Chapter Four

THE TOWNS OF WILTSHIRE[1]

By Jeremy Haslam

Introduction

WILTSHIRE HAS BEEN DESCRIBED by Maitland as 'the classical land of small boroughs'; it certainly had more of these boroughs than any other county by the time of Domesday (Darby 1977, 296-7, 368). These 'petty boroughs' may have been, in comparison with the huge towns of Midland and eastern England, relatively small, and as elements in the total settlement landscape of the south-west they may have been less distinct from the surrounding countryside. But already by the early 10th century (and as this chapter will suggest, rather earlier) they were important focal points of administrative and economic activity, and must have possessed physical as well as social characteristics no less 'urban' than those shown by many of the larger urban places of the period.

There are 10 places in the county which are variously described in Domesday Book either as boroughs, as having burgesses or a market, or as being liable to payment of the third penny, from which it can be inferred that these were urban places certainly in the early 11th century and very probably the 10th century. These places are: Bedwyn, Bradford-on-Avon, Calne, Cricklade, Malmesbury, Marlborough, Salisbury (Old Sarum), Tilshead, Warminster, and Wilton.[2]

There are two, possibly four, other places not so described, which share so many of the characteristics of these Domesday boroughs as to suggest that by the later Saxon period they, too, had developed into truly urban places. These are: Amesbury, Chippenham, and possibly Westbury and Downton.

It is proposed to discuss the topographical and historical characteristics of these places in such a way that common features—of their lay-out, their historical development, and their wider spatial and temporal relationships in the historical landscape—can be compared. From these comparisons it should be possible to make valid inferences about early urban development over an area which forms a significant portion of the area of Saxon Wessex.

There are perhaps four other important types of evidence around which more inferential arguments suggesting urban status and development can be woven. These are, firstly, the record of the Burghal Hidage document of the early 10th century, which mentions four places in the county: Chisbury, Cricklade, Malmesbury, and Wilton.

It is not in doubt that most of those places mentioned in the Burghal Hidage which were not merely re-fortified hill-forts were already—or at least were very soon to become—truly urban places in the early 10th century (Loyn, 1961; Biddle, 1976a). As will be discussed further below, Chisbury, the only re-fortified Iron Age hill-fort
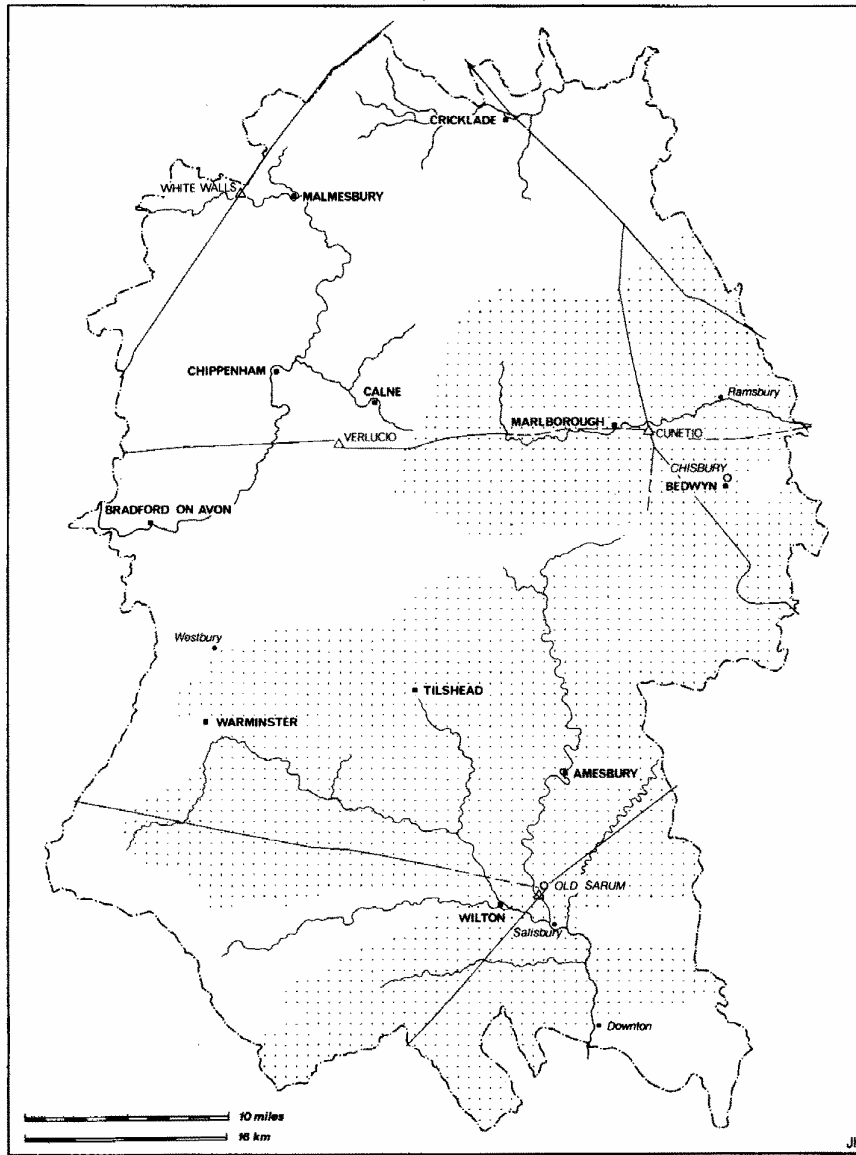
32. Wiltshire, showing Saxon towns (bold capitals) with other places mentioned in the text

in this list, stands in close topographical and historical relationship to Bedwyn at its foot, and the two must be considered together.

The second line of positive evidence is the existence of pre-Conquest mints, which are known from the following places: Bedwyn, Cricklade, Malmesbury, Marlborough, Salisbury (Old Sarum), Warminster and Wilton.[3]

As Professor Loyn (1961) (amongst others) has pointed out, the evidence from mints is one of the most direct indications of royal control of the type of economic activity which is a necessary characteristic of urban life, whether found in defended or undefended settlements. In particular at Wilton and Old Sarum, the existence of closely dateable mint signatures and moneyers is important evidence for their development in the early 11th century.

A third type of evidence, the topographical features shown by a place or group of places, is seldom one which has been applied systematically to groups of the smaller towns. It will be shown below, however, that many of the places mentioned above have topographical characteristics which suggest that both in their siting and their layout they were regularly ordered (as distinct from planned) settlements, and, secondly, that many of these features are common to a group of places which share a common historical development. The topographical patterns shown particularly by Wilton, Chippenham and Calne suggest the association of a market-place, a minster church, an area set aside as an enclosed (possibly fortified) royal residence, and an area for other houses, which together form a complex of features which can possibly be taken back to the 8th century. As will be shown, these observations appear to reinforce conclusions about the development of these places that can be drawn from other kinds of evidence.

A fourth type of evidence, though it is one which is not directly indicative of urban status as such, is the part which a place has played in the historical landscape. The evidence is complex, involving both spatial and temporal connections. In this chapter, therefore, this evidence, insofar as it relates to all 15 of the places already mentioned above, can only be examined briefly. Nevertheless, the relationships described below show quite clearly, firstly, that without exception these urban places developed at or near the centres of royal estates, most of which are recorded as being 'ancient demesne' in Domesday Book and were therefore probably in royal hands in the early years of the formation of the West Saxon kingdom. It is suggested that these places developed their urban characteristics as a direct result of their role as central places on these royal estates at a period which was arguably somewhat earlier than the period (the 10th century) most commonly accepted for the beginning of the general growth and spread of urban institutions in England. And, secondly, these estate centres were generally directly related (albeit with links which become dimmer in the more distant past) to estates and/or central settlement locations which can be taken back through the early Saxon to the Roman period, and in some cases back to the pre-Roman Iron Age. Bradford-on-Avon, which is the site of an Iron Age hill-fort, a large Roman villa and cemetery, an early Saxon river crossing and battle site, an early 11th-century royal and subsequently monastic estate centre, and a Domesday borough, is perhaps the clearest example of a pattern of continuity from the Iron Age to the present, both in the central settlement and in its larger territory. It is argued below that this pattern is shown (with variations) by most of the other places mentioned in this chapter.

Bradford-on-Avon

Of all the places discussed in this chapter, Bradford-on-Avon is probably the one which shows the best archaeological and historical evidence for suggesting that the later-Saxon urban place has developed on or very near the site which was the focus of its immediate area from the Iron Age onwards. The physical focus of this site was the natural ford, described as 'braden forda be afne' in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* in 652. On the edge of the steep hillside overlooking the ford was the Iron Age hill-fort of Budbury (Figs. 35 and 36), excavated in 1969 (Wainwright 1970). Immediately to the north of this was a substantial Roman villa, discovered and partly excavated in 1977. It must be from this villa, and from a probable settlement around it, that the many burials, pottery and coins found in the vicinity derived.[4] Though there were no obvious indications of continuity of occupation in the villa into the 5th century, it seems likely that the estate of which it was clearly the centre survived to become the Domesday hundred and parish with little change. The northern boundary of this land unit is still formed by the disused Roman road between Bath and *Verlucio* and, although further work is necessary to document it in detail, its western boundary (now the county boundary) is contiguous with the area formerly dependent upon Roman Bath. An element in the early post-Roman organisation of this estate is indicated by the village of Cumberwell to the north of Bradford, whose name suggests a settlement of Welsh or British origin (Smith 1956, i, 119).

The later history of Bradford also suggests that the settlement focus shifted from the villa on the hill to around the ford in the valley early in the Saxon period. Bradford was the site of a battle, presumably at the river crossing, in 652. Most commentators have regarded this as a battle between Britons and Saxons (e.g., Jones 1859, 9-10; Major 1913, 54; Oman 1938, 287; Hunter-Blair 1956, 36), but the description of this battle as a 'civil war' by Aethelweard (Whitelock 1979, 164, n. 5) suggests the possibility that it was fought between Saxon and Mercian forces. Since the latter had, as a result of the battle of Cirencester in 628, gained Bath and its territory (Stenton 1943, 44, 66), they might be expected to have wished to extend their control over a further stretch of the Avon and into the neighbouring estate.

Bradford was thus, in the mid-7th century, already probably a settlement, a focus of routeways over a comparatively large river, and the centre of an estate (presumably in royal hands) whose boundaries were in all probability the same as those of the later *parochia*. These conclusions are further strengthened by the foundation there of a minster church (*monasterium*) by Aldhelm before 705, which must have been established to serve, and possibly convert, an already existing population. There are indeed grounds for suggesting that the siting of this church was governed by the existence nearby of a pagan, and latterly, Christian, religious site at the holy well. At Wells (Somerset), a minster church of the same period was similarly sited near the holy wells, which has been described as one of the several places in the Celtic west of 'pagan veneration which were dedicated and perhaps adapted as baptismal foci during the Christian conversion' (Rodwell 1980, 39).

Bradford was certainly the centre of a royal estate by 1001, when it was given by Ethelred to the nuns of Shaftesbury as a refuge for both the nuns and the bones of Edward the Martyr from the Danes (Gem 1978, 109-10).[5] The writer does not now

| Boundaries		PRESHUTE	Parish names
--------	County	————	roads
--------	Hundred	▲	Roman town
--- --- ---	Parish	★	villa
--------	borough or estate	⟨hillfort symbol⟩	hillfort

33. Symbols used in Figs. 34–56. Parish boundaries are based on the Tithe Award maps, c. 1840. Boundaries in towns are based on those shown in the first edition 1 : 2500 O.S. maps, augmented by earlier evidence where indicated in captions. Contour plans of towns at two or four metre intervals are from surveys by Wiltshire County Council

34. Bradford-on-Avon area showing bounds of charter of 1001
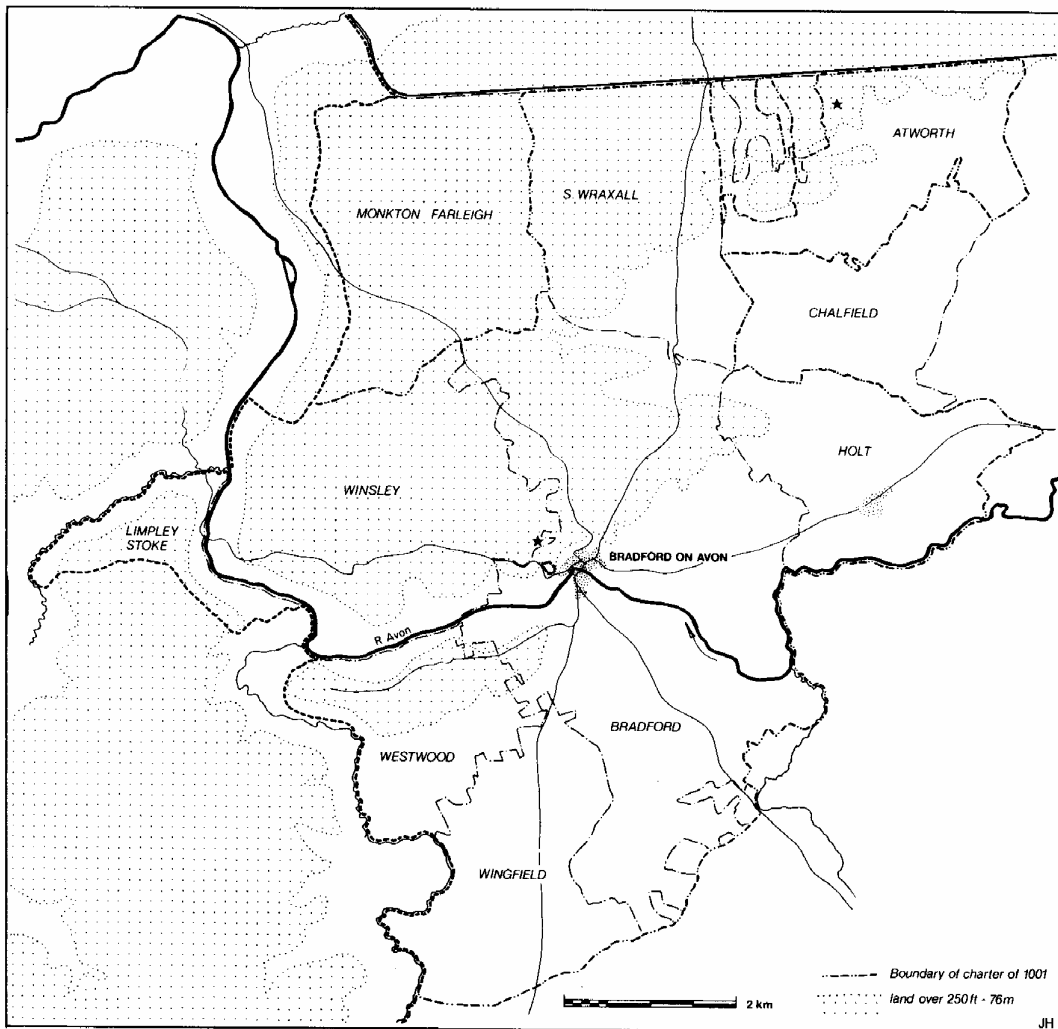
consider that this implies that Bradford was fortified (cf. Haslam 1976, 10). It is, however, in a less strategic position than Shaftesbury itself. The references in the charter must mean that it was deemed more suitable in being further from the coast, referring perhaps directly to the events of 998 when the whole of Dorset was overrun by the Danish army.

