Hastings, Haestingaceaster and Haestingaport

A QUESTION OF IDENTITY

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Three places named in early documentary sources, the burh of Haestingaceaster, Haestingaport where Duke William constructed a castle before the battle of Hastings, and the town of Hastings have been assumed to be synonymous. There is, however, little or no tangible evidence for any significant pre-Conquest settlement at Hastings. Newly documented archaeological evidence from Pevensey Castle suggests that there was substantial settlement within the Roman walls throughout the middle and late Saxon period while topographical evidence suggests that Hastings was an unlikely site for an Alfredian burh. It is proposed that the burh of Haestingaceaster was situated within the Roman walls of Pevensey Castle and that the borough of Hastings was a mid-11th century or a post-Conquest creation. The name of Haestingaport could apply to either of these settlements.

INTRODUCTION

The modern town of Hastings with its Norman castle, the administrative centre of the Sussex rape of Hastings, is usually considered to be the successor to the Saxon burh of Haestingaceaster. The burhs were fortifications established by King Alfred and his successors in the late 9th to early 10th century. They were designed to strengthen the defences of the kingdom of Wessex against renewed threats of Danish invasion from the continent and against the support given to the raiders by the Danes of Northumbria and East Anglia. The system of fortifications defended both the sea frontier and the inland borders of Wessex, augmenting the land forces which, up to then, had been provided by local levies within the shires. Most if not all of the population of Wessex lived within twenty miles of one of these fortresses and many of the burhs were established within the walls of former Roman forts and towns.[1]

The attributes that made these sites desirable defensive posts and their situation in the most densely populated areas with good road or water communications, also made them potential market centres: many of them eventually developed into substantial towns.[2] Haestingaceaster is recorded as having a mint in Athelstan's laws (*c.* 926–930). This suggests that some trading was either already taking place, or more probably, was expected to take place, since the earliest coins known with the Hastings mint signature date from the end of the 10th century. Some coins of the mid-11th century record another version of the place-name, *Hestinpor*, and one recension of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle records that William constructed a castle at Haestingaport following his landing at Pevensey. The changed suffix may reflect a perception that the role of the settlement was changing from defence to trade; the place-names 'port' and 'borough' appear to be interchangeable when they are utilized in contemporary sources. But equally the change could suggest the development of another settlement elsewhere. Both these names, Haestingaceaster and Haestingaport were associated with a burh or borough and undoubtedly refer to settlements.[3]

It has generally been assumed that the three names recorded in the documentary sources relate to the same place. But there is a possibility that they do not. There is no unequivocal evidence for a significant settlement at Hastings before the Conquest. When the name was first recorded in 1011 it was associated with a region, a region that gave its name to what is arguably the most memorable battle in English history. No borough at Hastings is recorded in Domesday Book. As yet no

evidence has been found within the town either for a major Roman site, which would account for the 'ceaster' suffix in the place-name, or for early- to mid-Saxon settlement. In addition, no earthworks delineating the burh have been identified within the modern town. Negative evidence is a dangerous tool, but so little positive evidence for a settlement must create some doubt about the identification. If Hastings was not Haestingaceaster is there an alternative site for the burh? An analysis of the place-name, topographical, and documentary evidence undertaken with this problem in mind, in addition to new archaeological evidence from Pevensey, suggests that there may be.

PLACE-NAME AND DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

The importance of the different forms of the place-names in early documents requires the use of various styles of presentation in this paper. Where names are quoted from documentary sources italics have been used and the original spelling has been retained; where the names are used in discussion a modernized form has been used.

The earliest recorded form of the name Hastings is in the Burghal Hidage, a record of the burhs established by Alfred king of Wessex and his son Edward. The main text of the Burghal Hidage is thought to date from the 880s but later editions were made in the early 10th century. A compilation of the various surviving texts allows a reconstruction of the list of Sussex burhs and their related hidage to be made. The names and hidage values are taken from the Nowell transcript, with one exception. The Nowell manuscript ascribed the unlikely figure of only twelve hides to Lewes so the figure of 1300 hides, which is common to the Rylands manuscript and all the other sources, has been used.

324 hides to *Eorpeburnan* [not certainly identified, possibly Newenden in Kent or Rye]
500 hides to *Haestingaceastre* [Usually identified as Hastings]
1300 hides to *Loewe* [Lewes]
700 hides and twenty hides to *Burham* [probably Burpham]
1500 hides to *Cisseceastre* [Chichester][4]

Apart from Haestingaceaster and Chichester there are three other places recorded in the Burghal Hidage that contain the place-name element ceaster: the former Saxon shore fort of Portchester and the Roman towns of Winchester and Exeter. Chichester, Portchester and Exeter have substantial Roman walls which still survive today. Although they are not visible now, the Roman walls of Winchester remained in use as the Saxon town developed. The Roman gatehouse became ruinous and collapsed during the 5th century and the ensuing rubble was incorporated in successive road surfaces. The need for remetalling indicates continued occupation within the city, and in the late Saxon period the former gateway was blocked with a new section of wall.[5]

The ceaster element in these names is particularly significant. In place-names it is, almost without exception, associated with former Roman towns or forts.[6] Although some stray finds of Roman pottery have been identified in Hastings, no major Roman site is known there. Hastings is unlikely to have been recognized by the Saxons as a 'ceaster'. Total reliance cannot be placed on negative evidence, but it should not be completely ignored. Whereas development at other, apparently less important towns, Eastbourne and Brighton for example, discovered Roman villas and Saxon burial sites, no significant Roman, or early to mid-Saxon site has been noted during the development of the modern town at Hastings. This lack of evidence for Roman occupation at the supposed site of the Saxon burh has caused scholars to hypothesize about the possibility of a Roman fort or settlement lost to the sea. Because there has been coastal erosion at Hastings such a theory cannot be disproved, but positive evidence is still lacking.

