



The Anglo-Saxon Burh at *Wigingamere*

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INTRODUCTION

This paper has two purposes. In the first place, it is intended to put forward an identification of the site of *Wigingamere*, a fortress stated in *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* as having been built by Edward the Elder in May, A.D. 917 in the course of his campaign against the Danes (Whitelock 1979, pp. 214-15). A correct location of the site would not only solve a long-standing historical puzzle, but should also clarify an important stage in Edward's military progress, of which the immediate outcome was the submission of the Danish armies of Bedford and Northampton, and of Essex, East Anglia and Cambridge.

In the second place, this case study will be used as a set of empirical data from which can be formulated an overall model describing certain aspects of the genesis of the Anglo-Saxon burh. This discussion is based on two premises: firstly, that the construction of burhs by the king in the later Saxon period, in both southern England and the Midlands, tended to generate certain changes in the landscape which can be recognised as commonly recurring patterns in the surviving evidence; and secondly, that formative stages in this process, and, by extension, human actions on a historical stage, can be legitimately inferred from the spatial investigation of these morphological survivals.

This model has two parts: firstly, its 'centripetal' aspect, which seeks to provide a framework by which inferences about the past processes can be articulated — and made explicit as inferences — against the observed data (since this data will almost by definition be more recent in origin than these processes, and thus incomplete); and secondly, its 'centrifugal' aspect, which seeks to provide a conceptually coherent set of such inferences which can be tested deductively against other examples (or data-sets). By setting out to explain seemingly diverse morphological patterns in terms of both function and process, it is hoped that this study will permit 'the identification of formative, generative and adaptive processes, and the establishment of a relational model which will incorporate interactive components, *i.e.* factors, processes, morphological elements and agents involved in the decision-making process' (Gordon 1984, p. 1). By doing this,

it is the intention to bring some of the formative processes in Anglo-Saxon urban genesis within the purview of a theoretical methodology which, with only a few exceptions, seems to be applied by geographers to phenomena belonging to the post-Norman Conquest and indeed post-medieval periods.

A further premise is that the identification of these regularities can lead to the identification of the existence not only of burhs which are hitherto unlocated (in this instance *Wigingamere*), but also those which are undocumented in *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* or other historical source. This latter aspect has been argued elsewhere in relation to several such burhs in Devon and Wiltshire (Haslam 1984a & b). It has also been stated (though not yet discussed in detail) as being applicable to the analysis of late Saxon urban morphology in general, and burh-building in particular, in other areas such as East Anglia (Haslam 1985, pp. 54-8).

THE BURH OF WIGINGAMERE

There are perhaps five main conditions which must be met before any place can be identified with any certainty as the burh at *Wigingamere*.

1. It must be located in an area which can be inferred from the record of Edward the Elder's tactics in the *Chronicle*. As is suggested below, this narrows the search to a relatively small area south of Cambridge and north of Hertford.
2. It should show topographical evidence for the former existence of defences, or for its location at a naturally defensible and strategically commanding position.
3. It can be argued that Edward's burhs were set up not merely as fortresses but as fortified towns — *i.e.* places whose maintenance and manning were to be guaranteed by a permanent population, which by the standards of the time was, either in fact or intention, urban in character. The site identified as the burh at *Wigingamere* is likely therefore to show some early evidence of having been an urban place.
4. In view of its origins as a royal foundation, the place should show evidence of having been a royal possession. This could be either of long standing or recently acquired for the purpose of the foundation of the burh.

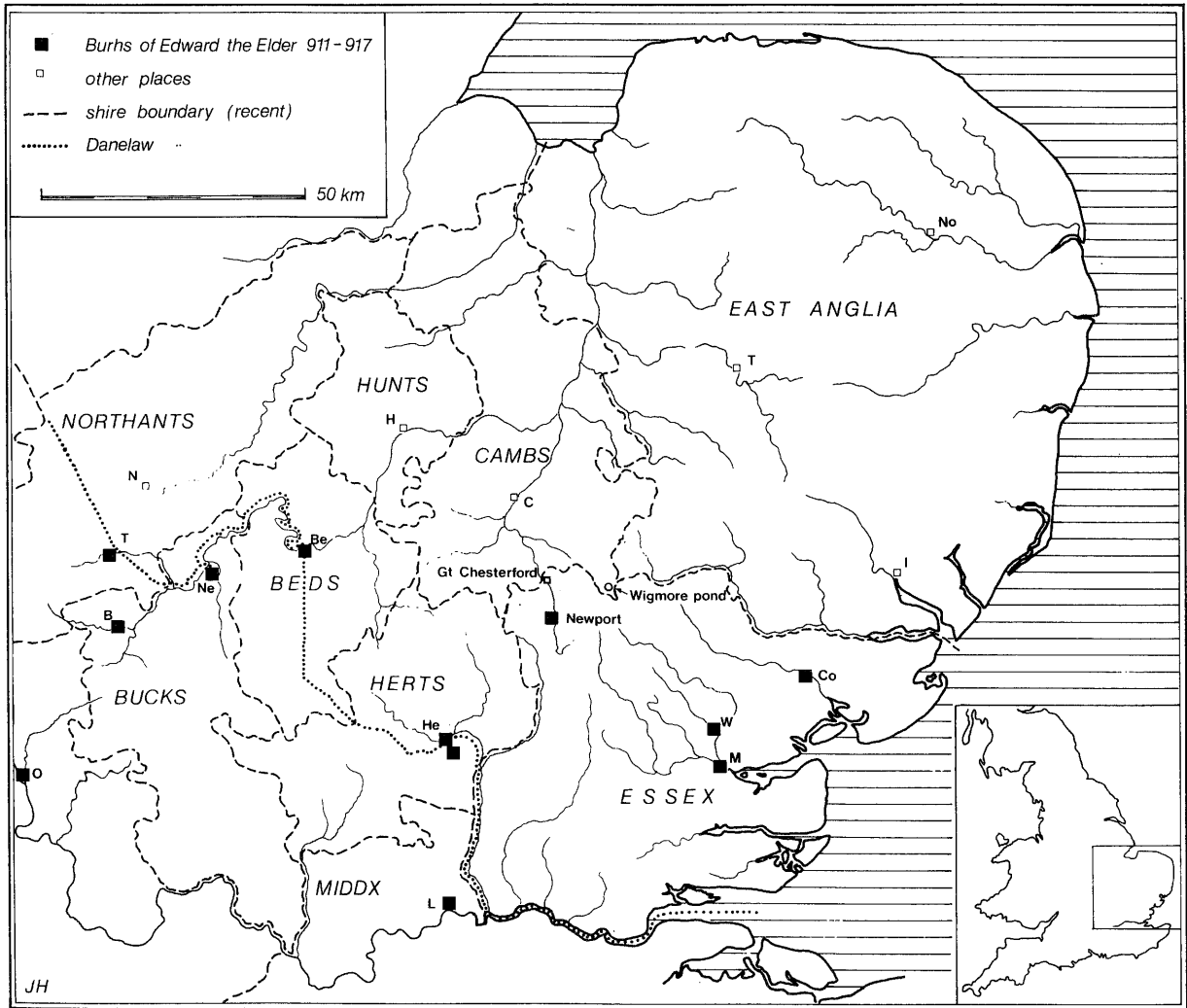


Fig. 1. Burhs of Edward the Elder.

