Aspects of Anglo-Saxon History in the East Midlands,
with special reference to the lower Soar valley.

by Anthony Rollings.

Thesis submitted for the degree of Ph.D. in English Local History, University of Leicester, 1996.
This thesis illustrates features of Anglo-Saxon settlement in the valley of the river Soar, Leicestershire, between the northern limit of Leicester and the river Trent, herein called ‘the lower Soar valley’. It is a poorly attested area in documentary and archaeological evidence, and the place-name evidence presents difficulties of interpretation. These circumstances determine the methods employed and the structure of the thesis, which is in three parts.

Part One examines the pre-Conquest evidence for the area: an appropriate regional context is sought, firstly by examining the Anglo-Saxon history of the purely conceptual region of the East Midlands, and secondly by examining the Iron Age and Romano-British history of the area. Thus, it is hoped, an appropriate regional context is established, geographically and historically. The archaeological evidence for the early Anglo-Saxon settlement of the lower Soar valley is next considered, its value assessed, and some tentative conclusions formed about the organisation of settlement in the area. Documentation of the lower Soar valley during the Anglo-Saxon period is minimal, and the attempt is made to illuminate its history from developments in the neighbouring, better documented valley of the rivers Tame and Mease.

Part Two, which examines the post-Conquest evidence, employs retrospective analysis to illustrate the history of the lower Soar valley from a later, better documented period. Domesday Book, the Leicestershire Survey of 1129-30, the Rothley custumal of c. 1245 and the Hospitallers’ Extent of 1338 are adduced. The Norman magnates’ holdings in the lower Soar valley appear to be arranged transversely, including land in the forest to the west, in the valley itself, and in the wolds to the east. This practice was also followed by the Anglo-Saxon lords. The ‘mixed bag’ of lands, vills and private jurisdictions presented by the Domesday survey of Leicestershire contrasts with the accounts of Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire, where a hundredal system distinct from the Danish system of wapentakes can be traced. In Leicestershire, instead of a recognisable jurisdictional, administrative and economic system controlled by royal officers, a patchwork of private jurisdictions existed, its organisation and economy determined by unregulated entrepreneurship.

Part Three synthesizes the findings of the earlier parts. Significant in the Anglo-Saxon history of the area is the relationship between Rothley, Barrow-on-Soar and Loughborough. An account is given of the origins of these places, and the function performed by each in a territorial and political unit of the Anglo-Saxon period located in the lower Soar valley.
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A.B.Rollings,
### ABBREVIATIONS

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<td>Arch. J.</td>
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<td>A.S.C.</td>
<td>Anglo-Saxon Chronicle</td>
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<tr>
<td>B.L.D.A.S.</td>
<td>Bulletin of the Loughborough and District Archaeological Society</td>
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<td>B.W.B.</td>
<td>British Waterways Board</td>
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<td>E.P.N.S.</td>
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INTRODUCTION.

The attempt to recover something of the Anglo-Saxon past of almost any part of England will involve the student in what is currently being discussed by Anglo-Saxonists as "the process, (or processes), of state-formation". From one standpoint, the whole of the Anglo-Saxon period may be seen as the process of state-formation which resulted in the establishment of the kingdom of England, but this is too broad a view for anyone wishing to study the period in any detail. The kingdom of England, as it emerged in the tenth and eleventh centuries, was an amalgam of a number of pre-existing kingdoms, Wessex, Mercia, Northumbria and East Anglia among them, each of which was a fully developed "state society", (to borrow a term from the sociologists), in its own right, with a lengthy history. It is clear, moreover, that these kingdoms, too, represent the amalgamation or coalescence of earlier kingdoms. For some of these we have sufficient documentary evidence to conclude that they also were fully formed states; for others we can be almost, but not absolutely certain that they were, while for yet others, we can do no more than suspect that this was the case. Thus it is clear that among the constituent parts of the Northumbria of king Edwin, (616-33), were the former kingdoms of Bernicia and Deira, and although there is no record of the independent existence of the kingdom of Lindsey, a surviving king-list among other evidence, suggests that Lindsey was an independent kingdom before the time of the Northumbrian and Mercian hegemonies, and retained at least a local sovereignty until the closing years of the seventh century(1). Stenton himself had doubts as to whether Lindsey really was a kingdom, and more recently, other scholars have had similar doubts, although they have not gone so far as to deny all possibility of Lindsey's having been a kingdom(2).

An area roughly coterminous with the pre-1974 county of Sussex was the kingdom of the South Saxons during the fifth century(3). Its king, Aelle, is said by Bede to have been the first of the *bretwaldas*, or over-kings(4). This title and its significance has been rigorously examined by Dr Wormald(5). There is charter evidence, although some of it is doubtful, that Sussex was an independent kingdom during the eighth century(6). The *princeps* Tondberct of the South Gyrwe was the first husband, (c 660), of Aethelthryth, a daughter of king Anna of the East Angles, (d. 653-4), and this may reflect the absorption of the Gyrwe, or "fen-dwellers", into the kingdom of East Anglia(7). We have a relatively precise record of the absorption of the kingdom of the Hwicce, whose territory lay in parts of what are now Worcestershire, Warwickshire and Gloucestershire, into the kingdom of Mercia. In 693, king Oshere's grant to the abbess Cuthswith begins its dispositive clause: 'Ego Oshere rex Huicciourum', but in 706, a grant by his son Aethelweard begins: 'Ego Aedelweardus subregulus, Osheri quondam regis Wicciourum filius.....consentiente Coenredo rege Merciorum'(8). Many more examples of this process could be cited; the situation has been aptly summed up by Dr D.P.Kirby, who says 'The more closely an Anglo-Saxon kingdom is examined, therefore, the more it tends to dissolve into its constituents'(9). Another view of

(8). *C.S.* 85, 116.
the same situation has been expressed by Dr Stephen Bassett, who likens it to 'the earlier rounds of a fiercely contested knock-out competition'(10).

A more abstract and theoretical approach to the process of state formation has been that of the anthropologists and sociologists. This is a formidable body of literature, but if a brief *resume* of it may be attempted, it is that the starting point is the individual family, and that related families constitute a "kinship group". A number of kinship groups may develop into a tribe, and a number of tribes into a "complex chiefdom". If this expands, it will become a "state society", and ultimately a nation state(11). The advantage of this "model" is that it introduces the element of family connection and lineage into the process of state formation, which is an important aspect of kingship in the early Middle Ages. The principal agents of state formation during this period were the people who were called "kings". The attributes of kingship during the sub-Roman period and after have been rigorously studied by scholars, examining not only English but also European examples. A relatively early, but none the less, wide-ranging symposium on the subject was edited by Professor P.H.Sawyer and Dr Ian Wood in 1977(12). More recently, Dr Barbara Yorke has treated developments in England in a manner which would not have been thought possible by the historians who dubbed the early mediaeval period "The Dark Ages"(13). More recently still, Dr Ian Wood has traced the history of the Merovingians in Gaul in a way which sheds a good deal of light on developments in England(14). Two aspects of early kingdoms and kingship are of particular importance here. The first is the king's capacity for leadership in war, and the second his


ability to acquire and distribute wealth, in whatever form. It is not surprising that in what is
essentially a constitutional history book, Professor Henry Loyn has stressed the importance of
these attributes(15). They are the essential machinery of the state formation process. The
king's ability as a war leader extends beyond personal bravery, skill at arms and an aptitude
for strategy and tactics on the battlefield. Bodies of fighting men have to be recruited,
motivated and maintained; treaties and marriage alliances have to be considered either as a
means of avoiding war, or as a means of provoking it. What we might call the logistics of
kingship, the way in which a king organised his kingdom, in peace and in war, provide our
knowledge of Anglo-Saxon history.

In terms of "personnel", we know that most of the recorded kingdoms of the Anglo-
Saxon period had a hierarchy of functionaries; their names and titles appear in Latin and Old
English documents as 'subreguli', 'principes', 'duces' and 'ministri', 'ealdormen', 'thegnas' and
'gesithas'. Thus we know that late in the seventh century, one Frithuwold was 'provinciae
Surríanorum subregulus regis Wlfari (sic) Mercianorum', and that Friduricus, apparently a
relative, was 'religiosimus principum Aedilredi regis Merciae gentis'(16). Unfortunately, we
can not precisely define either the differential in rank or the degree of nobility or royalty of
these people(17). What is clear, however, is that as part of the state formation process, kings
appointed officers of state, who may be relatives or demoted former kings, to facilitate the
administration of the kingdom.

Like the kings themselves, these state officials or aristocratic hierarchs are associated
with particular territories, and the reconstruction, where it is possible, of these early land

(16). C.S. 34, 841.
divisions can advance considerably our knowledge of what is justifiably regarded as one of the more obscure periods of our history. There are several kinds of territory which existed in Anglo-Saxon England, among them hides, hundreds, wapentakes, shires, 'regiones' and 'provinciae'. After the Augustinian mission of 597, the ecclesiastical territories appear; initially dioceses and 'parrochiae' (18). The basic difficulty in carrying out territorial reconstructions of this kind is that the terms used to describe the territories are not only used imprecisely in the sources, but are also subject to changes of meaning and emphasis over time. For example, Bede, writing before 731, describes the monastery of Medehamstede as being 'in regione Gyruionmi' (19). This is supported by a charter of c680, in which king Aethelred of Mercia grants land to the monastery 'quod constructum erat in loco qui vocabulum est Medehamstede in regione Gyrviorunt' (20). However, Bede, describing the death of St Wilfrid in 709 at Oundle, which he describes as 'regio', says that it is 'in provincia Gyrviorunt' (21). Frithuwold, as we have seen, was at some time before 675, 'provinciae Surrianorum subregulud' (22). But an undated charter of king Offa of Mercia, (757-96), 'actum publice ac confirmatum in regione Sudregiona' (23). In this case, since there is a considerable lapse of time between the lives of Frithuwold and Offa, the terms 'regio' and 'provincia' could have changed in meaning, or more likely, the status of Surrey could have altered. The reconstruction of 'regiones' and 'provinciae', then, can present problems, although Dr James Campbell's researches have shown that at least one pitfall can be avoided. Both in Bede and the early charters, with one exception only, 'though a "regio" may be within a "provincia", the converse is never the case' (24).

Closely allied to the 'regiones' and 'provinciae' are the shires, an essential instrument

of the state formation process, which gives territorial expression to governmental policy. Whether the term “shire” was actually used or not, a System of local divisions used for administrative purposes was characteristic of all the better known kingdoms of the Anglo-Saxon period(25). It is worth remembering that the Old English ‘scir’ bears the meaning of “share”, indicating not only a territorial share of the kingdom, but also a share of the expenses of government. The English shires, as they existed before 1974, present something of a problem. Most of them had remained largely unaltered for the best part of a millennium and in some cases longer, but the process of establishing them was a lengthy one which was begun relatively late in the Anglo-Saxon period, so that to speak, for example, of “early Anglo-Saxon Gloucestershire” is something of a contradiction in terms. Dr John Blair prefaces a study of an English shire as follows:

“This is a study of the society and institutions of Oxfordshire, (as it existed until 1974), between the fifth and the eleventh centuries A.D. It is as well to admit at the outset, that for most of that period “Oxfordshire” did not exist‘(26).

In fact, what Dr Blair does, and does so well, is reveal the origins of Oxfordshire. As he admits, he is really writing a history of the upper Thames valley; that part of it which eventually became Oxfordshire. Oxfordshire is, in fact, an appropriate regional context for Dr Blair’s research into the lands of the Gewisse, the Hwicce, and other contemporary kingdoms.

The present exercise is not primarily a study of the development of shrieval systems, but it has to take account of the different ways in which the shires, like other territories, came into being, developed and in some cases, disappeared. Some of the pre-1974 shire boundaries are not only the boundaries of early Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, but also of prehistoric tribal territories. Kent and Sussex are examples. Kent was known as an entity at least as early as the

(25). G.W.S. Barrow, The Kingdom of the Scots, (1973), Ch.1, pp. 8-68.

first century B.C. It is mentioned by name in the works of Strabo, Caesar and Ptolemy. It was
the landing place of at least part of the Roman Army of conquest in 47 A.D. It was a
powerful Anglo-Saxon kingdom under Aethelbert, (d. 616), who was one of Bede's
bretwaldas. The Augustinian mission of 597 landed at Thanet, and England's first minster
church was established at Canterbury. It is one of the best attested parts of England in terms
of documentation and archaeology(27). A topographical analysis of the six "pays" which
comprise the county has led to an illuminating account of its settlement history(28). In the
case of neighbouring Sussex, the situation is less well documented and less clear, but it is
likely that the territory of the Regnenses and their "king" Cogidubnus, was also the sixth
century kingdom of Aelle, first of the bretwaldas according to Bede(29). More tenuous, but
still a possibility, is the notion that Essex, the territory of the East Saxons, was originally the
land of the Trinovantes, whose ruler, Addedomarus, received the protection, ineffectual as it
transpired, of Caesar, in 55-54 B.C.

By contrast, there are the shires which had not reached their pre-1974 state as late as
the time of Domesday. This is true of Yorkshire and Lancashire, the recorded parts of which
are described in Domesday as 'the land between Ribble and Mersey'. In 1086, the little county
of Rutland was far from having reached its pre-1974 form. Of its three wapentakes, Witchley
was an integral part of Northamptonshire, and the other two, Alstoe and Martinsley, were
taxed as part of Nottinghamshire(30). This reflects the problems faced by successive English
kings in reorganising the confederacy of the Five Boroughs of the Danelaw(31). It is

interesting to note that although the two shires were distinct and separately titled in Domesday Book, the sheriff of Nottinghamshire was also the sheriff of Derby until the sixteenth century, although Dr Roffe, surprisingly, regards this as purely fortuitous.

Finally, there are the "lost" shires, which became incorporated in other territories long before 1974. Winchcombeshire and "Stamfordshire" are examples. Dr Bassett identifies Winchcombeshire as the ancestral heartland of the Hwiccian royal dynasty, which first expanded to form the Hwiccian kingdom, (although Sims-Williams sounds a note of caution), continued as a Mercian shire, and was not finally extinguished until about 1017, when it was absorbed into Gloucestershire(32). "Stamfordshire" is a somewhat more elusive territory, since there is no direct record of its extent. Stamford, however, was one of the Five Boroughs of the Danelaw, and if it resembled the other four at all closely, it had, like them, a dependent territory. A brief essay by Dr Roffe, concerning the urban houses in Stamford belonging to rural manors in 1086 and later, shows that town houses in Stamford belonged to Witham, Greatford, Casewick and Uffington, in pre-1974 Lincolnshire, to Tickencote and Hambleton in Rutland, Wakerly in Northamptonshire, and Sproxton in Leicestershire(33). These manors may have lain within the "shire" of Stamford before the present pre-1974 shires were finally formed. In his detailed study of Surrey, Dr Blair more than once suggests that since the boundaries of kingdoms were continually changing, and the making of the shires as we know them was a relatively late development, it is the smaller territories which show the greater stability, since they tended to be incorporated as intact units into various of the larger territories(34). He makes the same suggestion of greater stability for the ecclesiastical


territories, particularly those of the minsters, which were supposedly permanent institutions, endowed with perpetually inalienable lands.

The practice or technique of territorial reconstruction has been applied unevenly to the English landscape. It depends on documentary evidence, place name solutions which do not admit of alternative interpretations, and unambiguous archaeological attestation, and these desiderata are not universally available. As a result, the south and west of England have been more fully treated in this way than other parts of the country. To put it another way, the land which lies south of the Humber, north of the Welland, and east of the Penine, Peak and Charnwood watersheds presents particular difficulties to the historian of early mediaeval settlement. It is, however, with the early settlement of a part of this area that the present exercise is concerned.

In localities where no delineated territory is immediately apparent, particular topographical features sometimes provide an avenue of approach. River valleys, for instance, are the sites of the earliest human habitations and settlements: they are the most densely populated areas of prehistory, and their occupation has been continuous. The way in which river valley settlers pressed inland from the valleys themselves into other landscapes has been the subject of a penetrating study by Professor Everitt(35). The river valleys, then, and the surrounding landscape features are sites of continuous historical development at all periods of human history, whether or not they are well documented, well attested archaeologically and blessed with illuminating place names. Such an area is found in northern Leicestershire and southern Nottinghamshire, where the lower reaches of the river Soar flow through a valley bounded to the west by the Charnwood forest, and to the east by the Leicestershire-Nottinghamshire wolds, on its way to join the Trent.(Fig.1, p.10). It is herein referred to as the lower Soar valley.

In terms of historical territories, this is a difficult area with which to deal. It lies in

THE LOWER SOAR VALLEY.

Scale: \( \frac{1}{2} \) inch=1 mile.
two pre-1974 counties and two pre-Conquest wapentakes, Goscote and Rushcliffe. There is an added complication in that within the Rushcliffe wapentake lies a detached portion of Broxtowe wapentake which is adjacent to the Leicestershire-Nottinghamshire and Rushcliffe-Goscote boundary, and contains the vills Costock, Wysall, Rempstone, Thorpe-in-the-Glebe and Willoughby-on-the-Wolds. A wider context is not much more helpful, since the area concerned was always part of a frontier zone at least until the West Saxon kings had established their domination over virtually the whole of England. It can be seen in an Anglian context, a Mercian context, a Viking or Danish context or a West Saxon context, and of these four possible regional contexts, two are virtually inaccessible. The alliterate Vikings left no documentation and very little archaeology which is recognisable as their own, and the Anglians are generally acknowledged to be the least well attested of the early Saxon peoples. The excavator of Yorvik, where the now celebrated helmet was virtually the only find of the period, calls them 'The elusive Anglians'(36). Dr Yorke observes that 'The source of conflict between Mercia and East Anglia was presumably the control of the amorphous East Midlands peoples known collectively as the Middle Angles'(37). The establishment of an historically appropriate regional context, therefore, is difficult, but also important, and is likely to involve a consideration of Romano-British and late Iron Age circumstances in the region. The term "East Midlands" can be used very appropriately, but it is important to remember that this is an ambivalent term of relatively recent origin, which has no political or institutional validity. The East Midlands is a conceptual, not an historical region.

The chief difficulty for an historian in studying a poorly documented area is that he must have recourse to the evidence afforded by archaeology and place name study, which subjects are closely related to his own, but governed by different methodologies, the

exponents of which are sometimes prone to disagreement. Dr Bassett, however, has an optimistic view:

'Now that historians, archaeologists and place-name scholars do talk to each other, coordinate their studies and combine the results, the Migration Period in lowland Britain is no longer an impenetrable Dark Age'(38).

Both archaeology and place-name evidence for the lower Soar valley present problems. The archaeological evidence is quite plentiful, but most of it is very difficult to assess and interpret. This is partly because it is the result of excavations carried out a long time ago, during a time when it was more appropriate to talk about antiquarians than archaeologists, and when techniques, both of excavation and reporting were at an early stage of development. In addition, a great deal of the material recovered during these early excavations has subsequently been lost, and there is no opportunity to re-examine it using the more effective methods available to the archaeologists of today. All we have left, in many cases, are the quaintly worded reports of these antiquarian excavators, whose work, however, should not be despised. It would be easy to reject this evidence on a number of grounds, but since it is the only evidence we have, the best possible use must be made of it. A fundamental problem with the archaeological evidence for the migration period in England is the question of its date. This question will be more fully dealt with in Chapter Three, but it is important to point out here that the original typologies for early Anglo-Saxon artefacts were based on Bede's belief that the Adventus Saxonum was a single event, occurring about 450 A.D. As we now know, Bede was mistaken in this; Germanic settlers had begun to arrive in England more than a century earlier. This means that great care has to be taken in establishing chronologies for early Saxon monuments and artefacts such as burials, cemeteries and their contents(39).

The extent to which placename evidence is of value to historians is still a matter of debate. In his contribution to the latest edition of The Oxford History of England, Dr J.N.L. Myres wrote a lengthy account of its weaknesses, concluding that there are 'fundamental uncertainties inherent in all English place-name study' (40). His views, or "attitudes" as she describes them have, not unexpectedly, been hotly contested by Dr Margaret Gelling(41). Few local historians, however, would deny the value of place-name evidence, particularly in cases like the present one, where the other sources of evidence are either lacking or ambivalent. With the lower Soar valley, there are two sets of place-name problems. The first concerns the general difficulties, acknowledged by the place-name scholars, of dealing with place-names in an Anglo-Scandinavian area. These may be briefly summarised:

1). Place names were given to settlements by people who lived outside them; a Scandinavian name does not necessarily indicate a Scandinavian settlement.

2). Apart from personal names which can be positively identified, the elements "by" and "thorpe" are the principal means of identifying a Scandinavian settlement. These elements, however, may have been derived from Old English byrig and throp.(42).

3). Except in cases where a pre-Viking settlement name is known as well as a Viking name, such as Derby, which was known as Northworthy in pre-Viking times, it is impossible to tell whether a), the Vikings occupied a place, but retained its Saxon name, or b), occupied a place and changed its name from Saxon to Scandinavian, or c), founded a new settlement and gave it a Viking name.

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The second set of problems with place-name evidence for the area under consideration is concerned with their territorial distribution. While there is a notable concentration of Scandinavian place-names in the neighbouring Wreake valley, there is an equally notable absence of such names in the lower Soar valley\(^{43}\). Moreover, the majority of the Wreake valley place-names incorporate a personal name element, while the majority of lower Soar valley place-names are topographical. The contrast extends to the names of the wapentakes in which the two valleys lie; the Wreake, itself a Danish name, lies partly in the Danish named wapentake of Framland, while the lower Soar valley is in the English named wapentakes of Goscote and Rushcliffe. This situation has important implications, not only for the density of Danish settlement, if any, in the lower Soar valley, but also for the extent and effectiveness of Danish control of the area, bearing in mind that the precise boundary of the Danelaw is unknown north of Stony Stratford in Buckinghamshire. It is often assumed that since Stony Stratford is on the Watling Street, the Danelaw boundary continued along it, and indeed this is possible, even likely, but in reality it is no more than one of what Dr Campbell has called the 'idees reçues about it (Anglo-Saxon history) which are in themselves no more than speculations.....hallowed by repetition'\(^{44}\). Bishop Asser's Life of king Alfred contains an account of the boundary between Wessex and the Danelaw agreed in Alfred's treaty with Guthrum 880-886, but Asser's authenticity, together with a great deal more of the "received wisdom" concerning Alfred has recently been seriously challenged in a book of which the author himself says of his research: 'This has resulted in a narrative that inevitably appears more iconoclastic than I would otherwise have wished'\(^{45}\). The treaty, apparently undisputed.

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\(^{43}\) Cameron, Scandinavian settlement in the territory of the Five Boroughs, the place-name evidence, (1965), and G.Fellowes-Jensen, Scandinavian settlement names in the East Midlands, Copenhagen, (1978), pp. 231-61.

\(^{44}\) Campbell, Essays, p. 130.

however, and with it the boundary, can largely be substantiated, by comparing it with the document known as the Burghal Hidage, and this has been done by Dr Dumville (46). We can be reasonably sure, then, of the boundary between Wessex and the Danelaw, but for the boundary between Mercia and the Danelaw we have only the Chronicle entry which tells us that 'the Danes went into Mercia and shared out some of it between themselves, and some they gave to Ceolwulf' (47). Even if there was a treaty between Mercia and the Danes, and even if it did name the Watling Street as a boundary, it is reasonable to expect a certain "thinning out" of Danish settlement near the boundary, and since treaties for the most part are never kept for very long, the boundary itself must have been almost permanently in dispute.

Ecclesiastical developments in the area do not readily lend themselves to the reconstruction of historical territories; a diocese of Leicester was founded during the reign of Aethelred of Mercia, (674-704), but it was administered from Lichfield or held as a plurality until 737. The Viking attacks disposed of it along with all the other eastern bishoprics, and it remained an archdeaconry of various sees until it was refounded in 1927. Its original extent remains unknown. The reconstruction of ecclesiastical organisation in eastern England during the tenth century and later has probably obscured the best chances we may have had of reconstructing the organisation of the earlier church in that part of the country. The grant, in 956, by king Eadwig to archbishop Oskytel of York, of a scattered estate centred on Southwell, in Nottinghamshire, led to the foundation of Southwell Minster (48). The charter, however, makes no mention of a minster, but does stress that the archbishop should have jurisdiction throughout the estate, and thus established a court. It was perhaps inevitable that the minster would follow (49). A further reorganisation in the East Midlands occurred after

1072, when Remigius of Fécamp, who had been appointed to the vast see of Dorchester by the Conqueror, removed his sedes to Lincoln and revived that long defunct bishopric. Recovering the diocesan boundaries of the pre-Viking East Midlands is a non-starter. A search for the smaller ecclesiastical territories reveals that they, too, are almost entirely absent.

In his study of the Domesday evidence for minsters, that is, collegiate churches of secular priests, Dr Blair points out that the Domesday circuit "D", Leicestershire, Northamptonshire, Oxfordshire and Warwickshire, must be regarded as 'a gap in the data', but he offers no reasons for this state of affairs(50). They must, however, include not only Viking destruction, but also two other features of Anglo-Saxon and later ecclesiastical history. The first is the previously mentioned reforms of Dunstan and Ethelwold, whose insistence on a return to the Benedictine Rule converted some minster churches into regular houses, and the second is the proliferation of private manorial churches which eventually rendered the minsters obsolete.

Of the minsters, or possible minsters, anywhere near the lower Soar valley, Buckminster and Misterton, Leicestershire, base their claims mainly on onomastic evidence, but it is worth noting that both were held by tenants of the bishop of Lincoln at Domesday, and they may have been prebends of the cathedral. Melton, Leicestershire, qualifies on at least one of the criteria for minster status proposed by Dr Blair; there were two priests there in 1086(51). Breedon-on-the-Hill, Leicestershire, was undoubtedly a minster; one of the fragmentary documents concerning its foundation clearly states that the abbot and monks were to baptise and preach doctrine to their people(52). There is also some circumstantial


(51). Blair, "Secular Minster Churches".

(52). C.S. 841, (49c).
evidence that Rothley, which is actually in the lower Soar valley, was a minster site; it was the caput of a large royal soke during the reigns of both the Confessor and the Conqueror, an Anglo-Saxon cross stands in the churchyard, the parish is a large one now, and was larger still before the borough of Mountsorrel was planted there in the twelfth century. Rothley was an extensive peculiar, "The Manor of Rothley Temple", for some centuries.

To deal with an area for which there is such meagre evidence, requires the heavy application of two particular techniques. The first might be called the "comparative method", in which an unattested area is compared or contrasted with a better attested one, which is related, either by proximity or in some other way. The second is a method employed by Maitland, although few could hope to use it as effectively as he has done(53). This involves examining a poorly documented area by a study of it during a later, but better documented period of time; such a method may be called "retrospective analysis".

The employment of these two methods dictates, to some extent, the format in which the thesis is structured. It falls naturally into three parts. In the first, the comparative method allows a conventional chronological approach to each topic discussed. In the second, the Anglo-Saxon history of the lower Soar valley is examined from the standpoint of successively later documents, while a third part will attempt a synthesis of the preceding two. With this modus operandi established, a number of questions may be considered.

Since the lower Soar valley is not a self-evident territorial unit, like a shire, a hundred or a parish, an appropriate regional context must be sought at the start of the analysis, and this can be done in two ways. The first is to take the currently widely recognised, but purely conceptual region of the East Midlands and examine a number of aspects of Anglo-Saxon history in that region. These will include the state formation process and the emergence of the shires, the question of Middle Anglia and the Middle Angles, the impact of the first Viking Age and ecclesiastical developments. The second way of establishing a regional context for

(53). Maitland, Domesday Book and Beyond, 1897.
the lower Soar valley is to consider the background to the Anglo-Saxon settlement of the area. During the late Iron Age and Romano-British periods, the lower Soar valley lay within the territory of the tribal group known to Ptolemy as *KOPITANOI*, now less elegantly termed Corieltauvi. The region occupied by this tribal group is very similar in position and extent to the region now called the East Midlands. The land of the Corieltauvi is undoubtedly a valid historical region, and such record of it as exists may provide some clues as to the nature and character of settlement patterns and organisation among the Anglo-Saxons, who, like most invader/settlers, will have preferred to take over going concerns whenever possible.

Since the lower Soar valley is notoriously ill-provided with documentary evidence for its history, something may be gained from a study of an adjacent area for which there is a certain amount of documentary evidence during the Anglo-Saxon period. The river Tame, like the Soar is a tributary of the Trent, and the Tame, together with its own tributary, the Mease, is separated from the Soar valley by the Charnwood forest, through which runs the watershed between the two river valleys. This feature may well have formed a boundary between the settlers to the east and west of it. A number of charters of the Mercian kings indicate or infer the existence of a Mercian province of the *Tomsaetan*, or "dwellers by the Tame", and if these charters do not directly illustrate situations in the lower Soar valley, at least they provide information about its next door neighbour. It is important here to look not only for possible comparisons, but also for possible contrasts, since although the lower Soar valley was a part of Mercia for some of its history, it was far from being so for all of it.

Since charter evidence goes back no further than the late seventh century, and the rise of Mercia begins with the reign of Penda, c.626-c.656, the only possible approach to the early Anglo-Saxon history of the lower Soar valley lies in the attempt to relate what appear to be the settlement opportunities offered by the terrain to what is known of the type and distribution of Anglo-Saxon material within it, and this involves dealing with the inadequacies of the archaeological record detailed earlier. The main body of archaeological evidence for the settlement or conquest period comes from graves and cemeteries, and it may
be that the type and distribution of these monuments will reveal some of the features of early Anglo-Saxon settlement in the area.

The capacity of the comparative method of inquiry into the history of the lower Soar valley is strictly limited, and when that limit has been reached, it becomes necessary to turn to the method of retrospective analysis, in order to deduce, if possible, causes unknown from effects which are known. Domesday Book is central to this process, since it reveals not only the extents of shires, hundreds and wapentakes, but also the approximate extent of much smaller territories, in particular that of manorial estates and private jurisdictions, the distribution of which can explain the reasons for recurrent settlement patterns. The extent to which Domesday Book directly records the situation tempore regis Edwardi is limited, but there are other ways in which that situation can be discovered from its pages.

The Domesday account of the lower Soar valley raises the question of whether particular significance can be attached to the three settlements of Barrow-on-Soar, Rothley and Loughborough. Care must be taken when talking about "important" places, because very often it is not the places themselves which are of permanent importance, but the functions they performed from time to time, and the events which from time to time occurred there. What the precise significance of these three settlements was, is not immediately clear, but some light might be shed on the situation by the document known as the Leicestershire Survey, c.1130, and in the case of Rothley, a custumal of c.1275, and part of an Extent of 1338 are particularly revealing. A final question to be raised, although as yet it is unanswerable, is whether the lower Soar valley itself can be delineated as a coherent unit, an historical territory of the Anglo-Saxon period.
PART ONE

THE PRE-CONQUEST EVIDENCE
CHAPTER ONE.

The regional context, (1), The East Midlands.

It will be useful to offer a brief survey of some of the physical features of the lower Soar valley which seem to the writer to have had particular influence on its past settlement. One feature of the river which was of particular significance to the human settlers who have occupied its banks and hinterlands continuously since Palaeolithic times is its flood characteristics. The Soar's rate of fall is only about five feet in a mile, over roughly a forty mile course, from its source in a multitude of springs in the Smockington-Claybrooke area,(roughly SP 45-55:85-95), to its confluence with the Trent at Redhill, (SK 312:488). It is a slow-flowing, relatively shallow river, and should have no great propensity to flood unless in response to exceptional rainfall along its course, even allowing for the quick run-off of local rainfall over the impervious rock on either side of the river(1). The Soar floods extensively, however, and does so regularly, it might almost be said reliably, regardless of immediately local climatic conditions.

Without straying into the fields of climatology and hydrodynamics, a fairly simple explanation of this can be offered. It might be as well to dispose first of all of the effects of 18th century canalisation of the Soar and the Trent. The Soar Navigation, (Leicester to the Trent), The Trent and Mersey Canal, the Trent Navigation and the Erewash Canal were all completed between 1777 and 1780. The principal workings affecting the Soar were the locks at Sawley, the Cranfleet Cut and Thrumpton Weir(2). The general effect of this canalisation was to reduce slightly the flooding of the Soar valley. It is safe to assume that the floods which can be observed frequently in the Soar valley today are somewhat less extensive.

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than those with which the Anglo-Saxons were familiar. The floods of the Soar are not, properly speaking, floods at all. The Trent flows more strongly that the Soar, so that there is an underlying tendency for the Soar to become bottled up when the Trent is flowing at its strongest. In addition to this, however, the river Derwent, which rises high up in the Derbyshire Peaks, joins the Trent from the north less than three miles upstream from the mouth of the Soar, and the river Erewash, which rises near Chesterfield, joins the Trent at a point slightly below the mouth of the Soar. The result is a huge backwash of the Soar, which often gives an observer the impression that it is flowing the wrong way, that is southwards instead of northwards. Over the millennia this has allowed the formation of the gravel terraces which offered settlement opportunities to prehistoric man and his successors, and an extensive flood plain, providing very high quality water meadows and arable land. The gravel terraces have largely been reduced to a series of dismal pools by the landscape vandalism of gravel extractors, but the agrarian and pastoral potential for a mainly non-industrial community is still evident.

To the west of the river valley lies the Charnwood Forest, not only a source of timber and stone, but also a facility for the swine-herding extensively practised by the Anglo-Saxons, to judge from later evidence. It has been estimated that pigs greatly outnumbered all other domestic animals during Anglo-Saxon times, and there is documentary evidence of the importance of this animal. In the Laws of king Ine of Wessex, 688-94, it is stated that anyone cutting down a tree under which thirty swine could stand, must pay sixty shillings, and in the will of Alfred, a ninth century ealdorman of Surrey, two thousand pigs are bequeathed to his wife(3). To the east of the river lie the Leicestershire-Nottinghamshire wolds, a well overlain boulder clay, providing as good upland grazing as can be found anywhere.

To this must be added the contribution of the Soar's own tributary streams, which so

far as the floods are concerned is slight, but is highly significant in terms of settlement potential. The Soar's main tributary is the Wreake, or the Eye as it is called in its upper reaches to the north of Melton Mowbray. The Eye rises near the village of Bescaby, (SK 822:262), and flows in a generally south-easterly direction through Melton Mowbray, where it becomes the Wreake, and on to Wanlip, about five miles north of Leicester, where it joins the Soar. It is a sufficiently substantial river to give rise to a settlement pattern of its own which is culturally and historically distinct from that of the Soar: it is a different 'pays'. The streams feeding into the Soar which are integral to its own settlement pattern are many and varied, and only the most important of them will be mentioned at this point; some of the others may be found relevant later. From the wolds to the east of the river, going northwards, the most significant are Fishpool brook, Walton brook, Hermitage brook, King's brook and Kingston brook, while from Charnwood to the west, again going northwards, are Rothley brook, Woodbrook, Burleigh brook, Blackbrook, with its tributary Grace Dieu brook, and Long Whatton brook, with its tributary Westmeadow brook. The important contribution of these brooks to the settlement pattern of the lower Soar valley is that they provided the water supply to facilitate settlement above the flood plain of the river. One visually dramatic example of this, especially when the river is in flood, is Sileby, (SK 60:15). From the Soar at Sileby Mill, (SK 593:148), one looks due east across the flood plain towards the wolds which begin to rise about three quarters of a mile away. Dominating the skyline is the tower of the mainly mediaeval parish church. Sileby brook, which is shown but not named on the one-inch and two and a half inch to the mile Ordnance Survey maps, rises near Six Hills, (SK 642:202), and flows southwards, skirting Seagrave and flowing straight through Sileby and across the flood plain to join the Soar at the mill site. The mediaeval footings of the present building, now used as a boat shed, are clearly visible. It is not surprising that two mills are recorded in Domesday at Sileby, both held by one Arnold, a tenant of Hugh de Grandmesnil, castellan of Leicester; the one on the Soar would be inoperable during the floods, and the other, the site of which can be conjectured, was probably upstream on the Sileby brook. Hugh
de Grandmesnil did not hold all of Sileby in 1086; part of it belonged to the Rothley soke, held by king William and king Edward before him, and another part belonged to the Barrow-on-Soar soke, held by Hugh, earl of Chester, and earl Harold before him in 1066.

It is useful to distinguish between those settlements which are actually on the river, and those which are in the valley but not on the river itself, and are not part of the settlement of the wolds to the east or the forest to the west. The "on-Soar" suffix is a rough guide. Where the banks are deep or the land rises sharply from the river, the settlement extends almost to the water's edge, and this is the case at Barrow-on-Soar, Stanford-on-Soar, Normanton-on-Soar, Kingston-on-Soar and Ratcliff-on-Soar. Among the settlements which are undoubtedly in the valley but not on the river are Sileby as we have seen, Rothley, Loughborough, Sutton Bonnington, Hathem and Long Whatton. (Fig. 2, p. 25).

Since the area thus described is not a self-evident territorial unit, the establishment of an appropriate regional context is important. The lower Soar valley would today be said to lie within a region known as the East Midlands, a term which is widely used by firms and institutions to describe their areas of operation, although the delineation of the areas served by these institutions differs widely from one to another. It seems that every use of the term indicates a different area, and it is difficult, therefore, to delineate this putative region with any kind of precision.

Professor N.P. Brooks, editor of the series Studies in the Early History of Britain, writes in a foreword to the second volume in that series, "It is intended that the series will cover all the main regions of early mediaeval Britain", and in spite of the fact that the volume in question is entitled The East Midlands in the Early Middle Ages, (4), presumably as a result of his own decision, he adds that 'the East Midlands did not form a single

THE SOAR FROM LEICESTER TO THE TRENT

THE LOWER SOAR AND ITS TRIBUTARIES.

RIVER TRENT

Red Hill
Ratcliffe-on-Soar
Kingston-on-Soar
Kegworth
Sutton Bonington
Hathern
Dishley
Normanton-on-Soar
Stanford-on-Soar
Kingston Brook
King's Brook

BLACKBROOK

LOUGHBOROUGH

Woodbrook

Grace Dieu Brook

Barrow-upon-Soar

Quorn

Mountsorrel

Rothley Brook

Cossington

Sileby

Fishpool Brook

Sileby Brook

Scale: ½ inch=1 mile.
political unit at any time during the early Middle Ages'. The mandatory brevity of a foreword prevents Professor Brooks from answering two of the more obvious questions that he raises: first, if the East Midlands was not a single political unit, was it some other kind of unit, and second, if it was not such during the early Middle Ages, was it a single political unit at some other period? In the attempt to answer these questions, it may be that an appropriate regional context for the lower Soar valley will be found. Dr Stafford's introduction to her book, and the opening of her first chapter suggest that she has found some difficulty in justifying it, but she produces a topographical map of the East Midlands, which is reproduced overleaf. (Fig. 3, p. 27). One question it raises is whether a region which includes over a hundred miles of coastline can properly be called midland, but before considering that question, it is appropriate to consider a number of features of Anglo-Saxon history as they affected the region thus designated, the first of which is what is widely described as “the process of state-formation”.

It is virtually impossible to write a satisfactory narrative history of the period during which Roman Britain ceased, and Anglo-Saxon England began to exist, and this is reflected in the variety of the nomenclature used to characterise it. “Post-Roman”, “sub-Roman”, “Migration Period”, “Settlement Period”, and even “The Age of Arthur”, are all in current use to entitle the period from about 350 to about 600 A.D. (5). Opinions as to the merits of Dr Morris’ title, and indeed of his book, vary considerably, but it is worth noting that he was among the first to isolate the period 350-650, (in his case), from the fragmented remains of the original Roman province of Britannia and the so-called “heptarchic” period of Anglo-Saxon England. There is something of a consensus at present that what went on during that period should be called “the state-formation process”.

If there is any value in the categorisations of ethnographers and sociologists, (6), and

(6) E.g. Service, Earle, Renfrew, Hodges, Binchy.
THE EAST MIDLANDS.

(from Stafford)

Isle of Axholme

R.Siea

over 200 ft (61 m)

land over 200 ft (61 m)

land over 200 ft (61 m)

forest (approximate)

marsh and fen

probable Anglo-Saxon coastline
if such things as “complex chiefdoms” can, under certain circumstances, develop into “state societies”, some such development was taking place in parts of England during the fifth century, although the ethnographers are describing the development of society during a much earlier period of time. The Roman withdrawal removed the bureaucratic hierarchy, the urban character of Romano-British society, the monetary economy and the system of law promulgation and enforcement. People who had held any kind of official position in the Romano-British hierarchy now found that they were without either the support or the constraints of that hierarchy. The part played by immigrant peoples in the transformation of Roman Britain into Anglo-Saxon England may be less than is sometimes supposed, but the important thing about the immigrants is that they were from beyond the limes of the Roman Empire, and they had no direct experience of a Romanised society.

It was as if the whole process of state formation had to begin all over again. Writing of the development of government during the Anglo-Saxon period, Professor H.R. Loyn distinguishes three features of this process between 500 and 871, the date of Alfred's succession to the throne of Wessex(7). These are leadership in war, the control of wealth and (the promulgation of) law. Professor Loyn, of course, is picking out the landmarks in the formation of a united English state: he cites the reign of Egbert of Wessex, 802-39, the Tribal Hidage and the law codes of Ethelbert and Ine. In fact, however, these processes had taken place much earlier, but only in part, and only in certain places, which is one of the reasons why the Anglo-Saxon period is of such interest to local historians. The speed with which state formation proceeded during the fifth and sixth centuries is nothing short of staggering, but it can be accounted for in three ways: the survival of bits, pieces and memories of the ordered society of the Roman period, (although it must be remembered that Roman Britain was a province, and later several provinces of an empire, and not a state in itself), and the

presence in the British Isles of several fully developed kingdoms which had never been fully
Romanised in Wales and Scotland, and in Ireland not Romanised at all. Some of them are the
subject of the diatribes of Gildas in chapters 27-63 of the De Excidio, and Maelgwn's
kingdom of Gwynedd, or the kingdoms of Strathclyde and Dalriada might be mentioned. The
third factor in the rapid and uneven process of state formation is the presence of Christianity
in England from a very early stage of the Romano-British period, which meant that a form of
ecclesiastical organisation was in continuous being from Roman to Anglo-Saxon times.

It is worth while to consider the significance of a number of terms used in Gildas,
Bede, and the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle to describe as the writers saw it, the emergence of
England from Roman Britain. These are Vortigern, appearing in Bede's phrase suo rege
Uuortigerno, (8), tyrannus, tyrannus superbus, cyninga and bretwalda. It is a truism to say
that all these terms are capable of more than one interpretation, but it is important to realise
that certainly in the case of the Old English titles, cyninga and bretwalda, the variety of
possibility in interpretation is a characteristic of the language itself, which is "multivalent",
that is, words and phrases carry more than one meaning simultaneously and intentionally.
This is why it is unfortunate that in the county by county volumes of the English Place-name
Society, each place name is reduced to a single solution, when, if a floral term may be
borrowed, the solution should appear like the head of an umbelliferous plant.

When Gildas says of the Britons after the withdrawal of Roman authority, that 'they
were ruled by tyrants', he may well be referring to the situation outlined above in which
people who were formerly "set under authority" were now independent. They were joined by
opportunists and adventurers who could establish some form of personal authority, and, of
course, the leaders of immigrant groups. Gildas does not name Vortigern, he refers to a
tyranus superbus, or 'proud tyrant', the "proud" used in the sense in which a moulding
"stands proud" of the flat surface beneath it. Naturally some of the tyrants prospered more

(8). H.E., 1, 15.
than others. It is Bede who substitutes *suo rege Uuortigernus* for Gildas' *tyrannus superbus*, and he may have done so because he had access to the computations at the head of the Easter Annals appearing in the British Historical Miscellany, some of which was compiled from very early sources. Here it says, (erroneously), that *Guorthigirnus tenet imperium in Britannia, Theodoso et Valentiniano consulibus* (9). Vortigern is very likely a title as well as a personal name; there are other examples of it. The important point here is that there is at least a perceived, and maybe no more than perceived, differentiation in status between the Vortigerns and the *tyranni superbi* on the one hand, and the "ordinary" tyrants on the other.

The Anglo-Saxon word "*cyninga*", (in non-philological terms), is related to a complexity of meanings, (10), four of which are relevant here. There is the relationship to (a), "fitting, proper, appropriate, suitable", to (b), kin, family, tribe, patriarch, elder, persona", to (c), "knowledgeable, capable, able, cunning," and (d), "king", as we now use the word to describe the head of a nation-state, although its use in this context can not precede the formation of such entities. 'Ohtere saede his hlaforde Aelfrede cyning.....' is probably the student's first introduction to the translation of Anglo-Saxon prose. Thus the word can describe a person of very little or very great distinction, so long as the distinction is there. "*Bretwalda*" may be similarly considered. Apart from "chief king of Britain or of the Britons", the word can mean a person, not necessarily a king, who has power over a wide area, a "bright-wielder" in the sense of a warrior brandishing a sword, or "bright-wielder" in the sense of one dispensing treasure, a "ring-giver". Thus again this term can be used to describe persons of various rank or importance. However, the term would never have come into use had it not been necessary to create a distinction between kings in general, and overkings in particular, and again it has to be considered whether the use of such titles indicates

actual importance, perceived status or an insubstantiable claim (11). Whatever their titles, or
the validity of such titles, these early notables are the agents of state-formation, and they are
associated with particular places at particular times. Separating the kings or likely kings from
the recorded bretwaldas and those who appear equal to them in importance even if they did
not have the title, and then attaching their names to the places associated with them, provides
some sort of view of the unequal spread, over space and time, of the state-formation process.
However, to do this in anything like a comprehensive manner would be a very large
undertaking, and would require the collation of all the known king-lists and partial king-lists
covering the period 450-600. Probably the nearest anyone has come to doing it has been done
by Dr James Campbell in his "Bede's Reges and Principes" but, of course, by the time it is
possible to talk about "reges", "principes", "subreguli", "duces", and "ministri", the process of
state-formation has reached a pretty advanced stage(12). To get at the earliest stages of the
process without adding another complete book to the rapidly increasing body of scholarly
literature on post-Roman or sub-Roman Britain, it might suffice to look at the better attested
eyearly kingdoms and their rulers, to see who were regarded as bretwaldas and who were not,
and estimate the likely extent of their rule.

A list of bretwaldas appears in Bede, (13), and in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle in the
annal for the year 825, the latter being derived from the former. Bede's list, in order, is
Aelle, (Sussex), Ceawlin, (Wessex), Ethelbert, (Kent), Raedwald, (East Anglia), Edwin,
(Northumbria), and the succeeding Northumbrian kings, Oswald and Oswy. To this list, the
chronicler adds Egbert of Wessex, and by implication, his West Saxon successors. By the
time it is possible to distinguish the bretwaldas from other rulers, the process of state
formation has been completed, not only in the bretwalda's own kingdom, but also in those

(11). P.Wormald, 'Bede, the Bretwaldas and the origins of the Gens Anglorum' in Wormald,
whose rulers are his under-kings, and it is at these we must look, if we can find any evidence for them. In the case of Aelle of the South Saxons, for example, the Chronicle tells us that he "came to Britain" with his three sons, Cymen, Wlencing and Cissa in 477, landed on Selsey Bill, (Cymenesora), fought the "Welsh", and drove some of them into the Sussex Weald, (Andredesleag). In 485, he fought the Welsh on the banks of Mearcraededburna, (unidentified), and in 491, he and Cissa besieged Pevensey, (Andredesceastr), the Roman and Saxon Shore fort, and slew all the inhabitants. We hear no more of the first of the "rulers of Britain south of the Humber".

It is not necessary here to trace the origins of those kingdoms of which we have any record: this has been admirably done by (among others), the contributors to a recent book on the origins of the early Saxon kingdoms (13). It is necessary, however, to emphasise certain features of the early Saxon period and the records we have of it. The process of state formation during the sub-Roman or post-Roman period should not be confused with the general process of state formation which resulted in the formation of the kingdom of England. In spite of the achievements of the West Saxon kings of the ninth and tenth centuries, the first king to rule a united England which was not subsequently divided was Cnut the Dane, who ruled 1016-35. The early process was completed during the fifth and sixth centuries and began in the fourth. By 600, every part of England was nominally part of a kingdom, and every person in England was the subject of a king. The bretwaldas must be seen as "broad rulers" in the sense that they held extensive territories, including those of other kings, and not as rulers of all England, or even all England south of the Humber. Ceawlin of Wessex may be taken as an example. His reign, roughly, lasted from 560 to 593, and in the Chronicle we hear of him fighting against Ethelbert and driving him into Kent, of the West Saxons fighting various named and unnamed opponents. We hear that they fought in

Bedford, Aylesbury, (Bucks.), Limbury and Eynsham, (Oxfords.). In 577 Ceawlin fought the battle of Dyrham on the Gloucestershire/Somerset boundary, killing the three kings Coinmail, Condidan and Farinmail, and capturing Cirencester, Gloucester and Bath. This seems to be the beginning of the West Saxon conquest of the Devon and Cornwall peninsula, since succeeding West Saxon kings fought battles at Bindon, 614, Pinhoe, 658, Posbury, 661 and Hehill in Cornwall, 722. In 584, Ceawlin fought at *Fethanleag*, near Stoke Lyne in Oxfordshire, was expelled from the throne at Adam's Grave, Alton Priors, (Wilts.), in 592, and died in 593. His chances of ruling effectively over a much larger area than that bounded by the places with which he was associated were negligible. It could only be done in a nominal way by the practice of commendation; as a man commended himself to a lord, so a lord to a king, and a king to an over-king. Looked at from another viewpoint, this practice closely resembles a Mafia-style protection racket.

Another factor to be borne in mind is that we have a distorted view of the period 450-600 because Bede firmly believed that the *Adventus Saxonum* was virtually a single event occurring at virtually a particular point of time, about 450. This, as the archaeological record attests, is not true. Bede's belief accounts for the fact that all the very early kings appear as invaders, even the legendary ones, who certainly include Hengist and Horsa. (Both words mean "horse", but Hengist means "gelding", and since Horsa was reportedly killed at "Agaelsthrep", or Aylesbury, the surviving monarch may have been in no good position to found a dynasty). The truth almost slips out in the Chronicle entry for 591, in which Stuf and Whitgar, described as West Saxons, are said to have "come to Britain".

