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**The Land of the English Kin**  
*Studies in Wessex and*  
*Anglo-Saxon England in Honour*  
*of Professor Barbara Yorke*

Edited by Alexander Langlands and Ryan Lavelle

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The Land of the English Kin

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# The Land of the English Kin

*Studies in Wessex and Anglo-Saxon England in  
Honour of Professor Barbara Yorke*

*Edited by*

Alexander Langlands  
Ryan Lavelle



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The Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data is available online at <http://catalog.loc.gov>

Typeface for the Latin, Greek, and Cyrillic scripts: “Brill”. See and download: [brill.com/brill-typeface](http://brill.com/brill-typeface).

ISSN 1878-4879

ISBN 978-90-04-34949-0 (hardback)

ISBN 978-90-04-42189-9 (e-book)

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## Editors' Preface

The origins of this book lie in a day conference held under the auspices of the Wessex Centre for History & Archaeology at the University of Winchester in September 2014. That conference, held in honour of Professor Barbara Yorke following her retirement from the University, was entitled *Saints, Rulers and Landscapes in Early Medieval Wessex*, and featured papers from a small number of both established and emerging scholars. Those papers were always intended to form a 'core' for this Festschrift to our *Doktormutter* and a number of the papers presented at that conference have been developed for this book. It is testament to the patience and goodwill of those speakers who came to Winchester back in 2014 that this volume was given time to grow, as more scholars responded to the invitation to write pieces suitable for Barbara. We are immensely grateful to all the authors in this volume for their forbearance, good humour and patience, and frequent willingness to respond to comments and queries. Of course, providing comments to the authors would not have been possible without the hard work of various anonymous readers at different stages of this project—their contributions remain uncredited but they have our grateful thanks all the same. Thanks go also to Mark Allen, Katherine Barker, Carey Fleiner, Patrick Hase, David Hinton, Tom James, Simon Keynes, Janine Lavelle, Libby Langlands, Mandy Richardson, and Robert Yorke. We are also grateful to Nicola King for indexing the volume and providing some invaluable comments in the process, as well as to the series editor Bonnie Effros, and our various editors at Brill, Marcella Mulder, Elisa Perotti, Irimi Argirouli, Alessandra Giliberto, and Ester Lels. We wish to extend our gratitude to the University of Winchester, which provided generous financial support for the Open Access publication of this volume, as well as—through the Wessex Centre for History & Archaeology—for the 2014 conference. Finally, our thanks also go to Alison Merry, who kindly painted the wonderful tribute to Barbara used in this volume in her own inimitable style. Alison has been patiently waiting to present the painting to Barbara for the past five years. We hope that the volume does justice to Alison's work ... and of course, does justice to Barbara's scholarship.

*Alex Langlands*

*Ryan Lavelle*

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# Abbreviations

<i>Æthelweard, Chronicon</i>	<i>Chronicon Æthelwardi: The Chronicle of Æthelweard</i> , ed. and trans. A. Campbell (London, 1962)
ANS	Various editors, <i>Proceedings of the Battle Conference on Anglo-Norman Studies</i> 1978 etc. (Woodbridge, 1979 etc.); cited by volume number and conference year
<i>Antj</i>	<i>Antiquaries Journal</i>
<i>Arc. Cant.</i>	<i>Archaeologia Cantiana</i>
ASC	<i>Anglo-Saxon Chronicle</i> . Text edited in <i>The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition</i> , general eds D.N. Dumville and S.D. Keynes (Woodbridge, 9 vols published, 1983–present). Unless otherwise noted, translations are cited from Dorothy Whitelock, David C. Douglas and Susie I. Tucker, <i>The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Revised Translation</i> (London, 1961; rev. 1965); entries are cited by MS where versions differ substantially and, unless otherwise noted, the corrected annal year assigned by Whitelock et al.
ASSAH	<i>Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History</i>
ASE	<i>Anglo-Saxon England</i> [journal]
Asser	<i>Asser's Life of King Alfred Together with the Annals of Saint Neots Erroneously Ascribed to Asser</i> , ed. W.H. Stevenson (Oxford, 1906); trans. Simon and Keynes and Michael Lapidge, <i>Alfred the Great: Asser's Life of King Alfred and Other Contemporary Sources</i> (Harmondsworth, 1983)
BAR	British Archaeological Reports
Bede, <i>HE</i>	Bede, <i>Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum: Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People</i> , ed. and trans. B. Colgrave and R.A.B. Mynors (Oxford, 1969); unless otherwise indicated, citations are from this edition
BL	London, British Library
CBA	Council for British Archaeology
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum Series Latina
<i>CDEPN</i>	<i>The Cambridge Dictionary of English Place-Names: Based on the Collections of the English Place-Name Society</i> , ed. Victor Watts (Cambridge, 2004)
<i>Domesday</i>	Domesday Book Phillimore county edition (J. Morris [general ed.], Chichester, 1975–86); referred to by county volume and cited by entry number

EETS	Early English Text Society; OS = Original Ser.; SS = Supplementary Ser.
EHD 1	<i>English Historical Documents vol. 1: c.500–1042</i> , ed. Dorothy Whitelock, 2nd ed. (London, 1979)
EHR	<i>English Historical Review</i>
EME	<i>Early Medieval Europe</i>
GDB	Great Domesday Book, i.e. the 'Exchequer' MS; in <i>Great Domesday</i> , general ed. R.W.H. Erskine, Alecto Historical Editions (London, 1986–92); reference given by folio
HBS	Henry Bradshaw Society
HH	Henry of Huntingdon, <i>Historia Anglorum: The History of the English People</i> , ed. and trans. Diana Greenway, (Oxford, 1996)
HSJ	<i>Haskins Society Journal</i>
JEPNS	<i>Journal of the English Place-name Society</i>
JW vol. 2	<i>The Chronicle of John of Worcester: Volume II: The Annals from 450–1066</i> , ed. and trans. R.R. Darlington and P. McGurk (Oxford, 1995)
JW vol. 3	<i>The Chronicle of John of Worcester: Volume III: The Annals from 1067–1140 with the Gloucester Interpolations and the Continuation to 1141</i> , ed. and trans. P. McGurk (Oxford, 1998)
MGH	Monumenta Germaniae Historica
LE	<i>Liber Eliensis</i> , ed. E.O. Blake, Camden 3rd Ser. 92 (London, 1962); trans. J. Fairweather, <i>Liber Eliensis: A History of the Isle of Ely from the Seventh Century to the Twelfth, Compiled by a Monk of Ely in the Twelfth Century</i> (Woodbridge, 2005)
ODEPN	<i>The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Place-Names</i> , ed. Eilert Ekwall, 4th ed. (Oxford, 1960)
ODNB	<i>Oxford Dictionary for National Biography</i> (Oxford, 2004); updated online at < <a href="http://www.oxforddnb.com/">http://www.oxforddnb.com/</a> >
OE	Old English
O.S.	Ordnance Survey
OV	<i>Orderici Vitalis Historia Ecclesiastica / The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis</i> , ed. and trans. Marjorie Chibnall, 6 vols (Oxford, 1968–80)
PASE	King's College London and University of Cambridge, <i>Prosopography of Anglo-Saxon England</i> < <a href="http://www.pase.ac.uk">http://www.pase.ac.uk</a> >

- PHFCAS *Proceedings of the Hampshire Field Club and Archaeological Society* (published since 1998 as *Hampshire Studies: Proceedings of the Hampshire Field Club and Archaeological Society*)
- RS Rolls Series
- S Citation of charter, catalogued in *Anglo-Saxon Charters: An Annotated List and Bibliography*, ed. P.H. Sawyer, Royal Historical Society Guides and Handbooks 8 (London, 1968); revised version ed. S.E. Kelly, R. Rushforth et al., for the *Electronic Sawyer: Online Catalogue of Anglo-Saxon Charters* website, King's College London <<http://www.esawyer.org.uk>>
- TRHS *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*
- VÆdR *Vita Ædwardi Regis: The Life of King Edward who Rests at Westminster*, ed. Frank Barlow (London, 1962; 2nd ed., Oxford, 1992) [2nd ed. indicated where used]
- VCH *Victoria County History* (London, 1901–); volumes cited according to county and volume number; online editions available via the Institute of Historical Research *British History Online* website, <<https://www.british-history.ac.uk>>
- VW *The Life of Bishop Wilfrid by Eddius Stephanus*, ed. and trans. Bertram Colgrave (Cambridge, 1927, repr. 1985)
- WANHM *Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Magazine*
- WM, GP William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Pontificum Anglorum, The History of the English Bishops*, ed. and trans. M. Winterbottom and R.M. Thomson, 2 vols (Oxford, 2007)
- WM, GRA William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum Anglorum: The History of the English Kings, Volume 1*, ed. and trans. R.M. Thomson, M. Winterbottom and R.A.B. Mynors (Oxford, 1998); *Vol. 2: Introduction and Commentary*, ed. R.A.B. Mynors, R.M. Thomson and M. Winterbottom (Oxford, 1999) denoted by “vol. 2”
- WP *The Gesta Guillelmi of William of Poitiers*, ed. and trans. R.H.C. Davis and M. Chibnall (Oxford, 1998)

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# Introduction

*Ryan Lavelle and Alexander Langlands*

This book is a thank-offering from friends, former colleagues, and pupils of Professor Barbara Yorke. Since beginning her academic career at King Alfred's College (now the University of Winchester) in 1977, Barbara has had an enormous influence on the development of early medieval scholarship, particularly that relating to Anglo-Saxon England, and the papers in this book are intended as a tribute to her place in that scholarship.<sup>1</sup>

Barbara Anne Elizabeth Troubridge was born in West Sussex in 1951. Attending Horsham High School for Girls, Barbara's interest in history was cultivated by the historical landscape of an area rich with Anglo-Saxon churches and medieval vernacular architecture. Barbara went to Exeter University in 1969 to read a degree in History and Archaeology. Archaeology was the poorer relation within a History department headed by the medieval historian Professor Frank Barlow. The small group of archaeology specialists, under the watchful eye of Lady Aileen Fox, then Senior Lecturer in Archaeology at Exeter, needed to be agile in their interdisciplinarity as this was a joint honours degree. Barbara was equally comfortable in each discipline. Medieval archaeology was then a comparatively new discipline which was coming of age in the 1960s and 70s, however, and it was that element of the degree which particularly captured Barbara's attention. The childhood fascination with the Sussex landscape bore fruit with an undergraduate archaeology project involving the investigation of a medieval peasant longhouse which lay next door to her grandparents' West Sussex home, while inspirational teaching by the archaeologist Ann Hamlin on the early Christian church across Britain and, especially, Ireland provided Barbara with a sense of the place of the Anglo-Saxons within a distinctly Insular world. Barbara's interest in the Anglo-Saxons particularly developed during her second year of studies, when she took a course on the Anglo-Saxon church taught by Mary Anne O'Donovan. A colleague and friend from those undergraduate days, Alison Merry, recalls that Barbara studied hard: course books did not just sit on her shelves but Barbara actually read them, lending her a confidence and calming influence among her contemporaries.

Barbara's appreciation for the deep history of the landscape is evident from those undergraduate days—"misty, damp days wandering on Dartmoor with

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<sup>1</sup> We are grateful to David Bates, Alison Merry, Roger Richardson, and Robert Yorke for their help in writing this introduction.

Lady Fox, examining Bronze Age barrows," Alison recalls. As president of the Archaeology Society, Barbara hosted events "with great charm and quiet authority," ensuring that visiting speakers were wined and dined by the society. Exeter itself also had its charms, not least providing opportunities for tasting Devonshire cream teas and visiting teashops. With Alison, Barbara briefly harboured an ambition to open a teashop, and although those post-graduation plans never materialised, the love of the finer things in life has remained a lifelong passion: whether high tea in an English provincial town or *Kaffee und Kuchen* in a Vienna coffee house, the importance of taking time to stop to talk with old friends or new acquaintances has been an abiding feature of a scholar who has recognised the importance of sharing ideas and maintaining the human face of academic discourse.

Barbara graduated in 1972, and she spent a brief period at Liverpool University studying for a diploma in archive administration, during which time she met her husband, Robert Yorke, who himself became an expert on heralds' manuscripts at the College of Arms, London. Realising that a life in the archives wasn't for her, Barbara returned to Exeter in 1973, where, as the pupil of Professor Frank Barlow, she investigated early Anglo-Saxon kingship. This was then a topic which was deserving of serious historical attention in the light of new archaeological work but it is notable that in the writing up of her thesis, Barbara benefited from the guidance of an early modern historian, the then Head of History, Professor Ivan Roots. "Anglo-Saxon Kingship in Practice 400–899," submitted for a PhD in 1978 and examined by Henry Loyn, broke new ground in its consideration of the historical development of royal genealogies as well as opening up new lines of enquiry in the study of often fragmentary, laconic sources. Barbara published a number of important works on the presentation of kingship in early Anglo-Saxon sources during the 1980s, culminating in the first of a number of important books, *Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo-Saxon England* (London, 1990). *Kings and Kingdoms* was a long way from a simple re-write of her thesis, linking Barbara's philosophy on the topic with the need to represent the histories of the kingdoms insofar as they might be reconstructed while recognising the limitations of the sources. The manner in which *Kings and Kingdoms* balanced the needs of the academic community with the clear presentation of a complicated early medieval history to both students and an interested public represents a hallmark of Barbara's approach to the early Middle Ages.

In 1977, while writing up her PhD, Barbara successfully applied for a lectureship at King Alfred's College, Winchester. This higher education institution, which had established its reputation for teacher training, had just begun to offer undergraduate degrees, initially through the auspices of the Council for

National Academic Awards. The new degree programme in History and Archaeology reflected the combined honours approach of Barbara's alma mater. Her then head of department, Roger Richardson, recalls that her appointment was a unanimous choice because of her "quiet confidence and mastery of her field—as well as for being so personable." It was comparatively uncommon for a history programme in the new sector of what would later become known as "post-1992" institutions to offer studies in the early Middle Ages, often perceived as a luxury that a small department would have to do without. Barbara's understanding of the developments in archaeology in Britain, Ireland and more widely in Europe put her in good stead for the interdisciplinary aspects of early medieval studies, and she has always been a staunch defender of the importance of investigating what might appear to many to be an obscure and difficult-to-grasp subject area. There are generations of Winchester students who came to know and love the waves of 'Egg-kings', guided through the topic by Barbara's understated yet deeply-founded command of the period.

Barbara's second monograph, *Wessex in the Early Middle Ages* (London, 1995), established her mastery of the history and archaeology of a region which has played such a significant part in Barbara's career. Although Barbara has always maintained that she is interested in more than Wessex, and the books and papers she has published since then have broadly reflected this, her standing as a scholar of the West Saxon kingdom has been instrumental in ensuring the survival of early medieval studies in an institution which has gone through some turbulent times over the last forty years. Barbara was promoted to a readership in 1993 and became Professor of Early Medieval History at what was still King Alfred's College in 2001—a time when only 1,700 of 11,000 UK professors were women.<sup>2</sup> Barbara has been generous with her time, lending her expertise to a number of groups and projects which reflect the esteem in which she is held in Britain, Ireland, and beyond. She is currently a Vice-President of the Royal Archaeological Institute and has served on the Board of the International Society of Anglo-Saxonists, and on the Council of the Society of Antiquaries. She has been a member of the Fabric Advisory Committee to Winchester Cathedral, as well as advising various academic projects, Beyond the Tribal Hidge, Anglo-Saxon Assemblies, Staffordshire Hoard, Travel and Communication in Anglo-Saxon England and The Rendlesham Project. The conferral of

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2 The gender balance of the professoriate at King Alfred's College's in 2001 and University of Winchester for 2017/18 is more favourable in general than the national picture, though full equality among the UK's professoriate and in Winchester is yet to be achieved. National statistics are available from the Higher Education Statistics Agency, <<https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/staff>>.

an honorary professorship in early medieval archaeology by University College London in 2012, in recognition of her work on three of the projects with UCL, amounts to what is essentially a double professorship and is an endorsement of the interdisciplinary nature of medieval studies seen at the beginning of Barbara's academic career at Exeter in 1969. Thus we offer this book, with its recognition of the idea of networks of shared identity, as a tribute to what Barbara has achieved, and continues to achieve.

### “Ealle Angelcynnes Lond”

The first part of the title of this volume, *The Land of the English Kin*, is an apposite phrase for a volume dedicated to Barbara Yorke, relating to her collegiate and professional support fostered amongst a community of academics. The title is taken from the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle's* reference to “angelcynnes lond.” Variations on this term, sometimes referring to “all” the *angelcyn*, sometimes not, feature regularly as the chroniclers' means by which to identify a ‘land’ that is more or less coterminous with the England of today. Arguably, the most famous use of the term comes from the extract dated to 787 [recte 789] in which the chronicle informs us in retrospective fashion, of “the first ships of the Danish men which sought out the land of all the *Angelcyn* [*ealle angelcynnes lond*].” Whilst “English race” appears to be the accepted translation of *Angelcyn* in M.J. Swanton's comparatively recent edition of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*, *cyn* is used elsewhere in Old English texts to imply ‘nation’ and ‘people.’<sup>3</sup> Although perhaps a little archaic, ‘kin’ is almost certainly a more accurate translation and one that avoids the obvious pitfalls of ‘race’—the post-modern back-projection of which is now problematic, to say the least.

A closer look at the entry in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* for the year 789, which details the arrival of three ships (perhaps from Norway)<sup>4</sup> provides some parallel with Alcuin, whose sense of the terrors of the *pagana gente* arriving storm-like at the island monastery of Lindisfarne in 793, is juxtaposed with the definition of the arrival of the English. Alcuin relates a timescale to “nearly 350 years that we and our fathers have inhabited this most lovely land [*pulcherrime patrie*].”<sup>5</sup> A moment of the definition of the English people is provided at a

3 *Dictionary of Old English: A to H* (Toronto, 2016), <<https://www.doe.utoronto.ca/pages/index.html>>, s.vv.

4 The reference may well be late. David N. Dumville, “Vikings in Insular Chronicling,” in *The Viking World*, ed. Stefan Brink with Neil Price (London, 2008), p. 356.

5 *Epistolae Karolini Aevi*, 2, ed. E. Dümmler, MGH *Epistolae* 4 (Berlin, 1895), no. 16, p. 42; trans. *EHD* 1, p. 842.

time of threat and crisis, while overlooking—perhaps deliberately—the fact that among those who arrived in a distant past actually included what is now Scandinavia, i.e. those attacking the ‘land of the English’. In the arrival of three ships of Vikings in Portland, Dorset, the West Saxons were experiencing their Alcuinian moment of self-definition. Here identity could be defined as affiliation, a sense of declaration.

That sense of the identity as affiliation is something to be drawn on in this book, which offers Englishness not as something exclusive and defined by othering, but as something which is inclusive. In interpretations from the 21st century, determined by biological interpretations stemming from the 19th and 20th centuries, as well as in new genetic research, ‘kin’ has more than a whiff of the biological to it. It wasn’t always so. In relating to another 8th-century stand-off, the *Chronicle’s* entry for 755 refers to a declaration by surrounded rebels that “no kinsman [*mæg*] was dearer to them than their lord.” It is worth pondering whether by 789 (or the later 9th century, when the entry was presumably written), the lordship that the *Chronicle* extolled might encompass a sense of shared ‘kinship’ of sorts too, taking those within beyond *mæg* into *cyn*. It is in this spirit that *The Land of the English Kin* is offered. It rolls together people and place into one short, succinct, and innovative rubric. It draws archaic language back into the discussion of the discipline and the subject matter. It also reflects an underlying tenet of the book which is about people but people in a place with a sense of shared identity. It considers the perspective of ‘dwelling’—that is, the perspectives of people from within the period. It is an early medieval idea for an early medieval world. Crucially, that shared identity and ‘kinship’, as well as the inclusivity of ‘land’, is one that stems from an intellectual dedication to this book’s honorand.<sup>6</sup>

The sections of the book are organised in accordance with the principle interests and influences of Barbara’s scholarship. The first section is on the links between the Roman and post-Roman world on ‘Anglo-Saxon’ settlement and the perception of that settlement.<sup>7</sup> The section opens with Winchester: Tony King provides an extensive assessment of the place-name evidence regarding Roman Winchester, and is followed by Martin Biddle who discusses the topography of the Roman city and the development of scholarship on the topic.

6 Barbara comments on the inclusivity of the history of the Anglo-Saxons in England in her short introduction to the topic, *The Anglo-Saxons* (Stroud, 1999), pp. 1–2.

7 See “Fact or Fiction? The Written Evidence for the Fifth and Sixth Centuries AD,” *ASSAH* 6 (1993), 45–50; “The Origins of Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms: The Contribution of Written Sources,” *ASSAH* 10 (1999), 25–30; “Anglo-Saxon Origin Legends,” in *Myth, Rulership, Church and Charters. Essays in Honour of Nicholas Brooks*, ed Julia Barrow and Andrew Wareham (Aldershot, 2008), pp. 15–30.

Biddle's discussion includes an extensive appendix providing an invaluable collation of the evidence for the topography of the later Anglo-Saxon city built over the Roman streets. Jillian Hawkins discusses the Anglo-Saxon settlement in the Solent and its toponymic memory, Nick Stoodley on the identities expressed through costume groups, and Sue Harrington on female identity/status and the development of an early community on the Isle of Wight. The relationship between settlement and written sources is a theme in this section, a particular area of interest to Barbara Yorke, whose work addressed the ways in which the definition of early Anglo-Saxon historical memory was very much defined by 8th- and 9th-century interests. John Baker and Jayne Kershaw's paper on the memory of names is a tour de force of toponymic study, highlighting what is essentially a folk memory of ethnonyms in the landscape, while Courtney Konshuh's chapter on the formulation of Roman and early Anglo-Saxon history in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (or *Chronicles* as Konshuh would have it), is in the tradition of Barbara Yorke's work on this topic.

The second section of the book, "Rulers and their Territories," is on the formation of early kingdoms running through to the nature of the development of later kingdoms.<sup>8</sup> The section begins with a cluster of papers by Julia Barrow, Nick Higham and David Pelteret, on two of Bede's Northumbrian kings: Barrow on Oswald, and Higham and Pelteret taking different perspectives on Egfrith's overlordship. As with Konshuh's reading of *Chronicle* identity, these three papers follow Barbara Yorke's methodology of what might be described as interstitiality, addressing the gaps between what the sources say and what they don't say, sometimes bringing in what they ought to say for good measure. Other papers in this section look further south and move across the 'Conversion Period' and Viking Age. Helena Hamerow and Andrew Reynolds address aspects of continuity in the landscape in Mercia and Wessex respectively, while papers by Stuart Brookes, Alex Langlands, Ryan Lavelle, and David

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8 For Barbara's interest in this topic, see (in addition to her 1990 *Kings and Kingdoms* book and overlap with works cited in n. 7) see her papers "The Jutes of Southern Hampshire and Wight and the origins of Wessex" in *The Origins of Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms*, ed. Steven Bassett (Leicester, 1989), pp. 84–96; "Anglo-Saxon gentes and regna," in *Regna and Gentes: The Relationship between Late Antique and Early Medieval Peoples and Kingdoms in the Transformation of the Roman World*, ed. Hans-Werner. Goetz, Jörg Jarnut, and Walter Pohl (Leiden, 2003), pp. 383–407; "The Bretwaldas and the Origins of Overlordship in Anglo-Saxon England," in *Early Medieval Studies in Memory of Patrick Wormald*, ed. Stephen Baxter et al. (Farnham, 2009), pp. 81–96. Barbara's contextual contributions to reports on recent major archaeological finds, L. Blackmore et al., eds., *The Prittlewell Princely Burial: Excavations at Priory Crescent, Southend-on-Sea, Essex, 2003*, MOLA Monograph Ser. (London, 2019), and T. Dickinson, C. Fern, and L. Webster, eds., *The Staffordshire Hoard*, Society of Antiquaries monograph (London, 2019) are testament to the value of her approach to early kings and kingdoms.

McDermott focus on institutions of the West Saxon kingdom, particularly with reference to the landscapes of that kingdom. In the wider landscape of Wessex, Brookes and Langlands take institutional approaches, with Langlands taking a clear route of populating those institutions, attempting to find the links between institutions and the people to whom they related, while Brookes addresses the organisation of the landscape. Lavelle and McDermott attempt to address higher-ranking individuals—in Lavelle's case, Alfred and his biographer Asser, and for McDermott, Edmund Ironside—and the direct shaping of their experiences and careers by the landscapes they encountered.

The religious affiliations of the kingdoms, a topic which was particularly highlighted in Barbara's work on nunneries and royal familial religious interests,<sup>9</sup> are the focus for the third section of the book, which includes three papers, by Steven Bassett, John Blair, and Jonathan Pitt, on the influence of minster communities in different parts of England in the 7th and 8th centuries, in the West Midlands, northern Wessex (Wiltshire) and Lincolnshire respectively. Each paper represents a different approach, with Bassett rethinking early Worcester charters, Blair addressing with particular aplomb the systematic analysis of recent and not-so-recent archaeological finds, and Pitt taking the post-medieval customs and institutional memories to look for the imprints of earlier minsters. The significance of one church is a focus of Michael Hare's piece on the former church of St Helen's Malmesbury, which draws out the way in which one institution might have a bearing on the surrounding community in northern Wiltshire, while Bob Higham's piece on the Godwine family's religious interests draws both on Barbara's Exeter connections and the ways in which patronage could be used to draw out political networks, a theme which is relevant to the connections described in Alan Thacker's paper from his research into the cult of St Wærburh, a saint whose different identities were relevant in different milieux. That theme of networks figures in Jinty Nelson's

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9 Significant works are "Sisters under the Skin'? Anglo-Saxon Nuns and Nunneries in Southern England," *Reading Medieval Studies* (1995), 95–117; "The Bonifacian Mission and Female Religion in Wessex," *EME* 7 (1998), 145–72; *Nunneries and the Anglo-Saxon Royal Houses* (London, 2003); "Queen Balhild's 'Monastic Policy' and the Origins of Female Religious Houses in Southern England," in *Early Medieval Monasticism in the North Sea Zone*, ed. Gabor Thomas and Alexandra Knox (Oxford, 2017), pp. 7–16. For a study of the place of early Anglo-Saxon religion in Insular context, see also Barbara's *The Conversion of Britain 600–800* (London, 2006), while Barbara's papers "The Foundation of the Old Minister, Winchester, and the Early West Saxons Kings," *PHFCAS* 38 (1983), 75–84, "The Bishops of Winchester, the Kings of Wessex and the Development of Winchester," *PHFCAS* 40 (1984), 61–70, and "Æthelwold and the Politics of the Tenth Century," her contribution to her edited volume, *Bishop Æthelwold: His Career and Influence* (Woodbridge, 1988), pp. 65–88, are important considerations of the political significance of Winchester's religious communities.

offering, on the connections between Alcuin and his Anglo-Saxon female correspondents. If many of the papers on ecclesiastical institutions in this section are focused on the significance of religion ‘on the ground’, this latter paper highlights an interest by Barbara—a theme of no little importance in a Festschrift volume—in the personal connections which could be drawn across great distances through networks of learning and patronage, which often included women connected to the royal kin.

The final theme is the reception of the Anglo-Saxon past in the centuries after 1066, a topic of great importance to Barbara, who has reminded many to look at previous generations’ conceptions of the past in order to understand how we receive it ourselves.<sup>10</sup> David Bates’s paper does not edge far beyond 1066 but in a perfect companion piece to his recent biography of William the Conqueror, he shows how the not-so-recent Anglo-Saxon past came to shape the Conqueror’s conception of his new West Saxon possessions. Roffey and Weikert take the discussion into the 12th century—in Roffey’s case in Winchester, in Weikert’s in East Anglia, where the Anglo-Saxon heroes of the past were used to define a community. Michael Hicks adopts a similar approach, and indeed there is much in common with Bob Higham’s paper, in his consideration of how pre-Conquest saints were used in the centuries after 1066. Hicks edges past the other ‘great disaster’ moment for Anglo-Saxon history, that of the English Reformation, a moment which provides a starting point for a more focused study of pre-Conquest sainthood by Karl Alvestad, who concentrates on the adoption in England of the cult of King Olaf (or Olave) II of Norway (d.1030). Both authors show how those ‘Anglo-Saxon’ saints and the universal saints of Anglo-Saxon foundations had a long afterlife and continue to influence the perception of Anglo-Saxon England today. Roger Richardson’s paper continues this theme of the reception of the pre-Conquest past, finishing the volume with a consideration of how another Exeter scholar, W.G. Hoskins, addressed Anglo-Saxon settlement in his broader studies of the English landscape. While Richardson does not labour the parallels between Barbara Yorke and Hoskins, concluding the volume with this is a useful reflection on how a scholar’s endeavours influence the shape of a field.

Although beginning at the beginning, as it were, with the Roman legacy, and ending in the later 20th century at a point when Barbara Yorke was establishing

10 *The Millenary Celebrations of King Alfred in Winchester 1901*. Hampshire Papers 17 (Winchester, 1999); “Alfredism: The Use and Abuse of King Alfred’s Reputation in Later Centuries,” in *Alfred the Great. Papers from the Eleventh-Centenary Conferences*, ed. Timothy Reuter (Aldershot, 2003), pp. 361–80; “The ‘Old North’ From the Saxon South in Nineteenth-Century Britain,” in *Anglo-Saxons and the North*, ed. Matti Kilpiö, Leena Kahlas-Tarkka, Jane Roberts, and Olga Timofeeva (Tempe, AZ, 2009), pp. 131–50.

her academic career, chronology has not been the key focus in shaping the volume. Indeed, it should be admitted that the categorisation of the material within sections in this volume is, by its nature, somewhat artificial, and there are many contributions which might just as easily fit in one section as another. While female monasticism does not figure large in the papers (and indeed Nelson's paper is hedged by the question of just what religious status Alcuin's female correspondents might have been), the themes which underpinned Barbara's understanding of female monasticism, the links between different members of the family and the underlying influence of particular figures underpins Hamerow and Harrington's papers. Equally, where the discussion is on the nature of the relationship between rulers and minsters, a theme at the heart of three contributions to this volume, Blair, Bassett, and Pitt, Barbara's interest in the nature of the organisation of early kingdoms comes to the fore. A further theme is that of the West Saxon kingdom and the Wessex region, which has been a particular topic of interest to the dedicatee of this volume and forms a focus of a number of papers, from those of Hamerow, Harrington, Hawkins, Stoodley, whose papers deal with the early geographical area of Wessex (as many of those would argue, this was a long way from being a 'West Saxon kingdom' in the 5th and 6th centuries), to Konshuh (on the West Saxon kingdom's self-identity), Brookes, Reynolds, Langlands, Lavelle, McDermott, and Pitt. Edging into the decades after 1066, a period which was defined as much by the nature of an Anglo-Saxon kingdom as it was by the Norman institutions that came in,<sup>11</sup> David Bates's chapter on William the Conqueror and Wessex considers how the echoes of the former kingdom sustained a note that lasted well into the 12th century.

Barbara has never defined herself specifically as a student of landscape but she has emphasised its importance, and aspects of landscape and topography, particularly with regard to Wessex, figure strongly in many of these papers. Central to that definition of Wessex, at least in the 10th century and the modern imagination, is Winchester, Barbara's home since her appointment as Lecturer in History and Archaeology by King Alfred's College (the forerunner of the University of Winchester) since 1977. Winchester has loomed large in Barbara's studies of Anglo-Saxon England and it is appropriate that two of Barbara's colleagues have offered papers specifically on the city, bookending the Anglo-Saxon city with Roffey's reading of post-Conquest leprosy provision and Tony King's offering in the opening chapter on the definition of Winchester as *Venta Belgarum*. This may have been a term whose inherent history, King

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11 Useful comments on this topic are made by Barbara in *Wessex*, pp. 325–26; *Anglo-Saxons*, pp. 92–105.

argues, links with the memory of tribal groups in pre-Roman and Roman-era Winchester. Thus the history of the Anglo-Saxons is grounded in a much longer past. Martin Biddle's offering to this volume completes the Winchester narrative. Biddle's approach to the urban landscape of Winchester is a statement of current thoughts arising from his extensive work on Winchester's role in urban development.

In the range and expertise of the contributors brought together for this volume, there is no better demonstration of the truly interdisciplinary nature of early medieval scholarship. The study of Anglo-Saxon England and its neighbouring polities has developed to now incorporate a suite of modern concepts and perspectives, and in this volume more recent notions of memory, gender, identity, and space sit alongside traditional themes such as governance, power, and kingship. But, having taken the opportunity to move beyond the 'core' of the Wessex region which constituted the focus of many of the papers which were presented at a conference dedicated to Barbara Yorke, entitled *Saints, Rulers and Landscapes*, in 2014, this is now a volume that draws more widely on early medieval scholarship on England and Europe. It reflects the very latest in methodological approaches in not only the advanced syntheses between historical and archaeological evidence, but the increasingly productive integration of place-name and topographical data. Many of the papers presented in this volume also provide the most up-to-date perspectives on some of the key themes, people and places of the period. They provide a fitting tribute to Barbara's expansive sense of scholarship, on her ability to ask new questions of old sources and make the familiar seem unfamiliar, to draw together the sense of the past in a lived and living landscape. These are all issues which make this book meaningful to us in our roles as editors and authors, and to all those who have contributed to it.

**PART 1**

*The Making of Post-Roman Identities*





# Venta Belgarum: What Is in the Name for Roman Winchester?

*Anthony C. King*

The name for Roman Winchester, Venta Belgarum, has been known for centuries, and the attribution of the name to modern Winchester has not been in question in any significant way. The purpose of this brief chapter about Barbara Yorke's home town is to look at the two elements of the name, to reflect on recent scholarship, and to make a proposal concerning the second, 'tribal' component.

An essential starting point is the entry for Venta Belgarum in A.L.F. Rivet and Colin Smith's *Place-Names of Roman Britain*,<sup>1</sup> in which the name is given as Venta (Ouenta in Greek transliteration) by Ptolemy,<sup>2</sup> Venta Belgarum or Velgarum in the *Antonine Itinerary*,<sup>3</sup> Venta Velgarom in the *Ravenna Cosmography*,<sup>4</sup> and also as Venta by Bede.<sup>5</sup> The last in this list links Venta to Wintancaestir and provides the strongest early medieval evidence for continuity of the first element of the Roman name into the modern toponym.<sup>6</sup> In addition, the *Notitia Dignitatum* lists a 'Procurator gynaecii in Britannis Ventensis (var. bentensis)'.<sup>7</sup> This Venta is Winchester, in all probability, but two others, Venta Icenorum (Caister St Edmund, Norfolk) and Venta Silurum (Caerwent, South Wales), are

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- 1 A.L.F. Rivet and Colin Smith, *The Place-Names of Roman Britain* (London, 1979), p. 492.
  - 2 Ptolemy, *Geography*, 11.3.13, ed. C. Müller (Paris 1883–1901). See also G.R. Isaac, *Place-Names in Ptolemy's Geography* (Aberystwyth, 2004), CD-ROM s.v. Britt. Inss., Ouenta.
  - 3 *Antonine Itinerary*, 478.2; 483.2; 486.11, ed. O. Cuntz (Leipzig, 1929). See also G.R. Isaac, *The Antonine Itinerary. Land Routes. Place-Names of Ancient Europe and Asia Minor* (Aberystwyth, 2002/2004), CD-ROM s.v. Britannia, s.v. Venta; A.L.F. Rivet, "The British Section of the Antonine Itinerary," *Britannia* 1 (1970), 34–82.
  - 4 *Ravennatis Anonymi Cosmographia*, 106.18, ed. Joseph Schnetz (Leipzig, 1940), also I.A. Richmond and O.G.S. Crawford, "The British Section of the Ravenna Cosmography," *Archaeologia* 93 (1949), 1–50.
  - 5 Bede, *HE*, 111.7; IV.5; V.23.
  - 6 See Martin Biddle and Birthe Kjølbbye-Biddle, "Winchester: from *Venta* to *Wintancaestir*," in *Pagans and Christians—from Antiquity to the Middle Ages. Papers in Honour of Martin Henig, Presented on the Occasion of his 65th Birthday*, ed. Lauren Gilmour, BAR International Ser. 1610 (Oxford, 2007), pp. 189–214, at p. 207.
  - 7 *Notitia Dignitatum*, XI.60, ed. O. Seeck (Berlin, 1876).

also in contention.<sup>8</sup> No other direct evidence of the name is known, save the 3rd-century milestones with the formula RPBP, as found in excavations at South Wonston in the 1980s, and in the early 19th century at Bitterne. These have been interpreted as *res publica Belgarum posuit* (“the council of the Belgae put this up”).<sup>9</sup>

The double-name formula for Roman Winchester is widespread in Britain, Gaul and elsewhere in the Roman Empire. For the most part, the first element is descriptive of the location, while the second has an ethnic component. They are most commonly applied to the so-called *civitas* capitals, which is a modern term for the administrative centres of *civitates* (which is a known ancient term for the administrative regions).<sup>10</sup> The *civitas* was thus the territorial unit, with its ‘capital’ positioned usually but not always centrally within it. In legal terms, the *civitas* capitals were of lowly status in Roman city hierarchy, and there was the incentive for cities to bid for elevation to *municipium* (e.g. St Albans) or *colonia* (e.g. Autun, Avenches).

Such elevation did not happen in the case of Winchester, nor to its neighbours, Silchester (Calleva Atrebatum), Chichester (Noviomagus Regnorum [or Reginorum]) or Dorchester (Durnovaria [Durotrigum]). Two more distant urban centres connected to Winchester on the road system, Cirencester (Corinium Dobunorum) and London (Londinium), did, however achieve higher status by virtue of being provincial capitals; almost definitely in the case of the latter, less certainly so for Cirencester, which became a capital of Britannia Prima in the late Roman period.<sup>11</sup> As Rivet suggests, on the basis of Pliny’s discussion of Gallic towns and peoples,<sup>12</sup> it is likely that Winchester was a *civitas stipendiaria*, a tax-paying town.

Winchester, Silchester and Chichester are relatively close to each other, when compared with the usual distances between towns in Roman Britain. This implies that their *civitates* were not overly extensive, and when the

8 J.P. Wild, “The *Gynaecium* at *Venta* and its context,” *Latomus* 26 (1967), 648–76; W.H. Manning, “Caistor-by-Norwich and *Notitia Dignitatum*,” *Antiquity* 40 (1966), 60–62.

9 They were probably set up during the reign of Gordian III. South Wonston: *The Roman Inscriptions of Britain, Volume III. Inscriptions on stone found or notified between 1 January 1955 and 31 December 2006*, ed. R.S.O. Tomlin, R.P. Wright and M.W.C. Hassall (Oxford 2009), no. 3516. Bitterne: *The Roman Inscriptions of Britain, volume 1. Inscriptions on Stone*, ed. R.G. Collingwood and R.P. Wright (Oxford, 1965), no. 2222.

10 See generally J.S. Wacher, ed., *The Civitas Capitals of Roman Britain* (Leicester, 1966); J.C. Mann, “City-names in the Western Empire,” *Latomus* 22 (1963), 777–82.

11 Roger White, *Britannia Prima* (Stroud, 2007), pp. 36–37.

12 Pliny the Elder, *Naturalis Historia*, 4.106–109, ed. K.F. Mayhoff (Leipzig, 1875–1906). A.L.F. Rivet, “Summing-up: Some Historical Aspects of the *Civitates* of Roman Britain,” in *Civitas Capitals*, ed. Wacher, pp. 101–13, at p. 111, n. 11.

pre-Roman and early Roman political situation is examined, it becomes clearer as to why this might have been the case.

Our understanding of the Late Iron Age leads most modern commentators to the conclusion that the Atrebates were dominant in the region, up until a short number of years before the Roman conquest of AD 43.<sup>13</sup> This is dependent on the historical narrative built up around Commius and his successors, and also coin distributions.<sup>14</sup> Whether Commius came to Britain in the late 50s BC because he fled from Gaul,<sup>15</sup> or was sent there by the Romans,<sup>16</sup> is not a point of contention here. The coin distributions are of more importance, and appear to indicate an area encompassing Silchester, Winchester, Chichester, together with parts of Surrey and coastal Sussex.<sup>17</sup> Interestingly, Winchester lies on the western margin of this area, which conceivably had the River Itchen as a boundary; Dobunnian land lay to the west and north-west, Durotrigan territory to the south-west, and an area defined as possibly sub-Durotrigan was to the south,<sup>18</sup> in the New Forest and Southampton Basin. This may have a bearing on the *civitas* territory of Roman Winchester, discussed further below.

Coins of Commius are found in the same general area as uninscribed coins attributed to the Atrebates or their predecessors,<sup>19</sup> and there are also post-Caesarian coins of Commius in Atrebatan territory in Gallia Belgica.<sup>20</sup> This gives us a picture of a region, perhaps called the land of the Atrebates, under some sort of dynastic control, often termed the Southern Dynasty. This was the position during the 1st century BC and in the first two decades of the 1st century AD. After this, the politico-military situation changed, with the loss of Silchester and much of the territory, whether through military or dynastic succession being difficult to tell.<sup>21</sup> Coins of Epaticcus, of the so-called Eastern

13 Barry Cunliffe, "Iron Age Wessex: Continuity and Change," in *Aspects of the Iron Age in Central Southern Britain*, ed. Barry Cunliffe and David Miles (Oxford, 1984), pp. 12–45, esp. p. 37, Fig. 2.19; Barry Cunliffe, *Iron Age Communities in Britain*, 3rd ed. (London, 1991), pp. 149–57; Barry Cunliffe, *Wessex to A.D. 1000* (Harlow, 1993), pp. 208–13; Lyn Sellwood, "Tribal Boundaries Viewed from the Perspective of Numismatic Evidence," in *Aspects of the Iron Age*, ed. Cunliffe and Miles, pp. 191–204, esp. p. 192, figs 13.1, 13.8, 13.11; John Creighton, *Coins and Power in Late Iron Age Britain* (Cambridge, 2000), Ch. 3.

14 Creighton, *Coins and Power*, pp. 59–79.

15 Frontinus, *Strategemata*, 2.13.11, ed. C.E. Bennett (Harvard, 1925).

16 Caesar (Hirtius), *De Bello Gallico*, 8.48, ed. Anne Wiseman and Peter Wiseman (London, 1980). Creighton, *Coins and Power*, pp. 61–64.

17 Creighton, *Coins and Power*, p. 223.

18 Sellwood, "Tribal Boundaries," Fig. 13.11.

19 Simon C. Bean, *The Coinage of the Atrebates and Regni* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 119–20.

20 Creighton, *Coins and Power*, pp. 72–74.

21 John Creighton, *Britannia. The creation of a Roman Province* (London, 2006), p. 27.

Dynasty, are found in much of the region,<sup>22</sup> and may represent changed realities of power in the 30s and 40s AD. This, in turn, led to Verica's famous appeal to Rome and the Claudian invasion.

Winchester does not figure in this narrative, nor do the Belgae. The archaeological evidence from the town suggests that the Middle Iron Age enclosure at Oram's Arbour continued to be Winchester's focus in the Late Iron Age, but the intensity of occupation was less than in earlier times, and extensive evidence for houses and domestic occupation is not really forthcoming.<sup>23</sup> There are some material traces, including 'coin-moulds', but it is possible that the enclosure was more of an open space, used for trading and exchange. It had a demonstrably strategic location, on an east-west routeway where it crossed the north-south waterway of the R. Itchen at a convenient, probably fordable, point. It also may have been on a boundary location between the Atrebates and peoples further to the west. Oram's Arbour was probably the *Venta* of Winchester's Roman name, and it is to the etymology of this word that we now turn.

*Venta* is an intriguing word, and has seen a variety of translations. As discussed by Rivet and Smith, it is "a well-known problem," and they conclude that "the three *civitas*-names with *Venta* are a puzzling feature considered as an isolated and untypical naming act."<sup>24</sup> Their preferred translation is "market-place," a British Celtic (Brittonic) word, possibly also seen in Late Latin *vendita*, 'market'. As such, this would fit Oram's Arbour well, in its Late Iron Age guise, and it may be, as Rivet and Smith suggest, that *Venta Belgarum*, *Venta Icenorum* and *Venta Silurum* are a uniquely British equivalent of the more widespread Roman naming practice of Forum plus name of a people or territory, as in *Forum Segusiavorum* (Feurs, France) and several other examples.<sup>25</sup> Graham Isaac also gives the meaning of *Venta* as "market-place; administrative centre," presumably on the same basis.<sup>26</sup>

22 Creighton, *Coins and Power*, p. 77.

23 K.E. Qualman, et al., *Oram's Arbour. The Iron Age Enclosure at Winchester. Volume 1: Investigations 1950–1999* (Winchester, 2004), p. 90.

24 Rivet and Smith, *Place-Names*, pp. 262–65. See also Richard Coates, "Remarks on 'pre-English' in England: with Special Reference to \**ventā*, \**ciltā* and \**cunāco*," *JEPNS* 16 (1984), 1–24, esp. pp. 1–7; T.S. Ó Máille, "*Venta, Gwenta, Finn, Guen*," *Nomina* 11 (1987), 145–51; John T. Koch, "*Bannaventa*, Borough Hill (Northamptonshire), and Welsh *mynwent*," *Studia Celtica* 50 (2016), 169–74.

25 Alexander Falileyev, *Dictionary of Continental Celtic Place-Names. A Celtic companion to the Barrington Atlas of the Greek and Roman World* (Aberystwyth, 2010), p. 125.

26 Isaac, *Antonine Itinerary*, CD-ROM, s.v. Celtic elements etymology, s.v. *uenta*. See also Patrick Sims-Williams, *Ancient Celtic Place-Names in Europe and Asia Minor* (Oxford, 2006), p. 118; Fernando Fernández Palacios, "The Theonym \**Conventina*," in *Celtic Religions in the*

But the meaning of *Venta* needs further discussion. Kenneth Jackson pointed out many years ago that the word does not have a convincing Celtic etymology, and it does not survive in any derived forms in regional Celtic languages such as Cornish or Breton.<sup>27</sup> However, Ifor Williams equated the word with the Welsh suffix *-went*, as in *Cadwent* or *Llinwent*.<sup>28</sup> The meaning in these cases would be ‘field’, and thus ‘battlefield’ and ‘flax-field’ respectively. It is this usage that probably fits best with *-venta* when used as a suffix in the two Roman place-names in Britain, *Bannaventa* (Whilton Lodge, Northants) and *Glannoventa* (Ravenglass, Cumbria); the former is “field on the prominence” or “market on the promontory,” and the latter “shore field” or “market on the shore.”<sup>29</sup> In other words, this meaning implies an open-air market, or a gathering place or field, which again would fit Oram’s *Arbour* well.

Recent discussion of *venta* as a word or word element has focussed on other possibilities. Delamarre derives the word from Gallo-Brittonic *\*wenta*, and Indo-European *\*g<sup>wh</sup>en-ta*, with the meaning ‘place of slaughtering of animals’ or ‘place of sacrifice of animals’.<sup>30</sup> This, too, would fit with the notion of Oram’s *Arbour* being where animals were killed for the market, or possibly at religious ceremonies. All three of the British *Venta* towns could be associated with this type of activity, especially in respect of the marketing, slaughter and perhaps sacrifice of sheep and cattle.<sup>31</sup>

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*Roman Period. Personal, Local, and Global*, ed. Ralph Haeussler and Anthony King (Aberystwyth, 2017), pp. 165–75, esp. n. 40.

- 27 Kenneth Jackson, “Romano-British names in the Antonine Itinerary,” in Rivet, “British Section of the Antonine Itinerary,” p. 80.
- 28 Ifor Williams, notes on etymology, in Richmond and Crawford, “British Section of the Ravenna Cosmography,” pp. 27, 48.
- 29 Rivet and Smith, *Place-Names*, pp. 262–64, 367, 511–12. Koch, *Bannaventa*, pp. 171–72, interprets *Bannaventa* as ‘the place rich in peaks’, and *Glannoventa* as ‘the place of river banks, shores’, thus giving the *\*-uent-* element a simpler locational character.
- 30 Xavier Delamarre, “Notes d’onomastique vieille-celtique,” *Keltische Forschungen* 5 (2010–12), 99–137, esp. pp. 126–29; Xavier Delamarre, *Noms de lieux celtiques de l’Europe ancienne* (Paris, 2012), p. 27. There is a root, *-uen-* underlying the word *venta*. Van Hamel long ago related this to the Celtic *\*gwent* ‘worry, excitement’, but Delamarre’s derivation from Indo-European is now preferred. Cf. A.G. Van Hamel, “La racine *uen-* en celtique et en germanique,” in *Mélanges linguistiques offerts à M. Holger Pedersen à l’occasion de son soixante-dixième anniversaire* (Copenhagen, 1937), pp. 103–09. I am grateful to Fernando Fernández for drawing my attention to these references.
- 31 Cf. Anthony King, “Regional Factors in the Production and Consumption of Cattle, Sheep and Goats, and Pigs in Roman Britain,” in *The Role of Zooarchaeology in the Study of the Western Roman Empire*, ed. Martyn G. Allen and Mark Blagg-Newsome (Portsmouth, RI, 2019), p. 41, for discussion of animal husbandry, especially Late Iron Age emphasis on sheep husbandry on the Wessex downland.

The possible ritualistic association for Venta, as proposed by Delamarre above, leads us to a similar linkage, in the form of the goddess name Coventina or \*Conventina. She is found at a single site, the shrine and well to the nymph of that name, adjacent to Carrawburgh fort on Hadrian's Wall.<sup>32</sup> The name is probably composed of *con-*, *-vent-* and the adjectival *-ina*. Thus, *venta* is encapsulated in this theonym, and has been the subject of wide-ranging discussion as a consequence.<sup>33</sup> Fernandez explored the possibility that the *vent* or *uent* component might have an Indo-European non-Celtic root related to water, and, as aired by Olmstead,<sup>34</sup> it could be a nasalised form of Indo-European \**ued-* 'wet', from which we have Germanic \**uent-*, English *winter* 'wet season'. There is also Indo-European \**auent-* 'to wet; a spring', from which river names can be derived, e.g. R. Ant, Norfolk.<sup>35</sup> We can even invoke here the hydronym Solent, attested as Soluente in the early 8th century AD,<sup>36</sup> which may include the element *uent* in its watery interpretation. As far as Winchester is concerned, the watery meaning of the word seems less applicable than a field/market interpretation, unless the close proximity of the R. Itchen, and marshy ground to north and south of the city, may have a bearing on the meaning of the word.<sup>37</sup>

32 Lindsay Allason-Jones and Bruce McKay, *Coventina's Well. A Shrine on Hadrian's Wall* (Chesters, 1985).

33 Fernández, "Conventina"; Patrizia De Bernardo Stempel, "Continuity, translatio and identificatio in Gallo-Roman Religion: the Case of Britain," in *Continuity and Innovation in Religion in the Roman West*, 2, ed. Ralph Haeussler and Anthony King (Portsmouth, RI, 2008), pp. 67–82. I am also grateful to participants in the discussion of Venta and Coventina at the *Fontes epigraphici religionum celticarum antiquarum* (FERCAN) conference at Lampeter, 2014, following Fernando Fernández's paper. For Spanish analogous deity names, see Elizabeth Richert, *Native Religion under Roman Domination: deities, springs and mountains in the north-west of the Iberian Peninsula* (Oxford, 2005), no. 81, Cohventa, no. 82, Cuhue(tena?).

34 Garrett S. Olmstead, *The Gods of the Celts and the Indo-Europeans* (Budapest, 1994), pp. 427–28.

35 Fernández, "Conventina." See also Aventicum (Avenches, Switz.), which may be 'town of the river-dwellers'. The name is thought to be 'indigenous, perhaps Celtic'; Falileyev, *Dictionary*, p. 103.

36 S. Hillsberg, *Place-Names and Settlement History. Aspects of Selected Topographical Elements on the Continent and in England* (Leipzig, 2009), p. 48; David Tomalin, "The Solent in Prehistory," in *The Book of the Solent*, ed. Maldwin Drummond and Robin McInnes (Chale, 2001), pp. 13–32, esp. p. 14; A.D. Mills, *A Dictionary of English Place-Names* (Oxford, 1991), s.v. Solent.

37 It is pertinent in this respect that both Venta Icenorum and Venta Silurum have analogous geographical positions to that of Winchester, being located adjacent to rivers on ground that was relatively protected from flooding. Cf. Ó Máille "Venta," pp. 146–47, for further discussion.

Although most interpretations of *venta* give a Celtic or Gallo-Brittonic origin, Jackson was clear in stating that the word had difficulties in Celtic etymology, and as seen above, Fernandez actively explored the possibility of an Indo-European non-Celtic derivation.<sup>38</sup> In the case of Coventina, there is a possible Germanic link, which Fernandez felt unqualified to pursue, but has been discussed by Clay in relation to the Germanic dedicants at the shrine.<sup>39</sup> Coventina's Well was built at the time that the 1st Cohort of Batavians was at Carrawburgh, and there are dedications made by men of the 1st Cohort of Frisians and the 1st Cohort of the Cuberni (Cugerni). Other dedications at Carrawburgh were by the 2nd Cohort of Nervians, and there are several phonetically Germanic personal names, as well as reference to *germanus* as self-description by dedicants. Clay suggests that "the cult-centre was used to construct and maintain Germanic social networks."<sup>40</sup>

What relevance does this Germanic link have to Venta Belgarum? To approach the answer to this, we need to return to Commius and the second, Belgic, element of Winchester's Roman name. The continental coinage of Commius has a pairing with the Garmanos, a word which also appears on coins in combination with other personal names.<sup>41</sup> These coins are found in the territory of the continental Atrebatas (around modern Arras) and in the Aisne valley further south. Garmanos may be a second individual, but equally could be an epithet. If the latter, we may have a variant of Germanos, remembering that conventional Latin pronunciation of both variants would be with a hard 'g' and thus closer than modern usage would suggest. It is a moot point whether Garmanos can be identified with Germanus,<sup>42</sup> but if it can, was Commius

38 Jackson, "Romano-British names," p. 80; Fernández, "Conventina."

39 Cheryl Clay, "Before there were Angles, Saxons and Jutes: An Epigraphic Study of the Germanic Social, Religious and Linguistic Relations on Hadrian's Wall," in *Pagans and Christians* (see above, n. 6), pp. 47–63, esp. pp. 52–53. See also Cheryl Clay, "Developing the 'Germani' in Roman Studies," in *TRAC 2007. Proceedings of the Seventeenth Annual Theoretical Roman Archaeology Conference*, ed. Corisande Fenwick, Meredith Wiggins and David Wythe (Oxford, 2008), pp. 131–50, esp. p. 147.

40 Clay, "Before there were Angles," p. 53.

41 Creighton, *Coins and Power*, pp. 72–74. See also Richard Coates, "The British Dynasty of Commius: A Philological Discussion," *Studia Celtica* 45 (2011), 185–92, for discussion of Commius and his lineage.

42 I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer of this paper for the following comment: "The change of [er] > [ar] before a consonant is known in Vulgar Latin/Proto-Romance, but its dating is uncertain. The 1st century [BC] would be a very early case indeed. The change ... is also well-known later as a feature of British Celtic in the transition to Brittonic. However, a connection of its base with the ancestor of Welsh *garm* 'shout, outcry, clamour' might also be considered."

self-styled as ‘german’ and if so, how does this relate to Gallia Belgica and Venta Belgarum?

It was recognised by Caesar that Gallia Belgica had a different language from much of Gaul (i.e. from the later Roman province of Gallia Lugdunensis),<sup>43</sup> but one which was assumed to be mutually understandable with Gallic, and consequently, to be of Celtic or Gallo-Brittonic lineage. The word *Belgae* itself has a Celtic meaning as ‘proud ones’.<sup>44</sup> However, in Gallia Belgica, Celtic place-names are uncommon in parts of the region, especially north of the Ardennes, leading Wightman to suggest that much of the population had a non-Celtic language, even if the aristocracy spoke Celtic or were multi-lingual.<sup>45</sup> It is likely that the large swathe of land between the Seine, the Moselle and the Rhine, encompassing Gallia Belgica and Germania Inferior, contained a number of languages in the pre-Roman period, some more ‘Celtic’, others more ‘Germanic’. There was probably not a Belgic language as such, but clearly the territory had a distinct identity, enough for Caesar to remark on it, and for it to be named Gallia Belgica.

Commius, therefore, had a Belgic identity, was also called “the Atrebatan” by Caesar,<sup>46</sup> and may have used the epithet *Garmanos* (or at least be paired with someone of that name). We know that he had control or influence over the *Morini*, the *Bellovaci* and the *Nervii* as well as the *Atrebates*,<sup>47</sup> and was a worthy founder and king (*rix* or *rex*) of the Southern Dynasty when he eventually came to Britain.

To anticipate the final conclusion to this paper, if we move forward to urban naming after the Roman conquest, we see the Commian legacy reflected in the second elements of the three cities of the *Atrebates*. Silchester took the *Atrebatan* aspect, Chichester the possibly royal (*Regini* or *Regni*) aspect<sup>48</sup> and lastly, Winchester, the *Belgic* aspect. It was the conscious re-forging of a regional identity over the old *Atrebatan* Iron Age kingdom, created in the wake of the restoration of the *status quo* after the successful Roman conquest of the area. We shall probably never know whether pre-Roman Winchester housed Belgic

43 Caesar, *De Bello Gallico*, 1.1.

44 Rivet and Smith, *Place-Names*, p. 267.

45 Edith Mary Wightman, *Gallia Belgica* (London, 1985), p. 11. See also Creighton, *Coins and Power*, Ch. 6, on social hierarchies and language use in the Late Iron Age.

46 Caesar, *De Bello Gallico*, 4.27.

47 Creighton, *Coins and Power*, pp. 59–61. Coates, “British dynasty of Commius.”

48 The usual interpretation of *Regni* gives it a ‘royal’ association, but there is uncertainty surrounding the etymology of this name, and an alternative is *\*regini* ‘proud ones, stiff ones’; Rivet and Smith, *Place-Names*, p. 446.

people from Gallia Belgica, and possibly non-Celtic speakers.<sup>49</sup> The doubts discussed above concerning the Celtic derivation of Venta are relevant, however, and it may just be the case that the word has some form of non-Celtic, even Belgic cultural linkage, albeit tenuous for the latter, given the lack of evidence for *venta* elements in Gallia Belgica itself.

A last issue to tackle is the question of when the full double-name formulation of Venta Belgarum was applied to Winchester. The literary authorities are interesting in this respect, as the earliest, Ptolemy, c. AD 140–50, gives only Venta, a *polis* of the Belgae.<sup>50</sup> The next, chronologically, is the *Antonine Itinerary*, which probably does not have a single date, being a compilation of different official routes, but is probably to be placed between the reigns of Trajan and Diocletian.<sup>51</sup> It gives the double formula Venta Belgarum. On the face of it, therefore, Venta is the primary name, and Belgarum is an add-on which was gaining currency, in official documents at least, during the 2nd century.<sup>52</sup>

Ptolemy's text implies that the Belgae were a recognisable entity (whether actual people or an administrative unit) by the mid-2nd century, and therefore

49 This is not to take the avowedly non-Celtic line of Michael Goormachtigh and Anthony Durham, "Kentish place-names—were they ever Celtic?" *Arch. Cant.* 129 (2009), 279–93. See, however, Stephen Yeates, *Myth and History. Ethnicity and Politics in the First Millennium British Isles* (Oxford, 2012), for discussion of, for him, a strong German element amongst the Belgae. Daphne Nash, "The Language of Inscriptions on Icenian Coinage," in *The Iron Age in Northern East Anglia. New Work in the Land of the Iceni*, ed. J.A. Davies, *BAR Brit. Ser.* 549 (Oxford, 2011), pp. 83–102, similarly discusses the German linguistic aspect of the Icenian evidence.

50 Ptolemy, *Geography*, 2.3.13. The two other places attributed to the Belgae by Ptolemy are Aquae Calidae (Bath) and Ischalis (unlocated). He also states that the Belgae are below (i.e. south of) the Dobunni. Ptolemy is the only source for such a westerly extension of the territory of the Belgae, and this is usually regarded as incorrect, for discussion of which see Rivet and Smith, *Place-Names*, p. 256. However, Martin Henig, in various publications ("From Classical Greece to Roman Britain: Some Hellenic Themes in Provincial Art and Glyptics," in *Periplous. To Sir John Boardman from his Pupils and Friends*, ed. G.R. Tsatskheladze, A.J.N.W. Prag and A.M. Snodgrass (London, 1999), pp. 172–85; "A New Star Shining Over Bath," *Oxford Journal of Archaeology* 18:4 (1999), 419–25; *The Heirs of King Verica. Culture and Politics in Roman Britain* (Stroud, 2002), p. 48), makes a case for Bath coming under the control and patronage of Togidubnus, after the emperor had granted the king additional territory as a reward for his loyalty to Rome (Tacitus, *Agricola*, 14, ed. R.M. Ogilvie and Ian Richmond [Oxford, 1967]).

51 Rivet and Smith, *Place-Names*, p. 153.

52 It is worth noting the relatively late date for this. A consequence may have been that the first element of the place-name had a much stronger hold on popular usage, and therefore survived in the medieval and modern place-name. This contrasts with the Gallic situation, where late and post-Roman names took on the ethnic element, e.g. Bellovacis (Beauvais), Suessiones (Soissons).

had a geographical existence prior to this date. As outlined above, we have reasons to believe that Belgic as an epithet associated with the Atrebates was in existence well before the conquest of AD 43. The question at this point is why Belgarum was applied to Winchester as opposed to one of the other two towns in the old Atrebatian region, and when the *civitas* of this name became a distinct entity.

The notion of the ‘friendly king’ and client kingship has been the subject of much discussion in relation to Roman Britain, notably concerning Tiberius Claudius Togidubnus and the inscription with his name at Chichester.<sup>53</sup> Much of the debate is not relevant to this paper, but we need to note John Creighton’s argument that the Southern Dynasty was, in effect, a client kingdom prior to AD 43, since Caesar’s invasion was nominally at least, a conquest, and in consequence, Commius had been accepted as king of the Atrebates by Rome. In this scenario, Commius was the first in a line of kings that ended with Togidubnus, and on the latter’s death, the Roman governor took full control and the client kingdom came to an end.

Creighton also has a maximalist view of the extent of Togidubnus’ area of power and influence, with him being entrusted with an area larger than the old Atrebatian kingdom, to encompass a significant part of southern and south-eastern Britain, at a time when the Roman governor was actively undertaking military operations further to the north and west.<sup>54</sup> Russell also maps out a large territory for Togidubnus, taking in central southern Britain, as far west as Bath, and north into the south and east Midlands.<sup>55</sup> A more circumscribed

53 *The Roman Inscriptions*, 1 (see above, n. 9), no. 91. The main literature on client kings in Britain, and Togidubnus, is Anthony A. Barrett, “The career of Tiberius Claudius Cogidubnus,” *Britannia* 10 (1979), 227–42; Anthony A. Barrett, “The *civitates* of Tiberius Claudius Cogidubnus,” *Echos du Monde Classique/Classical Views* 26 (1982), 45–55; David C. Braund, *Rome and the Friendly King. The Character of Client Kingship* (London, 1984); David C. Braund, *Ruling Roman Britain. Kings, queens, governors and emperors from Julius Caesar to Agricola* (London, 1996); Creighton, *Coins and Power*; Creighton, *Britannia*; Miles Russell, *Roman Sussex* (Stroud, 2006), Chs. 1–2; Miles Russell, *Bloodline. The Celtic Kings of Roman Britain* (Stroud, 2010), Ch. 8. It is current practice and philological preference to spell Togidubnus rather than Cogidubnus, but either is potentially correct (Richard Coates, “Cogidubnus Revisited,” *Antf* 85 (2005), 359–66; see also Russell, *Bloodline*, p. 109). It is not accepted here, as Russell contends, that Togidubnus and Togodumnus were the same person. However, it is entirely possible that Togidubnus was not related to the Commian dynasty and had been put into power by the Romans after the death of Verica.

54 Creighton, *Britannia*, p. 31. See also Colin C. Haselgrove, “Romanization before the Conquest: Gaulish Precedents and British Consequences,” in *Military and Civilian in Roman Britain*, ed. T.F.C. Blagg and A.C. King, BAR Brit. Ser. 136 (Oxford, 1984), pp. 1–64, esp. p. 36. See also Henig, *Heirs*, p. 48.

55 Russell, *Bloodline*, p. 111, Fig. 57.

area for the client kingdom is the old Atrebatian kingdom without further territory, and this is accepted by Barrett<sup>56</sup> and in most of the general textbooks on Roman Britain. There is also a minimalist position, which gives Togidubnus just the territory of Chichester (i.e. the Regnum).<sup>57</sup> For reasons given earlier in this paper, the old Atrebatian kingdom seems to be the natural unit for the post-Claudian area under Togidubnus' control.

Roman Winchester, therefore, was likely to have started post-conquest life as a market and administrative centre within the client kingdom. It was, to some extent, the junior of the three Atrebatian urban centres in terms of its early development. Silchester has extensive evidence for major pre-Roman development, and as an *oppidum*, was significantly larger than Winchester.<sup>58</sup> It also had high-status construction soon after the conquest, which Fulford postulates as a possible palace for the client king, with Neronian imperial assistance.<sup>59</sup> Chichester, too, was an extensive 'territorial' *oppidum*, with much early development focused on the Fishbourne area, and also the possible building of a contemporary palace there for the client king.<sup>60</sup> So far, we do not have the equivalent at Winchester, and the *oppidum* enclosure of Oram's Arbour, while being a respectable 20 ha, is not on the same scale as the immediate pre- and post-conquest occupation at Silchester and Chichester.

The Roman town, partially overlying Oram's Arbour, and presumably bringing about the latter's abandonment as an enclosure, has its own earthwork defences, that can be dated to the late Neronian or early Flavian period.<sup>61</sup> It looks as though the initial development of the Roman town, eventually into one of the larger towns in Britannia, started from these relatively humble beginnings. In some respects, it can be characterised as a deliberate revivification of the earlier market-place or Venta of Oram's Arbour, as a town on the western margin of the old Atrebatian territory. This must have taken place while the client kingdom was still in existence, and it is possible that Togidubnus' sphere of

56 Barrett, "Career"; Barrett, "Civitates."

57 Barry Cunliffe, *The Regni* (London, 1973), p. 23. Braund, *Ruling*, p. 111, also appears to lean towards this position.

58 John Creighton and Robert Fry, *Silchester: Changing Visions of a Roman Town* (London, 2016), Ch. 11.

59 Michael Fulford, "Nero and Britain: The Palace of the Client King at *Calleva* and Imperial Policy Towards the Province after Boudicca," *Britannia* 39 (2008), 1–13; Michael Fulford and Jane Timby, *Late Iron Age and Roman Silchester. Excavations on the Site of the Forum-Basilica 1977, 1980–86* (London, 2000), pp. 567–68. See also Jillian Greenaway, "The Neronian Stamped Tile from Little London, near Silchester," *Britannia* 12 (1981), 290–91.

60 Fulford, "Nero," p. 10.

61 See the summary in John Wachter, *The Towns of Roman Britain*, 2nd ed. (London, 1995), pp. 291–93.

influence had allowed for expansion to the west, thus extending what was later to become the Belgic *civitas* into western and south-western Hampshire and probably beyond.<sup>62</sup>

Autonomy for Winchester, as a *civitas*-capital after the end of the client kingdom, cannot be easily dated, because we do not know when Togidubnus died. Barrett suggests an early date, in the mid-60s AD, and this, or even earlier in the late 50s, was accepted by Braund, and initially, by Fulford.<sup>63</sup> However, Fulford's re-evaluation of the early building evidence at Silchester has led him to discard a Neronian date and argue for construction taking place on behalf of the client kingdom during the 60s AD, after Boudica's rebellion.<sup>64</sup> A Flavian date for the death of Togidubnus is the current view, while acknowledging that we will never have certainty.<sup>65</sup> Tacitus records that Togidubnus had remained loyal 'down to our times', which was the late Flavian period or later.<sup>66</sup> This would make Togidubnus very elderly at the time of his death, and therefore the phrase is often taken as a literary generalisation.

By way of conclusion, we must return to the word *Belgae*. Caesar stated that "maritime regions" of Britain had been settled before the time of his own invasion, by "invaders who crossed from Belgium (*ex Belgio*) for the sake of plunder, and then, when the fighting was over, settled there: these people have almost all kept the names of the tribes from which they originated."<sup>67</sup> This led Barry Cunliffe to suggest that the area in question included the shores of the Solent and further inland, and that this had taken place c. 100 BC, representing the beginnings of the Late Iron Age dispositions in the region.<sup>68</sup> This could, of course, mean that a group or groups of people in the region styled themselves *Belgae* (but it must be noted that there are no people of this name 'of the tribes from which they originated', as Caesar put it), and that this was crystallised eventually into the name for Roman Winchester.

As we know, however, from what developed in the period after Caesar's invasion, the region became part of the Atrebatian kingdom under Commius.

62 But probably not as far west as Bath, see n. 47; Wachter, *Towns*, p. 293. *Contra*, Fulford, "Nero," p. 11.

63 Barrett, "Career," p. 242; Braund, *Ruling*, p. 112; Fulford and Timby, *Forum-Basilica*, p. 569.

64 Fulford, "Nero."

65 See Creighton, *Britannia*, p. 152; Russell, *Roman Sussex*, p. 42.

66 Tacitus, *Agricola*, 14. A very late date for Togidubnus' death is accepted by Henig, *Heirs*, p. 56. This is based, in part, on the substantial changes to Fishbourne palace at the end of the 1st century being put in place after his death, and on the possible patronage by Togidubnus of the development of Bath as a religious centre during the Flavian period. See n. 49.

67 Caesar, *De Bello Gallico*, 5.12.

68 Cunliffe, *Wessex*, pp. 205–06; *Britain Begins* (Oxford, 2012), p. 334.

A possible consequence would have been the incorporation of the loosely named Belgae into the political structure of the kingdom,<sup>69</sup> with Venta Belgarum encapsulating a memory of this in its name. Alternatively, and perhaps preferably, it may have taken Belgarum as a descriptive ethnic epithet, 'proud ones', deriving from the ethnic identity of the Atrebatian kings. When the three towns were established as *civitates*, probably in the Flavian period, Silchester kept the 'tribal' name, Chichester took the 'regal' name,<sup>70</sup> and Winchester had its proud reference to the ancestral spirit of the old Atrebatian realm.<sup>71</sup>

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69 It is conceivable that the Belgae were a subordinate unit within the Atrebates, as also possibly for the Regini around Chichester.

70 Or alternatively, an epithet derived from *\*regini* 'proud ones, stiff ones'; Rivet and Smith, *Place-Names*, p. 446. See n. 48.

71 I am very grateful to Dr Martin Henig and a second, anonymous, reviewer for their helpful and useful comments on this paper.

## Winchester: A City of Two Planned Towns

*Martin Biddle*

The principal streets within the walls of Winchester form today an ancient and orderly pattern. There are four elements. The spine is High Street running downhill from West Gate to East Gate, and beyond to the bridge across the River Itchen. Back streets run close behind and parallel to High Street on either side. North–south streets run at right-angles from High Street out to the line of the city walls. To north and south their ends are linked by a street which ran, and in part still does run, around the inside of the city walls. This elegant and logical system is first displayed on John Speed’s map of Winchester, published in 1611 (Fig. 2.1).<sup>1</sup>

In the 1870s the Ordnance Survey mapped the city at the scale of 1:500, the sheets of which were published at this and reduced scales in the following years. The sight of the surveyors at work and the meticulous accuracy and extraordinary detail of their published sheets can only have increased interest in the historical topography of the city. In 1890 the then Dean of Winchester, G.W. Kitchin, while reasonably cautious about the nature of *Venta Belgarum*, Roman Winchester, published a detailed “Map of Norman Winchester, A.D. 1119,” which he based on the Winton Domesday, a written survey drawn up about 1110 which he now set in the context of the mapped city (Fig. 2.2).<sup>2</sup> There are many points of detail which later work would correct, but it was a pioneering attempt.

So too was Francis Haverfield’s account of “Winchester—*Venta Belgarum*,” published in 1900 with for the first time a plan of Winchester “showing Roman remains.” This has the approach roads from north, west, and south (but not the east) and shows the Roman city wall in red, but otherwise only individual

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- 1 John Speed, “Hantshire divided and described,” *Theatre of the Empire of Great Britaine* (London, 1611). For Speed’s map and the maps of Godson 1750 and Milne 1793, with full references, see Martin Biddle and Derek Keene, eds., *Winchester*, The British Historic Towns Atlas VI, Winchester Studies 11 (Oxford, 2017), Pl. 1, nos. 2–4. (hereafter WS 11)
  - 2 G.W. Kitchin, *Winchester* (Historic Towns, ed. E.A. Freeman and W. Hunt), 2nd ed. (London, 1890), folding map facing p. 72. For the Winton Domesday, see Martin Biddle, ed., *Winchester in the Early Middle Ages: An Edition and Discussion of the Winton Domesday*, Winchester Studies 1 (Oxford, 1976). (hereafter WS 1)

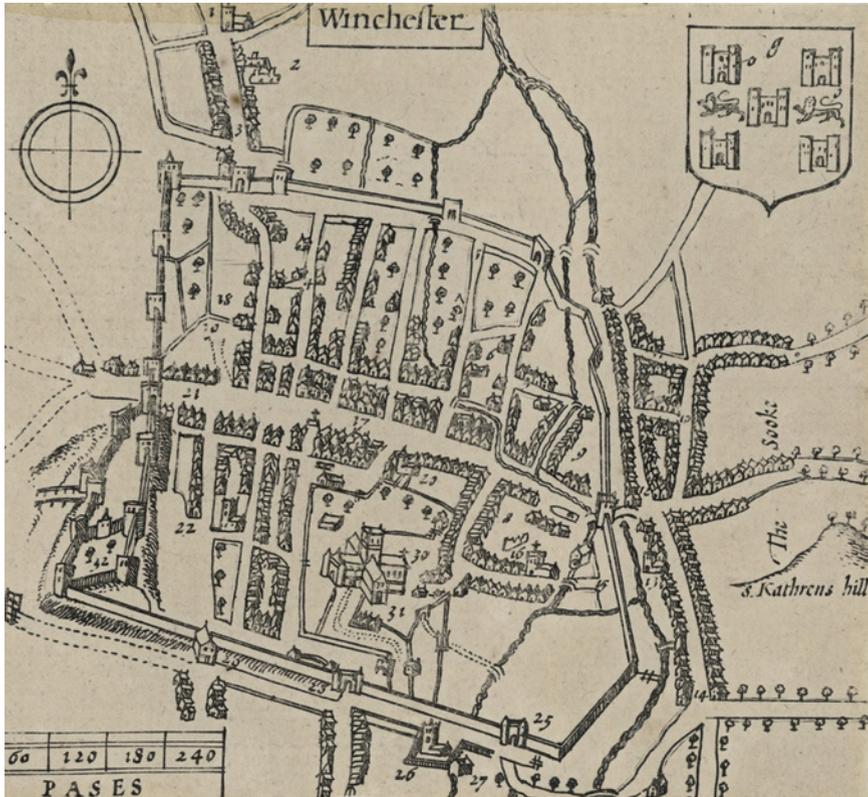


FIGURE 2.1 Winchester 1611, from John Speed, "Hantshire divided and described," *Theatre of the Empire of Great Britaine*  
PRIVATE COLLECTION

spot finds of "Buildings," "Graves," and "Other remains," with no sign of any internal streets.<sup>3</sup>

Very different was the plan of "Roman Winchester A.D. 43–410," drawn in 1909 and published in 1914 by the Winchester printer and publisher, William Thorn Warren (Fig. 2.3).<sup>4</sup> "Winchester, as it exists today [he wrote], in its general plan of the older streets, is almost identical with what it was when the Roman cohorts were here stationed." Thus, all four elements of the present street plan (High Street, back streets parallel to either side, north–south streets, and wall street) and the defences of the medieval castle are taken as Roman in

3 F. Haverfield, "Romano-British Hampshire: 4. Winchester—Venta Belgarum," in *VCH Hants 1* (London, 1900), pp. 285–93, with plan opposite p. 286.

4 Wm. Thorn Warren, *Notes from the History of Winchester* (Winchester, 1914), pp. 5–8, with folding plan before title page.



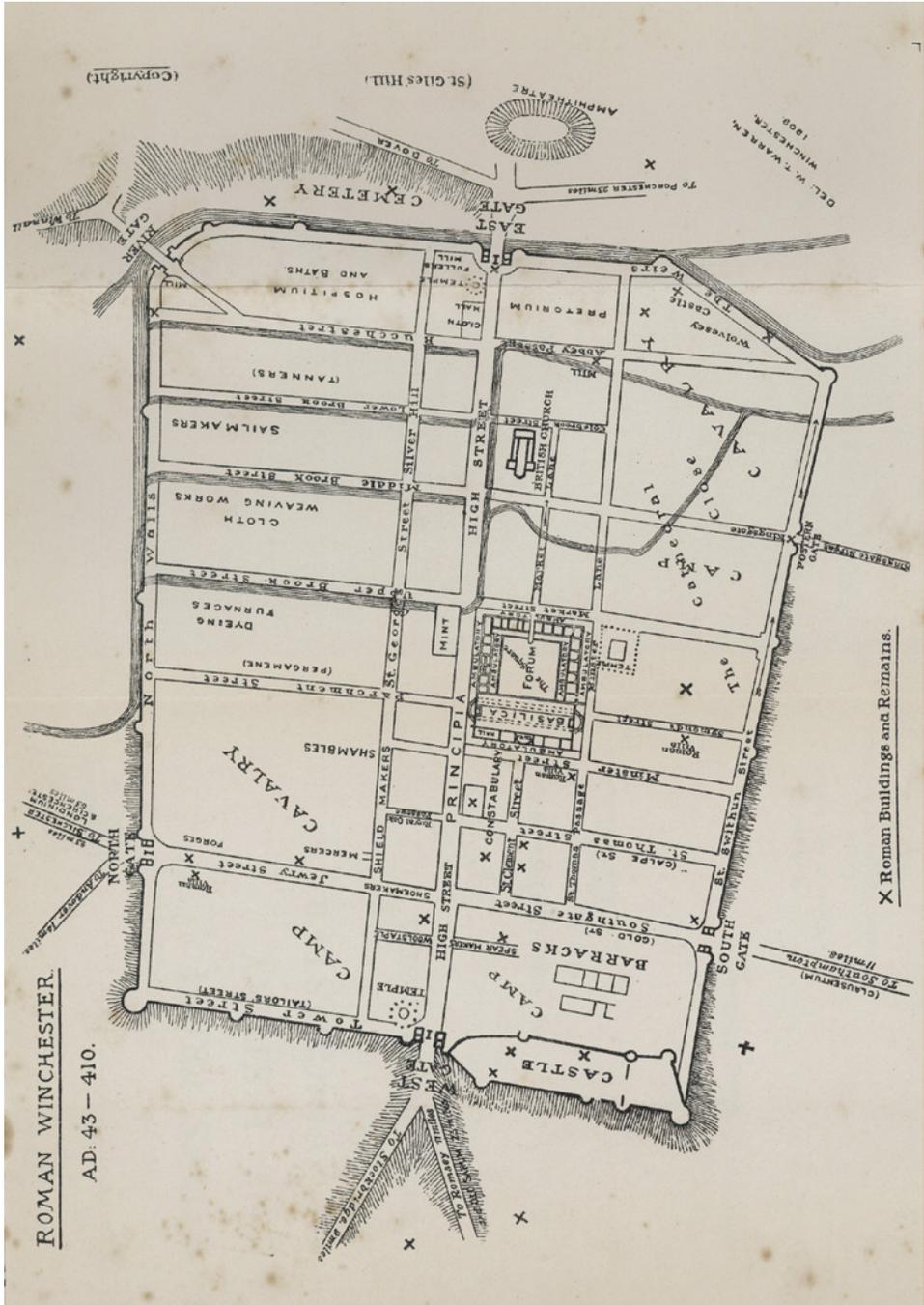


FIGURE 2.3 "Roman Winchester A.D. 43-410," drawn 1909, from Wm. Thorn Warren, *Notes from the History of Winchester* (Winchester and London, 1914), folding map facing the title page

origin, and areas are assigned to “cavalry” and “camp.” This is all fancy, but the forum is in the right place and its plan and the plan of the “British church” are clearly derived from what had been revealed by the then recent excavations at Silchester, as are the in-turned plans of the four principal gates.<sup>5</sup> It is all the stranger that Warren ignored the very regular grid of Silchester’s Roman streets in favour of a Roman origin for the streets of medieval and modern Winchester.

In the thirty or so years which followed, little was learnt about the history and nature of Winchester’s streets. Sydney Ward-Evans (c.1883–1943), who tried in his own way to record and salvage archaeological information and finds encountered during building works, seems to have supported Warren’s view that “the main elements of the Roman town plan ... were largely reflected by those of the medieval city”.<sup>6</sup>

Much changed with the appointment in 1947 of Frank Cottrill (1908–84) as the first professional curator of the Winchester City Museum.<sup>7</sup> His previous posts as “Investigator of Buildings” in the City of London from 1934 and to the new post of “Archaeologist” at the Leicester Museum from 1938, gave him “an impressive record of excavation experience,” especially in the recording of archaeological features exposed in the construction of new buildings. These skills were fully realised in Winchester from 1947 onwards, both in his own meticulously recorded observations, but also in his encouragement of the first ever proper archaeological excavations in the city. A particular aspect was Cottrill’s observation and record of service trenches dug along the streets for the insertion or repair of water, gas, electricity, and telephone cables. Sadly, observation and record of such intrusions no longer continues except in the rare cases when an archaeological condition is imposed as part of the planning process. Cottrill watched them all, especially down the north side of High Street

5 Warren’s information on Silchester will have been taken from F. Haverfield, “Romano-British Hampshire: 2. Silchester,” in *VCH Hants* 1, pp. 271–84; and more particularly from G.E. Fox and W.H. St. J. Hope, “The Romano-British Town of *Calleva Atrebatum* at Silchester,” in *VCH Hants* 1, pp. 350–72, where plans of the forum, ‘church’, and gates, are all to be found in the context of a regular grid of Roman streets on the coloured folding plan of the Roman town facing p. 350.

6 Kenneth E. Qualmann, “Roman Winchester,” in *Roman Towns: the Wheeler Inheritance. A Review of 50 Years’ Research*, ed. Stephen J. Greep, CBA Research Report 93 (York, 1993), pp. 66–77, at p. 66 and Fig. 2. See also below, p. 31.

7 Elizabeth Lewis, “Frank Cottrill, MA, FMA, FSA: An Appreciation,” in John Collis et al., *Winchester Excavations 1949–1960*, Volume III: *Excavations in St Georges Street and the High Street* (unpublished typescript in Winchester Research Unit (WRU) and Winchester Museum Service (WMS) archive), pp. 11–15.

where the discovery of Roman buildings showed conclusively that the Roman street ran not on the line of the present High Street but to its south, a situation confirmed in the excavation he arranged on the site of St Maurice's Church in 1959.<sup>8</sup> A few other observations of Roman streets were made by Cottrill or in excavations commissioned by him, but apparently not sufficient to raise the issue of the relationship of the Roman to the Anglo-Saxon street pattern.

The first plan of the streets of Roman *Venta Belgarum* based on archaeological evidence "as known at the end of 1962" was published that year.<sup>9</sup> A more detailed plan based on Cottrill's earlier observations and excavations up to 1965 followed.<sup>10</sup> Plans of the street pattern of Late Saxon and Norman Winchester were published following the excavations of 1966.<sup>11</sup> By 1967 it was clear that the Anglo-Saxon streets did not follow the Roman pattern but formed a separate and distinctive system which has survived in all essentials to the present day. This was demonstrated the following year in a series of eight plans published by the Winchester Excavations Committee tracing the development of Winchester from prehistory to the 19th century (see Fig. 2.4).<sup>12</sup>

However, in 1995–96 the Winchester Museums Service (WMS) published a new plan of Roman Winchester (Fig. 2.5) comprising two distinct elements: an earlier system of thirty long narrow blocks (*insulae*) in the sloping western half of the walled area and a later system of fifteen larger square blocks in the lower

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- 8 For a plan showing the relationship of the Roman west–east street to the church and to High Street, see Martin Biddle and R.N. Quirk, "Excavations near Winchester Cathedral, 1961," First Interim Report, *Archaeological Journal* 119 (1962), 151–53, Fig. 2 and Pl. VIII A (hereafter *I Interim*).
- 9 *I Interim*, Fig. 1. See also Patrick Ottaway, *Winchester, St Swithun's "City of Happiness and Good Fortune" An Archaeological Assessment* (Oxford, 2017), p. 83.
- 10 Martin Biddle, "Excavations at Winchester 1962–63. Second Interim Report," *AntJ* 44 (1964), 214–17, Fig. 1 (hereafter *II Interim*); "Excavations at Winchester 1964. Third Interim Report," *AntJ* 45 (1965), Fig. 1 (hereafter *III Interim*); "Excavations at Winchester 1965. Fourth Interim Report," *AntJ* 46 (1966), Fig. 1 (hereafter *IV Interim*).
- 11 Martin Biddle, "Excavations at Winchester 1966. Fifth Interim Report," *AntJ* 47 (1967), 277, cf. Figs. 1 and 2 (hereafter *V Interim*).
- 12 WS II, as n. 1, Fig. 1. This was first published in Martin Biddle, "Excavations in Winchester 1967. Sixth Interim Report," *AntJ* 48 (1968), Fig. 1 (hereafter *VI Interim*) and updated on several subsequent occasions, notably by the discovery in 1969 that the west wall of the Roman town formed a large salient south of West Gate which was followed by the western defences of the Norman and later castle: Martin Biddle, "Excavations at Winchester 1969. Eighth Interim Report," *AntJ*, 50 (1969), 281–85, Figs 1 and 2, and Pl. XXXVIII (hereafter *VIII Interim*). See also Martin Biddle, "The Study of Winchester: Archaeology and History in a British Town," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 69 (1983), 93–135, Fig. 2.

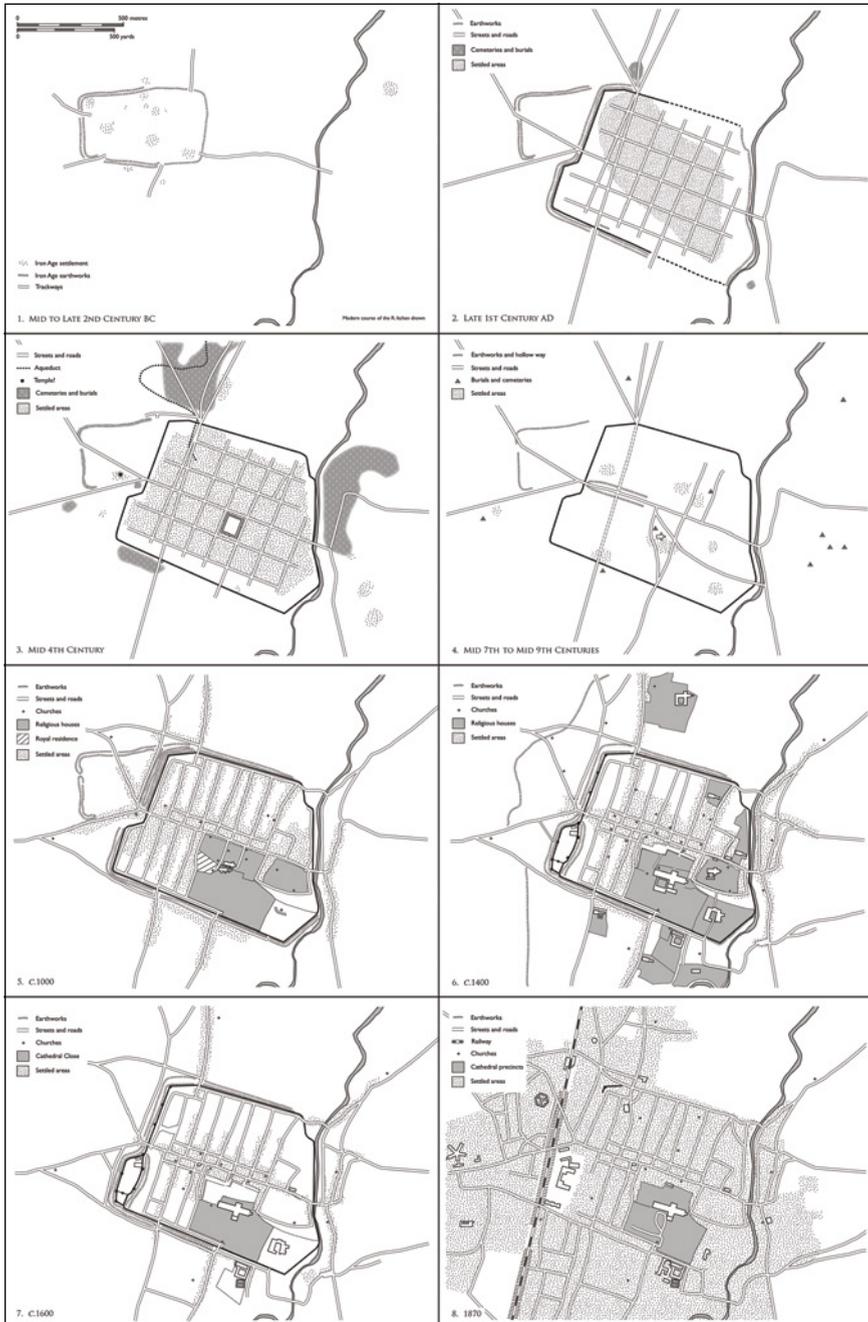


FIGURE 2.4 Winchester, the development of the city from the mid to late 2nd century B.C. to 1870, from WS 11 (Winchester Atlas) (Oxford, 2017), Fig. 1. Drawn by Giles Darke ©WINCHESTER EXCAVATIONS COMMITTEE AND THE HISTORIC TOWNS TRUST

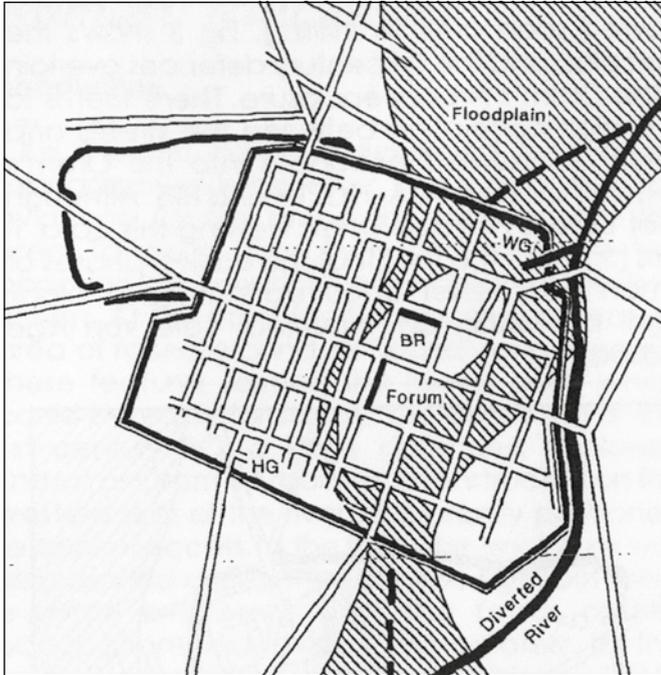


FIGURE 2.5 Winchester, supposed plan of the Roman streets, from *WMS Newsletter* 22 (August 1995), p. 6, Fig. 4

area to the east.<sup>13</sup> The long narrow *insulae* were proposed on the basis of a single excavation close to South Gate, where the supposed north–south street is at best a lane or track.

Although no Romano-British town is known to have had a plan of this kind,<sup>14</sup> such a plan subsequently appeared in the Winchester Museums Service's own publications<sup>15</sup> and in the reports of outside bodies undertaking

13 Graham Scobie, "Topography and Development," *WMS Newsletter*, nos 21–24 (1995–96), esp. 22 (August 1995), 4–9.

14 John Wacher, *The Towns of Roman Britain*, 2nd ed. (London, 1995), *passim*. The plan of Roman Winchester (Fig. 132) was revised for this edition to reflect the views of the "Winchester Museum Service Archaeology Unit."

15 K.E. Qualmann et al., *Oram's Arbour* (Winchester, 2004), Fig. 39; H. Rees et al., *Artefacts and Society in Roman and Medieval Winchester* (Winchester, 2008), Fig. 2; M. Maltby, *Feeding a Roman Town* (Winchester, 2010), Figs 2, 3, and 12; P.J. Ottaway et al., *The Roman Cemeteries and Suburbs of Winchester* (Winchester, 2012), Figs 5, 6, 96, and 126.

contract excavations in advance of development.<sup>16</sup> The superb quality of the draughtsmanship and presentation of the plans in the two volumes published by Oxford Archaeology in 2010 and 2011 gives the evidence they present for the Roman street-plan a wholly undeserved authority. This unsatisfactory plan (which also shows an island in the middle of Winchester for which there is no valid evidence) has continued to be used despite the publication of the archaeological and documentary evidence presented by the Winchester Excavations Committee as long ago as 1968. This plan has been corrected by the publication in 2017 of *Winchester: An Archaeological Assessment*<sup>17</sup> and by subsequent publications from the Winchester Excavations Committee, including *The Winchester Historic Towns Atlas*.<sup>18</sup>

The only Roman element shadowed by the Anglo-Saxon plan is the route downhill from West Gate to East Gate and over the crossing of the river Itchen. Here too the Roman line has been lost as the present High Street veers away to the north<sup>19</sup> making for a crossing of the Itchen some twelve metres north of the probable site of the Roman crossing, perhaps as a result of the loss of a probable Roman bridge.

The Roman streets seem to have been laid out in the seventies or eighties of the 1st century A.D., and to have lasted into some date in the 5th century or even later (Fig. 2.6). When the church later known as Old Minster was built about the middle of the 7th century, it was built at an angle across a Roman east–west street, the presence of which was ignored and had clearly been forgotten. The relationship of the minster to the underlying Roman street, and of the layout of the Anglo-Saxon street-plan as a whole to the pattern of the Roman streets, is now well known (Fig. 2.7) and shows conclusively the very different character of the two layouts.<sup>20</sup>

In this contribution for Barbara Yorke, who has done so much to illuminate the history and achievements of Anglo-Saxon Wessex and of England, the

16 Paul Booth et al., *The Late Roman Cemetery at Lankhills, Winchester: Excavations 2000–2005*, Oxford Archaeology Monograph 10 (Oxford, 2010), Fig. 1.4; Ben M. Ford et al., *Winchester: a City in the Making*, Oxford Archaeology Monograph 12 (Oxford, 2011), Fig. 1.4.

17 Ottawa, *Winchester*, Figs 3.7, 3.12, pp. 98–101.

18 WS 11, Map 2, Figs 1, 4, 6 and 10.

19 See above, p. 31, n. 8.

20 For detailed plans of Winchester c.350, c.930, and c.1000 at a scale of 1:4000, see WS 11, Maps 2–4. For the Roman and post-Roman periods, see pp. 9–12 and 20–25, Figs 4, 6, 10, and 15. For the Anglo-Saxon layout, see pp. 26–29, Fig. 16 (reproduced here as Fig. 2.8), and also the *Gazetteer* pp. 68–69.

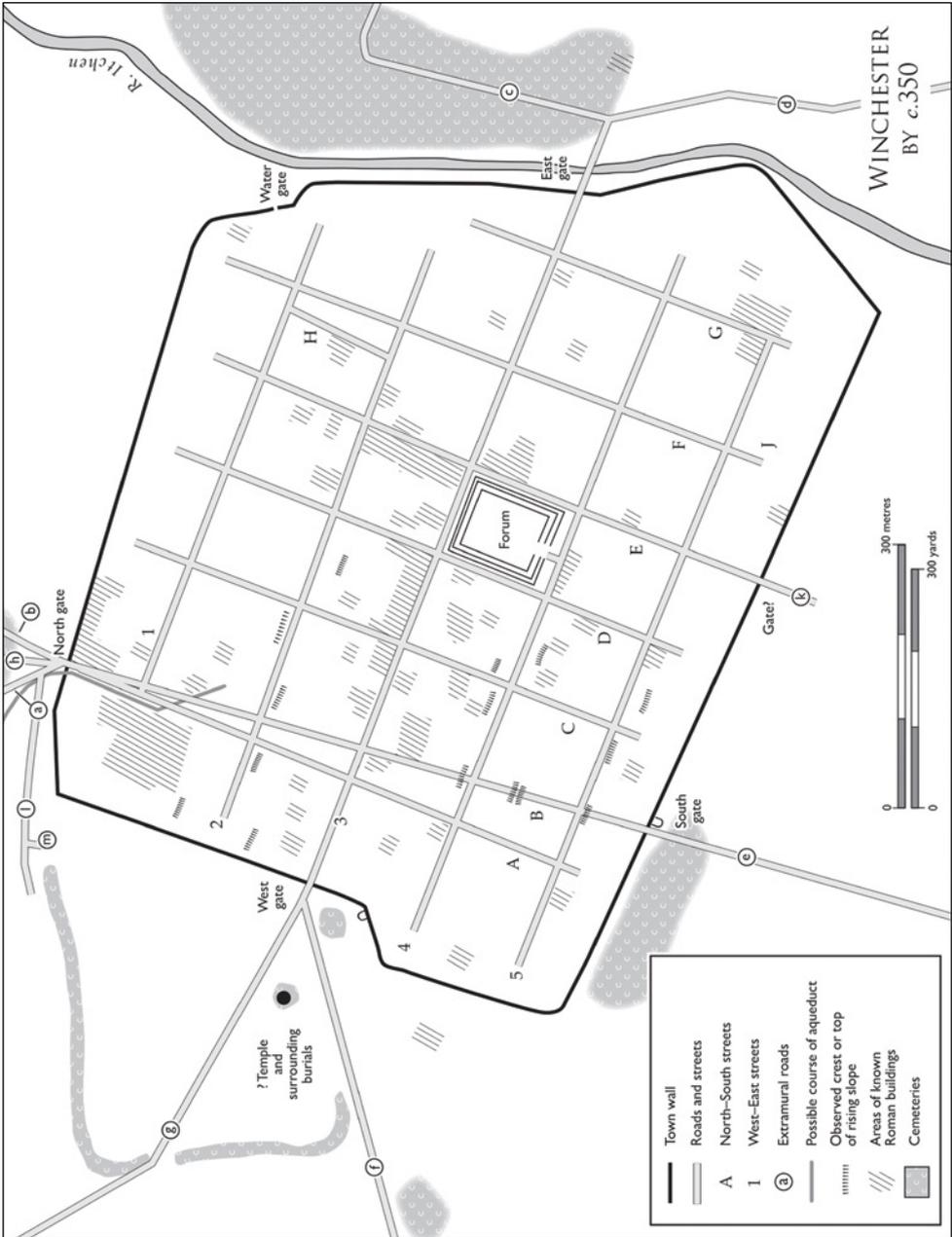


FIGURE 2.6 Winchester by c.350, from WS II (Winchester Atlas) (Oxford, 2017), Fig. 10. Drawn by Giles Darkes © WINCHESTER EXCAVATIONS COMMITTEE AND THE HISTORIC TOWNS TRUST



FIGURE 2.7 Winchester, the Anglo-Saxon and Roman street plans overlain. Drawn by Giles Darkes, 2017  
©WINCHESTER EXCAVATIONS COMMITTEE

written, archaeological, and numismatic evidence for the individual streets of Anglo-Saxon Winchester are brought together for the first time in Appendices A and B, which follow (Fig. 2.8).<sup>21</sup>

<sup>21</sup> I am most grateful to Clare Chapman for her assistance in editing this article and its appendices.

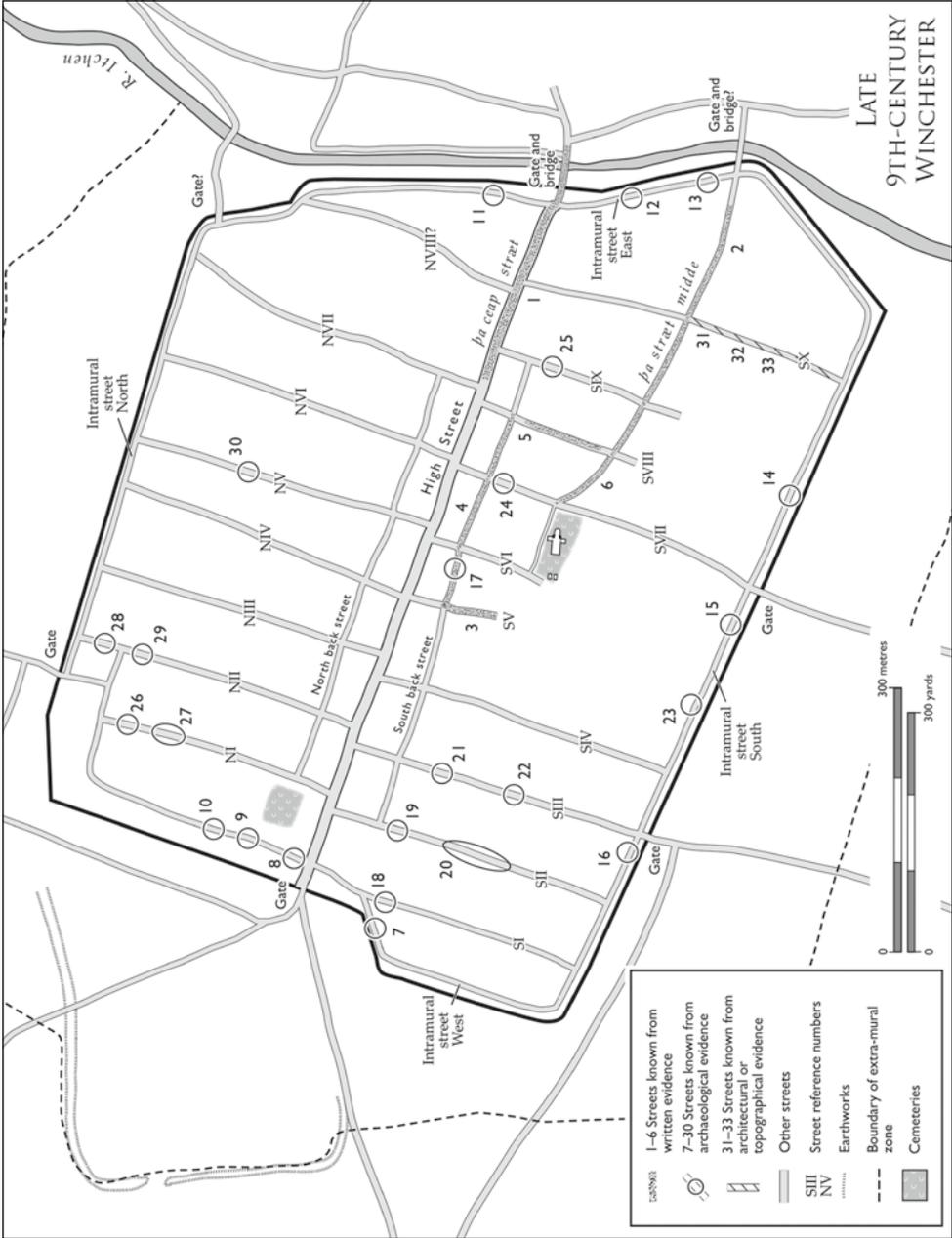


FIGURE 2.8 Winchester, the Anglo-Saxon, 9th-century street plan from WS 11 (Winchester Atlas) (Oxford, 2017), Fig. 16 (for the annotations, see here Appendix A). Drawn by Giles Darkes

## Appendix A: Winchester's Anglo-Saxon Street-plan: Written and Archaeological Evidence<sup>22</sup>

Entries 1–33 refer to sites numbered on Fig. 2.8.

### Written Evidence: Sites 1–6

1. *þa ceap stræt*

'the market street', before 5 January 902,<sup>23</sup> refers to the E part of the later High Street. Cf. London, *Westceap*, spurious charter of 1067, written ?in early 12th century, but with good OE forms, and *eastceape*, c.1100.<sup>24</sup>

2. *þa stræt midde*

'the mid street', before 5 January 902,<sup>25</sup> probably same as Entry 6.

3. *westrichte to ðære street*

'due west to the street', i.e. 'the west street', ?901,<sup>26</sup> a lost N–S street, see below South v.

4. *ðære norð stræte*

'the north street', ?901,<sup>27</sup> an E–W street, probably Back-street South, found in excavation, see Entry 17.

5. *ðære east strete*

'the east street', ?901,<sup>28</sup> a lost N–S street, see below South VIII.

6. *ðære suð strete*

'the south street', ?901,<sup>29</sup> an E–W street, probably the same as 'the mid-street', see Entry 2.

22 For further information on the Anglo-Saxon streets, see WS 11, pp. 27–29 and Gazetteer, pp. 68–69.

23 Alexander R. Rumble, *Property and Piety in Early Medieval Winchester: Documents relating to the Topography of the Anglo-Saxon and Norman City and its Minsters*, Winchester Studies 4.iii (Oxford, 2002), Doc. 1, pp. 45–49, Fig. 7 (hereafter WS 4.iii).

24 Eilert Ekwall, *Street-Names of the City of London*, revised ed. (Oxford, 1965), pp. 182–85.

25 WS 4.iii, Doc. 1, pp. 45–49, Fig. 7.

26 WS 4.iii, Doc. 11, pp. 50–56, Fig. 8.

27 WS 4.iii, Doc. 11, pp. 50–56, Fig. 8.

28 WS 4.iii, Doc. 11, pp. 50–56, Fig. 8.

29 WS 4.iii, Doc. 11, pp. 50–56, Fig. 8.

## Archaeological Evidence: Sites 7–30

### *a. Intra-mural Streets*

#### Intra-mural Street West

(NB: the part to the N of High Street is perhaps *Snidelingestret* ('people living at a place overgrown with coarse grass')<sup>30</sup>)

#### 7. Beneath Castle Yard, 1971

a street running NE–SW, levelled into and parallel with the Roman rampart behind city wall, and resurfaced at least nine times. Rather less than 2 m wide, the first surface made of small broken flints, notably similar to the first surface of the adjacent N–S South 1, see below Entry 18.<sup>31</sup>

#### 8. Beneath the S end of Tower Street

close to the junction with High Street and opposite the SE angle of the new county offices (now Queen Elizabeth II Court), then under construction, in the area of Features 76–80, of which Feature 79 produced some finds probably of “ninth century” date. It seems to be no more than an assumption that the early street lay here below the south end of Tower Street.<sup>32</sup>

#### 9. Opposite 56 Tower Street, 1999

and to the east of the 1964 excavations of the western defences “the insertion of a manhole”<sup>33</sup> revealed a

... thick flint metalling, probably of Roman date ... at a depth of c.2.7 m that directly overlay the natural subsoil. Its substantial nature is indicative of a street that possibly ran north–south, immediately within the line of the western defences of the Roman town.<sup>34</sup>

Given the absence of evidence for the existence of a Roman intra-mural street at *Venta*, and the small extent of a manhole excavation, this is more likely to be an observation

<sup>30</sup> WS 1, p. 235.

<sup>31</sup> Martin Biddle, “Excavations at Winchester 1971. Tenth and Final Interim Report,” *Antf* 55 (1975) 103, Fig. 3 (hereafter *x Interim*).

<sup>32</sup> John Collis, *Winchester Excavations 1949–1960. Volume 11: Excavations in the Suburbs and the Western Part of the Town* (Winchester, 1978), p. 201, Fig. 84.

<sup>33</sup> David Hopkins, ed., *Archaeology in Hampshire: Annual Report 1999*, Hampshire County Council (Winchester, 2000), p. 63.

<sup>34</sup> A.P. Fitzpatrick, “Roman Britain in 2000: 9. Southern Counties,” *Britannia* 32 (2001), 376.

of a Roman E–W street, perhaps Street 2 (Fig. 2.6), or of Anglo-Saxon Intra-mural street West.

10. Dump of cobbles at east end of Trench III at Tower Street (Final phase 10), 1964 with its W edge c.15 m E of inner (E) face of Roman city wall.<sup>35</sup> If Entries 8 and 9 indicate that the line of Anglo-Saxon Intra-mural street West lay below Tower Street, these cobbles probably lie too far W to be part of the street.

#### Intra-mural Street North

No known archaeological evidence at July 2018.

[but see Ward-Evans report in *Hampshire Chronicle*, 2 July 1938: it is unclear whether this relates to a Roman N–S street or to Intra-mural street North]

#### Intra-mural Street East (now Colebrook Street East)

11. 75–79 Eastgate Street, 1989 and 1999

Excavation at three points over a length of about 20 m revealed a “flint metallated surface” probably representing “the latest use of the medieval intra-mural street ... first constructed on top of the Roman bank as early as the late ninth-century”. No dating evidence is reported.<sup>36</sup>

12. 10 Colebrook Street, 1986

Excavation revealed “a sequence of cobbled surfaces” at the W edge of the excavated site (Phase 4a). Layer 162, the first of the three phases of cobbling, “consisted of a compact surface of tightly packed small and medium-sized flints,” probably representing the east edge of the early medieval Colebrook Street.<sup>37</sup>

13. Magdalen Almshouses, 1980

Excavation in Trench III revealed

... a possible Roman street (F 13) ... on a north–south alignment to the rear of the [Roman] rampart ... the remains of at least three metallings had survived (Phase 301) ... it was at least 3.80 m wide.

The metallings are described as flint gravel. Phases 303–8 in Trench III were heavily disturbed by medieval pits and ‘truncated’ by post-medieval activity. It seems possible that F 13 was in fact a southward continuation of the post-Roman intra-mural

35 *III Interim*, Pl. LXIX, Layers 2/3.

36 Steven Teague, *75–79 Eastgate Street, Winchester: Report on Archaeological Evaluation 1999* (unpublished in Historic Environment Record [HER], 1999).

37 J. Zant, “The End of the Roman Period,” in G. Scobie et al., *The Brooks, Winchester. A Preliminary Report on the Excavations, 1987–88*, WMS Archaeology Report 1 (Winchester, 1991), pp. 29–31.

street observed to the N at 75–79 Eastgate Street (Entry 11) and 10 Colebrook Street (Entry 12).<sup>38</sup>

#### Intra-mural Street South

The central section of this street, from South v, Symonds Street (formerly Minster Street), to the Priory Gate runs along the S face of the Close Wall (for which, see South v). It seems clear that the wall was built to exclude the intra-mural street, which must therefore be older than the construction of the wall. The wall is conventionally dated to the 12th century.<sup>39</sup> Its massive simplicity, lacking plinths, buttresses, and freestone quoins, even at the dramatic salient angle at the junction of Symonds Street and St Swithun Street, suggests that the wall may be older, dating perhaps from the time of the establishment of the precincts of the three minsters by King Edgar in 970.<sup>40</sup>

#### 14. Pilgrim's School (within the cathedral precinct), 2005–07

Excavation revealed the presence of a

...spread of tightly packed flint nodules (137) that may have formed a rough track that ran immediately [*sic*] and parallel to the inside of the [Roman] wall ... It survived for a width of 2.0 m from the edge of the wall [but may have been wider].<sup>41</sup>

There was a narrow gully against the wall to the south of the metalled surface (cf. Entry 15) and a second slighter gully to the north.

...It is possible that the metalled surface ... is of [Late Saxon] date, constructed over the slighted Roman rampart along the side of the town wall ... to provide access to the wall to facilitate repairs.<sup>42</sup>

#### 15. 4a St Swithun Street, 1992

Excavation in Trench 2 under Taplin's Building showed that "the Roman rampart was cut into and a coarse metalled surface (F 106) was laid upon the levelled bank." Only a 1.1 m width of the metalled surface lay within the trench, but "it seems probable that it represents the late Saxon or later intra-mural street, predecessor to St Swithun Street. A small v-shaped ditch (F 109) ... can be seen as a roadside ditch" (cf. Entry 14).<sup>43</sup>

38 Zant, "End of the Roman Period"(as n. 37).

39 WS 1, pp. 301, 312, and 555.

40 WS 4.iii, pp. 136–39, Document VI. 2.

41 C. Champness et al. "Holocene Environmental Change and Roman Floodplain Management at the Pilgrims' School, Cathedral Close, Winchester, Hampshire," *PHFCAS* 67:1 (2012), 25–68, at p. 44.

42 Champness et al., "Holocene Environmental Change and Roman Floodplain Management," pp. 39, 44, and 54, Fig. 13C.

43 Steven Teague, *Archaeological Evaluation—4a St Swithun Street*, unpublished report in WRU and WMS archives, dated 5 November 1992.

16. Southgate Street, former Provost Cells, 2013

The excavation of Trench 4 revealed two successive metallated surfaces, the lower of “tightly pack[ed] angular flint cobbles” [Context 404], “probably an intra-mural street and associated with 10th–12th century pottery ... cut into the Roman bank” [of the southern defences].<sup>44</sup>

***b. Back Streets, Parallel to High Street to North and South***

Back Street North

No known archaeological evidence at July 2018.<sup>45</sup>

Back Street South

17. 31a–b The Square, 1988

Excavation revealed “a flint metallated surface” running E–W across the S part of the excavated area. The ‘road’ appeared

... to have been little used since its single surface was unworn and by the 10th/11th century it was sealed by a thick silty clay deposit. The street probably represents part of the original later Saxon street grid. Its apparent minimal usage and early closure are closely supported by the documentary evidence.<sup>46</sup>

The same as ‘the north street’, see above, Written evidence, Entry 4.

***c. North–south Streets: South of High Street (South 1–x)***

South 1, Beneath Castle Yard, No Known Name.

18. Castle Yard, 1971

the first of eight superimposed street surfaces “was made of a single layer of small broken flints, tightly packed together without any special bedding and forming a hollow surface about 1.5 m wide.” The eighth and latest surface reached a width of not less than 6.7 m.<sup>47</sup>

44 Steven Teague, *Old Guard House and Provost Cells: Evaluation Report, Southgate Street, Winchester, Hampshire*, Oxford Archaeology Report, unpublished in HER (2014), Paras. 3.6.7, 4.3.5, and pp. 25–26, Contexts 402 and 404, not to be confused with the supposed (but probably mis-identified) Roman intra-mural street represented by Context 419.

45 Ward-Evans observed “traces of a Roman road” under St George’s Street in 1931 but it is not clear whether this was an early metallating of St George’s Street or of one or both of the Roman N–S streets C or D (see Fig. 2.6): *Hampshire Chronicle*, 29 August 1931.

46 *WMS Newsletter* 3 (Feb. 1989), 3–5, Fig. 3.

47 *VIII Interim*, 285–89, Pls xxxix, xLa.

South II, Trafalgar Street

originally *Gerestret* (c.1110) probably ‘Grass street’,<sup>48</sup> the most extensively investigated of all Winchester’s Anglo-Saxon streets, excavated intermittently over a length of about 150 m.

19. Assize Courts South, 1964<sup>49</sup>

For the two early 10th-century coins from the lowest two surfaces of this street, see Appendix B.

20. Lower Barracks, 1989

Excavation records show that in 1989 Gar Street was investigated in four trenches, over a total length of 105 m. Both sides of the street were seen, indicating a width of at least 5.6 m, and both appear to have been built up throughout the length examined.<sup>50</sup> For the coin of Alfred recovered from “one of the earlier levels of a building abutting the street to the east,”<sup>51</sup> see Appendix B.

South III, Southgate Street

originally *Goldestret* (c. 1110), perhaps ‘Goldsmiths’ street’.<sup>52</sup>

21. Hotel du Vin, Southgate Street, 2011

observation of the Winchester Gas Main Project by Wessex Archaeology in 2011 recorded “metalled surfaces,” suggested by P.J. Ottaway to be “Anglo-Saxon and medieval?”<sup>53</sup>

22. Guard House, Southgate Street, 2011

observation of the Winchester Gas Main Project by Wessex Archaeology in 2011 recorded “metalled surfaces,” suggested by Ottaway to be “Anglo-Saxon and medieval?”<sup>54</sup>

South IV, St Thomas Street

originally *Calpestret* (c.1110), meaning unknown.<sup>55</sup>

No known archaeological evidence at July 2018.

48 WS 1, p. 234.

49 *III Interim*, 242–43, Pls LXXIII, LXXXII.

50 *WMS Newsletter* 4 (June 1989), 11.

51 Ottaway, *Winchester*, p. 219.

52 WS 1, p. 234.

53 Wessex Archaeology “Winchester Gas Main Project, Winchester, Hampshire,” *Wessex Archaeology Report 61060.05* (2011), unpublished in HER.

54 *Wessex Archaeology* 2011 (as n. 53).

55 WS 1, p. 233.

### South v, Little Minster Street

originally the north half of *Mensterstret* (1148), 'Minster Street'.<sup>56</sup> Original name unknown, but perhaps to be identified with 'the west street' (see above, Written evidence, Entry 3). Little Minster Street runs S from High Street in a slightly curving line down to the site of the former Minster Gate, at which point it reaches the NW corner of the Close Wall. From here the street runs S in a straight line down the W side of the Close Wall. At some date after the foundation of the almshouses of Christ's Hospital under the will of Peter Symonds in 1586, the southern half of Minster Street became known as Symonds Street.<sup>57</sup> The curving N half of Minster Street appears to reflect the western limit of the Anglo-Saxon and Norman royal palace, finally abandoned following the siege of Winchester in August 1141. The straight S half of the street respects, as does the E half of St Swithun Street, the wall of the Cathedral Close, a major intact monument, the flint work of which is not later than the 12th century and may be much earlier.

### 23. No. 24 St Swithun Street

In 1929 Ward-Evans recorded in the upper part of a deep excavation in the street opposite Miss Holloway's house (24 St Swithun Street),<sup>58</sup> "the old Roman roadway".<sup>59</sup> An excavation in St Swithun Street at this point will have been as much as 10 m north of the line of Intra-mural Street South. Since 24 St Swithun Street lies directly opposite the S end of Symonds Street, the observation probably relates to the S end of the former Minster Street.

### South vi

Lost street to the E of Little Minster Street, apparently giving entry to the west fronts of the Old and New Minsters.

No known archaeological evidence at July 2018 but see Fig. 2.8.

### South vii

Appears to lie here approximately one-street's width to the west of Roman N–S Street E, see Fig. 2.6.

### 24. Wessex Hotel, 1961

Excavation in 1961 on the S side of Market Lane in advance of the construction of the hotel, revealed an area of cobbling "on top of Roman Street E".<sup>60</sup> No metalled surface which might represent South vii was found to the west of the Roman street, but the

<sup>56</sup> WS 1, p. 234.

<sup>57</sup> WS 2, p. 863.

<sup>58</sup> *Warren's Winchester Directory 1929*, 224.

<sup>59</sup> *Hampshire Chronicle*, 5 October 1929.

<sup>60</sup> *I Interim*, 156–57, Pl. VIII A, Fig. 4, Fig. 5, Layer 27.

later arrangement of burials and buildings suggests that a route representing South VII lay on the expected line in this area of the site.<sup>61</sup>

#### South VIII

Lost, perhaps 'the east street', see above, Written evidence, Entry 5. Original name unknown.

No known archaeological evidence at July 2018.

#### South IX

Lost, beneath Nunnaminster precinct. Original name unknown.

25. Flint metallurgy found in excavation, 1973

Trench III, Layer 780 at approximately NGR, SU 48390 29273.<sup>62</sup>

#### South X

Lost, beneath Nunnaminster precinct and Wolvesey. Original name unknown. See below, Architectural and Topographical evidence, Entries 31–33.

### *d. North–south Streets: North of High Street (North I–IX or X)*

#### North I

Staple Gardens, originally *Brudenestret* (1148), perhaps 'Street of the Brides',<sup>63</sup> the second most intensively investigated of Winchester's Anglo-Saxon streets after South II (Entries 19–20).

26. Frederick Place 1960

excavation north of (the W–E return of) Tower Street, on the line of Staple Gardens, revealed in all three trenches "a layer of small cobbles, compact and heavily rammed in Trenches I and III in the western half of the site, less continuous in Trench II," which could represent a northern continuation of *Brudenestret*. Overlying layers (especially Layer 17) produced 10th- and 11th-century pottery including Winchester Ware.<sup>64</sup>

61 WS 4.i, Part III, Chapter 3.iii, Figs 106, 107a, and 107c.

62 *Current Archaeology* 102 (Nov. 1986), 206; see WS 4.i, Part x, Chapter II. 1. iv, Figs 6A, 128.

63 WS 1, p. 233.

64 John Collis, *Winchester Excavations 1949–1960. Volume II: Excavations in the Suburbs and the Western Part of the Town* (Winchester, 1978), pp. 165, 178, Figs 68–69, 74 with pottery nos 57–59.

27. Staple Gardens, Discovery Centre, 2005–07<sup>65</sup>

Full excavation by Oxford Archaeology of a 5 m length of the street, with a width of up to 5 m, and up to seven superimposed surfaces.

Within Properties BW 2 and BW 3 “the earliest surface ... consisted of a single layer of tightly packed small flint cobbles ... which probably formed the base for a directly overlying surface of fine angular flint gravel”. Radiocarbon dates of 770–940 (OxA-17177) and 780–990 (SUERC-13909) from the silt over these surfaces, recalibrated by Bayesian modelling, “further refined these dates to 770–890 and 770–920 respectively ... which would suggest that the street had been in use for a significant period of time before 890, or at least had been subject to heavy wear.”<sup>66</sup>

Within Property BW 4 three superimposed surfaces produced “two statistically consistent radiocarbon determinations” of 780–970 (OxA-17173) and 730–970 (SUERC-13907), refined by Bayesian modelling to 830–940.<sup>67</sup>

The discussion concludes that “the dating ... suggests that the street grid was first laid out ... early in Alfred’s reign (871–99), or before, rather than during the 880s or later.”<sup>68</sup>

## North 11

Jewry Street, originally *Scowrtenestret*, ‘Street of the shoemakers’.<sup>69</sup>

## 28. Crown Hotel site

A length of 2.80 m of “tightly packed small and medium sized flints” (Layer 472) forming the earliest surface of the west side of the original N–S line of the street (F. 221) was excavated in Trench IV (Phase 531) and recorded in section (Layer 840) in Trench V (Phase 913).<sup>70</sup>

## 29. No. 28 Jewry Street, 2009–10

A “coin of Alfred, struck by the monyer Lulla between 875 and 880, [was] found within the earliest levels of a structure alongside the Saxon precursor to Jewry Street”.<sup>71</sup> For the coin, see Appendix B.

65 Ben M. Ford and Steven Teague, *Winchester—A City in the Making: Archaeological Excavations between 2002 and 2007 on the Sites of Northgate House, Staple Gardens and the Former Winchester Library, Jewry Street*, Oxford Archaeology Monograph 12 (Oxford, 2011), pp. 79–83, 189–90, Figs 3.3–3.7, Table 3.4. For an “Overview of the Scientific Dating Evidence,” see pp. 225–36, esp. pp. 225–26, 235–36.

66 Ford and Teague, *Winchester*, p. 189, Table 3.4.

67 Ford and Teague, *Winchester*, p. 229, Fig. 6.5, cf. Table 3.4

68 Ford and Teague, *Winchester*, p. 189.

69 WS 1, p. 234.

70 Zant, “End of the Roman Period” (as n. 37).

71 Ford and Teague, *Winchester*, p. 189. Due to legal dispute no known interim or full publication exists.

## North III

St Peter Street, originally *Alwarnestret* (c.1110), 'Æðelwaru's Street', later *Fleshmongestret* (1293–4 onwards), 'Street of the butchers'.<sup>72</sup>

No known archaeological evidence at July 2018.

## North IV

Parchment Street from late 13th century, originally *flæscmangra stræte* (996), 'Street of the butchers'.<sup>73</sup>

No known archaeological evidence at July 2018.

## North V

Upper Brook Street, originally *scyldwyrhtana stræte* (996), 'Street of the shield-makers'.<sup>74</sup>

## 30. Central Car Park, 1978

An evaluation excavation on the E side of Upper Brook Street (Trench 1) revealed "a series of metallised surfaces, of which the earliest probably represented the Late Anglo-Saxon street."<sup>75</sup> The W edge of The Brooks excavation which followed in 1987–88 lay to the E of the probable E edge of the Anglo-Saxon street.<sup>76</sup>

## North VI

Middle Brook Street, originally *Wenegenestret* (c. 1110), possibly 'Winegar's Street'.<sup>77</sup>

The E edge of The Brooks excavation of 1987–8 lay to the W of the probable W edge of the Anglo-Saxon street.<sup>78</sup>

## North VII

Lower Brook Street, originally *Tænnerestret* (990), 'Street of the tanners'.<sup>79</sup>

The E edge of the Lower Brook Street excavations of 1962–71 lay just to the West of the probable W edge of the Anglo-Saxon street which was not directly encountered.<sup>80</sup>

72 WS 1, p. 233. For the use of the name 'Fleshmonger Street', see WS 1, p. 234; WS 11, Gazetteer, 'St Peter's Street,' cf. 'Parchment Street'.

73 WS 1, p. 234; WS 2, p. 55.

74 WS 1, p. 235.

75 WMS archive; not mentioned in Scobie et al., *The Brooks, Winchester*, (as n. 37).

76 Scobie et al., *The Brooks, Winchester*, Fig. 27.

77 WS 1, p. 235.

78 Scobie et al., *The Brooks, Winchester*, Fig. 27.

79 WS 1, p. 235.

80 11 to x *Interim*, *passim*.

The excavation traced the development of properties along the W edge of the Anglo-Saxon street from the 10th century onwards, but although there was a long sequence of earlier Anglo-Saxon activity on the site, no evidence for its relationship to the street was possible.

#### North VIII

Busket Lane, originally *Bucchestret* (c.1110), possibly 'Street of the bleachers' or 'Street of Bucca', a personal name.<sup>81</sup>

No known archaeological evidence at July 2018.

### Architectural and Topographical Evidence: Sites 31–33

#### 31. Wolvesey wall (built 1377)

There are three blocked openings in the wall, the widest of which (Blocked gate III) lies on the line of the lost N–S street, South x.<sup>82</sup> The blocking is visible from the interior of the Wolvesey precinct in the S face of the wall and in the N face from the garden of 26 Colebrook Street.<sup>83</sup>

#### 32. Wolvesey, Woodmansgate

The principal entrance to the palace was built c.1158–71 on line of N–S street, South x, but at a slight angle to it, following the new alignment of the East Hall.<sup>84</sup> Roman N–S street G (Fig. 2.6) lies approximately one-street's width to the E of both the central passage of the gate and of South x.<sup>85</sup>

#### 33. Wolvesey

The West Hall built by Bishop Gifford c.1100 on the west side of N–S street, Street x,<sup>86</sup> can now be seen to have been aligned along it. The later East Hall, built by Bishop Henry of Blois c.1135, lies on a slightly different alignment.

81 WS 1, p. 233.

82 WS 1, Figs 9, 25–27.

83 Observed by Martin Biddle and Katherine Barclay, 2013–14.

84 WS 7.ii, p. 1204, Fig. 387.

85 *x Interim*, 321–23, 326, 328, Figs 17–19, Pls 62a–b.

86 WS 1, Figs 9, 25–27.

## Appendix B: Winchester: Anglo-Saxon Streets and Anglo-Saxon Coins

### Street South II (Gar Street)

1. Edward the Elder penny, horizontal type, Winchester style, minted c. 910–15, “continued to circulate well into the second half of the 10th century.”<sup>87</sup> Found on the lowest cobbled surface under ‘Street 1’ (i.e. on the surface of the earliest street).<sup>88</sup>
2. Kufic dirham, minted 905–906.<sup>89</sup> Found on the surface of ‘Street 1’ (i.e. the second street).<sup>90</sup>
3. Alfred penny, two-line type, of the moneyer Æthelwulf, Winchester style, minted 880–99.<sup>91</sup> Found in excavations at Lower Barracks 1989, “from one of the earlier levels of a building abutting the street to the east,”<sup>92</sup> “associated with a workshop adjacent to Gar street.”<sup>93</sup> For the coin, see *Coin Register 2007*, no. 276.<sup>94</sup>

### Street North II (Jewry Street)

1. Alfred penny, cross-and-lozenge (crossbar) type, of the moneyer Lulla, struck between 875 and 880.<sup>95</sup> Found in excavations at 28 Jewry Street “within the earliest levels of a structure alongside the Saxon precursor to Jewry Street.”<sup>96</sup> For the coin, see *Coin Register 2010*, no. 194.<sup>97</sup>

87 Martin Biddle, ed., *The Winchester Mint and Coins and Related Finds from the Excavations of 1961–71*, Winchester Studies 8 (Oxford, 2012), p. 613, No. 6. (hereafter WS 8)

88 III *Interim*, p. 242, Pl. LXXXII.

89 WS 8, pp. 695–98.

90 III *Interim*, p. 242, Pl. LXXXII.

91 Early Medieval Coin Catalogue [EMC] number 2007.0001. Type N 639 in Jeffrey. J. North, *English Hammered Coinage, 1: Early Anglo-Saxon to Henry III c.600–1272*, 3rd ed. (London, 1994).

92 Ottaway, *Winchester*, p. 219.

93 Ford and Teague, *Winchester*, p. 189.

94 *British Numismatic Journal* 77 (2007), 331.

95 EMC 2009.0123. Type N 629 in North, *English Hammered Coinage, 1* (as n. 91).

96 Ford and Teague, *Winchester*, p. 189.

97 *British Numismatic Journal* 80 (2010), 225.

## Words and Swords: People and Power along the Solent in the 5th Century

*Jillian Hawkins*

The years between the withdrawal from Britain of Roman Imperial power and the establishment of the early Anglo-Saxon kingdoms have long provoked interest among historians and archaeologists as to what was actually happening. One reason for this perennial fascination must be the lack of evidence, which allows theories to develop: none of the (few) written sources is impartial, and any concrete archaeological evidence will suggest an historical belief according to the believer. As David Mattingly puts it succinctly, “The ending of Roman Britain is a subject of few facts and many theories.”<sup>1</sup> When we develop a theory, we bring our own prior knowledge and interests, hoping to add just that little bit extra to what has been proposed before. And thus it is here.

Where written sources, archaeology or landscape offer little to work on, place-names may provide evidence, by indicating who first used the elements in those place-names and passed them on in the names which survive even to the present day. However, even place-names can become traps for the unwary.<sup>2</sup> No contextual evidence should be ignored. Just as it has been stressed that context and local factors were, and are, important where names are first used, it is also important to consider why names survive. The history of an area will help to discover reasons for name survival: likewise name survival will contribute to what is known of the area’s history. Thus here, not only place-names, but also history and archaeology too take their place in understanding what was happening in the Solent area in the pre-Roman and Roman times, and during the events of the 5th and 6th centuries. The Solent appears to have been a waterway of ancient and continued importance, and the people who lived on its shores to have been people of some standing. Coastal change would have affected trade and lifestyle as the years progressed. In the area here under consideration, i.e. the Solent coast between Southampton Water and Bognor, together with the north coast of the Isle of Wight, geological and landscape

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1 David Mattingly, *An Imperial Possession: Britain in the Roman Empire* (London, 2007), p. 529.

2 Margaret Gelling, *Signposts to the Past*, 1st ed. (Chichester, 1978), p. 12. This is a sentiment which Barbara Yorke will recognise from our discussions when I was her student.

change have brought great differences to the way people have lived their lives in the last 1,500 years. Place-names will reflect people's lives, and what is significant to those people.

### The Place-name Element *ōra*

One of the recurrent place-name elements in the area under consideration is *ōra*. The word in this form appears to have, or to have developed, various significances in Old English, and has sources and cognates in more than one language, deriving from Latin, and also from Old Norse and Latin.<sup>3</sup> There is also the OE term *ōr* "beginning, origin, front,"<sup>4</sup> cognate with ON *óss* "mouth, outlet of a river" (as in Oslo) and with Latin, *ōs, oris; ostium*, "mouth" (as in Ostium, port of Rome), and O Slav *usta*, "mouth."<sup>5</sup> In oblique cases *ōr* would have needed a second syllable, thus adding to the confusion with oblique cases of *ōra*.

It is therefore quite difficult to ascertain the exact significance of derivatives of *ōra* in the many place-names along the Solent and Channel coasts which contain the element, and to complicate things further, there are two places called Ower, both in different situations, in Hampshire. Here, names on the section of coast between Southampton Water and Bognor, and the coast of the Isle of Wight will be considered. Since there are other elements deriving from Latin in the area, it appears likely that it is the Latin word *ōra* which should be considered, and this in itself has been the focus of discussion by many scholars.

### The Significance of the Element *ōra*

In the days of the Roman Empire, the word *ōra* was used in Latin by Classical authors to indicate some sort of edge in general, and in particular a coast or sea-coast. The term *ōra maritima* could be used to signify the inhabitants of a coastal region, and hence a region or country, even a world or a zone. In either a transferred or a different meaning, *ōra* could be used for a boat's rope or cable.<sup>6</sup> Among related Latin words and uses are *ōrārīus*, 'belonging to the coast, a coastal vessel', *\*ōrātīm*, 'from coast to coast'.<sup>7</sup>

The discussion gradually became wider and more detailed as the study of philology progressed. Eilert Ekwall did not mention the Latin connection,

3 John Hines, pers. comm., 2 Oct. 2009.

4 Henry Sweet, *The Student's Dictionary of Anglo-Saxon* (Oxford, 1896), p. 133.

5 *CDEPN*, p. xlvi.

6 C.T. Lewis and C. Short, *A Latin Dictionary* (Oxford, 1879), p. 1274; *CDEPN*, p. 415.

7 Lewis and Short, *Latin Dictionary*, p. 1274.

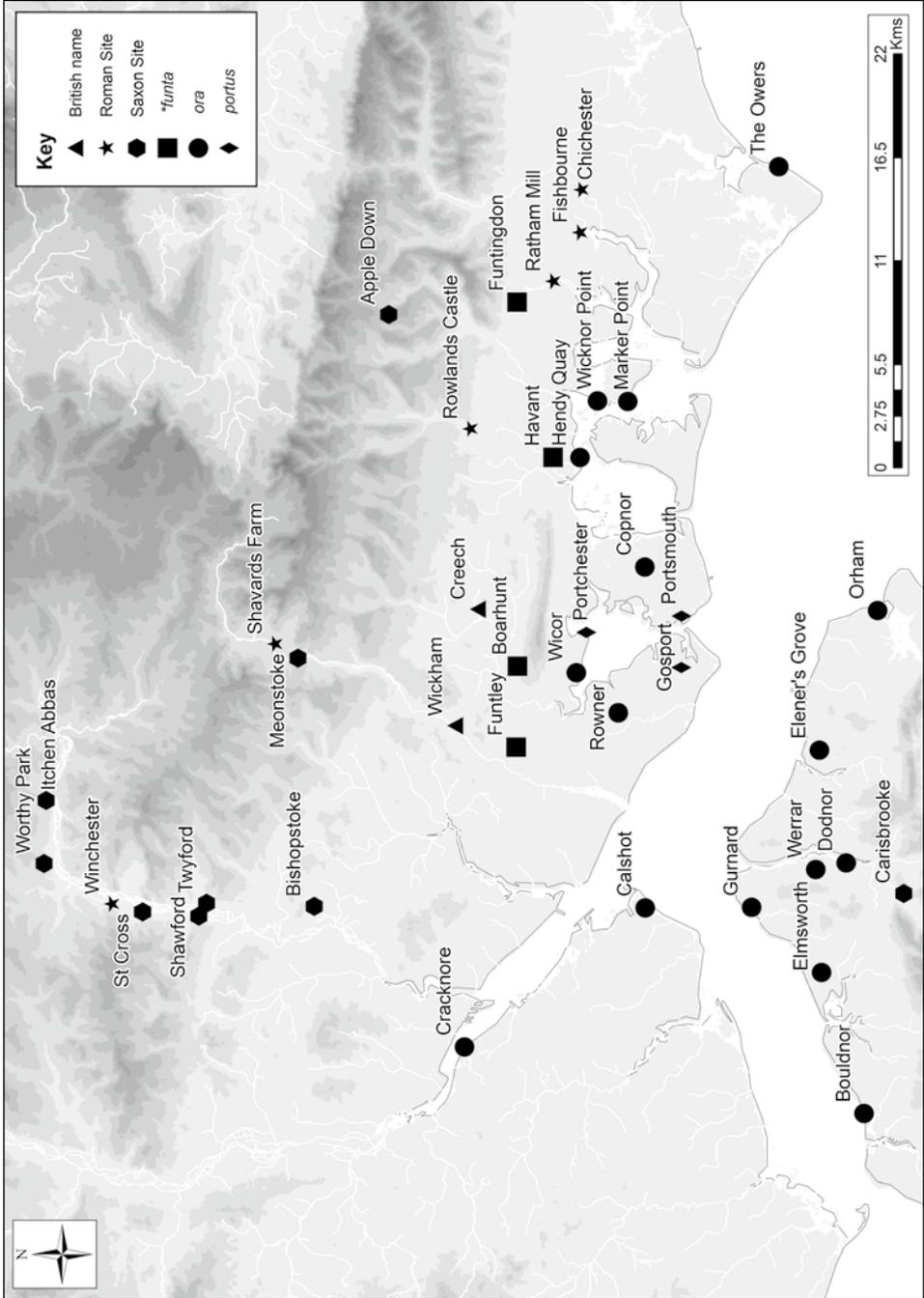


FIGURE 3.1 The distribution of *funta*, *ora* and *portus* place-name elements against select archaeological sites dated to the Roman and Saxon periods

concentrating on the word as an OE word ‘border, margin, bank’,<sup>8</sup> suggesting specific waterside connotation: “firm foreshore, gravelly landing-place” as on the coast of Hampshire, and indeed in places such as Windsor, “riverside landing place with a windlass.”<sup>9</sup> In 1956, A.H. Smith gave two uses of the word, giving the OE use as “border, margin, bank, edge,” and the Latin use as “rim, bank, shore.”<sup>10</sup>

In his unpublished collection of notes on Hampshire place-names, J.E.B. Gover listed the two places called Ower in Hampshire, giving both as from *ōra*. Inland Ower near Cadnam (O.S. SU 3216) is “bank, shore etc.”; coastal Ower near Calshot (O.S. SU 4701) is “shore, bank.”<sup>11</sup> Richard Coates listed both places, considering OE *ofer* and *ōra* to differentiate significance, while he uses the meaning of a landing-place in his explanation of Copnor as “Coppa’s shore or bank.”<sup>12</sup>

Margaret Gelling brought up the idea of different meanings, pushing the discussion further with the statement that “There is a clear dichotomy of meaning between coastal settlements ... and inland examples ...”<sup>13</sup> Later research by Ann Cole has concentrated on the use of *ōra* to signify a certain shape of hill, inland as well as near the coast,<sup>14</sup> contrasting the use of *ōra* with that of *ofer*, and, in an important collaboration with Margaret Gelling, illustrations were employed to prove the point;<sup>15</sup> Cole suggests that the beach (*ōra*) could have transferred its name, when called out by approaching sailors, to be understood by foreigners as referring to the nearby flat-topped hill. The OE word *ōra*, it is suggested, is related to Latin *ōra*, ‘rim, bank, shore’.<sup>16</sup> Thus, although concentrating on the significance ‘flat-topped hill’, Cole still admits a

8 *ODEPN* p. 350.

9 *ODEPN*, p. 523.

10 A.H. Smith, *English Place-name Elements*, 2 parts (Cambridge, 1956), 2:55.

11 J.E.B. Gover, *The Place-Names of Hampshire* (Unpublished typescript, held in Hampshire Record Office, Winchester, c.1961).

12 Richard Coates, *The Place-Names of Hampshire* (London, 1989), p. 128; p. 59. With regard to Gover and Coates, see also the discussion of the two places in Hampshire called Ower, in *CDEPN*, p. 457. The former is suggested as a possible confusion with *ofer* (not discussing Ann Cole’s 1989/1999 distinction [for which, see below]), the latter from *ōra* which he takes to signify “shore” and gives as an OE word.

13 Margaret Gelling, *Place-Names in the Landscape* (London, 1984), pp. 179–82 (quotation at p. 179).

14 Ann Cole, “The Meaning of the Old English Element *Ōra*,” *JEPNS* 21 (1989), 15–22; “The Origin, Distribution and Use of the Place-Name Element *Ōra* and its Relationship to the Element *Ofer*,” *JEPNS* 22 (1990), 26–41.

15 Margaret Gelling and Ann Cole, *The Landscape of Place-Names* (Stamford, 2000), pp. 203–10.

16 Gelling and Cole, *Landscape of Place-Names*, p. 204.

dual meaning. John Pile agrees with Gelling's 1984 point that *ōra* has two meanings, and that in the Portsmouth area and the coast here, it is the Latin meaning 'shore, foreshore' which should be preferred.<sup>17</sup>

In a later piece on the linguistic aspects of British identity, Coates made the point that borrowed vocabulary betrays the presence of another culture, in this case a Latin word used in Britain by locals.<sup>18</sup> In this area it appears obvious that *ōra* was a word used locally, its significance deriving from the Latin *ōra*, used by the locals (and visitors) and taken on by Germanic newcomers, who had probably visited the coast before the 5th century for trade. David Parsons discusses loan-words, concluding that "relevant evidence varies according to region."<sup>19</sup> Given the nature of the local coastal region, and its variation over the last two millennia, it is obvious that *ōra* here has the significance so well described by Ekwall, i.e. a good place to beach your boats. However, the diversity of significance cannot be faulted. It is necessary, therefore, to accept that one word may have two quite different meanings, a not unknown linguistic feature, and echoing Smith's dual use (above), noted even in 1956.

The concentration of names with an *ōra* element suggests that the area itself may have been known as *The ōra*, and the name used by residents and visitors alike.<sup>20</sup> Also, since it is a Latin word, it may be assumed that it was used before the Germanic *adventus*, corresponding to Ptolemy's "Magnus Portus" (discussed below), continuing to be used afterwards, and even to the present day.

### *Some Local Names Containing the Element ōra.*

In most of the *ōra* names which are still used today, the word has changed in pronunciation—and thus spelling—with usage through the years. This indicates that the word and its significance were important in the local *lingua franca*, and was evidently widely used by the locals and by visitors. Some of the *ōra* names no longer appear to contain the element, such as Gurnard, Isle of Wight (O.S. SZ 470950), recorded as *de Connore*, *de Gomore als Gonmore* in 1279, from OE *gyru* + *ōra*, 'muddy shore';<sup>21</sup> and Marker Point (O.S. SU 746023),

17 John Pile, "Ōra Place-Names in the Portsmouth Area," *Hampshire Field Club Newsletter* 32 (1999), 5–8.

18 Richard Coates, "Invisible Britons: the View from Linguistics," in *Britons in Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. Nick Higham (Woodbridge, 2007), pp. 172–91, at p. 188.

19 David Parsons, "Sabrina in the Thorns: Place-Names as Evidence for British and Latin in Roman Britain," *Transactions of the Philological Society* 109 (2011), 113–37, at p. 134.

20 Gelling, *Place-Names in the Landscape*, p. 179.

21 Helge Kökeritz, *Place-Names of the Isle of Wight*, *Nomina Germanica* (Uppsala, 1940), p. 187; *CDEPN*, p. 266.

1296 *Merkore*, from OE *mēarc* + *ōra*, ‘boundary on the shore’.<sup>22</sup> Today this is the point where the boundary between Hampshire and West Sussex arrives at the shore.

These names illustrate the acceptance of the element *ōra* by the newcomers, and the eventual addition of their own OE words to differentiate the places, a process of adoption followed by adaptation. Two names have the element *wīc* added, which, as discussed below, may be counted as either local Latin or brought from the homelands: Wickor Point on Thorney Island (O.S. SU 746039), which is suggestive of an *ōra* place-name;<sup>23</sup> Wicor (O.S. SU 600050), a trading (*wīc*) site outside the walls of Portchester castle, recorded c.1400 as *Wikoure*.<sup>24</sup> An indication of the persistence of place-name traditions is that Wicor has now given its name to the local area and primary school.

### Other Local Place-names Containing Latin Elements and their Significance

There is also a noticeable occurrence locally of other place-name elements which derive from Latin. Their survival alongside the *ōra* names is an indication that not only did local people use some Latin words in speech, but also that new arrivals adopted local terms.<sup>25</sup> Certain place-name elements still survive in names we use today. These elements are *vīcus*, *portūs* and *\*fūnta*, which are examined below. These Latin elements were later added to elements from OE, as they were taken on by people now speaking the early Old English language. When people give names to places, they use words which are significant to them in the context, and adapt them to suit their own pronunciation.<sup>26</sup>

The elements are as follows:

- Latin *vīcus*: district, street, village, estate, thus a designated place of settlement, with various significances.<sup>27</sup> The element *vīcus* was known to the Germanic incomers, and used in Old Saxony before the *adventus*, often there to

22 Allen Mawer and F.M. Stenton, with J.E.B. Gover, *The Place-Names of Sussex* (Cambridge, 1929–30), p. 62.

23 See generally Martin Bell, “Saxon Sussex,” in *Archaeology in Sussex to AD 1500*, ed. P. Drewett, CBA Research Report 29 (London, 1978), pp. 64–69, at p. 64.

24 Gover, *The Place-Names of Hampshire*, p. 22.

25 Margaret Gelling, “Towards a Chronology for English Place-Names,” in *Anglo-Saxon Settlements*, ed. Della Hooke (Oxford, 1988), pp. pp. 59–76, at p. 63.

26 *CDEPN*, p. xlvii

27 Simpson, ed., *Cassell’s New Latin-English, English-Latin Dictionary*, p. 641.

signify a road with dwellings. It continued to be used in parts of England, for many centuries, with various significances and alterations. One of the earliest uses combined *wīc* with OE *-ham*, to give *wīchām*, found across much of south-east England and indicating to the Germanic folk a place where Romano-British people were to be found.

- Latin *portūs*: Classical Latin uses the word to signify a harbour, haven or port, where customs duties could be collected<sup>28</sup> The element *portūs* survives in names in the area of Portsmouth harbour: Portsmouth (O.S. SU 6501), recorded in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* for 501 (from *portūs* + OE *muþa*, “harbour mouth”); Portchester (O.S. SU 625045), recorded in S 372 (A.D. 904) as *Porcestre* and *Porceastra* (from *portūs* + OE *cæster*, *ceaster* from Latin *castra*, “harbour, military camp”); Gosport (O.S. SZ 6199), recorded in 1251 as *Goseport* (from OE *gōs*, genitive plural *gōsa* + *portūs*, “goose place in the *portus*”).<sup>29</sup>
- OE *\*funta* (from Late Latin *fontāna*, ‘spring’): this word would have been taken from the Latin into Brittonic.<sup>30</sup> Even though it has never been found in writing in this form (hence the asterisk), it exists in place-names in oblique forms. Historical, landscape and archaeological evidence suggest that this was a place where there was, and in fact usually still is, a spring, perhaps of supernatural significance, and therefore important.<sup>31</sup>

The position of these names on what may have been cultural boundaries has been interpreted as reflecting their role as meeting places between resident Romano-British and incoming Germanic peoples. During the period of the Germanic settlement, resident and newcomer could meet there, to make a territorial agreement.<sup>32</sup> This is especially evident in Wiltshire, at Teffont (O.S. ST 985328) (*at Teofunten* in S 730 (AD 964), from OE *\*tēo* ‘boundary’ + OE *\*funta*) and Fovant (O.S. SU 005285), recorded in S 364 (AD 901) as *Fobbefunte*, which lie at the western limit of Germanic influence before the 7th century, together with Urchfont (O.S. SU 042574), recorded in Domesday Book (1086) as *Ierchesfonte*.<sup>33</sup>

28 Lewis and Short, *Latin Dictionary*, p. 1402.

29 *CDPEN*, pp. 478 (Portchester) and 257 (Gosport).

30 See the entry for *fons*, *fontanus* “spring, fountain,” in Simpson, ed., *Cassell’s New Latin-English, English-Latin Dictionary*.

31 Jillian Hawkins, *The Significance of the Place-Name Element \*funta in the Early Middle Ages*, BAR Brit. Ser. 614 (Oxford, 2015), pp. 12–15.

32 Hawkins, *Significance of the Place-Name Element \*funta*, pp. 101–06.

33 Hawkins, *Significance of the Place-Name Element \*funta*, pp. 22–28, 119–30.

The element *\*funta* is known in only 21 names, all in the south-east part of England, and four of them are in the Solent area. Together with Mottisfont, some distance to the west on the river Test, at O.S. SU 326269, Hampshire and West Sussex have almost a quarter of *\*funta* sites. In this area the four *\*funta* names occur in a clear demarcation line between the coastal *ōra* area and the early Anglo-Saxon settlement area on the Meon north of Wickham, and Apple Down 1 north of Chichester. These names are: Funtley (O.S. SU 562082) (*Funtelei* in Domesday Book, from *\*funta* + OE *lēah*, ‘spring in a clearing’); Boarhunt (O.S. SU 604084) (OE *burh* gen sing *byrig* + *\*funta*, ‘spring in an enclosed space’), recorded in a 12th-century list of lands belonging to Old Minster, Winchester from a likely 10th-century context (S 1821) as *æt byrhfunt*; Havant (O.S. SU 717061) (OE pers name *Hama* + *\*funta*, ‘Hama’s spring’), recorded in S 430 (AD 935) as *æt hamanfuntan*; Funtington West Sussex O.S. SU 801081 (*\*funta* + OE *-ing* + OE *-tūn*, ‘settlement where there are springs’).

Arranged as they are to the north of the *ōra*, these names show a line of places where the resident British met the newcomers, apparently to give the latter permission to go inland from the *ōra*.<sup>34</sup> Along the *ōra*, trade was still important at that time, but the Germanic newcomers were largely farmers, as evidenced by their settlements upstream on the Meon. Havant lies at the southern end of the way to Rowland’s Castle Roman industrial site, at O.S. SU 733106, and at the junction of this road with the main Roman road from Chichester to the west. Havant was therefore a place to be kept in British hands. Funtington is north of the Roman site at Ratham Mill (O.S. SU 809064) but south of the early Saxon site at Apple Down; the new folk could go north but not stay in the south. Boarhunt may well have been an early sacred site; if the *\*funta* here had a supernatural significance, the early church may well commemorate this. The present early Saxon church is on a slight hill overlooking the *\*funta*. There are pre-English names such as Creech, O.S. SU 636102 (*crūg*, ‘hill, barrow, mound’) to the east of Boarhunt. Funtley is near the mouth of the Meon river, to the north of the *ōra* and at the western end of the Portsdown Hills. Rather than blocking the way upstream, since early Saxon artefacts are known from Meonstoke, it would seem that the *\*funta* here was an agreement site allowing passage upriver, but not settlement nearer the coast. The earliest Saxon evidence was found some 10 km north of Funtley.

34 Hawkins, *Significance of the Place-Name Element \*funta*, pp. 101–06.

## The Geology of the Solent Area and its Significance in Early Trading Links

The coastline of the Solent has changed substantially during past millennia. Southampton Water has developed from a river into the present wide estuary, fed by the Test, Itchen and Hamble rivers. Portsmouth, Langstone and Chichester harbours have developed from dendritic (branching) river systems, as the sea level has risen. Research by Chichester Harbour Conservancy group's project *Rhythms of the Tide* has indicated that in this harbour at least, change during the Holocene (the 10,000 years since the last Ice Age) has been very localised and varied.<sup>35</sup> Thus each locality should be individually assessed for change, although in general terms sea level has risen substantially all along this stretch of coastline.

In considering trade along this coast, *The Ora*, our concern here is not the trade for provisioning the Roman army in Britain following the Claudian invasion, which would have been supervised and controlled, in *The Portūs*, but a more general trading network. There is good evidence for wider than coastal trade along this stretch, and in fact there had been trade across the Channel and from further afield for many years. Links with the near Continent were important, and evidence from ceramic and coin finds demonstrates that in the 1st century BC the main local link was between Armorica and Hengistbury.<sup>36</sup> Despite the Roman invasion of Gaul in the 1st century BC, and the subsequent disruption there, including the rebellion in Armorica in 56 BC, the importance of Hengistbury continued during the first half of that century. However, trade routes changed through the years, each becoming more or less important.<sup>37</sup> Cultural links were also important. The similarity of the Iron Age temple on Hayling Island to those in northern France has been noted, indicating a more than economic link.<sup>38</sup>

Strabo, the Greek geographer, born perhaps in 63 BC, was in Rome in AD 21, where he wrote that the known exports from Britain at that time were grain, cattle, gold, silver, iron, slaves and hides.<sup>39</sup> In Mary Beard's apt paraphrase of

35 *Past Matters*, Heritage of Chichester District Annual Report, Chichester District Council 4 (2006). Pile, "Ora Place-Names," pp. 6–7.

36 Barry Cunliffe and Philip de Jersey, *Armorica and Britain*, Studies in Celtic Coinage 3 (Oxford, 1997), pp. 104–08.

37 Francis M. Morris, *North Sea and Channel Connectivity During the Late Iron Age and Roman Period (175/150 BC–AD409)* (Oxford 2010).

38 Anthony King and Grahame Soffe, *A Sacred Island: Iron Age, Roman and Saxon Temples and Ritual on Hayling Island* (Winchester, 2013).

39 Mattingly, *Imperial Possession*, p. 491.

Strabo, the British people are described “tall, bandy-legged and weird”<sup>40</sup> (though not too weird to be traded as slaves, apparently): “taller than the Celts, and not so yellow-haired” (εὐμηκέστεροι τῶν Κελτῶν ... καὶ ἥσσον ξανθότριχες). In Rome, Strabo claims to have seen “mere lads towering as much as half a foot above the tallest people in the city.” (ἀντίπαιδας ... τῶν ὑψηλοτάτων αὐτόθι ὑπερέχοντας καὶ ἡμιποδίω.)<sup>41</sup> He described how ships leaving Gaul on the evening ebb tide to cross the Channel would reach Britain by the eighth hour on the following day, the four main cross-channel routes being from the mouths of the rivers Rhine, Seine, Loire and Garonne. Unfortunately no destination ports are named.<sup>42</sup> Gallo-Belgic coins appear in Britain before the Christian era, also wine and oil amphoræ.<sup>43</sup> It is easy to understand why this part of the Channel coast became a profitable trading area. Not only was there good beaching facility in many accessible places all along the coastline, but also the Isle of Wight gave a measure of protection, as well as creating by its position the four tides a day of the Solent. The nature of the coastline provided sheltered berthing and shallow water for small boats. Proximity to the Continent encouraged contact. Best times and routes would have become common knowledge to traders. There is as yet no evidence that trading took place up-river, apart from on the Medina, where there are *ōra* names. Properly excavated and dated early Germanic evidence in the Isle of Wight is thin on the ground, except for the Chessell Down cemetery, at O.S. SZ 404851.<sup>44</sup> However, the mainland rivers flowing south on the mainland would have enabled the items listed by Strabo to arrive at the coast for export.

The only sure modern evidence of trade along the Solent coastline lies in the place-names in *ōra*, and the fact that a Latin word was used suggests that trade along here grew up during the Roman period. In the hinterland were the territories of the Atrebates around *Calleva Atrebatum* (Silchester) and the Belgae, around *Venta Belgarum* (Winchester). These two groups had fled to Britain from the strife on the Continent, prior to the Claudian invasion of Britain in 43 AD, and it appears that contact was maintained. The importance of the sea to the Belgae is shown by the number of marine creatures on their coinage.<sup>45</sup>

40 Mary Beard, *SPQR: A History of Ancient Rome* (London, 2016), p. 482.

41 Strabo, *Geography, Volume 2: Books 3–5*, ed. and trans. Horace Leonard Jones, Loeb Classical Library 50 (Cambridge, MA, 1923), IV.5, pp. 255–57

42 Mattingly, *Imperial Possession*, p. 30.

43 Morris, *North Sea and Channel Connectivity*, pp. 10–21.

44 Pat Barber, pers. comm. 17 Feb. 2016. On burials at Chessell Down, see Sue Harrington, “A Well-Married Landscape: Networks of Association and 6th-Century Communities on the Isle of Wight,” below, pp. 103–09. For Carisbrooke, see below, p. 64.

45 Chris Rudd, *Ancient British Coins* (Witham, 2010) p. 57.

However, it is difficult to see what items or substances were traded along the coast: the soil here provides little archaeological evidence, but at the Roman villa site *Spes Bona*, at Havant, ceramic evidence from the Isle of Wight and the New Forest was found, with Black Burnished Ware 1 from Poole and a little Samian ware from Gaul.<sup>46</sup> Havant was an important site in this part of Roman Britain: it was a route meeting place with access to the Channel, close to the pre-Roman temple on Hayling Island and possibly itself a religious site, as the Church of St Faith is still prominent in the centre.<sup>47</sup>

Along the coast to the east at Fishbourne, Purbeck marble and other stone from the Isle of Purbeck was used in the construction of the north wing of the palace, and there were also marbles from Turkey, Greece and Europe—as Barry Cunliffe has it, “a wide range of the most exotic veneers.”<sup>48</sup> This speaks of a much wider trading area than merely cross-channel or coastal, probably with bigger boats with a greater draught, needing deeper water than that provided at an *ōra*.

We have more information from Ptolemy (Claudius Ptolemæus), who lived in Alexandria until his death, probably around AD 170. He was an astronomer, mathematician and geographer, and though his observations and writings have been superseded, they are still a valuable source of information. Though his map of Britain was inaccurate by present standards, the system of latitude and longitude he developed helps to understand the information he gives, in his book *Geography*, Ch. 2, about the coast of what is now the English Channel. The mouths of the Exe, *Alaunus* (Avon) and Arun are shown, and between them the *Magnus Portus*. The use of *portūs* does not here necessarily indicate deep water; the word can be used to signify a harbour or port in general terms, and in this case is usually taken to refer to the stretch of coast between the Exe and the Arun. By using this term, Ptolemy gives us to understand that trade along the coast here was dense and important, so much so that it was common knowledge in the world at that time and deserved his name for it. The continued use of the element *ōra* demonstrates that the beaching facility was hugely significant to the locals, who were happy to make use of a Latin word which their trading partners used too. The terms *Magnus Portus* and *ōra* here probably indicate certain areas, rather than being used as actual place-names.<sup>49</sup>

46 Oliver J. Gilkes, “The Roman Villa at *Spes Bona*, Langstone Avenue, Langstone, Havant,” *PHFCAS* 53 (1998), 49–77.

47 Hawkins, *Significance of the Place-Name Element \*funta*, pp. 36, 141–43.

48 Barry Cunliffe, *Fishbourne: A Roman Palace and its Garden* (London, 1974), p. 109.

49 A.L.F. Rivet and Colin Smith, *The Place-Names of Roman Britain* (London, 1979), p. 408.

Trading continued into the 5th century, although the pattern of trade altered during the Roman period, as Roman expansion continued and conditions on the Continent changed.<sup>50</sup> However, during the later centuries of Roman power in Britain, piracy in the Channel became more and more threatening, usually from Saxons and Franks from the other side of the water. The defence system which was established for Britain was the line of forts along the Saxon Shore, or *Litus Saxonicum*, details of which were set out in the 4th-century *Notitia Dignitatum* which survives today only in 15th-century and later copies. The forts lie on the coast from Brancaster in Norfolk round to Portchester near Portsmouth. In this situation it would be surprising if trade had not been disrupted in the Channel. However, in the little creeks the people were more protected, so local trade could continue, and the use of the word *ōra* was still appropriate, and well-established. Gradually the power of Rome in Britain was eroded, until, early in the 5th century, Britain was apparently told to manage its own defence, under attack as it was on all sides.<sup>51</sup>

#### Events of the 5th and 6th Centuries: Evidence from Written Sources

Written accounts of the post-Roman Germanic incursus, such as those of Gildas or the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, are necessarily hardly impartial: neither gives the whole picture, since each reflects a single point of view. In any case, the *Chronicle* as we have it today was not written down until the 9th century, so was hardly a contemporaneous account of events, and the intent was to validate the presence of the emerging Anglo-Saxon power in Wessex. The entry for 449 describes how the incoming Germanic force in Kent, originally there to help the local folk, sent a message home, saying that they found the British whom they encountered worthless and the land profitable, hoping thus to persuade more of their kinsmen to join them. Their description of the British (whether well-founded or not) would have been a good incentive to farmers from across the Channel whose land was under threat in a changing climate.

However, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* does also offer some details of the arrival of Germanic people in the small coastal area here under consideration.

50 Michael Fulford, "Britain and the Roman Empire: the Evidence for Regional and Long-Distance Trade," in *Roman Britain: Recent Trends*, ed R.F.J. Jones (Sheffield, 1991), pp. 35–47.

51 On the problems of interpreting this narrative and the account of the 6th-century Greek historian, Zosimus, see Nicholas J. Higham, "Britain in and Out of the Roman Empire," in Nicholas J. Higham and Martin Ryan, *The Anglo-Saxon World* (New Haven, CT, 2013), pp. 41–42.

We are told that in 449 Jutes settled on Wight and in the area which would become Wessex. The story of the Jutes was told by Barbara Yorke<sup>52</sup> and their presence is confirmed by place-names: Bishopstoke (O.S. SU 465191) on the lower Itchen was recorded in the 960 charter S 683 as *Ytingstoc*, the outlying farm of the Jutes; and a valley near East Meon was *Ytedene*, which later became Eadens, now Roundabout Copse on the A272 (O.S. SU 678260).<sup>53</sup> This is not the place to discuss the names of these groups of people, whether they were in fact Saxons or Jutes, and in any case their ethnic or tribal affiliation may have changed after they had settled.<sup>54</sup>

The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* also describes other arrivals in the area. The dates, names and events listed in the *Chronicle* should not be taken literally, but provide a starting point for any discussion of the incursus,<sup>55</sup> so for the sake of simplicity the personal names, and the dates, used in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* are kept in the following discussion. In 477 Ælle, with his sons Cymen, Wlencing and Cissa, are said to have arrived at *Cymenesora*, now The Owers, off the coast at Selsey Bill, but probably, given local sea-level changes, a good *ōra* to land on in those days. Once on land, they appear to have moved off to the east, as after a battle they drove the locals into the Weald, which may have been any wooded area to the north. In 485, we are told, Ælle and his forces had arrived at Beachy Head, where they apparently broke through an agreed river border, the *mercreadesburne*, which name indicates that at some point they had been obliged to negotiate with the locals and thus that they did not have all the power. The border river which is called *mercreadesburne*, 'border river', is usually taken to be the Arun but which is more likely to have been the bourne at Eastbourne, since there is a *\*funta* site nearby, Bedford Well, now the name of a roundabout. The presence of a *\*funta* reinforces the statement of an

52 Barbara Yorke, "The Jutes of Hampshire and Wight and the origins of Wessex," in *The Origins of Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms*, ed S Bassett, (Leicester, 1989), pp. 84–96, 256–63.

Barbara Yorke, "The Meonware: the People of the Meon," in *The Evolution of the Hampshire Landscape: the Meon Valley*, ed. Michael Hughes, Hampshire County Council Archaeological Report 1 (Winchester, 1994), pp. 13–14.

53 *Ytedene* is in *The Pipe Roll of the Bishopric of Winchester 1301–2*, ed. Mark Page (Winchester, 1996). The Tithe Map and Tithe Apportionment Records for East Meon (1851–52), which include local places names are at Hampshire Record Office, 46M68/PD1 and 46M68/PD2.

54 See below, Nick Stoodley, "Costume Groups in Hampshire and their Bearing on the Question of Jutish Settlement in the Later 5th and 6th Centuries AD," pp. 70–94, and John Baker and Jayne Carroll, "The Afterlives of Bede's Tribal Names in English Place-Names," pp. 112–53.

55 Barbara Yorke, "Fact or Fiction? The Written Evidence for the Fifth and Sixth Centuries AD," *ASSAH* 6 (1993), 45–50. See also Courtney Konshuh, "Constructing Early Anglo-Saxon Identity in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*," below, pp. 154–80.

agreed boundary in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*.<sup>56</sup> Having broken through the boundary, Ælle then proceeded further eastwards to *Anderitu* (Pevensey).

In the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* entry for 495, Cerdic and Cynric arrived at *Cerdicesora*, which has so far not been securely located, but which appears from the following events to have been to the west, perhaps on the shore of what is now Southampton Water, which was part of the *ōra*. This may have been Cracnore (O.S. SU 405109), or maybe Calshot (O.S. SU 480012), recorded in a 980 charter as *æt Celcesoran* (S 836). Some years later, in the *Chronicle's* entry for 508, Cerdic and Cynric are said to have killed a British king named Natanleod (*leod*, "leader"), whose land extended across country as far as the river Avon, to Charford. Thus these two incomers, with their men, seem to have travelled across land to the north of the New Forest, to the Avon valley, instead of entering the Avon at Avonmouth and travelling upstream. Excavations in the Avon valley, for example at Breamore, demonstrate that there was indeed a strong, élite Germanic presence here. In 552—so the *Chronicle* relates—they were as far as Salisbury.

Again the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* states that in 501, a certain Port, with his sons Bieda and Mæglā, landed with two ships at Portsmouth (once again there is no comment here on the personal names given) and fought locally. No mention is made in the *Chronicle* as we have it of the occupation at Portchester. The fort was occupied from its inception, probably in the late 3rd century, and occupation continued more or less densely. Evidence suggests that, as well as the military, there was a civilian population here, with women and children, and that normal household activities were carried out. The occupants appear to have been a community of *læti*, who continued to live here in the 5th century, perhaps supplemented by more Germanic settlers. There are remains of sunken-featured buildings and ceramic débris to substantiate this.<sup>57</sup> Evidence of activity outside the fort is still provided by the presence of the place-name Wicor (*wīc* + *ōra*): since trading did not take place inside a fort, in this case *wīc* would indicate the usual external commercial site of the fort.

Is it to be assumed that the 5th-century arrivals ignored the people at Portchester? The fort was set well back into what is now Portsmouth harbour, protected from any piracy in the Channel. What is to be made of the British nobleman allegedly killed by the conveniently named Port and his men? Maybe they needed some action in the story as it was told in the 9th century. The *Chronicle* states that in 514 Stuf and Wihtgar arrived, turning south to the Isle of Wight. There are *ōra* names on the Solent coast of the Isle of Wight, and on the shores of the Medina, indicating that boats could be beached here, perhaps to trade

56 Hawkins, *Significance of the Place-Name Element \*funta*, pp. 37, 152–53.

57 Barry Cunliffe, *Excavations at Portchester Castle*, 2 vols (London, 1975–76).

here. The newcomers appear to have penetrated up the Medina to Carisbrooke, and we are told that Wihtgar died in 544 and was buried at his stronghold: indeed a rich male burial, dated to the early 6th century, has been excavated at Carisbrooke,<sup>58</sup> which at least gives some credence to the story if not to the names.

Thus, allowing for the inexactitudes of the *Chronicle*, we have four groups of Germanic incomers landing somewhere along the coast which, it is believed, from place-name evidence, was still known as the *ōra*. Where Port and his men went is not stated. Aelle and his men went east, Cerdic and his followers went west, and Stuf and Wihtgar went south. No-one went north, according to the story in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, yet archaeology tells it differently. There seems to have been a certain British power-base along this stretch of coast; there is no mention of weakness among the locals, as had been proclaimed in Kent. We have no tales of battles in this location, but finds of artefacts suggest a Germanic presence here. There are gaps in the official account as given in the words of the *Chronicle*.

### Events of the 5th and 6th Centuries: Evidence from Archaeology

At present there appears to be no significant evidence of a Germanic presence along the *ōra* shore. Slight evidence has been found near Funtley<sup>59</sup> and a continuing occupation at Portchester is known,<sup>60</sup> but new Germanic settlement along the coast is notable for its absence. Either, any immigrants were absorbed into the local culture, or, which seems more likely, the *ōra* residents had the power to direct newcomers elsewhere, along the coast or up the Meon or the Itchen. The lack of archaeological finds of Germanic settlement may well reflect the importance of the *ōra* as a British power base.

Upstream on the Itchen was Winchester, Roman *Venta Belgarum*. Just south of Winchester is St Cross, where two brooches were found: a supporting arm brooch of the early to mid-5th century and a miniature bow brooch of the late 5th or 6th century.<sup>61</sup> A low status farmstead existed just to the south.<sup>62</sup> A little

58 C.J. Young, ed., *Excavations at Carisbrooke Castle, Isle of Wight, 1921–96* (Salisbury, 2000).

59 Hawkins, *Significance of the Place-Name Element \*funta*, p. 35.

60 Cunliffe, *Excavations at Portchester Castle*, Vol. 2.

61 Mark Stedman, "Two Migration Period Metalwork Pieces from St Cross, Winchester, Hampshire," *PHFCAS* 59 (2004), 111–15.

62 James Lewis, "The Road to Nowhere? Winchester Park and Ride: Interim Results from the 2009 Compton Dig by Thames Valley Archaeological Services," Hampshire Field Club Lecture, 16 Mar. 2010.

further downstream at Shawford a small-long brooch of the late 5th or 6th century was found.<sup>63</sup> A cemetery dating from the late 5th or 6th century was excavated nearby at Twyford.<sup>64</sup> These finds demonstrate an early Germanic presence to the south of Winchester, where there appears to have been no hiatus in occupation: excavation in the city demonstrates that people were living here, apparently continuously: wherever excavation has taken place within the city, there is evidence of a continuity of activity from the 4th century into the 5th and 6th. Burials have been found close to the city, on St Giles Hill and West Hill, possibly relating to the population within.<sup>65</sup> Upstream on the Itchen, some 3 km from the city walls, the cemetery at Worthy Park dates from the 5th century, and the cemetery at Itchen Abbas primary school appears to span the late Roman/early Saxon period (Historic Environment Record site 32037).<sup>66</sup> The many finds from the Itchen valley above Winchester bear out the notion of a continuity of settlement in the area.<sup>67</sup>

There is no account in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* of any incomers going up the Itchen, but it is evident that they did. There is no evidence, so far, of any battles, warfare or strife which would have allowed the Germanic folk to go to, and beyond, Winchester. It would appear that they came peacefully, or at least without fierce fighting, and were allowed to settle in peace by the local inhabitants who had the power. If there had been a battle which the British won, it would not have made an impressive entry in the account of how the fierce newcomers fought their way into this area. If there had been a battle which the newcomers won, it would have been part of the foundation story and is unlikely to have been forgotten. Even though records are patchy, and written many years after the events, it is unlikely that such strife would have been ignored in the *Chronicle*.

However, in the Meon valley there is more convincing evidence of where the power lay. There has been significant excavation in this river valley, and investigation has continued with the Meon Valley Project. The earliest finds of

63 Mark Stedman, "Two Anglo-Saxon Metalwork Pieces from Shawford, Compton and Shawford Parish," *PHFCAS* 58 (2003), 59–60.

64 Kirsten Egging Dinwiddy, "An Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Twyford, Near Winchester," *PHFCAS* 66 (2011), 75–126.

65 Martin Biddle and Birthe Kjølbbye Biddle, "Winchester from *Venta* to *Wintancæster*," in *Pagans and Christians: from Antiquity to the Middle Ages: Papers in Honour of Martin Henig, Presented on the Occasion of his 65th Birthday*, ed. Lauren Gilmour, BAR Int. Ser. 1610 (Oxford, 2007), pp. 189–214.

66 Sonia Chadwick Hawkes with Guy Grainger, *The Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Worthy Park, Kings Worthy, Near Winchester, Hampshire* (Oxford, 2003).

67 Hawkins, *Significance of the Place-Name Element \*funta*, pp. 30–32.

an early Germanic presence have been at Shavards Farm, Meonstoke, where an early 5th-century supporting arm brooch was found, and also a 5th-century quoit brooch style belt fitting.<sup>68</sup> There had been a Roman villa at Meonstoke, notable enough for its façade now to be exhibited in the British Museum, and signs of a continued occupation were seen when the villa site was excavated,<sup>69</sup> so there may have been continuous sub-Roman occupation within the villa, and by the early 5th century there was a Germanic presence in the Meon valley. The cemetery near Shavards Farm demonstrates that people with Germanic tastes settled, worked, lived and died here.<sup>70</sup>

Again, instead of the incomers taking territory after fierce battles, killing the natives and destroying their way of life, in fact something else was going on. The new people did not have all the power, or gain an overall control, they had to negotiate with the residents. This is not unknown elsewhere: a similar situation seems to have occurred at Orton Hall Farm, Peterborough.<sup>71</sup> There is further evidence of genetic and cultural amalgamation in this area. South of Cambridge, Oxford Archaeology has revealed that at Oakington (O.S. TL 410644), the four individuals examined were culturally Anglo-Saxon but genetically a mixture of British and Anglo-Saxon ancestries.<sup>72</sup>

### Landscape Features

To the north of the coast between Selsey and Funtley there is the sharp rise of the Portsdown Hills, and behind these was, in the 5th century, the dense forest of Bere. These formed a barrier to anyone wishing to travel by land, but the incomers travelled by boat, seeking land to farm. There would have been access

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- 68 Barry Ager, "A Quoit Brooch Style Belt-Plate from Meonstoke, Hampshire," *ASSAH* 9 (1996), 11–14. (On the supporting arm brooch, Nick Stoodley, pers. comm.; this find is so far unpublished)
- 69 Anthony King, "The South-east Façade of Meonstoke Aisled Building," in *Architecture in Roman Britain*, ed. Peter Johnson and Ian Haynes, CBA Research Report 94 (York, 1996), pp. 56–69.
- 70 Nick Stoodley and Mark Stedman, "Excavations at Shavards Farm, Meonstoke: the Anglo-Saxon Cemetery," *PHFCAS* 56 (2001), 129–69, at pp. 164–65.
- 71 D.F. Mackreth, "Orton Hall Farm, Peterborough: a Roman and Saxon Settlement," in *Studies in the Romano-British Villa*, ed. Malcolm Todd (Leicester, 1978), pp. 209–28; Mackreth, *Orton Hall Farm: a Roman and Early Anglo-Saxon Farmstead*, East Anglian Archaeology Report 76 ([Peterborough] 1996). Hawkins, *Significance of the Place-Name Element \*funta*, pp. 30–32.
- 72 S. Schiffels, et al. "Iron Age and Anglo-Saxon Genomes from East England Reveal British Migration History," *Nature Communication* 7 (2016), <<https://doi.org/10.1038/ncomm10408>>.

inland via the Test, the Itchen and the Hamble rivers which flow into Southampton Water, and via the Meon which empties into the Solent. The entrance to the Test is shallow, muddy and difficult to navigate, and also is in the path of the prevailing south-westerly wind. The Hamble is winding, hence its name, OE *hamel* + OE *ēa*, ‘winding water’.<sup>73</sup> and tidal still for quite a long way upstream, muddy and uninviting, so perhaps it is not altogether surprising that these river mouths were, apparently, ignored, as no archaeological evidence has been found to date which might suggest an entry into them. Perhaps this gap in the written account is true. Yet neither are there are entries in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* telling of Germanic progress up the Meon or the Itchen, which would appear to have been an easier journey, and in fact in these two cases archaeology tells a different story: there was indeed a Germanic presence in these two river valleys, but no record of any strife which would have enabled such a presence. So two river mouths may well have been ignored for nautical reasons, but whereas the Meon and the Itchen also appear to have been ignored according to the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, archaeology and place-names provide evidence to the contrary, filling in more gaps. This suggests a variation in perceived power, perceived indeed by resident and newcomer alike, and by the historian, but studiously ignored by anyone writing the *Chronicle* and wishing to portray the Germanic settlement as following violent conquest.

### Conclusion: The Contribution of Place-names

At this point it is necessary to consider the information to be gained from a study of local place-names, and to remember that, after the lapse of anything approaching a Roman culture in Britain, literacy was extremely restricted. The incoming folk from the North Sea coast had runic script. The passage of any word from resident Briton to Germanic newcomer had to be effected in speech. To communicate in speech requires both parties to be alive, and near enough to each other to be within hearing distance. It also requires a willingness to listen and take notice of each other. If the resident cannot tell the new arrival the name for a place, that newly-arrived person will not know it. How else but by spoken communication would the new folk take on the names of the local rivers, names which are cognate with those of rivers on the European continent and adapted by them into the Old English names Test, Itchen, Hamble and Meon—thus continuing from a long tradition in the language. Such a transmission requires attention, interest and understanding. The proof that these names were transmitted is that we still use them today, just as we use

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73 CDEPN, p. 274.

Wight (Latin *Vectis*, Brittonic \* *ŪeXta*) and Solent (*Solunte*).<sup>74</sup> What price fire and the sword? History is written, we are told, by the victor, but victory may be achieved by various means.

It may be that the use of the word *ōra* was widespread through the trading network, so it cannot be assumed that this was a new word for anyone arriving from the opposite shore of the Channel. Even though it may be assumed that by the 5th century trade had diminished, if that were the name by which the coastal area was known, there must have been no reason to use a different name.

The Roman road from Chichester and the coast runs north-west, then forks just beyond the Meon to become the roads to Winchester and Clausentum. Near this fork, with varied evidence of Roman activity in the vicinity, is Wickham (O.S. SU 575115), the river Meon running through, Funtley to the south, Boarhunt to the east and the early Anglo-Saxon settlement to the north. Wickham as a place-name is quite widespread in southern England, and the word is believed to have a wider significance, in fact a compound of two elements used by the Anglo-Saxons as a description of a type of place which they encountered, thus an appellative. Its significance appears to have been that of a place where newcomers found an enclave of native power which was to be respected, so they coined a term for such a place, using *wīc*, a place of non-military settlement, not a *ceaster* which would have been a military camp, + *-hām*, an early habitative term.<sup>75</sup> The existence of a *wīchām* is always a clue to the events in its area.

There is also a sub-text within the *Chronicle*, to be found in the gaps. This will exist in any written account, for, according to Jacques Derrida, “writing is never governed by the intention and avowed aims of its authors,”<sup>76</sup> and this will be especially true of an account produced for propaganda. For example, when Ælle is said to have landed at Selsey, he obviously turned east, but no comment is made. Neither is a reason given for the western landfall of Cerdic and Cynric: the only people who seem to have landed where they wanted to be were Stuf and Wihtgar. It is therefore to be assumed that the northern Solent coast was either unattractive, which was obviously not the case, or impossible to settle on because there was already a strong power base there, having been built up through trade for many centuries. The Saxons of the 9th century were not prepared to admit that. It would not have added to the foundation myth.

74 Hawkins, *Significance of the Place-Name Element \*funta*, pp. 29–30.

75 Hawkins, *Significance of the Place-Name Element \*funta*, p. 208.

76 Ann Jefferson and David Robey, eds., *Modern Literary Theory: A Comparative Introduction*, 2nd ed. (London, 1986), p. 116.

So in the 5th century any arriving Germanic folk were directed to the north of the *ōra*, and into Southampton Water. Allowed into the mouth of the Meon, they were then permitted upstream beyond the important Romano-British settlement at Wickham, and settled with or near the Romano-British people who were still occupying the villa at Meonstoke, and where the land had already been tilled. Allowed into the Itchen, they progressed upstream to Winchester, where they settled beyond the city walls.

Why is there no record of battles, with numbers of the slain, blood and gore and victory for the newcomers? No record of the warlike, glorious beginnings of Anglo-Saxon Wessex? It may indeed have been that there were no such happenings in this particular area, even though there was probably plenty of warfare elsewhere. Place-names bear witness to the fact that Germanic people did indeed settle in this small area, perhaps in different circumstances from elsewhere in Britain, and perhaps with eventual cultural assimilation, supporting the evidence of archaeology, and filling in the gaps in the story. The words we use in modern place-names supplement, and often override the words used in the *Chronicle*. You don't learn someone else's words by killing him. With a supra-semantic significance, words can be more powerful than swords and can take on a life of their own.

## Costume Groups in Hampshire and Their Bearing on the Question of Jutish Settlement in the Later 5th and 6th Centuries AD

*Nick Stoodley*

Bede's account of the arrival of Germanic migrants provides the clearest evidence for Jutish settlement in Britain during the early Anglo-Saxon period. He tells how the Jutes settled in Kent, the Isle of Wight and that part of the mainland opposite Wight (Bede *HE* 1.15). Archaeological evidence for the Jutes is however not as extensive as it is for the Angles and Saxons.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, if it were not for Bede, scholars may never have held the Jutes responsible for the appearance of artefacts of South Scandinavian derivation in East Kent. It is not surprising therefore that in recent years the idea of a Jutish migration has come under critical scrutiny, especially from scholars who are wary of relying too heavily on the written sources.<sup>2</sup> Further away from East Kent, archaeological evidence for Jutish settlement is weaker. The Isle of Wight has a modest collection of finds linking it to East Kent and Jutland, while southern Hampshire has produced very few such artefacts.

This essay will re-examine the question of Jutish settlement in Hampshire, but rather than focusing on individual artefacts it places the emphasis on female dress. Folk costume provided an important way to mark out group identity in early medieval society and it will be argued that variations in costume in Hampshire have the potential to reveal a group that claimed Jutish ethnicity. This identity was deliberately created in the later 5th and 6th century; the motive behind this ethnogenesis coming from an external force.

1 Andrew Richardson, *The Anglo-Saxon Cemeteries of Kent*, BAR Brit. Ser. 391 (Oxford, 2005), p. 250.

2 Pernille Sørensen, "Jutes in Kent? Considerations on the Problem of Ethnicity in Southern Scandinavia and Kent in the Migration Period," in *Method and Theory in Medieval Archaeology: Death and Burial in Medieval Europe—Papers of the 'Medieval Europe Brugge 1997' Conference*, 10, ed. Guy De Boe and Frans Verhaeghe (Brugge, 1997), pp. 165–73; Pernille Kruze, "Jutes in Kent? On the Nature of Jutish Kent, Southern Hampshire and the Isle of Wight," *Probleme der Küstenforschung im südlichen Nordseegebiet* 31 (Oldenburg, 2007), pp. 243–376.

### Costume in North West Europe and Southern Scandinavia during the Migration Period

Gregory of Tours provides a useful starting point with his claim that Queen Fredegund ordered the Saxons who were settled around Bayeux not only to dress as Bretons but also to adopt their hairstyles in order to fight alongside the Bretons against the Frankish duke Beppolen.<sup>3</sup> This tactic gave the impression of a large but also unified Breton resistance—costume was understood as a way in which similarity and difference was articulated and here it created the sense of a common identity. However, it is with female dress that the remainder of this essay is concerned. Women were very much the purveyors of cultural identity, as one sees in the clear regional differences that existed throughout migration-period Europe. The evidence from Lombardic graves reveal that women wore a long-sleeved single-piece undergarment secured at the neck by a brooch of disc or 'S' form, while an outer dress was fastened by a pair of bow-brooches at the waist and a single brooch over the chest.<sup>4</sup> In addition, stockings were secured at the knees, a bead necklace was often worn, and the costume was finished off by a variety of metal implements suspended from the girdle.<sup>5</sup> In both Alemannic and Frankish territories garters were also used to cover the lower legs,<sup>6</sup> although the actual dress itself demonstrates subtle differences. In the former, a pair of bow brooches was positioned one above the other over the upper body,<sup>7</sup> while in Francia, a robe was commonly donned that employed a pair of brooches in the area of the neck and another around the waist to clasp it. Likewise, women living under Visigothic control in the Iberian Peninsula in the later 5th and earlier 6th centuries had adopted a standard type of costume: a pair of brooches, often bow-brooches (*Bügelfibeln*), fastened a cloak at the shoulder or chest level, while various types of buckles secured belts.<sup>8</sup>

Analysis of 4th- and 5th-century graves in the Elbe-Weser triangle have shown that women in the Saxon homelands wore a peplos dress that was fastened at each shoulder by a brooch and in many cases a bead necklace was

3 Edward James, *The Franks* (Oxford, 1988), p. 101.

4 Neil Christie, *The Lombards* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 43–44.

5 Christie, *The Lombards*.

6 Gale Owen-Crocker, *Dress in Anglo-Saxon England*, rev. ed. (Woodbridge, 2004), p. 50.

7 Rainer Christlein, *Die Alamannen* (Stuttgart, 1978), p. 78, Fig. 54.

8 Gisela Ripoll López, "Symbolic Life and Signs of Identity in Visigothic Times," in *The Visigoths from the Migration Period to the Seventh Century*, ed. Peter Heather (Woodbridge, 1999), pp. 403–31.

strung between the fasteners.<sup>9</sup> For example, the individual in Helle grave 20 had a pair of supporting arm brooches on the shoulders between which two strings of beads were suspended.<sup>10</sup> Just over a third of women had an additional brooch over the chest that probably fastened an outer garment. In grave 3532 at Issendorf, a richly attired adult woman had been interred in a burial chamber wearing a dress that was secured at each shoulder by an applied brooch and there was also a chip-carved equal-arm brooch that probably secured a garment of outer clothing.<sup>11</sup>

The dominant burial rite in the region occupied by the Angles was cremation and consequently very little is known about their costume. The general burial practice in the area traditionally believed to have been occupied by the Jutes (northern Jutland) was inhumation and the evidence from two cemeteries reveals that the majority of graves contained single brooches and/or pins, though a small number also had evidence for a peplos (see below).

### Costume Groups in England in the Late 5th and 6th Centuries

Costume evidence from South East England during the later 5th and 6th centuries provides the background against which Hampshire will be evaluated. The presence of two distinct styles as signalled by the number and positions of brooches that roughly equated with Anglian and Saxon areas of culture was recognised by Leeds.<sup>12</sup> It was not until Vierck's study, however, that these were broken down into smaller regional groups and their boundaries mapped.<sup>13</sup> Gale Owen-Crocker's study of Anglo-Saxon dress identified that although the peplos was a universal garment worn throughout much of England, regionalisation was an important factor with a tripartite division between Saxon, Anglian and Kentish regions.<sup>14</sup> In Anglian and Saxon areas a peplos was the standard item, but in the former it was more likely to have had a cloak worn over the

9 Hayo Vierck, "Von Der Trachtprovinz Zur Bevölkerungs-Geschichtlichen," in *Sachsen Und Angelsachsen*, ed. Claus Ahrens (Hamburg, 1978), pp. 285–93.

10 Horst Wolfgang Böhme, *Germanische Grabfunde Des 4. Bis 5. Jahrhunderts Zwischen Untorer Elbe Und Loire* (Munich, 1974), Fig. 53.

11 Hans-Jürgen Hässler, *Das Sächsische Gräberfeld Von Issendorf, Ldkr, Stade, Niedersachsen. Die Körpergräber*, Studien Zur Sachsenforschung, 9:4 (Oldenburg, 2002), pp. 146–62.

12 Edward T. Leeds, *The Archaeology of the Anglo-Saxon Settlement* (Oxford, 1913), pp. 75–76.

13 Vierck, "Von Der Trachtprovinz Zur Bevölkerungs-Geschichtlichen."

14 Owen-Crocker, *Dress in Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 35–103.

top. In East Kent a range of different costumes are evidenced that include the peplos and examples of continental and hybrid Kentish-continental fashions.

On the whole these regional groups have stood the test of time; the publication of studies of new, and not so new, cemetery excavations only serving to reinforce, not dismantle them. Recent research has demonstrated that within each region a more complex state of affairs existed, however. Fisher found that the frequency of graves with annular brooches, swastika brooches and pins varied between Middle Anglia, East Anglia and the Lark River area, and although she did not examine the character of the costumes, the differences probably resulted from the wearing of subtly different costumes that demonstrate the presence of subgroups.<sup>15</sup> Hines analysed the evidence for Edix Hill and surrounding burial grounds and a correspondence analysis revealed four different 'costume groups' as indicated by variations in the types of dress fasteners.<sup>16</sup> It is likely that the differences resulted from the wearing of subtly different costumes that reflect variation *within* local communities.

In the Upper Thames Valley most women of adult age were laid to rest in a peplos secured by a pair of brooches and embellished with a bead necklace. At Abingdon the majority of women also had a pin, whereas in the neighbouring cemetery of Berinsfield they were uncommon. Different styles both between and within individual cemeteries were recorded by Karen Brush. A particularly intriguing site is that of Wasperton (Warwickshire), where separate Anglian and Saxon traditions both prevailed, interestingly alongside hybrid examples that combined elements of both.<sup>17</sup>

Research in East Kent has cast light on the complexities of costume in the region.<sup>18</sup> It was found that Anglian and Saxon styles are rare, and that Kentish, continental and hybrid Kentish-continental styles that utilised multiple brooches are more common. There is, however, a notable degree of variation in terms of the actual types and numbers of brooches that were combined.

During the later 5th and 6th centuries costume style in Anglo-Saxon England was characterised by regionally-specific styles, yet underneath this tripartite

15 Genevieve Fisher, "Style and Sociopolitical Organisation: A Preliminary Study from Early Anglo-Saxon England," in *Power and Politics in Early Medieval Britain and Ireland*, ed. Stephen Driscoll and Margaret Nieve (Trowbridge, 1988), pp. 136–41.

16 Tim Malim and John Hines, *The Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Edix Hill (Barrington A), Cambridgeshire*, CBA Research Report, 112 (York, 1998), pp. 313–17.

17 Karen Brush, *Adorning the Dead: The Social Significance of Early Anglo-Saxon Funerary Dress in England (Fifth to Seventh Centuries AD)* (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Cambridge, 1993), p. 110.

18 Birte Bruggmann and Keith Parfitt, *The Anglo-Saxon Cemetery on Mill Hill, Deal, Kent*, The Society for Medieval Archaeology Monograph, 14 (Leeds, 1997), pp. 113–16.

division individual communities had the freedom to experiment, producing variations on the standard style for their region. But—and this is the key point—the evidence is largely restricted to the local community, it is rare to find such variation repeated throughout a wider area.

## Early Saxon Costume in Hampshire

### *Introduction*

Pernille Kruse's (née Sørensen) contextual and multi-disciplinary study of Jutish settlement in England demonstrated that there is little if any direct evidence for a large-scale migration from Jutland to England in the 5th or 6th centuries. No burials from East Kent, the Isle of Wight or southern Hampshire have produced assemblages of Jutish objects. In most cases single artefacts (hand-made pottery, D-bracteates, cruciform and relief brooches) had been interred in richly-furnished graves of the 6th century.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, there are few similarities between the form of the grave and the nature of the wider burial rite when comparing Jutland with evidence from East Kent, the Isle of Wight and southern Hampshire. The typical rite in the Jutlandic cemeteries of Hjemsted and Sejlflod included a coffin, with the burial orientated west-east and placed supine or on one side and accompanied by objects that included one or more pots, a knife, comb and dress accessories, such as a buckle, brooch, clasp or pin.<sup>20</sup> Evidence from England differs, especially in East Kent, where some graves were associated with structural features and the deposition of weapons was common.

At the time she was writing, Kruse was unable to identify any Jutlandic artefacts in southern Hampshire,<sup>21</sup> but in recent years metal-detectorists have recovered examples of Martin's Group I cruciform brooches from sites in the southern half of the county (see below). Such brooches date to the 5th century, the earliest to the first half, but they are not specific to Jutland; rather, they are paralleled at sites along the North Sea from Frisia to Norway.<sup>22</sup> Nevertheless, the brooches suggest that Scandinavian, if not Jutlandic, dress fashions were present in southern Hampshire in the early migration period. This topic will now be expanded by an examination of the styles of female costume worn in early Anglo-Saxon cemeteries in Hampshire (Fig. 4.1) and a consideration of

19 Kruse, "Jutes in Kent?" (2007), pp. 345–46.

20 Kruse, "Jutes in Kent?" (2007), p. 299.

21 Kruse, "Jutes in Kent?" (2007), p. 334.

22 Toby F. Martin, *The Cruciform Brooch and Anglo-Saxon England* (Woodbridge 2015), p. 175.

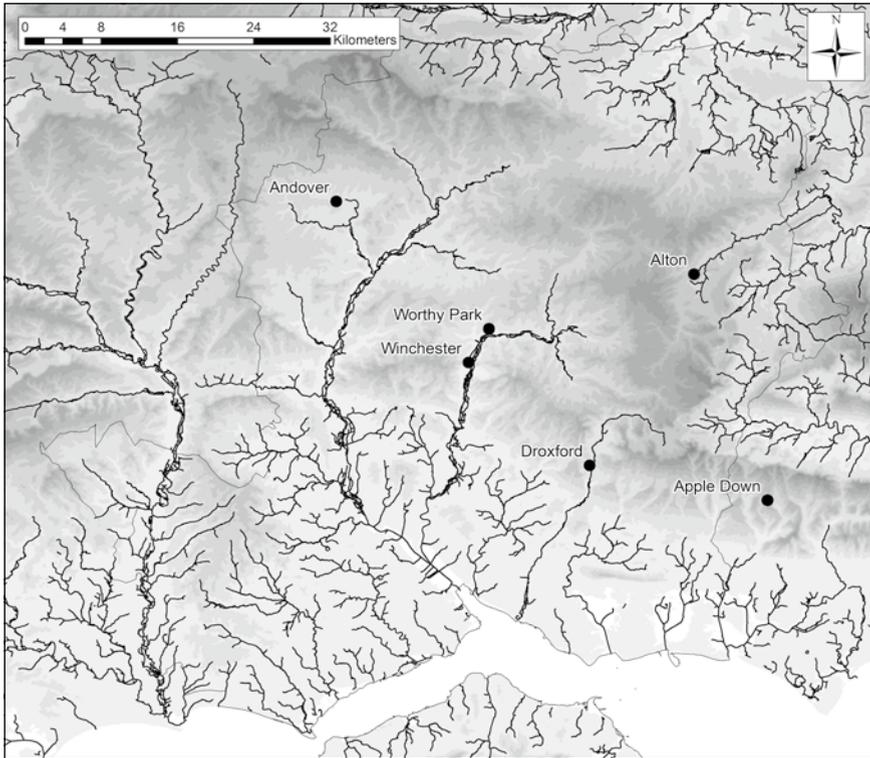


FIGURE 4.1 Location of the early Anglo-Saxon cemeteries used in the study

whether it can make a contribution to the question of Jutish settlement in the county. A scheme to classify the costumes is based on the dress styles created by Walton-Rogers for her analysis of Dover Buckland.<sup>23</sup> Her Dress Styles (I–III) cover most of the identifiable costumes in Hampshire during the later 5th and 6th centuries and allow for a comparison to be made with East Kent and the Isle of Wight. Walton-Rogers based her categories of dress styles on the position and types of brooches, but this study only considers the position of the fasteners because in Hampshire there is no obvious link between brooch type and dress. Dress Style I is the peplos, identified by Walton-Rogers by brooches at the shoulder, either a pair or a singleton. A single brooch positioned at the shoulder may however have been securing a different garment to the peplos, for example a cloak. Dress Style II is identified by a single brooch found

23 Penelope Walton-Rogers, “Part 5: Costumes and Textiles,” in *Buckland Anglo-Saxon Cemetery, Dover: Excavations 1994*, ed. Trevor Anderson and Keith Parfitt (Canterbury, 2012), pp. 182–91.

anywhere from the neck to the lower chest and may have clasped a loose and lightweight garment—the actual form of the costume is however unknown. Dress Style III is evidence for a Frankish fashion that utilised two brooches at the neck/centre chest and represents a garment with a front-opening slit.

All burials over the age of 12 with evidence for female dress have been studied. Costume was age-related and younger individuals tended not to have dress fasteners or produce evidence for a different style of costume to that worn by adult women.<sup>24</sup> The position of the brooches is taken from the grave plans, but there is a risk that the body and artefacts may have shifted due to taphonomic processes. There is, however, a general consistency to the position of the artefacts demonstrating a level of accuracy across the board and the evidence can be relied upon to provide a solid foundation from which the form of the costume can be reconstructed. More problematic is the fact that metal fasteners only provide limited information about costume. The linen or cloth could have been folded in certain ways or secured by organic fasteners, such as wooden toggles, that no longer survive; the length of the hemline and for that matter that of the sleeves (if present) may have varied. In addition, elements that did not require securing, such as certain under- or overgarments, usually leave no evidence whatsoever but may have been invested with important socio-cultural information that is now irretrievable.

Early Saxon settlement in Hampshire was restricted to the chalklands of the county: no funerary or settlement evidence has so far been discovered on the clays of the Hampshire Basin. For the purpose of this study southern Hampshire is defined as a band extending from the Hampshire basin to just north of Winchester and includes the upper Itchen, while everything above can be considered north Hampshire.

### *North Hampshire*

Alton (Mount Pleasant) and Andover (Portway East) (Table 4.1) were investigated under scientific conditions and produced large numbers of graves. Both are mixed-rite cemeteries but only the inhumation burials are suitable for analysis.