5. Its place-name should appear in a recognisably related form to the original *Wigingamere*, or there should be an explanation for the latter's disappearance. The *-mere* element in the original name also implies the former existence of a nearby area of standing water (see appendix).

There have been several suggestions as to the identity of the site. These include Wigmore in Herefordshire, Wicken (17 miles north of Cambridge) (Armitage 1912, p. 42), and Waymere in Hertfordshire (Oman 1938, pp. 502 & n. 2). All of these are however in positions which are inconsistent with the record of king Edward's military tactics in A.D. 917. Certainly in the case of the last two, they show no evidence of the existence of an identifiable fortress. Although neither Wainwright (1975, p. 314) nor Stenton (1971, pp. 305-24) was able to suggest a precise location for the fortress, Wainwright recognised that it lay 'a few miles south-east of Cambridge' (*ibid.*). Both associated its construction with the advance of the English frontier which was represented by the establishment of burhs at Towcester A.D. (917) and Bedford A.D. (915).

More recently another identification has been

made by Dr David Hill (1975). Since his detailed arguments have not appeared in print (although they have been presented in map form — Hill 1981, pp. 58, 137), they are summarised here. Hill points out that just as the burh at Towcester (built, as was *Wigingamere*, in A.D. 917) filled a gap between burhs at Warwick and Bedford to extend the effective frontier northwards from Buckingham, so should the burh at *Wigingamere* have filled a gap to the east between the burhs at Bedford and Maldon, to push the frontier forward from the burh at Hertford (see Fig. 1). This would have extended English territory further into north Essex between the Danish forces at Colchester and Cambridge. This limits the site of the burh to a relatively small area in northern Essex or southern Cambridgeshire. Its location in this area would (as Stenton and others have long appreciated) best explain the information in the *Chronicle* that the burh was attacked by the armies from East Anglia, Mercia and Essex (the latter presumably based at Colchester). Hill has suggested (1975), following the Ordnance Survey,¹ that the burh was sited at or near Wigmore Pond, near Castle Camps, just to the north of the Cambridge/Essex border. This however poses difficulties, in that there is neither any readily identifiable fortress in the area,

nor any place which is, or has ever been, of urban character. The fact that this area is, as Hill points out, the highest ground between Cambridge and Colchester is more an argument against the location there of an urban burh of the type discussed above than in support of it.

There is, however, another site which on topographical and historical evidence can more satisfactorily be identified with the burh at *Wigingamere*. This is at Newport, in north Essex (see Figs. 1 & 2). It shows characteristics which meet all of the requirements set out above, and is located in the area suggested by Hill's analysis of Edward's burh-building strategy. It is the purpose of this paper to argue that all these characteristics, when taken together, are best explained by the hypothesis that Newport was founded in the early tenth century as a new urban settlement and market, as well as a fortress. It will be argued that this process involved a local reorganisation of the landscape, creating morphological features which are common to a number of other similar burhs.

Firstly, the topography of Newport is consistent with the supposition of the former existence of a defensive enclosure which is primary to an extra-mural 'market' area. The burh as reconstructed in

Fig. 3 lies on the end of a long north-facing spur. It is defined on its eastern and northern edges by marked slopes, with marshy areas beyond, though its western and southern defences would have occupied comparatively flat ground. The position of the south gate is marked by the northern end of a funnel-shaped 'market' place, part of whose western side is occupied by the parish church of St Mary and its churchyard.

The area of the suggested defended enciente is small — about 1.87 hectares. Only excavation can demonstrate the existence or non-existence of defences, whose northern and eastern lines could be pin-pointed with some accuracy. As is argued in more detail below, the association of a discrete defensible area (even today topographically distinctive) with an extra-mural market place and church is characteristic of a large number of urban burhs of all sizes. The model developed here provides the basis for the proposition that in many cases the extra-mural (as well as the intra-mural) settlement is contemporary with the creation of the place as a fortress, and forms a functional unity with it. The occurrence of this complex of topographical features at Newport, while not necessarily demonstrating the existence of a burh there, at least