A further matter of note is the total absence for the period before 600 of any reference to a Mercian, Midland, or East Midland kingdom, king, or indeed any other person. There are a number of possible explanations here. There may have been kingdoms of the rise and fall of which we have no record. The process of state formation may never have taken place. There are good reasons why Bede would not wish to mention the Midlands, apart from the likelihood that he had no correspondent such as Daniel of Winchester or Albinus of
Canterbury in that area. One of Bede's intentions in the Ecclesiastical History was to indicate the character of good and Christian kingship, and the shining example he adduces is Edwin of Northumbria (14). Edwin was killed by the pagan king Penda of Mercia, and Cadwalla at the battle of Hatfield Chase in 633, and therefore Penda and his predecessors really have no place in Bede's book, even though Penda, Wulfhere and Aethelbald of Mercia could well have figured as bretwaldas. Bede does, almost reluctantly, accord some importance to Aethelbald. After listing the bishops and their sees of his own time, he says 'Et hae omnes provinciae ceteraeque australes ad confinum usque Humbræ fluminis cum suis quæque regibus Merciorum regi Aedilbaldo subiectae sunt' (15). But then, Bede was nothing if not a patriotic Bernician.

Much of the early Anglo-Saxon Chronicle is derived from Bede, but that need not have prevented its writers from mentioning Mercia or the Midlands. There was good reason for the omission, however. The Chronicle was probably conceived as an encomium to the achievements of the West Saxon kings; the Parker, (A), Chronicle begins with a genealogical preface, which traces the descent of Cerdic and Cynric back to Woden, and continues with a list of the kings of Wessex down to Alfred. At the time the Chronicle was begun, the struggle between Wessex and Mercia was still in progress, and it would not have been good propaganda to make a "feature" of Mercia. Perhaps the principal reason for the absence of Midland records before 600 is that the area was part of the over-kingdom of East Anglia, which is the least documented of all the early kingdoms. David Dumville has discussed the possibility, but so far as the present study is concerned, inconclusively (16). If there were

(14). It will be objected that Bede's "ideal king" was St. Oswald, but it seems that Bede admired Oswald for his saintliness, but Edwin for his kingliness. (15). H.E. V, 23.
any pre-600 records of the Midlands, the Viking incursion of the ninth century would probably have disposed of them, and we have little left but a genealogy consisting of Wehha, the first ruler, his son, Wuffa, the founder of the dynasty, and Tytila, Raedwald, Eni, Sigbert, Earpwold, Ragenhere, Anna, Ethelhere and Ethelwald, by which time we are well into the seventh century, and East Anglia was eclipsed by the power of Northumbria and Mercia. There is an important possibility here, in that the East Midlands may well have been orientated to the east, rather than being a focal area in itself, or orientated westwards. The kingdom of East Anglia was in being, although subordinated, well into the eighth century, and it is notable that Felix, the monk of Crowland, dedicated his life of St.Guthlac to Aelfwold, king of East Anglia, who died in 749, in spite of the facts that Guthlac was undoubtedly a Mercian nobleman, and that Aethelbald, king of Mercia 715-56, was the founder of Crowland Abbey, in 718, on the site of Guthlac’s hermitage, where Aethelbald, undoubtedly a relative of Guthlac, had visited him, according to Felix, in the years before his accession to the throne, and before Guthlac’s death in 714.

The next aspect of the Anglo-Saxon East Midlands to be examined is the somewhat vexed question of “Middilenglum” and the putative Middle Angles. “The seventh century shuffle” is a phenomenon long observed by those studying Anglo-Saxon history and the Old English language. The participants in that exercise would have used a stronger term. A massive reorientation took place. The centres of power in the sixth century were in the north and east: Kent, Essex, East Anglia and Northumbria, and the tradition of power bases in these areas is a long one. Colchester, Lincoln and York were the earliest of the Romano-British coloniae, and their influence was augmented by the ring of Saxon Shore forts, the functions of which establishments were far from being purely defensive, or even purely military. The new sources of power and authority were appearing in the west and to the south: Worcester, Lichfield, Tamworth and Winchester. The seventh century was also the century of the Conversion, in the sense that there were many more Christians in England in 700 than there were in 600. Christianity had been alive and kicking in England for centuries, and on an
organised basis, but what occurred in the seventh century was a wholesale reorganisation, brought about by Pope Gregory the Great, whose pontificate began in 590. In effect, the Western Church was transformed from a loose federation of virtually independent congregations and dioceses into a centralised international organisation. This involved a complete reorientation in Britain; the evangelising force, (although it could be and was accused of making no attempt to convert the Saxons), was based in the west, in Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Somerset, Devon and Cornwall, and moved eastwards. From the time of the Augustinian mission of 597, a more effective proselytisation, (because it was aimed first at the kings), proceeded from the east. It was in these circumstances that the notion of Middle Anglia or "Middilenglum" was born.

In spite of the large body of scholarly writing that Middle Anglia has attracted, there really is no getting away from what Wendy Davies said, briefly, almost tersely, as long ago as 1973 (17). There are other references than Bede's to Middle Anglia and the Middle Angles, for example in Felix' Life of St Guthlac (18), but without his statements these would not suffice to justify the proposition of a king, a kingdom and a people of the Middle Angles (19). What Bede in fact says does not amount to such a proposition, but it is important to consider why it has been thought to do so. The political situation of the mid-seventh century might be said to favour the formation of a Middle Anglian kingdom. Apart from the reorientation referred to above, there was something of a power vacuum. The power of East Anglia was declining, that of Mercia had not extended in terms of effective rule into the East Midlands, and that of Northumbria was losing its grasp over territory south of the Humber. If a powerful warrior had emerged in the area, he might have made himself a kingdom, if the

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circumstances of the Mercian and Northumbrian successions had been different, it might have been Peada, but he was destined to become king of all Mercia, if only for a short time. Bede may have sensed this situation, but he had other, and perhaps simpler reasons for writing as he did. It is worth following his account of the political situation as it developed during the middle years of the seventh century. In *H.E.* II, 20, Bede describes the death of Edwin in battle and the subsequent ravaging of Northumbria by Penda of Mercia and Cadwalla of Gwynedd. Bearing in mind Bede's intention to teach about the virtues of Christian kingship exemplified by Edwin, Penda and Cadwalla, Edwin's slayers, are cast as villains of the piece, Cadwalla the worse of the two, because while Penda was a pagan, from whom no better might be expected, Cadwalla was a barbarian who professed Christianity. Outraged Northumbrian patriotism, therefore, sees Mercia as a source of evil. Bede, however, has to write the history of the conversion of Mercia as part of the "History of the Church and English People", and sooner or later, Mercia must become respectable. Bede has already paved the way, by making Cadwalla the greater villain of the two, and he can go a little further, later, in *H.E.* III, 21, when he says that king Penda himself did not forbid the preaching of the Faith to any, even of his own Mercians, who wished to listen, but he hated and despised any whom he knew to be insincere in their practice of Christianity once they had accepted it, and that any who despised the commandments of the God in whom they professed to believe, were themselves despicable wretches. This, of course, would apply to Cadwalla, and separate him from Penda, somewhat rehabilitating Penda in the process, although Bede later inveighs against Penda's subsequent activities. But it does not go far enough. Bede has to recognise that Peada, Penda's son, was converted in Northumbria, and returned to Mercia to convert that people. Bede also knew that the Northumbrian king Oswy, together with Peada and his brother and successor, Wulfhere, were jointly concerned with the establishment and endowment of the great monastery at Medehamstede. Bede simply had to say something really nice about Peada, so he described him as almost, but not quite a king, ruling in what was almost, but not quite a kingdom. The fact that there is no mention of
Middle Anglia or the Middle Angles in the document known as the Tribal Hidage, argues against the existence of such an entity. There is a sort of consensus that it is a tribute-list, but there has been wide disagreement about its date and origin, its date being variable between the time of Wulfhere, 656-75, and that of Offa, 765-796. It was long thought to be Mercian in origin, but the possibility of its being Northumbrian was always acknowledged, since Northumbria does not appear in it, and, of course, no king would levy tribute from himself (20). The most recent, and seemingly the most confident assessment asserts firmly that it is a Northumbrian document of the reign of king Edwin, 616-33 (21). However, the Tribal Hidage quite clearly gives us a list of tribal peoples each of which is attached to a number of hides, and the variation in hidage between the peoples mentioned may be taken to indicate variations in wealth, importance or extent. It might be regarded in vulgar terms as a pecking order or a league table. It has been rigorously studied by many scholars since it was first printed by Birch in the last century. Its value here lies in the fact that scholars have been able, within limits, to locate most of the thirty four tribes mentioned in the hidage, and this, coupled with the hidages in the document, enables us to see who inhabited the East Midlands, and how wealthy and important they were at the time of the hidage’s compilation. The three maps overleaf represent three views of the distribution of the tribes of the Tribal Hidage. (Figs. 4, 5, 6, pp 39-41). The first is a reproduction of C.R.Hart’s map illustrating his paper on the Tribal Hidage in T.R.H.S. 5,(1971). This was reproduced together with the second, in his paper on the kingdom of Mercia in Mercian Studies, ed. Domier, (1977). Both reflect Dr Hart’s view that the Middle Angles were a definite people with a definite territory. The third map overleaf is from David Hill’s Atlas of Anglo-Saxon History, (1981), reproduced in H.R.Loyin’s Governance, p.37. All three maps show a concentration of the


THE KINGDOM OF MERcia

(from Hart)
Figure 2. The kingdom of Mercia in the late eighth century: suggested reconstruction of the political boundaries.
THE ENGLAND OF THE TRIBAL HIDAGE

(from Hill)

Fig. 6.
smaller groups in the putative territory of the Middle Angles. There is no other area in England which shows such a concentration, and this alone gives the area its distinction, one which was observed by contemporaries, who categorised it Middle Anglia or "Middilenglum". No doubt the whole of England was divided into kingdoms of similar size at an earlier period, but it would be fair to say that at the time when the Tribal Hidage was compiled, the situation in the East Midlands area did not exist elsewhere in the country, in most parts of which the small early kingdoms had been subsumed into larger units. That these small units had in fact, been kingdoms is suggested by references to the people of the Gyrwe, or fen-dwellers, in whose territory Medehamstede was situated, and one of whose rulers, Tondberct, a princeps, married an East Anglian princess, a daughter of king Anna, at some time before 668(22).

Mercian origins have attracted the attention of many scholars over a long period of time, and it is unnecessary to discuss them in detail here. A summary can be arrived at in the form of a table,(Table 1 p.43), based on the Chronicle entry for 626, and the work of a recent writer on the subject(22). It can be seen that the formation of the Mercian kingdom in the sense of the "heptarchic" kingdoms was later than that of the others, as was the conversion of Mercia, excepting conversions made by the Celtic church and the survival of Romano-British Christianity. Thus the Tribal Hidage reveals the East Midlands as an area in which the existence of sub-kingdoms and provinces, formerly small kingdoms, survived, partly because it failed to coalesce at the time when it might have done, and partly because it was literally a battleground over which the major kingdoms fought and haggled, until it became the more or less undisputed territory of Mercia, and even that situation did not last for long.

In a sense, the Viking invasions of the ninth century created an East Midland identity more than anything else had done. "The Five Boroughs of the Danelaw", is a resoundingly


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legendary</th>
<th>Historical</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Woden</td>
<td>Penda d.655</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wihtlaed</td>
<td>Oswy (Northumbria)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wermund</td>
<td>Wulfhere 658-675</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semi-historical</th>
<th>Historical</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Offa (of Angeln)</td>
<td>Cenred 704-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angeltheow</td>
<td>Ceolred 709-16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eomer</td>
<td>Ceolwald 716</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Icel</td>
<td>Aethelbald 716-57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cnebba</td>
<td>Beornred 757</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cynewald</td>
<td>Offa 757-96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creoda</td>
<td>Ecgfrith 796</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pybba</td>
<td>Cenwulf 796-821</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

|                   |              |
|                   | Ceolwulf I 821-3 |
|                   | Beornwulf 823-6 |
|                   | Ludeca 826-7 |
|                   | Wiglaf I 827-9 |
|                   | Egbert (Wessex) 829-30 |
|                   | Wiglaf (2) 830-40 |
|                   | Berhtwulf 840-52 |
|                   | Burgred 852-74 |
|                   | Ceolwulf II 874-9 |
|                   | Aethelred II 879-911 |
compact expression, but the circumstances must be examined carefully to establish that it is anything more, than just that. Of the five boroughs, Lincoln, Leicester, Nottingham, Derby and Stamford, the last named is today a much smaller place than the other four; perhaps it may be said to have dropped out of the running, or been relegated to a lesser category. The map which at present accompanies the B.B.C. weather forecast for the East Midlands is a rectangle, discreetly shaded at the edges, drawn round Derby, Nottingham, Lincoln and Leicester, and if a "heartland" of the East Midlands is looked for, here it is, apparently the creation of Viking raider/settlers between, say, 870 and 920. The situation, however, is by no means as simple as that. A number of questions spring to mind: how many "boroughs of the Danelaw" were there? What was their function or were their functions? How do they relate to the "Alfredan" burhs? What was their position in the general process of urbanisation, which began long before the Viking Age, and went on long after it? What was their status in law, particularly after the Saxon recovery of them in the early tenth century? The Danelaw as such was established by means of a treaty between Alfred, king of Wessex, and Guthrum, a king of the Danes, soon after 886, when Alfred occupied London, and placed the ealdorman Ethelred in charge of the city(23). Asser's "Life of King Alfred" tells us that according to this treaty, the boundary between Wessex and the Danelaw was to lie up the Thames as far as the mouth of the river Lea, then up the Lea to its source, then along a straight line to Bedford and from there along the river Ouse to Watling Street, and along Watling Street to the boundary with Mercia. The significant thing for present purposes is that all of Kent, and most important, London, was in West Saxon hands. Guthrum's kingdom of East Anglia as it was called, would have to develop its own capital or chief cities elsewhere. (Fig.7,p.45).

The Five Boroughs are indicated indirectly and by implication more than once in the Chronicle, but only once are they named. This is in the annal for 942, which is in verse. It praises king Eadmund, 940-6, who freed them from the control of the Scandinavian

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(23) A.S.C., annal for 886.
Anglo-Scandinavian England in the eleventh century.

The shadings are approximate only and are based on place-name evidence. Among burhs still unidentified are Scergeat and Weardbyrig on the western Mercian border.

(from Hill)
kingdom of York. They had previously been delivered from the Vikings by Edward the Elder and Aethelflaed, “Lady of the Mercians”, some twenty years earlier. In the annal for 1013, the deaths of Sigferth and Morcar are recorded, who are described as thanes of the Seven Boroughs, which are not named. Stenton suggested that the seven boroughs might be the five named in the 942 annal with the addition of Torksey and York, but there is no more to be said in favour of these two towns than there is for any other two towns known to have been held by the Vikings. Torksey is a plausible candidate with its Scandinavian name and its strategic position at the junction of the Trent and the Fossdike, and the Conqueror's fear of renewed Scandinavian attacks led him to order the building of a castle there soon after 1066. York is less likely, since although technically in the Danelaw, it was in fact a separate kingdom, distinct from the rest of the Danelaw in many ways. In fact there is nothing to connect the seven boroughs with the five; they could have been a completely separate grouping. If the kingdom of York, in spite of its attempts to annex Lindsey and northern Mercia, is regarded as being being basically confined to land north of the Humber, then a Danelaw and an East Midlands appears as a more distinct entity, having its focus on the five boroughs. There is no "capital" as such, nor is there an axis of power and control like that between Winchester and London for the kingdom of Wessex, but if the five boroughs are compared with other centres of the Danelaw as at present contrived, they stand out as pre-eminent. To illustrate this, it is necessary to touch on aspects of two very large subjects without becoming involved in their minutiae; the growth of urbanisation in Anglo-Saxon England, and the significance of the West Saxon "burhs". The burhs have tended to be seen rather narrowly, because of their particular association with the document known as the Burghal Hidage, and with the campaigns of Alfred and Edward the Elder against the Danes. On reading through the Burghal Hidage, the places in it appear to be arranged in a clockwise direction, rather like the bounds of a charter. They can be enclosed by a line drawn from "Eorpburnan", (provisionally identified as somewhere north east of Hastings), from Hastings westwards along the south
coast, up the Bristol Channel and the Bath Avon, on through Malmesbury to Oxford and the
northernmost point, Buckingham, then roughly following the Thames to Southwark (Fig. 8,
p.48). Within the figure so described, the burhs of the hidage reveal a wide diversity of
character, which makes it difficult to summarise briefly their principal features, which may
be, a), fortification, either existing, such as Roman walled towns or Iron Age hill-forts, or
newly created as at Wareham and Malmesbury, for purposes of defence and attack,
b), commercial importance or potential, c), ecclesiastical or administrative importance. For
example, it might well be argued that Chisbury, (Cissanbyrig), does not qualify on the above
grounds, being a small Iron Age hill-fort, which connoisseurs of such monuments would
describe as "grotty". However, the area around it has been shown to contain several important
town elements in a dispersed, as against a nucleated state. They include a Roman small town,
(Cunetio), the seat of a bishopric, (Ramsbury), and a mint site, (Great Bedwyn).(Fig.9, p.49).
(24). The Burghal Hidage can not be taken as a complete list of burh sites since it can not
contain burhs which were established after it was written. An example is Towcester,
(Northants.), the former Roman town of Lactodurum, which not only exhibits a number of
topographically identifiable burh features, but is also described in some detail in the
Chronicle annals for 920-1. It is clear also that there were Mercian as well as West Saxon
burhs an example being Warwick, where the topographical features are readily observed,
particularly at the West Gate. It must be asked, therefore, if other burghal systems existed in
addition to the West Saxon documented one, when and where they were established, did the
Vikings have a burghal system, and if so, was it their own or were they utilising one already
in existence or which had existed before they came? Can we regard the five boroughs, which
can not be in the Burghal Hidage because they were not in Wessex as being burhs?

The idea of a defensive wall, enclosing an area in or near which trade or

(24). Aston and Bond, The Landscape of Towns, (1987), p. 60, and more recently, D.Hill and
I. THE BURGHAL HIDAGE

To Eorþeburhnan belong 324 hides, to Hastings belong 500 hides, and to Lewes belong 1200 hides, and to Burpham belong 720 hides, to Chichester belong 1500 hides. Then to Portchester belong 500 hides, and 150 hides belong to Southampton, and to Winchester belong 2400 hides, and to Wilton belong 1400 hides, and to Tisbury belong 500 hides, and to Twayneham belong 500 hides less 10 hides, and to Wareham belong 1600 hides, and to Bridport (or Bredy) belong 800 hides less 40 hides, and to Exeter belong 734 hides, and to Halwell belong 300 hides, and to Liddesdale belong 150 hides less 10 hides, and to Pilton belong 400 hides less 40 hides, and to Watchet belong 513 hides, and to Axbridge belong 400 hides, and to Lyng belong 100 hides, and to Langport belong 600 hides, and to Bath belong 1000 hides, and to Malmesbury, and to Cricklade belong 1400 hides, and 1500 hides to Oxford, and to Wallingford belong 2400 hides, and 1600 hides belong to Buckingham, and to Sceofestige belong 1000 hides, and 600 hides belong to Eashing, and to Southwark belong 1800 hides.

For the maintenance (?) and defence of an acre's breadth of wall 16 hides are required. If every hide is represented by 1 man, then every pole of wall can be manned by 4 men. Then for the maintenance of 20 poles of wall 80 hides are required, and for a furlong 160 hides are required by the same reckoning as I have stated above. For 2 furlongs 320 hides are required; for 3 furlongs 480 hides. Then for 4 furlongs 640 hides are required.

1 Cott. Cl. has Donce his to P., BCL. hid to H., 7 to W. bireód 1211.1.2. hides; C.C.C. has 1 P., D (an erasure) hid to H., C.C. 7 L.' (entered above the line); Or. has the same without the erasure and with C. 7 L. in the text.


3 The other ms. have 700 hides and include Shaftesbury with the same assessment.

4 The other ms. have 'less 40 hides' (which rightly applies to Bredy) and omit Wareham and Bredy.

5 The other ms. have 2100.

6 The other ms. have 1300.

7 The other ms. have 1500.

8 The other ms. give Buckingham the same assessment as Sceofestige.

9 The other ms. have 500.

10 Donne gebryð, Hi.

11 -ehob, Hi.

12 gebryð, Hi.
Segregation of late Saxon urban functions in north-east Wiltshire.
manufacture can take place, and which is also a headquarters and a ritual site is very old. Apart from the numerous examples of fortified Roman towns, it can be observed in the "oppida" and larger hill-forts of the Iron Age, and a case can even be made for attributing these functions to the henge monuments of the Neolithic and Bronze Ages. Assuming for the moment that burhs existed in fact if not in name from an early stage, what marks Alfred's achievement, if it is his, is the organisation of defence, the hidage, and not the notion, or indeed the physical construction of such places. The question of the burhs is a prominent feature of much of the recent work on the growth of towns during the Anglo-Saxon period, and what concerns the burhs in this large body of work can be summarised by reference to three papers among the many which have been written on the subject. Martin Biddle points out in respect of the five boroughs that: 'in none of them can the character and topography of the ninth century Danish settlement be defined with any precision,' but he has already taken account of earlier developments, and pointed out that at Hereford and Tamworth, 'It is striking that the two Mercian boroughs where relevant recent excavations have taken place, should both have produced evidence of defence systems earlier than the tenth century(25).

R.A.Hall points out that 'Historical sources do not shed light on the status of any of the Five Boroughs in the Viking period of their existence,' and refers to Jeremy Haslam's work on Bedford and Cambridge as indicating that they 'are examples of a group of sites numbering a dozen or more and spread across pre-Viking Mercia, where urban origins can be traced back to deliberate foundation by Offa'(26). Haslam developed his work on Bedford and Cambridge in a later paper which refers


to Hodge’s study of ‘a regional marketing system in the Carolingian Empire’, and adduces the well known relationship between Offa and Charlemagne to suggest that what was going on in Francia was also happening in England, quoting Nicholas Brooks’ study of the Trinodia Necessitas, as described in royal charters of the eighth and ninth centuries in support. Noting that ‘it is a simple matter of observation that all the early mediaeval shire towns in Mercia are located on major rivers’, Haslam provides a list, (Table 2, p.52), which is reproduced overleaf(27). It is interesting that Derby is not included, and of course, we are offered no kind of direct evidence that Offa undertook any such thing as fortifying all the Mercian towns of any importance which are situated on major rivers. It is, however, quite possible that he did so, or was one of a number of kings who did so.

What we can take from these discussions is the undoubted fact that trade and manufacture were sufficiently important, even in the middle Saxon period, to require that kings should raise fortifications and organise defensive systems for their protection, the latter being necessary, even if the physical structure of the fortification was already in being or partly so. We can also note that the places where this was done are of very diverse origins, and this is particularly true of the five boroughs. Leicester and Lincoln are both Roman towns, but of very different kinds, Leicester being a municipium, (leaving aside for the moment the argument about whether it was or was not a civitas capital), and Lincoln being one of the early coloniae. Derby was given its name, "Deoraby", by the Vikings, but to the Saxons it was known as "Northworthige", or Northworthy, the name meaning "northern enclosure", and some definite knowledge as to where the enclosure actually was and what it enclosed would be worth a great deal. There is evidence for an early Roman fort, later transferred to a site across the river, but clearly Derby's origins were different from those of Leicester or Lincoln. Nottingham, or "Snotengaham", (A.S.C. s.a.868), seems to have been,

TABLE 2. The burhs — some data

PUTATIVE MERCIAN BURHS OF THE REIGN OF OFFA

(from Haslam)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Town</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>H</th>
<th>J</th>
<th>K</th>
<th>L</th>
<th>M</th>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambridge</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Godmanchester</td>
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<td></td>
<td>?X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X'</td>
<td>X'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hereford</td>
<td></td>
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1. Viking site moved to Huntingdon.
3. In St Clement's parish to N. of bridge.

Significant attributes

A — Roman fortified town.
B — Focus of pre-Roman/Roman/early Saxon settlement, or early central place (where not a Roman town).
C — Early ecclesiastical centre (mother church, pre-Norman cathedral see and/or early monastic establishment).
D — Known royal centre: X — site of known royal palace (documentary or archaeological evidence); O — inferred from royal status at Domesday or earlier.
E — Situated to command defensible bridging point.
F — Site of middle Saxon wic.
G — Archaeological evidence for early and/or middle Saxon (pre-late ninth century) occupation.
H — Archaeological or other evidence for: X) middle Saxon defences; O) middle Saxon or pre-Danish bridge/causeway.
J — Viking army base in late ninth/early tenth centuries.
K — Viking trading settlement or centre (archaeological evidence or topographical inference).
L — Head place of early medieval region or shire.
M — Site of burh of Alfred,Æthelflaed or Edward the Elder, early tenth century (documentary, topographical and/or archaeological evidence).
(from its -ingaham elements), a secondary Saxon settlement of the sixth-seventh century, having no known extent or recorded importance until the Viking period. It contains an eminently defensive site on a major river, and may have been, as a fortification and market, a Viking creation. Stamford is less important, for the purposes of the present study, than the other four places, but it is worth noting that its origins are likely to have been as a fortified aristocratic residence with outlying dependencies(28). This again, is a very different development from any other of the five boroughs. What creates a unity if such it is, of the five boroughs is that for whatever reasons, they came to be important as part of the Viking strategy in England. Trade was certainly a part of that strategy, even if Viking trade meant no more than the profitable disposal of the products of pillage. Because they were important to the Vikings, it was, of course, important to the Saxons to regain control of them, hence they became a focus of attention in the ninth and tenth centuries.

The "almost, but not quite, united" character of the East Midlands can be shown from the development of the church in the area. Undoubtedly Christianity existed in the East Midlands from Romano-British times and there was an active "Celtic" Christian presence in the region: a bishop of, or from, Lincoln attended the Council of Arles in 314. But so far as the Roman church is concerned, that is, dating from Augustine's mission of 597, the conversion of the East Midlands, or at least the Middle Anglian part of it, is a late arrival. According to Bede, Paulinus made converts in Lincoln in 628, following his conversion of Edwin of Northumbria in 627, and built a fine stone church there, (probably on the site of the present church of St. Paul-in-the-Bail), which, however, had lost its roof by the time Bede was writing of it. Nevertheless, it attracted pilgrims each year, and in 634, Justus' successor to the see of Canterbury, Honorius, was consecrated there by Paulinus(29). Paulinus was by

now bishop of Rochester, having fled from Northumbria after Edwin's death in 633, and missionary work in Lindsey must have been suspended or at least curtailed while pagan Mercia expanded.

The next stage in the development of the East Midland church occurs with the conversion of Peada, and his appointment as princeps of the Middle Angles. He brought with him four priests from Lindisfarne, one of whom was Diuma, who was consecrated bishop of "the Middle Angles and Mercia", because there were not enough priests to provide two bishops. Diuma most probably set up his see in Lichfield, which is in Mercia proper, and not in the province of the Middle Angles. So near and yet so far!

During the primacy of Theodore of Tarsus, 668-690, and at the request of king Aethelred of Mercia, 676-704, the kingdom of Mercia was divided into five dioceses, Hereford, Worcester, Lichfield, Dorchester, (on Thame), and Leicester. Theodore's programme of diocesan reform was first promulgated at the Council of Hertford in 672, so this arrangement probably came into force between then and Theodore's death in 690, and it provides a diocesan unity for the East Midlands. But the early history of the Leicester diocese is bedevilled with uncertainty. Local tradition claims "Cuthwine" as the first bishop of Leicester, from 680-c691, but the episcopal lists do not include him, except as a bishop of the East Angles (30). Wilfrid and Haedda both appear in the lists, but among his other notable characteristics, Wilfrid was a great traveller, and an arch-pluralist. Haedda was bishop of both Lichfield and Leicester. The see finally came into being with the appointment of Torthelm, by Aethelbald of Mercia in 737. The Leicester diocese can be shown to exist, not only from the episcopal lists, but also from the Chronicle and from the subscriptions of charters, until the episcopate of Ceolred between 840 and 872. Viking attacks then drove the eastern bishops to Dorchester. Leicester remained within the see of Dorchester until 1072,

when bishop Remigius removed his see to Lincoln.

The East Midlands, as has been suggested above, has no topographical homogeneity: the region, as originally postulated contains forest, field and fenland, coastline, wolds and river valleys. Some of its high ground almost qualifies as mountain. Neither now nor in the past is there or has there been a definite territorial boundary since Roman times, and there has not been a recognisable regional capital. In early Saxon times there was no *bretwalda* for the area itself: The East Midlands was a territory in dispute between *bretwaldas* whose power bases were outside the region. The kingdom of the Middle Angles, although it looked as if it might do so in 654, never did, in fact, come into being. During the short-lived Viking ascendancy in the region, its chief places were the five boroughs of the Danelaw, but the Danelaw itself was not a single kingdom, and the territory of the five boroughs did not have a single ruler, or even a resident king, and there was no pre-eminent place among the five. In terms of diocesan organisation, the only possible factors making for a diocese of the East Midlands were the bishoprics of Lincoln and Leicester. (Figs. 10,11, pp.56-7.). But for much of the early Saxon period, Lincoln was the seat of the bishops of Lindsey, and Leicester was part of the diocese of Mercia, with its centre at Lichfield. Even when Leicester was established, about 680, it was held jointly with Lichfield for nearly sixty years before the bishop of Leicester was bishop of nowhere else. It became part of the vast see of Dorchester in the 870's and of Lincoln in 1072, finally resurfacing in its own right in 1927.

Nevertheless, whether it is called "Middilenglum" or the East Midlands, there is an entity in the region which is apparent today as it was to the Anglo-Saxons. It has been pointed out above that it is difficult to see how the coastline from the Humber to the Wash can properly be described as belonging to the East Midlands, but, of course, the Midlands are connected to the coast by means of rivers. This is not to suggest that the rivers provided an easy system of transport and communication for the region; far from it. For one thing, transriverine transport and communication is equally as important as transport and
Early dioceses and minsters, to c. 850 (after M. Falsk and J. Gillingham. Historical Atlas of Britain. Granada Publishing, 1981 with corrections). The diocesan boundaries shown are normally guesswork, but probably correct approximately. A generous estimate of the number of minsters, based on later legends and the existence of outstanding monuments as well as good evidence, has been made, because only in the south-east and in the diocese of Worcester do reliable charters exist in any quantity, and it seems reasonable to extrapolate from the situation revealed there to areas like the Midlands and East Anglia. Note how few minsters outside Northumbria (and other than episcopal sees) are mentioned by Bede.
The dioceses of late Anglo-Saxon England.

Cornwall and Crediton were held jointly first by Lyfing (c.1027-46) and then by Leofric (1046-72) who moved the centre of the see to Exeter in 1050. Ramsbury and Sherborne were joined together by Herman in 1058 (ultimately in post-Conquest days it became the diocese of Salisbury). The extensive diocese of Dorchester was created out of earlier dioceses of Lindsey and Leicester after the troubles caused by the Scandinavian invasions (ultimately in post-Conquest days it became the diocese of Lincoln).

(from Hill)
communication by means of the rivers themselves, and the provenance of bridgeable, fordable and ferryable points was by no means large in Anglo-Saxon times. More important, the navigability of the East Midland rivers was much more limited than is indicated, no doubt unintentionally, by historians and others who have not tried navigating them. For the navigator of today, aided as he is, by the heavy canalisation of the rivers and by the availability of sturdy, purpose built vessels, propelled by powerful and reliable engines, navigation on these rivers is never easy, and at times, extremely hazardous.

In non-technical terms, we are concerned with two river systems. The first is that of the Trent, which debouches into the Humber at Trent Falls. From the north, the Trent is fed by the rivers Dove, Derwent, Erewash and Idle, and from the south by the rivers Tame and Mease, and by the river Soar and its tributaries, the Wreake, Glen and Sence. The second river system is that of the Wash. Particular attention may be drawn to the course of the river Witham, which rises in the north east Leicestershire wolds, barely six miles from the source of the Wreake, called the Eye at its source, and flows northwards on the west side of the Lincoln Edge, and eastwards through the Lincoln Gap at Lincoln itself. From Roman times, the Witham at Lincoln has been connected with the Trent at Torksey by the Fossdike. From Lincoln, the Witham flows south, and is joined by its tributary the Slea near Tattershall. The Slea rises on the east side of the Lincoln Edge, and flows north east through Sleaford to join the Witham. The Witham flows on to Boston, and through the Boston Haven to the Wash. The other rivers in this system are the Welland, the Nene and the Great Ouse, which flows into the Wash at its southernmost point. (Fig.12 p.59).

The most important thing about these rivers and their valleys is not the opportunity they might have afforded for transport and communication, which was subject to great limitations, despite the more favourable level of the water table in Anglo-Saxon times, but the fact that they afforded the opportunity for settlement. Settlement gave rise to corporate as well as individual aspirations and self perceptions, and these, in turn, to social, political, economic, religious and ceremonial developments, which can be traced, albeit tentatively
Fig. 12. EAST MIDLAND RIVER SYSTEMS

The topography of the East Midlands.

(from Stafford)
and with difficulty in some detail. The important thing about settlement in the river valleys of the East Midlands, is that in broad terms, it has been continuous since the earliest stages of human history, as can be seen from the archaeological record. This will be illustrated later, but for the moment it would seem valuable to examine the earlier background to the area, in the attempt to discover an appropriate historical regional context for the lower Soar valley.
CHAPTER TWO

The Regional Context, (2), The KOPITANOI.

If the East Midlands can not be seen as a unified entity during the Anglo-Saxon period, it may, perhaps, be seen as such during the Iron Age and Romano-British periods, when it was the territory of one of the major tribal divisions of Iron Age and Roman Britain, that of the Coritani, more recently known as the Corieltauvi (1). It may at first sight appear far fetched to suggest that the dispositions of an Iron Age tribal group could have any influence or effect on those of the Anglo-Saxons several centuries later, but in certain respects and in certain cases, this seems to be what has happened. The pre-1974 county of Kent, for example, seems to have had virtually the same boundaries as the kingdom of Aethelbert, in the late sixth and early seventh centuries, and this, in turn, was the tribal territory of the Cantiaci during the Iron Age and Romano-British periods. King Edwin's seventh century Northumbria is much the same area as was the putative tribal territory of the Brigantes, and pre-1974 Sussex was very likely the old kingdom of Aelle of the South Saxons, first of the bretwaldas, according to Bede(2). This, in turn was the land of the Regnenses, subjects of the Belgic Romanophile Tiberius Claudius Cogidubnus, "Great King in Britain", whose inscription, curiously enough, turns up in Colchester, and not in the environs of the splendid palace at Fishbourne, wherein that enigmatic magnifico most probably disported himself (3). Such considerations as these led W.G.Hoskins to observe that "Boundaries are one of the most permanent and ancient features of the English landscape (4). The territory of the Corieltauvi, however, did not give its boundaries to any

(2). H.E. ll, 5.
later political or administrative unity, or indeed to any other kind of unity, although this
does not mean that it had no influence on much later developments.

A generally acceptable indication of the boundary of the Coritani, as the tribal group
was then called, appeared as long ago as 1973 (5). Todd's boundary deliberately excluded
the south Lincolnshire fens, since his book was one of a series entitled Peoples of Roman
Britain, and from the time of the foundation of the colonia at Lincoln, (70-90 AD, probably
nearer the earlier date), this fenland was part of the territorium of Lindum, and would have
been administered not as tribal territory, but as part of an imperial estate. The tribal territory
of the Corieltauvi would have been administered by the Ordo at Leicester. Before the
Roman invasion in 43 AD, these fens would have been part of the territory of the
Corieltauvi (Fig.13, p63). Parts of the boundary must be matters of inference and
guesswork; this is particularly true of the northern and western boundary. The eastern and
southern boundaries, however, are much more certain. In the extreme north, the river
Humber divided the Corieltauvi from the Parisi, and the Lincolnshire coast is an obvious
limit. In the south, the watershed of the rivers Nene and Welland has been convincingly
argued by Todd.

The basis of Todd's Corieltauvian boundary was the distribution of the stater
coinage recognised as that of the Corieltauvi by D.F.Allen. This was inscribed with the
names of rulers, sub-rulers or magistrates in the same way as that of other tribes, but not
decorated with a distinctive emblem, such as the vine-leaf of Verica, the three-tailed horse
of the Atrebatic coinage, Cunobelin's wheat-ear, or most striking of all, the coinage of
Tasciovanus, with its representation of a mounted warrior, blowing upon a carnyx, or Celtic
war-trumpet. There are few finds of Catuvellaunian coinage north of the Nene-Welland

(5). Malcolm Todd, The Coritani, "Peoples of Roman Britain" series, ed. K.Branigan,
(1973), and D.F.Allen, 'The Origins of Coinage in Britain' in S.S.Frere, ed, Problems of the
1. The extent of the *civitas Coritanorum*

**THE TERRITORY OF THE CORIETAUVI.**

*(from Todd)*
watershed, and none of the Corieltauvi to the south of it. This and the difference between
the southern and midland staters strengthens the case for the boundary and does more
besides, but the value of inferring history from the stater coinage has been questioned (6).
Most commentators on the Gallo-Belgic coinage have doubted that it was used as currency.
It was minted in gold, and was therefore of too high a value to be used in ordinary
transactions. It stands mid-way between gift exchange and money economies. It is not only
the gold coinage, however, which indicates a boundary, and points to other differences
between the lands north and south of the Nene-Welland watershed. Contemporary for a
time with the Gallo-Belgic gold coinage were the tin-bronze potin coins, obviously of less
value than the gold, but still probably confined to transactions between elites. Potins were
minted both in Gaul and in Britain, and their distribution, chronology and other aspects of
their significance have recently been examined (7). The distribution of these potin coins
does not cross the Nene-Welland watershed, not only strengthening the case for regarding
that feature as a boundary between the Corieltauvi and their southern neighbours the
Catuvellauni and the Iceni, but pointing to other differences between the lands to the north
and those to the south of the watershed, as Haselgrove emphasises (Fig. 14, p.65). These
differences will be considered later, but for the moment it is appropriate to complete an
account of the boundary. A final indication that the Nene-Welland watershed was the
southern boundary of the Corieltauvi is provided by the two Celtic temples at Collyweston
and Brigstock, Northamptonshire, which are virtually on the watershed. The putative tribal
boundary next passes between High Cross, Leicestershire, and Chesterton, Warwickshire,
and on between Mancetter and Wall, the Romano-British Letocetum, in the county of

(6). Megaw and Simpson, eds., An Introduction to British Prehistory, 2nd impression,
Southern Britain, showing archaeological sites outside the South-East with British potin coin finds; British potin coin hoards; and the proportions of Class I and Class II coins in the principal circulation areas.

**DISTRIBUTION OF BRITISH POTIN COINAGE.**
Staffordshire. It follows along Cannock Chase and through the south Derbyshire hills. Thence it follows the edge of Sherwood, and the watershed of the rivers Don and Idle to the Humber bank. Thus, the tribal boundary of the *Corieltauvi* encloses a region which can reasonably be described as the East Midlands.

One of the chief difficulties in trying to find out the effect of Iron Age and Romano-British dispositions on the Anglo-Saxon East Midlands lies in the fact that the *Corieltauvi* are among the least documented of the British tribes. They are located in Ptolemy's *Geography*, written c.140-50 AD, as *KOPITANOI* (Fig. 15: p.67). Two of the routes in the Antonine Itinerary, *Iter 6* and *Iter 8* pass through the territory of the *Corieltauvi* (Fig.15 :1 : 2). The Antonine Itinerary was probably compiled over a long period of time, begun in the time of Trajan, 98-117, and completed in that of Diocletian, 284-305. It is from the Ravenna Cosmography, c700, that the reference to *Ratae Coritanorum*, (Leicester), comes, and from which the notion that Leicester was the *civitas* capital of the *Corieltauvi* has sprung. It is unfortunate that from the fifth century *Notitia Dignitatum* it is impossible to find an officer with specific responsibility for the East Midland or Corieltavian territory, under the overall authority of the *Dux Britanniarum* (8). There is no mention of the *Corieltauvi* in any of the authors, principally Caesar and Tacitus, from whom we get our knowledge of Britain before and during the Romano-British period. The reasons for this are many and varied, but they are worth reviewing in the light of later history.

Caesar probably knew of the existence of the *Corieltauvi*; his geographical sense was phenomenal. The tribe was not, however, among those having direct contact with Gaul and Rome as were those to the south. Caesar himself was personally acquainted with Commius, ruler of the *Trinovantes*, and Cassivellaunus, ruler of the *Catuvellauni*, but he left Britain for the last time in 54 BC, and was assassinated ten years later. In the case of Tacitus, it is worth noting that part of his *Annals* is missing, and this may have contained

Fig. 15.1. Ptolemy’s map of the British Isles.

The course of Iter vi: Fig. 15.2.

The course of Iter viii: Fig. 15.3.
references to the Corieltauvi. It is easy to explain why the Corieltauvi do not appear in his Agricola. Tacitus was Agricola's son-in-law, and the book is an encomium to the military and organisational talent of its subject: Agricola is presented as the ideal provincial governor. Agricola's great achievements in Britain took place far to the north of the Corieltauvian lands, and whatever he may have known about them, Tacitus had no cause to mention them. Reliable dating evidence places Agricola's governorship of Britain between 77 AD and 84 AD (9). By 77 AD, the military zone was beyond Corieltauvian territory; the line of the Fosse had probably been reached by 67 AD at the latest, and the legionary fortress at Lincoln was well on the way to becoming a colonia, if it had not already done so (10). Leicester was in the hands of the civilian Ordo, who were undoubtedly members of the Celtic aristocracy. In general, the Roman writers have more to say about the tribes which were troublesome to Rome than about those which were not, and thus we know more about the Brigantes and the Iceni than we do about their neighbours, the Corieltauvi.

There is, however, another reason for the absence of the Corieltauvi from the writings of the Roman authors who mention Britain in their works. We have seen that the stater coinage of the Corieltauvi differs in character from that of the tribes to the south, and that neither the stater coinage nor the potin coinage, (of less value and nearer to a full money economy), of the southern tribes crosses the Nene-Welland watershed and vice versa. This would suggest that over a given period of time, beginning well before 55 BC, and ending when the legions of Aulus Plautius passed through the Corieltauvian boundary, this watershed was an interface between zones of differing economic significance. One of the difficulties of the prehistorian is that of reconciling historical methodology with the

(9) W.S.Hanson, Agricola and the Conquest of the North. (1987).

evidence of archaeology, which is a separate, though related discipline. This has been amply demonstrated by Professor Barry Cunliffe (11). A solution to this problem is provided by the construction of models, one of which is the "core-periphery" relationship, constructed by Karl Polyani,(12), and the other is that of the "gateway community", constructed by Kenneth Hirth (13). Cunliffe makes effective use of both models in explaining the interaction between Rome and western Europe, and incidentally illustrating the situation in Britain, during the first centuries BC and AD.(Fig.16, p70). Fig.16:1 shows the basic core-periphery model, and Fig.16: 2 the basic gateway community model. Fig.16: 3 relates these to the situation in Gaul and southern Britain in about 10 BC. The gateway community exists on the southern coast of Britain, and Cunliffe suggests Mount Batten, near Plymouth, the Portland-Weymouth bay region and Hengistbury as its main sites.

The "dynastic" coinage of the south eastern tribes is so called because it has been possible to relate the numismatic to the literary evidence for rulers of these tribes. Where there is no literary evidence, as with the Corieltauvi, it is not possible to deduce a dynasty: one can only guess. A further difficulty is that although it is possible to apply core-periphery and gateway community models on a small scale, we do not have any real indication of the internal structure of the main tribal groups, certainly not for the Corieltauvi. Yet some sort of hierarchy, or at least a pecking order, must have existed within the Corieltauvi as with the other tribes. It is for numismatists to draw conclusions from the evidence of coins, but it is reasonable for the layman in such matters to suggest that the Corieltauvi like other tribes had lords and overlords relating to kinship groups, and that some of them were authorised to mint coins to be used in high value transactions or gift-exchange, and that among this aristocracy were people with such names as VOLISIOS,

(13). Hirth, 'Prehistoric Gateway Communities', American Anitquity, 43, pp.35-45.
FIG. 16. 2 Model of a multiple gateway system

FIG. 16. 1. Model to show the relationship of the principal economic zones into which the Roman world can be divided

FIG. 16. 3. Model for trade in northern Gaul and Britain c. 10 BC
DUMNOcoveros, TIGIRSENO and CARTIVEL. It is impossible to say where exactly these obscure chieftains had their headquarters, or where were the lands whence they drew their wealth, but undoubtedly the territory of the Corieltauvi was parcelled out among them, each aristocrat enjoying greater or lesser wealth and power than his peers. There may or may not have been a paramount ruler: the Dobunni, for example, on numismatic and literary evidence seem to have had at least two contemporary rulers, and may in fact have been a federal tribal group. It would be an advantage if a clear connection could be found between the principal centres of the pre-43 AD Corieltauvi and those of the Germanic peoples of four to five hundred years later, but such a project is clearly a non-starter. It is, however, well worth looking at a number of settlements existing before, during an after the Romano-British period, to see what was important about them, or what is more significant, what was thought to be important about them. Todd says:—

'One of the most important (problems) is the relationship between the territoria of Lincoln and Leicester. It must be borne in mind that the division of the tribal land of the Coritani between Lindum and Ratae may have had a profound influence on the development of land settlement in particular '(14).

The notion that Lincoln and Leicester were the two principal centres of the Corieltauvi comes from Ptolemy, who was writing in the second century AD, and it does not necessarily follow that these places held that position before the Roman Conquest: the archaeological record, in fact, suggests otherwise. Lincoln is a very ambivalent site, so far as its prehistory is concerned. It is easy to imagine, or even believe, that a prominent hill-top site, dominating the gap in the Jurassic Ridge, and overlooking the Brayford Pool at the confluence of the rivers Witham and Till, was a place of great importance during the Iron Age as well as later. Its importance, however, is not so easily established. Earlier archaeological examination concentrated on the hill-top, where there are a number of

(14) Todd, Coritani.
hindrances to such examination, not the least of which is a huge mediaeval cathedral. It is not surprising that little evidence for an important Iron Age site has been found there. Away from the hill-top, in the very gap itself, a roundhouse, some outbuildings and pottery were recovered in 1972, dating from about 100 BC (15). Further excavation may establish a larger site, but a single roundhouse, or even half a dozen, hardly indicates a major site, even if it was important without necessarily being particularly extensive. It might be significant, given the ritual importance of water to the Celtic peoples, and their propensity for casting valuable articles into it, that nothing of the kind, no Battersea helmet, no Aylesford bucket, has been recovered, either from the Brayford Pool, which admittedly is very deep, or the nearby reaches of the Till and Witham; but then again, extensive canalisation from Roman times onwards, may have removed any such deposits. In the present state of knowledge, however, there is no evidence to suggest that Lincoln was a place of great importance in pre-Roman times.

Similar ambiguities attend the consideration of Iron Age Leicester. The basis for the assumption, if it is made, that Leicester was one of the two chief places of the Corieltauvi, rests on the provenance of Gallo-Belgic coinage and pottery, and the name Ratae, Celtic for "banks" or "ramparts", but a warning against making too much of this was given some years ago:-

'....such pottery and coins continued in use after the Roman Conquest, are extremely difficult to date accurately, and could have been brought to Leicester after the Roman army had arrived. It must be admitted that no structures have yet been convincingly proved as belonging to the period before AD 43, but this may be achieved before long. However, the name of the town, Ratae, is derived from a Celtic word meaning ramparts or banks, and it might be thought, therefore, that the Iron Age site was a defended oppidum'(16).


Professor Wacher's expectations have been fulfilled in part; evidence of a settlement pre-dating 43 AD has been found on the east bank of the Soar, in the area of what is now West Bridge (17). The size of the settlement, however, is quite small, even by the standards of the Iron Age being barely 1km by 1.5km in extent. No trace of any banks or ramparts, however, have appeared. Such evidence as there is, then, does not suggest a defended oppidum site. There has been a good deal of speculation as to whether the oppidum site, if there was one, was elsewhere in the Leicester area. It was sometimes the practice of the early Roman authorities to site a town at some distance from the Celtic centre it replaced, in order to draw trade, and political and social activity away from the original Celtic focus. This happened in the case of Cirencester, Corinium Dobunnorum, which was raised at some distance from Bagendon, the pre-conquest centre of activity. In Leicester, the area known as Rawdykes, on the Aylestone road is a possibility in this connection, but as yet there is no evidence of significant Iron Age activity there.

A possible indicator of importance or status among Celtic settlements is evidence of oppidum sites or the presence of hillforts, but even this is by no means as clear cut as it may seem, particularly in Britain, and even more particularly in the land of the Corieltauvi. To take the oppidum first; the glossary to a Latin text-book for use in schools may contain the entry “Oppidum-i-n: a town”, but a more sophisticated dictionary, for example Lewis and Short, will make it clear that the word is used by Roman authors to describe towns other than Roman towns, not infrequently with a suggestion of contempt (18).

(18) A well-known example is Caesar's description in De bello Gallico, Bk.5, Ch.21, of the Oppidum Cassivellauni, most probably the Devil's Dyke, Wheathamstead, Hertfordshire, (TL 186 : 133), 'When they (the Britons) have fortified dense forest, where they customarily gather to avoid enemy attack, with a rampart and a ditch, the Britons call it an Oppidum'.
There are far fewer references in the Roman writers to oppida in Britain than to oppida in Gaul or Germany, although perhaps this is not surprising. Even so Caesar and Strabo are ambivalent in their references to oppida as “fortified forests in Britain” and “forest thickets”. The clearest reference to oppida in Britain comes from Suetonius, who tells us that Vespasian fought thirty battles, subjugated two warlike tribes, and captured twenty towns. (oppida). The question of oppidum sites in Britain is a vexed one in any case; earlier prehistorians denied their existence, largely because British claimants for the status seem so pitifully small compared with continental examples. Even Cunobelin’s “capital” at Camulodunum is an insignificant site compared with the Heuneburg in Germany, Bibracte of the Remi or Vercingetorix’s stronghold at Alesia, both in Gaul. Modern opinion tends to identify oppida on the basis of function rather than size, but function can only be inferred from deposited artefacts in the case of sites for which there is no documentary record. On this basis Camulodunum and Verulamium might well be included, together with Bagendon, Maiden Castle and other strongholds of the Dobunni and the Durotriges, but it is doubtful that Leicester or Lincoln could be included even on this basis. This does not mean, however, that the Corieltauvi were in any way backward or inferior to their neighbours because they lacked an accredited oppidum site. What it does mean is that they had not adopted this particular form of settlement, which may not have been suited to their purposes. For an oppidum to be developed it is necessary for someone to have sufficient power and control over a large population to bring it into being, and a technology sufficient to organise a reliable water supply and an effective sewage system. Even then, there has to be some apparent advantage, either in material terms or in terms of prestige and status.

