

The Origin and Plan of Bedford

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In 1970, in a short article in this *Journal*, David Hill discussed the origins of Bedford, and also put forward an interpretation of the layout of the various elements in its topography. There are, however, several considerations concerning both of these aspects which suggest alternative hypotheses, and which in the writer's view place the origins and physical development of the town in a new light.

THE TOWN PLAN

The course of the defences around the northern burh of Bedford has never been established by archaeological means. That there were defences, however, can be inferred both from the entry in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (*sub anno* 915, Whitelock 1955, 195) referring to Bedford as a burh and to its inhabitants as *burgware*, and from the presence of the fortified southern burh built by Edward the Elder (Baker 1970, 67; Hassall and Baker 1974, 79-80) which is clearly a secondary element (see below). Since the line of the defences of the northern burh has been lost, it is therefore the topography of the town which must provide the evidence for their exact course.¹

The only suggestion as to their course has been made by Hill (1970, 98). He has pointed out that the northern burh is essentially rectilinear in plan (Biddle and Hill 1971, 84 and fig 1); and has also suggested that the Saxon church of St Peter is part of the northern gateway, placed so that its tower and stone walls acted as 'bastion or a flanking guard to the gate' (Hill 1970, 98). The east side of the defences is to be located east of the castle area, and the west side as far west as the Saffron ditch (Baker 1970, 68, fig 1). This solution is broadly accepted in the more recent survey of the town (Hassall and Baker 1974, 79).

There are a number of arguments which make it necessary to reject this proposed course and to put forward an alternative, which will make the rectilinear plan of the original burh even more evident than is suggested by Hill. This line and the alternative course proposed here are both given in figure 1.

Hill's view that St Peter's church was placed on, or formed part of, the north gate rests on an analogy with the numerous examples of the association of churches with the gates of Saxon burhs in Wessex.² However, the known associations of early churches with burh gates occur almost exclusively in Wessex, rather than to the north of the Thames (excepting Oxford). Bedford is not a Wessex burh, and, it will be suggested below, has a very different origin and early development; any analogies drawn between Bedford and, say Cricklade or Wallingford, are therefore likely to be misleading. The argued coincidence between church and gateway is moreover contradicted by other considerations discussed below.

The clue to the position of the north gate is provided by the alignments of four main roads which approach the northern end of the High Street from the west (Bromham Road - Dame Alice Street),³ from the north-west (Tavistock Street), from the north (Little Bury Lane), and from the east (St Peter's Street).⁴ The meeting place of all these streets is immediately to the north of point A on figure 1, that is, some distance south of St Peter's church, and they join the axial north/south road, which crosses the bridge and runs along the High Street, at this same point. If Bedford had defences at any period, it must be assumed that the courses of these roads reflected the position of gates in these defences. The northern gate must therefore have occupied a position indicated by point A, placing the junction of all these roads (or to look at them from the inside of the burh, their division) on its outside. The major east/west route of Bromham Road and St Peter's Street would therefore have run outside the gate, rather than through the corners of the defences, were the north gate located at St Peter's church.

Besides establishing the position of the north gate, this conclusion has an important corollary: St Peter's church now becomes an extra-mural church, placed in a triangular-shaped open area, possibly a market place, to the north of the gate.

Instances of the association of a market area and a church, situated *outside* one or more of the gates of the earliest nuclei of pre-Conquest burhs, are not only common to towns north of the Thames, but are also, with only a few exceptions, absent from burhs to the south of this line.⁵ Bedford clearly provides an example of this type.

The positioning of the north gate at point A establishes an important fixed point which suggests the way in which the lines of the defences relate to surviving topographic elements of the burh. The northern defences thus ran along a line immediately to the north of Lime Street and Lurke Lane, with the inference that these represent the course of the original intra-mural lane or wall street.⁶ This line of streets is, significantly, also followed by the parish boundary for most of its length. Similar cases of the conjunction of a parish boundary with an intra-mural street at Northampton (Silver Street), and at Hereford (Behind the walls Lane), lend further plausibility to this identification.