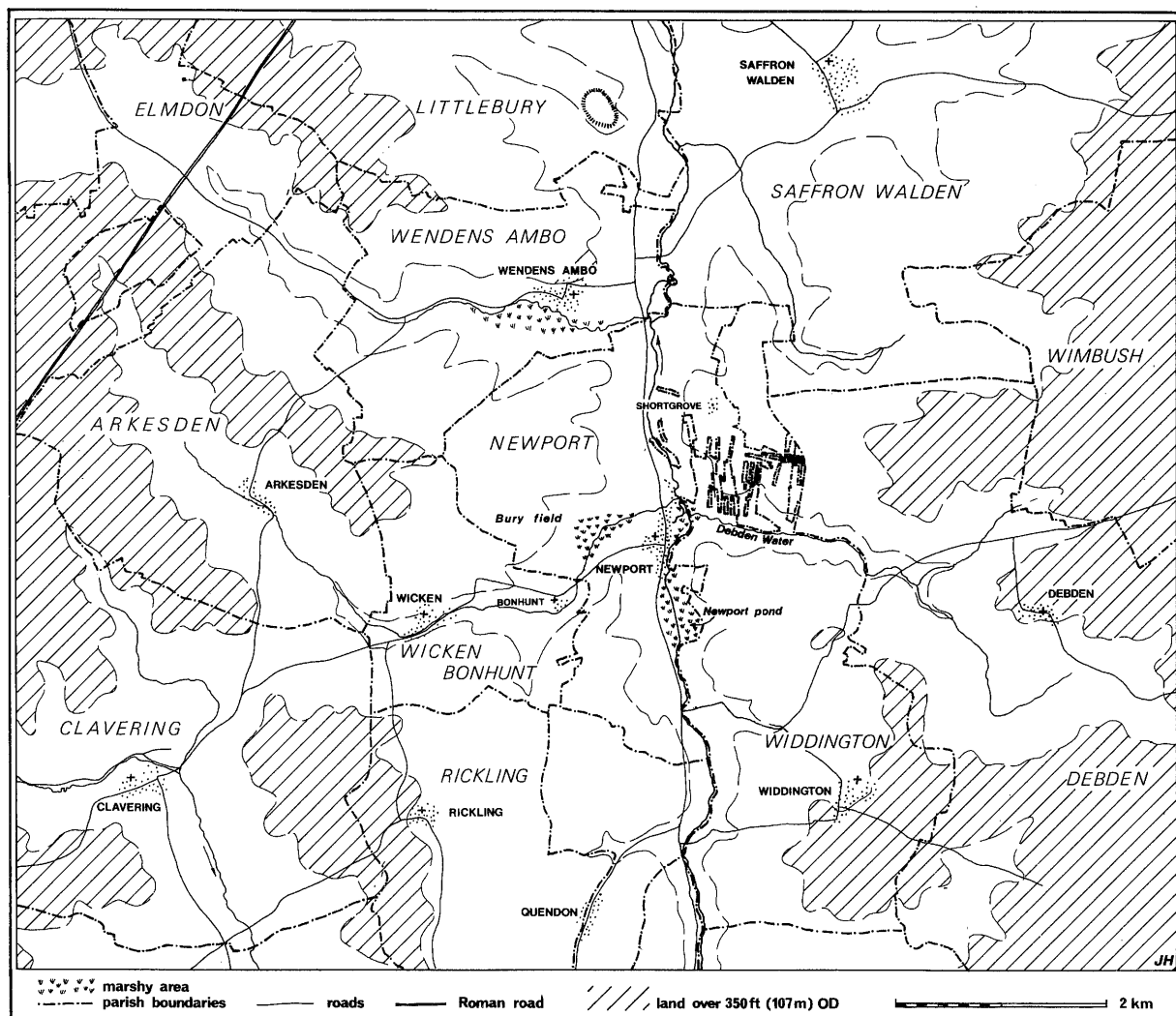


Fig. 2. The location of Newport in north Essex: the possible site of *Wigingamere*.

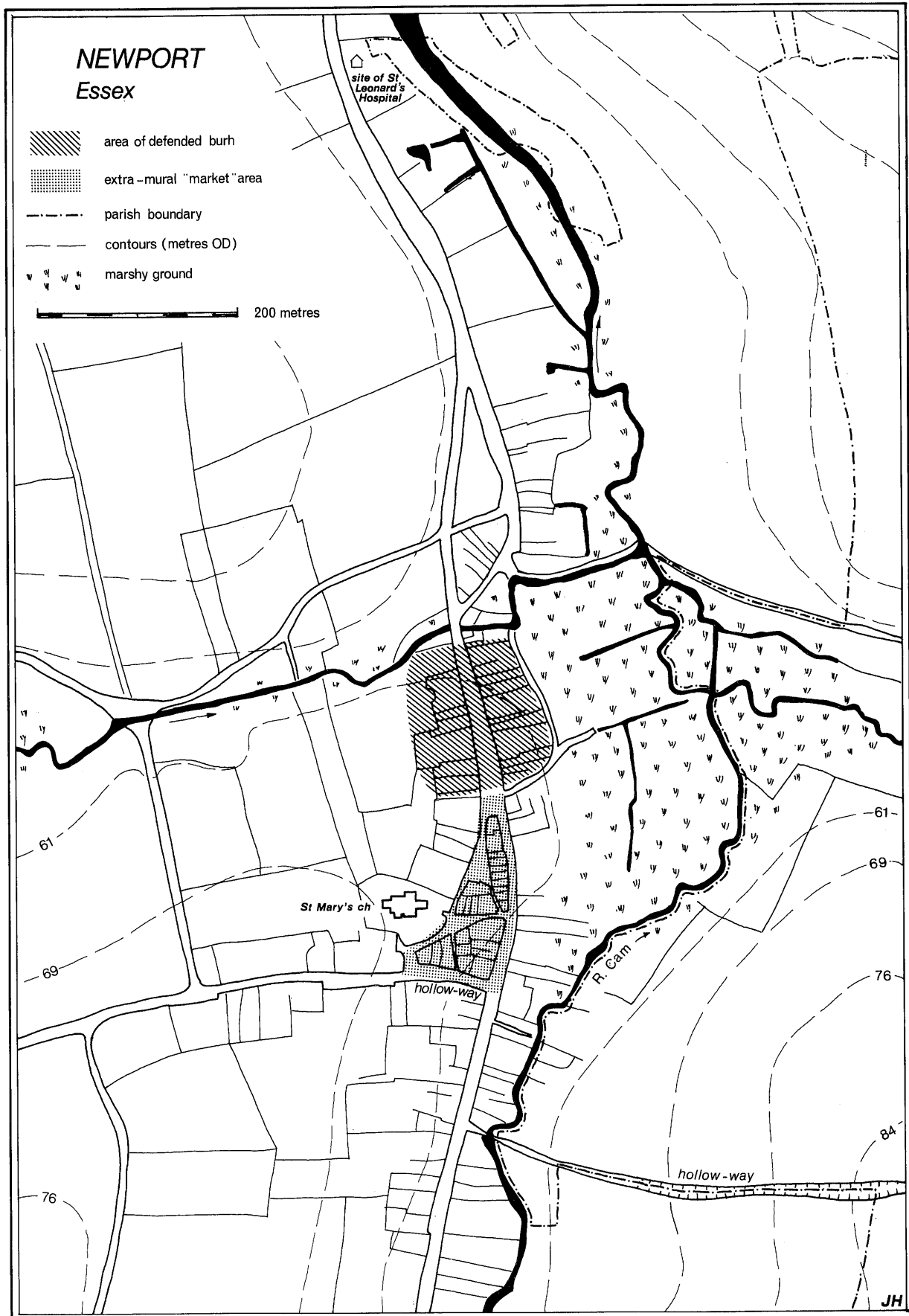


Fig. 3. Newport, Essex: the site of the burh.

provides an inductively derived basis for the hypothesis, which can then be tested deductively against other evidence.

