# Approaches to the analysis of the topography, origins, growth and development of English medieval towns: case studies of selected towns and their wider applicability

## Volume 1: Text

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# Abstract

The study of the topography, origins, growth and development of English medieval towns in has been the meeting ground, and, on occasions, the battle ground, of researchers from a wide range of disciplines, most especially historians, geographers and archaeologists. The purpose of this thesis is to identify the methodologies most commonly used across the disciplines; to assess their effectiveness; to highlight their strengths, weaknesses and limitations; and to suggest ways forward in urban topographical studies. The period covered is from the $7^{th}$ century when the first towns and proto-towns can be identified down to $c$1540 before the changes wrought by the Dissolution of the Monasteries, although some earlier material is discussed where it is relevant to the later growth of an urban centre. Four differing approaches are identified: landscape analysis; documentary evidence; town-plan analysis and the results of archaeological investigation; although it is recognised that there is a degree of overlap between all of these. These are tested against a range of towns within the urban spectrum through a series of case studies. Four Cheshire towns are chosen to cover the range from small - medium-sized centres, including a largely industrial town. A fifth study, of Northampton, is chosen as an example of a large town, particularly because there has been a large number of archaeological investigations within the settlement.

The innovative use of GIS as a means of compiling, storing, analysing and illustrating a wide range of spatial data is central to the project. To assess the varying approaches, different ways of visualising the Cheshire towns are tested, while Northampton presents an opportunity to compare the results of GIS analysis using non-invasive sources against the findings from the relatively extensive archaeological investigations.

The results of the work emphasise the value of using all four techniques in combination. Large-scale archaeological investigation represents the most effective technique for reconstructing urban topography but it is rarely possible to excavate a sufficiently large area in an urban context to answer all of the questions that can be posed and the other techniques still offer insights which supplement the archaeological evidence. Despite the relatively large amount of archaeological work at Northampton only around 6% of the late Saxon town and 3% of the medieval town have been excavated while none of the Cheshire case study towns have seen any major archaeological interventions and this largely reflects a situation in English small towns as a whole. Nevertheless important observations have been made. Hence

the towns of Frodsham and Macclesfield, together with Leek in Staffordshire, all three of which were founded by the same lord in the early 13$^{th}$ century, exhibit quite different town plan characteristics suggesting that the lord himself played little part in their design. The greater wealth of archaeological data from Northampton has demonstrated the presence of a middle Saxon elite centre whose existence could not have been predicted without excavation, while the existence of a long-established  pottery type series has enabled the mapping of the extent of settlement at key periods within the town's origin and development. Property boundaries plotted from Victorian mapping have been compared to boundaries discovered by archaeological excavation and shown in many cases to date back to the medieval period. Importantly, however, whereas at other major settlements such boundaries have been shown to date back to the late Saxon period those at Northampton are of post-Conquest, 12$^{th}$-15$^{th}$ century, date, and are part of a major replanning and expansion of the town in the post-Conquest period. A general point which is made is the value of analogy. Hence aspects such as deflections in the road pattern consequent upon the building of bridges, the wholesale movement of settlements, the fossilisation of defensive boundaries in the street pattern and the planting of Norman castles to control and dominate Anglo-Saxon centres can all be shown to follow patterns identified elsewhere.

# Acknowledgements

# Abbreviations

AASR Associated Architectural Societies Reports and Papers

BNFAS Bulletin of the Northamptonshire Federation of Archaeological Societies

CBA Council for British Archaeology

CALS Cheshire Archives and Local Studies

CHER Cheshire Historic Environment Record

CIfA Chartered Institute for Archaeologists

DTM Digital Terrain Model

FISH Forum on Information Standards in Heritage

GMFEW Gazetteer of Markets and Fairs in England and Wales

Website - https://archives.history.ac.uk/gazetteer/gazweb1.html

JNNHS Journal of the Natural History Society and Field Club

NAHS Northamptonshire Archives and Heritage Service

NHER Northamptonshire Historic Environment Record

NHLE National Heritage List for England

Website - https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/

PAS Portable Antiquities Scheme

PCAS Proceedings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society

RCHM(E) Royal Commission on Historical Monuments

THSLC Transactions of the Historical Society of Lancashire and Cheshire

VCH Victoria County History

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

English medieval towns, once seen as a separate entity to the surrounding countryside (described as recently as the 1970s as 'non-feudal islands in the feudal seas'[1]) are now accepted as playing a central role in medieval society and economy. The analysis of their topography has been the meeting ground, and, on occasions, the battle ground, of researchers from a wide range of disciplines, most especially historians, geographers and archaeologists. This division has led to cases where urban topographical studies in one discipline have not paid attention to information available using techniques from another discipline.[2] The purpose of this thesis is to identify the methodologies most commonly used across the disciplines; to assess their effectiveness; to highlight their strengths, weaknesses and limitations; and to suggest ways forward in urban topographical studies. The period covered is from the 7th century when the first towns and proto-towns can be identified in England down to *c*1540 before the changes wrought by the Dissolution of the Monasteries, although some earlier material is discussed where it is relevant to the later growth of an urban centre. The thesis presents a best practice approach for enriching the future study of medieval towns especially in the use of GIS to compile, store, analyse and illustrate the data. Archaeologically the necessity to identify areas which contain important evidence of past urban development and to justify their consideration as part of the planning process is more important than ever. The recognition of threats to archaeological deposits containing evidence of this nature from the 1970s onwards led to the adoption of procedures to protect or secure investigation of these deposits. However, current government proposals talking of new permitted development rights and the launch of a package of 'the most radical reforms to our planning system since the Second World War' represent a major threat to the hard-fought gains of the last fifty years.[3]

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[1] Postan 1972, 212

[2] See Chapter 2: review by Keene and my discussion of publications by Clarke *et al* (2010) and Swanson (1999)

[3] Sources: 'CIfA and CBA response to Boris Johnson's 'Build, build, build speech''
https://www.archaeologists.net/news/cifa-cba-response-boris-johnson%E2%80%99s-%E2%80%98build-build-build%E2%80%99-speech-1593776800?fbclid=IwAR2pmvkkxnIDvh7-Polemfzs5q9Y490gPEB4iGSO7oNHYY0TyzxbMXj_-Ck (accessed 4.7.20); article in *The Times* of 20.7.20 headed 'Planning proposals a race to the bottom'

## Aims and Objectives

### Research Aim

My research aim is to **identify** the various techniques most commonly used in the analysis of the topography of English medieval towns, particularly those employed in assessing their origins, growth and development (and in some cases lack of development or shrinkage); to **assess** their effectiveness and their limitations; and to **recommend** ways forward in urban topographical studies.

### Research Objectives

In order to achieve this I have identified six research objectives:

1. To identify, summarise and assess existing approaches to the study of the topography, origins and development of English towns in the medieval period.
2. To test the varying methodologies by applying them to the analysis of selected towns at different levels of the medieval urban hierarchy, initially using landscape analysis, accessible historical sources and town-plan analysis.
3. To further test the methodologies by comparing the results of the initial analyses with data from archaeological excavation.
4. To assess the overall value and problems of using historic map evidence in the analysis of medieval towns.
5. To identify ways in which the use of GIS can modify and improve the study of the origins, growth and development of medieval towns.
6. To recommend ways forward in urban topographical studies.

## Approaches to the study of the topography of medieval towns

I have defined four broad approaches to the study of the topography of medieval towns:

### Landscape analysis

An approach common to historians, geographers and archaeologists although best known through the work of the historians Hoskins and Beresford. Although primarily used in rural

studies it is also effective in looking at aspects of urbanism such as why a town grew up at a certain place and its effects on the communication and administrative pattern of its surrounds.

**Documentary evidence**

The availability of historical sources relating to topography or other aspects which influence urban growth and decline varies greatly between towns depending on the survival of documents and the extent to which they have been studied or published. My approach has been to use easily accessible secondary sources and a few key primary texts, such as the Domesday Survey, to demonstrate how they can be used in studying urban growth and decline.

**Town-plan analysis**

Town-plan analysis could be regarded as a subset of landscape analysis and uses many of the same techniques, such as looking at deflections in the road or street pattern. It also includes, however, the more detailed approach established by Conzen in the 1950s-60s of using 19th century and earlier maps and plans to look in detail not just at the street pattern but also at the internal plot boundaries within the street blocks, and using these to define plan units.

**Archaeological research**

I have concentrated on those aspects of the results of archaeological excavation and finds analysis which shed light on the layout of a town and its origins and development. Given that, as noted above, town-plan analysis relies largely upon the premise that 19th century plot boundaries relate back to the medieval period I have been particularly concerned to delineate the medieval property boundaries discovered by the excavations and to establish to what extent they relate to plot boundaries shown on the later mapping.

## Format of thesis

This chapter introduces the subject and outlines my research aim and objectives. Chapter 2 reviews previous work on the topography of medieval towns and allied subjects. Chapter 3 outlines my methodology. Chapter 4 comprises the analysis of four small - medium-sized towns in Cheshire, including a primarily industrial settlement. Chapter 5 looks at

Northampton as an example of a large town. Chapter 6 discusses the results from my studies as a whole. Chapter 7 presents my major conclusions. I have included detailed analysis of the plan units for Northampton as defined by non-invasive sources as Appendix 1 and of the archaeological excavation evidence within each unit as Appendix 2. The overall results of these have been used to create used to create higher level plan units which are discussed in Chapter 5.

# Chapter 2: The study of medieval English towns and their topography

## Introduction

As noted above the study of the topography of medieval towns has been an interest shared by a number of disciplines, particularly historians, geographers and archaeologists. Hence in discussing the development of the subject it has become commonplace to look at the three disciplines separately. This approach does have a great deal of validity. We should be aware, however, that many urban topographers have had a foot in more than one camp. Two of the most widely read and influential urban history textbooks of the 1970s were by Platt, a lecturer and later professor of history at Southampton University, who carried out, and published with commendable alacrity, a major series of archaeological excavations in Southampton, and by Aston and Bond, who studied geography at Birmingham University, but then spent their early careers as County Archaeologists - indeed Aston's subsequent role as a lead presenter with Time Team meant that in the public eye he was the quintessential archaeologist.[4]

In looking at the history of the study of urban topography we need to adopt a dual approach, looking at the developments in the different disciplines against a chronological framework. Before doing so, however, we need to consider what we mean when we talk about a town.

## The Definition of a Town

The answer to the question 'What is a town?' is not a simple one. It can mean different things to different people at different times, and different disciplines, and indeed to different sections within the same discipline.

At the upper end of the hierarchy the distinction between a city and a town is an arbitrary one. Although the larger British towns tend to have a cathedral and therefore city status many smaller towns did so also - St David's in Pembrokeshire being the best example. For the purpose of this thesis towns which possessed city status in Britain in the medieval period will be described as such but this does not indicate any judgement about the size or importance of the settlement and the two are regarded as essentially the same settlement type.

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[4] Platt 1976; Platt and Coleman-Smith 1975; Aston and Bond 1976

More difficulty arises at the lower end of the scale distinguishing a small town from a large village or other settlements with a specialised function. Early historians of the medieval period who were largely concerned with legal and constitutional matters tended to equate a town with a borough. Thus in 1898 Maitland stated that 'The borough community is corporate; the village community is not', although when repeating this phrase later he did allow that 'Some injustice will be done by every distinction of this sort. Law sees difference of kind where nature has made differences of degree. Some little accident might throw a township on one side of the line or the other.'[5] This legal approach was persistent. Tait regarded the acquisition of self-government as a necessary requisite for urban status, while as late as 1967 Beresford proposed to accept as a town '...any place that passes one of the following tests: had it a borough charter?; did it have burgages?; was it called a *burgus* in the Assize Rolls, or was it separately represented by a jury before the judge of assize?; was it taxed as a borough? did it send members to any medieval Parliament?'[6]

In the 1970s a wider bundle of criteria - social, physical and economic as well as legal and constitutional, was used in the Council for British Archaeology Publication *The Erosion of History* and by Biddle in defining Anglo-Saxon towns.[7]

Twelve criteria were defined:

- defences
- a planned street system
- a market(s)
- a mint
- legal autonomy
- a role as a central place
- a relatively large and dense population
- a diversified economic base
- plots and houses of 'urban' type
- social differentiation

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[5] Maitland 1898, 18, 22-3
[6] Tait 1936, 1; Beresford 1967, 273
[7] Heighway (ed) 1972, 8-10; Biddle 1976a, 100

- complex religious organisation
- a judicial centre)

It was proposed that anywhere which fulfilled three or four of these criteria merited 'serious consideration' as a town. This approach of looking at a bundle of criteria was based on German models and was useful in getting away from purely legal and constitutional considerations. It does, however, conflate a number of criteria which are essential elements with others which are less diagnostic and has been criticised by Reynolds as 'one of the less useful concepts that has come to Britain from abroad'.[8]

Nowadays most researchers follow Reynolds in suggesting a more flexible approach based on socio-economic rather than legal criteria.[9] Her criteria are a combination of the functional 'a significant proportion...of its population lives off trade, industry, administration and other non-agricultural occupations' and social - 'that it forms a social unit more or less distinct from the surrounding countryside'. Even here it is perhaps not useful to over-emphasise a separation between the town and its surrounding countryside. Dyer suggests a similar definition '…[a town] should have a permanent concentration of population, some hundreds at least, who made their living from a variety of non-agricultural occupations.' He then goes on to clarify this by saying 'These people might include officials and clergy but usually in order for a large population to find employment, the inhabitants would be occupied in trades and crafts. A town would also have a range of institutions, a complex social structure, and would be closely involved in the economic and cultural life of a rural hinterland.'[10]

This sums up the essentials: a relatively large population (although not necessarily more than a few hundred) engaged in a variety of non-agricultural occupations, especially trade and crafts (although we should acknowledge that some of the town's population may have made at least part of their income from agriculture, either from the fields which surrounded most towns or from holdings in neighbouring villages); and a role as a centre for the surrounding area.

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[8] Reynolds 1992, 49-50 - quoted in Palliser (ed) 2000, 5
[9] Reynolds 1977, ix
[10] Dyer 2002a, 58

We must accept, however, that at the lower end of the scale towns may differ little from villages and that we should not be thinking of a great divide but of a continuum whose split off point is not always clear. A recent article by Goddard is valuable in reminding us that most towns had a major agricultural component, while most agricultural settlements had an element of craft production, and that small towns especially were part of the wider manorial economy and should not be separated off from this. In addition he questions whether towns which came into existence in particular economic circumstances but then 'failed' should really be regarded as failures or whether they should be regarded as adapting to change.[11]

We should also be aware of the relationship between towns and other institutions or settlements which housed large numbers of people. Hence a monastery, a castle or an industrial settlement may be composed of a relatively large number of people but would not in themselves constitute a town. The presence of a relatively large number of people, whether a monastic community, a garrison or a group of artisans, would, however, require a further group of people to service them and the settlement of these people may grow to become a town, whether deliberately founded as such or not. In addition monasteries and garrisons often acted as estate centres where produce would be brought, and industrial settlements attracted traders and middlemen. Hence we find towns such as Evesham and Bury St Edmunds sited outside the gates of monasteries, or others such as Richmond clustered around a castle site, while perhaps the best examples of industrial sites which became towns are the inland saltworking centres of Droitwich in Worcestershire and Nantwich, Northwich and Middlewich in Cheshire.

My definition of a town with its emphasis on economic criteria is one which is widely accepted in northern Europe. We should be aware, however, that it has not gained universal acceptance elsewhere. In areas where there was a greater degree of survival of Roman institutions, especially Mediterranean Europe, the tendency has been to define early medieval cities and towns against a Roman benchmark, looking for the survival of monumental architecture, particularly town walls, and for the presence of secular and ecclesiastical institutions such as palaces and churches. Judged against these benchmarks many of the settlements which we would describe as towns, such as the trading ports which re-emerge in

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[11] Goddard 2011

northern Europe from the late 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> centuries or the small, undefended English boroughs of the 13<sup>th</sup> century would hardly qualify as towns.[12] Ward-Perkins has contrasted the differing views and interpretations of the same data by Italian and British historians looking at the survival or revival of town life in northern Italy and discussed how these differences reflect their background in studying either the classical world or the 'dark ages'.[13] Indeed the Mediterranean view of towns corresponds most closely to the definitions of the early British historians with their emphasis on legal privileges.

Having examined what constitutes a town we can now turn to the history of their study, particularly that of their topography. I have set this discussion within a chronological framework but also divided by discipline, although there is inevitably some overlap.

## Developments in the study of medieval urban history (to 1950)

It would be absurd to try and point to a particular time when humankind suddenly became interested in its surroundings or its own history. These would have been basic human instincts from earliest times. Hence we can expect an interest in the history of towns to have been present from soon after their foundation. In the case of the British Isles a lively interest in the past can be found in Anglo Saxon poetry, notably *The Ruin*, thought to be inspired by the remains of the Roman town of Bath:

Wondrous is this masonry, shattered by the Fates. The fortifications have given way, the buildings raised by giants are crumbling. The roofs have collapsed; the Towers are in ruins...There were splendid palaces, and many halls with water flowing through them; a wealth of gables towered aloft. Loud was the clamour of the troops; many were the banqueting halls full of the joy of life – until all was shattered by mighty Fate...[14]

William Fitzstephen's description of late 12<sup>th</sup> century London shows a great interest in urban topography as well as a sense of pride in his native city; while in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century William of Worcester gives much topographical detail in his *Itineraries*, particularly for his home

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[12] Wickham 2005, 591-6
[13] Ward-Perkins 1997
[14] Chadwick 1922, 55

town of Bristol.[15] It is, however, in the 16th century that we can discern a major flowering of interest in English history and topography, including that of its towns, with the works especially of John Leland and William Camden. John Leland's notes on his travels through England and Wales between 1539/40 and 1545 have been an invaluable source of information for historians and topographers ever since.[16] He showed both a keen eye for earthworks and an early awareness of archaeological, or perhaps more accurately antiquarian, research in his description of his visit to the hillfort of Cadbury Castle which he was anxious to establish as King Arthur's Camelot:

> At the very southe end of South-Cadbyri standith Camalllate…In the upper parte of the hille be 4 diches or trenches, and a balky waulle of yerth betwixt every one…Much gold, sylver and coper of the Romaine coyness hath be found ther yn plouing…[17]

He also gives an example of town planning undertaken at Wells by Thomas Beckington, Bishop of Bath and Wells, in the mid-15th century, who, in addition to providing a conduit in the market place built twelve 'right exceeding fair houses al uniforme of stone high and fair windoid in the north side of the market place…' and was minded, if he had lived longer, to build another twelve on the south side of the market place 'the which work if he had complishid it had bene a spectable to al market places in the west cuntery'.[18]

Leland had intended to write a history of England and Wales but in 1547 he suffered a severe mental breakdown which rendered him incapable of further work and he died in 1552.[19] Hence William Camden's *Britannia*, the first edition of which was published in 1586, was the first published topographical description of the British Isles.[20] Around the same time John Stow was compiling his *Survey of London*, a detailed topographical study and description of the city, published in 1598.[21]

Although there was much useful work, urban historical studies over the next three centuries tended to concentrate on legal and constitutional affairs, while individual town histories often

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[15] Brooke 1975, 112-21; Harvey (ed) 1969
[16] Chandler 1993, xxvii
[17] Toulmin-Smith 1964, Vol 1, Part 2, 151
[18] Toulmin-Smith 1964, Vol 1, Part 2, 145
[19] Chandler 1993, xv-xvi
[20] Hey (ed) 2008, 302
[21] Palliser 2006, I 1; Stow 1908

took an insular approach with events in a town's history being seen in isolation rather than being considered against a background of events elsewhere. The late 19th century – early 20th centuries saw great improvements at a local level with the foundation of the Victoria History of the Counties of England in 1899 and the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments in 1908. At a national level there were important works by figures such as Gross, Bateson and Maitland though their interests were still largely legal ones.[22] Maitland, however, did show a keen eye for topographical detail in his lectures on Cambridge, published as Township and Borough which includes plans showing the town with its major monuments and surrounding fields.[23]

As late as the 1930s Tait's *The Medieval English Borough,* subtitled *Studies on its Origins and Constitutional History*, makes no attempt to use topographical study as evidence even for the early period when documentary sources are sparse.[24] Ironically Stephenson - to counter whose argument that the Anglo-Saxon borough was largely a military centre with few urban functions before the Norman conquest, Tait's book was largely written as a riposte - did include studies of the topography of some of the major English towns, illustrated with rather rudimentary town plans (Fig 2.1).[25] Stephenson was influenced by the Belgian historian Henri Pirenne and attempted to apply his theories about the revival of trade and the origins of towns in the medieval period to England.[26] In particular he took Pirenne's hypothesis that medieval towns commonly began as defended trading settlements outside existing major centres such as fortresses and royal, ecclesiastical or administrative centres and argued for a similar development in England. In doing so he stressed the importance of topographical study and how this had transformed the study of towns on the Continent:

> …thanks to the new approach the history of Roman cities like Paris and Cologne, of 10th century burgs like Ghent and Erfurt, and of newer foundations like Étampes and Lübeck has been revealed with a clarity and distinctness otherwise unobtainable. The lack of similar work in England is only too apparent.[27]

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[22] For the preceding see Reynolds 1977, v-vi; Palliser 2000, 7-9
[23] Maitland 1898
[24] Tait 1936
[25] Stephenson 1933, 186-205
[26] Pirenne 1925
[27] Stephenson 1933, 186

Many of Stephenson's conclusions from his topographical studies of individual towns can be challenged but his advocacy of the value of topographical study was important and influential. Soon after the publication of Stephenson's work Cam published a paper on the origins of Cambridge challenging Stephenson's theories on the origins of that town. In doing so she also showed a keen eye for topography and a willingness to use archaeological evidence:

> The evidence of the burgage rents, of the churches, of the mills, of the ancient watercourses, of the burial grounds, of the pottery, all together tip the scales against him [Stephenson].[28]

Cam also included a description of Northampton in the medieval period in her essay on the town included in Volume 3 of the Victoria County History of Northampton.[29] Although a valuable study of the then known history of the town the topographical analysis is less satisfactory and it may be that although it was published in 1930 it was written considerably earlier, possibly before the outbreak of the First World War.[30]

## Developments in the study of medieval urban history (1950 - 1999)

Important as Tait's book was its complexity and density are such that it has been observed that it may have been a cause of a hiatus of thirty years or more when 'little of first rank' on medieval towns was published.[31] Tait's spell was finally broken in the 1970s with the publication of no less than three syntheses of medieval English town life within a period of two years by Reynolds, Platt, and Aston and Bond. Reynold's book, *An Introduction to the History of English Medieval Towns*, was still largely concerned with legal and constitutional history but was a clear and accessible account of the evidence as known at the time and, while admitting that this was not her specialist field, she did include a 'postscript on topography' as a final chapter.[32] Platt's *The English Medieval Town* presents a more well-rounded study skilfully blending historical and archaeological evidence. He includes a chapter on the urban

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[28] Cam originally read a paper to the Cambridge Antiquarian Society in 1933 which was printed in their Communications vol 35 (1935). It was reprinted in Cam 1944, 1-18, the quotation is from page 18.
[29] Cam 1930
[30] Riden and Insley 1998, iii
[31] Palliser 2000, 9
[32] Reynolds 1977

landscape as well as more traditional historical themes such as the borough economy, borough society and borough constitution and emphasises the importance of the church in towns.[33] Aston and Bond's *The Landscape of Towns* covers the whole period from prehistory to the 20th century and offers a more geographical approach.[34] It will be discussed in more detail below.

As regards the history of individual towns the outstanding publication from this era is Keene's Survey of Medieval Winchester which reconstructs the histories of the houses, plots, gardens and fields in the city and suburbs between *c*1300 and *c*1540. It is discussed in more detail below.[35]

Some of the county surveys in the Making of the English Landscape series contain useful chapters on towns, notably the volume on Staffordshire where Palliser quotes an early account, of 1559 but based partly on earlier documents, of the reasoning behind town foundations by the Earls of Derby, talking about the region around Tutbury castle:

> Then began they to devise to increase their possessions with people...and to make the Honour more stately, erected free [or 'three' boroughs] within six miles of the castle, one at Tutbury, one other at Agardsley called Newborough, and one other at Uttoxeter, and granted to the burgesses and inhabitants of everyone one of them...parcels of land to build on; and to make men more desirous to plant their habitations in those places, procured for them markets and fairs...and granted to the burgesses divers liberties of common of pasture, pannage and estovers in their Forest of Needwood...[36]

This reference neatly summaries three of the essentials in creating a successful medieval town: the granting of land to build on; the provision of markets and fairs to encourage trade; and the granting of privileges to the inhabitants, including rights in the town fields.

Later in date than the books discussed above but related in theme is Swanson's *Medieval British Towns*. This is of value in being rather more up to date than Reynold's work and covering the whole of the British Isles but, surprisingly for a comparatively recently published

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[33] Platt 1976a
[34] Aston and Bond 1976
[35] Keene 1985. See section on 'Landscape analysis, town-plan analysis and developments in the study of the topography of medieval English towns from the 1950s to 1990'
[36] Palliser 1976, 151

work, covers urban topography in three pages and includes no plans at all apart from a map showing the location of the towns mentioned in the text.[37]

The majority of works on medieval urban history up to the 1980s, and many beyond that date, tended to concentrate on the larger towns, and also to study towns with only scant attention to their surrounding countryside, regarding towns as something different and separate from the 'feudal system' prevalent in the countryside. As late as 1972 the economic historian Postan described medieval towns as 'non-feudal islands in the feudal seas', channelling the earlier views of Hemmeon 'In the feudal ocean which once rolled over northern and western Europe appeared many islands...These islands, some of which were artificial and imitative, were the urban communities'.[38] In contrast Hilton's book on West Midlands society in the late 13th century, published in 1966, was a pioneering work demonstrating that towns were an integrated part of medieval society.[39] As a regional study, however, its impact was not perhaps as great as it should have been. Subsequent publications by Hilton and Dyer, however, have been more influential in demonstrating the importance of towns as a whole to the feudal economy, and in emphasising the role that small towns played both nationally and in enabling peasants in rural areas access to markets to sell goods to pay money rents.[40]

Dyer has also documented places functioning as towns without possessing borough status. Hence Rugby, in Warwickshire, which had been granted a market in 1255, possessed a market place and its poll tax and court records show evidence of marketing and of a diverse range of occupations, and yet it never received a borough charter nor does it have evidence of burgage tenure. In addition he has pointed out that a great deal of marketing took place outside urbanised places, not only at village markets but also at sites such as inns, ports and country fairs.[41]

For the pre-Conquest period the role which Anglo-Saxon fortified centres or *burhs* played in the establishment of town life has been increasingly recognised from the 1970s. Many of the arguments for this have been put forward by archaeologists and will be discussed below but

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[37] Swanson 1999 - for urban topography pages 107-9
[38] Postan 1972, 212; Hemmeon 1914, 1
[39] Hilton 1966
[40] Hilton 1982a, 1982b; 1984; 1985; 1992, 32-41; 1996; Dyer 1989
[41] Dyer 1992a

important in this debate was an article by Brooks which provided a detailed exposition in of the way in which kings were able to enforce work on fortifications by means of the 'common burdens' or *trinoda necessitas* of army-service, fortress-work and bridge-work.[42] This also provided a means by which work on urban, as well as military, institutions could be enforced. We do not know when the 'common burdens' were first required although Brooks points out that Stevenson regarded them as 'such primitive requirements of any organised state that it is unlikely they were suddenly imposed in the eighth century'. We first hear of the burdens in 749 when Aethelbald of Mercia reserves them in a general grant of privileges enacted at the synod of Gumley but this may be in reaction to the appearance of immunity clauses granting freedom from secular services which had previously been accepted without challenge. Certainly in 747 the church was complaining that Aethelbald and his officials had been compelling monks to join the work-parties on royal halls and vills, and perhaps also, Brooks speculates, on bridges and fortresses.[43] Hence we can see a mechanism by which work at royal centres could be achieved already in operation, in Mercia at least, by the mid-8th century. By the end of the 8th century Offa was granting land free from all works except the burdens and it was emphasised that these were to be done by all of the people without exception. This is the period when we first hear of Viking raids on England so this threat is likely to have made the explicit reservation of the burdens more important than ever. Hence in a charter of 792 Offa grants extensive immunities to all the Kentish churches but reserved the burdens in order to counter the threat from sea-borne Viking armies.[44]

Evidence for the other Anglo-Saxon kingdoms is even more elusive. There is only one Wessex charter of 8th-9th century date surviving in contemporary form and it is not until the reign of Aethelbald of Wessex (855-60) that all three of the burdens are reserved. Brooks suggests it was not until this time that an obligation to build fortifications was first regularly exacted in Wessex.[45] He concludes that the development of military obligations may have varied between different kingdoms and that while army service was probably an ancient obligation in every kingdom, the requirements for bridge-work and fortress work came later. By the late 9th century the 'common burdens' played a vital part in Alfred's fightback against

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[42] Brooks 1971
[43] Brooks 1971, 77
[44] Brooks 1971, 79
[45] Brooks 1971, 81

the Danes, particularly in allowing the building of a series of fortified centres as a centre of refuge, to house a garrison and, arguably, in some cases to act as trading and manufacturing centres.[46]

## Developments in the study of medieval urban history (2000 onwards)

The year 2000 saw the publication of the three volume Cambridge Urban History of Britain. The medieval volume, Volume 1, is, of course, an invaluable resource, usefully summarising work carried out up to this point.[47] The chapter on 'The Topography of Towns 600-1300' is of direct relevance but topographical matters are also touched upon in many of the other chapters.[48] Blair contributed a section on 'Small Towns 600-1270' in which he reiterated his argument for the importance of minster church sites in fostering urban growth and looks at the topography of early urban sites.[49] Dyer's contribution on the later small towns contains a useful, if inevitably speculative, attempted quantification of the number of small towns in later medieval England.[50] His mapping of these is interesting in showing a rather unexpected pattern (Fig 2.2). Whereas we might expect a simple split with a greater density of towns in the more prosperous south and east and a lesser number in the north and west the actual pattern is rather different with a high density of towns in the thinly populated west of England. We have to be careful in interpreting this, especially as the larger towns, defined by Dyer as those with more than 2,000 inhabitants, are omitted. Nevertheless Dyer's suggestion that one reason for this pattern may be that lords with land in the west of the country, areas without rich arable resources, may have founded boroughs in the hope of an alternative way of making a profit may have some merit. A chapter on 'The Large Towns 600-1300' includes sections on planning within the *wics* or trading emporia of the late 7th - 9th centuries and on fortresses and urban plans.[51] The corresponding chapter for the larger towns of the late medieval period is a more straightforward historical account with no attempt to establish whether any change in the fortunes of a particular town was reflected in its topography.[52] In

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[46] Lapidge (ed) 1999, 456-57; Biddle and Hill 1971
[47] Palliser (ed.) 2000
[48] Palliser *et al* 2000
[49] Blair 2000; for minster churches see also Blair 1992, 1996, 2005
[50] Dyer 2000, 506-10
[51] Hinton 2000
[52] Kermode 2000

general, however, Volume 1 does attempt to use a wide range of evidence and this is reflected in the authorship of the individual chapters which includes a number of archaeologists, especially for the earlier period, and one historical geographer in addition to historians from across the discipline. In this it presents a stark contrast to Volume 2, covering the period 1540-1840, which says little about urban topography at this period. Remarkably in a volume with over 800 pages of text there is not a single figure showing a town plan. Noticeable also is the limited crossover between researchers in the two periods. If we look at the authors within the two volumes, only Alan Dyer contributed to both.

Since 2000, Dyer and White have published overall studies of medieval England, in which towns have been given their rightful place as an important component in medieval economy and society.[53] White's book is of value in that whereas many earlier general works have tended to use a large percentage of examples from the south and midlands of England his book redresses the balance a little by using a greater proportion from the north, perhaps reflecting his home base of Chester.

Dyer tackles a large number of issues pertinent to the town topography and development. One issue is why a lord would found a town, or encourage its growth, in the first place. He points out that a small-medium sized borough of eighty burgage plots, each paying 12d, would raise a revenue of £4 a year which might easily rise to £10 with profits from market tolls, borough courts and town mills. This compares to a value of around £1 a year if the land remained in agricultural use.[54] Historians are understandably loath to equate such figures to modern day income. The National Archives do, however, include a currency converter on their website which suggests that a figure of £10 in 1270 would equate to £7,298, in 1400 to £6,127 and in 1500 to £6,659.[55] The opportunities for profit extended also to those who took up the burgage plots. A plot could be sublet or divided and a portion rented out. In a thriving town a house and plot might be rented out for 20s pa, while even a cottage might fetch 5s pa.[56] The foundation of a town also had a more intangible, but nevertheless important, benefits in providing the lord's tenants in adjacent rural manors easy access to a market where they could

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[53] Dyer 2002a; White 2012
[54] Dyer 2002a, 146
[55] The National Archives. 'Currency Converter 1270-2017': https://www.google.com/search?client=firefox-b-d&q=national+archives+currency+converter (accessed 7.1.19)
[56] Dyer 2002a, 198

sell their produce to pay money rents and in increasing the lord's prestige and standing.[57] Dyer also provides an estimate of the proportion of people living in towns in England and Wales suggesting that it increased from 10% of the total population in 1100 to 20% by 1300.[58]

One aspect which has been a source of recent debate is the extent to which towns declined in the 14th-15th centuries. There is general agreement that the Black Death of 1348-9 reduced the population of England by around half, from a peak of perhaps 5-6 million to 2½-3 million. The Black Death had been preceded by the Great Famine of 1315-22 which had perhaps already led to the ending of a period of expansion throughout the 12th-13th centuries.[59] Further pestilences over the next two centuries meant that there was a continued downturn in population.[60] In the longer term the Black Death was not necessarily a disaster for those who survived, however. Villages would have shrunk in size but the more go-ahead peasants were able to increase their holdings and wage earners to hold out for higher wages. Within towns too the effect of the Black Death was mixed. As in the countryside they lost around half of their population but the proportion of people living in towns seems to have remained around the same, indicating that the urban economy did not collapse. The larger towns seem to have suffered more than the smaller ones and there are many cases of towns asking for a reduction in taxation because of impoverishment. Winchester's population is estimated to have fallen from a peak of around 10,000 – 12,000 around 1300 to below 8,000 in 1417 and then to c.4,000 in 1524-5.[61] Some towns were already in trouble before the Black Death, however. Northampton was complaining of decline in the third quarter of the 13th century.[62] Other towns prospered after the Black Death, especially those involved in clothmaking or who took advantage of local industries.[63] In general average incomes of townsmen increased in the period between 1300 and 1540.[64] We might, of course, expect to see the effect of a smaller but more wealthy population after the mid-14th century reflected in the urban landscape.

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[57] Dyer 2002a, 146
[58] Dyer 2002a, 187
[59] Dyer 2002a, 228-33
[60] Dyer 2002a, 297
[61] Dyer 2002a, 298-9
[62] RCHM(E) 1985, 55
[63] Dyer 2002a, 307-10
[64] Britnell 2000, 327-30

## Cartography and the study of medieval towns

The interest in urban history and topography in the 16th century was matched by an interest in improved mapping which saw great advances in cartography, including town plans. Early in the century town plans tended to be sketches but by the mid-16th century plans scale plans begin to appear. Harvey has identified a plan of Portsmouth of 1545 as the earliest known scaled plan of an English town.[65] Unusually this plan shows just the outline of streets, structures and boundaries in a manner more reminiscent of later maps, whereas more common from the mid-16th century down to the late 18th century was to show buildings and other features in perspective on top of a scaled ground plan. The most comprehensive set of plans of English towns of this nature were those published by John Speed in his *Theatre of the Empire of Great Britaine* of 1612, where he included plans of the shire towns and ecclesiastical centres as insets on his county maps. Unlike the latter - which were largely copies of the work of others, the majority of his town plans were based on his own surveys.[66] Although published at a small scale Speed's plans are generally accurate in their depiction of the street plan and usefully give the location of the chief buildings and structures within the town (Fig 2.3).[67] Ogilby's road maps published in his atlas of 1675 are useful for towns for which no earlier plans are available in giving some idea of their extent at this time and in showing major roads and indicating where minor roads run off from them. They do need to be treated with caution, however. Their scale of publication is small (1 inch to a mile/1:63360) and their location of 'minor' roads leading off from them can be shown to be inaccurate in places (Fig 2.4).

Large-scale town plans begin to appear around the same time as Speed's work, such as those of blocks of properties in London produced by Ralph Treswell *c*1612, although it is towards the end of the 17th century before large-scale plans of entire English towns and cities survive.[68] We do have to be careful in our use of these early town plans and consider their intended use as well as the limitations of the survey methods of the time. In an unusual contemporary admission of the limitations of early surveys the engraver Wenceslaus Holler

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[65] Harvey 1993, 69, 72-3
[66] Skelton 1951; Hindle (1998, 55-7) and West (1983, 133) say that 44-50 of the 70 town plans are Speed's own work, generally denoted by his inclusion of a 'scale of pases' on the plans
[67] Skelton (1951, 115) says that the majority were published at a scale ranging between about 5″ to a mile (1:12,672) and 10″ to a mile (1:6,336)
[68] Schofield (ed) 1987

included an inscription on his 1680 map of London as follows: 'The Scale's but small, Expect not truth in all' (Fig 2.5).[69] Surveying methods improved from the mid-18th century, however, and town plans became increasingly common from this time although they tend to be restricted to the larger and more prosperous towns and those undergoing rapid change through industrialisation; indeed Lobel has claimed that'…one can confidently judge of the economic prosperity of a [18th century] town by the quality of its maps.[70] Although invaluable for showing the layout of streets and major features within a town the planimetric accuracy of these maps is still insufficient to provide a good fit with Ordnance Survey maps. I explore this problem later.

It was the 19th century before most of the smaller, non-industrial, towns were mapped. The most comprehensive source of these before the advent of detailed Ordnance Survey mapping were the tithe surveys produced after the Tithe Commutation Act of 1836. Tithe maps varied greatly in quality, however; they were divided into 'first class' maps, produced in line with the recommendations of the Tithe Commission at a scale of at least 4 chains to one inch (1:3168), and 'second-class' maps which were often updated copies of earlier maps or might be at a smaller scale than that recommended by the Commission. Some did not include urban areas as these were not tithable.[71] The great merit of the tithe maps lies in the fact that most were surveyed in the first half of the century before the period of greatest industrial growth, and in many cases before the changes wrought by the coming of the railways; of the 11,800 tithe apportionments and maps for England and Wales, the majority were completed by the end of 1844 and only seven were reported as still in progress in 1856.[72]

It was only with the introduction of large-scale Ordnance Survey plans that standardised, accurate and detailed plans of towns became widely available, however. The largest scale plans were introduced as a result of the major cholera outbreak of 1832 and the increased concern for sanitary provision which required detailed mapping. Initially towns were surveyed at five feet to the mile (1:1056) but this was seen to be too small and from 1850 a number of towns paid for surveys at ten feet to the mile (1:528) at the instigation of the local

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[69] Quoted in Hewitt 2010, xxii
[70] Lobel 1968, 57-61; Hindle 1998, 59-69; West (1983, 150-65) includes a gazetteer of town maps and plans *c*. 1600-1900
[71] Hindle 1998, 48-53; Kain and Prince 2000, 31-57
[72] Kain and Prince 2000, 26

Boards of Health.[73] Finally, in 1855, a nation-wide mapping of towns at 1:500 scale was agreed upon. By 1895 most towns with a population of over 4000 had been surveyed; the majority of the surveys were done at the same time as those for the 1:2500 mapping although some were commissioned separately.[74]

For towns with a population of less than 4,000 the most detailed early Ordnance Survey mapping available is the 1:2500 plans. The entire cultivated area of Great Britain was surveyed between 1853-4 and 1896. A general revision was begun in 1891 and between that date and 1945 all but the most remote areas were completely revised at least once.[75] Some details were omitted from the revised maps; most importantly from the point of view of landscape analysis, township and ecclesiastical parish boundaries were no longer shown.

## Landscape analysis, town-plan analysis and developments in the study of the topography of medieval English towns from the 1950s to 1990[76]

In the 1950s there was an increasing realisation that the English landscape was worthy of study in itself. The new field of landscape analysis was one where the interests of a number of academic disciplines met and gained much from exchange of ideas and techniques. There were three pioneers: Hoskins, a local historian; Beresford, an economic historian, and, within the field of town-plan analysis specifically, Conzen, an historical geographer. Hoskins' publication of his highly accessible *The Making of the English Landscape* in 1955 was a watershed moment in demonstrating to a wide audience that the study of the landscape could yield valuable evidence which was not recorded in documents or available by other means. He popularised the image of the landscape as a palimpsest whereby the remains of earlier landscapes could still be traced in the modern landscape or upon historic maps.[77] His main emphasis was on rural areas but he did include a chapter on 'The Landscape of Towns', where

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[73] Consequently these are often referred to as Board of Health Plans
[74] Oliver 1993, 15-17
[75] Oliver 1993, 21-26
[76] I have used 'Landscape Analysis' as a neutral term to encompass studies which can also be classed as 'Landscape History' or 'Landscape Archaeology'
[77] Hoskins was not the inventor of the analogy. As he himself makes clear (Hoskins 1967, 17) he owes the term to Maitland who wrote 'We are learning from the ordnance map (that marvellous palimpsest which...we are beginning to decipher…' (Maitland 1897, 15)

he emphasised the value of looking at the town on the ground and set out some of the questions which could be considered:

> Why is the town just like this, this shape, this plan, this size? Why do the streets run in this particular way and not in some other way that seems more logical to us? Why are there sometimes two market places, why are the ancient churches just where they are? - and so on. In short what gives the town this particular landscape?[78]

Hoskins treated the analysis of town plans in more detail in later works, particularly in *Local History in England* which included a chapter on the topography of towns, including a study of Stamford with plans illustrating how the road from the north was realigned within the town with the building of the castle and establishment of a large market place immediately outside its walls (Fig 2.6).[79]

Around the same time Beresford was also demonstrating the value of using a combination of maps, documents and fieldwork in landscape analysis. In his *History on the Ground*, sub-titled 'Six Studies in Maps and Landscapes', he includes chapters entitled 'A Journey to New Towns' and 'A Journey to Elizabethan Market Places'. He distinguished between 'new towns', such as Hedon, Ravenserod and Hull on the Humber Estuary which were 'created in open country where there was no village before' and 'promoted villages', such as Higham Ferrers in Northamptonshire and Toddington in Bedfordshire, denoting existing villages which then gained the economic and legal privileges which enabled them to become a town; he suggested that the two types of town were likely to have different street-plans and different parish shapes.[80]

This was a theme to which Beresford returned in his magisterial survey of 1967 *New Towns of the Middle Ages*.[81] This was largely concerned with the phenomenon of new town foundation in England, Wales and Gascony in the medieval period and discussed the ways in which these settlements were planted, by whom and for what purpose. Though a work of great scholarship Beresford's work did continue to promote the idea of a great divide between a planted new town and 'organic' towns. Hence he says that '...most English county towns were organic and

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[78] Hoskins 1955, 270
[79] Hoskins 1959, 86-87. Hoskins' hypothesis has been amended by the realisation that the original road route was heading for a ford to the west of the later bridge – see Fig 6.1 and Chapter 6: landscape analysis
[80] Beresford 1957
[81] Beresford 1967.

not planted'.[82] Beresford was not alone in postulating this division, Hoskins also spoke of the difference between 'planned' and 'unplanned' towns as though there was a sharp divide between the two and a CBA Research Report of 1976 on *The plans and topography of Medieval Towns in England and Wales* had papers on the evolution of planned towns by Biddle and Butler and one on the evolution of towns by natural growth by Platt.[83] Platt's paper, however, discusses obvious cases of planning, as he acknowledges, such as the laying out of a triangular market place by the precinct of the abbey at St Albans and the provision of a wide market streets at Stratford-upon-Avon so that much of what he describes as 'natural growth' is what would now be described as part of composite planned town.[84] The distinction between 'planned' and 'organic' towns has proved persistent.

The third pioneer, Conzen, differed from the other two in that his researches were focused exclusively upon the urban landscape. He devised a methodology of detailed analysis of the layout of towns which he termed town-plan analysis. This is generally regarded as separate from landscape analysis but follows the same principles of detailed analysis on the ground and of the study of map evidence. He put forward his methodology for the geographical analysis of the town plan in a study of the town of Alnwick in Northumberland, published in 1960 but based on fieldwork undertaken in 1956, around the same time as Hoskins' and Beresford's early fieldwork. Whereas the two latter had contented themselves with pointing out aspects of a town's development, he showed how with the use of maps, documents and detailed observation on the ground the story of the origins and subsequent development of a town throughout its history from its origins down to the 1950s could be pieced together and in the process demonstrated the complexity of the development of town plans and their composite nature.[85]

As a German émigré Conzen was well-versed in the techniques of townscape study developed by German scholars which were in general well in advance of those in use at the same time in Britain.[86] It was he, however, who brought together the various strands and approaches and

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[82] Beresford 1967, 149.
[83] Hoskins 1967, 65; Barley (ed) 1976; Biddle 1976b; Butler 1976; Platt 1976b.
[84] Platt 1976b, 48, 53
[85] Conzen 1960 (1969).
[86] The development of techniques in town-plan analysis in Germany from the late-19th to mid-20th centuries is discussed by Lilley (1994, 31-4)

attempted to define a detailed methodology and vocabulary for town-plan analysis. He pointed out that earlier town-plan analyses were generally restricted to looking at street patterns rather than looking at the shape and internal structure of the property boundaries which sit within the street blocks. In addition he noted a tendency to look at phases of outward growth but not to consider changes within the earlier street blocks. He divided the town into plan units based on the street plan, plot boundaries and building coverage 'block plans', defining for Alnwick a total of thirteen major plan units, ranging from 'Medieval High Street layout' to 'Modern Residential Accretions' and forty-nine sub-types, including 'Shallow Burgage series' and 'Post-war emergency housing estate'.[87]

Conzen's study of Alnwick did come in for some criticism, particularly by Hoskins who felt that it was too focused on the geographical influences on a town plan and too little concerned with the personalities behind the development.[88] In addition his attempt to create a language for town-plan analysis caused some confusion. This was allayed to some extent by his inclusion of a glossary of technical terms in the revised edition of his monograph 'in response to a repeated suggestion from readers'.[89]

Conzen returned to his theme in a 1968 article with a particular emphasis on the medieval period designed to persuade urban historians of the value of town-plan analysis, particularly where documentary evidence is absent or inconclusive.[90] He dismissed as discredited the notion of 'planned' and 'unplanned' (or 'organic') towns, pointing instead to their composite nature.[91] To illustrate his approach Conzen presented plan analyses of two medieval towns: Ludlow and Conway. He demonstrated the composite nature of Ludlow's medieval town plan defining seven plan units, each representing a different phase of development (Fig 2.7).[92] In contrast, Conzen assigned the development of Conway's medieval town plan to a single phase of town foundation, in 1284, but showed how the plan had been adapted in response to the

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[87] Conzen 1969, 4-5, 108-18
[88] Hoskins 1967, 73
[89] Conzen 1969, 2, 123-31.
[90] Conzen 1968, 114-8
[91] Conzen 1968, 119
[92] Conzen 1968, 124-7

existing topography of the site to enable it to fulfil a specific set of functional requirements, such as allowing the maximum number of burgages to have a main street location.[93]

Conzen's work threw out a challenge to workers in a number of disciplines to produce comparative studies. Surprisingly it was some time before other workers took up his challenge, possibly because of the perceived complexity of his techniques of town-plan analysis. Given that Conzen adopted a primarily geographical approach and language, it is less surprising that when his challenge was taken up it was done so most enthusiastically by historical geographers, particularly a group based at the University of Birmingham. Foremost amongst this group was Slater who has been influential in interpreting Conzen's work on the analysis of medieval plot patterns and the devising of town-plan units for a wider audience, and has developed Conzen's original concepts in a number of important directions, including greater consideration of the people and institutions behind the planning and development of the towns under consideration.[94] His early work demonstrated the value of detailed metrological analysis in elucidating the town plan, particularly in following the process of laying out of burgages. He pointed out that measurements off maps were unlikely to bring out the level of accuracy needed to elucidate details of layout of individual plot boundaries (although the subsequent advent of digital mapping has made this less of an issue). Accordingly he took measurements in the field at a number of historic towns. Although later sub-division or amalgamation of burgage plots can mask the detail, by looking 'primary plot' boundaries he was able to show that a wide range of towns were laid out using a system of measurement based on a statute perch of 16½ feet (*c*5m).[95] In addition at Stratford-upon Avon and Lichfield in particular he was able to show how a grid pattern layout had been skilfully adapted to the site and its existing landscape features in a similar manner to that which Conzen had demonstrated for Conway, as well as documenting the process by which many of the initial plots were sub-divided or amalgamated (Fig 2.8).[96] In a study of Warwickshire and Worcestershire towns he was able to demonstrate that many 'new towns' were not founded on 'green field' sites where there had been no previous settlement but that they had been preceded by earlier settlements which had often already attracted market functions. This cast

[93] Conzen 1968, 127-30
[94] Slater 1987 (Bishops); 1990 (Secular); 1996, 1998 (Benedictines)
[95] Slater 1980; 1987; 1988; 1990
[96] Slater 1987

further doubt on the validity of the division between 'new' and 'organic' towns. In the same paper he also took up Conzen's challenge to provide comparative studies of towns and town-plan elements, and to assess whether particular feature forms were characteristic of particular periods. For Warwickshire and Worcestershire towns he defined three basic market shapes - triangular, rectangular and broadened street - and suggested that triangular markets were especially characteristic of the older established, Anglo-Saxon, towns, and most particularly those which were in monastic lordship, and that broadened street markets were especially characteristic of 'new towns' of the 12th-13th centuries.[97] In early examples of collaboration between an historical geographer and archaeologists Slater also provided town-plan analyses to complement archaeological investigations at Hedon and Doncaster.[98]

Around the same time Aston and Bond published *The Landscape of Towns*, perhaps the first book of synthesis to include property boundaries on their illustrations of town plans and to use these in a detailed analysis of urban plan elements (Fig 2.9).[99] Later Bond published a study of Thame, Oxfordshire, where he was able to demonstrate a far more complicated situation than the classic view of the settlement as a new town founded by the Bishop of Lincoln in the early 13th century. A pre-urban nucleus, comprising a minster and possibly a royal or ecclesiastical residence, and a probable mid-12th century phase of town growth, preceded the creation of a 'new town' in the early 13th century.[100]

Two archaeologists with connections to Birmingham University also carried out early town-plan analyses: Meeson as part of an MA thesis on Tamworth, Staffordshire and Baker in a study of Walsall.[101] At the latter Baker was able to demonstrate that even in a town which has undergone major changes as a result of its later industrial history it was possible to elucidate its early history and much of its plot layout using historic maps and careful analysis, despite the disappearance of many of its early features (Fig 2.10).

Scrase, an historian, carried out a detailed study of Wells, Somerset, where he was able to compare the results of his analysis of burgage plot boundaries with the relatively abundant

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[97] Slater 1982
[98] Slater 1985; 1989
[99] Aston and Bond 1976
[100] Bond 1990
[101] Meeson 1979; Baker 1989

documentary evidence for the town to suggest some of the processes which can result in boundary change and to illustrate their complex nature, especially on the more popular sites such as street corners where sub-division can lead to a plethora of small properties on the street frontage. He was able to point to a trend of sub-division of plots in the period before 1350, with a peak between 1250-1325, while amalgamation of plots did not occur until 1350 and was uncommon until 1575.[102]

The recognition of the threat to urban archaeological deposits by redevelopment from the early 1970s onwards led English Heritage to fund a number of rapid surveys and syntheses of town histories and topography designed to point out their importance and the threats to their archaeological deposits, both county-wide surveys and studies of individual towns and cities. All of these surveys included town plans showing their historic features and several them showed historic property boundaries although they generally stopped short of defining plan units.[103]

Related to town-plan analysis is what has been termed total plot history where, for a number of towns fortunate enough to have abundant documentary sources and good historical map coverage, it has been possible to reconstruct histories of all or most medieval properties and to plot their position. The outstanding example of this is Keene's survey of Winchester, mentioned above, where he has mapped and compiled histories of the houses, plots, gardens and fields of the town in the late medieval period between around 1300 and 1540, a total of 1128 properties. In addition he has assembled a biographical register of the property holders, numbering over 8,000.[104] It has not been possible to repeat this feat for other towns, partly because of the need for good documentary coverage and partly because of the sheer effort and manpower necessary. At an earlier period Salter and Urry did undertake pioneering work on properties in Oxford and Canterbury respectively in the 1960s.[105] It is a testimony to Salter's

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[102] Scrase 1989
[103] Examples of county surveys are: Oxfordshire (Rodwell 1975); Wiltshire (Haslam 1976); Berkshire (Astill 1978) and Dorset (Penn 1980), while the most important, and influential, of the town and city studies was that of London (Biddle and Hudson 1973)
[104] Keene 1985.
[105] Salter 1965-6; Urry 1967

work that Oxford Archaeology made use of his mapping of property boundaries 50 years later in excavations in Oxford's city centre.[106]

## Post-1990 developments in town-plan analysis

In the period after 1990 two papers were published which expanded on Slater's work in interpreting Conzen's theories and methodology for a wider audience. Using Worcester as a case study Baker and Slater aimed to establish a 'precise, verifiable and repeatable method' for plan unit definition. An overall plan of the city showing buildings and property boundaries derived from late 19th century 1:500 scale Ordnance Survey mapping was compiled. This plan was then used to create a second plan showing the primary boundaries only, defined as those running continuously from street fence to back fence without significant deviation or interruption.[107] A paper by Lilley, a geographer by training, advocated a similar methodology using Coventry as an example, based on his PhD on the city, but illustrates how by adding historical and archaeological evidence to a base plan new evidence for the origins and development of the settlement can be put forward. He also emphasised the value of undertaking the process of TPA in encouraging thought:

> …the act of tracing off patterns of streets and plots helps to put oneself in touch with not only the form of the urban landscape (that is its nuances, subtleties and signs), but also the creators of the urban landscape itself (the agents of townscape change), all of which helps in interpreting and understanding the historical significance of a particular town's plan-form.[108]

Slater contributed to a chapter on understanding urban landscapes in a general volume on landscape studies which made the point that landscape studies had largely concentrated on rural rather than urban topics. In discussing town plans he also made the point that plan analyses can only go so far in suggesting chronologies of plan development. Detailed dating is only possible if combined with historical and/or archaeological studies.[109] Of especial interest in studying small urban settlements is Slater's paper comparing small boroughs and market settlements in Staffordshire where he argues that town plans reflect the urban hierarchy in the county; boroughs tended to be marked out by distinctive settlement

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[106] Biddulph 2019, 24
[107] Baker and Slater 1992
[108] Lilley 2000a, 15
[109] Slater 2000

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boundaries, distinctive plot patterns and one or more distinctive and spacious market areas, whereas this was only rarely the case for market villages. He recognised, however, that these observations might not necessarily hold true for the more prosperous south and east of the country and hence that they needed to be tested elsewhere.[110]

Lilley published an important paper in 2001 looking at town foundations by the de Redvers family, earls of Devon, in the south of England, and in particular at three adjacent towns around the Solent, Lymington in Hampshire and Newport and Yarmouth on the Isle of Wight, all founded in the late 12th century. His analysis of the town plans revealed that, despite the family connections all three differed in their form suggesting perhaps that the lords themselves were not greatly involved in their design and employed different 'designers' in each case. Newport does, however, bear a resemblance in form to Portsmouth which lies opposite to it on the Hampshire coast. Portsmouth was also founded in the late 12th century but by a different lord, perhaps indicating that the two lords employed the same 'designer' to lay out their new towns.[111]

Lilley published *Urban Life in the Middle Ages*, a book in which he was able to expand upon many of his earlier themes. From our point of view the two most important chapters are those on 'Lordship and Urbanisation' (Chapter 4) and 'Urban Landscapes' (Chapter 5). In Chapter 4 he looked at the chronology of new town foundation and at who was founding towns – kings, bishops, monasteries and laymen - putting people to the fore as advocated by Hoskins. In Chapter 5 he looks at the different types of towns – castle towns and abbey towns, street markets and 'formal' urban landscapes laid out to a regular grid, and at the practicalities of medieval urban design and the types of surveyor who undertook the work, suggesting they were divided between 'lay' measurers (*mensores laici*) and 'literate' or learned measurers (*mensores literati*).[112]

Baker has shown how Conzenian-style plan analysis can be used in conjunction with documentary and archaeological evidence to provide an extra dimension to town histories, initially in looking at Gloucester and Worcester in conjunction with Holt, and later in a

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[110] Slater 2005
[111] Lilley 2001
[112] Lilley 2002, 138-77; 2005, 229-38

detailed archaeological assessment of Shrewsbury.[113] In his publication on Worcester he was able to document how archaeological evidence had modified previous interpretations of the position of the east side of the late Saxon defences. The discovery of a large ditch running north-south between High Street and The Shambles during excavations at the City Arcades Site in 1999 demonstrated that the late 9th-10th century defences were located to the west of The Shambles whereas they had previously been suggested as running to its east (Fig 2.11). This suggestion had been backed up by the observation that the parish boundary between St Swithun's and St Martin's ran along this line also.[114]

Baker and Slater have also pointed out cases where large 'ground-works' schemes have been undertaken as a preliminary to town planning, such as the infilling of a large Roman-period ditch at Worcester prior to the laying out of the Anglo-Saxon burh.[115] At Shrewsbury, Baker, building upon the work of Carver, has emphasised the scale of terracing and earthmoving undertaken on this restricted promontory site.[116]

A number of theses have looked at the integration of town-plan analysis with other methodologies. Croom included studies of the town plans of Ludlow and Bridgnorth in a thesis looking at the pre-medieval - medieval settlement pattern of South-East Shropshire.[117] She emphasised the need to examine the rural hinterland in undertaking town-plan analyses, looking particularly at the road pattern, footpaths, streams and field boundaries. Her analysis of the two towns established that both showed signs of several phases of planning 'events' but came to a similar conclusion as Lilley in emphasising 'A topographical study…can provide only relative dates for the different phases; absolute dates can be determined only from written material.'[118] She might of course have added archaeological investigation as a source of more accurate dating.

Baker looked at how the integration of data from archaeological investigations in larger, more complex, towns can be integrated with detailed town-plan analysis, using his work on the city

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[113] Baker and Holt 2004; Baker 2010
[114] Baker and Holt 2004, Fig 6.11 and 171-73; Fig 7.1 for the parish boundaries. Baker *et al* 1992, fig 5, for earlier suggestion of eastern line of defences
[115] Baker and Holt 2004, 345-56; Slater 2007, 20-22
[116] Baker 2010, 26-38; Carver 1973-4
[117] Croom 1989
[118] Croom 1989, 382-83; Croom later published her analyses of the two towns as a separate paper (Croom 1992)

of Worcester and on the Pride Hill area of Shrewsbury as case studies.[119] Lilley used his thesis on Coventry, already referred to, to test the reliability of town-plan analysis, using large-scale 19th century mapping to attempt to reconstruct the city's medieval town plan and define plan units as a first stage of Preliminary Plan Analysis (PPA), and then, in a second stage of applied Plan Analysis (APA), integrating evidence from cartographic, archaeological and documentary sources to date the origins of each unit and to allow the evolution of the medieval town to be reconstructed. He included a section looking at the origins of town-plan analysis in Europe and North America, setting Conzen's approach into its historical context. One of his most important conclusions was that using Ordnance Survey plans of the 1880s to define the initial medieval town plan was problematic in an industrial city as there had been so many changes by this time, and that in the case of Coventry it would have been more effective to use the earlier Board of Health plans of 1851.[120] Catchpole examined the economy and topography of the small towns of medieval Gloucestershire, looking at the distinctive features which distinguished them from other settlements such as nucleated villages and larger towns.[121] Most recently Dean has explored the archaeology of neighbourhoods in York between 600 and 1600. His thesis is the only urban topographical study of which I am aware to share a similar approach to mine in using GIS to draw together archaeological, historical and cartographic data.[122] The two approaches were, however, developed separately.

Concentrating on the Swinegate and Petergate areas adjacent to York Minster it identifies the emergence of 'estate landscapes' around the Roman fortress area and explores how these were gradually replaced by the pattern of streets and burgage plots which characterise the medieval city

Related to town-plan analysis are the studies undertaken as part of the British Atlas of Historic Towns Project which was established in 1963 as part of a Europe-wide project to produce atlases of consistent scale and content for the easy comparison of the growth and development of European towns and cities. The aim was to produce high-quality maps of

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[119] Baker 1990
[120] Lilley 1994
[121] Catchpole 2005
[122] Dean 2012

historic towns at important periods of their history from their beginnings down to around 1800 together with a linking text discussing the history of the town. After an initial spurt, however, the work proceeded at a glacial pace and then foundered for a time. Between 1969 and 1989 three volumes had been published, covering thirteen towns.[123] These have been criticised principally as being studies of the town at single points in time rather than discussing the topographical development of the town and for not making clear the sources from which the maps were compiled.[124] The project was revived in the present century and the latest volumes take a more wide-ranging approach. Studies have been published of Windsor and Eton, York and Winchester.[125] The two latter of course have a rich archaeological background and these volumes have been largely produced by the archaeological organisations serving them (the York Archaeological Trust and the Winchester Excavations Committee) and hence present a valuable summary and mapping of archaeological work in these cities.

## Use of GIS in town-plan analysis

Given the heavily map-based emphasis of town-plan analysis it is surprising that GIS has not been used until relatively recently and that its use is still not widespread. In this respect it contrasts with its earlier and more enthusiastic use in archaeological contexts especially for Historic Environment Records and Characterisation projects.

Three major AHRC-funded projects instigated by Lilley and various collaborators have used GIS. The earliest was an analysis of a series of 'new' towns founded by Edward I, twelve in Wales and one in England.[126] Although the project was largely concerned with Wales these are towns founded by an English king and are accordingly of relevance for the study of English towns also. The work was carried out between 2003 and 2005. Its aims were to establish the original layout and design of these towns, to identify common aspects of their design and to examine the agents and the decision-making processes involved in their

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[123] Lobel (ed) 1969 (covering Banbury, Caernarvon, Glasgow, Gloucester, Hereford, Nottingham, Reading, Salisbury); Lobel (ed) 1975 (covering Bristol, Cambridge, Coventry, Norwich), Lobel (ed) 1989 (covering London)
[124] Lilley 1994, 28-29; Slater 2000, 106
[125] Lewis 2015 (Windsor); Addyman 2015 (York); Biddle and Keene 2017 (Winchester)
[126] Wales: Aberystwyth, Beaumaris, Caernarfon, Caerwys, Conwy, Criccieth, Flint, Harlech, Holt, Newborough, Overton and Rhuddlan. England: Winchelsea.

formation. In addition an interactive, digital atlas of the towns, including 3D modelling, was created and made available to a wide audience via a website (Figs 2.12, 2.13).[127] In addition the original GIS files created for the project are available for download through the Archaeology Data Service website so that future researchers can carry out their own analyses.

The second project was a study of medieval Chester, carried out 2008-9. Part of the project was the creation of a digital map of Chester as it appeared *c*1500, showing features such as streets, plot boundaries, churches and other religious structures, ecclesiastical precincts, parish boundaries, the city walls and earlier courses of the river Dee (Fig 2.14).[128] Again the original GIS files have been made available for download.[129]

The third project was a study of medieval Swansea carried out 2013-14 by Dean and Lilley.[130] Its approach is similar to mine in using GIS to bring together historical, archaeological and cartographic information although the two methodologies were developed separately. A recent article by Lilley and Dean based on the project is important in making the point that the same evidence can be used to come to different conclusions. Hence they present two different interpretations of the origins of medieval Swansea: one as a fairly typical Norman castle town; the other as a Viking trading settlement with a similar layout to southern Irish settlements of this period (Fig 2.15).[131] This is a useful reminder that town-plan analysis can only present a hypothetical reconstruction of town origins and development, hopefully for verification or rebuttal by the results of archaeological work or historical research.

