

NOTES

¹ I would like to thank Nigel Berryman and his parents for providing information about his discovery. Norton and Billingham police were also of considerable assistance in recovering the scattered finds.

² The finds were conserved by John Atkinson at the N.E.M.S. laboratory, Newcastle upon Tyne. The photograph was produced by Tom Middlemas of Durham University Archaeology Department. The illustrations are the work of Louise Hayhow.

³ The textile remains were kindly examined by Penny Walton, who reports that the thread is 2-ply, S-twisted from Z-spun yarns. The fibre is almost certainly flax.

⁴ I would like to thank Dr David Birkett for providing a pathology report on the remains.

⁵ I am grateful to Professor Rosemary Cramp and Dr Tania Dickinson for commenting on these finds.

⁶ Information on early discoveries in Norton has been gathered by Robin Daniels and Denise Jelley, and is filed on the Cleveland County Council Archaeology Record.

⁷ R. Miket, 'A Restatement of the Evidence from Bernician Anglo-Saxon burials', 289–305 in P. Rahtz *et al.*, *Anglo-Saxon Cemeteries 1979* (Oxford, Brit. Archaeol. Rep. Brit. Ser. 82, 1980). The Fernic Road cists may be added to Roger Miket's list of long cist inhumations, as might the undocumented record of the discovery of inhumations at Greatham, 7 km to the E. of Norton.

⁸ R. Cramp, 'Anglo-Saxon Settlement', 263–97 in J. C. Chapman and H. Mytum, *Settlement in North Britain 1000 B.C.–1000 A.D.* (Oxford, Brit. Archaeol. Rep. Brit. Ser. 118, 1983).

⁹ R. Daniels, 'The Medieval Village of Norton', 27–36 in Cleveland County Archaeology, *Recent Excavations in Cleveland* (Middlesbrough, 1983).

THE BURGHAL HIDAGE: TOWARDS THE IDENTIFICATION OF *EORPEBURNAN* (Figs. 2 and 3)

Eorpeburnan, the first of the sites listed in the *Burghal Hidage*, has never been firmly identified.¹ The Castle Toll earthworks at Newenden, Kent, are generally considered the most likely location.² The length of these earthworks is uncertain, being somewhere between 385 and 450 metres; the *Hidage* assessment provides for a length of 445.5 yards — 411.2 metres.³

Eorpeburnan is often equated with the half-finished fortress recorded in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle as stormed by the Danes in 892; located 'four miles from the entrance to the estuary' of the Limen river. The evolution of the Romney Marsh area has been confused and complex, but the broad outline is clear.⁴ In late prehistoric times, a long and continuous shingle bank stretched most of the way across a wide bay that is today marked by a line of inland cliffs from Sandgate to a Fairlight Head that then reached much further out to sea. Behind this shingle bank lay a large lagoon into which the rivers Brede, Tillingham and Rother (Limen) debouched. With the passage of time, this lagoon developed into a miasma of marsh and mud flats. Large tracts of this were drained in the Roman period when the main exit from the marsh was by Lympe. Before the end of the 9th century a breach in the shingle bank developed where Old Winchelsea was later to stand. Some authorities opine that this was the principle mouth of the Limen-Rother river in the pre-Conquest period, with the main channel passing to the south of the Isle of Oxney. Other opinion would have the main flow passing to New Romney — a route it undoubtedly did take in later times. The northern Lympe branch was then probably but a dribble of its former self, most of its flow having been captured by the newer branches of the Rother. Given this uncertain picture, three places might reasonably be considered as a 'mouth of the estuary' of the Rother in 892: New Romney, Old Winchelsea, or given that the river from the Isle of Oxney was probably open marsh, Appledore (Fig. 2).

Newenden is not four modern miles from any of these. A further objection to the Castle Toll/*Eorpeburnan* equation is that Newenden is on the Kent side of the modern county boundary, and the *Burghal Hidage* document makes no other provision for the defence of that sub-kingdom.