A major Roman site lies less than twenty kilometres along the coast at Pevensey. The modern name does not preserve any memory of the Roman past but it is undoubtedly what the Anglo-Saxons would have termed a 'ceaster'.[7] The substantial surviving walls of the Saxon shore fort, probably Anderitum, form the outer bailey walls of the Norman castle.[8] There is a close analogy with Portchester, another Saxon shore fort utilized as a burh, which also lies on a spur within a natural coastal inlet. Such coastal inlets were the target of Viking raiders since they offered safe harbourage for their ships. It would have been strange if this vulnerable area had been omitted from the burh defences of the Sussex coast in favour of a site which offered little if any protected harbourage, and lay in one of the poorer and less populated areas of Sussex.

The name Hastings first appears in 1011 when the compiler of the Anglo-Saxon chronicle identified a district *Haestingas* perceived as distinct from both

Sussex and Kent. The chronicler appears to have considered this area to have been the equivalent of a shire.[9] The region took its name from a people, the Hastingas [*Hestingorum gentem*], who were subdued by Offa of Mercia in 771: the Norman rape of Hastings is thought to represent at least part of their landholding.[10] The region of *Haestingas* would undoubtedly have included the burh of Haestingaceaster and may have extended to the north-west as far as Hastingford near Crowborough. Hastingleigh in Kent lies well away from their Sussex land. The name suggests it was a wood pasture outlier of their central landholding.[11] The use of the name Hastings to describe a region raises questions about the interpretation of later entries in the Chronicle. The evidence is ambiguous. References to the shipmen of *Haestingum* may refer to people living within the region of Hastings and the men of *Haestinga ceastre* may be associated with the administrative area of the burh, but equally they could be describing the residents of towns.[12] The dates and forms of the place-names Hastings and Pevensey in several sources are shown in Table 1.

Only after the creation of the Norman castleries or rapes can the name Hastings be associated confidently with a settlement. Even then the different applications remain difficult to distinguish because the name of the older land area was perpetuated in the name of the Rape of Hastings. The town of Hastings which emerges after the Conquest fits convincingly into the context of urban growth occasioned both by the importance of the castle as the administrative centre of the rape, and vigorous exploitation of their estates by two Norman lords, the Count of Eu and the Abbot of Fécamp.

The appearance of the name Pevensey in the documentary sources alongside that of Hastings also suggests to us the existence of two separate settlements. But the name Pevensey did not originally describe a settlement. The earliest forms of the name suggest that it was a river name, old English 'ea', a river, combined with a personal name.[13] It may still have had the same meaning for the compilers of the Chronicle. Where the name Pevensey was recorded in the mid-11th century it was invariably associated with a description of ships taking shelter in a harbour. In that context it is likely that the name was being used to describe a waterway and not a settlement.[14] The illustration under the text in the Bayeux Tapestry that describes William's fleet arriving at Pevensey shows ships sailing and then being beached, no buildings are depicted.[15]

Table 1. Dates and early forms of the place-names Hastings and Pevensey.

Date	**Burghal hidage and Athelstan's laws**	**Charter**	**Anglo-Saxon Chronicle C or E recension**	**Anglo-Saxon Chronicle D recension**	**Coins (variation only)**	**Bayeux Tapestry**
c. 880–910	Haestingaceastre					
c. 930	Haestingaceastre					
c. 940		pefenes ea				
1011			E. Haestingas			
1049			C. Pefenesae	Peuenesea [Men of] Haestinga ceastre		
1052			E. Pefenesea C. [shipmen of] Haestingan	[shipmen of] Haestingum	*c.* 1050–52 Hestinpor Hestinpo	
1066			E. Hestingan	Pefnes ea [castle at] Haestinga port after battle [returned to] Haestingan		Pevenesae [soldiers to] Hestinga [fortification at] Hestenga[ceastra] [soldiers went out of] Hestenga

Although some allowance has to be made for artistic licence and the tapestry cannot be interpreted as depicting places with perfect accuracy, the coincidence of the views of the compilers of the Chronicle and the designers of the Tapestry regarding the status of pre-Conquest Pevensey is notable. Exactly when the name was first applied to a settlement is uncertain, but the first indisputable reference to a borough called Pevensey is in Domesday Book.[16]

The problems of interpretation associated with the characteristics and relative importance of Hastings, Haestingaceaster, Haestingaport and Pevensey in the years before the Conquest have been discussed above. Similar problems relate to the record of the events which occurred in 1066 just before the battle of Hastings. Most seriously, the sources differ in the description of the actions taken by Duke William after his invasion force landed. Since the assumption has always been made that Hastings, Haestingaceaster and Haestingaport were synonymous, the texts have been interpreted to support that view. Some issues can be raised if that assumption is not made.

Only near contemporary 11th-century documents have been selected for discussion. The 'D' recension of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle is the only chronicle to record the events following William's landing at Pevensey but the names recorded in the 'E' and 'C' recensions of the chronicle have been included for comparative purposes. The variations in form they demonstrate, even within what could be described as one source, make clear the difficulty of establishing not only an indisputable narrative, but also a certain location for events in the 11th century (see Table 1).

William of Jumièges, whose work is considered to have been written in or before 1070 records that Duke William had two castles constructed, one at Pevensey and one at Hastings.[17] If his description of events is accepted as correct it suggests that the name Pevensey had become associated with a settlement by 1066.