The former was investigated by Vera Evison, although a small group of graves was excavated when the site was threatened by development in the early 1990s

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24 Nick Stoodley, "From the Cradle to the Grave: Age Organisation and the Early Anglo-Saxon Burial Rite," *World Archaeology* 31:3 (2000), 456–72.

TABLE 4.1 Costume evidence from Hampshire cemeteries by dress style

Cemetery	No. of burials	Dress style I	Dress style II	Dress style III	Other
Alton	21	9(43%)	0	1(5%)	11(52%)
Andover	31	13(42%)	4(12%)	0	13(42%)
Droxford	21	1(5%)	1(5%)	0	19(90%)
Worthy Park	40	2(5%)	1(2%)	1(2%)	36(90%)
Apple Down	41	0	3(7%)	1(2%)	37(90%)

(graves 100–104).<sup>25</sup> The examination of the burials revealed that 10 (47 per cent) had brooches, of these 9 (43 per cent) were interred wearing a peplos-style costume (Fig. 4.2); an exception was the female in grave 14 with a pair of quoit brooches worn in a manner that corresponds to Dress Style III. The most popular brooch type was the saucer, with varieties of small-long and button brooches also present. Just over half the females had no brooches or had other dress accessories, such as pins, necklaces, girdle items, from which it is difficult to reconstruct the style of dress.

At Alton, the peplos was worn throughout the 5th and 6th centuries: it was present in the earliest phase of the cemetery as the interment in grave 102 with a quoit and disc brooch demonstrates. Grave 104 potentially contained one of the earliest burials and is particularly intriguing because an old woman had been accompanied by a range of Roman artefacts: a necklace of blue glass beads, a knife, a bow brooch and two buckles. Both the buckles were found at the shoulders and look to all intents and purposes to have been acting as dress fasteners. Perhaps she was a native who, without access to the latest Germanic brooches, was forced to make do with substitutes.

At Portway East, 18 burials had brooches: 13 (42 per cent) were fastening a peplos-style costume (Fig. 4.3); in addition, the female in grave 42 had a single disc brooch on the right shoulder.<sup>26</sup> Several burials had a single brooch over the upper body, which indicates Dress Style II, while 42 per cent had no clear evidence for costume. The fasteners are mainly pairs of disc or saucer brooches,

25 Vera I. Evison, *An Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Alton, Hampshire*, Hampshire Field Club and Archaeological Society Monograph 4 (Gloucester, 1988); Nicholas Riall, "An Anglo-Saxon Cemetery on Mount Pleasant, Alton, Hampshire," *Farnham and District Museum Society News* 1:2 (1996), 8–13.

26 Alison Cook and Max Dacre, *Excavations at Portway, Andover 1973–1975*, Oxford University Committee for Archaeology Monograph 4 (Oxford, 1985).

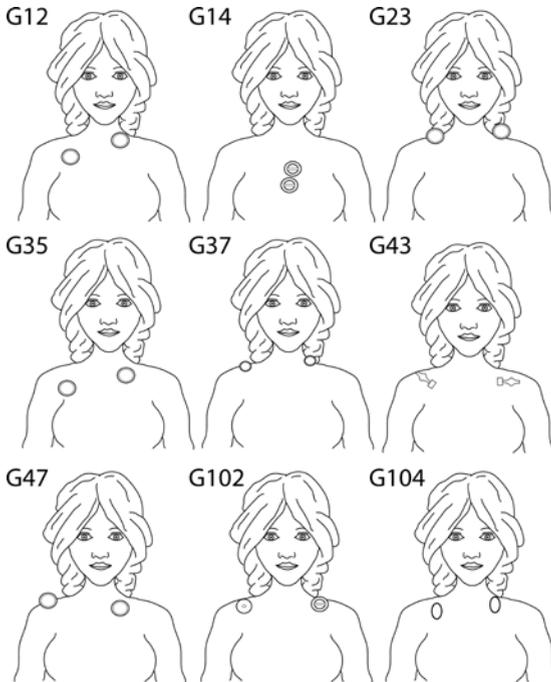


FIGURE 4.2 Position of brooches in graves at Alton (women/brooches not to scale) (For key, see Fig. 4.3)

although occasionally small-long brooches were used. In some cases a bead necklace was strung between the brooches, e.g. grave 52, and in several examples a pin was also present, often on the chest perhaps evidence for an overgarment. A small number of burials also had keys and chatelaines suspended from the waist. The peplos was worn throughout the duration of the cemetery's use: on the shoulders of the burial in grave 67 a quoit brooch had been paired with an old Romano-British brooch, potentially one of the earliest interments, while later a couple of burials had their dresses secured with 6th-century types of saucer brooch. In all, a period of about a century elapsed during which women from this community were consigned to the ground wearing similar styles of costume.

A very similar situation is found in other Saxon areas. At Pewsey (Blacknall Field, Wiltshire), just over two-thirds of the female burials with costume accessories had a pair of brooches at the shoulder.<sup>27</sup> The same pattern is observed in

<sup>27</sup> Nick Stoodley, "The Social Structure," in *The Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Blacknall Field, Pewsey, Wiltshire*, ed. Bruce Eagles, Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society Monograph 4 (Trowbridge, 2010), pp. 90–92.

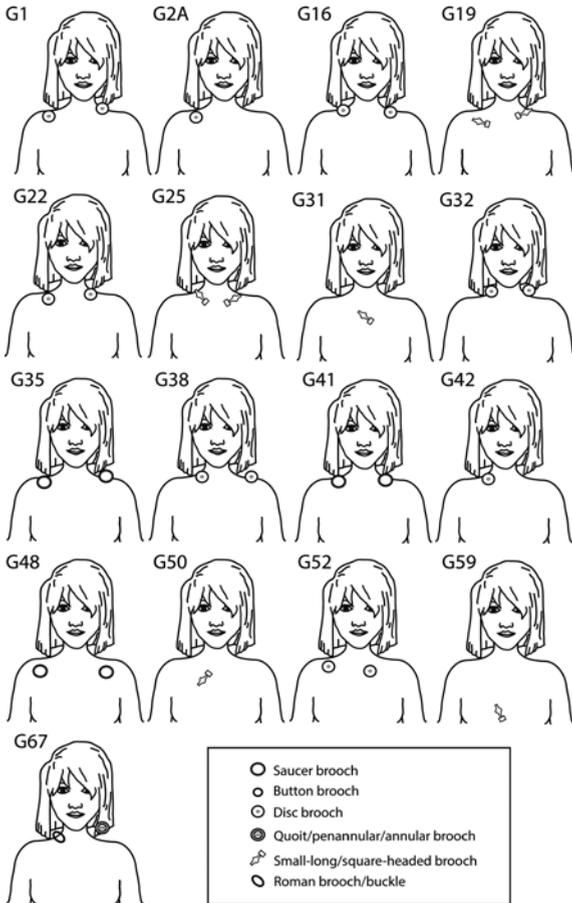


FIGURE 4.3 Position of brooches in graves at Andover (women/brooches not to scale)

the cemeteries of Collingbourne Ducis, Market Lavington and Winterbourne Gunner.<sup>28</sup> The area that was to become the kingdom of the South Saxons is more difficult to assess because much of the information derives from old excavations and the systematic recording of the graves was not performed. Alfriston and the recently investigated cemetery at St Anne’s Road Eastbourne are

28 Nick Stoodley, “Metalwork,” in *The Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Collingbourne Ducis*, ed. Kirsten Egging Dinwiddy and Nick Stoodley, Wessex Archaeological Report 37 (Salisbury, 2016), pp. 120–22.

exceptions and although Kentish dress styles are found, the peplos was again the most popular style.<sup>29</sup>

### *South Hampshire*

The analysis of the southern part of the county focuses on the burial grounds of Droxford and Worthy Park (Table 4.1). The only other cemeteries to have been investigated under modern conditions are the long-lasting site at Meonstoke and a recently excavated one at West Meon that contained later 6th- and 7th-century burials.<sup>30</sup> Neither has produced costume evidence. The West Sussex cemetery of Apple Down 1 (at Marden, West Sussex) lies to the north-west of Chichester, about 13 miles east of the Meon valley, but because of its proximity to the Hampshire/West Sussex border and the style of its costumes, it is also included in the area.<sup>31</sup>

At Droxford (Fig. 4.4) out of 21 females, only one was wearing a peplos: a pair of disc brooches were discovered over the shoulders of the burial in grave 36.<sup>32</sup> Grave 13 contained a burial beside which a pair of saucer brooches had been placed, while a penannular brooch was at the neck. This female appears to have been interred in an example of Dress Style II, while a peplos may have been laid alongside the body. The emphasis on adorning the female body at Droxford was through the use of chatelaines and necklaces, such as graves 13 and 30. The cemetery was only partially investigated and many graves had been destroyed during the construction of the Meon Valley Railway. Yet the excavated evidence appears to come from the main part of the cemetery and is probably representative of the burial practices of the community.

Worthy Park (Fig. 4.4) lies to the north of Winchester and only one of the 41 female burials had evidence for a peplos: grave 63, which contained two iron annular/penannular brooches, although in grave 77 a single quoit brooch was on the left shoulder.<sup>33</sup> There is one example each of Dress Style II (grave 30)

29 A. F. Griffith, "An Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Alfriston, Sussex," *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 57 (1915), 197–208; A.F. Griffith and L.F. Salzmann, "An Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Alfriston, Sussex," *Sussex Arch. Coll.* 56 (1914), 16–51; Christopher Greatorex, "The Archaeological Excavation of a Late Iron Age Site and Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at St Anne's Road Eastbourne, East Sussex" (forthcoming).

30 Nick Stoodley and Mark Stedman, "Excavations at Shavards Farm, Meonstoke: The Anglo-Saxon Cemetery," *PHFCAS* 56 (2001), 129–69.

31 Alec Down and Martin Welch, *Chichester Excavations 7. Apple Down and the Mardens* (Chichester, 1990).

32 Fred Aldsworth, "The Droxford Anglo-Saxon Cemetery, Soberton, Hampshire," *PHFCAS* 35 (1978), 93–182.

33 Sonia Chadwick Hawkes and Guy Grainger, *The Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Worthy Park, Kingsworthy, near Winchester, Hampshire*, Oxford University School of Archaeology Monograph 59 (Kings Lynn, 2003).

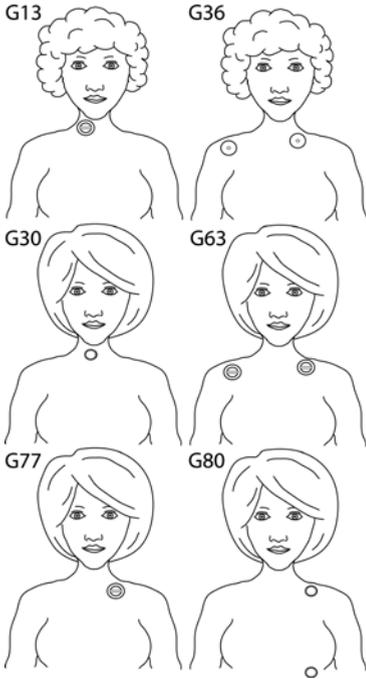


FIGURE 4.4  
Position of brooches in graves at Droxford (top) and Worthy Park (centre and bottom) (women/ brooches not to scale)

and Dress Style III (grave 80). Chatelaines and pins were also relatively common.

The examination of dress at Apple Down 1 (Fig. 4.5) revealed a now familiar pattern: one (grave 10) out of a total of 42 female burials had a pair of brooches and they were fastening an example of Dress Style III (similar to Worthy Park grave 80). Over the chest of the female in grave 14 was a fine silver gilt Jutlandic square-headed brooch that was combined with a pair of six spiral saucer brooches at the waist. Although it is reminiscent of continental dress fashions, i.e. Walton-Rogers Dress Style IV, it differs by having a pair of circular brooches at the waist.

#### *Discussion of Hampshire's costume*

The costume evidence from south Hampshire clearly differs to that found in the north of the county. Only a handful of burials had a pair of brooches and in most cases they were not securing a peplos. Proportionally more examples of Dress Styles II and III are present, i.e. fashions that are common in East Kent. Some burials had a pin over the chest, which may have been performing the same function as a brooch, thus the quantity of Dress Style II may be higher (a similar situation was also found at Andover and Alton). Yet the costume worn by the majority of the burials could not be identified and it is possible

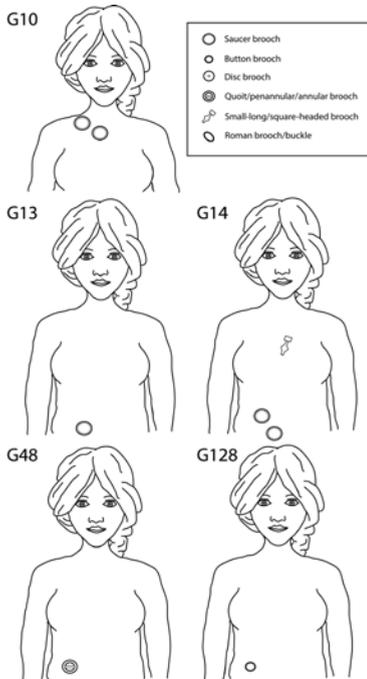


FIGURE 4.5  
Position of brooches in graves at Apple Down  
(women/brooches not to scale)

that a style was worn that may have been tailored at the shoulders thus eliminating the need of fasteners.<sup>34</sup>

That not all women had brooches is unsurprising since their conferment appears to have been dependent on an individual's age and status within the household.<sup>35</sup> The cemeteries of Andover and Alton were organised around individual plots and each contained burials of both sexes and all ages. These plots probably belonged to a household and were used throughout the duration that the cemetery was in use. It is significant that each plot contained women with and without the peplos—the decision as to what costume to inter an individual in was decided at the household level.

Yet compared to north Hampshire the scarcity of the peplos in the south of the county is significant and must have resulted from factors other than those decided by the community. Owen-Crocker also noted that the position of the brooches in graves in Hampshire (and Kent) differs to the usual arrangement

34 Down and Welch, *Chichester Excavations 7. Apple Down and the Mardens*, pp. 95–96.

35 Stoodley, "From the Cradle to the Grave"; Stephen Sherlock and Martin Welch, *An Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Norton, Cleveland*, Council for British Archaeology Research Reports 82 (Oxford, 1992), p. 102.

of two shoulder brooches.<sup>36</sup> At Worthy Park the lack of jewellery and burial wealth generally was noted by Sonia Chadwick Hawkes: “After the initial phase, signs of prosperity are absent until the mid-7th century, a fact which may reflect the isolation and instability of this part of Hampshire...”<sup>37</sup> This argument fits ill with the evidence from the male burials: 54 per cent (18/33) had weapons of which over half had shields and one individual also had a sword. Shields and swords required large quantities of raw materials and involved a level of craft specialisation only available to the skilled blacksmith. Such objects were valuable, easily on a par with the showier jewellery. Likewise, at Droxford the excavated graves produced nine weapon burials and if the number of unstratified swords is anything to go by it may originally have had the highest proportion of sword burials in the county. At Apple Down, 16 (43 per cent) of the males had weapons (very similar to the national average); although the majority had a single spear (75 per cent) three had a spear and shield and one had a spear and seax. In contrast, Portway East only produced three shields (25 per cent of weapon burials) and no swords, the majority of the burials had single spears. If the quantity and quality of the weapons can be taken as an index of a community’s wealth, it is erroneous to claim that Worthy Park, and by implication Droxford, were impoverished communities.

Neither can the difference between northern and southern Hampshire be explained chronologically, i.e. the burials without a peplos are part and parcel of the changes that occurred to female costume in the 7th century.<sup>38</sup> The brooches from the south Hampshire cemeteries are from the late 5th and 6th century. Moreover, all three cemeteries produced weapon burials of the late 5th and 6th century and contemporary female burials would have been present. The fact that a significant number of the male population were interred with weapons in the traditional Anglo-Saxon manner demonstrates that these were communities that had fully embraced the practice of accompanied inhumation. The age and sex profile of these cemeteries makes it clear that they served local communities; they are directly comparable to their counterparts in the north of the county. Some of the female burials were granted assemblages that, despite the difference in costume, had many similarities to other early Anglo-Saxon burials, such as the presence of vessels and collections of small objects collected together in bags. Despite the lack of paired brooches,

36 Owen-Crocker, *Dress in Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 54–55.

37 Sonia Chadwick Hawkes and Calvin Wells, “The Inhumed Skeletal Material from an Early Anglo-Saxon Cemetery in Worthy Park, Kingsworthy, Hampshire, South England,” *Paleobios*, 1:1–2 (1983), 3–36.

38 Helen Geake, “Burial Practices in Seventh- and Eighth-Century England,” in *The Age of Sutton Hoo*, ed. Martin Carver (Woodbridge, 1992), pp. 83–94.

the women of south Hampshire enjoyed a similar range of burial practices to their counterparts elsewhere in the country. These were not communities in which Germanic burial practices had failed to take hold, nor were they communities where women had been marginalised and where difference in costume was a reflection of gender inequality.

### A Shared Identity? Costume in South Hampshire, the Isle of Wight and East Kent

Although it is difficult to know exactly what types of costume were being worn in south Hampshire, the lack of the peplos is significant. Did south Hampshire perceive itself as different to the north of the county and expressed this by shunning the style of costume traditionally linked to the Saxons, but adopted styles that were worn in the areas traditionally associated with the Jutes?

East Kent is notable for its elaborate female costumes, which included Frankish and hybrid Kentish-continental styles and employed multiple brooches of various types.<sup>39</sup> There are however much simpler costumes, i.e. Walton-Rogers' Dress Styles II and III, which as noted above find good parallels in Hampshire. Examples of Dress Style II were found in 6th-century graves excavated at Dover Buckland (graves 23, 219, 221 and 290),<sup>40</sup> Bifrons (grave 63),<sup>41</sup> Lyminge (grave 33),<sup>42</sup> Mill Hill, Deal (graves 18, 33, 64 and 94),<sup>43</sup> and Finglesham (grave C2).<sup>44</sup> And costumes conforming to Dress Style III were found in graves at Dover Buckland (graves 48, 92, 366, 428 and 440), Bifrons (grave 89) and Lyminge (possibly grave 16). Examples of the peplos are present but relatively rare, for example at Lyminge and Bifrons, and this also strengthens evidence for a link between East Kent and southern Hampshire.

Connections between south Hampshire and the other two regions were also examined through a study of brooch types. Compared to the north of the

39 Birte Brugmann, "Britons, Angles, Saxons, Jutes and Franks," in *The Anglo-Saxon Cemetery on Mill Hill, Deal, Kent*, The Society for Medieval Archaeology Monograph Series 14 (Leeds, 1997), pp. 110–18.

40 K. Parfitt and T. Anderson, *Buckland Anglo-Saxon Cemetery, Dover. Excavations 1994*, The Archaeology of Canterbury, New Ser., 4 (Canterbury, 2012); Vera I. Evison, *Dover, the Buckland Anglo-Saxon Cemetery* (London, 1987).

41 Sonia Chadwick Hawkes, "The Anglo-Saxon Cemetery of Bifrons, in the Parish of Patricbourne, East Kent," *ASSAH* 11 (2000), 1–94.

42 Alan Warhurst, "The Jutish Cemetery at Lyminge," *Arch. Cant.* 69 (1956 for 1955), 1–40.

43 Brugmann and Parfitt, *The Anglo-Saxon Cemetery on Mill Hill, Deal, Kent*.

44 Sonia Chadwick Hawkes, "The Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Finglesham, Kent: A Reconsideration," *Medieval Archaeology* 2 (1958), 1–71.

TABLE 4.2 Brooch types from Hampshire cemeteries

	Alton	Andover	Droxford	Worthy Park	Apple Down I
Annular	1	2		2	1
Applied			2		
Button	4		3	3	1
Disc	3	14	2		
Penannular			1		1
Quoit	2	2		1	
Radiate			1		
Romano-British	1	3	1	2	
Saucer	5	6	4	1	5
Small-long	2	7	1		
Square-headed			1		1

county there is a greater range of types in southern Hampshire (Table 4.2), but only two brooches have links with Jutland or East Kent: the fine silver-gilt Jutlandic great square-headed brooch of Haseloff's Jutlandisch Group C from Apple Down (grave 14) and a small square-headed brooch of Åberg Type 133 from Droxford (unprovenanced); the latter can be paralleled with examples from the Isle of Wight and Kent.<sup>45</sup> In addition, there is a pendant from Droxford (unprovenanced) and one from Worthy Park (grave 77) that exhibit similar decoration to that found on objects from Wight.<sup>46</sup> In common with the northern part of the county, southern Hampshire had a preference for circular brooch types, i.e. button, disc and saucer.

Metal detecting has increased the number of known brooch types from southern Hampshire (Table 4.3). Of note are the nine fragments of early types of cruciform brooch and the five supporting-arm brooches that indicate settlement taking place by at least the mid-5th century and involving migrants from both south Scandinavia and the Saxon homelands. Although these finds are unstratified, excavated 5th-century evidence is provided by a weapon burial

45 Down and Welch, *Chichester Excavations 7. Apple Down and the Mardens*, pp. 95–96; Aldsworth, "Droxford Anglo-Saxon Cemetery," p. 170.

46 Aldsworth, "Droxford Anglo-Saxon Cemetery," p. 171; Hawkes and Grainger, *The Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Worthy Park, Kingsworthy, near Winchester, Hampshire*, p. 76; Christopher J. Arnold, *The Anglo-Saxon Cemeteries of the Isle of Wight* (London, 1982), p. 107.

TABLE 4.3 Brooch types recovered through metal detecting (Hants)

	North Hants	South Hants
Annular	2	1
Applied		2
Button	6	17
Bow		2
Cruciform	1	9
Disc	2	18
Equal-armed	1	1
Keystone-garnet	1	1
Radiate	1	
Plate-brooch	1	1
Saucer	2	5
Small-long	6	20
Square-headed	2	13
Supporting-arm		5

from Itchen Abbas (unpublished), incidentally interred in a cemetery with Roman burials, and a female interment from Weston Colley.<sup>47</sup>

The majority of the Isle of Wight's early Anglo-Saxon cemeteries were excavated by antiquarians and very few graves were properly recorded. An exception is the richly furnished grave at Chessell Down (grave 45); the drawing reveals a costume very similar to the more elaborate East Kent examples. Less wealthy burials were not recorded with such enthusiasm, but it is possible to infer the character of the dress for several at Chessell Down. Hillier comments that the costume consisted of 'a long dress, open partly down the front, or a tunic, which, being confined round the waist by a belt of leather or some other substance, was closed at the breast and neck by the fibulae, i.e. probable evidence of Dress Style III.<sup>48</sup> At Bowcombe Down a single button brooch was over the centre of the chest of the individual in grave 18 indicating Dress Style II.<sup>49</sup>

47 Nick Stoodley, "A Fifth-Century Female from Weston Colley, Micheldever, Hampshire," in *Studies in Early Anglo-Saxon Art and Archaeology: Papers in Honour of Martin G. Welch*, ed. Stuart Brookes, Sue Harrington, and Andrew Reynolds, BAR British Ser. 527 (Oxford, 2011), pp. 49–54.

48 George Hillier, *The History and Antiquities of the Isle of Wight* (London, 1855), pp. 28–29.

49 Arnold, *The Anglo-Saxon Cemeteries of the Isle of Wight*, Fig. 68.

TABLE 4.4 Brooch types from the Isle of Wight

	Cemeteries (after Arnold 1984)	Metal-detected
Ansate		1
Applied	1	1
Bird	4	
Button	7	32
Bow	2	11
Cruciform		5
Disc	3	22
Equal-armed	2	6
Keystone-garnet	4	3
Penannular		1
Radiate	1	4
Rosette	1	
Plate-brooch	2	1
Quoit		1
Saucer		7
S-shaped	1	1
Small-long		14
Square-headed	23	14
Swastika		1

In Arnold's catalogue of graves, 24 contained brooches of which half had a single fastener and may be evidence for Dress Style II. In addition, five burials had a pair of brooches that could be evidence for a peplos or Dress Style III, while seven had a greater number of brooches. In terms of its simpler costumes, Wight is similar to south Hampshire, while the presence of three or more brooches in some burials indicates more elaborate costumes and is comparable to the situation found in East Kent.

The results from metal detecting on Wight generally supports the evidence from excavated graves (Table 4.4), but as on the mainland increases the number of known brooch types. In particular, early types of cruciform brooches are represented, including one from Martin's sub-group 1.1 (from Shorewell), which strengthens evidence for the connection between the island and south Scandinavia and could push the date of the earliest phase back to the mid-5th century, or even earlier.

### Discussion: Costume and the Creation of a Jutish South Hampshire

Place names and written sources distinguish southern Hampshire from its northern counterpart. Bede understood that southern Hampshire had once been an independent Jutish province and he also mentions the Meonware, a probable Jutish territory based on the Meon valley.<sup>50</sup> Frustratingly, Bede does not say where the Jutes (*Iutae*) originated from, although he placed the Angles between the Saxons and the Jutes,<sup>51</sup> implying that the Jutes occupied land to the north of the Angles. The Jutes have also been linked linguistically to Jutland, but there is uncertainty about the meaning of the term Jutland.<sup>52</sup> In England *Iutae* went through a series of developments resulting in *Yte*, of which several place-names in southern Hampshire derive from.<sup>53</sup> *Ytedene*, ‘valley of the Jutes’ near East Meon, supports the view that the Meon valley had been home to a group of Jutes settled within the wider Jutish province of southern Hampshire.<sup>54</sup> Several place and administrative names also indicate that south Hampshire was Jutish. John of Worcester refers to the New Forest as “Ytene” (‘of the Jutes’), while on the River Itchen the Old English name for Bishopstoke is ‘Ytingstoc’ (‘the settlement of the Jutes’).<sup>55</sup> Yet as Bartholomew points out, this says nothing about the location of the Jutish homelands.<sup>56</sup> Furthermore, as previously mentioned, Kruse’s study has demonstrated that there are few archaeological links between northern Jutland and East Kent, the Isle of Wight and southern Hampshire.<sup>57</sup> At this point it is instructive to compare costume evidence from northern Jutland. The cemeteries of Hjemsted and Sejlflod, which were excavated and published to modern standards, figure in Kruse’s study but she did not attempt to reconstruct the style of costumes—probably because of the poor preservation of the skeletal material. However, it is still possible to get a rough idea of dress style from the number and general position

50 B.A.E. Yorke, “The Jutes of Hampshire and Wight and the Origins of Wessex,” in *The Origins of Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms*, ed. Steven Bassett (Leicester, 1989), pp. 84–107, at pp. 89–90.

51 Bede, *HE*, I.15.

52 Philip Bartholomew, “Continental Connections: Angles, Saxons and Others in Bede and Procopius,” *ASSAH* 13 (2005), 19–30; Kruse, “Jutes in Kent?” (2007), p. 252.

53 William Henry Stevenson, *Asser’s Life of King Alfred* (Oxford, 1904), pp. 166–70.

54 Yorke, “Jutes of Hampshire and Wight and the Origins of Wessex,” p. 90.

55 Yorke, “Jutes of Hampshire and Wight and the Origins of Wessex,” p. 91.

56 Bartholomew, “Continental connections: Angles, Saxons and Others in Bede and Procopius,” p. 23. Note also John Baker and Jayne Carroll’s reservations, in “The Afterlives of Bede’s Tribal Names in English Place-names,” below, p. 135–37.

57 Kruse, “Jutes in Kent?” (2007).

of the fasteners. At Hjemsted (south-west of Jutland), thirty-six 5th-century inhumations were excavated, but only 25 per cent ( $n = 9$ ) produced dress fasteners.<sup>58</sup> And only two had a pair of brooches: grave 125 contained cruciform brooches in a position that is compatible with the wearing of a peplos dress; but in grave 313 two cruciform brooches were on the right hand edge of the grave, one above the other. The majority of burials had single brooches or pins in the upper part of the grave, which corresponds to an area over the chest and may relate to Dress Style II. Sejlflod (north-eastern tip of Jutland) produced a much larger number of graves: 350 from two separate, though closely placed, burial grounds that were used during the 4th and 5th centuries.<sup>59</sup> Forty-five graves contained brooches, yet the majority had only one (69 per cent), and most were found over the upper body (Dress Style II). Almost a third (14 or 31 per cent) contained multiple brooches: in six burials a pair appear to have been positioned at the shoulders indicating the wearing of the peplos, while more elaborate styles appear to have consisted of brooches at the shoulders and over the chest. More work is needed on the costumes worn in Jutland, yet overall, the dominant fashion in the homelands appears to have been something akin to Dress Style II.

The evidence from metal-detecting is now starting to show connections between East Kent, the Isle of Wight and southern Hampshire and an area of northern Europe that includes Jutland.<sup>60</sup> The earliest types of cruciform brooch from south Hampshire do indicate a link between the area and southern Scandinavia in the early to mid-5th century, but these connections had ceased by the end of the century. From this time the area displays a Saxon character, in fact there are only a handful of artefacts that demonstrate links with East Kent or the Isle of Wight. Rather it was a style of female dress that was used to create and maintain cultural associations with East Kent, Wight and perhaps Jutland.

Studies have shown that style articulates social relations because it becomes associated with groups of individuals within a geographical area over a given span of time and is usually considered a marker of historically and ethnically, or culturally, bounded social units.<sup>61</sup> Style operates as a form of communication

58 Per Ethelberg, *Hjemsted: En Gravplads Fra 4. Og 5. Årh. E.Kr.*, Skrifter Fra Museumsrådet for Sonderjyllands Amt (Haderslev, 1986).

59 Jens N. Neilsen, *Sejlflod – Ein Eisenzeitliches Dorf in Nordjütland. Katalog Der Grabfunde*, Nordiske Fortidsminder, Series B, Vol. 20 (Copenhagen, 2000).

60 Martin, *The Cruciform Brooch and Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 175.

61 Margaret Conkey, "Experimenting with Style in Archaeology," in *The Uses of Style in Archaeology*, ed. Margaret Conkey and Christine Hastorf (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 1–17; James Sackett, "Style, Ethnicity, and Stone Tools," in *Status, Structure and Stratification: Current*

expressing identities in certain situations, usually at times of environmental and social stress.<sup>62</sup> Ethnography provides abundant evidence for the important and dynamic social role that female costume plays and how it was deliberately used in the articulation of relationships between different people and groups.<sup>63</sup> Hodder's often-quoted ethnographic study of tribal groups in the Baringo district of western Kenya demonstrates this point. He found that although interaction often took place across tribal boundaries, unambiguous material culture distinctions were articulated through a range of different artefacts that included jewellery and female adornment.<sup>64</sup> These distinctions were necessary in order to justify competition between groups especially at times of economic stress when groups are competing for scarce resources. Along with other artefact types, female adornment functioned as an active and dynamic expression of group identity in a situation of competition and conflict.

Only certain elements of material culture become active in signifying ethnicity, however: distinctive forms and styles may be actively maintained, whilst other forms and styles may cut across ethnic boundaries.<sup>65</sup> Material culture practices become objectified as symbols of group identity and as ethnic markers become naturalised through repeated social use.<sup>66</sup> A relationship often existed between culture and ethnicity, but it is not fixed; rather it resulted from specific circumstances in particular social and historical contexts.

The lack of the peplos in south Hampshire was deliberate and indicates that its people considered themselves different to the folk in the north of the county, but it also served as a method to create and maintain links with Wight, East Kent and perhaps even northern Jutland. Was dress a symbol of a new ethnic identity in south Hampshire? Rather than costume reflecting the presence of a pre-existing ethnic group, which had settled in the area in the earlier 5th century, it may have symbolised a new identity; one created in the later 5th century to bring together disparate groups of people as they encountered new situations. A burial that is especially pertinent, and which may show this

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*Archaeological Reconstructions*, ed. Marc Thompson, Maria Garcia, and Francois Kense (Calgary, 1985), pp. 277–82.

62 Polly Wiessner, "Style and Social Information in Kalahari San Projectile Points," *American Antiquity* 48 (1983), 253–76; "Reconsidering the Behavioral Basis for Style: A Case Study from the Kalahari San," *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology* 3 (1984), 190–243.

63 Joanne Eicher, "Introduction: Dress as Expression on Ethnic Identity," in *Dress and Ethnicity. Change across Space and Time*, ed. Joanne Eicher (Bridgend, 1999), pp. 1–5.

64 Ian Hodder, *Symbols in Action, Ethnoarchaeological Studies of Material Culture* (Cambridge, 1982).

65 Siân Jones, *The Archaeology of Ethnicity* (London, 1997), p. 120.

66 Florin Curta, "Medieval Archaeology and Ethnicity: Where Are We?" *History Compass*, 9:7 (2011), 537–48, at pp. 539–40.

process in action, is Droxford (grave 13) where a peplos seems to have been placed alongside the body of a woman laid to rest in an example of Dress Style II. In a similar vein, but from the north Hampshire cemetery of Alton (grave 104), an old woman had used Roman buckles as dress fasteners to secure a peplos. Had she now adopted a Saxon identity and expressed this visibly through costume?

Costume was an appropriate medium because an ethnic group selects the cultural attributes that it considers important enough to define itself; these were based on pre-existing forms of cultural identity and methods of social differentiation, such as gender and status.<sup>67</sup> In early Anglo-Saxon England gender distinctions were symbolised through costume and because this was an established, highly visible and portable method of display, it was the ideal medium through which ethnic identities were expressed. Although Pohl shows that costume was more likely to have expressed social rather than ethnic distinctions, he states that there is documentary evidence demonstrating its use as a sign of ethnic identity.<sup>68</sup> Women were not passive carriers of badges of ethnic identity, however. Rather they assumed an active role in the creation and maintenance of this identity because of their role within society as reproducers of the group. Evidence to support this notion can be found in the fact that costume evidence is mainly found in the burials of biologically mature women.<sup>69</sup> Moreover, male burials in Hampshire show no discernible differences: there was no attempt to distinguish ritually between the males of north and south Hampshire. Importantly, artefacts were not ethnic symbols, this identity was expressed through a female-specific costume. Symbols of ethnic identity also occur in collective rituals intended to mobilise groups and a public affair,<sup>70</sup> such as an early Anglo-Saxon funeral in which the corpse was laid out fully dressed, presented the ideal opportunity to reinforce these messages.

That Apple Down followed the same dress styles as Droxford and Worthy Park implies that the south Hampshire dress province can be extended eastwards. Welch believed that the Apple Down community represented a South Saxon settlement, perhaps one of several small bands of colonists from the primary South Saxon settlements of eastern Sussex.<sup>71</sup> On the costume evidence

67 Florin Curta, "Some Remarks on Ethnicity in Medieval Archaeology," *EME* 15:2 (2007), 159–85, at pp. 169–70; Jones, *The Archaeology of Ethnicity*, p. 125.

68 Walter Pohl, "Telling the Difference: Signs of Ethnic Identity," in *From Roman Provinces to Medieval Kingdoms*, ed. Thomas Noble (Abingdon, 2006), pp. 120–67.

69 Stoodley, "From the Cradle to the Grave."

70 Curta, "Medieval Archaeology and Ethnicity," p. 538.

71 Down and Welch, *Chichester Excavations 7. Apple Down and the Mardens*, p. 109.

it seems reasonable, however, to suggest that Apple Down was a community located on the periphery of the southern Hampshire province. In fact, to the east of Chichester is a gap in the distribution of the early Saxon cemeteries that points to an uninhabited zone, possibly marking a 6th-century boundary between the Hampshire group, which includes Apple Down, and to their east the territory of the South Saxons proper.<sup>72</sup>

An analysis of the textiles from Hampshire was undertaken by Sue Harrington.<sup>73</sup> The evidence does not permit the southern Hampshire and northern Hampshire sites to be distinguished as separate areas. Although two of the rare types of weave, the twill mixed spin and plain mixed spin, were only found in the cemeteries of Apple Down, Droxford and Worthy Park, the other rare types did not group together in any meaningful way. It is notable that cloth types were identified that are unusual for Hampshire in all the five sites and these do record a higher frequency in East Kent although this could be explained by biases in the dataset. It seems that it was the actual style rather than the cloth itself that carried symbolic meaning.

As has been mentioned above, the creation of ethnic groups is often dependent upon cultural changes provoked through, for example, the interaction of competing groups.<sup>74</sup> According to Barbara Yorke, the three coastal regions of southern England formed a political confederation during the 6th century that was aimed at combating a threat posed by Saxon pirates operating in the Channel which threatened the trade on which the prosperity of East Kent and Wight depended.<sup>75</sup> It is argued that in 6th-century southern Hampshire the pressure from Saxon piracy brought together what had hitherto been a mix of different peoples as evidenced in the earlier 5th century by the brooches from south Scandinavia and north-west Germany, and probably also a group of (archaeologically invisible) natives. In a similar way Yorke has also claimed that the population would have been more ethnically mixed.<sup>76</sup> That it was a threat by the Saxons explains why this identity was shunned in favour of one with links

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72 Elizabeth O'Brien, *Late Roman Britain to Anglo-Saxon England: Burial Practices Reviewed*, BAR British Ser. 289 (Oxford, 1999), map 39.

73 Sue Harrington, *Report on Investigations into the Textile Remains from Five Anglo-Saxon Cemeteries in Hampshire* (Unpublished report, 2003).

74 Pohl, "Telling the Difference: Signs of Ethnic Identity," pp. 122–23.

75 B.A.E. Yorke, "Gregory of Tours and Sixth-Century Anglo-Saxon England," in *The World of Gregory of Tours*, ed. Kathleen Mitchell and Ian Wood (Leiden, 2002), pp. 113–30.

76 Yorke, "Jutes of Hampshire and Wight and the Origins of Wessex," pp. 91–92.

to East Kent, where the elite families claimed Jutish ancestry.<sup>77</sup> In southern Hampshire the choice of a Jutish identity was a politically motivated response to an external (Saxon) stimulus. 'Jutishness' may have also been desirable because lying just across the Solent was Wight, possibly home to a Scandinavian elite, who may have offered military support in exchange for political allegiance and economic contributions. This process of ethnogenesis developed out of political connections with a Jutish elite, rather than an influx of people from northern Jutland. By the 6th century the people of south Hampshire claimed a Jutish identity, yet the majority were unlikely to have been able to trace their roots back to north Jutland; it was an identity created around a shared past that was legendary and was symbolised through folk costume.

### Conclusion

Hampshire has provided evidence for differentiation in costume in the late 5th and 6th centuries, suggesting essentially two distinct costume groups. In the north of the county a group of local communities followed a style typical of the surrounding Saxon groups—the peplos was the costume of choice. In the south a different situation prevailed and styles not dissimilar to those from East Kent and the Isle of Wight are identified. This is the archaeological evidence for a new identity, one that linked the areas. Previously, archaeological connections between southern Hampshire and the other two kingdoms were considered very weak, if non-existent. It can be claimed that all three south coast territories shared a common identity in the later 5th and 6th centuries, although for southern Hampshire this may have been more of a created identity to serve certain political objectives rather than deriving from an actual influx of Jutish settlers. Finally, this essay has attempted to demonstrate that it is not only the types of artefacts that are important in the identification of cultural and ethnic groups in the early Anglo-Saxon period, rather it was the way that they were used, which after all was their primary function.

### Acknowledgements

The motivation behind this essay came from Barbara Yorke's excellent 1989 article, "The Jutes of Hampshire and Wight and the Origins of Wessex," plus

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77 Kruse, "Jutes in Kent?" (2007), p. 348.

research carried out as part of my doctoral studies that revealed differences in the types of female costume worn in early Anglo-Saxon Hampshire. Work on the topic began in 2000, but progress stalled not least because of my reluctance to get to grips with the thorny topic of ethnicity in early medieval archaeology. Barbara encouraged me to persevere and I hope that the result is a fitting tribute to the faith that she placed in me! Many people have been kind enough to discuss my research and in particular I would like to thank Dr Charlotte Behr, Dr Bruce Eagles, Dr Jill Hawkins, Mark Stedman, the late Dr Martin Welch and Prof. Barbara Yorke. Many years ago, I gave rough and ready versions of this essay to the Institute of Archaeology Medieval Seminar and Oxford University Medieval seminar, and I would like to thank the organisers for giving me these opportunities. Finally, I am grateful to my son Jake for his help with the artwork.

# A Well-Married Landscape: Networks of Association and 6th-Century Communities on the Isle of Wight

*Sue Harrington*

That women are by and large ‘hidden from history’ is an obvious statement, a consequence of texts being produced for purposes from which, it is inferred, they were uninvolved in or excluded from or at least did not have their contribution acknowledged.<sup>1</sup> To quote Gillian Clarke “We are, as usual, trying to interrogate the writings and artefacts of men for information it never occurred to them to give.”<sup>2</sup> Accordingly, to find women in the past from historical sources, one has to read beyond the small volume of evidence to establish, beyond a few named individuals, the existence of the female population. Whilst it would be tedious to reiterate and bewail the masculinist content of the king lists and other documents from that period, Barbara Yorke’s work on the early Anglo-Saxon kingdoms raises one’s hopes that meaningful lives of contemporary women can be illuminated. By aligning feminist perspectives on archaeology with approaches from social geography in conceptualising space, place and gender,<sup>3</sup> and considering elements of the archaeological record as a form of social network, different perceptions of the cultural dynamics of the mid-first millennium AD might be foregrounded. An appraisal of source material is required, both 7th-century historical and earlier archaeological, in order to tease out aspects of attitudes to and the position of women in the sixth century in Britain.

This paper was prompted by two factors: firstly, Barbara Yorke’s presentation on the mid-6th-century female from Chessell Down grave 45 at the UCL Institute of Archaeology conference, *Women’s Work: Archaeology and the Invisible Sex* (2000). This encouraged me to reflect that by acknowledging my wariness regarding historical sources, a reappraisal of the intersections with archaeological research would be fruitful. Secondly, her comments on the role of women in the power struggles and strategies in the formation of the Kentish kingdom,

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1 Sheila Rowbotham, *Hidden from History* (London, 1974).

2 Gillian Clarke, *Women in Late Antiquity: Pagan and Christian Lifestyles* (Oxford, 1994), p. 3.

3 Doreen Massey, *Space, Place and Gender* (Cambridge, 1994).

formed a glimpsed narrative of gender issues in the 7th century—with outcomes that could be investigated via the archaeology of the 6th and which will be expanded upon in this paper.<sup>4</sup>

### Women in Early Anglo-Saxon Studies

Within Anglo-Saxon archaeology the impact of feminist-derived gender research has been minimal in comparison to its impact on prehistory. Sam Lucy asserts that this was a function of the historicist tradition of Anglo-Saxon scholarship, rather than through any inherent problems with the archaeological data per se.<sup>5</sup> Much of the early discussion on the role of women in the early medieval period has focused on marriage and the domestic context.<sup>6</sup> Stenton notes only individual abbesses and queens, with no index entries for the category ‘women.’<sup>7</sup> This absence of meaningful focus sits uneasily perhaps with the acknowledged attributes of women to hold land in their own right and to act as compurgators in law-suits.<sup>8</sup> This later attribute, of acting as a witness who could swear to the innocence or good character of an accused person, places women in the role of reliable truth-sayers. Immediately one wonders if this role might relate to a much earlier role in divination, evidenced by amulets, curing stones and crystal balls found exclusively in female graves of the 6th century.<sup>9</sup> Perhaps this is just another example of an archaeologist’s leap based on shaky understandings of the texts, but does suggest that the concept of ‘woman’ had a cultural value within a set of idealised gender qualities, rather than individual attributes, that had clear social and political purpose.

A quotation from the late Martin Welch’s text—edited at this point by Barbara Yorke—on the documentary sources for the early Anglo-Saxon kingdoms in southern Britain, is worth quoting at length here:<sup>10</sup>

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- 4 Barbara Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo-Saxon England* (London, 1990), pp. 25–44.
- 5 Samantha Lucy, “Housewives, Warriors and Slaves?” in *Invisible People and Processes*, ed. Jenny Moore and Eleanor Scott (Leicester, 1997), pp. 150–68 at p. 150.
- 6 Dorothy Whitelock, *The Beginnings of English Society* (Harmondsworth, 1952), pp. 93–95.
- 7 Frank M. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1947). In the third edition (1971), there is a single page index listing for “women, their contribution to monastic reform.”
- 8 Whitelock, *The Beginnings of English Society*, p. 94.
- 9 Audrey Meaney, *Anglo-Saxon Amulets and Curing Stones*, BAR British Ser. 96 (Oxford, 1981).
- 10 Martin Welch (ed. Barbara Yorke), “The Kingdoms in the Written Sources,” in Sue Harrington and Martin Welch, *The Early Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms of Southern Britain, AD 450–650: Beneath the Tribal Hidage* (Oxford, 2014), p. 3.

The many journeys between southern England and *Francia* recorded for church members can be taken as representative of a much broader and well-established traffic. In the same way emulation of Frankish family monasteries, and particularly the tendency for these to be run by princesses and other high status women, may be an indication of a wider and longer-rooted Frankish influence on elite life.

A second observation from the same project is also pertinent. Martin Welch noted—a point endorsed by Barbara—that territorial boundaries were subject to frequent revision. This was particularly the case with territories on the periphery of kingdoms exemplified by the changing control of the Isle of Wight, a matter commented on by Bede (*HE* IV.15–16).

Barbara Yorke notes elsewhere that king Æthelberht's sister Ricula was married to Sledd of the East Saxons and that "Kent played a role in bringing the family to power."<sup>11</sup> So, it can be inferred that the presence of this Kentish representative was a visible statement, an example of the symbolism of a wider power made apparent by the female body. Whilst Æthelberht agreed to convert to Christianity as a condition of his marriage to Bertha of *Francia*, but actually converted via Rome not through his bride's Christian entourage—was this sidelining her symbolic representation of the power of the Franks, and in what position did this place her, both as a person and as a cipher? This very action represented a loosening of existing ties with *Francia* and an assertion of regional independence. Nevertheless, a repeat transaction saw Æthelberht's son Eadbald, whose mother was Bertha, marry another Frankish bride, Ymme, repeating the strategy of a networked power association—demonstrating a need to maintain these cross-channel links and by extension the links of the Frankish network throughout Europe. Indeed, the marriage of Eadbald in the first instance to his step-mother (his father's second wife),<sup>12</sup> perhaps is an indication of the real issue at play—the political power this union signified for the kingdom of Kent, or at least the presentation of such an on going alliance to other emergent kingdoms in the island of Britain.

However, was this only one way traffic or were value transactions involved as a trade-off, such as land grants, tribute revenues and access to trading links? Sonia Chadwick Hawkes, highlighting the presence of bridal females with gold

<sup>11</sup> Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, pp. 28–29.

<sup>12</sup> Kenneth P. Witney, "The Kentish Royal Saints: An Enquiry into the Faces Behind the Legends," *Arch. Cant.* 101 (1984), 1–22, at p. 2.

braided head-dresses buried in Kent, certainly assumed this to be the case.<sup>13</sup> Barbara Yorke demonstrates the value of female relatives at a variety of levels, sometimes with repeat marriages within the same family to hold the link fast.<sup>14</sup> But a new role, for high status women at least, is evident in the 7th century, as abbesses within newly founded monastic institutions. In summarising this situation Barbara notes that, for example “control of Minster[-in-Thanel] ... passed among female members of the royal house” and that “abbesses were active in gaining grants and privileges.”<sup>15</sup> Indeed here is the crux of this discussion:

The proprietary houses may also have been linked with the administration of the kingdom for a number of them seem to have been based in the central places of major estates for whose spiritual needs they would have been responsible.

Was this linkage between elite female status and land holding or administration a new development of the 7th century or a continuation of earlier practices? How might a marriage brokerage system sit within a developing social context, however one that perhaps still relied on the symbolic value of women to make it viable? How did this situation come about? Or was this a continuation of a tradition of venerating high status women, now presumed to be religious because of their elite connections?

John Blair proposes that “in the pioneering stages of the English conversion ... women may have played a dynamic role which faded when institutional structures crystallized.”<sup>16</sup> He also conjectures on the appeal of Christianity to pagan women, as it gave them the opportunity for the “heroic afterlife that their warrior husbands could expect.” I would argue conversely that the very rich nature of female burials in the 6th century does actually reflect a similarly elevated set of afterlife concepts, but one that, alongside contemporary male burials, was also fixed in their present, as an *aide mémoire* to the living within the landscape.<sup>17</sup>

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13 Sonia Chadwick Hawkes, “Anglo-Saxon Kent c.425–725,” in *Archaeology in Kent to 1500*, ed. P. Leach, Council for British Archaeology Research Report, 48 (London, 1982), pp. 64–78.

14 Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, p. 37, table 3.

15 Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, p. 38.

16 John Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 174–75.

17 Howard Williams, *Death and Memory in Early Medieval Britain* (Cambridge, 2006), p. 178.

### Marriage at All Ages?

Witney notes that women could not take the veil and enter a convent as a nun until the age of 16.<sup>18</sup> This could have a practical outcome in that there might be a saving on a dowry by the girl's family and would keep property that might be diverted within the family.<sup>19</sup> There is sufficient archaeological evidence that can be interpreted to suggest that pre-Christianity females could be married before this age and buried with full adult female assemblages—the girl, indicated age of c.10 years from Holywell Row grave 11, Suffolk and illustrates this point, as does the potentially younger girl from Buckland Dover grave 20.<sup>20</sup> The following examples are all from bodies sexed skeletally as female but with burial material that is most commonly associated with young adult and adult women. They span the 6th and 7th centuries. It must be acknowledged that there is an issue with the circularity of ascription wherein the gender of feminine grave material is then inscribed onto the sex of the body, where none may have survived, and the resolution of sex queries being subordinated to the gendering of the objects.<sup>21</sup>

There was an infant (age at death 0–2 years) of the later 6th century, with beads, a Kentish/Frankish buckle and a style II bracteate from grave 40 in the unpublished site at Ozengell, Kent (author's research notes) and another in grave 86 with a keystone garnet disc brooch. In contrast there is only one example of a male associated weapon—a D1 spearhead—with such a young body, in this case in grave 89 from the unpublished Kentish site at Bradstow School, Broadstairs. One can also pick out children placed in the age at death category of 3–6 years with adult type material. Finglesham, Kent grave 7, dated to the second half of the 7th century, has wheel-thrown vessels and gold pendants and Sarre, Kent grave 277 dated to the 7th century, has a set of keys.<sup>22</sup>

Within the next age at death category, that of Juvenile 7–15, there are a greater number female bodies with adult feminine assemblages. Following the

18 Witney, "The Kentish Royal Saints," p. 3.

19 Clarke, *Women in Late Antiquity*, p. 53, discussing Roman elites.

20 Thomas C. Lethbridge, *Recent Excavations in Anglo-Saxon Cemeteries in Cambridgeshire and Suffolk*, Cambridge Antiquarian Society Quarto Publication 3 (Cambridge, 1931); Vera I. Evison, *Dover, the Buckland Anglo-Saxon Cemetery* (London, 1987).

21 Lucy, "Housewives, Warriors and Slaves?"; Nick Stoodley, *The Spindle and the Spear: A Critical Enquiry into the Construction and Meaning of Gender in Early Anglo-Saxon Inhumation Burial Rite*, BAR British Ser. 288 (Oxford, 1999).

22 Sonia Chadwick Hawkes and Guy Grainger, *The Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Finglesham, Kent*, Oxford University School of Archaeology Monograph, 64 (Oxford, 2006); David Perkins, "The Jutish Cemetery at Sarre Revisited: Part 2," *Arch. Cant.* 110 (1992), 83–120.

work of Nick Stoodley, the age of 12 appears to be that at which girls were perceived to be ready for marriage and, one assumes, for childbearing.<sup>23</sup> These examples occur throughout the late 5th, 6th and 7th centuries of furnished burial—examples amongst many are Saxton Road grave 51 with beads and button brooches, Portway Andover graves 44 and 61 with beads and chatelaines and Long Wittenham grave 7 with pierced coins and a range of beads and pendants on her necklace. In this age grouping male bodies with weapons become present. The juveniles with swords are the most obvious (Saxton Road grave 42, Croydon grave 4, Dover Buckland grave 21 and Bradstow School grave 71), but there are also 48 examples of young male bodies with spearheads. This age correlation has already been investigated by Heinrich Härke, so it serves only to note here the parallel nature of the cultural trait of vesting young male bodies with older age-related material.<sup>24</sup> In summary, it is plausible to suggest that the wide temporal span of these graves may indicate that the practice of embellishing female children with adult female assemblages continued throughout the period of Christianisation and thus may well have been a long and deeply embedded cultural practice.

Within this age group there are also examples of female-associated cultural material that is not local to the region of burial. For example Dover Buckland grave 326 has a pair of Anglian wrist clasps in situ, items that are rare in southern Britain, with only eight published examples.<sup>25</sup> Kent, although with the largest number of recorded excavated graves, shows surprisingly few artefacts that were culturally non-local.<sup>26</sup> However, there is a greater frequency, in contrast, of Kentish material outside of Kent: 66 brooches appear throughout southern Britain, although only a few with the under-15 age group.

### Non-local Cultural Material

Just considering brooch types in the Kentish kingdom, the Saxon saucer brooches (27 examples) that do occur within East Kent are all at major sites such as Faversham, Lyminge and Dover Buckland, but not elsewhere in the

23 Stoodley, *Spindle and the Spear*; "Burial Rites, Gender and the Creation of Kingdoms: The Evidence from Seventh-Century Wessex," *ASSAH* 10 (1999), 99–107.

24 Heinrich Härke, "Early Saxon Weapon Burials," in *Weapons and Warfare in Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. Sonia Chadwick Hawkes (Oxford, 1989), pp. 49–61; Heinrich Härke, *Angelsächsische Waffengräber Des 5. Bis 7. Jahrhunderts* (Cologne, 1992).

25 Keith Parfitt and Trevor Anderson, *Buckland Anglo-Saxon Cemetery, Dover. Excavations 1994*, The Archaeology of Canterbury, New Ser., 4 (Canterbury, 2012).

26 Harrington and Welch, *The Early Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms of Southern Britain*.

communities east of the Medway. The small long brooch, culturally designated at Anglian and a rather common item, is more widely spread amongst sites east of the Medway, but relatively infrequent in West Kent. A child aged at death 3–6 years with two Anglian type small long brooches was in grave 254 at Dover Buckland.<sup>27</sup> Outside of Kent the situation appears to be different. Brooch wearers up to the age of 15 have very few Kentish brooches. Indeed, there are more penannular brooches with these young females (16 examples) than any other putatively non-regional types. The penannular brooch also occurs in Kent too. How might these distributions be interpreted? Can we see here the movement of young females out of Kent but a much more limited presence of non local women within it? Do the regions and polities further to the west of the Anglo-Saxon communities also employ a strategy of linkage through females and over considerable geographical distance? This of course begs the question around whether objects move, as trade goods or ‘fashion’ items, or whether the females move and carry the cultural material with them. The latter argument is favoured.

This somewhat cursory exploration of the archaeological evidence does nevertheless add weight to the proposition that the strategic exchange of females of all ages before and after puberty could explain these patterns of distribution of culturally specific artefacts in the 5th, 6th and, briefly, 7th centuries. Inevitably, more questions are raised than can be addressed adequately here. However, whilst this exogamic movement of women is highlighted through the burials of young females,<sup>28</sup> one must also assume that the burials of older women (married early but living longer) may well illustrate crucial aspects of this socio-political mechanism. This cultural trait appears, in southern Britain at least, before the advent of female involvement in the religious institutions of the 7th century. This later process, although still hiving off females, perhaps into locales away from their kin group, itself an exogamous process, but one that still retained them within their elite group and as representatives of it.

What can analysis of their complex burial assemblages from disparate cultural sources indicate about their life courses and role in the dynamics of territorial expansion that characterised the early kingdoms? The basis of the discussion that follows is to suggest that the females accumulated cultural material throughout their life courses (however brief) and that that material is

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27 Anderson, *Buckland Anglo-Saxon Cemetery*.

28 Sue Harrington, “Beyond Exogamy,” in *Studies in Art and Archaeology: Papers in Honour of Martin G. Welch*, ed. Sue Harrington, Andrew Reynolds and Stuart Brookes, BAR British Ser. 527 (Oxford, 2011), pp. 88–97.

indicative of cultural networks across space. That this material came to be fixed within a landscape context is suggested to be diagnostic of the processes of state formation in the mid-6th century in southern Britain. Here, one draws towards the intricacies of gender and landscape and the discussion now focuses on the theme of the precursor (6th-century) power network facilitated by female mobility within the territoriality of landscapes.

### Gender and Social Dynamics

The case study used to explore these propositions is the woman from grave 45 at Chessell Down on the Isle of Wight and her contemporaries. But first, it is important to establish the theoretical standpoint that will inform the discourse. Gender identity, from burials in early Anglo-Saxon England, appears to relate to wealth and status, with common correlates of women with jewellery and men with weapons. This is certainly too coarse a classificatory method, as has been pointed out.<sup>29</sup> Gender, or the socially constructed element of identity, is not a fixed and universal trait and can be seen evolving within dynamic contexts.<sup>30</sup> Gender is an arena for subtle short term and dynamic longer term changes in human agency and identity and is deeply connected to societal change, particularly as it engages with economic activity. This is particularly obvious in Anglo-Saxon contexts that associate unmarried females with spinning—as spinsters—an identity confirmed within an economic context of surplus production of the key commodity of cloth.<sup>31</sup>

Gender as an area for research is very much concerned with agency, work, nuance, life course, dynamic change and power relationships, intercut with changing hierarchies and beliefs. What burial can offer to understandings of gender is a snapshot of a cultural situation that has been set in time and space. Additionally, issues of space and place and how these might interact with gendered lives have long been a concern of social geographers, particularly second wave feminists such as Doreen Massey and Gillian Rose, with a shift in emphasis to think about the spatial in terms of social relations and the forms of knowledge that this might entail.<sup>32</sup>

29 Lucy, "Housewives, Warriors and Slaves?"; Stoodley, *Spindle and the Spear*; "Burial Rites, Gender and the Creation of Kingdoms."

30 Roberta Gilchrist, "The Spatial Archaeology of Gender: A Case Study of Medieval English Nunneries," *Archaeological Review from Cambridge* 7:1 (1988), 21–28.

31 Chris Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages: Europe and the Mediterranean, 400–800* (Oxford, 2005), p. 700.

32 Massey, *Space, Place and Gender*, p. 19.

### The Cemetery at Chessell Down, Isle of Wight, and Grave 45

To return to the Chessell Down burials on the Isle of Wight—here given the shorthand code of CLD. The site of the Chessell Down cemetery, now within a Forestry Commission conifer plantation, is on the western end of the island on the northwest slope of chalk downs at 114 m above sea level, in the parish of Shalfleet. The aspect of the slope is interesting, as it offers a wide view westwards over the sea approaches to the Solent and to any landing places on the mainland shore opposite in Hampshire. The cemetery is one of many along the central chalk ridge of Wight (the project database records twelve sites), mainly only excavated partially, but consistently producing material linking these communities to Kent in the 6th century. The place name Chessell may derive from OE *ciest*, ‘chest or coffin’, combined with *hyll*, ‘hill’, suggesting local awareness over time of the presence of this burial ground.<sup>33</sup> The site overlooks a north-south low level routeway between the chalk downs across the island that links the routeway along the foot of the scarp and the channel facing coast to the south. Any traveller coming off the downs from a higher level routeway would have passed through the cemetery to reach the other roads and tracks. On the corresponding hill, facing eastwards is the barrow cemetery at Shalcombe Down, with secondary Anglo-Saxon inhumations and a possible cremation. Amongst the grave goods are a sword and poor quality imitations of Kentish keystone garnet disc brooches suggesting knowledge of the brooch type but without the necessary craft skills to reproduce them accurately.<sup>34</sup>

Although the two burial grounds are seemingly very close and in visual proximity, the distribution of cemeteries along and around the chalk ridge of the Isle of Wight mirrors the density found in Kent and other downland settled areas. The majority of the diagnostic material in Isle of Wight cemeteries of the 6th century comes from Kent or Francia, with Frisian pottery also present. From further afield, there is a Visigothic tremissis of AD 509 to 520 at Bowcombe Down and embossed rim copper alloy bowls from the Rhineland. The recently published metal detected find of a Frankish helmet from a weapon grave on Bowcombe Down exemplifies the cross-Channel links in that period.<sup>35</sup> The Portable Antiquities Scheme database records a very similar mix of

33 Christopher J. Arnold, *The Anglo-Saxon Cemeteries of the Isle of Wight* (London, 1982), p. 18, referencing Helge Kökeritz, *The Place-Names of the Isle of Wight* (Uppsala, 1940), p.209.

34 Arnold, *The Anglo-Saxon Cemeteries of the Isle of Wight*, pp. 81–83.

35 James Hood et al., “Investigating and Interpreting an Early-to-Mid Sixth-Century Frankish Style Helmet,” *British Museum Technical Research Bulletin* 6 (2012), 83–95.

material in the area below Chessell Down. Another penannular brooch (Fowler type G) has also been found in the locality.

The confused and piecemeal excavation of Chessell Down by antiquarian diggers in the 19th century needs not be reprised here,<sup>36</sup> suffice to comment that this was a large and important site whose archive eventually found a secure home in the British Museum. All available evidence was eventually reconstructed by Arnold from the disparate sources, with the caveat that the evidence was eccentric so that the grave groups as published must constitute a 'best guess' rather than definitive statements—his list includes over 200 unassociated items. The profile of the material found from cemeteries on the Isle of Wight and collated by Arnold shows material broadly datable to the 6th century. There is very little that is Saxon or Anglian in origin, with only a few applied disc brooches and Swanton type L and J spearheads.<sup>37</sup> It is notable that the main spearhead types (from the H series) are not frequent in East Kentish contexts. There is also a penannular brooch from the British West.

The original extent of the cemetery was probably much greater than as excavated, with many graves situated around the edge of marl pits that had eaten into the hillside. Nevertheless, a conservative estimate of the number of people whose graves could be identified runs in excess of 110, placing it in terms of scale commensurate with the contemporary Kentish sites. The presence of cremations was also noted, but it is uncertain here from the published evidence if these are actually contemporary or much earlier.<sup>38</sup> Mixed rite cemeteries are rare in Kentish type sites, but are more frequent elsewhere.<sup>39</sup> Another unexpected feature is the use of stone lined cists, of which there are two examples noted (although there may be some ambiguity in the antiquarian use of the term, it is assumed that a stone-lined chamber is indicated). Again these are generally found outside of Kent and were used from the Late Roman period onwards in areas at the upland edges and beyond the regions of Anglo-Saxon settlement. CLD Grave 45 is described thus: "the cist was about eight feet in length and nearly five in width. The skeleton was on its back, and betokened a person in life of stately presence."<sup>40</sup> Grave 8, the other cist, is much less substantially constructed and contained only an iron knife. From the reconstructed site plan CLD 45 lies at the end of a row of graves all orientated north east to south west (the line is discontinued by the edge of a marl pit).<sup>41</sup> Those to the

36 Arnold, *The Anglo-Saxon Cemeteries of the Isle of Wight*, pp. 13–19.

37 Michael Swanton, *A Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Spear Types*, BAR British Ser. 112 (Oxford, 1974).

38 Arnold, *The Anglo-Saxon Cemeteries of the Isle of Wight*, p. 18.

39 Harrington and Welch, *The Early Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms of Southern Britain*.

40 Arnold, *The Anglo-Saxon Cemeteries of the Isle of Wight*, p. 26.

41 Arnold, *The Anglo-Saxon Cemeteries of the Isle of Wight*, Fig. 3.

south of CLD 45 in the line are unfurnished burials (graves 46, 47, 50 and 52) with the exception of a south east to north west orientated spear grave (48).

The plan of grave 45 is an image used very frequently to illustrate a female burial in the 6th century, almost as an archetype, although in the context of her contemporaries she is clearly unusual. The plan is George Hillier's original drawing, made more widely known through inclusion in volume VI of Charles Roach Smith *Collectanea Antiqua* (1868) and latterly Chris Arnold's volume (1982) on the Anglo-Saxon cemeteries of the Isle of Wight (Fig. 5.1). Yet, how accurate a depiction is it? The slightly ghoulish representation of the skull and disproportionately long legs within a distracting etched background tends to mask the extraordinary visual nature of her assemblage and denotes her as exceptional rather than as representative of women in the 6th century. We have no personal information about her, apart from inferring a fully grown body and what the assemblage might suggest about her life-course. The types of objects associated with her and their provenances are given in Table 5.1, below.

She has a more extended range of artefact provenances than other contemporary females, with her gold braid, Frankish style dress fittings, Kentish brooches and the Kentish-type weaving beater. As Barbara Yorke originally suggested some years ago, she appears to be conventionally Kentish in aspect, but may well have come from Francia, perhaps as a point of origin and indicated by the gold braid, but subsequently via Kent. Her final destination and purpose was to demonstrate the affiliations of the Isle of Wight to Kentish and Frankish trading interests. There is nothing overtly Scandinavian in her material culture, however, in contrast to her mid-6th-century contemporary in grave 4 at Sarre, Kent. Sarre 4 has a parallel assemblage, but one that also includes southern Scandinavian type gold bracteates. It is tempting to suggest that both women, Sarre 4 and CLD 45, arrived in Kent from different locales, gathering personal material as they were moved. Her three great square-headed brooches are culturally Kentish, but are made of silver—a relatively rare raw material that could have come either from Francia or conceivably traded from on-going mine workings in the British West. The weaving batten has for many years been discussed as a tool for use on the warp weighted loom.<sup>42</sup> It is now proposed that, with its particular form, associated contexts and relatively short temporal span of use, it had a less utilitarian function and may rather relate to regulation

42 Marta Hoffmann, *The Warp-Weighted Loom*, *Studia Norvegica* 14 (Oslo, 1964); Louise Millard, Shirley Jarman, and Sonia Chadwick Hawkes, "Anglo-Saxon Burials near the Lord of the Manor, Ramsgate: 17–22," *Arch. Cant.* 84 (1969), 9–32.

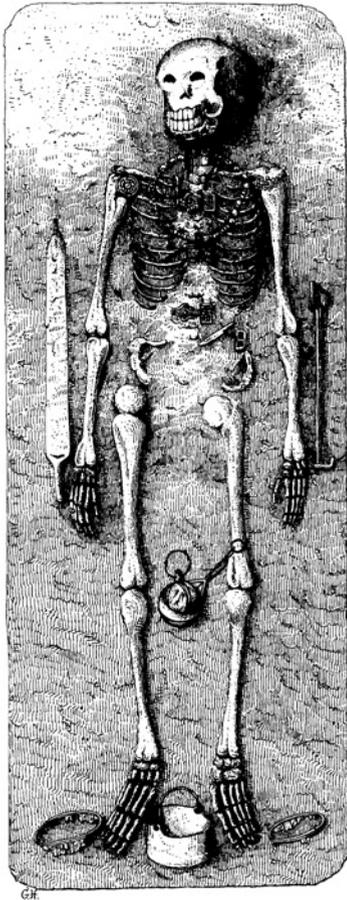


FIGURE 5.1  
Grave 45 Chessell Down, from Williams, *Death and Memory*, Fig. 1, p. 7

of cloth widths for trade and tribute.<sup>43</sup> This assertion would place this object on a par with weapon swords, if they themselves are seen as emblematic of a royal official such as a port reeve, charged with obtaining dues from trading activities along the coast. It is noted that weaving batters do not occur in cemeteries unless there is a contemporary sword burial as is the case with Chessell Down (nine swords in graves plus another five unassociated examples).

CLD 45 was not alone within her community in her geographically distant contacts. Another eight females in the Chessell Down cemetery (where grave groups have been established: that is graves 3, 13, 23, 40, 69, 98 and 108) had Frankish type brooches. Does this group perhaps suggest an entourage of

43 Sue Harrington, "Early Anglo-Saxon Weaving Swords Revisited," in *The Evidence of Material Culture: Studies in Honour of Professor Vera Evison*, ed. Ian Riddler, Jean Soulat, and Lynne Keys (Autun, 2016), pp. 209–18.

TABLE 5.1 CLD 45's objects and their provenances

Object	Material	Provenance
Pail/bucket with runic inscriptions	Copper alloy	Eastern Mediterranean
Perforated spoon	Silver	Via Kent
Crystal ball	Crystal	Via Kent
Latch lifter/girdle hanger	Iron	Local or via Kent
Cup(s?)	Wood with decorated silver	Via Kent?
Knife	Iron	Local
Buckle loop	Iron with silver inlay	Frankish
Great Square headed brooches × 3	Silver gilt, garnet	Kentish
Symmetrical brooch	Silver gilt, garnet	Kentish/Frankish?
Keystone garnet disc brooch	Silver gilt, garnet	Kent
Braided headband	Gold thread	Frankish?
Beads		Various
Weaving batten	Iron	Kentish
Finger ring	Gold	Unknown
Finger ring	Silver	Unknown

females, possibly an entire household or kin group? Gillian Clarke comments that 'If an important woman in a household took to the ascetic life, her women relatives, dependents and slaves might join her, so that the household became a community'.<sup>44</sup> Life on the Isle of Wight in the 6th century, however exposed to gales from south westerly winds and strong sea currents, does not necessarily imply asceticism and isolation, but such a grouping together of women may have strengthened the bonds of this outpost to the local community of traders and back to their Kentish and Frankish elites, as was the custom.

Is there any reason to suppose that CLD 45 herself may have come from further afield? Hackenbeck et al. demonstrated through stable carbon and nitrogen isotope analyses of bone from the mid-5th- to mid-7th-century community of Altenerding in Bavaria, that the diet of women indicated greater mobility than that for men and that there were correlates with 'foreign' grave goods, in the case of grave 421 from Scandinavia.<sup>45</sup> Curiously, the woman in grave 343 at Altenerding with a weaving sword had a distinctively low nitrogen

44 Clarke, *Women in Late Antiquity*, p. 102.

45 Susanne Hackenbeck et al., "Diet and Mobility in Early Medieval Bavaria: A Study of Carbon and Nitrogen Stable Isotopes," *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* 143:2 (2010), 235–49.

score in contrast to the rest of her community. Such analyses have not been carried out for the skeletal material that survives from Chessell Down, so any inferences about wider mobility must be drawn from the artefactual evidence.

The pail in grave CLD 45 is a rare artefact, provenanced to the eastern Mediterranean. Whether it can be argued that she arrived via the eastern Mediterranean with her decorated pail is a moot point, but it is noted that these particular objects do not occur along the overland and riverine routes of mainland Europe.<sup>46</sup> Eastern Mediterranean-sourced artefacts, such as weighty copper alloy bowls, appear in Kent from the late 6th century onwards. It is interesting to speculate whether more extensive trading routes along the western seaboard of Britain and northern France had been established by then—the wealth of Kentish material, including a weaving beater of similar form to that with CLD 45, from the cemetery at Herpes-en-Charente, France, from mid-way down the Bay of Biscay, may point to this. In this case, a differentiation might be made between those artefacts of personal adornment, such as brooches accrued during her life course and in recognition of her cultural affiliations and role in formal alliances, and given artefacts, such as the weaving batten and the pail that manifested hers and her community's wider associations.

There is a small concentration of eastern Mediterranean material in Wight, Hampshire and Sussex a generation or more earlier than it appears in Kent. The glass vessel from grave 49 at Highdown, West Sussex may be broadly contemporary with the deposition of the mid-5th-century Patching Hoard.<sup>47</sup> The decorated pail from grave 1 at Shallow's Farm, Breamore in a double burial has close similarities in terms of its decorative scheme with the Chessell Down item.<sup>48</sup> The find of bridle fitment first alerted investigators to the presence of early Anglo-Saxon material near a crossing point of the river,<sup>49</sup> yet this was an object that came too from the eastern Mediterranean.

The Shallow's Farm burial was a double male/female inhumation with both bodies covered by a shield boss and with a ferruled spearhead. It is noted that

46 Anthea Q. Harris, *Byzantium, Britain and the West, the Archaeology of Cultural Identity* (Stroud, 2003).

47 Martin Welch, *Early Anglo-Saxon Sussex*, BAR British Ser. 112 (Oxford, 1983); Sally White et al., "A Mid-Fifth Century Hoard of Roman and Pseudo-Roman Material from Patching, West Sussex," *Britannia* 30 (1999), 301–15.

48 David Hinton and Sally Worrell, "An Early Anglo-Saxon Cemetery and Archaeological Survey at Breamore, Hampshire, 1999–2006," *Archaeological Journal* 174:1 (2017), 68–145.

49 Bruce Eagles and Barry Ager, "A Mid 5th- to 6th-Century Bridle-Fitting of Mediterranean Origin from Breamore, Hampshire, England, with a Discussion of Its Local Context," in *Bruc Ealles Well. Archaeological Essays Concerning the Peoples of North-West Europe in the First Millennium AD*, ed. Marc Lodewijckx, Acta Archaeologica Lovaniensia, 15 (Leuven, 2004), pp. 87–96.

a pail of similar form, but undecorated, was in a sword-bearing male burial in CLD 26—a burial that also included a copper alloy hanging bowl probably coming from a trade route with the British West. The coastal access point to the river Avon, upon which the Shallow's Farm site is located further upstream, lies behind the promontory of Hengistbury Head, visible on a clear day from the chalk ridge of the Isle of Wight.

The Isle of Wight and the Avon Valley were at the interface with the British West and Cornwall—areas that have produced ceramics that denoted trading links along the Atlantic seaboard to the Mediterranean. CLD 45, through the range of material present in her burial shows that she was the locus that demonstrated the mediation of relationships between two powerful trading regions—her burial, the largest and most substantial of those excavated, faces out towards the west of Britain and to the Atlantic seaboard trading routes, not east back towards Kent and Francia. Her burial was the visual demonstration of a north European network of associations in the 6th century.

### Conclusions

Variations on the theme of female embodiment securing links and rights to landscape are a recurring and welcome theme in recent discussions of the archaeological and documentary evidence. This might be taken to display as a more generalised trend to now consider the actualities and choices in past peoples' lives. Duncan Sayer has argued that female burials with children mark out a system of dynamic investment, although whether married women moved to be near their female kin in the patrilocal residence around the time of birth might also be considered as an interpretation of female/child double burials.<sup>50</sup> Whether we should consider clusters of female burials in a cemetery as single kin group or an assemblage of exogamous women would bear further investigation. Helena Hamerow considers the interconnections between gender and sacral authority and concludes that

the small number of royal nuns and abbesses who figure so prominently in written accounts of the Conversion were part of a wider, undocumented change in the role of women that began several decades before the

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50 Duncan Sayer, "Sons of Athelings Given to the Earth: Infant Mortality within Anglo-Saxon Mortuary Geography," *Medieval Archaeology* 58:1 (2014), 78–103; Brooke A. Seelza, "Female Mobility and Postmarital Kin Access in a Patrilocal Society," *Human Nature* 22 (2011), 377–93.

founding of the first female houses. It is argued that these well-furnished graves reflect a new investment in the commemoration of females who came to represent their family's interests in newly acquired estates and whose importance was enhanced by their ability to confer supernatural legitimacy onto dynastic claims.<sup>51</sup>

A clear example of such a dual purpose may be surmised for the woman in the richly furnished 7th-century grave in the square enclosure from Street House, Loftus, Cleveland—a site on a headland above the trading routes along the north east coast.<sup>52</sup> A similar situation may be discerned for the woman excavated in 1860 during the construction of the windmill at Sarre, here above the Wantsum Channel on the safe navigable route between Thanet and the mainland of Kent.<sup>53</sup>

I have argued that this is only a more visible result of a much earlier and widespread trend that was instrumental in confirming territorial and trading hegemonies in the 6th century. It is proposed that the female role in political networks, previously facilitated by marriage, is re-affirmed by their new role within minsters, as guardians and administrators of land and wealth. The 6th-century burials can be read as making places and networks permanent within the spatial strategies of state formation.

Entry into a convent was not necessarily an alternative to marriage, but rather an adaptation by removing them from the market at the point at which they were no longer useful in this arena. Their next role was as landholders for the kin group, to maintain wealth for that group, in the knowledge that their position and status would be sufficient to fulfil this essential role. This is not to suggest a role as surrogate men, but a deployment and extension of their accepted gender identity set by the precedents of the 6th century.

The gender identity of females, as a category rather than through individual attributes, was important to confirm the interrelationships necessary for the claiming of territory. This could be achieved through marriage, which could operate seemingly at any age of the individual, with the femaleness of the body being all that was necessary. The construction of place, as known to people within the community and those visiting or passing by, was confirmed through

51 Helena Hamerow, "Furnished Female Burial in Seventh-Century England: Gender and Sacral Authority in the Conversion Period," *EME* 24:4 (2016), 423–47, at p. 423.

52 Stephen Sherlock, *A Royal Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Street House, Loftus, North-East Yorkshire*, Tees Archaeology Monograph 6 (Hartlepool, 2012).

53 John Brent, "Account of the Society's Researches in the Saxon Cemetery at Sarre," *Arch. Cant.* 5 (1863), 305–21.

the placing of richly vested female burials at strategic nodes within networks of links over space. Most recently Kate Mees has noted the placement of high-status female burials adjacent to long-distance ridge-top driveways in Wessex in the 7th century.<sup>54</sup>

Females were emblematic and the embodiment of networks over space. Central to this construct, it is argued, was the formal agreement of marriage, which itself could become flexible regarding those involved and the requirements of the political circumstances. The woman in grave 45 at Chessell Down marked the sea-born interface between the Anglo-Saxon world, and its links to the east, with those polities to the west, themselves arguably already linked to the eastern Mediterranean by the 6th century. These women were not there by chance, but their presence does suggest parity with the status of weapon bearing men. Those men, as agents of a distant king, could have imposed their regime by force to extract trade tribute and surpluses. That, in the mid-6th century, it was also crucial to have the ideological status of females allied to their regimes of control perhaps offers precursors for the role of elite women in the early church of the 7th century.

### Acknowledgements

This paper is a re-working of a presentation made at the European Association of Archaeologists conference in Oslo, Norway in 2011. The session was concerned with the scientific evidence for female mobility.

The data referred to in the text is held in the database of the *Beyond the Tribal Hidage* project. This database from the Leverhulme Trust funded project (2006–9 at UCL Institute of Archaeology) holds records of the burials of 12,000 individuals and their 28,000 associated artefacts from over 600 burial sites in southern Britain south of the river Thames valley (data to 2017 and freely available to download from <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/early-medieval-atlas/map-data/beyond-tribal-hidage-data>). Barbara Yorke was an esteemed and active member of the advisory group, and gave invaluable support to the completion of the project in the aftermath of the untimely death of Martin Welch in 2011.

Thanks to Sarah Semple, Eleanor Dare, Stuart Brookes and Nick Stoodley for comments on earlier drafts and for highlighting omissions and errors. Remaining errors and misconceptions are mine alone.

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54 Kate Mees, *Burial, Landscape and Identity in Early Medieval Wessex* (Woodbridge, 2019), pp. 67–73.

## The Afterlives of Bede's Tribal Names in English Place-Names

*John Baker and Jayne Carroll*

Bede famously traced the origins of the Anglo-Saxons back to three of the strongest Germanic “tribes”:

They came from three very powerful Germanic tribes [*de tribus Germaniae populis fortioribus*], the Saxons [*Saxonibus*], Angles [*Anglis*], and Jutes [*Iutis*]. The people of Kent and the inhabitants of the Isle of Wight are of Jutish origin and also those opposite the Isle of Wight, that part of the kingdom of Wessex which is still today called the nation of the Jutes. From the Saxon country, that is, the district now known as Old Saxony, came the East Saxons, the South Saxons, and the West Saxons. Besides this, from the country of the Angles, that is the land between the kingdoms of the Jutes and the Saxons, which is called *Angulus*, came the East Angles, the Middle Angles, the Mercians, and all the Northumbrian race (that is those people who dwell north of the river Humber) as well as the other Anglian tribes.<sup>1</sup>

Already in the time of Bede, it is clear that these three people-names could be used to denote both continental and insular peoples. Indeed, in Old English (OE) texts, *Engle* ‘Angle’ is used in several ways: (1) to refer to the inhabitants of Angeln;<sup>2</sup> (2) to refer to one of the constituent bodies of the Germanic-speaking inhabitants who arrived in lowland Britain, and who settled, traditionally at least (as in Bede’s *Historia*), in midland and northern areas of what was to become England, and in contrast to Saxons and Jutes (and others);<sup>3</sup> (3) the

1 Bede, *HE* 1.15.

2 Thus, for example, the narrator of *Widsith* records that *Engle* and *Swæfe* observe the border established by Anglian king Offa; the narrator himself depicts himself *mid Englum* “among Angles” (George Philip Krapp and Elliott Van Kirk Dobbie, eds., *The Exeter Book*, The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records 3 (New York, 1936), pp. 154–56, line 61).

3 *The Battle of Brunanburh* recalls the *adventus Saxonum*, *sibpan eastan hider Engle ond Seaxe ... Brytene sohtan* ‘when hither from the east Angles and Saxons sought Britain’ (ll. 69–71); *The Battle of Brunanburh*, ed. Alistair Campbell (London, 1938).

Germanic-speaking inhabitants of England without explicit distinction between Angles, Saxons, and Jutes, as in the compound *Engla-lond* 'England'. This last sense is the one found most frequently in OE texts, and was well established by the late 9th to early 10th century. OE *Seaxe* 'Saxons' shadows *Engle*'s first two senses, denoting: (1) the Old Saxons on the continent; (2) the Saxons in England.<sup>4</sup> In Old English, unlike *Engle*, it does not seem to have developed the more general sense 'English people', although that is the main application of its cognate in the Brittonic languages (see e.g. Welsh *Sais*, Cornish *Zowzon*).<sup>5</sup>

These two people-names are well attested in Old English sources. The same cannot be said of the Jutes, who appear only infrequently in Anglo-Saxon texts. They are one of the Continental peoples named in *Widsith* (*Ytum*), ruled by the otherwise unknown Gefwulf.<sup>6</sup> In the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*'s version of Bede's account, the Jutes are *Iotum* or *Iutum* (dative plural) and *Iutna cyn* ('people of the Jutes'),<sup>7</sup> but in the Old English translation of Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, Latin *Iutis* is rendered as *Gēatas* 'Geats' (the Scandinavian people to whom Beowulf was said to belong) rather than *Ēote* 'Jutes', although *Iutorum provincia* is given, correctly, as *Eota land*.<sup>8</sup> The *Middle English Dictionary* notes use of *Iutes*, *Jutys*, but only from the late 14th century onwards and confined to historical passages following the Bedan tradition. What little evidence there is suggests very limited use of the word *Ēote* and confusion about the identity of the peoples called, in Latin, *Iuti*. It appears that the word fell out of general use early on and was preserved principally in works drawing from Bede's account.

Nevertheless, all three of these people-names are thought to have given rise to place-names in England, although in intriguingly different proportions, as will become evident below. *Englar* and *Saksar*, the Old Norse cognates of *Engle* and *Seaxe*, are also thought to appear in names in those areas of England

4 *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary, Based on the Manuscript Collections of the Late Joseph Bosworth*, 1st ed. (Oxford, 1898) and *Supplement*, 1st ed. (Oxford, 1921), ed. Joseph Bosworth and T. Northcote Toller. Note in the late 9th century, for instance, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*'s *ða Seaxan hæfdun sig*e 'there the [Old] Saxons had the victory' (ASC s.a. 885).

5 See *sais* in *Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru* online, <<http://welsh-dictionary.ac.uk/gpc/gpc.html>>; O.J. Padel, *Cornish Place-Name Elements* (Nottingham, 1985), p. 210.

6 *Widsith*, l. 26.

7 ASC A, s.a. 449. This is rendered as *Giota*, *Giotis* in Æthelweard, *Chronicon*, p. 8.

8 Bede, *Ecclesiastical History* 4.16; *The Old English Version of Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, IV.18, ed. Thomas Miller (London, 1890); Bede's *terras Iutorum* 'Jutish lands' in the same chapter is omitted from the Old English. See also Bosworth and Toller, *Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*; William Henry Stevenson, *Asser's Life of King Alfred Together with the Annals of Saint Neots Erroneously Ascribed to Asser* (Oxford, 1906; repr. 1956), pp. 166–70.

settled by Scandinavians in the later Anglo-Saxon period, or heavily influenced by their language. These Old English and Old Norse names take their place alongside a range of others which have ethnonyms as their specific elements.<sup>9</sup> The other groups identified in such place-names include Brittonic and Goidelic speakers, early Germanic tribal communities, and communities distinctly Scandinavian or northern European in some way.<sup>10</sup>

Such place-names are traditionally interpreted as denoting isolated groups of ethnically or linguistically distinctive people.<sup>11</sup> That, common sense tells us, is how they work as names—there is little point describing a place as the village of the Frisians if all of the surrounding villages also contain Frisians. It is usually assumed, too, that the names were given not by the inhabitants of the settlements themselves but by their neighbours, surrounding communities who identified these groups as ethnically or linguistically different, something other than the “norm,” whatever that might have been. In some cases, however, self-identification must also have been a factor.

As is already clear in Bede’s account, two of the three ethnonyms that are the focus of this paper gave rise to a number of derived people-names, most of which are associated with kingdoms of the middle Anglo-Saxon period. These are the East Saxons (Bede’s *Orientalis Saxones* and the *Eastseaxan* of the OE translation), South Saxons (*Meridiani Saxones*; *Sudseaxan*) and West Saxons (*Occidui Saxones*; *Westseaxan*); East Angles (*Orientalis Angli*; *Eastengle*) and Middle Angles (*Mediterranei Angli*; *Middelengle*). A further group are the Middle Saxons, named in other sources from the 8th century onwards.<sup>12</sup> Many of these names survived as the names of shires or regions. In the former category are Essex, Sussex and Middlesex; in the latter are Wessex and East Anglia. It seems that there was at one time a Jutish territory, the *Iutarum natio* or *Iutorum provincia* described by Bede, the *Eota Land* of his Old English translator, *Iutna cyn* of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and (*in*) *provincia Jutarum* of the 12th-century *Chronicle* of John of Worcester.<sup>13</sup> The name does not seem to have survived as a district name, and the other regions reportedly settled by Jutes do

9 The specific or qualifying element is usually the first element in a construction such as Engleton (Staffordshire), OE *Engle* ‘Angles, English’ + OE *tūn* ‘farm, settlement, estate’, i.e. ‘farm of the *Engle*’.

10 Eilert Ekwall, “Tribal names in English place-names,” *Namn och Bygd* 41 (1953), 129–77.

11 See, for example, the comments on *Dene* and *Nordmenn* names in Kenneth Cameron, *English Place Names*, new ed. (London 1996), p. 77.

12 J.E.B. Gover, Allen Mawer and F.M. Stenton, *The Place-Names of Middlesex, apart from the City of London* (Cambridge, 1942), p. 1.

13 JW vol. 3, s.a. 1099. See Nick Stoodley, “Costume Groups in Hampshire and their Bearing on the Question of Jutish Settlement in the Later 5th and 6th centuries AD,” above, p. 88.

not seem to have been given names commemorating that tradition—the people of Kent are the *Cantware*, not the \**Ēast Ēote*, those of Wight the *Wihtware* or *Wihtsāete*, not the \**Sūð Ēote*.

These names of kingdoms and regions are not the main focus of this paper, but one appears also in a place-name and one as a charter bound: Exton 'farm, estate or settlement of the East Saxons' (*æt east seaxnatune* 940 [S 463; 12th-cent. MS]; Hampshire, O.S. SU 614211);<sup>14</sup> and *subsaxa lond* 'land belonging to the South Saxons' (c.848 [S 1193; 13th-cent. MS]; near Burmarsh, Kent; O.S. TR 105315).<sup>15</sup> They are therefore worth brief mention. J.K. Wallenberg points out that the latter is on the eastern boundary of the estate being described, and may therefore refer to a detached area of land belonging to the South Saxons.<sup>16</sup> These seem to be comparable with place-names such as Markfield (Leicestershire; *Merchenefeld* in Domesday Book [1086]) and Markingfield (West Yorkshire; *Merchefeld* 1086, *Merkenfeld* in the Lay Subsidy Roll of 1297), both of which can be interpreted as 'open land of the Mercians',<sup>17</sup> Conderton (Worcestershire; *Cantuaretun* 875 [S 216; 11th-cent. MS]) and Canterton (Hampshire; *Cantortun* 1086), 'farm or settlement of the people of Kent',<sup>18</sup> and Wychwood (Oxfordshire; *Huiccewudu* 841 [S 196; 11th-cent. MS]), which is 'woodland of the *Hwicce*'.<sup>19</sup> Such place-names commemorate an association with a particular kingdom or shire.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine English place-names containing the (ostensibly) less specific group-names *Engle/Englar*, *Seaxe/Saksar*, and *Ēote*, assessing the material and noting the difficulties involved, in some cases, in securely identifying reliable examples. It then examines the significance of the survival of Angles, Saxons and Jutes in English toponymy, and considers the range of possible identities reflected in the place-names: did such names reflect identities which in some sense date back to the time of the Anglo-Saxon settlements, later perceptions of such identities, or a separate assertion of ethnic identity in the middle or later Anglo-Saxon periods? What might it have

14 Allen Mawer, *Place-Names and History* (Liverpool and London, 1922), p. 10; Richard Coates, *The Place-Names of Hampshire* (London, 1989), p. 74; *CDEPN*, p. 222.

15 Paul Cullen, "The Place-Names of the Lathes of St Augustine and Shipway, Kent," PhD thesis (University of Sussex, 1997), p. 217.

16 J.K. Wallenberg, *Kentish Place-Names* (Uppsala, 1931), p. 270.

17 Ekwall, "Tribal Names," p. 141; Barrie Cox, *The Place-Names of Leicestershire*, 7 vols (Nottingham, 1998–2016), part 6, p. 175; A.H. Smith, *The Place-Names of the West Riding of Yorkshire*, 8 vols (Cambridge, 1961–63), part 5, p. 177.

18 Mawer, *Place-Names and History*, p. 10; Ekwall "Tribal Names," p. 133; Smith, *Place-Names of the West Riding*, part 5, p. 177, part 7, pp. 37, 38; Coates, *Place-Names of Hampshire*, p. 49.

19 Ekwall "Tribal Names," p. 142; Margaret Gelling, *The Place-Names of Oxfordshire* (Cambridge, 1953–54), p. 386.

meant to be described as *Engle*, *Seaxe* or *Ēote* at the point at which these names were meaningful labels? What was the range of functions of names which contained these elements? It should be emphasized that this chapter will focus on the toponymic evidence; for reasons of space, broader questions of the use of these names in literary texts will not be explored in detail.

### Establishing a Corpus

Modern forms of place-names are not a reliable guide to their etymology (the words which made up the names when they came into existence, as meaningful descriptions of places). Place-name scholars collect early attestations of the names—the earlier the better—in order to move back in time, as close as possible to the point of naming (and therefore to transparency in meaning). To take just one example, the modern name Englefield Green, Surrey, looks as though it could well belong to a corpus of *Engle*-names. All but one of its medieval attestations, though, lack <l> (e.g. *Hingefeld*a 967 [S 752; 13th-cent. MS], and *Ingefeld*, recorded in 1291, 1295, 1317, and so on), which suggests that the etymology of the name is more likely to be the Old English personal name *Inga* + OE *feld* ‘open land’: ‘Inga’s open land’ + modern English *green*.<sup>20</sup> Only with early spellings therefore, is it possible to suggest a likely etymology for a name. Even with a good record of early attestations, there may be further complications in determining with confidence the words which made up the name at its inception. The discussion below assesses place-names attested before 1400 whose early forms suggest that they could be included in a corpus of *Engle*-, *Seaxe*-, and *Ēote*-place-names. Each set of place-names is analysed in turn, with indications given of the level of confidence we have in an individual name’s suggested etymology. The intention is to establish a (relatively) reliable corpus of relevant names, which can then form the basis of a discussion of what these ethnonyms may have signified when they were used as place-name elements.

### OE *Engle* or ON *Englar*

The identification of names in OE *Engle* or Old Norse (ON) *Englar* is relatively straightforward. As the specific (first element) in a place-name, the ethnonym would appear in the genitive plural form, and, for both the Old English and Old

20 J.E.B. Gover, Allen Mawer, and F.M. Stenton, *The Place-Names of Surrey* (Cambridge, 1934), pp. 120–21; *CDEPN*, pp. 216–17. The sole medieval spelling with <l> is *Ingelfield* (1282); there are seven extant medieval spellings which lack <l>.

Norse, this is *Engla* 'of the *Engle*'.<sup>21</sup> Over time, the unstressed genitive inflection *-a* would have become less distinct (> /ə/), with this represented in the written record by *Engle-*. Neither *Engla-* nor *Engle-* is close in form to other place-name-forming elements, and there are no English or Scandinavian personal names with which they might be confused. In other words, early place-name spellings which begin *Engla-* or *Engle-* are generally accepted as containing forms of the ethnonym *Engle/Englar*. It has also been suggested that an uninflected root-form of the ethnonym, *Engel*, might appear in *Ængelhamstæde*, one of the bounds of Wootton St Lawrence, in Hampshire,<sup>22</sup> but parallels for such a use of uninflected ethnonyms seem to be confined to names for territories or kingdoms.<sup>23</sup> A singular form of the ethnonym (and possible personal name), *Angel*, has been suggested as the first element of Anglesey (Cambridgeshire);<sup>24</sup> it is not, however, independently attested as a personal name in early medieval England and an alternative etymology for this name is more likely.<sup>25</sup> In what follows each of the *Engle-*names is listed under its generic (second element), with relevant comparative material.

*With OE generics*

OE *burna* 'stream'

**Great Englebourne (Devon; O.S. SX 775565)**<sup>26</sup>

*Engleborna* 1086, *Engleburne* 1250

Compare Walburn in the North Riding of Yorkshire, whose first element may be *Walh* 'Briton'.<sup>27</sup>

OE *feld* 'open land'

**Englefield (Berkshire; O.S. SU 625725)**<sup>28</sup>

21 *Engle* is an *i*-stem, whose 'original' genitive plural would have been *Engla*; early forms of Ing Lane (see below) may suggest that a (secondary) genitive plural form *Englena* may have been formed on the model of *n*-stems; Alistair Campbell, *Old English Grammar* (Oxford, 1959), §610(7); Richard M. Hogg and R.D. Fulk, *A Grammar of Old English. Volume 2—Morphology* (Chichester, 2011), §2.70.

22 Karl Inge Sandred, *English Place-Names in -stead* (Uppsala, 1963), p. 275.

23 See also the comments on the possible use of uninflected *Seax-* for *Seaxe* below, and the references in n. 46.

24 *DEPN*, p. 10.

25 P.H. Reaney, *The Place-Names of Cambridgeshire and the Isle of Ely* (Cambridge, 1943), p. 131.

26 J.E.B. Gover, Allen Mawer, F.M. Stenton, *The Place-Names of Devon*, 2 vols (Cambridge, 1931–32), pp. 325–26; *DEPN*, p. 167.

27 A.H. Smith, *The Place-Names of the North Riding of Yorkshire* (Cambridge, 1928), p. 270.

28 Margaret Gelling, *The Place-Names of Berkshire*, 3 vols (Cambridge, 1973–76), p. 211; *DEPN*, p. 167; *CDEPN*, p. 216.

(on) *Englafelda* c. 900, *Inglefelle*, *Englefel* 1086, *Englefeldia* 1154×89

The co-occurrence of OE *feld* with ethnonyms is notable: compare *Merce* ‘Mericians’ in Markfield, Leicestershire, and Markingfield, West Riding of Yorkshire, *Daynesfeld* in Cheshire (singular *Dene* ‘a Dane’, or possible personal name), and the two possible *Seaxe* examples, below.<sup>29</sup>

OE *hām-stede* ‘homestead’

*Engelhamstæde* (Hampshire; O.S. SU 592532)<sup>30</sup>

(on) *Ængelhamstæde* 990 (S 874; mid-12th-cent. MS)

Karl Inge Sandred suggested that <Ængel> here stands for *Engel* (note <stæde> for *stede*), a root form of *Engle*, and that this name could therefore be interpreted as “the homestead of the Anglians.” This root form seems not to occur elsewhere in place-names, nor is OE *hām-stede* otherwise found with group-names, so a question remains as to whether this is indeed an instance of the ethnonym.

OE *lane* ‘lane’

**Ing Lane** (now Maiden Lane; London; O.S. TQ 297804)<sup>31</sup>

*Englenelane* 1282, *Inggelenelane* 1310–11, *Ingelane* 1320

This is not quite as straightforward as Eilert Ekwall’s statement, that “[t]he earliest instance clearly indicates a meaning ‘the lane of the Angles,’” suggests.<sup>32</sup> If this is indeed the case, it seems to be the only example of the ethnonym with an *n*-stem genitive ending (\**Englena*). Given the tendency of other ethnonyms to vary in declension between *i*- and *n*-stem, a variant *n*-stem form is by no means impossible. It is unusual, though of course not unique, for as full a form as *Englene-* to be preserved in the written record as late as the late 13th century, even for group-names for which we have better evidence of an *n*-stem derivation. Contextual evidence may support Ekwall’s proposed etymology, as there is a small corpus of ethnonym + routeway names: Denver, Norfolk (‘Danes’ passage’, OE *fær*); the compounds with ON *gata* ‘road’ listed below under **Sash**

29 Cox, *Place-Names of Leicestershire*, part 6, p. 175; Smith, *Place-Names of the West Riding*, part 5, p. 177, and see also Markington, p. 179; J. McN. Dodgson, *The Place-Names of Cheshire*, 5 parts in 7 vols (Cambridge 1970–72, Nottingham. 1981–87), part 4, p. 193. Flemmingfield in Durham looks like a possible example, but probably contains a surname; Allen Mawer, *The Place-Names of Northumberland and Durham* (Cambridge, 1920), p. 87; *CDEPN*, p. 45.

30 Sandred, *English Place-Names in-stead*, p. 275.

31 Eilert Ekwall, *Street-Names of the City of London* (Oxford, 1954), p. 123.

32 Ekwall, “Tribal Names,” p. 139.

**Gate**; there are two possible instances of *Bretar/Brettas* 'Britons' with OE *strēt* 'main road' in the north west.<sup>33</sup>

OE *tūn* 'farm, estate'

**Engleton Hall (Staffordshire; O.S. SJ 898101)**<sup>34</sup>

*Hengleton* 1204, *Engleton* c. 1206–30

The ethnonym + *tūn* structure is recurrent, although given the general ubiquity of *tūn*-names this is not surprising. Group-names with *tūn* include: *Brettas/Bretar* 'Britons', *Frīsan/Frīsir* 'Frisians', *Íras/Írar* 'Irish, Goidelic speakers', *Norðmenn* 'Scandinavians, Norwegians', *Seaxe/Saksar* 'Saxons' (see below, p. 134), and probably *Cumbre* 'Welsh, Britons'. The distribution of these names as a group has a marked Danelaw weighting, and it is possible that many of them date to the period of Scandinavian settlement or later.<sup>35</sup>

OE *wudu* 'wood'

**Inglewood Forest (Cumberland; O.S. NY 453391)**<sup>36</sup>

*Englewod* c. 1150; *Engelwode* c. 1158; *Englewud* 1227

Compare Wychwood, Oxfordshire, whose first element is the group-name *Hwicce*.<sup>37</sup>

*With ON generics*

ON *bý* 'farm, village'

**Ingleby (Lincolnshire; O.S. SK 894778)**<sup>38</sup>

*Englebi* 1086, c. 1115, *Engleby* 1166

**Ingleby (Derbyshire; O.S. SK 352269)**<sup>39</sup>

*Englabý* 1009, *Englebi* 1086, *Engleby* 1216

**Ingleby (Greenhow parish, Yorkshire, North Riding; O.S. NZ 581063)**<sup>40</sup>

*Englebi, Engleby* 1086, 1203–7

33 A.H. Smith, *The Place-Names of Westmorland*, 2 vols (Cambridge, 1967), part 1, p. 21; Eilert Ekwall, *The Place-Names of Lancashire* (Manchester, 1922), p. 224.

34 *DEPN*, p. 167; J.P. Oakden, *The Place-Names of Staffordshire*, 1 vol. so far (Cambridge, 1984), p. 37; D. Horowitz, *The Place-Names of Staffordshire* (Brewood, 2005), p. 248.

35 Jayne Carroll, "Identifying Migrants in Medieval England: the Possibilities and Limitations of Place-Name Evidence," in *Migrants in Medieval England*, ed. Joanna Story, Elizabeth M. Tyler, and W. Mark Ormrod (Oxford, forthcoming, 2020).

36 A.M. Armstrong, et al., *The Place-Names of Cumberland*, 3 vols (Cambridge, 1950–52), p. 38.

37 Gelling, *Place-Names of Oxfordshire*, part 2, p. 386.

38 Kenneth Cameron with John Insley, *The Place-Names of Lincolnshire*, 7 vols so far (Nottingham, 1985–2010), part 7, p. 93; *DEPN*, p. 264.

39 Kenneth Cameron, *The Place-Names of Derbyshire*, 3 vols (Cambridge, 1959), part 3, p. 639; *DEPN*, p. 264.

40 Smith, *Place-Names of the North Riding*, p. 167; *DEPN*, p. 264; *CDEPN*, p. 331.

**Ingleby (Barwick parish, Yorkshire, North Riding; O.S. NZ 441137)**<sup>41</sup>

*Englebi* 1086, *Caldengilbi* 1279, *Kaldingelby*, *Caldingelby* 1283

**Ingleby (Arncliffe parish, Yorkshire, North Riding; O.S. NZ 447009)**<sup>42</sup>

*Englebi*, *Engleby* 1086, 1231, *Engelby juxta Ernecluf* 1303

While these names have been listed as containing an ON generic, it should be remembered that, in places which had seen Scandinavian linguistic influence as a result of settlement, *bý* ‘farm, village’ may have been adopted into the local toponomasticon regardless of the cultural or linguistic identity and heritage of those areas’ inhabitants. Nevertheless, *bý* is certainly of Scandinavian origin, it has a consistent Danelaw distribution, and it compounds with a markedly high proportion of Scandinavian first elements, including identifiably Scandinavian personal names.<sup>43</sup> In many cases, *bý*-names would have arisen in Norse-speaking environments, and can be interpreted as good evidence of Scandinavian-speaking communities in the late 9th century and early 10th.<sup>44</sup> On contextual grounds an Old Norse origin for these names is most likely—the names occur within clusters of other early-attested *bý*-names in areas of considerable Scandinavian linguistic influence, and their etymology, ‘farm or village of the English/Angles’, clearly points in this direction. Ethnonym + ON *bý* is recurrent: examples include compounds in ON *Bretar* ‘Britons’, ON *Danir*/OE *Dene* ‘Scandinavians, Danes’, ON *Frísir*/OE *Frísan* ‘Frisians’, ON *Írar*/OE *Íras* ‘Irish’, and ON/OE *Norðmenn* ‘Scandinavians, Norwegians’.

### OE *Seaxe* and ON *Saksar*

As indicated above, identifying OE *Seaxe*- or ON *Saksar*-names presents considerably more difficulty than identifying *Engle*-names. Early spellings which suggest these ethnonyms can also suggest two other (related)

41 Smith, *Place-Names of the North Riding*, p. 170; *DEPN*, p. 264.

42 Smith, *Place-Names of the North Riding*, p. 178; *DEPN*, p. 264; *CDEPN*, p. 331.

43 An OE cognate *bý* ‘village’ seems to be attested once in the 10th-century gloss to the Lindisfarne gospels, but the distribution and compounding characteristics of the element are such that its toponomastic origin is confidently attributed to Scandinavia (David N. Parsons and Tania Styles, *Vocabulary of English Place-Names, BRACE–CÆSTER* (Nottingham, 2000), pp. 104–8).

44 See Lesley Abrams and David N. Parsons, “Place-Names and the History of Scandinavian Settlement in England,” in *Land, Sea and Home: Proceedings of a Conference in Viking-Period Settlement at Cardiff, July 2001*, ed. John Hines, Alan Lane, and Mark Redknap (Leeds, 2004), pp. 379–431, esp. pp. 394–400.

possibilities, and there are few definitive characteristics by means of which to differentiate the three.

(1) The weak masculine personal names OE *Seaxa* and ON *Saxi* are themselves derived from the ethnonyms. We would expect both the ethnonym and personal name, when found as the specific elements in place-names, to appear in the genitive case, and these forms are as follows:

OE *Seaxe* (ethnonym, *n*-stem, plural) ~ *Seax(e)na*<sup>45</sup>

OE *Seaxa* (personal name, *n*-stem, singular) ~ *Seaxan*

At first glance, this looks promising—the plural and singular genitive forms are distinct, and therefore possible to tell apart. That this difference might, however, be difficult to detect in place-names can be demonstrated by looking at some of the early spellings for Exton in Hampshire.<sup>46</sup>

*æt east seaxnatune* 940 (S 943; 12th-cent. MS)

*Essessentune* 1086

*Estsexentun* c.1127

*Exton* 1182

In the earliest, pre-Conquest attestation, it is very clear that we are dealing with *seaxna*-, the genitive plural form of the ethnonym *Seaxe*. We have here a diagnostic spelling, and *seaxnatune* must mean 'settlement/estate of the [East] Saxons'. By Domesday Book in 1086, though, this distinctive ending has reduced to *-en*. Were it not for the pre-Conquest spelling, we could not be confident, on formal grounds at least, that it is a reduction of *-ena*; it could represent a reduced form of genitive singular *-an* (although see further discussion under Saxondale, p. 126). The 1182 form serves as a further warning that complete loss of a genitive plural inflection (or indeed a genitive singular inflection) was also possible by a relatively early date. Original *-ena-* might only survive in Middle English (ME) spellings as <e>, or it might disappear altogether. In short, if we do not have pre-Conquest attestations we are unlikely to have diagnostic spellings which point clearly to underlying *-ena* or *-an*, and relatively few settlement-names are attested before the Domesday Survey.

45 The ethnonym seems to have been an original *n*-stem noun which transferred to the *i*-stems while retaining the original gen. pl. inflection; Hogg and Fulk, *A Grammar of Old English: Morphology*, §2.70.

46 Coates, *Place-Names of Hampshire*, p. 74; *CDEPN*, p. 222.

We should also probably reckon with an alternative OE genitive plural *Seaxa*, modelled on *i*-stem ethnonyms, including *Engle*.<sup>47</sup> This may be evidenced in *subsaxa lond c.848* (S 1193; 13th-cent. MS).<sup>48</sup> Again, here we have a pre-Conquest spelling which seems to preserve the distinctive *-a* ending of this *i*-stem genitive plural, but the quality of the vowel in compounds would have become less distinct and represented in later medieval sources as <e>. A run of late medieval spellings with medial *-e-* is therefore indicative of an earlier inflection; but it could be the remnant of the plural forms *-ena*, *-a*, or of singular *-an*.

It has also been argued that the root of an ethnonym such as OE *Seaxe* might sometimes have been used uninflected in place-names as *Seax*.<sup>49</sup> Ekwall suggested this for Saxham in Suffolk, Saxton in West Yorkshire, and Sax-on Street in Cambridgeshire, but it should be noted that most of his suggested analogues for such uninflected ethnonyms are names of territories or kingdoms (*Seaxland*, *Scotland* and *Francland*) rather than settlement-names.

The Old Norse equivalents, plural ethnonym *Saksar* and singular personal name *Saxi*, have indistinguishable genitive forms, *Saksa* and *Saxa* (using <ks> and <x> to distinguish is a modern spelling convention)—we simply cannot tell, on formal grounds, which we are dealing with. And again, these *-a* inflections would reduce over time to *-e-*, or disappear altogether.

(2) The neuter nouns OE *seax*, ON *sax* ‘dagger, sword’ (the ethnonym derives ultimately from the etymon of these two cognates), may be used in place-names with a transferred sense, usually taken to describe (a) a stream, hill or other landscape feature which in some way resembles a dagger; (b) dagger-like flora; (c) cultural practices of weapon deposition in watery features. The first of these, especially in reference to streams, is the more securely attested (see *Saxcemedede*, below). In such cases, when used as the first element in compounds, we would expect spellings in *seax-*, whether from an originally uninflected form or from a genitive singular *seaxes* reduced through dissimilatory loss. It should here be noted that the ON cognate of *seax* might also be reckoned with in English place-names, given its occurrence in Scandinavian river-names (see *Saxcemedede*, below, and references cited there). The second application, posited by Kitson (see *Seaxa broc*, below), might entail use in the genitive plural (*seaxa*), which would render it formally indistinguishable from the *i*-stem genitive plural of the ethnonym noted above. The third possibility has not generally

47 Campbell, *Old English Grammar*, §610(7); Hogg, *Grammar of Old English*, §2.70.

48 S 1193; Cullen, “The Place-Names,” p. 217.

49 O.S. Anderson, *Hundred-names of the South-Western Counties* (Lund, 1939), p. 141; Ekwall, “Tribal names,” pp. 135–36; Reaney, *Place-Names of Cambridgeshire*, pp. 133–34; A.H. Smith, *English Place-Name Elements*, 2 vols (Cambridge, 1956), part 2, p. 116; A.D. Mills, *The Place-Names of Dorset*, 4 vols so far (Cambridge, 1977–), part 3, pp. 104–05.

been considered in the place-name literature, but ritual deposition of this nature is attested in early medieval and post-Conquest England.<sup>50</sup> If such practices could give rise to *seax* place-names, then this application might be reckoned with for any place-name whose generic refers to a feature associated with wetland or rivers. A meaning 'cliff, stone, rock' has been proposed, but is not widely accepted.<sup>51</sup>

To summarise, *Seax(e)na*-forms must derive from the ethnonym *Seaxe*, but the reduced form *Seaxen*- might derive either from *Seaxe* or from the personal name *Seaxa*; while the reduced forms *Seaxa*-, *Seaxe*-, and *Seax*- might derive from either of those or from OE *seax*. *S(e)axa*-, *S(e)axe*-, and *S(e)ax*-forms might alternatively derive from either of the Old Norse equivalents, *Saksar* and *Saxi*. As the personal names *Seaxa* and *Saxi* presumably arose as bynames bestowed on individuals considered ethnically Saxon, the implication of ethnic otherness might still be present in place-names whose first element is this personal name. It could be argued, then, that place-names containing either the ethnonym or the personal name should be considered together. Place-names which contain *seax* 'dagger, sword', on the other hand, are of a different order, even if that word is thought to be the origin of the ethnonym.

The name-by-name analysis which follows takes the above considerations into account, and draws on comparative material, in order to suggest which names might usefully be considered part of the corpus of *Seaxe*-names.

*With OE generics*

OE *brōc* 'stream'

***Seaxa broc* (lost) (boundary point of an estate at Conington, Cambridgeshire; O.S. TL 158876)**

*Seaxa broc* 957 (S 649; 10th-cent. MS)

Formally, *Seaxa* could be the genitive plural of the group-name or of *seax* 'knife'. Kitson suggested that the stream, *seaxa broc* 'knives' brook', was named

50 Ben Raffield, "A River of Knives and Swords': Ritually Deposited Weapons in English Watercourses and Wetlands during the Viking Age," *European Journal of Archaeology* 17:4 (2014), 634–55; David Stocker and Paul Everson, "The Straight and Narrow Way: Fenland Causeways and the Conversion of the Landscape in the Witham Valley, Lincolnshire," in *The Cross Goes North: Processes of Conversion in Northern Europe: AD 300–1300*, ed. Martin Carver (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2003), pp. 271–288. We are grateful to Alex Langlands for bringing this to our attention.

51 Ernst Förstemann, *Altdeutsches namenbuch*, 2 vols (Bonn, 1913–16), 2:654–8; Anton Fägersten, *The Place-Names of Dorset* (Uppsala, 1933), pp. 19–20; *DEPN* pp. 405–6, under Saxham, Saxtead; John Kousgård Sørensen, *Dansk Sø- og Ånavne* (Copenhagen, 1968–96), vol. 2 (1973), pp. 231–32.

from the sharpness of its rushes.<sup>52</sup> Ritual deposition of weapons might also be reckoned with. The stream has been identified with Holme Brook,<sup>53</sup> and forms part of the northern boundary of the estate at Conington, which ran *lang broces on gyruwan fen* ‘along the brook to *gyruwan fen*’.<sup>54</sup> Whitsun Brook in Worcestershire (*wixena* ‘of the *Wixan*’) and—less certainly—Walbrook in Middlesex (*weala* ‘of the Britons’) are possible comparable names.<sup>55</sup>

OE *brycg* ‘bridge’

**Sackbridge (lost) (in Bottisham, Cambridgeshire; O.S. TL 546606)**

*Saxbriggemore* 1391, *Saxbrugge* 1429

P.H. Reaney takes this to be uninflected *Seax*, thus perhaps ‘Saxon-bridge’.<sup>56</sup> The forms are late, but possible parallels to such a compound can be found: *la Denebrygg*’ 1303 is closely analogous if its first element is OE *Dene* ‘Danes’ (gen. pl. *Dena*); so too, perhaps, *Weala brucge* (944 [S 500; MS c.1240]), with OE *walas* ‘Welsh (speakers)’ (gen. pl. *weala*),<sup>57</sup> although in each of these cases a genitive inflection appears to be preserved. Also of relevance are the several instances of ethnonyms compounded with other elements referring to river crossings, such as OE *ford* in Denford (Northamptonshire; *Dene*) and Orford (Lincolnshire; OE *Īras* ‘Irish; Goidelic speakers’).<sup>58</sup> Given the possibility that OE *seax* was used as a river-name (see *Saxcemedede*, below), a similar explanation should also be entertained here, although compounds of *brycg* with river-names are relatively rare.<sup>59</sup>

OE *cot* ‘cottage, hut’

**Sascott (Shropshire; O.S. SJ 425118)**

*Saxcote* 1086, *Sayscot* 1274, *Saxecot* 1308

**Sessacott (Devon, O.S. SS 355165)**

*Saxecot*’ 1219

52 P.R. Kitson, *A Guide to Anglo-Saxon Charter Boundaries* (forthcoming).

53 Susan Oosthuizen, *The Anglo-Saxon Fenland* (Oxford, 2017), p. 59.

54 C.R. Hart, *The Early Charters of Eastern England* ([Leicester], 1966), pp. 23–24. *Gyruwan* may be an instance of another group-name, *Gyrwe*.

55 Allen Mawer, F.M. Stenton, and F.T.S. Houghton, *The Place-Names of Worcestershire* (Cambridge, 1927), p. 16; Gover, Mawer, and Stenton, *Place-Names of Middlesex*, p. 7.

56 Reaney, *Place-Names of Cambridgeshire*, p. 128.

57 Parsons and Styles, *Vocabulary, BRACE-CÆSTER*, p. 54; Gelling, *Place-Names of Berkshire*, pp. 643–44.

58 See Carroll, “Identifying Migrants.”

59 Margaret Gelling and Ann Cole, *The Landscape of Place-Names* (Stamford, 2000), p. 69, and see also the entry for *brycg* in Parsons and Styles, *Vocabulary, BRACE-CÆSTER*, pp. 51–57.

There is little early evidence of an original inflection in the forms for the Shropshire name, but OE *seax* 'dagger' is an unlikely recurrent first element with OE *cot* 'cottage, hut', even in a transferred sense; so an uninflected form of *Seaxe* or early reduction of a medial inflection might be considered. That means both ethnonym and personal name are possible for these place-names, and the latter was preferred both by J.E.B. Gover, Allen Mawer and Frank Stenton, and by Margaret Gelling.<sup>60</sup> OE *cot* is very rarely compounded with an ethnonym. An apparent exception is OE *wala-cot*, but while the primary sense of OE *walh* was 'Welsh (speaker)', it developed a secondary meaning 'serf', and this might be the relevant sense in those compounds. A compound meaning 'cottage(s) of the serfs' would be directly comparable with recurrent compounds such as *gebūra-cot* 'cottage(s) of the (tied) peasants' and *ceorla-cot* 'cottage(s) of the peasants', *swāna-cot* 'cottage(s) of the herdsmen or peasants',<sup>61</sup> and not therefore relevant in the present case. Compounds of OE *cot* with personal names, on the other hand, are relatively common. The personal name *Seaxa* seems most likely, then, but the double occurrence of the compound in places with later survival of Welsh and Cornish cultures is noteworthy, as is the proximity of Saxworthy (discussed below), just across the River Torridge from Sessacott.

In each case, the development /saks(ə)kot/ > /sas(ə)kot/ can be explained by dissimilatory deletion of the first /k/. There may also have been some Brittonic influence on the development of each name: the apparent diphthong of the 1274 form for Sascott might indicate influence from Welsh *Sais* 'Englishman' (compare Seisdon, below);<sup>62</sup> while it may be Brittonic prosody—placing stress on the penultimate syllable—that has preserved the medial syllable in the modern form of Sessacott.

OE *dæl* / ON *dalr* 'valley'<sup>63</sup>

**Saxedele (lost field-name in Gayton Thorpe, Norfolk; approx. O.S. TF 745185)**

*Saxedele* e. 13th

**Saxedale (lost; in Withcall, Lincolnshire; approx. O.S. TF 285839)**

Insley treats the first element of the Norfolk name as OE *Seaxe* or ON *Saksar*, thus 'valley of the Saxons'. Gover, Mawer and Stenton note a mention of the

60 Gover, Mawer and Stenton, *Place-Names of Devon*, p. 162; Margaret Gelling, *The Place-Names of Shropshire*, Parts 1–6 (Nottingham, 1990–2012), part 2, p. 54.

61 Parsons and Styles, *Vocabulary, BRACE–CÆSTER*, pp. 70–71; David N. Parsons, *The Vocabulary of English Place-Names, CEAFOR–COCK-PIT* (Nottingham, 2004), pp. 19–26; Smith, *Elements*, part 1, pp. 57, 89–90, 109; Smith, *Elements*, part 2, pp. 171, 242–4.

62 Gelling, *Place-Names of Shropshire*, part 2, p. 54.

63 ON *deill* 'share of land' is a possibility, but we might expect early forms to show a reflex of /ei/; see Smith, *Elements*, part 1, p. 128.

apparently identical *Saxedale* in the Kirkstead cartulary, but provide no further information.<sup>64</sup>

OE *denu* 'valley'

**Saxondale (Nottinghamshire; O.S. SK 683400)**

*Saxeden* 1086, *Saxenden* 1316; *Saxendala* c.1130, *Saxendale* 1199

This is a rare instance where post-Conquest forms may be diagnostic. There is some evidence to suggest that an original inflectional /n/ was more likely to survive in the late medieval reflexes of place-names when immediately followed by a vowel, as would have been the case with medial *-(e)na-*. The /n/ in place-name compounds with genitive singular *-an* seems generally to survive only when the following element begins with a vowel or /h/ plus vowel. So, we might argue that the early (and current) spellings for Saxondale suggest that OE *Seaxena-denu* 'valley of the Saxons' is the most likely interpretation of the name.<sup>65</sup> The second element seems to have interchanged for a while with OE *dæl* 'pit, hollow; valley' or ON *dalr* 'main valley', which eventually supplanted it.<sup>66</sup>

OE *dūn* 'hill'

**Seisdon (Staffordshire; O.S. SO 836947)**

*Saisdon hvnd'*, *Saisdone hvnd'*, *Seiesdon hvnd'* 1086, *hdr' de Saiesdona* 1130,

*Seidon'hundredum* 1182, *Seisdon'hundredum* 1185; *Seisdone* 1086, *Seisdun*

1160–1206 (personal name), *Seyxdun* 1235, 1236, *Seydon'* 1236, *Seisdon'* 1242

Association of Seisdon with *Seaxe* or *Seaxa* is problematic. Anderson and others have attributed the development of /ks/ > /s/ or /z/ (indicated by the surviving forms and modern pronunciation) to Anglo-Norman influence.<sup>67</sup>

64 John Insley, "Scandinavian Personal Names in Norfolk," 2 vols (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Nottingham, 1980), pp. 636 and 639; John Insley, *Scandinavian Personal Names in Norfolk: A Survey Based on Medieval Records and Place-Names* (Uppsala, 1994), pp. 323–24; J.E.B. Gover, Allen Mawer and F. Stenton, *The Place-Names of Nottinghamshire* (Cambridge, 1940), p. 241.

65 Ekwall, "Tribal Names," p. 136. The environment of /n/ in such compounds may have facilitated its retention. Similar survival is attested for Oxford, from OE *oxena-ford* 'ford of the oxen', which is *Oxeneford* 1086, *Oxineforþ'* c.1130, *Oxineford* 1316 and the identical Oxenford, which is *Oxenfordam* 1128, *Oxeneford* 1135×54, *Exeneford* 1291; Gelling, *Place-Names of Oxfordshire*, part 1, p. 19, Gover, Mawer, and Stenton, *Place-Names of Surrey*, p. 216. See also Cameron, *English Place Names*, p. 27.

66 Gover, Mawer and Stenton, *Place-Names of Nottinghamshire*, p. 241; Ekwall, "Tribal Names," p. 136.

67 R.E. Zachrisson, 'The French element', in *Introduction to the Survey of English Place-Names, Part 1*, ed. Allen Mawer and F.M. Stenton (Cambridge, 1933), 93–114, at p. 114;

Although <s> forms begin early and are almost universal, early Anglo-Norman influence on the name of an administrative centre is feasible (Seisdon was the name of a Domesday hundred).<sup>68</sup> Unlike most other *Seaxe* or *Seaxa* place-names, however, the spellings listed above suggest preservation of the first vowel as a diphthong. Attempts to identify it with Welsh *Sais* 'Englishman', which might explain the diphthong, have not been received entirely enthusiastically, and it is hard to account for an English place-name compound with Welsh *Sais* as first element, or for a Welsh place-name compound with OE *dūn* as the generic.<sup>69</sup> Welsh influence, as suggested for Sascott (above), seems rather less likely this far east, unless it occurred very early. It is hard to conclude with much conviction that Seisdon is a *Seaxe* place-name.<sup>70</sup>

OE *ēa* 'river, stream'

**Saxcemedē (lost, nr Puddletown, Dorset; O.S. SY 755945)**

*Saxcemedē* 1270 (1372 MS)

Formally both *Seaxe* and the personal name *Seaxa* are possible, given the lateness of the only surviving attestation, but A.D. Mills prefers OE *\*Seax-ēa* 'stream called *Seax*', where *Seax* means something like 'the sword, the bright one', noting use of the ON cognate *sax* in Scandinavian river-names.<sup>71</sup> Ritual deposition of weapons might be an alternative explanation of the use of *seax* in such names. (Compare also *Seaxa broc*, above.) Either of these is probably more attractive than derivation from a compound such as *Seaxa-mēd* 'meadow of the Saxons', since OE *mēd* is rare as the second element in compounds with an ethnonym. Compare Common Mead in Dorset (*Comermede* 1300), where the first element might be *Cumbre* 'Britons', but Mills prefers a personal name

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compare also the discussion of Saxlingham in Eilert Ekwall, *English Place-Names in -ing*, second edition (Lund, 1962), p. 138; *DEPN*, p. 411.

68 In addition to the <x> spelling listed above, there is *Sexedon* 1428, and there are forms with neither <s> nor <x>. Sascott and Sessacott, where /ks/ has developed to /s/, do at least have early spellings in <x>, and the development in those cases is more easily explained by dissimilation in the cluster [ksk].

69 W.H. Duignian, *Staffordshire Place-Names* (London, 1902), pp. 132–3 (incorporating a note by W.H. Stevenson); O.S. Anderson, *English Hundred-Names* (Lund, 1934), p. 145; Richard Coates and Andrew Breeze, *Celtic Voices, English Places* (Stamford, 2000), p. 335; Horowitz, *Place-Names of Staffordshire*, p. 482; *DEPN*, p. 411; Gelling and Cole, *Landscape*, p. 169.

70 Anderson, *English Hundred-Names*, p. 145 makes some tentative alternative suggestions.

71 Mills, *Place-Names of Dorset*, part 1, p. 328; Sørensen, *Dansk Sø- og Ånavne*, vol. 2, pp. 231–2; *Danmarks Stednavne* <<http://danmarksstednavne.navneforskning.ku.dk/>>, s.v. Gladsaxe (accessed 1 March 2018).

*Cumbra*;<sup>72</sup> and Walmead in Wiltshire (*Walemade* 1100–35), with OE *walh* ‘Briton; serf’ (and see the discussion of *wala-cot* under Sascott, above).<sup>73</sup>

OE *feld* ‘open land’

**Saxfield (Cheshire; O.S. SJ 823901)**

*Saxefeld* 13th cent., c.1290, *Saxe Felde* 1578

**Saxifield (Lancashire; O.S. SD 862352)**

*Saxifeldyk* 1324, *Saxxefeld* 1425, *Saxyfeld* 1507

For the first of these names, either OE *Seaxa-feld* or *Seaxena-feld* ‘open land of the Saxons’ is formally acceptable,<sup>74</sup> but so is *Seaxan-feld* ‘open land of a man named *Seaxa*’. For Saxifield, spellings with medial <i> and <y> seem problematic and earlier attestations would be required to establish their precise significance. Ekwall suggests a personal name as first element, either OE *Seaxa* or ON *Saxi*.<sup>75</sup> The genitive inflections would normally be reduced to /ə/, giving ME spellings in <e>, as also (in most instances) the genitive plural inflection of OE *Seaxe*. The <i> and <y> may simply stand for /ə/, or else we may be dealing with an unattested OE \**seaxing* ‘knife-shaped feature’, if the topography is appropriate (much of the area is now built up). It is worth noting that personal names often form the specific in compounds with OE *feld*,<sup>76</sup> but the twin occurrence of the collocation of *Sax-* with OE *feld* is perhaps suggestive of the ethnonym rather than a personal name. It might be compared with Englefield (above), and the other examples of ethnonym + *feld* noted there.

OE *halh* ‘nook’

**Saxehale (lost, nr Stutton in Tadcaster, West Riding of Yorkshire; O.S. SE 479415)**

*Saxehale, Saxhale, Saxhalla* 1086

This is another of the rare occasions when the post-Conquest forms may be partly diagnostic. With no more than Domesday to go on, caution is required, but the surviving spellings probably rule out both *Seaxena-halh* and *Seaxan-halh*. When followed by /h/ plus vowel, some trace of the /n/ might be expected. This might therefore be OE *Seaxa-halh* ‘nook of the Saxons’, or perhaps OE

72 Mills, *Place-Names of Dorset*, part 3, p. 19.

73 J.E.B. Gover, Allen Mawer and F.M. Stenton, *The Place-Names of Wiltshire* (Cambridge, 1939), p. 198.

74 Dodgson, *Place-Names of Cheshire*, part 1, p. 236.

75 Ekwall, *The Place-Names of Lancashire*, p. 83.

76 Gelling and Cole, *Landscape*, p. 274.

*seaxa-halh* 'daggers' nook', if characterized by particularly dagger-like flora (compare *Seaxa broc*, above).<sup>77</sup>

OE *hām* 'homestead, settlement'

**Great/Little Saxham (Suffolk; O.S. TL 794632)**

*Saxham* 1086, 1197, *Sexham* 1086

There is no evidence for an originally inflected first element, and the forms count against *Seaxena-* or *Seaxan-* (see the preceding entry), casting doubt on Walter Skeat's interpretation of the first element as a personal name. Ekwall suggests OE \**Seax-hām* 'homestead of the Saxons', rejecting OE *seax* in a topographical application and (on formal grounds) the personal name.<sup>78</sup> Victor Watts also prefers the ethnonym, as do Keith Briggs and Kelly Kilpatrick, though they offer the personal name as an alternative.<sup>79</sup> It should be noted that OE *hām* 'homestead', or OE *hamm* 'enclosed land' (from which *hām* can be hard to distinguish in place-names), occur rarely in compounds with ethnonyms: there are few if any certain instances with reference to groups of Angles, Jutes, Danes, Frisians or Northmen; only with OE *Swāfe* 'Swabians' has such a compound been proposed with any great force.<sup>80</sup>

OE *mearc* 'boundary'

***Seaxana meare* (lost, nr Warehorne (?), Kent; O.S. TQ 985325)**

*Seaxana meare* 845 for 830 (S 282; 11th-cent. MS)

Paul Cullen follows Wallenberg in taking the second element to be OE *mearc*, and the first element is clearly a weakly inflected genitive plural of OE *Seaxe*, thus 'boundary of the Saxons'.<sup>81</sup>

OE *sēađ* 'pit'

***seaxe seađ* (Slackstead, Hampshire; approx. O.S. SU 396257)**

77 Smith, *Place-Names of the West Riding*, part 4, p. 76.

78 He accepts the latter as a possibility in *DEPN*, pp. 405–6, but rejects it in "Tribal Names," p. 136.

79 Walter W. Skeat, *The Place-Names of Suffolk* (Cambridge, 1913), p. 59; *DEPN*, p. 405–6; *CDEPN*, p. 529; Keith Briggs and Kelly Kilpatrick, *A Dictionary of Suffolk Place-Names* (Nottingham, 2016), p. 118–19.

80 Reaney, *Place-Names of Cambridgeshire*, p. xxxiii, p. 133–34; *DEPN*, p. 455; *CDEPN*, p. 592. Compounds of *hām* with *-ingas* group names (if they are comparable) are, however, common; see J. McN. Dodgson, "The Significance of the Distribution of the English Place-Names in *-ingas*, *-inga-* in South-East England," *Medieval Archaeology* 10 (1966), 1–29; Barrie H. Cox, "The Significance of the Distribution of English Place-Names in *-hām* in the Midlands and East Anglia," *JEPNS* 5 (1972–73), 15–73, at pp. 50–61.

81 Wallenberg, *Kentish Place-Names*, p. 165; Cullen, "The Place-names," p. 253.

*on seaxea sead̄ of seaxe sead̄e, on seaxe sead̄e* 900 (S 360; early 11th-cent. MS); *on seaxes sead̄e* 899×924 (S 381; 12th-cent. MS)

Grundy takes this to be a personal name, or rather a by-name, thus ‘Saxon’s Pit’.<sup>82</sup> We may then be dealing with an unattested strong personal name \**Seax*, comparable with the Scandinavian name discussed under Saxthorpe, if the form in S 381 is the more reliable. The other forms might result from reanalysis of *seaxes sead̄e* as *seaxe sead̄e*, but the process could be the other way round. Kitson notes an association of *sēad̄* with watery features, so another instance of *seax-ēa* as a river-name is possible (whatever the motivation, see *Saxce-mede*), or a reference to dagger-like rushes (see *Seaxa broc*), although the spellings do not necessarily indicate a genitive plural form.

OE *stede* ‘place’

**Saxstead (Suffolk; O.S. TM 265655)**

*Saxsteda* (Skeat gives *Saxteda*)

Skeat is followed by Ekwall (who considers but rejects OE \**seax* ‘rock’), Mills, Watts, and Briggs and Kilpatrick in assuming a personal name *Seaxa*, with OE *stede* ‘place’.<sup>83</sup> Few forms listed by any of these commentators could be considered diagnostic of that personal name in preference to the ethnonym, so OE *Seaxe* is at least a possibility. The only other possible instance of ethnonym + *stede* is Irstead in Norfolk. Its early forms do not rule out a form of OE *Īras* ‘Irish’ as first element, but OE *gyr* ‘mud, filth, marsh’ has been preferred by commentators.<sup>84</sup>

OE *tūn* ‘farm, estate’

**Saxton (West Yorkshire; O.S. SE 476369)**

*Saxtun, Saxtuna, Saxton, Saxtuna* 1086

**Saxon Street/Saxton Hall (Cambridgeshire; O.S. TL 675595)**

*Sextuna, Sextone* 1086, *Sexton, Sextone* 1208 Cur (personal name), *Saxton, Saxtone* 1236

82 G.B. Grundy, “The Saxon land charters of Hampshire with notes on place and field names, 1st series,” *Archaeological Journal* 2nd series, 28 (1921), pp. 55–173, at p. 83; G.B. Grundy, “The Saxon Land Charters of Hampshire with Notes on Place and Field Names, 2nd series,” *Archaeological Journal* 2nd ser., 31 (1924), 31–126, at p. 119.

83 Skeat, *Place-Names of Suffolk*, p. 88; *DEPN*, p. 406; A.D. Mills, *The Oxford Dictionary of British Place-Names* (Oxford, 2003), p. 408; *CDEPN*, p. 529; Briggs and Kilpatrick, *Suffolk Place-Names*, p. 119.

84 Sandred, *English Place-Names in -stead*, p. 183; *DEPN*, p. 266, *CDEPN*, p. 333.

For the first of these names, A.H. Smith noted the possibility of a connection with Saxons, but preferred a personal name.<sup>85</sup> For the second, Reaney was unconvinced by *Seaxe* for lack of ME forms with medial <e>, and felt that OE \**seax* 'hill' was topographically inappropriate;<sup>86</sup> he therefore posits the root *Seax-* used in compound to mean 'Saxon'.<sup>87</sup> Certainly there is no reflex of an original inflection in the forms listed here, although, as noted above, that need not rule it out. Compounds of the type ethnonym + *tūn* are recurrent (see discussion of Engleton, above).

OE *wordīg* 'enclosure'

**Saxworthy (Devon; O.S. SS 375175)**

*Sexaworthi* 1330

Gover, Mawer and Stenton take the first element to be a personal name, but OE *Seaxe* cannot be dismissed on formal grounds.<sup>88</sup> Saxworthy is located just across the River Torridge from Sessacott, and a connection with that name is possible.

*With Brittonic generics*

Welsh *pen* 'chief, head; promontory'

**Pensax (Worcestershire, O.S. SO 725695)**

*Pensaxan* (dat.) 11th cent.<sup>89</sup>

This is a Brittonic place-name, formed as a name-phrase from the ancestors of Welsh *pen* 'head, top', and *Sais* 'Englishman, Saxon'.<sup>90</sup> This accounts for the

85 Smith, *Place-Names of the West Riding*, part 4, p. 70; part 7, p. 50.

86 It is also worth noting that \**seax* might have been used of some sword-shaped feature other than a hill.

87 Reaney, *Place-Names of Cambridgeshire*, pp. 127–8. The field-names Little Sextons and Sextons Lances, in Tolleshunt Knights (Essex; *Sextynegrove* 1291), may be instances of the occupational byname *Sexton*, which is on record from the 14th century; in 1881 it was most common as a surname in East Anglia and the south-east. The names are listed in P.H. Reaney, *The Place-Names of Essex* (Cambridge, 1935), p. 616. *Sexton* is discussed in Patrick Hanks, Richard Coates and Peter McClure, eds., *The Oxford Dictionary of Family Names in Britain and Ireland* (Oxford, 2016), s.v. "Sexton," online at <<http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780199677764.001.0001/acref-9780199677764-e-36576>&gt; (accessed 26 Jan. 2017).

88 Gover, Mawer and Stenton, *Place-Names of Devon*, p. 107.

89 *Hemingi chartularium ecclesie Wigorniensis*, ed. Thomas Hearne, 2 vols (Oxford, 1723), 1:246.

90 Mawer, Stenton, and Houghton, *The Place-Names of Worcestershire*, pp. xliii and 67; Ekwall, "Tribal Names," p. 138; *DEPN*, p. 362; Kenneth Jackson, *Language and History in Early Britain* (Edinburgh, 1953), p. 539; Mills, *Place-Names of Dorset*, part 3, p. 105; Coates and Breeze, *Celtic Voices*, pp. 11 and 341; *CDEPN*, p. 467. Padel, *Cornish Place-Name Elements*,

order of the elements—the generic element *pen* precedes the ethnonym specific. It should be considered alongside the lost name *Pensousen* (1582; Cornwall), and Pennersax (or Pennersaugh) in Annandale (Middlebie, Dumfries, Scotland; *Penresax* 1194, *Pennyrsax* 1194),<sup>91</sup> name-phrases containing reflexes of the same elements.

### Sixpenny Farm (Dorset; O.S. ST 844169)

*seaxpennes* 932 (S 419; 15-cent. MS), *Sexepenne* 1340 (personal name)

Sixpenny was also the name of an 11th-century hundred (*Sexpene* 1084), part of the later hundred of Sixpenny Handley.<sup>92</sup> R.E. Zachrisson suggested 'Saxons' mountain top', but this was rejected by Anton Fägersten, who preferred OE \**seax* in the sense 'cliff, stone'.<sup>93</sup> While that sense is unrecorded, it is clear that the first element could be an instance of the transferred use of OE *seax* in reference to a topographical feature. Mills, however, follows Zachrisson's interpretation of the first element as the uninflected root of OE *Seaxe*; the generic is ultimately of Brittonic origin, but was perhaps borrowed into some OE dialects.<sup>94</sup> It is difficult, however, to consider this name without reference to Pensax, *Pensousen* and Pennersax. In each of those examples, the name is apparently a reference by Brittonic speakers to a headland or similar feature associated with one or more Saxons, and the recurrence of the association with *pen* suggests that the collocation may have been a feature of Brittonic lexis. In view of that, it is tempting to see Sixpenny as a further example of the same Brittonic elements present in those names, with the same meaning, but formed as a true compound, with specific preceding generic. Compounds seem generally to have been favoured in the Brittonic languages up to the 5th century, name-phrases from the 5th century onwards, which would require Sixpenny to have been coined very early in the Anglo-Saxon period; but Oliver Padel points out that this general rule is not a hard and fast one, and that true compounds could

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p. 210 and p. 294; Smith, *Elements*, part 2, p. 98; 'Addenda and Corrigenda', *JEPNS* 1 (1968–9), 51.

- 91 William J. Watson, *The History of the Celtic Place-Names of Scotland* (Edinburgh and London, 1926), pp. 180, 356; Edward Johnson-Ferguson, *The Place-Names of Dumfriesshire* (Dumfries, 1935), p. 94; Jackson, *Language and History* pp. 539–40; Alan James, *Brittonic Language in the Old North: Volume 2 –Dictionary* (2014), p. 343 <<http://spns.org.uk/resources/bliton>> (accessed 18 May 2018).
- 92 Anderson, *South-Western Counties*, p. 140–41.
- 93 Fägersten, *Place-Names of Dorset*, pp. 19–20, 24.
- 94 R.E. Zachrisson, *Romans, Kelts and Saxons in Ancient Britain* (Uppsala, 1927), 49; Mills, *Place-Names of Dorset*, part 3, pp. 104–5; Anderson, *South-Western Counties*, p. 141; *CDEPN*, p. 276, under Handley.

be used in the coining of place-names at a later date.<sup>95</sup> Chronologically, there seems little reason to rule out the possibility that Sixpenny originated as a Brittonic place-name, even if its surviving forms are the result of Anglicization. A difficulty with this interpretation, however, is the dearth of evidence for *pen* as the generic in early Brittonic place-names.<sup>96</sup>

*With ON generics*

ON *bý*

**Saxby (Leicestershire; O.S. SK 820201)**

*Saxeby* 1086, *Sessebia* c.1130, *Saxenebi* 1175, 1198

**Saxby All Saints (Lincolnshire; O.S. TF 004861)**

*Saxeby* 1086, 1166

**Saxby (Lincolnshire; O.S. TF 005862)**

*Sassebi* 1086, *Saxsabi*, *Saxsebi* c.1115, *Saxeby* c.1155

These three compounds in ON *bý* 'farm, settlement' should be treated together, although different etymologies have been proposed. Formally they could all contain a reference to Saxons. The late 12th-century forms for the Leicestershire Saxby point to the genitive plural form of OE *Seaxe* (*Seax(e)na*),<sup>97</sup> although it is possible that these spellings represent a 'translation' or reanalysis of an underlying Old Norse specific. All other spellings could represent either OE *Seaxe* or ON *Saksar*. While an ethnonym interpretation was favoured by Fellows Jensen,<sup>98</sup> Ekwall and others have preferred the ON personal name *Saxi*, citing the frequency with which this personal name occurs in eastern England as an explanation for the recurrence of the same compound.<sup>99</sup> The compound *Inгла-* or *Engla-bý*, discussed above, is also recurrent, as are *Dena-* or *Dana-bý* 'settlement of the Danes', *Frīs(en)a-* or *Frīsa-bý* 'settlement of the Frisians'. The

95 Padel, *Cornish Place-Name Elements*, pp. xiv–xvi.

96 A.L.F. Rivet and Colin Smith, *The Place-Names of Roman Britain* (London, 1979), p. 436 only note it in *Pennocrucium*, and the continental parallels they cite also have *pen* as first element. Padel finds no instances of Cornish *pen* as the generic in a place-name compound, although it does occur in name-phrases, CoPNE p. 178. See also the useful discussion of *pen* in Oliver Padel, "Brittonic place-names in England," in *Perceptions of Place*, ed. Jayne Carroll and David N. Parsons (Nottingham, 2013), pp. 1–41, at pp. 32–34.

97 Cox, *Place-Names of Leicestershire*, part 2, p. 135.

98 Gillian Fellows Jensen, *Scandinavian Settlement Names in the East Midlands* (Copenhagen, 1978), p. 66.

99 *DEPN*, p. 405. Cameron, *Place-Names of Lincolnshire*, part 2, p. 254; part 6, p. 203. See also Insley, "Scandinavian Personal Names," pp. 636–39. That etymology is also allowed by B. Cox, "The Place-Names of Leicestershire and Rutland" (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Nottingham, 1971), p. 166; *Place-Names of Leicestershire*, part 2, p. 135. *CDEPN*, p. 529 gives "Saks's village" for Saxby in Lincolnshire but "Saxons' village" for the other two.

Saxby names fit within this pattern and should probably be derived from an ethnonym, whether OE *Seaxe* or ON *Saksar*.

ON *gata* 'road' (or late OE *gate*)

**Sash Gate (Lincolnshire; O.S. TF 062947)**

*Saxgate* 1280×85

Cameron offers both the ON personal name *Saxi* and uninflected OE *Seax-* or ON *Saks-*. If the latter, the place-name would mean 'the road of the Saxons'.<sup>100</sup> ON *gata* is several times compounded with other ethnonyms (see also Ing Lane, above), including Jubbergate (*Brettegata* 1145–55) in York, from ON *bretta-gata* 'road of the Britons';<sup>101</sup> four instances in Lincolnshire of ON *\*Dana-gata* 'road of the Danes' and three possible instances of *\*Norðmanna-gata*, two in Leicestershire and one in Northamptonshire;<sup>102</sup> Flemingate in Beverley, Yorkshire (ON *Flæmingjar* 'Flemings'); the lost *Scotgate* in Lincolnshire (OE *Scott* 'Irish person, Scots Gael').<sup>103</sup> This makes a compound ON *Saksa-gata* 'road of the Saxons' a strong possibility.

ON *þorp* 'secondary settlement'

**Saxthorpe (Norfolk; O.S. TG 115305)**

*Saxthorp, Saxiorp, Sastorp* 1086, *Saxtorpe* 1146–8, *Sakesthorp* 1244<sup>104</sup>

Sandred takes this to contain the personal name *Saxi*, but Insley believes the spellings to be indicative of a strong form *\*Saks*, which seems to occur in Danish place-names.<sup>105</sup> ON *þorp* is compounded with ethnonyms in a small number of cases, such as Friesthorpe (Lincolnshire) and Danthorpe (Yorkshire),<sup>106</sup> but is common with personal names (especially within the Danelaw).<sup>107</sup>

<sup>100</sup> Cameron, *Place-Names of Lincolnshire*, part 3, p. 88.

<sup>101</sup> A.H. Smith, *Place-Names of the East Riding of Yorkshire and York* (Cambridge, 1937), p. 291.

<sup>102</sup> There are four instances of ON *\*Danagata* in Lincolnshire and three possible instances of *\*Norðmanna-gata*, two in Leicestershire and one in Northamptonshire – Cameron, *Place-Names of Lincolnshire*, part 3, p. 29, part 5, pp. 12, 34, 75, Cox, *Place-Names of Leicestershire*, part 2, pp. 30, 198, and J.E.B. Gover, Allen Mawer, and F.M. Stenton, *The Place-Names of Northamptonshire* (Cambridge, 1933), p. 233;

<sup>103</sup> Smith, *Place-Names of the East Riding*, pp. 195, 291; Cameron, *Place-Names of Lincolnshire*, part 2, p. 103.

<sup>104</sup> Karl Inge Sandred, *The Place-Names of Norfolk*, 3 vols so far (1989–), part 3, p. 98.

<sup>105</sup> Insley, *Scandinavian Personal Names in Norfolk: A Survey*, pp. 323–24.

<sup>106</sup> Cameron, *Place-Names of Lincolnshire*, part 7, p. 59; Smith, *Place-Names of the East Riding*, p. 53.

<sup>107</sup> Paul Cullen, Richard Jones and David N. Parsons, *Thorps in a Changing Landscape* (Hatfield, 2011), pp. 46–51, 64–66.

### Summary of *Seaxe* and *Saksar*

It will be clear that most of these names could contain *Seaxe* or *Saksar*, but only a small number can be identified as secure instances, where the early spellings are diagnostic or strongly suggestive of the ethnonym in preference to alternative explanations. These are Saxondale, *Seaxana meare* and Pensax (although this instance is Brittonic rather than OE or ON). Rather more names contain probable instances of the ethnonym: *Seaxa broc*, *Sackbridge*, *Saxedele*, *?Saxedale*, *Saxehale*, *Saxham*, Saxfield, Saxifield, Saxton, Saxon Street, Sixpeny, the three Saxby names and Sash Gate. All of these have acceptable (sometimes favourable) early forms, while onomastic parallels provide strong contextual arguments for their inclusion. Most of the remaining names have acceptable forms, but no strong contextual reason for favouring the ethnonym over other explanations. They are no more than possible examples of the ethnonyms, and in many cases are more likely to contain a personal name or the substantive element *seax*: Sascott, Sessacott, *Saxcemedede*, Saxstead, Saxworthy and Saxthorpe. In the case of Seisdon, a different etymology may need to be sought.

### OE \**Ēote* (\**Ȫte*, \**Īote*)

Alistair Campbell stars these, presumably because the nominative form is, essentially, hypothetical;<sup>108</sup> an indication of just how rarely Jutes seem to be mentioned in Old English texts. The corpus of place-names traditionally identified as containing OE *Ēote* is small and not especially well attested. It is set out below in alphabetical order, rather than grouped by generic.

#### Bishopstoke (Hampshire; O.S. SU 465195)

(*apud*) *itinstokan* 959 (14th-cent. MS), (*æt*) *yting stoce* 960 (S 683; 12th-cent. MS), *Stoches* 1086<sup>109</sup>

Richard Coates cautiously notes that the import of the forms “is obscure, but they may contain a reference, of very great antiquity, to Jutes.” He points out, however, that the form *Yting* “appears to be a singular *-ing* name here,”<sup>110</sup> which weighs against that etymology. Gelling suggested a personal name derived from the ethnonym (compare Eatenden, below), and Insley takes the

108 Alistair Campbell, *Old English Grammar* (Oxford, 1959), §610 (7), p. 245.

109 J.E.B. Gover, “Hampshire Place-Names” (unpublished typescript), p. 67; Coates, *Place-Names of Hampshire*, p. 34.

110 Coates, *Place-Names of Hampshire*, p. 34.

compound to mean ‘place associated with the Jute(s)’.<sup>111</sup> The final element is OE *stoc* ‘outlying settlement’, which otherwise does not seem to be attested with ethnonyms.

***Eadens* near East Meon (Hampshire; approx. O.S. SU 679221)**

*Ytedene* 1263, 1301, 1453, *Itedene* 1350, *Eadens* 1840

Gover takes this to be ‘valley of the Jutes’, OE \**Țte* (the West Saxon variant of \**Ēote*) with OE *denu*.<sup>112</sup> The forms certainly allow for an original *Țtena-* or *Țta-denu*, but the personal name posited for the preceding entry is again possible.

***Eatenden* (Mountfield, Sussex; O.S. TQ 730186)**

*Itintune* 12th cent., *Ytenton*, *Itenton* c.1200, *Ytintun* 1261

This does not seem previously to have been considered in connection with OE *Ēote*. It has been interpreted as an OE *-ingtūn* compound based on an unattested personal name \**Ita*, a pet form of dithematic personal names in *Id-* or *Ith-*, and a cognate of OHG *Izo*. The place-name could thus be interpreted as ‘Ita’s farm or settlement’.<sup>113</sup> The forms, however, bear comparison with those listed under Bishopstoke and *Eadens*, and it therefore merits inclusion in this corpus. There is no reason to assume that the initial vowel was a short one—indeed, the modern form suggests a long vowel. The early spellings, as they stand, would not rule out OE \**Țtena-tūn* ‘farm or settlement of the Jutes’, or an *-ing* formation comparable with that proposed for Bishopstoke.<sup>114</sup>

***Țtene*, associated with the New Forest (Hampshire)**

*in Nova Foresta, quae lingua Anglorum Țtene nuncupatur* c.1115

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- 111 Gelling, *Place-Names of Berkshire*, p. 403; John Insley, “Meanware,” *Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde* 19 (2001), 473–76, at p. 475; and note *CDEPN*, p. 60, ‘at the farm called *Țting*, the Jutes’ place’.
- 112 Gover, “Hampshire Place-Names,” p. 63a; see also Insley, “Meanware”; Barbara Yorke, “The Jutes of Hampshire and Wight and the Origins of Wessex,” in *The Origins of Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms*, ed. Steven Bassett (Leicester, 1989), pp. 84–96, 256–63, at p. 90.
- 113 Allen Mawer and F.M. Stenton, with J.E.B. Gover, *The Place-Names of Sussex* (Cambridge, 1929–30), p. 475 and compare p. 358; Richard Coates, “Preparatory to A Dictionary of Sussex Place-Names: A,E,I,O,U. Working Paper” (UWE Research Repository, 2017, available from: <http://eprints.uwe.ac.uk/30943>), p. 22. Compare also Ernst Förstemann, *Altdeutsches namenbuch* (Bonn, 1900), p. 944.
- 114 The early forms of Itford in Beddingham, Sussex (*Litelforde* (sic) 1086, *Itesford* 1215, *Itesford* 1242, *Țteford* 1337), are too confused for inclusion in the corpus. The name is taken by Mawer, Smith and Gover, *Place-Names of Sussex*, p. 358 to contain the same first element as *Eatenden*. In this instance, the modern forms suggest a short initial vowel, in contrast to *Eadens* and *Eatenden*, perhaps more in line with derivation from a personal name \**Ita*.

The form *Ytene*, taken from the chronicle of John of Worcester, seems to represent West Saxon OE \**Țtena* 'of the Jutes', and Ekwall suggested expanding it to ME \**Ytenewode* 'woodland of the Jutes'.<sup>115</sup> In the same chronicle we have *in provincia Jutarum, in Nova Foresta*.<sup>116</sup>

It is unfortunate that the earliest attested of these names is so problematic as an example of OE *Ēote*. A compound *Ēote + -ing + stoc* would be a very unusual one on two counts: *-ing*-suffixed ethnonyms are otherwise unattested, and OE *stoc* is rare with ethnonyms. Even if, as Gelling suggests, the first element is a personal name derived from the ethnonym, it is not direct evidence that the inhabitants were Jutes, unless it arose as a byname \**Țting* 'son of the Jute'. *Eadens* is similarly problematic, since it could be derived from the same personal name. If that purported personal name were only identified in place-names located in and around the area thought to have been settled by Jutes, this might cast doubt on its existence; but it does seem to occur elsewhere. Edford Brook (Lilleshall, Shropshire), for instance, is *Eotanford* 963 in the bounds of Church Aston, apparently 'Eota's ford'. The unrecorded personal name \**Ēota* would be the normal west midland form of West Saxon *Țta*. If *Țta* has an ethnonymic function in the Hampshire names—if, for instance, it is a byname meaning 'the Jute'—then we should reckon with it also in Shropshire. That leaves only John of Worcester's *Ytene*. The association in the same text of *provincia Jutarum* with the New Forest makes it very likely that this is a genuine reference to Jutes; but, in the form in which it has been passed down, it is not a place-name. The chronicler may have taken it from an OE text in which it was part of a hypothetical \**Ytenewald*, but that is not evidence for its more general currency in spoken contexts.

### Discussion

It is clear from the analysis above that identifying *Seaxe*- and \**Ēote*-names is especially challenging. However, patterns of compounding shared with other group-name place-names may support the inclusion in our corpus of a considerable number of these names, even when the early forms allow for other interpretations. Determining the sense and significance of the ethnonyms within the corpus of place-names assembled above is not straightforward. What

<sup>115</sup> JW vol. 3, s.a. 1100; Ekwall "Tribal Names," p. 132; Coates, *Place-Names of Hampshire*, p. 122.

<sup>116</sup> JW vol. 3, s.a. 1099. Insley, "Meanware," p. 475; Yorke, "Jutes of Hampshire and Wight," pp. 90–91.

follows is an assessment of the possible significances of the more securely identified group-name place-names.

Many—if not all—of the place-names under discussion have been interpreted by scholars as containing references to distinctive minority groups, communities who were notably different in some way from their surrounding populations. It is this assumption that lies behind Ekwall's statement, "[i]t is *a priori* obvious that places were not generally named from the tribe or nation in whose territory they are found."<sup>117</sup> These names are usually interpreted as having arisen in the speech of surrounding populations, rather than as self-identifying labels.

Even within one subset of our corpus—the *Engle/Englar* names, for example—the cultural and/or linguistic identity that made the referents distinct was unlikely to have been uniform. As was noted above, the group-names could have varying referents in the documentary record. The same variation in application might be observable in the place-names, and indeed place-name usage might depart significantly from that of written documents, whose contexts of production were very different. What, if anything, can be said about the ways in which these group-names were used in place-names?

For the English-language *Engle*-names, it is usually the more specific—more Bedan—sense of 'Angle' that is thought to be active. A.H. Smith summarised, "Outside East England, the E[ast] Midl[ands], and the N[orth] C[ountry], the word refers in p[lace]n[ame]s. to an isolated settlement or group of Angles."<sup>118</sup> They tend to be seen as evidence of migration from further north or east in England.

Englebourne in Devon can readily be interpreted as one such 'Anglian' name. Ekwall—and Smith—writing in the 1950s, saw the *Engle* here as a distinctive minority group within Wessex.<sup>119</sup> An English-language name must of course have been formed at some point after the West Saxon expansion into this area in the late 7th to early 8th centuries. Englebourne's genesis was probably considerably later than the initial movements westwards, as the scant evidence there is suggests that, in Devon, Old English speakers initially adopted Brittonic place-names, which were only later replaced by Old English formations.<sup>120</sup> This replacement was largely complete by the time of the Domesday Survey, at least for the types of settlement-name contained therein, but it is

117 Ekwall, "Tribal Names," p. 130.

118 Smith, *Elements*, part 1, p. 153.

119 Ekwall, "Tribal Names," pp. 138–9; Smith, *Elements*, part 1, p. 153.

120 Duncan Probert, "Mapping Early Medieval Language Change in South-West England," in *Britons in Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. Nick Higham (Woodbridge, 2007), pp. 231–44, at p. 233.

evidenced in texts from the 9th century.<sup>121</sup> And by the late 9th century Englebourne was, if not exactly West Saxon heartland, very nearly so—a number of nearby estates were bequeathed by King Alfred, in his will, to members of his family.<sup>122</sup> Angles may well have been notable in such a context. Back in 1931, however, Gover, Mawer, and Stenton, the English Place-Name Society (EPNS) editors for Devon offered a rather different reading. They suggested that Englebourne “may mean ‘bourne or stream of the English’, possibly because at one time it formed the boundary between the British and the invading Anglo-Saxons.”<sup>123</sup> The notion of a fixed boundary between Britons and Anglo-Saxons is of course problematic from a 21st-century perspective,<sup>124</sup> but it is perhaps worth exploring the idea that the name referred in some way to the (notional) extent of English control. At first glance, Gover, Mawer, and Stenton’s suggestion, with its reference to “invading Anglo-Saxons,” seems to rest on the assumption that the name was formed at the time they were moving westwards into this area. The name is perhaps unlikely to date from this period for the reasons mentioned above, and the use of *Engle* at this early date is also problematic. If the (English) name had been formed during a period of West Saxon expansion into Brittonic-speaking regions, it would of course have to have been self-identification on the part of the English speakers. Self-identification as *Engle*, rather than *Seaxe*, at a time earlier than that for which we have evidence that *Engle* could denote English speakers regardless of regional origin is improbable. Gover, Mawer, and Stenton may, though, have envisaged a later context for the formation of Englebourne, and it is possible to imagine it arising, with this ‘boundary’ sense, as a name which preserved—or invented—a folk-memory of an earlier border between English and British, at a time after *Engle* had come to mean English speakers. If English-language names in this part of the world originated, on the whole, in the 9th and later centuries, then this is at least a possibility.

Englefield in Berkshire is the other *Engle*-name for which the “contrasting” population is thought to be West Saxon.<sup>125</sup> Berkshire was contested territory,

121 Probert, “Mapping,” p. 233.

122 Simon Keynes and Michael Lapidge, *Alfred the Great* (Harmondsworth, 1983), pp. 173–78, esp. map 5.

123 The stream referred to is now the River Harbourne, a tributary of the Dart. Gover, Mawer, Stenton, *Place-Names of Devon*, pp. 325–26.

124 Both for what it implies about British/Anglo-Saxon relations and because medieval borders were probably zones rather than linear features. See, for example, Probert, “Mapping,” p. 232, and the references in Fiona Edmonds, “The Expansion of the Kingdom of Strathclyde,” *EME* 23 (2015), 43–66, at p. 53, nn. 44, 45.

125 *DEPN*, p. 167; *CDEPN*, p. 216.

and came under Mercian rule in the late 8th and early 9th centuries. Margaret Gelling pointed out that the phonology of the county's place-names was not obviously affected by these periods of Mercian rule—the names owe their forms to the West Saxon dialect. This suggested to her that Mercian overlordship was just that, and “did not affect the composition of its population,” and that “[t]he Angles of Englefield [...] would not have been mentioned in a place-name if they had not been exceptional.”<sup>126</sup> Citing Englefield as evidence of the lack of any settlement concomitant with Mercian dominion has the effect, probably unintended, of identifying the name's *Engle* with Mercia. *Engle* did not necessarily refer to settlers from “core” Mercian territory. Their linguistic or cultural distinctiveness may have had its origins well outside that territory—that *Engle* could refer in place-names to a non-Mercian Anglian identity may be suggested by its use in Engleton in Staffordshire.<sup>127</sup> Englefield's *Engle* could have been Middle or East Angles.

A memorializing function for Englefield was suggested by Ekwall, who offered a “mere guess” that “the name commemorates an early battle between Angles and Saxons,”<sup>128</sup> and by Andrew Reynolds, who suggested that the name may have been a deliberate bestowal by the West Saxons on the place where in 871 Æthelwulf, ealdorman of Berkshire, defeated two jarls of the Great Viking Army.<sup>129</sup> Reynolds' contention is that the term *Engle* here reflects a conscious use of language which stresses English unity. This has most commonly been detected in the use of *Angelcynn*, from the late 9th century and primarily in texts associated with Alfred's court, to refer to both Mercians and West Saxons as a unified people.<sup>130</sup> These arguments rest, at least in part, on *feld* here having the sense of battle-field, and this is indeed one of the word's senses.<sup>131</sup> However, it seems unlikely to have been the one at work in Englefield when we look at

126 Gelling, *Place-Names of Berkshire*, p. 839.

127 See below, pp. 141–42; Ekwall, “Tribal Names,” p. 139.

128 Ekwall, “Tribal Names,” p. 139.

129 Andrew Reynolds, “Archaeological Correlates for Anglo-Saxon Military Activity in Comparative Perspective,” in *Landscapes of Defence in Early Medieval Europe*, ed. John Baker, Stuart Brookes, and Andrew Reynolds (Turnhout, 2013), pp. 1–38, at pp. 26–27.

130 Patrick Wormald, “Bede, the *Bretwaldas* and the Origins of the *Gens Anglorum*,” in *Ideal and Reality in Frankish and Anglo-Saxon Society: Studies Presented to J.M. Wallace-Hadrill*, ed. Patrick Wormald, Donald Bullough and Roger Collins (Oxford, 1983), pp. 99–129; Patrick Wormald, “The Venerable Bede and the ‘Church of the English,’” in *The English Religious Tradition and the Genius of Anglicanism*, ed. G. Rowell (Oxford, 1992), pp. 13–32; Sarah Foot, “The Making of *Angelcynn*: English Identity before the Norman Conquest,” *TRHS* 6th ser. 6 (1996), 25–49. For these issues, see also Courtney Konshuh, “Constructing Early Anglo-Saxon Identity in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*,” below, pp. 154–79. However, cf. George Molyneaux, “*Angli* and *Saxones* in Æthelweard's *Chronicle*,” *EME* 25:2 (2017), 208–23.

131 See the detailed discussion of *feld* in Gelling and Cole, *Landscape*, pp. 269–78.

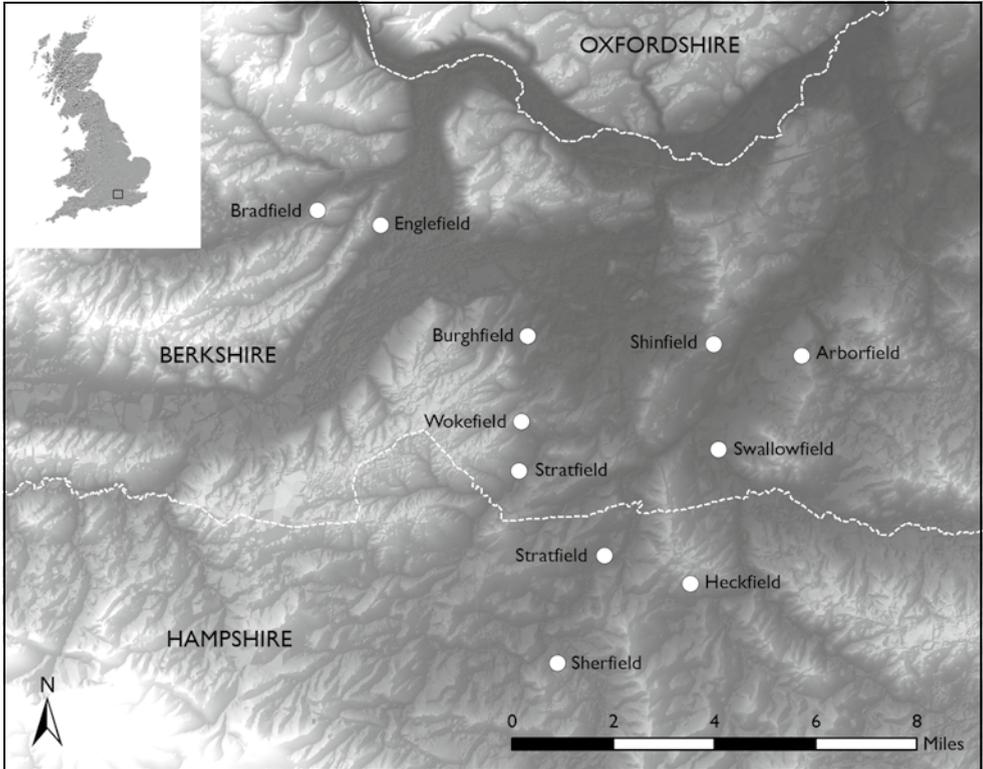


FIGURE 6.1 *Feld*-names in Berkshire and Hampshire  
MAP PRODUCED BY RICHARD JONES

the name in context. It is one of a swathe of *feld*-names found in West Berkshire and neighbouring Hampshire (Fig. 6.1).<sup>132</sup> *Feld* here seems to have been used in contrast to forested land just to the east. Stripped of commemorative function, it is difficult to understand how a general sense of *Engle* 'English' would work in this particular location. A more specific 'Anglian' sense seems more likely, especially as *feld* is relatively common in the earliest attested place-names, and may belong to a fairly early stratum here rather than to the late ninth century (or later).<sup>133</sup>

Engleton in Staffordshire is situated, as Ekwall observed, in "old Anglian territory;" he therefore saw the names as having arisen at some point after Staffordshire's identity had become distinctively Mercian.<sup>134</sup> For Ekwall, these

132 In Berkshire: Arborfield, Bradfield, Burghfield, Shinfield, Stratfield, Swallowfield, Wokefield; in Hampshire: Heckfield, Sherfield, Stratfield (Gelling and Cole, *Landscape*, p. 272).

133 Gelling and Cole, *Landscape*, p. 272.

134 Ekwall, "Tribal Names," p. 139. See also Smith, *Elements*, part 1, p. 153.

*Engle* were incomers from further east, Middle or East Angles, defined against—and presumably by—a surrounding population whose primary identity was at that point not “Anglian.” This population need not necessarily have identified as Mercian, of course; more local identities may have been at work. More recently David Horovitz has suggested that this area was “mainly British” at the point at which the name came into existence, noting that the British-OE hybrid name Brewwood (Brit. *brigā* ‘hill’, OE *wudu* ‘wood’) is less than 2 km away.<sup>135</sup> While the name Brewwood is not necessarily in itself compelling evidence for the late survival of a British-speaking community,<sup>136</sup> Engleton is certainly far enough west to imagine significant continuity in population in this area from pre-English times through to the later Anglo-Saxon period; retention of British speech was not necessarily part of that continuity. Ekwall and Horovitz envisage significantly different social and linguistic environments and processes of naming. The first is an entirely English cultural environment, with the place-name arising descriptively in speech. The second is a situation of cultural contact, and possibly one where the place-name was imposed by the settlement’s inhabitants, an example of self-identification. It was noted above (pp. 119, 130–31) that many place-names of the type ethnonym + *tūn* occur in the Danelaw and suit a context after the Scandinavian settlements. This adds further uncertainty to any interpretation of Engleton. It could suggest a later context for the name, which in turn would count against a linguistically or “culturally” British environment.

Inglewood (Forest) in Cumberland is perhaps the only *Engle*-name for which we can suggest with some confidence a particular context of production. There seems to be general agreement that here we have English or Angles defined against a population which was in some sense British. Ekwall suggests that these *Engle* were “in Welsh territory,” Smith that they were “amongst the Cumbrian Britons,” and the EPNS editors and Watts plump for the Britons of Strathclyde.<sup>137</sup> The area so named would have been part of the kingdom of Northumbria before its collapse in 867, and though enclaves of Brittonic speakers may have survived Northumbrian rule these were unlikely to have been land-owners.<sup>138</sup> A significant Brittonic-speaking population re-emerged only in the late 9th or 10th century, with the southwards expansion of the

135 Horovitz, *Place-Names of Staffordshire*, p. 248.

136 A reflex of \**brigā* may have been adopted by English speakers into their onomastic; Padel, “Brittonic Place-Names,” pp. 24–25.

137 A.M. Armstrong, *et al.*, *The Place-Names of Cumberland*, 3 vols (Cambridge, 1950–52), p. 38; *DEPN*, p. 265; Smith, *Elements*, part 1, p. 153; *CDEPN*, p. 331.

138 Edmonds, “The Expansion,” p. 49.

kingdom of Strathclyde.<sup>139</sup> Inglewood, between Carlisle and Penrith, formed part of the southernmost extent of this kingdom, “an inland border zone that comprised Inglewood Forest and the Eamont/Penrith area.”<sup>140</sup> Given that the population here and further north and west comprised speakers of several different languages—English, Scandinavian, and Goidelic, as well as Brittonic—it seems more likely that Inglewood is a name referring to political rather than linguistic identity, one that was given in recognition of the fact that this area was where British political control petered out. This is perhaps not a case of a ‘minority population’ name, but one used with a particular political significance to mark a borderland area.

It is perhaps of interest, then, that when we look at the distribution of the more secure OE *Engle*-names—leaving, for a moment, Ing Lane—they are all located in what might be termed borderland areas, where one set of historic identities or allegiances intersected with another (Fig. 6.2). Englebourne lies within Anglo-Saxon territory but not far from areas where Brittonic speech endured; Engleton, in the west midlands, lies in an area in which British identities, cultural and linguistic likely lasted longer than areas not much further east; and the name Inglewood seems to have arisen in the context of British territorial expansion into English speaking (or linguistically mixed) areas. Englefield lies within territory claimed at various points by Mercia and Wessex. There is perhaps something more to these names than their referring ‘observationally’ to minority groups, then. Inglewood looks like a reference to the limits of political power, and, while the other names may not have this precise function, it may be that ethnic identifiers arose in historically contested areas, even if that contest was a relatively distant memory at the point at which the name came into existence.

A distribution map of OE *Seaxe*-names is strikingly different from that of *Engle*-names, both because of the markedly greater number of possible instances (Fig. 6.3), and because of the number of names located within Scandinavian-influenced areas. Some of these names may fit a ‘borderland’ interpretation.

*Seaxana meare* refers directly to a boundary, of course, and is possibly therefore a special case. The estate of *Flodhammas*, whose southern border it comprised, lay within Walland Marsh and the parishes of Brookland, Brenzett, and Fairfield, all of which abut Kent’s boundary with Sussex. *Seaxana* here may be elliptical, or it may represent an everyday “vernacular” reference to South

139 Edmonds, “The Expansion”; Edmonds’s adaptation of the traditional interpretation is compelling, but for alternative explanations see the references in her footnotes 5, 7.

140 Edmonds, “The Expansion,” p. 55.



FIGURE 6.2 OE *Engle*-names  
 MAP PRODUCED BY RICHARD JONES

Saxons. The more specific *Sup>saxa lond* (see above, p. 115) lay less than 10 miles to the east, and may represent a detached part of South Saxon territory. It is perhaps of interest that we have a “full” form of the group-name in such a context, with what may be a direct reference to land-holding within Kentish territory by a political unity.

Sessacott and Saxworthy are located on the western periphery of Anglo-Saxon England, close to the Anglo-Cornish border, and their motivation is a

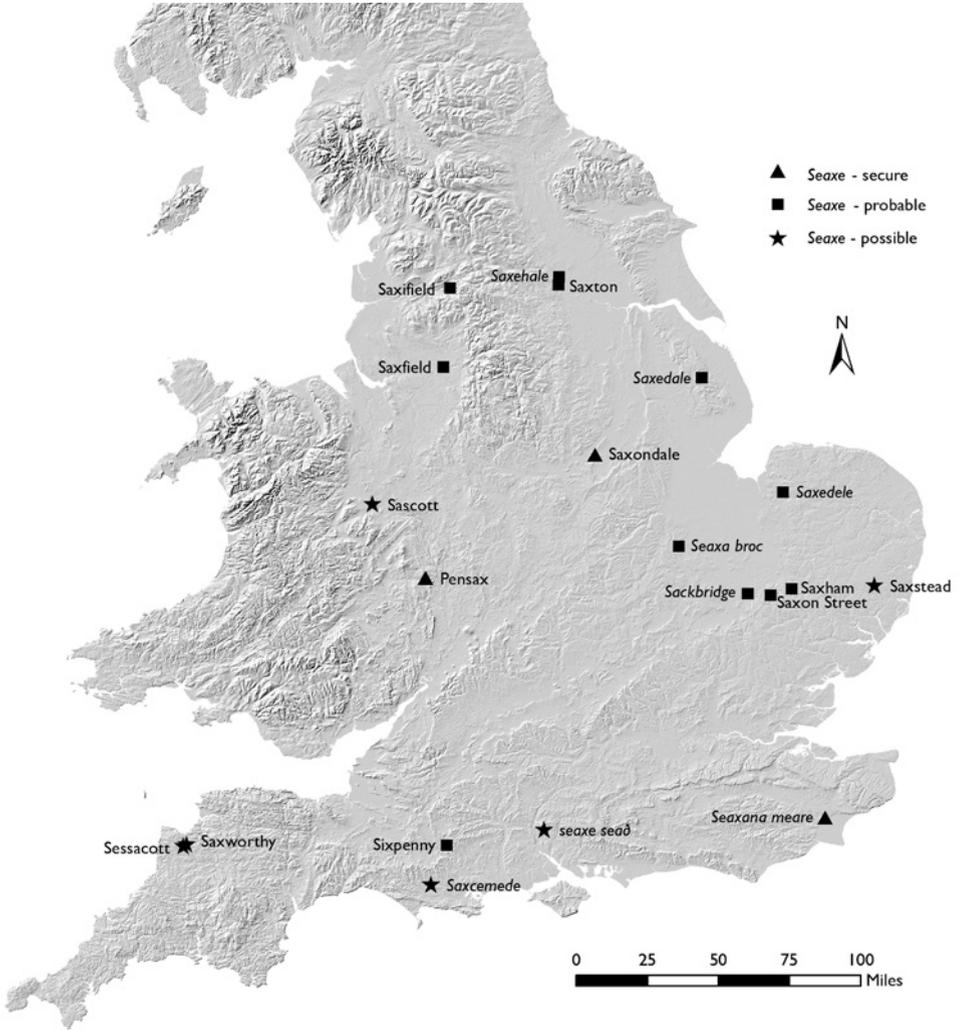


FIGURE 6.3 *Seaxe* distribution map  
 MAP PRODUCED BY RICHARD JONES

matter of some curiosity, if, as discussed above, they contain the personal or by-name *Seaxa* rather than the ethnonym *Seaxe*. It may be that the social conditions of the border region gave rise more readily to use of the ethnonym in given names or as a byname. The use of OE *Seaxa* ‘the Saxon’ as a by-name in Sascott, however, on the edge of supposedly Anglian Mercia, is harder to interpret in this way, unless we reckon with some sort of semantic influence

from Brittonic \**Saxso-*, whose referents were English rather than specifically Saxon. It is not difficult to imagine such influence on the English spoken in this part of the west midlands, whether that of “original” Germanic-speakers or of those who had learned it under political exigency. The other west midland name in the corpus, Pensax, a Brittonic place-name, is very likely to contain the ethnonym, whether in reference to an individual Saxon or a community of Saxons. In Della Hooke’s view, the name arose because “a group of Anglo-Saxon settlers were sufficiently distinctive in north-west Worcestershire to give their name ... to the estate of Pensax ... in the woodland beyond Wyre.”<sup>141</sup> Whether this distinctive group was an isolated community surrounded by Brittonic speakers, or dwellers in the borderland at the limits of Anglo-Saxon expansion, the name seems likely to have arisen at an early stage, when Anglo-Saxon culture or Old English language were distinctively rare in this part of Worcestershire. In Gelling’s judgment, Old English had come to dominate even in districts much further west by the end of the 9th century.<sup>142</sup> An early date was also proposed by Kenneth Jackson, on phonological grounds, although Alan James demurs.<sup>143</sup> Full discussion of this name belongs with a detailed analysis of comparable Brittonic material, and is beyond the scope of this chapter. Whether Sixpenny should be treated separately is moot. Its location is much less clearly culturally liminal, except in the very earliest of Anglo-Saxon contexts—Anderson posits “an ancient Saxon boundary” in explaining the name’s motivation.<sup>144</sup>

Another group of *Seaxe* names might be considered to have arisen in a border environment: Saxon Street, Saxham, and *Sackbridge*. Ekwall considered them remnants of an early Saxon migration to this otherwise predominantly Anglian area,<sup>145</sup> but all three are located about 10 miles north of the modern county boundary of Essex. If that is a good approximation of the extent of East Saxon territory in the Anglo-Saxon period,<sup>146</sup> then it is not inconceivable that control of parts of southern Cambridgeshire and Suffolk was contested by the

141 Della Hooke, *The Anglo-Saxon Landscape: The Kingdom of the Hwicce* (Manchester 1985), p. 164.

142 Margaret Gelling, *The West Midlands in the Early Middle Ages* (Leicester, 1992), pp. 70–71.

143 Jackson, *Language and History*, pp. 539–40; Alan G. James, “A Cumbric Diaspora?” in *A Commodity of Good Names: Essays in Honour of Margaret Gelling*, ed. O.J. Padel and David N. Parsons (Donington, 2008), pp. 187–203, at p. 198.

144 Anderson, *South-Western Counties*, p. 141.

145 Ekwall, “Tribal Names,” p. 137.

146 Barbara Yorke, “The Kingdom of the East Saxons,” *ASE* 14 (1985), 1–36, at pp. 27–31; *Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo-Saxon England* (London, 1990), pp. 46–47.

East Saxons at various times, or that East Saxons migrated into these nearby areas after the initial settlement period. It is harder to make such an argument for Saxstead, around 20 miles north of the boundary, but in any case the personal names is probably more likely than the ethnonym here.<sup>147</sup>

The remaining OE *Seaxe*-names are harder to read as expressions of border dynamics, and the conventional interpretation, as isolated communities of Saxons in areas whose identities Bede classed as collectively Anglian, may be preferable. Dodgson considered Saxfield to commemorate “a settlement of Saxons among the Anglian population of north-east Ch[eshire];”<sup>148</sup> Gover, Mawer and Stenton considered Saxondale in Nottinghamshire to record “some isolated Saxon settlement in this Anglian territory.”<sup>149</sup> Gover et al. went further, in fact, and suggested that the presence of a Saxon population might account for use of OE *denu*, otherwise rare in Nottinghamshire; this seems not to be entirely supported by more detailed analysis of that element,<sup>150</sup> but the recurrence of generics referring to valleys and nooks, in Saxondale, *Saxehale*, and the two instances of *Saxedale*, is worthy of note. Parallels can be found in the place-name Walden (Essex, Hertfordshire), from OE *Wala-denu* ‘valley of the Britons’, and *Eadens* in Hampshire (above, p. 136) might also be compared.<sup>151</sup> The historical context for these isolated communities is impossible to reconstruct, since place-names are generally their sole evidence and we cannot date their coining very precisely. Does a name such as Saxfield, near the border of Lancashire and Cheshire, tell us that Saxons and Angles were both present in that region in the early to mid Anglo-Saxon period, or that a group of Saxons migrated to this otherwise Anglian land at a later date? The name Exton shows that movements of this kind could take place and be recorded in place-names after the establishment of a distinctively East Saxon identity. In an otherwise apparently non-Saxon region, OE *Seaxe* might sometimes have been short for *Ēast*, *Sūð* or *West Seaxe*, as may have been the case in *Seaxana meare* on the border with Kent. On the other hand, if many of the names originated early on, they presuppose a much more mixed settlement of Angles and Saxons that belies Bede’s later rationalization.

147 Although it is worth noting the suggestion that Sutton Hoo once marked the border of East Saxon territory, see Michael Parker Pearson, Robert van de Noort and Alex Woolf, “Three Men and a Boat: Sutton Hoo and the East Saxon Kingdom,” *ASE* 22 (1993), 27–50.

148 Dodgson, *Place-Names of Cheshire*, part 1, p. 236.

149 Gover, Mawer and Stenton, *Place-Names of Nottinghamshire*, p. 241.

150 Gelling and Cole, *Landscape*, p. 113.

151 Reaney, *Place-Names of Essex*, p. 537; J.E.B. Gover, Allen Mawer, and F.M. Stenton, *The Place-Names of Hertfordshire* (Cambridge, 1938), pp. 22–23.

The exceptions here are the Jutes, whose name seems to be confined at most to one Jutish area only, and is not apparently found elsewhere. This may be because they have not been looked for beyond their Bedan districts; or because the Jutish identity was subsumed by a West Saxon one early on. John Insley contends that “[t]he separate Jutish identity [of parts of Hampshire and of the Isle of Wight] lasted for a considerable time.”<sup>152</sup> This rests on seeing Asser’s reference to Alfred’s maternal grandfather, Oslac, as *de Gothis et Iutis* ‘from the Goths and Jutes’ as reflecting a late 9th-century consciousness of Jutish origins in those regions, to which Oslac’s family belonged.<sup>153</sup> It is hard to know, however, whether this is anything more than a reflection of learned tradition or acquaintance with Bede. The scarcity of \**Ēote*-names does not especially weigh in favour of the Hampshire/Wight population continuing to identify with the Jutes for an extended period of time. If this scarcity is indeed a result of that identity being subsumed by a West Saxon one, it might support an interpretation of many *Seaxe*- and *Engle*-names as having arisen at a relatively late date; they arose, perhaps, at a time when those identities were more clearly geographically defined. A late interpretation may also more easily explain those *Engle*- and *Seaxe*-names located in borderlands, whose semantic value required an understanding that there were Anglian or Saxon polities.

Chronology is less of a problem for those names which show Scandinavian influence, and which therefore must date from the late 9th century or later. They are best discussed together, particularly as eight of them are *bý*-names. Ethnonym + *bý* is recurrent in Danelaw areas of England: the generic is found with specifics referring to Britons (*Bretar*), Flemings (*Flæmingjar*), Frisians (*Frísir*), Irish/Goidelic speakers (*Írar*), Scandinavians (*Danir* and *Norðmenn*), as well as *Englar* and *Saksar*. For this reason, the *Saxby*-names are very likely to contain the ethnonym, despite there formally being other possibilities. Scholars who have preferred an ethnonym interpretation have argued that the *Saxbys*, like the *Inglebys*, refer to English-speaking communities. Gillian Fellows-Jensen offers two possibilities:

the Danes must either have been able to distinguish between the Angles and the Saxons or have used the two national terms synonymously. The latter alternative seems the more likely.<sup>154</sup>

<sup>152</sup> Insley, “Meanware,” p. 474.

<sup>153</sup> Asser, chapter 2.

<sup>154</sup> Fellows-Jensen, *Scandinavian Settlement Names in the East Midlands*, p. 66.

Barrie Cox adds that, “by the date of such a name’s formation, the Danes were unlikely to have been able to distinguish between Angles and Saxons.”<sup>155</sup> The traditional argument holds that *Saxby*- and *Ingleby*-names referred to English-speaking communities in areas dominated by Scandinavian speakers, and indeed they certainly occur within areas whose place-names are good evidence for heavy Scandinavian linguistic influence. However, given that the element *bý* compounds elsewhere with ethnonyms referring to peoples of the European mainland, the possibility should be borne in mind that the *Saxby*-names in fact refer not to (Anglo-)Saxons but to ‘Old’ Saxons, from Saxony. OE *Seaxe* refers sometimes to Continental Saxons; in Scandinavian contexts, ON *Saksar* refers only to Continental Saxons. If the *Saxby*-names were formed by Scandinavian speakers, as seems likely,<sup>156</sup> why would *Saksar* have been the term chosen to denote English speakers? There is no Scandinavian textual evidence to suggest that it was used with this sense, and, had Scandinavian communities in the Danelaw learned the vocabulary for English speakers from their Anglo-Saxon neighbours, we may wonder why these neighbours would have self-identified as *Seaxe*. If we allow that Flemings and Frisians appear in English place-names,<sup>157</sup> then we must allow that Continental Saxons may too. It is worth noting that one of the Lincolnshire *Saxbys* is just over a mile from a lost *Frísa-bý* site,<sup>158</sup> and Saxby in Leicestershire is approximately 8 miles from Frisby on the Wreake, one of three *Frísa-býs* in that county.<sup>159</sup> If the *Saxbys* do indeed refer to Continental Saxons, this makes better sense of a situation in which both *Englar* and *Saksar bý*-names are found in the east midlands at no great distance apart, in one case fewer than 10 miles apart (Fig. 6.4).

Considering the names within the broader onomastic context might also cast light on whether these names did indeed refer to minority communities surrounded by one dominant group. The recurrent names in *\*Engla-bý*—which can readily be interpreted as Old Norse formations<sup>160</sup>—are, for example, usually identified by scholars as groups of English speakers surrounded by

155 Cox, *Place-Names of Leicestershire*, part 2, p. 135; see also *CDEPN*, p. 529.

156 For *bý*-names as evidence of Scandinavian linguistic communities, see Abrams and Parsons, “Place-Names and the History of Scandinavian Settlement in England,” esp. pp. 394–400.

157 *Flemingjar* in Flimby (*Flemyngeby* 1171–5): Armstrong, et al., *The Place-Names of Cumberland*, p. 286.

158 West Firsby; Cameron, *Place-Names of Lincolnshire*, part 6, p. 154.

159 Cox, *Place-Names of Leicestershire*, part 3, p. 80; for the other two see part 4, p. 58, and part 6, p. 141.

160 See above, pp. 119–20.

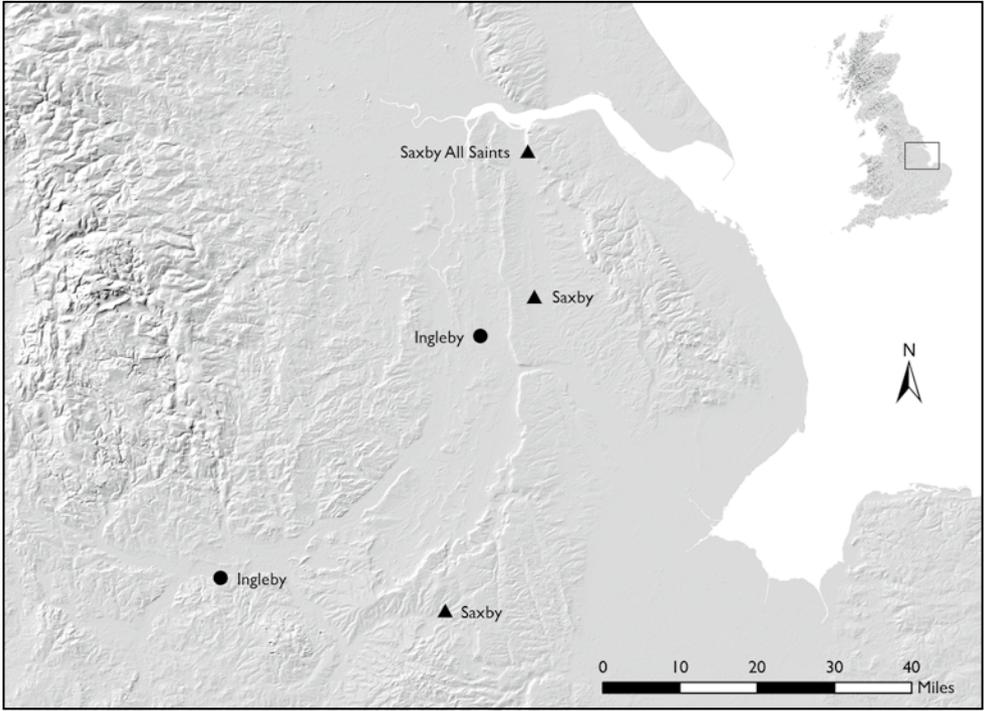


FIGURE 6.4 East midlands names  
MAP PRODUCED BY RICHARD JONES

Scandinavians.<sup>161</sup> Ethnonym + *by*-names tend to occur in clusters, however, which rather suggests that these names were characteristic of areas whose populations were thoroughly mixed and ethnically dynamic,<sup>162</sup> but where Old Norse was the dominant language in the toponymicon at the time that these names arose. Fig. 6.5 shows one such cluster in the North Riding of Yorkshire.

Less can be said about the remaining two possible *Saksar*-names, the lost Sash Gate, in Owersby parish, Lincolnshire, and Saxthorpe in Norfolk. The personal name *Saxi* is a formal possibility in both of these, and is accepted by most scholars as the specific of Saxthorpe. As there are just two other possible

161 In addition to the references given above for each name, see also Cameron, *English Place Names*, p. 77; Gillian Fellows Jensen, *Scandinavian Settlement Names in Yorkshire* (Copenhagen, 1972), pp. 13, 30–31; Fellows Jensen, *Scandinavian Settlement Names in the East Midlands*, pp. 19–20, 55.

162 Carroll, “Identifying Migrants.”

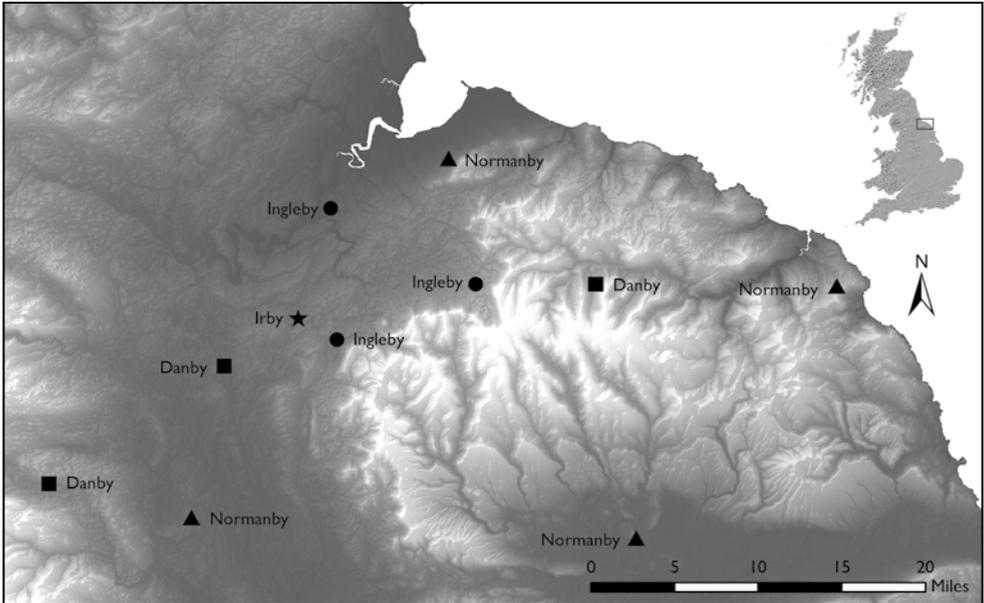


FIGURE 6.5 North Riding cluster

MAP PRODUCED BY RICHARD JONES

ethnonym names in ON *þorp* but very many personal names,<sup>163</sup> this is probably the safest assumption. Sash Gate, on the other hand, sits with ten or more other names comprising ethnonym + ON *gata*, plus several additional names comprising ethnonym + routeway. For Sash Gate, as for the *Saxby*-names, it has been argued that the *Saksar* were Anglo-Saxons.<sup>164</sup> However, it is possible again to point to instances in which *gata* compounds with specifics referring to Continental European peoples: there is a *Flæmingja-gata* ‘road of the Flemings’ in Beverley, as well as recurrent instances of *Norðmanna-* and *Dana-gata*. A possible reference to Continental Saxons must at least be considered. What the relationship between the Saxons (of whatever origin) and the road might be is not entirely clear. There are three surviving instances of ethnonym + *gata*: Jubbergate in York (*Bretar*), Flemingate in Beverley, and Deansgate (*Danir*) in Grimsby. These are also the earliest attested of the ethnonym + *gata* compounds, all appearing in 12th-century documents. The roads so-named are

163 See, for example, the numbers in Fellows Jensen, *Scandinavian Settlement Names in the East Midlands*, pp. 92–101, and see above, p. 134.

164 Cameron, *Place-Names of Lincolnshire*, part 3, p. 88.

within substantial settlements: Ekwall suggested that Britons were Jubbergate's main inhabitants, and Smith that Flemingate was occupied by Flemish traders.<sup>165</sup> Occupation or trading sites are certainly possible motivations for such names, and may lie also behind Ing Lane (if the name does indeed contain *Engle*), which Ekwall saw as "the result of an early Anglian immigration into London."<sup>166</sup> Use of the road in question is an alternative explanation, as in Alan James's assessment of the two *Bret(t)a-stræt* names in the north west, which "presumably refer to Cumbrian drovers or traders."<sup>167</sup> Ekwall explained these names as referring to their perceived builders, but that rested on their having been applied, as he thought, to Roman roads.<sup>168</sup> Such an explanation seems unlikely to apply to Sash Gate, which lay within the Lincolnshire village of Owersby, or indeed to any of the *gata* names.

### Conclusions

In considering the material set out in this essay, we are inevitably indebted to and constrained by Bede's ethnographical framework. In many cases, we can only judge the motivation of an *Engle*, *Seaxe* or *Ēote* place-name against his parameters. Yet the reality of early Anglo-Saxon identities must have been ethnically and geographically more complex: ethnically complex because of participation in the settlement of England by other Germanic 'tribes' not mentioned by Bede in this passage;<sup>169</sup> geographically complex because it is hard to imagine an uncontrolled, early medieval mass migration with such a neat outcome. Barbara Yorke's cautionary observation, when assessing Bede's description of the languages of Britain, is just as valid here:

... Bede seems to show awareness that the identity of Angles and Saxons (and presumably the Jutes), although partly the result of heavy migration from certain areas in the Germanic homelands, was also the product of a certain rationalization and regrouping of identity which occurred within Britain itself...<sup>170</sup>

165 Ekwall, "Tribal Names," p. 162; Smith, *Place-Names of the East Riding*, p. 195.

166 Ekwall, *Street-Names*, p. 123.

167 James, "Cumbric Diaspora?" p. 191.

168 Ekwall, "Tribal Names," p. 162.

169 Compare the tantalizing implications of *HE* v.9.

170 Barbara Yorke, "Political and Ethnic Identity: A Case Study of Anglo-Saxon Practice," in *Social Identity in Early Medieval Britain*, ed. William O. Frazer and Andrew Tyrrell (London, 2000), pp. 69–89, at p. 72 (referring to Bede, *HE*, 1.1, v.9).

With our material there is an additional complication, that of chronology—we can rarely date the coining of these place-names with any great precision. Even so, it is clear that a number of them post-date the Scandinavian settlement of northern and eastern England, another time of migrations to and within Britain. If some of the place-names discussed here arose during the 5th and 6th centuries, or reflect patterns of settlement established at that time, other contexts should also be sought in explaining the full range of names. If we are aware that Bede's description of the settlement of Angles, Saxons and Jutes may be a rationalization of a very complex reality, we must also avoid simplification in explaining the toponymic afterlives of those 'tribes'.

## Constructing Early Anglo-Saxon Identity in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*

*Courtney Konshuh*

The chronicle compiled at King Alfred's court after 891 was part of his educational reform and was also part of an attempt to create a common national identity for the English. This can be seen in the contemporary annals (i.e. from 871 to 891), but the large body of annals drawn together from diverse sources for the preceding nine centuries shows this same focus. The earlier annals, while not necessarily compiled at the same time, were selected and manipulated with the same goals, and are organised thematically into annals which explore Britannia's roots as a Roman colony, its development as a Christian nation, and the *adventus* of the Germanic tribes. Barbara Yorke has shown some of these accounts to be semi-historical or mythological, but they are juxtaposed with historically accurate descriptions. While the early annals have a different compilation context than those which document Alfred's reign, they were nonetheless selected, organised and inflated in order to legitimise the line of Cerdic and bestow authority on Alfred as well as his descendants. In this, they follow the same model as later annals in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*.<sup>1</sup>

In light of recent research, it seems well established that the compilation of the "Common Stock" or "Alfredian Chronicle" (i.e. the annals to 891 common to most *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*) was a courtly endeavour and that the exemplar for the earliest A-manuscript was a product of King Alfred's scholarly circle.<sup>2</sup> While Alfred's personal involvement in this may not have been particularly large,<sup>3</sup> the political thought of his circle of scholars can be detected throughout the annals. Annals for Alfred's reign and for the reigns of his father and

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- 1 For discussion of the term 'The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*' as opposed to the more accurate plural title (used in this chapter) see Pauline Stafford, "The Making of Chronicles and the Making of England: the Anglo-Saxon Chronicles after Alfred," *TRHS* 6th ser. 27 (2017), 65–86, at pp. 65–66.
  - 2 Nicholas Brooks, "Why is the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle about Kings?" *ASE* 39 (2011), 43–70; Anton Scharer, "The Writing of History at King Alfred's Court," *EME* 5:2 (1996), 177–206.
  - 3 Malcolm Godden, "Did King Alfred Write Anything?" *Medium Aevum* 76 (2007), 1–23; Janet Bately, "Did King Alfred Actually Translate Anything? The Integrity of the Alfredian Canon Revisited," *Medium Aevum* 78 (2009), 189–215.

grandfather seem to have a different character than the early annals (i.e. those before approx. 800).<sup>4</sup> There were clearly various stages of compilation and it may make more sense to view the early annals as having been compiled and added to smaller groups of contemporary annals which were circulating in the late 9th century;<sup>5</sup> they were nonetheless sorted and compiled at some point as a whole.<sup>6</sup> The early annals mix Roman legacy, Christian history, and mythical accounts of the Germanic tribes' arrival in England from sources like Bede, Orosius, Gildas, recent memory and oral tradition.<sup>7</sup> This chapter will show how these historical subjects are presented throughout the early annals into the 7th century as a concerted effort to promote a unified Anglo-Saxon identity, part of a larger ideological programme which was being promulgated at King Alfred's court. Whatever the elliptical content of the annals may hide, their selection, structure, and form all reveal something about their composition context.

