The Location of the Burh *of* Wigingamere – *A Reappraisal*

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In a paper published in 1988[1] I put forward arguments for the identification of the otherwise unlocated *burh* of *Wigingamere*, which figures twice in the account of the campaigns of 917 in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, with Newport (north Essex). To the paper was attached a short appendix by the late John Dodgson on some aspects of the derivation of the name, which he had promised me at an early stage in the inception of the article. His contribution was both brief and entirely non-committal regarding my own hypotheses.

It was, however, becoming clear from my correspondence and conversations with John Dodgson well before the paper appeared in print (and indeed before it was submitted to the editor in its final form) that, far from agreeing with my suggested identification, he was actively considering an alternative which to him was much more interesting – namely the similarities between the early name-forms of Wing and Wingrave, Bucks., and *Wigingamere*. The results of his investigations on the place-name evidence appear below (pp. 383–9) in the form which he submitted as a contribution to the *Saga Book of the Viking Society* in February 1988, following a lecture, which contained a long section on the topic, which he gave to the Viking Society in 1987. This must have been one of his last substantial pieces of work.

As a result of these conversations with John Dodgson, and some time before my own paper was published, I began to seek an alternative location for the *burh* of *Wigingamere* in the area around Wing, following his insights as to the similarities between the early name-forms. I came by a largely independent but parallel route to accept the identification which he has proposed in the last paragraph of his paper (see below, 389) – that of Old Linslade, which is situated 3 miles (5 km) north-east of Wing on the river Ouzel (see Fig. 7). On reading his notes, which I was able to do after his death, I was gratified to find that many of my own ideas corresponded closely with those which had led him to the same set of conclusions. The results of my own investigations are put forward here, but are done so very much in the spirit of a quest jointly (even if

[1] 'The *burh* of *Wigingamere*', *Landscape History* X, 25–36. I must record my thanks to Professor Desmond Slay, who contacted me to put John Dodgson's work on *Wigingamere* into a suitable form for publication. I am also indebted to Mrs Joyce Dodgson, who kindly provided me with a copy of this typescript from her word-processor, and who has helped me with this work with many other kindnesses. I must also thank Joy Jenkyns for many stimulating exchanges relating to the topic as a whole.

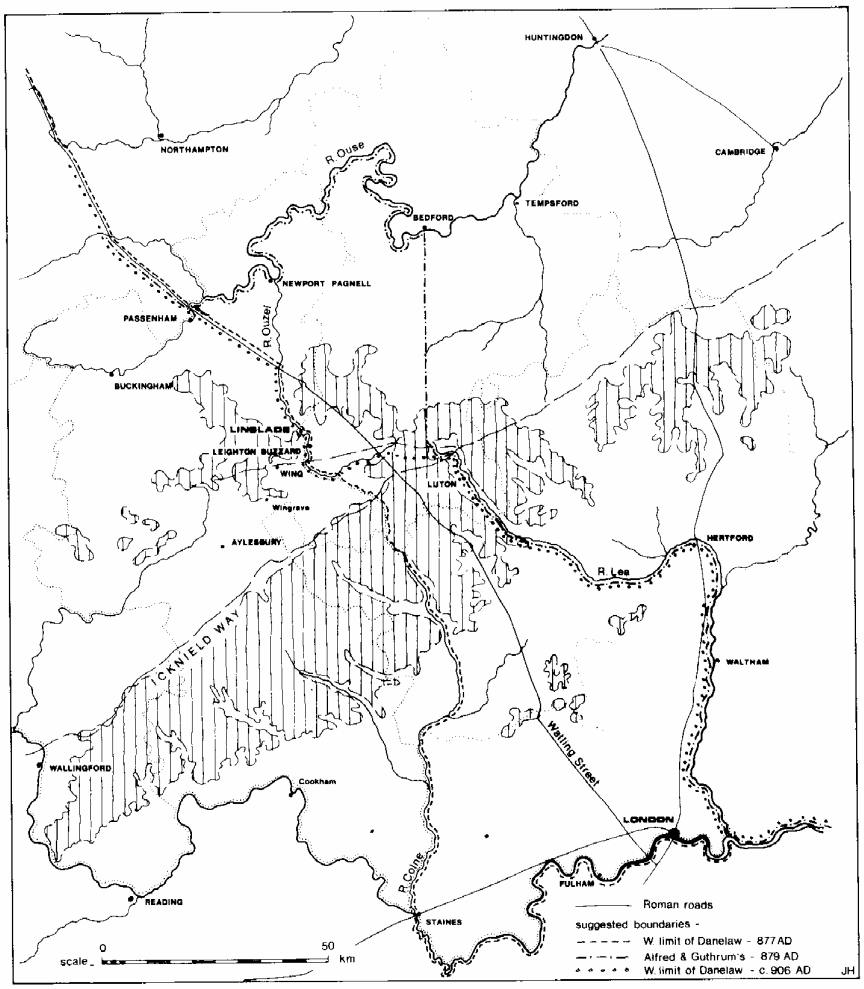

Fig. 5: The location of *Wigingamere* at Linslade in relation to the suggested development of the south-western Danelaw boundaries, and Danish and West Saxon fortresses, in the late 9th–early 10th centuries.

mainly independently) undertaken, and as a tribute to his powers of independent lateral thinking.

John Dodgson's researches brought up another intriguing possibility, about which I had asked his advice at an early stage, after learning of his ideas about the association of *Wigingamere* with the Wing area, namely that the *-mere*

element in the name *Wigingamere* could refer not so much to the presence of a pool or lake nearby (as he has suggested in his paper below, and as he put forward in the appendix to my first paper on *Wigingamere*) but rather to the position of the *burh* on or near the boundary (OE *(ge)mǣre*) of the *Wigingas*, the people of the territory of which Wing was the centre. Although this suggestion does not appear in his paper in this volume, he specifically alludes to this in the transcript of his lecture to the Viking Society referred to above: 'we can ... hazard a guess that the only-once-used fortification [of *Wigingamere*] would have been "on the boundary of the Wing people" which is what the name obviously suggests'. This possibility appears in several places in his notes.