The line of the eastern defences, as marked on figure 1, can also be deduced by the same arguments which locate the northern line. To the east of Mill Street, the eastern arm of the four main cross-streets of the town, is St Cuthbert's church, placed in a rectangular area which, certainly from the time of Speed's map of 1610,⁷ is clearly a significant element in the topography of the town. The possibility that this church was associated with an extra-mural market place, rather than with the east gate itself, suggests that this gate should be placed at point B, and that the eastern defences should therefore lie to the west of the church. On this alignment, the inner edge of the northern half of the eastern defences is again followed by a parish boundary. There is no north/south street on this line, and none is marked on Speed's map; it must be assumed therefore that this boundary was drawn along the line of a feature which was lost at an early date. To the south of Mill Street this boundary takes a wandering path to the east of the castle, which suggests that it was diverted from a straight north/south line by the imposition of the Norman castle on the town. Just as this castle has altered the street plan and tenement boundaries of the south-east quadrant of the town (Hassall and Baker 1974, 81), so it may reasonably be assumed to have affected the course of the parish boundary. If this is so, then the original parish boundary could well have followed the entire length of the

intra-mural street of the eastern defences in the Saxon period. On this assumption, three sides (including the river) of the original burh are precisely defined by the parish boundary of St Paul's, its main church. A third important feature is that the line of the eastern defences thus postulated takes them underneath both the centre of the motte of the Norman castle and the north-east bastion of the castle bailey (Hassall and Baker 1974, 81 and fig 5; Baker 1972, 18-19 and fig 2). The Saxon defences must certainly have been visible when the castle was constructed and are unlikely to have been ignored; and the siting of a Norman castle on, rather than inside, Saxon urban defences has many parallels. In the writer's view the location of the defences on this line makes more sense of the various observable topographical features than does Hill's suggestion that the defences lay to the east of the castle.⁸

The position of the western defences is more problematical. The west gate (point C in fig 1) is placed approximately the same distance westwards from the central crossroads as the east gate is to the east. This position is supported by the fact that the defences which incorporated this gate lie immediately to the east of the course of a stream flowing southwards into the Ouse,⁹ thereby taking advantage both of the defensive potential of this stream and of the raised land to its east. The defences shown in figure 1 thus lie along a break in the slope which is still clearly visible. They also cross the line of the main street where it makes a change of direction to the south, which is more likely to have occurred outside rather than inside the line of the defences. Though there are no parish boundaries or other obvious features of the built topography which might act as a guide, this general course is probably the only one which the physical topography will allow. The archaeological evidence which bears on this problem is however somewhat equivocal. Recently recovered material suggests that middle Saxon occupation extended further to the west than this line.¹⁰ The western defences could be placed further to the west, provided that their line respects the physical constraints already mentioned. It must be pointed out that the area could well have been occupied before the construction of the postulated 8th century burh defences, whose layout would have respected the physical rather than the built topography; the earliest defences of Hereford, of possibly similar date, similarly cut across earlier occupation (Shoemsmith 1972). To the north of the gate the defences

are made to take a line which curves eastwards to meet the western end of the northern defences, running parallel to All Hallows' Lane to the west. This street is marked on Speed's map and is clearly an element in Bedford's early topography;¹¹ just as St Cuthbert's Street must have followed the line of the eastern defences, so All Hallows' Lane would, it is suggested, have followed the line of the western defences.

The line of the defences as argued above encloses a sub-rectangular area of approximately 37 acres or 15 hectares (about half the area of Cricklade or a sixth of that of Winchester). This area is divided into quadrants by the four main streets which have been assumed in the discussion above to have passed through gates in these defences at or near their centre points. Recently discovered evidence of the position of an earlier timber bridge slightly to the west of the present stone bridge (Hassall and Baker 1974, 78) suggests that the original line of the High Street approximated more nearly to a straight line, its southern end probably diverted only on construction of the stone bridge in the 12th century (*ibid.*). This is marked in broken lines in figure 1. The main streets thus display a more marked regularity even than the lines of the defences.

The analysis so far has suggested that apart from the church of St Paul's and the Norman castle there are five main elements in the growth and development of the northern burh. These are:

- 1 Defences, of sub-rectangular form.
- 2 Four main streets set at right angles, the west, north and east streets passing through presumed gates in the centres of the defences, with the south street leading to the bridge.¹²
- 3 The bridge, placed approximately centrally in relation to the defences and the street system.
- 4 Two 'Market areas' immediately outside the north and east gates, each associated with a church (St Peter's and St Cuthbert's).
- 5 Main roads leading from the north gate and from the west gate, and minor extra-mural north/south streets to the west and east of the defences.