In turning to hillforts, a complicating factor occurs in that some hillforts were also oppida and some were not. A basic difference, however, between the oppidum and the hillfort is that oppida are a development of the late pre-Roman Iron Age, while the fortified hill-top site is of very much earlier origin. There are several examples of such sites, throughout Britain: excavations at Carn Brea, in Cornwall, have revealed that people of the
Iron Age re-fortified a settlement site which had originally been a fortified hill-top settlement, established by people living in the Neolithic period (19). Unlike the sites which may or may not have been oppida, hillforts are numerous in Britain; there are over two thousand of them according to the Collins Guide to Field Archaeology, and they are among the most easily recognised of earthwork sites. The briefest of looks at the literature of hillforts, however, reveals that not only in typological and chronological considerations, but also in terms of function, social and demographic significance, and in terms of success or failure in operation, there is a wide variety of hillfort types and wide variation of purpose in their construction. Here, we are concerned with only three aspects of the British hillforts, which are 1), the difference in concept between the hillforts of south west England and the Welsh border, and those of eastern England, 2), the “success” of the south western hillforts and the “failure” of those in the east, and 3), the significance of the re-occupation and re-fortification of some hillfort sites in the late Roman and sub-Roman periods.

1). It goes without saying that the federal or hierarchical organisation of a large tribal group, leading to the process of state formation, based on hillforts, depends on a suitable provenance of hill-top sites, and thus, in topographical terms, the territories of the Durotriges, the Dobunni and the Cornovii, are much more suited to such a development than the lands of the Catuvellauni, the Corieltauvi, or the Iceni. It seems likely, looking at such large examples as Hembury, Hod Hill, Ham Hill and of course Maiden Castle, that these places were permanently occupied settlements, that they were obviously fortified, in most cases the residence of a warrior/aristocrat, and that they were surrounded by territoria contributory to and dependent on them. The contrast between this apparently highly organised system and that of hillforts in eastern England has been a matter of note for some years (17). An impressive illustration of the way in which hillforts of the south and west

constituted the nuclei of dependent territories has been given by Cunliffe, and is reproduced in Fig. 17, p. 77 (21). When we look at the incidence and the structural nature of hillfort sites in the territory of the Corieltauvi, it is clear that no such thing exists there.

2) It was Stanford who used the terms “success” and “failure” to describe hillfort provenance in western and eastern England. These are not the best terms to use, since they imply that the Iron Age tribes of the west undertook an enterprise which worked, while their eastern contemporaries undertook the same enterprise and it did not work. What is likely to be the case is that what developed in the west was irrelevant to the situation of the Corieltauvi, who could make no effective use of the “hillfort-oppidum-dependent territory” syndrome, and it is therefore unlikely that such hillforts as there are in Corieltauvian territory were sites of prime importance to the tribe or to such divisions of it as there may have been.

3) There are very few positively identified hillfort sites of the Iron Age in the territory of the Corieltauvi, although there are a good many hill-top sites which may have been fortified during the period. Significantly, these are frequently the sites of churches, and a good example is the hill on which stands the church of St Guthlac, at Stathern in Leicestershire, (SK 773:309), and another, perhaps more impressive and not far away, the church of St Denys at Eaton in the same county, (SK 7929), standing on top of a virtually conical hill which demonstrates the topographical nature of the place-name itself, “the island tun”.

Perhaps the best indication that hillforts were not an integral part of the Corieltauvian economy or polity, is their absence from places where we would most expect to find them; the Leicestershire-Nottinghamshire wolds and the Jurassic Ridge, known locally as the Lincoln Edge.

None of the relatively few East Midland hillforts has attracted lengthy and detailed

Salisbury Plain showing hill-forts probably occupied in the first century B.C. (black circles) and their potential territories constructed as Theissen polygons. Other enclosures are shown as open circles.
investigation. There has been nothing like Wheeler at Maiden Castle, Cunliffe at Danebury or Allcock at South Cadbury. Such investigation as has taken place has been inconclusive, but this is not entirely the fault of the archaeologists. Three East Midland sites might be taken as examples, although two of them may not, in fact, be Corieltauvian. Breedon-on-the-Hill, Leicestershire, (SK 405:233), is better known as the site of an eighth century minster church, but the earthworks round the church, known locally as "The Bulwarks", are the vallations of an Iron Age hillfort. Breedon is on the later shire boundaries of Leicestershire and Derbyshire, and may even have been Brigantian rather than Corieltauvian, but in any case, more than half of it has been destroyed by the abominable quarryman, and this, together with the presence of the later church, has prevented any effective examination. Burrough Hill, Leicestershire, (SK 761:120), presents no such difficulties; it is in the care of Leicestershire County Council. It is, however, small in extent as hillforts go, and was probably not permanently occupied. Its later history is consistent with its possible former function; Leland, writing about 1540, describes it as the place of a Whitsuntide festival, where 'came people of the County thereabout and shoot, run, wrestle, dance and use other feats of exercise'. It may even have been some chieftain's gesture of the flamboyance for which the Iron Age Celts are noted.

There is of course, another Borough Hill, near Daventry in Northamptonshire, (SP 5762), and this is a much more impressive site. It is one of the largest of the British hillforts, far larger than Maiden Castle, and comparable in size with Stanwick or Traprain Law. Unfortunately, practically nothing is known about it; aerial photography has identified a Roman fort and habitation sites which could be Iron Age or Anglo-Saxon or both. But the site itself is inaccessible at present, and has been since the BBC put radio masts all over the top of it earlier this century. The question of whether it belonged to the Catuvellauni or the Corieltauvi might be settled if access could be gained, but since this is impossible, it seems to have been completely left out of account by prehistorians and archaeologists alike. It seems certain, therefore, that the organisation of the Corieltauvi was not based on oppidum
sites or hillforts, and it has been clearly pointed out that at least as far as Lincolnshire is concerned, the richest settlements of the *Corieltauvi* were on low-lying ground (19).

The generally accepted view of the "important centres" of Iron Age society is based on the provenance of material attributable to the Iron Age "C" period, roughly the first century BC, and in the absence of any supporting documentary material, this must be speculative. Nevertheless, Malcolm Todd's map of the distribution of such material in the territory of the *Corieltauvi* is well worthy of study. (Fig. 18, p80). It is tempting to base theories about Corieltauvian political, economic and social life on the settlements where, or near which, these finds have been made, but it must be admitted that only the most general conclusions can be indicated. The attempt can be made, for example, to arrange these settlements into groups, possibly indicating sub-groupings of the tribe, but there are various ways in which this can be done, yielding anything from two to half a dozen groups, with nothing to suggest that any one such arrangement has any more to recommend it that any of the others. It seems likely that a northern group of settlements, Dragonby, South Ferriby, Kirmington, Hibaldstow and Owney, was distinct from the rest of the tribal territory, but unless it is assumed that all the other settlements constituted the second of a two group arrangement, which is highly unlikely, it is impossible to group the remaining settlements into any kind of a convincing pattern. It is clear, however, that among the southern settlements of the *Corieltauvi*, Ancaster and Old Sleaford were key sites, but both appear to have separate and specialised functions. The view might be taken, therefore, that the characteristic organisation of the *Corieltauvi* was a combination of kinship groups of varying size, possibly subject to a paramount ruler, possibly not, but in any case containing a number of "top dogs", any one of whom might, at some time or other, become paramount, or cease to be so. It is important to avoid thinking that the tribe was in any way more

FIG. 18. The Coritani

Iron Age C material in the north-east Midlands
"backward" or "primitive" than its neighbours; the level and quality of imported goods, and the quality and quantity of home products in terms of pottery, coinage and all other types of surviving artefacts, is equal to that of any other tribal group in Iron Age Britain. Consistent with such a situation is the predilection for dispersed, rather than nucleated settlement, applied to governmental, industrial and military functions as well as agrarian activity. Here again, it is important to avoid thinking that such a form of organisation is inferior, or less effective in its own context than an organisation based on large nucleations.

There is very little that can be offered by way of evidence for such a suggestion; even with the tribal groups of which we know most, the nature of organisation and administration is still no more than a matter for speculation. In the present context, it might be valuable to turn again to the stater coinage to see if any differences between that of the Corieltauvi and that of the southern groups suggests a difference in internal organisation. There are two factors to be borne in mind in making such an attempt. The first is that all sources indicate that at least from the the time of Cassivellaunus, with whom Caesar had dealings in 55-54 BC, the political history of southern Britain was characterised by a vigorous expansionist policy on the part of the Catuvellauni, and we do not know the extent to which Catuvellaunian rulers had established their sway over their neighbours at any one time. By the time of Cunobelin, who died about 40 AD, it is clear that the Trinovantes had been conquered; Cunobelin's coins were minted at Camulodunum, suggesting that he had moved his "capital" from Verulamium, the chief place of the Catuvellaunian heartland, roughly Hertfordshire, to the former capital of the Trinovantes, and had his coins inscribed CAMU, to demonstrate the fact. The coins of Tasciovanus, his predecessor, were minted at both Verulamium and Camulodunum, suggesting that the conquest had taken place before Cunobelin succeeded to the kingdom. The second factor to note is that some of the rulers who appear on the coins do not appear in the literature and vice versa. Thus, Mandubracius of the Trinovantes does not appear to have minted coins, but figures prominently in the literature, while Tasciovanus of the Catuvellauni, minted the most striking coinage of the
A-Q series, but is not mentioned in the literature.

It is not proposed here to attempt to show a dynastic succession from the names inscribed on the Corieltauvian coinage, but rather to indicate what may be differences between the political constitution of the Corieltauvi and that of the tribes to the south. This can be done by taking the number of rulers comprising the dynastic succession in some of the southern tribes, their importance being deduced from the fact that they minted coins, and comparing this with the number of notables minting coins among the Corieltauvi. Although other successions are partly known, for example those of the Dobunni, Iceni and Trinovantes, the longest successions are those of the Atrebates and the Catuvellauni. For the Atrebates, the succession, starting with Commius, Caesar’s ally, goes to Tincommius, Eppilus, Verica, and after the Conquest, to Cogidubnus. For the Catuvellauni, the succession is Cassivellaunus, Tasciovanus, Cunobelin and his sons, Togodumnus and Caratacus. The important feature in the present context is that in each of these successions, covering the period between Caesar’s explorations and the Claudian conquest, there are five “minting monarchs” per tribe. If attention is then turned to the notables minting coins among the Corieltauvi during the same period, the list is much longer; at least nine people or pairs of people are minting coins, and the total number of distinct names involved is twelve (Table 3, p83). While this is by no means conclusive, it does add a little weight to the suggestion that authority among the Corieltaivi was less centralised than it was with the Atrebates or the Catuvellauni. Todd tentatively suggested that Dumno and Volisios, whose names appear on the obverse of the coins, may have been paramount rulers, and the names appearing on the reverse of the coins, those of subordinate chiefs, who, none the less, had sufficient autonomy to mint their own coins, or at least have their own names inscribed on them (23). He also suggested that subordinate to Volisios were Tigirseno, Dumnodocoveros, Dumnovellav and Cartivel, and that these people were associated with settlements at

(23). Todd, Coritani.
Inscriptions appearing on coins of the Corieltauvi, dated to the first centuries B.C. and A.D. The earliest are at the top of the list and the latest at the bottom. (After Todd).
Leicester, Old Sleaford, Dragonby and possibly Ancaster. Be this as it may, it is easy to see that these, and other Corieltauvian settlements are parts of entities in dispersal. Old Sleaford is a mint site; there is no evidence of any other kind of activity on the same scale there. Ancaster is not far off, and may have been the residence of a local or even paramount chief, but there is no sign of defences. Similarly with Leicester as we have seen; there was a relatively large settlement by Corieltauvian standards, but no indication of a high status inhabitant, and again, no defences.

The impact of the Roman invasion and subsequent provincial administration on the Corieltauvi is difficult to assess, as indeed it is over the whole of Britain. The enormous amount of visible and tactile evidence of Romanitas throughout Britain is apt to make us believe that the influence of Rome was more permanent and more profound than perhaps it was. Apart from anything else, climatic considerations alone would have prevented the majority of the population from adopting the lifestyle of their Mediterranean or southern Gaulish counterparts. Certainly so far as the Corieltauvi are concerned, it is noteworthy that they were not in the military zone for any length of time, and there is no record of their having offered any resistance to the invaders. Of the three legions involved in the actual conquest of the territory, IX Hispana was in the territory of the Brigantes in the very early stages of the conquest, and the vexillations of XIV Gemina and XX Valeria Victrix were beyond the line of the Fosse, and into the lands of the Cornovii and the Dobunni well before 70 AD. There have been various explanations for this; one being that in fact no resistance was offered, and another that the Corieltauvi, like their neighbours the Iceni, were already a client kingdom. Certainly if the administration of the Corieltauvi was organised on a dispersed basis, there would be few places at which resistance could be concentrated and the advance of the legions halted, however temporarily. The important point, however, is that within a very short space of time, the tribal land of the Corieltauvi, albeit excluding the territorium of Lindum, was returned to civil government, based at the newly created Roman town of Leicester. The decuriones and aediles of the newly formed
tribal government can only have been members of the former tribal aristocracy. The "Old Gang" were back in power, and, up to a point, there would be continuity of practice, or malpractice.

Questions such as "How Roman was Roman Britain?", and "Was there such a thing as the Adventus Saxonum?", have been asked with increasing frequency during recent years, and the general trend of the answers given may be briefly discussed here. So far as the first of our questions is concerned, what has occurred is the gradual realisation that the Roman Conquest of Britain was not a wholesale transference of the ethos of Republican Rome into the province of Britannia, and this is the result of participation in Romano-British studies by scholars whose academic background is not exclusively that of the Classics. More account is now taken of the facts that the Conquest of Britain, and indeed the establishment of the Principate in Rome which preceded it are events which occur late in the history of Rome itself, and that Romanitas has an infinitely variable meaning. This relates to the second question in that the Adventus Saxonum is tending to be seen more and more as a continuous process, permeating both Rome and the empire and in some ways representing a continuity of culture and lifestyle from the pre-Roman Iron Age. This has been admirably expressed in a recent study of fourth and fifth century Britain(24).

It has to be remembered that the names of the tribal divisions of Britannia, although clearly incorporating Celtic elements, are those given to us by Roman writers, reflecting their own view of what those tribal divisions were. As such, they were probably based on a fairly vague and perceptual ethnic homogeneity which conceals very real differences in detail. If it is true that the cohesion of the Corieltauvian tribal group is weaker than its single name suggests, then it might be said that the continuity between the Iron Age and Anglo-Saxon East Midlands lies in the preservation of a relatively fragmented settlement area which never could be and never was a united Anglo-Saxon kingdom. In the end, we

remain looking at a number of settlements, varied in character and function, now nucleated but formerly dispersed, which are basically related to river systems (See Fig.18, p.80). Divisions between settlement groups probably followed the watersheds of the East Midland river systems; the overall Corieltauvian boundary seems to do so for much of its extent, and a very practical point is that a river is not of much use to a settlement unless the settlement controls both banks.

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CHAPTER THREE

Early Anglo-Saxon settlement in the lower Soar valley.

In Chapters One and Two an attempt has been made to provide an appropriate regional context, having historical and political validity, for the lower Soar valley. "The East Midlands" has been found to be a conceptual region, not capable of strict definition in either geographical or political terms. Professor Brooks has pointed out that 'The East Midlands did not form a single political unit at any time during the early Middle Ages' (1). The territory of the Iron Age and Romano-British tribe or tribal group known as the Corieltauvi, however, seems to correspond roughly with the area now generally regarded as being the East Midlands, and it would seem reasonable to assume that if any characteristics of settlement pattern and social and political organisation survived from Iron Age and Romano-British times into the Anglo-Saxon period, they would constitute a "Corieltauvian tradition" rather than an "East Midland character".

The basic aim of the present chapter is to test the provisional hypothesis that within the lower Soar valley, a settlement pattern, and a social, political and economic structure, created in prehistoric times, persisted into the Anglo-Saxon period, and was not completely transformed, as so much of eastern England was, during the first Viking Age. This will entail a brief consideration of Romano-British settlement in the surrounding area, and some of the circumstances attending the end of Roman government and its replacement by the Anglo-Saxon settlement. Such evidence as there is for early Saxon settlement in the lower Soar valley will be examined and compared with the work of place-name scholars as it affects the area concerned. Finally an attempt will be made to assess the impact of the first Viking Age on the lower Soar valley by comparison with its impact on the neighbouring Wreake valley and other areas.

(1). N.P. Brooks, Foreword to The East Midlands in the early Middle Ages, P.Stafford, (1985).
A good starting point for the study of Anglo-Saxon history in any area is the situation during the later Romano-British period. A characteristic feature of this period in most parts of Roman Britain was the decline of urbanism and the gradual disintegration of the market and money economy(2). This was characteristic of the Empire as a whole, and the continental evidence for it, some of it documented, is more easily studied than is the evidence from Britain. The decline of the towns caused what might be termed "a return to the villas" (3). The towns and their territoria disintegrated into their constituent parts, the surrounding villa estates or pagi; rural districts as they were to be called in much later times (4). The organisation of a villa and its pagus is something which can be observed much better from continental examples than from English ones: in fact there is no proof that the English villa economy was the same as its continental counterpart, although it is not unreasonable to assume that it was. The organisation of the pagus linked together a number of villas and/or farmsteads with a principal villa acting as a caput for the pagus as a whole. There is evidence to show that this operated in some cases on a colonate basis, the occupants of the principal villa having something of a seigneurial relationship to the occupants of the other sites (5). To

(2). It appears that Ratae was developed on the site of a vexillation fort of about ten hectares in size, datable to the first half of the first century AD. This tallies with the generally accepted view that the legions had reached roughly the line of the Fosse by 47 AD. The best attested period artefactually of Leicester's Roman history is 100-250 AD. J.Buckley and J.Lucas, Leicester Town Defences, Leicester Museums Publications No.85, (1987).


examine the late Roman sites in and around the lower Soar valley is to be confronted with something of a paradox. There is on the one hand ample evidence for a relatively high density of occupation; for example the low status Romano-British greyware and *mortarium* sherds are found on almost every fieldwalking expedition undertaken by the volunteer fieldworking groups organised by the Leicestershire Museums. On the other hand, there are comparatively few villa or small town (*vicus*) sites. This does not mean that they do not exist.

Leicestershire's small band of professional archaeologists is preoccupied to a great extent with the recovery of *Ratae* itself; a continuing and pressing necessity in a city bedevilled by constant redevelopment. It is, however, quite likely that the majority of Romano-British habitation sites in this area consisted of small farmstead sites like the one discovered in a rescue operation in advance of the Hamilton housing development at Humberstone Farm in 1985 (6). This would be quite consistent with what might be termed "the Corieltauvian tradition", as suggested in Chapter Two; an administrative, social, political and economic system, fully developed, but on the basis of dispersed location and specialist function.

It is necessary to take the whole of present day Leicestershire and parts of the neighbouring counties in order to collect a sample of a dozen "small town" sites, as Leicestershire archaeologists have done(7) Their list comprises *Manduessedum*, (Mancetter), *Venonis*, (High Cross), *Tripontium*, (Cave's Inn), *Vernemetum*, (Willoughby-on-the-Wolds), Medbourne, Great Casterton, Thistleton, Goadby Marwood and Red Hill, with "possibles" at Market Harborough and Burrough-on-the-Hill. We need consider only five of these sites. The first four are mentioned in the *Antonine Itinerary*, whence we have their Latin names, and Red Hill is the only one which is actually in the lower Soar valley. Romano-British small towns were sometimes settlements devoted to a specialised activity; one of the ambivalent collection of sites at Brough-on-Humber, *Petuaria*, accommodated an *officina* of mosaicists,

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and Manduessedum was a very highly specialised settlement(8). It concentrated very largely, though not entirely, on a single type of pottery vessel: the mortarium or mixing bowl. The Mancetter-Hartshill mortaria had a very wide distribution which may give rise to the Romano-British name of the place, Manduessedum, which can be rendered as "horse and cart"(9). Venonis stood at the junction of the Fosse Way and the Watling Street, and Tripontium was on the Watling Street, and since there is no evidence of any particular specialism otherwise, it may be assumed that part at any rate of the function of these settlements was to provide for travellers using two of the major Roman roads of Britain.

With Willoughby-on-the-Wolds, Vememetum, and Red Hill we move nearer to our target area and into a very different kind of specialism: that of the religious or ritual site. Vememetum contains the nemetos element which is indicative of such places; a relatively near example being Aquae Arnemetiae, the Romano-British name for the spa at Buxton in Derbyshire. There are variations on the name Vememetum to be found all over Europe, and it is usually translated as "great sacred enclosure"(10). In most cases the enclosure contained a temple building, the remains of which are the principal means of identifying them. They are mainly of late date in Romano-British terms. The best attested of such sites in England is the temple site of Mars-Nodens at Lydney Park in Gloucestershire, and facing it from the Cotswold scarp on the east side of the Severn is another such site at Uley Bury. Nodens is an Irish-Celtic deity and is equated with Mars, indicating the Romanisation of Celtic ritual and belief. The original excavation, undertaken by the Mortimer Wheelers, revealed that the site contained in addition to the temple, a guest house, a bath complex and a long dormitory building, possibly used for private contemplation, or "healing sleep", an abaton. There is

(10). Rivet and Smith, p.495.
other evidence that healing may have been part of the function of the place. The finds included bronzes and statues, and a number of "curse-tablets", and indications that visitors could buy bronze or gilt-bronze letters in order to nail up their own inscriptions on boards provided. Within the temple itself there is a mosaic with an inscription which tells us that Titus Flavius Senilis, the praepositus religionum, or superintendent of rites, dedicated the mosaic and that its laying was overseen by Victorinus, styled interpres, which may mean that he was a specialist in dreams and oracles, or that he was a specialist in the Latin and Celtic languages. The floor had been provided from the gifts, ex stipibus, made to the temple (10).

Sites of this kind seem to have been places of retreat, or pilgrimage of a sort, for the devout, particularly the wealthy devout. In some cases, such as at Bath, Aquae Sulis, and Buxton, Aquae Arnemetiae, the presence of springs among other circumstances, led to the development of substantial towns, but many of them, like Lydney and Uley never did more than fulfil the original purpose of their construction.

There has been no proper survey or excavation at Willoughby-on-the-Wolds. There is a description in Stukely's *Itinerarium Curiosum* of 1776 of what he saw when he visited the site, and a number of casual finds more recently, but we do not know the extent of the site, the layout of its buildings or the deity in whose honour it was built (11). In effect we have only the Romano-British place-name to go on, but in this case that is fairly conclusive. It is doubtful if such places were an integral part of any local community; in the case of Vernemetum it is high up in the Leicestershire-Nottinghamshire wolds, and equidistant from the nearest points on the rivers Soar and Wreake, at about seven miles from each. The site is barely more than a mile, however, from the nearest point on the present line of the Fosse Way, and the Antonine Itinerary shows the road leading directly to Vernemetum (12).

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(12) Rivet and Smith, p. 165, 168.
could, therefore, have been of greater use to devout travellers than to local residents. It also illustrates the continued tradition of the dispersal of social function from Corieltauvian times. No urban settlement developed round the religious centre. It would have been contrary to regional tradition for this to have happened.

The site at Red Hill, Nottinghamshire, is adjacent to the confluence of the rivers Soar and Trent; it overlooks both rivers. It is not mentioned by Ptolemy, and does not appear in the Antonine Itinerary or the Ravenna Cosmography, and we do not know how the place was named by its Romano-British occupants. It is surprising that any of it survived into the 1950's and 60's when the only serious attempt at an excavation was made. The construction of the Cranfleet Cut and Thrumpton Weir in the eighteenth century was followed by the construction of a railway tunnel under the hill and a bridge across the Trent. Finally came the huge complex of the Ratcliffe-on-Soar power station. The excavator confirms that it was a Romano-British temple site, similar to those previously mentioned. Coins, tiles, potsherds and brooches were recovered and a number of timber buildings. The one stone structure was thought to be the temple, and a further indication of the ritual nature of the site was the recovery of three "curse-tablets", one dedicated to Jupiter Optimus Maximus, possibly the dedicatee of the site. The continuity of the site was illustrated by the discovery of Iron Age pottery and a little Anglo-Saxon stamped, and therefore early, pottery(13). Thus, not only within the lower Soar valley, but throughout the modern county of Leicestershire and beyond, apart from the city of Leicester itself, even the larger settlements, the "small town" or vicus sites, do not exhibit the nucleation of urban functions, but illustrate those functions in separated and dispersed places.

With the villa sites, too, the evidence of a relatively high density of population

is in sharp contrast to the number of known and positively identified sites. Villas in the Midlands and where they exist, in the North are much less elaborate and extensive than the well-known sites in the South, such as Lullingstone, Kent, Chedworth, Gloucestershire, North Leigh, Oxfordshire, and Brading, Isle of Wight, which resemble much more closely the well-attested and documented sites on the continent than do the Midland examples (14). This causes some difficulty in deciding whether a particular site can be placed in the villa category or belongs to a lesser and possibly subordinate classification. In general, Midlands archaeologists have adopted a set of strictly artefactual criteria for a site of villa status, based on the presence of mosaic floors, painted wall plaster, a bath house, stone walls and a hypocaust system, any one of which features qualifies the site for categorisation as a villa. On this basis, half of the dozen sites in present day Leicestershire which have any claim at all to villa status are sufficiently better appointed than the others to constitute a class of their own (15). This includes two in the Soar valley; Norfolk St., now within the city of Leicester, and Rothley, some six miles north of the Roman city limit. A significant point is that both these villas appear to belong to the fourth century, whereas Ratae itself appears to have had its *floruit* much earlier, and this may account for the appearance of a large and obviously important villa so close to the town itself. By the fourth century the urban economy was declining and giving way to a villa economy. The Norfolk St. villa was relatively recently excavated and reported, and apart from other artefacts, substantial areas of mosaic and painted wall plaster are displayed in the Jewry Wall Museum at Leicester (16). The Rothley villa, by contrast, was excavated, if that is the right word, as long ago as 1901. It has been known to antiquarians since the eighteenth century and has been extensively robbed. The

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excavator has left only a hasty report of an uncompleted dig; further work was to be undertaken but this did not take place. Nevertheless, he was able to confirm the existence of a well, a stoke-hole, a hypocaust system and a tessellated floor, suggesting a well-appointed villa for this part of the world (17). He also left a useful ground plan of the work as far as it had gone, and a photograph of the excavation site. (See Fig. 19 and Plate 1, p. 95). Pending the discovery of other villa sites in the lower Soar valley, we might conclude that Rothley dominated the economy of the lower Soar valley during the last stages of Roman Britain. This is an important site and it will be examined in detail at a later point, but at present the main concern is the situation in the lower Soar valley as a whole.

There are no reliable detailed records, archaeological or otherwise for the period of transition from Roman Britain to Anglo-Saxon England so far as the lower Soar valley is concerned, and this is true of many other areas of the country. In general terms, however, what happened during the migration period is fairly clear (18). In social terms, urban society disappeared and was replaced by the rural society of the villas, their associated pagi and their successor sites. In economic terms the money economy collapsed and was replaced by gift exchange and barter (19). In governmental and administrative terms, the provincial

(18). The original province of Britannia became the two provinces of Britannia Superior, the South, and Britannia Inferior, the North, in 197 AD. Under Diocletian, 286-305, the provinces of the Empire were renamed 'dioceses', of which Britain was one. The diocese of Britain consisted of four provinces: Britannia Prima, Wales and the West, Britannia Secunda, the North, Flavia Caesariensis, Midlands and East Anglia, and Maxima Caesariensis, the South-east. S.Johnson, Later Roman Britain. (1982), p. 13.

(19). It is indicative of the ambivalence of the period that it is treated in histories not only of Roman Britain but also of Anglo-Saxon England. Thus Peter Salway, in Roman Britain, (1981), devotes ch.16 to it and discusses Gildas, Vortigern and king Arthur, while James Campbell, in Campbell, ed., The Anglo-Saxons, (1982), entitles his first chapter 'The end of Roman Britain', and includes illustrations of Saxon Shore forts, mosaic floors, and an aerial photograph of Calleva Atrebatum (Silchester).
Tucker's plan of Rothley villa.

Excavation of Rothley villa: Tucker's photograph.

Roman Villa at Rothley, looking East. April 1901.
administration gave way to what was in effect chaos. In the absence of the Imperial and Provincial constitutions and administration, the Romano-British officials and magistrates seem to have found themselves in many cases, charged with the responsibilities with which Rome or the provincial administration had invested them, but without any higher authority to consult, to which to appeal, or which issued orders and demands. Such people were often native leaders invested with Roman titles, or Roman officials, who were most probably by this stage, of Germanic extraction, who found themselves in sole charge of the area they had been appointed to administer on behalf of the imperial or provincial government. Such people ruled as "kings"; they were the "tyrants" referred to by Gildas in the De Excidio (20).

Although recent scholarship in the field of England during the migration period has tended to make "The Dark Ages" somewhat less dark than they were when first called by that name, the light has not fallen evenly over the whole landscape, and if the period can no longer be regarded as completely dark, there are certainly places where the darkness seems as impenetrable as ever. It has been pointed out that we can not regard the early Saxon kingdoms and their rulers as bearing much similarity to the states and rulers for which and whom we have documentary evidence in the seventh century (21). Except where they deal with specific people and places, the generally accepted sources for the migration and settlement periods can give us no more than "an idea of the sort of thing that was going on". Continental sources such as Zosimus and Procopius are too distant from Britain to contain first hand accounts of events there, and even within Britain itself, the sources have very great limitations. Much of the early part of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle is derived from Bede, whose knowledge, even together with the information he received from his correspondents does not cover the whole of England (22). It has recently been suggested that in certain ways

the *Ecclesiastical History* is a somewhat triumphalist account of the progress of the church from the time of the Augustinian mission of 597, and it is as well to consider this when reading Bede purely as narrative history (23). Gildas' *de Excidio* is a tirade against wickedness in high places for the most part, and in any case it illustrates the situation in Wales and the West rather than anything else. The *Historia Brittonum* associated with Nennius is really a miscellany into which a number of traditions have been gathered: in one sense it is a collection of tales (24). It is not surprising, therefore, that the one point on which Dr James Campbell agreed with Dr John Morris is that what we know of the early Saxon period is largely speculation which has become hallowed by repetition (25). Another source which is of value, but not specific value, is the poetry and literature which has survived in later manuscripts. From such pieces as the *Ynglinga Saga*, the fragment of the *Battle of Finnsbury* and principally *Beowulf*, we have constructed our picture of the early Germanic king, holding his position by a combination of respected lineage and prowess in battle, and recruiting his "hearth troop", who were with him at all times, even to the practice of sleeping round the hearth where the king took pride of place, and from which the name, "heorth werod" derives. The king rewards his followers with treasure, he is a "ring giver", and eventually with lands. In return for this, the hearth troop undertakes to fight for him and to die on the battlefield if the king is killed. Much of this literary material is, however highly retrospective: it recreates an almost legendary past. For instance, the only surviving manuscript of *Beowulf* can be dated about the year 1000, while a likely date of composition


would be in the eighth century. (Cotton Vitellius A15). But some of the characters in the poem, Hygelac for example, are historically attested as belonging to the late fifth and early sixth centuries (26). A recent paper suggests, from a comparison of genealogies which can be derived from the text of the poem with the descent of king Aelfwold of the East Angles, 713-749, that Beowulf was written for performance in the presence of that king (27). The much later poem, The Battle of Maldon, presents a similar problem. The battle was a genuine historical event, recorded in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (28). The principal character of the poem, Bryhtnoth, ealdorman of the East Saxons, was a genuine historical figure, about whom we know quite a lot, but although the poem was probably written shortly after the battle took place, it reads as if it were describing an event of the heroic age, with the small but faithful band of warriors fighting to the death against the greater numbers of the enemy, choosing to die with their lord rather than face the disgrace of leaving the battlefield. The literature can never be more than indirect evidence for the period it describes (29). It is possible that there were some records for the migration period in the lower Soar valley. Romano-British officials, the aediles and decuriones, learned to read and write Latin and had the language taught to their sons. It is likely that records were kept in the basilica at Ratae, in the tablinum at the Norfolk St. villa and at Rothley. If there were such records, however, they have not survived or not been recovered. We are left, therefore, with an archaeological record, incomplete and frequently enigmatic, and place-names, which, though capable of solution, are often ambivalent when used as evidence.

There is no doubt that the most prolific source material we have for the study of the

sub-Roman period comes from burial sites. The interpretation of this material has always
been problematical, and some notable red herrings have appeared in the past. One of these is
the once widely held notion that cremation burials were a pagan rite, and therefore pre-
Conversion, while inhumations were a Christian practice, and therefore inhumation burials
were post-Conversion. Another, harder to dispose of, was the notion that furnished burials,
that is, containing grave-goods, were those of pagans, while the unfurnished burials were the
result of conversion to Christianity. A third red herring has been that a burial containing
weapons was necessarily a "warrior" burial. The truth is that inhumation, cremation, and the
presence of weapons or other artefacts are not single indicators of a single status (30).

Of some sixteen sites in the lower Soar valley which have yielded Anglo-Saxon
material, seven are, or include, burial sites. Unfortunately, only two of these, Thurmaston and
Wanlip, have been adequately excavated and properly published; the others, some of them
clearly significant, have been, by modern standards, inexpertly excavated and inadequately
reported. As an example of the difficulty of assessing and interpreting this somewhat garbled
evidence, it may be worth while to consider a site which is not in the lower Soar valley, but
somewhat to the east of it, because in this case it is possible to give a fairly full account of the
discovery, reporting and the subsequent history of the assemblage recovered.

A burial was discovered at Beeby in 1844, when a Mr Mariott was carrying out field
drainage on his land. It was initially reported as follows:

'John Marriott Esq., of Beeby had a very curious Anglo-Saxon necklace and
fibula, which attracted much notice. They were dug up, it was stated, in a field
at Beeby, about two and a half feet below the surface' (31).

Fortunately the same burial is mentioned again later in the same Transactions:

(30). H.Härke, 'Changing symbols in a changing society: the Anglo-Saxon burial rite in the
seventh century', in Carver, ed., Sutton Hoo.

'Mr. Ingram produced, for more intimate inspection, some objects of curiosity lately exhibited at the public meeting of the Society. They were found four or five years ago about two and a half feet below the surface of an old grass field in that parish when being drained. They consist of a necklace, three fibulae, and three hooks and eyes from a Saxon interment. The bones were reduced to powder, but a few teeth were preserved. The necklace consists of seventy beads, varying in size from a peppercorn to one and a half inch in diameter, and of various shapes. The largest are of glass or crystal and amber; the smallest of semi-transparent blue glass. Others are like red pottery, inlaid with yellow and green; white, ornamented with red and blue; or black with yellow and red. The two largest of the fibulae are above four inches long. The hooks and eyes are of silver, the parts for sewing them to the dress being large'.

The subsequent history of this assemblage and its documentation has been summarised by the curator of Archaeology at the Jewry Wall Museum, Leicester (32). The assemblage was well drawn soon after discovery, and the drawing published by the Anastatic Drawing Society in 1858. This society did invaluable work in the days before photography was available to archaeologists and historians. The assemblage has been commented upon by numerous scholars, and an account, together with a copy of the drawing mentioned above, appeared in the Victoria County History of Leicestershire (33). The assemblage, now minus one of the three brooches was offered for sale at Sotheby's in 1937, and the wrist clasps and the two remaining brooches were purchased by the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, and subsequently transferred to the Leicester Museums, where they are now in the reserve collection at Jewry Wall. The necklace was not purchased and can not now be traced. The "old grass field" of the original report has been identified as Gorse Close, (SK 672:078). There has been no excavation anywhere near the site, although it was fieldwalked by Leicester Museums


volunteers in 1988. The relevant page of the V.C.H., together with a photograph of what is left of the assemblage, taken by the present writer in 1988, appear on the following pages. (Plates 2&3, pp.102-103).

The basic weakness of these early excavations and reports is that they take no account either of chronological or spatial relationships. Of course it would be wrong to criticise the antiquarians of an earlier century for not possessing the knowledge, to which they themselves have largely contributed, or the technology of later generations. Neither should we reject their work as being useless for our own purposes. Whether we like it or not, this is the only evidence that we have, and we must make the best use of it that we can. With the Beeby burial, we do not know, for instance, whether it is in complete isolation or is a part of a cemetery site. The early reports do not tell us that the site is near a hilltop overlooking the present shrunken village from about a mile away, and practically on the boundary between the present civil parishes of Beeby and Hungarton. We may deduce that the burial was of a female from the presence of the necklace, and that it was a relatively high status one because the wrist clasps are made of silver. It is from this kind of evidence that we have to try to piece together the settlement patterns and social organisation of early Saxon England.

The lower Soar valley Anglo-Saxon burial sites to be discussed here are, in alphabetical order, Barrow-on-Soar, (two sites, or at least two reports), Loughborough, Rothley, Thurmaston, Wanlip and Wymeswold. To these may be added two more, north of the present boundary between Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire, at Sutton Bonnington and Kingston-on-Soar. It is best to consider the Thurmaston cemetery first since it has had a fairly recent and extensive excavation, and is the subject of a thorough and detailed report (34). It is worth observing, however, as one of the difficulties encountered in dealing with archaeological material in an exercise of the present kind, that the original discovery was

Plate 2.

The Beeby assemblage drawn soon after its discovery in 1844
Plate 3.

The Beeby assemblage photographed in 1988.
made in 1954, and the publication of the report did not occur until 1983!

The Thurmaston cemetery was discovered while housing development was taking place in 1954. The cemetery site (SK 617:084) lies on the boundary between the present parishes of Thurmaston and Humberstone, and assuming those names to indicate settlements or communities, the cemetery could have served both. It covers the site of what the excavators thought might have been a ploughed out late Neolithic or Bronze Age barrow, from which a late Neolithic mace-head, and sherds of a collared urn were recovered, lying in a dense scatter of white pebbles. The collection of urns and urn fragments represent a total of 96 urns, to which two more must be added which were stolen from the site and sent to the British Museum, which institution kindly returned them to Leicester. The contractors told the excavators that a large number of urns had been destroyed during the erection of a completed bungalow before the excavators arrived, and the excavators knew that the cemetery was larger than the excavated area. They therefore estimated that the cemetery contained between 200 and 300 burials. The recovered material evinces a wide range of urn types, from undecorated to the elaborate buckelurnen, and the decoration includes linear motifs, stamps, stehende bogen and swags. Thus, the cemetery covers a period stretching from the earliest days of the Saxon settlement to the end of the sixth century, when the practice of burial in decorated urns was discontinued. The metal objects recovered, brooches, pins and buckles, tweezers and manicure items, which are used as a basis for dating the pottery, were dated to c.450 at the earliest. Here, however, the author of the report issues a caution. At the time of the excavation, the material recovered was dated according to typological sequences established by a generation of scholars who based their sequences on a notional Adventus Saxonum of c 450 (35, 36). This as we now know, is an unsafe assumption, and we may well


have to ascribe a much earlier date to the beginning of these sequences. One significance of the Thurmaston cemetery, therefore, is that it seems to have been established, so to speak, at the very moment when Roman Britain gave way to Anglo-Saxon England. A further significance of the Thurmaston cemetery is its relationship with other cemetery and burial sites in the lower Soar valley.

The Wanlip cemetery was discovered during school building between 1958 and 1960, and (characteristically) not published until 1980. There is some confusion about the site, which is sometimes said to be in Birstall. This is because the schools built on it were intended to serve principally the population of Birstall, and their postal address is Birstall, but the site is in fact in the parish of Wanlip (SK 600:109). A further confusion exists because of what can only be described as a persistent rumour that Wanlip is the site of a Saxon settlement, an assertion which is confidently rejected by the excavator (37). The Wanlip material was recovered in three stages; in June 1958 three pots were recovered, in April 1959 a sword, a spear, a shield-boss and some potsherds, and in October 1960, the cremation burial of a horse, with two shield-bosses and an iron bridle-bit completed the assemblage. The excavators concluded that this represented one small part of a predominantly inhumation cemetery, which included at least one high status cremation. The cemetery was dated as fifth-sixth century, and together with what is known of other similar sites, confirms that groups practising varied burial rites existed together in the lower Soar valley. There is also some evidence of connection or relationship between these groups; pottery stamps from the Wanlip assemblage correspond with some from the Thurmaston cemetery. This is an important point, and it will be raised again when the other lower Soar valley burial sites have been considered and reviewed in the light of the most recent studies of the symbolism of Anglo-Saxon burial rites.

For the Rothley cemetery we are dependent upon what we would now consider to be the unsystematic excavation and reporting techniques of the nineteenth century antiquarians (38). Such report as we have contains an account of correspondence between the excavator and the Society of Antiquaries concerning the discovery by a labourer working for Thomas Babington, then living at Rothley Temple, of a silver gilt brooch in 1785, and some anatomical observations on some of the skulls found at the site. What is apparent, however, is that an extensive cemetery of the early Saxon period existed virtually on the same site as the Romano-British villa discussed earlier herein. The illustrations accompanying the report of "Miscellaneous objects from Rothley" contains at least three easily recognisable sherds of early Saxon funerary pottery. (See items 12, 13, 14, in Plate 4, p.107). They are clearly related to the pottery recovered at Wanlip and Thurmaston.

Barrow-on-Soar is a name, one would think, calculated to excite the interest of the archaeologist and local historian, but it does not seem to have done so. There has been no work undertaken by the "official" archaeological bodies, and the site is not mentioned by any of the better known antiquaries of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, although R.A. Rutland refers to a lost report in a lost periodical, Midland Counties Historical Collector, for 1856, of 'what appear to be Anglo-Saxon burial mounds' (39). The only recorded investigation at Barrow was undertaken in the 1950's by F. Ardron, who began work there in 1952, and from 1955 was assisted by members of the newly formed Loughborough and District Archaeological Society. Ardron's site was a gravel pit, dug in the loop of the Soar which interrupts its generally northward course, taking it south-westwards into Quorn before returning again to Barrow and resuming its northerly direction. (SK 569:166). Neither Ardron and his colleagues, nor anyone else has discovered any evidence of a barrow in the area, of


MISCELLANEOUS OBJECTS FROM ROTHLEY.
whatever period, but the excavators drew attention to a field name, "the Anglebury", on the other side of the river from their excavation. As would be expected in this area, the excavation produced evidence of continuous activity, prehistoric, Romano-British and Anglo-Saxon. The Anglo-Saxon material included pottery sherds, some of them stamped and so funerary, and a spear ("javelin"), and a knife, associated with the inhumation of a twenty-five year old male (40). What seems clear from what in effect is a "jumble" of reports, is that barrows or not, there was a cremation cemetery and an inhumation burial on or near the site of Ardron's dig.

Further evidence for Anglo-Saxon burials comes from Loughborough in the shape of cremation urns, but these have been discovered in ones and twos over a long period of time, and in any case, most of them have been subsequently lost. What emerges from the confusion is that there was likely to have been another relatively extensive cremation cemetery in the Loughborough area. Further downstream, to the north of Loughborough, two cemeteries are recorded, one at Kingston-on-Soar, and the other at what is now Sutton Bonnington, a fourteenth century amalgamation of what had previously been two manors. Similarly, Kingston-on-Soar had been two manors in 1066, which were amalgamated by Earl Hugh of Chester, and were a single manor in 1086. The Kingston-on-Soar cemetery was discovered between 1840 and 1844, and it covered about half an acre. It is estimated that about two hundred urns were destroyed before some sixteen were rescued and illustrated in the Journal of the British Archaeological Association. Of these, some six are still extant, two of them plain, the earliest form of Anglo-Saxon pottery, and the others having stamped and linear decoration. The cemetery was dated to c.550, but this, as we have seen, is probably too late a date (41). At Sutton Bonnington, two cremation urns of similar date were recovered from a

much larger number which were destroyed, and this also is an indication of an extensive early cemetery (42).

The study of early Germanic burials has advanced a great deal in recent years, and there is a formidable corpus of literature on the subject. An attempt may be made to summarise its general direction by referring to the work of two scholars who were early in the field, and who may to some extent be regarded as founding fathers. E.T.Leeds took as his starting point Bede's distinction between Angles, Saxons and Jutes (43). Leeds endeavoured throughout his work, to illustrate this distinction artefactually, but of course, it is a task which is impossible of achievement, since whatever distinctions are illustrated by Anglo-Saxon funerary artefacts, they are not those between Angles, Saxons and Jutes (44). There is of course a distinctive Jutish culture, which Leeds identified in Kent, along the south coast, in the New Forest, which was known as Yte until king William II, 1086-1100, gave it its present name, and on the Isle of Wight. The river name Itchen is obviously indicative of the Jutes, and this river links Southampton with Winchester (45). Recent research links the Jutes with the formation of the kingdom of Wessex (46). The other scholar, whose work to some extent complements that of Leeds, is J.N.L.Myres, who at first saw the form and decoration of early Saxon pottery as a typological development illustrating the chronology of the settlement period (47). Present practice is to group these early burials into four categories; "Final Phase", "princely", "unfurnished" and "deviant". The last two of these categories do

(42). Meaney, Gazetteer, p. 216.
(43). H.E., 1, 15.
not concern us here: unfurnished simply means that no grave goods are present, and deviant indicates mutilated or damaged corpses, the result of massacre or execution. The term “Final Phase” is the heading of the last chapter of Leeds’ book referred to below, (Note 44), and means basically any furnished burial, while princely denotes a very rich burial, usually under a mound (48).

The real advance which has been made since Leeds and Myres wrote is in the understanding of the kind of statement which a burial or a funerary artefact makes about the deceased. Every aspect of an early Anglo-Saxon burial is part of a complex symbolism which is multidimensional, reflecting age, especially the stages of weaning, puberty and the attainment of adulthood, ethnic affinity descent, status and gender; and it must also be remembered that the symbolism changes through time. For example, an emergent aristocracy has to emphasise its status to a greater extent than an established one, and as the settlement progressed there was less need to emphasise the connection with a continental homeland (49). In the light of these considerations, we can regard the decoration on early Anglo-Saxon funerary pottery not merely as a demonstration of the decorative repertoire of a particular potter, or as a typological development, illustrating the chronology of the settlement period, but also as a multidimensional statement about the deceased, reflecting age, gender, descent, ethnic affinity and status. Of course we can not be too precise in attempting to interpret the symbolism of early burials. It might be fairly safe to say that the famous Sutton Hoo helmet, which is of Swedish design, indicates the Swedish ancestry of whoever was commemorated by the monument. It would not do, however, to suggest that the appearance of a swastika design on an early Saxon burial urn indicates the Romano-British descent of the deceased because the swastika design often appears on the borders of Romano-British mosaics. What might be suggested, though, is that there was some connection between those deceased who

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had swastikas on their funerary urns, and a distinction between them and those deceased who had not.

The lower Soar valley cemeteries are remarkably evenly distributed, that they were originally of comparable extent and that they are roughly contemporaneous. (Fig.20, p.112). In terms of pottery form and decoration they are clearly connected, but unfortunately the survival rate of urns and usable sherds is too uneven for this to be pressed too far. It is comparatively easy, for instance, to establish the connection between Thurmaston, Wanlip and Rothley, but less easy, because of the much smaller quantity of surviving material, to connect these with the cemeteries further north, although it is very likely that such a connection existed whatever its nature may have been. Cemetery sites of the early Saxon period are usually at some distance from the settlements for which they catered. We have noted above the confusion which has arisen in the case of the cemetery at Wanlip/Birstall, and observed that the Thurmaston cemetery is on the boundary between the present parishes of Thurmaston and Humberstone. The Rothley cemetery, too, is near the western boundary of the present parish. There has been wide discussion of the frequent phenomenon of cemeteries and other monuments occurring near parish and other boundaries (50). Either the monument was sited so as to be near an existing, and therefore ancient, boundary, or the later boundary was drawn taking cognisance of the existence of the monument. An additional possibility is that these sites are on or near boundaries because they served social entities on both sides of the boundary, thus sharing the necessary surrender of land, and its preparation, furnishing and maintenance. It is likely that in an age of emerging kingdoms and aristocracies, the arrangement of the cemetery and its contributory settlements would be imposed rather than agreed. There is no possibility of proving this, but it may be that the Thurmaston cemetery also served Humberstone, that the Rothley cemetery served Swithland and Cropston, the

Early Anglo-Saxon cemeteries in the lower Soar valley.

Fig. 20

- Loughborough
- Barrow-upon-Soar
- Quorn
- Mountsorrel
- Sileby
- Cossington
- Rothley
- Cropston
- Wanlip
- Thurmaston
- Humberstone

● = cemetery.
Sutton Bonnington cemetery served the two original settlements of Sutton and Bonnington and the Kingston-on-Soar cemetery served the two settlements of which it originally consisted. As we shall see from the later history of the lower Soar valley, there was a tendency for the larger landholders to group, or try to group their holdings latitudinally across the valley, thus benefiting from a variety of terrain, including forest land to the west, the felden of the valley floor, and the wolds to the east. There is no doubt that the cemetery sites we have been considering are on or near boundaries between settlements lying to the east or west of each other, and they may thus have played an important part in the development of a settlement pattern of ancient origin and long continuance. It is important, too, to remember that the settlements under discussion here were not, in the early Saxon period, the nucleated villages and townships that they are today. They were groups of scattered farmsteads, identified only by a perceived common feature, which may have been a family relationship between those dwelling in a particular group of farmsteads, a common patriarchal figure, past or present, or their proximity to a recognisable topographical feature. Moreover, these individual settlements were likely to “drift”, as houses and fields were abandoned and rebuilt (50). From the time of its establishment, the burial or cemetery was a fixed and focal point among the dwellings of a semi-amorphous community.