It seems likely, furthermore, that it was as a result of these events that the Saxon churches at Bradford and at Limpley Stoke (on the western boundary of the estate—see Fig. 34) were built. The controversy regarding the date of construction of the church at Bradford need not be rehearsed here. The balance of recent opinion favours a late Saxon date (Taylor 1973, 165), for which the inference has been made that
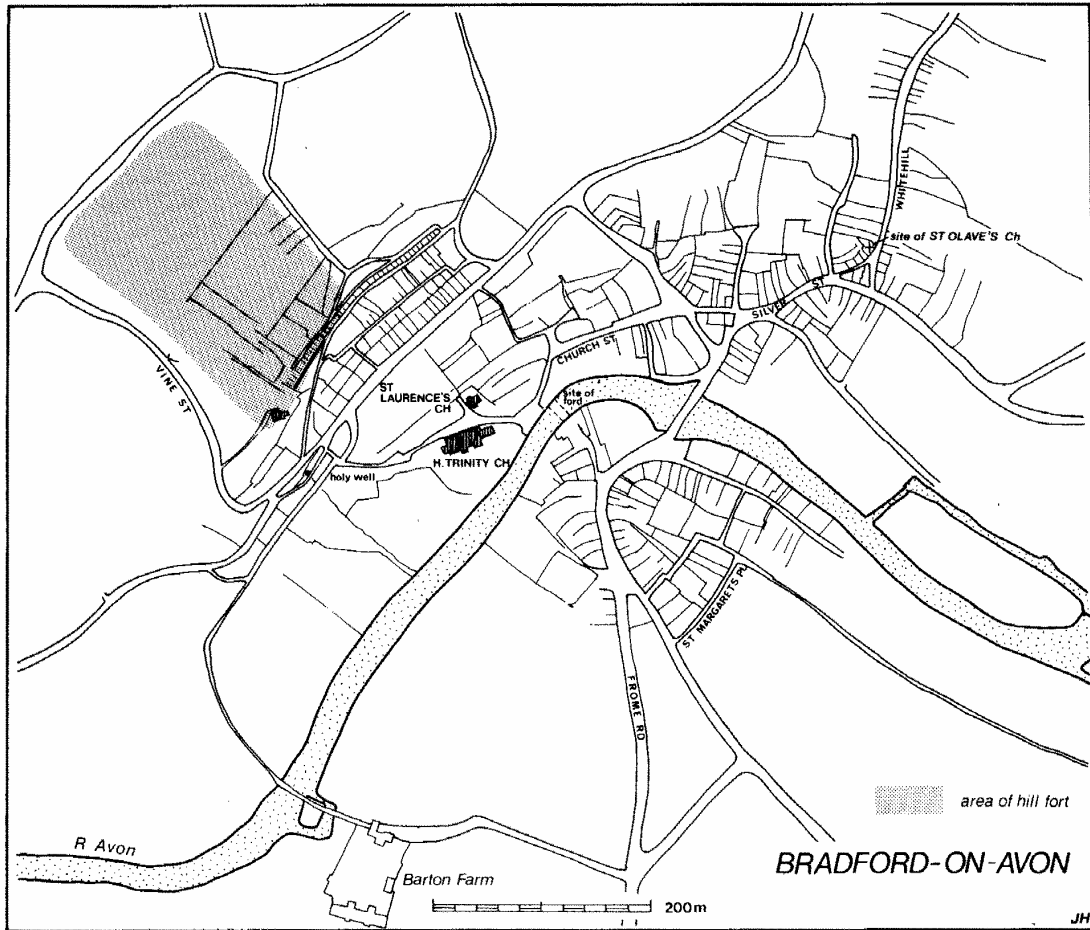
35. Bradford-on-Avon
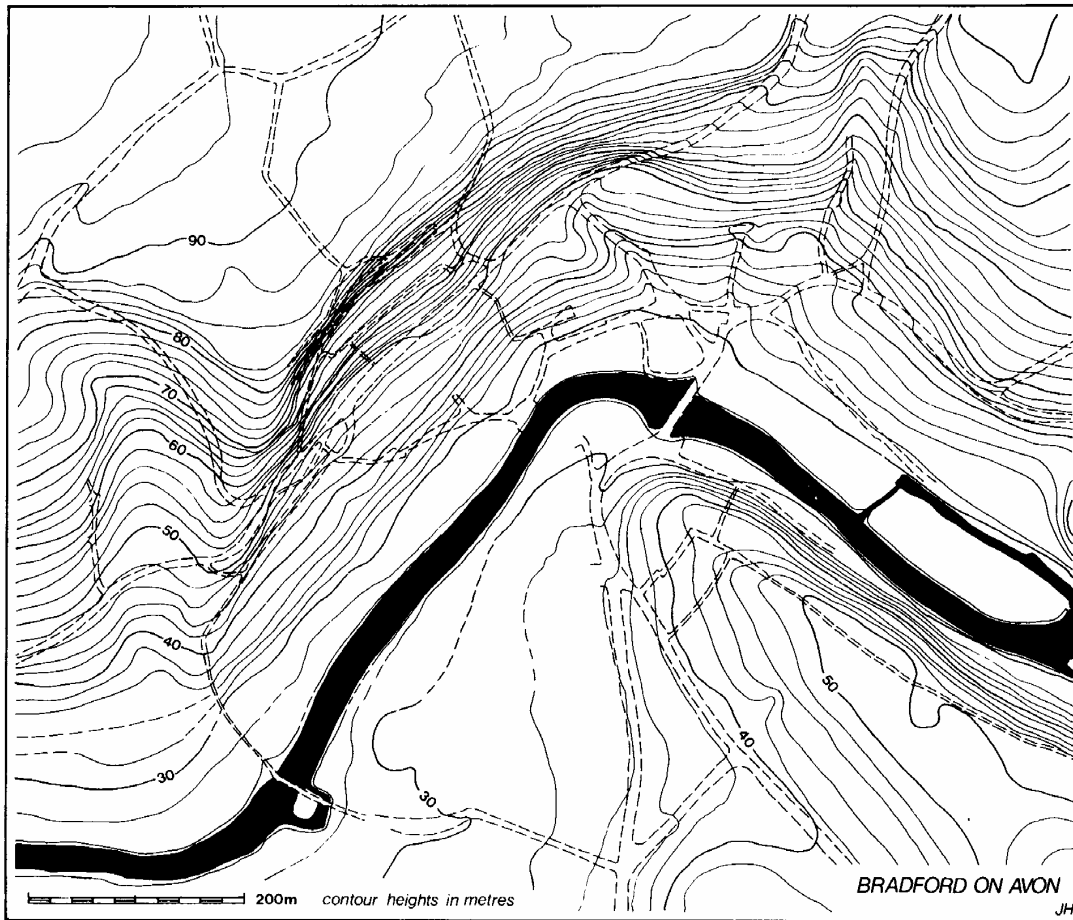
36. Bradford-on-Avon, contours at 2m. intervals

the context for its construction lies in the acquisition of Bradford by Shaftesbury abbey (Haslam 1976, 9; Hinton 1977, 24; Gem 1978, 110). Some strength is given to this by the consideration that the Saxon chapel is not on the site of the parish church. Since (as Gem [*ibid.*] has pointed out) the latter is most likely to mark the site of the minster church of St Aldhelm, the chapel must therefore have had some specialised function unconnected with a parochial role—a fact which also explains its temporary 'loss' among later buildings. This conclusion strengthens a suggestion made by H. M. Taylor (lecture at Bradford, 1975) that the chapel could have served as a reliquary chapel for the bones of Edward the Martyr, for whose safekeeping the Bradford estate had, according to the charter of 1001, been given to the nuns of Shaftesbury.

The physical development of Bradford is relatively easily discernable from its topography (Fig. 35). To the south of the ford a marked spur forms an arm of dry land, surrounded on three sides by river or marsh, which provides one of the few crossing places of a wide, often flooded and presumably originally marshy valley. The ford was in use until the early 19th century, though it was replaced by a bridge a little way upstream in the 14th century. It has already been suggested (Haslam 1976, 10), that the earliest settlement was concentrated on the northern end of this spur south of the ford, a suggestion strengthened by the concentration of early settlement at the heads of similar spurs at river crossings at, for instance, Calne, Chippenham, and Wilton (below). A comparison with the topography of these places also suggests the possibility that a discrete area of land on this spur, which survives in the 19th-century townscape (*see* Fig. 35), could have been an enclosure containing the Saxon royal *villa*. This would place it at the centre of an original settlement whose southerly limit may be marked by the presence of St Margaret's Place.

The ecclesiastical focus of the settlement was, however, clearly always on the northern side of the river, possibly reflecting, as suggested above, the existence of a pagan and early Christian religious site around the holy well. The 8th-century minster church was most likely on the site of the chancel of the present (Norman) parish church. It seems probable that the monastic precinct of Shaftesbury abbey, associated with St Lawrence's church, would have occupied at least part of the lower slopes of the hillside to the north of the church.

At a relatively early date, however, settlement must have spread—or shifted—along an early routeway to Chippenham from the northern end of the ford up the hill to the north-east. Its most likely course followed Church Street, the Shambles, Silver Street and White Hill. The site of St Olave's church, its dedication suggesting a mid-11th-century date, shows how far settlement must have reached along this route. It also, furthermore, suggests that some Viking settlement after, and perhaps as a consequence of, the raids of the late 10th and early 11th centuries was concentrated at Bradford (as well as probably at other similar early centres), possibly even augmenting its status and function as a developing urban place. A similar early routeway northwards from the ford can be traced past the church to the north-west. Its line is marked by footpaths, though partly obscured by 18th-century terraced housing, and continues up modern Wine Street to the top of the hill. Other early routeways to the south of the ford must have included the road to Frome to the south-west, and a pathway to the south along the crest of the spur which marks the site of the early settlement.

Bedwyn, Chisbury, Ramsbury, and Marlborough

These four places lie close together near the Kennet valley in eastern Wiltshire (Fig. 36a). It will be argued that in the late Saxon period their development can only be understood when their roles as high-order settlements are considered as being essentially complementary.[6]

Chisbury is a late Iron Age hill-fort (Cunliffe 1973, 431) whose inclusion (as *Cissanbyrig*) in the Burghal Hidage suggests that its defences were probably refurbished to form an element in King Alfred's systematic fortification of Wessex
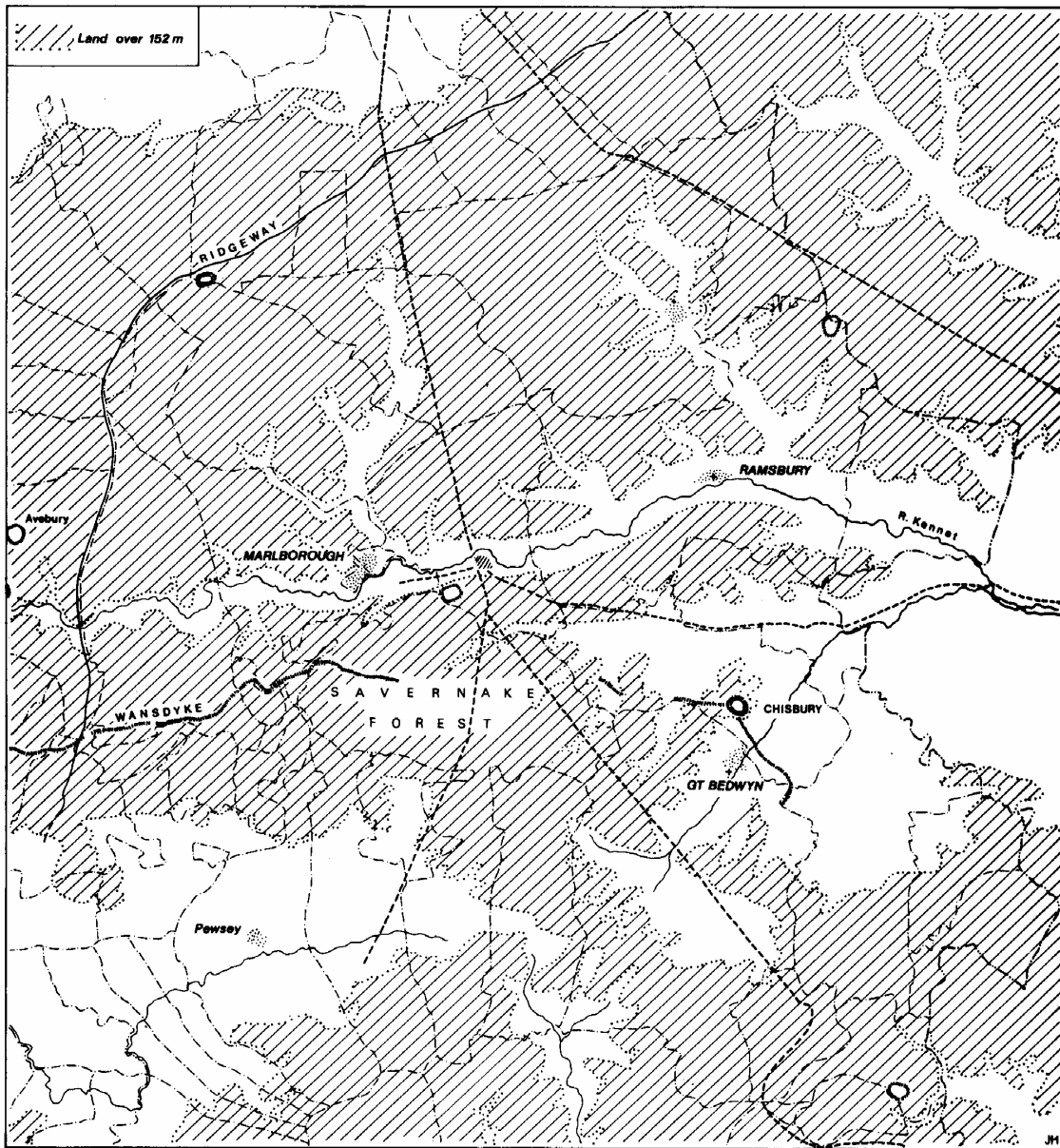
36A.   The area around the early estate centres of Bedwyn and Ramsbury. The Saxon royal multiple estate probably stretched approximately from the Ridgeway on the north and west to the county boundary on the east and south-east, and possibly comprised an area formerly dependent on the Roman town of Cunetio. The late Saxon centre of Marlborough subsequently developed on a new site within this early royal estate, probably as a burh in the early 10th century as a replacement for a hilltop burh at Chisbury.

(Brooks, 1964 75-9). This conclusion appears to be strengthened by the presence of a small medieval chapel dedicated to St Martin, at present quite isolated, at the eastern entrance of the defences. It is difficult to suggest a context for the construction of this, other than as the successor of a chapel placed by, or possibly over, the gateway of the Alfredian burh. The probable abandonment of the hill-fort in favour of settlement at Bedwyn at its foot in the early 10th century[7] suggests that the chapel is of late 9th-century origin.[8]

Immediately to the south of Chisbury lies Bedwyn. Detailed arguments have recently been set out by the writer (Haslam 1980, 58-64) suggesting that Bedwyn was the site of an early *villa regalis* at the head of a large estate which occupies roughly the catchment area of the Bedwyn stream. It is probable that it was in existence as such by the mid-7th century, and was early on provided with a minster church.