The primary elements in this layout are clearly the first three: defences, streets and bridge. The physical topography of the northern burh shows that it is the river crossing which is the *raison d'être* of Bedford. The town is placed on the end of a long spur of land, further defined by a stream running down its western side, which reaches to the edge of the river — a site ideal for the bridging point of a river,¹³ for a permanent settlement,

and for a defended enclosure to guard this bridge. The function of this burh as a device for safeguarding the bridge, as well as a means of regulating river traffic, is reflected in the unity of bridge and burh which is suggested in historical sources from the 8th century onwards. In his discussion of the three common and obligatory burdens of army service, the building of fortresses and the construction of bridges, Brooke shows (1971) that they are always associated in the reservation clauses in charters from at least the middle of the 8th century. In commenting on and explaining the importance of this association, he states that '... in England bridges were linked with fortresses ... Bridge and fortress were a single military unit; together they secured the river crossing for the armies of the kingdom and together they prevented the movement of enemy troops either by land or by river' (*ibid.*, 72).

The physical connection of burh and bridge is also suggested by the fact that both are considerable investments in labour: a defended enclosure at a river crossing justifies the effort of building a bridge, and is the best guarantee for its continued existence and upkeep. The fundamental connection of the street system with the burh and bridge unit is also suggested by the fact that it provides the essential link between the position of the bridge, the lines of the defences and the gates through these defences at their central points. The plan of the burh, as well as its relationship to the bridge and to the roads leading to its northern gate, would be meaningless without them.

The three elements of burh, bridge and streets in Bedford must be seen therefore as a single unit, in that the existence of one of these elements implies the existence of the other two. Since they are linked together in space, it may be concluded that they are also linked together in time; in other words they form a single system which has been planned and laid out over a short period, as a result of a deliberate policy which may be described as broadly defensive. This conclusion will be seen as of some importance when the origins of this system are discussed below.

ORIGINS

The documentary evidence for the origin of Bedford comes solely from the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. This has already been quoted and discussed by Hill (1970, 96-7), and it is, as he points out, clearly crucial to a consideration of Bedford's origins.

However, Hill makes several conflicting observations on the Chronicle references. He argues that since Edward also stayed for four weeks at Buckingham, where he built two burhs, he must also have been responsible for the construction of both north and south burhs at Bedford. To this period, therefore, belong 'the regular pattern of Bedford, together with its walls and bridge' (*ibid.*, 98). This conclusion has been broadly adopted in the survey of Bedford by Hassall and Baker (1974, 79). The comparison with Buckingham, however, not only runs against the statement of the Chronicle, but is also itself beset with difficulties. The exact course of the defences of the two Buckingham burhs is not known, and there is no indication therefore that the lengths of the defences of the burhs in both places are comparable. Furthermore the physical topography of Bedford and Buckingham is quite dissimilar; there is no indication of the comparative size of the workforce which built each burh; and there is also no way of knowing whether or not the defences were built with the same techniques. The lack of any features common to these two places suggests that no direct comparisons can be made.

The entries in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle make it quite clear, however, that the southern burh built in 915 is an addition to a burh already in existence on the north side of the river. When Edward the Elder and his army came to Bedford in 915, he 'obtained the *burh* and almost all the citizens (*burgware*) who dwelt there before, submitted to him' (Whitelock 1955, 195). Whatever the precise significance of the term *burgware*, it is clear that in 915 there was already in existence a fortified burh with a resident population, which was by implication the fortress occupied until that time by the Danish army. Secondly, Edward is recorded as having ordered the construction or fortification only of the burh on the south side of the river, thereby implicitly contrasting it with one on the north side.

The conclusion that the northern burh of Bedford predates the southern burh constructed by Edward appears to be independently confirmed by the topography of the town. It has already been indicated by Hassall and Baker (1974, 78) that the two streets aligned onto the southern end of the bridge – Cardington Road from the south-east and Cauldwell Street from the south-west – have both been deflected inside the perimeter of the southern burh to meet at a point somewhat south of the bridge, at what in effect is

its central cross roads (see fig 1). There is an obvious conclusion from this observation: if these roads, heading towards the bridge, were deflected by the construction of the southern burh in 915, then their original alignment, and therefore the existence of the bridge, predates this event. Since it has already been argued that northern burh, bridge and streets are a single planned unit, the existence of the bridge at this date demonstrates the existence of the whole system.

