The Later Pre-Conquest Boroughs and their Defences
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FOR NEARLY two centuries before the Norman Conquest the burh, or defensible centre of population, is often mentioned in contemporary documents. The typical burh of the eleventh century was plainly an artificial creation in which men of different lords lived together . . . taking advantage of such opportunities of trade as the conditions of their time afforded. They formed a body from which a local garrison could immediately be drawn in time of need, and their predecessors had played a very important part in the defence of the land during the Danish invasions of the ninth and tenth centuries. There is in fact good reason to believe that the origin of the burh as a permanent feature of a national scheme of defence belongs to the reign of King Alfred.3

This passage from the late Sir Frank Stenton’s Anglo-Saxon England4 provides the historical setting for the present paper, which attempts to bring together some of the results of recent research into the archaeological problems connected with the Anglo-Saxon burhs, or, to use the more modern form, boroughs. The enquiry is concerned with the two hundred years ending in 1066, the later 9th, 10th and 11th centuries, and more particularly with the ‘defensible centres of population’ of that period. The close connexion of the port or trading centre and burh or fortress is accepted and will not be discussed. To quote Stenton once more: ‘by virtue of its walls Canterbury was not only a port or market-town, but a burh or defensible position, and in the ninth century its inhabitants are described indifferently as portware or burguiare.5 This is well brought out in Athelstan’s law concerning moneyers.6 This confines minting and buying and selling to the ports and states the number of moneyers in a dozen named centres, adding, ‘and in each other burh one’.

As Stenton has emphasized in the passage first quoted, the emergence of the borough as a permanent feature of the English scene should, in all probability, be associated with King Alfred (871-99). There were certainly Saxon fortresses before this date, as is shewn by the inclusion of work on bridges and fortresses as one of the three common obligations often known as the trinoda necessitas; these obligations were normally reserved when the Crown granted other exemptions.7 Few such fortresses have been identified. At Yeavering, the 7th-century seat of the kings of Northumbria,8 the halls and other buildings of the royal palace were

1 Stenton, pp. 288-9. For key to shortened references see Abbreviations, p. 103.
2 Stenton, p. 516.
3 Athelstan II (924-39), capp. 12-14 (E.H.D., i, 384). For the original see F. L. Attenborough, The Laws of the Earliest English Kings (1922), sub. Athelstan II.
4 E.g. Birch, i, 274 (Offa, 795 x 6); Sawyer, no. 139; cf. Stenton, pp. 386-7.
5 H. M. Colvin (ed.), The History of the King’s Works, i, 2-5.
overshadowed by a 'strongly palisaded enclosure' within which 'the inhabitants might hope to resist' the destructive raids of hostile armies. It failed on two occasions to prevent the destruction of the palace. At Tamworth the pre-10th-century enclosure located in one section was on a very small scale, but the evidence is not sufficient to shew whether this was typical of the royal palace on that site.

The boroughs as a factor in the military scheme first appear in connexion with the Danish wars in the last decade of the 9th century. The annal for 8937 speaks of the harassment of the Danes 'by other bands, almost every day, either by day or by night, both from the English army and from the boroughs. The king had divided his army into two, so that always half its men were at home, half on service, apart from the men who guarded the boroughs'.

The character of these boroughs is illustrated by a contemporary Worcester document. Aethelred the ealdorman and his wife Aethelflaed, daughter of King Alfred, 'at the request of Bishop Waerferth, their friend ... ordered the borough at Worcester to be built for the protection of all the people and also to exalt the praise of God therein'. They then granted to the church of Worcester 'half the rights which belong to their lordship, whether in the market or in the street, both within the fortifications and outside'. The shared rights included the tax for the repair of the borough wall.

The building of boroughs continued during the reign of Alfred's son and successor, Edward the Elder (899–924). To the later years of his reign, probably between 911 and 919, belongs the document known as the Burghal Hidage. This is a list of fortresses or boroughs defending the coasts and frontiers of Wessex, with a note of the hides which belong to each. These hides were responsible for the manning of the borough, each hide sending one man. The appended calculation states that four men are required for each perch (5½ yd.) of rampart, or 160 men for each furlong of 220 yd. A more convenient calculation is one man for each 4½ ft. of rampart. The overall picture, to quote Stenton once more, shews that 'by the early part of the tenth century no village in Sussex, Surrey or Wessex east of the Tamar was distant more than twenty miles from a fortress which formed a unit in a planned scheme of national defence'.