The writer has also argued (*ibid.*) that Ramsbury, which lies in the Kennet valley to the north of Bedwyn, was also an early *villa regalis*, with presumably a minster
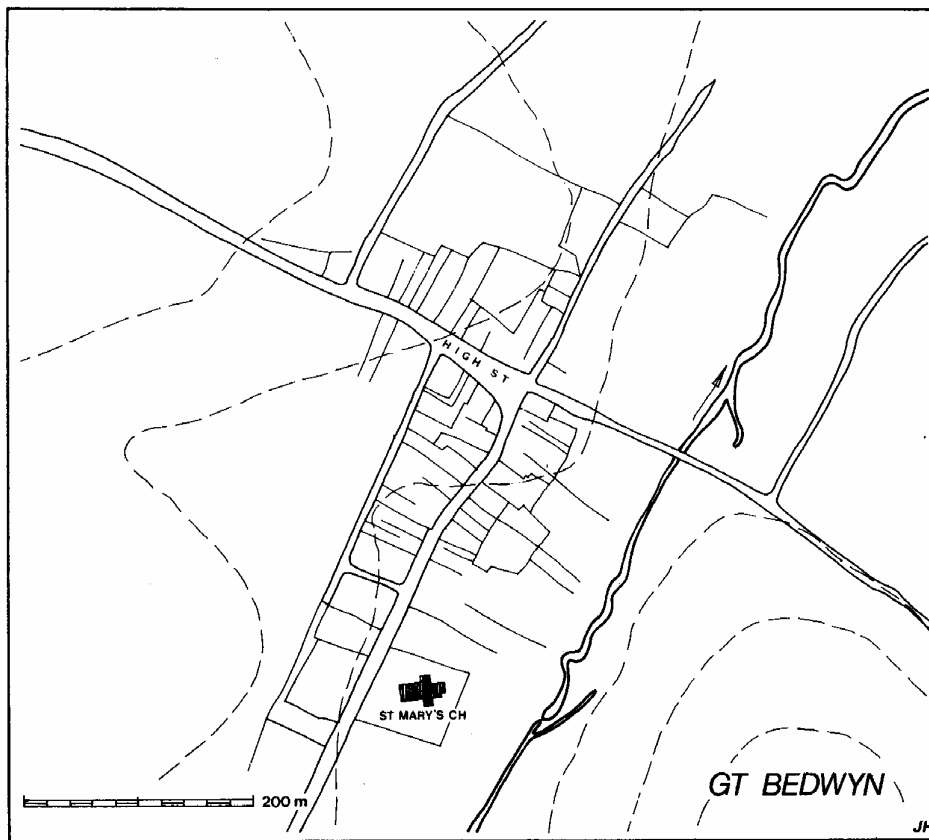
37. Great Bedwyn

church, which had developed at an early date by transference of royal power from the late Roman fortified town of *Cunetio,* only six kilometres to the west.[9] This development is suggested as providing the context both for the presence at Ramsbury in the early 9th century of a large-scale iron-smelting industry using innovative techniques, with which were associated exotic imports (lava querns), as well as for its later choice as the seat of a bishopric in A.D. 909.

Unlike Ramsbury, however, Bedwyn certainly became a small town by the 10th century, whose chief interest lies in the survival of guild statutes of the early to mid-10th century.[10] By the mid-11th century it possessed a mint, and had 25 burgesses at Domesday. It seems likely that the location of the royal burh at Chisbury was
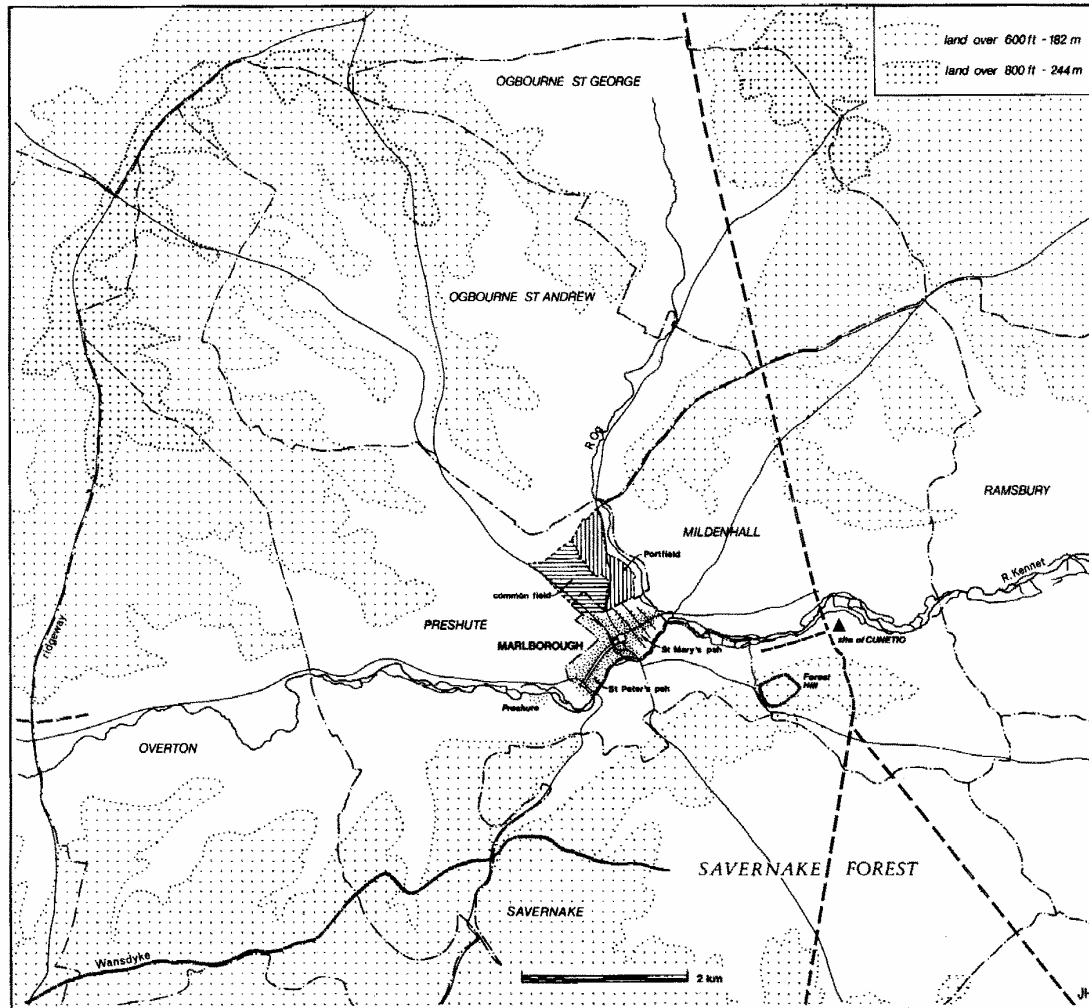
38. Marlborough area

governed as much by the fact that it lay on a royal estate as by its central position within the defensive system as a whole. Although Bedwyn's development as a town and the choice of Ramsbury as the bishop's seat in the 10th century must have reflected the importance of this burh, the writer has already argued (Haslam 1980, 63 and n. 144) that their respective roles should be considered more a consequence of their status as royal residences at the heads of large estates from a rather earlier period.

The topography of Bedwyn (Fig. 37) is uninformative. St Mary's church, which is presumed to be the site of the early minster, is some way removed from the focus of the present village. It is clear that the settlement has shifted, possibly in the early medieval period, from its probable original focus around the church.

The historical connections of Marlborough with Ramsbury, Chisbury and Bedwyn, and in particular the relationships between these places in the 10th century, must be inferred from similar patterns of settlement elsewhere. Marlborough is sited on a prominent broad spur, for the most part steeply sloping, overlooking the Kennet valley (Figs. 39 and 40). The advantage of its site, with easy access to east and west along the Kennet valley, to the north along the Og valley, and to Salisbury and Winchester over the Downs to the south, must in part be responsible for its greater success as an urban place over Bedwyn. It will be argued below, however, that this success, which becomes steadily more apparent in both documentary and archaeological evidence during and after the 11th century, is due at least initially as much to the historical circumstances surrounding its foundation as to these geographical factors.
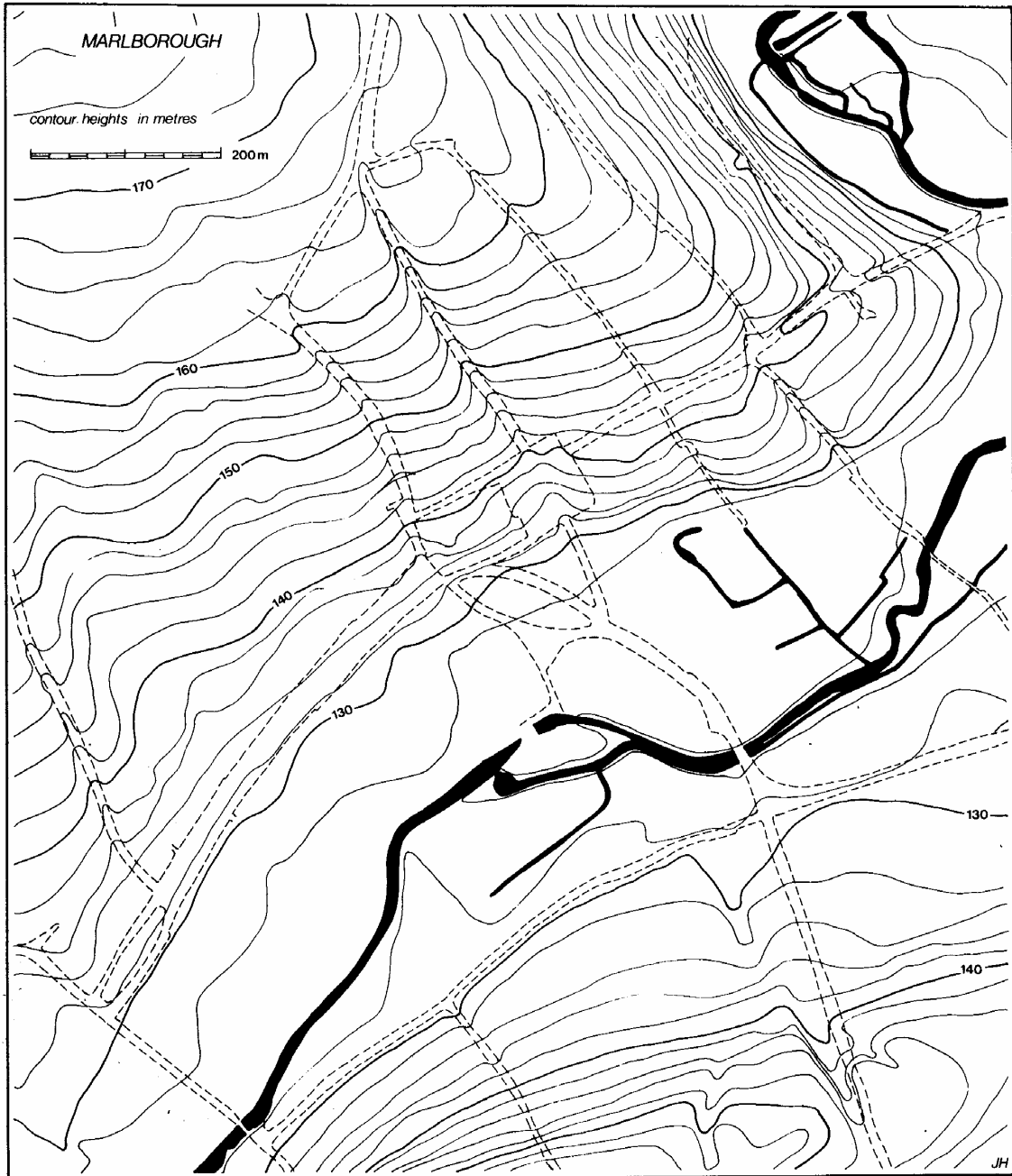
The most striking feature about the town is, as Brentnall has already remarked (1950, 275), that its two constituent parishes, St Mary's and St Peter's, have clearly been carved out of the earlier parochial unit of Preshute (see Fig. 38). That the latter was in royal hands (it was called the King's 'ancient demesne' in the Hundred Rolls [*ibid.*, 300, 313]) suggests that the town was a deliberate urban foundation on a new site by one of the later Saxon kings. Its position in relation to the Downs and its situation by the river suggest that it was so founded to act as a distribution and processing centre for the wool industry which was growing in the 10th and 11th centuries (Sawyer 1978, 233).

Its proximity to the ecclesiastical centre of Ramsbury suggests a possible historical context for its foundation. Recent excavation and topographical analysis at Wells, Somerset, has suggested that a new town was laid out in the Saxon period outside the precincts of the cathedral established there in 909 (Rodwell 1980). The writer has, in fact, argued elsewhere (Haslam 1981) that the integral nature of the arrangement of town, market and Saxon cathedral suggests that the town was laid out in one operation with the building of the cathedral, both thus being new foundations of Edward the Elder. The possibility is thus put forward that the origin of Marlborough lies in a similar episode of urban creation at the same time as the establishment of the see of Ramsbury in 909, both again initiated by Edward the Elder.

There is some topographical evidence that this was centred on St Mary's church,[11] which probably formed the church of the new urban foundation. This lies in close proximity to an open space (The Green) through which runs a street (Herd Street) which today forms a marked hollow way (*see* Fig. 40). That this formed the main axis of the new town is suggested by the fact that approach roads lead to both its

approx. area of
e. 10th cent. burh

200m

MARLBOROUGH

JH

39. Marlborough

MARLBOROUGH

contour heights in metres

200 m

170

160

150

140

130

130

140

JH

40. Marlborough, contours at 2m. intervals

northern and southern ends, the latter across a bridge and probable causeway over a low-lying area of the river valley. There is some archaeological indication for the existence of defences to the west of the church, the presence of the defended burh appearing to be enshrined in the place-name 'Kingsbury'.

The area to the north-east shows several other streets lying parallel to Herd Street, connected by a central east/west street. Although these streets could constitute what remains of an original planned lay-out, it seems more likely that this pattern is the result of continued growth over a period of time. The name 'New land' was given to the eastern part of this area in the 12th century, with a new church and parish (St Martin's) created for it in 1254 (Brentnall 1950, 300-2).[12] Archaeological evidence of 11th- or early 12th-century occupation on the south-western side of the town (immediately north of St Peter's church) indicates that the town expanded considerably during the Norman period. It is to this period, therefore, that we should attribute both the creation of this new 'suburb' to the east of the original burh (though extra-mural expansion eastwards before the Conquest need not be ruled out), as well as the creation of a new wide market street to the west with its own church, the whole development forming a new parochial unit, probably as a consequence of the establishment of the Norman castle further to the west.