But significantly, neither of the English sources record a castle being constructed at Pevensey; both associate Pevensey with ships. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle records the construction of only one castle, but where that castle was built is open to debate. The Chronicle names Haestingaport, this could refer to the settlement which later became medieval Hastings or, on the other hand, it might reflect a change of use from a defended site to a trading centre (which would be compatible with the burh being situated at Pevensey).[18] The reference in the Bayeux Tapestry is also ambiguous. The name of Hastings is used three times in the text, and could apply to a land area rather than a settlement. Where it is used in association with the illustration of the construction of the castle, the word 'ceastra' can be read either as part of the place-name to form 'Haestingaceastra' or, alternatively, as a descriptive label for the illustration.[19]

Alternative interpretations of these sources and the possible reasons for their differences are too numerous to discuss in detail here and the discussion would serve little purpose since the sources themselves differ. The problems, therefore, are impossible to resolve. We do not know for certain where William constructed his castle, or castles, before the battle of Hastings.

One aspect of the judicial administration of the Norman rapes also suggests that Hastings was not an established administrative centre before the Conquest. There is evidence that courts held in early Saxon burhs or boroughs had jurisdiction over a district wider than just the town.[20] After the Conquest the Rape Court for Lewes, and the court for what was described as the 'lowey' of Pevensey, which was probably the equivalent court within that rape, were held every three weeks within their respective pre-Conquest boroughs.[21] These courts appear to have replaced the hundred courts within the rapes. A similar but not quite identical court was held within the Rape of Hastings.[22] Here the hundredal jurisdiction within the Rape of Hastings was undertaken by the Lathe court, which met every three weeks at Derfold and Seddlescombe and only occasionally at Hastings Castle.[23] The infrequent use of Hastings as the meeting place of the principal court of the rape may indicate that the town had little or no place in the pre-Conquest administration of the area.

TOPOGRAPHICAL AND ECONOMIC EVIDENCE

Doubts about the topographical and economic viability of Hastings as a burh and as a 10th- or 11th-century trading site also suggest that Haestingaceaster lay elsewhere. In the absence of clear documentary evidence the economic and topographical evidence is crucial.

The coastal burhs were established at or adjacent to vulnerable areas of coastline, river valleys and

coastal inlets which would have afforded safe harbourage for the Viking raiders. They were also central places immediately accessible to the majority of the population so that shelter could be provided within the walls in the event of attack. These conditions favoured the establishment of trading centres and the association of Haestingaceaster with a mint in the reign of Athelstan suggests that trading was by then one of the functions of the burh, although coins associated with the mint do not appear before *c.* 1000.

The obvious poverty of the Wealden area surrounding Hastings recorded in the Domesday survey suggests that the area was not highly developed economically. Consequently, it was unlikely to have sustained a significant trading borough with which a mint could have been associated over 100 years earlier (see Table 2). The other Sussex burhs were more favourably situated, lying adjacent to major manorial centres where the greater part of the population would have been living.

Six features can be identified as significant factors in the development of early boroughs in Sussex:

1. access to the sea coast;
2. river transport to the Wealden interior;
3. road transport;
4. various land resources close by;
5. other special resources, e.g. salt works, fisheries (especially in the poor Wealden area);
6. wealthy manorial centres (both creating a demand and supplying excess goods).

Table 2. Pre-Conquest values of manorial holdings and boroughs in the Norman Rapes of Sussex. (Values to the nearest £1.)

Chichester	£1375	*Notes:* Variations in the form of entry for boroughs makes exact calculation of pre-Conquest values impossible. The values have been calculated as noted here.
Bramber	£537	Chichester £15 TRE Arundel TRE £2 mill, £1 banquets, £1 entertainmnet: Total £4 Steyning Included in manor
Lewes	£673	Lewes £26 TRE Pevensey TRE 14s. 6d. tribute, £1 tolls, £1 15s. port dues, 7s. 3d. pasture: Total £3 16s. 9d.
Pevensey	£574	Rye(?) Included in manor of Rameslie
Hastings	£302	All ecclesiastical liberties are included. Value of 'one night's rent' given as 'when acquired'.[24]

Ease of access was crucial to the establishment of early trading centres. In the difficult terrain of the Sussex Weald at a time when the Roman road system had declined, the rivers and waterways were links rather than barriers. The coastal ports were cut off from easy access to the north by the dense woodland and wet clay soils of the Weald; access inland to and across the area would have depended to a large extent on the navigable rivers and sea inlets. Wealthy manorial centres which not only produced an excess of goods to trade but also demanded other goods were a further prerequisite for the development of a trading centre. In addition, the relatively small scale of early trading and the difficulty and subsequent cost of transport would lead to the development of markets lying close to the borders of areas with differing resources.[25]

With the exception of Hastings these features are discernible at all the clearly identifiable Domesday boroughs in Sussex (*see* Table 3 & Fig. 1).

Chichester and Lewes, the two other Saxon burhs which emerge first as mints in the 10th century and then as urban centres in Domesday Book clearly conform with the model. Chichester, despite having no access to a navigable river, was well served by the Roman road system which survived there and is still reflected in the roads serving the town. The wealth of the royal manor of Bosham, the greater part of which was held by the Bishop of Exeter, clearly reflects the rich agricultural soils of the coastal plain which surrounds the town, but Wealden woodland resources lie only a short distance away to the north. The creeks of Chichester harbour, although lying some distance away, were obviously, as their surviving name suggests, eventually administered from the former burh. At Lewes a similar pattern emerges, both downland and Wealden resources lay close to the borough. In addition, there were major fisheries associated with the substantial manorial centres of the Ouse valley and the river provided both inland and coastal transport links.