As the reconquest proceeded in the early 10th century the system was extended to Mercia, where the record known as the 'Mercian Register', incorporated in texts B and C of ASC, notes the fortresses erected by Aethelflaed, lady of the Mercians, during the reign of her brother Edward. The record gives the date of the founding of each borough and the language suggests a change in the method of construction towards the end of this period. 'In this year ... Aethelflaed, lady of the Mercians, went with all the Mercians to Tamworth and built the borough there in the early summer and afterwards, before Lammas, that at Stafford'. The quotation is from the 'Mercian Register' for 913 and is typical of a number both

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7 ASC., s.a. (texts A, B and C).
8 E.H.D., i, 498; Sawyer, no. 223 (884 x 901). For the original see F. E. Harmer, Select English Historical Documents of the Ninth and Tenth Centuries, p. 22.
9 Robertson, pp. 249–9; Stenton, pp. 261–2.
10 ASC., s.a.
in the Register and in the main Chronicle. The verb translated as ‘built’ is timbrian which could be used either of stone or of wood. In 917 the main Chronicle has an important variation. ‘In this year before Easter King Edward ordered the borough at Towcester to be occupied and built . . . That summer between Lammas and Midsummer (the Danes) . . . broke the peace and went to Towcester and fought all day against the borough, intending to take it by storm, but yet the people who were inside defended it until more help came to them and the enemy then left the borough and went away.’ After describing the summer campaigns the annal continues: ‘Then very soon afterwards in the same autumn King Edward went with the army of the West Saxons to Passenham, and stayed there while the borough of Towcester was provided with a stone wall.’ It is a legitimate deduction that this was an innovation and that the normal phrase translated as ‘built’ implies the use of some material other than stone.

The boroughs of the 9th and early 10th centuries varied widely in character. Some, such as Winchester and Exeter, were old Roman cities, towns or fortresses, where the decayed defences could still form an obstacle to attackers. Elsewhere, as at Lydford, topography very largely dictated the plan of the new borough. Amid this diversity a number of roughly rectangular defended sites first claim our attention. Among the rectangular boroughs recently studied are Wareham, Cricklade, Tamworth and Wallingford, in each of which there have been excavations.

At Wareham (Dorset) the fortified borough is set on a narrow neck of land, where the rivers Frome and Piddle approach most nearly before again diverging to fall separately into Poole Harbour. On the E. and W. sides substantial earthen banks and ditches run from river to river and on the north a similar rampart crowns the natural scarp to the River Piddle. On the south, towards the Frome, no defence is now visible, but a comparatively slight palisade above the scarp of the river terrace would probably have been considered sufficient. The area enclosed is between 80 and 90 acres.

Wareham has produced evidence of occupation during much of the pre-Roman iron age. There was a Romano-British settlement which included at least one building of some distinction. Five early Christian inscriptions, dating from the 6th century to c. 800, indicate a sub-Roman church of importance—to use the Welsh vernacular term, a ‘clas’ or mother church of monastic type serving a wide area. With the arrival of the Saxons in the later 7th century the settlement continued to flourish as a terminus for cross-channel traffic. It was while awaiting a favourable wind at this harbour that St. Ealdhelm (ob. 709) went out to consecrate a church on a neighbouring estate, probably at Corfe. About this date the church (now Lady St. Mary) was rebuilt as a Saxon minster with a plan of the Brixworth type. In this church Brihtric, king of Wessex, was buried in 802.

15 ASC., s.a. 669 (Reculver, a stone church), and s.a. 896 (of ships), both from text A.
16 ASC., s.a. (text A).
G.P., liber v (R.S., lxxn, 363).
The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, here a contemporary, or nearly contemporary, record, states that in 876 the Danish 'army slipped past the army of the West Saxons into Wareham'. After making peace with King Alfred, 'they—the mounted army—stole by night away from the English army to Exeter'. There is no suggestion that Wareham was fortified at this date. Asser, describing the same events a generation later, gives topographical details and calls Wareham a fortress (castellum), but this may well be a gloss describing the position when he wrote. Wareham is listed in the Burghal Hidage of the early 10th century to it belonged 1,600 hides. It was then the site of a nunnery. After 1066 a castle was built in the SW. corner of the town.

Sections cut into the W. rampart in 1952–4 shewed three early phases of development. The last of these represents a complete remodelling of the rampart with a long sloping outer face and, presumably, a large ditch; it was carried out at a date not earlier than 1100 and should probably be connected with the erection of the castle. The two earlier phases are of pre-conquest date.

The first phase had an earth bank, which survived to a height of 9 ft. above the original ground level. The layers in the centre of the bank ran horizontally, tailing down towards the inner edge. This suggests the former existence of a front revetment of timber. No evidence of this survived as the front of the bank had been removed by scarping either in the third phase or subsequently. Any contemporary ditch had also been destroyed by the large post-conquest ditch, now extending to a width of over 60 ft. from the present front of the bank. The base of the bank was composed of comparatively clean sands and gravels. Over these layers was black surface soil, probably scraped up from within the rampart. Under the bank and in the upper layers of scraped-up material were numerous fragments of Romano-British pottery, including New Forest and other wares of the 4th century. A few abraded scraps of post-Roman pottery came from the upper layers of the bank. Fragments of a 9th-century vessel had been found in a similar context by Piggott in 1940, when the front of the bank was again scarped to make it a more formidable obstacle.