The identification of a burh and associated settlement at Newport carries the implication that it was a new settlement sited there primarily for strategic reasons. This derives considerable support from the relationship both of the settlement and of its parish to its neighbours. As is apparent from Fig. 2 most of the villages surrounding Newport are situated some distance from the Cam valley, and lie on flat sites at a higher level, often near stream heads (for instance Wicken Bonhunt, the mid-Saxon village of Bonhunt, Saffron Walden, Widdington, Quendon and Rickling). Newport, situated by the side of the river Cam in the bottom of the valley, stands out as being the only exception in the area to this general pattern.

An analysis of the structure of Newport parish also supports the hypothesis of the secondary nature of the settlement at Newport. The parish is divided into two parts, to the west and east of the river Cam. Since elsewhere the line of the Cam invariably forms the division between parishes (see Fig. 2), this seems likely to have developed in separate stages. From the relationship of the part to the west of the Cam to the parish of Wicken Bonhunt it can be inferred that the area of both parishes originally formed one unit, from which Newport parish has been separated, dividing the larger unit in the proportion of 2:3. These two parishes cover an area that includes the valley bottom and side slopes of a tributary valley to the Cam. As has been observed elsewhere (Petchey 1980, p. 113; Eddy & Petchey 1983, p. 69), this larger unit shows similarities in both its topography and size to its neighbours on all sides (Widdington, Debden and Saffron Walden to the east of the Cam, and Quendon and Rickling, Wendens Ambo and Littlebury to the west — see Fig. 2), and can therefore be argued as belonging to the same phase of landscape development.

There is some evidence that the part of Newport parish to the east of the Cam is an addition to the area to the west. The easterly portion shows a peculiar relationship to Widdington parish, in that parts of each remain as detached islands in the other (see Fig. 2). This can best be explained by an examination of the history of St Leonard's Hospital, immediately to the north of Newport. This hospital was founded in the early twelfth century, and was given a number of estates, some of which lands were in Widdington parish (*VCH Essex* ii, 1907, pp. 190-1). After the Dissolution the hospital was owned by holders of Newport manor (Morant 1763-8, p. 585), its former possessions in Widdington adjoining the original Newport parish west of the Cam presumably being retained in the latter parish.

Some broad dating of these processes can be suggested from independent evidence. It can be inferred from the existence of a settlement at Bonhunt in the middle Saxon period (Wade 1980) that the 'primary' pattern of villages in the landscape, together with their associated territories referred to above, were perhaps established by this period if not

earlier. On the other hand, the separate creation of the parish of Newport west of the Cam, argued above, seems likely to have occurred before Domesday. At this time Newport was rated at 8½ hides (fo. 7a; Rumble 1983, 1.28), an assessment not inappropriate to its original area (west of the Cam) of about 1,200 acres. The division of the one early unit into two parishes must have been on the occasion of the foundation of St Mary's church at Newport. Since Newport itself is also mentioned in the Domesday survey as existing in 1066 (*ibid.*), this new parish (and the settlement itself) must therefore have been formed as a secondary settlement to Bonhunt in the late Saxon period.

There is further evidence which supports the hypothesis that Newport was both a new burh and a new settlement. Firstly, the newly created parish of Newport is similar in size to the land units belonging to some other early tenth-century burhs. These include the town fields of Colchester, which were attached to various town houses owned by the burgesses at Domesday, which comprise 1,296 acres of arable, plus 51 acres of meadow (Round 1882, p. 5; Tait 1936, pp. 73-4). An even more striking analogy is the double field system of Cambridge, in which both the town fields of the northern burh, which are coterminous with the parish of its church (St Giles), and the town fields of the southern burh (arguably built by Edward the Elder), which are coterminous with its parishes (Haslam 1984c, pp. 23-6), were two separate land units each comprising about 1,200 acres (Maitland 1898, pp. 108-22). It is suggested that the best explanation in functional terms for each of these cases — and of some others where the correspondence in size is perhaps not so striking — is that these are areas of land appropriated to the inhabitants of the burh on the occasion of its foundation by the king.

The hypothesis that the area of Newport parish corresponds with the new burghal 'territory' derives considerable support from the occurrence on the Tithe Award map of the name Bury Field, which refers to much if not all of the area of the parish immediately to the west of the town (Fig. 2). This is the successor of *le Berymad* mentioned in 1322, and of *Burie Mede Feld* in 1538 (Reaney 1935, p. 531). The name appears elsewhere to describe town fields, as for instance those at Colchester (see above) from 1196 onwards (*ibid.*), and at the other Newport in Buckinghamshire (Mawer & Stenton 1925, p. 29).² It appears to be equivalent in every sense to the more common Portfield or Portmeadow (*ibid.*), which arguably reflects the equivalence of the terms 'burh' and 'port' in the later Saxon period, as for instance in the laws of Athelstan. Since the defences of the suggested burh at Newport are unlikely to have been maintained much beyond the phase of English conquest in the early tenth century, it follows that the occurrence of the name 'Bury Field' implies that these fields were acquired by the inhabitants of Newport at or near the time of its foundation as a burh. The occurrence of this name at Newport (and of other 'bury' names mentioned above) therefore provides a direct, and arguably

causal, link between the reality of the place as a 'burh', a fortress, and as a 'port', a new settlement of probably urban status and character. A fortress which was not also a permanent settlement would have required neither its own fields nor its own church, nor an area of land (the parish) appropriated out of an already existing territorial unit to support this church with tithes.

The place-name Newport also provides evidence which supports this general hypothesis. It is described in Domesday Book as already existing in 1066, though no specifically urban features such as a market or burgesses are mentioned (fo. 7a — Rumble 1983, 1.7). Its name alone, however, demonstrates that it must have been considered a new planted town, and that it was such before the Conquest. It is argued here that the best explanation for the origin of all the features so far discussed — namely the topographical indications of the association of a market and fortified enclosure, the secondary origin both of the settlement within the landscape and of the parish of its church, its royal ownership at Domesday, and the 'bury' field-name and the place-name — is that they are the surviving evidence of modifications to the landscape which were a direct consequence of the foundation of Newport as a new urban burh by the king in the late Saxon period.