Such evidence as archaeology affords can be supplemented by that of place names. There are two striking features of place-name distribution in the lower Soar valley which may reveal important factors in its settlement history. The first is the marked preponderance of topographically derived over those incorporating personal name and habitation site elements, and the second is the almost total absence of Scandinavian names. The frequently occurring leah element in and around Charnwood suggests an early exploitation of the forest’s resources; Rothley, Dishley, Charley, Oakley, Burleigh, Morley, Langley, Kinchley, Sharpley

and Bagley all occur within the forest area, although not all of these are philologically
derived from leah. Moreover it must be remembered that this is the most common of all
English place name elements (51). It can not be assumed that because leah is most commonly
taken to mean a clearing in a wood and that it is an early Old English form, that these places
were all forest clearances undertaken during the early Saxon period. We know that the lower
Soar valley has been exploited by man continuously since early prehistoric times, and it is
therefore perfectly possible that the clearances were made centuries, even millennia, before
the Saxons appeared. What we do know is that whoever undertook the clearances, that is if
they were not natural gaps in otherwise continuous woodland, it was the Saxons who gave
them the names that we use now. To the east of the river lie the wolds, the term itself being of
Old English origin. As well as Burton, Walton and Willoughby, all of which are "on-the-
Wolds", Prestwold and Wymeswold incorporate the place-name element. In addition, there
are two examples of (W)Old Wood, at SK 585:218 and SK 585:285, in which cases the
original character 'W' has been lost. In general, throughout the lower Soar valley,
topographical names preponderate over both habitation and personal names, but although the
preponderance itself is clear enough, what sort of conclusion should be drawn from the fact is
not. It is a long time since place-name scholars seriously questioned the notion that the
earliest Saxon settlements were indicated by the ingas elements in place names (52). One
reason for their doing so was that archaeology could demonstrate that areas particularly rich
in early Saxon remains had few ingas place names to go with them, and conversely that some
areas rich in ingas names afforded very little evidence of early Saxon occupation (53). In the

(51). M.Gelling, 'Towards a chronology for English place-names', in Della Hooke, ed.,
(52). J.McNeil Dodgson, 'The significance of the distribution of English place-names in
ensuing debate, topographical place names have been considered as a candidate for the type with which place name chronology begins, but nowadays no place-name scholar will go beyond saying that although some topographical names are demonstrably very early, this can not be claimed for all of them or even most of them (54). However, if topographical names are among the earliest to be given, this fits very well with some of the other evidence we have of early Saxon settlement. In fact, the example of the lower Soar valley could well be used in support of an argument for the earliness of topographical names; here we have a locality for which we have evidence of a high density of population for the period at an early stage, and a prominent feature of its place-name distribution is a preponderance of topographical names. If, however, topographical names are not, in fact, a reliable indicator of early settlement, then we have to account by other means for their ubiquity in the lower Soar valley. One possibility is that we are dealing with a group or groups of people who characteristically, as part of their corporate culture, identified their settlements and other places of activity by means of topographical names. In fact, both explanations could exist side by side.

The second outstanding feature of place-name distribution in the lower Soar valley is the almost total absence of Scandinavian place-name elements, in striking contrast to the situation in the neighbouring Wreake valley, where Scandinavian names occur very frequently. In the same way as Wymeswold, (Wigmund’s wold), stands out as a rare example of a personal name, so Sileby, (Siegli’s “by”), stands out as a rare example of a Scandinavian name. It is true that Thurcaston and Thurmaston are regarded as Scandinavian, but these are “hybrids”, presumably receiving their names from neighbouring Saxons, and in any case it is possible to adduce an Old English derivation for them. There are also four “thorpes” round Loughborough, Sheltorpe, Woodthorpe, Thorpe Acre and Knighthorpe, and a number of “gate” street names in the town itself, but these are not necessarily derived from Danish or

other Scandinavian forms (55). There is a sharp distinction between the two “Danish periods” in pre-Conquest English history (56). The second Danish assault, occurring during the late tenth and early eleventh centuries, which resulted in the rule of Danish kings from 1016-1042, was, even if not in pursuit of a Danish claim to the English throne, conceived of and intended as a conquest which would make England a province of the Danish empire which already included much of Scandinavia. The Viking attacks of the ninth century began simply as looting enterprises, and only later resulted in settlement of a sort (57). Raids on coastal areas were easily compassable from bases in Denmark, Norway and Sweden, but campaigns inland required logistical support in England itself, and the earliest Danish settlements in East Anglia and the Midlands are best seen as logistical support for combatant units operating further to the west. In fact we get a sort of indication of this when we are told first of king Burhred of Mercia’s flight to Rome and of his replacement by the Danes with the ‘foolish king’s thane’ Ceolwulf, who was clearly a puppet king (58). Next we are told that the host departed from Wessex into Mercia, where ‘some of it they shared out and some they gave to Ceolwulf’ (59). There is, as ever with this part of the Midlands, a great deal of ambiguity about its status. Evidence for the Danelaw boundary will be considered later, but for the moment it is important to consider the evidence of direct Danish control within the lower Soar valley. The most obvious circumstance is that for the whole of their courses, the rivers Soar and Wreake flow through territorial land divisions which are described in the Domesday Survey as “wapentakes”. The name derives from the Old Norse *vapnatak*, or “weapon take”, which emphasises the military nature of the Danish occupation


of the area concerned. Leicester, described in Domesday as *Civitas de Ledecestre*, was one of the "Five boroughs of the Danelaw", and these two circumstances alone bid fair to establish that Anglo-Saxon influence here was at least temporarily eclipsed. There is a considerable difference in character, however, between places which were actually inhabited by Danish immigrants and those which merely lay within the jurisdiction of a Danish lord. It is worth noting at this point that the pre-1974 county of Leicestershire was, at the time of Domesday, divided into four wapentakes, Guthlaxton, Goscote, Gartree and Framland. Of these, the first two have Old English names; Guthlaxton takes its name from Guthlac, the Mercian noble who may be St Guthlac, the hermit of Crowland (60). Guthlac's death, in 714, is recorded in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (61). The base of Goscote is "cote", Old English for "cottage". The other two wapentakes have Scandinavian names; Gartree derives from Old Danish "Gueri's tree", and Framland from "Frani's lundr", the "grove" or "spiritual home" of someone called "Frani". There was, in fact, a jarl named "Fraena", who was killed at the battle of Ashdown in 871, but there is no other evidence to connect him with Framland (62). Also of interest is the fact that the two Scandinavian named wapentakes are much smaller in extent than the two with Old English names and have far fewer vills recorded in Domesday: Guthlaxton has 98 vills, Goscote 90, Gartree 60 and Framland only 46.

The river Soar flows through the English named wapentakes of Guthlaxton and Goscote, and the Nottinghamshire wapentake, also English named, of Rushcliffe. The river Wreake has its confluence with the Soar at Syston, and between there and Melton Mowbray it flows through the Goscote wapentake, but between Melton and its source it is flowing through the Danish named Framland wapentake. In the Framland wapentake the Wreake is

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known by its Anglo-Saxon name "Eye", but on entering the Goscote wapentake near Melton it changes its name to the Scandinavian "Wreake". Perhaps the Vikings who had settled extensively in Framland felt no need to change the name there, but felt the need to do so only when that river flowed into a wapentake with an Old English name. From the various works of at least four place-name scholars, a provisional hypothesis concerning the nature and extent of Viking settlement can be formulated (63).

1). Danish settlers tended to occupy land which was of inferior agricultural quality and not intensively settled or exploited.

2). Settlements created by the Danes were given Scandinavian names, in many cases the name of the settler or his lord with the addition of by.

3). Places which the Danes took over from the Saxons mostly kept their Old English names.

4). "Hybrid" names, having both Scandinavian and English elements, represent places which were given their names by surrounding people of a different race; to use the most often quoted examples, Grimston, Leicestershire, has the personal name of a Scandinavian settler as its first element, but the surrounding English described it as his tun, whereas Ingleby, Derbyshire, has the Danish second element by, but was a place occupied by the English, who were, presumably, something of an exception in the area.

So far as the first of these suggestions concerned, it can be amply demonstrated in the Framland wapentake. The best land is to be found on the top of the wolds and in the river valley (64). English place names predominate here, and they are mainly topographical as is the case in the lower Soar valley. The fourth suggestion does not fare so well in Framland. Grimston is entirely encircled by places having a by final element; Old Dalby, Shoby,

Asfordby, Welby and Saxelby. For the other two suggestions there are also attendant
difficulties. We have no means of knowing whether a place with a Danish name is, in fact, a
“new” settlement or not, although if it can be taken in conjunction with the suggestion that
the settlers occupied previously unexploited areas of “less good” ground, a reasonable case
can be made. The greater difficulty occurs with the places which retain their English names.
We know nothing of the relationship between the Viking settlers and the native English
during the very short period, and this must be stressed, of the first Scandinavian ascendency.
Enslavement, massacre, expulsion and co-existence are all possibilities, and all are mentioned
or inferred in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. The Chronicle, however, is none too objective an
account; it had the purposes of vilifying the Vikings, if that were necessary, and extolling the
royal house of Wessex among others. We can explain the virtual absence of Scandinavian
place names from the lower Soar valley by saying that the Anglo-Saxon population was
killed or expelled by the invaders, but because the settlements there already had English
names, those names were retained by the newcomers. We can also say that the Vikings did
not settle in these places, but merely exploited their product by some means of control, which
on the whole seems more likely. The Vikings could never outnumber the native population:
they were always an immigrant minority. Even in Framland, 23 out of the 46 Domesday vills,
exactly half, have English names. It is hardly likely that the whole of the lower Soar valley,
still less the wapentake of Goscote, could have been depopulated and resettled by Vikings.
The English remained, albeit under Danish rule, and we have to consider how effective that
rule might be in the lower Soar valley, and in the frontier area of the Danelaw in general.

Apart from the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle itself, the value of which, as has been
suggested, is limited, there are two other documents relevant to an understanding of the
nature of the Danish occupation of eastern England during the late ninth and early tenth
centuries. These are the treaty or treaties between Alfred, king of Wessex, and Guthrum, the
Dane styled king of East Anglia between 878 and 886, and the document of undetermined
date known as the Burghal Hidage. Both have been the subject of extensive debate, not only
about their dates, but also about their significance, and in focussing attention on settlement
history in the lower Soar valley, it is fortunate that only parts of this debate need to be
considered. The treaty between Alfred and Guthrum, like all other treaties, was not kept by
either side for any length of time. It is important, however, since it represents the first real
reverse suffered by the Danes in their hitherto irresistible advance across England. Alfred's
victory at Ethandun, or Edington in Somerset put him in a very strong position, since his own
forces were concentrated around him in the heartland of Wessex, whereas the Danish lines of
communication were stretched to the point of ineffectiveness. Alfred could impose tough
terms, and he did (65). To force the pagan Guthrum to accept Alfred's own Christian faith
was to inflict a signal humiliation on his enemy, but what really concerns us here was
Alfred's insistence that the Danes should "leave his kingdom" (66). This proviso has ensured
that we have at least some indication of what is actually meant, in terms of extent, by "the
Danelaw". The treaty begins by describing Alfred as Aelfrede cyninc...calles Angele cynnes
witan, a claim which is impossible, unless it is taken into account that the Danes had already
overrun Northumbria and East Anglia and partitioned Mercia. In that sense Alfred did rule
over all the remaining English (67). Past history played a part in the formation of what we
know of the Danelaw boundary. London and Middlesex had been held or claimed by Mercia
since the time of Offa, 759-96, but Essex had passed into West Saxon hands and remained in
them since the time of Ecgbert, 802-39. Thus, while Alfred had cause to regard Essex as part
of his kingdom, the Danes, as conquerors of Mercia, could claim London and Middlesex. As
the treaty tells us, the boundary of the Danelaw was the river Lea, east of London, which

(65). P.Wormald, 'The Ninth Century', in Campbell, ed., The Anglo-Saxons, (1982), ch. 6,
pp.132-60.


Alfred now held, and by his ship-building initiative, although he may not have been concerned to earn himself the title of "Father of the English Navy", he showed his concern to control the lower reaches of the Thames, which linked London with Essex, whatever happened in Middlesex. From the treaty, we learn that the boundary ran up the river Lea to Leagrave and Luton, and then ran almost due north to join the Ouse at Bedford. It then followed the course of the Ouse upstream, until that river reached the Watling Street, which it does at Stony Stratford, Buckinghamshire, where, so far as the treaty is concerned, it stops. Before considering what happened after that, we must turn to the Burghal Hidage.

For present purposes it is not important to be precise about the date of the Burghal Hidage. We can choose to agree with R.H.C. Davis that it is a document of the reign of Alfred, possibly as early as the 880’s, or with N.P.Brooks that it can not really be earlier than 914 (68). We need, however, to perform a simpler exercise than those undertaken by the scholars mentioned, which is to read the document exactly as it is written, and note the order in which the burhs occur. The fortress/markets of the Burghal Hidage are presented in exactly the same way as are the landmarks of a charter boundary clause. The peregrination, a long one in this case, proceeds in a clockwise direction, beginning not at “top dead centre” or at "12.00 noon", but, to continue the analogy of the clock, at about “4.00 pm”, which is just what happens in the boundary clauses. The Hidage begins with Eorpburnan, inland and east of Hastings, the second landmark, and continues round the south coast with occasional excursions inland: Lewes, Burpham, Chichester, Portchester, Southampton, Winchester, Wilton, Tisbury, Twineham, Wareham, Bredy, Exeter and Halwell. From Halwell it crosses the Devon-Cornwall peninsula via Lydford to Pilton. It then runs up the Severn estuary to

Watchet, Axbridge, Lyng and Langport. It then joins the Avon through Bath and
Malmesbury. It then takes a short step to the Thames at Cricklade, and thence to Oxford and
Wallingford, up to Buckingham on the Ouse, back to Scealtesege on the Thames, then to
Eashing and on to Eorpburnan. A map and a text of the relevant section of the Burghal
Hidage, (Fig.21, p.123), appear overleaf (69). Both the map and the text contain controversial
features, but apart from drawing attention to them, it is not necessary to enter into the
controversy. There are various manuscripts of the document; in some of them Bremesbyrig
and Scergeat are included, but since these places have never been identified, both Biddle and
Whitelock have left them out. Warwick and Worcester appear on Martin Biddle's map, but
they are not mentioned in the text, or indeed in any text before 920, by which time Mercia
had been annexed by Wessex. They are undoubted burhs, but they are Mercian, not West
Saxon. There are also some grounds for doubting if Oxford and Buckingham were included
in the original assessment. None of these issues, however, affects the basic view expressed
here which is that the close similarity between the arrangement and presentation of the
Burghal Hidage, and the boundary clauses accompanying many Anglo-Saxon charters,
suggests that among other things, the Hidage is in fact a statement of the boundary of the
Wessex heartland.

We can now return to the question of why the Alfred-Guthrum treaty does not
describe the Danelaw boundary beyond Stony Stratford. As its name suggests, Stony
Stratford is the point at which the Watling Street fords the river Ouse, and it is thus an easily
recognised and permanent landmark. It is sometimes assumed that having reached a point on
the Watling Street, the boundary continued along it, possibly as far as Chester. However
likely this may be, the fact remains that the Alfred-Guthrum treaty does not say that it did

(69). The map is from M.Biddle, 'The towns', in Wilson, ed., The Archaeology of Anglo-
I. THE BURGHAL HIDAGE

To Eorpeburnan belong 324 hides, to Hastings belong 500 hides, and to Lewes belong 1200 hides, and to Burpham belong 720 hides, to Chichester belong 1500 hides. Then to Portchester belong 500 hides, and 150 hides belong to Southampton, and to Winchester belong 2400 hides, and to Wilton belong 1400 hides, and to Tisbury belong 500 hides, and to Twyneham belong 500 hides less 30 hides, and to Wareham belong 1600 hides, and to Bridport [or Bredy] belong 800 hides less 40 hides, and to Exeter belong 734 hides, and to Halwell belong 300 hides, and to Lidford belong 150 hides less 10 hides, and to Pilton belong 400 hides less 40 hides, and to Watchet belong 513 hides, and to Axbridge belong 400 hides, and to Lyng belong 100 hides, and to Langport belong 600 hides, and to Bath belong 1000 hides, and to Malmesbury, and to Cricklade belong 1400 hides, and 1500 hides to Oxford, and to Wallingford belong 2400 hides, and 1600 hides belong to Buckingham, and to Sceafesige belong 1000 hides, and 600 hides belong to Eashing, and to Southwark belong 1800 hides.

For the maintenance (?) and defence of an acre’s breadth of wall 16 hides are required. If every hide is represented by 1 man, then every pole of wall can be manned by 4 men. Then for the maintenance of 20 poles of wall 80 hides are required, and for a furlong 160 hides are required by the same reckoning as I have stated above. For 2 furlongs 320 hides are required; for 3 furlongs 480 hides. Then for 4 furlongs 640 hides are required.
and any observations on a boundary north of Stony Stratford remain speculative. The reality is that the boundary stops at Stony Stratford and does not go any further for quite practical reasons. Alfred would hardly be able to enforce a boundary further north; the most northerly of the West Saxon burhs was Buckingham, and in any case to the north and west of Stony Stratford was not Wessex, but Mercia or what was left of it. It is true that West Saxon influence in Mercia had been growing for many years; king Egbert of Wessex, 802-39, had ruled Mercia for a few months in 829-30, and king Burhred of Mercia had appealed to Aethelred, Alfred's brother and predecessor, for help against the Danes in 868(70). Both Ceolwulf and Aethelred (Aethelred II of Mercia) also appealed to Alfred for help. It was not, however, until c.886 that Alfred married his daughter to Aethelred of Mercia, not till 911 that Aethelred died, leaving a West Saxon princess as ruler of Mercia, and not till her death in 917 that Alfred's son Edward annexed Mercia into the kingdom of Wessex, and by that time the Vikings were being driven out of their former strongholds.

As a result of setting the place-name evidence against contemporary military and diplomatic developments, some suggestions can be made about the lower Soar valley settlements during the first Viking age. They were under Danish control to a large extent, but not completely so. The Danes had not settled there as they had in the neighbouring valley of the Wreake. The settlements lay within land divisions known as wapentakes, not hundreds, and the land was assessed in carucates, not hides. The wapentakes within which the lower Soar valley lay, however, had English and not Scandinavian names. The boundary of the Danelaw was not defined north of Stony Stratford; where it lay at any one time depended on the state of the fighting. The only indication we have, even of the possible existence of a boundary, comes from the Anglo-Saxon annals for 874 and 877. The first tells us that after Burhred's flight to Rome, Ceolwulf submitted to the Vikings, and the second that the Danes divided parts of Mercia among themselves and 'some they gave to Céolwulf'. We do not

(70). A.S.C., s.a. 868.
know what was given to Ceolwulf. The lower Soar valley was, like all Mercia after 874, nominally subject to Danish control, but the extent to which the Danes exercised, or were able to exercise that control was probably limited. Probably the Framland wapentake provided a logistical “depot” for the requirements of the Danish “burh” at Leicester, but elsewhere, Danish influence was probably limited to a claim for tribute in the form of goods, services and money, which may not have been too easily or effectively enforced.

Earlier in this chapter it was observed that archaeology and place-name distribution are the only sources for the history of the lower Soar valley during the Anglo-Saxon period. It remains to be seen whether any conclusions, however tentative, can be reached from a review of this material. The first feature of note is that the distribution of post-Roman sites suggests a settlement pattern which changed very little since prehistoric times. The early Saxon cemeteries are virtually on top of sites which were used in Romano-British and pre-historic times. Then it can be seen that in spite of a high density of population, there are few “central” or nucleated sites, although the level of population and the quantity and quality of surviving artefactual material suggests that the lower Soar valley, far from being a stagnant backwater, was, or was part of a busy and thriving region. It appears that the “Corieltauvian tradition”, if such there was, continued through the Romano-British and into the Saxon period. The distribution of early Saxon burials and cemeteries throughout the lower Soar valley is so regular as to suggest that it was not accidental, particularly as the symbolism of the decorated pottery recovered seems to connect them, and this suggestion is strengthened by their being sited in such a way as to link the settlements the names of which they currently bear with neighbouring ones. All this points to a possible element of control in their distribution. This may not necessarily be confined to the lower Soar valley, but it is consistent throughout that area. It can readily be seen that the place-names of the lower Soar valley show an overwhelming preponderance of names which are topographically derived. This may do no more than indicate an early settlement period, which of course we can infer from other evidence. However, place-name scholars are cautious about equating topographically
derived place-names with early settlement, and it may be that such names indicate a cultural trait of the people who named the places. If that is so, then the culture of which topographical place-naming is characteristic extended into the Wreake valley. We have seen that of the 46 vills of the Framland wapentake listed in Domesday, 23 have Scandinavian names and 23 have English names. Of the 23 with English names, only five are derived from personal names, while eighteen are topographically derived.

In military, political and diplomatic terms, there must be reservations about the impact of the first Viking age on an area such as the lower Soar valley. It is an area in which land holdings have to be advantageously distributed in order to maximise either product or its revenue. No-one would be better off than anyone else by having some fields in what is now Loughborough Meadows, but if to this is added wealden land at, say, Hoton and Burton-on-the-Wolds, and forest land at, say, Charley, a considerable asset would accrue. The Danes of the first Viking age could hardly perceive this; they were too busy fighting, and in any case, the first Viking age lasted no longer than fifty years. If it is allowed, and it is very likely the case, that Danish settlements such as those in Framland were a means of providing goods and services for the army units, in this case those based at Leicester, then the lower Soar valley was at most, an area from which tribute could be raised, probably with difficulty. The Vikings who came to England were not agriculturalists; their chief characteristics were skill in seamanship, fighting ability and a great trading capacity, even if that trade was the profitable disposal of plunder. Paradoxically, they were townsmen rather than countrymen, and an area in which there were no apparent "central" places, which is not to say that there were none, was not an immediate target. The lower Soar valley was not a part of the Danelaw as defined by the treaty between Alfred and Guthrum, nor was it a part of the kingdom the Danes were required to leave as defined by the peregrination of the Burghal Hidage.

It must be admitted that the archaeological evidence, the place-name evidence and the evidence of such documents as may have a bearing on the early history of settlement in the lower Soar valley, do not provide a very firm foundation on which to base conclusions. Such
evidence as there is, however, is bound to give rise to the notion that within the lower Soar valley, a settlement pattern, and a social, political and economic structure, created in prehistoric times, persisted into the Anglo-Saxon period, and was not transformed, as so much of eastern England was, during the first Viking age. This part of England gives substance to Sir Paul Vinogradoff’s statement, made nearly a century ago, that ‘The history of mediaeval England rises on the solid bedrock of the Iron Age’

Unfortunately, there are no documents of the Anglo-Saxon period which relate directly to the lower Soar valley. There are no records of land grants, the foundation of minsters or of the location of royal vills. It is possible, however, that comparison and perhaps contrast with a documented territory, suited to such a purpose by virtue of proximity and other points of similarity, would shed some light on the organisation of settlement in the lower Soar valley. To the west of the Charnwood forest watershed lie the valleys of the river Tame, and its tributary, the Mease. There is documentary evidence for this territory, and this will be examined in the following chapter.
The present chapter examines a number of documents of the Anglo-Saxon period relating to an area lying immediately to the west of the lower Soar valley. These are principally charters of Mercian kings, nobles and ecclesiastics, promulgated during the approximate period 680-850. These documents indicate at least some aspects of settlement and political organisation in the areas to which they refer. An underlying, but not necessarily a safe assumption, is that the circumstances pertaining in the area to the west of the Charnwood ridge were similar to those pertaining to the east of that watershed. One factor which is in favour of such an assumption is that for the period in question, the land and its people on both sides of the Charnwood ridge were subject to the kings of Mercia. Against such an assumption is the fact that for most of the Anglo-Saxon period the central section of the Trent drainage basin was a virtual battlefield, fought over by the kings of East Anglia, Northumbria and Mercia, and later by the Danes and the West Saxons. The causes and effects of this complex situation have recently been skilfully demonstrated (1). Fig.22, (p.129), is an attempt to show the region diagrammatically, and is not drawn to scale.

Any attempt at considering Anglo-Saxon settlement in this area must sooner or later take into account what is known or can be learned about the tribal or folk group, if such they were, known as the Tomsaetan, who were absorbed into the kingdom of Mercia during the period of that kingdom's ascendancy. The rise of the so-called "heptarchic" kingdoms was accomplished by means of the absorption of such groups by conquest or treaty, the groups themselves having emerged during the sub-Roman and settlement periods as a plethora of petty kingdoms, identified by the name of a patriarch or cyninga, or by means of the name given to the area they occupied. They are the ingas, saetan, or wara peoples. Stenton called

the *Tomsaetan* 'dwellers by the river Tame', and compared them with the *Wilsaetan*, or "dwellers by the river Wylie", from which the name Wiltshire derives (2). Our knowledge of these early peoples is scant, partly because there are no documentary sources for the period of their independent existence, and partly because the cultural differences between them are too slight to show up in an archaeological record which is itself incomplete. Past scholarship has established the names of some of these early groups, and their approximate location in relation to each other, and where the information is given in Bede or the Tribal Hidage, the number of hides at which they were assessed. In some cases land grants and other documents give us the names of *principes* or *ealdormen* associated with such peoples. The very earliest sources for this information, however, come from late in the seventh century, and their earlier history is still to be discovered, if indeed it can be.

The *Tomsaetan* can be associated with the river Tame and also the settlement of Tamworth which lies at the confluence of the Tame with its tributary, the river Anker. It is, in fact, the Anker which flows through the centre of the town. The onomastic connection is clear enough. Bede does not mention the people, the river or the settlement by name, although he refers to the South Mercians, as a people of 5000 hides, as against 7000 hides for the North Mercians, the river Trent being the dividing line (3). This, of course does not tally with the hidage of Mercia appearing in the Tribal Hidage, as 30,000, but the reasons for this are not relevant at this stage. Dr Hart suggested that the *Tomsaetan* and the South Mercians might be one and the same, having their “capital” at Tamworth (4). Unfortunately the *Tomsaetan* do not appear in the Tribal Hidage, possibly because they had been incorporated with Mercia before the document as we have it was drawn up, so that no comparison is possible. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle does not mention the *Tomsaetan*, but it does mention

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Tamworth. However, the earliest reference to Tamworth in the Chronicle is in the annal for 913, which tells us that Aethelflaeda, Lady of the Mercians, had a burh constructed there as part of the campaign against the Danes. For our knowledge of these early communities and their territories, we depend upon that body of miscellaneous documents known loosely and generally as the Anglo-Saxon charters. The Tomsaetan as a social group do not appear in the charters until 841, but what seems to be Tamworth appears as early as c 680. The history of Tamworth itself is only incidentally germane to the present purpose, but its significance has attracted the attention of a number of distinguished scholars and it can not be totally ignored.

A suitable modus operandi is to take the documents more or less in chronological order and discuss the contents of each in turn. The founding of the monastery of Medehamstede (Peterborough) and its colony at Breedon-on-the-Hill in Leicestershire is largely recorded in a mass of material which is impressively sonorous but regarded by scholars as entirely unreliable. For the present, however, attention can be focussed on four incomplete texts belonging to a group sometimes described as the Peterborough fragments. These have the merit of being regarded as genuine by competent authorities (5). They were brought to the attention of the generality of scholars by the late Sir Frank Stenton, who not only argued, but in fact established their integrity together with a partial validity for some of the other Peterborough documents. Stenton pointed out that they provided a credible account of events in the Midlands during the late seventh century which it had not been possible for Bede to describe (6). Bede’s principal sources for events in the south of England were his correspondents bishops Daniel of Winchester and Ingwald of London, neither of whom would be likely to know any more than Bede himself about what was going on in the Trent valley area. The relevance of these documents to the present exercise lies in the possible


reference to Tamworth, and the character of king Aethelred of Mercia's local administration. They are printed as Nos. 840-3 in Birch's *Cartularium Saxonicum*. They constitute a record of grants that were made, and are not the grants themselves, but whoever wrote the record must surely have had the documents to hand since it contains many of the diplomatic formulae of the period, and refers to the traditional practices associated with a land grant. In order as they appear in Birch, the first of these fragments records a grant by king Aethelred of Mercia to Peterborough Abbey, *Medehamstede in regione Gyrwe*, of 30 *manentes*, (synonymous with "hides"), at *Leugtriccidun*. This place has never been positively identified, although Laughterton, Lincolnshire, has been tentatively suggested (7). Philologically this is very convincing, but Laughterton is too far away from Breedon for it to make practical sense. Dr Gelling has indicated that to journey westwards into Mercia is to encounter increasingly place-names incorporating Welsh or Celtic elements (8). This may account for the appearance of the Celtic *dun* (a hill) element in *Leugtriccidun*. "Leug" appears to derive from the Latin *Leuga*, the linear measurement "league", and the "tri" element from *tres*, "three". The "cc" is possibly a corruption of the Old English *ac*, or "oak". Thus, *Leugtriccidun* may possibly transliterate as something like "the oak-covered hill of three leagues", which would accurately describe the ridge of the Charnwood Forest lying immediately to the south of Breedon. According to custom, the grant was later confirmed by the king, who, *in proprio cubiculo et coram multis testibus glebam sumptum de prefata terra Leugtriccidun imposuit super codicem evangeliorum*. This describes the traditional ceremony of confirming a grant by placing a turf from the land granted on an altar, or as in this case, a gospel book. The witnesses recorded are Saxwulf, bishop of Mercia, two monks, Aethelred's queen and two of Aethelred's *principes*. There is support for this in what is known of the chronology of events


at this time. Saxwulf was the founding abbot of Medehamstede, and became bishop of the Mercians in 675, after Aethelred's succession in 674. Bede confirms the location of Medehamstede and the name of Eathelred's queen, Hosthryth (9). The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle records her murder at the hands of the Mercians in 697, which is perhaps to be expected since she was a Northumbrian princess (10). Saxwulf died in 692, and Aethelred retired as a monk to Bardney Abbey in 704 and later became abbot there (11).

The second fragment, C.S. 841, records the grant by Friduricus religiossimus principum Aedilredi regis Merciae gentes, of 20 manentes at Bredun, (Breedon-on-the Hill, Leicestershire), to Medehamstede for the founding of a monastery, and the election of Hedda as its first abbot. In the third fragment, the same Friduric grants 31 manentes at Hrepingas to abbot Hedda, and the gift is again confirmed by king Aethelred and abbot Saxwulf in the traditional manner, with a turf, cespitunculum, and a gospel book. Hrepingas has been something of a problem to scholars for a long time. It was originally identified by Eilert Ekwall as Rippingale in Lincolnshire, where Medehamstede held very considerable lands. But Rippingale is forty miles from Breedon, and unless the grant was of revenue from the land and not of the land itself, could not, in practical terms be part either of the territory to be farmed or even evangelised by the monks of Breedon. Later opinion suggests that Repton, Derbyshire, is intended, and a good philological case has been put forward for this by Alexander Rumble (12). Geographically this is much more acceptable since Repton is only six miles away from Breedon, but Repton is the site of an equally ancient and equally impressive monastery and mausoleum of some of the Mercian kings. The question of why two such important establishments are to be found so close together must be borne in mind in any consideration of this area of north Leicestershire and south Derbyshire.

In the fourth fragment, the abbot Hedda is recorded as acquiring 15 manentes at

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Cedenac or Cedenan Ac. This has been "identified" as Cadney in Lincolnshire, but if Hrepingas can not be Rippingale because Rippingale is too far from Breedon, Cedenac is even less likely to be Cadney, which is more than twice the distance of Rippingale from Breedon. It is worth remembering, however, that the name means no more than an oak tree of some description, and may refer to a place which, although well known to the parties to the transaction, was not, and may never have been, a settlement site. A possibility in this connection is that the part of the Charnwood Forest now known as Cademan Wood, (SK 44:17), is the Cedenac of this charter fragment. Earlier spellings of "Cademan" are hard to come by; it appears spelt so on Prior's map of Leicestershire of 1777, but is absent from Speed's map of the county of 1610. It does not appear in Domesday Book. It seems, however, that bishop Stubbs located it to the Charnwood area, and identified it either with Cadborough Hill, Seal, or Cademan Hill, Whitwick (13). A feature of interest in this document is the miscellany of articles, to the value of £25, quingentos solidos, given by Hedda to Aethelred pro praefata terra pretium. It consists of twelve straw beds, with mattresses adorned with plumes, and pillows covered with soft muslin in the British fashion, what would seem to be a cruciform brooch of gold, two horses and two dogs. For the present, however, there are two important aspects of these four fragments which need to be examined. The first is the use in the first fragment of the phrase in proprio cubiculo and its incorporation in the fourth, into the passage His ita peractis rex ipse Aedilredus in cubiculo proprii vici qui nominatur Tomtun. Cubiculum is usually rendered as "bedchamber", but can equally mean any sort of private quarters; in this case the nearest modern equivalent may be "in chamber(s)", as when a judge operates in chambers rather than in open court. It is interesting that the adjective proprius refers in the first example to cubiculo, "in his own chambers", but in the second to vici,

thus, "in chambers in his own town which is called Tomtun". The assumption we have to make is that Aethelred's royal vicus of Tomtun is in fact the Tomwordige of later charters and the Tamworth of today.

The second important aspect of these documents relates to the location and extent of the grants they contain. The total number of manentes granted is ninety-six, which compares closely with what Dr Blair has deduced to be the original foundation grant to the abbey of Chertsey in Surrey:

"The charter's statements that Frithuwold grants 200 hides at Chertsey and five at Thorpe, but that "the land is, taken together, 300 hides", are usually dismissed as scribal confusion, but it makes equally good sense to interpret them as meaning that the monastery already had ninety-five hides" (14).

Dr Wormald has suggested that the Frithuric who is Frithuwold's principal witness in the Chertsey charter, is not only a relation, but also the Friduric princeps of the Breedon charter and this may indicate something of a "standard practice" in the amount of land granted for the foundation of a monastery in the seventh century (15). It may also have been standard practice for the foundation grant of the monastery to be a compact territory close to the monastery itself; Dr Blair proceeds to an inferred boundary of the Chertsey estate, based on the lands granted to the abbey (16). If the identifications suggested above of the places mentioned in the Breedon charters are correct, a hypothetical boundary of the original Breedon minsterland could be suggested (Fig.23, p.136). C.S. 843 alone refers to Tomtun, but Aethelred appears as "consenting" or "confirming" or as witness in other places; in 676, Suaberht, king of Kent, granted land to the abbess Aebba in Thanet and Sturry, Kent. Aethelred appears not only in the dispositive of the grant, cum consensu et voluntate

Lands granted for the foundation of Breedon Church, c.680.

/// = 5 manentes/hides.  Scale: 1 inch=1½ miles approx.

praecellentissimi regis Aedilredi, but also in the subscription, Signum manus Aedilredi regis Merciorum dum ille infirmaverat terram nostram in hoc loco qui dicitur Mirafeld atque Stapulford (17). Clearly Aethelred was on campaign and not in a Mercian royal vill. Like many Anglo-Saxon kings, he witnessed documents by marking them with a cross, pro ignorantia litteris, a circumstance which allowed the scribe to express sentiments of which the king might not have approved.

Aethelred’s grant of lands for the foundation of St Peter’s abbey at Gloucester is bedevilled with chronological confusion, which begins when it says that it was enacted in the fifth year of Aethelred’s reign, which should 679, but the charter continues: hoc est anno dominicae incarnatio sexcentesimo septuagesimo primo, which is 671, tunc fuerat domini archiepiscopus Deusdedit, who died in 664 and was succeeded by Theodore of Tarsus in 668, et Saxulphus episcopus gentes Mercini. Saxwulf became bishop of Mercia in 675, having previously been abbot of Medehamstede, et sinodus congregata fuit in loco famosa Ethcealchy (18). Expert opinion, however, advises that this charter has an authentic basis and should not be rejected (19). Aethelred was now at Ethcealchy, which is unidentified, although a possible identification is offered later herein; it may have been a Mercian royal vill, or more likely a minster site. It is, however, loco famosa, which suggests a greater importance, as does the fact that it is the scene of a synod, than those places described simply as in loco qui dicitur, etc.

The practice of naming the places where charters were originated, although frequently observed, was not universally followed, and there are several charters of Aethelred’s successors to the kingdom of Mercia, Coenred, Ceolred and Aethelbald, in which this information is not given. A charter of 749 which does indicate its place of origin, and is of interest to Leicestershire historians, is the grant of privilege to the Mercian churches known

as the "Donation of Aethelbald" (20). This was drawn up at Godmundesleach, which Stenton felicitously identified as Gumley in the south west of that county (21). There is however, a gap of a century between the reference to the royal vill at Tomtun, and the first reference to Tamworth. This occurs in a charter of king Offa, dated 26th December, 781, the fifteenth year of his reign, in a complex grant to St Peter's Worcester, of land at Hampton Lucy, Warwickshire, leased by St Peter's to the abbess Eanburh, Offa's kinswoman (22). On this occasion Offa was in sede regali sedens die secundo nativitas domini id est eo die quo primicerii martyrum beati Stephani nativitas celebratur in Tamworthy. Another charter, promulgated at the same time, begins the subscription with Ego Offa rex sedens in regali palatio in Tamwordige (23). Allowance has, perhaps, to be made for the somewhat florid tone of many of Offa's charters, which is exceeded only by the tone of those of Edgar and Athelstan, but it is difficult to see how in sede regali sedens, and sedens in regali palatio can mean anything other than that Tamworth was the site of a royal palace containing a royal throne in 781 if at no other time. A further examination of this and of the change in nomenclature from Tomtun to Tamworthy will be made later, but for the present it is best to follow the canon of the Mercian charters at least to the point at which the Tomsaetan appear. In spite of the effusiveness surrounding Offa's sojourn at Tamworth in 781, the enactment of his charters was carried out in several other places. Celchyd or Celchyth, which it is hoped to show later may well be the same place as Aethelred's Ethcealchy, possibly identifiable as Calke Abbey in Derbyshire, appears in three subsequent charters, among others, one of 785 and two of 789 (24). The place has not been identified, but it is likely to have been a religious site; the 785 grant to the thegna Eadbert and his sister in Kent was enacted in synodal conventu in loco ubi nominatur Celchyd, and the agreement of 789 between bishop

Heathored and Wulfheard, son of Cussa factum est pontificale conciliabulum in loco famosa qui dicitur Celchyd. The word pontificale is here used in its sense of "important" or "authoritative", and is not connected with the Papacy. It is used to emphasise the authority of the small gathering indicated by the use of the diminutive form conciliabulum.

It may be that Celcyth, Celchyd and Ethcealchy all refer to Calke in Derbyshire; there is an onomastic similarity for which an etymological explanation might be tentatively offered. The element celc, cealc, is common to all three names, and appears to derive from Old English calc, or "chalk". Thus, Celcyth, Celchyd, might transliterate as "Chalky", and Ethcealchy as "Chalky land". At the northern end of the present Calke estate, which lies within the parish of Ticknall, are the remains of several banks of limekilns. These are of eighteenth and nineteenth century origin, but there is documentary evidence of a lime-burning industry at Ticknell dating back to the mid-fifteenth century (25). Today, Calke is the site of a large Baroque mansion known as Calke Abbey, now in the care of the National Trust. The title "Abbey" is of nineteenth century origin, but the house does stand on the site of a twelfth century Augustinian priory. This was founded by Richard, second earl of Chester, son of Hugh d'Avranches, William the Conqueror's cousin and premier earl. In Saxon and early Norman times royal and aristocratic patronage had favoured the Benedictine order, but king Henry I, 1100-1135, had been an enthusiastic supporter of the Augustinians, and the aristocracy followed suit (26). It is noteworthy that at some time between 1109 and 1122, Robert de Ferrers, later first earl of Derby, granted the parish church of Breedon-on-the-Hill, site of the Anglo-Saxon minster, to the Augustinian priory of St Oswald, Nostell, Yorkshire (27). Earl Richard of Chester reached his majority in 1115, he had succeeded his father at the age of seven, and he perished in the disaster of the White Ship in 1120, so his

Augustinian priory of St Giles at Calke was founded between 1115 and 1120. Breedon is less than three miles from Calke. The priory of St Giles did not last long. On the death of the fifth earl of Chester, Ranulph II, in 1153, the countess Matilda, his widow, transferred it to Repton, where the former Anglo-Saxon monastery was revived as a priory: only a small cell remained at Calke which existed as a grange of Repton during the later Middle Ages, and was dissolved as part of the Repton establishment in 1538, but not before the astute monks of Repton had sold the Calke lands to a London merchant on their own account (28). The possibility, therefore, that Calke, like Breedon and Repton was an Anglo-Saxon religious site, used by the Mercian court for executive purposes, and refounded as an Augustinian house in the twelfth century, can not be ruled out.

Offa was again at Tamworth in 790 to confirm a grant of land in London to the French abbey of St Denis (29). His successor, Coenwulf, 796-821, restored to Christ Church, Canterbury, land at Charing in Kent which had been seized by Offa on the grounds that its grant by the Kentish king was not confirmed by Offa on the grounds that its grant by the Kentish king was not confirmed by Offa himself, in a charter often cited as an example of Offa's assertion of his powers as an overking (30). Coenwulf enacted the restoration in vico regio act Tomwordige, in 799. The charters of Coenwulf and his successors Ceolwulf and Wiglaf reveal a number of places likely to have been Mercian royal villas. A grant by Coenwulf to abbot Balthun of Kempsey, Worcestershire, in 799, was made in eodem concilio qui dicitur Colleshyl, which is Coleshill, now a suburb of Birmingham (31). A joint grant by Ceolwulf and king Cuthred of Kent, who were brothers, in 805, scripta est in celeberrimo loco ubi nominatur Acleah (32). Acleah remains unidentified, but the name is purely topographical, indicating a clearing among oak trees, and it may never have been a settlement site. It may have been in the Charnwood Forest, since the name survives as that of a mediaeval deanery of Leicestershire, formed by the division of the former wapentake of

Goscote into East and West Goscote in the fourteenth century. The deanery of Akely is almost exactly coterminous with the hundred, as it was called after the wapentake was divided, of West Goscote. "Akely" is an uncommon place-name. There is an example about six miles north of Buckingham, but a distinguished place-name scholar is firmly convinced that the Acleah of the charters is the Akely deanery of Leicestershire (33). It is possible that the location of Acleah and the place whence Akely is named is the site of Oakley Grange Farm (SK 222:491). Coewulf's grant of 814 to archbishop Wilfrid of Canterbury was enacted in vico regali qui dicitur et Bearwe. This may mean "Barrow", and it can also mean "wooded", but as there are at least ten candidates for the site, the credentials of each in turn will be considered in a later chapter (34). A grant by Ceolwulf to Wilfrid was enacted in loco regale qui dicitur Bydictun (35). Mercian royal patronage of Wilfrid lasted into the reign of king Wiglaf, whose bifurcated reign spanned the years 827-40; Mercia being subject to king Ecgbert of Wessex for the year 829-30. In 831 a grant of land in Middlesex actum est in regale villo quae nominatur Wichbold (36). The name survives in that form today, Wichbold, Worcestershire, and shows that the place was originally built by the Hwicce, an early kingdom incorporated into Mercia about the year 700. The first indication that the kings of the Hwicce had lost their independence appears in 706 in a charter of Athelweard, granting land at Ombersley to bishop Ecguine of Worcester: Ego Adelweard subregulus, Osheri quondam regis Wicciorum filius...consentiente Coenredo rege Merciorum (37). Wiglaf's

(33). Dr Barrie Cox, (now Professor Cox) pers comm, following a seminar conducted by Dr Simon Keynes at the department of English Local History, 18-3-93.

(34). C.S. 348.

(35). C.S. 370.

(36). C.S. 400.

grant to the monastery of Hanbury, Worcestershire, in 836, *factum est haec donatio in Craeft*, which is Croft, Leicestershire (35).

It is with the reign of Berhtwulf, 840-52, that a relatively clear picture of the extent of the territory of the *Tomsaetan* emerges. A *Witanagemut* was held at Tamworth over Easter, 28th March, 840, and to it *tunc perrexit ille episcopus Heahbert cum suis secum senioribus in pascha ad Tamwordie* (36). In the following year Berhtwulf granted to bishop Heahbert land *ubi ruricoli nominantur Hwiccewudu*, that is, Wychwood, Oxfordshire. The grant *scripta est in loco qui dicitur Croponporn*, Cropthorn, Worcestershire, *et iterum in natali domini aet Tomanwordie* (37). Many scholars have pointed out that the Mercian kings were in the habit of spending the major festivals of the Christian year at Tamworth, and Christmas 841 was a busy season; at the same session Berhtwulf granted abbot Eanmund of Breedon-on-the-Hill freedom from *illis incommodiis quam nos Saxonica lingua faestingmen dicimus*; the duty of providing food and accommodation for the king's retainers whenever it was required. The monastery certainly had to pay for its privilege, and the payment was to be held and enjoyed at Tamworth, *regaliter perfruendum et possedendum in famoso vico in Tamwordie*. It consisted of a great silver dish, skilfully made and with costly decoration, and 120 *mancuses* of pure gold. In addition the monks were to chant psalms and masses, 120 of them, for king Berhtwulf, his dear friends and all the Mercian people. *Haec autem cartula caraxata est...in celebre vico on Tamwordie* (38). At Christmas 845, Berhtwulf, again at Tamworth, granted privilege to Heahbert for a monastery at Stratford-on-Avon: *Gesta est autem haec donatio...in loco regali qui dicitur Tamworthy* (39).

Two charters, from 848 and 849, complete the picture we have of Tamworth and the *Tomsaetan* before the establishment of the Aethelflaedan *burh* in 913 (40). The first is

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another grant of privilege by king Berhtwulf to abbot Eanmund of Breedon, this time
exemptions from the customs of feorme and eafor, which, like the faestingmen of the 841
charter were impositions laid on his subjects by the king. Feorme and eafor meant providing
pasture and accommodation for the king's beasts, usually horses, dogs and hawks, and for the
grooms and others required to tend the beasts. There was an exemption to this privilege:
visitors coming to the king by sea, or from Wessex or Northumbria were to be given food, or
food and lodging, depending on the time of their arrival. As on the previous occasion, the
monastery had to pay: 180 mancuses of pure gold and fifteen manientum of land at Stanlege
and Bellanforde. The former is probably Stanley in Derbyshire and the latter remains
unidentified. Additionally, the monastery had to compensate the princeps Humberht with a
richly ornamented vase (41). This is an example of the customary arrangement in cases of
grant of privilege; the grantee was exempted not only from services and goods due to the
king, but also from those due to the ealdorman or princeps, who also had to be compensated
for the loss caused by the privilege.

It may be of advantage at this point, to add a little more detail about the princeps
Humberht from some of the charters in which his name is mentioned. It is assumed that these
references are all to the same man, which of course, may not be the case. He first appears in
an incomplete text dated 835, in which the abbess Cynewara of Repingdon, surely Repton,
grants land: Ego Cynewara abbatissa concedo Hunberto duci terram juris mei nomine
Worksworth, Wirksworth, Derbyshire. The land carried with it an annual rent of 300
shillings' worth of lead to Christ Church, Canterbury (42). Ego Hunberht dux heads the list of
laymen subscribing at the Witanagemut at Tamworth in 840, and in 841, Hunberht dux
appears in the subscription to Berhtwulf's grant of Wychwood to bishop Heahbert of
Worcester (43). He appears again in 841, subscribing to Berhtwulf's grant to Worcester

Abbey (44), and in the faestingmen privilege to Breedon-on-the-Hill (45). He also appears in the privilege to Stratford-on-Avon in 845 (46). In the grant of exemption from feorme et eafor of 848, he contributes Insuper etiam ego Hunberht princeps optinebam a domino meo Berhtwulf, and in return for his richly ornamented vase, the monastery is liberatum et absolutum ab omnibus causis...quae mihi aut principibus Tonsetorum unquam ante ea pertinebant. The charter concludes: Haec scedula scripta est...in venerabili monasterio primum Aet Hrypadun, (Repton), et iterum karaxata et confirmata (47). It seems then, that not only was Humberht chosen as princeps of the Tomsaetan by Berhtwulf, which must have been on the latter's accession in 840, but that he was also dux during the reign of Wiglaf, and he had thus been an important Mercian functionary for almost fifteen years by the time this present charter was issued.

In 849, bishop Alhun and his familia of Worcester granted a total of twenty manenses of land, in an area to the south of present day Birmingham, to king Berhtwulf for five lives, and in the same document, Berhtwulf granted the same land to his thane, ministro meo, Ecgbert, also for five lives. Alhun and his monks made the grant pro nostra defensione, and Berhtwulf received sixty pounds in pure gold and silver for the land from Ecgbert (48). There are many points of interest in this document. The first is that the various parcels of land involved had been some sort of unity for at least seventy years; in 780, king Offa had granted the same package to the church of St Peter, Bredon, Worcestershire, for the use of the bishop of Worcester (49). Although bishop Alhun's charter of 849 describes the land concerned in slightly more detail than does Offa's of 780, the names are the same: Wearsetfelda, Coftune, (Cofton Hacket), wreodenhale, (Rednal), and the silva quae eisdem terris adjacet of 780 is likely to be the hopwudu (Hopwood) of the 849 charter. It would seem that the scribe was less fluent in Anglo-Saxon than he was in Latin, since he uses inde and deinde throughout,

instead of the Old English equivalents, introduces the boundary clause with *Hos terminos pertinent at Coftone*, followed by *Primum* instead of the usual Old English *aerest*. Thus, we get *Primum Tomsetna gemaere, et pencersetna foran rehte*. This establishes that a landmark on the boundary of Cofton was also on the boundary between the *Tomsaetan* and the *Pencersaetan*, who probably occupied the basin of the river Penk as the *Tomsaetan* did the basin of the Tame. Two other points of interest are that the charter was proclaimed *in loco qui nominatur aet glenne*, Great Glen, Leicestershire, and confirmed by Berhtwulf *in loco famosa qui dicitur Tomeweording*.

Some fifty or so of the pre-Viking charters of Mercia have been cited above. This is a relatively small sample since there are for the period some 160 royal charters alone, that is, excluding those of laymen and ecclesiastics. Nevertheless, even such a limited selection reveals a surprising number of the royal villas of the Mercian kings, and of other places used by them for charter purposes which may not have had that status (Table 4, pp. 146-149).