My original hypothesis of the identification of *Wigingamere* with Newport, Essex, has had to give way to another which embraces the new insights provided by John Dodgson's analysis of the place-names. I do still believe, however, that Newport was originally built as a *burh* during the campaign in north Essex, probably in 917, for the topographical and other reasons given in the original paper. Even though the case for identifying it with *Wigingamere* is no longer tenable, I would still argue strongly for two general hypotheses which arise out of this study and which I have reiterated elsewhere. The first is that Edward the Elder (as well as probably Æthelred and Æthelflæd in western Mercia) built probably many more *burhs* during their campaign against the Danes than are individually named in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle – or indeed any other documentary source. In particular, any analysis of the campaigns of Edward the Elder between 911 and 922 must therefore be based on a wider range of evidence than that in the historical annals themselves. Secondly, the name Newport which was given to this *burh*, which was in existence before the Conquest, together with various aspects of its topography, provide strong inferential evidence for the overall hypothesis that most if not all *burhs* built in this period (and many of those built in the later ninth century) were established from their inception as centres for settlement, trade and administration as well as of defence. This carries the implication that the necessary multi-level and multi-faceted social infrastructure which guaranteed adequate defence – i.e. the mobilization and relocation of the population, the establishment of garrisons and the setting aside of a territory around each *burh* which provided the economic base for this infrastructure – was established by an exercise of royal prerogative. This social infrastructure was then itself maintained by giving a wider commercial function to the community, whose rights and privileges were in return then specially guaranteed by royal protection. It is argued in the present paper that such considerations also apply to the alternative site of *Wigingamere*.

In the paper printed in this volume (below, 383–9) John Dodgson put forward arguments which show a strong affinity of the place-name

Wigingamere, a *burh* mentioned twice in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle in 917,[2] with the name-forms of Wing and Wingrave, Bucks. This identification must now constitute the core hypothesis, which others must either validate or invalidate. As suggested above, the identification of Newport in north Essex with *Wigingamere* recently made by the writer must therefore be abandoned in favour of one which fits this context.[3] In the present paper it is argued that Dodgson's hypothesis is supported by two complementary sets of arguments: firstly, by an analysis of its context in the text of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, and secondly, by an analysis of its role in the military-geographical situation of the time. Both these lines of argument necessitate a detailed examination of the strategies employed by Edward the Elder in the fighting which resulted by the end of 917 in the extension of West Saxon domination to include the whole of Guthrum's former kingdom of Eastern England. These arguments are themselves validated, it is suggested, by the identification of a site for the *burh* (at Old Linslade, 3 miles (5 km) to the north-east of Wing) in a location which fits inferences from both the place-name and these strategic contexts, and which shows many of the topographical and other characteristics which would be expected of such a *burh*.

To appreciate the significance of the context of *Wigingamere* in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, it is necessary to apply some elementary textual criticism to the annals of the period 911 to 917 in the Parker MS. 'A'. It is remarkable that, apart from a long description of the Viking raids and West Saxon campaigns around the Severn Estuary in 914, the Chronicle for these years follows a regular pattern of alternating descriptions of military activity on two fronts: Group A – the advance north and north-eastwards from London into Essex, and Group B – the advance eastwards from the central Midlands (modern Bucks.). This grouping becomes apparent when the events in the annals for this period are categorized by stages.

[2] All references to the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle and the dating of events are to the edition and translation by Whitelock, *EHD*, 2nd edn (London, 1979).

[3] Haslam, 'The *burh* of *Wigingamere*'. Dr Cyril Hart finds supporting evidence for my identification of *Wigingamere* with Newport in the existence of an early connection between a berewick of Newport and Shelford, Cambs., in Domesday ('Shelford *burh* and minster', forthcoming). In the context of the present discussion I would seek support from this evidence not for the equation of *Wigingamere* with Newport, but rather for the existence of an early-10th-century *burh* at Newport, with which Shelford had connections, which I suggest was constructed in 917 as one element in the final military offensive by Edward the Elder against the Danes in East Anglia. I am grateful to Dr Hart for sight of his forthcoming paper, and for making many helpful suggestions on an earlier draft of this paper.

GROUPS A & B		
1.	911 (?season)	King Edward succeeds to the territory of London and Oxford on Æthelred's death
GROUP A		
2.	912 Martinmas (November 11– i.e. probably Nov 911)	Northern *burh* of Hertford built
3.	912 summer (18 May–14 June)	Edward camps at Maldon, constructs *burh* at Witham; submission of most of men of Essex
4.	Ditto	Southern *burh* of Hertford built
GROUP B		
5.	913 – April	Danes from Northampton and Leicester raid around Hook Norton (north Oxfordshire) and Luton (south Beds.) and meet local resistance
	[914	Attack by Vikings on Severn Estuary]
6.	914 autumn (before 11 Nov, i.e. prob. 913)	Edward goes to Buckingham and builds two *burhs;* submission of Danes of Beds. and some of Northants.
7.	915 autumn	Edward goes to Bedford; submission of the rest of Bedford Danes; construction of southern *burh* there
GROUP A		
8.	916 June	Edward goes to Maldon – *burh* (?re)built

Even though the 'sample' is rather small, the prominence of this pattern of alternating groupings, which overrides annual divisions, generates the expectation that this same annalistic format would be maintained in the relatively full annal for 917. It is clear that this annal does indeed divide very neatly into four alternating sections, as shown below.

GROUP B		
9.	917 – before Easter (13 April)	Towcester occupied and built
10.	Rogation (19–21 May)	*Wigingamere* built
11.	24 June –1 Aug	Towcester attacked by Danish armies from Northampton, Leicester and north Mercia
12.	?August	Raiding by same armies around Bernwood Forest and Aylesbury (i.e. central Bucks.)

13. ditto	Tempsford built and occupied by Danish army from E. Anglia; Huntingdon abandoned; raiding towards Bedford by same army
14. ditto	*Wigingamere* attacked by Danish armies from E. Anglia and Mercia
15. late summer	Tempsford captured by W. Saxons
GROUP A	
16. autumn	Colchester captured by W. Saxons
17. ditto	Maldon attacked by Danes from E. Anglia (unsuccessfully)
GROUP B	
18. autumn	Edward goes to Passenham; Towcester walled with stone; submission of Northampton Danes to Edward in person
19. ditto	Huntingdon captured and restored; submission of Huntingdon Danes to Edward in person
GROUP A	
20. before Martinmas (11 November)	Edward goes to Colchester; submission of Danes of E. Anglia, Essex and Cambridge to Edward in person

End of annals for 911–17.