## English Heritage and Characterisation Studies

Conzenian-style town-plan analysis has been little challenged as a way of looking at town origins and growth. An allied methodology has been gradually evolved, however, in the series of urban surveys initiated by English Heritage from 1990s onwards.[132] These have taken three forms: Urban Archaeological Databases/Intensive Urban Surveys; Extensive Urban Surveys;

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[127] Lilley, Lloyd and Trick 2005. 'Mapping the Medieval Townscape'.
http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/atlas_ahrb_2005/. Accessed 6.1.19
[128] 'Mapping Medieval Chester'. http://www.medievalchester.ac.uk/index.html. Accessed 6.1.19
[129] 'Mapping Medieval Chester'. http://www.medievalchester.ac.uk/mappings/mapintro.html. Accessed 6.1.19
[130] Dean and Lilley 2013-14. 'Mapping Medieval Swansea'. http://www.medievalswansea.ac.uk/en/mapping-medieval-swansea/. Accessed 24.3.19
[131] Lilley and Dean 2015
[132] Thomas 2006

and Historic Landscape Characterisation. The Urban Archaeological Databases (UADs) were intended to cover thirty-five of England's most historic towns. The project is still ongoing with UADs for Kings Lynn and Hull currently being compiled.[133] The main emphasis has been to create a database of archaeological excavations and monuments, and, for later projects, heritage assets as a whole - including historic buildings. A secondary phase comprised an assessment and research framework for further work, a number of which have been published as monographs, of which Baker's volume on Shrewsbury, already mentioned above, is the best example of use of town-plan analysis techniques.[134] The Extensive Urban Surveys are intended to cover the smaller towns on a county by county basis; thirty six of the forty-six 1974 county surveys have currently been completed or are in progress.[135] Both surveys have evolved over time. All but the earliest have used GIS systems as well as computerised databases. They share with town-plan analysis the concept of defining plan elements, such as a market place, regular burgage plots etc, and plan units. For the later EUS projects, such as Sussex, these have been formalised as Historic Character Types (HCTs) and Historic Urban Character Areas (HUCAs) (Fig 2.16). In addition summaries of the town's development as a whole over time are compiled. The emphasis, however, is on defining areas to assess their historic environment value and to devise management strategies for them for planning purposes. Nevertheless the outcomes do have a great research potential. For example the Gloucestershire EUS was used by the Project Officer as a starting point for a subsequent PhD thesis on *The Small Towns of Medieval Gloucestershire*.[136] They have not, however, commissioned similar monographs on the smaller towns covered by the Extensive Urban Surveys. Hence Dyer's lament over the greater emphasis on the archaeology of the larger towns is still valid almost two decades since he first drew attention to it.[137]

The third English Heritage urban survey type is Urban Historic Landscape Characterisation (UHLC) which has been used for large metropolitan areas such as the Black Country, South Yorkshire and Merseyside. The techniques have been adapted from rural Historic Landscape Characterisation Projects (HLCs). The HLCs are heavily dependent upon GIS. The modern

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[133] Pers comm Nick Davis, Historic England 15.06.20
[134] Baker 2010
[135] Pers comm. Roger M. Thomas, English Heritage, 9.3.15
[136] Catchpole 2005
[137] Dyer 2003

landscape is divided up into broad types, such as Settlement, Industrial, Extractive and each Broad Type is divided up into Narrow Types, such as, for Extractive, Quarry, Mine and Workshops. Previous land use is then defined using historic maps. By this means a large database is built up. The Black Country HLC divided the landscape up into 12,664 distinctive land units or polygons.[138] Given that each polygon has – at a conservative estimate – around a dozen pieces of data attached to it, this gives us around 150,000 pieces of data which can be queried, analysed and presented in an infinite number of ways.[139] To ensure the wide availability of their results digital copies of many of the reports of, and in some cases the data from, Extensive Urban Survey and Historic Landscape Characterisation projects have been deposited on the Archaeology Data Service website.[140]

What town-plan analysis and characterisation do share is the concept of looking at the landscape as a whole and breaking it down into its constituent parts, or land uses, rather than just picking out parts of the landscape regarded as of particular interest or value, although of course aspects of particular interest can be highlighted at a later stage.

## Archaeological approaches to the study of medieval towns

### The pioneering years

Archaeologists were slow to realise the value of studying medieval urban sites. Medieval deposits were often removed with little or no recording by archaeologists looking to answer questions about a town's Roman past, a situation helped no doubt by the better visibility of Romano-British deposits, especially when compared to the more ephemeral deposits often associated with the return of urban occupation in the Anglo-Saxon period.[141] Where medieval features were excavated they were generally at high-status sites such as castles and ecclesiastical buildings. Historians too were slow to recognise that archaeology could add a different dimension to their studies rather than being 'an expensive way of finding out

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[138] Areas of land defined by GIS
[139] For a discussion of the Black Country HLC see Quigley and Shaw 2010
[140]EUS: Archaeology Data Service 'Extensive Urban Survey': https://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/EUS/. HLC: Archaeology Data Service 'Historic Landscape Characterisation': https://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/HLC/
[141] Vince 1990, viii; Carver 1987, 20, 42-3

something you already know'.[142] Even Grierson, a numismatist who might be expected to have some empathy for archaeology, remarked in the late 1950s that 'the spade cannot lie, but it owes this merit in part to the fact that it cannot speak'.[143]

After the Second World War W.F. Grimes pointed the way in his excavations on bomb-damaged sites where he looked at a wide variety of medieval sites and demonstrated that important insights could be gained.[144] Nevertheless there was still an implicit assumption that the archaeology of the pre-Medieval period was the more important. Hence in 1948 the Council for British Archaeology, recognising the need for work on bomb-damaged sites, published research priorities for the period from the prehistoric down to the 7th century AD.[145] It was intended that this be followed by a second document covering the 'later Pre-Conquest, Medieval and Post-Medieval periods' but this was never completed.

A further illustration of the relatively recent recognition of the value of post-Roman archaeology is the date of the foundation of a society covering the period in Britain. The Society for Medieval Archaeology was formed as late as 1957, while the Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies began life in 1910, and the Prehistoric Society, although not actually named as such until 1935, had begun life, as the 'East Anglia Society of Prehistorians', in 1908.[146]

The situation was changed dramatically in the 1960s largely through the work of Martin Biddle. His excavations at Winchester from 1961 onwards demonstrated the value of large-scale excavation for studying urban deposits and in 1968 he wrote an influential article pointing out the benefits of co-ordinated archaeological and historical research on medieval towns.[147]

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[142] Remark by an unnamed medieval historian at Birmingham University in the 1970s to Peter Gelling (pers comm); Philip Rahtz is said to have attributed a similar remark to Peter Sawyer; 'Historian on the Edge': https://600transformer.blogspot.com/2015/02/archaeology-is-just-expensive-way-of.html (accessed 19.1.20)
[143] Grierson 1959, 129
[144] Grimes 1968
[145] Council for British Archaeology 1948
[146] Society for Medieval Archaeology website: http://www.medievalarchaeology.co.uk/index.php/the-sma/sma-retrospect-and-prospect/ (accessed 30.3.18); Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies website: https://www.romansociety.org/ (accessed 30.3.18); Prehistoric Society website: http://www.prehistoricsociety.org/about/history_of_the_prehistoric_society/ (accessed 30.3.18)
[147] Biddle 1968

**The legislative background**

A discussion of the legislative background to requirements for archaeological work may seem tangential to discussions of the topographical development of medieval towns. It is, however, essential if we are to make further progress in understanding the origins and growth of medieval towns as the majority of archaeological work since the introduction of PPG16 in 1990 has been undertaken ahead of development and financed by developers. If this system does not continue, or is watered down to a significant extent, future progress will be significantly affected.

Around the end of the 1960s archaeologists were realising that the quickening pace and larger scale of development was threatening large-scale destruction of archaeological sites and landscapes, both urban and rural. This led to the recognition of the need for 'Rescue Archaeology' ahead of destruction of archaeological deposits and to the formation of RESCUE, the British Archaeological Trust, in 1971, to raise awareness and to campaign for funds for archaeological work.[148] The publication of the influential *The Erosion of History* by the Council for British Archaeology (CBA) in 1972 dealt specifically with the threat to urban archaeological deposits.[149] The pressure from the Council for British Archaeology and RESCUE led to greatly increased government funding for archaeological work. Government expenditure on Rescue Archaeology almost quadrupled, to £813,000, between 1971 and 1973, although RESCUE's advocacy of the setting up of a State Antiquities Service was never acted upon.[150]

The Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act of 1979 included provision to designate Areas of Archaeological Importance (AAIs). Designation allowed a period of up to 13 weeks for archaeological investigations on a development site within an AAI. Five AAIs were designated (Canterbury, Chester, Exeter, Hereford and York). A major drawback, however, was that no provision for funding of archaeological work was made. Gradually through the 1970s and 1980s, however, there was, in Britain and abroad, an increasing focus on the 'polluter pays principle' which was enshrined in the United Nations' declaration on

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[148] Barker 1974
[149] Heighway (ed) 1972
[150] Barker 1974, 281, 283

environment and development in 1992.[151] Originally applied largely to environmental hazards and the natural environment the principle gradually came to be recognised as one applying also to the historic environment. Around the same time nationally, particularly after Margaret Thatcher came to power in 1979, Central Government was anxious to cut down on public spending and archaeological bodies were encouraged to ask developers to meet the costs of necessary archaeological work ahead of and during development work. Archaeologists at the Museum of London were already doing so by 1978.[152] This policy was less easy to implement outside London until it was enshrined in planning guidance by the publication of Planning Policy Guidance Note 16: Archaeology and Planning (PPG16) in 1990.[153] PPG16 introduced a presumption in favour of preservation of nationally important archaeological remains but recognised that where this was not possible '…an archaeological excavation for the purposes of 'preservation by record', may be an acceptable alternative…'. It also emphasised the importance of archaeological evaluation ahead of determination of a planning application. The onus on paying for this work was put on the developer on the 'polluter pays principle'. The whole system was to be managed by local authorities, largely through the imposition of a condition or conditions on the planning consent.

The introduction of PPG16 was something of a two-edged sword. On the one hand the amount of archaeological fieldwork undertaken increased dramatically with more than 1,000 investigations per annum being recorded for most years between 1990 and 2010, more than double the level of work undertaken during the busiest periods in the previous three decades. Around 50% of this work was in urban centres and around 90% of it was undertaken as part of the planning process, the remainder being undertaken principally by universities or local groups.[154] On the other hand a policy of preservation tended to cut down the number of large-scale excavations and at times led to a mixed policy of preservation of certain areas and excavation of only those areas threatened with destruction. This tended to make interpretation

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[151] Principle 16 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development reads: 'National authorities should endeavour to promote the internalization of environmental costs and the use of economic instruments, taking into account the approach that the polluter should, in principle, bear the cost of pollution, with due regard to the public interest and without distorting international trade and investment.' Accessed from Internet 1st April 2018
[152] Schofield and Vince 2003, 14
[153] PPG16:
http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+/http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/ppg16 (accessed 30.3.18)
[154] Darvill *et al* 2019

of those areas which were excavated more difficult as insufficient of the site was excavated to make a valid interpretation. Schofield and Vince highlighted this problem:

> Evaluation and small-scale work opens up only part of a medieval building, whether standing or only consisting of layers in the ground. One consequence will be that most of the useful statement to be made in the future will be based on the larger sites excavated in the 1970s and 1980s.[155]

Nevertheless it has been possible to conduct large-scale work when it has been concluded that preservation by record is the best course. A mixed preservation and part excavation strategy can undoubtedly lead to problems, however, both in interpreting a part-excavated site and also in cases where development plans are changed during the development process. In these circumstances much reliance is placed upon the curatorial archaeologists within councils to 'police' developments. Unfortunately with local government cutbacks over the last decade there is less provision within councils for such work to be undertaken.

In addition the introduction of PPG16 and its polluter-pays principle also led to the introduction of 'competitive tendering' whereby the funder, generally the developer, was encouraged to seek tenders from a range of archaeological organisations rather than the work necessarily being carried out by an archaeological unit specifically set up to carry out work in a particular area. This can lead to a fresh outlook on an area but also can mean that an organisation without detailed knowledge of an area may be less effective. Hence Ayers has commented for Norwich that '…the removal of a single investigating authority…has inevitably led to a loss of coherent endeavour, only partly compensated by a more rigorous research regime.'[156] Here too more pressure is put on the curatorial archaeologists to ensure work is carried out to a high standard and to a consistent research design. In order to achieve this English Heritage encouraged the production of Regional Research Frameworks which include strategies for the urban environment.[157]

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[155] Schofield and Vince 2003, 16
[156] Ayers 2011, 63
[157] Historic England 'Research Frameworks': https://historicengland.org.uk/research/support-and-collaboration/research-frameworks-typologies/research-frameworks/ (accessed 8.10.19)

PPG16 was replaced in 2010 by a new document, Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment (PPS5)[158] which combined guidance for archaeology with that for the built environment.[159] Only two years later, however, PPS5 was itself replaced when guidance on the historic environment was subsumed within an overarching National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). This too was replaced in February 2019 by a revised version.[160]

These replacements for PPG16 provide something of a worry in that they reflect an increase presumption in favour of development and a desire to simplify the planning system so that development was not held up by 'red tape' – which could be interpreted to mean archaeological interest, especially for sites without designation.

Hence NPPF 2019 states that:

Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable document', unless 'the application of policies in this framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for restricting the overall scale, type or distribution of development in the plan area'. A footnote states that 'assets of particular importance' includes 'designated heritage assets (and other heritage assets of archaeological interest).

Nevertheless the most important provisions of PPG16 for archaeological sites are retained although stated in a less forthright manner:

- The importance of heritage assets is recognised '…Heritage assets…are an irreplaceable resource, and should be considered in a manner appropriate to their significance…'[161]
- The value of evaluation of the archaeological resource ahead of the determination of a planning application is stated '…Where a site on which development is proposed

[158] PPS5:
http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20120919201742/http://www.communities.gov.uk/archived/publications/planningandbuilding/pps5 (accessed 12.4.18)

[159] Previously the built environment was covered in a separate document PPG15: Planning and the Historic Environment (1994) which covered 'historic buildings, conservation areas, and other elements of the historic environment'

[160] National Planning Policy Framework, February 2019:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/810197/NPPF_Feb_2019_revised.pdf?_ga=2.267495046.966284064.1566683545-654561829.1564606913 (accessed 8.10.19)

[161] Paragraph 184

includes, or has the potential to include, heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation'[162]

- The requirement for developers to fund archaeological work, including post-excavation analysis and reporting, where archaeological deposits will be destroyed as part of a development is acknowledged '...Local planning authorities should require developers to record and advance understanding of the significance of any heritage assets to be lost...in a manner proportionate to their importance and the impact, and to make this evidence (and any archive generated) publicly accessible. However, the ability to record evidence of our past should not be a factor in deciding whether such loss should be permitted.[163]

- The need for local planning authorities to maintain an up-to-date historic environment record for their area is recognised 'Local planning authorities should maintain or have access to the historic environment record in their area...'[164]

**Urban Archaeology 1970s to 1990s**

The recognition of the need for archaeological work ahead of destruction by large-scale development in the 1970s-80s, and increased financial provision, led to the formation of archaeological units in many of England's historic centres following the model already established at Winchester where the Winchester Excavations Committee, later the Winchester Research Unit, was founded in 1964. Large-scale archaeological excavations were undertaken in major towns such as London, York, Lincoln, Norwich, Ipswich, Canterbury, Southampton, Worcester and Northampton, although the funding, largely from central government (but also from the mid-70s to mid-80s with finance from the Manpower Services Commission designed to provide work for the unemployed), was not inexhaustible, and difficult decisions had to be made. One advantage that this pre-PPG16 phase of excavation did have was that although funding was restricted to those areas which were due for development it was not always necessary to wait until there was a specific scheme or developer which meant that in many cases archaeological work could be undertaken without such a time pressure.

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[162] Paragraph 189
[163] Paragraph 199
[164] Paragraph 187

This increased archaeological work in English towns led to a number of syntheses largely based on the findings, the most influential of which have been those of Carver, Ottaway, and Schofield and Vince.[165] For the pre-Conquest period large-scale excavations of middle Saxon trading settlements (*wics* or *emporia*) at London, Ipswich, Southampton and York established the extent of contact with the continent at that period.[166] Those at *Hamwic* (Southampton) are of particular interest in indicating a planned layout for the settlement with buildings sited along the street frontages (Fig 2.17).[167] Recently Blair has gone further in suggesting that the streets and property boundaries were laid out according to formal grid pattern using a 'short perch' of 15 feet/4.6m.[168]

For the late Saxon period perhaps the two most informative excavations have been those at Winchester and Coppergate, York. At Winchester a planned street system, distinctly different to the street system of the preceding Roman town, arranged on a grid pattern with a main High Street running east-west, back lanes running parallel either side, north-south streets running at right angles to the High Street and intra-mural streets running around the inside the defences, was dated to late 9th century, during the reign of Alfred the Great (Fig 2.18).[169] Biddle and Hill pointed out evidence for similar rectilinear layouts elsewhere, both at sites of previous Roman towns at Chichester, Exeter and Bath, and on non-Roman sites at Wareham, Wallingford and Cricklade. These were a component of Alfred's defences against the Danes but the authors argued were also planned from the outset as fortified towns rather than being merely fortifications and places of refuge in times of danger.[170] The excavations at Coppergate, York, demonstrated the vibrancy of urban living in Anglo-Scandinavian towns at this time. Four properties were laid out *c*930 set at right angles to the street, each a 'standard perch' (16½ feet/*c*5m) width (Fig 2.19).[171] Once laid out the property boundaries survived with only minor changes down to the 20th century.[172]

[165] Carver 1987; Ottaway 1992; Schofield and Vince 1st edition 1994; 2nd edition 2003
[166] Pestell 2011
[167] Morton 1992, 29-40; Andrews 1997, 20-48, 252-56
[168] Blair 2018, 171-73
[169] Biddle 1976a, 129-30
[170] Biddle and Hill 1971
[171] Mainman 2014, 701-17
[172] Hall 1984, 49

For the post-Conquest period the most interesting sites from our point of view are those where it has been possible to excavate a number of complete properties in their entirety. The archaeological investigations at Alms Lane, Norwich, in the 1970s are of particular value in this respect for it was possible to excavate three properties in their entirety here.[173] The site lay to the north of the river Wensum away from the commercial core of the medieval town (Fig 2.20). Its location on the margin of settlement perhaps explains why until the late 13th century the area was waste ground used for quarrying and rubbish dumping. Occupation began on the site in the late 13th century. It was not until the start of the 15th century that plot boundaries could be identified, however. The site was divided into three tenements within which were clay-walled houses (Fig 2.21A). There were many changes within the plots themselves with a gradual increase in building cover and a changeover from clay walling to flint and brick rubble. Buildings were generally side on to the street or set back from the frontage with evidence for upper storeys from the mid-15th century. From our point of view the most important point is that the boundaries first recognised at the start of the 15th century can still be seen on the late 19th century 1:500 Ordnance Survey mapping and indeed survived down to the bombing of the site in 1942 (Fig 2.21B).

An excavation at the small Welsh town at Newport, Dyfed, tells a different story. Strictly speaking it is outside our area of interest but it was founded by an English lord and is essentially an English towns imposed upon Wales. Again three plots were investigated but proved to have been occupied for only a short period. Nevertheless the investigations are of value in documenting the process of laying out plots in detail.[174] A castle and town were founded here around the late 12th- early 13th century by William Fitzmartin. The excavations took place in an area at the northern end of the town close to the site of the original castle (Fig 2.22). Three plots were excavated fronting on to Long Street; each were 55m in depth but their widths varied. The northernmost and southernmost plots, A and C, varied between 14m-18m in width, while the central plot, C, was 11m-14m in width (Fig 2.23). The excavator suggested that the intention had been to lay out three plots, each of the same width (given the dimensions it is perhaps likely that the original intention was to lay out properties 3 perches (*c*15m) wide and 11 perches (*c*55m) deep). However, plots A and C are noticeably wider than

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[173] Atkin *et al* 1985
[174] Murphy 1994

plot B suggesting that they were occupied before plot B encroached upon the intended area for the central plot so that when it too was occupied it had a narrower plot with a width of only 11m by the frontage. The plots were probably laid out at the time of the town's foundation. They were only occupied for a short time however before being given over to agriculture, perhaps by the early 14th cen. The reason for this was presumably the foundation of a new castle to the south around the mid-13th century, following destructive Welsh raiding, which had the effect of pulling settlement towards it.

**Urban Archaeology 2000 onwards**

One important contribution to archaeological thought since 2000 came from an historian with Dyer's publication of his presidential address to the Society for Medieval Archaeology in which he pointed out that archaeological work on small towns in England, which he defined as those with populations of less than 2000, had lagged far behind that of the larger towns, despite the fact that he estimated the population of each to be around the same – at *c*400,000 in total at each.[175] He was anxious that archaeologists should realise the value of work in small towns despite the fact that the results can seem less rewarding than those in larger towns and picked out the contribution of work in the smaller centres towards looking at: urban origins; definitions and characteristics (e.g. differences between a small town and a large village); function and diversity (e.g. did they have a primarily trading or industrial function, or both); and long-term development (e.g. did they decline after the Black Death and related crises of the 14th century).

In his comprehensive survey of Anglo-Saxon England of 2018 Blair suggested that settlements from the 7th century onwards exhibit systematic planning from the 7th century onwards, based on a 'short perch' of 15ft/4.6m in Central and Eastern England and a 'long perch' of 18ft/5.5m in Wessex, with the standard perch of 16½ft/5m representing a compromise between Mercian and Wessex measures. He also surveyed the evidence for towns in the late Saxon period and suggested that a distinction could be drawn between 'true' towns, generally in the east of England but typified by York with densely-packed strip-like buildings fronting on to streets from the 10th century, and other centres which were more

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[175] Dyer 2003

collections of aristocratic enclosures (*hagan*). These *hagan* were often linked to substantial rural estates and generally have evidence of industrial, and possibly commercial, functions, in addition to residential ones, but little sign of high-density settlement until the later 10th - 11th centuries.[176]

A number of recent publications have been of value in looking at urban development. The Society for Medieval Archaeology Monograph *The Archaeology of the 11th century*[177] contained two chapters on urban archaeology. Ten Harkel discussed the impact of the Norman Conquest on Anglo-Saxon towns'.[178] She emphasised the general continuity of development either side of the Conquest with the one major innovation being the imposition of urban castles which acted as defences and administrative headquarters but were also highly-visible statements of power intended to overawe the native population. The rebuilding of cathedrals on a grand scale and the foundation of abbeys could be seen as another expression of power as could the Normans willingness to cause large-scale destruction in clearing sites for urban castles.

The increasing crossover between historical geographers and archaeologists in the study of medieval towns was demonstrated by Lilley's chapter on 'The Norman Conquest and its influences on Urban Landscapes'.[179] He explored the physical impacts that the Normans had on urban landscapes, both in founding new towns and in re-shaping existing ones, using a comparative approach looking for common patterns to show how towns were altered. In doing so he postulated a greater degree of change than evidenced by Ten Harkel. Like Ten Harkel, he emphasised the building of castles as a Norman innovation but in addition he pointed out that whole new urban landscapes were created. One widely-used model was the 'castle town' whereby a castle was situated adjoining to an area of urban activity, commonly comprising a market street with plots for traders and townspeople either side. A similar model was used in existing towns as at Bristol where a castle was placed adjacent to the late Saxon town on its east side but in addition a new market street was built on the opposite side of the castle. At Norwich the castle was built over part of the Anglo-Saxon town entailing the destruction of

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[176] Blair 2018, 70-71, 339-47
[177] Hadley and Dyer (eds) 2017
[178] Ten Harkel 2017
[179] Lilley 2017

streets and houses and a 'new borough' was laid out adjacent to it. These new settlements could be seen as a deliberate attempt by the Normans to refocus an urban core away from the Anglo-Saxon centre. This process was made more explicit at Hereford and Shrewsbury where special privileges were given to those living in the new Norman parts of the town which made them more attractive to incomers. Lilley also discussed castle towns situated at the borders of Norman England at Bridgnorth and Ludlow by the Welsh border and Alnwick by the Scottish border. He sees a common theme of development here where subsequent to the initial town foundation a new area was added with a much larger market place with spacious plots either side, probably at the same time as the granting of borough charters, thus making these towns in potentially volatile areas more favourable prospects for settlement. A third phase comprised the laying out of new streets running off the market places with smaller plots thus maximising the potential for profit from rents (Fig 2.24).[180]

Lilley also provided the urban overview for *The Oxford Handbook of Later Medieval Archaeology in Britain*.[181] He emphasised the value of studying urban forms, most especially for studying poorly documented aspects of medieval urbanism, such as phases of growth in England prior to the 13th century when more widespread and detailed urban records became available. He also questioned the common assumption that 'regularity' in urban form represents planned development while irregularity denotes 'organic' or 'unplanned' urban growth.

## Conclusion

The topics discussed in this chapter have been necessarily wide-ranging. The study of urban topography covers a number of disciplines, principally history, geography and archaeology, and the development of the study of each of these has been examined. Historical studies suffered initially from a narrow legal approach and towns were regarded as something which stood outside the 'normal' feudal order – 'islands in a feudal sea'.

From the 1970s a more flexible approach to the definition of a town became common with the emphasis on economic and social criteria which has allowed a wider range of settlements to

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[180] Lilley also discusses this three-phase model of town formation in Lilley 2002, 140-52
[181] Lilley 2018

come into the urban fold. At the same time researchers such as Hilton and Dyer have emphasised the important role played by small towns. The 1950s saw an increased recognition that the landscape itself was an important document with the publication especially of Hoskins' *The Making of the English Landscape*. Initially this landscape-based approach was largely focused upon the countryside but it was increasingly recognised that towns too could benefit from a similar analysis, especially with the publication of Beresford's *New Towns of the Middle Ages*. Around the same time Conzen, an historical geographer, was pioneering a more detailed approach to studying urban topography, town-plan analysis, which looked not only at the street pattern but at the layout of plot boundaries within the street blocks. Conzen's methodology has been amplified and extended by later historical geographers, especially Slater and Lilley.

Archaeologists were initially slow to contribute to medieval urban studies as excavation tended to be focused upon pre-literate communities. This changed, however, from the 1960s with the work of Biddle who demonstrated at Winchester that archaeology, rather than being the 'handmaiden of history'[182], could give us information about the historic period which was not recorded in documents.

The three approaches – historical, geographical and archaeological - initially took place along divergent lines with limited overlap, exemplified by Hoskins' criticism of Conzen for insufficient consideration of the personalities behind urban growth or the historian's dismissal of archaeology as 'an expensive way of telling us something we already know'.

In addition to looking at developments over time in the major disciplines concerned with urban topography I have reviewed three themes which have a major bearing on my work:

- Cartography, particularly developments in the mapping of towns
- The use of GIS and its value in bringing together spatial data from a wide range of sources in order to provide new insights
- The legislative background to the development of archaeological investigation, particularly the recognition of the need to take the existence of archaeological deposits into account in responding to planning applications

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[182] Title of a paper by Hume 1964

# Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter outlines the methodology which I propose to employ to achieve my aim. Having identified the four broad approaches to the analysis of the topography of English medieval towns I propose to assess their effectiveness and their limitations through a series of case studies and to use the results of these to recommend ways forward in urban topographical studies.

## The Choice of Case Studies

Previous topographical studies of medieval English towns have concentrated on either large towns or small-medium-sized ones – for example Lilley's PhD thesis concentrated on Coventry while Catchpole's was focused upon the small towns of Gloucestershire.[183] I have chosen to look at towns of a range of sizes in order to assess whether there are differences in their location, origins and development, and to bring out variations in their treatment. For the smaller towns I have chosen to look at a variety of settlements in Cheshire because these had received little in-depth study previously and hence there was the opportunity to add to the body of knowledge on the topography of medieval small towns in an under-researched area. As an example of the larger towns I have chosen Northampton, rather than Chester, because there has been a larger amount of archaeological work undertaken on the medieval deposits there and, importantly, most of it has been published or is accessible.

## Approaches to the study of the topography of medieval towns

As outlined in Chapter 1 I have identified four broad approaches to the study of the topography of medieval towns used to varying degrees by the disciplines most commonly involved in research into this topic. Three of these approaches are non-invasive in so far as they don't involve any destructive processes, while the fourth is invasive and can lead to the destruction of the data which are being studied.

Non-invasive techniques

- Landscape analysis

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[183] Lilley 1994; Catchpole 2005

- Documentary evidence
- Town-plan analysis

Invasive techniques

- Archaeological research

## Landscape analysis

Of the four approaches which I have outlined this is the one which most spans the various disciplines and indeed the terms Landscape Archaeology and Landscape History are also used to describe a broadly similar method of reading the landscape.

From the point of view of urban topography I shall look at aspects such as: the location of the town within its wider landscape; the geology of the area and its effects on the settlement; landform and relief; the pattern of communications, particularly roads and rivers; and pre-existing features which have influenced later urban development.

I shall also incorporate at this stage archaeological evidence for the pre-urban background within the surrounding area here as this aspect is commonly researched at a preliminary stage and taken into account by historians and geographers as well as archaeologists. This will include evidence such as the location of major sites in the area e.g. prehistoric hillforts, major Roman settlements, early Saxon settlements and cemeteries etc.

## Documentary evidence

As we have seen, at a number of towns, notably Winchester, sufficient documentary evidence has survived to attempt a total plot history. This is an immense task, however, and one that would only be possible for a small minority of towns with exceptional documentary survival. Even for those towns without such a wealth of documentary evidence a trawl through all of the primary source material looking for topographical information is a large task and generally beyond the scope of a fairly rapid survey. Accordingly my approach will be to use secondary sources such as town histories, and references to the settlement in county histories, together with a small number of sources which are both easily accessible and of particular value for topographical analysis, such as the Domesday Survey. In addition the dates of

borough and market and fair charters are valuable for indicating periods of growth, although they do not necessarily date the foundation of a town or the inception of its markets or fairs. A handlist of known borough charters was compiled by Beresford and Finberg in 1971, and revisions issued in 1981.[184] For the market and fair charters the online 'Gazetteer of Markets and Fairs in England and Wales to 1516' will be an invaluable resource.[185] Place names can also be of value where they give evidence for the topographical characteristics or status of a settlement. Other sources particular to individual settlements will be highlighted in their discussion.

## Town-plan analysis

I have used the term town-plan analysis to describe the study of urban topography using broadly similar techniques to those of landscape analysis but within the town boundaries, and also the more detailed approach looking not just at the street pattern but also the plot boundaries within the street blocks established by Conzen in the 1960s and further refined and modified by his successors, particularly Slater, Lilley and Baker.[186] I have not separated the two as Conzen and his successors used the former as well as the latter.

Conzen envisaged a three-fold process in the reconstruction of a town plan: the definition of the street pattern; the delineation of plot boundaries within those streets; and the plotting of building block plans within the properties. In his original study of Alnwick this worked well, especially as Conzen was concerned in this analysis with the development of the town right up to the mid-20th century. If, however, we are concerned only with the medieval period rather than later periods the delineation of the buildings, and even the building block plans, represented on Victorian mapping does not reflect the situation in the medieval period for the majority of towns which have not been fortunate enough to retain a good proportion of their medieval building stock. This is true for many of the smaller towns but more so for the larger, industrial towns which saw major changes from the later 18th century onwards. Accordingly I shall concentrate on defining the medieval street pattern and plot boundaries. I shall also plot features such as administrative boundaries and major secular and ecclesiastical institutions

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[184] Beresford and Finberg 1973; Beresford 1981
[185] GMFEW website: https://archives.history.ac.uk/cmh/gaz/gazweb2.html (accessed 7.1.19)
[186] Conzen 1960/69, 1968; Slater 1980, 2000; Baker and Slater 1992; Lilley 1994, 2000

both of which give us information about the origins and growth of a town. For my case study of a large town I shall also plot the areas of major intrusion in order to establish what percentage of the area of the medieval town survives to be studied.

Having established the town plan Conzen advocated a further stage of analysis - the definition of plan units looking for areas 'endowed with a measure of morphological unity and/or homogeneity'.[187] He recognised that division into plan units could be undertaken at different levels. For his multi-period study of Alnwick he defined four levels of 'plan-division' but confined himself to one set of plan units for his studies of the medieval phases of Ludlow and Conway.[188] For my case studies I shall define a single set of plan units for the smaller towns but two levels for the large town. Once the plan units had been defined Conzen attempted to assign phases to them. In some cases this can be a reasonably straightforward process, at least to decide in which order plan units were laid out, but in other cases this can be a subjective process so that I shall be putting forward preliminary hypotheses which can be tested against new evidence as it arises.

Conzen's approach has been criticised, most especially by Keene who in a review of *Urban Historical Geography: Recent Progress in Britain and Germany* criticised the lack of use of 'the major contribution from archaeology' and described '…the study of urban morphology…as represented here…' as '…an inflexible mode of enquiry.' He did, however, allow that '…the standards of clarity which he [Conzen] and his followers have set in identifying and depicting the components of urban form forge a tool which should be widely used.'[189] Later works by historical geographers, and indeed some earlier ones such as Slater's collaborations with archaeological work at Hedon and Doncaster, have established a more collaborative approach, however.[190] More recently Schofield and Vince have cautioned against assuming that property boundaries surviving in towns today, or shown on 19th century maps, necessarily preserve medieval outlines.[191]

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[187] Conzen 1969, 128
[188] Conzen 1960, 116-18, Fig 21; Conzen 1969, 122-130
[189] Keene 1990, 241-42
[190] Slater 1985; 1989
[191] Schofield and Vince 2003, 90

## Archaeological research

As regards archaeological research I shall concentrate upon those aspects of archaeological excavation which shed light on the topography, origins, and development of the settlement. In particular I shall consider aspects such as the excavation evidence for the date of streets, plot boundaries and defensive lines, and the extent to which medieval property boundaries do survive down to the 19th century and beyond. As regards finds there is a long-established pottery type-series for Northampton which I propose to map the extent of settlement at key periods.

A first task is to assemble a plan of archaeological excavations within each town within my case study areas. For the Cheshire case study towns, as with many small towns, the amount of archaeological work is small. CHER have supplied a shapefile of the location of all of their 'Events' within my case study towns which can be load directly into GIS. In addition they have supplied a copy of their 'Event Reports'. From this I was able to pick out all of the 'invasive' events (i.e. excavations, evaluations and watching briefs) and request scanned copies of the reports on these.

For Northampton all of the archaeological work up to 1985 is summarised in a RCHM(E) volume.[192] The majority of excavations since that date have been carried out by Northamptonshire Archaeology who have supplied me with copies of their reports, including preliminary reports of work not yet published. I have also contacted other archaeological contractors who have worked in the town for copies of unpublished reports.

## GIS and Cartographic Sources

A particular feature of my proposed approach is the use of GIS bring together the different spatial sources. Allied to this is my use of a wide range of cartographic sources.

The advent of desktop GIS and the increasing availability of data in a format which can be loaded into a GIS has greatly enhanced the ease with which landscape studies can be carried out and allowed them to be undertaken to a greater depth.

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[192] RCHM(E) 1985

In particular:

- A wide range of maps and plans of a particular town dating to different periods and created for different reasons can be registered to the National Grid quickly and accurately (depending on the accuracy of the original survey) and can be overlaid one on top of another for easy comparison.
- Features from archaeological excavations and historical sources can also be georectified enabling them to be overlaid on the map data for detailed comparison.
- The drawing of digital plans is far quicker than hand-drawing; mistakes can be easily rectified; and changes due to new sources becoming available at a later date or to revised interpretations can be easily incorporated
- Plans of different towns, and individual features within individual towns, can be easily viewed at the same scale to compare and contrast
- Maps of adjacent areas, such as Ordnance Survey maps, can be combined together to form a seamless layer rather than having to be examined separately. This can be an enormous time saving both in locating copies of maps and in their subsequent analysis.

I shall use ArcGIS for my thesis.[193] ArcGIS, produced by the Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI), is an industry standard software and comprises a number of separate but integrated applications. I shall largely use ArcMap to assemble, compare, interrogate and depict spatial data from archaeological, historical, geographical and cartographic sources. In addition I shall trial the use of ArcScene to create visualisations of the topography of a number of my case study towns. Like ArcMap, ArcScene allows the researcher to overlay different layers of data but in this case in a 3D environment.

In addition to creating data myself I shall use spatial data from a wide range of sources. I have identified the following sources available Digimap as of value:

- Ordnance Survey MasterMap
- 20th century Ordnance Survey mapping at 1:1250, 1:2500 and 1:10000 scales

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[193] Currently ArcGIS version 10.4.1

- Late 19th century – early 20th century Ordnance Survey maps and plans at 1:500, 1:2500 and 1:10560 scales
- Ordnance Survey Land and Height data available at 5m intervals: Ordnance Survey Terrain 5 contours and DTMs[194]
- British Geological Survey solid and drift geology data, 1:10000 scale

Environment Agency

- LiDAR: LiDAR composite digital terrain model, 1m interval

I propose in addition to make use of the following earlier historic mapping:

- Ordnance Surveyors' Drawings of the late 18th- early 19th century available from the British Library[195]
- Scanned copies of historic maps of my case study towns. These will be discussed in the chapters on the individual towns.

The Ordnance Survey did not adopt a single grid system for Great Britain as a whole (the National Grid) until after 1938, following the recommendations of the Davidson Committee. Before this different projections were used for individual counties or groups of counties.[196] Accordingly to allow maps earlier than this to be used in a GIS system they need to be georeferenced to the National Grid. The pre-1938 Ordnance Survey mapping is available in a georeferenced from Digimap. The Ordnance Surveyors' Drawings are also available in a georeferenced format from the British Library. The remaining historic maps of Northampton and my Cheshire case study towns I shall georeferenced myself using ArcGIS functionality.

Although the modern Ordnance Survey MasterMap would be the most accurate mapping to use for plotting landscape features, many of the details of the medieval layout of the towns, especially the larger, industrial ones, have been swept away by late 19th – 20th century development. Accordingly I shall follow the majority of practitioners of town-plan analysis in

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[194] Digital Terrain Models
[195] British Library 'Ordnance Surveyors' Drawings opened for reuse': https://blogs.bl.uk/magnificentmaps/2013/05/ordnance-surveyors-drawings-opened-for-reuse.html (accessed 7.1.19)
[196] Harley 1975, 4-5, 17-20

using the late 19th century detailed Ordnance Survey plans for the plotting of plan elements. These early Ordnance Survey plans are both an important historic document in their own right and also, since they are the earliest mapping to depict the townscape with reasonable accuracy, are the most appropriate to be used as a base map on to which other spatial data can be attached. I have used the largest scale versions of these plans available. For Northampton and one of my Cheshire case study towns (Macclesfield) they are available at 1:500 scale, while for the remaining Cheshire case study towns the most detailed scale is 1:2500. These Ordnance Survey plans are in general the earliest accurate survey available. They were, however, generally compiled by chain survey rather than using a theodolite and they also pre-date the introduction of the National Grid so their correspondence to modern mapping is not exact. Accordingly I shall address the issue of the accuracy of their original survey and the accuracy of their registration to the National Grid in Chapters 4 and 5.

The pre-Ordnance Survey maps are a useful source of spatial information, particularly in eliminating those streets and areas laid out between the time of the earliest mapping and the Victorian mapping and, for the larger towns, to reconstruct elements which have been removed by the time of the late 19th century mapping. These maps do need to be treated with care, however. One issue is the accuracy of the survey and what has been recorded; another is the circumstances of their compilation. Are they genuine new surveys or are they copies of earlier maps? And for what purpose were they intended? In discussing the historic maps I shall follow Hindle in distinguishing between *planimetric accuracy* (i.e. the extent to which features such as streets and boundaries are shown in correct location to each other in 2D) and *topographic accuracy* (i.e. the extent to which all features within an area are shown).[197] Hence the 17th century Speed town maps have a poor planimetric accuracy so that when georeferenced they are a poor fit with 19th century and modern maps. In general, however, they do show the street plan of the town and its major buildings with a good degree of accuracy. Again I shall address the issue of accuracy of survey of these maps in chapters 4 and 5.

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[197] Hindle 1998, ix

## Periodisation

I am well aware that the use of labels such as Bronze Age, Iron Age, Anglo-Saxon, Medieval is an inadequate way of dividing past events into periods with its mixture of technological innovations, ethnic descriptions and imprecise periods. Unfortunately dating techniques are not sufficiently precise to divide events up by centuries and some of the terms are so well embedded in the literature that I have decided to continue with older methods of description. I have used the term 'Medieval town' to describe the period between the 7th century when towns first arose again in England down to *c*1540 before the major changes wrought by the dissolution of the monasteries. In discussing the towns in detail, however, I have used the term Anglo-Saxon to describe the pre-Norman conquest period reserving medieval for the post-Conquest period. I have used Anglo-Saxon rather than Early Medieval except where I refer to continental towns of this period. For the Prehistoric and Romano-British periods I have used the terminology and date ranges given in Historic England's Period's List.[198]

The terms I have used are as follows:

Mesolithic *c*10000BC – *c*4000BC

Neolithic *c*4000BC – *c*2200BC

Bronze Age *c*2600BC – *c*700BC

Iron Age *c*800BC – AD43

Romano-British AD43 - 410

Anglo-Saxon/Early Medieval 410 - 1066

Early Saxon *c*410 – *c*650

Middle Saxon *c*650 – *c*875

Late Saxon *c*875 – 1066

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[198] FISH 'Chronology': http://www.heritage-standards.org.uk/chronology/ (accessed 2.2.19)

Medieval 1066 - 1540

Norman 1066 – 12$^{th}$ century

Late Medieval 1348 - 1540

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# Chapter 4: Case Study I - Selected Cheshire towns

## Introduction

As discussed in Chapter 3, I chose to examine a selection of Cheshire towns as an example of smaller and medium-sized medieval urban centres as they are relatively under-studied, especially in comparison with towns of this date further to the south. There are particular problems in studying Cheshire's medieval towns. Cheshire was a palatinate county administered by the Earls of Chester rather than the Crown. Accordingly from the late 13th century at least it was not subject to taxation from central government and hence the taxation documents, such as the poll taxes and lay subsidies, which are normally used for analysis of comparative size and wealth both with settlements within the county and elsewhere in England, are not available to us. The county did have its own taxation system, the Mize, which was established in the mid-14th century and this can tentatively be used to give some idea of the relative wealth of settlements within Cheshire, including the urban centres (apart from Chester which was not included), although they do need to be treated with a great deal of caution as they are collected by township which would include both urban and rural areas. I have used the figures from the Mize of 1405, calendared by Booth, which survives in the most complete form.[199]

The county was held by Edwin, Earl of Mercia prior to the Conquest. From 1071, however, Hugh d'Avranches was made Earl of Chester and as one of the Marcher Lords was given wide powers over his domain. The earldom stayed within his family until 1237 when, with the death of the last of the direct line, John the Scot, the earldom reverted to the crown. The best known of the Cheshire earls was Ranulf de Blundeville who held the earldom from 1181-1232, and was one of the chief magnates in England. Once the earldom reverted to the crown it tended to be granted by the King to his eldest son. Edward of Woodstock, the Black Prince, the eldest son of Edward III, was particularly energetic in raising money from the earldom which he was granted in 1333 when he was only three and held until his death in 1376.[200]

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[199] Thornton 2000, 63-66, 76-77; Booth 1985
[200] Husain 1973, 83-97; Hewitt 1967, 5-7

**Urban Centres in Cheshire**

Twenty-three settlements in Cheshire can be identified as having some urban characteristics in the medieval period (Fig 4.1). They comprise:

*County Town*

The city of Chester was the dominant urban centre in the County and indeed in the North West.

*Settlements with borough charters*[201]

Altrincham: charter granted by Hamon de Massey *c*1290

Congleton: charter granted by Henry de Lacey 1272x4

Frodsham: charter granted by Ranulf de Blundeville, Earl of Chester, 1208x1215

Knutsford: charter granted by William de Tabley 1292 (he makes an agreement with his overlord, Sir Richard Massey of Tatton to divide the burgages in Knutsford between them)

Knutsford Booths: as Knutsford but burgesses of Knutsford Booths distinct from those of Knutsford

Macclesfield: charter granted by Ranulf de Blundeville, Earl of Chester, *c*1220

Over: charter granted by Walter Deaur, Abbot of Vale Royal, 1294x1306

Stockport: charter granted by Robert de Stockport *c*1260

Tarporley: charter granted by Reginald de Grey 1281x1298

Of these nine settlements, seven can be confidently identified as true towns in the medieval period. However, Over perhaps never truly developed as an urban centre (although there do appear to be burgages laid out for a length of around 500m either side of Delamere Street), while Knutsford Booths is best regarded as a minor adjunct to Knutsford.

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[201] Data from Beresford and Finberg 1973; Beresford 1981

*The salt towns*

Middlewich; Nantwich; Northwich

Salt was an important commodity and the Cheshire towns were second only to Droitwich in Worcestershire in importance for inland salt production. All three settlements had Romano-British antecedents although not necessarily in exactly the same location.[202]

These settlements are perhaps the most likely candidates to have developed some urban functions before the Norman conquest because of the importance of their industrial base. Hence it may seem surprising that none of them possessed borough charters but early urban centres often did not acquire borough charters as they were held to be 'boroughs by prescription' (i.e. they had been boroughs since 'time immemorial'). All three were clearly functioning as towns from at least the 13th century, and probably earlier.

*Settlements with market and fair charters (in addition to the settlements above, many of which also possessed market and fair charters)*

Aldford: granted to Wakelin de Arderne 1254

Audlem: granted to Thomas de Aldelym 1295

Bromborough: granted to Abbot and Convent of Chester 1278

Burton: granted to Walter de Langeton, Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield, 1299

Malpas: granted to Philip and Isobel Burnel 1281

Nether Alderley: granted to Wakelin de Arderne 1254

Of these Malpas can be confidently identified as a town (burgages are mentioned in the 13th century); Audlem and Burton possibly so. The others are more likely to be, at best, market villages.

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[202] Nevell and Fielding (eds) 2004-5

*Others*

Halton: claimed to be a borough, with a market and fair, in the 14th century; adjacent to Halton castle

Murifeld: burgages mentioned here in the 14th century. It lies within the parish of Over but its site is not securely identified.

Sandbach: an Anglo-Saxon ecclesiastical centre with a rectangular market place by the church

Tintwistle: burgages mentioned in the 14th century, although settlement does not appear urbanised

*Summary*

Accordingly, in addition to the city of Chester, we can identify eleven settlements as definite towns (Altrincham, Congleton, Frodsham, Knutsford, Macclesfield, Malpas, Middlewich, Nantwich, Northwich, Stockport, Tarporley), while there are a further five possible urban centres (Audlem, Burton, Halton, Over and Sandbach). Of these sixteen settlements, four were in the hands of the Earl of Chester by the 13th century and the remainder, apart from Burton which was held by the Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield and Over held by Vale Royal Abbey, were in seigneurial hands. Such a dearth of ecclesiastical lordships is unusual. In Staffordshire, Slater considers that there were twenty-two settlements which could be regarded as urban in the medieval period, of which eleven belonged to ecclesiastical lords.[203]

I have chosen four settlements for detailed analysis:

- Frodsham and Macclesfield – settlements in contrasting landscapes but both founded by the 6th earl of Chester in the early 13th century. This gives me an opportunity to establish whether towns founded by the same landowner exhibited similarities in their urban form.
- Middlewich – one of the three salt towns; chosen as an example of a primarily industrial town

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[203] Slater 2005, 24

- Malpas – chosen as an example of a small town which never received a borough charter and yet had indications of urban life

A general point about the Domesday Survey entries for the case study towns, and indeed for Cheshire as a whole, is worth making here. All four are recorded as worth a higher amount in 1066 than at 1086 and are recorded as being 'waste' at some point in the intervening period, as are many other Cheshire settlements. What does this mean? Conventionally the description of many Cheshire manors as being waste has been taken to be due to their destruction by the Normans after an outbreak of rebellion in the county in 1069.[204] More recently Matthews has suggested that the term 'waste' implies land which was 'in a state where no surplus was to be had' rather than being in a state of wholesale destruction.[205] Given that all of the settlements had recovered to some extent by 1086 this is perhaps the more likely explanation.

**Cartographic evidence**

As discussed above the base mapping used for delineation of the medieval street plan and plot boundaries was the detailed Ordnance Survey 1st edition mapping. For Macclesfield there were 1:500 scale plans of 1873-4 but for the other three settlements the most detailed mapping available was the 1:2500 scale plans of 1870-75.

As regards pre-Ordnance survey mapping few of the Cheshire towns were surveyed before the 19th century. The county is fortunate, however, in having an almost complete set of tithe maps dating to between 1836 to 1851 which are of special value as the majority pre-date the coming of the railways.[206] I obtained scanned copies of the tithe maps for my case study towns from Cheshire Archives and Local Studies and registered them to the National Grid using ArcGIS.

The earliest map of the county, Burdett's County Map of 1777, and those portions of the Ogilby road maps covering Cheshire published in his Britannia of 1675, although of too small

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[204] See for example Stenton 1971, 603-05; Crosby 1996, 33
[205] Matthews 2003, 53-70
[206] Cheshire Archives and Local Studies launched a pioneering website in 2008 to provide online access to the county's tithe maps registered to the National Grid and 'stitched together' to form a seamless layer. Cheshire Archives and Local Studies. 'Cheshire Tithe Maps Online'. https://maps.cheshireeast.gov.uk/tithemaps/ (accessed 7.1.2019)

a scale for detailed analysis, are useful in showing the road pattern of the area around our settlements in the 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries.[207]

## Frodsham

### Landscape analysis

Frodsham lies close to the northern border of Cheshire on the former main road between Chester and Warrington, now the A56, around 15kms (10 miles) from each. The building of the M56 motorway immediately to the north of the town in 1987 means that it is now bypassed by heavy traffic. The town is sited on low-lying land, between 10m-25m AOD, at the foot of the sandstone hills of the mid-Cheshire ridge. It lies 1km south of the river Mersey, which until recently formed the border between Cheshire and Lancashire, and immediately west of the river Weaver, which was tidal from its confluence with the Mersey as far as Frodsham Bridge. The marshes of the Mersey estuary lie to the north and west, and the valley of the river Weaver to the east. To the south of the town the ground rises sharply towards Overton, reaching a height of 150m AOD at Beacon Hill which forms part of the northernmost extent of the sandstone hills of the mid-Cheshire ridge; to the west a small hamlet, Netherton, lies at the foot of the hill (Fig 4.2).

The dramatic changes in height (for Cheshire at least!) give an opportunity to test the depiction of the relief of the area in 3D using ArcScene. Two 'off the shelf' options are available for this:

- Ordnance Survey Terrain 5 data (5m intervals)
- LiDAR DTM data (1m interval)

Figs 4.3 and 4.4 show the results of draping the 1<sup>st</sup> edition Ordnance Survey plan over the two data options. Using the Ordnance Survey data (Fig 4.3) gives a rather 'blocky' appearance especially in the area of Overton Hill (to the left of the plan). The plan using the LiDAR data gives a more precise image (Fig 4.4). The majority of the more subtle variations it picks up, however, are relatively recent phenomena; the striations on the slopes up to Overton Hill

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[207] Burdett 1777; Ogilby 1675

which look rather like ridge and furrow are 20<sup>th</sup> century roads and properties, while a diagonal stripe at the bottom right of the plan is the line of the M56 motorway. Hence in some ways the Ordnance Survey-derived plan is a better depiction of the relief although if this was a rural area where we were looking for historic earthworks the LiDAR-derived plan would be preferable.

As regards geological data fault lines run immediately to the west and east of the town. Hence the town lies largely upon sandstone of the Helsby Sandstone Formation, but to the west the manor house lies upon sandstone of the Wilmslow Sandstone Formation, while the area to the south and east, including the village of Overton, sits upon Tarporley Siltstone (Fig 4.5). The Tarporley Siltstone is free draining, while the Helsby Sandstone is hard and cemented. Accordingly water percolates through the siltstone, emerging as springs at the boundary with the sandstone. In general the area is free of superficial deposits except the west corner of the town which sits upon Glaciofluvial Sheet Deposits (sand and gravel). The area of marsh to the north of the town comprises Tidal Flat Deposits (clay, silt and sand) (Fig 4.6).

If we look at the road pattern the Roman road from the legionary fortress at Chester to the fort and civilian settlement at Wilderspool, near Warrington, would have run through the Frodsham area but its exact line cannot be traced. It is perhaps generally assumed that it ran along the line of the later main road through the town. This road does, however, take a major diversion at Netherton turning through an angle of 60˚ to the north east to enter into Frodsham. If the road originally continued in a straight line it would pass along Howey Lane, running around the lower slopes of Overton Hill to Overton where the parish church of Frodsham was located (Fig 4.2). The road may then have descended down a ridge marked by Townfield Lane to cross the river Weaver around Frodsham Bridge as does the later road. Alternatively there may have been an earlier crossing of the Weaver further upstream. It may be significant that there is a diversion similar to that at Netherton at Sutton Weaver to the east of the river Weaver where the road turns through an angle of 110˚ to the west. If the Roman road had continued in a straight line from Sutton Weaver it would run straight towards Overton.[208]

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[208] This 'route' is shown as 'Roman road? Alternative' on Fig 4.2

The township of Frodsham lies within the ecclesiastical parish of Frodsham which covered eight townships, including Frodsham Lordship.[209] The boundaries of the townships of Frodsham and Frodsham Lordship are inextricably linked with small parts of each one situated within larger portions of the other, so that there can be no doubt that two once formed a single entity (Fig 4.7).[210] Doubtless this division came about as a result of the creation of the borough of Frodsham in the early 13th century, with the town and its fields, largely around the town, becoming Frodsham, and the rural area, largely to the south but also encompassing the manor house, constituted as Frodsham Lordship. The intertwined nature of the two townships is emphasised further by three small areas which are recorded as 'Common to Frodsham and Frodsham Lordship'. At Domesday Frodsham lay within Ruloe Hundred; the Cheshire hundreds were reorganised in the 12th century, however, and as a result of this it was placed within Eddisbury Hundred.[211]

*Archaeological Evidence for pre-urban background (Prehistoric – 6th century AD)*

Given Frodsham's location overlooking the river Mersey, which is likely to have acted as a tribal boundary at an early period in the same way as in the later period it marked the boundary between Lancashire and Cheshire, we can expect the area to have been of importance from the prehistoric period onwards, although the lower-lying areas may have been too marshy for permanent settlement.

Apart from a small number of chance finds, however, the first evidence for settlement in the area comes from the presence of three defensive enclosures on the sandstone ridge overlooking the town: the hillforts at Woodhouses, 2km to the south, and Helsby, 4km to the south-west, and a smaller 'promontory fort' at Bradley, 2km to the south-east. Although hillforts are traditionally regarded as generally of Iron Age (c 800BC – AD43) date, recent excavations at Helsby and Woodhouses revealed a more complicated, and interesting, story. At both sites the initial phase of rampart construction was thought to be of Bronze Age date, while at Helsby a final phase of rebuilding was dated to the sub-Roman period, perhaps as late

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[209] Laxton 2002
[210] The boundaries between the two has been digitised from the 1st edition Ordnance Survey plans
[211] Phillips and Phillips 2002, 8, 9a, 27a

as AD530.[212] The presence of three forts in close proximity, certainly in the Iron Age, and possibly as early as the Bronze Age, argues for an importance for the area, as well as the need to defend the area against incursions across the river Mersey. The only evidence for Roman activity in the area is the presumed line of the Roman road discussed above.

**Documentary evidence**

The place name tells us little about the settlement. Frodsham first occurs in the Domesday Survey as *Frotesham*, meaning Frod's village or estate.[213] The Domesday Survey does, however, give vital evidence as to the importance of Frodsham at the time of the Norman conquest and earlier. It states that:

> Earl Hugh holds Frodsham. Earl Edwin held it. 3 hides paying tax. Land for 9 ploughs. In lordship 2 [ploughs]; 1 slave; 8 villagers and 3 smallholders with 2 ploughs. A priest and a church have 1 virgate of land. A winter mill; 2½ fisheries; meadow, 3 acres; woodland 1 league long and ½ league wide; 2 enclosures; ½ salthouse in Wich [Nantwich?] that serves the hall. The third penny from the pleas of this Hundred belonged to this manor before 1066. Value then £8; now £4; it was waste.[214]

Hence Frodsham is held by the Earl of Chester and was previously in the possession of Edwin, Earl of Mercia. It was perhaps earlier in the hands of the kings of Mercia, a possibility enhanced by the observation that the township immediately adjoining Frodsham to the east is called place name Kingsley within the parish; it too is within Frodsham parish. Hence Frodsham's large value in 1066, one of the largest in Cheshire, and the presence of a hall, and of a priest and church, as well as interests in a salt house would indicate that by the 11th century, and probably much earlier, Frodsham was the administrative centre of a large comital, and earlier royal, estate.[215] In Roelau Hundred only Weaverham, from where the salt industry at Northwich was administered, was worth more (£10), while nearby manors such as Helsby and Kingsley were assessed at considerably less (12s and 30s respectively).

The Frodsham of the Domesday Survey, however, was not located in the area of the later town. The church serving the township lies at Overton suggesting that the Mercian estate centre was also located here and the hypothesis that the original line of the Roman road ran

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[212] Garner 2016
[213] Dodgson 1971, 222
[214] Morgan (ed) 1978, 1.8
[215] Higham 1993, 152-5

through Overton, if true, is further support. Furthermore the discovery of a pre-conquest grave-cover at the church, indicating that it was used for high-status burial, and, perhaps, its dedication to St Laurence imply that the church at Frodsham originated as a minster church serving the large parish of Frodsham.[216]

If we turn to the post-Conquest period, by 1086 Frodsham was, held by the Earl of Chester, Hugh de Avranches. Its value had been reduced from £8 to £4 which would, as discussed above, indicate that it had suffered during the general turmoil at the time of the Norman takeover but, as we have seen above, does not necessarily mean total destruction. We have little information about Frodsham between 1086 and the founding of the borough in the early 13th century. There is, however, an 18th century engraving of the ruined manor house/castle which lay immediately west of the site of the medieval town. This shows a long hall with rounded Norman-style windows suggesting that the comital estate centre had been moved down to this area at some point between the between the late 11th to late 12th centuries (Fig 4.8). It is difficult to determine the exact status of the manor house/castle. By the mid-14th century the buildings were in a poor state of repair. In 1351-2 the kitchen and stable attached to the hall, and a palisade around the manor to the west, were repaired. By 1354-5, however, the hall was propped up and in 1357-8 it collapsed completely and a new hall was built. In 1358-60 a new kitchen was built and a water mill and the tower of the manor were repaired.[217] There are no sign of major defences at the site nowadays but it has been heavily landscaped so there may have been more substantial earthworks at an earlier period. The mention of a tower, hall and kitchen suggest a complex of some pretension but by the 13th-14th century at least it appears to have been more of a fortified manor house rather than a true castle. The manor house burnt down in 1654. The ruins were cleared away and replaced by Park Place, a Georgian mansion, built around 1750.[218]

The greatest change in the history of the settlement at Frodsham comes in the early 13th century. Frodsham was granted a borough charter by Ranulf de Blundeville, the sixth earl of Chester, at some time between 1208 and 1215 and it was doubtless at this time that a new town was founded on the site of the present town. The burgesses were granted a burgage in

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[216] Harris and Thacker (eds) 1987, 289; Higham 1993, 152
[217] Dodd 1987, 13-14; Stewart-Brown (ed) 1910, 252
[218] Dodd 1987, 58

the town for which they paid an annual rent of 1s, an acre of land in the town fields, and were free of toll throughout the earl's territories, but bread had to be baked in the lord's ovens, and corn ground at the lord's mills. An extent of the manor of 1280 tells us that there were 110 burgages at this time and this was presumably the number laid out at the foundation of the town; by 1492 the number of burgages had increased slightly to 115.[219] There is no mention of a town assembly in the foundation charter but repairs to a 'House of the Burgesses' are recorded in 1315 suggesting that some form of assembly was being held by this time.[220]

It is likely that the foundation of the town was accompanied by major earthworks designed to prevent flooding of the new settlement and its fields. Dodd has identified a natural break of slope immediately to the north of the settlement which was reinforced in the medieval period and acted as a barrier between the town and its fields and the marshland beyond; it was known as 'le morewalle'. Beyond this were further sea defences designed to prevent encroachment of the tide damaging the marsh grazing and hay. These were repaired by the Earl of Chester in the early 15th century but continued to need periodic attention; in 1793 and 1802, the river breached the embankments and flowed over the marshes to within a few hundred yards of the centre of the town.[221] The building of the M56 motorway has removed evidence for these breaks of slope but the division between town, marsh and the river Mersey can be seen clearly on Burdett's map of 1777 (Fig 4.9).

The fate of the town was of course inextricably linked with that of the manor of Frodsham. The manor remained in the hands of the Earls of Chester until the last earl died in 1237, after which date it reverted to the crown along with the earldom. Thereafter it remained in royal hands throughout the medieval period, apart from a short time from 1278-83 when it was granted to Dafydd ap Gruffydd, brother of Llewelyn, Prince of Wales, before his rebellion led to his death. The town and manor were administered by a bailiff, often a local man, based at the manor house.[222]

If we turn to look at the economy of the town the earliest record of a market dates to 1278 when, during his brief tenure of the manor, Dafydd ap Gruffydd was granted a mandate to

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[219] Dodd 1987, 13, 25; Beamont 1881, 43
[220] Barraclough (ed) 1988, No. 371; Dodd 1987, 14
[221] Dodd 1987, 6, 49; Ormerod 1882, Vol 2, 53
[222] Dodd 1987, 14-15; Ormerod 1882, Vol 2, 47-50

move the market day from Sunday to Tuesday.[223] We can assume that a weekly market and annual fair were held from the time of the granting of the borough charter and almost certainly considerably earlier as Sunday market days were frowned upon by the 13th century.[224] Hence it is likely that the market was originally held on a Sunday in the area of the church at Overton and moved down to the 'new' town when it was founded.

Medieval deeds record a wide range of trades and occupations in the town including mercers, blacksmiths, butchers, basket-makers, skinners, dyers and carpenters.[225] The mention in the borough charter of a grant of 1 acre of land in the town's fields for each burgage reminds us that agriculture would have played a part in its economy, as it did for the majority of medieval English towns. The town was surrounded by three main fields, Ship Field, The Bottoms and Long Field.[226] In addition the townsfolk kept sheep on the pasture on the hills above the town and rented land for grazing and hay from the manor demesne.[227]

These activities would have been common in most medieval towns but Frodsham also had the advantage of a port and fishing industry. The river was tidal up to around the point where Frodsham Bridge was built and a small port developed there. In 1280 tolls from ships landing at the port were valued at £10, almost twice the value of the burgage rents.[228] It was at this point that coastal ships could be loaded with material shipped down the river Weaver in lighter crafts. The area was important for the transhipment of salt in the 18th-19th centuries and this may have been the case at an earlier period. The name Ship Street is likely to be connected with the port for it leads through Ship Field, one of the town's open fields, to the river Weaver. In 1315 there is mention of a grant of land in 'le schipelendingis'.[229] There was

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[223] GMFEW website: https://archives.history.ac.uk/gazetteer/gazweb1.html (accessed 7.1.19)
[224] Britnell 1981, 212
[225] Dodd 1987, 28-9
[226] Dodd 1987, 30; field names on the tithe apportionment show that Ship Field lay between Main Street and Ship Street, The Bottoms between Main Street and Church Lane, and Long Field between Fluin Lane and Townfield Lane.
[227] Dodd 1987, 30-31.
[228] Dodd 1987, 13
[229] Dodgson suggested that Ship was a corruption of Sheep but, as Dodd has pointed out, given the reference to 'le schipelendingis' (i.e. the ship landings) it is more likely to refer to ships (Dodgson 1971, 222; Dodd 1987, 11).

in addition a fishing industry. Fisheries at Frodsham are mentioned in the Domesday Survey and the bailiff's accounts of 1315 refer to payments for fisheries.[230]

The wealthier townsfolk could make money – or lose it! – by taking on the 'farm' of the town.[231] Similarly the mills, the town oven, the fishing rights in the Rivers Mersey and Weaver were generally leased out. There was also a healthy trade in the purchase, sale, leasing and mortgage of burgages; by 1342 the Boydel family had acquired eight burgages. There is also evidence for the sub-division of burgages; hence some time before 1357 Henry, son of Elias, was in possession of a half burgage.[232]

Another source of revenue would have been the various mills. The Domesday survey records a *winter mill* at Frodsham and by 1280 there were three mills which formed part of the manorial holdings but were farmed out. The Ogilby road map of 1675 marks a mill to the west of the manor house, while the Burdett map of 1777 shows two mills in the same area on a stream running north into Frodsham Marsh. These are perhaps the two watermills located in Castle Park which were pulled down when the railway was constructed.[233] A large pond in front of the manor house is marked on the tithe map and may be connected with the mills. The building of a windmill is recorded in the 14th century.[234] Its location is not given but a windmill is shown to the east of the town on the Ogilby map.

It is striking that the parish church remained at Overton with no attempt being made to found a new church or chapel within the new town. The church was restored 1880-2 at which time much of the evidence of its building history was lost. Enough remains, however, to adduce a broad outline. Nothing survives of the late Saxon church apart from the architectural fragments mentioned above. The Norman church, largely of late 12th century date, comprised a nave, chancel and side aisles. The work suggests a good level of interest in the church at this period before the foundation of the new town. The building was largely remodelled in the 14th century when the aisles were rebuilt, the chancel lengthened and the tower built, and there was further rebuilding in the 15th century. Doubtless there was a need for extra

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[230] Dodd 1987, 5.
[231] i.e. they leased the town for a fixed sum of money, hoping to make a profit from the various rents and tolls
[232] Dodd 1987, 24
[233] Ormerod 1882, Vol 2, 53.
[234] Dodd 1969, 332.

accommodation once the new town was founded. There is no surviving evidence of 13th century work, though the late 19th century restoration may have removed any which had existed.[235] There was a leper hospital at Frodsham by 1237-8.[236] Its site is not known but it would have lain outside the settled area.

As Cheshire lay outside the national taxation system we have little evidence to compare the value of its towns nationally, or even with other towns within Cheshire. Ranulf de Blundeville, who granted Frodsham its Borough Charter, was also responsible for the creation, or at least the promotion of the town of Macclesfield. In 1237 the manor of Macclesfield was worth £67 compared to Frodsham's valuation of £126 but what percentage of these figures is contributed by the towns themselves is uncertain. In the Cheshire Mize of 1405 Macclesfield paid the sum of 36s 3d and Frodsham paid 36s. These are surprisingly small sums, especially as they covered the whole parish; possibly as royal manors Frodsham and Macclesfield received a beneficial tax assessment.

There is evidence of a decline in the value of the manor of Frodsham from the 13th century onwards. Its value of £126 in 1237 had fallen to £81 in 1280 and £76 by 1346-7. This decline has been attributed partly to mismanagement but also to the town's geographical situation, constrained as it was between the hills and the marshes of the Mersey estuary, with a shortage of arable land.[237] The Black Death (1348-9) and other pestilences of the 14th century took their toll as well; in 1351 more than half of the burgages were said to be empty and the burgesses were petitioning to be set free from the farm of the lord's oven which they had taken over for a sum of 30s.[238]

There is some evidence of continuing decline; William Smith, writing at the end of the 16th century described the town as 'but one long street, with a castle of stone at the west end thereof' and says that Frodsham 'was also of late years, by Sir John Savage, made a market

[235] Richards 1973, 157-8; Pevsner and Hubbard 1971, 220
[236] Stewart-Brown and Mills (eds) 1938, 34
[237] Booth and Dodd 1978, 36-7
[238] Dodd 1987, 26-7

town', implying that Savage, by this time lessee of the Manor of Frodsham, had had to re-found the market.[239]

**Town-plan analysis**

The most obvious feature of Frodsham's medieval town-plan is its broad market street, Main Street (formerly High Street) with long, narrow burgage-style properties lying either side. Two minor roads lead off, Ship Street to the north and Church Street to the south. As we have seen there was no church or chapel within the new town. The church of St Lawrence lay around 800m uphill within the village of Overton, indicating that this was the earlier settlement. A manor house or castle lay immediately to the south west, while a port lies *c*1km to the north east on the river Weaver.