Hastings does not conform with the model. The few manorial centres in the vicinity of Hastings in 1086 were less valuable than any lying adjacent to the other boroughs. Filsham lay nearby but was valued at only £20 before the Conquest. Bexhill, the other major holding in the area was separated from Hastings by the small river at Bulverhythe and the

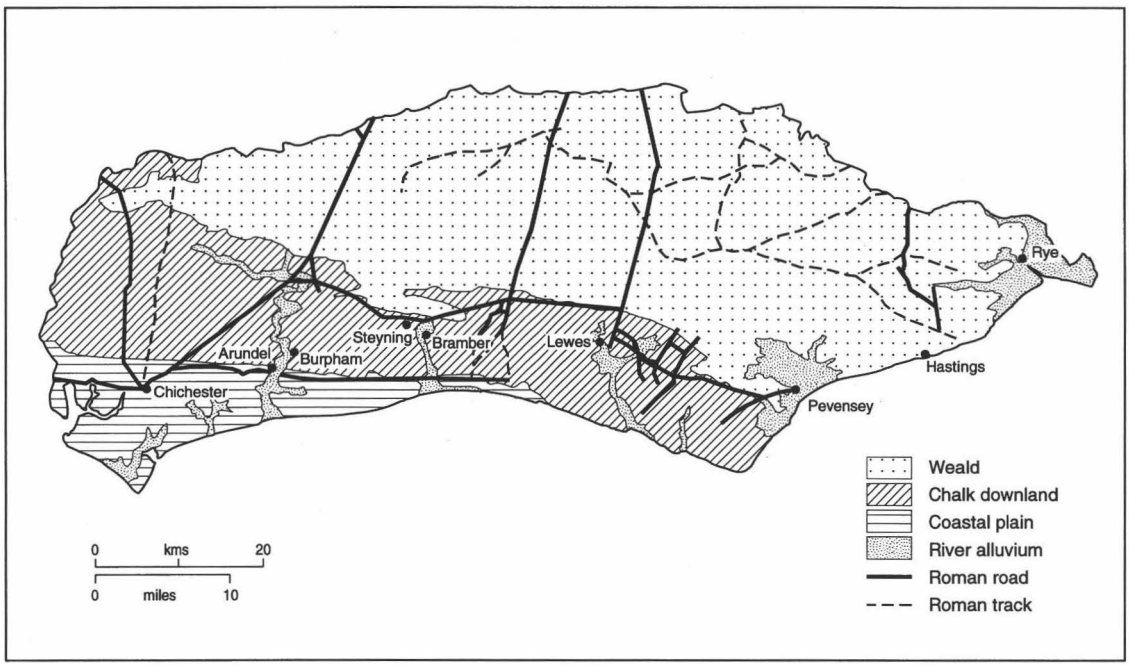

Fig. 1. Saxon burhs and Noman boroughs and castles in Sussex.

holder, the Bishop of Chichester, obviously had an interest in the borough at Pevensey since he held burgesses there. Water channels linked his land at Barnehorne with the harbour of Pevensey.[26]

Much of the inland area of the Rape of Hastings was still dependent on manorial centres in Pevensey Rape in 1086.[27] The holdings recorded there by the happy chance of their change of administration were mostly of small value. In addition, Hastings lies in a land area which is exclusively Wealden; there are no other significant resources recorded in the area (*see* Fig. 1).

The viability of the harbour at Hastings can also be questioned. The river there drains a catchment area of a mere nine to twelve square kilometres and flows only about three to four kilometres to the sea. Although there has clearly been coastal erosion at Hastings which would have diminished the length of the river, such a small flow of water is unlikely to have scoured out an estuary large enough to have created a significant harbour. All except one of the harbours recorded in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle from the 9th to the 11th century lie on substantial river estuaries or sea inlets. Portland, the one exception, is protected by the promontory of the Chesil beach.[28] Despite the fact that ships could have been grounded on an open coast, in practice, when safe harbourage was required for any length of time, they were not.

It is unlikely that a burh would have been constructed in an area of low population, with no manorial holdings of value, which was unlikely to attract seagoing raiders since there was little, if any, safe harbourage for their vessels.

AN ALTERNATIVE INTERPRETATION

In contrast, the substantial sea inlets around Pevensey would have been an attractive landing place for both invaders and merchants. The harbour provided protected, offshore beaches attractive to Viking raiders while the more substantial inlets and river valleys assisted access to the interior. There were wealthy manorial holdings, one of them the royal manor of Eastbourne, lying adjacent to the harbour where a defensive and trading burh would clearly have served a useful purpose. The walls of the Roman fort, which lay adjacent to the harbour, survived in a form sufficient to provide the burh defences and such sites were utilized elsewhere. Two defensive sites, one centred on Pevensey and another at

Table 3. Domesday boroughs, their position, resources and the value of adjacent manorial centres.

Domesday Boroughs	Value of two major adjacent manors TRE	Safe sea harbour	River access inland	Road access	Border of agricultural resources	Other resources adjacent	Notes
Rye	£40	*	*		*	*	Abbot of Fécamp 100 salt works
Pevensey	£90	*	*	*	*	*	Value of Eastbourne on acquisition. Salt works
Lewes	£110	*	*	*	*	*	Fisheries
Steyning	£114 Two manors of Steyning	*	*	*	*		Abbot of Fécamp
Arundel	£46	*	*	*	*		Situated in poor area but harbour dues suggest good coastal link
Chichester	£340 Two manors of Bosham	*		*	*		Access by former Roman roads. Central point of resources not border
Hastings[?]	£34 Filsham and Bexhill, but Bexhill possibly linked with Pevensey	*[?]					

Eorepburnan, to the east of Hastings Rape, would have provided sufficient protection for the small population of the Wealden coastal area lying between them.