The account of the period, even that of 917, is so brief and attenuated that it cannot possibly be a full, representative or even an adequate description of all the engagements or skirmishes, the moves and counter-moves, between the West Saxon forces and the various Danish armies attached to each centre.[4] But

[4] These considerations call in question the assumptions behind many historians' smooth and seamless accounts of the events of this period – e.g. C. Oman, *England before the Conquest*, 8th edn (London, 1938), 498–505; F. T. Wainright, 'Æthelflæd Lady of the Mercians', in H. P. R. Finberg, ed., *Scandinavian England* (Chichester, 1975), 75; and Stenton, *ASE*, 324–9. Thus Stenton is even able to suggest that the advance against the Danes was 'suspended for 18 months' between the summer of 912 and early 914. The present writer would suggest that the reality must have been somewhat different: it seems much more likely that there was a concerted and systematic, even though perhaps unspectacular, military consolidation and advance, on both the Midlands and Essex fronts, about which the Chronicle – as in so many other instances – is totally silent. There is some evidence that Edward constructed many more *burh*s in the Midlands than are mentioned by name. The construction of a *burh* at Aylesbury (see M. E. Farley, 'Aylesbury – a defended town', *Records of Bucks.* XIX (1974), 429–48) and the refurbishment of the defences of Oxford with a stone wall (B. Durham, C. Halpin

because there is no independent check, either literary or archaeological, it is necessary to work on the premise that the dating and timing of the events described in the annals is, as far as it goes, at least internally consistent – i.e. that the strategies which are described do in fact bear some relationship to real events which were played out within a real landscape.[5] This being so, there are valid inferences that can be made from this literary arrangement about the location of the site of *Wigingamere*. The logic of this analysis suggests therefore that the two references to *Wigingamere* (stages 10 and 14) belong with the single Midlands grouping (Group B) of the first part of the annal. If *Wigingamere* were located in the north Essex area, then the pattern, already established by the annalist in the preceding years, would be unacceptably fragmented.

It is also evident that these groups under the year 917 are paired: the first pair represents the completion of the essential military groundwork, in the Midlands and Essex respectively, for the successful implementation of the second pair, which describes the submission of the rest of the Midland Danes, and then of the Danes of East Anglia and Cambridge, to King Edward in person. It is difficult to avoid the inference that the Chronicler has systematically set out to represent a pattern of equivalent and parallel advances on these two fronts. This suggests that the regularity of this pattern is a deliberate construction, a reflection more of the annalist's orderly presentation of his own perceptions of the tide of the West Saxon success, even of his view

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and C. Palmer, 'Oxford's northern defences: archaeological studies 1971–82' *Oxoniensia* XLVIII (1983), 14–18) could well belong to this period. There are some grounds for suggesting the existence of *burh*s at Burford, Henley-on-Thames and Luton, as well as Passenham (see below, nn. 25–6). It is likely for instance that the raids of 913 into north Oxon. were a reaction to the re-establishment of new defences and a new garrison in Oxford in the period immediately after Edward's accession to Oxford in 911. See also the writer's arguments (J. Haslam, 'The towns of Devon' in *idem*, ed., *Anglo-Saxon Towns in Southern England* (Chichester, 1984), 249–84) for the existence of a phase of systematic *burh*-building in southern England in the first decade of the 10th century, which is not mentioned in the Chronicle. Dr Cyril Hart ('Shelford *burh* and minster') has also examined the question of the existence and siting of various Danish fortifications not recorded in the Chronicle. If Stenton has sought historical explanations which are 'agreeable to recorded history' (Stenton, *ASE*, 519) there is a case here for suggesting that recorded history should on the contrary be re-interpreted or reassessed in terms of agreeable explanations (i.e. that historical explanation should be hypothetico-deductive rather than inductive in its approach).

5 Dr Cyril Hart has suggested to me the obvious possibility that this alternating pattern represents the activities of two separate West Saxon army divisions. He has also pointed out that an independent check to the Chronicle's account is that of Roger of Wendover, who mentions the existence of a Danish *burh* at Wiston. See further in Hart, 'Shelford *burh* and minster'.

of the historical inevitability of the outcome, than of an objective view of the exact temporal relationship of these events. It appears to be a literary device whose main purpose was to emphasize the importance of the personal submission of the Danish populations to Edward the Elder, the significance of which has recently been brought out by Abels.[6]

By themselves the arguments made above are of course somewhat circular: the fact of the location of *Wigingamere* in Bucks. is inferred from the regularity of this annalistic pattern, which pattern is then validated by the assumption of the location of *Wigingamere* in this area. There are, however, other arguments which support the postulate that *Wigingamere* lay in the Midlands area, and arguably on or near the Danelaw boundary in the vicinity of Wing – and therefore that this annalistic pattern is a valid one. These are two-fold. The first is that the site of Old Linslade can be identified on quite independent grounds as being a possible site of a *burh*, which because of its location on the border of the territory dependent on Wing can be identified with *Wigingamere*. The second is that the positions of the two references to the *burh* of *Wigingamere* relate more naturally to the tactics described immediately before and after them than they do to any other context – i.e. that the position of the *burh* makes more sense in the context of the theatre of operations in the Midlands, and in the area of Wing in particular, than of that in Essex. This latter premise, however, requires an analysis of the course of the boundary of the Danelaw at this time, since it is only by examining the relationship of the *burhs* to this boundary that their full strategic significance can be understood. This general question is discussed in detail elsewhere by the present writer,[7] but it is necessary to sketch the development of this boundary up to and during the time of the campaigns of 911–17 to bring out those factors which bear upon the question of the siting of *Wigingamere*.

As a primary postulate it is argued that the Danelaw boundary was established by the Danes of East Anglia and eastern Mercia in 877, as the culmination of a process of consolidation of Danish hegemony in the area north of the Thames by Guthrum's army.[8] Although Stenton suggested that the

[6] R. P. Abels, *Lordship and Military Obligation in Anglo-Saxon England* (London, 1988), 79–86 and *passim*.

[7] J. Haslam, 'Wessex, Mercia and the Danelaw: some aspects of strategic developments, 874–886' (forthcoming).

[8] The historical scenario sketched in the following two paragraphs is at variance with generally accepted opinion, and must for the moment be regarded as a working hypothesis only. Detailed supporting arguments are however set out in a paper by the writer ('Wessex, Mercia and the Danelaw'). The postulate concerning especially the date and significance of the treaty between Alfred and Guthrum given here is diametrically opposed to that put forward in a recent paper by Dr David Dumville ('The treaty of Alfred and Guthrum', in *idem, Wessex and England from Alfred to Edgar* (Woodbridge, 1992), 1–27) but is similar to