Barbara Yorke was one of the first scholars to occupy herself with the nature of the early West Saxon annals in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles* as a unit.<sup>8</sup> Very little work on the early annals as a whole has been done otherwise; this choppy and piecemeal history is seen as providing the modern historian with evidence

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- 4 Janet Bately, "The Compilation of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, 60 BC to AD 890: Vocabulary as Evidence," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 64 (1978), 93–129.
- 5 John Quanrud, "The Sources of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle to the Annals of the 890s" (Univ. of Nottingham, PhD thesis, 2014); Frank Stenton, "The South-Western Element in the Old English Chronicle," in his *Preparatory to Anglo-Saxon England: Being the Collected Papers of Frank Merry Stenton*, ed. Doris Mary Stenton (Oxford, 1970), pp. 106–15; Robert Hodgkin, *A History of the Anglo Saxons*, 3 vols (Oxford, 1939), vol. 2; A.J. Thorogood, "The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle in the Reign of Ecgberht," *EHR* 48(1933), 353–63; Courtney Konshuh, *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles: Writing English Identity* (forthcoming).
- 6 Bately has convincingly argued against the compilation of a large set of annals from around 855 (in Alfred's father Æthelwulf's reign) on linguistic grounds. This means that whatever the state of the sources gathered for the Common Stock, they were likely all first put together in Alfred's reign. Janet Bately, "Manuscript Layout and the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle," in *Textual and Material Culture in Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. Donald Scragg (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 1–22.
- 7 Including a whole host of other antique and early medieval sources, such as Isidore's *Chronicon*, Rufinus' Latin translation of Eusebius' *Church History*, Jerome's *de Viris Illustribus*, Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*, *Chronica Maiora* and *Minora*, and *Epitome*, and the *Liber Pontificalis*: Prosper's *Chronicle*, and several continental Chronicles. See Janet Bately, "World History in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: its Sources and its Separateness from the Old English Orosius," *ASE* 8 (1979), 177–94, at p. 178.
- 8 Barbara Yorke, "Fact or Fiction? The Written Evidence for the Fifth and Sixth Centuries AD," *ASSAH* 6 (1993), 45–50; Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo-Saxon England* (London, 1990), pp. 3–4; Yorke, "The Representation of Early West Saxon History," in *Reading the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: Language, Literature and History*, ed. Alice Jorgensen (Turnhout, 2010), pp. 141–59.

of history recording, but the limitations of its style seem to mean that it cannot reveal a narrative voice or collaborative purpose. While the annals are often used in conjunction with Bede (and many derive from Bede) and other sources to create modern narratives on early Anglo-Saxon history, these annals are actually the driest of the dry; no one would read them from start to finish for pleasure, and sixteen folios of brief notices could hardly have been interesting for a medieval audience either. Even in her important essay about *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles'* narrative mode, Cecily Clark largely skips the early annals, citing only two pre-9th-century entries in her evaluation of the "stylistic continuity" of "terse, timeless formulas";<sup>9</sup> she nonetheless finds several examples of authorial interpretation in these annals by way of adjectives, adverbs or relative clauses. That even the terse and disconnected statements of the early annals contain elements of interpretation or point of view reveals that these annals are indeed worth evaluating in their own right and shows their thematic unity.

In her paper on the representation of early West Saxon history in these early annals, Barbara has shown how formulations from the Cynewulf and Cyneheard episode reflect contemporary Alfredian interest in the role of the *witan* in advising the king demonstrated in documents as diverse as Alfred's laws, the Alfred-Guthrum treaty, and Asser's Life, and which had ramifications on the succession of Alfred's sons Edward.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, the failure to mention any West Saxon saints cannot be accidental.<sup>11</sup> While it is simple to see a narrative as determined by the elements which it in fact includes, in the case of *Chronicles*, the elements which are left out can be just as important. This ellipsis need not indicate an attempt to suppress information; just as the modern historian crafts a narrative based on the elements she deems relevant, so too will the *Chronicle* compilers have sifted through a vast body of oral and written evidence to determine what was relevant in the creation of the Common Stock annals.

To honour Barbara's interest in obscure annals and their ideological implications, this paper seeks to evaluate the selection and manipulation of the early annals in their context as an Alfredian court production. Studies of the Common Stock annals have drawn attention to exciting passages such as the 755 Cynewulf and Cyneheard episode or the Germanic *adventus*; however,

9 Cecily Clark, "The Narrative Mode of The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle before the Conquest," in *England Before the Conquest: Studies in Primary Sources Presented to Dorothy Whitelock*, ed. Peter Clemoes and Kathleen Hughes (Cambridge, 1971), pp. 225–35, at p. 219

10 Yorke, "The Representation of Early West Saxon History," p. 143.

11 Yorke, "The Representation of Early West Saxon History," p. 156.

this chapter will look at how the early annals as a whole follow several main streams, presenting an ideologically unified narrative. They are not a haphazard assemblage of random historical data chosen due to time constraints or lack of information in the compilation process; they were put together with the same coherent purpose that can be seen in other Alfredian texts and translations. While the combination of history and mythology within these annals may jar with current views of history-writing or even contemporary continental conventions in annal-writing, as a whole they reflect Alfredian interests in succession, nation-building and exploration or creation of “English” identity.

Reflecting the same model as contemporary 9th-century annals, these early annals were selected from written and oral sources and inflated with semi-historical and mythological material in order to legitimize the line of Cerdic and bestow authority on Alfred and his descendants. While they do not present a smooth or engaging narrative, their selection and inclusion reflect the compilers’ interest in creating an Anglo-Saxon identity applicable to all English speakers in Britain. This identity is derived from Britannia’s place in the Roman Empire, the common ethnic identity grounded in the Germanic *adventus*, and the transformation of Britannia into England making use of Bedan conceptions of an inclusive English-Christian identity.<sup>12</sup> At the same time, this collective identity is more nuanced, and allows for individual local identities, according each kingdom heroic forefathers and genealogies. This forward-looking strategy allows individual local identities to continue while at the same time suggesting that they are in fact all related, or part of the same larger family. Every family must have a leader, and so it can be seen throughout the annals that the House of Cerdic, the rulers of Wessex, have an illustrious past and present, making them the pre-eminent branch of this Germanic family tree.

### Ethnogenesis

The *Chronicle* annals are an important part of the ethnogenesis of the *Anglecynn* in the late 9th and early 10th centuries. The creation of a regional identity or ethnicity is of course not a biological reality, but rather a performance; identity is acted out in language, dress and customs.<sup>13</sup> These practices would not be

12 Ryan Lavelle, “Places I’ll Remember? Reflections on Alfred, Asser and the Power of Memory in the West Saxon Landscape,” below, pp. 312–35.

13 Walter Pohl, “Ethnic Names and Identities in the British Isles: A Comparative Perspective,” in *The Anglo-Saxons from the Migration Period to the Eighth Century: An Ethnographic Perspective*, ed. John Hines (Woodbridge, 1997), pp. 7–32, at p. 8.

markers in a vacuum, and identities are constructed in opposition to the other. Ethnicity is not an objective fact but rather results from subjective identification, and medieval ethnicity is generally formed in opposition to the stranger.<sup>14</sup> Latin-barbarian discourse accompanied or justified the emergence of a barbarian *gens* into the Roman world; while our early texts “identify” outside ethnic groups (such as the Gauls or the Ostrogoths) in order to help Romans organise outsiders into discrete units,<sup>15</sup> these labels can come to define the groups themselves. Similarly in the 9th century, Alfred was defining the group which would rule in opposition to the Viking newcomers;<sup>16</sup> as a chronicler in his son Edward’s reign writes for the year of Alfred’s death, he “was king over all of the *Angelcynn* except for those under Danish dominion.”<sup>17</sup> The Old English term *Angelcynn* probably derives from Gregory the Great’s Latin *gens Anglorum*, which Bede adopted in the *Historia Ecclesiastica*; while Gregory and others outside Britannia may simply not have understood the different identity groups included in this umbrella term, Bede certainly did, and sought to portray all the Anglo Saxons as God’s chosen people.<sup>18</sup> With the exception of one Mercian charter, the term *Angelcynn* was propagated by Alfred’s court, and can be found in several of his circle’s translations.<sup>19</sup> Alfred would have encountered the Latin *Angli* on his pilgrimage to Rome early in his life and continental scholars in his court would have been familiar with the concept, so the idea that all English speakers in Britain belonged to the same *gens* was hardly an innovation. However, it was not common currency in Old English or among Anglo-Saxon speakers, and distinct regional identities persisted until the Norman conquest. The categorisation of *pagani/dene* was a flexible marker as well, but in Alfred’s reign these terms were othered to provide a convenient counterpoint to the emerging Anglo-Saxon identity which Alfred sought to

14 Helmut Reimitz, “The Art of Truth: Historiography and Identity in the Frankish World,” in *Texts and Identities in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Richard Corradini (Vienna, 2006), pp. 87–103, at p. 87.

15 Pohl, “Ethnic Names and Identities in the British Isles,” p. 10.

16 Roffey and Lavelle note that Frankish sources transition from the terms ‘pagans’ or ‘Northmen’ to ‘Danes’, where ‘Danes’ represent a locatable ethnic group who could be “treated with, dealt with, and ultimately brought to the will of the king.” Simon Roffey and Ryan Lavelle, “West Saxons and Danes: Negotiating Early Medieval Identities,” in *Danes in Wessex: the Scandinavian Impact on Southern England, c.800–1100*, ed. Ryan Lavelle and Simon Roffey (Oxford, 2016), pp. 7–34, at pp. 9–12.

17 According to *ASC A 900*, Alfred “wæs cyning ofer eall Ongelcyn butan ðæm dæle þe under Dena onwalde wæs.” (All translations in this chapter are my own).

18 Sarah Foot, “The Making of Angelcynn: English Identity Before the Norman Conquest,” *TRHS* 6th ser., 6 (1996), 25–49, at pp. 43–45.

19 Foot, “Making of Angelcynn,” pp. 29–30 incl. n. 25.

curate.<sup>20</sup> By setting up a group *Angelcynn* identity locked in a struggle against first Britons and then Vikings, Alfred's circle was creating a blanket identity for all the previous Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, and paving the way for an inclusive, assimilatory identity.

Of course, it is not enough for Alfred's court to simply assert that all Anglo Saxons had the same identity. For this to be successful, people must come to view themselves as *Angelcynn/gens Anglorum*. As John Hines points out, the "testing-ground for ethnicity lies in the field of social practice, a practice that is of course shaped by language and communication".<sup>21</sup> While identities need not necessarily emerge out of opposition, the duality of Danish/heathen vs *Angelcynn*/Christian had been cemented by the Alfred-Guthrum treaty which created a border with ethnic identities assigned to each side; identities emerge out of the duality that was created by the "new regnal identity on the twin bases of territorial habitation, and, at higher social levels where men shared the king's *familiaritas*, on sworn commitments, practical fidelities and good lordship".<sup>22</sup> The annals are part of the communication process taking place in the late 9th-century over the nature of the *gens Anglorum*, both as a group separate from the Romans, Britons or Vikings, and as a composite group of West Saxon, Kentish, Mercian, and potentially East Anglian and Northumbrian. Historical texts are not only a diagnostic of contemporary developments in how identity was understood, but also function as a communication intended to influence contemporary perception. As Helmuth Reimitz points out, Frankish histories and annals were the "media through which ethnic identities were devised and propagated"<sup>23</sup> and the same efforts can be seen with the Anglo Saxons.

While Alfred and his circle may have had a notion of an overarching identity to which they ascribed, Alfred's legitimacy was based on his rule as the king of Wessex, and other Anglo-Saxon kingdoms had not been particularly eager to submit to West Saxon authority in the past. With the advent of the Vikings and the removal of all native dynasties except for Alfred's in Wessex after 878, and then with Alfred's conquest of London in 886 and his assumption of overlordship over Ealdorman Æthelred of the Mercians, Alfred was ruling at least nominally over all of non-Viking Britannia. The territorial division of *Angelcynn* to the south and west and the othered Vikings to the north and east in

20 Janet Nelson, "England And the Continent in the Ninth Century: II, the Vikings and Others," *TRHS* 6th ser., 13(2003), 1–28, at p. 27.

21 Pohl, "Ethnic Names and Identities in the British Isles," pp. 7–8.

22 Nelson, "England And The Continent in The Ninth Century: II," p. 27.

23 Reimitz, "The Art of Truth," p. 87.

the Alfred-Guthrum treaty promoted the development of shared identity in the southwest against a common foe. However, the seeds for absorbing these others were already laid; as Guthrum took on the West Saxon name Æthelstan with Alfred as his godfather at his baptism, implications of lordship obligations and Alfredian spiritual overlordship were already present in this division, and through this the opportunity for Viking-held regions to be subsumed into *Angelcynn* identity. In many senses, Wessex's star was on the rise, and while Alfred may not have had any plans to conquer Northumbria and create a unified polity,<sup>24</sup> he was thinking about future generations. *Angelcynn* identity was being created at Alfred's court, and formulated in such an inclusive way that it could come to encompass all of Britannia. While the identity is a construct, the coherent picture of 'the English' and an English nation of *Angelcynn* is created throughout these annals. I will therefore use the term 'Britannia' for the Roman province and the *Angelcynn* to signify the identity group which these chroniclers were hoping to create.

By taking an existing identity of *Angelcynn*, which had been promoted in Bede's history and could be applied to all Anglo-Saxon speakers and Christians, the annals adopt an existing discourse but transform it to fit to the current political reality of an island mostly conquered by Vikings. As the sole 'surviving' kingdom after the Viking conquests, Wessex's claim to primacy was therefore based on its nature as part of a larger ethnic group, the *Angelcynn*, but also its separateness and specialness as the most Christian and most Anglo Saxon of all. This identity was utilised by West Saxon successor kings to justify their rule over Mercia, East Anglia and Northumbria. The ideas of Alfred's courtly circle were probably largely formulated under Alfred's direction, so when I refer to King Alfred's role in the composition of the annals, I mean as conceptual director rather than direct author, collator or scribe.<sup>25</sup>

Though the early annals seldom provide us with great interpretative additions or substantial narratives, they were nonetheless selected from a larger body of historical data which was available to the compilers, including, among other texts, Gildas' *De Excidio Britanniae*, Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica* and Orosius' *Historia adversos paganos*, all of which are substantial narrative sources.<sup>26</sup>

24 George Molyneaux, *The Formation of the English Kingdom in the Tenth Century* (Oxford, 2015), Ch. 4.

25 David Pratt, "Problems of Authorship and Audience in the Writings of King Alfred the Great," in *Lay Intellectuals in the Carolingian World*, ed. Patrick Wormald and Janet Nelson (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 162–91, at pp. 171–74.

26 Janet Bately, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: Texts and Textual Relationships* (Reading, 1991); Kenneth Harrison, "Early Wessex Annals in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle," *EHR* 86 (1971), 527–33; David Dumville, "Some Aspects of Annalistic Writing at Canterbury in the Eleventh and Early Twelfth Centuries," *Peritia* 2 (1983), 23–57; Sarah Foot, "Finding the Meaning

The annals are not terse and spotty because of a dearth of information available to the compilers; they were selected from a vast body of historical writing and combined with genealogies, legendary and oral material to highlight elements that were important to the compilers. With some exceptions, the annals can broadly be sorted into three main themes: those which focus on the history of the Roman Empire, Christian history, the mythological and semi-historical accounts of the Germanic tribes' *adventus* and their subsequent development into kingdoms. Taken together, these themes are relevant to the message promoted in the later annals justifying Alfred's authority over the West Saxons,<sup>27</sup> but they expand the ethnic group included under the West Saxon kings' implicit authority. Britannia is cast as a nation which began with the Roman occupation and survived its fall, only to gain its own identity under the Germanic invaders, and whose identity and existence began with the Roman occupation. Its unity is emphasised alongside the moral and military right of the invaders. The just victory of these invaders can be seen in their conversion to Christianity, which is initiated by a direct request to Pope Gregory the Great, and in the strong ties to Rome which are maintained thereafter. While there are different Anglo-Saxon kingdoms with different histories, genealogies and identities, these early annals assert that they are nonetheless part of a greater, Christian whole, and that Wessex is most fit to rule them as the strongest, most aggressive, and most Christian kingdom.

### The Roman Empire

Britannia's place in the history of the Roman world is firmly established from the very first annal, and throughout the annals important events from the Roman Empire are included, often explicitly in terms of how they relate to Britannia. Before the history of Britannia can really begin, its discovery by Julius Caesar and consequent entry into written memory are mentioned in an undated pre-annal before the year 1: "AER Cristes geflæscnesse .lx. wintra, Gaius Iulius se casere ærest Romana Bretenlond gesohte ⁊ Brettas mid gefeohte cnysede ⁊ hie oferswiþde ⁊ swa þeah ne meahthe þær rice gewinnan."<sup>28</sup> This firmly establishes Britannia in the developed world, and conceptually its history

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of Form: Narrative in Annals and Chronicles," in *Writing Medieval History*, ed. Nancy Partner (London, 2005), pp. 88–108.

27 Courtney Konshuh, "Fighting with a *lytle werode*: Alfred's Retinue in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle," *The Medieval Chronicle* 10 (2015), 95–117.

28 "Sixty years before the birth of Christ, Julius Gaius the emperor [Caesar] first sought out Britannia, and overcame the British with battle and conquered them, and nevertheless could not gain the kingdom."

begins with contact with the Roman Empire and the Christian era. Similarly, the annal for 46 establishes that Claudius “oþer Romana cyninga Bretene lond gesohte 7 þone mæstan del þæs ealondes on his gewald onfeng, 7 eac swelce Orcadus þa ealond Romana cynedome underþeodde.”<sup>29</sup> This annal expands the geographical area which the Romans conquered, giving precedence for future claims to insular unity; by this reckoning, the entire island of Britannia was administered as a unit, including as far north as the Viking base in Orkney. The annals then give accession dates for important emperors, especially in the first century AD, becoming sparser as regards the Empire and focusing rather on emperors who had significance for Britannia.

Many of the other annals seem at first to be a random selection of events and rulers of the Roman Empire, but these can in fact be related to their importance to Britannia;<sup>30</sup> most of the time, this relevance is made explicit. Severus’ reign is included under annal 189 because, as the annal relates, he built a wall in Britannia, a fact which the annalist probably took from Bede.<sup>31</sup> It is logical, for example, that Emperor Augustus’ reign be mentioned, as his rule was particularly significant in the formation of the Roman Empire, of which Britannia became a part. The relevance of the fall of Rome in 410 (under annal 409) does not centre on the Roman empire, but rather on the importance of its fall to Britannia: “Her Gotan abrecon Romeburg, 7 næfre siþan Romane ne ricsodon on Bretone.”<sup>32</sup> Thereafter, the Roman Empire is no longer significant for these annals, and is only mentioned again<sup>33</sup> when the Romans in Britannia gathered together all the gold they could find and buried it or took it with them when they left for Gaul.<sup>34</sup> The annal on the otherwise unimportant usurper Magnus

29 ASC A 46: “In this year, Claudius, the next Roman king sought the land of the Britons and received most of the island into his dominion, and even the island Orkney was subjected to Roman imperium.”

30 Or to Christianisation, see the next section, below.

31 It is possible that there was collaboration with the OE Bede translator, for while Bede’s Latin states that the island was divided by a wall which he explains was actually a rampart made of sod with wooden stakes placed atop it (Bede, *HE*, 1.5), both the Chronicle and the OE translation of Bede say that Britannia was “mid dice begyrde”, that is, “surrounded with a ditch”. Bede, *The Old English Version of Bede’s Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. Thomas Miller, EETS OS 95 (London, 1890), p.1.5.

32 “In this year the Goths sacked Rome, and the Romans have never ruled Britain since.”

33 Other than in annals added by later annalists—the F-scribe, for example, adds a number of details about Rome to the A-manuscript.

34 ASC A 418: “Her Romane gesomnodon al þa goldhord þe on Bretene wæron 7 sume on eorþan ahyddon þæt hie nænig mon siþþan findan ne meakte 7 sume mid him on Gallia lēddon.”—“In this year the Romans gathered all the gold that was in Britannia and hid some of it in the earth so that no one would ever be able to find it afterwards, and some they brought to Gaul.” See Rory Naismith, *Money and Power in Anglo-Saxon England: the*

Maximus is probably drawn from Orosius,<sup>35</sup> though Gildas also mentions him as an example of the sins of the Britons;<sup>36</sup> it is unclear from which source this annal derives. The reason for his inclusion in the annals is clear: “he wæs on Bretenlonde geboren.”<sup>37</sup> His subsequent actions which led to civil war would have been well known from Orosius and are potentially included as a moral condemnation of the early Britons, further justifying their conquest by the Germanic tribes.

After the fall of the Roman Empire and the subsequent looting of Britannia, continental events are not mentioned again until the death of Charlemagne; while the annal 812 for 814 includes the years of Charlemagne’s reign, he is labelled a *cyning* rather than *casere*. Julius Caesar is the only Roman emperor whose title of emperor was recognised as *casere*; the other emperors *feng to rice*, the standard *Chronicles* formula for accession, but their dominion over Britannia is therefore of limited degree.<sup>38</sup> Other than the popes who are mentioned in relation to this annal and who will be discussed below, there are no other continental events in the intervening years. Instead, the annals switch focus to centre entirely around the Germanic *adventus* in Britannia, battles against the Britons and subsequent infighting until Christianisation begins in annal 596.<sup>39</sup> Important events in the history of Christianity are intermingled among the Roman content; this follows the tradition of the apologetic histories of Lactantius, Eusebius and Orosius, and places Britannia within a Christian context from its apparent inception in 60 BC.

According to the outline provided in the annals, Britannia essentially came into existence when contact was made with Rome, and its early development was possible as a result of this. The civilisation which came from being a part of Roman society and contact to Christianity was possible only because Britannia was conquered and absorbed into the Roman Empire; while neither the Empire nor the Britons’ Christianity lasted, contact with Rome provided a basis for the unity of Britannia and first contact to Christianity. Further annals

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*Southern English Kingdoms 757–865* (Cambridge, 2012), pp. 39–41. Note that silver and bronze were more common than gold in known Roman hoards; this annal probably uses “gold” in a literary context.

35 Both the OE Orosius and ASC A spell his name ‘Maximianus’. *The Old English Orosius*, ed. Janet Bately, EETS SS 6 (London, 1980), VI.35.

36 Gildas, *The Ruin of Britain and Other Works*, ed. and trans. Michael Winterbottom (Chichester, 1978), Ch. 13.

37 ASC A 381: “He was born in Britannia.”

38 Even Claudius, for example, in annal 46 is termed a *cyng* and submits most of England to Roman *kingship* (“cynedom”).

39 Corrected (incorrectly) by hand 8 (MS F scribe) to 595.

provide a Christian narrative which begins before the *adventus* of the Anglo Saxons, emphasising the legitimacy of Britain within a Christian Roman Empire, before going on to show the Christianisation narratives of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. The *adventus* annals meanwhile are concerned with the double duty of showing the related nature of the Germanic tribes, and also the natural leadership of one group in particular.

### Germanic Adventus Annals

The *adventus* annals have long been recognised as being not entirely historical;<sup>40</sup> rather than explore the historical/archaeological accuracy which Barbara has covered in detail,<sup>41</sup> this chapter will examine how the *adventus* annals are constructed to present a common vision of the Germanic tribes. Certain elements within the annals reveal that they were based on material that was manipulated considerably in order to line up with year numbers, such as the duplication of some annals or the creation of founding fathers whose identities are in fact derived from existing place-names (such as Port and Wihthgar).<sup>42</sup> The combination of mythological arrival and conquest annals with the strategic inclusion of genealogies allow the annals as a whole to present all the kingdoms and sub-kingdoms of Britannia as important members of a larger family. They show the supremacy of the Germanic incomers over the native Britons, and they focus on the House of Wessex almost from the outset, showing the West Saxons to be the natural leaders of this group.

The first annal to describe the *adventus*, under the year 449, is a complex one, and contrasts with the entries immediately previous; there are only four annals in the original hand in manuscript A for the previous eighty years, and this after a complete lack of content for 200 years.<sup>43</sup> Following Bede's chronology,<sup>44</sup> the *adventus* is situated in the (Roman) context of the reigns of

40 Barbara points this out in many places. For an overview of the historiography on this see John-Henry Clay, "Adventus, Warfare and the Britons in the Development of West Saxon Identity," in *Post-Roman Transitions: Christian and Barbarian identities in the Early Medieval West*, ed. Walter Pohl and Gerda Heydemann, *Cultural Encounters in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (Turnhout, 2013), pp. 169–213, at p. 172.

41 Barbara Yorke, "Anglo Saxon Origin Legends," in *Myth, Rulership, Church and Charters*, ed. Julia Barrow, Andrew Wareham, and Nicholas Brooks (Aldershot, 2008), pp. 15–30.

42 Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, pp. 3, 27

43 Bately's hand 8 (the scribe of manuscript F) and hand 12 later filled in some content for these empty annals.

44 Nicolas Howe argued that Bede chose 449 as an arbitrary date to focus the migration myth: *Migration and Mythmaking in Anglo-Saxon England* (New Haven, 1989), p. 57.

Martianus and Valentinus,<sup>45</sup> and it is emphasised that Hengest and Horsa were invited into Britannia by their king, Vortigern, in order to help the Britons.<sup>46</sup> The explicit reference to an invitation, translated directly from Bede<sup>47</sup> is an important legitimisation of the Anglo Saxons' right to be in Britannia in the first place, and a justification for the warfare that takes place thereafter alluded to in the same annal. Horsa and Hengest's landfall at Thanet, the same place St Augustine was to land, prefigures the later Christianisation that was to unite the Anglo Saxons.<sup>48</sup> After their very first battle and Horsa's death in the annal for 455, Hengest *feng to rice* along with his son Æsc.<sup>49</sup> By framing Hengest's succession with this formula, the original invasion is embedded in language which is used throughout the annals to indicate legitimate succession, and gives Horsa retroactive legitimacy. The annal is forward looking in that it prefigures Christianisation which will unify the Germanic peoples in Britannia, and it looks backward to the Roman Empire by placing these early rulers within the context of the Roman Empire, while solidly justifying their presence.

Successive tribes' arrivals are described in much the same way. They arrive (*Her cuom*) in Britannia (*Bretene* or *Bretenlond*), accompanying family members and the number of ships are listed (*7 his ü suna, mid üi scipum*), and the next clause describes a subsequent battle and victory over the locals (*7 þær ofslogon monige Wealas*), often giving a personal or place name. Conquering father-son and brother-pairs arriving in (often three) ships is a common feature in Indo-European foundation legends,<sup>50</sup> and would also evoke the story of Romulus and Remus, another link between the Anglo Saxons and Rome. The obsession with Germanic brother pairs in founding early kingdoms is what

45 Bede, *HE*, I.15.

46 *ASC* A 449: "Hengest 7 Horsa from Wyrtegeorne geleapade Bretta kyninge gesohton Bretene on þam stape þe is genemned Ypswinesfleot, ærest Brettum to fultume, ac hie eft on hie fuhton."—"Hengest and Horsa sought Britannia at the place that is named Ebbsfleet, invited by Vortigern, King of the British, first in order to help them, but later they fought against them."

47 Bede, *HE*, I.15: "Anglorum siue Saxonum gens, inuitata a rege praefato"—"the Anglian and Saxon gens, invited by the aforementioned king." The nominative participle construction (*inuitata a rege*) seems to have caused issues in the translation.

48 Patrick Sims-Williams, "The Settlement of England in Bede and the Chronicle," *ASE* 12 (1982), 1–41, at p. 29.

49 This is the standard formula used when a new king starts his reign and is used 42 times in the *A MS* to 900, usually with a genitive or dative specifying the kingdom (*to wesseaxna/miercena*/etc. *rice*, or *on Wesseaxum*) though sometimes, and only for non-West Saxons, the kingdom is implied by the direct juxtaposition of the previous king's death and the following king's accession (i.e. A 675 *Wulfhere forþferde 7 Eþelræd feng to rice*). Æsc succeeds to the kingdom again in annal 488 for an additional 24 years.

50 Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, p. 3.

Isabelle Réal refers to as a Germanic Christian ideal, which revolves around the “notion de fraternité spirituelle qui s’étend a l’ensemble des hommes”.<sup>51</sup> The kin groups’ legitimacy over their conquests is emphasised, while the parallel structure of different kin-groups makes them seem part of a coherent whole. Naming the site of landfall and subsequent victories legitimises Anglo-Saxon dominion over those areas. The early *adventus* annals are a nod to or perhaps a trigger which would evoke oral mythology about the ruling families in southern England; at the same time, they anticipate the genealogies which will follow in later 6th- to 9th-century annals.

Despite the genealogical information which was apparently available for ruling families north of the Thames, only the *adventus* of dynasties south of the Thames are included,<sup>52</sup> that is, those which had been subsumed into Wessex by the 9th-century compilation of these annals. Kent, Sussex, Wight and the Jutes of southern Hampshire all have *adventus* annals, and they are subordinated to Wessex shortly thereafter, either through bloodline, conquest, or erasure from the narrative. Stuf and Wihtgar, the brothers who arrived in annal 514, are revealed in 534 to be the nephews of Cerdic and Cynric, and they were given the Isle of Wight by Cerdic and Cynric, who had conquered it in 530. Stuf and Wihtgar are Jutes (or Goths?<sup>53</sup>) in Asser, but West Saxons in the annals. It is unlikely that Wight was conquered before Cædwalla’s reign (685–88),<sup>54</sup> and while these annals may be based on genuine oral tradition, they have also clearly been adapted to show the importance of the West Saxon war-leaders from their very arrival. The importance of Kent cannot be overlooked—Horsa and Hengest were the first, and their successor Æsc followed Hengest as king in annal 488,<sup>55</sup> years before Cerdic and Cynric even arrived. However, Æsc does not appear again after this, nor does King Ælle of the South Saxons; instead the next 50 years of annals focus on Cerdic and Cynric and their kin. Silencing these narratives leaves the impression that the West Saxons were responsible

51 Isabelle Réal, “Représentations et pratiques des relations fraternelles dans la société franque du haut Moyen Age (VIe–IXe siècle),” in *Frères et sœurs: les liens adelphiques dans l’Occident antique et médiéval*, ed. Sophie Cassagnes-Brouquet and Martine Yvernault (Turnhout, 2007), pp. 73–94, at p. 74.

52 Sims-Williams, “The Settlement of England in Bede and the Chronicle,” p. 27.

53 Simon Keynes and Michael Lapidge argue that Asser was probably confused about the difference between Goth and Jute, and that the purpose of this detail is to show that “Oslac was of ultimately Danish extraction.” *Alfred the Great: Asser’s Life of King Alfred and other Contemporary Sources* (Harmondsworth, 1983), p. 229, n. 8.

54 Yorke, “Anglo Saxon Origin Legends,” p. 19.

55 With the formula *feng to rice*: “Her Æsc feng to rice 7 was .xxiii. wintra Cantwara cyning.”—“In this year Æsc succeeded to the kingdom and was the king of the Kentish for 24 years.”

for conquering the Britons thereafter, and the implication is that the other founders were dependent on Wessex, giving the West Saxons ancestral claims to lands that were only to be conquered from the late 8th to the early 9th century.

The house of Wessex is celebrated especially from its arrival in Britannia in 495, and the line is followed from Cerdic and his son Cynric through to Alfred, highlighting Wessex's primacy in Britain over all of the lines which would lead the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. The annal for Cerdic and Cynric's *adventus* in 495 outwardly follows the same model as the other *adventus* annals but adds crucial details which highlight the West Saxons' pre-eminence.<sup>56</sup> They are the only arrivals to have titles before they land, and the title *ealdorman* which they are given is a product of 7th- and 8th-century state-building which certainly did not exist in the 5th century. While other founders fought battles soon after arriving, it is emphasised that Cerdic and Cynric fought against the British the very same day.<sup>57</sup> Their status is established from the start, as is their ability to wage warfare. Nearly every Germanic character in these early annals fights with the British (and wins), but the West Saxon kings are the first to not only wage war against the Britons, but also against other Anglo Saxons. The West Saxons first attacked the Kentish in 568, Sussex in 607, and Mercia in 628, before any other internecine Anglo-Saxon conflict is mentioned.<sup>58</sup> When other Anglo-Saxon kingdoms war against each other, the aggressor is usually not named, and instead a passive construction is used.<sup>59</sup> The emphasis on Wessex's conquests and elision of conquests by others produces a narrative in which Wessex appears particularly formidable from their *adventus* in Britannia to contemporary times.

From its early place both in the Germanic *adventus* and in Christianisation from Rome, Kent enjoys a special prominence in the annals, but West Saxon legitimacy over Kent is more than implied in the early annals. Precedence is set in the mid-6th century when Ceawlin and Cutha of Wessex attacked King

56 ASC A 495: "Her cuomon twegen aldormen on Bretene, Cerdic ⁊ Cynric his sunu, mid .v. scipum in þone stede þe is gecueden Cerdicesora ⁊ þy ilcan dæge gefuhtun wiþ Walum."—"In this year, two ealdormen, Cerdic and his son Cynric, arrived in Britannia with 5 ships at the place which is called Cerdicesora, and on the same day fought with the Britons."

57 Interestingly, these details are not repeated in the duplicated entry of 514 suggesting there was debate on how to frame Cerdic and Cynric's arrival in one of the compilation stages.

58 The first conflicts in which a kingdom other than Wessex is the named aggressor are the in the late 7th century, in 675 and 676.

59 For example, when Penda and the Welsh kill King Eadwine of Northumbria, this is recorded with a passive construction, and the instigator of the violence is not made clear. ASC A 633: "Her Edwine wæs ofslægen"—"In this year Eadwine was killed."

Æthelberht of Kent and apparently put him to flight in Kent (“hine in Cent gefliemdon”).<sup>60</sup> The phrasing of this annal is ambiguous, and while the Kentish were the aggressors at this time, with Ceawlin and Cutha defending Wessex and forcing Æthelberht to flee back to Kent, the Old English grammar leaves unclear whether the Kentish were put to flight *in* or *into* Kent. The annal therefore gives the impression that the West Saxons attacked and defeated the Kentish; because the annals also leave out Kentish overlordship over Wessex by the same King Æthelberht from 593, the annals give precedence for West Saxon control of Kent. Alfred’s grandfather Ecgberht may have been descended from the Kentish line,<sup>61</sup> but there was also a need to show Kent to be dependent upon Wessex as Canterbury became the focal point of Anglo-Saxon Christianity. There was clearly some debate as to how the conquest of Jutish Wight by West Saxons was to be reconciled in West Saxon propaganda, but the late 9th-century assumption that Kent is a part of Wessex was common in many of these annals.<sup>62</sup>

The kingdoms north of the Thames are brought into the annals either with their conversion to Christianity or through the legitimate succession of a king with the formula *feng to rice* and sometimes with a genealogy. Genealogies, which are never provided for the southern kingdoms<sup>63</sup> that were subsequently absorbed by Wessex, show all the Anglo-Saxon tribes to be descended from a single Germanic ancestor, Woden. This effectively depicts the kingdoms as one larger family, showing a given ruler’s descent from the original settlers or further back to Woden (or his father Frithuwulf). The first mention of a kingdom not occupied by Wessex in the 9th century is in the 547 annal for Ida, from whom the annals claim the royal line of Northumbria is descended.<sup>64</sup> Ida’s genealogy in this annal shows him to be descended from Woden and further carries his genealogy back to Geat; this first genealogy for Ida is the only one which extends beyond Woden besides Æthelwulf’s, which goes beyond Geat

60 ASC A 568: “Her Ceaulin 7 Cuþa gefuhton wiþ Eþelbryht 7 hine in Cent gefliemdon, 7 tuegen aldormen on Wibbandune ofslogon, Oslaf 7 Cnebban.”—“In this year Ceawling and Cutha fought with Æthelberht and put him to flight in(to?) Kent, and killed two ealdormen at *Wibbandun*, Oslaf and Cnebba.”

61 Though the annals do not promote this. Scharer, “The Writing of History at King Alfred’s Court,” pp. 184–85.

62 Simon Keynes, “The Control of Kent in the Ninth Century,” *EME* 2:2 (1993), 111–31.

63 Dorothy Whitelock, “The Old English Bede,” in her collection *From Bede to Alfred: Studies in Early Anglo-Saxon Literature and History* (London, 1980), viii:57–90, at p. 74.

64 The annal is derived from Bede. ASC A 547: “Her Ida feng to rice, þonon Norþanhymbra cynecyn onwoc”—“In this year Ida succeeded to the kingship, from him arises the Northumbrian royal line.” The formula *feng to rice* is used to show his legitimacy. Probably he was actually king of Bernicia. Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, pp. 74–75.

back to Adam. The East Saxons appear only after Gregory's mission of Christianisation had established itself in Kent in a conversion annal for 604, making both their conversion and entry into the narrative dependent on Kentish influence. Penda is the first Mercian king named, in 626, and his overlordship of Wessex is reduced to two mentions of having driven out Cenwalh in annals 645 and 658; it is not made clear who was ruling in Wessex during his absence. Military victories of other kingdoms or interesting facts such as King Ælle or Æthelberht's overlordship and Bedan status of *bretwalda* are not mentioned.<sup>65</sup> While the annals are careful to mention all of the kingdoms at one point or another, they generally do not describe other kingdoms' successes. The resulting narrative provides little more than a nod to other kingdoms, stories of which presumably would have been well known in the oral tradition these annals derive from, amidst Wessex's near-continuous victories. These nods are nonetheless important; no kingdom is completely elided, and potential readers/listeners would have found their own history as part of this collection.

While Cerdic and Cynric were not the first to arrive in Britannia, they were the most successful, as were their descendants, whose lineage is emphasised repeatedly as a legitimising factor.<sup>66</sup> The genealogies incorporated throughout the annals do not solely focus on Alfred's line, though they do promote Cerdic above all other Anglo-Saxon genealogies.<sup>67</sup> Wessex's supremacy over the other tribes is justified in part through their success in warfare against the Britons and other Anglo Saxons, while the genealogies additionally provide unifying ancestry tying the tribes together.

Themes within these early annals resonate with entries contemporary to Alfred, suggesting that they were compiled with these priorities in mind. In the 9th-century annals, Alfred's immediate family were also skilled war-leaders, and emphasis is placed on how the sibling-pair "Eþered cyning 7 Eþfred his broþur" fought together against the Vikings from 868 until Æthelred's death in 871, just as the initial pairs of the *adventus* had. Alfred's family efforts in general are detailed, including their involvement in Mercia against the Welsh in 853, cementing the West Saxons as a sort of older brother to the other kingdoms. The West Saxon conquests throughout the early annals prefigure King

65 The annal 827 for 829 lists all the *bretwalda* and appends Alfred's grandfather Ecgberht to that list.

66 David Dumville, "The West Saxon Genealogical Regnal List and the Chronology of Early Wessex," *Peritia* 4 (1985), 21–66, at p. 23.

67 Scharer, "The Writing of History at King Alfred's Court," p. 178: "There is only one dynasty, that of Cerdic, which provided a continuous line of kings from the primordial arrival and struggle against the Britons, culminating in Alfred. Obviously the purpose of this myth making was to heighten Alfred's stature."

Ecgerht's conquests in the annals for 825 (s.a. 823) and 829 (s.a. 827) and the annals name him *bretwalda*. Wessex's strength in battle is important in the late 9th century when, as the annals depict it, only Alfred was able to successfully defend his kingdom and achieve victory over the Vikings.

Military victory alone was not sufficient justification for Wessex's pre-eminence in Britannia, however. The annals which describe Christianisation of the Germanic tribes further legitimise the West Saxon rulers, corresponding to the Alfredian political idea, evident in Gregory's dialogues and in the Old English Boethius, that good and just kings share God's authority.<sup>68</sup> Wessex was not the first kingdom to convert to Christianity, but it was more thoroughly Christianised, and did not suffer any regression as was the case in other kingdoms. Moreover, Wessex had already grown to envelop both Kent and Wight, whose Christianisation is detailed in the annals, showing Wessex's capacity to absorb other kingdoms as well as its spiritual superiority.

### Christian History

The annals, while avoiding explicitly Christian interpretations or direct references to God's power on earth, nonetheless embed the history of Britannia within the history of Christianity. The format of annals, which uses the year of the incarnation, locates this history as a Christian text. While Bede had first used Anno Domini dates for his history,<sup>69</sup> the *Annales Regni Francorum* were the first secular history to use a Christian framework for the reckoning of time;<sup>70</sup> the *Chronicles* follows the model of the *Annales*, taking this a step further by beginning the history of England with the birth of Christ. While the first annal actually recounts the pre-Christian conquest of Britain by Caesar, the annal introduces this content in the context of annal (year) 1 with the retrospective "AER Cristes geflæscnesse .lx. wintra". The history therefore officially begins in the Christian world with the birth of Christ, with the birth of Britain when it enters the Roman world within a Christian frame. The genealogical prologue is also phrased in a similar manner, describing the advent of Cerdic and Cynric in 494 as "Py geara þe wæs agan fram cristes acennesse .cccc. wintra

68 *The Old English Boethius: An Edition of the Old English Versions of Boethius's De consolatioe philosophiae*, ed. Malcolm Godden and Susan Irvine, 2 vols (Oxford, 2009), vol. 1, verse 17.

69 Nicholas Brooks, *Bede and the English* (Jarrow, 1999), p. 3.

70 Rosamond McKitterick, "Constructing the Past in the Early Middle Ages: The Case of the Royal Frankish Annals," *TRHS* 6th ser., 7 (1997), 101–29, at pp. 110–13.

7 .xciiii. uuintra.”<sup>71</sup> Despite possible allusions to divine power, such as the comet which precedes the Viking attack on Lindisfarne,<sup>72</sup> the lack of any reference to God’s intervention makes this history a secular one but in its format and frame it is explicitly Christian. Christian history is woven into the annals in a similar way that elements of Roman history were, and Christian history in Britannia is embedded in this context adding further (Christian) legitimacy to the set of annals;<sup>73</sup> Christianisation becomes an important part of the identity of the Anglo Saxons.

Many of the early annals deal with important developments in early Christianity which were significant for the world, such as Herod’s persecution and death (annals 2 and 3), Christ’s baptism and death (annals 30 and 33), the deaths of important figures such as three of the four evangelists (annals 63 and 69), various popes and martyrs. This is perfectly in line with the main style of reporting in the temporal annals, which focus almost exclusively on the succession and deaths of kings and important battles. Other important events in Christian history are also included, such as the sacking of Jerusalem in 70 (under annal 71) and Christian missions to the Britons and Irish (annals 167 and 430). The annals select a very limited number of important early Christian figures, leaving out Mary mother of Jesus and many of the disciples.<sup>74</sup> The focus on leaders such as Christ, the evangelists, and even Herod as well as the sacking of Jerusalem prefigure the later annals’ focus on kings and conquest, while the transmission of Christianity to Britain and Ireland presages the Christianisation of the Germanic peoples which will fill the 7th-century annals.

Several annals make clear the place of a Christianised Britannia within the Roman Empire, naming a (fictional) Christian Briton as king: “To þam Lucius Bretene kyning sende stafas, będ þæt he wære cristen gedon, 7 he þurhteah

71 “In the year that was 494 years after Christ’s birth.” This follows Orosius’ convention of dating years *ab urbe condita*, which Bede expanded for the fall of Rome to “anno milesimo CLXIII suae conditionis, ex quo tempore Romani in Brittanica regnare cessarunt, post annos ferme quadringentos LXX ex qui Gaius Iulius Caesar eandem insulam adiit”—“1164 years since it was built, and Roman rule in Britain ended 470 years after Gaius Julius Caesar had come to the island.” Bede, *HE*, I.11.

72 The references to comets, eclipses, etc. show God’s presence in the world and may portend good or evil, but God’s agency is not explicitly named.

73 Continental chronicles do not make as much of an effort to record martyrdoms or the hallowing of bishops as the Common Stock.

74 Ben Snook, “Women in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle before AD 800,” in *Authority and Gender in Medieval and Renaissance Chronicles*, ed. Juliana Dresvina and Nicholas Sparks (Newcastle, 2012), pp. 32–60, at p. 43.

þæt he bēd.”<sup>75</sup> An important aspect of this conversion, though not explicit in the annals, is that the conversion was ultimately unsuccessful; when Augustine met with the Britons in 603, he was entirely unimpressed with their broken-down traditions and refusal to accept his and Rome’s authority.<sup>76</sup> As Gildas tells us, “Christ’s precepts were received by the inhabitants without enthusiasm.”<sup>77</sup> The subsequent degradation of British Christianity should be taken as implied in this annal, and there are no further references to it. The Christianisation of the Germanic tribes is the more important narrative for this work, and will be detailed below. It is significant that Germanic Christianisation came not from the Britons who were already present when the Anglo Saxons arrived, and also not from Æthelberht’s Merovingian queen Bertha;<sup>78</sup> their Christianisation came directly from Rome, providing spiritual primacy over the Britons.

Many of the annals which seem to describe temporal Roman events may actually have been included because of their relevance to the development of Christianity. Why, for example, would the annals include the accession of Tiberius, but hardly any emperors from the second century? Gildas relates that Tiberius, during the spread of Christianity was one of the first emperors to persecute Christians,<sup>79</sup> a fact which the annals do not mention, but which would have been known to the compilers from Orosius, who also relates Tiberius’ initial inclination to support Christ’s inclusion in the pantheon.<sup>80</sup> The accessions of Vespasian and his son Titus are placed in annals directly before and after the annal which details Titus’ sacking of Jerusalem and slaying of 11,000 Jews,<sup>81</sup> and Emperor Domitian’s “most cruel” Christian persecution was also known from Orosius.<sup>82</sup> These annals are therefore important not only in

75 ASC A 167: “Lucius, king of the Britons sent messengers to [Pope Eleutherius], asking to be made Christian, and he [Eleutherius] carried out what was requested.” For the background to this myth, see Alan Smith, “Lucius of Britain: Alleged King and Church Founder,” *Folklore* 90 (1979), 29–36. This annal’s content derives from Bede, *HE*, 1.4; Alfred’s circle or a 9th-century audience may not have been able to know that there was no Lucius.

76 Bede, *HE*, 11.2.

77 Gildas, *Ruin of Britain*, ed. Winterbottom, Ch. 9: “licet ab incolis tepide suscepta sunt.”

78 Snook, “Women in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle before AD 800,” pp. 43–44.

79 Gildas, *Ruin of Britain*, ed. Winterbottom, Ch. 8.

80 Orosius, *Historiarum Adversum Paganos Libri VII*, ed. C. Zangemeister (Leipzig, 1889), VII.4 (Hereafter Orosius, *Libri VII*).

81 This is likely a miscopying from Orosius, who cites Josephus’ number of eleven hundred thousand (“undecies centena milia”), which was transcribed by the annalist as .cxi þusen-da. Orosius, *Libri VII*, VII.9, ASC A 71.

82 Orosius, *Libri VII*, VII.10: “... Christi Ecclesiam ... crudelissimae persecutionis edictis conuellerere auderet” — “He dared to assault the Christian Church with edicts of most cruel persecution.” ASC A 83

documenting the history of the emperors, but in that they chronicle the difficulties of the Abrahamic peoples before Christianity arrived in England via Gregory the Great.

The tone of the annals which describe Christian events changes after the Germanic *adventus*, promoting the ideas around a common Christian Germanic identity propagated in Bede. While the Christianisation of the Britons initiated by Lucius was done almost impersonally (i.e., Lucius requested Christianisation, the Eleutherius “carried it out”), the annalists provide more details regarding Germanic Christianisation. In the annal for 596,<sup>83</sup> “Pope Gregory sent Augustine and many monks to Britannia, who preached the word of God to the English people.”<sup>84</sup> The erased annal for 604 relates that Essex was baptised under King Sæberht, that King Edwin was baptised with his people (Northumbria) in 627, that Eorpwald (East Anglia) was baptised in 632, that Middlesex was Christianised under Ealdorman Peada in 653, that Mercia became Christian when Penda died in 655, and that the people of Wight were first baptised in 661 when King Wulfhere of Mercia conquered Wight. Each kingdom has a single annal marking their conversion, except for Wessex. Bishop Birinus, the first bishop of Dorchester, brought baptism to Wessex in annal 634, baptised King Cynegils in 635 (with Oswald of Northumbria as his godfather), further baptised Cwichelm in 636, and also baptised Cynegils’ son Cuthred in 639, becoming his godfather. The next king to rule Wessex was Cenwalh, who built the first church in Winchester in 643 before being baptised three years later. The special attention devoted to Wessex here is obvious: four members of the West Saxon elite, all Cerdicings, were baptised, two of whom also receive mention in the genealogical preface where Cynegils is explicitly cited as the first king of Wessex to receive baptism.<sup>85</sup>

While these annals highlight Wessex above the other kingdoms, at the same time they focus on unity. It is not insignificant that the annalist chose to report that Gregory sent Augustine not to Æthelberht, king of Kent, or to the Kentish people, but to the English people. While this is an almost direct translation

83 Erroneously corrected by hand 8 to 595.

84 ASC A 596: “Her Gregorius papa sende to Brytene Augustinum mid wel manegum muncum þa Godes word Engla ðeoda godspelledon.”

85 ASC A Prefatory material: “Pa feng Cynegils Ceolwulfes broþur sunu to rice 7 ricsode .xxx. wintra, 7 he onfeng ærest fulwihte Wesseaxna cyninga, 7 þa feng Cenwalh to 7 heold .xxx. wintra, 7 se Cenwalh wæs Cynegilses sunu”—“Then Cynegils, Ceolwulf’s son’s brother succeeded to the kingdom and ruled for 31 years, and he received baptism first among the West Saxon kings, and then Cenwalh succeeded and held [the throne] for 31 years, and this Cenwalh was Cynegils’ son.” They are also explicitly linked to Cerdic in the previous line; “hiera cyn geþ to Cerdice”—“their line goes to Cerdic.”

from Bede,<sup>86</sup> the annalists otherwise make a point of stating precisely who was baptised, and these names were available in Bede and was presumably deliberately left out. The reference to Augustine's landing at Thanet refers back to Horsa and Hengest's arrival there, referring to the "divinely ordained purpose of migration."<sup>87</sup> While Wessex ruled Kent in the 9th century when these annals were compiled, Kent was a powerful kingdom in the late 6th century; the annal does not attempt to subsume Kent into Wessex but rather universalises the first act of Christianisation as something "English." While the role of the kingdom of Kent in Christianisation of the English is therefore elided, the nature of the initial Christianisation thereby becomes more inclusive. The death of Pope Gregory the Great is related in similarly inclusive terms: "Gregory died ten years after he had sent *us* baptism."<sup>88</sup> The use of the first person plural pronoun "us" refers to the Christianisation of all the English. This is the beginning of the Christianisation of the *gens Anglorum*, not just one group of them. While Wessex may be accorded a special place in their ranks, their Christian identity unifies the Anglo Saxons. The idea of a Christian *gens* is obviously derived from Bede's Christian history,<sup>89</sup> and was to prove a useful concept for the Alfredian construction of an inclusive Anglo-Saxon identity.

Despite the reliance on Bede for these annals, Christianity is first mentioned as reaching the "English" through Gregory's mission to Kent, and not through Northumbria. Northumbrian conversion is not left out, but textually it follows southern conversion, and the omission of any mention of Adomnan or the Irish missions is surely not an accident; rather, Northumbrian Christianisation is depicted as dependent upon Christianisation of Kent and under the primacy of Canterbury. The annal for 601 pre-emptively narrates Bishop Paulinus' later conversion of Edwin from 625, locating the conversion following the investiture of Augustine as Archbishop of Canterbury and Gregory's sending of further teachers to Britain.<sup>90</sup> Paulinus and Edwin's conversion therefore seem

86 Bede, *HE*, 1.23: "misit seruum Dei Augustinum et alios plures cum eo monachos timentes Dominum praedicare uerbum Dei genti Anglorum"—"[Gregory] sent Augustine, the servant of God, and many other monks with him, fearing God, to preach the word of God to the English people." Only "fearing God" has been left out in the OE translation.

87 Howe, *Migration and Mythmaking in Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 64.

88 My italics. *ASC* A 606: "Her forþferde Gregorius ymb .x. gear þæs þe he us fulwiht sende."

89 Patrick Wormald, "Bede, the Bretwaldas and the Origins of the Gens Anglorum," in *Ideal and Reality in Frankish and Anglo-Saxon Society: Studies Presented to J.M. Wallace-Hadrill*, ed. Patrick Wormald, Donald Bullough, and Roger Collins (Oxford, 1983), pp. 99–129.

90 *ASC* A 601: "Her sende Gregorius papa Agustino ærcebiscepe pallium in Bretene, 7 wel monige godcunde lareowas him to fultome; 7 Paulinus biscepe gehwerfde Edwine Norþhymbra cyning to fulwihte."—"In this year, Pope Gregory sent Archbishop Augustine

subordinate to the authority of Canterbury. As it is ambiguous whence Paulinus came or derived his authority, it could even be misunderstood that Paulinus was one of the teachers sent by Gregory. The annal for 625, the year Edwin was actually baptised according to Bede,<sup>91</sup> further emphasises that Paulinus was raised as bishop of Northumbria by Archbishop Justus of Canterbury, making his authority directly dependent on Canterbury. Justus probably reached England in 601 and was one of the group sent by Pope Gregory in that annal. This is a useful tactic for Wessex; while Wessex was not converted until 634, Kent and therefore Canterbury were part of Wessex when the annals were being compiled, and the annals themselves work to legitimise this conquest. Northumbrian Christianity is therefore dependent upon Wessex for its authority. Indeed, upon the death of King Edwin, Paulinus “returned” (*hurf eft*) to Canterbury to become bishop of Rochester. Bishop Wilfrid’s expulsion by the Northumbrian king in 678 is also included, and without additional context, it seems as though Northumbria was going through difficulty in maintaining sanctioned Christianity. The implications throughout are both that Christianity in Northumbria was dependent on Canterbury from the beginning, which is patently incorrect, and also that the conversion of Northumbria was not as successful as in the south.

These factors together promote the authority of the See of Canterbury, while the annals otherwise seek to minimise ethnic distinction in terms of religiosity. The Christianisation of all groups is considered, and while Anglian or Northumbrian relevance in Christianisation is minimised in favour of West Saxon, all those of Germanic descent in Britannia are unified by their Christianity. Even in Bede there are distinctions between the different ethnic groups. According to Hines, “Saxons usually turn up for military victories, whereas the Angles are often mentioned in matters of religion.”<sup>92</sup> The primacy of the Saxons in military matters is not minimised, but is shown to be part of the House of Cerdic’s better abilities; their overlordship over the group is thus justified. This applies to the English church, which was established quickly and thoroughly across Britannia, but most especially in Wessex. All would become Christian, but conversion happened first, and most completely, in the south.

While the importance of the Synod of Whitby in 664 and triumph of Roman Christianity over the Britons loomed large in Bede, the annals seem unaware of or uninterested in the Easter controversy, and instead mention the Council of

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in Britain the pallium, and also very many educated teachers to support him; and Bishop Paulinus brought Edwin, King of the Northumbrians to baptism.”

91 Bede, *HE*, II.14.

92 Pohl, “Ethnic Names and Identities in the British Isles,” p. 19.

Hatfield, when Archbishop Theodore of Canterbury sought “Cristes gelaefan geryhtan.”<sup>93</sup> The “correction” refers to the heresy of monothelitism, and may be another jab at the British Church, which did not follow the “right” belief in Christ. This may also be the context for a possible annal on Pelagius’ heresy; annal 430 narrates Palladius’ Christianisation of the Irish under Pope Celestine’s orders. The annal looks like an almost direct translation from the Latin Chronicle of Prosper of Aquitaine: Prosper’s *Chronicle* associates Palladius with the combatting of the Pelagian heresy in Britain, which may further explain why this annal was included.<sup>94</sup> In either case, Anglo-Saxon Christianity as propagated by Gregory the Great is superior to the missions which were sent to the Irish and British before, and the Archbishop of Canterbury’s primacy is asserted.

The annals follow Bede in asserting a general identity of English Christians amongst the denizens of Britannia; Gregory sent baptism to “Engla þeode,” foreshadowing *Angelcynn*. However, while Bede preferred Roman Christianity to Celtic, the annals carefully adjust this preference to show the primacy of Canterbury and the Christianity adopted in Kent and Wessex. The annals’ emphasis on Rome, both as the centre of Empire and of later Christianisation, also links the West Saxons to Rome, both indirectly, through their early Christianisation, and directly, through Alfred and his father’s travels to Rome and Alfred’s ambiguous consecration by the pope in 853.<sup>95</sup> The *gens Anglorum* may have a common Christian identity, but the annals emphasise that it was Wessex that was most Christian first, and could be expected to safeguard Christianity in Britannia.

93 ASC A 680: He wanted “to correct the belief in Christ.”

94 Dáibhí Ó Cróinín, “Who was Palladius, ‘First Bishop of the Irish’?,” *Peritia* 14 (2000), 205–37, at pp. 207–08, citing Prosper of Aquitaine, *Epitoma Chronicon* in *Prosperi Tironis epitoma chronicon*, ed. Theodor Mommsen, MGH Auctores Antiquissimi 9:1 (Berlin, 1892), p. 473. According to Prosper, “Ad Scottos in Christum credentes ordinatus a Papa Caelestinus Palladius primus episcopus mittitur.” The annal is a precise translation with difference only in word order (which can be explained by the requirements of OE grammar): ASC A 430 “Her Paladius se biscep was onsended to Scottum þæt he hiera geleafan trymede from Celestino þam papan.”—“In this year Bishop Palladius was sent to the Irish by Pope Celestine in order to establish their faith.” The word *primus* is left out—this is probably not an accident, as attention is paid throughout that the first (*ærest*) event of significance occurs in Wessex throughout the Common Stock.

95 ASC A 853: “he hine to cynninge gehalgode 7 hiene him to biscepsuna nam”—“[Pope Leo IV] hallowed [Alfred] as king and took him as his spiritual son [godson?].” See Janet Nelson, “The Problem of King Alfred’s Royal Anointing,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 18 (1967), 145–63; Michael Lapidge, “Some Latin Poems as Evidence for the Reign of Athelstan,” *ASE* 9 (1980), 61–89, at pp. 79–80.

While the Anglo Saxons in general deserve their primacy over the Britons due to their Christianity, the Cerdicings in particular proved their piety in their many journeys to Rome and direct descent from Noah's son Scef. In this same way, the Anglo-Saxon primacy over the Vikings is also assured through the Christian heritage; Alfred's ability to finally neutralise the main Viking threat to Wessex in 878 required military victory but was assured only by baptising Guthrum and his followers at Wedmore.<sup>96</sup>

### Creation of an English Identity

The early annals do not tell a 'story', terse or otherwise, as we expect from later *Chronicle* entries, and while the Germanic *adventus* annals come closest to presenting a narrative, even these would not make for interesting reading in a single sitting. However, all the annals contribute to the themes of legitimisation of the Anglo Saxons over the Britons and Vikings, and the primacy of the House of Wessex over the Anglo Saxons. Additionally, they prefigure and strengthen the "interesting" annals which depict the rise of Ecgberht, Æthelwulf, and finally Alfred and his wars against the Vikings. While this group identity was not immediately useful, by the 890s King Alfred had either annexed Mercia or had become the senior partner, with Ealdorman Æthelweard of Mercia signing charters under Alfred and marrying his eldest daughter. By the 910s at the latest, the latest possible date for the writing of MS A, King Edward had embarked upon his wars of conquest in East Anglia, and the *Chronicle* entries for his reign depict this as a liberation of Anglo Saxons from Viking terror. Regardless of whose reign the Common Stock was compiled for, the expansion of Wessex into other Anglo-Saxon kingdoms was already a reality. For the narrative of liberation and subsequent rule by Wessex to be successful, a general Anglo-Saxon identity would help ease such conquest.

This assimilation was also open to accepting Vikings under West Saxon overlordship. When Guthrum accepted baptism as Æthelstan, he in effect became a sub-king under Alfred, just as Alfred was directly subordinate to the Roman pope after his baptism in Rome in 853. The implication that Scandinavian traders had accepted Alfred as king is also present within the Old English Orosius translation, in which one of them addresses Alfred as *hlaforð*.<sup>97</sup> The inclusion of Scef/Woden in the genealogies as well as references to

96 ASC A 878.

97 *Old English Orosius*, ed. Bately, XIII.29: "Ohtere sæde his hlaforde, Ælfrede cyninge ..."—"Ohtere said to his lord, King Alfred ..."

Geatish/Scandinavian relatives imply a shared heritage between the Angelcynn and Scandinavian brethren. Like the Britons, who were elided from the history of Britannia after their conquest by the Germanic groups, Vikings were given the option of adopting Anglo-Saxon identity.

The place of Alfred at the pinnacle of this group is of course mostly to be found in the annals from his reign, but the foreshadowing of the earlier Common Stock annals cannot be coincidence. Alfred and his brother King Æthelred fight together, just as the founding brothers of each tribe did in the 5th century, just as Romulus and Remus did. Alfred's anointing in Rome and the alms he sends there in the 880s reflect the gift of Christianisation which was given directly from Rome and firmly ground him as a Christian king following the Roman model. Alfred's bravery in battle and the loyalty of his retinue is emphasised just as the military superiority of the Germanic tribes and especially the Cerdicings was. He secured the submission of each shire independently in 878 before defeating Guthrum, and then legitimately secured overlordship of part of Mercia much as the tribes conquered the Britons. The legitimisation of Alfred here is done along very similar lines to the legitimisation of his supposed ancestors and that of Britain as a part of the Roman and Christian world. And importantly, this legitimation was as useful to Alfred, who had unexpectedly become king only after the death of all his brothers, as it would to his son Edward, who faced a rebellion from a cousin which could not have been entirely unexpected.<sup>98</sup>

While the early Common Stock annals may not have functioned as a narrative which could be read (aloud?)<sup>99</sup> in the same way as later annals, particularly those for 871–78 or 892–96, they are important as pieces of a larger puzzle. Many of these annals are brief reminders of a larger story which could be found in Bede or Orosius,<sup>100</sup> or perhaps in oral tradition. They function rather as reminders of Britannia's place in the world and the development of the *Angelcynn*, and could even have been intended as triggers which would remind a reader of the larger history to which they belong.

98 Alfred's will (S 1507) seems to deliberately dispossess Æthelwold. Ryan Lavelle, "The Politics of Rebellion: the Ætheling Æthelwold and West Saxon Royal Succession, 899–902," in *Challenging the Boundaries of Medieval History: the Legacy of Timothy Reuter*, ed. Patricia Skinner (Turnhout, 2009), pp. 51–80, at 57–60.

99 Mark Amodio, *Writing the Oral Tradition: Oral Poetics and Literate Culture in Medieval England* (Indiana, 2004), p. 5.

100 The full stories could have been made available via the OE translations of these texts, which were not necessarily being produced at Alfred's court but were certainly available at Edward's.

This brings us to their conception and compilation. Clearly these annals were deliberately selected and constructed to present a unified view of the past. Nor does this perspective appear foreign to the works of Alfred's courtly circle; it unfolds in annal form. It shows the development of Britannia from an insignificant part of the Roman Empire to a nation-state of its own, which in the face of the annals of the 880s depicting the fall of the Carolingian empire, could even be construed as presenting England as a possible future contender to lead the enlightened western world. It intermingles the story of the Roman Empire with an unbroken history which connects the *Angelcynn* to Christianity, emphasising their unity in their Christian belief. Finally, it cements the position of the English over the British and the primacy of Wessex among all the English. These points taken together are a vigorous inscription of Alfred's authority as ruler of an expanding kingdom or empire, which included, in the 890s, Wessex, Wight, Sussex, Kent, Cornwall, London and overlordship over parts of Mercia. Alfred's descendants can be seen to further expand their interests into East Anglia and eventually Northumbria; the seeds for this ambition are planted already in these early annals, which attempt to create a unified English and Christian identity, and then justify the superiority of the West Saxons, giving precedence for West Saxon rule by attributing the first West Saxon overlordship of all Britannia to Alfred's grandfather Ecgberht in the 827 annal for 829. The Common Stock annals work to emphasise and strengthen the message of West Saxon supremacy and Alfredian legitimacy found so clearly in the late 9th-century annals; they are further evidence of ongoing compilation in order to meet the expanding goals of Alfred and his son Edward in their creation of an English identity.

### Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Frank Battaglia, Matt Bennett, Alice Jorgensen, Ryan Lavelle and Ingrid Lyberg for their helpful comments, and Barbara Yorke for her enormous influence on my understanding of the Anglo-Saxon world.



**PART 2**

*Rulers and Their Territories*





## Oswald and the Strong Man Armed

*Julia Barrow*

Barbara Yorke has made major contributions to our understanding of early Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, including Northumbria, and this paper, which aims to shed some new light on Bede's handling of one of the key battles in early Northumbrian history, is presented to her as a small thank-offering for her work in this field and for her many kindnesses to fellow-scholars.<sup>1</sup> Most recently Barbara Yorke has turned her attention to Aldfrith of Northumbria and his associations with Iona and Abbot Adomnán before the latter helped him to become king of Northumbria following the death of his half-brother Ecgrith in 685.<sup>2</sup> This paper goes a little further back in time to look at Aldfrith's uncle Oswald, another Northumbrian ruler with strong Ionan connections, and in particular at Bede's account of how Oswald defeated Caedwalla, king of the Britons, near Hexham in 634. As has long been noted by commentators, Bede does not provide any practical military information about the battle but instead concentrates on its spiritual meanings, and this paper will attempt to explore some of these further.<sup>3</sup> The main aim is to point out a hitherto unnoticed set of allusions to passages in Luke Ch. 11 and Matthew Ch. 12 in the two opening chapters of Book III of Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*: paying attention to these allows us to see how Bede shaped his material,<sup>4</sup> and in particular helps to deepen discussion of three debates about Bede's *HE*, first of all his presentation of the kingdom of Northumbria as united polity, secondly whether or not he had read Adomnán's *Life of St Columba* and thirdly why he describes Oswald

1 See esp. Barbara Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo-Saxon England* (London, 1990), pp. 72–99, and *The Conversion of Britain 600–800* (Harlow, 2006), passim, and items in following note.

2 Barbara Yorke, *Rex Doctissimus: Bede and King Aldfrith of Northumbria*, Jarrow Lecture, 2009 (Jarrow, 2009); “Adomnán at the Court of King Aldfrith,” in *Adomnán of Iona: Theologian, Lawmaker, Peacemaker*, ed. Jonathan Wooding and Rodney Aist (Dublin, 2010), pp. 36–50.

3 See, for example, Clare Stancliffe, “Oswald, ‘Most Holy and Most Victorious King of the Northumbrians,’” in *Oswald: Northumbrian King to European Saint*, ed. Clare Stancliffe and Eric Cambridge (Stamford, 1995), pp. 44–45; N.J. Higham, *The Convert Kings: Power and Religious Affiliation in Early Anglo-Saxon England* (Manchester, 1997), pp. 33–83, at pp. 206–07; N.J. Higham, *Ecgrith, King of the Northumbrians, High King of Britain* (Donington, 2015), p. 67.

4 For discussion of some of the issues leading Bede to shape his material as he did, see Stancliffe, “Oswald, ‘most holy and most victorious king of the Northumbrians.’”

as raising “the sign of the cross” at Heavenfield next to the Roman Wall before setting out to fight his adversary.<sup>5</sup> This paper looks at the events following Edwin’s death and Bede’s use of biblical exegesis to provide a framework for his account of these, and then at Oswald’s activities at Heavenfield and how Adomnán and Bede diverged in their interpretations of them.

The origins of the battle between Oswald and Caedwalla lay in the latter’s victory over Edwin of Northumbria at the battle of Hatfield Chase in 633, a significant defeat for the Northumbrian Angles in which Edwin and one of his sons, Osfrith, were killed.<sup>6</sup> Caedwalla was given support on this occasion by Penda, a member of the Mercian royal family who from this point became king of the Mercians,<sup>7</sup> but it is likely that this alliance was brief, as Penda allowed another of Edwin’s sons, Eadfrith, to take refuge with him.<sup>8</sup> The Caedwalla who killed Edwin and was in turn killed by Oswald was identified in the early 9th-century *Historia Brittonum* as Cadwallon son of Cadfan, king of Gwynedd;<sup>9</sup> this identification has recently been questioned by Alex Woolf, who suggested that he is more likely to have been a king of a British kingdom in northern England, possibly Elmet, but Woolf’s interpretation has met with mixed responses.<sup>10</sup> The earliest sources to mention Caedwalla, Adomnán’s *Life of Columba*, written in the 690s, followed in 731 by Bede’s *HE*, refer to him only as “king of the

5 Recourse is made in this article at different points to three editions of Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History* (in general cited below as *HE* with book and chapter number): *Venerabilis Baedae Opera Historica*, ed. Charles Plummer, 2 vols (Oxford, 1896); Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica in Bede’s Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. Bertram Colgrave and R.A.B. Mynors (Oxford, 1969); Bède le Vénérable, *Histoire ecclésiastique du peuple anglais*, ed. André Crépin, Michael Lapidge, Pierre Monat and Philippe Robin, 3 vols, Sources chrétiennes 489–91 (Paris, 2005); for Adomnán see *Adomnan’s Life of Columba*, ed. and trans. Alan Orr Anderson and Marjorie Ogilvie Anderson, rev. by Marjorie Ogilvie Anderson (Oxford, 1991) and Adomnán of Iona, *Life of St Columba*, trans. Richard Sharpe (Harmondsworth, 1995).

6 *HE* 11.20.

7 For discussion of Penda see Nicholas Brooks, “The Formation of the Mercian Kingdom,” in *The Origins of Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms*, ed. Steven Bassett (Leicester, 1989), pp. 158–70, esp. 164–70; repr. in *Anglo-Saxon Myths: State and Church 400–1066* (London, 2000), pp. 61–77, at pp. 69–77.

8 *HE* 11.20; see also discussion by Alex Woolf, “Caedualla Rex Brettonum and the Passing of the Old North,” *Northern History* 41 (2004), 5–24 at pp. 7–8.

9 Nennius, *British History and the Welsh Annals*, ed. and trans. John Morris (Chichester, 1980), pp. 78–79.

10 Woolf, “Caedualla Rex Brettonum,” followed by Yorke, *Conversion of Britain*, p. 63 and James E. Fraser, *From Caledonia to Pictland: Scotland to 795* (Edinburgh, 2009), pp. 166–67, but not by T.M. Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons 350–1064* (Oxford, 2013), p. 358, and specifically rejected by John T. Koch, *Cunedda, Cynan, Cadwallon, Cynddylan: Four Welsh Poems and Britain, 383–655* (Aberystwyth, 2013), pp. 163–85.

Britons.”<sup>11</sup> In Bede’s account, the area especially ravaged by Caedwalla 633–34 seems to have been the territory around Cambodunum (perhaps modern Leeds)<sup>12</sup> since in *HE* 11.14 it is stated that the heathen who killed Edwin burned down the royal vill and church there; it is worth noting that the stone altar from the church was removed to the monastery of the priest-abbot Thrythwulf in the forest of Elmet. Given the site of Oswald’s eve-of-battle camp at Heavenfield, just on the northern side of the Roman Wall and thus protected against attacks from the south, and within about four miles of Dere Street (the A68), it seems likely that the enemy they faced was advancing from the south, perhaps along Dere Street.<sup>13</sup> Caedwalla’s most recently recorded activity before meeting Oswald was his killing of Eanfrith, presumably somewhere in Bernicia, but since he appears to have remained on the move in Northumbria (*HE* 11.20: “for a long time raged through all their land”) we cannot be sure of his itinerary.

On Edwin’s death, Caedwalla was not powerful enough to take over the areas Edwin had ruled or to prevent the succession of Anglian rulers in Northumbria; equally, the Northumbrian Angles could not agree on a single successor. Edwin’s nephew Osric was established as king in his uncle’s heartland, Deira, while the Bernicians chose Eanfrith, one of the sons of Æthelfrith, the Bernician dynast who had been king of Northumbria 604–16 (king in Bernicia 592–616) and who had been Edwin’s great enemy.<sup>14</sup> Both Osric and Eanfrith apostasised, abandoning their Christian profession for paganism: “Qui uterque rex, ut terreni regni infulus sortitus est, sacramenta regni caelestis, quibus initiatus erat, anathematizando prodidit, ac se priscis idolatriae sordidibus polluumdum perdendumque restituit.”<sup>15</sup> Bede probably saw the apostasy as

11 For the dating of the *Life of St Columba* see Adomnán, *Life of St Columba*, ed. Sharpe, p. 55.

12 A.L.F. Rivet and Colin Smith, *The Place-Names of Roman Britain* (London, 1979), p. 293.

13 Heavenfield is just to the north of the Roman Wall, lying a mile and a half east of Chollerford, a strategic ford over the North Tyne, and about 4 miles west of where Dere Street crosses the wall. Colgrave and Mynors’ translation (p. 217), places Heavenfield south of the Roman Wall: “This place, on its north side, is close to the wall,” but Bede’s “Est autem locus iuxta murum illum ad aquilonem” should be “Now this place is next to the wall to the north.” On the site see Eric Cambridge, “Archaeology and the Cult of St Oswald in pre-Conquest Northumbria,” in *Oswald: Northumbrian King to European Saint*, ed. Stancliffe and Cambridge, pp. 140, 163; Alison Binns, “Pre-Reformation Dedications to St Oswald in England and Scotland: A Gazetteer,” in Stancliffe and Cambridge, p. 255. For a picture of the site see N.J. Higham, *The Kingdom of Northumbria AD 350–1100* (Stroud, 1993), p. 125.

14 Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 212 (*HE* 111.1 on Osric and Eadfrith); see Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 116, 176–80 (*HE* 1.34 and 11.12 on Æthelfrith).

15 *HE* 111.1: “But no sooner had these two kings gained the sceptres of their earthly kingdom than they abjured and betrayed the mysteries of the heavenly kingdom to which they had been admitted and reverted to the filth of their former idolatry, thereby to be polluted and destroyed” (Colgrave and Mynors’ translation, p. 213).

symbolically linked to the division of the kingdom, as we will see. He presents the establishment of the two kings as the division of what had been a single people and kingdom, for, down to his statement in *HE* 111.1, that the people (gens) of the Northumbrians consisted of the *regnum Deirorum* and the *regnum Berniciorum*, he always depicts the Northumbrians as unified. This is the case when he introduces Æthelfrith in *HE* 1.34 (“regno Nordanhymbrorum”),<sup>16</sup> when he describes Edwin’s powers in *HE* 11.9 (“gens Nordanhymbrorum, hoc est ea natio Anglorum, quae ad Aquilonalem Humbre fluminis plagam habitabat”)<sup>17</sup> and indeed also in his mention of Ida in his chronological summary in *HE* v.24, under the year 547 (“Ida regnare coepit, a quo regalis Nordanhymbrorum prosapia originem tenet ...”).<sup>18</sup> Historians have for nearly a century noted that Bede’s unified presentation of the Northumbrians cannot be accepted as it stands,<sup>19</sup> and have also explored how far Bede himself was responsible for originating or at any rate popularising the term “Northumbrians,”<sup>20</sup> but there is in addition a religious significance to Bede’s reluctance to name the Deirans and the Bernicians earlier than in *HE* 111.1. The admission that the people of the Northumbrians had anciently been divided into two provinces (“nam in has duas provincias gens Nordanhymbrorum antiquitus divisa erat”) allowed Bede to compare Northumbria with the kingdom divided against itself that cannot stand in Luke 11:17, Matthew 12:25 and Mark 3:24.

16 Colgrave and Mynors, p. 116 (1.34): “the kingdom of Northumbria,” though more literally “the kingdom of the Northumbrians.”

17 Colgrave and Mynors, p. 162 (11.9): “the Northumbrian race, that is the English race which dealt north of the river Humber.”

18 Colgrave and Mynors, p. 562 (v.24: “Ida began to reign, from whom the Northumbrian royal family trace their origin”).

19 J.N.L. Myres, “The Teutonic Settlement of Northern England,” *History* 20 (1935), 250–62; Peter Hunter Blair, “The Boundary between Bernicia and Deira,” *Archaeologia Aeliana*, 4th ser., 27 (1949), 46–59, esp. p. 51, sees the division as deriving from separate groups of English settlers; J.M. Wallace Hadrill, *Bede’s Ecclesiastical History of the English People: A Historical Commentary* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 87, 97. However, Ian Wood has recently argued for a unified northern polity across the area from the Roman Wall to Yorkshire in the sub-Roman period that subsequently was divided into the tribal groups of the Bernicians and the Deirans, headed by descendants of continental settlers brought in by the Romans as military forces: “The Roman Origins of the Northumbrian Kingdom,” in *Italy and Early Medieval Europe*, ed. Ross Balzaretti, Julia Barrow and Patricia Skinner (Oxford, 2018), pp. 39–49.

20 Myres, “The Teutonic Settlement”; Peter Hunter Blair, “The Northumbrians and their Southern Frontier,” *Archaeologia Aeliana*, 4th ser., 26 (1948), 98–126, at p. 104; T.M. Charles-Edwards, “Bede, the Irish and the Britons,” *Celtica* 15 (1983), 42–52, esp. pp. 49–50; see also Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, p. 74.

In Luke and Matthew's gospels, Christ's statement "A kingdom divided against itself shall not stand" comes immediately after he had been presented with a dilemma, on the one hand being pestered for healing cures but on the other facing criticism for carrying these out on the Sabbath. Some of his audience was hungry to see signs of God's presence while others were accusing him of casting out devils in the name of Beelzebub rather than in the name of God.<sup>21</sup> In response to this latter group Christ stated that Satan cannot be divided against himself but is a strong man armed who takes over a house, as a metaphor for demons taking possession of a human being.<sup>22</sup> All of this supplied Bede with imagery. In his portrayal, the apostate kings, Osric and Eanfrith, are evidently not types of Satan (their division prevents this) but creatures taken over by him. In his commentary on Luke 11:17 Bede had compared the undivided kingdom to the Trinity standing up against the heresy of the Arians, who thought the Son was lesser than the Father and the Spirit was lesser than the Son; presumably Osric and Eanfrith, kings of a divided kingdom, were comparable to heretics.<sup>23</sup> Their failure to maintain their Christian faith and their inability to join together had left Northumbria vulnerable to attack by a Satanic figure, Caedwalla, who, although "he had the name and profession of a Christian," was a barbarian in outlook and behaviour who did not spare women or children and who tortured and murdered his victims.<sup>24</sup> Caedwalla, moreover, wandered through the Northumbrian provinces for a long time (*HE* 11.20), resembling Satan in his wanderings as depicted in Job 2:2, in 1 Peter 5:8 and especially in Luke 11:24 where the exorcised devil is said to wander through dry places, which Bede in his commentary on Luke explains as schismatics and bad Catholics.<sup>25</sup> An even more explicit connection between Caedwalla and

21 In his commentary on Luke, Bede argued for the reading Beelzebub against Beelzebul (Luke 11: 18): see Bede, *Opera exegetica*, 3; *In Lucae evangelium expositio; in Marci evangelium expositio*, ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 120 (Turnhout, 1960), p. 232 (IV.xi.15).

22 For the "strong man armed" see Luke 11:21, and for Bede's comment on the phrase (he defined "the strong man armed" as the devil) see *In Lucae evangelium expositio*, p. 234 (IV.xi.21).

23 Bede, *In Lucae evangelium expositio*, p. 232 (IV.xi.17; for Bede's discussion of the passage as a whole see pp. 232–34).

24 *HE* 11.20. Bede did not portray Caedwalla "by implication, as a pagan" (pace Fred Orton and Ian Wood with Clare A. Lees, *Fragments of History: Rethinking the Ruthwell and Bewcastle Monuments* (Manchester, 2007), p. 171); he was accusing Caedwalla of something much worse. For discussion of Bede's use of 'barbarian' here see Clare Stancliffe, *Bede and the Britons* (Whithorn, 2007), pp. 19–22.

25 *HE* 11.20 (Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 202–04) for Caedwalla moving about; Bede, *In Lucae evangelium expositio*, pp. 234–35 (IV.xi.24).

Satan in Bede's mind can be found in his application of the term "outrageous tyranny" to Caedwalla ("vesanam Brittonici regis tyrannidem"), which parallels his phrase "vesaniam suae tyrannidis" ("the madness of his tyranny") for the devil's power over the minds of the faithless in his commentary on Mark 11:22–23.<sup>26</sup> One of the influences behind Bede's use of the word tyrant may have been Rufinus, the translator of Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History*; Rufinus associated the terms 'barbarian' and 'pagan' with the term 'tyrant', and it is noticeable that Bede brings both of these into play in his description of Penda and Caedwalla in *HE* 11.20, describing Penda as a pagan and Caedwalla as a barbarian more savage than a pagan.<sup>27</sup>

Christ said that Satan, the strong man armed, could only be dislodged from his house if someone stronger than he attacked him. Osric's attempt to besiege Caedwalla, who had taken refuge in a fortified town ("in oppido municipio")<sup>28</sup> failed because Caedwalla was able to make a surprise sortie and kill him. Eanfrith, even weaker, tried to make terms with Caedwalla and was killed.<sup>29</sup> Clearly neither Osric nor Eanfrith was the stronger man capable of defeating the strong man armed (Luke 11: 21–22): as Bede would have seen it, their lack of Christian faith would have precluded this. The stronger man was about to

26 *HE* 111.1 (Colgrave and Mynors, p. 214) for Caedwalla's outrageous tyranny (note also Bede's reference to him in 111.1 as "tyrannus saeviens," "a savage tyrant," Colgrave and Mynors, p. 212); Bede, *In Marci Evangelium Expositio*, p. 581 (111.xi.22–23). Similar links between the devil and tyranny in Bede's writings can be found in *HE* IV.14 ("the tyranny of the devil" referring to the state of paganism among the South Saxons), and Bede's *Prose Life of Cuthbert*, Ch. 17, for Cuthbert overcoming an army of tyrants by fighting against demons while a hermit on Farne (*Two Lives of St Cuthbert*, ed. and trans. Bertram Colgrave (Cambridge, 1940), p. 214). Charles-Edwards, "Bede, the Irish and the Britons," p. 46, contrasts the tyranny of Caedwalla with the *imperium* of Edwin and Oswald.

27 *HE* 11.20: Colgrave and Mynors, p. 202. On Rufinus' use of the word *tyrannus* in association with *barbari* and *pagani*, see J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People: a Historical Commentary* (Oxford, 1988), p. 89.

28 Plummer, in his edition of *HE* 11.121, followed by Colgrave and Mynors (p. 213), and Crépin (vol. 2, p. 17, n. 4), identifies this as York, but Woolf, "Caedwalla," pp. 7–8 argues against this because Bede always refers to York as a *civitas*. Glanville Jones, "Multiple Estates and Early Settlement," in *Medieval Settlement: Continuity and Change*, ed. P.H. Sawyer (London, 1976), pp. 15–40, at p. 38, suggested Aldborough (Isurium), a Roman *municipium* at a strategic site on Dere Street, at this point heading NW from York and just to the north of its junction with a road coming north from Tadcaster (for Aldborough's communications see Ivan D. Margary, *Roman Roads in Britain*, rev. edn (London, 1967), pp. 359, 407, 428); James Campbell, "Bede's Words for Places," reprinted in his *Essays in Anglo-Saxon History* (London, 1986), p. 103, proposed that *oppidum municipium* "is a Latin version of the *Cair Mincip* (Mencipit), which occurs in the Nennian list of twenty-eight *civitates*."

29 *HE* 111.1; on Bede's use of the term 'damnavit' ('condemned?') for Caedwalla's treatment of Eanfrith, suggesting a form of execution, see Woolf, "Caedwalla," p. 7.

appear, however, in the form of Eanfrith's brother Oswald, who led a smaller army ("but strengthened in faith": *sed fide Christi munito*) to victory against Caedwalla in spite of the latter's "immense forces, which he boasted nothing could resist" (*HE* 111.1). Oswald is evidently being portrayed as a type of Christ here. Bede also treats Oswald in this way in *HE* IV.14, where he is credited with saving inmates of a South Saxon monastery from plague.<sup>30</sup> Similarly, Bede viewed Oswald as gifted with powers of exorcism: one of the miracles attributed to him in *HE* is the curing of a demoniac using earth onto which water that had washed Oswald's bier had been poured. Here too Oswald is casting out the devil.<sup>31</sup>

The strength of Oswald's Christian faith is made clear for us by Bede at the end of Ch. 1 of Book 111 ("cum parvo exercitu, sed fide Christi munito")<sup>32</sup> and even more clearly at the start of Ch. 2; indeed, Bede spends more time describing Oswald's spiritual preparation ahead of the battle than he allows to the fighting itself, which is given a bare quarter-sentence at the end of Ch. 1 ("the abominable leader of the Britons, together with the immense forces that he boasted nothing could resist, was destroyed in the place which in the language of the English is called *Denisesburna*, that is the brook of Denisu").<sup>33</sup> Heavenfield was Oswald's eve-of-battle camp rather than the battlefield itself: the fighting took place about seven miles to the south, on the *Denisesburna*.<sup>34</sup> This was identified in the mid-19th century as the Rowley Burn, which lies a little to the south of Hexham, by Canon William Greenwell, on the basis of a charter issued by Thomas de Whittington for the archbishop of York in 1233.<sup>35</sup> In Bede's account, Oswald's preparation consisted of raising "the sign of the cross" at Heavenfield and then encouraging his army to pray in front of it before

30 *HE* IV.14: in another parallel with *HE* 111.1–2 Bede creates another Oswald-Caedwalla opposition by making the central figure in *HE* IV.15 the Caedwalla who was king of the West Saxons.

31 *HE* 111.11; for discussion of the role of the devil in this story, see Peter Dendle, *Satan Unbound: the Devil in Old English Narrative Literature* (Toronto, 2001), pp. 94–95.

32 "[W]ith a small army, but strengthened in the faith of Christ."

33 "[I]nfandus Brettonum dux cum immensis illis copiis, quibus nihil resistere posse iactabat, interemtus est in loco, qui lingua Anglorum Denisesburna, id est rivus Denisi, vocatur" (Colgrave and Mynors, p. 214; I have altered their translation slightly here).

34 Welsh sources (*Historia Brittonum* and *Annales Cambriae*) identify the site of the battle as *Cantscaul*, probably a Welsh rendering of the name Hexham: Kenneth Jackson, "On the Northern British Section in Nennius," in *Studies in the Early British Border*, ed. Nora Chadwick (Cambridge, 1963), p. 34; Andrew Breeze, "Bede's *Hefenfeld* and the Campaign of 633," *Northern History* 44 (2007), 193–97.

35 William Greenwell, "Address to the Members of the Tyneside Naturalists' Field Club (read 19 March 1863)," *Transactions of the Tyneside Naturalists' Field Club* 6 (1863–64), 1–33 at 13–14.

moving off to fight the enemy as dawn broke. This account has until fairly recently been accepted by scholars as historically believable evidence for the raising of a free-standing cross and has often been taken as the starting point for the introduction of free-standing monumental crosses into Northumbria.<sup>36</sup> More recently, this interpretation has been called into question by archaeologists, art historians and historians who view the introduction of monumental crosses into Northumbria as a development unlikely to have begun before the later 7th century at the earliest. Moreover, Bernicia was not the earliest part of Northumbria to develop monumental crosses, a form of art which seems to have been pioneered by Whitby in Deira.<sup>37</sup> Oswald's own lifetime was a decisive period for the cult of the Cross: in 630 the True Cross, which had been removed from Jerusalem by the Persians in 614, was brought back to Jerusalem and then in 636 taken to Constantinople;<sup>38</sup> the Feast of the Invention of the Cross was developed in the first half of the 7th century at Rome, with a prayer about the Cross being inserted into a sacramentary under 14 September in the first quarter of the century and a full mass for the feast being composed probably under Pope Honorius I (625–38).<sup>39</sup> It is unlikely, however, that Oswald himself would have been aware of much if any of this, and more probable that the cult of the Cross became popular in Anglo-Saxon England after the middle of the century. Several modern scholars are thus unwilling to accept a free-standing cross, even a wooden one, at Heavenfield as early as the 630s (though clearly one existed in Bede's own day, a point to which we will return):<sup>40</sup> as a result, the symbolic elements in Bede's narrative (whose significance has long been recognised) have come further into the foreground of discussion.

36 See for example Blair, *The World of Bede*, p. 102; Paul Meyvaert, "A New Perspective on the Ruthwell Cross: *ecclesia* and *vita monastica*," in *The Ruthwell Cross*, ed. Brendan Cassidy (Princeton NJ, 1992), pp. 95–166, at p. 106; Richard N. Bailey, *England's Earliest Sculptors* (Toronto, 1996), pp. 47–48, though he goes on (p. 50) to propose "that the Oswald cult, and particularly the cross associations of that cult, was a relatively late development."

37 Rosemary Cramp, "A Reconsideration of the Monastic Site of Whitby," in *The Age of Migrating Ideas. Early Medieval Art in Northern Britain and Ireland*, ed. R.M. Spearman and John Higgit (Edinburgh, 1993), pp. 64–73, esp. p. 70; see also Elizabeth Coatsworth, "The Cross in the West Riding of Yorkshire," in *The Place of the Cross in Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. Catherine E. Karkov, Sarah Larratt Keefer and Karen Louise Jolly (Woodbridge, 2006), p. 18.

38 Ian Wood, "Constantinian Crosses in Northumbria," in *The Place of the Cross in Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. Karkov, Keefer and Jolly, pp. 3–13, at p. 7.

39 Éamonn Ó Carragáin, *Ritual and the Rood: Liturgical Images and the Old English Poems in the Dream of the Rood Tradition* (London, 2005), p. 190.

40 Orton, Wood and Lees, *Fragments of History: Rethinking the Ruthwell and Bewcastle Monuments*, pp. 171–72; Wood, "Constantinian Crosses"; Coatsworth, "The Cross in the West Riding of Yorkshire."

In recounting the story of Oswald raising a cross at Heavenfield Bede was influenced by ideas surrounding the cult of the Cross from his own day. Éamonn Ó Carragáin has pointed out that Bede, in putting the words “Flectamus omnes genua” (“Let us all bend our knees”) into Oswald’s mouth, was making the king cite the opening words of the solemn Good Friday prayers that were developed in Rome (where they were associated with the veneration of a cross) at the end of the 7th century.<sup>41</sup> Several scholars have noted the conscious parallel Bede is making in his account with Rufinus’ account (in his version of Eusebius’ *History*) of Constantine’s vision of the cross at the Milvian Bridge, though they have also noted that the parallel is not exact, since Oswald, unlike Constantine, was not a convert, while, as Ian Wood notes, Jerome’s story of Constantine’s association with Arianism made the emperor a questionable role-model.<sup>42</sup> However, Bede must have wanted to suggest that Oswald emulated Constantine in bringing Christianity to his people. Bede’s own community shared in the developing cult of the Cross in the early 8th century; Abbot Hwaetberht (in office 716–c.750), was the author of a Latin riddle entitled “De cruce,” and a cross-slab of the late 7th or early 8th century survives at Jarrow with the inscription “In hoc singulari [sig]no vita redditur mundo” (“in this unique sign life is restored to the world”), taken from the *titulus* of a statue of Constantine quoted in Rufinus’ version of Eusebius’ *Ecclesiastical History*.<sup>43</sup> Its reference to the cross as a sign is echoed in Bede’s account of Heavenfield in *HE* III.2.

Nonetheless, there was a real wooden cross on the site at the time Bede was writing; he informs us that he received his information about Heavenfield from members of the community of the church of Hexham (founded in or just after

41 Ó Carragáin, *Ritual and the Rood*, pp. 231–32; Éamonn Ó Carragáin, “Sources or Analogues? Using Liturgical Evidence to Date *The Dream of the Rood*,” in *Cross and Cruciform in the Anglo-Saxon World: Studies to Honor the Memory of Timothy Reuter*, ed. Sarah Larratt Keefer, Karen Louise Jolly and Catherine E. Karkov (Morgantown, VA, 2010), pp. 152–53. See also Orton, Wood and Lees, *Fragments of History: Rethinking the Ruthwell and Bewcastle Monuments*, pp. 170–80, and Paul J. Stapleton, ‘The Cross Cult, King Oswald, and Elizabethan Historiography’, *British Catholic History* 33 (2016), 32–57, at pp. 35–37.

42 Wallace-Hadrill, *Bede’s Ecclesiastical History*, p. 89; Wood, “Constantinian Crosses,” pp. 4–6; the Constantinian parallels had also been noted by Peter Hunter Blair, but he thought Oswald actually did raise a cross at Heavenfield (cf. Peter Hunter Blair, *Northumbria in the Days of Bede* (London, 1976), p. 140); see also Jennifer O’Reilly, “Reading the Scriptures in the Life of Columba,” in *Studies in the Cult of St Columba*, ed. Cormac Bourke (Dublin, 1997), pp. 80–106, at pp. 81–82.

43 Rosemary Cramp, *Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture*, 1: *County Durham and Northumberland*, 2 vols (Oxford, 1984), 1:112–13 (Jarrow 16a–b); Bailey, *England’s Earliest Sculptors*, p. 49; Ó Carragáin, *Ritual and the Rood*, p. 32.

671/3) and he is unlikely to have stated something that they might contradict.<sup>44</sup> The brethren of the church of Hexham were developing Heavenfield as an Oswald cult site probably already at the time of Wilfrid, founder of their church, and more strongly under Bishop Acca.<sup>45</sup> Bede says that not only had they for a long time (“multo iam tempore”) maintained the practice of visiting the place on the eve of Oswald’s feast day (4 August; Oswald’s death at *Maserfelth* had occurred on 5 August 642), but they had recently (“nuper”) built a church there to make the place more sacred (Éamonn Ó Carragáin notes that the church was presumably built after Acca had become bishop in 709).<sup>46</sup> By Bede’s time, there was a wooden cross of some age on the site; it was frequently chipped away at by local inhabitants to supply splinters of wood to be immersed in water for medicinal purposes for both humans and livestock, and was old enough to have “old moss” (“de veteri musco”) growing on it that supplied medication for a contemporary of Bede’s, Bothelm, a brother of the Hexham community, who had broken his arm after slipping on some ice.<sup>47</sup> For the cross to have been old enough to have old moss growing on it by 731 would not, however, mean that it had to be any older than the end of the 7th century: indeed if a wooden cross had by any chance been raised at Heavenfield in 634 it would probably have rotted well before 731. It is possible therefore that the cross had originally been set up by the community of Hexham in the later 7th century to provide a focus for the cult of Oswald at Heavenfield. For Bede, however, the cross was Oswald’s own work and he was keen to explore the full range of symbolism that this interpretation offered.

Before we turn to Bede’s use of Gospel symbolism in this passage we need to compare his account of Oswald’s activities before the battle with that provided

44 For the name Hexham, see Donald Bullough, “The Place-Name Hexham and its Interpretation,” *Notes and Queries* 46 (1999), 422–27, correcting Victor Watts, “The Place-Name Hexham: A Mainly Philological Approach,” *Nomina* 17 (1994), 119–36; on Wilfrid’s foundation of the church of Hexham see *Wilfrid: Abbot, Bishop, Saint: Papers from the 1300th Anniversary Conferences*, ed. N.J. Higham (Donington, 2013).

45 Alan Thacker, “*Membra Disjecta*: The Division of the Body and the Diffusion of the Cult,” in *Oswald: Northumbrian King to European Saint*, ed. Stancliffe and Cambridge, pp. 97–127, at pp. 110–11, suggests that the community of Hexham started to develop Heavenfield as an Oswald cult site under Wilfrid, but that “Oswald’s most enthusiastic sponsor” was Bishop Acca (deposed 731). See Bailey, *England’s Earliest Sculptors*, p. 50, and more generally D.P. Kirby, “Northumbria in the Time of Wilfrid,” in *St Wilfrid at Hexham*, ed. D.P. Kirby (Newcastle upon Tyne, 1974), pp. 26–27.

46 *HE* III.2; Ó Carragáin, *Ritual and the Rood*, p. 232.

47 *HE* III.2.

by Adomnán in his *Life of Columba*.<sup>48</sup> Adomnán supplies an account which, he says, he had been told by his predecessor, Abbot Failbe, who had himself been told it when young by Oswald as the latter stated it to Abbot Segene.<sup>49</sup> Unlike Bede's account, which was third- or fourth-hand at best, Adomnán's was second-hand and much closer to Oswald. He, too, however, wanted to shape his material and he tells the story to give an example of how God honoured Columba with the gift of prophecy. Oswald, encamped ("castrametatus") and ready for battle against Caedwalla ("Cathlonem Britonum regem fortissimum"), had a vision of St Columba as he slept. The saint was so tall that he touched the clouds; spreading out his shining garment to cover almost all of Oswald's camp he comforted Oswald with a version of the words with which God had comforted Joshua on the death of Moses: "Be strong and act manfully. Behold, I will be with thee" (cf. Joshua 1:9). After this Columba told Oswald to set off to fight the following night and said that his enemies would flee, that Caedwalla would be delivered into his hands and that Oswald would be victorious and would reign happily.<sup>50</sup> When he woke up Oswald explained the vision to his advisers and they promised that they would seek baptism after the battle; Adomnán here explains that "all Saxony," that is, all the Angles, were pagan at this point save Oswald and twelve followers who had been with him in exile among the Irish.<sup>51</sup> By contrast, Bede's account makes no mention of Columba, and he presents Oswald's soldiers as ready to pray in front of Oswald's cross, in other words already Christian converts. The difference between Adomnán's account and Bede's is so great that it has led some commentators to assume that Bede could not have read Adomnán's *Life of Columba*.<sup>52</sup> This is the impression that Bede seems to wish the reader to form in *HE* 111.4, in which he remarks Columba's pupils are said to have written many things about his life and

48 O'Reilly, "Reading the Scriptures," pp. 81–85, compares Bede's and Adomnan's accounts of Heavenfield.

49 *Adomnan's Life of Columba*, ed. and trans. Anderson, p. 14.

50 *Adomnan's Life of Columba*, ed. and trans. Anderson, p. 14.

51 There may be a possible link here with Bede's mention of Eanfrith having only twelve companions when he met Caedwalla (*HE* 111.1), though in both cases the biblical symbolism is the important factor (O'Reilly, "Reading the Scriptures," pp. 82–83, notes the link between Oswald's twelve Christian followers and the twelve men who set up twelve stones at the command of Joshua in Joshua 4:2–3).

52 E.g. Colgrave and Mynors, p. 225 n. 2: "Bede does not appear to have known the *Life of Columba* written by Adamnan." For the transmission of the *Life of Columba* see *Adomnan's Life of Columba*, ed. and trans. Anderson, pp. liv–lxv and Adomnán, *Life of St Columba*, trans. Sharpe, pp. 88–89: there is no specific evidence for early circulation of the work in Anglo-Saxon England but certainly this possibility cannot be excluded.

words.<sup>53</sup> However, it has been suggested that he did know these but was unwilling to cite them directly.<sup>54</sup> As Richard Sharpe observes, Bede was anxious to present the Heavenfield story differently from Adomnán: he had to depict the Anglo-Saxon Bernicians as Christian at this point to avoid portraying the battle as a “victory of pagan English over Christian Britons,” which “would go right against the theme of his work.”<sup>55</sup> It is also worth noting that this depiction of Christian Bernician Angles accords oddly with Bede’s curious insistence in *HE* 111.2 that there were no churches or altars in Bernicia until after Oswald’s victory (a statement that is in itself odd given his comments about Paulinus’ missionary activity in Bernicia in *HE* 11.14).<sup>56</sup> Bede’s divergence from Adomnán’s account is very similar to the divergence visible between his description of Edwin’s conversion and that presented in the Whitby *Life of St Gregory*, especially the presentation of the visionary figure appearing to Edwin while he was in exile.<sup>57</sup> In both cases it is possible that what Bede is doing is consciously altering an existing narrative rather than being ignorant of it. Moreover, he was strongly interested in Adomnán, whose work on the Holy Places he quotes in Book v, with approval, and he thought highly of the latter’s attempt (albeit unsuccessful) to introduce Roman Easter dating to Iona.<sup>58</sup>

Bede’s decision to pass over in silence Oswald’s own account of seeing a vision of Columba at Heavenfield meant that he was able to show Oswald placing his faith firmly in Christ crucified, with no mediation through a saint, much less one, like Columba, who dated Easter incorrectly.<sup>59</sup> Here a further Gospel allusion comes into play. Shortly after Christ’s statement about how a stronger man will despoil the strong man armed comes his condemnation of the wicked generation seeking a sign to believe in and his remark that they will receive no sign but the one of the prophet Jonah, whose three nights in the belly of the whale foretell the three days spent by the Son of Man in the bowels of the earth (Luke 11:29–32; Matthew 12:38–42). In his commentary on Luke 11:29 Bede

53 Plummer (2:135) points out that Bede’s “de cuius vita et verbis nonnulla a discipulis eius feruntur scripta haberi” (*HE* 111.4) implies that Bede himself did not have access to them.

54 “Indeed, Bede’s Constantinian version of events could imply a definite rejection of the Ionan model”: Wood, “Constantinian Crosses,” p. 4.

55 Adomnán, *Life of St Columba*, trans. Sharpe, p. 252.

56 As noted by, for example, Peter Hunter Blair, *The World of Bede* (London, 1970), p. 102.

57 See discussion by Julia Barrow, “How Coifi pierced Christ’s side: A Re-examination of Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History*, 11, Chapter 13,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 62 (2011), 693–706, at pp. 697–700, 706.

58 *HE* v.15–17 (Holy Places) and v.15 for Easter dating. See also *HE* iv.25, with discussion by Julia Barrow, “Bede’s Wise and Foolish Virgins,” forthcoming, for Bede’s favourable description of Adomnán’s namesake.

59 *HE* 111.4.

pointed out that the wicked generation would receive only a sign of Christ's incarnation and passion, not his divinity or his glorification, whereas Christ's disciples were shown his transfiguration on the mountain and his ascension into heaven. This explains why it is a cross, or more particularly "the sign of the cross," that Oswald erected at Heavenfield in Bede's account: the Bernician Angles are receiving the sign of Christ's passion.<sup>60</sup> Again, the parallels between Oswald and Christ are being drawn out, with the reader being encouraged to think ahead to Oswald's eventual death in battle at the hands of Penda's forces.<sup>61</sup>

In particular, it was the name of the site, Heavenfield, which inspired Bede:

This place is called in English Heavenfield, and in Latin *Caelestis campus*, a name which it certainly received in days of old as an omen of future happenings; it signified that a heavenly trophy was to be erected there, a heavenly victory begun, and that heavenly miracles were to take place there continuing to this day.<sup>62</sup>

Bede's remark that the victory was merely "begun" in 634 implies that it needed to be completed, or won, evidently by Oswald's martyrdom in 642. His sentence is rich in military metaphors used for spiritual concepts ('trophy', 'victory' and indeed 'field' itself): these receive extra emphasis from the repeated use of the adjective *caelestis*, heavenly. The term 'trophaeum' barely occurs in the Vulgate (only in 2 Maccabees 5:6 and 15:6), but was used, along with the word *triumphus*, by Evagrius in his Latin translation of Athanasius' *Life of Anthony* to emphasise the triumph of Christ.<sup>63</sup> This was a work that Bede knew well, as it

60 "Et accepit et dedit signum videlicet incarnationis non divinitatis passionis non glorificationis. Discipulis autem suis signum de caelo dedit quibus aeternae beatitudinis gloriam et prius figuraliter in monte transformatus et post veraciter in caelum sublevatus ostendit" (*In Lucae evangelium exposition*, p. 238 (IV.xi.29)). See also n. 43 above.

61 Oswald's death at the hands of the Mercians at *Maserfelth* is recounted by Bede in *HE* III.9.

62 "Vocatur locus ille lingua Anglorum Hefenfeld, quod dici potest Latine 'Caelestis Campus', quod certo utique praesagio futurorum antiquitus nomen accepit: significans nimirum quod ibidem caeleste erigendum tropeum, caelestis inchoanda uictoria, caelestia usque hodie forent miracula celebranda." Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 216–17 (*HE* III.2), with adaptations to their translation ('trophy' for 'sign', and 'begun' for 'won'). Breeze, "Bede's Hefenfeld," pp. 196–97 suggests that *Caelestis* in *Caelestis Campus* is a personal name in the genitive ("the field of *Caelestis*").

63 G.J.M. Bartelink, "Grécismes lexicologiques et syntaxiques dans les traductions latines du ive siècle de la *Vita Antonii* d'Athanase," *Mnemosyne* 30 (1977), 388–422, at pp. 403–04.

was one of the models for his prose *Life of Cuthbert*.<sup>64</sup> Bede uses ‘tropheum’ of Christ’s passion in his commentary on Luke, 8:37: “The trophy of his (Christ’s) passion and the glory of his resurrection will be made known to the tribes of Judaea that they should believe.”<sup>65</sup> There may be a conscious contrast here between Oswald’s Christian trophy and the *thuf*borne before the virtuous but (in Bede’s eyes) less holy Edwin as he processed around his kingdom in *HE* 11.16.

In conclusion, it seems not impossible that Bede had read Adomnán’s *Life of Columba*, but rejected its story of how Oswald was inspired by a vision of Columba at Heavenfield. Instead, Bede (presumably following the view of the community at Hexham) chose to interpret the cross at Heavenfield as an artefact placed there at Oswald’s command. But the starting point of the whole narration was probably Bede’s reflection on the division of Northumbria at Edwin’s death and the close parallels this supplied with the parables of the divided kingdom and the strong man armed in Luke and Matthew, allowing him to present Osric and Eanfrith as open to demoniac possession through their loss of faith, Caedwalla as a mirror-image of Satan and Oswald as a Christ-like figure who was able to take on Satan and free the divided kingdom or house from attack. Since in both gospels these parables are followed by the statement that the current generation would receive no sign other than the sign of Jonah (usually interpreted, for example by Bede himself, as Christ’s Passion), this allowed Bede to build up to his narrative of Oswald raising up a cross at Heavenfield and leading his followers in a Good Friday prayer, thus further underlining Oswald’s saintly qualities and marking him out as the only truly holy Northumbrian king.

64 *Two Lives of St Cuthbert*, ed. and trans. Bertram Colgrave (Cambridge, 1940), p. 16 and see also pp. 11–13.

65 *In Lucae evangelium expositio*, p. 187 (111.viii.37): “Cuius tamen tropheum passionis resurrectionisque Gloria credituris Iudaeae tribus intimabitur.”

## Theodore's Peace

*N.J. Higham*

Across her career, Barbara Yorke has massively advanced our understanding of early insular kingship, the territorial make-up of the Anglo-Saxon world and the establishment of Christianity in Britain.<sup>1</sup> It is my purpose in this tribute to focus on a short sequence of interactions between kings and senior clerics of a kind which have often been central to her work, focussing particularly on a few months in the autumn 679. Of course, we do not have anything like as much information as we would like and there is of necessity much speculation in what follows, but the bare bones of what happened are plain enough. This essay is intended to compliment my treatment of this episode in my recent volume on King Ecgrith,<sup>2</sup> where I focus primarily on the battle and its consequences. Here I will concentrate less on the conflict than on the peace negotiations through which Northumbrian/Mercian hostilities were concluded.

### The Synod of Hatfield

We begin with the Council of the English Church convened and chaired by Archbishop Theodore at Hatfield on 17 September 679.<sup>3</sup> Theodore had by then been in Britain for a little more than a decade, pushing forward major reforms of the Church with an urgency which reflected both the pressing need and his own advancing years (he was already 67 when he arrived).<sup>4</sup> Bede preserved the

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1 It is a great pleasure to contribute to a volume honouring Barbara Yorke. My own friendship with her dates back to a Workers' Educational Association residential weekend at Horncastle from which she and I 'escaped' when formal sessions had ended to explore Anglo-Saxon Lindsey, bowling around country lanes with only a somewhat sketchy grasp of where we were at any moment but a shared fascination with the historical evolution of the Wolds landscape. Ever since, I have valued her knowledge and diligent scholarship, her quick wit and gentle humour, her generosity as regards her time and energies and the care which she brings to all she does.

2 Nicholas J. Higham, *Ecgrith, King of the Northumbrians, High-King of Britain* (Donington, 2015), pp. 180–82.

3 Bede, *HE* IV.17(15), pp. 384–87.

4 Michael Lapidge, "The Career of Archbishop Theodore," in *Archbishop Theodore: Commemorative Studies on his Life and Influence*, ed. Michael Lapidge, Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England 2 (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 1–29.

record of his first synod, held at Hertford in 672, which provides the skeleton of his programme.<sup>5</sup> However, the Hatfield meeting was for a very different purpose. Earlier in the same year Pope Agatho had given leave for John, abbot of St. Martin's in Rome, to accompany Benedict Biscop and Ceolfrith on their return to Wearmouth to help in spreading up-to-date Roman practices in Northumbria. At Rome the central issue at this date was the Monothelite Controversy—specifically how to respond to a missive from the emperor on that subject and re-unify the Faith. Agatho instructed Abbot John that he should check in Britain for any sign of that “heretical contagion” and report back.<sup>6</sup> On arrival he communicated this errand to Archbishop Theodore; the Hatfield meeting was his response. Its synodal book recorded the unequivocal commitment to the orthodox Roman stance of the archdiocese and its clergy.<sup>7</sup>

The location of this synod is a matter of debate. The main candidates are the places today named Hatfield in South Yorkshire and Hertfordshire (discounting as improbable others in Hereford and Worcester and Essex).<sup>8</sup> That Theodore's first council met at Hertford was probably what encouraged the assumption that the Hatfield meeting occurred nearby.<sup>9</sup> However, Bede had only hitherto named the northern Hatfield, where King Edwin met his death in battle,<sup>10</sup> and he made no effort to distinguish the location of Theodore's synod from the battle site. In addition, the dating clause at the start of the synodal book implies a meeting within the sphere of influence of the Northumbrian king:

Imperantibus dominis piissimis nostris Ecgfrido rege Humbronensium, anno decimo regni eius sub die xv kalendas Octobres indictione octaua, et Aedilredo rege Mercinensium, anno sexto regni eius, et Alduulfo rege Estranglorum, anno septimodecimo regni eius, et Hlothario rege Cantuariorum, regni eius anno septimo...

(Our most pious lords ruling, Ecgfrith king of the *Humbrenses*, in the tenth year of his reign, on the seventeenth of September and the eighth

5 Bede, *HE* IV.5, pp. 348–55.

6 Bede, *HE* IV.18(16), pp. 388–91.

7 Henry Chadwick, “The English Church and the Monothelite Controversy,” in *Archbishop Theodore*, ed. Lapidge, pp. 88–95.

8 For discussion see Higham, *Ecgfrith, King of the Northumbrians*, p. 180–81.

9 Sir Frank M. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 3rd ed. (Oxford, 1971), pp. 137, 749; see editorial comments for Bede, *HE* IV.17(15), pp. 384–87.

10 Bede, *HE* II.20, pp. 202–07.

indiction, and Æthelred king of the Mercians, in the sixth year of his reign, and Aldwulf king of the East Angles, in the seventeenth year of his reign, and Hlothhere king of the Kentings, in the seventh year of his reign...)

That Ecgrith is separated from the other three named kings in a way which seems intended subtly to advertise his superior status is unlikely to have been accidental. The record was written for the eyes of Pope Agatho so was almost certainly drafted by Theodore in person. It is difficult to imagine the archbishop distinguishing Ecgrith in this way if the meeting took place at Hatfield in Middle Anglia, which was almost certainly at this date under Mercian control. This is easiest reconciled, therefore, with the meeting taking place near the Humber.<sup>11</sup> The *Tribal Hidage* suggests that the northern Hatfield was the name of a region,<sup>12</sup> as much as a specific place. That the area was favoured as a meeting place is confirmed by the synod held at Austerfield (named by Stephen of Ripon as *Aetswinapathe* and *Ouestræfelda*) by Theodore's successor, Bertwald.<sup>13</sup> It is, therefore, the more northerly Hatfield that should be preferred.

Having described the meeting and quoted extracts from the synodal book, Bede shifted his focus in his next chapter to Abbot John, who, as the guest of Benedict and Ceolfrith, had been teaching at Wearmouth in the run-up to the synod, passing on his knowledge of the Roman Christian calendar and his expertise in choral music. Having attended the synod, Abbot John then crossed back to the Continent with a copy of the synodal book for Pope Agatho. This copy eventually reached Rome but John did not, having died in Gaul en route.

### The Battle Near the River Trent

With his account of John's actions concluded, Bede turned his attention back to events in England. In *HE*, IV.19 (Chapter 17 in the c-text variants) he took the opportunity provided by her death in this year to promote the memory of Æthelthryth, Ecgrith's first queen and the founding abbess of Ely. He lauded her sanctity, promoted her cult and even offered in the following chapter a

11 Nicholas J. Higham, *The Kingdom of Northumbria AD 350–1100* (Stroud, 1993), p. 139; Chadwick, "English Church and the Monothelete Controversy," p. 88, footnote 2; Nicholas J. Higham, *Ecgrith, King of the Northumbrians, High-King of Britain* (Donington, 2015), p. 180.

12 David N. Dumville, "The Tribal Hidage: An Introduction to its Texts and their History," in *The Origins of Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms*, ed. Steven Bassett (London, 1989), pp. 225–30.

13 *VW*, ch. 46, pp. 92–95.

hymn which he had himself composed in her honour “many years before” (the virgin queen had clearly long been one of Bede’s heroes). Chapter 19 (17) has 110 lines in the modern edition, making it the third longest chapter in the book. Chapter 20 (18), which is focused tightly on the same subject, adds a further 60 lines, meaning that Bede’s account of Æthelthryth takes up almost eight per cent of book 4.<sup>14</sup> There follows a description of the battle near the river Trent which is exceptionally brief; the shortest chapter in the book by far it has a mere 13 lines, only half those of the next shortest (Chapter 8). Bede sandwiched this between his lengthy treatment of Æthelthryth and another group of long passages on similar themes. Chapter 22 (20) describes a miracle which occurred in the aftermath of the battle (73 lines), then 23 (21) celebrates the life of Hild, abbess of *Streanaeshalch*, on the occasion of her death in 680 (at 167 lines the second longest chapter in the book). Finally 24 (22) provides further proof of the Godliness of her monastic regime, providing an account of the poet Cædmon (103 lines). Bede promised in his Preface that he would “tell of good men and their good estate” (*de bonis bona referat*), as well as “the evil ends of wicked men” (*mala commemoret de prauis*). Something that he might have added, but chose to leave unsaid, is that he would allot a much higher proportion of his work to the former than the latter. As a result Bede’s text can leave an impression of “a cast of saints rather than rude warriors”,<sup>15</sup> yet there can be little doubt that the *Historia Ecclesiastica* was a cautionary tale aimed primarily at the secular elite within contemporary Northumbria.<sup>16</sup>

In such circumstances the often brief passages which do deal with the affairs of kings deserve our close attention. What follows is a comparatively literal translation of *HE* IV.21 (19):<sup>17</sup>

Anno regni Ecgfridi nono, conserto graui proelio inter ipsum et Aedilredum regem Merciorum iuxta fluuium Treanta, occisus est Aelfuini frater regis Ecgfridi, iuuenis circiter X et VIII annorum, utrique prouinciae multum amabilis. Nam et sororem eius, quae dicebatur Osthyrd, rex Aedilred habebat uxorem. Cumque materies belli acrioris et inimicitiae longioris inter reges populosque feroces uideretur exorta, Theodorus Deo dilectus antistes, diuino functus auxilio, salutifera exhortatione coeptum tanti

14 Nicholas J. Higham, (*Re-*)*Reading Bede: The Ecclesiastical History in Context* (London, 2006), pp. 110–12.

15 Walter Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History (A.D. 550–800): Jordanes, Gregory of Tours, Bede, and Paul the Deacon* (Guildford, 1988), p. 235.

16 James Campbell, “Bede 1,” in his *Essays in Anglo-Saxon History* (London, 1986), pp. 1–27; Higham, (*Re-*)*Reading Bede*, p. 56.

17 Higham, *Ecgfrith, King of the Northumbrians*, p. 179.

periculi funditus extinguit incendium; adeo ut, pacatis alterutrum regibus ac populis, nullius anima hominis pro interfecto regis fratre, sed debita solummodo multa pecuniae regi ultori daretur. Cuius foedera pacis multo exinde tempore inter eosdem reges eorumque regna durarunt.

(In the ninth year of Ecgrith's rule, a grievous battle [*grave proelium*] was fought between him and Æthelred king of the Mercians, near the river Trent, [and] Ælfwine the brother of King Ecgrith was killed, a young man of about eighteen years old [who was] much loved in both kingdoms. For King Æthelred had as wife his sister, who was called Osthryth. And although there were reasons for bitter war and lengthier hostilities between the kings and these ferocious peoples, Bishop Theodore the beloved of God, trusting in divine aid, completely extinguished the fire of great danger by his health-bringing encouragement; as a result, peace was restored between the kings and the peoples, no further lives were demanded for the death of the king's brother but only the due sum of money was given to the king who had a duty of vengeance [Ecgrith]. By such means treaties of peace [*foedera pacis*] lasted for a long time between those kings and their realms.)

This passage is our principal witness to an outbreak of violence between the Northumbrian and Mercian kings, the peace by which it was resolved and Theodore's role in its negotiation.

We do not know for sure precisely when or where the battle occurred. First, the timing. Bede's dating of the event by reference to Ecgrith's ninth regnal year seems at variance with the dating clause of the synod, in Ecgrith's tenth regnal year, which he included four chapters earlier. Perhaps with that in mind, Bede dated the synod to 680 in his chronological recapitulation, placing Ælfwine's death, so the battle, one year earlier. However, the meeting at Hatfield necessarily occurred prior to the Church Council at Rome chaired by Agatho on 25 March 680, which Abbot John set out to attend (Wilfrid was present). The synod must therefore be dated to September 679.<sup>18</sup> Ecgrith's first regnal year can have begun no earlier than his father's death on 15 February, 670 (and perhaps several months later). His ninth year was therefore 679–80, which is compatible with Bede's date. Stephen remarked that Ælfwine's body was

18 Wilhelm Levison, *England and the Continent in the Eighth Century* (Oxford, 1946), pp. 272–73; Catherine Cubitt, *Anglo-Saxon Church Councils, c. 650–850* (London, 1995), pp. 254–55; Catherine Cubitt, "Appendix 2: The Chronology of Stephen's Life of Wilfrid," in *Wilfrid: Abbot, Bishop, Saint, Papers from the 1300th Anniversary Conferences*, ed. Nicholas J. Higham (Donington, 2013), pp. 334–46, at p. 344.

carried into York on the first anniversary of Wilfrid's appeal against the loss of his see,<sup>19</sup> an event which Bede dates to 678. We should therefore assign both the synod (on 17 September) and the battle to 679.

When was the battle in relation to the synod? Given Abbot John's passage up to Northumbria earlier that year and the obvious dangers of organising a meeting in the southern borderlands of Northumbria at a time of war between Ecgfrith and Æthelred, it seems common sense to follow Bede's ordering of events across these chapters. We should therefore assume that hostilities between the Northumbrian and Mercian kings broke out only once the synod had concluded.

Where did the battle occur? While it has been suggested that the synod's focus on narrowly doctrinal issues might have discouraged Theodore from having kings present,<sup>20</sup> dating it by reference to the reigns of four kings, led by Ecgfrith, does rather imply their attendance. Otherwise why select these four but omit the king of, for example, the West Saxons? That the battle occurred "*iuxta* the river Trent" is consistent with this reading of events, for a synod at the South Yorkshire Hatfield attended by Ecgfrith, Ælfwine and Æthelred could easily have led to confrontation between them and a fight near the Trent, which divided the Hatfield *regio* from Lindsey.<sup>21</sup> That Bede has Imma expecting to find "friends" (*amici*) to aid him and then, on capture, claiming that he was just a "poor rustic" bringing supplies to the Northumbrian warriors clearly indicates that the battle occurred within Ecgfrith's territories. While there can be no certainty, therefore, it seems very likely that the battle near the river Trent occurred soon after 17 September, within Northumbria's southern borders and in the general vicinity of the site at which the synod of Hatfield had occurred.

What sort of battle was it? Colgrave's translation of *gravis proelium* as "a great battle" rather obscures Bede's meaning, for *gravis* means 'grievous' or 'harsh', not 'great'.<sup>22</sup> Bede was referring less to the scale of the conflict, therefore, than to Ælfwine's death—he was of course Ecgfrith's heir and would have been expected to have taken up the reins of the Northumbrian kingship should Ecgfrith die without heirs of his body (as he did in 685). His death was particularly 'grievous' from the perspective of a writer whose most impressionable years coincided with these events: Bede joined Wearmouth as a novice aged seven around the time of the battle and was just entering his teens when Ecgfrith was killed. From his perspective, these were emotive events. We should

19 VW, ch. 24.

20 Cubitt, *Anglo-Saxon Church Councils*, p. 55.

21 See David Hill, *An Atlas of Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford, 1981), p. 76.

22 Higham, *Ecgfrith, King of the Northumbrians*, p. 179.

not necessarily see this *proelium* as a full-scale battle, therefore. In Chapter 22 (20) Bede also termed it *pugna*—‘a fight’ (originally in the Classical period a ‘fist-fight’). If the kings attended a synod in the frontier region of Hatfield it seems reasonable to expect them to have done so with large retinues. The battle near the river Trent was probably nothing larger-scale than a clash between these bands of household warriors, not a set-piece engagement of the full Northumbrian and Mercian armies.

Who won? Bede was careful to avoid being overly explicit on that subject but it is clear from his account of Imma’s survival that the Mercians controlled the field of battle following the conflict. In that sense, at least, this was a Mercian victory, but this same passage reveals that losses were heavy on both sides for the Mercian *comes* who took charge of the captured Imma recalled that all his “brothers and kinsmen were killed in that fight.”

### Theodore’s Peace

No sooner had the flames of war taken hold than Bede has Theodore stamp them out. The archbishop’s speed of response is certainly consistent with both the synod and the battle occurring in a very short space of time and in close proximity. We should probably envisage Theodore still nearby when the clash between the kings occurred so able to react swiftly in the immediate aftermath. His behaviour seems exceptional, though, for Bede does not offer comparable situations in which a bishop engineered peace between warring kings. Additionally, earlier wars that he referred to ended with recognition of the superiority of one king over another but this did not. Theodore’s peace looks different, therefore.

There had been many conflicts between Northumbrians and Mercians since the Northumbrian King Edwin was slain at Hatfield (in 633) by an army with a Mercian contingent led by Penda. That same Mercian leader was responsible for Oswald of Northumbria’s death in 642 and for at least two invasions of the North during Oswiu’s reign, in the second of which, in 655, he was himself killed at the *Winwaed*. Thereafter Oswiu’s attempts to rule Mercia were ended by a revolt in 658 in favour of Penda’s son, Wulfhere. Oswiu’s son, Ecgfrith, then defeated Wulfhere in battle c.674. Theodore was in Britain at this point and found himself having to reorganise the English bishoprics in consequence. More recently, he had had to pick up the pieces when Æthelred invaded Kent c.676, a campaign which left Rochester incapable of any longer supporting a bishop.<sup>23</sup> Clearly, in 679 Theodore needed peace to enable him to continue

23 Bede, *HE* IV.12, pp. 368–71.

reforming the Roman Church in Britain. In very general terms, therefore, his purpose is plain.

In Chapter 21 (19) Bede referred explicitly to only one element of the settlement, the payment of compensation so as to mitigate the duty of vengeance, implicitly by Æthelred to Ecgrith. Bede, ever the diplomat, revealed just that part of the agreement that gave something to Northumbria. Otherwise his account is little more than an extended metaphor of Theodore as God's agent extinguishing with water the fire of war, leaving us to reconstruct what else was agreed as best we can.<sup>24</sup>

Some of this is uncontentious. We can safely conclude that any remaining claims on Ecgrith's part to superiority over Mercia, as established c.674 by victory over Wulfhere, were at an end. So too was any expectation of tribute from Mercia, such as Stephen remarked had been paid by Wulfhere.<sup>25</sup> Additionally, Ecgrith conceded territory, relinquishing Lindsey to his rival.<sup>26</sup> Henceforth, the boundary between the two kingdoms would lie on the Humber. The dating clause of Hatfield's synodal book termed Ecgrith "king of the *Humbrenses*". For the future that would cease, giving way to the expression 'Northumbrians'.

Apart from his having to pay wergild, therefore, Æthelred clearly gained a great deal: a wealthy and much-fought-over territory, which his father had held and his brother lost, would henceforth be part of Mercia; he now had equality of status with his hitherto-dominant Northumbrian brother-in-law, and his rival's influence south of the Humber had collapsed. Theodore's peace was an important step in the long-term consolidation of Mercian power across the south of Britain, which would be such a feature of the next century and a half, and facilitated the re-organisation and institutionalisation of the Mercian Church which was underway across the remainder of Æthelfrith's reign.<sup>27</sup>

What, though, beyond monetary recompense for his brother's death, did Ecgrith obtain from this treaty? More specifically, in what sense were its terms sufficiently advantageous from his perspective to deter him from continuing the war? After all, had he beaten Æthelred in 679 there can be little doubt that he would have sought to tighten his grip on the South, taking territory perhaps, and/or tribute, much as he did when he earlier defeated Wulfhere. Peace robbed Ecgrith of that opportunity.

24 For wider discussion of the royal interest in peace, see Paul J.E. Kershaw, *Peaceful Kings: Peace, Power and the Early Medieval Imagination* (Oxford, 2011).

25 *VW*, ch. 20.

26 Bede, *HE* IV.12, pp. 370–71.

27 John Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 79–80; Morn Capper, "Prelates and Politics: Wilfrid, Oundle and the 'Middle Angles,'" in *Wilfrid: Abbot, Bishop, Saint*, ed. Higham, pp. 260–74.

Seeking answers to that question brings us to the nature and purpose of Theodore's involvement. Of course, it was very fitting that a clergyman should take it upon himself to weave peace between kings,<sup>28</sup> but his was no UN-style intervention on behalf of the injured or captured, as the Imma miracle recounted by Bede makes clear.<sup>29</sup> Imma was incapacitated in the battle and captured in its aftermath, risking execution in vengeance for the deaths in battle of his captor's kinsmen but was eventually sold into slavery instead. There was no attempt by the archbishop to intervene; rather the miraculous element in his story supposedly stemmed from the masses said by Imma's brother, Tunna, a Northumbrian abbot.

To understand both Theodore's case for peace and Ecgfrith's willingness to accept it we need to revisit the difficulties confronting Roman Christianity in Northern Britain, then explore what the king and archbishop actually did in the few years following the peace, assessing the extent to which their actions are likely to reflect matters agreed at this point.

### Theodore, Ecgfrith and the North

Penned for decades into southern England, lacking the patronage of the more powerful English kings and with little Continental support, the insular Roman Church was in crisis in the early 660s. King Oswiu's switch to the Roman dating of Easter in 664 brought a genuine big-hitter on board but this coincided with the plague in which both Archbishop Deusdedit and King Eorcenberht of Kent died. Oswiu therefore found himself almost immediately having to oversee re-appointment to Canterbury. Wigheard, despatched to Rome as Deusdedit's successor, died before he could be consecrated.<sup>30</sup> With plague raging there too, Pope Vitalian struggled to find a replacement but he clearly recognised that Oswiu's conversion presented an important opportunity, sending a letter of intent, two extracts from which Bede included in his *Historia Ecclesiastica*.<sup>31</sup> In the first Vitalian welcomed Oswiu's conversion to the "true and apostolic faith" (meaning Roman Christianity as opposed to Ionan), and rejoiced that he was labouring day and night to bring "all his subjects to the catholic and apostolic faith". In the second he promised that the man that he would send would have

28 See, for example, the letter of Bishop Wealdhere to Archbishop Brihtwold, c.704–05, in *EHD* 1, no. 164.

29 Bede, *HE* IV.22, pp. 400–05.

30 Bede, *HE* III.29, pp. 318–23.

31 Bede, *HE* III.29, pp. 318–23.

“full instructions” so that “by his preaching and with the help of the word of God, [he would] entirely root out, with His blessing, the tares sown by the enemy throughout your island.”

It was Vitalian’s intention, therefore, to seize this opportunity to complete the conversion of Britain to Roman Christianity. His representative would be charged not just with consolidation of the true faith amongst the English but with eradication of heresy among all Britain’s inhabitants. Circumstances were particularly advantageous, for Oswiu was a foster-son of the monastery of St. Columba on Iona and its principal protector in the 660s. He was also a friend of the Scottish royal family, members of which were ruling the northern Picts under his overall *imperium*. As the direct ruler of numerous British and Pictish communities and the superior king of all northern Britain,<sup>32</sup> Oswiu was in a strong position to encourage the spread of Roman practices. That he shared Vitalian’s ambition seems likely, for Wigheard had supposedly sought authority to “ordain bishops throughout the whole of Britain to the churches of the English.”<sup>33</sup>

With Wigheard dead, it fell to his replacement to push through this ambitious program in northern Britain. It was one of the most learned men available, the Greek expatriate Theodore, who Vitalian eventually appointed. En route to Canterbury, he stayed at Paris with Bishop Agilbert,<sup>34</sup> who had attended the synod of Whitby so will have been well-primed on the religious situation in Northumbria. Theodore needed to rebuild the English Church pretty much from the top down. In 669 there was a shortage of suitable candidates even to fill the existing bishoprics, only one of which currently had a canonically-appointed incumbent (Wine at London), and even he had allegedly bought his post.<sup>35</sup> However, there was a very well-qualified individual available in the person of Wilfrid, who had already been consecrated as bishop of York by Agilbert.<sup>36</sup> One of Theodore’s first actions as archbishop was therefore to journey north, unseat Oswiu’s uncanonically-ordained bishop, Chad, and enthrone Wilfrid. Bede reported that, already before Oswiu’s death in February 670, “Wilfrid was administering the see of the church of York not only of all the Northumbrians but also of the Picts, as far as King Oswiu’s power extended.”<sup>37</sup> Theodore deputed the expansion of Roman Christianity in the North to Wilfrid,

32 Bede, *HE* II.5, pp. 148–55; James Fraser, *From Caledonia to Pictland: Scotland to 795* (Edinburgh, 2009), pp. 186–99; Higham, *Ecgrifith, King of the Northumbrians*, pp. 105–08.

33 Bede, *HE* III.29, pp. 318–23.

34 Bede, *HE* IV.1, pp. 328–33.

35 Bede, *HE* III.7, pp. 232–37.

36 *VW*, ch. 12.

37 Bede, *HE* IV.3, pp. 336–47.

therefore, while he focused on the many problems of the South.<sup>38</sup> As far as we know he did not cross the Humber again for nine years.

In Northumbria, Oswiu's death brought his son, Ecgfrith, to power. Ecgfrith's East Anglian wife was Wilfrid's committed supporter, gifting him the rich estates on which he founded his second great monastery at Hexham.<sup>39</sup> Ecgfrith's early years were crowned with military successes from which Wilfrid also benefited. The king's suppression of a Pictish revolt provided new opportunities to promote the Roman Church among the Picts, Scots and Britons. Victory over Wulfhere and the Mercians c.674 allowed the king to secure Lindsey, which was then detached from the Mercian bishopric and added to Wilfrid's.<sup>40</sup> When the bishop completed his magnificent new church at Ripon, Ecgfrith and Ælfwine attended its consecration and enriched it with new estates.<sup>41</sup> Many of the abbots of Northumbria's existing monasteries either gifted him their lands or willed them to him, Stephen tells us, and his household was becoming a magnet for the sons of the nobility.<sup>42</sup>

Wilfrid was therefore growing ever more rich and influential, but the queen withdrew to the religious life c.672 and Wilfrid's opposition to clergy who had accepted the Roman dating of Easter only in 664 was making him powerful enemies.<sup>43</sup> These included the prominent community at *Streanaeshalch*, led by Ecgfrith's maternal relative, Abbess Hild, his widowed mother, Eanflæd, and his sister, Ælfflæd,<sup>44</sup> who were investing there in the memory of Pope Gregory's mission to the English and Northumbria's first 'Roman' king, Edwin, Eanflæd's father and Hild's great-uncle.

Wilfrid's confrontational attitude towards heresy comes over strongly in Stephen's description of his treatment of British communities inside Northumbria.<sup>45</sup> While this was arguably in-line with Theodore's views early in his career as archbishop, the elderly archbishop seems to have moderated his views while in Britain and adopted a more pragmatic stance.<sup>46</sup> In contrast, Wilfrid did not. His authoritarian approach will arguably have alarmed large

38 Bede, *HE* IV.2. pp. 332–37.

39 *VW*, ch. 22.

40 *VW*, ch. 21.

41 *VW*, ch. 17.

42 *VW*, ch. 21.

43 *VW*, ch. 12.

44 Higham, *Ecgfrith, King of the Northumbrians*, pp. 130–33.

45 *VW*, ch. 17.

46 Clare Stancliffe, *Bede, Wilfrid and the Irish* (Jarrow, 2003), pp. 12–15; Thomas Charles-Edwards "Wilfrid and the Celts," in *Wilfrid: Abbot, Bishop, Saint*, ed. Higham, pp. 243–59, at p. 247.

numbers of Northumbria's clergy and alienated Ecgrith's Scottish, Pictish and British tributaries. On this reasoning it seems likely that Wilfrid was now proving to be an obstacle to Ecgrith's over-lordship of the North, and the spread there of Roman practices.

Nor had Wilfrid endeared himself to Theodore, who at Hertford had made known his desire to reduce the size of the English dioceses only to see Wilfrid's expand both northwards and southwards. Additionally, there were issues around York's status. Wilfrid's sending proctors to represent him at the synod of Hertford, rather than attend in person,<sup>47</sup> may reflect his knowledge (which Wilfrid will have come across in 664) that York had briefly been a metropolitan see in the 630s.<sup>48</sup> That this mattered to the Wilfridians is revealed by Stephen's reference to Colman as once having been metropolitan bishop of York.<sup>49</sup> This misrepresents the Irishman but demonstrates awareness of York's earlier status, and reveals a degree of interest in projecting that forward in time from the days of Paulinus towards Wilfrid's appointment.<sup>50</sup> Although Wilfrid is not known to have challenged Theodore's authority directly, the issue of York's status vis-à-vis Canterbury necessarily mattered at a time when the see's partitioning was on the agenda.

By 678 Wilfrid had a new enemy in Ecgrith's second queen, Iurminburh.<sup>51</sup> The king had his own reasons,<sup>52</sup> of course, but it was explicitly with her encouragement that he invited Theodore north that autumn to rid him of his bishop. The archbishop's willingness to co-operate reflects his desire to divide the see, obviously, but he was probably also motivated by a wish to keep Ecgrith on side, to defuse tensions between different adherents to Roman practices in Northumbria and re-invigorate the expansion of Roman Christianity northwards under his own supervision.

Theodore sub-divided the Northumbrian Church immediately after he had ejected Wilfrid, appointing separate bishops for Bernicia, Deira and Lindsey. The new appointees were all northerners and likely to have been Ecgrith's choices as much as Theodore's. Bosa, appointed to York, was one of Hild's graduates,<sup>53</sup> so a candidate likely to have been favoured by Ecgrith's sister and

47 Bede, *HE* IV.5, pp. 348–55.

48 James Fraser, *From Caledonia to Pictland*, pp. 195–99; Nicholas J. Higham, "Bede and the Early English Church," in *Leaders of the Anglo-Saxon Church, from Bede to Stigand*, ed. Alexander Rumble (Woodbridge, 2012), pp. 25–40, at 32–36.

49 *VW*, ch. 10.

50 Bede, *HE* 11.17; pp. 194–97.

51 *VW*, ch. 24.

52 Higham, *Ecgrith, King of the Northumbrians*, pp. 171–73.

53 Bede, *HE* IV.23, pp. 404–15.

mother, who were gradually taking control of *Streanaeshalch* during the elderly abbess's final illness (she died in 680). Eata, appointed to Hexham, had been one of Aidan's English pupils recruited in the 630s who had risen first to the abbacy of Melrose then of Lindisfarne (the latter in 664 at the urging of Oswiu's third and last Irish bishop, Colman). He was therefore a leader of the Northumbrian monks and clergy who had come over to Rome with King Oswiu, making him exceptionally well placed to appreciate how best to persuade others to follow in his footsteps. Eadhæd, in Lindsey, had been King Oswiu's personal priest in the mid-660s.<sup>54</sup> Theodore and Ecgrith were therefore promoting ex-Ionans to head up the Northumbrian Church, with the most 'Iona-friendly' candidate appointed to the most northerly see. This reveals their dissatisfaction with Wilfrid and willingness to trust instead to the so-called 'middle' group of clergy, who had themselves undergone the transition from Ionan to Roman Christianity.<sup>55</sup>

This re-configuration of the Northumbrian Church was, however, still fragile in the autumn of 679, and faced a particular threat from Wilfrid's appeal to the papacy against his expulsion. At this point Wilfrid's supporters still retained control of several wealthy Northumbrian monasteries, giving him a platform from which to relaunch his career should he carry the day at Rome. Both Theodore and Abbess Hild sent letters seeking to sway the papal court against Wilfrid but the matter was only settled in October. The result was not therefore known in England when Theodore was negotiating peace between Ecgrith and Æthelred. That Ecgrith and Theodore were already co-operating closely is likely to have been an important influence on these discussions. Their co-operation clearly continued, for when Wilfrid did eventually return (late in 680 or in 681), his papal letters were dismissed as forgeries, Wilfrid was imprisoned, then exiled and his followers dispersed by the king.<sup>56</sup> Such would have been unthinkable without the archbishop's support. Discussion and reaffirmation of their joint position by king and archbishop vis-à-vis Wilfrid is therefore likely to have formed part of their meetings late in 679.

Theodore demonstrated his commitment to this agreement in the immediate aftermath of peace, shifting Bishop Eadhæd, who he had appointed to Lindsey late in 678, to Ripon, where he was presumably tasked with cancelling out Wilfridian influence but at the same time spreading Roman practices among the still largely British communities of the Pennines. This was, though,

54 Bede, *HE* 111.28, pp. 314–17.

55 For the divisions of the Northumbrian Church, see Thomas Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 320–21; 336–37.

56 *VW*, chs. 34–40.

far from the end of Theodore's engagement, for his frequent visits to the North and his actions there imply that a detailed program was agreed by king and archbishop in the aftermath of the battle by the Trent. That Bede referred not to a *foedus pacis*, but *foedera pacis* in the plural, suggests that there were agreements not just between the two kings but between the archbishop and each king as well.

Theodore committed himself to pushing forward Roman Christianity in the North. In 681 he returned to partition the Bernician diocese, dividing Bernicia between Hexham and Lindisfarne and creating a new see for the Picts at Abercorn, based on the safer, southern shore of the Firth of Forth.<sup>57</sup> This provided the missionary effort with a new forward base. Again, the appointees were northerners. One had been the abbot of Gilling, the other a man with strong links to Whitby, so once more both probably men who had 'come-over' to Rome with Oswiu. Theodore subsequently deposed Tunberht from Hexham (the reason is unknown) but, at the synod of *Adtuifyrði*, near the river Aln (Northumberland), in the autumn of 684 he oversaw the election of yet another ex-Ionan priest, Cuthbert, once an in-mate of Melrose but now the prior of Lindisfarne, who was ordained by the archbishop at York the following Easter.<sup>58</sup> Theodore's input to the northern Roman Church was very considerable, therefore, between 678 and 685 (when Ecgrith was killed). For such an old man (he was about 77 years old in 679), the frequency of his journeys northwards is remarkable. It seems reasonable to see his input as fulfilment of commitments made to the king in the aftermath of the fight near the river Trent.

Ecgrith seems likewise to have seen his own success bound up with strengthening the Roman Church in the North. Bede claimed that towards the end of his life Oswiu had wielded *imperium* over both the Scots and the Picts,<sup>59</sup> later specifying that he had "subjected the greater part of the Pictish people to the rule of the English".<sup>60</sup> He had certainly established English rule in Fife, perhaps beyond. Ecgrith suppressed a Pictish revolt early in his reign (c.671), so on the face of it held a position comparable to that of his father. There were important differences, though, for Oswiu had had the active co-operation of the Scottish royal family and promoted Dál Riata princes to rule the northern Picts. With Wilfrid in post, though, Ecgrith seems to have been unable to count on the active support of Iona's associates in Dál Riata, turning instead to

57 Bede, *HE* IV.12, pp. 368–71.

58 Bede, *HE* IV.28 (26), pp. 434–35.

59 Bede, *HE* II.5, pp. 148–55.

60 Bede, *HE* III.24, pp. 288–95.

a distant cousin, Bruide,<sup>61</sup> a scion of the British dynasty of Dumbarton Rock, to serve as tributary king of the northern Picts. While his victory was still fresh, Ecgfrith's power was unchallenged but Wilfrid's aggressive approach to mission had the potential, at least, to stir up hostility not just to the Roman Church but to English domination as well.

It was against that backdrop that Ecgfrith engineered Wilfrid's removal and the appointment of bishops likely to take a less confrontational approach towards the Scottish and Pictish Churches. But alongside that initiative the Northumbrian king invested heavily in a new, ostentatiously 'Roman' church at Jarrow (founded c.681).<sup>62</sup> This new venture reveals much about Ecgfrith's thinking. It was Benedict Biscop to whom he granted the necessary estates, the man who had guided Theodore to Britain and served as his abbot at Canterbury until Hadrian's arrival.<sup>63</sup> Given the closeness of his connection to the archbishop, it seems very likely that the new foundation was discussed by Ecgfrith and Theodore late in 679. The site was later described as Ecgfrith's port,<sup>64</sup> referring to the open water below (once called the Slake). This choice of location implies strong links between the king's foundation and his military and political ambitions. There were two strands to the policies agreed by Ecgfrith and Theodore, therefore. On the one hand they were promoting as bishops men who had themselves experienced the transition to Rome, in expectation of their greater success in encouraging others to follow suit. Alongside, the king bank-rolled a major new centre of Catholic orthodoxy and was preparing to take on the role of God's champion in imposing His will on the North.

That this would be necessary was becoming ever more apparent, for Ecgfrith's defeat by the Mercians coincided with signs that northern British and Pictish leaders were flexing their military muscles, encouraged perhaps in addition by the emergence in the late 670s of a powerful new High-King in Ireland.<sup>65</sup> Ecgfrith's ambitions in this theatre are hinted at, at least, by a claim made by Wilfrid, relevant to the period after he had been reinstated by the

61 *Historia Brittonum*, 57, in *British History and the Welsh Annals*, ed. and trans. John Morris (Chichester, 1980), p. 77.

62 Ian Wood, *The Origins of Jarrow: The Monastery, the Slake and Ecgfrith's Minster* (Jarrow, 2008), p. 18; Rosemary Cramp, *Wearmouth and Jarrow Monastic Sites*, vol. 1 (Swindon, 2005), pp. 8–12; Higham, *Ecgfrith, King of the Northumbrians*, pp. 192–93.

63 Bede, *Historia Abbatum*, chs. 3, 7, ed. Christopher Grocock and Ian N. Wood (Oxford, 2013), pp. 28–29, 36–39.

64 Symeon of Durham, *Libellus de Exordio atque Procurso Istius, Hoc Est Dunhelmensis Ecclesie*, 2.5, ed. David Rollason (Oxford, 2000), pp. 36–39.

65 Higham, *Ecgfrith, King of the Northumbrians*, pp. 201–07.

pope as bishop of York.<sup>66</sup> Wilfrid was present at the synod of Rome in March 680 and added his signature to its proceedings, as “legate of the venerable synod for Britain”,<sup>67</sup> but when Stephen came to report on this he represented Wilfrid confessing “the true and catholic faith for all the northern part of Britain and Ireland and the islands which are inhabited by peoples of the Angles and Britons as well as the Scots and Picts.”<sup>68</sup> Obviously, this far exceeded the practical limits of the jurisdiction of York’s bishop in 680, but it probably did reflect Wilfrid’s aspirations. This was the authority, therefore, and these the responsibilities that Wilfrid thought were rightfully his, in line both with Vitalian’s letter and current thinking at Rome. As we have seen, the York diocese was dependent in the 670s on the influence of the Northumbrian king. Wilfrid’s grandiose conception of his diocese probably therefore mirrors Ecgrith’s ambitions as Northumbria’s ruler. When in June 684 he set about re-imposing himself militarily, he first attacked the High-King of Ireland, Fínsnechtae Fledach of Brega, then marched on the Picts the following year.<sup>69</sup>

### Conclusions

Beyond the fact that Æthelred paid wergild for the killing of Ecgrith’s brother Ælfwine, Bede offered little detail of the agreements by which Theodore negotiated an end to Northumbrian/Mercian hostilities in the autumn of 679. It is easy to see what Æthelred gained from the deal, effectively recovering the dominant position in southern Britain that had been enjoyed by family members in the past, plus Theodore’s co-operation in reforming the Mercian Church. That the Mercian king agreed to peace, therefore, is unsurprising.

Likewise, that Theodore required peace and stability in order to make headway in his reform and re-organisation of the English Church is obvious. However, his close involvement in the far North stemmed only from Wilfrid’s ejection in the previous year. This required a hands-on role in a region which he had formerly barely even visited. War risked disrupting his oversight, leaving the North in the hands of only-recently-appointed bishops whose commitment to and knowledge of Roman practices Theodore may well have doubted. The archbishop stepped in to negotiate peace in order to safeguard his work of

66 *VW*, ch. 32,

67 Chadwick, “The English Church and the Monothelete Controversy,” p. 92.

68 *VW*, ch. 53.

69 Bede, *HE* IV.26(24), pp. 426–31; *The Irish Chronicles*, 686, ed. and trans. Thomas Charles-Edwards, 1 (Liverpool, 2006) p. 166. See David A.E. Pelletier, “The Northumbrian Attack on Brega in A.D. 684,” below.

reform more generally but particularly his newly expanded engagement with the conversion of the North. Theodore's peace late in 679 should therefore be understood in the context of Wilfrid's exclusion in 678, his appeal to Rome and the efforts of both archbishop and king to push forward the missionary effort northwards. The archbishop had co-operated closely with Ecgrith across the previous year and there is every reason to think that their joint enterprise featured heavily at this point. It would continue thereafter up to Ecgrith's death.

In 679 Ecgrith lost his brother, the province of Lindsey, and the last vestiges of his admittedly short-lived supremacy over the South. That he agreed to peace suggests that he was persuaded by Theodore that the North was the theatre in which God wished him to concentrate his efforts. While the new bishops appointed by the archbishop sought to steer the Northumbrians and their British, Scottish and Pictish neighbours towards Roman practices by persuasion, Ecgrith himself set about resourcing a new, very 'Roman' foundation at Jarrow. Benedict Biscop, to whom he granted the new lands, was the king's counsellor, the Northumbrian closest to Theodore and the individual within Northumbria with the greatest knowledge of Continental Christianity. Jarrow represents, therefore, Ecgrith's renewed commitment to Rome's leadership of the Church at a moment of personal crisis. Again, this is likely to have been a matter of close discussion with Theodore.

Once Jarrow was well underway, the king put into effect his plan to impose orthodoxy on the North by force of arms. A successful expedition against Brega in eastern Ireland in the summer of 684 effectively neutralised the Irish High-King, removing any potential for his interfering in the North. This left the Picts and Britons of the Clyde valley exposed. Once his new 'Roman' church had been consecrated on 23 April 685, Ecgrith marched against the Picts, confident of divine support. What Ecgrith lost in southern Britain by Theodore's peace he was therefore expecting to make up in this northern world as God's lieutenant, assured of divine support in bringing "all his subjects to the catholic and apostolic faith," and so weeding out "the tares sown by the enemy," as Vitalian had put it. Ecgrith died in battle less than a month later, on 20 May, but his failure should not blind us to the plans that will have been drawn up in discussion with Theodore in 678 and 679, then pushed through energetically in the intervening years. Although Ecgrith's death ended attempts to impose Roman Christianity on the North by force, Ecgrith's successor, Aldfrith, and Abbot Ceolfrith at Jarrow both continued the broad thrust of these policies, persuading Abbot Adamnán, the Ionan community and the Pictish king Nechtan all to convert to Rome, as Bede recounted triumphantly in 731.<sup>70</sup>

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70 Bede, *HE* v.15,21–22, pp. 504–09, 532–55.

## The Northumbrian Attack on Brega in A.D. 684

*David A.E. Pelteret*

One of the most puzzling episodes in the history of Northumbria is the attack on Brega in the midlands of Ireland instigated by Ecgrith, king of the Northumbrians, in the year before he died. Anglo-Saxon sources do not mention any reason for the attack. This chapter suggests that Ecgrith's motive lay in the nature of his kingdom at the time and that this explanation is consonant with Irish annalistic evidence.<sup>1</sup>

### Sources

The report of the attack on Brega in the Irish Annals is laconic: for example, the *Annals of Ulster*, s.a. 685.2 states: "The Saxons lay waste Mag Breg, and many churches, in the month of June."<sup>2</sup> Fortunately the Venerable Bede, writing in a judgmental passage imbued with over four decades of hindsight, provides in his *Historia ecclesiastica* IV.26 a few fragments of additional information that are relevant:

In the year of our Lord 684 Ecgrith, king of Northumbria, sent an army to Ireland under his ealdorman Berht, who wretchedly devastated a harmless race that had always been most friendly to the English, and his hostile bands spared neither churches nor monasteries. The islanders resisted force by force so far as they were able, imploring the merciful aid of God and invoking His vengeance with unceasing imprecations.

After relating how Ecgrith was killed the next year, on 20 May, in an attack on the Picts that his friends had advised against, Bede says that

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- 1 Later sources dealing with the impact of the attack on Brega are not discussed here. For admirable introductions to these sources see Patrick Wadden, "The First English Invasion: Irish Responses to the Northumbrian Attack on Brega, 684," *Ríocht na Míde* 21 (2010), 1–33, and "Trácht Romra and the Northumbrian Episode in *Betha Adamnáin*," *Ériu* 62 (2012), 101–11.
  - 2 "Saxones Campum Bregh uastant 7 aeclesias plurimas in mense Iuni": *The Annals of Ulster (To A.D. 1131)*, Part 1: *Text and Translation*, ed. and trans. Seán Mac Airt and Gearóid Mac Niocaill (Dublin, 1983) [hereafter *AU*], pp. 148–49.

... in the previous year he had refused to listen to the holy father Egbert, who had urged him not to attack the Irish who had done him no harm; and the punishment for his sin was that he would not now listen to those who sought to save him from his own destruction.<sup>3</sup>

Unfortunately Bede does not disclose where he obtained his information. Its ultimate source may have been the monk Egbert himself. Egbert had originally retired as a *peregrinus* to Ireland<sup>4</sup> to the monastery of Rath Melsigi.<sup>5</sup> He was a supporter of the Dionysiac Paschal tradition and is referred to by Bede in several places in his *Historia ecclesiastica*.<sup>6</sup> For reasons undisclosed he eventually moved to the monastery on the island of Iona in 716, where he is credited by Bede with converting the monastic community there to the Dionysiac Easter and the adoption of the Petrine tonsure.<sup>7</sup>

### Northumbria: The Setting

Northumbria in the reign of Ecgrith was still in anthropological terms at a stage of social development more akin to a chiefdom than a state.<sup>8</sup> To begin with, it did not have stable borders. Even Northumbria itself as a consolidated realm was a recent creation, the southern territory of Deira having been finally incorporated into Bernicia in the north under Ecgrith's father Oswiu less than twenty years before Ecgrith acceded to the throne of the Northumbrians. Northumbria's northern border is difficult to define in his reign.<sup>9</sup>

3 Bede, *HE* IV.26(24), pp. 426–29.

4 Bede, *HE* III.4, pp. 224–25

5 On the monastery see Dáibhí Ó Cróinín, "Rath Melsigi, Willibrord and the Earliest Echternach Manuscripts," with an appendix by Thomas Fanning, "Some Field Monuments in the Townlands of Clonmelsh and Garryhundon, Co. Carlow," *Peritia* 3 (1984), 17–49.

6 Bede, *HE* III.4, 27; IV.3, 26(24); V.9, 10, 22, 23, 24, pp. 224, 312, 344, 428, 474–80, 554, 556, 566. He may, in fact, have had episcopal status: cf. Bede, *HE*, p. 225 n. 3. See also Bede, *De temporum ratione*, cap. 66, s.a. 4670, in C.W. Jones, ed., *Beda's opera didascalica*, 2, CCSL 123B (Turnhout, 1977), pp. 532–33 (a reference I owe to Dr Daniel Mc Carthy).

7 Bede, *HE* V.22, p. 554. Bede's reference to its island location is important because it shows that Egbert kept his vow not to return to his "native island Britain" (Bede, *HE* III.27, pp. 312–13).

8 For chiefdoms see Elman R. Service, *Primitive Social Organization: An Evolutionary Perspective*, 2nd ed. (New York, 1971), Ch. 5 and for some key characteristics of a state see D. Blair Gibson, *From Chiefdom to State in Early Ireland* (Cambridge, 2012), pp. 279–81, though naturally as in any discipline there is a diversity of opinion among anthropologists.

9 See Peter Hunter Blair, "The Bernicians and their Northern Frontier," in *Studies in Early British History*, ed. Nora K. Chadwick (Cambridge, 1954), pp. 137–72, esp. pp. 169–72, repr. in Peter

As for the south, sometime in the 670s Ecgrith and his younger brother Ælfwine, who was apparently ruling Deira, granted Wilfrid certain lands that had been under the control of the British church. Specifically named are Yeadon and the region of Dent and Catlow.<sup>10</sup> How far these regions were actually under the direct sway of the two Northumbrian kings may be questioned. Wilfrid was an aggressive cleric pursuing a Romanist agenda in Northumbria but he had only seven or eight years at most to establish in these regions churches that adhered to Roman practices before he was ousted from his bishopric by Ecgrith in 678.<sup>11</sup>

How much control Ecgrith exercised over the territory to the west abutting the Irish Sea is uncertain. Nick Higham talks of “Northumbrianization,” implying it was a gradual process. He has suggested that the Mersey was its southern frontier “from the later decades of the seventh century” but unfortunately there is no firm evidence for this.<sup>12</sup> Even if he is correct, this does not mean that the area was under Ecgrith’s control in the 670s and early 680s. In the south-east of his realm Ecgrith suffered a severe military defeat at the hands of the Mercians in 679 at the River Trent, where effectively he lost control of the territory of Lindsey. We shall return to this defeat later.

Three further factors should be considered when assessing the nature of Northumbrian society in the reign of Ecgrith. The first is the position of the land charter. Chapter 17 of the *Vita Wilfridi* records that Wilfrid read out before his congregation the donations of land granted him by Ecgrith and Ælfwine, which is strongly suggestive that the land charter was known in Northumbria.<sup>13</sup> Whether charters were introduced into England by Augustine of Canterbury or some seventy years later by Theodore,<sup>14</sup> Wilfrid would surely have realized

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Hunter Blair, *Anglo-Saxon Northumbria*, ed. M. Lapidge and P. Hunter Blair, Collected Studies Series, CS192 (London, 1984), VIII.

10 *VW*, Ch. 17, pp. 36–37.

11 For current thinking on Wilfrid and a substantial bibliography see N.J. Higham, ed., *Wilfrid: Abbot, Bishop, Saint. Papers from the 1300th Anniversary Conferences* (Donington, 2013).

12 Nick Higham, “Northumbria’s Southern Frontier: A Review,” *EME* 14 (2006), 391–418, at pp. 414–16.

13 *VW*, Ch. 17, p. 36. On Wilfrid and land charters see Patrick Sims-Williams, “St Wilfrid and Two Charters dated AD 676 and 680,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 39 (1988), 163–83.

14 For the early date see Pierre Chaplais, “Who Introduced Charters into England? The Case for Augustine,” *Journal of the Society of Archivists* 3:10 (1969), 526–42, repr. in Felicity Ringer, ed., *Prisca Munimenta: Studies in Archival and Administrative History presented to Dr. A.E.J. Hollaender* (London, 1973), pp. 88–107. For arguments in favour of Theodore see Ben Snook, “Who Introduced Charters into England? The Case for Theodore and Hadrian,” in *Textus Roffensis: Law, Language, and Libraries in Early Medieval England*, ed. Bruce O’Brien and Barbara Bombi (Turnhout, 2015), pp. 257–89.

their importance for permitting permanent tenure of land given to the Church. Bede's evidence, however, suggests that its use as a means of ensuring permanent tenure of land granted by a king to *laymen* was something that was only in the process of coming to fruition in the latter years of Bede's life.<sup>15</sup>

A second factor is the nature of the coinage in Northumbria in the reign of Ecgrith. Apart from a handful of gold *thrymsas* associated with southern Northumbria whose date and interpretation is debatable, there is no evidence for monetized trade in Northumbria during Ecgrith's reign.<sup>16</sup> Most numismatists and economic historians are in agreement that the development of *sceatta* coinage in the 8th century was hugely important in the development of trade, but in Northumbria the first evidence of *sceattas* comes from the reign of Ecgrith's successor, his half-brother Aldfrith.<sup>17</sup>

The third factor is how the kingdom was administered. There was evidently a political hierarchy in that the expedition to Brega was led by Berht, who is described as a *dux* or ealdorman.<sup>18</sup> Carlisle was administered by a *praepositus* (?reeve) called Waga.<sup>19</sup> The *Vita Wilfridi* mentions *praefecti* (?also reeves) and sub-kings (*subreguli*).<sup>20</sup> The kingdom thus had a basic administrative structure but there is a question as to how far it was underpinned by a literate bureaucracy. It must be remembered that some ecclesiastical foundations dated only from the time of Oswiu.<sup>21</sup> Whether they were yet ready to provide training of

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- 15 "Epistola Bede ad Ecgbertum episcopum," Ch. 12, in *Venerabilis Baedae opera historica*, ed. Charles Plummer, 2 vols (Oxford, 1896; repr. in 1 vol., 1969), 1:415–16; translation in *EHD* 1, pp. 805–06 (no. 170). The only land charter ascribed to Ecgrith (S 66) is a fabrication, but see Patrick Wormald's valuable introduction to the history of the land charter, *Bede and the Conversion of England: The Charter Evidence*, Jarrow Lecture 1984 (Jarrow, 1985), esp. p. 17, repr. in idem, *The Times of Bede: Studies in Early English Christian Society and its Historian*, ed. Stephen Baxter (Oxford, 2006), pp. 135–66, esp. p. 151.
- 16 James Booth, "Northumbrian Coinage and the Productive Site at South Newbald ('Sancton')," in *Early Deira: Archaeological Studies of the East Riding in the Fourth to Ninth Centuries AD*, ed. Helen Geake and Jonathan Kenny (Oxford, 2000), pp. 83–97, at p. 83; Elizabeth J. Pirie, "Contrasts and Continuity within the Coinage of Northumbria c. 670–876," in *Coinage and History in the North Sea World, c. AD 500–1250: Essays in Honour of Marion Archibald*, ed. Barrie Cook and Gareth Williams (Leiden, 2006), pp. 211–40, at pp. 217–18.
- 17 Elizabeth J.E. Pirie, "Finds of 'Sceattas' and 'Stycas' of Northumbria," in *Anglo-Saxon Monetary History: Essays in Memory of Michael Dolley*, ed. M.A.S. Blackburn (Leicester, 1986), pp. 67–90.
- 18 Bede, *HE* IV.26(24), pp. 426–27.
- 19 *VCSA* 4.8, pp. 122–23.
- 20 *VW*, ch. 17, pp. 36–37.
- 21 Bede, *HE* III.24, p. 292.

the kind that the future king Aldfrith received from the Irish<sup>22</sup> is an open question. The departure for Ireland of many dissatisfied with the outcome of the Synod of Whitby must have been a severe cultural blow for the kingdom.<sup>23</sup> Monkwearmouth was established by Benedict Biscop only in 679, and Jarrow in 685. The undoubted cultural accomplishments of Northumbrian ecclesiastical foundations did not start to appear until well into the reign of Aldfrith.<sup>24</sup>

On the other hand, we should not underrate the importance that the significant figure of Wilfrid had in shaping the value system of the king and his followers. By successfully persuading Oswiu to accept the Dionysiac Easter, thus marginalizing supporters of the different Christian tradition the Irish brought to Northumbria by portraying its followers as schismatics,<sup>25</sup> Wilfrid enabled the Irish to be regarded as “the other” and thus easier to attack. Though Ecgrith was subsequently to oust Wilfrid for adopting the attributes of a king in his style of living, Ecgrith initially supported him with generous benefactions, as we have seen. In my view, Thomas Charles-Edwards is quite right in emphasizing the importance of Wilfrid’s religious views on the kingdom,<sup>26</sup> even though he was not himself of political importance in Northumbria after he left in 678 to appeal to the pope against his deposition.

These factors suggest to me that Ecgrith’s reign is likely to have followed the style of governance of earlier kings, who maintained the support of their entourage by acquiring booty and by seizing territory whose inhabitants could then be granted as slaves to their followers together with a proportion of the material spoils of war. In attempting to determine the motive for the attack on Brega it is important to bear all these factors in mind.

### The Date of the Attack on Brega

It is unfortunate that ascertaining the date of the attack on Brega from the extant sources is not straightforward. Any resolution of the apparent inconsistencies requires either an element of special pleading or conjecture.

22 Colin A. Ireland, “Where was King Aldfrith of Northumbria Educated? An Exploration of Seventh-Century Insular Learning,” *Traditio* 70 (2015), 29–74.

23 Bede, *HE* IV.4, p. 346; Vera Orschel, “Mag nEó na Sacsan: An English Colony in Ireland in the Seventh and Eighth Centuries,” *Peritia* 15 (2001), 81–107.

24 Ireland, “King Aldfrith,” 30.

25 In *VW*, ch. 5, pp. 12–13, his biographer refers to “the Easter rule, of which the British and Irish schismatics (*scismatici*) were ignorant.”

26 T.M. Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons 350–1064* (Oxford, 2013), p. 409, though he reaches different conclusions from me about Ecgrith’s intentions in invading Ireland.

Bede states unambiguously that Ecgrith's father, Oswiu, died on 15 February 670, "leaving his son Ecgrith as heir to the kingdom" and confirms the year in his chronological summary.<sup>27</sup> He reports in this summary that Ecgrith was killed in 685. He had implied this date earlier when, after giving 684 as the year of Ecgrith's attack on Brega, he later in the same chapter declares that "the very next year" Ecgrith led an army to ravage the Picts and was killed by them on 20 May "in the fortieth year of his age and the fifteenth of his reign."<sup>28</sup> That Bede was accurate in ascribing his death to the fifteenth year finds confirmation in the dedication inscription for the church of St Paul at Jarrow, which has survived. This records that the monastery was dedicated on the 9th kalends of May (i.e. 23 April) in the fifteenth year of king Ecgrith and the fourth of abbot Ceolfrith. The ninth day was on a Saturday in 684 but fell on a Sunday, the appropriate day for such a dedication, in the year 685.<sup>29</sup>

The most convincing solution, to my mind, is that formulated by Kenneth Harrison, namely Ecgrith did not immediately succeed his father until sometime in September 670.<sup>30</sup> I suggest that an explanation lies to hand for a delayed accession. Ecgrith had an elder brother, Alhfrith, who supported Wilfrid in his prosecution of the Roman cause at Whitby. In that context, Alhfrith is described as a king, presumably of Deira. Bede mentions in passing that Alhfrith had rebelled against his father.<sup>31</sup> It is usually assumed that Alhfrith was either killed or had died since he is not mentioned in the historical record after A.D. 664 but this was not necessarily the case. Because of Alhfrith's rebellion, Ecgrith may well have been Oswiu's designated successor,<sup>32</sup> but if Alhfrith had, in fact, survived, as the elder brother of Ecgrith he could well have laid claim to the throne,<sup>33</sup> a claim that may have taken some months to resolve. Although Bede strongly disapproved of Ecgrith's attack on the Irish, he may

27 Bede, *HE* IV.5 and v.24, pp. 348–49 and 564–65.

28 Bede, *HE* IV.26(24), pp. 426–29.

29 Elizabeth Okasha, *Hand-List of Anglo-Saxon Non-Runic Inscriptions* (Cambridge, 1971), pp. 85–86 (with extensive bibliography up to 1965) and Plate 61; John Higgitt, "The Dedication Inscription at Jarrow and its Context," *AntJ* 59:2 (1979), 343–74 (with a few readings slightly different from Okasha's and an extensive discussion of script and textual affinities) and pl. LXa and b, opp. p. 358; Ian Wood, *The Origins of Jarrow: The Monastery, the Slake and Ecgrith's Minster*, *Bede's World Studies* 1 (Jarrow, 2008), pp. 2–3 and n. 2.

30 "The Reign of King Ecgrith of Northumbria," *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal* 43 (1971), 79–84. For an alternative viewpoint see Susan Wood, "Bede's Northumbrian Dates Again," *EHR* 98 (1983), 280–96.

31 Bede, *HE* III.14, pp. 254–55.

32 For the concept of designation, see Harrison, "Reign," p. 83 and n. 1.

33 Professor Higham assumes that Alhfrith was not available: see N.J. Higham, *Ecgrith: King of the Northumbrians, High-King of Britain* (Donington, 2015), p. 126 n. 21.

well not have wanted to impugn Ecgrith's claim on the throne by mentioning Alhfrith in this context since Ecgrith had been so centrally involved in the creation of Bede's own monastery at Jarrow.

Unfortunately one looks in vain to the Irish Annals, which fail to clarify the chronology. The text of the *Annals of Ulster* actually gives A.D. 684 as the year of the attack, but in fact, the date of the attack on Brega in the *Annals of Ulster*, *Annals of Roscrea*, *Annals of Tigernach*, *Chronicon Scottorum*, *Fragmentary Annals*, and *McGeoghagan's Book* (= *Annals of Clonmacnoise*), whose entries are all cognate, synchronize at A.D. 685, as Daniel McCarthy has shown.<sup>34</sup> Likewise several sets of annals synchronize Ecgrith's death at A.D. 686, with the *Annals of Ulster* and *Tigernach* stating that Ecgrith "had completed the 15th year of his reign" and giving a non-Julian date, "Saturday, May 20th," as the specific day of his death.<sup>35</sup> Since 20 May 686 fell on Sunday, whereas 20 May 685 indeed fell on Saturday, Dr Mc Carthy has suggested to me that the one-year postdating of these two entries in these annals implies they were entered retrospectively. As for the claim that at his death Ecgrith had completed the fifteenth year of his rule, I would suggest this is best explained by the annalist's imposing a *damnatio memoriae* on a failed contestant for the throne, thus dating Ecgrith's succession to the death of Oswiu (February 670).

My conclusion is thus that Bede's dating of A.D. 684 for the attack should be accepted in spite of the seeming conflicts between the early medieval sources.

### *Captivi*

Adomnán, abbot of Iona, mentions in passing two visits to Northumbria subsequent to Ecgrith's death but only in the context of a pestilence that was afflicting both Britain and Ireland. In his view God protected him from this plague "in England, when we visited our friend king Aldfrith ... both in our first visit, after the battle of Ecfrieth, and in our second visit, two years later."<sup>36</sup> As he is focusing on the fact that he was spared from infection, Adomnán can

34 Available at <[www.scss.tcd.ie/misc/kronos/chronology/synchronisms/Edition\\_4/K\\_trad/Synch\\_tables/so679-0694.htm](http://www.scss.tcd.ie/misc/kronos/chronology/synchronisms/Edition_4/K_trad/Synch_tables/so679-0694.htm)> (accessed 28 Feb. 2017)

35 "uicisimo die mensis Maii, Sabbati die ... .x.uº. anno regni sui consummata": *AU*, pp. 148–49.

36 *Adomnán's Life of Columba* (hereafter *AVC*), 2.46, ed. and trans. Alan Orr Anderson and Marjorie Ogilvie Anderson (Oxford, 1991), pp. 178–79 (103b). On Aldfrith see Barbara Yorke, *Rex doctissimus: Bede and King Aldfrith of Northumbria*, Jarrow Lecture 2009 (Newcastle on Tyne, 2009) and Ireland, "King Aldfrith," together with the references they cite.

tactfully avoid mentioning the reason for one of these visits, presumably because he is keen to rebuild the bridges between Irish clerics and Northumbria that had been swept away by the torrent of Wilfrid's eloquence at the Synod of Whitby. With Wilfrid effectively banished since 678 and Aldfrith, a former resident of Iona with strong Irish ties, now the king of the Northumbrians, it was not necessary to drag to the surface the attack on Ireland that Ecgrith had fomented in 684. Fortunately the Irish Annals succinctly report that in 687 (*recte* 686) Adomnán brought back sixty captives to Ireland.<sup>37</sup>

The much later *Fragmentary Annals of Ireland* confirms that these were people taken by the Saxons: "In this year Adamnán set free the captives the Saxons had taken from Ireland."<sup>38</sup> It is important to note here that the text uses (in a Middle Irish form) the Old Irish *brat* whose range of meanings includes 'captive(s) as spoil',<sup>39</sup> though *not* 'hostages'. Irish law was familiar with the concept of hostages, but the word for an intertribal hostage appears to have been *gíall*.<sup>40</sup> Since Ecgrith himself was held as a hostage in the kingdom of the Mericians at the time when his father successfully defeated Penda in 655,<sup>41</sup> one can understand why it might be assumed that such captives were taken as hostages. (It should be noted, however, that Bede uses the word *obses*, not *captivus*, to describe Ecgrith's status.)

We are fortunate, however, in having a contemporary source that enables us to interpret how the word *captivus* was used by an Irishman in the late 7th century. Adomnán, who died in 704, composed his *Life of Columba* perhaps little more than a decade after Ecgrith's death. In that work he uses the words *captiva* and *captivus* three times in fairly unambiguous contexts. The first concerns Columba's contact with a magician called Broichan, who possessed an Irish female slave whom Columba urged him to free. "Know this, Broichan, know that if you will not release for me this pilgrim captive (*captivam*) before

37 For example, "Adomnanus captivos reduxit ad Hiberniam .lx.," *AU*, pp. 150–51. All synchronize on the same date of A.D. 687, a discrepancy of one year.

38 "Isin bliadain si ro fuaslaig Adhamhnán an braid rugsad Saxain a hErimn": Joan Newlon Radner, ed., *Fragmentary Annals of Ireland* (Dublin, 1978), pp. 36–37.

39 Also "act of plundering, robbing; spoil, plunder, robbery." Available at *EDIL—Electronic Dictionary of the Irish Language*, s.v. "1 brat" (accessed 27 Nov. 2017). My thanks to Dr Colin Ireland for advice on this word.

40 *EDIL*, s.v. "2 gíall (a)" (accessed 27 Nov. 2017). Robin Chapman Stacey, "The Hostage-Sureties of Irish Law," in eadem, *The Road to Judgment: From Custom to Court in Medieval Ireland and Wales*, Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia, 1994), pp. 82–111 and notes, pp. 258–69.

41 Bede, *HE* III.24, p. 290.

I depart from this province, you shall presently die.”<sup>42</sup> That the Latin *captiua* here is a virtual synonym for a slave is indicated by Adomnán’s words, where he rings the changes in his choice of vocabulary to describe her status: she is a *serua* (used twice), an *ancellula*, a *seruula*, a *famula* (used twice). In a second story, Columba gives an indigent man a miraculous stake whose property is consistently to impale animals and thus provide the man’s family with food and income. His wife urges him, however, to destroy it because if people or cattle are killed by it, “[Y]ou yourself and I, with our children, will either be put to death, or be led into slavery.”<sup>43</sup> A third incident concerned Librán, a man who had killed someone and had been put in chains, but had been redeemed by a kinsman; on his release Librán agreed to serve the one who freed him—but had then run away to Iona. After doing seven years’ penance Columba sent him back to his owner, predicting to him that, following the advice of his owner’s wife, “he will ... grant you liberty ... unloosing according to custom the captive’s belt from your loins.”<sup>44</sup> In all three cases it is clear that *captivus* and *captiua* are virtual synonyms for a slave. As with Bede, Adomnán uses the word *obsides* to refer to hostages.<sup>45</sup> The meaning ‘person taken as a slave’ is fortified by the development of a metaphorical sense in later Irish writers: ‘to enslave spiritually’.<sup>46</sup>

It is nigh impossible to give a clear definition of slavery in Northumbria at this period, but two aspects of existence can be said to have been a reality for these captives. The first is the inevitable consequence of being taken away from their homeland: they would have been deprived of the support of

42 “Scito Broichan scito quia si mihi hanc perigrinam libe<ra>re captivam nolueris priusquam de hac reuertar prouincia, citius morieris”: *AVC* 2.33, pp. 140–41 (79b).

43 “[T]u ipse et ego cum nostris liberis aut occidemur aut captiui ducemur”: *AVC* 2.37, pp. 150–51 (84b). Richard Sharpe concurs with their translation: “[T]hen you and I and our children will be killed or led into slavery”: Adomnán of Iona, *Life of St Columba*, trans. Richard Sharpe, Penguin Classics (Harmondsworth, 1995), pp. 186 and 337 n. 305, where, citing Fergus Kelly, *A Guide to Early Irish Law*, Early Irish Law Series 3 (Dublin, 1988), pp. 215–16, he points out that a victim’s family could demand that someone who was unable or unwilling to pay the penalty for unlawful killing could choose to have the killer killed or enslaved.

44 “[L]ibertate donabit, cingulum ex more captiui de tuis resoluens lumbis”: *AVC* 2.39, pp. 156–57 (89a) and cf. Sharpe, trans., *Life of St Columba*, pp. 190 and 340 n. 315.

45 *AVC* 2.42 (95a), pp. 166–67.

46 Anthony Harvey and Jane Power, *The Non-Classical Lexicon of Celtic Latinity*, 1: *Letters A-H*, Royal Irish Academy Dictionary of Medieval Latin from Celtic Sources, Constituent Publications 1 (Turnhout, 2005), p. 109, s.v. “captiuare,” who cite Sedulius Scottus, *Collectanea in omnes B. Pauli epistolas*, in *Patrologia Latina*, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne (1844–65), 103:203A and Iohannes Scottus Eriugena, *De diuisione naturae (Periphyseon)*, lib. v, in *Patrologia Latina* 122:972A.

kinsmen. The second is the humiliating nature of the status of being a slave. With his customary acuity, James Campbell drew out the implications of a passage about captives recorded by Bede: "When Bede described a vision of hell the image which came to his mind was that of captives being led off into slavery, the crowd mocking round them."<sup>47</sup> Humiliation was integral to the status of a slave, as the contemporary West-Saxon Laws of Ine make plain: in the case of slaves, misdemeanours were to be punished by beating, unlike freemen, who could compound for wrongs committed.<sup>48</sup>

We should thus see those captured in the raid on Brega as no different from material forms of booty. They were available to be granted by royal pleasure to supporters, to be employed as their new owners pleased. Their position was potentially more parlous than those whose territory in England had been overrun by conquering Anglo-Saxons, however, in that they would not have had kindred who might provide them with support.

How did Adomnán come to be the intermediary in securing the release of these persons in 686? As often with historical events, we should look to a combination of factors. As abbot of Iona, he was a member of a confederacy of monasteries, including Durrow, west of Brega. Several times Adomnán mentions contacts with Durrow.<sup>49</sup> The monastery of *Rechru*, which appears to have been on what is now called Lambay Island, was claimed in later sources to be part of Columba's *familia*.<sup>50</sup> We do not know which ecclesiastical foundations were attacked, but being off the coast of Brega Lambay Island was particularly vulnerable. We can thus envisage that representations were made to Adomnán from the churches affected in Brega, either through Durrow or directly, to intervene to secure the release of those who had been seized in 684. And since Aldfrith, who had succeeded Ecgfrith as king, had been resident at Iona,

47 "Early Anglo-Saxon Society According to Written Sources," in his *Essays in Anglo-Saxon History* (London and Ronceverte, WV, 1986), p. 138; originally published (in German) in Claus Ahrens, ed., *Sachsen und Angelsachsen* (Hamburg, 1978), pp. 455–62; cf. J. Campbell, "Elements in the Background to the Life of St Cuthbert and his Early Cult," in *St Cuthbert, his Cult and his Community to AD 1200*, ed. Gerald Bonner, David Rollason, and Clare Stancliffe (Woodbridge, 1989), pp. 3–19, at p. 5. The passage in Bede, *HE* v.12, pp. 490–93 reports Drythelm describing the lamentation of "captured foes."

48 Ine 3.1, 48, 54.2, in *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, ed. Felix Liebermann, 3 vols (Halle, 1903–16), 1:90, 110, 114.

49 For arguments in favour of Adomnán's having personal knowledge of Durrow see Alfred P. Smyth, *Celtic Leinster: Towards an Historical Geography of Early Irish Civilization A.D. 500–1600* (Dublin, 1982), pp. 118–19. On his Irish midlands links see Ireland, "King Aldfrith," pp. 51, 52, and n. 129.

50 Máire Herbert, *Iona, Kells, and Derry: The History and Hagiography of the Monastic Familia of Columba* (Oxford, 1988), p. 42.

Adomnán had good reason to visit the new king in order to repair the relations between the Irish and the Northumbrians that had been damaged by Ecgrith's instigation of the invasion of Brega. Equally Wilfrid's prosecution of the Roman cause had created rifts between those with sympathy for Ionan ecclesiastical practice and those devoted to the Dionysiac Easter.

The *Annals of the Four Masters* rather gilds the lily in its account of Adomnán's visit:

Adamnan went to England, to beg for the captives [*braite*] that the North Saxons had taken with them from Mag-Breg, in the previous year. He got their restitution from them after doing miracles and wonders before the hosts; and afterwards they gave him great honour and reverence, with complete restoration of everything he asked of them.<sup>51</sup>

This has all the marks of an oral tale that has grown in the telling. The story is taken even further in the *Three Fragments*. The latter asserts that Adomnán was given the booty seized consequent on his receiving the crown-tonsure in Northumbria,<sup>52</sup> a claim made presumably on the basis of a letter of Ceolfrith to Nechtan, king of the Picts, cited in Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica* v.21. There Ceolfrith reports that when Adomnán "was sent on a mission from his people to King Aldfrith and wished to see our monastery," Ceolfrith reproved him for wearing the Celtic tonsure. He mentions that Adomnán subsequently led large numbers in Ireland to "the catholic observance of Easter," but carefully avoids saying that he personally adopted the tonsure of St Peter.<sup>53</sup>

Ceolfrith's letter reports only a single visit by Adomnán to Northumbria but his focus was on the crown tonsure issue. Six of the Irish annals record a visit to redeem captives; only the *Annals of Tigernach* and *Annals of Roscrea* report (in almost the same terms as their first entry) a second visit two years later.<sup>54</sup>

51 *Annála Ríoghachta Éireann: Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland by the Four Masters from the Earliest Times to the Year 1616*, ed. and trans. J. O'Donovan, 2nd ed., 7 vols (Dublin, 1856), 1:290–93, s.a. 684; also translated in *Early Sources of Scottish History, A.D. 500 to 1286*, collected and trans. by Alan Orr Anderson, 2 vols (Edinburgh, 1922; repr. Stamford, 1990), 1:196.

52 *Annals of Ireland: Three Fragments, copied from Ancient Sources by Dubhaltach mac Firbisigh*, ed. with a translation and notes by J. O'Donovan (Dublin, 1860), pp. 112–15; cited in translation in *Early Sources*, ed. Anderson, 1:196 n. 3.

53 Bede, *HE* v.21, pp. 550–51.

54 For the references see n. 34 above. In the second entry "in (H)iberniam" replaces "ad Hiberniam." Dr Mc Carthy has suggested to me that two different sources were being drawn upon. For the texts see Whitley Stokes, ed. "Annals of Tigernach. Third Fragment A.D. 489–766," *Revue celtique* 17 (1896), 119–263, at pp. 210 and 211. Also Bart Jaski and Daniel Mc

As mentioned above, Adomnán said he made two visits, the second being two years after the first. Daniel Mc Carthy has shown that Adomnán was not an altogether reliable chronographer<sup>55</sup> but it is difficult to see why he should be inaccurate here. The annalistic sources imply, however, that only one visit involved negotiating for the release of the Irish captives.

### Motive

Ecgrith's defeat at the Battle of the River Trent in 679 must not only have been a blow to the Northumbrian people but also a devastating triple blow for Ecgrith.<sup>56</sup> First, he had lost his eighteen-year-old brother, a potential preserver of the dynasty should Ecgrith die. Second, he had lost the territory of Lindsey and, since the truce between him and Æthelred, king of the Mercians, had been negotiated by Archbishop Theodore of Canterbury, he could hardly renege on the agreement because Theodore had supported him over the deposition of Wilfrid.<sup>57</sup> The lands in Lindsey and its revenues that might have been at his disposal as its overlord were now lost to him—and to those on whom he might have bestowed them.<sup>58</sup> Perhaps most serious of all was something that is not discussed in the sources but which should also be taken into account. Like many leaders in all spheres of life and all periods, early medieval kings were dependent on charisma: those indefinable aspects of personality that empowered them to lead others. In a society characterized by war and religion, a significant defeat such as this one must have led to doubts and questions about Ecgrith's rulership and whether he had Divine support for it.

We cannot say for sure what factors were at play in the years following his defeat in 679, but one further matter should at least been borne in mind. With expansion to the south-east brought to a halt, one would have expected Ecgrith to have turned his attention to the north-west to enlarge his realm. Yet it has been noted that Christian memorials showing Anglo-Saxon influence

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Carthy, "A Facsimile Edition of the Annals of Roscrea," p. 44. Available at <[https://scss.tcd.ie/misc/kronos/editions/AR\\_portal.htm](https://scss.tcd.ie/misc/kronos/editions/AR_portal.htm)> (accessed 2 Feb. 2017).

55 "The Chronology of Saint Columba's Life," in *Early Medieval Ireland and Europe: Chronology, Contacts, Scholarship. Festschrift for Dáibhí Ó Cróinín*, ed. Pádraic Moran and Immo Warntjes, *Studia Traditionis Theologiae* 14 (Turnhout, 2015), pp. 3–32.

56 On the political dimensions of the defeat see Higham, *Ecgrith*, esp. pp. 179–82.

57 See also N.J. Higham, "Theodore's Peace," above, pp. 197–213.

58 For this region, see Christopher Loveluck et al. *Rural Settlement, Lifestyles and Social Change in the Later First Millennium AD: Anglo-Saxon Flixborough in its Wider Context*, Excavations at Flixborough 4 (Oxford, 2007).

seem to stop at the River Cree, to the west of which lay Whithorn.<sup>59</sup> Anglo-Saxon expansion into Whithorn seems to have taken place later, with a bishopric being established there shortly before 731.<sup>60</sup> It is puzzling that Ecgrith seems not to have expanded his territorial boundaries to encompass Whithorn—unless he encountered some serious opposition in that region.

However we explain the passage of time between late 679 and the attack on Brega in June 684, I suspect that the invasion of Ireland was dictated by socio-economic factors rather than political ones. Some scholars have thought otherwise. Alfred Smyth suggested that Aldfrith might have been associated with Durrow and the Southern Uí Néill: “Ecgrith then would have launched a punitive raid against the Southern Uí Néill in the belief that they had harboured his rival and older brother for many years.”<sup>61</sup> Hermann Moisl in a closely argued article that has had wide influence asserted that in 685 “the Uí Néill took part in the Pictish-Irish revolt against Ecgrith ... to support the claim of their kinsman Aldfrith to the Northumbrian kingship; Ecgrith, realizing what was afoot, made a preemptive strike against the Uí Néill.”<sup>62</sup> Barbara Yorke has observed that there are Northumbrian sources suggesting a different interpretation of how Aldfrith succeeded to the throne.<sup>63</sup> And I share Thomas Charles-Edwards’s hesitancy in accepting that an attack on the Southern Uí Néill would have motivated the Northern Uí Néill to take revenge a year later, especially given the constant internecine strife between ruling families in Ireland.<sup>64</sup>

What we are being asked to believe is that Ecgrith attacked Brega and took unnamed (and thus quite possibly politically unimportant) prisoners (Moisl’s word) in order to put pressure on the Northern Uí Néill not to support the

59 Nicola J. Toop, “Northumbria in the West: Considering Interaction through Monumentality,” in *Early Medieval Northumbria: Kingdoms and Communities, AD 450–1100*, ed. David Petts and Sam Turner (Turnhout, 2011), pp. 85–112, at pp. 98–100. I have not seen Derek Craig’s 1992 Durham doctoral thesis “The Distribution of Pre-Norman Sculpture in South-west Scotland: Provenance, Ornament and Regional Groups,” which informed Toop’s observations.

60 See Toop, “Northumbria in the West,” esp. Plate 1b opp. p. 178. For the literary and historical evidence of Northumbria’s westward expansion see Rosemary Cramp, *Whithorn and the Northumbrian Expansion Westwards*, Third Whithorn Lecture, 17th September 1994 (Whithorn, 1995) and for archaeological evidence about early Whithorn see Peter Hill, *Whithorn and St Ninian: The Excavation of a Monastic Town, 1984–91* (Stroud, 1997).

61 Smyth, *Celtic Leinster*, p. 121.

62 Hermann Moisl, “The Bernician Royal Dynasty and the Irish in the Seventh Century,” *Peritia* 2 (1983), 103–26, at p. 123.

63 “Adomnán at the Court of King Aldfrith,” in *Adomnán of Iona: Theologian, Lawmaker, Peacemaker*, ed. Jonathan M. Wooding et al. (Dublin, 2010), pp. 36–50, at pp. 37–38.

64 *The Chronicle of Ireland*, trans. T.M. Charles-Edwards, *Translated Texts for Historians* 44, 2 vols (Liverpool, 2006), 1:165, n. 6.

claims of Aldfrith on the Northumbrian kingship (for which there appears to be no evidence, unless one interprets a remark by the 12th-century historian William of Malmesbury that Aldfrith “had been regarded by the nobles although the elder as unworthy of the throne”).<sup>65</sup> It is puzzling then why Ecgrith did not just attack Iona in 684, since this is where Aldfrith appeared to have been residing. Nicholas Higham emphasizes the growing power of Fínsnechtae Fledach and detects “an intermeshing of friendships and hostilities around the North Channel, with Brega, Clyde Rock and Fortriu pursuing parallel objectives and probably in alliance.” In his view, this prompted the Northumbrian expedition which led to the seizing of hostages.<sup>66</sup>

I would prefer the judicious application of Occam’s Razor. Rather than complex arguments based on the alleged threats posed by Aldfrith or Fínsnechtae Fledach, I suggest that Ecgrith was behaving like other Anglo-Saxon kings who preceded him. Any ruler requires supporters in order to retain power. For an early medieval king, this meant that his followers needed material rewards in the form of precious objects and the manpower necessary to provide the food and services attendant on their status.

Brega was an agriculturally rich region easily accessible from the sea. At this time its churches were most likely still wooden structures<sup>67</sup> and so easy targets, especially since their communities could be portrayed as schismatics who did not follow the true date of Easter. Cogitosus’ *Life of Brigit*, probably composed in the mid-7th century,<sup>68</sup> helps explain why ecclesiastical establishments especially were attacked. According to him the tombs of Brigit and her bishop Conleth in the church in Kildare were “adorned with a refined profusion of gold, silver, gems and precious stones with gold and silver chandeliers hanging from above.” He also records that Brigit had shattered a silver chalice into three equal pieces to hand to the poor. Given the political importance and evident wealth of Brega it is not unreasonable to suggest that its churches were possessed of similar lavish trappings. Some may even, like Brigit’s church, have kept “the treasures of kings.”<sup>69</sup>

65 WM, *GRA*, §52, pp. 80–81.

66 Higham, *Ecgrith*, pp. 201–07 at p. 204 and p. 26.

67 Peter Harbison, “Early Irish Churches,” in *Die Iren und Europa im früheren Mittelalter*, ed. Heinz Löwe, Veröffentlichungen des Europa Zentrums Tübingen, Kulturwissenschaftliche Reihe, 2 vols (Stuttgart, 1982), 2:618–29.

68 Sean Connolly and J.-M. Picard, “Cogitosus’s *Life of St Brigit*,” *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 117 (1987), 5–27, at p. 5.

69 Patrologia Latina 72:789A (church), 786A–B (chalice), and 790B (treasures of kings) (texts) and Connolly and Picard, “Cogitosus’s *Life*,” pp. 25 Ch. 32.1, 22–23 Ch. 27.1–4, and 26 Ch. 32.9 (translations).

The intricate Tara Brooch, discovered at Bettystown, on the coast of Brega just south of Drogheda, which may be dated to c.700, shows that Cogitosus was not simply engaging in hyperbole.<sup>70</sup> Obviously the techniques evident in the Brooch did not arise ex nihilo at the beginning of the 8th century: they were part of a tradition stretching back to at least the late 6th century, as the Ballinderry Brooch of c.600 with its enamel and millefiori decoration attests.<sup>71</sup> Ecclesiastical objects such as book covers and book shrines, and more idiosyncratic objects such as the 8th-century Moylough Belt Shrine from Co. Sligo<sup>72</sup> point to the diversity of items that might be found in churches. Then there was the wealth that could be seized from individuals. The valuable objects that were available for looting were diverse, for instance, horse bridles of gold and silver, which were marks of status.<sup>73</sup> Objects of personal adornment such as penannular brooches must also have been tempting targets for looters.<sup>74</sup>

An attack on Brega thus offered the possibility of obtaining booty in the form of goods and persons that Ecgfrith could distribute to his followers at a minimum cost to himself. It was something of a masterstroke. If Berht and his men had failed and been killed ... well, that would have been unfortunate and Ecgfrith's prestige may have suffered—but they would not have been present to remind him of their failure. Even had they been captured, *they* could have been portrayed as the ones who had failed.

70 Niamh Whitfield, "The Filigree of the Hunterston and "Tara' Brooches," in *The Age of Migrating Ideas: Early Medieval Art in Northern Britain and Ireland. Proceedings of the Second International Conference on Insular Art held in the National Museums of Scotland in Edinburgh, 3–6 January 1991*, ed. R. Michael Spearman and John Higgitt (Edinburgh and Stroud, 1993), pp. 118–27; the putative date of the Tara brooch is discussed at p. 126.

71 For an illustration and discussion see Fintan O'Toole, *A History of Ireland in 100 Objects* (Dublin, 2013), no. 26.

72 O'Toole, *History of Ireland*, no. 32. Peter Harbison's posited later dates for the Tara Brooch (middle or latter part of the eighth century) and the Belt Shrine (A.D. 750×850) do not affect my general argument even if they be accepted by other scholars: "The Date of the Moylough Belt Shrine," in *Irish Antiquity: Essays and Studies Presented to Professor M.J. O'Kelly*, ed. Donnchadh Ó Corráin (Cork, 1981, repr. Dublin, 1994), pp. 231–39.

73 *Crith Gablach*, ed. D.A. Binchy, Mediaeval and Modern Irish Series 11 (Dublin, 1941), p. 16, Ch.27.407, discussed by Fergus Kelly, *Early Irish Farming: A Study based mainly on the Law-Texts of the 7th and 8th Centuries AD*, Early Irish Law Series 4 (Dublin, 1997), p. 89. On silver in Ireland see Michael Ryan, "Some Archaeological Comments on the Occurrence and Use of Silver in Pre-Viking Ireland," in *Studies on Early Ireland: Essays in Honour of M.V. Duignan*, ed. B.G. Scott ([Dublin], n.d. [1981?]), pp. 45–50.

74 Most of the objects in this paragraph are illustrated in Françoise Henry, *Irish Art in the Early Christian Period (to 800 A.D.)*, rev. ed. (London, 1965); metalwork is discussed in Ch. 5 (pp. 92–116).

### Northumbrian Reactions to the Attack

Historians are primarily dependent upon written sources and inevitably there is a risk that the values and judgments of their sources shape their interpretation of events. To historians of early Anglo-Saxon England Bede is such a towering figure that his interpretation of events can easily colour our views. Bede did not take a neutral position over the attack on Brega as is evident from his condemnation of it quoted earlier.<sup>75</sup> The consequences of Ecgrith's subsequent death at the hands of the Picts are given epic status by Bede with a quotation from Virgil, *Aeneid* 2.169: "From this time the hopes and strength of the English kingdom began to 'ebb and fall away'."<sup>76</sup>

We must remember that Bede was writing over four decades after the event and from a perspective on the Irish that, while nuanced, was favourable.<sup>77</sup> It is worth considering what Ecgrith accomplished in the eleven months following the attack on Brega. In 685 he had encouraged the consecration of Cuthbert as bishop. This was no *ex cathedra* decision on his part: a "synod of no small size" assembled in his presence and, presided over by Archbishop Theodore no less, elected Cuthbert. When Cuthbert failed to respond but remained at the monastery on Farne, Ecgrith sailed there with Bishop Trumwine "as well as many other religious and powerful men," the word "powerful," *potentibus*, implying support by the secular leaders of the time.<sup>78</sup> As has already been discussed Ecgrith was also commemorated in the foundation stone at Jarrow, the consecration of the church taking place just the month before his death. Thus it is clear that Ecgrith continued in an intimate relationship with ecclesiastical leaders following his attack on Brega. And the support of his secular elite was implied not just by their presence at the synod that elected Cuthbert but also by their willingness to follow him on his fatal venture into Pictland.

There is one other source that has been deemed possibly to be relevant, though it is extremely problematic. In the *Fragmentary Annals of Ireland*

75 Bede, *HE* IV.26(24), pp. 426–29.

76 "Ex quo tempore spes coepit et uirtus regni Anglorum 'fluere ac retro sublapsa referri': Bede, *HE* IV.26(24), pp. 428–29.

77 For the complexities of Bede's attitude to the Irish see A.T. Thacker, "Bede and the Irish," in *Beda Venerabilis: Historian, Monk & Northumbrian*, ed. L.A.J.R. Houwen and A.A. MacDonald, *Mediaevalia Groningana* 19 (Groningen, 1996), pp. 31–59.

78 Bede, *HE* IV.28(26), pp. 436–37, an account substantially supported by the earlier *Vita S. Cuthberti Anonyma*, 4.1, in *Two Lives of Saint Cuthbert: A Life by an Anonymous Monk of Lindisfarne and Bede's Prose Life*, ed. and trans. Bertram Colgrave (Cambridge, 1940, repr. 1985), pp. 110–11; cf. also Bede, *Vita Sancti Cuthberti*, in the same volume, Ch. 24, pp. 238–39.

following an entry on “[t]he death of Flanna Fína, son of Oswy, king of the Saxons” there is a three-quatrain poem of twelve lines in total by an otherwise unknown poet, Riagail of Bennchor (Bangor, Co. Down) that sings of a battle fought by Bruide. Flann Fína was the Irish name of Aldfrith, Ecgfrith’s alleged half-brother and successor. Though Bruide mac Derile, king of the Picts, died in A.D. 704, two years after the death of Aldfrith, there is no suggestion in Anglo-Saxon sources that Aldfrith died in battle. The poem most likely refers to the death of Ecgfrith at the hands of Bruide mac Bili, king of the Picts (A.D. 672–693).<sup>79</sup> James Fraser, with commendable caution, notes that “it is possible to read” the poem as indicating that a backlash led the king “to make some kind of public show of remorse.” I would instead interpret the lines translated as “even though he did penance | and that too late in Iona” as poetic licence, implying that Ecgfrith’s interment at the Irish monastery of Iona was a kind of posthumous penance (exile being one form of penance for killing). The poem is clearly a later confection ultimately from a source hostile to Ecgfrith which in my view does not provide credible evidence of his behaviour after Brega.<sup>80</sup>

There is no evidence that the Northumbrian contemporaries of Ecgfrith reacted with hostility to his assault on Brega. On the contrary, the literary sources portray him as ruling as a proper Christian Anglo-Saxon king should, attending an important synod called to elect a new bishop and receiving advice—even if he chose not to take it.

With his successful onslaught on Brega, Ecgfrith had engineered a foreign victory and thereby had acquired additional means to support his warrior entourage. This success evidently gave him the confidence to himself lead an invasion force into Pictland the next year. It was a decision that was a fatal misjudgement.

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79 “Mors Flainn Fiona mc. Ossa, rí Saxon”: Radner, ed., *Fragmentary Annals*, pp. 54–55, no. 165. Radner evidently understood the poem to refer to Aldfrith as she identifies the Pictish king as “Bruide m. Deril” (see *ibid.*, p. 213). Cf. Ireland, “King Aldfrith,” pp. 44–45.

80 James E. Fraser, *The Pictish Conquest: The Battle of Dunnichen 685 and the Birth of Scotland* (Stroud, 2006), p. 46. See further Wadden’s discussion of this source: “First English Invasion,” pp. 9–10.