Evidence from excavations undertaken at Pevensey supports the proposition that what is now Pevensey Castle could have been Haestingaceaster. The former Roman fort continued to be occupied during most of the Saxon period and the walls enclosed a substantial settlement in the late Saxon period. An early- to mid-5th-century *schalenurne*, a distinctive ceramic form also found in the Germanic homelands of Saxon settlers, a copper alloy backing plate from an Alamannic type horse-harness strap distributor, as well as other early Saxon pottery sherds suggest that there could have been a Germanic presence there before the main wave of Saxon immigration. The presence of other exotic artefacts indicate that the fort was not isolated following the Roman withdrawal. Palaeochristian wares from Southern Gaul, a Macedonian grey-ware bowl sherd from Stobi in the Balkans and glassware from Antioch demonstrate that trade links were maintained with the Mediterranean world.

As at Winchester and Richborough, the gatehouse of the west gate was probably destroyed during the 5th century, only here the destruction was deliberate, the stone plinth blocks were used to construct a causeway across the defensive ditch in place of the earlier bridge. On the surface of the causeway was a compacted area containing not only iron boot studs and coins but also segmented beads of the 4th–5th century, indicating that the causeway was in use for some time. It is possible that the site was abandoned during part of the 6th century, but by the mid-7th century at the latest, occupation had been re-established within the walls. The luxury items associated with this middle Saxon phase, a Valsgade glass bowl (one of only seven known from England),[29] and a fragment from a Kempston cone beaker, similar to others found in a Saxon cemetery at Alfriston, suggest that the former Anderitum was a middle Saxon centre of some substance; possibly a royal centre as was Winchester during the same period, but for a sub-king of the South Saxons.[30]

The gap left by the destruction of the Roman gatehouse was bridged during the later Saxon period by the insertion of a mortared rubble wall, similar in construction to that at Winchester, but with a narrow sinuous entrance copying the Roman north postern. Evidence for a middle/late Saxon refurbishment of the East Gate at Pevensey was also

found. Photographs taken at the time of the excavation show clear evidence for internal megalithic quoining with large, rough greensand blocks and slabs laid in the long and short style so typical of Saxon work, although the stone was so shattered that it has now been largely replaced by mortared rubble. Coins of Egbert (9th century) and Cnut (11th century) were found and, most significantly, substantial numbers of cesspits and rubbish pits, typical of town settlement, attest to the continued occupation of the site inside the walls during the late Saxon–early Norman period.[31]

There was no marked decrease in occupational debris within the walls until the late 12th–early 13th century. In 1254 the castle moat was dug and soil was spread over the outer bailey, by then largely empty.[32] This accords well with evidence from excavations undertaken by Dulley between 1962 and 1966 outside the walls of the castle within the present town of Pevensey. In a series of excavations quays and sea walls were located which Dulley concluded must have been peripheral to the original nucleus of the town since none of the finds could be dated earlier than the 12th century.[33] More recent excavations in the centre of Pevensey village at the Old Farmhouse site also produced no evidence for pre-Norman occupation other than a couple of sherds of Roman pottery.[34] This would be consistent with the evidence which suggests that the major part of the late Saxon and early Norman town lay within the castle bailey.

If Pevensey was originally called Haestingaceaster when, and under what circumstances would a change of name have taken place? Possibly by the mid-11th century the use of the old name was declining, the documentary evidence could be interpreted as supporting that view, and eventually the name of the harbour was applied to the settlement. But the hiatus associated with administrative changes following the Conquest could have occasioned a deliberate change of name.

The district of Hastings appears to have been a power centre for the Godwine family in the mid-11th century. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle records the use of the harbour at Pevensey by members of the Godwine family and on Earl Godwine's return from exile in 1052 the men of Hastings initially deserted the crown and supported him[35] (*see also* note 13). This same area was the bridgehead of William's invasion and, while members of the Godwine family and other claimants to the English crown still survived, was probably vulnerable to counter attack. Castleries were established all along the Sussex and Kent coast, and eventually masonry castles were built to defend and administer an area which provided crucial links with Normandy. The administrative divisions allotted to the new Norman lords of the Sussex castleries obscure our understanding of any earlier administrative areas within the county.

Clearly if Pevensey was Haestingaceaster, a Saxon district of Hastings based on the burh would have included land in the Norman rapes of Pevensey and Hastings (*see* note 25). The major royal demesne manor of Eastbourne, which lies in what became Pevensey Rape, was one of many manors which had outlying holdings in Hastings Rape before the Conquest and probably the borough of Pevensey also had links with both rapes.[36]

There are no obvious associations between adjoining manors and the borough of Pevensey as there are at Lewes and Chichester, but some suggestions can be made about possible links with the lords of manors in Hastings Rape and the borough. Edmer the priest, who held fifteen burgesses in Pevensey before 1066, is likely to be the same Edmer the priest who held Herstmonceux. The Bishop of Chichester who had five burgesses, held the manor of Bexhill in Hastings Rape before the Conquest. Other land associated with the royal manor of Eastbourne was situated at Hankham which lies almost immediately adjacent to the borough. The adjoining marshes owned by manors in both Hastings and Pevensey Rapes abounded in saltworks producing one of the most important trading commodities of the medieval period.[37] This evidence points to a trading area based on the watershed draining into the marshland at Pevensey. If there was a settlement at Hastings, that would seem to be associated in Domesday with the borough (possibly Rye) within the Abbot of Fécamp's manor of Rameslie (*see* Fig. 2).

The division of the Saxon district of Hastings into two rapes would have required a change of name for part of the holding. The name of Pevensey, formerly applied to the waterway but conceivably by the mid-11th century already associated with the old burh of Haestingaceaster then became identified with the borough and rape administered from the new Norman castle. The older name was retained by the new Rape of Hastings which was to be governed from the new castle established in the centre of its coastline.