Danelaw boundary at this period ran along Watling Street,[9] there are stronger grounds for suggesting that this boundary ran northwards from the Thames near Staines along the river Colne, following approximately the eastern border of Bucks. with Middx, Herts. and Beds., along the river Ouzel to where it was crossed by Watling Street at Fenny Stratford, and thence along Watling Street north-westwards to the northern boundaries of Guthrum's kingdom (see Fig. 5). It seems probable that the line of this boundary was significant in earlier periods, for the southern part marched with the western boundary of the see of London and Essex, established in the seventh century, thereby defining the western boundary of the area dependent on London,[10] and its whole length possibly also formed the eastern boundary of the area dependent upon a *burh* at Oxford established by Offa in the late eighth century.[11] As argued below, it seems likely that the river Ouzel was also the boundary between the Early/Middle Saxon tribal groupings, the *Wigingas* and the *Yttingas*. It is clear that the establishment of this boundary gave control of both London and a considerable length of Watling Street to the Danes, which must effectively have deprived both Alfred and Ceolwulf of access to an important port and market whose benefits (which must have included substantial revenues in taxes and tolls) they and their immediate predecessors had shared since the 860s.[12] This control of London was doubtless strengthened by the presence of the Danish army at Fulham in 878–9. There are strong arguments, which cannot be discussed in detail here, for the hypothesis that this boundary was pushed eastwards to the line established by Alfred and Guthrum's treaty, effectively in the late summer of 879 (not, as has been assumed up till now, in 886). At this time – on the removal or death of Ceolwulf II of Mercia and the expulsion of Guthrum's army to eastern England and the other Danish army at Fulham to the Continent – it is suggested that Alfred gained control of both the area to the west (i.e. present-day Oxon. and Bucks.), as well as London and its dependent territory (now Middx). However, there are indications that Alfred lost control of London to the Danes again by 883, but regained it after much fighting in 885–6, when control over the whole area (Oxon., Bucks. and Middx and part of

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counter-arguments set out in a paper by Dr Simon Keynes ('King Alfred and the Mercians'). I am grateful to Dr Keynes for showing me his paper prior to publication. Further relevant discussion is to be found in C. R. Hart, *The Danelaw* (London, 1992).

9 Stenton, *ASE*, 321.

10 , D. Hill, *An Atlas of Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford, 1981), 136, 138.

11 J. Haslam, 'Market and fortress in England in the reign of Offa', *World Archaeology* XIX, no. 1 (1987), 76–93.

12 M. Archibald, 'The coins', in L. Webster and J. Backhouse, eds, *The Making of England: Anglo-Saxon Art and Culture, AD 600–900* (British Museum Publications, London, 1991), 284–9.

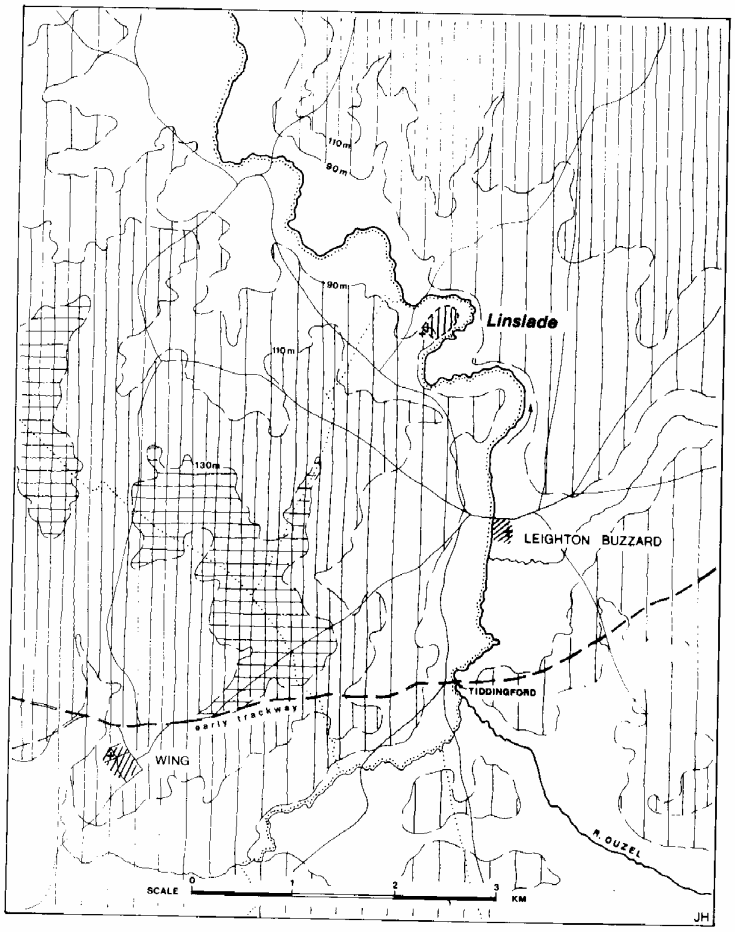

Fig. 6: The location of *Wigingamere* at Linslade, in relation to the river Ouzel, Tiddingford (*Yttingaforda*) and Wing.

Herts.) was ceremonially handed over by Alfred to Ealdorman Æthelred.[13]

However, the area in between these two boundaries – the primary one of 877 and the secondary one to the east re-established by negotiation between

[13] The question of the fate and fortunes of London in the period up to 886 is controversial, but is placed in context in the discussion in Keynes, 'King Alfred and the Mercians'. My own view, that London and possibly the whole of Essex was under total Danish control from 877 to late 879 when Alfred regained London from Guthrum, goes beyond what Keynes is prepared to postulate.

Alfred and Guthrum in late 879 – subsequently became disputed territory. The Danes, it is argued, continued their offensive against London and the area around Watling Street with some success, until finally pushed back from London in 885–6. In any case the northern part of Alfred and Guthrum's boundary, which ran in a straight line between the source of the river Lea near Luton northwards to Bedford, was for practical purposes a completely notional line which was not definable on the ground. As Stenton has remarked,[14] it was never subsequently perpetuated by any historically significant boundary, and it has had no effect either on the landscape or on settlement. It could never have been policed, nor could it have provided any grounds for either establishing or enforcing the legal rights of a population on one side over against those of the other, which is a feature of its other clauses. It can be inferred from this that its primary purpose was not so much to define a discrete area of territory, but rather to give to King Alfred the military jurisdiction over the strategic corridor of Watling Street between north-western Mercia and London. This should be clear from the map – see Fig. 5. However, the conclusion of the treaty between Edward the Elder and the Danes in 906 at Tiddingford, which was located on the crossing of the river Ouzel by an ancient *herepath* (see Fig. 6), shows that the accepted boundary at this time between the Danes and the West Saxons in this northern sector (the length of Watling Street north of Luton and the Icknield Way) had reverted to a position west of Watling Street, along what was probably the earlier boundary of 877.[15] Furthermore, this seems to be confirmed by the fact that at some date between 899 and 911 (but probably before 906) King Edward had engineered the purchase of two estates by West Saxon thegns from Danish owners at Chalgrave and Tebworth (Beds.), which lay within the area between these two boundaries.[16] It can be reasonably inferred that this was part of a policy designed to ensure the loyalty, allegiance and military obligation of local landowners to Edward in this disputed area.[17]

[14] Stenton, *ASE*, 261.