In the second phase the bank was heightened on the rearward slope. This addition was capped with a layer of white mortar. A wall with a path on the inner face was built on a raft some 7 ft. wide set on the crest of the bank with a flange of mortar spread out in front of the wall. The whole formed a single operation. A sherd of pottery attributable to the 8th or 9th century was found in the material added to the bank.

The 1,600 men provided by the hides belonging to Wareham would suffice to cover 2,200 yd. of rampart at the standard rate (see above, p. 84). This figure corresponds fairly closely to the length of the three existing stretches of bank including that overlooking the Piddle, but makes no provision for the defence of

17 ASC., s.a. (cxt A).
18 Asser, cap. 49.
19 Robertson, pp. 245 and 496. This article was already in proof before the publication of the article on the text of the Burghal Hidage by David Hill (Med. Archaeol., xiii (1969), 84–92).
21 Ibid., iv (1960), 56–68.
the side facing the Frome. Within the ramparts the town plan of Wareham still retains the imprint of a gridded layout. Its date cannot be established, but the position of the older buildings indicates that it goes back far into the middle ages; it is therefore likely that it dates from the foundation of the borough.

The first phase of the rampart can only represent the fortress listed in the Burghal Hidage of the early 10th century; there can be little doubt that it was the borough erected in the later years of King Alfred. The second phase must therefore belong to the period between this foundation and the Norman conquest.

The second phase at Wareham is perhaps illustrated by the neighbouring borough of Shaftesbury, also in Dorset. There was an important minster at Shaftesbury as early as the 8th century. In the later years of the 9th century King Alfred established outside the E. gate a richly endowed nunnery, of which his daughter, Aethelgeofu, became abbess. The body of the murdered king, Edward the Martyr, was brought here for burial in 978. In 1001 King Aethelred gave to the abbey the old foundation of Bradford-on-Avon (Wilts.); it was intended to serve as a refuge in time of need.

William of Malmesbury, writing about 1125, noted in the chapter-house of the nuns an inscription said to have been brought from the ruins of a very old wall. His transcription, which may be defective in detail, records that King Alfred made this town (hanc urbem fecit) in 880. A fragment of this inscription was found in the course of excavation at the beginning of this century. The stone has since been lost, but a rubbing is preserved in the Shaftesbury Historical Museum. The lettering indicates a pre-conquest date of the late 10th or early 11th century.

The oldest text of the Burghal Hidage, published by Robertson, does not include Shaftesbury, but some later texts (e.g. Birch 353) suggest that it followed Tisbury in the original list and that to it belonged 700 hides. Shaftesbury was already a mint under Athelstan (924–39). The defences of the borough lay to the west of the monastery and of the present town. The inscription probably marks a refortification similar to that at Wareham. The grant of 1001 would suggest that it was carried out after that year. The date 880 recorded in the text preserved by William of Malmesbury need not refer to the original fortification of the borough; it could commemorate a grant of privileges in connexion with the foundation of the nunnery, to which Bishop Eahlstan of Winchester (c. 862–c. 877) is said to have been a witness.

At Wareham the rectangular plan of the borough was imposed by topography, but at Cricklade (Wilts.) it was a deliberate choice. Only the N. side is marked by a natural feature, the low scarp where the Oxford Clay has been cut into and falls to the alluvial flood plain of the upper Thames. Cricklade lies on the S. side

23 Asser, cap. 98.
24 ASC., s.a. 978 and 979 (text D (E)).
25 W. Durand, Monastic Anglicanum, II (London, 1819), 479-80; Sawyer, no. 899.
26 G.P., liber II (R.S., III, 186).
27 E. Doran Webb, Excavations on the Site of the Ancient Abbey Church... Shaftesbury: Report for 1904, pp. 4-5.
29 Robertson, p. 24; Sawyer, no. 357 (871 x 7).
of the river at the highest point to which water-borne traffic could reach. There is evidence of occupation in the Romano-British period, when the settlement probably served as an outlet for the rich agricultural and industrial production of the Cotswold villas. The occupation does not cover the whole area enclosed by the Saxon defences; it is mainly concentrated along and above the scarp which borders the alluvial flood plain. After the Romano-British period the site was deserted and became ploughland (see below, p. 99). Cricklade is listed in the Burghal Hidage, which states that to it belong 1,400 hides. In 903 the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle records that the Danes of East Anglia 'broke the peace so that they harried all Mercia until they reached Cricklade. And they went then across the Thames and carried off all that they could seize both in and around Braydon and turned homeward'. It is a legitimate inference that the fortress was already in existence and that it held out. The church of St. Sampson incorporates detail that dates from the 10th or 11th century. There is no evidence of substantial post-conquest development.

