

The Burghal Hidage: The Establishment of a Text

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THE Burghal Hidage is the name given to a set of documents written in Old English which list thirty-three burhs and state how many hides belong to each. There are seven manuscript texts, none of which lists all the burhs. The meaning is obscure and there are many variations in place-names and assessments. The list starts at an unidentified point and makes a circuit of Wessex with no entries for Kent, Cornwall or London. The circuit goes down the English Channel then up the Severn. It returns along the Thames valley and ends opposite London. This has led to speculation that the document is incomplete. One Mercian burh is listed in the body of the text, and two more are added as an appendix in some of the manuscripts. One manuscript ends with an interpretation of the hidages in terms of the number of men required to defend a given length of wall. The others end with a total of burhs, and hides.

The publication of a manuscript of the Burghal Hidage by Birch in his *Cartularium Saxonicum*¹ led to it being used by the major historians of early medieval England who followed. Unfortunately Birch presented the most corrupt text and this inevitably led to many misconceptions. The publication of a purer version, the Nowell Transcript, came in 1937.² This version has since been used to the exclusion of the other six, obscuring the fact that they contain unique information. Together with the Nowell Transcript Miss Robertson published her notes, which are the only authoritative work on the manuscripts. Recently Nicholas Brooks³ attempted to locate all the burhs.

The Burghal Hidage offers a fixed point, almost the only reference point, in the vital stage of English town development between the extension of urban life in 9th-century England and the beginning of useful mint evidence in the reign of Eadgar. It has seemed worthwhile to re-examine the manuscripts of this essential source.

¹ From B. M. MS. Cotton Claudius D ii, f. iv; H. T. Riley, *Munimenta Gildallae*, II (1862), 626, and W. de G. Birch, *Cartularium Saxonicum*, (1885-93), no. 1335. A very confused list of burhs, apparently from Cotton Claudius D ii and Otho B xi, appeared in T. Gale, *Historiae Britannicae, etc., Scriptores*, xv (1691), I, 748. It is included in TABLE I since one cannot completely overlook the possibility of access to a lost version of the text.

² The Nowell Transcript (1562) of Cotton Otho B xi of c. 1025, destroyed in the 1731 fire, printed by Robin Flower, *The Text of the Burghal Hidage* (London Medieval Studies, I, 1937), p. 60, and edited by A. J. Robertson, *Anglo-Saxon Charters* (1939), p. 246.

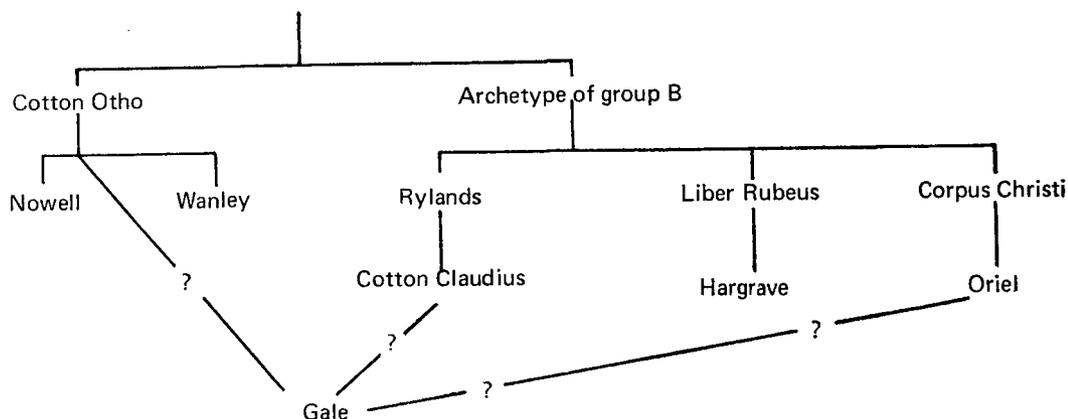
³ Nicholas Brooks, 'The unidentified forts of the Burghal Hidage', *Med. Archaeol.*, VIII (1964), 74-90. It should be noted that *Eorpeburnan* may be located at Castle Toll, Newenden, Kent TQ 852284).

The surviving texts are (i) the Nowell Transcript, and (ii) the other six manuscripts, here referred to as group B which comprise:

- Rylands Latin MS. 155, f. 3v (c. 1210)
- Liber Rubeus Scaccarii, f. 29 (c. 1230)
- B. M. Hargrave MS. 313, f. 15v (c. 1260)
- Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, MS. 70, f. 3 (c. 1310)
- Cotton Claudius D ii, f. iv (c. 1320)
- Oriel College, Oxford, MS. 46, f. 2v (c. 1330).

These, together with what evidence we have for Cotton Otho B xi,⁴ have been placed in a parallel text (TABLE I, opposite). From this it will be seen that the texts in group B fall into three pairs, Rylands and Cotton Claudius; Liber Rubeus and Hargrave; Corpus Christi and Oriel. But it is apparent from the confused line 1 that none of the texts contains all the information in the others and that the archetype is therefore absent.