The thirty one charters listed in Table 4 reveal fifteen separate places, all of which have some claim to be regarded as *villa regis*. Tamworth differed from all the others: It has been described by one scholar as ‘the chief residence of the Mercian kings’, (50), and by another as ‘the capital of the South Mercians’ (51). It has also been regarded as one in a system of fortified market towns on important river crossings throughout Mercia and beyond, developed by Offa to counter the threat of marauding Vikings (52). The difference between


(52). J. Haslam, ‘Market and Fortress in the Reign of Offa’, *World Archaeology*, Vol. 19, No. 1, (1987). The author does not support his claim with any solid evidence: while it is possible that Offa and/or his successors did so, there is no documentary or archaeological evidence that they did so.
TABLE 4
CHARTER DESCRIPTIONS OF MERCIAN ROYAL VILLS, 680-850

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>C.S. No.</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Grantor</th>
<th>Grantee</th>
<th>Proclaimed</th>
<th>Confirmed</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>840</td>
<td>680</td>
<td>Aethelred k.Mercia</td>
<td>Medehamstede</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>in proprio cubiculo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>843</td>
<td>680</td>
<td>Aethelred k.Mercia</td>
<td>Hedda, Abbot of Breedon</td>
<td>Tomtun</td>
<td></td>
<td>in cubiculo proprii vici qui nominatur Tomtun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>681</td>
<td>Aethelred k.Mercia</td>
<td>Osric and Oswald</td>
<td>Ethcealchy (Calke?)</td>
<td></td>
<td>in loco famosa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>91</td>
<td>716</td>
<td>Wihtried k.Kent</td>
<td>Kentish Churches</td>
<td>Clovesho</td>
<td></td>
<td>in loco qui vocatur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>149</td>
<td>732-3</td>
<td>Aethelbald k.Mercia</td>
<td>Mildrith, Abbess</td>
<td>Willenhaleh</td>
<td>Willenhall</td>
<td>in loco qui dicitur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>178</td>
<td>749</td>
<td>Aethelbald k.Mercia</td>
<td>Monasteries and churches</td>
<td>Godmundesleah (Gumley)</td>
<td></td>
<td>in loco celebre eius vocabulum est</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>201</td>
<td>767</td>
<td>Offa k.Mercia</td>
<td>Stithbert Abbot</td>
<td>Caelicyth (Calke?)</td>
<td></td>
<td>juxta locum qui dictur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>209</td>
<td>772</td>
<td>Offa k.Mercia</td>
<td>Ridda minister</td>
<td>Godmundleas (Gumley)</td>
<td>Iorotlaforda</td>
<td>aet Godmundleas aet Iorotlaforda</td>
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<tr>
<td>C.S. No.</td>
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<td>230</td>
<td>779</td>
<td>Offa, k.Mercia</td>
<td>Dudda minister</td>
<td><em>lorotlaforda</em></td>
<td>Godmundesleah</td>
<td>concilium qui dicitur Godmundesleah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>235</td>
<td>780</td>
<td>Offa, k.Mercia</td>
<td>Worcester</td>
<td><em>Bregantford</em></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>in loco celebre</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>239</td>
<td>781</td>
<td>Offa, k.Mercia</td>
<td>St Peter's</td>
<td><em>Tamworth</em></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>in sede regali sedens</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>240</td>
<td>781</td>
<td>Offa, k.Mercia</td>
<td>Worcester</td>
<td><em>Tamwordige</em></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>sedens in regali palatio in Tamworth</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>247</td>
<td>785</td>
<td>Offa, k.Mercia</td>
<td>Ealdbert, minister and his sister</td>
<td>Celchyd</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>in synodali conventu in loco ubi nominatur Celchyd</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>255</td>
<td>789</td>
<td>Offa, k.Mercia</td>
<td>Waermund, bishop of Rochester</td>
<td>Celchyd</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>in loco ubi nominatur Celchyd</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>256</td>
<td>789</td>
<td>Offa, k.Mercia</td>
<td>Agreement of bishop Heathered with Wulfheard son of Cissa</td>
<td>Celchyd</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>pontificale conciliabulum in loco famosa qui dicitur Celchyd</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>259</td>
<td>790</td>
<td>Offa, k.Mercia</td>
<td>St Denis' Abbey, France</td>
<td>Tomwordy</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>in Tomworthig</em></td>
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<td>C.S. No.</td>
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<tr>
<td>275</td>
<td>No date</td>
<td>Offa</td>
<td>Woking Church</td>
<td></td>
<td>Freoricburna</td>
<td>villa regali nomine Freoricburna (Surrey)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>293</td>
<td>799</td>
<td>Coenwulf</td>
<td>Christ Church</td>
<td>Tomwordige</td>
<td></td>
<td>in vicu regio at Tomewordig</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>295</td>
<td>799</td>
<td>Coenwulf</td>
<td>Abbot Balthun of</td>
<td>Colleshyl</td>
<td></td>
<td>in eodem concilio qui dicitur Colleshyl</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Kempsey, (Worcs).</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>321</td>
<td>805</td>
<td>Coenwulf</td>
<td>Wulfheard, priest</td>
<td>Acleah</td>
<td></td>
<td>in celeberrimo loco ubi nominatur Acleah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>348</td>
<td>814</td>
<td>Coenwulf</td>
<td>Wilfrid, Archbishop of Canterbury</td>
<td>aet Bearwe</td>
<td></td>
<td>in vico regali qui dicitur aet Bearwe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>370</td>
<td>822</td>
<td>Coenwulf</td>
<td>Wilfrid, Archbishop of Canterbury</td>
<td>Bydictun</td>
<td></td>
<td>in loco regale qui dicitur Bydictun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>400</td>
<td>831</td>
<td>Wiglaf</td>
<td>Wilfrid, Archbishop of Canterbury</td>
<td>Wichbold</td>
<td></td>
<td>in regale vill quae nominatur Wichbold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>416</td>
<td>836</td>
<td>Wiglaf</td>
<td>Hanbury Abbey</td>
<td>Craeft</td>
<td></td>
<td>Factum est haec donatio in Craeft</td>
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<tr>
<td>430</td>
<td>840</td>
<td>Witanagemut at Tamworth</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tomeworthie</td>
<td>tunc perexit ille episcopus Heahbert cum suis secum senioribus in pascha ad Tomeworthie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>432</td>
<td>841</td>
<td>Berhtwulf k.Mercia</td>
<td>Heahbert, bishop of Worcester</td>
<td>Cropanporn (Cropthorn, Wores).</td>
<td>Tamworthie</td>
<td>in loco qui dicitur Cropanporn et iterum aet Tomanwordie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>433</td>
<td>841</td>
<td>Berhtwulf k.Mercia</td>
<td>Heahbert, bishop of Worcester</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tomanwordie</td>
<td>in celebri vico Tomanwordie</td>
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<tr>
<td>434</td>
<td>841</td>
<td>Berhtwulf k.Mercia</td>
<td>Eanmund, abbot of Breedon, (Leics).</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tomanwordie</td>
<td>in celebri vico on Tomanwordie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>450</td>
<td>845</td>
<td>Berhtwulf k.Mercia</td>
<td>Heahbert, bishop of Worcester</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tomworthy</td>
<td>in loco regali qui dicitur Tomworthy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>454</td>
<td>848</td>
<td>Berhtwulf k.Mercia</td>
<td>Eanmund, abbot of Breedon, (Leics).</td>
<td></td>
<td>Aet Hrypadune (Repton)</td>
<td>in venerabili monasterio Aet Hrypadune et iterum karaxata et confirmata</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>455</td>
<td>849</td>
<td>Ealhun, bishop of Worcester Berhtwulf k.Mercia</td>
<td>Egberht, minister</td>
<td>aet glenne</td>
<td>Tomweordy</td>
<td>in famosae loco qui dicitur Tomeweording</td>
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Aethelred's *cubicolo proprii vici qui nominatur Tomtun* and Offa's *rex sedens in palatio in Tamuordige*, together with an attempt to define the precise function performed by Tamworth in Mercian society will be disregarded for the present, but at this point it might be as well to consider what the term *Tomsaete* or *Tomsaetan* really means. To the social historian, the *Tomsaetan* may appear as a cohesive community, bound together by kinship or ethnic homogeneity, settled in a particular landscape from which they derive their name, and preserving their identity for some centuries. On this basis it might be inferred that their territory was bounded by the watersheds on either side of the river Tame. But the only really solid information we have about their territory is what has come from Stenton's observations on some of the Mercian charters; that it contained Breedon-on-the-Hill in Leicestershire and the area around Cofton Hacket in Worcestershire. We do not know, for instance, whether those two places can be regarded as being at the extreme ends of the territory of the *Tomsaetan*, or whether a line drawn between them represents any kind of axis of the territory concerned. We do know, from Dr Hart's researches, that Cofton Hacket's boundary included a point on the boundary which divided the *Tomsaetan* from the *Pencersaetan*, whose land, if it was the basin of the river Penk, lay to the west of the *Tomsaetan*. We might hazard a guess that either or both of these groups had a boundary with the *Arosaete* to the south, assuming that this group occupied the basin of the river Arrow in Warwickshire. The *Arosaete* appear in the Tribal Hidage, assessed at 600 hides as are ten other of the groups mentioned in that document. There are two factors to be borne in mind here; the first is the extent to which river basins form the pattern of settlement in the midland area, and the second is the extent to which the names of the groups occupying these basins indicate a distinct kinship or ethnic community.

*Saetan* names do not consistently reflect river basin settlement. The *Pecsaetan*, for example, derive their name from the Derbyshire Peak District, and while the Penk, the Tame and the Arrow have their *saetan* groups, the Anker, the Blythe and the Cole do not, possibly...
because their basins were included in the land of the *Tomsaetan*. More important, however, in the present context, the principle does not appear to extend eastwards; the rivers Mease, Sence and Soar do not have a recorded *saetan* group, although they might have had such a group or groups. The Mease is particularly worthy of note. It rises on the western slopes of the Charnwood Forest, joining the Trent less than a mile to the east of the mouth of the Tame, following a generally westward course. Two important royal holdings on the Mease are recorded in Domesday, Clifton Campville, Staffordshire, and Measham, then in Derbyshire, a berewick of Repton, which in 1086 was largely a royal manor, but containing holdings of Burton Abbey and Nigel of Stafford. It might be said that the Mease was at least worthy of a *saetan*. Still more so was the Soar, or *Leire* as it may then have been called, rising near the Warwickshire border and flowing northwards through the *Leire castra*, (Leicester), of the Roman period, and joining the Trent at Red Hill in Nottinghamshire. We have also to remember that names are things which are given; the *Tomsaetan* were described as such by others, and a totally different name, or more likely names, may have existed among themselves. Moreover, by the time the *saetan* names were recorded, the Tribal Hidage being the first of such records, the name meant basically a unit of taxation or administration. At least two scholars have recently drawn attention to this (53). A further point of interest is that the suffixed elements *saetan* do not occur among the known names of social groups anywhere east of the *Tomsaetan*, with one exception, that of the *Ciltemsaetan*, somewhat to the south of what is normally regarded as the Midlands. This cannot be solely attributed to the differences in dialect which existed in the Old English language before the ninth century. There are grounds for thinking that social, political, fiscal and administrative organisation differed substantially between the inhabitants of the Tame basin and those of the Soar basin; that

what can be described no more precisely than a change of cultural emphasis takes place somewhere between the valleys of the Tame and the Soar.

A review of what is generally known of the Tomsaetan and Anglo-Saxon Tamworth, essential as it is to any understanding of settlement and organisation in the valleys of the Trent’s southern tributaries, leaves at least two very important problems to be solved, if indeed, they are capable of solution. The first is whether any kind of substance can be given to the notion expressed above that a change of cultural emphasis takes place somewhere between Cannock Chase and Charnwood Forest. The second is the question of the actual extent of the territory of the Tomsaetan: which places came within the jurisdiction of the princeps Tonsetorum, and which did not? As an approach to the first problem it can be said that if, for whatever reason, it were desirable to draw a line dividing something called the East Midlands from something called the West Midlands, Cannock Chase, Charnwood Forest or somewhere in between would be a reasonable place to draw it. It might also be said that to travel westward from such a line would be to go into an increasingly Mercian environment, whereas to travel eastward from it would be to go into an increasingly East Anglian environment. Place-name scholars have observed what one of them has called a “linguistic boundary”, lying between places having name elements which mean the same, but have different derivations (54). There are difficulties here, because the only Old English dialects clearly distinguishable from each other are Kentish, Northumbrian, Mercian and West Saxon.

Another problem is that the further west we go into Mercia, the more we encounter the survival of names or name elements which are of Welsh origin (55). In any case the place-name scholars would not claim that this boundary was one which could be precisely drawn, still less that it represents any kind of political or administrative division. Additionally,

during the later Iron Age, the territory of the Corieltauvi must have given way to that of their western neighbours, the Cornovii and the Dobunni somewhere in this area. It has been suggested that Cannock Chase was the western limit of the civitas Corieltauvi (56). In Chapter Two it was suggested that the social and political organisation of the Corieltauvi differed from that of their southern and western neighbours, and the fragmentary evidence for such a suggestion was reviewed.

Any answer to the second question must, unfortunately, be almost completely conjectural. In the present state of knowledge it is not possible to take, for instance, a collection of parish boundaries and assert that together they form the boundary of the Tomsaetan. With the Tomsaetan, as with other groups, past scholarship has produced in most cases an approximate location, sometimes a provisional boundary, but always with due stress on the fact that such things are "approximations". For present purposes it is necessary only to suggest that whatever was contained within the boundary of the Tomsaetan did not include the lower Soar valley. Again, it is not possible to go far beyond the realm of conjecture, but it may be possible to indicate that the balance of probability weighs in favour of, rather than against such a suggestion.

It is possible that some light could be thrown on these questions by the application of models drawn from the analyses of early societies undertaken by the social scientists, as was attempted in Chapter Two. It has seemed to the present writer, however, that the expansion of Rome and its effect on late Iron Age Europe, especially Britain, is a particularly appropriate situation for such an application, whereas a much smaller territorial extent, during the Anglo-Saxon period is far less appropriate. Recent writers have voiced the same misgivings:

'Although there is no doubt about the general value of such approaches, there is a danger that their over-simple or uncritical application may mask complexities and diversities in a way that is misleading' (57).

A similar objection is expressed in more forthright terms by a well-known authority on the Anglo-Saxon period in another contribution to the same volume (58).

It is reasonable to ask why the Tomsaetan, "dwellers by the Tame" in Stenton's words, should include within their territory Breedon-on-the-Hill, which is, even as the crow flies, no less than eighteen miles from the nearest point on the Tame, which is in fact the junction of the Tame with the Trent. It is here assumed that the pre-1974 boundary of Leicestershire is of post-Conquest origin. This differs from the view of Mr T.Cain, who says that it was established by Edward the Elder, 901-925 (59). Mrs M.Tranter has pointed out that the pre-1974 boundary of Leicestershire is less than 150 years old,(60), and Phythian-Adams has stated that 'in well-wooded or sparsely populated areas...in early times districts were divided from each other by broad strips of no-man's land or inter-commonable territory' (61). A probable answer is that the valley of the Mease was also in the territory of the Tomsaetan. The Mease and the Tame flow into the Trent at almost the same point: on the map they can not be shown as more than half a mile apart, on the ground, the mouths of the Tame and the Mease can hardly be distinguished. The "dwellers by the Tame" were also dwellers by the Mease. The Mease rises in a number of streams high in the Charnwood Forest, or the high ground to the north of what is normally designated as the forest. Breedon stands slightly

the west of the watershed which divides those streams which flow westwards into the Mease and Tame from those which fall eastwards towards the Soar. It is not unreasonable to suggest that this watershed formed the eastern limit of the territory of the Tomsaetan. The hillfort at Breedon might be seen as marking the boundary of a prehistoric people whose territory lay to the west of it, and it may be that king Aethelred of Mercia and the princeps Friduric raised their minster on it for a similar purpose.

The functions of the villae regis both as staging posts in the itineraries of necessarily peripatetic royal households, and as the centres of local justice and administration have been described by scholars since at least the time of Sir Paul Vinogradoff (62). As an institution, the royal vill was ubiquitous, and this, too, has been pointed out (63). It is therefore likely that whatever differences of culture and character existed between the Tomsaetan and their eastern neighbours in the lower Soar valley they will have shared this particular institution.

The pre-Conquest evidence for settlement organisation in the lower Soar valley contains little in the way of documentation. In Part Two of the thesis, documents of the post-Conquest period will be discussed to see if they can throw light retrospectively on the Anglo-Saxon period in the selected area.


PART TWO

THE POST-CONQUEST EVIDENCE
CHAPTER FIVE

Domesday Book and beyond in the lower Soar valley.

It is a fortunate circumstance for the student of early English history that the two founding fathers of the study of Domesday Book had divergent perceptions of the Survey's value (1). For J.H.Round, Domesday was the gateway to an understanding of the Middle Ages and later, but for F.W.Maitland, Domesday provided a view, albeit oblique and indistinct, of the Anglo-Saxon past (2). The historian of the lower Soar valley is forced to follow, however falteringly, in Maitland's footsteps because he has no Anglo-Saxon documentation of the area or of the people and places within it. Even if the whole area of the two counties through which the Soar flows, Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire, is included, the documentation is still very sparse, and not of much use, although at first sight it appears promising. County by county lists of charters for the two counties consist of thirteen charters for Leicestershire, referring to some fifteen places, and for Nottinghamshire, six charters referring to twenty-two places (3). This seemingly impressive amount of material tends to break down under examination. In the case of Leicestershire, Langton, Eston, (Great Easton), and Bringhurst, (unidentified), derive from the "charter" of king Wulfhere, 664, founding the abbey of Medehamstede, (Peterborough), which included a grant of land for the foundation of a monastery at Breedon-on-the-Hill (4). (The other charter references for Breedon have been fully examined in the preceding chapter). Reference to Beeby derives from bishop Oscytel of Dorchester's will of 971, granting land there to bishop Ethelwold of Winchester, and from Ethelwold's own grant of the same land to Thurcytel, abbot of Bedford, Ramsey or Crowland.

between 971 and 975. Both Oscytel's will and Ethelwold's grant are lost. Hart clearly avoids the spurious Crowland charters in which Beeby appears several times, the first being in a supposed charter of king Eadred of 948, which purports to record the re-foundation of Crowland Abbey by Thurketyl, following its destruction by the Danes (5). Had Dr Hart wished to make use of this undoubtedly dubious material, two more places in Leicestershire could be derived from his list of charters, Sutton (Cheney), and Stapleton, which first appear in a supposed charter of king Wiglaf dated 833 (6). This document refers to two carucates in each vill, and at Sutton a windmill, *molinendum ventricium*, which would not have been possible in 833 since windmills did not appear in England before the twelfth century. Land at Beeby, Sutton and Stapleton comprises the holding of Crowland church in Leicestershire in Domesday, and in the Leicestershire Survey of c 1130, it is reported that the Abbot of Crowland held twelve carucates at Beeby. Sutton and Stapleton do not appear in that incomplete document (7). Wilson, Diseworth and Atterton, *Aederedes dune* in the charter text, occur in a grant to bishop Ethelwold of Winchester, made by king Edgar in 967 (8). Hart explains it as being connected with Ethelwold's ambition of reconstructing the original estates of *Medehamstede*: land at Breedon is also granted in this charter, and Breedon was a colony of *Medehamstede*. Shangton, Sharnford and (Little) Wigston are bequests to Burton Abbey in the will of its founder, Wulfric Spott, and finally, Burbage, Barwell, Scraptoft and Packington are part of the original endowment of Coventry Abbey contained in its foundation charter of 1043, by earl Leofric of Mercia and his countess Godiva (9). Presumably because they do not contain grants of land in Leicestershire, Hart omits three places which are mentioned in the early charters: Croft, where king Wiglaf issued a charter in 836, (10), (Great) Glen, where a charter of king Berhtwulf was proclaimed in 849, (11), and Gumley, where the Mercian Witan met in 749, 772, and 779 (12). Gumley was identified by Stenton as

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the *Godesmundlacceh* and *Godesmundesleah* of the charters and the *Godiumelai* and
*Gutmundeslea* of *Domesday Book* as early as 1905 (13).

A similar situation arises in connection with the charter evidence for
Nottinghamshire. *Muskham* and *Collingham* occur in the "Wulfhere" material, which, as we
have seen, is difficult to use. A large number of places in Nottinghamshire is contained in the
grant made by king *Eadwig* to archbishop *Oscytel* of York in 956. These are *Southwell,*
*Normanton,* *Upton,* *Hockerwood,* *Fiskerton,* *Farnsfield,* *Kirklington,* *Morton,* *Gibsmere,*
*Bleasby,* *Halloughton* and *Halam.* These places, or rather land in them, together with its
jurisdiction, were the original endowment of Southwell Minster, founded as part of the
restoration of the English church in the East Midlands after fifty years and more of heathen
Scandinavian rule, as was explained by Stenton, on the occasion of the minster's millenary
celebrations in 1956 (14). *Sutton,* Scrooby and Thoresby were also grants to the minster
made to Oscytel by king *Edgar* in 958, in a charter which is lost. Hicklington, Kinoulton and
Lockington form part of a bequest by *Aemketl* and his wife *Wulfrun* to Ramsey Abbey in
Huntingdonshire. *Hart* was of the opinion, based on the text of the document, that the
Lockington of the bequest is in Yorkshire and is not the much nearer Lockington in
Leicestershire. Finally a reference to Newark comes from Pope *Victor II*'s confirmation of the
countess Godiva's endowment by earl *Leofric* in 1055. In the quest for charter evidence for
the area, the historian of the lower Soar valley, as can be seen, draws a complete blank, which
he might attribute to "the essential cussedness of things", or he might wonder if there is some
more rational explanation. An obvious, but still essentially speculative explanation is that the
documents referring to the area did exist, but have been lost, possibly due to their destruction
by the Vikings. The sparseness of Anglo-Saxon documentation throughout northern and
eastern England has often been attributed to this cause. *Peterborough,* *Crowland,* *Lincoln,*

Repton and Breedon are all likely places for the deposition of documents, and all are known to have been ravaged by the Danes. This *scriptorium inopia fugax*, however, is common to the pre-Viking and post-Viking periods: it is only after the Conquest that documents begin to proliferate. It may be that it is the Conqueror and not the Vikings who should be blamed for the absence of documents which once existed. Another possible explanation is that there never were any early written records of transactions relating to many parts of the East Midlands and the North, because the early practice of publishing transactions ceremonially or ritually, and recording them in human memory continued longer in these areas than it did elsewhere (15). Yet a third possible explanation for the absence of early documents relating to the East Midlands in general and the lower Soar valley in particular, is that much of the land was either royal or ecclesiastical land of long standing, which was not alienated, and therefore not the subject of transactions recorded in writing. The primary source for an enquiry of this kind is Domesday Book, to which we must now turn.

One of the Conqueror's requirements of his commissioners was that they should record who held, and what was held and its value at three points in time: on the day king Edward was alive and dead, at the time king William granted it, which may be any time between 1066 and 1086, and at the time the Survey was made in 1086 (16). Theoretically this should give a very clear picture of the situation in England on the eve of the Conquest, but unfortunately this part of the commissioners' brief was only partially carried out, with the result that for very many places Domesday contains no information about the 1066 landholder or the extent of his holding. There are other difficulties; a Norman lord can be relatively easily identified because his name is accompanied by that of his Normandy estate, his position in an official hierarchy or by a reference to his ancestry. Thus we are not likely to confuse Hugh, earl of Chester with Hugh de Grandmesnil or Hugh, son of Baldric, or Robert

de Tosny with Robert Dispensator. Even when they are named, however, the Anglo-Saxon landholders of 1066, or even those of 1086, do not have such convenient "identity tags" attached to them. The result (to take a purely hypothetical example) is that only in the most fortunate circumstances can it be said with any confidence that somebody called Alwin, who held two carucates from the bishop of Lincoln in Bottesford, is not the same Alwin who held four carucates of waste from Robert de Bucy in neighbouring Redmile, but is the same Alwin who held a carucate and a half from Earl Hugh in Syston, twenty miles away. This situation is compounded by two additional difficulties; first we can rarely tell whether or not a named Anglo-Saxon landholder is tenant-in-chief, subtenant or tenant of a subtenant, and second, in cases where the formula T.R.E. is not specifically used, we can not tell whether the landholder concerned held his land during king Edward's reign or whether he acquired it at some time between 1066 and 1086. At first sight, Domesday gives the impression that the large estates of the Norman magnates were composed of numbers of small estates which had been independently held before the Conquest, but this is by no means universally true (17). That the difficulty of identifying the antecessores of Norman lords caused problems from the time of Domesday itself, is amply demonstrated by the long lists of clamores accompanying the surveys of some counties, Lincolnshire in particular. The basis of quite a number of these claims can be expressed as a sort of formula:-

A holds the land at Domesday, B held it T.R.E.
C claims it, because T.R.E. B held it from D, who

is C's antecessor.

In this apparently impenetrable morass, there are one or two islands of firm ground which assist in the search for details of landholding patterns during the last years of Anglo-Saxon England. Land of the king, the earls and upper aristocracy often involve an important and therefore recognisable antecessor. Thanks to king William's policy towards the church, it

is reasonable to assume that land of the church in 1086 was also land of the church in 1066 and earlier. William was at pains to present himself as the church’s loyal son and generous benefactor (18). He had prudently ensured papal support for the enterprise before launching his attack on England, and refrained from confiscating church property. Instead, he appointed Normans as archbishops, bishops and abbots, whenever he had reason, opportunity or excuse to do so; the most notable example being the replacement of Stigand as archbishop of Canterbury with Odo, bishop of Bayeux, his half-brother, who acted for a time, as co-viceregent of England during William’s frequent returns to Normandy. William also appointed Remigius of Fécamp as bishop of Dorchester in 1067, but here he was continuing a tradition of Edward the Confessor, who had appointed the Norman, Ulf, to that see in 1049 (19). Ulf was expelled as the Godwin faction gained ascendency, in 1052, and was succeeded by the Saxon, Wulfwig, but on Wulfwig’s death in 1067, William took the opportunity to appoint Remigius. During Edward’s reign, the practice of appointing senior ecclesiastics and other state officials from Normandy, aroused intense opposition among the aristocracy, but so far as the monks and clergy were concerned, they carried out their duty of obedience to the bishop or abbot, and there was no outcry from those to whom they ministered, either in Edward’s or in William’s reign. Remigius removed his see to Lincoln in 1072: Dorchester was very poorly endowed, and at Lincoln Remigius could claim, among others, the extensive lands of Halfdan, who appears as his antecessor in part of that county in Domesday. Whether or not it is stated in Domesday there is a reasonable chance that the land of the church at Domesday was land of the church in 1066, although it may not appear to be the case from Domesday itself.

Within the lower Soar valley, there is no holding of the major ecclesiastical landlords recorded in Domesday, although elsewhere in the counties of Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire there are substantial holdings of the archbishop of York and the bishop of

Lincoln, among other major ecclesiastical institutions. It may be worth noting, however, that much of the archbishop of York's land in Nottinghamshire and Leicestershire derives from king Eadwig's grant to archbishop Oscytel of 956 for the foundation of Southwell Minster (20), and that much of the bishop of Lincoln's land in the same counties was acquired after 1072, when bishop Remigius removed his see from Dorchester to Lincoln (21). The diocesan organisation of East Anglia and the East Midlands was swept away by the Viking attacks of the ninth century, and it was a very long time before it was even partially restored, the foundation of Southwell Minster and the re-establishment of the diocese of Lincoln being among the principal landmarks in that process. Leicester remained an archdeaconry of Lincoln from 1072 to 1839, when the archdeaconry was transferred to the newly created diocese of Peterborough, and it was 1927 before the diocese of Leicester was restored (22).

An attempt to use ecclesiastical lands in order to illustrate the pre-Conquest situation in the lower Soar valley produces what archaeologists are wont to call "negative evidence", which nevertheless has its value, emphasising as it does, the remoteness of that area from the centres of large-scale organisational institutions such as dioceses, major monastic foundations and the influence of major urban centres.

One of the very clear features of landholding in the lower Soar valley at Domesday is the fact that much of the land there was held by king William and earl Hugh of Chester and their immediate retainers. This does shed a certain amount of light on the pre-Conquest situation in so far as among the major antecessores of William and Hugh were Edward the Confessor and earl Harold as the Normans called him, because according to their view, Harold had usurped the throne that rightfully belonged to William, and could not therefore be regarded as king Harold as he was known to the English. One of the difficulties of trying to

(20). C.S. 1029.
deduce the pre-Conquest social organisation of the lower Soar valley is that it involves a variety of apparently overlapping tenures and jurisdictions. There are the two shires of Leicester and Nottingham, the wapentakes of Goscote and Rushcliffe, and a number of sokelands varying in extent from land in anything between two and twenty-two manors. The method used here is to consider tenants-in-chief, sub-tenants and antecessores in some thirty-odd places within the lower Soar valley. This can not be a complete account of the situation, first, because there are a number of unidentified places mentioned in the Leicestershire Domesday which are, or may be in the lower Soar valley, and second, there are a number of places in the lower Soar valley which are not mentioned in Domesday, notably Cropston, Swithland, Woodhouse, Quorn, Lockington and Hemington. This may mean that these places did not exist in 1086 and came into being later, but is more likely to mean that their assessments are included in those of other places (23). Thus, Cropston and Swithland are likely to have been assessed with Rothley, Woodhouse and Quorn with Barrow, and Lockington and Hemington with Kegworth. Heading this list of places alphabetically is Barrow-on-Soar, which is an appropriate place with which to start, but to continue through the list in alphabetical order would not seem to be advisable.

Barrow is the caput or centre of a large soke, which may be even larger than at first appears, of which most of the holdings are in the lower Soar valley. The land in Barrow, Castle Donington, Cossington, Hoton, Seagrave, Sileby, Prestwold and Charley are within the lower Soar valley, while land in Rearsby, Brooksby, Frisby-on-the-Wreake, Gaddesby and Rotherby are not, but they continue the general direction of this sokeland eastwards into the valley of the Wreake. Thus, the soke of Barrow, if that is the whole of it, lies between Castle Donington and Charley in the forest on the west, across the valley floor at Cossington, on to the wolds east of the river with Hoton and Prestwold, and further east into the Wreake

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valley at Frisby, Brooksby and Gaddesby (Fig.24, p.166). Barrow, with its dependencies, appears at the head of the Leicestershire holdings of earl Hugh: at the end of the entry for Barrow itself, Domesday states *Hoc manerium tenuit Heraldus comes cum appendices infrascriptis*, leaving no doubt as to the holder and his *antecessor*, and excluding the possibility of subinfeudation other than from the king. The list of Barrow's dependencies ends with the information that *de his terris teneant iv milites de comite xii carucatas terrae*, and details of the earl's demesne and its occupants and the occupants of the soldiers' land.

It would be expected that following the list of dependencies, its assessments, *valuit* and *modo* would be given, but this is not so; what follows is an account of the lands of some of earl Hugh's tenants in Leicestershire. With the exception of Thedingworth, these holdings are all in the lower Soar valley, comprising land in Kegworth, Hathern and Dishley, Loughborough and Burton-on-the-Wolds. This represents another traverse of the valley, from the forest at Kegworth, through Hathern, Dishley and Loughborough, to Burton, on the wolds to the east (Fig.25, p.167). The list of earl Hugh's tenants' holdings begins with Loughborough, followed by Burton, followed by Kegworth, followed by Burton again. Of the tenants themselves, there is more to be said later, but in terms of their *antecessores* and those of earl Hugh, we are told that "five thanes" held Loughborough, earl Harold held Kegworth and that the land in Hathern and Dishley belonged to the manor of Kegworth, and that the hide in Burton, held by Leofwin from earl Hugh, belonged to Loughborough. It is at this point that the assessment appears: *in his omnibus prescriptis terris fuerant lxxx carucae T.R.E. Totius valuit et valeat xl libra*. Not only does the emphasis on all of the lands concerned suggest that the assessment covers Barrow and its soke as well as the tenants' holdings, a simple count of the recorded ploughlands and ploughs shows that all the lands must be included in order to reach the total of eighty ploughs. Thus it appears that there are two tenures in which the valley is traversed by the holdings; one directly controlled by earl Hugh, and presumably administered by his reeves and bailiffs, and another in the hands of his tenants.
Fig. 24. TRANSVERSE LAND-HOLDING IN THE LOWER SOAR VALLEY

(1). THE BARROW SOKE: EARL HAROLD T.R.E., EARL HUGH 1086

Scale: 3 miles = 1 inch approx.
(2) **FIVE THANES T.R.E.: ROGER, RALPH, HUGH, GODRIC AND ROGER, 1086.**

**Scale: 3 miles = 1 inch approx.**
Before going further into the significance of these and other lands in the lower Soar valley of earl Hugh, his tenants and their *antecessores*, it is appropriate to draw attention to another collection of holdings, or soke, which follows a similar pattern. This is the royal manor of Rothley, land of king William in 1086, and of king Edward in 1066. Rothley stands on the brook which bears its name, a mile or so to the west, as the crow flies from the point where the brook joins the river Soar. It is on the edge of the Charnwood forest and as its name suggests, it was probably a clearing, natural or otherwise, in the more extensive forest of Anglo-Saxon times. The vill itself is separately assessed in Domesday at sixty-two shillings, which may, as has been suggested, include Cropston and Swithland. Also within the Rothley soke are lands in Sileby and Seagrave, thus carrying the soke in an eastward direction, from Rothley in the forest, across the valley to Sileby, east of the river, and Seagrave on the wolds further east. The soke extends like Barrow's, into the Wreake valley at Gaddesby and Frisby. King William also has land in Thorpe Acre, north-west of Loughborough and now part of the town itself, and Dishley, which was land of queen Edith, and which Godwin holds from him *ad firmam*, and Shepshed, held by Osgot formerly, which Godwin now also holds *in feudo* from the king. Many places in the lower Soar valley, therefore, belong to sokes held by the king and earl Hugh, which extend latitudinally from the forest to the wolds, and the land of the tenants of king and earl follow the same directional pattern (Fig.26, p.169). It remains to be seen whether this pattern can be observed in other places than those comprising the Barrow and Rothley sokes, but some consideration of the term itself, and the significance of these manorial dependencies is essential before proceeding further. The terms *sac* and *soc*, often appearing together, occur very frequently in Domesday and in some earlier documents, but unfortunately their meaning is far from clear:-

'Sacu and socu, "cause and suit", "jurisdiction", "sake and soke",
the most common and vaguest of these (judicial and financial) rights' (24).

Fig. 26. TRANSVERSE LANDHOLDING IN THE LOWER SOAR VALLEY

(3) THE ROTHLEY SOKE: KING EDWARD 1066, KING WILLIAM 1086

Scale: 3 miles = 1 inch approx.
A long standing scholarly tradition associates the soke with areas of Danish occupation, and indeed, some of the most extensive sokes are to be observed in Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire and Leicestershire, and according to this tradition, the soke is regarded as an institution of the Danelaw (25). The tradition is still very much alive; a recent work, devoted exclusively to the Danelaw discusses sokes under that very heading (26). Some doubts, however, must be expressed here. In the attempt to distinguish between Anglo-Saxon and Danish or Scandinavian, it can be overlooked that Saxon and Dane had a common ancestry and common basic social institutions, that 'the Anglo-Saxons had always lived to a greater or lesser extent within a Scandinavian world' (27). It would be reasonable to expect that if the soke is an institution of ninth century Danish origin, it would relate to other institutions of the same origin, in particular to the wapentake. It does not appear to do so however; the Rothley soke extends beyond the Goscote wapentake into the Framland wapentake at Somerby, Chadwell and Wycomb. It is true that "Danish" Leicestershire was divided into the four wapentakes of Guthlaxton, Gartree, Goscote and Framland, and that there are four major sokes in the county, Barrow, Rothley, Great Bowden and Melton. However, two of the sokes have their caputs in Goscote wapentake, and there is no corresponding soke in Guthlaxton. It would also be expected that sokes would not be found outside the area of the Danelaw, but in Staffordshire, the land is described in hides and hundreds, not carucates and wapentakes and there is no evidence of Danish settlement, although there is evidence of Danish attacks (28). Staffordshire contains numerous sokelands, held by the king and the bishop of Chester, including Penkridge (king William, 1086, king Edward, 1066), with land in seven manors in

Cuttlestone hundred, Eccleshall, (bishop of Chester, 1086, bishop of Lichfield, St Chad's, 1066), with land in thirteen vills in Pirehill hundred, Sugnall with nine dependencies, and Lichfield with fourteen, and there are others. It is worth noting also that in these cases the sokes do lie within the hundred to which the caput belongs. It would also be expected that a Danish institution would have a Danish name, but both sac and soc, or sake and soke, are Old English words, and used with very similar meanings to those they appear to bear in Domesday at least as early as the eighth century (29). The significance of “soke” varies according to its application, whether to land, as in a territorial soke, to a judicial right, privilege or duty, as in soca est in...x, or to a man as in sochemann. There is considerable complexity, not to say confusion, involved in considering “soke” as applied to persons; the extent to which it implies “freedom” or “unfreedom” is confusion worse confounded by the emotive connotations of those words in modern usage. Nor is its relationship to phrases such as Ailmar libere tenuit T.R.E., (East Langton, Leics.), and Saxi tenuit et potiut ire quo voluit, (Market Bosworth, Leics.), at all clear. In terms of settlements, however, two relatively simple principles emerge; that “soke” implies the profits of jurisdiction, and that “soke right” seems to go with the land rather than the man (30). This, in turn, implies that a right or duty of prosecution rests with the holder of a particular land, independently of the powers of officers of the shire, or hundred/wapentake, and may imply the existence of a court, also independent of the shire or hundred/wapentake, in which such prosecutions took place. Also, the possibility that the soke, as an instrument of social, administrative or judicial


“sacu”, noun, “strife, dispute, attack”, ll. 1857, 2472.

“socn”, noun, “persecution, search, enquiry” l. 1777.

Wyatt and Chambers, ed, (1943).

organisation, is older than the Danelaw in which it appears so frequently, can not be ruled out.

A return to the Rothley and Barrow sokes will be needed later, but for the present, further examples of associated holdings which traverse the Soar valley from west to east must be sought. To the south of Rothley and north of Leicester lie Belgrave, Merdegrave in Domesday, Thurcaston, Birstall, Wanlip and Syston, and in 1086 land in all of them was in the hands of Hugh de Grandmesnil. Unfortunately, Grandmesnil's lands in Leicestershire are so numerous that it would be possible to pick out of them any pattern which may be desired, so this situation needs a closer look. As with some others among the Norman magnates, notably Grandmesnil's namesake, Hugh earl of Chester, some knowledge of the man himself is helpful to an understanding of landholding in particular localities (31). Surprisingly few of the great tenants-in-chief of the Conqueror were participants in the actual invasion, but this particular "few" included Hugh de Grandmesnil. The Hastings veterans had an aura and prestige of their own; they were legends in their lifetimes and specially favoured by the king. Grandmesnil's position was somewhat anomalous, as was the position of Leicester itself, styled Civitate in Domesday, but not being a diocesan see and therefore not a city. The extent of Hugh de Grandmesnil's lands in Leicestershire and elsewhere (he held in a dozen shires and owned virtually the whole of Leicester, either of his own or jointly with the king) added to his prestige as a veteran of Hastings, was sufficient to rank him among the earls. In fact he received the earl's "third penny" from the £20 a year the king received from the Leicester moneyers. But there had never been an earl of Leicester, and the king was not inclined to dispense earldoms freely, even among the Hastings veterans; he was well aware of the extent to which king Edward's rule had been weakened by their machinations and it was only by

means of some energetic and ruthless campaigns that he was himself able to keep them under control (32). William created only two earldoms during his reign, Chester and Shrewsbury, both of them in the hands of his kinsmen. Grandmesnil was not an earl; he undoubtedly fulfilled the function of sheriff of the county, but he is nowhere styled vice-comes. He was castellan of Leicester. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Grandmesnil lands ringed the borough itself, giving him Belgrave, Birstall, Thurcaston, Humberstone and Syston, but following the river valley downstream, he held land in Anstey, Thurcaston and Groby within the forest area, part of Sileby to the east of the river, and at Wymeswold, on the wolds further east. He was, as it were, "baulked" at Wanlip, which had belonged to earl Aubrey (of Northumbria), who had returned to Normandy before Domesday Book was compiled, and whose lands had reverted for the time being to the king, who held it in 1086. Thus, whatever else he held, Hugh de Grandmesnil and his tenants had, like the king and earl Hugh and their tenants, the advantage of holding land in forest, field and wold; the advantage of being able to diversify operations according to the changes in the market for land, animals and their product, and so maximise their rents (Fig.27, p.174).

North of the Barrow and Rothley sokes, the lands of the king and earl Hugh continue to dominate the scene. In the case of the king, the holders are the taini Regis or "King's Thanes", who appear, usually at the end, in the Domesday account of most counties, sometimes under that title, as in Nottinghamshire, sometimes described as servientes regi as in Leicestershire, or taini et servientes regi as in Warwickshire. Their precise status is obscure, and the size of their holdings varies enormously, but one aspect of their status seems to be that however small their portion, they were tenants-in-chief, holding directly of the king, and their holdings were hereditary (33). Various of the king's thanes held land in


Fig. 27. TRANSVERSE LANDHOLDING IN THE LOWER SOAR VALLEY

(4). HUGH de GRANDMESNIL and TENANTS: (H)=GRANDMESNIL, (T)=TENANT

Scale: 3 miles = 1 inch approx.
Normanton-on-Soar, Sutton Bonnington, Kingston-on-Soar, Ratcliffe-on-Soar, Barton-in-Fabis, Clifton, Gotham, and Willoughby-on-the-Wolds, and earl Hugh's tenants also held in Sutton Bonnington, Normanton-on-Soar and Kingston-on-Soar. This pattern of holdings grouped in forest, field and wold, running from west to east, seems consistent throughout the lower Soar valley, from the walls of Leicester to the banks of the Trent, or so it appears from the Domesday accounts of the wapentakes of Goscote in Leicestershire and Rushcliffe in Nottinghamshire. To discover if any greater substance can be given to this suggestion, the relationship between the sokes of Rothley and Barrow must be examined more closely, and some reason sought why the assessment of the Barrow soke includes not only the members belonging to that manor, but also Loughborough, Kegworth, Hathern, Dishley and Burton-on-the-Wolds.

The connection between the Barrow and Rothley sokes appears in that in four vills, Seagrave, Sileby, Frisby and Gaddesby, there is land belonging to both sokes. In the case of Frisby the total land recorded is divided between the two sokes; no other landholder is present. For the most part, both sokes follow the same geographical direction, eastwards and northwards of the soke centres. Several of the vills in which Rothley and Barrow have sokeland are adjacent to each other. There is also the connection between the high status holders of the lands both in 1086 and in king Edward's time. In 1086, Barrow was held by earl Hugh of Chester, the premier earl, and in 1066 it was held by earl Harold, heir to the throne and briefly, king of England. Rothley was land of king William in 1086, and king Edward in 1066. That there is a connection between Rothley and Barrow sokes is clear, but what that connection was, and the significance of the situation appearing in Domesday, is almost totally obscure. One possibility, among several, is that the two estates were originally one, and that they were separated by the process of fission (34). This process appears to have

affected many originally large estates, which, by that process, were broken apart into a number of separately held manors, a process sometimes described as manorialisation. If this is so, there remains the rather irritating question of whether the caput of this Barrow-Rothley was in Barrow or Rothley. There is a third factor in the equation however, which is the relationship between Barrow and Loughborough, which were jointly assessed, both in 1066 and 1086.

We have seen that the assessment of the Barrow soke includes Loughborough, Kegworth and land in Burton-on-the-Wolds, Hathern and Dishley, and that the assessment of £40 applied in 1066 and 1086, although it was worth only £10 when the earl acquired it. All of this land was earl Harold's in 1066, with the exception of Loughborough, then held by five thanes. In 1086, Loughborough was held by five tenants of earl Hugh: Roger, Ralph, Hugh, Godric and Roger, who may or may not be the same man as the first Roger. In any case, there are five portions of land. Although Domesday does not say as much, it is most likely that the five thanes of 1066 were earl Harold's men. If so, we have a collection of lands which formed a single unit of assessment not only in 1086 but also in 1066, and thus we have an unusually clear view of a pre-Conquest situation. The view can be made even clearer by advancing the suggestion that the holdings of earl Hugh's tenants in 1086 were the same in extent as those of the thanes in 1066. The difficulty arising with this, as with all other pre-Conquest situations deduced from the Domesday Survey, is that in the absence of earlier documentation, we do not know how far back into the pre-Conquest period the situation goes. This must to some extent affect consideration of the notion that the Barrow and Rothley sokes were at one time a single jurisdiction or unit of assessment. If they were, obviously this must have been before 1066, or the joint assessment would be indicated in the Domesday assessments. There is thus the possibility of a very large pre-Conquest estate, or other fiscal and/or juridictional land unit consisting of the presumed joint soke of Rothley and Barrow, together with the known joint assessment of the Barrow soke with Loughborough, Kegworth and land in Burton, Hathern and Dishley. It must be borne in mind, however, that the curious
juxtaposition of lands and vills in the Barrow and Rothley sokes may not mean that they were
originally joined, and may, in fact, mean just the opposite: that the Barrow and Rothley sokes
were separate and possibly rival jurisdictions, and had been so from time immemorial.

The pre-Conquest position in the lower Soar valley, so far as it is revealed in
Domesday Book, can be summarised according to three groups of holdings; lands between
Rothley and Leicester, lands of the Rothley and Barrow sokes and lands between
Loughborough and the Trent. Of these groups, the first is by far the most difficult to deal
with, largely because it is impossible to establish with any certainty, the antecessores of Hugh
de Grandmesnil. In order to do so it would probably be necessary to produce a detailed
account of the English earldoms during the last half century or so preceding the Conquest,
and the difficulty of doing that has been emphasised by one of the few scholars who might
have been expected to approach the task with confidence; 'It is impossible to reconstruct the
detailed history of the earldoms which at one time or another existed in England between the
accession of Cnut and the Norman Conquest' (35). So far as Hugh de Grandmesnil's
antecessores are concerned, it may be no more can be said than that 'It is possible, in fact, that
Hugh's holding was made up of two elements; a hard core of lands that came to him from
some previously important person's estate, and a hastily contrived mélangé of further lands
that had been gathered together from other sources' (36). Before abandoning the quest for de
Grandmesnil's elusive antecessores, however, it is worth noting some of the pre-Conquest
features of the area. The lower Soar valley lies at the extreme periphery of the pre-Conquest
earldoms, as it had lain on the frontier of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms of the pre-unification
period. Any or possibly all, of the greater earls of the pre-Conquest period might at one time
or another have held the lands which eventually came to Hugh de Grandmesnil, and it is

The Norman Conquest of Leicestershire and Rutland, p.19.
worth considering them in turn. Starting with earl Leofric of Mercia (1023-57) who could well have held Leicester and its shire, his sole surviving son, Aelfgar, succeeded him as earl of Mercia in 1057, and died in 1062. Aelfgar was succeeded as earl of Mercia by his son Edwin, who was murdered by his own retainers, hoping to curry favour with the king, in 1071. Of the house of Godwine, earl of Wessex, who died in 1053, three sons held earldoms which stretched into or close to Leicestershire: Harold, Gyrth and Leofwine. Harold was born c.1022, distinguished himself in the service of king Edward, and was created earl of East Anglia in 1044. After the brief exile of the Godwins in 1051, Harold resumed his earldom in 1052, but in the following year Godwine died and Harold succeeded him as earl of Wessex, and his brother Gyrth became earl of East Anglia. In 1057, Leofwine was created earl of a polyglot, and therefore nameless earldom, which was virtually all of south east England which was not part of Wessex or East Anglia. All three, Harold, Gyrth and Leofwine, perished at Hastings in 1066. From Northumbria, earl Siward's son, Waltheof, whose earldom included land in Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire and Rutland, prudently married a niece of the Comqueror, the countess Judith, but then imprudently became involved in the revolt of the earls and was beheaded in 1076. No situation could be better contrived to obscure the identification of Hugh de Grandmesnil’s antecessores. Finally, it should be noted that the bulk of Grandmesnil’s Leicestershire holdings were south and west of the borough itself, in the Gartree and Guthlaxton wapentakes. Of his 74 Leicestershire manors, 17 are in Gartree and 38 in Guthlaxton. This may represent what Professor Phythian-Adams has called the 'hard core' of Grandmesnil’s holding, while the 16 manors in Goscote and the three in Framland may represent the 'hastily contrived mélange of further lands' to which he also refers (37). Grandmesnil’s holdings to the north of Leicester follow the pattern observed elsewhere in the lower Soar valley, of maximising revenue and maintaining the opportunity

of diversification in these lands by holding them as an irregular traverse of the valley, crossing the river from west to east, thus embracing forest, meadow, arable and pasture, the proportions of which could be varied in accordance with changing market conditions; a pattern which may have been established in much earlier times.

The transaction recorded in the Leicestershire Domesday as commutatione Turchilestone, “the Thurcaston exchange” is of particular interest in this respect. The parties to the transaction were king William and Geoffrey de la Guerche, lord of the extensive Framland soke of Melton. At some time before 1086, the king gave a parcel of lands, some of which, in Little Dalby and Withcote, was adjacent to the Melton soke, to Geoffrey, in exchange for the manor of Thurcaston. Geoffrey also held land in Burton-on-the-Wolds, which means that prior to the exchange, Geoffrey held lands traversing the lower Soar valley, and by retaining some land in Thurcaston after the exchange was made, he kept his traverse intact. By 1086, however, the manor of Thurcaston was in the hands of Hugh de Grandmesnil, who had strengthened his own traverses of the valley by its acquisition.

Another magnate to hold land in the lower Soar valley in this manner was Henry de Ferrers. In addition to a group of holdings in the extreme north west of the Goscote wapentake, Henry held land in Anstey, Seagrave, Sutton Bonnington, Willoughby-on-the-Wolds and Leake.

This transverse settlement pattern is most clearly seen in the sokes of Rothley and Barrow and it obviously applies both in king Edward’s time and in king William’s. It would be of great advantage to be able to trace the antecessores of the Domesday landholders here back through the reign of the Confessor to the time of the Danish kings, 1016-42, and into the reign of Aethelred “the Unready”. One of the obstacles to doing this lies in the person or persons of “Queen Edith”, who, so far as the lower Soar valley is concerned, held land in Thorpe Acre and Dishley, which was held in 1086 by Godwin from king William. Domesday never makes it clear whether “Queen Edith” refers to Edith, daughter of earl Godwine of Wessex, who married Edward the Confessor in 1045, or to Edith, daughter of earl Aelfgar of
Mercia, and widow of Gruffydd ap Llewellyn, "king" of Wales, who married earl Harold following Gruffydd's death in 1063 (38). Rothley itself may well be a royal possession of very long standing and is the subject of future discussion. In 1066 it was in the hands of king Edward and its soke traversed the lower Soar valley. It may have included the settlements of Swithland and Cropston, and contained land in Seagrave, Sileby and Gaddesby, and extended to Asfordby, Wartnaby and Frisby-on-the-Wreake. It may have been established early in the Anglo-Saxon period, and it certainly survived long after Domesday. It was a royal manor until 1150, and its soke was virtually intact well into the thirteenth century (39). Fragments of it remained into the fourteenth century and may well have lasted until the Dissolution of the Monasteries in the sixteenth (40). It lasted longer still as the ecclesiastical Peculiar of the Manor of Rothley Temple. Barrow, with its soke, together with Kegworth and land in Hathern and Dishley, belonged to earl Harold in 1066, giving a sort of "grand traverse" of the lower Soar valley, particularly if the "five thanes", holders of Loughborough in 1066, were Harold's men. The fact that the said five thanes were the antecessores of five of earl Hugh's tenants in 1086 is a significant feature, to be examined when considering the origins of Loughborough itself. Between Loughborough and the Trent, the Domesday position shows the king and earl Hugh holding, through their tenants and thanes, the same traverse of the lower Soar valley as they did with the sokes of Rothley and Barrow. The antecessores here, however, are far less obvious.