The status of Newport in Domesday Book as a royal centre which paid the *firma unius noctis* is particularly significant. As will be argued below, this evidence can best be explained by the hypothesis that it was the remnant of a larger royal estate whose centre in the middle Saxon period was at Bonhunt. This relationship reflects similar patterns observable elsewhere, especially in southern England, in which new urban places were established adjacent to royal centres to act as secondary marketing centres for the disposal of the surplus products of the royal estate.

The identification of Newport with the new burh at *Wigingamere* is based on several further observations. Firstly, the name Newport, and the inferences already made that this was both a new market town and burh in the later Saxon period, provide a context both for the existence of the name *Wigingamere* before the fact of this plantation, and for its disappearance before 1066. The existence of the 'New Port' must have been of sufficient significance in the minds of (presumably) its inhabitants to supplant the old name for common usage. Secondly, it is possible that the earlier name is preserved in the name 'Wigmore Farm', at the eastern end of Widdington parish (NGR TL575320) on the early Ordnance Survey maps. Thirdly, the position of Newport is such as to fit with the requirements of the strategic considerations which can be inferred to have led to the construction of the burh at *Wigingamere*. This aspect is considered further below.

Fourthly, the local topography provides an unequivocal context for the presence of the -mere element in the name *Wigingamere* (see appendix). There are at least five areas of originally marshy ground or open water in valley bottoms on all sides

of Newport (see Fig. 3). The first is Newport Pond, a flat area of marshy wasteland to the south, which in the sixteenth century was described (mistakenly) as the head of the Granta or Cam (Reaney 1935, p. 531). The second, an area of about the same size, lies about half a kilometre west of Newport. This is marked on the Tithe Award map as 'Bury Meads', neighbouring fields being called 'Bury water field'. The third is the flat valley bottom, still rather marshy today, immediately to the east of Newport where Debden Water joins the Cam. A fourth is the area of water meadows in the valley bottom immediately south of Wendens Ambo. A fifth area, this time called a 'mere', was at Catmere End, near Littlebury, 3 kilometres to the north of Newport (*Catmer[ehall]*, 1244, *ibid.*, p. 530). That most if not all of these areas were open water in the Saxon period can be inferred from the abundant remains of wild water-bird fauna found at the nearby middle Saxon settlement at Bonhunt (Wade 1980, p. 98). An origin for these areas as possibly silted-up beaver ponds could be tentatively inferred by analogy with Ramsbury, Wiltshire, which is topographically and geologically very similar to Newport, where beaver bones have been found in a late eighth- to early ninth-century context (Coy 1980, p. 49).

DISCUSSION

There are perhaps three aspects of the hypothesis advanced above which have a more than local significance. These are: a) the military and strategic aspects of the foundation of the burh at *Wigingamere*/Newport; b) its value as a well-dated element in landscape stratigraphy; and c) as a valuable set of data for the definition of a general explanatory model describing the process involved in Edward the Elder's burh-building activities.

THE MILITARY SIGNIFICANCE

The burh of *Wigingamere* at Newport was clearly sited with a remarkable eye for strategy. It was sited on the end of a defensible north-facing spur which lay directly on an important and long-established routeway leading southwards from the Cambridge area.³ It can be argued that the decisions which resulted in the choice of site for a new burh here flowed directly from the experience of the English campaigns of A.D. 914. In this year Edward the Elder had built burhs at Buckingham and Newport Pagnell⁴ (like Newport, on the northern edge of English territory at the time), which together formed a provocative wedge between the Danish armies of Northampton and Bedford (see Fig. 2). This move resulted in the submission of the army at Bedford and at least part of that at Northampton. Arguments recently put forward by Cyril Hart show that Essex was in the early tenth century still under West Saxon rule, governed by an English ealdorman rather than a Danish earl. The Danish army however had occupied Colchester and had settled the north-

eastern part of Essex (Hart 1987, pp. 60-76). The establishment of the burh at *Wigingamere*/Newport by the English again created a stronghold on the northern borders of what was then English territory between the Danish armies at Cambridge, East Anglia and Colchester, and as such was perhaps intended at the time (and not only with the benefit of hindsight) as a threat to whatever cohesion they possessed. As well as this, its establishment helped to create a ring of burhs (which included Hertford, Witham and Maldon) surrounding Colchester, whose army could effectively have controlled only the easternmost rump of Essex.

This strategy allowed Edward to determine the place of battle, forcing the Danish armies into the open around the English fortress. Their defeat in this battle was arguably one of the crucial links in the chain of events which led to the submission of the whole of eastern England not long after. Furthermore, this move, as Wainwright has suggested (1975, pp. 314-5 & n. 2), seems to have resulted in (if it was not in fact designed to have achieved) the engagement of Danish forces from northern Mercia, enabling Æthelflæd and her army to occupy the Danish fortress at Derby. The offensive nature of this strategy provides one explanation for the comparatively small size of the defended area of the burh, and thus of the fact that the burh was not sited in the presumably still-standing Roman defences of Great Chesterford (covering some 20 hectares) immediately to the north.⁵

THE BURH IN THE LANDSCAPE

There are several significant aspects of the wider spatial relationships shown by the suggested burh at Newport. Its identification with the burh of *Wigingamere*, built in A.D. 917, provides, in Warwick Rodwell's phrase, 'a fixed point in landscape development chronology' (Rodwell 1978, p. 90). As such, it forms an important stage in a process of settlement metamorphosis which has arguably taken place in the area since the end of the Roman period.

An important aspect of the early history of the area lies in the inference, from several lines of evidence, that Newport was an element in a rather more extensive royal estate, whose centre seems likely to have been located at Bonhunt. Newport itself was a royal estate of 8½ hides in Domesday Book. As J. H. Round has already inferred (1903, p. 336), the reference in Domesday Book to the payment of two night's ferm suggests that this was, by 1086, the last surviving component of a much larger royal estate of some antiquity.⁶

The extent of this estate can be tentatively reconstructed.⁷ Wendens Ambo can be included with Newport and Wicken Bonhunt, since these parishes not only form a compact topographical unit, but also total only 16½ acres short of 25 hides. The royal estate may have also included Rickling and Quendon (which together form a 10-hide unit), since the place-name Rickling appears to indicate the followers of Ricola, Queen of Essex in the late

sixth century (Reaney 1935, p. 134). It can furthermore be inferred, both from an analysis of the finds from the excavation of the middle Saxon settlement of Bonhunt (Wade 1980), which include a large amount of imported Ipswich ware and Frankish pottery, and from the possible Roman origin of the place-name element *-funta* in Bonhunt, that Bonhunt itself was a high-status settlement in the early and middle Saxon periods which developed in relation to either a sacred site and/or a settlement focus in the Roman period, and as the successor to a Roman and immediately post-Roman estate and administrative centre at Great Chesterford, only 10 kilometres to the north.⁸ The presence of burials at Bonhunt, though undated, suggests the possibility that there was a minster church at Bonhunt which was the predecessor of St Helen's chapel. The abandonment of the minster in the later Saxon period could be explained by the destructive effects of the Viking presence in the area, coupled with the likely movement of at least part of the population to Newport. If this is so, the church at Newport could be regarded as a new urban sub-minster, equivalent to those rural hundredal minsters which were being founded at the time in other parts of England (Haslam 1988, p. 39).