Fig 4.10 shows the plot boundaries for Frodsham, Overton and the port at Frodsham Bridge, as well as the location of the Manor House/Castle; while Fig 4.11 shows the plot boundaries for the medieval town in detail. The boundaries have been reconstructed from the 1st edition Ordnance Survey 1:2500 maps of the 1870s. I also used the tithe map for Frodsham of 1844, principally to eliminate features introduced between the two dates. The major change between the two maps was the construction of the Chester to Warrington railway line through the town in 1850. This largely avoided the buildings within the town but did run through the back end of quite a large number of the medieval properties. I have shown the line of the railway on the figures to show the areas that have been lost. I overlaid the boundaries created from the 1st edition maps for the central area on the modern MasterMap survey (Fig 4.12) and on a crop of the tithe map which I had registered to the National Grid (Fig 4.13). The correspondence between the 1st edition plot boundaries and those boundaries which had survived down to the modern period was almost exact giving confidence in the planimetric accuracy and registration to the National Grid of the 1st edition plan. The correspondence to the tithe map was less good indicating that while the tithe map could be used as a general guide its planimetric accuracy was not sufficient to be used as a precise indication of the position of features.

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[239] Ormerod 1882, Vol 1, 138

Analysis of the plot boundaries has allowed me to define ten plan units which I have divided into three phases (one of which is divided into two sub-phases), to which tentative dates have been assigned (Fig 4.14).

*Phase 1 (7th century? – 12th century?) Mercian/comital estate centre at Overton*

Phase 1 comprises the Anglo-Saxon royal, and later comital, estate centre and associated minster church at Overton (Plan Unit I) served by an early, possibly Roman, road route running up Howey Lane and Pinmill Brow, and perhaps back down Townfield Lane. The fact that all three of these lanes are named on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey 1:2500 plans is a useful confirmation that they are early in date for, as Rackham has observed, '...almost any rural road with its own proper name is likely to be of at least medieval antiquity.'[240]

We cannot be sure of the settled area at this date. We can be reasonably sure that the minster church was on the site of the later St Lawrence's church. The estate centre and ancillary settlement are likely to have been immediately to the south of the church; certainly the ground falls away gradually to the north. By the mid-11th century we can anticipate that the ancillary settlement had grown into a village. I have plotted the internal boundaries shown on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey plans largely to demonstrate the irregular nature of the settlement pattern, although of course there is no guarantee that any of these boundaries are of Anglo-Saxon date. What is more likely to survive from this period is the pattern of roads and lanes around the settlement.

As an administrative and ecclesiastical centre the settlement at Overton is likely to have attracted ancillary settlement and incipient marketing as dues and produce were brought to the estate centre, giving encouragement to the idea of establishing a town but the settlement pattern is very different from the ordered pattern of a 'planned' town. A market, on Sunday in order to take advantage of people attending church, may have been held in the churchyard, or if more room was needed the triangular area to the south may have been an early green which could also serve as the site of a market. Alternatively this may have been the site of the hall, mentioned at Domesday, and ancillary buildings of the estate centre. There may also have

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[240] Rackham 1986, 275

been an attempt to establish traders and craftsmen here – might the rather more regular plots at the west of the settlement area represent burgage plots?

The date of this phase is equally uncertain. It dates from at least the 11$^{th}$ century but could go back much earlier. Higham has pointed out that St Laurence, a continental martyr, was familiar to English churchmen by the 680s and suggests that the foundation of the minster church and its associated territory could date back to the 7$^{th}$ – 8$^{th}$ centuries.[241] Is it possible that there was a transference of power, and settlement, from the hillfort at Helsby whose defences were refurbished at the start of the 6$^{th}$ century?

Overton's life as an estate centre and a 'proto-town' came to an end in the 12$^{th}$ – early 13$^{th}$ centuries with the establishment of a manor house/castle and the foundation of a 'new' town at the bottom of the hill, though it did of course continue to operate as an agricultural village and also as an ecclesiastical centre.

*Phase 2 (12$^{th}$ century)*

Phase 2 comprises the building of a manor house/castle (Plan Unit II) on the lower-lying land to the north of Netherton and the removal of the estate centre from Overton to this new site. The date of this is uncertain. As discussed above the early 18$^{th}$ century prospect view by the Buck brothers appears to indicate Norman work here suggesting perhaps a 12$^{th}$ century date for this phase. A lane leads off Howey Lane to the manor house site and may have formed the original entrance to the manor house if its inception preceded the diversion of the main road.

*Phase 3 (early 13$^{th}$ century – c1540)*

I have distinguished two sub-phases (Fig 4.14). Sub-phase 3A comprises the initial laying out of a 'new' town early in the 13$^{th}$ century. This is composed of a broad market street (Plan Unit III), now called Main Street but formerly High Street, lined on either side with burgages (Plan Unit IV), together with the port by the river Weaver (Plan Unit V). The foundation of the town would have also required the undertaking of a number of major engineering projects: the building of sea defences to prevent flooding in the lower-lying areas of the town; the diversion of the main road to run through the town; and the construction of the bridge over the

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[241] Higham 1993, 152, 154.

river Weaver. All of these projects may have been undertaken at this time, although if the original route from Overton crossed the river at the same point as the later one it may be that there was a bridge at an earlier date. I am suggesting that the building of port facilities occurred at the same time as the laying out of the town as it would seem sensible to maximise opportunities for profit from the outset. As with Plan Unit I the boundaries within this plan unit may be later but do serve to suggest that a rather looser settlement pattern than within the main settlement.

Many towns or individual plan units within towns were laid out to a specific measurement, either a common plot width or a common plot acreage, based on a standard perch measurement of 16½ feet (*c*5m), although these common measurements can become masked by subsequent division or amalgamation. The plot widths either side of the market street at Frodsham do not show a great deal of conformity. There is, however, evidence that the original layout of the town was based on a perch-based measurement. The length of street frontage on the north side of Main Street is 1808 feet/551.1m and that on the south side is 1810 feet/551.7m (see Fig 4.11). This is almost exactly equivalent to 110 perches.[242] Furthermore if we were to assume that the original intention was to lay out plots of 2 perches width – the width given for plots at Altrincham, the only Cheshire town for which a plot width is stated in the borough charter – this would be the equivalent of 110 burgages – the number given for Frodsham in the survey of 1280.[243] This figure does include side roads leading off from the market street so it would not have been possible to lay out plots of exactly 2 perches width but we are apparently seeing an initial perch-based layout which may have been adjusted when the burgage plots were actually taken up for development in the same way as Murphy has suggested for Newport, Dyfed.

Sub-phase 3B comprises Plan Unit VI and Plan Unit VII. Plan Unit VI is composed of burgage properties fronting on to Church Street which leads off from the south side of Main Street up to the church at Overton. On the north side are a few properties of shallow depth but on the south side are properties more similar in size to those on Main Street, with a back lane behind. Plan Unit VII comprises properties fronting on to Ship Street. These are assigned to a

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[242] 1 perch = 16.5 feet x 110 = 1815 feet (553.2m)
[243] For Altrincham see Slater 1981, 212

later sub-phase as they lie away from the main street and also if the argument that the original 110 burgages all lay along the main street is correct they would post-date 1280. It is perhaps unlikely, however, that they date from long after this time given evidence for the dereliction of properties in Frodsham in 1351 after the Black Death. Some of the properties along Ship Street do not contain buildings within their plots by the 19th century. Had these been converted to agriculture as the settlement shrank, or perhaps they represent speculative plots laid out but never taken up for settlement. The documentary evidence of both the division and amalgamation of properties would perhaps explain the lack of property boundaries of our hypothesised 2 perch (*c*10m) width, although this may always have been more of an ideal than a reality.

### Archaeological research

Very little archaeological work has been carried out in Frodsham and that which has been carried out has been disappointing; investigations of burgage plots on the north side of Main Street in the 1980s failing to reveal any features of medieval date.[244]

## Macclesfield

### Landscape analysis

Macclesfield is situated on the eastern side of Cheshire close to its boundary with Derbyshire and Staffordshire, and on the boundary between two landforms, the Cheshire plain to the west and the foothills of the Pennines to the east. In the latter area lay Macclesfield Forest, one of the largest areas of woodland in England at the time of the Domesday Survey.

The medieval town lies at around 150m AOD on a promontory overlooking the valley of the river Bollin to the east, although the river itself was largely culverted as it passed below the town when the North Staffordshire Railway was constructed in the mid-19th century (Fig 4.15). Another watercourse, the 'Water of E' (later Dams Brook), ran west-east below the town to the south, flowing into the Bollin around Water's Green. This too was largely

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[244] CHER 984/0/17

culverted in the 18th-19th centuries when this area became the centre of Macclesfield's silk industry.[245]

The town lies at a nodal point on the road network at a point where the north-south road between Stockport and Leek is intersected by an east-west route between Knutsford and Buxton.[246] Other roads lead in from Chester to the west, Congleton to the south-east and Chapel-en-le-Frith from the north east.[247]

In the area of the town the solid geology comprises pebbly sandstone of the Chester Pebble Beds Formation (Fig 4.16).[248] To the east, within the area of Macclesfield Forest, the ground is heavily faulted but the most common rocks are mudstone, sandstone and siltstone of the Millstone Grit Group; to the west is sandstone of the Wilmslow Sandstone Formation. Within the area of the town the solid geology is overlain by glaciofluvial deposits (sand and gravel), with alluvium lining the Bollin valley immediately to the east and the valley of the 'Water of E' to the south (Fig 4.17). To the east of the river Bollin there is glacial till but the higher ground, above around 200m AOD, is free from superficial deposits. To the west are further glaciofluvial deposits and glacial till.

*Archaeological evidence for pre-urban background (Prehistoric – 10th/11th century AD)*

Although there are a small number of prehistoric burial mounds and finds of stone axes and hammers recorded from the area there is nothing to suggest any particular importance for the Macclesfield area in prehistoric times. For the Romano-British period there is even less, with finds being restricted to a few stray coins and other finds.[249]

A notable series of stone crosses with cylindrical shafts, of 10th-11th century date, have been found in the area around Macclesfield including five within the town itself. Three of these, currently in West Park, were moved there from outside the town in the mid-19th century. The other two are in the centre of the town, in St Michael's churchyard, although whether this is

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[245] Only short lengths of these watercourses are shown on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey maps. I have, however, been able to reconstruct their course using the 1st edition map together with the tithe map of 1840 and the areas of alluvium shown on the Geological Survey maps.
[246] Now the A523 and A537 respectively
[247] Now the A54/B5392, A536 and B5470 respectively
[248] Formerly known as the Bunter Pebble Beds
[249] CHER (http://rcplive.cheshire.gov.uk/) and PAS (https://finds.org.uk/database) databases (checked 13.01.16)

their original position is uncertain.[250] Their significance is uncertain; they have been suggested to be way- or boundary-markers.

**Documentary evidence**

The township of Macclesfield lay within the parish of Prestbury which covered thirty three townships and was one of the largest medieval parishes in England. At Domesday the township lay within the hundred of Hamestan but reorganisation of the hundreds of Cheshire in the 12th century led to minor boundary changes and the renaming of the hundred as Macclesfield hundred.[251]

Our earliest reference to Macclesfield itself comes in the Domesday Survey:

> Earl Hugh holds Macclesfield. Earl Edwin held it. two hides paying tax. Land for ten ploughs. In lordship one plough; four slaves. A mill which serves the hall; woodland six leagues long and four wide; seven enclosures; meadow for the oxen. The third penny of the hundred belongs to this manor. Value before 1066, £8, now 20s; it was waste.[252]

The entry has much to tell us about pre-Conquest Macclesfield. The mention of a hall and mill mark it out as a major estate centre belonging to the Earls of Mercia and the fact that the Earl's share of the profits of the hundred were attached to it suggests that it was his main residence in East Cheshire in which case there is likely to have been a chapel within the complex also.

The place name tells us little about the settlement. At Domesday it is called *Maclesfield*. The final element *feld* means 'open land' and the first element may refer to an Old English personal name 'Macca' or 'Maccel' – hence 'Macca's (or Maccel's) Open Land' presumably in reference to the clearing of woodland in the area.[253]

The Domesday Survey does not record a church or priest anywhere in Hamestan hundred. There can be little doubt, however, that there was a minster church at Prestbury in the late Saxon period serving the surrounding area, indeed its place name '*Priests burh*' implies such

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[250] Higham 1993, 172; Bailey 2010, 36, 83-4, 126-7
[251] Laxton 2002
[252] Morgan (ed) 1978, 1.25
[253] Dodgson 1970, 113-4

a function as does its large parish.[254] Doubtless it is for this reason the post-Conquest church at Macclesfield never became a parish church but was a dependent chapelry to the church at Prestbury.

The existence of an important ecclesiastical centre at Prestbury in the later Anglo-Saxon period may also provide a context for the series of distinctive crosses with cylindrical shafts mentioned above. Almost all are located within the medieval parish of Prestbury. It has been suggested that they functioned as way- or boundary markers as, unusually, few are found within churchyards, those now within St Michael's churchyard being an exception.[255]

Macclesfield's assessed value of £8 in 1066 was matched in East Cheshire only by Adlington which was also a major comital centre (Higham suggests that it was the residence of the earl's steward).[256] Surrounding townships such as Gawsworth, Butley and Henbury had much lower values (20s, 30s and 40s respectively).

In common with many of the Cheshire townships Macclesfield's value at 1086 had suffered a major decline – to 20s – and it is recorded as having previously been waste. It is hard to see this as anything other than devastation at the time of the 'Harrying of the North', in particular 1069-70 when William marched on Chester.[257]

As we have seen after 1237 the earldom of Chester was retained by the sovereign or granted to the Princes of Wales although on occasions Macclesfield was granted by them to their consorts, as in 1270 when the future Edward I, then Prince of Wales, passed the town and manor to his wife Eleanor.[258]

It seems likely that the Norman manor house was located not on the ridge where the medieval town stood but further down the slope around 600m in an area named on a map of 1787 as 'Castle Fields' (Fig 4.15).[259] Ormerod records that:

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[254] Higham 1993, 174
[255] Higham 1993, 171-4; Bailey 2010, 33-7
[256] Higham 1993, 72
[257] Higham 1993, 189-91
[258] Earwaker 1877, 459-60
[259] Field Map of Sutton in Prestbury: CALS DCH\R\30

Near the Congleton Road is a place called Castle Field, which was probably the site of the local palace of the Earls of Chester. In this a circular mount or tumulus is still remaining.[260]

The plan of the site as it appears on the 1787 map and Ormerod's mention of a 'circular mount or tumulus' suggests that the manorial estate centre may originally have included a motte and bailey castle.

The town benefited from royal interest. During the 13th century the demesne land was consolidated to form the 'Lord's Park' which lay to the south of Park Lane between the roads to Congleton on the west and Leek on the east (Fig 4.15).[261] A new manor house, stables and accommodation for officials were built and the whole was surrounded by a fence. Edward I and Queen Eleanor stayed at the manor house on a number of occasions and Edward issued numerous royal orders 'from Macclesfield' during his campaigns against the Welsh 1277-84.[262] The Black Prince also showed a close interest in his demesne land, attempting to increase his income from the park with the breeding of war horses and rearing of cattle. By the mid-14th century the park contained over 300 cattle, two stallions and thirty mares.[263]

Macclesfield was granted a borough charter by Ranulf de Blundeville, the Earl of Chester, early in the 13th century. The traditional date of the grant is 1220; he did, however, grant a burgage here *c*1206 so that either his granting of a charter was earlier in date or he was encouraging urban growth by granting burgages before granting an official charter. His intention was presumably to foster an already existing incipient trading and craft community, and to encourage growth and the recruitment of entrepreneurs from the surrounding area, in order to increase his own revenues and to provide a market for the sale of goods from his own local estates.[264] Ranulf's charter does not survive but a new charter was granted by the future Edward I in 1261 and probably incorporates many of the same provisions. The burgesses were given the right to form a merchant guild and were exempt from tolls throughout Cheshire, apart from those levied on salt at the wiches. They paid 12d a year for their burgages, of which there were said to have been 120 originally but this figure had increased to 123 by

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[260] Ormerod 1882, Vol 3, 742
[261] The western and eastern boundaries are a little uncertain. I have for the moment put them as running as far as the Congleton and Leek roads but this may need amendment.
[262] Davies 1961, 11
[263] Davies 1961, 11-12; Booth 2003, xxiv-lxiv
[264] Barraclough 1988, Charter 341

1298-9.[265] They were allowed to pasture their beasts in the forest and to take wood for housing and fencing; however, their corn had to be ground at the lord's mill and bread baked at the lord's oven.[266]

Why was a borough founded at Macclesfield? As we have seen Macclesfield was a comital estate centre from at least the Late Saxon period. Such estate centres commonly attract marketing and craftsmen so there may already have been sufficient economic activity to suggest that a new town foundation would be successful. In addition it was a major route centre in an area where there were few competitors so that an urban foundation here must have been deemed to have a reasonable chance of success. Tonkinson has pointed to a marked increase in the revenues of the manor between 1183 and 1247/8 suggesting a process whereby the success of the manor encouraged urban growth which in turn contributed to the further success of the manor.[267]

What was Macclesfield's success as a town based upon? Although there is no mention of a market and fair or fairs in the 1261 charter there can be no doubt that there would have been provision for these from the outset – if they were not already taking place before the 13th century. Certainly fairs are recorded from 1241 onwards and in 1286 Macclesfield was complaining that the market and fair at Stockport were damaging those at Macclesfield.[268] Writing at the end of the 16th century William Smith records that the market day at that time was Monday and that there were two annual fairs.[269] Tonkinson suggests that most of the traders attracted were from an area of around 30 miles to the north and west of the town, with few visitors from the east due to the difficulty of reaching the town from this side and to the dominance of market centres such as Glossop and Charlesworth in the area of the Peak. Competition from the north and west came from Stockport, already mentioned, from the nearby boroughs of Knutsford and Congleton, and from markets at (Nether) Alderley, Wilmslow and Sandbach (the last two unlicensed).[270]

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[265] Booth (ed) 2003, 43
[266] Davies 1961, 8-10; Hewitt 1967, 69; Tonkinson 1999, 3
[267] Tonkinson 1999, 4
[268] GMFEW website: https://archives.history.ac.uk/gazetteer/gazweb1.html (accessed 7.1.19); Hewitt 1967, 70
[269] Ormerod 1882, Vol 1, 138
[270] Tonkinson 1999, 84-5

In addition Macclesfield was the centre of administration for the hundred, manor and forest which would have brought both officials and visitors to the settlement. Meetings were originally held at the medieval manor house but in 1357 the Black Prince ordered the building of a market hall/court house at the south end of the Market Place where meetings could be held. The manorial account rolls for 1361-2 show that the lord of the manor could make a considerable income from the market hall: shops below the hall were rented out and during the two annual fairs the hall itself was hired by the cloth sellers for a considerable sum. Rents for further shops in the market place are also recorded.[271]

The allotment of arable land in the borough charter reminds us that a proportion of the town's economy, like that of the majority of English medieval towns, was based on agriculture. Each burgess was allotted an acre of land within the town's fields which lay to the west of the town and had the right to dig peat in Danes Moss which lay to the south and to pasture sheep, horses and cattle on the common to the east of the river Bollin. Within the borough areas of orchards, gardens, a grange and a barn with a fold are recorded.[272]

As in other towns the burgesses were free to sell, sub-divide or amalgamate their plots and there are many documents of the 14th-16th centuries documenting this process. Some burgesses sought to bring in revenue by leasing or selling portions of their properties, while major landowners and gentry families such as the Macclesfields, Stanleys and Savages sought to amalgamate plots to build impressive town houses, a process doubtless made easier after the population reduction consequent upon the Black Death and other associated pestilences of the 14th century. The combination of adjacent plots to provide space for these major townhouses is documented in the Danes Moss Book of 1509, of which a copy made in 1611 survives.[273] Each burgess was entitled to cut peat in a strip a rod or rood in width.[274] By 1509, however, many of the holdings had been combined indicating that the original burgages to which they belonged had been combined. There were three holdings of four burgages, two of three burgages, thirty-five of two burgages and twenty-nine of a single burgage giving a total of 117 burgages, close to the original figure of 120 burgages when the town was founded.

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[271] Booth ed 2003, 45, 47; Hewitt 1967, 70; Tonkinson 1999, 46; Turner undated 4
[272] Tonkinson 1999, 11
[273] I have used a transcript of the 1611 document made in 1939 in Macclesfield Library Local Studies Collection (C/GAWS/D)
[274] Rod or rood = 5½ yards

The Danes Moss Book is also of value in giving street names for some, though not all, of the properties. Most frequently mentioned are Chestergate, Wallgate (Mill Street), and Jordangate together with a smaller number on Dog Lane (Stanley Street), 'South side of the Church' (Churchside) and Kiln Street - whose location is uncertain. It is perhaps strange that there is no mention of the Market Place, apart from two burgages said to be 'Near the Cross'. Possibly some of the Jordangate properties actually lay in the Market Place and in any case locations are given only for around two-thirds of the properties.

A chapel, dedicated to All Saints, was founded in 1278 by Queen Eleanor, wife of Edward I, in the centre of the settlement on the east side of the Market Place. It remained a chapel dependent upon the church at Prestbury until 1835 when it was created a parish church for Macclesfield, by which time it was dedicated to St Michael. Little remains of the medieval structure as there were two major phases of rebuilding, in 1739-40 and 1898-1901. What do remain are parts of the nave and the Savage chapel built between 1501-7 by Thomas Savage, Archbishop of York, which contains an outstanding set of monuments, principally to the Savage family. A further chapel, the Legh chapel was founded *c*1422 but rebuilt in 1620.[275] Interments would originally have taken place at Prestbury but at some point were allowed in the chapelyard.[276]

All Saints was not the first chapel in Macclesfield, however. It is likely that there would have been a chapel attached to the comital estate centre. Certainly there are records of a chaplain ministering in the royal chapel at Macclesfield from 1245-7 onwards, while a document of 1240-57 reserves rent of land in Macclesfield to the Chapel of St Mary and a charter in the British Museum records a St Mary's Place in Chestergate.[277] Does this mean that when the town was established the Earl founded a chapel within the town, and this was taken over by the Crown, or was the chapel at the manor house? Possibly the chapel foundered and was re-founded by Queen Eleanor or she may have replaced an existing institution, or if the existing chapel was located at the manor house Eleanor perhaps provided an additional chapel within the town.

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[275] Richards 1973, 205-10; Pevsner and Hubbard 1971, 265-7; Ormerod 1882, Vol 3, 751-2
[276] Davies 1961, 16
[277] Stewart Brown and Mills (eds) 1938, 90-1; Turner undated, 3; Dodgson 1970, 117

Important in the history and economy of the town were the local gentry who lived in or around the town. Foremost amongst these were the Macclesfield family. The family first appear in records of the mid-13th century. Jordan de Macclesfield was the keeper of the manor, park and forest *c*1325-1331 and held many properties in the borough, giving his name to Jordangate.[278] The best known of the Macclesfields, however, was John de Macclesfield, an officer at the court of Richard II, who built a fortified town house, known as Macclesfield Castle, on Mill Street, close to the Market Place, in the late 14th to early 15th centuries.[279] The house passed from the Macclesfield family to the Staffords, Duke of Buckingham, in the mid-15th century, from whom it passed to the Stanley family, Earls of Derby in the late 16th century.[280] In 1585 William Smith described it as a 'huge place all of stone in a manner of a castle – but now gone much to decay.' It was set back from the street and was square in plan with two wings and five turrets and occupied four burgage plots on the east side of Mill Street.[281] All that survives today is a much-patched stone wall running along Backwallgate which would have formed the northern boundary wall of the property.

Little now survives of the town's medieval buildings. The Guildhall stood in the Market Place next to the chapel. The original was perhaps a timber building but in the 16th century this was replaced by a stone building set an above an arcade of three shops shown in a contemporary drawing.[282] This building survived until 1823 when it was demolished and replaced by the present Georgian town hall. Next to the Guildhall was the 'King's Bakehouse' where the townspeople had to bring their bread to be baked. This building was demolished in 1870 when the town hall was extended.[283]

A market cross stood in the Market Place but was dismantled and removed and removed in the 18th century. Its base was re-assembled and placed in West Park in the 19th century but has more recently been put back on the south side of the Market Place.[284]

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[278] Tonkinson 1999, 108
[279] For its location see Fig 4.20
[280] Davies 1961, 19-20
[281] Turner 1987; Ormerod 1882, Vol 3, 745-8
[282] See Davies 1961, frontispiece
[283] Ormerod 1882, Vol 3, 741
[284] Ormerod 1882, Vol 3, 744

The 'Town Well' lay on the north side of Back Wall Gate, opposite a side entrance into Macclesfield Castle. It was set within a building roofed with stone with steps leading down to the water. By the 19th century it had been walled up and replaced by a pump.[285]

There was also a Leper Hospital, recorded in the mid-13th century. Lepers were cared for in isolated hospitals or spittle houses. An alley named 'Spitalfields' between Newgate and Roe Street to the south of the medieval town may mark the location of the hospital, although Davies suggests that the name comes from Macclesfield's fame as a silk town as the weaving of silk was originally carried out by Huguenot refugees in Spitalfields, London.[286]

A grammar school and chantry chapel were founded in the town in 1502 by Sir John Percyvale. The chantry priest acted also as the schoolmaster. The school survived the suppression of chantry chapels by Edward VI and obtained an additional endowment and charter in 1552 constituting it 'The Free Grammar School of King Edward VI in Macclesfield'.[287] Until 1748 the schoolhouse was situated behind All Saints chapel overlooking the river Bollin in an area still known as School Bank in the 19th century.[288]

**Town-plan analysis**

Macclesfield exhibits the greatest amount of changes of level within its settled area of all my Cheshire case studies. Accordingly I decided that it was the most suitable to trial the use of detailed contour mapping to aid my town-plan analysis. Fig 4.18 shows contours at 1m intervals generated from LiDAR survey. These are of course modern contours but hopefully do largely reflect the medieval topography. The town can be seen to lie at the southern tip of a north-south ridge of land. The highest point lies at 155m AOD. The ground falls away sharply to the east down to the Bollin valley (at 125m AOD) and to also to the south down to the valley of the 'Water of E' (135m AOD). I have divided the medieval occupation at Macclesfield into three broad phases, although it must be admitted that the first two are tentative.

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[285] Ormerod 1882, Vol 3, 741
[286] Turner undated, 5; Davies 1961
[287] Davies 1961, 210-2
[288] Ormerod 1882, Vol 3, 742

*Phase 1: Late Saxon  (10<sup>th</sup>- late 11<sup>th</sup> centuries?)* Fig 4.19

We do not know when a settlement was first established at Macclesfield. All that we can say is that it was well-established by Domesday. As we have seen it would have included a major comital estate centre. Gardiner has recently discussed high-status Late Saxon settlements.[289] He concludes that they were generally enclosed by a fairly insubstantial ditch, sometimes with a formal entrance, and that they contained a large hall or manor house with ancillary buildings, and often a church within or immediately adjacent to the site. As discussed the parish church within the Macclesfield area was at Prestbury but we can perhaps anticipate a private chapel within the estate centre and the gradual development of a settlement servicing the estate centre. The late Saxon settlement area has not been located. Its most likely site, however, is in the area of the later town, at the highest point overlooking the Bollin valley. It is possible also that the curving line of Derby Street (formerly Barn Street) preserves a fossilised boundary. The highest point within the area lies to the north of Derby Street immediately south of Stanley Street and this may mark the core of the pre-Conquest settlement. This hypothesis is given greater credence by the observation that the road leading into the town from the west, Chestergate, is deflected around 500m before it enters the settlement. If its line before the deflection is continued it would run directly to the highest point. Accordingly we can perhaps suggest a settlement bounded on its west and south sides by the curving boundary of Derby Street, to its north by Chestergate and to its east by Market Place/Mill Street giving a settlement area of around 2.5ha.

*Phase 2: Norman (late 11<sup>th</sup> - late 12<sup>th</sup> centuries?)*

As we have seen documentary and cartographic evidence suggests that the Norman estate centre lay not in the area of the hypothesised Anglo-Saxon centre and medieval town but around 500m to the south. Possibly the Norman earls wished to distance themselves from the earlier settlement. The detailed contour data generated from the LiDAR survey (Fig 4.18) indicates that although the Norman estate centre sits below the level of the earlier settlement it is still located in a strategic position at the tip of a spur of land overlooking the 'Water of E'.

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[289] Gardiner 2011, 199-207

It is likely that Anglo-Saxon settlement on top of the ridge continued into this period and gradually recovered from devastation at the time of the Norman Conquest so that by beginning of the 13$^{th}$ century there was a sufficiently thriving community to encourage the Earl of Chester to create a borough.

*Phase 3: 13$^{th}$ century – c. 1540*

This phase comprises the newly-founded borough of the early 13$^{th}$ century. Fig 4.20 shows the street pattern and plot boundaries defined from the earliest detailed Ordnance Survey mapping, 1:500 plans of the 1870s. The Macclesfield tithe map of 1840 does not show property boundaries but was of value in showing the road, river and stream pattern immediately preceding the greatest phase of industrial growth at Macclesfield.

The plot of the historic boundaries has been used to divide the medieval town into fifteen plan units, twelve of which (Plan Units I – XII) are likely to date to the initial laying out of the town (Sub-phase 3A) with the other three (Plan Units XIII-XIV) later in date (Sub-phase 3B), although still within the medieval period (Fig 4.21).

<u>Sub-phase 3A</u>

If my hypothesis is correct the late Anglo-Saxon settlement was located in the south-west corner of the later town and was incorporated within it. The foundation of the town was marked by a campaign of public works: the line of Chestergate was perhaps adjusted so that it avoided the earlier settlement and entered a newly laid out wedge-shaped market place (Plan Unit I). This formed the heart of the settlement with the chapel and chapelyard of All Saints adjacent to its south-east corner (Plan Unit II). Although the documentary evidence suggests that the chapel was not founded until 1278 its central position indicates that there may have been an earlier chapel on the site dating back to the founding of the borough. The small size of the plot is a reminder that the chapel was dependent upon the parish church at Prestbury and that most of the burials of the parishioners would have taken place there. Nevertheless the lavish nature of the Legh and Savage chapels built in the 15$^{th}$ - early 16$^{th}$ centuries demonstrates that All Saints was an object of veneration to the major families within the town as well as a vehicle for the display of their wealth and prestige.

Properties fronted on to the market place to the east (Plan Unit III which included the Guildhall and King's Bakehouse) and to the west (Plan Unit IV). Plan Units V and VI comprise properties behind Plan Unit IV fronting on to the north and south sides of Chestergate, the main road into the town from Chester to the west. Their intersection with the properties within Plan Unit IV is a jagged one, suggesting that land was taken out of the Market Place properties to create further properties along Chestergate. Plan Unit VII is composed of properties fronting on to the market place to the north but also properties fronting on to Mill Street to the west, while Plan Unit VIII demarcates properties further down Mill Street beyond Backwallgate the northernmost of which were later combined to form Macclesfield 'Castle', John de Macclesfield's mansion house. Plan Unit IX comprises most of the former late Anglo-Saxon settlement. The pattern of plot boundaries is less dense here. Properties front on to Mill Street to the east but also on to Stanley Street to the north and the curving line of Derby Street, which possibly preserves the line of a boundary to the late Saxon town, to the south and west. The properties away from the Mill Street frontage are rather larger and Derby Street's former name of Barn Street perhaps suggests that this area was largely given over to agricultural holdings.

Plan Unit X comprises properties on the west side of Mill Street beyond Stanley Street as far down as the present Exchange Street where a marked change of slope demarcates the southern boundary of the medieval town. Plan Unit XI is a restricted, sloping site to the south of Churchside. Given its nature this might have been regarded as a later addition but given that it is mentioned in the Danes Moss Book I have placed it in the initial town phase. Plan Unit XII is composed of properties fronting on to both sides of Jordangate, the main road into the town from the north.

Sub-phase 3B

I have placed three plan units in a later sub-phase. Plan Units XIII and XIV, comprising properties fronting on to King Edward's Street (formerly Back Lane) and Brunswick Street (formerly Goose Lane) respectively, are regarded as post-dating the initial town layout as King Edward's Street appears, as it former name implies, to have originated as a back lane access to properties fronting on to Chestergate which then acquired properties of its own, while Brunswick Street probably originated as an access lane down to the river. This interpretation is strengthened by the observation that the Danes Moss Book does not mention

properties on either Back Lane or Goose Lane. Plan Unit XV is the only plan unit to which we can give a precise date. It is composed of the site of the Grammar School and Chantry founded in 1502 on the eastern edge of the town overlooking the Bollin valley.

In addition to these new areas of settlement there were changes within the plan units which made up the original town. The Chestergate plots are likely originally to have run the full length of the area between King Edward's Street to the north and Stanley Street to the south but later, given the need for further properties on a restricted site, plots fronting on to the latter two streets were carved out of the tail end of the Chestergate properties. Similarly Church Street may originally have acted as a back lane to properties on Mill Street but later acquired properties of its own. There were also alterations to the market place. There may have been a market cross here from the foundation of the borough but the Market Hall was not erected until the mid-14th century and the manorial account rolls of 1361-2 make it clear that it included shops on its ground floor and that further shops had been erected within the market place also. The account rolls make it clear that this was a valuable source of revenue for the landowner.

Interestingly the building of the Market Hall takes place after the Black Death. Perhaps this was an attempt by the Black Prince to boost prosperity in the town at a difficult time, an early example of a regeneration project. The addition of extravagant side chapels to All Saints chapel and the foundation of a Grammar School and chantry chapel on an adjacent site perhaps indicates that Macclesfield did not suffer from the consequences of the Black Death and other pestilences of the 14th century to such an extent as many other centres, or if it did it soon recovered.

It is difficult to see a standard size for the burgages. All we can say is that if these were originally intended to see 2 perches (10m) width this would suggest that there should be frontages of 1200m in the original town and a case can be made for this if we assumed that burgages were laid out, or intended to be laid out, along the principal streets mentioned in the Danes Moss Book (Chestergate, Jordangate, Market Place, Mill Street, Churchside, Stanley Street).

**Archaeological research**

The only archaeological work known to have been carried out in Macclesfield took place close to the town hall in the Market Place in 1987. Archaeological deposits were encountered at a depth of *c*0.2m below the ground surface.

# Middlewich

**Landscape Analysis**

Middlewich is located centrally within Cheshire, on the Cheshire plain, to the east of the mid-Cheshire ridge. It lies at a nodal point on the road network at the point where the A530, a major north-south road connecting Nantwich and Warrington, is crossed by the A54, an east-west route from Chester to Buxton. Other routes lead south-east to Sandbach (A533) and north-east towards Knutsford (B5081) (Fig 4.22). Many of these routes originated as either Roman roads or as medieval tracks for the carriage of salt.

The river Croco runs south-north through the town, joining the river Dane around 800m to the north. The medieval town lay either side of the river, though principally on its west bank. The ground is relatively flat falling from a high point of around 35m AOD either side of the settlement to below 30m AOD by the banks of the river (Figs 4.23, 4.24).

The Bedrock Geology is Northwich Halite Member (formerly known as the Lower Keuper Saliferous Beds) over the entire area of Middlewich and its surrounds. As its name implies this is the source of the salt exploited in the medieval period. The superficial geology is variable. The majority of the town lies upon glacial till; there are, however, deposits of alluvium by the banks of the river Croco, and at the west end of the town there are river terrace deposits to the north of Wheelock Street and glaciofluvial sheet deposits to the south (Fig 4.25).

In the medieval period Middlewich was a township within a parish of the same name which comprised fifteen townships. The parish is a large one, 5435ha, but the township is extremely small, just 15ha. The township boundaries follow the river Croco at the north east and a stream leading into the Croco at the south east. The remaining boundaries are, however, 'artificial' in so far as they follow a rather zigzag line which bears no discernible relation to

any topographical feature (Fig 4.23). The evidence would suggest that the river Croco originally formed the boundary between Newton township on its west bank and Kinderton-cum-Hulme township to the east but that at some point a new township of Middlewich was formed by taking out territory from Newton township.

In 1086 the township was part of Middlewich (*Mildestuic*) Hundred but reorganisation of the hundreds in the 13th century saw the focus shift to Northwich, after which time it became known as Northwich Hundred.[290]

*Archaeological Evidence for pre-urban background*

<u>Prehistoric</u>

A number of finds of 'high-status' artefacts in and around the later settlement area, especially stone and bronze axes may attest to prehistoric activity in the area. Better evidence comes from the later Iron Age when finds of briquetage (poorly-fired ceramic vessels used in the production and transportation of salt) demonstrate that the brine springs were already being exploited at this date, although to what extent is uncertain.

<u>Romano-British</u>

All three of Cheshire's historic salt towns, Middlewich, Northwich and Nantwich, were exploited in the Roman period. Middlewich was also the site of a large Roman settlement and an associated fort. There can be little doubt that the chief reason for this was the location of the brine springs here. Indeed the name of the Roman settlement at Middlewich was *Salinae* (saltworkings). The main focus of the settlement was not, however, within the area of the later, medieval, settlement but lay to the north on the east bank of the river Croco to the north (Fig 4.22).

A number of Roman roads converge on the site. King Street, the Roman road that connected the fort and town at Wroxeter with the extensive settlement at Wilderspool, near Warrington, passes through the Middlewich, although its exact route through the Roman town and the point at which it crossed the river Croco is not known. King Street was joined just to the south

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[290] Dodgson 1970, 184

of Middlewich by a road that ran south-east to Chesterton and other roads are suggested as running west to Chester, east to Buxton and north-east to Manchester.[291]

The fort was built around AD71-74 in an area now known as Harbutt's Field about 700m north of the medieval settlement. It remained in operation until around AD132.[292] The primary reason for placing a fort here is likely to have been to control the saltworks. Evidence for saltworking has been found over a large area. This is intermixed with evidence for general occupation and other activities so that it is impossible to define a separate saltworking area. What we can say positively is that there was a Roman town spread over an area of perhaps around 65ha either side of King Street and to the north-east of the later, medieval town. It is unlikely that all of this area was occupied at the same time but further work and analysis is needed before more can be said. Nevertheless Middlewich may have been the most extensive and important Roman settlement in Cheshire after Chester. The heyday of the settlement is suggested to have been in the 2nd to 3rd centuries, with a decline from around AD260.[293]

Early Saxon

We have little evidence for what happened to Cheshire's salt towns after the end of Roman rule. The discovery of two late Roman lead pans with an inscription to a Bishop Viventius at Shavington, 6km south of Middlewich and 2km east of Nantwich, has led to the suggestion that there was continuing salt production in Cheshire in the 5th and 6th centuries controlled by the Christian church from Chester but for the moment this remains speculation.[294] Given the importance of salt, however, we can anticipate that the brine springs would have been exploited again once there was a reasonably stable political and economic situation and certainly its value at 1066 as given in the Domesday Survey would indicate that it was a thriving industrial centre before the Conquest.

**Documentary evidence**

The Domesday Survey records that:

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[291] Harris and Thacker 1987, 220
[292] Strickland 2001, 58
[293] Strickland 2001, 44
[294] Penney and Shotter 1996

In Middlewich hundred there was another Wich [divided] between the King and the Earl. Although there were no lord's salthouses there, they had the same laws and customs, as set down in the above Wich [Nantwich], and the King and the Earl shared in the same way. This Wich was at a revenue of £8, and the Hundred in which it lay at 40s; the king had two parts, the earl the third. When Earl Hugh acquired it, it was derelict [waste]; now the earl holds it himself and it is at a revenue of 25s and 2 cartloads of salt; but the value of the Hundred is 40s.[295]

Hence we can see evidence of devastation at the time of the Conquest such that no saltworking was taking place in its immediate aftermath. By 1086 the industry was on its way to recovery although it was only valued at 15% of its pre-Conquest figure.

Middlewich is first referred to in the Domesday Survey, as *wich*. By the 13th century it had become known as Middlewich (*medius wichus*) to distinguish it from Cheshire's other saltmaking towns and to denote its central position between the other two.[296]

The survey also includes long and detailed entries regarding the customs of the Cheshire salt towns quite unlike any of the other Cheshire entries, demonstrating the importance of the salt industry in the economy of the county. The entry demonstrates the interest of the state in the saltworkings with the profits being shared between the king and the earl of Mercia before the Conquest and belonging to the earl of Chester after the Conquest.

The small size of Middlewich township, and the fact that the Domesday entry concerns itself entirely with saltworking and makes no mention of agricultural production, suggests that the township originated as a purely industrial enclave, as at Nantwich whose Domesday entry tells us that the saltworking area was demarcated by a ditch - 'All these salt pans, both common and demesne, were bounded on one side by a certain stream and on the other side by a certain ditch.'[297]

There is no mention of a church at Middlewich in the Domesday Survey. There was, however, a priest, and therefore probably a church, within Newton township. The possession of a church at this early date demonstrates that Newton was a place of importance at this time and it can be suggested that there was an administrative centre here controlling the workings at

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[295] Morgan (ed) 1978, S2, 1
[296] Dodgson 1970, 240-7
[297] Williams and Martin (eds) 2003, 734

Middlewich, mirroring the arrangements at Nantwich and Northwich which had ties with Acton and Witton respectively.[298]

There is no evidence that Middlewich ever received a borough charter but like the other Cheshire salt towns it operated as a 'borough by prescription', a characteristic of an early urban centre. Certainly there are frequent references to burgesses and burgages in the town from the 13th century onwards.[299] Middlewich's assessment of 76s 10d in the Cheshire mize of 1405 was fourth largest for any township in the county. Of the other salt towns Nantwich had the largest assessment (£7 3s), and Northwich the sixth largest (67s 2d).

Middlewich never received a grant for a market and fair but, as with borough charters, markets and fairs could be held by prescription. A weekly market and two annual fairs are recorded from the mid-14th century but were doubtless held from considerably earlier.[300] William Smith, writing at the end of the 16th century, says that Middlewich's market day was Saturday. Saturday markets are normally a feature of the more important medieval towns. Smith also noted a '…broad place in the middest of the town, in manner of a market place, called the 'king's mexon'. This presumably refers to the triangular area within which St Michael's church stands.[301]

Although saltworking dominated the town's economy there is evidence of other types of trading activity. In 1334-5 two prominent townsmen undertook to build a hall 100 feet (30.5m) in length and 22 feet (6.7m) in width containing *selds* (shops or stalls) for the use of 'foreign' merchants. This was presumably the building later known as the Market Hall which is thought to have stood in the market place, perhaps on the site of the later town hall.[302] Such a substantial building would imply a thriving economy. In the 1360s annual revenue from the shops and the hall approached £3 but declined sharply afterwards.[303] We have some evidence of the types of trading taking place. Shops and stalls were rented out to butchers in 1350-1, and in the same year corn from Drakelowe, 4km (2.5 miles) to the north, was sold at

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[298] Oxley 1981; Cheshire Historic Towns Survey 2003a, 2003b
[299] Stewart-Brown 1925, 111, 115
[300] Stewart-Brown 1910, 146
[301] Ormerod 1882, Vol 1, 138
[302] Brown (ed) 1999, 19; Gifford and Partners 2003, 1, 13
[303] Laughton 2008, 9

Middlewich market.[304] Licenses were regularly granted to brew and vend beer. In 1351 there were complaints that outsiders were selling ale in Middlewich and Northwich without charge, while the brewsters based in the towns paid 6d to the earl for every brewing.[305] Another source of revenue was the lord's oven where the townspeople were required to bring their bread for baking. There are frequent references to profits from, and repairs to, the oven.[306]

The most prominent building in the town would have been the church of St Michael which sits within the market place. The church is largely Perpendicular in style, with heavy 19th century restoration. There is, however, some evidence of late Norman work, suggesting an ecclesiastical presence by the 12th century at the latest.[307] Before this the township may have been served by the church at Newton mentioned in Domesday. A deed of 1666 refers to St Anne's chapel and the lane leading south out of present-day Newton is named St Anne's Lane. It leads down to a field named as St Anne's Field in the Tithe Apportionment of 1848. Hence any precursor of St Michael's church in Newton township may have been dedicated to St Anne. Its site is uncertain, although Earl claims that it lay at the junction of St Anne's Lane and Sutton Road to the south-east of present day Newton (Fig 4.22).[308] Two bridges are mentioned early in the 14th century: the Great Bridge (*pons magnus*) on the site of the present bridge, and the Little Bridge (*parvus pons*) which Earl suggests lay at the end of Wych-House Lane.[309]

Saltworking was carried out around brine springs on the banks of the river Croco. Whereas Northwich and Nantwich had just one brine pit each, there were at least two at Middlewich. Medieval accounts in fact give six different names for pits at Middlewich but we cannot be sure whether or not these are different names for the same pits.[310] Camden, writing in the late 16th century, says that there were two springs either side of a small brook, while William Smith, writing around the same time describes Middlewich as '...a great town, with two brine pits on each side the river.'[311] It is generally assumed that he meant just two pits, one either

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[304] Stewart-Brown 1910, 184, 194
[305] Hewitt 1967, 68
[306] Stewart-Brown 1910, 103, 145, 185
[307] Pevsner 1971, 279-80
[308] Earl 1990
[309] Earl 1990
[310] Dodgson 1970, 243
[311] Camden 1586;

side of the river, rather than four pits, two each side of the river, but the wording is ambiguous.

The brine was taken from the brine pits to salt houses where it was boiled in lead pans to produce salt.[312] The number of lead pans in each wich house at Middlewich varied between four, six and eight before 1450. After 1450 it was standardised as six and in 1507 there were 110 salt houses in the town, each of six leads.[313] By the 17th century the brine was distributed to the salt houses in overhead wooden troughs.[314]

Saltworking was carried out for limited periods, presumably to conserve supplies. At Middlewich it could only take place between Ascension Day and Martinmas – May to November – which ensured also that salt was available in the summer months when it could be most easily transported.[315]

The earliest recorded salt houses in Middlewich date back to the 13th century, when reference is made to Elworth House, *Salina de Kinderton* and *Le longe Wichehouse*. Their location is unrecorded but there are 16th century references to *wichhouses* along Kinderton Street which would place at least some of the salt houses (including presumably *Salina de Kinderton*) to the east of the river.[316]

The importance of the salt industry in the regional economy is shown by the number of outside bodies and owners who had an interest in the saltworks. These included a number of religious houses: the abbeys of Dieulacres (Staffordshire), Basingwerk (Flintshire) and Vale Royal (Cheshire) all had vested interests in land or salt houses during the 13th to 15th centuries.[317]

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[312] Salt houses were also known as wych houses, hence Wych-House Lane
[313] Twigg undated
[314] Ormerod 1882, Vol 1, 138
[315] Cheshire Libraries and Museums undated
[316] Dodgson 1970, 243
[317] Thompson 1981, 4

A 'leadsmithy' was in existence by 1316.[318] This was presumably located at the northern end of Lewin Street, where it meets Kinderton Street, which is called Leadsmithy Street on early Ordnance Survey. It was doubtless producing lead pans for the salt industry.

**Town-plan analysis**

Fig 4.26 shows the historic plot boundaries which have been defined using the 1st edition Ordnance Survey mapping of the 1870s. These cannot be checked against the tithe map as it does not show the urban area. Both maps post-date the building of the Trent and Mersey canal, completed in 1777, which ran through the town along the line of the river Croco which was straightened as part of the works. The township boundary between Middlewich and Kinderton-cum-Hulme townships follows the former course of the river Croco and I have used this to recreate the pre-1777 line of the river.

The medieval settlement clustered around the bridging point of the river Croco, on both sides of the river, though the most important elements were on the west bank. A *magnus pons* or Great Bridge is first recorded in the 14th century and presumably is located on the site of the present bridge (A on Fig 4.26). There may, however, be an earlier crossing point (B on Fig 4.26). Kinderton Street loops round to the north to cross over the present bridge. Its line before this loop is, however, continued down to the river by Sea Bank and if that line was continued across the river it would lead directly to the main saltworking area.

I have used the delineation of the street pattern and plot boundaries to divide the settlement into nine plan units which I have tentatively divided into three phases (Fig 4.27).

*Phase 1 (10th-11th centuries?)*

This phase comprises Plan Unit I which I would suggest is the original area of the pre-Conquest saltworks on the west bank of the river Croco, which would have been accessed from the east via a bridge at the bottom of Sea Bank. Its western boundary is demarcated by Lewin Street and it is divided into two by the meandering line of Wych-House Lane whose name speaks for itself. We can speculate that this area was demarcated by a ditch or other boundary line as at Nantwich for the curving line of Lewin Street connects to the river Croco

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[318] Hewitt 1967, 66

at its northern end and to a stream leading into the river at the south (there is, however, another possibility for a curving boundary marking off the saltworking area marked by a curving line of plot boundaries which cross Lewin Street towards its southern end – see Fig 4.27).

I have suggested that at this period the saltworking area was confined to the west bank as the saltworks on the east bank lie within Kinderton township whereas if they were part of the original area of saltworking we might expect them to be taken out of Kinderton parish and allotted to Middlewich parish in the same way as the saltworking area on the west bank was apparently taken out of Newton parish. We do not know where the saltworkers were housed at this phase. The most likely possibility is in Newton township, perhaps in the area of the later settlement at Newton immediately west of Middlewich, or to the south where, as we have seen, there may have been a chapel.

*Phase 2 (late 11$^{th}$-12$^{th}$ centuries?)*

Phase 2 is composed of a further saltworking area on the west bank of the river to the north of Plan Unit I (Plan Unit II) and extensive saltworks to the east of the river Croco (Plan Unit III). Plan Unit II is considered to be later than Plan Unit I because it lies away from the likely early river crossing and outside my hypothesised early saltworks boundary. As explained above Plan Unit III is interpreted as later in date as it lies within Kinderton parish.

*Phase 3 (late 12$^{th}$ century? - c1540)*

This phase represents a major phase of replanning, the chief elements of which comprised: the building of a bridge on the site of the present crossing; the laying out a triangular area immediately to the west of the new bridge (Plan Unit IV) which acted as both a market place and a site for St Michael's parish church; and the laying out of areas of regular 'burgage-type' plot boundaries to the west of Lewin Street (Plan Unit V) and either side of Wheelock Street (Plan Units VI-VII). The Norman work in the church would suggest a *terminus ante quem* of the late 12$^{th}$ century for the inception of this phase. It is noticeable that the road pattern is focused upon the triangular market area. The roads from Nantwich and Sandbach join together to form Lewin Street, before entering the south side of the market area, the road from Chester (Wheelock Street) to Macclesfield and Congleton (Kinderton Street) divert to run

around its northern side, while the road from Warrington and Northwich (King Street), which follows the line of the Roman road, diverts when it joins Kinderton Street to pass through the market area.

The nature of activity within the plan units did not of course remain static throughout the medieval period. Hence although Plan Unit I is interpreted as initially a saltworking area alone, with the workforce living in Newton township, the plot boundaries indicate that burgage-style plots were laid out along the east side of Lewin Street especially towards its southern end, probably during Phase 3. Within Plan Units II and III the plot boundaries are noticeably irregular and although we can suggest some form of settlement it there is only slight evidence of burgage-style properties. By the late 19$^{th}$ century there is an Inn at the corner of Lower Street and Pepper Street and it would not be surprising if this had replaced a medieval predecessor given that it lies directly opposite the market area.

We can anticipate a series of changes within Plan Unit IV. By the late 19$^{th}$ century there was a graveyard immediately to the north of the church and buildings on all three street frontages, including the town hall on the west side. It is perhaps most likely that the market area and church are a single phase of planning but that the churchyard and properties are later additions. We have seen that the town hall was probably preceded by a market hall dating to the early 14$^{th}$ century and there may well have been further shops built within the market area as at Macclesfield. The church may not have been provided with a churchyard originally as it may have been founded as a chapel dependent upon the church at Newton.

Plan Units VI and VII can be seen as a reasonably straightforward urban extension along Wheelock Street. Plan Unit V lies closer to the early saltworking area and the plot boundaries are less regular and of less depth so that possibly properties here developed rather earlier.

**Archaeological research**

Archaeological work within the medieval town at Middlewich has been on a small scale. None of the sites have been fully published; there is a single analytical report which incorporates evidence from three of the sites but otherwise we are reliant upon short interim and 'grey literature' reports. Nevertheless there has been rather more work at Middlewich than at most of the medieval Cheshire towns, certainly more than within our other case study

towns, and it does provide some evidence to compare with the results from the non-invasive techniques. Fig 4.28 shows the position of the excavation sites; they can be divided into those primarily concerned with settlement and those primarily concerned with saltworking.

*Evidence for settlement*

Excavations of an area of around 360m$^2$ in 2005, following evaluation trenching in 2004, to the north of Wheelock Street, within Plan Unit VII, uncovered evidence of settlement activity from the 13$^{th}$-15$^{th}$ centuries.[319] A series of shallow ditches were interpreted as property boundaries. Two, 187 and 208, lay at right angles to the street frontage, 35.5m apart, and were suggested as side boundaries to properties; a further two, 175 and 48, lay parallel to Wheelock Street, set back 31.6m and 27m respectively from the street frontage. It was suggested that these might represent the rear boundaries of plots fronting onto the street, in which case their differing depths might suggest that the plots were laid out over a period of time. I have georeferenced the site plan and overlaid the plot boundaries as shown on the 1$^{st}$ edition Ordnance Survey mapping (Fig 4.29). Ditches 187 and 208 can be seen to correspond to boundaries shown on the mapping demonstrating that these date back to the medieval period. Property divisions shown on the mapping between 187 and 208 were not discovered during the excavations. It may be that these features demarcate an original property laid out around 7 perches  (35m) wide and later sub-divided with less substantial boundaries. The two ditches parallel to Wheelock Street, 175 and 48, can be seen to represent internal divisions within the properties, perhaps marking a division between building and yard areas and 'garden' areas behind, rather than the back boundaries of properties. Fig 4.28 demonstrates that the Wheelock Street properties run back to the township boundary, giving long, narrow properties, around 80m-90m in depth.

Investigation of an area of around 570m$^2$ to the south of Wheelock Street, within Plan Unit VI, in 2004 uncovered two large, intercutting, ditches at right angles to the street frontage and terminating by it.[320] The first was 3m wide and 0.5m deep and the second 4.5m wide and 0.7m deep. Both contained pottery of 14$^{th}$-15$^{th}$ century date and cattle horn cores in their

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[319] Towle and Hayes 2009, 32-34 (marked as Wheelock Street North on Fig 4.29)
[320] Earthworks Archaeological Services 2004; Towle and Hayes 2009, 34-35 (marked as Wheelock Street South on Fig 4.29)

backfill. It was suggested that the large ditches might be property boundaries but they are far wider than a 'normal' property boundary and they do not correspond to any boundaries on the Victorian mapping. The horn cores would suggest that tanning was taking place in the vicinity in the later medieval period as these are by-products of the tanning industry and it may be that the large ditches were also connected with the tanning industry.[321] A tannery is shown immediately to the south of the excavation area on the Victorian Ordnance Survey mapping so we may be seeing continuity of a tanning function in this area. Noticeable was the lack of evidence for structures on the street frontage suggesting that the street was not fully built up in the medieval period.

Excavations in 2001 of an area of around 50m$^2$ on the west side of Lewin Street, within Plan Unit V, *c*25m back from the street frontage, uncovered evidence of medieval features comprising ditches, pits and soil layers.[322] One ditch, 0.8m wide and 0.2m deep, is probably a boundary ditch, although it does not correspond to any of the boundaries shown on the Victorian Ordnance Survey maps. Unlike the sites to the east of Lewin Street there was no evidence for saltworking.

The two recent excavations at Wheelock Street demonstrate the value of archaeological investigations in a small town. The excavations to the south suggest industrial activity, in the form of tanning, rather than domestic occupation in this area. The excavations to the north demonstrate that property boundaries, and boundaries sub-dividing the front of the property from the back areas, can be identified. There was, however, little evidence for activity apart from the property boundaries. The street frontage was not available for excavation here but it may be that although the plots were laid out for settlement they were not occupied until a later period. The lack of 12th century material from either excavation might suggest that the laying out of plots along Wheelock Street belongs to a later phase than the creation of the market place and building of St Michael's church. I have for the moment, however, left them in the same phase as it seems more likely that all of the planned elements would go together in a single phase. The laying out of plots in the 12th century would not necessarily mean that they

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[321] Shaw 1996, 100-102; 115-118
[322] Earthworks Archaeological Services 2001 (marked as Lewin Street West on Fig 4.29)

were all taken up for settlement at that time, as the excavations at the Welsh town of Newport, Dyfed, demonstrated.

*Evidence for saltworking*

A large clay-lined pit, around 5m by 6m, discovered to the east of Lewin Street and north of Wych-House Lane, within Plan Unit I, on the west bank of the river Croco, in 1982 was excavated into medieval layers and may mark the site of one of the medieval brine pits from which brine was extracted.[323] In addition there have been a number of small-scale excavations, evaluations and watching briefs in the same area. These demonstrated that the area has been heavily disturbed by later activity in places but two pieces of work uncovered evidence of medieval activity, including pits which may have been for brine storage.[324] Excavations on the east bank of the Croco in 1973-74 at the junction of Kinderton Street and Sea Bank uncovered a further possible brine pit of perhaps 16th to 17th century date but whose origins may be earlier.[325]

# Malpas

## Landscape analysis

Malpas lies in the south-west corner of Cheshire, close to its border with Shropshire, and with Wales (the present border with the latter lies only 5km to the west). The Roman road between the legionary fortresses at Chester and Wroxeter, a branch of Watling Street, ran north-south through the settlement along the line of High Street/Old Hall Street. This route was gradually replaced as the main road from Whitchurch to Chester by the route which was to become the A41 which bypassed Malpas to the east. Doubtless this led to some loss of importance; we cannot identify when the Malpas road was eclipsed except to say that it is the A41 route which is shown on Ogilby's road map of 1675.[326] A westerly road, Church Street, leads towards the Welsh border and a major crossing of the river Dee at Bangor-on-Dee, while to the east a minor road, Well Street, leads to the A41 at No Man's Heath and thence towards

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[323] Williams, S.R. 1982 (marked as Wych House Lane North on Fig 4.29)
[324] Gifford 1993 (marked as Lewin Street East 1 on Fig 4.29); University of Manchester Archaeology Unit 2006 (marked as Lewin Street East 2 on Fig 4.29)
[325] Bestwick 1974 (marked as Sea Bank on Fig 4.29)
[326] Ogilby 1675, Plate 57

Nantwich, Cheshire's main salt town. At the northern end of Malpas a further road, Chester Road, leads off north east to Hampton Heath.[327] It is shown on Burdett's 1777 map but as it approaches Malpas it cuts through the field system at an angle and is therefore probably a post-medieval addition to the road pattern (Fig 4.30).

The centre of the settlement lies at the point where the former Roman road is crossed by the east-west route from Wales. On the north-west side of this point a motte and bailey castle and adjoining church lie at around 120m AOD on a south-east facing spur of land overlooking the crossroads. The ground falls away to the south-east to around 100m AOD at the bottom of Old Hall Street. Away from the settlement the ground continues to fall away, to a level of 65m AOD at Bradley Bridge, 1.5km to the south-east.

The town is highly unusual in not lying on a river. To the east of the town, down Well Street, are springs and wells, including one named as 'Town Well' on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey 1:2500 plan of the 1870s, suggesting that it may have been the principal source of water for the town.[328] The springs feed into an unnamed stream which runs south east to join Bradley Brook at Bradley Bridge. Bradley Brook itself runs into Wych Brook at Lower Wych.

The bedrock geology comprises siltstone and sandstone; to the south east is mudstone (Fig 4.31). Further south-east, to the south of Bradley Brook, the land is faulted and there are extensive deposits of salt-bearing rock. The superficial geology in the area of the town comprises glacial till (Fig 4.32). To the east, along the sides of the unnamed stream are deposits of glacial sand and gravel and of alluvium.

The township of Malpas lay within Malpas parish, one of the largest parishes in Cheshire. At Domesday the parish lay within Dudestan hundred.[329] The Cheshire hundreds were reorganised in the 12th century, however, and as a result of this Malpas was placed within Broxton Hundred.[330]

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[327] See Fig 4.33 for 'later road'
[328] See Fig 4.33 for position of Town Well
[329] Phillips and Phillips 2002, 27a
[330] Phillips and Phillips 2002, 8, 9a

The earliest reference to the settlement comes in the Domesday Survey when it is named as *Depenbech* ('at the deep stream valley'). By the 12th century, however, the Old English place name had been replaced by the Norman French *Malpas* ('difficult passage'). The early place name causes some difficulties. As we have seen the present settlement does not lie upon a river or stream, nor can it be said to be in a valley. This led Dodgson to suggest that the original settlement may have been at in the area of The Hough, around 1.5km to the south, which overlooks the point where the Roman road crosses the Bradley Brook in a narrow defile (Fig 4.30).[331] The later name of *Malpas* presumably refers to the difficult nature of the Roman road from Whitchurch and gives an indication as to why it was replaced by a new route which bypassed Malpas.

*Archaeological evidence for pre-urban background*

Prehistoric

The nearest major prehistoric site is the Maiden Castle hillfort on Bickerton Hill, 6km to the north. We cannot prove any direct connection but it does demonstrate that there was a centre of authority in the area at an early date.

Romano-British

As we have seen, the Roman road from Wroxeter to Chester passed through the town. Roman finds were claimed to have been found in the area of Malpas Castle in the 18th century, including lamps, coins and tessellated pavements but no other finds of this period have been found within Malpas and it is likely that their identification and dating as Roman is erroneous.[332] The nearest major site is the Roman town of *Mediolanum* (Whitchurch), in Shropshire, 7km to the south-east. An important chance find of Roman date is a bronze diploma or military discharge certificate issued in AD 103, known as the Malpas diploma although it was actually found at Bickley around 3km east of the town.[333] Additionally a hoard of Iron Age gold and Roman silver coins was found during a metal detecting rally near

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[331] Dodgson 1972, 39
[332] Thompson 1965, 104
[333] Thompson 1965, 106-8; Frere *et al* 1990, RIB 2401-2411 2-5; RIB II, 2401.1

Malpas in January 2014.[334] The hoard dates to the AD 40s-50s, within the first few years after the Roman conquest, and probably relates to the first military progress through the area – perhaps while establishing the road.[335]

**Documentary evidence**

Our first reference to Malpas comes in the Domesday Survey entry which reads:

> Robert [Fitzhugh] holds Depenbech [Malpas]. Earl Edwin held it. 8 hides paying tax. Land for 14 ploughs. In lordship 3 [ploughs]; 1 smallholder. Meadow ½ acre. 5 men at-arms [Knights] hold 5½ hides of this land from Robert, and have 3 ploughs there. 7 villagers with 2½ ploughs. Meadow, 2 acres. Value of the whole before 1066 £11 4s; later on it was waste; total value now 52s. It is 2 leagues long and 1 wide.[336]

This entry indicates that immediately before the Norman Conquest Malpas was an important centre, its value of £11 4s being one of the highest in Cheshire, and was held by Edwin, Earl of Mercia, the largest landholder in Cheshire. The township of Malpas lies within a large parish of the same name which has been suggested as originating as an early land unit belonging to the Mercian kings by the 7th century at the latest.[337] In addition although no church is mentioned at Domesday it is likely that would have been a minster church here prior to the Norman Conquest serving the parish community. Further support for this is given by the dedication of the church here to St Oswald, a saint favoured in 10th century Mercia.[338] Hence by the later Anglo-Saxon period Malpas can be identified as a major royal, and later comital, estate centre with an attached minster church. As such it is likely to have attracted ancillary settlement and marketing, as dues and produce were brought to the estate centre.

By 1086 Malpas's value had fallen to around 25% of its pre-Conquest figure, doubtless as a result of difficulties around the time of the Conquest. The settlement was in the hands of Robert Fitzhugh, Baron of Malpas, one of the major figures in Cheshire at this time. He was amongst the largest landholders in Cheshire, with lands concentrated on the Welsh border, including many now within Wales; indeed he was probably the most powerful person in

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[334] Portable Antiquities Scheme 'Coin Hoard' PAS Ref: LVPL-DFD9E1
https://finds.org.uk/database/artefacts/record/id/601465 The hoard dates to the AD 40s-50s, i.e. within the first few years after the conquest.
[335] Pers comm Roger White
[336] Morgan (ed) 1978, 2.4
[337] Higham 1993, 134-39.
[338] Phillips and Phillips 2002, 26, 27a; Higham 1993, 136.

Cheshire after the Earl of Chester.[339] The Domesday entry also indicates that Fitzhugh had endowed a number of knights with holdings in return for military service, doubtless principally to guard against the Welsh and perhaps against the local population, though the difference between the two may not have been that clear.

Ormerod says that Robert was probably the illegitimate son of Hugh d'Avranches, the Earl of Chester and that when he died his possessions were divided between his two daughters, Letetia and Mabella.[340] A recent article by Cotgreave, however, makes clear that there is no evidence of Robert's parentage, nor that he had two daughters. He points to evidence that Malpas was in the hands of Ralph ab Einion, 'a person of great note and large possessions in Wales and Cheshire' around the mid-12th century and suggests that it was his daughters who married into the Patric and Belward families through whose descendants the two halves of the barony of Malpas passed.[341]

These families were to play an important part in the history of Malpas. A number deserve special mention. Isabel Patric married Sir Philip Burnell at some time before 1277 and in a deed of 1281 Isabel was called 'Baroness of Malpas'. Sir Philip died fighting the Welsh a year later, however, after which Isabel married Richard de Sutton.[342] As we shall see below Philip and Isabel were significant figures in the advancement of Malpas as an urban centre.