The interrelation of the texts could be represented as:



Over half of the text is common to Nowell and group B and this can be translated as *Three hundred hides belong to Eorpeburnan and 24 hides. And at⁵ Hastings belong 500 hides⁶ . . . Then belong to Portchester 500 hides. And 150 hides belong⁷ to Southampton⁸. And to Winchester belong twenty-four hundred hides. And to Wilton belong fourteen hundred hides . . . And to Exeter belong 34 hides and 7 hundred. And to Halwell*

⁴ The Nowell Transcript can be partially checked by H. Wanley, *Librorum Veterum Septentrionalium Catalogus*, in G. Hickes, *Thesaurus*, II (1705), 219, who records the first and last lines of Cotton Otho B xi. The note on the maintenance of the burhs is given in G. Hickes, *Linguarum Veterum Septentrionalium Thesaurus* (1705), p. 109. Both these offer slight variations on Nowell and serve as a reminder that Nowell may not be infallible.

⁵ 'and' and 'at' are in group B only.

⁶ The 'xv' of Rylands and the 'quindecim' of Cotton Claudius, which derives from Rylands, is an intrusion which results from the confusion in the first line in the manuscript used by the copyist of Rylands. It is possible that this is part of the assessment for Chichester which both omit.

⁷ 'belong' supplied by Nowell.

⁸ In Corpus Christi the 'c 7 l' (for 150) was displaced above the line following Portchester when its omission was noticed. Oriel follows Corpus Christi.

belong three hundred hides. And to Lydford belong⁷ one hundred and fifty hides less ten hides. And to Pilton belong four hundred hides less 40 hides. And to Watchet belong 5 hundred hides and 13 hides. And to Axbridge belong⁷ four hundred hides. And to Lyng belong⁷ 100 hides. And to Langport belong⁷ 6 hundred hides. And to Bath belong ten hundred hides . . . And to Wallingford belong⁷ 24 hundred hides . . . And to Sashes belong⁷ 10 hundred hides . . . And to Southwark⁹ belong⁷ eighteen hundred hides.

To this we may safely add from Nowell the part of line 1 lost through confusion in group B, *And to Burpham belong seven hundred hides and 20 hides and to Chichester belong 15 hundred hides*, and also the part of line 3 lost by homoeolucation, *And to Twyneham belong 5 hundred hides less 30 hides. And to Wareham belong 16 hundred hides and to Bredy¹⁰ belong eight hundred hides less forty hides*. Finally we can add *And 16 hundred hides to Buckingham* (line 5), the text in group B being short of any assessment for this burh.

Group B supplies *And to Shaftesbury likewise*, i.e. with the same assessment as Chisbury (line 2), and *that is Barnstaple* (line 4), added to Pilton.

For the remainder of the text we have conflicting statements, but it is clear that where the assessment is given in words rather than in numerals there is less opportunity for a copyist's error. We may therefore accept *and twelve hundred hides to Malmesbury* from Nowell (line 5). Similarly it can be argued that it is more likely that part of a Roman numeral might be omitted rather than added: i.e. that vii or vi might become v, rather than that the reverse should happen. So we may prefer *And to Chisbury belong⁷ 7 hundred hides* (line 2) from group B, and *And 6 hundred hides belong to Eashing* from Nowell (line 6).

The conflicting assessments for Lewes, *to Lewes belong twelve hides* (Nowell) and *to Lewes thirteen hundred hides*, may well be due to a revision of this assessment when the archetype of group B was made. As both assessments are in words it is difficult to account for an error.

The most difficult sections of the assessments to reconcile are those for Cricklade and Oxford. Nowell can be rendered as *And to Cricklade belong 14 hundred hides and 15 hundred hides to Oxford*. Group B reads *And 1500 hides belong¹¹ to Cricklade and 1300 hides¹² belong to Oxford*. From the divergence of the texts it is clear that serious disruption has taken place. Of the many possibilities it would be simplest to accept the Nowell version as the least corrupt.¹³ But perhaps a version reading *And 1500 hides belong to Cricklade. And 1400 hides belong to Oxford* should be preferred. It should be noted that this version will give the same total for the two burhs as the Nowell Transcript.

There remain the two endings: that for Nowell makes the purpose of the text

⁹ It would appear that Nowell is at fault here and Wanley preserves the place-name from Cotton Otho B xi more faithfully.

¹⁰ Or Bridport.

¹¹ Supplied by Rylands.

¹² The 1,003 hides of some manuscripts of group B is obviously an error.

¹³ There are many arguments against this. The entry for Oxford is the only Nowell assessment to lack the verb, and there are strong topographical arguments for accepting 1,500 hides for Cricklade (T. R. Thomson, *Materials for a History of Cricklade*, III (1960), 66-7). If the Nowell transcript has the 1,500 hide assessment displaced, is the 1,400 hide assessment meant for Oxford? Or should we accept the group B reading of 1,300 hides? On balance it seems better to accept 'xiii' as more likely than 'xiii' and this has been done, but the wide range of possibilities should be noted.