The borough of Cricklade (Fig. 32; Pl. VII, A) is a rectangular area of some 80 acres. The ramparts are much spread; where best preserved they show as a broad bank between 50 and 60 ft. wide and about 3 ft. high. In places the bank has completely disappeared; more generally it is marked by a modern hedge or shows as a slight rise in the ground. Extensive excavations were carried out between 1948 and 1964, principally under the direction of the late Frederick Wainwright. Sections were cut across all four ramparts. A typical section (Fig. 33) shows a bank about 30 ft. wide, formed of piled clay subsoil. Traces of turf revetments were found in some sections both in front and at the back of the bank. The front had, wherever examined, been reinforced with the addition of a mortared wall 4 ft. thick, bedded on the natural subsoil. There was a slight offset externally at the contemporary ground level, which was in places 2 or 3 in. above the surface at the time that the bank was thrown up. Normally a wide cut with an irregular sloping back could be recognized behind the wall, showing that the front of the bank had been trimmed back for a distance of about 3 ft. for the insertion of the masonry. This cut was sometimes difficult to recognize as the space at the back of the wall had been refilled with the material which had been dug away. Traces of post-holes cut into the subsoil were found in a few of the sections; they were most numerous under the line of the added wall. In front of the wall was a berm about 20 ft. wide delimited by a slight V-shaped ditch about 5 ft. deep. This feature was found only in the last sections dug as the earlier trenches extended only 15 ft. (or less) from the face of the wall and it had been assumed that no ditch therefore existed.

A very few fragments of middle Saxon pottery, datable not later than the 9th century, were found in the make-up of the bank. But the most important piece of evidence discovered was a group of sherds belonging to a single vessel embedded in the base of the added wall and therefore providing a terminus post quem for this

31 Robertson, p. 246.
32 ASC., s.a. (text A, etc.).
33 Taylor, i, 182–4.
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age in electronic media.
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FIG. 32
CRICKLADE, WILTSHIRE
Plan showing rectangular shape of pre-conquest borough (p. 88)

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FIG. 33
CRICKLADE, WILTSHIRE
Section across N. rampart of pre-conquest borough (p. 88)
stage. The sherds have now been identified as part of a vessel from the Brunssum kilns in the Rhineland; it cannot be earlier than the 11th century and could well be as late as c. 1100. The masonry of the wall is rough, of pre-conquest character; a date before 1066 is to be preferred.

The ramparts extend to a length of nearly 7,000 ft. or about 5,300 if the N. side running along the scarp above the flood plain is excluded. The 1,400 men, indicated by the figure in the Burghal Hidage, would be sufficient for a length of 5,775 ft.

The surviving lines of the medieval burgage tenements, together with the data supplied by the excavations, show that Cricklade was laid out on a grid and suggest that this layout was contemporary with the foundation of the borough. Many of the outer insulae have only been built up in the present century.

In summary it may be concluded that the original clay bank at Cricklade represents the defences of the borough which existed in the early 10th century, that the foundation went back to the time of King Alfred, and that the wall was added in the course of the 11th century.

The original form of the rampart was established neither at Wareham nor at Cricklade, though both yielded indications of a wooden revetment. At Tamworth (Staffs.), however, the excavations carried out by J. Gould in 1967 and 1968 have demonstrated the type of wooden revetment in use at this date; nothing in the evidence found at Wareham or Cricklade precludes the possibility that similar timber reinforcement was originally used on those sites.

In 781 Offa, king of Mercia, granted a charter in his royal palace at Tamworth; there are other grants made at Tamworth during the period of Mercian rule in the 9th century. The ‘Mercian Register’ inserted in texts B and C of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle records the erection of a borough at Tamworth under the year 913 (see above, p. 84). After the Norman conquest Tamworth, covering an area of about 80 acres, was defended with a bank and ditch; there was a castle in the SW. corner of the town, which still retains architectural features going back to the later 12th century and even older earthworks.

Medieval Tamworth (Pl. VII, b) was a roughly rectangular settlement with the steep scarp above the Teme forming the southern side. The course of the river curtails the SE. corner, but the other three sides are artificial and regularly set out. The excavations of 1967 and 1968 were carried out near the centre of the W. rampart on the S. side of the medieval W. gate; further work at the SE. corner was inconclusive, though there were indications of an early rampart.