Many of the *Burghal Hidage* sites developed into urban centres, about which the next comprehensive source of information is the *Domesday Book*. The most important urban site in the area at Domesday was *Rameslie* but there is no documentary evidence for the existence of this place before 1005. By 1086 it was fading in importance, giving way to a *NOVUS*

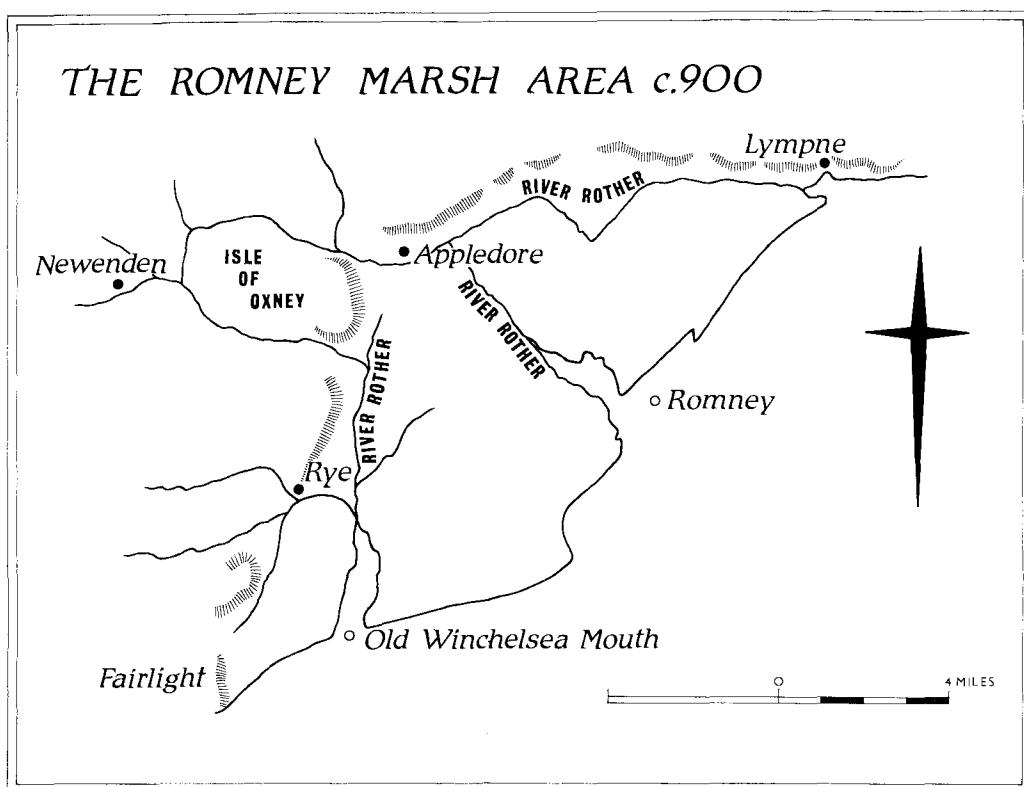


FIG. 2
Romney March, c. 900

BURGUS.⁵ This new town is generally taken to be Rye, growing while Rameslie, probably on the coast near Fairlight, was claimed by the sea.⁶ L. A. Vidler, the Rye historian, believed the town, although newly of borough status at Domesday, to have been settled in the Saxon period, although perhaps 'under some other name'.⁷ Little excavation has been conducted in Rye and Saxon occupation cannot be proved.⁸

Rye might be considered in the context of the quest for *Eorpeburnan*. It is in Sussex and eastwards of Hastings, the second *Burghal Hidage* site. Like many other *Burghal Hidage* locations it is on a promontory. The Ashdown Sand hill juts out into land that was once marsh and was closely circuted by water in the medieval period, with steep cliffs defending two and a half sides of the town's rough square. (See Fig. 3. The Town Salts were washed away by the sea in the 14th century.) It would have been roughly four miles from the Old Winchelsea mouth of the Rother/Limen. While *Eorpeburnan* and the fortress of 892 might not have been identical, the recent suggestion that the *Burghal Hidage* dates from c. 886–890⁹ rather than the early years of the 10th century strengthens the probability that only one site was involved.