TABLE I
A PARALLEL TEXT OF ALL KNOWN VERSIONS OF THE BURGHAL HIDAGE

1.	Hickes Nowell Rylands MS 155 Colton Claudius D.ii Liber Rubeus Scaccarii Hargrave MS 313 Corpus Christi College MS 70 Oriell Oxford MS 46 Gale: Scriptores XV	Dreo hund hida hyrð to ðorpeburan and xxiiii hida to Hæstinga ceastre Dreo hund hida hyrð to ðorpeburan 7 xxiiii hida to Hæstingaceastre Threo hund hyd. hyrað to heorepeburan 7 xxiiii hid 7 athastingeastre . xv. hyrað d. hyd. to laþe ðreoftene hund hyd. Threo hund hydaj hyrað to heorepeburan 7 xxiiii hid 7 athastingeastre quidecim hyd. to laþe ðreftene hundred hid. [] hund hide . hyrað to heorepeburan 7 xxiiii h [] hund hide hyrað to [porthe D hyrað] 7 xxiiii h Threo hund hidaj hirað to heorewe buran 7 xxiiii hidaj 7 athastingeastre hyrað.v. hid to laþe ðreftene hund hid Threo hund hid hirað to heorewe buran 7 xxiiii hidaj 7 athastingeastre hyrað.v. hid to laþe ðreftene hund hid 324 hidaj Heorewe-Buran/ðorpe-Burnam Hæstinge-cestre 500 hidaj Loþe 1300 hidaj Burh-ham 726 hidaj Cisseceastre 1500 hidaj Þorceastre 650
2.	Hickes Nowell Rylands C.Ci.Dii L.R.S. Hargrave C.Chr.C. Oriell Gale	hida . 7 ober healf hund hida hyrð to Hamtune . 7 to Wintaceastre hyrð feower 7 twentig hund hida . 7 to Willtune hyrð feowerline hund hida . 7 to Cissanbyrig hyrð v . hund hida . 7 to Tweoneam hyrð . v. hund hida butan . xxx. 7 c.l. hyd . to hamtona 7 to Dincestre hirað xxiiii hund hyd . 7 to Pillone . xiiii hund hyd . 7 to Tysanbyring . vii hund hyd . 7 to soraftebiring eac sya . 7 to Twouham hyrað . d. hyd . buga c.l. hid . to hamtona 7 to Dincestre hirað xxiiii hyd . 7 to Pillone . xiiii hund hid . 7 to Tysanbyring . vii hund hyd . 7 to Sofraflesbyring 7 aasi a to Þoriham hyrað . v. hyd . buga h . 7 c.l. h to hamtona 7 to Dincheastra . hyrað xxiiii hund . k . 7 to Pillone . xiiii hund hid . 7 to Tysanbyring . vii hund hid . 7 to sceaftebyrig eac sya . 7 to Þeonhā . hīr . d. h . buta h . 7 c.l. h to hamtona 7 to Dincheastre hyrað xxiiii hund . h . 7 to Pillone . xiiii hund . hid . 7 to Tysanbyring . vii hund . h . 7 to sceaftebyrig ca sya . 7 to Tweonhaljm . d. h . buta hid . to hamtona . c.7l . 7 to Dincestre hirað xxiiii hund hidaj 7 to Pillone . xiiii hund hid . 7 to Tysanbyring . vii hund hid . 7 to sceaftebyrig . eac [] a 7 to Tweonhaljm hirað v. hid buta hid . to Hamptona . c.7l . 7 to Wyncestre hirað xxiiii hund hid . 7 to Willtune . xiiii hund hid . 7 to Tysanbyrig . vii hund hidaj 7 to sceaftebyrig . eac [] a 7 to Twentim hirað v. hidaj buta hidaj 50 hidaj Hamptona Winchestre 2400 hidaj Pistone 1400 hidaj Tysanbyring/Cissanbyring 700 hidaj Soraflesbyring 700 hidaj Tweonham 470
3.	Hickes Nowell Rylands C.Ci.Dii L.R.S. Har C.Chr.C. Oriell Gale	hidan 7 to Werham hyrð . xv . i . hund hida 7 to Brydian hyrð eahfa hund hida butan feowerhigan hidan . 7 to Eaxanceastre hyrð feower 7 xxx . hida 7 vii . hund hida . 7 to Halganwille hyrð dreo hund hida . 7 to Hlidan hyrð ober healf hund hida butan . x . hidan . xl hyd . 7 to Excencestre . xxxiiii hyd 7 dcc hid . 7 to halganwille hyrð . ccc hyd . 7 to Hlidan . c hyd 7 xl xl hid . 7 to Excencestre . xxxiiii hid 7 vii hid . 7 to halganwille hyrð . ccc . hyd . 7 to Hlidan . centum hyd 7 quadraginta .xl. k . 7 to Eaxenceastre . xxxiiii . k . 7 dcc . k . 7 to halganwille hīr . ccc . h . 7 to Hlidan . c . 7 xl . k . xl . h . 7 to Eaxen[h]ceastre . xxxiiii . h . 7 dcc . h . 7 to halganwille hīr . ccc . h . 7 to Hlidan . c . 7 xl . h . .xl. hid . 7 to Excencestre . xxxiiii . hid 7 vii . hid . 7 to halganwille hīr . ccc . hydaj 7 to Hlidan . centū hidaj 7 quadraginta .xl. hidaj 7 to Excencestr . xxxiiii . hidaj 7 vii . hidaj 7 to halganwille hīr . ccc . hidaj 7 to Hlidan . centū hidaj 7 quadraginta hidaj Wearham 1600 hidaj Brydian 1760 hidaj Excencestre 734 hidaj Halgan Wille 300 hidaj Hlidan 140 hidaj