## A Conversion-Period Burial in an Ancient Landscape: A High-Status Female Grave near the Rollright Stones, Oxfordshire/Warwickshire

*Helena Hamerow*

In March 2015, a metal detector user uncovered several early medieval artefacts from land adjacent to the Rollright Stones, a major prehistoric complex that straddles the Oxfordshire—Warwickshire border (O.S. SP 2963 3089). He alerted the Portable Antiquities Scheme and the well-preserved burial of a female, aged around 25–35 years and aligned South-North, was subsequently excavated (Fig. 11.1).<sup>1</sup> The grave—which was shallow, undisturbed (apart from a small area of disturbance near the skull caused by the detectorist) and produced no evidence for a coffin or other structures—contained a number of remarkable objects indicating a 7th-century date for the burial. This was confirmed by two samples of bone taken for AMS radiocarbon dating, which produced a combined date of 622–652 cal AD at 68.2 per cent probability and 604–656 cal AD at 95.4 per cent probability (OxA-37509, OxA-37510). The burial lay some 50 m northeast of a standing stone presumed to be prehistoric in date, known locally as the ‘King Stone’.<sup>2</sup> This burial and its remarkable setting form a significant addition to the corpus of well-furnished female burials which are shedding new light on the role of women in Conversion-period England, about which Barbara Yorke has written so compellingly.

At the time of writing, conservation of the artefacts from the burial has not begun and the brief description of the main objects provided here must therefore be regarded as provisional.<sup>3</sup> The first and most striking object to be identified

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- 1 The excavation was undertaken by Anni Byard, David Williams, and Ros Tyrrell, Finds Liaison Officers for Oxfordshire, Surrey and East Berkshire, and Buckinghamshire. I am grateful to David Haine, Charles Wood, the Oxfordshire Museums Service, and the Rollright Trust for providing access to the site and finds. The finds and archive are now housed in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford. I am also grateful to George Lambrick for his comments on the text, and to Abi Tompkins for preparing Fig. 11.6
  - 2 George Lambrick, *The Rollright Stones. Megaliths, Monuments and Settlement in the Prehistoric Landscapes* (London, 1988).
  - 3 Descriptions of the objects are based on the Treasure Report issued by the British Museum (Treasure Number 2015T270). I am grateful to Dr Sue Brunning for permission to cite this report. The artefacts and archive are now held by the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.

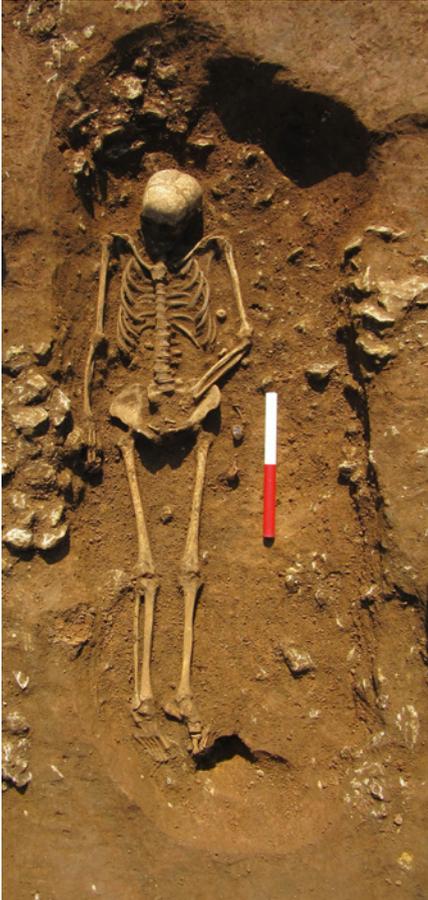


FIGURE 11.1  
The Rollright Stones Anglo-Saxon burial  
© A. BYARD, PORTABLE ANTIQUITIES  
SCHEME

was a long-handled copper alloy skillet lying to the left of the head. A circular, embossed silver disc inlaid with a single garnet was probably originally set into the base of the skillet, and a silver sheet decorative mount with a crescent-shaped plate is also likely also have been associated with it (Figs. 11.2 and 11.3). Such skillets—which are closely modelled on the Roman *trulleum*, used in hand-washing rituals<sup>4</sup>—are rare: only around seven other examples are known.<sup>5</sup> The skillet appears to have been placed inside a lockable wooden casket, the copper alloy fittings of which—including a decorated lock plate and two

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- 4 Anthea Harris and Martin Henig, “Hand-washing and Foot-washing, Sacred and Secular, in Late Antiquity and the Early Medieval Period,” in *Intersections: The Archaeology and History of Christianity in England, 400–1200: Papers in Honour of Martin Biddle and Birthe Kjolbye-Biddle*, ed. Martin Henig and Nigel Ramsay, BAR British Ser. 505 (Oxford 2010), pp. 25–38. I am grateful to Martin Henig for his observations on the Roman *trulleum*.
- 5 Helen Geake, “Medieval Britain and Ireland, 2005,” *Medieval Archaeology* 50 (2006), 283–86.



FIGURE 11.2 The skillet/*trulleum*  
© A. BYARD, PORTABLE ANTIQUITIES SCHEME



FIGURE 11.3 Silver mounts  
© A. BYARD, PORTABLE ANTIQUITIES SCHEME

hinges with triangular plates, one of which has been repaired—survive (Fig. 11.4). Such boxes are found in well-furnished burials of the 7th century and tend to be associated with females.<sup>6</sup> A close parallel for the hinges and lock-plate is provided by the casket found in the richly furnished 7th-century female burial at Swallowcliffe Down in Wiltshire.<sup>7</sup>

6 Forty out of forty-three wooden boxes included in a recent survey of Anglo-Saxon grave goods were found in female graves. John Hines and Alex Bayliss, eds., *Anglo-Saxon Graves and Grave Goods of the 6th and 7th Centuries AD: A Chronological Framework* (London, 2013), pp. 227–29; see also Helen Geake, *The Use of Grave-Goods in Conversion-Period England, c. 600–850*, BAR Brit. Ser. 261 (Oxford, 1997), pp. 82–83.

7 George Speake, *A Saxon Bed Burial on Swallowcliffe Down* (London, 1989), pp. 24–30. A deposit of small, spherical black seeds was found nearby and may have been associated with the box; although a sample was collected during the excavation, this could not be located at the time of writing (A. Byard, pers. comm.).



FIGURE 11.4  
The box fittings  
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ANTIQUITIES SCHEME



FIGURE 11.5  
The rock crystal pendant  
© A. BYARD, PORTABLE ANTIQUITIES  
SCHEME

A large, biconical faceted rock crystal bead, still attached to the remains of a chain or chatelaine, lay at the left side of the body (Fig. 11.5). It had presumably been suspended from an organic belt, of which no trace survived. Crystal beads were a fairly standard part of the burial kit of high status Merovingian and Anglo-Saxon women of childbearing age and were a “conspicuous sign

of wealth.”<sup>8</sup> The bead is visibly chipped and appears to have sustained some damage prior to burial; it is possible that it had previously been used as a spindlewhorl.

Two small, plain copper alloy pins with round shafts and globular heads, together with fine, figure-of-eight chain links found near the head, may derive from a linked pin set of the kind used to fasten veils or headdresses in the 7th century, although this remains uncertain in advance of conservation.<sup>9</sup> A single, large amber bead lay to the left of the ribs and a perforated antler disc was found lying beneath the ribs and partly beneath the spine, on the right hand side. Although these two objects lay some distance apart, it is possible that both were originally contained in an organic pouch.

The casket, linked pins, and skilnet can all be relatively closely dated. As already noted, skilnets are rare, but those that have been found in dateable contexts or with dateable decoration belong to the 7th or possibly early 8th century. According to the most recent and comprehensive chronological and typological framework for Anglo-Saxon grave goods, linked pins date to between the second quarter and the end of the 7th century,<sup>10</sup> while boxes are found in graves of the late 6th and 7th centuries.<sup>11</sup> In light of the radiocarbon dates, it is unlikely that any of these objects was particularly old when buried.

A marked increase in the frequency of well-furnished female burials occurred in England around the second quarter of the 7th century and burial wealth continued to be invested primarily in the graves of females until the practice of furnished burial came to an end around 700.<sup>12</sup> Following a general decline in the provision of grave goods with both males and females in the later 6th century, and the glittering but short-lived phase of male ‘princely’ burials that lasted from around the 590s to the 630s—of which Sutton Hoo Mound 1 is the richest and the Prittlewell chamber grave the earliest—mortuary display shifted decisively to the burials of females. Burials of males were thereafter much more likely to be sparsely furnished or unfurnished. Well-furnished female burials like the one at Rollright are thus a distinctive feature of the archaeology of 7th-century England. The best known and most spectacular examples, such as the burials from Swallowcliffe Down (Wilts.), Roundway Down

8 Numerous parallels are cited in Geneva Kornbluth, “Merovingian Rock Crystal: Practical Tools And Status Markers,” in *Golden Middle Ages in Europe: New Research into Early-Medieval Communities and Identities*, ed. Annemarieke Willemsen and Hanneke Kik (Turnhout, 2015), pp. 49–56.

9 Geake, *The Use of Grave Goods*, pp. 35–36.

10 Hines and Bayliss Type P12a: Hines and Bayliss, *Anglo-Saxon Graves and Grave-Goods*, pp. 225–26.

11 Geake, *The Use of Grave-Goods*, pp. 81–82.

12 Hines and Bayliss, *Anglo-Saxon Graves and Grave-Goods*.

(Wilts.) and Desborough (Northants), merely represent the richer end of a broad spectrum of ostentatiously furnished burials of females whose funerals offered their families the opportunity to engage in competitive display.<sup>13</sup> While male ‘princely’ burials are regarded as signalling, in Tania Dickinson’s words, “moments of specific political tension,” I have argued elsewhere that the well-furnished female burials that succeeded them were a means of conferring supernatural legitimacy and protection over their family’s claims to land and resources.<sup>14</sup> This is a possibility whose relevance in the context of the Rollright burial will become clear in the following discussion.

The Rollright burial displays several characteristics typical of female burials of this period. These include a marked shift in dress away from northern Germanic traditions that involved pairs of brooches, belt buckles and long strings of glass and amber beads, to dress accessories inspired by eastern Mediterranean and Frankish fashions, such as light necklets and pins used to fasten head coverings.<sup>15</sup> This shift in dress style is now widely regarded as a means of constructing elite status and projecting authority, rather than signalling the adoption of Christianity *per se*.<sup>16</sup> The 7th century also saw an increasing use of containers, above all pouches and boxes, in which special objects were concealed. The objects they contained often display signs of wear and thus of extended biographies, appear to have denoted the status of a ‘free’ woman (such as spindlewhorls and shears), and/or had amuletic qualities. Indeed, objects whose function appears to have been amuletic—i.e. they were believed to have magical qualities that could prevent harm or bring good luck—generally occur with greater frequency in the 7th century. Such items include the claws and teeth of certain animals, cowrie shells, and fossils, but also crosses and other items with explicitly religious connotations.<sup>17</sup>

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- 13 Speake, *Swallowcliffe Down*; Sarah Semple and Howard Williams, “Excavations on Roundway Down,” *WANHM* 94 (2001), 236–39; R.S. Baker, “On the Discovery of Anglo-Saxon Remains at Desborough, Northamptonshire,” *Archaeologia* 45 (1880), 466–71.
- 14 Tania Dickinson, “What’s New in Early Medieval Burial Archaeology?” *EME* 11:1 (2002), 71–87, at p. 85; Helena Hamerow, “Furnished Female Burial in Seventh-Century England: Gender and Sacral Authority in the Conversion Period,” *EME* 24:4 (2016), 423–47.
- 15 Helen Geake, “Invisible Kingdoms: The Use of Grave-Goods in Seventh-Century England,” *ASSAH* 10 (Oxford, 1999), 203–15.
- 16 West-East alignment of burials was already prevalent in early Anglo-Saxon England and should not be assumed to signal Christian belief at this early date (Nick Stoodley, *The Spindle and the Spear. A Critical Enquiry into the Construction and Meaning of Gender in the Early Anglo-Saxon Burial Rite*, BAR Brit. Ser. 288 (Oxford, 1999), pp. 63–66); conversely, South-North alignment of an isolated burial, as in the case of the Rollright burial, does not rule out the possibility that the family of the deceased woman regarded itself as Christian.
- 17 Hamerow, “Furnished Female Burial.” What appears to be a dog’s tooth was found in the area of the skull. There was no evidence to suggest it had been deliberately placed there, however, and it shows no signs of having been modified in any way.

The burial of the woman found at Rollright mirrors these wider trends in several respects. The linked pin suite and faceted rock crystal bead suspended from a chatelaine reflect Mediterranean or Frankish influences, while single amber beads and antler discs are both categories of object that have been classed as ‘amulets’. Rock crystal too was regarded as an inherently powerful material in the Roman and post-Roman worlds.<sup>18</sup> The skillet—which had apparently been concealed inside the casket<sup>19</sup>—should also be seen as an object with ritual, perhaps even religious, connotations. As already noted, such skillets are strikingly similar to the Roman *trulleum*, like those found at the Sacred Spring at Bath.<sup>20</sup> In a Roman context, the *trulleum* was used in hand-washing rituals, notably prior to feasting. Contemporary depictions show it being held under the hands, to collect water poured from a ewer. Hand washing vessels have been found in Roman graves of high status and may have been used in funerary rituals, although ritual ablutions also appear ‘in a specifically Christian context’.<sup>21</sup> It is worth noting in this context that an Anglo-Saxon skillet found at Shalfleet on the Isle of Wight, was decorated with a cruciform mount.<sup>22</sup>

The grave assemblage from Rollright thus reflects wider trends in mortuary practice across 7th-century England. The placement of the burial in relation to the King Stone and its immediate surroundings is, however, particularly striking and merits detailed consideration. If ancestral burials were placed in the early medieval landscape as a means of constructing social and ideological messages,<sup>23</sup> what was the burial of this individual in this remarkable location intended to communicate?

18 Kornbluth, “Merovingian Rock Crystal”; Audrey Meaney, *Anglo-Saxon Amulets and Curing Stones*, BAR Brit, Ser. 96 (Oxford 1981), pp. 67–71, 139–42.

19 One of the burials at Desborough contained a copper alloy skillet which may also have been associated with a casket (as well as other items), as suggested by a single surviving triangular hinged fitting (Baker, “Anglo-Saxon Remains at Desborough”).

20 B.W. Cunliffe, ed., *The Temple of Sulis Minerva at Bath Vol. 2. The Finds from the Sacred Spring* (Oxford 1988), pls. x–xvi. While Anglo-Saxon examples are rare, their distribution suggests an emphasis on Mercia and Wessex.

21 Harris and Henig, “Hand-washing and Foot-washing,” pp. 28–30 and Fig. 2.

22 Geake “Medieval Britain and Ireland.” Parallels may be drawn with Barbara Yorke’s interpretation of the hanging bowl from a male burial near Winchester as having been used by a high-ranking family in formal, Roman-inspired hand-washing ceremonies associated with feasting (Barbara Yorke, “The Oliver’s Battery Hanging-Bowl Burial from Winchester, and its Place in the Early History of Wessex,” in *Intersections*, ed. Henig and Ramsay, pp. 77–86). If the garnet-inlaid silver mount can be shown to have been set into the base of the Rollright skillet, this would increase the likelihood that its use involved a clear liquid, i.e. water.

23 Sarah Semple and Howard Williams, “Landmarks for the Dead: Exploring Anglo-Saxon Mortuary Geographies,” in *The Material Culture of the Built Environment in the*

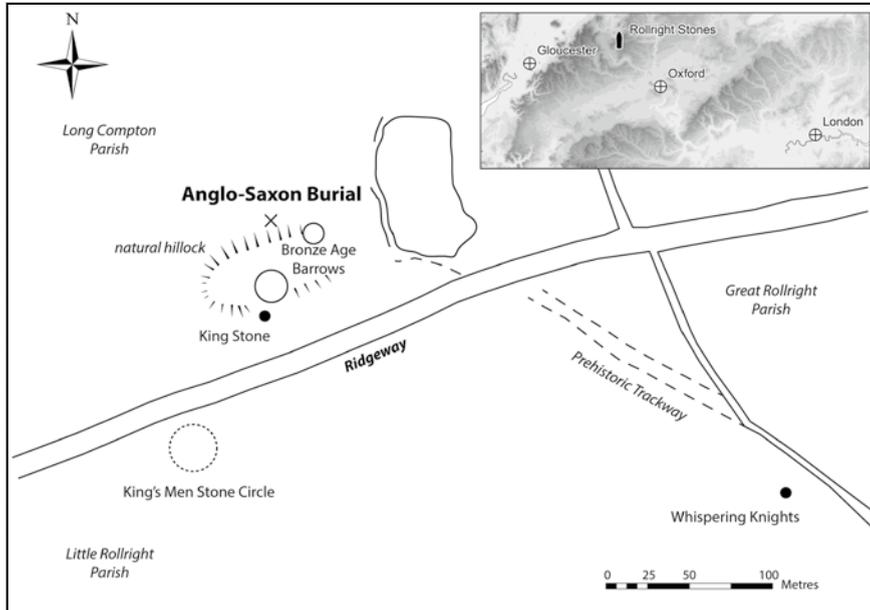


FIGURE 11.6 The Rollright stones showing the King Stone, Ridgeway, and the three-way junction of the Little Rollright, Great Rollright and Long Compton parish boundaries

To answer this question, the wider archaeological context of the burial must first be considered. The Rollright Stones complex includes—in addition to the King Stone—a series of funerary, ceremonial and other monuments spanning several millennia (Fig. 11.6). There is some evidence of late Mesolithic activity, but the earliest monument is probably the burial chamber known as the Whispering Knights, a portal dolmen tomb possibly dating to *c.*3800 BC. Due West of this and probably erected over a millennium later, is the stone circle known as the King's Men, set almost on the crest of the ridge. These monuments attracted several burial mounds in the Bronze Age, including a chambered round cairn occupying the apex of a natural hillock resembling—and for some years believed to be—a Neolithic long barrow. It is possible that the King Stone was erected in the Bronze Age as a permanent marker for the cemetery, but this has not been demonstrated by excavation. In later prehistory, the area became farmland: there are traces of a later Bronze Age or early Iron Age field boundary and a North-South trackway, partly fossilized as the parish boundary

*Anglo-Saxon World*, ed. M. Clegg Hyer and Gale Owen-Crocker (Liverpool, 2015), pp. 137–61.

between Great and Little Rollright. Around 200–50 BC, a middle Iron Age enclosure with a rock-cut ditch was established on the line of the trackway, on the North side of the ridge. The fields around the Stones were cultivated in the Roman period and a few sherds of Roman pottery from the stone circle suggest that it was visited during this period.<sup>24</sup>

The site thus has a complex biography and saw repeated reuse over several millennia. It lies, furthermore, near the junction of what became three parishes (those of Little Rollright, Great Rollright and Long Compton) and near a crossroads, where the major route running from Oxford to Stratford (now marked by a minor road) crosses the Cotswold Ridgeway, which here formed part of a medieval Saltway. To quote Sarah Semple: ‘These features give the site the degree of complexity found at the prehistoric ceremonial complexes in Ireland such as Tara, a complexity which prompted their continuation into the early medieval period as locations of ceremony and gathering.’<sup>25</sup> The possibility that the Rollright complex served as a place of assembly in the early Middle Ages is considered below.

While the location of the Rollright burial is indeed striking, prominent locations near boundaries and long-distance routeways are in fact typical of well-furnished 7th-century barrow burials—both male and female—as Shepherd’s seminal study demonstrated many years ago.<sup>26</sup> No evidence of a ring ditch was identified at Rollright, although only a small area was exposed around the burial and the evidence is inconclusive; even fairly large Anglo-Saxon barrows do not always produce substantial ring ditches and traces of a shallow ditch could easily have been ploughed away.<sup>27</sup> It should also be noted that, while the grave’s location on the scarp of the Cotswolds—literally ‘on the edge’—provides impressive views to the north and west towards the territory of the Hwicce (Fig. 11.7), a barrow located here would not have been easily visible from afar. A traveller walking along the Ridgeway would have encountered such a barrow—and the King Stone—relatively suddenly.

24 Lambrick, *The Rollright Stones*. I am very grateful to George Lambrick for his comments and observations on the prehistoric sequence.

25 Sarah Semple, “Locations of Assembly in Early Anglo-Saxon England,” in *Assembly Places and Practices in Medieval Europe*, ed. Aliko Pantos and Sarah Semple (Dublin, 2004), pp. 135–54.

26 J. Shephard, “The Social Identity of the Individual in Isolated Barrows and Barrow Cemeteries in Anglo-Saxon England,” in *Space, Hierarchy and Society. Interdisciplinary Studies in Social Area Analysis*, ed. B. Burnham and J. Kingsbury, BAR Int. Ser. 59 (Oxford, 1979), pp. 47–79.

27 A magnetometry survey conducted in the 1980s identified several “small isolated anomalies” but did not identify a ring ditch in this area. It is intended that a higher resolution survey will be conducted in the future. Lambrick, *The Rollright Stones*, pp. 57–58.



FIGURE 11.7 The Rollright Stones burial under excavation  
© P. BOOTH

Antiquarian finds from the mid-19th century published by Thomas Beesley demonstrate the existence of early Anglo-Saxon burials—at least thirteen inhumations and one cremation—in the vicinity of the Rollright Stones. Their precise locations are unknown, but they were found during quarrying in fields to the east of the King Stone, on both sides of the Ridgeway and on all sides of what became the three-way junction of the Little Rollright, Great Rollright and Long Compton parish boundaries (Fig. 11.6).<sup>28</sup> In 2015, two gilded cast saucer brooches with devolved Style I decoration dating to the first half of the 6th century were uncovered by metal-detector users from the field to the East of the King Stone (PAS nos. SUR-1CB11A; SURC-1C82C9). They appear to form a pair and are likely to come from a single female inhumation. To judge from the sketches and descriptions published by Beesley, none of the antiquarian finds appears likely to date to the

28 Thomas Beesley, “The Rollright Stones,” *Transactions of the North Oxfordshire Archaeological Society* 1 (1856), 61–73. Meaney records the finds from the burials as being housed in the British Museum, but the latter does not now have these in its collections. Audrey Meaney, *A Gazetteer of Early Anglo-Saxon Burial Sites* (Oxford 1964), p. 260; S. Brunning, pers. comm. 2017.

7th century. It is therefore possible that the burial excavated in 2015 was either isolated, or part of a small group of 7th-century burials inserted into or placed near an earlier burial ground, creating what Semple and Williams have called an ‘ancestral palimpsest’.<sup>29</sup>

Little can be said with certainty about the site during the Mid and Late Saxon periods. Despite metal-detecting in the area around the Rollright Stones, no Mid or Late Saxon metalwork or coinage has been reported at the time of writing. It is most unlikely, however, that the site’s significance was forgotten. Aliko Pantos has demonstrated that Late Saxon open-air assembly sites favoured certain locations, namely near standing stones, mounds, crossroads and along important routeways.<sup>30</sup> Exceptionally, the location of the Rollright complex (and of the Anglo-Saxon burial) displays all of these characteristics, making it an obvious candidate for a late Saxon assembly site. This was the kind of location where the hundred would meet, where a market would be held, and where royal agents would deal with administrative and legal matters. That said, no documentary or place-name evidence can be identified to support this suggestion, which must, for the time being, remain conjectural.<sup>31</sup>

A well-known piece of local folklore, however, may hint at the later history of the site. It was first recorded in full in the 18th century, although it was already mentioned by Camden in the late 16th.<sup>32</sup> It connects the name of the King Stone to a legend involving witchcraft and a thwarted claim to land and power. The legend relates how a knight travelling through the area with his men encountered a witch who tells him that if he can see the village of Long Compton from Little Rollright, he will become King of England. As he steps forward to look, a long hill or mound—presumably the natural hillock with its Bronze Age burial mound described above—rises up before him and blocks his view. The witch then turns him and his knights to stone. The following extract comes from the 18th-century version of the legend as transcribed by Leslie Grinsell:

29 Semple and Williams, “Landmarks for the dead,” p. 142.

30 Aliko Pantos, “The Location and Form of Anglo-Saxon Assembly Places: Some ‘Moot Points,’” in *Assembly Places and Practices in Medieval Europe*, ed. Pantos and Semple, pp. 155–80. This pattern has been confirmed more recently by work undertaken as part of the *Landscapes of Governance* project; see, for example, John Baker and Stuart Brookes, “Monumentalising the Political Landscape: A Special Class of Anglo-Saxon Assembly Site,” *AntJ* 93 (2013), 147–62.

31 While several field names appear to reference burial mounds (e.g. *trembergh*, i.e. “three barrows”), none is in itself suggestive of an assembly site, Lambrick, *The Rollright Stones*, p. 24.

32 L.V. Grinsell, *The Rollright Stones and Their Folklore* (St Peter Port, 1977). The intriguing link between this legend and the prehistoric landscape was first noted by Sarah Semple, “Locations of Assembly,” p. 149.

“Seven long strides shalt thou take, and  
If Long Compton thou canst see, King of England thou shalt be.”

.... As he took his seventh stride forward, there rose before him a long hillock which prevented him from seeing Long Compton. The witch then said,

“As Long Compton thou canst not see,  
King of England thou shalt not be.  
Rise up, stick, and stand still, stone,  
For King of England thou shalt be none;  
Thou and thy men hoar stones shall be  
And I myself an eldern tree.”<sup>33</sup>

The legend is probably late medieval in origin, but it is possible that the King Stone acquired its name at a much earlier date. A number of clearly important stones are mentioned in the boundary clauses of late Saxon charters, some of which may have been monuments—in some cases stone crosses—newly erected in the 10th or 11th century.<sup>34</sup> Alex Langlands has pointed out that they are typically located at the convergence of important trade routes and at cross-roads, such as the *kinges stane* located north of Winchester referred to by Lantfred and Wulfstan, and mentioned in the boundary clause of the Headbourne Worthy charter.<sup>35</sup> The location of the ‘King Stone’ at Rollright displays all the characteristics typical of an early medieval royal stone, raising the possibility that it acquired the name and status of a ‘King’s Stone’ in the Late Saxon period. If so, the legend could have developed in the later Middle Ages to explain why this ancient stone was known as the ‘King Stone’, centuries after the true origins of its name had been forgotten.

While much more will doubtless be revealed about this intriguing burial following conservation of the finds and analysis of the skeleton, it is already apparent that the grave was carefully positioned within a supernaturally charged ‘topography of power’. In a general sense, the ostentatious burial of ancestors reflected the efforts of a new hereditary aristocracy to establish its position within recently formed and rapidly expanding kingdoms.<sup>36</sup> More specifically, such burials testify to a change in the role of females within these

33 Grinsell, *Rollright Stones*. 10–11.

34 Andrew Reynolds and Alexander Langlands, “Travel as Communication: A Consideration of Overland Journeys in Anglo-Saxon England,” *World Archaeology* 43:3 (2011), 410–27, at pp. 420–23.

35 S 309. Alex Langlands, *The Ancient Ways of Wessex. Travel and Communication in an Early Medieval Landscape* (Oxford, 2019), pp. 85, 144–148.

36 Hines and Bayliss, *Anglo-Saxon Graves and Grave-Goods*.

land-controlling families.<sup>37</sup> It is well known that the Conversion period was a time when women—above all royal women—were exceptionally prominent in the English Church. Bede’s account of the activities of royal abbesses such as St Hilda clearly indicates that females played a special role in establishing and mediating their family’s relationship with the supernatural during the 7th and 8th centuries.<sup>38</sup> In the case of the Rollright burial, that special role is signalled by amuletic objects, but also by the skillet/*trulleum* with its ritual, and perhaps religious, associations. It is probably not a coincidence that the distribution of these well-furnished female burials broadly mirrors that of double monasteries, family institutions governed by women. Both are concentrated mostly in Kent, East Anglia, Northumbria, and along the Thames valley, and both can be seen as strategies deployed by leading families to legitimize and protect newly gained and precariously held land.<sup>39</sup>

Placing the burials of female ancestors at key places in the landscape, for example at or near the boundaries of patrimonial land, thus seems to have been a means of securing tenurial rights by investing landscapes—often already permeated with ancient monuments, as at Rollright—with ancestral associations and family memory. Here it is worth bringing in relevant Irish parallels. A seminal paper published by Thomas Charles-Edwards on ‘Boundaries in Irish Law’ drew attention to the use of burial mounds (*ferta*) to mark territorial boundaries in early medieval Ireland.<sup>40</sup> A legal tract of the late 6th or early 7th century indicates that such ancestral burials acted in effect as guardians of a family’s property. Thus, if someone wished to make a claim to land occupied by another, the following legal process had to be observed: “the claimant takes two yoked horses across the boundary in the presence of one witness. The boundary is marked by a *fert*, a grave-mound, or a ... collection of grave-mounds .... As the claimant enters the land he must take his horses over a

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37 Hamerow, “Furnished Female Burial.”

38 Bede, *HE*, especially Book IV; Barbara Yorke, “‘The Weight of Necklaces’: Some Insights into the Wearing of Women’s Jewellery from Middle Saxon Written Sources,” in *Studies in Early Anglo-Saxon Art and Archaeology: Papers in Honour of Martin G. Welch*, ed. Stuart Brookes, Sue Harrington and Andrew Reynolds, BAR Brit. Ser. 527 (Oxford 2011), pp. 106–11.

39 Hamerow, “Furnished Female Burial.” The importance of women in forming exogamous marriage alliances between leading families is famously reflected in *Beowulf* (lines 2020–68), in the marriage of Freawaru, daughter of the King of the Danes, to Ingeld, King of the Heathobards. Isotopic analysis of the skeleton may help establish whether the woman buried at Rollright was local, or whether her burial provides evidence of such exogamy.

40 Thomas Charles-Edwards, “Boundaries in Irish Law,” in *Medieval Settlement: Continuity and Change*, ed. Peter Sawyer (London 1976), pp. 83–87.

grave-mound ... He then withdraws and awaits a response from the occupant who is allowed five days to accept arbitration ...”<sup>41</sup>

More recently, Elizabeth O’Brien and Edel Bhreathnach have drawn attention to the archaeological evidence for this practice.<sup>42</sup> They note that *ferta* often reused, or were sited near, prehistoric monuments. They were, furthermore, “located in prominent positions, overlooking or close to natural boundaries...” Most of the burials associated with the *ferta* are female.<sup>43</sup> One example is linked to a legend about a claim to land that bears a striking resemblance to the Rollright story. It relates to a multi-period *ferta* site at Ballymacaward in Co. Donegal, at the mouth of the River Erne, where four female burials of 5th- or 6th-century date were inserted into a Bronze Age cairn, followed by a further nine, probably Christian, female burials in the 6th or 7th century. References in the Lives of Patrick—in particular the *Vita Tripartita*—make it clear that the site lay in “an important border territory” and was much fought over.<sup>44</sup> One contender persuaded a follower to try and expel Patrick “by promising him all the land he could see” north of a particular hill, probably to be identified with Sheegy’s Hill, on which a standing stone is located. When the follower tried to do so, his view was blocked “by a dark cloud that closed round him and restricted his claim.”<sup>45</sup> Like such legends, the richly furnished female burials of 7th-century England, such as the one at Rollright, may have as much to do with the politics of land tenure as with religion and myth.

41 Charles-Edwards, “Boundaries in Irish Law,” p. 83–84.

42 Elizabeth O’Brien and Edel Bhreathnach, “Irish Boundary Ferta, Their Physical Manifestation and Historical Context,” in *TOME: Studies in Medieval Celtic History and Law*, ed. Fiona Edmonds and P. Russell (Woodbridge, 2011), pp. 53–64. See also Elizabeth O’Brien, “Pagan or Christian? Burial in Ireland During the Fifth to Eighth Centuries AD,” in *The Archaeology of the Early Medieval Celtic Churches*, ed. Nancy Edwards (Leeds, 2009), pp. 135–54.

43 O’Brien and Bhreathnach, “Irish Boundary Ferta,” p. 55. O’Brien notes that a list of “buried women” in the the Middle Irish topographical lore known as *Dindschenchas* “associates the names of various burial mounds or *ferta* with the names of women who are purported to have been buried in these mounds...” (O’Brien “Pagan or Christian?” p. 145).

44 O’Brien and Bhreathnach, “Irish Boundary Ferta,” p. 60.

45 *Bethu Phátraic. The Tripartite Life of Patrick*, ed. and trans. Kathleen Mulchrone (Dublin and London 1939), p. 90. Intriguingly, the site at Ballymacaward lies near a lough whose name means “the lake of the otherworldly women.” O’Brien and Bhreathnach, “Irish Boundary Ferta,” p. 60.

# A Possible Anglo-Saxon Execution Cemetery at Werg, Mildenhall (Cvnetio), Wiltshire and the Wessex-Mercia Frontier in the Age of King Cynewulf

*Andrew Reynolds*

This chapter is offered as a small token of immense gratitude to the honorand of this volume. Barbara Yorke's work sets a standard that few are able to reach; always insightful, to the point and deeply thought-provoking. Her ability to throw new light on well-trodden material is widely acknowledged and is in many ways a function of her belief in, and lifelong engagement with, interdisciplinary approaches to the study of the early Middle Ages and the rich fruits that forays into the past of that nature can bear. Barbara has offered sage advice over the last ten years or so in a series of research collaborations at the Institute of Archaeology, UCL, both guiding and informing the Leverhulme Trust funded projects *Beyond the Burghal Hidage*, *Landscapes of Governance* and, most recently, *Travel and Communication in Anglo-Saxon England*. Before that, from 2000–2003, we were colleagues at the then King Alfred's College, Winchester (now the University of Winchester), where we shared our common interests. This piece therefore attempts to encapsulate the spirit of interdisciplinary enquiry by bringing together materials drawn from archaeology, written sources and place-names to reveal elements of the early medieval landscape history of a corner of north-eastern Wessex (Fig. 12.1), part of the region that has been the focus of so much of Barbara's writing and whose complicated history is encapsulated in her hugely influential *Wessex in the Early Middle Ages* published in 1995.<sup>1</sup>

The discussion begins by focussing on a brief report of human burials discovered at Mildenhall, Wiltshire in the 1950s, with more recent related discoveries, but whose possible significance, it can be suggested, has lain unrecognised until now and whose non-normative character, topographical and geographical setting prompt a wider enquiry. On the basis of written sources relating to the tenorial history of the area in which the burials were found, a case is then

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<sup>1</sup> Barbara Yorke, *Wessex in the Early Middle Ages* (London, 1995).

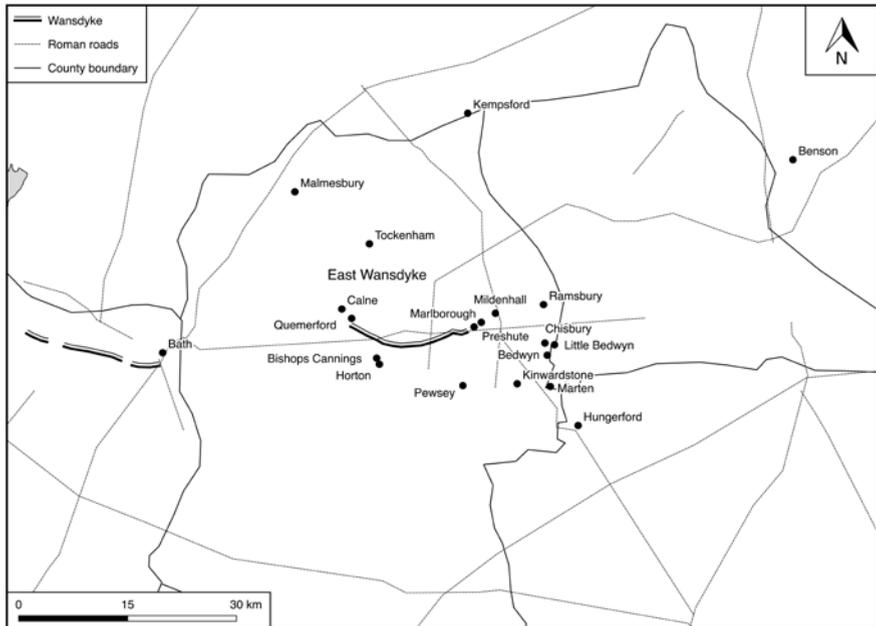


FIGURE 12.1 The Wessex-Mercia frontier region showing Wansdyke and places mentioned in the text

made for reconsidering the significance and role of the locale in the later 8th century during a period of competing claims to territory between the kingdoms of Mercia and Wessex. Overall, the paper attempts to draw a thread between a place, a region and a broader historical context, although each of these scaled discussions is arguably self-sustainable. On the way it makes suggestions about the historical and geographical context of a few problematic documents and some much debated toponyms to bring attention to a successful Wessex ruler, King Cynewulf, whose career is much neglected in the face of his contemporary, King Offa of Mercia.

### Human Burials at Werg

The initial inspiration for this paper is a report of barely a page-and-a-half published in the relatively obscure *Report of the Marlborough College Natural History Society* in 1956. The note in question, authored by that most active reporter of local archaeological discoveries in Wiltshire, Owen Meyrick, encapsulates in crisp prose many of the key aspects of the findings and the following summary

draws solely upon that note as the only account of the discovery.<sup>2</sup> The finds were made 2 km to the east of the Late Anglo-Saxon settlement and later town of Marlborough and 200 m west of the site of the former Roman town of *Cynetio*, now the village of Mildenhall, in the hamlet of Werg. While the exact position of the burials excavated in 1951 was not recorded, excavations and a watching brief undertaken by Wessex Archaeology in 1997 led to the recovery of a further two graves and other disarticulated human remains re-deposited in the fills of other archaeological features (O.S. SU 2130 6937).<sup>3</sup> These latter remains thus allow Meyrick's findings to be located with a greater degree of certainty if the two groups of burials are indeed related, which seems likely. The 1997 graves lay alongside the south bank of the River Kennet as it flows eastwards on a meandering course to the north of *Cynetio* (Fig. 12.2),<sup>4</sup> in a location that fits with Meyrick's description of the findspot as "low and quite near the present course of the Kennet, with a brook only about 20 yards away."<sup>5</sup> The 1997 investigations also reveal that the burials under consideration lay on the northern side of the Bath (*Aquae Sulis*) to *Cynetio* Roman road (Margary 53), one of six routes converging on *Cynetio*.<sup>6</sup>

Unfortunately, there is no plan, no photographic record, and no grave catalogue of the 1951 discoveries, but sufficient information exists to be able to appreciate the general character of the cemetery. Archaeological investigations were sparked by the finding of "a quantity of bones" on a smallholding occupied by a Mr A.C. Rhodes in May 1951. Following the realisation that the remains were human and a visit from the local police, "further investigations could be left to archaeologists," presumably led by Meyrick, which led to the recovery of eight skeletons, or parts thereof. Although the number of interments disturbed by the initial discovery is unknown, Skeletons 1 and 2 are reported as 'in large part removed'. Both bodies lay in shallow graves, one with the jaw of a small horse, and it is possible that the disturbed elements of these burials constituted the bones found in the first instance.

2 Owen Meyrick, "Romano-British Burials at Werg," *Report of the Marlborough College Natural History Society* 96 (1956), 19–20.

3 Nicholas Cooke, "Excavation of Roman Features and Deposits on the Outskirts of Cunetio (Mildenhall), Marlborough, in 1997," *WANHM* 96 (2003), 26–32.

4 The name *Cynetio* is likely to derive from that of the river rather than vice-versa, although the meaning of the name is uncertain: see, A.L.F. Rivet and Colin Smith, *The Place-Names of Roman Britain* (London, 1979), pp. 328–29.

5 Meyrick, "Romano-British Burials," p. 20; Cooke, "Roman Features," p. 28.

6 Mark Corney, "The Romano-British Nucleated Settlements of Wiltshire," in *Roman Wiltshire and After: Papers in Honour of Ken Annable*, ed. Peter Ellis (Devizes, 2001), pp. 5–38, at p. 12.



FIGURE 12.2 Mildenhall, *Cynetio* and immediate environs, showing the location of the Werg burials

The other skeletons were found at varying depths, all less than three feet. Skeleton 3, a disturbed interment, partly overlay Skeleton 4, the latter buried with the knees flexed and "a nail lying upright at the feet". Skeleton 5 was buried face down with the head turned to one side, an ox-jaw 'resting' on the left thigh and an oyster shell by the right hand. This body partly overlay that of Skeleton 6, another burial with flexed knees, and with iron fibulae by one hand and under the chin, features that suggested a shroud burial to Meyrick. Skeleton 7, also flexed at the knees, was found with a rim-sherd of unspecified date near the head, while Skeleton 8, again flexed at the knees, had the upper part of a large Savernake-type pot (1st century AD) near the head and a large ox bone in the grave fill. Skeleton 5 lay "north to south," the others "east to west," although the direction of the heads is not stated.

Meyrick reports that none of the skeletons showed signs of "a violent death" and indeed the remains, or at least a sample of them, were inspected by a Dr D.G. Roberts of the Department of Human Anatomy at Oxford, who, one hopes, would have recognised any obvious signs of trauma to the bones. Roberts reported that Skeleton 1 was that of a male aged 35–40, that Skeleton 2 was also male and aged about 30, while Skeleton 3 was an adult female; Skeletons 4 and 6 were older individuals of unspecified sex. Meyrick's report notes that Skeleton 5 was a male, but it is not clear whether that was confirmed by Roberts. One must, of course, be wary of such attributions in view of the considerable advances made in the field of human osteology since the 1950s, but one might expect an Oxford anatomist to be able to make sound judgements with regard to the sex of the individuals. That Roberts did not pronounce upon the sex of Skeletons 4 and 6 suggests the exercise of caution where, for whatever reasons, a confident assessment could not be made.

The two graves found in 1997 were disturbed interments and both lay east-west in shallow graves, heads to the east.<sup>7</sup> Grave 60 contained a heavily disturbed body laid supine and of undetermined sex. The grave fill contained disarticulated bone from two other individuals. Five sherds of medieval pottery initially ascribed to the grave fill are suggested by the excavator to be instead derived from a medieval ditch that truncated the grave. Grave 60 was cut by Grave 67, further demonstrating a sequence of burials at the site rather than a single event. The grave (67) contained a much-disturbed body of undetermined sex. Disarticulated human remains were also found in several other features in close proximity to the graves and a study of the remains recovered in 1997 revealed a total of seven individuals, bringing the total number of burials so far known from the site to 15, notwithstanding the possibility that the

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7 Cooke, "Roman Features," p. 29, Fig. 2 and p. 31.

discoveries in 1951 prior to Meyrick's intervention may have included further remains. A single cremation burial in a small pot of late 3rd- or 4th-century date was also found in the 1997 investigation, but it lay 150 m away to the north-east, with no human remains or grave-like features encountered along the line of the excavation trench between it and the two graves just described.

### Previous Interpretations

Interpretation of the remains is varied. Meyrick suggested a cemetery associated with "an adjacent settlement" (presumably *Cynetio*), while the *Victoria County History* account of Mildenhall parish favours "a war cemetery, of the early Iron Age,"<sup>8</sup> presumably on the basis of Meyrick's likening of the apparent inclusion of joints of meat, which he interpreted as provisions "for the after-life," to those found in the rather better-known burials of the 1st century AD excavated by Mortimer Wheeler at Maiden Castle in the 1930s and which for many years were thought of as victims of the Roman conquest.<sup>9</sup> The Maiden Castle burials belong to the late Iron Age, however, while the early Iron Age in Britain is traditionally placed between c.800 and c.400 BC. Cooke suggested, entirely reasonably, that the finding of disarticulated human remains in two pits containing 1st- or 2nd-century pottery in the 1997 investigations indicated a Roman period cemetery.<sup>10</sup> Again, however, the sheer volume of Roman material culture in the general area raises questions about secure dating, especially in the case of shallow features. The most recent assessment of burials of the Roman period in the county of Wiltshire places the Werg inhumations in the 'Late Iron Age to early Roman' period on the basis of the association of Skeleton 8 with Savernake Ware, while the Wiltshire Historic Environment Record lists the cemetery as undated.<sup>11</sup>

8 Jane Freeman, "Mildenhall," in *VCH Wilts.* 12, pp. 125–38, at p. 127.

9 Meyrick, "Romano-British Burials," p. 20; R.E.M. Wheeler, *Maiden Castle, Dorset* (Oxford, 1943). In fact, few of the Maiden Castle burials displayed injuries and while those that do might be victims of the local defence of the hillfort in the context of the Roman invasion of AD43, the majority are best seen as a 'normal' later Iron Age population buried over period of time; see Niall Sharples, *English Heritage Book of Maiden Castle* (London, Batsford, 1991), pp. 124–25.

10 Cooke, "Roman Features," p. 32.

11 Anne Foster, "Romano-British Burials in Wiltshire," in *Roman Wiltshire*, ed. Ellis, p. 169; Wiltshire County Council Historic Environment Record. Available at <[www.wiltshire.gov.uk/wiltshireandswindonhistoricalenvironmentrecord/wshemap.htm?a=d&id=9721](http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/wiltshireandswindonhistoricalenvironmentrecord/wshemap.htm?a=d&id=9721)> (accessed 3 Jan 2018).

### An Anglo-Saxon Execution Cemetery?

Several points require emphasis. In view of the location of the burials in a place of dense urban settlement of the Roman period—of which more below—all of the associated finds might be viewed as residual materials unintentionally incorporated into the grave fillings. Indeed, the propensity of the locale to yield archaeological finds of the Roman period was such that the Ordnance Survey saw fit to formally annotate the field next to that within which the Werg burials were found (known locally as ‘Black Field’ (*Blacke fyeld*) since at least 1578) with “Roman Coins, Pottery, &cc. frequently found” on its 1889 6-inch to the mile map of Marlborough and environs (Fig. 12.2).<sup>12</sup>

The Werg burials are not associated with any known burial ground of certain Roman date, save for the single cremation burial noted above which lay some distance away. A single inhumation in a lead coffin, recovered 120 m south of the south-east corner of *Cynetio* is certainly of (late) Roman type and indicates a cemetery of that period alongside the road to *Calleva* (Silchester).<sup>13</sup> While a later Roman setting for the Werg burials must remain a distinct possibility, in view of the unfurnished character of the burials, flexed aspect of certain of the bodies and proximity to *Cynetio*, an alternative attribution is equally possible.

Prone burials are long recognised from Romano-British cemeteries, particularly the later ones (4th century), including in urban settings,<sup>14</sup> but they are also common finds in ‘Anglo-Saxon’ cemeteries. In the pre-Christian period they are found in otherwise normal community cemeteries and, from the 7th century onwards, principally in execution cemeteries of 7th- to 12th-century date.<sup>15</sup> If a Roman period extra-mural cemetery is less than certain, then other possibilities—a ‘British’ cemetery of the early post-Roman period or an early ‘Anglo-Saxon’ cemetery of the 5th to 7th centuries—should be considered if only to be ruled out. All too little is known about the nature of continuity of burial customs from the late Roman period to the early middle ages in the region, but where late Roman cemeteries once considered to run on into the early Anglo-Saxon period have been subject to detailed scrutiny, including

12 J.E.B. Gover, Allen Mawer and F.M. Stenton, *The Place-Names of Wiltshire* (Cambridge, 1939), p. 302; Ordnance Survey 1889, Sheet XXIX.

13 F.K. Annable, “A Coffined Burial of Roman Date from Cynetio,” *WANHM* 72:3 (1980), 187–91; Mark Corney, “The Origins and Development of the ‘Small Town’ of ‘Cynetio’, Mildenhall, Wiltshire,” *Britannia* 28 (1997), 337–50, at p. 346.

14 Robert Philpott, *Burial Practices in Roman Britain: A Survey of Grave Treatment and Furnishing AD 43–410* (Oxford, 1991), pp. 71–73.

15 Andrew Reynolds, *Anglo-Saxon Deviant Burial Customs* (Oxford 2009), Chapters 3 and 4.

scientific dating, for example in the Upper Thames region of Oxfordshire and in eastern England, the case for continuity has been retracted.<sup>16</sup>

A cemetery of ‘Germanic’ character can be ruled out on the basis of a lack of grave finds that typify such burials in the North Wiltshire area and beyond. As generally poor as early Anglo-Saxon burials in North Wiltshire are by comparison with other regions of southern Britain, they nevertheless yield materials of a sufficiently distinctive character to be able to position them in cultural terms.<sup>17</sup> A further proposition—an unenclosed ‘field cemetery’ of normal community type of the middle Anglo-Saxon period (7th to 9th centuries)<sup>18</sup>—is unlikely on the basis of the aberrant Skeleton 5, interred prone and north-south in orientation. There is no evidence of a medieval cemetery in the immediate vicinity, at least not of churchyard-type, other than that associated with St John the Baptist, Mildenhall, 400 m to the west, a church that possibly preserves some 11th-century fabric.<sup>19</sup> Interestingly, however, Mildenhall was the site of a royal prison in 1265, with a gallows erected by a certain James de Audeberg there in 1272–73, although its site is not known.<sup>20</sup> While there is no evidence for the burial of execution victims beyond the 12th century at any of the excavated English execution cemeteries, with burial apparently normally taking place in monastic hospital or other especially designated cemeteries by

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- 16 James Gerrard, “New Radiocarbon Dates from the Lynch Farm Romano-British Cemetery, Near Peterborough,” *Northamptonshire Archaeology* 38 (2016), 241–43; C.M. Hills and T. O’Connell, “New Light on the Anglo-Saxon Succession: Two Cemeteries and their Dates,” *Antiquity* 83 (2009), 1096–1108.
- 17 While there is a sizeable body of evidence for burials of a Germanic character in Wiltshire between the 5th and 7th centuries, synthesized in a masterly fashion by Bruce Eagles, the general level of material culture pales in comparison to the cemeteries of the Upper Thames and other parts of southern and eastern England. See, for example, Bruce Eagles, “The Archaeological Evidence for Settlement in the Fifth to Seventh Centuries AD,” in *The Medieval Landscape of Wessex*, ed. Michael Aston and Carenza Lewis (Oxford, 1994), pp. 13–32; Bruce Eagles, “Anglo-Saxon Presence and Culture in Wiltshire c. AD450–c.AD675,” in *Roman Wiltshire*, ed. Ellis, pp. 199–233.
- 18 For discussions of this kind of cemetery, largely unrecognized until the 1990s, see John Blair, *Anglo-Saxon Oxfordshire* (Stroud, 1994), pp. 72–73; Sam Lucy and Andrew Reynolds, “Burial in Early Medieval England and Wales: Past, Present and Future,” in *Burial in Early Medieval England and Wales*, ed. Sam Lucy and Andrew Reynolds (London, 2002), pp. 13–15.
- 19 Nikolaus Pevsner and Bridget Cherry, *The Buildings of England, Wiltshire* (London, 1975), p. 348; Daniel Secker, “St John the Baptist, Mildenhall, Wiltshire” (unpublished typescript, 2009), 18pp. Available at <<https://medievalsite.files.wordpress.com/2011/12/mildenhall-wiltshire-church.pdf>> (accessed 12 Jan. 2018).
- 20 Freeman, “Mildenhall,” p. 135.

this time,<sup>21</sup> there is an outside possibility that the Werg burials are related to Audeberg's instrument of death.

In conclusion, the Werg graves were shallow, nine out of ten were oriented east to west, with one north-south, while graves intercutting others demonstrate sequence and not a single episode such as a massacre or conflict event. All of these characteristics align with those exhibited by Anglo-Saxon execution burials, where east-west orientation predominates, with other orientations also observed. The flexed aspect of four of the eight interments from the 1951 excavations should not be taken as an indication of uniquely later prehistoric or Roman period custom, as it is commonly observed in cemeteries of the Anglo-Saxon period, both of the pre-Christian and Christian centuries, including execution cemeteries of the 7th and 8th centuries and later.<sup>22</sup> Thus, we have a cemetery with a clear set of characteristics, but which is otherwise undated if the associated, likely residual, remains are discounted as secure dating evidence. A consideration of a possible chronological setting for the burials must therefore draw upon wider observations, but an execution cemetery somewhere in the 7th- to 12th-century range is a strong contender.

### Location

The topographical setting of cemeteries in general can often reveal as much about their character and type as the mode of burial customs found within them. In the case of execution cemeteries, three particular aspects stand out as defining characteristics: proximity to routeways, boundaries and pre-existing monuments. The location of the burials alongside one of the routes leading into the town of *Cynetio* has already been noted and the place was clearly a key crossing point of the Kennet. No discussion of *Cynetio* read in the preparation of the current piece, however, considers the possibility of bridges over the river Kennet during the Roman period. Given the key location of the place and the convergence of six major roads upon the Roman town (Fig. 12.3), the likelihood of at least timber bridges, perhaps with stone abutments, ought to be considered both to the north and east of the town where roads cross the river on the

21 Reynolds, *Deviant Burial*, pp. 245–46.

22 There is an extensive literature on the interpretation of flexed burials in early Anglo-Saxon cemeteries, which largely concerns questions of the 'ethnic' attribution of persons found so buried. See, Sam Lucy, *The Anglo-Saxon Way of Death* (Stroud, 2000), pp. 80–81. This discussion need not detain us further here, beyond the observation that the custom is observed over a long period, from later prehistory onwards, with fluctuations and nuances.

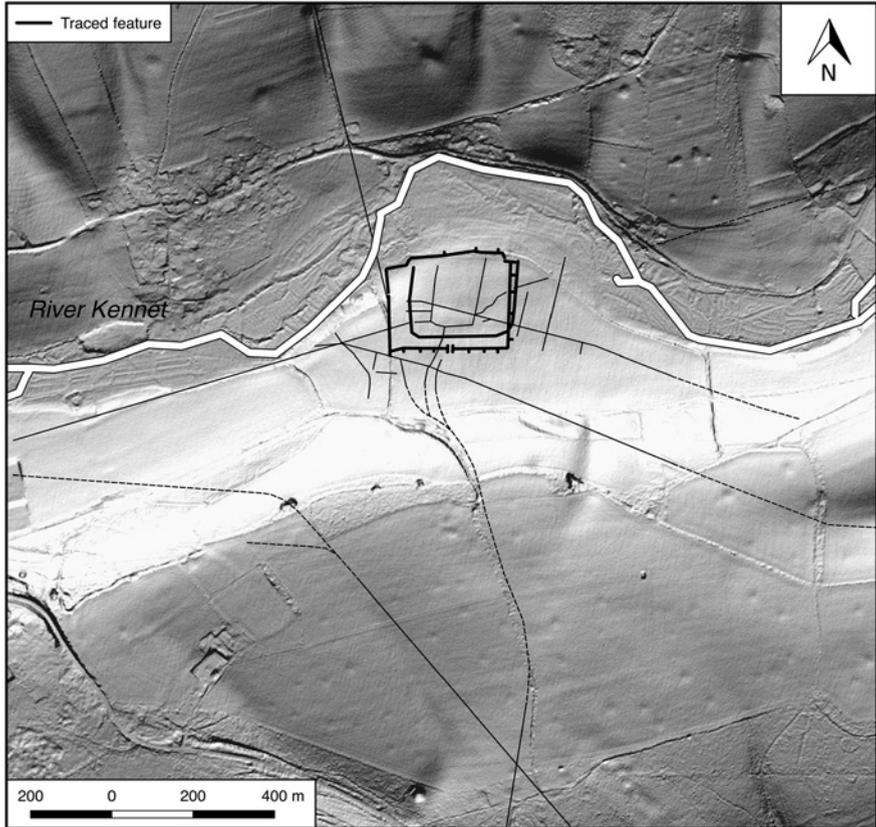


FIGURE 12.3 *Cynetio* and its place in the Roman road network

way to Cirencester (*Corinium*) via Margary 43 and possibly Alchester via Frilford respectively.<sup>23</sup> The river is narrow relative to watercourses elsewhere that had roads carried across them by bridges—for example Staines (*Pontes*), where the Roman name indicates more than one bridge, very likely a function of the confluence of several water courses there flowing into the Thames.<sup>24</sup>

Whether there were bridges or not, the locale was evidently a nodal point in the communication network of the region, although quite how long the various elements of the Roman road network survived in use into the Anglo-Saxon period is unknown. On the basis of a visual inspection of Ordnance Survey maps, it can be seen that the Roman road network in North Wiltshire at least,

23 Corney, "Origins," p. 346.

24 Phil Jones and Rob Poulton, *Roman and Medieval Staines: the Development Of The Town* (Woking, 2010).

survives in a piecemeal fashion. The East-West Mildenhall to Bath (*Aquae Sulis*) road leaves very little trace in the modern pattern of routes, beyond a general reflection of a corridor of movement on that axis.<sup>25</sup> From this observation, it might be suggested that the network of modern roads, at least the principal routes between the central places of the late Anglo-Saxon period, formed as those places crystalized into key centres of marketing and settlement. In other words, the Roman system appears to have been retained in a selective way, although quite what means of long-distance communications preceded the imperial network is far from established. Certain long distance routes of Roman origin, in particular those running north-south and connecting what became Mercia with Wessex have left a stronger sense of continued use—evident by their persistence up to the period of Ordnance Survey mapping—than east-to west routes. This is an interesting issue, which requires much more discussion than is possible here, but it does suggest that key points in the landscape of Wessex, like *Cvnetio*, will have retained importance as strategic nodes. The Werg burials perhaps find a setting in this context.

The most important east-west routes are those running parallel to the north and south of the River Kennet, following the river valley, and which link, to the north, Ramsbury (the seat of a Bishop between 909 and 1058) to Marlborough and, to the south, Marlborough to Hungerford.<sup>26</sup> Marlborough appears to be a late Saxon or later development as a town, while Hungerford is absent from the Domesday Survey; potentially both places are relatively late arrivals to the settlement geography of the area and the link between Mildenhall and Ramsbury is perhaps the earlier of the two routes. A key crossing point over the Kennet, linking the routes just discussed with the Roman roads converging on *Cvnetio*, seems to have been at Werg on the basis of both the configuration of the road pattern found on the earliest mapping of the locale and the existence of a bridge there by the 16th century,<sup>27</sup> where a connection across the river is made with the two Roman roads that converge 1.5 km south of the river and which themselves connect with the river via a route known as Cock-a-troop lane (Fig. 12.3), first recorded in 1257 as *Crokerestrope*, a name that derives either from the former existence of potters there or, more likely, to the commonality of Roman pottery in the ground round about.<sup>28</sup> It is of interest that Cock-a-troop Lane now passes directly over the south-west corner of the Roman walled circuit, although it re-emerges from within the walls close to the known entrance in

25 O.G.S. Crawford, *Archaeology in the Field* (London, 1953), pp. 67–73.

26 Crawford, *Archaeology*, p. 73, Fig. 7.

27 Andrews and Dury's Map 1773; Freeman, "Mildenhall," p. 127.

28 Gover et al. *Wiltshire*, p. 301.

the east wall. It would appear that the route originally ran up to the monumental south gate into the town, but that it was then diverted at some later juncture, perhaps when the south gate became impassable due to collapse: there may have been a breach at the south-western corner that facilitated passage through the ruins.

That Marlborough's two parishes have been carved out of Preshute parish—the latter church being the mother (minster) church of Marlborough—indicates that the pattern of local estate boundaries in the vicinity of Werg was at least partly altered in the late Anglo-Saxon period.<sup>29</sup> While the Werg burials themselves lie in the centre of the parish of Mildenhall as mapped in 1889, they do bear a close relationship to boundaries at the level of the tithings of Mildenhall (Fig. 12.4). Three in all, the tithings were those of Mildenhall, Poulton and Stitchcombe, all of which find entries in the Domesday Survey, of ten hides apiece for the first two estates, and only a hide for the last,<sup>30</sup> although in 1838 the latter two covered c.800 acres and c.1000 acres respectively, with Mildenhall tithing at c.2200 acres.<sup>31</sup> The burial site lay on the boundary between Mildenhall and Stitchcombe tithings, the River Kennet marking the division between the two,<sup>32</sup> but what of the possible antiquity of these divisions? Quite how far back the antiquity of Mildenhall's tithings lies is unknowable, but the tenurial history of Mildenhall is rather better documented than most other parcels of land prior to the Domesday Survey and an 8th-century horizon, at least, can be established.

The earliest written record of Mildenhall is an entry in the *Liber Terrarum* of Glastonbury Abbey, a mid-13th-century transcription of an earlier (perhaps late 10th- or 11th-century) cartulary.<sup>33</sup> The list records the granting of *Mildenhealh* by the West Saxon king Cynewulf to a certain Bica. Commentators on the grant, which cannot be dated any more closely than to the duration of that king's reign (757–86), note that forgery of a grant to a lay-person is most unlikely—with most forgeries being the product of monastic scriptoria laying false claim to lands—and in any case, a further grant of land to Bica, of an estate at Little Bedwyn in 778 is of undoubted authenticity, surviving as it does as a single sheet

29 H.C. Brentnall, "The Origins of the Parish of Preshute," *WANHM* 53 (1950), 294–310, at p. 275.

30 *DB Wilts.* 7:7; 27:19; 67:48.

31 Freeman, "Mildenhall," p. 125.

32 Freeman, "Mildenhall," p. 125.

33 For a discussion of this list and its dating, see Leslie Abrams, *Anglo-Saxon Glastonbury: Church and Endowment* (Woodbridge, 1996), pp. 13–18.

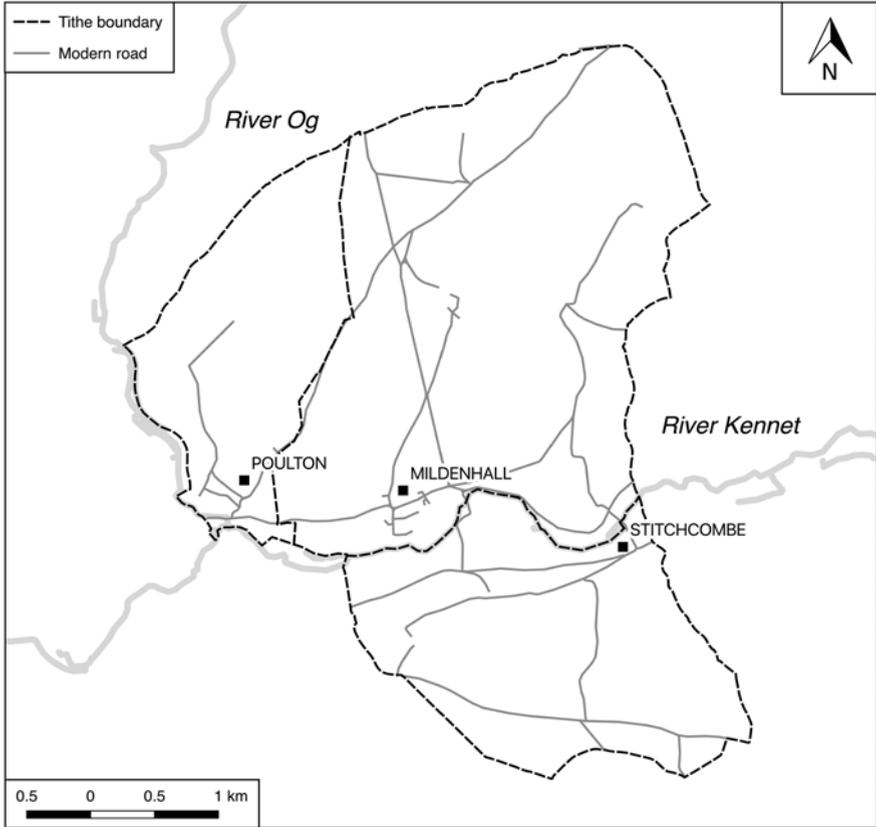


FIGURE 12.4 The parish of Mildenhall showing local routes and tithing boundaries

copy, perhaps contemporary but arguably later on palaeographical grounds.<sup>34</sup> The implications of these two grants to Bica are further explored below.

Land at Mildenhall finds mention in several other pre-Conquest sources. An Old Minster charter in the 12th-century *Codex Wintoniensis* records an exchange of lands dated 801×805 between Bishop Eahlmund of Winchester and a certain Byrhtelm, probably Bica's heir, whereby the bishop received a combined total 33 'manentes' comprising four estates, including at both Mildenhall and Bedwyn,<sup>35</sup> although the extent of the lands is not stated and it is possible that the Mildenhall parcel might have comprised either of the two larger tithings found in the Domesday Survey. In any case, it seems clear from a later

34 S 264; Heather Edwards, *The Charters of the Early West Saxon Kingdom*, BAR Brit. Ser. 198 (Oxford, 1988), p. 59.

35 S 1263; H.P.R. Finberg, *The Early Charters of Wessex* (Leicester, 1964), p. 72.

affirmation of the granting of 15 hides at Mildenhall to Glastonbury by King Edgar (946×955), found in the (not unproblematic) Glastonbury source *De antiquitate Glastonie ecclesie*, a 12th-century text in origin with subsequent additions, that either the extents of these lands or their hidage assessments fluctuated over time.<sup>36</sup>

Besides being located on a boundary of at least 8th century date, a link between the Werg burials and an ancient monumental setting is obvious. Elsewhere, a series of Anglo-Saxon execution cemeteries is located in close proximity to former Roman towns, some of which became important Anglo-Saxon towns (for example, Winchester and Old Sarum), and a number of others where execution cemeteries can be shown to predate urban occupation of the Anglo-Saxon period (such as Cambridge and Staines).<sup>37</sup>

The evidence of local place-names, however, brings another perspective to the findspot of the Werg burials with a bearing on the interpretation of the remains. Despite being identical with Old English ‘wearg’ (villain, felon, scoundrel), the place-name Werg is apparently better received as meaning ‘willow’ with similar examples found not far away in Berkshire.<sup>38</sup> In view of the archaeological discoveries and their topographical setting, the possibility that Old English ‘wearg’ is here preserved must remain a distinct possibility. Of particular significance, however, is the name of the field, Nickamore Field, within which the burials were found and of the immediate locale. First recorded in 1272 as *Nikerpole*, the name is again recorded in the 16th century as *Nicapooles Croft*.<sup>39</sup> Somewhat bizarrely, if not entirely without relevance, the editor of the 1956 Marlborough College *Report*, E.G.H. Kempson, appreciated the significance of the name of the field within which the burials lay in an addendum to Meyrick’s report, noting that “Possibly on an earlier occasion corpses may have been disturbed and ghosts seen.”<sup>40</sup> The significance of the field-name is its incorporation of the ‘*nicor*’, a water-demon that features in the *Beowulf* epic, no

36 Abrams, *Glastonbury*, pp. 175–76.

37 Reynolds, *Deviant Burial*, pp. 118–20 and p. 147; Craig Cessford, with Alison Dickens, Natasha Dodwell and Andrew Reynolds, “Middle Anglo-Saxon Justice: The Chesterton Lane Corner Execution Cemetery and Related Sequence,” *Archaeological Journal* 164 (2007), 192–226; Graham Hayman and Andrew Reynolds, “A Saxon and Saxo-Norman Execution Cemetery at 42–54 London Road, Staines,” *Archaeological Journal* 162 (2005), 215–55.

38 See, R.D. Fulk. ‘Old English Werg-, wyrge- ‘accursed,’ *Historical Linguistics*, 117 (2004), 315–22. I am grateful for John Baker’s comment on this name and for supplying references. Margaret Gelling, *The Place-Names of Berkshire I* (Cambridge, 1973), p. 125; Margaret Gelling, *The Place-names of Berkshire II* (Cambridge, 1974), pp. 311 and 319. See also Reynolds, *Deviant Burial*, pp. 225–27.

39 Gover et al., *Wiltshire*, p. 499.

40 Meyrick, “Romano-British Burials,” p. 20.

less.<sup>41</sup> Semple notes water-demons in her consideration of pre-Christian cult practice in Anglo-Saxon England, referencing also the Knucker's Hole, Sussex,<sup>42</sup> and it seems clear from the association of virtually all other known Anglo-Saxon execution cemeteries with features of an earlier age with potentially mythical connotations (for example, barrows and linear earthworks) that the two phenomena go together. While one might query the ghosts of the *Report's* Editor, a spot with demonic associations might either motivate or result from the location of a place for the despatch and burial of social outcasts. As a final note on the matter, the ruins of *Cvnetio* may well have inspired an other-worldly reaction from local people in the post-Roman period. Although the fragmentary 10th-century *Exeter Book* poem known as *The Ruin* suggests that this might take the form of reflections of wonderment rather than fear,<sup>43</sup> casting a common notion from a single source is sketchy at best. It is of interest in this light that a further example of a 'nicor' name is found in the *Nicarpool*, just south of the Roman city of Lincoln.<sup>44</sup> It might also be significant that the name of Poulton tithing means 'the farm by the pool';<sup>45</sup> perhaps so-called after its proximity to a body of water of such local notoriety that it required no further qualifying appellation.

### The Fate of *Cvnetio*

Over thirty years after the discovery at *Cvnetio* of the largest hoard of Roman coins found in Britain (in a large pot and a lead container between them holding nearly 55,000 coins of the 3rd century AD), and in the light of Mark Corney's painstaking plotting of the evidence from aerial photographs published in the late 1990s,<sup>46</sup> Channel Four's *Time Team* undertook large-scale surveys and sample excavations in order to bring a greater understanding to the site. A programme about the work was broadcast on 23 May 2010, entitled "Potted History," in Series 17 of *Time Team*. The investigations revealed much of interest,

41 For references to occurrences of the *nicor* in Old English texts, including *Beowulf*, see Joseph Bosworth and T. Northcote Toller, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary* (Oxford, 1898), p. 717.

42 Sarah Semple, "In the Open Air," in *Signals of Belief in Early England: Anglo-Saxon Paganism Revisited*, ed. Martin Carver, Alex Sanmark and Sarah Semple (Oxford, 2010), pp. 21–48, at p. 30.

43 S.A.J. Bradley (ed. and trans.), *Anglo-Saxon Poetry* (London, 1982), p. 402.

44 Francis Hill, *Medieval Lincoln* (Cambridge, 1948), p. 35.

45 Gover et al., *Wiltshire*, p. 301.

46 Edward Besly and Roger Bland, *The Cunetio Treasure: Roman Coinage of the Third Century AD* (London, 1983); Corney, "Origins," p. 342, Fig. 3.

but nothing datable to the post-Roman period beyond a few sherds of later medieval pottery.<sup>47</sup> Although stone buildings within the town were shown to have been in a state of collapse and/or demolition and had been robbed *within* the Roman period, investigation of the defences in several places—following a series of small cuttings made in the 1950s and 1960s—failed to establish a chronology for the destruction and removal of the town wall.<sup>48</sup> It must be significant, however, that the stone defences were not built until after c.AD 360, perhaps even as late as c.AD 380—in fact they are the latest known defences of this kind to have been built in the civilian area of Roman Britain<sup>49</sup>—and thus likely to have been in fine condition by the early 5th century and the apparent abandonment of the place. It is possible that stone buildings within the town were demolished to provide building materials for the defences by analogy with sites elsewhere in the province.<sup>50</sup> Corney suggests that by this time *Cvnetio* was a local centre of administration, a tax collection centre and a base for *comitatensian* (mobile field army) forces in the region.<sup>51</sup>

We have already noted that *Cvnetio* was the focus of no less than six Roman roads, making it a key nexus for travel and communication in central southern England, not just in the Roman period, but after too—at least until that arterial network failed to serve the economic and settlement patterns that followed. Here is not the place to provide a full survey of the early medieval archaeology of the region, as such can be found in detail elsewhere,<sup>52</sup> but in a nutshell the regional axes of action in the 5th and 6th centuries can be placed in the Upper Thames and along the south coast, with both regions facing a cultural watershed with Western Britain which lasted into the 7th century. By the second half of the 7th century, what became the kingdom of Wessex developed in the region between the Thames, the Solent and Selwood forest in the west.

As argued elsewhere, a marked disjuncture between Roman towns and locations that developed into central places during the Anglo-Saxon period can be

47 [Anon.], *Cvnetio Roman Town, Mildenhall, Marlborough, Wiltshire: Archaeological Evaluation and Assessment of Results* (Salisbury, 2011). Wessex Archaeology Report reference: 71509.01.

48 Anon., *Cvnetio*, pp. 24–25.

49 Corney, “Origins,” p. 346.

50 Corney, “Origins,” p. 349.

51 Corney, “Origins,” p. 349.

52 Eagles, “Archaeological Evidence”; Eagles, “Presence and Culture.” Dr Eagles’ papers are published in fully revised and updated form as an interlinked collection: see Bruce Eagles, *From Roman Civitas to Anglo-Saxon Shire: Topographical Studies on the Formation of Wessex* (Oxford, 2018).

observed in the Marlborough area.<sup>53</sup> This pattern can be traced along a corridor which broadly follows territories disputed between the kingdoms of Mercia and Wessex between the later 7th and earlier 9th centuries AD, in other words between the estuary of the Bristol Avon and the Thames in the Staines area.<sup>54</sup> This pattern contrasts with many other parts of Britain where Roman centres re-emerged as places of importance as the Anglo-Saxon period progressed. What happened to *Cvnetio*, when did it happen and why?

Following sporadic explorations since the 19th century, detailed studies of *Cvnetio* have succeeded in plotting the extent of the site, including two phases of defences; an earthwork enclosure of early Roman period, which was then enclosed within a substantial wall of flint and chalk faced with oolitic limestone, furnished with at least three gates and, at the last count, some 17 bastions—all-in-all a fortification covering 7.5 ha<sup>55</sup> and a place that by anyone's measure would have been an imposing fortress in the late Roman landscape and after. Why is there now nothing there visible above ground? Was *Cvnetio* visible as a walled enclosure when Marlborough was developed as a town? What social, political and economic phenomena led to the total erasure of such a substantial place? A possible indication of the residual significance of *Cvnetio* and locale is the albeit tenuous evidence for a chapel in Mildenhall parish at an unknown place called 'Selk', which may have lent its name to the Domesday Hundred of Selkley, perhaps as a function of its location having been the meeting place of the hundred, although other locations are perhaps more likely.<sup>56</sup> Archaeological finds of early medieval date in Mildenhall parish are limited to a couple of burials of 6th- and 6th/7th-century date, a saucer brooch of 6th-century date, a sherd of chaff-tempered pottery, a spearhead, and a late Saxon penny of Æthelred II (978–1016).<sup>57</sup>

53 Joshua Pollard and Andrew Reynolds, *Avebury: The Biography of a Landscape* (Stroud, 2002), Chapter 6.

54 Andrew Reynolds and Alexander Langlands, 'Social Identities on the Macro Scale: A Maximum View of Wansdyke', in *People and Space in the Middle Ages, 300–1300*, ed. Wendy Davies, Guy Halsall and Andrew Reynolds (Turnhout, 2006), pp. 13–44, at p. 42.

55 Corney, "Origins," pp. 343–44; Corney, "Nucleated Settlements," p. 17.

56 Freeman, "Mildenhall," p. 125; Andrew Reynolds, 'From Pagus to Parish: Territory and Settlement in the Avebury Region from the Late Roman Period to the Domesday Survey', in *The Avebury Landscape: Aspects of the Field Archaeology of the Marlborough Downs*, ed. G. Brown, D. Field and D. McOmish (Oxford, 2005), p. 172.

57 Simon Draper, *Landscape, Settlement and Society in Roman and Early Medieval Wiltshire* (Oxford, 2006), p. 156.

If Marlborough was planned as a fortified settlement in the late 9th century, as Jeremy Haslam has argued,<sup>58</sup> then *Cynetio* must have been dilapidated to the extent that its refurbishment was simply too big a task, otherwise it would surely have been refortified, or it had been robbed of its materials to a degree that reconstruction simply was not viable. That it was not re-occupied may suggest that Marlborough's urban character came very late in the Anglo-Saxon period if not after, perhaps during the floruit of urban growth that occurred in Britain from the 12th century. The presence of a castle at Marlborough by no means supports the existence of an urban settlement there at the time it was built and indeed other castles in Wiltshire are found in non-urban settings (for example, Devizes (initially), Wardour and Ludgershall). All too little is known about Marlborough's development from an archaeological perspective—in fact almost nothing—but there is currently no evidence to support a late 9th-century urban foundation.

Haslam's model for urban development in North Wiltshire, views Marlborough and Hungerford outplaying Ramsbury and Bedwyn in the late Anglo-Saxon period and Ramsbury succeeding *Cynetio* as the base of local power at "an early date".<sup>59</sup> While Bedwyn's moneyer *Cild* evidently moved to Marlborough in the reign of William the Conqueror,<sup>60</sup> Marlborough is not designated as a borough in the Domesday Survey, whereas Bedwyn is.<sup>61</sup> Notions of the degree of urbanity in Anglo-Saxon England have been much debated in recent years, with views ranging from it being a veritable urban crucible far earlier in comparison to its regional (Welsh, Scottish and Irish—to use modern geographical terms) neighbours, to a part of Europe that shares rather more in common with urban trajectories found across the European area; namely an urban development that aligns with a 12th-century upward turn there as elsewhere.<sup>62</sup>

58 Jeremy Haslam, "The Towns of Wiltshire," in *Anglo-Saxon Towns in Southern England*, ed. Jeremy Haslam (Chichester, 1984), p. 101; Jeremy Haslam, 'The Landscape of Late Saxon Burhs and the Politics of Urban Foundation,' in *The Material Culture of the Built Environment in the Anglo-Saxon World*, ed. Maren Clegg Hyer and Gale R. Owen Crocker (Liverpool, 2017), pp. 181–215, at pp. 202 and 213.

59 Haslam, "Wiltshire," at pp. 94–102.

60 F. Elmore Jones, "A Supplementary Note on the Mints of Bedwyn and Marlborough," in *Mints, Dies and Currency: Essays in Memory of Albert Baldwin*, ed. R.A.G. Carson (London, 1971), pp. 121–27.

61 *DB Wilts.* 1:23i; 1:2; 23i.

62 Andrew Reynolds, "Spatial Configurations of Power in Anglo-Saxon England: Sidelights on the Relationships between Boroughs, Royal Vills and Hundreds," in *Power and Place in Europe in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Jayne Carroll, Andrew Reynolds and Barbara Yorke (Oxford, 2019), *Proceedings of the British Academy* 224, pp. 436–455.

Perhaps the robbing of *Cynetio's* walls largely took place between the 9th and 12th centuries as a function of their quarrying during the rise of parish churches during this time, or perhaps for the surfacing of roads in the late Saxon period or later. Before this cultural horizon, it is fundamentally problematic to visualise how and why a major fortification was dismantled in a period where all buildings, with the exception of major churches (minsters), were of timber. Nearby minsters incorporating limestone include Avebury, while Roman sculpture is present at St Mary's Marlborough and at Stitchcombe, but the number of local minsters—and not least the availability of building stone to be plundered from the multiplicity of ruined Roman buildings in the landscape—do not adequately explain the demise of *Cynetio*.

### The Wessex-Mercia Frontier

At this juncture it is useful to draw together several threads; gallows, grants of land, and the wider setting of both in relation to the frontier between Wessex and Mercia. If the Werg burials are indeed pre-12th-century execution victims, then we might expect the gallows at which they met their fate to be in immediate proximity on the basis of similar cemeteries elsewhere.<sup>63</sup> While the gift of Mildenhall to Bica is known only by its incorporation in Glastonbury's *Liber Terrarum*,<sup>64</sup> students of Anglo-Saxon landscape history are more fortunate with regard to Cynewulf's grant of Little Bedwyn to him, for it includes a detailed boundary clause in Latin, with place-names given in Old English; in fact, it is the "earliest surviving example of such a detailed perambulation."<sup>65</sup> Of particular relevance to our discussion here is that the Bedwyn bounds make reference to the earliest documented gallows in Anglo-Saxon England using the Latin term '*gabulos*'. It is a matter of not inconsiderable interest that, according to the boundary clause, the Little Bedwyn gallows lay adjacent to a mark that the locals (*ruricolis*) called the 'ancient monuments' (*antiqua monumenta*) at the 'holly stumps' (*holenstypbum*). This is an unusual turn of phrase, to say the least, that prompted another Wiltshire antiquary, G.M. Young, to comment on the possible cultic significance of the name, especially as the spot mentioned in the charter is that occupied since at least the early 19th century by Harrow Farm,<sup>66</sup> the latter name possibly derived from Old English '*hearg*'

63 Reynolds, *Deviant Burial*, Ch. 4.

64 Abrams, *Glastonbury*, p. 175.

65 Edwards, *Wessex*, p. 61.

66 G.M. Young, "The Antiqua Monumenta of Bedwyn," *WANHM* 45 (1924), 525–27.

(temple/shrine), although the name is not attested before 1820.<sup>67</sup> While the bounds have been studied in detail by Crawford, and the authenticity of the Mildenhall grant bolstered by the existence of the Bedwyn charter,<sup>68</sup> any suggestion in the literature of a further relationship between the two grants ends there.

Of central importance here, is that the estate of little Bedwyn includes a fortification that features elsewhere in written sources as a nodal place in the early history of Wessex: the *cissanbyrig* (Chisbury) of the *Burghal Hidage* and the *Abingdon Chronicle*.<sup>69</sup> That both lands were gifted to the same beneficiary, both potentially with gallows, and that both included sites of nodal importance in terms of their connectivity and defensible capacity has to-date passed without mention as far as I have been able to establish.

Further, given the comparative rarity of grants by Cynewulf, it can be suggested that something more than the reward of a faithful retainer lay behind the gifting of two estates to one man. While the militarised nature of the frontier has been considered in detail in two previous accounts,<sup>70</sup> further possibilities can be proposed. To begin with, it might be argued that the granting of lands to Bica was part of a strategic plan to bolster the frontier with Mercia during a period of the latter's ferocious expansionist policy and ongoing territorial claims on the part of both kingdoms. Grants of land in North Wiltshire were made under both Mercian and West Saxon auspices in the second half of the 8th century—as they were along the broader frontier between the two kingdoms in the preceding century during the period of the foundation of the Thames valley minsters.<sup>71</sup> The power struggle in this extensive region—Berkshire and Wiltshire north of the Wansdyke—has been elucidated by Barbara Yorke, who notes the key horizons thus:<sup>72</sup> following a rebellion by the West Saxon King Cuthred in 750 in the face of earlier land-grabbing by

67 Gover et al., *Wiltshire*, xiv, p. 346.

68 O.G.S. Crawford, "The Anglo-Saxon *Bounds of Bedwyn and Burbage*," *WANHM* 41 (1921), 281–301; Edwards, *Early Wessex*, p. 72–73; Abrams, *Glastonbury*, p. 175–76.

69 A full discussion of the naming of Chisbury and its role in the defence of the Kennet valley, particularly in the 9th to 11th centuries, can be found in John Baker and Stuart Brookes, *Beyond the Burghal Hidage* (Leiden, 2013), pp. 226–29; John Baker and Stuart Brookes, "From Frontier to Border: the Evolution of Northern West Saxon Territorial Delineation in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries," *ASSAH* 17 (2011), 108–23.

70 Reynolds and Langlands, "Maximum View"; Baker and Brookes, *Burghal Hidage*, Chapter 4.

71 Frank Stenton, *The Early History of the Abbey of Abingdon* (Reading, 1913), pp. 9–18 and pp. 49–50.

72 See Yorke, *Wessex*, pp. 62–64 for a full account.

Æthelbald of Mercia, Cuthred's immediate successor Cynewulf, in the first year of his reign (and that of Æthelbald's murder), attested a grant of land by Æthelbald of Tockenham in North Wiltshire to Malmesbury.<sup>73</sup> From 758 onwards, however, Cynewulf granted lands widely in Wiltshire and beyond. Although one of his earliest charters (of 758) is confirmed by King Offa (757–96),<sup>74</sup> others betray little or no sense of Mercian overlordship. In 779, only a year after the Little Bedwyn grant, Cynewulf lost a fight with the Mercians, now ruled by Offa, at Bensington on the River Thames in Oxfordshire.<sup>75</sup> From that point until a further battle in 802—this time between men from Wiltshire and from the kingdom of the *Hwicce*—at Kempsford in Gloucestershire, also on the River Thames, West Saxon power in the border region was subjugated. From 802 onwards, however, at least Northern Wiltshire and Somerset became permanent territorial gains for Wessex.<sup>76</sup>

As argued elsewhere, at least the naming and conception as a unified frontier of the two earthworks known as Wansdyke with the Bath (*Aquae Sulis*) to Mildenhall (*Cynetio*) Roman road providing the link between the two, makes sense in the context of Wessex firming up—perhaps for the first time in such a dramatic fashion—its border with Mercia. The 'Wansdyke Frontier' formed a veritable comparator to its Mercian counterpart, Offa's Dyke, in several ways, prompting the question of which is the earlier of the two artefacts? Offa's Dyke is perhaps named after the heroic ancestor (the Offa found in the Mercian Royal Genealogy listed in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle entry for 757 in certain recensions among other places). Indeed, it was the ingenious suggestion by Barbara Yorke that the 8th-century king Offa took his own name and that of his dyke from his ancestor that inspired a similar view of the Wansdyke by the author of this paper and one of the editors of this collection.<sup>77</sup> Such a process might be read as both ideological in intent, by engaging a workforce in a collective enterprise whose physical outcome was heavily culturally loaded in terms of its naming (after Woden, that former deity transmogrified into an ancestor in the West Saxon Royal Genealogical List), and original in its organisational capacity (perhaps through the much debated use of labour by obligation).<sup>78</sup>

If Cynewulf's two grants to Bica were strategic as well as reward-driven in nature, all too little if anything has been identified about what else might have

73 S 96.

74 S 265.

75 The location of which perhaps suggests that Cynewulf took the fight to Offa.

76 Yorke, *Wessex*, p. 91.

77 Barbara Yorke, "The Origins of Mercia," in *Mercia: An Anglo-Saxon Kingdom in Europe*, ed. Michelle P. Brown and Carol A. Farr (London, 2005), pp. 16–17; Reynolds and Langlands, "Maximum View," p. 34.

78 Yorke, *Wessex*, p. 91.

comprised such a defensive effort in the face of Mercian land grabs beyond Wansdyke, but perhaps the grants of Mildenhall and Little Bedwyn provide hints: key landscape locales along the frontier were placed into the hands of faithful and powerful men like Bica.<sup>79</sup> Although Mercia has long been known through an examination of its charters to have exacted military obligations (*trinoda necessitas*) from beneficiaries of land grants from the mid-8th century,<sup>80</sup> in Wessex the obligation of military service by the land-owning classes appears to have been automatic at this time.<sup>81</sup> It is useful at this point, then, to reflect on certain other charters belonging to this period issued in the name of Cynewulf, although these documents have among them particular problems of attribution and location.

Among possible grants of Cynewulf in the Glastonbury archives are three problematic charters, relating to lands at *Cynemersforda*, *Horutone* and *Mertone*, all grants to unnamed laymen.<sup>82</sup> None of these estates is securely located, with suggestions offered largely on the basis of modern place-names, which in certain cases present a range of options. The spelling of the name of the grantor of the *Horutone* and *Mertone* grants can be read as either Cynewulf of Wessex or Coenwulf of Mercia (796–821). There is, however, only one definite charter in Coenwulf's name among the Glastonbury documents,<sup>83</sup> while by contrast a number can be attributed unequivocally to Cynewulf, which may lend weight to a Cynewulf association for the problematic grants. Possible identifications for the estates in question are that *Cynemersford* and *Horutone* equate to Quemerford, near Calne and Horton, near Bishops Cannings. *Mertone* has been suggested to lie in various southern English counties, but a case can be made for the location of the *Mertone* estate at Marten in Wiltshire, of which more below. If these *are* Cynewulf charters, then it might be argued that the North Wiltshire locations are likely as each lies along the Wessex-Mercia frontier and in two cases immediately adjacent to large royal estate centres of the house of Wessex (Quemerford/Calne and Marten/Bedwyn, with Horton

79 An interesting discussion of a mid-9th-century Mercian charter (S199) of King Berhtwulf (840–52) considers a grant of land to a thegn on the northern border of the Hwicce in social and political terms, see: Dominic Goodall and Andrew Wareham, "The Political Significance of Gifts of Power in the Khmer and Mercian Kingdoms," *Medieval Worlds* 6 (2017), 156–95, p. 162.

80 Nicholas Brooks, "The Development of Military Obligations in Eighth- and Ninth-Century England," in *England Before the Conquest: Studies in Primary Sources Presented to Dorothy Whitelock*, ed. Peter Clemoes and Kathleen Hughes (Cambridge, 1971), p. 76.

81 Brooks, "Military Obligations," p. 81.

82 S 1688, S 1689, S 1690; For discussions of the details of these grants and their possible locations, see Edwards, *Wessex*, p. 75 and Abrams, *Glastonbury*, p. 104, p. 141 and pp. 173–74.

83 S 152; Abrams, *Glastonbury*, p. 336–38.

laying in the large episcopal estate of Bishops Cannings by Domesday; it is likely to have been a royal estate at an earlier period). Quemerford, Horton and Marten all lay on important routes.

If there is any substance in the notions offered above, then a further comment can be offered regarding one of the most celebrated entries in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, the so-called ‘story of Sigebert, Cynewulf and Cyneheard’ found in the annal for 757.<sup>84</sup> Immediately distinctive by its length, tone and detail in comparison to the brevity that otherwise typifies 8th-century *Chronicle* entries, the story of inter-familial feuding in the royal house of Wessex found therein is relevant to our discussion. Here is not the place to enter into a detailed consideration of all aspects of this complex entry, which has been extensively interrogated elsewhere, but views differ widely from its acceptance as a record of 8th-century events drawing on a lost source, to its fabrication by compilers of the *Chronicle* in the later 9th century and therefore of questionable value.<sup>85</sup>

In essence, the entry relates how in 786 Cynewulf was murdered at *meretun* by a force led by another West Saxon noble, Cyneheard. The event takes place at the fortified residence of a lady usually held as Cynewulf’s mistress.<sup>86</sup> Three particular aspects of the tale are relevant here: it is often considered as a description of the transition of society from a kin-based to a lordship-based one; it provides evidence for fortified estate centres in 8th century Wessex, and its location, although much-speculated upon, is unknown.

We need not comment further here on the first two issues, but we might suggest that the *meretun* where Cynewulf met his end is also the *Mertone* that features in the mid-13th-century Glastonbury *Index Chartarum* noted above.<sup>87</sup> The name *meretun* means ‘farm at the boundary’.<sup>88</sup> A series of locations have

84 ASC s.a. 755 (for 757).

85 The most sceptical view is perhaps that found in H. Kleinschmidt, “The Old English Annal for 757 and West Saxon Dynastic Strife,” *Journal of Medieval History*, 22 (1996), 209–24, while many other scholars have interrogated the entry for what it might actually reveal about 8th century familial rivalries. For a range of views on its applicability, see: Yorke, *Wessex*, p. 91 and pp. 286–87; Stephen D. White, “Kinship and Lordship in Early Medieval England: The Story of Sigebert, Cynewulf, and Cyneheard,” in *Old English Literature: Critical Essays*, ed. R.M. Luizza (New Haven, CT, 2002), pp. 157–81. Early entries in the *Chronicle* are discussed elsewhere in this volume by Courtney Konshuh, “Constructing Early Anglo-Saxon Identity in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*,” above, pp. 154–180.

86 Yorke, *Wessex*, p. 79.

87 Abrams, *Glastonbury*, p. 35, IC B1.

88 Gover et al. *Wiltshire*, p. 347 and p. 402.



FIGURE 12.5 Earthworks from LiDAR evidence from Marten, showing the *Cynetio* to *Venta* Roman road routed around the enclosure

been proposed, ranging from Merton in Surrey, Martin in Hampshire, Dorset or in Devon,<sup>89</sup> but Marten in Wiltshire, is close both to the county boundary with Berkshire and Hampshire (the earliest mention of *Hamtunscir* is in the Chronicle entry for 757) and to the northern frontier between Wessex and Mercia in the later 8th century. Remarkably, Marten lies just short of 12 km south-south-east of Mildenhall, directly on the Roman road from Mildenhall to Winchester (Fig. 12.5). Merton in Surrey does not make sense in that Surrey was under Mercian control in the period during which the *meretun* incident occurred,<sup>90</sup> while arguments for the other suggested sites rely solely upon place-name evidence. The Wiltshire site at least has a socio-political context in relation to Cynewulf and his followers. A further piece of evidence that suggests a familial connection—both on the part of Cynewulf and Cyneheard—to the locality is the name of

89 See the list with references in White, “Kinship and Lordship,” p. 174, n. 11. N.B. Martin in Hampshire was in Wiltshire until the late 19th century and is not to be confused with the Wiltshire Marten discussed here.

90 J.E.B. Gover, Allen Mawer and F.M. Stenton, *The Place Names of Surrey* (Cambridge, 1934), xvii and p. 25.

the hundred within which Marten lay: Kinwardstone = Cyneweard's stone.<sup>91</sup> The hundred contains substantial royal holdings, for example those of Bedwyn and Pewsey, and by the time of the Domesday Survey it was the second largest hundred in Wiltshire being assessed at 196 ¼ hides,<sup>92</sup> an extent 100 hides smaller than that attributed to the lesser groupings found in the Tribal Hidage list of 7th- or 8th-century date and it might be suggested that the hundred is in essence an early tribal/familial territory.<sup>93</sup>

Marten also has archaeological evidence for a substantial earthwork enclosure interpreted as a moat (Fig. 12.5),<sup>94</sup> although moats, it has to be said, are rare features in the county with a distribution that places most of the 37 known sites in the north and east of the county, off the chalk and on the clay soils that characterise that part of Wiltshire.<sup>95</sup> While settlement-related earthworks of the pre-Conquest period are rare anywhere, they do survive in the context of defensible sites.<sup>96</sup> Besides the earthwork remains at Marten, a Google Earth search reveals evidence for a substantial double-ditched enclosure that extends beyond the upstanding features and across the field through which the Roman road passes (Fig. 12.6). Indeed, it can be seen that the Roman road has been diverted from its original course around this enclosure, while it follows a straight line before and after. A possible parallel for the form and extent of the Marten enclosure is provided by the excavated 8th-century defensible high-status farm at Yarnton in South Oxfordshire, a site whose arguably militarised aspect may reflect its location towards the southern frontier of Mercia in that period.<sup>97</sup> Only fieldwork will reveal Marten's secrets, but it seems as strong a candidate for the location of *meretun* as any other suggestion offered to date.

91 Gover et al., *Wiltshire*, p. 331.

92 A.P. Baggs, J. Freeman, C. Smith, J.H. Stevenson and E. Williamson, 'Kinwardstone Hundred', *VCH Wilts* 12, pp. 3–7, at p. 3.

93 For an excellent discussion of Great Bedwyn and region, see Bruce Eagles, 'The Area around Bedwyn in the Anglo-Saxon Period', in *The Romano-British Villa at Castle Copse, Great Bedwyn*, ed. Eric Hostetter and Thomas Noble Howe (Bloomington, 1997), pp. 378–97.

94 <<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1013104>> (accessed 12 Jan. 2018).

95 Mat Charlton, 'Moated sites near Westbury', *Camerton* 51 (2013), 34–39.

96 See, for example, Andrew Reynolds and Stuart Brookes, 'Anglo-Saxon Civil Defence in the Viking Age: A Case-Study of the Avebury Region,' in *Early Medieval Art and Archaeology in the Northern World: Studies in Honour of James Graham-Campbell*, ed. Andrew Reynolds and Leslie Webster (Leiden, 2013), pp. 561–606.

97 Gill Hey, *Yarnton: Saxon and Medieval Settlement and Landscape* (Oxford, 2004), pp. 139–66; Andrew Reynolds, 'Archaeological Correlates for Anglo-Saxon Military Activity in Comparative Perspective,' in *Landscapes of Defence in Early Medieval Europe*, ed. John Baker, Stuart Brookes and Andrew Reynolds (Turnhout, 2013), p. 20.



FIGURE 12.6 Aerial image of the Marten enclosure (above) with transcription (below)

If these ideas are plausible, then they indicate a high degree of contemporary geospatial knowledge and suggest a power base for Cynewulf and his kinsmen in eastern Wiltshire. In this context, it is worth noting the rapidity with which Cynewulf's supporters managed to raise a force with which to besiege *meretun* and kill Cyneheard and his followers only the morning after Cynewulf's murder, while one might also expect Cynewulf's mistress to have lived in relatively close proximity to him. That the king had only a small retinue with him also perhaps indicates that he had not travelled far.

### Discussion

The innovative nature of the charter tradition at this time in England is well known,<sup>98</sup> and centres in several respects on the nature of the diplomas of Cynewulf in terms of their formulae, the introduction of detailed boundary clauses and that they include the first grants to laymen, like Bica, in Wessex.<sup>99</sup> In an age of turbulent territorial politics, one might expect innovation in military organisation. The period from which military obligations upon lay landowners became explicit may have been preceded by a phase of reliance on kinship related networks, where obligations were considered inherent in grants of land to faithful followers that did not require explication in written form, while the late 7th-century laws of King Ine of Wessex (688×726), for example, indicate that free status brought with it the requirement of military service.<sup>100</sup>

As noted above, it has long been argued (and much debated)<sup>101</sup>—with the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* entry for 757 as a central piece of evidence—that this period witnessed a shift from kin-based loyalties to ties of lordship. Yorke notes that the granting of lands by charter could potentially seriously diminish royal authority, and there is certainly explicit evidence from Wessex in the later 9th century that King Alfred and other leading nobles were aware of this.<sup>102</sup> On the basis of the geographical distribution of Cynewulf's grants to laymen reconstructed in this paper (Fig. 12.7), however, it might be tentatively proposed that

98 Edwards, *Wessex*, p. 61.

99 Susan Kelly, *Charters of Malmesbury Abbey* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 170–71; Yorke, *Wessex*, p. 246.

100 *Ine*, clause 51, in *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, ed. Felix Liebermann, 3 vols (Halle, 1903–16), 1:112–13.

101 See, for example, White, “Kinship and Lordship.”

102 Yorke, *Wessex*, p. 246; Simon Keynes and Michael Lapidge, *Alfred the Great* (London, 1983), at p. 173.

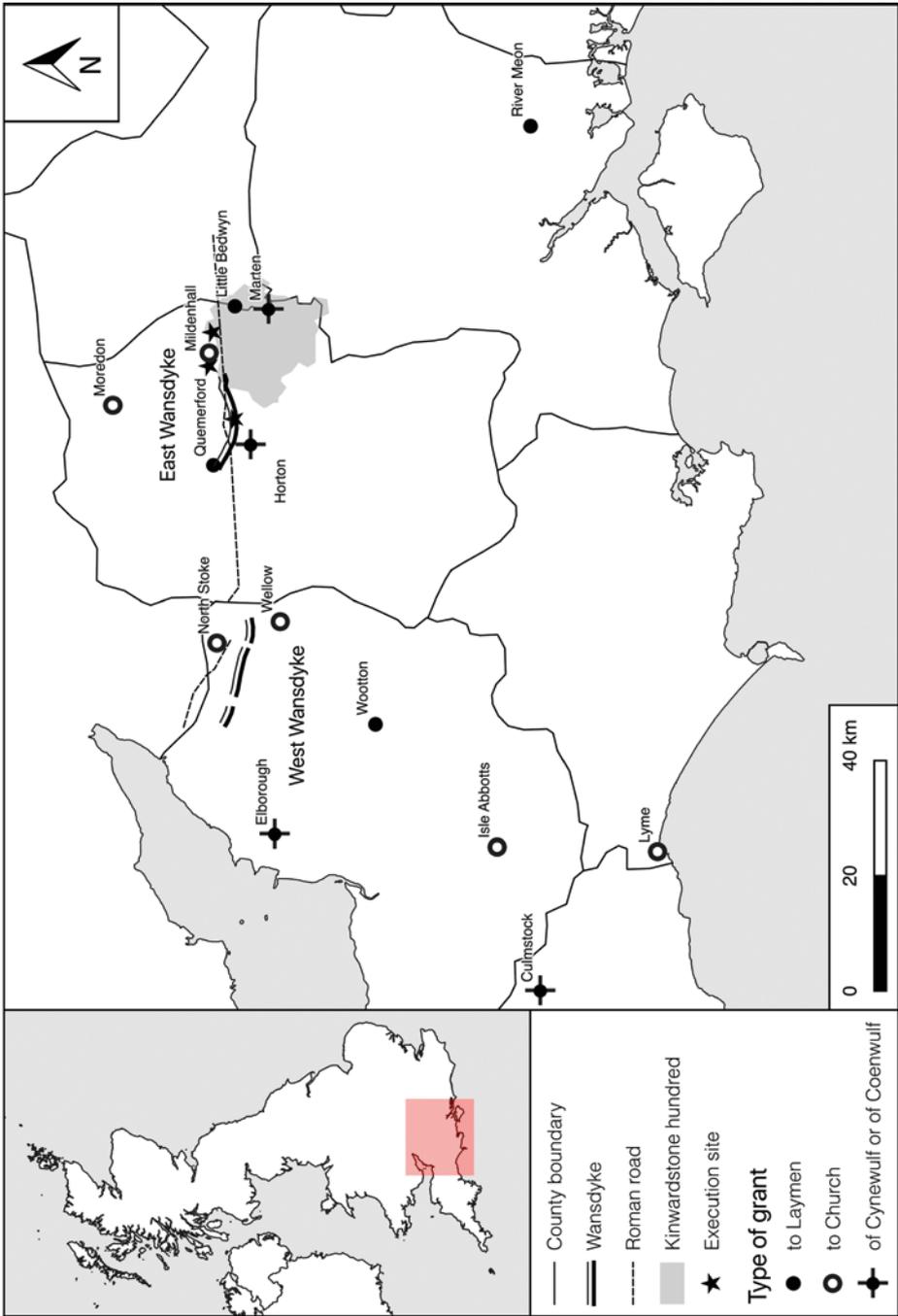


FIGURE 12.7 Cynewulf's land grants in relation to the Wessex-Mercia frontier and the location of Kinwardstone Hundred

grants of strategically important lands were made with close kin as the recipients and with personal ties forming the principal bond of loyalty between king and trusted follower or relation. A century earlier, the appointment of kinsmen to sub-kingships of large regions of the early kingdom of Wessex seems to have been the norm as evidenced by the much noted granting of 3,000 hides at Ashdown (then a name applied to the Berkshire Downs) by King Cenwalh of Wessex (642–45, 648–74) to his nephew Cuthred.<sup>103</sup> Cynewulf was elected by the leading councillors of the kingdom (*witan*)<sup>104</sup> indicating a degree of cohesion that had perhaps not existed immediately previously as the various branches of the West Saxon royal family had fought among themselves and it may be that he appointed faithful men as well as relations to strategically important places in the landscape but with grants of a smaller scale to those of a century earlier. The 757 ASC entry also relates how Sigebert (brother of Cyneheard, Cynewulf's murderer), deposed as king of the West Saxons by Cynewulf, was left in control of Hampshire, a not inconsiderable region, following established practice. From which branch of the West Saxon royal family Cynewulf was sprung remains unknown, but he at least claimed ancestry from the perceived founder of the West Saxon dynasty, Cerdic.<sup>105</sup>

A further point worth noting is the longevity of Cynewulf's reign. At 31 years, his period of rule is impressive by the standards of the day, notwithstanding the long reigns of the Mercian kings Æthelbald (716–57) and Offa (757–96). In Wessex between the reigns of Cyneigils (611–42) and Egbert (802–39) only the rulership of King Ine (688–726) at 37 years is longer than Cynewulf's. Cynewulf attended a meeting with papal legates in Canterbury in 786,<sup>106</sup> apparently on an equal footing with Offa, and he appears to have enjoyed much of his reign—certainly between 758 and 772 when he attests a charter of Offa,<sup>107</sup> but probably until the Bensington defeat in 779—as a (relatively) free agent, able to campaign against the western British on a frequent basis even in view of the might of his northern neighbour.<sup>108</sup> It is perhaps this window—between 758 and 779—that the Wansdyke frontier took its form and name.<sup>109</sup>

103 ASC s.a. 648. Yorke, *Wessex*, p. 83–84.

104 ASC 757.

105 Barbara Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo-Saxon England* (London, 1990), p. 140; ASC 757.

106 *EHD* 1, pp. 770–74.

107 S 108, the grant of an estate at Bexhill, Sussex.

108 ASC 757. Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, p. 105.

109 This view modifies that found in Reynolds and Langlands, "Maximum View," p. 37, where a post-Bensington context was suggested.

### Closing Remarks

It might be proposed that the granting of estates in the late 8th century to trusted individuals of key locales represents a concerted effort on the part of King Cynewulf to consolidate the northern frontier of his realm by a policy of strategic grants of land. Halsall notes the crucial role of the royal bodyguard in military organisation<sup>110</sup> and *if* the places and events considered in this paper can indeed be spatially related in the ways suggested, then Cynewulf's personal power base might be placed in central eastern Wiltshire, perhaps with a principal residence at Bedwyn or Pewsey.<sup>111</sup> The innovative nature of Cynewulf's charters and the context within which his military actions took place perhaps encapsulate a period of transition between the idea that military service was customary, to one where dues began to be more formally required. In an important discussion of the evolving structures of military obligation in 7th- to 9th-century England, Nicholas Brooks recalled charters of 739 and 794 that reveal that Wessex required all men with the rank of *comes* (landholding warriors) to provide military service.<sup>112</sup> Such political actions might well provide a context for the earthworks of both west and east Wansdyke, whether they are read as newly built at that time or as augmented existing features with an added ideological impact via their naming.

In conclusion, even if the Werg burials, where our enquiry began, are eventually shown to belong to the Roman period, this consideration has raised a number of questions and offered some tentative thoughts relating to the locale in the post-Roman centuries, not least a political and landscape context for two early West Saxon grants of land to Bica, 'comes', 'minister' and, it appears, appointed guardian, potentially with other men of similar standing elsewhere in the immediate locale, of key locations along the frontier between Mercia and Wessex in the late 8th century. It is possible, then to offer a tentative notion of an 8th-century Wessex that has traditionally been seen as a somewhat inferior counterpart to its northern neighbour in terms of military organisation. Rather than just coping with Mercian militarism by armed response, sometimes successful and sometimes not, perhaps Wessex also made use of powerful symbols in the landscape—gallows, fortifications and frontier earthworks—sending strong signals of authority to people within and without the consolidating polity. These actions perhaps reflect efforts by Cynewulf to

110 Guy Halsall, *Warfare and Society in the Barbarian West, 450–900* (London, 2003), p. 87.

111 It might also be suggested that Sigeberht could be supervised from the relatively close quarter of the Kinwardstone territory.

112 Brooks, "Military Obligations," pp. 80–81. S 255 and 267.

ideologically cement his people via expressions of judicial and militarised authority, collective action in the creation of a frontier and the conscious implanting of a shared cultural memory by embedding perceived royal genealogy in the landscape. Overall, this piece is consciously speculative, but it is offered in the spirit of enlivening debate in a period and region about which Barbara Yorke has revealed so much, but about which so much more remains to be known.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> I am grateful to the editors for their invitation to contribute to this festschrift, for their forbearance in waiting for my contribution and for their comments. John Baker provided useful guidance on aspects of the place-name material. Judy Haynes, formerly of Marlborough College, very kindly provided a copy of that institution's Natural History Society *Report* for 1956. The illustrations were prepared by Barney Harris.

# On the Territorial Organisation of Early Medieval Hampshire

*Stuart Brookes*

Barbara Yorke's typically incisive work, integrating historical and archaeological approaches, has to me always demonstrated most clearly the value of adopting a multi-disciplinary approach. Her willingness to include archaeological evidence alongside that from written sources has facilitated the analysis of Anglo-Saxon England, and Wessex in particular, in a way that provides insights of equal relevance to those who study the social, cultural, historical, or landscape dimensions of early medieval societies. Barbara's interest in multi-disciplinarity has seen her form a long and fruitful collaboration with archaeologists at UCL, co-investigating on a number of research projects. It is through my work on two of these projects—*Landscapes of Governance* and *Travel and Communication in Anglo-Saxon England*<sup>1</sup>—that I first properly got to know her.

Drawing on aspects of research that emerged from these projects, this paper reviews the evidence for the political geography of early Hampshire—an area so well known to Barbara. The recent identification in Hampshire of a number of early territories underlying the later configuration of administrative divisions allows for a more detailed examination of the internal organisation of early medieval kingdoms.<sup>2</sup> This paper makes observations about the suggested 'small shires' of Hampshire and describes some of the features of these early territories. It is argued that different types of territories can be identified, the comparison of which throws light on the evolution of local districts and of early Anglo-Saxon kingdoms.

## 'Folk' Territories and Meeting-places in Anglo-Saxon England

Landscape archaeologists and historians have suggested the existence of a number of early territorial entities—larger than the hundred but smaller than

1 <[www.ucl.ac.uk/archaeology/research/projects/assembly](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/archaeology/research/projects/assembly)>; <[www.ucl.ac.uk/archaeology/research/directory/travel-communication-anglo-saxon-england](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/archaeology/research/directory/travel-communication-anglo-saxon-england)>. (Accessed Dec. 2019).

2 Bruce Eagles, "'Small Shires' and *Regiones* in Hampshire and the Formation of the Shires of Eastern Wessex," *ASSAH* 19 (2015), 122–52.

the shire as recorded in Domesday Book—that can be reconstructed from place-names, historical and archaeological evidence. Perhaps the most widely known of these is that of the *Hroþingas* in Essex.<sup>3</sup> The extent of this putative ‘folk’ grouping—the land of ‘Hroða’s people’—is argued to be represented by an adjoining cluster of eight parishes all of which are named Roding lying either side of the River Roding and extending to the watershed of the river basin. Significantly, the existence of this territory appears to belong to a chronological horizon predating the administrative geography recorded in Domesday Book—by 1086 the Roding parishes lay in two different hundreds (Dunmow and Ongar), neither of which preserves the name of the *Hroþingas*.<sup>4</sup>

In some cases these putative territories can be related to terms occurring in early medieval sources. A charter of c.706×709 by Swæfred, king of Essex, to Ingwald, bishop of London, granted land in *Deningei*, Essex,<sup>5</sup> a ‘district’ R.E. Zachrisson believes on etymological grounds to have included the Dengie peninsula along with Danbury and the forest of *Danegrís* near Chelmsford, and belonging to the *Dæningas*-folk.<sup>6</sup> Similar districts in Kent appear to be fossilised by the time of the Domesday survey as ‘lathes’ (singular OE *læð*). Each lathe comprised several smaller divisions—hundreds—and formed in turn the administrative subdivisions of the shire.<sup>7</sup>

Territorial entities similar to the lathe or the district of the *Dæningas* are probably what are referred to in earlier sources in Latin as *regiones* or *provinciae*.<sup>8</sup> In his brief, but incisive discussion of these terms and their use in Bede’s

3 Steven Bassett, “In Search of the Origins of Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms,” in *The Origins of Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms*, ed. Steven Bassett (Leicester, 1989), pp. 3–27, at pp. 21–23, Fig. 1.11; Bassett, “Continuity and Fission in the Anglo-Saxon Landscape: The Origins of the Rodings (Essex),” *Landscape History* 19 (1997), 25–42.

4 P.H. Reaney, *Place-Names of Essex* (Cambridge, 1935), map of hundreds and parishes.

5 S 1787.

6 R.E. Zachrisson, “OE *dæn(n)* M Dutch *dan*, and the Name of Denmark,” *Acta Philologica Scandinavica* 1 (1926–1927), 284–92, at pp. 284, 286; Reaney, *Place-Names of Essex*, pp. 213–4.

7 J.E.A. Jolliffe, *Pre-Feudal England: The Jutes* (London, 1933), pp. 39–41; Nicholas Brooks, “The Creation and Early Structure of the Kingdom of Kent,” in *Origins of Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms*, ed. Bassett, pp. 55–74, at p. 69; Stuart Brookes, “The Lathes of Kent: A Review of the Evidence,” in *Studies in Early Anglo-Saxon Art and Archaeology: Papers in Honour of Martin G. Welch*, ed. Stuart Brookes, Sue Harrington, and Andrew Reynolds, BAR Brit. Ser. 527 (Oxford, 2011), pp. 156–70.

8 E.g. Bede *HE* 11.14, 111.20, 1V.13, 1V.19, v.19; discussed by Barbara Yorke, *Wessex in the Early Middle Ages* (Leicester, 1995), pp. 39–43. Indeed, the equivalence of these terms is sometimes made explicit: the East Kent lathe of St Augustine (*Lest’ de scō Augustine* in the 1240 Assize Roll: Paul Cullen, “The Place-Names of the Lathes of St Augustine and Shipway, Kent” Unpublished PhD Thesis, 2 vols (University of Sussex, 1997), 1:289) was referred to in an original late 8th-century charter as *regione Eastregna* (S 128).

*Ecclesiastical History* James Campbell makes several important observations.<sup>9</sup> Of the two terms, *provincia* appears to denote larger entities. At times, Bede uses it to describe kingdoms, and at others makes clear that such kingdoms contained smaller *regiones*.<sup>10</sup> It seems likely that *provinciae*, at least, reflected some form of supra-local group affiliation. Some are mentioned as having a *gens* (a ‘people’) or a *rex* (‘king’), implying a degree of political coherence and autonomy. They may on occasion have been relatively well defined. Both *regiones* and *provinciae* are often named with reference to geographical features such as rivers or important central places, and are co-areal with geographical basins defined by watersheds. For example Bede refers to the *Meanuarorum prouinciam*, “the territory of the dwellers of the (River) Meon.”<sup>11</sup> Similarly, the interpolated but basically authentic 7th-century foundation charter of Chertsey abbey, grants lands that go to the *terminum alterius prouincie que apellatur Sunninges*, “boundary of another *provincia* which is called [after the] followers of *Sunna*,”<sup>12</sup> and other districts also had clear unambiguous boundaries.<sup>13</sup>

While *regiones* seem to be smaller in size than *provinciae* these might also have originated as self-identifying groups of people, or ‘folk’, rather than necessarily as administrative divisions of kingdoms.<sup>14</sup> The lands of the *Girvii*, *Loidis*, *Incuneningum* and *Infepplingum* are referred to by Bede as *regiones*.<sup>15</sup> In keeping, several of the lathes, in their earliest forms in Domesday Book, are compounded with the OE community-name element *ware*.<sup>16</sup> For example, we come across *Burhwaralæð*, referring to the “district of the men of the stronghold,” i.e. Canterbury; *Limenwaralæð*, ‘district of the men of the Limen’; *Wiwaralæð* ‘district of the men of Wye’.<sup>17</sup> That is not to say that these districts might not also be fossilised in later administrative geography. Indeed, many authors have successfully argued that some of the boundaries of later hundreds, pre-Conquest estates and parishes, preserve—at least in part—the

9 James Campbell, *Bede's Reges and Principes*, Jarrow Lecture (Jarrow, 1979).

10 Campbell, *Bede's Reges and Principes*, pp. 3–4.

11 Bede *HE* IV.13.

12 S 1165.

13 Stuart Brookes and Andrew Reynolds, “Territoriality and Social Stratification: The Relationship between Neighbourhood and Polity in Anglo-Saxon England,” in *Polity and Neighbourhood in Early Medieval Europe*, ed. Julio Escalona, Orri Vésteinnsson and Stuart Brookes (Turnout, 2019), pp. 267–303.

14 Cf. also F.M. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*. 3rd ed. (Oxford, 1971), p. 293; John Blair, “Frithuwold’s Kingdom and the Origins of Surrey,” in *Origins of Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms*, ed. Bassett, pp. 97–105, at p. 105; Stephen Rippon, *Making Sense of an Historic Landscape* (Oxford, 2012), pp. 186–91.

15 Campbell *Bede's Reges and Principes*, pp. 3–4.

16 A.H. Smith, *English Place-name Elements*, 2 parts (Cambridge, 1956), 2:246.

17 Brooks, “Creation and Early Structure”; Brookes, “The lathes of Kent.”

outlines of these earlier territories.<sup>18</sup> Nor does this mean the *provinciae* or *regiones* alluded to by Bede were not also for administrative purposes. A probable 8th-century charter concerning the dues liable for the maintenance of Rochester Bridge corresponds closely to the Domesday lathe of Aylesford.<sup>19</sup>

Despite their connection with groups of people, nevertheless, it seems that some reconstructed *regiones* may have been considered as subdivisions of larger political entities from their earliest conception. In Kent, the eastern kingdom appears to have consisted of three or four districts later formalised as the lathes of Borough, Eastry, Limen, and Wye.<sup>20</sup> Each of these districts is already suggested by the pattern of early Anglo-Saxon burials of the 5th to 7th centuries.<sup>21</sup> They were also all centred on a royal vill containing the OE place-name element *-gē*, ‘district’, cognate with the German *-gau*,<sup>22</sup> and which archaeological evidence suggests may already have had high-status functions by the later 6th century.<sup>23</sup> It is, therefore, unlikely that they were ever regarded as fully autonomous units. The ruling *Oiscingas*—as Barbara herself has shown—exerted significant power over eastern Kent already in the 6th century, and it seems probable that these eastern lathes always formed a single larger agglomeration, perhaps equivalent to the original Kentish kingdom.<sup>24</sup>

In some cases, there may therefore be a considerable blurring between *regiones* originating as semi-autonomous ‘folk’ territories and administrative districts imposed from above and identified by their community-name

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- 18 e.g. Brooks, “Creation and Early Structure,” pp. 21–3; Steven Bassett, “Boundaries of Knowledge: Mapping the Land Units of Late Anglo-Saxon and Norman England,” in *People and Space in the Middle Ages, 300–1300*, ed. Wendy Davies, Guy Halsall, and Andrew Reynolds (Turnhout, 2007), pp. 115–42; Rippon *Making Sense*, pp. 151–64; Eagles, “‘Small Shires’ and *Regiones*.”
- 19 S 1481d; Nicholas Brooks, “Rochester Bridge, AD 43–1381,” in *Traffic and Politics: The Construction and Management of Rochester Bridge, AD 43–1993*, ed. Nigel Yates and James M. Gibson (Woodbridge, 1993), pp. 1–40.
- 20 Jolliffe, *Pre-Feudal England*.
- 21 Brookes, “The Lathes of Kent”; Tania Dickinson, “The Formation of a Folk District in the Kingdom of Kent: Eastry and its Early Anglo-Saxon Archaeology,” in *Sense of Place in Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. Richard Jones and Sarah Semple (Donington, 2012), pp. 147–67.
- 22 Smith, *English Place-name Elements*, 1:82; S.E.C. Hawkes, “Anglo-Saxon Kent c. 425–725,” in *Archaeology in Kent to 1500*, P.E. Leach, CBA Research Report 48 (London, 1982), pp. 64–78.
- 23 Gabor Thomas, “Life Before the Minster: The Social Dynamics of Monastic Foundation at Anglo-Saxon Lyminge, Kent,” *AntJ* 93 (2013), 109–45.
- 24 Barbara Yorke, “Joint Kingship in Kent c.560 to 785” *Archaeologia Cantiana* 99 (1983), 1–19; Brooks, “Creation and Early Structure.”

in *-ingas*, *-sæta*, and the like.<sup>25</sup> This observation has some relevance to our understanding of the many entities recorded in the list known as the ‘Tribal Hidage’.<sup>26</sup> In Steven Bassett’s influential discussion of the political context of this source, each of these ‘tribes’ is regarded as a structurally similar socio-political unit, differing from its neighbours only in the scale of its constituent community and the authority wielded by its leader.<sup>27</sup> However, the example of Kent suggests that, while political dominance rested in part on the control of community networks, there was also some innovation in administrative organisation. Unlike the eastern lathes, those in western Kent, and extending as putative territories into Surrey,<sup>28</sup> are likely to have been artificial constructs that, while sympathetic to social and economic constraints of the landscape, were nevertheless created primarily to serve administrative expediency. In John Blair’s assessment of the Surrey evidence such territories were being laid out already in the late 7th century.<sup>29</sup>

One clue to discriminating between these two types of district may be their size. Rippon suggests early ‘folk’ territories typically cover 250–400 sq. km.<sup>30</sup> A similar comparison shows the size of the east Kentish lathes to be significantly larger than the territories of the Rothingas and Stoppingas, that are only 48 and 82 sq. km respectively.<sup>31</sup> The latter are unlikely, therefore to represent petty kingdoms, nor probably autonomous ‘tribal’ units at all, but rather relatively local groupings that were always part of some larger political entity. In addition to the scale of territories one might also compare their spatial regularity. In size and form, the lathes of western Kent and the early districts of Surrey are noticeably more regular than their eastern Kent counterparts.<sup>32</sup>

Yet another clue to the structure of these districts can come from an analysis of the assembly places within and between them. Public assemblies were at the heart of Anglo-Saxon social, judicial, and administrative organisation, and it is likely that any supra-local group regularly converged on a meeting-place to settle disputes, regulate social interactions and execute legislative decrees.<sup>33</sup> These meeting-places, like the territories of which they were part, are also

25 Cf. particularly on this point John Baker, “Old English *sæte* and the Historical Significance of ‘Folk’-names,” *EME* 25:4 (2017), 417–42.

26 Campbell, *Bede’s Reges and Principes*, pp. 6–7.

27 Bassett, “In Search of the Origins.”

28 Blair, “Frithuwold’s Kingdom,” p. 99; John Blair, *Early Medieval Surrey* (Stroud, 1991), pp. 22–24.

29 Blair, *Early Medieval Surrey*, *passim*.

30 Rippon *Making Sense*, p. 151.

31 Bassett, “In Search of the Origins”; Bassett, “Boundaries of Knowledge.”

32 e.g. Blair, “Frithuwold’s kingdom,” p. 99, Fig. 7.1.

33 In his *The Origins of Political Order* (London, 2011), Francis Fukuyama makes the important point that mechanisms for settling disputes existed in all tribal-level societies.

sometimes preserved in later sources.<sup>34</sup> Particularly important in this regard are the meeting-places of Domesday hundreds, which at least by the 10th century were used on a four-weekly basis.<sup>35</sup>

The locations of these hundred meeting-places are, on the face of it, relatively easy to identify, as many hundreds were apparently named from the site at which meetings took place. Evingar hundred in north-west Hampshire, for instance appears to have met in a field (OE *efen* 'even, level' + *gāra* 'triangular piece of land') c.1.5 km north-west of Whitchurch on high ground near a cross-road of the Harroway, named as (*on*) *Geapan garan* in the charter bounds of Whitchurch (S 378), and still known in 1650 as *Evingdale*.<sup>36</sup> Clear identifications of this type are not invariably to be expected, and are not always straightforward. In some cases the feature that gave its name to a hundred—such as a tree, mound, or stone—has since disappeared or ceased to be known by that name, so the name of the hundred has effectively disappeared on the ground, along with the best means of securely identifying its meeting-place. Such is the case with the 'MAEGEN'S Barrow' that gave its name to Mainsborough hundred (*Maneberge, Manesberg hvnd*, 1086, DB) or 'Bunt's Barrow' from which Bountisborough hundred (*Bantesbergahdr*, 1168) is named.

Hundreds apparently named from their chief manors are also potentially problematic. In these cases the traditional meeting-place may have been adjacent to or distant from the manorial centre. Anderson, for instance showed that hundreds might bear more than one name, reflecting appurtenance to a central vill on the one hand, and location of meetings on the other, so that being named from a vill does not mean that a hundred also met at that location.<sup>37</sup> This may be the case with Somborne hundred (*Svmbvrne*, in Domesday Book, 1086) which was apparently named from the royal manor of King's Somborne, to which it belonged. By the 13th century Somborne was also known as *Hundredum de Stokbrygge* (1272 Assize Roll).<sup>38</sup> Stockbridge is c.4 km north of

34 John Baker and Stuart Brookes, "Identifying Outdoor Assembly Sites in Early Medieval England" *Journal of Field Archaeology* 40:1 (2015), 3–21.

35 E.g. 111 Edmund, clause 2, Hundred Ordinance, and 11 Cnut, clause 20, in *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen* 1, ed. Felix Liebermann (Halle, 1903), pp. 190–95 and p. 322; discussed by (among others) H.M. Chadwick, *Studies on Anglo-Saxon Institutions* (Cambridge, 1905), pp. 239–48; Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 292–301; H.R. Loyn, *The Governance of Anglo-Saxon England 500–1087* (London, 1984), pp. 140–46.

36 O.S. Anderson, *The English Hundred-Names: The South-Western Counties*. Lunds Universitetets Arsskrift 37.2 (Lund, 1939), pp. 193–94.

37 O.S. Anderson, *The English Hundred-Names* (Lund, 1934), pp. xxix–xxxix; *English Hundred-Names: The South-Western Counties*, 79–80, 83–84, 86–88, 90–91, 92–99.

38 Unless otherwise indicated, forms of names and dates when they are attested as such are from relevant county EPNS volumes or, in Hampshire cases, Richard Coates, *The Place Names of Hampshire* (London, 1989).

King's Somborne and seems to have been known as White Somborne in the early Middle Ages, so perhaps the *stocc-brycg* was the location of the hundredal assemblies.<sup>39</sup> In support of this identification Stockbridge Down, just 1 km east of the settlement and inter-visible with it, is the location of a Late Anglo-Saxon execution cemetery lying beside an artificial mound.<sup>40</sup> This kind of spatial relationship between meeting-places and execution sites is well-known elsewhere.<sup>41</sup>

The type and location of hundred meeting-places can provide further clues as to the organisation of early administrative territories. It might be assumed that meeting-places should be centrally placed within their district to enable ease of access for all inhabitants. Indeed this is often the case. The aforementioned Evingdale field is an unremarkable location except that it is almost directly at the centre of the hundred it served, lying alongside the Harroway—a significant ancient long-distance routeway that bisects the district. Similarly, the hundred of Kingsclere, though named from a royal manor attested in 9th-century sources (S 1507), apparently held its court at Nothing Hill (presumably from OE *(ge)mōt + þing + hyll*),<sup>42</sup> a prominent hilltop 2 km west of the vill, that is central both to the Domesday hundred and the earlier *regio* of Cleras.<sup>43</sup>

Given this assumption, it is interesting that many meeting-places are actually located on the boundaries between two or more hundreds. The reasons for this might be explained by several different processes (Fig. 13.1):

- A border location, as Margaret Gelling and Alik Pantos, have previously suggested, might have signified its neutral, liminal position between neighbouring communities, enabling the impartial settlement of local disputes.<sup>44</sup> They therefore define the limits of neighbouring groups (a), serving as a communal locale—a sort of ‘no man’s land’—for two or more communities.
- In some cases border meeting-places might have existed in a hierarchy of meeting-places, alongside other local courts (b). Conceivably in this

39 The name ‘Stockbridge’ itself apparently only came into general use from the early 13th century: Rosalind Hill, “The Manor of Stockbridge,” *Proceedings of the Hampshire Field Club* 30 (1973), 93–101.

40 Andrew Reynolds, *Anglo-Saxon Deviant Burial Customs* (Oxford, 2009), pp. 120–22.

41 Andrew Reynolds, “Judicial Culture and Social Complexity: A General Model from Anglo-Saxon England,” *World Archaeology* 45:5 (2014), 699–713.

42 *VCH Hants* 4, p. 246; Anderson, *The English Hundred-Names: The South-Western Counties*, p. 194.

43 Eagles, “‘Small Shires’ and *Regiones*,” pp. 131–32.

44 Margaret Gelling, *Signposts to the Past* (Chichester, 1978); Alik Pantos, “‘On the Edge of Things’: Boundary Location of Anglo-Saxon Assembly Sites,” *ASSAH* 12 (2003), 38–49, at pp. 43–48.

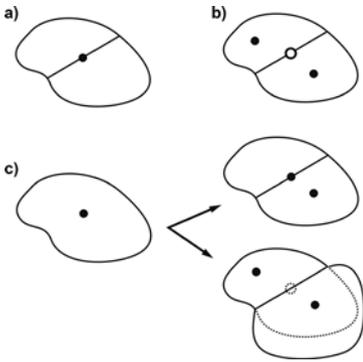


FIGURE 13.1  
Theoretical development of meeting-places on  
district borders

situation border meeting-places were concerned with supra-regional business such as military mobilisation or inter-regional trade, whilst centrally placed meeting-places dealt with more local legal and fiscal matters.<sup>45</sup>

- A third situation could see meeting-places emerge on borders as a result of territorial fission (c). In these instances the earlier meeting-place might have been retained as the court for one of the resulting districts, but was accompanied by a new meeting-place founded more centrally in the neighbouring district. In other cases new meeting-places emerged in the subdivided districts, replacing the earlier court site.

### Early Hampshire Territories

These observations have some relevance to a discussion of the territorial organisation of Hampshire in the Anglo-Saxon period. Hampshire has recently been the subject of an analysis by Bruce Eagles who through detailed retrogressive analysis has suggested a number of early medieval territories predating the Domesday hundredal pattern.<sup>46</sup> Both Eagles and previous mappings of the

45 Baker and Brookes, “Identifying Outdoor Assembly Sites”; John Baker and Stuart Brookes, “Gateways, Gates, and *Gatu*: Liminal Spaces at the Centre of Things,” in *Life on the Edge: Social, Religious and Political Frontiers in Early Medieval Europe*, ed. Sarah Semple, Celia Orsini and Sian Mui, *Neue Studien zur Sachsenforschung* 6 (2017), pp. 253–62; Alexander Langlands, “*Ceapmenn* and *Portmenn*: Trade, Exchange, and the Landscape of Early Medieval Wessex,” below.

46 Eagles, “Small Shires’ and *Regiones*.” It should be stated that Eagles’ model is not the only attempt to reconstruct early territories in Hampshire. For an interpretation based on terrain and hydrology, see Eric Klingelhöfer, *Manor, Vill and Hundred: The Development of Rural Institutions in Early Medieval Hampshire* (Toronto, 1991); for one based on royal estates, see Ryan Lavelle, *Royal Estates in Anglo-Saxon Wessex*. BAR Brit. Ser. 439 (Oxford, 2007), esp. pp. 37–47.

Domesday hundreds take as their basis the parish boundaries as documented in the 1851 one-inch Ordnance Survey maps.<sup>47</sup> By plotting individual place-names rubricated from Domesday Book and other early sources, parishes are then aggregated into larger districts defined by their common boundaries. Fig. 13.2 shows the resulting administrative territories proposed by Eagles and Thorn.<sup>48</sup> Minor deviations aside, there is a broad correspondence in the alignment of territorial boundaries.

Of the *regiones* proposed by Eagles, *Andeferas* and *Basingas* most closely resemble those of Eastry and Lyminge in Kent in form if not scale. Like the Kentish examples the territories of *Andeferas* and *Basingas* are both mirrored by the pattern of Early Anglo-Saxon finds. Early evidence is known from the immediate vicinity of Andover, including settlement finds from Old Down Farm to the south-east of the village of Charlton, 1 km west of Andover and two 6th/7th-century cemeteries to the west of this in the area of The Portway Industrial Estate.<sup>49</sup> *Basingas* is centred on the high-status Early Anglo-Saxon settlement site of Cowdery's Down on the north-west side of the River Loddon and Old Basing, on the eastern bank, its probable 8th-century successor.<sup>50</sup> Both Andover and Basing were royal villas in Domesday Book, giving their names also to their hundreds, preserving an early function as tribute centres and royal accommodation. However, both are considerably smaller than their Kentish counterparts. As reconstructed by Eagles they are only 215–280 sq. km. The analogy with Kent suggests that these *regiones* were essential elements of a larger political entity, not autonomous units.

These two putative *regiones* can be contrasted with the much larger *provincia* of the Meonware mentioned by Bede. Named from the River Meon, this district comprises two main concentrations of Early Anglo-Saxon burials, along the Meon valley in the north, and stretched along the scarp of Ports Down in the south. All the Domesday hundreds making up this region—Meonstoke, East Meon, Chalton, Titchfield, Ports Down, Bosbarrow, and

47 F.R. Thorn, "Hundreds and Wapentakes," in *The Hampshire Domesday*, ed. Ann Williams and R.W.H. Erskine (London, 1989), pp. 28–39.

48 Eagles, "Small Shires' and *Regiones*"; Thorn, "Hundreds and Wapentakes."

49 David Hopkins, *Hampshire and the Isle of Wight Extensive Urban Survey: Andover* (Winchester, 2004), p. 3 <[http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archiveDS/archiveDownload?t=arch-378-1/dissemination/pdf/test\\_valley/andover/assessment/andover\\_assessment.pdf](http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archiveDS/archiveDownload?t=arch-378-1/dissemination/pdf/test_valley/andover/assessment/andover_assessment.pdf)> (accessed Jan. 2018).

50 Martin Millet and Simon James, "Excavations at Cowdery's Down, Basingstoke, Hampshire, 1978–81," *Archaeological Journal* 140 (1983), 151–279; David Hopkins, *Hampshire and the Isle of Wight Extensive Urban Survey: Basingstoke* (Winchester, 2004), p. 2 <[http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archiveDS/archiveDownload?t=arch-378-1/dissemination/pdf/test\\_valley/andover/assessment/andover\\_assessment.pdf](http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archiveDS/archiveDownload?t=arch-378-1/dissemination/pdf/test_valley/andover/assessment/andover_assessment.pdf)> (accessed Jan. 2018).



FIGURE 13.2 Small shires and *regiones* of Hampshire, shown alongside the Domesday hundreds and their meeting-places

probably Fareham—are named from topographical features rather than manors, and the district notably lacks central places of the types found in the other core Hampshire territories. The more dispersed character of settlement in this *regio*, the different development of its hundreds, and its much discussed associations with a ‘Jutish’ settlement, argue for an alternative origin as a self-contained district. It may also once have been larger: place-names indicating a Jutish association are found also further west at *Ytene* in the New Forest and Bishopstoke (*Ytingstoc*) on the River Itchen.<sup>51</sup>

Further understanding of the organisation of the *regiones* can be gained from the location of hundred meeting-places recorded in Domesday Book (Fig. 13.2). Several observations can be made of this plot. Firstly, the distribution of different types of meeting-places appears to corroborate the pattern of *regiones* identified by Eagles. Each *regio* has at its centre either an important estate centre, or a meeting-place of Type 1: elevated, often on undifferentiated upland, natural eminences, and/or common land. Evangales (Upper Test *regio*), Nothing Hill (*Cleras*), Fawley Down (Chilcomb) are all examples of Type 1 meeting-places, and in each case it is likely that the Domesday hundred court continued an assembly tradition from earlier times. This pattern may be more pronounced. The *regio* of *Andeferas*, though centred on a royal vill, apparently had a meeting-place for the ‘out hundred’ at Weyhill, a Type 1 site 6km west of Andover.<sup>52</sup> The bounds of Micheldever (S 360) mention a *gemot hus* (OE (*ge*) *mōt* ‘assembly’, *hūs* ‘house’), which Brooks identifies as lying on the crossroads of the Roman road from Winchester to Silchester (Margary 42a), and Alresford drove (SU 51487 36386).<sup>53</sup> This finding is very akin to what is seen in Kent, where the lathes similarly met at places at a remove from their central villis. Thus Limen lathe assembled not at the royal vill of Lyminge, but at Shipway

51 Barbara Yorke, “The Jutes of Hampshire and Wight and the Origins of Wessex,” in *Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms*, ed. Bassett, pp. 84–96, at pp. 89–92; but see this volume: John Baker and Jayne Carroll, “The Afterlives of Bede’s Tribal Names in English Place-Names,” above. There are indications that this *regio* survived in part as a large royal estate that was consistently pulled back into royal control in the 9th–11th centuries: Lavelle, *Royal Estates*, pp. 93–95.

52 Eagles, “Small Shires’ and *Regiones*,” p. 131. Also of possible significance is the putative location of the royal assemblies of Grateley (c. 925×30) and Enham (1008) at Quarley Hill, 10 km south-west of Andover: Ryan Lavelle, “Why Grateley? Reflections on Anglo-Saxon Kingship in a Hampshire Landscape,” *PHFCAS* 60 (2005), 154–169. While royal assemblies did not generally take place at the same locations as later hundredal meeting places, it may be that they relate in some way to the assembly places of earlier *regiones*.

53 N.P. Brooks, “The Oldest Document in the College Archives? The Micheldever Forgery,” in *Winchester College: Sixth-Centenary Studies*, ed. Roger Custance (Oxford, 1982), pp. 189–228; Brooks, “Alfredian Government: the West Saxon Inheritance,” in *Alfred the Great: Papers from the Eleventh-Centenary Conferences*, ed. Timothy Reuter (Aldershot, 2003), pp. 153–174.

Cross in Lypne, some 7km to the south-west, whilst those of Eastry lathe assembled at the Type 1 site of Eastling (formerly Haddling) Wood in Northbourne, 6km to the south of Eastry.<sup>54</sup>

Secondly, it would seem that the fragmentation of *regiones* into smaller administrative territories saw the creation in many cases of hundreds centred and named from important estate centres. This development has been well attested elsewhere, and would seem to reflect a process whereby labour and other services devolved from kings to thegns and ecclesiastical communities whose estates formed the core of Domesday hundreds.<sup>55</sup> By the time of the Domesday survey, the *regio* of *Andeferas* consisted of the hundreds of Andover, based on the royal vill, and Welford. The latter hundred and all its manors belonged to the abbess of Wherwell by TRE. *Basingas* by comparison consisted by the Domesday survey of the royal estate-hundreds of Basingstoke and Odiham, as well as the hundreds of Chutely (named after a Type 1 meeting-place in Upper and Lower Chitterling fields, south of Manydown Park and close to the later meeting-place of the hundred ‘under a hedge at Malshanger’),<sup>56</sup> and Hoddington (OE pers.n. \**Hōd(d)(a) + inga + tūn* ‘farm/settlement of Hodda’s people’), possibly named after a local thegn. A similar process potentially underpinned the creation of a private hundred, described in the forged Micheldever charter (S 360), out of a larger earlier *regio* including the territory of Micheldever, Bountisborough, Mainsborough, Barton and Bermondspit.<sup>57</sup>

Thirdly, it is potentially significant that the locations of later hundredal meeting-places named from bridges/fords are largely confined to the putative *scīr* of *Hylthingas* and the New Forest. Audrey Meaney considered such meeting-places to belong to the earliest stratum of territorial formation, but—following the arguments about border meeting-places above—this need not necessarily be the case.<sup>58</sup> Three of the four Domesday hundreds comprising the *scīr* of *Hylthingas* are named from bridges/fords: Droxford (*drocenesforda* 826 (12th)),<sup>59</sup> Redbridge ((*of*) *Hreodbrycge* 956),<sup>60</sup> and Mansbridge (*Mannes*

54 Cullen, “The Place-Names,” 1:289.

55 e.g. Blair, “Frithuwold’s kingdom.”

56 *VCH Hants* 4, p. 223.

57 Brooks “Oldest Document”; Eagles, “Small Shires’ and *Regiones*.”

58 Audrey Meaney, “Gazetteer of Hundred and Wapentake Meeting-Places of the Cambridgeshire Region,” *Proceedings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society* 82 (1993), 67–92; Meaney, “Hundred Meeting-Places In the Cambridge Region,” in *Names, Places and People: An Onomastic Miscellany in Memory of John McNeal Dodgson*, ed. A.R. Rumble and A.D. Mills (Stamford, 1997), pp. 195–240.

59 S 275

60 S 636. *Hreodbrycge* is normally thought to be *Hreutford* in Bede *HE* iv, 16; Lavelle *Royal Estates*, p. 39. On the semantic uses of OE *brycg* and *ford* see particularly the discussion by John Baker and Stuart Brookes, *Beyond the Burghal Hidage* (Leiden, 2013), pp. 164–67.

*brycge* 932 (15th));<sup>61</sup> the former two lying on the eastern and western limits of the district, and the borders of its Domesday successors. The regularity of this arrangement, the similarity in places chosen as later meeting-places on border river-crossings, and the divergence in naming practices from other *regiones* in Hampshire, all hint at the artificial nature of this *scīr*, and its imposition into an earlier territorial arrangement. Eagles (2015, 129) is surely correct to see the creation of this *scīr* as part of the process by which the emporium of *Hamwic* was dominated by West Saxon kings in the 7th century, but these differences would also suggest that it belongs to a different chronological horizon than the other *regiones*.

In this regard it may be significant that the only other river-crossing meeting-places in Hampshire, Fordingbridge (*Forde* 1086 DB) and the enigmatic Witensford (*Whittensford* 1670, ‘?Witan + ford’), are both located on or very close to the shire boundary between Hampshire and Wiltshire. Based purely on the typology of meeting-places, the creation of a *scīr* of *Hylthingas* may be contemporaneous to the formalisation of territories at this larger scale. Perhaps further evidence of this is the location of place-names compounded with *scīr*: Shirrell Heath in Shedfield, and Shirley in Sople, both of which lie outside the region of core shires described by Eagles.

### Territory Formation in Early Medieval Hampshire

Despite the burgeoning interest in early medieval territories questions remain about the extents to which they reflected a form of community identity, and where on a sliding scale of autonomy these identities originated. Both are very difficult to answer because they raise fundamental questions about the nature of early medieval power and how it was rooted in local communities. While the observations made by James Campbell on this matter remain apposite, the evidence from Hampshire introduces some additional dimensions.

A general consensus amongst historians is that early medieval kingship was predicated to a great degree on politics of consensus—power resided in and drew from, the group over which it was exercised.<sup>62</sup> In small-scale societies, rule is embedded in local social structures, personal relationships, and

61 S 418

62 e.g. Talcott Parsons, “On the Concept of Political Power,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 107 (1963), 232–62; Michael Mann, *The Sources of Social Power: Volume 1, A History of Power from the Beginning to AD 1760* (Cambridge, 1986); T. Reuter, “Assembly Politics in Western Europe from the Eighth Century to the Twelfth,” in *The Medieval World*, ed. Peter Linehan, and Janet Nelson (London, 2001), pp. 432–50.

community dynamics, so that authority resides in the consensus that forms and legitimises the existence of a political centre.<sup>63</sup> The expectation is therefore that the origins of early medieval political communities are most likely to be found in the patterns of 'stakeholders' visible in the 5th and 6th centuries.

From this perspective, amongst the more persuasive models of community-territory formation are those that have taken an explicitly cultural ecological approach. The 'river and wold' model, espoused, amongst others, by Alan Everitt and Tom Williamson argues that the natural environment has an important structuring effect on the formation of early territories.<sup>64</sup> Thus, there is often a tendency for these territories to conform to the basins of river systems, with boundaries collinear with those of the watershed.<sup>65</sup> These 'drainage provinces' naturally comprised variations in drainage, soils, relief and landcover that lent themselves to particular forms of agricultural activity and settlement. Where underlying soils are free-draining, such as on gravel terraces, the sides of river valleys are commonly the most suitable for arable agriculture, while intervening uplands—the 'wold'—often comprises less fertile, thinner, and exposed lands, better suited to woodland management and animal husbandry.<sup>66</sup> Thus, communities developed within drainage provinces principally as a result of interactions governed by agriculture and livestock farming. The lordships that existed over these communities were correspondingly 'extensive', drawing on services and renders that spanned these ecological zones.<sup>67</sup>

While Hampshire does not have the clearly differentiated landscape of Kent—from which Alan Everitt first developed the 'river and wold' model—there are some areas where it may be usefully applied. Work undertaken by the UCL *Beneath the Tribal Hidage* project—another project with which Barbara was heavily involved—has described the clear tendency for early Anglo-Saxon burial sites to be associated with soils of fertility 3 and above, that were also free draining.<sup>68</sup> In Hampshire these soils mainly restrict themselves to the distinctive

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63 Julio Escalona, Orri Vésteinsson and Stuart Brookes, "Polities, Neighbourhoods and Things In-between," in *Polity and Neighbourhood in Early Medieval Europe*, ed. Escalona, Vésteinsson, and Brookes (Turnhout, 2019), pp. 11–38.

64 Alan Everitt, "River and Wold: Reflections on the Historical Origin of Regions and Pays," *Journal of Historical Geography* 3 (1977), 1–19; Everitt, *Continuity and Colonization: the Evolution of Kentish Settlement* (Leicester, 1986); e.g. Tom Williamson, *Environment, Society and Landscape in Early Medieval England* (Woodbridge, 2013).

65 Williamson, *Environment, Society and Landscape*, pp. 82–106.

66 Williamson, *Environment, Society and Landscape*, p. 55

67 On this point cf. also Rosamond Faith, *The English Peasantry and the Growth of Lordship* (London, 1997), pp. 1–14.

68 Sue Harrington and Martin Welch, *The Early Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms of Southern Britain AD 450–650: Beneath the Tribal Hidage* (Oxford, 2014), p. 91; cf. also Wendy Davies and

Upper Chalk band running east-west across the county, and this same area is also the focus of 5th- and 6th-century burial (Fig. 13.3). North and south of this band heavier Tertiary clays and sandy soils predominate. Here, three noteworthy clusters of burials are associated with smaller pockets of free-draining soils: across the centre of the Isle of Wight, the upper reaches of the River Avon, and a string of burials along Portsdown. Each in its own way may be regarded as an area of early high-status expression, with indications of connections with Kent.<sup>69</sup>

In the main zone of good quality free-draining soils, the tendency to form a river valley territory is most clearly expressed in Chilcomb *regio*, the boundaries of which conform almost precisely to the upper watershed of the River Itchen. In what became the *regio* 6th-century burials cluster around Winchester with others at Tichborne Down House and Cheriton on tributaries of the Itchen.<sup>70</sup> Similar river-based territories can be reconstructed focusing on the Rivers Anton and Dever, which became the *regiones* of *Andeferas* and *Micheldever* respectively.<sup>71</sup> By contrast, neither the aforementioned River Avon complex, nor one based on the River Meon survived as recognisable administrative districts.<sup>72</sup>

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Hayo Vierck, "The Contexts of Tribal Hidage: Social Aggregates and Settlement Patterns," *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 8 (1974), 223–93.

- 69 C.J. Arnold, *The Anglo-Saxon Cemeteries of the Isle of Wight* (London, 1982); D.A. Hinton and Sally Worrell, "An Early Anglo-Saxon Cemetery and Archaeological Survey at Breamore, Hampshire, 1999–2006," *Archaeological Journal* 174 (2017), 68–145; Stuart Brookes, "Folk' Cemeteries, Assembly and Territorial Geography in Early Anglo-Saxon England," in *Power and Place in Europe in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Jayne Carroll, Andrew Reynolds and Barbara Yorke (London, 2019), pp. 64–90.
- 70 Martin Biddle has argued that the core of this *regio*, formed of the monastic estate of Chilcomb, was already defined, and probably in royal possession, before the mid-7th century: "Hampshire and the Origins of Wessex," in *Problems in Economic and Social Archaeology*, ed. G. Sieveking, I.H. Longworth and K.E. Wilson (London, 1976), pp. 323–42, at p. 335.
- 71 Somewhat different river-based territories have been reconstructed by Klingelhöfer, *Manor, Vill and Hundred*; however, these are considerably smaller units that subdivide river basins into a series of 'archaic hundreds'. It is hard to reconcile these conjectural territories with the *regio* of Micheldever as reconstructed by Brooks, "Alfredian Government," p. 172, or the *regiones* discussed by Eagles, "'Small Shires' and *Regiones*," even if the broad observations regarding settlement evolution are correct.
- 72 Although it is not based on a river valley, Barry Cunliffe's reconstruction of Ceptune Hundred in the area of the Meonwara, similarly conforms almost precisely with the watershed boundaries of the minor rivers Hermitage and Lavant, but does not appear to be fossilised as a 'small shire': "Saxon and Medieval Settlement Pattern in the Region of Chalton, Hampshire," *Medieval Archaeology* 16 (1972), 1–12.

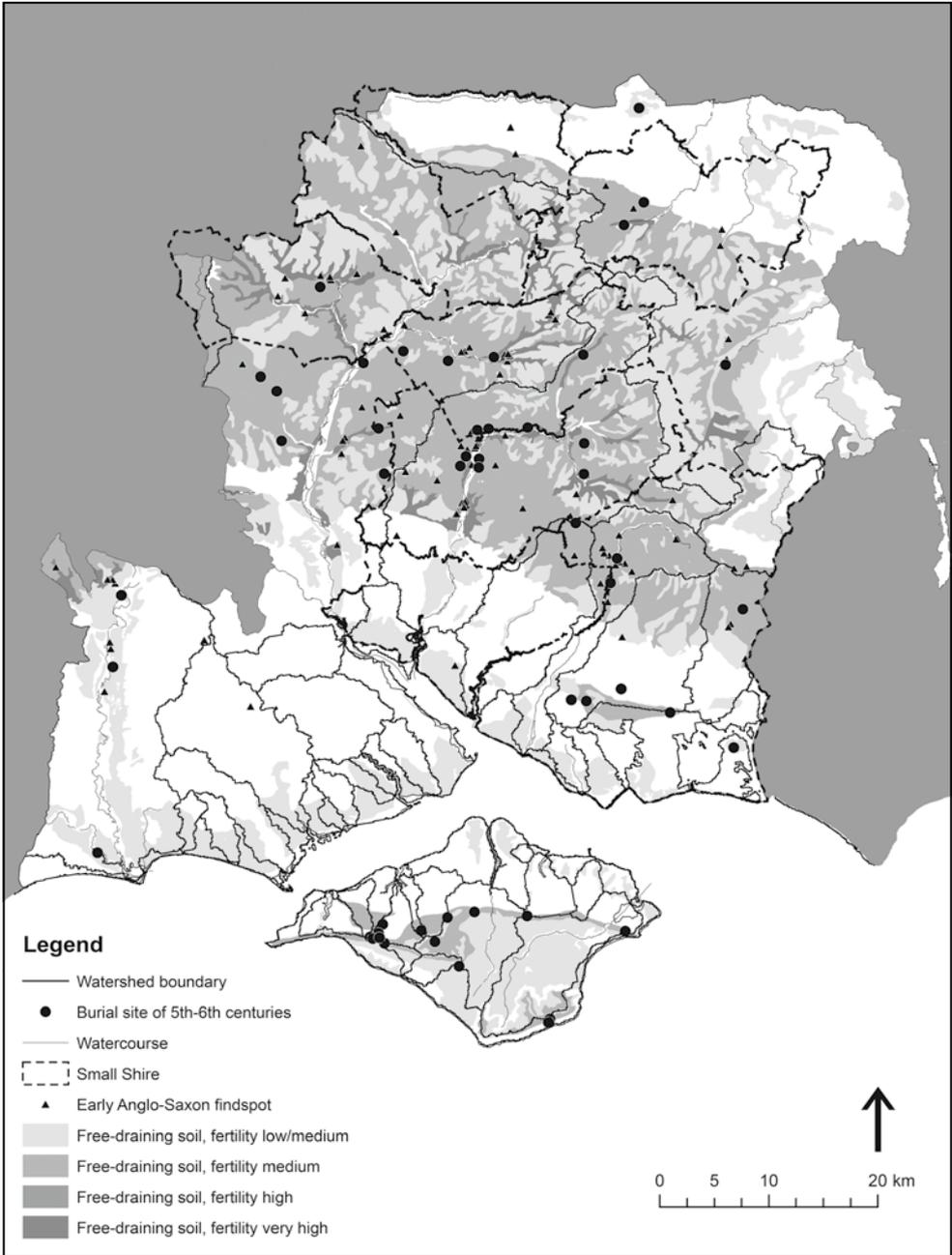


FIGURE 13.3 Early Anglo-Saxon burials of the 5th and 6th centuries in Hampshire shown against the distribution of free-draining soils, after: Harrington and Welch, *Early Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms*

However, while the 'river and wold' model might work reasonably well in certain parts of Hampshire, the evidence makes it more difficult to apply in others. Early burial sites, settlements, and putative territories in the north-west of the county bear little resemblance to drainage regions, and here it seems likely that other processes of community identity were at play. In its ecological composition, the Upper Test with its fertile well-drained soils and broad valley contours is identical to those of the Anton and Dever, but so far there is virtually no evidence for 5th- or 6th-century settlement. North of this, in what became *Cleras*, both appropriate soils and archaeological indicators for early settlement are hard to come by. On these grounds it seems highly unlikely that either was constituted as a recognisable territory before the 7th century. As late as the 18th century the parishes comprising this part of Hampshire consisted of large tracts of common and open land.<sup>73</sup> Indeed, the high numbers of swine renders recorded for the Upper Test in Domesday Book at, for example, Whitnal, Whitchurch, and Overton, suggest that this region—despite the availability of good quality soils—was still only partially cultivated as late as the 11th century, with many settlements there perhaps only occupied on a temporary or seasonal basis before that.

Taken in these broad terms there is clearly some variability between these putative territories. Some consistently hold to a certain structural appearance, sharing an ecological profile, focusing on a cluster of 5th- to 6th-century burials, and an administrative configuration attuned to relief and—in later attested meeting-places—topographical features. But not all districts sharing this profile emerged intact as later 'small shires' as might be supposed by Bassett's knock-out model. Rather, domination over these communities involved the re-fashioning of territorial arrangements in a seemingly artificial manner. *Hylthingas-scīr* as reconstructed by Eagles bears little resemblance to a drainage province—there are virtually none of the soils favoured by early settlement and archaeological evidence is noticeably thin before the 7th century. Coupled with the differences in the form of its meeting-places it seems likely that it was inserted into, rather than developed organically from, the networks of communities within it. In a similar fashion the lack of archaeological evidence and the divergence in ecological profile of north-west Hampshire argue against their origins as coherent 'folk' territories of the early Anglo-Saxon period. Here, it seems more likely that territory formation came as a result of administrative measures. However, the similarity of their meeting-places and the scale and form of these districts to those of 'core' *regiones* suggests that these emerged at a different time or via different processes than *Hylthingas-scīr*. Of

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73 John Chapman and Sylvia Seeliger, *A Guide to Enclosure in Hampshire* (Winchester, 1997).

potential interest in this regard is the observation made by Margaret Gelling, and discussed further by Barbara and others, that the morphology of Hampshire's northern boundary appears artificial rather than naturally defined by terrain, perhaps reflecting its origin as a border imposed during a period of Mercian domination in the late 7th or 8th centuries.<sup>74</sup>

One possible reason for the different temporal scale of territorial development is that soils and landcover in north-west (as perhaps south-west and south-east) Hampshire favoured livestock over arable farming with concomitant effects on the nature of the communities living there. It may be significant that in the north the *regiones* of *Andeferas*, *Basingas*, and *Cleras* were all centred on royal villas for whom the extraction of pastoral resources was priority. In this respect the *ceapmanna dele* discussed by Alex Langlands (this volume) takes on additional relevance.

Whatever the precise chronology and mechanisms of territory formation in early England, the evidence from Hampshire demonstrates that this was a constant and evolving process. Land management, community identity, and administrative innovations drove the formation of successive territories that could preserve or radically change through time. Reconstruction of these early territories requires the careful triangulation of a variety of sources spanning ecology, geography, place-name research, archaeology and history. The result is a picture of significant diversity and dynamism in the early medieval landscape.

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74 Margaret Gelling, *Place-Names of Berkshire*, 3 (Cambridge, 1976), pp. 844–5; Yorke, *Wessex*, pp. 88–89; Andrew Reynolds and Alexander Langlands, “Social Identities on the Macro-Scale: a Maximum View of Wansdyke,” in *People and Space in the Middle Ages*, ed. Davies, Halsall, and Reynolds, pp. 13–44.

## *Ceapmenn* and *Portmenn*: Trade, Exchange and the Landscape of Early Medieval Wessex

*Alexander Langlands*

It would seem that the influential views of Henri Pirenne have finally been given a decent funeral.<sup>1</sup> No attempt here is made, therefore, to exhume the “adventurers,” “vagabonds,” and those who “seize the many opportunities ... which commercial life offered” by using their “wits to get a living.”<sup>2</sup> But an exploration of the “niches for self-determined action, free market activities, and craft production for unknown consumers,” and what Joachim Henning has termed “innovative impulses for town development,” is intended to cast light on “the true keepers of the light of the urban economy”: the traders and craftsmen who lived in *emporia*, in *wics*, in old Roman towns and in all sorts of settlement agglomerations.<sup>3</sup> The true keepers in this context were the traders and townsmen—the ‘chapmen’ and ‘portmen’—of Anglo-Saxon Wessex and by reconstructing the geography of trade through a central corridor of this outlier of the Frankish economic sphere, the dynamics and developments over time within two major agricultural specialisms—sheep and cattle farming—can be explored to demonstrate that both the industries themselves and those concerned with their successful management exerted a pull that influenced key developments in the political control of the late Saxon economy.

1 Peter Clark, “Editor’s Preface,” in Adriaan Verhulst, *The Rise of Cities in North-West Europe* (Cambridge, 1999), pp. vii–viii.

2 Henri Pirenne, *Economic and Social History of Medieval Europe*, trans. I.E. Clegg (London, 1936), pp. 46–48; Henri Pirenne, *Medieval Cities: Their Origins and the Revival of Trade*, trans. F.D. Halsey (Princeton, 1969), pp. 114–15.

3 Joachim Henning, “Early European Towns. The Development of the Economy in the Frankish Realm between Dynamism and Deceleration AD 500–1100,” in *Post-Roman Towns, Trade and Settlement in Europe and Byzantium Vol. 1, the Heirs of the Roman West* ed. Joachim Henning (Berlin and New York, 2007), pp. 219–32, at p. 231.

### The 'ceapmanna del'

In a broadly acceptable charter recording a grant of land at Highclere (*Cleran*) made by King Eadred to Ælfsige, Bishop of Winchester in 955, the following landmarks are recorded in the boundary clause:

*on scip del of scip delle on cyp manna delle. andlang weges eft east on hyl-  
dan hlew*

to sheep dell, from sheep dell to traders' dell, along the way back east to  
*hyldan* tumulus<sup>4</sup>

In its wider landscape setting, the traders' dell sits at a major crossroads within the north Wessex landscape. The location is almost exactly at a mid-point between Oxford and Southampton, and is surrounded by one of the most expansive tracts of open chalk downland in Wessex. Characterised by numerous occurrences of *mere* (in this case, referring to dew ponds), and bounded by gates and hedges recorded in charters and place-names, this upland is likely to have been an important area of grazing at this time.<sup>5</sup> The area occupies a natural depression between the ridgeway and a promontory now known as Beacon Hill on which lies a hillfort where evidence of Neolithic, Bronze Age, Iron Age and Roman activity has been recovered.<sup>6</sup> It sits at the point where the boundaries of the Domesday hundreds of *Esseborne* (Hurstbourne, later Pastrow), Evingar and Kingsclere meet.<sup>7</sup> These topographical factors alone would mark out the location as relatively significant but it is the information gleaned from the boundary clauses that illuminates this place as one of important transactions.

4 S 565.

5 Alexander J. Langlands, *The Ancient Ways of Wessex: Travel and Communication in an Early Medieval Landscape* (Oxford, 2019), pp. 80–81, Fig. 19. Buttermere (*Butermere* in A.D. 863, S 336) is evidence of the herding of cows for dairying purposes but it would seem likely that a policy of mixed grazing of cattle and sheep, one that has an overall benefit to the downland sward, was in operation. See also Harold S.A. Fox, "Butter Place-Names and Transhumance," in *A Commodity of Good Names: Essays in Honour of Margaret Gelling*, ed. Oliver J. Padel and David N. Parsons (Donington, 2008), pp. 352–64.

6 Bruce Eagles, "A New Survey of the Hillfort on Beacon Hill, Burghclere, Hampshire," *PHFCAS* 148 (1991), 98–103.

7 William Page, "A History of Evingar," in *VCH Hants* 4 (London, 1911), p. 273.

The nature of the landmarks in this area make it relatively easy to place them and O.G.S. Crawford, followed by G.B. Grundy, associates the traders' and sheep 'dells' with a series of valley-head depressions and some (then) upstanding earthworks on the line of the current parish boundary.<sup>8</sup> This series of landmarks (excluding hounds' hill) is referred to in reverse order in a grant of land including Crux Easton (*Eastune*) made by King Edgar in 961 to Abingdon Abbey, and the boundary clause for the charter records the following landmarks but with a significant difference:

*þæt on hyldan hlæw, þonne andlang streates oð ceapmanna del, of ceapmanna dele þæt on portmanna [del], þæt on hunda(n) hylle*

thence to *hyldan* tumulus, then along the street as far as traders' dell, from traders' dell thence to townsmen's dell thence to hounds' hill<sup>9</sup>

An entirely new boundary clause for the Highclere estate was drawn up for Edgar's grant to Ælfwine in 959, where other landmarks of note are:

*to weard rode . þanone an frangsing æcer . of þam æcere on wic herpað . and lang herpaðes on weard setl*

to the look-out/guard clearing, then to the (?)people of Francia's/Franks' field,<sup>10</sup> from the field to the *wic* army path, along the army path to the look-out seat<sup>11</sup>

Taking all of these landmarks together, the geography of this area can be reconstructed in some detail (Fig. 14.1). It is safe to assume that the *scip* element refers to the main order of business. This is a dell into which the hounds, before being retired to hound hill, can herd the sheep so that they can be separated out into constituent flocks for the undertaking of seasonal tasks such as

8 O.G.S. Crawford, *The Andover District* (Oxford, 1922), pp. 67–68, 72–73, 80; G.B. Grundy, "The Saxon Land Charters of Hampshire with Notes on Place and Field Names," *Archaeological Journal* 31 (1924), 31–126, at pp. 58–60.

9 S 689: Susan E. Kelly, ed., *Charters of Abingdon Abbey, Part 2* (Oxford, 2001), pp. 364–69, no. 89. See also the translation of the bounds at <[http://www.langscape.org.uk/descriptions/glossed/L\\_689.2\\_000.html](http://www.langscape.org.uk/descriptions/glossed/L_689.2_000.html)> (accessed 10 Dec 2016).

10 A note of caution is needed here but for the combinations ng and nc see, Peter S. Baker, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, Volume 8: MS F* (Cambridge, 2000), p. xci and for Frangland see s.a. 882. 'Frangland' is also used repeatedly in the Peterborough Manuscript (MS E) s.a. 880, 881 and 882.

11 S 680.

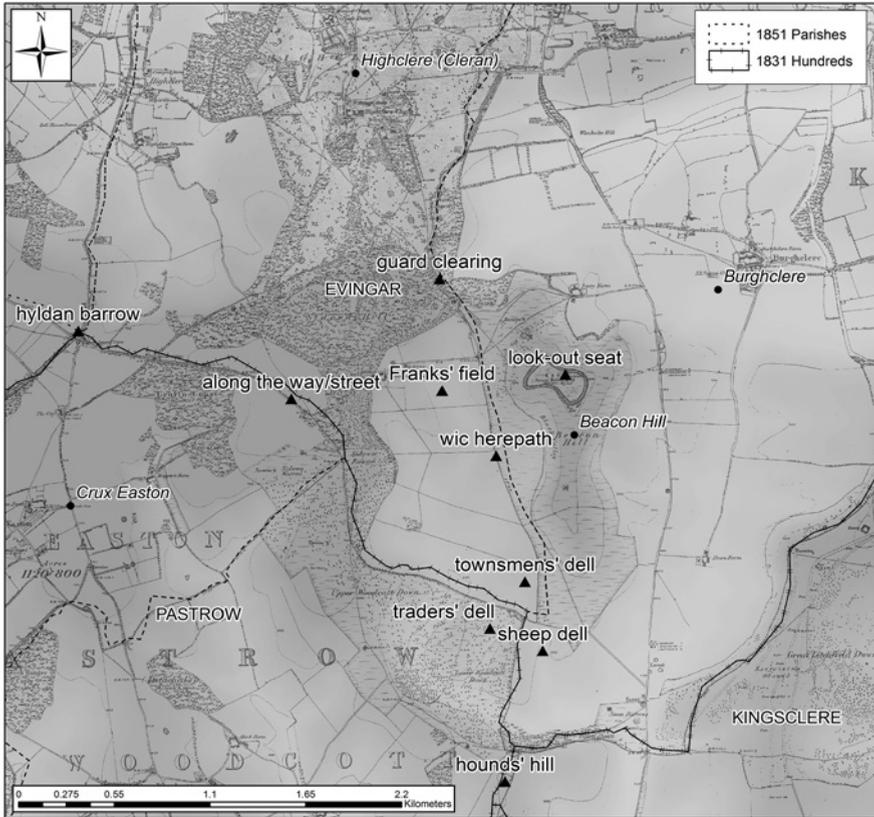


FIGURE 14.1 Selected boundary marks from 10th-century charters recording grants of land at Highclere and Crux Easton (Contains OS 1st Edition Six Inch base map © CROWN COPYRIGHT AND LANDMARK INFORMATION GROUP LIMITED (2018), ALL RIGHTS RESERVED)

ear-clipping, the drafting of lambs from ewes and various transactions involving the traders. At this point it is tempting to consider the possible Franks of the ‘frangsing æcer’ as here to oversee the purchasing of the finest fleeces in a scene reminiscent of an 11th-century illustrated calendar page for May, where a group of three cloaked individuals look on as shepherd and master consider the condition of a lamb’s fleece.<sup>12</sup> In the sheep dell, all would be enjoying the protection of the guards in the ‘weard setl’, and upon completion of transaction, the fleeces, still adorning their charges’ backs, could then be herded down

12 British Library, Cotton Tiberius B. v, fol. 5r, at <<http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/onlineex/illmanus/cottmanucoll/m/011cottibb00005u00005000.html>> (accessed 12 Jun. 2018).

through the 'weard rode' in the direction of a 'sceapwæscē' (sheep wash),<sup>13</sup> before drying, shearing and transportation along the 'wic herepath' in the direction of the continent, presumably via Southampton. This topographical configuration fits with a body of historical evidence that has established two things: that the trade in wool to the continent provides the best explanation for the growing wealth of silver in Anglo-Saxon England, and that the pre-eminence of Flanders in the cloth industry in the third quarter of the 11th century was dependent on an English wool trade dating back to at least the 10th.<sup>14</sup>

### The 'Portmonna hyðe'

In a "highly unusual document" King Edgar grants to Abingdon a unique package of possessions and facilities that includes a vineyard at *ƿæcet* (Watchet, Somerset), royal dues at *Suðhamtune* (Southampton), the fishing of one ship and the royal toll at both *Hƿitan clife* (?Whitecliff Bay, Isle of Wight) and *Portmonna hyðe*, and a salt works and one hide at *Brunwic wer*.<sup>15</sup> With the exception of Watchet it is reasonable to assume that all of the other locations mentioned are within the immediate sailing orbit of Southampton (Fig. 14.2).<sup>16</sup> Given the likely pattern of exploitation in the New Forest, we can safely assume the reason for the presence of the townsmen at Hythe: in a study of the boundary clauses for North and South Stoneham, Bishopstoke and Durley, Christopher Currie posited a system of wood pasturage for cattle similar to that operating in the New Forest as recently as the 19th century.<sup>17</sup> He identified droveways linking these areas to Southampton and further suggested that the same arrangements were likely to have been in existence in the New Forest.<sup>18</sup> Presumably the 'Portmonna hyðe' represented a short cut, a means by which 'store cattle' could be traded without the arduous and potentially condition-sapping drove, or hazardous ferry trip, to Southampton or Winchester. This

13 Another landmark from S 680, located a short distance north of Highclere in Fig. 14.1.

14 Edward Miller and John Hatcher, *Medieval England: Towns, Commerce and Crafts 1086–1348* (London, 1995), p. 16; P.H. Sawyer, "The Wealth of England in the Eleventh Century," *TRHS* 5th ser., 15 (1965), 145–64, at pp. 160–64.

15 S 701; Kelly, ed., *Charters of Abingdon Abbey*, pp. 377–81, no. 93.

16 For a discussion on the likely locations of all of these places see Kelly, ed., *Charters of Abingdon Abbey*, pp. 379–81. The *wer* (weir) of *Brunwic* may very well survive preserved in the dam of Brownich pond (O.S. SU 51902 03748).

17 Christopher K. Currie, "Saxon Charters and Landscape Evolution in the South-Central Hampshire Basin," *PHFCAS* 50 (1995), 103–25, at pp. 115–18.

18 Currie, "Saxon Charters and Landscape Evolution," pp. 116–17.

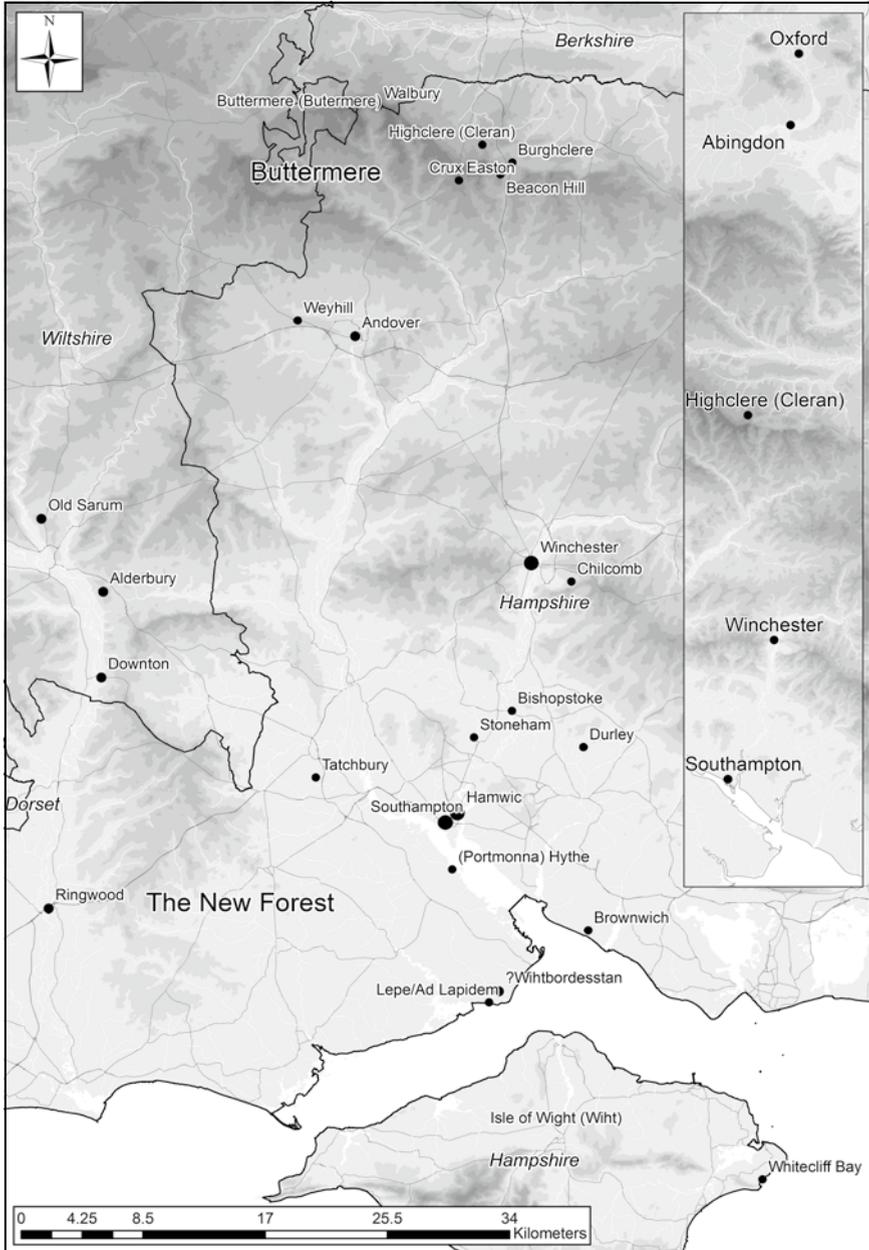


FIGURE 14.2 Places mentioned in the text including (inset) the Oxford to Southampton trade corridor

geographical configuration, one where witnesses are brought to the cattle rather than the other way round, finds parallels in Edgar's law-code promulgated at *Wihthordesstan*. Apparently issued in the aftermath of a widespread pestilence, it is chiefly celebrated as a text directed towards the Danelaw but displays a "clarity of detail in the regularization of cattle-trading that was largely absent from what had gone before."<sup>19</sup>

The location of *Wihthordesstan* is unknown. Patrick Wormald suggested a stone "presumably named from a person of repute" and made a tentative connection with *Wihthbrord* (a thegn of Alfred and Edward the Elder) who received Fovant and was involved in the *Helmstan* affair.<sup>20</sup> Stones with associated personal names are occasionally used as hundred meeting-places, are a frequent occurrence in Anglo-Saxon charter bounds and the name *Wihthbrord* itself would be a perfectly acceptable place-name element in this part of Anglo-Saxon England. Yet, whilst there is much that weighs in favour of the traditional interpretation, an alternative interpretation of the place and a connection with the New Forest is offered here. Taking *Piht* for the Isle of Wight, and the *bord* element to indicate a border (as in hem, edge, or coast),<sup>21</sup> a literal reading gives 'the stone on the Isle of Wight (facing) seaboard'. On the *bord* element, there is a sense of seashore or 'coastal border' emerging in the late Saxon period in relation to sea-going vessels, with the possibility that *bord-stæp* can be related to 'seashore' whilst *bæc-bord* appears to refer to the nautical terms 'larboard' and 'port (side)'.<sup>22</sup> Both of these uses might, at least, support a coastal location, and it is clear in Alfred's use of *innanbordes* and *ūtonbordes* that being inside or outside of the border—or coast—is an indication of whether one is at 'home' or 'abroad'.<sup>23</sup> All of this points to Stone Point and nearby Lepe (derived from the Latin *lapis*), on the southern coast of the New

19 Patrick Wormald, *The Making of English Law: King Alfred to the Twelfth Century* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 317–20.

20 S 364; S 1445; Wormald, *The Making of English Law*, p. 442., n. 92.

21 "board, n." OED Online. June 2018. Oxford University Press. <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/20731?> [accessed 12/06/2018].

22 For *bord-stæp*, (*Andreas*, line 442), G.P. Krapp, *The Vercelli Book* (New York, 1932), pp. 15, 110 has 'the rigging of a ship', although for 'seashore' see, for example, S.A.J. Bradley, ed. and trans., *Anglo-Saxon Poetry* (London, 1982), p. 122 and *The Dictionary of Old English: A to H*, [tapor.library.utoronto.ca/doe/](http://tapor.library.utoronto.ca/doe/) [accessed 12/06/2018]. In the most recent edition of *Andreas*, however, the term is translated as 'ship's walls', Richard North and Michael Bintley, eds., *Andreas: An Edition* (Liverpool, 2016), p. 141. The use here is considered to be ironic in its contrasting of the instability of the vessel with the stability of a safe harbour, Michael Bintley, pers. comm. 2018.

23 For 'home' and 'abroad' see Carole Hough and John Corbett, *Beginning Old English*, 2nd ed. (Basingstoke, 2013), pp. 134–36; Simon Keynes and Michael Lapidge, *Alfred the Great: Asser's Life of King Alfred and Other Contemporary Sources* (Harmondsworth, 1983), pp. 124–25.

Forest, representing a reasonably strong candidate for the location of the promulgation of *iv Edgar*.

There is certainly sense in the location for an assembly of this importance. In the first instance, it is well connected. There was a Roman road which ran from Tatchbury in a south-easterly direction towards Stone Point, linking it in to a proposed network of roads in this area that connected Southampton, Winchester, Ringwood (Hants), Downton and Old Sarum (Wilts.).<sup>24</sup> It seems reasonable to presume, as proposed by Ivan Margary, that somewhere in the immediate vicinity of Stone Point there was a Roman quayside and one that may still have been functioning as a *stæp* into the early medieval period. Bede tells us that during Cædwalla's mid-680s purge of the Isle of Wight, an "island entirely given up to idolatry," two young princes fled the violence, crossing over into the neighbouring realm of the Jutes. They were taken, we are told, to a place called *Ad Lapidem* (at Stone) from where, ultimately, they were betrayed and condemned to death.<sup>25</sup> Stone Point is accepted as the location for *Ad Lapidem*, and clearly a place at which important decisions were made.<sup>26</sup>

### Laws, Politics and the Economy of Mid-10th-century Wessex

Both of these case studies conform to the observation that the evidence of King Edgar's legislation is complemented by the evidence of his charters.<sup>27</sup> If the hypothetical location of *Wihtbordesstan* in the New Forest makes some sense of the relative importance of cattle trading in the code itself and gives a rationale for the townsmen being at Hythe, then the same can be said of Edgar's law code promulgated at Andover where the livestock of concern is sheep. Considered "the most thoughtfully crafted Anglo-Saxon law-making to date," it contains very precise provisions for the sale of wool and although these sit at the end of the code, the secular part of which is chiefly concerned with justice, court attendance and surety, they are grouped within a chapter that also contains the clause "And one coinage is to be current throughout all the king's

24 Ivan D. Margary, *Roman Roads in Britain*, 3rd ed. (London, 1973), pp. 94–96; A. Clarke, "The Roman Road on the Eastern Fringe of the New Forest, from Shorn Hill to Lepe," *PHFCAS* 58 (2003), 33–58.

25 Bede *HE* IV.16.

26 Barbara A.E. Yorke, *Wessex in the Early Middle Ages* (Leicester, 1995), pp. 90, n. 56; J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People: A Historical Commentary* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 156–57; J.E.B. Gover, *Hampshire Place-Names* (Unpublished manuscript, Hampshire Records Office, 1961), pp. 41, 199.

27 Simon Keynes, "Edgar, *Rex Admirabilis*," in *Edgar, King of the English 959–975*, ed. Donald Scragg (Woodbridge, 2008), p. 12.

dominion, and no man is to refuse it.”<sup>28</sup> The link between coinage, revenue and wool is made explicit in the Andover code in what Simon Keynes calls “basic commercial controls.”<sup>29</sup>

These commercial controls are exemplified in the 973/4 coinage reform of Edgar’s reign, which demonstrated a monetary system of great sophistication.<sup>30</sup> It was a system that had been used to great effect by Carolingian rulers in the mid-9th century, one that was enforced by a new administrative framework where all coins throughout the kingdom were struck to a uniform design and one that was to go on and prove, in the long run, “nothing short of revolutionary.”<sup>31</sup> These monetary reforms produced the coinage of a newly-regulated order and other elements of the Andover code (as well as the Hundred Ordinance) reflect a period within which order is being imposed on the less formal and less uniform arrangements of the earlier 10th century.<sup>32</sup>

Yet, whilst Edgar appears to have been regularising trade and tightening the fiscal grip on the economy, he was clearly loosening the grip in other areas. We see this most visibly in the laws relating to the control and policing of transactions. Although Edward the Elder’s laws are clear about the restriction of trade to boroughs, Richard Hodges argues that royal concern had to be “realistic” about trading, and Æthelstan clearly strikes a more conciliatory note in stipulating that only larger transactions were legally obliged to take place within the burhs.<sup>33</sup> Edgar goes one step further at *Wihthordesstan*. Every man was to be under surety in and outside the boroughs, and witnesses are to be appointed to oversee the buying and selling of goods, in either borough or wapentake. However, if one were to ride out to make a purchase, the obligation is there to inform neighbours before and on return of witnessed transactions. The conciliatory tone is at its most understanding of the nature of trade when it recognises

28 III Edgar 8.2, 8.3; *EHD* 1, p. 433; Wormald, *The Making of English Law: King Alfred to the Twelfth Century*, p. 317.

29 Keynes, “Edgar, *Rex Admirabilis*,” p. 11.

30 James Campbell, “Observations on English Government from the Tenth to the Twelfth Century,” *TRHS* 5th ser., 25 (1975), 39–54 at pp. 39–40; James L. Bolton, *Money in the Medieval English Economy: 973–1489* (Manchester, 2012), pp. 88–89.

31 Simon Coupland, “Money and Coinage under Louis the Pious,” *Francia* 17:1 (1990), 22–54; R.H.M. Dolley and D.M. Metcalf, “The Reform of the English Coinage under Eadgar,” in *Anglo-Saxon Coins*, ed. R.H.M. Dolley (London, 1961), pp. 136–68; Rory Naismith, “Prelude to Reform: Tenth-Century Coinage in Perspective,” in *Early Medieval Monetary History: Studies in Memory of Mark Blackburn*, ed. Rory Naismith, Martin Allen, and Elina Screen (Farnham, 2014), pp. 39–83, at p. 82.

32 Keynes, “Edgar, *Rex Admirabilis*,” pp. 11, 23.

33 Richard Hodges, *Dark Age Economics: The Origins of Towns and Trade, A.D. 600–1000* (London, 1982), p. 165.

that one can “unexpectedly” (*unmyndlunge*) make a purchase when out on any journey but that one must have the cattle presented to the township (*tunscipe*) on the common pasture upon return. In this clause it is explicit that it is on cattle that the emphasis is placed and the following clauses all deal with permutations that arise in the witnessing of cattle transactions, outside of the boroughs. These clauses, from both codes, provide a legal context for the presence of townsmen at Hythe, on the edge of a very important cattle-pasturing common, and at Burghclere, on the edge of an extensive area of downland sheep grazing.

There is clearly some joined-up thinking between the regulation of both the sheep and cattle trade in Edgar’s law codes, his reform of the coinage and his granting of land in key areas to Abingdon, his institutional ally in these endeavours. Questions emerge, however, as to whether his actions can be seen as a response to a relatively recent boom in livestock trading or whether, in fact, this represents a pioneering campaign to expand the interests of the nascent Anglo-Saxon state into an already burgeoning industry in order to harness the wealth of the trade in livestock in the countryside and beyond the burhs. Some support for the latter hypothesis comes in the form of a growing body of evidence for exchange beyond the *wics* in the 8th century, to which attention will now be turned.<sup>34</sup>

### Sheep and Cattle in the Age of Emporia

The widespread production of high-quality woven goods in the middle Anglo-Saxon economy is reflected in the relatively high price they command in Ine’s law code and the prevalence in the archaeological evidence from the period of loom weights and spindle whorls.<sup>35</sup> That these goods, in the form of blankets or cloaks, figured as a traded commodity between Anglo-Saxon England and

34 Katharina Ulmschneider and Tim Pestell, “Introduction: Early Medieval Markets and ‘Productive’ Sites,” and Ben Palmer, “The Hinterlands of Three Southern English *Emporia*: Some Common Themes,” in *Markets in Medieval Europe: Trading and ‘Productive’ Sites, 650–850*, ed. Katharina Ulmschneider and Tim Pestell (Macclesfield, 2003), pp. 1–11 and pp. 48–60; Chris Scull, “Urban Centres in Pre-Viking England,” in *The Anglo-Saxons from the Migration Period to the Eighth Century*, ed. John Hines (Woodbridge, 1997), pp. 269–98; Michael D. Costen and Nicholas P. Costen, “Trade and Exchange in Anglo-Saxon Wessex, c. AD 600–780,” *Medieval Archaeology*, 60:1 (2016), 1–26.

35 *Ine* 55, 69, in *Die Gesetze Der Angelsachsen*, ed. Felix Liebermann, 3 vols (Halle, 1903–1916), 1:114, 118; John R. Maddicott, “Prosperity, Power and the Age of Bede and Beowulf,” *Proceedings of the British Academy* 117 (2002), 49–71, at p. 72.

Frankish territories is established historically from at least the reign of King Offa.<sup>36</sup> In a recent analysis of coin finds of the late 7th to mid-9th centuries, a lively trade in West Wessex has been proposed suggesting a strong 'Frisian' connection where the most likely commodity is wool or woollen textiles.<sup>37</sup> The Franks of the *frang sing acer* may need to remain hypothetical, but it is incumbent on us to consider who, in Alfred's laws, are the 'men' that the traders (*ciep-monna*) are required to take before the king's reeve before making their way 'up' inland and similar stipulations are also found in Ine's code (688×694) where traders are required, if they make their way *uppe on londe*, to do their business in the presence of witnesses.<sup>38</sup> If the numismatic evidence does suggest a coin-carrying contingent of Frisian merchants in the 8th century, is this role being fulfilled by Frankish operatives in the 10th? Is it even a spurious endeavour to differentiate between the two given that, at a later date, the term 'Frisian' seems to be synonymous with 'trader' and it is clear that many of these may even have been Franks?<sup>39</sup>

The 'traders' dell' and the overshadowing hill-fort at Burghclere may mark a location that had experienced many years of sheep trading. Topographically, it fits a pattern observed for Dorchester, Warminster and Westbury (with their associated hill-forts and tracts of open downland), where coin finds from the middle Anglo-Saxon period suggest important nodes in the wool trade.<sup>40</sup> We may not have the numismatic evidence to back this up but there are *sceattas* recovered from the hill-fort at Walbury (around 10 km to the west), and on the southern edge of this stretch of downland six coins dated to the 8th and first half of the 9th centuries have been recorded with the find-spot 'Andover'.<sup>41</sup> Weyhill (to the immediate west of Andover) stands out as an important place

36 H.R. Loyn, *Anglo-Saxon England and the Norman Conquest* (London, 1962), pp. 195–96; Joanna Story, *Carolingian Connections: Anglo-Saxon England and Carolingian Francia, c. 750–870* (Aldershot, 2003), pp. 195–96.

37 Costen and Costen, "Trade and Exchange in Anglo-Saxon Wessex," p. 22.

38 *Alf.* 34; *Ine.* 25; Liebermann, *Gesetze*, 1:68, 100.

39 Stéphane Lebecq, "On the Use of the Word 'Frisian' in the 6th–10th Centuries Written Sources: Some Interpretations," in *Maritime Celts, Frisians and Saxons*, ed. Sean McGrail, CBA Research Report 71 (London, 1990), pp. 85–90; Lebecq, "Routes of Change: Production, and Distribution in the West (5th–8th Century)," in *The Transformation of the Roman World AD 400–900*, ed. Leslie Webster and Michelle Brown (London, 1997), pp. 67–78, at p. 75.

40 Costen and Costen, "Trade and Exchange in Anglo-Saxon Wessex," p. 18.

41 Katharina Ulmschneider, *Markets, Minsters and Metal-Detectors: The Archaeology of Middle Saxon Lincolnshire and Hampshire Compared*, BAR Brit. Ser., 307 (Oxford, 2000), p. 100; Early Medieval Corpus of Coin Finds <<http://www-cm.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/emc/>> (accessed 22nd Mar. 2016).

in the history of the sheep farming industry of Southern England. When it is first recorded in the 16th century, it was one of the largest in England, with sheep making up the main commodity of trade.<sup>42</sup> This economic vibrancy is also reflected in an earlier period. Extremely high quantities of Roman coinage have been reported to the Portable Antiquities Scheme from the parishes surrounding Weyhill and along the course of the Harroway for a distance of 5 km to the west.<sup>43</sup> Weyhill is believed to be derived from *wēoh* meaning 'holy place, heathen temple', and on such a major thoroughfare an area of mass congregation is suggested.<sup>44</sup> That sheep were a popular source of income here is clear from archaeological excavations of early Saxon-period sites. Against a faunal backdrop where cattle bones outnumber those of sheep on a majority of settlement sites throughout the Anglo-Saxon period,<sup>45</sup> sites at Chalton, east Hampshire, and Old Down Farm, Andover, buck the trend in that both record higher levels of sheep bones than any other species.<sup>46</sup>

The presence of all major body parts in the cattle faunal assemblages from Hamwic suggests that beasts were being brought in on the hoof and whilst similar circumstances are observed for Ribe and Dorestad, like Jorvik, the assemblages at Hamwic contained a higher percentage of mature beasts.<sup>47</sup> This has been seen by some to reflect a redistributive economy and one where residents did not have access to markets because, given the choice, people would have purchased younger beasts for consumption.<sup>48</sup> We are reminded, however, that secondary products often seem to have been just as important in the

42 William Page, "Weyhill with Penton Grafton," in *VCH Hants* 4, pp. 396–98.

43 The British Museum, Portable Antiquities Scheme <<http://www.finds.org.uk>> (accessed 22 Jan. 2017).

44 *DEPN*, p. 510.

45 Naomi Sykes, "From *Cu* and *Sceap* to *Beffe* and *Motton*: The Management, Distribution, and Consumption of Cattle and Sheep in Medieval England," in *Food in Medieval England: Diet and Nutrition*, ed. Christopher M. Woolgar, Dale Serjeantson and Tony Waldron (Oxford, 2006), pp. 56–71, at p. 58 and fig. 5.1.

46 Peter V. Addyman, David Leigh, and Michael J. Hughes, "Anglo-Saxon Houses at Chalton, Hampshire," *Medieval Archaeology* 16 (1972), 13–33, at p. 31; Susan M. Davies, "Excavations at Old Down Farm, Andover, Part 1: Saxon," *PHFCAS* 36 (1980), 161–80, at p. 177.

47 Helena Hamerow, "Agrarian Production and the *Emporia* of Mid Saxon England, c. AD 650–850," in *Post-Roman Towns, Trade and Settlement in Europe and Byzantium Vol. 1, the Heirs of the Roman West* ed. Joachim Henning (Berlin; New York, 2007), pp. 219–32, at pp. 220–21.

48 Tom Saunders, "Early Medieval *Emporia* and the Tributary Social Function," in *Wics: The Early Medieval Trading Centres of Northern Europe*, ed. David Hill and Robert Cowie (Sheffield, 2001), pp. 7–13; Jennifer Bourdillon, "Countryside and Town: The Animal Resources of Saxon Southampton," in *Anglo-Saxon Settlements*, ed. Della Hooke (Oxford, 1988), pp. 176–95, at pp. 188–91.

agrarian economy of Anglo-Saxon England and that it may be, for the butchers of Hamwic, that leather was their primary concern.<sup>49</sup> The assemblages of sheep bones recovered from Hamwic provide a useful parallel in that they suggest wether flocks—older beasts—where wool had been the primary concern.<sup>50</sup> Although no evidence for leather-working has been discovered at Hamwic, it has been proposed as an export commodity for Wessex's key *emporium* on the basis of the importance of cattle in the animal bone assemblage alone.<sup>51</sup> Leather was undoubtedly a key commodity in Anglo-Saxon England with Ælfric's shoewright providing only a cursory list before asserting that "not one of you would want to go through the winter without my craft."<sup>52</sup> In the 8th century we might assume a relatively high demand for leather of all grades in the emergence of a greater market for protective wear, to say nothing of the role leather would have played as a liquid retainer in itinerant and predominantly aceramic sections of society (e.g. traders, herdsmen, carters, carriers, labourers). For Hamwic, as well, there exists the very real possibility that engagement in vibrant cross-Channel trade required the building and maintenance of fleets of cargo ships that may have employed leather in their sails.<sup>53</sup> Intensification in crop husbandry from the middle Anglo-Saxon period would have created a greater need for harnessing leather both for the cart and the plough.<sup>54</sup> Hamwic's butchers may, therefore, have had an active interest in buying older beasts, with more weathered skins, where they required tougher

49 See Debby Banham and Rosamond Faith, *Anglo-Saxon Farms and Farming* (Oxford, 2014), p. 136 for the importance of secondary products, although no discussion on the production of leather and its importance to the agrarian economy is given.

50 Bourdillon, "Countryside and Town," p. 182.

51 Mark Brisbane, "Hamwic (Saxon Southampton): An 8th-Century Port and Production Centre," in *The Rebirth of Towns in the West AD 700–1050*, ed. Richard Hodges and Brian Hobley (London, 1988), p. 117; Alan Vince, "Saxon Urban Economies: An Archaeological Perspective," in *Environment and Economy in Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. James Rackham (York, 1994), pp. 108–19.

52 *Ælfric's Colloquy*, in *Anglo-Saxon Prose*, ed. and trans. Michael Swanton, rev. ed. (London, 1993), p. 173: "I buy hides and skins and by my craft prepare them, and I make them into various kinds of footwear, slippers and shoes, leggings and leather bottles, reins and trappings, flasks and leather vessels, spur straps and halters, bags and pouches. And not one of you would want to go through the winter without my craft."

53 See Sean McGrail, "Boats and Boatmanship in the Late Prehistoric Southern North Sea and Channel Region," in *Maritime Celts, Frisians and Saxons*, ed. Sean McGrail, CBA Research Report 71 (London, 1990), pp. 32–48, for the evidence for leather sails in the late Iron Age.

54 Mark McKerracher, *Farming Transformed in Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford, 2018), p. 93. Banham and Faith, *Anglo-Saxon Farms and Farming*, pp. 294–95.

and thicker hide to work and as such, may have been enfranchised to purchase beasts of their own choice, to suit their own needs, in a market-based system of exchange. But would they have been purchasing their materials from the herdsmen of the New Forest, or would the herdsmen of the proposed wood pasturage at North and South Stoneham, Bishopstoke and Durley have produced enough to meet their needs?

### Discussion

This paper has been offered in the spirit of Barbara Yorke's more recent collaborations, the Leverhulme Trust-funded *Landscapes of Governance* and *Travel and Communication in Anglo-Saxon England* projects, both run from UCL.<sup>55</sup> A key methodology of these projects is the application of the 'landscape' paradigm or, more generically, the application of spatial analysis to a diverse evidence base, the constituent parts of which can come with their own specialisms, methodologies and epistemologies. 'Landscape' can serve as a means of integration: a medium that supports and facilitates interdisciplinary scholarship and one that allows for the examination of the spatial dynamics between objects, events and place-names in order to yield new understandings of the past. As an example, the geography of Abingdon's endowments provides an extra dimension to the rationale behind the re-foundation of an important minster site as a new religious powerhouse. It has already been observed that the location of the abbey was very likely dependent on an existing trade route,<sup>56</sup> but holdings at key nodal points on this main arterial trade route through Wessex, and in places with footholds in the livestock economy, also indicate a clear provisioning strategy along with access to lucrative trading opportunities.

Portman is a relatively rare noun in Old English and in the corpus of surviving examples, links with Edgar are strong. The examples discussed above sit in close proximity to each other in terms of provenance and likely authorship.

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55 UCL, *Landscapes of Governance*, at <<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/archaeology/research/projects/assembly>>; *Travel and Communication in Anglo-Saxon England*, <<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/archaeology/research/directory/travel-communication-anglo-saxon-england>> (accessed 20 Oct. 2017).

56 Alexander Rumble, "Hamtun Alias Hamwic (Saxon Southampton): The Place-Name Traditions and Their Significance," in *Excavations at Melbourne Street, Southampton, 1971-6*, ed. P. Holdsworth (York, 1980), p. 13.

They appear in charters that are a year apart and in one manuscript copy, one charter immediately precedes the other, suggesting that at the time of both grants, the concept of townsmen presiding over rural livestock exchanges had currency amongst the agents of Edgar's inner circle.<sup>57</sup> Portmen also feature in Edgar's renewal of the privileges of Chilcomb granted to Old Minster, Winchester, in a charter that, although spurious in its surviving form, may have a basis in an earlier cartulary, perhaps compiled under the influences of Æthelwold.<sup>58</sup> Of most interest, however, are the "details of contemporary relevance" in the Old English Legend of the Seven Sleepers. In a text that is, in places, pre-occupied with the business of transactions and specifics of exchange, we find a reference to portmen and sections concerned with recoinages and the debasement of the silver content, the latter of which indicates a date of translation after which Edgar had introduced the practice in c.973.<sup>59</sup> The reference to the gift of royal tribute in the package of possessions that includes *Portmonna Hyðe* is explicit, but can we assume the same gift for the *Portmannadel*? Of the powers enjoyed from the New Forest trade, it should also be noted that Abingdon's holdings include Ringwood, again, courtesy of Edgar.<sup>60</sup> With a derivation from *rimuc* and *wuda*, suggesting 'border-wood', this estate commands the main crossing of the Avon from Dorset and beyond and therefore represents another exit point, like Hythe and Lepe, from the New Forest.<sup>61</sup> These spatial dynamics provide a fresh take on the practicalities of how these grants could be made to work as sources of revenue in order to fund Edgar's ideological ambitions for Abingdon, the "engine-house for Æthelwold's personal crusade of reform."<sup>62</sup>

The case-studies offered here further our understanding of developments in the early medieval economy of 10th-century Wessex, and Europe. It had been customary in the second half of the 9th century in north-west Europe for *portus* to be used more generally to refer to a trading settlement (rather than the limited sense of mooring place for ships) but unlike *cyping* and *ceapman*, *port* only appears to have been more widely used in Anglo-Saxon England from the

57 Kelly, ed., *Charters of Abingdon Abbey, Part 2*, no. 89 (S 689); no. 93 (S 701).

58 Alexander Rumble, *Property and Piety in Early Medieval Winchester: Documents Relating to the Topography of the Anglo-Saxon and Norman City and Its Minsters*, Winchester Studies 4.3 (Oxford, 2002), p. 17.

59 Catherine Cubitt, "As the Lawbook Teaches': Reeves, Lawbooks and Urban Life in the Anonymous Old English Legend of the Seven Sleepers," *EHR* 124 (2009), 1021–49, at pp. 1023, 1026.