The fortification methodology as shown in so many *Burghal Hidage* sites¹⁰ suggests that only the northern and western side of the site — where, as Camden said, 'the cliffs defend it not' — would have been defended. The burh circuit might then have run from the site of the later Land gate to the Strand gate, leaving the rest of the circuit to the natural defences of cliff, marsh and river. But if any Saxon work existed, no trace remains and even the later medieval town walls have for the most part gone: overlaid and demolished. Recent limited excavation

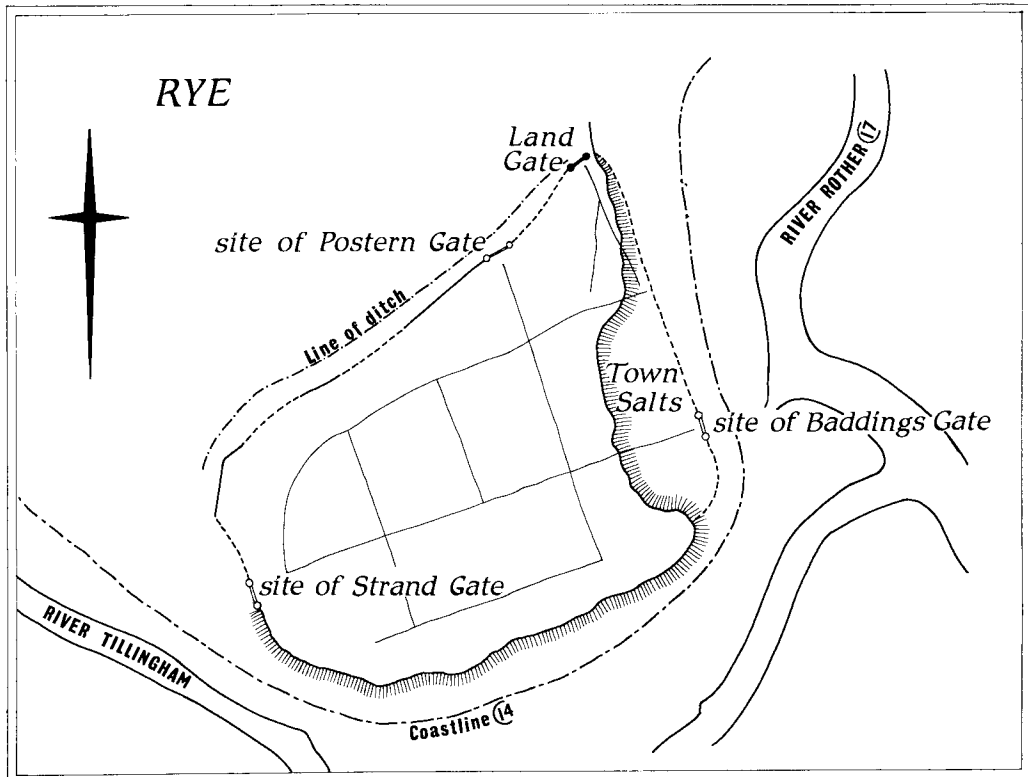


FIG. 3
Rye, Sussex

in Tower Street, near the site of the postern gate, adjacent to the wall, disclosed a wide shallow ditch that had been filled in during the mid 18th century. A date of construction for this ditch could not be suggested for it had been kept in good repair and clean of datable material.¹¹

However, some light can be thrown upon the vanished defences of Rye, for in 1847 William Holloway published his *History and Antiquities of the Ancient Port of Rye*, and described the end of the town ditch:

By the commencement of the eighteenth century the old defences of the town had ceased to be of much value; part of the town ditch, between the Land-gate and the Postern-gate, had been let in 1698; the remainder was now filled with mud, which was overgrown with high reeds, and this was let in 1736 to the respective owners of the adjoining property, . . .¹²

Holloway then gave the 'true measurement of the walls, gateways, and general circumference of the tower' (Land gate) 'at the present time', totalling 4,618½ feet (1,421 metres). He then noted that:

. . . for the first 342½ feet of the wall there was no ditch, which may be accounted for by the fact that the sea still flowed over the Strand up to the walls of this part. Hence the whole length of the ditch was 1337 feet, or only two furlongs.¹³

— or 445.6 yards. This may be but coincidence but it must serve as a serious warrant for Rye to be investigated further for possible evidence of Saxon habitation and identification as the *Burghal Hidage* fort of *Eorpeburnan*.