Although itself partly hypothetical in nature, this model of the development of the landscape up to the late Saxon period gives some support for the identification of Newport with the burh of *Wigingamere*, in that it provides both a functional and a spatial context, which can also be observed in other parts of the country, for the foundation by Edward the Elder of both a burh and a port at that particular location, quite apart from its military appropriateness. As is also argued in the cases of, for instance, Axbridge (Somerset) and Marlborough (Wiltshire), discussed below, it can be seen as functioning as a local defence adjacent to an important royal estate centre, in addition to its role as an element in a wider strategic scheme. In a similar way to these and other examples it is likely to have functioned as an outlet for the disposal of surplus produce and other goods produced on the royal estate, becoming in effect a formally constituted market which was set up to replace the earlier 'proto-urban' centre.⁹ The requirements of such a new market for regional accessibility would have been ideally met by its location on the important north-south routeway between London and Cambridge (see n. 3). This function would have ensured its survival throughout the tenth century, when its defensive functions (and doubtless capability) would have lapsed. The success of the settlement at a local level furthermore explains the observed decline of the middle Saxon settlement at Bonhunt by the later Saxon period (Wade 1980, p. 102).

FORTRESS AND TOWN — TOWARDS AN OVERALL MODEL

The evidence discussed in the first part of this paper provides some significant material for the genesis of

an overall model of burh-formation in England in the late Saxon period, by which morphological and other landscape data can be explained in terms of function and process. It has been inferred from the large size of most of the burhs in the Midlands (Biddle 1976, p. 136) that they were created both as fortresses and towns — places set out as settled centres of population, some of the functions of whose inhabitants must have been both to ensure the upkeep of the defences and to provide a permanent garrison for the defence of the immediate territory of the burh. Similar conclusions have been drawn by David Hill from an analysis of the comparative sizes of burhs and their subsequent performance as settlement centres (Hill 1981, pp. 143-4). Hill's analysis, in particular, is based on the premise that the walled area comprised the primary 'urban' nucleus with 'suburbs' forming a secondary development as a result of the later success of the place as a town.

The straightforward equation of size of burhs with an urban or non-urban function, while valid in a number of cases, is, however, too simple a model to account for the data already discussed. As pointed out above (note 5), an important factor determining size appears to have been the defensive or offensive role of the burh as a fortress. At Newport, the suggested defended area is too small to have accommodated either a permanent garrison or a viable 'urban' population. It has already been argued above that the creation of the defended area, the 'extra-mural' market, the church, the parish and the town fields, are best considered as complementary elements in a single morphological unit which has resulted from one episode of foundation of the place as both 'burh' and 'port', fortress and town. The extra-mural market area and church should therefore be considered as functional elements of the settlement as a whole which were primary to the intentions of the royal founder. This, arguably, reflects the function of such towns as places where both guarantors and witnesses to trading transactions were to be obtained, which can be inferred from Edward the Elder's first law (Attenborough 1922, p. 115; Loyn 1984, p. 149). Similar inferences have already been made by the writer concerning the importance of other fortress towns in Devon and elsewhere in southern England, which it has been suggested were founded by Edward the Elder in the first decade of the tenth century (Haslam 1984a & b). While the subject must be treated more fully at a later date, four examples from southern England can be cited briefly to show that the model developed here can be used to explain other analogous morphological data in similar functional terms. These are two well-documented burhs at Axbridge (Somerset) and Winchester (Hampshire), and two undocumented burhs at Kingsbridge (Devon) and Marlborough (Wiltshire) which have been identified as such by morphological features alone.

AXBRIDGE (SOMERSET)

Axbridge lies some 3 kilometres west of Cheddar. It is one of the class of small 'promontory' burhs mentioned in the *Burghal Hidage* (Hill 1969; Biddle 1976, pp. 126-7). Its interest for the present discussion lies in the fact that, both in its topography and in significant details of its early history, it shows the same combination of features also shown by Newport. It consists of a small defended enclosure (of the same size as that at Newport) on a topographically distinctive site, with which is associated an extra-mural market area and a church (Batt 1975; Aston 1984, pp. 172-4 & Fig. 62). The parish of this church occupies a narrow strip of land stretching from the moors in the south to the high Mendips in the north, the whole clearly carved out of the much larger parish of Cheddar. Part of this parish to the south is called 'Portmeade'.¹⁰

As has been remarked elsewhere (Rahtz 1979, pp. 8-10, 18), the settlement at Axbridge is likely to have been a separate and secondary component of the early royal centre and estate at Cheddar; as such it provided (as also did Newport) part of the *firma unius noctis* at the time of Domesday. It is likely to have functioned as a defence against access to the Cheddar estate from the west, particularly up the river Axe, which was very much larger then than today, by means of a defended bridge.¹¹ It must have also acted as a refuge for its inhabitants in times of insecurity, and as its commercial and trading centre (Rahtz, *ibid.*; Neale 1979, pp. 10-11; Aston 1984, p. 173 & *passim*), reflecting the separation of these functions seen at other sites (Aston 1984, pp. 195-200) — not least at *Wigingamere*/Newport itself (see above). In both its origin and function, it stands out as being as clear an example as Newport of a centre for both trade and defence which was founded by royal initiative as part of a wider fiscal and defensive policy. It is to be inferred from the general model proposed here that the associated morphological features of the settlement at Axbridge — the defended enceinte, the extra-mural market area, the church and its parish, the causeway and bridge, and the Portmeade — are all functionally interrelated and contemporary components of the new urban burh founded by the king in the late ninth century.