60 Kelly, ed., *Charters of Abingdon Abbey, Part 2*, p. 138. no. 87 (S 690).

61 Richard Coates, *The Place-Names of Hampshire* (London, 1989), p. 138.

62 Susan E. Kelly, ed., *Charters of Abingdon Abbey, Part 1* (Oxford, 2000), p. xl.

10th century.<sup>63</sup> It is the laws of the early 10th century that explicitly restrict trade to the ports that are the clearest indication we have that royal authority may be attempting to replicate an urban model that appears to have been working in 9th-century *Francia*.<sup>64</sup> A broader consideration of the *port* place-name element in its landscape context may go some way to characterising these developments and where it occurs in conjunction with the *ceap* element may be even more instructive.<sup>65</sup> The presence of *ceapmanna* in the 7th century is legally attested and that they are involved with inland trade, as opposed to being restricted to bases in the coastal emporia, is clear from their requirement to travel *uppe on londe*. This orbit of movement finds support in the distribution of *chapman*-place-names in Wessex and beyond, a review of which indicates a clear association with proposed trade routes of the middle Anglo-Saxon period.<sup>66</sup> Elsewhere, urban development models based on the strength of terminological data—in particular the relationship between *vicus* and *portus*—have been proposed for “the most important stage in early medieval development”; the transition from a estate-centred phase in exchange and agriculture to a “wider and free phase conducted by independent merchants and workers who traded or practiced a trade for a profit.”<sup>67</sup>

The point here is that the *ceapmenn* and their activity appear to be an existing configuration in the landscape of sheep and cattle farming into which the *portus* project is being initiated—that the trade of the 9th to 10th centuries is shaping the design of political economic stimuli rather than the other way round, in contrast to the “false dawn of the age of emporia.”<sup>68</sup> For Anglo-Saxon England, law codes, charters and chronicles—as well as archaeological evidence of urban planning—have all, in the past, contributed to a narrative that implicitly views the actions of kings, churches, elites and perhaps the ‘state’ as instrumental in the advancement of economic ambition in a model where

63 Adriaan Verhulst, *The Rise of Cities in North-West Europe* (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 48–52; P.H. Sawyer, “Fairs and Markets in Early Medieval England,” in *Danish Medieval History: New Currents*, ed. N. Skyum-Nielsen and Niels Lund (Copenhagen, 1981), pp. 153–68, at pp. 158–62.

64 *I Edward 1; 11 Æthelstan* 12, 13.1, in F.L. Attenborough, ed. *The Laws of the Earliest English Kings* (Cambridge, 1922), pp. 114–15, 134–35; Grenville Astill, “Exchange, Coinage and the Economy of Early Medieval England,” in *Scale and Scale Change in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Julio Escalona and Andrew Reynolds (Turnhout, 2011), pp. 253–72, at pp. 266–67.

65 E.g. ‘Cheapside’ in Langport (Somerset), ‘Cheap Street’ and ‘Port R[...] Close’ in Bedwyn (Tithe Award, 1850), *portmanna land* and *hrypera ceap* Canterbury (Kent, S 905), *Binneport* (c. 1261) and *chupyncliue* (1289) in Shaftesbury (Dorset).

66 Langlands, *The Ancient Ways of Wessex*, pp. 188–191, Fig. 51.

67 Verhulst, *The Rise of Cities in North-West Europe*, p. 56.

68 Henning, “Early European Towns,” p. 31.

urbanism—the town and the city—are seen as the key formative elements.<sup>69</sup> Yet, what is conveyed from the reconstruction of the geography of both study areas is clear evidence of a compromise, certainly in topographical terms, within two major elements of the early medieval economy in Wessex. Both sheep and cattle farming, and those concerned with their successful management, exerted a pull that influenced key developments in the political control of the late Saxon economy. Edgar's strategies should therefore be viewed as much as responses as they are initiatives in an on-going negotiation. The restrictions on limiting trade to the burhs may have been lifted, and the need for the witnesses to follow the trade, rather than the other way round, may have been conceded, but elsewhere, in the reform of the coinage, we see a tightening up of fiscal arrangements. It may be apposite, therefore, to extend Rory Naismith's observations on Edgar's reform of the coinage more broadly to the dynamics of the economy of this period: this was a change of tune and conductor, rather than a change of orchestra.<sup>70</sup>

In all of this, what emerges is a paradigm that places more emphasis on the wider constraints of landscape as a variable in the development of the economy and its relationship with ideas of kingship. In the early medieval west social and economic processes can be seen to transcend our traditional periodic division of the past and patterns of trade and external contacts can be seen to extend from prehistory through to the 6th to 7th centuries and beyond.<sup>71</sup> We may do well to extend this line of enquiry to early medieval Wessex and its relationship with its neighbours across the channel. Most recently, Michael and Nicholas Costen have identified "a much older pattern of trading places based not in major royal burhs, but at rural centres, including hill-forts," a reiteration of the assertion made by Grenville Astill that the social and economic relationships of the majority of the population were determined by an older, pre-burh

69 See H.R. Loyn, "Towns in Late Anglo-Saxon England: The Evidence and Some Possible Lines of Enquiry," in *England before the Conquest: Studies in Primary Sources Presented to Dorothy Whitelock*, ed. Peter Clemoes and Kathleen Hughes (Cambridge, 1971), pp. 115–28, at pp. 128, for towns as the 'supreme' achievement of Alfred, Edward and their successors; also, Martin Biddle and David Hill, "Late Saxon Planned Towns," *AntJ* 51 (1971), 70–85; Susan Reynolds, *An Introduction to the History of Medieval Towns* (Oxford, 1977), pp. 34–36.

70 Naismith, "Prelude to Reform: Tenth-Century Coinage in Perspective," p. 82.

71 Barry Cunliffe, *Facing the Ocean: The Atlantic and Its Peoples* (Oxford, 2001), especially ch. 13, "The Longue Durée," pp. 554–67; David Griffiths, "Markets and Productive Sites: A View from Western Britain," in *Markets in Medieval Europe: Trading and 'Productive' Sites, 650–850*, ed. Katharina Ulmschneider and Tim Pestell (Macclesfield, 2003), p. 72.

pattern of trading.<sup>72</sup> This pattern of trading ultimately has its roots in the landscapes that produce the items of commerce and as such invites us to augment the role of the agents that plied their trade on a daily basis within these worlds. Landscape therefore becomes the document through which we access and give voice to the people; the waves of the tides on the crest of which sits the froth of political action.<sup>73</sup>

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72 Costen and Costen, "Trade and Exchange in Anglo-Saxon Wessex," p. 23; Grenville Astill, "Community, Identity and the Case of the Late Anglo-Saxon Town: The Case of Southern England," in *People and Space in the Early Middle Ages, AD 300–1300*, ed. Wendy Davies, Guy Halsall, and Andrew J. Reynolds (Turnhout, 2006), pp. 253–72, at p. 254.

73 I am hugely grateful to Ryan Lavelle and an anonymous reader for generously giving up their time to read and comment on earlier drafts of this paper. John Baker very kindly offered advice on the place-names discussed. I consider myself very lucky to have met Barbara Yorke at a time in my life when I was looking for guidance and direction in following my passion for the study of the early medieval past. For her support during critical milestones in my career, I shall remain eternally grateful.

## Places I'll Remember? Reflections on Alfred, Asser and the Power of Memory in the West Saxon Landscape

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We are shaped by our memories and by others' memories of us. That statement may be a truism, but there are few places better than a Festschrift where one can get away with starting a paper in such a manner. And it is a valuable truism. Those memories which shape us, as so many studies have shown, are shaped by place, and the places themselves are shaped by memory. This has been demonstrated in neuroscientific terms over the last four decades by the identification of the role of 'place cells' within the hippocampus of the brain linked to the subjective 'sense of place', in part linked to the creation of personal memory, while the significance of *Lieux de mémoire* in French historiography provides an endorsement of what many of us already feel.<sup>1</sup> The development of the spatial turn has proved a particularly rich field in the study of Anglo-Saxon history and culture: Nicholas Howe showed the ways in which the experiences of place—those of the modern scholar and the medieval sense of place—can collide in a visit to a location, often in a way that forces us to consider how we approach the past.<sup>2</sup> A range of work on Anglo-Saxon landscapes, addressing the context of place-names, settlement, and perception has proved particularly fruitful in the last decade or so.<sup>3</sup>

1 A seminal work in the field of neuroscience is John O'Keefe, "Place Units in the Hippocampus of the Freely Moving Rat," *Experimental Neurology* 51 (1976), 78–109; a recent study is Sheri J.Y. Mizumori, ed., *Hippocampal Place-Fields: Relevance to Learning and Memory* (Oxford, 2008). For a brief discussion of Pierra Nora's project *Les Lieux de mémoire*, 6 vols (Paris, 1984–92), see his "Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Mémoire*," *Representations* 26 (1989), 7–24.

2 Nicholas Howe, *Writing the Map of Anglo-Saxon England: Essays in Cultural Geography* (New Haven and London, 2006).

3 Some examples are Tom Williamson's studies *Environment, Society and Landscape in Early Medieval England: Time and Topography* (Woodbridge, 2013) and *Sutton Hoo and Its Landscape: The Context of Monuments* (Macclesfield, 2008), Susan Oosthuizen, *The Anglo-Saxon Fenland* (Oxford, 2017), and the collection edited by Richard Jones and Sarah Semple, *Sense of Place in Anglo-Saxon England* (Donington, 2012). The underpinning philosophies in the interdisciplinary Leverhulme Trust-funded South Oxfordshire Project (2012–15),

Such issues are particularly pertinent with regard to a scholar whose sense of the early medieval past is rooted in the array of memories of places and the lived experience of places. I have been struck and indeed inspired by Barbara Yorke's knowledge of what seems to be just about every place west of the upper Danube relevant to the history of early medieval Europe, often characterised by an account of some obscure Merovingian saint's bones resting in some small church in the centre of some obscure town, which somehow managed to escape the most excessive ravages of the Renaissance: knowledge given a physical form in a well-catalogued 35mm slide collection.

These connections across time and space are important. An early medieval ruler could draw, like us, on the memories of others as well as on his or her own memories, and the re-telling of stories through place could link generations of members of a kin-group together. The place of this essay within a volume dedicated to Barbara Yorke may prove powerful as an endorsement of Barbara's scholarship, linking her with the place and scholarly identity of Winchester itself and, as a *Festschrift* ought to do, providing indications to generations of scholars to come of the networks of scholarship and friendship—the virtual kinship—that brought those scholars of the future to a better understanding of where they stand when they encounter this current study.

The above musings might of course be read as inward-looking scholarly self-indulgence but they are included here because they have a bearing on the early medieval past. When we draw together the skeins of memories that shaped the operations and functions, the *raison d'être*, of a ruling family—to rule, reproduce, control their environment, maintain and/or develop collective identity<sup>4</sup>—a number of factors become apparent. A member of a royal family sat in their historical present but they were also the sum total of what they had been, what their forefathers and foremothers had been (the latter sometimes acknowledged, though rarely explicitly), and, significantly, the rulers were also the sum total of what they considered their successors would be. There were some forty-five father-to-son successions of rulership in the West Saxon royal dynasty, each representing a generation of the historical past, recorded in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle's* entry for 855.<sup>5</sup> As Daniel Anlezark has demonstrated, links between the West Saxon dynasty in the 9th century and the Biblical Flood

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emphatically 'bottom-up' in its focus, are discussed by Stephen Miles in "The South Oxfordshire Project: Perceptions of Landscape, Settlement and Society, c.500–1650," *Landscape History*, 33:2 (2012), 83–98.

4 A useful discussion of this is provided by Michael Mann, *The Sources of Social Power Volume 1: A History of Power from the Beginning to AD 1760* (Cambridge, 1986).

5 ASC 855. See Kenneth Sisam, "Anglo-Saxon Royal Genealogies," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 39 (1953), 287–348.

were very real and meaningful: this was (in its own terms at least) a deep sense of historical time.<sup>6</sup> Contemporaries may have lived, as we also apparently do, in Bede's sixth and final age of the world<sup>7</sup> but a sense of future was not without meaning: projected forward, as 9th-century contemporaries presumably did when contemplating that 855 entry, it seems likely that those who thought about the centrality of Anglo-Saxon rulership would occasionally have included the 21st century in their sense of the historical future, too, like we see with Henry of Huntingdon's 12th-century address to "you who will be living in the third millennium."<sup>8</sup> A grand sweep of Cerdicings might, should fate have allowed, have ruled the *Angelcynn* till Doomsday (whenever that might be), a matter to which 19th-century historians might have been more sensitive than our own generations when, with some sense of imperial self-justification, they linked their monarch directly to the Anglo-Saxon past.<sup>9</sup>

Memory of place, and the sense of the link between the personal past, the personal present, and the personal future, as well as the past and future of ancestors and successors, played an important role in consideration of one of the most famous of the Anglo-Saxon rulers, Alfred the Great (849–99; r. 871–99)—particularly when Alfred is seen through the eyes of his biographer, Asser. It is Asser's presentation of Alfred, addressing the significance of the construction of kingship in his *Vita Alfredi*, which occupies the discussion in much of this essay, providing an exploration of the perception of self, of others, and of the corporate identity of family, kin and followers, through the ways in which place and space were perceived.

### Space, Place and the Life (and *Life*) of King Alfred

Asser's *Vita* shines a particularly raking light on the Anglo-Saxon sense of place. Asser made much of Welsh ethnicity: he writes of an upbringing associated

6 Daniel Anlezark, *Water and Fire: The Myth of the Flood in Anglo-Saxon England* (Manchester, 2006), particularly pp. 241–90.

7 For Bede's six ages of time, based on Augustinian tradition, see Peter Darby, *Bede and the End of Time* (London, 2012), pp. 21–24.

8 "Ad uos igitur iam loquar qui in tercio millenario..." HH, pp. 496–97. I am grateful to Paul Store for drawing my attention to this sentiment.

9 For the Victorian legitimization of the Anglo-Saxon past, see J.W. Burrow, *A Liberal Descent: Victorian Historians and the English Past* (Cambridge, 1982); Barbara Yorke's study, *The King Alfred Millenary in Winchester, 1901*, Hampshire Papers 17 (Winchester, 1999) remains a valuable case study in this regard. On coping with the imminence of Doomsday in the 10th and early 11th centuries, see Levi Roach, "Apocalypse and Atonement in the Politics of Æthelredian England," *English Studies* 95 (2014), 733–57.

with St David's, a place which contested its immunity from the surrounding kingdom of Dyfed, whose king had exiled both the bishop of St David's and Asser himself (perhaps indicating in an understated manner that his own presence in Wessex was forced by necessity).<sup>10</sup> Asser's link with St David's provides a sense of belonging which seems to take Asser's own sense of identity beyond Dyfed into south Wales or even Wales more generally, linking "right-hand" (southern) Wales to overlordship by Alfred's West Saxon kingdom.<sup>11</sup> Asser also alludes to his sense of being an outsider in Wessex, however, and this had much to do with how he perceived places in Alfred's Wessex. In this he has something in common with the way in which other 'outsiders', Alcuin at the court of Charlemagne in the 8th century, Dudo of St Quentin in the court of Duke Richard II of Normandy in the 11th century, could provide insights that an insider might not,<sup>12</sup> Asser's concerns go beyond connections of kinship and the flashes of activity in named places—the big battles and the places of death and burial of royal ancestors—which characterise the vernacular *Chronicle*, insofar as it is possible to see the concerns of its author-compilers.<sup>13</sup> Asser places Alfred at the centre of the narrative as a figure fit to rule as a Christian king, and as a king worthy to protect Asser's audience (and, importantly, capable of doing so).

In part, at least, Asser's is a view from the west, because of the nature of the writing of that account as a biography of an Anglo-Saxon ruler written—again in part—for a Welsh audience.<sup>14</sup> Achievements are personal in this form of narrative, and amongst those achievements Asser writes of the palaces built in stone, and earlier palaces removed, perhaps recalling the references in Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* to the abandonment of the royal residences, particularly

10 Asser, chapter 79.

11 Asser, chapters 80–81.

12 For the latter, see Benjamin Pohl, *Dudo of Saint-Quentin's Historia Normannorum: Tradition, Innovation and Memory* (Woodbridge, 2015); for Alcuin, D.A. Bullough, "Charlemagne's 'Men of God': Alcuin, Hildebald and Arn," in *Charlemagne: Empire and Society*, ed. Joanna Story (Manchester, 2005), pp. 136–50.

13 See Barbara Yorke, "The Representation of Early West Saxon History in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle," in *Reading the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: Language, Literature, History*, ed. Alice Jorgensen (Turnhout, 2010), pp. 141–59; see also Courtney Konshuh, "The Construction of Early Anglo-Saxon Identity in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*," above, pp. 154–79.

14 Simon Keynes and Michael Lapidge, *Alfred the Great: Asser's Life of King Alfred and Other Contemporary Sources* (Harmondsworth, 1983), p. 56. David Townsend, "Cultural Difference and the Meaning of Latinity in Asser's *Life of King Alfred*," in *Cultural Diversity in the British Middle Ages: Archipelago, Island, England*, ed. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen (Basingstoke, 2008), pp. 57–73, emphasises the multiculturalism of Asser's audience in terms of the placement of geography, a point with which James Campbell, "Asser's *Life of Alfred*," in his *The Anglo-Saxon State* (London, 2000), pp. 141–43, might be said—for altogether different reasons—to be in agreement with.

that of Yeavinger but also perhaps Goodmanham and *Campodunum*—places which had determined, in Bede's reading of events, different phases in the development of Christianity in Northumbria.<sup>15</sup> Perhaps more significantly, however, such sentiments resonated with the Solomonic sense of Alfredian kingship: the proclamation of dynastic greatness through palace-building.<sup>16</sup> In terms of Alfred's life, and indeed in terms of our own understanding, Asser provides a reminder of the dynamic nature of Anglo-Saxon royal space. When compared with other elements of royal dynamism, such as burh-building and royal justice, this is a portrayal that deserves to be taken seriously. But Asser, perhaps more than other writers of his time, also reminds us that places were experienced.

In addressing the interaction between place and memory we are removed from the territory of the methodology of later medieval historians' and archaeologists' knowledge of standing buildings and landscapes when considering royal quarters which can be peopled, landscaped and even populated with animals, fishes and birds.<sup>17</sup> Yet, if we look again at the sources as recalling places remembered and, indeed, hinting at those forgotten, we can still engage meaningfully with the sense of the lived place. There is almost a hierarchy of spatial locations in the *Vita Alfredi*, given particular meaning by the author's own links with the places that he has seen. Apart from St David's, directly associated with Asser himself (chapter 79), places at what might be read as the top of the

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- 15 Bede, *HE*, 11.13–14; on the impermanence of some (or indeed all) royal residences, see Peter Sawyer, "The Royal *Tun* in Pre-Conquest England," in *Ideal and Reality in Frankish and Anglo-Saxon Society*, ed. Patrick Wormald with Donald Bullough and Roger Collins (Oxford, 1983), pp. 273–99, at p. 286 and, on the rebuilding of sites in Asser, Michael G. Shapland, "Meanings of Timber and Stone in Anglo-Saxon Building Practice," in *Trees and Timber in the Anglo-Saxon World*, ed. Michael D.J. Bintley and Michael G. Shapland (Oxford, 2015), pp. 21–44, at pp. 32–33. Campbell observed ("Asser's *Life of Alfred*," p. 141) that "[i]t is not certain that Asser knew Bede's work," but, given the use of Bede's narrative in many of the 7th-century annals of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and Asser's own use of the *Chronicle* itself, Campbell's observation seems uncharacteristically hesitant.
- 16 Solomonic palace-building is in I Kings 7. The major treatments of Alfredian Solomonic resonances are Anton Scharer, *Herrschaft und Repräsentation: Studien zur Hofkultur König Alfreds des Großen* (Vienna/Munich, 2000), pp. 83–108, and David Pratt, *The Political Thought of King Alfred the Great* (Cambridge, 2007).
- 17 Later elite landscapes in England are discussed by, e.g. Oliver Creighton, *Designs upon the Land: Elite Landscapes of the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, 2009), and Amanda Richardson, *The Forest, Park and Palace of Clarendon, c.1200–c.1650: Reconstructing an Actual, Conceptual and Documented Wiltshire Landscape*, BAR Brit. Ser. 387 (Oxford, 2005). David Rollason, *The Power of Place: Rulers and Their Palaces, Landscapes, Cities, and Holy Places* (Princeton, NJ, 2016), pp. 99–167, is wider-ranging, although, perhaps inevitably, he draws principally on late medieval spaces.

hierarchy are (i) places where Asser has some personal recollection linked with the king;<sup>18</sup> then (ii) there are the places where the king had some life-changing event.<sup>19</sup> After those are (iii) a number of places (principally unidentified or unnamed) associated with the programmes of improvement which Asser attributes to the king.<sup>20</sup> Beyond those, Asser peppers the broader historical narrative, as does his source text, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, with (iv) sites where important events happened, including those before Alfred's reign.<sup>21</sup> (See Fig. 15.1. for those which may be identified.)

Such reflections on Asser's *Vita* might allow us to appreciate the manner in which Asser used the expectations of how a place was meant to interact with a royal subject's life. Alfred himself may have had a hand in the choice of spaces named in the *Vita* but there were surely many others which were not named by Asser, the names of which we simply do not know. Perhaps, given the plasticity of childhood memories, Alfred himself might not have known some of them. A court might move according to a known itinerary but places and events

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- 18 Those named are: Dean (chapter 79), 'Wintonia civitate' (either 'the monastery of Caerwent' or 'the city of Winchester', where Asser was seized by fever while deciding on the nature of his service to Alfred: chapter 79 [see below, p. 319]), *Leonaforð* (a royal estate where Asser met Alfred for the second time: chapter 81), and Congresbury, Banwell and Exeter (churches gifted by Alfred to Asser: chapter 81).
- 19 Wantage (chapter 1), Rome (chapters 8 and 11–13), unnamed place where book of poems learnt (chapters 22–23), Nottingham (chapter 30), Reading (chapters 35–36), Ashdown (chapters 37–39), Basing (chapter 40), Wilton (chapter 42), unnamed places at sea (chapter 48, chapter 64), Wareham (chapter 49), Chippenham (chapter 52), "woody and marshy places of Somerset" (*sylvestria et gronnosa Summurtunensis*) (chapter 53), Athelney (chapter 55 and, by association, chapter 56; chapter 57), Ecgbert's Stone (chapter 55), Iley Oak (chapter 55), Edington (chapter 56), Viking stronghold, unnamed (?= Chippenham, chapter 56), Aller (chapter 56), Wedmore (chapter 56), mouth of River Stour (chapter 67), place of wedding in Mercia (chapter 74), church of St Gueriir (and "now" St Neot, chapter 74), London (chapter 83).
- 20 Unnamed places of royal duty and improvement described in chapters 76, unnamed royal halls and fortifications built and in progress (chapter 91), Athelney (chapters 92–97), Shaftesbury (chapter 98), royal court (though not located) (chapter 100), monasteries granted wealth in Wessex, Mercia, and beyond (chapter 102), unnamed draughty churches and tents where Alfred burnt candles (chapter 104).
- 21 *Wihgarabyrig* (chapter 2), *Wicganbeorg* (chapter 3), Sheppey (chapters 3 and 10), Canterbury (chapters 4 and 34), London (chapters 4 and 44), *Aclea* (chapter 5), Sandwich (chapter 6), Thanet (chapters 9 and 20), Chippenham (chapter 9), Pavia (chapter 15), Rome (chapters 16, 46, and 71), Sherborne (chapters 18, 19, and 28), York (chapters 26–27, and 31), Thetford (chapter 31), *Englafeld* (chapter 35), Wimborne Minster (chapter 41), Repton (chapter 46), banks of R. Tyne (chapter 47), Cambridge (chapters 47 and 49), Exeter (chapter 49), *Cynuit* (chapter 54), Cirencester (chapters 57 and 60–1), Fulham (chapter 58), Condé (chapter 65), Rochester (chapter 66), Paris (chapters 82, 84, and 86), Chézý (chapters 84 and 86).



I will return to that link between a childhood landscape and the perception of a kingdom but there is an issue closer to home which requires comment. As Barbara Yorke has observed, Winchester features only once in episodes of Alfred's life, despite the continuing sense of the link between Alfred and the city.<sup>23</sup> It is perhaps even more revealing of what may have sometimes been an ambivalent relationship with the city that no episode, even that of Asser's illness, which *may* have been contracted in Winchester, links the city with Alfred's presence in the *Vita Alfredi* itself.<sup>24</sup>

It is only after the likely date of our surviving version of the *Vita Alfredi*, the "forty-fifth" year of Alfred's life (893, according to Asser's dating), that an account survives of Alfred ordering the hanging of the surviving crews of Viking pirates in the city, in 896, recorded in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*.<sup>25</sup> Why would Winchester be excluded from the *Vita*? One might suppose that Winchester was less important in Alfred's conceptualisation of the city at the time at which Asser wrote but perhaps it was simply less important for Asser, whose links, indeed resulting in his elevation to the bishopric of Sherborne, were often west of Selwood.<sup>26</sup> While Asser gives a Welsh exonym for seven places in England, Winchester is not among them, though it is not unlikely that one had existed and not impossible that Asser would have been aware of it.<sup>27</sup> Asser did not

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500–1600: *Essays in Honour of Peter Hayes Sawyer*, ed. Ian N. Wood and Niels Lund (Woodbridge, 1991), pp. 47–66.

23 Yorke, *King Alfred Millenary*, p. 5.

24 If Winchester, not Caerwent, were 'Wintonia civitate', where Asser says he suffered from a violent fever (chapter 79), it would be a striking sign of Alfred's absence from the city that Alfred had not caught up with Asser after what Asser says was an agreed rendez-vous six months after their first meeting just 26 miles (42 km) away at *Dene*, and had had to send letters enquiring after him, though it is possible, as Keynes and Lapidge, *Alfred the Great*, acknowledge (p. 261, although they plump for Caerwent for logistical reasons), that the wording of the text is ambiguous enough to read that Asser contracted the fever in Winchester and subsequently 'struggled' with it back in Wales for just over a year—it is, after all, possible that Asser could be aware of the point at which he contracted a fever which *subsequently* became debilitating. Alban Gautier provides a useful assessment of the evidence in his edition of Asser, *Histoire du Roi Alfred*, Les Classiques de l'Histoire au Moyen Âge (Paris, 2013), p. 126, n. Gautier favours Winchester on the basis that "la forme *Wintonia* n'est nulle part attestée pour Caerwent."

25 ASC 896. Asser indicates the date of composition in chapter 91. A recent review of the context of authorship is provided in Asser, *Histoire du Roi Alfred*, ed. Gautier, pp. xliii–lxxv.

26 For Asser's interest in minsters in western Wessex, in chapter 81, see John Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 303–304, 324–25.

27 The Welsh form 'Caerwynt', presumably a direct conversion from 'Wintan' and 'Ceaster' and a remarkable echo of the confusion read from Asser, chapter 79 (above, n. 24), is first attested in the 16th century and may be coined in the late Middle Ages (see M. Biddle, *King Arthur's Round Table: An Archaeological Investigation* (Woodbridge, 2000), p. 419. For Welsh exonyms in Asser, see David Townsend, "Cultural Difference and the Meaning

refer to Winchester by a version of the Roman Latin *Venta Belgarum*, which, writing in a scholarly tradition that was in part rooted in Roman learning, he would presumably also have known. Winchester is instead referred to by a Latin rendering of the Old English *Wintan Ceaster* (= “Wintoniam civitatem”).<sup>28</sup> Asser refers to the city only with reference to a Viking attack in 860, an event which has presumably been taken from its record in the *Chronicle*.<sup>29</sup>

The oddness of the comparative exclusion of Winchester might be more to do, however, with our expectation of its importance in the light of evidence from the 10th century and after, a period in which Winchester was thrust into the limelight. Rather than being less prominent than we might expect, other places could be actively forgotten, and were, to borrow Patrick Geary’s words, “phantoms of remembrance.”<sup>30</sup> The place associated with the death of a close family member, particularly a young child invested with royal expectations, could be a touchy subject. Peter Sawyer suggested in 1983 that some royal sites became less prominent, even leaving royal hands, after a traumatic event such as the violent death of King Edmund at Pucklechurch (Glos.).<sup>31</sup> We might do well to remember that Asser’s *Vita* is the only source to acknowledge the deaths of royal children in infancy. Victoria Thompson has remarked on the evident emotional nature of this passage, noting the lacuna in the surviving text of the *Vita*, which might show where a note on the deaths of the infants may once have stood in the original text.<sup>32</sup> Could it have been an erasure of the text? That would not mean that the details did not matter, whether or not they were erased in Alfred’s lifetime or after. Or indeed they may never have been there, a detail left to be filled in at a point when a member of the royal household was willing to provide the information.<sup>33</sup> Like the signing of divorce papers left to

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Latinity in Asser’s *Life of King Alfred*,” in *Cultural Diversity in the British Middle Ages: Archipelago, Island, England*, ed. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen (Basingstoke, 2008), pp. 65–66.

28 Tony King, “The Roman Names for Winchester,” above. A ‘classic’ study on the scholarly tradition in western Britain and cultural links between the ‘Celtic’ and ‘Anglo-Saxon’ world in western England is Patrick Sims-Williams, *Religion and Literature in Western England: 600–800* (Cambridge, 1990); for a consideration of these links further east, see Yorke, *Wessex*, pp. 177–81.

29 Asser, chapter 18.

30 Geary’s work on the topic of early medieval memory, though for the most part a consideration of Continental examples, is *Phantoms of Remembrance Memory and Oblivion at the End of the First Millennium* (Princeton, NJ, 1994).

31 Sawyer, “The Royal Tun,” p. 276.

32 Asser, chapter 75. Victoria Thompson, *Death and Dying in Later Anglo-Saxon England* (Woodbridge, 2004), pp. 9–10. Note here also the illness of Æthelgifu, the daughter of King Alfred, recorded in the spurious foundation charter for Shaftesbury, S 357. Susan Kelly addresses the possible reliability of the community’s tradition in this regard: *Charters of Shaftesbury Abbey*, Anglo-Saxon Charters 5 (Oxford, 1996), p. 29.

33 I gratefully acknowledge Barbara Yorke for the suggestion here.

languish in a drawer, such a job might seem easy but it created a finality that the party tasked with it was unwilling to acknowledge.

As Thompson notes, “humans are not logical.”<sup>34</sup> The late 14th-century record that King Richard II ordered the demolition of the Thameside palace of Sheen, where his first wife, Anne of Bohemia, died in 1394, shows that grief could be a powerful force in medieval kingship.<sup>35</sup> Such a late record may be a parallel too far but a sentiment closer to Asser and Alfred’s own time may be evidenced in the erasure in the A manuscript of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* of the reference to the burial location of the young Ætheling Edmund, son of Edgar and Ælfthryth, at Romsey a century later, in 971. Romsey is only mentioned in the Winchester texts: in this erased form in A and in full in A’s copy, manuscript G, suggesting that the Romsey detail was added *after* the record of Edmund’s death was added to other manuscripts of the *Chronicle*, whose texts are now represented by the manuscripts C, D and E, which diverge significantly from the A and G texts after 983. Other reasons may have lain behind the erasure of the reference to Romsey: the development of the Old Minster as a royal mausoleum containing *another* Edmund in the second quarter of the 11th century may one solution. Nonetheless, given the divergence of the texts after 983 and the presence of the record of Edmund in the G text’s copy of A, made in the early years of the 11th century,<sup>36</sup> it is not unrealistic—even if it is somewhat speculative—to ascribe the addition and subsequent erasure of Romsey in relation to the death of Edmund to the reign of Æthelred, a king who grew up surrounded by the memory of dead siblings.<sup>37</sup>

### Experiencing *Dene*

Back in the 9th century, Asser relates his first memory of Alfred some way into the narrative, at chapter 79, when, like his exemplar Einhard, a figure who had established the art form of ruler biography in early 9th-century Francia, Asser

34 Thompson, *Death and Dying*, p. 10.

35 Caroline M. Barron, “Richard II: Image and Reality,” in Dillian Gordon, *Making and Meaning: the Wilton Diptych* (London, 1993), p. 15.

36 Janet Bately, in her editorial commentary to her edition of ASC MS A, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition, Volume 3: MS A* (Cambridge, 1986), tentatively notes (p. xxxvii) that that ‘Hand 5’ was responsible for annals 973–1001, and “may also have written the partly-erased annal 971 (found also in G).”

37 For Æthelred and other siblings, see Ryan Lavelle, *Aethelred II: King of the English* (Stroud, 2002; rev. edn, 2008), pp. 90–92

moves from the details of public memory to the image of the private man.<sup>38</sup> His narrative places the two men “in the royal vill which is called *Dene*” (*in villa regia, quae dicitur Dene*) presumably referring to an estate corresponding with the parishes of East and West Dean, now in the parish of Singleton, West Sussex, an area which is not insignificant to the dedicatee of the present volume. The biographical significance of Asser’s *Vita* is a topic that is well considered in Anglo-Saxon studies but there is also an autobiographical element in the work, which helps to locate the subject of the biography in the memory of the lived experience.<sup>39</sup> By naming *Dene*, Asser specifies a nodal location but his is also an account of travel through “the expanse of many lands” (*multa terrarum spatia*): Asser relates that he travelled from the “westernmost and furthest boundaries of Britain” (*de occiduis et ultimis Britanniae*) to another boundary of Alfred’s kingdom, “the territory of the right-hand Saxons, which is in English [lit. ‘Saxonish’, *Saxonice*] is called Sussex” (*usque ad regionem Dexteralium Saxonum, quae Saxonice Suth-Seaxum appellatur*).<sup>40</sup> An indication of Asser’s approach to his different audiences is given by the fact that Asser places his reference to Wales in terms of the island of Britain, using a cardinal point, yet by reference to the English province he Latinises an idiomatic Welsh way of describing the ‘south’ as ‘on the right-hand’ (*i parth dehou*).<sup>41</sup> Although Alfred Smyth saw the use of such idioms as inconsistent, condemning a lack of “spontaneous Welshness” in the narrative,<sup>42</sup> there is something to be said about the way Asser used such inconsistencies to construct his narrative. Here, it mattered to refer to the Saxons (thrice over in one sentence!) through a Welsh frame and to refer to the Welsh region whence Asser hailed through an insular one. The *regio*—the “territory”—of the South Saxons was no longer a kingdom in the 9th century, although the term *regio* had been used by Bede in this context and the link to the Latin *rex* cannot have been unnoticed. However, it becomes part of a geographical circumscription for a Welsh audience while the sense of unity through the island of Britain is relevant to a West Saxon audience—presumably a West Saxon audience who knew their Bede, too.

38 On the construction of Einhard’s Charlemagne, see David Ganz, “Einhard’s Charlemagne: the Characterization of Greatness,” in *Charlemagne*, ed. Story, pp. 38–51.

39 Richard Abels, “King Alfred the Great and his Biographers: Images and Imagination,” in *Writing Medieval Biography, 750–1250: Essays in Honour of Frank Barlow*, ed. David Bates, Julia Crick, and Sarah Hamilton (Woodbridge, 2006), pp. 61–75, at pp. 62–66.

40 Asser, *Vita Ælfredi*, chapter 79; I have not followed Keynes and Lapidge’s translation, “the remote, westernmost parts of Wales” here.

41 Keynes and Lapidge, pp. 241–42.

42 Alfred P. Smyth, *The Medieval Life of King Alfred the Great: A Translation and Commentary on the Text Attributed to Asser* (Basingstoke, 2002), pp. 117–24 (quotation at p. 119).

We can only hope to imagine the experience of the saddle-sore monk (Asser gives no indication of having walked), perhaps tired and thirsty, accompanied by the Anglo-Saxon guides whom Asser notes were with him, arriving in the royal estate. Had Asser come directly from Wales, trying every other royal estate along the way? Had the king and scholar corresponded to ensure that they would rendezvous at the right place and time? And would Asser have written in Old English, a language with which he was evidently familiar, in order that he be understood? Or had the guides been responsible for the task of bringing Asser to the king safely, perhaps meeting Asser at a specific location en-route providing royal protection to ensure that Asser did not need to blow a horn as he travelled as a stranger through the wooded land of Wessex, particularly Selwood, which featured so prominently in Asser's narrative?<sup>43</sup> As every CEO knows, bringing a subordinate into *your* space ensures that the power relationship is duly demonstrated, a matter which Martin Gravel has shown with regard to the imperial rulership of Charlemagne and Louis the Pious.<sup>44</sup> Dean was a world away from Parma, where Einhard notes that Charlemagne met his Alcuin (other documents suggest that this was probably not for the first time),<sup>45</sup> but the sense of the king on the road, if not out of his kingdom, is still conveyed by what is not said in the text.

True to the *denu* place-name element, the *Dene* estate was perhaps a place which revealed itself in the folds of the landscape, rather like the settlements in the modern parish (Fig. 15.2). In their invaluable study of landscape names, Margaret Gelling and Ann Cole note the linear nature of some of the places relating to this name element in the South Downs (elsewhere *denu* is a place-name element referring to sinuous valleys).<sup>46</sup> The *denu* at East Dean and

43 See *Ine* 20, in F. Liebermann, *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, 3 vols (Halle, 1903–16), 1:98–99 for the reference to the blowing of a horn by a traveller (a clause which is common to clause 28 of the 7th-century Kentish lawcode of Wihtræd: Liebermann, *Gesetze*, 1:14). On the transmission of Ine's law under Alfred, see Mary P. Richards, "The Laws of Alfred and Ine," in *A Companion to Alfred the Great*, ed. Nicole Guenther Discenza and Paul E. Szarmach (Leiden, 2015), pp. 282–309; Selwood is simply named in Old English in chapter 12, but is specifically described as the "great wood" (*sylyva magna/coit maur*) in Latin and Welsh in chapter 55—perhaps an indication of Asser's awareness of woodland. The woodland after which Berkshire was apparently named, of which Asser was presumably aware (given his experience of the Berkshire battlefields of 871), is in chapter 1.

44 Martin Gravel, *Gravel, Distances, rencontres, communications: Réaliser l'empire sous Charlemagne et Louis le Pieux* (Turnhout, 2012).

45 *Vita Karoli*, chapter 9; see Bullough, "Charlemagne's 'Men of God,'" pp. 137–38, citing Alcuin, *Carmina*, no. 4, ed. Ernst Dümmler, MGH Poetae Latini aevi Carolini, pp. 220–23.

46 A discussion of *denu* is in Margaret Gelling and Ann Cole, *The Landscape of Place-Names* (Donington, 2000), pp. 113–21.



FIGURE 15.2 The South Downs landscape seen from Singleton, Sussex, which, with East Dean, was part of the royal estate of *Æthelingdene*

neighbouring Singleton (Sussex) does not dominate the surroundings, visible to all but, in a manner reminiscent of Asser's presentation of his subject, the land and buildings within the settlement might reveal themselves briefly as the traveller moves towards them, then disappear behind another undulation, only to become apparent once more. Dean is not normally thought to have been the *Langandene* where a version of Alfred's will was declared, a place which determined succession to the West Saxon kingdom, and there are a lot of *denu* place-names in Old English, but I don't see why it shouldn't have been or at least might be linked. Although Asser has *Dene*, not *Langandene*, such a verbal link could be important to a late 9th-century audience and the historical past might be linked with the sense of the future of the succession: *Langandene* was, as Patrick Wormald noted, where the "West Saxon Council [...] upheld Alfred's position [...]."47 The *villa regia* of *Dene* in Asser's account48 was, like that other important royal centre Athelney (Somerset), *Æthelungaegge*, the "Isle of the

47 Patrick Wormald, "On *þa Wæpnedhealf*: Kingship and Royal Property from Æthelwulf to Edward the Elder," in *Edward the Elder, 899–924*, ed. N.J. Higham and D.H. Hill (London, 2001), pp. 264–79, at p. 270.

48 Asser, chapter 79.

Æthelings,” later associated with the history of Æthelings.<sup>49</sup> As *Æthelingadene*, Dean was a place linked with the royal grandmother, Ælfthryth a century later, who evidently granted it some time before her death to her new foundation of Wherwell (Hants). As mother of Æthelred ‘the Unready’, the queen mother may have been responsible for the upbringing of royal children such as her grandson, Æthelstan, who remembered her in his 1014 will.<sup>50</sup> While Asser does not note a connection with æthelings in the case of either Dean or Athelney, the genitival derivation in Old English would have made it pretty clear in the case of the latter, and it is worth noting that *Æthelingadene* was bequeathed to Alfred’s son Æthelweard—like Alfred the youngest of the royal sons, in his will—so there may already have been a connection between family and place even by the time that Asser wrote.<sup>51</sup> However, for Dean, Asser’s memory of it is an indication of the way in which personal memory intertwined with institutional memory could provide the sense of the importance of a place.

It is these personal moments of Asser’s interactions with the landscape that help us to understand how the mnemonics of memory work in the royal landscape, a land perceived by rulers to be subject to their authority in some way—particularly, but not only, royal estates. The two battles which Asser relates in detail, Ashdown and *Cynuit*, are comparable by the memory of landscape; even if the 9th-century descriptions are less extensive than we might like, they remain revealing.<sup>52</sup> Asser noted the “ramparts thrown up in our fashion” (*moenia nostro more erecta*) at *Cynuit*, noting that he had himself seen that it was “secure from every direction except the east” (*tutissimus est ab omni parte, nisi ab orientali*).<sup>53</sup> *Cynuit*, however, was not a place where the king had fought a Viking attack: Asser does not quite link the king’s agency to the event in the

49 David N. Parsons, “Churls and Athelings, Kings and Reeves: Some Reflections on Place-Names and Early English Society,” in *Perceptions of Place: Twenty-First-Century Interpretations of English Place-Name Studies*, ed. Jayne Carroll and David N. Parsons (Donington, 2013), pp. 43–72.

50 S 904 (AD 1002); 1503 (AD 1014); on the connection between the queen mother and her grandson/s, see David McDermott, “Wessex and the Reign of Edmund II Ironside,” above/below.

51 S 1507. Lavelle, *Royal Estates*, p. 92. For the date of the will and its codicil, see Sean Miller ed., *Charters of the New Minster, Winchester*, Anglo-Saxon Charters 9 (Oxford, 2001), pp. 11–12 (Miller’s edition of the will is at pp. 3–7).

52 The extent of Asser’s description of the battle of Ashdown is compared with that of Nithard’s earlier 9th-century description of the Frankish battlefield of Fontenoy, by Guy Halsall, *Warfare and Society in the Barbarian West, 450–900* (London, 2003), pp. 178–80.

53 Asser, chapter 54. Nick Arnold, “The Site of the Battle of *Cynuit*, 878,” *Report and Transactions of the Devonshire Association* 145 (2013), 7–30, places the fortress at Great Torrington, Devon, though Derek Gore, “A Review of Viking Attacks in Western England,” in *Danes in Wessex: the Scandinavian Impact on Southern England*, ed. Ryan Lavelle and Simon Roffey

way of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, but the reference to the “king’s thegns” in the event remains a *léger de main* of writing out the achievement of Ealdorman Odda which, Barbara Yorke observed, was able to fool some of the final-year undergraduates on her “Alfred the Great” special study into thinking that the defence at *Cynuit* was Alfred’s personal achievement.<sup>54</sup>

### Experiencing Ashdown

In some contrast to *Cynuit*, the earlier battle of Ashdown (871) was of singular moment in *directly* projecting Alfred’s kingworthiness, even if, as Richard Abels has remarked, Asser’s description of Alfred setting off to fight before his brother, the king, had come to battle may be an exercise of putting a spin on a picture of Alfred’s military ineptitude.<sup>55</sup> Asser’s description of the battlefield of *Ascensdun* is given weight by the memory of a “rather small and solitary thorn-tree which we ourselves have seen with our own eyes.”<sup>56</sup> Although Della Hooke has recently noted how the thorn “was adversely regarded by Christians,” as “a symbol of profanity and untamed wildness,” such depictions seem to be linked to a proliferation of thorn bushes rather than specific trees. Thorn trees were a common species in Anglo-Saxon charter bounds and were frequent in the names of hundredal meeting places, but what may have been most significant in the case of Ashdown, as presumably in other sites, was its solitary nature; perhaps it had given its name to the predecessor of Compton Hundred, a Berkshire hundred on the line of the Ashdown hills, ‘Naked Thorn’ (*Nachededorne*), which was recorded in Domesday Book.<sup>57</sup> The solitary tree could have been read as having an association with kingship when seen in a Biblical context and, appropriately enough, the assumption of kingship within a family, in the

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(Oxford, 2016), pp. 56–69, at pp. 62–63 provides, as the title suggests, a useful review of the evidence.

54 For a comment on the misdirection in the ‘official’ accounts which edged out the place of Æthelweard’s family, see Ryan Lavelle, “Law, Death and Peacemaking in the ‘Second Viking Age’: An Ealdorman, his King, and some ‘Danes’ in Wessex,” in *Danes in Wessex*, ed. Lavelle and Roffey, pp. 122–43, at p. 125 and n. 31.

55 Richard Abels, “Reflections on Alfred the Great as a Military Leader,” in *The Medieval Way of War: Studies in Medieval Military History in Honor of Bernard S. Bachrach*, ed. Gregory A. Halfond (Farnham, 2015), pp. 47–63, and specifically on Ashdown, pp. 50–51.

56 Asser, chapter 39: “unica spinosa arbor, brevis admodum, quam nos ipsi nostris propriis oculis vidimus.” Although Asser is presumably making reference to himself, I have rendered Keynes and Lapidge’s first-person singular translation into first person plural.

57 GDB fol. 57v; *Domesday: Berks.*, 1:24.

Old Testament.<sup>58</sup> Perhaps referring to a thorn was preferable to the ash tree, the “archetypal sacred tree of northern paganism,” after which the wider area of Ashdown was itself named.<sup>59</sup>

The battlefield itself is invested with meaning by the personal witness of the place, rendering to the reader, like a charter, that the event itself is witnessed through the place “with our own eyes,” (*nostris propriis oculis vidimus*). In some ways this was not unlike the diplomatic formula of a cross signed “with [my] own hand,” *manu propria*.<sup>60</sup> In Anglo-Saxon diplomas, unlike their continental counterparts, such a claim was only partially correct, as the ink cross was a scribal signature of just one hand rather than by independent witnesses, though it was still acceptable, with the sign of the cross in diplomas a record of the *act* of hand-signing.<sup>61</sup> By comparison, Asser’s own sense of witness is conveyed by the reference to *oculi*.

In the Augustinian perception of reason, seeing is more than the visual interaction between the object and the beholder but is a step toward wisdom and the revelation of God: *oculi* provide, as David Pratt notes, the ‘sense’ of illumination, linked with the *mens*, while ‘looking’ (*aspicere*) and seeing (*uidere*) are the others;<sup>62</sup> Asser’s own vision of the tree and the battlefield, places so important in defining Alfred’s kingship, may have had such a dimension, though we might note here the Alfredian reading of the limits of understanding in the Old English translation of Augustine: just as looking at the sun means that one cannot see it “entirely as it is,” an understanding of God “entirely as he is” (*swicene swilc he is*) in this world is similarly elusive.<sup>63</sup> A necessary check on

58 For an Old Testament parallel of a thorn tree, see Judges 9.14–15 (although it must be admitted that the later Old English version of the Heptateuch passes over chapter 9: *The Old English Version of the Heptateuch, Ælfric’s Treatise on the Old and New Testament, and His Preface to Genesis*, ed. Samuel J. Crawford, EETS OS 160 (Oxford, 1922), pp. 408–09). For Christian readings of the thorn see Della Hooke, *Trees in Anglo-Saxon England: History, Lore and Literature* (Woodbridge, 2010), p. 79, and pp. 165–72 for hundreds and charter bounds.

59 Blair, *Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, p. 477. For the pagan-to-Christian shift in reference to the battlefield memory, see Lavelle, *Alfred’s Wars*, p. 304.

60 A search on [www.esawyer.ac.uk](http://www.esawyer.ac.uk) renders 67 results with “propria manu” or “manu propria,” from the 7th century (S 10) through to 1065 (S 1038).

61 On the signing of the cross by both hand and ink the context of ratification, see Ursula Lenker, “Signifying Christ in Anglo-Saxon England: Old English Terms for the Sign of the Cross,” in *Cross and Cruciform in the Anglo-Saxon World: Studies to Honor the Memory of Timothy Reuter* (Morgantown, WV, 2010), pp. 256–58.

62 David Pratt, *Political Thought*, p. 310, citing *Soliloquiorum libri duo*, ed. W. Hörmann, *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* 89 (Vienna, 1986), p. 19.

63 Pratt, *Political Thought*, p. 323, citing *King Alfred’s Version of St Augustine’s Soliloquies*, ed. T.A. Carmicelli (Cambridge, MA, 1969), p. 69.

the expectation of witness was appropriate for a thorn tree whose quality was measured as *admodum brevis*, a phrase which might refer to the 'shortness' of its 'full extent'. If after 871 Asser saw the solitary thorn tree, he was not perceiving the tree *swicene swilc hit wæs*, i.e. *entirely* as it had appeared in front of Alfred and his warriors in 871. It had grown and had changed but Asser's description highlights that in such an exposed place as the battlefield described by Asser prevailing winds would not have allowed a mature and well-rooted tree to change beyond recognition. The 'concept' of the thorn tree—its nature—remained the same. An eyewitness view of the place some ten or twenty years later meant that Asser perceived the nature of this landmark *as it is*, and thus could convey with it this important moment with which it was associated.

In the instance of the battle of Ashdown the interaction of Welsh monk and West Saxon king is temporally at one remove from an important place but it is linked in spatial terms through the interactions which had evidently taken place at court and via the itinerant court as it travelled around the landscape.<sup>64</sup> Like the mnemonics of landscape in a charter's boundary clause, the sense of the place on the page is apparent—and invested with meaning in terms of the control of territory.

If Alfred was really born at Wantage, the construction of a familial memory around it was important. Here, I should stress, I am not following the anti-Asser agenda of Alfred Smyth in arguing against the difficulties of sending a royal wife out to the edges of the kingdom to give birth at a time of potential Viking raids<sup>65</sup> but merely noting that the myths of family memory, repeated over and again, determined a place and its surrounding landscape as meaningful.<sup>66</sup> Alfred's own campaigns against Vikings in 871, that first year of royal rule, were within that landscape, and the zone itself is worthy of some reflections (Fig. 15.3). In a recent publication Barbara Yorke has commented on the significance of the mythical figure of Weland in the translation programme of Alfred's court, perhaps indicating the significance of the Neolithic monument of

64 H. Burne, "The Battle of Ashdown," *Transactions of the Newbury and District Field Club* 10 (1953), 71–85, probably takes the notion of a 'battlefield tour' further than is plausible and 'inherent military probability' is a concept which leads to more precision on the battlefield than the sources might allow but Burne does provide a useful sense of the experience of the landscape *after* the battle. I gratefully acknowledge Barbara Yorke for discussion on this point.

65 Alfred P. Smyth, *Alfred the Great* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 3–9.

66 A valuable paper on the 9th-century repetition of family memory (albeit not this particular episode) is Nelson, "Reconstructing a Royal Family," *passim*. Here I must record my particular thanks to Barbara Yorke, who helped me to understand how emotional expectations within a family might determine custom with the descent of land, which helped me to understand the maternal interests in particular lands (Lavelle, *Royal Estates*, pp. 77–101).

Wayland's Smithy in Alfred's memory of the landscape of the Berkshire Downs (Fig. 15.3; note that this was a place which, with its slab-stone delineation, may not have been alien to those at the West Saxon court who had seen 'stone ship'-marked burials of Denmark and eastern Sweden).<sup>67</sup> Tied up in this landscape was presumably Alfred's own memory of the making of his own kingship. In this sense, though less textually explicit than the more obvious parallels with the childhood journeys to Rome shown by Asser,<sup>68</sup> the links of the childhood landscape with Alfred's military demonstration of his kingworthiness as a young warrior may have been valuable in the presentation of the king to his different audiences.

Given the Æthelredian chronicler's conscious echoes of the earlier annals of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle in his use of formulas, I am struck by the relative proximity of these Alfredian battlefields and Scutchamer Knob, in East Hendred (Berks., now Oxon.), known in the *Chronicle's* 1006 entry as *Cwichelmshlæw*.<sup>69</sup> This prehistoric barrow, used as the assembly place for the shire of Berkshire, was where Vikings were said in the *Chronicle's* entry for 1006 never to be able to return to the sea if they reached it.<sup>70</sup> James Campbell commented on Scutchamer as the "heartland" of the 10th-century English

67 Barbara Yorke, "King Alfred and Weland: Tradition and Transformation at the Court of King Alfred," in *Transformation in Anglo-Saxon Culture: Toller Lectures on Art, Archaeology and Text*, ed. Charles Insley and Gale Owen-Crocker (Oxford, 2017), pp. 47–70. Details of the site and its 20th-century excavation are in Alasdair Whittle, Don Brothwell, Rachel Cullen, Neville Gardner, and M.P. Kerney, "Wayland's Smith, Oxfordshire: Excavations at the Neolithic Tomb in 1962–63," *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society* 57:2 (1991), 61–101. The monument is recorded in the bounds of a grant by King Eadred, S 564 (AD 955). See Della Hooke with L.S. Green, I. Hornbrook and M. Mellor, "Anglo-Saxon Estates in the Vale of the White Horse," *Oxoniensia* 52 (1987), 129–43; for a reading of the legendary landscape in this area, see Andrew Reynolds and Alexander Langlands, "Travel as Communication: A Consideration of Overland Journeys in Anglo-Saxon England," *World Archaeology* 43 (2011), 410–27, at p. 418, discussing L.V. Grinsell, "Wayland's Smithy, Beahild's Byrigels, and Hwittuc's Hlaew: a Suggestion," *Transactions of the Newbury and District Field Club* 8 (1939), 136–39.

68 See Susan Irvine, "The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle and the Idea of Rome in Alfredian Literature," in *Alfred the Great: Papers from the Eleventh-Centenary Conferences*, ed. Timothy Reuter (Aldershot, 2003), pp. 63–77. Howe, *Writing the Map of Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 101–24, provides a valuable reading of the notion of Rome as the (spiritual) "Capital" of Anglo-Saxon England.

69 Courtney Konshuh, "Warfare and Authority in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle" (PhD thesis, Univ. of Winchester, 2014 [forthcoming as *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles: Writing English Identity*]), p. 183, comments on the use of earlier common stock formulas, though not without reservation.

70 See my "Geographies of Power," p. 209, for the link between the reference to *feorm* provided to Alfred (=good) in ASC 878 contrasted with *feorm* provided by Vikings in ASC CDE 1006 (=bad).

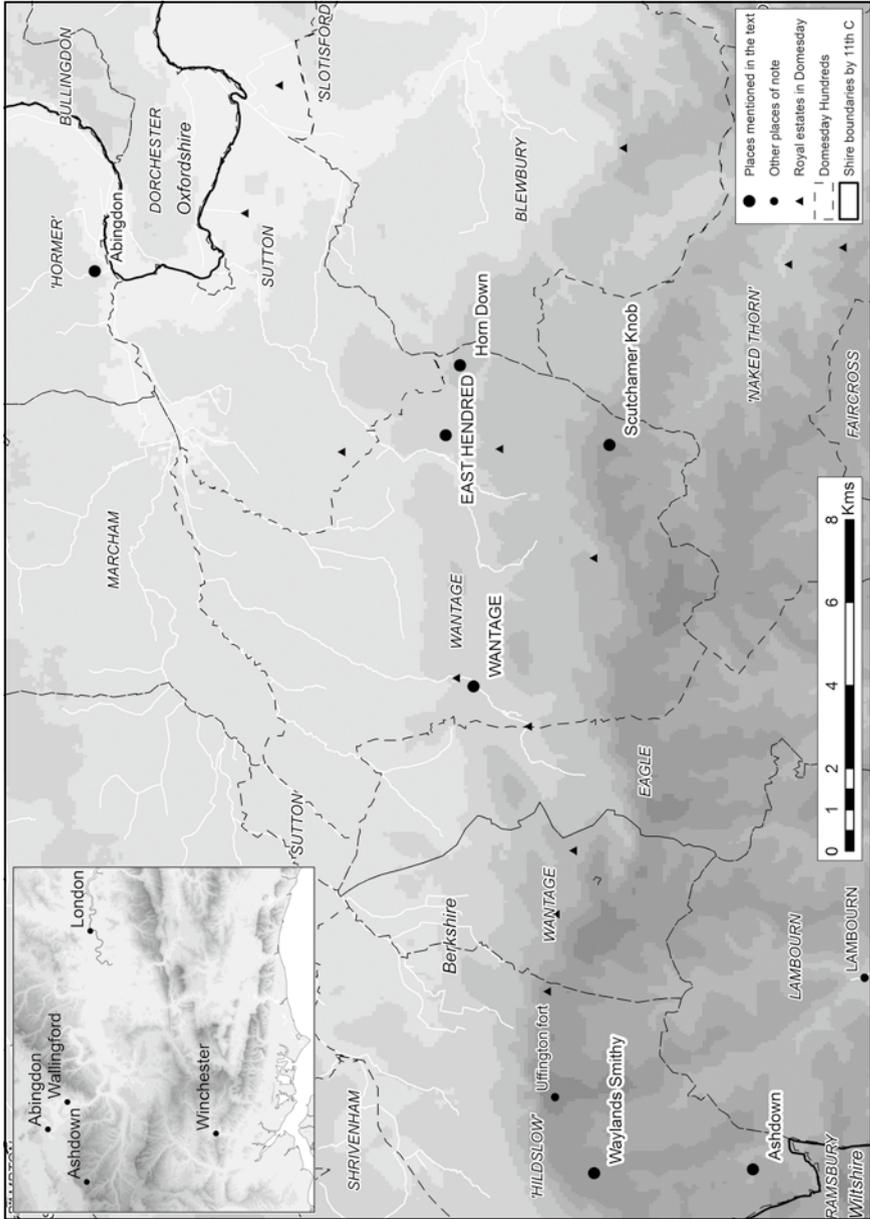


FIGURE 15.3 The Ashdown landscape and its environs

kingdom;<sup>71</sup> the Thames Valley's political centre of gravity for the 10th-century presumably originated in the importance of the northern frontier of the mid-to late-9th-century West Saxon kingdom.<sup>72</sup> With the descendants of Cynegils associated with the minster at Winchester, the naming of the barrow after Cwichehm, a king said by Bede to have despatched an unsuccessful assassin against Bede's hero, King Edwin (and a figure who was effectively the 'anti-Cynegils') may reflect the division of the kingdom in Winchester memory.<sup>73</sup>

If it is surprising that there is no Alfredian royal foundation along the lines of an Athelney or a Shaftesbury in the vicinity of Abingdon and the Berkshire Downs, it is more so that the existence of Abingdon itself did not serve to play this role in the family memory of Alfred's immediate descendants. In terms of its endowments and the privileges of its property Abingdon linked the memory of its endowment with Æthelstan 'Half-King', a man associated with Dunstan and Glastonbury, and with King Eadwig.<sup>74</sup> Eadwig was, of course, just as directly descended from Alfred as any other 10th-century king, but his marriage to Ælfgifu, which the Glastonbury-linked Archbishop Dunstan ordered to be dissolved, would have tied the king rather too closely to the kin-group of Alfred's brother King Æthelred I.<sup>75</sup> Something mattered in this region, and it mattered to the West Saxon royal house and its associates. It is worth remarking that the institutional memory of Abingdon in the 12th century holds Alfred in one of the few critical readings of the king in the Middle Ages, referring to

71 James Campbell, "England, c.991," in *The Battle of Maldon: Fiction and Fact*, ed. Janet Cooper (London, 1993), pp. 1–17, at p. 15.

72 I raise the question of whether Eadwig was strategically gaining support from followers in this region in the 950s in "Royal Control and the Disposition of Estates in Tenth-Century England: Reflections on the Charters of King Eadwig (955–959)," *HJSJ* 23 (2014 for 2011), 23–50.

73 On the foundation of Winchester and the link with Cynegils, see Barbara A.E. Yorke, "The Foundation of the Old Minster and the Status of Winchester in the Seventh and Eighth Centuries," *PHFCAS* 38 (1982), 75–83. The attempted assassination is in *HE* 11.9, an episode recorded in *ASC* E 626. Thomas Williams has recently developed the possible connection with Cwichehm, in "Landscape and Warfare in Anglo-Saxon England and the Viking Campaign of 1006," *EME* 23 (2015), 329–59, at pp. 352–53.

74 S 1208 (undated, but ascribed to 'c. AD 931'); S 658 (AD 959). These are discussed by Susan Kelly, ed. *Charters of Abingdon Abbey*, Anglo-Saxon Charters 7 and 8, 2 parts (Oxford, 2000–1), 1: lxxxvii–xcviii and 116–18; C.R. Hart, "Athelstan 'Half King' and his Family," *Anglo-Saxon England* 2 (1973), 115–44, at p. 125, highlights the importance of the endowment of the Uffington estate for Abingdon, though wrongly—it is now apparent from Kelly's work—reads the S 1208 charter as genuine.

75 Barbara Yorke, "Æthelwold and the Politics of the Tenth Century," in *Bishop Æthelwold: His Career and Influence*, ed. Barbara Yorke (Woodbridge, 1988), pp. 65–88, at pp. 77–78.

Alfred as a figure akin to Judas for his appropriation of the church's land.<sup>76</sup> That hostility may be as much to do with the effects of 10th-century reform as Alfred's own actions, a point when the church looked once more to lands which it felt it was entitled to have and the memory of Alfred may have been in the firing line, like the memory of the 8th-century Charles Martel had been for the stock-taking ecclesiasts of 9th-century Orléans,<sup>77</sup> but the comparison with Judas was a familiar enough sanction in 9th-century West Saxon charters (as of course in many other charters). Dorothy Whitelock's observation of a Mercian influence on some West Saxon charters of this period is worth noting here as it is pertinent to Abingdon's liminal place in the West Saxon kingdom.<sup>78</sup> Perhaps the 12th-century Abingdon chronicler was alluding to the breaking of a *specific* diploma's anathema when citing Alfred's appropriation of the land of the church?

Although Frank Stenton's suggestion that before the "Danish War" the house of Abingdon was never anything but "a little monastery built upon the royal demesne" is not a judgement that can be borne out by specific evidence, and Alan Thacker has noted that the minster had hardly gone to wrack and ruin when Æthelwold came to it as abbot in the mid-950s,<sup>79</sup> the interchangeability of royal and ecclesiastical interests may have led to Alfred's cavalier treatment of the house. This was not because it was an easy source of wealth to be plundered,<sup>80</sup> but because there was, as Barbara Yorke has shown with the

76 *Historia Ecclesie Abendonensis: The History of the Church of Abingdon*, ed. John Hudson (Oxford, 2 vols, 2002–7), 1:32–3 and 272–75; Blair, *Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, p. 325.

77 Paul J. Fouracre, "Writing About Charles Martel," in *Law, Laity and Solidarities: Essays in Honour of Susan Reynolds*, ed. Pauline A. Stafford, Janet L. Nelson and Jane Martindale (Manchester, 2001), pp. 12–26. A comparison may be made with the Old Minster's plea, on the basis of the investment which had been necessary by the bishop, to retain land at Beddington, Surrey, which was evidently compulsorily leased back to the king: S 1444 (AD 900×9). David N. Dumville, *Wessex and England from Alfred to Edgar: Six Essays on Political, Cultural, and Ecclesiastical Revival* (Woodbridge, 1992), p. 46. Note Richard Abels's desire to make Alfred a "West Saxon Charles Martel," noted in his "Alfred and his Biographers," p. 73, referring to the "failed" first edition of his biography, *Alfred the Great: War, Culture and Kingship in Anglo-Saxon England* (London, 1998).

78 Dorothy Whitelock, "Some Charters in the Name of King Alfred," in *Saints, Scholars and Heroes: Studies in Medieval Culture in Honor of Charles W. Jones*, ed. Margot H. King and Wesley M. Stevens, 2 vols (Collegeville, Minn., 1979), 1:77–98.

79 F.M. Stenton, *The Early History of the Abbey of Abingdon* (Reading, 1913 [repr. Stamford, 1989]), pp. 31–32. Alan Thacker, "Æthelwold and Abingdon," in *Bishop Æthelwold*, ed. Yorke, pp. 43–64, at pp. 51–52.

80 Robin Fleming, "Monastic Lands and England's Defence in the Viking Age," *EHR* 100 (1985), 247–65. For Alfred's use of minsters as "a Christmas present for a valued advisor," see Blair, *Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, pp. 324–25 (quotation at p. 325).

Alfredian interest in the Weland story, genuine engagement with the region as a place imbued with memory.

Alfred's own writings provided a sense of the royal duty to provide land and the means of sustenance to a royal follower following service rendered. The vignette provided by Asser of the king instructing his officers, particularly his dog-keepers, was noted by Abels as a sign of the man as micromanager,<sup>81</sup> but the notion of the lord's *fultume* is important in these Berkshire lands too. This is a word which is often translated as 'help' but might equally mean support, in huntin', shootin' and fishin'-type activities, on leased land which would eventually, given time and continued service, turn to bookland.<sup>82</sup> I have commented elsewhere on the exchange of land at Horn Down, in East Hendred hundred, wherein Alfred received *unhidated* land, in exchange for 5 hides of land at Appleford, some 4 miles (6.4 km) away. The exchange was with Deormod, a *cellararius* who may have been related through marriage to Æthelstan 'Half-King', and who may himself later have become an ealdorman.<sup>83</sup> An important indication of continuity of service and the link to land here is the record in Domesday's entry for East Hendred of a writ to the sheriff, by which the sheriff's wife kennelled the king's dogs in return for the estate.<sup>84</sup>

As far as I know, no archaeologist has managed to identify dog kennels in an early medieval estate. In the 9th century the Archbishop of Reims looked at Alfred's gift of hunting dogs with barely disguised disdain—an attitude which, Barbara used to observe to her final-year undergraduate students on her 'Alfred the Great' special subject, may reveal the distance between the aspirations and the reality of the Alfredian renaissance. But the kennelling of such dogs had real significance.<sup>85</sup> For Deormod, occupying the important position of the provision of food at court (for which hunting dogs must have played an essential role) it may have been a short step from there to an ealdormanry and the foundations of an affinity which could claim to being the next rung down from kings and queens. It might seem surprising that Deormod should even feel the

81 Abels, "Alfred and his Biographers," p. 73.

82 See Stephen Baxter and John Blair, "Land Tenure and Royal Patronage in the Early English Kingdom: A Model and a Case Study," *ANS* 28 (2006 for 2005), 19–46.

83 Lavelle, "Royal Control and the Disposition of Estates in Tenth-Century England," 38–39. For the link between Deormod and Æthelstan's family (with Deormod interpreted, through the evidence of S 362 (AD 901) as the brother of Æthelstan's aunt on his paternal side), see Hart, 'Æthelstan "Half-King" and his Family', p. 119, n. 5.

84 GDB fol. 57r; *Domesday: Berks.*, 1:38; note that Cola the Huntsman also held land at Hendred in 1086: GDB fol. 63r; *Berks.* 65.13.

85 *Councils and Synods with Other Documents Relating to the English Church I*, ed. Dorothy Whitelock, M. Brett and C.N.L. Brooke, 2 parts (Oxford, 1981), 1:10. Trans. Keynes and Lapidge, *Alfred the Great*, p. 184–85.

need to swap one estate at Horn Down for another just a few miles down the road, but the receipt of land at Appleford, for which Deormod apparently gave 50 mancuses to Alfred, may have been a means to gift the land to Abingdon, providing standing commensurate with Deormod's office, while the land close to East Hendred remained under royal control. It may be too far to link the late 11th-century land with the vagaries of 9th-century expectations but it is hardly unrealistic to consider that with the smooth operations of an administrative machine that kept particular lands within some royal *fisc* of some sort, a deeper sense of family memory might be at play.<sup>86</sup>

### Concluding Remarks

Our encounters with place tap into family memory, personal memory, and the connections associated with them. Our experience of a place may never come close to that of Anglo-Saxons one thousand years ago—for one matter, the notion that the countryside should ever be a place of leisure activity, somewhere 'pleasant', is presumably a long way removed from a ploughman's sense of the *micel gedeorf*, the "great toil," of the land. Also removed from our experience were a reeve, who had to think about the need for relevant tools to produce the best yield from the land, or a traveller, who might need to read the landscape to ensure that they reach shelter before nightfall.<sup>87</sup> But a member of a ruling family was the product of the experiences of that landscape and, I suppose, they could even *enjoy* it.

Just as the Fuller Brooch's depictions of the senses proclaimed, sight may have been all-important in determining wisdom but senses came into play in the experience—the enjoyed experience indeed—of the landscape: perceiving colours and light, which change according to weather, time of day, and season, seeing the changes in behaviour of animals (including, of course, dogs but we ought not to forget cats), hearing the birdsong,<sup>88</sup> feeling the sensations of

86 See S 937 (AD 990×1006) for the record of the compensation of land to Abingdon for land "belonging to the royal sons," given mistakenly to Abingdon by Edgar, taken away from Abingdon because of their royal status during the reign of Edward the Martyr, and compensated for by Æthelred. Lavelle, *Royal Estates*, pp. 1 and 90.

87 On the hard work of the ploughman, see *Ælfric's Colloquy*, ed. G.N. Garmonsway, 2nd ed. (London, 1947), pp. 20–21. Of course, I turn to my fellow editor, Alex Langlands, "*Ceapmenn* and *Portmenn*: Trade, Exchange and the Landscape of Early Medieval Wessex," above, pp. 294–311, for his invaluable discussion of the traveller's experience.

88 See Eric Lacey and Kris Poole, "Avian Aurality in Anglo-Saxon England," *World Archaeology* 46:3 (2014), 400–15.

movement such as localised gusts of wind on a ridge or the increase in speed as a horse recognised the last few miles of a homeward route, as tasting the food to which members of a ruling family were entitled, could give character and meaning to a landscape in a way which is difficult to understand today.<sup>89</sup> Though, like Alfred staring at the sun or contemplating God, we can never hope to stare at the Anglo-Saxon landscape long enough to understand it *swicene swilc hit wæs*, if we appreciate that for contemporaries the sense of meaning was present yet the real meaning could still be just beyond the edge of *their* perception, we may hope to begin to understand. Perhaps that is the best we can hope for.

### Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Catherine Clark, Courtney Konshuh, and Alex Langlands for their comments on this chapter; I am also grateful to Alex for preparing the maps.

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89 On high-status meat and royal status, see Lavelle, *Royal Estates*, p. 75. Alban Gautier, *Le Festin dans l'Angleterre anglo-saxonne (ve-xie siècle)* (Rennes, 2006), pp. 27–29, emphasises the quantity of food as a characteristic; at times when famine was never far away the reliable availability of food must have been important.

## Wessex and the Reign of Edmund II Ironside

*David McDermott*

Edmund Ironside, the eldest surviving son of Æthelred II ('the Unready'), is an often overlooked political figure. This results primarily from the brevity of his reign, which lasted approximately seven months, from 23 April to 30 November 1016. It could also be said that Edmund's legacy compares unfavourably with those of his forebears. Unlike other Anglo-Saxon Kings of England whose longer reigns and periods of uninterrupted peace gave them opportunities to legislate, renovate the currency or reform the Church, Edmund's brief rule was dominated by the need to quell initial domestic opposition to his rule, and prevent a determined foreign adversary seizing the throne. Edmund conducted his kingship under demanding circumstances and for his resolute, indefatigable and mostly successful resistance to Cnut, his career deserves to be discussed and his successes acknowledged.

Before discussing the importance of Wessex for Edmund Ironside, it is constructive, at this stage, to clarify what is meant by 'Wessex'. It is also fitting to use the definition of the region provided by Barbara Yorke. The core shires of Wessex may be reliably regarded as Devon, Somerset, Dorset, Wiltshire, Berkshire and Hampshire (including the Isle of Wight).<sup>1</sup> Following the victory of the West Saxon King Ecgbert at the battle of *Ellendun* (Wroughton, Wilts.) in 835, the borders of Wessex expanded, with the counties of Kent, Sussex, Surrey and Essex passing from Mercian to West Saxon control.<sup>2</sup>

Wessex was not the only region with which Edmund was associated, and nor was he the only king from the royal House of Wessex with connections to other regions. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* records that Æthelstan, who was probably raised in Mercia, was chosen by the Mercians to succeed Edward the Elder.<sup>3</sup> Edmund's grandfather, Edgar, had been fostered by Ealdorman Athelstan of East Anglia, and was accepted by the Mercians as king in their region

1 Barbara Yorke, *Wessex in the Early Middle Ages* (Leicester, 1995), p. 1.

2 ASC A E 835; trans. Michael Swanton (London, 2000), pp. 60–61; B.A.E. Yorke, "Wessex," in *The Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. Michael Lapidge, John Blair, Simon Keynes and Donald Scragg (Oxford, 1999), p. 470–71, at p. 471.

3 ASC C D 924; trans. Swanton, p. 105; also Sarah Foot, *Æthelstan: The First King of England* (New Haven, 2011), pp. 17–18 and 34–35.

prior to him succeeding his brother as king of all England.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, a connection between Edmund and Mercia can be found early in his career. Shortly after marrying the widow of the murdered Mercian thegn Sigferth, Edmund took possession of Sigferth's lands, and those of his murdered brother Morcar.<sup>5</sup> Mercia became Edmund's temporary power base, provided the ætheling with three armies, raised to oppose the depredations of Cnut.<sup>6</sup> When each of these armies failed to engage with the Danes, Edmund sought assistance from another region and entered into an alliance with his brother-in-law, Earl Uhtred of Northumbria. Together they raided territories controlled by Earl Eadric of Mercia, until Uhtred was compelled to abandon the joint-campaign to protect his earldom and Edmund returned to London.<sup>7</sup>

Upon his accession however, Edmund was more closely associated with Wessex than any other region, and relied on its resources to defend his kingship. The relationship between Edmund Ironside and Wessex was cyclical and reciprocal. It is most likely that Edmund was born and raised in the region and, given that he was buried in Glastonbury, it is probable that he died in Wessex. It is also notable that the rebellion of the ætheling Edmund began in Wessex. The influence Wessex exerted on the ætheling Edmund was reciprocated when he became king. Edmund restored English rule to areas of Wessex that had submitted to the Danes. The region also contributed to the posthumous reputation of Edmund, and in the division of the kingdom in 1016, Edmund received Wessex.

The precise location and date of Edmund's birth are unknown but there is strong circumstantial evidence to suggest that he was born and raised in Wessex. Edmund's name, and that of two older brothers and one younger brother, first appears in a diploma indicating the return to court, after a period of retirement at Wherwell, of dowager Queen Ælfthryth.<sup>8</sup> The implication of Ælfthryth's reappearance, and the first attestations of Æthelred's four oldest sons, suggests that they were raised in the nunnery which the queen had founded. Further evidence that Edmund was raised by his grandmother, in Wessex, is suggested

4 ASC B C 957; D s.a. 955, p. 113; also Cyril Hart, "Athelstan 'Half King' and his Family," in *The Danelaw* (London, 1992), pp. 569–604.

5 ASC E 1015; p. 146.

6 ASC D E 1015–16; pp. 146–47.

7 ASC D E 1016; pp. 147–49. Further details of Edmund's campaign with Uhtred can be found in WM, *GRA*, pp. 312–13; JW vol. 2, pp. 482–83.

8 S 876 (AD 993); for Ælfthryth's foundation of Wherwell see S 904 (AD 1002). Also Pauline Stafford, "Sons and Mothers: Family Politics in the Early Middle Ages," in *Medieval Women: Essays Dedicated and Presented to Professor Rosalind M.T. Hill* ed. Derek Baker, Studies in Church History: Subsidia 1 (Oxford, 1978), pp. 79–100, at p. 95.

by the will of Edmund's older brother Athelstan. The will of the senior ætheling asserts that he was "brought up" (*afedan*) by Ælfthryth.<sup>9</sup> Queen Ælfthryth possessed a number of estates throughout Wessex which, as has been observed by Pauline Stafford, suggests that Edmund's grandmother had sufficient resources to raise the children of Æthelred's first marriage, and that Edmund may have spent part of his childhood somewhere other than Wherwell.<sup>10</sup> Simon Keynes and Ann Williams have independently nominated *Æthelingadene* (Singleton, West Sussex), as a highly probable alternative setting for the æthelings' upbringing.<sup>11</sup> As indicated previously, Sussex was not one of the core shires of Wessex but had been absorbed by the region in the early 9th century. It is not known when Ælfthryth received this estate, but her possession of it is deduced from Æthelred granting sixty hides at *Æthelingadene*, which previously belonged to Queen Ælfthryth, to Abbess Heanflæd and Wherwell Abbey.<sup>12</sup>

*Æthelingadene* may have been significant for the young Edmund Ironside when it was attacked by a Viking raiding party in 1001.<sup>13</sup> It is not known if Edmund was present during the raid, or the reason for it, but Ryan Lavelle makes the persuasive suggestion that the assailants of *Æthelingadene* may have understood the political significance of assaulting an important royal estate.<sup>14</sup> It also possible that *Æthelingadene's* connection with the royal children, who

9 S 1503, trans. as "Old English will of the Atheling Athelstan, eldest son of King Ethelred (1014)," in *EHD* 1, pp. 593–96, at p. 596. The verb *afedan* can mean 'feed' and 'maintain' but in the context of upbringing, 'brought up' is perhaps the better interpretation; see J.R. Clark Hall, *A Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, 4th ed. (Toronto, 2008), p. 14; Stafford, "Sons and Mothers" pp. 92, 95; Ann. Williams, *Æthelred the Unready: The Ill-Counselled King* (London, 2003), p. 28; Ryan Lavelle, *Royal Estates in Anglo-Saxon Wessex: Land, Politics and Family Strategies*, BAR Brit. Ser., 439 (Oxford, 2007), p. 91.

10 Stafford, "Sons and Mothers" p. 92. For the diploma evidence of Ælfthryth's other estates, see S 725 (AD 964), S 742 (AD 966), and S 877 (AD 966). For lands held by Ælfthryth, see Lavelle, *Royal Estates*, pp. 11 and 84–89.

11 Simon Keynes, *The Diplomas of King Æthelred "The Unready," 978–1016: A Study in Their Use as Historical Evidence* (Cambridge, 1980), p. 187, n.117; Williams, *Æthelred the Unready*, pp. 28 and 162, n.55. For further discussion of *Æthelingadene*, see Ryan Lavelle, "Places I'll Remember? Reflections on Alfred, Asser and the Power of Memory in the West Saxon Landscape," above, pp. 323–25.

12 S 904.

13 ASC A 1001, p. 132.

14 R. Lavelle, *Aethelred II: King of the English 978–1016* (Stroud, 2002), p. 85. Williams suggests that Ælfthryth may have been alive in 1001 and therefore still owned *Æthelingadene*; *Æthelred the Unready*, p. 50, n. 42.

were a potentially powerful bargaining tool if taken hostage, may have increased the possibility of attack.<sup>15</sup>

Through his grandmother, Edmund was also connected to a powerful family in the West Country. His great grandfather, Ordgar, had been an influential and important figure in south-west England, and in one of King Edgar's diplomas Ordgar attests as the Ealdorman of Devon (*dux Domnoniæ*).<sup>16</sup> It has been plausibly suggested, by Stafford, that Ordgar's appointment and Ælfthryth's marriage to King Edgar, may have been part of a policy to attract allies in the South West of England.<sup>17</sup> Edmund's great uncle, Ordwulf, did not inherit the office of ealdorman but his occupancy of a position of responsibility is indicated by John of Worcester's description of Ordwulf as "first amongst the men of Devon" (*Domnanie primas*)<sup>18</sup> He may also, as suggested by Williams, have been reeve of the royal manor of Lipton in Devon.<sup>19</sup>

Edmund's connections to the nobility of the West of England are further demonstrated in his lease for Holcombe Rogus (formerly Dorset, now Devon), acquired from the community of Sherborne.<sup>20</sup> Diploma evidence indicates that several ecclesiastical and lay witnesses to the lease were connected to Edmund in other contexts. Bishop Lyfing of Wells attested diplomas with Edmund prior to the ætheling acquiring Holcombe,<sup>21</sup> and within the *termini ante* and *post quem* of the lease.<sup>22</sup> After he became Archbishop of Canterbury, Lyfing attested one other diploma with Edmund.<sup>23</sup>

The attestation of Bishop Æthelric of Sherborne is to be expected but Edmund's connection to the bishop was not confined to the lease. Bishop Æthelric attested all but three of the diplomas witnessed by Edmund and Bishop Lyfing, and witnessed one diploma with Edmund not attested by Bishop

15 Accounts of the capture of hostages (as opposed to hostages given as guarantees) are rare in Anglo-Saxon England: in an attack on Brycheiniog, Æthelflæd is reported to have taken the Welsh king's wife, amongst others, as hostage, perhaps in retaliation for the killing of Abbot Ecgberht: ASC C 916; p. 100; see also the seizure by Vikings of Archbishop Ælfheah of Canterbury (for ransom?) in ASC CDE 1011.

16 S 741 (AD 966).

17 Pauline Stafford, *Unification and Conquest: A Political and Social History of England in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries* (London, 1989), pp. 52–53.

18 JW vol. 2, p. 447.

19 Williams, *Æthelred the Unready*, p. 29.

20 S 1422 (AD 1007×1014). *The Charters of Sherborne*, ed. M.A. O'Donovan, Anglo-Saxon Charters 3 (Oxford, 1988), no. 14.

21 S 989–901 (AD 1001–112); S 904 (AD 1002); S 906 (AD 1004) and S 910–12 (AD 1005).

22 S 915 (AD 1007); S 920–23 (AD 1008–1011); S 929 (AD 1012); S 931 (AD 1013) and S 933 (AD 1014).

23 S 934 (AD 1015).

Lyfing.<sup>24</sup> Edmund probably had considerably less contact with Bishop Æthelsige of Cornwall, who also witnessed the Holcombe lease. Edmund and Æthelsige are known to have attested only two diplomas together.<sup>25</sup> This suggests strongly that Æthelsige's association with Edmund was significantly weaker than that of Bishop Lyfing, who witnessed sixteen diplomas with the ætheling, and Bishop Æthelric, who witnessed fourteen.

The most prestigious member of the Wessex nobility to attest Edmund's lease was arguably Æthelmær, Ealdorman of the Western provinces. There is evidence to suggest that Edmund and Æthelmær may have known each other prior to the lease, as an Æthelmær *minister* (thegn) witnessed several diplomas with Edmund between 993–1005.<sup>26</sup> Æthelred's diplomas also indicate Edmund was associated with another West Country thegn, also called Æthelmær. This second Æthelmær witnessed diplomas with Edmund before and after the ætheling acquired Holcombe.<sup>27</sup> The identically named thegns also attested diplomas with Bishops Lyfing and Æthelric, and some of those diplomas concern estates in the west of England.<sup>28</sup>

The remaining West Country noble who may have known Edmund independently of the lease is the enigmatically named Dorset thegn Brihtric the Red (*reada*). It is possible that the same Brihtric, without his soubriquet, witnessed diplomas with Edmund.<sup>29</sup> Approximately half of these diplomas refer to estates in the west of England, suggesting that the Brihtric who witnessed at Holcombe is the same man who attested the other diplomas with Edmund.<sup>30</sup> Also mentioned in the Holcombe lease are several West Country witnesses for whom there are no other references in the historical record: Abbot Leofsunu of Cerne; Æthelfand, the son of Æthelmær, Ealdorman of the Western Provinces; Ælfgeat, son of Hength; and Siward.

The attestation of Abbot Leofsunu, the senior ecclesiastic in Dorset, might be expected; and Æthelfand, the son of the most senior noble in the region, may have accompanied his father to witness the lease.<sup>31</sup> The reference in the lease to "all the foremost thegns of Dorset" (*ealle þa ildostan ðægnas on Dorsæton*) is

24 S 900–01; S 904; S 906; S 910–12; S 915; S 920–24 and S 933.

25 S 922 and S 924.

26 S 876; S 878 (AD 996); S 891 (AD 997); S 893 (AD 998); S 898–901; S 904; S 906 and S 910.

27 S 878; S 893; S 901; S 906; S 910–12; S 916 (AD 1007) and S 921–22.

28 The first Æthelmær attested the granting of West Country estates in S 899 and S 910; the second Æthelmær attested the granting of West Country estates in S 910 and 921.

29 S 891; S 901; S 904; S 910–12 and S 921.

30 The West Country estates appear in S 904; S 910 and S 921.

31 The otherwise unknown Æthelfand may be a scribal error for Æthelmær's son Æthelward: Williams, *Æthelred the Unready*, p. 114 and n. 23.

immediately preceded by the names Ælfgeat and Siward. They were perhaps indigenous Wessex aristocracy and the appearance of their names may also indicate they had seniority amongst the thegns.

### Rebellion

Wessex assumed greater significance for Edmund when it witnessed his initial acts of rebellion. The catalyst for Edmund's revolt appears to have been the execution of Edmund's long-standing associates, the Mercian thegns Sigferth and Morcar. Edmund's response to the thegns' deaths, the confiscation of their possessions and the sequestration of Sigferth's widow at Malmesbury was decisive, dramatic and criminal. Edmund released the widow and married her contrary to Æthelred's will.<sup>32</sup>

The king's motives for transferring the widow from Mercia to Wessex are not revealed in the laconic account of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* but political considerations may have informed Æthelred's thinking. The Chronicle describes Sigferth and Morcar as amongst the "foremost thegns" (*yldestan þægenas*) of their region, suggesting that they and their family exercised considerable influence and commanded significant support.<sup>33</sup> Faced with the possibility of Sigferth's widow becoming the focus for protest against the thegns' executions, Æthelred may have removed the widow to Wessex where she would effectively be a hostage for the good behaviour of her family.

Æthelred's reason for choosing Malmesbury is also unknown, but several factors may have made it an attractive location in Wessex to secure the lady. Malmesbury is close to the Fosse Way, along which Sigferth's widow might have been taken from the Midlands to Wessex. The town was also a *burh*, providing those responsible for safeguarding the lady with a defensible position to resist attempts to remove her. References in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* to Malmesbury as the town of Ealdhelm, the first abbot of Malmesbury, might indicate, as has been suggested by Susan Kelly, that the lady may have been placed in the minster or a royal residence in the town.<sup>34</sup>

32 ASC E 1015. The Chronicle does not record the reasons for the thegns' deaths but possible explanations can be found in: Stafford, "The Reign of Æthelred II," pp. 35–37; *Unification and Conquest*, p. 68; Charles Insley, "Politics, Conflict and Kinship in Eleventh Century Mercia," *Midland History* 25 (2000), 28–42., at pp. 31 and 34–35.

33 ASC E, p. 146.

34 ASC CE 1015; S.E. Kelly, *Charters of Malmesbury Abbey*, Anglo-Saxon Charters II (Oxford, 2005), p. 26.

In releasing Sigeferth's widow from her confinement, Edmund frustrated Æthelred's intention that she be sequestered. The legality of Edmund defying his father is a moot point, but removing the widow was a criminal act. Sigeferth's widow was technically under Æthelred's protection, and by taking her Edmund was in breach of the law.<sup>35</sup> Edmund's marriage to the widow was also unlawful.<sup>36</sup> The same law code that afforded protection to widows also forbade a woman to remarry within a year of her husband's death.<sup>37</sup> When Edmund married Sigeferth's widow, the stipulated time had not elapsed, making his union illicit.<sup>38</sup>

### Wessex and the Legitimation of Power

Following his rebellion in Wessex, Edmund became more closely involved with other regions of the country. He cultivated his relationships in Mercia and fought a campaign in the region with Uhtred of Northumbria. With the death of Æthelred on 23 April, Edmund returned his attention to Wessex. After his election in London, Edmund went into Wessex where the population ostensibly submitted to him.<sup>39</sup> Edmund's entry into the region, as described in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, is typically laconic but potentially deceptive. As Williams has suggested, the Old English 'gerad', used to describe how Edmund entered Wessex, may derive from the verb 'ridan', meaning 'to seize' or 'to occupy'. If correct, Edmund may have exercised force, implying that at least some parts of the region opposed his rule.<sup>40</sup>

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- 35 See Æthelred's law code *V Æthelred*, in A.J. Robertson, ed., *The Laws of the Kings of England From Edmund to Henry I* (Cambridge, 1925), pp. 85; 102. Wealthy widows in Anglo-Saxon England were sometimes the target of fortune hunters; T.J. Rivers, "The Legal Status of Widows in Late Anglo-Saxon England," *Medievalia et Humanistica* 24 (1997), 1–16, at p. 1; Christine Fell, *Women in Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge, 1984), p. 61; Sarah Foot, *Veiled Women*, 1: *The Disappearance of Nuns from Anglo-Saxon England* (Aldershot, 2000), p. 121.
- 36 Æthelred's reason for objecting to the marriage have been speculated upon by Stafford, "Sons and Mothers," p. 95 and n. 59; N.J. Higham, *The Death of Anglo-Saxon England* (Stroud, 1997), p. 62.
- 37 *V Æthelred*, in Robertson, *Laws*, p. 85.
- 38 None of Æthelred's extant law codes specify the punishment for a widow who re-married within the prescribed period but Cnut, perhaps in response to Edmund's marriage, introduced severe sanctions for the offence; see *II Cnut*, in Robertson, *Laws*, p. 211.
- 39 ASC, D E F 1016; pp. 148–49.
- 40 Williams makes a comparison with the modern terms 'override' and 'ride roughshod over'; *Æthelred the Unready*, pp. 142–43 and p. 226 n. 63. Lavelle makes a compelling case that the verb "geridan," used in the ASC to describe Alfred's control of Wessex, might indicate the chronicler's support for Alfred's kingship; "Geographies of Power in the Anglo-Saxon

John of Worcester's unique 12th-century account of Edmund's reception in Wessex may also obscure the truth and exaggerate his popularity in the region. Edmund is recorded as being received with great joy, with many hastily submitting to him voluntarily. This may be a literary trope, intended to convey the legitimacy of Edmund's accession, but another passage from this Anglo-Norman narrative makes the reliability of Edmund's alleged rapturous welcome questionable. John of Worcester also records that the bishops, abbots, ealdormen and all the nobles of England elected Cnut to be their lord and king at Southampton.<sup>41</sup>

The alleged double-election, as Williams suggests, may be a misplaced repetition of the submission made to Cnut after Edmund's death. There may however be some factual basis for John of Worcester's account. The submission of the senior clergy and nobility to Cnut at Southampton, it is argued, would explain Edmund's probable subjugation of Wessex.<sup>42</sup> Had Cnut been elected, Edmund's arrival in Wessex may not have been received with unqualified enthusiasm. It is more probable, suggests Jeffrey James, that the nobility of the region renounced their pledges to Cnut and accepted Edmund's lordship, under penalty of death.<sup>43</sup> The possibility that parts of Wessex had capitulated to Cnut, which Edmund then had to re-take, may also receive some support from William of Malmesbury's reference to Cnut taking possession of cities and towns while the ætheling Edmund was raising armies against him.<sup>44</sup>

Soon after securing the submission of Wessex, according to the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, Edmund fought the first of his battles in the region, at Penselwood in Dorset.<sup>45</sup> The proximity of Penselwood to the boundaries of Dorset, Somerset and Wiltshire may indicate, as suggested by Edward Freeman, that Edmund recruited his army from those shires.<sup>46</sup> In addition to Penselwood occupying a ridge of high ground next to forest, other factors may have contributed to it being selected as a battle site. John Baker and Stuart Brookes, in the course of

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Chronicle: The Royal Estates of Anglo-Saxon Wessex," in *Reading the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: Language, Literature, History*, ed. Alice Jorgensen (Turnhout, 2010), pp. 187–219, at p. 207. This argument can be applied to Edmund to suggest the chronicler's endorsement of Edmund's rule.

41 JW vol. 2, pp. 484–85.

42 Williams, *Æthelred the Unready*, p. 140.

43 Jeffrey James, *An Onslaught of Spears: The Danish Conquest of England* (Stroud, 2013), p. 169.

44 WM, *GRA*, pp. 312–13.

45 *ASC*, D E 1016; p. 149.

46 E.A. Freeman, *History of the Norman Conquest of England, its Causes and its Results*, 6 vols (Oxford, 1862–76), 1:421–22.

their continuing research into Anglo-Saxon assembly sites, have identified a small group of Anglo-Saxon meeting-places that are highly distinguishable by their domination of the landscape.

One such feature, termed a 'hanging promontory', lies just one kilometre to the south-east of Penselwood.<sup>47</sup> Adjacent to the county boundaries of Dorset and Somerset, Moot Hill Piece is described as a possible 'supraregional' assembly site and may have provided Edmund with a mustering point for his army. Alternatively, Edmund's army may have mustered one kilometre to the north-east of Penselwood at Coombe Street, one of the possible locations of Egbert's Stone where King Alfred assembled the armies of Somerset, Wiltshire and Hampshire west of Southampton Water, prior to defeating the Danes at the Battle of Edington.<sup>48</sup>

It is also conceivable that Edmund stayed at the nearby royal estate at Gillingham, using its resources to entertain and feed his closest followers, in much the same way as did Alfred during the campaign that culminated at Edington.<sup>49</sup> The importance of royal estates, as has been discussed by Lavelle, were essential to the maintenance of kingship and was one of the means by which the king expressed his legitimacy to rule.<sup>50</sup> In his possible use of assembly sites and royal estates, Edmund Ironside may have exploited the landscape of Wessex to assert his kingship.

The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* is unusually terse in its account of Penselwood, simply recording that Edmund fought there. Written more than one hundred years after the events they purport to describe, the Anglo-Norman narratives are virtually identical in making Edmund the victor.<sup>51</sup> Their reasons for doing so may be explained by Stafford's perceptive summary of the writing of history in 12th-century England. Part of the Anglo-Norman historians' purpose, it is argued, was to commemorate the Anglo-Saxon past.<sup>52</sup> When their sources were quiescent on the outcome of Penselwood, it is possible that the 12th-century apologists for pre-Norman England attributed a victory to Edmund.

47 John Baker and Stuart Brookes, "Monumentalising the Landscape: A Special Class of Anglo-Saxon Assembly Sites," *AntJ* 94 (2013), 1–16, at pp. 3–5.

48 *ASC*, MS. A, p. 76; John Baker and Stuart Brookes, "Identifying Outdoor Assembly Sites in Early Medieval England," *Journal of Field Archaeology* 40:1 (2015), 3–21, at p. 14.

49 Æthelweard, *Chronicle*, ed. A. Campbell (London, 1962), p. 42; Lavelle, *Alfred's Wars*, pp. 110 and 180.

50 Ryan Lavelle, "The Farm of One Night and the Organisation of Royal Estates in Late Anglo-Saxon Wessex," *HSJ* 14 (2005 for 2003), 53–82; "Geographies of Power," p. 206.

51 *WM*, *GRA*, pp. 314–15; *JW* vol. 2, pp. 486–87; *HH*, pp. 356–57.

52 Stafford, *Unification and Conquest*, p. 20.

Edmund and Cnut remained in Wessex, for the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* records that they next fought at Sherston (Wilts.). The proximity of Sherston to the borders of modern day Wiltshire, Somerset and Gloucestershire, in what may be considered the western marches of Wessex, has led Freeman and Williams to suggest, independently, that the more easterly parts of the region may have been under Danish control.<sup>53</sup> Sherston's shared county borders may also indicate it was close to a mustering point. The logistical advantage of a serviceable road, provided by the neighbouring Fosse Way, may also have commended Sherston to Edmund and Cnut as the location for their next encounter.

The probability that Wessex was divided in supporting Edmund in Wessex is indicated by John of Worcester. In an apparent address delivered by Eadric to Edmund's army, the ealdorman exhorted the men of Dorset, Devon and Wiltshire to flee the battlefield.<sup>54</sup> The attribution of the address may be fiction but the content of the exhortation, suggests Williams, could indicate that not only eastern but central Wessex were in the possession of the Danes.<sup>55</sup> In addition to the counties named by John of Worcester, Freeman argued that Edmund also recruited in Somerset. Lying between Wiltshire and Devon, it is plausible that Somerset contributed to the English army at Sherston.<sup>56</sup>

The presence of other English defectors amongst the Danish ranks at Sherston further illustrates the factionalism of Wessex. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* identifies a certain Ælfmær Darling,<sup>57</sup> and John of Worcester refers to the rebel Ælfgar, son of Meaw.<sup>58</sup> Ælfmær Darling is unknown outside the context of Sherston but in the opinion of Timothy Bolton, the inclusion of Ælfgar is significant. Although he was a Gloucestershire magnate, Ælfgar also held several estates in Dorset and Devon.<sup>59</sup> If Ælfgar recruited from these shires it would further illustrate the political fracturing of Wessex, and the difficulty Edmund had asserting his authority in the region.

The Danish army was also augmented, according to John of Worcester, by the men of Hampshire and Wiltshire.<sup>60</sup> It may be expected that Hampshire,

53 Freeman, *History of the Norman Conquest*, 1:423; Williams, *Æthelred the Unready*, p. 143.

54 JW vol. 2, pp. 488–89.

55 Williams, *Æthelred the Unready*, p. 143.

56 Freeman, *History of the Norman Conquest*, 1:423.

57 ASC D E 1016; pp. 150–51.

58 JW vol. 2, pp. 486–87.

59 Timothy Bolton, *The Empire of Cnut the Great: Conquest and the Consolidation of Power in Northern Europe in the Early Eleventh Century* (Leiden, 2009), pp. 38–39.

60 JW vol. 2, pp. 486–87.

which, according to John of Worcester, hosted the alleged submission to Cnut, would support the Danes. The presence of the men of Wiltshire, who also supported Edmund, indicates the county was divided in its allegiance. The Anglo-Norman accounts of English opposition to Edmund, if reliable, demonstrate that despite the claims of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* that all of Wessex submitted to Edmund there was, as observed by Williams, resistance to Edmund's rule.<sup>61</sup> English collaboration, as recorded in the Anglo-Norman narratives, does not necessarily indicate widespread rejection of Edmund. Antipathy to Edmund, Bolton suggests, appears to have been confined to southern Mercia and Wessex, and aversion to him may have been restricted to a small group with particular grievances.<sup>62</sup>

Edmund's second battle in Wessex seems to have ended inconclusively. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* refers to the comparable loss of life on both sides, and the apparent consensus of the combatants to cease hostilities and separate.<sup>63</sup> Similarly, William of Malmesbury does not award a clear victory to either side but makes the tantalising, and taciturn, remark that the English had hope of victory.<sup>64</sup> The unexplained expectation of the English, according to William, was sufficiently potent for the rebellious West Saxons to acknowledge Edmund as their rightful lord.<sup>65</sup> This account is unique but repeated references to Edmund raising further armies in Wessex suggest that after Sherston his position in Wessex had become more secure.<sup>66</sup>

A moral victory for Edmund at Sherston may be inferred from John of Worcester's assertion that during the night Cnut ordered his men to leave camp silently.<sup>67</sup> The alleged purpose of the nocturnal departure was to renew the siege of London, but Cnut's insistence on stealth was seized upon by Freeman to give the 'practical advantage' to the English.<sup>68</sup> To have left Edmund in possession of the battlefield, the traditional indication of success in war, may be interpreted as a Pyrrhic victory for the English. In practical terms, Edmund could exert his authority throughout Wessex and consequently recruit successive armies from a much wider area. The campaign in Wessex proved to be

61 Williams, *Æthelred the Unready*, p. 143.

62 Bolton, *The Empire of Cnut*, p. 38.

63 ASC DE 1016; pp. 150–51.

64 WM, *GRA*, pp. 314–15.

65 WM, *GRA*, pp. 314–15.

66 The *Encomium Emmæ Reginae*, ed. and trans. Alistair Campbell, Camden 3rd Ser. 72 (London, 1949), p. 21, records a Danish victory at Sherston but the panegyric nature of the narrative and significant factual errors, suggest its account of the battle is unreliable.

67 JW vol. 2, pp. 488–89.

68 Freeman, *History of the Norman Conquest*, 1:425.

pivotal for Edmund's kingship providing him, according to Williams, a "platform" which facilitated his continued resistance to Cnut.<sup>69</sup>

### A Broader Perspective

Edmund's remaining battles were fought outside Wessex but the region continued to have significance for him. The army gathered to follow Cnut and relieve his siege of London, according to John of Worcester, was assembled in Wessex.<sup>70</sup> This is consistent with Edmund's last known location but the puzzling reference by another Anglo-Norman chronicler, Henry of Huntingdon, to Edmund relieving the siege with a team of "chosen warriors" requires scrutiny.<sup>71</sup> Henry does not disclose the origin of this mysterious group but an answer may be found in the closely contemporary account of Thietmar of Merseburg.

The army that relieved Cnut's second siege of London, according to Thietmar, contained a contingent of "Britons" (*Britannis*).<sup>72</sup> A similar reference to Danish swords striking 'British ring-shirts' (*brezkum brynjum*) at the siege of London is also contained in the *Liðsmannaflokkr*, which Russell Poole has convincingly argued was composed circa 1017 by Cnut's following.<sup>73</sup> Collectively, these references may indicate that Edmund had recruited in the most westerly reaches of Wessex where the population was more likely to be of Welsh, that is, British, descent.

Evidence that connects Edmund to the more Celtic parts of Wessex may also be found in a diploma of Cnut, confirming a grant made by Edmund in exchange for land he had held in Cornwall.<sup>74</sup> An entry in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* referring to Cornwall as 'West Wales' indicates that in the early 9th century it had remained sufficiently Celtic to be considered non-English, but following King Egberht's victory at Hingston Down, Cornwall nominally came under English rule.<sup>75</sup> Henry of Huntingdon's enigmatic allusion to select warriors

69 Williams, *Æthelred the Unready*, p. 143.

70 JW vol. 2, pp. 488–89.

71 HH, pp. 356–57.

72 Thietmar of Merseburg, *Thietmari Merseburgensis Episcopi Chronicon*, ed. R. Holtzmann, MGH *Scriptores rerum Germanicarum, nova ser.* 9 (Berlin, 1935), chapter 41, p. 449.

73 Russell Poole, "Skaldic Verse and Anglo-Saxon History: Some Aspects of the Period 1009–1016," *Speculum* 62:2 (1987), 265–98, at pp. 282–84 and 286.

74 S 951 (AD 1018).

75 ASC A 828 [*recte* 830]; p. 62 and n.9. Also, O.J. Padel, "Cornwall," in *Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 122–23; T.M. Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons 350–1064* (Oxford, 2013), pp. 431; 494; 512–13.

may therefore refer to a substantially 'West Welsh' section of Edmund's army that distinguished itself at London.

The reliance Edmund placed upon Wessex to supply him with fighting men is further demonstrated at the conclusion of the Battle of Brentford, fought two days after the expulsion of the Danes from London. Whether it was the result of men drowning in the Thames, as recorded in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, or losing men in the fighting as argued, independently, by Frank Stenton and Russell Poole, the *Chronicle* records that Edmund returned to Wessex and assembled another army.<sup>76</sup> Upon his return, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* describes Edmund as bringing an army gathered from 'the entire English nation'. This is probably an exaggeration but may indicate that Edmund augmented his force by recruiting from areas close to Wessex.<sup>77</sup>

The numerically impressive force encountered the Danes in Kent where, according to the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, they fled to the Isle of Sheppey.<sup>78</sup> The *Chronicle* is silent concerning Edmund's whereabouts until *Assandun*, but John of Worcester reports that after he had dispersed the Danes in Kent, Edmund returned to Wessex.<sup>79</sup> This account is uncorroborated but Edmund's presence in Wessex would explain the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* recording that Edmund was initially unaware of Cnut raiding in Mercia. Edmund is said to have raised another army drawn from 'the entire English nation'<sup>80</sup> to pursue Cnut but as before, this phrase should not be read literally but indicates that support for Edmund's extended beyond Wessex.

Support for the implication that Edmund had extended his kingship to other regions of the country, can be inferred by the names of the English known to have died at *Assandun*. The majority were men of Mercia: Ealdorman Godwine of Lindsey; Ulfcytel of East Anglia; Æthelweard, son of Ealdorman Æthelwine of East Anglia, and Abbot Wulfsig of Ramsey. The location of *Assandun* in Essex may explain the apparent dominance of Mercians but the death-roll in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* suggests that Wessex incurred the second highest

76 ASC D E 1016; pp. 150–51; Frank Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 3rd ed. (Oxford, 1971), p. 39; Poole, "Skaldic Verse," p. 275.

77 ASC D E 1016; p. 150–51. One should not, as Richard Abels advises, read the *Chronicle* too literally: the reference to the "entire English nation" probably refers only to those who had a military obligation to attend the summons; *Lordship and Military Obligation in Anglo-Saxon England* (London, 1988), p. 177.

78 ASC D E 1016; pp. 150–51.

79 JW vol. 2, pp. 491–92.

80 ASC D E 1016; p. 151.

incidence of deaths. Amongst the identified Wessex dead were Ealdorman Ælfric of Hampshire and Bishop Eadnoth of Dorchester.<sup>81</sup>

Edmund and Cnut conducted peace negotiations following *Assandun* and arguably the most significant aspect of the treaty that concluded the war was the division of the country. Wessex, according to the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, was given to Edmund and Cnut received 'the north part'.<sup>82</sup> In partitioning the country, as observed by Timothy Reuter, Edmund and Cnut reopened the political fracture lines that had threatened English unification in the succession crises of 924–25 between Æthelstan and Ælfweard, and that of 955–57 between Eadwig and Edmund's grandfather, Edgar.<sup>83</sup>

### Death and Burial in Wessex

The accord that was reached between Edmund and Cnut lasted approximately one month, curtailed by Edmund dying prematurely on 30 November. His burial in Wessex, at Glastonbury, may have been influenced by the abbey containing the tomb of his grandfather King Edgar, but Edmund may already have had an attachment to the abbey.<sup>84</sup> On his death-bed, according to William of Malmesbury, Edmund granted the estate of Sturminster Newton (Dorset) and his body to Glastonbury.<sup>85</sup> While the nature of his relationship with the abbey may have been lost in the succeeding centuries, Edmund's burial at, and donations to Glastonbury, indicate that the community had some significance for him and provide further evidence of his landholdings in Wessex.

The location of Edmund's death is not disclosed by the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* but John of Worcester records that Edmund died in London, and Henry of Huntingdon has him dying in Oxford.<sup>86</sup> These 12th-century accounts that Edmund died outside Wessex should be regarded as unreliable. The improbability of Edmund dying in London was persuasively argued by Laurence Larson who, early in the 20th century, cited the city's occupation by the Danes as mitigating against Edmund's presence. Similarly, Larson reasoned it unlikely

81 ASC D E F 1016; pp. 152–53.

82 ASC D, p. 152.

83 ASC D, pp. 105 and 113; Timothy Reuter, "The Making of England and Germany," in *Medieval Europeans: Studies in Ethnic Identity and National Perspectives in Medieval Europe*, ed. Alfred P. Smyth (London, 1998), pp. 53–70, at p. 56.

84 ASC, MSS. D and E, pp. 152–53.

85 *The Early History of Glastonbury: An Edition, Translation and Study of William of Malmesbury's 'De Antiquitate Glastonie Ecclesie'*, ed. John Scott (Woodbridge, 1981), pp. 132–33.

86 JW vol. 2, pp. 492–93; HH, pp. 360–61.

that Edmund would visit Oxford, where the treacherous Eadric had a residence.<sup>87</sup> It is more credible that Edmund remained in the region allocated to him by the treaty, and he died in Wessex. One might also reasonably speculate that he died at a royal estate, possibly close to Glastonbury.<sup>88</sup>

Despite the closely contemporary account of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* of Edmund's burial at Glastonbury it is possible, according to a compelling theory by Martin Biddle and Birthe Kjølbye-Biddle, that some of Edmund's remains were translated to Winchester cathedral where they now reside. A late 12th-century inscribed marble slab, located on the north side of the south screen of the presbytery, reads: 'HIC: IACET: EDMUNDUS: REX: EPELDREDI: REGIS: FILIUS' (Here lies King Edmund, son of King Æthelred). Edmund's grave-slab at Winchester, suggest Biddle and Kjølbye-Biddle, is either a fabrication or evidence of Edmund's unrecorded re-burial.<sup>89</sup>

Edmund's translation to Winchester can be explained by the credible suggestion that Cnut intended the Old Minster to house the remains of his family. Edmund became Cnut's posthumous stepson through the latter's marriage to Emma, and thereby eligible for burial at Winchester. The date of Edmund's re-interment is unknown but, according to Biddle, it was most probably 1031 when Cnut visited Glastonbury. The decorated cloak, which William of Malmesbury has Cnut place on Edmund's tomb, might therefore have been in exchange for removing at least some of Edmund's remains, as might Cnut's recognition of Glastonbury's privileges.<sup>90</sup>

Edmund's translation is also suggested by the *West Saxon Genealogical Regnal List*, contained in the *Liber Vitae* of the New Minster and Hyde Abbey, Winchester. The list, composed c.1031, according to Simon Keynes, originally ended with the name of Æthelred but in the 12th-century the kings from Edmund to Stephen were added.<sup>91</sup> The addition of Edmund's name may indicate that after 1031, the date of Cnut's visit to Glastonbury, Edmund was translated to Winchester.

87 Laurence M. Larson, *Canute the Great 995 (circ)—1035 And the Rise of Danish Imperialism During the Viking Age* (New York and London, 1912), pp. 99–100.

88 For the identification and discussion of royal estates in Wessex, see Lavelle, *Royal Estates*.

89 Martin Biddle and Birthe Kjølbye-Biddle, "Danish Royal Burials in Winchester: Cnut and his Family" in *Danes in Wessex: The Scandinavian Impact on Southern England, c.800-c.1100*, ed. Ryan Lavelle and Simon Roffey (Oxford, 2016), pp. 212–49, at p. 224.

90 WM, *GRA*, pp. 330–31; Biddle and Kjølbye-Biddle, "Danish Royal Burials," p. 226.

91 *The Liber Vitae of the New Minster and Hyde Abbey Winchester*, ed. Simon Keynes, *Early English Manuscripts in Facsimile 26* (Copenhagen, 1996), p. 83; fol. 14r.

Edmund's tomb, assuming it is in Winchester, was moved from the Old Minster into the new Norman cathedral. In 1525 the contents of the majority of royal tombs, including Edmund's, were placed in ten wooden chests. Six of these boxes were destroyed in 1642 and their scattered contents placed in two new chests.<sup>92</sup> When Edmund's mortuary box was inspected in 1797, it was found to contain the bones of several skeletons, and assigning them to a particular individual was impossible.<sup>93</sup> However, in 2015 the Dean and Chapter of Winchester announced that forensic investigation of Edmund's ossuary will be conducted by the University of Bristol. At the time of writing, it may be confirmed in the next few years that the final resting place of Edmund Ironside is indeed Wessex.

The majority of the significant events in Edmund Ironside's life occurred in Wessex, he and the region influencing one another. Edmund spent his formative years in Wessex and it provided him the means and opportunity to rebel. Upon assuming the throne, Edmund asserted his kingship in Wessex and re-established English rule in the region. Wessex supplied Edmund with the resources to defend others areas of his kingdom and promote his reputation as a dynamic warrior king. Edmund received Wessex in the division of the country with Cnut, and it is where he died. Wessex was crucial to Edmund's career and kingship, his relationship with the region coming to a cyclical conclusion when it received his mortal remains, not once but twice.

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92 For the several translations of Edmund's Winchester tomb, see Biddle and Kjølbye-Biddle, "Danish Royal Burials," pp. 220, Fig.12.6; 226–27; 230–32.

93 J. Milner, *The History, Civil and Ecclesiastical, & Survey of the Antiquities of Winchester*, 2 vols (Winchester, 1809), 2:51.



**PART 3**

*Rulers and Religious Affiliations*





# Alcuin's Letters Sent from Francia to Anglo-Saxon and Frankish Women Religious

*Jinty Nelson*

In 2003, Barbara Yorke's *Nunneries and the Anglo-Saxon Royal Houses* offered radically new ways of thinking about religious women in the early medieval world. One was the realization that “kings could claim lordship over nunneries by virtue of their having been founded by members of the royal house.” Another was that nunneries “were not so much passive places ... as playing a proactive role...” A third was that “an abbess had a position which paralleled that of a male equivalent in the church ... Headship of a royal monastery was ... a gendered role. It was one that only royal women could perform from the royal kin-group.”<sup>1</sup> Over the past fifteen years, abbesses have been the subject of much new thinking, not least from Barbara herself. In this paper, which I offer in her honour, and mindful of a venerable tradition of women's sending of *munuscula*, I begin by taking a comparative approach, juxtaposing some evidence from Continental Europe, especially Francia, to evidence from Anglo-Saxon England, in quite different genres of the same period. The genres in question are, first, prayer-texts; second, capitularies, that is, administrative regulations and/or admonitory texts issued by early Carolingian rulers; and third, letters. On this basis, I shall investigate the women religious to whom Alcuin wrote.

## The Abbess in the Prayer-text

Here is an *Oratio quando abbas vel abbatissa ordinatur* (prayer when an abbot or an abbess is ordained), in an 8th-century Frankish Sacramentary:<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Barbara Yorke, *Nunneries and the Anglo-Saxon Royal Houses* (London, 2003), pp. 52, 161, 188.

<sup>2</sup> *Sacramentaire de Gellone*, ed. A. Dumas, CCSL 159 (Turnhout, 1981), nos. 2578, 2579, pp. 399–401. Translation here courtesy of Carey Fleiner. The key words here are *regimen animarum eligimus, electione, constituitur, digna, electa*: like the abbot, the abbess is chosen and empowered to rule.

Concede quaesumus omnipotens deus ut famulam tuam N. quem ad regimen animarum eligimus gratiae tuae dona prosequantur et ut te largiente cum ipsa nostra electione placeamus.

Omnipotens sempiterne deus divinum tuae benedictionis spiritum famulae tuae N. nobis propitiatus infunde ut quae per manus nostrae impositionem hodie abbatissae constituitur sanctificatione tua digna a te electa permaneat.

Grant it, we seek, omnipotent God, that your servant N., whom we have chosen for the guidance of souls (that they are endowed with the gifts of your grace), and that we greatly please you with this woman, our selection.

Almighty ever-eternal God, in our favour, fill your servant N. with the divine spirit of your blessing so that she, through the laying of our hands today, the woman, chosen by you, appointed to the [office of] abbess, will remain worthy, having been blessed by you.

Late in the 9th century, this was borrowed from the prayer following the anointing in the first, and thereafter much-copied, fully-fledged rite for the ordaining of a queen:

Omnipotens sempiterne Deus, divinam tuae benedictionis spiritum super hanc famulam tuam nostra oratione propitiatus infunde, ut quae per manus nostrae impositionem hodie regina instituitur, sanctificatione tua digna et electa permaneat...<sup>3</sup>

### Abbesses in Capitularies

Seven extracts from capitularies issued by King Pippin and his son, King Charles (Charlemagne) present various approaches to the subject of abbesses.

Pippin I, Council of Ver (11 July 755):

Domnus rex dicit quod vellit, ut, quando aliquas de ipse abbatissas ipse domnus rex ad se iusserit venire, semel in anno et per consensus episcopi

3 Ordo XIII (Erdmann Ordo), in Richard Jackson, ed., *Ordines Coronationis Franciae. Texts and Ordines for the Coronation of Frankish and French Kings and Queens in the Middle Ages*, 2 vols (Philadelphia PA, 1995–2000), 1:151. See further Janet L. Nelson, "Early Medieval Rites of Queen-making and the Shaping of Medieval Queenship," in *Queens and Queenship in Medieval Europe*, ed. Anne Duggan (Woodbridge, 1997), pp. 301–315 [repr. in Nelson, *Rulers and Ruling Families in Early Medieval Europe* (Aldershot, 1999), xv], at pp. 309–10, 314.

in cuius parrochia est, ut tunc ad eum aliquas veniant, et sua iussione, si necessitas fuerit, et aliubi omnino debeat nec per villas nec per alia loca demorare, nisi tantum cum celerius potuerit ad ambulandum et ad reverendum. Et si iusserit rex venire, veniat.

The lord king says that it is his will that when the lord king himself orders any of those abbesses to come to him, once a year and with the consent of the bishop of the diocese they are in, they must come immediately, and on his command, if necessity arises, and must absolutely not stay at estates or other places, unless they can travel [to the king] and back more quickly that way. And if the king says, "Come!," she must come.<sup>4</sup>

Pippin, Council of Ver, chapter 20:

[To the bishops], Illa monasteria ubi regulariter monachi vel monachas vixerunt, ut hoc quod eis de illas res demittebatis unde vivere potuissent, si regales erant, ad domnum regem fecissent rationes abba vel abbatissa.

About those monasteries where monks or nuns live in a Rule-based way [or, according to a Rule], that you [bishops] leave them with enough properties to live on, and if these were royal [monasteries], the abbot or abbess is to send in their accounts for them to the lord king.<sup>5</sup>

Charlemagne, *Admonitio generalis*, Aachen (23 March, 789):

Auditum est aliquas abbatissas contra morem sanctae Dei ecclesiae benedictionis cum manus impositione et signaculo sanctae crucis super capita virorum dare, necnon et velare virgines cum benedictione sacerdotali. Quod omnino vobis [episcopis et abbatibus], sanctissimi patres, in vestris parrochiis interdicendum esse scitote.

It has been heard that some abbesses, against the custom of the holy Church of God, give blessings on the heads of men with laying on of the hand and with the sign of the holy cross, and veil virgins with a priestly blessing. Know this, O you bishops and abbots, that this is totally forbidden in your dioceses.<sup>6</sup>

4 Pippin, Council of Ver, in MGH Capitularia regum Francorum I, ed. A. Boretius (Hanover, 1883), no. 14, chapter 6, p. 34.

5 Pippin, Council of Ver, MGH Capit. I, no. 14, chapter 20, p. 36.

6 Charlemagne, MGH Capit. I, no. 22, chapter 76, p. 60.

Charlemagne, Capit. no. 33 (early 802):

Ut episcopi, abbates vel abbatissae quae ceteris prelati sunt, cum summa veneratione hac diligentia subiectis sibi preesse student, non potentiva dominatione vel tyrannide sibi subiectos premant.

That bishops, abbots and abbesses, who are in command of others, with the greatest veneration shall strive to command those subject to them with such diligence [that they] do not oppress those subject to them by dominating them by force or by tyranny.<sup>7</sup>

Charlemagne, Capit. no. 42 (Salz, 803/804):

Ut nullus ex clericali ordine, sacerdotes videlicet aut alii clerici, neque laicus, brunias aut arma infra monasteria puellarum commendare praesumat.

No-one of any clerical rank, that is, priests or other clerics, and no layman, must presume to store byrnies [mail shirts] or weapons inside convents of young women.<sup>8</sup>

Charlemagne, Capit. no. 73 (811), chapter 4, p. 165:

[Homines dicunt] quod episcopi et abbates sive comites dimittunt earum liberos homines ad casam in nomine ministerialium, similiter et abbatissae: hi sunt falconarii, venatores, telonarii, praepositi, decani et alii qui missos recipiunt et eorum sequentes.

Some men are saying that bishops and abbots and counts are leaving behind at home their free men under the name of officials, and abbesses are doing the same thing: [those left at home are termed] falconers, huntsmen, toll-takers, stewards, deans and others who receive [royal] *missi* and their retinues.<sup>9</sup>

Charlemagne, Capit. no. 74 (October, 811), chapter 10, p. 167:

Constitutum est, ut nullus episcopus aut abbas aut abbatissa vel quislibet rector aut custos aecclisiae bruniam vel gladium sine nostro permissio

7 Charlemagne, MGH Capit. 1, no. 33, chapter 11, p. 93.

8 Charlemagne, MGH Capit. 1, no. 42, chapter 8, p. 120.

9 Charlemagne, MGH Capit. 1, no. 73 (811), chapter 4, p. 165.

cuilibet homini extraneo aut dare aut venundare praesumat, nisi tantum vassallis suis.

It has been laid down that no bishop or abbot or abbess or any rector or guardian of a church shall presume without our permission to give or sell to any outsider [or foreign man] a byrnie or a sword, except only to their own vassals.<sup>10</sup>

These texts show abbesses in Francia being addressed in similar terms to those used for abbots, involved likewise in the service of the kingdom, including military service, running their institutions with similar types of agent, and accounting to the king for the management of their resources in similar ways. Abbesses were members of an institutional elite. Some abbesses were reported to be involved in scams very similar to those of abbots, that is, shirking or privatizing their public responsibilities. There were special problems too: some abbesses had violated the gender-bound rules governing the practice of holy rites and use of holy space: women were forbidden to bless men, or to lay consecrating hands on women. Finally, though abbesses shared with bishops and abbots liability to feel the lash of peremptory royal commands, those royal imperatives put abbesses peculiarly firmly in their place as lay-persons. "Read your capitularies!" (as Charlemagne commanded a count) has its counterpart in an abbess's being told, "If the king orders 'Come!', she is to come."

Women were deployed in the formation of early Anglo-Saxon kingdoms in what Barbara Yorke identified as "political needs ... and family strategies ... [and] royal nunneries [that] cannot be understood solely as religious institutions."<sup>11</sup> Queens and abbesses were often associated in royal families, and "royal nunneries were often commanded by women who had once been queens."<sup>12</sup> Similar needs and strategies are visible all over the post-Roman world. Just a century ago, Karl Voigt's pioneering study of Carolingian monastic policy included the connection between royal women and female monasticism.<sup>13</sup> The connection is clear in the list of *Nomina reginarum et abbatissarum* in the Durham *Liber Vitae*, an early medieval book used for commemorating the dead, and equally clear on the Continent.<sup>14</sup> The great and royally-connected

10 Charlemagne, MGH Capit. 1, no. 74 (October, 811), chapter 10, p. 167.

11 Yorke, *Nunneries*, pp. 145–86, at 176.

12 Yorke, *Nunneries*, p. 174.

13 Karl Voigt, *Die karolingischer Klosterpolitik* (Stuttgart, 1917), pp. 163–204, 218–25.

14 Eva-Marie Butz and Alfons Zettler, "Commemoration and Oblivion. The Making of the Carolingian *Libri Memoriales*," in *Memory and Commemoration in Medieval Culture*, ed. Elma Brenner, Meredith Cohen, and Mary Franklin-Brown (Farnham, 2013), pp. 83–92. See also Dieter Geuenich, "A Survey of the Early Medieval Confraternity Books from the

convent of Remiremont in the Vosges was founded in the early 7th century, and its extant *Liber Vitae* was begun in 821.<sup>15</sup> Seventeen names of abbesses were listed, commemorated as a category. *Nunneries and the Anglo-Saxon Royal Houses* provides evidence from multifarious sources of some fifty Anglo-Saxon abbesses for the period between the 7th to the 11th century, revealing remarkable changes across that time-span. It would be interesting to compare the statistics for abbesses in the Carolingian Empire.

### Letters

In this paper I attempt nothing so ambitious. Rather, I look at a very small group of women who shared three characteristics: all received letters from Alcuin, sent in a quite limited period of time, between 786 and 804, and all were believed by the editor of those letters, the German scholar Ernst Dümmler (1830–1902), to have been certainly or probably abbesses. To begin with Alcuin (c.735–804): he spent most of his long life at York, the centre of Northumbrian royal and ecclesiastical power. He was a secular cleric at the minster, never holding a rank higher than that of a deacon. During the 780s and early 790s, he oscillated between England and the Continent, retaining strong personal interests in York after his move—permanent as it turned out—to Francia, in 794, when Charlemagne invited him to stay at his court. Some two years later, at the king's behest, Alcuin moved to St Martin's, Tours, where he remained based until his death in 804. He was not an abbot, but a lay-abbot, hence, by canonical standards, his post was anomalous. Charlemagne himself gave Alcuin a tongue-lashing on this subject in the course of a famous dispute between Alcuin and Theodulf.<sup>16</sup> His letters to kings and aristocrats were often micro-versions of the *Specula principum* (mirrors of princes) genre which were to diffuse the ideas and practices of Christian culture widely in the Carolingian world.<sup>17</sup> Though the time he spent as a teacher at Charlemagne's court was

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Continent," in *The Durham Liber Vitae and its Context*, ed. David Rollason, A.J. Piper, Margaret Harvey, and Lynda Rollason (Woodbridge, 2004), pp. 141–47, at p. 145.

15 *Liber Memorialis von Remiremont*, ed. E. Hlawitschka, Karl Schmid and Gerd Tellenbach, MGH Libri Memoriales I (Dublin and Zurich, 1970), fol. 35v.

16 Ep. 247, in MGH Epistolae Karolini aevi II, ed. E. Dümmler (Berlin, 1895), Charlemagne to Alcuin, pp. 399–401. For lay-abbots, see Franz Felten, *Äbte und Laienäbte im Frankenreich* (Stuttgart, 1980).

17 Hans Hubert Anton, *Fürstenspiegel und Herrscherethos in der Karolingerzeit* (Bonn, 1968), pp. 85–131, remains the classic account; see now also Joanna Story, *Carolingian Connections. Anglo-Saxon England and Carolingian Francia, c. 750–870* (Aldershot, 2003), passim

quite brief, his influence was deep, and, thanks to his students in the next generation, lasting. The oscillations explain the chronology of Alcuin's some 280 surviving letters: hardly any from the York years, but thereafter some sent from England to Francia, some in the other direction, but most to Continental recipients. Which letters survived, and where, depended largely on selections of the manuscript material made either at York in Northumbria on the instructions of Alcuin himself, or at Salzburg in Bavaria by Alcuin's friend Bishop Arn of Salzburg.<sup>18</sup>

Alcuin's letters thought by Dümmler to have been addressed to abbesses were the following, which I have set out in alphabetical order, with numbers of letters sent to each recipient in square brackets:

<b>Adaula</b> ?abbess in diocese of Salzburg, Ep. 68 (c.789–796)	[1]
<b>Æthelburh</b> , daughter of Offa, abbess, Epp. 36 (c.793–795); 102 and 103 (796, after 18 April); and 300 (797–804)	[4]
<b>Æthelthyrth</b> , abbess, widowed mother of Æthelred of Northumbria (+796), Epp. 79 (793–796); 105 and 106 (post-18 April 796)	[3]
<b>Gisela</b> , abbess of Chelles, Epp. 15 (793), 32 (793×95), 84 (793–96), 154 (793, September), 164, (early 799), 195 (800, before 19 April), 213 (early 801), 214 (early 801), 216 (801, after 4 April), 228 (801)	[10]
<b>Gundrada</b> , ?nun <i>ceteris in palatio virginibus exemplar</i> , Epp. ? 204 (800? mid-June), 241 (c.801), ?279 (804), 309 (801–4)	[4]
<b>Hundruda</b> ?nun <i>in palatio regis</i> [Offae], Ep. 62 (c.786–796)	[1]
<b>Regnoida</b> , ?abbess, Ep. 297 (796–804)	[1]

Two of the recipients are otherwise unknown. The first, **Adaula**, was addressed by Alcuin as *soror*. In a very short letter, Alcuin urged her to virtue, but there is

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but esp. pp. 4–10, 61–64, 93–109, 135–44, 181–84. For Alcuin at court, see Mary Garrison, “The Emergence of Latin Literature and the Court of Charlemagne,” in *Carolingian Culture: Emulation and Innovation*, ed. Rosamond McKitterick (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 111–40; Garrison, “The Social World of Alcuin. Nicknames at York and the Carolingian Court,” in *Alcuin of York. Scholar at the Carolingian Court*, ed. L.A.J.R. Houwen and Alasdair A. McDonald, *Mediaevalia Groningana* 22 (Groningen, 1998), pp. 59–79, and Donald A. Bullough, “Alcuin's Cultural Influence: the Evidence of the Manuscripts,” in *Alcuin*, ed. Houwen and McDonald, pp. 1–26.

18 Donald A. Bullough, *Alcuin: Achievement and Reputation* (Leiden, 2004), p. 36; Maximilian Diesenburger and Herwig Wolfram, “Arn und Alcuin 790 bis 804: zwei Freunde und ihre Schriften,” in *Erzbischof Arn von Salzburg*, ed. Meta Niederkorn-Bruck and Anton Scharer (Vienna and Munich, 2004), pp. 81–106.

no hint that she was an abbess.<sup>19</sup> She may or may not be identified with the Atula (named without any title of office) listed in the *Liber Confraternitatum* of St Peter's, Salzburg.<sup>20</sup> Alcuin's contact with her may well have come through his friend Arn of Salzburg. The second is **Regnoida**, whom Alcuin addressed, again in a short letter, as "most beloved mother in Christ," and whom he asked to pray for him.<sup>21</sup> Too little is known of either of them or their contexts to indicate whether either was an abbess, or went by some other title.

More interesting, and interestingly similar to one another, though documented by different authors, are **Hundruda** in Mercia and **Gundrada** in Francia. Alcuin addressed Hundruda as a *Deo devota femina*, a "woman devoted to God."<sup>22</sup> He praised her piety, her life of sobriety and chastity and "the examples you set in speaking modestly about the truth and in acting in the honourable state of chastity towards both younger and older people so that all may be edified, [and] so that the devotion of a rule-based life [*regularis vitae*] at the king's palace [*in palatio regis*] becomes visible in the way you behave [*conversatio*]."<sup>23</sup> From Alcuin's pen-portrait, which is all that is known of her, Dümmler flatly inferred: "ergo Hundruda monacha fuit"—"so Hundruda was a nun."<sup>24</sup> This was not the only possible inference, however. A pious aristocratic and well-connected woman living in a busy environment that included both the young and the old of both sexes, as well as the queen, and the king's son, was teaching informally at the Mercian court rather than occupying any institutionalized role.

Only two of the four letters which Dümmler thought Alcuin might have written to **Gundrada** were clearly addressed to her. One of the two letters whose addressee has been doubted, but I think was indeed Gundrada, was called by Alcuin *filia in Christo carissima*. Alcuin wrote of the well-known *familiaritas* between himself and his spiritual daughter, "desiring that your

19 Alcuin, Ep. 68, p. 112; the lemma (extra note) in this 11th-century manuscript has: Epistola Albini magistri ad Ulam abbatissam.

20 MGH Necrologia Germaniae II: Diocesis Salisburgensis, ed. S. Herberg-Fränkell (Berlin, 1904), p. 14.

21 Ep. 297, p. 456, whom Alcuin also addressed as "most holy mother and most sweet handmaid of God": the lemma simply says "ad Renoide."

22 Ep. 62, p. 105.

23 Ep. 62 (c.789–796), pp. 105–06.

24 Dümmler, MGH Epp. II, p. 105, n. 4: "ergo Hundruda monacha fuit." See the riposte of Sarah Foot, *Veiled Women, 1: The Disappearance of Nuns from Anglo-Saxon England* (Aldershot, 2000), p. 57; also Janet L. Nelson, "Gendering Courts in the Early Medieval West," in *Gender in the Early Medieval World. East and West, 300–900*, ed. Julia M.H. Smith and Leslie Brubaker (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 185–98, at p. 190, and Janet L. Nelson, "Was Charlemagne's Court a Courtly Society?" in *Court Culture in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. C. Cubitt (Turnhout, 2003), pp. 39–57, at p. 46.

nobleness [*nobilitas*] may gleam brightly in your behaviour [*mores*] and may your power [*potestas*] shine in the sweetness of your piety, and your eminence [*sublimitas*] may be loved and your authority [*dignitas*] be praised .... Every friendship [*amicitia*] which is accustomed to be kept between human beings [*homines*] is null and void if it is without trust [*fides*].<sup>25</sup> Alcuin's vocabulary in this letter implied that the woman for whom it was intended was of exceptionally high rank, and he combined this tellingly with his own sense of "the trustworthiness of our faith [in each other] [*fiducia fidei nostrae*]." It was as if any gender-gap had been overwhelmed by Gundrada's superior moral, and distinctively royal, qualities. One other small piece of evidence to support that interpretation comes from a charter of Charlemagne's dated 9 May 813. The forms and formalities of Charlemagne's charters sometimes included the name—in tironian notes, or Carolingian shorthand—of the powerful personage who had intervened to secure the charter's issue. Charlemagne's very last extant charter was requested by "Gundradus" (that was how the editor Engelbert Mühlbacher read it). But it could equally well be "Gundrada," for, given the difficulties of deciphering tironian notes, the last syllable may be a feminine one.<sup>26</sup> If that's the right reading, then the influential requester was not an *ambasciator* (a male requester) but an *ambasciatrice* (a female one)—Gundrada.<sup>27</sup> From that intervention, it could be inferred that Gundrada's rank enabled her to exercise a kind of political influence otherwise available only to men. This would tally with the impression given by the vocabulary deployed by Alcuin in Ep. 204.

Paschasius Radbert, more commonly known as Radbert of Corbie, had been nurtured at the convent of Notre Dame, Soissons, where the abbess in the early 9th century was Theodrada, Charlemagne's cousin. Radbert identified Gundrada, her sister Theodrada and brothers Wala and Bernar, and their considerably older half-sibling Adalard of Corbie, as members of the *regalis prosapia*, the royal line, offspring of Bernard, bastard son of Charles Martel.<sup>28</sup> In his *Life of Adalard*, Radbert offered a pen-portrait of Gundrada which resembled Hundrada's at Offa's Mercian palace, and during more or less the same years. This was no coincidence. Carolingian connections produced similar contexts for such women to flower in as models of piety. Radbert produced his own pen-portrait of Gundrada: "[she was] a virgin more close to the king [and] the most noble woman of noble ones [*virgo familiarior, nobilium nobilissima*] ... she was

25 Ep. 204, pp. 337–38.

26 My thanks go to David Ganz and Martin Hellmann for sharing their wondrous expertise.

27 Nelson, "Gendering courts," p. 191.

28 Paschasius Radbert, *Vita Adalardi* chapter 7, MGH Scriptorum in Folio 2, ed. G.H. Pertz (Hannover, 1829), p. 525.

unique in having remained a virgin amidst the lustful heats of the palace.”<sup>29</sup> In a letter datable to “c. 801,” Alcuin addressed Gundrada as *sponsa Deo dignissima* (“bride most worthy for God”). Alcuin’s nickname for her, Eulalia (after the virgin-martyr of Merida), signalled membership of the inner circle of those bound by *familiaritas* to each other and (in this context) to Charlemagne/David. Alcuin was so confident in Gundrada’s influence with Charlemagne that he asked her to transmit his apologies for having had to refuse a summons to court: “speak to my lord David so that he’s not angry with his servant.” Alcuin urged Gundrada to continue to be “an exemplar for all the other virgins [*ceterae virgines*] in the palace, so that they may learn from your holy behaviour how to guard themselves, or, if they should fall, how to rise again,” and “may they be as noble in their conduct as they are by parentage.”<sup>30</sup> Alcuin’s third letter was addressed to “a sister and a daughter in Christ,” putatively identified by Dümmler in a note as “Gundrada and Theodrada.”<sup>31</sup> The fourth letter, addressed to his “dearest sister in Christ’s love, Eulalia,” was among the very last of Alcuin’s letters to survive: Gundrada had asked for an explanation of “the reason of the soul,” and Alcuin responded with a lengthy exposition in 14 capitula ending with a 67-line poem.<sup>32</sup> Palace life apparently offered space for a little cohort of virtuous noblewomen, and Gundrada apparently led one, but there is no evidence that it was a convent rather than an informal discussion-group. Both Hundra and Gundrada lived *in* but were not entirely *of* a court milieu. Each was a teacher, though not necessarily only of other women, but it seems that in both cases, their chief responsibilities, morally and spiritually, were for women (not necessarily a large group of them), living devoutly as in a Rule-based life (*regularis vitae*). There is no clear evidence, however, that Hundra and Gundrada were abbesses.<sup>33</sup>

29 Paschasius Radbert, *Vita Adalhardi*, chapter 33, p. 527.

30 “Esto ceteris in palatio virginibus totius bonitatis exemplar, ut ex tua discant sancta conversatione se ipsas custodire vel cadentes resurgere,” Ep. 241, pp. 386–87.

31 Ep. 279, pp. 435–36, where Dümmler seems to identify Theodrada as Gundrada’s considerably younger sister. For debate about Theodrada’s marital status, see Johannes Fried, “Elite und Ideologie oder Die Nachfolgeordnung Karls des Großen vom Jahre 813,” in *La royauté et les élites dans l’Europe carolingienne (du début du Xe siècle aux environs de 920)*, ed. Régine Le Jan (Lille, 1998), pp. 71–109, at pp. 90–95; Karl Ubl, *Die Konstruktion eines Verbrechens* (Berlin and New York, 2008), p. 379; Martina Hartmann, *Die Königin im frühen Mittelalter* (Stuttgart, 2009), p. 105.

32 Ep. 309, pp. 473–78 (omitting chapters 2–12). The lemma, or short note in the manuscript, says “Incipit liber de anima ad Gundradane,” expressed in other manuscripts as “De animae ratione liber ad Eulaliam virginem.”

33 F. Felten, *Vita religiosa sanctimonialium: Norm und Praxis des weiblichen religiösen Lebens vom 6. Bis zum 13. Jahrhundert* (Korb, 2011).

The best-known of the women considered so far is **Gisela**. Most scholars, until recently, identified her as an abbess—and her convent as Chelles.<sup>34</sup> She is exceptionally well-documented, as Charlemagne's sister and a member of the royal family, as a court figure, and as the person who commissioned or patronized the *Annales Mettenses Priores*, one of the key annalistic sources of the reign of Charlemagne. No contemporary writer of annals, charters or letters identified her as an abbess. In none of the ten letters she received from Alcuin was she identified as an abbess within the letter itself. In the one surviving letter that Gisela (along with her niece Rotrud) wrote to Alcuin, she did not identify herself as an abbess: she and Rotrud called themselves *humillimae Christi famulae, Gisela et Rodtruda*.<sup>35</sup> Why then have modern historians so firmly assigned Gisela the title and office of abbess? The answer turns out to be simple: Dümmler provided Gisela with that title in no fewer than four of the letter-summaries he put before the edited text of the letters. Alcuin, by contrast, in the letters themselves, addressed Gisela as *virgo nobilis* (Ep. 15), Gisela and Rotrud as *mater et filia Christi* (Ep. 32), and Gisela again as *dilectissima in Christi soror* (Ep. 84), as *carissima in Christi soror* (Ep. 154), as *karissima in Christo* (Ep. 164).<sup>36</sup> In the next five letters, none of which was tagged with an explanatory note, the address-forms were similar to those in the preceding five, i.e. the woman (or women) was/were addressed in the familiar terms of spiritual kinship, most often of sisterhood in Christ. In four of the last five letters to Gisela or to Gisela and Rotrud (Epp. 195, 214, 216 and 228), Dümmler in each of his brief letter-summaries identified Gisela as *abbatissa Calensis*, abbess of Chelles, and he did the same for Gisela's one letter to Alcuin, Ep. 196. The supposition that Gisela was an abbess (and the most important in the empire) had been made much earlier in the 17th century, by Jean Mabillon and by Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz; Dümmler had either borrowed it or re-supposed it. These identifications constitute the only 'evidence' there is for Gisela having been abbess of Chelles, or indeed an abbess at all. Martina Hartmann must take the credit for being the first scholar in the 21st century to point this out, in 2007, somewhat *en passant* (for her topic in the relevant paper was "concubine or queen?").<sup>37</sup> If Gisela *had* been abbess of Chelles, it would have been bizarre

34 Yorke, *Nunneries*, p. 54; Anne-Marie Helvétius, "Pour une biographie de Gisèle," in *Splendor Reginae. Passions, genre et famille. Mélanges en l'honneur de Régine Le Jan*, ed. Laurent Jégou et al. (Turnhout, 2015), pp. 161–68.

35 Ep. 196 (800, after 19 April), pp. 323–25.

36 Several of these have an extra note (*lemma*) added by the scribe, but not in the address-formula at the beginning of the letter.

37 Martina Hartmann, "Concubina vel regina? Zu einigen Ehefrauen und Konkubinen der karolingischen Könige," *Deutsches Archiv* 63 (2007), 545–67.

indeed if the strictly contemporary author of the *Annales Mettenses Priores*, writing at Chelles, had not mentioned it. Gisela, it must be concluded, was not an abbess.

The remaining two religious women to whom Alcuin wrote were both Anglo-Saxon royals. Alcuin addressed neither of them as abbess. Dümmler in his brief summary-title to Ep. 36, named **Æthelburh**, daughter of King Offa, as abbess of Fladbury, Worcestershire, but the identification of Fladbury is certainly wrong, and scholars have not identified any alternative convent.<sup>38</sup> **Æthelthryth**, whom Dümmler named in his summary-title to Ep. 79 as an abbess, but without naming a convent, had been queen of Northumbria and wife of King Æthelwald Moll (d.765), and mother of King Æthelred (d.796), but there is no evidence as to which convent, if any, she presided over. These conclusions, at first blush disappointingly negative, reveal on closer investigation something of the relationships between Alcuin and each of these two women. They also permit comparison with the tone and terms in which Alcuin addressed at least one of his Frankish correspondents. Before making the case for the interest and importance of these two letters to these two Anglo-Saxon women, it is worth recalling, very briefly, four characteristics of early medieval letters in general. First, the writer presents himself or herself as in direct communication with the recipient: as Alcuin put it, “the letter speaks in place of the voice.”<sup>39</sup> Second, what look, at first, like very personal and private letters are at the same time highly rhetorical, often meant to be read out to a public. Third, they use a limited range of words and themes repeatedly and in formulaic ways (we still do, but the themes and tone are different): *munera*, *munuscula* (gifts, gifties); *amicitia* (friendship); *caritas* (love); *dilectio* (love); *memoria* (memory, commemoration); *elimosina* (alms). Fourth, the writer typically situates himself or herself as inferior to the recipient: *parvitas mea* (my smallness), but sometimes opts for a more equal, familiar level: *vestra familiaritas*. Alcuin, though born of a relatively insignificant family, had, by his latter years, acquired the moral authority to teach virtue to high-born women, expecting, in return, that such women were in a position to intercede for him with the ruler, just as he himself could intercede with the ruler on those women’s behalf. By his latter years too, though often far from court, Alcuin understood very well

38 Yorke, *Nunneries*, p. 66, n. 49.

39 Ep. 102. See also Giles Constable, *Letters and Letter-Collections* (Turnhout, 1976); Garrison, “The Emergence of Latin Literature at the Court of Charlemagne,” and “The English and the Irish at the Court of Charlemagne,” in *Karl der Grosse und sein Nachwirken*, ed. Paul Leo Butzer et al (Turnhout, 1997), pp. 97–124; Donald Bullough, *Carolingian Renewal* (Manchester, 1991), and *Alcuin: Achievement and Reputation*.

that Anglo-Saxon courts were places where powerful women lived and worked—and networked.

Alcuin addressed two letters to Æthelthryth, mother of the Northumbrian king Æthelred. She had withdrawn to a nunnery (place unknown) after her husband's death in 765 or not long after.<sup>40</sup> Dümmler dated Ep. 79 to 793–6, and Ep. 105 to 796, post 18 April—the date of the murder of King Æthelred. That Alcuin's letters to Æthelthryth were written so long after she was widowed could imply a longstanding bond, perhaps continuous from the 760s and 770s. It was only after her son's regaining of the kingdom of Northumbria in 790, however, that Alcuin's interest in communicating with Æthelthryth became stronger: she was now a force to be reckoned with in Northumbrian politics. His return to York between 790 and 793 was not coincidental, then, and nor was the writing of Ep. 79 after his return to Francia. Addressing Æthelthryth as “sister in Christ and mother,” Alcuin began as usual with thanks for gifts and appreciation of *caritas*, followed by a reminder of the special responsibilities of those in command of others (*qui praesunt aliis*) and who thus “carried the care of many and must answer for them all on the day of judgement.” Alcuin demanded his “dearest sister” to remember that those thus subjected must be taught by example:

Do not keep silent through any fear of man! ... Honour old women and old men as mothers and fathers, love the youthful as brothers and sisters, and teach the little ones like sons and daughters. Labour in the work of God ... with alms and gifts. ... Make your way of life [*conversatio*] an example to others of all goodness, so that the high honour of your personal position is praised by all, loved by many and the name of God glorified in you...

This letter reads, curiously, as if Æthelthryth were a proxy for her son, for whom he wrote the sharply critical Epp. 16 and 18 after the Scandinavian attack on Lindisfarne on 8 June 793. In writing to the king's mother, Alcuin was continuing an old association in new and problematic circumstances, writing with his private situation in mind. Other letters written in 795–96 show that Alcuin was thinking, again, about returning to York, and also that he considered himself a likely candidate to replace Archbishop Eanbald (1) who had been in post

<sup>40</sup> Barbara Yorke, “Æthelbald, Offa and the Patronage of Nunneries,” in *Æthelbald and Offa: Two Eighth-Century Kings of Mercia*, ed. David Hill and Margaret Worthington, BAR British Ser. 383 (Oxford, 2005), pp. 43–48.

since 780.<sup>41</sup> Æthelthryth and Alcuin shared the shock of King Æthelred's murder on 18 April 796.<sup>42</sup> Alcuin wrote to Æthelthryth as his "most beloved mother in Christ": the terms of spiritual kinship allowed Alcuin to represent Christ as Æthelthryth's spiritual son, and her grief for her carnal son to be transmuted into gladness that "his soul lives in Christ." Alcuin included a practical note: "Meanwhile you still have control of your own property, so use it to give alms—you never know what tomorrow might bring!" Alcuin asked Æthelthryth, "most beloved mother, to consider me now, though unworthy, as your spiritual son in place of your carnal one."<sup>43</sup> Knowing that carnal son as they both did, Alcuin and Æthelthryth may have found some consolation in irony. Less than four months later, Archbishop Eanbald died and was immediately succeeded by Eanbald II, whom scholars generally assume was a kinsman (perhaps a nephew?) of Eanbald I. To him, Alcuin now wrote in apparently conventional congratulatory terms but with a pen steeped in vitriol.<sup>44</sup> It is not clear whether the news reached Francia before or after Alcuin was given and accepted the lay-abbacy of St Martin at Tours. For Alcuin, in any case, the option of return to York and high ecclesiastical office had gone for good.

Finally, Æthelburh, daughter of Offa, and sister-in-law of King Æthelbert of Northumbria, appeared as an abbess (convent unknown) in 792. She received four letters from Alcuin (Epp. 36, c.793–95; 102 and 103, 796, after 18 April; 300, 797–804). The sequence of the first three of these letters parallels that of Alcuin's letters to Æthelthryth. Again the timing of the first falls within Alcuin's three years back at York. Remaking bonds with Mercian as well as Northumbrian royals was high on Alcuin's agenda. Ep. 36's praise of fertile virginity is boilerplate: "a few days' labour is remunerated by eternal rewards, and the heavenly bridegroom rejoices in the generous scale of alms." But here Æthelburh was addressed as "Eugenia," and with Alcuin, every nickname told a story: here the name appeared in an apocryphal martyr-tale set in the mid-3rd century, and briefly recorded in the 9th-century Old English Martyrology.<sup>45</sup> The story as elaborated later, portrayed Eugenia, daughter of a Roman governor: she escaped paternal control, dressed as a man, got herself baptized, and became an abbot. Later her sex was discovered, she moved to Rome where she was martyred. It is to be hoped that Alcuin explained to Æthelburh how the

41 Epp. 42, 43, 44, 46, 47, 48.

42 Ep. 105.

43 Ep. 106.

44 Ep. 114, cf. Epp. 115, 116, and the more amicable 226.

45 Christine Rauer, ed., *The Old English Martyrology* (Cambridge, 2013), pp. 36–37.

name should be interpreted. Names were important to Alcuin and his contemporaries (and some of those same names still are significant: apparently Eugenia has recently become an icon of the LGBTQ community). Alcuin brought Offa's daughter Æthelburh, into a charmed circle: of the purest and highest-born women with connections to the Carolingian court.

In Ep. 102, Alcuin did not address Æthelburh as Eugenia, but simply as *in Deo dilectissima filia*. He reflected that though letters from a distance were inferior to a good chat (*invida terrarum longinquitas mutuae confabulationis prohibet dulcedinem*), they could continue a conversation; "... I won't be asking you for anything new in letters that I've not already said to you face-to-face." Did Alcuin sense a certain fragility in Æthelburh's commitment, and now renewed his efforts to firm it up? The letter's tone then changed completely with the phrase "Ecce me modo infidelitas patriae in tantum horret ut reverti timeo"—"Look, the current state of disloyalty/treachery in our country appalls me so much that I am frightened to return, and I know of nothing I can do about this except weep and think about the lamentations of Jeremiah." This was as good as a declaration that he would never return. Amidst the general ruin, Alcuin wept hot tears over the fate of Æthelburh's widowed sister. "The woman deprived of the bed of her husband must be encouraged to serve Christ in the convent." Alcuin asked Æthelburh to remember his name in her prayers.

In the final section, he shifted into a quite different mode:

Liudgardam quoque nobilem feminam, quae tibi munusculi loco pallium direxit, habeto in Dei dilectione ut sororem; illiusque nomen cum nominibus sororum tuarum per ecclesiasticas cartas scribere iube. Honorabilis tibi est amicitia illius, et utilis. Misi dilectioni tuae ampullam et patenam ad offerendam in eis domino Deo tuis manibus oblationem.

And have the noble woman Liudgard, who sent you a shawl [?or veil] as a giftie, as a sister in the love of God. For you this friendship is honourable—and useful. And order her name to be inscribed along with the names of your sisters (i.e. nuns) in the lists of [your] church.

Liudgard was Charlemagne's fifth and last wife, and well-known to Alcuin. He may well have suggested to her that she send the shawl, for which the Scots *giftie* seems an apposite translation, as a token of spiritual sisterhood with Offa's daughter. Political and religious honour and utility were entwined here. Along with her sister, Æthelburh too was now endangered. Alcuin ended with his own gifts: he sent a jug and a plate for Æthelburh personally to offer the

oblations in the Mass, and to pray for him while doing so. The role of lay people in bringing oblations to the altar here acquired overtones.<sup>46</sup> Did Æthelburh, as a nun, have special qualifications for liturgical performance, with the convent church an appropriate stage? Or did she receive the title and role of abbess while her father was still alive?<sup>47</sup> In Ep. 103 Alcuin thanked his “sweetest sister” for the *munuscula caritatis tuae*, her prayers, and her *familiaritas*. He commended to her *caritas* the bearer of his letter, asking her to seek the widowed queen’s patronage in ensuring the man’s safe return *in patriam* (Francia), and to greet the queen in his name, assuring her that “we have always been faithful to her, ... especially now, when she outlives her husband the most excellent king.” Finally in Ep. 300, Alcuin, thanking Æthelburh for letters and *munera*, responded to yet another turn of fortune’s wheel. Offa was dead, and in both Northumbria and Mercia there were new kings whom Alcuin castigated as “tyranni non rectores; nec ut olim reges a regendo sed a rapiendo dicuntur”—“tyrants, not rectors, and not called ‘kings’ because they rule but because they plunder.” This was a letter of consolation, but also of strong support: tribulations are a sign of the trial of the just: “Gold shines only when tempered in fire. It won’t be easy for the devil to lay waste the house which is the habitation of Christ.” Æthelburh had planned to go to Rome, it seems, but at the time of receiving Alcuin’s letter had not yet succeeded. She should now give the money collected for the journey to the poor instead, and trust in God to provide for another attempt. In this letter Æthelburh was once again addressed as Eugenia.

Those then are the letters. They belong in contexts: where prayer-texts show Frankish abbesses exercising a kind of rule (*regimen*) but in a house kept apart—a house, as Alcuin said in which Christ resides, and where capitularies show that at least some Frankish abbesses, high-born and hugely well-resourced, were expected to participate along with abbots and bishops and secular officers in the activities of the state and service to the ruler. The letters reflect convent living and public service rather faintly, but they bring to life, in small Anglo-Saxon kingdoms as well as in the big Frankish one, sets of social relationships structured on an economy and language of gift-exchange and an ethic of generous alms-giving. The letters show hubs of communication *with* and even *in* royal courts inhabited by women as well as men. Just occasionally, and probably part-time, a high-born and learned woman could come to

46 David Ganz, “Giving to God in the Mass: The Experience of the Offertory,” in *The Language of Gift*, ed. Wendy Davies and Paul Fouracre (Cambridge, 2010), pp. 18–32.

47 Yorke, *Nunneries*, pp. 53, 66, n. 49, and 107, n. 15.

exercise a teacherly hegemony in the palace. Between Alcuin, the deacon of no more than a middle-ranking family, and women who were royal and always resourceful, a kind of friendship could blossom which sometimes came close to parity. The nicknames he chose for some of his correspondents reveal Alcuin as a man of passionate sociability. His letters, like so many lightning-flashes, suddenly illuminate a social world of *caritas*, of *amicitia* and *familiaritas*, of gifts and giftiness.

In the end, religious women are—and were—hard to pin down. The varied terms for their roles and ranks indicate a fluidity that did not apply to those of male religious.<sup>48</sup> Perhaps these ways baffled people at the time. Where was the dividing-line between a *Deo devota* and an abbess? Why did so many abbesses retain a life-interest in the properties of their convents? In what sense did the nuns of Abbess Emhild's community at Milz in Thuringia share with her *pariter* in handing over the convent to Fulda?<sup>49</sup> And did Emhild feel it necessary to insist that she was *not* giving Milz to the relics in the altar and its endowment because her male cousins claimed shares in those relics and that church and its property, but because “my tradition to God and St Mary is made to the relics of St. Mary that are my own ... in my reliquary”?<sup>50</sup> The words of Susan Wood are salient here: “At one level, that of religious life,” abbess or abbot renounced their property when being professed, but if that property belonged to her or his own foundation, “at another level, that of private law,” she or he remained that property's proprietor “until it was explicitly given away. ... Consciousness of one level may creep into the other and contribute towards ambiguities as to whether past, present or *post obitum* donations are intended,” adding a comment on “the haziness of civil personality” in early medieval times.<sup>51</sup> It seems appropriate to end this paper by returning, via Susan Wood's comments just quoted, to some words of Barbara Yorke, apropos the taking of religious vows: “How such actions were actually perceived by early medieval individuals is one

48 Franz J. Felten, *Vita religiosa sanctimonialium* (collected papers, all relevant to the early medieval period), see n. 33 above.

49 E.E. Stengel, ed., *Urkundenbuch des Klosters Fulda*, 2 vols. (Marburg, 1913–58), 1.2, no. 264, “cum ea [Emhild] pariter communibus manibus traditionem fecerunt.” See Matthew Innes, *State and Society in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 26 (“the redoubtable Emhild”), 125.

50 Stengel, ed., *Urkundenbuch des Klosters Fulda*, 1.2, no. 154. See Susan Wood, *The Proprietary Church* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 126–27, 136.

51 Wood, *Proprietary Church*, pp. 126–27, and see also pp. 136, 182, 316–17.

of the most difficult things for a modern historian to discover. ... In a period when the rights of the individual are often seen as paramount, it is easy to forget that even in relatively recent times people readily accepted that 'duty' should have priority over personal preferences and so constructed their self-worth from the correct performance of it."<sup>52</sup>

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52 Yorke, *Nunneries*, p. 10.

## The Role of Mercian Kings in the Founding of Minsters in the Kingdom of the Hwicce

*Steven Bassett*

A number of Mercian royal grants made in the late 7th and 8th centuries have been widely interpreted as founding the Hwiccian minsters to which they relate.<sup>1</sup> In each case the Mercian king who issued the charter has been seen as the donor of the lands from which the community of the newly established minster was meant to draw its livelihood. An example of such a charter is the one issued by the Mercian king Æthelbald in respect of Wootton Wawen (Warwicks.). The original manuscript has not survived, but there is an apparently reliable copy in the earliest of Worcester's 11th-century cartularies.<sup>2</sup> The charter was issued at an unknown date between Æthelbald's accession in 716 and the death in 737 of Uuor (Aldwine), bishop of Lichfield, who witnessed the charter.<sup>3</sup> Although it cannot be dated more narrowly, it probably belongs to the latest years of this date range, given that it has a number of distinctive features in common with Æthelbald's charter of 736 concerning land in *Usmere* near Kidderminster (Worcs.) and at an unidentified place nearby named *Brochyl*. This latter charter survives as an original single-sheet manuscript.<sup>4</sup> One of the distinctive features shared by this pair of charters is the make-up of their witness lists; another one is that, unusually, neither has either an invocation or a proem. The Wootton Wawen charter states that:

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- 1 It gives me much pleasure to contribute to a volume for Barbara Yorke, whose publications have greatly inspired me and who has been a kind and generous friend for many years.
  - 2 S 94; BL, Cotton Tiberius A. xiii, fol. 103r-v. For an important discussion of Æthelbald's charters in respect of land in the kingdoms of the Hwicce and Magonsæte (which, however, reaches a different conclusion from this chapter's), see Anton Scharer, *Die angelsächsische Königsurkunde im 7. and 8. Jahrhundert* (Vienna, 1982), passim but especially pp. 159–211.
  - 3 *Handbook of British Chronology*, ed. E.B. Fryde, D.E. Greenway, S. Porter and I. Roy, 3rd ed. (London, 1986), p. 218.
  - 4 S 89; Margaret Gelling, "Stour in Ismere," in *Myth, Rulership, Church and Charters. Essays in Honour of Nicholas Brooks*, ed. Julia Barrow and Andrew Wareham (Aldershot, 2008), pp. 83–87.

I, Æthelbald ... grant to my most respected and very dear associate Æthelric, son of Oshere the former king of the Hwicce, land of 20 hides, giving [it] with great goodwill of mind for ecclesiastical rule and dispensation ... So I indisputably bestow all this area ... on ... Æthelric, granting it at his request for the purpose of [establishing] monastic life.<sup>5</sup>

It has been widely assumed that in issuing this charter King Æthelbald was setting up a minster at Wootton Wawen. Æthelric is usually envisaged, more or (usually) less explicitly, as one of a number of members of the Hwiccian royalty or leading aristocrats whose job it was at various times to oversee the foundation of a minster on a Mercian king's behalf.<sup>6</sup>

We know of a number of analogous charters from the western midlands. To mention only the most reliable ones, there are three other charters issued by Æthelbald, two of which concern Hwiccian minsters. In the first one, probably issued in 718, Æthelbald granted six hides of land at Daylesford (Gloucs.) to a nun, Bægia, for constructing a minster there.<sup>7</sup> The second is the charter by which, in 736, he booked ten hides of land at *Usmere* and *Brochyl* to a man named Cyneberht, who is addressed as associate (*comes*) and thegn; this, too, was for setting up a minster.<sup>8</sup> The third of them, however, concerns Acton Beauchamp (Herefs., formerly Worcs.), which in the 8th century was in the diocese of Hereford and the kingdom of the Magonsæte. It is a grant of three hides of land, probably also made in 718, to a thegn called Buca (who is unknown in

5 "Ego Æthilbalth ... reuerentissimo comiti meo mihique satis caro filio quondam Huuiccorum regis Oosheræs Æthilricæ terram uiginti cassatorum in possessionem æcclesiasticæ rationis atque regulæ ... larga mentis beniuolentia donans concedo. ... Omnem itaque hunc agrum ... ita nimirum præfato comiti meo Æthilricæ in jus monasticæ rationis rogatus ab eo tradens largior ..." W. de G. Birch, *Cartularium Saxonicum*, 3 vols (London, 1885–93), 1:227–28 (no. 157).

6 This agency is implied in, for example, H.P.R. Finberg, "The Princes of the Hwicce," in *The Early Charters of the West Midlands*, ed. H.P.R. Finberg, 2nd ed. (Leicester, 1972), pp. 167–80, at p. 177; Della Hooke, *The Anglo-Saxon Landscape. The Kingdom of the Hwicce* (Manchester, 1985), pp. 134–35; Patrick Sims-Williams, *Religion and Literature in Western England, 600–800* (Cambridge 1990), p. 149; D.P. Kirby, *The Earliest English Kings* (London, 1991), p. 12; Francesca Tinti, *Sustaining Belief. The Church of Worcester from c.870 to c.1100* (Farnham, 2010), pp. 194–95; and John Hunt, *Warriors, Warlords and Saints. The Anglo-Saxon Kingdom of Mercia* (Alcester, 2016), p. 48. On Æthelric now see Steven Bassett, "Offa, King of the East Saxons, and his West Midland Land Grants," *Midland History* 40 (2015), 1–23, at p. 10 and Fig. 1 on p. 9. More generally on the status of men such as Æthelric see John Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society* (Oxford, 2005), p. 89.

7 S 84.

8 S 89.

any other context, as also are Bægia and Cyneberht<sup>9</sup>), for the perpetual support of the place's minster.<sup>10</sup> To these four charters we can add several other similar ones issued by various Mercian kings from the 690s up to as late as the 770s, if we are willing to include ones with a few worrying features which suggest the later improvement of what is arguably an essentially sound text.<sup>11</sup>

These charters are all usually thought to represent the foundation of minsters by successive Mercian kings from Æthelred to Offa, and their recipients are seen as the king's enablers, the local agents—albeit sometimes royal ones—who implemented his wishes on the ground. However, Patrick Sims-Williams had a different view of Æthelric, Cyneberht and the others who received charters during Æthelbald's long reign. He saw them as loyal officials of Æthelbald who, on their retirement from government service, were being handed a decent leaving gift—land on which each of them would found a minster and become its abbot.<sup>12</sup> To Sims-Williams Æthelric and the other similar recipients of Æthelbald's charters were like Bede's "thegn-abbots". When grantees of their sort disappeared after Offa's accession in 757, he argued that, thereafter, the charters being given to laymen were nothing more than straightforward land conveyances.<sup>13</sup> In other words, by Offa's time, although the clerks who drew up such documents were still using the standard formulaic language of earlier charters, Sims-Williams proposed that the recipients of the land which the charters said was being handed over for ecclesiastical purposes could in reality do whatever they liked with it.

But neither of these interpretations is necessarily correct. That is to say, first of all, we do not have to accept the widespread view that Mercian kings such as Æthelred and Æthelbald were themselves the founders of most of the early minsters in the kingdom of the Hwicce (and at Acton Beauchamp in the kingdom of the Magonsete) about which we first learn from charters. Nor, secondly, do we need to agree with Sims-Williams that the landed endowments of these early minsters were given to them by a Mercian king, even if the actual

9 See the entries at <<http://www.pase.ac.uk/jsp/persons/>> for Bægia 1, Buca 1, and Cyneberht 3.

10 S 85. At some time in the 11th century Acton Beauchamp was transferred to the diocese of Worcester and to Worcestershire: Richard Bryant with Michael Hare, *Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture. Volume X, The Western Midlands* (Oxford, 2012), pp. 282–83. Also see Sims-Williams, *Religion*, pp. 43, 150–52.

11 For example, S 70, S 71, S 75, S 95, S 99.

12 Sims-Williams, *Religion*, pp. 147–54.

13 Sims-Williams, *Religion*, pp. 154–55; "Letter of Bede to Archbishop Egbert," in *EHD* 1, pp. 799–810, at p. 806.

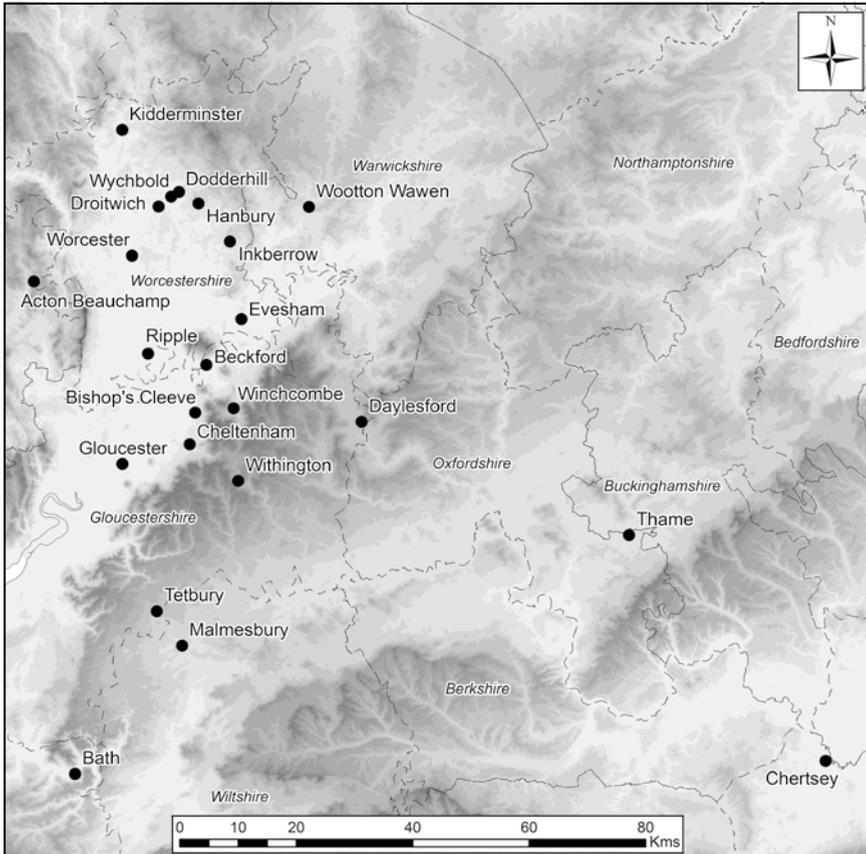


FIGURE 18.1 Places mentioned in the text

founder—and indeed the first abbot—was a retired royal official.<sup>14</sup> A third way of making sense of these late 7th- and 8th-century Hwiccian charters is also possible. It would require us to form a different view of the relationship being expressed in the charters between the grantor (the Mercian king) and the grantee (a man such as Æthelric). This would see the grantees as no mere Hwiccian or other functionaries of the Mercian kings, whether royal or aristocratic, active or retired. More importantly, it would identify the land which was being given to the minster concerned as the property, not of the Mercian king, but of the recipient of the charter. According to this third hypothesis, Æthelric, Cyneberht and the other grantees wanted to give land of their own to the

14 Bægia, to whom a charter was granted concerning land at Daylesford (S 84), was a woman and is therefore unlikely to have had any such role.

minsters which they were planning to found on it, or which they had just finished founding.<sup>15</sup>

What, then, was the Mercian king's role, if he was not the minster's founder or the source of its initial landed endowment? The purpose of a charter such as Æthelric's in respect of Wootton Wawen was, I suggest, two-fold. Firstly, it signified that Æthelbald, as the grantee's overlord, was giving his permission for a substantial area of land to be taken out of the public domain and, as it were, privatized by being given to a minster. There can be little doubt that the powers of early Anglo-Saxon kings included the active supervision of the use of all land on their subjects' behalf. The arrival of the Augustinian mission in 597 posed an entirely new problem for these kings, in that each of the many minsters set up in the first century and a half of English Christianity required a substantial, and permanent, landed endowment. But this created a significant difficulty. For instance, what we know of early Northumbrian history shows that in the first flush of enthusiasm for founding and endowing minster communities, so much land was handed over to these spiritual warriors that there was not enough left to sustain the kingdom's military strength. The Mercian kings seem to have learnt from this bad example for, wherever they had overlordship, charter evidence indicates that they insisted that no land should be given to the church without their own specific royal ratification.<sup>16</sup>

Accordingly, in 672×74 we see Frithuwold, the ruler of the people of Surrey, wanting to give a large block of his own land to an existing minster at Chertsey; but before he could do so, he needed his charter to be taken to the Mercian royal residence at Thame in Oxfordshire, for inspection and ratification by his overlord Wulfhere.<sup>17</sup> Several years later the Hwiccian king Oshere similarly had to ask Wulfhere's successor Æthelred to approve his charter in favour of the minster at Ripple (Worcs.).<sup>18</sup> By the early 690s at the latest the extent of Æthelred's direct interference in the kingdom of the Hwicce had increased.

15 I first alluded, very briefly, to this hypothesis in Steven Bassett, "In Search of the Origins of Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms," in *The Origins of Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms*, ed. Steven Bassett (Leicester, 1989), pp. 3–27, at p. 18; and then at length in my review of Sims-Williams, *Religion*, in *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 43 (1992), pp. 300–01.

16 Nicholas Brooks, "The Development of Military Obligations in Eighth- and Ninth-Century England," in *England Before the Conquest: Studies in Primary Sources Presented to Dorothy Whitelock*, ed. Peter Clemoes and Kathleen Hughes (Cambridge, 1971), pp. 69–84; repr. in Nicholas Brooks, *Communities and Warfare 700–1400* (London, 2000), pp. 32–47; Steven Bassett, "Divide and Rule? The Military Infrastructure of Eighth- and Ninth-Century Mercia," *EME* 15 (2007), 53–85; David Rollason, *Northumbria, 500–1100. Creation and Destruction of a Kingdom* (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 188–90.

17 S 1165.

18 S 52. For Oshere: Finberg, "Princes," p. 172; Bassett, "Offa," pp. 8, 10 and Fig. 1 on p. 9.

In 692 we find the first reliable charter of several which Æthelred himself issued in respect of land in that kingdom. It concerned ten hides of land at Wychbold (Worcs.), and the charter's recipient was Oslaf, whom it described as Æthelred's former *minister*, i.e. royal official.<sup>19</sup> This land ended up in Worcester cathedral's hands, but Oslaf probably wished to be able to endow the minster at Dodderhill, which was the mother-church of the whole Droitwich area, including Wychbold itself where the ten hides of land were located.<sup>20</sup>

In such charters Æthelred stated that he was booking land for ecclesiastical use at the request of this or that Hwiccian ruler or aristocrat.<sup>21</sup> From then on, with few exceptions, it seems that even the most senior members of the Hwiccian royal family could endow a minster only indirectly. In the Wychbold charter Æthelred said that he was booking the land "rogante me Oslauuo" ("at Oslaf's request"); and in Æthelbald's Wootton Wawen charter, as another example, the equivalent phrase is "rogatus ab eo" (literally, "having been asked by him"—i.e. by Æthelric—but, colloquially, "at his request").

It is this aspect of these charters above all else which shows that the Mercian kings were issuing them to members of the Hwiccian royal family and other aristocrats, and presumably to their peers elsewhere in England, in respect of the latter's own lands. The occurrence of the phrase "at his request" or its equivalent may be said to make this conclusion unavoidable. However, I do not wish to be thought to be ignoring the possibility that Mercian kings had land of their own in the kingdom of the Hwicce: they certainly did. Offa and Coenwulf, for instance, appear to have had Hwiccian ancestors on one side of their respective families, from whom they both presumably inherited land; and a century earlier, another Mercian king, Æthelred, may have had personal rights over land in the Avon valley as a result of his first marriage.<sup>22</sup> But it is not land of this sort which we are considering here, nor any land which Mercian kings might have acquired in neighbouring kingdoms by other means. The charters which they issued in respect of their own land in the kingdom of

19 His name suggests that he might have been a member of the Hwiccian royal family, but he is otherwise unknown.

20 S 75; *Hemingi Chartularium Ecclesiae Wigorniensis*, ed. T. Hearne (Oxford 1723), p. 278; Steven Bassett, "Sitting Above the Salt: The Origins of the Borough of Droitwich," in *A Commodity of Good Names: Essays in Honour of Margaret Gelling*, ed. O.J. Padel and David N. Parsons (Stamford 2008), pp. 6–17.

21 On the booking of land, in particular to the Church, see Chris Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages: Europe and the Mediterranean 400–800* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 314–18.

22 For Offa and Coenwulf: Sims-Williams, *Religion*, pp. 152–53, 166–67, and references cited there; Bassett, "In Search," pp. 239–40, n. 29, and p. 241, n. 35. For Æthelred: Bassett, "Offa," p. 17. The Avon being referred to here is the Warwickshire-Worcestershire river, not the so-called Bristol Avon.

the Hwicce are usually easy to distinguish from the ones being discussed. That is to say, they are easy to distinguish from the charters in which the grantee is a member of the Hwiccian royal family or other aristocrat (or occasionally a “servant of God” at Worcester or a nun), and in which the grantor is “asked” by the grantee to book the land in question. In all such cases this land was clearly destined for use by a minster somewhere in the diocese.

In one instance there is evidence which directly corroborates my interpretation of these Mercian royal charters. In 736 or 737 a synod chaired by Archbishop Nothhelm tackled the problem of who owned the minster at Withington (Gloucs.). The statement of the synod’s decision relates that

Æthelred ... with his companion Oshere, sub-king of the Hwicce, having been asked by him, conferred into ecclesiastical right with free possession land of 20 hides ... to two nuns, Dunne and her daughter Bucga, for the construction of a minster on it for the forgiveness of his [*or their*] sins and strengthened this their donation with the subscription of his own hand.<sup>23</sup>

This is almost certainly a quotation taken directly from Æthelred’s charter, since according to the synodal statement there were two copies of it currently available. Unfortunately, it is not a charter of which there is a surviving copy; but it was evidently one of the type being considered here, with Æthelred figuring as the grantor and Oshere, entitled sub-king of the Hwicce, as the person who wanted the land booked and who was, I contend, its actual owner. It is enough to say that the synod confirmed Dunne’s granddaughter in her claim to be the minster’s rightful abbess, and it allegedly stipulated that after her death the church should be placed under Worcester’s direct control.<sup>24</sup>

23 “Æthelred cum comite suo subregula [*sic*] Huicciorum Oshere rogatus ab eo terram xx cassatorum ... duabus sanctimonialibus Dunnan videlicet et ejus filiæ Bucgan ad construendum in ea monasterium in jus ecclesiasticum sub libera potestate pro uenia facinorum suorum condonauit, propriæque manus subscriptione hanc eorum donationem firmavit.” S 1429; Birch, *Cartularium Saxonicum*, 1:225–26 (no. 156). Both Dorothy Whitelock (*EHD* 1, p. 494) and Patrick Sims-Williams (*Religion*, p. 131) have translated *pro uenia facinorum suorum* as “for the forgiveness of his sins,” i.e. Æthelred’s, but it is possible that *suorum* refers to Dunne and Bucga. The English translation given here follows Sims-Williams’s, with otherwise only minor alterations. For Dunne see Barbara Yorke, *Nunneries and the Anglo-Saxon Royal Houses* (London, 2003), pp. 34, 57.

24 I say “allegedly” since our only record of this stipulation is in a Worcester cartulary, and, if it is a copyist’s interpolation, it would be only one among many suspected ones. For an incisive discussion of Worcester’s manipulation of its records in the 11th century: Tinti, *Sustaining Belief*, chapter 3.

About 40 years after the synod we again hear about the Withington minster. In 774 Bishop Milred of Worcester leased its land to Abbess Æthelburg for her lifetime. In his charter, of which we have a reliable copy, he helpfully rehearsed the church's earlier history, stating that the land in question had been granted to Dunne by Oshere, sub-king of the Hwicce, with the consent of Æthelred, king of the Mercians, to be held by ecclesiastical right:

I, Milred ... humble bishop of the Hwicce, grant the land of the minster called Withington... [i.e.] 21 hides. This is the land which Oshere, sub-king of the Hwicce, bestowed on a handmaid of God, Dunne, so that it might be in the church's legal possession, with the consent of Æthelred, king of the Mercians. ... I willingly deliver it to the honourable Abbess Æthelburh, Ælfred's daughter.<sup>25</sup>

Here, then, we have an explicit corroboration that Oshere, not Æthelred, owned the land which the latter had booked by his now-lost charter.

I turn now to what I see as the second purpose of charters such as Æthelbald's to Æthelric concerning the minster at Wootton Wawen. It is a more specific one—indeed, it is one which in some earlier examples plainly overlaps with the purpose which has been discussed above. This second purpose was to free the grantee's land from public renders and other obligations, so that he could give it, entirely unburdened, to the community of the minster named in the charter. As with all land over which the Mercians had overlordship, this land would have been subject to burdens of a sort which we may loosely call national ones, as well, no doubt, as to other burdens of only local significance. So, if anyone wished to use some of his land to endow a minster, and thereby supply those belonging to its community with part or all of their livelihood, he would hope to divert to their benefit the full potential profits from the land concerned. But this would involve handing it over free, not only from all his own and his family's interests in it, but also from the king's. Donors would want the land's agricultural and other produce to be entirely devoted to the service of God; and for a long time their Mercian overlords, too, anticipated spiritual

25 "Ego Milredus ... humilis Huicciorum episcopus terram monasterii quod nominatur Uuidiandun ... xxi manentia, quam uidelicet terram Oshere subregulus Huicciorum Dunnan famulæ Dei ut esset juris ecclesiastici tradidit consentiente Æthelredo regi Marciorum ... Nunc ergo ... libenter Æthelburge honorabili abbatissæ filiæ Ælfredi eam trado." S 1255. Birch, *Cartularium Saxonicum*, 1: 305 (no. 217). Ælfred and Æthelburg were members of the Hwiccian royal family: Finberg, "Princes," p. 178.

returns from such grants which far outweighed the earthly renders which they were willing to forego.

The earliest known reliable charter texts usually say nothing about tax impositions, or else they report that the minsters concerned were to hold the land freely. In the Wootton Wawen charter Æthelbald stated that he was granting the land “entirely freely” (*licenter omnino*). But within a few years of issuing this charter Æthelbald began insisting that national renders should from then on be paid from land which had been put to ecclesiastical use as much as from all other land. Consequently, the later the date of issue of the Wootton Wawen charter within the period 716–37, the more hardly won was the privilege which Æthelric gained by it. These national renders are, of course, the *trimoda necessitas*—the three-fold obligation of maintaining ‘burhs’ (i.e. fortified settlements), of building and repairing bridges, and of contributing men for army service.<sup>26</sup>

From the middle years of the 8th century, therefore, Mercian charters typically freed the lands of minsters from all tax burdens except the three-fold obligation. One example of a reliable charter which goes even further than this is worth mentioning. It is one which was issued jointly by Offa and the Hwiccian king Ealdred in favour of the minster at Bishop’s Cleeve (Gloucs.):

Wherefore I, Offa ... have pondered in my heart that, from among these earthly royal trappings of rule which I have received from the creator and bestower of all benefits, I should for my soul’s relief and the gaining of heavenly wealth give something, however unworthy, to the Church for the profit of monastic liberty. Hence I and Ealdred, sub-king of the Hwicce, together grant for the Lord Almighty’s sake and for the eternal health of our souls land of fifteen hides, that is, the estate called *Timbingctun*, to the minster community which is properly said to be at Cleeve and to the church of the blessed archangel Michael which has been founded there, giving this land freely into ecclesiastical possession.<sup>27</sup>

26 W.H. Stevenson, “Trinoda Necessitas,” *EHR* 29 (1914), pp. 689–703, in which all references to it in Anglo-Saxon charters are listed in n. 3 on p. 689; Brooks, “Development of Military Obligations,” pp. 69–84; John Baker and Stuart Brookes, *Beyond the Burghal Hidage. Anglo-Saxon Civil Defence in the Viking Age* (Leiden and Boston, 2013), pp. 43–44, 152–53.

27 “Quapropter ego Offa .... [c]ogitavi in corde meo quatinus ex his sceptris regalibus mundanis regni perceptis a conditore ac largitore omnium bonorum aliquid quamuis minus dignum pro remedio animæ meæ et pro adipiscenda præmia polorum in usus monasticæ liberalitatis ecclesiis donarem. Ideoque ego et Aldredus subregulus Huicciorum in comune pro domino omnipotenti et pro eterna salute animæ nostræ terram ter quinos

This charter can be dated to 777×79. By then the kingdom of the Hwicce had been almost wholly subsumed by the Mercians, and the latter's king had wide-ranging powers in it, including fiscal ones. After what has been seen in earlier charters, it should come as no surprise to find that this one's proem named Offa alone as the intending benefactor, with no mention being made of Ealdred prior to the statement of the actual grant. However, it was not Offa but the Hwiccian sub-king Ealdred who was giving this land to the church at Bishop's Cleeve—a minster which had almost certainly been founded by Ealdred's ancestors. In most respects, then, this was a purely Hwiccian affair. Offa's *munificencia* was not the grant of the land but the grant of it free of all secular burdens—burdens to which the charter makes no reference—at a time when almost all land in the kingdom of the Hwicce was subject to the three-fold obligation. In other words, from Ealdred the minster community at Bishop's Cleeve gained land, and from Offa it merely gained the right to hold on to the whole of whatever profit it could manage to squeeze out of the land and its occupants.

Before the wider implications of this discussion are considered, a related issue needs to be addressed. If the land given to the minsters at, for instance, Daylesford, Wootton Wawen and Withington belonged not to the Mercian grantor of the charters concerned but to the Hwiccian grantee, was a separate charter of foundation issued to each one's community? This question can be asked about most of the minsters in the diocese of Worcester. Those referred to in late 7th- and 8th-century charters fall into three categories. There are the ones, such as the minster at Wootton Wawen, of which we know from charters which Mercian kings issued to the men who were their actual benefactors. These may look like foundation charters but, as has been argued here, they are not. Secondly, there are well established churches like Bishop's Cleeve to which additional lands or privileges were being granted, or ones like those at Withington, Cheltenham and Beckford (both Gloucs.), for instance, which are referred to only because they were the object of a dispute.<sup>28</sup>

Finally, there are one, or at the most two, Hwiccian minsters which seem at first sight to have been set up by a Mercian king acting on his own. One is

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mansiones habentem, id est uicum qui nominatur Timbingctun, ad monasterium quod proprie nuncupatur æt Clife et ad ecclesiam beati Michahelis archangeli quæ inibi fundata est libenter in ecclesiasticam possessionem donantes concedimus." S 141; Birch, *Cartularium Saxonicum*, 1:340–42 (no. 246); Scharer, *Die angelsächsische Königsurkunde*, pp. 243–44. Now also see Steven Bassett, "The Anglo-Saxon minster at Bishop's Cleeve (Gloucestershire) and its lands," in *Names, Texts and Landscapes in the Middle Ages. A Memorial Volume for Duncan Probert*, ed. Steven Bassett and Alison J. Spedding (forthcoming).

28     Respectively, S 141, S 1429, S 1255, S 1431.

Winchcombe (Gloucs.), with an alleged foundation charter which purports to have been issued in 811 by King Coenwulf; but this is widely held to be a 12th-century fabrication.<sup>29</sup> The other minster is Hanbury, which was arguably mentioned in a now-lost charter of Wulfhere. If it was authentic it may well have been a charter, given to its abbot by the first Christian Mercian overlord of the Hwicce, by which the latter confirmed the minster in its existing landed endowment.<sup>30</sup> Accordingly, none of the authentic charters being discussed here is likely to have been a foundation charter.

There is only one church for which we have a very probably authentic charter of foundation. Issued in 693 by the Hwiccian king Oshere, the charter grants land to an Abbess Cuthswith for setting up a minster at *Penintanham*—almost certainly Inkberrow (Worcs.)—with Cuthswith herself as its first abbess.<sup>31</sup> If we also look at the charters whose authenticity is in doubt, we find that for no more than three other minsters—Gloucester, Bath and perhaps Ripple—there are substantially ‘improved’ texts which may nonetheless embody an authentic record of their having been set up by the Hwiccian kings Osric and Oshere respectively.<sup>32</sup> However, all three are probably much later fabrications which may reliably identify the minster’s founder, but which purport to be a foundation charter which may never have existed.

In many other parts of England we may reasonably account for the dearth of foundation charters in terms of the non-survival of Anglo-Saxon sources. But occurring as it does at Worcester, the Anglo-Saxon see with the best surviving records, this dearth may, perhaps uniquely, reflect a historical reality. It may mean that very few foundation charters as such were ever issued in the kingdom of the Hwicce. That is to say, when getting a Mercian overlord’s permission to divert land to ecclesiastical use was an unavoidable chore, the minster’s abbot or abbess would be given a copy of the resultant charter, as Dunne was at Withington, but no other documentation would be issued; but when getting the overlord’s permission was unnecessary or could be avoided, Hwiccian rulers may only rarely have issued foundation charters of their own.

However, it would be wrong to presume that there can have been few charters issued in the diocese of Worcester in the late 7th and 8th centuries of

29 S 167.

30 Steven Bassett, “A Lost Late Seventh-Century Charter concerning Hanbury (Worcs.),” *Transactions of the Worcestershire Archaeological Society*, 3rd Series, 26 (2018), 107–11.

31 S 53; H.P.R. Finberg, *The Early Charters of Wessex* (Leicester, 1964), p. 251 (cf. Margaret Gelling, “Recent Work on Anglo-Saxon Charters,” *The Local Historian* 13 (1978), 209–16, at p. 212); Patrick Sims-Williams, “Cuthswith, Seventh-Century Abbess of Inkberrow, near Worcester, and the Würzburg Manuscript of Jerome on Ecclesiastes,” *ASE* 5 (1976), 1–21; Yorke, *Nunneries*, pp. 57–58.

32 Respectively, S 70, S 51, S 52.

which we are unaware. The quantity and quality of the charters which survive there should not lead us to imagine that what we lack cannot ever have existed. For instance, we occasionally read in early sources about Hwiccian charters of which we are otherwise ignorant. Moreover, some of the charters which we have as single-sheet manuscripts, and which concern lands acquired by the church of Worcester in the 8th and 9th centuries, do not figure in its cartularies. Presumably these were charters which had been superseded by later ones, and so, being seen as of no further value, were not copied into Worcester's 11th-century cartularies. Finally, many of the early minsters known from charters are ones which came into Worcester's hands while they still had their landed endowments intact; retaining such charters was plainly in the head minster's best interests. But there were many other minsters in the diocese of which Worcester appears not to have gained control in the 8th and 9th centuries. A few of them, such as Evesham and Gloucester, preserved their charters (or at least alleged that they had); but for most of the minsters which did not come into Worcester's hands, any charters which they had may have stood very little chance of surviving.<sup>33</sup> It would be unwise, then, to assume that most minsters in the diocese of Worcester were set up without a charter of any sort being issued.

Two sorts of conclusions may be offered. First, we are faced with the likelihood that we know rather less than we thought that we did about the circumstances in which individual minsters were set up in the diocese of Worcester, or indeed about the date of their foundation. Some of the charters referred to here may have been issued at the time at which the minsters concerned were founded, or only shortly afterwards; but others may be significantly retrospective. The latter may be ones which were acquired by a minster community whose church had been founded before Mercian kings began to require all proposed grants of land to churches to be submitted for their ratification. No Hwiccian king is mentioned in, for example, King Æthelred's surviving charter in respect of the land which the West Saxon minster at Malmesbury held at Tetbury in the neighbouring kingdom of the Hwicce.<sup>34</sup> These charters are among the very earliest which we know of in the west midlands, and each may have been solicited by an abbot who was gravely concerned that the increasing overlordly power of the Mercian kings within the kingdom of the Hwicce threatened his church's rights over its land there. It may be no coincidence that

33 Worcester may sometimes have incorporated text from charters granted to the minster communities whose lands it took control of, producing spurious replacements which claimed that it itself had been the recipient of the grants concerned. For a probable example: Bassett, "Offa," pp. 14–16, 20.

34 S 71, which Susan Kelly reckons to be essentially acceptable: *Charters of Malmesbury Abbey*, ed. S.E. Kelly, Anglo-Saxon Charters 11 (Oxford, 2005), pp. 135–38.

if we were to search for monastic churches which may already have existed before the Anglo-Saxon Church established firm control in western England, Malmesbury would arguably be among the prime candidates.

My second conclusion has wider implications. In so far as the surviving Worcester charters form a representative sample from which we may reasonably hope to generalize, we see in them a new measure of the rate of subjection of the Hwicce to Mercian control. The role of early Mercian kings in the setting up of Hwiccian minsters is significantly redefined by this focus on the implication of phrases such as “rogatus ab eo” (“at his request”) and “rogante me Oslauuo” (“at Oslaf’s request”), and, more broadly, on what evidence we have of whose land these minsters were gaining. This has led to the realization that the Mercian kings were not their founders, and that it was the recipients of their charters who founded the churches concerned (or whose ancestors did, in cases where they already existed). Accordingly, the extent to which the early Mercian kings personally owned land in the kingdom of the Hwicce should now be reconsidered. We need not believe that they had many large estates scattered around the kingdom, on which they set up well endowed minster communities which may have been designed to act as a Mercian fifth column, or from which they rewarded Hwiccian collaborators for faithful service.

That said, however, the reality of the Mercian kings’ overlordship of the Hwicce is not called into question by this new way of looking at their charters. Rather, it reveals that the amount of direct control which the Mercians had over the Hwicce was at first far less than has frequently been assumed. Instead, we have found yet another indication that their control increased steadily with time, taking a century or more to achieve the total domination which they undoubtedly had by the end of the 8th century. It was a domination which came, moreover, not from military conquest, but from a policy of aggressive diplomacy sustained over a long period of time and backed up by the ever-real threat of military intervention.<sup>35</sup>

The obvious corollary of this is that the rulers of the Hwicce had scope for more independent action than used to be thought and that they had it for much longer. Stenton first argued in 1918 that their deteriorating status through time was expressed in their changing titles in charters in which their Mercian overlord also had a hand.<sup>36</sup> This growing subordination was matched by that of

35 Bassett, “Divide and Rule?” pp. 54–61.

36 F.M. Stenton, “The Supremacy of the Mercian Kings,” *EHR* 33 (1918), 433–52; reprinted in *Preparatory to Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. Doris Mary Stenton (Oxford, 1970), pp. 48–66. Also see Scharer, *Die angelsächsische Königsurkunde*, pp. 255–59; Barbara Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo-Saxon England* (London, 1990), pp. 108–09.

their peers in other kingdoms, even though the quality of information which we find in Hwiccian charters far surpasses what is available for most of the other polities which succumbed to the Mercians. We also see their steadily increasing subordination in other ways, such as the broadening geographical distribution of the grants of Hwiccian land made by successive Mercian kings acting on their own.<sup>37</sup> However, the charters of the type discussed here should not beguile us into underestimating the extent to which their own subjects thought of the rulers of the Hwicce as real kings in the late 7th and 8th centuries.

In almost every context in which we have observed these rulers, they were going through the motions necessary to keep their Mercian overlords content. The latter's role may look like the predominant one in founding new minsters in the kingdom of the Hwicce, in adding to the lands of existing ones, and (as, arguably, with Malmesbury), in confirming them in what they already had. But appearances may be deceptive, especially when the trappings of royal majesty are concerned. An overlord could be expected to emphasize both his own overlordship and the lesser ruler's subordination—and we can see this very clearly in the charters which concern Hwiccian land. But by scraping away the Mercian veneer on the transactions which they record, we find that in most cases we are hearing about Hwiccian royal or aristocratic donations to the kingdom's minsters, not Mercian ones. Mercian kings insisted on ratifying all land transactions in the polities of those rulers who recognized their overlordship. When it pleased them to do so, they could be generous to minster communities by allowing them to hold their lands tax-free. But in most cases, and possibly in all of them, this was the limit of their generosity. The lands which these minsters held had been granted to them, not by the Mercian kings who figure so prominently in the charters, but by the local ruler or by other leading members of his polity. This enables us to see that the role of these Mercian kings in the setting up of minsters in areas over which they had overlordship was a much slighter one than it has been previously thought to have been.<sup>38</sup>

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37 Bassett, "In Search," pp. 8–17.

38 An early version of this chapter was given as a paper at the University of Birmingham's Medieval History Research Seminar in January 2011. I am grateful for the discussion of it then, and respectively to Michael Hare and Sarah Wager and to Ryan Lavelle and an anonymous referee for their helpful comments on two subsequent versions.

## Beyond the Billingas: From Lay Wealth to Monastic Wealth on the Lincolnshire Fen-Edge

*John Blair*

Barbara Yorke's manifold contributions to Anglo-Saxon history—in her books, articles, lectures and ubiquitous conference appearances—have never lacked chronological or thematic breadth. A notable strength of her work is an emphasis on the largely undocumented 6th century as a historical period in its own right, determinative of critical changes in the 7th. She has also done more than most to illuminate the immediately pre-Christian and secular contexts of early monastic life. I hope she will like this case-study in continuity, which illustrates how the spectacular but ultimately transient religious culture of the later 7th to 9th centuries rested on older socio-economic and territorial foundations.

It also considers a part of England (once tackled by Barbara herself in a magisterial survey article)<sup>1</sup> which even for the age of Bede is largely undocumented, and which therefore demands creative use of the fast-growing archaeological record. To explore what was going on during *c.*600–850 in the dynamic and prosperous 'eastern zone',<sup>2</sup> comprising the east midlands, Norfolk, Lincolnshire and south-east Yorkshire, encounters special challenges that are not always fully acknowledged. On the one hand, that region provides most of our physical evidence for buildings, settlements, coins, pottery and other artifacts. On the other hand, it is almost completely deficient in written sources of a kind that might illuminate conditions at a local level. That makes the temptation to extrapolate from Kentish and West Saxon laws, or the charter archives of major churches in other parts of England, hard to resist. Yet there are grounds for suspecting that those texts describe societies of a significantly different kind: less wealthy at grassroots level, less dynamic, more hierarchical.

It is that combination of material richness with archival poverty that makes the 7th- to 9th-century archaeology of the region so controversial. Eastern

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1 Barbara Yorke, "Lindsey: the lost Kingdom Found?" in *Pre-Viking Lindsey*, ed. Alan Vince (Lincoln, 1993), pp. 141–50.

2 As defined by John Blair, *Building Anglo-Saxon England* (Princeton, 2018), pp. 24–51, which offers a framework for the present discussion of regionality.

England abounds in metal-detected (and occasionally excavated) ‘productive sites’ that yield recurrent sets of metal objects, often displaying prominent Christian symbolism or implying literacy. Some of these places contain or adjoin churches, or occupy topographical settings—notably islands, promontories and river-bends—that have been considered distinctively monastic. Were they inhabited by aristocrats with a strong interest in ecclesiastical material culture, or by high-living ecclesiastics? Is it really possible that monastic communities were so thick on the ground in eastern England?<sup>3</sup>

Although East Anglia has been the main focus of this debate, the most prolific settlement of this kind so far recognized was at Flixborough, in north-western Lindsey near the Humber estuary. The present study looks at a region of Kesteven, on the southern Lincolnshire fen-edge, that has not produced an assemblage of this kind (though it does contain the most coin-rich ‘productive site’ in England), and has not figured in the minster debate. It is, however, in the virtually unique position of being documented: it is the subject of the only genuine pre-Viking legal text that unambiguously relates to a specific place in Lincolnshire, Norfolk or Suffolk (S 1440 [AD 852]).<sup>4</sup> Moreover, its archaeological record has filled out in recent years, notably for the immediately pre-monastic era. In combination, these sources make it possible to reconstruct an unusually coherent picture, which may offer lessons for the minster debate in other parts of eastern England.

### The Billingas and Before: Ethnic and Social Identity, 400–650

This study concerns a fifteen-mile stretch of the fen-edge in central-east Kesteven, confronting the peat fen where it surrounds the west corner of the Wash (Fig. 19.1). The landscape is low-lying, with a mixed geology of limestones, mudstones, tills and glacial sand and gravel. The eastern edge towards the fen is heavily dissected with inlets, alternating with occasional islands of mainly glacial deposits. In the early middle ages, however, the (almost certainly) Romano-British Car Dyke constituted an emphatic man-made division between inhabited land and fen.

3 For some recent views: John Blair, “Flixborough Revisited,” *ASSAH* 17 (2011), 101–07; Christopher Loveluck, *Northwest Europe in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 2013), pp. 124–42; Andrew Tester et al., *Staunch Meadow, Brandon, Suffolk*, *East Anglian Archaeology* 151 (Bury St Edmunds, 2014), pp. 377–93.

4 S 1804 and 1805 (AD 675×92) probably refer to Repton, not Ripplingale; S 1412 (AD 786×96) may refer to Swineshead in Bedfordshire, not Lincolnshire: see S.E. Kelly, ed., *Charters of Peterborough Abbey*, *Anglo-Saxon Charters* 14 (Oxford, 2009), pp. 183–85, 205.