4.	Hickes Nowell Rylands C.Ci.Dii L.R.S. Hargrave C.Chr.C. Oriell Gale	7 to Pillehune hyrð feower hund hida butan . xl . hidan . 7 to Weced hyrð . v . hund hida . 7 xlii . hida 7 to Axanbyrige hyrð feower hund hida . 7 to lengen hyrð . c . hida 7 to Langport hyrð . vi . hund hida . 7 to Baðan hyrð hyn 7 to Pillone þis bearstaple hyrað . cccc . hyd . buga . xl hyd 7 to Weced hyrað . v . hund hyd . 7 xlii . hyd . 7 to axenebregge . cccc . hyd . 7 to lengen . c . hyd . 7 to langiord . dc hyd . 7 to baderan . m. 7 to Pillone þis bearstaple hierad . cccc . hyd . buga . xl hid 7 to Weced hyrað . v . c . hid 7 xlii . hid 7 to orenebregge . iiij . c . hidaj 7 to lengen . centum hid . 7 to langiord . vi . c . hyd . 7 to badecan . m. 7 to Pyltone þis berdestaple hīr . cccc . k . butan . xl . k . 7 to Weced hīr . v . hund k . 7 xlii . k . 7 to oxenbregge . cccc . k . 7 to lægen . c . k . 7 to langeport . dc . h . 7 to baðan . m. 7 to Pyltone þis bearstaple hierad . cccc . h . butan . xl . h . 7 to Weced hīr . v . hund . h . xlii . h . 7 to oxenbregge . cccc . h . 7 to lægen . c . h . 7 to langeport . dc . h . 7 to baðan . m. 7 to Pillone þis bearstaple hierad . cccc . hid buta . xl hid 7 to Weced hirað . v . hund . hid . 7 xlii . hid . 7 to oxenbregge . iiij . c . hid . 7 to lengen . centū hid . 7 to langport . vi . c . hid . 7 to bathe . m. 7 to Pyltone þis bearstaple . hierad . cccc . hid buta . i . exceptas xl hid 7 to Weced hirað . v . c . hid . 7 xlii . hid 7 to oxenbregg . iiij . hid . 7 to lengen . centum hid . 7 to Langport . vi . c . hid . 7 to bathe . m. Wiltune cum Bearstaple 260 hidaj Weced 513 hidaj Axanbriqe 400 hidaj Lengen 100 hidaj Langiord 600 hidaj Badaran
5.	Hickes Nowell Rylands C.Ci.Dii L.R.S. Hargrave C.Chr.C. Oriell Gale	hund hida . 7 twelf hund hida hyrð to Mealdmesbyring . 7 to Crocogelade hyrð xliii hund hida . 7 xv hund hida to Oxnaforda 7 to Waelingaforda hyrð xxliii hund hida . 7 xvi hund hida hyrð to Buccingahamme . 7 to Sceafteſigē hyd 7 xxii hund hyd . hyrað . to malmesberig 7 m . 7 . d . hyd hirað to crocogelade 7 m 7 iii . hyd hyrað to oxeforde 7 to Dealingeford . xxliii hund hyd . 7 to buccingeham 7 sceafteſege hidaj 7 xxii hund hidas hyrað . to Malmesberig m . d . hid hyrað . to Crocogelade m . 7 . iii . hid hirað . to oxeford 7 to Wallingeforde . xxliii . hund hyd 7 to bukyngham 7 to sceafteſege h . 7 xxii hund h . hīr . to mal[]nesbyrig 7 [m] . d . h . to crocogelade 7 m . ccc . h . hīr . to oxenforde 7 to Dealingeforde . xxliii hund h . 7 to bukingehā 7 sceafteſege h . 7 xxii hund h . hīr . to malmesbyrig 7 m . d . h . to crocogelade 7 m . ccc . h . hīr . to oxenforde 7 to Dealingeforde . xxliii hund h . 7 to bukingeham 7 sceafteſege hid 7 xxii hund hid hirað . to malmesberig [] 7 m . d . hid . to crocogelade 7 m 7 iii . hid hirað . to Oxeford 7 to Wallingford . xxliii hund hidas . 7 to bukyngham 7 to sceafteſege hid . 7 xxii hund hid hirað . to malmesberig 7 m . d . hid . to Crocogelade 7 m . 7 . iiij . hid . to Oxeford 7 to Wallingeford . xxliii . hund hid . 7 to bukyngham 7 to sceafteſege 3200 hidaj Malmesburyng 1500 hidaj Crocogelada 1300 hidaj Oxford & Wallingford 2400 hidaj Buccingh . & Sceafteſege