The combination of topographical and historical evidence suggests therefore that both the northern burh (including the main streets) and the bridge were already in existence by the time Edward arrived at Bedford in 915. There are therefore two possible alternatives for its origins: either it was constructed by the Danes, or it is earlier. A Danish burh on the north side of the river, at a nodal point on the boundary line of the Danelaw which was settled by treaty in 878, would have had some strategic importance both in guarding a crossing place and in regulating river traffic. Such considerations might well have figured amongst the reasons why the Danes did occupy Bedford, but they do not provide evidence that it was newly constructed by them for that purpose. There is, however, one major difficulty in accepting the northern burh at Bedford as a fortress of Danish origin. It has already been shown that this burh is of a fairly regular rectilinear construction; the relationship of both bridge and burh to the physical topography of the site shows that the bridge forms an integral part of this arrangement, and is clearly its focus. There is no evidence that the Danes constructed rectilinear burhs of this pattern, nor were they heirs to any such tradition; there is, indeed, much to show that their fortified sites, towns as well as fortresses in both Denmark and in England, were of a quite different type. Neither Birka (in Sweden) nor Haitabu, each founded *c.* 800 and each given defences at a later stage, is of the same rectilinear form. Although excavations at Haitabu have shown that the town was laid out in regular parcels of land bounded by streets (Lobbey 1978, 136-142), this pattern is in no way linked either to the defences or to a bridge. The complex of topographical features differs both in degree and in kind from those shown at Bedford.

In England, there is some evidence to show that the burhs whose construction is attributable to the Danes were organised, or rather developed, in a way which shows no similarity to the layout

of rectilinear fortresses of whatever period. It will be argued at a later date¹⁴ that a Danish burh at Cambridge, which comprises the parishes of St Clement and St Sepulchre (Lobel 1974, map 6), is of a U-shaped plan with its straight side formed by the river frontage and its main axis formed by a pre-existing roadway leading from the bridge.

Precisely the same plan is shown by Huntingdon, which sits astride Ermine Street. The similarly shaped fortified enclosure to the south of Lincoln, called Wigford, is also possibly Danish in origin (Colyer 1975, 34). Furthermore, the extensive Anglo-Danish settlement at York shows little evidence for the existence of any regular layout (Radley 1971, 39; Biddle 1976a, 123; Hall 1978). Dyer (1972) has also suggested that the most characteristic form of the Danish fortresses along the Danelaw frontier is a D-shaped enclosure, built on either flat land butting onto water or on an island surrounded by marsh or fenland — neither type of site showing any similarities to the topography of Bedford. Finally, of the so-called Danish 'boroughs', only Bedford and Northampton have anything like a rectilinear plan, suggesting that this was certainly not the normal way in which the Danes built fortresses for their army.¹⁵ The origins of the type must therefore be sought elsewhere.

If the burh at Bedford is not of Danish origin, then it must be earlier, a conclusion which at once raises the problem of the origins of rectilinear burhs. Hitherto this type of fortification has been regarded at least in England as the creation of King Alfred in Wessex (Biddle and Hill 1971), although more recently antecedents for it have been sought in a planned burh at Hereford (Biddle 1976a, 120-1; 1976b, 23-7) whose earliest defences belong to the 9th or even to the 8th century (Shoesmith 1972; Rahtz 1977, 111). There is an increasing amount of archaeological and topographical evidence to show, however, that burhs, and even rectilinear planned burhs, were not the creation of Alfred, but have a rather earlier origin. This evidence now suggests the following hypothesis: that Bedford is one of a series of at least twelve burhs, all with a rectilinear or sub-rectilinear plan, placed along the frontiers of Mercia by King Offa (died 796). It will also be suggested that this system of burhs represents, as does that of the Alfredian burhs of Wessex, 'a deliberate policy of urban foundation' (Biddle and Hill 1971, 83), and that they are in a very real sense fortified towns, concerned as much with

regional administration and the protection and encouragement of trade as with military objectives.¹⁶