Also important were the Brereton family who acquired the Belward portion of Malpas from the Egertons towards the end of the 14th century when Sir William de Brereton married Ellen, sister and heiress of David de Egerton. It was, however, a younger branch of the family descended from Sir Randle Brereton who came to reside at Malpas and built a hall there, Malpas Hall, which came to be known as the Old Hall and gave its name to Oldhall Street. It was destroyed by fire in 1767. The most illustrious member of the Brereton family was another Sir Randle, grandson or great grandson of the founder of the line, who was Chamberlain of Chester for 26 years during the reigns of Henry VII and Henry VIII. He built the impressive Brereton chapel in the church at Malpas in 1522, founded a grammar school,

[339] Husain 1973, 17, 112.
[340] Ormerod 1898, Vol 2, 328
[341] Cotgreave 2008
[342] Rootsweb: http://wc.rootsweb.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/igm.cgi?op=GET&db=jweber&id=I14993#s3 (accessed 4.11.15); Wikitreee: http://www.wikitree.com/wiki/Burnell-49 (accessed 04.11.15)

which stood 'behind the market place', and provided a 'hospital', comprising six almshouses for the elderly, which stood on the south side of Church Street, and was noted by Leland in the 1530s.

If we turn now to consider the status of the settlement in the post-Conquest period, there is no known borough charter for Malpas. There are, however, references to burgages here from the 1280s.[343] It is not unusual for burgage tenure to be granted without going to the expense of granting a borough charter and doubtless Malpas would have been regarded as a borough by the late 13th century at least.

As regards its economy Malpas probably recovered fairly quickly from its downturn after the Norman Conquest helped by its position at the centre of Robert Fitzhugh's estates. By the early 15th century it was one of the wealthiest townships in Cheshire, paying 64s in the mize of 1405, the eighth largest amount in the county. Where did its wealth come from? Agriculture would have played a part in its economy – in the 19th century Malpas was described as 'being surrounded by a great farming district'[344] - but trade, including in local produce and in salt from deposits to the south of the town, and manufacture, perhaps especially of linen cloth, were also important.

As we have seen it is likely that marketing was already taking place before the Conquest. By the later 13th century there was sufficient prospect of profit for Sir Philip and Isabel Burnell to go to the expense of obtaining a grant of a weekly Monday market and an annual three-day fair at the Feast of St Oswald in 1281.[345] The Burnell family were active in the acquisition of market charters and the promotion of towns at this period. Principal amongst these was Philip's brother, Robert Burnell, Lord Chancellor of England from 1274 until his death in 1292 and Bishop of Bath and Wells from 1275, and one of Edward I's principal advisers. Robert granted a borough charter to Acton Burnell in 1269/70 and obtained charters for a

[343] Beresford and Finberg 1973, 75, 193
[344] Pigot and Co 1828-9, 36
[345] GMFEW website: https://archives.history.ac.uk/gazetteer/gazweb1.html (accessed 7.1.19)

weekly market and two annual fairs at the same time. In addition he obtained market and fair charters for eleven other settlements between the 1270s and 1290s.[346]

Malpas's market day went through a surprising number of changes. A document of 1353 reveals that the Black Prince, in his capacity of Earl of Chester, had previously ordered that the market at Malpas be moved from Monday as it clashed with the market at neighbouring Whitchurch. It was originally ordained that the market at Malpas be moved to a Sunday but because this was 'a day on which all Christians ought to attend divine service and withdraw themselves as far as possible from secular works' the market should now be held on a Tuesday 'or such other day as be least prejudicial to the neighbouring markets'. However, some marketing on Sundays was allowed to continue - 'none the less all men may buy and sell bread, ale, flesh and small victuals every Sunday, as they used to do'. In 1365 the Prince ordered that the market day should be changed yet again, to Thursday, and that there should be two annual fairs, one at Martinmas and the other at Corpus Christi.[347] Writing in the 1530s John Leland recorded 'a little Sonday market' at Malpas.[348] Such a volatility of a market day is unusual – or at least rarely recorded. Also surprising is talk of marketing on a Sunday since, as we have seen, this was frowned upon by the church from the 13th century onwards. It is likely that the original market day at Malpas was Sunday and that marketing on this day for certain goods continued throughout the medieval period 'under the radar'.

The proximity of the border with Wales presented both a threat and an opportunity. Hence around 1300 a petition from the lord of Cholmondeley, 7km to the north east of Malpas, for a place of burial there claimed that '…the dead in the time of war are buried in the fields because the church of Malpas is so near Wales that part of the parish belongs to the Welsh...wherefore the English dare not go to the said church in time of war' and '...at one time...no Englishman dared to go to Malpas on Easter day for fear of the Welsh'.[349] These claims were no doubt exaggerated in order to make the case and Hewitt has highlighted the

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[346] Beresford and Finberg 1973, 150; GMFEW website: https://archives.history.ac.uk/gazetteer/gazweb1.html (accessed 7.1.19)
[347] Stewart-Brown (ed) 1910
[348]Toulmin Smith (ed) 1964, Vol 5, 30. Although the Sunday has been crossed out
[349] Hewitt 1929, 10

benefit of trading with the Welsh, although at times this was unofficial, as when goods were passed through Malpas during Owen Glendower's rebellion in 1402.[350]

We have only a small amount of evidence of what was being traded, or manufactured, in the town. Crosby records that Malpas was noted as a centre of the linen trade in the 14th century and that there was sufficient activity to support specialised cloth merchants. An inventory of a mercer here in 1371 includes Welsh woollen cloth as well as local linen.[351] A 'barkhousyard' (i.e. tannery) next to the 'Walleway' is recorded in a document dated 1404.[352] Tanneries required a plentiful water supply so the tannery was presumably located at the eastern end of Well Street in the area where the springs and wells are found.

Another factor which would have led to an importance for Malpas at this time is saltworking. Two townships at the southern end of Malpas parish, adjoining the north bank of Wych Brook, have names incorporating the element *wic*, Wychough and Wigland, and the settlements at Lower Wych and Higher Wych in the valley of the Wych Brook are recorded from the 13th-14th centuries (Fig 4.30). [353] Unfortunately we have no evidence for when the salt deposits here began to be exploited or for the scale of the workings. The fact that they lay close to the course of Watling Street may suggest that they were being exploited at this time and, as discussed earlier, the Anglo-Saxon settlement of Malpas may have lain further to the south towards the saltworks where it would be well placed to control them. Certainly they were intimately connected to Malpas in the post-Conquest period. We have a mid-14th century reference to the granting of the farm of the saltworks 'hard by Le Malpas' by the Black Prince to John de Malpas, holder of a part of the manor of Malpas at this time, in recognition of his service in Gascony.[354] By the early 16th century the brineworks were in decline - Leland described them as being 'two or three but very little salt springs'.[355]

Leland described 16th century Malpas as having three paved streets, most likely High Street, Oldhall Street and Church Street, although if High Street and Oldhall Street were regarded as

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[350] Hewitt 1929, 87
[351] Crosby 1996, 54-5.
[352] CALS DCH/C/324
[353] Watts 2004, 706
[354] Stewart-Brown (ed) 1910
[355] Toulmin Smith (ed) 1964, Vol 4, 4; Leland refers to them as at 'Dirtwich' and they are named as 'Lower Dirtwich' and 'Higher Dirtwich' on Burdett's map of 1777

a single street he might also be referring to Well Street.[356] The fact that they were paved does a least suggest some prosperity or claim to distinction by this time.

The history of St Oswald's church in the heart of Malpas can tell something about the fortunes of the town at this period. It is a large structure with a nave, chancel, western tower, and north and south aisles with chapels attached. It contains work from the 14th century but was largely remodelled in the second half of the 15th century. There are two elaborate chapels. The Brereton chapel in the south aisle was built in 1522 and contains the altar tomb of Sir Randle Brereton and his wife, Eleanor; Sir Randle was, as we have seen, an important benefactor to the town. The Cholmondeley chapel in the north aisle dates to the late 16th century and contains the altar tomb of Sir Hugh Cholmondeley and his lady, of 1596.[357] This demonstrates that the town retained the interest of the local gentry, and presumably a reasonable degree of prosperity, throughout the 14th-16th centuries, despite the vicissitudes of the Black Death and other pestilences of the time.

The church at Malpas is unusual in having two rectors who are recorded from 1285. By the 19th century there were two rectories – an Upper and a Lower. The Upper Rectory lay to the west of the church and castle, while the Lower lay on the south side of Church Street, though we do not know when these were laid out. The practice of having two rectors is said by Cordon to be a Welsh custom, but it is tempting to suggest that it may be a consequence of the church's original minster status, or possibly that it was a result of the splitting of the manor.[358]

**Town-plan analysis**

The medieval townscape of Malpas was dominated by a motte and bailey and church complex situated on a promontory overlooking the cross-roads where a south-north route towards Chester is intersected by a west-east route leading to the Welsh border. The roads widen out at the cross roads to form a market area at the centre of which stood a market cross. Burgage-style plots front on to the market area, while along the road to the west larger plots may represent an expansion of the settlement.

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[356] Toulmin-Smith 1964, Vol 5, 30: 'The seconde howse of the Breertons where Syr Randal a late dwelled, ys at Malpas, a little Sonday market having iii streates al pavid. His fair place is at the very ende of the south streate. Syr Randol erected a grammar schole ther, and an hospital.'
[357] Richards 1973, 220-24
[358] Richards 1973, 224-5; Cordon 1979, 7; Harris and Thacker (eds) 1987, 269

I have divided the medieval occupation at Malpas into three broad phases. The earliest relies largely upon landscape analysis and documentary evidence rather than town-plan analysis so arguably should be discussed in a separate section but it is clearest if we discuss the three phases together.

*Phase1: Anglo-Saxon (?7th century – ?late 11th century)*

We have seen that Malpas was an important estate and ecclesiastical centre in the Anglo-Saxon period belonging to the Earls of Mercia, and perhaps before this to the Kings of Mercia. As such it is likely to have attracted ancillary settlement and marketing, as dues and produce were brought here and the local populace came to attend church on a Sunday. The saltworks by the Wych Brook would have been a further attraction assuming that they were in operation at this time and depending on the scale of their operation.

The most likely site for the Anglo-Saxon settlement is within the later town, in the area of the later castle and parish church since these lie at the highest point overlooking the junction of the north-south and east-west roads. This would mean that the castle was built on the site of the Anglo-Saxon estate centre and that the church lay within, or immediately adjacent to, the enclosure, a common feature at this period.[359] As discussed above, however, this does not explain the early place name of *Depenbech* for the settlement which might suggest that its original site was further to the south on the edge of the valley of the Bradley and Wych brooks, possibly adjacent to 'The Hough', around 2km to the south east, in which position it would have been best placed to control the saltworks (Fig 4.30).

A start date for the settlement is equally difficult to determine; as discussed above a 7th century date has been suggested, while the end date would be the takeover of Cheshire by the Normans. If the Anglo-Saxon settlement did indeed lie further to the south it was presumably Robert Fitzhugh who was responsible for moving the settlement to its present site.

*Phase 2 (late 11th century – c1540)*

This phase covers the post-Conquest period. We can be reasonably certain that if the pre-Conquest settlement was not at the present site that it was moved to its present site soon after

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[359] Morris 1989, 259-61, 268-74

the Conquest given the location of a motte and bailey castle here. Hence we can now turn to the analysis of street pattern and property boundaries to delineate the nature and possible phasing of the post-Conquest settlement. As with the other Cheshire towns I have used the 1st edition Ordnance Survey 1:2500 plans of the 1870s checked against the tithe map of *c*1840. Fig 4.33 shows the property boundaries overlaid on the 1st edition 1:2500 Ordnance Survey plans. This plot has been used to divide post-Conquest Malpas into thirteen plan units which can be divided into two sub-phases, to which tentative dates have been assigned. Fig 4.34 shows the Plan Units of both sub-phases.

Sub-phase 2A c1070-c1200

Plan Units I-VII belong to this sub-phase. Plan Unit I is composed of the motte and bailey castle and church site which lie in a strategic position at the tip of a bluff of land overlooking the crossroads formed by the road north to Chester and the route west to the Welsh border. It is likely to have been built soon after the Norman Conquest by Robert Fitzhugh to act as the administrative centre of his Barony of Malpas and as a protection against the Welsh.    I am suggesting that the original castle encompassed the whole of the area between Church Street and High Street, an area of around 2.3ha, with the church set within the castle enclosure. Close parallels can be found at other motte and bailey castle sites close to the Welsh border in Cheshire. Fig 4.35 shows the castles at Malpas, Aldford and Dodleston at a common scale. At all three sites the churches lie in close proximity to the mottes, although at the latter two sites they lie outside the castle enclosures. It is likely, however, that once the Normans felt relatively secure the eastern portion of the castle enclosure at Malpas was given over to burgages forming Plan Unit II.

Plan Unit III comprises a broad street market marked by the widening of the High Street for a length of 250m and Church Street for a length of 70m with a small triangular area at the junction of the two streets where a market cross is situated. The cross itself is of 1873 but it sits on an octagonal base which is likely to be medieval, perhaps 14th century, in date.[360] It lies at the heart of the settlement at the junction of the south-north route to Chester and the east-west route to Wales. Burgage properties line its sides: Plan Unit II, IV and V to the west and

[360] NHLE website: https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/ (accessed 16.11.15)

Plan Units V, VI and VII to the east. As discussed above Plan Unit II was probably carved out of the castle area once security was not as great a priority. Plan Unit IV lies south west of the junction of the two market streets. The plots are fairly small and front on to both streets giving a rather 'jumbled' appearance. This could be due to their position as properties fronting on to the central market area would be valuable retail spaces which could lead to the sub-division of properties. Slater has discussed this process at Stratford-on-Avon, although Malpas is admittedly a more minor centre.[361] Another explanation for the 'jumbled' layout is that this area was originally laid out as a rectangular market area and which was later infilled. Conzen has documented this process at Alnwick although again Malpas is not as major a centre as Alnwick.[362] Plan Units V-VII lie east of High Street, either side of Well Street. I have defined them as separate plan units as they differ in depth suggesting they were laid out at different times, or perhaps by different individuals.

Sub-phase 2B c1200 – c1540

It must be admitted that we have little dating evidence for this phase except to say that the plan units defined lie away from the core area at the junction of High Street/Old Hall Street and Church Street/Well Lane and presumably therefore post-date the Sub-phase 2A units. The Burnells obtained a market and fair charter for Malpas in 1281 and it is around this time also that we first hear of burgage tenure in the town. This is likely to be more of a formalisation of an existing situation than the inception of a period of growth, however. In general a quickening of commercial life in England is suggested for the late 12th – late 13th centuries so a 13th century date for a period of expansion at Malpas would seem reasonable unless and until more secure dating evidence is available.[363]

Plan Unit VIII comprises an extension down the west side of Oldhall Street and contained Malpas Hall/Old Hall, the manor house of the Brereton family. The building no longer survives so we cannot be sure of its date nor how large an area the hall and ancillary structures covered. The boundaries within the area relate to the later hall built after the medieval hall burnt down in 1767 so give us no clue as to its original layout. Possibly the

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[361] Slater 1987, 191-203
[362] Conzen 1969, 34-339
[363] Astill 2000, 46-49; Blair 2000, 264-70

manor house and its ancillary structures comprised the whole of it comprised the area of Plan Unit VIII.

Plan Units IX-XII demonstrate an extension of settlement down Church Street. All four contain burgage-style properties but differ in their characteristics so that they are unlikely to represent a single phase of planning but perhaps they also reflect a divided lordship. Plan Unit XI is the furthest plan unit from the town centre and has few surviving plot boundaries. Possibly this was an area laid out for settlement but never developed or perhaps the settlement was short-lived and the properties here were subsequently given over to agriculture. Plan Unit IX includes the site of the Lower Rectory, one of the town's two rectories. By the 19th century the Upper Rectory lay to the north-west of the castle and church and its site has been defined as Plan Unit XIII although we cannot be sure that it represents the site of the medieval rectory.

**Archaeological research**

The locations of archaeological work at Malpas are shown on Fig 4.36. Only two pieces of work have produced positive results for the medieval period: an archaeological evaluation at the rear of the Jubilee Hall, within the area of Plan Unit VI on the east side of High Street, in 1999 revealed a pit containing medieval pottery and a flat-bottomed feature whose size could not be ascertained (Fig 4.36A); while trial pits at St Oswald's church uncovered a number of burials, some of which were are likely to be of medieval date (Fig 4.36B).[364]

In addition a number of evaluation trenches were excavated behind the Red Lion Hotel in the central area of the town to the east of High Street and within Plan Unit VII. Sandstone walls, pits and postholes were revealed but all were thought to be of post-medieval date and no pottery earlier than the 16th-17th century was recovered during the work(Fig 4.36C).[365] A series of evaluation trenches to the south of Church Street within Plan Unit X failed to reveal any medieval features in an area which I have suggested was laid out for settlement but was perhaps never fully developed (Fig 4.36D); while an evaluation on the edge of the town

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[364] High Street: Chester Archaeological Service 1999/2000, 4; St Oswald's: Nexus Heritage 2017
[365] Church Street: L-P Archaeology 2018

immediately outside my area of suggested medieval occupation at Woodville did not uncover any features earlier than post-medieval in date (Fig 4.36E).[366]

## Conclusion: the Cheshire case studies

What have we learnt from an analysis of our Cheshire case study towns? As regards the use of historic mapping I checked the planimetric accuracy of the plot boundaries defined from the 1st edition survey against the modern MasterMap in my Frodsham case study and found a good correspondence. I also checked the accuracy of the tithe maps against the 1st edition plot boundaries and found their planimetric accuracy to be insufficient to use for detailed plotting. They are, however, of value in checking for features introduced between the tithe survey mapping of the 1840s and the Ordnance Survey mapping of the 1870s, particularly as the former pre-date the building of the railways.

I also trialled a number of ways of visualising the setting of the towns. With Frodsham I compared the results of using Ordnance Survey 5m contour data and LiDAR DTM at 1m interval to produce 3D views using ArcScene. This proved to be a rapid way of producing a view which gives a better idea of the topography of an area than a 'traditional' 2D view with contours shown. The LiDAR view gave more detail but picked up 'extraneous' detail such as terracing for housing and the line of the M56 motorway. Hence for a general overview the Ordnance Survey Terrain 5 data is perfectly adequate. For Macclesfield I used the LiDAR data to produce a 2D view of the town at 1m intervals using ArcMap. This gives much more detail than the 5m contour data and I was able to establish the highest point within the town which may indicate the centre of the original settlement. Hence this proved to be a success but needs to be balanced against the time taken in producing the 'view'.

The setting of the four towns varied. Frodsham is located at the foot of a hill by the marshes of the Mersey estuary; Macclesfield lies on a ridge of land overlooking the valley of the river Bollin at the junction of two contrasting landforms – the Cheshire plain to the west and the foothills of the Pennines to the east;  Middlewich is sited within the Cheshire plain beside the river Croco; while Malpas is sited on a slight promontory at the junction of the former Roman road to Chester and a route to Wales - unusually there is no adjacent river. Three of the towns

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[366] Woodville: L-P Archaeology 2013; Jones 2009

(Frodsham, Middlewich and Malpas) share the common characteristic of being located on, or immediately adjacent to, a Roman road, and indeed the relative lack of growth at Malpas may be due to the subsequent replacement of this road by a route which bypassed the town. Macclesfield lies at a nodal point on the local road network also so that ease of communication was an obvious factor in the location and success of these settlements.

As regards the town plan we are largely reliant upon the Ordnance Survey maps, as like many smaller towns, there are no town plans pre-dating the 19th century available. Fig 4.37 A-D presents all four towns to a common scale with their chief plan elements identified. Perhaps the most obvious characteristic which they share is that none of the four possessed town defences. This should not surprise us; apart from Chester none of the Cheshire towns are known to have possessed defences. All four of the towns differ in their plan: Frodsham is based around a broad market street with burgages either side; Macclesfield around a wedge-shaped market place; Middlewich around a triangular market place within which stands its church; while Malpas has a broad street market but with a smaller adjunct at right angles where its two major roads intersect.

All of the settlements can be identified as significant centres in the Anglo-Saxon period. Frodsham, Macclesfield and Malpas were Mercian estate centres belonging to Earl Edwin before the Conquest and were assessed at a high value at 1066, £8 in the case of Frodsham and Macclesfield, and £11 4s in the case of Malpas. By 1086 Frodsham and Macclesfield were in the hands of the Earl of Chester and Malpas belonged to Robert Fitzhugh, Baron of Malpas, and perhaps the most important magnate in Cheshire after the Earl. Middlewich is a different case as its existence is based upon the saltworking industry. It too was valued at £8 before the Conquest; given the small size of the township its value was presumably due entirely to the saltworking industry, or almost so. None are likely to have been urban centres before the Conquest although Middlewich would obviously have been attracting traders in salt. There is clear evidence of relocation of settlement at Frodsham whose original settlement was at Overton, and possibly at Malpas, while the settlement at Middlewich was located away from the Roman settlement.

Frodsham and Macclesfield were both 'new' towns in that they were given borough charters by Ranulf de Blundeville, the earl of Chester, in the early 13th century. Given this it might be expected that they would bear some resemblance. In fact, however, they differ quite radically

in their form. Frodsham is largely a based around a single long, broad market street with burgages either side covering an area of around 13.5ha with a further 2.5ha fronting onto side roads perhaps added at a later date but still within the medieval period. The original settlement is thought to have comprised 110 burgages and there is a suggestion that there may have been an intention to lay out burgages 2 perches (*c*10m) in length. Other plan elements were sited outside the urban core: the medieval estate centre lay immediately south west of the town, a manor house may have been preceded by a Norman motte and bailey castle; there was a port by the river Weaver 1km to the north-east; and, most unusually, its parish church remained in the settlement at Overton, 600m to the south east, without even a chapel of ease within the town itself. Macclesfield was much smaller, the original settlement measuring around 7.5ha with a further 0.5ha probably added at a later date. The reason for its small size was presumably its location with the ground falling away sharply on its north, east and south sides. Nevertheless it possessed a similar number of burgages as Frodsham, 120 originally, and there is some slight evidence that again the burgages may have been at least intended to be of two perches (*c*10m) width. The need to fit this number of burgages into an area around half the size of that at Frodsham resulted in burgages of less depth than those at Frodsham giving a dense pattern of plot boundaries. Unlike Frodsham, Macclesfield was probably not built on an entirely new site, rather the late Anglo-Saxon centre was perhaps in the south-west corner of the later town. Again other plan elements were sited outside the urban core: the Norman and later medieval estate centres lay to the south across the valley of the 'Water of E'. A chapel serving the town was located adjacent to the market place although the parish church was at Prestbury, 4km to the north, indicating the tenacious nature of the pre-Conquest ecclesiastical structure.

Malpas is similar to Frodsham and Macclesfield in being a Mercian estate centre and indeed its value in 1066 was higher than that of the latter two. It is possible that, like Frodsham, its site was moved from a location further to the south, although in this case soon after the Norman Conquest. The Norman settlement was perhaps small in size, only around 5.5ha. A motte and bailey castle with adjacent parish church overlooked a market area and burgages at a point where the Roman road to Chester was crossed by a route into Wales. The presence of a motte and bailey castle at Malpas may perhaps give us more confidence in suggesting that the Norman estate centres at Frodsham and Macclesfield were also centred around a motte and bailey castles originally. My plan analysis suggests that the settlement at Malpas was

eventually around 15ha although this includes some areas which may have been laid out for settlement and never taken up. There is no evidence that Malpas was ever granted a charter, unless like Middlewich it could be regarded as a prescriptive borough. There are mentions of burgages in the late 13th century and the Burnells obtained a market charter around the same time. The impression, however, is that the town did not thrive to the same extent as Frodsham and Macclesfield. Possibly its divided lordship after the death of Robert Fitzhugh, the Baron of Malpas, meant that there was not a figure sufficiently powerful to co-ordinate a major redevelopment. In addition the replacement of the main route to Chester by a route further to the east which bypassed Malpas may have been a serious blow although we cannot be sure whether or not this was a medieval development.

Middlewich presents a contrast to the other settlements. It is an example of a town which owes its initial existence to a single industry – the extraction of salt. The fact that brine could be easily obtained from shallow cisterns led to its exploitation on an industrial scale from at least the 1st century AD when an extensive Roman settlement, with accompanying fort, was established on the east bank of the river Croco. It was also the meeting point of a number of Roman roads including King Street, a major route from Wroxeter to Wilderspool near Warrington and thence to the north west.

The salt industry perhaps foundered at some point after the end of Roman occupation but by the mid-11th century the Domesday survey indicates that it was thriving once again, only to dwindle once again during the unsettled period after the Norman Conquest. By 1086 it was on its way to recovery. The medieval saltworks were, however, located to the south of the Romano-British industrial area, perhaps originally solely on the west bank of the river but eventually on the east bank also. By the late 12th century we can suggest a phase of urban planning around the medieval saltworks comprising a new bridge, a triangular market area with a church at its centre, and an expansion of the settlement area incorporating newly laid-out plots along Wheelock Street, and perhaps Lewin Street. We can certainly identify Middlewich as an urban centre at this time but whether we should push its urban origins back further is debatable. In the Anglo-Saxon period, and perhaps early in the Norman period, we can suggest that Middlewich was more of an industrial enclave with the saltworkers living elsewhere, within the adjacent Newton township.

The subsequent history of the settlement presents a more familiar story with the infill of the market area. The siting of a large market hall here in the early 14th century to accommodate 'foreign' merchants would imply a thriving economy, or at least the confidence to attempt to encourage one. The mature settlement covers an area of 14ha, although around a third of this area was, partially at least, given over to saltworking.

This is the only one of our Cheshire case study towns where archaeological investigations have added some useful evidence. Excavations to the south of Wheelock Street suggest a cautious approach to the density of occupation with evidence that the area was given over to industrial functions rather than burgages. Work further down the street on its north side, however, does confirm the laying out of property boundaries here which survived to be shown on the Victorian mapping.

Hence the evidence from our four case studies demonstrates a variety of routes to urbanism although all four were important centres before their urban phase. Their development as true towns is quite late – the 12th - 13th centuries. This reflects the situation across Cheshire as a whole where so far there is little sign of urban occupation prior to the Norman Conquest apart from at Chester itself.[367]

The picture presented here is necessarily an incomplete one. The landscape analysis, documentary sources and town-plan analysis can only take us so far. They do tell a reasonably coherent story and much is gained from a comparison of their town plans and history of development. However, to give us a more-rounded view we need more extensive archaeological evidence and a wider range of sources. These are aspects which I have investigated for my study of Northampton in the next chapter.

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[367] Higham 2004, 165-67, 177-89

# Chapter 5: Case Study II - Northampton

## Introduction

Northampton has been chosen as a case study because it was a large and important town in the medieval period and because it has been the focus of a relatively large amount of archaeological work over the last fifty years, the results of which can be compared to test and amplify hypotheses formed from non-invasive techniques. In addition the early establishment of a pottery type series and its subsequent use by the majority of the different archaeological organisations working in the town means that comparisons of the occurrence and quantity of the most common ceramic types at different periods can be used to reveal the original core area of the settlement and its subsequent development.

The street names mentioned in the main text for Northampton are shown on Fig 5.1 except those demarcating the late Saxon defences which are shown on Fig 5.40. The road pattern in the area surrounding the town is discussed below and shown on Fig 5.6. Streets mentioned in the appendices but not in the main text are shown on the relevant appendix plans.

## Landscape analysis

Northampton lies centrally within England on what was, by the later medieval period at least, the main route north from London to York and beyond. Fig 5.2 shows the basic route network as used by Kings John, Edward I and Edward II between the late 12th- early 14th centuries as plotted by Hindle and shows Northampton as a major stopping off point on this road network.[368]

The solid geology within the town and its surrounds comprises ironstone and sandstone of the Northampton Sand Formation, with mudstone of the Whitby Mudstone Formation in the lower-lying areas of the Nene Valley; in the higher area to the north east are sandstone and siltstone of the Stamford Formation and mudstone of the Rutland Formation (Fig 5.3). The light sandy soils of the Northampton Sand Formation are well-drained and easily worked and would have been attractive for settlement from an early period.

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[368] Hindle 1989, Fig 8

The area of the historic town is largely free of superficial deposits but the Nene valley immediately to the north and east is lined with Alluvium and areas of sand and gravel, and clay and silt (Fig 5.4).

The historic town lies at the tip of a spur of land overlooking the river Nene at a point where the main body of the river is joined by the Northern Arm. The walled medieval town covers an area of around 100ha. It rises from around 60m AOD at its south-west corner to 90m AOD to the north east. The late Saxon town lay in the south-west corner of the medieval town covering an area of around 25ha (Fig 5.5). To the south and west of the town is the valley of the river Nene, around 1km broad, which would have formed a marshy barrier until recent times.

**Early routes into Northampton**

Northampton presents an interesting case of a town where changes and deflections in the road pattern of the surrounding area suggest earlier crossing points of the river and former road alignments. Much of this work is based upon a seminal paper of 1953 by Frank Lee so I have structured this section to re-examine his theories regarding early routes into the town and to suggest some amendments and additions of my own (Fig 5.6).[369] He identified the centre of the 12th century town as around All Saints church at the meeting point of two major routes, an west-east route along Marefair/Gold Street (A) and St Giles' Street (B) and a south-north route which crossed the river Nene at South Bridge (C) and continued up Bridge Street, Drapery and Sheep Street (D).[370] He suggested, however, that the South Bridge was not the original crossing point of the river and that there had been previously a route into the settlement further to the west.

Lee pointed out that the three principal routes into the town from the south all showed signs of having perhaps been deflected from their original path as they approached the town: Banbury Lane[371] (E) being deflected to the east to meet Towcester Road (F), while further to the north Towcester Road was deflected at G to meet London Road (H). If the line of Banbury

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[369] Lee 1953
[370] The west-east route may have originated as a Roman road - see Archaeological Evidence for pre-urban background below
[371] Banbury Lane was re-named Rothersthorpe Road in the 20th century

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Lane was projected further north without deflection (I) it intersects with Towcester Road at its deflection point (G). London Road also showed possible signs of having been deflected as its alignment shifts slightly to the north from around the site of the later Queen Eleanor's Cross. If its alignment further south is followed (J) this too meets the intersection of the other routes at G.

Having established his early route intersection point at G, Lee pointed out that a route running almost directly north from this point would run through an area of meadow (K), named Baulms Holme, crossed two channels of the river Nene (The Kislingbury Branch and the Brampton Branch), presumably via a series of fords or causeways, and entered Northampton at the bottom of Horseshoe Street (L) which, with its continuation to the north, Horsemarket (M), formed the main south-north route through the late Saxon town.[372]

Having suggested the line of the road into the late Saxon settlement from the south Lee pointed out that the route north out of the town also showed signs of deflection. The line of Horsemarket is continued by St Andrew's Street (N) and then Semilong (O). This route to the north was blocked by the building of St Andrew's Priory across its line *c*1100 and was replaced by the new south-north road mentioned above running from the south bridge (C) up to Sheep Street (D). The new route continued along Barrack Road (P). The two routes met at point Q whence the new and old routes followed the same line.

Lee's hypothesis regarding the early road lines from the south are most persuasive for the deflection of the Towcester Road (F) at G to meet the London Road and perhaps also the deflection of Banbury Lane (E). The London Road deflection (J) is more tendentious. It is possible that London Road as a whole is post-Conquest in date since it heads directly towards the South Bridge. There is another route from the south (R), known as Portway Lane, around 800m to the east of London Road which may be its pre-Conquest forerunner. Its line can be

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[372] There is still a footbridge over the Brampton branch of the Nene at the precise point where we would expect the route into the late Saxon town to run (see Fig 5.7). The significance of the place name 'Holme' is discussed in the Documentary Evidence section below. See HLU3 below for discussion of the layout of the late Saxon town

traced, principally as a footpath, from Hardingstone village running north to pass over the river Nene by Nunn Mills.[373]

Lee's suggestion of an early crossing point of the river Nene leading to a continuation of Horseshoe Street is a convincing one. A routeway via a ford or causeway would need to run across the broad and shallow part of the river before the confluence of the two main branches of the river Nene, while a preferable location for a bridge would be a narrower crossing point after the confluence, precisely where the South Bridge is located. Greater confidence in his hypothesis is provided by documentary evidence for a causeway in this area still surviving in the late 15th century. In his will of 1485 Richard Daffron bequeaths '…to the causeway in Westcotton next to the cross there , called the Oxford Way, 3s 4d'.[374] West Cotton was a hamlet immediately west of point G on Fig 5.6. It is named as 'West Cotton' on the early 19th century Ordnance Surveyor's drawing of the Northampton area, but is marked as 'Far Cotton' on the slightly later Bryant's map of Northamptonshire.[375] 'Oxford Way' is the Towcester Road (F on Fig 5.6).

Although not discussed by Lee there is a possibility that there was an earlier crossing, leading to the middle Saxon settlement of Northampton. Markham recorded that he had seen a 'paved causeway' at 'a good depth below the surface leading direct to the river' during construction for a new gas holder at the Gasworks site in 1889.[376] If he is correct in the date of his sighting the only gasometer constructed on the Gas Works site between the 1st edition Ordnance Survey plan published in 1887 and the 2nd edition published in 1901 is at point S on Fig 5.7. Given that this sighting of a 'causeway' lies to the west of Lee's hypothesised late Saxon route I would suggest that this indicates an earlier route crossing the Baulms Holme meadow to enter the middle Saxon settlement via Tanner Street and Narrow Toe Lane (T on Figs 5.6 and 5.7) with perhaps a continuation to the north via Quart Pot Lane (U on Fig 5.6).[377]

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[373] RCHM(E) 1985, Site 29, page 292; Wetton 1847, 3
[374] Edwards *et al* 2005, Will 83, 110-11
[375] Ordnance Surveyors' Drawing 253: Northampton. Dated to 1813; Bryant's Map of Northamptonshire 1827
[376] Markham 1913, 121; Cam 1930, 29
[377] Moore (1973) and Welsh (1996-7, 168-71) have made similar suggestions of an early causeway. However, neither identified the position of the gasholder under construction in 1889 which provides an anchor point for the line of the proposed route. See HLU2 below for discussion of the middle Saxon settlement.

Fig 5.8 shows the 'deflections' in the road pattern and suggested crossing points of the river overlaid on the 2nd edition 1:10560 map. I have used the 1:10560 1st revision map as an underlay in this figure because at the scale published here (*c*1:6400) the 1:2500 plan would be 'blurred'. It is worth noting, however, that despite being of the same date as the 1:2500 plan the gasometers are not shown at the 1:10560 scale, presumably so as not to overwhelm the map with detail. This emphasises the value of using the most detailed scale of mapping available.

A further early route can be identified. The Marcus Pierce map of Northampton of 1632 shows a lane ('old' Kettering Road - V) to the north east of the town running towards the medieval town wall, at which point it stops. If its line is continued it runs to the north gate of the late Saxon town. This suggests that there was a late Saxon routeway leading from the north gate to Kettering which was blocked by the building of the medieval town wall. This route was then replaced by a new road leading out from the east gate of the medieval town (Kettering Road - W). Another result of the building of the medieval town wall was the blocking of the route out of the town to the east (B) which was replaced by a route leading out from the east gate (Wellingborough Road - X).[378]

**Archaeological Evidence for pre-urban background (Prehistoric – 7th century AD)**

If we look at the settlement pattern in the surrounding area down to the early Saxon period the fertile Upper Nene basin within which Northampton is located can be shown to have attractive for settlement from an early period (Fig 5.9).[379] We do have to be a little careful about overemphasising its importance because the Northampton Sand Formation, which forms the bedrock over much of the area, is undoubtedly conducive to the discovery of archaeological sites both from aerial photography and geophysical survey.[380] In addition, widespread quarrying of ironstone deposits within the Northampton Sand Formation in the late 19th – early 20th centuries led to the discovery of many archaeological sites.

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[378] The blocking of the continuation of St Giles' Street is discussed in more detail under HLU4 below
[379] Early Saxon settlement in the surrounding area is discussed here but the evidence from Northampton itself is discussed later (HLU1 below)
[380] For early discoveries from aerial photography see Hollowell 1971, 2

*Prehistoric*

The earliest known major site is the Neolithic causewayed enclosure at Briar Hill which lies around 2km south west of the medieval town on the southern slopes of the Nene valley; it was extensively excavated in the 1970s. A further causewayed enclosure lies 4km north west of the medieval town at Dallington Heath, overlooking the Northern Arm of the river Nene. Causewayed enclosures are normally seen as meeting places for settlers in the surrounding area and are a phenomenon of the 4th millennium BC.[381]

The next major site we can identify is the Iron Age hillfort at Hunsbury which lies around 1km south of Briar Hill in a prominent position at the top of the slope down to the Nene Valley, 2.5km south west of the historic town. We cannot be precise about its dating as most of the finds come from 19th century ironstone quarrying but its construction may go back to the 5th century or earlier, although the majority of finds, and therefore perhaps the most intensive occupation, date to the 2nd-1st centuries BC.

*Romano-British*

At the Romano-British period there was a small Roman town at Duston, on the north bank of the river Nene, around 1.5km west of the medieval town. Again most of the finds from the site come from late 19th -early 20th century quarrying so we cannot be too certain about its exact nature and date. Roman finds, including burials, cover as area of around 75ha; the finds date from around the time of the Roman conquest in AD43 to the late 4th – early 5th centuries. The surrounding area was also densely settled with evidence for villas, farms, and industrial sites, especially a large number of pottery-producing sites of the 1st century AD.[382] It has been suggested that there was a Roman road running from Duston to the Roman settlement at Irchester passing through the area of the medieval town along Marefair and Gold Street.[383]

*Early Saxon*

There are a number of Anglo-Saxon burial sites, of the 5th-7th centuries AD, in the surrounding area. All were discovered in the late 19th-early 20th centuries so we cannot be

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[381] Whittle *et al* 2011
[382] RCHM(E) 1985, 38-9
[383] Williams 1979, 4

sure of the details. Three can be described as cemeteries, while another five were of three or less burials – given the circumstances of the discovery of the latter, however, we cannot be sure that they were not part of larger cemeteries. The largest number of burials were recovered from a cemetery at Duston immediately west of the Roman town. The discovery of a Roman lead coffin within the later cemetery may suggest some form of continuity. While it is tempting to suggest that the discovery of these cemeteries around Northampton might suggest a particular importance for the area, however, we cannot be sure that their relative ubiquity is not due to the large amount of quarrying in the area.

Finds of pottery of early-middle Saxon date from fieldwalking are common around Northampton and where tested these have often been shown to overlie settlements of this date.[384] Such sites are, however, found throughout much of Northamptonshire and there is nothing as yet to indicate a particular importance for any of the early Saxon sites in the Northampton area.[385]

*Summary*

Accordingly we can see that the Northampton area had been a focus for major settlements from at least the 4th millennium BC with causewayed enclosures, followed by an important hillfort, itself succeeded by a small Roman town. These were not, however, located at a single point but all shared the advantages of an easily-worked light, sandy soil and access to the river Nene.

## Documentary evidence

As discussed in the methodology section I have not attempted to trawl through all of the documentary evidence for Northampton to extract information. There are, however, a number of key sources which I have used to shed light on the topography, origins and development of the settlement which are discussed below. Where I have used further sources more specific to the town-plan analysis they are referenced in that section.

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[384] Shaw 1993-4
[385] Parry 2006, 91-4, 274

**Place Names**

The place name of Northampton itself gives us important information as to its original function. It is first referred to as *Hamtun* (home farm) in an entry of 913 in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. Gover *et al* in their 1930s publication of the Place Names of Northamptonshire surmised that the name indicated a 'central residence as contrasted with outlying and dependent holdings' and that 'Such a name is hardly likely to have arisen in the earliest [Anglo-Saxon] period. It suggests a time when something anticipatory of latter manorial development had begun to appear – the eighth rather than the sixth century.' They further suggested that 'the original Northampton was a royal residence and estate, at which were rendered the dues payable by the men of the folk - the *provincia* or *regio* – settled around it'.[386]

An example of the value of a lesser place name is *Baulms Holme* already referred to in the Landscape Analysis section above. Gelling says that the characteristic use of the term is 'for a patch of slightly raised ground in a marsh'.[387] This gives greater confidence in suggesting that there was an early crossing point of the river Nene running across Baulms Holme into Northampton.

**Anglo-Saxon Chronicle**

There are a number of references to Northampton in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle of value to our study:

> 913      In this year the [Danish] army from Northampton and Leicester rode out after Easter and broke the peace and killed many men at Hook Norton and round about there…[388]

> 917      That same summer…the army from Northampton and Leicester and north of these places broke the peace, and went to Towcester, and fought all day against the borough, intending to take it by storm, but yet the people who were inside defended it until more help came to them, and then the enemy left the borough and went away…

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[386] Gover *et al* 1933, xvii – xviii
[387] Gelling 1984, 51
[388] Whitelock (ed) 1961, 62-63

> Then…in the same autumn King Edward went with the army of the West Saxons to Passenham, and stayed there while the borough of Towcester was provided with a stone wall. And Earl Thurferth and the *holds*[389] submitted to him, and so did all the army which belonged to Northampton, as far north as the Welland…[390]

1010 Then before St Andrew's day the Danish army came to Northampton and at once burnt that town…[391]

1065 …all the thegns in Yorkshire and in Northumberland came together and outlawed their Earl Tosti and killed his bodyguard…And they sent for Morcar, son of Earl Ælfgar, and chose him as their earl, and he went south with all the people of the shire, and of Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and Lincolnshire until he came to Northampton…And the northern men did much damage round Northampton…in that they killed people and burned houses…so that the shire and other neighbouring shires were worse for it for many years.

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle evidence tells us that Northampton was in existence by 913 and was in the hands of the Danes at this date. It is perhaps most likely that they took it over around 877 when they annexed the eastern portion of the Mercian kingdom.[392]

**Domesday Survey**

Northampton's Domesday Survey entry marks it out as a different class of settlement from the Cheshire towns already discussed.[393]

It starts with the holdings of the King:

> In the time of King Edward there were in Northampton, in the king's demesne, 60 burgesses, having as many dwellings. Of these 14 are now waste; 47 [sic] are now left. Besides these there are in the new borough 40 burgesses in King William's demesne.

There then follows a list of 34 other individuals who hold a total of 230½ houses, 21 of which are waste. These house holders include many of the leading figures in the kingdom, both secular and ecclesiastical.

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[389] A Scandinavian term for a nobleman
[390] Whitelock (ed) 1961, 65-66
[391] Whitelock (ed) 1961, 90
[392] Stenton 1971, 251-52
[393] Williams and Martin (eds) 2003, 589

We are then told that the 'burgesses of Northampton pay to the sheriff yearly £30 10s. This belongs to his farm.'

The reason for the 'waste' houses is uncertain. Unlike Cheshire there is no evidence of widespread destruction in the period immediately following the Norman conquest. As we have seen, however, the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle tells us that Northampton was ravaged by the forces of earls Edwin and Morcar when they rose in revolt against Edward the Confessor in 1065.[394] Another possibility is that some houses were demolished in order to make way for Northampton Castle if we can assume that the original castle pre-dated the Domesday Survey.

There is a further entry in the Domesday survey which refers to the demesne of 'Portland' and mentions the churches of St Peter and All Saints. Its attribution is uncertain; both Northampton and Stamford possessed churches of St Peter and All Saints and hence it has been suggested as being land attached to one or other of these settlements.[395] From a topographical point of view it is of importance in that if it does refer to Northampton this proves the existence of All Saints church by 1066.

**Taxation**

The farm or tax paid by individual towns to the Crown can act as a rough guide to the prosperity and size of the settlement. The Domesday Survey tells us that in 1086 the town was at farm for £30 10s, a sum which ranks it around 26th in amount paid, in a group of other shire towns such as Derby (£30), Nottingham (£30) and Worcester (£31 5s). In 1130, however, the town's farm was raised to £100, an increase of more than 300%, and in 1184 it was raised yet again to £120, the 5th largest amount in the kingdom at that time, behind only London, Lincoln, Winchester and Dunwich.[396] In addition to shedding light on the town's burgeoning economy in the late 11th – 12th centuries this unprecedented increase has implications for the topography of the town. Such a large increase suggests an expansion in population which in turn implies an increase in settlement size.

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[394] Stenton 1971, 578-79
[395] Williams and Martin (eds) 2003, 590; Williams 2014, 17, 179-80; Welsh 1999a, 6
[396] Biddle (ed) 1976, 501

Northampton's position pre-eminent position was not to last, however. In the hundred rolls of 1274-5 the town complained that craftsmen were leaving because of heavy taxation.[397] Taxation figures for the later medieval period back up this picture of relative decline. Table 1 illustrates this picture of growth and decline. It compares the ranking of Northampton and Norwich from taxation returns between the 11th and 16th centuries. Norwich's ranking can be seen to remain fairly consistent between 2nd (behind London) and 7th while Northampton shows an unprecedented ascent in the 12th century to early 13th centuries only to fall back again by the 14th century.[398]

Table 1: Northampton and Norwich - comparison of rankings

| | 1086 | 1164-5 | 1194-1206 | 1334 | 1377 | 1524 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Northampton | 26 | 5 | 6 | 29 | 28 | 27 |
| Norwich | 5 | 3 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 2 |
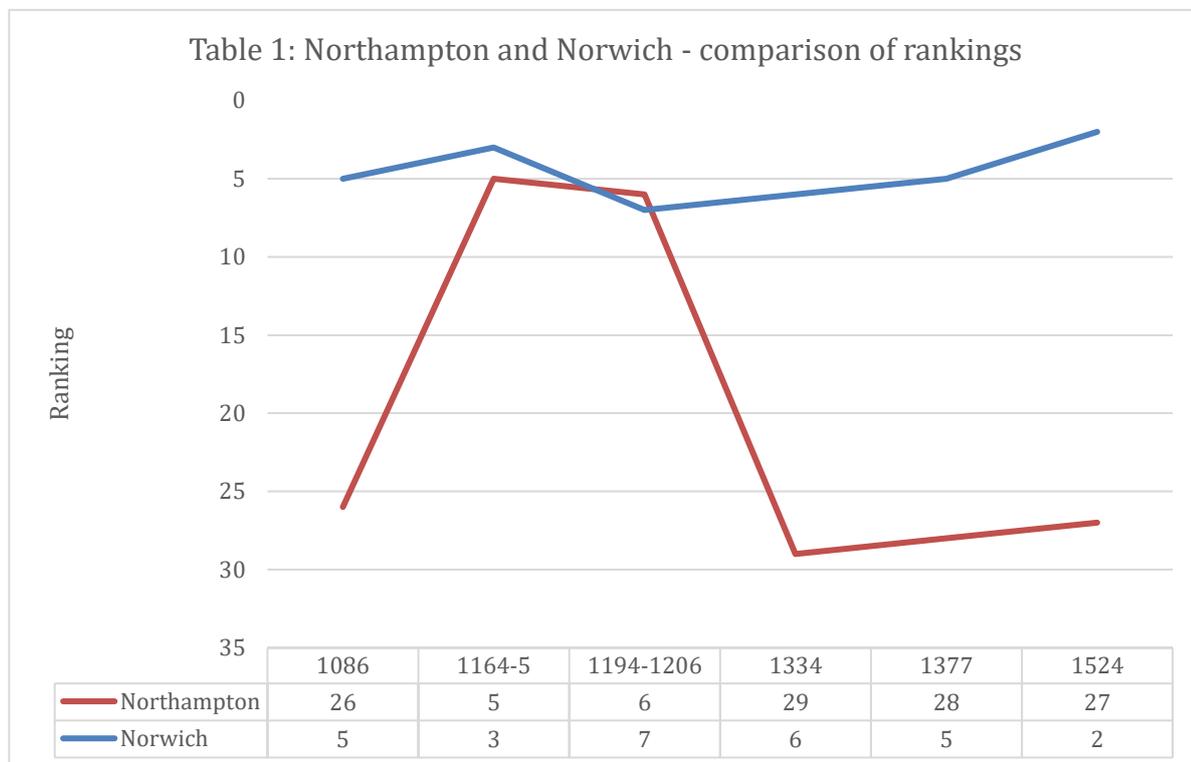


**The Hundred Rolls of 1274-5**

We are fortunate for Northampton that the hundred rolls of 1274-5, a national inquiry by Edward I into the usurpation of royal rights, gives us a valuable insight into a number of topographical points. It records ten instances of the blocking of streets and lanes of whose

[397] Williams 2014, 345-46. See below for fuller discussion of the hundred rolls
[398] Data for 1086, 1334, 1377 and 1524 is from A. Dyer 2000, 752-764; data for 1164-5, 1194-1206 is from Biddle (ed) 1976, 501

former existence we would otherwise have no knowledge, a useful reminder that a street plan shown on the earliest town plans – especially for the larger towns, does not necessarily record the full medieval street plan.[399] The hundred rolls also tell of the appropriation of portions of the town ditch.[400]

**Borough, market and fair charters**

Northampton's earliest surviving borough charter dates to 1189 although its status at Domesday leaves no doubt that it was a 'borough by prescription'. Equally although the earliest evidence for a market and a fair in the town do not occur until the 12th century there can be little doubt that they originated at an earlier period. A charter of 1599 sanctioned the holding of markets on Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays 'as heretofore accustomed'.[401] The fair at Northampton was one of the most important in the kingdom in the 12th-13th centuries. Purchases for the royal household were regularly made here in the reigns of kings John and Henry III demonstrating the town's national importance at this time.[402]

**Rentals of Edward I and 1504**

We are fortunate for Northampton that an early rental survives from the late 13th century. Williams has recently published a transcription of this making it an easily accessible source.[403] The 1504 rental is a direct descendant of the earlier document and many of the owners at the time of the earlier document are given as former owners in the later one. Hence a property in St Peter's parish described in the Edward I rental as 'the tenement of John Catesby' is included in the 1504 rental as 'the tenement once of John de Catesby, now of the heirs of Thomas Osberne esquire and called the Three Cuppes'.[404] The rentals do of course give much topographical information. One item of particular interest is the presence of a quarry within the town walls at the eastern end of Abington Street towards the east gate 'In

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[399] See transcription of the hundred rolls for Northampton in Williams 2014, 346-47, 13.1-13.3, 13.9, 13.12-16, 13.20. For detail of the blocked lanes see Fig 5.56 and Appendix 1: DL2
[400] Williams 2014, 346, 13.5, 13.6
[401] Cam 1930, 24
[402] Britnell 2000, 109; Cam 1930, 23-24
[403] Williams 2014, 157-98
[404] Williams 2014, 191, S4 for Edward I rental; 1504 rental NAHS, Northampton Borough Records Section I No 29

Abyndon Street…John Scote for the quarry opposite the tenement of the said Philip [Philip de Horton]'.[405]

**1586 terrier**

Although a little later than our period of study this terrier of property belonging to the town is of especial value in giving details of land use which is likely to have changed little since towards the end of our period at least. Particularly noticeable are the large areas of 'open ground' comprising gardens, closes, orchards, dovecotes and stables.[406]

**Street Names**

Street names can indicate market areas (e.g. Horsemarkett (1545); Shepes Markett 1545); occupational areas (Tanners strete 1540; le Goldestrete 1330; Mercers Rowe 1486-93; Row (Mercers Rowe 1545) ; and location of institutions (le Collegelane 1458).[407] We do need to be careful, however. Streets can change their function, and we need to know the earliest date when they are known by that name e.g. Horsemarket was earlier St Martin's Street.[408]

**Fire Court Register**

A major fire at Northampton in 1675 is said to have destroyed more than half of the town, including most of All Saints church. A special court was constituted to encourage rebuilding and settle disputes. The fire court register details 79 cases dealt with between 1676 and 1685. Although the court was given powers to make alterations to the town plan, in the event no great changes were made.[409] Accordingly although large parts of the town's housing stock were lost the property boundaries were mostly unaltered.

## Town-plan analysis

Having looked at the wider landscape context and documentary evidence for Northampton we can now concentrate upon the settlement itself. I have followed the same basic methodology

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[405] Williams 2014, 184, D7
[406] The terrier has been transcribed in Cox (ed) 1898, 153-60
[407] Gover *et al* 1933, 7
[408] Lee 1932, 69; Williams 2014, 172
[409] Cam 1930, 31, 33; Cox 1898, 244-49

for doing so as for the Cheshire towns – the delineation of the town plan and a division into plan units - but there are differences in undertaking the process for a large town. The two major differences are the wider range of cartographic sources available and the greater amount of change before the earliest detailed Ordnance Survey mapping of the mid-late 19th century which has masked the earlier street and plot pattern.

**Cartographic sources**

*Ordnance Survey maps*

As discussed in the methodology chapter (Chapter 3) I have used the 1:500 Ordnance Survey plans of the late 1880s, supplied georeferenced to the National Grid by Digimap, as a base map for plotting features in addition to its use as an important source of locational information in its own right. These plans cover the walled area of the medieval town and its surrounds in 57 sheets. These have, however, been grouped together in the GIS to provide a single, seamless layer (Fig 5.10). For the areas further out from the town not covered by the 1:500 mapping I have used 1:2500 maps. These have generally been used for the plotting of features such as road lines and river courses.

Before using the 1:500 plans I checked their planimetric accuracy against the modern Ordnance Survey MasterMap. Fig 5.11 shows the 1:500 mapping for the area of St Peter's church overlaid on the MasterMap topographic line data. The match is not exact: the boundaries on the 1880s mapping are around 2m south and up to 1m west of the modern mapping. Nevertheless this degree of inaccuracy is acceptable given that to use MasterMap as a base map would introduce a further layer of complexity as many of the features to be mapped, including parts of the street plan no longer survive, so that the Victorian mapping would have to be used as an intermediary anyway.

*Pre-Ordnance Survey maps*

The pre-Ordnance Survey maps have been registered to the National Grid. They comprise:

- Speed's map of 1610
- Marcus Pierce map  of 1632
- Noble and Butlin map of 1746

- Northampton inclosure map of 1779

- Roper and Cole map of 1807

- Wood and Law map of 1847

There are a number of issues with the maps. One is the planimetric accuracy of the survey and what has been recorded – there is a world of difference between a modern MasterMap survey and surveys such as John Speed's early 17$^{th}$ century town plans which 'involved little more than pacing the main streets and sketching in the principal buildings'.[410] None of the maps are an exact fit with the historic Ordnance Survey mapping although in general the later the map the better the fit. I have used the Wood and Law map to reconstruct parts of the course of the river Nene which had been altered before the earliest detailed Ordnance Survey mapping. In this case acceptable results were obtained by cropping a small area the map and georeferencing this separately.

Although the pre-Ordnance Survey maps cannot be used for detailed plotting of features they are nevertheless of value in establishing the date by which features such as streets, boundaries and major buildings were present and may be our only evidence for features which had been destroyed before the advent of more accurate mapping. Hence they can be extremely valuable if used with a critical eye and with knowledge of how they were compiled and the purpose for which they were intended. Accordingly it will be of value to discuss their merits and drawbacks individually. The Speed map of 1610 (Fig 5.12) shows the basic street plan as well as major features such as churches and other ecclesiastical institutions, and secular institutions and features such as the town hall, the town walls and its gates, and the town's mills. As has been observed for Speed's plans elsewhere, although his planimetric accuracy is poor his depiction of detail (topographic accuracy) is generally good.[411]

The Marcus Pierce map of 1632 (Fig 5.13) is a rather different case and illustrates the need to consider the reason for the compilation of a particular map. Its purpose was to show the lands of the former St Andrews Priory. Hence it misses out the south-west corner of the town and the adjoining meadows and river, doubtless because there are no priory landholdings in the

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[410] Hindle 1998, 57

[411] Lobel (1968, 51-4). On Speed's map of Northampton his only error in the naming of major features is that the site of the Whitefriars is marked as the Greyfriars; given that both were closed at the Dissolution of the Monasteries in the 1530s a degree of confusion is understandable.

area. It is extremely useful in showing the town fields, especially the large extent of the priory landholdings. Its depiction of the town is less satisfactory, however; the principal streets are shown but not the side streets. Accordingly its topographic accuracy for the town itself is poor. On the other hand when the area of the town fields is georeferenced the fit with the Victorian mapping is reasonably good as this was the purpose for which it was drawn.

The Noble and Butlin map of 1746 (Fig 5.14) is of more value as, although buildings are shown in block plan only, this is the earliest map to show property boundaries, to name all of the streets and to mark the parish boundaries. Its planimetric accuracy is still poor, however, so that it is a poor fit with the Victorian mapping, although considerably better than the Speed map.

The 1779 inclosure map (Fig 5.15) does not show any detail of the historic walled town; it does, however, show land allotments outside the north and east gates which allow the area of the medieval suburbs outside these gates to be suggested.[412] The roads out of the settlement are a good fit with the Victorian mapping so that its planimetric accuracy is good for the features which it shows.

The Roper and Cole map of 1807 (Fig 5.16) illustrates another pitfall for the unwary. It has generally been assumed to be a new survey. When the Noble and Butlin and Roper and Cole maps were overlaid on the GIS, however, it was obvious that the latter is largely a copy of the former, the building blocks and plot boundaries being virtually identical. A few new features such as the General Infirmary which lies outside the former town defences to the east of the medieval town have been added and a 'Ditch' and 'Old Ditch' are shown on the east side of the town rather than the boundaries shown on the Noble and Butlin map but these could have been added quite easily. Fig 5.17 illustrates the similarities. It shows the Abington Street area as shown on the Noble and Butlin map (left) and the Roper and Cole map (right). The only new building is 'Mellow's Row'; otherwise the buildings and plot boundaries are identical. As Hewitt has pointed out it was common for early maps to use information from pre-existing surveys.[413]

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[412] See Figs 5.61 and 5.67
[413] Hewitt 2010, xx-xxi

The Wood and Law map of 1847 comprises two sheets, north and south, covering the whole of the borough area at the time. Fig 5.18 is a cropped version showing the town area only. As we have seen it is not an exact fit with the Ordnance Survey mapping although its planimetric accuracy is far better than the earlier maps. It does also have the merit of showing the west side of the town before the changes wrought by the coming of the railway. As with many towns the site of the former castle proved to be a convenient plot of land for a station when the railway was brought into the town. Initially a small station was built in the 1850s on the site of part of the former Outer Bailey. A massive expansion in the late 1870s, however, destroyed most of the castle site, with a large goods shed being constructed on top of the main castle buildings, and the course of the western end of Marefair was moved around 20m to the north to bring it closer to the new station site. The construction of the railway line also entailed an alteration in the course of the river Nene to the north of the West Bridge.

*Plotting of areas of intrusions*

Before moving on to the mapping of streets, physical features and property boundaries we need to discuss the issue of the definition of areas of major alteration (intrusions) since the medieval period and before the Ordnance Survey 1880s mapping. This is particularly important because within areas of such change property boundaries are unlikely to date back to the medieval period. I have delineated the major intrusions on Fig 5.19. I have divided them into railway lines, stations and associated infrastructure; new streets and areas of housing associated with them; a large gasworks; and a number of large breweries. These areas of intrusion do not include post-late 19th century developments as plot boundaries within these areas can still be delineated from the late Victorian maps. The intrusions as plotted cover an area within the walled medieval town of *c*20ha, around 20% of the total area. This does not mean that below-ground archaeology has necessarily been destroyed in these areas, but it does indicate areas where the surface evidence no longer survived to be mapped by the 1880s.

*Plot of the street pattern, plot boundaries and course of the river Nene*

Having considered the cartographic sources available and delineated areas of intrusion we can move on to the definition of the medieval street and plot pattern, and also the course of the river Nene. For the smaller towns the river courses may not have seen significant changes but

for Northampton, and doubtless for the majority of the large industrial towns, there have been major alterations in the course of the river.

As discussed above my approach has been to use the 1:500 Ordnance Survey plans as far as possible as a base map and to delineate the property boundaries and the course of the river Nene. For the streets I have included those streets shown on the Speed map of 1610 but plotted from the 1:500 mapping. Checking against the later maps has shown that the Speed map is in general an accurate record of the streets in existence at the time of its compilation in the early 17th century and there is no reason to doubt that this largely represents the street plan of the medieval town also, although there have been some losses.[414]

There are two exceptions where it was not possible to use the 1:500 plan because it post-dates major changes and in these cases I have used cropped versions of the Wood and Law map of 1847 registered to the National Grid to give the closest possible 'fit'. These areas comprise:

- an area on the west side of the town where, as we have seen, the building of the railway line and railway station in the 1850s-1870s led to the destruction of the castle, changes to the course of the river Nene and minor changes to the street pattern around Black Lion Hill. For the river Nene I used Wood and Law's map of 1847 to reconstruct its course. I was able to check this against the course of the river Nene. For the outline of Northampton Castle and the earlier alignment of Black Lion Hill I followed Chapman's reconstruction in a forthcoming article on the castle.[415]
- an area to the east of Bridge Street where the building of Market Road destroyed channels of the river Nene, including one excavated to form part of the medieval town defences.

In defining the plot boundaries I have followed the principles laid down by Conzen as mediated by Slater, Baker and Lilley.[416] I have used the 1:500 mapping to define the boundaries but have also consulted the Noble and Butlin and Wood and Law maps to eliminate boundaries introduced between their survey (1746 and 1847 respectively) and the survey of the 1:500 mapping in the 1880s. Fig 5.20 shows the plot of the street system, plot

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[414] See Fig 5.56
[415] Chapman forthcoming a
[416] See Methodology section above

boundaries and amended course of the river Nene. The first two elements have been used to identify plan units and will be discussed in detail in the discussion of the individual units. I have included on the figure a plot of the areas of later intrusion where it is not possible to establish the earlier boundaries from the historic plans. As discussed above these cover around 20% of the walled town but are largely in peripheral areas so the actual loss of boundaries is likely to be less.

**Major medieval institutions and parish boundaries**

The date, type, location and number of major institutional features, and the shape, size and number of parishes, can tell us a great deal about the topography of medieval towns, especially the larger ones. Accordingly I have prepared plans of both of these with short accompanying texts. I have not gone into greater detail as both subjects are extensively covered elsewhere: the RCHM(E) volume on Northampton for the institutions (detailed discussion of individual institutions is in microfiche); and an earlier article by Williams for the parish boundaries.[417] Where I have mentioned institutions not in the RCHM(E) volume I have given a reference for them.

The major institutional features (Fig 5.21[418]) comprise:

*Secular Institutions*

Guildhall(s)

By the 14th century, and probably earlier, the Guildhall stood at the centre of the medieval town adjacent to the market place and All Saints church (Guildhall A). There are, however, two potential earlier sites: one within the area of the late Saxon town which may be the site of the original Guildhall (Guildhall B) and a further, more doubtful, reference to 'the Old Town Hall' outside the north gate of the late Saxon town (Guildhall C).[419]

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[417] RCHM(E) 1985; Williams 1982

[418] The letters or letters + numbers refer to the location of the features on the figure (e.g. D = Northampton Castle; A6 = Jewish Cemetery)

[419] Henry Lee, writing in the 18th century, states that 'the Old Town Hall was in a little close adjoining the last house on the right hand in the lane going from Mayorhold to Scarlet Well', suggesting that perhaps the Guildhall/Town Hall was moved from the late Saxon town junction to a site outside its North Gate before its

<u>Northampton Castle (D)</u>

The castle sits beside the west gate into the town although by the later medieval period at least the entrance into the castle was from the north. Its foundation is traditionally ascribed to Simon de Senlis I, Earl of Northampton *c*1089–1111/13, although some earlier work soon after the Norman Conquest is possible.

*Ecclesiastical institutions*

<u>Abbeys and Priories</u>

Within the town walls

St Andrew's Priory (E)

Traditionally the Cluniac priory of St Andrew is said to have been founded by Simon de Senlis I in the late 11th century. By the early 12th century it occupied an extensive site at the north-west corner of the medieval town. The priory owned a great deal of property in the town and its surrounding fields. By the late 12th century it had acquired the advowsons of all of the town's churches.

Outside the town walls

St James' Abbey (F)

The Augustinian Abbey of St James lay in the parish of Duston *c*1km west of the walled town. It was founded in the first half of the 12th century by William Peverel.

Delapré Abbey (G)

Delapré Abbey, a house of Cluniac nuns was founded by Simon de Senlis II, the second earl of Northampton, *c*1145. It lay within Hardingstone parish *c*1.2km SSW of the town. It was never a large or prosperous establishment.

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move to All Saints (Lee 1931-32, 68). Lee was, however, writing many centuries after the event and there is no further corroborative evidence for his statement

Friaries

Within the town walls

All four of the major orders of friars had premises in the town: the Carmelites (H) and Franciscans (I) at the north-east end of the town; the Dominicans (J) centrally probably to the north of Gold Street and east of Horsemarket; and the Augustinians (K) at the southern end of the town off Bridge Street. The first three orders had established their houses in the 13th century but that of the Augustinians may be later. In addition there were, short-lived houses of two minor orders, the Friars of the Sack (L), adjacent to the Derngate, and the Poor Clares, whose site is unknown but possibly in Horsemarket adjacent to the Dominicans; both are recorded in the 13th century.

Hospitals

Within the town walls

St John (M)

St John's Hospital lay at the southern end of the town to the east of Bridge Street. It was founded *c*1140 and escaped the dissolution.

Outside the town walls

St Thomas (N)

The hospital of St Thomas lay immediately outside the south gate of the medieval town, spanning a stream leading off from the river Nene. Leland claimed that the hospital was founded *c*1450, but this may be the rebuilding of an earlier foundation.

St Leonard (O)

The hospital of St Leonard lay beside London Road on the southern approach to Northampton, *c*450m south of the town, adjacent to the suburb of Cotton End. It was founded *c*1150 as a leper hospital and included a chapel and a graveyard.

Walbeck (P)

The Walbeck hospital lay to the north of the town along the main road to Leicester, probably in Kingsthorpe Hollow *c*1km north of the town. It too was established for lepers and is first mentioned in the mid-13th century.

