Old English texts. A naturalized form such as *safene* indicates a certain amount of familiarity among English speakers, but its extreme rarity in place-names (perhaps even its total non-existence in this arena) suggests that any familiarity with this word occurred among specialists, namely, physicians. Although *safene* was probably the correct name for any savine plant growing in England, it is suggested that the word was principally a medicine-name, equivalent to ModE *savin tops*.

It is difficult to determine whether the semantics of *safene* ever extended to include the native juniper, *Juniperus communis* L., but it is suggested that this is unlikely. The place-name, *Safandun*, presents the best evidence for this, but it is unconvincing. Among the exclusively medical cases in the rest of the *safene* catalogue, the place-name is a monstrous sore thumb. When this impression is combined with the otherwise total absence of *safene* in Anglo-Saxon place-names, and the further difficulties listed in Section 13.2, I have to favour the scenario that *safene* did not denote the common juniper. Old English vocabulary which is often defined as ‘juniper’, such as *gorst* and *fyr*s will be the subject of future investigations by this author, since it currently appears that the common juniper was denoted, along with other appropriate plants, by various words simply meaning ‘prickly shrub’. This confirms the impression that the adopted term, *safene*, was required for something more specific, exotic and of medical significance. An appropriate definition of *safene* would be ‘1. Savine-tops (a medicine consisting of, or made from the young leaves of *Juniperus sabina* L.). 2. The savine tree or bush’.

Appendix A

<i>CNo.</i>	<i>Source</i>	<i>Short Title & Reference</i>	<i>Spelling</i>
1	Leechbook	Lch II (3) 8.1.1	<i>safenan</i>
2	Lacnunga ⁸⁸	Med 3 (Grattan-Singer) 113.1	<i>safenan</i>
3	Bald: Leechbook	Lch II (1) 39.3.2	<i>safinan</i>
4	Bald: Leechbook	Lch II (2) 41.1.7	<i>safinan</i>
5	Bald: Leechbook	Lch II (2) 65.4.1	<i>safinan</i>
6	Lacnunga	Med 3 (Grattan-Singer) 100.1	<i>safinan</i>
7	Herbarium	Lch I (HerbHead) 87.0	<i>safinæ</i>
8	Bald: Leechbook	Lch II (1) 47.3.5	<i>safine</i>
9	Lacnunga	Med 3 (Grattan-Singer) 63.1	<i>safine</i>
10	Recipes: Vitellius C3	Med 5.8 (Cockayne) 10.1	<i>sauina</i>
11	Recipes: Vitellius C3	Med 5.8 (Cockayne) 10.5	<i>sauina</i>
12	Peri Didaxeon PeriD	15.11.2	<i>sauinam</i>
13	Herbarium	Lch I (Herb) 87.1.2	<i>sauinam</i>
14	Lacnunga	Med 3 (Grattan-Singer) 77.1	<i>sauinan</i>
15	Lacnunga	Med 3 (Grattan-Singer) 86.1	<i>sauinan</i>
16	Herbarium	Lch I (Herb) 87.0.1	<i>sauine</i>
17	Lacnunga	Med 3 (Grattan-Singer) 15.1	<i>sauine</i>
18	Lacnunga	Med 3 (Grattan-Singer) 33.1	<i>sauine</i>
19	Lacnunga	Med 3 (Grattan-Singer) 153.1	<i>sauine</i>
20	Macer: De viribus	OccGl 84 (Gough) 18	<i>sauine</i>
21	Glossary: Laud	CollGl 26 (Stracke) 1299	<i>sauine</i>
?22	Charter: S534	Ch 534 11	<i>safandune</i>
?23	Charter: S632	Ch 632 2	<i>sawendune</i>
24	Ælfric: Glossary	ÆGI 312.9	<i>sauene</i>
25	Ælfric Bata: Colloquies (G)	OccGl 28 (Nap) 367	<i>sauene</i>
26	Glossary: Barlow	CollGl 22 (Liebermann-Ker) 59	<i>sauene</i>
27	Herbarium	Lch I (Herb) 87.3.1	<i>sabinam</i>
28	Herbarium	Lch I (Herb) 87.2.1	<i>sabinam</i>

Appendix A1: *Safene* catalogue

<i>CNo.</i>	<i>Related</i>	<i>Context</i>
3	6	Same word, same text. 3: ... safinan, gnid to duste 7 meng wip hunig ... 6: ... safinan, gegnid to duste 7 mængc wið hunige ...
21	24, 25, 26	Probably from the same text originally. They have been taken as such for this research. 21: Sabina i sauine 24, 26: sabina sauene 25: Sabina sauene

Appendix A2: Related citations

<i>Lexeme</i>	<i>Reference</i>	<i>Reason for rejection</i>
sæffan	Ch 860 1	Latin <i>sabina</i> appears to have had a voiced spirant as the medial consonant, and this was also the case in the Old English loanword (Campbell 1962: 216, para 546). Medial -ff- is assumed to be unvoiced.
sæffan	Ch 860 14	See above.
sauina	CollGI 26 (Stracke) 67	Included in the Microfiche Concordance to Old English (MCOE) (1980) as CollGI 26 16. It has been excluded from the DOEWC (2005 release), presumably because it is now considered to be a Latin form.

Appendix A3: Rejected items

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