Of the features common to these early burhs, it is the combination of the evidence of the physical topography and of the archaeology which perhaps most clearly illuminates the formative stages of Bedford's growth. The physical topography has already been described, and not only provides the common denominator of all the comparable sites so far mentioned, but is also the essential factor without which human activity in general, and the built topography in particular, on the site of Bedford cannot be understood. The series of recent archaeological excavations in Bedford has produced extensive evidence of occupation in the area of the northern burh in the middle Saxon period.¹⁷ Pottery and some timber structures of this period have been found in two main areas of the town — the north-west and south-east quadrants. It has not, however, been possible either to date any of the streets, to locate the defences, or to establish the existence — or indeed the non-existence — of any of the main elements of the northern burh described above; early occupation can therefore be proved but not related to the burh system. What this evidence does demonstrate, however, is that there was extensive occupation on the site of the burh before the arrival of the Danes, and that they came to an already-existing settlement important enough to use as a point in the boundary of the Danelaw in 878, to serve as the headquarters of part of their army, and to control sufficient agricultural land to support this army in addition to the local population. These conclusions are entirely in concordance with the hypothesis that a defended burh and bridge already existed on the site before the establishment of the Danelaw.

The hypothesis of the origin of this burh in the eighth century also fits in with the wider settlement patterns which have been deduced for the area. Morris (1962, 62) has suggested that the focus of the region during the sixth, and probably the seventh century, was at Dunstable, which developed at the expense of Kempston (2 miles south-west of Bedford) as the centre of a 'densely populated area'. This is supported by a particular concentration of the sceatta coin finds of Aethelbald, Offa's predecessor, around Dunstable (Metcalf 1977, 91), which as Metcalf points out lies on the frontier of Greater Mercia at the junction of Watling Street and the Icknield Way. Although Metcalf

has said (*ibid*) that the shift of settlement focus from Dunstable to Bedford occurred in the late ninth or tenth centuries (presumably reflecting the idea of the Danish or Edwardian origins of Bedford as a fortified place), Morris (1962, 62) suggests that 'it was probably under Mercian rule that the strong place of Bedford on the Ouse replaced the ill-defended Dunstable area as the main centre of the region'. Furthermore, the shift of gravity from a settlement site whose importance was determined by the existence of earlier roadways to one which reflects a greater consideration for the needs of defence, is a process which not only appears to be a characteristic of the period,¹⁸ but also points to the controlling hand of a powerful king such as Offa.

The suggested identification on the ground of the series of burhs mentioned above reflects the situation which can be deduced from the documentary evidence discussed by Brooks (1971). He concludes that the earliest mention of the three common obligations of army service, bridge work and fortress work occur in Mercian, rather than Kentish or West Saxon, charters, the first of which was drawn up in 749. By this time, therefore – and certainly by the reign of Offa – there is evidence for the existence of, or at least of the political means and willingness to construct, a class of public work where 'bridge and fortress were a single military unit' (Brooks 1971, 72), which independent evidence suggests might be typified by a unit such as the burh and bridge at Bedford, and which is reflected in the topography of all the other places in this group.

It is not difficult to find an immediate historical context for the construction of the burh and bridge at Bedford in the late eighth century. Piratical raids by bands of Scandinavians were beginning to be directed against England at this time (Loyn 1977, 54-6), and a fortified bridge at Bedford would have effectively blocked penetration of Mercia by river-borne Vikings. It will be suggested elsewhere (Haslam, forthcoming) that the creation of a burh and bridge at Cambridge at the same time would have served a precisely similar purpose. Even though documentary evidence for this process is lacking from Mercia, it is certainly available for Kent. Brooks has shown that by 792 Offa was for the first time reserving the three common military obligations on all the Kentish churches 'contra paganos marinos' (1971, 79); and he goes on to suggest that 'Offa reacted vigorously to the new Viking danger and brought Kent into line with

Mercia by insisting that all estates, even church lands, should contribute men for service in the army and for the building of bridges and fortifications' (*ibid*, 80). The burh at Bedford, can therefore be seen as one element in a system for the defence of the eastern part of Greater Mercia, set up by King Offa in probably the last few years of his reign in direct response to the real or foreseen threat of Scandinavian invasion.