6.	Hickes Nowell Rylands C.Ci.Dii L.R.S. Hargrave C.Chr.C. Oriell Gale	hyrð . x . hund hida . 7 . vi . hund hida hyrð to Eschingum 7 to Subrigana geweorc hyrð eahtatene hund hida . x hund hyd . 7 . d . hyd hyrad to eschingū 7 to subringa geþeorche . xviii . hund hyd . þis ealles . xxvii hid 7 hund seofantigi þe hyrde to Ðan 7 xxx to Deast seaxum 7 to Pygaeceastru . m . cc . hyd . to Þarlinge Dīce feoþer 7 xxiiii . hund hyd x . hund hid . 7 . v . c . hid hirað to Eschingum 7 to subringa geþeorche . xviii . hund hid . þis ealles . xxvii . hid 7 hund seofantigi þe hyrde to Ðan 7 triginta . astsexū 7 to Pygaeceastru . m . cc . hyd . to Þarlinge wice feoþer 7 . xxiiii . hund hydaj x . hund h . 7 . d . h hīr . to eschingum 7 to subringa geþeorche . xviii . hund h . þis alles . xxvii . h 7 hūd seofetis þe hyrð to Ðan 7 xxx . Deastsexum 7 to Digraeceastrū . m . cc . h . to Þerlinge Dīce feoþer 7 . xxiiii . hida x . hund . h . 7 . d . h hīr . to esching[um] 7 to subringa geþeorche . xviii . hund . h . [þ]is alles . xxvii . h 7 hūd seofetis þe hyr [7] to Ðan 7 xxx . Deastsexum 7 to [D]igraeceastrū . m . cc . h . to Þerrunge Dīce feoþer . 7 . xxiiii . hidi x . hund hid . 7 . v . c . hid hirað to Eschingum 7 to subringa geþeorche . xviii . hund hid . þis ealles . xxvii . hid 7 hund seofantigi þe hyrað to Ðan 7 xxx . to Westsexū 7 to Digraeceastrū . m . cc . hid . to Waerynge wice feoþer 7 . xxiiii . hund hidan . x . hund hid . 7 . v . c . hid hirað to Eschingum 7 to subringa geweorche . xviii . hund hid . þis ealles . xxvii . hid . 7 hund seofantigi þe hyrad to Ðan 7 xxx . to Westsexū 7 to W[]igra[]ceastrum . m . cc . hid . Waerynge wice 7 . xxiiii . hund hidan . 600 hidaj Eschingum & Subringa . Weorch 1800 hidaj Ast Saxum & Wugeceastrum 1200 hidaj Þarlinge wice / Werynge wice / Wereburg - wic 2404 hidaj
7.	Hickes Nowell	To anes æceres bræde on Deastillinge . 7 to þære þære gebirgeað . xvi . hida . gif ælc hid byð be anum men gemannod þonne mæg man gesettan ælce gyrde mid feoþer mannum . Þonne gebyrð to Þentigan gyrðan on weastillinge hundeahtra hida 7 to þam furlange gebyrgeað To anes æceres bræde on weastillinge 7 þære wære gebirgeað . xvi . hida . gif ælc hid byð be anum men gemannod þonne mæg man gesettan ælce gyrde mid feower mannum þon gybyred to twentigan gyrðan on weastillinge hund eahtatig hida 7 to þam furlange gebirgeað
8.	Hickes Nowell	oper healf hund hida 7 x hida be þam ilcan gefæle þe ic her bebujan tealde . to þam furlangum gebyrað . xx . hida . 7 dreo hund hida . to þam furlangum hundeahtig hida . 7 cccc . hida . Þonne gebyrigeað to iii furlangum . xl . hida . 7 vi hund hida . to fif furlangum gebyrð oper healf hund hida 7 x hida be þam ilcan gefæle þe ic her bebujan tealde . to twam furlangum gebyrað . xx . hida 7 dreo hund hida . to þrim furlangum hund eahtatig hida 7 cccc hida þonne gebyrigeað to iii furlangum . xl . hida 7 vi hund hida . to fif furlangum gebyrð
9.	Hickes Nowell	ymbganges eahta hunda hida on weastillinge . to six furlangum gebyrð sextig hida . 7 nigan hund hida . to vii furlangum . xx . hida . 7 xi hund hida . to eahta furlangum ymbganges Deastillinge hund eahtig hida 7 xii hund hida . ymbganges eahta hund hida on weastillinge . to six furlangum gebyrð sextig hida 7 nigan hund hida . to vii . furlangum . xx . hida 7 xi hund hida . to eahta furlangum ymbganges weastillinge hund eahtatig hida 7 xii . hund hida . to nigan furlangum . xl . hida 7 xliii . hund hida . to x
10.	Hickes Nowell	furlangum gebyrð . ix . hida 7 xvii hund hida . to xii furlangum ymbganges Deastillinge gebyrð . xx . hida . 7 nigantyn hund hida . gif ymbgange mara bið þonne mæg man eape þone ofereacan geþencan of þisse tale for þon ealning to anum furlangum gebyrð . ix . hida 7 xvii hund hida . to xii furlangum ymbganges weastillinge gebyrð . xx . hida 7 nigantyn hund hida . gif se ymbgange mara bið þon mæg man eape þone ofereacan geþencan of þisse tale for þon ealning to anum
11.	Hickes Nowell	furlange gebyrð sixtig manna . 7 c . þon bið ælc gyrð mid feoþer mannum geset furlange gebyrð sixta manna . 7 . c . þonne bið ælc gyrð mid feower mannum geset