The section cut across the W. defences in 1967 showed the base of a bank of sandy turf 16 ft. wide, with rows of posts 16 ft. apart along the front and back of the bank and on its median line. There were also traces of a transverse strapping of timber. A berm about 20 ft. wide separated the front of the bank from a small
ditch about 15 ft. wide and 5 ft. deep. The bank itself covered an earlier non-military ditch, which would, at the most, have served as an enclosure to exclude animals or thieves.

Eighty ft. north of this section lay Lichfield Street, on the line of the road passing through the medieval W. gate. In 1968 excavations on the S. side of Lichfield Street (FIG. 34, a) uncovered the plan of one side of the 10th-century W. gate; the other half lay below the modern roadway. The inner and outer lines of posts retaining the bank turned inwards to form a slighter bank, perhaps a stair or ramp leading to a walk on top of the rampart. Within the line of the bank a double line of more substantial posts extended for at least 12 ft. from the line of the roadway; the two lines were 10 ft. apart. These represent the abutment for a timber bridge spanning the roadway; they form an original feature of the 10th-century plan (FIG. 34, b).

The position of the rampart with the gate near the centre of the W. side suggests that the borough of Aethelflaed covered the same area as the fortified medieval town. If this is so the gridded layout, which is still evident in the town plan, probably goes back to the period of the foundation. The church, set on one of the main streets, retains evidence of a pre-conquest plan and some stretches of masonry which are of this date.40

Wallingford (Berks.),41 on the W. bank of the R. Thames (PL. VIII, a) and controlling an important river crossing, is also a rectangular fortification. The substantial bank and ditch enclose about 100 acres and the perimeter, including the E. side above the flood plain of the river, measured rather over 9,000 ft. Wallingford is listed in the Burghal Hidage. To it belonged 2,400 hides, which would have supplied a force rather over that required to man the defences.42 There are indications of a gridded layout that is certainly original, as one of the main axes passes under the line of mid 12th-century earthworks. A depression under the E. bank may perhaps be a small dock; its date is uncertain, but it is probably connected with the castle. This lies in the NE. corner of the borough; its origin goes back to the time of William the Conqueror, but not all of the extensive earthworks are of the late 11th century.

Excavation by N. P. Brooks within the area of the later castle has shown two pre-conquest phases of defence.43 The primary earthwork, a bank about 35 ft. wide at the base, was formed of redeposited brick earth and gravel. Turf within the area of the bank had been carefully stripped and was then used to form a revetment at the back. A similar revetment of turf, or possibly of timber, must be assumed in the front of the bank, which had been cut back in a later phase. With the exception of two sherds of the earliest gritted wares, attributed to the 9th century, the few fragments of pottery from the core of the rampart were all hand-made, grass-tempered wares of the early or middle Saxon periods (c. 500– c. 900).

In the second phase the original revetment of turf or timber was replaced with

41 V.C.H., Berkshire, 1 (1906), 264-5.
42 Robertson, pp. 246 and 496.
LICHFIELD STREET, TAMWORTH, STAFFORDSHIRE

General plan of excavations (a) and detail (b) of part of pre-conquest W. gate and abutment for timber bridge (p. 92)

After Trans. Lichfield and S. Staffs. Archaeol. and Hist. Soc., by courtesy
a stone wall on the crest of the bank, as at Wareham (see above, p. 86). At the same time the front of the bank was cut back and additional material was provided to heighten the back. Chalk and flint foundations, timber slots and post-holes of houses—some dating as early as the late 10th century—were found on the alignment of the original main street running north, together with remains of the older N. gate; the present alignment of the road is post-conquest.

Not all the known boroughs of late Saxon date have the rectangular outline of those already discussed. Some were Roman sites, already walled; in others the plans were determined or influenced by local topography. Recent work at Lydford and Cadbury illustrates the second of these classes, while Lyng provides a useful reminder of the complexities of relating man power to the extent of the defensive rampart.

Lydford in west Devon figures in the Burghal Hidage; to it belonged 140 hides. In 997 the Danes ‘turned into the mouth of the Tamar, and went inland until they reached Lydford, burning and slaying everything they came across, and burnt down Ordulf’s monastery at Tavistock and took with them to their ships indescribable booty’. The wording implies that the borough at Lydford withstood the onslaught and blocked further advance.

Lydford lies on a wedge-shaped promontory (FIG. 35; PL. VIII, B) isolated on the south and west by the deep gorge of the Lyd and on the north-west by a very steep-sided tributary valley. Some 300 yd. from the point where the medieval (and modern) bridge crosses the gorge, the neck of the promontory is cut off by a bank about 650 ft. long, running from scarp to scarp. The modern road passes through a gap near the centre of this bank and continues along the axis of the ridge; its point of entry, which forms the only break, doubtless marks the position of the early gate. Within the defences and on the NW. side of the road is a castle with a mound surrounding a square tower of c. 1200 and a bailey running back to the edge of the side valley. Beside the castle is the parish church named in honour of the British saint, Petrock. On the point of the promontory, overlooking both the gorge and the side valley, is a small circular earthwork, now known to be a fort of early Norman date.