Marlborough thus provides a sharp contrast with the small town of Bedwyn: the former was a new foundation on a geographically advantageous site, while the latter was the result of an 'organic' development of proto-urban and urban functions at an ancient royal estate centre, perhaps encouraged by the proximity of the royal burh at Chisbury. Possibly the clearest demonstration of the suitability of Marlborough's site, and therefore of the reality of the economic factors which governed its choice, lies in its subsequent success both as a market town and as an industrial centre in the medieval period.[13] This contrast is further demonstrated by the fact that while Bedwyn has no clear cut area of arable and common town fields, those of Marlborough form a distinct entity to the north of, and topographically closely related to, the early nucleus of the town, the arable portion being called Portfield (see Fig. 38). Though this area is (perhaps rather surprisingly) not included within its original parish (St Mary's), it is clear that, like the town itself, it has been carved out of the king's 'ancient demesne' of Preshute. From this it can be inferred that this area formed an 'endowment' made by the king for the support of his newly created borough in the early 10th century.[14]

The developing relationship of these four settlements throughout the Saxon period is thus of great interest, showing a process of settlement development throughout the Roman and Saxon periods which involved several major shifts of both administration and population foci. The evidence suggests the formation of two royal estate centres at Ramsbury and Bedwyn at some time after the end of the Roman period in succession to *Cunetio*, both of them developing as proto-urban ceremonial, administrative and redistributive centres. In the late 9th century this pattern was augmented by the re-use of Chisbury hill-fort as a royal 'public burh'. In the early 10th century, however, the pattern was broken by the splitting of urban and ecclesiastical functions between the new town of Marlborough and the bishopric at Ramsbury by Edward the Elder in 909, with the (presumed) abandonment of the royal burh at Chisbury, but with the continuing focus of proto-urban if not by now truly urban functions at

Bedwyn. Soon after the Norman Conquest Marlborough became, as a result both of the construction of the royal castle there and of its more suitable geographical position, the dominant economic focus, inhibiting any nascent tendencies for urban growth at either Ramsbury or Bedwyn.

Calne

Calne is first recorded in the will of King Eadred (d. 955), when it was given to Winchester (Whitelock 1979, 555). However, a life of St Swithun (d. 862) written by
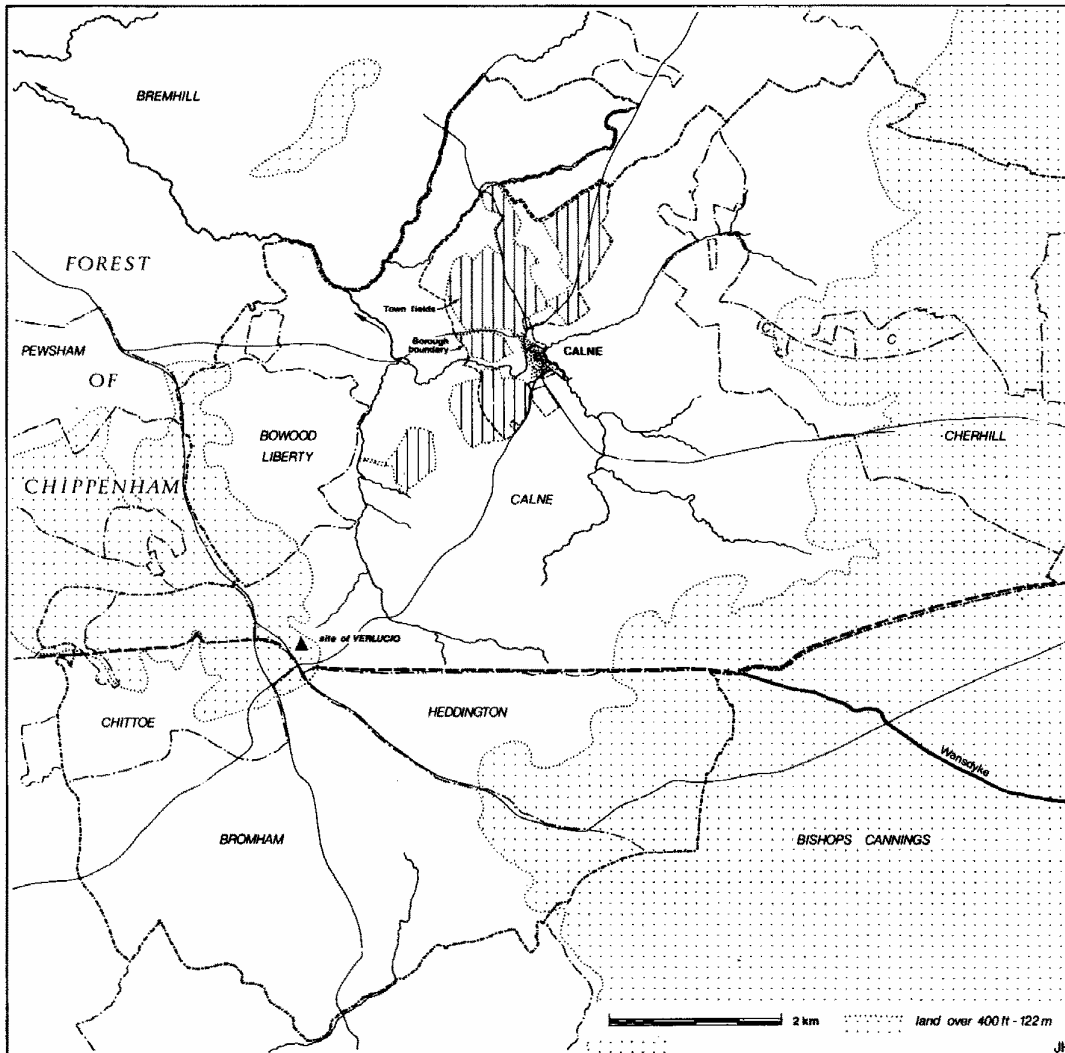
41. Calne area

Wulfstan in *c.* 1000 speaks of a prisoner being in the care of the chief magistrate of the district or hundred who lived in the king's villa ('regia . . . villula') at Calne (Marsh 1904, 14). It was clearly in this *villa regia* that the witan of 978 was held in which Bishop Dunstan miraculously escaped the collapse of the floor of a two-storeyed building—presumably the hall of the king's residence. A second witan is also recorded as being held at Calne in 998 (*ibid.,* 16). The existence of an early minster church at Calne, while not specifically mentioned in early documents, can be inferred from the exceptionally large holdings of the church in 1086, which amounted to 11 hides in all (Darlington 1955, 32).[15]

By the middle of the 9th century, therefore, Calne was already the site of a *villa regalis*, the centre of a large royal estate and hundred which was administered by, and under the jurisdiction of, a royal reeve. It was furthermore in all probability the site of a minster church which may well have been a late 7th- or (as at Bradford and several other royal centres) an early 8th-century foundation. Its urban character, certainly evidence by the time of Domesday, must have developed at an early date as a direct result of the concentration of these functions at one place (a process discussed further below).

The position of Calne in relation to the parish and hundred boundaries (Fig. 41), as well as to the earlier settlement pattern, is also of some interest. The Domesday hundred of Calne, on whose northern side the town lay, comprised several units, which include the Roman town of *Verlucio* in its south-western corner. The latter lies near the meeting points of three other ancient royal estates besides Calne: Chippenham to the north-west; Melksham to the south-west; and Bishops Cannings to the south-east. There is no evidence for any continuity of occupation at *Verlucio* into the 5th or later centuries, and it seems likely that the immediate area around the former Roman settlement and its attendant villas, occupying a watershed area of poor soils, must have reverted to the waste and forest out of which, as Bonney has recently suggested (1972, 178), they were probably carved. The present pattern of the distribution of royal estate centres around *Verlucio,* of which Calne is the nearest, is perhaps best explained by the fragmentation into smaller units of the presumably large territory dependent both administratively and economically upon *Verculio* soon after the formation of the West Saxon kingdom, each with a *villa regalis* at its centre. The writer has already argued (Haslam 1980, 60–61) for the operation of similar processes in the estates around the Roman town of *Cunetio.* That Bishops Cannings formed part of this larger area is suggested by the fact that the manor held one house in Calne at the time of Domesday, and by the fact that Chittoe is a chapelry of Bishops Cannings rather than Calne.

Calne provides one of the clearest instances among all the Wiltshire towns of the preservation of early features within the present townscape. The nucleus of settlement must have been round St Mary's church, which presumably occupies the site of the early minster. The church is centrally placed at the end of a low spur of land surrounded by streams on three sides. To the south, an open space (The Green) is separated from the church by a roughly equilateral area, occupied now (and clearly defined in the 19th century) by houses. This area is itself bounded to the north by Kingsbury Street. The association of these distinctive topographical features with the place-name 'Kingsbury', which means 'the king's burh or fortified house' (P-N

Wilts, 256) suggests the possibility that this discrete block of land represents the area occupied by the former royal *villa*—a conclusion considerably strengthened by the same associations of similar topographical features and the Kingsbury place-name in, for instance, Wilton.[16]

The early lay-out of the settlement might therefore have comprised the church, the royal residence, and an open space, all surrounded by land on the sides and
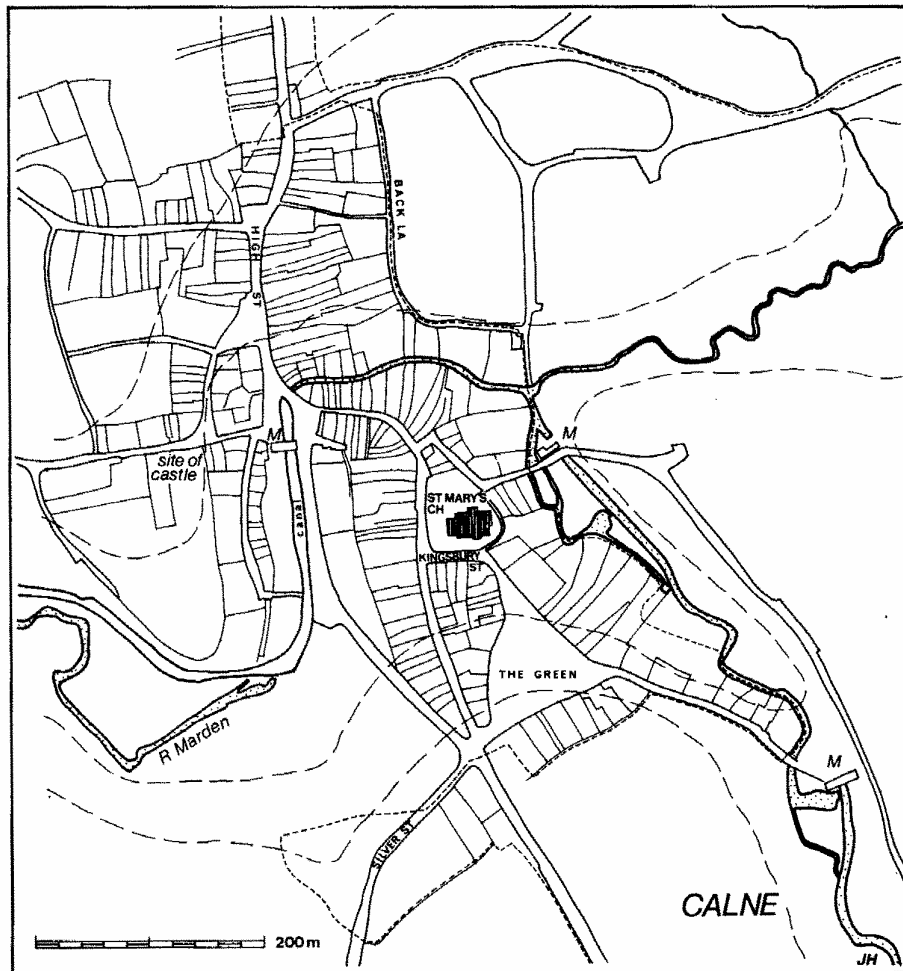
42. Calne, with boundaries and other details from map of Calne by T. Cruse, 1828
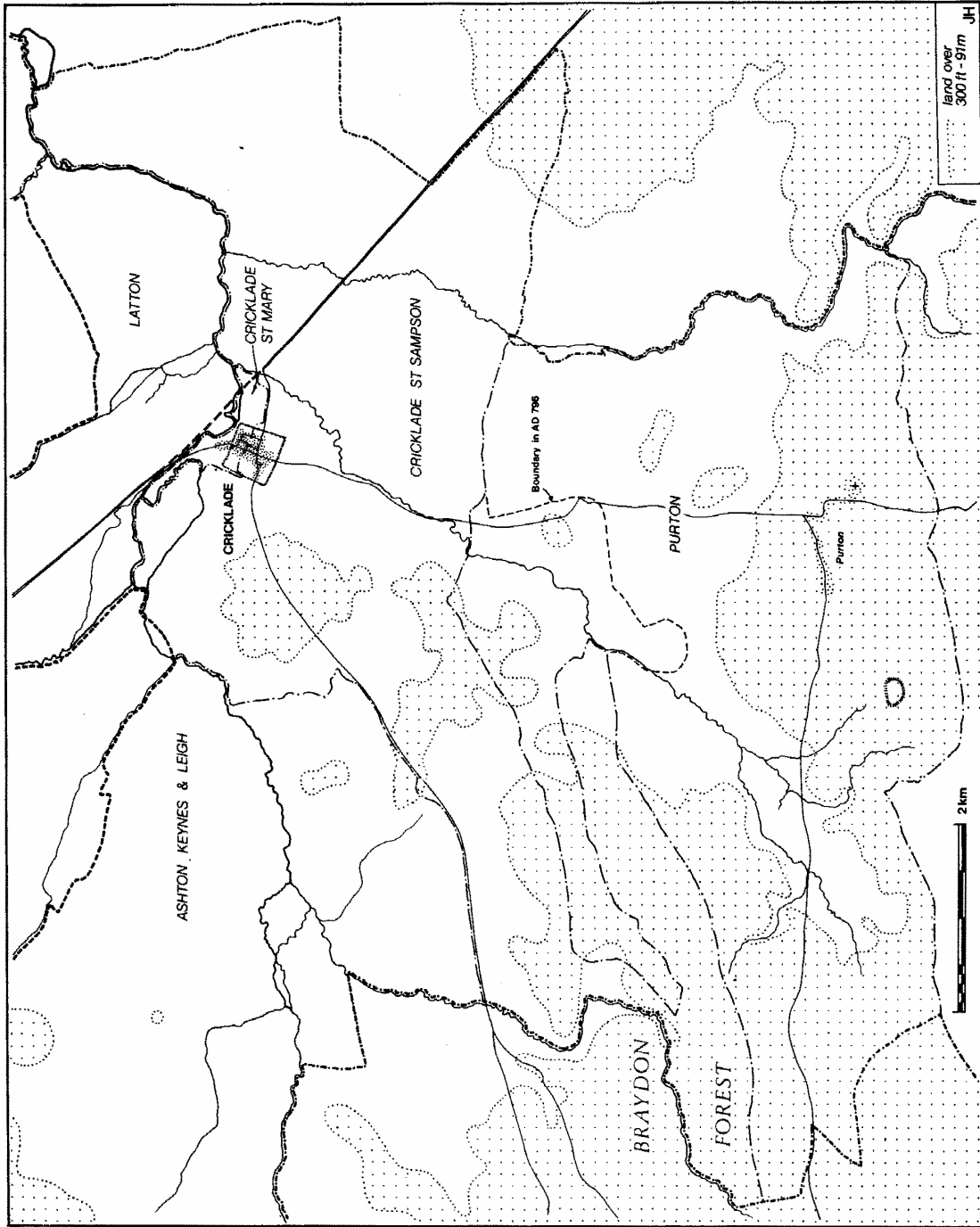
43. Cricklade area

southern end of the spur given over to houses (Fig. 57).[17] There is no reason, given the probable existence of the royal residence and minster church by the 8th century, why this arrangement should not closely reflect that existing at this time or even earlier. Closely associated with these features are three mills, all of which may well be of pre-Conquest origin. It also seems probable that the earliest bridge was at or near the site of the present bridge, though it seems doubtful whether settlement spread beyond the central spur around the church until the development of a new market and its associated settlement in the post-Conquest period, its form determined by the roads leading from the northern end of this bridge.