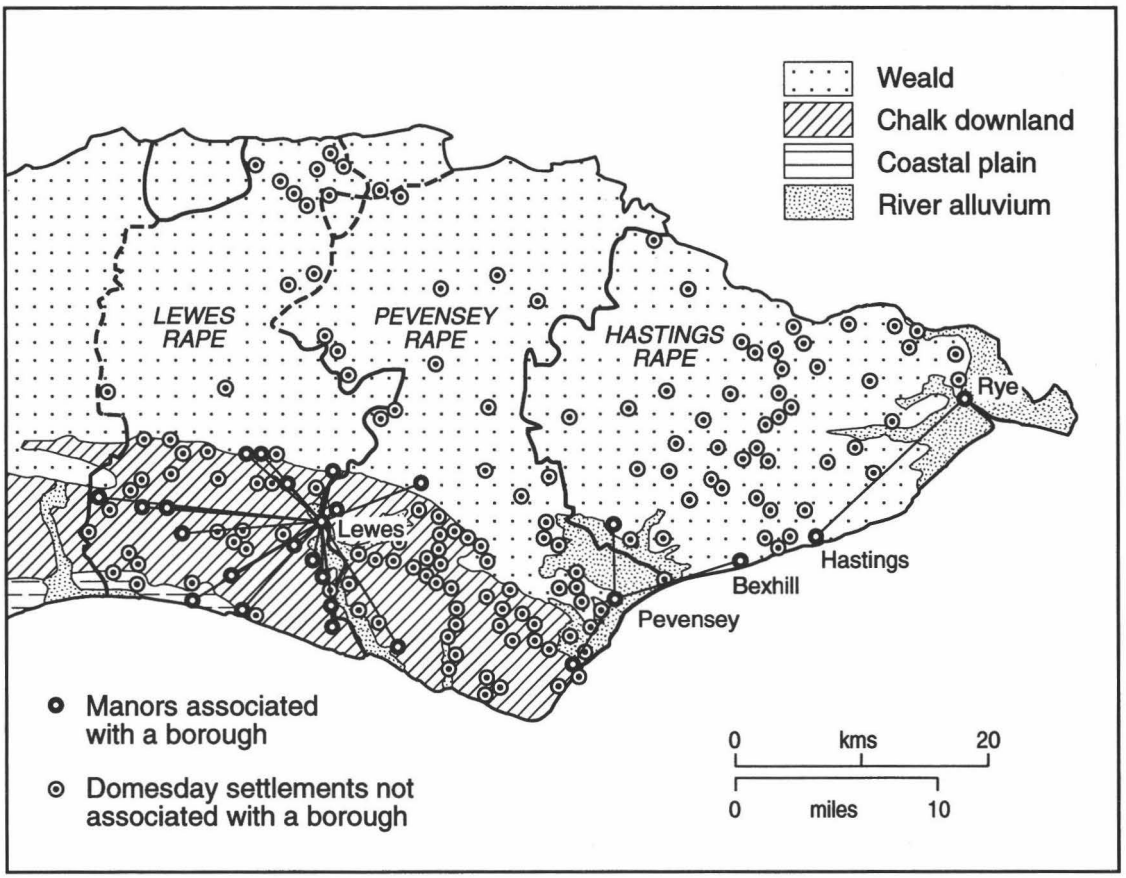

Fig. 2. Manors associated with the borough of Lewes and possible pre-Conquest manorial associations of Pevensey and Rye recorded in Domesday Book.

Possibly the seeds of a new borough at Hastings can be seen not only in the Abbot of Fécamp's burgesses in Hastings but also in the twenty burgesses in Bullington, a holding retained in demesne by the Count of Eu. Unlike the burgesses associated with Lewes and Chichester, they are not associated with a named borough in the entry. Bullington is a lost settlement, but a Bullington field in Pebsham farm on the eastern outskirts of modern Bexhill may suggest the position of its manorial centre.[38] The only other substantial manor in this central part of the coastal area of Hastings Rape, and the only manor in the rape held in demesne by King Edward before the Conquest was Filsham, of which the Count of Eu also retained over eight hides in demesne. The modern Filsham Farm lies on the edge of the western suburbs of Hastings and, if the identification of Bullington is correct, the two holdings lay one on either side of the only significant river valley in the central part of the rape. On this small river lies the settlement of Bulverhythe which is not recorded in Domesday Book. The name is of significance suggesting as it does the association of 'burhware', the citizens of the burh, and harbourage.[39] The name suggests that this was an outlying harbour of Haestingaceaster before the Conquest. The burgesses recorded at Bullington could represent a nascent borough organization being developed by the lord of the rape adjacent to the best harbourage in the vicinity of his castle.

CONCLUSION

The apparent omission of Hastings from Domesday Book has occasioned remarkably little debate since Round proposed that a description of the borough,

similar to the description of Dover, should have prefaced the Sussex survey.[40] Round's suggestion has been generally accepted and has influenced all discussion since then, but it is possible that knowledge of the later importance of Hastings as the head of the Cinque ports in Sussex has distorted perception of the settlement there in the 11th century. No one has ever proposed that the Domesday survey faithfully records the status of the settlement at Hastings in 1086. Consideration should be given to the possibility that it did.

The Sussex Cinque Ports never claimed to have enjoyed their liberties before the Conquest. Any importance Hastings could claim as head of the Sussex ports was clearly a post-Conquest creation.[41] The area surrounding Hastings was one of the poorest on the Sussex coast in 1086. Whether such an area could have provided the resources to support a borough with a mint over 100 years earlier must be open to question. Wealthier manorial centres, Eastbourne and Willingdon, lay in the Rape of Pevensey adjacent to Pevensey harbour. In addition the harbour would have been vulnerable to Viking raiders. Despite its vulnerability this area was apparently omitted from the system of Sussex burhs.