The settlement of Shepshed provides an opportunity to explore the circumstances of a non-royal antecessor, and to consider the question of the use of the hide rather than the carucate in the Domesday assessment of Leicestershire. At Domesday, Shepshed was held in fee from the king by one Godwin. There are no other recorded landholders in Shepshed.

There is a named antecessor, Osgot, who tenuit cum saca et soca. Apart from the personnel of the holding, its appurtances are two and a half hides and four carucates, fifty acres of meadow, and woodland of one league by four furlongs (480 acres). There are two points of interest arising from the use of the term "hide" here and elsewhere in Leicestershire. The hide, either as a unit of assessment or as a measurement of land area, is a very early Saxon institution, with which Bede was very familiar, and whose ‘expression appears to combine population (in households) with land area’ (41). The traditional notion of the hide representing 120 acres arises from Bede’s statement that the Isle of Thanet contained 600 hides (42). The area of Thanet, calculated at 720,000 acres, divided by Bede’s total of 600 hides gives a notional hide of 120 acres. The question to be asked is why, in a part of England supposedly and apparently controlled and partly settled by the Viking invaders of the ninth century, the hide survives the Scandinavian carucate as a unit of measurement/assessment into the late eleventh century. Shepshed is not an isolated example. Out of the 44 landholders recorded in the Leicestershire Domesday, thirteen have their land or some of it assessed in hides. Four places where this is so are relevant to the present purpose: Shepshed, Donnington-le-Heath and Burton-on-the-Wolds, a group which, incidentally, spans the valley from the forest to the wolds (Fig.28, p.182). The survival of the hide in Leicestershire adds a little weight to the suggestion, made in the previous chapter, that it is no more than speculation, however perspicacious, to talk of a Danelaw “boundary” anywhere north of Stony Stratford in Buckinghamshire, and that in the northern Danelaw, the Viking impact was limited to the fortified towns or army bases, and the places settled by Scandinavian immigrants. In Leicestershire terms, this would mean the borough itself and parts of the the Framland wapentake. The other matter of interest relating to the hide as it appears in the lower Soar valley and elsewhere in Leicestershire is its relation to the Danish carucate. The

Fig. 28. TRANSVERSE LANDHOLDING IN THE LOWER SOAR VALLEY

(5). TRAVERSE OF HIDATED LAND

Scale: 3 miles = 1 inch approx.
hide, in Leicestershire in 1086, was not the equivalent of the carucate, notionally 120 acres, as it may have been elsewhere, and there are three distinct references to this fact in the Leicestershire Domesday:-


2). *Ogerus Brito tenet in Cilebi* (Kilby) *de rege II partes unius hidae id est XII carucata terrae*. An even simpler calculation gives the same result: eighteen carucates to the hide.

3). *Ipse G.* (Geoffrey de la Guerche) *tenet Medeltone* (Melton Mowbray). *Ibi sunt VII hidae et una carucata terrae*. *In una quaequae hida sunt XIII carucata terrae et dimidia*. This, at fourteen and a half carucates to the hide, seems to upset the previous equations, but one of the major authorities on Domesday Book considers this to be an exception made in a particular case, and that the hide contained eighteen carucates as indicated in the cases of Burbage and Kilby (43). Thus, if it can be assumed that *carucata* means "ploughland", whatever its extent in terms of area, Shepshed consisted of 49 ploughlands, 50 acres of meadow, 480 acres of woodland and a mill. Domesday tells us that *hanc terram vastam inuuenit*, referring to Godwin, king William's tenant, but in any case, the potential here is considerable, and if the assessment bears any relation to the actual extent of the land, Osgot, Godwin's *antecessor*, held a large slice of the local landscape, together with the profits of justice therefrom, and possibly the proceeds of four houses in Leicester as well. Lands in Sutton, Bonnington, Normanton-on-Soar and Ratcliffe-on-Soar were held by one Osgot in 1066, who was the *antecessor* of Saewin, a substantial king's thane in 1086. "Osgot" is a relatively uncommon name, occurring only fourteen times in Domesday as a whole (44). The examples are widely

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(44). Dodgson and Palmer, *Index to Domesday Book*. 
separated, so that the appearance of two examples in close proximity increases the chances that they refer to the same man. If this is so, then Osgot can be traced from his substantial base in Shepshed across the valley to lands in Sutton, Bonnington, Normanton-on-Soar and Ratcliffe-on-Soar (Fig.29, p.185).

A similar example of a non-royal T.R.E. landholder, holding lands crossing the valley is that of Stori, antecessor of the Count of Mortain, in the Rushcliffe wapentake of Nottinghamshire. Again, this depends on the assumption that the references to “Stori” are all to the same man, but as there are only five references to “Stori” in the whole of Domesday, the case for such an assumption is strengthened (45). Stori could then have held land in Sutton, Bonnington, Normanton-on-Soar, Gotham, Leake, Stanton-in-the-Wolds and Keyworth (Fig.30, p.186).

It would appear, then, that a pattern of landholding, which may have originated early in the Saxon period, or even earlier, is discernible as a prominent feature of settlement organisation in the lower Soar valley, not only among the major landholders of Domesday, but also in the greater and lesser landholders who were their antecessores in pre-Conquest times.

A second prominent feature of the settlement of the lower Soar valley as it appears in the Domesday account is the connection, or relationship between the Rothley and Barrow sokes, and between Barrow and Loughborough. The land of the Barrow and Rothley sokes lies for the most part in vills which are physically adjacent to each other. In some cases a single vill contains land belonging to both sokes, and at Frisby-on-the-Wreake the entire vill is divided between the two sokes. This, in itself, is sufficient to raise the possibility that at one time the two sokes were combined, but there are other circumstances which emphasise the connection between Rothley, Barrow and Loughborough. In 1086, Rothley was land of king William the Conqueror, and in 1066 it was also land of the king, Edward the Confessor.

(45). Dodgson and Palmer, Index to Domesday Book.
Fig. 29. TRANSVERSE LANDHOLDING IN THE LOWER SOAR VALLEY

(6) LAND OF OSGOT

RATCLIFFE-ON-SOAR

SUTTON BONNINGTON

NORMANTON-ON-SOAR

****** CHARNWOOD ******
****** FOREST ***********
****** Shepshed **********

Scale: 3 miles = 1 inch approx.
Fig. 30. TRANSVERSE LANDHOLDING IN THE LOWER SOAR VALLEY

(7). LAND OF STORI

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Scale: 3 miles = 1 inch approx.
In 1086, Barrow was in the hands of earl Hugh of Chester, who might reasonably be described as the premier earl, and in 1066 it was in the hands of earl Harold, son of Godwin, who might reasonably be described in the same way. In 1086, Loughborough was in the hands of five named tenants of earl Hugh, and in 1066, it was in the hands of five otherwise unidentified thanes. It seems reasonably clear that the incoming Normans took over a territorial arrangement which had existed in pre-Conquest times, even to the extent of matching precisely the status of the landholders involved. Taken together, all of this appears to suggest that at some time in the Anglo-Saxon period, a territorial unit of some kind was based on the three settlements under discussion.

A considerable difficulty lies in trying to determine what sort of territory it was, and over what period of time it existed. If, as may be the case, it existed over a long period of time, its function, and so its designation will have changed, probably several times during the course of its existence. As Dr Higham has shown in respect of a larger territory, the Iron Age Cornovii, whose rulers were based at the hillfort on the Wrekin in Shropshire, became the Wreocansaetan, once independent, but an underkingdom of Northumbria by c.620, a Mercian province by the mid-seventh century, and the earldom of Edwin on the eve of the Norman Conquest (46). Smaller territories, too, followed a similar developmental pattern: changing very little in physical extent, but very considerably in function, status and designation. In an analysis of the mediaeval kingdom of Scotland, Professor Barrow reconstructed the shrieval system and related it to the functions status and obligations of the Scottish thanes. He began, however, with English examples, such as the shires so designated, of Tottenham in Middlesex, Waltham in Essex and Berwick-on-Tweed, among others (47). It is sometimes difficult for people accustomed to thinking in terms of the long-lived pre-1974 English shires to realise that shiring and re-shiring was a continuous process throughout the Anglo-Saxon

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period. It can also be difficult to grasp the notion, which was so obvious to our Anglo-Saxon forbears, that the designation of a territory is primarily a statement about its function and status, and only secondarily a statement about its spatial extent. Dr Higham has dealt succinctly with this problem in his recent consideration of the hide (48). It seems likely that the sokes of Rothley and Barrow with Loughborough, like the shires of Tottenham and Waltham:

'preserve in the eleventh and twelfth centuries traces of a sytem of what may be called "extensive" royal lordship which would once have been general across a great tract of south-eastern England...What sustained this lordship was "soke", that is to say, goods and services rendered at, and directed from, particular centres, often at some distance from their dependencies' (49).

The principle of what Barrow calls 'extensive royal lordship' is readily apparent, not only within the lower Soar valley, but also throughout a large tract of land surrounding it, covering a substantial area of the present counties of Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and Staffordshire. The appearance of king William and earl Hugh in the lands of their antecessores king Edward and earl Harold, together with the distribution of the land of the king's thanes, illustrates the situation described by Professor Barrow. Within the lower Soar valley, the principle of "soke" is also evident. Most of the land, and therefore its tenants, "owed soke" to Rothley, to Barrow, or to Loughborough. It may be possible to suggest, therefore, that these three settlements and their dependencies constituted a once delineable territory, comparable to the onetime "shires" of Tottenham and Waltham, which was part of the system of extensive royal lordship sustained by the principle of soke right. There are, however, some formidable questions outstanding. The process of fission, alienation or manorialisation which divided the original unit is by no means clear. As yet it is not clear

which of the three places involved was the one to which the soke of the whole territory was owed, or what, if any, was the status and function of the other two. Gavelkind and partible inheritance are often cited as causes of the break-up of earlier and larger territories, and rightly so, but there were other forces at work. Royal grants of land to faithful followers in battle are a feature of early Anglo-Saxon kingship, and following the Conversion, royal grants of land were made for the foundation of monasteries and churches. These, among other practices, tended to erode the organisational unity of formerly compact territories. Above all, there was an increasing awareness that the land itself was a marketable commodity with a measurable capital value and a calculable revenue potential. This factor must be the focus of attention before the three settlements under discussion can be examined individually.
CHAPTER SIX

Lands, Vills, Jurisdictions and Seigneurial Entrepreneurism

In the present chapter an attempt is made to examine some of the particularities of settlement organisation in the lower Soar valley in an effort to discover something of the motivation of the people who created that organisation. This means dealing with villages, vills and manors, and recognising that manor and vill rarely coincide. The pattern of settlement was largely determined by the landscape itself, but human activity does not always respect this. There are many instances of landlords who converted land best suited to arable into pasture for sheep because the price of wool was high and the price of bread low, and vice versa. As Professor Everitt has said, administrative boundaries and pays rarely coincide (1).

This incompatibility between administrative and organisational units on the one hand, and landscape features and divisions on the other, is nowhere more evident than in the Domesday account of England in 1086. The names of the places recorded in Domesday are recognisable, for the most part, as those in use today, and many of them are villages, some of them physically very little altered for centuries. It may be that the village is a proper starting point for the present chapter: it has certainly attracted a lot of scholarly attention. As long ago as 1955, W.G.Hoskins identified three physical categories of village, two of which are readily observable on the continent as well as in England: the strassendorfer, or "street villages", often characterised by name, such as Langdorf in Germany or Long Whatton in Leicestershire, England, and the angerdorfer, or "green villages", in which the buildings surround a central grassed space (2). Hoskins' third category was "...noticeably a conglomeration of houses...consists of dwellings planted down with no evident relationship to each other or to any visible nucleus" (3). Since Hoskins wrote in 1955, the study of villages

has become more sophisticated and complex: at least six elements of village structure have been postulated, of which any one or more can be combined in any number of ways, to produce a very large number of types or categories of village (4). Hoskins' third category is now characterised as "polyfocal" (5). Not all authorities, however, are convinced of the value of categorising village types in order to enhance our understanding of them (6). Certainly the identification of village types will have little value if it can not be related to other aspects of historical development, as Hoskins seems to hint, and it may be best to approach the subject from another angle, starting with the recognition that manor and vill do not often coincide.

For example, of the 294 recorded vills in the Leicestershire Domesday, excluding the eight places which are unidentified, only 146 appear to be wholly in the hands of one lord, and this is an inflated figure, since it includes berewicks and soke members as well as manors. The majority of the recorded vills in the Leicestershire Domesday are divided between two or more lords, the "record" being at Swinford, where half-a-dozen separate lords held land. Within the lower Soar valley, Seagrave and Burton-on-the-Wolds illustrate the situation.

In Seagrave, four magnates are represented: king William, who, as part of the Rothley soke has six carucates and 45 acres (3 x 1.5 furlongs) of pasture, Earl Hugh, who, as part of the Barrow soke, has two carucates and ten acres of pasture, Henry de Ferrers, who has half a carucate and four acres of pasture, and Robert de Bucy, whose tenant Robert has two carucates and seven acres of pasture. Within an area known as Seagrave, therefore, there are 10.5 ploughlands and 66 acres of pasture in four "bundles", of which the king's is by far

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the largest. So far as the population is concerned, there is very little to go on. Henry de Ferrers' half carucate sported one villein and one bordar with one plough: having been rated at 6d in 1066, it was rated at 2s at Domesday, a fourfold increase. Robert, tenant of Robert de Bucy, had two carucates which boasted three villeins and three bordars with two ploughs, one in demesne. The holding was rated at 12d (1s) in 1066 and 5s in 1086, a fivefold increase. We know nothing about how the lands of the king and the earl of Chester were peopled or equipped, nor do we know the value of the holdings, which are included in the assessments for the sokes to which they belonged. We might guess that the day to day supervision of activity in the fields was in the hands of royal and comital reeves, who may well not have been resident in Seagrave itself. We have no indication of the status occupied by Seagrave relative to that of other settlements. The Domesday Survey of some other counties, Nottinghamshire for example, is slightly more informative. In Nottinghamshire, each entry is prefixed by a marginal character, M (manerium), B (berewicus), or S (soca), which assists in this respect, but Leicestershire settlements are not so conveniently categorised, although we do know that the greater part of the settlement was divided between two sokes. There is no reference to a priest at Seagrave, so presumably no church, nor does there appear to be a mill, either or both of which would serve as a focal point within a nucleated or semi-nucleated settlement. At around 120 metres above sea level, Seagrave is well up in the wolds and it is literally miles from anywhere. The nearest neighbouring settlement by a good margin is Sileby, where there were two mills in 1086. It is perhaps not unreasonable to assume that any cereals grown on Seagrave's ploughlands were milled at the nearest of Sileby's mills. The bulk of Seagrave's land was divided between two sokes, the remainder, about a fifth of the total, was divided unequally between two lesser lords. It is difficult to imagine a less cohesive settlement, but today Seagrave is a nucleated village of the sort which appears on Christmas cards; Hall, church, inn, farmhouses and cottages all in close proximity.

At first sight, Seagrave appears to be an obvious example of C.C. Taylor's contention that the nucleated village, which used to be attributed to the Anglo-Saxons, is very largely a
post-Domesday phenomenon (7). We know, however, from excavation that nucleated settlements existed in some places long before the Conquest. West Stow in the Suffolk Breckland is an example which has been cited earlier in other contexts, but it is clear that there, even making due allowance for the distortion of evidence caused by the repair and replacement of decayed or damaged buildings over time, a settlement which was considerably more than a single farmstead existed early in the Anglo-Saxon period (8). Various explanations have been offered for the nucleation of previously dispersed settlements, most of them reflecting prudential motives of some kind, such as the better opportunities for defence afforded by a concentration of population, or the rationalisation of the distribution of pasture. However, human activity, particularly of a structural nature, is not always undertaken from strictly prudential motives; the securing of a material advantage or the avoidance of a similar disadvantage. A fairly recent publication deals specifically with this question (9). It might be as well to look at the process of village nucleation as being something which took place in some places at particular times in response to prudential considerations, but which in other places and at other times, was a matter of following a current fashion. Building walls round towns can often be seen to be as much a matter of civic pride as of precaution against attack, and the practice of erecting incongruous spires on the towers of earlier churches is often a matter of inter-parochial rivalry. Robert de Tosny's castle, overlooking Bottesford in Leicestershire is on a hill-top, an excellent site for a defensive fortification, but in giving it the title of "Belvoir", he did not express a particularly martial sentiment.

At Burton-on-the-Wolds, now also a nucleated village, the same sort of situation as at Seagrave is encountered, but on a larger scale. Two major magnates, earl Hugh and Geoffrey


de la Guerche are represented by tenants, and a third lord, Durand Malet, holds of the king.

It is in no sense a digression to consider Durand Malet in some detail. The extent of his holdings is sufficiently small for this to be done fairly quickly, and it may be that he illustrates the character and motivation of the generality of the Ango-Norman tenants-in-chief, which was also that of their antecessores and of the earlier Anglo-Saxon landlords. Given the close-knit web of family relationships existing between the relatively small numbers of the Anglo-Norman tenants-in-chief, it is most likely that Durand Malet was related to Robert and William Malet, both of whom were more extensive landholders than Durand (10). He is, however, quite independent of them; he holds of the king, he is a tenant-in-chief. Durand Malet is "small fry" indeed, compared with his fellow landlords in Burton-on-the-Wolds: like the little figures embroidered into the margin of the Bayeux Tapestry, he is a small detail in the vast canvas of Domesday Book. His obscurity, however, is a good reason for studying him more closely; the lesser lords were less likely to have their actions determined by matters of national importance, the necessity of attendance on the monarch, or the pursuit of the high ostentation required of the upper aristocracy, and it may well be that men like Durand Malet were more truly makers of the English landscape than either the great magnates above them or the socmen, villeins and bordars below them.

It is interesting to attempt to discover his status. The characteristic "format" of Domesday Book includes, for each shire recorded as such, an opening description of the shire town, In burgo, or In civitate. Following the accounts of the cities and boroughs is a list of landholders, tenentes, in the shire. This, too, appears to have a conventional format but it is very inconsistent. First comes the king, who is followed by "the lords spiritual", archbishops, bishops and abbots. Then come the lay lords, headed by the earls and counts. The females appear to follow the males, but this is not invariable, partly because there are very few of

(10). Dodgson and Palmer, Index to Domesday Book, Part Two: 'Persons.'
them, and partly because some of them, for example countesses who were the widows of
earls, being of high rank, sometimes occupy the places which would have been occupied by
their late husbands. Finally come the least of the tenants-in-chief, the taini or servientes regi.

It is significant that these lists are numbered, but the purpose of such enumeration is largely
obscured by the impossibility of achieving consistency in it; the only entirely consistent
feature is the appearance of the king as first in all the lists. Allowing for the inconsistencies, it
would seem that the purpose of the enumeration was to provide an indication of purely social
status, an order of precedence within the shire, not related to the extent of a lord's holdings,
either within a particular county or in general. The number of a particular lord has of course
to be taken in relation to the number of tenentes in the list, but on the whole, this does give a
valuable indication of personal status, because this is how the person concerned was
perceived by his contemporaries.

Durand Malet appears in only three shires; in Lincolnshire, where he is 44th out of 70,
in Leicestershire, where he is 35th out of 44, and in Nottinghamshire, where he is 26th out of
30 (11). He is more than a king's thane, but not much more, and it is not impossible that his
original status was just that. Most of Durand Malet's holdings are in Lincolnshire, and they
lie in a kind of quadrant formed by radii running north and east from Market Rasen to a
circumference formed by the south bank of the Humber estuary. This is in the North Riding
of the former Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Lindsey. Here he held land in ten manors, with a
berewick, four sokelands and other appurtenances, totalling some 28 ploughlands, carucata,
731 acres of pasture, 170 acres of brushwood, the proceeds of two and a half mills and two
and a half churches, with two priests and a salthouse, salina. On some of his lands he
collected the tailla, amounting to £3-13s (12).

At Burton-on-the-Wolds, Prestwold and Wymeswold in Leicestershire, he held a

(11). Dodgson and Palmer, Index to Domesday Book. (12). R.Welldon-Finn, Domesday
Book, a Guide, (1986 edn.), p.79. The tailla was an additional rent, paid to the lord.
total of seven and a half carucates and one bovate, and 45 acres of pasture, and at Owthorp in Nottinghamshire, a half carucate and twelve acres of pasture. Part of his Lincolnshire holding was disputed; in the clamores of the North Riding, the jurors held that the two bovates at Great Cotes belonged to Alfred of Lincoln (a more conspicuous figure than Durand Malet in that county, he is 27th as against 44th in the list of tenentes) but that Durand held soc over it and the three villeins who belonged to it.

**Durand Malet** is certainly in a small way of business, but he has a useful variety of assets. It is worth noting that most of his land is in or near to wealden countryside; all his Leicestershire land is in places which incorporate the 'wold' element in their names, and Owthorp, his Nottinghamshire land abuts an extensive area known as Owthorp wolds, (SK 330660). Of his Lincolnshire lands, Cuxwold incorporates the 'wold' element, and Irby, Cabourn, Linwood and Nettleton are all in the North Lincolnshire Wolds, running between Market Rasen and Immingham. This may be purely coincidental, but in case it is not, a possible reason may be explored. There is no doubt that the characteristics of wealden landscapes have been observed and noted for centuries, distinguished from other landscape types, and, in particular, a distinction has been drawn since Anglo-Saxon times between wold, 'wald', '(w)old' and forest, 'wudu' (13). Wolds, during the Anglo-Saxon and early mediaeval period were:

'pastures supporting a scattering of trees, with laeger stands here and there, (which) made ideal, well sheltered grazing grounds. Foliage within reach of browsing animals, the mast of beech and oak and the leaves of fallen trees provided sustenance for livestock; stands could be managed in such a way as to provide browse, cut from trees and then spread out for feeding' (14).

Durand Malet had a total of 788 acres of pasture, pratis, and in addition 170 acres of


(14). Fox, 'People of the Wolds', p.85.
brushwood, *silva minuta*. He was clearly able to practise grazing on some scale. No doubt he grazed all kinds of animals, but certain features of the account of his Lincolnshire lands may point to a kind of specialism. Among the variations in phrase which occur in the Domesday accounts of ploughland is *terra est x bovibus*, instead of the more usual *terra est x carucis*, "there is land for x oxen", rather than "there is land for x ploughs". This variation is not confined to the lands of Durand Malet, nor is it confined to Lincolnshire, where it occurs frequently. However, taking into account the fact that at Rothwell, Durand Malet had twice as much land for ploughing, *terra duplicatum ad arandi*, than was being ploughed, and at Claxby and Navenby there was land for ten oxen, the student is reminded of the suggestion of Dr S.P.J.Harvey, that in some areas oxen were bred for sale to other regions, and that numbers of oxen may have been recorded which were not intended for arable production but for sale (15).

If, in fact, Durand Malet held all this wealden pasture because he specialised in ox-breeding, or *vice versa*, he becomes more than a very minor landlord; he is also an entrepreneur, a facet he shares with most of the Anglo-Norman landlords, however greater the extent of their lands than his. Durand Malet did not hold enough land to derive sufficient wealth from rents and capital value alone, or to invest in land on a scale large enough for his market operations to yield a fitting competence as could his superiors, so he "diversified" as a stock-breeder. Any attempt to "flesh out" the figure of Durand Malet further involves pure speculation, but he might be seen as an "upwardly mobile" king's thane, originally granted some of the lands held in 1066 by Rothulfr, his principal *antecessor*, and having sufficient acumen to use his land profitably, acquired other lands of other *antecessores*, tangling with the influential Alfred of Lincoln in the process, not only in Lincolnshire, but also in Nottinghamshire and Leicestershire, where we find him in 1086 in the wolds overlooking the

River Soar.

It seems that at Burton-on-the-Wolds as at Seagrave, there is no natural cohesion between the various parcels of land and their appurtenances recorded in Domesday. Earl Hugh had three tenants there; Leofwine, who held a hide, that is, eighteen carucates, Godric, who held two carucates and Hugh, also holding two carucates. The jurisdiction of the hide was in Loughborough, but Hugh de Grandmesnil claimed jurisdiction of the two carucates held by Godric. Geoffrey de la Guerche’s tenant, William, held five carucates with sac and soc, and Durand Malet held five carucates from the king. There was no church and no mill, although the latter would not be likely up in the wolds.

The inhabitants of places like Seagrave and Burton-on-the-Wolds can hardly have developed much in the way of “community spirit”, they belonged to different lords, different manors and separate jurisdictions. Burton and Seagrave are both in the wolds east of the river, but the same is true of places on the valley floor and in the forest to the west, although it is noticeable that fewer of the vills of the forest area are split between tenants-in-chief. Examples which may be quoted are Dishley, divided between the king and earl Hugh, Castle Donnington, divided between earl Hugh and the countess Aelfeva, widow of earl Algar of Mercia, and Thurcaston, divided between Hugh de Grandmesnil and Geoffrey de la Guerche. In many of the places under consideration here, there was no church, and the courts were held in other vills, some distance away. The manorial and other courts of the lower Soar valley will be treated later, but a review of the churches recorded in Domesday in the area may give some idea of the places where people may have gathered on particular occasions. Such a review, however, is not as easily made as it might appear (16). Throughout the lower Soar valley, as defined herein, there is only one church mentioned in Domesday. This is at Ratcliffe-on-Soar, in Nottinghamshire, where there is also a priest recorded. Finding the

rest involves juggling with archaeological features of existing churches, grants of tithes made by landlords, and the provenance of priests, which may not necessarily imply that there was a church in the place where the priest is recorded. Where priests are recorded, they are usually included among the socmen, villeins and bordars as part of the working population of the vill. Some are recorded as landholders, but again, this does not necessarily mean that there was a church on their land (17).

Priests are recorded at Syston, Rothley and Castle Donnington in Leicestershire and at Ratcliffe-on-Soar in Nottinghamshire. Orderic Vitalis records that Hugh de Grandemesnil granted the tithes of some of his manors to the abbey of St Evroul in Normandy; they included Belgrave, the church and eleven virgates of land, with two peasant tithe collectors, Thurcaston, the church and two virgates of land, and Thurmanston, where there was a peasant tithe collector. He also records that Roger of Melay and Brisard and Robert Pultrel, two of earl Hugh's men, also gave their Leicestershire tithes to St Evroul (18). Roger held of earl Hugh in Loughborough, and Robert in Kegworth, which gives some grounds for inferring churches in those places. The presence of the remains of an early window, generally reckoned to be late Saxon or early Norman, in the parish church at Birstall may indicate another church in use at the time of Domesday, and some of the fabric of Diseworth church may well be Saxo-Norman. The place-name "Prestwold" on the wolds east of the Soar is a tenuous hint of another church, but it is clear that the searcher has to "scrape the barrel" for evidence of eleven churches in the Soar valley between Leicester and the Trent.

Another possible source of information about churches of the later eleventh century is their patronal dedications. It is possible that in some cases a church dedicated to an "early" saint, or a saint whose cult flourished during an early period, may indeed have been a

pre-Conquest foundation. Dedications to St Martin, for instance, may be very early. Martin, bishop of Tours, lived between the years 316-397, and the fact that he was held in great veneration by St Benedict of Nursia, 480-550, author of the Rule of St Benedict and founder of the Benedictine Order, led to the early and widespread establishment of the cult of St Martin, particularly as Benedict's own life was the subject of the second book of the "Dialogues" of Pope Gregory the Great, 590-604, who was responsible for Augustine's mission to England in 597 (19). Another dedication, possibly indicating the foundation of an early church, is to St Andrew, the first apostle, who successfully evangelised in Asia Minor and Greece. St Augustine of Canterbury possibly perceiving a similarity to his own situation, promoted the cult of St Andrew, which was widespread in East Anglia as early as the seventh century. Another group of dedications which may indicate an unrecorded Domesday church is to saints of the "Celtic" and Anglo-Saxon periods of Christianity. St Winifred, for example, was a seventh century lady, related to another Welsh saint, St Beuno. Undoubtedly an historical figure, St Winifred was the dedicatee of the great twelfth century abbey at Shrewsbury. A similar example, St Botolph, was one of two brothers, born into the Anglo-Saxon nobility, educated and becoming Benedictine monks in Gaul. Botolph returned to England to become one of the great English missionaries of the seventh century, along with Willibrord and Boniface. Some seventy-odd dedications to St Botolph are recorded; he is associated with boundaries, four of his churches are at gates to the city of London (20). Apart, then, from the dedication to St Martin of the present cathedral church of the present diocese of Leicester, the dedication to St Botolph at Shepshed, the parish church of Kingston-on-Soar dedicated to St Winifred, there is a church dedicated to St Andrew standing in the grounds of Stanford Hall in the former parish of Prestwold. There is documentary evidence for a church of St Andrew at Prestwold at least as far back as 1177.

In the cartulary of Garendon Abbey, Leicestershire, founded by Robert (Beaumont) earl of Leicester c.1130, Philip of Kime granted to the abbey and its monks *decimas suas de omnibus terris quas habuerant in pascha anno ab incarnatione MC lxxx vii in parrochia sancti Andree de Prestewald*. The tithes, *decimas*, were to be paid yearly on the feast of St Botulph, June 17th (21). Church dedications, however, are of limited use in the present context, which is why they have been superficially treated, because most dedications have been altered, in some cases several times, during the history of the church concerned (22). It is not possible to deduce the existence of an unrecorded Domesday church from a study of dedications alone. Fig.31, p.202 represents a conjectural provenance of churches in the lower Soar valley at the time of Domesday.

Throughout the country, there are many churches which are known to have existed in 1086, which are not mentioned in Domesday because they were private manorial chapels, with the status of the "field churches" mentioned in the laws of Aethelred and Canute (23). These were not directly income-bearing and therefore not recorded. The extent to which such churches as existed were focal points for communities is impossible to determine: the present parish system, which is now showing signs of disintegration, was then in its infancy. It is also worth remembering that although some observances involving attendance at church were mandatory, these were by no means frequent. It is doubtful that "regular" attendance at church, per head of the population, was any greater in 1086 than it is now.


POSSIBLE PROVENANCE OF LOWER SOAR VALLEY CHURCHES, 1086.

C = Church mentioned in Domesday
P = Priest
T = Grant of tithes to St Evroul
ED = Early Dedication
EA = Early architectural feature
It is, perhaps, in the field of jurisdiction that continuity from the earliest days of Anglo-Saxon England to the end of the Middle Ages is most easily observed. Until the emergence of Parliament as a legislative assembly, the ultimate legislative and judicial authority was the king, and this is theoretically true today: The Royal Assent to an Act of Parliament is a necessary part of the legislative process. The law codes of a succession of kings survive from the time of Aethelbert of Kent, d.616, onwards. On the surface, continuity in the devolution of justice and administration from the king is equally apparent; the shire, hundred and hall-moots of the Anglo-Saxons became the county, hundred and manorial courts of the Anglo-Normans (24). The real situation, however, is much less simple, and before considering jurisdiction in the lower Soar valley, it is necessary to address some, at least, of the complexities involved. From very early times of their origin, the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms were divided into small "shires" or their equivalent, for the purpose of raising armies and taxes, and for the administration of justice. Problems arise because the early Anglo-Saxon kingdoms were relatively short-lived; they were taking part in "the earlier rounds of a fiercely contested knock-out competition" (25). From early times also, the shires themselves were divided into "hundreds" for the same military, fiscal and administrative purposes. Like the shires, these early hundreds too, were drastically altered in shape, size and composition by the ferocity of the knock-out competition. One result of this was that former kingdoms became shires of larger ones, and former shires became the hundredal divisions of new shires; the counties of Kent and Sussex were former kingdoms, and the early kingdom of Lindsey became the Lindsey parts of the county of Lincolnshire. Dr Bassett has shown how Winchcombe, the origin and heartland of the kingdom of the Hwicce, survived until 1017, when it became a district within the county of Gloucesteshire (26).

(26) Ibid, pp.6-18.
In the lower Soar valley, however, there are no conveniently identifiable boundaries of kingdoms or dioceses from which to work. The so-called kingdom of the Middle Angles was still-born and the early diocese of Leicester was short lived. The lower Soar valley and the region surrounding it was variously under Northumbrian, East Anglian, Mercian, Danish, and on the eve of the unification of England, West Saxon control. One result of this was a piecemeal development of public administration, legal and fiscal, and the fact that many institutions of law and taxation were held from time to time by private individuals. Like the shire, the hundred must have had a very early origin, although it is not mentioned as such by name until the tenth century (27). Earlier in the tenth century, Edward the Elder had issued decrees to his reeves, enjoining them to hold meetings every four weeks and to ensure that a day was appointed for the hearing of every case arising (28). Within the area of the Danelaw, however, the situation becomes more complicated because of the uneasy equivalence of the hundred and the wapentake. The lower Soar valley is situated at the extreme western edge of the Danelaw, where, as has been suggested earlier herein, Danish control outside the boroughs and the settlements specialising in supplying the army units based at them, may have been more tenuous than it was further east, and it may be worth remembering that the lower Soar valley lies in the two English-named wapentakes of Goscote in Leicestershire and Rushcliffe in Nottinghamshire. It is clear from the Shire Customs recorded in the Nottinghamshire Domesday that in addition to the eight wapentakes of the shire, there were eighteen hundreds, each of which paid a fine of £8 in the event of a breach of the king’s peace; twelve of the hundreds paid to the king, the other six to the earl, following the normal custom of the “earl’s third penny”, according to which the earl received a third of the borough revenues. Since there was no earl in 1086, the custom must date from before the Conquest.

Not all of the eighteen hundreds in Nottinghamshire can be reconstructed, but some are mentioned in the Domesday text, and at least one more can be inferred. Two bovates of the land of Walter de Ainscourt at Farnesfield ad hundredo de Sudwelle (Southwell) pertinet. Gilbert Tison's land in Alwoldestorp is followed by a bald Blidevorde (Blidworth) hundredum, and his land in Averham is followed by Huic manerio appendent V sochemanni in aliis hundredis. The account of Henry de Ferrers' holding in Leake includes two carucates in an unnamed berewick of that manor. The entry concludes Hic iacet in Plunte (Plumtree) hundredo. A detached portion of the Broxtowe wapentake is separated from it by Rushcliffe. It contains the manors of Costock with Rempstone, Wysall with Thorpe-in-the-Glebe, and Willoughby-on-the-Wolds. This detached portion may be another of the hundreds referred to in the Shire Customs (Figs.32,33, pp.206,207).

Post-Domesday surveys in neighbouring counties show that this "hundredisation" within the wapentake system was not confined to Nottinghamshire. The Lindsey Survey of c.1115-1118, details the hundreds existing at that time within the wapentakes, although many of the hundreds can be discovered from the text of Domesday Book (29). Lincolnshire presents special problems, since not only was this huge shire divided into the three parts of Lindsey, Kesteven and Holland, Lindsey itself was divided into North, South and West Ridings. Similar documents are the Northamptonshire Geld Roll of c.1070, which details the hundreds at that time in Northamptonshire, but that shire was not divided into larger wapentakes, since it was only partially under Danish control, and more relevant to present purposes, the Leicestershire Survey of c.1129-30, which details a hundredal division of that shire's four wapentakes, not detectable from within the Domesday text (30). At about the time of the Leicestershire Survey, however, the original wapentakes of Leicestershire were being renamed "hundreds", beginning with the creation of Sparkenhoe hundred, carved out of the

Fig. 32. WAPENTAKES OF SOUTH NOTTINGHAMSHIRE, 1086.
Fig. 33. LEICESTERSHIRE WAPENTAKES, 1086

5 miles

-207-
Guthlaxton wapentake in 1129 or earlier, and ending with the division of the Goscote wapentake (already known as the Goscote hundred, and divided for ecclesiastical purposes into the deaneries of Goscote and Akely), in the fourteenth century. The same renaming of former wapentakes as hundreds was going on elsewhere.

The subject of the "small" hundred has attracted the attention of many scholars since it was first examined by J.H.Round (31). His observations gave rise to the notion of a hundredal unit of twelve carucates, the hundred itself consisting of a multiple of the twelve carucate unit, and the extent to which this suggestion is tenable in the present local context will be examined later in the context of the Leicestershire Survey of 1129-30. To examine the arguments of even a handful of the scholars who have treated this subject would be too lengthy an exercise for present purposes: the list includes, apart from Round, C.R.Hart, E.A.Joliffe, R.V.Lennard, Helen M. Cam, and D.R.Roffe (32). In general, the "small hundred" is seen as a fiscal unit, possibly one on which geld-rools were based, and possibly with geld-rools which may have been the basis for Domesday assessments. It may also be that the "small" hundred, for the specific purpose of a particular geld-roll or similar operation, temporarily separated the fiscal from the administrative and jurisdictional functions of the larger hundred/wapentake. Dr Roffe concludes that 'It was thus a contrived form, derived from a basically unmanorialised society, which, in essence, bore little relationship to estate and settlement structure', and suggests that 'although it may have taken over the elements of

an earlier system, there is thus no evidence to suggest that the institution of the (small) hundred as a system is older than the Danish settlement' (33). Helen Cam concludes her study of the Hundred and the Hundred Rolls with a table giving all the English counties and their constituent hundreds as they were in 1274, when Leicestershire consisted of the hundreds, named as such, of Guthlaxton, Gartree, Goscote, Framland and Sparkenhoe.

A summary of the various views which have been put forward would be that from the time of the emergence of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, there was a perceived need for an institution which provided a "tier" of government below that of the shire and above that of the individual vill. This, in effect, was the hundred, whether or not it was known by that name, or was related to the numerical quantity. The lathes of Kent and the rapes of Sussex are early examples of the shire division which is represented by the hundred elsewhere and at other times. The "small" hundreds perceived within the wapentakes of the Danelaw (which may themselves have been earlier hundreds or even shires) can be seen as an attempt to relate duodecimal to decimal values, for fiscal purposes primarily, if not solely. The figure of 120, which is both $12 \times 10$ and $10 \times 12$, becomes highly significant, theoretically the number of acres in a hide or carucate, and in fact the sum of ten shillings of twelve pence each, the English pound consisting of a decimal 20 shillings and a duodecimal 240 pence. The hundred as a unit of local government continued to exist long after it ceased to bear any relationship to the numerical value of 100. It finally disappeared when it was replaced by a local government system based on county boroughs, municipal boroughs, urban districts and rural districts during the nineteenth century. Not surprisingly, a constitutional historian speaks of groups of a hundred hides surrounding a royal vill, administered by a reeve, as 'the true origin of the continuous institutional life of the English hundred' (34).

In Leicestershire and in the lower Soar valley in particular, the hundredal system

(33). Roffe, 'The Lincolnshire Hundred', pp.28 and 36.
described in the Leicestershire Survey of c.1129 has particular significance, apart from the general question of the "small" hundreds of Leicestershire, Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire, and it may shed some light on the development of settlement within the area (35). It has first to be observed that it is a markedly "deponent" document. Although it is arranged according to the wapentakes of 1086, there is no account of Guthlaxton, only three entries for Gartree and the account of Goscote is far from complete (Fig. 34, p. 211). Only Framland has an account which includes all the Domesday villas. In general, the hundreds of the Leicestershire Survey do not conform consistently to multiples of the twelve carucate unit observed in Lincolnshire. To take Goscote examples, Shepshed hundred, consisting of two and a half hides (at the Leicestershire rate of eighteen carucates to the hide) and four carucates, plus two carucates and two bovates, totals fifty one and a quarter carucates, which, with an almighty squeeze, might be claimed to be an approximation of forty eight carucates, or four times the twelve carucate unit. Rearsby hundred totals exactly sixty carucates or five times the twelve carucate unit. On the other hand, in Beeby hundred, Beeby itself consists of twelve carucates of the Abbot of Crowland, but Keyham has only six carucates, Hungarton nine, and Sileby a total of fifteen carucates and three and a half bovates, a total for the hundred of forty two carucates and three and a half bovates, which is as far as it can be from the nearest multiples of twelve. In the hundred of Tonge, Robert of Ferrers holds twelve carucates in Tonge itself, while the earl of Chester holds fifteen carucates in Kegworth. In Worthington there are three carucates secundum cartam regis but twelve carucates secundum dictum hominum hundredi. In one case there are thirty carucates to the hundred of Tonge, and in the other thirty nine, both figures some way off the nearest multiple of the twelve carucate unit. Finally, in Loughborough hundred the Survey records fifty five and a half carucates. This is a very different picture from the one that Dr Roffe was able to give of the hundred in Lincolnshire, and if, as he suggests, the "small hundred has its origin in the

Fig. 34. Lands included in the Leicestershire Survey, 1129-30

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(from the Institute of Arms and Heralds and...
Danish settlement, the suggestion made more than once earlier herein, that Danish control and organisation in the lower Soar valley was less effective than elsewhere, would seem to be strengthened. It should be remembered that the Lincolnshire twelve carucate hundred, so clearly demonstrated by Roffe, is not drawn from a study of the Lindsey Survey alone, but principally from a study of the Domesday text itself, where, as in Nottinghamshire, there is evidence to be found. The word *hundredum* does not occur anywhere in the text of the Leicestershire Domesday, and the only evidence for the small hundred in Leicestershire comes from the Leicestershire Survey of 1129-30.

Moreover, although the similarities between the Lindsey Survey, the Leicestershire Survey and the Northamptonshire Geld-roll often lead to their being considered together, there are some important differences between them. The Northamptonshire Geld-roll is quite different from the other two documents. It is written in Anglo-Saxon, while the others are in Latin, and it pre-dates them by at least half a century. The Geld-roll could well be as some have suggested, a stage in the preparation of the Domesday assessments for Northamptonshire, which indicates a substantial reduction of the *T.R.E.* assessments. Among other things, the Geld-roll is a report of the failure of those responsible to collect the geld according to the assessments of king Edward's reign. A typical entry would be that for the Spellhoe hundred:

'To Spellhoe hundred belong ninety hides, and of these, twenty hides and half a hide are occupied and have paid geld and twenty five hides are borough land, and from ten hides belonging to Abington-Richard's land not a penny has been received, and from six hides belonging to Moulton-William's land not a penny has been received, and twenty eight hides and half a hide are waste' (36).

There are some other peculiarities of the Leicestershire Survey which invite discussion. It seems fairly clear, for example, that its hundreds were not always constructed

on a strictly "territorial" basis. The hundred of Ashby Folville, apart from the caput, consists of a compact group of holdings in Humberstone, Belgrave, Thurmaston, Birstall, Wanlip and Anstey, all of which are about ten miles from Ashby Folville itself. Land in Hathern, for example, appears in both Loughborough and Diseworth hundreds, and land in Thurmaston appears in the hundreds of both Ashby Folville and Barkby. Land in Worthington appears in the hundreds of Tonge and Belton. The fact that the vill was not of itself a focal point for any governmental purpose may well account for vills being split between hundreds in this way, particularly if the hundreds were purely fiscal units, but the distance between Ashby Folville and its constituent hundredal parts raises other questions. If the Leicestershire Survey was intended to divide the shire or wapentake into convenient fiscal units of multiples of twelve carucates, then the situation could be explained by saying that in some cases the compilers found it necessary to attach land from distant vills in order to make up the desired duodecimal quantities. There is no evidence, however, that the compilers of the Leicestershire Survey had this intention, since the resultant hundreds do not, for the most part, conform to the duodecimal pattern. In an administrative context, if Ashby Folville was the place where a hundred court was held every four weeks, (37), it seems nonsensical that the members of the hundred itself formed a compact group of lands in adjacent vills all of which are ten miles from Ashby Folville, and this looks suspiciously like a compilers' error.

There are other characteristics of the Leicestershire Survey which raise doubts as to whether the hundredal system it indicates was a workable piece of machinery in 1129. The one completely surveyed wapentake, Framland, divides some forty four vills into fourteen hundreds, and at first sight this seems to be too many hundreds, each consisting of too few vills, to comprise an effective system of tax assessment and collection, still less of courts, if applied to a whole shire. It would, however, be a convenient arrangement for the collection of


tribute within the wapentake in the context of a period of Danish control, roughly 875-925, although it must be remembered that the date of the Survey is 1129-30. The "missing" parts of the Leicestershire Survey may be significant in their absence, particularly the "hole" which appears in the Survey of the Goscote wapentake. Apart from the "hole", it is noteworthy that the Survey has no record at all of the wapentake of Guthlaxton, effectively the south western quarter of the shire. In the wapentake of Gartree there are only three hundreds described: those of Langton, Kibworth and Knossington, containing the land of thirteen vills (38). These are concentrated in the east of the wapentake, itself the south eastern quarter of the shire, and adjacent to Framland. If, indeed, these "small" hundreds are of Danish origin, what we have recorded in the Leicestershire Survey appears to be consistent with the notion that, outside the boroughs, Danish organisation and control was far less effective in Leicestershire than it was further east; the Danish hold on the frontier of the Danelaw was weaker and more tenuous.

The Goscote "hole" contains some six vills which are recorded in Domesday, but which do not appear in the Leicestershire Survey: these are Prestwold, Wymeswold, Burton-on-the-Wolds, Walton-on-the-Wolds, Barrow-on-Soar and Seagrave so far as the lower Soar valley in concerned. Also missing from the Leicestershire Survey are Chilcote, Measham and Willesley from the Derbyshire border, but it is with the six first named that we are presently concerned. This is a suitable group of vills to have constituted a "hundred" of Barrow-on-Soar, but there is no record that such a hundred ever existed, either for fiscal or jurisdictional purposes.

(38). Although it does not materially affect the arguments put forward here it is appropriate to note that Slade's translation of some of the vill names in the Langton hundred has recently been challenged: P.Bowman, 'Contrasting Pays: Anglo-Saxon Settlement and Landscape in Langton Hundred', in Bourne, ed, Anglo-Saxon Landscapes in the East Midlands, (1996), Note 11, p.141.
The reasons for the incompleteness of the Leicestershire Survey can not be determined very precisely; the missing parts may have been lost, stolen or destroyed, but equally possibly they are missing because they never existed in the first place, because the Survey was never completed. If the hundreds delineated in the Leicestershire Survey are in fact of Danish origin, they would not have been recorded in writing at the time, since the Viking culture was illiterate. Their creation would have been promulgated in spoken words, probably accompanied by ritual and ceremony, and knowledge of them perpetuated by folklore. The "Danish" hundreds of Leicestershire were not sufficiently significant to attract the notice of the Domesday commissioners for the shire, who made no reference to them. This leaves the problem of how to account for their apparent resuscitation nearly half a century after Domesday. A possible reason may lie in both national and local developments in the early twelfth century. Henry I, 110-1135, was not for nothing called "The Lion of Justice"; to his reign belong the establishment, for instance, of the justices' circuits, the Curia Regis, or royal court, and the Exchequer, all of which carried the royal authority into the smallest and most local of jurisdictional and fiscal units. In the shires, the importance and authority of the sheriffs was augmented, and new earldoms were created for valued supporters of the king, among them the earldom of Leicester in 1102. In this context the Leicestershire Survey might be seen as an exercise which was aborted, a plan begun, found unsuitable for its purpose, and scrapped. The plan may have originated during Henry's reign, or it may have originated before his reign, possibly as far back as the Viking period and preserved in folklore, but the one clear thing about it is that the administration of the shire, even for fiscal purposes only, would be impossible if the shire were divided into such a large number of such small hundreds. We have no record of any kind which shows the hundredal system of the Leicestershire Survey in actual operation.

The basic problem with the four existing wapentakes was that two of them, Guthlaxton and Goscote, were too big. By 1129, perhaps significantly the same date as that of the Leicestershire Survey, Sparkenhoe hundred had been carved out of Guthlaxton, and
possibly Goscote followed the ecclesiastical division of the Goscote and Akely deaneries, which had been created following bishop Remigius' removal of his see from Dorchester to Lincoln in 1072.

Royal, comital and vice-comital jurisdiction in the lower Soar valley was a mixed system of "dispersed" functions, in which not only the shire and the "large" hundred played their parts, but in which, also, the private jurisdictions of manor and soke-centre were fully involved. The royal manor and soke of Rothley, the earl of Chester's soke of Barrow, and the manor and dependencies of Loughborough, held by the earl's tenants, provided the basic machinery of local administration. North of the Nottinghamshire boundary, the presence of the king and his thanes and the earl and his tenants did the same thing. Earl Hugh's tenants and the king's thanes dominated Sutton Bonnington, two separate vills in 1086, and a king's thane held in Normanton-on-Soar, of which the jurisdiction lay in Sutton Bonnington; earl Hugh and a king's thane held in Kingston-on-Soar, and a king's thane held Ratcliffe-on-Soar.

For the "villagers" of the lower Soar valley, there was no permanent focal point, no continuous stimulant of human activity: neither the vill, nor the church, nor the manor, nor the hundred performed that function. The community, if such it was, gathered at different places, at different times and for different purposes. We should, perhaps, think of central occasions rather than central places. In the lower Soar valley, where, as in much of the East Midlands, the "Corieltauvian tradition" persisted, the settlement, or "village" was dispersed throughout the area covered by the name of the vill, which could be divided between several manors. A manorial or other court would undoubtedly occasion a gathering of people, and others would use the occasion for purposes other than those of the court. The gathering might even be a festive one, held "at the time of the filling of the butts", but the essence of the celebration was to do with the occasion rather than the location (39).

In terms of lands, vills and jurisdictions, therefore, the Anglo-Saxon and Norman

history of the lower Soar valley may present the picture of an "incohesive" society, with inconsistent customs and institutions. This, however, is to ignore the one fundamental motivation of those of the people, resident or not, who were in a position to determine the nature of settlement there, that is, the landholders, great and small, who were able to exercise their own initiative. These people were motivated by what we now call "market forces"; they were entrepreneurs. Some valid comparisons can be made between them and present-day stock market investors. The modern investor is not concerned with the actual business of the companies in which he invests; he is concerned with the capital value of his shares and the dividends they pay. In the same way, the Anglo-Saxon and Norman landholders were not concerned with how their land was used, or even where it was; they were interested in its capital value and the size of their rent-rolls. The modern investor tries to build up a portfolio of shares in various enterprises in order to protect himself against the operation of swings and roundabouts of the economic sort; the early mediaeval entrepreneur acquired a "portfolio" of lands for much the same purpose. In the lower Soar valley, holdings distributed in a kind of traverse, from the forest in the west, through the valley floor, with access to the river, and up on to the wolds to the east, constituted a "portfolio" in miniature, and had been the basis of settlement for centuries: the Domesday seigneurs were quick to appreciate its worth.