TABLE II
TOTALS OF ALL KNOWN VERSIONS OF THE BURGHAL HIDAGE

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	Nowell	Rylands	C. Cl. D ii	L.R.S.	Hargrave	C. Chr. C. Camb.	Oriel	Gale	Lowest	Restored
Eorpeburnan	324	324	324	324	324	324	324	324	324	324
Hastings	500	515	1,5(00)			500	500	500	500	500
Lewes	1,200	1,300	1,300			1,300	1,300	1,300	1,200	1,300
Burpham	720							726	720	720
Chichester	1,500			1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500
Portchester	500	500	500	500	500	500	500	650	500	500
Southampton	150	150	150	150	150	150	150	50	50	150
Winchester	2,400	2,400	2,400	2,400	2,400	2,400	2,400	2,400	2,400	2,400
Wilton	1,400	1,400	1,400	1,400	1,400	1,400	1,400	1,400	1,400	1,400
Chisbury	500	700	700	700	700	700	700	700	500	700
Shaftesbury		700	700	700	700	700	700	700	500	700
Twynham	470	460	460	460	460	460	460	470	460	470
Wareham	1,600							1,600	1,600	1,600
Bredy	760							1,760	760	760
Exeter	734	734	734	734	734	734	734	734	734	734
Halwell	300	300	300	300	300	300	300	300	300	300
Lydford	140	140	140	140	140	140	140	140	140	140
Pilton	360	360	360	360	360	360	360	260	260	360
Watchet	513	513	513	513	513	513	513	513	513	513
Axbridge	400	400	400	400	400	400	400	400	400	400
Lyng	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Langport	600	600	600	600	600	600	600	600	600	600
Bath	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	3,200	1,000	1,000
Malmesbury	1,200	2,200	2,200	2,200	2,200	2,200	2,200	1,500	1,200	1,200
Cricklade	1,400	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,300	1,300	1,500
Oxford	1,500	1,300	1,300	1,300	1,300	1,300	1,300	2,400	1,300	1,400
Wallingford	2,400	2,400	2,400	2,400	2,400	2,400	2,400	2,400	2,400	2,400
Buckingham	1,600	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	600	600	1,600
Sashes	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	600	600	1,000
Fashing	600	500	500	500	500	500	500	1,800	500	600
Southwark	1,800	1,800	1,800	1,800	1,800	1,800	1,800	1,800	1,800	1,800
Totals	27,671	24,296	25,281	23,981	23,981	25,781	25,781	32,727	26,161	28,671

clear, but that for group B is also important. Brooks¹⁴ rendered this as *That is all 27,000 hides and seventy which belong to it; and 30,000 (hides belong) to the West Saxons*. But this is a translation of Corpus Christi, the only text to supply the lines over the roman numerals which turn the 27 into 27,000 and the 30 into 30,000. The copyist of this manuscript was a careful worker, and checked and, occasionally, glossed his manuscript. It seems likely that he supplied the lines in an attempt to make sense of the text. It is clear that he was correct in reading the text as 27,070 since '27 and 70 that belong to it' makes no sense, but the figure of 30,000 hides for the West Saxons is much more doubtful.

But is there a total of 27,000 hides in our text? TABLE II (p. 87) shows that none of the existing manuscripts gives this figure. Even the text which is offered above gives a total of 28,671 hides (column 10, TABLE II). If, however, we ignore the assessment for Buckingham whilst accepting the rest of the above text we arrive at a total of 27,071 hides.¹⁵

By excluding Buckingham we also clarify the rest of the ending: there are then 30 West Saxon burhs in the text, so that we may read the ending as *That is all 27,000 hides and seventy which belong to it; and 30 (burhs belong) to the West Saxons*.

If this ending to the Burghal Hidage is acceptable, it establishes two very important principles; first that the text is complete and that the Kentish burhs were omitted, thus conflicting with Chadwick's suggestion that a portion of the text at the beginning containing the assessment for London and Kent may be missing; secondly, that the figures of the assessments can be checked from internal evidence.

With reference to the completeness of the text it is notable that the citation order forms a circuit of Wessex (FIG. 37) which bears a similarity to the bounds of charters of the same period, starting in the south-east and proceeding in an orderly manner clockwise until it ends at Southwark. Much could be implied from this, but here it is sufficient to note it as a further demonstration of the care with which the material in the document has been marshalled and that the order survives uncorrupted.

The exclusion of Kent would, presumably, be due to the ordering of that shire in sulungs. The exclusion of London would be due to it being a special case, its very large circuit being maintained by 'many shires whose labour was due at London'.¹⁶

It appears likely, then, that the text of group B originally read:

*Three hundred hides belong to Eorpeburnan and 24 hides
And at Hastings belong 500 hides
And to Lewes belong thirteen hundred hides
And to Burpham belong seven hundred hides and 20 hides
And to Chichester belong 15 hundred hides*

¹⁴ Nicholas Brooks, *op. cit.* in note 3, p. 87, note 51.

¹⁵ That Buckingham is not included in the total is illustrated by column 9 in TABLE II. This is a total of all the lowest assessments for each burh irrespective of the manuscripts from which it is derived. Even if low assessments from Gale are included, the total cannot be brought down to that required, without including many obviously erroneous readings.

¹⁶ Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, *sub anno* 1097.