Excavations in recent years, under the direction of P. Addyman, have shown that the bank crossing the neck of the promontory is returned along the NW. scarp, where it has been located both within the castle bailey and under the earthworks of the small fort. There are also surface indications on the other side of the road above the valley of the Lyd. Sections were cut across the bank, both on the neck of the promontory and on the north-west above the side valley. The published section, at a point where the pre-conquest bank underlay the earthworks of the early Norman fort, is described as follows. ‘Though partly levelled, they (the defences of the borough) remained to a height of 6 ft. and consisted of an earthen bank, c. 40 ft. wide with an abrupt front slope and a gentle back slope. The front was revetted with a granite wall inserted at a later date, and finished off

44 Robertson, p. 246.
45 ASC., s.a. (text C (D and E)).
LYDFORD, DEVON
THE ANGLO-SAXON BURH

assumed line of town bank

The Castle
St Peter's Church
The Fort

FIG. 35
LYDFORD, DEVON
Plan of pre-conquest borough showing position of church and of later fortifications (p. 94). Stippling indicates 1963-7 excavations.
with a mortar slick at ground level. Substantial upright squared timbers within the bank made no recognizable pattern. The bank was formed of alternate layers of turves and saplings or branches over a foundation of parallel planks or beams laid transversely on the old ground surface. Area excavations within the town disclosed property boundaries going back to Saxon times. They were demarcated by ditches and in places separated by paths running at right angles to the main street. Roads running parallel to this street survive in part as modern lanes and paths. The pottery found included some late Saxon wares.

Cadbury Castle, South Cadbury, near Wincanton, is one of the larger and more imposing hill-forts in Somerset. Multivallate defences of the pre-Roman iron age surround a steep-sided, isolated hill; the perimeter of the innermost rampart measures about 1,200 yd. and encloses some 18 acres. Coins struck at Cadbury indicate an emergency mint in the last years of Ethelred and the opening years of Cnut (c. 1010–c. 1020). In Domesday Book the small rural manor of South Cadbury, assessed in 1086 at 3 hides, remained a separate entry with a priest holding one half of a hide, an unusual arrangement.

Excavations carried out between 1966 and 1970 under the direction of L. Alcock have shown that the innermost rampart of the pre-Roman hill-fort was capped first with a timber and dry-stone wall of the 5th or 6th century and then with the defences of the Ethelredan borough. The early 11th-century rampart was between 15 and 20 ft. wide and formed of locally gathered material—largely of soil scooped up in the interior, but also, in the vicinity of the summit ridge, of freshly quarried stone—and faced with a wall of mortared masonry 4 ft. thick. A published photograph shows a double offset at exterior ground level. The SW. gate—one of two, both originally of pre-Roman date—had a single passage 30 ft. long by 11 ft. wide, with a two-leaved outer gate, pivoting on blocks of Ham Hill stone. The structure of lias slabs laid in a hard white mortar was an accomplished piece of building. There was evidence that it had been deliberately slighted, probably by Cnut when the mint was closed in c. 1020.

Within the rampart, near the summit of the ridge, was a cruciform foundation-trench outlining a central structure with projecting arms. The trench, which is securely dated as post-Roman, remained open for a period and was then refilled deliberately; the intended structure had never been built. The scale of the trench shows that a stone building was planned and, given the form, it can hardly have been anything but a church. If the trench really dates from the early 11th century—and the 5th or 6th is also possible on purely stratigraphical grounds—it should be taken in connexion with the ecclesiastical holding recorded at South Cadbury seventy years later (see above). The cruciform plan with a massive central crossing projecting beyond the four narrower arms is typical of a number of late pre-conquest minster churches and an abandoned project of this type fits well into the historical context of a closed mint and slighted defences.

Lyng, on the eastern edge of the marshes of central Somerset, again illustrates

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50 D.B., Somersethire, p. xxiv.
the problem of equating hidage with length of perimeter. The site has recently
been the object of a field survey by David Hill. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles
records that in 878 King Alfred made a stronghold (geweorc) at Athelney. Asser,
adding that the place is 'surrounded on all sides by very great, swampy and
impenetrable marshes, so that no one can approach it by any means except in punts or by a bridge (ponem),
which has been made with laborious skill between two fortresses (arces). At the
west end of this bridge a very strong fort has been placed, of most beautiful
workmanship, by the king's command.' Local topography shows that this western
fort was at Lyng, which figures in the Burghal Hidage with 100 hides.