[15] Hill, *An Atlas of Anglo-Saxon England*, 55; A. H. J. Baines, 'The Lady Elgiva, St Æthelwold and the Linslade charter of 966', *Records of Bucks.* XXV (1983), 110–38, esp. 127–9.

[16] Stenton, *ASE*, 322–3; Whitelock, *EHD* (2nd edn, London, 1979), 346–7; R. H. C. Davis, 'Alfred and Guthrum's frontier', *EHR* XCVII (1982), 803–10, esp. 803–4.

[17] The purpose of the treaty of Tiddingford (*æt Yttingaforda*) is not recorded. Whether or not Edward the Elder was forced unwillingly into negotiations with the Danes, or whether this was initiated by him, depends on whether the Ramsey (MS. 'B') or the W. Saxon account (MSS 'A', 'C' or 'D') in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle appears more appealing. However, the difference is probably insignificant, since it can be reasonably argued that both the Danes and the West Saxons chose 'from necessity' – i.e. self-interest – to re-establish by agreement the provisions for equal rights and opportunities between Saxons and Danes that had already been agreed between Alfred and Guthrum, arguably in 878–9. It could possibly also have

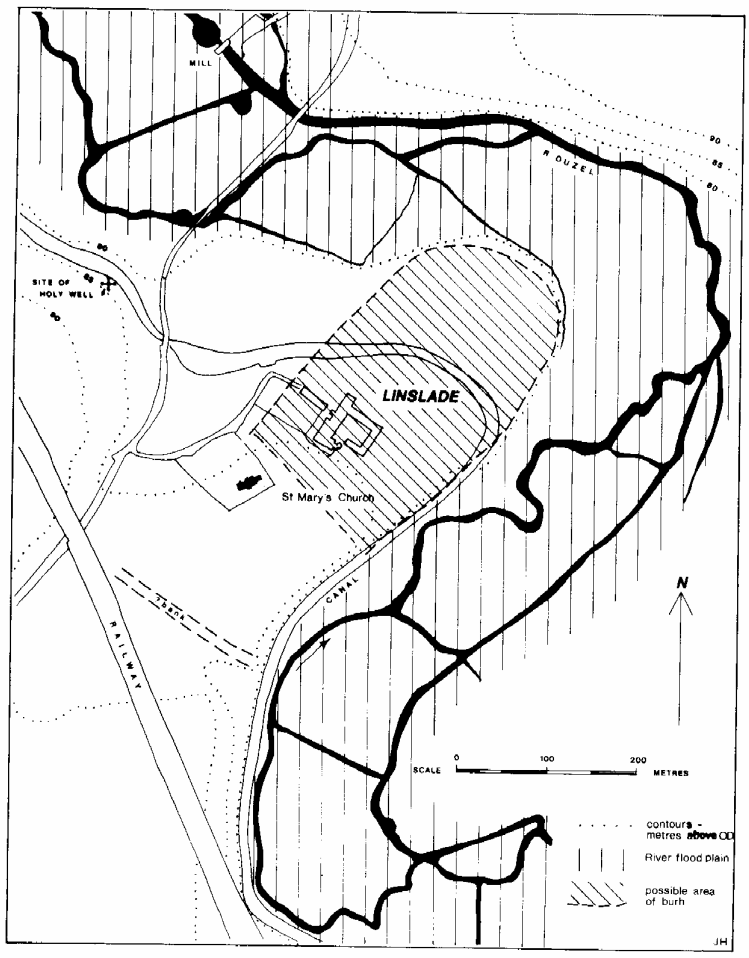

Fig. 7: The local setting of the suggested *burh* of *Wigingamere* at Linslade

allowed Danes to settle in vacant land in the Chilterns, as Baines has suggested ('The Lady Elgiva', 128). Alternatively, it could have regularized an already existing situation. Since Ealdorman Æthelred is mentioned as being one party to the transaction with Edward the Elder concerning the acquisition of Danish-held lands by English thegns at Chalgrave and Tebworth, it seems likely that in view of his long illness before his death (see Wainwright, 'Æthelflæd Lady of the Mercians', 308–9), this transaction would have been effected in the early part of the decade – i.e. at some time before 906. See further discussion in Baines, 'The Lady Elgiva'.

Both Stenton and Davis, however, see this as evidence both for a military advance and for secondary settlement by a Danish population to the west of Alfred and Guthrum's agreed line,[18] which Davis dates to the time of the campaigns of the 890s. Davis even speaks of a 'large Danish advance', and refers dramatically to the 'collapse' of this frontier at this time, citing the evidence of the Chalgrave and Tebworth charters (above) that the area had once again become Danish territory. But it can be argued that a boundary which was not in practice definable on the ground cannot 'collapse', because it would never have had any 'real' existence. It seems equally plausible and realistic to suggest that the Danes, once they had become established immediately east of the boundary of 877 (i.e. within the later 'disputed territory'), had never in fact moved, in spite of being in nominally English territory after Alfred and Guthrum's treaty was formalized. It is argued that it was this very situation which necessitated the guarantee of equal rights to both Danes and West Saxons, which is the most remarkable feature in this treaty. These provisions, which affected both trading rights and social standing, must have merely reflected the contemporary realities – that there were many Danish families living in English territory, and vice versa, who lived and traded with probably little day-to-day regard for the niceties of the alignment of notional political boundaries. Apart from those settled within this disputed territory, there were for instance probably a number of Danes established in the Chiltern area of south Bucks., well to the west of any formal Danelaw boundary,[19] and Danish settlement had probably expanded west of Watling Street in the area of modern Northants., north of Buckingham.[20] Furthermore, it seems highly unlikely that the substantial Danish trading population in London would have been expelled wholesale on Alfred's accession to the town in either 879 or 886.

It is clear from all these arguments that when Edward the Elder 'succeeded to London and Oxford and to all the lands belonging to them' in 911 (ASC, *s.a.*), he acquired dominion over a tract of Mercian territory whose eastern boundary was somewhat different from that negotiated by Alfred and Guthrum (see Fig. 5). The location of the Anglo-Danish conference at Tiddingford in 906, which must have been held on the mutually recognized boundary,[21] demonstrates that the northern section of this boundary had reverted to the line of the river Ouzel – i.e. to the line established in 877. It was from this boundary, or more accurately 'front', that the campaign of 911–17 started. One of the immediate aims of Edward appears to have been to recover control of Watling Street, which represented – as it clearly had to Alfred in 879 – an

[18] Stenton, *ASE*, 261; Davis, 'Alfred and Guthrum's frontier', 803–6.