Cricklade

Cricklade is in many ways a type site for the small class of burhs of rectangular plan created on new sites probably by King Alfred in the later 9th century (Biddle and Hill 1971).[18] The defensive arrangements of the town, discussed below, are archaeologically probably the most fully documented of any Saxon burh, though recent work has brought into question the interpretation of much of this evidence and has highlighted some problems concerning its early topography.[19] Other aspects of its early history are discussed by Thomson (1961) and Loyn (1963).

Cricklade is first mentioned in 903 in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle,* when it was either successfully defended or not in existence—the former being more likely. In spite of its probable origin as an element in the system of defence of Wessex initiated by Alfred, its royal connections are only obscurely revealed in documents.[20] However, there is some evidence to suggest that the late 9th-century town was founded within an already existing land unit which was from an early date part of the royal forest of Braydon (Thomson 1953, 6). To the south of the parish (Fig. 43) lies the parish of Purton, which also formed part of this unit, and which numbered among several properties in the forest given in the 7th and 8th centuries to Malmesbury abbey by various kings (*ibid.,* 5-6).[21] Excavations at Purton itself have revealed a Roman villa associated with a pottery industry, as well as a pagan Saxon cemetery of the 7th century near the church.[22] Taken with the evidence of the Roman settlement and villa at Cricklade (see below), this evidence at least suggests the possibility that both Cricklade and Purton, and the areas of their respective parishes, were constant elements in a landscape whose divisions had changed little since the Roman period. Since the church at Cricklade was the mother-church of a wide area (Thompson 1961, 1-2) these considerations would provide a context for the plausible though neglected suggestion of Thomson (*ibid.,* 65) that the church was already a minster by or soon after c. 700, possibly owing its foundation to Aldhelm of Malmesbury.

Some idea of the area included in the 1,500 hides pertaining to Cricklade in the Burghal Hidage is given by the area from which contributory burgesses were drawn in Domesday. These totalled 33 burgesses, with one house and one garden, and are from various places in north-east Wiltshire (*see* Fig. 45). It is of some significance that, together with those of Malmesbury, these burgesses are distributed over the northern third of Wiltshire. The total of the hides assigned to both places in the Burghal Hidage is very nearly equal to the 3,000 hides of land given by the West Saxon king Cenwalh to his kinsman, Cuthred, in 648, and described as being 'near Ashdown'

(Whitelock 1979, 164). Since Ashdown was the area of the Berkshire Downs to the north of the River Kennet (O.S., 1966), this suggests that the burghal areas of these two places, presumably apportioned in the late 9th century, preserved and were merely a division of a very much more ancient land unit which must have comprised the whole of the northern part of Wiltshire north of the River Kennet and the Roman road betweeen Bath and *Verlucio.*
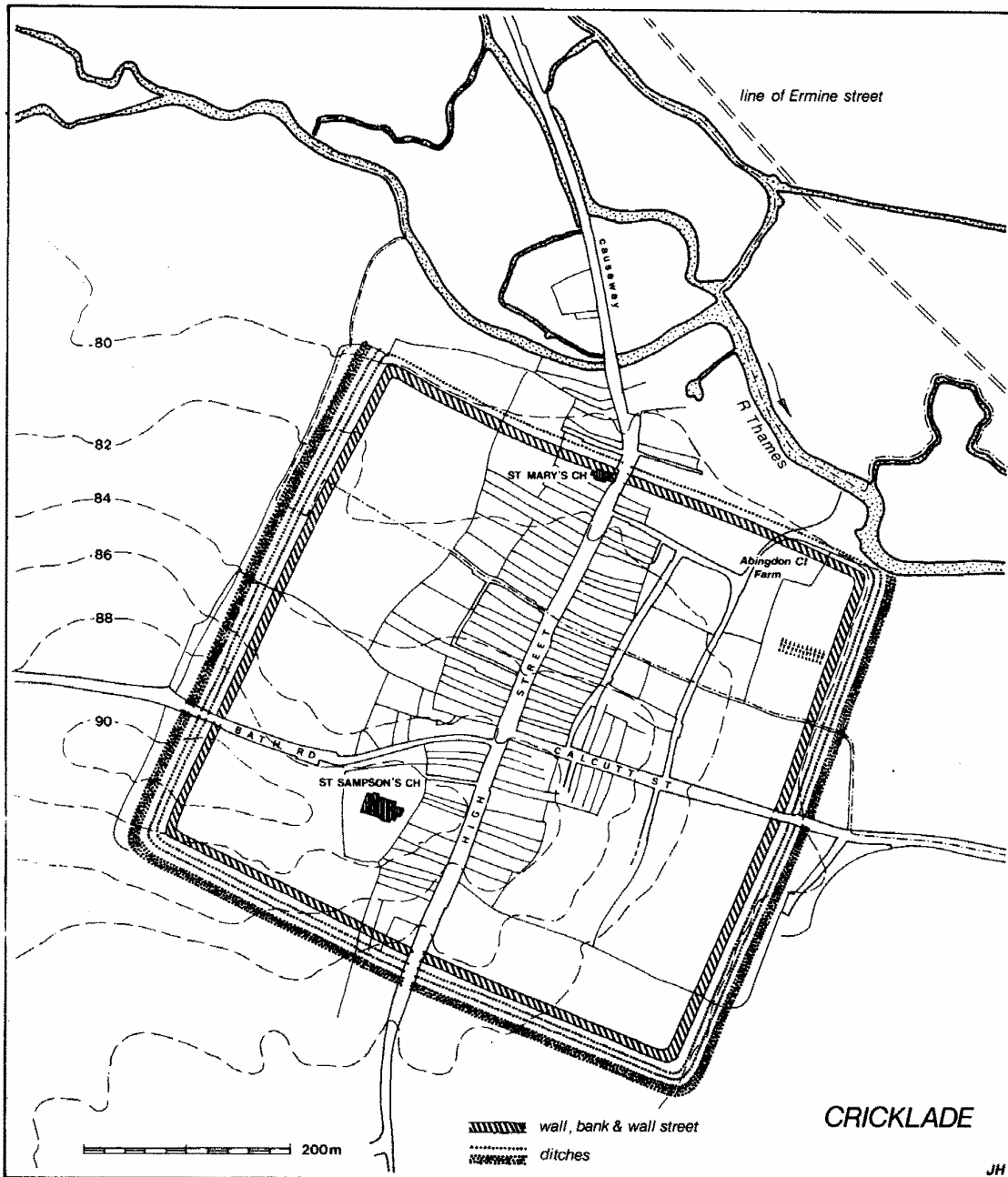
The topography of Saxon Cricklade has been greatly elucidated not only by a series of excavations on various parts of its defences (described below), but also by a growing appreciation of the scale of Roman activities in the area. Excavations by the writer in 1975 within the north-west corner of the defences demonstrated the existence of an extensive and long-lived (1st to 4th centuries A.D.) village settlement previously hinted at from finds of Roman pottery in the area (Radford 1972, 94-5). This settlement was apparently associated with a large villa situated near the High Street,[23]

It is probable that this villa settlement was itself associated with a river crossing and causeway forming the foundation of the present road running northwards from the town, giving access to Ermine Street. The demonstration by F. T. Wainwright (1960) that the line of Ermine Street over the river had become lost immediately after the end of the Roman period suggests that an easy alternative route and crossing point of the Thames and its valley, represented by this causeway, was then available. Continuity of the settlement site at Cricklade after the 5th century can be neither demonstrated nor reasonably postulated. However the connections of this routeway both to the north and the east, with Ermine Street (whose preservation implies continued use throughout the Saxon period) suggest its continued local importance as a crossing point of the river and its valley, and provide the context for the siting there of the Alfredian burh in the late 9th century.

Both the position and the lay-out of the burh were thus determined to a large degree by already existing topographical features, which included the north gate and possibly the church, an earlier routeway approaching the river crossing from the south-west (the present Bath Street), and another routeway possibly approaching from Purton to the south. The lay-out of the defences, however, represents the closest approach of any new Alfredian burh to a perfect rectangle, in spite of the fact that its precise disposition was apparently further determined on the north and east sides by the edge of firm ground represented by the 80m. contour (*see* Fig. 44), and on the south side by a steep-sided though shallow valley.

The results of the excavations by the writer on the south-west corner of the defences in 1975,[24] when analysed with the results of previous work on the defences (Radford 1972), have shed some new light on both the topography of Cricklade and the lay-out of Saxon burhs in general. It is clear from the evidence of all the excavations to date that the construction of the defences in the pre-Conquest period falls into three main periods.

Firstly, an earth and clay bank some 6m. in width, which was probably supported and strengthened in front by a timber palisade, was further strengthened by the construction outside the bank of a triple-ditch system comprising two smaller ditches and a wide outer ditch, separated from the bank and from each other by wide berms. A double-ditch system has been put forward as the norm of Saxon

line of Ermine street

.80

82

84

.86

.88

90

BATH RD

ST MARY'S CH

Abingdon Ct Farm

R Thames

CAUSEWAY

HIGH STREET

CALCUTT ST

ST SAMPSON'S CH

wall, bank & wall street

ditches

200m

CRICKLADE

JH

44. Cricklade, with boundaries from Tithe Award map, 1841

burhs, including Cricklade, by Biddle (1976a, 129); however, the feature described by Biddle as the outer Saxon ditch at Cricklade was demonstrated in 1975 to be a later ditch dug around the earlier burh in probably 1144. These results suggest the possibility that other burhs might well have been provided with a triple- rather than a double-ditch system, increasing the resemblance of their fortifications to those of Roman military camps.

Inside the bank was a narrow walkway of laid stones worn smooth over what must have been an appreciable period, the whole about 1.5m. in width, which must have acted as an intra-mural or 'wall' street—a feature well documented archaeologically as being characteristic of the layout of Saxon burhs in general (Biddle and Hill 1971, 73, 76; Biddle 1976a, 130). It was clear that this walkway was no later than the construction of the bank. The fact that turf used in the construction of the bank had been removed from the area of the bank and ditches, but still remained under the stones of the walkway, even suggests the possibility that the walkway had been laid out *before* the bank and ditches were constructed. This feature has been found in nearly every section cut across the bank, and on all four sides of the defences,[25] confirming its importance as an integral part of the lay-out of the whole defensive system of the burh.

A possible additional element in the initial lay-out of the burh was a feature found in two places on the inside of the eastern and western sides of the defences. This consisted of a 1m. wide line of stones running parallel to the bank and walkway about 5m. inside the latter. What this feature represented—whether the base of a wall or another flat stone walkway—is problematical; however, one likely interpretation is that it defined the inner edge of a zone around the inside of the defences which remained in royal hands to enable the proper military function of the defences to be maintained.

The second period is marked by the insertion of a new stone wall, of about 1.2m. thickness at the base, into the front of the bank, replacing the original (probably decayed) timber palisade. Though there is no positive dating evidence for this feature, its construction should most probably be viewed in the context of a general strengthening of existing defences by King Ethelred in the late 10th or early 11th century, in response to renewed Viking attacks, a programme which involved both the refurbishment with stone walls of other urban burhs such as Wareham and Christchurch, and the construction of 'emergency burhs' on hilltops, such as South Cadbury and Old Sarum (see below) (Radford 1972, 106; Hill 1978, 223-5).[26] At the same time as the construction of the front wall another was probably added to the upper part of the back of the bank to act as a rear revetment to a walkway along its top.

The third period in the defensive sequence is marked by the complete and deliberate destruction of the front and rear walls—an episode which has not hitherto been recognised at Cricklade. The two inner ditches were either partially or completely filled with stones, and the destruction deposits from the wall piled on the inner berm. The rear wall was similarly pushed down the back of the bank. Similar deposits have been observed in all earlier trenches across the defences, but incorrectly interpreted.[27] The archaeological evidence of the systematic destruction of the wall, the deliberate infilling of the ditches, and the fact that these processes can be shown to have taken place on all four sides of the defences, demonstrates that this was the result of a

deliberate act designed to destroy the defences as a functioning system. Similar phenomena have been observed at South Cadbury (Alcock 1972, 201), as well as the defences of other burhs such as Wareham, Christchurch, Lydford, and probably Cissbury and Old Sarum (Haslam, forthcoming). This widespread, and therefore arguably systematic, episode of destruction can in the writer's view be best interpreted as a deliberate policy on the part of the Danish Cnut, after he became king in 1016, of the razing of existing defences to consolidate his position in the area in which he himself had fought. Significantly, however, the mint at Cricklade still produced coins throughout his reign. It was therefore not town life, or the towns themselves, which were destroyed, but only their defences.[28]

Several conclusions can be drawn from these excavations and other evidence about the original lay-out of the town. The existence of the intra-mural walkway or wall street demonstrates that the existing streets must have formed part of a system of internal streets which, like those at Winchester, were arguably laid out in a single operation designed to sub-divide the land inside the defences 'for the apportionment of land and for ease of movement on interior lines' (Biddle 1976b, 27), and that both this process and the lay-out of the defences must be considered as comprising one operation. It is indeed possible that the lay-out of the intra-mural walkway on open ground provided the initial grid around which the bank and ditches were subsequently constructed. The poor performance of Cricklade as an urban place in medieval and later times has meant that many of the internal streets have since become lost. The 1975 excavations showed furthermore that much of the land inside the defences on the western side of the town, and probably therefore on its eastern side as well, was open ground throughout the life of the burh.

A further problem on which some light has been thrown by excavation is the position of the west gate. Attempts have been made to show that it was situated in the centre of the western defences, in an equivalent position to the east Gate (Thompson 1961, 68; Radford 1972, 88-9). However, various lines of evidence suggest that the original gateway was probably under the present line of Bath Road.[29] The existence of a hypothetical extra-mural market outside the supposed centrally placed west gate (Radford 1972, 89, 99) must in consequence also be discounted. The so-called 'hollow way' leading to it from the river is, in fact, a mid-12th-century defensive ditch.