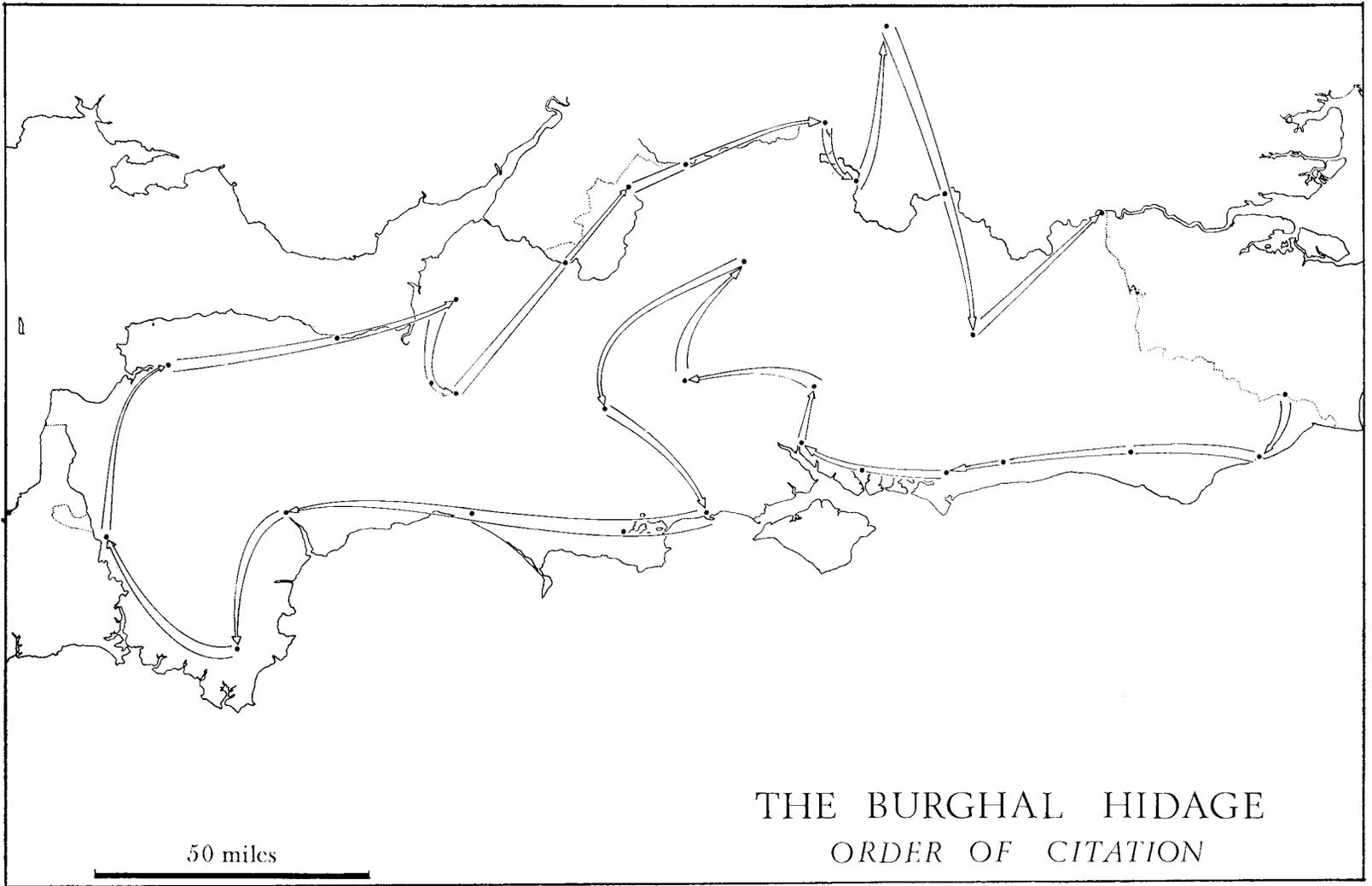


FIG. 37
MAP SHOWING ORDER OF CITATION OF PLACE-NAMES IN BURGHAL HIDAGE (p 88)

Then belong to Portchester 500 hides
And 150 hides belong to Southampton
And to Winchester belong twenty four hundred hides
And to Wilton belong fourteen hundred hides
And to Chisbury belong 7 hundred hides
And to Shaftesbury likewise
And to Twyneham belong 5 hundred hides less 30 hides
And to Wareham belong 16 hundred hides
And to Bredy belong eight hundred hides less forty hides
And to Exeter belong 34 hides and 7 hundred
And to Halwell belong three hundred hides
And to Lydford belong one hundred and fifty hides less ten hides¹⁷
And to Pilton that is Barnstaple belong four hundred hides less 40 hides
And to Watchet belong 5 hundred hides and 13 hides
And to Axbridge belong four hundred hides
And to Lyng belong 100 hides
And to Langport belong 6 hundred hides
And to Bath belong ten hundred hides
And twelve hundred hides belong to Malmesbury
And 1500 hides belong to Cricklade
And 1400 hides belong to Oxford¹⁸
And to Wallingford belong 24 hundred hides
And 16 hundred hides belong to Buckingham
And to Sashes belong 10 hundred hides
And six hundred hides belong to Eashing
And to Southwark belong eighteen hundred hides
That is all 27,000 hides and seventy which belong to it; and 30 burhs belong to the West Saxons
And to Worcester 1200 hides. To Warwick 2400 hides¹⁹

The text from which Nowell is derived had the same assessments, except for Lewes at 1,200 hides, and had the ending as published by Robertson:

For the maintenance and defence of an acre's breadth of wall
16 hides are required. If every hide is represented by 1 man,
then every pole of wall can be manned by 4 men.
Then for the maintenance of 20 poles of wall 80 hides are required,

¹⁷ It should be noted that the text names *Hlidan*, that is the River Lyd. References to *Hlidaforda* appear in 997. The recent excavations at Lydford were greatly hampered in dating the foundation of the burh owing to a lack of early pottery, general in the west at this period (P. V. Addyman, forthcoming report on the excavations at Lydford). There remains the possibility of an earlier burh on the River Lyd, perhaps at Lifton.

¹⁸ Or the assessments of Cricklade and Oxford can be taken as in Nowell.

¹⁹ The appendix containing these two burhs can be added without comments. They are not part of the main text nor do they figure in the totals, but it should be noted that the 'four and' with which the assessments for Warwick begins is probably a slip. One can deduce that the copyist of archetype B was faced with a text which contained the assessments in words, and that he saved time by writing some in Roman numerals, but clearly forgot to erase the beginning he had made on Warwick when changing to numerals. If this is 2,404 it is the only assessment over 513 that is not taken to the nearest hundred.

and for a furlong 160 hides are required by the same reckoning as I have stated above.