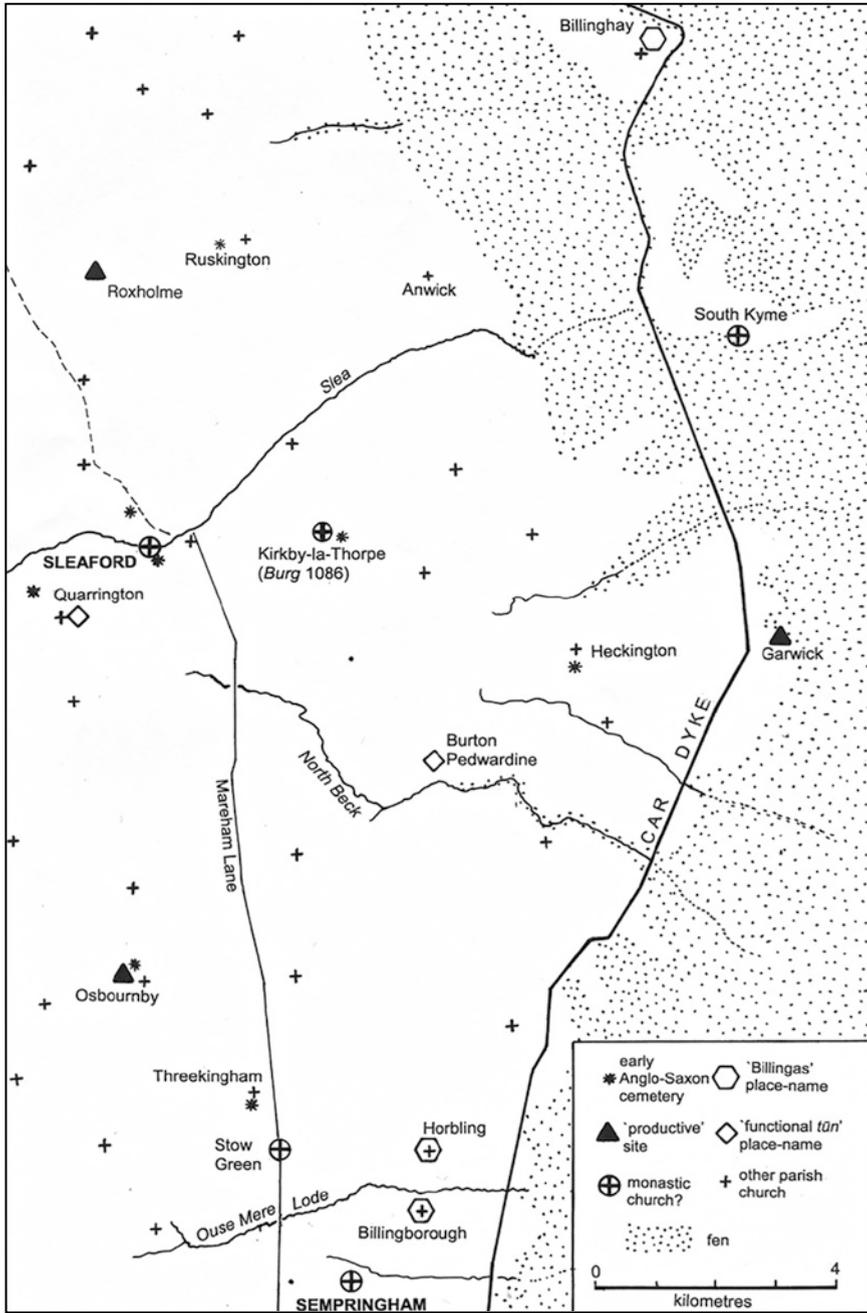


FIGURE 19.1 The land of the Billingas: south-east Lincolnshire and the fen-edge, showing places mentioned in the text

The early Anglo-Saxon archaeology of this zone has been reviewed by Caitlin Green, in her study of post-Roman Lincolnshire.<sup>5</sup> Green makes a powerful case for a long-term coherence and identity through the late Romano-British to early Anglo-Saxon eras, apparent in finds of post-Roman British items and in concentrations of cremation and inhumation cemeteries. For present purposes, we may especially note the large cremation cemetery at Quarrington near Sleaford, and a scatter of inhumation cemeteries running southwards from Ruskington via Sleaford to Folkingham. Green comments:

The sense, derived from their distribution and separation from the other cemeteries of northern Kesteven, that the Ruskington-Sleaford-Folkingham group of cemeteries may represent a genuine early Anglo-Saxon 'settlement unit' and territory, is heightened by a closer examination of the archaeology of this part of northern Kesteven.<sup>6</sup>

That archaeological perspective gains support from a trio of 'folk-group' place-names running down the fen-edge: Billingham, Horbling and Billingborough. These incorporate the name of an extended kindred, the 'Billingas',<sup>7</sup> and their close proximity to the self-contained funerary landscape of the cemeteries is suggestive. Whether or not the Billingas should be identified with the 'Bilmigas' of the Tribal Hidage (Green concludes, with prudent though possibly slightly excessive scepticism, that they should not), they look broadly comparable to the other territorially-defined groups in the Middle Anglian section of that text.<sup>8</sup>

This combined evidence points to a stable and long-term social identity. At some point—presumably in the 6th or 7th century—the inhabitants, though probably of mixed Brittonic and Anglian origin, made that identity explicit by associating themselves with an eponymous Billa and his following. To some extent, this strong territorial coherence would have evolved naturally from the distinctness of their geographical niche, along the eastern and seawards-facing side of the zone between the Trent and the Wash. Beyond that, though, it must have been heightened by the economic possibilities of that location. There

5 Thomas [Caitlin] Green, *Britons and Anglo-Saxons: Lincolnshire AD 400–650* (Lincoln, 2012), especially pp. 60–77, 128–37, 170–202, is the source for this section except where otherwise stated.

6 Green, *Britons and Anglo-Saxons*, p. 187.

7 Green, *Britons and Anglo-Saxons*, p. 40 and n. 41.

8 Cf. Green, *Britons and Anglo-Saxons*, pp. 185–86. Given the probably convoluted transmission of the Tribal Hidage, an amendment of 'Bilmigas' to 'Billingas' does not seem implausible to me.

were strong incentives to harness means of production and exchange: the opportunity was there to become extremely rich.

### Exchange and Wealth: The Background to the High Monastic Era

The fen-edge was a crucial but in some ways self-contained zone in the economy and society of Anglo-Saxon England.<sup>9</sup> The hagiographer Felix, writing c.720–40, famously pictured the “most dismal fen of immense size, [...] now consisting of marshes, now of bogs, sometimes of black waters overhung by fog, sometimes studded with wooded islands and traversed by the windings of tortuous streams.”<sup>10</sup> This dismissive language belies the archaeological message that the coastal strip had a dynamic role in food-production, and as an interface with economies of the North Sea zone, which must have made it very significant indeed for high-consuming Mercian elites. The fen-edge communities are likely to have had their own strong sense of identity,<sup>11</sup> but it may have been one defined more by the seaways eastwards than by English neighbours westwards.

Socially distinctive or not, the Billingas people were not isolated economically. Green writes of the Sleaford burials:

[T]his cemetery was not only exceptionally large, but also exceptionally well connected to the outside world. Thus, for example, many more amber beads—around 981 in total—have been found in the Sleaford cemetery than in any other Anglo-Saxon cemetery in England, these being mainly used in the sixth century and probably imported from the Baltic. Similarly, there is a notable concentration of walrus- or elephant-ivory rings in the Sleaford cemetery, and this cemetery has also produced more

9 Andy Crowson, Tom Lane, Keith Penn and Dale Trimble, *Anglo-Saxon Settlement on the Siltland of Eastern England*, Lincolnshire Archaeology and Heritage Reports 7 (Heckington, 2005); Katherina Ulmschneider, “Settlement, Economy and the ‘Productive Site’: Middle Anglo-Saxon Lincolnshire AD 650–780,” *Medieval Archaeology* 44 (2000), 53–79, at pp. 70–71.

10 Felix, *Vita Sancti Guthlaci*, chapter 24, ed. Bertram Colgrave, *Felix's Vita Sancti Guthlaci* (Cambridge, 1956), pp. 86–87: “Est in meditullaneis Britanniae partibus immensae magnitudinis aterrima palus, ... nunc stagnis, nunc flactris interdum nigris fusi vaporis laticibus necnon et crebris insularum nemorumque intervenientibus flexuosis rivigarum anfractibus.”

11 For the distinctive perceptions of coastal communities see Aidan O’Sullivan, “Place, Memory and Identity among Estuarine Fishing Communities: Interpreting the Archaeology of Early Medieval Fish Weirs,” *World Archaeology* 35:3 (2003), 449–68.

than twice as many probably imported crystal beads (again, primarily a sixth-century artefact) as any other Anglo-Saxon cemetery.<sup>12</sup>

How did this material arrive? Thanks to the work of Adam Daubney and Michael Metcalf, one entry-point for luxuries is now known with confidence. Two miles east of Heckington village, and immediately beyond the Car Dyke, is a spur of high ground projecting from the fen-edge. Its name ‘Garwick’, recorded from the thirteenth century, probably means ‘trading-place (*wīc*) of triangular shape’.<sup>13</sup> The Anglo-Saxon items metal-detected there comprise fourteen artefacts from the 6th century, 23 artefacts from the 7th to mid-9th centuries, 26 gold tremisses of c.570–670, some 240 sceattas from c.715–50, and just three post-750 pennies.<sup>14</sup> This quantity of coins is phenomenal, surpassing any other ‘productive site’ in England; to put the gold coins in context, the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) database for the whole of Lincolnshire contains just one further example. While they raise questions as well as answering them (notably the odd disjuncture between the tremisses up to 670, which are from Frankish mints but excluding Frisia and Dorestad, and the sceattas after 715, which are heavily Frisian and dominated by Dorestad), they point to a massive in-flow of wealth, presumably in exchange for English exports such as wool and perhaps slaves.<sup>15</sup>

For transport along the fen-edge, it is possible that the Car Dyke was still significant. Both the original and the post-Roman functions of this man-made channel are debated: was it a drain, a canal or a boundary? The detailed and admirably open-minded survey published in 2005 avoids definitive conclusions, but vindicates the canal option as plausible: “Whatever the purpose of the Car Dyke, it would serve, when completed, as a means of local transport.”<sup>16</sup>

12 Green, *Britons and Anglo-Saxons*, p. 191.

13 For a recent discussion of minor *wīc* names see Blair, *Building*, pp. 255–56. Field-boundaries at Garwick do indeed suggest a triangular area, with sides of c. 250 m., bisected by the road from Heckington to Swineshead Bridge.

14 Adam Jonathan Daubney, *Portable Antiquities, Palimpsests and Persistent Places: A Multi-Period Approach to Portable Antiquities Scheme Data in Lincolnshire* (Leiden, 2016), pp. 228–48; D.M. Metcalf, “Tremisses and Sceattas from the South Lincolnshire Productive Site,” *British Numismatic Journal* 86 (2016), 96–117.

15 Metcalf suggests that the tremisses may have been brought by Gallic slave-traders. That is certainly plausible, but it should perhaps not be taken for granted that these coins came direct from Francia, rather than at second-hand through more northerly intermediaries.

16 Brian B. Simmons and Paul Cope-Faulkner, *The Car Dyke: Past Work, Current State and Future Possibilities*, Lincolnshire Archaeology and Heritage Reports 8 (Sleaford, 2004), p. 163.

There is no evidence that it remained navigable in the early to middle Anglo-Saxon period, nor that it did not. Valuable corridor as it was between Lindsey in the north and Middle Anglia in the south, the natural (if not currently the usual) assumption may well be that the effort of keeping it clear of silt was always thought worthwhile.

Garwick must surely have been the point of interface between North Sea traders and the leaders of the Billingas, who could have organized transport of goods along the Car Dyke both northwards and southwards from the *wīc*: it helps to explain the exotic 6th-century luxuries at Sleaford, and also perhaps why those luxuries were concentrated in a minority of rich graves.<sup>17</sup> (Intriguingly, the three places with Billingas-related names are all within a mile of the Dyke.) In the 8th century, the sceattas show that participation in the Frisian commercial nexus continued at least up to the collapse of that currency. Despite the lack of broad pennies, it is not impossible that Garwick remained an economic node through the era of Mercian dominance: some of the silver items date from well into the 9th century.

Another economic 'persistent place' lay in the south-west of the territory, at Osbournby.<sup>18</sup> Here the time-span is even longer: the metal assemblage is dominated by Romano-British material, and continues through the late- and post-medieval periods. Artefact distributions of the 6th to 11th centuries (and later) show a strong spatial continuity. The items are also more typical than at Garwick, comprising the now-familiar mixture of strap-ends, hooked tags, pins and occasional coins—but lacking the styli and inscribed items that have become recognized signatures of putatively ecclesiastical sites. If Garwick hints at concentration and control, Osbournby reminds us that the economy in this rich zone of England is unlikely to have been monopolistic or command-driven. Rather, long-standing material prosperity gave scope for mutually advantageous interactions between grassroots communities and proprietorial elites, whether those elites were defined in terms of kindreds, warrior prowess, or the new monastic culture. Whoever was in charge, a place like Osbournby was always there.

Before we examine how ecclesiastical topography mapped onto the topography of kinship, proprietorship and commerce, a basic point needs to be made about all of them: this was a world of 'central clusters', not complex centres.<sup>19</sup> Before 10th-century urbanization, structured activities in the Anglo-Saxon landscape were not based on concentrated, multi-functional places, but

17 Green, *Britons and Anglo-Saxons*, p. 191.

18 Daubney, *Portable Antiquities*, pp. 120–79.

19 For this argument see Blair, *Building*, pp. 193–201.

on constellations of linked points with complementary functions. Some of the problems and concerns that arise from a later perspective are therefore irrelevant: we do not need to identify *the* secular centre, or *the* main church, but rather to establish which settlements, installations and churches were attached to which others. That is an institutional question, which conventionally requires written evidence, but it also has topographical dimensions that can leave their imprint on the landscape. In eastern England, that is usually all we have. In the present case, it is instructive—notwithstanding the unique survival of a document—to see first what can be made of the non-written evidence on its own.

Topographically and archaeologically, it is apparent that the Billingas region had two core nodes. These display a certain symmetry: they lie on the same Roman road, each of them contains a probable pre-monastic secular focus, and each includes ecclesiastical sites and possessions. We will approach them through the physical and onomastic evidence before turning to the unique testimony of S 1440, a mid-9th-century *Medeshamstede* charter.

### The Northern Cluster: Sleaford, Quarrington, Kirkby-la-Thorpe and South Kyme

The topographical and archaeological focus of the northern part of the territory is the complex settlement of Sleaford (Fig. 19.2).<sup>20</sup> This was itself divided in two by the alluvial river-valley of the Sleas, including Sleaford Fen immediately west of the town. North of the river, the supposed ‘planned town’ of New Sleaford and its parish church are now known to have Anglo-Saxon origins: in particular, a group of rectilinear though rather flimsy structures excavated immediately west of the church are tentatively dated to the 8th or 9th century.<sup>21</sup> At Holdingham, just outside the town to the north-west, an apparently sizeable settlement in the 5th- to 8th-century range has recently been located; Roxholme, slightly further north, was reported to be producing sceattas, pins, mounts and other eighth-century items as this paper was going to press.<sup>22</sup>

20 Sources for this section, except where otherwise stated, are: Christine Mahany and David Roffe, eds., *Sleaford*, South Lincolnshire Archaeology 3 (Stamford, 1979); Sheila M. Elsdon, *Old Sleaford Revealed*, Nottingham Studies in Archaeology 2 (Oxford, 1997).

21 Mahany and Roffe, *Sleaford*, pp. 20–27. This dating is implied by the presence of shelly wares combined with the absence of Stamford Ware.

22 P. Cope-Faulkner, “Archaeological Evaluation on Land at Lincoln Road, Holdingham, Sleaford, Lincolnshire,” unpublished evaluation report, Archaeological Project Services Rep. 10/06 (Sleaford, 2006); Roxholme finds reported by Adam Daubney, May 2018.

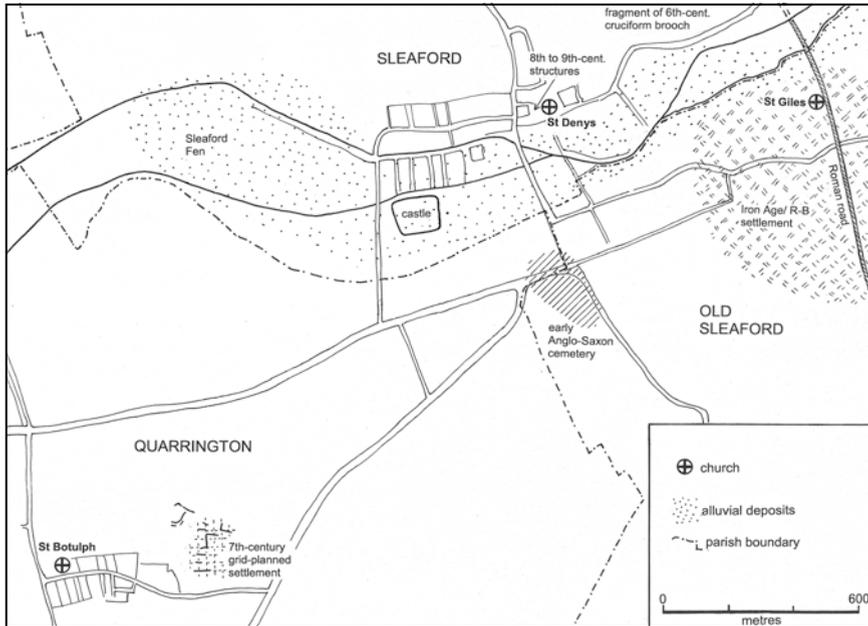


FIGURE 19.2 The historic core zone of Sleaford and Quarrington, showing sites mentioned in the text

Currently more impressive, however, is the material from south of the river, including the large late Iron Age and Roman settlement at Old Sleaford (bisected by Mareham Lane, the Roman road from *Durobrivae* near Peterborough to Lincoln) and the rich 6th-century cemetery mentioned earlier. At Quarrington, to the south-west, a complex settlement spanning the 5th to 8th centuries was excavated in the early 1990s.<sup>23</sup>

Lincolnshire is rich in settlement sites of the middle Anglo-Saxon period, and the Sleaford material of that date does not stand out as exceptional. Nonetheless, there are some indirect pointers to its special status. One is its formation around the burial focus of the 6th-century community, which clearly was exceptional in its day. Another is the collocation of three churches: St Denys's (probably the Bishop of Lincoln's church at Sleaford in Domesday Book) north of the river, St Botolph's at Quarrington and St Giles's at Old Sleaford (probably the two Domesday churches of Quarrington) south of the river.<sup>24</sup>

23 Gary Taylor et al, "An Early to Middle Saxon Settlement at Quarrington, Lincolnshire," *Antf* 83 (2003), 231–80.

24 GDB fols. 344v, 346v; Mahany and Roffe, *Sleaford*, pp. 13–14, 17.

A more concrete indicator comes from the Quarrington excavation, where a configuration of 7th- to 8th-century ditches seems to have been laid out using the technique of formal grid-planning. Recent research shows that this practice in pre-Viking England was especially associated with the monastic high culture, and it raises the possibility that Quarrington was some kind of monastic dependency.<sup>25</sup> The place-name (*cweorning tūn*, ‘millers’ settlement’) strengthens that possibility, since it is of a classically ‘functional’ type and suggests that this was a specialized dependency of some centre. Given the close tenurial links, that centre can scarcely have been other than Sleaford, which was a major grain-processing site later.<sup>26</sup>

One further comment in the Quarrington excavation report is worth quoting:

The range and variety of fabrics indicate that Quarrington had access to an extensive trading network. In the Early Saxon period, the fabrics at Quarrington are known to have come from southern, northern and central Lincolnshire as well as from Leicestershire. By the Middle Saxon period the source of the vessels was mainly the Northamptonshire area, with a smaller element from south and central Lincolnshire as well as a few sherds from Ipswich. Contact with the Lindsey part of Lincolnshire at this date seems very limited, with only four vessels from the area being found on the site.<sup>27</sup>

This southwards re-orientation of Quarrington’s economic links has implications to which we will return.

Two miles east of Sleaford is the village of Kirkby-la-Thorpe (*Chirchebi* in Domesday Book). There has been a consensus that the distinctive Old Norse compound *kirkja-bý(r)* reflects, in one way or another, the local presence of an important church in existence by the time of the Viking settlements.<sup>28</sup> Most recently, Tom Pickles’s careful analysis (focused on Yorkshire but with wider implications) identifies two alternative meanings: ‘church-farm’ in the sense of a daughter-house or cell of a minster containing its own church, and ‘farm

25 John Blair, “Grid-Planning in Anglo-Saxon Settlements: the Short Perch and the Four-Perch Module,” *ASSAH* 18 (2013), 18–61, at pp. 31–34; John Blair, Stephen Rippon and Chris Smart, *Planning in the Early Medieval Landscape* (Liverpool, 2020).

26 Simon Pawley, “Grist to the Mill: a New Approach to the Early History of Sleaford,” *Lincolnshire History and Archaeology* 23 (1988), 37–41.

27 Taylor et al. “Early to Middle Saxon Settlement,” 276.

28 John Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 310–11, and works cited.

of the church' in the sense of an estate belonging to a religious community.<sup>29</sup> In practice these meanings shade into each other, and in either case it seems likely on topographical grounds that the parent community was Sleaford.

One further site, manifestly ecclesiastical on artistic evidence, could have been part of the Sleaford complex, though the closest topographical analogy points in another direction. South Kyme is a sand and gravel island in the peat fen, facing the outflow of the River Slea. The existing parish church is part of an Augustinian priory founded in 1169, but it contains fragments of an exquisite panel-built stone chest or shrine from the late 8th or early 9th century. This has stylistic links with the 'Haedda Stone' at Peterborough (*Medeshamstede*), and with other Mercian sculpture at Breedon, Fletton and Castor.<sup>30</sup> A strikingly close parallel is the whalebone Gandersheim Casket—essentially a miniaturized version of the kind of composite shrine that the South Kyme fragments represent—of which Leslie Webster has written:

[It] reveals this artistry [the Mercian animal style] at its subtlest and most exquisite. ... One of its creatures, with a prancing posture and pointed wing, appears in identical form on a sculptured stone fragment at Castor, near Peterborough, suggesting that the same model was used for both. It therefore seems plausible that the casket ... was made at the great monastery of *Medeshamstede*.<sup>31</sup>

South Kyme church, then, had a context in the high monastic and cultural milieu of late 8th-century Mercia. It does not look important in any other way,<sup>32</sup> unless the 12th-century Augustinian foundation (or re-foundation?) reflects the kind of 'submerged continuity' that Tim Pestell has identified at a large number of East Anglian monastic sites.<sup>33</sup>

29 Thomas Pickles, *Kingship, Society and the Church in Anglo-Saxon Yorkshire* (Oxford, 2018), 244–45.

30 P. Everson and D. Stocker, *Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture*, 5: *Lincolnshire* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 248–51 and ills. 339–45.

31 Leslie Webster, *Anglo-Saxon Art* (London, 2012), pp. 106–8, 140–2.

32 However, Adam Daubney informs me (*pers. comm.*) that quantities of Middle Anglo-Saxon material have recently been metal-detected from a field near Anwick, some 3 miles (5 km) WNW of South Kyme: is this another significant *wic* name like Garwick?

33 Tim Pestell, *Landscapes of Monastic Foundation: The Establishment of Religious Houses in East Anglia, c.650–1200* (Woodbridge, 2004), pp. 194–99, 216–17, 219–22. He identifies a recurrent congruity of site, even though direct continuity is not demonstrable in most cases. Whatever the reasons for this pattern (Pestell's term 'continuity of retrospection' may be helpful), it clearly has lessons for the present cases of South Kyme and Sempringham.

The location of South Kyme on an island at the mouth of the Slea might encourage speculation that this was an outlying hermitage or retreat-house of Sleaford, analogous to the ‘remoter houses’ known to have belonged to Lindisfarne, Lichfield, Hexham and Melrose.<sup>34</sup> But did the shrine celebrate a local hermit comparable to St Guthlac, whose tomb—on the fen-edge island of Crowland near *Medeshamstede*—was adorned with ‘wonderful constructions of ornaments built by King Æthelbald’?<sup>35</sup> Topographically and geologically, the relationship between Sleaford and South Kyme bears close comparison to the relationship between *Medeshamstede* and Crowland. That raises a different possibility: Guthlac and his hermitage at Crowland were free-functioning, and not dependent on *Medeshamstede*. On the other hand, the sculpture constitutes a strong suggestion that, by c.800, *Medeshamstede* had laid its hands on South Kyme. If ecclesiastical patronage operated in several stages, there may have been a broad trend from pluralism to more hierarchical and centralized arrangements.

*The Southern Cluster: Threkingham/Stow Green and Sempringham*

The focus of the southern part of the territory includes the suggestively-named Billingborough, ‘the *burh* of the Billingas’, and Horbling, ‘the Billingas’ muddy land’. While these names cannot be precisely dated or contextualized, they speak of a time when the Billingas themselves were still a reality, or at least an important memory. A large inhumation cemetery at Threkingham is poorly recorded, but a late 18th-century report mentions skeletons found “with a deal of rusty iron.”<sup>36</sup> Although the evidence is less direct, therefore, this could have been a 6th- to 7th-century secular node comparable to the one at Sleaford.

Two miles west of Horbling, the almost empty landscape around Stow Green near Threkingham (again on the Roman Mareham Lane) belies that site’s august and saintly associations in the 11th century. As David Roffe and Rosalind Love have shown, Ely traditions identified Stow Green as ‘Ædelreðestowe’, where St Æthelthryth (d. 679) broke her journey through Lincolnshire and where a chapel (identified from finds of burials and grave-marker fragments) was built in her honour.<sup>37</sup> This story is, of course, far from contemporary, but it occurs early enough to suggest an established pre-Conquest tradition; the element *stōw* is a familiar indicator of a significant religious site. A fair held there on St Æthelthryth’s feast in 1275 (and possibly recorded in

34 Blair, *Church*, pp. 217–18.

35 Felix, *Vita S. Guthlaci*, chapter 51, pp. 162–63.

36 Audrey Meaney, *Gazetteer of Early Anglo-Saxon Burial Sites* (London, 1964), p. 165.

37 David Roffe, “The Seventh Century Monastery of Stow Green, Lincolnshire,” *Lincolnshire History and Archaeology* 21 (1986), 31–33; R.C. Love, ed., *Goscelin of Saint-Bertin; the Hagiography of the Female Saints of Ely* (Oxford, 2004), pp. xv, xlii, 46.

Domesday Book) gains significance in the context of the widespread associations between minsters and markets.<sup>38</sup>

Sempringham, 2 miles (3.2 km) south of Stow Green, is well-known for a different reason. Its Priory, which developed from an eremetical community founded c.1131, was the mother-house of the Gilbertines, the only English-founded religious order.<sup>39</sup> At that point Sempringham already possessed a parish church (of which St Gilbert, the founder of the order, was priest), and this survives as St Andrew's church, located in a group of rectilinear enclosures north of the Priory site. In 2005, an intensive geophysical survey and programme of field-walking was carried out, to assess plough-damage and clarify the topography of the Priory and its environs.<sup>40</sup> One unexpected outcome was the discovery that an area measuring some 300 by 200 metres, around and west of the parish church and mostly within the ditched enclosures, was strewn with 6th- to 9th-century pottery, including Ipswich- and Maxey-type wares with a central date-range of c.720–820.

This indicates a significant settlement concentration of relevant date, but the nature of the settlement remains unclear. No metal-detector survey was conducted, so it is unknown whether or not the distinctive metal items that characterize monastic-type sites in the 'eastern zone'—and the absence of which we have noted from Osbournby—were present too. In the light of Pestell's East Anglian model, though, the juxtaposition of this site with the first Gilbertine priory looks suggestive. The suggestion of continuity is encouraged by the later pottery at Sempringham, which implies unbroken occupation through the 9th to 12th centuries and beyond.

### The Era of Monastic Insecurity: Mercian Power and Secular Predation

During the century after 750, monastic patronage and endowment suffered a progressive, ultimately catastrophic reversal. Lay magnates clawed back what

38 Roffe, "Seventh Century Monastery," p. 31; Ulmschneider, "Settlement, Economy and the 'Productive' Site," p. 73.

39 Brian Golding, *Gilbert of Sempringham and the Gilbertine Order, c.1130–c.1300* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 13, 198–202.

40 G. Coppack and P. Cope-Faulkner, "Sempringham Priory: Survey and Assessment of the Mother-House of the Gilbertine Order and the Tudor Mansion that Replaced it" (unpublished paper); P. Cope-Faulkner, ed., "Assessment of Fieldwalking and Geophysical Survey at Sempringham Priory and Village, Pointon and Sempringham, Lincolnshire," unpublished, APS Report 113/08 (2008). Many thanks to Glyn Coppack for providing a copy of this report, and for helpful discussions.

their ancestors had given, and minsters became pawns in strategies for investment, land-management, administration and defense.<sup>41</sup> Those pressures would have been as heavy in south-east Lincolnshire—important both economically and strategically to the ascendant Mercian regime—as anywhere else. The Billingas zone offered access from the Trent corridor to the trade-routes and commercial riches of the Wash catchment;<sup>42</sup> it was also close to Ermin Street, which must have figured in any Mercian scheme to exert control over East Anglia and Lindsey.

What might such a scheme have looked like? That question has been explored elsewhere in relation to the Mercian polity as a whole,<sup>43</sup> with broad conclusions that suggest some possibilities when applied to this local example. Very briefly, it seems that Mercian rulers achieved joined-up government and civil defence through series of nodes—often strung out along navigable rivers and land-routes—that each comprised a royal enclosure or compound ringed by specialized and dependent service complexes. Nomenclature is important here: the relevant place-names are surprisingly consistent, and suggest an ‘administrative’ vocabulary imposed from above.<sup>44</sup> The nature and appellations of the centres varied, but the satellites generally had names in *-tūn*. Especially characteristic is the compound implying dependence on a fortification (*burh*) that usually comes through to us as Burton, Bourton or Berrington: it seems that a *burh-tūn* was a specific and consistent entity, providing surveillance functions for its parent *burh* and extending its viewshed across surrounding terrain.<sup>45</sup>

In some sense, the centre to which a *burh-tūn* belonged was by definition a *burh*, and that element often—though by no means always—occurs in its place-name.<sup>46</sup> It may therefore be relevant that each of our two nodes contains a *burh* name. When the name ‘Billingborough’ was formed is impossible to know, though it could potentially have been as late as the Mercian era. In the Sleaford node, we can perhaps be a little more precise. As David Roffe has shown, a lost Domesday place called *Burg* was part of Kirkby-la-Thorpe, and had its own (now-lost) church of St Peter additional to Kirkby’s church of

41 Blair, *Church*, pp. 121–34.

42 Cf. Blair, *Building*, pp. 180–82, 220.

43 Blair, *Building*, chapter 6.

44 Blair, *Building*, pp. 193–94.

45 Blair, *Building*, pp. 199–201.

46 Blair, *Building*, pp. 200–01, noting that in the names of former Roman places with *burh-tūn* adjuncts, the ‘functional’ descriptor *burh* often over-rides the ‘archaeological’ descriptor *ceaster*.

St Denis.<sup>47</sup> This juxtaposition of a *burh* with a *kirkja-by(r)* is intriguing: it implies at least two layers of naming, of which *burh*—being English rather than Norse—is perhaps likely to be the earlier. If the *cyric* acknowledged in the Norse name was Sleaford minster or an outlying component of it, does the *burh* represent an intermediate, later 8th-century stage when that component was assimilated to the Mercian defensive system?<sup>48</sup>

In support of this line of speculation is the fact that *Burg* had its *burh-tūn*: Burton Pedwardine, 2.5 miles (4 km) SSE of Kirkby village, which appears as *Burtun* in Domesday Book. The distance between centre and satellite, and the resemblance of this configuration to several others including both Roman roads and *burh-tūn* places,<sup>49</sup> are so consistent with the general pattern as to leave little doubt that the relationship is real and purposeful.<sup>50</sup> That might in turn help to clarify the date when—as noted above—the name Quarrington (*cweorning tūn*) was formed as a functional dependency of Sleaford. There are grounds for thinking that the functional generic *tūn* is pre-eminently a later 8th- to 9th-century formation.<sup>51</sup> So even if Quarrington had been a monastic dependency for a century or more, it may have acquired its present name in the same era as Burton Pedwardine, when the Sleaford complex was starting to feel burdened by the military and provisioning requirements of the Mercian crown.

Moving on a stage, from the height of the Mercian regime under Offa to its trauma under Burgred, we at last confront the text that is such a remarkable survival in its regional context. It belongs to a distinctive 9th-century category of vernacular agreements and dispute-settlements concerning land, the formulations of which can be somewhat clumsy and impenetrable. In that

47 David Roffe, “The Lost Settlement of Burg Refound?” unpublished but accessible online at <http://www.roffe.co.uk/burg.htm>.

48 Compare the change of the name of *Medeshamstede* itself to Peterborough, ‘St Peter’s *burh*’, which could have happened in a context of Mercian royal domination: Kelly, *Characters of Peterborough*, pp. 37–40.

49 Blair, *Building*, pp. 201–19, especially the cases of *Margidunum*, Littleborough and Dorchester.

50 A potential weakness in this argument is that Burton Pedwardine and Kirkby-la-Thorpe villages are not intervisible. Both, however, are intervisible with the (perhaps significantly-named) Beacon Hill between them. In any case we do not know precisely where *Burg* lay: if it was in the south-east of Kirkby parish (below the 10-m contour) it would have been visible from Burton, which also has clear views north-eastwards towards Heckington, Garwick and the fen-edge.

51 Blair, *Building*, pp. 194–97.

respect S 1440 is no exception, but with the help of Susan Kelly's edition and insightful commentary some important data can be extracted.<sup>52</sup>

The document records an agreement made in 852 between the religious community at *Medeshamstede*/Peterborough and a lay magnate called Wulfred. *Medeshamstede* leases "the land at Sempringham" to Wulfred and one next heir, who are to hold it for renders of firewood, so that "he may enjoy the full freedom of the land at Sempringham and at Sleaford in perpetuity" (*ðæt he ðes landes fulne friodom bigete in ece ærfeweardnesse æt Sempingaham and æt Slioforda*). *Medeshamstede* is to enjoy the land at Sleaford; Wulfred is to enjoy that at Sempringham, in return for specified renders of food, drink, horses and money, and after the deaths of him and his heir it is to revert to *Medeshamstede*. At that stage a further 20 hides will be transferred to the *Medeshamstede* community for their refectory, and 12 hides at *Forde* (unidentified) and Cheale (near Gosberton) to the 'lord' of *Medeshamstede*; conversely, 2 hides at *Lehcotum* (unidentified) will be transferred by *Medeshamstede* to Wulfred's kin.

This complicated transaction leaves some unanswered questions, the most important being the previous status of the Sleaford land: was it originally Wulfred's (making this an exchange of two valuable assets), or originally *Medeshamstede*'s (implying an attempt by the community there to get the best out of a bad situation in which a powerful layman had encroached on their property)? Kelly's tentative preference is for the former interpretation,<sup>53</sup> but the wider context offers grounds for favouring the latter. This agreement, like others of its kind and era, shows an eminent and previously secure religious community embroiled in the ultimately hopeless struggle to protect its assets against the tides of fortune: Wulfred, whoever he was,<sup>54</sup> was a man with whom they had to compromise on a playing-field that was not level. It is all too easy to envisage a situation in which he or his family had annexed both these estates from *Medeshamstede* during the unstable decades since 820, necessitating a deal by which he could be persuaded to restore them—one immediately, the other posthumously—in return for a handsome payback. (In the event, there is no evidence that either property was ever again possessed by the *Medeshamstede*/Peterborough community.)

What leaps out from this text, in the light of the argument so far, is that the two specified 'lands'—Sempringham and Sleaford—correspond to the two core nodes of the Billings territory. That fact, combined with the testimony of

52 Kelly, *Charters of Peterborough*, pp. 215–21.

53 Kelly, *Charters of Peterborough*, p. 218.

54 Probably a Mercian thegn who attests several royal diplomas: Kelly, *Charters of Peterborough*, p. 219.

the South Kyme sculpture, supports the view that the two estates had been linked in *Medeshamstede's* possession in the medium past, and also perhaps further back. But another imponderable is the precise status of the entities defined as 'Sempringham' and 'Sleaford': were they simply possessions, or monastic communities in their own right? The conventional Old English term *land* tells us nothing specific, but it certainly does not exclude monastic identity. By that stage it had become commonplace to describe old religious communities and their endowments as measures of land, and in some texts that practice is explicit.<sup>55</sup>

Those analogies do not in themselves entitle us to define the two centres named in the 852 lease as monastic. They do, however, chime happily with the other cumulative if mainly indirect indicators that that was indeed the case. Taken together, the evidence is quite persuasive that slices of the Billingas territory had been assigned to support two monastic establishments there during the late 7th- to early 8th-century boom in endowment, and that over the next century or two those establishments suffered the pressures common in such cases. The survival of the lease offers a rare opportunity to compare a sample of the highly-developed but essentially prehistoric 'eastern zone' with the documented zones outside it, and to observe a 9th-century trajectory that was essentially similar.

### Conclusion

The density of ecclesiastical sites in this modestly-sized tract of land must, at some level, reflect its established prosperity. Wealth consisted not just in hidages, but in productive capacity and economically advantageous contacts: the opulence of the Sleaford cemetery and the Garwick productive site were the underpinning of later monastic initiatives.

The inferred minsters at Sleaford and Sempringham could have been controlled by *Medeshamstede* from a relatively early date, perhaps even from their foundations. A possible pointer in that direction is the economic re-orientation away from Lindsey and towards Northamptonshire suggested by the Quarlington pottery.<sup>56</sup> However, the traditions associated with Threkingham and

55 Blair, *Church*, p. 130. A good parallel for the Sleaford-Sempringham text is an agreement between Ealdorman Ælfred and the Christ Church, Canterbury community in the 870s or '80s (S 1202): Christ Church leases to Ælfred "the land at Croydon," but Croydon is explicitly called a minster in 809 (S 64).

56 Cf. Daubney, *Portable Antiquities*, pp. 247–48; it seems very likely that the pottery was carried northwards along the Car Dyke.

Stow Green complicate the picture, suggesting as they do that St. Æthelthryth's community at Ely may also have had a stake in the early monastic development of the region. Likewise, the possibility is open that South Kyme was originally independent of both Sleaford and *Medeshamstede*. It could well be that Sleaford and Sempringham (and indeed Threekingham and South Kyme) began as autonomous foundations by the local 7th-century leaders—presumably endowed out of the family lands of the Billingas or their successors—and were progressively drawn into the ambit of the dominant fen-edge communities further south.

Any such transactions are beyond the reach of surviving documents, and it is worth pausing to ask why that should be so. The 'eastern zone', which in material terms was the richest in 8th-century England, is to all intents and purposes prehistoric, and we are not entitled to assume that the social and legal norms of other regions—for example bookland—ever took root there. It is a commonplace that Viking devastation destroyed all the early charters. However, the later fenland monasteries did preserve some pre-Viking material, and there is no obvious reason why that should not have included diplomas. In any case, there is no reason at all why they should not have preserved 10th-century royal diplomas if such existed. In fact, not a single reliable pre-Viking royal diploma,<sup>57</sup> and only three reliable 10th-century ones (all from Edgar's reign),<sup>58</sup> relate to places in the entire region of Lincolnshire, Norfolk and Suffolk. Was this a society of rich, independent freemen who recorded transactions as vernacular agreements and memoranda, and amongst whom the concept of royally-conferred bookland gained little traction?<sup>59</sup> Like the regional contrasts in material remains, that possibility reminds us that 'Anglo-Saxon England' was not a homogeneous entity, but an amalgam of often contrasting culture-zones.

By the mid-8th century, *Medeshamstede's* stake in the Billingas territory may have helped to strengthen Mercia's tightening grip; the South Kyme sculpture, probably a *Medeshamstede* product, is testimony to 'imperial' Mercia at its most sophisticated and splendid. Offa seems to have held *Medeshamstede* and its abbot Botwine in esteem, but it was a relationship that came with

57 Above, n. 4.

58 S 703 (Chelsworth, Suffolk, AD 962), S 781 (Stoke near Ipswich, Suffolk, AD 970), S 782 (Barrow-upon-Humber, Lincs., AD 971).

59 Bede, of course, famously decried the proliferation of bookland grants in Northumbria. But he does not tell us whether the practice was general through that kingdom, or specific to parts of it. Bede, "Letter to Bishop Ecgbert," chapter 12, ed. Christopher Grocock and Ian N. Wood, *Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow* (Oxford, 2013), pp. 146–49.

obligations.<sup>60</sup> One such may have been the burdening of Sleaford with royal defensive installations, a *burh* and its *burh-tūn*. The demands of kings and their powerful magnates become increasingly insistent from c.790 onwards,<sup>61</sup> culminating in negotiations of the kind implied by the Sleaford-Sempringham agreement. It may well be that when the first Viking raiders arrived, those monastic settlements were already mere shadows of their former selves.

That leaves unclear the precise extent of ecclesiastical land-holding at its height. The range of possible interpretation remains wide, but it has its limits. In broad terms it is hard to doubt that by, say, 750 the monastic presence in this small strip of the fen-edge was quite significant, and we can make tentative steps towards quantification.

The 'Bilmigas' are assigned 600 hides in the Tribal Hidage, though since the identity of that group with the Billingas is disputed, the fact is of doubtful relevance. Still, the Billingas territory as reconstructed from the place-names looks comparable to the Middle Anglian peoples comprising the nucleus of the Hidage, whose territories are typically assessed in the range from 300 to 900 hides. Unfortunately, where the two main properties are concerned, the 852 lease gives no hidages that can be compared with this broad order of magnitude for the parent territory. However, the fact that the lesser estates used as make-weights at the end of the agreement comprised 20, 12 and 2 hides respectively suggests that the principal assets in contention were much bigger than that. It is far from implausible that the main Sempringham and Sleaford land-blocks were each in the order of 50 to 100 hides, or even more.<sup>62</sup> We can therefore reasonably infer that monastic endowment had eaten up a significant slice of the former territory of the Billingas. Furthermore, the complex nuclei known by the names of the two focal settlements must have controlled at least some sections of the valuable fen-edge, including by implication the church site at South Kyme with its lavish sculpture, and perhaps also the plutocratic node at Garwick, which the sceatta finds show to have continued into the likely era of monastic lordship.

Even if we err towards caution, Sempringham and Sleaford were hugely valuable assets: no wonder that the pressures towards secular control and lordship proved too strong for their monastic proprietors to resist. The main fact to set against a maximal hypothesis of monastic domination in the region is the absence (so far) of rich cruciform objects, styli, and the other now-familiar indicators of the 'minster culture'. But that could reflect different circumstances

60 Kelly, *Charters of Peterborough*, pp. 17–20.

61 Kelly, *Charters of Peterborough*, pp. 19–20.

62 Cf. the cases listed by Blair, *Church*, p. 87.

of survival and retrieval. Sleaford is a built-up town, and the field survey at Sempringham did not include metal-detecting. The Quarrington site, which was extensively excavated, had a simple material culture, suggesting its status as a service dependency.<sup>63</sup> Future work should show whether the apparent concentration of rich finds from this region at secular sites (Garwick and Osbournby) rather than ecclesiastical ones is an effect of retrieval, or shows something genuinely different from the pattern at Flixborough and the East Anglian sites. At all events the South Kyme fragments show that, by c.800, the region had access to ecclesiastical art at the highest level.

That problem notwithstanding, the case-study may have some lessons for undocumented regions of Lincolnshire and East Anglia where sites producing ecclesiastical-type metalwork are so thick on the ground. The Sleaford and Sempringham complexes were zones of linked sites, each two to three miles across, with only three or four miles between them. Similar monastic landscapes could easily be inferred in many parts of Norfolk, for instance, even though there are no texts to help us resolve them into clusters with named centres. In Anglo-Saxon England, as in other societies at other times, the monastic boom was an immensely powerful cultural and spiritual force while it lasted, and devotees invested lavishly.<sup>64</sup> When resources would stretch to it, the impact of that investment on the landscape could be remarkably close-grained.<sup>65</sup>

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63 Compare a similarly-planned settlement next to Ely: R. Mortimer, R. Regan and S. Lucy, *The Saxon and Medieval Settlement at West Fen Road, Ely: The Ashwell Site*, East Anglian Archaeology 110 (Cambridge, 2005).

64 Cf. Blair, *Church*, pp. 73–78, 84–91.

65 For comments on an earlier draft, I am very grateful to Kanerva Blair-Heikkinen, Glyn Coppack, Adam Daubney, Ryan Lavelle, and Kevin Leahy.

## *Mynsters* and Parishes: Some Evidence and Conclusions from Wiltshire

*Jonathan Pitt*

Fortunate historians find themselves taught or supervised by an academic who inspires and whose reputation for knowledge, scholarship and judgement proves to be justified during the experience. A desire to emulate that teacher or supervisor is likely to result and, though often remaining unrealised, may still result in small contributions to our knowledge of the past.

Whether it is fortunate to begin a programme of research at a time when the foundations of the topic are under attack is less certain. The ‘minster model’<sup>1</sup> describes a system of early medieval pastoral provision based on a network of churches which, being generally the oldest in their parishes, had responsibilities towards, and rights over, those parishes—the latter, naturally, larger at the time than parishes of the later medieval period. In accordance with their functions, typically these ‘minsters’ required a staff of several clergy and a landed endowment to match. Aspects of the model have been a matter of debate, fuelled by questions of terminology and by scepticism, particularly as to how early a network of *mynster* parishes might have existed.<sup>2</sup> Though understandable in light of the available evidence, some of this seemed founded on

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1 To set out the basics: P.H. Hase, “The Development of the Parish in Hampshire, particularly in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries” (PhD thesis, Univ. of Cambridge, 1975); John Blair, “Secular Minster Churches in Domesday Book,” in *Domesday Book: A Reassessment*, ed. P.H. Sawyer (London, 1986), pp. 104–42; “Local Churches in Domesday Book and Before,” in *Domesday Studies: Papers Read at the Novocentenary Conference of the Royal Historical Society and the Institute of British Geographers, Winchester, 1986*, ed. J.C. Holt (Woodbridge, 1987), pp. 265–78; “Minster Churches in the Landscape,” in *Anglo-Saxon Settlements*, ed. Della Hooke (Oxford, 1988), pp. 35–58; “Introduction: From Minster to Parish Church,” in *Minsters and Parish Churches: The Local Church in Transition 950–1200*, ed. John Blair, Oxford Univ. Committee for Archaeology Monograph 17 (Oxford, 1988), pp. 1–19.

2 My approach to terminology here is always to use the Old English *mynster*, given its wide contemporary application—I do not know of another vernacular word the people of the time would have used—and the simple word parish (rather than *parochia*), since there is no obvious reason to distinguish one kind of parish from another—except when quoting directly or indirectly from other writers. By *mynster* I mean a church suggested by evidence to have been of pre-Conquest origin and of more-than-ordinary status.

arguably anachronistic doubts as to what activities ‘monks’ in ‘*monasteria*’ might have been expected to undertake.<sup>3</sup> Thus it cannot reasonably be denied that:

1. the model’s evidence describes the formation of the medieval parish network as a process of fragmentation, that is, a move from fewer, larger parishes to more, smaller ones;
2. to note that some of the *mynsters*, revealed by the evidence as superior churches in this network, were in existence by the late 7th or early 8th centuries is not to claim that that network was unchanged during that interval;
3. the identification of *mynsters* of the late Saxon period is not the same as proposing that all existed 300 years earlier or were unchanged in role, character or sphere of influence during that interval,<sup>4</sup> and
4. a study seeking to identify *mynsters* and the extents of their parishes has the potential to reveal much about the organisation of the landscape and the structure of its inhabitants’ lives.

Wiltshire (Fig. 20.1) does not provide much data to answer questions about early ecclesiastical arrangements and functions, and this paper does not therefore seek directly to address ‘the debate’, but rather to summarize the available conclusions, on the grounding of the four points above, and to refine slightly

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3 David Rollason and Eric Cambridge, “Debate: The Pastoral Organisation of the Anglo-Saxon Church: A Review of the ‘Minster Hypothesis,’” and John Blair, “Debate: Ecclesiastical Organisation and Pastoral Care in Anglo-Saxon England,” *EME* 4 (1995), 87–104, and 193–212. On the terminology as relating to the character of ecclesiastical communities: Sarah Foot, “Anglo-Saxon Minsters: A Review of Terminology,” in *Pastoral Care Before the Parish*, ed. John Blair and Richard Sharpe (London, 1992), pp. 212–25, at pp. 215 and 222. Daphne Gifford in 1952 stated that the “line between early clerical and ascetic foundations was thin. “Mynster” and “monasterium” in Old English and Latin documents are the words for houses of clerks and monks alike.”—“The Parish in Domesday Book,” (PhD. thesis, University of London, 1952), p. 19. See also Richard Morris, *Churches in the Landscape* (London, 1989), pp. 128–33. Francesca Tinti, “Introduction,” in *Pastoral Care in Late Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. Francesca Tinti (Woodbridge, 2005), pp. 1–16, at p. 13, wonders if the term *monasterium* should be used for religious communities of the 7th and 8th centuries, *mynster* reserved for the later period: unwarranted preconceptions about the nature and roles of those establishments might still result.

4 Still, early evidence points to pastoral work being undertaken by members of early communities: Sarah Foot, “Parochial Ministry in Early Anglo-Saxon England: The Role of Monastic Communities,” in *The Ministry: Clerical and Lay: Papers Read at the 1988 Summer Meeting and the 1989 Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society*, ed. W.J. Sheils and Diana Wood, *Studies in Church History* 26 (1989), pp. 43–54, esp. pp. 46–49, 53. See also Alan Thacker, “Monks, Preaching and Pastoral Care in Early Anglo-Saxon England,” in *Pastoral Care Before the Parish*, ed. Blair and Sharpe pp. 138–70, esp. pp. 139–43. On how *mynsters* might have changed, John Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 124–34.

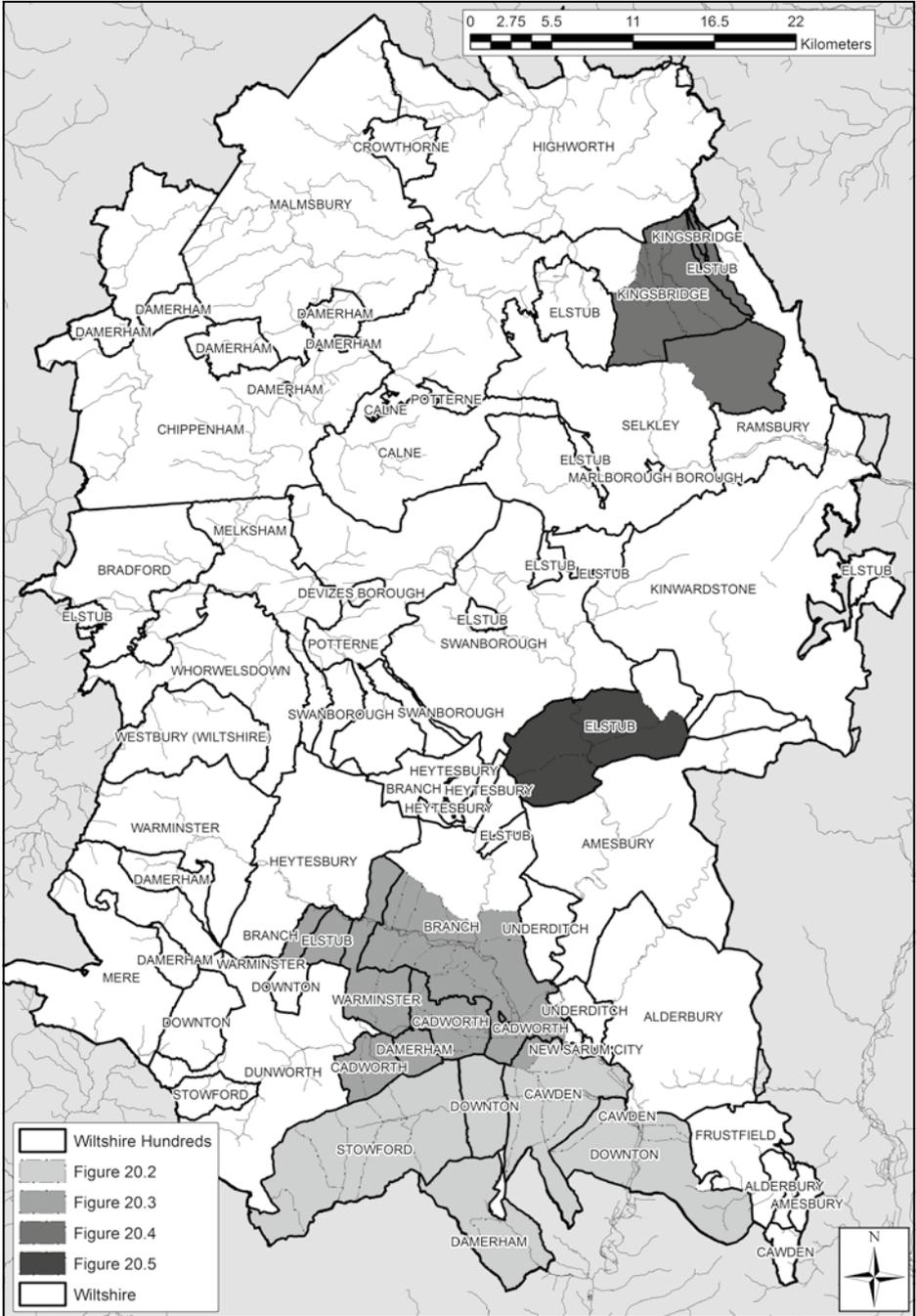


FIGURE 20.1 Wiltshire hundreds, showing the locations of hundreds discussed in the text

the picture I have suggested previously.<sup>5</sup> It will provide examples of the pattern and will attempt to complement some of Barbara Yorke's own interests.

Wiltshire evidence reveals a telling correspondence between a variety of clues relating to individual churches, and also between the parochial network and the administrative one in the late Saxon period. Across Wiltshire it is not uncommon for signs of a pre-Conquest religious presence to be accompanied by later evidence of a large parish and strong suggestions that parish and hundred were, in the late Saxon period, coterminous.<sup>6</sup>

An example is at Broad Chalke (Fig. 20.2) where, though no church is mentioned in Domesday Book, and there is no surviving Saxon fabric, there is a fragment of a Saxon cross-shaft, an interesting topographical situation, and late medieval evidence. The cross-shaft has been dated to the 9th century, and its presence raises questions about the interpretation of such remains. Comparisons within reach of Chalke include the crosses, varied in size, type and location, recorded at an important *mynster*, Glastonbury, and the 8th-century Lypiatt Cross in Bisley, Gloucestershire, which, though associated with a *mynster*, perhaps always functioned as a boundary-marker, or a preaching cross, or both.<sup>7</sup> Chalke's cross now stands inside a large church of cross-shaped plan on a site at least partially circular with traces of a possible enclosure-bank. On a sloping valley-side, the church site has been partly levelled off to make this enclosure.

Although no information can be found in the cartulary of Wilton Abbey which held Stowford hundred from the 10th century,<sup>8</sup> episcopal registers are helpful, making it clear that nearby chapels were subsidiary to the church at Broad Chalke. In 1413, Bowerchalke was still in Broad Chalke parish, an institution to the chapel reading "Bower Chalk chapel, in Chalk parish": in 1321,

5 The Wiltshire evidence is discussed more fully in J.M.A. Pitt, "Wiltshire Minster Parochiae and West Saxon Ecclesiastical Organisation" (PhD thesis, University of Southampton, 1999), and some aspects summarized in Jonathan Pitt, "Malmesbury Abbey and Late Saxon Parochial Development in Wiltshire," *WANHM* 96 (2003), 77–88, and "Minster Churches and Minster Territories in Wiltshire," in *Boundaries in Early Medieval Britain*, ed. David Griffiths, Andrew Reynolds and Sarah Semple, *ASSAH* 12 (Oxford, 2003), pp. 58–71.

6 For the shire's hundreds and their boundaries around the time of Domesday, F.R. Thorn, "Hundreds and Wapentakes," in *The Wiltshire Domesday*, ed. N.A. Hooper and F.R. Thorn, Alecto Historical Editions (1989), pp. 31–45 and Map v1 accompanying—informing all comments below on the extent and boundaries of Wiltshire's hundreds.

7 John Scott, *The Early History of Glastonbury: An Edition, Translation and Study of William of Malmesbury's De Antiquitate Glastonie Ecclesie* (1981), pp. 78–81; Carolyn Heighway, *Anglo-Saxon Gloucestershire* (Stroud, 1987), pp. 98–99; Richard Bryant, "The Lypiatt Cross," and Michael Hare, "The Minster Status of Bisley," *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society* 108 (1990), 33–46. and 46–49.

8 By a 100-hide grant of 955 (S 582).

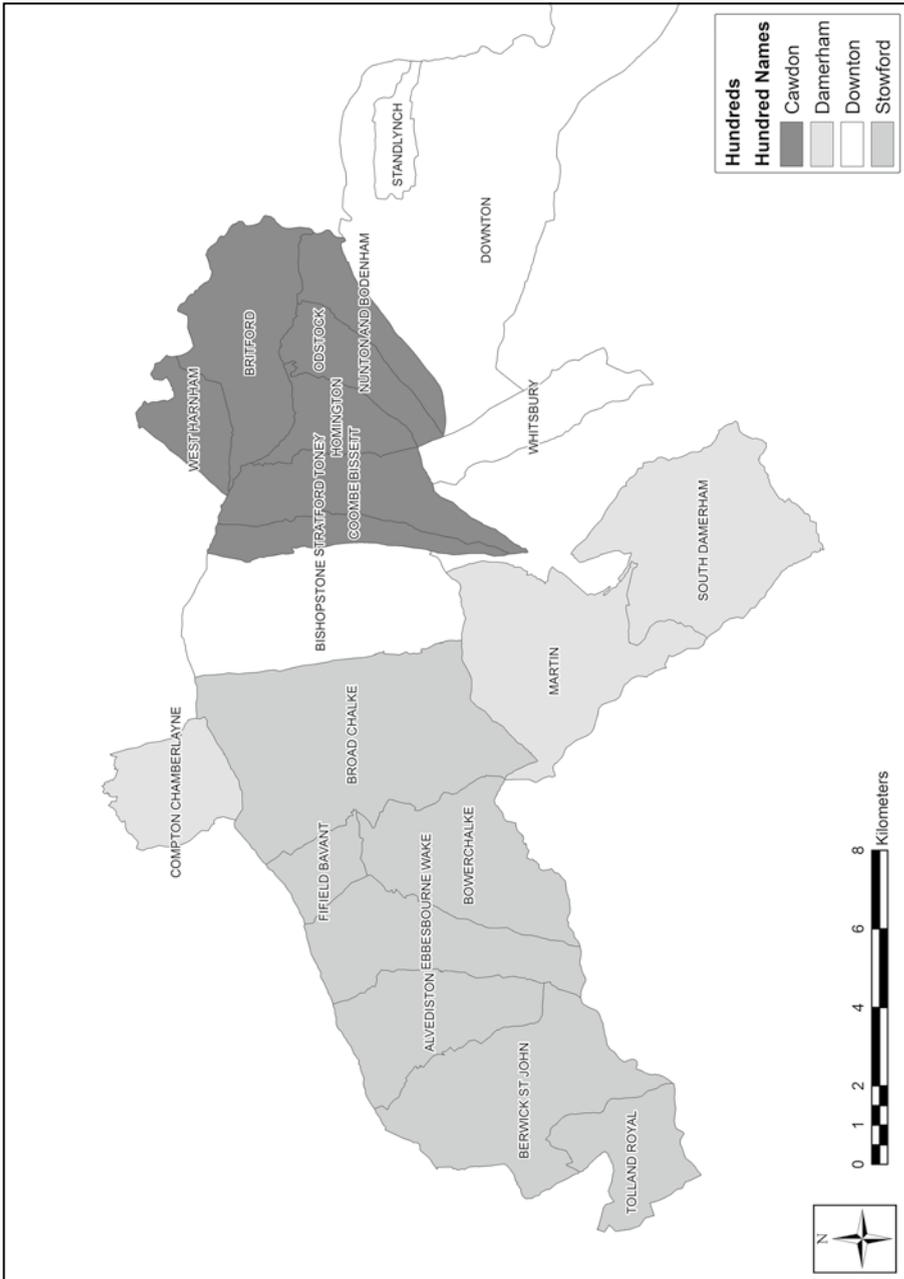


FIGURE 20.2 The hundredal geography of central south Wiltshire, c.1086

the rector of Broad Chalke presented to the vicarage of “his chapel of Bower Chalk”.<sup>9</sup> In 1394, his successor was responsible for providing a chaplain for Gurston: in 1317 there was a parson “of Broad Chalk and Gurston”.<sup>10</sup> In 1322, the rector of Broad Chalke was to present to a chantry which, initially in Knighton chapel, would be transferred to Chalke parish church.<sup>11</sup> The earliest of these revealing documents is from 1312:

The aforementioned church [Broad Chalke] is prebendal [...] having four chapels annexed to it, namely *Alvedeston*, *Bourchalk*, *Gerardeston* and *Knynghteton*, and all this from time out of mind [...]<sup>12</sup>

These documents suggest a large parish for Broad Chalke stretching along the Ebble valley as late as the 14th century, in turn suggesting that in the Saxon period it may have covered the entire hundred.<sup>13</sup>

The case of Damerham demonstrates another variation in the type and quality of evidence available for a particular church. The will of King Alfred contains an interesting reference to Damerham:

... it is my will that the community at Damerham be given their landbooks and their freedom to choose such lord as is dearest to them, for my sake and for Ælflæd and for the friends for whom she used to intercede and I intercede. Moreover, a payment in livestock is to be made for the needs of my soul...<sup>14</sup>

9 *The Register of Robert Hallum, Bishop of Salisbury 1407–17*, ed. Joyce M. Horn, Canterbury and York Soc. 72 (York, 1982), p. 52; *The Register of Roger Martival, Bishop of Salisbury 1315–1330*, Canterbury and York Soc., 55–59, 4 vols. (Oxford etc., 1959–75), Vol. 1, ed. Kathleen Edwards, p. 230.

10 *The Register of John Waltham, Bishop of Salisbury 1388–1395*, ed. T.C.B. Timmins, Canterbury and York Soc. 80 (Woodbridge, 1994), p. 153; *Register of Roger Martival*, Vol. 3, ed. Susan Reynolds, pp. 34–55.

11 *Register of Roger Martival*, Vol. 1, pp. 401–06.

12 “Ecclesia eciam supradicta [Broad Chalke] prebendalis est et eciam [...] habens quatuor capellas sibi annexas, videlicet Alvedeston, Bourchalk, Gerardeston et Knynghteton, et hec omnia a tempore cuius contrarii memoria non existit ...”: *Registrum Simonis de Gandavo, Diocesis Saresbiriensis, A.D. 1297–1315*, ed. C.T. Flower and M.C.B. Dawes, Canterbury and York Society 40–41, 2 vols (Oxford, 1934), pp. 788–90. The prebend mentioned was in Wilton Abbey.

13 Hundredal layouts on the maps are derived from the Thorn’s work (see n.6), though parish boundaries are in nineteenth-century form.

14 “ḡ ic wylle þæt man agyfe þam hiwum æt Domrahamme hyra landbec ḡ hyra freols swylce hand to ceosenne swylce him leofast sy, for me ḡ for Ælflæde ḡ for þa frynd þe heo foreþingode ḡ ic foreþingie. ḡ sec man eac on cwicum ceape ymbe minre sawle þearfe swa

That a religious community of some kind existed at Damerham in the late 9th century is the natural inference. Smyth concludes, on the basis of the inclusion of Ælflaet, that the community was a nunnery.<sup>15</sup> If he is right, Ælflaet was presumably the abbess, but this could imply a double monastery. Alternatively, a male community may have been provided with an abbess, even temporarily, to provide a woman of high status with employment and income,<sup>16</sup> or Ælflaet may even have been a secular figure. At any rate, the establishment can be called a *mynster*, and the tithing of the parish known as '*Munstrestret*' may reflect something of what the locals would have called their church.<sup>17</sup>

The manor with the church came into the hands of Glastonbury Abbey and useful documents emanate from that institution. In a 13th-century manuscript survives a copy of a 12th-century account of Abbot Henry's acts noting that, finding six 'canons' there, he replaced them with a single chaplain,<sup>18</sup> providing us in effect with a picture of the end of a *mynster* community: the document may reflect similar but unrecorded actions by his contemporaries or predecessors, an indication of one sudden mechanism by which many *mynsters* may have declined in status and function. Other sources allow suggestions to be made about the extent of Damerham's parish. In 1394, a document makes clear Tidpit's dependence on Damerham, for it was stated that the Rector of Tidpit was to bury his parishioners at Damerham.<sup>19</sup> A charter of Bishop Walter of

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hit beon mæge 7 swa hit eac gerysne sy 7 swa ge me forgyfan wyllan." S 1507. Quoted from *Alfred the Great: Asser's Life of Alfred and Other Contemporary Sources*, ed. and trans. Simon Keynes and Michael Lapidge (Harmondsworth, 1983), p. 178. Further comments in Blair, *Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, pp. 303 and 325–26.

- 15 Alfred P. Smyth, *King Alfred the Great* (Oxford, 1995), p. 264. Lesley Abrams, *Anglo-Saxon Glastonbury: Church and Endowment* (Woodbridge, 1996), pp. 104–07 and 343, accepts the existence of a royal minster, with the gift to Glastonbury Abbey perhaps in part directed towards the reform of this community.
- 16 Suggested by Heighway, in *Anglo-Saxon Gloucestershire*, p. 111. Note that some apparently male *mynsters* had women attached, as seems to have been the case at Bedwyn, for example: Bern, Burgerbibliothek, MS 671, fol. 76v, where a nun witnesses a manumission copied into a gospel book at Bedywn: translated by H.C. Brentnall, "Bedwyn in the Tenth Century," *WANHM* 52 (1947–48), 362–64.
- 17 E.H. Lane Poole, *Damerham and Martin: A Study in Local History* (Tisbury, 1976), p. 2. The tithings, including "*Munstrestret*," are listed in the early 16th-century *Cartulary of Glastonbury Abbey*, BL MS Harley 3961, fol. 149v.
- 18 "*in manerio de Domerham ... inveni sex, qui dicebantur canonici, singulas prebendes possidentes*": *English Episcopal Acta, 8: Winchester 1070–1204*, ed. M.J. Franklin (Oxford 1993), pp. 209–10. The original document is to be found copied into the early 14th-century *Cartulary of Glastonbury Abbey*, BL MS Add. 22934, fol. 12r.
- 19 *Register of John Waltham*, ed. Timmins, p. 154. This is in spite of the designations "*esglise*" and "*ecclesie parochialis*" in 1361 (at the presentation of a chaplain) in the abbot of Glastonbury's register: BL MS Arundel 2, fol. 55r.

Salisbury of 1267, and a vicarage ordination of 1270, are strongly suggestive of the ecclesiastical dependence of Martin upon Damerham,<sup>20</sup> which is significant, as Martin later acquired a parish of its own.

The fact that the surviving community in the 12th century was male may weaken the case for a nunnery at Damerham: a nunnery in Alfred's time cannot be ruled out, though, since the composition of communities could change, and it is worth noting that records, in the 12th and 13th centuries, of prebendaries at former *mynsters* do seem to correlate with nunneries: prebends were set up at Wilton, Romsey, Wherwell and Nunnaminster, Winchester and at the first three pastoral service for the surrounding area, as well as for the nuns, seems to have been a motive.<sup>21</sup> Another possibility is that a defunct nunnery church and associated buildings were converted, perhaps in the 10th century and possibly after the grant to Glastonbury, to serve as a *mynster* for the land thus received.

It should be noted that Damerham hundred, to which the *mynster's* parish seems to have been confined, included a detached portion at Compton Chamberlayne north of Stowford hundred, and yet there is no evidence to connect Compton with Damerham ecclesiastically. Speculative attachment to Damerham's parish has to rest on administrative practice which makes clear that a secular connection was in operation in the later medieval period, for the inhabitants of Compton were expected to attend the hundred court at Damerham c.1245.<sup>22</sup> Suggestions of administrative and ecclesiastical intimacy are reinforced by the physical boundaries of parts of Damerham hundred, which follow the Roman road and Grim's Ditch in the north and Bokerley Dyke in the west. Parish and county boundaries still follow these features, and it has been suggested that Bokerley Dyke was in origin a negotiated frontier of the early Saxon period.<sup>23</sup> The early origin of these boundary features, and the fact that they are followed by the apparent boundaries of Damerham hundred suggest that Damerham's parish never extended beyond the late 11th-century extent of the hundred.

Through Wiltshire a network of late Saxon hundred *mynsters* can be reconstructed with varying degrees of detail and confidence. Signs of early origin and status at these churches combine with later documentation of the break-up to varying degrees of their parishes, as at Broad Chalke and Damerham.

20 *The Great Chartulary of Glastonbury*, ed. Aelred Watkin, Somerset Record Society 59, 3 vols (Frome, 1947), 63 (1952), 64 (1956), 1:57–59.

21 For the Hampshire nunneries, Hase, "Development of the Parish," pp. 84–86 and 299–303. Barbara Yorke, *Nunneries and the Anglo-Saxon Royal Houses* (London, 2003), pp. 127–29, connects these prebends with the pastoral service of the attached parishes.

22 *Great Chartulary of Glastonbury*, 3:638–41.

23 Barbara Yorke, *Wessex in the Early Middle Ages* (London, 1995), pp. 23–24 and 85.

So far as the *mynsters'* parishes can be reconstructed, correspondence with the hundredal layout around the time of Domesday Book appears significant.<sup>24</sup> The repeated correspondence between parish and hundred invites speculation as to how it arose and it must be considered that it may have been the outcome of policy, or the by-product of royal use of the *mynster* network.<sup>25</sup> A number of factors are likely to lie behind difficulties in some areas: the nature and quantity of the evidence and the vagaries of its survival; conversely, in some cases the number of sources makes the significance of each difficult to judge, or reveals genuine complications not revealed by the more straightforward pattern apparent elsewhere; a different political history in the north of the shire<sup>26</sup> could have led to a different kind of pattern less easily or less clearly adapted, if at all, to match the network elsewhere, though it would be very difficult to prove this.

Further, the dominance of important religious communities such as at Malmesbury and, over the boundary with Somerset, Glastonbury, seems likely to have led to anomalies in the pattern insofar as their lands and churches were concerned, and to have been a significant factor in parish development. Outside Malmesbury's sphere, in the south of the shire, Old Minster, Winchester and Shaftesbury Abbey were among significant holders of lands and churches. Another of these was Wilton Abbey, which presided over lands where identification of *mynsters* and their parishes is difficult, possibly for the reasons outlined above. In this area the pattern of hundreds c.1086 was complicated (Fig. 20.3): the area included the main parts of the hundreds of Branchbury and Cadworth as well as detached portions of these and Warminster, Heytesbury and Damerham hundreds. Also, the sources are limited. Wilton Abbey produced a cartulary which includes 29 Anglo-Saxon charters relating to estates in Wiltshire, many of them in this area, but there is little information on churches and their relative status.

"Wiltshire grew out of Wilton," it has been declared,<sup>27</sup> and whatever the exact identity of the people called the *Wilsætan* in 802,<sup>28</sup> Wiltshire must owe its name to the position of Wilton as a royal centre in the period when the shire took shape. Following the creation of the see of Ramsbury c.909, the bishop

24 Pitt, "Wiltshire Minster *Parochiae*," pp. 23–96.

25 Blair, *Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, esp. pp. 325–26: in the late 9th century "the royal administration had achieved territorial stability by battening onto minsters."

26 Briefly commented on in Pitt, "Wiltshire Minster *Parochiae*," pp. 13 and 14.

27 *VCH Wilts* 6, p. 7.

28 In *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, trans. G.N. Garmonsway, 2nd ed. (London, 1972), pp. 58–59, the term is rendered as "the men of Wiltshire."



FIGURE 20.3 Branch and Cadworth hundreds, c.1086, showing documented ecclesiastical links

seems to have been thought of as the “bishop of Wiltshire.”<sup>29</sup> The nunnery founded in Wilton in the Saxon period was one of the more prestigious. Its existence is first known for certain in the 10th century,<sup>30</sup> although its own doubtful tradition, recounting the foundation of a church c.800, its conversion to a nunnery by King Egbert and his sister Alburga in 830 and rebuilding by King Alfred c.890, places the nunnery’s foundation in the early 9th century.<sup>31</sup> Instead, foundation by Edward the Elder has been suggested: in the text of the 974 charter (S 799) Edgar states that his ancestor Edward founded the abbey, and although the charter is not thought genuine, this information is likely to have derived from the nunnery’s own tradition. Doubts must remain in place concerning this tradition.<sup>32</sup> It seems legitimate to wonder whether Alfred’s actions were of more significance than those of the alleged founder of c.800, Egbert, or Edward,<sup>33</sup> but at different times the community may have wished to provide itself with a more appropriate history.

There is some evidence that the nunnery was reformed in the later 10th century, and in connection with this, and the 15th-century account’s claims of refoundation by Alfred, are the ideas that this late 9th-century refoundation was connected with the provision of a *mynster*, separate from the nunnery, for the town, and that reform of the nunnery in the late 10th century resulted in its move to a new site, separating it even more effectively from the proposed *mynster*.<sup>34</sup> These suggestions rely on a picture of a female community being founded c.800 within a pre-existing *mynster*, moving later as it gained its own

29 Bishops Ælfstan, who died in 981, Ælfric, who became archbishop of Canterbury in 994×95, and Beorhtwold, whose appointment is recorded 1006, are thus designated in ASC C 981, A 994, and CDE 1006. Beorhtwold was called both “*episcopus Ramesberiensis*” and “*Wiltonensis episcopus*” in the 12th century: Scott, *Early History of Glastonbury*, pp. 138–41.

30 The first surviving charter (S 424) to the nunnery is dated 933.

31 Simon Keynes, *Anglo-Saxon Charters: Archives and Single Sheets*, British Academy/Royal Historical Society Committee on Anglo-Saxon Charters (forthcoming), recounts the traditions recorded in the 15th century, and suggests that the poet had access to the Abbey’s archive. Barbara Yorke, “Sisters under the Skin? Anglo-Saxon Nuns and Nunneries in Southern England,” *Reading Medieval Studies* 15 (1989), 95–117. For comments on Goscelin, Edith and the character of the community, Susan J. Ridyard, *The Royal Saints of Anglo-Saxon England: A Study in West Saxon and East Anglian Cults* (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 140–54.

32 Yorke, *Nunneries*, pp. 75–76.

33 Alfred is known to have founded religious houses, in the context of attempting to revive spiritual life.

34 Jeremy Haslam, “The Towns of Wiltshire,” in *Anglo-Saxon Towns in Southern England*, ed. Jeremy Haslam (Chichester 1984), pp. 87–147, at p. 123. Ridyard also finds indications in Goscelin’s *Vita Edithe* that the Abbey was undergoing reform during her time: *Royal*

identity, and therefore seem to rely on an acceptance of the traditions mentioned above.

Three possibilities suggest themselves and they are not mutually exclusive. One, that Wilton's nunnery was itself a *mynster* serving a parish in the Saxon period, for an important religious establishment in the town which gave its name to the shire might be expected to have been such a church: another, that a separate church in the town served this function; finally, that the area considered contained other churches whose origins were as Saxon *mynsters*. The nunnery did maintain a small number of priests in the later Saxon period—Goscelin, who wrote the *Vita Edithe*, was possibly one of them<sup>35</sup>—and 'double minsters', with an attached community of male clergy, served the needs not just of the nuns but also of a parish.<sup>36</sup> However, there is evidence concerning churches of close proximity to Wilton which makes it hard to suggest a large parish for any church in the borough itself. If St Mary's was a *mynster*, the evidence for this has largely vanished. The chapel of Netherhampton was apparently dependent upon St Mary's in 1394, but this is the only ecclesiastical link documented in later medieval times.<sup>37</sup> The church became the town's mother church in the 16th century, following the falling into disuse of many of the town's other churches during the preceding two centuries, and this has been held to indicate this church's previous high status.<sup>38</sup> Receipt thereafter of all the town's tithes and those of Burcombe, Bulbridge and Ditchampton<sup>39</sup> may be no more than the natural result of these late changes.

Wilton's cartulary does contain one document which seems to suggest a *mynster* on its lands, at South Newton. In 1208 an agreement was reached regarding the advowson of a chapel at Great Wishford. The chapel was allowed to receive tithes of corn and of twenty acres held by its parson, but all tithes of Henry de Albeni's demesne were acknowledged to be a right of "Niwetune" church, which was already in receipt of a pension from Wishford chapel, and retained the right of presentation to it.<sup>40</sup> Later, the "Inquisitions of the Ninth"

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*Saints*, p. 141, n. 5. On reform in relation to the nunneries in particular, see Yorke, *Nunneries*, pp. 85–89.

35 And he mentions two others there in King Edgar's time: Ridyard, *Royal Saints*, p. 144; *vÆdR*, pp. 94, 98.

36 John Godfrey, "The Place of the Double Monastery in the Anglo-Saxon Minster System," in *Famulus Christi: Essays in Commemoration of the Thirteenth Centenary of the Birth of the Venerable Bede*, ed. Gerald Bonner (London, 1976), pp. 344–50.

37 *Register of John Waltham*, ed. Timmins, p. 145.

38 *vCH Wilts* 6, pp. 28–30. Haslam, "Towns of Wiltshire," p. 143, n. 53.

39 *vCH Wilts* 6, p. 30.

40 *Registrum Wiltunense*, ed. R.C. Hoare (London, 1827), pp. 16–17.

reveal that the parson of South Newton was entitled to the offerings made in “three chapels,”<sup>41</sup> and several sources allow the identification of these chapels. One must have been Great Wishford, and in 1394 it was the rector of South Newton’s responsibility that the windows of Little Wishford’s chapel were not in good repair.<sup>42</sup> Ugford, with a chapel perhaps by 1191,<sup>43</sup> was in South Newton parish until the 20th century, and both Ugford and Burden’s Ball immediately to the north of Wilton were served from South Newton in 1535.<sup>44</sup> Institution to the church of St Peter, Bulbridge, on the other side of Wilton to the south, was in 1248 in “*Niwetone*” church.<sup>45</sup>

South Newton’s church lacks the appearance of a church of former notable wealth and status, and the very name of the vill would seem to suggest relatively late origins. The nunnery seems to have played a role in the high status of this church, for it was attached to a prebend in Wilton Abbey. Its rights over nearby churches may result either from gift, by the abbess,<sup>46</sup> or from her protection of the parochial rights South Newton’s church acquired when founded, perhaps late in the Saxon period but before other nearby churches. The best explanation for the South Newton evidence may be that it is one of many churches which acquired rights late in the Saxon period and for a variety of reasons not necessarily connected with early foundation or earlier *myenster* status. Its attachment to one of the abbey’s prebends would have funded that position—but 13th-to-16th-century evidence discussed above suggests it is quite legitimate to connect the church’s status, and its prebendary, with an intention to provide for the pastoral service of its parish.<sup>47</sup>

The area in question contains several pieces of Anglo-Saxon sculptural work. The Wylve valley includes the church of Knook with a tympanum, in the past given a Saxon date by more than one writer, and perhaps a cross-shaft remnant, part of a cross shaft at Codford St Peter, a cross fragment found at Hanging Langford and a tympanum and rood at Little Langford. Most of these sculptural remains have been dated, rightly or wrongly, to the first half of the

41 *Nonarum Inquisitiones in Curia Scaccarii temp. Regis Edwardi III*, Record Commission (London, 1807), p. 177.

42 *Register of John Waltham*, ed. Timmins, p. 146.

43 *VCH Wilts* 15, p. 225, and p. 214 (map).

44 *Valor Ecclesiasticus, temp. Hen. VIII*, ed. John Caley and Joseph Hunter, Record Commission, 6 vols (London, 1810–34), 2:100.

45 *Charters and Documents illustrating the History of the Cathedral, City and Diocese of Salisbury*, ed. W.H. Rich Jones and W.D. Macray, RS 97 (London, 1891), p. 313.

46 As documented later c.1191, when the abbess granted “decimae de dominico de Stokes, et viii solidi pro decimis de dominico nostro de Avena”: *Charters and Documents*, ed. Rich Jones and Macray, pp. 52–53.

47 Again see Yorke, *Nunneries*, pp. 127–29.

9th century.<sup>48</sup> Codford St Mary has been suggested also to incorporate Saxon remains in its structure,<sup>49</sup> and Teffont Magna's church contains fragments of a Saxon cross-shaft.<sup>50</sup> Other churches are known to have existed in the area in the late Saxon period: Burcombe, very close to Wilton, has a church incorporating late Saxon features, and at Bemerton a church was present by 968 when it was given with two hides to the nunnery: the charter (S 767) mentions the previous holders Regenweard and Blithher, suggesting perhaps a proprietary church founded by one of these men or a predecessor. Although the church was given to the nunnery, it appears in later sources dependent not upon Wilton but upon Fugglestone—pastoral arrangements were evidently made either before that grant, or by the nunnery.

The cross-shafts raise the same interpretational problems as that at Broad Chalke: unlike Broad Chalke, these churches have no hint of superior status in later sources of any kind, including episcopal registers, and may be suggested to contain the remains of crosses dating from before the building of the churches. Meanwhile, tympana have been found in many lesser churches, and are likely to date from after the Norman Conquest (above, n. 48): leaving those aside, the churches at Knook, Codford St Peter, Codford St Mary, Hanging and Little Langford might have been founded comparatively early, and through this early foundation acquired independence earlier than most churches.

Examination of the charters for this region and the topography of the estates described in their bounds may support this suggestion: the Wylve valley was, it seems, divided into self-sufficient units, farming open-field systems, by the 9th century, following a pattern of allocation of areas appendant to royal territory (in this case, the royal centre at Wilton).<sup>51</sup> It might be natural for

48 P.G. Medd, "Anglo-Saxon Ecclesiastical Organisation in the Kingdom of Wessex," (Univ. of Oxford, B.Litt. thesis, 1958), p. 175. H.M. Taylor, however, dates Knook's tympanum to c.1000: "Anglo-Saxon sculpture at Knook," *WANHM* 63 (1968), 54–57. See also H.M. and Joan Taylor, *Anglo-Saxon Architecture*, 3 vols (Cambridge, 1965–78), 1:364–65. G. Zarnecki, "1066 and Architectural Sculpture," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 52 (1966), 87–104, esp. pp. 98–101, draws on regional and continental parallels to argue that the earliest *tympana* date from the late 11th century.

49 C.E. Ponting, "Notes on Churches in the Neighbourhood of Warminster," *WANHM* 27 (1894), 245–79. E.H. Goddard, "Notes on pre-Norman Sculptured Stones in Wiltshire," pp. 43–49 in the same volume, has some discussion of the other remains mentioned. On Codford St Peter, see also K.G. Forbes, "The Codford Saxon Carving," *WANHM* 62 (1967), 34–37.

50 *VCH Wilts* 8, p. 78.

51 Della Hooke, "Regional Variation in Southern and Central England in the Anglo-Saxon Period and its Relationship to Land Units and Settlement," in *Anglo-Saxon Settlements* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 123–51, especially pp. 126–27 and 134–40. Also her *The Landscape of Anglo-Saxon England* (London, 1998), pp. 117 and 122.

independent estates to acquire their own churches, also with some independence, at a comparatively early date. If alternatively they acquired preaching crosses at that time, it is not unreasonable to think churches later appeared on estates that had passed into the hands of Wilton Abbey, thus greatly reducing the chances of survival of any evidence placing them in an earlier *mynster* parish.

The case of the parish layout in Wilton Abbey's lands thus illustrates the importance of landholding in the pattern of *mynster* parishes we see in the sources. For example, some of the churches already mentioned might count as 'estate *mynsters*' as much as 'hundred *mynsters*'. At Downton for instance, the land was in the hands of the bishop of Winchester early in the 10th century, in royal hands for most of the rest of that century, and then restored to the bishop. The manor was the same unit as the hundred and, I have suggested, the parish.<sup>52</sup> One wonders therefore whether the extent of the parish is owed to the fact that bishop and king were able to preserve it from the effect of encroachments resulting from the foundation of lesser churches within it. At Damerham the situation was similar. The hundred and the manor held by Glastonbury Abbey were the same unit, passing to the abbey by the will of Æthelflaed in the late 10th century. Detached parts of Damerham hundred, at Compton Chamberlayne, and of Downton hundred, at Bishopstone, were likely added in around this time for the administrative convenience of their landlords. Again, at Broad Chalke, the hundred *mynster* might be regarded as an estate *mynster*, the hundred as noted being granted to Wilton Abbey, during the 10th century. At Tisbury, the *mynster* and 20 hides of land surrounding were granted to Shaftesbury Abbey, a gift which Æthelred II confirmed in 984, and the parish, which I have suggested encompassed a number of later parishes around Tisbury, corresponds closely to the bounds attached to the surviving charter.<sup>53</sup>

Undoubtedly gifts of lands to ecclesiastical institutions led to the creation of the records that allow us to look at the *mynster* parishes—though if Wilton Abbey created such records, they are lost. Additionally though, these institutions were prestigious and educated enough to defend, or establish, the rights of the churches on their lands, so that in turn their relatively large parishes survived long enough to be glimpsed in later records. The churches involved may have existed already, as *mynsters* or as lesser churches dependent on older *mynsters*, or they may have been newly founded shortly after the receipt of the

52 Pitt, "Wiltshire Minster *Parochiae*," pp. 29–32.

53 Pitt, "Wiltshire Minster *Parochiae*," pp. 50–57.

lands. If already extant, they may have acquired 'hundred *mynster*' status at that time, in cases in which hundred and estate were the same unit.

Concentrations of ecclesiastical estates may equally be responsible for evidence that is difficult to interpret. In Thornhill hundred in the north-east of the shire (Fig. 20.4), Aldbourne's church existed by the time of Domesday Book, with a priest holding two hides, and the land had in 1066 been in the hands of the Godwin family (Harold II's mother).<sup>54</sup> If the hundred had a *mynster* it may have stood at Aldbourne. However, this cannot be certain due to the rights of other landlords in the hundred. At Wanborough a church existed by

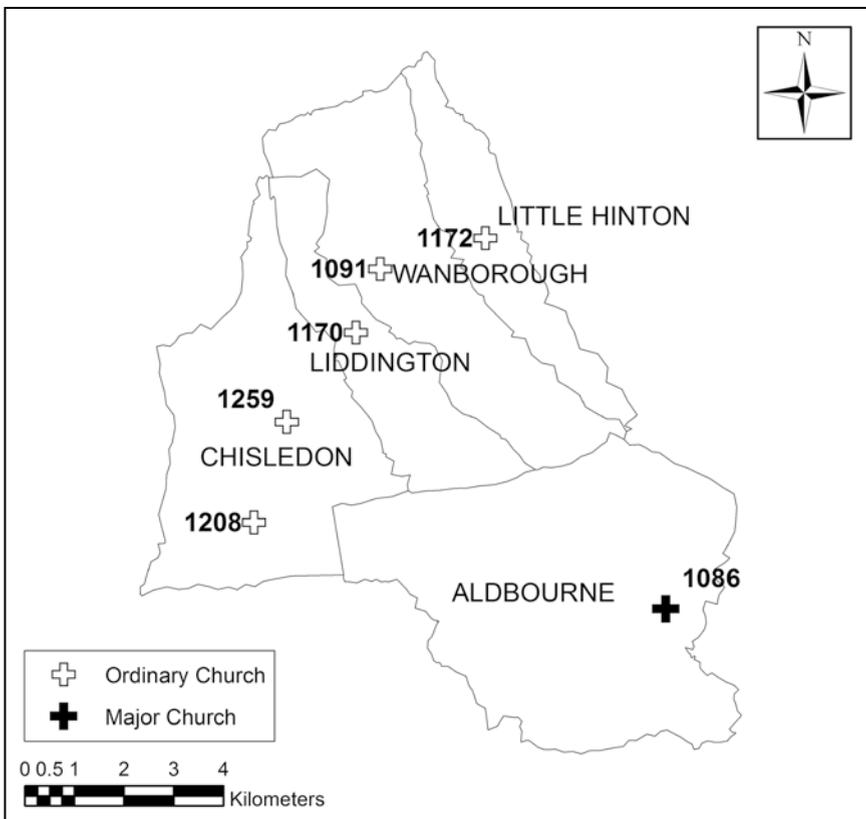


FIGURE 20.4 Thornhill hundred, c.1086, showing churches with dates of first known reference

1091, showing no evidence of dependence upon another, largely, it may be suspected, because it was in the hands of the bishop.<sup>55</sup> The lands, however, had been granted in the 9th century to Old Minster, Winchester and included Little Hinton.<sup>56</sup> Liddington, meanwhile, was a Shaftesbury Abbey estate by 1066.<sup>57</sup> Chiseldon was among the estates of New Minster, Winchester, from early in the 10th century<sup>58</sup> and there may already have been a church. In short several religious institutions held lands, and churches which they may even have founded, in the hundred and they would no doubt have competed to promote the influence and status of churches on their estates—after all, income was involved—so that, if there was a hundred *mynster* here, it cannot be certain which church it was. If it had been Aldbourne, even the Godwins were unable to preserve its rights against the bishops and communities of Old and New Minsters, Ramsbury/Sarum, Shaftesbury and Glastonbury.<sup>59</sup>

Other estate holders may have competed in Elstub hundred (Fig. 20.5), where a *mynster* stood at Netheravon,<sup>60</sup> a late Saxon tower, once with structures on each side, now at the west of the more familiar nave and chancel. However, later evidence also suggests something more than a simple parish church, and pre-Conquest foundation, at Enford—lands here in the bishop of Winchester's hands in 1066 had very possibly come into the hands of Old Minster, Winchester, in the 10th century.<sup>61</sup> Considering that Netheravon was another estate of the powerful Godwin family, a link between that family and the surviving structure must be suspected.<sup>62</sup> It could have been built as a manorial church

55 *Vetus Registrum Sarisberiense alias dictum Registrum Sancti Osmundi Episcopi: The Register of S. Osmund*, ed. W.H. Rich Jones, RS 78/1–2, 2 vols (London, 1883–84), 1:198–200. The Norman-period church seems to have been cruciform, perhaps reflecting high status: *VCH Wilts* 9, p. 183.

56 Pitt, "Wiltshire Minster *Parochiae*," p. 92.

57 *Cartulary of Shaftesbury Abbey*, BL MS Harley 61, fol. 80r, mentions Liddington's church in a survey of the abbey's lands of the 1170s. The charter of King Edmund (S 459) granting ten hides at Liddington to one Adulf also survives in the cartulary, fols 9v–10r, dated 940, so the land, at least, may have come into the abbey's hands during the 10th century.

58 S 370; GDB, fol. 67v.

59 Pitt, "Wiltshire Minster *Parochiae*," pp. 91–93. Glastonbury Abbey held Badbury, which in turn might not have remained dependent upon Chiseldon had a church been built.

60 Pitt, "Wiltshire Minster *Parochiae*," pp. 94–96. GDB, fol. 65r. *The Register of John Chandler, Dean of Salisbury 1404–17*, ed. T.C.B. Timmins, Wiltshire Record Society 39 (Devizes, 1984), pp. 30 [1405], 89 [1408], on West Chisenbury's dependence. *VCH Wilts* 11, pp. 178–80.

61 *Charters and Documents*, pp. 366 [1291], 54 [Coombe, c.1194]; *Select Documents of the English Lands of the Abbey of Bec*, ed. Marjorie Chibnall, Camden 3rd ser. 73 (1951), p. 57 [Compton, c.1230?]. GDB, fol. 65v; *Taxatio*, p. 180.

62 Other churches associated with the family are mentioned in Blair, *Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, pp. 357–58.

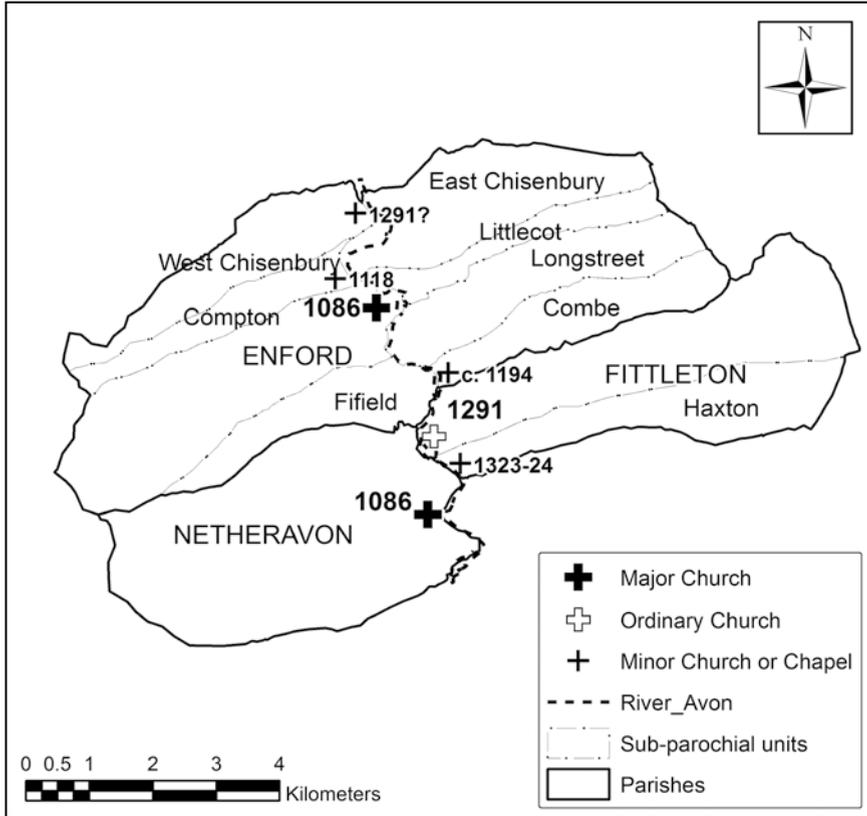


FIGURE 20.5 Elstub hundred, showing parishes and churches with dates of first known reference

for the family's estate, or as the church of a religious community, which chimes well its endowment in 1086,<sup>63</sup> or indeed a combination of both, and in either case possibly succeeding or perpetuating a hundred *mynster*. Or, the church of

63 "Nigel the Physician holds the church of this manor with 1 hide"; GDB, fol. 65r, listed under the king's lands, but three manors listed under Nigel's own section are stated to belong to the church of Netheravon. These were Stratton St Margaret (30 hides TRE), Chisenbury (8 hides TRE) and another hide in Netheravon; GDB, fol. 73r. A hide was a typical 1086 holding for a Wiltshire *mynster*: that the manors were an endowment made by the Godwins as part of a project for the church seems a reasonable suggestion.

1086 being described as “waste” in Domesday Book, the ‘late Saxon’ tower may relate to its replacement.<sup>64</sup> Enford, even if not originating as a hundred *mynster*, became in effect the church for the bishop of Winchester’s estate. The fact that the hundred had not been divided before 1086 suggests the layout of ecclesiastical and secular units overlies earlier arrangements.

Thornhill and Elstub hundreds show examples of what can be viewed as another ‘layer’ of ecclesiastical organisation, churches of lesser status than *mynsters* but likely to have been founded comparatively early and to have enjoyed some local standing hinted at in the later sources. In the past I have tried to suggest that acquisition in the 10th century, by religious establishments, especially those involved in the reform movement of the time, is likely to have been one reason for the desire that churches be founded on the lands involved, and corresponding parishes laid out.<sup>65</sup> There were other changes in the period, however, including the proliferation of small secular estates, thought to have been one of the reasons behind the foundation of dependent churches, many of which only acquired parochial status much later, centuries later in some cases. Further, a very significant phenomenon—the appearance of nucleated villages replacing a previously much more scattered settlement pattern and associated with the laying-out of open-field systems—is generally thought to have begun in the 9th century and continued through the late Saxon period.<sup>66</sup> The effects on people’s lives would have been profound, and one of those effects was surely to foster the sense of community we see in the later medieval period, and also, very likely, the sense that one of these new communities should have its own church, even if it remained subject to the local *mynster* long after its foundation.

Further research may help answer some of the remaining questions, including the nature and geography of pastoral provision in the area in the early Anglo-Saxon period. Meanwhile, the sources show, in my view, that Anglo-Saxon ecclesiastical organisation consisted of and grew into a ‘layered’ pattern: hundred *mynsters* perhaps lay at the centre of these layers, replacing or growing out of an older pattern. Nunneries appear to have established prebends, not necessarily based on existing *mynsters*: perhaps at Damerham only the

64 John Blair, pers. comm.

65 Pitt, “Malmesbury Abbey and Late Saxon Parochial Development”; “Minster Churches and Minster Territories.” Hooke, *Landscape of Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 117.

66 See for example, Hooke, *Landscape of Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 115ff.

prebendaries lasted beyond 1066, their existence beyond that of the nuns possibly suggestive of pastoral functions. In Wilton's case it can be suggested that there was a *mynster*, serving a unit at some point divided into Branchbury and Cadworth hundreds. Its connection with the late Saxon nunnery is difficult if not impossible to disentangle with the evidence available. The abbey's estate was the result of endowment intended to support the nunnery: whatever that house's connection with a pre-existing *mynster*, it made arrangements for local pastoral provision. A number of other churches existed, founded at different times for different purposes, by royal and other major and minor landholders as well as by religious houses. Between hundred *mynsters* and these other churches, the pattern of landholding shaped the pattern of parishes now discernible, which is a late Saxon pattern.<sup>67</sup>

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67 I am grateful to Alex Langlands for re-drawing the maps for this chapter. Any further research will benefit from, and perhaps be unsuccessful without, the input of a genuine scholar such as Barbara Yorke. My own research was undertaken with the benefits of her advice, encouragement and understanding, her instinctive knowledge of when support was needed and, conversely, when it was best to leave me to "get on with it." Mistakes and misinterpretations are my own.

# The Anglo-Saxon Chapel of St Helen at Malmesbury

*Michael Hare*

Many years ago, Barbara Yorke mentioned to me that an Anglo-Saxon church, known as St Helen's, had recently been discovered during alterations to a house at Malmesbury. During a subsequent visit to Malmesbury I failed to find the building in question! However, serendipity then intervened when I encountered the present owners, Kes and Mary Smith, at Deerhurst and discovered that, having acquired an Anglo-Saxon church, they had developed an interest in Anglo-Saxon church architecture. They invited me to visit and have subsequently encouraged me to study the building.

## The Site of St Helen's

The town of Malmesbury occupies a steep-sided irregular limestone promontory.<sup>1</sup> The town is largely surrounded by two rivers which meet at the south-east corner, the Sherston branch of the (Bristol) Avon on the south and west and the Tetbury branch of the Avon to the east and north (Fig. 21.1). It has long been proposed that Malmesbury had its origins in a bivallate Iron Age hillfort, and this has recently been established by excavations on the eastern side of the town.<sup>2</sup> A monastery was established at Malmesbury in the 7th century and occupied the north-western corner of the hillfort. St Aldhelm, a member of the West Saxon royal house, became abbot c.680 or a little later.<sup>3</sup> Malmesbury is listed in the *Burghal Hidage* of late 9th- or early 10th-century date,<sup>4</sup> and it

1 For a contour plan of the town at 2 m intervals, see Jeremy Haslam, "The Towns of Wiltshire," in *Anglo-Saxon Towns in Southern England*, ed. Jeremy Haslam (Chichester, 1984), pp. 87–147, Fig. 48 (at p. 116).

2 Timothy Longman, "Iron Age and Later Defences at Malmesbury: Excavations 1998–2000," *WANHM* 99 (2006), 105–64; Mark Collard and Tim Havard, "The Prehistoric and Medieval Defences of Malmesbury: Archaeological Investigations at Holloway, 2005–2006," *WANHM* 104 (2011), 79–94.

3 The early history of the abbey is summarized by S.E. Kelly, ed., *Charters of Malmesbury Abbey*, Anglo-Saxon Charters 11 (Oxford, 2005), pp. 1–34; for the date of Aldhelm's appointment as abbot, see Michael Lapidge, "The Career of Aldhelm," *ASE* 36 (2007), 15–69, at 48–52.

4 Alexander R. Rumble, "An Edition and Translation of the Burghal Hidage, together with Recension C of the Tribal Hidage," in *The Defence of Wessex: The Burghal Hidage and Anglo-Saxon Fortifications*, ed. David Hill and Alexander R. Rumble (Manchester, 1996), pp. 14–35, at 26–27

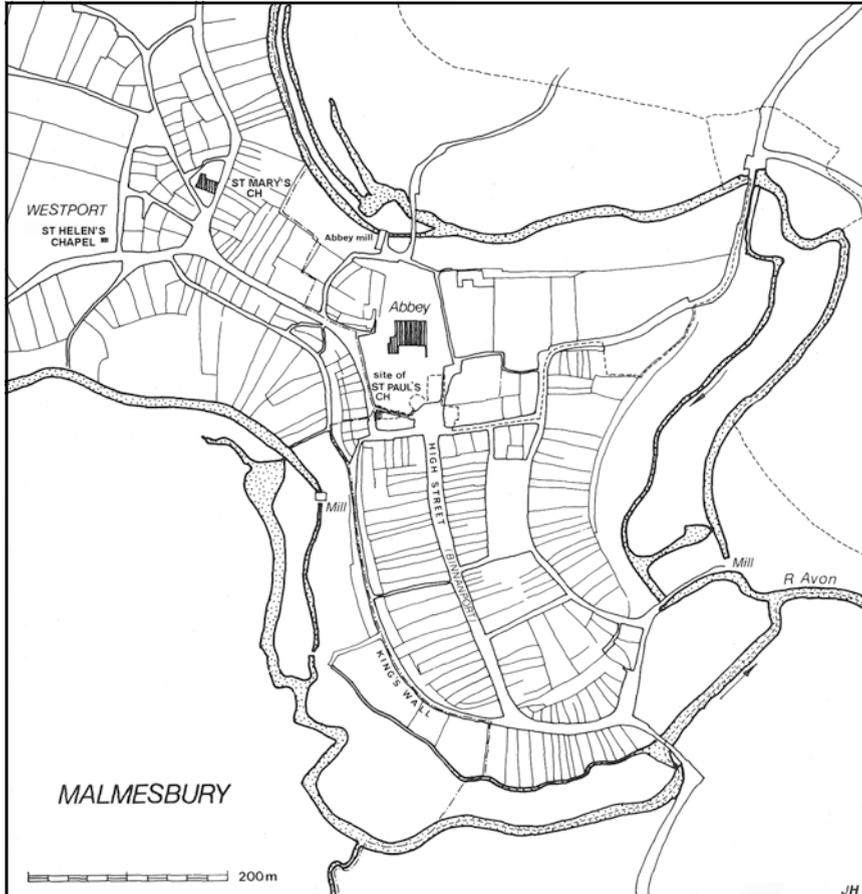


FIGURE 21.1 Map to show the position of the former chapel of St Helen at Malmesbury in the suburb of Westport  
 ADAPTED BY RICHARD BRYANT FROM AN ORIGINAL MAP BY JEREMY HASLAM

seems very probable that the defences of the Iron Age hillfort were adapted when the burh was created. At one point a substantial earth and stone bank of 10th- or 11th-century date has been identified on the line of the inner Iron Age defences.<sup>5</sup>

(text), 33 (translation). See also Barbara Yorke, *Wessex in the Early Middle Ages* (London, 1995), pp. 115–21.

5 Longman, “Iron Age and Later Defences,” pp. 125–30, 160–61. For a general discussion of the town in the early medieval period, see Haslam, “The Towns of Wiltshire,” pp. 111–17.

At the north-west corner of Malmesbury a narrow neck of high ground connects the town with a broader area of high ground to the west between the two rivers.<sup>6</sup> This area was outside Malmesbury's Iron Age hillfort, and a medieval suburb known as Westport occupied the neck of land and the area immediately to its west. A major road (Bristol Street) runs through the suburb parallel to the Sherston Avon to the south. St Helen's is located on the north side of this street at Nat. Grid Ref ST 92977 87406, about 250 m from the former west gate of the town; the south wall of the house is set back about 10.60 m from the modern street frontage. The building stands on a south-facing slope about 1.75 m above street level; the ground continues to rise to the rear of the house.

### The discovery of St Helen's

It was long believed that the house called St Helen's stood on the site of a chapel dedicated to St Helen. For instance in 1805 the Rev'd J.M. Moffatt in his *History of the Town of Malmesbury* wrote that:

At the corner of a street, formerly called Milk-Street, near the road to Sherston, stands a house which is denominated *St. Hellen's*, on the same spot where formerly stood St. Hellen's Chapel. In the wall of the garden belonging to this house, is fixed a calvary cross.<sup>7</sup>

It was therefore something of a surprise when redevelopment of the area revealed that the walls of the chapel were preserved in the house.

In the years after World War Two there was considerable pressure to remove poor quality housing, to build new houses and to provide wider roads. In 1967 the Borough Council obtained outline planning permission to redevelop the area to the west of West Street (the north-south street a little to the east of St Helen's); this redevelopment would have involved the demolition of St Helen's. Fortunately Malmesbury Civic Trust made an appeal for renovation of the area rather than demolition.<sup>8</sup> In 1976–79 a private initiative took place which involved the refurbishment of a number of houses at the southern end of West

6 Leland put it neatly, "Newton water and Avon ren so nere together in the botom of the west suburbe at Malmesbyri, that there within a burbolt-shot the toun is peninsulatid": Lucy Toulmin Smith, ed., *The Itinerary of John Leland in or about the years 1535–1543*, 5 vols. (London, 1906–10), 1:131.

7 J.M. Moffatt, *The History of the Town of Malmesbury, and of its Ancient Abbey* (Tetbury, 1805), pp. 102–03.

8 Charles Vernon, *Malmesbury's Past, People and Places* (Malmesbury, 2014), p. 64.

Street together with St Helen's and the cottages to its west. It was in the course of this work that the early medieval fabric came to light when pebbledash and whitewash was removed from the walls; the building was recognized in 1980 as a church of Anglo-Saxon date by the late John Bowen of Malmesbury.<sup>9</sup>

A photograph taken during the work, showing the house from the north, indicates that it was completely gutted.<sup>10</sup> Unfortunately no archaeological observation took place during the work, and much more could doubtless have been learnt at that time. There are no reports of burials having been seen during the work.

Since the discovery, there have been many brief references in print to St Helen's, but the building has not yet received a detailed study.<sup>11</sup>

### Description

The present house consists of the nave of the church, but it will be suggested below that there was formerly a narrower chancel to its east. The house (23 Bristol Street) now forms the eastern end of a terrace, the remaining houses (Nos 25, 27, and 29) being of 19th-century origin; early maps show that there was also a narrow structure adjoining St Helen's at the east end of the terrace.<sup>12</sup> The nave is clearly defined by megalithic quoins (discussed in more detail below) at the south-west, south-east, and north-east angles. Internally it is divided into two floors, with a further room above in an attic space. To the rear there is a flat-roofed two-storeyed extension of modern date. The west wall of St Helen's is obscured by the 19th-century house to the west, and no details of its construction are visible. The north wall is now an internal wall within the house, again with no constructional details visible. The photograph of the house from the north taken during the refurbishment of the house in the 1970s

9 John Bowen, *The Story of Malmesbury: part one, 500 BC–1600 AD* (Malmesbury, 2000), pp. 31–32. The information that the building was pebbledashed comes from a former 'listed building' description, available in the Historic England Archive, file BF083999; the remains of whitewash are still visible in places.

10 I am grateful to Kes and Mary Smith for showing me this photograph.

11 There is an unpublished description dated 1992 by the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments (England) [hereafter RCHME], now available in the Historic England Archive, file BF083999. Warwick Rodwell has drawn attention to the building on more than one occasion; see for instance Warwick Rodwell, *The Archaeology of Churches* (Stroud, 2012), pp. 41, 196.

12 This structure appears on a map of 1845 (Wiltshire and Swindon Archives 815/27L), which also shows that the adjoining cottages to the west had been built by that date. St Helen's is listed Grade II\*, and Nos 25–29 Grade II; No. 29 is set forward closer to the street.



FIGURE 21.2 View of the south wall of the former chapel of St Helen at Malmesbury in 1992  
© CROWN COPYRIGHT. HISTORIC ENGLAND ARCHIVE (REF. BB/15932).

shows the stubs of stone walls projecting northwards from the north-east and north-west corners, suggesting that there was an earlier structure on the site of the modern extension. It may well be that the north-west quoin also survives, but it is completely encased by later structures.

The nave measures externally 6.82 m in length and 4.40 m in width; internally the nave, as far as can be measured, is 5.64 m in length and 3.24 m in width. The walls are thin, measuring between 0.58 m and 0.65 m in thickness, with a pronounced batter (more noticeable internally than externally).<sup>13</sup> The south wall (Fig. 21.2) is built of roughly-coursed limestone rubble and it stands on a square plinth of undressed stonework projecting about 0.10 m–0.15 m from the wall face. The wall is 4.66 m in height above the plinth, but has at some stage been raised by about 0.60 m, probably when the building was converted into a two-storeyed cottage and the present 17th-century roof was added. There is a doorway with a small modern porch towards the east end and windows

<sup>13</sup> At one point the thickness of the north wall is 0.70 m, but the fabric is not certainly ancient here.



FIGURE 21.3 View of the east wall of the former chapel of St Helen at Malmesbury in 1992  
© CROWN COPYRIGHT. HISTORIC ENGLAND ARCHIVE (REF. BB/15936).

lighting the ground and upper floors in the centre of the wall, with a dormer window lighting the attic.<sup>14</sup> There is no clear evidence for early windows or doorways. A disturbed area about 0.60 m wide between two straight joints above and to the left of the porch has been interpreted as a blocked early window;<sup>15</sup> this is possible, but the evidence is by no means convincing. It has also been suggested that the ground-floor window formed part of a doorway;<sup>16</sup>

14 For a fuller account of the later features of the building, see the listed building description available at <[www.britishlistedbuildings.co.uk/en-460688-23-bristol-street-malmesbury-#.VviTym\\_2bIU](http://www.britishlistedbuildings.co.uk/en-460688-23-bristol-street-malmesbury-#.VviTym_2bIU)> (accessed 18 Nov. 2017).

15 In the RCHME description quoted in n. 11 above.

16 In the listed building description quoted in n. 14 above.

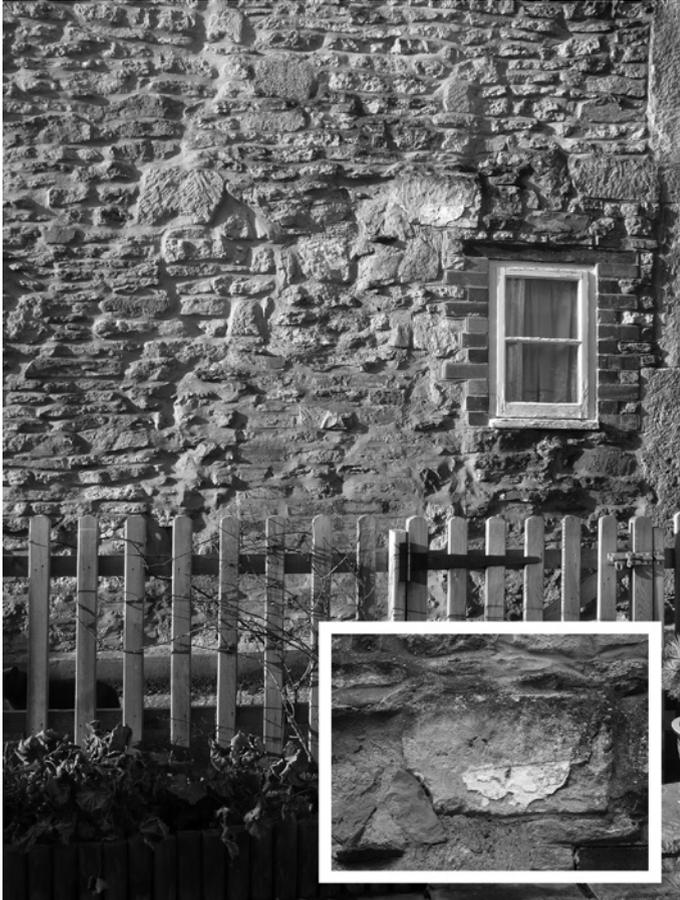


FIGURE 21.4 View showing the remains of the blocked chancel-arch of the former chapel of St Helen at Malmesbury, with (inset) detail of the impost on the north side

© AUTHOR

the jamb of the eastern side of the window is formed of larger stones than the western jamb, but there is no sign of an opening beneath the window-sill.

The gabled east wall (Fig. 21.3) now has only a small modern window at ground-floor level, close to the north-east quoin of the nave. However, there is evidence for a former opening towards the centre of the wall, and it is suggested that this opening was originally a chancel-arch. The principal evidence is provided by two large blocks which seem to have been the original imposts of the opening (Fig. 21.4); both imposts display broad hollow chamfers, that on the north side revealed after the removal of a small quantity of mortar. The width

of the opening, as measured at the base of the imposts, was 0.96 m, and its height to the top of the imposts (above the level of the plinth in the south wall) is 2.37 m; with a round head, the original height would have been in the order of 2.82 m. The head of the opening is lost, though a faint outline in the masonry might indeed suggest the former presence of a round-headed opening. The jambs of the opening are also lost, but the blocking of the opening is clear and includes much brick. The use of brick suggests that the opening may have continued in use after it ceased to function as an arch between nave and chancel; it may perhaps have served as an entry to the building after the chancel was demolished or it may have provided access to the structure to the east visible on 19th-century maps. The opening is not quite central to the wall, being displaced some 0.14 m to the north; erratic setting out is common in early medieval buildings. Above this opening there is a further disturbed area, perhaps representing a square-headed window of domestic character.<sup>17</sup>

There is no trace now visible of scars left by the side-walls of the former chancel, but it is evident that the east wall of the building has been extensively refaced and patched. Moreover, slight changes in the plane of the wall suggest that it was not built as a single straight wall; the simultaneous construction of a chancel to the east would explain these minor deviations in the plane of the wall.<sup>18</sup> The stone plinth along the south wall is continued as a rendered feature along the east wall, rising with ground level towards the north; it seems likely that in the east wall the plinth is a modern feature.

The battered remnant of the chancel-arch is thus the only early opening of which any trace has survived. The position of the original entrance door is unknown, but may well have been in the west wall; there is now a large fireplace and chimney in the west wall which has probably destroyed any trace of such a doorway.

It is the megalithic quoins of oolitic limestone which are the most distinctive feature of St Helen's. These have usually been described as consisting of long-and-short work,<sup>19</sup> though they do not display the regular alternation of tall pillar stones with flat stones bonding deeply into both adjacent walls. The quoining consists rather of massive oblong pillar stones bonding more deeply into alternating faces of the wall, coupled with occasional flat stones which bond deeply into one wall only in accordance with the alternating pattern of the oblong pillar stones. The south-east quoin is visible on both faces and serves well to illustrate the character of the quoining. The lowest stone is a massive

17 In the former listed building description quoted in n. 9 above.

18 I am grateful to Richard Bryant for pointing this out to me during a site visit.

19 For instance in the RCHME description quoted in n. 11 above and in the listed building description in n. 14.

pillar stone 1.55 m in height, oblong in shape, extending further into the south face (up to 0.6 m) than into the east face (up to 0.3 m). Above this is another pillar stone 0.84 m in height, again oblong in shape, extending further into the east face (up to 0.6 m) than into the south face (up to 0.24 m). There is then a flat stone only 0.22 m in height, which extends more deeply into the south face than the east face, followed by a tall pillar stone which extends more deeply into the east face than into the south face; above that level the quoining belongs to the later increase in the height of the wall. Only one face is visible of the south-west and north-east quoins, but these seem to follow a similar pattern; the largest stone is the lowest in the south-west quoin, which is 1.70 m in height.

The stones used for the quoining display no obvious traces of reuse from Roman buildings such as lewis-holes, but it does seem likely that the massive stones used to form the quoins derive from a Roman building or buildings. The small Roman town at White Walls in the parish of Easton Grey a little under three miles to the west would be one possibility, and the small town at Nettleton Scrub (with a substantial temple) about nine miles to the south-west is another option.<sup>20</sup> However, stonework of this size is more likely to derive from a major town with large-scale public engineering projects such as baths, bridges, temples, and defensive walls. Cirencester, just over ten miles to the north, seems the most likely source, with Bath 18 miles to the south-west another possibility.<sup>21</sup> All of the sites listed lie on the Fosse Way. Detailed petrological examination of the quoins might well prove helpful in identifying the source of the stone.

An extremely unusual feature at the top of the north-east quoin is a carved kneeler (Fig. 21.5), that is to say a stone projecting over the wall below at the bottom of the coping on the gable end of a roof.<sup>22</sup> The stone, which is also of oolitic limestone, measures 0.42 m in maximum width and 0.25 m in maximum height. The decoration consists of a spiral volute in shallow relief, from which a pair of broad mouldings rise parallel to the chamfered outer face of the kneeler. The two mouldings are divided by a narrow incised groove; the upper moulding tapers slightly as it rises. It is possible that something has been lost from the top of the stone which acted as a stop to the two mouldings. The presence of the kneeler implies a roof with a substantial overhang.

20 Mark Corney, "The Romano-British Nucleated Settlements of Wiltshire," in *Roman Wiltshire and After: Papers in Honour of Ken Annable*, ed. Peter Ellis (Devizes, 2001), pp. 5–38, at pp. 23–26, 30–34.

21 Although Bath is linked to Malmesbury by the River Avon, the river is not navigable for most of this stretch.

22 The RCHME description quoted in n. 11 above suggests that "this sculpture is clearly not in its original position," but the sculpture does not seem to have been recognized as a kneeler.



FIGURE 21.5 View of the kneeler at the top of the north-east quoin of the former chapel of St Helen at Malmesbury  
© AUTHOR

At the top of the south face of the lowest stone of the south-east quoin, a much-weathered scratch-dial survives. This is the only feature visible in the present building likely to be of later medieval date.

### Documentary Evidence

There is no surviving medieval documentation for St Helen's, assuming that there was not at some stage a change in dedication. The building first appears in 1575 in a grant of a large number of 'concealed lands' to John Herbert and Andrew Palmer; under this grant they received St Ellen's chapel together with lands which had pertained to it in Malmesbury, Foxley, and Burton Hill tithing in Malmesbury.<sup>23</sup> 'Concealed lands' were properties which had escaped Crown ownership following the Dissolution of the Monasteries in the 1530s and of the

23 *Calendar of the Patent Rolls Preserved in the Public Record Office, Elizabeth I, VI, 1572–75* (London, 1973), no. 2382 (pp. 408–14, at 408). The grant also included a chapel of All Hallows at Malmesbury with lands in Westport and Burton Hill; this chapel was located in the

Chantries in 1547; much energy was expended (and much unpopularity incurred) by those licensed to search for them.<sup>24</sup> We learn from this record that St Helen's had remained in some sort of ecclesiastical use until the 1530s or 1540s, but no further details are given.

According to Moffatt, St Helen's was in the possession of the borough when he wrote his history of the town, published in 1805.<sup>25</sup> More of the early modern and later history of the building could doubtless be gleaned from the borough archives.

### Date

There is insufficient evidence to permit a close dating for the structure of St Helen's. The quoining is akin to long-and-short work, which would suggest a date in the 10th or 11th centuries.<sup>26</sup> It should not be regarded as certain that the building pre-dates the Conquest, for long-and-short quoining continued to be used after the Conquest, for instance in the Castle chapel of c.1070 at Winchester.<sup>27</sup> The spiral ornament on the kneeler cannot be used to suggest any closer dating, for spirals are fairly common, but the most ready parallels for such ornament in an architectural context come from the late 10th and 11th centuries. Similar spiral ornament, both in terms of scale and architectural context, may for instance be found on two mid-to late 11th-century capitals in the belfry windows at Sompting (West Sussex); on the side faces of each capital two heavy, rounded stems rise from a narrow roll moulding to end in tight scrolls or spirals.<sup>28</sup> A late 10th- or early 11th-century example of a carved roof

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High Street according to Richard H. Luce, *The History of the Abbey and Town of Malmesbury* (Malmesbury, 1979), p. 38.

24 C.J. Kitching, "The Quest for Concealed Lands in the Reign of Elizabeth I," *TRHS* 5th ser. 24 (1974), 63–78.

25 Moffatt, *History of the Town of Malmesbury*, p. 115. Moffatt also states that St Helen's was confirmed to the borough by William III in his charter of 1696; however, St Helen's is not mentioned by name in the printed text, though it may well be subsumed in the "Burgess Lands" to which the charter refers: *Authenticated Copy of Charter Granted to the Free Men of Malmesbury by King Athelstan and Ratified by King William III* (Malmesbury, 1910), esp. pp. 21–22.

26 H.M. Taylor and Joan Taylor, *Anglo-Saxon Architecture*, 3 vols (Cambridge, 1965–78), 3:939–57.

27 Martin Biddle, "Excavations at Winchester, 1971: Tenth and Final Interim Report: Part 1," *AntJ* 55 (1975), 96–126, at pp. 106–09.

28 Dominic Tweddle, Martin Biddle, and Birthe Kjølbye-Biddle, *Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture*, IV, *South-East England* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 183–84, ills. 205–12.

finial with a tight, spiral terminal can be found at Bibury (Gloucs.) on a high-level wall panel that depicts a steeply-roofed, two-cell fictive building.<sup>29</sup>

### Discussion

Two features of St Helen's are of particular interest. First there is the surviving decorated kneeler, a feature otherwise unparalleled in pre-Conquest churches. Secondly there is the evidence for an extremely narrow chancel-arch, no larger than a doorway and thus comparable to the very small chancel-arch at Bradford-on-Avon, only about 18 miles to the south; at Bradford the chancel-arch is 1.07 m in width and 2.97 m in height.<sup>30</sup> An excavated example of a church with a very narrow doorway-like opening between nave and chancel is provided by the church of St Mary, Tanner Street, Winchester; an earlier rectangular building was converted into the nave, with an apsidal chancel built to its east. A very narrow chancel-arch about 1 m in width opened between the two compartments; this arrangement seems to belong to the early 10th century, and the arrangement had been given up by the later 11th century.<sup>31</sup> A further example is perhaps provided by the building known as Prior's Hall at Widdington (Essex).<sup>32</sup> The building is now a house (formerly known as Stone Hall), and may have originated as such, but seems more likely to have been a church which went out of use at a very early date and was adapted to use as a secular building. What survives is a 'nave' aligned east-west about 12 m in length with long-and-short quoins at the angles. There is evidence that there was a narrower structure to the east, presumably a chancel. In the middle of the east wall of the nave there is a narrow doorway-like opening; the opening is round-headed, has imposts of square section and measures only 1.00 m in width.

It seems unlikely that very narrow chancel-arches would survive in any church which remained in normal use during the liturgical changes of the later 11th, 12th, and 13th centuries. In particular the movement of altars to the east

29 Richard Bryant, *Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture*, x, *The Western Midlands* (Oxford, 2012), pp. 139–40, ill. 42.

30 Taylor and Taylor, *Anglo-Saxon Architecture*, 1:86–89; H.M. Taylor, "The Anglo-Saxon Chapel at Bradford-on-Avon," *Archaeological Journal* 130 (1973), 141–71.

31 Martin Biddle, "Excavations at Winchester, 1970: Ninth Interim Report," *Antj* 52 (1972), 93–131, at pp. 104–07; "Excavations at Winchester, 1971: Tenth and Final Interim Report: Part II," *Antj* 55 (1975), 295–337, at pp. 312–13. For the dating, see the final phasing in Martin Biddle, *Object and Economy in Medieval Winchester*, *Winchester Studies* 7.2, 2 vols (Oxford, 1990), 2:1166–77.

32 For a preliminary account of Prior's Hall, see Nicola Smith, "England's Oldest House?" *Country Life* 183 (31 August 1989), 84–85.

end of chancels and the introduction of the Elevation of the Host would make the replacement of narrow chancel-arches with wider openings essential.<sup>33</sup> It is unlikely to be coincidence that our three standing examples of narrow chancel-arches are all preserved in buildings which had unusual after-lives and finished up as domestic buildings in the case of Malmesbury and Widdington and as a school and cottage in the case of Bradford-on-Avon. We do not know when Bradford-on-Avon and Widdington went out of use as churches, though the absence of any ecclesiastical features of 12th- to 15th-century date may suggest in both cases that this took place not long after the Norman Conquest (or even before it). In the case of Malmesbury the chapel apparently continued in use until the Reformation, but it may well be that the chancel was removed at an early date. At Winchester, the example of St Mary, Tanner Street makes the point that in churches which remained in congregational use, a narrow chancel-arch is likely to have been replaced by alternative arrangements.

It remains to discuss the purpose for which St Helen's was originally founded, together with its possible uses until the time of the Reformation. Malmesbury's ecclesiastical history in the pre-Conquest period is dominated by the abbey founded in the 7th century. It is unfortunate that the records of the abbey and the writings of its premier historian, William of Malmesbury, shed no light on the origins and evolution of St Helen's. Indeed the history of the several pre-Conquest churches within the abbey precinct is problematic;<sup>34</sup> archaeology has so far produced only a bone mount datable between the late 9th and mid-10th centuries, found during excavations in part of the cemetery.<sup>35</sup>

It is unknown when the suburb of Westport was first laid out, and it is also unclear who promoted this extension to the town; the king and the abbot of Malmesbury are the most likely candidates. Westport is not separately listed in Domesday Book of 1086 and is first mentioned by name in 1135.<sup>36</sup> Jeremy Haslam has plausibly argued that the Westport suburb was established in the late Anglo-Saxon period.<sup>37</sup> The discovery of St Helen's lends additional support to his argument. A parochial function for St Helen's seems excluded, for there were two parish churches, St Paul serving the town within the walls, and St Mary,

33 For these liturgical changes, see P.S. Barnwell, "The Laity, the Clergy and the Divine Presence: The Use of Space in Smaller Churches of the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries," *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 157 (2004), 41–60.

34 On the evidence for churches within the precinct, see Appendix B, "The Churches of Malmesbury Abbey," in WM, *GP*, 2:330–33.

35 Jonathan Hart and Neil Holbrook, "A Medieval Monastic Cemetery within the Precinct of Malmesbury Abbey: Excavations at the Old Cinema Site, Market Cross," *WANHM* 104 (2011), 166–92, at pp. 185–86, 188.

36 *VCH Wilts.* 14, p. 231.

37 Haslam, "The Towns of Wiltshire," pp. 116–17.

Westport serving the western suburb. Both had substantial parishes extending into the surrounding countryside and they probably once formed a single unit.<sup>38</sup>

However, other possibilities exist for the original function of St Helen's. It might have originated as the private chapel of a wealthy landowner with interests in the Westport suburb, perhaps with a personal devotion to St Helena. Barbara Yorke has hinted at the possibility of an association with the Westport market.<sup>39</sup> It might also be proposed that St Helen's was established by Malmesbury Abbey as a stational church in a processional liturgy. As Helen Gittos has recently shown, the liturgical sources reveal "that processions between churches were integral to the celebration of many major feasts, certainly in the late-tenth and eleventh centuries and probably from the late-seventh century."<sup>40</sup> For instance the Palm Sunday procession at Canterbury in the late Anglo-Saxon period involved a visit to the extra-mural church of St Martin, and similarly at Winchester in the early Norman period the procession took in the extra-mural church of St James.<sup>41</sup> At Malmesbury a procession crossing the high and narrow neck of land between St Helen's and the abbey would have formed an impressive and dramatic spectacle.

A few tentative additional thoughts in support of this suggestion can be put forward. A dedication to St Helena may have been regarded as particularly appropriate for an extra-mural church in Westport, based on Roman precedent. In his *Gesta regum Anglorum*, written in the mid-1120s, William of Malmesbury included a Roman *itinerarium* apparently composed between 648 and 682; this *itinerarium* lists the gates and roads leading out of Rome in turn, with details of the saints (mainly martyrs), to which they led. It has plausibly been suggested that William's *itinerarium* derives from a copy obtained by Aldhelm at the time of his visit to Rome, probably in 688–89;<sup>42</sup> if so, it would have been available for consultation by the community of Malmesbury throughout the Anglo-Saxon period. Of particular interest to us is this text's reference to the seventh gate: "Septima porta modo Maior dicitur, olim Sircurana dicebatur, et Via Lauicana

38 The parish boundaries are mapped in Haslam, "The Towns of Wiltshire," p. 113, Fig. 46, and in *VCH Wilts* 14, pp. 4, 26, 128, 230.

39 Yorke, *Wessex*, pp. 232, 234. More generally on the links between churches and market-places, see Richard Morris, *Churches in the Landscape* (London, 1989), pp. 212–13.

40 For discussion of processional liturgy involving stations at different churches, see Helen Gittos, *Liturgy, Architecture, and Sacred Places in Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford, 2013), pp. 103–45 (with the quotation at p. 110).

41 Gittos, *Liturgy, Architecture, and Sacred Places*, pp. 124–34.

42 For the text, see WM, *GRA*, IV.352, 1: pp. 614–20. For the suggestion that the text had been preserved at Malmesbury since Aldhelm's visit, see Lapidge, "The Career of Aldhelm," pp. 52–64.

quae ad beatam Helenam tendit”—“The seventh gate is now called the Greater gate, but was formerly the Sircuran [=Sessorian], and there is the Via Labicana, which leads to St Helena.”<sup>43</sup> At Malmesbury the gate leading to the suburb of Westport (the town’s only early suburb) stood immediately to the west of the precinct, about 50 m west of the facade of the Norman abbey church (Fig. 21.1).<sup>44</sup> This was in all likelihood the gate through which ceremonial entrances to the abbey were made in the 10th and 11th centuries, and it may well have been regarded by the community as their equivalent of the ‘greater gate’.

Moreover, the role attributed to St Helena, the mother of the Roman emperor Constantine, in the discovery of the True Cross, may also have been important. In the *Gesta regum Anglorum*, William of Malmesbury listed the gifts made by Hugh, duke of the Franks, when he sent an embassy in 926 to King Æthelstan (924–39) to ask for the hand of his sister. According to William, these gifts included the sword of Constantine, Charlemagne’s lance, the banner of St Maurice, and:

a small piece of the holy and wonderful Cross enclosed in crystal, which the eye can penetrate, solid rock though it is, and discern the wood, its colour and its size; a small portion too, mounted in the same fashion, of the crown of thorns.<sup>45</sup>

In the *Gesta pontificum Anglorum* (also written in the 1120s), William relates that Æthelstan had:

lavished on the monastery many estates, many palls, a gold cross, phylacteries, also of gold, and a fragment of the Lord’s cross which he had been sent by Hugh king of the Franks.<sup>46</sup>

Sarah Foot has shown that the claim to a fragment of the True Cross should be treated with caution, as the abbey of Milton also claimed that it had received from Æthelstan the gift of a fragment of the True Cross; in addition Exeter Cathedral claimed to have possession of one-third of all Æthelstan’s relic collection, and its 11th-century Old English list of relics included a piece of the

43 WM, *GRA*, IV. 352, I: p. 618. The ‘Sircuran gate’ of the text is evidently a corruption of the original text, which must have referred to the Sessorian gate; WM, *GRA* vol. 2, p. 309.

44 A map showing the full line of the medieval town defences with the position of the west gate was published by Longman, “Iron Age and Later Defences,” p. 107, Fig. 2.

45 WM, *GRA*, II.135, I: pp. 218–20.

46 WM, *GP*, V.246, 1:592.

True Cross.<sup>47</sup> Nevertheless we need not doubt that in William's own day, the abbey of Malmesbury had a relic of the cross set in crystal, probably embedded in a processional cross like the Ardennes Cross of the second quarter of the 9th century or the Theophanu cross from Essen of the middle of the 11th century; in these examples the cross fragments were placed behind a crystal set at the central crossing.<sup>48</sup> It is not difficult to imagine a spectacular cross of this type forming a prominent feature of processions from St Helen's. However, it should be stressed that the line of thought put forward here is highly speculative.

As to the use of St Helen's in the later medieval period, no evidence can currently be brought to bear, and we must simply recognize that many categories of minor churches, for instance churches serving hermitages and hospitals and those acting as chantries, are under-represented in our surviving sources. The function of St Helen's chapel throughout its history down to the 16th century thus remains unknown.

### Conclusion

The church of St Helen's is a useful addition to the corpus of buildings constructed in pre-Conquest style, and it deserves to be better known. It is to be hoped that further evidence will come to light to provide more information about its original purpose and its subsequent survival through to the 16th century.<sup>49</sup>

47 *Æthelstan's relic collection and his donations of relics are discussed by Sarah Foot, *Æthelstan: The First King of England* (New Haven, CT, 2011), pp. 188–203.*

48 For the Ardennes Cross (in the Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg), see 799—*Kunst und Kultur der Karolingerzeit. Karl der Grosse und Papst Leo III. in Paderborn*, ed. Christoph Stiegemann and Matthias Wemhoff, 3 vols (Mainz, 1999), 2:797–800, cat. no. XI.12; for the cross of Theophanu (in the Domschatzkammer in Essen), see Ulrich Knapp and Klaus Gereon Beuckers, *Farbiges Gold. Die ottonischen Kreuze in der Domschatzkammer Essen und ihre Emails* (Essen, 2006), pp. 11–12. There are several other examples of crosses of similar type from the 10th–12th centuries.

49 Whenever I have visited St Helen's, Kes and Mary Smith have been genial hosts and they have welcomed a variety of friends and colleagues whom I have taken to see St Helen's. Richard Bryant, Carolyn Heighway, Graham Jones, Malcolm Thurlby and Nicola Smith have all visited the building with me and all have made useful comments and observations, as did the anonymous referee. Richard Bryant has also provided me with much help with the illustrations. Jeremy Haslam kindly allowed me to adapt one of his maps of Malmesbury.

## St Wærburh: The Multiple Identities of a Regional Saint

*Alan Thacker*

The saint's cult discussed in this chapter originated in Mercia but was promoted over a wide area, including Chester and, eventually, a monastery which as been described as “to all intents and purposes a West Saxon institution.”<sup>1</sup> As such it forms a particularly fitting subject for a volume in honour of Barbara Yorke who has written so extensively and influentially about Anglo-Saxon Wessex in particular and the royal women of Anglo-Saxon England as a whole. This chapter has had an extremely long gestation—I first wrote about St Wærburh in the early 1980s—and it is with great pleasure that I finally present it here to a scholar whose work has made us all rethink our views about Anglo-Saxon kingship and the religious communities and cults that it engendered.

The traditions relating to St Wærburh and her relics are well-known. She was the daughter of King Wulfhere of Mercia (657–75) and his wife Eormenhild, and through her mother was closely connected with both the Kentish and East Anglian royal families. She early showed a disposition towards the religious life, and entered the monastery of Ely where her great aunt Æthelthryth was abbess. She remained for some time at Ely, where according to some sources she succeeded her grandmother Seaxburh and her mother Eormenhild as abbess, but was recalled to Mercia by her uncle, King Æthelred, Wulfhere's brother and successor (675–704), and given authority over the nunneries of his kingdom. She performed miracles while living on her father's estate at Weedon (Northants) and died about 700 in her monastery of *Triccingham* (almost certainly Threethingham, Lincs.). After some dissension, she was buried in accordance with her wishes in the monastery of Hanbury, near Repton (Staffs.), where nine years later, in recognition of her sanctity, her remains were elevated at the command of her cousin, the Mercian king Ceolred (709–16), and were found to be miraculously preserved and uncorrupted. Her relics remained enshrined at Hanbury until the time of the Danish invasions, shortly after which

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1 S.J. Ridyard, *The Royal Saints of Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge, 1988), p. 189.

they were removed to Chester where they lay until the destruction of her shrine in the 1530s.<sup>2</sup>

What follows will re-examine this material in relation to the five centuries or so from about 700 to 1200. My reasons for doing so are not only that it has intrinsic interest, but—more importantly—because the reinventions and re-location of St Wærburh in the earlier middle ages illustrate with especial clarity the ways in which a saint's cult could be promoted and adapted as the focus of changing dynastic, local, regional and civic identities. I shall begin by looking at the written sources and at the community which produced the principal *Vita* associated with the cult (surprisingly enough one which never housed Wærburh's relics). Then I shall go back to the cult's origins and diffusion in two early English kingdoms, and lastly focus upon its relocation to a new urban environment in Chester.

### The Sources

Since I first worked on this material in the 1980s, the most crucial source, the short anonymous Latin Life, has been edited by Rosamond Love.<sup>3</sup> As in many respects, we came to similar conclusions, here I shall simply summarise my main arguments about the texts before moving on to look at the evolution of the cult itself. The sources for Wærburh's story are scanty and diverse. Besides the fundamental *Vita S. Werburgae*, there are important, if brief notices of the saint in a number of 12th-century sources, including of John of Worcester's *Chronicle*, Henry of Huntingdon's *Historia* and William of Malmesbury's *Gesta pontificum*.<sup>4</sup> Other traditions about Wærburh and her relics are related in the 12th-century history of the abbey of Ely (the *Liber Eliensis*),<sup>5</sup> in the Latin Lives and lections of Eormenhild and Seaxburh,<sup>6</sup> and in the *passio* of the saint's supposed brothers, Wulfhad and Ruffinus, an almost entirely fictional,

2 For summaries of her life and cult see Alan Thacker, "Werburh [St Werburh, Werburgh, Werburga] (d. 700×07), Abbess," *ODNB*, <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/29062>>; J. Tait, ed., *Chartulary of Chester Abbey*, 2 vols, Chetham Society, new series 79, 82 (Manchester, 1920–3), 1:viii–xiv; Rosalind Love, ed. and trans., *Goscelin of Saint-Bertin. The Hagiography of the Female Saints of Ely* (Oxford, 2004), pp. xv–xvii.

3 *Vita S. Werburgae (VWer)*, in Socii Bollandanii, *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Latina*, ed. Henryk Fros [*BHL*], 4 vols (Brussels, 1898–1985), no. 8855; Love, *Goscelin*, pp. 25–51 (references to *VWer* hereafter are to Love's edition).

4 *JW* vol. 2, p. 126; *HH*, pp. 692–94; *WM*, *GPA*, 1:172.5–9, 183.3 (pp. 466–68, 488).

5 *LE* 1.15, 17, 24, 36, ed. Blake, pp. 32, 35, 42, 52.

6 *BHL*, nos. 7694, 2611; both edited by Love, *Goscelin*, pp. 1–23, 133–89.

probably post-Conquest, fabrication.<sup>7</sup> There are also two later sources, both by monks of Chester abbey: the 14th-century *Polychronicon* of Ranulf Higden<sup>8</sup> and the early 16th-century English verse *Life of the saint* by Henry Bradshaw.<sup>9</sup> In addition, the cult is mentioned in various late Anglo-Saxon lists of the resting-places of English saints<sup>10</sup> and in a number of 11th- and 12th-century calendars,<sup>11</sup> and is represented in scattered ancient parish church dedications.<sup>12</sup> In its present form, all this material is late, very little if any of it from before the 11th century, i.e. at least 300 years after Wærburh's death.

In considering this evidence, perhaps the most important problem is the date, reliability, and provenance of the anonymous *Vita Werburgae*. In its final form this work was probably written around 1100: its conclusion refers to bodies of early English saints that had survived incorrupt for over 400 years, while its prologue mentions Wærburh's relatives, Cyneburh, Cyneswith and Tibba, as resting at Peterborough, to which monastery they had only been transferred in 963.<sup>13</sup> A further indicator is a lengthy miracle story, that of the wild geese, who damage the saint's crops on her royal estate at Weedon and are brought to repentance, one of their number having been stolen and restored to them by Wærburh; as the author himself acknowledged that anecdote closely resembles an incident in the *Life of the Belgian saint Amalburg*, which he himself had fashioned, and which was probably written in Flanders in the later 11th century.<sup>14</sup>

Despite these pointers, careful examination of the text suggests that at its core lay accounts of the saint's miracles, and more particularly of her death, burial and elevation, likely to have originated in Hanbury, the saint's first resting-place, perhaps in the 8th or 9th century. The *Vita* recounts that Wærburh had

7 BHL, nos. 8735–6; *Acta Sanctorum*, Jul. v (1727), pp. 571–82; P. Grosjean, "De Codice Hagio-graphico Gothano"; "Codici Gothani Appendix," *Analecta Bollandiana* 58 (1940), 90–103, 177–204, at pp. 93, 183–87.

8 C. Babington and J.R. Lumby, eds., *Polychronicon Ranulphi Higden monachi Cestrensis*, RS 41, 9 vols (London, 1865–86), 6:126, 176–77, 366.

9 C. Horstmann, ed., *Life of Saint Werburge of Chester, by Henry Bradshaw*, EETS OS 88 (London, 1887).

10 D.W. Rollason, "Lists of Saints' Resting-Places in Anglo-Saxon England," *ASE* 7 (1978), 61–93, at p. 73, n. 3; p. 84; idem, *The Mildrith Legend. A Study in Early Medieval Hagiography in England* (Leicester, 1982), pp. 28–29, 44, 84–85, 87; Felix Liebermann, *Die Heiligen Englands* (Hanover, 1889), pp. 7–8.

11 Francis Wormald, ed., *English Kalendars before AD 1100*, HBS 72 (1934 for 1933); Rebecca Rushforth, *Saints in English Kalendars before 1100*, HBS 117 (2008 for 2005); F. Wormald, ed., *English Benedictine Kalendars after AD 1100*, 2 vols., HBS 77, 81 (1938–46).

12 F. Arnold-Forster, *Studies in Church Dedications*, 3 vols (London, 1899), 2:378; 3:451.

13 *VWer*, Chs. 1, 11 (pp. 32, 48); Rollason, *Mildrith Legend*, pp. 26–27.

14 *VWer*, Ch. 6 (pp. 40–42); Love, *Goscelin*, p. lxxvii.

chosen Hanbury as her resting-place, wheresoever on her estates she might die. In fact she died at Threekingham, where the community locked the body away intending to retain it for themselves. Nevertheless, it was miraculously delivered to the people of Hanbury (*Heanburgenses*), come to collect it, when by divine will the watchmen were overcome by sleep and the locks and bars they had installed fell to the ground.<sup>15</sup> Thereafter the saint was taken to Hanbury, where she performed many miracles and where after nine years later her imperishable body was elevated at King Ceolred's command.<sup>16</sup>

The reworking and augmenting of this core text was once thought to have been commissioned by the monks of Chester.<sup>17</sup> That, however, is extremely unlikely. Although the prologue alludes perfunctorily to Wærburh's resting-place in the city, the rest of the *Vita* contains no reference to the translation to Chester, to the saint's shrine there or to the minster and the Benedictine monastery that succeeded it. Moreover, it refers uncompromisingly to the disintegration of the saint's hitherto incorrupt body, which at the moment of removal from Hanbury yielded to the laws of mortality, lest it fall into the invaders' impious hands, an event that the new custodians would surely not have wished to advertise.<sup>18</sup> If Chester be excluded, the community with the greatest reason to remember Wærburh around 1100 was Ely, the burial place of her mother Eormenhild, her grandmother Seaxburh, and her great aunts Æthelthryth and Wihtburh.<sup>19</sup> The manuscript certainly points to an Ely provenance.<sup>20</sup> Moreover the author of the Life of Wærburh expressly commends the tomb of Eormenhild at Ely as the place at which Wærburh's aid should be invoked.<sup>21</sup> It is unlikely in the extreme that a Life composed for the monks of Chester would have recommended this as an appropriate place to obtain Wærburh's

15 On Hanbury and its association with St Wærburh, see *VCH Staffs.* 10, pp. 125–48, esp. 137–38.

16 *VWer*, Chs. 8–11 (pp. 44–48).

17 See e.g. *VEdR*, 2nd ed., p. 111.

18 *VWer*, Ch. 12 (pp. 48–50).

19 See below.

20 For discussion of these manuscripts see now, Love, *Goscelin*, pp. xlvi–lviii. Of the six surviving medieval copies of the *Vita*, three occur in 12th-century manuscripts closely associated with Ely and devoted to Ely hagiography: Trinity College Cambridge, MS 0.2.1; Corpus Christi College Cambridge, MS 393; BL, Cotton MS Caligula A viii, fols. 59–191. Another is from neighbouring Ramsey: Bodleian Library, MS Bodl. 285. Even the now lost Chester copy of the *Vita*, which provided material for the first book of Bradshaw's poem, seems to have made use of Lives of the Ely abbesses, Æthelthryth, Seaxburh and Eormenhild, and perhaps derived from an Ely manuscript: Bradshaw, *Life*, esp. 1, lines 1982–2275 (pp. 75–84).

21 *Lectiones in natale Sancte Eormenhilde* [*Lect.Eorm*], ed. Love, *Goscelin*, pp. 11–23, at Ch. 5 (p. 16).

intercession. We may therefore take it as reasonably certain that the Life in its extant form was written at that monastery, around the time of the translations there of Wærburh's close relatives in 1106 (a subject to which I shall return shortly). Although the longstanding assumption that the anonymous author was Goscelin has been questioned, the Life's most recent editor has persuasively reaffirmed the traditional attribution.<sup>22</sup>

### The Cult of Wærburh and Her Relatives at Ely

The history of the cult of Wærburh's relatives at Ely is a complex matter, in a large part obscure. The life of the community was disrupted by Danish attacks in the late 9th century and any traditions about its early years that had survived up to then were irrevocably lost.<sup>23</sup> The cult of the foundress Æthelthryth undoubtedly continued, however, and the restoration of the community by St Æthelwold in 970 inaugurated a revival of interest in the cult of that saint and her relatives, Wærburh's forbears. In 974, the remains of Æthelthryth's sister Wihtburh, who had lived as a recluse at Dereham (Norfolk), were brought to Ely. At much the same time the bodies of Eormenhild and Seaxburh were translated to new shrines by St Æthelwold.<sup>24</sup> It was at that time perhaps that the community began to develop that interest in sanctified incorruption which is so marked a feature of its hagiographical writings, including the *Vita Werburgae*; for Wihtburh's body, like her sister Æthelthryth's, was reputed imperishable.<sup>25</sup> There is no evidence, however, that Wærburh herself was culted at Ely in this period; her feast day does not, for example, occur in the early 11th-century calendar in the missal of Robert of Jumièges, which has strong connexions with Ely.<sup>26</sup> Nor does she appear in the earliest post-Conquest Ely litany.<sup>27</sup>

In the early 12th century there was a renewed interest in the cult of the Ely princesses, promoted by the new abbot, Richard of Clare after his return from a

22 Love, *Goscelin*, esp. pp. lxxi-lxxviii. Cf. Ridyard, *Royal Saints*, p. 60; Rollason, *Mildrith Legend*, pp. 26–27, where the text is treated as anonymous.

23 Ridyard, *Royal Saints*, p. 181–85; *VCH Cambs.* 2, p. 99.

24 *Vita S. Wihtburge* (hereafter *VWiht*), Chs. 9–14, in Love, *Goscelin*, pp. 66–75 and *BHL*, no. 8979 (citations from Love's edition); *LE* 11.53, 145–46 (pp. 120–23, 230–31).

25 *VWiht*, Chs. 7–8 (pp. 64–67).

26 J.B.L. Tolhurst, "An Examination of Two Anglo-Saxon MSS of the Winchester School," *Archaeologia* 83 (1933), pp. 27–44. Cf. Ridyard, *Royal Saints*, pp. 179–80 n. 20, 209–10 n. 151.

27 N. Morgan, ed., *English Monastic Litanies of the Saints*, HBS 119 (2012), no. 30 (pp. 24, 104–07).

visit to Rome in the company of Archbishop Anselm. In 1106 the saints' bodies were removed from the resting-places allotted to them by Æthelwold and translated to new monuments in Abbot Richard's new monastic choir. The discovery of Wihtburh's still uncorrupted body gave fresh impetus to the devotion.<sup>28</sup> After, or in association with, these events we find a flourishing literary tradition, with which the *Vita Werburgae* is closely connected, and which includes Lives and Miracles of Æthelthryth, Seaxburh, and Wihtburh.<sup>29</sup> Thereafter we also find all the Ely princesses given prominence in the Ely calendar, which commemorates both the depositions and translations of those actually enshrined there. Wærburh herself is also included but with less emphasis. She is only commemorated on 3 February, the day of her death and deposition; her Chester translation feast is ignored.<sup>30</sup> Nevertheless, her association with the celebration of the Ely saints, two of whose bodies were reputed to be imperishable, suggests her *Vita's* emphasis on the initial incorruption and subsequent disintegration of her body is related to the East Anglian community's preoccupations in 1106.

The Ely material has been edited and analysed by Love and there is no space to discuss it in detail here.<sup>31</sup> An outline, however, is essential to understanding the development of the cult as a whole. There are several layers to the tradition about the royal saints of Ely. Its most developed form is related in the history of the Ely community known as the *Liber Eliensis*, written in the middle decades of the 12th century. The crucial element in this final stage of the Ely version of the legend is the intrusion of a Kentish theme. Seaxburh, Eormenhild, and Wærburh herself were all alleged to be abbesses of the royal Kentish abbey of Minster-in-Sheppey, which Seaxburh had founded. According to the *Liber Eliensis*, moreover, they all also became successively abbesses of Ely.<sup>32</sup> This version of events has little to commend it, since Seaxburh died in 695 and Wærburh by 704, leaving little time to fit in the two otherwise unknown Ely abba-cies of Eormenhild and of Wærburh herself. Nor does it accord very easily with the well-attested tradition of Wærburh's burial at Hanbury.

Material related to the Kentish traditions recorded in the *Liber Eliensis* appears in the hagiography of the royal saints of Ely probably compiled more or less contemporaneously. In the Life of Seaxburh, Seaxburh and her daughter Eormenhild are said to have entered religion together in the monastery that

28 *VWiht*, Chs. 16–24 (pp. 74–83); *LE* 11.143–48 (ed. Blake, pp. 227–34).

29 *BHL*, nos. 2638, 2639, 7693, 8979, 8980; Love, *Goscelin*, pp. 53–189, 204–17.

30 Wormald, *Eng. Ben. Kal. after 1100*, 2:1–19.

31 Love, *Goscelin*, pp. lviii–cxiii. For earlier discussion, see Ridyard, *Royal Saints*, esp. pp. 176–210.

32 *LE* 1.17–18, 24, 35–38 (ed. Blake, pp. 35–36, 42, 51–52).

the former had founded at Milton. When Seaxburh leaves her later foundation of Minster in Sheppey for Ely she is succeeded there as abbess by Eormenhild, and at her death she is again succeeded by Eormenhild in Ely.<sup>33</sup> There was, however, clearly an earlier phase in the writing about Ely's saints when the Kentish element of the story was unknown, a phase which produced the original versions of these Lives. In this account, which can probably be attributed to the early 12th century, Eormenhild and Wærburh entered the religious life at Ely, rather than a Kentish minster, and were not believed to have become abbesses of Ely. It is to this phase that the *Vita Werburgae* belongs.<sup>34</sup> The reference to Eormenhild's taking the veil at Sheppey in Trinity College Cambridge MS O.2.1 is clearly a later interpolation to bring it into line with the *Vita Sexburgae* which precedes it in that manuscript.<sup>35</sup>

The source of the Kentish traditions (to which several of these works refer) appears to be what the author of the Life of Seaxburh referred to as "various ancient writings in English" (*ex antiquis Anglorum scriptis*).<sup>36</sup> A similar reference to an Old English source occurs also in the *Liber Eliensis*, in connection with Seaxburh and Eormenhild taking the veil at Sheppey.<sup>37</sup> Interestingly, a fragmentary Old English text related to this material survives in a manuscript in Lambeth Palace Library. It appears to be a version of the genealogy of the Kentish royal house, the so-called Kentish royal legend, 'customized' as it were for the monastery of Sheppey. Focused primarily on the daughters of King Anna, namely Æthelthryth, Seaxburh and Wihtburh, before breaking off, like the Life of Seaxburh, it relates that Seaxburh and Eormenhild took the veil at the Kentish minster of Milton and that Seaxburh subsequently founded the minster at Sheppey.<sup>38</sup> It also refers to Wærburh resting at Hanbury and shows some knowledge of the Danish invasions. All that suggests that this particular

33 See e.g. *Vita S. Sexburgae*, ed. Love, *Goscelin*, pp. 133–88, at chs 8, 15, 19, 24 (pp. 150–52, 166, 170, 182); *BHL*, no. 7693. Wærburh is mentioned only as Eormenhild's holy offspring (p. 144). See also the revisions made by in MS O.2.1 to *VWer* and *Lect.Eorm* (see n. 35).

34 *VWer*, chs 2–3 (pp. 34–36).

35 The *Vita Sexburgae* occupies fols. 215–28. The interpolation to *VWer*, Ch. 3 is at fol. 233. A similar amendment acknowledging the Kentish tradition is made to *Lect.Eorm*. Ch. 6 (p. 16) at fol. 229v.

36 *Vita Sexburgae*, prol. (pp. 136–38).

37 "[I]n Anglico quidem legimus": *LE* I.36 (ed. Blake, p. 51). Cf. the reference to "ancient sources" relating that Wærburh succeeded Eormenhild at Ely in the Book of Miracles included in a late 13th- or early 14th-century Ely manuscript, BL, Cotton MS Domitian A. iv—"ut ex antiquitus scriptis collegisse memini": *LE*, ed. Blake, App. B, p. 400.

38 London, MS Lambeth 427; Rollason, *Mildrith Legend*, pp. 30–31, 86–87; Love, *Goscelin*, pp. civ–cvi; O. Cockayne, ed., *Leechdoms, Wortcunning and Starcraft*, 3 vols, RS (London, 1864–6), 3:430–33.

text was probably compiled some time between the late 9th and earlier 10th century, and that it represents a tradition that highlighted or enhanced the Kentish elements in the background of Wærburh and her family. That has considerable implications for our understanding of the early development of Wærburh's cult, and it is to those early developments that the discussion will now turn.

### The Early Cult of St Wærburh

Initially, the major centre of Wærburh's cult lay in the heartlands of the Merician kingdom, at Hanbury, where the saint's remains were elevated and enshrined. Hanbury itself was probably a place of some importance: King Ceolred's presence at Wærburh's elevation suggests that it may well have been the centre of a royal estate, and the name-ending *bury* links it with a number of other ancient administrative and ecclesiastical centres in the north-west Midlands. The church was probably an early minster. In the Middle Ages it was a valuable rectory and it had a large ancient parish with dependent chapelries. Almost certainly that parish was once even larger and probably included the honorial caput of Tutbury, which cuts through the territory of the later medieval parish. Even in Domesday it remained a manorial centre, with a priest who was still a modest landholder.<sup>39</sup>

Another focus of the cult, also royal according to the stories first recorded perhaps in Hanbury, was Weedon (Northants), the location of Wærburh's most celebrated miracle, that of the wild geese reduced to obedient penitence.<sup>40</sup> Wærburh's cult was undoubtedly fostered there during the middle ages, for Leland recorded a chapel dedicated to her south of the churchyard.<sup>41</sup> Adjoining Weedon is a village bearing the significant name of Stowe-Nine-Churches (also Northants). The place-name Stowe, one meaning of which was "holy place," could designate important ecclesiastical centres,<sup>42</sup> and it is significant therefore that Stowe was reputed the burial-place of Ælfnōth ("Alnotus"), according to the *Vita Werburgae*, a serf of Wærburh's who became a hermit and was martyred by robbers. The *Vita* records him in terms which suggest that the information was derived from an early resting-place list: "the celebrated man

39 *VCH Staffs.* 10, pp. 125–48, esp. pp. 125–26, 128, 137–38.

40 *VWer.*, Ch. 6 (pp. 40–42).

41 T. Hearne, ed., *The Itinerary of John Leland*, 9 vols bound in 3 (Oxford, 1770), 1:11–12.

42 David Roffe, "The Seventh-Century Monastery of Stow Green, Lincolnshire," *Lincolnshire History and Archaeology* 21 (1986), 31–33, at p. 31; *CDEPN*, p. 583.

of God lies buried at Stowe, one league from Bugbrook.<sup>43</sup> Possibly indeed Stowe was the original mother-church of Wulfhere's estate at Weedon. The numerous churches referred to in the name suggest dependent chapelries; and certainly the pre-Conquest holder, Tonna, was possessed of considerable estates.<sup>44</sup> Although it is not mentioned in the Domesday Survey, the church bears the plausibly early dedication of SS Peter and Paul, has a late Anglo-Saxon tower, and contains fragments of late Anglo-Saxon sculpture.<sup>45</sup>

Threkingham, where Wærburh died, presents an interesting parallel. It was clearly an ecclesiastical site of some importance in the pre-Conquest period, since it had two substantial churches at the time of Domesday, both of whose dedications (to St Peter and St Mary) the Survey rather unusually supplies.<sup>46</sup> It has been plausibly suggested that these were dependencies of a further church, two miles to the south-west, which again has a significant place-name, Stow Green, and that this may have been the site of the monastery in which Wærburh died. The church there, mentioned in Domesday but now disappeared, by the 12th century was dedicated, significantly, to St Æthelthryth of Ely, and in the Middle Ages was the scene of a fair, held on 23 June, St Æthelthryth's feast day. It is particularly interesting that a site associated with Wærburh in the early material from Hanbury should also have links with Ely.<sup>47</sup>

Wærburh, then, was associated not only with Hanbury but with two other Mercian cult centres. There was also a pre-Conquest dedication to the saint in London, which may just possibly go back to the 9th century, and which will be discussed shortly. All this suggests a major early cult with strong royal patronage. A particularly interesting aspect of this was the cult's diffusion in Kent from a relatively early period. An ancient dedication to the saint, on the opposite bank of the Medway to Sheppey, is first mentioned in the 12th-century *Textus Roffensis*, and was also known to the Chester monk, Henry Bradshaw, who makes Hoo the scene of one of Wærburh's miracles.<sup>48</sup> Hoo St Werburgh seems to have been an early estate centre, the focus of a primitive *regio* perhaps originally embracing the whole of the Hoo peninsula. The church itself was a royal foundation, listed among eight diocesan "monasteries" in the 9th-century version of King Wihtred's privilege. It had a very extensive ancient

43 *VWer.*, Ch. 7 (pp. 42–44).

44 *vCH Northants* 1, p. 346.

45 H.M. and J. Taylor, *Anglo-Saxon Architecture*, 3 vols (Cambridge, 1965–78), 2:594–96.

46 GDB, fols. 341v, 365v, 370.

47 Roffe, "Seventh-Century Monastery," pp. 31–33; GDB, fol. 356.

48 P.H. Sawyer, ed., *Textus Roffensis*, Early English Manuscripts in Facsimile 11 (Copenhagen, 1962), fol. 221; Bradshaw, *Life*, 1, lines 2788–2815 (p. 102); G. Ward, "Saxon Churches in the *Textus Roffensis*," *Archaeologia Cantiana* 44 (1932), 39–59.

parish, originally presumably coterminous with the *regio* of the Howara, the people of Hoo, and almost certainly it should be viewed as a Kentish 'primary minster'. It was indeed the only such community known in the diocese of Rochester apart from the cathedral itself.<sup>49</sup> The special position of the Hoo and its people is indicated by their responsibility for the repair of two piers of the bridge of Rochester; only the archbishop of Canterbury and the bishop of Rochester had commensurate obligations.<sup>50</sup> Interestingly too the early minster parish of Hoo, like Weedon and Threekingham, was associated with a Stowe place name, in this case High Halstow, which Alan Everitt has described as "what was once the 'holy stow' of Hoo, on its commanding promontory overlooking St Werburga's minster, down by the Medway."<sup>51</sup>

The royal minster at Hoo appears to have been founded by King Cædwalla of Wessex at the time of his partial conquest of Kent in 686–87 in conjunction with members of the East Saxon royal house, one of whom was ruling in western Kent.<sup>52</sup> Its early charters are conflated in a document which formed part of the archive of the great Mercian monastery of *Medeshamstede* (Peterborough), evidence that it had some close connection with that house from a very early date. It is presumably through this Mercian connection that the cult of Wærburh was introduced into Hoo.<sup>53</sup> The saint would have been a highly appropriate patron for a Kentish-Mercian community. Interestingly, the Life of Eormenhild, wife of the Mercian King Wulfhere and Wærburh's Kentish mother, takes up this theme and says explicitly that the queen was a *mediatrix* between the men of Kent and the Mercians.<sup>54</sup>

Hoo then would have been an obvious centre for any attempt to foster links between Mercia and Kent during the period of the Mercian hegemony. The Mercian takeover of Kent in the late 8th and 9th centuries seems to have been greatly resented, and the promotion of the cult of St Wærburh at Hoo would fit nicely into such a context; the half-Mercian, half-Kentish saint would have

49 Alan Everitt, *Continuity and Colonization. The Evolution of Kentish Settlement* (Leicester, 1986), 99, 187–88, 190, 192–93, 284–92; Nicholas Brooks, *The Early History of the Church of Canterbury* (Leicester, 1984), pp. 194, 205–06; Rollason, *Mildrith Legend*, pp. 46, 48.

50 A.J. Robertson, ed., *Anglo-Saxon Charters* (Cambridge, 1939), no. 52 (pp. 106, 108).

51 Everitt, *Continuity and Colonization*, p. 292.

52 It seems that one of the founders was the invader Swæfred, son of King Sebbi of the East Saxons and joint king of Kent with Wihtried. Swæfred acknowledged the overlordship of the Mercian king Æthelred: S. Kelly, ed., *Charters of St Augustine's Abbey, Canterbury* (London, 1995), pp. 196–97.

53 Rollason, *Mildrith Legend*, p. 46; F.M. Stenton, *Preparatory to Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. D.M. Stenton (Oxford, 1970), pp. 189–90; S 68, 233.

54 "Tradita ... est a patre rege Erconberto Wlfero regi Merciorum, hacque mediatrice Cantuarii et Mercii facti sunt uti unum regnum": Love, *Goscelin*, p. 12.

been a very suitable patron of efforts to sweeten the bitterness of political dependency.<sup>55</sup> If such was indeed the case, it is especially interesting that when in 823 the Mercian King Ceolwulf granted land in Canterbury to Archbishop Wulfred he performed the deed at a royal vill called *Werbunging wic*, “Wærburh’s wic or trading centre.”<sup>56</sup> This place-name occurs again, some 20 years later, as the location of his successor Beorhtwulf’s confirmation in 844 or 845 of a grant by King Æthelbald (716–57) to the church of Rochester.<sup>57</sup> Now of course we cannot be certain that the Wærburh who gave her name to this royal centre was the saint. But Wærburh is not an especially common name,<sup>58</sup> and in the 8th and 9th centuries seems to have been borne principally by women associated with the saint’s own family, namely the wife of King Wihtred of Kent (690–725)<sup>59</sup> and the wife or daughter of the saint’s cousin, King Ceolred of Mercia.<sup>60</sup> (A third Wærburh was wife of a late 9th-century ealdorman).<sup>61</sup> Almost nothing is known of any of these women, and it seems much more likely therefore that the eponymous figure of this Mercian royal vill was the saint.<sup>62</sup>

Both grants at *Werbunging wic* have a very strong Mercian-Kent-London context. The nature of the grant of 823 involved Ceolwulf in his capacity as king of Kent, and the fact that Archbishop Wulfred himself wrote the charter

55 Barbara Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo-Saxon England* (London, 1990), pp. 31–33, 42.

56 S 187.

57 S 88.

58 Only four bearers of the name are known: PASE, s.v. “Wærburg.”

59 Kelly, *Charters of St Augustine’s*, p. 103. Kelly suggests that this queen was the patron saint of Hoo, but there is no evidence that she was ever culted and in any case the Mercian associations of Hoo render this very unlikely indeed.

60 ASC, s.a. 782. The Chronicle sources allege that this woman was Ceolred’s queen. It has been suggested that she was Ceolred’s daughter but there is no apparent basis for this: *Handbook of British Chronology*, ed. E.B. Fryde et al., 3rd ed. (London, 1986), p. 16.

61 PASE, s.v. “Alfred 18,” where it is suggested he was ealdorman of Surrey, with the dates 863–870×899. Cf. Brooks, who suggests he was a Kentish ealdorman: *Early History*, p. 151.

62 It may be significant that the reign of Ceolwulf appears to mark a revival of interest in Wærburh. With the accession of Ceolred’s exiled rival and distant relative Æthelbald (716–57), Æthelbald’s kinsman and counsellor Guthlac seems to have taken on Wærburh’s role as patron of the ruling house (see B. Colgrave, ed. and trans., *Felix’s Life of Guthlac* (Cambridge, 1956), esp. Chs. 40, 42, 45, 49, 51–52; A.T. Thacker, “Guthlac and his Life: Felix Shapes the Saint,” in *Guthlac: Crowland’s Saint*, ed. J. Roberts and A.T. Thacker (Donington, in press), pp. 1–24, esp. 1–2, 22–23). Ceolwulf himself belonged to a dynasty established only with the accession of his brother Coenwulf in 798, the alliterating names of which recall those of Ceolred and his cousin and predecessor Coenred (Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, pp. 104, 111, 118–19). The new dynasty perhaps wished to be linked with the earlier rulers, grandsons of Penda, and hence favoured Wærburh, the dynastic saint of that branch of the royal kindred.

and was included among the attestors along with the East Anglian *subregulus* Sigered, suggest a meeting place in the South-East, if not in Kent itself.<sup>63</sup> The grant of 844 or 845 involved important trading privileges in London belonging to Kent's second see. It thus seems possible that *Werbunging wic* was not Hanbury, as we might expect, but some other settlement in the South-East, not too far from London, which in the earlier 9th century constituted an appropriate place for the Mercian king and Kentish bishops to transact business. As was long ago pointed out, Hoo is a very plausible identification of this otherwise unknown vill.<sup>64</sup> It has a coastal location, appropriate to a *wic*, and is on the borders of Mercia, Essex and Kent.

Now this identification has been contested. Simon Keynes has argued that in the early 9th century the Mercian conquerors of Kent kept their distance from the kingdom, even when dealing with the archbishop.<sup>65</sup> But although this may have been the case under King Cenwulf (796–821), the situation was clearly changing under his successor Ceolwulf, when king and archbishop were on sufficiently good terms to meet. Thereafter of six recorded negotiations about property and rights between Kentish bishops and Mercian kings, two as we have seen involved *Werbunging wic*.<sup>66</sup> A more significant objection to the identification with Hoo is, perhaps, the fact that when Beorhtwulf issued his confirmation at *Werbunging wic* in the 840s Kent was no longer in Mercian hands. Yet, as Keynes himself has noted, it seems likely that in this reign London, also lost to the West Saxons, returned to the Mercian sphere of influence.<sup>67</sup> Perhaps the ancient royal vill of Hoo (highly accessible from London) returned with it. Hoo moreover was very near Rochester, the see of the beneficiary of Beorhtwulf's charter.

Two other of the six transactions just mentioned were made at the famous council site of *Clofesho*.<sup>68</sup> Was that too within the Hoo estate? It has long been argued by Stubbs and more recently by Ward, Wallace-Hadrill and Vollrath-Reichelt that it is to be identified with Cliffe-at-Hoo, which lies on the north side of the Hoo peninsula.<sup>69</sup> Keynes has dismissed this identification since the first element of Cliffe is OE *clif*, not *clof* and the place-name *Clofesho* denotes

63 Brooks, *Early History*, pp. 168, 360.

64 E.g. G. Ward, "The Forgotten Saxon Nunnery of St Werburg at Hoo," *Arch. Cant.* 47 (1935), 117–25, esp. 122–23.

65 Simon Keynes, "The Control of Kent in the Ninth Century," *EME* 2 (1993), 111–31.

66 S 88, 187, the others being S 186, 188, 1434, 1436.

67 Keynes, "Control of Kent," p. 127.

68 S 1434 (824); S 1436 (825).

69 Ward, "Forgotten Saxon Nunnery," pp. 122–23; J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People: A Historical Commentary* (Oxford, 1988), p. 143.

“the hill spur (or spurs) of a particular valley or cleft.”<sup>70</sup> Nevertheless, Cliffe-at-Hoo was, like Hoo St Werburg itself, an important early estate centre at the terminus of a Roman road. Its church, originally perhaps subordinate to Hoo St Werburg, though later an important centre in its own right, bears the suggestive dedication of St Helen.<sup>71</sup> It remains at least possible that the revival of *Clofesho* during the period of the Mercian hegemony as a site for ecclesiastical councils, a use first prescribed by Theodore in 672, was linked with its being sited on an estate such as Hoo linked with a saint who was both Mercian and Kentish. Clearly a plausible case can be made for *Clofesho* being regarded as a place where king and Kentish bishops could meet on equal terms.<sup>72</sup>

I would argue then that Wærburh was a royal saint whose cult was fostered by the Mercian kings and their dependants at a number of important and widely dispersed centres in the 8th and 9th centuries. Enshrined at the monastery of Hanbury, she was venerated at a number of other royal monasteries and minsters, both in the Mercian heartland and beyond. The cult did more than enhance the prestige of her particular branch of the royal kindred; it had political overtones, and by virtue of these seems to have remained significant as late as the 9th century when the Mercian kingship belonged to men distantly if at all related to the line of Wulfhere, Wærburh’s own branch of the royal kindred. By reconstructing the foci of this major cult we may disinter something of the geography of political power within pre-Viking Mercia.

### The Pre-conquest Cult at Chester and its Diffusion

Wærburh’s remains were certainly enshrined at Chester by 958, when King Edgar made a grant of lands to the saint’s *familia* there.<sup>73</sup> The date of their arrival is, however, difficult to ascertain. A late tradition, recounted by the Chester monk Ranulf Higden, relates that because of the Danish raids on Mercia (which culminated in 874 in the flight of the king and the encampment of the invaders around the nearby royal monastery of Repton), the Hanbury

70 S.D. Keynes, *The Councils of Clofesho*, Vaughan Paper 38 (Leicester, 1993), pp. 14–15.

71 Everitt, *Continuity and Colonization*, pp. 194, 242–43.

72 For a summary of the councils meeting at *Clofeshoh* see Keynes, *Councils of Clofesho*, pp. 5–14, though he comes to a very different conclusion.

73 S 667. For the cult at Chester see *VCH Ch*, 1–25, at pp. 18–19; idem, “Chester and Gloucester: Early Ecclesiastical Organization in Two Mercian Burhs,” *Northern History* 18 (1982), 199–211, at pp. 203–04, 209.

community fled from their home.<sup>74</sup> Taking the shrine containing the holy relics, by then crumbled into dust, they came to Chester. Higden says nothing of the arrangements made for their reception, but claims that from the time of King Æthelstan there existed a minster of canons to serve the saint. In itself, the story of the flight from Hanbury is not improbable—the journeyings of St Cuthbert and his community provide an obvious parallel—but the episode has long been doubted, partly because the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* described Chester itself as a deserted place in the annal for 893.<sup>75</sup>

As I have argued elsewhere, a more plausible context for the coming of Wærburh's relics to Chester is provided by material first recorded by the 16th-century monk, Henry Bradshaw. Bradshaw depicts the rulers of Mercia, Alfred's daughter Æthelflæd and her husband Æthelred, as primary patrons of the cult and adds that they set up the shrine in the church of SS Peter and Paul, the mother church of Chester, which they enlarged and dedicated to the saint.<sup>76</sup> This later date would make more sense of the tradition that her body crumbled to dust to avoid impious pollution—there would have been no threat of this if the body had been removed in advance of the Danes (St Cuthbert's body, after all, survived). It would also make sense of the attachment of Hanbury to Chester—not an arrangement likely to have been effected in the 870s.<sup>77</sup>

The sources for Bradshaw's account are lost. He depended chiefly on a volume which he termed the "third passionary" and which apparently contained the Lives of St Wærburh and the Ely abbesses, free of the Sheppey material imported in the mid-12th century and displaying no knowledge of the traditions which made Wærburh and her mother abbesses of Ely. Besides material evidently imported from Ely in the early 12th century, the third passionary also contained matter of local, Cestrian, origin, in particular, accounts of the saint's translation and the miracles she performed thereafter.<sup>78</sup> Since the sequence of the miracles ends in 1180, there are reasons for thinking that the volume was compiled shortly after that date, a period which also saw the production of Lucian's *De Laude Cestriae*, a Chester service book, and a calendar.<sup>79</sup> It is not at all

74 Higden, *Polychronicon* 6:126–28, 366; Bradshaw, *Life*, pp. 149–52.

75 ASC, s.a. 893 (MSS C, D, s.a. 894; omitted in MS E).

76 Bradshaw, *Life*, I, lines 527–666 (pp. 149–53).

77 For a different view, reaffirming the traditional date, see C.P. Lewis, "Edgar, Chester and the Kingdom of the Mercians," in *Edgar, King of the English, 959–75: New Interpretations*, ed. Donald Scragg (Woodbridge, 2007), pp. 104–23, at p. 115.

78 Bradshaw, *Life* I, lines 694–96, 3246; II, lines 1690–5 (pp. 32, 117, 188).

79 M.V. Taylor, ed., *Liber Luciani de Laude Cestrie*, Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire [RSLC] 64 (1912); Bodleian Library, MS Tanner 169\*; Wormald, *Eng. Ben Kal. after 1100*, I, 95–96.

unlikely that some record of the translation was kept at Chester from a relatively early period.

Chester was an important centre for Æthelflæd, and in 907 she caused it to be refortified, evidently as part of the defence of Wirral against Norse invasions from Ireland.<sup>80</sup> Moreover, she and her husband had already shown interest in the cult of Wærburh's relative St Mildburh, in whose honour they gave a valuable golden chalice to the church of Wenlock.<sup>81</sup> Even more significantly, in 909, two years after the refortification of Chester, Æthelflæd was responsible for the translation of St Oswald, the 7th-century Northumbrian king enshrined in the royal Mercian monastery of Bardney (Lincs.), to a new foundation in her fortified capital of Gloucester.<sup>82</sup> The cult of St Oswald was associated with that of Wærburh in Chester by c.1200 at the latest, and it may be that, as Bradshaw alleges in his poem, it was introduced into the city by Æthelflæd.<sup>83</sup> Æthelflæd's conquest of Staffordshire in 913 offered her ample opportunity to introduce the relics from Hanbury. Some reorganization of local cult centres consequent upon that conquest provides a much more plausible context for the acquisition of Hanbury by the minster at Chester than the romantic story of the flight of the clergy before the marauding Danes.<sup>84</sup> It also suggests that like Oswald, Wærburh's was a cult that had considerable resonance for the royal families of pre-Viking England.

With the removal of the relics to Chester the cult takes a new course. St Wærburh becomes the patron of a royal burh and as such a mediator between the much reduced Mercians of the early 10th century and their alien West Saxon rulers, rather as she had been between the Mercians and the men of Kent in the 9th century. Little, however, is known of her cult thereafter in late Anglo-Saxon Chester. It may have been promoted by Kings Æthelstan and Edmund, both of whom are said by late traditions to have founded a house of canons in her honour.<sup>85</sup> That the saint continued to be venerated there is clear from King Edgar's grant of 958,<sup>86</sup> and the enrichment of her church with precious ornaments by Earl Leofric of Mercia (d. 1057).<sup>87</sup> But it is not until the time

80 *VCH Cheshire* 1, pp. 249–50; 51, pp. 17–19.

81 S 221.

82 ASC, MSS A, B, s.a. 909 (C, D, s.a. 910); Thacker, "Chester and Gloucester," pp. 203–04.

83 Bradshaw, *Life*, 1, lines 636–38 (p. 152); Thacker, "Kings, Saints and Monasteries," pp. 18–19.

84 *Chart. Chester Abbey* 1, pp. x, xiv; F.T. Wainwright, *Scandinavian England* (Chichester, 1975), pp. 310–14; Marios Costambeys, "Æthelflæd [Ethelfleda]" in *ODNB* <<https://doi.org/10.1093/refodnb/8907>>.

85 Higden, *Polychronicon* VI, pp. 128–29; Bradshaw, *Life* 1, lines 597–603 (p. 151); *VCH Ches.* 3, p. 132.

86 *Chart. Chester Abbey* 1, pp. xvii–xviii, 10–13; S 667; S 667.

87 JW vol. 2, p. 582.

William of Malmesbury in the 12th century that there is any contemporary witness that wonders were wrought at the shrine. Otherwise there is only the very late evidence of Bradshaw about favours wrought for the canons of the pre-Conquest minster, evidence to which we shall return in a moment.

Outside Chester, the saint enjoyed a modest reputation in late Anglo-Saxon times. The feast day of her deposition (3 February) was known in Canterbury by c. 1000, and in all occurs in some seven calendars dating from before 1100.<sup>88</sup> She was also invoked in two or three early litanies during the same period.<sup>89</sup> Besides those already mentioned in Hanbury, Chester, and Hoo, there are a few other plausibly pre-Conquest dedications, including most significantly those at London and Derby.<sup>90</sup> The London evidence is especially interesting; the church, which lay south of Cheapside at the junction of Watling Street and Friday Street, is first recorded c. 1100 in the possession of Christ Church, Canterbury. Previously held by one Gumbert, it had a house next door and almost certainly dates back at least to late Anglo-Saxon times.<sup>91</sup> Like the church of St Bride, Fleet Street, it may well derive from some Chester merchants then active in London. It is tempting, however, to speculate that it may be the product of earlier 9th-century royal sponsorship. Wærburh is precisely the sort of saint we might expect to be promoted in London by the Mercian kings. The church of St Alban, Wood Street, which lay to the north of St Werburgh's, would provide an analogy, if as was formerly believed, its earliest building dates back to the 8th or 9th century.<sup>92</sup> More recently, however, it has been suggested that that too is a late Anglo-Saxon foundation.<sup>93</sup> The problem must remain unresolved; but at the very least there remains the possibility that the cult of Wærburh was introduced into London by the Mercian kings.

In or near Derby, there are two probable pre-Conquest dedications to St Werburgh: one in Cheapside at the heart of the late Anglo-Saxon town, the other at Spondon just outside. In both cases it seems very probable that the churches

88 Wormald, *Eng. Kal. before 1100*, pp. 31, 59, 73, 199, 213, 255. Her deposition was also added to a Sherborne calendar in the 11th century: Wormald, p. 185. Rushforth, *Saints in Eng. Kal.*, no. 19.

89 M. Lapidge, ed., *Anglo-Saxon Litanies of the Saints*, HBS 106 (1991, for 1989–90), pp. 118, 145, 238 (nos. vi.129; xii.162; xxxii. 129).

90 Cf. also churches at Blackwell (Derbs.): J.C. Cox, *Notes on the Churches of Derbyshire*, 4 vols (Chesterfield, 1875–79) 1:93–94; Kingsley (Staffs.).

91 D.C. Douglas and G.W. Greenaway, eds. and trans., *English Historical Documents* vol. 2, 1042–1189, 2nd ed. (London, 1981), no. 280; B.W. Kissan, "An Early List of London Properties," *Transactions of the London and Middlesex Archaeological Society* n.s., 8 (1940), 57–69, at pp. 58, 60, 65.

92 W.F. Grimes, *Excavation of Roman and Medieval London* (London, 1968), pp. 203–09.

93 G. Milne, *Excavations in Medieval Cripplegate, London* (Swindon, 2001), pp. 86–100.

themselves pre-date the Conquest, but the dedications only emerge in the 12th century. The church in Cheapside, which had a parish by 1140 and a cemetery by 1200, was almost certainly among the six Derby churches listed in Domesday. Its dedication, however, was only disclosed when it was confirmed to the canons of Darley abbey by Walter Durdent, bishop of Lichfield in the 1150s.<sup>94</sup> At Spondon there was a church and a priest by 1086, and the dedication becomes apparent when the church was given by William de Ferrers to the hospital of Burton Lazarus in the reign of Henry II.<sup>95</sup> Two such potentially early occurrences of a relatively rare dedication suggest that the cult of St Wærburh had especial significance in pre-Conquest Derby. One possibility is that the cult was introduced by Æthelflæd herself, after the conquest of the town in 917.<sup>96</sup> She may indeed have had a longstanding interest in the area; her husband Æthelred together with her brother Edward the Elder were already purchasing land at Hope and Asford in Derbyshire before Æthelred's death in 911. That transaction is thus likely to have been very much at the time that he and Æthelflæd were responsible for the translation of Oswald of Northumbria in 909.<sup>97</sup>

There is, however, another possible explanation of the Cheapside dedication. The church, which belonged to Leofric in 1066, was probably held in 1086 by Ralph fitz Hubert, lord of Crich, and one of the most important barons in Derbyshire.<sup>98</sup> Leofric is presumably to be identified with the man of that name who in association with Leofnoth was one Ralph's principal antecessors elsewhere in Derbyshire. These substantial pre-Conquest landholders were probably brothers, successors in many of his estates of the royal *minister* Morcar. Morcar and his brother Sigferth were designated chief thegns of the Seven Boroughs (which included Derby) when they were treacherously murdered by the Mercian ealdorman Eadric *Streona* in 1015.<sup>99</sup> Now Morcar was probably married to the niece, and was certainly one of the principal lay heirs, of Wulfric Spot (d. 1002×4), the rich and royally descended thegn who held land on Wirral, probably the great estate of Eastham just outside Chester.<sup>100</sup> The link with Wærburh may therefore go back to Wulfric and his family.

94 *GDB*, fol. 280v.; *VCH Derbs.* 1, p. 327; R.R. Darlington, ed., *Cartulary of Darley Abbey*, 2 vols (Kendal, 1945), 1: liii–liv, 108, 204; 2: 595–96.

95 Cox, *Churches of Derbyshire*, 3: 293, 296; *VCH Derbs.* 1, p. 343.

96 R.A. Hall, "The Pre-Conquest Burgh of Derby," *Derbyshire Archaeological Journal* 94 (1976, for 1974), 16–23.

97 S 397; P.H. Sawyer, ed., *Charters of Burton Abbey* (London, 1979), pp. 5–7.

98 *VCH Derbs.* 1, p. 305; *Cart. Darley Abbey* 1, pp. liii–liv.

99 *ASC C(DE)* 1015; *Charters of Burton Abbey*, pp. xli–xliii.

100 *VCH Derbs.* 1, pp. 305–06; *VCH Cheshire* 1, p. 264; *Charters of Burton Abbey*, pp. xviii, xxiv, 54.

### The Cult in Chester after the Norman Conquest

It is clear that the advent of the Normans gave fresh impetus to Wærburh's cult. Earl Hugh I's refoundation of the minster as a great Benedictine abbey in the late 1080s and early 1090s undoubtedly enhanced Wærburh's status.<sup>101</sup> It was an enterprise in which the Norman abbey of Bec was much involved. Hugh's closest friend among the higher clergy, the prelate chosen to dedicate his new foundation, was Anselm, abbot of Bec, soon to become archbishop of Canterbury.<sup>102</sup> The first abbot of Chester, Richard (1092–1116), was a monk of Bec and according to Ranulf Higden had been Anselm's chaplain.<sup>103</sup> Interestingly, Richard of Clare, the abbot of Ely and patron of the royal cults there, installed by Henry I shortly after his accession in 1100, was also a monk of Bec and a protégé of Anselm.<sup>104</sup> Those connections may go some way to explain the almost simultaneous development of Wærburh's cult in Chester and Ely at this time.

Earl Hugh, however, unlike Abbot Richard, does not seem to have engaged in elaborate translation ceremonies to promote his saint. His principal contribution, apart from the establishment of the monastery itself, was the grant to his new foundation of a midsummer fair focused upon a secondary feast, that of St Wærburh in the summer (*in aestate*) celebrated on 21 June.<sup>105</sup> We do not know the origins of this feast, which by the 13th century was also referred to as the feast of the Translation of St Wærburh.<sup>106</sup> In Bradshaw's time it was believed to commemorate the day of Wærburh's initial elevation by King Ceolred, when her body was found to be incorrupt.<sup>107</sup> It may therefore have been long established locally. At all events, although it is not to be found in any pre-Conquest calendar, by the 12th century it had become the saint's principal day in the North-West. The fair and the feast on which it was centred was clearly a matter of considerable importance to the Anglo-Norman earls, and the organization of these events was the subject of a number of charters.<sup>108</sup> The feast was given great prominence in a still surviving late 12th-century service book

101 *VCH Ches.* 3, p. 132–34; 5:1, pp. 30–31.

102 On Hugh I's connexions with Bec see G. Barraclough, ed., *The Charters of the Anglo-Norman Earls of Chester*, RSLC 126 (1988), no. 4; *Chart. Chester Abbey* 1, pp. xxiii–xxv.

103 M.V. Taylor, ed., *Obits of Abbots of Chester*, RSLC 64 (1912), p. 94; *VCH Ches.* 2, p. 133; Higden, *Polychronicon* VII, p. 360.

104 *LE* II.140, 144–48 (ed. Blake, pp. 224, 228–34); *VCH Cambs.* 2, 203.

105 *Chart. Chester Abbey* 1, p. 21.

106 R. Stewart-Brown, ed., *Calendar of Chester County Court Rolls*, Chetham Society, new ser., 84 (Manchester, 1925), pp. 122–23.

107 Bradshaw, *Life* 1, lines 3449–3455 (p. 124), citing Ranulf of Higden's *Polychronicon*, although in fact Higden says nothing about the day on which the translation took place.

108 *Chart. Chester Abbey* 1, pp. 21, 46–48, 52–53, 68–69; *VCH Ches.* 5:2, p. 100.

(to which I shall return).<sup>109</sup> The growing importance of the summer feast (and very probably the cult as a whole) in this period is reflected by its addition to a number of calendars, including those from Abingdon, Worcester, and Sherborne, in the 12th century.<sup>110</sup> It is also reflected in the development of a tradition which located Wærburh herself at Chester and made the city the scene of an embellished version of her most famous miracle, that of the obedience of the wild geese. That Chester gloss on the traditions of Hanbury and Ely was recorded by both William of Malmesbury and Henry of Huntingdon before the mid-12th century.<sup>111</sup>

The post-Conquest period probably also saw the establishment of some new church dedications. By c. 1200, for example, Wærburh was dedicatee of the church of a newly-established Premonstatensian community in Warburton (Cheshire), a vill which had briefly belonged to Chester abbey in the early 12th century.<sup>112</sup> By the later 12th century, there were churches dedicated to Wærburh in the cities of Bristol<sup>113</sup> and Dublin,<sup>114</sup> with both of which Chester had significant trading links. There was also a chapel with its own cemetery in Shrewsbury, near the episcopal church of St Chad.<sup>115</sup>

There was an important efflorescence of writing about Wærburh at Chester abbey in the late 12th century. The best evidence of this is the still extant service book, which contained amongst other things an office for her feast and a litany in which she is given exceptional precedence over other female saints

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- 109 The grading, "in copes with twelve lections," was added in the 13th century. The feast of the deposition was even more highly rated, in red with an octave. See Bodl., Tanner MS 169\*, pp. 4, 8; Wormald, *Eng. Ben. Kal. after 1100*, 1, pp. 95–96, 101, 105.
- 110 Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 57, fol. 65; Wormald, *Eng. Kal. before 1100*, pp. 189, 217; Rushforth, *Saints in Eng. Kal.*, nos. 19, 21. Cf. also the addition of the 3 Feb. feast in red to a Worcester calendar in the 12th century: Wormald, *Eng. Kal. before 1100*, p. 213; Rushforth, *Saints in Eng. Kal.*, no. 21.
- 111 WM, *GPA* 1:172.5–9 (pp. 466–68); HH, pp. 692–94.
- 112 G. Ormerod, *History of the County Palatine and City of Chester*, 2nd ed., revised by T. Helsby, 3 vols (London, 1882), 1:567; *Chart. Chester Abbey*, 1:52, 59, 60, 61.
- 113 Bristol: the church of St Werburgh in the important intramural thoroughfare of Corn Street was in existence by the late 1160s when it was granted to Keynsham Abbey by Earl William of Gloucester: W. Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum*, 6 vols in 8 (London, 1817–30), 6(1), p. 453. Cf. R.B. Patterson, ed., *Earldom of Chester Charters* (Oxford, 1973), pp. 41–42, 49 (no. 17); William of Worcester, *The Topography of Medieval Bristol* (Bristol Record Society, 2000), p. 202 (no. 359).
- 114 The parish church of Dublin castle was established at the latest by the 1170s, but possibly considerably earlier: H.B. Clarke, "Christian Cults and Cult Centres in Hiberno-Norse Dublin," in *The Island of St Patrick*, ed. A. MacShamhráin (Dublin, 2004), pp. 140–58, at 144–45.
- 115 *VCH Salop*. VIa, p. 23.

and martyrs.<sup>116</sup> In addition, there is the work of the monk Lucian, *De Laude Cestriae* (“In praise of Chester”). Lucian emphasizes the number and variety of the city’s saintly protectors, among whom the holy Virgin Wærburh was pre-eminent. The ever watchful guardian of the Northgate, her activities reinforced by her company of monks at prayer both day and night, she had recently given proof of her efficacy by saving the city from fire.<sup>117</sup> Most tantalizing of all is the lost “third passionary,”<sup>118</sup> which formed Bradshaw’s principal source and included a version of the *Vita Werburgae*, imported from Ely in its early 12th-century form, and a record of the saint’s miracles in Chester from the 10th to the late 12th centuries.<sup>119</sup>

The miracles related in the third passionary evidently extended from an incident ascribed to the reign of Edward the Elder (899–924) to 1180, when the saint’s relics were borne in procession to quell a great fire in the city. The record is divided into sections concerning the canons of the Anglo-Saxon minster and the monks of the new Benedictine foundation. The first to be recorded by Bradshaw tells how the canons took St Wærburh’s shrine to the walls of the city when it was besieged by a Welsh king called “Griffin.” The shrine was damaged by a stone thrown by one of the attackers, and as a result the Welsh king and his host were smitten with blindness and retreated.<sup>120</sup> The episode is placed by Bradshaw in the reign of King Edward the Elder, and if authentic would of course be excellent evidence for the presence of Wærburh’s relics in early 10th-century Chester. It seems more likely, however, that Bradshaw confused his Edwards and that the incident should properly be ascribed to the reign of Edward the Confessor. We know little of Edward the Elder’s relations with the Welsh, and when he is in conflict with them the men of Chester were their allies.<sup>121</sup> On the other hand, a Griffin does appear in contemporary sources for the Confessor’s reign and is to be identified with Gruffudd ap Llywelyn, the 11th-century king of Gwynedd who was active against the English in the mid-1050s.<sup>122</sup>

116 E. Danbury, “The Intellectual Life of the Abbey of St Werburgh, Chester, in the Middle Ages,” in *Medieval Archaeology, Art and Architecture at Chester*, ed. A.T. Thacker, British Archaeological Association Conference Trans. 22 (Leeds, 2000), pp. 107–20, at pp. 108–10; Wormald, *Eng. Ben. Kal. after 1100*, 1, pp. 95–96.

117 Lucian, *De Laude Cestriae*, pp. 54–60; R.C. Christie, ed., *Annales Cestrienses*, RSLC 14 (1886), p. 28.

118 Bradshaw, *Life* I, lines 694–96, 3246; II, lines 1690–5 (pp. 32, 117, 188). Cf. discussion by Horstmann, *Life of Werburge*, pp. xvi–xix, and Love, *Goscelin*, pp. lviii, cxviii–cxix.

119 Bradshaw, *Life* II, lines 667–1681 (pp. 153–88).

120 Bradshaw, *Life* II, lines 681–729 (pp. 154–55).

121 WM, *GRA*, 1:350 (Ch. 196.3), 420 (Ch. 228.8); 2:186–87.

122 *VEdR*, 2nd ed., pp. 64 (where Gruffudd is linked with an unnamed king of the Scots), 86–88; *ASC*, MSS CD, s.a. 1055, 1056, 1058; J. Tait, ed. *Domesday Survey of Cheshire*, Chetham

Another of Bradshaw's miracles is very similar and is perhaps based upon an even more garbled version of the same incident. During an attack on Chester by Harold of Denmark, Malcolm of Scotland, and the "king of Goths and Galwedy," the canons again parade with the shrine, it is again damaged, and the man responsible is possessed by devils and dies, a sign which causes the attackers to abandon the city.<sup>123</sup> It is impossible to make much of this, though it may represent a confused memory of an incident of the 1050s, when, for example, Gruffudd intrigued with others including Earl Ælfgar of Mercia, Magnus, son of Harold Hardrada of Norway, and the men of the Isles.<sup>124</sup>

A few other stories in the pre-Conquest section of the record contain some circumstantial information. One refers to the cure of a canon called Ulminus who broke his leg while hunting.<sup>125</sup> Another describes attempts by the inhabitants of Wirral to devastate the saint's park at Upton and the punishment meted out to them. Though Upton is listed among the possessions granted by Edgar in 958, the name is in a late form, and in any case the community no longer held an estate there in 1066. Upton was certainly granted to St Werburgh's abbey by Earl Ranulph I (1121–28/9), and the story is therefore more likely to be of post-Conquest origin.<sup>126</sup> Such evidence, combined with the garbling of the Anglo-Saxon tradition, suggests that the whole *liber miraculorum* in the third passionary was compiled after the Conquest, probably in the 12th century. It also ties in with the much more circumstantial detail in the post-Conquest material, which besides the story of the fire of 1180 includes lengthy anecdotes from the time of Earl Richard (1101–20).<sup>127</sup>

Some of these later stories present Wærburh in a special relationship with the Norman earls and their retainers. Invoked, for example, by the constable William fitzNigel, she divides the waters of Dee to enable him to cross to Basingwerk to bring succour to Earl Richard then threatened by the wild and wicked Welsh.<sup>128</sup> In another, she is presented as protectress of the monastery against the comital family. Richard, originally a benefactor of the abbey and as we have seen favoured by Wærburh, was turned against the community by his wife, who prevailed upon him to demand that the abbot surrender to him the

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Society, new series, 75 (Manchester, 1916), pp. 22–23, 90–91, 242–43; R.R. Davies, *The Age of Conquest* (Oxford, 1987), pp. 24–27; F.M. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 3rd ed. (Oxford, 1971), pp. 572–76.

123 Bradshaw, *Life* 11, lines 758–99 (pp. 157–58).

124 Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 574–75.

125 Bradshaw, *Life* 11, lines 1038–1107 (pp. 166–69).

126 Bradshaw, *Life* 11, lines 989–1037 (pp. 165–66); *Chart. Chester Abbey* 1, pp. xxviii, 46–52. The reference to hunting parks has a post-Conquest feel.

127 Bradshaw, *Life* 11, lines 1416–1597 (pp. 179–85).

128 Bradshaw, *Life* 11, lines 1416–85 (pp. 179–81).

great manor of Saughton by Chester. When he and his wife were drowned in the famous wreck of the White Ship the saint appeared to the sacristan to announce the death of his community's adversary.<sup>129</sup>

Most importantly, perhaps, the post-Conquest stories present Wærburh as protectress of Chester itself. Bradshaw has a particularly circumstantial account of the saint's defence of the city in the great fire of 1180. The fire having quickly consumed a great part of the town including the minster of St Michael at the Roman south gate, the monks came forth from the abbey bearing the shrine of St Wærburh and chanting litanies. They moved around the fire and (helped as Bradshaw acknowledges by the citizens) the blaze was extinguished. The citizens expressed their gratitude in a solemn procession of thanksgiving. This last story was undoubtedly current almost immediately after the event which it described since it was also recorded by Lucian, writing in the 1190s.<sup>130</sup>

It is clear, then, that the advent of the Normans gave a fresh impetus to Wærburh's cult. Hugh's refoundation of the minster elevated the status of its patron. In particular, the establishment of a three-day fair around the summer feast ("St Werburg in Chester") gave great prominence to that day and by the 12th century it rivalled the traditional feast of 3 February. The late 12th and early 13th century seem to have marked the apogee of Wærburh's cult in Chester. It was the period when Ranulf III's promotion of the special, princely, status of the Cheshire core of his earldom was stimulating a growing sense of local identity, vis a vis both the English and Welsh. It was also the moment when the citizens of Chester were developing their own instruments of self government.<sup>131</sup> Wærburh provided a figure around which these reformulated regional and civic identities could accrete. Her role in the fire of 1180 perhaps engendered a new level of popularity among the citizens, and the extension of the cult to trading centres such as Bristol and Dublin seems also likely to have been their work.

As elsewhere there is little to indicate that the Normans in Cheshire were hostile to established native saints. On the other hand the cult does seem to have become a distinctly local affair. Compared with the modest popularity that she enjoyed in the late Anglo-Saxon calendars, the saint received few notices after the Conquest. As might be expected, her death-day was commemorated at Ely and in one or two other communities, most notably perhaps in

129 Bradshaw, *Life* 11, lines 1486–1597 (pp. 182–85).

130 Bradshaw, *Life* 11, lines 1598–1681 (Ch. 20); Lucian, *De laude Cestriae*, pp. 30–31, 55.

131 A.T. Thacker, "Introduction: the Earls and their Earldom," in *The Earldom of Chester and its Charters*, ed. A.T. Thacker, *Journal of the Chester Archaeological Society* 71 (1991), pp. 15–18.