NOTES

- 1 Detailed documentary evidence has not been used in this analysis, though not in ignorance of its potential importance. It should be noted that the defences of the southern burh were rebuilt in the late 11th or early 12th century (Hassall and Baker 1974, 80), which suggests that the defences of the northern burh could possibly have been reconstructed at the same time.
- 2 See comments in Biddle 1976a, 129 and examples quoted in note 253.
- 3 The street names are those in current usage, and are taken from the plan of the town in fig 6 in Hassall and Baker 1974.
- 4 Two main streets, one from the north-east (Kimbolton Road) and the other from the east (Goldington Road), merge a little to the east to form this street. All these lines are marked on fig 1, and also given in Hassall and Baker 1974, fig 7. They show up clearly in the aerial photograph of the town, plate 5, *ibid*.
- 5 Towns with prominent market areas outside gates include Hereford, Gloucester, Oxford, Nottingham, Stamford, Northampton and London. The exception to the south of the Thames is Winchester, where a market place was in existence outside the west gate certainly by the early 10th century (Biddle 1976c, 285).
- 6 This street is increasingly being recognised as a distinctive feature of Saxon burhs (Biddle 1976a, 130 and note 256, 149) and has been demonstrated archaeologically at for instance Winchester (Biddle 1975, 103), Cricklade (excavation by the writer, 1975), London (Biddle and Hudson 1973, 23), Canterbury (Tatton-Brown 1978), Hereford (Shoemith 1972), and Tamworth (Sheridan 1972-3). It can also be seen as an important element in the existing street plans of many other towns – e.g. Northampton (Lee 1953), Hereford (Lobel 1969) and Nottingham (Barley and Straw 1969).
- 7 Reproduced as a plate opposite p. 84, Hassall and Baker 1974.
- 8 It has been suggested (Hassall and Baker 1974, 81) that the ditch around the eastern edge of the motte (followed by Thames Street) formed a common ditch with the main defence. However, the line of the parish boundary, and of this street itself, suggest that the building of the motte spread well outside the comparatively slight width of the Saxon defences.