The principal landholders in the lower Soar valley, both in 1066 and 1086, were the king and the premier earl. Their extensive sokes were centred on Rothley, Barrow-on-Soar and Loughborough. Further examination of the history of these three places in the following chapters, may reveal more of the early settlement history of the area.

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PART THREE

TOWARDS A RESOLUTION
CHAPTER SEVEN

Pre-Conquest Rothley and some Later Documents

In the third part of the present thesis, an attempt is made to recover something of the origins of the three settlements of Rothley, Loughborough and Barrow-upon-Soar, and to illustrate the social, political and economic functions which these settlements may have performed during the Anglo-Saxon period. It is hoped that this will support the suggestion that the lower Soar valley formed a governmental and administrative unit during that period. The present chapter deals with Rothley.

Before proceeding to pre-Conquest matters, it is important to point out that Rothley was a royal manor and soke in 1086 and was to become an ecclesiastical peculiar, the dependent churches of which were, in several cases, members of the original soke. (Fig.35, p.220). This is the starting point of the argument which is developed throughout the chapter, that Rothley was an early villa regis which became a minster during the course of its history. It has been pointed out that the survival of ecclesiastical peculiaris is often an indication of an earlier minster establishment, together with a number of other circumstances, one of which was the presence of more than one priest at Domesday. As it happens, there was only one priest at Rothley in 1086, but this may be explained by the fact that at the time of Domesday, Rothley was a minster in decline. (See note 30, p.242).

An account of the Roman villa and early Saxon cemetery has been given in Chapter Three, but it is necessary here to draw attention to certain features of both monuments. First it should be noted that the villa is remarkably well-appointed for one in the Midland area. Its fourth century owner must have been a person of considerable wealth, and that kind of wealth is usually associated with political importance and authority in a local context. It is very likely that the Rothley villa was the caput of a surrounding pagus. It is also important to remember that the villa amenities included a well, and that the villa site is about a quarter of
THE ROYAL SOKE AND ECCLESIASTICAL PECULIAR OF ROTHLEY

Soke =
Peculiar =
a mile from the nearest point on the Rothley Brook. As for the cemetery, it must be emphasised that it occupies the same site as the villa, and that this is not such an unusual occurrence as might be expected. There are literally hundreds of Gaulish examples of “Germanic” cemeteries within former villa precincts, and even in Britain examples are known at LLantwit Major (Glamorgan), Banwell (Somerset), Denton and Worlaby (Lincolnshire), Southwell Minster (Nottinghamshire), Great Tew (Oxfordshire), Well House (Berkshire) and Wigginton (Oxfordshire) (1). The important point here is that the settlement(s) producing the cemetery could not have been on the villa site, and must therefore have been at some distance away, although within easy reach. A site other than that of the villa must be sought for the Anglo-Saxon settlement of Rothley. We have, unfortunately, no indication of either the size or the nature of early Saxon settlement at Rothley; the original excavations were not what would nowadays be called scientific, and since most of the material recovered is now lost, it can not be re-examined (2). It may be profitable to examine the course of the Rothley Brook, a not inconsiderable watercourse, since the early Saxon settlement would have depended upon it for a water supply; the well at the original villa site would probably have been rendered unusable, or represented a technology not possessed by the successors to the villa owners. The brook passes very close to the site of the later Templars' preceptory and south of the present settlement before turning north, skirting the eastern side of the village, before turning east again to join the Soar. (SK 593:133). This brings it fairly close to the site of the churchyard with its Anglo-Saxon cross.

As historical or archaeological evidence, Anglo-Saxon crosses are ambiguous, enigmatic and equivocal. To start with, it is rarely certain that the places where they are found are the places where they were originally raised. No specific function or significance can be attributed to them in general, and various explanations have been offered in individual cases, most of which are highly speculative. It has been variously suggested that they were preaching crosses, raised before the resources to build a church were available, memorials to royal or aristocratic persons, indicators of sites of royal or ecclesiastical importance, or simply boundary markers of one kind or another. Their decoration is a matter for the art historians, who can point out (as indeed can the competent layman) that the decoration includes vinescroll or pelta patterning, and that there is a biblical tableau, an Abraham and Isaac or a Christ in Majesty. There is frequently a wide divergence of opinion as to the date of a particular example. The Rothley cross has had its fair share of expert attention; in 1937-8 it was the subject of a very full discussion and description in the Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society, and dated to between 1000 and 1050 (3). At about the same time it was included in an authoritative art history of the Anglo-Saxon period, and dated much earlier, c.850 (4). Later descriptions also give varying opinions as to its date; a standard authority on English architecture agrees with the earlier date of c.850 (5). A more recent estimate of the age of the Rothley cross attributes it to the tenth century (6). Personal scrutiny of the artefact leads the writer to prefer the earliest date, but even if that could be firmly established, it does not tell us why the cross appears where it does. If a general interpretation of the significance of Anglo-Saxon crosses is accepted, that they mark

sites of political or ecclesiastical importance, then the Rothley cross may be related to the importance of Rothley as a known royal manor or to the importance of the church alongside which the cross stands. It is convenient to deal first with the church and its site.

The present parish church of St Mary and St John the Baptist, which is an interesting double dedication, is a much later structure than the cross standing in the churchyard. It follows that if the cross was raised at the time of its manufacture, and in the place where it now stands, the cross was on the site before the church was built, although the possibility that there was an earlier church on the same site can not be discounted. The site itself, however, occupies the highest ground in the immediate vicinity, virtually on the 46 metre contour line. We have, in fact, a cross on a mound, which, like most of the evidence for pre-Conquest Rothley is sufficiently evidential to arouse curiosity and invite conjecture, but not precise enough to form the basis of conclusions. The highly reputed among our field archaeologists frequently give "awful warnings" of the mistakes which can easily be made in the interpretation of earthworks (7). We can not be sure that the mound on which the parish church of Rothley and its attendant Anglo-Saxon cross stand, is, in fact, an earthwork. No evidence has been produced to suggest that it is other than natural. The church itself was the subject of a lengthy paper in the T.L.A.H.S. in 1920, but this is largely confined to the later fabric of the church and its associations with notable post-mediaeval families (8). It does, however, draw attention to the presence of "Norman" fabric in the building, and this, together with the Domesday record of a priest at Rothley in 1086, may indicate that there was a church at Rothley at that time. However, even taking the latest possible date for the cross, 1000-1050, and the earliest possible date for the church, say c1080, the cross can not be there to emphasise the importance of the church, unless there was an earlier church on the

(8). J.Watson Watts, 'Rothley, the Church', T.L.A.H.S., 12, (1921-2), p.120.
site, of which no evidence remains and of which there is no record. Two other features of the church and its site are worth considering; its shape, and the two entrances to the churchyard. The ground plan of Rothley church is almost square, as distinct from the "oblong" shape of the ground plan of the majority of mediaeval parish churches. This raises the possibility that the present church is standing on the site of an earlier minster, a possibility which is slightly enhanced when it is realised that Rothley was the mother church of chapelries at Gaddesby, Keyham, Grimston, Wartnaby and Chadwell and Wycomb (9). This in turn, might offer a reason for the presence of the cross in the churchyard, but some of the other generally accepted criteria for the identification of a minster are missing; for instance there is mention of only one priest at Domesday, and no mention of a church as such (10). Two entrances to a parish churchyard is a not uncommon feature of such sites. Usually this can be explained in terms of the position of the church relative to that of the manor house of the parish/vill; one entrance for the lord of the manor, his family and entourage, and the other for the "villagers". This can not be the explanation in the case of Rothley, since there is no manor house nearby; the only manor house known in Rothley is "Rothley Court", the present building of which incorporates the chapel of the former Templars' preceptory. This site, too, is a candidate for a place in Rothley's Anglo-Saxon history, lying, as it does, about mid-way between the cemetery site and the cross in the churchyard. There are two reasons for examining this site more closely. First, it stands virtually on the Rothley Brook, and any building or settlement on the site would be immediately adjacent to a water supply. Secondly, the distance between the Romano-British villa site and the present settlement of Rothley represents the phenomenon known to field archaeologists as "settlement drift" (11).

In this case, the "drift" is from west to east, and the Templars’ chapel and preceptory lies mid-way along the line of the drift, between the villa and the present settlement site. It is a not unlikely site for the principal building, a hall, of the Anglo-Saxon settlement which succeeded the villa community (Fig.36.p.226).

An examination of the site of the "Rothley Temple" is, like the examination of the rest of Rothley, as far as the Anglo-Saxon period is concerned, pregnant with possibilities, but barren of proof. It is axiomatic that a place which is styled a "manor" must have a "manor house", a chief building from which the business of the manor is conducted and in which the manorial courts are held. This building may or may not be the permanent residence of the lord of the manor, but it has to be there. We know that in 1066 Rothley was a manor to which an extensive soke was attached; it must have had a manor house, but we have no information as to where it stood. We do know, however, that from 1231 at the latest, the lords of the manor of Rothley were the Knights Templar, that the Templars raised a preceptory there, the chapel of which still stands and is open on request to members of the public, and that the preceptory building was the manor house of Rothley for over seven hundred years. The possibility has to be considered that the preceptory chapel stands on or near the site of an earlier manor house, which, in view of its proximity to Rothley Brook, and its position on the line of drift from the villa site to that of the present settlement, may also be the site of an early Saxon settlement which provided the cemetery established on the villa site with some of its occupants.

A very competent architectural examination of the whole site of "Rothley Court" was made in 1921-2, and it represents an early example of what Dr H.M.Taylor later called "structural analysis" (12). The purpose of this examination, however, was not to look for possible Anglo-Saxon origins, but to recover the ground plan and other features of the

Rothley Temple (after Fosbrooke)
Templars' preceptory (13). As it happens, this does reveal a number of affinities with much earlier building traditions, although this does not necessarily mean that the preceptory is a reconstruction of an earlier building. Fosbrooke dated the building of the preceptory to c.1240, following Henry III's grant of 1231, but the connection between Rothley and the Templars goes back somewhat further than that. Rothley was recorded as a royal manor and soke in Domesday Book, which also says that it belonged to Edward the Confessor. It remained in royal hands until 1150 when king Stephen granted it to Ranulf Gemonis, earl of Chester. Henry II (1154-89) seems to have first confirmed Stephen's grant and then resumed it, and Rothley appears to have passed in and out of royal hands until Henry III's grant of 1231. However, the Close Roll of 1216 contains an entry by which the king (John, 1199-1216) restores the land of Rothley to John de Harecourt as he had had it from king Richard (1189-99). Contemporary documents show the Harecourts to have been an important family in the county, but the only surviving indication of their presence is in the name of Kibworth Harcourt, a settlement well to the south of Leicester. The Harecourts were patrons of the Temple from the time of king Stephen, and John de Harecourt, to whom Rothley was restored in 1216, was himself a Templar, who died with the crusading army at Damietta in 1221 (14).

Particular features of the preceptory chapel to which Fosbrooke draws attention, are interesting because of their affinity with earlier styles of building and ground plan. The Early English style lancet windows with single splay interior sills are less than normally pointed for the period creating an affinity with the Norman and Anglo-Saxon round-headed arches. The present east window, as Fosbrooke points out, is clearly an adaptation of three earlier lancet windows to create the broad-arched window of the Perpendicular style. This is something which happened to both Norman and Anglo-Saxon churches; a dramatic interior example is at Brixworth, Northants, where the Anglo-Saxon triple-arched screen was turned into one


(14). Clarke, 'Rothley Custumal', p.94.
large arch about 1400. The buttressing of the preceptory chapel divides the building into four bays, there being no windows in the westernmost bay except the one lancet in the west wall. Timber buildings of four bays are among the commonest forms of the architecture of the Angl-Saxon period, not only in England but also on the continent (15). Fosbrooke's analysis of the c.1240 building of the Templars included the chapel at the north end of the complex, joined by a porch, containing the only door to the chapel, to another building of slightly larger proportions which was also part of the preceptory complex. He refers to this as "the Hall of the Templars", but gives no account of its function or use. The existence of chapels integral with buildings used for secular purposes is a very common architectural feature. Among the better known examples are the Christian chapel integral with the Roman villa at Lullingstone in Kent and Odda's chapel, integral with the manor house building at Deerhurst in Gloucestershire. A more recent and perhaps more closely relevant example comes from Raunds in Northamptonshire, where two churches with an attendant cemetery, all of the Anglo-Saxon period, were discovered within the walls of a later mediaeval manor house (16). Whether the kind of thing that happened at Lullingstone, Deerhurst and Raunds also happened at Rothley can not be determined unless it can be established that the Templars' building of c1240 was raised on the site of an earlier structure (Fig.37,p.229).

There are two other points of interest in Fosbrooke's account of the Rothley Temple. He refers to the removal of some yew trees at the back of the house, "a few years back" (i.e. prior to 1921) because they darkened the windows, during which "the remains of a Roman villa were discovered". He refers also to "another Roman villa...near the railway station", and to its description in T.L.A.H.S. 9. This latter is, of course, Tucker's excavation of the villa and cemetery sites examined in Chapter Three hereof. It is quite astonishing that Fosbrooke, (15). James, Marshall and Millet, 'An early Mediaeval Building Tradition', Arch. J., 1984, pp. 182-215.

(16). Raunds 1979, Northamptonshire County Archaeology Unit, (1979).
PHASES 1 and 2.

- EARLY SAXON CHURCH
- LATER SAXON CHURCH
- LIMIT OF MANOR HOUSE BUILDING

PHASES 3 and 4.

- EARLY MANORIAL HALL
- LATER MANORIAL BUILDING

DOVECOT

LATER HALL

LATER Solar OR CHAPEL

SERVICES
who was a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries, should have missed the significance of this later discovery of Romano-British material. Even in the places where Roman villas are thickest on the ground, and these do not include East Midland England, they do not occur within half a mile of each other. The most likely explanation of the villa material discovered by the removal of the offending yew trees is that it was quarried from the villa site proper so that it could be used in the construction of another building. The second point is that Fosbrooke also refers to "some masonry composed of three tiers of steps which appear to have been the base of a cross", which existed in the eighteenth century, "a short distance from the south east angle of the house". He does not pursue the matter, so the present whereabouts of this masonry remains unknown, nor does he appear to have asked himself if the site of the masonry might have been the original site of the Anglo-Saxon cross standing in the churchyard about half a mile to the east of the preceptory.

There is undoubtedly a good deal of archaeological and other material relating to the history of Rothley from late Roman times to the time of the Norman Conquest. Its particular provenance and distribution, however, does not facilitate the construction of a precise and accurate account. Various "scenarios" are possible, all of them plausible, but all depend upon a considerable element of speculation; "what might have happened" rather than what actually took place. Theoretically, the pre-Conquest history of Rothley is recoverable, but such recovery would require an undertaking similar to the one conducted by Hurst and Beresford at Wharram Percy in Yorkshire (17). Wharram Percy was a deserted village when Hurst and Beresford first went there, and they were at it for thirty years.

If there is no contemporary documentary evidence for Rothley during the Anglo-Saxon period, there is a comparative wealth of it for the Middle Ages, and it may be that a study of some of it can indicate the nature of Rothley's Anglo-Saxon past. There are some five documents which may be taken as the most likely to yield results in the present context.

These are, in chronological order, Domesday Book, 1086, the Leicestershire Survey, 1129-30, the Rothley Custumal, c1245, the Extent of the estates of the Templars, 1308 and the Extent of the estates of the Knights Hospitaller, 1338. Of these documents, the Custumal gives by far the most detailed and comprehensive account of Rothley, both manor and soke, but in the present context it can not be isolated from the others.

The two Extents of the fourteenth century are perhaps rather too late in time to illustrate the Anglo-Saxon period, but there is some value in mentioning them. The Extent of 1308 was occasioned by the imminent suppression of the Order of the Temple, briefly described below, but the Extent of the estates of the Hospitallers of 1338 may be seen as a \textit{terminus post quem} for Rothley and its soke, after which the Hospitallers "batted out time" until the Dissolution effected by Henry VIII's Reformation Parliament between 1536-40 (18).

It is worth noting that 1338 is early days in the Hospitallers' control of Rothley. The initiative in suppressing the Templars, their predecessors as lords of Rothley, came from Phillip the Fair of France (1285-1314) and although he began to suppress the order in France in 1307, the Papal Bull enjoining its suppression throughout Christendom was not issued until 1309, and it was not until 1312 that the Temple was finally abolished by Act of the Council of Vienna. There would certainly be a lapse of time before the Hospitallers, on whom the Templars' possessions were conferred, could acquire the possessions of the now defunct order. Items of minor interest are that Rothley in 1338 had two mills, one a windmill, the other a watermill, whereas only one mill is mentioned in 1086 (at which time windmills did not exist) and in 1245. (They would have been "new-fangled" then: the earliest known windmills date from the end of the twelfth century). It is also of interest that in 1338, the manor and soke of Rothley, together with its church and chapelries, was running at a loss.

The Hospitallers did not acquire the Temple lands in England until 1333, at a time

when Leonard de Tybertis was Prior in England. Leonard had been sent to England to restore the ruinous state of the Temple here which was partly due to the incapacity of Prior Thomas de Larcher, or de L'archer who died in 1329, having resigned or been deposed somewhat earlier (19). In 1338, the Prior was Phillip de Thame, Leonard's successor, and his name appears in the last entry of the Rothley Extent: “There remain outstanding 82 marks, ten pence. What is amiss is from the time of Brother Thomas de Larcher, and now recovered at the great expense, magnis sumptibus, of the present prior, Phillip de Thame”.

It is clear, however, that in 1338, Rothley was potentially a considerable asset to its lord. There was the manor and its garden, and rent from within and without the manor, 217 acres of arable at 6d an acre, the two mills, the proceeds of the court and fines, profit from the stock, from a dovecot and an orchard, which together totalled 131 marks, rather more than £40. There was also the proceeds of the church with its chapelries (modern spellings) at Gaddesby, Grimston, Wartnaby, Chadwell and Wycomb, worth another 100 marks. The striking thing about the Extent, however, is that it shows that the extensive soke, existing in 1066, 1086, and largely intact in 1245, has gone. Under the Hospitallers, Rothley was the smaller part part of a Commandery consisting of two manors, Rothley and Dalby, with minor appurtenances in Melton and Stonesby. The only hint, and it is no more than that, of an Anglo-Saxon past to be gleaned from the Extent is the list of the chapelries of Rothley church. This, taken together with references to the church in the other documents here considered, the presence of an Anglo-Saxon cross of indeterminate date in Rothley churchyard, and the proportions of the ground plan of the church itself, might make something of a case for suggesting that Rothley might have been, at some time in the Anglo-Saxon past, a minster site.

From the Leicestershire Survey of c1130, it seems that Rothley was still in royal

hands at this stage, and would remain so until 1150 when king Stephen granted it to Ranulph, earl of Chester. Rothley in 1130 was a constituent of the hundred of Rearsby, which contained land in Queniborough, Syston, Brooksby, Quenby and Thurcaston as well as Rothley. The entry for Rothley reads:-- In Rodoleia terra Regis v. carucata. This is the same amount of land, five carucates, recorded in Domesday as belonging to king William and as having belonged to king Edward.

From the point of view of the Anglo-Saxonist, the opening statements of the Domesday entry for Rothley are of the greatest interest:- Rex tenet Rodolei. Rex Edwardus tenuit. We do not know when or by what means Rothley came to be a royal possession, but on the basis of negative evidence, there is nothing to disprove the suggestion that it had been in royal hands for a long time before 1066. It remains to be seen if the Custumal of 1245 contains any evidence which would support the suggestion that Rothley and its soke was part of a royal estate from early in the Anglo-Saxon period.

The Custumal was published by G.T.Clark in Archaeologia, Vol. 47, in 1882, and its introduction consists of a paper which he read to the Society of Antiquaries in 1879. The custumal is undated, and until recently, Clark's general statement that "the Custumary as here given was compiled soon after the middle of the thirteenth century", has been accepted as the closest dating possible. Recently, however, Dr D.A.Postles has collated the Custumal with a document in the Chancery Miscellanea in the Public Record Office, and, as a result is able to date the Custumal rather more precisely (20). The document used by Dr Postles in this exercise is the record of a dispute between the Master of the Templars and the customary tenants of the Rothley soke (21). The first membrane of this document is dated Octabis sancti Michaelis anno quinquagesimo sexto Regis Henrici, which is 1272, the last year of Henry's reign and life, but the document says that the plea was initiated three years earlier in 1269. It

(20) D.A.Postles, The Custumal of Rothley, its Date and Significance, inf. recd.
(21) Public Record Office, C250/86.
is clear, however, that the justices of 1269 reached their decision on the basis of a much earlier dispute recorded in the *de banco* rolls of 29 Henry III, that is, 1245, and this, added to other evidence leads Dr Postles to conclude that the custumal was produced in connection with this earlier dispute, which arose because the Templars levied an *incrementum* on the rents of the customary tenants. Since Rothley and its soke members had been land of the king both in 1066 and 1086, it was "ancient demesne of the crown", and rents and other dues from it were fixed and invariable. The dispute may have been a test case determining if the Templars were sufficiently powerful to have an effect on this long established ruling.(22).

The greater part of the custumal consists of the rentals, first of the soke caput, and then of the soke members. It is worth noting that the soke of 1245 is different from that of 1086. The 1245 soke consists of land in Rothley, Gaddesby, Barsby, Baggrave, Croxton, Tilton, Marefield south and Marefield north, Somerby, Grimston, Saxilby, Wartnaby, Chadwell, Keyham and Menton, (recte Melton), a list which omits from the Domesday soke, Allextone, Seagrave, Sileby, Tugby, Skeffington, Halstead, Asfordby, Twyford and Frisby. Croxton and Menton, however, were not in the Domesday soke but appear in that of 1245. Following the rentals are the *redditus forinseci*, or payments received from outside the soke. The mill, which was there at the time of Domesday, is treated separately, and is let at the discretion of the Preceptor at five marks a year. Out of this total of rents, there is a charge of 22s. in favour of the abbot of Croxton, which existed before the time of the Templars at Rothley, having been a grant of the king to the abbot in respect of assarting at Rothley and Mountsorrel. This is followed by a valuation of the churches based on a sworn inquisition, *Extenenta per Inquisitionem*, made during the time when Amed de Morestall was Master of the Temple in England. This refers to the grant of Henry III in 1231, which gave the Temple not only the manor and soke, but also the advowsons of the church and its chapelries. The

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results of the inquisition were confirmed by the bishop of Lincoln. Then follows an
instruction as to how the rents are to be collected, and an account of the stipends and other
expenses of the manor. The next two sections of the custumal are the *consuetudines et
servicia* and *de curia tenenda* and finally comes a list of *Compositiones Vacabulorum (sic) in
Quibusdem (sic) Cartis contentorum*.

There are certain features of the Rothley custumal which strongly suggest that it was
compiled from records, written and unwritten, of great antiquity. Clark clearly thought so
The franchises and tenures recorded in it (the custumal) are evidently of very remote date,
probably going back to a time long anterior to the Conquest' (23). Six features of the
custumal might be taken as indicators of the antiquity of the Rothley soke, and tabulated as
follows:-

1). The existence of the soke.
2). The survival of apparently uncommuted dues in kind.
3). The existence and incidence of the *incrementum*.
4). The organisation of the soke and the names of its officers.
5). The ancient nature of the *consuetudines*.
6). The list of *compositiones vacabulorum* and reference to *cartis contentorum*.

As an economic and jurisdictional institution, the royal manor and attendant soke is
very ancient indeed, and almost certainly originated before the time of the *villae regis* of
which Bede writes. Such places provided accommodation, and from the soke, a commisariat
for the necessarily itinerant royal households and their attendant officers of the early Saxon
period. The existence of a royal soke in 1066 does not prove that Rothley was an early *villa
regis* but in the absence of evidence to the contrary, the possibility that it was can not be
ruled out.

Dues in kind were an essential and integral feature of early Saxon tenures, but, unlike the other non-monetary obligations in the form of labour dues or services, dues in kind were nearly all commuted for money payment long before the Templars came to Rothley. It is unusual to find in a single document, such a number of references to them, and even more unusual that, as seems to be the case here, they have not been commuted.

At Barsby, two tenants each give a cock, and a third tenant gives three cocks. Somewhat enigmatically, yet another tenant gives a ploughshare, vomer, during his lifetime. In north Marefield, Adam Faber pays a pound of pepper, and in Saxilby, Henricus Molinendarius pays a pound of cinnamon. In Wartnaby, Herbert of Seagrave appears to have commuted his due, a pair of white gloves at Easter, for fifteen and a half pence. In Menton, three villagers pay a pound of pepper.

An interesting feature of the custumal is the incidence of the increment which Dr Postles has shown to be the cause of the dispute between the tenants and Fr Imbert, Master of the Temple in England, and possibly the reason for its compilation. It would be entirely logical if the increment excluded the manor of Rothley, which it does, on the grounds that Rothley was indisputably ancient demesne of the king, but one would then expect that the soke of 1086 would also be exempt, and that the increment would be confined to the soke lands of Rothley which were not in the soke of 1086, at first sight Croxton and Menton. But there is a difficulty here. Menton does not appear in the Leicestershire Domesday, and is unlocated. It is assumed here that Menton is a misspelling of Melton. The custumal does not make it clear whether “Croxton” refers to Croxton Kerrial or South Croxton. Croxton Kerrial was land of the king in 1086 and the caput of a small soke which had been Earl Morcar’s in 1066. It is also known to be the site of a former abbey, and largely because of the references in the custumal to the abbot of Croxton, it is here assumed that Croxton Kerrial is intended. However, the real point at issue is that the imposition of the increment is clearly contrary to the law and custom of the time and points either to some special privilege or exemption enjoyed by the military orders, or to the Temple’s ability to corrupt royal officials,
a state of affairs which is not unknown(24).

In only five of the fifteen vills of the soke is the increment levied invariably and without exception, Croxton, Tilton, south Marefield, Somerby and Grimston. In the other ten vills there appear to be exceptions or exemptions from the increment, and in some cases from the rental altogether. This may be summarised as follows:-

**Rothley:** The tenants of the manor of Rothley itself appear to pay no increment. In addition, six tenancies, five jointly held, and one singly held, each of one virgate, appear to pay no rent.

**Gaddesby:** Six villagers pay very small sums, from one penny to two pence to two pence and an obolus. The custumal does not say what is paid for, and there is no increment. Two tenants, holding fourteen acres of land, pay two shillings, six pence and an obolus, but there is no increment.

**Barsby:** The tenants who pay dues in kind, (see above), make no other payment, either rent or increment.

**Baggrave:** Three tenants pay 3d each with no increment, and 5d is collected from the whole village.

**North Marefield:** Adam Faber pays a pound of pepper and 1s for the 5th part of a carucate, but no increment.

**Saxilby:** Henricus Molinendarius pays a pound of cinnamon, but no rent or increment. Two tenants pay 4d each, but no increment.

**Wartnaby:** Thomas Clerico and his brother pay 5d for the whole vill. Herbert of Seagrave, who appears to have commuted his due in kind of a pair of white gloves at Easter for fifteen and a half pence, pays nothing more, either in rent or increment.

**Keyham:** One tenant pays 3d with no increment.

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Chadwell: One tenant pays 2d with no increment, and the tenants of two mills pay nothing.

Menton: No increment is levied on the tenants of Menton, and three villagers pay a pound of pepper and nothing else.

The items and memoranda inserted into the rental all refer to "private deals" between individual tenants and particular preceptors or masters of the order, and can not, in themselves predate the Templars' acquisition of the estate. The agreed rent is stated, but no increment mentioned. One suspects the existence of earlier tenures and franchises, with which the Templars had to come to terms. There are also other apparent exemptions which are not the subject of items and memoranda involving Temple dignitaries. There are many possible reasons for these apparent exemptions, one of which is that those exempt had demonstrable title to be so exempted, and it could well be that the title to recte firma and nothing else is of pre-Conquest origin.

In the custumal, the rental of most of the vills in the soke, including the caput is preceded by the names of Juratores. Saxilby and Chadwell have no jurator, the other vills have from one to four such officers, making a total of thirty-five juratores for the soke as a whole, and Dr Postles has identified some of them as appearing on behalf of themselves and their vills in the litigation occasioned by the imposition of the increment. It is possible that when the custumal was compiled, each vill put forward representatives, from whom those who went to Westminster were selected, but it is far more likely that they were persons of existing status within a long-standing manorial organisation. In Imperial Rome a jurator was a sworn assessor who assisted the censor, and it exactly describes the function of the "tithing-men" who answered upon oath for themselves and others in early Anglo-Saxon England.

The use of the term propositus or prepositus is also suggestive of antiquity. Praepositus is the normal Latin rendering, not only of the Middle English reeve, but also of the Old English gerefa, and the functions of the reeve, especially the king's reeve are mentioned in early Saxon law codes and other documents. There are five, out of thirty-five juratores of Rothley soke who bear the name Propositus, but Dr Postles has pointed out that it
is a fairly common byname, and this, by itself may mean no more than that the mens' name was "Reeve", and the scribe rendered it Propositus in Latin. However, there are other references in the custumal where there can be little doubt that the use of the word indicates a function. The rental for Gaddesby is followed by four memoranda, the second of which concerns Ricardus de Gaddesby, propositus, who gave 12d rent to the master and brothers of the Temple. It is unlikely that a man would be identified by a locative surname as well as another common byname. An even stronger indication of the use of propositus to describe a function occurs in the account of the Extent of Rothley church and its chapelries made in the time of brother Amed de Morestall as Master of the Temple in England, probably about 1231, the year in which Henry III granted the manor and soke of Rothley, together with the advowsons of the church and its chapelries to the Temple. The entry reads:- Rogerus Thok de Kayham propositus and Simon of Kayham said on oath, dicunt super sacramentum, that the chapel was worth ten marks. There can be little doubt that Roger was a reeve. The practice of oath-taking super sacramentum is in itself the survival of a very early procedure.

The account of the Extent of the church is followed in the custumal by a memorandum stating how the rents are to be collected, in hunc modum collinguntur Reditus Prescripti. Each vill of the soke, beginning with the caput is named, and the entry for each begins:- Propositus de (name of vill) respondet per manum suum...etc. Clearly this refers to one of the duties of the reeve.

In the sections consuetudines et servicia and de curia tenenda, it is clear that administrative practices of considerable antiquity are being described. The king's bailey reeve, ballivus domini regis, makes a reeve of whoever he wishes, both in Rothley and in all the villages of the soke. This indicates a hierarchy of reeves known to exist in early Saxon royal estates (25). This consisted of the king's reeve, responsible for the caput, and the lesser

reeves, responsible for the vills of the soke. In addition, the men of Rothley are to carry corn, *blada dominica domini regis*, and take it to the king's barn, *orrreum domini regis*. The king's reeve, *dictus ballivus*, is to hold a court every three weeks or once a month at his discretion.

The final item in the custumal is entitled *compositiones vocabulorum (sic) in quibusdem (sic) cartis contentorum*. It must be assumed that *vocabulorum* is a misspelling of *vocabularum* and that *quibusdem* is a garbled version of *quaedam*, and read the title as something like "Lists of terms contained in certain charters". It is a curious inclusion, of a kind not normally found in similar documents, and doubly curious because there are no references to any particular charters, although all the terms included are to be found in grants of land, property or privilege as far back as the time of the earliest authentic documents of the Anglo-Saxon period. There are some forty-one terms in the list. It must be doubted if this section was an integral part of the custumal in its original form, but Clark saw no reason to reject it, and if its inclusion was an attempt to stress the antiquity and hence the inviolability of the tenures and franchises recorded, then it can be seen as a strengthening of the villagers' case against the Templars.

In effect, the section is a very comprehensive list of franchises, obligations and quittances therefrom, with the terms written in English, Old English in most cases, and explained in Latin. It is fortunate that a modern discussion and explanation of fifteen of the forty-one terms in the list is readily available (26). In practice, very few of the custumal's forty-one, or even of Harmer's fifteen franchises were granted in any one charter; one of the fullest lists occurs in the foundation charter of Blyth priory in Nottinghamshire, which was founded by Roger de Bully and his wife Muriel, in 1088 (27). Roger's grant consisted of the church, the whole vill and its appurtenances, and the *consuetudines* hitherto performed for Roger by the *homines eiusdem ville*. These consisted of ploughing, carting, mowing


reaping, hay-making giving marriage dues, *marchetum*, and making the mill pond. He further granted all the franchises, *dignitates*, he held in the vill. These were *sac et soc*, *tol et them*, *et infangtheof*, *ferrum et fossum*, (ordeal), *et furcas*, (gallows), as he had received them from the king. Roger's grant thus consisted of the church, the vill and dependencies, seven customary dues and eight franchises, a good deal less than what was granted to the Templars in Henry III's charter of 1231.

What is clear, both from the custumal itself, and from the inclusion of the *compositiones*, is that the custumal was compiled by means of consulting documents, not now extant, or possibly recollection of ceremonial, which were of considerable antiquity, and the random appearance of items and *memoranda* in the text may indicate that it was prepared in some haste, a claim by the appellants to fixed and immutable conditions of tenure, in what was, in effect, a protest against the imposition of the *incrementum*.

To conclude: the territorial disposition of lands in the Rothley soke is an illustration of the feature of "transverse" settlement pattern which characterised the lower Soar valley throughout a long period of history, and the survival of a "working" manor and soke into the late thirteenth century is evidence of the continuity of institutions in that area. The absence of any pre-Conquest documentation for the manor and its soke, necessitates reliance on archaeological and topographical evidence, which, although plentiful and suggestive, is not conclusive. Taking it in conjunction with later documentation, however, creates a strong case for the suggestion that Rothley was a royal establishment of very great antiquity, which retained some of its characteristics for more than a century after it passed out of royal hands in 1150.

Circumstantial evidence would suggest a minster site:
1). An Anglo-Saxon cemetery overlying a Romano-British villa gives Rothley an early ritual significance.
2). Fosbrooke's discovery of re-used Roman material in the garden of Rothley Temple is in keeping with the well-known tradition of the re-use of such material in the construction of
early churches, Brixworth in Northamptonshire, for example.

3). His discovery in the same garden of the stones which, as he says, might have formed a pedestal for a cross, invites the inquirer to consider the possibility that the pedestal might have supported the cross standing in the present churchyard, which, incidentally, has no pedestal.

4). It is, however, the later documentation which provides the strongest indication of possible minster status. It is important to note that when Rothley passed out of royal hands in 1150, the advowsons of the church and its chapels did not pass with the manor to the successive non-royal grantees. Rothley passed in and out of royal hands until 1216-7, by which time it was in the hands of the Harcourts, some of whom were Templars. Parts of Rothley became land of the Templars in 1219, but it was not until 1231, that Henry III granted them not only the manor of Rothley and its appurtenances, but also the advowsons of Rothley church and its chapels (28). These are enumerated in the custumal considered above.

5). As the Hospitallers Extent of 1338 shows, the manorial soke was largely broken up by that date, but the church and its dependencies were not; they continued to exist as the ecclesiastical peculiar or peculiar jurisdiction of the manor of Rothley Temple, consisting of Rothley, Mountsorrel South, Gaddesby, Grimston, Keyham Wartnaby, Wycomb and Chadwell.

If to these considerations are added the facts that even today, Rothley is a large parish, and was even larger at the time of Domesday, since the planted borough of Mountsorrel was carved out of Rothley and Barrow shortly before 1148, (29), many of the criteria for the existence of a minster are met (30). A further consideration is that in establishing a preceptory at Rothley, the Templars may have been continuing a tradition, since the

preceptory as an institution would much resemble a minster, being in some sense a collegiate church of secular priests (31). It remains to discover, if possible, what functions in the territory of the lower Soar valley were performed by the settlements of Loughborough and Barrow.

(31). P.Lloyd, A Study of the Dedications Given to Religious Buildings in Leicestershire before the Reformation, M.A. Dissertation, Leicester University, 1973. This study refers to “a mediaeval will” which is said to establish a connection between Rothley and St Wistan, (d.850). The attendant circumstances are complex, and for this reason they are treated in an appendix.
CHAPTER EIGHT

The Origins of Loughborough and the Status of Barrow-on-Soar

In the previous chapter a case was made for regarding the royal settlement of Rothley as a minster site, forming part of a delineable political, economic and social unit within the lower Soar valley. The other key settlements within this area are Loughborough and Barrow-on-Soar, and it remains to discover the function and character of these settlements within the administration of the territory as a whole.

There is no documentary evidence for Loughborough before 1066. The Domesday Book entry for Loughborough reveals a complex tenurial situation which will need to be considered several times during the course of the present chapter. Initially it has to be noted that the manor of Loughborough was land of Earl Hugh, farmed out to five tenants, who held a total of eighteen carucates, and between them two mills, forty-five acres of meadow and 210 acres of woodland. Included in the earl's Loughborough land was the jurisdiction of a hide in Burton-on-the-Wolds, which jurisdiction was claimed by Hugh de Grandmesnil. The manor of Loughborough proved to be a remarkably successful settlement as its more recent history has shown. By 1130 Loughborough was the caput of a hundred consisting of land in Loughborough, Charley, Dishley Garendon, Thorpe Acre and Hathem. A charter of king John in 1206 granted a street market. Among the earliest stages in the "rise and rise of Loughborough", a process which has been continuous since the thirteenth century is the market and fair charter of the reign of Henry III, (1216-1272), which is highly prized by contemporary Loughburians and may be illustrated as follows:-

...concessimus....Hugoni Despenser quod ipsi et heredes sui habeant in perpetuum unum mercatum singulis septimanis, per diem Jovis (Thursday) apud manerium suum de Lucteburh et quod habeant ibidem unam feriam singulis annis per tres
The Thursday market is still held and is a flourishing concern. The August fair has disappeared, but a grant made shortly after the original one granted a fair on November 2nd, and this still takes place, although it is nowadays a matter of dodgem cars and candyfloss.

Leland, writing in about 1540, says:-

'The toune of Lugborowe is yn largeness and good building next to Leyrcester of all the markette tounes in the shire and hath in it a 4 faire straites o mo welle pavid' (2).

The original Latin version of Camden's Britannia appeared in 1586, but in the English edition of 1637, the author writes:-

'...Loughborough, a Mercate Towne...But now among all the Townes of this Shire, it rightfully chalengeth the second place next unto Leicester, whether a man either regard the bigness or building thereof, or the pleasant woods about it.'

Industry located successfully in Loughborough, not only the ubiquitous but volatile textile industry, but also, as the railway industry developed, railway engineering. Locomotive engines are still made in the town. In the days of the Great Central Railway, Loughborough could boast that two railway companies had built stations there, and nowhere else in the county apart from Leicester itself. As early as 1634, attempts had been made to link Loughborough to the river Soar from which it is separated by the extensive Loughborough Moors and Loughborough Meadows, and this was finally achieved in 1776, when a group of Loughborough notables secured an Act of Parliament for the construction of the Loughborough Canal which opened in 1778. A further Act of 1791 permitted the

(1). Transcription in Nicholls, History of Leicestershire, (1810).
construction of the Leicester Canal which opened in 1794, the two waterways constituting the Soar Navigation, one of the most successful canal enterprises, which lasted until 1931 before becoming part of the by then doomed Grand Central system (3).

In the Twentieth Century, Loughborough was still in the forefront of technological development: the battery-powered milk floats which are a common sight on our streets were developed there by Morrison Electrics, a local family firm which traded until the 1950's. By then, of course, Herbert Schofield had welded together a somewhat polyglot collection of educational institutions into what was to become first the Loughborough College of Advanced Technology, the only such institution to have a Department of Aeronautical Engineering, with its own hangars, aircraft and flying field, and later, Loughborough University. Albeit in bare outline, this is the story of a settlement and community which has been conspicuously successful. It is worth noting that whereas most of the reformed councils of Leicestershire, and other counties, made up their new coats of arms from heraldic features of the arms of the previously existing smaller local authorities, Charnwood, which comprised the former municipal borough of Loughborough, the urban district of Shepshed and the rural district of Barrow-upon-Soar, chose to retain the arms of the former municipal borough, granted in 1888, in what may be viewed as a symbolic act (Figs. 39,40, pp.247, 248).

Documentation for Loughborough before the thirteenth century is minimal. In addition to the writ of Henry III quoted above, there was a charter of king John in 1206, granting a street market. About 1130, Loughborough was the caput of a hundred consisting of land in Loughborough, Charley, Dishley, Garendon, Thorpe Acre and Hathern. As an example of the continuity of institutions in the Soar valley area, it is worth noting that the assessment for Loughborough in the Leicestershire Survey is one hide and thirteen carucates, and that Hathern is assessed at half a hide. The complex Domesday account of Loughborough must be the subject of detailed examination at a later stage: the point to be made here is that

The County of Leicestershire showing its District Areas
MAP OF CHARNWOOD DISTRICT
IN LEICESTERSHIRE

Showing the Boundaries as designated under the Local Government Act, 1972 and effective as from 1st April, 1974.

County Boundary
District Boundary
Civil Parish Boundaries

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there is no documentary evidence for Loughborough earlier than 1066. In such circumstances there is usually recourse to archaeological and place-name evidence, but here a virtually blank wall is encountered. The only surviving archaeological evidence for pre-Conquest Loughborough consists of a single cremation urn, containing fragments of two other vessels, discovered in 1911 close by the Woodbrook near the centre of the present town (4). The accepted place-name solution was first put forward by Eilert Ekwall, and most later scholars seem to have agreed it (5). 'Luhhede's burh' is a strange name indeed, and invites further consideration. It cannot be taken in any literal sense as a fortified or burghal place associated with someone called 'Luhhede'. There is no evidence of fortification of any kind at Loughborough, at any time, historic or prehistoric. There are no earthwork remains and there was never a wall there. Nor is there any natural feature there, a "berg" or "burg" to which the place-name element can be attached. It is, in fact, an almost indefensible site, overlooked by the high ground of the forest to the west, too far from the Soar to the east, about a mile across the Loughborough Moors or Loughborough Meadows, for the river to form a defensive feature, and with unhindered access along the river valley from north and south. There are, as we shall see, some indications of the provision of a kind of "look-out" system, but this is more likely to have been concerned with protecting livestock from thieves; in any case, if the system, such as it was, gave warning of attack, there was no fortification to provide defence. The burh element has to be regarded as an example of the Anglo-Saxon propensity for "gnomic" utterances; the place is called a burh because that is the last thing it could have been, the word being used in a comic or derogatory sense. Alternatively, the term burh may be loosely used to describe a farmstead with an enclosure to keep out stray animals, wild or domestic.


(5) Ekwall, Oxford Dictionary of English Place-names, (3rd edn, rep, 1951), and P.L.N.R.
Similar considerations apply to the "Luhhede" elements. If this is indeed a personal name, then it is unusual in several ways. As has been observed earlier, a characteristic of Soar valley settlement is that the great majority of place-names within it are topographical, not personal, and this alone makes it unusual. It is also a very uncommon name, unique in fact. Thirdly, it is a distinctly uncomplimentary name. Luh is the Old English form of "lake", and hede, of course, means "head". "Lake-head" certainly sounds like a derogatory nick-name, and "Lake-head's burh" may be so called because nobody but a fool would attempt to fortify it. However, "Lake-head", in a literal sense, is a description of a topographical feature, and bearing in mind the "multi-valency" of words and phrases in Old English, it might be inferred, highly speculatively, that an unnamed person, who earned himself an uncomplimentary nick-name for so doing, settled at Loughborough, possibly on the site near the Woodbrook where the cremation urn was found, and the comic description burh was given to it because it was in a vulnerable position. A more likely explanation, however, is to be found by considering two topographical features of Loughborough which no longer exist. It is still possible to trace on Ordnance Survey maps, stretches of the Summerpool Brook to the east of the town, which can only have got its name from an expanse of water which did not dry out in the summer. This is coincident with another expanse of water, the Hermitage Pool, fed by the Hermitage Brook, which existed until the eighteenth century, when it was filled in and the brooks diverted to form the present canal basin (6). Further details will be found later in the present chapter. Thus, "luhhede's burh" or "enclosure at the head of the lake", becomes consistent with the topographical character of Soar valley settlement names.

At this point it is profitable to consider the earliest spelling of Loughborough that we have, which occurs in Domesday Book. It appears three times in the account of Leicestershire; in the account of Leicester as Loctebume, and twice in the account of the land of earl Hugh as Luctebume. In general, place name scholars have rejected Domesday

spellings as inaccurate and unreliable, but their grounds for doing so are open to question:

'It is as well to remember, however, that the scribes were Norman, to whom
the names would appear barbarous, and that they would in any case tend to
represent English sounds by the nearest equivalent in their own language. As
a result the spellings of Domesday Book have often to be treated with considerable
cautions.' (7).

The suggestion that the scribes of Domesday Book were Normans is, of course, historically
unlikely, since the persons brought to England by the Conqueror were mostly of high rank,
and moreover, William had more and better scribes at his disposal in England than he had in
Normandy, but stronger evidence than that can be adduced. An examination of the Domesday
manuscripts themselves has identified eleven distinguishable “hands” involved in the
Compilation. At least eight of these are common to English and Continental documents, and
the eight includes the hand most frequently occurring, that is, the hand responsible for the
greater part of the manuscripts (8). There is no valid reason why Domesday spellings should
be suspect, and there is as much evidence in Domesday to show that Saxon scribes had
difficulty in rendering the names of Norman tenants-in-chief than there is for concluding that
Norman scribes found difficulty in rendering English place names. For instance, no Norman
scribe would have had any difficulty in rendering correctly the name of Geoffrey de la
Guerche, whose name, like most of the tenants-in-chief, is, in fact, a place name: the location
of his estate in Normandy. Nevertheless, in all of the half-dozen English shires in which he
held land, his name is rendered as Geoffrey de Wirce, an obvious Anglicisation. The point is
most important in establishing what can be established about the origins of Loughborough.

(7) K.Cameron, English Place-Names, (1988 edn.), p.21. See also M.Gelling, Signposts to
the Past, Ch.6.

(8) A.R.Rumble, 'The Palaeography of the Domesday Manuscripts', in Sawyer, ed,
Lucteburne is clearly derived from the Old English verb *lucan*, "to enclose", "interlace", or "interlock", and *buma*, "stream", which is topographical, as are most Soar valley place-names, and it precisely describes the way in which Loughborough is criss-crossed or enclosed by streams rising in the Charnwood Forest and disgorging into the river Soar to the east of the present town. They include Black Brook, Burleigh Brook, Grace Dieu Brook, Hermitage Brook and Wood Brook which runs right through the centre of the present town. There are other lesser watercourses as well.

There are thus two possible explanations of the name Loughborough, one describing an individual settlement, and the other describing the area immediately surrounding it. It may not be too far fetched to suggest that the former description preceded the latter, which came into use only when the individual settlement had become the scene of more varied activity.

In turning to the content of the Domesday Book entry for Loughborough an extremely complex situation is encountered. This has been briefly treated earlier, but now needs to be considered in more detail. The core of the problem is the relationship during the pre-Conquest period between Loughborough, Barrow and Rothley, and it seems that the only approach to it lies in the information contained in Domesday Book. One has to start, therefore, with the situation in 1086. At that time, the Rothley soke was held by king William and the Barrow soke by earl Hugh, who was a close, but not a first degree relative of the king. The geographical proximity of the lands of the two sokes suggests that at some time they might have comprised a single soke, but there is no proof of this, and other interpretations of the situation are possible. Even if the existence of a single soke could be proved there would still remain the awkward question of whether Barrow or Rothley was its caput. Although Rothley and Barrow are four miles apart, they were adjacent manors in 1086, since Mountsorrel, which now separates them, is a planted borough of the twelfth century (9). The duality of Rothley and Barrow, combined in a single administrative unit appears in much

later history. From 1888 to 1974, both places were contained within a local government unit known as the Rural District of Barrow-upon-Soar, but the offices of the Rural District Council were not in Barrow, but in Rothley. For the moment, however, the connection between Barrow and Rothley must be noted as a prominent, but inexplicable feature of Soar valley settlement history, while the connection between Barrow and Loughborough is examined.

In addition to the Barrow soke, earl Hugh also held Loughborough, most of Burton-on-the-Wolds, Kegworth, Hathem and part of Dishley, but these lands were sub-infeudated to tenants. Before considering this sub-infeudation, it is important to remember that both in 1066 and 1086 the Barrow soke was assessed together with these sub-infeudated lands. There is no assessment given at the end of the account of the Barrow soke; the Domesday text proceeds immediately to a description of the sub-infeudated lands. Only when this is completed is the assessment given in the following words:-

*In his omnibus prescriptis terris fuerant (80) carucata T.R.E.*

*Totius valuit et valeat (40) libri.*

Thus there is no doubt that in 1066 and 1086 the Barrow soke, together with Loughborough, most of Burton, Kegworth, Hathem and part of Dishley comprised a single unit for fiscal if no other purposes.