Hill's study shows that the borough of Lyng (FIG. 36) occupies a promontory,
jutting out into the marsh. There are the remains of bank and ditch running
across the neck of the promontory, at the W. end of the modern village. He argues
that the figure of 100 hides was reached by rounding up a total of between 90 and
110 and that the bank should therefore measure between 370 and 450 ft. He
concludes: 'A possible arrangement, then, of Lyng would be the town bank
enclosing the modern village (with a light line of defence on the marsh shore line),
a causeway (on the line of Balt Moor Wall?), a second burh (on the knoll immedi-
ately west of Athelney Hill?) and the monastery itself on the hill.' It should be
added that the length of bank and ditch across the neck of the promontory
measures between 500 and 600 ft.; this does not in my view invalidate Hill's
reconstruction.

The Roman sites present special problems, on which little work has recently
been done. York, where the medieval defences have recently been surveyed by
the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments, is not really relevant to the
present enquiry. The walls are by implication the work of the Danes. Moreover
York in the early 10th century was exceptional. It was one of the great trading
centres of the Scandinavian north and the picture in Egil's Saga shows a large
royal palace and the extensive enclosures (garths) of the aristocracy. The extent
and form of the defences of this period at York were governed by needs quite
different from those which applied in the case of the normal late Saxon borough.
London, another great trading centre within a ring of Roman walls, also stands
apart from the normal pattern.

But there are other cases where the borough arose in an old Roman city. There
it may be supposed that the defences normally followed the older line of the
Roman defences. This is the picture illustrated by Martin Biddle in the fine
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FIG. 36
LYNG, SOMERSET
Plan of modern village probably on site of pre-conquest borough (p. 97)


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series of plans representing the growth of Winchester.\textsuperscript{60} Here the circuit of the Roman walls—approximately 3,200 yd.—corresponds very closely to the provision of 2,400 hides stated to belong to the city in the Burghal Hidage.\textsuperscript{61} The survival of the Roman defences, perhaps of the actual Roman walls, also emerges from the picture of Exeter provided by William of Malmesbury in the early 12th century. He states that King Athelstan (926–39) 'fortified the city with towers and enclosed it with a wall of squared stones'.\textsuperscript{62} The ashlar, as can still be seen in many places, is Roman work, but the ascription to Athelstan shows that these walls were not only in use in the 12th century, but had been before the Norman conquest. The area of about 100 acres enclosed by the Roman circuit corresponds fairly closely to that of the newly designed Alfredian boroughs; the 734 hides listed in the Burghal Hidage\textsuperscript{63} are quite inadequate for the extent of the perimeter, nor are there natural defences to make up the deficiency.

At Portchester (Hants) (FIG. 37) much work has been done in recent years under the direction of B. Cunliffe. Among other discoveries the emergence of large timber buildings of pre-conquest date may be noted. Here only the question of the defences will be considered. The Burghal Hidage allots 500 hides to the borough,\textsuperscript{64} of which the late Roman Saxon Shore fort clearly formed the core. The perimeter of the fort measures about 2,400 ft., compared with 2,062 indicated by the hidage. But the position is complicated by the existence of an outer earthwork cutting off the promontory on which the Roman fort stands. Its length from shore to shore is rather over 1,600 ft. During the recent excavations\textsuperscript{65} the outer earthwork has twice been examined. The published section shows that the bank was faced with a wall 6 ft. thick, built in a foundation-trench carried down to the solid chalk. Behind the wall was a rampart, now 4 ft. high, but thought originally to have stood to some 9 or 10 ft. The rampart was composed of redeposited chalk and brick earth and lay on a surface scarred by parallel plough furrows. The small amount of pottery from the bank included a few sherds of 9th- to 11th-century date, but nothing later. The date of the rampart remains uncertain, but, to quote the excavator: 'The more pottery samples containing only pre-Conquest sherds that are found from below and within the rampart, the more the possibility of a late Saxon date becomes a probability.'

The aim of this selective and incomplete survey has been to present and analyse the results of some recent work concerned with the late pre-conquest boroughs; some general conclusions are beginning to emerge and these will now be discussed.

The first and, in my view, the most important is the identification of a rectangular type of rather less than 100 acres that may well be considered the Alfredian or immediately post-Alfredian norm. Wallingford and Cricklade are the best examples, but Wareham appears to have conformed to the type, although

\textsuperscript{60} *Antiq. J.*, xlviii (1968), 252.
\textsuperscript{61} Robertson, pp. 246 and 495.
\textsuperscript{63} Robertson, p. 246.
\textsuperscript{64} Ibid., pp. 246 and 495.
PORTCHESTER CASTLE

Plan shewing Roman Saxon Shore fort which formed core of late Saxon borough and lay within outer earthwork of late Saxon (?) date (p. 99)