The present St Mary's church by the north gate is also very probably an element in the pre-Conquest topography of the burhs. Agruments have been given by Drs. Taylor and Thompson (1965 and 1966) for suggesting that the north chapel of the church was built on the site of the gatehouse of the burh, though doubt has been cast on this by Radford (1972, 106-7). The writer has argued else-where, however (Haslam 1981), that it is indeed of pre-Conquest origin, and represents a chapel either newly constructed or rebuilt (or re-dedicated) as a result of the acquisition in 1008 of the area of its later parish by Abingdon abbey (which is also dedicated to St Mary). There is, furthermore, some evidence for supposing (*ibid*) that the land unit represented by this parish was of rather earlier origin, serving some sort of defensive function for the north walls and gate, rather in the manner of the wards of London and Canterbury, possibly from the initial stages of the formation of the burh.
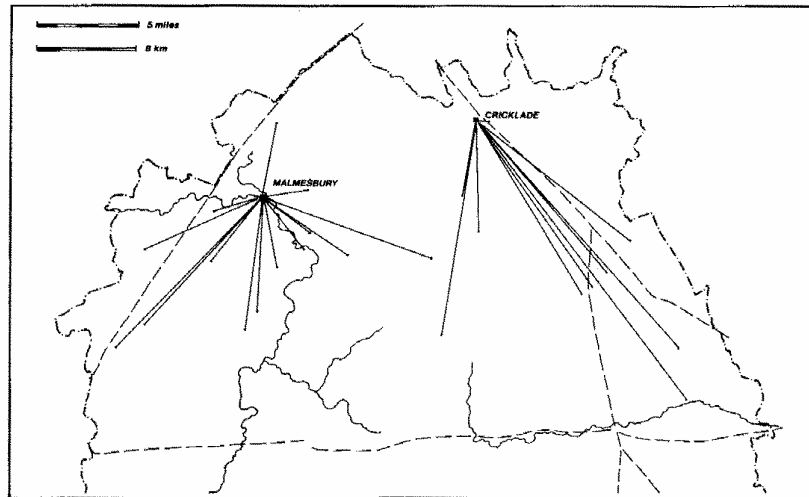
45. Domesday manors with property in Cricklade and Malmesbury

Malmesbury

As with most other places discussed in this chapter, the existence of an urban place at Malmesbury by the 10th century is the end result of its development as a settlement focus from well before the Saxon period. Little excavation has taken place in the town, but the early records of the abbey, together with the relationship of Malmesbury to the surrounding parishes, can begin to establish these settlement patterns.

One important element in this pattern is the early relationship of Malmesbury to Brokenborough. There is some evidence to suggest both the existence at Broken-borough of an early *villa regalis* and, furthermore, of the existence of an Iron Age hill-fort at Malmesbury itself, the two bearing a similar relationship to the hill-forts and *villae regales* at, for instance, Amesbury, Bedwyn, Bradford, Warminster, and Wilton. This relationship is suggested firstly by the account of the abbey's origins in the *Eulogium Historiarum* which represents stories current in the abbey in the 14th century (Watkin 1956, 210, n. 21).[30] This exhibits several features which, bearing as they do a close resemblance to more recent ideas concerning post-Roman settlement history, merit rather more serious attention than has been given to them in the past. The salient features of this account are, firstly, that the Irish monk, Maeldulph, came (in the early or mid-7th century) to a fortified *castellum* called Caer Bladon, the later Malmesbury; secondly, that this fortified place was only sparsely inhabited at that time, and was the site of a former British 'city'; and, thirdly, that this place stood in some relationship to another, probably fortified, centre named Caer Dur, the king's residence, now Brokenborough.

As for the first of these observations, there is some evidence that Malmesbury was indeed an Iron Age hill-fort. Its site, surrounded by steep slopes on all sides except a narrow ridge of land to the north-west, is nature's gift to defence-conscious man. A

more concrete indication of Iron Age defences is provided by an observation of J. M. Moffat, who noted (1805, 101) that near the east gate 'at a small distance from the base of this wall (the town wall) about six feet underneath the surface of the earth, a substance has been discovered, which has been supposed to be a vitrified matter, and it has been imagined that the place was formerly encompassed with a vitrified bank or vallum'. This can most reasonably be interpreted as the remains of a timber-framed limestone slab wall which had been burnt *in situ*. Further evidence of the former existence of bivallate defences is provided by the peculiar topography of the medieval defences themselves, discussed below.

This being so, the re-occupation of other hill-forts in the early Saxon period (Fowler 1971) suggests that Malmesbury itself could well have become a military or tribal centre in the 5th or 6th centuries, a process which would provide the context for the record in the *Eulogium Historiarum* of the former existence of a British 'city', in the 7th century only sparsely occupied. It would furthermore be reasonable to suggest, in view of the similar pattern shown at most of the other centres discussed in this chapter, that a *villa regalis* developed out of this tribal centre on a new but nearby site, possibly on the consolidation of the West Saxon kingdom in the 7th century. As such it would have formed the centre of a territory either closely reflecting or directly continuing the early Saxon, or even the Iron Age, tribal territory. This would place in context the reference to Brokenborough as this royal centre, its name Caer Dur not so much showing the existence of another hill-fort (as Gomme thought, 1887, 422), but rather the presence of a fortified royal residence or burh.[31]

Some support is given to this model of early settlement development around Malmesbury by later evidence. In 956 Brokenborough was the centre of a large royal estate of 100 hides which was given to Malmesbury abbey by King Eadwy (Sawyer 1968, No. 629; Finberg 1964, No. 275), of which part had probably already been given by King Ine to Aldhelm (Darlington 1955, 88-9). The precise area comprised in this grant of land is uncertain, but must have included the modern parishes of Brokenborough and much, if not all of Crudwell, Charlton, Garsden, and Lea (*ibid.*; Grundy 1920, 42-53), as well as the area of the two Malmesbury parishes (Fig. 46). The parishes of Great and Little Somerford may well also have comprised part of this large royal estate.[32]

The probable early development of the royal centre at Brokenborough allows the foundation of the monastic establishment by the Irish monk, Maeldulph, in the mid-7th century to be placed in its proper context. William of Malmesbury suggested that Maeldulph 'was attracted by the solitude of woodland which surrounds the place',[33] but the foregoing considerations suggest that his choice of site and his reasons for coming were governed, firstly, by its proximity to the royal centre and by its defensive potential, and, secondly, by the consideration that, occupying as it must have done a central position in a relatively populous place, it would have been an ideal place for a Celtic missionary enterprise.[34] Furthermore, the relationship already suggested between the royal centre at Brokenborough with the hill-fort at Malmesbury provides one more instance of a pattern already noted by Alcock (1971, 326) of the association of early monastic establishments with pre-existing fortresses,[35] and of the possession of such places by the monastic founder by direct royal gift.

These royal connections have a further implication. Malmesbury provides an interesting parallel for the phenomenon noted in Irish examples of the siting of monastic establishments on the borders of kingdoms (Riain 1972). The Wiltshire-Gloucestershire border must in the 7th century have formed the boundary between the West Saxon and Mercian territories (the Hwicce from the early 7th century)—its disputed status at that time shown by the grants of land to Malmesbury in the later 7th century by both Mercian and West Saxon kings. It is not impossible that both
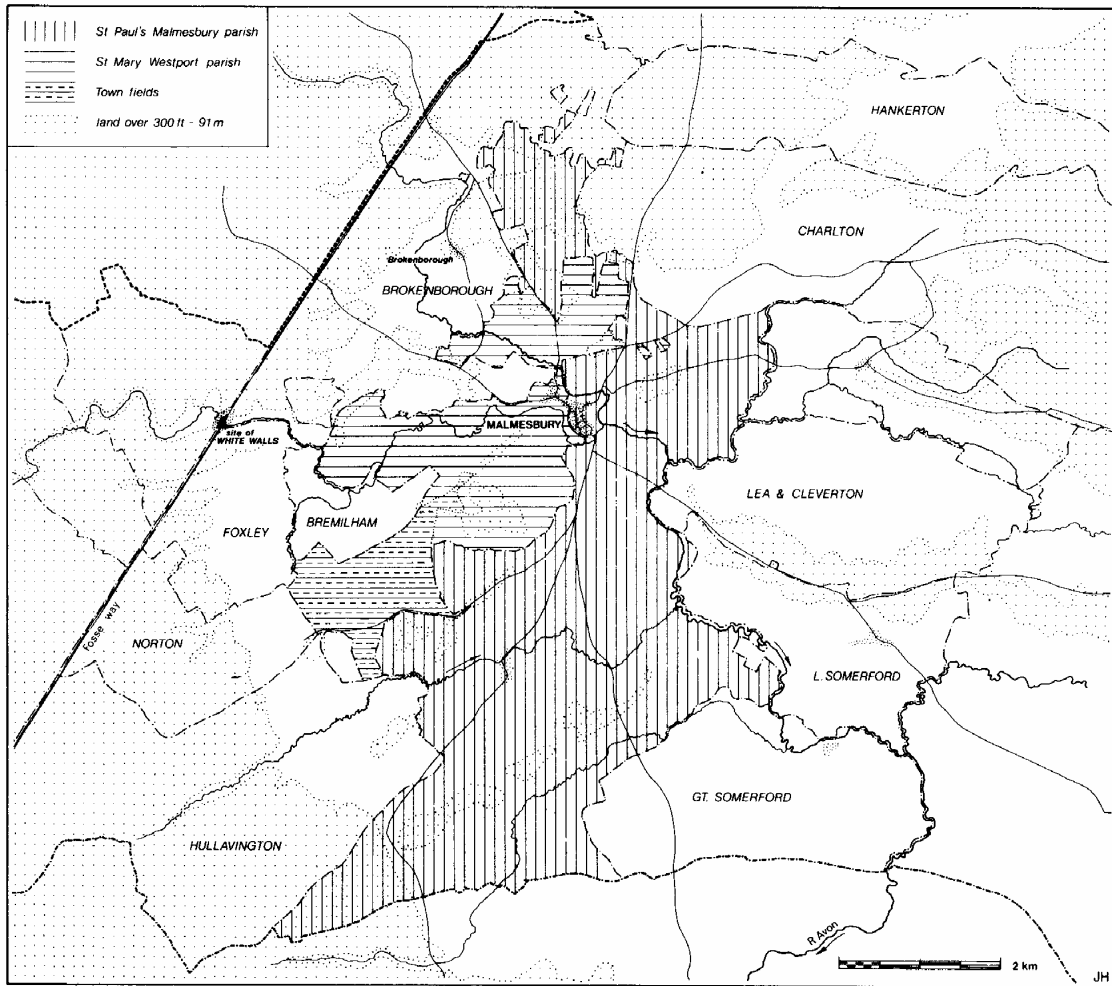
46. Malmesbury area

Maeldulph's initial choice of site, and in particular the growth of Aldhelm's expanded monastic establishment, were directly encouraged by the West Saxon kings to stabilise this outlying area of their kingdom. Indeed, William of Malmesbury himself noted that Aldhelm obtained special privileges for Malmesbury, Bradford and Frome lest conflicts between the kings of Mercia and Wessex should jeopardise the future of the monastery (Watkin 1956, 211).
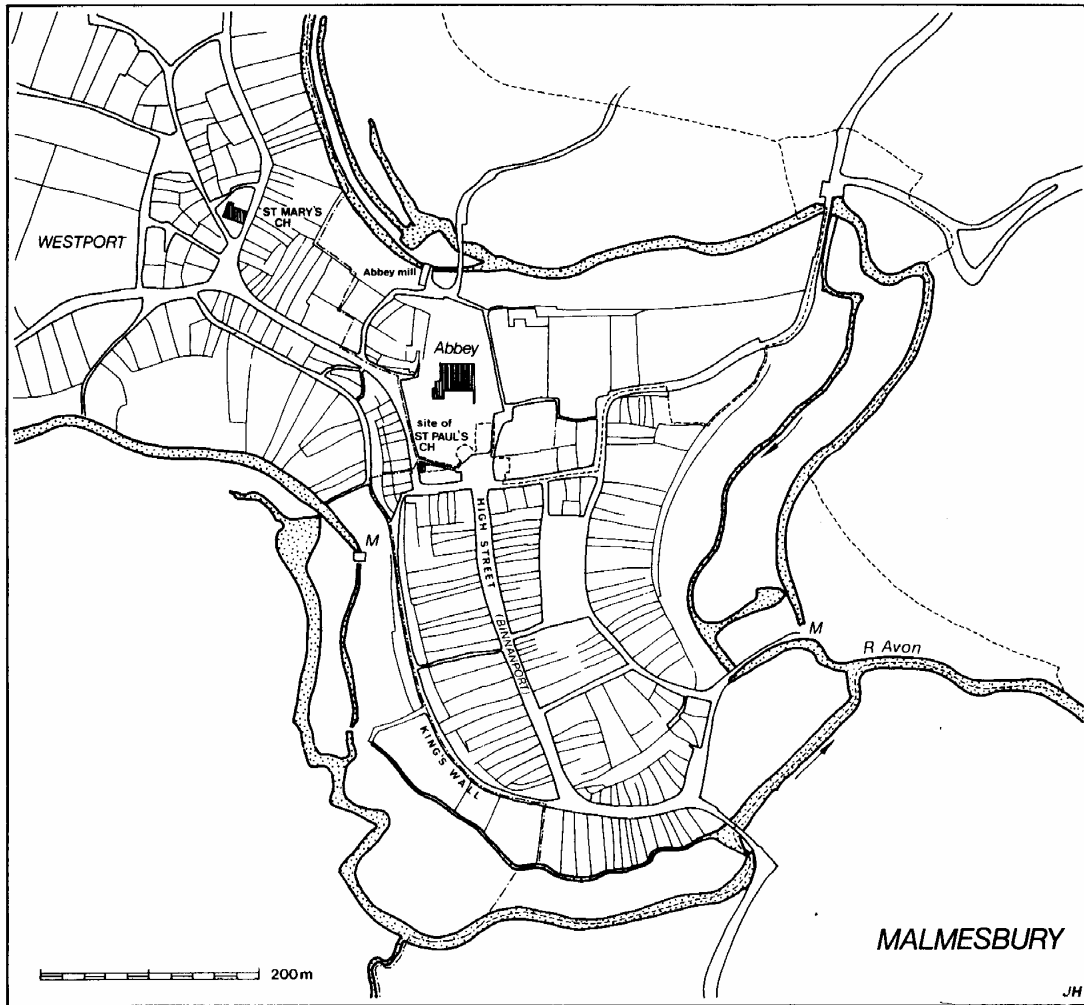
47. Malmesbury

The subsequent history of the monastery has been told already (*ibid.*). It is reasonable to suppose, however, that quite early in its life the monastic establishment must have attracted around it a considerable service population of miscellaneous students, craftsmen, traders, and other providers who constituted what may be described as a proto-urban settlement, becoming a focus of local if not regional trading activity and of small-scale industrial production.[36]

By the later 9th century, however, the Danish threats to Wessex led (as is suggested by the inclusion of Malmesbury in the Burghal Hidage) to the choice of Malmesbury, very probably by King Alfred, as a fortress to form an element in his systematic defence of Wessex. Its site, one of the factors which determined the presence of the monastery more than two centuries earlier, marked it out as being of great defensive potential. It must be inferred that the earlier Iron Age defences around the edge of the hilltop were refurbished, a process in all likelihood accompanied by the laying-out of at least some of the streets and the division of the interior space into *hagae*, whose boundaries must be reflected in the rectangular property divisions within the town observable to this day (Fig. 47). Malmesbury must have been both a fortress and a new urban creation, and is similar in plan to those other promontory fortress sites at Shaftesbury, Lydford, and Lewes.

It is not impossible, however, that some of these features—in particular the line of the central spinal street, the position of the three main gates, and the monastic precinct boundary—already formed elements in the topography of the earlier settlements. The roads entering the town through presumably long-established entrances to the north-west and north-east both turn southwards before meeting at the northern end of High Street, at which point is a market cross. It seems likely that this pattern developed well before the period of Alfredian urban restoration, and reflects the passage of well-used routeways around the outside of an already established monastic precinct, as well as the possible presence of an early market-place outside the monastery gate.