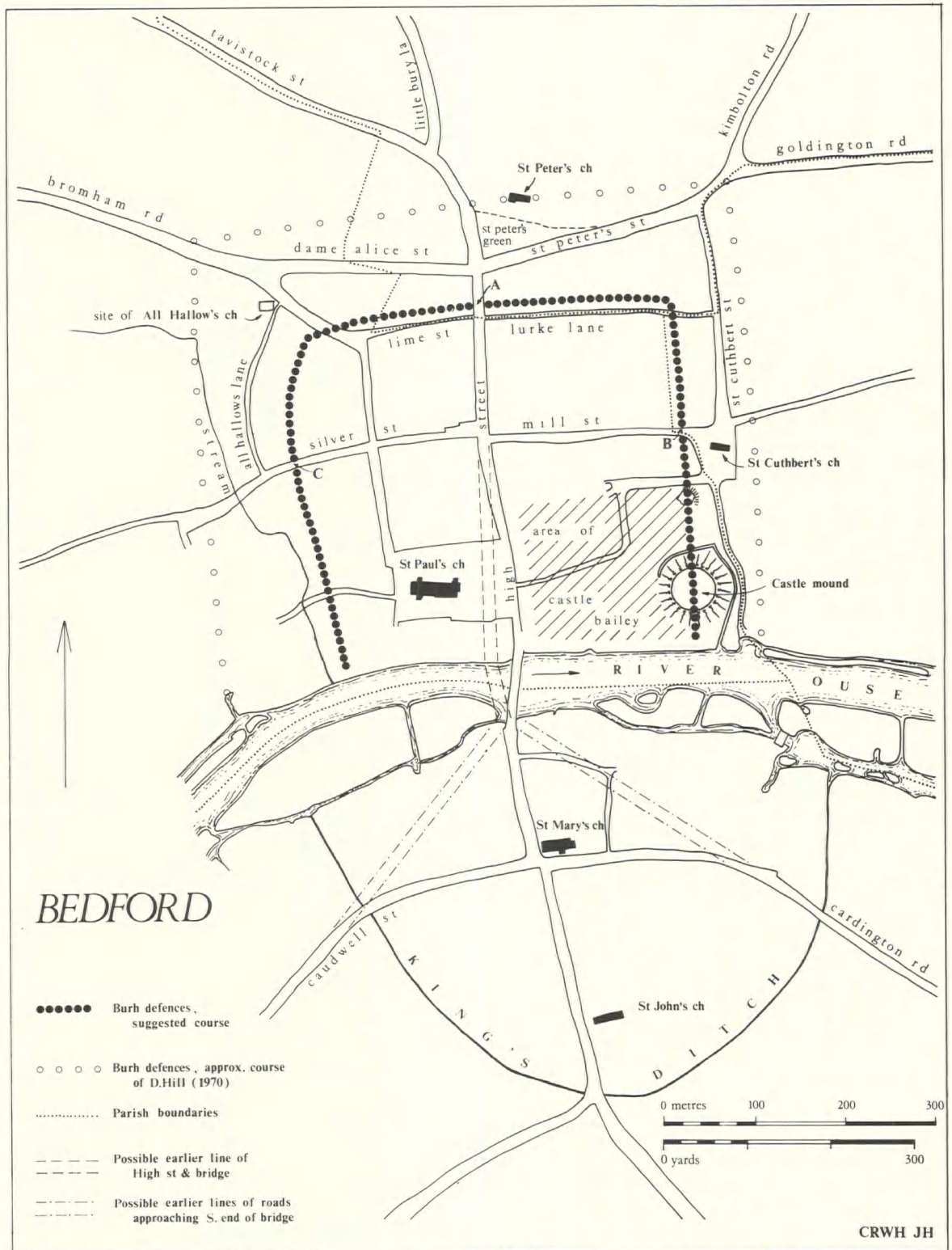


Fig 1 Early Medieval Bedford

- 9 This stream is shown on Speed's map of 1610, and more precisely on Brayley's plan of 1817, but by the time of Reynolds' plan of 1841 had disappeared under new housing.
- 10 Finds from the Empire Cinema site. I am grateful to Jane Hassall for drawing my attention to this.
- 11 That it is of some antiquity is suggested by the consideration that the position of this street is closely reflected by the position of St Cuthbert's Street on the east of the town, which joins the postulated extra-mural market place outside the east gate with the main roadway (St Peter's Street) to its north. In the same way All Hallow's Street joins the street immediately outside the west gate with one of the main westerly roadways to its north. Both these streets can therefore be seen as one of the organically derived elements consequent upon the planned layout of the main streets, gates and defences (see above, p 00), and, if the early and certainly pre-Conquest dates of the extra-mural market places are a guide, of possibly pre-Conquest origin themselves.
- 12 The side streets also exhibit a rectilinear form, running in most cases parallel with the main streets. Though there are topographical grounds for suggesting an early date for these streets – in the south-east corner they appear to be affected by the insertion of the Norman castle – there is no evidence which indicates whether they did or did not form part of the original system. The intra-mural or wall streets are probably also an integral part of this system, allowing ease of movement on interior lines (Biddle 1976a, 130), but this suggestion is, as indeed is their very existence, inferential only.
- 13 That the site of Bedford was a crossing place in the Roman period is suggested by the alignment of a Roman road from Campton, near Shefford (13km south-east of Bedford) which enters Bedford at St John's Street (Kennett 1969, 84), and by the scatter of finds of Roman date on both sides of Bedford bridge (Hassall and Baker 1974, 77).
- 14 In Haslam, forthcoming.
- 15 Indeed, it will be suggested that the rectilinear burh of Northampton is, like that of Bedford, pre-Danish.
- 16 There is evidence to suggest that the origin of most of the Midland shire towns (of which Bedford is one), as fortified centres (though not as settlements) must be sought in a programme of administrative reorganisation of the Mercian kingdom by Offa in the late 8th century. The detailed evidence for this hypothesis will be considered at a later date.
- 17 I am most grateful to both David Baker and Jane Hassall for the opportunity to discuss this evidence in advance of publication. See Baker *et al* 1979.
- 18 A similar shift can be observed in the Oxford region, where the new burh (it is suggested here) of Offa at Oxford replaced Dorchester-on-Thames as the main regional centre (Ashdown and Hassall 1975, 133; Biddle 1976a, 145 note 153). These relationships will be discussed further at a later date.

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The Bedfordshire Archaeological Council is indebted to Bedford Museum, The North Bedfordshire Borough Council for a grant towards the costs of this paper.