WINCHESTER

The exceptional quality of both archaeological and documentary data relating to early medieval Winchester has enabled many of the morphological developments of the pre-Conquest town to be reconstructed (Biddle (ed.) 1976). In particular, the suburb outside the west gate shows a number of features characteristic of the places discussed above. It has been suggested that it was the first suburb to have developed, at the convergence of the most important of the long-distance routes approaching the city, possibly as 'early as the beginning of the tenth century' (*ibid.*, p. 455). However, it could well be inferred, from both the presence in the western

suburb of large tenements which were also characteristic of the initial layout of the intra-mural area, and from the extent there of royal holdings in the eleventh century (*ibid.*, p. 452), that the development in this area was considered by its royal founder in the late ninth century as a functionally integral part of the burh conceived as a 'port'. This area was also described as *popularis platea* in the period A.D. 934 - c. A.D. 939, when a new church (probably St Martin's, situated immediately outside the gate) was dedicated by the bishop at the request of the citizens (who presumably included the inhabitants of the suburb) (*ibid.*, p. 265). The documentary evidence of occupation, a market-place and a church, as very probably functionally associated features from an early stage in the layout of the 'extra-mural' part of the burh, goes some way towards validating the general model put forward above.

KINGSBRIDGE (DEVON)

The case has been argued by the writer for the foundation of a burh at Kingsbridge, as part of a system of burhs in southern England, by Edward the Elder in the first decade of the tenth century (Haslam 1984a, pp. 271-5). A significant feature of its topography, not fully realised at the time of writing, is the association of a church and a market area immediately outside the suggested north gate of the defences of the burh (*ibid.*, & Fig. 95).¹² The parish of this church comprises the area of the probable burh and the extra-mural area to its north, and is carved out of the larger parish of Churchstow (*ibid.*, Fig. 94).

The topographical association of market area and church situated outside the principal landward gate at the suggested burh, is identical with the pattern shown at Newport, as well as at Axbridge. By reference to the model put forward here, this morphological unity can be interpreted as a functional unity, which resulted from the creation at Kingsbridge of a new burh in the early tenth century which was also conceived as an urban place. This must also have acted as a secondary market centre in relation to the large royal estate of which it formed a part — particularly in view of its ideal position to take advantage of coastal trading. If, however, the church belongs to the time of the creation of the burh, the dedication of the church to St Edmund in the early eleventh century can be interpreted as possibly being the rededication of a church already in existence.¹³

Similar inferences relating to the functional unity between the defended burhs, extra-mural market areas and other features can be made in the cases of other burhs in Devon examined by the writer (1984a). At Barnstaple, a large market area outside the east gate of the burh is the focus of the bridge, which other considerations suggest is also likely to have been a primary element in the construction of the burh, although the original church was situated at the western end of the burh (*ibid.*, p. 255). At Totnes, the long street (Fore Street) between the

east gate of the burh and the bridge can also be interpreted as an extra-mural market and settlement area (*ibid.*, pp. 260-2), the morphological unit of burh, street and bridge together forming a cohesive and contemporary functional unit.

MARLBOROUGH (WILTSHIRE)

The hypothesis has been put forward elsewhere for the existence of an urban burh at Marlborough, founded in the first decade of the tenth century as a replacement for the late ninth-century hilltop fortress at Chisbury, 8 kilometres to the east (Haslam 1984b, pp. 94-102; 1985, pp. 42-3). By reference to the overall model, the morphological features of this suggested burh at Marlborough can be interpreted as being functionally associated from its initial foundation. These include a defended enclosure (its western side probably indicated by the street name 'Kingsbury') situated on a distinct spur of land, which was approached by possibly ancient routes from all directions (that from the south through a still-surviving hollow-way — see Haslam 1984b, Fig. 40); a market area (in this case intra-mural); an adjacent church with its parish, which occupied a small area around the burh and was clearly carved out of the larger parish of Preshute; the town fields ('Portfields') to the north of the burh, included within the area of the new parish; and a Port-mill. The morphological unity of these features has been only slightly disturbed by the development of a new Norman borough, with its own church and tertiary parish, probably in the later eleventh century (Haslam 1984b, Fig. 39; 1985a, Fig. 13). As with the other examples of new burhs cited above, the suggested burh at Marlborough can also be regarded as the new Port or secondary market centre for the large royal estate, whose high-status ecclesiastical function was enhanced with the creation in A.D. 909 of a new bishopric at Ramsbury near by.

CONCLUSIONS

It has been the intention in this paper to put forward a general model describing some aspects of the genesis, early development and function of the Anglo-Saxon burh, by inference from the somewhat disparate morphological and historical evidence relating to a sample of the smaller burhs. In particular, this model has been based on the premise that the complementary functions of the burh as a defended place and as a new market settlement were reflected in the creation of recognisable morphological patterns over both the intra-mural and a much wider extra-mural area. This carries the implication that valid inferences concerning these functions can and should be drawn from the morphological and other data.

The identity of the burh of *Wigingamere* with Newport is a hypothesis which satisfies certain requirements arising from considerations of

national military strategies, and fits with inferences concerning local developments in the historic landscape. When this model is tested against other (admittedly selected) examples, similar functions and temporal processes as are postulated in the case of *Wigingamere*/Newport can be seen as resulting in nearly or exactly equivalent morphological features.

Insofar as these features can be associated with a known burh such as Axbridge, this goes some way towards validating the original identification of the burh of *Wigingamere* with Newport. Furthermore, it opens the way to a further process of testing and refinement in a reasonably rigorous hypothetico-deductive fashion.