[19] Baines, 'The Lady Elgiva', 128.

[20] Stenton, *ASE*, 261; A. H. J. Baines, 'The Danish wars and the establishment of the borough and county of Buckingham', *Records of Bucks.* XXVI (1984), 11–17, esp. 13.

[21] Hill, *An Atlas of Anglo-Saxon England*, 55.

important strategic corridor between the north-western parts of Mercia and London, the latter now firmly in West Saxon hands. One of the first actions by Edward in this phase in the Midlands as recorded by the annalist was the building of the two *burh*s during his stay at Buckingham, one of which was arguably at Newport Pagnell.[22] Professor Davis is perhaps one of the first

[22] I would reaffirm a case I stated elsewhere (*Early Medieval Towns*, Shire Archaeology Series (1984); 'The *burh* of *Wigingamere*' (1988), that Newport Pagnell was the second *burh* which Edward the Elder built when he stayed at Buckingham in 914, and that its construction at this point posed an immediate threat to the armies at Bedford and Northampton. The topographical suitability of the site has been discussed by J. Robinson, *The Evolution of the Townscape of Newport Pagnell* (Bradwell Abbey Field Centre, 1975) and other aspects of its history discussed by A. H. J. Baines, 'The origins of the borough of Newport Pagnell', *Records of Bucks*. XXVIII (1986), 128–37. The construction of a *burh* here was arguably the proximate cause of the capitulation and submission of the army at Bedford soon after (in 915), and the absorption and secession of some of the territory belonging to both Northampton and Bedford in 914. It is suggested that the latter comprised the area of the three Domesday hundreds of Seckloe, Moulsoe and Bunsty which surround Newport, and which occupied a wedge of territory of considerable strategic importance encompassing the valleys of the rivers Ouse and Ouzel east of Watling Street (see Fig. 6). The fact that this discrete area extends the later county of Bucks. eastwards beyond Watling Street can best be explained by the suggestion that this was formerly territory belonging to both Bedford (that part south of the Ouse) and Northampton (north of the Ouse) which was taken into West Saxon dominion at this time. A parallel situation can be recognized in the area of modern Northants. west of Watling Street, which arguably became (or was rather reinstated as) part of the area dependent upon Buckingham in 914, to be reabsorbed by Northants. at a later date (see Hart, 'Shelford *burh* and minster', forthcoming). This complex question will be discussed by the writer (Haslam, 'Wessex, Mercia and the Danelaw: some aspects of strategic developments, 874–86', forthcoming). This scenario differs from that put forward by Baines, who argues that Buckingham is a *burh* of Edward the Elder (newly built in 914), and that Newport Pagnell is an earlier 'Danish' trading post (Baines, 'The Danish wars ...' (1984); 'The development of the borough of Buckingham, 914–1086', *Records of Bucks*. XXVII (1985), 53–64; 'The origins of the borough of Newport Pagnell' (1986)). The difficulty with this dual hypothesis is that (a) it is Buckingham which is mentioned in the Burghal Hidage (see below, n. 23) and not Newport, and (b) Newport lies to the east of Watling Street, which was disputed territory for a time after Alfred and Guthrum's Treaty, and (c) that the foundation of Newport and the secession of the surrounding territory in 914 (above) provides the best explanation for the reference in the Chronicle to the submission of 'many of those who belonged to Northampton' and the 'principal men who belonged to Bedford', before either Northampton or Bedford themselves were actually taken. This aspect emphasizes the importance of the act of submission to Edward argued above, which is made with such force in the last entries in the annal in the Chronicle for 917. Furthermore, Newport is

historians to realize that Buckingham was originally an Alfredian *burh*, which by implication was refurbished by Edward the Elder in 914.[23] If so, Edward was

topographically quite dissimilar from other Danish fortresses, but very similar to a whole range of Edwardian *burh*s of the early 10th century (e.g. Haslam, 'The Towns of Devon', in *idem*, ed., *Anglo-Saxon Towns in Southern England*, 249–84). This is clear from the topographical analysis by J. Robinson (*The Evolution of the Townscape of Newport Pagnell* (1975)) to which A. H. J. Baines ('The origins of the borough of Newport Pagnell' (1986)) does not allude.

[23] Professor Davis does not, however, give any reasons for asserting this. The writer's own reasons for accepting this are as follows. It is important to realize (a fact which seems generally to have eluded historians of the period) that the Chronicle entry does *not* say either that Edward built two *burh*s at Buckingham, or that they were new constructions at the time. It merely states that Edward *stayed* at Buckingham for four weeks, and built two *burh*s, one on each side of the river. The most reasonable inference must be that one of these was at Buckingham itself (though even this is not explicitly stated), and Newport (see above, note 22) is certainly on the other side of the river. There is no evidence which runs counter to the proposition that the *burh* of Buckingham of 914 represented a refurbishment of an earlier (Alfredian) *burh*, neither is there any evidence which positively demonstrates that it was a new construction in 914. It is arguably a much more logical and historically sound procedure to infer that Buckingham was indeed an Alfredian *burh* from its inclusion in the Burghal Hidage, than to argue that the Burghal Hidage is no earlier than 914 – which hypothesis is generally based on the mistaken assumption that Buckingham is *necessarily* a new *burh* of 914. These arguments in turn imply that any attempt to exclude Buckingham from the true canon of the Burghal Hidage on the basis that it must be a later insertion – usually done on the basis that the total hidage figures of the *burh*s only equal the stated total if Buckingham is excluded – is entirely misguided. This is dealing selectively with the evidence to suit the hypothesis – especially as there is no textual evidence for its secondary insertion. The present writer believes that the area represented approximately by Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire became part of Alfred's dominion in 879 on the departure of Guthrum's army. This is implied by Oman, *England before the Norman Conquest*, 8th edn (1938), 469, and by P. Wormald, 'The ninth century', in J. Campbell, ed., *The Anglo-Saxons* (Oxford, 1982), 132–59, esp. 152, though in both cases without discussion. That Oxford was utilized by Alfred as a *burh* is indicated by the Oxford coinage of Alfred (M. Archibald, 'The coins', in Webster and Backhouse, eds., *The Making of England*). This being so, it can be more reasonably suggested that a *burh* situated at Buckingham would have fitted Alfred's strategic requirement to provide a strong defence for the northern reaches of the Watling Street corridor, which he had obtained by negotiation from Guthrum. The writer's view is that the date of its construction, together with that of Oxford, can be put in the autumn of 879, or possibly early 880. The view stated above about the origins of Buckingham is, however, at variance with the opinion of Baines, who sees Newport Pagnell as an Alfredian/Danish *burh*, and Buckingham as an Edwardian *burh* ('The Danish wars...' (1984); 'The development of the borough of Buckingham' (1985); 'The

at least in part consolidating a position already established by Alfred thirty years previously. From the positions of the two *burh*s at Buckingham and Newport it can be inferred that they were constructed to stabilize West Saxon control over the northern part of the corridor along Watling Street, especially as they appear to have been founded to counter earlier raiding in 913 into northern Oxon. and southern Beds. by an army from Northampton and Leicester, which must have been directed in part along Watling Street.[24]