For 2 furlongs 320 hides are required;

For 3 furlongs 480 hides.

Then for 4 furlongs 640 hides are required.

For the maintenance of a circuit of 5 furlongs of wall 800 hides are required.

For 6 furlongs 960 hides are required;

For 7 furlongs 1120 hides;

For the maintenance of 8 furlongs 1280 hides.

For 9 furlongs 1440 hides;

For 10 furlongs 1600 hides are required;²⁰

For 11 furlongs 1760 hides are required.

For the maintenance of a circuit of 12 furlongs of wall 1920 hides are required.

If the circuit is greater, the additional amount can easily be deduced from this account, for 160 men are always required for 1 furlong, then every pole of wall is manned by 4 men.

Miss Robertson noted that the assessments of some burhs—Winchester,²¹ Wareham, Bath, Malmesbury and Wallingford—could be checked on the ground, and demonstrated that in some cases the assessment did not include the sides of a burh which were covered by water defences.

Recent work has shown that the assessments also hold true for Cricklade,²² Lyng,²³ Southampton and Portchester.²⁴ There is also a marked correlation for other sites. Pilton Camp, Devon (SS 569353), has a circuit of 1,520 feet measured as against 1,485 feet calculated.

The length of *dry* wall at Burpham (TQ 039086) would appear to be correct for a defence running from the marsh on the east to the River Arun on the west, and both the camps in Halwell parish (Devon), Stanborough (SX 773517) and Halwell Camp (SX 785533), have circuits of the right order although only excavation can show which, if either, has Saxon occupation.

If the assessments are correct, they should be able to tell us a great deal about the early development of towns such as Oxford,²⁵ Exeter and Shaftesbury.

The date of the document can be estimated only from internal evidence.²⁶ Oxford and Buckingham came into the hands of the king of Wessex in 911²⁷ and the burh at Buckingham was built in 914.²⁸ The *terminus ante quem* is provided

²⁰ The conversions for 9 and 10 furlongs are omitted in Hickeys.

²¹ Recent excavations at Winchester have revealed that the Roman and Saxon wall is 9,954 feet long and so nearer the burghal hidage figure than Miss Robertson believed (*op. cit.* in note 2, p. 495). The discrepancy between the calculated and the actual measurements is less than 1%. See M. Biddle in *Antiq. J.*, L (forthcoming).

²² T. R. Thomson, *loc. cit.* in note 13.

²³ David Hill, 'The Burghal Hidage—Lyng', *Proc. Somerset Archaeol. and Nat. Hist. Soc.*, III (1967), 64–6.

²⁴ David Hill, 'The Burghal Hidage—Southampton', *Trans. Hants Field Club*, xxiv (1967), 59–61.

²⁵ Cf. E. M. Jope, 'Saxon Oxford and its region' in D. B. Harden (ed.), *Dark-age Britain: Studies Presented to E. T. Leeds* (1956), p. 241 f., which uses an assessment of 2,400 hides to discuss the nature of the original burh boundary. The assessment of 1,400 hides offered here would indicate a town burh layout in the west of the medieval town in the early tenth century.

²⁶ See more fully in J. H. Tait, *The Medieval English Borough* (1936), pp. 15–18.

²⁷ Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, *sub anno* 911.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, *sub anno* 914.

apparently by the exclusion of Dorchester, a mint under Athelstan and, less certainly, by the seizure of Mercia by Edward the Elder in 919.

If the document dates from the close of the reign of Edward the Elder it would have been drawn up during the time that Stenton sees as most likely for the shiring of West Mercia.²⁹ The shires were grouped around the shire-towns, Gloucester, Winchcombe, Warwick, Worcester, Hereford, Shrewsbury, Stafford and Chester.

It should be noted that the assessment for Worcester in the Burghal Hidage is the same as the assessment for Worcestershire in the County Hidage.³⁰ The entry in Domesday for Chester reads *For the repair of the city wall the reeve was wont to call up one man from each hide in the county.*³¹ If this is taken with *If every hide is represented by one man then every pole can be manned by 4 men*, we should expect enough men from the 1,200 hides of Cheshire to maintain and defend a wall of 4,950 feet, a figure which is not inconsistent with the land walls of Chester at this time.³²

There is therefore at least a possibility that this document should be seen in a Mercian context. This would assist in explaining some of the problems of the Burghal Hidage. It suggests why the hidation only vaguely correlates with what is known of later shire assessments in Wessex. The document would only have to show that such a system could be made to work in Wessex and not necessarily to have been applied. It suggests why the conversion table at the end of the Nowell Transcript converts lengths to hides, when what the foregoing text needs is a table converting the assessments back to lengths. It also suggests why two Mercian burhs appear in the appendix to group B, showing the start of organization of the shires.

²⁹ F. M. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England* (1943), p. 333.

³⁰ F. W. Maitland, *Domesday Book and Beyond* (1897), p. 525.

³¹ Domesday Book I, fol. 262 b.

³² From the silted up 'creek' of late Roman times round the line of the wall to the site of the later water-tower is approximately 5,130 feet. From the southern river end of the walls round to the water-tower would be less close, but it is unlikely that the suburb outside the Roman walls was enclosed only twelve years after the restoration of the city.