Shrewsbury's episcopal minster of St Chad, the 12th-century martyrology of which also included the translation feast (assigned to 20 June) and the feast day of Wærburh's mother, Eormenhild.<sup>132</sup> Elsewhere the translation feast was neglected, even at Abingdon where it had been known before the Conquest.<sup>133</sup> One possible indication of interest at this time may be the fictional *passio* of Wærburh's alleged brothers, Wulfhad and Ruffinus, which elaborates tradition about the saint with a story of an aborted marriage, associating her very closely with her Mercian royal relatives.<sup>134</sup> Her supposed brothers were enshrined at Stone (Staffs.), an Augustinian priory founded in the reign of Henry I and probably succeeding a church dedicated to Wulfhad.<sup>135</sup> The date of their *passio*, which does not mention Wærburh's enshrinement in Chester, remains however very uncertain.<sup>136</sup>

By the later 13th century, even in Chester, the cult's popularity had waned. The great earldom of which Wærburh had in some sense been the patron had been absorbed by the Crown. Among the citizenry, her cult had been eclipsed by that of the Holy Cross, promoted at Chester abbey's rival as an ecclesiastical centre, St John's. On the whole there were few bequests by the citizens to the abbey, and few chantries were established there after Henry III's foundation for Earl Ranulf III.<sup>137</sup>

### Conclusions

In this chapter, I have sought to chart the changing fortunes of a cult which was fostered at a variety of times in a number of important centres in the North-West, the Midlands and the South-East and which in its various reinventions has been an important vehicle for fostering dynastic, regional and civic identity. Wærburh begins her posthumous career as patron of a specific royal lineage, that of the kings Wulfhere, Æthelred, Coenred and Ceolred. That lineage ended with the death of Ceolred in 716. Thereafter her role changes. She is more

132 *VCH Salop*. 1va, pp. 22–23.

133 *Eng. Ben. Kal. after the Conquest* 2:118 (Crowland), 150 (Dunster); 2:9 (Ely).

134 Grosjean, "Cod. Goth. Appendix," pp. 183–87; Dugdale, *Monasticon*, 61, pp. 226–30.

135 *VCH Staffs.* 3, p. 240.

136 In Dugdale's day a version of the *passio* formed the bulk of the *Historia Fundationis*, the opening section of a now lost or missing Cottonian manuscript, Otho A xvi: *Monasticon* 61, p. 226. That text was appended to the Peterborough Chronicle of Hugh Candidus in the 14th century: W.T. Mellows, ed., *The Chronicle of Hugh Candidus* (Oxford, 1949), pp. 140–59; BL, Add MS 39758.

137 *VCH Ches.* 51, pp. 34, 85–86.

important to later Mercian kings as patron of their dealings with Kent. Her strong associations with Mercia's former greatness explain why Æthelflæd sponsored her cult in Chester and perhaps elsewhere. The move to Chester set the cult on a new course. Plucked from her dynastic monastery and set up in an urban minster, Wærburh became patron first of a military garrison established by an alien royal family governing all that remained of Mercia after the Danish conquests and then of the rapidly developing city of her adoption. The final reinvention came after the Conquest, with Wærburh's new eminence as patron of a great Benedictine abbey and of the princely family that founded it. Once again a dynastic patron, she became also in a fuller sense a patron of the citizens themselves—with their emerging sense of civic identity and their strong sense of differentiation from their English and Welsh neighbours. It is at this point probably that the cult is taken to fellow trading cities such as Bristol and Dublin. It is at this point too that the cult achieves its own literature. Paradoxically, perhaps, it was the Anglo-Normans in the 12th century who crystallised the image of this early Anglo-Saxon saint in the form that was to endure throughout the middle ages and receive its final rendering in Henry Bradshaw's vernacular *Life*.

## The Godwins, Towns and St Olaf Churches: Comital Investment in the Mid-11th Century

*Robert Higham*

Historical research into the late Old English ruling class has been much pursued in recent decades. This essay brings together two of the many major themes emerging from recent work: aristocratic interest in towns and aristocratic church patronage. Their importance—singly, or in conjunction—has been highlighted, in different ways, by a number of authors.<sup>1</sup> Here, they are brought together in order to explore possible links between the urban interests of the Godwin family and the building of churches dedicated to St Olaf in Exeter, Chichester and Southwark. This study arises from another enquiry concerning evidence for a comital residence in Exeter in the mid-11th century. This was located in the north-west quarter of Exeter, not far from the church of St Olaf (known as St Olave's, as elsewhere, from the Latin form of the name). This property was remembered in local tradition and gave rise to the name *Irlesbery* (in various spellings), found in sources of late 12th-century and later date. Outer (northern) parts of *Irlesbery* became the site of a hospital (St Alexius) in the late 12th century. The endowment of the church of St Olaf in Exeter was linked with the Godwins and with Edward the Confessor. Traditions of these endowments survive in a later cartulary of St Nicholas Priory, a Benedictine house founded by Battle Abbey (Sussex). William the Conqueror gave St Olave's church to Battle by the time of the Domesday survey. The priory, which soon developed immediately adjacent, occupied the central (southerly) part of *Irlesbery* which, after the Conquest, passed into royal hands. The documentary evidence (hitherto unpublished and complex) for this comital property, its assessment in Exeter's urban topography and its links with St Olave's church, are

1 Gervase Rosser, "The Cure of Souls in English Towns before 1000," in *Pastoral Care before the Parish*, ed. John Blair and Richard Sharpe (Leicester, 1992), pp. 267–84; Robin Fleming, "Rural Elites and Urban Communities in Late Saxon England," *Past and Present* 141 (1993), 3–37; Ann Williams, "Thegnly Piety and Ecclesiastical Patronage in the Late Old English Kingdom," *ANS* 24 (2002), 1–24; John Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society* (Oxford, 2005); Oliver Creighton and Robert Higham, *Medieval Town Walls. An Archaeology and Social History* (Stroud, 2005); Stephen Baxter, *The Earls of Mercia. Lordship and Power in Late Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford, 2007).

the subject of a study published separately.<sup>2</sup> In what follows, the existence of this property, including a church which has survived and a residence which has not, has been assumed.<sup>3</sup>

In the present context (Fig. 23.1), what matters is the tradition of the endowment of the church by the Godwins because, looking further afield, we also find St Olaf's churches in two other towns in whose territories the Godwins were highly influential: Chichester, in Sussex and Southwark, on the south bank of the Thames opposite London. Although in Chichester and Southwark, the link between the St Olaf churches and the Godwins is less explicit than is the case in Exeter, it is suggested in what follows that the three places illuminate a largely unrecognised aspect of the church patronage of this most powerful of 11th-century families. The best-known associations of the Godwins and churches relate to collegiate foundations rather than to lesser churches. The family also had a reputation for despoiling churches, but how far this was deserved or simply a product of later anti-Godwin propaganda is unclear. Earl Godwin may have re-founded the minster at Dover (Kent) as a college of secular canons, moving it from near the shore to the higher, defended area above the town. By the time of Domesday there were twenty-four canons there. In Henry I's reign, it was moved again back into the town.<sup>4</sup> In 1060, Earl Harold, Godwin's son, founded a college of secular canons at Waltham (Essex), a church with an already-long history.<sup>5</sup> Edward the Confessor's queen, Edith, Godwin's daughter, re-built Wilton Abbey (Wiltshire), where she was educated.<sup>6</sup>

In embracing notions of territorial power, the ruling class, towns and a popular north European saint, this exploration of the Godwins and some St Olaf churches will hopefully address the theme of the book in which it is offered, with much personal affection and professional respect, to its dedicatee.

2 Robert Higham, "Earlsbury: A Comital Residence in Exeter," *Proceedings of Devon Archaeological Society* 76 (2018), 141–85.

3 Given the overlapping subject-matter, repetition of some data in the two studies has been unavoidable. I am grateful to the Devon Archaeological Society for consideration in this matter. For the background to Exeter in this period see: John Allan, Christopher Henderson, and Robert Higham, "Saxon Exeter," in *Anglo-Saxon Towns in Southern England*, ed. Jeremy Haslam (Chichester, 1984), pp. 385–411; Robert Higham, *Making Anglo-Saxon Devon: Emergence of a Shire* (Exeter, 2008); Robert Higham, "William the Conqueror's Siege of Exeter in 1068," *Transactions of the Devonshire Association* 145 (2013), 93–132.

4 Williams, "Thegnly Piety and Ecclesiastical Patronage," p. 8 and sources quoted there.

5 Williams, "Thegnly Piety and Ecclesiastical Patronage," p. 14.

6 Frank Barlow, *The Godwins: The Rise and Fall of a Noble Dynasty* (Harlow, 2002), pp. 107–11; Emma Mason, *The House of Godwine. The History of a Dynasty* (London, 2004), pp. 84–87.

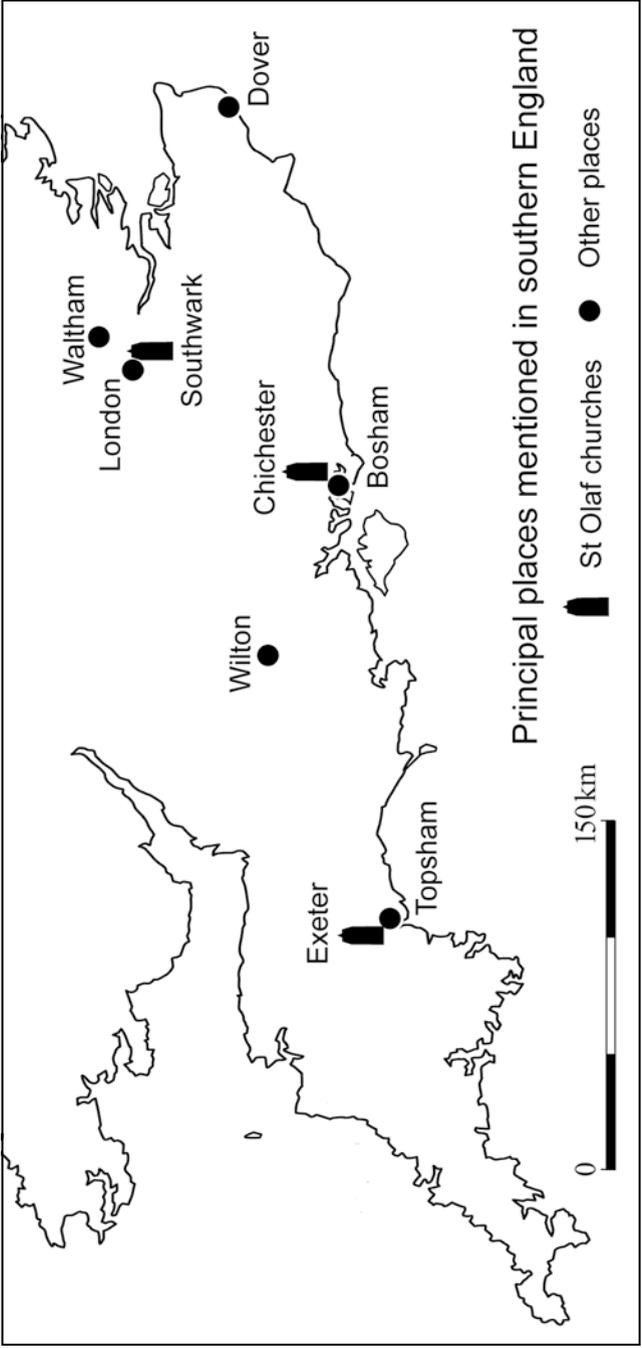


FIGURE 23.1 Map of principal places in southern England mentioned in the text  
MAP BY OLIVER CREIGHTON, REPRODUCED WITH THANKS

## St Olaf—King and Saint

The saint to whom the church in Exeter was (amongst others: see below) dedicated, whose name in English-speaking regions became “Olave” (and sometimes, through the pronouncing of St and Olave together, Tooley) was the Norwegian king, Olaf Haraldsson, born in 995, reigned 1016–1029 and died in 1030.<sup>7</sup> After a warrior career in the Baltic, northern France and England—including service for Æthelred II of England against the Danes—he returned to Norway and seized power as king. Having adopted Christianity in England, he continued the work of King Olaf Tryggvason (ruled 995–1000, whose Christianity was also learned in England) to make Norway a fully Christian country: a process achieved partly by conversion and partly by coercion. Eventually there was an internal revolt against him, exploited and supported by Cnut, king of England and Denmark, which led to his exile in 1028–1029. In 1030, supported by Swedish allies, he attempted to recover his position but was killed in battle, on 29 July, at Stiklestad. Danish control in Norway lasted to 1035, when Cnut died. In 1035, Magnus, Olaf’s own son, became king of Norway and the “Danish party” fled.

Miracles were soon reported at Olaf’s grave and a chapel was built there. In August 1031, his body was moved and enshrined at St Clement’s church at Nidaros, where he was declared a saint. Nidaros was soon rebuilt and became a great cathedral. From 1035, development of the cult of the new saint was assisted by the succession, as king, of his son Magnus. The Olaf cult, whose feast day was 29 July, the date of his death, thus had a political dimension as well as a dimension reflecting his role as a martyr to the Christian conversion of his country. The speedy canonisation of Olaf in Norway may have been an anti-Danish gesture, since the Danes were then ruling Norway, or—given Olaf’s experience in England—it may have been influenced by the English tradition of creating royal saints.<sup>8</sup> The cult spread rapidly in the northern world and Olaf became Norway’s patron saint. He was recognised officially by the Papacy in 1164, but his sainthood had long been recognised in the wider church. In active terms of new church dedications, however, the cult lasted

7 Frances Arnold-Forster, *Studies in Church Dedications or England’s Patron Saints*, 3 vols (London, 1899), 2:441–54; Bruce Dickins, “The Cult of St Olave in the British Isles,” *Saga Book of the Viking Society* 12 (1937–1945), 53–80; David Hugh Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints* (Oxford, 1978), pp. 300–01.

8 Sverre Bagge and Saebjörg Walaker Nordeide, “The Kingdom of Norway,” in *Christianization and the Rise of Christian Monarchy*, ed. N. Berend (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 121–66.

only about a century: mid-11th century to mid-12th (though there are post-medieval examples).<sup>9</sup>

In the British Isles, the Olaf cult took hold quickly. His death and subsequent canonisation were noted in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (MS C 1030, an annal presumably composed at a later date). His feast-day occurs in saints' calendars at several English cathedral churches, including Exeter, and at several monasteries. Representations of Saint Olaf occur in England on seals, in stained glass, woodwork and other media. Some churches dedicated to him are known to have been built before the Norman Conquest (including at York and Exeter) and others are documented later, though their foundation dates are often uncertain. The distribution of these forty-plus (rural and urban) churches in the British Isles is heavily-weighted to the Scandinavian-influenced areas of northern Britain, eastern England, the Dublin area and the northern and western isles. Further south, they occur also in a few towns: at London, Exeter and Chichester. A small number of southern English rural examples is also known. In the political confrontations of the northern world the Danes had been enemies of the Norwegians, but the cult of St Olaf soon became popular in Denmark and in Danish-influenced areas of the British Isles as well as in—more understandably—Norway and the Norse-influenced areas. This was perhaps because, until the martyrdom of King Cnut IV of Denmark in 1086 (in a rebellion not unlike that which led to Olaf's death)<sup>10</sup> and his canonisation by the Pope in 1101, the Danes had no national saint of their own: Olaf did, at least, represent the northern world. It has been argued that the Danish espousal of St Olaf as a saint was also a deliberately political act, aimed at adopting his influence to their own advantage in the north.<sup>11</sup>

### St Olave's Church, Exeter

The church of St Olave, in Fore St, became a parish church in the early 13th century, when—along with Exeter's other lesser churches—a parochial territory was allocated to it.<sup>12</sup> It is aligned more or less with the street, but not exactly. The building has been surveyed by Richard Parker, to whose report the

9 For the later cult, see Karl Alvestad, "Olavian Traces in Post-Medieval England," below, pp. 602–620.

10 Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints* pp. 67–68.

11 Barbara Crawford, *The Churches Dedicated to St Clement in Medieval England. A Hagio-Geography of the Seafarer's Saint in 11th Century North Europe* (St Petersburg, 2008), pp. 25–28 and sources quoted there.

12 Nicholas Orme, *The Churches of Medieval Exeter* (Exeter, 2014), pp. 28–34.

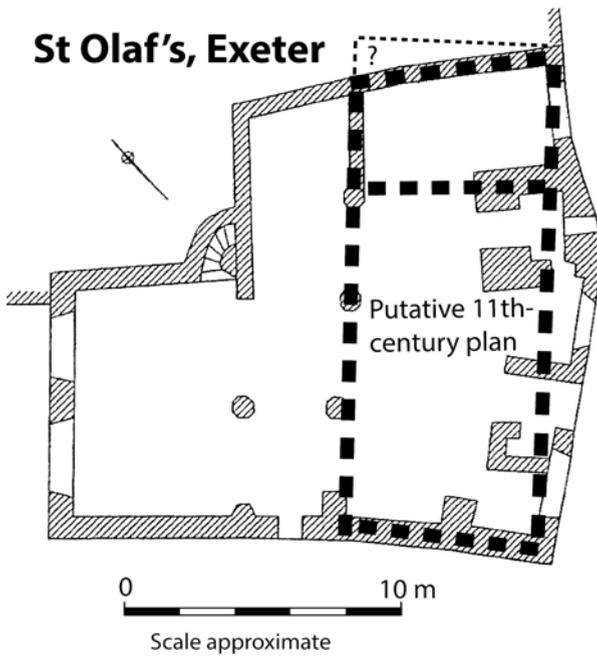


FIGURE 23.2 Plan of St Olaf's (St Olave's) church, Exeter, indicating the putative 11th-century plan within the later structure. BASED, BY PERMISSION AND WITH THANKS TO ITS AUTHOR, ON THE SURVEY IN RICHARD PARKER, "ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORDING AT ST OLAVE'S CHURCH, EXETER," FIG. 2

following discussion is indebted for some chronological and building material analysis.<sup>13</sup> In its eventual (and current) form, it comprised a chancel, nave, two aisles on the north side, and a narrow extension on the south side which also embraces a lateral tower at the junction of nave and chancel. The two aisle extensions on the north side are successively 14th- and 15th-century in date. The narrow southern extension, on the Fore St side had been built by the 1750s, since it is shown on a map of that date.<sup>14</sup> The extension may be of 15th-century origin (like the northernmost aisle) and related to the priest's house which is known to have been incorporated here at this time (the blocked southern

13 Richard W. Parker, "Archaeological Recording at St Olave's Church, Exeter" (unpublished Exeter Archaeology Report No. 99.67, 1999).

14 Devon Heritage Centre: Exeter City Archives, Exeter City Chamber Maps, 58/15; despite a date of 1815 given by Bridget Cherry and Nicholas Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Devon* (London, 1989), p. 394.



FIGURE 23.3 St Olave's church, Exeter, from the south (Fore St)  
© AUTHOR

doorway relates to this). A wooden stair and gallery was inserted here at a later date (Figs 23.2, 23.3, 23.4).

The earliest diagnostic fabric in the building is long and short quoining of late Saxon style in the north-west external angle of the nave (abutted by the northern aisle) (Fig. 23.4). It is one of a number of churches in Exeter to retain fabric of this date: also, St Martin's (at the north-eastern edge of Cathedral Close; long and short quoins); St George's (originally on the west side of South St; fragments now re-erected on the east side of that street; long and short quoins); St Stephen's (High St; early 12th-century crypt details abut crypt walls of late Saxon date). While styles of late Saxon masonry did not immediately cease at the Norman Conquest—indeed, in Exeter, the Norman castle gatehouse contains quoins and window features of earlier style—the documentary evidence for St Olave's existence before 1066 (see below) makes it a reasonable assumption that the north-west angle of the nave is of late Saxon construction: by implication, the whole nave was of this date. The likely reconstruction of the first church is as a rectangular, two-cell (nave, chancel) plan, of locally-available volcanic stone with white triassic sandstone quoins, corresponding



FIGURE 23.4  
St Olave's church, Exeter; long-and-short quoins of primary 11th-century fabric at the west end of the nave  
© AUTHOR

to the surviving nave and chancel, approximately 7.5 m wide and 15 m long (about 25' × 50'). Its west wall survives and the east wall of the chancel could also be primary though it is not now available for inspection (plastered internally and conjoined with an adjacent building externally). Simple two-cell plans of this sort, in an approximate length/breadth proportion of 2:1, were normal for the city's lesser churches at this time.<sup>15</sup> At St Olave's, the original north wall thickness is represented by the masonry supporting the west side of the nave arcade's westernmost arch (the nave arcade piers are narrower than this, and thus not remnants of the original wall, but newly-built structures). It is, however, possible that the masonry at this westernmost point suggests a north aisle arcade earlier than the existing one, perhaps of 12th-century date.

Prior to the widening of the church towards Fore Street (which destroyed any primary quoins at the south-west angle of the west end of the nave), the south tower projected from the church. Internally, its appearance has been altered by the insertion of a large arch on the north side, to open into the church, and by the insertion of a doorway in its west side to give access to a pulpit. The

<sup>15</sup> Higham, *Making Anglo-Saxon Devon*, pp. 116–23.

tall window in the south wall is of 15th-century style but its relieving arch may be a relic of an earlier and shorter window opening (perhaps 14th-century, the date of the ogee-headed lancet in the tower's middle storey). This large window reflects the shape of the large, internal opening: they are presumably contemporary (as also the squint). The western doorway in the tower, for the pulpit, must date from after the church was widened towards the street. Three corbels, high up on the northern (internal) face of the tower, may have supported upper timber-work (as they do now). On the exterior, the window openings suggest there were three storeys to the tower. The tower was originally topped by a spire and four pinnacles.<sup>16</sup> The blocked southern door of the church related to the priest's house (see above). The main door was relocated outwards, perhaps from a porch, when the nave was extended towards the street. Where the 11th-century door was located is not known. It may have been on the south, as later. But since the church's origin is so closely connected with the Godwins' property which lay to its north, it is possible that the primary entrance was on the north and that the southern one was created, on the main street, when it became a parish church. A similar sequence may have applied at St Olave's, Chichester (see below).

Published comments on the date of the southern lateral tower are problematic. There is a local tradition that the lateral tower is late Saxon.<sup>17</sup> Theoretically, the endowed nature of St Olave's (unusual for a lesser city church: see below) may have involved an embellished plan. Even allowing for later alteration of windows and other details, however, the details of the tower do not support such an early date: an addition of the later middle ages is much more likely, indeed to the point of certainty. It is constructed of high-quality squared blocks, mainly of volcanic stone, in a style which may have just-pre-dated the use of local breccia (commonly called Heavitree stone) in the city, from the late 14th century onwards. The possible influence of the mid-12th-century lateral towers of Exeter Cathedral on local churches should be considered in this context. St Petrock's (High St) and St Martin's (Cathedral Close) also had a single lateral tower. Both towers, more obviously, are of late medieval date.

### St Olave's Church, Exeter: Foundation and History

Domesday Book related that the church of Battle (King William's foundation of Battle Abbey, Sussex) held the church of St Olave in Exeter in 1086 (Fig. 23.5). The name was spelt *Olaf* in the Exchequer Domesday; *Oilaf* in the main text of

<sup>16</sup> Orme, *Churches of Medieval Exeter*, p. 153.

<sup>17</sup> Cherry and Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Devon*, p. 394.

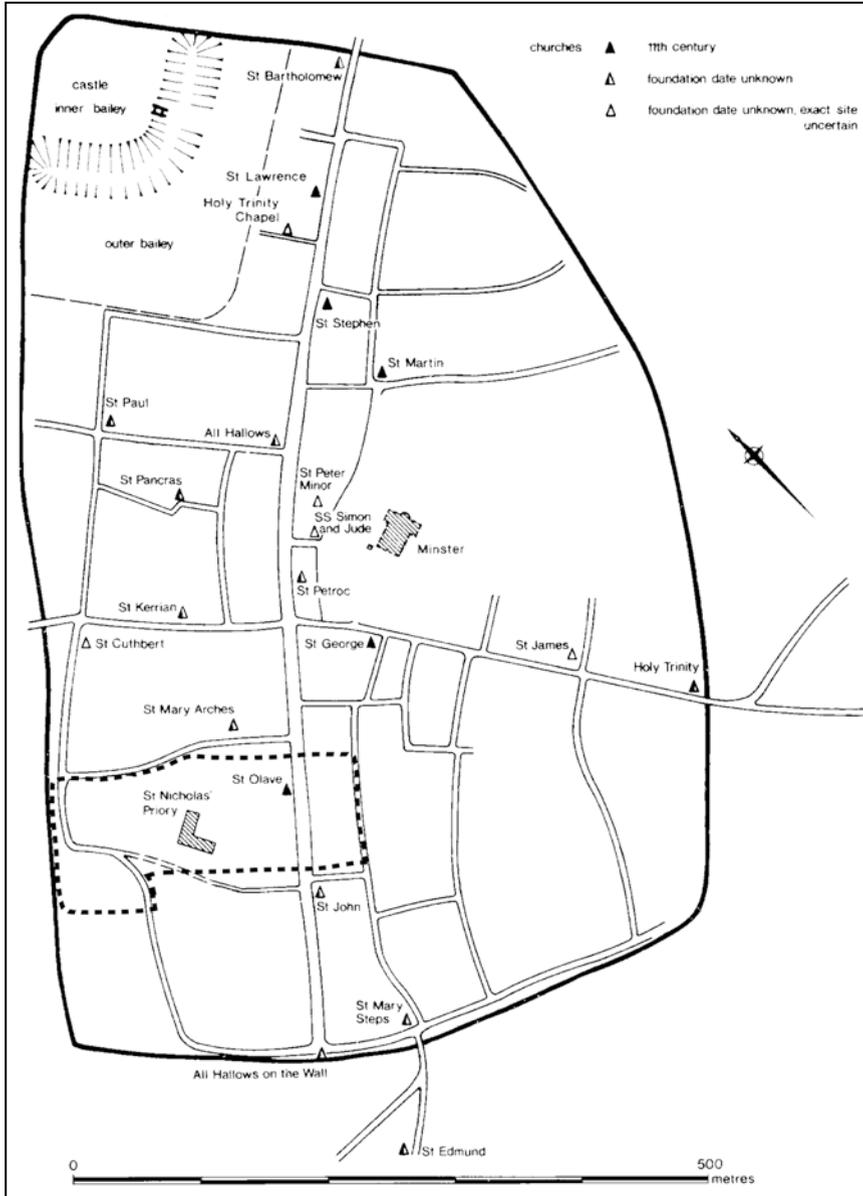


FIGURE 23.5 The 13th-century and later parish of St Olaf, Exeter (boundary simplified) and other early churches in the city.  
 BASED ON DATA IN ALLAN, HENDERSON & HIGHAM, "SAXON EXETER,"  
 (FIGS 126, 128, WITH AMENDMENTS)

the *Exon Domesday* and *Olav* in the *Terrae Occupatae of Exon Domesday*.<sup>18</sup> By 1066, the Godwin family property around St Olave's already contained at least eight houses, since Battle Abbey was given eight houses in Exeter by King William with St Olave's church: the Domesday entry implies church and houses were associated.<sup>19</sup> The only Exeter houses said by Domesday Book to have been held by the Godwins (specifically, by Earl Harold) were five attached to the rural manor of Tawstock.<sup>20</sup> The houses later held by Battle Abbey may have been built specifically as urban properties for tenants within the area included in, or adjacent to, *Irlisbury*. It is, of course, possible that amongst the 285 houses owned by the king in 1086 there were some inherited not from King Edward, but from the Godwins, now undifferentiated in Domesday Book. We might also wonder whether the eight houses given to Battle Abbey and the five attached to Tawstock were adjacent? A group of thirteen properties could make a viable part of a "Godwin quarter" in *Irlisbury*. Given the association of Gytha with St Olave's church (below) and her presence in Exeter during the Norman siege of 1068,<sup>21</sup> it seems likely that all or part of the *Irlisbury* property was included in her dower after the death of her husband, Earl Godwin, in 1053.

Comment on St Olave's church started with O.J. Reichel who argued (a) it was founded by King Cnut—for which there is no direct evidence—and (b) it was later endowed by Gytha, Earl Godwin's wife, after the earl's death (1053) so that a priest could pray for his soul, an endowment for which there is surviving evidence.<sup>22</sup> Of the two primary sources (see below) Reichel was aware of the "Gytha charter" (Sherford) but not of the "King Edward charter" (Kenbury). But he deduced that St Olave's had held Kenbury before 1066 because by 1086 it was held by Battle Abbey, to which St Olave's and its possessions had been given by King William.

The history of St Olave's has been discussed in the wider context of Exeter's churches by Nicholas Orme, who suggests (and it is also this author's view) that the two "pre-conquest charters"—which survive (in Latin) in the 14th-century cartulary of St Nicholas Priory—contain reliable data even though, in

18 *Domesday: Devon*, 9:2, where Exeter was rendered *Execestre*; *Exon Domesday*, fols. 196a, 505b, in *Libri Censualis, vocati Domesday Book, Additamenta ex Codic. Antiquiss. Exon Domesday; Inquisitio Eliensis; Liber Winton; Boldon Book*, ed. H. Ellis (London, 1816), at pp. 178, 469; where Exeter was rendered *Essecestra* and *Exonia*.

19 Eleanor Searle, ed., *The Chronicle of Battle Abbey* (Oxford, 1980), p. 82, n.1; *Domesday: Devon*, 9:2.

20 *Domesday: Devon*, 1:40.

21 Higham, "William the Conqueror's Siege of Exeter."

22 Oswald J. Reichel, "The Domesday Churches of Devon," *Transactions of the Devonshire Association* 30 (1898), 258–315, at pp. 288–89; Oswald J. Reichel, "The Early History of the Principal Manors in Exminster Hundred," *Transactions of the Devonshire Association*, 47 (1915), 209–47, at pp. 212–13.

surviving form, they are late concoctions, perhaps based on actual charters, on a list of charters or on a prose narrative of grants.<sup>23</sup> The two relevant texts are:

- a) BL, MS Cotton Vitellius D. ix, fos. 39 r–v:<sup>24</sup> a grant, with a dating clause for 1063, by King Edward the Confessor of two pieces of land (a half virgate and a quarter virgate) at Kenbury (in Exminster), as well as land at *Lan* [an incomplete place-name], made at the request of a priest named Scepio, to “Saints Mary, Thomas the Apostle, and Olave.” No witness-list or boundary clause is given. Orme suggests that Scepio is a later mis-reading, by a Latin-educated clerk who knew no Old English, of the name Sæwin (the priest who occurs also in the other charter) taken from an earlier source in Old English.<sup>25</sup>
- b) BL, MS Cotton Vitellius D. ix, fo. 167 v:<sup>26</sup> a grant of 1057×1065 (by reference to the witnesses) by Gytha, widow of Godwin, earl of Wessex, of land at Sherford (in the South Hams) to “the church of St Olave, king and martyr” for her soul and Godwin’s soul. Witnessed by her sons, Tostig and Gyrth, earls, as well as by Sæwin the priest and “many others” unnamed; confirmed by Bishop Leofric. No boundary clause is given.

While unconvincing as late Anglo-Saxon charters—in Latin, lacking boundary clauses and with no (or fragmentary) witness-lists—their survival only in a later cartulary is insufficient reason to reject their content. There are other charters with no surviving boundary clauses and, in later copying, sometimes witness-lists (which may by then have seemed less significant) were omitted. What was important, when these two entries were written in the priory’s cartulary, was the evidence they provided of the origin of endowments associated with the highest ranks: a king and the widow of an earl. Maintaining this record was part of the priory’s creation of a sense of its own history: an important function of the writing of cartularies. Further, seeking an association with King Edward is understandable. Seeking association with the long-out-of-favour Godwin family can only mean this had been real: it would not have been invented at this late date. It is suggested by Nicholas Orme (personal communication) that, since the chroniclers of Battle Abbey knew that St Olave’s had possessed Sherford and Kenbury,<sup>27</sup> the original documents which underlie the

23 Orme, *Churches of Medieval Exeter*, pp. 150–53. The British Library MS containing the cartulary is available as a microfilm (MFC7) at the Devon Heritage Centre, Exeter (formerly, Devon Record Office).

24 S 1037; J.M. Kemble, ed., *Codex Diplomaticus Aevi Saxonici*, 6 vols (London, 1839–48), no. 814.

25 Orme, *Churches of Medieval Exeter*, p. 150.

26 S 1236; Kemble, *Cod. Dip.*, no. 926.

27 Searle, ed., *The Chronicle of Battle Abbey*, pp. 80–83; Sireford, Chenebury.

cartulary entries may have been at Battle in the mid-12th century when the chronicle was written. This fascinating idea, if correct, means that the mother house had earlier collected muniments relating to its distant possessions. That the two sources occur in different parts of the cartulary suggests they came to light, during its compilation, at different times.

Confirmatory data comes from sources earlier than the cartulary: from King William's writ (in much later copies) authorizing his gifts of St Olave's and its lands to Battle Abbey;<sup>28</sup> from Domesday Book, which places, in Battle Abbey's hands in 1086, both Sherford (part of Chillington in 1066) and a furlong in Exminster which had been leased by a (presumably royal) reeve (Eccha) before 1066 to a priest (presumably a priest associated with St Olave's church);<sup>29</sup> from Battle Abbey's mid-12th-century "Chronicle," which narrates the grants of *Sherford* and *Chenebury* and of other gifts in Devon, including Cullompton church.<sup>30</sup> Authenticity of the data in the cartulary is also suggested by (i) the multiple dedication of the church, which included Thomas the Apostle (a rare dedication, unlikely to be invented); by (ii) the memory of a significant player in the story, a priest called Sæwin, perhaps the same Sæwin the priest who held Swimbridge (Devon) in 1086 (in which case, a resilient survivor of the Conquest and a man who had influenced both King Edward and the Godwins);<sup>31</sup> by (iii) the record of the (incomplete) place-name *Lan*: this can hardly have been invented by the cartulary's compiler and must have come from an earlier (damaged or illegible) manuscript. It does not occur in any of the other relevant sources, which suggests it came from a source independent of them.

The significance of St Olave's possession of lands for the support of priests (perhaps two, each supported by a grant) should not be overlooked. It was the only endowed church (apart from the minster/cathedral) in pre-Conquest Exeter. By 1086, only one other church had endowments: St Mary's in the castle, with its four prebendaries.<sup>32</sup> This underlines the high status of St Olave's, with its patronage by the Godwins and King Edward, even if the church itself was small (the monks from Battle thought so, as the Battle chronicle states).

It is perhaps an open question as to whether the church was now newly-founded, or whether—as the multiple dedication may reveal—it already

28 David Bates, *Regesta Regum Anglo-Normannorum. The Acta of William I* (Oxford, 1998), no. 14.

29 *Domesday: Devon*, 1:34; 1:4; the furlong in Exminster is a parcel identifiable with Kenbury.

30 Searle, ed., *The Chronicle of Battle Abbey*, pp. 80–83.

31 Orme, *Churches of Medieval Exeter*, p. 150.

32 Orme, *Churches of Medieval Exeter*, pp. 73–80, 151, who points out that the 1086 values of their endowments were similar: St Olave's, £3-2-0 and St Mary's, £3-15-0.

existed and St Olaf's name was added in conjunction with its new endowment; Nicholas Orme (below) believes all are primary dedications. Relevant to this, as well as to the church's status, is the fact that it possessed saints' relics. In the Chronicle of Battle Abbey's narrative of the foundation of St Nicholas Priory it is said that in addition to receiving gifts from King William and others, the first monks from Battle (led by Cono and Robert, successors of Gunter) raised money for their new building enterprise (which they had to initiate twice, as their first new building was burned down) by preaching sermons while travelling with "the relics for which the place is noted."<sup>33</sup> Since the newly-arrived monks could hardly in such a short space of time have acquired new relics, these were presumably inherited from St Olave's church. The church thus seems to have had pretensions to some grandeur. Nicholas Orme has suggested these relics may have related to the three saints found in the church's dedication.<sup>34</sup> Although the inclusion of Mary in the dedication does not necessarily reflect ownership of a relic (though the standing which the Godwins achieved through the marriage to Gytha—who was connected to the Danish royal house—should not rule out the possibility of their ownership of such an item), a relic of St Thomas may have been obtained by Tostig (mentioned in the "Gytha charter" and who went to Rome in 1061) or by Harold, who was perhaps in Rome in 1056.<sup>35</sup> Since Tostig took over St Olave's church in York (see below) from Earl Siward after 1055 and, since Gytha's Danish connections were ongoing, it is not impossible that the family had acquired a relic of St Olaf himself.

Commemoration of St Olaf appears in liturgical books of Leofric, bishop of Exeter 1050–72, given by him to his cathedral.<sup>36</sup> The tradition was still alive here in the 14th century.<sup>37</sup> Whether this reflected the existence of St Olave's church in Exeter, or simply the wider popularity of the cult, is unclear. His feast occurs also in cathedral calendars at London, Norwich, York and Winchester and in monastic ones at Ramsey, Sherborne, Abbotsbury, Launceston and Syon.<sup>38</sup>

33 Searle, ed., *The Chronicle of Battle Abbey*, pp. 80–83, 258–59.

34 Orme, *Churches of Medieval Exeter*, pp. 150–53.

35 Barlow, *Godwins*, pp. 81–82, 88.

36 E.S. Dewick and W.H. Frere, eds., *The Leofric Collectar (Harl. Ms. 2961) with an Appendix Containing a Litany and Prayers from Harl. MS 863*, HBS 45, 56, 2 vols (London, 1914–21), 1:210–14; 2:614.

37 Dickins, "Cult of St Olave," pp. 56–57.

38 Dickins, "Cult of St Olave," p. 79; Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints* p. 301.

### Discussion: Exeter

The north-west quarter of Exeter thus had a church, dedicated to the biblical saints Mary and Thomas and to the Norwegian king and saint Olaf, which was endowed with lands in Devon by King Edward the Confessor and Gytha, widow of Godwin, earl of Wessex, and also with some houses in the city. In origin, this was a private church. Its endowment with land may mean its patrons were attempting to turn it into a small minster. But since its dedication was also to St Thomas and Mary it may be that Gytha was re-founding an existing church. Whether any putative earlier (that is, pre-St Olaf) church was associated with an earlier high status residence belonging to the south-western ealdormen is an interesting (but unanswerable) question. Given the dedication to St Olaf and its endowment by Gytha, however, it is hard to escape the conclusion that it was the Godwins, earls of Wessex, who were later remembered in the name of *Irlesbery* (see pp. 467–68). Also testimony to the strength of local memory of the Godwins is a marginal note in a 12th-century Martyrology in Exeter Cathedral's library.<sup>39</sup> This records the momentous events of 1066 largely in terms of the Godwin family—King Harold Godwinson and his brother Tostig—and of King Harold (Hardrada) of Norway.

Godwin himself had been projected by King Cnut, from obscure origins as a Sussex thegn, to the earldom of Wessex.<sup>40</sup> He is the best-known example of the 'new men' raised by Cnut, alongside removal or dispossession of the 10th-century upper class. Indeed, it has been suggested that the short history of this new ruling class raised by Cnut contributed to their relatively easy suppression by William the Conqueror.<sup>41</sup> By the 1060s, the Godwin family held lands in thirty-two English shires, often holding more than twice as much land in these shires than the other great families. After the Norman Conquest, a comparably wealthy (non-royal) position in Devon was enjoyed only by the family of Baldwin de Meules, royal sheriff and castellan of Exeter.<sup>42</sup> Domesday Book reveals that, in 1086, the sheriff received one third of the royal income of Exeter, an arrangement also found at Shrewsbury.<sup>43</sup> Generally, however, Domesday describes this third as received by an earl,<sup>44</sup> presumably reflecting continuity of pre-Conquest practice, a practice which had presumably applied at Exeter.

39 Exeter Dean & Chapter MS 3518, fol.53v; also David Lepine and Nicholas Orme, *Death and Memory in Medieval Exeter* (Exeter, 2003), pp. 256–57.

40 For background, see Barlow, *Godwins*; Mason, *House of Godwine*.

41 Robin Fleming, *Kings and Lords in Conquest England* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 48–49.

42 Fleming, *Kings and Lords in Conquest England*, pp. 221–22, maps 7.1, 7.2.

43 *Domesday: Devon*, C2; C12.

44 *Domesday: Devon*, C2 notes; Baxter, *Earls of Mercia*, pp. 100–01.

The Godwin family were major land-owners in the south west and their greatest holdings were in Devon, Wiltshire, Hampshire, Kent, Sussex, Essex and Norfolk.<sup>45</sup> At the national level (to judge from Domesday Book) as earl of Wessex, Harold Godwinson was the richest man in England after King Edward.<sup>46</sup> In addition to income from land, the late Saxon earls had the third penny from each hundred and borough court in every shire in their earldom.<sup>47</sup> Harold's mother, Gytha, was also immensely rich, both during her marriage to Godwin and her widowhood.<sup>48</sup> Gytha's offer, recorded by William of Poitiers, of the weight of King Harold's body in gold in return for possession of his body after his death at Hastings, was probably backed up by an ability to produce this enormous amount of gold.<sup>49</sup>

The family certainly had interests in Exeter itself. Domesday reveals that Edward the Confessor had apportioned two-thirds of the royal revenue from Exeter to his queen, Edith, the daughter of Earl Godwin and Gytha.<sup>50</sup> Thus, if the earl had one third and the queen had two thirds, all the city's royal revenues went to the family. There was a later, and probably reliable, tradition that Gytha, Godwin's widow, was living in Exeter when the city was besieged by William the Conqueror in 1068. This, too, strengthens the case for a significant Godwin presence in the city, the context for the property, later remembered as *Irlsbery*, adjacent to St Olave's church. Harold Godwinson's north Devon manor of Tawstock had five Exeter houses attached to it (possibly, though not certainly, adjacent to *Irlsbery*).<sup>51</sup> Other Exeter houses, formerly belonging to the family, may have been subsumed in the total held by the king in 1086. Queen Edith held the important manor of Wonford, immediately adjacent to the city; Earl Harold acquired Exeter's port of Topsham (and see below); Leofwine, brother of Harold and Edith, held the manor of Pinhoe, also close by.<sup>52</sup>

The family saw the south west as an important part of their power base in times of political crisis. In 1052, Harold and Leofwine, the sons of Godwin, returned here (having landed at Porlock, in Somerset) from their exile base in

45 Fleming, *Kings and Lords in Conquest England*, pp. 57, 59, table 3.1.

46 Peter A. Clarke, *The English Nobility under Edward the Confessor* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 24–25, 164–91; Mason, *The House of Godwine*, pp. 52–53.

47 Clarke, *The English Nobility under Edward the Confessor*, p. 19.

48 Ann Williams, "Land and Power in the Eleventh Century: The Estates of Harold Godwinson," *ANS* 3 (1981), 171–87.

49 WP, II.25, pp. 140–41.

50 *Domesday: Devon*, C2.

51 *Domesday: Devon*, 1.40; see Higham, "William the Conqueror's Siege of Exeter" for details.

52 Thorn and Thorn, eds., *Domesday Book: Devon*. 1.28, 1.44, 1.52.

Dublin. In 1069, the sons of Harold staged a comeback to the south west, again from Dublin, attacking the north Devon and south Devon coasts.<sup>53</sup> Given the eminence of Exeter described in Domesday Book, where the city is ranked with London, York and Winchester, it must have been the most prestigious place in the south-western sphere of influence of the Godwins. It was not simply the shire town of Devon: it was also a sort of provincial capital.<sup>54</sup> Around AD 1000 the Exeter mint had been amongst England's most prolific (production had declined somewhat before 1066). It had negotiated good terms about taxation and military service with 10th- and 11th-century kings, which indicates some considerable degree of communal organisation. It defended this status—rather than a wider sense of English nationalism—against William the Conqueror in 1068.<sup>55</sup> It has been noted that the many landed endowments of the Godwins in the reigns of Cnut and Edward were intended not simply to enrich them but also to cater for strategic needs: their lands in Essex and in the southern coastal shires gave them a base for defensive responsibilities in the Thames estuary and the English Channel.<sup>56</sup> Harold Godwinson's holdings in Herefordshire may reflect direct interest in defence against the Welsh. In the context of the Godwins' south-western properties, the city of Exeter, a defensible *burh* since the time of King Alfred situated at the head of the Exe estuary, may have had particular significance: another reason for them to develop a major presence here.

The same may be true of Harold's acquisition (as earl of Wessex) of Exeter's estuarine port at Topsham. The manor where this port was situated had belonged to St Peter's minster/cathedral in the city, who held that it had been granted by King Æthelstan. Harold somehow acquired it, a situation which led to ill-feeling between the Godwins and Leofric (the bishop, since 1050). If the rebellion of Exeter in the winter of 1067–68 was stimulated by the ambitions of the Godwin family—a possibility supported both by Gytha's presence in the city and the efforts of her grandsons to stage a comeback in the region—then it would not be surprising if Bishop Leofric lent his weight to the "peace party" which attempted to make a settlement with King William in advance of the

53 Benjamin Hudson, "The Family of Harold Godwinson and the Irish Sea Province," *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 109 (1979), 92–110; Barlow, *The Godwins*, pp. 62–63; Mason, *The House of Godwine*, pp. 194–95; Higham, "William the Conqueror's Siege of Exeter."

54 Higham, *Making Anglo-Saxon Devon*, pp. 167–74.

55 Higham, "William the Conqueror's Siege of Exeter."

56 Fleming, *Kings and Lords in Conquest England*, pp. 90–104.

latter's siege of the city.<sup>57</sup> Harold and his brothers acquired church property in many shires, by agreement, by the king's intervention or by their own bullying, habits they had inherited from their father, Godwin.<sup>58</sup> In the case of Topsham, Harold's motive may have been the security of the Exe estuary or it may have been to support the activity of Scandinavian-derived merchants who probably flourished in the city (see below). Both possibilities have a long historiography. In discussing alleged spoliations of the English church by Godwin and Harold, Freeman noted the defensive possibility.<sup>59</sup> Davidson was dismissive of this idea (Exmouth would have been more relevant) and thought controlling the commerce and port income of Topsham was Harold's motive.<sup>60</sup> Domesday Book noted that Harold had held Topsham in 1066 and that the king held it in 1086.<sup>61</sup> But the cathedral claimed Leofric had restored the manor to St Peter's: it is in the list of his benefactions to the minster (written in old English, originally drawn up before his death in 1072 and later copied into the Exeter Book of poetry and a Latin gospel book).<sup>62</sup> But Domesday shows this had not been achieved by 1086, and the Topsham entry in Leofric's list—stating that Harold had taken Topsham unjustly—was interpolated between already-written lines. Nevertheless, to prepare the case, Leofric created a "Topsham charter" of King Æthelstan, together with other charters he needed to demonstrate title to estates which the church had lost (the list of his benefactions says he recovered alienated estates not only by payment, but also by advocacy—i.e. the legal process in which having charters as evidence would be crucial).<sup>63</sup>

Exeter was also the location of the shire court of Devon. With King Cnut's re-organisation of earldoms into large units with many shires, these courts—formerly presided over by the ealdormen—were presided over by the earls. In order for the earls to be present at each court, the courts must have assembled at different times. But it is possible that, to ease this complication, several

57 For a fuller discussion, see Higham, "William the Conqueror's Siege of Exeter"; Freeman's notion that the Godwins supported the Lotharingian-educated bishops, such as Leofric, to counter the king's promotion of Norman churchmen, is no longer credited: see *VEdR*, p. 109, n. 6; Simon Keynes, "Giso, Bishop of Wells (1061–1088)," *ANS* 19 (1996), 203–71, at pp. 212–13.

58 Fleming, *Kings and Lords in Conquest England*, p. 83.

59 Edward A. Freeman, *The History of the Norman Conquest of England*, Vol. 2 (Oxford, 1868), p. 549.

60 James B. Davidson, "On the Early History of Dawlish," *Transactions of the Devonshire Association* 13 (1881), 106–30.

61 *Domesday: Devon*, 1:44.

62 Raymond W. Chambers et al., eds., *The Exeter Book of English Poetry. A Facsimile* (London, 1933).

63 S 433.

courts were held in the larger provincial centres<sup>64</sup> and, if this was so, Exeter would have been the obvious place for the south-western shires. Since King Edgar's time, the shire courts met twice a year. Only one specific record of the shire court of Devon survives, preserved in the charters of Sherborne Abbey, an account of a land dispute heard at the court in Exeter, in 1045 or 1046, with Earl Godwin presiding.<sup>65</sup> We do not know specifically where shire courts met in the shire towns by this date. Since they were held, ultimately, in the king's name, they may have been held in a royal urban property if there was a suitable one. In Exeter, evidence is emerging that such a place may indeed underlie the Norman (Rougemont) castle.<sup>66</sup> Equally possible, however, was provision of a suitable court site within the urban properties of the earls themselves. It is perhaps in this context that significant motive may be found for the development of a comital residence, eventually with its own church, in Exeter in the decades when the Godwins were earls of Wessex—an enormous earldom stretching across southern England within which Exeter would have made an ideal centre for the south west.

The example of Chester (below) illustrates, however, that a church of St Olaf might serve not a high-status residence but a local community of Scandinavian-derived population. At Chester, this is easily understood: the city lay in the Danelaw, had a hinterland in which there had been permanent Norse settlement and was connected via the (then navigable) river Dee to the Irish Sea and the Hiberno-Norse world centred on Dublin. Exeter, in contrast, lay distant from the Danelaw. Although 'viking' influence may be seen on some of the stone carving in south west England, there is little evidence for rural settlement from immigrants.<sup>67</sup> On the other hand, as we have seen, the Godwins had Dublin connections and, in both the internal crisis of 1051–52 and the external crisis of the Norman Conquest, the family made use of the Dublin–Devon sea route in their political reactions. It has been shown that, although an ethnic Scandinavian presence in non-Danelaw England was thin, Scandinavian personal names occur in some numbers, both in pre-Norman sources and (as a social legacy) in later sources. These names reflect partly Scandinavians who found service in England under King Cnut, and partly an adoption of Scandinavian names by English people in this period. The 11th- and 12th-century data from south-west England (Domesday Book, moneyers' names on coins, and

64 Barlow, *The Godwins*, p. 86.

65 Mary A. O'Donovan, ed., *Charters of Sherborne*, Anglo-Saxon Charters 2 (Oxford, 1988), pp. 59–61.

66 Stuart R. Blaylock and Robert A. Higham, *Recent Research at Exeter Castle, Devon* (in preparation).

67 Derek Gore, *The Vikings and the West Country* (Exeter, 2015).

Old English written sources of pre- and post-Conquest date) suggest that Scandinavian personal names were used by people of some status: moneyers, guild members and people involved in property transactions.<sup>68</sup> A study of the moneyers operating in Exeter itself in the reigns of King Cnut and his sons shows that, while outnumbered by English moneyers, the proportion of Scandinavian moneyers was higher (six out of a total of about twenty) than at other southern mints of the period.<sup>69</sup>

While caution is required in interpreting this data in broader terms, it may support the contention that Exeter had a small, but identifiable community of Scandinavian or, at least, of Scandinavian-derived people in the late pre-Norman period. Current research on Exeter's 12th-century property deeds and other local sources also reveals that a continuing minority of Exeter's influential citizens bore Scandinavian-derived names in the Norman period.<sup>70</sup> Thus, the dedication of a church to St Olaf in Exeter might reflect not just this saint's general popularity, nor just the presence of a residence belonging to the Godwin family but also the presence of a commercially-based group with Scandinavian origins or connections. In the description of Exeter at the time of William the Conqueror's siege in 1068, penned by Orderic Vitalis in the early 12th century (from the testimony of William of Poitiers, writing around 1070), the presence of foreign merchants in the city was noted and Exeter's links with Ireland and Brittany were emphasised.<sup>71</sup> While the locations of Exeter's *Irlsbery* and St Olave's church might have been influenced by the defensibility of the north-western angle of the city walls, which overlook a steep drop, they may also have been influenced by the proximity of this end of the city to the river Exe (though, it should be said, the south-western part of the city would have been even more convenient in this particular respect). The notion of a Scandinavian-derived group in Exeter, now supported by the analyses described above, goes back to the late 19th century, when it was proposed, simply on the basis of the St Olave church dedication in Fore St, in a study which strove (misguidedly) to identify several ethnic zones in the city.<sup>72</sup> Although its

68 John Insley, "Some Scandinavian Personal Names from South West England," *Namn och Bygd* 70 (1982), 77–93; John Insley, "Some Scandinavian Personal Names from South West England from Post-Conquest Records," *Studia Anthroponymica Scandinavica* 3 (1983), 23–39.

69 Veronica J. Smart, "Moneyers of the Late Anglo-Saxon Coinage: The Danish Dynasty 1017–1042," *ASE* 16 (1987), 233–308, at pp. 301–02.

70 Julia Crick, pers. comm.

71 OV 2:210–14. Higham, "William the Conqueror's Siege of Exeter."

72 Thomas Kerslake, "The Celt and Teuton in Exeter," *Archaeological Journal* 30 (1873), 211–25.

demarcation of British and English areas does not withstand scrutiny, the idea that a Danish group—first encouraged in the time of King Cnut—lived in the Fore St area may now be seen to have some merit.<sup>73</sup> Possibly also relevant to this putative Scandinavian community is the former chapel dedicated to St Clement, which was situated by the river Exe, north of the city, until its demolition in the sixteenth century. St Clement was popular in the Scandinavian and Scandinavia-influenced world though not necessarily first introduced into England by the vikings.<sup>74</sup> There was another St Clement's church at Powderham, on the Exe a few miles south of Exeter, but very few in the south west as a whole. Since, however, the church immediately north of Exeter does not appear in record until around 1200, its origins are, strictly, unknown.<sup>75</sup>

One final dimension of the Godwin family property in Exeter is worth consideration. Nevertheless, the possibility may be borne in mind that, at least in the form in which it came to be remembered as *Irlsbery*, it was developed in the 1050s after the return of the Godwin family to power and influence following the political crisis of 1051–52 during which they had been in exile. Their development of a major property in the south-western provincial capital, with its own church dedicated (*inter alios*) to a Scandinavian king/saint, may have been a strong signal of the family's return to power and influence in the region. It has been well said that church-building and church patronage could be powerful messages in declaring the “presence” of a major family in a particular area, and that St Olave's in Exeter may be very relevant to this theme.<sup>76</sup> It may have been all the more significant because, in 1050, just before the Godwins' rebellion, the local power structure in Exeter had been altered with the elevation of Exeter's minster to cathedral status and the installation of a bishop (Leofric) in the heart of the city (instead of, as previously, six miles away at Crediton). The Godwins may have felt that this major change made it all the more important for their political presence to be seen—and not simply felt—when they returned in 1052. Since Earl Godwin died in 1053, the development may have been largely implemented by Harold, his son and successor as earl. The endowment of St Olave's by Gytha, his widow, was specifically in her late husband's memory.<sup>77</sup> Tension between the Godwins and bishop Leofric may also have played a part in the events at Exeter in 1068, when King William besieged the city.<sup>78</sup>

73 Kerslake, “Celt and Teuton in Exeter,” p. 220.

74 Crawford, *Churches Dedicated to St Clement*.

75 Orme, *Churches of Medieval Exeter*, p. 89.

76 Mason, *House of Godwine*, p. 84.

77 For the chronology of 1050–1053, see Barlow, *Godwins*, p. 341.

78 Higham, “William the Conqueror's Siege of Exeter.”

### Discussion: National

Attention has been drawn to the considerable documentary evidence for property in towns belonging to the 11th-century earls or their predecessors, the ealdormen.<sup>79</sup> Given the crucial importance of towns and earls to aspects of the governance of late Saxon England, it is hardly surprising that they had urban interests and that towns figured frequently in the narratives of political events in which they were involved. Earls had the third penny from the courts, had their own urban properties and had rural manors to which urban houses were attached. While earls had no influence in some towns for particular reasons, such as the locally-dominant role of a king, of a major church or of a sheriff, the urban interests of earls—measured through the data of Domesday Book—were widespread, occurring in almost sixty towns. Sometimes, *hagae* belonging to comital families are revealed in late Saxon charters (as at Worcester) or in later deeds (as at Cambridge). At Nottingham, a territory absorbed in the extended Norman city had belonged to the earls. Sometimes specific residences emerge from documentary sources, as at Exeter (see pp. 467–68), at York (see below) and Oxford (its exact location remains disputed). Sometimes churches were involved, as at Oxford, Dover, York and Exeter. At Lincoln, the earl's residence stood near a church, which was later succeeded by the cathedral, in the upper part of the city. Stephen Baxter's overview of comital urban interests shows the Godwin family had urban houses (attached to rural manors) in towns spread across the shires of their West Saxon earldom: Rochester, Romney (Kent); Lewes, Chichester, Steyning (Sussex); Guildford, Southwark (Surrey); Winchester, Cricklade, Malmesbury, Wilton (Wiltshire); Langport (Somerset); Barnstaple, Exeter (Devon).<sup>80</sup> Variations lying behind this published summary of data are revealing. In most cases, these urban houses occurred in modest numbers. But at Steyning, by 1066 Harold had taken the whole town and church from the Abbot of Fecamp; and at Lewes, Godwin had shared the lordship of the town with Edward the Confessor. At both places, as well as at Dover (which figures prominently in the political narratives of the period, and where Godwin probably re-founded the church), we might expect the family to have possessed a residence of their own. The case of Southwark, where Godwin also had a major interest, is particularly relevant to the present discussion because it had a church dedicated to St Olaf (see below). In another discussion of urban property-holding by rural elites, it has been noted that the

79 Baxter, *Earls of Mercia*, pp. 97–104, for what follows.

80 Baxter, *Earls of Mercia*, pp. 100–01, Table 3.4.

Godwins had some tenements in a total of 37 boroughs,<sup>81</sup> some of which lay well outside their Wessex earldom.

A notable example of comital urban residence connected to church foundation—known because the documentary evidence and topographical data can be integrated—is at York. Here, the post-viking Northumbrian earls built an enclosed residence with church outside the city wall, at Galmanho.<sup>82</sup> Documentary and topographical data permit reconstruction of this urban component of a comital property.<sup>83</sup> After the conquest of Viking York in 954, the north was governed on behalf of the English kings by earls based in York. Siward, earl 1041–1055, was a Dane who came to England with King Cnut. Earl Siward supported king Edward against the Godwin family in the political crisis of 1051–52. He was succeeded as earl by Tostig, Godwin's son, who was forced out in 1065 following a northern rebellion. Relating that event, the 12th-century writer John of Worcester noted Tostig's chamber and treasury in York.<sup>84</sup> In its 1055 entry The D version of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* recorded that “in this year passed away Earl Siward in York, and he lies at *Galmanho* in the minster which he himself had built and consecrated in the name of God and Olaf.” The *Life of King Edward* provided the same data; the C manuscript of the *Chronicle* gave the same again but without the detail of St Olaf.<sup>85</sup>

St Olave's church (now a 15th-century rebuilding, later altered) stands just outside the north-west city wall, between Bootham Bar and the River Ouse. St Mary's Abbey was founded here in 1085, its precinct comprising a large sub-rectangle, in which the church was incorporated by the precinct entrance. The first precinct seems to have been surrounded by the earlier comital enclosure, since the monks were led to settle here “on account of the security/defence of the place (*propter loci munitionem*).” An early name for Bootham Bar was *Galmanlith*, related to *Galmanho*. Later, the area around the Abbey was known as “Earlsborough.” This led to the long-held interpretation that the earls had a residence here adjacent to St Olaf's, that the boundary of their property was reflected in the later abbey precinct, and that the abbey entrance (later St Marygate) coincides with the entrance to the earlier comital enclosure (the

81 Fleming, “Rural Elites and Urban Communities,” pp. 7–8.

82 David M. Palliser, *Medieval York 600–1540* (Oxford, 2014), pp. 64–65, for the site's context in York's history; Peter V. Addyman, *The British Historical Towns Atlas. Volume 5: York* (York, 2015); Dickins, “Cult of St Olave,” pp. 56–57.

83 For what follows, see *VCH Yorks*, 3, pp. 107–08; *VCH Yorks: City of York*, pp. 13–17, 357–60; Royal Commission on Historical Monuments, *York. Vol. 2. The Defences* (London, 1972), pp. 8–9.

84 JW vol. 2, pp. 596–99.

85 ASC C 1055; *VÆdR*, p. 31.

present enclosing wall with gatehouse is 13th-century). The wider estate for which this urban property was the centre included immediately extra-mural lands and nearby rural manors. These had perhaps been taken out of earlier minster lands with the support of Kings Cnut and Edward the Confessor. The estate passed mainly to count Alan I of Brittany, and from him to a monk from Whitby for foundation of a Benedictine house. Progress was delayed by a dispute with Archbishop Thomas, settled by William the Conqueror. In 1088, William Rufus donated further adjacent property to the monks, presumably also an element of the former comital precinct, so that a new church, St Mary's Abbey, could be founded.<sup>86</sup>

There are clear parallels between Exeter and York. They have been observed as southern and northern examples of linked residence and church<sup>87</sup> but similarities and differences in detail are significant. In both, a comital property with a church dedicated to St Olaf was given after the Conquest to a new Benedictine monastery through the intervention of a king. In both, the old church survived beside the new monastery, being too small for the new monastic community's requirements. In York, the site was immediately outside the city wall, whereas at Exeter it lay inside. York had a cultural, economic and political background of Scandinavian influence. In Exeter, such a background was limited, though a community of Scandinavia-derived people lived and worked in the city. In York, there are indications of enclosure—even defence—around the perimeter of the comital residence. In Exeter, the matter of enclosure remains unresolved. After Siward's death in 1055 and Tostig's occupation of the northern earldom, the Godwin family possessed two residences and power-bases, in the south and north of England, with remarkably similar elements.

Since churches dedicated to St Olaf were important elements of both the Northumbrian earls' residence in York and the West Saxon earls' residence in Exeter, we may wonder whether there was a connection between such churches in towns and the location of very high status secular residences. The evidence does not, however, support such a general argument, as the occurrence of St Olaf's churches in towns is too diverse. In Chester, a significant trading city and shire centre where a high status residence might be expected, there is nothing to suggest such a site, despite the city having a church dedicated to St

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86 Another high status and enclosed property in the city may be identifiable in the south-east corner of the Roman fortress, where the topographical name 'Arkiltofts' derives from Arnketil, the name of a prominent rebel against William the Conqueror. S.R. Jones, *York. The Making of a City 1068–1350* (Oxford, 2013), pp. 50–54, 65, 93.

87 Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, p. 403.

Olaf. It lies outside the city's walled area, in Lower Bridge St, but without supporting data suggestive of a linked high status residence.<sup>88</sup> The church's origin is unknown: it first occurs in written record early in the 12th century.<sup>89</sup> Lower Bridge St had also another church, dedicated to St Bridget. These two churches may have served a Norse-Irish community of traders living and working between the city wall and the River Dee. Since St Olaf's church cannot have originated earlier than the 1030s, it is likely that St Bridget's church, immediately outside the city's south gate, was the primary foundation of this community, and St Olaf's, further away from the city, was a secondary foundation. Domesday Book noted that Chester, like Lincoln and Stamford, was governed in Anglo-Scandinavian tradition by a group of twelve *iudices* or "lawmen."

### Chichester

Chichester, with a St Olaf church in North Street, provides a very different, but most interesting case. Much altered in the later Middle Ages (a bookshop since 1956) the basic structure is 11th-century in origin, but commentators differ as to whether dating from just before or from just after the Norman Conquest.<sup>90</sup> It contains re-used facework masonry from Chichester's Roman city wall. The original door—visible as a blocking—to the small nave (measuring 25'6" × 17'4", approximately 7.75 m × 5.25 m)<sup>91</sup> was on the south, replaced in the 14th century by a western entrance on the street frontage. This sequence raises the possibility that the original door led to a private house (see below), a door to the street only being necessary in a later (parochial) context. The chancel is a 13th-century addition or replacement, out of alignment with the nave, measuring 13'8" × 13'10" (approximately 4.25 m square). This re-building of the east end may have coincided with the acquisition of the church by Chichester cathedral. The chancel arch was rebuilt around 1850 (Figs 23.6, 23.7, 23.8).

A local published tradition maintains that the church was founded by Grimcytel, bishop of Selsey (the South Saxon see until 1075 when it was superseded by Chichester) from 1039 to his death in 1047.<sup>92</sup> This idea rests on the assumption

88 J.D. Bu'lock, *Pre-Conquest Cheshire, 383–1066* (Chester, 1972), pp. 59–60, 76.

89 Dickins, "Cult of St Olave," pp. 70–71, cites a reference in 1101.

90 *VCH Sussex* 2, p. 365; *VCH Sussex* 3, pp. 162–63; Ian Nairn and Nicholas Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Sussex* (Harmondsworth, 1965), p. 179.

91 Andrew Westman, *Chichester City Walls* (Chichester, 2012), p. 103; see the published plan in *VCH Sussex* 3, pp. 162–63.

92 For an example, see J.R. Cann, *St Olaf's Church, Chichester* (Chichester, n.d.).

## St Olaf's, Chichester

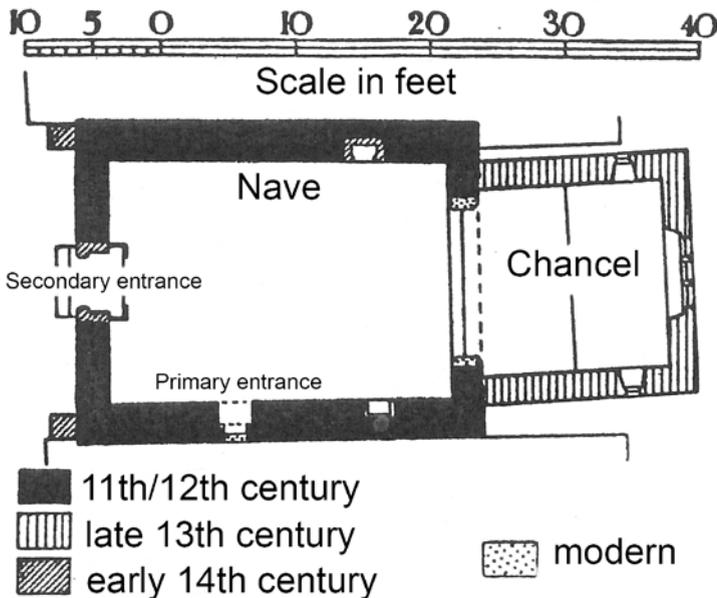


FIGURE 23.6 Plan of St Olaf's church, Chichester, showing structural phases from the 11th to 12th centuries onwards.

BASED ON VCH SUSSEX VOL. 3 (1935), P. 162, WITH ADDITIONS;

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that he had been in Norway and was identical with the man who appears in Scandinavia as Grimkel, one of King Olaf's Christian missionaries who was instrumental in his canonisation in 1031.<sup>93</sup> If so, perhaps he established this small urban church, in his English diocese, in memory of his former patron. The association of Grimkel with King Olaf appeared in 13th-century sagas, but has earlier origins, starting with Adam of Bremen in the 1070s and then appearing in late 12th-century sources.<sup>94</sup> In these accounts, Grimkel figured amongst a group of English bishops and priests serving as missionaries for King Olaf, who had taken them to Norway after a campaign fought in England on behalf of King Æthelred. If this Grimkel is to be identified with bishop Grimcytel of

93 Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, pp. 300–01.

94 *Adam of Bremen: History of the Archbishops of Hamburg-Bremen*, ed. and trans. Francis J. Tschan (New York, 1959), pp. 94, 214; *A History of Norway and the Passion and Miracles of the Blessed Óláfr*, ed. Carl Phelpstead and Devina Kunin (London, 2001), p. 25; *Theodoricus Monachus: An Account of the Ancient History of the Norwegian Kings*, ed. D. McDougall and Ian McDougall (London, 1998), p. 33.



FIGURE 23.7 St Olaf's church, Chichester, from the west  
© THE AUTHOR

Selsey, it appears, however, that he was back in Norway shortly before his own death. There, he figured in the agreement of 1046–47 between Magnus (King Olaf's son) and Harold Hardrada (Magnus's uncle) concerning the future rule of Norway and Denmark.<sup>95</sup> Grimcytel is said to have purchased the see of Selsey from King Harold Harefoot in 1039 and may also have purchased the see of Elmham from King Edward in 1043.<sup>96</sup> His death in England in 1047, and his burial in Canterbury, were noted in the 'C' version of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. It must be emphasised, however, that the identification of Grimkel with

95 *Theodoricus Monachus*, ed. McDougall and McDougall, p. 43.

96 *VÆdR*, pp. 76, 108, 222.

The parishes of medieval Chichester,  
showing the location of St Olaf's



FIGURE 23.8 The medieval parishes and churches of Chichester, showing the parish of St Olaf and its church.  
BASED ON MUNBY, "SAXON CHICHESTER AND ITS PREDECESSORS,"  
(FIG. 108), WITH AMENDMENTS. BY PERMISSION OF ITS AUTHOR,  
WITH THANKS

Grimcytel has (to this author's knowledge) not been proven. Lesley Abrams has noted that Grimkel simply sounds like a Norse name, without making reference to Bishop Grimcytel, and that another of the missionaries named by Adam of Bremen was Rodulf, whose name sounds Norman.<sup>97</sup> Olaf may have brought them from England, but the supposed English origin of this missionary group (including also Sigfrid and Bernhard, whose names look German) may be spurious. Grimkel appears as a personal name in England, mainly in

97 Lesley Abrams, "The Anglo-Saxons and the Christianization of Scandinavia," *ASE* 24 (1995), 213–49, at pp. 223–24.



FIGURE 23.9 Bosham church, Sussex  
© W. WOODBURN, REPRODUCED WITH THANKS

the Danelaw shires. Grimcytel occurs as a personal name in several English contexts, including for moneyers in eastern England.

There is, in any case, another possibility for the foundation of St Olave's in Chichester which deserves serious consideration, namely that the church was founded by Earl Godwin for a Scandinavian group, and that the earl may have had an associated urban residence.<sup>98</sup> Dickins noted Scandinavian names in 11th-century Chichester.<sup>99</sup> Further support for this suggestion might be found in *Domesday Book*, which reveals that several of Godwin's manors had

98 Proposed in *vch Sussex* 3, pp. 83–84, 166.

99 Dickins, "Cult of St Olave," p. 68.

possessed house properties in Chichester, clearly indicating he had a significant interest in the city: Stoughton, with fifteen; Bosham, with eleven; Singleton, with nine; Westbourne, with six;<sup>100</sup> other manors, Chithurst, Stedham, Selham, Lavant, and Compton, had just one or two attached city properties.<sup>101</sup> Countess Gytha, had two manors with properties in Chichester: Harting, with eleven; Marden, with one.<sup>102</sup> A location for the Godwins' houses in Chichester has been suggested in North St and West St.<sup>103</sup> Caution is needed, however, as Domesday Book's description of Chichester says that in 1066 there had been just under a hundred properties there, but that by 1086 there were a further sixty.<sup>104</sup> So it is possible that the number of urban houses attached to Godwin's former manors had increased since 1066. Godwin had one third of the customary dues paid by the urban properties.<sup>105</sup> A number of non-Godwin manors also had Chichester properties, and the rest had presumably belonged either to the King or the Church, but as much as 50 per cent of Chichester may have belonged to manors held by the Godwins. It has been noted that, "encircled by a ring of estates held by the Godwinsons and their men" Chichester was "thoroughly Godwinist."<sup>106</sup>

As well as the possibility that St Olave's in Chichester was founded for or by a Godwin-supported community, the possibility that it also had a specific connection with nearby Bosham (within five miles) should be considered (Fig. 23.9). At Bosham, there were two manors by the mid-11th century.<sup>107</sup> One manor, including 112 hides of land and a church (the present church of Holy Trinity) had been given as a gift by Edward the Confessor to his Norman chaplain, Osbern.<sup>108</sup> In 1072, Osbern became bishop of Exeter and in 1086 he still possessed his Bosham manor but it had been reduced in size to its (as Domesday relates) original extent of 65 hides by the loss of outlying territories. In the Anglo-Saxon and early Norman periods, the church at Bosham was a minster supported by its rich manor. In the early 12th century, Bishop William Warelwast of Exeter transformed it into a college of six secular canons, whose deans would be the bishops of Exeter. The college used the east end of the church, while the nave was used as the parish church, connected to Chichester diocese. This split in

100 *Domesday: Sussex*, 1:1; 11:3; 11:30; 11:37; Bosham is discussed below.

101 *Domesday: Sussex*, 11:5; 11:9; 11:10; 11:14; 11:36.

102 *Domesday: Sussex*, 11:6; 11:33.

103 *VCH Sussex* 3, pp. 83–84.

104 Under the holdings of Earl Roger of Montgomery; *Domesday: Sussex*, 11:1.

105 £10 to the king; £5 to the earl; *Domesday: Sussex*, 11:1.

106 Fleming, "Rural Elites and Urban Communities," p. 13.

107 *VCH Sussex* 4, pp. 182–88; they became a hundred in the 13th century.

108 *Domesday: Sussex*, 6:1.

responsibility led to disputes between the bishops over many centuries.<sup>109</sup> Further evidence for Bosham church's minster status comes from Domesday Book itself.<sup>110</sup> Bishop Osbern's manor contained a sub-manor called Thorney, which had its own church and priest but whose tithes were owed to the priests (plural: *clerici*) of Osbern's own church.

The other Bosham manor had been the property of the Godwins, earls of Wessex.<sup>111</sup> In 1086 it was held by King William, one of only two (also Rotherfield) Sussex manors retained by him: both had been Godwin's manors. At Bosham, the Godwins had ship-building interests in the harbour, where they also kept their personal fleet.<sup>112</sup> It was at Bosham in 1049 that Swein, Godwin's son, seized his cousin, Beorn, and took him in his ships to Dartmouth, where he was infamously murdered.<sup>113</sup> Bosham also figured in the narrative of the rebellion of the Godwins against King Edward in 1051–52. The family's manor house at Bosham occurs in a scene on the Bayeux Tapestry illustrating the start of Earl Harold's crossing of the English Channel in 1064. It is assumed that the Tapestry refers to Harold's Bosham property rather than Osbern's. The house is shown as a first-floor hall with a feast taking place. This scene also includes a church: the two crosses on its roof distinguish it from a secular building and *ecclesia* is written in the legend above. If this is the church mentioned in Domesday's description of the Godwins' manor, then it no longer survives. If it is present-day Bosham's church, then the Tapestry's designer transposed it from Osbern's manor for visual effect. It has long been recognised that the existence of two manors complicates interpretation of this scene on the Tapestry: logically, it should be the hall and church in the Godwins' manor which are depicted, the present-day Bosham church thus possibly being irrelevant to the issue.<sup>114</sup> Whether *any* of the (named) buildings on the Tapestry looked like their depictions has long been argued about.<sup>115</sup> In the present author's view, the depictions of the church and hall at Bosham are likely to be emblematic rather than based on specific structures. They show what sorts of buildings a manor belonging to such a wealthy family as the Godwins should contain, in a

109 *VCH Sussex* 2, pp. 109–12.

110 *Domesday: Sussex*, 6:1.

111 *Domesday: Sussex*. 1:1.

112 Philip MacDougall, "Bosham. A Key Anglo-Saxon Harbour," *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 147 (2009), 51–60.

113 *ASC* CD 1049.

114 F.M. Stenton, ed., *The Bayeux Tapestry*, 2nd ed. (London, 1965), p. 79; D.M. Wilson, ed., *The Bayeux Tapestry* (London, 1985), p. 217; Mason, *House of Godwine*, p. 84.

115 Elisabeth C. Pastan, "Building Stories: The Representation of Architecture in the Bayeux Embroidery," *ANS* 33 (2011), 151–85, at pp. 162–64.

place that was important in the narrative. If the designer knew there were two manors, perhaps the church from one (Osbern's) and the hall from the other (Harold's) were shown, as the finest buildings there.

Domesday Book says that the Godwins' manor of Bosham, rated at 56 ½ hides, included also a church (location not specified) and eleven properties in Chichester.<sup>116</sup> By 1086, King William had given ten of these to the bishop of Chichester. Domesday makes no mention of St Olave's church in Chichester, so we have no independent evidence of its context. But it is possible that the church listed for the manor of Bosham was situated with that manor's Chichester properties and that the Godwins founded this church to serve their own and their urban tenants' needs, tenants attached to their Bosham manor. A location for a "lost" church in Bosham has been suggested at Crede, where early O.S. maps and local property deeds mark the place as "Site of Monastery," but nothing to demonstrate the truth of this has been established. It is difficult to see how a church (substantial, if it was the one depicted on the Bayeux Tapestry) has disappeared without trace.<sup>117</sup> Association of the Godwins with St Olave's church, Chichester, is not, however, dependent on identifying it with the church of their Bosham manor. The latter *might* have disappeared and the urban church may have been a separate Godwin foundation for their tenants.<sup>118</sup> Whatever its origins, the church later had a small urban parish straddling North St. Whether this reflected an earlier and secular property unit is an interesting question. Pagham manor, which belonged to the archbishops of Canterbury as a gift of Saint Wilfrid, was said by Domesday Book to have a church in Chichester as well as one in the rural manor.<sup>119</sup> This provides a parallel for the Bosham-St Olave's hypothesis suggested here: an early city church belonging to a rural manor. The church in question was All Saints, in south-eastern Chichester (the rural church was St Andrew's; later St Thomas the Martyr). The 12-acre urban parish was the archbishops' jurisdiction which eventually became known as The Pallants, a name derived from *Palenta*—the paled (enclosed) area referred to in 12th-13th-century sources—rather than, as sometimes suggested, from *palatium* (palace).<sup>120</sup> It was in Aldwick Hundred, but was taken over by the city in 1552. The church, however, remained

<sup>116</sup> *Domesday: Sussex*, 1:1.

<sup>117</sup> I am grateful to Joan Langhorne, Bosham's church archivist, for all these details; for a recent illustrated history of Bosham and its famous church, see also her *A Guide to Holy Trinity Church, Bosham* (Bosham, 2013).

<sup>118</sup> As suggested in *VCH Sussex* 3, pp. 83–84, 166.

<sup>119</sup> *Domesday: Sussex*, 2:5.

<sup>120</sup> *VCH Sussex* 3, pp. 103–04; *VCH Sussex* 4, pp. 227–33; Julian Munby, *Saxon Chichester and its Predecessors* (Chichester, 1984), pp. 327–28.

an archbishop's peculiar after that. Domesday Book also reveals that, in 1086, several manors which had belonged to the Godwins before 1066 had churches, but whether built before or after 1066 is unclear. By 1086, these manors were held by earl Roger (of Montgomery) or his tenants.<sup>121</sup>

### Southwark

Finally, the interest of the Godwin family in Southwark, at the south end of London Bridge, should be noted (Figs 23.10, 23.11, 23.12, 23.13). Southwark was developed by around 900 as a defended place opposite the city of London on the north bank of the Thames (hence the “south” element of Southwark). In the Burghal Hidage list (Surrey was in Wessex, whereas London was in Mercia) it was known as *Suthringa geweorc*—the southern fortification. Although a possible link between the Godwins and the St Olave's church which formerly stood in Southwark has been noted,<sup>122</sup> this possibility seems never to have been explored. The general Godwin-Southwark connection occurs, in fact, in both in English and Norman sources. A Godwin property here figures in the narrative of the family's rebellion against King Edward in 1051–1052. London and Southwark were key places at several points in the story told in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle and the “Life” of King Edward.<sup>123</sup> The D version of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* says that on his return to England in 1052, Earl Godwin had a particular alliance with the men of Southwark, established in earlier years. The *Chronicle* also noted local networks of men loyal to the Godwins in Dover and Bristol, perhaps because the growth of local loyalties was a natural outcome of the development of urban interests by powerful families.<sup>124</sup> During his progress around London after the battle of Hastings, as described by William of Poitiers, Duke William's troops burned “all the houses they could find on this side of the river”—presumably Southwark—after driving London's defenders within their city wall.<sup>125</sup> The “Life” of King Edward says Godwin had a *mansio* in Southwark, construed by some commentators specifically as his house, but by the modern editor simply as his manor.<sup>126</sup>

121 *Domesday: Sussex*, Chithurst, 11:9; Climping, 11:75; Compton, 11:36; Singleton, 11:3; Stedham, 11:10; Stoughton, 11:37.

122 Dickins, “Cult of St Olave,” pp. 67–68.

123 *vÆdR*, pp. 21, 27; Frank Barlow, *Edward the Confessor* (London, 1970), pp. 112–14, 123–24; Barlow, *The Godwins*, pp. 58–59, 64–65; Mason, *House of Godwine*, p. 72.

124 Fleming, “Rural Elites and Urban Communities,” p. 10.

125 *WP*, 11.28, p. 146–47.

126 *vÆdR*, p. 21.

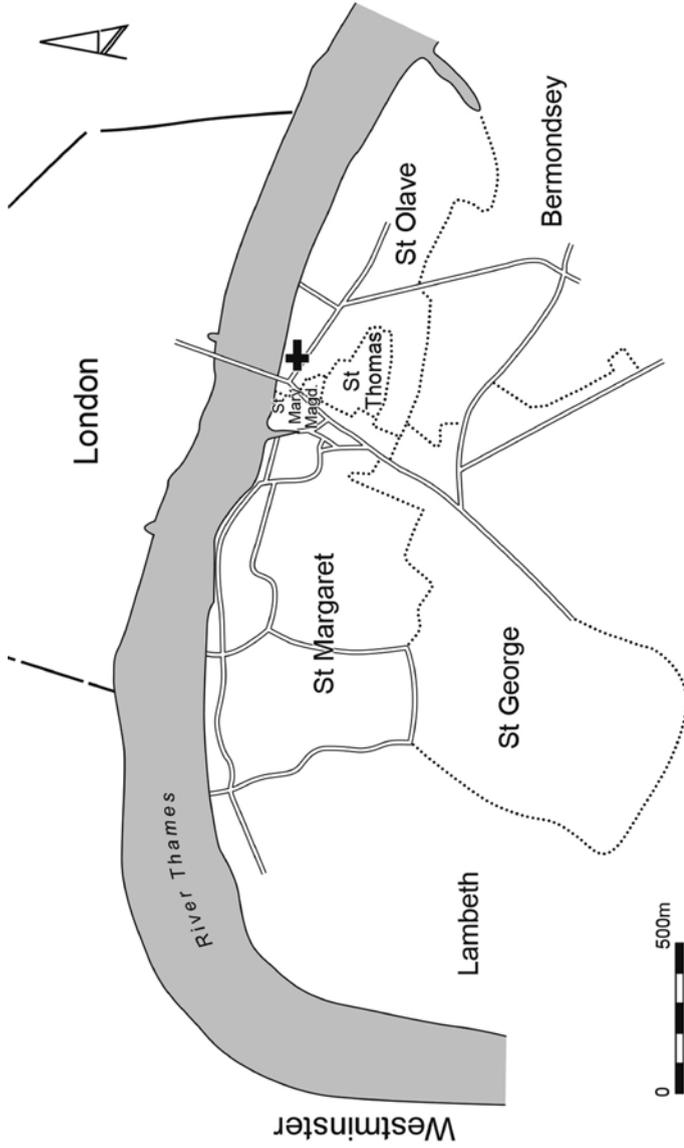


FIGURE 23.10 Parishes and other details in and around Southwark. BASED ON DATA IN CARLIN, *MEDIEVAL SOUTHWARK*, FIG. 1, WITH AMENDMENTS, BY PERMISSION OF ITS AUTHOR AND WITH THANKS, DRAWING BY SEAN GODDARD. THE LOCATION OF ST OLAF'S CHURCH HAS BEEN ADDED (AS SHOWN, FOR EXAMPLE, IN SCHOFIELD, *MEDIEVAL LONDON HOUSES*, P. 241)

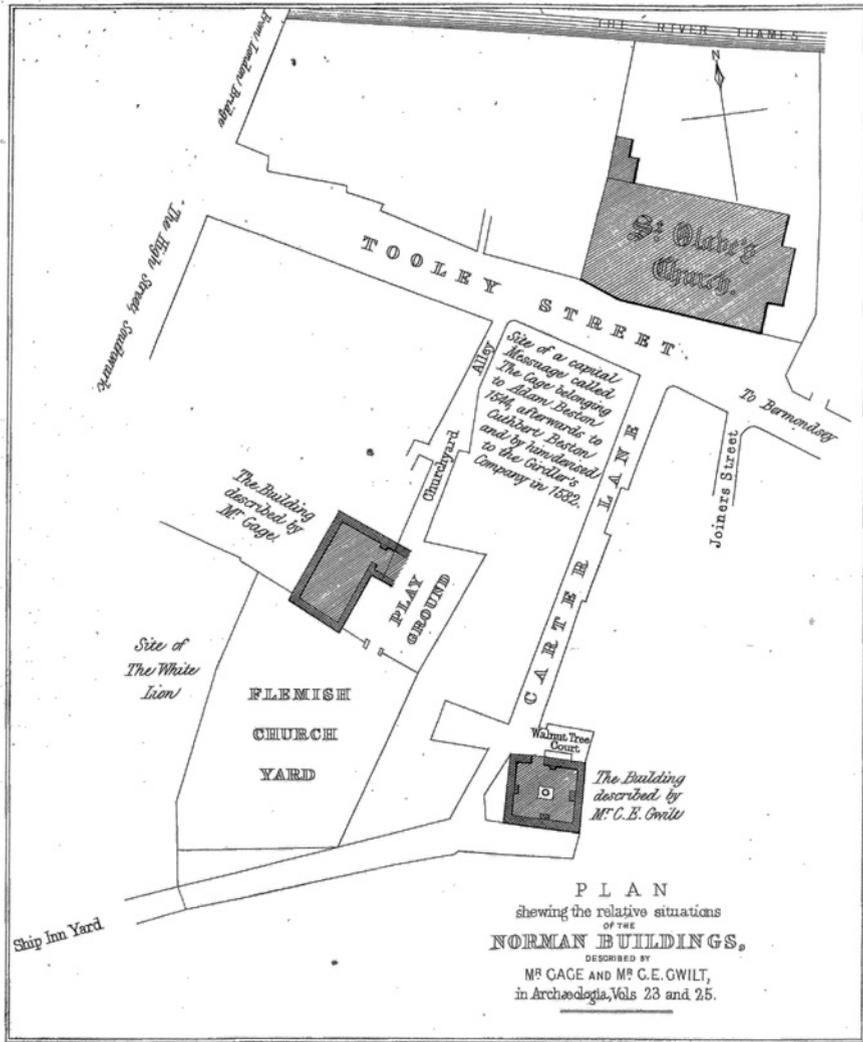
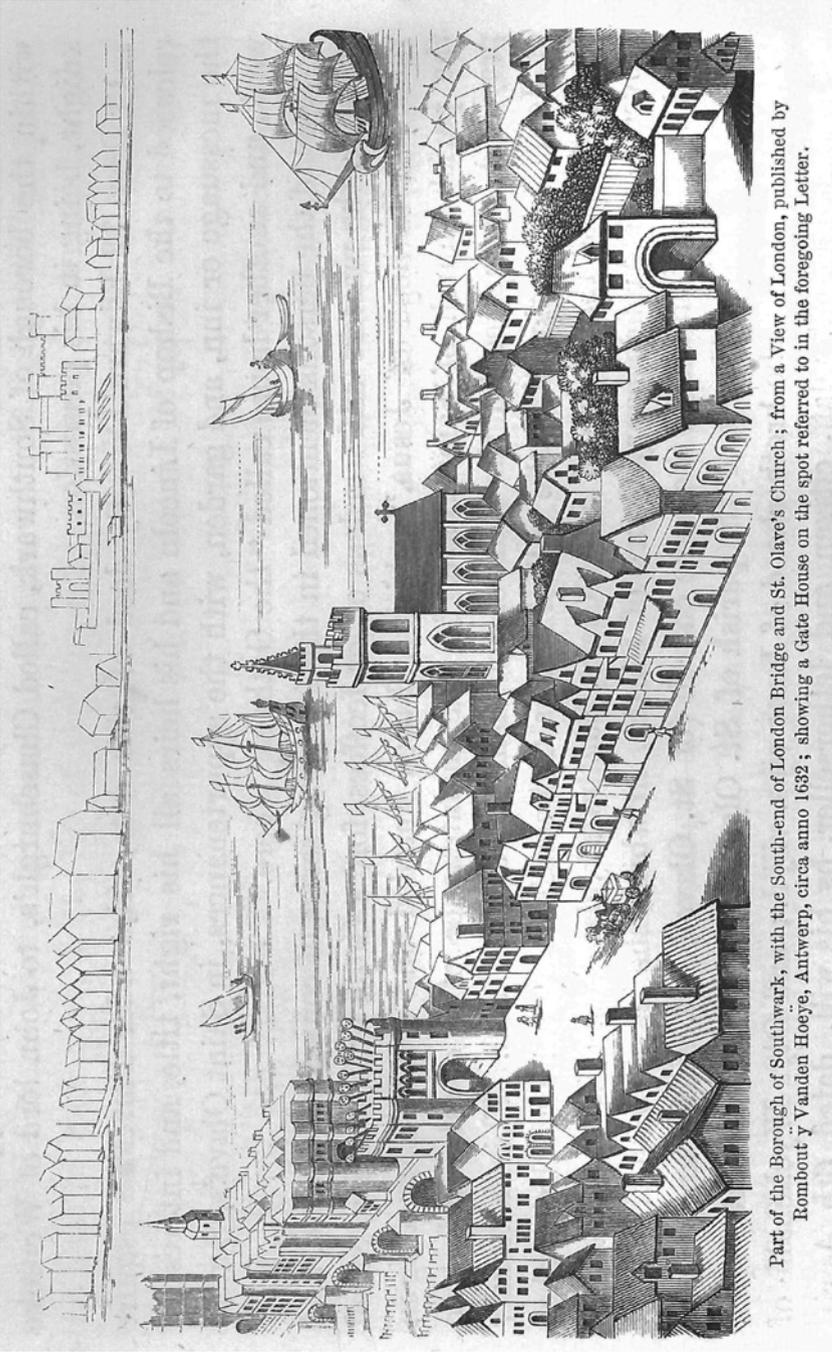


FIGURE 23.11 Locations of 12th-century houses (earls of Warenne and priors of Lewes) discovered in 1830 near St Olave's church, Southwark; illustrated (survey by J. Basire) in Corner, "Observations on the Remains of an Anglo-Norman Building," plate I  
 BY KIND PERMISSION OF THE SOCIETY OF ANTIQUARIES OF LONDON

Domesday Book reveals that both King Edward and the Godwin family had interests in Southwark (*Sudwerche*).<sup>127</sup> The king had possessed a minster (*monasterium*) church and an *aquae fluctum*. These were, respectively, the church

127 VCH Surrey 1, p. 303; *Domesday: Surrey* 5:28 and note.



Part of the Borough of Southwark, with the South-end of London Bridge and St. Olave's Church; from a View of London, published by Rombout y Vanden Hoeeye, Antwerp, circa anno 1632; showing a Gate House on the spot referred to in the foregoing Letter.

FIGURE 23.12 St Olave's church, Southwark, as depicted in a view of circa 1632 by Rombout y Vanden Hoeeye (Antwerp); illustrated in Corner "Observations on the Remains of an Anglo-Norman Building," p. 46

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FIGURE 23.13 St Olaf House, Southwark (built in 1930s), on the site of St Olave's church  
© J. BEERE, REPRODUCED WITH THANKS

later known as St Mary's, and the nearby tidal inlet from the Thames later called St Mary's dock or St Saviour's dock.<sup>128</sup> Both of these had by 1086 been granted by William I to Odo, bishop of Bayeux and earl of Kent, who had given them to two other men—first, Æthelwold and later, Ralph—in exchange for a house in Southwark. Domesday Book relates that tolls taken for the mooring of ships had been shared between King Edward (two thirds) and Earl Godwin (one third). It is likely that the whole area, given its role in London's security, had originally been royal demesne from which specific properties had later been granted out. The Godwins' property and commercial rights had perhaps

128 Martha Carlin, *Medieval Southwark* (London, 1996), pp. 15–22.

originated in a grant from King Cnut, though none is known. It has been suggested that, since, in an on-going dispute between Bishop Odo and the king, it was said on local testimony recorded in Domesday Book, that only the king had had the river tolls along the waterfront (*strande*), Godwin's right to his share of the tolls may have lapsed on his death in 1053 and now been claimed by the bishop.<sup>129</sup> If this was the case, it supports the idea that Bishop Odo had been granted the Godwins' property (see below).

The Godwins were extensive land-holders in Surrey.<sup>130</sup> Southwark gave them a secure base, opposite London and not far from Westminster, the site of Edward the Confessor's new principal residence and royal abbey. By 1066, Harold Godwinson was in possession of Bermondsey, on the east side of Southwark, and Lambeth, to its west. In 1086, the king held Bermondsey, where Domesday Book noted the new church, presumably the Cluniac priory established in 1082.<sup>131</sup> Harold had granted Lambeth to the canons of his own foundation at Waltham; in 1086 it was held by the count of Mortain.<sup>132</sup> It is possible that the Godwin connection with Lambeth went back to 1046, when King Edward exiled Osgod Clapa, one of King Cnut's major supporters. According to the 12th-century writer John of Worcester, King Harthacnut collapsed at Lambeth in 1042, while attending a feast to celebrate the marriage of Gytha, the daughter of Osgod Clapa, to Tofi the Proud, a Dane. The king died soon after (8 June), and was buried at Winchester, next to Cnut, his father.<sup>133</sup> Although it is not actually stated here that Lambeth was Osgod's manor, this seems a reasonable deduction. Perhaps Lambeth had been given to Osgod by King Cnut and was then given, by King Edward, to Godwin. The tenure of Lambeth was, however, also complicated by a second manor there, which Domesday Book says had been held by Goda, the sister of King Edward, who died in 1056.<sup>134</sup>

The Godwin family had thus developed a major presence on the south side of the Thames. Their Surrey manor of Merton (held by Harold in 1066) had sixteen houses in Southwark attached to it, and the manor of Oxted (held by Gytha in 1066) had one house in Southwark.<sup>135</sup> This raises the question, discussed in relation to Exeter and Chichester (see above), as to whether an urban church may have been an appendage to a high status house, or also built to

129 *VCH Surrey* 4, p. 135.

130 *VCH Surrey* 1, pp. 281–82; on early Surrey churches, see also John Blair, *Early Medieval Surrey: Land-Holding, Church and Settlement before 1300* (Stroud, 1991).

131 *Domesday: Surrey*, 1:4.

132 *Domesday: Surrey*, 17:1.

133 *JW* vol. 2, pp. 532–35.

134 *Domesday: Surrey*, 14:1.

135 *Domesday: Surrey*. 1:5, 15:1.

serve its lord's urban tenants. The situation was not, however, unique to the Godwins: several other lay and ecclesiastical lords also had manors with attached houses in Southwark and/or London.<sup>136</sup> In 1086, about fifty houses in Southwark were attached to various rural manors, but this can hardly have been the total number of houses in this important place.<sup>137</sup> Later, Southwark was a favoured location for houses of the rich and powerful: church institutions from the 12th century, and secular gentry and nobility from the 14th century.<sup>138</sup> Perhaps the Godwins had been early exponents of this social trend.

Tooley Street in Southwark, running east from the south end of London Bridge, takes its name from the church of St Olaf—by elision of “Saint” and “O”—which formerly stood on the north side of the street near the bridge.<sup>139</sup> In the Middle Ages the street was known as ‘the royal highway’ (*vicus regius* or *regia strata*) and by the 16th century, as St Olaf's Street.<sup>140</sup> A pre-Norman origin for St Olave's, Southwark seems highly likely: the church definitely existed in the later 11th century. The church was amongst the early gifts made—mainly in Sussex but also in Surrey—to Lewes Priory (Sussex). The grant was made probably by William de Warenne, who founded the priory with his Flemish wife, Gundreda (it was the first Cluniac priory in England) around 1077–78 out of the old minster of St Pancras.<sup>141</sup> But since the evidence for the grant comes from 12th-century confirmations of Lewes Priory charters, it may possibly have been made by the founder's son, also William.<sup>142</sup> Domesday Book shows that before 1066 the lordship of Lewes had been shared between King Edward and the earl of Wessex.<sup>143</sup> In 1086, King William had the royal portion; William de Warenne (founder of Lewes Castle and Priory and, in 1088, earl of Surrey) had the Godwin portion. When the Warennes gave St Olave's church, Southwark, to Lewes

136 *VCH Surrey* 1, pp. 285–86.

137 Carlin, *Medieval Southwark*, p. 135.

138 Carlin, *Medieval Southwark*, pp. 25–28, 44–46.

139 John Schofield, *Medieval London Houses* (London, 1995), p. 32; Carlin, *Medieval Southwark*, pp. 85–89; Bruce Watson, Trevor Brigham, and Tony Dyson, *London Bridge: 2000 Years of a River Crossing* (London, 2001), p. 94.

140 Carlin, *Medieval Southwark*, p. 25.

141 *VCH Sussex* 2, pp. 64–65; for a critical assessment of the—later, but possibly truthful—traditions concerning the priory's origins, see F. Anderson, “Lewes Priory: The Early Sources Re-Examined,” in *Lewes Priory. Excavations by Richard Lewis 1969–1982*, ed. M. Lyne (Lewes, 1997), pp. 5–11.

142 For discussion of the sources, see: John Blair, “The Surrey Endowments of Lewes Priory before 1200,” *Surrey Arch. Collections* 72 (1980), 97–126; the earliest relevant is a confirmation of the priory's possessions by Ralph, Archbishop of Canterbury, in 1121; it is printed in John H. Round ed., *Ancient Charters, Royal and Private, prior to A.D. 1200* (London, 1888), pp. 11–16, no. 8; See also *VCH Surrey* 4, pp. 151–52.

143 *Domesday: Sussex*, 12:1.

Priory, they re-connected, through their own network of lordship, two places probably connected earlier through the lordship of the Godwin family.

Independent evidence of the early existence of St Olave's in Southwark comes from the Annals of Bermondsey Abbey, which describe a grant of land at Hoddesdon made in 1096 by *Petrus de Sancto Olavo* to the abbey.<sup>144</sup> The (Cluniac) abbey was founded in 1082 by a London citizen, and King William I donated the manor of Bermondsey, which had earlier belonged to Harold Godwinson.<sup>145</sup> The Annals are a 15th-century compilation from diverse earlier sources, in this case, probably, a charter or a confirmation of one (the annal mentions confirmations by William II and Henry I). Peter, the grantor of 1096 was presumably a citizen associated with St Olave's church in nearby Southwark. But the land donated was in Hertfordshire, where he held property in Hoddesdon. Domesday Book described him as "Peter, a burgess," and he held two hides in Hoddesdon from the king which in 1066 had been held by Gode of Queen Edith.<sup>146</sup> While labelled here "Queen Edith's man," Gode was actually a woman. She and her son had also held from Queen Edith a separate four hides in Hoddesdon as well as two hides in Welwyn.<sup>147</sup> While Peter's description as "a burgess" may reflect some tenure in nearby Hertford, his link with Southwark and Bermondsey presumably means he was an urban property holder on the south bank of the Thames. By the mid-11th century, Hoddesdon comprised several manorial units. Other interested parties in 1066 were Edeva the Fair and Godith, the man of Asgar the Constable.<sup>148</sup> In the present context, the succession of the burgess, Peter, to land associated with a member of the Godwin family, is of interest. Perhaps his family had earlier Godwin connections? Perhaps his father was among Earl Godwin's Southwark supporters, mentioned in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. Hoddesdon itself was only a few miles from Waltham (Essex), the location of the church patronised by Earl Harold.

William de Warenne was created earl of Surrey by King William II—whom he supported against rebel magnates—early in 1088 but died in June 1088 following a wound at the siege of Pevensey castle.<sup>149</sup> He was already one of the

144 *The Annals of Bermondsey Abbey*, in *Annales Monastici*, ed. Henry R. Luard, RS 36, 5 vols (London, 1864–69), 3:429.

145 *The Annals of Bermondsey Abbey*, ed. Luard, pp. xxxv–xxxvi.

146 *Domesday: Herts.*, 42:7.

147 *Domesday: Herts.*, 32:2; 34:4.

148 *Domesday: Herts.*, 16:10; 17:14; 33:13.

149 Ivor J. Sanders, *English Baronies. A Study of Their Origins and Descent 1086–1327* (Oxford, 1960), p. 128; Frank Barlow, *William Rufus* (London, 1983), pp. 73, 93; Christopher P. Lewis, "William De Warenne," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Vol. 57 (Oxford, 2004), pp. 404–06.

richest men in England, with lands in numerous shires, but his endowments in Surrey came only with the comital title in 1088.<sup>150</sup> The elevation of William de Warenne was thus linked with the fall of Odo of Bayeux and it seems probable that, in Southwark, there was a sequence of property-holding from Earl Godwin, through Bishop Odo, to Earl William. Thus, unless he had acquired some property in Southwark at an earlier date, the grant of St Olaf's, Southwark, to Lewes Priory could not have been made before 1088. On the other hand, since the major Surrey endowments of William, first earl de Warenne, had been in Queen Edith's hands before 1066,<sup>151</sup> it is possible that she had a Southwark interest, otherwise undocumented, and had owned—even founded—St Olaf's church there, as suggested by John Blair.<sup>152</sup> Since the queen was daughter of Earl Godwin and Gytha, however, this possibility further underlines the Godwin family link.

When London Bridge Station was built in 1829–30 and the approach to London Bridge re-built, under-crofts of two 12th-century stone houses close to St Olave's church were discovered. They were subsequently identified, through medieval property records, as belonging to the earls of Warenne and the priors of Lewes.<sup>153</sup> The possibility should therefore be allowed that the de Warenne house—even though not documented before the 14th century<sup>154</sup>—was successor to Godwin's *mansio* mentioned in the "Life" of King Edward. If this was so, there is an analogy with Exeter: both St Olaf churches stood on a street leading to a major river bridge and both were adjacent to a Godwin family residence. The Southwark house belonging to Lewes Priory may even have been part of the original grant of St Olave's to Lewes Priory.<sup>155</sup> In 1086, Domesday Book described (above) an interest in Southwark which had been shared between King Edward and the Godwin family. This arrangement survived, emerging as one of Southwark's five medieval manors, and continued to the 14th century. It was known as the Guildable Manor and was not only the earliest, but also the only secular manor: the other four were of 12th-century creation and were

150 *VCH Surrey* 1, pp. 340–41; and for the family chronicle written in the 12th century, see *The Warenne (Hyde) Chronicle*, ed. Elisabeth Van Houts and Rosalind Love (Oxford, 2013).

151 Betchworth, Fetcham, Dorking Reigate, Shere; *VCH Surrey* 1, p. 340; *Domesday: Surrey*, 1:7; 1:10; 1:12; 1:13.

152 Blair, "The Surrey Endowments of Lewes Priory before 1200," p. 100.

153 G.R. Corner, "Observations on the Remains of an Anglo-Norman Building in the Parish of St Olave, Southwark," *Archaeologia* 38 (1860), 37–53; John Schofield, *The Building of London from the Conquest to the Great Fire* (London, 1984), pp. 52–53; Schofield, *Medieval London Houses*, pp. 31–32, 231–32.

154 Carlin, *Medieval Southwark*, pp. 28–30.

155 Blair, "The Surrey Endowments of Lewes Priory before 1200," p. 100.

ecclesiastical manors. Its profits were shared between the kings and the earls of Surrey, whose jurisdictions were separately defined: the royal half was based on High St, while the comital half was based on Tooley St, where St Olave's church and the 12th-century houses found in 1829 were situated.<sup>156</sup> Thus the manorial geography of Southwark supports the idea, discussed above, of a Godwin-Odo-Warenne succession of interest.

There is, then, no specific evidence that the Southwark church was founded by the Godwins, but, given its location in the manorial geography (above), it seems more likely to have been a Godwin foundation than a royal one (while allowing the possibility of Queen Edith's role, mentioned above). The king's minster mentioned in Domesday Book was presumably St Mary's, founded as the church of the *Suthringa geweorc* and converted to an Augustinian priory in 1106. It was a parish church from the Reformation and, in 1905, became a new cathedral.<sup>157</sup> In addition to St Olave's, Southwark's earliest parishes were St George's and St Margaret's, both of whose churches were documented in the early 12th century. St George belonged to Bermondsey Priory and St Margaret belonged to St Mary's Priory in Southwark itself.<sup>158</sup> St Olave's later became one of Southwark's parish churches. Its territory extended almost a mile eastward from London Bridge and centred on Tooley St, with its cemetery on the north (river-) side of that street.<sup>159</sup> By 1544 it had a western tower and steeple.<sup>160</sup> The church was demolished and rebuilt in 1740, repaired after a fire in 1843, and demolished in 1926. The Art Deco building of 1930 occupying the site is called St Olaf's House.<sup>161</sup> Southwark was, of course, associated with Olaf himself: in his early career, before becoming king of Norway, he had fought in a battle (1014) at London Bridge as an ally of King Æthelred against the Danes. The event was narrated in the 13th-century Saga of St Olaf, with its details embellished by the passage of time.<sup>162</sup> It seems likely that the church reflects his general popularity rather than any specific memory of this event, though the latter possibility cannot be discounted.

156 Carlin, *Medieval Southwark*, pp. 106–08.

157 *VCH Surrey* 2, pp. 107–12, for a general history.

158 Carlin, *Medieval Southwark*, pp. 89, 94.

159 Carlin, *Medieval Southwark*, pp. 20, Fig. 1, 86.

160 This is shown on Wyngaerde's panorama; Watson, Brigham, and Dyson, *London Bridge*, p. 94.

161 Bruce Watson, *Old London Bridge Lost and Found* (London, 2004), p. 25.

162 *VCH Surrey* 1, pp. 336–37; Christopher N.L. Brooke and Gillian Keir, *London 800–1216: The Shaping of a City* (London, 1975), pp. 21–22.

London (north of the Thames) had five St Olaf churches, reflecting Scandinavian influence in the city during King Cnut's reign and later.<sup>163</sup> This influence is normally seen in terms of politics, commerce and social interaction, but it has also been suggested that London churches whose dedications had Scandinavian associations (St Clement Danes and St Bride's as well as the five St Olaf churches) may have been founded specifically by King Cnut to serve garrisons of his Danish troops.<sup>164</sup> In support of this idea, their locations—near the city walls, the Thames and London Bridge—may be evidence of strategic value. In addition, the hostility of the Londoners to Cnut's conquest is well known.<sup>165</sup> On the other hand, since most of these churches were dedicated to Olaf (died 1030), they were clearly founded after 1031, by which time London had been ruled by King Cnut for some fifteen years and the "garrison" need could hardly have been urgent. There seem to have been no particular circumstances between 1031 and Cnut's death in 1035 which might have made urban garrisons newly significant. Extension of the 'Danish garrison' idea to York, Exeter, Chester and Chichester—all of which had churches dedicated to St Olaf—suffers the same chronological problem. It must be admitted, however, that all these cities were of strategic significance. In his study of Cnut's reign, M.K. Lawson does not adopt the 'garrison-church' idea and warns that we cannot even be certain that the St Olaf churches in London were founded before Cnut's death.<sup>166</sup> As we have seen, reference to St Olaf's in Exeter emerges only in King Edward's reign. As a *coda* to this discussion, it must also be said that the same idea—churches as Danish garrison centres—has also been considered for the forty-plus churches in England dedicated to St Clement (another saint much espoused by the Danish royalty and aristocracy) which are mainly in the towns of the Danelaw. A recent discussion of this issue, however, advises caution, partly because specific supporting evidence is largely absent and partly because the popularity of St Clement in eastern England had begun long before the reign of King Cnut. The strongest case for this argument applies to St Clement Danes church in London, but even here the association with the men of the royal fleet seems to pre-date Cnut's reign.<sup>167</sup> In the post-medieval period, several Scandinavian churches were built in London, including St Olave's in

163 Dickins, "Cult of St Olave," pp. 64–68; Brooke and Keir, *London 800–1216*, pp. 141–42.

164 Pamela Nightingale, "The Origin of the Court of Husting and Danish Influence on London's Development into a Capital City," *EHR* 102 (1987), 559–78, at p. 567.

165 M.K. Lawson, *Cnut. The Danes in England in the Early Eleventh Century* (London, 1993), pp. 19–20, 86, 140, 182.

166 Lawson, *Cnut*, p. 206.

167 Crawford, *Churches Dedicated to St Clement*, pp. 3–4.

Bermonsey/Rotherhithe which was consecrated in 1927, a year after the demolition of St Olave's in Tooley St.

### Conclusion

It would be unwise to advance a specifically Olaf-related cult on the part of the Godwins, as opposed to the family's general espousal of an increasingly popular saint. Nevertheless, while the widespread evidence for churches in England dedicated to St Olaf reveals this saint's general appeal, a case can at least be made for the Godwin family endorsing this tradition. Their association with St Olave's church in Exeter is demonstrable. St Olave's church in Southwark is highly likely to have been a Godwin-related foundation, and St Olave's church in Chichester is also likely to have been so (though a case for an alternative origin can be made). It may also be significant that the documentary evidence relating to Exeter concerns—in addition to the patronage of King Edward—specifically Gytha, Earl Godwin's wife, and that one suggested origin for St Olave's in Southwark is a foundation by Edith, Earl Godwin's daughter. Perhaps the St Olaf cult was particularly favoured, within the family, by their principal women? Here, of course, we must remember that Gytha herself was not only Danish but also related to the Danish royal family (her brother, Ulf, was married to Estrith, the sister of king Cnut)<sup>168</sup> and that the Danes, despite earlier having been King Olaf's enemy, soon espoused his cause as a saint. Cnut's northern 'empire' provided a background for the spread of people, ideas and fashions in this period. He was not only king of England (1016–35), but also king of Denmark (1018–35) and king of Norway (1028–34).

Of Exeter, the question was asked whether the endowments by Countess Gytha and King Edward were made to a newly-founded church or to a church which had existed earlier, but without landed endowment, in the lifetime of Earl Godwin. It was also questioned whether the multiple dedications of the church were all contemporary, or whether the dedication of St Olaf might have been added to a church already dedicated to SS Mary and Thomas. On balance, the circumstances suggest that all three dedications were contemporary, but the question of whether the church was first founded by Godwin or Harold or Gytha must remain open. Gytha may simply have been up-grading her late husband's foundation, in his memory. At Chichester, dedicated only to St Olaf, there is no evidence to suggest when, in the period concerned, the church was founded. The same applies at Southwark, though a connection with Edith,

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<sup>168</sup> Mason, *House of Godwine*, pp. 34–35.

Godwin's daughter, is a possibility, as noted above. It would be tempting to imagine a neat pattern of family foundations in memory of Earl Godwin: Exeter by Countess Gytha; Southwark by Queen Edith; Chichester—perhaps—by Earl Harold. Our evidence, however, falls short of such a neat conclusion. We must be satisfied with a simpler observation: that the origin of these churches was associated with Earl Godwin's family. Indeed, Godwin himself may have founded all of them, between Olaf's canonization in 1031 and his (own) death in 1053.

At the places principally discussed here—Exeter, Chichester and Southwark—a case can be made not only for the Godwin family's patronage of St Olaf, but also for their having an urban residence (in addition to urban houses attached to rural manors). Clear evidence links St Olave's in Exeter with the Godwins, but evidence for their urban holdings here is more limited than at Chichester and Southwark, where, in contrast, their link with the St Olave's churches is less clear. Domesday Book, may however, conceal a greater ownership of Godwin family houses in Exeter than is apparent, as we have seen, and the uneven treatment of towns in Domesday Book is well known, so we should not necessarily expect consistent data. Although the recorded references to *Irlsbery* in Exeter are later in date they represent a reliable tradition of this name in the north-west quarter of the city, where the church dedicated to St Olaf was situated. The strong tradition that Gytha took refuge in Exeter in 1068, and was involved in the city's rebellion against William the Conqueror, supports the idea of a significant family residence here. Whether or not the Godwins had a residence in Chichester, which is probable but not demonstrable, they must have had one nearby at Bosham, which occurs several times in the recorded narratives of the mid-11th century and figures in a famous scene on the Bayeux Tapestry. Given the importance of Southwark to the Godwins, as revealed in the narratives of Edward the Confessor's reign, their possession of a residence there seems beyond doubt. William the Conqueror's recorded burning of Southwark, following his victory at Hastings, may therefore have had not only military significance: it may have been a further deliberate blow against the old order.

That Bosham, Southwark and Dover possessed a 'strategic' value to the Godwins' earldom of Wessex has already been noted.<sup>169</sup> Dover, on account of its position, was also very important to the kings and their fleets. To these, this discussion has now added Chichester and Exeter. Taken in conjunction with their re-foundation of the minster at Dover, we might also see, in this pattern of data, evidence of the family's combined interest in residences and associated

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<sup>169</sup> Mason, *House of Godwine*, p. 52.

churches in key places which were (variously) of political, administrative and commercial importance. Thus, church patronage in the cult of St Olaf was part of the development of these power bases. All these places had coastal, estuarine or riverine situations (as did Topsham, near Exeter, which the family acquired). All were situated in places which had been late Saxon defended *burhs*: Exeter and Chichester were of Roman origin; Southwark was a new creation of c. 900 or earlier; Dover was a re-developed Iron Age hill-fort. Exeter and Chichester were amongst the bigger late Saxon towns and all of these places had mints (though varying in output and numbers of moneymen).<sup>170</sup> Whereas the 10th-century 're-conquest' of the Danelaw gave rise to newly-created shires named after their shire town, the shires in southern England had a more complex ancestry and not all had an obvious urban centre.<sup>171</sup> Exeter was, however, clearly the shire town of Devon, as well as a provincial capital for the south west in general. Chichester was, together with Lewes, a principal town of Sussex, as well as close to the Godwins' manor of Bosham, crucial to their maritime activity. Southwark gave the family a base opposite London and near the developing royal centre of Westminster. Southwark was also (with Guildford) notable for its urban character in a shire (Surrey) which experienced little development of early towns.<sup>172</sup>

Finally, a recurrent feature of the data explored in this discussion has been the association of rural manors with urban properties. This reflects not only the general symbiosis of town and country, but also more specific functions that such urban properties might fulfil. These functions, as suggested by various commentators over a long period, could be several. Some urban properties may have had origins in early arrangements relating to urban defensive responsibilities. Some may simply have been occupied by rent-paying tenants of the lords of rural manors. Such properties might well include a house where a rural lord resided when attending courts of shire or borough, or when attending a major minster church situated in the town. These properties may also have been part of the network through which rural produce was sold in urban markets. That these links occur so frequently in Domesday Book reveals that, although town life had developed enormously since the days of the Alfredian

170 For useful information on urban rankings see: Alan Dyer, "Ranking Lists of English Medieval Towns," in *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, Vol. 1: 600–1540, ed. David M. Palliser (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 747–70; David Hill, *An Atlas of Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford, 1981), p. 130, Fig. 222.

171 James Campbell, "Power and Authority 600–1300," in *Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, 1, ed. Palliser, pp. 51–78.

172 Martin O'Connell and Robert Poulton, "The Towns of Surrey," in *Anglo-Saxon Towns in Southern England*, ed. Jeremy Haslam (Chichester, 1984), pp. 37–51.

*burhs*, it had not yet become quite as distinct from rural life as it was to be in later centuries. Another indicator of town-country links in the 11th century is the ongoing cultivation by townsmen of agricultural land around their towns. Exeter, one of the places analysed in this discussion, was, in fact, a case in point at this time, as Domesday Book reveals.<sup>173</sup>

### Acknowledgements

I am grateful to John Allan, Stuart Blaylock, Richard Parker and Andrew Pye for advice on the north-west quarter of Exeter; to Nicholas Orme, for sharing his work on St Olave's, Exeter, before its publication (when I was concurrently researching the Godwins' *Irlesbery* site); to Julia Crick, for helpful discussion of various sources; to Bill Woodburn, Joan Langhorne and Fred Aldsworth for help with Bosham and Chichester; to Rhodri Lewis (West Sussex Record Office) for answering my Sussex queries; to Karl Alvestad (University of South-Eastern Norway) for help with medieval sources on Norway, bishop Grimkel and St Olaf in Norway; to John Schofield and Martha Carlin for help on Southwark; to the staff of Devon Heritage Centre (formerly Devon Record Office) and Exeter Cathedral Archives. John Allan, Julia Crick and Nicholas Orme made helpful suggestions when the text was at draft stage. The majority of drawn illustrations were prepared by Oliver Creighton, to whom I am most grateful.

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173 Allan, Henderson and Higham, "Saxon Exeter," pp. 385-411.



**PART 4**

*Anglo-Saxon England Beyond 1066*





# William the Conqueror and Wessex

*David Bates*

This article is written in honour of a scholar whose many distinguished contributions include a history of Wessex that is the indispensable foundation for this analysis of how William the Conqueror (1066–87) shaped his Wessex inheritance.<sup>1</sup> While adopting the standard definition of Wessex as consisting of the six historic counties of Devon, Dorset, Somerset, Wiltshire, Berkshire, and Hampshire, I only occasionally refer to Devon, since, although the Domesday record of that shire does contain typically ‘Wessex’ features, as far as we know William did not visit it after early 1068 when he besieged Exeter and then marched his army into Cornwall, before returning to Winchester to celebrate Easter.<sup>2</sup> The article is also intended as a contribution to how different regions of England experienced the so-called Norman Conquest.<sup>3</sup>

Wessex’s place in the English monarchy’s history was entertainingly illuminated by the late James Campbell’s comment that Wessex, the Thames Valley, and western Mercia largely remained the residential and governmental centre of the English kings and queens from the 10th century until the time of Queen Victoria.<sup>4</sup> This continuum was, however, one with many fluctuations both before and after 1066. From Æthelred the Unready’s time (978–1016), kings had tended to concentrate their attention on the eastern Wessex shires, with Edward the Confessor’s itinerary even suggesting a move away from Wessex and a preference for Westminster and Gloucester over Winchester.<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, Winchester had been especially favoured by the Danish kings Cnut (1016–35) and Harthacnut (1040–42), both of whom were buried in the

1 Barbara Yorke, *Wessex in the Early Middle Ages* (London, 1995). I am grateful to Bob Higham and Ryan Lavelle for their comments on an earlier version of this article and to Sophie Rixon for her assistance during its preparation.

2 For the definition, Yorke, *Wessex*, p.1. For Devon, Robert Higham, *Making Anglo-Saxon Devon: Emergence of a Shire* (Exeter, 2008), pp. 150–52, 167–91, and 226–27.

3 For an important recent essay, Aleksandra McClain, “Rewriting the Narrative: Regional Dimensions of the Norman Conquest,” in *The Archaeology of the Eleventh Century: Continuities and Transformations*, ed. Dawn M. Hadley and Christopher Dyer (London and New York, 2017), pp. 203–28.

4 James Campbell, “The United Kingdom of England: The Anglo-Saxon Achievement,” in his *The Anglo-Saxon State* (London and New York, 2000), pp. 47–49.

5 Yorke, *Wessex*, pp. 144–48.

cathedral.<sup>6</sup> Wessex's centrality to the pre-1066 English kingdom was expressed in many other ways, with Winchester arguably having something of the character of a capital city and, because of the presence of the royal treasury, being an administrative centre for the kingdom. The site of three bishoprics and a high proportion of England's richest monasteries, both male and female, Wessex's religious institutions were also deeply embedded in the apparatus of royal rule.<sup>7</sup> It had also been of central importance to the lives of England's two last pre-1066 queens, Emma, wife in turn of Æthelred the Unready and Cnut and mother of Harthacnut and Edward the Confessor (1042–66), and Edith, wife of Edward the Confessor. Edith was also the daughter of another major figure in Wessex's history, Godwin, earl of Wessex from Cnut's time until his death in 1053, and the sister of another one, his successor as earl, Harold, who became king of the English in 1066.

All this formed a multi-faceted basis for William the Conqueror's role in the history of Wessex that is arguably epitomised by the creation of the New Forest, by Winchester's central place in the making of Domesday Book, and by the construction of the huge new cathedral that began at Winchester in 1079.<sup>8</sup> All in varying ways draw attention to the grandeur, symbolism, and changes at the heart of the history of William the Conqueror and Wessex. The massive size of Winchester cathedral, one of the largest churches in Christendom in some ways constructed as a deliberate imitation of St Peter's in Rome and of the cathedral church of Speyer built for the Emperor Conrad II (1024–39), can serve as an illustration.<sup>9</sup>

6 See recently, Martin Biddle and Birthe Kjølbbye-Biddle, "Danish Royal Burials in Winchester: Cnut and His Family," in *Danes in Wessex: The Scandinavian Impact on Southern England, c.800–c.1100*, ed. Ryan Lavelle and Simon Roffey (Oxford, 2016), pp. 212–49; Timothy Bolton, *Cnut the Great* (New Haven, and London, 2017), pp. 113–20, and 179–84.

7 For a central aspect of this subject, Barbara Yorke, *Nunneries and the Anglo-Saxon Royal Houses* (London and New York, 2003). See also Sarah Foot, *Veiled Women, 1: The Disappearance of Nuns from Anglo-Saxon England* (Aldershot, 2000), pp. 162–65.

8 Central to all modern understanding of Winchester is Martin Biddle, ed., *Winchester in the Early Middle Ages: an Edition and Discussion of the Winton Domesday*, Winchester Studies 1 (Oxford, 1976). For context, Sally Harvey, *Domesday: Book of Judgement* (Oxford, 2014), pp. 7–19; Judith A. Green, *Forging the Kingdom: Power in English Society, 973–1189* (Cambridge, 2017), pp. 187–89.

9 Martin Biddle, "Seasonal Festivals and Residence: Winchester, Westminster and Gloucester in the Tenth to Twelfth Centuries," *ANS* 8 (1986), 51–72, at pp. 60–63; Eric Fernie, *The Architecture of Norman England*, (Oxford, 2000), pp. 117–21, and "Three Romanesque Great Churches in Germany, France and England, and the Discipline of Architectural History," *Architectural History* 54 (2011), 1–22, at pp. 11–17.

### The Installation of the New Regime

According to the *Carmen de Hastingae Proelio*, the only source for the event, Winchester submitted to William during his army's march around the south of London after the Battle of Hastings, saying that the decision to do so was taken jointly by Queen Edith and the citizens.<sup>10</sup> The indigenous population of Wessex was thereafter seemingly little involved in rebellions against the new regime, with, after Exeter's defiance in late 1067–68, the only two known uprisings taking place in all probability either in the summer or the early autumn of 1069, albeit with one possibly dating from 1071. According to Orderic Vitalis, probably at this point reworking or reproducing the lost later sections of the *Gesta Guillelmi* of William of Poitiers, one revolt involved men from Dorset and Somerset, who he described as West Saxons (*Saxones orientales*), and was defeated by Bishop Geoffrey of Coutances, who was one of William's closest associates and was in the process of becoming a major landholder in the western Wessex shires. Geoffrey is said to have used troops raised from Winchester, Salisbury, and London.<sup>11</sup> Another revolt involved tenants of the abbey of Abingdon who joined in revolts whose nature and date are not specified in the abbey's *Historia*.<sup>12</sup> There were also uprisings in Devon and Cornwall in 1069, probably associated with the failed attempts by King Harold's sons to establish a base to rally support. These were defeated by Earl William fitz Osbern and the Breton Earl Brian in alliance with the citizens of Exeter.<sup>13</sup>

Winchester, Salisbury and Exeter's support to the suppression of rebellion presumably indicates a significant readiness to work with the new regime. However, the dynamics of change immediately after 1066, which are the background to this article but not its subject, must surely have been more complex than they superficially appear to have been.<sup>14</sup> The many individuals and

10 *The Carmen de Hastingae Proelio of Guy Bishop of Amiens*, ed. and trans. Frank Barlow (Oxford, 1999), pp. 36–39.

11 OV, 2:228–29.

12 *Historia Ecclesie Abendonensis: The History of the Church of Abingdon*, 2.223, ed. and trans. John Hudson, 2 vols (Oxford, 2002–07), 1:226–7; David Bates, "Guillaume le Conquerant et les abbés anglais," in *Sur les pas de Lanfranc, du Bec à Caen: recueil d'études en hommage à Véronique Gazeau*, ed. Pierre Bauduin et al. (Caen, 2018), pp. 335–42.

13 OV, 2:228–29; Robert Higham, "William the Conqueror's Siege of Exeter in 1068," *Transactions of the Devonshire Association* 145 (2013), 93–132, at pp. 122–23.

14 Above all for now, Ann Williams, *The English and the Norman Conquest* (Woodbridge, 1995), pp. 78–80, 96–97, and 98–125; Ryan Lavelle, *Royal Estates in Anglo-Saxon Wessex: Land, Politics and Family Strategies*, BAR Brit. Ser. 439 (Oxford, 2007), pp. 102–16. The PASE database, <www.pase.ac.uk>, will allow the theme to be explored further. For arguments analogous to mine, Elisabeth van Houts, "The Memory of 1066 in Written and Oral

communities across Wessex who had been closely associated with Godwin and Harold are unlikely to have submitted passively, at least not in their minds; a huge number of them must have known those who had died at Hastings and elsewhere or whose lands had subsequently been confiscated. The probable undercurrents of turbulence and discontent may suggest that some of the rebels of 1069 were followers of Mærleswein, a man who, while holding lands in many shires, has recently been identified as a royal agent originally based in Wessex, and who was among the group that unleashed the great revolt in northern England earlier in 1068.<sup>15</sup> Arguably Mærleswein and other rebels must have waited until a revolt developed that had a reasonable prospect of success. Continuing resentment within Wessex is surely also demonstrated by the way in which Queen Edith's one surviving post-1066 charter, which dates from 1072 and was written in Old English, described William's Queen Matilda as his "bedfellow" (*Mathyld his gebedde*).<sup>16</sup> The predominant narrative is arguably ultimately one of pragmatic submission in the face of overwhelming power.

William installed William fitz Osbern at Winchester early in 1067 before leaving England for Normandy, with William of Poitiers identifying the city as being a suitable place from which to govern the kingdom. He also described the citizens as untrustworthy.<sup>17</sup> Orderic added to this that fitz Osbern also received the Isle of Wight.<sup>18</sup> The evidence for William fitz Osbern's activities in Wessex and across much of southern and western England before his death in early 1071 can be used to help chart the chronology of change.<sup>19</sup> Hence if, as has recently been argued, the creation of the so-called New Forest was one of the steps taken to protect the coast, an extension towards the sea of an existing *foresta regis* to support William fitz Osbern, then it can be seen as part of an apparatus created to defend against the raiding and invasions that had been a feature of Wessex's recent history and which are evidenced by Domesday's

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Traditions," *ANS* 19 (1997), 167–79, at p.179 ("it is not enough to study the history of the Conquest purely in terms of questions about the continuity of Anglo-Saxon customs").

15 For this suggestion, C.P. Lewis, "Danish Landowners in Wessex in 1066," in *Danes in Wessex*, ed. Lavelle and Roffey, pp. 172–211, at pp. 183–84.

16 F.H. Dickinson, "The Sale of Combe," *Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society Proceedings* 22 (1876), 106–13, at p. 107; Pauline Stafford, *Queen Emma and Queen Edith* (Oxford, 1997), p. 276. For this theme, David Bates, *William the Conqueror* (New Haven and London, 2016), pp. 262–63.

17 WP, 11.35, pp. 164–65.

18 OV, 2:260–61.

19 C.P. Lewis, "William fitz Osbern, earl (*d.1071*)," *ODNB* <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/9620>> (accessed 29 Sept. 2017); Bates, *William the Conqueror*, pp. 299–300 and 342–43.

references to damage caused at Fareham (Hants), by raids from the sea and further west in Devon, and to the presence of housecarls in the towns close to the Dorset coast.<sup>20</sup> Although in some respects problematic, Domesday's references to the destruction of houses after 1066 in Dorset's towns also fit this pattern. Whether or not this involved the construction of castles, it is certain that the *burhs* of pre-1066 Wessex were continuing to be used as defensive centres.<sup>21</sup> This early phase was also a time when William sought to recruit allies. His restoration of an estate to Bishop Giso of Wells in 1068 which, as the diploma in all probability drafted for Giso tells us, had been taken from the bishopric by King Harold, "inflamed by greed" (*cupiditate inflammatus*), was manifestly aimed to recruit support in the western Wessex shires.<sup>22</sup>

There are clear signs of deliberate efforts to articulate the continuum that was at the heart of William's claim to be the legitimate king of the English. He is known to have spent Easter at Winchester in 1068, 1069, and 1070, the first of the Easter crown-wearings there that were to be a feature of his rule. Although the 1068 assembly, which took place immediately after William's return from campaigning in Devon and Cornwall, is directly known only from a brief statement in the 'D' version of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, charters in all likelihood associated with it indicate the continuation in office in Wessex of English officials alongside the presence of the new foreign elite.<sup>23</sup> Charters dated to the 1069 assembly also show that many members of the surviving English and the new Norman/French elites were present. At the 1070 gathering papal legates performed a type of second coronation for William and confirmed the deposition of Archbishop Stigand of Canterbury, who was also bishop of Winchester, and of other bishops and abbots.

Wessex and Winchester were therefore at the heart of William's English rule from the start. Following the pattern in every other major urban centre, a castle was erected within the walls involving considerable destruction and the takeover of an area of approximately 5.7 acres, probably a comment on William of

20 Karin Mew, "The Dynamics of Lordship and Landscape as revealed in a Domesday Study of the *Nova Foresta*," *ANS* 23 (2001), 155–66, at pp. 162–65; GDB, fols 40v, 75r; Yorke, *Wessex*, pp. 142–43; Higham, "William the Conqueror's Siege of Exeter," pp. 122–23.

21 *DB*, i, fol. 75r; Laurence Keen, "An Introduction to the Dorset Domesday," in *The Dorset Domesday*, Ann Williams and R.W.H. Erskine, Alecto Historical Editions (London, 1991), pp. 18–20.

22 *Regesta Regum Anglo-Normannorum: The Acta of William I (1066–1087)*, ed. David Bates (Oxford, 1998), no. 286 (henceforth, *Acta*); Simon Keynes, "Giso, Bishop of Wells," *ANS* 19 (1997), 203–71, at pp. 242–43, 258 (no.14). For William's cultivation of bishops, Bates, *William the Conqueror*, p.293.

23 *ASC* D 1067 (*recte* 1068); *Acta*, nos. 181, 286. On these charters, see Richard Sharpe, "The Earliest Norman Sheriffs," *History* 101 (2016), 485–94, at pp. 490–91, 492.

Poitiers' belief that the citizens could not be trusted.<sup>24</sup> Also, in c.1070, the enclosure of the royal palace was doubled in size by taking in the cemetery of one of the two great Winchester monasteries, the New Minster.<sup>25</sup> During this period, William also compensated Edward the Confessor's religious foundation at Westminster with a generous exchange to enhance royal resources at Windsor; a narrative inserted into a 12th-century forged charter indicates that this was done so that William could hunt in the nearby forest.<sup>26</sup> Windsor, described in the *Vita Edwardi Regis* as a royal town (*regale municipium*), also became a centre at which great assemblies were held, with the two of them held there in 1070 and 1072 dealing with major matters affecting the English Church.<sup>27</sup> This emphasis on Berkshire and also, as we shall see, on the abbey of Abingdon, shows that William's regime was consciously maintaining the tradition of Berkshire's integration into Wessex that went back to the time of Alfred the Great.<sup>28</sup>

### Crown-Wearings, Itinerary, and Infrastructure

From 1072 until his death in 1087, on as precise an estimate is possible, although William spent only between 23 and 24 per cent of his time in England, a visible presence in Wessex and at Winchester remained central to his English rule. He is known to have spent Easter at Winchester in 1072 and 1086, is likely to have done so in 1071 and 1076, and possibly did so in 1081. In short, whenever he was in England, he aimed to be at Winchester for Easter, a statement that might at first sight appear surprising given the years when he was demonstrably not there. It does, however, become utterly convincing when we realise that he could not possibly have been there in 1073, 1075, 1077, 1078, 1079, 1080, 1082, 1083, 1085, and 1087, and that visits to England in 1074 and 1084 are extremely unlikely. As is well known, all this is part of the pattern whereby William wore his crown at Winchester at Easter, at Westminster at Whitsun, and at Gloucester at Christmas whenever he was in England that is famously described in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*.<sup>29</sup> That this was not his invariable practice, as shown by

24 Biddle, ed., *Winchester*, pp. 302–03.

25 Biddle, ed., *Winchester*, pp. 292–305; *Acta*, no. 344.

26 *Acta*, nos. 290, 299; Barbara Harvey, *Westminster Abbey and its Estates in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1977), pp. 27–28; Emma Mason, *Westminster Abbey and its People, c.1050–c.1216* (Woodbridge, 1996), p. 16.

27 *VEdR*, 2nd ed., pp. 100–01.

28 Yorke, *Wessex*, pp. 95–96.

29 ASC E 1086 (*recte* 1087).

his having been at Winchester for Whitsun in 1081 and at Windsor at Whitsun in 1070 and 1072, makes no difference to the basic point about an itinerary that symbolically replicated the English past. While Windsor has some of the characteristics of the other places, it was probably not thought a crown-wearing centre because it lacked the religious institutions that were present at the other three.<sup>30</sup>

William's two stays in England in 1080–81 and 1085–86 involved him and his entourage moving eastwards and westwards across Wessex. In 1080–81, he travelled from Gloucester at Christmas 1080 to London by February 1081, then to Winchester by late May, and then to St David's in west Wales, before crossing to Normandy in the autumn, presumably from either Portsmouth or Southampton.<sup>31</sup> In 1085–86, after spending Christmas 1085 at Gloucester, he seems to have moved into Wessex and stayed there until his departure for Normandy in the autumn. The *signa* of the charters and the records of business also show that many of the great men of the English kingdom were in his company during these periods. The crown-wearings also sometimes coincided with councils attended by the bishops and abbots of the English Church. The volume of business and the logistics associated with bringing the returns to the Domesday survey to William in 1086 and the taking of the Salisbury Oath on 1 August must have been huge.

Charters and narratives also demonstrate William's presence within Wessex at Salisbury/Old Sarum in February 1081 and on 1 August 1086, at North or South Petherton (Somerset) in all probability in the spring of 1071, on the bishop of Winchester's estate of Downton (Wiltshire) in 1082, on the Isle of Wight for the arrest of his brother Bishop Odo of Bayeux later in 1082 or early in 1083, and at Lacock (Wiltshire) in 1086.<sup>32</sup> The Abingdon *Historia* tells us that William was accustomed to go to the island of Andersey in the Thames to the south of Abingdon for rest cures that included blood-letting.<sup>33</sup> A writ-charter attributed to William in the *Historia* indicates a journey a little beyond Wessex to Brill

30 Michael Hare, "Kings, Crowns, and Festivals: the Origins of Gloucester as a Royal Ceremonial Centre," *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society* 115 (1997), 41–78, at pp. 48–57, and with Windsor discussed at pp. 54–55.

31 Bates, *William the Conqueror*, pp. 429–33.

32 *Acta*, nos. 154, 268; ASC E 1086; *Vita Wlstanii*, in *William of Malmesbury: Saints' Lives*, 2.2, ed. and trans. Michael Winterbottom and Rodney M. Thomson (Oxford, 2002), pp. 62–65. For Odo's arrest, Bates, *William the Conqueror*, pp. 443–44. For the identification of Lacock, see the Institute for Name Studies website, *Key to English Place-Names* <<http://kepn.nottingham.ac.uk/map/place/Wiltshire/Lacock>>.

33 *Historia Ecclesie Abbendonensis*, 2:72–73.

(Bucks.).<sup>34</sup> Provision for leisure as well as for the formal rule was central to William's relationship with Wessex. William's long absences in France notwithstanding, all this would have required at least the retention of the infrastructure that had supported the itineraries within Wessex of the pre-1066 kings, all the more so because, according to William of Malmesbury, writing in the early 12th century, William's crown-wearings were especially magnificent.<sup>35</sup>

Although the Domesday evidence presents some problems because Hampshire and Berkshire were included in Circuit I of the survey and Dorset, Wiltshire, and Somerset in Circuit II, there is no doubt that the system that had sustained royal itineraries before 1066 supported William's as well, with there being clear signs that it was significantly expanded. The 'farm of one night' (*firma unius noctis*), or 'the farm of one day' (*firma unius diei*) in Hampshire, was rendered either in kind or cash by the majority of the royal lands in Hampshire, Dorset, Wiltshire, and Somerset recorded in Domesday as held by Edward the Confessor and subsequently transferred to William.<sup>36</sup> Exemption from paying geld continues on many of these estates, with the Domesday accounts for Dorset, Wiltshire and Somerset being close to formulaically repetitious in stating that the estates did not pay geld and had never done so.<sup>37</sup> The same looks to be true for Hampshire and, with some variations, for Berkshire.<sup>38</sup> The first entry in the *terra regis* for Wiltshire (Calne) is actually set out in a way that explains the situation ("it has never paid geld; hence it is not known how many hides are there" [*nunquam geldauit, ideo nescitur quot hidae sint ibi*]), with the entries thereafter repeating an identical phrase in a way that indicates that the arrangements dated back to beyond the memories of the Domesday jurors and the central administration responsible for collecting the tax.<sup>39</sup> Its special character is also reflected by the way in which the Circuit II shires (Dorset, Wiltshire, and Somerset) categorise the *terra regis* separately as inherited royal demesne before subsequently describing the lands acquired from both

34 *Acta*, no. 6; *Historia Ecclesie Abbenonensis*, 2:2–5. The document's diplomatic suggests that it dates from William II's reign, but the *Historia* attributes it to William I.

35 WM, *GRA*, ch. 279, pp. 508–09.

36 For a recent discussion, Lavelle, *Royal Estates in Anglo-Saxon Wessex*, pp. 13–47. Also, Pauline Stafford, "The 'Farm of One Night' and the Organization of King Edward's Estates in Domesday," *Economic History Review*, 2nd ser. 33 (1980), 491–502, at pp. 492–93 and 499–501.

37 GDB, fols 64v–65v, 75rv, 86r–87r. Thus, for example, *Nunquam geldauit, nec hidata fuit* in the entry for Bedwyn (Wilts.), fol. 64v.

38 GDB, fols 38r–39v, and 56v–57r; B.J. Golding, "An Introduction to the Hampshire Domesday," in *The Hampshire Domesday*, ed. Ann Williams and R.W.H. Erskine, Alecto Historical Editions (London, 1989), pp. 1–27, at pp. 20–21.

39 GDB, fol. 64v.

Godwin's family and others and from the deceased Queen Matilda, with rubrications inserted in Dorset making this specific distinction. The purpose of the exemptions, both before and after 1066, would have been to protect the estates from the unpredictable consequences of a tax levied at varying and sometimes oppressive rates. The arrangements were unique to the Wessex shires.<sup>40</sup>

There is a pattern on some of the lands once held by Earl Godwin's family, most notably by his sons Harold and Tostig, by his wife Gytha, and—presumably after 1075—by Queen Edith, incorporated into the royal lands for the assessment to geld often to be either reduced or abolished, even though all these estates had previously been assessed to the geld and many continued to be. Long-standing arrangements that were uniquely favourable to the king were therefore being extended to acquisitions. Many of the incorporated estates were recorded as paying renders, often at a level above the estate's recorded value and at a significantly higher level than before 1066.<sup>41</sup> That this process could be pushed too hard is graphically illustrated by the record of East Meon (Hants), a very large estate that Stigand, archbishop of Canterbury and bishop of Winchester, was said to be holding on behalf of the Old Minster, and which was valued at £60 and, after being included in the king's lands, was at farm at £100, but, so the entry says, "it cannot bear it."<sup>42</sup>

The places that William is known to have visited had a long association with kings and were also usually in close proximity to forest where he and his nobles could hunt. North and South Petherton were large royal estates inherited from Edward the Confessor that both rendered the farm of one night and had the standard exemption from paying any geld. Both were relatively close to the Quantock Forest and the Neroche Forest.<sup>43</sup> The Thames island of Andersey had been a royal residence in the times of Kings Offa of Mercia (757–96) and Æthelstan (924–39). In the 11th century a minster was being built there by the priest Blæcman, a close associate of Earl Godwin.<sup>44</sup> Brill, which is

40 See, for example, R.S. Hoyt, *The Royal Demesne in English Constitutional History, 1066–1272* (Ithaca, NY, 1950), pp. 19–25.

41 See, J.H. Round, "Introduction to the Hampshire Domesday," in *VCH Hants*, 1: 399–447, at pp. 413–15; Golding, "An Introduction to the Hampshire Domesday," p. 21.

42 "Sed non potest pati." GDB, fol. 38r.

43 GDB, fol. 86r; James Bond, "Forests, Chases, Warrens and Parks in Medieval Wessex," in *The Medieval Landscape of Wessex*, ed. Michael Aston and Carenza Lewis (Oxford, 1994), pp. 115–58, at pp. 120, 121, 131, and 134.

44 For the narratives of Andersey's history, *Historia Ecclesie Abendonensis*, 1:lvii, cviii–cix, 208–09, and 372–73; 2:cviii–cix, and 72–73; "De Abbatibus Abendonie," in *Chronicon Monasterii de Abingdon*, ed. J. Stevenson, RS 2, 2 vols (London, 1858), 2:273, 277; *Charters of Abingdon Abbey*, ed. Susan E. Kelly, Anglo-Saxon Charters 7 and 8, 2 parts (Oxford, 2000–1), 2:clx–clxi, ccii–cciii.

approximately 14 miles to the north of Andersey, was the site of a royal residence built by Edward the Confessor whose grandeur merited it being described as a *palatium*; it was the base for hunting in nearby Bernwood Forest.<sup>45</sup> One place that William cannot be shown to have visited, however, is Clarendon, with the famous Evesham knight-service writ that says that William mustered troops there now having been shown to be a 12th-century forgery.<sup>46</sup> Even if Clarendon only became one of the great royal residences from Henry I's reign onwards, the tradition recorded in the forged writ may nonetheless be significant; there is clear evidence that Clarendon had been a park frequented by kings before 1066 and Edward the Confessor's presence in 1065 at nearby Britford indicating that it was so used at the time of the Conquest.<sup>47</sup>

Most of the forest and hunting officials recorded in Domesday Book appear in Hampshire, Wiltshire, and Dorset, with some of them having been tenants there in the time of Edward the Confessor.<sup>48</sup> There are mentions of 'forest' in most of the Wessex shires, with it being possible to deduce that they refer to forests to which names can be assigned.<sup>49</sup> The presence of Waleran the huntsman as a substantial tenant-in-chief in Dorset, Hampshire, and Wiltshire is just one indication of the existence of an associated hierarchical managerial organisation.<sup>50</sup> It is, however, only in the cases of the New Forest and Windsor that significant change during William's reign can be identified. Whatever is made of the extensive literature on the *Nova Foresta* and the levels of continuity involved in its creation and in the history of parks, woodlands, and enclosed spaces, the scale of spatial and territorial change that took place produced such shock for historians writing in both Normandy and England in the 12th century that it must have seemed dramatic.<sup>51</sup> In the case of Windsor, in

45 *VÆdR*, 2nd ed., pp. 98–99; GDB, fol. 143v; I.M.W. Harvey, "Bernwood in the Middle Ages," in *Bernwood: The Life and Afterlife of a Forest*, Harris Papers 2 (Preston, 1997), pp. 1–2.

46 *Regesta*, no. 131; Nicholas Vincent, "The Use and Abuse of Anglo-Saxon Charters by the Kings of England, 1100–1300," in *The Long Twelfth-Century View of the Anglo-Saxon Past*, ed. Martin Brett and David A. Woodman (Aldershot, 2015), pp. 191–228, at pp. 223–25.

47 *VÆdR*, 2nd ed., pp. 78–79; Tom Beaumont James and Christopher Gerard, *Clarendon: Landscape of Kings* (Macclesfield, 2007), pp. 43–47.

48 Graham Jones, "A 'Common of Hunting'? Forests, Lordship and Community before and after the Conquest," in *Forests and Chases of England and Wales c.1000–1500*, ed. John Langton and Graham Jones (Oxford, 2010), pp. 36–67, at p. 67.

49 Thus, for example, F.R. Thorn, "Hundreds and Wapentakes," in *The Wiltshire Domesday*, ed. Ann Williams and R.W.H. Erskine, Alecto Historical Editions (London, 1989), pp. 31–45, at p.37.

50 GDB, fols. 48rv, 72r, 82r.

51 Mew, "The Dynamics of Lordship," pp. 157–63. In general, Alban Gautier, "Game Parks in Sussex and the Godwinsons," *ANS* 29, (2007), 51–64; Judith A. Green, "Forest Laws in England and Normandy in the Twelfth Century," *Historical Research*, 86, (2013), 416–31.

addition to the exchange with the abbey of Westminster mentioned above, the Abingdon *Historia* records that four hides had been removed from Winkfield (Berks.) by William's judgement to expand the forest at Windsor.<sup>52</sup> The minutiae of this remarkable infrastructure are wonderfully illuminated by Domesday's mention of Godric's wife who was holding land in East and West Hendred because she was caring for the king's dogs.<sup>53</sup>

### William's Family and Wessex

The evidence for William's family's presence in Wessex demonstrates a deliberate policy of maintaining tradition. His second son Richard's death in a hunting accident in the New Forest in c.1070 and his burial in Winchester cathedral are facets of this, an indication both of presence there during his life-time and of a status that merited a place alongside the numerous kings and queens already entombed there.<sup>54</sup> The reference in Domesday Book to Geoffrey the chamberlain holding Hatch Warren in Hampshire for the service he had performed for the king's daughter Matilda indicates her presence in Wessex, suggesting that she was being educated at one of the Wessex nunneries, with Wilton, where Queen Edith had been educated, or the Nunnaminster in Winchester, being the most likely possibilities.<sup>55</sup> Although the names and sequence of William's and Matilda's daughters present problems, Matilda's existence is certain because the mortuary roll of Matilda, the first abbess of La Trinité of Caen, who died in 1113, asked for prayers for her soul and listed her with others of William's deceased daughters who had all been lay women.<sup>56</sup> These being the only two known references to her, it is likely that she died young and that she was fulfilling the tradition of a female royal presence in Wessex.<sup>57</sup> While perhaps excessively speculative, it is impossible not to suggest that she would have met with Edith, the sister of Edgar the Ætheling and future

52 *Historia Ecclesie Abendonensis*, 2.6, 2, pp. 8–9; GDB, fol. 59r; Jane Roberts, *Royal Landscape: The Gardens and Parks of Windsor* (New Haven and London, 1997), pp. 7–10.

53 GDB, fol. 57v. See above, Ryan Lavelle, "Places I'll Remember? Reflections on Alfred, Asser and the Power of Memory in the West Saxon Landscape," above, at p. 333.

54 OV, 3:114–15; WM, *GRA*, ch. 275, 1:502–05; Biddle and Kjølbbye-Biddle, "Danish Royal Burials," pp. 224–25, and 227.

55 GDB, fol. 49r.

56 *Recueil des rouleaux des morts (VIII<sup>e</sup>–vers 1536)*, ed. Jean Dufour, 4 vols (Paris, 2005–8), 1: p. 398 (no. 114). Léopold Delisle's and Jean Dufour's mistaken identification of Matilda, the first abbess of La Trinité, as a daughter of William and Matilda was corrected by Frank Barlow, *William Rufus* (London, 1983), p. 442; cf. Yorke, *Nunneries*, p. 92.

57 The extensive literature is summarised in Yorke, *Nunneries*, pp. 89–92.

wife of Matilda's brother King Henry I, and Gunnhild, King Harold's daughter and future wife of Count Alan Rufus, one of the greatest of the cross-Channel elite, both of whom were being educated in Wessex nunneries.

A certain presence in Wessex is the future King Henry I, William's and Matilda's youngest child, in all probability educated in Wessex with Bishop Osmund of Salisbury a likely tutor. Henry resided for a time at the abbey of Abingdon where he is known to have been at Easter in 1084.<sup>58</sup> Where his father intended this to take him is of course unknown and is undiscoverable because of the conflicts that followed William's death. There is, however, significant evidence that Henry's links with the region around Abingdon formed during his adolescence were sufficiently strong to have a powerful influence on his adult life.<sup>59</sup> This attachment may well explain why he developed Woodstock (Oxon.) and Clarendon as residences.

William's wife Matilda was prominent in Wessex up until her death in 1083. An extensive landholder in many south-western shires, she had held a large manor in Hampshire and was a major landholder in Devon and Dorset, where her estates merited the insertion of two rubrics into the Domesday text, the second of which drew attention to lands that had been administered on her behalf by the sheriff Hugh fitz Grip.<sup>60</sup> She is recorded in Domesday as making grants to the Norman monasteries of Le Bec and La Trinité and Saint-Etienne of Caen and, in a charter, to have given a chasuble made in Winchester to La Trinité.<sup>61</sup> There are records of grants made by her to individuals, some of whom were certainly of English birth, of the restoration of a small estate in Hampshire to an Englishman, and of her doing justice.<sup>62</sup> The Geld Rolls preserved in Exon Domesday mention that she had granted exemption from geld to "a certain widow" (*quidam uidua*) for Matilda's deceased son Richard's soul.<sup>63</sup>

While in no way being equivalent in scale to that of Queens Emma and Edith, Matilda's recorded activity in Wessex is notable, especially as she spent even more time in Normandy than her husband. Her consistent presence

58 *Historia Ecclesie Abendonensis*, 2:16–19; C. Warren Hollister, edited and completed by A. Clark Frost, *Henry I* (London and New Haven, 2001), pp. 35–37; Judith A. Green, *Henry I, King of England Duke of Normandy* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 22–23.

59 David Crouch, "Robert of Gloucester's Mother and Sexual Politics in Norman Oxfordshire," *Historical Research* 72 (1999), 323–33, at pp. 327–30.

60 GDB, fols 38r, 75v (*Has subter scriptas terras tenuit Mathildis regina* and *Has octo infra scriptas terras tenuit Hugo f. Grip de Regina*), and 101rv. For Matilda's estates, Lavelle, *Royal Estates in Anglo-Saxon Wessex*, pp. 84–87.

61 GDB, fols 68v, 78v; *Acta*, no. 63.

62 GDB, fols 38r, 48v, 84r (×2).

63 "The Dorset Geld Rolls," ed. and trans. Ann Williams, in *VCH Dorset*, 3: 128.

among the *signa* of William's English diplomas does show that she invariably crossed the Channel for the great occasions that took place in Wessex. We also know that she acted independently there during one period of several months in 1081–82 when William was in Normandy and when, among other things, she dispensed justice on his behalf at Windsor.<sup>64</sup> Her role in persuading Bishop Osbern of Exeter to restore the church of Wedmore (Som.) to the Bishop Giso of Wells could be a deliberate continuation of Edith's favour to Giso.<sup>65</sup> In February 1081, she granted Garsdon (Wilts.) to the abbey of Malmesbury, with the diploma's reference to her as William's *legalis coniunx* possibly being one of those coded jibes at the new regime indicative of continuing resentment.<sup>66</sup> She also used the known royal itinerary in Wessex to demand gifts from the abbey of Abingdon, only to reject what was offered and extort much more valuable ones, namely a chasuble, an alb with a stole, and a Gospel book, all of which the monks regarded as being among their greatest treasures.<sup>67</sup> Her long absences in Normandy notwithstanding, it looks as if she was playing a role that conceptually and episodically sustained that of the most recent English queens. The concentration of many of her lands and activities in the western Wessex shires may well indicate responsibility for them was assigned to her, a suggestion that gathers strength from William's own focus having primarily been on the eastern shires.

Even though Richard and William Rufus, the two of William's sons who died in hunting accidents in the New Forest, were buried in Winchester cathedral, it is ultimately doubtful that William thought of it as becoming a royal mausoleum; in all likelihood, Saint-Etienne of Caen was always destined to be where he was going to be buried. Richard's burial at Winchester alongside the kings and queens Cnut, Harthacnut, Emma and Edmund Ironside, as well as Earl Beorn, nonetheless demonstrates William locating his family within the dynastic continuity that was central to his claim to legitimacy.<sup>68</sup> His own burial must be seen as a manifestation of the contemporary trend to abandon burial

64 In general, David Bates, "The Representation of Queens and Queenship in Anglo-Norman Royal Charters," in *Frankland: Essays in Honour of Dame Jinty Nelson*, ed. Paul Fouracre and David Ganz (Manchester, 2008), pp. 285–303, at pp. 287–90. For 1081–82, Bates, *William the Conqueror*, pp. 433–35.

65 *Acta*, no. 289; Keynes, "Giso," pp. 227–39; Stafford, *Queen Emma and Queen Edith*, pp. 147–48.

66 *Acta*, no. 193.

67 *Historia Ecclesie Abendonensis*, 1:224–5.

68 Biddle and Kjølbbye-Biddle, "Danish Royal Burials," pp. 219–28, with the suggestion that William envisaged burial at Winchester at pp. 227–28; cf. Bates, *William the Conqueror*, pp. 169–70.

in a mausoleum in favour of one in a personal monastic foundation, a change epitomised in England by Edward the Confessor's and Edith's burial at Westminster.<sup>69</sup> Henry I's foundation of the abbey of Reading and his decision to be buried there, as well as being a response to a family tragedy, may well represent not just another expression of this trend, but also a personal continuation of his father's close relations with Cluny. His cultivation of Wessex and Windsor was perhaps founded in memories of childhood spent there.<sup>70</sup>

### Wessex and the Cross-Channel Empire

The way in which Wessex's geographical location made it the English core of the new cross-Channel empire is evident in multiple ways.<sup>71</sup> Although the ports at which William embarked and disembarked when he made his many Channel crossings are rarely named in the sources, the crossing from either Caen or Ouistreham or from the Seine valley into the Solent, with hunting in the New Forest en route, was the most convenient one for him to take. I have recently suggested that it was "the axis on which the cross-Channel empire turned."<sup>72</sup> Domesday's account of Southampton mentions that sixty-five Frenchmen and thirty-one Englishmen have been settled there "after King William came to England" (*Postquam rex W. uenit in Angliam hospitati in Hantone lxx francigene et xxxi angligene*). When wives and families are taken into account, this is a significant increase in population. Those who possessed houses there include newcomers who were the great landholders in the shires of western England, namely, Bishop Geoffrey of Coutances, Count Robert of Mortain, and Ralph de Mortemer, all presumably using the property for themselves or their associates as residences at which to stay when they had crossed the Channel or were about to cross it. Also present among the holders of houses are the abbeys of Lyre and Cormeilles which were William fitz Osbern's two main monastic foundations, the count of Evreux, and Stephen the steersman.<sup>73</sup> All four are indicative in different ways of the establishment of a new presence; the

69 Elizabeth M. Hallam, "Royal Burial and the Cult of Kingship in France and England, 1060–1330," *Journal of Medieval History*, 8, (1982), 339–80, at pp. 367–77.

70 For Henry and Reading, Hollister, *Henry I*, pp. 282–87; Green, *Henry I*, pp. 170–72. Lavelle, "Places I'll Remember?" above, pp. 313–335, provides an exploration of childhood memory, albeit in a different period.

71 For my usage of the word "empire," David Bates, *The Normans and Empire* (Oxford, 2013), pp. 8–11.

72 Bates, *William the Conqueror*, p. 500.

73 GDB, fol. 52r.

abbeys because they transported William fitz Osbern's image as a religious patron into England; Count William of Evreux, while he held land in England only in Berkshire and Oxfordshire in addition to the house in Southampton, so that he could attend court at Winchester, Windsor, and elsewhere; and Stephen because he may well have been the man who steered William the Conqueror's ship when he crossed the Channel.<sup>74</sup> This remarkable agglomeration, combining as it did practicality and a physical demonstration of presence, may well be what has been referred to as the 'castle town' that was "inserted alongside an existing street axis."<sup>75</sup>

Somerset excepted, where Bishop Geoffrey of Coutances and Count Robert of Mortain had massive landholdings, there is no dominant landholder recorded in Domesday Book in any of the other Wessex shires, apart from each one's sheriff. Instead there is a multiplicity of landholders who included the most powerful members of the cross-Channel elite, but with all of them usually holding only a small number of estates. Hampshire unsurprisingly supplies the most remarkable illustration of this phenomenon, since, presumably because of Winchester, every one of the well-known list of the so-called 'Class A' magnates appear, but with only Roger de Montgomery holding a sizeable estate.<sup>76</sup> That this process is another one that started early in William's reign is indicated by William fitz Osbern's grant to Roger de Montgomery of the large estate of Chalton (Hants), presumably as a stopping-off point for Roger on his journeys to and from Normandy to his earldom on the Welsh border.<sup>77</sup> The same phenomenon is present, albeit in reduced form and with some of the group holding larger estates, in Dorset and Wiltshire.<sup>78</sup> Also significant must be the appearance in Dorset of Roger de Beaumont, a massively important member of the new regime and without doubt the most powerful Norman layman not to hold much land in England.<sup>79</sup> Surely what was involved for him was a presence in Wessex to enable court attendance, but which did not involve huge cross-Channel responsibilities. It is also likely that a puzzling feature of the Domesday evidence, the apparently excessive destruction of houses in the

74 GDB, fol. 52r. For Stephen, OV, 6:296–97.

75 Keith D. Lilley, "The Norman Conquest and its Influences on the Urban Landscape," in *The Archaeology of the Eleventh Century*, ed. Dyer and Hadley, pp. 41–63, at pp. 36–7.

76 GDB, fols 38r, 44v, 47r. For the "Class A" categorisation, C. Warren Hollister, "The Greater Domesday Tenants-in-Chief," in *Domesday Studies: Papers Read at the Novocentenary Conference of the Royal Historical Society and the Institute of British Geographers, Winchester, 1986*, ed. J.C. Holt (Woodbridge, 1987), pp. 219–48, at p. 242.

77 GDB, fol. 44v.

78 GDB, fols 66r, 68v–69r, 71r, 77r, 78r–80r.

79 GDB, fol. 80r.

Dorset towns and the variable evidence on the ground for the presence of castles was a reflection of these arrangements' success. The sheriff Hugh fitz Grip, who is regularly named as the culprit, may well have over-reacted to the needs of security.<sup>80</sup>

Another manifestation of the development of cross-Channel links that consolidated presences between Normandy and Wessex involved the grant before 1086 of lands and churches to almost all of the main monasteries of Normandy and to some French abbeys as well. Thus, the abbeys of Grestain, Jumièges, Lyre, Troarn, Saint-Wandrille, Saint-Etienne of Caen, La Trinité of Caen, Montivilliers, Marmoutier, Fontenay, Montebourg, Saint-Pierre of Préaux and Saint-Séver all received lands in Wessex, as also did the canons of the cathedral churches of Lisieux and Coutances.<sup>81</sup> Very notable too is the number of churches that had been transferred to Norman monasteries, with the abbeys of Cormeilles, Lyre, and Mont Saint-Michel holding churches in Hampshire, of which Lyre held a remarkable eight, seven of which were on the Isle of Wight,<sup>82</sup> Saint-Wandrille two in Dorset,<sup>83</sup> Jumièges, Saint-Wandrille, and Saint-Etienne of Caen one each and Mont Saint-Michel two in Wiltshire,<sup>84</sup> Mont Saint-Michel one in Berkshire,<sup>85</sup> and Saint-Etienne of Caen one in Somerset.<sup>86</sup> One striking feature of this list is the number of grants of churches on royal lands, something that must be attributable to William himself. The relationship between the grants and the cross-Channel holdings of the topmost imperial elite, and the fact that almost all of the abbeys concerned had ready access to the sea in Normandy and therefore to the crossing to Wessex, must also be significant. William himself made it as financially easy as possible for the two Caen abbeys and the abbey of Grestain, where his mother was buried, to operate within this new world.<sup>87</sup> This process of integrating religious institutions associated with

80 GDB, fol. 75r; Keen, "An Introduction to the Dorset Domesday," pp. 18–20.

81 Grestain, GDB, fol. 43v (Hants), 68v (Wilts.); Jumièges, GDB, fol. 43v; Lyre, GDB, fol. 38v, 39v, 52r (Hants); Troarn, GDB, fol. 44v (Hants); Saint-Wandrille, GDB, fol. 75r (Dors.); Saint-Etienne of Caen, GDB, fol. 78v (Dors.) and fol. 91r (Som.); La Trinité of Caen (Dors.), GDB, fol. 79r (Dors.); Montivilliers, GDB, fol. 79r (Dors.); Marmoutier, GDB, fol. 79r (Dors.); Fontenay, GDB, fol. 72v; Montebourg, GDB, fol. 73r (Wilts) and fol. 91r (Soms.); Saint-Pierre of Préaux, GDB, fol. 60r (Berks.); Saint-Séver, GDB, fol. 91v (Soms.). For the canons of Lisieux and Coutances, GDB, fols 65v (Wilts.) and 79r (Dors.).

82 GDB, fol. 49r (Cormeilles), and fols 39v, 52r, 52v (Lyre); fol. 43r (Mont Saint-Michel).

83 GDB, fol. 78v.

84 GDB, fol. 65r.

85 GDB, fol. 57r.

86 GDB, fol. 91r.

87 *Acta*, no. 158 (*quocumque deferantur uel ducantur tam in Anglica quam in Normannia, sicuti ecclesia sancti Stephani Cadomensis habet ubique sua dominie qujeta*).

the new regime into the royal itinerary in Wessex also involved Battle Abbey receiving lands in Berkshire and a house in Windsor.<sup>88</sup>

### William and the Great Churches of Wessex

On the basis of the evidence of 11th-century charters and Domesday Book, William's relationship with many of Wessex's religious institutions appears to have been supportive, without being generous.<sup>89</sup> There are many instances starting from early in the reign of confirmations or restorations of property and he heard disputes between monasteries that were resolved according to English traditions.<sup>90</sup> His grant of Hempage Wood (Hants) to support the construction of the new cathedral at Winchester later became the subject of an entertaining story.<sup>91</sup> He was to an extent supportive of English abbots staying in post, with, for example, Abbot Æthelnoth of Glastonbury remaining in office until his death in c.1082. Also, after Abbot Ælfwig, who may well have been a kinsman of King Harold, had been killed at the Battle of Hastings, the monks of New Minster were allowed to appoint an English monk named Wulfric in 1069; he was, however, deposed in 1072.<sup>92</sup> William famously intervened in the making of Domesday Book to ensure that the services and customs due to the bishop of Winchester at Taunton were entered in the written record of the survey (*in breuibus scriberet*).<sup>93</sup> His restoration of Laverstoke (Hants) to the Old Minster so that the monks would pray for Matilda's soul shows that he held the abbey in special esteem; in England only the abbey of Bury St Edmunds, with which he appears to have had a special relationship, was singled out as so uniquely important.<sup>94</sup> On the other hand, there are few records of him making grants

88 GDB, fol. 59v; *Regesta Regum Anglo-Normannorum vol. 2, Regesta Regis Henrici Primi, 1100–1135*, ed. Charles Johnson and H.A. Cronne (Oxford, 1956), no. 1807.

89 For a survey and a clear statement, Round, "Introduction to the Hampshire Domesday," pp. 416–21 ("the religious houses appear to have suffered no other appreciable loss," at p. 419). See also, Golding, "An Introduction to the Hampshire Domesday," pp. 11–13.

90 *Acta*, nos. 1–3 (Abbotsbury), 4–5 (Abingdon), 11–12 (Bath), 151 (Glastonbury), nos. 193, 195 (Malmesbury), nos. 337–41 (Old Minster, Winchester). For the settlement of disputes, Bates, *William the Conqueror*, pp. 442–43.

91 *Annales monasterii de Wintonia*, in *Annales Monastici*, ed. Henry R. Luard, RS 36, 5 vols (London, 1864–69), 2:1–125, at pp. 34–35; John T. Appleby, "Richard of Devizes and the Annals of Winchester," *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research* 36 (1963), 70–77, at 73.

92 For these cases, Bates, "Guillaume le Conquérant et les abbés anglais," pp. 336, 338, with references given there.

93 GDB, fol. 87v.

94 GDB, fol. 43r. For Bury St Edmunds, GDB, fol. 222r; 2, fol. 210r.

and, in the case of Glastonbury, the wealthiest of all the monasteries, there is evidence of the removal of estates on an extensive scale.<sup>95</sup>

As already indicated by the take-over of the New Minster's cemetery for the royal palace, William was certainly prepared to divert Church property to his own uses. However, as in the case of Windsor and the abbey of Westminster mentioned above, the transaction had involved an exchange; it is even possible that the Domesday jurors' comment that the exchange was an unjust one indicates that William had not needed to be so generous.<sup>96</sup> William had also handed out three hides of Old Minster land in Wiltshire to William Escudet on a life-tenure.<sup>97</sup> Any assessment of his activities is, however, complicated by later evidence, one aspect of which is a series of charters that William's grandson Bishop Henry of Winchester obtained from his recently crowned brother King Stephen that purport to list estates that William had taken from the Old Minster.<sup>98</sup> New Minster also claimed in a 12th-century forged charter that William had inflicted extensive damage on the monastery.<sup>99</sup>

In the absence of the comprehensive modern history of Winchester's religious institutions in the period from the 10th to the 12th century that needs to be written, it is enough to say for now that in every case, the history of many of the estates that Bishop Henry's charters claim turns out to be complicated.<sup>100</sup> Thus, Hayling Island had been granted by William to the abbey of Jumièges in 1067 and is duly entered as being held by the abbey in Domesday Book. However, Domesday also says that the monks of the Old Minster claim it on the basis of a grant by Queen Emma and that it had been held in 1066 by Queen Edith. Along with other evidence, it also shows that the monks had granted it out on a lease.<sup>101</sup> The cases of East Meon (Hants) and Wargrave (Berkshire)

95 For Glastonbury's losses, Lesley Abrams, *Anglo-Saxon Glastonbury: Church and Endowment* (Woodbridge, 1996), pp. 272–317; *Charters of Glastonbury Abbey*, ed. Susan E. Kelly, Anglo-Saxon Charters 15 (Oxford, 2012), pp. 74–76, and 132–38 (N.B. “13% of the estates to which the abbey had some kind of claim were lost after the Conquest,” p.76).

96 *Acta*, no. 344; GDB, fol.43r.

97 *English Episcopal Acta*, 8: *Winchester 1070–1204*, ed. M.J. Franklin (Oxford, 1993), no.18.

98 *Regesta Regum Anglo-Normannorum: vol. III, Regesta Regis Stephani ac Mathildis Imperatricis ac Gaufridi et Henrici Ducum Normannorum, 1135–1154*, ed. H.A. Cronne and R.H.C. Davis (Oxford, 1968), nos. 945–51.

99 Alexander R. Rumble, *Property and Piety in Early Medieval Winchester* (Oxford, 2002), 178–79.

100 For a similar observation, *The Liber Vitae of the New Minster and Hyde Abbey, Winchester*, ed. Simon Keynes, Early English Manuscripts in Facsimile 26 (Copenhagen 1996), p. 42, n. 243. For the crucial *Codex Wintoniensis*, see for now, Alexander R. Rumble, “The Purposes of the Codex Wintoniensis,” *ANS* 4 (1982), 153–66 and 224–32, at pp. 158–60.

101 *Acta*, no. 159; GDB, fol. 43v; *Anglo-Saxon Charters*, ed. A.J. Robertson, 2nd. ed. (Cambridge, 1956), no.114, p. 212 (S 1476).

were also complicated, with the monks of Old Minster forging a charter of Edward the Confessor in the 12th century that claimed it had been given by Queen Emma.<sup>102</sup> Crowcombe (Somerset) is, however, apparently straightforward since Domesday lists it as an Old Minster estate in 1066 that was held in 1086 by Count Robert of Mortain.<sup>103</sup> This and the apparently contrasting experiences of Glastonbury and the religious houses closer to Winchester suggest that we must make a distinction between a Wessex heartland around Winchester where there was no dominant secular power other than the king and his sheriff and the more peripheral Somerset where Glastonbury's main predators, Bishop Geoffrey of Coutances and Count Robert of Mortain, held massive lands and dominated local society. William arguably showed a greater respect for English religious institutions than some of his closest associates. It is also the case that bishops and abbots appointed by William at Winchester and Abingdon could be disrespectful to the great English saints despite William's own emphasis on a legitimacy derived from the past; we are dealing once more with the complexities that followed from newcomers trying to work in what they thought to be circumstances so unfamiliar that change was needed.<sup>104</sup>

### Conclusion

Ultimately the history of William the Conqueror and Wessex does conform to William of Poitiers' comment that Winchester, which he called "a noble and strong town," was a suitable place from which to rule England. If William, who was William the Conqueror's chaplain, is here conveying the king's thoughts, then we have a valuable insight into the king's intentions.<sup>105</sup> That the huge new cathedral at Winchester must surely reflect William's personal opinions is another sign of this. Arguably the history also fits well with the famous verdict of the anonymous English author of the homiletic obituary in the 'E' version of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, with its mentions of grandeur, greed, the imposition of excessive rents, an excessive devotion to hunting, and the protection of

102 As noted above, East Meon is recorded in Domesday as held by Archbishop Stigand for the monks, making a confusion between his extensive personal estates and monastic lands plausible. For Wargrave, *Anglo-Saxon Charters*, ed. Robertson, no. 118 (S 1062); F.E. Harmer, "Anglo-Saxon Charters and the Historian," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 22 (1938), 339–67, at pp. 349–51.

103 GDB, fol. 91v.

104 Rebecca Browett, "The Fate of Anglo-Saxon Saints after the Norman Conquest of England: St Æthelwold of Winchester as a Case Study," *History* 101 (2016), 183–200.

105 WP, II.35, pp. 164–65 (*Guenta urbs est nobilis et ualens*).

monasteries.<sup>106</sup> In its way it epitomises the eternal conundrum of the positives and negatives of England's history in the aftermath of 1066 and of William's life that perplex all who try to write about him. It has to be a telling commentary on the arguably dazzling effect on memory of William's exercise of power in Wessex that his grandsons King Stephen and Bishop Henry of Winchester were prepared publicly to endorse the belief that he had unjustly removed estates from the Church that does not seem to be justified by the 11th-century evidence.

One can wonder what would have occurred if the 10th-century English kings had located their power-base in Mercia; the cross-Channel empire and Wessex's role within it certainly would not have evolved as they did and the practical exercise of cross-Channel rule could even have been seriously compromised. It must also be noted that the massive expansion of the royal lands in Wessex that took place was actually a product of Harold's accession to kingship. If he had won the Battle of Hastings, he might well have placed an enhanced emphasis on Wessex's centrality to English kingship. While the second half of the 12th century is justifiably written about in terms of Winchester's decline, it is arguably doubtful that William would have wanted this to happen.<sup>107</sup> In the end the work of this volume's honorand is the indispensable basis for all serious analysis of a long-term continuum in which William the Conqueror's reign was a significant episode.

### Postscript

Since this article was passed over to the editors for publication, the remarkable Chew Valley coin hoard has been discovered. Found by metal detectorists in January 2019, it has yet to be analysed in depth. Gareth Williams of the British Museum has nonetheless made available to me a preliminary survey to indicate how its contents are likely to affect knowledge of William the Conqueror and Wessex. Containing 2,528 coins and comprising nearly twice as many of King Harold's coins and almost five times as many of William the Conqueror's first issue than were hitherto known, it is going to make a huge difference to numismatic analysis and its implications for the history of this turbulent period.

106 ASC E 1086.

107 Kenji Yoshitake, "The Place of Government in Transition: Winchester, Westminster and London in the Mid-Twelfth Century," in *Rulership and Rebellion in the Anglo-Norman World, c.1066–c.1216: Essays in Honour of Professor Edmund King*, Paul Dalton and David Luscombe (Farnham, 2015), pp. 61–75.

Its contents must date from 1067–69. The hoard's very existence suggests, as my chapter does, that conditions in Wessex were more unsettled than is often thought. The presence of coins of William's first issue from almost all of the south-western and Wessex mints nonetheless indicates that the new regime was able to organise minting throughout the region from the very beginning. But the presence of over 100 Harold coins from the Wilton mint suggests that minting of Harold coins continued there, probably under the auspices of his sister Queen Edith up until the time that she came to terms with William. We will learn much more when a detailed catalogue and analysis are published.

# Sanctity and Suffering: The Sacred World of the Medieval Leprosarium. A Perspective from St Mary Magdalen, Winchester

*Simon Roffey*

The first documented leprosy hospitals date from the late 11th century and it is generally believed that this period marks their first introduction into Anglo-Norman society.<sup>1</sup> However, there is certainly a prior context for related medical practice as well as the treatment of the ill and infirm in Pre-Norman England. Moreover, there is an increasing body of evidence for an increase in leprosy in the centuries leading up to the first documented foundations of leprosy hospitals, which suggests that the Normans may have institutionalised an already prevailing and progressively emergent disease.<sup>2</sup> This paper, based on ten years of research on the former *leprosarium* of St Mary Magdalen, Winchester, will provide an archaeological and historical reassessment of the social context of leprosy and the status of its institutions in medieval society (Fig. 25.1). Furthermore, it will also argue that the status of *leprosaria* were more akin to religious communities rather than wholly marginalized places for exclusion.

## *Leprosaria: The Early Medieval Background*

Leprosy has been claimed to have been a “social problem” by at least by 1044, when the leprous bishop, Ælfweard of London, was required to resign his bishopric.<sup>3</sup> That being said, skeletal evidence for leprosy is comparatively rare, apart from a few individual examples, and there is no archaeological

1 See Simon Roffey, “Charity and Conquest: *Leprosaria* in Early Norman England,” in *The Archaeology of the 11th Century: Continuities and Transformations*, ed. Dawn M. Hadley and Christopher Dyer, Society of Medieval Archaeology Monograph 38 (London and New York, 2017), pp. 170–80.

2 For a recent overview of skeletal evidence from Anglo-Saxon England see Sarah Inskip, G. Michael Taylor, Sue Anderson and Graham Stewart, “Leprosy in Pre-Norman Suffolk, UK: Biomolecular and Geochemical Analysis of the Woman from Hoxne,” *Journal of Medical Microbiology* 66 (2017), 1640–49.

3 Nicholas Orme and Margaret Webster, *The English Hospital 1070–1570* (New Haven, CT, 1995), p. 24.



FIGURE 25.1 The excavations of St Mary Magdalen, Winchester, looking west towards the City

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evidence for pre-Conquest hospitals in England. Perhaps the most intriguing evidence for a pre-Conquest community, or at least a defined cemetery group, comes from the excavations of the medieval churchyard at Castle Mall, Norwich, which revealed a series of burials which presented skeletal evidence of leprosy. Radiocarbon dates of eighteen individuals showed that the burial ground came into use in cal AD 980–1030 (95 per cent probability) and went out of use in cal AD 990–1050 (95 per cent probability).<sup>4</sup> Related artefacts recovered from the graves were generally of a late Saxon/Norman type. No related buildings were found to suggest the cemetery was part of a hospital complex, but it is entirely possible that any buildings, the majority likely of timber, had been destroyed by later burials, or even lie under the site of the later church itself.

The practice of medicine was already widespread in England prior to the Norman Conquest and physicians were a feature of Anglo-Saxon society from at least the 9th century. Alfred's biographer, Asser, relates, for example, that the king, who seems to have suffered from various illnesses, was often tended by

4 Elizabeth Shepherd-Popescu, *Norwich Castle: Excavations and Historical Survey 1987–98, Part 1: Anglo-Saxon to c.1345*, East Anglian Archaeology 132 (Norwich, 2009).

physicians (*medici*), possibly attached to the royal court.<sup>5</sup> The curing of people with leprosy does feature in some of the hagiographic and homiletic writings of the late Anglo-Saxon period. Ælfric, who spent much of his early monastic life in Winchester, in his *Lives of Saints*, presents a story of St Martin healing leprosy sufferers outside the gates of Paris.<sup>6</sup> Medical treatises of the late 9th and 10th centuries, including the *Old English Herbarium* and the *Lacnunga* refer to a range of skin ailments, some of which may have been leprosy.<sup>7</sup> The so-called *Bald's Leechbook*, of the late 9th or early 10th century, a work with possible Winchester connections, refers to the disease more directly as a “white roughness” (*hwite rieþfo*) which “is called leprosy in the south.”<sup>8</sup> Late Anglo-Saxon society certainly presented both the conditions and a socio-religious context for the evolution of the hospital. A fragmentary documentary record and growing archaeological evidence for leprosy in the pre-Conquest period may suggest an acute progression of leprosy leading to the institutionalisation of the disease in the first few decades of the Norman Conquest.

The late 11th and early 12th centuries witnessed the foundation of dedicated leprosy hospitals, often on the margins of European urban settlements. The implications of this marginal location, as well as related issues concerning contagion and religious exclusion, has led many traditional historians to view these institutions and their occupants as being excluded or marginalized from medieval society. This has consequently given rise to the popular (mis)conception of the ‘leper as outcast’ which has dominated the public imagination even into the 20th and 21st centuries.<sup>9</sup> In contrast, however, recent archaeological research on medieval leprosy hospitals suggests that many early institutions may have operated more as quasi-religious communities, with houses, chapels and organised cemeteries. Evidence from sites such as Winchester, one of the most comprehensively excavated examples, suggests a quality of life and status in death that runs contrary to traditional perceptions of people with leprosy

5 Asser, ch. 74. David Pratt, “The Illnesses of King Alfred the Great,” *ASE* 30 (2001), 39–90, at p. 39.

6 Ælfric’s *Lives of Three English Saints*, ed. and trans. Geoffrey I. Needham (Exeter, 1976), p. 69.

7 Sally Crawford, “The Nadir of Western Medicine? Texts, Contexts and Practice in Anglo-Saxon England,” in *Bodies of Knowledge: Cultural Interpretations of Illness and Medicine in Medieval Europe*, ed. Sally Crawford and Christina Lee, *Studies in Early Medicine* 1: BAR Int. Ser. 2170 (Oxford, 2010), pp. 41–52.

8 Christina Lee, “Changing Faces: Leprosy in Anglo-Saxon England,” in *Conversion and Colonization in Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. Catherine Karkov and Nicholas Howe (Tempe, AZ, 2006), pp. 59–81, at p. 75. The reference is in *Leechdoms, Wortcunning, and Starcraft of Early England*, ed. Oswald Cockayne, RS 35, 3 vols (London, 1864–6), 2:228–29.

9 See e.g. Saul Brody, *The Disease of the Soul: Leprosy in Medieval Literature* (London, 1974).

and their social context.<sup>10</sup> This research further supports recent revisionist approaches to medieval leprosy which argue that in some cases leprosy articulated a 'sanctity in suffering' and was a mark of divine favour.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, in the wider medieval landscape, rather than being segregated and excluded institutions, these communities were in fact an important and integral component of a broader sacred landscape in the medieval urban hinterlands.

### Medieval Leprosy: Perceptions and Misperceptions

In the medieval period leprosy was endemic to most of Asia, the Middle East and Europe. Today leprosy, or Hansen's disease as it is more commonly known, is a disease that still continues to impact on people in many countries, and the 'shame' of its affliction is still apparent in modern societies.<sup>12</sup> In this light any revision of early leprosy 'hospitals' as religious communities, with a special status in medieval society, should contribute to a more empathetic perspective. It can help challenge and address traditional misconceptions of the disease and its status in past society, and, in a wider global perspective, further an understanding of leprosy and the roots of discrimination in contemporary society. It has been claimed that much of the discrimination towards people with leprosy today ultimately stems from a biomedical segregationist agenda of the 19th century.<sup>13</sup> This is an agenda, developed in traditional academic disciplines, that can still be found within contemporary scholarship about leprosy and its history.<sup>14</sup> Despite the substantial progress made in the modern control of leprosy, discrimination has persisted partly because most languages have framed the word 'leprosy' as a synonym for indignity and stigma since the Middle Ages.

Early references to the treatment of people with leprosy can be found in Biblical sources, particularly the *Book of Leviticus*. Levite laws dealing with

10 Simon Roffey and Katie Tucker, "A Contextual Study of the Medieval Hospital and Cemetery of St Mary Magdalen, Winchester, England," *International Journal of Paleopathology* 2:4 (2012), 170–80; Simon Roffey, "Medieval Leper Hospitals in England: an Archaeological Perspective from St Mary Magdalen, Winchester," *Medieval Archaeology* 56 (2012), 203–33.

11 Simon Roffey and Phil Marter, "Treating Leprosy: St Mary Magdalen, Winchester," *Current Archaeology* 267 (2012), 12–18.

12 See <<https://www.lepra.org.uk/News/history-and-heritage-of-leprosy>> for example (accessed 24 May 2018).

13 See Carole Rawcliffe, *Leprosy in Medieval England* (Woodbridge 2006), pp. 17–29 for a more detailed discussion of leprosy and the origins of discrimination.

14 See Roffey, "Medieval Leper Hospitals in England" for a more detailed discussion.

ritual impurity stated that anyone with signs of leprosy were to be “led” or brought to the priest and consequently consigned to live “outside the camp.”<sup>15</sup> Later, echoes of this injunction can perhaps be found in later regulations and decrees such as Canon 23 of the 1179 Third Lateran Council, which stated that people with leprosy should not dwell among the healthy.<sup>16</sup> Here, the implied prohibition of such decrees would present one explanation as to why the majority of medieval leprosy hospitals were founded on the outskirts of towns. Consequently, the liminal treatment of people with leprosy has also been held to be akin to the treatment of criminals in the medieval period who were often buried on the boundaries and outskirts of towns.<sup>17</sup> In this respect, it has been suggested that *leprosaria* offered an alternative place for the burial of criminals. Excavations at the hospital of St Giles, Brompton Bridge (N. Yorks.) revealed the burial of an individual with leprosy placed on the hospital boundary. This was accordingly interpreted as that of a criminal or suicide.<sup>18</sup> However, apart from the location of the burial it is unclear as to how this interpretation has been reached,<sup>19</sup> and the archaeological evidence for the burial of criminals in leprosy hospitals is otherwise unconvincing. In contrast, as we shall see below, archaeological evidence from St Mary Magdalen, Winchester, reveals that the dead were treated with a level of dignity and respect, which perhaps reveals a more complex picture regarding their social status.

One common misunderstanding regarding leprosy in the medieval period is the belief that the disease was believed by medieval society to be contagious and was the specific reason why *leprosaria* were located outside of town boundaries. Thus, leprosy was “feared for its contagiousness” and thus “in their intent,” hospitals “were established to confine lepers (and so the disease) and to keep them alive.”<sup>20</sup> Consequently “the leper was a threat to society, the carrier of contagion, and society did what it could to protect itself.”<sup>21</sup> However, this may not have necessarily been the case and may be a largely anachronistic interpretation. Classical medical literature does not present any clear evidence

15 Leviticus 13:2, 7, 9 and 19; Leviticus 13:46, 14:2.

16 Norman, P. Tanner, ed. and trans., *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* (London, 1990), pp. 222–23.

17 Christopher Daniell, “Conquest, Crime and Theology in the Burial Record 1066–1200,” in *Burial in Early Medieval England and Wales*, ed. Sam Lucy and Andrew Reynolds, Society of Medieval Archaeology Monograph 17 (London, 2002), pp. 241–25, at p. 246.

18 Peter Cardwell, “Excavation of the Hospital of St Giles by Brompton Bridge, North Yorkshire,” *Archaeological Journal* 152 (1995), 109–245, at p. 128.

19 It is also possible that the burial may date from the later phases of the hospital when it ceased to function primarily as a *leprosarium*.

20 Brody, *Disease of the Soul*, pp. 60, 75.

21 Brody, *Disease of the Soul*, p. 79.

that the disease had been classified as a transmissible disease<sup>22</sup> and indeed the first appearance of views on the contagiousness of leprosy only emerged between c.1220–30, some 150 years after the first recorded foundation of leprosy hospitals.<sup>23</sup> In 1363 Guy de Chauliac was the first textbook author to make the connection by labelling the disease “contagious and infectious,”<sup>24</sup> although the foundation of *leprosaria*, as hence the disease itself, was in decline well before this time.<sup>25</sup> It is therefore reasonable to conclude that perceived views of people with leprosy, and the consequent location of the hospitals to which they are admitted, was not necessarily related to notions of disease transmission. Furthermore, it also challenges the idea of stigmatization, since contagiousness is often held as the primary reason for the specific location of hospitals.

### Hospital in the Landscape: Practicalities and Provision

Almost all medieval leprosy hospitals were founded on the edge of towns or in the immediate urban hinterland.<sup>26</sup> As noted, this specific location would naturally support the idea that hospitals were placed famously ‘outside the camp’. In this sense, however, it could be argued that in such instances we may be ultimately looking at the treatment of the *disease* itself rather than the *diseased*.<sup>27</sup> Nonetheless, it should also be noted that many other types of medieval hospital were found outside of towns, as at Canterbury, London and Winchester. This liminal location can also be applied to some urban monasteries, particularly friaries. Since, as we have noted above, a need for quarantine was not necessarily the prime motive behind the foundation of a hospital, at

22 Antje M. Schelberg “‘Morbus regius’—No Case for the Medieval Leprosy Examination Boards,” in *The Myths of Mediaeval Leprosy: A Collection of Essays*, ed. Antje M Schelberg, (Göttingen, 2006), pp. 1–15, at p. 8.

23 Justin K. Stearns, *Infectious Ideas: Contagion in Pre-Modern Islamic and Christian Thought in the Western Mediterranean* (Baltimore 2011), pp. 49, 102–51. For a wider discussion of contagion and leprosy see also Francois Olivier Touati, *Maladie et société au moyen âge. la lèpre, les lépreux et les léproseries dans la province ecclésiastique de Sens jusqu’au milieu du XIVe siècle* (Brussels, 1998); idem, “Contagion and Leprosy: Myths, Ideas and Evolution in Medieval Minds and Societies,” in *Contagion: Perspectives from Premodern Societies*, ed. Lawrence, I. Conrad and Dominik Wujastyk (Aldershot, 1999), pp. 161–83.

24 Luke Demaitre, *Leprosy in Premodern Medicine : A Malady of the Whole Body* (Baltimore, 2007), p. 40.

25 Roffey, “Medieval Leper Hospitals in England,” p. 214.

26 Roffey, “Medieval Leper Hospitals in England.”

27 Roffey, “Charity and Conquest” p.172.

least prior to c.1300, there must therefore be other possible reasons for leprosy hospitals being placed outside of medieval towns. These include proximity to important roads (i.e. London, Old Sarum, Norwich, Winchester and Southampton), a source of water (in the example of Bath, located on the bank of the river Avon), and ultimately the availability of land which would have been presumably more feasible on the outskirts of the town by the 12th century. At Norwich, all five leprosy hospitals were founded by the town's entrances.<sup>28</sup> Here perhaps one cannot imagine a more inappropriate place for a hospital if there was a fear of contagion. Such places would have been particularly busy and were often the location for markets or town gatherings. Overall self-sufficiency, rather than exclusivity, was the fundamental reason behind the siting of leprosy hospitals in and around towns. Here, in such visible and physically accessible places there would be perhaps greater capacity for attracting charity and alms-giving. In most examples, the *leprosarium* would be the first (or last) religious institution travellers and merchants came across when approaching or leaving a town. Such a position would have served as a potent symbol of civic charity and responsibility. At Southampton, the leprosy hospital, founded by the civic authorities, occupied several hundred metres of land, north of the Bargate, either side of the King's Highway to Winchester.<sup>29</sup>

The placing of many hospitals on major roads into towns also presented potent status symbols for their founders, often bishops, and by implication required visually impressive and well-appointed buildings. In this sense these pious, and visible, symbols would have effectively branded the landscape and, as we will see, arguably formed an important component in a wider network of religious sites in the medieval landscape. In this light such institutions may be viewed rather as religious communities than consolidated groups of outcasts. Furthermore, it is also possible that *leprosaria* may have been founded to create a monastic setting in which their inmates could pursue a primarily religious vocation,<sup>30</sup> and thus arguably of a status on par with that afforded to some minor monastic communities of the time.

28 Rawcliffe, *Leprosy in Medieval England*, p. 313, map 5.

29 Alan, D. Morton and Vaughan Birbeck, "Archaeological and Documentary Evidence of Southampton's Leper House," in *PHFCAS* 67:1 (2012), 210–18.

30 Elma Brenner, "Outside the Walls: Leprosy, Exclusion, and Social Identity in Twelfth and Thirteenth Century Rouen," in *Difference and Identity in Francia and Medieval France*, ed. Meredith Cohen and Justine Marie Firnhaber-Baker (Aldershot, 2010), pp. 139–56, at p. 142.

### Sanctity in Suffering

Prior to the 14th century, a period that may coincide with a growing understanding of disease transmission and contagion, there is some historical evidence to suggest that leprosy was believed to be a mark of divine favour, and its occurrence a religious calling and a “passport to paradise”.<sup>31</sup> In this context, the suffering associated with leprosy was viewed by some medieval theologians, such as St Hugh of Lincoln (c.1135–1200), as a form of purgatorial hardship and akin to the sufferings of Christ himself.<sup>32</sup> As early as the 4th century AD Gregory of Nazianzus (c.325–390) had referred to it as a sacred malady, and the Bishop of Tournai in 1239 claimed the disease as a gift from God.<sup>33</sup> In such instances, we may view related leprosy communities as representative of a type of religious calling, rather than imposed segregation, albeit with the proviso that the two are not necessarily mutually exclusive in all cases. It is here that archaeological evidence can add much to the debate where excavated examples and extant buildings from important medieval towns such as Rouen, France, and Winchester and Norwich in England indicate well-provisioned communities. Although it is unclear as to what extent such beliefs concerning leprosy and the vocational status of sufferers were universally held and, indeed, for how long, the archaeological evidence from the early phases at Winchester does go some way to support such a status.

Archaeological research at the medieval leprosy hospital of St Mary Magdalen, Winchester, one of the earliest dated examples from Western Europe (c.1070–90), has contributed much to the ongoing debate. Here, excavations have revealed the possible presence of an early religious community of people with leprosy, comprising evidence for former timber structures, a small masonry chapel and an organised cemetery (Fig. 25.2).<sup>34</sup> The archaeological evidence compares well with the earliest documented foundation at Harbledown, Canterbury (c.1080s). Here, a contemporary description refers to a chapel, timber houses and cemetery on the shelf of a hill.<sup>35</sup> At Winchester the primary phase of occupation had ended by the mid-12th century when a new chapel was constructed together with a masonry infirmary and associated structures. The cemetery was also decommissioned at this time, and a new cemetery laid out to the south of the chapel.

31 Rawcliffe, *Leprosy in Medieval England*, pp. 58–59.

32 Rawcliffe, *Leprosy in Medieval England*, p. 59.

33 Brody, *Disease of the Soul*, p. 101.

34 Roffey, “Medieval Leper Hospitals in England.”

35 Eadmer, *Eadmer's History of Recent Events in England*, ed. and trans. Geoffrey Bosanquet (London, 1964), 25; see also Roffey, “Charity and Conquest.”



FIGURE 25.2 View of the east end of the mid-12th-century chapel (looking south). The north-south running wall with the sandy mortar in the foreground represents the remains of the east end of the smaller and earlier chapel dating to around the first few decades of the Norman Conquest  
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Analysis of the cemetery material from Winchester was radiocarbon dated to the late 11th and early 12th centuries, and revealed skeletal evidence for leprosy in over 85% of excavated skeletons, a much larger percentage than has previously been recorded from any British site or anywhere else.<sup>36</sup> The high proportion of people with leprosy noted in the cemetery also suggests that medical diagnosis of the disease was very precise. There was also evidence from the

36 Roffey and Tucker, "A Contextual Study."



FIGURE 25.3 Burial from the cemetery of St Mary Magdalen. Note the grave cut with ledge and head niche  
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hospital, in one example, for remedial and surgical care in the form of a leg amputation with subsequent healing.<sup>37</sup> Together this points to the likelihood of a specialist institution and one that may have been founded as a direct contingency against the dramatic rise of the disease in the later 11th century. Overall, the evidence from Winchester shows a level of personal and communal, and possibly professional, provision that suggests an elevated level of social status, perhaps on par with minor monastic houses of the period.

The burials comprised men, women and children indicating a mixed community. The burials of these individuals are of some significance. Very few of the graves intercut, suggesting they had been marked. Furthermore, the form of graves was anthropomorphic, tapered with cut niches for the head. Many graves had evidence for ledges indicating that they were either covered by ledger slabs or, more likely, wooden boards (Fig. 25.3). The anthropomorphic style of burial is normally only otherwise found in the context of monastic burial, an example being the nearby abbey of St Mary's (Nunaminster) in Winchester.

37 Roffey and Tucker, "A Contextual Study."

Further afield, examples include the Cistercian abbey of Langthorne, Essex, the Benedictine priory of St Neots, Cambs., and St James's Priory, Bristol, among others.<sup>38</sup> At St Mary Magdalen, Winchester, this was also a form of burial that was applied equally to male and female burials as well as, unusually, to neonate burials. It can thus be argued that these burials were treated as burials of the religious; a status afforded all members of the community (including babies), with the only condition being that all individuals had evidence of leprosy. This may again confirm that, at least at Winchester, the community was not viewed as contagious outcasts but rather as a religious community, with leprosy as a form of 'divine calling' and vocation.

### Pilgrim Burial

One of the burials present at the *leprosarium* of St Mary Magdalen, Winchester, represents the only example of a pilgrim burial with a scallop shell in a medieval leprosy hospital cemetery.<sup>39</sup> Osteological and scientific analysis indicated that the pilgrim had experienced early onset of leprosy, although the disease was probably not the direct cause of death sometime in the early 12th century. It is therefore likely that the pilgrim had contracted the disease fairly recently and raises the possibility that he had come into contact with a carrier of the disease, possibly asymptomatic, during his travels.<sup>40</sup> The individual was accompanied by a scallop shell with two pierced holes that was found on the left side of the pelvis (Fig. 25.4). The two small holes were presumably for attachment to a scrip or bag which no longer survived. Together with the pilgrim's staff and hat, the scrip, which in appearance would have resembled a pouch, had a symbolic as well as practical function and was often blessed before pilgrimage.<sup>41</sup> Scallop shells badges have been found in other religious contexts including Lichfield and Worcester Cathedrals and Hulton Abbey, Staffs.<sup>42</sup> This type of badge has long been associated with pilgrimage to the shrine of St James the Great at the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela, Galicia, Spain,

38 Roberta Gilchrist and Barney Sloane, *Requiem: The Medieval Monastic Cemetery in Britain* (London 2005).

39 Simon Roffey, Katie Tucker, Kori Filipek-Ogden, et al., "Investigation of a Medieval Pilgrim Burial Excavated from the *Leprosarium* of St Mary Magdalen Winchester, UK," *PLOS Neglected Tropical Diseases* 11:1 (2017), 1–27.

40 Roffey, Tucker, Filipek-Ogden, et al., "Investigation of a Medieval Pilgrim Burial."

41 Roffey, Tucker, Filipek-Ogden, et al., "Investigation of a Medieval Pilgrim Burial." See also for comparative examples of pilgrim burials with scallop shells.

42 Gilchrist and Sloane, *Requiem*, p. 127.



FIGURE 25.4

Scallop shell pilgrim badge from St Mary Magdalen dating to the first few decades of the 12th century. Note the small holes which would have been used to attach the shell to the pilgrim's bag or scrip

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since at least 1130.<sup>43</sup> The shrine of St James at Santiago de Compostela, Spain, together with Jerusalem and Rome, was one of the three great pilgrimages of the medieval period.<sup>44</sup> However, pilgrimage was an international phenomenon, and saints' shrines (often contexts for miraculous cure of illness and disease) were numerous throughout medieval Europe. In England, the principle pilgrim centres were Canterbury and Walsingham. However, Winchester was also an important and popular pilgrim centre in its own right.

By the early 12th century, Winchester was a bustling and cosmopolitan city. Replete with shrines, religious institutions and hospitals it also represented a central place in the pilgrimage landscape. The city housed several important relics, including those of the Saints Swithun, Birinus, Judoc and Grimbald. The city was also central to a network of pilgrim routes in the south of England stretching from Glastonbury in the west to Canterbury in the east. To the north of Winchester lay Reading Abbey, which was one of the most important pilgrimage sites in Western Europe.<sup>45</sup> In the 12th century, Reading had acquired the hand of St James, formerly held by the German Imperial Treasury and

43 John Cherry, "The Depiction of St James Compostela on Seals," in *Beyond Pilgrim Souvenirs and Secular Badges: Essays in Honour of Brian Spencer*, ed. Sarah Blick (Oxford, 2007), pp. 37–47, at p. 40.

44 Simon Roffey, *Chantry Chapels and Medieval Strategies for the Afterlife* (Stroud: 2008), p. 124.

45 Julie M. Candy, *The Archaeology of Pilgrimage on the Camino de Santiago de Compostela: a Landscape Perspective*, BAR Int. Ser. 1948 (Oxford, 2009), p. 4.

brought to England by Matilda, daughter of Henry I.<sup>46</sup> Such an acquisition would have been a major draw for pilgrims. Moreover, Winchester was only 15 km from the bustling port of Southampton where many pilgrims would have arrived from, or embarked on, pilgrimages overseas. Winchester, served by its own important shrines, was thus a key focal point in a wider pilgrim network. This then raises a question concerning the wider landscape context of the *leprosarium* at Winchester, and to what extent it might have fitted into a wider network of religious sites in the landscape.