The West Saxon control of Watling Street was augmented by the building of the *burh* at Towcester in early 917. This directly threatened the formidable army at Northampton which now faced a line of four *burh*s – Buckingham, Towcester, Newport and Bedford. The clear inference from the annalist's juxtaposition of the first mention of *Wigingamere* immediately after that of Towcester was that it was built as a partner to Towcester in a flanking position to the south of this line. It seems most reasonable to suggest that this *burh* was built not only to protect the area of central Bucks. from otherwise unhindered access from the east along the Icknield Way, but also to support the two *burh*s at Bedford in the advancing front towards Huntingdon, Cambridge and ultimately East Anglia. Although the building of the *burh*s at Newport in 914 and Bedford in 915 had pushed the West Saxon front eastwards along the Ouse valley, this cannot have had much practical effect on the tract of land to the south which was still vulnerable to attack from the east. Although there are also grounds for arguing that *burh*s at Aylesbury and Oxford played a part in the defence of the region at this time (probably in 913),[25] Aylesbury in particular was too far to the rear of the front by 917 to protect south Oxon. from attack from the east, for instance along the Icknield Way. *Wigingamere*, at its suggested location at Linslade near Wing, would have filled this gap south of the *burh*s at Newport Pagnell, Towcester and probably Passenham.[26] A site on

origins of the borough of Newport Pagnell' (1986)).

[24] The mention of the two *burh*s of Buckingham at the end of the annal of 914 follows naturally from the reference to the raids of the previous year, after the long excursus concerning activities in the Severn Estuary. This can best be interpreted on the premise that the Severn Estuary section is a later insertion into a purely Midlands annal relating to 913, and that Buckingham and its other *burh* were refurbished and built probably in the late autumn of 913 to counter these (and doubtless other) raids by the Danes in the same area. See further in Baines, 'The Danish wars...' (1984) and 'The development of the borough of Buckingham' (1985), for pertinent comments about the relationship of Buckingham to the local Roman road system and to Watling Street.

[25] For the *burh*s at Aylesbury and Oxford, see above, n. 4. There was also a large tract of territory – effectively the western part of modern Herts. and southern Beds. – which would have been unprotected with *burh*s. There are therefore grounds for seeking such *burh*s at key sites in this area. One of these is likely to have been at Luton, where there are good topographical and historical reasons for postulating the existence of a *burh* built at this period.

or near the old boundary of the Danelaw to the south of Towcester – i.e. Watling Street or the river Ouzel – would therefore be the most likely situation for the location of *Wigingamere*.

Indeed, the context of the second reference to *Wigingamere* strongly supports this inference. After a Danish army attacked Towcester from the north, and raided further south around Aylesbury and Bernwood Forest (i.e. behind, or to the west of, *Wigingamere*), another army made concerted efforts to consolidate these lightning strikes by adopting the West Saxon strategy of building a new fortress at Tempsford, in a forward position from Huntingdon, and from this position attacking Bedford (with unsuccessful results). A third army from East Anglia was then raised to break through the defences by attacking *Wigingamere*. Not only is this attack seen by the annalist as being directly motivated by the need to mount an effective offensive in the Midlands area, but the inferences from the geography of the area indicates that this attack would have been directed from the east along the corridor to the south of Bedford, Newport Pagnell and Towcester, and therefore very probably through southern Beds. along the Icknield Way and the ancient *herepath* which branched off from it to cross the river Ouzel nearby (see Fig. 6).[27] Furthermore, the annalist is clearly implying by the juxtaposition of these references that the failure of this expedition by the Danes against *Wigingamere* provided the opportunity for the West Saxon forces to advance eastwards on Tempsford, the capture of which in its turn led to the final *putsch* in the central Midlands – the strengthening of Towcester and the consequent submission of the people of Northampton, and the capture of Huntingdon and the submission of the population dependent upon it (stages 18–19). It is argued that, given the logical progression of the strategical developments in this account, a location of *Wigingamere* in north Essex, or anywhere else in the central Midlands other

[26] The arguments from which the existence of a *burh* at Passenham can be reasonably inferred are (a) that Edward would not have stayed at an undefended site so near the frontier with the Danes, (b) that it is sited just to the west of Watling Street itself within undisputed West Saxon territory at the time, (c) that Passenham remained the centre of a royal estate at the time of Domesday, and (d) that the site is topographically particularly suitable for the construction of a 'promontory-type' defended enclosure. The question requires further detailed investigation. For the importance of the Icknield Way in the later Saxon period, see comments in Hart, *The Danelaw*, 26 and *passim*.

[27] The *herepath* branched off the Icknield Way to head westwards towards Wing, and crossed the Ouzel at *Yttingaford*, which was the site of the Anglo-Danish conference of 906. It is called variously *thiodweg* (public road) in the Chalgrave charter of 926, or *saltstrete way* in 1511, and must therefore have been both of some antiquity and of considerable importance (see further in F. G. Gurney, 'Yttingaford and the tenth-century bounds of Chalgrave and Linslade', *Bucks. Record Soc.* V (1920), 163–80).

than in the gap along the frontier south of Towcester, would be wholly out of place.