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NOTES

1. Wigmore is shown on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map in 'ancient' lettering, probably implying a traditional local identification of Wigmore Pond with *Wigingamere*. This tradition was current in 1923, when noted by an officer of the Ordnance Survey (information kindly supplied by Dr David Hill, January 1983). Wigmore Pond is apparently the location suggested for *Wigingamere* on the Ordnance Survey map *Britain before the Norman Conquest* (1973).
2. The existence of a burh at Newport Pagnell has been suggested elsewhere (Robinson 1975). The writer has suggested that this forms the second burh built while the king stayed in Buckingham in A.D. 914 (Haslam 1985, pp. 40, 42-3), though the evidence has yet to be argued in detail.
3. This was possibly in part of Roman origin — see Bassett 1982, pp. 2-9. See also Jones 1938, p. 3, Fig. 1, p. 8, Fig. 3; Lobel 1975, p. 1 & map 1. This road, leading to London, was possibly also the route by which continental pottery was imported to Bonhunt, probably via London, in the middle Saxon period (see Wade 1980, p. 98).
4. See note 2 above.
5. A case can be made (to be more fully argued elsewhere) for the division of Edward's burhs in the Midlands into two classes: those serving offensive functions, of relatively small size (such as *Wigingamere*/Newport), and those which served defensive functions, of a larger size. A further explanation of the choice of a different site for the burh from Great Chesterford is the proximity of *Wigingamere*/Newport to the earlier royal estate centre at Bonhunt, argued below.
6. Rumble 1983, fo. 7a, 1:28; *VCH Essex* i, 1903, pp. 435-6. See further discussion on the significance and antiquity of these royal dues, as indicating early central places, in Hooke 1986, pp. 82, 87 & passim.
7. Much of the material in this section is based on unpublished work by Steven Bassett. This forms a thesis in developed form towards which my own undeveloped ideas were approximating in the early stages of the research for this paper.
8. An analogous instance in the region of such a shift has been suggested as occurring from Cambridge to Chesterton (see Haslam 1984c). Bassett has already identified a territory, preserved in later estate and parish boundaries, which occupies an area of about 4.5 km radius around Great Chesterford. The southern boundary of this territory is common with the northern boundary of Wendens Ambo. These relationships will be more fully discussed by Steven Bassett.
9. The incipient market functions of such royal estate centres have been argued for instance by the writer in relation to Wiltshire (1984b), and by Grenville Astill in relation to Berkshire (1984). Of some significance in this respect is the archaeological evidence of the existence of an open space within the middle Saxon settlement at Bonhunt (Wade 1980, p. 98) which can be interpreted as a possible market/ceremonial area by analogy with similar topographical features observable in some of the early royal settlements in Wiltshire.
10. Shown on the 1st edition OS map 1:2,500 scale.
11. The existence of a bridge to the south of Axbridge can be inferred from the place-name in *The Burghal Hidage* (vide Kingsbridge, first mentioned in A.D. 962, above and Haslam 1984a, p. 271). This being so, the defensive function of the bridge, presumed causeway and burh in blocking access by boat up the river can in turn be inferred from the arguments set out by the writer elsewhere (*ibid.*, pp. 263, 279 & passim), based on Professor Brooks' analysis of the historical sources (1971). The position of the ninth-century bridge cannot however be identified readily from the present topography. It could have been situated to the east of Weare (at approx. NGR ST420530), or else at, or near, the present bridge at Lower Weare (at NGR ST406537). In the ninth century the river Axe would have been considerably larger than today (which in the context of the times would have justified the need for a defensive bridge), since much of its flow was channelled to the river Brue to the south by engineers from Glastonbury Abbey in the post-Conquest period.
12. The market, called 'The Cheape House', is shown on a 'platt' of Kingsbridge of 1586 as standing in the street opposite the church — *Trans Devonshire Assoc.* 90 (1958), frontispiece.
13. The association of a pillory with the market building in the plan of 1586 (see note 12 above) could be taken as indicating that the area of the parish, besides being a purely ecclesiastical unit, was also the area in which independent jurisdiction was exercised by the inhabitants of the new town. It was suggested (Haslam 1984a, p. 275) that the church and parish were secondary to the formation of the burh, and belong perhaps to the later tenth century. The dedication of the church to St Edmund seems most likely, however, to be associated with the revival of his cult, in the West Country and elsewhere, in the early eleventh century by Cnut (Arnold Forster 1899, p. 333-4).

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APPENDIX:

The place-name *Wigingamere*
John McNeal DodgsonOld English *Wigingamere* Anglo-Saxon Chronicle
A.D. 917.

1. This appears to represent OE *mere* 'a lake, a pool', with the genitive plural form of an OE *-ing-* suffix formation, **wiging* or **wiging*, seen also in the place-names WINGHAM Kent (W. lenberg 1934, p. 537), WINGFIELD Suffolk (Ekwall 1960, s.v.), and very likely WING and WINGRAVE, Buckinghamshire

(compare Ekwall 1960, s.v.; Mawer & Stenton 1925, pp. 86, 88, and Wallenberg 1934, p. 384 & n. 1). The OE suffix *-ing* forms both common and proper nouns with the sense 'thing or person associated with-; called after-; related to-; descended from-; son of-'. One cannot tell whether the **wingas* in this name were persons or things.

2. The element *wig* in *wiging* could represent one of the following: (a) OE *wig* 'war', or the derivative *wiga* 'a warrior' or the personal-name from this, OE *Wiga*; (b) OE *wig*, *wih*, *wēob* 'an idol, a shrine, a temple', (cf. OE *wig-bedd*, *wēofod* 'an altar'), the pre-Christian term, superseded by OE *cirice* 'church', which was used in OHG names of early Christian mission churches and indeed was mistakenly substituted for OE *wīc* 'trading settlement' in the OHG source of the earliest record of *Hamwīc* (>Southampton), and forms the place-name WYE, Kent (Wallenberg 1934, p. 384).

3. The possible meanings are: from 2(a), 'the mere of the warriors' or 'of Wiga's people' or 'of the things or of the people associated with one Wiga, or with a warrior, or with a war'; from 2(b), 'the mere of the people of a shrine' or 'of the things associated with a shrine'.

4. The final element, *-mere*, might be expected to persist in later forms of the place-name; but if unstressed it would have been reduced in pronunciation and confused with OE *mōr* 'a moor, a marsh'.

5. Had there been any further record of the name, and had the basis been OE *wig* 'war' or *wig* 'shrine', then we should expect the palatal *g* to have been elided, and the name to have been developed to something like **Wing(e)-mer(e)*, *-mor(e)*, [*wijingə*] > [*wiingə*] > [*wing(ə)-mar*].

6. All one can do with the one spelling to hand, is to speculate. Some speculations are entertaining. If the place-name *Wigingamere* (*Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* A.D. 917) were based upon OE *wig*, *wih*, *wēob* 'shrine, etc.' we could speculate that the reason for the promotion of the place to a burh might have been, that it was a pre-Christian or early Christian cult site with geographical amenities convenient for a customary place of resort. If the basis were OE *wig*, *wiga* 'war, warrior', then the question would be, whether the name referred to the circumstances of the fortification and campaign in A.D. 917 or to some association with the evidence and occasion of previous wars, fighters and perhaps fortifications hereabouts.

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