Churches

Within the town walls

There were seven parish churches within the walls: All Saints (Q); Holy Sepulchre (R); St Giles' (S); St Peter's (T); St Gregory's (U); St Mary's (V) and St Michael's (W). All were in existence by the late 12th century at the latest when they were granted to St Andrew's Priory.[420] The churches of St Peter, St Gregory and St Mary may date back to the middle Saxon period, and All Saints to the late Saxon period.[421]

Outside the town walls

There were two parish churches serving suburbs outside the town walls: the church of St Bartholomew (X) in the northern suburb and the church of St Edmund (Y) serving the eastern suburb of St Edmund's End. Both were included in the late 12th century grant to St Andrew's Priory.

Chapels

Within the town walls

Three chapels are recorded within the town walls: St Katherine's chapel (Z) in the 'new cemetery' is first mentioned in recorded in 1471 but is likely to date back much earlier as the new cemetery is recorded in the 13th century; the chapel of St Martin (A1) which lay to the west of Horsemarket, formerly known as St Martin's Street; and the chapel of St Mary Magdalene (A2) which lay within the late Saxon town towards the south-west corner of Marefair and Horseshoe Street adjacent to the probable original Guildhall site.

Outside the town walls

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[420] Williams 1978, 74
[421] See discussion of their date under the Higher Level Plan Units HLU2 and HLU3 below

Two chapels lay outside the town walls and served the suburbs within which they lay. The chapel of St Margaret (F) lay in Duston parish to whose church it was attached. It lay adjacent to St James' Abbey, and served the western suburb of St James' End. It is first recorded early in the early 13th century. The chapel of the hospital of St Leonard (O) had acquired semi-parochial rights for the adjacent suburb of Cotton End by the late 13th century.

College

Within the town walls

The college of All Saints (A2) was established as a house in which the guild chaplains of All Saints' Church could live together under a common rule. It was granted a foundation charter in 1460 but this makes clear that the house had already been in operation for some time.

Hermitages (with chapels)

Outside the town walls

South Bridge Hermitage (A3)

In a will of 1527 a chapel of St Thomas is identified as the hermitage at the south end of the South Bridge. The hermitage would have been dissolved at the Reformation but the building survived and came into the hands of the town.

West Bridge Hermitage (A4)

A hermitage by the west bridge is marked on Speed's map of 1610 on the south side of the road immediately east of West Bridge and is mentioned in 1602. As with the hermitage on the south bridge the hermitage would have been dissolved by this time but the building survived to be leased out by the town.

*Jewish Religious Institutions*

Jewish Synagogue (A5)

A synagogue was located in Silver Street at the heart of the Northampton's Jewish community.[422]

Jewish Cemetery (A6)

Detailed analysis by Roberts suggests that a Jewish cemetery lay within a small, irregular enclosure, shown on the Marcus Pierce map of 1632, around 100m along the road north out of the town.[423] Human remains found in the area in 1992 were radiocarbon dated to the 12th/13th century.[424]

*Medieval Parish Boundaries*

As we have seen above there were seven medieval parish churches in Northampton. By the time that the parishes were first mapped (on the Noble and Butlin map of 1746), however, only four survived: St Peter's, All Saints, Holy Sepulchre and St Giles'. St Gregory's and St Mary's were incorporated into All Saints in the 16th century, while St Michael's parish was annexed to Holy Sepulchre by the 18th century. Accordingly there are some uncertainties over the precise boundaries of the medieval parishes. I have largely followed Williams's suggestions in my attempted reconstruction of the earlier boundaries (Fig 5.22). The only major difference is I have suggested that the eastern boundary of St Mary's parish ran as far as the late Saxon defences rather than to Horseshoe Street. Two areas are worth looking at in detail. Fig 5.23 shows how the boundary between the parishes of St Peter, St Gregory and St Mary deviates around the site of middle Saxon timber and stone halls discovered by excavation.[425] The halls would pre-date the setting up of a parish system within the Northampton but this boundary suggests that the site of these halls still had some significance when the parish boundaries were set out. Fig 5.24 illustrates a different point. It shows the markedly sinuous path followed by the boundaries between Holy Sepulchre, All Saints, St

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[422] Williams 2014, 171, 173, 188-89
[423] Roberts 1993
[424] Cadman 1993
[425] See discussion under HLU2 below

Michael's and St Giles' parishes suggesting that the parishes here were not laid out, or not finalised, until the town was already densely occupied, perhaps in the 12th century.

**Plan Units**

*Introduction*

Whereas it has been possible to analyse the smaller Cheshire towns using a single level of plan units I have found it clearer to analyse the more complicated sequence at Northampton using two different levels of plan units: a set of 19 detailed plan units (Plan Units I – XIX) which for the purpose of the general discussion I have combined into five higher-level plan units (Higher Level Units 1-5). For the detailed plan units I have followed the same methodology as for the Cheshire towns using 'non-invasive' techniques for the initial division, principally looking at the street pattern and layout of property boundaries but also taking into account the landscape analysis and documentary evidence. I have discussed the defensive lines as separate units (DL1 for the late Saxon defences and DL2 for the medieval defences) as to discuss each length within the plan unit in which it occurs would have caused too much repetition. Given the large amount of archaeological work in the town over the last fifty years or so I have been able to undertake the second stage of looking at the archaeological evidence to see to what extent this verifies, amplifies or challenges the non-invasive evidence to a far greater depth than at the Cheshire towns. Accordingly I have separated out the archaeological evidence. I have included this material as an appendix (Appendix 1: Plan Units defined from non-invasive sources; Appendix 2: Archaeological Evidence). The major findings from this detailed work are discussed within the higher level units. The early and middle Saxon phases of the settlement pre-date the criteria by which the detailed plan units were defined (the street system and plot boundaries) so that I have discussed these at the higher level unit only.

For the higher level plan units I have adopted a different approach using all of the techniques in collaboration to provide a single narrative but highlighting which pieces of evidence come from each technique to assess the balance of evidence from each. In order to discuss the higher level units, however, we need first to examine the location of archaeological excavations within the town and the distribution of the major pottery types recovered from these excavations both of which contribute to discussion.

# Archaeological evidence

The history of archaeological work in Northampton is a relatively recent one. Prior to the 1970s the only work on any scale was a campaign of archaeological excavation led by John Alexander on what remained of Northampton Castle, the majority of whose site had been destroyed by the construction of Northampton Railway Station in the 19th century. Alexander's work was unpublished at the time but has recently been brought together by Chapman.[426] Development pressure in the 1970s led to the formation of the Northampton Development Corporation Archaeological Unit (NDCAU) which carried out a series of major excavations between 1971 and 1985. After the closure of NDCAU in 1986 responsibility for archaeological work in the town passed to the Northamptonshire County Council Archaeology Unit (NCCAU). The publication of PPG16 in 1990 opened up archaeological work in the town to other archaeological organisations although the majority of excavations have continued to be undertaken by NCCAU or its later iterations.[427]

Fig 5.25 shows all known archaeological excavations carried out within the medieval town. It has been compiled from a number of sources including previous overall mapping of excavations by NDCAU and NCCAU but in many cases I have gone back to the location plans within the original reports and georeferenced these to get the most accurate location possible. The majority of these excavations were, of course, carried out before the advent of GPS and were located using theodolites or tapes so absolute accuracy cannot be guaranteed. We can see that there has been a relatively large amount of archaeological work in Northampton although it has not been spread evenly across the settled area. Much of the work has been concentrated in the area of middle and late Saxon settlement in the south-west quarter of the medieval town. There has been a lesser amount of archaeological investigation in the south-east quarter with very little to the north and east, and only two small-scale excavations in the suburbs. This is to some extent due to the importance of the results of the work in the south-west quarter which encouraged further work and attracted funding. It is also, however, the result of the availability of areas for archaeological excavation. Much of

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[426] Chapman forthcoming b

[427] NCCAU was re-branded as Northamptonshire Archaeology in 1993 and in 2014 left the County Council to become part of MOLA Northampton, a branch of Museum of London Archaeology

the area in the south-west quarter was re-developed between the 1970s and the 1990s so that large areas were available for investigation ahead of construction work.

Table 2 shows the amount of area excavated within the late Saxon town and within the medieval town (the latter figure includes the area of the late Saxon town as this contained medieval deposits also) both in total area and as a percentage of the area of the two settlements. It can be seen that the percentage for the late Saxon town is almost double that for the medieval town as a whole, 5.66% and 3.08% respectively. I have given a figure for the amount of excavation within the medieval suburbs but have not attempted to give an estimate of the total area of the suburbs as this is so uncertain but the percentage of work undertaken is undoubtedly infinitesimally small.

Table 2: Northampton – areas excavated

|  | Total area | Area excavated | % of area excavated |
|---|---|---|---|
| Medieval town | 1,015,338m$^2$ | 31,263m$^2$ | 3.08 |
| Late Saxon town | 275,542m$^2$ | 15,585m$^2$ | 5.66 |
| Medieval suburbs |  | 453m$^2$ |  |

**Using ceramic evidence to document town origins and growth**

*Introduction*

I have taken advantage of the relatively large and well-recorded pottery evidence from Northampton to demonstrate a methodology for documenting town origins and growth using the most common types of pottery ('Indicator Pottery Types') found during archaeological excavations in the town. The use of plots of finds, particularly pottery, to identify the extent of settlements at particular periods has a long history. In the 1930s Cam included a plot of pottery thought to be Anglo-Saxon at Cambridge in her refutation of Stephenson's hypothesis

that the town to the south of the river Cam was a post-Conquest foundation (Fig 5.26).[428] Perhaps the most influential plot of finds material was Vince's plot of middle Saxon finds from London which demonstrated that the trading settlement of this period was located outside the Roman enceinte in the Aldwych area (Fig 5.27).[429] More recently, in a rural context, Lewis has used pottery recovered from test pits excavated in villages in eastern England to demonstrate the contraction of settlement after the Black Death and other depredations of the 14th century (Fig 5.28). My analysis differs from the earlier examples in combining looking at particular pottery types, rather than all pottery of a particular period, and distinguishing the amount of pottery recovered as a proportion of the size of the excavated area, to delineate the areas of settlement at various stages of its history .[430]

*Methodology*

This work has been possible because virtually all the pottery analysis carried out in the town has used the Northampton Pottery Type Series (NTS) or its successor, the Northamptonshire County Type Series (CTS). The one exception has been in respect of the MoLAS excavations at Sol Central Marefair where the Bedfordshire County Type Series was employed, but a correlation table gave the NTS and CTS equivalents.[431]

The plotting and analysis were undertaken using ArcMap. A shapefile with associated database was created recording the number of sherds of each of the major pottery types recovered from excavations in the town since 1973. A simple count of the number of sherds was used as this figure was recorded for all of the sites whereas figures for estimated vessel equivalent (EVE) or weight are only recorded for a selection of the later sites. Fig 5.29 shows the sites which were used in the analysis. Pottery from watching briefs was not included as it normally amounted to only a small number of sherds and the sites were not subject to detailed investigation. Where there have been several interventions in the same area, particularly where evaluation work has been followed by set-piece excavations, the pottery quantities have been amalgamated. These comprised: Woolmonger Street, St James' Place and St James'

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[428] Cam 1944, 8. Reprint of an article of 1935
[429] Vince 1984a; 1984b; 1990, 13-25
[430] Lewis (2016) does distinguish between test pits with no sherds, one sherd, two-four sherds or five sherds or more but does not identify particular pottery types
[431] Slowikowski 2005

Square; Angel Street and St John's Street; separate pieces of work on the Northampton High School for Girls, Derngate, by Northamptonshire Archaeology and Oxford Archaeology; adjacent excavations at The Riding carried out by Northampton Development Corporation in 1981-2 and by AOC Archaeology in 1999; and work at Sol Central, on the site of the former Barclaycard House, Marefair, where an evaluation by Northamptonshire Archaeology in 1998 preceded further work by MoLAS between 1998 and 2002. The adjoining sites in the St Peter's area - St Peter's Street, St Peter's Gardens and The Green - have not been combined as each was a large-scale excavation with a differing research design.

Table 3 (below) is an extract from the shapefile database showing the pottery sites, their area in square metres, the number of sherds of each indicator pottery type from each site and references to the original pottery reports.

| SITE NAME | Area | EMS | Maxey | N'ton | St Neots | Shelly | Total | Reference |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 46-50 SHEEP STREET | 400 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 524 | 528 | Blinkhorn 2006 |
| ANGEL STREET/ST JOHN'S STREET COMBINED | 1467 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 73 | 15564 | 15640 | Blinkhorn 2016; Blinkhorn 1993 |
| BLACK LION HILL | 194 | 34 | 1 | 14 | 492 | 966 | 1507 | Denham 1985a |
| CHALK LANE | 900 | 1265 | 77 | 1285 | 7213 | 9 | 9849 | Gryspeerdt 1981 |
| COLLEGE STREET | 20 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 235 | 235 | Gryspeerdt 1982b |
| COMMERCIAL STREET | 20 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 80 | 81 | In archive |
| COW LANE/SWAN STREET CENTRAL | 293 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 260 | 265 | Blinkhorn 2014 |
| DERNGATE B | 8 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 8 | 150 | 158 | Shaw and Denham 1984 |
| FREESCHOOL STREET | 22 | 1 | 0 | 4 | 242 | 257 | 504 | Shaw and O'Hara 1990 |
| GREEN STREET | 460 | 0 | 15 | 17 | 9 | 51 | 92 | Blinkhorn and Soden 1998-9 |
| GREGORY STREET | 401 | 0 | 9 | 390 | 1668 | 2348 | 4415 | In archive |
| GREYFRIARS | 1617 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2274 | 2274 | Gryspeerdt 1978 |
| HORSESHOE STREET A | 126 | 0 | 0 | 43 | 43 | 554 | 640 | In archive |
| KINGSWELL STREET | 1186 | 0 | 0 | 29 | 1783 | 1555 | 3367 | Blinkhorn 2008 |
| MAREFAIR | 290 | 43 | 3 | 213 | 181 | 2357 | 2797 | Gryspeerdt 1979 |
| MAYORHOLD | 190 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 873 | 875 | McCarthy 1976 |
| MOAT HOUSE HOTEL | 182 | 0 | 0 | 12 | 30 | 150 | 192 | Blinkhorn 2000-1 |
| NEWLANDS | 60 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1031 | 1033 | In archive |
| NORTHAMPTON HIGH SCHOOL COMBINED | 897 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 5 | 1094 | 1102 | Shaw 1991; Shaw et al 1992; Blinkhorn 2002 |
| RAILWAY STATION | 855 | 1 | 2 | 19 | 502 | 1061 | 1585 | Blinkhorn forthcoming |
| SOL CENTRAL MAREFAIR (MOLA/NA COMBINED) | 3337 | 36 | 24 | 388 | 1563 | 2734 | 4745 | Blinkhorn 1998; Slowikowski 2005 |
| St EDMUND'S END (KETTERING ROAD) | 92 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 176 | 177 | Williams E and Shaw 1996-7 |
| ST GILES' STREET (GUILDHALL) | 180 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 233 | 449 | 684 | Denham 1996-7; |
| ST JAMES' END | 96 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 47 | 47 | Shaw and Soden 1996 |
| St JOHN'S CAR PARK 2012 | 489 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 522 | 524 | McSloy 2013 |
| ST PETER'S GARDENS | 900 | 273 | 10 | 531 | 2100 | 4165 | 7079 | Denham 1985b |
| ST PETER'S STREET | 1425 | 148 | 83 | 722 | 985 | 6407 | 8345 | McCarthy 1979 |
| ST PETER'S WAY | 15 | 0 | 0 | 8 | 8 | 124 | 140 | In archive |
| SWAN STREET NORTH (DERNGATE A) | 12 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 5 | 44 | 50 | Shaw and Denham 1984 |
| SWAN STREET SOUTH | 330 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 29 | 622 | 656 | Denham and Shaw 1993-94 |
| THE CONVENT | 25 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 25 | 702 | 729 | In archive |
| THE GREEN | 1135 | 5 | 0 | 132 | 1796 | 7048 | 8981 | In archive |
| THE RIDING COMBINED | 252 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 23 | 879 | 904 | Denham 1984; Blinkhorn 2005 |
| WOOLMONGER STREET COMBINED | 1845 | 101 | 3 | 395 | 2668 | 2568 | 5735 | Blinkhorn 1995; Soden 1998-9; Denham 1983 |

Table 3: Extract from pottery database. EMS = Early-Middle Saxon Wares; Maxey = Maxey-type ware; N'ton = Northampton Ware; St Neots = St Neots-type ware; Shelly = Shelly Wares

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All sherds of the major pottery types were counted including those found as a residual element in features from a later period. This was considered acceptable as there was no evidence from any of the sites that material had been brought in from elsewhere so that the pottery as a residual element was likely to have come from contexts close by, a common phenomenon at complex urban sites with intercutting features. Not to have done so would have risked missing information. For instance at the Sol Central Marefair site a reasonably large number of Early-Middle Saxon and Middle Saxon sherds were recovered from residual contexts (36 and 24 sherds respectively) although no features of this date were discovered during the excavations. The excavation strategy adopted at this site, however, was to excavate deposits down to the formation level of the proposed development rather than down to the natural subsoil.[432] Accordingly, I would consider that the earlier sherds found as a residual element indicate activity of these periods on or adjacent to the site which were not uncovered due to the excavation strategy. Greater confidence in this assertion is provided by the results from the Marefair excavation site 60m to the west which was excavated down to the natural subsoil and where features of Early/Middle Saxon date were discovered.[433]

It is worth emphasising the value of using a single type series. This has enabled pottery from a succession of excavations, carried out by a variety of organisations, and studied by a number of different specialists over a period of more than 40 years, to be analysed in an integrated manner. The NTS was established at the time of major investigations in the town in the 1970s.[434] It was used, with amendments and modifications as further evidence presented itself, by all subsequent ceramic specialists until 1997 when it was incorporated into the CTS. This involved a change of prefix and code but otherwise it has been a matter of further refinements rather than wholesale restructuring, a testament to the rigour with which the original type series was established. Where there have been refinements this is discussed under the individual pottery types.

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[432] Miller and Wilson 2005, 1
[433] Williams, F 1979, 43-46
[434] McCarthy 1979, 153-65

*Indicator Pottery Types*

The indicator pottery types are described below with their common name (e.g. Maxey-type ware) and approximate date range, followed by their NTS and CTS codes. I have used the NTS codes as the primary code in my discussion as these are the codes used in most of the previous detailed discussions of the pottery from Northampton and they encompass the various later divisions and refinements.

*Early-middle Saxon wares (c.400–900) NTS S1-2*

All early-middle Saxon wares. S1 has a 'black, gritty' fabric, of which there are many subdivisions, while S2 comprises grass-tempered wares. These wares are not given a separate number in the CTS but are described individually. It is unfortunate that these fabrics cannot be more precisely dated but their recovery from features with early Anglo-Saxon radiocarbon dates and the presence of non-ceramic finds of this date from a number of the sites indicate that many must date to earlier within the period.

*Maxey-type ware (c.650-850) NTS S3 CTS 97*

Calcareous pottery with affinities to Maxey-type III wares but thought to be local. Although not common, S3 is a valuable indicator as it encompasses the period of the middle Anglo-Saxon settlement.

*Northampton ware (c.875-1000) NTS W1[435] CTS 130*

Quartz-tempered pottery, commonly wheel-thrown, but there are also hand-made examples, or hand-made bases with a wheel-turned rim. The only ware known to have been manufactured in Northampton itself - a kiln site was discovered during development in Horsemarket in 1971.[436] This ware has affinities to other late Saxon wheel-thrown pottery often found at centres within the Danelaw, such as Thetford, Stafford, and, especially, Stamford. There has been much discussion as to whether these wares were introduced during

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[435] The NTS distinguished two related fabrics (W32, W34; see Denham 1985, 54)) which are not included in the sherd count. They are a minor part of the assemblage and hence their non-inclusion does not materially affect the distribution pattern.
[436] Williams 1974

the period of Danish incursions in the later 9th century, or whether their origins were earlier still.[437] In the case of Northampton it has been possible to recognise a Northampton ware horizon within the wider late Saxon period, often associated with St Edmund Memorial pennies. Denham considered the issue and tentatively suggested a date of *c*.900 – *c*.975 for the *floruit* of Northampton ware.[438] Since then, however, the period of usage of the St Edmund Memorial coinage has been refined and it would appear to be largely restricted to the period *c*.895 – 917/18.[439] Hence the beginning of Northampton ware may be put back to the end of the 9th century, the time when the settlement was in the hands of the Danes. An end date for its production is less easy to determine but, given that it forms a distinct early sub-phase within the late Saxon period, it is likely to have ceased production within the 10th century.

*St Neots-type ware (c.850–1100/1200) NTS T1*

(subsequently divided into T1(1) and T1(2)[440]); CTS 100 (=T1(1)); 200 (=T1(2))

A calcareous pottery, common in Northampton and across the region. Sub-divisions have been suggested.[441] The most important one is between T1(1), a predominantly black-grey sub-type, and T1(2) which is mainly red-reddish brown.[442] These are the most common varieties and there may be chronological implications, for T1(1) is thought to date to 900-1100, while T1(2) is ascribed a date range of 1000-1200. For the current analysis T1 has been treated as a single fabric since pottery reports prior to 1985 did not record the sub-division. The implication of the sub-division as recorded on the sites excavated after 1985 is, however, considered in the discussion.

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[437] Hurst 1976, 314, 318; Perry 2016, 101-8; Blinkhorn 2013; Dodd *et al* 2014, 85-94, 100-03
[438] Denham 1985, 55
[439] Williams *et al* forthcoming in *Northamptonshire Archaeology*
[440] Also sub-types T1(3) and T1(4) which form a minor part of the T1 assemblage (see Denham 1985, 30).
[441] Denham 1985, 53-4.
[442] Denham 1985, 28-29

*Shelly wares (c.1100-1400) T2/330 shelly coarseware (1100-1400); T2(2)/319 Lyveden/Stanion A ware (1150-1400), 320 Lyveden/Stanion B ware (1225-1400)*

Shelly wares are the dominant post-Conquest pottery type in Northampton and hence form a valuable indicator of settlement areas in the broad 1100 - 1400 period. Later pottery reports have distinguished Lyveden/Stanion wares from the general pottery type but as these were not differentiated in earlier reports they have been included in the totals for this type as a whole.

*The results*

Much consideration was given as to the best way of showing the results of the pottery analysis graphically. The advantage of using a computerised database such as that available within ArcGIS is that, once the data have been entered, it is possible to make an almost infinite number of calculations and to present them in a wide variety of ways. Two approaches were tested:

- to divide the number of sherds of pottery of each indicator type recovered from each site by the size of the area excavated in square metres. Hence at Black Lion Hill 492 sherds of St Neots-type Ware came from an area of 194m$^2$, an average of 2.54 sherds from each square metre.
- to calculate, using sherd count, the percentage of each fabric out of the total of indicator pottery types as a whole. Hence the 492 sherds of St Neots-type ware from Black Lion Hill represent 32.65% of the total number of indicator pottery sherds recovered from the site.

Both approaches have their merits and their drawbacks. The former suffers from the fact that the sites differ in the depth and type of deposits and the amount of sampling of features; ideally we would use cubic metres excavated but this data is not available for the majority of sites. The latter perhaps provides a truer reflection of the intensity of excavation at each site but gives a higher percentage figure for the later pottery types at those sites which do not have early occupation.

The two methods were tested as part of my research project and in general the results were similar, but the number of sherds per square metre was preferred as this gives greater comparability between sites with early occupation and those without. Accordingly, for the

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present paper I have included an initial illustration (Fig 5.30) showing the percentage of each indicator pottery type from each excavation and giving an indication of the size of the site, as this provides a useful introduction to the range of pottery types found and the location of the areas excavated.[443]

Fig 5.30 demonstrates that there is a concentration of data within the south-west quarter of the medieval walled area of Northampton, both in terms of the number of sites excavated and also in the size of sites (eight of the eleven category 4 and 5 sites lie in this area). There is a reasonable spread of sites to the east but little information for the northern part of the town. This reflects the lack of opportunity for excavation in this area rather than any deliberate policy.

If we turn to the individual pottery distributions early-middle Saxon wares can be seen to be largely restricted to the south-west quarter between Chalk Lane to the west and Woolmonger Street to the east (Fig 5.31); radiocarbon dates from the former and non-ceramic finds from the latter suggest early Anglo-Saxon activity at these sites so we can be reasonably sure that this distribution does encompass the early Anglo-Saxon period. The small number of sherds found on sites to the east of the Lee line, only one or two per site, may not be sufficient to suggest actual settlement. Given, however, the ubiquity of early-middle Anglo-Saxon sites in Northamptonshire, including around Northampton itself, there is at least the possibility that some may do so.[444]

Figure 5.32 shows the incidence of Maxey-type ware. The plot is important as the life of this pottery type is broadly the same as that of the middle Anglo-Saxon settlement. It is not, however, present in great numbers in Northampton so its occurrence should be treated with care – the largest number of sherds from a single site is 83 from St Peter's Street. The need to analyse the data with caution is further illustrated by the assemblage from Green Street where 15 sherds were recovered from a small excavation; fourteen were from a single vessel giving a spurious high incidence. The problem would have been overcome by using a count of the maximum number of vessels but these figures were not estimated for sites investigated earlier.

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[443] There are five different sizes of 'pie': Size 1: 0-100 m$^2$; Size 2: 101-200 m$^2$; Size 3: 201-500 m$^2$; Size 4: 501-1000 m$^2$; Size 5: >1000 m$^2$

[444] Shaw 1993-4; Parry 2006, 91-4, 271

If we disregard this 'false' reading, high percentages of Maxey-type ware are restricted to the St Peter's Street/Marefair/Chalk Lane/Gregory Street area, and we may be seeing here a true reflection of the extent of the high-status settlement of this period, although we can note the small number of sherds from the Northampton Station site (two sherds) to the west and Woolmonger Street (three sherds) to the east. This restricted distribution also has implications for the theory that the Lee line represents a middle Anglo-Saxon rather than a late Saxon defensive line for the few sherds from Woolmonger Street are the only ones to have been found east of the line of Horsemarket/Horseshoe Street.

In looking at the incidence of pottery from the middle Saxon period we should be aware also that a proportion of the early-middle Saxon wares belong to this period. Nevertheless, pottery does not appear in any great quantities on the Northampton sites at this period, nor in fact do other finds, a feature which it shares with a number of high-status sites of this period elsewhere. Hamerow suggests that this may be due to the erosion of occupation layers, as well as patterns of deposition and waste disposal.[445] Certainly on the 'palaces' site the middle Anglo-Saxon levels include neither sunken-featured buildings nor rubbish pits, from which so much of the pottery from the earlier and later periods was recovered.

It is worth remarking also on the virtually total absence of middle Saxon Ipswich ware from Northampton sites, with only one definite sherd having been recovered, from Chalk Lane.[446] The production period of this pottery type is now thought to be between around 720 - 850, a similar date to that of the Anglo-Saxon 'palaces', and it has often been seen as an indicator of a high-status site, although this is not exclusively the case.[447] Why then is there such a dearth of Ipswich ware from Northampton? Blinkhorn has plotted its distribution showing that it is most common, unsurprisingly, in a 'Primary Zone' covering East Anglia, but also occurs in lesser quantities in a 'Secondary Zone' on sites in the Midlands, the North-East and the South-East, including Northamptonshire.[448] He has also suggested that pottery was used as a cultural identifier in Anglo-Saxon England, so that Ipswich ware was part of the 'social kit' of

[445] Hamerow 2015, 343
[446] Gryspeerdt 1981, 110
[447] Blinkhorn 1999, 8-9; 2012, 1, 90
[448] Blinkhorn 2012, 70

the inhabitants of East Anglia in the middle Anglo-Saxon period.[449] Hence it could be speculated that Northampton lay within a Maxey-type ware rather than an Ipswich ware zone. Ipswich ware is, however, found at other sites in Mercia; accordingly its non-appearance at Northampton remains, for the moment, a conundrum.

If we turn to the late Saxon period, Northampton ware may broadly indicate the extent of occupation in the late 9th and 10th centuries (Fig 5.33). All sites within Lee's defensive line contain pottery of this type apart from the small-scale excavations at College Street, so we can suggest that settlement had spread to this line during the time when this ware was in production. There is a small incidence of this pottery beyond the Lee line. While it is tempting to suggest that the two sherds from the Mayorhold, outside the north gate, could represent expansion of occupation into this area and the two each from the excavations at St Giles' Street and The Riding could indicate activity along the road east out of the late Saxon settlement, there are also small numbers of sherds from excavations in the south-east of the medieval walled area (Swan Street South five sherds; Angel Street/St John's Street two sherds; Northampton High School for Girls sites two sherds; Swan Street North one sherd) in areas away from the main routes out of the town; accordingly we may be seeing no more than sherds discarded away from the settlement area.

Fig 5.34 shows the occurrence of St Neots-type ware. This pottery type largely spans the late Saxon period but sub-divisions (notably NTS T1(2)/CTS 200) continue into the 12th century. There is again a high incidence and widespread distribution within Lee's defensive line but with a greater penetration to the east outside the late Saxon defences, particularly on the St Giles' Street site which lies on a main route out of the town. Where, however, the sub-divisions of this ware have been recorded, the pottery recovered from the sites to the east has been mainly of the later variant, so we may be seeing largely 12th century rather than earlier expansion.

Fig 5.35 plots the incidence of shelly wares of the 12th - 15th century. It shows graphically the dramatic expansion of settlement in the medieval period; pottery of this date is present in quantity on every site (apart from Chalk Lane which was by this time sealed by the bank of

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[449] Blinkhorn 2013, 158-9

Northampton Castle), including the suburbs to the west (St James' End) and east (St Edmund's End).

The research presented above provides a model for the origins and early development of Northampton which supplements the story told by the excavated structural evidence and the historical sources. It furnishes a relatively objective view, and one which can be refined and extended as further excavation data becomes available. A number of caveats, however, need to be entered. As discussed, the sites were not chosen to give a spread across the town but were a result of development pressure, which was concentrated in the south-west quarter. Work here has provided nationally, and even internationally, important information about middle Anglo-Saxon and late Saxon settlement. Ideally, however, we might wish for a number of substantial excavations on the major routes out of the late Saxon town. The balance has been rectified a little recently with large-scale work at Angel Street, although this is in a back-street area, so settlement here is likely to have begun later than on the main streets and routes out of the town.[450] In addition, the investigations were undertaken by a number of different organisations and individuals over a period of more than 40 years. Fortunately, however, there has been a large element of continuity and general agreement over their purpose – to recover the story of the origins, growth and development of the town of Northampton, though the limiting of some excavations, such as the MOLAS work at Sol Central, to areas and levels directly affected by development proposals, has contributed to a rather 'bitty' story in these cases.

The differing size of the excavations should also be borne in mind. The results from St Peter's Street where an area of 1425 $m^2$ was investigated over a period of three years have a great deal more validity than those of Derngate Trench B where an area of 8 $m^2$ was dug in a single day. It would be possible to remove the smaller sites from the analysis and if, say, sites less than 100$m^2$ were omitted the results would arguably have a greater validity. The spread of sites would be considerably reduced, however, and the results would not be significantly different.[451]

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[450] Brown in preparation
[451] Ten of the 34 sites would be removed – see Fig 5.30 category size 1

## Town-plan analysis: Higher Level Plan Units (HLUs)

**Introduction**

As outlined above I have found it clearer to discuss the more complicated, and better documented, sequence of development at Northampton using two levels of plan unit. This section comprises the discussion of the higher-level plan units. At this stage I have added phasing information and combined the non-invasive and invasive techniques to form a single narrative. The early and middle Saxon phases at Northampton pre-date the laying out of the plot boundaries and most of the street plan. Accordingly I did not include these at plan unit level but discuss them in this section as higher-level units. An update on Anglo-Saxon Northampton, co-authored by myself, is currently awaiting publication so I shall concentrate here on those aspects relating to topography and dating.[452]

The relative wealth of archaeological information available for Northampton, certainly compared to the Cheshire towns (apart from Chester itself) gives an opportunity to demonstrate the inter-connectedness of the different techniques and how they can be combined together to form a single narrative as well as used to challenge each other. In order to do so I have highlighted pieces of information and hypotheses which rely upon a single technique in different colours; purple for landscape analysis; green for documentary evidence; blue for town-plan analysis and red for archaeological information.

Before looking at the evidence from the Anglo-Saxon period onwards two earlier features which may have had an influence on these later phases should be considered. A small portion of a prehistoric ring ditch, around 30m in diameter, was uncovered during excavations at St Peter's Street.[453] At the time no special significance was attributed to this. Recently, however, there has been an increased recognition that Anglo-Saxon sites, especially those belonging to the upper strata of society, were often sited adjacent to prehistoric monuments.[454] There has been little evidence of Romano-British activity uncovered within the area of the later town but

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[452] Williams *et al* forthcoming in *Northamptonshire Archaeology*
[453] Williams 1979, 137-38. See Figs 5.36 and 5.37A for the location of the prehistoric feature and its relation to the Anglo-Saxon settlements
[454] See discussion of the middle Saxon settlement below

the east-west road line running through the settlement along the line of Marefair/Gold Street may preserve the line of a Roman routeway which influenced the layout of later settlement.[455]

**Higher Level Plan Units**

I have divided the higher level plan units into:

HLU1: The early Saxon settlement

HLU2: The middle Saxon settlement

HLU3: The late Saxon town/settlement

HLU4: The medieval walled town

HLU5: The medieval suburbs

*HLU1: The Early Saxon settlement (c410 - c680)*

Features of early Saxon date, including sunken-featured buildings and possible posthole buildings have been discovered at a  number of the excavation sites in the town, principally on the St Peter's Street sites, Chalk Lane and Woolmonger Street (Fig 5.36: Sites 2, 3 and 4). Early Saxon sites are, however, common in the area around Northampton, as elsewhere in much of Northamptonshire, and although there are a few 'high-status' objects from the various sites in Northampton there is insufficient to suggest that the settlement in this area is of a particular significance at the moment.[456]

HLU2: The middle Saxon settlement (c680 – c875)It is at this period that we see a dramatic change in the nature of settlement in Northampton with the foundation of an indisputably high-status settlement denoted by prestigious buildings which present a stark contrast to both earlier and later settlement patterns. Excavation evidence comes from six sites in the area around St Peter's church (Fig 5.37A): the three conjoined sites of St Peter's Gardens (2a), St Peter's Street (2b) and The Green (2c); Black Lion Hill (5) to the west, and Gregory Street (6)

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[455] For the line of the road see Fig 5.36 and discussion under Archaeological evidence for pre-urban background above

[456] For early Saxon features see Williams *et al* 1985, 38-40 and Williams *et al* forthcoming; for early Saxon sites elsewhere in Northamptonshire see Parry 2006, 91-4, 274; Shaw 1993-4

to the east and Marefair (7) to the north. Two sub-phases can be recognised.[457] Initially, at sub-phase A, around the late 7th - early 8th centuries, a large timber hall of a distinctive type with annexes at either end, was erected and formed the centre-piece of a complex of timber buildings and boundary ditches set approximately parallel or at right angles to the main building suggesting an element of planning (Fig 5.37A). At this sub-phase the site resembles a late example of what are now termed 'Great Hall Complexes.[458] Of interest is that one of the timber buildings overlies the site of a prehistoric ring ditch. This is a phenomenon noted at other high-status middle Saxon sites, notably Lyminge and Sutton Courtenay, and has been suggested as a means of appropriating the significance of the earlier monuments to the later sites.[459] Subsequently, at sub-phase B, around the late 8th – early 9th centuries, the timber hall was replaced by an even more impressive building - a massive stone hall, virtually unique in the British Isles (Fig 5.37B). The east wall of a further stone building was found 15m to the west adjacent to the site of the later St Peter's church and is likely to be a forerunner of the present church. Five mortar mixers doubtless provided mortar for the stone hall and church. Four graves found some 70m east of the main complex on the Gregory Street excavation are also of this sub-phase and suggest that St Gregory's Church, which lay around 20m to their north, dates back to this period as well. A number of gullies discovered on St Peter's Street, The Green and Black Lion Hill and interpreted as boundary ditches could belong to either sub-phase. Those on St Peter's Street and The Green appear to be part of the same boundary with postholes and stakeholes on their inner sides. No features of this period were found to the south of the boundary ditch on the excavations at The Green so it is possible that this feature marks the southern boundary of the high-status settlement. Excavations to the north of Marefair, although heavily disturbed by later activity, uncovered evidence of one or more timber buildings, set parallel to the street. The gully on Black Lion Hill also lay parallel to Marefair so that the two pieces of evidence are a valuable indication that we can date Marefair back to the middle Saxon period at least and therefore makes more likely the suggestion that it was originally a Roman road.

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[457] The dating for the two sub-phases is slightly earlier than given in the original report (Williams *et al* 1985) as a result of a review of the dating evidence to be published in Williams *et al* forthcoming

[458] McBride 2020

[459] McBride 2020, 66 and Fig 2.28; Blair 2018, 121, 124-25

The exceptionally high status of the settlement at this period is indicated by the scale of its buildings and particularly by the presence of stone buildings and mortar mixers. This led to its interpretation as a secular 'palace' complex. Subsequently John Blair has suggested that it is better interpreted as part of a minster complex.[460] It is impossible to be certain either way – are we seeing a minster complex, or are we seeing a palace with attached/associated church(es)/chapel(s)? Indeed it is possible that an earlier secular complex was replaced by a monastic one as has been suggested for the Saxon settlement at Flixborough, Lincolnshire.[461]

How large an area did this middle Saxon high-status settlement cover? As discussed above, we have seen the plot of middle Saxon Maxey-type pottery suggests a slightly wider settlement area than that suggested by excavated features alone with sufficient pottery of this type recovered from Chalk Lane and the Sol Central Marefair site to suggest occupation (Fig 5.32).[462] A settlement area to include these would cover around 2ha (Fig 5.38).

In the earlier landscape analysis section I speculated that there was an early route leading to the middle Saxon settlement from the south. Fig 5.38 looks at this route in more detail. If we take a straight line from the point where a possible causeway was reported in the late 19th century to the bottom of Tanner Street this passes through the site of the medieval Mervyn's mill. This mill is recorded from the late 13th century but may well have had a middle Saxon predecessor. Indeed we can see a similar juxtaposition of an important Anglo-Saxon site and its attendant mill at Tamworth, where the mill, dated by excavation to the 9th century, lay upon the river Anker around 200m from the Mercian palace site (Fig 5.39).[463] At Northampton the projected line then continues up Tanner Street and Narrow Toe Lane to enter into the middle Saxon elite centre. If this line is further continued through the high-status complex it would pass along Quart Pot Lane which leads to the site of St Mary's church, suggesting that this too may date back to the middle Saxon period. Added weight is given to this suggestion by Blair's observation that dedications to the Virgin are common at

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[460] Blair 1996
[461] Loveluck and Evans 2011, 17-18
[462] The scheme of investigation for the Sol Central excavation entailed the preservation of some areas and the excavation of other areas either down to the top of the archaeological horizon or to formation level of the proposed development. Accordingly we cannot be sure whether middle Saxon deposits were, or indeed still are, present on the site (Miller and Wilson 2005, 1)
[463] Rahtz and Meeson 1992; Staffordshire County Council 2011

elite sites of this period.[464] The antiquity of my suggested route up from the river  is given further corroboration by the observation that the boundary between the medieval parishes of St Peter, St Gregory and St Mary ran up Tanner Street/Narrow Toe Lane and then diverted around the area of the middle Saxon timber and stone halls before rejoining its south-north course by running up Quart Pot Lane.[465]

One aspect worth considering is to what extent the existence of a high-status complex of this period at Northampton could have been predicted without the excavation evidence. Gover *et al*'s discussion of the significance of the place name *Hamtun* in the 1930s and their suggestion that it was likely to indicate the presence of a 'royal residence and estate centre' of the eighth…century' is remarkably prescient. Otherwise, however, there was little recognition of a high status for the settlement here before the earliest documentary reference to the site as a Danish army base in the early 10th century. Hence Cam in her history of Northampton written as part of a VCH volume said that:

The earliest reference to Northampton in writing comes in 914, and though the archaeological evidence clearly indicates occupation of the castle site in the Romano-British and Anglo-Saxon periods, no settlement of any importance seems to have existed at Northampton before the time of the Danish conquest.[466]

The reference to Romano-British occupation illustrates a common hazard of relying on antiquarian interpretation of archaeological finds. Pottery discovered during the construction of Northampton Station on the site of the castle in the 1880s was interpreted as Romano-British and this was not corrected until re-examination of the material in the 1960s showed it to be of late Saxon St Neots-type ware.[467] A similar situation was found at Norwich where pottery previously classed as 'Roman' was found to be late Saxon Thetford-type ware.[468]

*HLU3: The late Saxon town/settlement*

This higher-level unit comprises Plan Units I-IV, XIV, together with DL1

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[464] Blair (1996, 105)
[465] See Fig 5.23 and discussion of medieval parish boundaries above
[466] Cam 1930, 1
[467] Scriven 1881-2; Kennett 1968
[468] Carter 1978, 189

Town-plan analysis suggests that the late Saxon settlement comprised a walled area of around 25ha with markets outside its east and, in all probability, north gates. Its defences are demarcated by a double row of streets on its north and east sides, while on the south and west they lay adjacent to the Northern Branch of the river Nene (Fig 5.40). The internal streets around the defences were presumably deliberately laid out so as to allow easy access along the defensive line, mirroring the layout at centres such as Winchester where an internal road probably originally ran around the full length of the circuit (Fig 2.18).[469]

Can we be sure that settlement of this period was restricted to the walled area and its periphery? The ceramic evidence allows to test this hypothesis. Figs 5.33 and 5.34 show the occurrence of the two most common types of late Saxon pottery from excavations in the town, Northampton Ware and St Neots-type Ware. As we have seen the former is likely to date to the early earliest phase of late Saxon activity (late 9th-10th centuries), while the latter covers the entire period and may last into the 12th century. Both plots show large quantities of late Saxon pottery within the double-row of streets leaving no doubt that settlement had spread to the entire area which they delineate during this period. Limited quantities of Northampton Ware can also be seen in the south-east quarter of the medieval town. Given their small quantity (between one to five sherds per site) I would suggest that they represent discarded material in an area likely to have been part of the settlement's fields rather than indicating settlement. In addition two sherds were recovered from small-scale excavations at Mayorhold just outside the north gate of the late Saxon settlement. I have suggested from town-plan analysis that there was marketing here and the ceramic evidence could be taken as corroboration for this although it must be admitted that their incidence is no greater than that at the other extramural sites. The plot of St Neots-type Ware does show a greater occurrence of this ware within the area of the medieval town. The quantities are not large, however, except at the St Giles' Street site where the ware formed a reasonably large proportion of the assemblage. This may indicate occupation along a major road leading out from the east gate, which would not be surprising. Given, however, that St Neots ware continued in production into the 12th century, this need not have taken place in the late Saxon period.

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[469] Biddle 1976a, 129-30

Who was responsible for the development of the late Saxon settlement? The town was in the hands of Danes from around 877 when Mercia was partitioned until 917 when the Danish army based there surrendered to the Edward the Elder. Hence one of the major questions is the influence of the Danes on the form and nature of the settlement. Unfortunately the dating evidence provided by the archaeological work is not sufficiently precise to provide a definitive answer. At many sites a 'Northampton Ware horizon' where this pottery type predominates can be identified but for the moment we cannot put a closer date than the late 9th- late 10th centuries for its period of production, spanning the period of Danish and English influence over the settlement.

As regards the defences we have seen that the only major excavation has been at Green Street in the south-west corner of the town away from the double-row of streets (Fig 5.36: Site 1). The investigations here established that the earliest phase comprised a clay bank with a timber revetment and a ditch almost immediately in front of the revetment. Subsequently the timber revetment was replaced in stone and at the same time a gateway was cut through the bank and a metalled surface was laid running on the same alignment as Green Street (Fig 5.41). The first phase fell within the 'Northampton Ware horizon', while the second phase was suggested as belonging to the late 10th-11th centuries.[470] Hence we cannot be sure whether the first phase of these defences was constructed by the Danes or the English. The Danish settlement would surely have had some form of defence but we cannot be sure whether it covered the entire area within the double row of streets.

This sequence of defences mirrors that at a number of other English fortified centres, such as Oxford and Hereford, where again the ramparts had timber revetments which were subsequently replaced with a stone facing.[471] We do not, however, have sufficient evidence about Danish defences in England to establish whether there were Danish fortifications of the same nature although the defences at Nottingham may date to the period of Danish occupation there, or even pre-date it.[472] There is also an intriguing documentary reference for Towcester in Northamptonshire where in 917 Edward the Elder first 'ordered the borough at Towcester to be occupied and built' but later in the year, after an unsuccessful siege by the Danish army,

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[470] See Appendix 2: Archaeological Evidence – Plan Unit I
[471] Hereford: Boucher 2002, 9-10; Oxford: Dodd (ed) 2003, 21
[472] Knight *et al*, 45-47

the fortress was reinforced with a stone wall; does this refer to a strengthening of the defences by the addition of a stone revetment wall?[473]

The road pattern surrounding the settlement was extensively altered in the post-Conquest period with the building of the south bridge. I have followed Lee in suggesting that the earlier approach from the south was via a ford over the river Nene. Trial trenching was undertaken in 1984 in an attempt to uncover the line of the hypothesised Saxon ford leading into the town on the south side.[474] No positive evidence was found for a causeway or other features apart from ditches which may served for drainage or field boundaries – or both. Site constraints meant that the trenching was not able to be undertaken as far east as the most likely line of the causeway and the work was hampered by the dangerous nature of the subsoil with sides collapsing in as excavation took place so that it cannot be taken as evidence for the non-existence of the causeway. At Oxford a whole series of early fords and crossings into the town from the south have been uncovered from the prehistoric period onwards, including an early Saxon causeway. In the middle Saxon period a wooden bridge was constructed along the line of the crossing which was replaced in the late Saxon period by a stone ford up to 7m wide. The ford was silting up by the late 11th century and was replaced by the Grandpont, a rubble causeway with intermittent flood arches 4m wide and up to 700m long.[475]

The suggested line of the approach from the south would have entered the town at the bottom of Horseshoe Street with its line continued by Horsemarket, St Andrew's Street and, ultimately, Semilong (Fig 5.6). A further route led north east from the north gate towards Kettering (the 'old' Kettering Road). The approach from the west was perhaps a continuation of a Roman road from Duston entering the town via a crossing close to the site of the later west bridge. This route then continues through the town (as Marefair and Gold Street) to the east gate outside which was a market area sited around All Saints church. Roads radiate out from this market area along what were to become Abington Street, St Giles' Street and Derngate. We cannot be certain that all three date back to the late Saxon period, although St Giles' Street must surely do so as its route was later blocked by the building of the medieval town wall.

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[473] Whitelock 1961, 64-66
[474] Hardy 1985
[475] Dodd (ed) 2003, 10-16, 32-35, 53-54

Within the defences the late Saxon settlement is divided into four unequal quadrants by the major north-south route of Horseshoe Street/Horsemarket and the east-west route of Marefair/Gold Street. The pattern of minor streets at this period is more difficult to establish. St Peter's Street and Woolmonger Street run at an angle eccentric to the north-south and east-west alignments. This might have been regarded as a sign of an earlier street pattern. However, the archaeological evidence has demonstrated that these two streets were not laid out until the post-conquest period. Although the two major streets are roughly at right angles there is little sign of a gridded street system. St Katherine's Street does run parallel to the east-west axis of Gold Street and may have been laid out originally as a back lane serving properties fronting on to Gold Street but we cannot be sure whether it was laid out at this period or later. I have not discussed the plot boundaries in this phase as the archaeological evidence suggests that these too were not laid out until the post-Conquest period.

There are no definite signs of formal market areas within the walled town but this is not unusual for late Saxon towns.[476] There is, however, as we have seen, evidence for market areas outside the north and east gates. The market area at the north gate comprises a rectangular area known by the 18th century as Mayorhold but earlier as Marehole, suggesting a horse market. At the east gate there was a larger rectangular market area with All Saints' church at its centre. It is noticeable that the road routes radiate from the market area rather than from immediately outside the gate itself.

A multiplicity of churches is common in Late Saxon towns. Northampton cannot approach the number of early churches and chapels estimated for Norwich (46 by 1086) and Lincoln (35 by 1110).[477] We have seen, however, that there is good evidence for the existence of St Peter's and St Gregory's churches, and possibly St Mary's, in the middle Saxon period. All Saint's church outside the east gate is likely to be a late Saxon foundation and the discovery of burials of 10th century date in the area of St Martin's chapel suggests that it too may date to this period.[478]

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[476] Palliser *et al* 2000, 167; Ottaway 2017, 219
[477] Morris 1989, 169
[478] Miller and Wilson, 2005, 9-13

What was the layout of the late Saxon settlement? First of all we should emphasise that its form, as revealed by excavation, is very different from that of the preceding middle Saxon period. The large and prestigious timber and stone buildings of the elite centre have been swept away, perhaps as a result of the Danish takeover. Excavation evidence from St Peter's Street (Fig 5.42), suggests a rather loosely-disposed settlement pattern of timber buildings established around the early 10th century.[479] This pattern is in sharp contrast to that uncovered by the excavations of contemporary levels at Coppergate, York, where, as discussed earlier, closely-packed properties were set adjacent, and at right angles, to the street frontage.[480] An explanation for this may be that the two places represent different types of urban settlement at this period. Blair has pointed to the contrast at this time between settlements such as York and Lincoln where evidence has been recovered of densely packed street frontages, and other settlements, among which I would include Northampton, which exhibit a more dispersed settlement pattern indicative of clusters of aristocratic enclosures.[481]

At Woolmonger Street there is evidence of a large posthole building with a deep internal cellar dated to the 10th century (Figs 5.43, 5.44). Its alignment was noticeably eccentric to that of the street itself demonstrating that late Saxon settlement here also pre-dated the street layout. It was in fact more closely aligned to the west-east route through the settlement along Marefair/Gold Street although this lay some 70m to the north (Fig 5.40).

A corollary of the discussion of the settlement pattern is at what point we can describe the settlement as urban. Certainly the 11th century settlement as revealed by the Domesday Survey with its large number of houses, many in the possession of important, wealthy and influential landowners, and its position at the head of its shire is urban. How far back we can suggest an urban status depends to some extent on our definition of a town. If we are looking for a densely packed urban space with buildings fronting on to street frontages we do not see this at Northampton until the post-Conquest period (although the lack of excavation along the major street frontages must be acknowledged here). If, however, we are looking for evidence of a variety of non-agricultural occupations then the late Saxon settlement with its pottery industry producing Northampton Ware and evidence for a range of metalworking, as well as

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[479] Williams *et al* 1985, 43
[480] Fig 2.19; Mainman 2014, 701-17
[481] Blair 2018, 341-50

sufficient St Edmund Memorial pennies recovered during excavations as to suggest that they may have been minted here, would suggest that the settlement was urban from early within this period, encouraged by its role as a military centre under first the Danes and then the forces of Edward the Elder.[482]

*HLU4: The medieval walled town (1066-1540)*

This higher-level unit comprises the medieval occupation within the area of the former late Saxon town (Plan Units I-IV; XIV) and the area of the expanded town as far as the medieval town walls (Plan Units V-XIII, XV; DL2).

If we turn to the post-Conquest period we have a far wider range of documentary evidence. This establishes Northampton as an important shire town in the 11th century which became one of the major urban centres in England in the 12th-13th centuries, only to decline again from around the late 13th century to become once again a shire town of medium importance.[483]

The distribution of medieval shelly wares demonstrates that at this period the settlement had expanded massively from an area of around 25ha within the late Saxon defences, with some activity also outside the east and north gates, to an area of *c*100ha encompassed by the medieval defences, with further suburban expansion (Fig 5.35).[484] Given the long life of this pottery type (*c*1100 - *c*1400), however, we need to use other evidence to attempt a more detailed phasing.

There is overwhelming evidence from a wide range of sources that this period of dramatic change in the size and layout of the settlement at Northampton dates to the Norman period from around the time of the Conquest to the late 12th century. We can certainly see the process under way at the time of the Domesday Survey and it was probably complete by 1189 when the town's farm was increased to a sum almost four times that of its figure a century earlier or soon afterwards.

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[482] Williams *et al* 1985, 44 for pottery industry and metalworking activity; Lyons 2001, 73-74 for possibility of a mint at Northampton in the early 10th century
[483] See Documentary Evidence above
[484] See HLU5 below for discussion of suburban expansion

The layout of the town and street names are shown on fig 5.1, while the chief elements of the Norman transformation of the town Fig 5.45. The latter comprise:

- An increase in size of the defended area from the 25ha of the late Saxon town to 100ha of the medieval town, with growth to the east and north (the south and west boundaries being constrained by the floodplain of the river Nene), creating probably the largest walled area in England at the time, outside London and York which partially re-used Roman defences. The only comparable circuits which do not use earlier defensive lines are Norwich, whose defences were not completed until the mid-14th century and Coventry, whose rather smaller circuit (75ha) was not completed until the 16th century.[485]

- The building of a bridge over the river Nene to create a new entry into the town from the south. This lay to the east of the earlier presumed crossing points at a point where the two main branches of the river, the Brampton branch and the Kislingbury branch, converged where the river could be spanned more easily. The bridge and the road pattern associated with it must have been in existence by the mid-12th century as St John's hospital, which lies beside the street leading down from the town to the bridge, and St Leonard's hospital, which lies beside the road leading to the bridge on the opposite side of the river, were both in existence by this date.[486]

- The creation of a new route through the town consequent upon the building of the south bridge. The roads entering the town from the south were deflected to cross the river via the bridge and a new route created passing up through the town by way of Bridge Street, Drapery and Sheep Street with Barrack Road continuing the line out of the town to the north.[487]

- The movement of the 'town centre' (i.e. the chief administrative and commercial core) from the crossroads of Horseshoe Street/Horsemarket and Marefair/Gold Street, where the late Saxon guildhall is thought to have been located, to the area around All Saints' church where the east-west route across the town intersects with the new north-south

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[485] Norwich: Ayers 2003, 87; Coventry: Gooder 1971
[486] See Major medieval institutions above and Fig 5.21
[487] See Fig 5.6; route following line of C, D, P and Q

route. The medieval guildhall was sited here from at least the 14<sup>th</sup> century and probably much earlier.

- The building of a castle sited within, and dominating, the former late Saxon town.
- The provision of a large market space within the expanded town. As we have seen the original market was held in and around All Saints church but was ordered to be moved to '…the void and waste place…on the north part of the said church' in 1235. It is difficult to believe, however, that such a large space within the heart of the expanded town would have been available at this late date, however, and we can speculate that the market area had already been laid out by this date, perhaps at the same time as the creation of the new south-north route through the town which it adjoined, and that the decree of 1235 was intended to concentrate marketing in this area and away from the vicinity of the church.
- An increased ecclesiastical provision. The dating of these institutions confirms the hypothesis of expansion into all parts of the medieval town early in the post-Conquest period. Hence St Giles' church at the east end of the town, Holy Sepulchre church at its north-east end adjacent to Sheep Street, St John's Hospital at its southern end by Bridge Street and St Andrew's Priory at its north-western corner, were all in existence by the early 12<sup>th</sup> century at the latest and St Michael's is attested from the late 12<sup>th</sup> century. In addition St Peter's church was rebuilt around 1140 and the tower of All Saints' church is of 12<sup>th</sup> century date so that not only were new churches built but the existing ones were extensively renovated at this time.
- The laying out of new streets within the former late Saxon town. Excavations have established that St Peter's Street and Woolmonger Street were laid out in the late 11<sup>th</sup>-early 12<sup>th</sup> centuries. It is worth noting here that neither of these can be said to be part of any sort of grid plan: St Peter's Street runs only vaguely in alignment with Marefair/Gold Street in a rather meandering way, while Woolmonger Street is noticeably divergent to Gold Street and looks more like a convenient route from the old entry into the town from the south via Horseshoe Street to the new centre of the town in the area of All Saints' church.
- The laying out of new streets within the expanded (medieval) town. The expanded town was based around a series of major routes leading out of the town: the new north-south route mentioned above and routes leading to the east-north-east (Abington

Street) and east-south-east (Derngate). The former routes leading out to the east (St Giles' Street) and the north-east (the 'old' Kettering Road) were, however, blocked by the building of the town wall. Outside the walls the 'old' Kettering Road was replaced by a new Kettering Road leading off from the east gate of the new town. The former route to the east leading off from St Giles' Street was replaced by Wellingborough Road, which also exited the town *via* the east gate, though whether this was a new route or not is uncertain. A number of the new streets can be seen to follow a sinuous course suggesting that they followed the line of former field boundaries. The clearest example is Sheep Street, part of the new route to the north, and Newland and its continuation down the eastern side of the Market Square.[488]

If we look at the street pattern within the expanded town we can see a series of planning events taking place within a century or so of the Normans Conquest with the major streets acting as a skeleton upon which the minor streets and property boundaries are 'hung'. The dates of the town churches indicate that this period of expansion was completed by the late 12th century.

We know that at least a portion of the extended town was in existence by 1086 as the Domesday Survey tells us of a *novus burgus* (New Borough) of 40 burgesses. Given that the late Saxon town is said to contain almost 300 houses, however, this *novus burgus* presumably covered quite a small area and pre-dated the building of the town wall. Given that St Giles' church was in existence by 1122 at the latest, and there is excavation evidence of early occupation along St Giles Street, this area is a possibility. Alternatively the Newland area has been suggested on the basis that both areas are described as 'new'. The term Newland, or Newlands, however, is more commonly used in 12th-13th century contexts for areas of planned urban extensions taken out of former town fields. Bond discusses this phenomenon at Newlands, Pershore, and gives a number of examples from elsewhere [489] Another possibility is that the *novus burgus* lay in the area to the north of the castle. The Normans commonly laid out new boroughs at the gates of their newly-built castles separated from the late Saxon towns which they had taken over. For this model to work at Northampton, however, we would have

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[488] See Appendix 1: Plan Units VII and IX and Figs 6.9 and A1.10
[489] Bond 1977, 23-26

to assume that the main entrance to the first castle was from the north, as it was at later periods, and that the *novus burgus* was soon taken over in importance by expansion of the town to the east and north-east (possibly as a result of the building of the South Bridge). Such a location for the *novus burgus* would, however, make sense of Henry Lee's contention, widely discounted, that the old town hall was towards the west end of Scarletwell Street.[490]

Who was responsible for this transformation of the urban landscape? Surely such a massive undertaking can only have been undertaken by the chief landholder. Initially the post-conquest town was in the hands of a Saxon earl, Waltheof, who flip-flopped between supporting the king and rebelling against him – for which he was executed in 1076. He may have initiated the process given that there was already a *novus burgus* by 1086, or it may have been a royal initiative. Perhaps the best candidate for the major part of the transformation process is Simon de Senlis I who was granted the town, together with the earldoms of Northampton and Huntingdon, in or before 1090. Traditionally he is credited with building Northampton's first castle and the town walls and he certainly founded the Cluniac Priory of St Andrew. In addition a pilgrimage he took to the Holy Land may have inspired him to build the round church of Holy Sepulchre. After Simon de Senlis I's death, *c*1111x13, the town reverted to the Crown, and was in royal hands until *c*1138 when Simon de Senlis II succeeded to both the town and the earldom. He founded Delapré Abbey *c*1145. Simon de Senlis II died in 1153. His son, Simon de Senlis III, was under age at the time and so did not succeed to the earldom until 1159 but he never acquired the town which reverted to the Crown. Accordingly we can perhaps credit the transformation of Northampton largely to Simon de Senlis I and to the Crown, especially Henry I, with Waltheof playing a part at its earliest stage.

Whatever the exact sequence of events we can see at Northampton a process similar to that undertaken by the Normans at other existing major urban centres. One major element was the insertion of a castle into the late Saxon town, entailing the destruction of a large part of the town and disruption to its street pattern. The castle controlled the entrance into the settlement from the west and was a visible demonstration of the power and control of the new overlords. Another was a huge expansion of the town and the diminution of the status of the earlier settlement with the chief focus of activity moving to the area outside the late Saxon

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[490] Lee 1932, 68; Appendix 1: Plan Units - Plan Unit V

settlement. Lilley has documented this process at other major Norman centres such as Bristol, Norwich and Hereford.[491] He emphasises how the role of the old late Saxon town is downplayed by the founding of Norman quarters of a similar size, sometimes with special privileges. Northampton can perhaps be seen as an extreme case where the Norman town grew to entirely dwarf the earlier settlement.

What can the archaeological excavation evidence tell us about the changes in the town after the Norman conquest? As we have seen there is clear evidence of the laying out of new streets within the area of the late Saxon town at a similar time to the development of the 'expanded' town. Hence St Peter's Street and Woolmonger Street were both laid out around the late 11th-early 12th centuries and timber buildings were constructed set parallel to, rather than at right angles to, the streets (Figs 5.46, 5.47). The frontages were not completely built up, perhaps reflecting their back-street position. The earliest stone buildings did not occur at either site until the 13th century (Figs 5.48, 5.49, 5.50). Again the buildings were generally aligned parallel to the street frontages but did not form a continuous frontage. It was only in the early 15th century that the excavated portion of St Peter's Street was fully built up (Figs 5.51, 5.52), apart from House 10 where there were two drying ovens. The properties at St Peter's Street varied between 7.5m – 10.4m in width, while those at Woolmonger Street varied between 9.5m – 14m. The latter street was never fully built-up.

Our only evidence from a main street location within the area of the Anglo-Saxon town comes from the excavation at Marefair. The frontage was badly damaged by later development but enough survived to suggest that a stone building was constructed here in the 12th-13th centuries, also set parallel to the street; it was around 12m in width (Fig 5.53). It may have formed part of a terrace of buildings, suggesting perhaps that this frontage was more fully built up than on the back streets.

Evidence from within the expanded medieval town is limited. The excavations at St Giles' Street mirror those within the late Saxon town in that a phase of timber building from at least the 12th century was replaced by a stone building in the 13th century (Fig 5.54A). In this case, however, the stone building at least was set at right angles rather than parallel to the street

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[491] Lilley 2017, 34-36

perhaps suggesting a greater pressure for space. On the other hand, however, only the western part of the site was given over to a building, the eastern area being a yard.

If we turn to the back streets within the medieval town excavations on Swan Street have demonstrated that this street was not laid out until the 13th century (Fig 5.55 Sub-phase 2c).[492] Buildings in this area were of a low-status, rather ephemeral, nature and may in some cases be sheds or stables rather than dwellings. In the 16th century a series of bedding trenches suggest that the area was given over to horticulture (Fig 5.55: Sub-phase 3c). Similar features, also dated to the 16th century, were uncovered on the Guildhall site at Exeter and were also interpreted as indicating horticulture, possibly a vineyard.[493]

The excavation evidence suggests that the town was not densely packed with dwellings even at the height of its prosperity (although we might expect to find a denser settlement pattern in the main commercial area in the area around the Market Square if there had been an opportunity to carry out investigations in this area). This low density away from the main commercial streets can be paralleled elsewhere. Hence Keene, using the more plentiful documentary sources for Winchester, was able to state that 'gardens, closes, crofts and other open ground occupied a far higher proportion of the urban area than that taken up by building.[494] This was perhaps more the case for Northampton than most towns given its large walled area and may explain why, when friaries came to be founded in the town in the 13th – 14th centuries, they were able to be accommodated within the walled area rather than in the suburbs as at many other towns with smaller walled areas. We should also recognise, however, that archaeological excavation may uncover evidence for settlement in quite unexpected areas. Hence evaluation and excavation work close by the town wall to the south of Derngate recovered evidence of 12th-13th century occupation which was perhaps connected with a hypothesised road running around the inside of the defences in this area (Fig 5.56).[495]

As with many medieval towns ecclesiastical premises occupied a large portion of the urban area. Within the walls there was one priory (St Andrew's), houses of the four major orders of friars and two short-lived houses of minor orders, seven parish churches, three chapels, one

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[492] See Appendix 2: Plan Unit XII west side
[493] Collis 1972, 12-14, Plate 6 Move this to discussion?
[494] Keene 1985, Vol 1, 151
[495] For excavation evidence see – Appendix 2 Plan Unit XII east side; for internal road see Appendix 2: DL2

hospital, a college of priests and a hermitage by the west bridge. We cannot define the area of three of the four friaries so it is not possible to estimate what percentage of the town was occupied by ecclesiastical premises but St Andrew's Priory alone formed 10% of the area within the medieval town walls, while the premises of the Whitefriars and of St John's hospital occupied a further 2.8% and 2.9% respectively.

The provision of areas for marketing had a major influence on the topography of the town. Down to the early 13th century the main market comprised an area *c*0.9ha area around, and within, the church and churchyard of All Saints. From the early 13th century, however, marketing in churchyards was disapproved of and the market was ordered to be moved to 'the void and waste place…on the north part of the said church' [All Saints], i.e. the present Market Square. Can we really believe, however, that such a large space was available at the centre of the medieval town? Foard has suggested that the term that the term 'waste' in the medieval period could include market places.[496] Had the area been laid out, perhaps as part of the Norman replanning as an adjunct to the original market area, perhaps as a livestock market (which would need a large space)? Slater has hypothesised that a similarly large market place at Warwick, *c*1ha in size, was first established as a livestock market on the edge of the late Saxon town, citing as evidence streets named Rother (i.e. cattle) street and Hog Hill leading into it.[497] We could similarly envisage the Market Square being laid out on the edge of the late Saxon town at Northampton as a cattle market (and perhaps part of the fair site) soon after the Conquest when the new south-north route was laid out along Bridge Street and Sheep Street.[498] Sheep Street could also have originated as a street leading to the sheep market rather than being a market street itself; by 1610, however it is described as 'Sheepe Market' on the Speed map of that date.