### Hospitals in the Landscape: A Spiritual Network?

The medieval urban hinterland was a landscape imbued with meaning. Springs, ancient paths, hills, churches, monasteries, hermitages and hospitals together created a web of ciphers and symbols that made up an interconnected and sacred landscape. In particular, religious institutions, through their patronal saints and holy communities, invested these hinterlands with dynamic spiritual significance. In Winchester, Derek Keene has argued that the “physical ordering of Winchester from the 9th to 12th century was informed by a succession of powerful ideologies and models.”<sup>47</sup> Here, certain groups of churches such as St James and St Anastasius by virtue of their placement at the suburban limits or on hill tops close to the city may have “come to express Winchester’s role as a point of departure for places of pilgrimage overseas and itself a destination for pilgrims.”<sup>48</sup> Other churches in the hinterlands also followed this pattern and included the chapel of St Catherine (on St Catherine’s Hill, to the south of the city), evoking perhaps Alexandria, Mount Sinai and the Holy Land; St Faith’s, associated from the 11th century with the important pilgrimage to Conques; St Giles, associated with the pilgrim centre at Gilles de Garde; and St Cross providing perhaps a symbolic association between

46 Cherry, “The Depiction of St James Compostela,” p. 40.

47 Derek Keene, “Early Medieval Winchester: Symbolic Landscapes,” in *Lords and Towns in Medieval Europe: The European Historic Towns Atlas Project*, ed. Anngret Simms and Howard B. Clarke (Farnham, 2015), pp. 419–45, at p. 443. Here it is interesting to note that the influential Bishop of Winchester, Henry de Blois (1129–71), was possibly accused by the Cistercian Bernard of Clairvaux of intending to make Winchester a second Rome. Bishop Henry also petitioned, unsuccessfully, for Winchester to be made an archbishopric around this time. See also Jeffrey West “A Taste for the Antique? Henry of Blois and the Arts,” *ANS* 30 (2008), 213–30.

48 Keene, “Early Medieval Winchester,” p. 436.

Winchester and Jerusalem.<sup>49</sup> Significantly, Keene goes on to mention the leprosy hospital at St Mary Magdalen claiming that its refoundation in the 12th century would have “reinforced Winchester’s association with pilgrimage, Jerusalem and the Resurrection” (Fig. 25.5).<sup>50</sup>

The presence of St Mary Magdalen, and therefore the inclusion of its community in this symbolic ordering, again reinforces the explicit status of people with leprosy and their hospitals in the 11th and 12th centuries. In this context, *leprosaria* were not segregated or excluded groups of outcasts but fundamental constituents of medieval urban social and religious life. Moreover, the specific location of leprosy hospitals on the boundaries of medieval towns can be viewed as occupying a peculiar, yet distinctive, liminal place in the medieval landscape. As noted, at Norwich five leprosy hospitals occupied positions by the entrances to the city. At Old Sarum, the hospital was positioned just outside the entrance to the early Norman town and castle and on the junction between three major roads. As at Winchester, these hospitals can rather be seen as important and integral components of a broader sacred landscape. Rather than outcasts, in some cases these communities were endowed with divine favour; the institutions acted as spiritual guardians marking and protecting the approaches to medieval towns and cities. At Winchester, many of the churches might have had some visual association and would have been visible, along with the Cathedral, from valley bottom to the south of the city by visitors travelling to or from the continental port at Southampton.<sup>51</sup> In particular, the hilltop locations of St Mary Magdalen, together with St Giles and St Catherine’s chapels, would have provided prominent landmarks, interconnected and visually prominent from both within the city and its approaches. Here, St Mary Magdalen was not only physically connected, but also visually and spatially interconnected to other landscape features and religious institutions, contributing to a complex network of sacralisation in the medieval urban hinterland.

Past perceptions and traditional histories of people with leprosy add little to a progressive and informed academic debate on the subject. The implications of such views are particularly acute today where in many parts of the world people still experience leprosy (Hansen’s Disease) and related discriminative and prohibitive legislation. Despite this, recent years have witnessed a reassessment of the evidence, and questioned the idea of the ‘medieval leper’ as outcast. The evidence from 12th-century Winchester, when placed into this

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49 Keene, “Early Medieval Winchester,” pp. 438–39.

50 Keene, “Early Medieval Winchester,” p. 440.

51 Keene, “Early Medieval Winchester,” p. 438.



FIGURE 25.5 Pilgrimage landscape of the Winchester hinterland, from north to south (approximate locations): Hyde Abbey (relics of St Grimbald), St Mary Magdalen, St James (with relic of St James), St Giles (pilgrimage centre at Gilles de Gard and on land route to Santiago), St Faith (pilgrim centre at Conques), Hospital of St Cross (Jerusalem and Holy Cross found by St Helena), St Catherine (Monastery at Sinai).

context, further challenges these long-held assumptions and suggests, that at least in this case, hospitals were communities of leprosy sufferers who may have carried their disease as a religious calling. Here, such communities may have contributed to a wider symbolic landscape of religious institutions in the wider urban and suburban landscapes. Ultimately, in this light we can see the first *leprosaria* of the late 11th and early 12th centuries as being more akin to religious communities rather than segregated communities of outcasts. In this light, they may have served as an innovative institutional, and formally religious, component of a long standing tradition of early medieval health-care and healing. Far from being excluded from early medieval society they were an integral component of it. However, it is likely that such a situation was relatively short-lived, and leprosy as a religious vocation was not, in general, destined to survive beyond the 13th century.<sup>52</sup> It is possible that as the disease continued to spread during the later 12th and 13th centuries, and coupled with a growing awareness of disease transmission and contagion, these early communities morphed into more formal institutions. This may have also coincided with the development of clearer defined and more explicit (and explanatory) church legislation. Now, although the church might decree that leprosy was a gift of God, its bishops and priest would nonetheless increasingly use the disease as a useful and familiar metaphor for spiritual degeneration.<sup>53</sup> By the 1180s at Winchester, the simple timber buildings, chapel and cemetery had been replaced by masonry buildings and a more formal organised arrangement introduced. This included a large masonry infirmary and a formal cloister. It was also a period when the hospital began to appear more prominently in the historical records.<sup>54</sup> Initial excavation of the later cemetery at Winchester revealed burials that were less defined, non-anthropomorphic and truncated and overall in stark contrast to the earlier burials.

Winchester in the late 11th and early 12th centuries was still a city of some national importance and this is reflected by the impressive programme of rebuilding initiated by the early Norman kings and bishops. Furthermore, Winchester continued to represent a powerful symbol of secular and religious authority, and it may be that the community at St Mary Magdalen was unique in this context. Yet, this may not necessarily be the case and more archaeological research needs to be conducted on early, or 'first phase', leprosy hospitals, a period, as at Winchester, that may often predate any documented histories.

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52 Rawcliffe, *Leprosy in Medieval England*, p. 59.

53 Brody, *Disease of the Soul*, p. 61.

54 There is no documentary reference to the hospital or community at Winchester prior to 1148, during the 60 or 70 years after its first archaeologically-dated phases.

Such research, it is hoped, will begin to shed more light on the status of such early *leprosaria* and their communities in the 11th and early 12th centuries, as well as Anglo-Saxon precedents. It will move to provide an alternative picture to the 'medieval leper' as outcast and further help to challenge traditionally-derived misconceptions of a disease that is very much alive today.

# Ely Cathedral and the Afterlife of Ealdorman Byrhtnoth

*Katherine Weikert*

In 1154, seven Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian men were translated to the new Norman cathedral at Ely (Cambs.) and reburied together in a single monument in the north transept of the cathedral.<sup>1</sup> One of these men was the Ealdorman Byrhtnoth. Byrhtnoth is of course a well-known figure in late Anglo-Saxon England, with a relatively rich documentary record for the period. He witnessed a number of charters through a long career in the reigns of Æthelred, Edgar, Edward, Eadwig and Eadred,<sup>2</sup> and was named in the wills of his father-in-law, Ealdorman Ælfgar, and sister-in-law, Æthelflæd.<sup>3</sup> He gained a reputation as a virtuous man and spoke in defence of monks who would have been expelled in favour of secular clergy during the ‘anti-monastic’ reaction following the death of King Edgar in 975.<sup>4</sup> He predeceased his wife Ælflæd and so is not mentioned in her will, but there are numerous notices of their joint gifts as well as the gifts of their extended family in *Liber Eliensis* (11.62–64). His death is recorded in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* as well as *Liber Eliensis*, and in more heroic form in the *Vita Oswaldi* as well as in the well-known poem “The Battle of Maldon.”<sup>5</sup> This text has been used more than any other in medieval and modern times to reconstruct the persona of this famous and heroic man.

1 I am always grateful to have received guidance, advice and hopefully just a fraction of Barbara Yorke’s knowledge as her PhD student 2010–13; I have greatly benefitted from her wisdom and support as both an academic and a human being. My thanks also to Ros Faith, David Green, Charles Insley, Ryan Lavelle, Simon Roffey and Simon Yarrow for very helpful discussion on points of this paper, as well as to the conveners and audiences at seminars and conferences at Oxford, Cardiff, Manchester and Southampton for comments on early stages of research. All remaining errors, of course, are my own.

2 PASE, “Byrhtnoth 1.”

3 S 1483, S 1494.

4 *EHD* 1, no. 236; Richard Abels, “Byrhtnoth [Brihtnoth] (d. 991), Magnate and Soldier,” *ODNB* <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/3429>> (accessed 12 June 2015); Byrhtferth of Ramsey, *Vita S. Oswaldi*, 1v.13, Byrhtferth of Ramsey: *Lives of St Oswald and St Ecgwine*, ed. Michael Lapidge (Oxford, 2009), pp. 127–29; *LE*, 11.62, pp. 133–36; trans. Fairweather, pp. 160–61, n. 295.

5 *ASC* A, C (D, E), p. 82; *Vita Oswaldi* V.5, pp. 156–59; “The Battle of Maldon,” in *The Battle of Maldon AD 991*, ed. Donald Scragg (Oxford, 1991), pp. 1–36.

However, Byrhtnoth was not the only man represented on this monument; he joined six others in this place of honour in Ely. These men represented various identities, local and international, secular and sacred, but grouped together, their identities were transmuted into one that was best for Ely in the 12th century: a worthy and decidedly masculine grouping offered for veneration. These 12th-century representations have been largely understudied, though there is a compelling reason for this: the original monument, spoken of in two 12th-century texts, is lost, as is one of these two texts themselves. However, grouped together, the remaining evidence gives a tantalizing view of what Ely was doing with their past. There is much to read in this monument, but most questions fall under this umbrella: why these men, at this place, at this time? There are three main points to read in this. Firstly, of course, there is the financial impact of new saints. But more importantly, the next two: secondly, the political associations and affiliations that can be read in this particularly interesting selection of men through their group identities. And finally, the spatial implications of its location for a gendered reading of the space.

I take as a starting point here David Lowenthal's writing on the past itself as a foreign country:<sup>6</sup> in presenting these long-dead men as their new and, at the same time, nostalgic worthies, the Anglo-Norman monastery utilized a combination of Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian men to create a "useable past"<sup>7</sup> to best represent their own purposes and identities in the 12th century when, in fact, there would have been significant separations between the personal identities of these pre-Conquest men and the 12th-century monks at Ely. In addition to this, at this time western Europe was in the grips of what Jo Anne McNamara has aptly called the *Herrenfrage*, a crisis of monastic and sacred masculinities whose solution was for sacred and secular men to "establish their own dominance at any cost."<sup>8</sup> This would include reasserting repetitive versions of hegemonic masculinities available in the 12th century, but in this instance at Ely the martial and saintly aspects of masculinities were brought to the fore in this monument and its placement in the Cathedral. At Ely's refoundation in 970 as a part of the Benedictine reforms, it had become a male-only monastery.<sup>9</sup> But the monastery was originally founded in the later 7th century

6 David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country: Revisited* (Cambridge, 2015).

7 Van W. Brooks, "On Creating a Usable Past," *The Dial* 64:7 (1918), 337–41.

8 Jo Ann McNamara, "The Herrenfrage: The Restructuring of the Gender System 1050–1150," in *Medieval Masculinities: Regarding Men in the Middle Ages*, ed. Clare A. Lees. (Minneapolis, MN, 1994), pp. 3–29, at p. 19. McNamara's decision to use a German coinage for a "Man Question" is a response to the traditional historiographical notion of a *Frauenfrage*.

9 "Houses of Benedictine Monks: Abbey and Cathedral Priory of Ely," in *VCH Cambs.*, 2 (1948), pp. 199–210.

by royal female founders who became saints, Æthelthryth and her companions, sisters, and later abbesses, Wihtburh, Seaxburh, and Eorminhild.<sup>10</sup> When Ely put their monument to their seven men on an intersecting path to the four women saints, this impacted the creation of a memory culture surrounding their mythologized and nostalgized past. This monument and its contextualized place provides an opportunity to view Ely familiarizing a foreign past to suit their purposes, and at the same time introducing male worthies to their saintly pantheon, metaphorical and spatially interrupting the memory culture of their female founders.

This chapter will approach the memorialization in two separate but intertwined ways. First, I will examine the individual and the group identities of these seven worthy men. By demonstrating Ely's familiarization and use of their own past, we can see the monastery compressing individual identities, particularly those of Ealdorman Byrhtnoth and Bishop Osmund of Skara, into group identities more appropriate for the 12th-century fens, and (particularly in the case of Osmund), making their broadly-travelled lives of secondary importance to their localized importance: the foreign past here did not matter so much as their personae and ability to be used in a political present. Second, the group's identity as specifically male also is key to understanding these men's potential importance of shaping a memory culture at Ely to medieval travellers and pilgrims, intervening in their development of 'memories' about these men and casting their personae in a way that best suited Ely's needs. By considering the lived experience of encountering this memorial on Ely's pilgrim trail we can understand how Ely was actively reconstructing their past through not only written, but also visual means.

### The Texts and the Monuments

In order to fully appreciate what the sources can tell us, we have to discuss a lost text, the physical memorialization at Ely and *Liber Eliensis* in conjunction with one another, and doubly so as the lost text survives via *Liber Eliensis* itself. The three are substantially intertwined. The lost manuscript, called the *History of Seven Illustrious Men* in Janet Fairweather's recent translation of *Liber*

10 John Crook, "Vir optimus Wlstanus": The Post-Conquest Commemoration of Archbishop Wulfstan of York at Ely Cathedral," in *Wulfstan, Archbishop of York: The Proceedings of the Second Alcuin Conference*, ed. Matthew Townend (Turnhout, 2004), pp. 501–24, at p. 524.

*Eliensis*,<sup>11</sup> outlines the lives and deeds of, indeed, seven illustrious men who were crucial patrons to Ely in the late Anglo-Saxon period: Archbishop Wulfstan of York; Bishop Osmund of Skara; Bishops Ælfwine and Ælfgar of Elmham; Eadnoth of Ramsey; Bishop Æthelstan of Elmham; and Byrhtnoth. The *History* has probably been lost since perhaps as early as the 14th century, based upon a note in the Cambridge manuscript of *Liber Eliensis* (discussed below). It is assumed to be written by Prior Alexander specifically during the reign of King Stephen, giving it a relatively secure date of 1151×54.<sup>12</sup> It probably had an intensely localized interest; given the translation of these seven men around the same time, it reads much like a modern guidebook to the tomb of the seven men.

Its inclusion in *Liber Eliensis* only a couple of decades after its production allowed its survival. The chronicle-cartulary *Liber Eliensis* tells the history of Ely through the compilation of local history, archived charters, and commentary from a monastic compiler who had knowledge of English, if was not of English ancestry himself. The oldest manuscripts are the E manuscript from the 12th century, Trinity College Cambridge, and the 13th-century F manuscript, Cambridge University Library, a fuller version and one used for both the Blake transcription and the Fairweather translation.<sup>13</sup> A note on the unbound flyleaf of the F manuscript mentions that “[t]hese are the confessors of Christ, whose bodies lie on the north side of the choir of the church of Ely, separately in *loculi* (or *locelli*) in the stone wall,” followed by a list of the pious men’s names: Wulfstan, Osmund, Ælfwine, Ælfgar, Eadnoth, Æthelstan, Byrhtnoth.<sup>14</sup> According to Simon Keynes, the hand is a “scrawl” of the second quarter of the

11 Further noted by Blake, in his introduction to his edition of the *LE*, pp. xxxviii; Elizabeth Coatsworth, “Byrhtnoth’s Tomb,” in *The Battle of Maldon AD 991*, ed. Scragg, pp. 279–88, at p. 279; and James Bentham, *The History and Antiquities of the Conventual and Cathedral Church of Ely from the Foundation of the Monastery, A.D. 673, to the Year 1771* (Norwich, 1812). The lost document will be referred to as the *History* in the remainder of this article for clarity’s sake.

12 Blake, “Introduction,” p. xxxviii; “Houses of Benedictine Monks,” pp. 199–210.

13 See Fairweather’s introduction to her translation of *LE*, pp. xiv–xv; xxv–xxvi; Trinity College Cambridge MS O.2.1; Cambridge University Library, EDC 1. EDC 1 was consulted for this chapter.

14 “Isti sunt confessores Christi quorum corpora jacent ex parte aquilonari chori ecclesie Eliensis in locellis separatim in pariete lapideo.” Cambridge University Library, EDC 1. Translation from Crook, “Vir optimus Wlstanus,” p. 506. Byrhtnoth in this note is titled as the duke of Northumbria, echoing his notation as such in LE 11.62. Blake (p. 134, n. 1) suggests that the compiler at Ely knew the poem “The Battle of Maldon” and “drew a wrong conclusion” about the language used for a Northumbrian hostage fighting for Byrhtnoth (“*on Norðhymbron*”). Fairweather (p. 160, n. 298) notes that only in the Ely tradition is Byrhtnoth associated with Northumbria. By the 13th-century Cambridge University Library:

14th century,<sup>15</sup> probably contemporary with the new quire at Ely following the collapse of the Norman tower in 1322 and the men's own retranslation into the quire wall. It is notable that the seven are written as "confessores Christi," and that Byrhtnoth's legacy at this point in the 14th century was not his military or secular identity.<sup>16</sup> The original *History* probably talked about the men in order of their placement in the memorial monument in Ely, reading from left to right, and the compiler of *Liber Eliensis* appears to have more or less done a medieval 'copy-paste' of the details of this text, though rearranging the text to place the men in chronological order rather than their order on the monument. Indeed, the compiler of *Liber Eliensis* specifically noted that he wrote about these men out of order because of narrative demands (11.87); the narrative was chronological, whilst the positioning of the seven men in situ, from Wulfstan to Byrhtnoth, was not. In fact, chapter 87 of book II of *Liber Eliensis*—the chapter about Wulfstan—speaks of these men, noting "first of these in order is the excellent man Wulfstan," when by this point in *Liber Eliensis*, most of the others had already had their chapters.<sup>17</sup>

The occasion of writing the *History* probably corresponds to the first translation of these men in the 12th century. They were translated a second time into the north quire wall with the build of the new quire in the early 14th century following the collapse of the Norman tower.<sup>18</sup> They remained there until 18 May 1769, when these bones again saw the light of day as they were translated a third time from this location to their current site in the chantry chapel of Bishop West.<sup>19</sup> The seven bodies were placed in the order that they were placed in the 14th-century monument,<sup>20</sup> likely the same order that they were in during the 1154 translation. Sadly, *Liber Eliensis* is mainly quiet about the tomb and location of these seven men at their 1154 translation, outside of the mention that the "first in order is Wulfstan" and that the men were placed on the north side of the cathedral (11.87).<sup>21</sup> The current, 18th-century monument is thought almost universally to reflect the 14th-century layout of the men.

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EDC 1 and the 14th-century note in its flyleaf, the knowledge and memory of his office had already been transmuted.

15 Cited in Crook, "Vir optimus Wlstanus," p. 506.

16 Coatsworth, "Byrhtnoth's Tomb," p. 280.

17 *LE*, trans. Fairweather, p. 185.

18 C.W. Stubbs, *Historical Memorials of Ely Cathedral* (Ely, 1897), p. 91.

19 R.J. King, "Ely Cathedral," in his *Handbook to the Cathedrals of England* (London, 1862). Available at <[http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Gazetteer/Places/Europe/Great\\_Britain/England/\\_Topics/churches/\\_Texts/KINCAT\\*/Ely/1.html](http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Gazetteer/Places/Europe/Great_Britain/England/_Topics/churches/_Texts/KINCAT*/Ely/1.html)> (accessed 13 Mar. 2015).

20 Stubbs, *Historical*, pp. 92–93.

21 *LE*, trans. Fairweather, p. 185.

Based upon remaining stonework, drawings of the 14th-century monument, and antiquarian records from the 18th century, T.D. Atkinson and John Crook also claim that this alignment could reflect the 12th-century line-up.<sup>22</sup> Fairweather has also noted that the order of these seven worthies, in a monument facing north with names reading Wulfstan to Byrhtnoth from left to right, followed precedence: the archbishop and possible saint, arguably the most holy, was (and indeed still is) to the east with the sole secular patron, Byrhtnoth, to the west.<sup>23</sup>

It must be acknowledged that there is no material evidence to definitively place this memorial to the seven worthies within the cathedral to which they were transferred in the mid 12th century. The 12th-century memorial, as mentioned, has not survived to the present day. But this memorial has long been researched, considered, and recorded from the 12th century till today, in terms of its size, its style, and its form. Antiquarian drawings of the 14th-century shrine record in general terms the 14th-century monument that was mostly destroyed in the 18th-century translation; most recently, John Crook has examined these drawings alongside the cathedral fabric itself for indications of accuracy and structure.<sup>24</sup> Research from Crook and Atkinson place the 12th-century monument in the north side of the crossing, between the Norman piers, facing into the north transept.<sup>25</sup> This is also a convenient placement as it would be where the men would stay until their movement in the 18th century to facilitate the quire being moved north, out of the octagon. But what we can build from this contextualization of evidence and simple placement of the monument is a further ability to examine the monument and its place in much more detail, not only in its interpretation via group identities, but through its spatial arrangement within the Cathedral itself.

The group identities are painted for us most clearly through the *History/Liber Eliensis*. The *History/Liber* portrays a slightly altered Byrhtnoth from the man of the poem, mostly in the focus of his generosity to the abbey, but he still displays the appropriate ranges of heroic masculinity. For example, Byrhtnoth

22 "City of Ely: Cathedral," in *VCH Cambs.* 4 (2002), pp. 50–77; Crook, "Vir optimus Wlstanus," p. 521.

23 Janet Fairweather, *Bishop Osmund: A Missionary to Sweden in the Late Viking Age* (Skara, 2014), p. 330.

24 Crook, "Vir optimus Wlstanus"

25 Crook, "Vir optimus Wlstanus," p. 516; John Crook, *English Medieval Shrines* (Woodbridge, 2011), pp. 178–79; T.D. Atkinson, et al., "City of Ely: Cathedral," in *VCH Cambs.* 4:50–77; Eric Fernie, "Observations on the Norman Plan of Ely Cathedral," in *Medieval Art and Architecture at Ely Cathedral*, British Archaeological Association Conference Transactions 2 (London, 1979), pp. 1–7.

is still brave and daring. He was “indefatigable in soldiering and warfare, courageous beyond all measure”; he was incited to “daring” by messages from the vikings to, essentially, come and get them. He fought forcefully for fourteen days and was still fighting when his head was cut off (*LE* 11.62), much in the same way the Byrhtnoth of poem was still kicking it when his arm was taken off,<sup>26</sup> and indeed the Byrhtnoth of *Vita S. Oswaldi* takes the biblical allusions of fighting to the left and the right while going down in a blaze of glory.<sup>27</sup> But the Byrhtnoth of *Liber Eliensis* is also quite a comrade; he refuses to stay at Ramsey when they refuse to fete all of his men: “I will not dine alone without the men you refer to, because I cannot fight alone without them” (11.62).<sup>28</sup> Underlining the importance of this camaraderie, a post-13th-century reader of *Liber Eliensis* even took care to highlight this passage in the marginalia of the Cambridge University Library EDC 1 manuscript.

Perhaps as would be appropriate to a monastic cartulary, the Byrhtnoth of the *History/Liber* also takes on more typically venerable features. Byrhtnoth “honoured Holy Church and the servants of God everywhere” (*LE* 11.62),<sup>29</sup> probably in reference to his vehement defence of monks against secular clergy noted in the *Liber Eliensis* (11.51) and *Vita Oswaldi* in 975.<sup>30</sup> But this Byrhtnoth goes beyond these words from decades before and puts this defence of holiness into action at Ely. Before battle, in gratefulness for the monks’ hospitality, Byrhtnoth gives Ely a laundry list of estates and precious moveable goods. The *Liber Eliensis* Byrhtnoth dies in battle and is retrieved by the monks at Ely; they replace his head with one of wax and bury him at Ely (11.62). Beyond Byrhtnoth’s actions, more is made of his generosity via his family; both his wife and her sister are mentioned in the next two chapters of *Liber Eliensis*, giving estates and objects like a wall-hanging illustrating the deeds of the heroically deceased Byrhtnoth (11.63, 64). So this Byrhtnoth is no less courageous and has all of his military masculinity trappings, but *Liber Eliensis* also casts his as considerably more generous and not only as a defender of the realm but a defender of Ely and the church.

But Byrhtnoth was only one of seven in this text and this monument. The eagerness to read Byrhtnoth from these texts has overshadowed the importance of establishing a group identity or identities to these seven who were

26 “Battle of Maldon,” ed. Scragg, lines 160–84.

27 *Vita Oswaldi* v.5, p. 157.

28 “Sciat dominus abbas, quod solus sine istis nolo prandere, quia solus sine illis nequeo pugnare;” *LE*, trans. Fairweather, p. 162.

29 “Preterea sanctum ecclesiam et Dei ministros ubique honorabat;” *LE*, trans. Fairweather, p. 160.

30 *Vita Oswaldi* 1v.13, pp.127–29.

remembered together, and how the memories of these men were developed and underlined by both the *History/Liber* and the monument. Elizabeth Coatsworth has already noted that these seven were translated from the Anglo-Saxon cathedral as a group, not as individuals, and Byrhtnoth was not made distinct from the other six as a “lay hero,”<sup>31</sup> and this needs further examination. Group identities, and how they are represented, are here key to understanding the purpose of this monument in shaping the memory of the past in the 12th-century cathedral. Each individual, examined here in order of their appearance in the monument, needs to be considered in order to discern these group identities.

Wulfstan (d. 1023) was “one of the half dozen most significant figures even in the crowded and dramatic history of 11th-century England”; as a writer of both homilies and legislation his stamp was felt strongly in the English and European culture of the time.<sup>32</sup> Although no vita was written about him, the *History/Liber* chooses to record details of a typically hagiographic nature about his determination to be buried at Ely thanks to his crosier sinking half-way into the floor at Ely during a procession. There are further details of miracles at his tomb, including the healing of diseases. Moreover, *Liber Eliensis* (11.87) helpfully notes that, although Wulfstan’s body had decayed, there were convenient contact relics such as his chasuble, stole, maniple, and gilded pins available, and even casts as miraculous that these objects were still around despite the time lapse from their burial and their proximity to a decaying body! Joyce Tally Lionarons has already noted that Ely was trying to capitalize on the status of Wulfstan to propagate a cult by the report of the miracles at his grave;<sup>33</sup> here, the *History/Liber* is practically waving a flag to point out that there is still plenty to see here, despite the lack of a saintly body.

The biographical details of Bishop Osmund (d. no later than 1075) have been somewhat contested, although recent work has shed more light on his life and times.<sup>34</sup> Albeit not much described in the *History/Liber*, Osmund appears to have been a well-travelled and well-learned (if controversial) figure. He was trained in Bremen, travelled to Rome where he was “repulsed” and left without episcopal orders but subsequently consecrated in the Polish archbishopric of

31 Coatsworth, “Byrhtnoth’s Tomb,” p. 280.

32 Patrick Wormald, “Wulfstan (d. 1023),” *ODNB* <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/30098>> (accessed 12 June 2015).

33 Joyce Tally Lionarons, *The Homiletic Writings of Archbishop Wulfstan: A Critical Study* (Woodbridge, 2010), p. 10.

34 Fairweather, *Bishop Osmund*. The date of Osmund’s death is discussed at p. 330.

Gniezno, or the territory of Kieven Rus'.<sup>35</sup> Osmund then went to Sweden where he was the bishop of Skara and had archiepiscopal aspirations.<sup>36</sup> He was adept at Byzantine doctrine, and was possibly brought to Sweden to help create a "national" Church.<sup>37</sup> Adam of Bremen found Osmund a questionable figure; however, Skara was a "neglected" see of Bremen, and Bremen's renewed attention on Skara led to the insertion of a new bishop in the place of Osmund.<sup>38</sup> The struggle for control of Skara between Bremen and the Swedish kings explains much of Adam's ire. Whatever Osmund's reputation within the spheres of Skara and Bremen, though, it apparently did not proceed him to Ely, or at least was not important to the 12th-century writers. The *History/Liber* instead primarily speaks of his attachment to King Edward and subsequently to Ely in his retirement (*LE* 11.99). This international figure of sacred rank and secular consultation was placed next to Wulfstan on the monument, the archbishop, perhaps indicating Osmund's ranking as important in a number of contexts, not just to Ely.

Bishop Ælfwine of Elmham (d. by 1038<sup>39</sup>) was a well-known entity to Ely, having been at Ely as a child oblate before being raised to the bishopric of Elmham in the time of King Æthelred (*LE* 11.75). His depiction on the monument and the *History/Liber* retains the importance of the locality of Ely although probably partly through necessity: by the time of writing the *History*, the bishopric of Elmham was no longer extant, having been transferred to Thetford and subsequently to Norwich. The *History/Liber* portrays Ælfwine as holy and but mostly as generous, including naming estates given to Ely by the bishop and his parents; the texts also note with some importance that Ælfwine brought monks to Bury St Edmunds (11.75).

Bishop Ælfgar of Elmham (d. 1020<sup>40</sup>) preceded Ælfwine in the post, but appeared to Ælfwine's right on the monument. Ælfgar gets double mention in the *History/Liber*, first as the person to bury Bishop Eadnoth in secret because of Ælfgar's insistence that Eadnoth was a martyr (*LE* 11.71) (discussed below), and second in his own right as one of Ely's worthies (11.72). The *History/Liber* particularly wants to paint Ælfgar in tones suitable for one with close proximity to

35 Per Beskow, "Byzantine Influence in the Conversion of the Baltic Region?" *The Cross Goes North: Processes of Conversion in Northern Europe, A.D. 300–1300*, ed. Martin Carver (Woodbridge, 2005), pp. 559–63, at p. 562; P.H. Sawyer, *Kings and Vikings: Scandinavia in Europe A.D. 700–1100* (London, 1982), p. 141.

36 Fairweather, *Bishop Osmund*, p. 283; 294–96.

37 Sawyer, *Kings and Vikings*, p. 141.

38 Fairweather, *Bishop Osmund*, p. 298.

39 PASE, "Ælfwine 47."

40 PASE, "Ælfgar 31."

martyrs and saints, carefully noting Ælfgar's association with Dunstan, Archbishop of Canterbury, already canonized by the mid-12th century and a popular figure. According to the *History/Liber*, which freely acknowledges the information from Osbert's *Life of Dunstan*, Ælfgar received a vision of Dunstan being requested by angels to join them, predicting both the man's death, acceptance into heaven, and sainthood. Ælfgar also, of course, retires to Ely.

Bishop Eadnoth of Dorchester, Abbot of Ramsey (d. 1016<sup>41</sup>) has an especially packed notice in the *History/Liber*, and another one packed with contact with saints (*LE* 11.71). As Abbot of Ramsey, he received news of the vision of a craftsman about the body of Saint Ives of Ramsey, which Eadnoth promptly had brought to Ramsey. Following this, as bishop of Dorchester, he also translated to London the body of St Ælfheah, martyred by vikings in Canterbury in 1012.<sup>42</sup> Finally, Eadnoth himself is killed by Cnut's men at Assandun: his hand first cut off for a ring, and then his body hacked to pieces, as he and Abbot Wulfsgie chant mass on behalf of Edmund Ironside's men. They made a good end. Ælfgar, referenced above, stole Eadnoth's body from its drunk guardians and buried it at Ely. This was done for several reasons: firstly to increase the reputation of Ely, secondly because Ælfgar knew of Eadnoth's love of the female saints of Ely, and finally because Ælfgar believed Eadnoth to be a martyr. Having received such a vision of Dunstan's death and sainthood, who would doubt Ælfgar's word?

The final worthy save Byrhtnoth was Æthelstan, another bishop of Elmham (d. after 1001<sup>43</sup>). His depiction in the *History/Liber* is dry in comparison to the others: he is depicted as a holy man, who gave Ely much by way of property both in land and moveable goods, and who opted to be buried at Ely (*LE* 11.65). Ælfgar, his predecessor at Elmham, is noted as following his example (11.72).

To read this monument, let's return to the questions I posed at the beginning and the three main ways that this translation and monument can be read. First, the most cynical (or perhaps simply the most practical) interpretation focuses on the financial impact of cultivating new saints at a place already well-known for its existing Anglo-Saxon saints, and in thus doing draw more pilgrims to Ely. Saints' presence increased the prestige of the institution, but the heavy footfall of pilgrims would also increase the income. Saint Æthelthryth and her companions, Wihtburh, Seaxburh, and Eorminhild were translated to the Ely's Norman cathedral in 1006 and placed behind the high altar, and by the late 12th century, Ely was taking full advantage of their female

41 PASE, "Eadnoth 11."

42 ASC C (D, E), p. 91.

43 PASE, "Æthelstan 56."

Anglo-Saxon saints.<sup>44</sup> Indeed, by the 14th century when the pilgrimage Æthelthryth's shrine is at its peak,<sup>45</sup> cathedral rolls indicate that this shrine was taking in nearly double the moneys taken in at the High Altar, to the tune of some £40 per annum.<sup>46</sup> The income from these saints, in fact, appears to rise steadily from the available records when it first appears in the sacrists' rolls in 1302/3 with an income of £11, to its high point in the available records at £94 9s. 10d. in 1408/9.<sup>47</sup> By the 13th century, with Bishop Northwold's extension of the presbytery, the shrine was heavily trafficked and had its own entrance in the north transept. Northwold's works were not only to "make room for the Magnificent Shrine of S. Etheldreda" in James Bentham's view<sup>48</sup> but to really make room for the numerous pilgrims coming to Ely to see this saint. In addition to this, in the reign of Henry I (prior to the translation of the male worthies but after the translation of the female saints), Ely was granted the right to hold a fair on the feast of St Æthelthryth and three days before and after,<sup>49</sup> increasing the income that could be had through the celebration of the saint. Saints were good business to a cathedral.

Second, the group identities of these collected men make a great impact on their interpretation. The first and most obvious link between the men is that they were all, of course, men. More on this below. But a second link is that they all had an intensely localized interest in or association to Ely in their lives or afterlives. Ely was essentially the retirement home of Osmund, Ælfgar and Æthelstan and the location of the child-oblate stage of the career of Ælfwine. Eadnoth and Wulfstan's associations are further pitched in specifically spiritual tones: Eadnoth because of his intense love of the female Anglo-Saxon saints there (perhaps a flimsy but acceptable excuse for Ælfgar's body-snatching), and Wulfstan through the miracle of his crosier choosing his place of burial there, as well as the miracles reported at his grave. But in this localized group identity, Osmund's episcopal career as intensely Continental, almost entirely taking place in central Europe and Scandinavia, was flattened in favour of his retirement to Ely. None of this life or these deeds are important to Ely. In

44 Crook, "Vir optimus Wlstanus," p. 524.

45 Virginia Blanton, *Signs of Devotion: The Cult of St. Æthelthryth in Medieval England, 695–1615* (University Park, PA, 2010), p. 9.

46 Martin Locker, "The Medieval Pilgrimage from Ely to Walsingham: A Landscape Sensory Perspective." Unpublished conference paper, University of London Institute of Archaeology Graduate Conference, February 2011. Available at <<https://www.academia.edu/2043915>> (accessed 5 Apr. 2018).

47 Ben Nilson, *Cathedral Shrines of Medieval England* (Woodbridge, 1998), pp. 154–55.

48 Bentham, *History and Antiquities*, p. 254.

49 Charter printed in Bentham, *History and Antiquities*, Appendix, p. 18, no. 13.

fact, the only indications of his non-English career is in that the *Liber/History* mentions that he arrived in England from “the region of Sweden where he had been bishop” (LE 11.99).<sup>50</sup> His actual origin is now debated as either Anglo-Saxon or Norwegian, but to all intents and purposes the *Liber/History* Anglicizes him for the sake of maintaining an intensely localized importance to these seven worthies; his foreignness (and note-worthy career) are glossed over for the sake of making him familiar, local, English.

Another group identity that is clear in the *History/Liber* is that of patronage, displayed through not only the monument but the monastic archive at the time. Byrhtnoth, Wulfstan, Æthelstan, Ælfwine and his family, and Osmund are all noted as patrons of Ely, having given gifts of properties and goods. Æthelstan is noted for his generosity more so than his saintliness, described as a “donor of outstanding liberality” in a passage that further notes the presence of Æthelstan having witnessed charters of the abbey (LE 11.65).<sup>51</sup> The passage describing Wulfstan’s patronage also details his confirmation of charters in favour of Ely, while the sections on Ælfwine’s patronage are likely at least partial copies of charters (LE 11.87, 75, 86). Portions describing the gifts of Byrhtnoth and his family too are likely taken from monastic archives, including copies of, or at least knowledge of the content of, the wills of Leofflæd, his daughter, and Thurstan, his great-grandson (11.62–64, 67, 88–89).<sup>52</sup> The repetition of these charters is particularly interesting here as the will of Thurstan disposes three estates inherited from his family in settlement outside of Ely, their intended remainderman:<sup>53</sup> Wimbish and Pentlow in Essex, and Kedington in Suffolk, are all noted by *Liber Eliensis* as a gift to Ely from Thurstan’s parents, but Thurstan’s will disposes of them otherwise. The charters weren’t enough to retain the properties; the F manuscript of the *Liber*, compiled in the mid-13th century, made a point of reiterating these gifts, though long-lost.<sup>54</sup> But despite slips through the cracks such as this, the monument served to remind as a visual prompt to the visitors to the abbey of both these men’s gifts, and the benefits of generosity to the abbey. In a way, the monument served as a more

50 “[D]e Sueðtheda [*sic.*] regione, ubi episcopus extiterat;” LE, trans. Fairweather, p. 201.

51 “*precipua largitate erga ecclesiam istam munificus*”; LE, trans. Fairweather, p. 164.

52 S 1520 (archived at Ely); S 1530 (archived at Canterbury); S 1531 (archived at Bury St Edmunds).

53 Katherine Weikert, *Authority, Space and Gender in the Anglo-Norman World* (Woodbridge, 2020).

54 Blake notes that “later agreement [may have been] made with the testators’ kin, for no complaint of usurpation is made”: “Foreword,” in *Liber Eliensis* (London, 1962), p. xi; whilst there is no complaint in LE about these estates, there is no point mentioning them if Ely did not at least still have their eyes on past wrongs.

general, but more visible, reiteration and confirmation of the charters that the compiler of the *Liber* was writing about.<sup>55</sup> The memory of the gifts, and the confirmation of the gifts, were served up in visual form to a larger audience of the pilgrims at Ely, a reminder of the virtues of generosity particularly when given to Ely.

Another group identity is that of their holiness, with many of the men portrayed as potential saints or having strong ties with exiting holy men, almost as contact relics themselves. Ælfgar has visions associated with his former colleague, Saint Dunstan, as well as being in close contact with the body of the martyred Eadnoth. Eadnoth, prior to his own martyrdom, was in close contact with the saintly bodies of Ives and Ælfheah. Wulfstan is, of course, being presented as a saint in the making. Byrhtnoth, it has already been noted, is not here an exemplar of a secular hero<sup>56</sup> but instead cast in the light of these holy men. Translation, too, plays a strong part in this group identity as holy men, with Ælfgar playing a part with Eadnoth's translation, and Eadnoth himself involved with the translations of Ives and Ælfheah. The translation of these seven worthies from the old Anglo-Saxon church is also a key part of casting these men as new saints, even if the distance travelled was not great. The systematic papal control of canonization was not confirmed until 1298. Rita Tekippe has noted that "[translation] to a devotional site was part of the essential recognition of that person as a saint, and often constituted the second phase of the *elevatio*, up to the 12th and 13th centuries."<sup>57</sup> Tekippe also points out that the translation from a grave site to a cult centre was a "point of solemn, ceremonial acknowledgement of the relics as signifier of the saint ... crucial in the establishment of the cult."<sup>58</sup> This can certainly be seen with the ceremony recorded of the translation of the female saints in 1106 and indeed again at their movement into the new presbytery in the mid 13th century, with the king present and Bishop Northwold granting indulgences to all present at the ceremony.<sup>59</sup> In translating these men together, Ely was marking their group identity in terms of their holiness but also certainly laying the groundwork for their potential sainthood. Their group translation in 1154 was a hope for the repeated

55 Simon Yarrow, pers. comm.

56 Coatsworth, "Byrhtnoth's Tomb," p. 280.

57 Rita Tekippe, "Pilgrimage and Procession: Correlations of Meaning, Practice, and Effects," in *Art and Architecture of Late Medieval Pilgrimage in Northern Europe and the British Isles*, ed. Sarah Blick and Rita Tekippe (Leiden 2005), pp. 693–751, at p. 707.

58 Tekippe, "Pilgrimage and Procession," p. 708.

59 Virginia Blanton, "Building a Presbytery for St. Æthelthryth: Bishop Hugh de Northwold and the Politics of Cult Production in Thirteenth-Century England," in *Art and Architecture of Late Medieval Pilgrimage*, ed. Blick and Tekippe, pp. 539–65, at p. 541.

success of the female translations in 1106, and no doubt a part of the attempt to create new saints for Ely.

But an identity that is found in subtext here is an intensely strong connection between these men of resistance, and resistance in particular to viking threats and raids. This is where Byrhtnoth's identity, alongside his role as patron to Ely, is most closely tied to these other holy men, and where the group identity most closely relates to him. Both Byrhtnoth and Eadnoth died directly in battle with vikings, Byrhtnoth wielding a sword and Eadnoth wielding prayers. Eadnoth is further associated with the martyred Saint Ælfheah, killed by vikings as a hostage in 1012. Eadnoth is specifically called a martyr through the mouth of Ælfgar; Byrhtnoth, through his secular heroic identity, could be cast in the same light. The Maldon poem has Byrhtnoth dying with a prayer on his lips, whilst the *Vita Oswaldi* casts his fighting and death in biblical tones.<sup>60</sup> Poetic and hagiographic tropes no doubt, but ones helpful in establishing the creation of a holy man after the fact. Wulfstan's well-known *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos* from 1014 also works in a resistance identity, both in its secular and sacred chastisements of the English peoples, making an uncomfortable attempt at stirring resistance whilst offering consolation.<sup>61</sup> If his foreign identity could be usable to Ely in any context, Osmund too might be cast in this role too: in attempting to assist the king of Sweden in establishing a 'national' church,<sup>62</sup> he could perhaps be seen as working against pagan raiders and killers, subverting their cultural norms that would result in the deaths of men like Byrhtnoth and Eadnoth.

So why then, at this place, at this time, commemorate a group of men whose group identity was fiercely localized, strongly generous, certainly saintly, and finally symbolic of political resistance? Ely, it is worth remembering, was well known as a place for resistance and rebellion by the late 12th century. Resistance to vikings would be the earliest action, seen here in Byrhtnoth, Eadnoth and Wulfstan (and perhaps in some degree in Osmund). Beyond the time of the vikings, *Liber Eliensis* was well aware of Hereward's resistance to the Normans, and in fact helped to perpetuate the myth or history through its dissemination in the *Gesta Herewardi* and beyond. Virginia Blanton has written as well about Ely viewing themselves as "victims of aggression during the Norman invasion" and has read the Æthelthryth shrine as a symbol of the monastery's

60 "Maldon," ed. Scragg, lines 171–180; *Vita Oswaldi*, v.5, p. 157, n. 55.

61 Andreas Lemke, "Fear-Mongering, Political Shrewdness or Setting the Stage for a 'Holy Society'?—Wulfstan's *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos*," *English Studies* 95:7 (2014), 758–776.

62 Sawyer, *Kings and Vikings*, p. 141.

“desire for independence, sovereignty and impenetrability.”<sup>63</sup> The mid-12th century saw Ely again as a centre of resistance and rebellion in the mass entanglement of Nigel, bishop of Ely, with the power structures of the civil war period. Nigel played both sides with some success, moving between Stephen and Matilda’s faction as needed.<sup>64</sup> Indeed *Liber Eliensis* itself has been read as an expression of “monastic anxieties in the midst of a major political and cultural shift” in the 12th century, and that the monastery envisioned itself as “victims of royal rapaciousness.”<sup>65</sup> By the time of the translation of these Anglo-Saxon worthies and the writing of the *History*, Nigel appeared to have made peace with both factions, witnessing the charter assuring the kingdom to the future Henry II in 1153 as well as attending his coronation in late 1154.

Blanton has already noted that the descriptions of viking and Norman invaders in *Liber Eliensis* “poses an indirect but clear warning to those who threaten the monastic space at Ely” and that the text itself is positioned as a “personal representation of a community that envisioned itself as a threatened space.”<sup>66</sup> This text reached a learned audience of probably monastic and royal readers. The monument served a similar purpose, but to a different audience and through different means. In creating a monument that included resistance as a group identity, Prior Alexander and the monks at Ely were quietly acknowledging not only recent history but their existence for two centuries at the centre of rebellions and resistance to vikings via their role with Byrhtnoth and Maldon, Normans with their infamous Hereward the Wake, and the empress and the king via Bishop Nigel’s machinations, depending on what year it happened to be. But this audience would be to the audience of those visiting the shrine: locals, travellers, secular and sacred alike. By the time of the mid-13th century and certainly by the 14th century, lay pilgrimage at Ely was the norm rather than royal patronage;<sup>67</sup> this later audience surely indicates the early audience and a slow, steady build of non-royal lay pilgrims to Ely. Depending on the route taken, Ely was on the way from London to Walsingham,

63 Virginia Blanton-Whetsell, “*Tota integra, tota incorrupta*: The Shrine of St. Æthelthryth as Symbol of Monastic Autonomy,” *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 32:2 (2002), 227–267, at pp. 232–33. She also provides a thorough overview and analysis of *Liber Eliensis* and resistance to Normans, particularly in regards to the imagery of the incorruptibility of Æthelthryth, at pp. 248–56.

64 For a reconstruction, see John Hudson, “Nigel (c.1100–1169),” *ODNB* <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/20190>> (accessed 12 June 2015).

65 Blanton-Whetsell, “*Tota integra*,” p. 234.

66 Blanton-Whetsell, “*Tota integra*,” pp. 235, 244–45.

67 Blanton, “Building a Presbytery,” p. 543.

“England’s Nazareth.”<sup>68</sup> The audience for this monument was a significant one from across England and further afield.

But Nigel’s relationship with the monks at Ely had always been uneasy, and this in a timeframe when the conventual church was already at the end stages of a possibly uncomfortable transition to a bishopric and cathedral from 1109, leading to separate identities forged out of what used to be a singular entity. For decades, Nigel, only the second bishop at Ely, had treated monastic and bishopric properties as his own in terms of use and disposal. In the early years of Henry II this was still at play through a series of monastic records from 1156 recorded in *Liber Eliensis* dictating the return of the state of Ely as when Nigel took office (*LE* III. 123–29). As Fairweather has mentioned, “the monks of Ely were not noted for deference to their bishops’ opinions.”<sup>69</sup> In addition to simply noting a state of resistance, a feeling of being under constant threat during the civil war period when the Isle saw itself sieged and defended, with this monument the monks were noting their resistance to Nigel.

It would be a position with a certain amount of plausible deniability, if the monks and Prior Alexander were pressed. The overt message to the monument would certainly be saintliness, secular patrons, and the prestige of the institution. The subtext of this monument, however, was resistance to invasion or incursion, exemplified by Byrhtnoth and Eadnoth, and perhaps Osmund here would represent the monks’ attempts to work with the system of oppression rather than against it. But in utilizing a group identity that includes resistance to vikings, this monument represents not only the monastery and cathedral as a traditional place of resistance, but also the fermenting trouble at Ely against their bishop. On a certain level, the venerable men who resisted vikings who not only killed but stole property gave the monks at Ely something to identify with in their struggle to reinstate the properties that Nigel had taken from Ely.

### The Spatial Arrangements of the Monument

Finally, the group identity of these worthies as venerable *men* also needs to be considered. Here the spatial placement of this monument gives a very particular social impact on those viewing it. As Simon Roffey has pointed out in his work on chantry chapels, the spatial and visual relationships between features have an important impact of how to ‘read’ monuments within churches.<sup>70</sup>

68 Locker, “Medieval Pilgrimage from Ely to Walsingham.”

69 Fairweather, “Introduction,” p. xxii.

70 Simon Roffey, *The Medieval Chantry Chapel: An Archaeology* (Woodbridge, 2007), p. 41.

Pierre Bourdieu has stated that “the meaning objectified in things or places is fully revealed only in the practices structured according to the same schemes which are organized in relation to them.”<sup>71</sup> The Byrhtnoth monument at Ely can only be understood in relation to the place and the practices that sought meaning in it. As already noted, by the time of the translation and new monument to these Anglo-Saxon men, Ely was a busy place for pilgrims seeking the shrines of Æthelthryth, Wihtburh, Seaxburh, and Eorminhild.<sup>72</sup> This shrine was located in the far east of the cathedral. The use of the space of the cathedral by pilgrims is important in thinking about approaching both the female saints’ shrine and the new Byrhtnoth tomb and memorial. Access to the shrine lay upon a pathway through which one would arguably encounter Byrhtnoth first, before any other of the seven worthies and certainly even the female saints themselves.

Understanding the approach to both the monument and the shrine is crucial to understanding the spatial meaning of the monument within the Cathedral. There were possibly three entrances to the cathedral that pilgrims would use to access the monument and the shrine in the late 12th century: through the nave, or through one of two doors in the north transept. First, and most likely for access, is the door in the west end of the north transept. The current iteration in the cathedral fabric is the result of an early 18th-century rebuild after a wall collapse so the fabric gives us no indication to its earlier roots, though by the Reformation this was the access point referred to by Atkinson as the “pilgrim’s entry.”<sup>73</sup> In this instance, the pilgrim would enter the cathedral precinct through Stepil Gate from Stepil Row, modern High Street, or perhaps via the market at the St Æthelthryth Gate, the site of which is newly discovered to the immediate east of the Almonry,<sup>74</sup> and proceed to this door. Once inside the pilgrim would be in an aisle on the west end of the north transept, with the massive late Norman composite piers to their left and a running bench along the wall to the right.<sup>75</sup> The pilgrim would proceed through the aisle before reaching the crossing—the exact location of Byrhtnoth—and carrying on to the left to reach the shrine to the east, passing the Byrhtnoth monument on the north side of the crossing (See Figs. 26.1 and 26.2).

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71 Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge, 1977), p. 90.

72 Crook, “Vir optimus Wlstanus,” p. 524.

73 Atkinson et al., “City of Ely: Cathedral.”

74 Peter Boyer and Tom Woolhouse, “Archaeological Excavation on the Site of the Almonry Restaurant Extension, Ely Cathedral, Cambridgeshire.” Unpublished excavation report, Pre-Construct Archaeology, May 2013 <<https://doi.org/10.5284/1027716>>.

75 Atkinson et al., “City of Ely: Cathedral.”

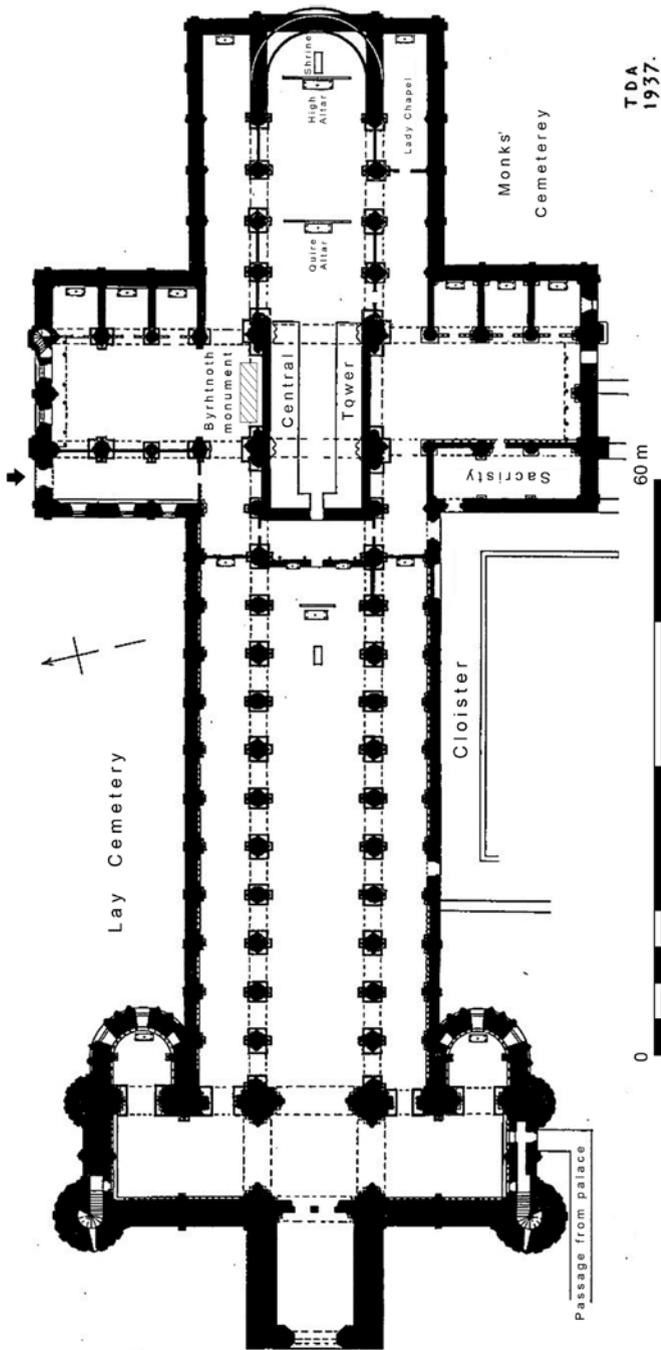


FIGURE 26.1 Ely Cathedral from c.1225, with the location of the Byrhtnoth monument. This plan shows the door in the north transept, west side, later referred to as the "pilgrim's entry"  
 ADAPTED FROM ATKINSON, "CATHEDRAL"



The second door, on the east end of the north transept, looks like a late 12th-century door; its decorated stonework matches the scheme on the exterior wall, but the door very clearly interrupts the original window. It is certainly a later insertion from the original build, though as to when is unclear. From the early 14th century it served as an exterior entry point to the Lady Chapel.<sup>76</sup> The door here is from after the initial Norman construction but possibly for more specific access to the chapels on the eastern end of the transept. The eastern aisles of the transept were walled off for chapels, and remained that way at the time of the 12th-century translation, indicating that this place inside the door was probably still a chapel in the years before the build of the Lady Chapel. This entry on the eastern side of the north transept seems more likely to be one specified for this chapel entry. It was certainly possible that pilgrims used it to access the cathedral, but its primary purpose was not for this reason.

Entering through the nave is also likely; as Nilson mentions, it was the “public part of the church and the only area where lay people could gather[...] Admission to the nave was easy, since it was open during regular daylight hours.”<sup>77</sup> This access would necessitate the pilgrim to move from the nave to the north aisle at least by the time they reached the eleventh pier where a pulpitum blocked access further east to the quire,<sup>78</sup> though more likely before with the location of the altar at the tenth pier. Movement to the north aisle instead of the south is considered implied if not axiomatic, as moving to the south aisle would interfere with the monastic processions to service, with the prior’s door and monk’s door both located in the south nave aisle. Additionally, Pam Graves has demonstrated that the iconography of the northern sides of English churches tends to be associated with evil, darkness and the Crucifixion, and the south with good, light and the Resurrection;<sup>79</sup> perhaps here too this north/south divide is indicative of secular and sacred traffic. Having moved into the north aisle, the pilgrim would progress into the north transept, the area to the north of the quire between the piers of the Norman tower, and again first encounter Byrhtnoth and company. In both processual circumstances, when entering through the nave or through the north-west transept, the first memorial monument encountered by the pilgrim beyond any in the nave was that of Byrhtnoth. This demarcation is made more significant when entering from the

76 King, “Ely Cathedral,” p. 218.

77 Nilson, *Cathedral Shrines*, p. 94.

78 Coatsworth, “Byrhtnoth’s Tomb,” p. 280.

79 C. Pamela Graves, “Social Space in the English Medieval Parish Church,” *Economy and Society* 18:3 (1989), 297–322.

nave. Processions through space marked a transformation for the pilgrim; movement through portals and spaces signalled not only a change in location but a change in state “between earthly and spiritual realms”.<sup>80</sup> Here, as a pilgrim moved from the more secular and profane space of the nave into the more sacred space at the crossing, the Byrhtnoth monument marked this transition into a differing place.

If both entrances, nave and transept, are used at this stage in the 12th century, a simplified spatial analysis shows a nice social idea of the space. Although the space of the north crossing, the most likely location of Byrhtnoth and friends, is not the highest prestige space—that still belongs to the shrine to the east of the high altar—it is the most *trafficked* space (See Fig. 26.3). It is even a location on the pilgrim trail that was later marked in iconographic ways as the start within this holy space: the 14th-century capitals of the interior of the octagon depict the salient points of the life of Æthelthryth,<sup>81</sup> with the first depicting her unwilling marriage at this northwest point (See Fig. 26.4). The point at the start of this pictorial cycle of the capitals is also the same point that pilgrims would enter the crossing on their way to the Æthelthryth shrine; this point in the northwest of the north transept was the beginning of the path in the sacred space.

Beyond that there remains further difficulty in how historians have read the monument. This monument has been read in both medieval and modern times from left to right, i.e. from Wulfstan to Byrhtnoth. We can see this as early as the compiler of *Liber Eliensis*, in his excuses for writing these worthy men out of order. However, the reading of this monument relies on two very basic facts that have not been taken into account. In order to ‘read’ the monument this way, from left to right, one must be approaching it straight on, from dead centre. We have already seen that this would not have been the case. Secondly, one must be able to *read* to ‘read’ this monument from left to right. One must spatially understand western text to be read from left to right to ‘read’ a monument as text, to understand and express a monument in these terms. This probably was not the case with the average pilgrim who would have encountered the monument, with an already demonstrable preference of lay pilgrims

80 Simon Coleman and John Elsner, *Pilgrimage Past and Present: Sacred Travel and Sacred Space in the World Religions* (Cambridge, MA, 1995), p. 6; quote from Karl Kinsella, “Doorways as Liminal Structures in Anglo-Saxon Text and Image,” *Leeds Studies in English*, New Ser. 48 (2017), 43–55, at p. 44.

81 Virginia Blanton-Whetsell, “Imagines Ætheldredæ’: Mapping Hagiographic Representations of Abbatial Power and Religious Patronage,” *Studies in Iconography* 23 (2002), 55–107.



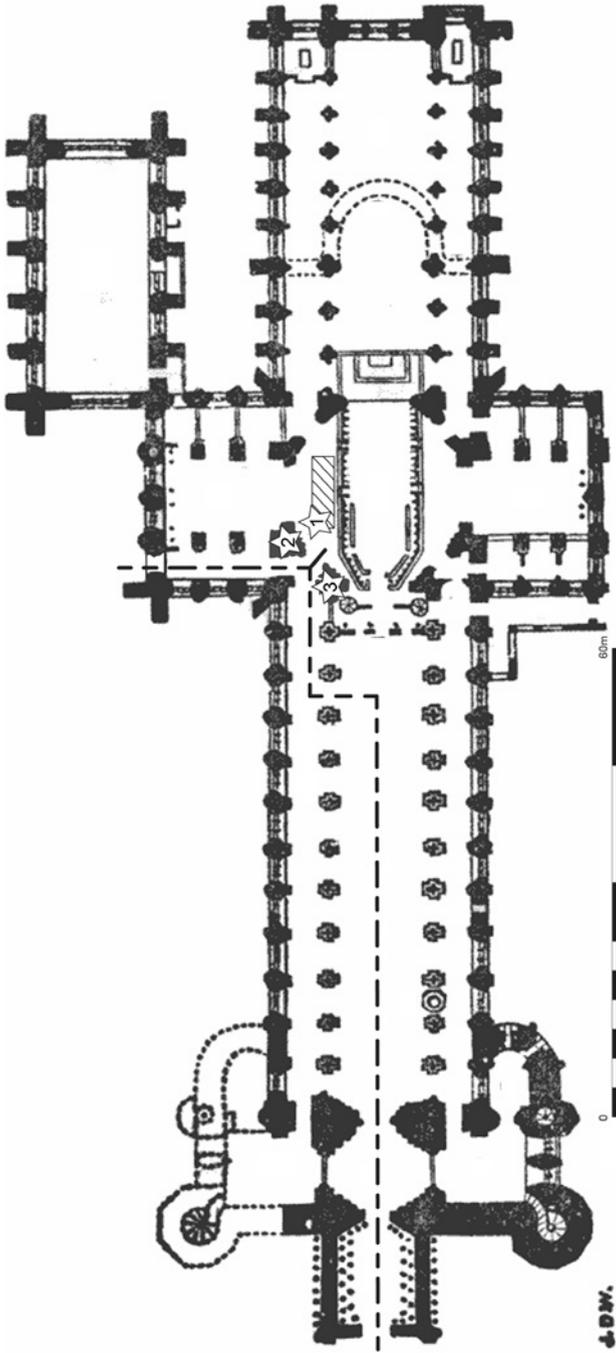


FIGURE 26.4 The monument within the octagon before the removal of the quire stalls into the presbytery through after the building of the octagon in the 14th century. The monument remains at the same location in the crossing; the start of the cycle of the 14th-century column capitals at the marriage of Æthelthryth capital at the star labelled 2, and the end of the cycle with the incorruptible body of Æthelthryth capital at the purple star. Byrhtnoth's place on the monument is the star labelled 3. The lines through the nave and north transept represent paths taken by the pilgrims to reach the crossing and the shrine of Æthelthryth to the east of the high altar ADAPTED FROM [ANON.], *A HAND-BOOK TO THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH, WITH SOME ACCOUNT OF THE MONASTIC BUILDINGS*, &c., AT ELY, 11TH ED. (ELY, 1880), P. 59

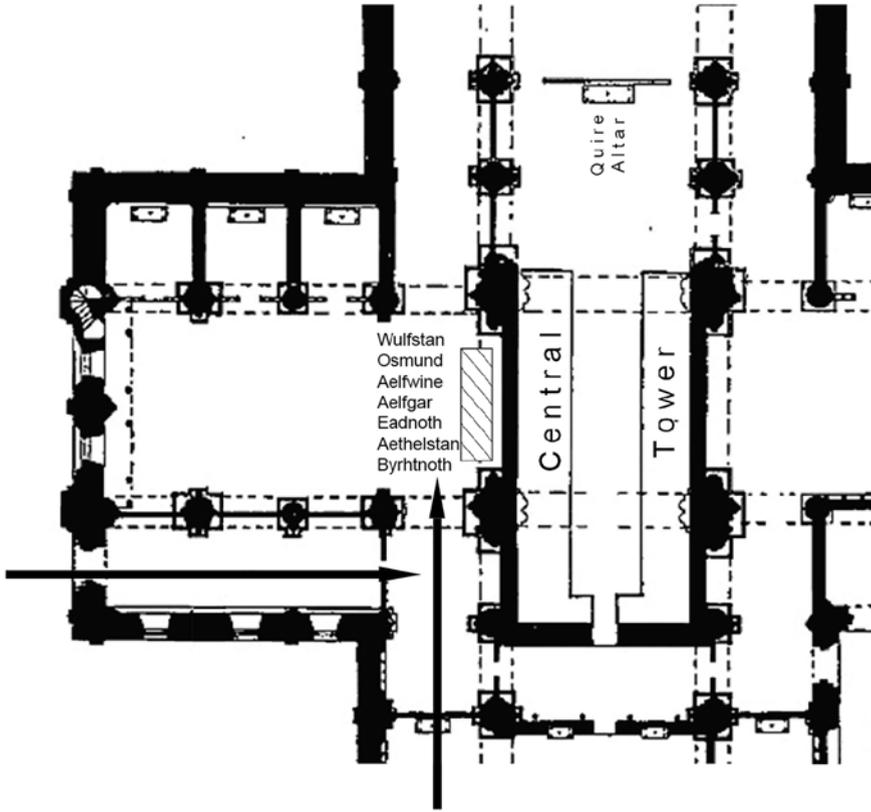


FIGURE 26.5 Routes from nave and transept, intersecting with the Byrhtnoth monument at the location of Byrhtnoth  
ADAPTED FROM ATKINSON, "CATHEDRAL"

at the site by the time of the 14th century.<sup>82</sup> And as a matter of fact, for pilgrims coming from either the nave or the northwest transept entrance, the first worthy they would have seen was Byrhtnoth himself (see Fig. 26.5).

Spatially speaking, what then is happening here with this monument at this place? As noted above, by the mid- to late 12th century, western Europe was in the grips of what Jo Ann McNamara has called the *Herrenfrage*, the crisis of masculinity. As religious leadership struggled to maintain control in the face of double monasteries, powerful abbesses, questions over clerical marriage and other aspects both of female religious authority and the perceived denigration of masculine religious authority, sacred and secular men were encouraged to "establish their own dominance at any cost."<sup>83</sup> A part of this gender

82 Blanton, "Building a Presbytery," p. 543.

83 McNamara, "Herrenfrage," p. 19.

restructuring has been read into the disassociation and disavowment of dual-sex monastic establishments. Ely, of course, had already de-established itself as a double monastery. At its refoundation in 970 in the throes of King Edgar's Benedictine reforms,<sup>84</sup> it had become a male-only monastery. But they still had older female founders who happened to be saints and bring them a certain amount of income from pilgrims. When Ely translated their seven worthy men into the new cathedral, they were flaunting their masculine re-foundation in an attempt to memorialize new, masculine founders. All seven of these men were benefactors to Ely; some, like Byrhtnoth, great ones. One man in particular, Wulfstan, was in the process of potentially becoming a local saint; remember that *Liber Eliensis* records miracles that were taking place at his grave, and carefully notes shrouds, pins, and so forth that could be trotted out at a gravesite as contact relics (*LE* II.87).<sup>85</sup> This new potential relic spot represented by the seven worthies gave Ely a claim on a more appropriate (for the mid-12th century) male foundation.<sup>86</sup> The location of this monument, erected where pilgrims would encounter it before reaching the female Anglo-Saxon saints, would give Ely's founding men first strike at the shaping of memory culture represented by the cathedral monuments on the pilgrim's trail. The monument intervened with the creation of the memory of Ely's past, in a way that Ely carefully chose and crafted with these seven men. Their importance was noted in their placement, and the male configuration of the seven worthies interrupting the path to female saints show Ely pressing their 10th-century masculine refoundation at the middle of the 12th century.

### Conclusions

The afterlife of Byrhtnoth makes for interesting readings, as much now as it did then. But in our focus to read Byrhtnoth as a singular man, a certain persona, much has been lost in terms of the context of his persona as a part of a painstakingly actualized group identity in the place of Ely Cathedral. It is here that group identities representing not only holiness and patronage but also political resistance and gender restructuring were brought en force to define very real social and political movements in the 12th century. The seven worthy men here were not presented as foreign but familiar, never mind that none would have been within living memory, all existed under a different rule of a different

84 "Houses of Benedictine Monks," pp. 199–210.

85 Lionarons, *Homiletic Writings of Archbishop Wulfstan*, p. 10.

86 Their female founders were also being rewritten in masculinized terms at this time; see Blanton-Whetsell, "Tota integra," 256–59.

ruling class, and one in particular was far less identifiably English in ethnicity or career than the others. The theoretical ‘past as a foreign country’ as well as the foreigners within their past were made into something useably, identifiably English, and English for Ely’s purposes. This monument, in the 12th centuries and beyond, was viewed by pilgrims from England and across Western Europe, and it was here that Ely was attempting to write themselves and their identity to those visitors.

The monument was certainly something wholly appropriate to a monastic memorial, demonstrating that masculinity and piousness—and generosity, of course—can go hand-in-hand. But beyond this, in the wider world of the 12th century, more can be said. It was here within this monument that Ely presented a subtext of resistance, perhaps in recognition of the region’s long-standing tradition of harbouring and fermenting rebellion. In the mid-12th century, when the Isle itself was frequently under threat from both factions of the civil war, this subtext of resistance and survival was certainly an acute feeling. And in an even more personal level, the monument could represent the monks’ own resistance to Nigel. There was a certain amount of plausible deniability to this, to be sure, but in a monastery often at odds with its bishop, this subtext cannot be denied.

But even beyond this we can place this monument in the larger framework of 12th-century Europe. Amongst gender restructuring in the 12th century, we can see Ely physically representing their two foundations in ways best suited for the time. Their female saints and founders were no less important, and certainly their status and placement within the monastic memory, history and mythology would not be taken away—to say nothing of the income earned from the shrines of these Anglo-Saxon women. But Ely suddenly found it appropriate to fete their refoundation and their male benefactors. The context of this memorial in its location in Ely Cathedral represents an attempt at providing Ely a set of masculine venerables in contrast to their popular female saints. Through this we can read a physical representation of *Herrenfrage*, a reassertion of a hierarchical masculinity at the end of the 12th century.<sup>87</sup> Byrhtnoth and these holy men became a tool of an ecclesiastic hierarchy reasserting holy and masculine values in alignment with their attempt to provide Ely with further saints to fill their spiritual and financial coffers.

In short, this monument was no mere ossuary, no simple piece of stone to reflect upon. The group identities represented in this monument reflected a very real political and social present to the monks and the pilgrims at Ely Cathedral in the 12th century, one that was cast onto a wider European stage by

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87 McNamara, “Herrenfrage.”

virtue of the pilgrims to the site. In this the cycle would repeat itself: Ely was taking in wider Western European ideas about gender and monasticism, while at the same time perpetuating and repeating these ideas back to their visitors, asserting their identity as pious, rebellious, and masculine.

# Leavings or Legacies? The Role of Early Medieval Saints in English Church Dedications beyond the Conquest and the Reformation

*Michael Hicks*

Every English church is dedicated to some aspect of the godhead or to a patron saint, often commemorated in the place names, such as St Albans in Hertfordshire, Bury St Edmunds in Suffolk, and St Osyth in Essex. Many of the earliest missionaries and those princesses who founded nunneries have been reviewed by Barbara Yorke in work which has done much to reveal the early medieval legacy of the landscape of Britain.<sup>1</sup> The dedications of parish churches are among the most obvious elements of that legacy but they also reveal much of the perceptions of that legacy in the later Middle Ages.

Although this paper focuses on Anglo-Saxon dedications before the Norman Conquest, the discussion also includes native British saints or Celtic dating before the arrival of the Anglo-Saxons, some of later date, Anglo-Saxon saints who operated within England and abroad (e.g. St Boniface), universal and Roman saints venerated within England, and some others, notably the 11th- and 12th-century Vikings King Olaf Haraldsson and Earl Magnus. This paper considers these early contributions to the pool of dedications current in today's churches and how and why the dedications have multiplied and then were curtailed in the millennium since the Norman Conquest. Thus St Petroc was the most popular native/British or Celtic saint in the West Country, to judge from his fourteen dedications in Cornwall and Devon; there was another church of St Petroc at Winchester.<sup>2</sup> A much venerated Anglo-Saxon saint was St Botolph (Abbot Botwulf of Iken, Suffolk, c.610–70), who is still commemorated at over seventy locations, most notably the Boston stump in Lincolnshire, St Botolph's Priory in Colchester (Essex), the parish church at Botolphs in Sussex, and the four London parish churches of St Botolph Aldgate, Aldersgate,

1 Barbara Yorke, *Nunneries and the Anglo-Saxon Royal Houses* (London, 2003); *The Conversion of Britain: Religion, Politics and Society in Britain c.600–800* (Harlow, 2006); more recently, "Churches and the Christianisation of Early Medieval Britain," in *Places of Worship in Britain and Ireland, 300–950*, ed. Paul S. Barnwell (Donington, 2015), pp. 1–30.

2 Nicholas Orme, *English Church Dedications with a Survey of Cornwall and Devon* (Exeter, 1996), Fig. 1.

Billingsgate and Bishopsgate. In the final category are the four London churches of St Olave in Bread Street, Hart Street, Old Jewry, and Silver Street that celebrated the Norwegian king Olaf Haraldsson, slain in 1030 at the battle of Stiklestad; St Olave also occurs as a dedication at Chichester, Exeter and at York, where the church was founded by Siward, the Scandanavian earl of Northumbria, prior to his interment there in 1055.<sup>3</sup> Botulph, Edmund, Swithun, and Wilfrid proved particularly popular, but some dedications occur only once, 88 such examples being in Cornwall.<sup>4</sup> There was only one known Anglo-Saxon dedication in Cornwall, to SS Cuthbert and Oswald, that can be dated before 800. St Swithun was an entirely Southumbrian saint.<sup>5</sup> Dozens, scores, even perhaps hundreds of Anglo-Saxon churches were dedicated to such native saints before the Norman Conquest, yet are hidden from historians because they feature in no writings and nothing identifiably Anglo-Saxon survives of their buildings. However early they are, such dedications are normally first recorded after the Norman Conquest, when indeed the parishes may have been defined and the churches built. It is these post-Conquest medieval dedications to pre-Conquest native saints that are the subject of this paper.

It is striking that relatively few of the 9,000 English parishes founded before 1200 have distinctively Anglo-Saxon and Celtic dedications. Very many were founded by the Anglo-Saxons, perhaps the vast majority of English medieval parish churches, but the founders of such local churches normally chose their patrons not from native saints, but rather from scripture and late antiquity, from the apostles (e.g. St Andrew), evangelists (e.g. St Matthew), early Roman martyrs and especially virgin martyrs (St Margaret of Antioch), the Archangel Michael, popes (St Clement and St Gregory), bishops and abbots (Martin of Tours), and from semi-legendary and still half-remembered saints like St Christopher and St George.<sup>6</sup> This devotion to 'universal saints' was a triumph of the Roman mission of St Augustine over the Celtic church of St Aidan. Apparently the Anglo-Saxons replaced earlier dedications and place names as they colonised the 'Celtic fringe,' Cornwall and Cumbria.<sup>7</sup> Their dedications have

3 See papers by Robert Higham, "The Godwins, Towns And Churches: Comital Investment in the Mid-11th Century," above, and Karl Alvestad, "Olavian Traces in Post-Medieval England," below.

4 Orme, *Dedications*, p. 133.

5 Michael Lapidge, *The Cult of St Swithun*, Winchester Studies 4.2 (Oxford, 2003), p. 47.

6 Orme, *Dedications*, p. 17; Lapidge, *Cult of St Swithun*, p. 47.

7 Yorke, *Conversion*, pp. 189–92; Orme, *Dedications*, p. 9. Celtic dedications were also common for chapels, often apparently post-Conquest: Nicholas Orme, "Church and Chapel in Medieval England," *TRHS* 6th ser., 6 (1996), 75–102, at p. 81; "The Other Parish Churches: Chapels in

generally endured until the present day. That they are Anglo-Saxon choices is seldom recognized.

### The Meaning of the Dedication

Dedications of churches are the raw material for this paper. Establishing dedications is not straightforward. If every church now has a particular patron, this can seldom be proved always to have been the case. The first date when a dedication is recorded is usually centuries after the particular church was founded or to which the earliest architectural fragment can be attributed. Dedications in Cornwall and Devon are often documented only from the mid-18th century. Medieval records of ecclesiastical administration or royal patronage concerned themselves with the church as benefice, as a source of taxation, as a structure to be built and maintained, identifiable by its location, rather than by its dedication, however liturgically important that may have been. Reading back from the known to the unknown, may be a doubtful procedure, but is unavoidable and it is a well-founded practice of reputable historians.<sup>8</sup>

Dedications had a meaning. The saint had done something, suffered somehow, or had been martyred which qualified him/her to be a saint and to be revered. St Augustine brought with him a sheaf of Roman saints and especially virgin martyrs who became patrons of many Anglo-Saxon churches in the centuries that followed. Local confessors achieved sainthood from the 6th century, perhaps usually acknowledged at the particular church that they founded or wherein they were interred. Their appeal was always limited, especially geographically: they were West County, Northumbrian, or East Anglian saints. Most churches were dedicated by the 9th and 10th centuries, when their cults expanded beyond their home localities. St Cuthbert and St Wilfrid apart, few had *vitae* before the 11th century, and many had none. The Normans inherited the shrines and dedications of saints whose names and saints days encompassed almost everything that was known.<sup>9</sup>

Very few dedications can be dated precisely. Obviously they cannot be earlier than what is commemorated. When rulers or archbishops were martyred, there are dates after which dedications in memory must belong: after 642 for

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Late Medieval England," in *The Parish in Late Medieval England*, ed. Clive Burgess and Eamon Duffy (Donington, 2006), pp. 78–94, at p. 85; see also below, pp. 591–94.

8 Orme, *Dedications*, p. 19; W. Urry, *Canterbury under the Angevin Kings* (London, 1967), pp. 207–08; Derek Keene, *Survey of Medieval Winchester*, Winchester Studies 2 (Oxford, 1985), 1:107; Lapidge, *Cult of St Swithun*, p. 43.

9 Yorke, *Nunneries*, pp. 17 and 20; *Conversion*, pp. 172 and 189–92.

King Oswald, 869 for King Edmund, after 882 for Bishop Swithun, 978 for King Edward, 1012 for Archbishop Alphege, 1030 for King Olaf, c.1116 for Magnus Earl of Orkney, and 1170 for Archbishop Thomas Becket. The Empress Helen, Abbot Martin of Tours, and St Pancras all 'seem' early. "The church of St Mildred at Canterbury" that already existed by 1084, Urry surmised, was "probably not established by a Norman."<sup>10</sup> Later, the date of official canonisation becomes critical.

Theoretically these cults went out of date. Was anybody really interested in King Olaf after the Norman Conquest? Contemporaries, it appeared, admired St Botolph, but what was it that he represented five centuries after his death when selected again? What did late founders who selected much earlier saints know about them? And who chose the dedication anyway—a lay founder or a priest? Dedications ought to be revealing about what was admired and was fashionable (thus appealing beyond a particular group and/or locality at a particular time). What aspect of the cult endured? This in turn ought to admit historians to the mores, social values, and intellectual environment of the later era.

The English parish system was virtually complete by 1200. New churches continued to be founded, but their status was not of parish churches, but rather of chapels within parishes. Great churches in newer towns, such as Holy Trinity at Hull, St Mary Beverley, and St Mary Redcliffe in Bristol remained in status mere chapels. Parish churches often originated earlier than the documentary record for them. Many early churches that were probably small and constructed of wood were totally obliterated when rebuilt in stone and were repeatedly refashioned to create today's predominantly Gothic structures that rarely preserve visible traces of their Saxon origins. Some occur in earlier records like the eight churches at York mentioned at the time of Domesday Book.<sup>11</sup> Almost all therefore antedate the earliest surviving fabric by several centuries. The first evidence for a dedication is also usually late, after the emergence of relevant records and therefore post-1200, but dedication itself though unrecorded was normal from the 4th century, consecration by a bishop mandatory from the 5th century, and was ultimately invariable. Almost all medieval parish churches were rebuilt or extended several times, yet retained their dedications. That is why the predominantly 13th- and 14th-century churches of Romney Marsh at Brookland, Brenzett and Snargate are still dedicated to Augustine and Dunstan, both early archbishops, and even to Eanswith, the Anglo-Saxon virgin. That the churches and dedications precede 1200 is one

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10 Urry, *Canterbury*, p. 208.

11 *VCH Yorks.: City of York*, 1, p. 361.

reason why post-Conquest saints became patrons of very few parishes. The great exception was Thomas Becket (Thomas the Martyr, d.1170, canonised 1173), a genuinely national saint whose patronage was adopted at existing churches at Portsmouth (now Portsmouth Cathedral) and Fairfield in Romney Marsh, at South Cadbury church and chapel in Somerset, by altars in the city and minster of York, and often in votive masses.<sup>12</sup> The dedication to him of Box church in Wiltshire, which already existed in 1159, must therefore be a renaming. Maybe Box, like the other four daughters of St Andrew's (minster) church at Chippenham, was originally dedicated to St Nicholas.<sup>13</sup> The *Victoria County Histories* systematically record all churches and their dedications, but do not automatically note the earliest date when the dedication occurs. Reading all dedications back from their first occurrences in the records, usually 13th- or 14th-century, to the foundation of the church, is justifiable, but dedications sometimes changed. The Anglo-Saxons sometimes substituted their own choices for Celtic saints and similarly the Normans probably replaced Anglo-Saxon dedications.<sup>14</sup> Hence perhaps the coupling of the Virgin or apostles with native saints that originally stood alone.<sup>15</sup> Henry VIII's hostility to St Thomas Becket, the Canterbury martyr, whose veneration he banned, resulted in many churches being re-attributed to St Thomas the Apostle (Doubting Thomas), hitherto not particularly popular, for example at Cowick (Devon).<sup>16</sup>

Some light on these issues emerges from Lapidge's investigation of a popular Anglo-Saxon saint, Bishop Swithun, who died in 863. Winchester Cathedral, originally dedicated to the apostles Peter and Paul, then additionally to Holy Trinity and St Swithun, eventually and colloquially was dedicated to Swithun only: a guide, as Lapidge says, to the development of the cult. Although the only other church of St Swithun to be firmly dated to the mid-12th century is at Abingdon and thereafter Woodbury in Devon to 1205 and St Swithun's

12 *VCH Somerset* 9, pp. 105 and 107; *VCH Yorks: City of York*, pp. 369 and 374; *Fabric Rolls of York Minster*, ed. J. Raine, Surtees Society 35 (1858), p. 206; William Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum*, 8 vols (London, 1846), 2:57.

13 *English Episcopal Acta*, 18: *Salisbury, 1078–1217* (Oxford, 1999), no. 18.

14 Ridyard rejects "the myth of Norman scepticism" towards Anglo-Saxon saints. Susan Ridyard, "Condigna veneratio: Post-Conquest Attitudes to the Saints of the Anglo-Saxons," *ANS* 9 (1986), 179–206 (quotation at p. 204); see also R.W. Pfaff, "Lanfranc's Supposed Purge of the Anglo-Saxon Calendar," in his *Liturgical Calendars, Saints and Services in Medieval England* (Aldershot, 1998), pp. 96–108. Dedication evidence suggests otherwise; see Rebecca Browett, "The Fate of Anglo-Saxon Saints After the Norman Conquest of England: St Æthelwold of Winchester as a Case Study," *History* 101 (2016), 183–200.

15 E.g. St Egwin (Evesham), St Pandonia (Eltisley, Norf.), St Sexburga (Minster in Sheppey). But see also below p. 587.

16 Orme, *Dedications*, p. 42.

Kingsgate in Winchester to 1264, all or most of the 68 parish churches of St Swithun were surely dedicated to him by the 12th century onwards. Lapidge's caution is justified because parishes ceased to be created after 1200 and indeed often the surviving fabric of St Swithun's churches are earlier. Of six churches of St Swithun on the estate of Winchester cathedral priory,<sup>17</sup> Nately Scures (Hants) possesses "a complete miniature Norman church" of c.1130–40, Martyr Worthy a nave of c.1140, Little Hinton (Wilts.), a 12th-century arcade, and Headbourne Worthy (Hants), a large Late Saxon church.<sup>18</sup> What do physical remains of other such churches reveal? It is beyond the scope of this paper to consider how dedication evidence could indicate the development of the Anglo-Saxon Church. Swithun dedications therefore began before the Conquest, continued thereafter and apparently stopped only when new parishes ceased to be created.

Frances Arnold-Foster estimated that in England there were over two thousand medieval dedications to the Virgin Mary, half that number to All Saints, hundreds to St Peter and St Paul, St Andrew, St Nicholas, St Lawrence, St Catherine and St Margaret, and significant numbers to the other apostles, Roman martyrs and virgin martyrs.<sup>19</sup> Those parish churches dedicated to native saints from before the Norman Conquest were therefore always very few. After the conquest there were almost no new dedications to St Botolph, the Norwegian St Olaf, or the south-western saint St Nectan. Celtic influence makes Cornwall and Devon exceptional, but dedications here are also best recorded and evidence from them must be used. The 700 medieval dedications of Cornwall and Devon fell eventually into three categories: the scriptural and west European tradition; Cornish saints, sometimes identified, who often occurred only once; and a tiny minority, perhaps only a score, of Anglo-Saxon saints. Cuthbert, Edmund, Edward, Olaf and Swithun occur in single figures.<sup>20</sup> Only in the most English major cities with many parishes where churches needed to be distinguished by name did a few receive pre-Conquest dedications.

London had more parish churches than any other city—about 120 in the mid-11th century—and had more with Anglo-Saxon dedications than anywhere else. Their foundations and dedications cannot be substantiated significantly earlier in time. "Little is known about the formation of these parishes and the building of the great majority of the churches of London," wrote Joyce

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17 Lapidge, *St Swithun*, pp. 42–43.

18 Nikolaus Pevsner and Bridget Cherry, *Wiltshire*, 2nd ed. (London, 1975), pp. 299–300; Michael Bullen, John Crook, Rodney Hubbuck, and Nikolaus Pevsner, *Hampshire: Winchester and the North* (London, 2010), pp. 320–21, 390 and 403.

19 Frances Arnold-Foster, *Studies in Church Dedications, or England's Patron Saints*, 3 vols (London, 1899).

20 Orme, *Dedications*, pp. 37–40.

Jeffries Davis, “but it is certain that by the end of the 12th century, and in all probability much earlier, the parochial boundaries were defined as they remained through the Middle Ages.”<sup>21</sup> St Gregory’s church can be dated firmly to 1010, St Magnus’ church is from the 12th century, thirteen others existed by 1100, another 69 by 1200, and probably the remaining 28 also predated 1200. St Peter Cornhill, St Alban Wood Street, and St Andrew Holborn are reputedly very ancient. How many of these were pre-Conquest, let alone from the 10th, 9th, 8th or 7th centuries is quite unknowable—at least without extensive archaeological investigation. As elsewhere, the parish churches of medieval London were mainly dedicated to the Virgin and other commonly venerated saints, but they did include four dedicated to Botolph, five to Olave, two each to Dunstan and Mildred, and others to Augustine, Edmund the King, Magnus the Martyr, and Swithun.<sup>22</sup> At best a sixth of London churches therefore were dedicated to pre-Conquest native saints.

The same pattern emerges rather less clearly in the other major towns. There were 46 parish churches at York. The dedications of seven known pre-Conquest parish churches are known. These did include the pre-Conquest Cuthbert and Olaf, but the other five were scriptural, antique, and west European. Amongst the other 39, the one dedication to a native saint, St Edward king and martyr, needs to be set against six to the Virgin, four to All Saints, three each to Holy Trinity, St Helen, St John, and St Michael, and the remainder to other legendary and west European saints.<sup>23</sup> Among the 54 parish churches at Winchester in 1300, only the foundations of St Andrew and St Gregory (both now lost) can be firmly dated before the Conquest and most are not recorded before the later 11th century, yet, writes Keene, “it is likely that those with parochial status already existed in the mid 12th century and that most of them were founded before 1100.” Thirty different patrons are recorded: Our Lady nine times, Martin six times, Peter five times, Michael four times, John thrice, All Saints and Nicholas twice. All are universal saints. The only native dedications were to Alphege (killed in 1012) recorded in 1284, Boniface (1172), Petroc and Swithun (two dedications).<sup>24</sup> Among the 29 at Exeter, where 17 dedications were in the scriptural/west European tradition, there were eleven that related to earlier native saints—to Cuthbert, to the three royal martyrs Edmund,

21 J. Jeffries Davis, “Ecclesiastical History,” in *VCH London 1* (London, 1909), p. 179.

22 Jeffries Davis, “Ecclesiastical History,” pp. 180–81 and 190.

23 *VCH Yorks: City of York*, pp. 365–91. St Edward and some of the others could be pre-Conquest dedications.

24 Alexander R. Rumble, *Property and Piety in Early Medieval Winchester*, Winchester Studies 4.2 (Oxford, 2002), p. 35; Keene, *Survey*, 1:107 and 134–35.

Edward and Olaf, and to the four Celts David, Kerrin, Petroc and Sidwell.<sup>25</sup> The 22 recorded at Canterbury included the surviving churches of St Alphege and St Dunstan, both archbishops, recorded in 1174–75, and St Mildred (1084), but no other pre-Conquest native saints. Over thirty parish churches in Norwich include just three pre-Conquest dedications to SS Botolph, Olave, and Swithun.<sup>26</sup> The twenty-odd parish churches established at Bristol feature a single pre-Conquest dedication to the Mercian St Werburgh.<sup>27</sup>

It is doubtful quite what such dedications implied. Few of these churches contained relics of their patron saints or shrines and almost none of them became objects of pilgrimage or veneration. Admittedly all saints were assigned their own saints day and at one time all patron saints enjoyed their own annual festival of services focused on themselves. However relatively few festivals were included in the calendars of greater churches even in the Anglo-Saxon era to spread their commemoration beyond their own churches. There were already too many saints, so calendars omitted most recent saints of purely local importance.<sup>28</sup> By the 13th century, when the use of Sarum apparently developed, so many saints were crowding the Church's calendar and cutting across the celebration of the liturgical year that drastic cuts were implemented. These particularly devalued native saints. This problem of excessive festivals recurred several times.

First of all, the three uses of Sarum, York and Hereford adopted 'normative' calendars which excluded many pre-Conquest British and Anglo-Saxon saints. There was no room, for instance, for Abbot Botolph or King Olaf, and those retained, such as Archbishop Alphege, Bishops Birinus of Winchester, Mellitus and Erkenwald of London, were not necessarily popular and were indeed seldom selected for parochial dedications.<sup>29</sup> The adoption of the Sarum Use throughout the province of Canterbury by c. 1375 caused the dropping from the calendars of such local saints as Egwin, Guthlac, Mildred, Modwenna, Neot,

25 Orme, *Dedications*, p.35.

26 Ken Farnhill, *Guilds and the Parish Community in Late Medieval East Anglia c.1470–1550* (Woodbridge, 2001), pp. 196–97.

27 For the significance of Werburgh dedications elsewhere, see Alan Thacker, "St Wærburh: The Multiple Identities of a Regional Saint," above, pp. 443–66.

28 *English Kalendars before AD 1100*, ed. Francis Wormald, HBS 72 (London, 1934); Rebecca Rushforth, ed., *Saints in English Kalendars before AD 1100*, HBS 117 (Woodbridge, 2008).

29 Erkenwald, bishop of London from 675, seems not to have appealed to Londoners. See Eamon Duffy, "St Erkenwald: London's Cathedral Saint and his Legend," in *The Medieval English Cathedral*, ed. Janet Backhouse (Donington, 2003), pp. 150–67, at p. 152; Alan Thacker, "The Cult of Saints and the Liturgy," in *St Paul's: The Cathedral Church of London 604–2004*, ed. Derek Keene, R. Arthur Burns and Andrew Saint (London, 2004), pp. 113–22, at pp. 118, 121.

Osyth, Rumwald, and Werbergha.<sup>30</sup> SS Grimbald and Edburgh, who remained in the calendar, were not used for dedications. Secondly, many were downgraded in the event of calendar clashes, as the Sarum ordinal prioritised major festivals over minor ones. Inclusion in the calendar did not necessitate a separate set of services in the *Sanctorale* or even guarantee actual observance. All that most selected saints received, thirdly, was the common services for their particular category of saints—*common* for bishops, confessors, martyrs, virgins, or virgin martyrs—and a personal *memoria* at vespers, matins and lauds. Only a few preferred saints qualified for double feasts, which entailed a full complement of *proper* services specifically devoted to them, with nine lessons and nine responses at matins in secular churches and twelve in monasteries that might extend over the whole octave. A full range of observances was composed for St Swithun, but even his was not a double feast, and not all of his observances therefore featured in the Sarum breviary. Very few so preferred were native: St Cuthbert being an obvious instance. Fourthly, each use amalgamated dedication feasts on a single date, 15 September for Sarum until 1319, when it was moved to 30 September to avoid clashing with the important Nativity of the Blessed Virgin on 9 September, and for York in 1489 to the Sunday after the Commemoration of St Paul (19 January). Henry VIII made 1 October into the national dedication day.<sup>31</sup> A single day was also set for the veneration of relics. Such measures should have meant that most pre-Conquest native saints ceased to be celebrated in their own churches even on their own festival days. Some did however: in West Somerset the feast of St Carantoc was celebrated at Carhampton in the mid-13th century and the translation of St Decuman at Watchet in 1412. The cult of St Edburga was still celebrated in mid 15th-century Bicester (Oxon.)<sup>32</sup> Nevertheless dating by saints days, in letters and inquisitions *post mortem*, does show that some of these less favoured saints still impinged on writers' memories.

It is only in recent years, the late 20th and early 21st centuries, that the Church has tackled depopulation and dwindling congregations in the countryside with suspending presentations, uniting benefices into groups, and declaring some churches redundant. Most medieval churches therefore survive. Such problems were addressed sooner in the principal towns of medieval England that were overstocked with under-endowed churches and where

30 Nigel Morgan, "The Sarum Calendar in England in the Fourteenth Century," in *Saints and Cults in Medieval England*, ed. Susan Powell (Donington, 2017), pp. 5–23, at p. 11.

31 Matthew Cheung Salisbury, *The Secular Liturgical Office in Late Medieval England*, *Medieval Church Studies* 36 (Turnhout, 2015), p. 90.

32 *VCH Somerset* 5 (1985), p. 168; Somerset Heritage Centre DD/L/P/163; DD/WY 9/W2; Morgan, "Sarum Calendar," p. 11.

many parishes were therefore united. "St Edmund Riddingate at Canterbury did not survive the fourteenth century", wrote Urry, "and others followed."<sup>33</sup> The 54 churches of Winchester in 1300 had dwindled to 37 by 1500 and now to a mere six, not all still parochial churches.<sup>34</sup> Most striking is London, where 85 churches were destroyed in the Great Fire of 1666 and not all were restored, 23 were demolished under the Union of Benefices Act (1860), and most of the survivors were damaged or destroyed in the Blitz in the Second World War. When such churches were lost and their parishes absorbed by others, their dedications disappeared. There is therefore no church honouring Alphege, Boniface or Petroc in Winchester today. If pre-Conquest dedications are commonplace, medieval dedications to Anglo-Saxon saints are few in number, and yet fewer date from the half millennium between the Norman Conquest and the Reformation.

### Post-Conquest Dedications

Because most parish churches were founded before 1200, it is not to parish churches that we should look for post-Conquest dedications, but to other religious institutions which were much more numerous. Orme estimates that there were another 20,000 chapels of all types,<sup>35</sup> some pre-Conquest, but the majority later. There came to be some 900 monastic houses founded before 1300, more than a thousand hospitals dating from 1100–1540, several thousand chantries, guilds and fraternities established mainly in 1300–1540 in existing structures, and many thousands of new altars within all these new foundations and parish churches, all of which ought to have been consecrated and dedicated by bishops, besides lights, wall paintings, screen panels, sculptures, and vestments also commemorating particular saints.<sup>36</sup> Originally perhaps churches had only one altar: in 1150 only four of 20 churches in London possessed more than one.<sup>37</sup> As churches expanded, so altars multiplied, until only the tiniest single-cell church was left with just one. These extra foundations represent successive modes of religious expression and fashions in the objects of devotion. Whilst most of these too were devoted to biblical and traditional western European saints, they did include numerous dedications to native

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33 Urry, *Canterbury*, pp. 208, 210.

34 Keene, *Survey*, 1:107.

35 Orme, "Other Parish Churches," p. 80.

36 These are specifically excluded from discussion here.

37 *VCH London* 1, p. 180.

saints pre- and post-Conquest and to aspects of the Virgin and the Passion that indicate the enthusiasms of particular individuals and groups at particular dates.

Many Benedictine monasteries, secular cathedrals and royal free chapels, and minsters that became Augustinian priories preceded the Norman Conquest and thus perpetuated their dedications. Examples are the dedication to the Holy Trinity at Christchurch (Hants, now Dorset), Cuthbert at Durham, Æthelrelda (Ely), Æthelbert (Hereford), Frideswide (Oxford, 1122), German in Cornwall, Morwenna (Burton on Trent), Sexburga (Minster in Sheppey, Kent), and Wulfhad (Stone, Staffs.). Noting their pre-Conquest patrons, J.H. Denton observed that “[m]ost of the royal free chapels had been Anglo-Saxon minsters”. Admittedly many of the saints had been from the universal list, but they also numbered St Oswald at Gloucester and Harold Godwinson’s Waltham Holy Cross (Herts.). The secular college at Wimborne in Dorset remained dedicated to St Cuthberga.<sup>38</sup> A host of Benedictine cells (alien priories), Augustinian, Cistercian, Cluniac, Carthusian, Gilbertine, and Premonstratensian monasteries were founded in the two centuries after the Norman Conquest and friaries from the 13th century onwards. Cistercian houses were generally dedicated to the Virgin and many friaries to St Francis and St Dominic. That the new Norman bishops and abbots disapproved of Anglo-Saxon cults has been questioned, yet the number of new foundations with Anglo-Saxon patrons was actually quite small. A few new examples are St Augustine (at Bristol in 1140 and Wellow in 1132), St Botolph (Colchester, c.1100), St Cuthbert (Carham, Northumberland, 1131), St Edburga (Bicester, Oxon., 1182×5), St Nectan (Hartland, c.1161), St Oswald the King (Nostell, Yorks., 1114), and St Wilfrid (Hornby, Lancs., 12th century; Moberley, Ches., 1206).<sup>39</sup> Quite often existing patrons like Edwold at Cerne Abbey, Egwin at Evesham Abbey, and Morwenna at Burton Abbey became coupled with or subjected to the Virgin or St Peter.<sup>40</sup> Hospitals, all post-Conquest foundations, were generally dedicated to scriptural saints, notably SS James and Bartholomew, or to a subgroup of universal saints, such as Anthony, Katherine, Margaret and Nicholas. Very few were dedicated to English saints. Most popular was St Edmund King and Martyr, with two dedications, and St David, also with two: King Æthelbert featured in Hereford (where

38 J.H. Denton, *English Royal Free Chapels 1100–1300: A Constitutional Study* (Manchester, 1970), p. 23.

39 Alison Binns, *Dedications of Monastic Houses in England and Wales 1066–1216* (Woodbridge, 1989), passim. Binns treats only male houses, however.

40 *Ibid.*, p. 65. So too with parish churches: St Pandonia became paired with St John the Baptist at Eltisbury; Virginia Bainbridge, *Gilds in the Medieval Countryside: Social and Religious Change in Cambridgeshire, c.1350–1558* (Woodbridge, 1996), p. 63.

the cathedral was dedicated to him), Archbishop Oswald (d. 992) and Bishop Wulfstan (d.1095) at Worcester, and after the Conquest Thomas Becket and Archbishop Edmund Rich.<sup>41</sup> Nicholas Orme and Margaret Webster's more exhaustive research revealed St German as the only Briton among patron saints in Cornwall and Devon.<sup>42</sup>

Unlike parish churches, most monasteries and hospitals can be dated with precision. Castle chapels also can be bracketed to the two centuries after 1066. Nicholas Orme's reading is useful here: "When castles appeared at the Conquest, they too included chapels for their lords, castellans and retinues. Bristol, Coventry, Dover, Exeter, Hereford, the Tower of London, York, and many others had such amenities, sometimes with permanent staffs of clergy."<sup>43</sup> Some of the latter were royal free chapels or secular colleges. H.M. Colvin documents works on chapels at 23 royal castles and another 12 royal residences from 1200 onwards. Some castles had several chapels ranging from those with naves and arcades to timber structures a few yards square or oratories by the door/off the chamber of the king. Of royal castles, Chester had three chapels, Dover at least three, Hadleigh two, Leeds (Kent) at least two, the Tower of London about five, Ludgershall three, Marlborough two, Nottingham three, Oakham two, Winchester at least four. So too palaces and hunting lodges: six at Woodstock. Colvin documents how many of these were conjured up in a particular year by whim of Henry III and subsequently forgotten.<sup>44</sup> Unfortunately most were unendowed—property generates records and hence evidence of dedication—and most castles went out of use before 1200 or at least 1300, when records can reasonably be expected to survive. The clergy seldom appear in bishops' registers. "Most castle chapels were simply private altars," wrote Denton.<sup>45</sup> Mere consecration did not create a record. And the king's accounts rarely refer to the dedication—rather to the king's chapel, the queen's chapel, the great chapel, the new, lesser, lower or upper chapel. At Ludgershall the three chapels were dedicated to St Katherine, St Leonard, and St Nicholas, at Guildford to St Katherine and St Stephen, and at Winchester there were chapels of St Judoc (d. 668, a Breton),<sup>46</sup> St Katherine and St Thomas Becket.

41 R.M. Clay, *Medieval Hospitals of England* (London, 1909), pp. 252, 260, and 263–64.

42 If this is the 'right' St German: Nicholas Orme and Margaret Webster, *The English Hospital 1070–1570* (New Haven, CT, 1995), p. 192.

43 Orme, "Church and Chapel," p. 76.

44 H.M. Colvin, R.A. Brown and J. Taylor, *History of the King's Works. The Middle Ages*, 2 (London, 1963), *passim*.

45 Denton, *Chapels*, p. 129.

46 Ryan Lavelle kindly pointed out that St Judoc was associated with Kings Æthelstan and Edward; perhaps his dedication may have passed from an Anglo-Saxon palace dedication.

The sample of known dedications is very small. Some chapels contain multiple altars, like the three at Dover St Andrew dedicated to St Adrian, probably Hadrian, abbot of St Augustine's Abbey at Canterbury, who died in 709, and the definitely pre-Conquest St Edmund and St Edward. Henry III did order numerous images, paintings, and windows relating to the Majesty, to SS Edmund, Edward, Eustace, John the Evangelist, Mary, Thomas and William. Most common was St Edward, probably the Confessor, but at Gillingham in Dorset both Edward the Confessor and Edward King and Martyr were celebrated in glass. King Henry III, for it is usually he, enjoyed planning these chapels, their dedications and decorative schemes. He ranged widely in his choice of edifying iconography for himself, his queen and entourage, particularly regarding Anglo-Saxon royal saints.<sup>47</sup> There had been hundreds of private castles too, dozens of which lasted enough to include permanent chapel, but for these the source material is even sparser and more difficult to locate.

Castle chapels were included in Orme's chapel category, but other types of chapels were more numerous. There were thousands of chapels of ease or free chapels, scores of chapels on hills, bridges, by the wayside, on hilltops, or near wells, even a couple on battlefields, in caves and in other locations. They held no property, were subjected to no presentations or visitations, and were generally abandoned at the Reformation, so few of their dates of foundation or dedications are known. At Bristol, where seven chapels are recorded, two were dedicated to the Irish saint Brendan and to Jordan are pre-Conquest.<sup>48</sup>

Most of these institutions contained other altars that also had to be consecrated. In honour of St Æthelburga there was the shrine, altar and chantry in Barking Abbey.<sup>49</sup> Some major foundations contained numerous altars—certainly many more altars than can ever be identified. At Christchurch (Hants, now Dorset) there were certainly nine altars in the east end, the parish altar, others in the crypt and St Michael's loft, and another three cage chantries interpolated into existing spaces, thirteen or perhaps even twenty in all.<sup>50</sup> Though a parish church now, Christchurch housed an Augustinian priory in the middle ages and shares therefore in the monastic cartulary, but most parishes do not. Parish archives never survive before the mid 14th century, thereafter only rarely, and deal principally with income and expenditure rather than worship. Royal licences to alienate in mortmain, a principal source for

47 Colvin, et al., *King's Works*, 2, passim.

48 Orme, "Church and Chapel," p. 81.

49 Orme, *Dedications*, p. 248.

50 Cindy Wood, "The Cage Chantries of Christchurch Priory," in *Memory and Commemoration in Medieval England*, ed. Caroline Barron and Clive Burgess (Donington, 2010), pp. 234–50, at p. 237.

chantry foundation, focused on endowments, not the liturgy, and so did the rarer chantry deeds, but all chantries involved the celebration of mass at an altar designated by the founder and hence dedicated. Hence the dedication of most of the ninety chantries in the 46 parish churches of medieval York are unrecorded. This need not mean that the dedications did not matter, but that liturgical celebrations generated no extant sources. Only 25 of the 46 churches hosted chantries, yet some contained eight, six, four or two. Our Lady was by far the most popular patron, with at least 28 chantries in her honour, with up to three in the same church and same altar; the Apostle James, St John the Baptist, St Katherine, and St Thomas the Martyr lagged well behind. Anglo-Saxon saints do not feature at all. The 15 chantries in St Nicholas's church, Newcastle-upon-Tyne (now Newcastle Cathedral) included only one sited at the altar of a pre-Conquest saint, Cuthbert, founded as late as the reign of Richard II.<sup>51</sup>

It was only when there were more altars and chantries in a single location that native saints appear. This situation arises only in the greatest churches that contained multiple altars and chantries. Remember that by the late middle ages all regular clergy were expected to be priests and all priests were expected to celebrate mass daily, which created a demand for altars and hence a wider variety of dedications. By 1200 altars at St Paul's Cathedral included King Oswald, Bishops Cedd of the East Saxons (d. 664) and Chad of Lichfield (d. 672), to which were added in 1247 King Ethelbert, and by the 1260s Edward the Confessor.<sup>52</sup> A chronicle of Byland Abbey records the consecration of its altars in stages from the east as the church was erected: the high altar (St Saviour) and St Stephen in 1195, in 1214 the nave altar of Holy Trinity and the altars of SS Augustine, Edmund, John the Baptist, Peter and Paul in the transepts, and in 1221 those of SS Michael and Martin.<sup>53</sup> Of these only SS Augustine and Edmund were Anglo-Saxon saints. There were 66 chantries attached to altars in York Minster. Amongst the usual scriptural saints, virgin martyrs (Agnes, Cecilia, Petronilla) and modern saints (Thomas Becket, William of York), there feature dedications to Gregory the Great, to Bishops Chad, Cuthbert, Paulinus and Wilfrid, to Edmund and Edward kings and martyrs, to the virgin Frideswide, and to Ninian. The altar dedicated to Cuthbert was probably earlier, but the chantry founded there by Bishop Skirlaw dated only from 1405. The altar of St Ninian,

51 Eneas Mackenzie, "St Nicholas' Church: History and Architecture," in *Historical Account of Newcastle-Upon-Tyne Including the Borough of Gateshead* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1827), pp. 235–55.

52 Thacker, "Cult of Saints," p. 117.

53 *VCH Hants* 2 (1903), pp. 153–54, which wrongly locates the narrative at Christchurch (Hants, now Dors.); *The Christchurch Priory Cartulary*, ed. K.A. Hanna, Hampshire Record Series 18 (2007), p. xxvii.

the 6th-century apostle to Galloway, may also be very late. First recorded in 1483,<sup>54</sup> it was perhaps prompted by Richard III, a documented devotee.

Similarly the 30 different altars in St Paul's Cathedral that hosted 84 chantries were dedicated mainly to saints of scripture and antiquity. Only Thomas the Martyr was post-Conquest in date and only Archbishop Dunstan, Bishops Chad and Erkenwald were Anglo-Saxon. New altars were added as the cathedral was upgraded and extended and were located in the old structure, nave, choir and transepts, in the crypt and charnel house, in the new work, and in one case in a cage chapel inserted between the pillars of the arcade.<sup>55</sup> Wholly new foundations could tailor the buildings to the liturgy. The feasts of the martyred kings Edmund and Edward were upgraded to inferior double feasts at Fotheringhay, where sung mass was ordained in honour of St Winifred virgin and martyr at Halloween, and on midsummer eve another in honour of St Æthelrelda.<sup>56</sup> The match between such masses and the altars was seldom complete: often indeed chantries moved altars as ordained by the chapter.

Gilds and fraternities were voluntary religious groupings generally operating from parish churches. Some antedated the Norman Conquest like the Thegns' gild in Cambridgeshire that venerated St Æthelrelda of Ely,<sup>57</sup> but the principal source, the parliamentary survey of 1389, detailed gilds established within recent memory. Those that were property-owning were recorded in the chantry certificates of 1546–48, but far more are known only by references in wills. The 64 with extant statutes in Cambridgeshire were Marian, scriptural, or from the western tradition excepting one in honour of St Æthelrelda. She was daughter of Anna, king of East Anglia (d. 654). So supposedly were Sexburga, Withburga, and perhaps also Pandonia and Wendreda, all virgins, princesses and abbesses, whose gilds crop up very occasionally in wills.<sup>58</sup> So did Edward king and martyr in St Edward's church in Cambridge (but not St Edmund) and

54 Raine, *Fabric Rolls*, 274–306; R.B. Dobson, "The Foundation of Perpetual Chantries by the Citizens of Medieval York," in his *Church and Society in the Medieval North of England* (London, 1996), pp. 253–84; see also Dobson, "The Later Middle Ages," in *A History of York Minster*, ed. G.E. Aylmer and Reginald Cant (Oxford, 1977), pp. 44–109, at p. 95.

55 Marie-Hélène Rousseau, *Saving the Souls of Medieval London: Perpetual Chantries at St Paul's Cathedral, c. 1200–1548* (Farnham, 2011), p. 4, and Appendix; Thacker, "Cult of Saints," p. 121; see also Rosalind Hill, "A Chaunterie for Soules': London Chantries in the Reign of Richard II," in *The Reign of Richard II: Essays in Honour of May McKisack*, ed. F.R.H. Du Boulay and Caroline M. Barron (London, 1971), pp. 242–55.

56 A. Hamilton Thompson, "The Statutes of the Collegiate Church of St. Mary and All Saints, Fotheringhay," *Archaeological Journal* 75 (1918), 241–309, at p. 296.

57 Bainbridge, *Gilds in the Medieval Countryside*, pp. 61–64.

58 Bainbridge, *Gilds*, p. 62.

Archbishop Æthelnoth (d. 1038).<sup>59</sup> The same pattern occurred in Norfolk and Yorkshire, where fewer returns survive from 1389 and vastly more wills. In Yorkshire, “a few gilds were dedicated to local saints” or pre conquest saints, to SS Hilda, John of Beverley, Botolph, Wilfrid, and Ninian, but what was most striking was the absence as patrons of SS Cuthbert, Oswald, and William of York.<sup>60</sup> A score of native dedications occur in Norfolk to Botolph, Edmund, Edward, Ethelrelda, and Withburga.<sup>61</sup> Native dedications were extremely local, Æthelrelda in Ely, John in Beverley, Wendreda in March, and Wilfrid in Ripon, and only there. Almost all Norfolk saints occurred in churches with the same dedication, seven gilds of St Botolph (out of nine) in churches of St Botolph, testimony to the survival of the cult where originally rooted, but not to a more widespread or more enduring movement.

The foundation of new colleges was an opportunity for new dedications, perhaps to Anglo-Saxon saints but generally to others. The original dedication of the church or chapel that normally preceded them is sometimes lost. When parish churches or castle chapels were erected into colleges, it was common to expand the patronage—at Ottery St Mary (Devon) in 1337 to Christ, St Mary, and St Edward the Confessor and All Saints and at Tonge (Staffs.) in 1410 from St Bartholomew to God, Our Lady, and St Bartholomew. Edward III similarly extended the patronage of his much enhanced college at Windsor from St Edward the Confessor to Our Lady, St George, and St Edward, henceforth known as St George’s for short. In all these instances the original patron was retained, which was not always the case: at Fotheringhay (Northants) St Edward the Confessor disappeared between 1398 and 1410 and at Windsor and Battlefield (Salop.) colleges SS George and Mary Magdalene obscured their co-patrons in common parlance.<sup>62</sup> Retention of the dedication need not imply any relevant observances. There may or may not be altars with this dedication and the services prescribed in surviving collegiate statutes almost never mentioned them. The two or three masses per day were invariably in honour of the Virgin, the

59 Bainbridge, *Gilds*, pp. 62–64; see also Ridyard, “*Condigna Veneratio*,” p. 180. To my knowledge, neither Pandonia nor Wendreda are discussed in Yorke’s work.

60 David J.F. Crouch, *Piety, Fraternity and Power. Religious Guilds in Late Medieval Yorkshire, 1389–1547* (York, 2000), pp. 102 and 252–59.

61 Farnhill, *Guilds*, pp. 176–208.

62 Dugdale, *Monasticon*, 6, *passim*. Modern studies of colleges say little about the dedications, e.g. Nigel Saul, *Death, Art and Memory in Medieval England: The Cobham Family and their Monuments 1300–1500* (Oxford, 2001); *The English Medieval College and its Context*, ed. Clive Burgess and Martin Heale (Woodbridge, 2008), pp. 21–22; Mark Bailey, “Sir John de Wingfield and the Foundation of Wingfield College,” in *Wingfield College and its Patrons: Piety and Prestige in Medieval Suffolk*, ed. Peter Bloore and Edward Martin (Woodbridge, 2015), pp. 31–48, at pp. 45–46.

Sarum mass of the day, or for the souls of founders and benefactors: the votive masses operated to a strict rota that never, for instance, specified SS Edward, George, or Mary Magdalen.

A particularly striking example was the shortlived college that Richard Duke of Gloucester, the future Richard III, established at Middleham in Yorkshire in the parish church of the 9th-century virgin martyr St Alkilda. Alkilda remained as third patron, after Jesus and Our Lady, but received no particular devotions. His second even more abortive college at Barnard Castle relegated the original patron Margaret of Antioch to fourth place behind Jesus, the Virgin, and Ninian. His third college at York Minster was dedicated to God, the Blessed Virgin, George and Ninian.<sup>63</sup> Middleham's seven priests took the names of patron saints: only the Virgin was scriptural, four were traditional (Anthony, Barbara, George, Katherine), and two—Cuthbert and Ninian—were northern and pre-Conquest in origin. The feasts of Cuthbert in Lent and Ninian on 16 September were elevated to principal feasts, comparable to Christmas and Easter. The duke named no less than 43 favourite saints: some scriptural, most from antiquity, no less than eleven virgins, but also including the two northern saints Wilfrid of Ripon and William of York. Some of these were Sarum feasts, only a couple York feasts, another couple were neither. That all 43 were designated as double feasts, with particularly elaborate sung services not always available in the *Sanctorale*, must have imposed strains both in locating appropriate material and in performance on the clerical staff. St Ninian was foregrounded in all Richard's colleges. A devotion to St Ninian was added to the book of hours that Richard was using at his death.<sup>64</sup>

Whilst highly personal, such selections were not unusual in the century before the Reformation. Particular masses were commissioned on particular weekdays. Whatever the dedication of the chantry or altar, 13th-century and 14th-century founders had to make do with the services that the Church prescribed in the mother church, the masses of the day as modified by saints' festivals as prescribed by the relevant use, whether secular (eg Sarum) or monastic. For late foundations, those dating from the 15th and 16th centuries, the principle increasingly applied that founders prescribed their own preferences. Votive masses, as these were called, operated on a weekly rota: Trinity mass on Sunday, the Angels on Monday, Salvation of the People on Tuesday, the Holy

63 Dugdale, *Monasticon*, 6:1440–1; R.B. Dobson, "Richard III and the Church of York," in *Kings and Nobles in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. Ralph A. Griffiths and James Sherborne (Gloucester, 1986), pp. 130–54, at p. 145, Building works ceased and the endowments were resumed on the king's death.

64 Raine, *Fabric Rolls*, p. 305. All three colleges died with the king.

Ghost on Wednesday, Corpus Christi on Thursday, Holy Cross on Friday, and the Virgin (principally the Annunciation on Saturday), to which were added such variants as the Requiem mass or on Fridays the Name of Jesus or Five Wounds of Christ.<sup>65</sup> Some founders transposed the days, selected other masses that might well focus on Cuthbert or Ninian, and added prayers and anthems to particular saints.

### Postscript: Anglo-Saxon Saints after the Reformation

Amongst the many thousand new dedications of post-Conquest England there were therefore significant numbers relating to native and pre-Conquest saints. All this however was changed at the Reformation, as the monasteries were swept away in 1536–40, colleges, chantries, guilds, fraternities, chapels, and many hospitals by Edward VI. Subsidiary altars became redundant. The cathedrals were retained, generally re-dedicated to the Trinity, and a few monastic and collegiate churches such as Malmesbury and Wimborne that became parish churches retained their ancient dedications to St Cuthburga and St Milburga. Only the parish churches remained of the post-Conquest foundations and up to 30 per cent of these dedications, Orme estimates, were changed.<sup>66</sup> Anglo-Saxon dedications were a high proportion of what was left. They were: predominantly to saints from the bible and late antiquity, semi-legendary saints and virgin martyrs of west European tradition, but among them only a smattering of Anglo-Saxon and British saints. It was these and tiny numbers of post-Conquest saints that distinguish almost all the medieval churches that survive today. Over the next two centuries there were few new Anglican churches—it was virtually impossible to found new parishes—and hence few new dedications. Such dedications moreover ceased to matter much and seemed often to be forgotten. Whilst the Church of England recognized only certain saints, no effort was made to purge such legendary saints as Christopher and George or those of doubtful sanctity. The Puritans and dissenters, who disapproved of the cult of saints, did not dedicate their meeting houses. Meantime the population grew and shifted, to outer suburbs at London and into new spa towns (e.g. Bath), ports (e.g. Liverpool), and industrial towns (e.g. Manchester), and the demand for new parishes, new churches, and more sittings became irresistible. Parliament's response was to vote £1 million in 1818

65 Michael Hicks, "The Piety of Margaret Lady Hungerford (d. 1478)," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 20 (1987), 19–38, at p. 31.

66 Orme, *Dedications*, p. xii.

and another £500,000 in 1824 towards new churches, almost all of which were dedicated to scriptural saints. The handful of exceptions, all outside London, included St Cuthbert in the North and St David and St Fagan in Wales.<sup>67</sup> The host of Gothic Revival churches that followed in the 19th and early 20th centuries were a little more wide-ranging: St Aidan, St Augustine, and St Edward the Confessor featured occasionally. The revived Roman Catholic church recognized not only pre-Conquest but also post-Reformation saints, such as St Thomas More and St John Payne. The University of Winchester, a 19th-century Anglican foundation named for a period after King Alfred in 1928, dedicated halls of residence and teaching blocks at various times to SS Alphege, Edburga, Grimbald, and Swithun. The main site is still named after King Alfred.

### Leavings or Legacy?

This survey has presumed that dedications mattered. One might reasonably ask why. Originally, admittedly, it was believed that patron saints interceded on behalf of parishioners, founders, benefactors with the Heavenly King. Right up to the Reformation pious Christians continued to seek the intercessions of these ancient saints and to make offerings and more permanent benefactions to them. Other types of pious expression, such as the depiction of saints on rood screens and vestments and dating conventions, suggest that Anglo-Saxon saints were rooted more firmly in English sentiment than the small number of new dedications suggest. What did the English know about these saints and how could they know it? Relatively few saints qualified for proper services, that specifically celebrated their lives and deaths, and the collections of saints' lives, notably the *Golden Legend* and Osbern Bokenham's *Legends of Holy Women*, treat hardly any of them. It is not likely that Anglo-Saxon *vitae* (of St Botolph, for instance) were widely read in the later Middle Ages. Intercession was continued, but less often, as many patrons became less esteemed and generally indeed lost their dedication feasts, as new saints, new liturgical feasts, and especially the Blessed Virgin rose in importance. Some Anglo-Saxon saints remained in the calendars, but they were rarely selected as patrons to the thousands of new churches, monasteries, chapels, guilds and chantries. Admittedly the cults of Cuthbert in the North, Edmund in East Anglia, and Swithun in Wessex did flourish. They have certainly lasted much better than the new saints of post-Conquest England whose devotions were effectively abolished

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67 Arnold-Forster, *Studies in Church Dedications*, 1:11. Dobson, "Richard III and the Church of York," p. 145.

at the Reformation. The really lasting Anglo-Saxon legacy has been the implanting in England of those saints current in late antique Rome: it is they who colonised the churches of Anglo-Saxon England, outnumbering the native saints, many of whom were squeezed out at the Norman Conquest and the Reformation. There survive today thousands of pre-Conquest dedications, but only a fraction signal the impact of the Celtic saints, Anglo-Saxon, and Viking kings and bishops, and King Olaf. Much more numerous but also much less obvious are the dedications to scriptural and antique saints that today are a principal legacy of the Anglo-Saxon Church.

## Olavian Traces in Post-Medieval England

*Karl Christian Alvstad*

In 1918 Sir James Bird, clerk to the London County Council, mournfully noted that if the church of St Olave, Southwark, was destroyed and its parish abolished, it would mark the end of an almost nine-hundred-year-long history of St Olaf being a part of the landscape and life of Southwark, and that it would be the loss of an identity marker for the community connected to the church.<sup>1</sup> His remarks were to no avail. During the following decade, the church was closed and torn down, and the parish split between its neighbouring parishes, including St Mary Magdalene, Bermondsey.<sup>2</sup> The parishes in Southwark have since changed their borders several times and the majority of what was St Olave Parish today forms parts of St Mary Magdalene, with St Olave, St John and St Luke, Bermondsey. The current parish of St Mary Magdalene retained Olave in its name up until the 1970s. As a consequence of these changes the parish church of St Mary Magdalene houses some of the few surviving artefacts from St Olave, Southwark.<sup>3</sup> Although the parish church of St Olave, Southwark, has been demolished, the church and the parish is an excellent starting point for the exploration of the survival and legacy of St Olave in Britain as it illustrates some of the changes and challenges faced by the Olavian traces in the 20th century. St Olave might have been a significant saint in the Middle Ages, and the traces of his cult have through churches, images, two schools, and the name of a village, endured and become embedded in the landscape of Britain. This endurance reflects and mirrors many of the changes that have taken place in Britain, particularly in the post-medieval world.

- 1 James Bird and W.R. Riley, *St Olave's, Southwark* (London, 1918), p. 12; King Olaf II Haraldsson was elevated to sainthood in 1031 after his death in 1030, in a Nordic context he is most often referred to as St Olav or St Olaf, whereas in an Anglophone context—and especially in the British Isles—Olaf appears in an anglicised version of Olav, from the genitive *Olaves*, as St Olave or in some very rare occasions as St Ola (this use only occurs in Orkney in the British Isles to my knowledge). 'Olave' is used throughout this chapter in reference to the saint's cult and most of his dedications in England but, in line with other usage, 'Olaf' is used in references to the king himself and other dedications.
- 2 Mervyn Wilson, *A Brief History and Description of Bermondsey Parish Church, St Mary Magdalene, with St Olave, St John and St Luke, Bermondsey* (London, 1976), p. 21.
- 3 Wilson, *Brief History and Description*, p. 14.

In this chapter I will therefore explore how, where, and if possible why, these Olavian traces survived, as well as how we might understand them. One of the key questions addresses by this paper is what causes have impacted the changes in the Olavian traces. The paper also asks whereas there are any wider trends that dictated the use and presentation of Saint Olave (Olaf) in the period between Queen Elizabeth I's accession to the throne and today.

In a brief work published in 1998, *A Saint for All Nations*, Simon Coupland explored the international dimensions of the cult of St Olave in the Middle Ages.<sup>4</sup> His work gives an excellent overview of the Olavian cult, but it sheds little to no light on the centuries following the Reformation. His study identified many key elements of the development of the cult across Europe, and placed the cult in the British Isles in this wider context. Fifty years before Coupland, Bruce Dickins had demonstrated in his article "The Cult of S. Olave in the British Isles" that the cult of St Olave could be traced back to the 1050s in Britain.<sup>5</sup> Dickins also demonstrated that there had been a number of new Olavian dedications in the 19th century, among other at Ramsey (Isle of Man), Lerwick (Shetland), Woodberry Down (London), and Bermondsey (London).<sup>6</sup> These two studies have until now formed the core of the scholarship on the Olavian cult in Britain, but new additions to this study of saints and their place in the British landscape are now available. Elsewhere in this volume, Robert Higham convincingly suggests that the early cult of Olave has significant connections with the Anglo-Scandinavian aristocracy in England before the Norman Conquest,<sup>7</sup> while Michael Hicks explores the place of the Anglo-Scandinavian saints in the religious landscape of England after 1066 and into the late medieval period.<sup>8</sup>

Although theories for the origins for the Olavian cult in Britain have been presented, few scholars have considered the survival of these cult sites up to today, and the 19th- and 20th-century revival of these Olavian traces. This chapter addresses this deficiency, and it explores the survival and developments of the Olavian cult, its sites and images in post-medieval Britain. This chapter focuses especially on the 19th- and 20th-century Olavian traces and

4 Simon Coupland, *A Saint for All Nations: The Cult of Saint Olaf Outside Norway* (Trondheim, 1998).

5 Bruce Dickins, "The Cult of St Olave in the British Isles," *Saga-Book of the Viking Society* 12 (1937–45), 52–80.

6 Dickins, "Cult of St Olave," p. 79.

7 Robert Higham, "The Godwins, Towns and St Olaf Churches: Comital Investment in the Mid-11th Century," above, pp. 467–513.

8 Michael Hicks, "Leavings or Legacies? The Role of Early Medieval Saints in English Church Dedications beyond the Conquest and the Reformation," above, pp. 582–601.

their wider cultural and social contexts. It will thus explore the mechanism that has supported an Olavian renaissance in the twentieth century.

While this chapter aims to explore the survival of Olavian traces in Britain, the accessibility of evidence and the constraints of length have only allowed an examination of evidence from London, Wessex and the Lake District. The inclusion of the later example is due to a particularly interesting dedication to St Olaf (with Old Norse-inspired spelling) at Wasdale Head in the Lake District, Cumbria. Although this chapter examines a limited number of traces, these traces provide an opportunity for further studies, and as such give some insight into the continuation of the Olavian traces throughout Britain. The selection of examples included in this chapter means that sites—such as the church of St Olaf in Poughill (Cornwall) and the Priory and village of St Olave in Norfolk among others—will not be examined in this context,<sup>9</sup> but I hope one day to return to them and provide a more complete analysis of the Olavian cult and its traces in the British Isles. Through the selected dedication and traces the chapter will explore and examine how Olaf II Haraldsson is remembered, cultivated and perceived in Britain in this period. These dedications and traces survive today through the writings about the individual churches dedicated to Olave, and parishes these churches belong to. Many of these texts are results of the thoughts and inspirations of the parish councils or a member of the local communities, and can as such be seen as a statement of the local memory, identity and understanding of the role St Olave plays in their community. Accordingly this chapter engages with the memory and identity function the Olavian traces have played in the 20th century. This will be of the utmost significance in the context of St Olave, Southwark, where although the church was dismantled, the community retained statements and identifiers to their previous religious identities.

### **Continuity and Change—Survival and Renewal: Surviving the Reformation in Britain**

Following the Lutheran reformation of Norway in 1536–37, the centre of the Olavian cult at Trondheim, Norway, saw its shrine dismantled with pilgrimage and religious remembrance of St Olaf eradicated in the new Lutheran Church. These changes contributed to a decline in popularity for St Olaf in much of Europe including the British Isles. As a consequence of this and the dissolution

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<sup>9</sup> K. Rutherford Davis, *St Olave's Priory, Herringfleet, Suffolk* (London, 1949); note that 20th-century changes to the county borders moved the village and priory of St Olave to Norfolk.

of the monasteries in both Scandinavia and Britain in the mid-16th century, much of the knowledge about the wider cult of St Olave and its developments, was lost. It can today be suggested, due to extensive cross-referencing of a number of sources, that the Olavian cult in the Middle Ages had been significant and that the reformations of Norway and England has a major impact on this cult. In Norway, the shrine of St Olave was destroyed and the body of the saint was lost.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, cult statues, reliquaries and texts were destroyed, confiscated or hidden. As a result, much that once was only survived in folklore and popular memory through place names or local myths.

Of course, this stripping of the altars was not an exclusively Norwegian experience. The English reformation can be seen as both a curse and a blessing for the Olavian cult: a curse in that an unknown number of objects may have been destroyed in the stripping of English churches as part of the iconoclasm of the Reformation;<sup>11</sup> and a blessing in that the Marian revival of the Catholic Church in England saw a new cult statue being produced for St Olave, Southwark.<sup>12</sup> Although this statue is now lost, the textual references to it provide information about the church at Southwark, and help to highlight the importance of the Southwark church in the religious landscape of London in a Catholic context. Yet, today little survives of the medieval representations of Olave in England; those that do survive can predominantly be found in manuscripts and textual sources. The majority of Olavian traces that survived the English reformation are church dedications such as the St Olave's church in York, Exeter, Gatcombe (Isle of Wight), Southwark, a number in London.<sup>13</sup> These churches, and the names of those that have not survived, can be read as indicators of the popularity of St Olave in the Middle Ages, something Dickins, Higham, and Coupland have commented on.<sup>14</sup> Many of the Olavian dedications that are now lost have left traces in the physical landscape of Britain through place names and artistic depictions of the saint, and they testify to the continuity of names and the longevity of identity markers such as parish

10 Øystein Morten, *Jakten på Olav den Hellige* [The Search for St Olaf] (Oslo, 2014), pp. 17–19.

11 Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400–1580*, 2nd ed. (London, 2005), pp. 381, 453 and 480.

12 Dickins, "Cult of St Olave," p. 68.

13 York: Henry Stapleton, *The History of St Olave's Church York* (York, 2002), pp. 6–7; Exeter: Dickins, "Cult of St Olave," p. 69; Gatcombe: Anon., *St Olaves Church Gatcombe: A Short Guide and Souvenir* (Gatcombe, 2010); James Evans, *The Church of St Olave and Its Links with the Past*, 2nd ed. (Gatcombe, 1966); Southwark: Bird and Riley, *St Olave's*, pp. 5–12; London: Phil Manning, *"Our Own Church": Aspects and Images of St Olave's Hart Street, All Hallows Staining and St Catherine Coleman* (London, 2014), pp. 3–12 and 48.

14 Coupland, *Saint for All Nations*, pp. 7–16.

churches and local dedications to saints. A crucial fact or consequence of this local identity is the happy accident that parish churches in Britain largely retained their medieval names, which supported by the continuity of settlement patterns have caused a retention of saints dedications, at least in the case of Olave, to remain in their original locations. In the Norwegian context such continuity is very rare. As such, these churches formed the foundation for the Olavian traces in the post-medieval period. To my knowledge, there were no new Olavian dedications until the 19th century. While three of these later dedications are explored to some detail at the end of this chapter, from the English reformation until the Great Fire of London in 1666, little is known about the developments of the Olavian traditions in Britain beyond a reference to the aforementioned Marian revival statue of St Olave dating from 1556–58 at the Church of St Olave, Southwark. What can be established is that in 1561 a school was established in the parish of St Olave, Southwark.<sup>15</sup> This foundation is today known as St Olave Grammar school, and takes its name from the parish it once belonged to. The founding of this school can be seen in a wider context of Elizabethan educational policies, according to R.C. Carrington,<sup>16</sup> and is not an anomaly among these but represent instead the norm. The details of the history of this school are investigated further below; for the present all that is necessary to be established is that the school was established before the Great Fire of London and its impact on the Olavian traces.

### The Great Fire of London

During the Great Fire of London, three of the medieval St Olaf churches of the city burnt down, and only one, St Olave Hart Street, survived due to the creation of firebreaks around it and the Navy Office,<sup>17</sup> changing the face of the Olavian traces in London. Samuel Pepys narrates through his diary how the church was saved, “blowing up of houses in Tower-streete, those next the Tower [...] and then it was east to quench what little fire was in [the ruins of the houses torn down for protection of the Navy Office].”<sup>18</sup>

15 R.C. Carrington, *Two Schools: A History of the St Olave's and St Saviour's Grammar School Foundation* (London, 1962; repr. 1971), p. 34.

16 Carrington, *Two Schools*, pp. 14–19.

17 Manning, “*Our Own Church*,” p. 36.

18 *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, ed. Henry Benjamin Wheatley, 5 (London, 1923), p. 399.

Pepys' diary contributed to the church of St Olave Hart Street becoming a centre for pilgrimage, as a mid-20th-century commentator claimed.<sup>19</sup> Following the fire's destruction St Olave Old Jewry was restored, but St Olave Silver Street and St Nicholas Olave were both destroyed and the parishes united with neighbouring parishes. The Fire of London had a significant impact on both the expression of and content of the religious landscape of London. Another 20th-century commentator, Eileen Gray, noted that St Olave Hart Street was one of only eight surviving pre-1666 churches left in the City of London.<sup>20</sup> As such the three Olavian churches lost in the Fire were not alone, and are more representative of the development of churches in the city than the odd survivor in Hart Street. St Olave Old Jewry was the only one of the fire-damaged Olavian churches that was included in Christopher Wren's rebuilding plan.<sup>21</sup> The church was restored and was in use until 1884, when the parish was united with the neighbouring parishes following a dramatic population decrease. As a result of the unification of the parishes, the Olavian dedication was transferred to the neighbouring parish of St Margaret Lothbury, another Wren church nearby.<sup>22</sup>

Following the fire of London, there is a gap in the sources for the Olavian cult in Britain, the next thing we hear is that in 1736 St Olave Southwark was granted funds to be restored after years of decline, in what W.R. Riley claimed in 1918 was a classic example of the post-Wren late English Renaissance style drawing inspiration from St Martin-in-the-Fields and St Paul's cathedral.<sup>23</sup> Despite the 18th-century restoration, the church and its community struggled in the 19th century due to changes in the population of the parish.

### Restoration and "Viking Awareness" in Georgian and Victorian England

Barbara Yorke argued in 2009 that the Victorians were fascinated by the Vikings through two key strands: (1) through the history of the localities, and (2) a

19 A. Powell Miller, *Parish Church of St Olave, Hart Street: An appeal for the restoration of the Church* (London, 1951), p. 5.

20 Eileen Gray, *St Olave's Church* (London, n.d. [c.1950]), p. 5.

21 John Christopher, *Wren's City of London Churches* (Stroud, 2012), pp. 58–59.

22 Church of England, Diocese of London, *Amended Proposals for a Scheme for Union of the Rectory of St Margaret Lothbury with St Christopher-le-Stocks and St Bartholomew Exchange with the united rectory of St Olave Old Jewry with St Martin Pomeroy, St Mildred Poultry and St Mary Colechurch* (London, 1884), p. 2.

23 Bird and Riley, *St Olave's*, p. 18.

wider concern about the perceived antiquity of European nations.<sup>24</sup> This first of these strands are also seen in the 19th century when it comes to the Olavian traces. The best example for this is perhaps St Olave Southwark, both the parish and the church, but it also applies to a wider programme of restorations that seems to have taken place in the Olavian churches. It is worth noting here that the 19th century saw the re-discovery and compilation of Viking history, and although the Vikings were part of popular culture in Britain at this point, they were, according to Andrew Wawn, a distinctly novel element in British and European Culture.<sup>25</sup>

In the years since the Great Fire of London, St Olave Southwark, which had not been damaged in the Fire as it was on the south side of the River Thames, had apparently started to show signs of age. The medieval church was refurbished and extensively altered in 1736. Riley opined that, like Wren's late 17th-century church of St James's, Piccadilly, and James Gibbs' early 18th-century church of St Martin-in-the-Fields, the new church of St Olave was "designed on [a] Basillica Plan"<sup>26</sup> (sic.), and went on to state that it was a representative of the Late English renaissance in church architecture. This redesign of the church represents a major investment of £5,000 by Parliament in response to the state of the church. A fire in 1843 in the building damaged the interior, meaning further works were required. The physical restorations, investments and rebuilding in this church indicates not only an interest in the church itself, but also a conscious connection to the building and the parish,<sup>27</sup> a connection between the parishioner and the location, and reaffirms the place of Olave in the London cityscape.

Alongside these investments the identity of the parish seems to have been kept alive, and to some extent evolved. Although the sources we have available from this period are few, an interesting statement of the local identity is a small publication from 1886, by the Reverend S. McDaniel, a Catholic priest based in Southwark.<sup>28</sup> McDaniel presents the history of the Catholic mission

24 Barbara Yorke, "The 'Old North' From the Saxon South in Nineteenth-Century Britain," in *Anglo-Saxons and the North: Essays Reflecting the Theme of the 10th Meeting of the International Society of Anglo-Saxonists in Helsinki, August 2001*, ed. Matti Kilpiö, Leena Kahlas-Tarkka, Jane Roberts, and Olga Timofeeva (Tempe, AZ, 2009), pp. 131–50, at p. 148.

25 Andrew Wawn, *The Vikings and the Victorians: Inventing the Old North in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 3–9.

26 Bird and Riley, *St Olave's*, p. 18.

27 K.D.M. Snell, *Parish and Belonging: Community, Identity and Welfare in England and Wales 1700–1950* (Cambridge, 2009), p. 441.

28 S. McDaniel, *Life of St Olave, Martyr, and King and Patron Of Norway* (London, 1886).

in Southwark, taking the opportunity to claim that the Catholic parish of Our Lady of La Salette and St Joseph, Southwark, was the rightful successor of the medieval parish of St Olave, and at a result he and the parish should place themselves under Olave's protection.<sup>29</sup> McDaniel's prayer: "St Olave, Pray for us,"<sup>30</sup> follows on from a concise but detailed theological account of intercession, and above all a claim that St Olave watches over his parish and the locality of Southwark. McDaniel substantiates this by pointing to the Miracle of the healed knight at St Olave, Southwark, recorded in a number of the versions of the medieval hagiography of St Olave, *Passio et miracula beati Olavi*.<sup>31</sup> This account not only indicates the awareness of Olave by religious communities in the area, but also that the sources regarding his life were being circulated—even if McDaniel did not state which texts he drew on—among at least some of the religious elite.

Although the miracle of the English knight is not mentioned by Thomas Carlyle in his *The Early Kings of Norway*, he does highlight the presence of two St Olave churches in London, one of which Carlyle explicitly states is St Olave Southwark.<sup>32</sup> Carlyle further highlights that these churches have been the site of miracles,<sup>33</sup> suggesting that St Olaf's miracles in London were fairly well known among authors interested in Olaf in the 19th century.

The link between the parish of St Olave Southwark, and the miracle is reiterated in the 1918 account. It was used as an argument for why the church should be saved and not demolished or sold.<sup>34</sup> The crisis of St Olave Southwark at the beginning of the 20th century, was one faced by other London parishes as well, including St Olave, Silver Street, decline in population and changing demographics. This situation was not helped by the presence of the Catholic community of Rev. McDaniel just a stone's throw from the parish church. The decline was so marked that the parish was unable to support any restorations of the church, and the church was declared redundant in 1926, with the site sold off in 1928, and the parish divided between its neighbours.

29 McDaniel, *Life of St Olave*, pp. 2–3.

30 McDaniel, *Life of St Olave*, p. 3.

31 *A History of Norway and The Passion and Miracles of the Blessed Olaf*, trans. Devra Kunin and ed. Carl Phelpstead (London, 2001), p. xxxviii.

32 Thomas Carlyle, *The Early Kings of Norway and An Essay on the Portraits of John Knox* (London, 1875), p. 31.

33 Carlyle, *Early Kings of Norway*, p. 152.

34 Bird and Riley, *St Olave's*, pp. 6–8.

### Identity and Place: The Saint, the Viking, and the Norseman as Identity Marker in 20th-Century Britain

Following the dissolution of St Olave Southwark, the remaining parish community in Southwark sought to protect the Olavian tradition of the location resulting in a number Olavian dedications, including buildings on the site of the former church. By setting these dedications in context of the closure of St Olave Southwark they represent a survival of the Olavian tradition through traces in the landscape of the city. Traces such as street names, the moving of dedications to new churches, or continuity of symbols have been seen by Rudy Koshar as elements of a memory landscape.<sup>35</sup> As such, these dedications can be interpreted as an extension of Pierre Nora's notion of *Lieux de mémoire*<sup>36</sup> and, through that, a manifestation of the cultural memory of the community. This would imply that Olavian dedications of the 20th century, both in London and elsewhere, can potentially be seen through the lens of community identity and cultural remembrance within the community that commissions the dedications. Such a conscious memory construction can be seen in some of the 20th-century Olavian dedications.

#### Southwark Cathedral: St Olaf House and New Churches in London

Following the closure and dismantling of St Olave Southwark, the bishopric of Southwark transferred the name and dedication St Olave to a new mission south of London, in Mitcham. This transferral came as a consequence of the new Mitcham parish receiving parts of the profits from the sale of the dismantled Southwark church. According to Keith Penny, the only condition of these funds were that the new parish would assume the old dedication of St Olave's, through which it would ensure a continuity within the bishopric, acknowledging the past of the region and tapping in to the identity of the community on the south shore of the Thames.<sup>37</sup>

35 Rudy Koshar, *From Monuments to Traces: Artifacts of German Memory 1870–1990* (London, 2000), p. 9.

36 Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Mémoire*," *Representations* 26 (1989), 7–24.

37 Keith Penny, *The Church of Blue Columns, Anglo-Catholicism in a New District: St Olave, Mitcham, 1928–1939* (London, 2013), p. 6.



FIGURE 28.1  
Mosaic of "Saint Olave, King of Norway" on the corner of  
St Olaf House, Southwark

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This continuity of dedication and tradition, although invented, fits within a wider set of statements of Olavian continuity in the Southwark area. Although the parish of St Olave was abolished and split in several parts, the local landscape still presents reminders in its fabric to the lost church and its parish. The site of the church is today St Olaf House in Tooley Street, a street whose name is derived from that of St Olaf.<sup>38</sup> At one corner of St Olaf House a visitor to the area can today find St Olave's Stairs, a present reminder of the old name of the location. Tooley Street, although an ancient street, presents the visitor also with another reminder of the past of the location, a major mosaic relief on the corner of St Olaf House (see Fig. 28.1). This depiction is not as surprising in its placement as in its iconography, but it strengthens the sense of Olavian continuity at the site and quite literally cements Olave in the cityscape of Southwark.

As with the church of St Olave, Southwark, St Olave's School, a pre-Great Fire Olavian institution noted above, was an integral part of the cityscape of the parish. Founded in 1561, and re-confirmed in 1571 as St Olave Grammar School,<sup>39</sup> the school represents in many ways both the beginning of the new Olavian traditions as well as the continuation of the old. The school was established in the parish of St Olave, Southwark, and thus took the name of the parish of its origins. Such an act of naming policy was nothing new, nor was it a

38 See Higham, "Godwins, Towns and St Olaf Churches," above, p. 505.

39 Carrington, *Two Schools*, pp. 34–35.

representation of a cult continuation with reference to Olaf; instead it was a statement of identity and locality. The school was situated in the parish until the second half of the 20th century, when it moved to Orpington where it remains today.<sup>40</sup> Although it moved, it still carried the name and some of the symbols of the school and its original parish.

Even though St Olave Grammar School has since moved from the parish, its dedication—and that of its sister institution, St Saviours and St Olave Grammar School—still recalls the Olavian origins of their foundations through the symbols used at the schools. The Old Olavians, the former students of Olave proper, use an emblem displaying an open crown and an axe,<sup>41</sup> two of the most common attributes connected with St Olaf in artistic depictions,<sup>42</sup> whereas the school of St Saviours and St Olave has incorporated this symbol in to their school crest.<sup>43</sup> These institutions continue today the educational traditions of the parish of St Olave, Southwark, and through their imagery they present a direct link to the Olavian traditions of Southwark.

As an extension of these traditions and the links with their Southwark past, the former pupils of St Olave Grammar School formed the Old Olavians association in the late 19th century. Their magazine *Olavian*, first published in 1896, is a treasure trove for researchers exploring the history of the school.<sup>44</sup> The Olavians and St Olave Grammar School represent today a statement of continuous tradition from Southwark, one which taps in to the traditional iconography of King Olaf through the Crown and the Axe.

### Depicting the Saint-King

Despite the continuity of St Olave in a school setting, there were evidently fears that following the early 20th-century destruction of St Olave's Church Southwark, the long tradition of Olavian presence in Southwark would end. As

40 Carrington, *Two Schools*, p. 249.

41 Carrington, *Two Schools*, p. 13; *Old Olavians Website*, <[www.oldolavians.net](http://www.oldolavians.net)> (accessed 19 Feb., 2017).

42 Margrethe Stang, "Helgenkongen og Alterbilder" [The Saint King and the Altar Piece], in *Helgenkongen St Olav I kunsten* [Depictions of St Olaf in Art], ed. Øystein Ekroll (Trondheim, 2016), pp. 27–53, at pp. 31–33.

43 St Saviours and St Olave's School homepage, <<http://www2.sso.southwark.sch.uk>> (accessed 19 Feb. 2017).

44 Carrington, *Two Schools*, p. 275.



FIGURE 28.2

Statue of St Olave (second from left on the upper tier) as part of the altar screen of Southwark Cathedral

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a result a number of interesting steps were taken to retain a sense of Olavian continuity for the area. At the site of St Olave's Church a new building, opened in 1932, externally gave a nod to the origins of the parish and its name. For on the corner of Tooley Street and St Olave's Stairs the new building presented a mosaic relief of St Olaf.<sup>45</sup> However, this depiction presents a rather interesting image of the Saint; he is seated whilst holding a long cross-topped staff in one hand, and a naked sword in the other (see Fig. 28.1). The closest similarity to this depiction comes from Southwark Cathedral, where a statue from the same period can be seen on the altar screen (Fig. 28.2). The sword is an uncommon attribute for St Olave, who is most commonly depicted with an axe. The use of the axe is can be seen in a number of contemporary depictions in London among other in the stain glass window of St Olave Hart Street and on the statue found on the face of Norway House just off Trafalgar Square.<sup>46</sup>

The majority of Olavian images in London are modern, taking inspiration from the medieval Olavian iconography. Among these depictions the stain glass window in Hart Street, which in 2015 was presented by Caroline Swash as one of the 100 best stained glass sites in London,<sup>47</sup> is perhaps the best example of iconographic continuity in the image of Olave. The Hart Street image of

45 Historic England, *Historic England Website*: "St Olaf House," <<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1385977>> (accessed 19 Feb. 2017).

46 Karl Alvestad, "Den nasjonal Olav" [The National Olaf], in *Helgenkongen St Olav I kunsten*, ed. Ekroll, pp. 191–214, at p. 204.

47 Caroline Swash, *The 100 Best Stained Glass Sites in London* (London, 2015), p. 92.

Olave was made by Arthur Buss (1909–99) presents a man standing,<sup>48</sup> crowned and majestic; he holds the traditional axe and at his feet lays a dragon, a symbol often interpreted as the evil within himself that Olaf overcome before the battle of Stiklestad. This image draws directly on images surviving from the late medieval Hanseatic tradition of depicting Olaf, where the saint is depicted standing with a dragon under his feet, and holding the axe.<sup>49</sup> This image was also absorbed by the Norwegian artist Gustav Vigeland, who in 1898 designed the quintessential image of St Olaf in a modern context; where the king stands crowned and holds an Axe, and Orb and under his feet rests a dragon with his own face. In a Norwegian context, the statue designed by Vigeland marked the height of Gothic revival in art and architecture.<sup>50</sup> Buss's stained glass window further presents a tantalising clue to the modern Olavian tradition, both in Britain and throughout the world. For in the frame underneath the depiction of St Olaf is the crest of the modern Norwegian royal house and the monogram of Haakon VII of Norway (1872–1957), the last Norwegian king to be crowned as a successor of Olaf. Haakon's monogram is an acknowledgement of Haakon's use of St Olave's church Hart Street as his parish Church for parts of his exile in London. The monogram also illustrates the link between Olaf and the Norwegians in the 20th century, and to them [us] Olaf is a key cultural emblem.

However, the Olavian images in London also include a number of depictions of Olave which are significantly different from the Saint of St Olave Hart Street; chief among these is the mosaic relief on St Olave House in Southwark, on the site of the ancient St Olave church in Southwark. The relief shows Olave seated, robed and crowned, holding a cross and a sword; two attributes that plausibly refer to the church, and the episode in the sagas wherein King Olaf is said to have taken part in the defence of London in 1014, pulling down London Bridge.<sup>51</sup> But here, St Olave is not presented wearing Viking or medieval garbs, instead he cloak and tunic is draped to look like closer to a classical costume than an early medieval one. As mentioned above, the sword this Olave statue wears is a rather unusual attribute to the king, but London is also the home of three other depictions from around the same date all showing St Olave with a sword instead of an Axe. Two of the more prominent ones are the statues by

48 Swash, *The 100 Best Stained Glass Sites*, p. 92.

49 Stang, "Helgenkongen og Alterbilder," pp. 43–45.

50 Alvestad, "Den nasjonal Olav," pp. 195–96.

51 Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla 11: Óláfr Haraldsson (The Saint)*, trans. Alison Finlay and Antony Faulkes (London, 2014) p. 10.



FIGURE 28.3

Stained glass window depicting St Olave made by Arthur Buss, in St Olave Hart Street, London

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Gustav Lærum on the façade of Norway House, and in the hallway of the Norwegian Seamen's church in Rotherhithe, dedicated in 1927 to "St Olav."<sup>52</sup> These two statues are exactly the same, and show Olave standing, dressed as a Viking with a big cross on his chest and a sword with the sword point in the ground in front of him; in this depiction Olave is the Christian king and nation-builder of Norwegian historical tradition, the founder and defender of Christianity in Norway. This image is key to the historical understanding of Olave/Olaf in Norway, and also key to why Norwegian society and settlements have turned to Olave for symbols in exile or following migrations.

The final Olavian image in London can be found very close to the site of the former St Olave Southwark, namely in Southwark Cathedral, where the altar screen today includes a statue of Olave in the romanticised image of a 'barbarian'. Moreover, the Southwark Cathedral Olave presents a man holding his sword over his right hand shoulder, dressed in some sort of skin, whilst holding his shield with a cross, against his left leg. Few of the attributes given to Olave in this statue are normally used to identify him and the identification of this statue as St Olave is therefore entirely reliant on local guiding literature. The cathedral's tradition, recorded in its guidebook, recalls that this Olavian figure (see Fig. 28.3), was made in the 1920s or 30s, the same time as the Olavian dedication of the bishopric moved from Southwark or Mitcham as discussed above. The plaque for the screen corroborates this story, for it suggests the statue was commissioned and produced before St Olave Southwark was dismantled. Yet,

52 Alvestad, "Den nasjonal Olav," pp. 204–06.

the plaque also tells the reader that Olave sailed up the Thames and attacked England in 994 as an enemy of Æthelred ‘the Unready’, before returning in 1014 as an ally of the same king, and helped save London. The plaque claims: “he was a man of war but embraced the Christian religion and became a devotee,” a statement which possibly can be attributed to both Olaf I (i.e. Olaf Tryggvason, who died c.1000) and Olaf II of Norway. For through its introduction of St Olave, the plaque presents the two Olafs as one person, suggesting that the author of the plaque was familiar with key events in the Viking age, whilst at the same time not have access to, or used the sagas. The author of the plaque seems to be the only author to confuse these two kings, whereas the contemporary Rev. S. McDaniel, James Bird and Philip Norman all seem to have managed to separate these two kings. The knowledge about the Viking past of Olaf, and especially his supposed role in the defence of London against the Danes in 1014, is a key feature in most narratives about Olave from the beginning of the 20th-century in London.<sup>53</sup> To these narratives, Olaf is a link to both the Vikings and to the Anglo-Saxon past, whilst he also was an accepted symbol for the newly-independent Norwegian state.

### London's Norwegian Olaf

Throughout the 19th century, Norwegian society had awoken to the possibility of political independence, and had rediscovered its Viking and medieval past. As part of this, the history of Olaf II Haraldsson was transmitted among the population through textbooks and national commemorations.<sup>54</sup> Following Norwegian independence from Sweden in 1905, Norway needed an embassy in London, and the Norwegian community in the city needed a place to gather. In 1924, the Norwegian community in London received its first centralised ‘home’, in Norway House just off Trafalgar Square, where one of the two Olave statues by Gustav Lærum was placed above the doorway.<sup>55</sup> By placing the image of Olave on the façade of the building, Olave House, home of both the Norwegian Club and the Norwegian Embassy, linked St Olave directly to Norway and

53 Philip Norman, *St Olave's Hart Street* (London, 1905), p. 93; Wilson, *A Brief History and Description*, p. 21.

54 Karl Christian Alvestad, “Kings, Heroes and Ships: The Use of Historical Characters in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Perceptions of the Early Medieval Scandinavian Past,” Ph thesis, University of Winchester, 2016 (currently in preparation for publication).

55 Alvestad, “Den nasjonal Olav,” pp. 204–06.

claimed him as a Norwegian saint. To some extent, this distorted the Olavian tradition in Britain. The re-dedications and use of Olave in London and throughout Britain had through the centuries established Olave as a saint who happened to be a Viking and a Norwegian, but whom in the eyes of Rev. S. McDaniel<sup>56</sup> and Rev. R.K. Haslam<sup>57</sup> was an example for the devotion and religious dedication.

The 'Norwegianness' of St Olave was not stressed until this point; instead Olave seems to have taken on a modern nationality around 1925–27, when the Norwegian seamen's church was established in Southwark and named St Olaf's Church. St Olaf's Church is the home of the second Lærum statue, and together with Norway house must have been at the heart of the Norwegian community in London. The link between Olave and Norway is further expressed in the context of St Olave Hart Street, which, following its destruction during the Blitz, tapped into Olave's Norwegianness and the connection between the church and Samuel Pepys to fund the reconstruction. A. Powell Miller, the rector of the parish, noted in 1951 that as part of the reconstruction of the Church, the church had received a piece of stone from Trondheim Cathedral "built over the tomb of St Olaf, and this is to be incorporated in the new building."<sup>58</sup> Through this incorporation, St Olave Hart Street reinstated the bonds between the heart of the Olavian cult and some of the sites of Olavian traces in Britain. As such the medieval bonds described by Coupland in 1998 are being rediscovered and re-constituted in the modern age.

### Wasdale Head—the Odd One Out? Or the Example that Confirms the Rule?

At the foot of Scafell Pike in Cumbria, the tallest point in England, within a cluster of trees not far from Wastwater, England's deepest lake, lies what to some might sound like the odd one out of the Olavian traces in Britain, the small St Olaf Church at Wasdale Head. St Olaf Church gained its name as late as 1977, and is thus the newest dedication to Olave (in this case, 'Olaf') in Britain.

First attested in the 16th century but bearing no known dedication until 1977, the dedication to St Olaf on 23 March 1977 was an act of public

56 McDaniel, *Life of St Olave*, pp. 28–29.

57 Penny, *The Church of Blue Columns*, p. 92.

58 Powell Miller, *Parish Church of St Olave*, p. 5.

remembrance and identity construction, whereby the Bishop of Carlisle and the church embedded the Viking past of the parish into the very name of the church. There is no evidence that St Olaf ever visited Cumbria, nor did Dickins find any traces of Olave surviving from the Middle Ages in this part of Britain, but the region is well known for its many Viking artefacts and Norse place names. Among these artefacts is the Gosforth Cross outside St Mary's Church in Gosforth, approximately 9 miles away from Wasdale Head and in the same parish as St Olaf's Church. Interestingly, the church's 2002 booklet, narrating the local history and the history of the church, claims: "It is more than likely that the dalesfolk owe their Christian heritage to this Viking Saint."<sup>59</sup>

Although unsubstantiated (and the booklet's subtitle, "Maybe True, Maybe Not," ought to give historians pause for thought!), this claim sheds an interesting light on what at least one parishioner believed their own religious origins to be, and the author of the pamphlet Bill Bailey makes a point of stating that it was the parishioners who initiated the "re-dedication" of the Church.<sup>60</sup> As such the community at Wasdale Head has made an interesting statement to the world: to them their Viking origins are intrinsic to the landscape, their identity and to their site of worship. The church and its name St Olaf, which is a modern rendering of the Old Norse name Oláfr or the anglicised Olave, are at the centre of the community at Wasdale Head, and as such it shares many parallels with St Olave Southwark and St Olave Hart Street. For the church and the community, and the saint and the community have become intrinsically linked to a sense of place and identity; unlike the two London parishes, St Olaf at Wasdale Head is a modern creation in its dedication, but it shares key similarities with the two other churches. Firstly, all three of the churches share sense of historical origins in the 11th century, with Bill Bailey claiming that the current church at Wasdale Head is the same as the one built around the turn of the millennium (there is a local tradition that Viking ship timbers survive in the roof).<sup>61</sup> St Olave Southwark is attested in the 11th century,<sup>62</sup> whereas a document from 1109 refers to a church of St Olave near the tower.<sup>63</sup> This latter reference is taken by some to be linked to St Olave Hart Street which is some 400 m from the Tower of London. Secondly, in line with the claims of Riley

59 Bill Bailey, *The Vikings, Wasdale Head and their Church: A Historical Chronicle—Maybe True, Maybe Not* (Wasdale, 2002), p. 40.

60 Bailey, *The Vikings, Wasdale Head*, p. 40.

61 Bailey, *The Vikings, Wasdale Head*, p. 21.

62 Bird and Riley, *St Olave's*, p. 5.

63 Bryan Corcoran, *Guide to St Olave's Hart Street, in the City of London* (London, 1908), p. 111.

and Bird,<sup>64</sup> as well as Bryan Corcoran,<sup>65</sup> Bailey claims that the churches of St Olave lay at the centre of a Viking-Norse settlement and that its community in Wasdale Head is a continuation of this settlement. Bailey highlights the links between the Vikings and Wasdale Head as a justification for the Olavian dedication.<sup>66</sup> Indirectly Bailey makes St Olave an identity marker for Wasdale Head alongside the majestic surroundings of the church. This idea of a church as a marker of a community identity is also embedded in the 1918 report about St Olave Southwark, as such the symbols and ideas around saint and place in the modern British landscape is nothing new. Bailey describes in a sense the creation of a memory site at the re-naming of the church of Wasdale Head in 1977, a memory site that is designed to remind both locals and visitors of the real and perceived Viking heritage of the community. Although the church at Wasdale Head has taken the name of St Olaf, the church, to my knowledge, has no depictions of the saint. This might be due to the size of the church and the lack of space available, yet through its projected 'vikingness' the image of St Olaf is projected through the writings of Bailey and the dedication it accompanies creating a place and trace of Olaf that is unmistakably part of the Olavian traditions of Britain.

### **Conclusion: Olavian Traces as Memory and Manifestation of Ages Past**

From the first dedications of the late Anglo-Saxon period, through the Middle Ages and the Reformation, a number of sites in Britain have been connected with the name Olave/Olaf. Their destiny and survival have closely followed the wider historical events in both England and in the United Kingdom as a whole. From the Great Fire of London through the bombs of the Second World War, the Olavian traces of Britain have survived, flourished and had a direct impact on the landscapes of Britain today. Although the majority of London's Olavian churches are now gone, their memory is still preserved in the cityscape through street names, plaques, and art. In other parts of Britain Olavian traces have shared the destiny of those in London, with some getting lost, whilst new ones are added. Two of the oldest, York and Exeter, still remain as prominent reminders of a time when the Olavian tradition, as now, was very much

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64 Bird and Riley, *St Olave's*, p. 5.

65 Corcoran, *Guide to St Olave's Hart Street*, p. 111.

66 Bailey, *The Vikings, Wasdale Head*, p. 40.

connected with the Vikingness or Norseness of the saint and the identity of the locality in which the dedication was placed.

### Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Bob Higham, Ryan Lavelle, and Simon Sandall for some useful comments. This chapter is inspired by Barbara Yorke's work on Anglo-Saxonism, particularly on the 1901 commemoration of King Alfred, *The King Alfred Millenary in Winchester, 1901*, Hampshire Papers 17 (Winchester, 1999). It is therefore greatly indebted to Barbara's mentoring and guidance throughout my studies.

## Pioneering Local History and Landscape History: Some Reflections on Anglo-Saxon England in the work of W.G. Hoskins

*R.C. Richardson*

As the editors' introduction to this collection of essays makes clear, Barbara Yorke has carved out a very special niche for herself in Anglo-Saxon studies. Apart from Wessex and Exeter as common denominators, however, a common interest in historiography, a shared attention to revealing detail and to continuities, together with the obvious capacity for lucid exposition which they both display, comparisons between Barbara Yorke and W.G. Hoskins (1908–92) do not immediately spring to mind as being particularly revealing. His specialist interests, after all, lay in another period. He was chiefly an early modernist and, descended from Devon yeoman stock himself, he was drawn more to the social and economic history of peasant proprietors in the provinces than to ruling houses, royal foundations and church history which have consistently featured as central elements in Barbara's work. He was most knowledgeable about his native Devon and the Midland counties, especially Leicestershire, where he spent the bulk of his working academic life; for him capital cities, past as well as present, held little allure. A wartime exile in a government department in London reinforced Hoskins's loathing of the "Great Wen." He remained lastingly puzzled why anyone would actually choose to live in that dangerous, noisy, polluted, and vastly overcrowded city.<sup>1</sup>

Nonetheless, though they were not Hoskins's chief priorities, the Anglo-Saxon and post-Conquest periods and the successive waves of invasion, settlement and colonisation they brought with them occupied a deeply significant position in his pioneering analysis of the evolution of the English landscape published in 1955, and it is for this reason that this aspect of Hoskins's work is the main focus of this paper. Occasional specialised studies in these fields such as *Sheep Farming in Saxon and Medieval England* (a 1955 lecture to the

<sup>1</sup> See Joan Thirsk, "William George Hoskins, 1908–1992," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 87 (1995), 339–354, at p. 343. The deliberate omission of London from Hoskins' *Local History in England* (London, 1959; 2nd ed., 1984) emphasised the author's distaste for, and lack of interest in, the capital.

International Wool Secretariat; London, 1956), *The Westward Expansion of Wessex* (Leicester, 1960), and “The Highland Zone in Domesday Book” (1963) took their place in his prolific list of publications.<sup>2</sup> Family and place-name evidence, land charters, early laws and by-laws, the Domesday survey, boundary markers, fossilized field systems, hedges, Ordnance Survey maps, and painstaking fieldwork all featured prominently in his sources and methodology. Noted Anglo-Saxonist F.L. Attenborough, editor of *Laws of the Earliest English Kings* (Cambridge, 1922), and Principal of University College, Leicester, where Hoskins was employed, worked closely with Hoskins for a number of years, though chiefly as an expert amateur photographer. He collaborated on a number of occasions with the early medievalist H.P.R. Finberg: their jointly authored *Devonshire Studies* (London, 1952) and Finberg’s 1960 “Supplement to Early Charters of Devon and Cornwall,” included in Hoskins’s *Westward Expansion of Wessex*, are the most notable examples. Finberg succeeded Hoskins as Head of the Department of English Local History at University College, Leicester in 1951 when Hoskins moved on (not altogether contentedly) to a Readership in Economic History at the University of Oxford. Hoskins was fascinated by different forms of settlement—villages, hamlets, and isolated farmsteads—and the local circumstances which apparently explained their distribution. Footnotes to his writings show that Hoskins tried to keep abreast of others’ scholarship in the early medieval field,<sup>3</sup> as well as having an intimate knowledge of classic texts such as Frederic Seebohm’s *The English Village Community* (London, 1883), Paul Vinogradoff’s *Villeinage in England* (Oxford, 1892), F.W. Maitland’s *Domesday Book and Beyond* (Cambridge, 1897), H.L. Gray’s *English Field Systems* (Cambridge, MA, 1915), H.C. Darby’s edited collection, *Historical Geography of England before AD 1800* (Cambridge, 1936), and F.M. Stenton’s *Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford, 1943). Leading archaeologist Sir Cyril Fox was a close friend of Hoskins and could be turned to for specialist advice, while *Archaeology in the Field* (London, 1953) by O.G.S. Crawford, “the greatest British archaeologist of his time,” was conveniently on hand and acknowledged in

2 The first and third of these essays are included in Hoskins’s *Provincial England. Essays in Social and Economic History* (London, 1963), pp. 1–14, 15–52 (“The Highland Zone” was new for this collection). The second was published as Department of English Local History, University of Leicester, Occasional Papers no. 13, reissued in 1970.

3 For example, for the 1977 edition of *The Making of the English Landscape* Hoskins made reference to Trevor Rowley ed., *Anglo-Saxon Settlement and Landscape*, BAR 6 (Oxford, 1974), Jack Ravensdale, *Liable to Floods* (Cambridge, 1974), Christopher Taylor, *Fields in the English Landscape* (London 1975), and Don Benson and David Miles, *The Upper Thames Valley: An Archaeological Survey of the River Gravels* (Oxford, 1974).

Hoskins's late 1960s survey of the field.<sup>4</sup> That said, however, when Hoskins published *The Making of the English Landscape* (London, 1955), archaeologists had not made many inroads into the Anglo-Saxon and medieval periods, and some techniques like field-walking were in their infancy. Hoskins himself was chiefly interested in the visible landscape rather than what lay completely hidden beneath it.

Hoskins had preferred to live in Exeter for the last ten of his Oxford years (1955–65). Exeter was his native city, where he had studied for his bachelor and master's degrees and indeed for his PhD awarded in 1937 (as a London University external student), and he moved there permanently in 1968 after his retirement from his second, short, and deeply unhappy, period in Leicester. The University of Exeter awarded him an honorary doctorate in 1974. Given the Exeter connection, a note on the dedicatee of this volume is appropriate here: Barbara Yorke overlapped with him in Exeter during her undergraduate studies and PhD research at the University under Professor Frank Barlow.<sup>5</sup> She heard Hoskins lecture in Exeter and in her published writings occasionally drew on his work where relevant<sup>6</sup> though much less so than on that of Finberg, whose research and publications coincided more closely and consistently with her own. Her thematic chapters on social structure, rural life, trade and the growth of towns in her Wessex book harked back to the kind of subject matter favoured by Hoskins while at the same time recognising that his was most certainly not the last word on the subjects in question, especially on population trends and settlement distribution.

Hoskins's *Local History in England* (London, 1959; 3rd ed., 1984) was his chief specific foray in the direction of historiography. Primarily a utilitarian handbook offering advice on sources and methodology, Hoskins's second chapter was given over to a brief survey of the changing nature of local history and its practice over time. Passing quickly over the early topographers, William of Worcester and John Leland, Hoskins gave more space to early modern county historians, William Lambarde, John Carew, William Burton, William Dugdale and Robert Thoroton among them. The later emergence of urban histories was

4 Hoskins, *Fieldwork in Local History* (London, 1967), p. 137.

5 She later contributed an essay to Barlow's *Festschrift*—"Carriers of the Truth: Writing the Biographies of Anglo-Saxon Saints," in *Writing Medieval Biography, 750–1250: Essays in Honour of Frank Barlow*, ed. David Bates, Julia Crick, and Sarah Hamilton (Woodbridge, 2006), pp. 49–60.

6 For example in her *Wessex in the Early Middle Ages* (London, 1995) Yorke draws on Hoskins's *The Westward Expansion of Wessex*: on p. 274, she notes the correlation which Hoskins established between the number of farms and the number of villeins on the higher ground in Devon.

briefly rehearsed. But in assessing these early county and urban histories Hoskins was often severely judgemental. Polwhele's *Devon*, for instance, was dismissed as miserably third rate. More generally he was firmly convinced that, especially in the obsessive preoccupation with manorial history, "the dead hand of the seventeenth-century squire still guided, until recently, the hand of the living antiquary."<sup>7</sup> Even the best of them provided only sourcebooks, not genuine histories, for others to quarry. A few, however, like Thomas Rymer, Thomas Madox, and Thomas Hearne, by bringing together in print monumental collections of manuscript material laid the secure foundations of later Anglo-Saxon and medieval historical scholarship.<sup>8</sup> However, too many local historians, Hoskins opined, were blinkered in their approach to the subject, over-preoccupied with factual details and blind to the challenges of problem-solving. Elsewhere he spoke scathingly of "the amateur imbecilities that often marked much of their work in the past."<sup>9</sup>

Hoskins wrote or edited twenty-two books in all in the course of a very long career, the first of them appearing in 1935 and the last in 1976.<sup>10</sup> Some were county guidebooks and some resulted from successful television series. He was an unabashed populariser and became a minor household name. But the 1950s saw the appearance of some of Hoskins's most substantial and significant work; with a light teaching load and with no college responsibilities at Oxford he had ample opportunities for research and writing. The first of them, *Devon* (London, 1954), was a contribution to the series "A New Survey of England," edited by Jack Simmons, Professor of History at University College, Leicester, Devon-born himself and Hoskins's friend. Aimed at the general reader it was a bulky text with an equally weighty gazetteer. Thematically arranged and based on exhaustive fieldwork as well as research in the records, Hoskins devoted a chapter to the English settlement, paying great attention to place-name evidence to address what was seen as an English/British racial frontier eventually formalised in the 10th century between Devon and Cornwall. Revisiting the

7 Hoskins, *Local History in England*, pp. 23, 30. Barbara Yorke's insightful historiographical treatment of *The King Alfred Millenary in Winchester, 1901*, Hampshire Papers, 17 (Winchester, 1999) is characteristically more restrained.

8 See David C. Douglas, *English Scholars, 1660–1730* (London, 1939; 2nd ed., 1951).

9 Hoskins, *Fieldwork in English Local History*, p. 13.

10 A full listing of Hoskins's many publications, but dispersed under the topics to which they relate, appears in Margery Tranter et al., eds., *English Local History: The Leicester Approach; A Departmental Bibliography, 1948–1998* (Leicester, 1999). A consolidated chronological bibliography of his writings is given in C.W. Chalklin and M.A. Havinden, eds., *Rural Change and Urban Growth, 1500–1800: Essays in English Regional History in Honour of W.G. Hoskins* (London, 1974), pp. 342–50.

same subject a few years later in his 1960 *Westward Expansion of Wessex*, he went further and scrutinised individual farm names ending in—hays or—hayne to document the West Saxon advance.<sup>11</sup> Most of Devon, he argued, had been conquered—or, more often, infiltrated—by the Saxons before the end of the 7th century and the establishment of the see of Crediton and monasteries at Axminster and Exminster in the early 8th century confirmed the existence of a settled Saxon population. The early creation of villages in Devon, often on royal estates, for Hoskins was a clear indication that they were “planted,” their concentrated, nucleated form providing protection for the new inhabitants.<sup>12</sup> The later spread of settlement in the countryside and the establishment of some new towns, among them Bideford, Dartmouth, Plymouth and Tavistock, and the beginning of a great age of church-building in the 12th and 13th centuries were processes he explored with the sources and methods available to him at the time.<sup>13</sup>

Whereas Hoskins's *Devon* was an act of filial piety from a man born and raised that county, his book *The Midland Peasant. The Economic and Social History of Leicestershire Village* (London, 1957) was the direct outcome of the years spent at University College, Leicester after 1931 and was an offering chiefly to fellow academics who shared his preference for the use of the historical microscope; the book was a detailed case study over time of Wigston, the largest village in Leicestershire when the Domesday survey was compiled. In this volume, as in others, Hoskins paid great attention to place-name evidence, much of it in this case being a compound of Scandinavian and Old English elements. The Vikings first arriving in the 870s, he argued, superimposed their settlement on the existing English village but segregated themselves into their own distinct quarter. As the Domesday evidence showed, Old English personal names such as Godric, Godwin, Edwin and Alwyn, lingered in the village in the late 11th century. However though Hoskins showed a committed interest in the origins and early history of Wigston the bulk of the book was devoted to the history of the village from the 13th century on, and indeed his survey continued up to 1900. It was the considerable presence of peasant proprietors and peasant

11 Hoskins, *Westward Expansion*, p. 10.

12 It is now clear, of course, to Yorke and others, that Hoskins's chronology of settlement and his views on the early appearance of nucleated villages simply cannot be sustained in the light of subsequent research. Writing much later, from a very different research platform informed by field archaeology Lucy Ryder, *The Historic Landscape of Devon. A Study in Change and Continuity* (Macclesfield, 2012) and H.S.A. Fox, *Dartmoor's Alluring Uplands: Transhumance and Pastoral Management in the Middle Ages*, ed. Matthew Tomkins and Christopher Dyer (Exeter, 2012) revisited parts of Hoskins's historical heartland.

13 Hoskins, *Devon*, pp. 58–60.

culture, broadly defined, which gripped Hoskins's attention; even in 1086, when Great Domesday was written, he found that approximately 40 per cent of the land in the village was in the hands of free tenants. Of yeoman stock himself these were the kind of men—vigorous, thriving, and independent-minded—Hoskins instinctively admired and whose social eclipse under the impact of the later agricultural and industrial revolutions he mourned. “The peasant village had been swamped and then submerged completely, and the tide of industrialism rolled on over it unchecked.”<sup>14</sup>

*The Making of the English Landscape* (London, 1955), addressed both to an academic audience and the general reading public, was Hoskins's most significant book of this prolific decade and, several times reprinted, in due course it established itself as a classic, admired by geographers no less than historians.<sup>15</sup> It was a pioneering study, a new kind of history, predicated on the conviction (which he amply demonstrated) that “the English landscape itself, to those who know it aright, is the richest historical record we possess.”<sup>16</sup> He compared it to the complex, richly orchestrated sounds of a symphony, all the more impressive and compelling if its component elements, intricate structures, textures, harmonies and rhythms were carefully analysed in detail. Continuing the same metaphor he thought the smallest of counties such as Rutland were more akin to the subtler intimacies of chamber music.<sup>17</sup> Underlining in this book as in his others the fundamental fact that so much of the landscape was man-made rather than natural, the chronological emphasis was on post-Conquest and later developments. Two substantial preliminary chapters, however, addressed the early stages of settlement and colonisation. The prehistoric

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14 Hoskins, *Midland Peasant*, p. 282.

15 It spawned an initially unsuccessful series of county landscape studies under Hoskins's general editorship; very few of the projected volumes were published in the 1950s. There was a distinct time-lapse before the book's impact was fully registered and the the plan for the county series of landscape studies was revived. Landscape History as a recognised sub-discipline did not take off until the 1970s. See Christopher Dyer's foreword, “Landscape History after Hoskins,” in *Medieval Landscapes*, ed. Mark Gardiner and Stephen Rippon (Macclesfield, 2007), pp. xiii–xiv.

16 Hoskins, *Making of the English Landscape*, p. 14.

17 Hoskins, *Making of the English Landscape*, p. 19. Mick Aston in his *Interpreting the Landscape. Archaeology and Local History* (London, 1985; rev. ed., 2002) thought “ants' nest” was a better analogy than “symphony” to describe the ever-changing landscape. Oliver Rackham's preferred metaphor is perhaps even more suggestive: “The landscape is like a historic library of 50,000 books. Many were written in remote antiquity in languages which have only lately been deciphered: some of the languages are still unknown.” Some of the volumes have been “eaten away by bookworms,” others have been thoughtlessly discarded, while yet more have been trimmed and crudely rebound. Rackham, *History of the Countryside* (London, 1986), pp. 29–30.

contribution to the landscape was quickly covered—and certainly undervalued—with passing reference to the Chrysauster Iron Age hamlet in Cornwall and the outline shape of Celtic fields at Fyfield Down near Marlborough, Wiltshire.<sup>18</sup> The Roman contribution through the planting of towns and villas and the ambitious imperial road-building programme was briefly—too briefly and selectively it could be said—considered. Using place-name evidence, documentary sources, and aerial photography, however, Hoskins was seduced into placing too much weight on the early Anglo-Saxon achievement in clearing woodland and in creating nucleated villages. Such developments, it is now recognised by the work of Oliver Rackham and others, came later than Hoskins believed and often in the 9th and 10th centuries. Rackham, a botanist by specialism, was a major revisionist here giving particular attention to woodland and wood pasture and to long-term continuities in the landscape. It is still possible to agree with Hoskins, however, that almost all villages in existence in the 20th century had been created by 1086 and that their different forms—green villages like Finchingfield in Essex, street villages like Henley-in-Arden in Warwickshire, and fragmented villages like Middle Barton in Oxfordshire—bore witness to the different circumstances surrounding their early history. He traced the boundary banks of Anglo-Saxon estates in Devon—Armourwood Lane near Thorverton had once functioned in this way—and rejoiced in the discovery of a sarsen stone boundary marker at Alton Priors in the Vale of Pewsey, Wiltshire.<sup>19</sup> Elsewhere and for other parts of the country he plotted on the map the impact of Scandinavian settlement with new names being given in some cases to old settlements and with completely new centres of population betraying their foundation in place names with—by suffixes in the Midlands and—thwaite in Cumberland and Westmorland.<sup>20</sup> Place-name evidence also guided Hoskins—perhaps too rashly—to early examples of land-drainage schemes in Romney Marsh in Kent, the Pevensey Levels in Sussex, and to other places in in Somerset, the East Riding of Yorkshire, Lincolnshire, and even in Devon at Powderham (polde-ham).<sup>21</sup>

Like others before him Hoskins utilised the Domesday survey as a topographical record—of the distribution of watermills, for example. In an overwhelmingly rural landscape there was still waste land and forest, though less than he believed. Sheep were present in the country in enormous numbers, as many place names like Shipston and Shipton in the Cotswolds bore witness.

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18 Hoskins, *Making of the English Landscape*, pp. 21, 23.

19 Hoskins, *Making of the English Landscape*, pp. 56–57.

20 Hoskins, *Making of the English Landscape*, pp. 58–60.

21 Hoskins, *Making of the English Landscape*, pp. 63–64.

Self-evidently there were few urban settlements of any size. Only five towns—London, Norwich, York, Lincoln and Winchester—were thought by Hoskins to have had more than a thousand burgesses in 1086.<sup>22</sup> A few others, like Newbury in Berkshire and Okehampton in Devon, were brand new at the time and exceedingly small. Other, immediately successful, new towns founded by great ecclesiastics—among them Ludlow, Plymouth, Salisbury and Stratford upon Avon—followed in the 13th century. Early medieval church building and the impact of monasteries and their granges on the landscape were other subjects that seized Hoskins's attention. Field patterns often closely related, he argued, to the kind of plough locally available, fascinated him.<sup>23</sup> Indeed village founding and the creation of open field farming, for Hoskins, were the principal hallmarks of the first great epoch in the development of the English landscape though, as has been subsequently demonstrated by Stephen Rippon and others their chronology confused him. Early Saxon settlements in fact had little in common with medieval villages. This is a far more complex and contentious subject than Hoskins recognised and the regional variations are enormous. The century of parliamentary enclosure for Hoskins was the second great epoch. Borrowing the idea from Maitland, Hoskins was fond of describing the English landscape—not altogether accurately, as others like Christopher Dyer have since pointed out—as a layered palimpsest.<sup>24</sup>

Hoskins, it is clear, felt an affinity with the Anglo-Saxons and their free peasantry descendants in the Middle Ages; he was fiercely proud of his own Devon yeoman forebears. The Vikings, by contrast, he viewed as reprehensible intruders. “These uncouth characters need not detain us long,” he observed in his *Two Thousand Years in Exeter* (Exeter, 1960), “for they made no lasting impression on the city of Exeter though they badly damaged it in 1003.”<sup>25</sup> The German bombing raids on Exeter in the spring of 1942, he continued elsewhere by way of comparison, “burnt and shattered in a manner not known since the heathen Danes had damaged the Anglo-Saxon town 900 years before.”<sup>26</sup> The Normans, too, in his view were “plunderers,” William the Conqueror behaving like “some avenging maniac” in Yorkshire.<sup>27</sup>

22 Hoskins, *Making of the English Landscape*, p. 67. For a more liberal reading of the evidence based on a Domesday geography that was beginning to be established as Hoskins was writing, see H.C. Darby, *Domesday England* (Cambridge, 1977), pp. 302–09.

23 Hoskins, *Making of the English Landscape*, pp. 66–67.

24 *Medieval Landscapes*, p. 1.

25 Hoskins, *Two Thousand Years in Exeter* (Exeter, 1960), p. 118.

26 Hoskins, *Devon*, p. 198.

27 Hoskins, *English Landscapes* (London, 1973; repr., 1977), p. 23; Hoskins, ed., *History from the Farm* (London, 1970), p. 18; See Hoskins, *Age of Plunder*, p. 233, for a similar reading of Henry VIII.

In his greatly subdued introduction to a new edition of *The Making of the English Landscape* which appeared in 1977, Hoskins freely acknowledged that much that he had written in 1955 in his early chapters was now seriously out-of-date largely due to the vast amount of archaeological research which had taken place as well as to new work on landscape history itself in such books as papers in Trevor Rowley's edited collection *Anglo-Saxon Settlement and Landscape* (Oxford, 1974). Estimates of population in pre-Saxon times—prehistoric as well as Romano-British—which he had unquestioningly relied on in the 1950s he now accepted were quite wrong and had to be pitched much higher. "This means that our knowledge of how much of our land had been cleared and brought into cultivation [...] needs complete revision, for people imply farming systems for their material needs."<sup>28</sup>

The 1977 introduction was to a book which remained essentially the same, however ("there is so much we still do not know, so much work in progress, that a revision is still premature," he wrote).<sup>29</sup> A further, sumptuously-illustrated edition of Hoskins's classic text, edited by Christopher Taylor in 1988, went much further in drawing attention to the many ways in which subsequent research had challenged or invalidated what had been originally offered in 1955. Though still applauded by Taylor as "one of the greatest [and most ground-breaking] books ever written" by a man who was "perhaps the last of the polymaths" and praised for its clarity and accessibility, and for its contribution to the expansion of historical studies, it was—like all others—unavoidably and firmly rooted in its own time and the state of knowledge prevailing in the 1950s when it was put together.<sup>30</sup>

Hoskins's original text was respectfully preserved intact in this new edition but was carefully framed by Taylor's new contextual introductions, both to the book as a whole and to individual chapters which were themselves interspersed with sometimes lengthy editorial comment showing the many places where Hoskins's statements and arguments were now wholly inaccurate, or at best incomplete. Taylor re-emphasised, as Hoskins himself had come to recognise, that the Saxon settlers arrived in a populous England in the 5th century that had a well-tamed and far from empty landscape.<sup>31</sup> They adapted

<sup>28</sup> Hoskins, *Making of the English Landscape* [1977 edition], p. 11.

<sup>29</sup> Hoskins, *Making of the English Landscape* [1977 edition], p. 15.

<sup>30</sup> Hoskins, *Making of the English Landscape*, with an introduction and commentary by Christopher Taylor (London, 1988), pp. 7, 9.

<sup>31</sup> Stephen. Rippon, Chris. Smart and Ben. Pears, *The Fields of Britannia. Continuity and Change in the Late Roman and Early Medieval Landscape* (Oxford, 2015) has underlined this argument even more through its systematic use of archaeological evidence and analysis of palaeoenvironmental sequences.

themselves to it and their relatively small numbers ensured that they were in no position to create something that was entirely new. Dispersed settlement rather than nucleated villages with open fields was the norm. These features came later between the 9th and 12th century and were often the result of deliberate plantation by ecclesiastical and lay landlords—a “village moment,” as some have claimed.<sup>32</sup> Drawing on much new work in place-name studies by Margaret Gelling and others, as well as findings in archaeology, Taylor underlined that place-name evidence required even more careful handling than Hoskins had given it, partly because of possible double meanings and also because the same places existed under different names at different times.<sup>33</sup> Individual place names such as Finchingfield in Essex and Powderham in Devon which Hoskins had confidently used as examples to demonstrate particular points, were in fact, Taylor declared, much more ambiguous.<sup>34</sup>

Though highly original and path-finding Hoskins, it is plain, was stridently opinionated and was prone to indulge his monumental prejudices pugnaciously even in his more scholarly publications and even when discussing Devon and Exeter. As he got older Hoskins developed a love/hate relationship with his native county and city. He still took comfort in 1959 from the fact that in Exeter:

... you can see the green fields of the country at the end of nearly every street-view and the people have the cheerful, rubicund look of country-dwellers and not the miserable, grey, slave-like expression that one sees in London and the big industrial cities. Devon for all its faults and deficiencies is the best of all places in which to live. Some of us think that Paradise may be no better.<sup>35</sup>

He was vigorously critical, however, of pre- and post-war redevelopment in the city. Slum clearance in the 1930s had resulted in wholesale destruction of a once important but by then much-decayed sector of the city without even a

32 See Joan Thirsk, “The Common Fields,” *Past & Present* 29 (1964), 3–29, reprinted in the same author’s *The Rural Economy of England: Collected Essays* (London, 1984), pp. 35–58, and Trevor Rowley, ed., *The Origins of Open Field Agriculture* (London, 1981). Della Hooke, *The Landscape of Anglo-Saxon England* (Leicester, 1998) also emphasised how slowly nucleated villages came to some parts of the country. They were still arriving in Warwickshire, for example, in the 11th century (p. 131).

33 See, for example, Gelling’s major work on *Place Names in the Landscape* (London, 1984).

34 *Making of the English Landscape* (1988), pp. 55, 72.

35 Hoskins, *Devon and its People* (Exeter, 1959), p. 167.

proper record kept of what had been swept away.<sup>36</sup> The City Council, he went on in the same vein, rivalled the German bomber pilots in the havoc they wreaked on post-war Exeter.<sup>37</sup> Much of modern Exeter, he lamented, given over to speculative builders by politicians unworthy of trust was becoming “a desert of brick and concrete.”<sup>38</sup> Relentlessly opposed to what he saw as the Leviathan state and its mindless bureaucrats and planners, the word ‘politician’ stuck in Hoskins’s throat whenever he used it. “Never trust any party politician of any colour,” he ranted. “Most of us sooner or later have to pay for our mistakes; it is only politicians who manage to make other people pay. One cannot learn too soon to have an absolute contempt for them as a class, whatever their creed or the colour of their ties.”<sup>39</sup> Not altogether surprisingly, Hoskins’s caustically expressed views, including allegations of mismanagement and corruption, led to his being on the receiving end of a libel action from Exeter City Council in 1963.<sup>40</sup> He was forced, at great cost, to make an out-of-court settlement but evidently in general terms he remained unrepentant. “The bigotry of modern Exeter is still unbelievable to civilised people. As for their politics they are savage.”<sup>41</sup>

And so it went on. Targets as numerous and various as large-scale capitalist farmers, puritans and Nonconformists, electricity pylons crucifying the countryside, industrial blight, the loss of individuality in many towns and cities as high streets were brutally re-developed and standardised, the decline of provincial culture, London’s stranglehold and metropolitan dominance over the provinces, high-speed trains, road engineers, the relentless profusion of motor cars all aroused Hoskins’s ire. Hoskins was at heart a poetic visionary and romantic conservative and he looked back fondly to an idealised pre-industrial golden age rooted in his view of the Anglo-Saxon past in which peasant proprietors and peasant civilisation flourished side by side. For him the Industrial Revolution and its sweeping transformations started to dissolve all that he held dear—organic, closely-integrated communities, local horizons and quasi-local autonomies, stability, traditional crafts, and vernacular architecture. It is no surprise that Hoskins held the Romantic poet William Wordsworth in such high esteem; the two men’s sensibilities, imagination and predispositions had much in common, as Matthew Johnson has been at pains to emphasise. Even Hoskins’s prose style derived much of its inspiration from the Lakeland poet:

36 Hoskins, *Two Thousand Years in Exeter*, p. 130.

37 Hoskins, *Devon and its People* (Exeter, 1959) p. 88.

38 Hoskins, *Devon and its People*, p. 134.

39 Hoskins, *Devon and its People*, pp. 110, 126.

40 Thirsk, “W.G. Hoskins, 1908–1992,” p. 351.

41 Hoskins, *Old Devon* (Newton Abbot, 1966), p. xiii.

“Wordsworth tramped across the fells, observed the landscape and just gathered it up into his heart and produced a poem. Hoskins tramped across Devon and Leicestershire, pored over the Ordnance Survey map, and wrote a historical narrative.”<sup>42</sup>

Hoskins invariably wrote in a deeply personal way and his preferences, feelings, convictions, prejudices and dogmatism always to some degree coloured his approach to history. *One Man's England* was the title he gave to one of his books in 1978, but in truth this could have been the sub-title of all of them.<sup>43</sup> By and large he turned his back on the modern world, on modern technologies, and on what he viewed as the pompous, impenetrable, modern jargon favoured by theorists and sociologically inclined historians. In his inaugural professorial lecture given after his return to the University of Leicester in 1965 he mockingly suggested that, with foresight, he ought to have given his book *The Making of the English Landscape* a more trendy, eye-catching title such as *The Morphogenesis of the Cultural Environment*.<sup>44</sup> Not surprisingly, Hoskins's subjective vision of landscape history and local history were too exclusively locked into the English provinces to be an easy export to the United States.<sup>45</sup> Hoskins never went over the Atlantic and, indeed, only in later life did he start crossing the English Channel with any regularity and then only for holidays. In every sense he was most comfortably at home in a specifically *English* local setting. Wales remained largely absent from Hoskins's vision, Scotland and Ireland entirely so. For all this he was stridently unapologetic:

Some shallow-brained theorists would doubtless call this ‘escapism’, but the fact is that we are not all born internationalists and there comes a time when the complexity and size of modern problems leave us cold. We belong to a particular place and the bigger and more incomprehensible the world grows the more people will turn to something of which they

42 Matthew Johnson, *Ideas of Landscape* (Oxford, 2006), p. 112.

43 See David Matless, “One Man's England: W.G. Hoskins and the Culture of Landscape,” *Rural History. Economy, Society Culture* 4:2 (1993), 187–208.

44 Hoskins, *English Local History: the Past and the Future* (Leicester, 1966), repr. in *The Changing Face of English Local History*, ed. R.C. Richardson (Aldershot, 2000), chapter 6, p. 137. It is not difficult to guess what Hoskins would have made of a report on a Leicester retrospective conference on his work published in the journal *Urban Morphology. Journal of the International Seminar on Urban Form* 9:2 (2005), 94.

45 See D.W. Meinig, “Reading the Landscape: An Appreciation of W.G. Hoskins and J.B. Jackson,” in *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes: Geographical Essays*, ed. D.W. Meinig (New York and Oxford, 1979), pp. 195–244.

grasp the scale and in which they can find a personal and individual meaning.<sup>46</sup>

Hoskins's subjectivity, his largely atheoretical approach to landscape, his insularity and blind-spots have not hindered or even as a rule qualified the high praise which has been heaped upon him. Michael Havinden is just one of many historians who has applauded Hoskins's dazzling originality while another former Oxford student of his, Peter Beacham, praised his rare combination of "scholarly insight, poetic imagination and painterly eye ... [and] the immemorial quality and quiet power" of his prose. David Matless paid tribute to the "holistic particularisation" of Hoskins's vision though he felt bound to recognise its "melancholy strain."<sup>47</sup> Two large and laudatory 50th-anniversary conferences were held at the University of Leicester in 2005 and 2009 to commemorate the original publication of *The Making of the English Landscape* and *Local History in England* respectively. Both resulted in significant and appreciative publications.<sup>48</sup>

Charles Phythian-Adams, Professor of English Local History at Leicester in the 1990s, has probably gone furthest in the claims he has made for Hoskins's decisive contributions to historical studies. Hoskins, he declared, "revolutionised the historical perceptions of his fellow countrymen. It is difficult to name a single other modern historian in this country who has succeeded thus comprehensively in making history so directly relevant to the citizen."<sup>49</sup> His vision encompassed the whole of English history and he deserves to be recognised as the founding father of the modern study not only of local history and landscape history but of agricultural history, urban history, historical demography, and of vernacular architecture. Phythian-Adams's appraisal amounted to a eulogy, and it times it verged on the uncritical. Hoskins, he concluded, "is best seen as both visionary and poet of that disappearing world to which he saw himself as having just belonged. His lament for that 'peasant civilisation'... runs

46 Hoskins, *Local History in England*, pp. 6–7.

47 David Matless, "W.G. Hoskins Remembered," *Devon Historian* 69 (2004), 4–7; "One Man's England," p. 203.

48 Gardiner and Rippon, eds., *Medieval Landscapes*, and Christopher Dyer, Andrew Hopper, Evelyn Lord, and Nigel Tringham, eds., *New Directions in English Local History since Hoskins* (Hatfield, 2011). Joan Thirsk's edited collection of essays on *The English Rural Landscape* (Oxford, 2000) unsurprisingly underlined Hoskins's ground-breaking work in this field.

49 Charles Phythian-Adams, "Hoskins's England. A Local Historian of Genius and the Realisation of his Theme," *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society* 66 (1992), 143–59. Quotation on p. 159.

like a moving threnody throughout his wonderful writing [...] a momentarily spell-binding glimpse into nothing less than an English Garden of Eden.”<sup>50</sup> Reverence for Hoskins, the father figure of Local History and Landscape studies, surely comes close here to running out of control and ultimately serves as little purpose as anachronistically criticising him for being out of line with the findings and methods of current research.

Joan Thirsk, whose links with Hoskins were longer and closer, was much more balanced in the appraisal of him contained in her obituary article which she prepared for the British Academy. Like Phythian-Adams, alert to the significance of his pioneering work for fellow academics and to his appeal to the general public and deeply sympathetic to his aims, Thirsk recognised that Hoskins's accessible and passionately argued writings and broadcasts won a larger public for English Local History than it had ever enjoyed before. Hoskins's obsessions and increasingly curmudgeonly attitudes, however, at times intruded too much into his work and reached the point where they clouded his judgements.<sup>51</sup> Johnson, in his 2017 *Ideas of Landscape*, concludes that the Hoskins tradition, which here receives extended and insightful treatment, will remain valuable only if it breaks out of its original conceptual limitations.<sup>52</sup>

For Barbara Yorke, it is clear, Hoskins was not a major direct influence on her work and he does not figure conspicuously in footnotes to her publications. The chapters on social and economic history in her Wessex book follow most closely in his footsteps. Her research has always been sharply and consistently focused on a different specialism, the Anglo-Saxon period, in a way that his was not. In developing his vision and practice of English Local History, however, Hoskins paid due attention to these early centuries and naturally did so within the state of knowledge about them which then existed. Examining the evidence of settlement and using the methodologies of fieldwork and place-name studies then current Hoskins advanced an interpretation that was central to his concept of the complex logic of the evolving English landscape. Anglo-Saxonists, no less than those working in other fields, including local history and landscape history, have moved on since then, to a great extent in this case due to the ways in which archaeology—especially landscape archaeology—has decisively modified historians' understanding of earlier centuries. The more than 100-page bibliography appended to Stephen Rippon, Chris Smart and Ben Pears's *The Fields of Britannia* is a striking indication of the huge

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50 Phythian-Adams, “Hoskins's England,” p. 159.

51 Thirsk, “W.G. Hoskins,” passim.

52 Johnson, *Ideas of Landscape*, chapter 6.

literature in this field which has recently accumulated.<sup>53</sup> Barbara Yorke in her own distinctive way has been a key player in this transformation of Anglo-Saxon studies as Hoskins was in different respects in his chosen field in the 1950s and later. That she, an Exeter-trained medievalist should be honoured now in a *Festschrift* as the Exeter-born and Exeter-trained Hoskins was decades earlier is another echo at least of the partial common ground they share.<sup>54</sup>

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53 *The Fields of Britannia: Continuity and Change in the Late Roman and Early Medieval Landscape* (Oxford, 2015).

54 Chalklin and Havinden, eds., *Rural Change and Urban Growth 1500–1800*. The volume restricted itself to early modern studies in which Hoskins himself was so conspicuous a presence. There were no contributions on Anglo-Saxon or medieval history. For this volume the medievalist M.W. Beresford, sometime collaborator with Hoskins and author of *The Lost Villages of England* (London, 1954) displayed his versatility by contributing an essay on the re-development of Leeds in the 18th century.



# Select Bibliography

We have endeavoured to include all primary sources used in this volume's essays; secondary works are normally included on the basis of multiple citation, either within a particular chapter, across the volume as a whole, or if they are deemed to be particularly significant. While *Festschriften* often have a separate list of works published by the honorand, the frequent reference to Barbara's works in the preceding 29 chapters provides some justification for including them as an integral part of this bibliography. We have supplemented the 'Yorke list' to make it as comprehensive as possible as a record of her contribution to scholarship to date. "Yorke, Barbara" frequently features as a coda to so many bibliographies published in her field; it seems fitting to ensure this tradition continues here.

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