There are three possible interpretations of the evidence. First, the presently accepted view that Hastings, Haestingaceaster and Haestingaport were the same place. Although the most straightforward interpretation of the documentary evidence supports this view, the lack of substantial evidence for early settlement at Hastings and its unlikely position must create doubts. Round's view that Hastings was a substantial pre-Conquest settlement has been generally accepted and, following the development of place-name studies, the existence of a significant Roman site at Haestingaceaster has been assumed, but there is no evidence for such a site at Hastings.[42]

An alternative interpretation is that Pevensey Castle was Haestingaceaster, but that by the mid-11th century another settlement, Haestingaport, was developing at what is now Hastings. The possible reasons for such a development are uncertain, but there is evidence for a Saxo-Norman marine regression affecting the east coast of Britain and a similar decline in sea level would have caused problems at a harbour like Pevensey.[43] The emergence of a major shingle bar would have caused a shift away from the harbour immediately adjacent to Haestingaceaster towards the eastern side of the estuary. This reduction in harbourage could in turn have encouraged the use of minor harbours like Bulverhythe and Hastings. The name of Bulverhythe itself may support this hypothesis. However, an explanation needs to be found for the use of the harbour at Pevensey by a major invasion fleet in 1066 and the post-Conquest improvement in the borough. The number of burgesses rose from just 27 to 110 in 1086, following its acquisition by the Count of Mortain.[44]

The third and final interpretation is that Pevensey Castle was Haestingaceaster/Haestingaport, and that the change in the suffix reflects the changing perception of the settlement following its development as a borough. Possibly by the mid-11th century the use of the old name was declining and the name of the harbour serving the burh, Pevensey, came to be applied to the town itself (*see* Table 1). This substitution would have been a natural process if development was already taking place on a beach for shipping outside the walls of the former burh. Alternatively, a deliberate name change might have been necessary following the reorganization of the Sussex rapes following the Conquest.

The evidence is ambiguous and it is impossible to draw any certain conclusions. The purpose of this paper is to raise questions and open up a debate about what will undoubtedly be a contentious issue. Further archaeological field work and excavation at both Pevensey and Hastings may help to answer some of the questions about the status of both settlements pre-Conquest and the sequence of events following William's landing. Detailed analysis of the place-names in both Pevensey and Hastings Rape may also clarify the sequence of settlement in the area. Above all, a detailed study of coastal change in this area of Sussex would make an important contribution to the debate.

The subject is of some importance, if this hypothesis were generally accepted it would contribute to the debate about the origins of the Norman rapes of Sussex and possibly lead to a reappraisal of the power and influence of a people whose land lay adjacent to the boundaries of both the South Saxon kingdom and the kingdom of Kent.

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NOTES

[1] F. M. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England* (3rd edition, Oxford, 1971; repr. 1987), 264–6.

[2] H. R. Loyn, *Anglo-Saxon England and the Norman Conquest* (London, 1962; repr. 1991), 142.

[3] I. Stewart, 'The Sussex mints and their moneyers', in P. Brandon (ed.), *The South Saxons* (Chichester, 1978), 100.

[4] D. Hill, 'The Burghal Hidage: the establishment of a text', *Medieval Archaeology* **XIII** (1969), 85–90.

[5] J. Wacher, *The Towns of Roman Britain* (London, 1988), 249–50, 330–31, 278–9. M. Biddle, 'Excavations at Winchester, 1971, tenth and final interim report', *Antiquaries Journal* **55**(2) (1975), 96–337.

[6] A. H. Smith (ed.), *English Place-name Elements* 1 (English Place-name Society, 1956), 85. 'Ceaster was clearly used to describe important Roman towns and cities, being often added in OE as a suffix to the Romano-British names.' In the North and in Scotland 'there are cases where the word was used of any ancient fortifications or remains of them but it is rarely used in this context in Southern England. Woodchester [there was a Roman villa there] being one of the few examples'.

[7] M. Gelling, *Signposts to the Past* (London, 1978), 51–3.

[8] D. Hill, The origins of Saxon towns, in *The South Saxons* (Chichester, 1978), 177.

[9] C. Plummer, *Two of the Saxon Chronicles Parallel* 1 (Oxford, 1892; rev. edn. 1972), 199, 141.

[10] T. Arnold, *Historia Regum of Simeon of Durham* (Rolls Series, 1885; repr. Kraus, 1965), 44.

[11] E. Ekwall, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Place-Names*. 4th ed. (Oxford, 1960; repr. 1991), 292. The place-name element 'leah' can be interpreted as 'open place in a wood', therefore 'Hastingleigh' a woodland clearing belonging to the Hastingas.

[12] Plummer, *Two of the Saxon Chronicles Parallel*, 170, 178.

[13] Ekwall, *English Place-Names*, 365. Expert opinion differs regarding the meaning of the place-name Pevensey. Mawer and Stenton and Dodgson consider that the suffix is 'eg', island, a description that applies to the promontory on which Pevensey lies. Elkwall, Cameron and Gelling consider the name to be a river name and the early recorded forms with the suffix 'ea' all confirm this as the more likely interpretation.

The earliest reference to the name in an authentic charter, is dated 947. The charter records a gift of land and a saltpan at Hankham. The phrase *'and an sealtearn with pefenes ea'* is translated by Barker, *Sussex Archaeological Collections* (hereafter *SAC*) **88**, 61, as 'and one saltpan opposite to Pevensey . . .'. This phrase could not be applied to a waterway. However Peter Kitson in 'Geographical variation in Old English prepositions and the location of Aelfric's and other literary dialects', *English Studies* **74** (1993), 5, defines the meaning of 'with' somewhat differently. 'With in charter boundaries typically defines a point on a boundary by reference to a landscape feature not actually on the boundary. The most convenient single translation of it is "level with", "towards, against". . .'. This interpretation of the word 'with' does not disallow the interpretation of *'pefenes ea'* as a river name.