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NOTES

¹ D. Hill, 'The Burghal Hidage: the Establishment of a Text', *Medieval Archaeology*, 13 (1969), 84-92; N. Brooks, 'The Unidentified Forts of the Burghal Hidage', *Medieval Archaeol.*, 8 (1964), 74-90.

² B. K. Davison, 'The Burghal Hidage Fort of Eorpeburnan: a suggested identification', *Medieval Archaeol.*, 16 (1972), 123-27.

³ *Ibid.*, 127.

⁴ For a survey of recent research on this area, see B. Cunliffe, 'The Evolution of Romney Marsh: a preliminary statement', in F. H. Thompson (ed.), *Archaeology and Coastal Change* (Soc. Antiqs. London, 1980), 37-55.

⁵ *Domesday Book*, ed. J. Morris (Chichester, 1976), 2, 5.1.

⁶ L. A. Vidler, *A New History of Rye* (1934), 4.

⁷ L. A. Vidler, *Sussex Notes Queries*, 1 (1927), 182.

⁸ F. Aldsworth and D. Freke, *Historic Towns in Sussex: an archaeological survey* (1976), 52.

⁹ R. H. C. Davis, 'Alfred and Guthrum's Frontier', *English Hist. Rev.*, xcvi, no. cclxx (Oct. 1982), 803-10.

¹⁰ For example D. Hill, 'The Burghal Hidage-Southampton', *Proc. Hampshire Field Club Archaeol. Soc.*, 24 (1967), 59-61; D. Hill, 'The Burghal Hidage-Lyng', *Proc. Somerset Archaeol. Natur. Hist. Soc.*, 111 (1967), 64-66; F. Aldsworth and D. Hill, 'The Burghal Hidage-Eashing', *Surrey Archaeol. Colls*, 68 (1971), 198-201.

¹¹ J. Hadfield, 'An excavation at 1-3 Tower Street, Rye', *Sussex Archaeol. Colls*, 119 (1981), 222-23.

¹² W. Holloway, *The History and Antiquities of the Ancient Port of Rye, Sussex* (1847), 354.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 589.

¹⁴ The maps were drawn by C. R. Meeson, to whom I am very grateful.

A LATE SAXON STRAP-END MOULD FROM CARLISLE (Fig. 4; Pl. XIII, A)

The purpose of this note is to draw attention to two fragments from a late Saxon two-piece clay mould for casting strap-ends, found during recent excavations on Crown and Anchor Lane, Carlisle (NY 401 560).¹ Only the largest of the two fragments shows any form of decoration (see Fig. 4 and Pl. XIII, A). This fragment has a maximum length of 42 mm and internally a maximum thickness of 7 mm. The smaller piece has intact the surrounding raised border which is 10 mm wide and 9.5 mm high.

The Context (J.T.)

The fragments (CO 1) were recovered from the fill of a rectangular timber-lined structure (CAL A60), probably a pit surviving up to 0.30 m deep, which had been severely truncated by the construction of a cellar in the 18th century. The (?) pit, the lining of which included reused lengths of timber perhaps from a sill beam, contained very few datable objects, all, apart from the mould, of Roman date. However, a dendrochronological analysis of part of the pit's reused timber lining which had subsided into the pit fill suggests a felling date of c. 800 (793 ± 9).² Further information on the dating of the structure may become available when other dendrochronological samples taken from it have been analysed.

The Fabric (J.T.)

The mould is in a fairly soft grey/brown fabric. The core and internal margin and surface are dark grey (7.5YR N4/). The external margin is very pale brown (10YR 7/3), the external surface pale brown (10YR 6/3). Examined under a ×20 binocular microscope, the characteristic inclusions have been identified as moderate very fine mica, sparse very fine black iron ore, and moderate fine to medium sub-rounded translucent and opaque quartz.

Saxon Pottery in Cumbria (J.T.)

Little is known about pottery in use in Cumbria in the Saxon period. Excavations in Carlisle are beginning to produce fabrics which do not fit well into the Roman or medieval fabric type series and may be of Saxon date. One such sherd, in a hard grey fabric with an external solid boss, was recovered from a timber-lined well (BLA A 93) on Blackfriars Street.³ The sherd has affinities with Ipswich-type Ware and a preliminary consideration of the dendrochronological information from one of the well timbers suggests a middle Saxon