After Antiq. J., by courtesy, and based on O.S. map with sanction of Controller of H.M.S.O. Crown copyright reserved
the site had a long and continuous occupation before the ramparts were thrown up. Tamworth varies somewhat for topographical reasons and Exeter because the line of the defences was imposed by the Roman walls. Some of these boroughs, for which information concerning the original form is available and where no earlier defences existed, were enclosed with an earthen bank revetted with turf at both front and back and strengthened with timber. The height of 9 ft., established for phase I at Wareham, was probably normal, but this is the only example where the excavated bank has not suffered later degradation. The only clear pattern of timber-work is the three lines of posts found at Tamworth, together with a substantial bridge spanning the gateway. This site may not be entirely typical as the width of the bank between the inner and outer line of uprights is only 16 feet. At Cricklade, where the results were inconclusive, there were traces of three lines of timbering—inner, medial and outer—related to a 30-ft.-wide bank.

It has been argued in a number of cases that the hides belonging to a borough in the Burghal Hidage correspond roughly to the perimeter of the defences, using the criterion incorporated in the oldest text of that document. There are sites where this is true, notably among the Roman cities at Winchester and Bath. But Exeter, also a Roman city, is badly short on any shewing, and if the equation is to be accepted one must assume a serious error in the text. It is probably better to focus attention on the rectangular fortifications which probably represent the model of the new Alfredian borough. Cricklade is about 20% short of the tally. At Wallingford it is approximately correct. Both these sites lie on the edge of river scarps and there is no apparent reason for the different allotments. The point is worth emphasizing as Wareham, lying between two rivers, has long been cited as a case where the hides belonging to the borough provided for the two ramparts running between the valleys and for that above the lesser river, the Piddle on the north, leaving the side towards the Frome, the major river, unprovided for; in contrast to the N. front above the Piddle this now has no visible defences, but it is unlikely that none in fact existed. A palisade running along the top of the scarp above the river flats is the least that we should expect in a fortress thrown up for defence against an enemy who was largely seaborne. Such a defence must be maintained and manned and its omission from the scheme would be difficult to explain. On the promontory sites of Lydford and Lyng the provision falls short, but not to a significant extent, of the requirements of the defences across the neck of the promontory, but it takes no account of the enclosure on the naturally defended sides. At Lyng it is assumed that these were on a lesser scale; at Lydford it is known that a substantial rampart enclosed the whole borough.

The conclusion seems inescapable. The number of men required to man the ramparts according to the calculation appended to the Burghal Hidage represents a military establishment which was not always achieved in practice. The men available must often have fallen short of requirements; in places the shortage may well have been disastrous. This is what might have been expected. The number of hides was known and it would not make sense in the military field to limit the number of boroughs and the perimeter of individual boroughs to the exact forces that could be made available. In actual warfare the threatened borough could
expect to be reinforced by elements of the field army, a possibility perhaps hinted at in the annal for 893 (see above, p. 84), which first mentions the boroughs.

A stone wall is first mentioned in 917 (see above, p. 85). In all the Alfredian or immediately post-Alfredian boroughs yet investigated the wall is secondary and the evidence in each case points to its having been added in the 11th century. Only at Cadbury, a new foundation of c. 1010, are bank and wall contemporary. The same may be true of Portchester, but the date of the outer earthwork has yet to be established. Normally the wall seems to reinforce the front of the earthen bank, doubtless replacing a decayed timber revetment, but at Wareham and Wallingford it was set on the crest of the older bank, an interesting anticipation of the pattern followed in post-conquest York.

Evidence for a gridded layout of the interior of the boroughs is increasing and the evidence would suggest that this layout is contemporary with the foundation. The evidence that much of the area so laid out at Cricklade was never occupied strengthens the case for an early dating of the grid. It is too soon to say much about the buildings which occupied the interior of the boroughs. The most extensive evidence is that emerging at Portchester.

Finally it should be noted that the foundation probably in each case included a minster church, if this did not already exist in an older settlement, as at Wareham. In addition to Wareham, pre-conquest churches of late 10th- or 11th-century date have been noted at Cricklade and Tamworth. A borough, though not necessarily an early foundation, has long been known as possessing an important 11th-century church. But the most significant example is probably Derby. Domesday Book shows that the borough had two important churches—these may be identified as All Saints with seven priests and St. Alkmund with six. The recent excavations have shewn that St. Alkmund is the old Anglian minster of Northworthy with a church going back to pre-Danish times. All Saints, now the cathedral, must represent the new foundation serving the borough; it probably arose soon after the Saxon reconquest of the early 10th century. It is against this background that the enigmatic cruciform foundation-trench at Cadbury must be viewed.

69 Taylor, I, 424–8.
70 D.B., Nottinghamshire, p. 1; V.C.H., Derbyshire, i (1905), 327.
71 Stenton, p. 232.
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