The correct reading of the name Pevensey in the Hankham charter and the reference given above were kindly provided by Professor Richard Coates.

[14] G. N. Garmonsway, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (London, 1972; repr. 1986), 168. 'E' 1046 'Then Harold [recte Beorn] took over the king's ship . . . and they sailed west to Pevensey and lay there weather bound' and 'D' 1050 [1049] 'earl Godwine also with forty-two ships sailed from Sandwich to Pevensey'. 177 'E' 1048 [1051] 'Meanwhile earl Godwine was warned and sailed into Pevensey; the weather became so very stormy that the earls could not find out what had happened to earl Godwine'. 178 'E' 1052 Harold was sailing from Ireland with nine ships, met his father and sailed to the isle of Wight 'and went thence to Pevensey'. 199 'D' 1066 'Then duke William sailed from Normandy into Pevensey, on the eve of Michaelmas'.

[15] D. M. Wilson, *The Bayeux Tapestry* (London, 1985), 41–4.

[16] J. Morris (ed.), *Domesday Book, Sussex* (Chichester, 1976), [references numbered as in the volume] 10, 1.

[17] E. M. C. Van Houts (ed.), *The Gesta Normannorum Ducum of William of Jumièges* (Oxford, 1992). Dr Van Houts kindly made available to me part of her transcription of the earliest manuscript of redaction 'C' of William of Jumièges prior to publication. The manuscript is Oxford Bodl. Lib. Bodley 517.

[18] Plummer, *Two of the Saxon Chronicles Parallel*, 199.

[19] Wilson, *The Bayeux Tapestry*, 12–18.

[20] J. Tait, *The Medieval English Borough* (Manchester, 1936), 6.

[21] L. B. Larking, 'The custumal of Pevensey', *SAC* **4** (1851), 212. The custumal deals primarily with the courts of the liberty of the Cinque Port of Pevensey but one section mentions the court held on behalf of the Queen by her steward in Pevensey. This is probably the court of the honor of Aquila (part of the Domesday Rape of Pevensey).

[22] E. J. Courthope & B. E. R. Formoy (eds.), *Lathe Court Rolls and Views of Frankpledge in the Rape of Hastings* (Sussex Record Society, 1931), XXII. L. F. Salzman (ed.), *Victoria County History, Sussex* (hereafter *VCH*) **VII** (1940), 29.

[23] The use of the Kent term 'lathe' for an administrative area suggests that at least part of the Rape of Hastings was associated with manorial centres in Kent, possibly until the creation of the rapes following the Conquest.

[24] The total pre-Conquest values of the boroughs of Chichester and Lewes were recorded in Domesday Book. No total pre- or post-Conquest valuation was recorded for Pevensey. The values given are those listed as paid by the King's burgesses.

It is not clear when the boroughs at Rameslie and Arundel Castle were created, but the Domesday record suggests they were both post-Conquest creations. The increased value of the Abbot's manor of Rameslie may be due to the development of the borough, possibly Rye. Before the Conquest Arundel Castle was valued for payment for a mill and for dues on three banquets and one entertainment. These appear to be similar in form to the 'one night's rent' due to the Crown from other major manorial holdings.

[25] S. Reynolds, *English Medieval Towns* (Oxford, 1977), 16–45.

[26] E. Barker, Sussex Anglo-Saxon charters, *SAC* **86** (1947), 93.

[27] Morris, *Domesday Book, Sussex* **9**, 1–131. Of the 131 holdings recorded in Hastings Rape no fewer than 65 were named as outliers of manors in Pevensey Rape. They lay in five of the twelve hundreds in Hastings Rape, Shoyswell, Henhurst, Hawksborough, Netherfield and Baldslow. Of these holdings two were valued at £4, one at £3, ten at between £1 and £2 and the remaining 52 were valued between 1s. and 14s.

[28] Garmonsway, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, 58–201.

[29] Vera Evison, pers. comm.

[30] M. Lyne, *Excavations at Pevensey, 1936–69* (forthcoming). Typescript in Sussex Archaeological Society library, Barbican House, Lewes.

[31] Lyne, *Excavations at Pevensey.*

[32] Lyne, *Excavations at Pevensey.*

[33] A. J. F. Dulley, Excavations at Pevensey, Sussex, 1962–66, *Medieval Archaeology* **XI** (1967), 218–19.

[34] Mark Gardiner, pers. comm.

[35] Garmonsway, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* 168, 177–9.

[36] Morris, *Domesday Book, Sussex* **10**, 2; **10**, 81–2; **10**, 84; **9**, 88; **9**, 90.

[37] Morris, *Domesday Book, Sussex* **9**, 1; **10**, 2, and others.

[38] A. Mawer & F. M. Stenton, *The Place-Names of Sussex* (Cambridge, 1930), 491.

[39] Mawer & Stenton, *The Place-Names of Sussex*, 535.

[40] Salzman *VCH, Sussex* **IX** (1937), 9, referring to Round, Feudal England, 568.

[41] Salzman, *VCH, Sussex* **IX**, 35.

[42] Salzman, *VCH, Sussex* **IX**, 9. Hill, 'The origins of Saxon Towns', in *The South Saxons*, 177.

[43] C. Green, 'Changes in East Anglian coastline levels since Roman times', *Antiquity* **35** (1961), 21–7.

[44] Morris, *Domesday Book, Sussex*, **10**, 1.