At this point one can begin to compare the situation in 1066 with that in 1086. Rothley was held by king Edward in 1066. The Barrow soke was held by a magnate of at least equal rank to earl Hugh; earl Harold. Of earl Hugh's subinfeudated lands, we know from Domesday that Kegworth was held by earl Harold. We do not know who held Burton, Hathem and Dishley, but we know that the jurisdiction of the hide in Burton lay in Loughborough and we know that the Barrow soke, with Loughborough, Burton, Kegworth, Hathem and Dishley comprised a single fiscal unit both in 1066 and 1086. It seems not unreasonable, therefore, to assume that earl Harold was earl Hugh's antecessor as tenant-in-chief in all the lands of earl Hugh in Leicestershire. Loughborough also reveals a close
similarity in pattern of tenure in 1066 and 1086. Of the situation in 1066 we are told baldly that Quinque taini libere tenuerant. In another county we might have expected to be given their names, and told at least that “each had his hall” there, but the Leicestershire Domesday is nothing if not laconic (10). All that can be deduced is that in 1066 Loughborough consisted of five separate holdings, each held by someone with the rank of thegn, and all of them probably sub-tenants of earl Harold, but we are better informed about the situation in 1086. The five thegns have been replaced by an equal number of tenants of earl Hugh, and we have their names and the extent of their holdings. From this it seems likely that the holdings of the five thegns were taken over as “going concerns” by the men of earl Hugh. Before looking at the names and holdings of the earl’s subtenants, it is worth considering the appurtenances of the manor of Loughborough. Clearly it was a manor, although the Leicestershire Domesday often describes a place without indicating its status, manor, sokeland or berewick, as is the case with Loughborough. But we know from the entry following that the jurisdiction of a hide, eighteen carucates in Leicestershire, in Burton-on-the-Wolds lay in Loughborough, which is sufficient to establish the status. Loughborough’s appurtenances were by no means negligible; there were two mills at ten shillings, forty-five acres of pasture, and seven furlongs by three furlongs of woodland, that is 210 acres. The implication is that although the arable land at Loughborough was divided between five men, the appurtenances were not. Technically, perhaps, it might be argued that the five men were really four, because the name “Roger” occurs twice in the account of Loughborough, and the appurtenances were divided, two of the four having a mill each, the third the meadowland and the fourth the woodland, but that is not what Domesday appears to be saying, which is that Loughborough was a manor

(10). In neighbouring Nottinghamshire, for example, the entry for Normanton-on-Trent is typical:-

In Normentune habuerant v taini, Justan, Aseloc, Durand, Eluuard Vilmar, quisque aulam suam. (Text extended).
jointly held by five or possibly four men. Joint holdings are relatively common throughout Domesday Book; they occur frequently in all the East Midland counties. They can be explained in terms of the fission of larger holdings, or the manorialisation of larger estates, as a result of partible or gavelkind inheritance. The joint holding of land as such presents no difficulty; rents and dues, or even the land itself could be divided by agreement reached on the spot. Joint tenure of a manor, however, raises the question of whether such a thing as joint lordship was possible. Given an eleventh century context, it seems unlikely that the day to day business of a manor of the extent of Loughborough, with a recorded population of at least forty-seven, which means that the true population would be three or four times that number, could be effectively conducted by a quincumvirate. It is possible, that since earl Hugh, as the king's tenant-in-chief, was lord of the manor, he reserved the functions of lordship to a comital reeve, but it is open to doubt that such a person would have sufficient status to exercise authority among the earl's tenants. Another possible resolution of the apparent dilemma lies in the fact that if indeed some kind of partnership existed, at least there was a fairly obvious "senior partner". Roger, the first named of Hugh's Loughborough tenants holds eight carucates, possibly eight and a half, while three and a half carucates are allotted to Ralph, Hugh and Godric, the last of whom, in view of his Saxon name, may have been a survivor, or his descendant, from pre-Conquest days (11). Whether the fifth named tenant, Roger, with only half a carucate, is the same as the first Roger, can not be determined. Roger is identified as Roger of Melay and Brisard, who granted his Leicestershire tithes to the monastery of St Evroul in Normandy before 1081 (12). Roger may have been the lord of the manor, but without full authority over his fellow tenants within it.

There is no explanation of this situation which is entirely satisfactory. The question of the existence of manors in joint lordship is wider than the scope of the present exercise, but it

is as well to note that Loughborough is a part of it. It is also as well to note that the same problem which appears in 1086 also existed in 1066 and probably earlier, with the five thanes to whom earl Harold had subinfeudated Loughborough. One general conclusion which can be drawn is that Loughborough was not a typical, orthodox or conventional manor, and this raises the possibility that Loughborough is treated as a manor in Domesday simply because there was no other settlement category into which it would fit. It is therefore necessary to see if there are any circumstances of the early history of Loughborough which would suggest a "proto-urban" situation.

There is an immense body of literature concerning towns, their institutions, origins and development, and in some cases, decline and extinction. In all this enormous body of scholarship, Loughborough gets hardly a mention. W.G.Hoskins chose to trace the history not of Loughborough, but of Market Harborough (13). Professor Everitt regarded Melton Mowbray, not Loughborough, as one of the "primary towns" of England (14). In his best known book, Hoskins included a chapter on "The Landscape of Towns", in which he distinguished three broad categories; planned towns, open field towns and market towns (15). In the light of what has been written on the subject since 1955, this may seem very elementary, but it is nevertheless the basis of a good deal of urban scholarship. It is obvious that in terms of Hoskins' categories, Loughborough is a market town, and as we have seen, that is how both Leland and Camden described it in the sixteenth century. Royal licence for market activity, again as we have seen, was granted by king John in 1206 and Henry III in 1227. However, the potential both for market development and urban nucleation at Loughborough existed long before the thirteenth century, possibly as far back as prehistoric

times. Topographically, Loughborough is almost a perfect setting for a market place, and a
town. A great variety of produce was available in the surrounding area. The oak forest to the
west of the present town was a source of pig-products, timber and stone, and east of the town,
Loughborough Moors and Loughborough Meadows provided not only grazing, but very high
quality grasses which grew abundantly on the flood plain west of the river, which was deeply
covered each year with highly fertile silt, and these grasses were marketed as winter feed for
livestock. The existence of not one, but two mills at the time of Domesday indicates a strong
demand for corn, and to the east of the river, the wolds provided both arable and pasture for
sheep and cattle (Fig. 40, p. 258). There is surviving evidence for these activities, although in
only one case can a probable origin be indicated. In Romano-British times, slate from the
quarries at Swithland in the Charnwood Forest was distributed over a wide area; from
Littlechester, Derbyshire, and High Cross, Leicestershire in the west, along the Fosse as far
north as Norton Disney, ten miles short of Lincoln, southwards as far as Kettering and
Irchester in Northamptonshire, and eastwards as far as Ancaster in Lincolnshire (16). The
Swithland quarries continued in use until the late nineteenth century (Fig. 41, p. 259).

Loughborough boasted a pig-market, sited to the west of the town centre, nearest to
the forest, within living memory, and pig farming is still practised at Copt Oak and elsewhere
in the forest. The sale of the Meadow's abundant grasses, or haymarket, continued until the
1920's and the auctioneers responsible for the sale are still in business as estate agents. The
cattle market was held in the open market place and surrounding streets until the nineteenth
century, when an enclosed market was built (now a car park) which finally ceased trading in
1976. Both the mills mentioned in Domesday appear on nineteenth century Ordnance Survey
maps, marked as "Upper Mill" and "Lower Mill", and the lower mill, known as Cotes Mill,
now a restaurant, was still in the production of animal feed in 1958 (17).

LOUGHBOROUGH; NATURAL RESOURCES; FOREST, FIELD AND WOLD.
Figure 2: Distribution of Swithland slate
It is clear that when Leland and Camden described Loughborough as a "market town", they did not mean "a town with a market place", but a place where several markets were held, on more than one site. The *feriam singulis annis per tres dies duraturas*, granted by Henry III was not held as it is now, in the central market place, but in an area to the south of the town centre, known as Fair Fields, and marked on the nineteenth century O.S. map. This is now the site of the Loughborough Endowed Schools, (including the Boys' Grammar School, founded by Thomas Burton in 1495) of which the preparatory department is known as Fairfields School. The oldest surviving buildings in Loughborough are close to the parish church of All Saints, itself a mainly fourteenth century structure. The "Great House", which may have been a meeting place for merchants, is late fifteenth century, the "Manor House" is fourteenth century and the Old Rectory, recently restored by the Loughborough and District Archaeological Society and the Department of the Environment is a rare survival of a stone built house of the twelfth century.

Before proceeding to consider what can be perceived of Loughborough's distant past in the light of what some authorities have to say about urban origins and development, it is worth while to undertake some analysis of the layout of streets in the town and some of their names. This is a process fraught with pitfalls, the main reason for which is the habit of those who give names to streets of using archaic names for relatively modern thoroughfares in an attempt to suggest greater antiquity than is the case, and the fact that street name study, a branch of place-name study, can be only a partial explanation of the historical situation. The phrase "layout of streets" has been used above in order to avoid saying "street plan", which would imply that Loughborough was a "planned town". Loughborough was not a planned town in the sense that the "bastides" of Gascony or Edward I's "plantations were (18). Nor is it planned in the sense that the towns of the Burghal Hidage were (19). In fact there are

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indications which suggest that Loughborough was a thriving market place, in the literal sense, before the process of nucleation took place. The prerequisites of nucleated settlement were already present, and had been since the earliest settlement of the Soar valley; the numerous streams rising in the Charnwood forest and falling to the Soar, gave a constant water supply, and equally important, facility for an adequate sewage system: the *fulan broc* which is so frequently used as a landmark in the boundary clauses of Anglo-Saxon land grants.

It has been said that to study a particular landscape effectively, be it urban or rural, natural or man-made, an essential preliminary is to view it from the outside (20). To a large extent this has already been done, but one aspect of the area surrounding Loughborough has, so far, been omitted, and that is the roads which approach the place. Roads are often the earliest detectable feature of any landscape, although it must be remembered that the greater the use made of them, the more likely they are to change their alignment, due to the frequent need for repair and maintenance, which in earlier times involved not only widening, but also diversion round lengths rendered unusable, and the provision of easier routes round obstacles. A relatively local example, provided by the Fosse Way occurs between Leicester and Lincoln. The present road, A46, passes about a mile to the east of Willoughby-on-the-Wolds, the Roman *Vernemetum*, but we know from the Antonine Itinerary, *Iter VI* and *Iter VIII*, that the original line of the Fosse ran directly to *Vernemetum* (*Iter VI*), or *Verometo* (*Iter VIII*), (21). This is almost certainly true of the main thoroughfare providing access to Loughborough from north and south, the Leicester-Derby road, A6, running from Leicester through Birstall, Rothley, Mountsorrel and Quorn, and reaching Loughborough at Shelthorpe. Significantly, this route is rapidly becoming known as "the old road", since it has been replaced by one which runs to the east of it, bypassing Rothley, Mountsorrel and Quorn. It seems likely, however, that the A6 through the centre of Loughborough,

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(20). C.V.Phythian-Adams, pers. comm.

where it is known as the High Street, is on its original alignment, since there are other obviously old roads leading into Loughborough, all of which converge upon it. Three of them come into the centre of Loughborough from the east; Meadow Lane, Moor Lane and Little Moor Lane. Loughborough Meadows and to a large extent the Moors too, have never been exploited for any purpose other than grazing and the production of hay grasses. Part of the extensive flood-plain of the Soar, they stretch for about a mile between the eastern side of the town and the river. The subsoil is a soft alluvial silt, which has been deposited annually for millennia. Thus, this ground is quite unsuitable either for arable farming or building of any kind; it is too soft too deep. The moors are slightly firmer than the meadows, as one would expect, since they are upstream. Their preservation has little, if anything to do with the work of present day conservationists, but, for example, the meadows produce 178 different species of flora, and the long grass provides cover for a wide range of fauna, particularly ground nesting birds, such as the rare whinchat and redshank, which have become extinct in many places (22). There can be little doubt of the antiquity of the moor and meadow lanes, or that they point to a very early development of trading functions in what is now the central area of Loughborough. They can be traced by name almost directly into the market place, in spite of the interruption caused by the canal in the eighteenth century, two railway lines in the nineteenth, and a mass of subsequent building development. Moor Lane and Little Moor Lane converge to the east of the Great Central Railway station, which now blocks it off, but to the west of the station, the railway works and the junction between New King St. and Wharncliffe Rd, Moor Lane, still so called, continues, and joins the High Street by way of Aumberry Gap and Pinfold Gate. Meadow Lane can still be used to travel, if somewhat adventurously, from Main Street, Stanford-on-Soar, directly to the High Street, right opposite the market place. From Stanford, it crosses the Soar by means of Stanford Bridge, itself an ancient structure on the site of the original "stone ford" which gave Stanford its

(22). Wix, Shacklock and Keil, p.108.
name. A viaduct carries the Great Central line over it, and it passes under the present British Rail line.

The approach to Loughborough from the west is by means of two roads of considerable antiquity; the Ashby Road and the Forest Road. The name of the former reveals its destination, and the latter connects Loughborough with a number of forest settlements, principally Ibstock and Coalville. Coalville, incidentally, apart from its modern spelling, does not derive its name from the coal mines which were sunk there during the nineteenth century, but from the name of a knightly family who held the manor during the middle ages, and, according to its cartulary, were benefactors of Garendon Abbey (23). While still concerned with the approach roads to Loughborough, it is worth while to draw attention to a possible provision for defence of a particular kind, which may have existed at the time of early settlement in the area. There are four "thorpes" in the area surrounding Loughborough, Shelthorpe, Woodthorpe, Thorpe Acre and Knightthorpe. Thorpe Acre and Knightthorpe are essentially the same site, which was land of the king in 1086. It is generally reckoned that "thorpe" indicates an outlier of a larger settlement, (24), and there has been much discussion among place-name scholars concerning the possible functions of such places, and the question of whether particular examples are of ninth century Danish or earlier Saxon origin (25). In order to avoid unnecessary entanglement in the detail of this discussion, it can be suggested that the other elements in the names of the Loughborough "thorpes" are of Saxon rather than Danish origin. Woodthorpe contains the Old English element wudu, Shelthorpe would be "Skelthorpe" if it were of Danish origin and Thorpe Acre contains the English element aecer, a measurement not known to the Danes. There has also been discussion of the possibility that "thorpes" had the function of providing some sort of protection for the

(23). Registrum Abbatiae de Geroldon, British Library, SCH 96515.
larger settlements to which they were attached. This can be no more than speculation, since
there is no literary, documentary or artefactual evidence that they ever did so but it is a
speculation which has interested several scholars and deserves to be examined in relation to
the situation at Loughborough. In terms of defence against armed attack, the Loughborough
thorpes would have provided no defence at all; the best they could have done would have
been to raise an alarm, warning of an approaching attack. There is, however, no defensible
position within the town itself from which resistance could be organised, but there are two
places which suggest that a look-out and patrol system may have operated. These are Toothill
Street and Ward's End. "Toothill", and variations of that name occur frequently throughout
England, both in towns and in the countryside. The name is usually taken to mean a look-out
point (26). Ward's End is not associated with any person of that name, nor is it and "End" in
the topographical sense of a road which does not lead to another road: it is part of the route
leading from the market place directly to the forest, an possibly indicates the limit of a
patrolled area. In the absence of any kind of fortification in Loughborough, it is difficult to
see what kind of defence the thorpes, Toothill Street and Ward's End could provide. If
however, Loughborough in the early stages of its development was primarily a market place,
the principal threat it would face would come, not from hostile armies, but from the thieves
of goods and livestock, against which a system of look-outs and patrols would provide an
effective defence.

An analysis of street names within a given settlement is necessarily an imprecise
exercise, particularly in the case of streets which have mediaeval or earlier origins, and where
there no surviving architecture to provide a guide to chronology. It is basically the
archaeological exercise of typology, in which a sequence of developments can be established,
but dated only relatively, not absolutely. Loughborough does, however, present a reasonably
good opportunity for the reconstruction of an earlier town layout, even if it is not possible

to identify precisely the "four or mo straites well pavid" to which Leland referred. This is because most of the development of central Loughborough occurred during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and the resulting streets were given the names of prominent or relatively easily datable events. This is not, however, an entirely "free gift"; it provides only a number of *termini ante quem*, or dates before which a particular street can not have existed. For instance Canal Bank can not have been so named before the canal was constructed, and the earliest date for this is 1777-8 (27). The street may have been built and named well after that date, although this is unlikely, but it can not have been before that date. By the exercise of the same technique we can eliminate a large number of streets, until we are left with a central web of streets, all of which could be mediaeval or earlier (Figs 42,43, pp. 266, 267). It is worthwhile to consider some of these names since, as in so many of our older towns, the names of the streets are an indication of the activities which took place there, and this enhances the picture we have of life in the town at an earlier period of its history. Moor Lane for example, needs no explanation of itself, but it is highly noteworthy that it leads to the neighbouring settlement of Quorn, or Quorndon. About half way between Loughborough and Quorn, it changes its name to Flesh Hovel Lane, a name which occurs fairly frequently, and is usually an indication of a slaughterhouse, or butchery establishment of some kind. Midway between two settlements is an appropriate place for such an establishment, since in an age to which the refrigeration of perishable goods was unknown, butcheries were frequently highly malodorous places.

Within the town itself, the High Street is, and was, obviously the main thoroughfare, as is the case with very many old towns in England. The institution is of Anglo-Saxon origin; several of the towns of the Burghal Hidage have a principal thoroughfare which was, and still is known as the High Street. There is, however, no means of dating High Street, Loughborough, although it is worth noting that a principal street, running between the limits

LOUGHBOROUGH: A MODERN STREET-MAP.
Fig. 43.

LOUGHBOROUGH: THE OLDEST STREETS.
of the town, is a feature which Loughborough has in common with the burhs. So also is the fact that the nucleated settlement encloses a convergence of routes, but there the resemblance ends.

A convenient way of commenting on the names of Loughborough's older streets is to approach the town from the Leicester side, dealing first with the streets to the north of the High Street, and secondly with those lying to the south. This means starting with something of a mystery, assuming that Aumberry Gap derives from Aumbry or Ambry, which usually means a recess or niche in a church wall, sometimes containing an effigy or a reliquary. The word can, however, be applied to almost any kind of recess or cupboard. If there was such a feature of a wall at Aumberry Gap, Loughborough, it has long since disappeared and left no record. The earliest occurrences of the word, however, are in Middle English and Old French, which suggests a mediaeval date for the feature. Pinfold Gate is easier to deal with: a pinfold was often a feature of Anglo-Saxon and mediaeval towns. It was an enclosure into which stray animals, or sometimes animals in transit, were herded; the proprietor, whether an individual or a local authority raising a charge for its use.

It might be of value at this point to discuss the question of the other street names in Loughborough which contain the element "gate". Including Pinfold Gate, there are four such, the others being Baxter Gate, Church Gate, and Woodgate. The appearance of "gate" street names is sometimes taken as an indication of a Scandinavian presence, but as several place-name scholars have warned, this is by no means always the case (28). The root geat is common to both Old English and Old Scandinavian languages, and in Old English can mean not only an architectural artefact, but also a route leading to somewhere or something. Thus, Church Gate can mean not only the structural gate, allowing ingress to the enclosed churchyard, but also the road which leads to the church. The same considerations apply in the cases of Pinfold Gate and Woodgate, the route to the forest; these names can not be taken

as a reliable indication of the presence of Vikings. This leaves only Baxter Gate, and here again, a Scandinavian presence can not be conclusively proved. The modern "Baxter" can derive equally from the Old Scandinavian bakkstr or the Old English baecesteor, a baker.

Added to the fact that the "gate" names are four in number out of a total of more than twenty early street names, it is clear that only a weak case can be made for a Viking presence in Loughborough. It follows that if any of these street names are of pre-Conquest origin, then Anglo-Saxon occupation is indicated.

Pinfold Gate leads into Chapman Street, the name suggesting the presence of "chapmen", or travelling merchants. The Coneries gets its name from "cony" or "coney", which is an old name for a rabbit or the fur of a rabbit, and coneries, which are found in many towns, are traditionally places where small game and wildfowl are sold. Sparrow Hill, crossing Baxter Gate is self-explanatory. Biggin Street derives from a common word for building or house, frequently encountered in Middle English texts, and Dead Lane, which occurs in several old towns, marks the route of funeral processions. Fennel Street derives from the name of the common herb, and again, occurs in other places in various forms, denoting a place where all kinds of herbs and spices could be obtained. Tatmarsh, which leads off Toothill Street, is derived from Old English tadde, a toad, and the "marsh" element renders the name self-explanatory. Tatmarsh, The Rushes and Swan Street are all connected. Swan Street in many cases, is named after an inn called "The Swan", (28), but there is no record of such a hostelry on the Loughborough site, and in all probability, Swan Street is so called because of the one-time presence of real birds. Attention has already been drawn to the Summerpool and Hermitage brooks, and it is now worth drawing attention to the presence of Burleigh Brook and Woodbrook close to this part of the town. The situation in the mediaeval and earlier periods has largely been obscured by the construction of the canal between 1776

and 1778, but the Act enabling the construction gives some hint of the earlier situation. It was entitled:

'An act for making the river Soar navigable from the river Trent to or near Loughborough in the county of Leicester; and for making navigable cuts or canals from the said river Soar to or near the Rushes and the Hermitage Pool at Loughborough aforesaid'. (29).

To the south of the High Street, Southfields Road looks at first sight to refer to an open-field system, but there is no other evidence of any such system at Loughborough; the moors and meadows to the east could not be used for arable purposes, and the forest to the west encroached close to the town. There is an area to the north known as "Bottle Acres", but as "bottle" derives from an Old English word *botl*, a house or building, it is difficult to see it as the site of an open field. It may simply refer to fields lying to the south of the town. Southfields Road is linked to Woodgate by Packhorse Street, which needs no explanation, and Beehive Lane, the site of the settlement's apiary. Honey was an important commodity, being used for brewing at a time when sugar was unknown in England. Ward's End has already been discussed; Market Street and Market Place, the settlement's *raison d'être*, and physical focal point, explain themselves, while Green Close Lane and Orchard Road are a reminder that in the days before "infilling" was rife, most towns contained fields, orchards, plantations and other open spaces between the "clumps" of buildings which comprised the town.

While it is possible to arrive at an early layout of Loughborough streets, it is far less easy, if not impossible, to date a particular layout with any precision. No doubt we are looking at an approximation to "mediaeval" Loughborough, but the mediaeval period comprises several centuries. Is this, for example, the Loughborough about which Leland and Camden were so complimentary in the sixteenth century? Is it the Loughborough familiar to Thomas

Burton, who founded the Grammar School in 1495? Is it the Loughborough for which Hugh Despenser obtained a market and fair charter in 1227? Would it be recognisable to earl Hugh's tenants in 1086, or earl Harold's thanes in 1066? It could possibly be earlier than that; towns were being created, other than those on pre-existing town sites from early Saxon times (30).

There are two important factors in the history of Loughborough which may throw some light on the origins of the place, and go some way towards establishing a chronology. The first is that there appears to be no element of planning in the evolution of Loughborough. This has the important implication that it is a settlement, based on commercial activity, which grew up over a period of time. Some twenty or so streets can not appear quickly or all at once unless there is an element of planning. If Loughborough had been a borough, it would have fitted neatly into the category that Beresford called "organic boroughs" (31). This brings us to the second factor, which is the absence of any official status other than that of manor, until the late nineteenth century. Loughborough was a thriving town, of considerable size and importance in the eighteenth century, but the Act for the construction of the canal refers throughout to "the lordship of Loughborough". There may be a quick answer to this particular question. The purpose of granting borough status, whether to a plantation or an "organic" town was summed up by Edward I in a writ of 1296, following a Parliament held at Bury St Edmund's, itself a planted borough of the reign of William the Conqueror:

'ad maius commodum nostri et mercatorum ibidem accedentium' (32).

The purpose of awarding borough status was to "drum up" trade. No matter how successful such an enterprise might ultimately be, and this was far from always being the case, it occasioned considerable expense, and involved the grant of franchises which could subsequently prove inconvenient. Such an investment was not necessary at Loughborough,


where a roaring trade was already being done. Moreover, it would be inconsistent with the "Corieltauvian tradition", to which sophisticated social, political and economic organisation was alien.

While it may not be possible to establish a precise chronology for the early development of Loughborough, it is possible that an examination of the characteristics of early trade and commerce may reveal something of the sequence of events in that process. In doing this, however, there is the danger of relying too heavily on the large body of influential scholarship which has discussed urbanism and market evolution as abstract concepts against the background of human history as a whole, and while this is relevant, it is not germane to the present purpose. Most studies in the origins of urban development and commercial activity, have tended to deal, for obvious reasons, with the largest examples, providing the greatest extent of artefactual and documentary evidence. Thus we are reasonably well informed about the existence of large trading sites, not necessarily towns according to some definitions, established throughout the maritime Europe of the fifth century and onwards; Hamwih (Southampton), Sarre (Kent), London and Ipswich (Suffolk) in England, Quentovic or Étaples, originally in Neustria, Dorestad at the mouth of the Rhine, alternately Frisian and Merovingian, Hetheby in Denmark and Birka in Sweden (33). Their essentially commercial, rather than urban characteristics, have earned them the title "emporia". We also know that these places occupied the attention of kings, and in particular, that the Merovingians deliberatly enhanced the commercial potential of Dorestad and Quentovic, even if the supposed charter of Dagobert I, (623-39), has proved to be a ninth century forgery (34).

Quentovic's importance was well known in England; Bede, writing c.731, tells us that in 668, Theodore of Tarsus, on his journey to England was escorted by the High Reeve of Kent to Quentovic on his way to Canterbury (35). A significant fact to emerge from the emporia is

that although market place and town frequently coincide, they are separate entities and can exist independently of each other. Whether or not a parallel development took place at Loughborough depends on whether developments on a large scale throughout Northern Europe, were paralleled in microcosm in the separate kingdoms and sub-kingdoms of individual countries. Such a situation would not have been impossible at Loughborough at a very early stage; the place is surrounded by the production sites of a variety of commodities from the forest, fields and wolds, and it is a very convenient place for the exchange, sale and purchase of those goods. The fact that there is no evidence, (other than the convergence of a number of routes), in the shape of lost coinage or datable market débris, is due to the fact that there has never been any archaeological excavation at Loughborough, even when the opportunity has occurred. This is not to suggest that Leicestershire’s archaeologists have been in any way remiss. It is well known that urban excavations are messy and expensive; and in the case of a town like Loughborough, which underwent extensive development in Victorian and Edwardian times, involving a good deal of "infill" building, there is usually a substratum of domestic and commercial cellars, the construction of which has destroyed the "natural" stratification of the site, and rendered excavation virtually impossible. There have been a few stray finds, but it is not possible to draw any significant inferences from these.

However, an exploratory excavation, described as an evaluation by the archaeologists concerned, at Holywell Hall, (SK 508:180), about two miles from the town centre, in 1989-90, has a little more to offer (36). Holywell Hall is a moated farm site of the mediaeval period, and is recorded as belonging to Garendon Abbey, about a mile to the north of it, in 1240, but the name of the site, in conjunction with other evidence, has led archaeologists to believe that it is also a hermitage site of much greater antiquity. The excavation was occasioned by the proposal of British Gas to build a research station adjacent to the site, and

it indicated probable gardens or orchards, together with a pond, most likely connected with
the mediaeval Hall. However, included in the finds was a quantity of post-Roman pottery
sherds, five of which could be identified as Anglo-Saxon of the sixth or seventh centuries.
Unfortunately, if that is the right word, it transpired that the moated site itself, the most
likely site of the hermitage and of other Anglo-Saxon artefacts, was not under threat by the
Company's development, and was not excavated. Small though this body of evidence is, it is
likely to be a part of a larger one, as yet unexcavated, and must point to Anglo-Saxon activity
in the sixth and seventh centuries.

A possible origin for Loughborough, then, is as a sort of "mini-emporium", a trading
place not necessarily having much in the way of "urban" pretensions. Another possible origin
for Loughborough is as the site of periodic and peripatetic fairs, which have been observed as
an early development in trading practice(37). Again, its location makes it a highly suitable
site for such events. Unfortunately there is no reference to a fair at Loughborough before
1227, and no artefactual evidence is available.

The social scientists have laboured diligently to construct "models" designed to
classify trading and urban places and even to develop a hierarchy among them, and through
this, a sort of chronology (38). For the purposes of local history, however, they are too
preoccupied with social theory and a kind of ethnoarchaeology. Beresford, with his feet
firmly on the ground, literally as well as metaphorically, probably sums the situation up when
he says that 'many organised markets and fairs were established in country places that had no
claim at all to being towns' (39). The existence of such places may be considered "proto-
urban" in that they could flourish without the provision of the prime necessities for urban
nucleation; a water supply and a sewage system which would need to be be more complex

(37) Hodges, Dark Age Economics, passim.
and sophisticated the larger the nucleation became, and paved routes, without which the
hooves of ungulate animals, their droppings and the iron shod wheels of laden carts would
soon render the site unusable on a regular basis. It is possible that this is one of the origins of
Loughborough.

To seek the origins of Loughborough as a town is to encounter the age-old question of
"What do we mean by a town? There is no lack of answers, but since a town is not a simple
entity, there is no simple definition. Most scholars interested in "urban studies" since the
Second World War have adopted the "criteria-bundle" approach in which a number of the
observed characteristics of towns are listed, and a particular place is judged to be a town if it
meets the number of criteria required by the scholar concerned. The name is derived from the
German Kriterienbundel, a term used by the German historian Edith Ennen in 1953, and has
been quoted by almost every urban historian since (40). Three instances of the use of this
method may be used here.

In 1950, before the term kriterienbundel was coined V.Gordon-Childe produced a list
of nine characteristics of towns in antiquity, and it included monumental architecture,
developed social stratification, writing, exact sciences and naturalistic art (41). Among other
things, however, Childe was treating urbanism as a facet of societies which could be
regarded as "civilised", rather than "primitive" or "barbaric".

In a rather more circumscribed context, Beresford produced a bundle of criteria for
the mediaeval town based largely on documentation, the use of the title burgus in the Assize
Rolls, or representation by a separate jury before an Assize judge, taxation as a borough and
representation in a mediaeval Parliament (42). Beresford himself says these are legal rather
than economic tests, but what he is really defining is a borough rather than a town.

Revolution', *Town Planning Review*, 21, pp.3-17.
The third, and probably the most widely used of these sets of criteria was originally produced by Caroline Heighway in a study which has mainly to do with the "rescue" excavation of urban sites (43). The list became more widely known after it was used by Martin Biddle, in a study of Anglo-Saxon towns (44). There are some twelve criteria quoted, which vary from the wide-ranging "role as a central place", to the specific requirement of a mint. These are only three among the innumerable examples of the definition of a town, but a significant point is that there is no single criterion which is common to all three bundles, and this raises doubts as to whether it is at all possible to define a town precisely; to be able to say that this place looks like a town, but it is not, because it does not contain X, Y or Z, and conversely that this place does not look like a town, but it is, because X, Y and/or Z are present.

There are, however, two characteristics of early towns which do not seem to have received as much attention as they might have. The first is that it is in the nature of towns to attract people, in relatively large numbers, for particular purposes and on particular occasions, who are not permanently resident within the town. They "come to town", transact their business, and when it is concluded, they go back "home" again. This, of course, is true of modern towns as well as early ones. The second feature is that in early towns, urban or "central" activity was periodic or occasional, and the town might, for substantial periods be dormant, or semi-deserted. This feature has been well described in the case of the Anglo-Saxon Lincoln of the eighth century (45):

'...Eighth century Lincoln... a place overwhelmingly dormant for much of the time, until sparked into occasional life by the arrival of traders, or a peregrinating royal household, or an important festival'

Looked at from the point of view of these two characteristics, it can be seen that whatever its starting point, be it a fortification, a market, an ecclesiastical or other religious focus, urban development consists of increasing the number of occasions or purposes which attract non-resident visitors to the point where there is almost always a reason or reasons why non-residents should visit the town. They will not, of course, always be the same non-residents, which makes it advantageous for specialist tradesmen to remain within the town, and in this way, among others, a nucleated settlement is developed.

There is another type of "proto-urban" situation which scholars have described, and which may have existed in the Soar valley, and which may have led to the creation of Loughborough town. This is the existence of town elements, or "bits of the bundle", dispersed originally over a relatively wide area, which over a period of time, coalesce to form the town. Attention has been drawn to a number of sites in Wiltshire, lying to the south of the river Kennet between Hungerford and Marlborough, on the Great West Road, A4. (Fig.44, p.278). These comprise a Roman town, Cunetio, from which the river Kennet gets its name, the site of the bishop's seat of the pre-1058 see of Ramsbury, the Iron Age hillfort and Burghal Hidage site of Chisbury, Cissanbyrig, and the mint site at Great Bedwyn: thus a market, a fortification, a religious centre and a mint (46). The identification of such "proto-urban" complexes, however, must always be problematical: it is fatally easy to select points on a map, and point to a connection where none exists. In the example quoted, for instance, where was the final nucleation? It could be Marlborough, or Hungerford, or Devizes, all of which lie outside the area enclosed by the sites named. If, however, other origins for these places can be established, and this is certainly the case with Devizes, it can only be concluded that

this particular proto-urban situation belongs to a town which did not actually materialise.

Nearer to home is another possible proto-urban complex, which may have been the origin of Newark, Nottinghamshire. At first sight, there is much to suggest that the town of Newark was a Viking foundation. Most of the older streets are "gate" names, and the survival of Kirkgate, with its Scandinavian, as distinct from English pronunciation, i.e. Churchgate, as in Loughborough and Leicester, certainly suggests a Viking presence. However, the presence of a major cremation cemetery, containing more than 200 cremation urns, near the southern limit of the town, in Millgate, indicates considerable pre-Viking activity in the area (47).

Newark lies on both the Fosse Way and the river Trent, in an area of primary East Midland settlement, at a point where that settlement extends into the Vale of Belvoir and beyond. Its economic potential was clearly exploited to the full during the Romano-British period. Seven or eight villa sites occur within it, and a complex of three "small towns", Margidunum, (Castle Hill), SK7041, Ad Pontem, (East Stoke), SK7550, and Crococalana, (Brough), SK8358, all lying on the Fosse Way. (Fig.45, p.280). In general, the Romano-British place names fit well with the surviving English ones. The "dun" element of Margidunum, "fort on high ground", equates well with "Castle Hill", and the "Margi" element relates to boundaries and/or rivers, in this case the Fosse Way or the Trent, either of which may have been a temporary *limes* during the earliest stages of the Conquest. Ad Pontem, "at the bridge", and East Stoke, "place to the east", i.e. of the river, fit well together, indicating a concern with the river crossing, which appears to connect with the mouth of the river Greet on the opposite bank, and indicates a concern with communications and all that that implies. Crococalana, Brough, is less easily explained. "Brough" suggests a fortification, and in fact both Margidunum and Crococalana show some evidence of fortification at an early date, but there is nothing in the name Crococalana to suggest fortification as such. The "calana" elements

Fig. 45.

THREE ROMANO-BRITISH 'SMALLTOWNS'_ POSSIBLE ORIGINS OF

NEWARK, NOTTS.

POSSIBLE DISPERSED TOWN ELEMENTS
suggest "calling loudly", or "hailing". "Brough" can mean a small hill or tumulus, as can "Croc", "crouch" or "cruc"(48). This, together with the "calling" element, might mean that Crococalana was a place of assembly of some sort, and possibly a religious or ritual site. Thus, to the south of Newark, lie a once fortified Romano-British "small town" and another, which, being a communications centre, was likely to have been a toll collecting point, and very likely a market as well, bearing in mind the varied productivity of the Vale of Belvoir and the wealden area surrounding it. North of Newark is another Romano-British "small town" which may have had a ritual emphasis. The area between the Trent and the Witham must have gained a tremendous social and economic cohesiveness with the cutting of the Fosse Dyke from Lincoln to Torksey, which was undoubtedly a Roman enterprise. By the late Roman period, therefore, a possible "proto-urban" situation existed on the east bank of the Trent. Add to this the fairly close proximity of the walled small town at Ancaster, a considerable pottery production site, (Ancaster ware is identified as such and has a reasonably wide distribution), and the known mint site at Old Sleaford, and the possibility of a proto-urban site from which the Niw Geweorc, "new building", or Newark developed, is enhanced. There are other, although not necessarily conflicting accounts of the origins of Newark (49).

If Loughborough originated as a collection of dispersed town elements, which gradually coalesced to form the town, where and what the other elements were, must be sought, and the distance between them may be a relevant factor. In the Wiltshire example, Great Bedwyn, the mint, is roughly five miles south of Ramsbury, the bishopric site, and the Iron Age and Burghal Hidage fort is just over a mile to the north of Great Bedwyn. Cunetio, the Romano-British small town, is four miles from Ramsbury. Marlborough, the nearest

(48). Rivet and Smith, Place Names of Roman Britain, (1981 edn).

later town, is two miles from the site of Cunetio. In the Nottinghamshire example, Margidunum, Ad Pontem, Newark and Crococalana are all on a twelve mile stretch of the Fosse Way, with Ancaster and Old Sleaford about twenty miles to the east. Loughborough may have originated in this way, and if so, it probably provided the market element of the dispersed town. There are two possibilities as to which were the complementary sites. The first involves the Holywell Hall site referred to above, about three miles south-west of the town centre, which, if there was a hermitage there, may have provided the religious or ritual element, and the Knighthorpe/Thorpe Acre site, which is on an isolated hill, and may have been fortified, although no evidence has even been sought, let alone found, about two miles to the north west of the town centre. The second possibility, again assuming that Loughborough provided the market element, involves Rothley, four miles south of Loughborough which has a religious significance going back to the early Anglo-Saxon cemetery, and an administrative significance going back to the time when it first became a royal vill. The third element would appear if Barrow-on-Soar, four miles south east of Loughborough had been a fortified site, but unfortunately there is no documentary or artefactual evidence of this. The place is certainly fortifiable; it rises steeply from the east bank of the river, and the highest point of the present settlement overlooks the surrounding countryside. There is also the possibility that the name “Barrow” is a corrupted version of burh, or a related term indicating fortification, but there is nothing in the way of conclusive evidence for this.

This is a great pity, since, if Loughborough, Rothley and Barrow could be more positively identified as three elements of a dispersed town of the early Anglo-Saxon period, it would go a long way towards solving the problem which appears in Domesday: the juxtaposition of the members of the Barrow and Rothley sokes, and the appearance of the valuit/valor of the Barrow soke following the account of Loughborough and its dependencies. This could point to the existence of an early estate or governmental unit.

The pre-Conquest history of Loughborough is undocumented and unattested
archaeologically. Under such circumstances, the only avenue of exploration has been to examine some of the known ways in which other towns came into being, and to consider whether any, or indeed all, of them would apply in this particular case, since a logical sequence of events in the formation of any market town would be for it to begin as a place of barter and exchange of products from the surrounding district, thereby attracting occasional and peripatetic fairs and markets and the attention of travelling merchants, until it became a town by establishing its own ecclesiastical, administrative and fortificational elements, which had formerly existed elsewhere. This would be entirely consistent with the settlement pattern of the lower Soar valley; the variety of available merchandise being provided by the forest, the moors and meadows, and the wolds to the east. It would also be consistent with what has been called the “Corieltauvian tradition”, which disdained the current, and frequently expensive, changes going on elsewhere, retaining earlier settlement patterns and socio-political forms, but at the same time, losing nothing in the way of product quality, sophistication, and in particular, profitability.

Many scholars, of more than one generation, have pointed to what may be called an archetypal territorial institution, fundamental in the literal sense to the evolution of English settlement, and to settlement elsewhere. These basic territorial units served a variety of functions, political, administrative, social, fiscal and jurisdictional. They are relatively small in extent, and at various times in their history they have had different names, shires, rapes, lathes, hundreds, and perhaps in the earliest stages in the process of state formation they were the petty kingdoms of the Migration Period. Arguably they have survived institutionally, with somewhat different territorial limits, as more modern units of local government. Within the territorial boundary were three settlements of particular specialist importance. These were a royal vill, a ritual site, which may, after about the mid-seventh century, have become a minster site and a market or meeting place at which internal and external trade was conducted. It has been suggested herein that the lower Soar valley may have been such a territory during pre-Conquest times, that Rothley may have been a minster site, and that
Loughborough may have been a market and trading place before it acquired a truly urban character. This process of elimination casts Barrow in the role of the royal vill or caput of the whole territory. It is also true that a logical sequence of events would be for the territory to be divided by the provision of land for the minster and the development of a specialised manor. Topographically, too, Barrow is a “likely spot” for the location of a high status settlement, rising steeply from the river bank to a point which commands the surrounding countryside. It is an eminently defensible position, even without fortification, for which, in fact, there is no archaeological evidence. More is needed, however, to support the suggestion that Barrow was a royal vill, providing a caput for the whole territory.

The name itself presents some difficulty. The modern word “barrow”, in whatever sense it is used can be derived from a number of Old English sources. We can perhaps eliminate the feminine noun *bearwe*, which means a conveyance for goods, a basket or a wheelbarrow, as being unlikely in a place-name context. *Beorg*, a masculine noun which occurs several times in Beowulf, is acceptably translated as “barrow” in the sense of a funerary monument, and the name “Barrow” may well have been given to a settlement near to such a site. “Barrow” can also be derived from the genitive and dative forms of the masculine noun *bearu*, a small wood, of which the genitive is *bearo* and the dative *bear(u)we* (50). There is general consent among place-name scholars that the place-name “Barrow” is derived in this way. As it happens, the steeply rising river bank below the central part of the present settlement is covered by a small but dense wood.

There are references to *aet Bearwe* in Bede’s Ecclesiastical History, the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle and in the Mercian royal charters. In the first of his references, Bede obligingly confirms the philological solution of the place-name scholars by telling us that *aet Barwe* means *ad silvam* and that it is in the province of Lindsey, where king Wulfhere gave Chad fifty hides of land to build a monastery in 667, and where Chad remained until his death in 680. H.Sweet, The Student’s Dictionary of Anglo-Saxon, (1985 edn).
672. This is clearly the well known monastery site at Barrow-on-Humber (51). Bede's second reference to aet Barwe concerns Winfrith's deposition from the Mercian bishopric by Thodeore of Tarsus in 673, and his retirement to the monastery at Barrow-on-Humber (52). The reference in the Chronicle concerns bishop Aethelwold of Winchester's attempt to restore all the possessions of Medehamstede, and the context reveals that this, too, refers to Barrow-on-Humber (53).

Among the charters of the Mercian kings, there are two which were promulgated aet Bear(u)we. In the first, dated 737-40, king Aethelbald grants land in Gloucestershire to his faithful minister, Osred, and in the second, dated 814, king Cenwulf grants land to archbishop Wulfred of Canterbury (54). We can not be sure, of course, that both charters refer to the same place, but even if there were two Mercian royal vills called "Barrow", there are reasons for thinking that neither of them was Barrow-on-Humber. As we know from Bede, Barrow-on-Humber was a very prestigious monastery, founded by St Chad, to whom king Wulfhere made a grant of fifty hides for the purpose, in 667. It is also the place to which Wynfrith retired and where he later died. There are many instances of charters being promulgated at monasteries and other religious houses, but they usually contain some indication that this is the case. It may be the appearance of the abbot or abbess and a number of clerical witnesses in the subscription, or the use of such phrases as in synodali conventu, or in eodem concilio preceding the name of the place (55). A particularly prestigious house such as Barrow-on-Humber would merit a suitable description. A charter of king Berhtwulf, dated 848, was first proclaimed at Repton: ...in venerabili monasterio....Aet Hrypadune (56). Since there are no strong indications that the two charters under consideration here were promulgated at a prestigious monastery, there is some justification for looking elsewhere for aet bearwe.

The field is not so wide as might be expected. Excluding compounds, such as

Barrowby and Barrowden, the gazetteer of an up-to-date road atlas lists ten examples (57). An index of places mentioned in Domesday Book gives eight examples (58). Some of these can obviously be eliminated, and, indeed, Professor Sawyer reduces the possibilities to four (59). Sawyer gives a comprehensive list of 156 identifiable royal vills and 44 which are not identified, including aet Bearwe. He mentions the four sites of Barrow in Lincolnshire (Barrow-on-Humber), Barrow in Leicestershire (Barrow-on-Soar), Barrow, Shropshire and Barrow in Gloucestershire. It has been suggested above that Barrow-on-Humber is a less likely site for the proclamation of the Mercian charters concerned, because its celebrated ecclesiastical history is likely to have been indicated in the wording of the charters. This leaves three possibilities, two of which do not appear in Domesday Book. The reasons for the omission of places from Domesday have been considered by Dr S.P.J. Harvey (60).

Obviously there were some places which just got left out, and others not established until after 1086, but the principal reason for omission, says Harvey, is that the places omitted paid their tax through larger and more significant settlements. This may well account for the omission of Barrow, Glos., and Barrow, Shrops., from Domesday, and make it less likely that they were royal vills at which assemblies issuing charters were held. This, no doubt, is why Professor Sawyer leaves out of account the settlement of Barrow-on-Trent, Derbyshire, which, as Domesday tells us, was a berewick of the royal manor of Melbourne in 1086.

It would seem that there are fewer objections to Barrow-on-Soar than to any other of the possible sites of the aet Bearwe of the Mercian charters, and while this is not conclusive,

it does, when other evidence for the area is taken into account, justify the suggestion that the lower Soar valley was a political and fiscal unity of the Anglo-Saxon period, which bears a striking territorial resemblance to the former Rural District of Barrow-on-Soar and the present Charnwood District of Leicestershire.

The question of an appropriate chronology for this putative territory seems to be an insoluble problem. Large scale archaeological excavation, or the discovery of hitherto unknown documents are not likely prospects. It may be that future research into the distribution of Mercian royal vills and minsters will reveal a pattern into which the lower Soar valley can be fitted, but for the present, the case must rest.
APPENDIX

The connection between Rothley and St Wistan

In 1973, in the course of writing a dissertation in pursuit of a Master's degree, one Phillip Lloyd wrote 'A mediaeval will states that the dedication of the parish church or Templar chapel was to St Wistan'. He goes on to quote the will, in which the testator expresses a desire to be buried 'in the churchyard of St Wistane in the Temple of Rothley' (1). Later in the dissertation, he lists the Rothley Preceptory together with Wistow and Wigston, as the places in Leicestershire dedicated to St Wistan (2). He also points out, elsewhere in the dissertation that the evidence of wills can be unreliable in relation to church dedications. The will to which Lloyd refers appears to be the only evidence which exists to connect St Wistan with Rothley, and, unfortunately, repeated and determined efforts to establish contact with Mr Lloyd have proved unsuccessful.

Attempts to trace the will itself have been equally fruitless: the testator is unnamed, the will is unwitnessed and undated, and it remains to examine the materials which exist for the life and death of the saint in the hope of finding evidence for a possible connection with Rothley.

The fullest account of the saint is to be found in the chronicles of Evesham Abbey (3). On his death in 840, king Wiglaf of Mercia was succeeded not by his son, Wigmund, who had predeceased his father, but by his grandson, Wigstan, (hereafter Wistan). At Wistan's request, Mercia was ruled by his mother, Aelfleda, with the assistance of the Mercian Witan, but Wistan did not renounce his claim to the throne. A rival claimant to the throne, Berhtferht, (in some accounts Brifardus, the Consul), attempted to marry Aelfleda, but

Wistan forbade the marriage, and as a result was murdered by his enemy. In addition to the other evidence in favour of Wistow as the scene of the murder, there is the fact that Wistow, Leicestershire, appears in Domesday Book as Wistanestou, which appears to settle the matter of where the murder occurred. Miracles were recorded at the time of Wistan’s death. A shaft of light rose to Heaven from the spot where he died, and remained for thirty days, and at the bottom of the shaft, the hair of his head, which sustained the fatal blow, grew among the grass, fulfilling an earlier prophecy that ‘not a hair of his head shall be harmed’. His body was taken to Repton, and entombed with that of his grandfather. W.G.Hoskins says that before being taken to Repton, the body lay at Wigston where a church was dedicated to him, which was wrongly called St Wolstan’s, after a Saxon bishop of Worcester, for some three centuries, and that in pre-Reformation times this church was largely, if not wholly, maintained from the proceeds of an annual pilgrimage to see a jewelled image of the saint (4).

The presence of Wistan’s body at Repton is recorded in an Anglo-Saxon list of saints’ resting places written at some time before 1030 (5). Dr H.M.Taylor has faithfully recorded the transference of Wistan’s remains between Repton and Evesham (6). In about 1030, abbot Aelfward of Evesham, who was also bishop of London, persuaded king Cnut to present Wistan’s relics to Evesham Abbey. The first Norman abbot of Evesham, Walter de Cerisy, was appointed in 1067. He doubted Wistan’s sanctity, and had the relics cast into a fire, where they neither burned nor blackened. He was so overcome that on lifting the bones from the ashes, he dropped and smashed the skull, the pieces of which were wrapped in a napkin and replaced in the reliquary. Between 1183 and 1190, Baldwin, archbishop of Canterbury, sent the abbot of Leicester and the prior of Kirby, (possibly Monks’ Kirby, Northamptonshire), to

Wistow on the anniversary of the martyrdom, June 1st, to test the original miracle. The
miraculous hair duly performed, and they reported it to the archbishop. In 1207, the tower of
Evesham abbey collapsed and smashed the reliquary. The canons of Repton, hearing of the
diaster, begged for a relic of St Wistan, and were granted part of the skull and an armbo

There is no mention of a connection between St Wistan and Rothley in any of the
works to which reference is made above. Neither is such a connection mentioned in at least
two of the mediaeval documents in which reference to a connection is likely to have been
made (8). An archaeological examination of the Templars' chapel in 1921-2, makes no
reference to any kind of memorial to St Wistan (9).

There are, however, a number of ways in which such a connection could have been
established, although there is no extant record of it. One possibility concerns the members of
the Harcourt family to whom the former royal manor of Rothley was granted, bit by bit,
during the years following 1150. The Harcourts, some of whom were Templars and
crusaders, held land in Kibworth and Newton Harcourt, the latter of which is in the parish of
Wistow. It is quite possible that the Harcourts had derived some benefit from the success of
St Wistan's cult and wished to promote it in their newly acquired manor of Rothley, by
establishing a memorial to him. There is no concrete evidence that they did so, however.

It is also possible that a connection was established much earlier, shortly after
Wistan's death. Whether the body was carried from Wistow, or as Hoskins suggests, from
Wigston, it would certainly have taken several days, allowing for due solemnities, to reach

(8). G.T.Clark, 'The Custumary of the Manor and Soke of Rothley in the County of
Leicester', Archaeologia, 47, (1882), and 'The Extent of the Knights Hospitaller, 1338',
Camden Society, 65, (1857).
Repton. If, as was suggested in Chapter Seven, there was a minster church at Rothley at the time, it would be an obvious resting place on the funeral journey.

An additional circumstance concerns the cross-shaft, at present standing in the parish churchyard, but possibly originally on the Temple site. One of the several authorities who have offered a date for this artefact puts it c 850 (10). Reportedly, St Wistan was murdered on 1st June, 849.

The whole business of the connection between Rothley and St Wistan, rests, therefore, on an unprovenanced, unattested and undated will, of which the testator is also unknown. The scholar who mentions the will admits that the evidence of wills is unreliable in relation to church dedications. It is interesting that the same scholar, in a later paper, deals with both Rothley and St Wistan without mentioning any connection between the two.

For some, the evidence of this will is sufficient to lead to the assertion that ‘one of the churches in ... Wigston Magna is also dedicated to St Wigstan, as was also the chapel of the Knights Templar at Rothley’ (11). For the present writer it is not.

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