It is also possible that the former existence of bivallate defences of the Iron Age hill-fort is reflected in the present topography. The outer ends of properties within the town and the crest of the slope around all the sides of the town are marked by a common line, which is presumed to mark the crest of the inner bank re-utilised in the late 9th century. Outside this line, however, and lower down the slope, is a second line which marks another break in slope. On the south side this line is marked by a wall forming the boundary of extra-mural properties fronting on to the lower High Street, on the west side by the outer edge of the small street now called King's Wall, and on the east side by the edge of a similar, though unnamed, pathway running southwards from the east gate. Although these apparently double topographical features could be a fortuitous result of the relatively precipitous slopes, they could on the other hand reflect the adaption in the late Saxon period of an earlier bivallate defensive system. The paths or streets on both the east and west sides of the defences could on this interpretation be seen as the intra-mural streets running inside an outer bank.

The history of the various churches in Malmesbury is bound up with the early development of the monastery, and is not easy to discern. The available evidence has been discussed by Watkin (1956, 227-8), and suggests the presence of several

subsidiary churches or chapels within the precinct, numbering at least four before the Norman Conquest. There was a further chapel dedicated to Our Lady which was referred to by Leland as being built in the town ditch to the west of St Paul's church. The church of St Paul was the parish church in the medieval period (to be succeeded after the Dissolution by the remains of the abbey church), and there is no reason to doubt that this was the principal church of the original Alfredian burh. In view of its site within the probable original monastic precinct, however, it seems possible that its origin could be even earlier. Its parish, occupying a large area of land around the town
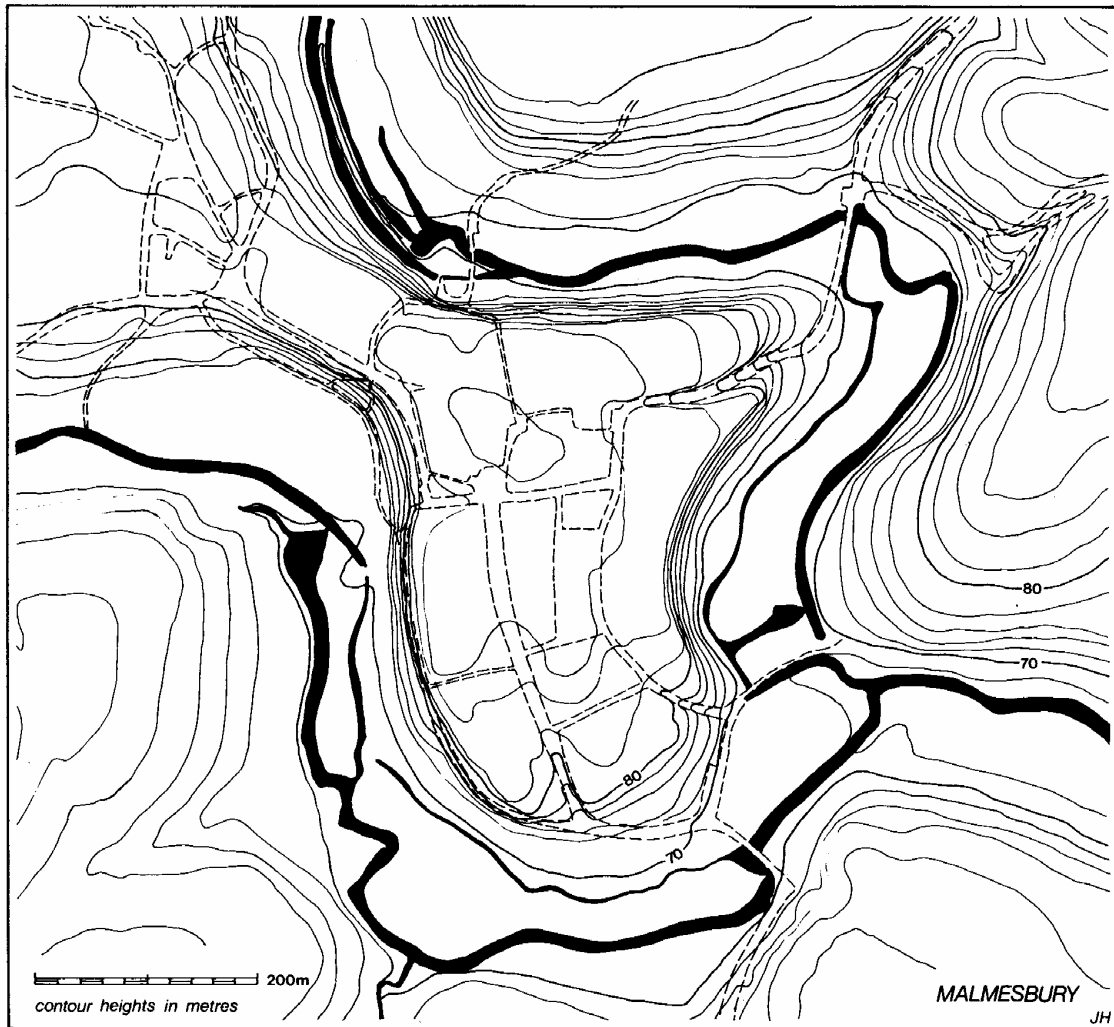
48. Malmesbury, contours at 2m. intervals

(Fig. 46) is closely associated topographically with that of St Mary Westport, suggesting that the two originally formed one unit, with the latter divided from the former at some later date.[37] This unit shows every sign of having been divided off from a larger territory, in this case very probably the royal estate which was still, in the late 9th century, centred on the *villa regia* at Brokenborough. This, in turn, suggests the possibility that the original parish unit of the town (comprising the present St Paul's and St Mary Westport parishes) was created by royal endowment on the establishment of the burh by King Alfred in the late 9th century.[38]

These suggestions seem to be strengthened by the disposition of the town fields, most of which lie at present within St Mary Westport parish. In the medieval period the area cultivated exclusively by the burgess community comprised various large fields ('magnae bruerae') among which was one called *Portmannesheath*.[39] This 'port' element in this name suggests a Saxon origin for the use of the land by the property-holders of the Saxon burh.[40] The charter of Athelstan granting these lands to the townspeople for services rendered may be spurious, but all the foregoing arguments suggest at least the strong possibility that some if not all of these lands were, in fact, set aside for the exclusive use of the original *burhwara* at the same time as the formation of the parish of the burh church on the creation of the burh by King Alfred.[41] It thus seems intrinsically likely that the tradition in this charter of the gift of lands to the town may indeed have had some basis in fact, and that it recorded the gift of part of the royal estate to the town (though possibly even earlier than the 'Athelstan tradition' would assert), the whole estate later given *in toto* to the monastery by Eadwy.

In spite of its hilltop location therefore, Malmesbury appears to have become a successful urban centre in the 10th and 11th centuries. It was an important minting centre from the reign of Edgar, and is the only mint recorded in the Wiltshire Domesday. Its success must have been due as much to the already long-established role of the monastery as both consumer and provider of food and commodities as to the continuing interest of Alfred and his successors in its fortunes.

Tilshead

The only definite indication of the existence of urban functions at Tilshead is the mention of 66 burgesses attached to it in Domesday Book. It was, however, part of the ancient demesne of the king, liable, like others, for the *firma unius noctis*. Its estates, assessed at 40 ploughs, was the same size as Warminster and Amesbury, and rather larger than Calne. It is difficult to reconstruct the extent of this estate, although it must have occupied most of the central area of the upland chalk downs, probably bounded on its edges by those parishes extending into the downland from centres in surrounding valleys—the Wylye to the south, the Avon to the east and north, and the Pewsey Vale to the north-east. The greater part of this central area is co-extensive with the Domesday hundred of Dole, which spans the lower reaches of the (later named) River Till. It is possible that other neighbouring upland parishes to the west (Chitterne and Imber) also formed part of this original royal estate.

It can be inferred, therefore, that as the site presumably of a *villa regalis* Tilshead was the place of central importance within this area of the chalk uplands, and as such would have shown many of those administrative functions—economic, legal and
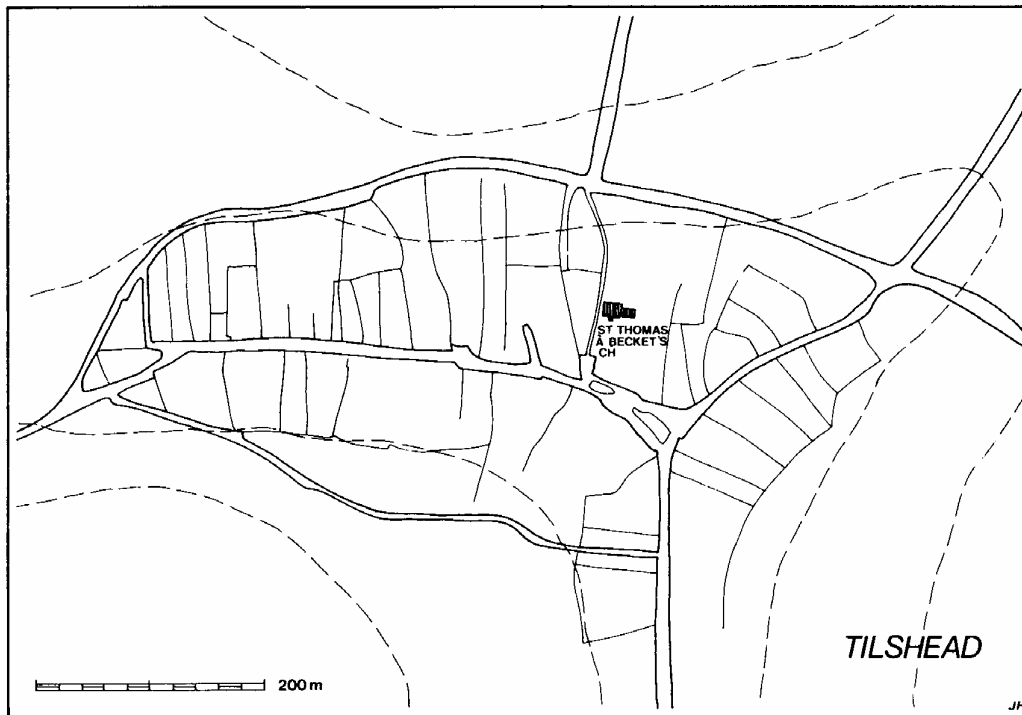
49. Tilshead, with boundaries from Inclosure Award map

ecclesiastical—shown by other better-documented centres. The evidence pointing to the importance of the woollen industry in Saxon England (discussed below) suggests that the specifically urban functions of Tilshead—whether the burgesses recorded in Domesday book lived there or elsewhere—must therefore have arisen out of its role as both a collection and distribution centre for both the wool and the sheep produced on the surrounding open downland.

There is little indication in the present topography of Tilshead of either the density of occupation at this period or of the lay-out of individual properties. The later Saxon period must have represented the peak of its fortunes, from which it seems to have declined steadily. It seems probable, however, that some of the present long boundaries between the main street and two back lanes (see Fig. 49) must mark some of the initial land divisions within the early town.

Warminster

The town of Warminster is a further instance of the early concentration of urban development at a Saxon royal estate centre of some antiquity. In Domesday it was an ancient demesne of the king, and supported 30 burgesses. There is some evidence
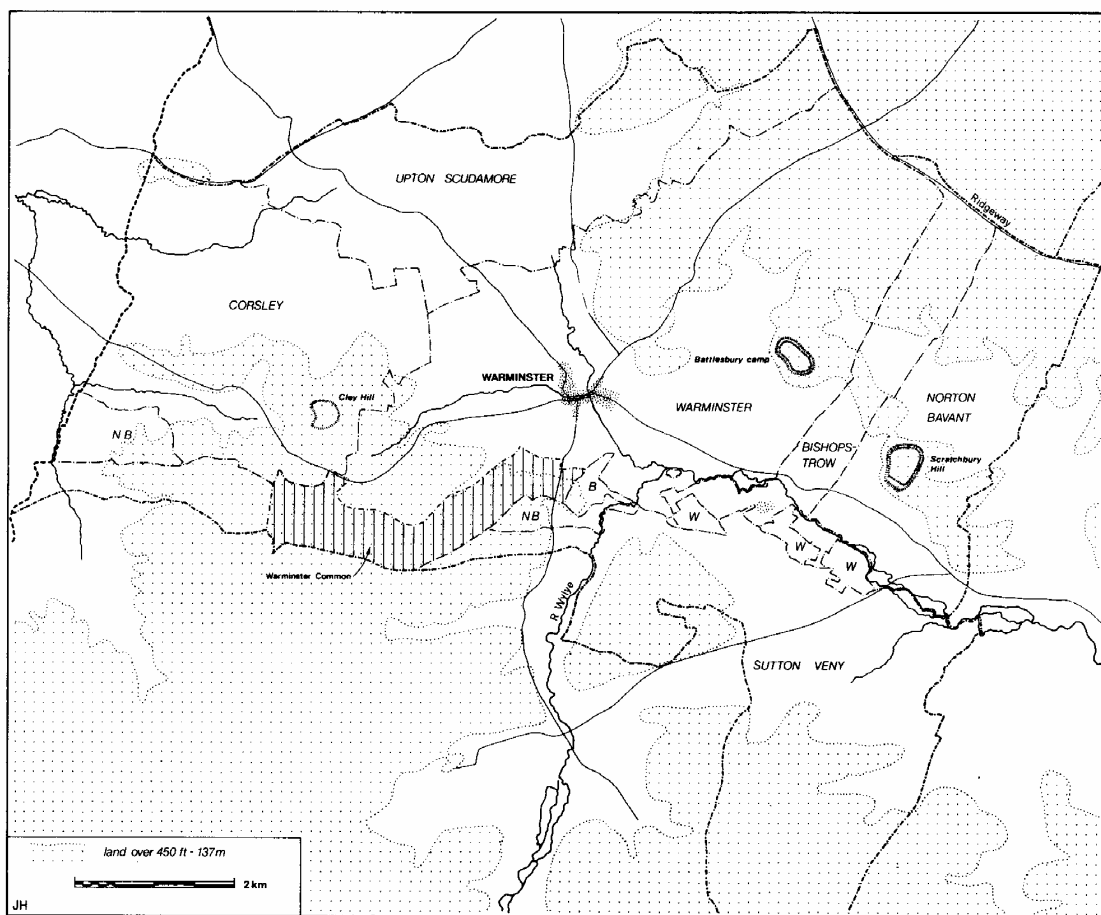
50. Warminster area

that the Domesday hundred (which was the same as the modern hundred [Rogers 1965, 1]) preserves the extent of the original royal estate centred on Warminster (Fig. 50). Most of its constituent parish churches were daughter churches of that at Warminster and the pattern of parish boundaries shown in Tithe Award maps shows close connections between them.[42]

This estate contains three Iron Age hill-forts: Cley Hill, Battlesbury, and Scratchbury camps. Finds of Roman coins, and of possibly pagan Saxon weapons, together with

51. Warminster, with boundaries and other details from Inclosure Award map, 1783

horse and human skeletons from Battlesbury in particular,[43] suggest its continuing (though doubtless intermittent) role throughout the Roman and early Saxon period as a military focus. Though the relationship of the later royal estate and its *villa regalis* to these earlier features are not so clear cut as, for instance, at Bradford, Amesbury, and Wilton, it could nevertheless be concluded that this *villa regalis* developed on the present site of Warminster early in the period of the formation of the West Saxon kingdom. The antiquity of this estate is suggested by the further possibility that the minster church at Warminster owes its origin to St Aldhem. He was certainly responsible for the foundation of the minster churches at the adjoining royal estate centres of Frome and Bruton, to the west and south-west. Furthermore, William of Malmesbury records the tradition that, as bishop of Sherborne, Aldhelm preached at Bishopstrow,[44] one of the constituent villages of Warminster hundred, whose church is dedicated to him. The intrinsic likelihood that the origin of both the village name and church dedication lies in a historical event suggests that by this time St Aldhelm had already founded a minster church at the centre of the estate of which Bishopstrow was one component, either (as at Bradford and Frome) before the beginning of his episcopate in 705, or else immediately afterwards.