There are therefore several lines of argument which give independent support to Dodgson's initial hypothesis that *Wigingamere* should be located near Wing, which lay immediately to the west of this Danelaw boundary in the otherwise unprotected area to the south of Towcester. A position on the eastern boundary of the area or people dependent upon Wing, the *Wigingas*,[28] would fit the strategic requirements analysed above. There is every reason to believe that the river Ouzel, which was certainly a major political boundary in 906 and probably a significant boundary from the eighth century if not earlier, would have been the boundary referred to in the name *Wigingamere*. This would furthermore have been the eastern boundary of the *parochia* of the early minster at Wing, whose antiquity and importance is attested in its surviving structure,[29] since immediately to the east of the Ouzel was another minster at Leighton Buzzard, whose *parochia* lay wholly within modern Bedfordshire.[30]

Given all these arguments, there are several reasons for identifying the site of the *burh* of *Wigingamere* with Old Linslade, on the west bank of the river Ouzel (see Fig. 7). Linslade is indeed located on the boundary of the territory dependent upon Wing. It shows several topographical and settlement characteristics which might be expected of such a *burh*. It was strategically placed in relation to local routeways, since it commanded a crossing place of the river and valley which was already ancient by the time it was mentioned in the charter of Linslade of 966,[31] as well as that of the ancient route (described

[28] It seems highly likely that the river Ouzel would have formed the common boundary of the *Wigingas* to the west and the *Yttingas* to the east, the latter group giving its name to *Yttingaford* situated on this boundary, recorded in 906 (see Baines, 'The Lady Elgiva', 127–9). John Dodgson's remarks (see above, 113) about the *-mere* element in *Wigingamere* referring to the 'boundary of the *Wigingas*' should be borne in mind.

[29] B. Cherry, 'Ecclesiastical architecture' in D. M. Wilson, ed., *The Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England* (London, 1976), 151–200, esp. 170.

[30] It seems likely, however, that the minster at Leighton Buzzard was a creation of the early 10th century, as possibly a new minster founded within an urban *burh* by Edward the Elder after the hostilities of 917 were over and Beds. had become West Saxon territory. This is another line of enquiry altogether. See recent comments in J. Blair, 'Minster churches in the landscape' in D. Hooke, ed., *Anglo-Saxon Settlements* (Oxford, 1988), 35–58, esp. 41. For the general process, see J. Haslam, 'Parishes, churches, wards and gates in eastern London' in J. Blair, ed., *Minsters and Parish Churches: The Local Church in Transition 950–1200*, Oxford University Committee for Archaeology monograph XVII (1988), 35–44.

[31] The place-name (*hlincegelad*) takes its name from the crossing. For a detailed discussion of the charter of 966 (*BCS* 1189, Sawyer 737), its bounds, and the relationship of the topographical details of the site and the river crossing to the place-name, see Baines 'The Lady Elgiva', 124–7. The bounds are discussed in M.

variously as *herepath, thiodweg* or 'saltway') over the Ouzel 2 miles (3.5km) to the south at Tiddingford, which was the site of the Anglo-Danish conference of 906.

The identification of the *burh* of *Wigingamere* with Linslade is also supported by the later history of the site. It is clear from Hart's analysis that the Ælfgifu to whom King Edgar gave Linslade in 966 (she already held Wing) was the divorced wife of King Edgar's brother Eadwig.[32] *Wigingamere* / Linslade and its associated territory clearly therefore stayed in the royal fisc for nearly half a century after its construction, and remained in the royal dower for the next century after that. This pattern is common to other (ex)-*burh*s, for instance Newport, Essex, Passenham and many others.[33]

The site also shows several aspects which mark it out as being historically significant. It was the site of the parish church of Linslade, which was adjacent to a historically important holy well, a place of pilgrimage until 1299.[34] It is reasonable to see this as one further example of a class of early sites of cultic significance recently identified by Blair,[35] many instances of which were holy wells used probably as early baptismal sites, which were located at the boundaries of estates of later mother churches. It would fit in with this model therefore to see the church at Linslade as being founded at or very near a site which was already of cultic significance, as part of the ecclesiastical provision for the population of the *burh* of *Wigingamere* in 917. The market and eight-day fair which existed at this site in the medieval period, which only ended in the thirteenth century,[36] could well have originated as a planted market as part of the provision by the king for the population of the *burh*. This would have merely extended or concentrated the local 'central-place characteristics' which are likely to have developed from a somewhat earlier date around the holy well as a result of its function as a place of pilgrimage which was located at the river crossing.

The detailed topography of the site provides further validation for these inferences (see Fig. 7). It is a promontory site, defined on three sides by marked breaks in slope, the flat top of which would have been particularly suitable for use as a populated and defended enclosure. The north and north-east sides comprise a steep bank or bluff which rises some 3–4m from the water meadows of the river, around which is an artificial cut, now silted up and reduced in size, which may well have served some defensive function. It is probable also that the steep bank on the north-east side formerly existed on approximately the line of the canal, whose construction has here considerably modified the original lie

Gelling, *The Early Charters of the Thames Valley* (Leicester, 1979), 173–6.

32 Hart, *The Danelaw*, 455–65.

33 Haslam, 'The *burh* of *Wigingamere*'; for Passenham, see above, n. 26.

34 Baines, 'The Lady Elgiva', 127.

35 Blair, 'Minster churches in the landscape' (1988), 50–5.

36 Baines, 'The Lady Elgiva', 127.

of the land. The north-west side is marked by a break of slope which runs to the north-west of the church through the churchyard, and is discernible in the field on the further side of the canal. To the south-west of the site are the remains of what could be interpreted as a defensive bank, some 1m in height from field level to the north-west, and up to 2m in height to the south-east, where it is cut by the canal. (This could be relatively easily tested by excavation.) As defined by these bounds the possible defended area occupied an area of about 30 acres (12.5 hectares).

It is more probable, however, that defences across the spur would have been located to the north-east of the church, though no evidence of these remain. This would have made a smaller defended enclosure of some 20 acres (8 hectares). This arrangement would place the church in an extra-mural position, with space on the spur nearby for associated occupation. This would conform to an arrangement which is common to other *burh*s, in which, as the writer has argued, the elements of defended enclosure, church and extra- (as well as intra-) mural settlement were both physically and functionally interrelated.[37]

Taken together, therefore, the various aspects of its place-name and its strategic context, combined with its suggestive settlement and site characteristics, provide strong arguments that Linslade is very likely to have been the site of the *burh* of *Wigingamere*. It was sited in a position which was in the right place to have performed the military functions which can be inferred from the strategic developments recorded in the Chronicle. It lay on the eastern boundary of the area dependent on the early centre of Wing, reflecting the probable original meaning of the place-name, a line which furthermore was a major political boundary in the early tenth century and earlier. It was a readily defensible site so placed as to have afforded good protection from enemy forces approaching central Bucks. from the east along, for instance, the Icknield Way, and was located near two early crossing places of the river where such an attack is likely to have been directed. It also shows vestiges of settlement characteristics which would be expected of a *burh* as a newly planted settlement centre: a church and a market, both by inference grafted onto a site which was probably already by the early tenth century showing incipient central-place characteristics, albeit on a local scale.

[37] Haslam, 'The *burh* of *Wigingamere*'.