There was in addition a multiplicity of market areas in the medieval town which can be identified by their plan form and by their street names, although the date of their layout can be uncertain. Hence a broad street market, Horsemarket, leads into a rectangular market area, Mayorhold, situated at the north gate of the late Saxon town. Given that Horsemarket formed

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[496] Foard 1995, 115
[497] Slater 1982, 190
[498] See Appendix 1: Plan Units XIV and XV for a more detailed discussion of the market place at All Saints and the Market Square

part of the major north-south route through the late Saxon town it could date to this period although purpose-built market areas were unusual in late Saxon towns. As we have seen Mayorhold is likely to have originated as a market area outside the north gate of the late Saxon defences although its extension into the area previously occupied by the north gate presumably dates to after the defences went out of use. Regent Square comprises a rectangular market area immediately within the north gate of the medieval town. Its name is of course later; it is called North End on the Noble and Butlin map of 1746. Broad Street and Sheep Street are both wide streets leading into Regent Square. Might the plethora of market areas in the area of the north gate be due to the desire to hold livestock markets on the edge of the town rather than bringing animals into the more congested centre?

Can we see evidence of decline at Northampton in the later medieval period? All towns suffered of course with the Black Death and other pestilences of the 14th century with the most recent estimates suggesting that the loss of life may have been up to 50% of the population.[499]  In addition, however, Northampton may have suffered more than most. The town was already complaining of the loss of craftsmen due to heavy taxation in the late 13th century and I have shown how taxation data can be used to document the town's rise from a middling county town around the time of Domesday to become one of the major towns in the country in the 12th century before falling back to its previous status in the 14th century. There is, however, little evidence of decline in the excavation evidence. As we have seen above there was a large-scale rebuilding and refurbishment of properties in the early 15th century at St Peter's Street, while at Woolmonger Street a second floor was added to the properties in the west and east trenches in the mid-13th and late 14th centuries respectively.[500] At Swan Street South the area was given over to gardening in the 14th century but occupation in this area was never intensive in any case.[501] One notable aspect around this time is a dropping off in the incidence of pit digging in the yard areas from the late 14th century onwards suggesting a change in the method of rubbish disposal.[502] Presumably rubbish was now being taken off

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[499] Dyer 2002a, 228-33
[500] See Appendix 2: Plan Units I and III
[501] See Appendix 2: Plan Unit XII west
[502] Examples are: Black Lion Hill (Shaw 1985, 123); St Peter's Street (Williams *et al* 1985, 28); Derngate (Shaw 1984, 74-75)

site, possibly due to a growing concern for hygiene after the Black Death. A similar phenomenon has been noted at Southampton.[503]

There is in fact better evidence for a diminution of settlement activity from the excavation evidence in the late 15$^{th}$ – 16$^{th}$ centuries. The buildings at St Peter's Street, Woolmonger Street and St Giles' Street were all abandoned around this time, while the area at Swan Street was given over to horticulture.[504] Henry Lee claimed that there was a fire in 1516 which 'burnt and consumed the greatest part of the town…' which may have had an effect upon the economic fortunes of the town.[505]

An important part of my work on Northampton has been to establish a plan of the medieval street system and of the plot boundaries within the street blocks. The street system has been based upon that shown on Speed's map of 1610 which as far as can be checked is an accurate representation of that in existence at the time of its survey and of the basic skeleton of the medieval street plan although the documentary evidence tells us that there has been some loss of minor routes. In particular the late 13$^{th}$ century hundred rolls tell us of lanes which have been blocked, including some which formed a route running along the interior of the medieval town wall on its south side.[506]

Having established the street system I delineated the plot boundaries within the street blocks, largely from the Victorian mapping. Unlike the Cheshire case studies the relatively large amount of archaeological evidence from the town gave me the opportunity to establish to what extent these plot boundaries do represent the medieval plot pattern. In order to do so I overlaid the plot boundaries on top of the georeferenced excavation plans. Once again the most informative results come from the large-scale excavations at St Peter's Street and Woolmonger Street. At St Peter's Street the excavation plan of the site in the early 15$^{th}$ century (Fig 5.51) shows an almost exact correspondence between the property boundaries defined from the archaeological work and the plot boundaries defined from the Victorian mapping and some at least of these plot boundaries date back to the laying out of the street in

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[503] Platt and Coleman-Smith 1975, 34-35
[504] See Appendix 2: Plan Units I, III, Xa, XII west side
[505] Lee 1931-2, 69-70
[506] See Fig 5.56 and Appendix 1: Plan Units – DL2; IV, IX, XIII

the late 11th century (Fig 5.46).[507] Of interest is that there is no standard size for the properties which differ in width between 7.5m and 10.4m. The correspondence between the medieval property boundaries and the Victorian plot boundaries is of especial interest given the evidence that after a widespread fire in the late 15th- early 16th centuries the site was largely devoid of buildings. It is tempting to talk of a period of 'dereliction' when buildings are no longer present in a particular area. The survival of boundaries, however, demonstrates that the land was still of value and perhaps given over to gardens or orchards as can be demonstrated by the excavations at the south end of Swan Street as well as from a 1586 terrier of town property.[508] Woolmonger Street shows a similar situation to St Peter's Street with boundaries which can be traced back to the mid-13th century (Figs 5.49, 50).[509] Here there were buildings 9.5m wide (Building 1, west trench) and 14.5m wide (Building 3), both set along the street frontage. Smaller-scale excavations have shown a similar situation. At Marefair, on a major street frontage, plot boundaries date back to the 12th/13th century (Fig 5.53).[510] At St Giles' Street towards the centre of the medieval town, a plot boundary dated back to the late 13th century but in this case was originally the boundary between a building and its yard area.[511] Most of these plot boundaries survived into the mid-20th century (see Fig 5.57 for St Peter's Street). In the case of St Giles' Street the boundary between two halves of the same property (the building and yard area) by the 1960s formed the boundary between 1 and 1a St Giles' Street (Fig 5.54B). Excavations on the Swan Street Central site, on a minor lane within the medieval town, also recovered evidence of a long-lived boundary.[512] After a period of quarrying from the later 12th century the site was terraced and an ironstone boundary wall, which also acted as a revetment for the terracing, was constructed (Fig 5.58). Short-lived occupation in the 15th century was replaced by horticultural activity in the 16th. The boundary wall is shown on the Victorian mapping and survived down to redevelopment in the present century. Elsewhere in the town a boundary on the Swan Street Central site belonging to the late 13th century is shown on the Victorian mapping, and also survived down to the present century.

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[507] See Appendix 2: Plan Unit I
[508] For Swan Street see Appendix 2: Plan Unit XII and Fig 5.55; for the 1586 terrier see Documentary evidence section above
[509] For details see Appendix 2: Plan Unit III
[510] For details see Appendix 2: Plan Unit II
[511] For details see Appendix 2: Plan Unit Xa
[512] Finn 2014

Having established that the plot of major boundaries from the Victorian mapping does in fact to a large extent reflect the medieval plot boundaries we can turn to assessing what it tells us (Fig 5.20). The first point to note is the amount of disturbance to the medieval street and plot pattern even by the 1880s with the insertion of major infrastructure such as railway lines and stations and associated infrastructure, new streets and areas of housing associated with them, a large gasworks; and a number of large breweries. The resulting plot nevertheless shows a fairly intensive level of plot boundary development except towards the north, much of which lies within the St Andrew's Priory precinct and in the south-east corner of the walled town. The latter may be due to this area being given over to large urban estates such as 'The Grange' in the later medieval period.[513] The small properties on Drapery and Mercer's Row bordering the Market Square are also of interest. Previously plots of this nature were considered to be market stalls which gradually became permanent fixtures but more recently it has been recognised that instead they represent attempts by landowners to increase their revenue.[514]

Another notable discovery from the archaeological excavations has been the large amount of quarrying within the town, most of which can be dated to around the later 11th-12th centuries. Quarries have been reported from sites spread throughout the walled town.[515] The quarries are all for the extraction of ironstone, apart from one in Plan Unit VII which has been suggested as possibly for the extraction of clay. There was obviously a need for an enormous amount of stone perhaps largely for building the town wall and for the metalling of road surfaces. The quarries vary from small ones as at Black Lion Hill to large areas as behind the Derngate frontage and must have had quite an effect on the look and feel of the late 11th-12th century town.[516] The backfilled pits had an effect on subsequent development. Where walls for stone buildings crossed earlier pits stone foundations were cut down to a deeper level so that in some cases all that survived of these buildings were the deeper foundations.[517] Support for the

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[513] See Appendix 1: Plan Unit XII
[514] Palliser *et al* 2000, 169
[515] See Appendix 2: Plan Units I, IV, VIII, Xb, Xc, XII
[516] See Appendix 2: Plan Units I and XII
[517] Shaw 1985, 118, 120; Fig 4 for the earlier pits, Fig 5 for foundations set into them

excavation evidence of quarrying comes from the late 13th century rental of Edward I which refers to a quarry in Abington Street adjacent to the east gate.[518]

*HLU5 The medieval suburbs*

Plan Units XVI-XIX

Despite the large size of Northampton's walled area it possessed suburbs outside all of its main gates by the 13th century (Fig 5.59). This higher-level plan unit comprises the five suburbs outside the main gates of the town: the eastern suburb - St Edmund's End (Plan Unit XVI); the west suburb - St James' End (Plan Unit XVII); the southern suburb(s) - South Quarter immediately outside the town walls and Cotton End on the far side of the south bridge (Plan Unit XVIII) and the north suburb (Plan Unit XIX).[519] Our best dating evidence for the suburbs comes from their ecclesiastical provision. The northern and eastern suburbs were both in existence by the late 12th century at least as they were provided with their own parish churches by this date. The west suburb at St James' End had its own chapel by early 13th century. We can expect the South Quarter to have developed early, soon after the building of the south bridge. The ready access to water would have been attractive to a range of industries. Cotton End largely comprised the leper hospital of St Leonard which was founded in the mid-12th century. The siting of a leper hospital here reflects the fact that the area was isolated from the main town at that time but it did attract some settlement afterwards and the chapel of the hospital served as a quasi-parish church for the local inhabitants.

The east suburb covers an area of *c*7ha shown on the Speed map of 1610 and marked as an area of 'gardens and old enclosures' on the 1779 Inclosure map (Figs 5.60, 5.61). The South Quarter covered an area of *c*5ha between the town walls and the south bridge while Cotton End covered an area of *c*2ha including the leper hospital (Fig 5.62). The extent of the west and north suburbs is more difficult to quantify. For the west suburb, the Speed map of 1610 shows an area of *c*2ha by the west bridge (Fig 5.63). A sketch map of 1720 of Duston parish shows an area of enclosures further west along the south side of the road with a back lane behind, however (Fig 5.64). In addition there is a further area of enclosures on the east side of

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[518] Williams 2014, 184
[519] For detailed analysis see Appendix 1: Plan Units XVI - XIX

the road in Dallington parish. Accordingly I have suggested that these areas also originally formed part of the suburb (Fig 5.65). Greater confidence in this identification is given by the observation that St Margaret's chapel, which served the suburb, lies within this extended area. The northern suburb lay immediately outside the north gate (Fig 5.66). The Inclosure map of 1779 shows closes either side of the road covering an area of *c*3ha (Fig 5.67). The parochial church, however, is shown further out around 300m from the north gate. This seems rather a small area for a suburb with its own parochial provision and I have suggested that a further area of small fields shown on the Marcus Pierce map of 1632, covering *c*8ha, may have formed part of the suburb (Fig 5.68). They lie opposite the site of the parish church which would make more sense of its isolated position.

If we look at the suburban areas as a whole there are a number of interesting comparisons. Three of the suburbs (the northern, eastern and western) had possible evidence for a back lane, while two (the northern and western) were located adjacent to monasteries opening up the possibility that the settlements here were founded or at least encouraged by these establishments. Slater has demonstrated that monasteries were active in town planning in the West Midlands.[520]

It is a measure of Northampton's success in the post-conquest period that all four suburbs were in existence by the 12th – early 13th centuries despite the large area covered by the walled town. This is not particularly surprising. Properties on the major roads leading into a town are always likely to be more popular, especially to tradesmen and craftsmen, than back street properties within the walls. The suburbs were also often more sensitive to the ebb and flow of a town's economic fortunes, however. The parish church in the northern suburb had been downgraded to the status of a chapel by the 16th century and by the time of 1632 map of St Andrew's Priory lands the suburb had disappeared completely. Similarly in the eastern suburb St Edmund's church was no longer extant by the 16th century and Speed's map of 1610 shows only a few buildings in the suburb. Similarly the Speed map shows only a few buildings in the western suburb clustered around the road out from the west bridge. Given that Cotton End is never likely to have been intensively settled only the South Quarter can be termed a long-term success, presumably due to its proximity to the walled town and its access

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[520] Slater 1982, 1996

to the river. The western and northern suburbs do look rather large in size. One possibility is suggested by Lilley's analysis of Monks Kirby in Warwickshire where he suggests that a row of plots running north from the original settlement area and called 'Bond End' had been laid out to accommodate agricultural workers rather than tradesmen (Fig 5.69).[521] Could the same apply to the rows of enclosures furthest away from the town in these two suburbs (Fig 5.64 areas E and F in the western suburb and Fig 5.66 area E in the in the northern suburb).

There has been little archaeological work in the suburbs. A small-scale excavation in the eastern suburb of St Edmund's End did, however, provide interesting evidence.[522] Occupation was attested from the 12th century when small semi-cellared structures were located away from the Kettering Road street frontage (Fig 5.70). A few timber slots and postholes of the same date towards the frontage may indicate a building there also but it became obvious that the street had been widened so that the immediate frontage lay outside the site under the pavement. More solid evidence of occupation came in the mid-13th century when the back of a stone-founded building lying parallel to the street was constructed around the mid-13th century (Fig 5.71). Settlement activity ceased around 1400, however, with no evidence of further buildings on the site until the 19th century. Hence, unlike the majority of the sites within the walled town this suburban site did demonstrate a cessation of settlement activity around, or soon after, the depredations of the 14th century. A small evaluation in the western suburb of St James' End located the back end of a series of buildings fronting on to the street dated between the 13th-17th centuries with no evidence for subsequent occupation until the mid-19th century.[523]

## Conclusion

Northampton was for a time one of the most important towns in England. It was also one of the largest, if not one of the most densely occupied. Hence the study of its topography and development is complex one composed of many strands. In accordance with my aims and objectives I have not attempted to write a straightforward narrative about the origins and development of the town rather I have used Northampton to explore different ways of looking

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[521] Lilley 1996, 22
[522] See Appendix 2: Plan Unit XVI
[523] See Appendix 2: Plan Unit XVII

at urban topography. The landscape analysis section has emphasised the importance of changes in river crossing points leading to 'deflections' in the road pattern. The documentary evidence has shown how key documents such as the Domesday Survey and the Hundred Rolls contain valuable topographical information. Under town-plan analysis I have considered the value of Conzenian-style town-plan analysis in a major urban centre and suggested that whereas a single series of plan units is sufficient for the study of a small town a two-fold division into detailed plan units (in appendix) and higher level plan units, comprising bundles of the detailed plan units, is more appropriate for a larger town. In the higher level units I have brought together all of my different methodological approaches but distinguished between them to demonstrate the contribution each one makes to the narrative. I have also examined the cartographic sources for the town and detailed their advantages and disadvantages. Other sections have detailed the contributions made by an examination of the location and dating of major secular and, especially, ecclesiastical institutions and by an analysis of parish boundaries. I have discussed the reasonably plentiful archaeological evidence within the individual detailed plan units (in appendix) but brought out the major points in the discussion of the higher level units. In addition I have taken advantage of the exemplary recording of the pottery data to demonstrate how it can be used to show the growth of the town graphically.

As regards planning I have demonstrated three major episodes of planning at Northampton. The first was in the middle Saxon period with the construction of the middle Saxon elite complex. The elements of planning and display at these high-status complexes is increasingly being recognised.[524] At Northampton buildings and boundaries are set roughly parallel, or at right angles, to the timber and stone halls, and also to the Marefair street alignment. My suggested approach to the settlement from the south up Tanner Street/Narrow Toe Lane is also at right angles to Marefair. Later, at sub-phase B, there is the addition of a possible ritual landscape with the construction of St Peter's, St Gregory's and possibly St Mary's churches. The next phase of planning was the construction of the late Saxon defences covering a roughly rectangular area bisected by a new north-south route along Horseshoe Street/Horsemarket and the existing east-west route of Marefair/Gold Street. This too was perhaps accompanied by a new route from the south crossing the river Nene. The presence of

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[524] McBride 2020, 39-48

an internal road around the defences emphasises the role of this new settlement as a military base and has parallels at Wessex centres such as Winchester though whether the Danes or the English were instigators of this phase of planning is uncertain. The first and perhaps the second episodes of planning are examples of settlement planning so it is with the third episode that we see an example of true town planning with the Norman transformation of the town. Chief elements here are the imposition of a castle within the area of the former late Saxon town, a massive expansion of settlement to the north and east, the construction of new town walls, and the building of the south bridge with the concomitant re-routing of the north-south route through the town.

# Chapter 6: Discussion

## Introduction

The aim of the research presented in this thesis was to identify the varying approaches used in the analysis of the topography of English medieval towns, particularly those used in studying their origins, growth and development (and in some cases lack of development or shrinkage), and to assess their effectiveness and their limitations.

In order to achieve this the approaches were divided into four broad, and admittedly overlapping, categories: landscape analysis of the broader surrounds of the town; historical study using the results of accessible documentary research; town-plan analysis looking at the layout of the town itself; and archaeological research using particularly the results of archaeological excavation and the analysis of finds. In addition the use of cartographic sources and the contribution made by the relatively recent use of GIS in urban topographical studies were also assessed.

Previous studies of town topography have tended to concentrate upon either larger or smaller towns. Accordingly my work was deliberately slanted towards studying towns at different levels of the urban hierarchy in order to bring out similarities and differences. My approach was to use a series of case studies of selected towns at different levels of the medieval urban hierarchy looking initially using the non-invasive techniques (landscape and town-plan analysis and accessible historical sources). The results using these non-invasive techniques were then further tested by comparing the results with data from the invasive technique of archaeological excavation before arriving at an overall synthesis using all of the techniques in combination.

Chapter 1 comprised a brief introduction to the research aim and objectives. Chapter 2 assessed previous work studying medieval English towns and their topography, highlighting the range of different approaches used by the various disciplines involved in the study of the topography of medieval towns. In addition the various definitions of what constitutes a town were discussed, although it was emphasised that the distinction between a town and a village with some marketing and craft functions is more of a continuum than a sharp divide, and indeed at the lower end a settlement may change its status according to the prevailing

economic conditions of the time. Chapter 3 detailed the methodological approach and the choice of case studies: a selection of small - medium-sized towns in Cheshire; and Northampton as an example of a major town. The results from this research were presented in Chapters 4 and 5. Chapter 4 comprised the study of the Cheshire towns. This began with an analysis of urbanism in Cheshire in general which enabled the definition of four types of settlement which have some claim to be regarded as towns: settlements with borough charters (not all of which developed as true towns); industrial settlements which may acquire urban functions (in Cheshire's case the three salt towns of Middlewich, Nantwich and Northwich); settlements with market and fair charters, some of which developed as towns while others remained market villages (or indeed may have failed as trading centres completely); and others - settlements which have some urban characteristics, such as a market place or a mention of burgages, but insufficient evidence for it to be determined whether they were truly urban. I determined that 22 settlements fell into one or more of these categories and, of these, I suggested 11 could definitely be described as towns, with another four as possibilities. I selected four of the definite towns for detailed study: Frodsham and Macclesfield as examples of towns with borough charters; Middlewich as an example of an industrial (salt) town; and Malpas as an example of a small town towards the lower end of the urban spectrum. The results of the in-depth study of these four towns were compared and contrasted. Chapter 5 looked at Northampton as an example of a major urban centre, which was indeed for a time one of the foremost towns in the kingdom. This provided me with the opportunity to look at a wider range of evidence because there has been a great deal of archaeological work in the town and there was also a larger amount of documentary and cartographic sources.

The current chapter assesses the methodologies used in the case studies to identify their merits and drawbacks, but also brings in examples from elsewhere in order to demonstrate the value of comparison with other sites and demonstrate that the results of my case studies have a wider relevance.

## Method 1: landscape analysis

Landscape analysis may seem tangential to assessing the origins and growth of towns. If, however, the study area is restricted to the restricted envelope of the town itself important evidence of origin and growth can be missed. This is perhaps most clear in looking at the road

pattern for the area around a town. A case can be made for deflections in the road pattern for all of my Cheshire case studies as well as for Northampton. Hence at Frodsham it is difficult to see why the parish church site is at Overton unless this was the original site of the settlement mentioned in the Domesday Survey as having a priest and a church. If this was the case the Anglo-Saxon, and probably Roman, route from Chester must have continued in a straight line from Netherton up to Overton and was only later diverted at Netherton turning through an angle of 60° to the north east to enter into the 'new' town of Frodsham (Fig 4.2). This may have been accompanied by the building of a bridge over the river Weaver, a frequent accompaniment to road diversions. One problem of course is that we can rarely 'prove' such diversions. There are, however, enough examples where a strong case can be made to demonstrate that it was a frequent occurrence. Hence at Stamford there is a persuasive case for locating the original crossing point of the river Welland as a fording point to the west of the later bridge (Fig 6.1). The route shown on Fig 6.1 makes an interesting comparison to that shown by Hoskins in 1959 (Fig 2.6) where he recognised that the line of the Great North Road had been altered but not that a deflection in the road to the south of the river indicated an earlier fording point. This demonstrates the value of looking at the wider landscape when undertaking a town study.

Within my case study areas recent excavations at Middlewich, undertaken since my original analysis of the settlement, have verified the line of the Roman road immediately after its crossing point of the river Croco and demonstrated that the crossing point lay, as suggested, to the south of the medieval crossing point of the river (Fig 4.22). Malpas represents a rather different case where the main road between the Roman settlements/forts at Whitchurch (Mediolanum) and Chester (Deva) passes through Malpas (Fig 4.30). At some point, however, this route was downgraded in importance with the adoption of a new route running around 3km to the east of Malpas along the line of the present A41. We do not know precisely when this changeover took place but certainly by 1675 it is the new route bypassing Malpas which is shown on the Ogilby road map of the route between Whitchurch and Chester. If this route was in operation by the medieval period it may explain why Malpas's urban growth was rather stunted. A clue as to why the old route was downgraded is perhaps given by the place name Malpas ('difficult passage') which may refer to road between Whitchurch and Malpas.

At Northampton I have suggested a series of road realignments between the middle Saxon, late Saxon and Norman periods, particularly on the southern approaches to the town where the building of a bridge over the river Nene in the Norman period led to routes into the town being diverted towards this crossing point. Before this time road alignments suggest that the middle and late Saxon settlements were entered from the south via fords and/or causeways across the river Nene (Figs 5.6, 5.38).[525] The re-alignment of the southern approaches to Stamford, discussed above, is a clear parallel. Another is Ludlow where the original route over the river Teme was via a ford. When this was replaced by a bridge a new route leading up to the market place was established *via* Lower Broad Street and Broad Street (Fig 6.2).

Less commonly used when looking at routes coming into towns is looking at the field pattern and the extent to which routes either 'run with' the fields or cut through them, demonstrating whether they are earlier or contemporary with their setting out. Hence at Malpas, Chester Road leads off from the northern end of the town to connect with the main road to Chester.[526] It dates back to at least the later 18th century as it is shown on Burdett's 1777 map of Cheshire. It does, however, cut through the town's field system at an angle so must post-date its layout. Similarly at Northampton the 'original' road to Kettering leads off from the north gate of the late Saxon town and the town fields can be seen to be laid out in accordance with it, while the later route leading from the east gate of the medieval town cuts through the town fields (Fig 6.3).

Outside our area Bassett plotted the road pattern and field boundaries in the vicinity of Lichfield as shown on the mid-19th century tithe maps. He noted that the majority of roads ran in conformity with the field boundaries. A number, however, were at variance to it; some of these were relatively recent but others were diversions from the original road pattern in order to run into the newly laid-out medieval town.[527]

Rivers play an important part in the siting of towns. The position of Northampton at the confluence of two arms of the river Nene reminds us that most towns were situated on rivers (if not on the coast!), generally at convenient crossing points (Fig 5.5). Blair has pointed out

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[525] *For discussion see Early routes into Northampton above
[526] See 'Later road' marked on Fig 4.33
[527] Bassett 1980-1, 95-98, Fig 1

that early minster sites commonly lie on peninsulas enclosed by converging rivers as at Northampton.[528] This is not a phenomenon restricted to early ecclesiastical sites, however. Tamworth, the site of a royal palace during the time of king Offa and his successors in the 8th-9th centuries, lies in a similar position at the confluence of the rivers Tame and Anker (Fig 5.39). Of our Cheshire case studies Macclesfield overlooks the river Bollin and its tributary, 'the Water of E' (Fig 4.20); Middlewich lies beside the river Croco (Fig 4.26); and Frodsham lies around 800m west of the river Weaver (Fig 4.10). Malpas is, however, an extremely unusual example of a town which lies some distance from a river, the nearest water course being the Wych Brook 1.7km to the south east.

Administrative boundaries can tell us a great deal about the history of a town. A clear example is Middlewich, whose township, at 15ha (37 acres) one of the smallest in Cheshire, has quite clearly been taken out of Newton township (Fig 4.23). Its small size demonstrates that Middlewich was never intended to be a self-sufficient agricultural community but was from the outset an industrial salt-producing enclave which then developed urban functions. Equally of interest is Frodsham where the town and its fields were carved out of Frodsham lordship when the town was founded creating a jigsaw of interlinked boundaries (Fig 4.7). Outside our area a clear example of a newly-founded town expected to make a living from commerce and manufacture alone is Stratford-upon-Avon whose inhabitants were granted no agricultural land at all.[529]

We have also seen a number of instances of the deliberate relocation of settlements. Hence the foundation of the 'new' town of Frodsham in the 13th century took away the incipient urban functions at Overton, and perhaps some of its inhabitants also, although, unusually, there was no separate ecclesiastical provision for the town, the sole place of worship and burial remaining at Overton. Middlewich represents a rather different case where the medieval settlement lies on the opposite bank of the river Croco from the Roman settlement and around 500m south of a Roman fort (Fig 4.22). Whether this relocation was a deliberate act  or whether there was a hiatus between the two settlements is uncertain. Similarly the settlement at Northampton is preceded by a Roman settlement at Duston 1.5km to the west (Fig 5.9).

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[528] Blair 1996, 98; 2005, 193
[529] Slater 1997, 34

There was also an extensive Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Duston. This raises the possibility that settlement continued here for a sufficient length of time for some sort of transfer of authority from the one site to the other. We see a further shift at Northampton with the centre of the town moving from the crossroads of Marefair/Gold Street and Horseshoe Street/Horsemarket in the late Saxon town to the area around All Saints church, 300m to the east (Fig 5.45). Elsewhere Bridgnorth in Shropshire is a classic example of the relocation of a settlement. In the 1080s Robert de Belleme removed the people of the settlement at Quatford to the site of his newly-built town and castle at Bridgnorth, 3km to the north west, providing the new settlement with a bridge over the river Severn to replace a ford just below the earlier site.[530]

Hence my work has demonstrated how landscape analysis of the surrounds of a town can tell us a great deal about its history. As a corollary it has emphasised the importance of not looking at the narrow envelope of the town itself.

## Method 2: documentary evidence

The second approach employed was the use of documentary evidence. Here, place names can give us important information both about topography and function. They have been more commonly used in looking at the rural environment; but are also of value in urban contexts.[531] We have seen a good example of this at Malpas where its original name of *Depenbech* ('at the deep valley with a stream in it') perhaps suggests that the original settlement was further to the south where the topography better suits the place name, while its Norman name – Malpas ('difficult passage') probably refers to the journey to the settlement from Whitchurch. Northampton's original name of *Hamtun* – home farm - gives us a clue as to its original function and status as an estate centre rather than its topography. Similarly Middlewich (wich = saltworking area) emphasises the central importance of salt to the settlement, while the middle element does of course refer to its relationship to Northwich to the north and Nantwich to the south. Outside my case study areas a good example of a topographical name is Stamford (stone ford) which emphasises the central importance of the fording point to the early growth of the town. As regards settlement function Gelling suggested that the *worthy* element in the earlier Anglo-Saxon period was applied only to centres of importance,

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[530] Lilley 2002, 140-41
[531] Room 1992

particularly fortified settlements; hence Tamworth, which was, as we have seen, a major Mercian royal centre was 'the fortified settlement by the river Tame'.[532] Additionally Hart has pointed out the significance of the earlier name of Derby - Northworthy, 'the northern fortified settlement', which he suggests was named thus due to its location in relation to Tamworth.[533]

Related to place names are street names within a town which may indicate the location and nature of major industries or commercial areas such as Tanner Street, Woolmonger Street, Mercer's Row, Drapery in  Northampton and Wych-house Lane in Middlewich. The evidence needs to be treated with care, however. The street may have been predominately focused upon a particular industry at a certain period of time but that focus may have changed. Similarly street names can identify market areas. The bailiff's accounts for Northampton suggest that there may have been separate markets for sheep, cattle, pigs and horses. A shepcheping is recorded towards the end of the 13th century and a market for horses in 1288-9.[534] The present Sheep Street and Horsemarket are first shown on Speed's map of 1610 and Noble and Butlin's map of 1746 though it is perhaps reasonable to suggest that they mark the location of the medieval markets; both are broad streets. An otherwise unrecorded market area in the town is *Netesmarkett* (cattle market) which lay close to Mervyn's mill in the mid-16th century.[535]

Perhaps the most useful single document for researching the early history of settlements is the Domesday Survey. Hence for Cheshire we can see that Frodsham, Macclesfield and Malpas were all held by Edwin, Earl of Mercia, before the Conquest and by 1086 the two former were in the hands of Hugh d'Avranches, Earl of Chester, while the latter was held by Robert Fitzhugh, one of the foremost of Hugh's barons. All were assessed as worth £8 in 1066, a high value for Cheshire townships, but had declined in value drastically by 1086; presumably they had suffered at the time of the 'Harrying of the North' by William the Conqueror.[536] Both Frodsham and Macclesfield are said to have halls, marking them out as estate centres, while Frodsham had a priest and church also. Although none of the three could be described

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[532] Gelling 1992, 147-8
[533] Hart 1992, 37, fn37
[534] Williams 2014, 65
[535] Gairdner and Brodie (eds) 1905, 308
[536] Stenton 1971, 603-05

as urban centres at this time they clearly had advantages which would make their elevation to that status an easy step. Middlewich was shared between the king and earl Edwin in 1066; presumably because it was of such value that the king was unwilling to assign it over completely to the earl. By 1086 it was in the hands of earl Hugh but the king was still entitled to 2/3rds of the revenue. Its value of £11 4s is one of the largest in Cheshire (although less than Nantwich's £21) and, given, that the township was one of the smallest in Cheshire must be based largely, if not entirely, on the salt industry. Such is the importance of the salt industry that it is at the three wiches that we are most likely to see the first signs of urban life in Cheshire outside Chester.

The Domesday entry for Northampton is equally illuminating.[537] It can be seen to be a settlement of a completely different scale; 330½ houses are recorded, 21 of which are said to be waste. Unlike Cheshire there is no evidence of widespread destruction in the period immediately following the Norman conquest. As we have seen, however, Northampton suffered at the hands of earls Edwin and Morcar when they rose in revolt against Edward the Confessor in 1065 so this may provide a context for the 'waste' houses.[538] Another possibility is that some houses were demolished in order to make way for Northampton Castle if we can assume that the original castle pre-dated the Domesday Survey. Certainly this was a common phenomenon. One hundred and sixty-six houses were destroyed at Lincoln 'on account of the castle', 51 at Shrewsbury and at least 98 at Norwich.[539] Northampton's entry also records that there are 40 burgesses in the 'new borough' which doubtless records the start of the building of the medieval town. The entry is reminiscent of the 'French boroughs' recorded at similar urban centres such as Nottingham, Shrewsbury, Hereford and Norwich. The Domesday entry for Shrewsbury actually records 43 'French' burgesses while at Nottingham the distinction between the 'old' and 'new' boroughs remained into the 15th century with different rules of inheritance.[540]

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[537] Williams and Martin (eds) 2003, 589
[538] Stenton 1971, 578-79
[539] Lincoln - Williams and Martin 2003, 883; Shrewsbury – Williams and Martin 2003, 688; Norwich - Ayers 2003, 54
[540] Nottingham: Barley and Straw 1969, 2; Shrewsbury: Williams and Martin (eds) 2003, 688; Hereford: Lilley 2017, 35-36; Norwich: Ayers 2003, 60-63

There are of course many other documents which can shed light upon the topography of medieval towns. Of particular value for Northampton are the Hundred Rolls which document ten cases of the blocking of streets and lanes of whose former existence we would otherwise have no knowledge. This is an important point to bear in mind when reconstructing the town plan. Plots of the medieval street pattern tend to rely on the earliest plans of the town, often 17th century plans such as the Speed maps, or, for the smaller towns, 19th century maps, and then taking away known later streets. The fortunate survival of the record of lane closures in the late 13th century hundred rolls at Northampton demonstrates, however, that, especially for the larger towns, parts of the medieval street pattern will have been lost well before this time. Ecclesiastical bodies such as friaries are perhaps the worst offenders. Hence I have documented the closure of lanes within their properties by the Blackfriars and St John's Hospital, and the attempted closure of a lane running around the inside of the town walls by the Whitefriars, as well as the blocking of a likely intra-mural road around the south side of the medieval defences which involved the Friars of the Sack (Fig 5.56). Whereas the loss of streets is demonstrated by documentary evidence at Northampton, archaeological evidence has shown the same process in operation at Norwich where a previously unknown street, with well-preserved road metalling and drainage ruts of possible pre-Conquest date, was discovered during excavations on the site of the Greyfriars. It had been closed by the Franciscans in the 13th century.[541]

Borough, market and fair charters need to be treated with caution as they do not necessarily date the formation of a town or the start date of a market or fair. Nevertheless they can indicate periods of town origin and growth. At Frodsham the granting of a borough charter in the early 13th century is likely to mark the date when the settlement was moved down to its present location at the bottom of Overton Hill but we cannot be sure that this was the case at Macclesfield where there may have been a pre-existing urban or proto-urban settlement. Nor does the lack of a borough charter necessarily imply a lack of urban features; indeed, as we have seen, this may indicate an early town (a 'borough by prescription') whose urban status dates back to a period before it was necessary to obtain a charter. This may be the case with Middlewich and the other Cheshire wich towns, as it undoubtedly was for Northampton

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[541] Ayers 2011, 80-81

whose earliest surviving charter dates back to 1189.[542] There is no evidence that Malpas ever received a charter but nevertheless there is a mention of burgages in the 13th century. This is not unusual, however. Slater has pointed to the case of Birmingham whose lord purchased a market charter in 1166 but thereafter granted land in burgage tenure without going to the further expense of obtaining a borough charter.[543]

Equally market and fair charters need not date the setting up of a market or fair; they may have been established before the granting of a charter became necessary. Northampton never felt the need to obtain a market or fair charter despite the fact that in the 13th century its fair was 'one of the great fairs of England'.[544] The fair was first recorded in the mid-12th century when Simon de Senlis II  granted a tenth of its profits to St Andrew's Priory.[545] Lower down the scale Malpas acquired a charter for Monday market in 1281. It is difficult to believe that there was not a market here before that date, however, and a Sunday market mentioned in the 14th and 16th centuries is perhaps an indication that the original market was on that day. Sunday marketing would of course have been frowned upon at this time although this does not necessarily mean that it was not taking place.

Outside our area a clear example of a market operating 'under the radar' is given by the town of Wolverhampton in Staffordshire which, in 1180, was fined 20s 'in mercy for the market which they ought not to have'.[546] This was obviously a means of extracting money rather than a prohibition as the market continued. In 1203 a jury recorded that the day of the market had been changed from Sunday to Wednesday and that the *villata* was still 'in mercy'.[547] It was not until 1258 that the town finally acquired a formal market charter.[548] It is possible, however, that the obtaining of a market charter may have been the occasion for the provision of a new market place. A large wedge-shaped market place sits to the south of the town church and may have replaced an earlier market in the churchyard.

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[542] Beresford and Finberg 1973, 141
[543] Slater 2005, 27
[544] GMFEW website: https://archives.history.ac.uk/gazetteer/gazweb1.html (accessed 7.1.19)
[545] Cam 1930, 23
[546] GMFEW website: https://archives.history.ac.uk/gazetteer/gazweb1.html (accessed 7.1.19)
[547] GMFEW website: https://archives.history.ac.uk/gazetteer/gazweb1.html (accessed 7.1.19)
[548] GMFEW website: https://archives.history.ac.uk/gazetteer/gazweb1.html (accessed 7.1.19)

Early writer's accounts are also a source of valuable topographical information. Hence John Leland, writing in the early 1540s, says that Malpas has three paved streets and a 'little Sonday market', as well as a 'fair place' (the Old Hall) erected by Sir Randall Brereton who also endowed a grammar school and hospital.[549] His recording of a Sunday market at this late period is particularly interesting. Leland's account of Northampton talks of 'a faire suburbe without the South gate: and another, but lesse, without the Weste gate…'. He does not mention the north or east suburbs which would suggest that they either no longer existed (likely in the case of the north suburb) or were so decayed that they could no longer be described as a suburb (likely in the case of the east suburb as a few houses are shown here on Speed's map of 1610). St Edmund's church in the east suburb is not mentioned so presumably was no longer extant, while he says he 'saw the ruines of a large chapelle withowte the North gate' which must refer to the chapel of St Lawrence (formerly the church of St Bartholomew).[550]

Although not directly related to topography taxation returns can give us an idea of the relative status and therefore perhaps relative size of different towns, while increases in tax and ranking can give an idea of periods of growth within a town. As we have seen this is not possible for Cheshire which lay outside the national taxation system until the 16th-17th centuries.[551] The data for Northampton is much more interesting, however, demonstrating how Northampton rose from being a middling county town in the 11th century to one of the most important towns in the kingdom in the 12th century before falling back again by the 14th century. Table 1 demonstrates Northampton's rise and fall in ranking graphically in comparison to Norwich whose position remained high throughout the medieval period.

Documentary evidence of ecclesiastical provision further corroborates the evidence of the importance of the town in the 12th century with seven churches within the walls by towards the end of the century and indicates the existence of suburbs outside all four major gates by the early 13th century. The suburbs to the north and east lay within Northampton's territory and were served by their own parish churches, while those to the south and west lay in separate parishes and consequently were served by chapels. The provision of friaries of all

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[549] Toulmin-Smith 1964, Vol 5, 30
[550] Toulmin-Smith 1964, Vol 1, 8
[551] See Chapter 4: Introduction

four major orders of friars in the 13th century further emphasises the town's importance as does the presence of a Jewish synagogue and cemetery.

Church dedications can be useful indicators of their period of foundation although we do need to be aware that they can change, even at an early period. Hence at Wolverhampton the parish church was originally dedicated to St Mary but by the mid-12th century its dedication had been changed to St Peter.[552] Nevertheless a dedication to St Peter is often a feature of an early church - as at Northampton. Baker and Holt have noted the same phenomenon at Worcester and Gloucester, each of which have two churches dedicated to the apostle by the 10th century.[553] Blair has pointed out that early churches dedicated to St Peter are often associated with an early church dedicated to the Virgin which gives greater credence to my suggestion, from topographical evidence, that St Mary's church at Northampton was an early foundation.[554] A dedication to St Gregory, also found at Northampton, is common in the pre-Conquest period as well.[555] In our Cheshire case studies the minster church at Frodsham is dedicated to St Laurence which Higham has suggested points to a 7th-8th century date for its foundation; while the church at Malpas, also suggested as a minster, is dedicated to St Oswald. This was a popular dedication in 10th century Mercia after the relics of St Oswald were brought into the kingdom from Bardney in Lincolnshire in 909 and laid to rest in Aethelred and Aethelflaeda's New Minster founded at Gloucester.[556]

Frodsham and Macclesfield both have evidence for the sub-division and amalgamation of burgages. This process may be a contributory factor to the difficulty in identifying common plot widths and sizes. A similar process elsewhere has been documented by Scrase for St Albans, where he has suggested that plot division was most common 1250-1325 while plot amalgamation began after 1350, and Slater for Stratford-on-Avon.[557]

Accordingly we can see that documentary evidence is a valuable source of evidence for assessing the origins and development of towns. Much of this is familiar material which has been used elsewhere although I have tried to demonstrate how a careful reading can bring out

[552] Greenslade and Pugh (eds) 1970, 321
[553] Baker and Holt 2004, 229
[554] Blair 1996, 105
[555] Butler 1986, 44
[556] Baker and Holt 2004, 20; Butler 1986, 44-45
[557] Scrase 1989; Slater 1997

evidence whose significance may not be immediately apparent, such as the Sunday market at Malpas – is this a survival from a late Saxon market held originally in the churchyard? The fortunate survival of records of lane closures in the hundred rolls is unusual and of benefit in emphasising the amount of loss of streets and lanes at an early period. The most obvious problem with the documentary evidence is that of survival and accessibility. Few places have the wealth of records which have enabled such an in-depth analysis of the topography of medieval Winchester, nor are there normally the resources to undertake or commission an exhaustive search through what documentary evidence is available for topographical information.

## Method 3: town-plan analysis

The third method assessed was town-plan analysis. A major part of my assessment has been to examine the use of Conzenian-style detailed town-plan analysis. As discussed earlier I largely followed the methodology advocated by Conzen and mediated by Slater, Lilley and Baker.[558] My work differed, however, in looking at a range of towns in the urban hierarchy rather than a group of towns at the same level or a single large town, and, with Northampton, bringing in archaeological evidence to assess, amplify or question the results of the town-plan analysis.

The process can be divided into three stages: the reconstruction of the medieval street pattern and plot/property boundaries; the definition of plan units using the results of the first stage; and phasing of the plan units. The first stage could be described as a reasonably mechanical process especially for the smaller towns where there has been less change in subsequent centuries. For Northampton the process was more complicated as the medieval pattern had been destroyed by subsequent industrial and housing development in quite large areas by the time of the earliest Ordnance Survey mapping of the late 19th century. The areas of later intrusion are shown on the mapping. Where the course of the river had been altered as a consequence of the insertion of the railway station its earlier course was plotted from the mid-19th century Wood and Law map of the town.

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[558] See Chapter 3 Methodology - town-plan analysis

The second stage - the definition of plan units – is a more subjective process. However, if we look at the most studied English medieval, Ludlow, although we can see differences in the precise boundaries of the plan units delineated in studies by Conzen, Lilley and Hindle, there is, in general, broad agreement (Figs 2.7, 6.2, 6.4).[559] It is at the third stage of the sequence and dating of the plan units that there is greater disagreement with Conzen seeing the castle and the settlement at Dinham below it as primary features (II and III on Lilley's plan) followed by settlement along High Street (IV on Lilley's plan) while Lilley see settlement along Old Street leading up from a ford over the river Teme as primary (I on Lilley's plan) followed by the castle and the settlement at Dinham. Hindle sees a third alternative with the castle and Dinham as primary but a settlement along the road up from the ford following soon after (I, VII and IX) on Lilley's plan. Hence practitioners of town-plan analysis are increasingly recognising that this third stage of placing plan units in sequence and assigning dates to them is likely to remain tentative in many cases unless there is corroboration from archaeological or documentary evidence. In this respect Lilley and Dean's analysis of medieval Swansea and their recognition that different interpretations can be offered from the same body of evidence is a valuable contribution.[560] This can focus future research upon answering these questions rather than offering a single interpretation which runs the risk of being regarded as a proven fact.

How successful has my use of Conzenian-style town-plan analysis been? For the Cheshire towns the process has been a relatively simple one. The plot boundaries as shown on the Victorian maps appear not to have changed substantially. Frodsham and Malpas saw little industrial change in the 18th-20th centuries while the major industrial changes at Macclesfield and Middlewich took place outside the envelope of the medieval town. The division into plan units is reasonably straightforward so that it is the phasing of these that is perhaps most tendentious and best to regard as provisional.

For the more complicated development sequence at Northampton I have followed Conzen in his study of Alnwick in introducing two levels of plan unit, dividing the town into nineteen 'fine-grained' plan units (PUI-XIX) and five higher level units (HLU1-5). This allows me to

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[560] Dean, G. and Lilley, K. 2013-14 'Mapping Medieval Swansea':
http://www.medievalswansea.ac.uk/en/mapping-medieval-swansea/ (accessed 24.3.19); Lilley and Dean 2015

discuss detail at the lower level but to discuss overall trends at a higher-level. I also separated out the discussion of the late Saxon and medieval defences (discussed as DL1 and DL2 respectively) from the 'fine-grained' plan-units to avoid repetition. I defined and discussed the lower level units using the non-invasive sources and then have outlined the archaeological evidence for each plan separately to make clear where the archaeological evidence amplified or challenged the evidence from non-invasive sources. At the higher unit level I brought all of the evidence from the different methodologies together to form a single narrative but in order to demonstrate the contribution made by each methodology I used a different colour type for each (purple for landscape analysis; green for documentary evidence; blue for town-plan analysis and red for archaeological information). This has demonstrated the benefit of bringing together a wide range of evidence to give as complete an analysis as possible of the topographical history of a settlement. Hence the process for a larger town is a complicated one involving two 'orders' of plan units and a number of exceptions such as the defensive lines which have been discussed separately and the early periods which are discussed at the higher level only. Nevertheless I have demonstrated the value of the definition of plot boundaries and established that the majority of these do date back to the medieval period even where sites have been subject to a period of 'dereliction' or hiatus in settlement activity. The next phase of definition of plan units is perhaps more tendentious but does ensure that each area of a settlement is considered and assigned an interpretation even if it must remain a hypothesis or series of hypotheses.

Having discussed the process we can look at some of the results. For the Cheshire towns we have seen a number of instances where enclosures on the edge of towns are likely to represent earlier property boundaries in areas subsequently given over to agriculture after 'shrinkage' of the settled area or possibly speculative attempts at laying out of properties which were never fully taken up. There are examples of this at Frodsham and Malpas. If this process had ever applied at Middlewich and Macclesfield it has been masked by the subsequent re-growth of these towns in the 18th-19th centuries. Outside our area the excavations at Newport, Dyfed, provide a good example of an enclosure shown on 19th century mapping which had been a settlement area in the medieval period (Fig 6.5).[561]

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[561] Murphy 1994

At Northampton we can see a similar process in the suburbs on its eastern, western and possibly northern sides, all of which have small enclosures which look as though they were originally laid out as settlement plots. In addition in all three cases there is evidence for back lanes which would suggest a degree of planning. The western and northern suburbs are adjacent to St James' Abbey and St Andrew's Priory respectively suggesting that these suburbs may have been laid out as a speculative venture by ecclesiastical landowners. A further corollary of this is the large size of Northampton's early suburbs, despite the extent of the walled town, demonstrating again the importance of looking outside a narrow urban core. Nevertheless we should perhaps wonder whether the large area of suburbs on the northern and western sides were speculative ventures which largely failed given that by the 16th century the western suburb had shrink to a small settlement by the west bridge and the northern suburb had disappeared completely. Alternatively some of the plots furthest away from the town may have been laid out for agricultural workers as Lilley suggested for Monks Kirby, Warwickshire.[562]

I have discussed the re-routing of roads and tracks approaching towns in the Landscape Analysis section. We can see a similar process operating in towns most commonly to bring them into market areas enabling tolls on goods entering the town to be collected and increasing footfall on market day. The road diversion at Frodsham enabled the road to be brought along the market street, while at Macclesfield the road from Chester to the west was brought into the market place so that travellers wishing to travel east had to enter the market place, turn to the north and then turn east again at the top end of the market area. At Northampton the building of the south bridge was accompanied by a large-scale re-alignment of the street pattern with the building of a new route along Bridge Street leading to the market area around All Saints church and thence towards to the north gate via Drapery and Sheep Street. I have suggested also that the Market Square was laid out to the north of the church and adjacent to the north-south route at the same time.

One interesting comparison that can be made is of the layout of different towns 'founded' by a particular landowner. Ranulf de Blundeville, 6th Earl of Chester, is known to have founded three towns: Frodsham and Macclesfield in Cheshire and Leek in Staffordshire. We might

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[562] See HLU5 above

expect them to all display similar characteristics. In fact, however, all three differ radically. We have seen that Frodsham largely comprised a single long broad street while Macclesfield was based around a wedge-shaped market place (Fig 4.37 A-B). Leek is different again; its chief characteristic is an extremely large market place, 1ha in area, set at the intersection of the main roads into the town, with the parish church immediately to the north. The remainder of the medieval town was set around the market place and the streets leading into it (Fig 6.6). At first sight it may seem surprising that all three towns differ quite radically. Does this suggest that de Blundeville was not personally involved in the design of the towns but used different agents at each one? Or was the layout of the towns led by the natural topography of each area and by pre-existing features? The answer may lie in the combination of the two. Lilley examined this problem in a group of towns founded by the de Redvers family in the south of England and concluded that they also differed radically in design, again perhaps indicating that different designers were employed. On the other hand he pointed out similarities in design between one of the de Redvers's towns, Newport, Isle of Wight, and nearby Portsmouth, even though the latter was in a different lordship, perhaps evidence that the two lords employed the same local designer.[563]

Northampton, with its wide range of ecclesiastical institutions, reminds us that most large towns were dominated by the church, and their various buildings and precincts would have been a prominent feature of such towns. There were seven parish churches within the town walls, all in existence by the late 12th century. A multiplicity of churches is towns is a sign of an early town although Northampton cannot match centres such as Winchester where there were fifty six churches in the city and its suburbs, most of which were in existence before the mid-12th century.[564] At Northampton, the northern and eastern suburbs had their own parish churches - in fact the references to St Lawrence's church in the northern suburb is almost our only evidence for the existence of a suburb here. The western suburb was served by a chapel which was attached to the church at Duston within whose parish it lay. The southern suburb of Cotton End lay within Hardingstone parish but was largely served by the chapel of the leper hospital of St Leonards which lay within the suburb although this was a cause of friction with the church at Hardingstone. As elsewhere leper hospitals were located on the approaches

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[563] Lilley 2001
[564] Platt 1976, 149

to the town from the north (Walbeck hospital) and the south (St Leonard's hospital) and hermitages and bridge chapels were sited by the entrances into the town from the west and south. All were handily placed to extract offerings from grateful travellers entering the town, or hopeful ones leaving it.[565]

St Andrew's Priory occupied a site at the northern end of the walled town from around the beginning of the 12th century; its precinct, almost 10ha in area, covered around 10% of the entire area of the walled town. The town is unusual in having premises of all of the four major orders of friars here - a sign of a major national centre.[566] The size of Northampton's walled area meant that, unusually, it was possible for all of the friars to locate their premises within the walls. The area that they covered cannot be delineated with certainty but would perhaps in total cover a similar portion of the town as the priory site. Hence the ecclesiastical sites would have been a dominant element in the topography of the town.

Northampton demonstrates how early defensive lines may be 'fossilised' within the street pattern with its double row of streets demarcating the line of the late Saxon defences on its north and east sides. A close analogy is Nottingham where a concentric line of streets demarcates the northern, eastern and western sides of the late Saxon settlement (Fig 6.7).[567] Both settlements are of a similar size (25ha for Northampton and 20ha for Nottingham). Both sites illustrate the problem of a lack of close dating evidence. Were the defences built by the Danes when the settlements were in their hands or were they built by Edward the Elder or his successors. At Nottingham the balance of evidence perhaps supports the Danes as Edward is said to have repaired the defences when he captured the settlement in 918.[568] Nevertheless there is still the possibility that the Danish defences were elsewhere or did not cover the full extent of the defended area which we can now delineate. From a topographical point of view it would be extremely helpful if it was possible to determine whether the Danes built defences of this nature or whether they were an English innovation, or even whether the original prototypes were Mercian centres such as Tamworth which have been suggested as being

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[565] For leper hospitals see: Historic England 'The Time of Leprosy 11th to 14th century': https://historicengland.org.uk/research/inclusive-heritage/disability-history/1050-1485/time-of-leprosy/ (accessed 8.10.19)
[566] Remark by Alexander Murray on 'In Our Time: Greyfriars and Blackfriars', Radio 4 https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p003k9dz (accessed 8.10.19)
[567] Knight *et al* 2012
[568] Whitelock 1961, 67

middle Saxon in date.[569] Hopefully greater precision in dating techniques may help solve this conundrum in the future but it also points out the need for archaeological work to be of sufficient scale to provide secure dating evidence rather than just to confirm the presence of defences.

We have seen in the documentary evidence section how Northampton's increase in importance is demonstrated by increases in its taxation through the 11th to 12th centuries. This economic rise helps to explain the town's equally unprecedented increase in size from the 25ha within the defences of the late Saxon town to the 100ha within the 12th century walled town, perhaps the largest walled area of any town in England at this time, apart from London and York whose circuits were based upon existing Roman defences (Norwich's defences, although covering a larger area, are later in date, work not beginning until the mid-13th century and not completed until the mid-14th).[570] In addition to its walled area Northampton had suburbs outside all four of its main gates covering an area of up to 26ha in total. Northampton's subsequent economic decline is mirrored by a diminution in tis size with all of its suburbs shrinking, or in the case of the north suburb, disappearing completely, by the 15th-16th centuries while settlement areas within its wall were being turned over to other activities.

None of Cheshire case study towns have evidence for town defences. Indeed none of Cheshire's urban centres, apart from the city of Chester, do so. This is a point worth emphasising. The majority of English medieval towns did not have defences and much time and effort can be expended fruitlessly in looking for them. Creighton has estimated that only around 25% of English medieval towns possessed defences and even at those towns which did do so they were often later additions to already functioning towns.[571]

Conzen had hoped that it would be possible to recognise types of medieval market places as belonging to particular phases or regions. Slater examined the medieval town plans of Warwickshire and Worcestershire and defined three basic market place types: the triangular, the rectangular and the broadened street and suggested that the triangular markets were especially characteristic of the older-established towns, while the broadened street markets

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[569] For Mercian centres see Bassett 2007; Haslam 1987
[570] For Norwich see Ayers 2003, 87
[571] Creighton 2007, 44

were common in the 'new', later-established, towns.[572] Our case studies for Cheshire confirm the presence of all three plan types with Frodsham, Macclesfield and Malpas representing variants of the broadened street market type and Middlewich being an example of the triangular market area within which is the site of a church, a common feature elsewhere also.[573] Sandbach and Knutsford, although not studied intensively, possess clear examples of rectangular markets adjacent to the main street. Hence the Cheshire evidence chimes in with that from elsewhere suggesting that there is little regional variation in market plan types. As regards chronological variation the broadened street markets at Frodsham and Macclesfield were almost certainly established by Ranulf de Blundeville in the early 13th century while the presence of Norman work in the church at Middlewich suggests an earlier date for the triangular market area there.

At Northampton we see a more complex situation with a variety of market places of different shape and form. If we look first at the late Saxon town there is little evidence of a planned market space within the defences. This fits well with the situation elsewhere; few towns have evidence of market places of this period within their walls.[574] More common were market areas adjacent to or outside the town gates. At Northampton the market place at the east gate of the late Saxon town, with All Saints church at its centre, looks like a classic example, while the rectangular market area at Mayorhold outside the north gate is likely to have also been established at this period. Examples elsewhere are Winchester where a probable 10th century market place and church are sited outside its west gate, while the long, broad market street outside Oxford's north gate, Magdalen Street/St Giles' Street, with the church of St Mary Magdalen at its southern end may also date back to the Anglo-Saxon period.[575]

Northampton's main post-Conquest market place was the large Market Square (Fig 6.8), *c*1.5ha in area, set immediately to the east of the new north-south route up from the south bridge. I have discussed above evidence for believing that it dates to the laying out of the expanded town soon after the Norman conquest.[576] A close parallel is the market place at Norwich which is of a similar size. It was laid out soon after the conquest and formed the

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[572] Slater 1982, 186-91
[573] Palliser *et al* 2000, 168-69
[574] Palliser et al 2000. 167
[575] for Winchester see Biddle and Keene 1976, 285 and Ottaway 2017, 219
[576] See HLU4 above

centrepiece of the new French borough; the church of St Peter and the medieval guildhall were sited within it.[577]

There were in addition at Northampton many ancillary market areas. Topographically we can recognise a smaller rectangular market at Regent Square just inside the north gate of the medieval town while Mayorhold, which I have suggested as originating in the late Saxon period, presumably continued in use, and was perhaps expanded into the area of the north gate of the late Saxon town when the defences were abandoned. Broad street markets can be recognised at Horsemarket and Sheep Street as well as Broad Street itself.[578] All of these market areas lie towards the northern end of the town and are perhaps, as some of the street names suggest, livestock markets situated towards the edge of the town to save bringing stock into the busiest areas. An exception is *Netesmarkett* which lay close to Mervyn's mill. This would seem an unusual place for a cattle market unless although the livestock could have been brought in by way of the west bridge. Alternatively it may mark the site of an Anglo-Saxon livestock market as at this period I have suggested that the southern approach to the town was via a ford entering the town initially by Mervyn's mill and later at the bottom of Horseshoe Street. Either of these routes would afford an opportunity to bring cattle directly into the market area (although admittedly formal market areas do seem to have been rare in Anglo-Saxon settlements).

A notable feature of the town plan at Northampton is the pronounced curvature of a number of the streets in the medieval town, particularly Sheep Street and Newland/east side of the Market Square demonstrating that the street layout here followed the line of earlier field boundaries (Fig 6.9). This is a phenomenon found in many medieval towns, a particularly good example being Stratford-upon-Avon.[579]

Slater and others have pointed to examples of a perch-based layout, based on a statute perch of 16½ feet, in post-Conquest towns.[580] I have pointed out evidence at Frodsham for a possible perch-based layout where 110 burgages are recorded and the length of both sides of

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[577] Ayres 2003, Fig 26, 55, 60-63
[578] See Fig A1.2I for location of Horsemarket; Fig A1.2B for Sheep Street; Fig A1.2C for Regent Square; Fig A1.2E for Marehold, Fig A1.2M for Broad Street
[579] Slater 1997, 35-36, Fig 8
[580] Slater 1980

the High Street (Main Street) is a little over 3600 feet (Fig 4.11). This would suggest a burgage width of 2 perches which is the width prescribed in the borough charter for Altrincham, the only Cheshire town for which a property width is recorded. Otherwise it is difficult to recognise a common width for properties at my other Cheshire case-study towns while excavated properties at Northampton varied between 7.5m – 14.5m in width with no evidence of a standard measurement.

I have pointed to the significance of administrative boundaries in the wider landscape around towns in the landscape analysis section above. Within the larger towns where there is more than one parish these boundaries can also tell us something about the settlement process within the urban 'envelope'. Hence at Northampton the 'jagged' nature of the boundaries between All Saints, Holy Sepulchre, St Michael's and St Giles parishes suggest that they were laid out after settlement had moved into these areas giving a *terminus ante quem* for this growth (Fig 5.24).

The extensive suburbs at Northampton, together with the fact that there was space within the walled town for friaries to be located there in the 13th-14th centuries demonstrates that settlement did not follow a simple process of incremental growth from a central core. Rather settlers, especially those involved in trade, were attracted to major roads and streets, while 'back-street' areas were given over to gardens and orchards. This is a factor to be taking account of in excavation strategies for medieval towns. Hence Atkin and Carter have noted that their original strategy for investigating the development of medieval housing at Norwich by looking at a variety of sites from the core to the periphery of the was compromised as the sites in the central area were in back street locations and '…it would appear that ribbon development along the city's major roads had by-passed our sites, and that intensification of their exploitation came about in a process of internal colonisation'[581]

Town-plan analysis does of course rely to a large extent on maps and hence the issue of what maps to use and their reliability is central to my thesis. From the point of view of what mapping to use as a base map for defining elements of the town plan I have followed the majority of TPA practitioners in using the earliest large-scale editions of the Ordnance Survey

maps, Victorian mapping of the mid-late 19th centuries. I have used the largest scale available – 1:500 for Northampton and Macclesfield and 1:2500 for the other Cheshire towns. These maps are of course not only of value as base maps but are invaluable historic documents in themselves, indeed in some cases they may be the earliest detailed mapping of a town. Alternatives for base mapping would be modern Ordnance Survey MasterMap data. This has the merit of greater accuracy but given the extent of change in the period of over a century between the two surveys this would introduce a further stage where features on the 1st edition would have to be compared to the modern mapping. Accordingly I checked the Victorian mapping against MasterMap and determined that the extent of difference between the two was acceptable.

The Victorian mapping itself post-dates many major 19th century and earlier infrastructure projects such as railways and gasworks. This tends not to be a great problem for the smaller towns but is likely to be for the larger, more industrialised, towns. Hence for Northampton around 20% of the plan of the medieval walled town had been destroyed by later development. These areas can be reconstructed to some extent from earlier mapping. Issues with the planimetric accuracy of these maps can be improved by georeferencing a portion of the maps cropped to just the area of interest only.

The pre-Ordnance Survey mapping is a valuable source of evidence despite its poor planimetric accuracy but needs to be treated with care, considering the reason for the survey of the map or maps in question. Hence the principal purpose of the tithe maps of the mid-19th century is to delineate those areas where tithe is payable and these largely lie outside the urban areas. Accordingly, as we have seen, although in some cases, such as our Cheshire case studies of Frodsham and Malpas, the urban areas are delineated with a good degree of accuracy, elsewhere the urban area is either not delineated at all, as at Middlewich, or only shows the outline of the streets, as at Macclesfield. For the smaller towns these tithe maps of the mid-19th century may be the earliest urban plans available, as they are for the Cheshire towns, or indeed there may be no plans pre-dating the Victorian Ordnance Survey maps.

Elsewhere, particularly for the larger towns, there may be a whole sequence of earlier mapping of great value in plotting features which had were no longer extant by the 19th century; town defences and gates are particularly good examples of features which often disappear at an early date, whether because they were within parliament-supporting towns

whose defences were ordered to be razed by Charles II after the Restoration or because they were removed later as they formed a barrier to traffic entering and leaving the town.[582]

In general the earlier the map the less accurate the survey is the measured survey. Hence 17th century small-scale plans such as Speed's map of Northampton of 1610 are a poor fit with the Ordnance Survey mapping. Nevertheless this plan is extremely valuable in showing the street plan which is largely that of the medieval town, although, as we have seen, medieval Northampton had lost a number of its minor streets and lanes even as early as the later 13th century. The importance of being aware of the purpose behind the creation of particular maps is illustrated by the Marcus Pierce map of Northampton of 1632. This map is largely concerned with showing the former holdings of St Andrew's Priory within the town fields. Hence it does not include the south-west corner of the town and the adjoining meadows and river, doubtless because there are no priory landholdings in the area, and for those parts of the town which it does cover the principal streets are shown but not the side streets. The field pattern is shown more accurately as this was the primary purpose of the map. The mid-18th century Noble and Butlin map of the town is the first to show property boundaries, although these cannot always be related easily to those shown on the Ordnance Survey plan. A better 'fit' for small areas of the town can be achieved by cropping small areas of the map and registering these separately. The next map in the sequence, the Roper and Cole map of 1807 illustrates another important point. When closely compared with the Noble and Butlin map the former can be seen to be largely a copy of the latter with recent features added. This is a point not noticed before but is quite obvious when the two are overlaid (Fig 5.17). The Wood and Law map of 1847 is a better measured survey although its fit with the historic Ordnance Survey mapping is still not exact.

Another example of the value of the ability to overlay mapping is the discovery that a lane shown on the early maps of Northampton at the north end of the town is not, as previous reconstructions of the street plan of the medieval town have assumed (including one of my own) Regent Street but a small lane, Narrow Lane, immediately to its south. Again this becomes obvious when the 1746 map, which shows only Narrow Lane, is overlaid on the Wood and Law map of 1847 which shows both the lane and Regent Street, running parallel to

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[582] Creighton and Higham 2005, 233-40

it 25m to the north. Regent Street's name suggests that it was inserted between after 1811 when the Prince Regent was in power due to the incapacity of his father George III, possibly due to the fame of Regent Street in London which was completed in 1825.[583]

GIS is important as a means of holding a large amount of spatial data which can be viewed and overlaid to create new understandings. Indeed certain aspects of this thesis either could not have been undertaken manually or would have taken so much time that other aspects could not have been explored. Hence for Northampton there are a total of 57 historic Ordnance Survey 1:500 maps from which digital data has been created (Fig 5.10). This would have been an immense task to undertake manually even if copies had been available - Lilley has commented upon his difficulties in obtaining access to the 1:528 Board of Health plans of Coventry for his thesis.[584] In addition GIS enables a large amount of spatial data to be held, interrogated and reproduced in a single workspace. Figure 6.10 is a screenshot of an ArcGIS workspace for Frodsham used to analyse and depict Medieval Frodsham and its surrounds.[585] As others have commented the process of creating and displaying data in GIS is not simply a mechanical process but the ability to manipulate, overlay and compare data from a wide-range of sources means that it is also a thinking space where new hypotheses can be formulated and tested.[586] It is difficult to separate out time taken on GIS-based and other forms of research but the balance in this thesis is perhaps 50-50. This may seem an excessive amount of time for the GIS work but reflects the largely spatial nature of my research.

## Method 4: archaeological evidence

The fourth method that was assessed was archaeological evidence. I shall concentrate here on what archaeological investigation has told us about the origins and development of our case study towns which we didn't already know (or should have known) from the non-invasive methodologies.

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583 Wikipedia 'Regent Street': https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Regent_Street (accessed 24.7.20)
584 Lilley 1994, 95-96
585 See Fig 4.2 for the resulting illustration
586 Gillings and Goodrick (1996, Summary) remarked that 'GIS is increasingly seen as much as a place to think as a simple data management and mapping tool'.

**Cheshire Towns**

As discussed earlier there has in general been very little archaeological investigation in our case study Cheshire towns. Indeed, there has not been a great deal in any of the Cheshire towns outside Chester itself. Our only case study town where archaeological excavation has added a little to our understanding is at Middlewich where property boundaries were located to the north of Wheelock Street, suggesting that there may have been an original property width of  seven perches, while further work to the south of the same street indicated that the street frontage was not fully built up and suggested a possible industrial use for the area.

One noticeable point is the stark difference between excavations at the small towns in Cheshire and those at Northampton. Where there have been opportunities in Cheshire results have been fairly disappointing with only low levels of activity detected. This is not a phenomenon restricted to our case study towns. Towle and Hayes surveyed the evidence for other Cheshire towns and found a similar situation with recent excavations in Northwich, Congleton and Knutsford all failing to uncover evidence of medieval activity and indeed it is commonplace for small towns as a whole.[587] This is not to suggest that we should abandon work in small towns. Indeed it increases the value of work at sites in small towns which do contain widespread archaeological deposits.

The work in the small towns may seem rather unexciting compared to that in major towns. Nevertheless it is worthwhile, and in fact is vital to tell us about what was going on in these small towns in the medieval period. Was there a great deal of craft activity? Towle and Hayes suggested possibly not. On the other hand Dyer has surveyed the evidence for Staffordshire towns from the documentary evidence and demonstrated that, although there is less of a range of crafts undertaken at the smaller towns, there was nevertheless activity taking place.[588] It is also worth pointing out that the smaller towns generally have less of a build-up of occupation material so that work carried out in these settlements is relatively inexpensive.

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[587] Towle and Hayes 2009; Dyer 2003
[588] Dyer 2002b

**Northampton**

The situation at Northampton is very different with archaeology making a major contribution to our understanding of the early history of the town. For the early Saxon period there was no way of knowing whether there was settlement of this period and, if there was, its status and importance other than by using archaeological evidence. Given the ubiquity of early-middle Saxon sites in much of Northamptonshire, admittedly partly due to their visibility from fieldwalking due to the widespread use of pottery in the area at this date, we might have anticipated settlement of this period but we had no evidence from the site of the later town apart from a Pagan Saxon burial reported from the Northampton castle site in the 19th century. Hence the discovery of extensive early Saxon settlement in the south-west quarter of the later town is an addition to the town's history. The coincidence, at least in part, with the middle Saxon settlement may suggest that it was a settlement of some significance but apart from a few high-status metalwork finds there is no proof that it was of any greater importance than the many other sites along the Nene valley. The distribution of early-middle Saxon pottery (Fig 5.31) shows small amounts of this ware outside in the area of the later medieval town whereas the distribution of the definitely middle Saxon Maxey-type ware (5.32) is restricted to the south-west quarter. At the early Saxon period we may be seeing a pattern similar to that at Mucking of a settlement shifting across the landscape through time.[589]

Archaeological excavation has transformed our knowledge of middle Saxon Northampton. The only recognition of its importance before the major campaign of excavations began in the town in the 1970s was the suggestion in Gover *et al* that the place name *Hamtun* indicated a royal residence and estate here from around the 8th century.[590] This showed a remarkable prescience although it seems to have gone largely unnoticed by later writers. The excavations have provided a great deal of additional evidence both about the high-status nature of the settlement with its large timber and stone halls, its stone 'church' and mortar mixer technology suggesting something more prestigious than a 'normal' royal estate centre (or monastic establishment). The evidence of its location from archaeological investigations then allowed speculation from landscape analysis as to its form with the suggestion that the road

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[590] Gover et al 1933, xvii-xviii

between the Roman settlements at Duston and Irchester ran through it from east-west and that a road up from a fording point of the river Nene led directly to the heart of the 'elite centre'. In addition analogy with the Mercian palace at Tamworth suggests that the Mervyn's mill which lies on the river Nene adjacent to my suggested fording point may have a middle Saxon antecedent. Hence, the archaeological evidence has not only revealed the location of a high-status complex but has led to new questions that could be explored using the other techniques, in this case landscape analysis. This demonstrates an additional point – the iterative nature of research whereby a discovery in one field can lead to further insights using a different technique and consequently the need to keep re-assessing old evidence and theories as new evidence comes in. Another example is the reassessment of a prehistoric ring ditch found in the area of the middle Saxon complex in the St Peter's Street excavation of the 1970s. At the time of the original excavation this was not thought to have any significance for the later settlement. More recently, however, the widespread of occurrence of prehistoric features at the site of middle Saxon high-status sites has led to the suggestion that they were deliberately sited by these earlier monuments to endow the new dynasties with an air of authority and antiquity, giving new meaning to a feature excavated almost fifty years previously.

The non-invasive techniques have made a greater contribution to our knowledge of late Saxon Northampton. Nevertheless much remained to be determined from the archaeological evidence. Who built the defences – the Danes or the English? Or could they, as some writers believed, date back to the middle Saxon period? Was the settlement restricted to the area within the defences? When did the settlement become urban and who was responsible? Does the street pattern of this part of the town date back to this period? What was the form of the settlement? What about the plot boundaries which can be seen on earliest Ordnance Survey maps which elsewhere, most notably at York, had been suggested as dating back to this period?

The evidence from excavations uncovered so far can only partially answer these questions.. As regards the defences the work at Green Street established that they were Late Saxon rather than Middle Saxon in date. The dating evidence was not, however, sufficiently precise to establish whether they were established at the time when the Danes or the English were in control of the settlement. Analogies for the form and size of the defences can be found at English centres such as Hereford and Oxford but, as we have seen, the similar enceinte at

Nottingham may be of Danish origin.[591] Plots of late Saxon pottery (Figs 5.33, 5.34) suggest that settlement was largely restricted to the defended area with the possibility of some spread along the routes out of the town (in this case St Giles' Street).

Turning to the street pattern an important finding was that St Peter's Street and Woolmonger Street and their associated plot boundaries were not laid out until after the Norman Conquest. Hence opportunities for town-plan analysis at this period are limited. The delineation of the defences and the major streets can be sustained but we cannot assume that the side roads in the south-west quarter of the town or the plot boundaries associated with them preserve a late Saxon layout. The excavations also suggested an informal settlement pattern rather than the densely-packed buildings set along street frontages which excavations at Coppergate, York, and Flaxengate, Lincoln, in the 1970s to early 1980s had suggested might be the norm for late Saxon towns.[592] Increasingly, however, it is being recognised that during the late Saxon period, and especially so early within the period, many urban centres comprised clusters of large aristocratic properties.[593] The evidence from Northampton, particularly the St Peter's Street and Chalk Lane sites, would put the late Saxon settlement in the latter category. A corollary of this is at what point the settlement could be described as urban. If we are looking for a 'traditional' town layout of properties fronting on to densely packed streets we do not see this until the post-Conquest period (although we must admit that most of our evidence comes from back streets); if, however, we are looking for a settlement with a diverse economic base acting as a centre for the surrounding area then archaeological discoveries such as evidence for a pottery industry, coinage which might suggest the existence of a mint and evidence for the working of a range of metals, Northampton could be argued as achieving this early in the late Saxon period.

If we turn to the post-Conquest period the plot of shelly wares from excavation sites graphically illustrates the town's dramatic increase in size (Fig 5.35). We have only limited evidence for the dating of the street pattern in the 'extended' town. Small-scale excavations of sites fronting on to the major streets of Sheep Street, St Giles' Street and Derngate suggested that their layout can be tentatively assigned to the 11th- 12th centuries. Larger-scale work on

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[591] Hereford: Boucher 2002, 9-10; Oxford: Dodd (ed) 2003, 21
[592] See Hall 2014 for York and Perring 1981 for Flaxengate
[593] Blair 2018, 339-350

sites fronting on to the more minor streets of Swan Street (Cow Lane) and St John's Street suggest a 13th century date for the former and a mid-12th century date for the latter.

Within the former late Saxon town St Peter's Street and Woolmonger Street can be shown to have been laid out in the late 11th - early 12th centuries suggesting a re-ordering of settlement in the area of the late Saxon town at the same time as the development of the medieval town. major period of expansion to the east. Hence the street pattern as shown on Speed's map of 1610 and reconstructed on my Fig 5.20 is likely to date back largely to the 13th century and earlier although, as we have seen from the documentary evidence, there has been some loss of minor lanes.

This brings us to a discussion of the plot boundaries. As discussed, using the GIS I overlaid the plot boundaries on top of the georeferenced excavation plans. This showed on the excavation sites the majority of the plot boundaries I had delineated from the Victorian mapping dated back to the medieval period validating the reconstruction of medieval plot system. One observation of particular interest is the widespread evidence of cessation of settlement activity on many of the excavated sites in the town between the late 15th/early 16th centuries and early 18th centuries. It is tempting to describe this as a phase of dereliction. However, the survival of plot boundaries laid down in the medieval period down to the 18th century and beyond would indicate that these areas were not simply abandoned. They survived as properties and in many cases the deposition of garden soils indicates that they were in use as gardens and orchards.

It is also worth emphasising that the majority of buildings excavated were set parallel to the street rather than at right angles to it. Admittedly the evidence is skewed by the fact that the vast majority of sites excavated sites were on back street locations away from the main commercial core - the one excavation which did lie close to the commercial core, at St Giles' Street, did reveal evidence of a building set at right angles to the frontage although it had an adjacent yard area also fronting on to the street. Nevertheless it is worth pointing out that we would not necessarily expect buildings to be end on to the street throughout a medieval town as this view is a surprisingly entrenched one – a recent excavation report on a site away from

the commercial core in Northampton reported that 'one would normally expect any tenements to be at right angles to the street frontage'.[594]

The large amount of quarrying for ironstone throughout the town, most of which can be dated to the later 11th-12th centuries, is attested by the archaeological excavation evidence. Given its widespread occurrence it must have had quite an effect on the look and feel of the late 11th-12th century town as well as causing problems for future building operations, as my own experience attests.[595]

What effect did the Black Death and other depredations of the 14th century have on the town? Excavations in the eastern suburb have established that occupation of a property here ceased around 1400. Within the walled town the marginal site at Swan Street South was perhaps given over to gardening but this area was never intensively occupied in any case. Elsewhere there is little sign of such a catastrophic event. At St Peter's Street the excavated portion of the street was fully built up for the first time in the early 15th century in what appeared to be a co-ordinated act of replanning. Perhaps a reduction of population had provided an opportunity to bring a series of disparate properties into a single ownership. One aspect which may perhaps be connected to the Black Death is the movement away from deposition of domestic refuse in rubbish pits in backyards from around the mid-14th century at Northampton and other urban centres.

The setting up of a pottery type series for the town at an early stage of the archaeological investigations and its continued use, albeit with a number of changes, over the ensuing fifty years has enabled the production of plots of the major pottery types indicative of particular periods of Northampton's development. Fig 6.11 shows the individual plots on a single illustration demonstrating how they can be used to present an instant visual representation of the origins, growth and development of the town.[596] Early-middle Saxon wares (A) are largely concentrated in the south-west quarter of the later town but with small quantities to the east which may represent separate settlements. Middle Saxon Maxey-type ware is restricted to the south-west quarter although it is admittedly only found in small quantities. wares (B).

[594] Hiller *et al* 2002, 58
[595] In the 1980s-90s I was called out on a number of occasions to building sites where developers had unexpectedly found areas of loose fill where they had expected firm bedrock
[596] See Figs 5.31 – 5.35 for larger versions of the individual plots

Northampton ware (C), which dates to early within the late Saxon period is present at all sites within the defences of this date, and by the north gate. Finds of this pottery type to the east may be due to settlement spreading along the roads out of the town but given the small quantity are perhaps more likely to be discarded material (they have not been reported as any more abraded than other pottery from the same sites so are unlikely to be a manuring scatter). Finds of St Neots-type ware (D) are again found in great quantities within the late Saxon defences but are also found in greater quantities outside to the east. This pottery type continues in use into the 12<sup>th</sup> century so we are not necessarily looking at late Saxon occupation. Finds of post-Conquest shelly wares (E) can be seen to be present in great quantities throughout the medieval walled town and in the surrounding suburbs.

## Comparison of the four different approaches

This thesis aimed to assess the different approaches to the topographical analysis of English medieval towns dividing the process into four broad methodologies. It was admitted at the outset that there was a great deal of overlap between the techniques and this has only been emphasised by my subsequent research. A case in point is the discovery of the middle Saxon elite complex by excavation which then led to the hypothesis, from landscape analysis, that the site was entered from the south via a route up from the south passing Mervyn's mill, which in turns led to speculation as to whether the mill site itself dated back to the middle Saxon period, using analogy with the mill site at Tamworth.

Large-scale archaeological investigation offers the greatest scope for reconstructing urban topography but it is rarely possible to excavate a sufficiently large area in an urban context to answer more than a minority of the questions than can be posed. In these circumstances it is with the combination of all four techniques, manipulated within GIS, that significant advances in understanding of town origins and development can occur. This has implications because there are great variations in the types of evidence available for towns at different periods, of different types and in different locations. For Anglo-Saxon towns, archaeological evidence will generally play a greater part than historical evidence simply because there is far less of the latter available at this period. Similarly some of the more detailed aspects of town-plan analysis may play a less important part in that the more major road and street alignments within the town may date back to this period but the work in this thesis suggests that in many

cases the details of the more minor roads, and, most especially, the plot boundaries, are more likely to date to the post-Conquest period. Conversely there may be little archaeological evidence from the smaller towns, and even some of the larger ones. For the smaller towns there has both been a lack of realisation of the importance of work in these centres, as highlighted by Dyer, and a lack of opportunity since the larger scale developments have tended to be restricted to the more major towns.

What are the strengths and weaknesses of the different approaches? This research has demonstrated how landscape analysis gives an overview of the town in its setting. It allows assessment of details such as changes in road alignment which often arise as a result of the foundation of new towns or of bridges replacing fords or causeways at entry points into a town. In addition it allows comparison of the settings of towns where aspects such as location at the confluence of rivers can be recognised and assessed. The contribution of documentary evidence is governed by two factors. The first is the availability of sources and the second is the extent to which sources have been analysed and published, given that it is generally beyond the resources of the majority of town studies to go back to detailed primary documentary sources. Where this has been possible, such as Keene's work at Winchester, the results have been of immense value but few towns have such a wide range of sources available nor where it might be possible have they been able to harness the resources to do so. Nevertheless easily accessible resources such as Domesday Book can often tell us a great deal about town layout from the simple confirmation that there was a church in the settlement by the time of the Conquest (although the lack of mention of a church or priest cannot be taken to mean that there was not one in existence at the time) to more detailed references, most prevalent for the larger towns, to aspects such as the planting of a new quarter by the Norman overlords, the existence of a castle, or the recording of 'waste' houses suggesting disruption at the time of the Conquest.

Town-plan analysis could be regarded as a more detailed form of landscape analysis carried out within the envelope of a town's extent, and indeed that is the case for aspects such as the deflections of roads and streets within the town itself as demonstrated at Northampton by the insertion of a new north-south route (Fig 5.6D) in the post-Conquest period consequent upon the building of the south bridge (5.6C). Around the same time the old north-south route through the town (Fig 5.6L-N) was blocked by the building of St Andrew's Priory. Town-plan

analysis also includes, however, the approach pioneered by Conzen of looking at plot patterns within the street parcels revealed by historic mapping. In the same way that field boundaries and alignments outside the town can reveal earlier routes, he proposed that the plotting of boundaries can reveal earlier plan layouts and phases of growth and contraction. My testing of plot boundaries delineated from Victorian mapping against excavation data has largely vindicated his approach. A frustration with town-plan analysis is that although it is possible to suggest a sequence in which a series of planning events take place these cannot be confirmed, or definitively dated unless there is archaeological or, more rarely, documentary evidence available. From this point of view Lilley and Dean's recognition that alternative hypotheses can be put forward for the early development of medieval Swansea from the same evidence is a valuable contribution and ensures that future work can be concentrated upon proving or disproving both hypotheses.[597]

Archaeological evidence perhaps holds out the hope of the most detailed analysis. In practice, however, the areas which we would most like to investigate in order to answer questions of origins or growth or topographical nature may not be available for investigation or may have been destroyed or extensively damaged by later development. The prevalence of later cellarage along street frontages or the rarity of opportunities to investigate streets themselves are cases in point. Nevertheless where there has been the opportunity for meaningful archaeological intervention we can divide the results into two categories: work which has added to, verified, or denied, hypotheses from other methodologies; and work which has offered new interpretations. If we look at Northampton, as mentioned above, archaeological work has demonstrated many of the plot boundaries shown on the Victorian maps, and in some cases surviving down to the present day, do date back to the medieval period, supporting Conzen's hypothesis regarding the antiquity of may of the boundaries seen on the historic mapping. However, whereas it is often suggested that these boundaries date back to the late Saxon period, based largely on the findings at Coppergate, York, those investigated at Northampton are all of post-Conquest date. Similarly whereas it might have been assumed that the minor streets in the late Saxon town dated back to this period the evidence from St Peter's Street and Woolmonger Street indicated that these too were laid out in the post-Conquest period.

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[597] Lilley and Dean 2015, 284-88

Another noticeable feature is the widening of streets since medieval times so that even where frontages are uncellared only the back of buildings or in some cases only the yards behind are available for excavation. Hence the best results are obtained in the cases where whole streets are closed down and re-developed, as at St Peter's Street and Woolmonger Street. One case where completely new evidence has been provided by excavation are the middle Saxon elite centre which was almost entirely unanticipated (apart from prescient remarks about the place name *Hamtun*). This is a case where there was an opportunity for excavation in the precise area where the most important evidence was located, and policy at the time allowed excavation well-ahead of development rather than having to wait for specific development schemes in the relevant areas which would have brought more time pressure on sites which needed careful handling due to the ephemeral nature of the evidence.

## Wider implications of this research

What are the lessons to be learnt from this thesis? The most obvious one is the value of using a combination of techniques to come to as close an explanation as possible of the topography, origins and development of medieval towns. As a corollary of this, and given the quantity and disparate nature of the evidence, the use of GIS is an essential element, not only as a means of storing and displaying data but as an aid to thought and analysis.

It should also be recognised that the process of studying the origins and development of a town is an iterative one which will never be completed; even as intensively studied a settlement as Winchester still has many basic questions to be answered as Biddle has recently emphasised:

> The work carried out under these different arrangements over the last 70 years forms the rich material upon which this Urban Archaeology Assessment is based….It might perhaps seem that we know an enormous amount about the origin and development of Winchester over the last two thousand years, so much indeed that there is very little need to go on digging…as each and every development site comes on stream

> Nothing could be further from the truth. At last we now have a base on which to ask questions which could not have been posed 60 years ago.[598]

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[598] Biddle, Foreword, in Ottaway 2017

Accordingly as each new piece of information comes in it needs to be examined not only for its own narrow intrinsic interest but also as to whether it adds to or alters previous opinions and interpretations. The dangers of relying on earlier interpretations without checking whether more recent work has overtaken them has been highlighted by Ayers who pointed out that Carter's tentative model for the origins and development of Norwich in his pioneering article of 1978, designed to inform a research strategy for a major programme of archaeological research which has refined, and in some cases overturned, his initial suggestions, was still being used without qualification despite the fact that it was the catalyst for work which had overturned much of the original model. Hence a publication of 2005 shows a putative pre-Conquest defensive line whose existence was disproved in the late 1970s.[599]

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[599] Ayers 2011, 63

# Chapter 7: Conclusions

English medieval towns have been characterised in the past as separate entities to the surrounding countryside: 'non-feudal islands in the feudal seas'.[600] Nowadays they are accepted as playing a central role in medieval society and economy. Hence, it is vital to understand their origins and how they were shaped and modified, a study that relies on analysis of their topography. Topographic study of towns has been claimed by researchers from a wide range of disciplines, especially historians, geographers and archaeologists. However, this has led on occasions to debate in isolation in which techniques and approaches have been conducted with inadequate reference to other disciplines.[601] The aim of this thesis was to identify the various techniques most commonly used across these disciplines in the analysis of the topography of English medieval towns, particularly those employed in assessing their origins, growth and development (and in some cases lack of development or shrinkage); to assess their effectiveness and their limitations; and to recommend ways forward in urban topographical studies. I identified four broad categories: landscape analysis; documentary evidence; town-plan analysis; and archaeological evidence (although I did recognise that there was a degree of overlap between all of them). I used a number of case studies of towns to examine each methodology separately to identify what pieces of knowledge or hypotheses are due to one technique or another and to evaluate to what extent one technique can be used to question or amplify another. The case studies were deliberately chosen to represent a range of town types comprising: a small, unchartered town (Malpas); medium-sized 'new town' foundations (Frodsham, Macclesfield); a primarily industrial town (Middlewich); and a county town which was for a time one of the foremost towns in England (Northampton).

Of the four techniques archaeological excavation offers the greatest potential for reconstructing urban topography and also for validating hypotheses from the other techniques such as the elucidation of the date of boundaries defined by town-plan analysis. In practice, however, it is rarely possible to excavate more than a small proportion of a medieval town, and indeed many of the smaller towns have received only a negligible amount of excavation.

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[600] Postan 1972, 212

[601] See Chapter 2 for remarks by Keene 's remarks pages 00-00 and discussions of publications by Clarke *et al* (2010), page 00, and Swanson (1999), page 00

Accordingly I have emphasised the value of using the four techniques in combination, tied together by the use of GIS. GIS was central to my work in delineating, storing, analysing and illustrating the data. Indeed without GIS it would have been difficult, if not impossible, to carry out a project of this nature where it was necessary to combine and compare large amounts of spatial data from disparate sources. While the use of GIS in urban studies is not new, desktop GIS systems have now reached a stage where they can be employed by non-specialists and routinely embedded in such studies by a single individual.

My discussion of the Northampton evidence and division into 'higher level units' demonstrates how the four techniques can be brought together to make a coherent narrative while also making clear which piece of evidence or hypothesis is reliant upon which particular technique, although of course there are 'blurred edges' between the different techniques – a place name can be regarded as documentary evidence but, the analysis of the place name Malpas and its earlier name of Depenbech demonstrates that it has implications for landscape analysis also. Further, I was able to use the relatively large amount of excavation data from Northampton to identify medieval property boundaries and to compare these with plot boundaries delineated from Victorian Ordnance Survey mapping. This is important because the detailed town-plan analysis technique developed by Conzen and his successors relies on the proposition that 'strong' boundaries identified on the Victorian mapping preserve medieval property boundaries and yet this premise has not been tested previously against excavation evidence.[602] As a result, Schofield and Vince have warned against simply assuming that properties identified on 19th century maps, or indeed surviving down to the present day, necessarily preserve medieval boundaries and this is certainly a valid point of view.[603] The relationship cannot be assumed, it must be proved, and GIS offers a comprehensive and straightforward to do so. The evidence from Northampton showed that the majority, though not all, of the boundaries plotted from the excavation data did date back to the medieval period, between the 12th-15th centuries. Accordingly my research indicates that provided care is taken to remove obviously later boundaries a plot of the remaining boundaries can be used in suggesting medieval plan layout.

[602] Conzen 1968; Baker and Slater 1992; Lilley 2000a
[603] Schofield and Vince 2003, 90

The limited archaeological evidence from Cheshire means that we are more reliant upon the non-invasive techniques to understand their topographical evolution. A number of important themes can nevertheless be identified: Cheshire towns, as elsewhere, are normally located at places which are already important estate centres; at least one example of a complete relocation of a settlement can be identified; and towns founded by the same lord can exhibit completely different plan characteristics, suggesting their design, as well as being fitted to its setting and pre-existing features, was in the hands of 'designers' or agents rather than the lords themselves. Thus, even in the absence of sound archaeological data, coherent analysis can be carried out, which can of course be tested should opportunities for excavation arise.

The study of the topography of medieval towns is important because it provides evidence for the origins, growth and development of towns which is generally lacking from documentary sources. Archaeological and historical research is being hit by a triple 'whammy' of the effects of policy of austerity leading to loss of jobs, funding and expertise; the imminent 'Brexit' from the EU which has led to a concern that provisions for the historic environment encapsulated in EU legislation and guidance may not be repeated in national legislation; and, most recently, by the effects of the coronavirus pandemic on the economy. In these circumstances the importance of clear and verifiable analyses of town origins and growth to inform strategies for future work is now more important than ever. Otherwise there is a risk, for archaeological evidence at least, that information will be lost because its importance is not realised. This study offers a clear and sustainable path to providing a means to generate detailed hypothetical topographical models of England's historic towns and cities into which information from archaeological and other interventions can be added.

The way forward for urban topographical studies is continuing and increased cross-fertilisation and co-operation between the various disciplines involved. Historical geographers must recognise the importance of archaeology in validating their hypotheses, archaeologists should recognise the importance of looking for, and dating, boundaries both in choosing sites and in excavation strategies, and historians should be aware of the importance of topographical evidence for their studies. Through working together, researchers in these disciplines can demonstrate that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts.

# Appendix 1: Northampton - division into plan units from non-invasive sources

## Introduction

Where I discuss particular features or highlight particular streets I have indicated these on the accompanying maps with a letter. Figures in red on the illustrations are excavation sites mentioned in Appendix 2: Archaeological evidence. The location of other streets mentioned may be found on Fig 5.1.

The town defences present a particular problem in dividing the town into plan units. If we discuss each portion within the plan unit within which it occurs this creates a lot of repetition and makes it difficult to discuss the evidence for their location and date as a whole. On the other hand if we regard them as separate plan units it creates problems in discussing the subsequent use of an area which has contained defences which have been demolished. Accordingly I have decided to discuss the defensive lines separately before discussing the plan units but where a defensive line appears within a plan unit this will be highlighted.

## Defences

The defensive lines comprise:

- Late Saxon defences (DL1)
- Medieval defences (DL2)

### DL1: Late Saxon defensive line

In addition to discussing the early routes into Northampton Frank Lee, in his 1953 article, was the first person to point out a concentric ring of streets running around the north and east sides of Northampton and suggested that these fossilised the defences of the late Saxon town. Fig 5.40 shows his hypothesised defences: an inner line is marked by Bath Street (A), Silver Street (B), College Street (C) and Kingswell Street (D) and an outer line by Scarletwell Street (E), Bearward Street (F), Drapery (G) and Bridge Street (H). Lee suggested that from towards the bottom of Bridge Street the defences ran in a westerly direction to a point at the bottom of Tanner Street (I) where a mill stream fed into the Northern Arm of the River Nene. He does

not mark a defensive line on the west side of the town, suggesting that the mill stream and the Northern Arm of the river Nene formed a sufficient barrier on this side. Subsequent writers have largely followed Lee but suggested that the defences continued on the west side running inside the line of the watercourses. These defences would have enclosed an area of around 25ha.[604] There would have been gates to the north, west and east, and also, if Lee's hypothesis that there was an early route across the river entering the late Saxon town at the bottom of Horseshoe Street (J) is accepted, to the south. In addition I have suggested that there was an earlier crossing point of the river from the south entering the town at the bottom of Tanner Street (I), passing Mervyn's mill (K).[605]

Lee's hypothesis has been widely accepted. Welsh has been the only person to seriously challenge his interpretation of the double-row of streets as fossilising a defensive line.[606] His arguments are not particularly convincing, however, especially given that there are a large number of parallels for such a fossilised pattern elsewhere, such as Nottingham, Hereford and Oxford whose defences cover a similar area as those at Northampton.[607] More seriously a number of other writers, while accepting Lee's interpretation, have suggested a different, earlier, date for the defences. Haslam and, more recently, Bassett have suggested that Northampton was part of a system of 8th- or early 9th-century Mercian defended settlements, while Blair has proposed that the 'Lee line' might define a very large example of the sort of monastic enclosure that he postulates for Cheddar.[608] For the moment I have continued to use the term 'late Saxon' for these suggested defences. I shall consider the date of their inception in more detail when the archaeological evidence is added. The date of their disuse is also uncertain. A charter of Simon de Senlis I, of late 11th to early 12th century date, refers to '*hospites manentes extra vetus fossatum*' which may suggest that these defences were no longer in use by this date.[609] It may be that they were deliberately slighted soon after the

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[604] I shall discuss the issue of whether there were defences on the west side in the excavation section

[605] For suggestions of an early mill on the later Mervyn's mill site see Chapter 5: HLU2 and for discussion of a possible early crossing point see Chapter 5: Early routes into Northampton

[606] Welsh 1996-7

[607] Knight *et al* 2012 for Nottingham; Thomas and Boucher (eds) 2002 for Hereford; Dodd (ed) 2003, 21 for Oxford

[608] Haslam 1987, 84; Bassett 2007, 80; Blair 1996, 98-100; see Appendix 2: Archaeological Evidence DL1 for excavation dating relating to this

[609] 'Guests staying outside the old ditch'

Conquest so that the defences could not be used against the Norman overlords at a time when their hold upon the kingdom was precarious.

## DL2: Medieval Defences

Tradition ascribes the building of the post-Conquest town walls to Simon de Senlis I in the late 11th to early 12th centuries. This may coincide with the demise of the late Saxon defences but we cannot be sure that the two events coincided. A further charter of Simon de Senlis I, to St Andrew's Priory, refers to '*terra…a fossa eorum usque ad fossam burgi*'.[610] This description would best fit a new defensive line although we cannot rule out the *fossam burgi* relating to the late Saxon defences.[611] If it is describing the new defensive line the use of the term *fossa* implies earthwork defences rather than a stone wall at this date, nor can we be absolutely sure that these defences covered the entire area of the later defences. By the mid-12th century we have better evidence for the existence of a town wall for a grant by Simon de Senlis II to the priory refers to rent they had lost *propter murum et ballium quibus villa clauditur*.[612] If this refers to a stone wall around the complete circuit it would be an early date for such a massive undertaking - the post-Conquest defences at Norwich were commenced in 1253 but work on a masonry wall is not thought to have begun until 1297, and the complete circuit was not finished until 1344.[613] Given Northampton's burgeoning importance in the 12th century a date for the walling of the town at this time is likely, however. There are murage grants of 1224, 1252 and 1301 but these are thought likely to relate to repairs and improvements rather than construction of the wall.[614]

The defences were apparently a formidable obstacle; in 1277-8 they were reported as being wide enough for six persons to walk abreast.[615] Given, however, that there is evidence that the town defences on the south-west side were being compromised by the 13th century it is possible that they were more massive on the north and east sides where there was no protection from the river and where they would have served to impress travellers entering the

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[610] 'Land from their ditch [the monks of St Andrew's Priory] as far as the town ditch'
[611] RCHM(E) 1985, 51-52
[612] 'On account of the wall and bailey with which the town is enclosed'. Williams (2014, 23) suggests that *ballium* may be a scribal error for *vallum* (ditch) which would make more sense of the reference
[613] Ayers 2003, 87
[614] RCHM 1985, microfiche, Northampton Site 7, 328
[615] Brown 1915-16, 88

town from these directions. There were major gates on the roads leading out to the north, east, south and west, of which the East Gate was described as being particularly fine. In addition there was a gate at the bottom of Derngate, as well as postern gates at the bottom of Swan Street, by Mervyns mill and a 'postern de Lurteborn' whose location is unknown but probably lay on the north side of the town.[616]

The area covered by the fully-developed town wall is reasonably clear (Fig 5.56). Speed's map of 1610 shows the wall surviving on the north and east sides of the town and he also comments that 'This town…is walled about strong and high except to the west which is defended by a river parted into many streams', implying the existence of defences on the south and there is plentiful documentary evidence for the existence of defences on this side of the town.[617] The hundred rolls of 1274-5, an inquiry instigated by Edward I into the usurpation of royal rights tell us that '…John Apotecarius, while he was mayor of Northampton ten years ago, appropriated from the ditch of the king [land] twelve feet in width extending from the west gate of Northampton up to the dam of Mervyn's mill (*M'thenesmylnedam*).[618] This reference does also indicate, however, that the defences were being compromised already by this date – all the more surprising since Northampton was at the centre of the struggle between Henry III and the de Montfort family from 1264-5.[619] On the west side of the town the castle defences would have provided protection for much of its length and there can be little doubt that there would have been defences between the northern end of the castle defences and the precinct boundary wall of St Andrew's Priory which acted as the town defences at its northern end, despite Speed's suggestion that it was protected merely by the river. The walls were ordered to be pulled down in 1662 as Northampton had been a strong supporter of the parliamentary side in the Civil War so that nothing remains of them today.

The medieval town walls encompass a massive area of around 100ha. Only London, Lincoln and Norwich are of a larger size and the former two re-use parts of a Roman circuit, while, as we have seen, the latter's walls are later in date, construction work not starting until the mid-

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[616] RCHM(E) 1985, microfiche, Northampton Site 7, 329
[617] Speed 1676, 55
[618] Williams 2014, 334-354, explains the background to the inquiry and gives a translation from which this reference (13.6), and further ones below, are taken. See Fig 5.40 for circuit between west gate and Mervyn's mill
[619] Cam 1930, 3

13<sup>th</sup> century.[620] Otherwise only York is of a similar size but again re-uses much of its Roman circuit. Coventry's walls also enclose a large area, around 75ha; building of the town wall there did not commence here until the mid 14<sup>th</sup> century, however, and was not completed until the second quarter of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.[621]

There is plentiful evidence that there was originally an intra-mural road running around most if not all of the town wall, apart from at the west where it adjoins the castle and to the north where it runs around the perimeter of St Andrew's Priory (Fig 5.56). If we start from the North Gate there is an intra-mural road running from here to the Derngate shown clearly on the 17<sup>th</sup> century maps onwards (A).[622] This road runs past the Whitefriars and survived an attempt by the friars living there to close it off. In 1278 they applied to the King for permission to enclose that portion of the walls adjoining their property which would have effectively blocked the road now known as the Upper Mounts. A jury was summoned to comment upon their request and reported that it would be injurious to the town and accordingly their request was refused. It is worth quoting their reply as it gives a number of valuable details as to the nature of the wall and its uses:

> The jurors declare that it would be very prejudicial and harmful to the town of Northampton if the walls were enclosed, and the crenelles built up, for the following reasons: That the burgesses of the town, and especially the sick, were often accustomed to walk on the walls, from one gate to another, to take the air, and that if part of the walls were enclosed they would no longer be able to take exercise as they were wont. In like manner in winter, instead of walking on the walls, they would be compelled to take the muddy and noisome way between the town walls and the Friary buildings. Furthermore they reported that it would also be dangerous because the watchmen who watch by night in Northampton, walk along the walls, and through the crenelles watch for malefactors entering or coming out of the town: and if the walls were enclosed, and the crenelles were stopped up, as was proposed by the Friars, no one in future would be able to lie in wait for malefactors on that side of the Town, nor to hinder their evil deeds or take precautions as they ought, and were wont to do.[623]

The remark about the 'muddy and noisome' state of the lane between the friary and the town walls is of interest as well as the value attached to the town walls.

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[620] See plans in Creighton and Higham 2005, 23-25
[621] Gooder 1971
[622] The letters refer to locations marked on Fig 5.56
[623] Serjeantson 1909-10, 148

No intra-mural wall is shown over the remainder of the area, but we can suggest that one existed for the whole length of the southern half of the circuit between the Derngate and the west gate. The evidence comes again from the Hundred Rolls of 1274-5.[624] There are complaints of the blocking of a 'common way' from Cowgate to the south gate (13.14; B), from south gate to Mervyn's mill postern (13.15; C) and, as discussed above, from Mervyn's mill postern to the west gate (13.16; D). 13.14 – 13.16 move from east to west, the preceding entry (13.13; E) refers to a blocked common way from 'the gate which is called Dernegate up to the court of Dandelin'. As this immediately precedes entries running from the 'Cowgate' westwards it is most likely that this refers to a way coming from Derngate to Cowgate. This usefully gives us a location for house of the Friars of the Sack as they are named as one of the parties responsible for the blocking of the lane. There are two further entries mentioning blocking of common ways: one 'from the court of William le Rot' up to the head of the way that is called Gyselgot' (13.12) and one from 'Mount Sorrel up to the postern de Lurteborn' (13.20); their location is uncertain.

## Plan Units

If we turn to look at the detailed plan units I have defined a total of 19 units looking, as with the Cheshire case studies, for areas 'of morphological unity', using particularly my reconstruction of the street pattern and plot boundaries. Fifteen of the plan units lie within the medieval town walls and four outside (Fig A1.1). I have further sub-divided three of the plan units into sub-units (Plan Units IX, X, XIII). Plan Units I-IV lie within the core area of the late Saxon town while the remaining plan units largely lie outside the anticipated area of late Saxon settlement, or at least outside its core area. Hence we can expect large parts of the remaining plan units to have formed part of the town's fields in the late Saxon period and consequently we should be aware that elements of these may have influenced later development patterns.

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[624] The hundred rolls text for Northampton is included in Williams 2014, 341-54. The entry numbers (13.14 etc) are taken from his version of the text

**Plan Unit I**

This area is bounded by the river Nene to the west and south, Horseshoe Street (A) to the east and Marefair (B) to the north (Fig A1.2). As discussed above the late Saxon and Medieval defences run close by the river in the south-west portion of the area. It is defined as a separate plan unit as the street pattern is markedly irregular when compared to other areas within the town. It is difficult to discern any true pattern in the plot boundaries, except to say that there is a denser arrangement of plots fronting on to Marefair than to those fronting on to the streets behind. It is also noticeable that the boundaries in the south-west portion of the area run through the defences down to the river suggesting that they post-date their disuse. As discussed above there is evidence that a road running around the inside of the defences in this area was blocked and that the defences themselves fell into disuse as early as the 13th century.[625]

There are a number of indicators that this area formed the original core of the settlement at Northampton. An irregular street pattern is often an indicator of an early, pre-urban, nucleus, while the churches of St Peter (C) and St Gregory (D) have been identified as middle Saxon foundations. If we look in detail at the street pattern there are a number of further features which may relate to an early nucleus. One noticeable feature is a route leading down from St Peter's church to the river and the site of Mervyn's mill (Tanner Street/Narrow Toe Lane: E). I have suggested that this may have been an early route into the town and that there may have been an Anglo-Saxon predecessor to Mervyn's mill (F).

In addition Horseshoe Street is noticeably wider at its southern end as shown on maps from the Noble and Butlin map of 1746 onwards. Does this indicate that this was an area used for marketing? If so it may date back to the late Saxon period if we are correct in suggesting that the late Saxon entrance into the town from the south came up this street. The narrowing on the street further to the north could either indicate this area was not part of the market area or may be due to properties extending their frontages into the street line in an area which would have formed a central part of the late Saxon town. A further market area appears to have lain at the

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[625] DL2 above

bottom of Tanner Street, as a 'close beside Marlyn's mill in 'Netesmarkett' is referred to in 1545.[626]

There is also evidence that the earliest Guildhall (G) lay within this plan unit at the junction of Horseshoe Street/Horsemarket and Marefair/Gold Street, adjacent to the chapel of St Mary Magdalen. In addition there was a hermitage by the west bridge (H); a common location for these institutions.[627]

**Plan Unit II**

This area is formed by the line of the late Saxon defences to the north, the river Nene to the west, Horsemarket ((I) to the east and Marefair to the south (Fig A1.2). The major topographical feature in this plan unit is Northampton Castle (J) which occupies its western third. The castle lies beside the Northern Arm of the river Nene overlooking the west bridge, one of the principal routes into the town. Its construction would have entailed the destruction of earlier settlement over an area of *c*6ha, around 24% of the late Saxon town.

If we look at the street pattern it shows a greater degree of rectilinearity than Plan Unit I with Quart Pot Lane (K) and Pike Lane (L) running off at right angles to Marefair, and Castle Street (M) at right angles to Horsemarket. Bath Street (N) and Scarletwell Street (O) run on the same line as Castle Street and form intra-mural and extra-mural roads running around the late Saxon defences. There is no sign of a rigid grid plan, however, and the streets are not aligned with streets in the adjoining plan units. The one exception to this may be Quart Plot Lane which does share a similar alignment to Tanner Street/Narrow Toe Lane in Plan Unit I and may form part of an early route connected with the middle Saxon settlement at Northampton. The other feature which may date back to the earliest settlement is St Mary's church (P) which lies on the west side of Quart Pot Lane. Its foundation date is unknown but I have suggested that this church too may have originated in the middle Saxon period. [628]

If we look at the plot boundaries within the area we can see a relatively built-up pattern along Marefair and the southern end of Horsemarket, with a less dense pattern away from the main

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[626] Gairdner and Brodie (eds) 1905, 308. 'Netesmarkett = cattle market
[627] See Fig 5.21 and Chapter 5: Major medieval institutions
[628] See Chapter 5: HLU2

streets, as we might expect. Once filled in, the area between the double row of streets was also available for occupation. The easternmost portion of the defences within this plan unit, between Mayorhold (Q) and Upper Cross Street (R), is shown as built up on Speed's map and the plot of plot boundaries (S) here suggest an intensively settled area of small properties fronting on to both Scarletwell Street and Bath Street with a central boundary line.

**Plan Unit III**

This area is bounded by Horseshoe Street to the west, Gold Street to the north, Bridge Street to the east and the medieval town walls to the south (Fig A1.3). There was originally an internal road running around the circuit of the medieval defences in this area which was enclosed in the late 13th century (Fig 5.56). The line of the late Saxon defences in this area is uncertain but I have taken it as running on along a boundary line shown on Noble and Butlin's map of 1746, running from the bottom of Horseshoe Lane east to a kink in the line of Kingswell Street (A).

The most noticeable feature in the street plan is Woolmonger Street which runs in a south-west to north-east alignment, markedly different to the general north-south and east-west trends in the majority of the town (B). Lee noted its apparent alignment with Abington Street and suggested that they originally formed part of a road running to his suggested late Saxon river crossing at the bottom of Horseshoe Street.[629]

If we look at the plot boundaries there is a reasonably dense pattern of properties set at right angles to Gold Street (C) with further properties set at right angles to Woolmonger Street. A division, or plan seam, between the two sets of properties can be discerned at their western end but towards the east they appear to run through from one street to another albeit with a curve as they approach Woolmonger Street. There are also short properties fronting on to Horseshoe Street and at the bottom end of Bridge Street. Once the late Saxon defences were removed narrow properties were built fronting on to Bridge Street, the major post-Conquest north-south route, and a lane, Frances Jetty (D), was inserted to give access from Kingswell Street to Bridge Street through the former defensive line.

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[629] Lee 1953, 174; but see excavation evidence refuting this suggestion - Appendix 2: Plan Unit III below

In the post-Conquest period the most significant event was the insertion of the Augustinian Friary into the south-east corner of this area. Its general area is marked on the plan (E) although its precinct cannot be precisely defined. Serjeantson says that the friary was founded in 1323 when a 'messuage' in Bridge Street was given to the Austin Friars by John Longeville; Cox, however, believed that this was a refoundation as he had 'met with several references to an Augustinian friary in the south of the town in Northampton deeds between 1275 and 1290'.[630] By 1329 there were 21 friars living in the monastery. Thereafter it continued to grow with further extensive property being granted or purchased throughout the 14th century before it was dissolved in 1538.[631]

The mention of messuages acquired by the friary indicates that the street frontage was already built up before the foundation of the friary, perhaps not surprisingly as Bridge Street was a major route. One of the properties granted to the friary in 1330 is described as 108 feet long and 44 feet broad.[632] The back boundary of the plots defined in this area towards the bottom of the west side of Bridge Street (F) measure between 31.5m – 34.5m (103 – 113 feet) showing a good correspondence to the documentary reference.

The Ministers' accounts when the friary was dissolved speak of '…the late Priory (*sic*) with all buildings, gardens, orchards and waste ground pertaining to the same: also a pasture there called 'le olde orchard' containing by estimation 2 acres, one garden there called 'le newe orchard' containing one rood of land and four separate gardens, containing…half an acre of land between them'.[633] Hence the Friary had obtained a great deal of land in addition to messuages along the Bridge Street frontage and had perhaps eventually acquired most of the land between Bridge Street and Horseshoe Street behind the back boundaries of the properties fronting on to the south side of Woolmonger Street. This reference also reminds us that a medieval town, especially one with a walled area as large as Northampton, would not be fully built up but would contain elements such as gardens, orchards and 'waste ground'.

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[630] Serjeantson 1911-12 gives a detailed history of the friary, including its gradual acquisition of property to extend its precinct; Cox 1898, 522
[631] Serjeantson 1911-12, 72-74
[632] Serjeantson 1911-12, 72
[633] Serjeantson 1911-12, 80

**Plan Unit IV**

This unit comprises the area north of Gold Street and east of Horsemarket; the late Saxon defences form its northern and eastern boundaries (Fig A1.3). Properties along the north side of Gold Street are generally aligned at right angles to the street. Some boundaries run all the way back to St Katherine's Street which lies parallel to Gold Street, around 67m (220 feet) to the north, and may have originated as a back lane to these properties or, given the distance between them, possibly it was always intended that there should be properties fronting on to both streets.

As elsewhere within the town once the late Saxon defences were disused and the ditch had been backfilled properties were laid out and at least two through routes, Bradshaw Street (H) and Jeyes Jetty (I), were punched through to provide access from the late Saxon core to the market area.

Noticeable also in this area is the way in which properties fronting on to Drapery (J) 'bulge' forward suggesting that they have encroached on to the street in order to take advantage of marketing opportunities here (Fig A1.4). Was a row of shops added to the frontages? There is an entry in the 1274-5 Hundred Rolls which may relate to this, complaining that John le Comber built a shop in the royal way opposite Butchers Row 'to the harm to the whole community of Northampton…'.[634]

If we look at ecclesiastical institutions in this area three are known. The site of St Katherine's Chapel (K) lay between King Street and St Katherine's Street. St Katherine's chapel in the 'new cemetery' is first recorded in 1471 but it may date back to several centuries earlier as the new cemetery is mentioned in a number of 13th century documents.[635] Intriguingly the whole block between Horsemarket to the west, King Street to the north, College Street to the east and St Katherine's Street to the south is shown as walled on Speed's map as though it formed a single ecclesiastical precinct (Fig A1.4 top). Adjacent lay the College of All Saints (L), founded as a house in which the guild chaplains of All Saints could live together under a common rule. It was situated on the west side of College Street, probably within the enclosed

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[634] Williams 2014, 347, 13.18
[635] RCHM(E) 1985, microfiche, Northampton Site 30, 380-81

block around St Katherine's chapel and the new cemetery as in 1503 the chapel is said to be next to the college.[636] The college was closed at the reformation.

The third ecclesiastical institution was the Blackfriars (N). Although previously thought to be located towards the south-west corner of this sub-unit, Welsh has demonstrated that it lay further north towards Silver Street.[637] The friary was founded $c$1230 and continued to acquire land to extend its site throughout the 13th-14th centuries so that its site may have comprised much of the area between King Street and Silver Street, and perhaps further south down to Gold Street.[638] In the Hundred Rolls of 1274-5 the friars were said to have enclosed 'a common way six feet in width from the new cemetery up to St Martin's Street', demonstrating that yet another street has been lost from Northampton's medieval street pattern.[639]

A further, and more rare, medieval institutional building within this plan unit was a Jewish Synagogue (O), located in the area of Silver Street and Bearward Street, surrounded by the houses of the town's Jewish community.[640] Their location in this area is perhaps surprising as elsewhere Jewry tended to be located close to seats of authority, such as castles, for their protection, as at Norwich.[641] Possibly its location here was due to its siting close to the commercial heart of the post-Conquest town. During disturbances within the town in 1264 the Jews were forced to flee to the castle.[642] Not long after, in 1290, the entire Jewish community was expelled from England.

I have included the Mayorhold (P) within this plan unit, although it could equally be discussed under Plan Units I or IV. It comprises a rectangular area 100m north-south by 35m east-west. It is an obvious market area but the question is at what date and for how long? There is no definite answer to either question. Market areas at the gates of Anglo-Saxon towns are a relatively common feature.[643] In this case the market area lies both within and outside the gates. It is possible that the market area was extended to encompass the area

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[636] Serjeantson and Longden 1913, 377
[637] Welsh 1996-7, 175
[638] Serjeantson 1911-12
[639] Hundred Rolls 1274-5, see Williams 2014, 346, 13.2. St Martin's Street is an early name for Horsemarket.
[640] Williams 2014, 51, 171, 173, 176, 189, 191-92
[641] Ayers 2003, 60-65
[642] Williams 2014, 63
[643] e.g. Winchester: Biddle and Keene 1976, 285, Ottaway 2017, 219

within the late Saxon defences after they were removed, although equally there is no reason why marketing could not take place immediately within the gates as no permanent buildings were required. The earliest reference I can find to the place name is 1545 when 'le Marehole' is recorded.[644] This may indicate that by this time the area was part of the horse market recorded in the area to the south, but it may have acted as a more general market area at an earlier date.[645]

**Plan Unit V**

This area lies immediately outside the late Saxon defences which form its southern boundary. The medieval town walls and the precinct of St Andrew's Priory (A) form its north and west boundaries while Sheep Street (B) and Regent Square (C) form its east boundary (Fig A1.5). Plan Unit V illustrates the problem of interpreting the morphological development of a large town with a long history. A number of different phases of development can be suggested but none of them can be given a precise date:

Phase 1

Phase 1 (Fig A1.6) is composed of elements considered to pre-date the building of the medieval town wall.

They comprise:

- St Andrew's Street (D) which runs north from the Mayorhold market place (E) at the north gate of the late Saxon defences. This street is likely to be the start of the original route to Leicester before it was blocked off by the building of St Andrew's Priory.[646]
- The former road to Kettering (F) whose line is shown on the Marcus Pierce map of 1632 running through the town fields directly towards the Mayorhold. It was blocked off by the building of the medieval town wall.

Phase 2

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[644] Gairdner and Brodie (eds) 1905, 309-10
[645] See Plan Unit II above and Plan Unit V below for discussion of Henry Lee's comments about the Mayorhold area
[646] See fig 5.6 and Early routes into Northampton above

Phase 2 (Fig A1.7) comprises a large number of elements which could arguably be divided into more than one phase but it is difficult to decide which element would come first so it is better to discuss them as a single phase.

They are composed of:

- The building of the Medieval town wall (G). This blocked off the former road to Kettering which was replaced by a new route leading out from the east gate of the medieval town.
- The insertion of St Andrew's Priory (A) into the northern corner of the medieval town wall
- The construction of Sheep Street (B) which replaced St Andrew's Street as the main road to Leicester.
- A number of streets and lanes forming a rectilinear pattern perhaps based upon the pre-existing St Andrew's Street (D). Lower Harding Street (H) runs parallel to St Andrew's Street 410 feet to its west and forms the eastern boundary of the priory for the upper part of its length. Pike Lane (I) and Grafton Street also form boundaries to the priory. In addition two narrow lanes connect Sheep Street to Mayorhold (Bull Head Lane (K)) and to St Andrew's Street (Narrow Lane (L)), and could also be seen as part of a rectilinear plan system. Was there an attempt by the priory to set up a planned settlement area outside its gates?

Phase 3

Phase 3 (Fig A1.7) comprises a number of elements which are eccentric to the north-south alignment:

- Broad Street (M) which runs from Mayorhold to the north gate of the medieval town. I have placed this in a separate phase because its line is eccentric to the rectilinear street pattern and particularly because it can be seen to cut through the easternmost portion of Narrow Lane.

- A market place at Regent Square (C) immediately inside the north gate of the medieval town walls.[647] I have assigned this to Phase 3 as Broad Street leads into it.
- Bell Barn Street (N) which also runs at an angle eccentric to the rectilinear layout; in this case its purpose is clear as it leads from St Andrew's Street to the priory gatehouse.

As discussed earlier it is difficult to put a date on the suggested phasing. Phase 1 comprises a period when the late Saxon defences were still in operation, perhaps the 10th century; Phase 2 includes elements such as the medieval town wall and St Andrew's Priory which are of late 11th – early 12th century date; Phase 3, and particularly the insertion of Broad Street, cannot be dated with any certainty, although given that the northern end of the town appears to have been quite lightly occupied from the later medieval period onward it may not date to much later than Phase 2.[648]

The major site in the area was St Andrew's Priory which occupied an area of 10ha, around, 50% of the total area of the plan unit and 10% of the medieval walled town, testimony to the importance of the priory, and of the church as a whole, in Northampton. The priory was founded by Simon de Senlis I in the late 11th century. Its original site is thought to have lain in Horsemarket, but it is likely to have moved to its extensive site here by c1100.

The number of marketing areas within the unit is notable. Regent Square is an obvious market place by the north gate of the medieval town. Did it replace the market at Mayorhold as the latter was no longer on the main road out to the north, with the Mayorhold downgraded to form part of the Horsemarket?[649]  In addition Sheep Street was perhaps the location of the *shepcheping* mentioned in the 13th century;[650] while, given its name and width Broad Street is likely to have also been laid out as a market area.

As regards property boundaries those to the east of St Andrew's Street run off at right angles to this street and then 'kink' towards Broad Street suggesting that they have been readjusted when the latter was constructed and there is a suggestion of a similar situation for the

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[647] Regent Square would not of course be its name in the medieval period but we do not know its earlier name. The Noble and Butlin map refers to the area by the north gate as 'North End'.
[648] See Plan Unit XIX below for discussion of the early demise of the northern suburb
[649] The Mayorhold is discussed under Plan Unit IV
[650] Williams 2014, 65

properties between Broad Street and Sheep Street also. The south-west corner of the plan unit does look to have been quite intensively settled as we might expect for an area lying close to the Market Square. Elsewhere, and especially on the western side, the impression given is that the area was quite lightly settled so that if there was an attempt to encourage settlement in this area it would appear to have met with little success.

As a corollary to the analysis of Plan Unit V a good example of the way in which the use of GIS with its ability to overlay maps and to focus upon a small area in detail is provided by the case of Regent Street and Narrow Lane. Previous attempts to map Northampton's historic street system based on the early mapping have wrongly shown Regent Street as part of the original street pattern.[651] It was only through overlaying the Noble and Butlin map of 1746 on top of the Roper and Cole map of 1847 that I realised that the lane shown on the Noble and Butlin map was not Regent Street but Narrow Lane (Fig A1.8).[652] Regent Street presumably dates to the period 1811-20 when the future George IV was acting as Prince Regent during the incapacity through mental illness of his father George III.[653]

**Plan Unit VI**

This is a small triangular unit comprising Sheep Street (A) and Regent Square to the west, the medieval defences to the north east and Church Lane (B) to the south east (Fig 6.9). The chief element within it is Holy Sepulchre church (C), one of the most important churches in Northampton. Its circular design is based on the church of Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem and it is thought to have been founded by Simon de Senlis I after his pilgrimage to the Holy Land *c*1100 but before his death *c*1113.[654] The curving line of the church boundary is of interest although there is no reason to think that it suggests an earlier date for a church on the site. It is perhaps likely that the church originally occupied all of the site within the plan unit but that parts of the area were then given over to settlement fronting especially on to the main streets. The properties fronting on to Sheep Street at the southern end of the plan unit appear to share a common back boundary with those in Plan Unit VII to the south at around 47m from the

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[651] e.g. Williams 1979, Fig 4; Foard 1995, Fig 1 and my own earlier plan published in Shaw 2005, Fig 2
[652] The lane is not given a name on the 1746 and 1847 plans but is called 'Narrow Lane' on the 1:500 mapping
[653] Wikipedia accessed 20/11/18
[654] ODNB Simon de Senlis I; RCHM(E) 1985, microfiche, Northampton Site 22, 353-61

frontage. Campbell Street (D) forms part of an intra-mural street within the medieval town walls.

**Plan Unit VII**

This is a rectangular area lying immediately north of the Market Square (E), east of Sheep Street, south of Church Lane and east of Newland (F) (Fig 6.9). Sheep Street follows a sinuous course suggesting it has been laid out respecting the line of earlier field boundaries.

The property boundaries show a fairly dense settlement pattern as we would expect in an area adjacent to the Market Square on one side and to the major north-south route through the town on the other. At the northern end there is boundary between properties fronting on to Sheep Street and those fronting on to Newland which continues the boundary seen at the southern end of Plan Unit VI. At the southern end of Plan Unit VII, however, there are long properties, around 98m deep, running back from the Market Square. Although we might expect the major properties to be fronting on to the Market Square or Sheep Street there is evidence of properties fronting on to Newland also. At its southern end there is a suggestion that smaller properties have been carved out of the back end of an original property fronting on to the Market Square.

**Plan Unit VIII**

This is a trapezoidal-shaped area north of Lady's Lane (G), east of Newland, south of Church Lane and west of Upper Mounts (H) (Fig 6.9). The latter formed part of the internal road inside the Medieval defences. This plan unit comprises the precinct of the Whitefriars, which had been founded by 1270 and was dissolved in 1538. Speed's map of 1610 clearly shows boundary walls on the south and east sides and we can assume that the whole precinct had at one time been enclosed (Fig A1.9).[655] The 17th and 18th century maps show a number of properties at the south-west corner of this plan unit and there are a number of shallow property boundaries with a back boundary around 95 feet from the Newland frontage. Are these post-dissolution properties or were there medieval properties within the friary precinct?

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[655] As discussed earlier Speed wrongly identifies the Whitefriars site as the Greyfriars

A court case of 1278 where the friars attempted to enclose the intra-mural lane within their property is discussed above.[656]

**Plan Unit IX**

This is a large plan unit comprising all the area between Newland and the Market Square to the west, Abington Street (A) to the south, the town wall to the east and Lady's Lane to the north (Fig A.10). I have defined it as a single plan-unit because Speed's map shows a wall around the area as though it had originally formed a precinct of some form (Fig A1.9). I have, however, divided it into four sub-units. It is pierced by two streets, Wood Street (B) and Wellington Street (C), although there is some doubt whether the latter is part of the medieval street system.[657] The plan unit as a whole will be considered first followed by a discussion of the sub-units (IXa-d). There are references to the area as *nova terra* (New Land) in the medieval period.[658] This has led to the suggestion that it was the area called *novus burgus* in the Domesday Survey but this is not necessarily the case. The term Newland or Newlands is commonly found in newly settled areas, especially in the 12th-13th centuries.[659] Otherwise our only dating evidence for the occupation of this area is the fact that St Michael's church was located within, or adjacent to, it and we know that this was in existence by the late 11th century.[660] Newland and the west side of the Market Square which form the western boundary of this area show a pronounced curve, as do Wood Street and Wellington Street to a lesser extent, suggesting, as with Sheep Street, that this area was laid out respecting the line of earlier field boundaries.[661]

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[656] See DL2 above

[657] The evidence for the inclusion of Wellington Street is contradictory. Speed's Map of 1610 shows two streets between the Market Square and the town wall but the Noble and Butlin map of 1746 shows only Wood Street (known at that time as Cock Lane). The Marcus Pierce map of 1632 is notably deficient in its showing of side roads but does show an opening for a road around the location of Wellington Street (but not for Wood Street) The Wood and Law map of 1847 shows both Wood Street and Wellington Street. I have followed Speed and Wood and Law and included it.

[658] Williams 2014, 170

[659] See Bond 1977 for discussion of Newlands in Pershore, Worcestershire

[660] Williams 2014, 22

[661] See plan unit VII above for Sheep Street

*Sub-unit IXa*

This sub-unit comprises the site of the precinct of the Greyfriars. The Franciscan friars came to Northampton in 1226 to a site outside the east gate of the town but soon after, *c*1236-39, moved to this intra-mural site. The exact extent of the friary precinct is not known but I have followed Williams in suggesting that its boundary is marked by an area of orchards shown on Noble and Butlin's map placing it to the south of Lady's Lane, to the west of Newland and east of Wood Street.[662] Its southern boundary lies behind properties fronting on to Newland to the west and Abington Street to the south. It is likely that the site of St Michael's church lay at the north-eastern corner of this sub-unit, although it is also possible that it lay on Lady's Lane by the Whitefriars precinct as a church-like building is shown here on Speed's map.[663]

*Sub-unit IXb*

This sub-unit comprises properties fronting on to the Market Square. They are large properties, the property known as the Peacock Hotel by the late 19th century being 27.5m wide and 76m in depth.

*Sub-unit IXc*

This sub-unit comprises properties fronting on to the north side of Abington Street. It must be admitted that the boundary between properties fronting on to the Market Square and those fronting on to Abington Street is an uncertain one and probably subject to minor changes over time. The properties are pierced around one third of the way along their length from the Market Square by Wood Street, formerly Whitefriars Lane, and around half-way by Wellington Street.

*Sub-unit IXd*

This sub-unit comprises the area behind the Abington Street properties running back to Lady's Lane as well as the Lower Mounts (D) which forms part of the road running around the inside of the Medieval defences. Few buildings are shown here on the historic mapping and it is perhaps doubtful whether it was ever intensively settled which perhaps explains why

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[662] Williams 1978, 101-104
[663] RCHM(E) 1985, microfiche, Northampton Site 29, 380

it was possible for the Greyfriars site to be inserted in the area immediately to the west in the second quarter of the 13th century.[664]

**Plan Unit X**

This large area has been defined as a single plan unit because it looks like a planned development of the area between Abington Street and St Giles Street (E) running from the market area around All Saints to the medieval town wall (Fig A1.10). The only internal dating for settlement here is the earliest known mention of St Giles' church in 1122 which gives a *terminus ante quem* for the plan unit.[665] St Giles' Street was originally part of a west-east route, possibly originally a Roman road, running along the north side of the Nene valley.[666] The medieval town wall blocked off this route, with only a small postern gate leading from the churchyard through the wall, and it was probably at this time that a new west - east route was created leading out from the east gate of the medieval town. The old route was re-opened some time after 1746 (it is not shown on the Noble and Butlin map of that date) when Spencer Parade was built to connect St Giles' Street and Billing Road.

*Sub-unit Xa*

This sub-unit comprises the area between the early market place at All Saints to the west and Fish Street to the east (F). It is bisected east-west by Dychurch Lane (G), formerly the more prosaic *Groppecunte Lane*, a common medieval street name especially prevalent for lanes adjoining market places.[667] The lane originally ran through directly to Wood Hill (H) and is shown thus on Speed's map of 1610 but by the time of the Noble and Butlin map its egress had been blocked (it is not shown at all on the Marcus Pierce map of 1632, a reminder that this map did not attempt to show the town's full street pattern). The chief building in this area is the medieval Guildhall which lay at the north-east corner of Wood Hill and Abington Street. The presence of pointed two-light windows on a sketch of the building which accompanies Noble and Butlin's map of 1746 suggests that it dates to the 13th-14th centuries, although it may have replaced an earlier building on the site. The Guildhall building stood

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[664] See sub-unit IXa above
[665] RCHM(E) 1985, microfiche, Northampton Site 23, 361-71
[666] *See fig 5.9 and Archaeological evidence for pre-urban background above
[667] Gover *et al* 1933, 8; Holt and Baker 2001, 206-12

until 1864 when it was replaced by a new town hall on St Giles' Street. Its ground floor was probably originally open and occupied by shops, as we might expect on a valuable market frontage.[668] As regards plot boundaries we can see properties fronting on to the market place, Abington Street and St Giles' Street with Dychurch Lane acting as a back lane for properties fronting on to the two latter streets.

*Sub-unit Xb*

This sub-unit comprises the area between Fish Street and St Giles' Terrace (I).[669]  Within this area was a major urban estate, Gobion's Manor, which belonged to the Gobion family from the 12th century until 1300 when Sir Richard Gobion died.[670] Subsequently it passed through various hands before being bought by the mayor and corporation of Northampton in 1622. It was destroyed in the Great Fire of Northampton of 1675. A large building shown in this area on Speed's map of 1610 is presumably the manor house (Fig A1.9). A lease of the manor house site of 1685 makes it clear that the site included an urban farm:

> lett unto the said Robert Adys all that toft or parcell of ground whereon lately stood a messuage…burnt downe and demolished by the late dreadful fire…called or knowne by the name of Gobion's manor howse with the whole homestead and backside in which was several barnes and a maulting, stables, cowhouses and other little buildings ..and also the passage or cartway leading from Dithers Lane[671] into the yard or backside aforesaid and also the close being part of the homestead adjoyning to the yard or backside and the litle tenement  and all the uper end of the said close on the east…and also that part of the mannor howse yett standing on the west…all which premises…are called and knowne by the name of Gobions ffarme howse and homestedd…[672]

The plot of property boundaries shows properties at right angles to the two main streets Abington Street and St Giles' Street but the central area between these, the locations of Gobion's manor, is devoid of boundaries.

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[668] RCHM(E) 1985, microfiche, Northampton Site 11, 337; Williams 2014, 69
[669] Named as Church Lane on the 1746 Noble and Butlin map
[670] For a fuller discussion of Gobion's Manor see Williams and Farwell 1984, 83-87, of which the text below is a summary
[671] Dychurch Lane
[672] NAHS, Northampton Borough Records

*Sub-unit Xc*

This sub-unit comprises St Giles church and its churchyard on its southern side and properties fronting on to Abington Street to the north. The latter are widely-spaced and run back for some distance from the frontage, up to 97m. There is documentary evidence of quarrying in the area. A deed, dating to before 1275, records the sale of a house in 'St Giles' Lane, opposite the quarry next to the cemetery of the said church'.[673] Is this the quarry mentioned in the hundred rolls towards the east end of Abington Street around the same time? Unfortunately in neither case can we be sure of the exact position of the quarries but it does indicate extensive quarries in the area at this time – although we cannot be sure that they were still in operation. Given that this area lies adjacent to the town wall it is possible that the stone was used in the building or repair of the wall.

**Plan Unit XI**

This is a triangular area lying between St Giles Street to the north, Derngate (J) to the south west and the town wall to the east (Fig A1.10). As we might expect the property boundaries show a denser pattern towards the central area of the town with properties fronting on to both streets; further east there is a less dense pattern and this pattern is confirmed by the 17th century maps. Towards the eastern end a lane, Spring Gardens (K), connects the two main streets and east of this is an area of apparently open ground.

**Plan Unit XII**

This is another triangular area formed by Derngate to the north east, Swan Street (L) to the west and the town walls to the south (Fig A1.10). The medieval name for Derngate was Swinewell Street with Derngate referring only to the gate in the town walls at the bottom of the street. Gover *et al* suggest that dern derives from OE *dierne*, secret or hidden, but say that 'the origin of the epithet is obscure'.[674] Derngate was a minor gate within the town walls, referred to as a postern gate in the 1274-5 hundred rolls, so possibly the epithet comes from its relatively unassuming status. Swan Street was Cow Lane until the late 19th century. A postern gate at the bottom of the street gave access to Cow Meadow.

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[673] NAHS, Northampton Borough Records Section II, Part I No 17
[674] Gover *et al* 1933, 7

The most important building within this plan unit was The Grange, a major urban residence whose main feature was a tower which led to its name of 'The Towre' on Speed's map of 1610 (Fig A1.11 (A)). The Grange is first referred to in the late 13th century rental of Northampton when it belonged to 'Hugh de Cancell'.[675] In 1377 it is referred to as 'Latimer's Tower' when it was granted by John Neville, Lord Latimer, to John de Etton. Does this suggest that Lord Latimer had added a tower to an existing residence? Such a building would fit in with a fashion for building urban houses with solar towers in the 13th-14th centuries.[676]

The 1504 rental talks of adjacent tenements which had been incorporated into the Grange by this time. The impression given, and one supported by the delineation of major property boundaries and by the historic map evidence, is of a fairly open area as we might expect of an area some distance from the town centre which was the location of at least one major urban property.

In 1647 Northampton suffered a visitation of the plague and the town assembly ordered that the 'Towre howse' be requisitioned for use as a plague house. It is worth quoting the order in detail as doubt has been cast on the position of the tower.[677]

> …And it appearing to this Assemblie that there is a convenient howse out of the hert of the Towne neare the medowes and fields which wilbe verie useful in this behalf called the Tower howse, It is agreed and ordered that the said Tower howse shalbe forthwith taken and used in this behalf…[678]

Subsequently Cox says that 'the Tower House' was burnt down in the Great Fire of 1675.[679] Certainly it was no longer extant by the time of the Noble and Butlin map of 1746 although the field in which it stood is marked as 'Tower Close' (Fig A1.11 (B)).

As discussed above there is evidence that there was probably originally an intra-mural road running by the medieval town wall here.[680] This area was also the location of the short-lived home of the Friars of the Sack which is first recorded in 1271 and had come to an end by

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[675] Williams 2014, 182
[676] Shaw 2005, 28-29; Schofield 1994, 36, 38, 69
[677] See Appendix 2: Plan Unit XIII
[678] NAHS, Second Assembly Book 16 September 1647
[679] Cox 1898, 240
[680] See discussion of the Medieval town walls, DL2 above

1303.[681] The Brothers of the Sack were among those accused of blocking the intra-mural road here, in 1274-5, suggesting that their house stood close to the wall, perhaps by the Derngate.

**Plan Unit XIII**

This area comprises a rectangle formed by Bridge Street (A) to the west, Swan Street to the east, George Row (B) and the westernmost ends of St Giles' Street and Derngate to the north and the town walls to the south (Fig A1.12). It is defined as a single plan unit because it looks as though it may have been laid out in a single episode of town planning with the area divided into three portions by two east-west streets Angel Street (C) and St John's Street (D), formerly Three Potts Lane, although it must be admitted that they differ in their depth between 88m (290 feet) for the central portion and 122m (400 feet) for the southernmost. Once laid out the three portions had a rather different history so they have been divided into three sub-units.

Bridge Street is included in this unit and is considered as a whole although it does show some variation. The southernmost third, within sub-unit XIIIc is markedly narrower than the northernmost two-thirds, within sub-units XIIIa and XIIIb. Why is this? Has the northern portion been deliberately laid out as wider to form a market street, or has the southernmost third, which forms the western boundary of St John's Hospital encroached forward?

*Sub-unit XIIIa*

This is the northernmost sub-unit fronting on to the central area of the town around All Saints church to the north. There has been considerable loss of early boundaries due to the expansion of County Hall here and to the insertion of a north-south road, Guildhall Road, at the eastern end of the sub-unit. What survives suggests a pattern of long properties running all the way back to Angel Street, a distance of around 95m, except at the west where properties front on to Bridge Street with a maximum depth of 56m. The mid-18th century Noble and Butlin map shows two large inns, the George Inn on the corner of Bridge Street and George Row and the Angel Inn on the corner of Bridge Street and Fetter Street (E). The location of inns on the main thoroughfare into the town from an early date can of course be anticipated and both date

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[681] RCHM(E) 1985 microfiche, Northampton Site 117, 341

back to earlier than 1585 when they are included on a list of ancient inns within the town compiled by the town assembly.[682]

*Sub-unit XIIIb*

This is the central sub-unit between Angel Street and St John's Street. Unlike the sub-units to the north and south there is a central north-south street between Bridge Street and Swan Street, Fetter Street, dividing the area into two equal parts. Again the insertion of Guildhall Road at its eastern side has led to a loss of boundaries. The most dense pattern of property boundaries is, as we would expect, on the Bridge Street frontages where properties of 27.5m depth at its northernmost end and 32m depth in the central and southern portions are present. Elsewhere there is a less dense settlement pattern but there do appear to be properties fronting on to all of the more minor streets, including Fetter Street. Speed's map shows a boundary wall running along the north side of St John's Street (Fig A1.13 (A)). Is this significant? Does it mean that this entire sub-unit was enclosed at an earlier period?

*Sub-unit XIIIc*

This is the southernmost sub-unit and comprises the former precinct of St John's hospital. The hospital was founded *c*1140; it escaped the dissolution and continued in use until the 19th century. In 1871, however, the site was sold to the Midland Railway. The former chapel and hospital which lie on the Bridge Street frontage were not touched and survive to this day, having been converted into a Roman Catholic Church. The Master's House, which lay away from the frontage, was demolished in 1871, however. In 1836 it was described as a 'large Mansion-house for the Master with a garden of three acres belonging to it'.[683] Speed's map (Fig A1.13 (A)) shows the Chapel and Hospital on the frontage and a large building behind which is presumably the Master's House along with two smaller buildings; the hospital precinct is surrounded by a wall, two buildings front on to Bridge Street. The Noble and Butlin map (Fig A1.13 (B)) shows a large building behind the Bridge Street frontage towards St John's Street. An enclosed orchard to the south is around 3 acres in area so there can be little doubt that this is the Master's House and its adjoining garden.

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[682] Cox 1898, 302
[683] Serjeantson 1912-13, 60

To the south of the hospital buildings a number of property boundaries suggest that there may have been buildings fronting on to Bridge Street by the South Gate. In addition in 1266 the master and brethren of St John's Hospital were given licence to enclose a lane called 'Crakebolle Street' which lay between their church and grange provided that they provided an alternative egress for people living on the lane.[684] Does this also indicate that there were dwellings within the precinct? This suggestion is perhaps supported by a complaint in the Hundred Rolls of 1274-5 that '…a common way , from the gate called Cougate up to the south gate' had been blocked up by '…the wife once of Thomas Tyard, Thomas Toth, the master of the hospital of St John and Drew de Malerbe'.[685] If the whole precinct had been in the hands of the hospital alone it is difficult to see why others would have been mentioned in the complaint.

**Plan Unit XIV**

This comprises a rectangular area, around 0.82ha (2 acres) in area, located at the heart of the medieval town and immediately outside the east gate of the late Saxon town  (Fig A1.12). The church of All Saints sits centrally within the area. The first definite reference to All Saints church comes in 1107.[686] If, however, we can regard the reference to Portland in the Domesday Survey as referring to Northampton this would place the origins of the church back into the pre-Conquest period.[687] The church was burnt down in the Great Fire of 1675 and almost entirely rebuilt with only the lower parts of the tower and a vaulted crypt surviving the conflagration so that we have few details of its medieval precursor. It was, however, described by Henry Lee, writing not long after it was burnt down, as being 'as large as some Cathedrals'.[688] The church's function as a market place church was reflected in its description as *ecclesia de foro in Northampton* in a charter of c1180.[689]

We can therefore envisage a market place and market church outside the east gate of the late Saxon town with roads diverging from its eastern end along Abington Street (F), St Giles' Street (G) and Derngate (H). During the 13th century, however, the holding of markets and

[684] Serjeantson 1912-13, 228
[685] Williams 2014, 347, 13.14
[686] RCHM(E) 1985 microfiche, Northampton Site 21, 344
[687] See Documentary Evidence: Domesday survey for discussion of Portland
[688] Lee 1932
[689] Serjeantson 1901, 14

fairs in churches and churchyards began to be frowned upon and in 1235 Henry III wrote to his bailiffs in Northampton instructing that the market and fair no longer be held within or around the church and churchyard:

> Know ye that We being unwilling that from henceforth any market or fair shall be held in the churchyard or church of All Saints…have…appointed that the market or fair…from henceforth shall be held in the void and waste place of the said town on the north part of the said church.[690]

**Plan Unit XV**

This plan unit comprises the Market Square, a large rectangular market place, around 1.5ha in area (Fig A1.12). As we have seen the documentary evidence tells us that the king ordered the market and fair to be moved here in 1235. We do need to consider the implications of this order a little more closely, however. Was there really a 'void and waste place' available immediately north of All Saints church in the centre of the town in the early 13th century? Foard has suggested that the term 'waste' in the medieval period could include market places.[691] Was the area already being used as part of the fair site or as an overspill for the market? It is difficult otherwise to see why such a large area should be available at a time when Northampton was arguably at its zenith. In a paper of 1982 Slater made a suggestion for the similarly large market place at Warwick, *c*1ha in size, which could perhaps apply to Northampton also. He hypothesised that the site was first established as a livestock market on the edge of the late Saxon town, citing as evidence streets named Rother (i.e. cattle) street and Hog Hill leading into it.[692] We could similarly envisage the Market Square being laid out on the edge of the late Saxon town at Northampton as a cattle market soon after the Conquest when the new south-north route was laid out along Bridge Street and Sheep Street. Sheep Street could also be re-interpreted as being originally a street leading to the sheep market rather than being a market street itself. Alternatively, or perhaps in addition, the Market Square could have been intended as a major component of Northampton's fair, known from the mid-12th century, which was one of the most important fairs in the country.

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[690] Serjeantson 1901, 19
[691] Foard 1995, 115
[692] Slater 1982, 190

The Edward I town rental of the late 13th century makes it clear that by this time the Market Square was divided into 'rows', within which were a large number of shops and a smaller number of stalls, houses and tenements.[693] The houses and tenements tend to pay a greater rental. Were these ranged around the market place rather than within it? The entries for the Market Square and its surrounds present a sharp contrast to those for the remainder of the town which refer mainly to tenements and houses and contain no references to shops. Rows of buildings within the Market Square to the north of Mercer's Row (I) and to the east of Drapery (J) shown on the early town maps (e.g. Fig A1.4) give some idea of the nature of the properties at an earlier period. Indeed the properties today along these streets, although the buildings themselves are later, show the characteristics of market properties with their small property size and lack of yards and gardens.

The square also contained a number of civic buildings: a market cross stood towards its northern end, it is mentioned in 14th-15th century deeds and was replaced by a new one in 1535; and the 'Great Conduit' was situated towards its southern end, it was built around 1481 with a meeting hall above and shops below. Both are shown on the early historic maps but were destroyed in the 'Great Fire' of 1675.[694]

**The Suburbs**

Despite the great size of the walled area of the town suburbs were present on all four sides from an early date. We should not be surprised by this. The attraction of a road frontage, even if it was outside the town walls, was often greater than a back street within the walled area.

We do need to think about what we should define as a suburb. My view is that it should be related closely to urban life. Hence buildings along a road frontage immediately outside a walled town which may well have had trading and manufacturing concerns would obviously meet the criteria and religious institutions such as hospitals and hermitages who owe their existence to the proximity of a town would do so also. I have not included hamlets of farms and cottages separate from the town even though their presence produce may largely have

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[693] Williams 2014, 170-71, 185-89
[694] Cam 1930, 25

found its way into the town, I would regard these settlements as part of the town's hinterland rather than its suburb.

**Plan Unit XVI: East suburb (St Edmund's End)**

We know that the east suburb of St Edmund's End (Fig 5.60) was in existence by the late 12<sup>th</sup> century as its parish church, St Edmund's, is mentioned in the confirmation of the grant of the town's churches to St Andrew's Priory.[695] It would appear that by the 15<sup>th</sup> century the suburb was in decline, however, as its church was annexed to the rectory of St Michael's church. The church seems to have fallen out of use around the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century and thereafter the parish was regarded as part of St Giles so we are looking at a suburb which either failed to grow substantially or, if it did, was shrinking back by the 15<sup>th</sup> century.[696] The site of the church cannot be precisely determined but a 19<sup>th</sup> century deed locates it as lying between Kettering Road (A) and Wellingborough Road (B) and it is perhaps most likely to lie at the point where the two roads divide (C).[697]

For the topography of the settlement we are largely reliant upon the early maps. Speed's map of 1610 (Fig 5.61 (A)) shows a small number of houses either side of the road leading out of the east gate towards Kettering and Wellingborough but this was of course a time when the suburb was in decline. Of greater help is the Northampton Inclosure map of 1779. Although this map does not show any buildings in the area it does show an area of small enclosures immediately outside the east gate marked as 'Several Gardens and Old Enclosures' (Fig 5.61 (B)). They lie either side of the road leading out of the east gate as far as the bifurcation into the Kettering and Wellingborough Roads. There can be little doubt that these enclosures mark the area of the eastern suburb. Of interest is the indication of a lane behind the southern area of enclosure on the 1779 map which suggests that there was a back lane to the properties fronting on to the south side of Wellingborough Road. This lane continues to be shown on the Wood and Law map of 1847 (as Bird's Place) and by the time of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century Ordnance Survey plans has been formalised as 'St Edmund's Road'.

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[695] RCHM(E) 1985, 53
[696] RCHM(E) 1985, microfiche, Northampton Site 26, 379
[697] NAHS, NPL2657; Shaw 1996-7

**Plan Unit XVII: West Suburb (St James' End)**

The west suburb lay beyond the West Bridge on the opposite bank of the Northern Arm of the river Nene from the walled town (Fig 5.65). It was located along St James' Road (A), Harlestone Road (B) and Weedon Road (C). St James Road and Harlestone Road form the boundary between Duston parish to the south and south west and Dallington parish to the north and north-west. St James' Abbey (D), which gives its name to the suburb, is located around 1 mile to the west of the west bridge. It was an Augustinian house founded around the mid-12th century by William Peverel. The abbey was well endowed and possessed a great deal of property in Northampton.[698]

Speed's map of 1610 shows a small suburb immediately west of the west bridge (Fig 5.63). There is, however, good evidence to suggest that it is only showing the surviving remnant of a far larger suburb. Speed's map itself gives the first clue for it shows the start of a road leading off to the south of the main road and running roughly parallel to it. A map of the parish of Duston of 1722, although too poorly surveyed to georeference adequately, nevertheless contains important detail of the suburban area (Fig 5.64).[699] It shows a series of small enclosures (E) along the south side of the main road with a back lane running behind them for a distance of around half a mile (F).[700] They are bisected by a further lane leading from Weedon Road to a tributary of the river Nene (G). This area looks like a planned element of properties set along the road out to St James' Abbey. This identification is given greater credence as St Margaret's chapel (H), founded to serve the inhabitants of the suburb, is located within this area. Its site had been a matter of speculation.[701] However, Bridges, writing in the early 18th century, says that the chapel was adjacent to a toll house. This toll house is marked on the early 19th century Ordnance Surveyors' drawing of the area, located at the junction of the Weedon and Harlestone Roads.[702] Another possible settlement area is

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[698] RCHM(E) 1985, microfiche, Duston Site 8, 264-5

[699] The tracing of an extract of NAHS Map 2883: 1780 copy of 1722 map of Duston Manor. The map is a 'sketch' rather than an accurate survey. I have added letters corresponding to those on Fig 5.64 for easy comparison

[700] On this and later plans the back lane (F) turns a right angle at its south-eastern end to join St James' Road. The Speed map, however, suggests that originally it ran in a straight line to join St James Road at a point where a further lane (J) runs off south west to a mill on the river Nene. I have shown this original line on Fig 5.65

[701] The RCHM(E) volume places it further west adjacent to the abbey (RCHM(E) 1985, microfiche, Duston Site 8, 265)

[702] Bridges 1791, 501. Ordnance Surveyors' Drawing 253: Northampton, dated to 1813

represented by a series of enclosures (I) running along the north-east side of Harlestone Road, within Dallington parish, for a distance of around 600 yards as far as a lane leading to Dallington mill. J is a lane leading from St James' Road down to the river Nene. These areas would make rather a large suburb and it may be that some of the enclosures represent speculative attempts at settlement which never took off or were laid out for agricultural workers. Given the location of the suburb adjacent to St James' Abbey it is likely that the abbey played a part in its growth.

**Plan Unit XVIII: Southern suburbs**

There were two suburban areas to the south of the walled town. They vary in character and accordingly have been defined as separate sub-units: sub-unit a, the 'South Quarter', comprised the area immediately south of the town walls down to the south bridge; while sub-unit XVIIIb, 'Cotton End', lay to the south of the bridge (Fig 5.62).

Sub-unit XVIIIa

The South Quarter was densely built up with properties with narrow frontages and long backyards. A feature of the area is a number of streams leading off from the channel of the river Nene into a number of the properties shown on the early town maps (Fig A1.14). Could these be bringing in water for industrial purposes? There was a dense concentration of tanneries in the South Quarter by the 18th century.[703] At the northern end of the quarter was St Thomas' Hospital which lay immediately outside the south gate, partially over a stream which formed part of the town defences (Fig 5.62A). Leland says that the hospital was founded *c*1450 but this may have been an augmentation and rebuilding of an earlier foundation. It housed two masters and 12 poor people. The hospital buildings were destroyed in 1874-6.[704]

Sub-unit XVIIIb

The small suburb of 'Cotton End' lay to the south of the south bridge, within Hardingstone parish. The major feature here was the leper hospital of St Leonard (Fig 5.62B), founded in the mid-12th century, which lay on the east side of the London Road around 100m from the

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[703] NAHS, 1768 poll book
[704] RCHM(E) 1985, microfiche, Northampton Site 19, 341; Serjeantson and Adkins 1906, 161-2

bridge. In addition to the hospital building it contained a chapel and a cemetery and in the late 13th century it was deemed to hold semi-parochial rights over the suburb.[705] The hospital survived the dissolution but by the later 16th century was greatly decayed and the buildings were pulled down.[706] Although we would not expect a large suburb adjacent to a leper hospital the presence of houses in the area is attested in the late 13th century when a 'messuage on the street of St Leonards, between tenements to west and east' and a 'house in the parish [*sic*] of St Leonard' are recorded.[707]

There was also a hermitage/chapel immediately to the south of the bridge mentioned in 1472-3 (Fig 5.62C). This may be the Chapel of St Thomas confirmed to St Andrew's Priory in the late 12th century , although this reference might instead be to a chapel of St Thomas within the priory precinct. In a will of 1527 a chapel of St Thomas is identified as the hermitage at the south end of the South Bridge.[708] The building was still in existence by 1586 when it was described as 'a tenement called "the Armentage of the Sowth Brydge of three bays, lyinge next the river on the south side…'.[709]

Around ½ mile south east of the suburb lay Delapré Abbey, a house of Cluniac Nuns founded by Simon de Senlis II *c*1145 (Fig 5.62D). It was never a prosperous establishment and in 1530 housed only 11 nuns.[710] It did own some property within Northampton but its influence did not match that of St Andrew's Priory or St James' Abbey.

**Plan Unit XIX: Northern Suburb**

The northern suburb lay immediately outside the north gate (A)[711] of the town (Fig 5.66). It was served by its own parish church, St Bartholomew's, which would imply that it was originally of some size, or at least intended to be so. The church is first recorded in the late 12th century and is mentioned in the early 15th century but its later history is uncertain. It does not appear in the Feudal Aids of 1428. By the time of the dissolution it seems to have become

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[705] Serjeantson 1915-16, 7-9
[706] RCHM(E) 1985, microfiche, Hardingstone Site 27, 292; Cox 1898, 329-33
[707] NAHS, Northampton Borough Records Section II Part I Nos 20 and 21
[708] RCHM(E) 1985, microfiche, Hardingstone Site 26, 291
[709] Cox 1898, 159
[710] RCHM(E) 1985, microfiche, Hardingstone Site 25, 291
[711] The letters refer to locations marked on Fig 5.66

a chapel and been re-dedicated to St Lawrence.[712] There is something of a dichotomy here though for Leland, writing around the same time, says that he saw the ruins of a large chapel outside the north gate which could surely only have been the same church/chapel.[713]

If we look at the historic mapping we are presented with something of a dichotomy for at first sight there is little sign of a suburban settlement here. The Speed map shows no buildings outside the gates and we can assume that there was little or no suburban occupation surviving by this period. The 1779 Inclosure map gives us our first clue as to the form of the suburb. It shows two small enclosures either side of the road leading out from the gate, the western one (B) is marked 'gardens' and the eastern one (C) 'North end close' (Fig 5.67). Further out, around 100 yards from the North Gate is marked the site of the church is marked as 'St Lawrence Church Yard' (D). The identification of 'North end close' as an area separate from the town fields is given greater credence by the location of a Jewish cemetery here. A charter of 1259 records that St Andrew's Priory leased the Jewish Community in Northampton a plot of land for a cemetery. A further charter of 1271 places it outside the North Gate. Detailed analysis by Roberts suggests that the cemetery lay within an irregular small enclosure within 'North end close' (E) which is shown on the Inclosure map and on the earlier Marcus Pierce map of 1632 (Fig 5.68).[714]

The area defined so far seems a small area for a suburb, especially one with its own parochial provision. There is, however, a further area of enclosures on the west side of the road leading out from the North Gate (F), best shown on the Marcus Pierce map of 1632 which may also have originally been part of the suburb. Although by the time of the Pierce map the enclosures form part of the town fields they are noticeably shorter than the fields elsewhere on the map and show little sign of an aratral curve. In addition they back on to Semilong (G) which although probably originally the main road out of the town to the north appears by this time to be acting as a back lane to the properties fronting on to the road to Leicester. Admittedly the Marcus Pierce map does not show a lane at the back of the properties but we have already seen that this map omits detail of minor streets within the town. There is certainly a 'strong' boundary here as it forms the boundary between Northampton and Kingsthorpe parishes. A

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[712] RCHM(E) 1985, microfiche, Northampton Site 25, 378
[713] Toulmin-Smith 1964, Vol 1, 8
[714] Roberts 1993

lane is shown here on the 1779 Northampton Inclosure map and on the Kingsthorpe inclosure map of 1767.

The evidence for the northern suburb is the least clear of the four suburbs but it does enable us to suggest a suburb of sufficient size to merit a parish church though we are perhaps seeing a settlement area which was largely a failure. The suburb lies adjacent to St Andrew's Priory (H) and it is tempting to see the priory's hand in the formation of the suburb.

In discussing the northern suburb we should also be aware of an 'urban' feature further out. The Walbeck leper hospital lay on the main road out from the North Gate in Kingsthorpe Hollow, formerly known as Wallbank, around 1km north of the town walls (I). The earliest known mention of the hospital dates to the first half of the 13th century. It is not recorded after 1347.[715]

# Appendix 2: Northampton – archaeological evidence within the plan units

## Introduction

Fig 5.25 shows all known archaeological excavations carried out within the medieval town. Even though the archaeological work only covers a fraction of the historic town it does nevertheless represent a large body of evidence. Accordingly, given that my emphasis is on identifying what archaeological evidence can add to topographical and documentary evidence rather than presenting a full gazetteer of archaeological discoveries from the town I have concentrated on those sites, generally the larger ones, which come closest to answering questions regarding the layout of the settlement.[716] As regards plans of features from the individual sites I have used scanned copies of the plans in the original reports but have georeferenced these which has allowed me to overlay the plot boundaries which I defined earlier to see whether these correspond to boundaries discovered during the archaeological work. Excavations in each plan unit are marked on the illustrations in red.

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[715] RCHM(E) 1985, microfiche, Kingsthorpe Site 9, 310; Serjeantson 1915-16, 41-42
[716] Details of all archaeological work in the town are held in the NHER: https://www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/councilservices/archives-and-heritage/northamptonshire-archives/research-and-history/Pages/historic-environment-record.aspx

As with the discussion of plan units based on non-invasive techniques I have separated out the work on the defensive lines for discrete discussion.

## Defences

### DL1: Late Saxon defensive line

Unfortunately there has been little opportunity to excavate the late Saxon defences on their north and east sides where they are demarcated by the concentric ring of streets because in the main they lie within a heavily built-up area. Where opportunities have arisen the sites have generally been too small to allow a meaningful-size trench to be excavated and disturbance from later cellarage and the excavation of large pits has hampered interpretations. Hence there are a number of excavations where possible ditch deposits have been uncovered but none have been able to provide definite evidence.[717]

Outside the concentric ring of streets an opportunity to carry out an excavation on the defensive line at the southern end of the circuit off Green Street did finally arise in 1995-6 (Fig 5.36 Site 1).[718] Although the work was still on a relatively small scale a good sequence of defences was uncovered. The investigations established that an initial phase of defences comprised a clay bank with a timber revetment and a ditch set 0.8m in front of the face of the bank. Subsequently the timber revetment was replaced in stone and at the same time a gateway was cut through the bank and a metalled surface was laid running on the same alignment as Green Street (Fig 5.41). The excavation yielded vital evidence as to the date of the defences as a soil horizon sealed by the clay bank contained middle Saxon pottery, of probable early 9th century date, while the excavation of the clay bank itself yielded contained pottery of late 9th to late 10th century date, giving a late Saxon date for the first phase of the defences. There is only limited dating evidence for the second phase of defences but they are suggested as belonging to the late 10th - 11th centuries and were replaced by the post-Conquest defences in the late 11th-early 12th century, at which time the late Saxon gateway was blocked.

Accordingly what has excavation added to our interpretations of Northampton's early defences? Firstly there is no sign, in this area at least, of the middle Saxon defences postulated

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[717] See RCHM(E) 1985, microfiche, Northampton Site 6, 326-27
[718] Chapman 1998-9

by Haslam and Bassett or of a monastic enclosure ditch suggested by Blair. The first phase of defences with its timber-laced rampart and its refurbishment with a stone revetment wall can both be firmly placed within the late Saxon period although whether the initial defences were built during the Danish occupation or afterwards is still uncertain. There was no sign in the excavations of a period of dereliction between the abandonment of the late Saxon defences and the construction of the medieval defences so it would appear that the late Saxon defences continued in use until around the end of the 11th century. The provision of a gateway and a metalled surface in the second phase of defences poses the question of its purpose. Was this the original entrance into the town before the west bridge was built, in which case the idea of a Roman road running along the line of Marefair/Gold Street etc is less tenable. Or could it have provided access to a wharfage alongside a then navigable river?

## DL2: Medieval town walls

As with the late Saxon defences there had been few opportunities to investigate the medieval defences in a meaningful manner until the excavations at Green Street, largely because for most of their length the defences lie beneath the present road system, although short lengths of wall, bank and ditch have been uncovered at various times.[719] As we have seen at Green Street the late Saxon defences were replaced probably early in the 12th century by a stone wall, 1.85m wide, and a ditch, around 15m wide, which had been completely backfilled by the later 15th century.[720]

Hence the archaeological evidence tends to confirm the historical tradition that the medieval town defences were built by Simon de Senlis I who was Earl of Northampton between *c*1090-1111/13. The early date for their disuse in this area also fits in with documentary references to land being appropriated from 'the ditch of the king'.[721] We should not, however, assume that the sequence in the south-west quarter of the town applies to the whole circuit of the defences. By the post-Conquest period this area was something of a backwater and some protection was in any case afforded by the river. Hence, as we have seen, no defences are shown in this area on Speed's map of 1610, while a full circuit is shown over the remaining area. The Medieval

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[719] Williams 1982, 63-65; Shaw *et al* 1992, 3-7, 24; Hiller *et al* 2002, 37, 56
[720] Chapman 1998-9
[721] See Appendix 1: Plan Unit – DL2

defences elsewhere may well have been both more impressive and kept in better repair, especially on the north and east where there was no protection from the river and where the more major routes into and out of the town were located. In this respect it is worth noting that the East Gate was described as the most impressive of the town's gates while the approach towards the castle from the north may also have been seen as an opportunity for display.

## Plan Units

The early and middle Saxon phases at Northampton pre-date the laying out of the plot boundaries and most of the street plan by which plan units were defined. Accordingly I have not included discussion of these periods at plan unit level but discuss them as higher level units (HLUs 1 and 2).

### Plan Unit I

Within Plan Unit I the most illuminating site is St Peter's Street. An area of land, 50m in length, either side of the street, was investigated 1973-6 giving a total street frontage excavated of 100m.[722] The opportunity to excavate such a long length of uncellared frontage, and to include portions of the street itself, is unusual in a medieval town and affords us a rare opportunity to look in depth at the settlement layout and the dating of the plot boundaries shown on the Victorian mapping.[723]

The nature of the late Saxon settlement here was very different from that of the preceding phase. The high-status features of the middle Saxon elite complex were replaced by structures of a more modest type (Fig 5.42).  The settlement pattern is of buildings rather loosely disposed around the site at differing alignments (although we do need to remember, of course, that not all of the buildings are contemporary). At the west end of the site a series of posthole buildings may have been grouped around a metalled courtyard entered by a gate. At a secondary phase a surface-laid building (Building 2), evidence for which is rare in late Saxon Northampton, replaced a posthole building (Building 1). The evidence from the east end of

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[722] Williams 1979, especially the synthesis section, pages 137-147

[723] As discussed above the phase plans used here are georeferenced versions of the figures in the original St Peter's Street report (Figs 76-78). In this publication features definitely of a particular phase were delineated in black, while features which may be of the phase in question but could be of an earlier or later phase are shown in red.

the excavation area presents a contrast for there is no evidence for posthole buildings here but instead there were four sunken-featured buildings (SFBs), their surviving depths varying between 0.5m – 0.65m.[724] From our point of view the most important aspect of the late Saxon features as a whole is that they pre-date the laying out of St Peter's Street with Building 1 lying across the line of the later street and many of the others set eccentrically to the later street alignment. In addition the plot boundaries bear no relation to the late Saxon features, and indeed PB1 cuts through Buildings 1 and 2.

At the next phase belonging to the late 11th - 13th centuries we see another major change in the settlement pattern (Fig 5.46). St Peter's Street has been laid out, probably in the late 11th - early 12th century, and timber buildings are constructed along both sides of St Peter's Street. and also down Narrow Toe Lane. Narrow Toe Lane may also have been laid out at this time although I have suggested that it dates back to the middle Saxon period in which case it may be that it was widened at this period to create a more formal street frontage.[725] The buildings are set parallel to, rather than at right angles to, the street frontages but the northern side of St Peter's Street is not fully built up. Some at least of the plot boundaries appear to belong to this phase. The evidence is clearest to the south side of St Peter's Street. Here PB7 appears to demarcate the boundary between Timber Building 1, which fronts on to Narrow Toe Lane, and  Timber Building 3 which fronts on to St Peter's Street, while PB8 forms the boundary between Timber Buildings 3 and 4. The evidence is less clear to the north of the street. Towards its west end PB1 may demarcate the west boundary of Timber Building 2. The area further to the east is not built up, however, and PBs 2 and 3 appear to cut features of this phase.

From the late 13th century onwards we can see the gradual introduction of stone buildings (Fig 5.48). Initially one building (House 3) was set parallel to the street but an adjoining building (House 4) was set gable-end on to the street. Walls were generally around 0.8m wide which would suggest at least a stone ground floor rather than a dwarf wall for a timber building. PB2 marks the boundary between Houses 3 and 4.

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[724] Referred to in the illustrations as Grubenhaus 1-4
[725] For suggestion of Narrow Toe Lane as part of an early route Early routes into Northampton and HLU2 (Figs 5.6, 5.38)

There is another dramatic change in the early 15th century when there was a wholesale rearrangement with stone buildings laid out parallel to St Peter's Street along the whole length of the excavated area in a single phase of development (Fig 5.51). The buildings are similar, though not identical, varying between 8m - 12m in length but with a broadly common depth of 6m. Total uniformity may have been difficult to achieve because some properties already contained buildings whose foundations were re-used in the rebuilding phase. It seems most likely, however, that this is a planned redevelopment of the street, possibly by a single owner, or by several owners acting in concert. At this phase we can also see that the St Peter's Street frontage is the dominant one with the building at the south-west corner being set parallel to St Peter's Street rather than to Narrow Toe Lane as previously. It is at this phase that it is easiest to recognise property boundaries and these can be seen to match the Victorian boundaries in all cases except one. Hence to the north of the street PB1 marks the boundary between Houses 1 and 2 and PB2 marks the boundary between Houses 3 and 4, while PB4 probably marks the boundary between Houses 5 and 6 which could not be recognised from the excavation evidence. The only exception is PB3 which runs along the line of a drain within House 4 rather than marking an external boundary. To the south of the street PB7 marks the boundary between Houses 8 and 9 and PB8 that between Houses 9 and 10. All of these plot boundaries continued to demarcate property divisions until the 1960s at which time buildings along the site were demolished (Fig 5.57).

Towards the end of the late 15th century or early in the 16th century the buildings along St Peter's Street were burnt down in a fire and there is no evidence for subsequent occupation along the street until the 18th century apart from the easternmost property to the south of the street which was converted for use as a tannery.[726] The area behind the St Peter's Street frontage down to The Green was also given over to tanning in the 16th-17th centuries. This was a noxious activity which is generally located away from settlement areas.[727]

Excavations of a further site on St Peter's Street at Black Lion Hill around 60m to the west showed a similar sequence of activity as at the main St Peter's Street site.[728] A few of the findings are worth highlighting, however. A number of quarry pits were excavated

[726] Williams 1979, 145-46
[727] Shaw 2011, 120
[728] Shaw 1985

immediately adjacent to the St Peter's Street frontage *c*1100. Given their proximity it seems most likely that they were excavated to provide material for metalling the street and this gives further validation to the laying out of St Peter's Street about this time. From the 13th to mid-14th centuries a stone building occupied the St Peter's Street frontage. Its walls were around 0.9m - 1m wide, a similar width to those on the St Peter's Street site. Subsequently the building was demolished and a further building replaced it on the same line but now with narrower walls, only *c*0.6m wide. This is interpreted as a timber building with a dwarf stone wall replacing a stone building, or at least a building with a stone ground floor. A notable dropping off in the incidence of pit digging in the yard area behind the building from the late 14th century onwards suggests a change in the method of rubbish disposal. Presumably rubbish was now being taken off site, possibly due to a growing concern for hygiene after the Black Death. A similar phenomenon has been noted both elsewhere in Northampton and in other towns, such as Southampton.[729] The building on the St Peter's Street frontage was left derelict around 1500 demonstrating that the abandonment of settlement along the street was a widespread phenomenon and not just restricted to the eastern end of the street.

**Plan Unit II**

The most informative site here for the late Saxon period was at Chalk Lane where there was an opportunity to excavate a site which had largely lain beneath the bank of the Inner Bailey of Northampton Castle, thus ensuring less disturbance from later features than is normal on urban sites.[730] Two phases of late Saxon occupation could be discerned. The centrepiece of the first phase of settlement was a substantial rectangular post-pit building with a cellar at one end. Other, less substantial buildings may have been contemporary. A greater degree of organisation could be discerned at the later phase with the division of the site into functional areas comprising a posthole building, a yard area, a rubbish disposal area and a cultivated area. The general pattern of settlement resembled that at the late Saxon phase at St Peter's Street with settlement organised in a self-contained unit rather than being set along a street frontage.

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[729] Northampton: St Peter's Street (Williams *et al* 1985, 28); Derngate (Shaw 1984, 74-75); Southampton: Platt and Coleman-Smith 1975, 34-35
[730] Williams and Shaw 1981

Excavations on the Marefair frontage in 1977 were of a limited nature because much of the area had been disturbed by later cellarage.[731] Nevertheless this was one of the few opportunities to examine a major street frontage so the results were of significance despite the level of destruction from later activity. Some time around the 12th/13th centuries a stone building or buildings (the remains were described in the original report as 'forming part of a terrace or large building') was constructed aligned along the Marefair frontage. Only a short (4m) length, of the front wall survived but the back, north, wall could be traced as either a wall foundation or a robber trench for a distance of up to 13m (Fig 5.53). An outbuilding was added to the rear in the late 14th century but both the main building and the outbuilding went out of use in the late 14th/early 15th centuries. Thereafter there is evidence of continued activity in the yard area but it is uncertain whether there was a building on the frontage until around the 18th century when a stone building was constructed on the frontage re-using the earlier walls. If we look at the Victorian plot boundaries we can see that PB20 runs along the line of the western boundary of the medieval building, while PB21 runs along the line of an east wall of what may be an internal division but also runs through features in the yard area at the back. Hence the boundaries date back to the 12th/13th century although PB21 has been extended into the yard area at a later period. Again these plot boundaries survived down to the 1960s at which time PB20 marked the division between 59 and 58 Marefair while PB21 ran along the eastern boundary of 56 Marefair.

This unit also includes the castle site which was the subject of antiquarian investigations in the later 19th century ahead of the construction of Northampton railway station which demonstrate both their value and their limitations. A great deal of valuable evidence was recovered from this work regarding the form of the castle and the buildings within it. In addition pre-castle features were uncovered, comprising a probable early Saxon burial mound and pits and wells of late Saxon date. Recent excavations in the outer bailey suggest that this part of the castle was not constructed until the early 12th century, perhaps 1110-1120, but this only gives us a *terminus ante quem* for the building of the original castle.[732]

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[731] Williams F 1979. For site location see Fig 5.23
[732] Chapman forthcoming b

**Plan Unit III**

The most extensive excavations within this area were undertaken along Woolmonger Street from 1994-7. Following a desk-based assessment (DBA) and the excavation of evaluation trenches a tripartite archaeological strategy was adopted, comprising pre-emptive archaeological excavation of the most promising areas, a watching brief of the remaining areas affected by the development and preservation of areas unaffected.[733] This strategy means we don't have such a large area of continuous excavated street frontage as at St Peter's Street but the results of the work do again provide evidence of occupation stretching over a period of around 1,000 years from the early Saxon period through to the late 15th/early 16th centuries.[734]

The best evidence comes from the north side of Woolmonger Street where two areas were intensively excavated: a West Trench of 280m² and an East Trench of 240m²; both trenches contained a street frontage of around 20m in length. In addition a further trench, Trench 10, of 216m², excavated as part of the evaluation work, also provides information of value. Taken together the three trenches comprise an excavated street frontage of 60m (Fig A2.1). As with St Peter's Street the area lies away from the centre of the post-Conquest settlement around All Saints' church so that the results for this period do not necessarily reflect what we might expect in a more central area.

The earliest firm evidence for occupation comes in the late Saxon period. In the west trench parts of three cellared buildings were uncovered (Fig 5.43). The best preserved of the cellars (Cellar 1) was 4.5m in length, 4.2m width and 1m in depth. It formed the western bay of a posthole building at least 11.8m in length and 6.4m in width with a hearth in its eastern bay. The backfill of the cellar contained a large proportion of Northampton Ware, suggesting that it went out of use before the end of the 10th century, although the overlying posthole building continued in use for some time before being burnt down. Importantly the late Saxon features in the trench were all aligned at an angle eccentric to that of Woolmonger Street, and one of

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[733] DBA: Shaw 1993a; Evaluations: Shaw and Steadman 1994, Parry and Webster 1994; Excavation: Soden 1998-9
[734] The limited early Saxon evidence is discussed separately – see HLU1

the cellars actually ran under the road line, indicating that Woolmonger Street had not been laid out by this time (Fig 5.44).

The evidence for late Saxon activity in the east trench was of a different nature. A slightly curving gully, 0.5m wide, ran approximately north-south across the site with a series of postholes running parallel to it on its west side (Fig A2.2). This was perhaps a boundary work of some form. Again its line is noticeably eccentric to that of Woolmonger Street. Accordingly the archaeological evidence indicates that Woolmonger Street was a post-Conquest street rather than forming part of an early alignment continued by Abington Street as suggested by Lee.[735]

The late Saxon features in the west trench do, however, lie approximately parallel, to Gold Street to the north, suggesting that this street line, which may date back Roman times, may have been influencing the layout of settlement for some distance back from its frontage (Fig A2.3).

Following the destruction of the late Saxon buildings in the west trench there was a phase of further timber buildings of late 11th century date which had gone through a series of alterations and renewals (Fig 5.47). They are aligned upon Woolmonger Street demonstrating that the street was laid out at this time.

In the east trench a mass of postholes dated to the 12th – mid-13th centuries indicated the presence of one or more timber buildings which were probably subject to multiple phases of building and rebuilding (Fig A2.4). Sufficient survived to suggest that the building(s) were aligned along Woolmonger Street, but removal of levels of this date by later activity, particularly the excavation and subsequent robbing of the foundation trenches for a later stone building means that we cannot be sure of the precise layout of any buildings.

Both trenches saw a dramatic change in the settlement form around the mid-13th century with the appearance of stone buildings set along the Woolmonger Street frontage. In the west trench a stone building (Building 1) comprising a single room 11m in length and 5.5m in width was constructed lying parallel to Woolmonger. Subsequently, perhaps in the late 13th

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[735] See Appendix 1: Plan Unit III above for Lee's suggestion

century, a further building (Building 2) was added to the west although only its south wall could be identified (Fig 5.49). A slot within this new building, parallel to the south wall may have held a sill to support a stair to an upper floor. Building 2 was interpreted in the original report as an extension to Building 1.[736] However, given that one of the Victorian plot boundaries runs along the division between the two structures I have interpreted them as separate buildings. In the east trench a stone building (Building 3), measuring around 15m by 5m externally and divided into two unequal bays, was constructed around the mid-13th century, again set parallel to Woolmonger Street (Fig 5.50). The largest room, on the east, included a central hearth and was interpreted as a hall; the smaller room, to the west, was interpreted as a parlour. No earlier than the late 14th century a second floor was added to the main building accessed by external stairs at the back away from the street frontage. The insertion of a second floor and the discovery of small amounts of painted wall plaster and window glass suggest that the building may have had a status above the ordinary. In the yard area behind the main building a detached stone building, incorporating a malt kiln, was interpreted as a malthouse or kitchen. In both trenches the stone buildings survived until the late 15th - early 16th centuries after which there was a hiatus in settlement until the 18th-19th centuries.

As regards the plot boundaries, one boundary (PB10) is located in the west trench and two (PBs 11 and 12) in the east trench. None of these bear any relationship to the late Saxon features, and indeed PB10 cuts through one of the cellared buildings. The evidence is equivocal for the post-Conquest timber phase but is much better for the mid-13th century stone building phase. Hence in the west trench PB10 can be seen to run along the dividing wall between Buildings 1 and 2, suggesting that the two buildings were separate properties rather than one being an extension to the other as previously interpreted (although it is possible that a single property was divided into two at a later date). In the east trench PB11 can be seen to run along the west wall of Building 3. PB12 cuts through the building, however, and must date to a later period. Accordingly two of the three boundaries can be seen to date back to at least the mid-13th century. If we come forward in time both of these boundaries survived until widespread demolition along the street in the 1990s.

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[736] Soden 1998-9, 82

A further trench (Fig A2.1: Trench 10), a short distance to the east of the east trench, was excavated as part of the evaluation works. Importantly there was no sign that the street frontage had ever been occupied by buildings. Instead there was a succession of pits dating from the late Saxon period onwards. Hence unlike the excavated portion of St Peter's Street in the early 15th century the Woolmonger Street frontage was never completely built-up.

**Plan Unit IV**

There has been little archaeological work in this area. A small excavation at the Moat House Hotel (Fig A1.3Q) did give us some information, however.[737] Although no actual buildings were discovered on the site the presence of pits of 10th – 11th century date did at least suggest the presence of pre-Conquest occupation in the area confirming that settlement had spread to the north-east quarter of the area enclosed by the double ring of streets by this date. Further pits of 12th - early 13th century date suggest continued occupation but a change in the nature of features within the area took place in the late 13th century with the excavation of large, deep, pits which were presumably quarry pits for the extraction of ironstone. Since the Dominican Friary is thought to have been located in this area it is tempting to suggest that the stone was intended for friary buildings but this can only be speculation. The quarry pits had been infilled by the 14th century and subsequently a 'garden' soil developed suggesting that the area was given over to cultivation.

**Plan Unit V**

The only excavation within this plan unit was a small-scale investigation by the Mayorhold (Fig A1.5O) in 1971.[738] The site was badly disturbed but enough survived to demonstrate occupation from at least the 12th century onwards with stone buildings of 13th-16th century date. Two sherds of late Saxon Northampton Ware in residual contexts may hint at earlier activity adjacent to the likely market place by the north gate of the late Saxon settlement.

**Plan Unit VI**

There have been no archaeological excavations within this plan unit

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[737] Chapman 2000-01
[738] Mynard 1976

**Plan Unit VII**

Again there has been little excavation in this area but there was an opportunity for a small excavation at 46-50 Sheep Street (Fig 6.9I) in 2003-4 which produced results of interest.[739] Evaluation work established that the best survival was to the south of the site within the former 46 Sheep Street. A possible cellar of 11th-12th century date was uncovered set parallel to, but over 5m back from, the Sheep Street frontage; it extended beyond the property boundary to the south and so pre-dated the laying out of boundaries between 44 and 46 Sheep Street. The ?cellar was 6.5m long (north-south) x at least 5.5m wide (east-west) x 2.1m deep. It was backfilled in the 12th century but its date of construction is uncertain so that it could conceivably date to the pre-conquest period which would have important implications for the spread of settlement in Northampton as the site lies some way outside the presumed late Saxon area. When compared to other late Saxon cellared buildings in Northampton, however, this feature does seem rather large and abnormally deep. Elsewhere in the town the surviving depth of the late Saxon cellars is generally up to 1m. Horsman produced a table showing the size of the better-preserved sunken-floored buildings at London which showed a similar situation with only one cellar of comparable depth to the Sheep Street structure.[740] Possibly we are seeing a post-Conquest cellared building of a rather different type. There was extensive pit digging on the site in the 12th - early 13th centuries, including up to the Sheep Street frontage. It was suggested that the 12th century pits may have been excavated for the extraction of clay while the early 13th century ones were for rubbish disposal. One of the latter pits ran into the area of 44 Sheep Street suggesting that the boundary between 44 and 46 Sheep Street had not been laid out by this time; others lay close to the Sheep Street frontage, perhaps indicating that there was no structure on the frontage at this date. Hence the domestic rubbish in the pits would suggest 12th-early 13th century occupation in the area but there was no indication of a building on the site between the abandonment of the cellar in the 12th century and the construction of a 'cottage' on 44 Sheep Street in the 16th century. This is a useful indication that we need not expect intensive occupation within the entire post-Conquest town, especially away from the central commercial core.

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[739] Brown 2006
[740] Horsman 1988, 68, Table 3. WAT3.

**Plan Unit VIII**

Excavations in 1974 at the SW corner of the Whitefriars precinct (Fig 6.9J) revealed stone buildings of 13th-century date set over a quarry pit of 12th-13th century date. Plot boundaries in this area suggest that there may have been properties fronting on to Newland but whether these buildings were part of the friary is uncertain.[741]

**Plan Unit IX**

*Sub-unit IXa*

Archaeological excavations in 1972 uncovered part of the church and one of the claustral ranges of the Greyfriars (Fig A10L).[742] There was, however, considerable disturbance from Victorian cellarage so that it was impossible to reconstruct a more complete plan of the friary.

*Sub-unit IXd*

Small scale excavations in 1980 away from the Abington Street frontage (Fig A1.10M) were primarily undertaken to look for signs of defences pre-dating the medieval line in an area where putative 'Anglo-Norman' defences were supposed to run.[743] No evidence of these was uncovered. Towards the west end of the area postholes and pits associated with medieval pottery of 12th century date onwards were uncovered but there was little indication of settlement in the trenches further to the east.

**Plan Unit X**

*Sub-unit Xa*

A chance arose to excavate to the north of St Giles' Street in 1990 (Fig A1.10N). Although the site was a small one it did present an unusual opportunity to look at a site towards the centre of the post-Conquest town.[744] The chief priority for the investigation was to attempt to locate and excavate at least one medieval property in its entirety. In the event, however, the

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[741] RCHM(E) 1985, microfiche, Northampton, Site 14, 339-40
[742] Williams 1978
[743] RCHM(E) 1985, microfiche, Northampton Site 37, 382-83
[744] Shaw 1996-7

site illustrated many of the problems and frustrations of excavating a site within a commercial core. The immediate St Giles' Street frontage proved to be cellared to such a depth as to have removed all medieval deposits. Hence the excavation was moved back around 6m from the street frontage. An area of around 170m$^2$ was excavated but even this area proved to have been heavily disturbed. Around 52m$^2$ (30%) of the later medieval deposits had been removed by more recent intrusions while for the earliest period of activity in the 11$^{th}$ - mid 12$^{th}$ centuries around 100m$^2$ (59%) had been removed by later features. Nevertheless sufficient survived to give a reasonable indication of the settlement history of the area although it was not possible to recover a complete tenement as had been hoped.

A phase of timber buildings from at least the mid-12$^{th}$ century was indicated with a boundary ditch separating two areas of activity although a gap within it suggests that it separated two parts of the same property. In the late 13$^{th}$ century a stone building was constructed on the west side of the site while the east side contained ovens and a malt kiln which perhaps suggest a brewhouse/bakehouse complex (Fig 5.54A). As with the earlier phase the two sides were separated by a boundary ditch (medieval boundary 1) ditch which lay 2.5m east of the earlier boundary. This was later replaced by a stone boundary wall (medieval boundary 2) immediately to the east. The stone building and associated features went out of use around 1525 and there was a period of abandonment when the walls were 'robbed' for their stone and layers of loam were deposited within the rooms.

The Victorian plot boundary (PB50) runs along the line of the medieval boundaries and hence dates back to the late 13$^{th}$ century. It survived down to the 1960s at which time it formed the boundary between Nos 1 and 1a St Giles' Street (Fig 5.540B).

Despite the limited nature of the work the results are illuminating. The sequence of post-conquest activity mirrors that in other more remote areas of the town with the notable difference that the stone building lies at right angles, rather than parallel, to St Giles' Street. Once again we have evidence of a long-lived boundary but in this case we also have evidence that this boundary shifted between the mid-12$^{th}$ and late 13$^{th}$ centuries - although it is likely to have been an internal property boundary which would have made such a shift an easier proposition.

*Sub-unit Xb*

Excavations in this area in 1981-82 and 1999 were primarily designed to locate and investigate the site of Gobion Manor (Fig A1.10O), a major medieval urban manor house burnt down in the Great Fire of 1675, and to determine whether it had any pre-conquest antecedent.[745] A small quantity of late Saxon pottery was recovered in residual contexts and may indicate activity of this date in the area. The earliest definite feature was a large quarry pit of 12$^{th}$ century date. A boundary ditch of 13$^{th}$ century date running north-south across the centre of the site discovered in the 1999 excavations was suggested as the possible boundary between Gobion Manor to the east and properties fronting on to Fish Street to the west but no remains related to the manor were found in either excavation.

*Sub-unit Xc*

The only archaeological excavation in this area was small scale trial trenching in 1982 immediately north of St Giles' churchyard (Fig A1.10P). This revealed that the area had been part of a large quarry backfilled in the medieval period. The discovery of three fragmentary skeletons suggested that St Giles' cemetery had at one time extended this far north. The archaeological evidence for quarrying in this area echoes the documentary evidence.[746]

**Plan Unit XI**

There have been no archaeological excavations within this plan unit

**Plan Unit XII**

This is an interesting plan unit from the point of view of our study because it lies in a relatively remote area of the medieval town in the south-east quarter of the walled area, away from the presumed area of pre-Conquest settlement and away from the main streets so that we might expect it to be one of the latest and least intensively settled areas of the walled town. Few major boundaries can be discerned for the area but, as we have seen, the documentary evidence suggests that by the late medieval period the area along Derngate was predominantly

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[745] Williams and Farwell 1984; Capon 2005
[746] See Appendix 1: Plan Unit Xc

occupied by large urban houses, particularly The Grange with its impressive tower house.[747] The relatively large amount of excavation in the area potentially affords us the opportunity to test these hypotheses.

*West side: Swan Street and Derngate frontages and area behind*

There have been three excavations along the east side of Swan Street, in addition to one along the west side.[748] Excavations at the bottom, southern end of the street (Swan Street South: Fig A1.10Q), in 1989 demonstrated the changing use of an area of land behind a minor street within the walled town.[749] Such marginal sites are valuable in that they often prove to be more sensitive to the ebb and flow of a town's economic fortunes than the more intensively occupied major street frontages. The site may have lain within the town fields in the late Saxon period for there is evidence of the deposition of a 'cultivation soil' up to 0.5m in depth (Fig A2.5: Sub-phase 1b). Settlement appears to have spread into the area around the mid-12th century when a number of postholes and stakeholes, associated with rubbish pits, perhaps suggest dwellings of a low-status, rather ephemeral, nature. Their alignment is eccentric to that of Swan Street (Fig A2.5: Sub-phase 2b). Early in the 13th century three rectangular cut features of a shallow surviving depth (0.1m – 0.5m) appear to represent remnants of semi-cellared structures of some form, perhaps rather primitive dwellings or outhouses (Fig 5.55: Sub-phase 2c). Similar features are quite common on Northampton at this period.[750] They are aligned parallel to Swan Street suggesting that the street had been laid out by this time. Subsequently, in the 14th century, there was a hiatus in occupation activity when the formation of a 'cultivation soil' suggests the area may have been used for gardening (Fig 5.55: Sub-phase 3a). Further postholes, stakeholes and a shallow trench suggest a move away from horticulture on the 15th century but the nature of the possible buildings suggest either primitive dwellings or possibly sheds or stables (Fig 5.55: Sub-phase 3b). By the 16th century the area seems to have been given over to cultivation once again. The evidence for this is in the form of a large number of shallow trenches, interpreted as bedding trenches (Fig 5.55: Sub-phase 3c).

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[747] See Appendix 1: Plan Unit XII
[748] For the latter see Sub-unit XIIIc below
[749] Shaw and Steadman 1993-4
[750] See for example Plan Unit XVI below

Hence we see a picture here of episodes of low-status occupation interspersed with periods of horticultural activity, reminding us that medieval towns were not necessarily, or indeed commonly, densely built up away from the main streets. No evidence for boundaries was found on the Swan Street South site despite the excavation of a length of frontage of around 26m; either the area was within a single large property or any demarcation between properties was not sufficiently substantial to leave any trace.

A recent excavation on Swan Street (Swan Street Central: Fig A1.10R) around 100m to the north of the previous site, saw a similar pattern of development but did include a property boundary.[751] Extensive quarrying took place on the site in the post-Conquest period and these pits were backfilled in the late 12th-13th centuries. Again there was evidence that the street was laid out in the Swan Street 13th century at which time the quarry pits received their final backfill and the land was terraced for occupation. From the late 13th century an ironstone wall served as a property boundary and revetment for the terrace (Fig 5.58). Once established this boundary continued in use until it was swept away in 21st century redevelopment.[752] In the 15th century a number of dwellings with gardens and stone-lined cesspits to the rear were erected on the upslope side of the boundary wall but this was short-lived and in the 16th century the land was given over to horticulture. The boundary found during the excavation was checked against the plot from the Victorian mapping. It lay on the same line but around 2m to the north. Since it corresponds exactly to the boundary as shown on the 1960s mapping it does demonstrate that the Victorian mapping is not as accurate as the later mapping as demonstrated above.[753]

Small-scale excavations undertaken in 1980 towards the northern end of the street (Swan Street North: Fig A1.10S) established that there were timber buildings fronting on to Swan Street between the 12th/13th and 17th centuries.[754] Further to the north a small trench by the Derngate frontage (Fig A1.10T) located a rubbish pit dated to the 11th century and established that there were stone-founded buildings on this frontage between the 13th-15th centuries. A

[751] Finn 2014
[752] Finn 2014, 18-20
[753] See Cartographic Sources above page 00; the boundary line plotted from the Victorian mapping is shown on Fig A1.10
[754] Shaw 1984, 66, 69

watching brief in the area behind the frontages was chiefly of interest in establishing that the area had been heavily quarried for ironstone in the 12th century.[755]

*East side: Derngate frontage and area behind*

Further to the east the closure of the Northampton High School for Girls site which occupied an area of almost 2ha (0.8 acres) to the south of Derngate running down to Victoria Promenade led to both a large development opportunity and the need for archaeological work ahead of and during building work (Fig A1.10U). The area included the site of 'The Towre' which is shown on Speed's map of 1610 and, as we have seen, formed part of a major late medieval urban mansion known as the Grange.[756] The location of this site and the establishment of its nature formed one of the major objectives of the archaeological work, as did the establishment of the date and nature of medieval settlement on the site as a whole. In the event the project was rather fragmentary in nature. Initial evaluation was undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA) in 1991 and 1996. A total of thirteen trial trenches and two trial pits were excavated but the areas available for investigation were limited as the school was still in operation at that time.[757] Subsequently the Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) were commissioned to undertake a scheme of work 'principally a watching brief during development, augmented by limited excavation as necessary.' The emphasis was on preservation *in situ* so that only those areas where buildings were proposed were subject to a watching brief and supplementary excavation where necessary. Initially this archaeological excavation work was only undertaken down to the depth of the foundation level for the proposed buildings but for subsequent work closer to the Derngate frontage the strategy was modified to allow deeper excavation within the building footprints.[758] The results were rather disappointing due partially to the poor survival of deposits in some areas but also to the strategy imposed upon the excavators.

As so often in Northampton the archaeological work revealed extensive evidence for quarrying for ironstone, backfilled in the 12th-13th centuries. There was only a small amount of evidence for medieval occupation towards the Derngate frontage and certainly there was no

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[755] Shaw 1984, 65, 72, 74
[756] See Appendix 1: Plan Unit XII
[757] Shaw *et al* 1992; Parry and Shaw 1996
[758] Hiller *et al* 2002

evidence for major buildings. This may support the idea that the Derngate frontage was the focus for a small number of major properties rather than being a densely built-up frontage. Two small cut features may represent semi-cellared buildings similar to those found at the southern end of Swan Street; they were of 12th-13th century date.[759] Interestingly there is evidence of early occupation towards the southern end of the area towards the town wall. Trench A of the NA work uncovered evidence for a posthole building and rubbish pits close to the medieval town wall, while the OAU work discovered similar evidence around 10m to the north.[760] In both cases it would appear that this occupation was of 12th – 13th century date. Could this be connected to an internal road running around the inside of the defences as suggested by the documentary evidence?[761] It must be admitted, however, that no evidence for such a road was discovered. The tail end of a clay bank was found close to the southern limit of the site in three trenches; its position suggests that it formed part of the town defences.[762]

'The Towre' and associated buildings of the Grange were not located leading the OAU report to follow Welsh in suggesting that the Tower in fact lay not where Speed showed it on his map and not within the area marked as Tower Close on the Noble and Butlin map but to the north of Derngate. Speed's misplacing of the building was put down to either a 'simple error' or '…that by positioning the building to the south of the road, Speed (whether by instruction or his own decision) was emphasising the fact that a substantial part of the land south of the road was part of the Grange'.[763] Given that the entire area was not excavated and that the most likely area of 'The Towre'/The Grange lies a little to the west of the most intensively investigated portion of the site there is no need to suggest such a complicated machination on Speed's part (Fig A1.11). I know of no other case it has been suggested that he deliberately sited a building away from its true location. Further evidence of the veracity of Speed's placing of 'The Towre' is given by the order of the town assembly in 1647 that the 'Towre howse' be used as a plague house as it lay 'out of the herte of the towne near the medowes

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[759] Hiller *et al* 2002, 58
[760] NA work: Shaw *et al* 1992, Trench A, 3-5, 23; OAU work: Hiller et al 2002, 37-40, 58
[761] See Appendix 1: DL2
[762] Shaw 1992, 3-4, 7, 24; Hiller *et al* 2002, 37, 56
[763] Hiller *et al* 2002, 59; Welsh 1999b

and fields'.[764] A location to the north of Derngate would not be close to the town meadows or fields.

The evidence from the former High School for Girls site is disappointing. This can to some extent be blamed on poor preservation in some areas but the rigid strategy adopted, although strictly speaking in line with the requirements of PPG16, did lead to the loss of evidence. Hence it would have been useful to open up a larger area around NA's evaluation Trench A which contained good evidence for early occupation but since most of the surrounding area was outside the building footprint it was not investigated. The present state of the site shows that much of the area not occupied by buildings comprises service roads rather than being open areas so that it is perhaps doubtful whether those areas of theoretical preservation will be considered worthwhile investigating in the future.

**Plan Unit XIII**

*Sub-unit XIIIb*

The south-eastern portion of this sub-unit was the subject of extensive archaeological excavations ahead of the construction of new offices for Northampton Borough Council (Fig A1.12K). A large-scale excavation of an area of around 1400m$^2$ facing on to St John's Street was undertaken in 2014 following earlier evaluation work in 1990 and 2010. This is the largest area excavated within the medieval town. Unfortunately, however, the site data is still awaiting analysis so that we are reliant upon short summary reports of the 2010 evaluation and 2014 excavation together with a report on the original evaluation.[765] The available data indicates settlement begins on the site around the mid-12$^{th}$ century with the construction of a small timber building fronting on to St John's Street to the south. In the 13$^{th}$ century there was a stone building with wells and ovens behind while the presence of malting ovens suggests a 14$^{th}$ century brewery. Subsequently there was a hiatus in occupation when the site was robbed for stone and became a dump for soil and domestic refuse, before a further stone building was constructed in the 16$^{th}$ century. The perimeter of this plot was surrounded by a stone wall which appears to verify the delineation of such a wall on Speed's map of 1610. There was no

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[764] See Appendix 1: Plan Unit XII
[765] 2014 excavation summary report: Brown and Elston 2017; 1990 evaluation: Shaw 1993b

indication of buildings on Fetter Street until the 17th century. Hence the results from the site are perhaps similar to what might be anticipated of a back-street site in the post-Conquest town with no sign of pre-Conquest occupation and settlement moving into the area around the mid-12th century. The changeover from timber to stone buildings in the 13th century fits in with experience elsewhere. A hiatus in occupation in the 15th century is a little earlier than experienced at St Peter's Street but the renewal of occupation in the 16th century is also earlier. Does the late occupation evidence for Fetter Street suggest that this is a late addition to the street pattern? More can be said when the results have been fully analysed and any conclusions must be tentative for the moment. Of particular interest will be the comparison of the plot boundaries to the evidence from the Victorian mapping.

*Sub-unit XIIIc*

This plan unit encompasses the precinct of St John's Hospital. Archaeological excavation was undertaken on its eastern side towards Swan Street in 2012 (Fig A1.12L).[766] Pits of 13th-early 14th century date were discovered at the north and south ends of the site. Those to the north included some which were markedly larger and deeper, up to 3.8m diameter across and 2.5m deep, and probably originated as quarry pits. Others to the north and those to the south were smaller and shallower. An east-west boundary wall which abutted the northern wall of a building presumably fronting on to Swan Street was found at the southern end of the excavation trench. The boundary and building appear to be the same features shown on the Noble and Butlin map of 1746. They were accordingly ascribed in the excavation report to the 18th-19th centuries. There was, however, no dating evidence associated with these features and it is possible that the boundary wall at least dates back to the medieval period. A north-south boundary shown on the Noble and Butlin map runs north-south parallel to, and 48m to the west of, Swan Street suggesting perhaps that this area had been taken out of the precinct and given over to occupation fronting on the street in the medieval period. The presence of squirrel and cat bones in the medieval pits suggest the processing of small animal pelts, evidence for which has been found elsewhere in Northampton.[767] This perhaps supports the

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[766] Carlyle *et al* 2017
[767] Geber and Armitage 2017, 191

idea of this area comprising properties fronting on to Swan Street which, in this case, had been given over to small-scale industrial use.

**Plan Units XIV and XV**

There have been no archaeological excavations within these plan units

**Plan Unit XVI**

The only excavation within the plan unit is of a small area adjacent to the north side of Kettering Road undertaken in 1988 (Fig 5.60E).[768] It became clear that the road had been widened so that the frontage of any buildings lay outside the site under the modern pavement. Occupation began in the 12th century. A few timber slots and postholes in Trench A may indicate timber buildings on the Kettering Road frontage but more substantial evidence survived in Trench C, towards the back of the site, in the form of two small semi-cellared structures, perhaps workshops or storage areas rather than dwellings, set around 15m back from the original street frontage (Fig 5.70). Around the mid-13th century two stone-founded structures, or one structure with an annexe, were built along the Kettering Road frontage set parallel to the street. Only their back wall and around 0.5m of the interior floor levels could be excavated (Fig 5.71). Occupation ceased around 1400 with no evidence of further buildings on the site until the 19th century. Although only a small area was excavated this was nevertheless the largest investigation of a suburban area. The results support the evidence from non-invasive sources suggesting occupation activity commencing in the 12th century and diminishing from the 15th century. Buildings, set parallel to the street frontage, could be attested by the mid-13th century.

**Plan Unit XVII**

A small scale evaluation in 1996 located the back walls of two buildings aligned along St James' Road.[769] The earliest, dated to the 13th century, had a wide foundation trench suggesting that it had a stone superstructure, while the later, dated to the 14th-17th centuries had a narrower foundation indicating that it was likely to have been a timber-framed building

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[768] Shaw 1996-7
[769] Shaw and Soden 1996

set on a dwarf stone wall. This mirrors findings elsewhere in Northampton.[770] The later building may be one shown in this area on Speed's map of 1610. There was no evidence for subsequent occupation on the site until the mid-19th century.

**Plan Unit XVIII**

There has been no archaeological excavation within this plan unit. However, skeletons found in the late 19th and mid-20th centuries at Cotton End are likely to be from the cemetery associated with St Leonard's hospital.[771]

**Plan Unit XIX**

There has been no archaeological excavation within this plan unit. However, human remains found in the area in 1992 were radiocarbon dated to the mid-12th-late 13th century. They were found around 50m to the south of the likely site of the Jewish cemetery. Given their dating, however, they are likely to be Jewish burials, suggesting perhaps that the cemetery was larger than anticipated or that it originally lay in this area.[772] A 13th century Jewish tombstone found during building work towards the north end of the town in the mid-19th century was presumably originally from the cemetery.[773]

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[770] Shaw 1985, 122
[771] RCHM(E) 1985, microfiche, Hardingstone Site 27, 292
[772] Cadman 1993
[773] Roberts 1992

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