As in the case of Calne and Wilton, the topography of the town suggests both the site of the royal residence and the lay-out of settlement immediately around it. The church of St Denys lies at the highest point of a raised area of land between two small streams which surround it on almost every side (Fig. 51).[45] A portion of this area (defined by the 375ft. [115m.] contour) is also occupied by the present Manor Farm, immediately to the south-east of St Denys's church. This was formerly called Warminster Court, and was in the hands of the Maudit family, the lords of Warminster, soon after the Norman Conquest (Daniel 1879, 115), and is thus likely to mark the site of the earlier Saxon royal residence.[46] This suggestion is further strengthened by its position so near to the site of the early minster church. Around this area, which takes up much of the available space on the higher ground between the streams, the single surviving street formed by Church Street and Silver Street must have formed the axis of the early settlement. Properties along this street must have backed on to the royal residence to the north and east, on to the small stream to the south, and on to low-lying land to the west.

A recent excavation to the north of Emwell Street[47] has shown that this street (whose properties backed on to the same stream as those along the south side of Silver Street) was being developed from the late 10th century onwards for small-scale industrial use.[48] Assuming that occupation along Emwell Street is secondary to that along Silver Street, it seems likely that the latter was developed during the 10th century if not somewhat earlier.[49] The identification of this Saxon nucleus thus provides a pattern of the close topographical association of the royal residence, the borough and minster church, and Saxon occupation—a pattern which can also be inferred from the topography of Calne, Chippenham, and Wilton, discussed elsewhere in this chapter. Later Saxon and early medieval development must have been concentrated round the bridge over the River Were to the east, with a further new urban development to the east of this, probably as a result of the grant of a market to the town in 1204 (Haslam 1976, 63).

Wilton and Old Sarum

For reasons which will become apparent, Wilton and Old Sarum must be considered together as being the two main focal points in an area which has been one of the most significant foci of settlement in Wessex throughout the Saxon period. The development of urbanism in these two places can only be understood by examining their changing roles in the settlement pattern during this period, a process which with the growth of New Salisbury in the 13th century and the subsequent eclipse of urban functions at both Old Sarum and Wilton is one which is among the most complex and interesting in the south of England.

In the Iron Age the hill-fort of Old Sarum, lying in a commanding position between the rivers Bourne and Avon, must have been in many senses the focus of a wide area. On it later converged several Roman roads, a large Roman settlement probably developing on a site in its shadow closer to the river (R.C.H.M. 1980, xxviii). The hill-fort, nevertheless, gave the settlement its name (*Sorviodunum*), which has been perpetuated throughout the Saxon period.[50] The Anglo-Saxon penetration of this area is well documented both in the *Chronicle* and, more recently, in numerous archaeological finds (*ibid.*, xxviii-xxix). The battle recorded at Searoburh in 552 indicates the continuing importance of the hill-fort as a military if not also an administrative or tribal focus of its region. Indeed, it seems at least possible that the manifest attraction of this area for the Saxons lay in the existence of a working system of administration and land utilisation preserved from, and around, the Roman settlement at *Sorviodunum*.

It is in this context that the rise of royal Wilton, and its assumption as the capital place of the later shire, must be placed. Royal charters were signed at Wilton in 838 and 854 (James 1962, 7). It was certainly the chief place of the present county by the end of the 8th century, and of the Wilseatan (whatever area this covered) very probably by the end of the 7th century (Young 1942, 28-9; Darlington 1955; P-N Wilts, xvi-xvii). This evidence points to the conclusion that it became the local royal administrative centre on the consolidation of Saxon power in the area in direct succession to the tribal base at Old Sarum.[51] These necessarily brief arguments suggest that the royal palace complex at Wilton, described above as centring on Kingsbury Square, has an origin possibly as early as the early 7th century. These conclusions certainly fit in with the development of settlement patterns within and around the royal Forest of Grovely, which occupied the ridge immediately to its west, and whose eastern bounds were drawn along the western defences of the town (Grundy 1920, 571-3). Bonney has argued (1972, 180-1) that the woodland comprising the later forest was formed by regeneration of land abandoned by Iron Age and Roman settlements consequent upon their movement into the valleys. He has also suggested, however (lecture, 1980) that Wilton itself does not fit neatly into the pattern of surrounding settlements and parishes, and has observed that it is an intrusion into a landscape already settled and divided up by the earlier Saxon period.[52]

These observations suggest that the royal vill at Wilton was a 'planted' settlement, and that the existence or development of the forest on the Grovely ridge, and its suitability as a royal hunting ground, was either the immediate cause or the immediate consequence of this development. This conclusion is strengthened by the position

of Wilton at the junction of two valleys, on a gravel ridge surrounded by marsh or rivers, suggesting a conscious choice, for specific reasons, of a site combining regional accessibility with local inaccessibility. A similar conclusion can be drawn from the relationship of Chippenham to surrounding settlements (see above), and from its position on a similarly distinctive site.

An ecclesiastical presence must also have developed at Wilton at an early date. There are various intermittent references to the formation of a monastic establishment of some kind at Wilton from the early 9th century onwards (Hoare 1825, 60–67, 78–80; Nightingale 1906, 2; Darlington 1955, 30). According to a 15th-century poem setting out the history of the nunnery, King Ecbert founded a nunnery for 13 sisters in 830, dedicated to St Mary. This was said to have been the successor of a chantry built in commemoration of Alemund by Weohstan, the first recorded Ealdorman of Wiltshire in c. 800 (Hoare 1825, 60–61). Alfred is said to have refounded the monastery dedicated to St Mary, removing it 'from its former situation to the site of what had previously been the royal palace', and giving it the title of Abbey (ibid., 78).

Although the author of the V.C.H. has dismissed this account out of hand (Crittall 1956, 231), its underlying authenticity appears to be borne out by independent evidence shown by the topography of the centre of the town. It preserves, in particular, a record of the close relationship between the main monastic church, dedicated to St Mary, and the royal residence; it is precisely this same relationship which is demonstrated in the proximity of the present St Mary's church and the king's burh' or royal palace, shown by the place-name 'Kingsbury', discussed in more detail below.[53] If it is accepted that these accounts are genuine, St Mary's church would by the end of the 8th century have been a minster church of some importance— reflecting the regional importance of the villa regalis. In view of this late 7th-century origin of minsters at other places discussed in this chapter, its origin could well be taken back to the early days of the conversion of Wessex in the 7th century.

The close association of St Mary's church and royal palace is further indicated by the burial there of two, possibly three, of Edward the Elder's daughters, together with his second wife. Edgar's charter of 974 suggests that Edward refounded the monastery (Hoare 1825, 85), but since most of the 9th- and 10th-century kings seem to have had a finger in the monastic pie (ibid., 78) it is difficult to know precisely what this means. It is possible, however, that both this episode (and perhaps also Alfred's earlier 'refoundation') mark the provision of a new minster church separated from the earlier monastery (included in consequence within the precincts of the royal palace) to provide a parish or burh church for the developing urban community in precisely the same way, and for the same reasons, that the New Minster was provided at Winchester (Biddle [ed.] 1976, 314). The close interest of Edgar in the monastery at Wilton (his daughter, Edith, was associated with the monastery for most of her life), suggests furthermore that the move of the monastery from a position either within or attached to the royal palace to the site some 300m. to the east, where it remained until the 16th century, was the direct result of the reformation of the monastery by the king and Bishop Dunstan, probably before 974.

From the late 9th century to beyond the Norman Conquest both the functional and spatial relationships between Wilton and Old Sarum become close, and are highly illuminating for any study of urban origins and development. In 871, a month

after his accession to the throne, Alfred fought and lost a battle against the Danes at Wilton. There is some evidence to suggest that it was at this time that the strategic importance of Old Sarum in relation to the old-established royal site at Wilton was appreciated anew, and its defensive potential once again utilised. Wilton formed one of the places mentioned in the Burghal Hidage, being assessed at 1,400 hides (Hill 1969, 90). However, of all the places mentioned in this document, Wilton has the least adequate defences, whether artificial or natural, a fact which has led the author of the *V.C.H.* to suggest some link between Wilton and Old Sarum (Hill 1962, 52-3). It is thus intrinsically possible that it was Old Sarum rather than Wilton which formed the original fortification in King Alfred's initial scheme for the defence of Wessex. This suggestion is strengthened by the evidence of a document noticed by Colt Hoare (1812, i, 224) which records the re-fortification of Old Sarum by King Alfred. It reads: 'I Alfred, king and monarch of the English, have ordered Leofric Earl of Wiltunshire not only to preserve the castle of Sarum (? *Searoburh*), but to make another ditch to be defended with palisades, and all who live about the said castle, as well as my other subjects, are immediately to apply to this work'.[54] Whatever might have been the provenance or the form of this document, its genuineness is suggested by the appearance in it of those elements which would be expected in such an undertaking: the use of ditch and palisade defences, the summons to the earl (shire reeve) of the county, and the nature of the re-fortification as a public enterprise.

There is nothing, however, to suggest that the provision of defences at Old Sarum implied the creation there of an urban place, although coins of Athelstan and Edgar have been found inside the defences (Shortt 1965, 9; R.C.H.M. 1980, xxix).[55] The topographical evidence described below suggests that urban development was concentrated at Wilton, then as later a far more accessible and well-watered site. The inclusion of Wilton in the Burghal Hidage document, furthermore, shows that this must have been a development no later than the reign of Edward the Elder. Whether this document relating to Old Sarum is genuine or not, it certainly describes a development—or at least part of a series of developments—which can be recognised as occurring in other places in southern England, in which an initial non-urban (presumably Alfredian) hilltop fortress was succeeded by a topographically distinct urban development, with or without defences, on a new and more accessible site.[56]

The Alfredian origin of the burh at Old Sarum provides a context for its use as an 'emergency burh' during the period of renewed Danish hostilities in the early 11th century. In 1003 Swein 'led his army into Wilton, and they ravaged and burnt the borough, and he betook him then to Salisbury'. It was either in anticipation, or as a direct result, of this event that the moneyers moved from Wilton to Old Sarum (Dolley 1954; Hill 1962, 53).[57] There is good evidence from other fortresses constructed at this time that the existing defences of the hill-fort must have been strengthened or reconstructed.[58] One, and possibly two phases of post-Roman defences have been identified archaeologically, but in view of the lack of dating evidence or other diagnostic archaeological features it would be a mistake to identify these firmly with this episode.[59]

It is possibly to this phase of burh construction (or equally possibly to the preceding Alfredian phase) that several features discernable in the Norman period can be ascribed. Firstly, the area of the hill-fort and burh was by the time of Domesday quite

clearly a royal enclave surrounded by lands belonging to the first bishop (Benson and Hatcher 1843, 41; Hill 1962, 51-2; R.C.H.M. 1980, xxix-xxxi). In his gift of these lands to the bishop, probably before the Conquest (Hill 1962, 52), the king must have reserved for himself the old royal burh—a conclusion which provides the context for the unusual interest which William I took in Old Sarum both as the site of a castle and a cathedral.
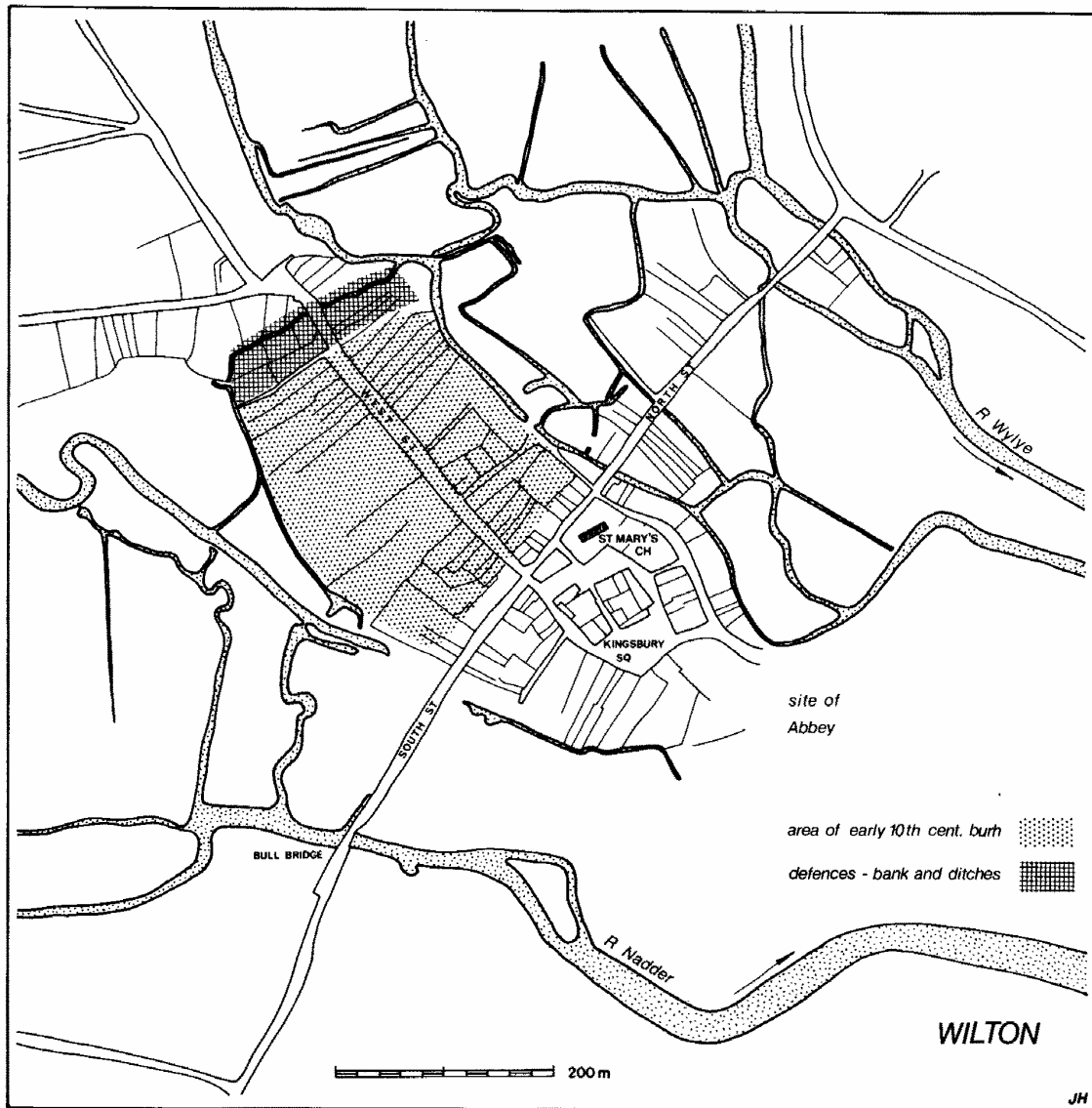
Secondly, there are suggestions that there was already by the end of the Saxon period a church or chapel dedicated to St Mary inside the burh, within the precinct of the later castle (Benson and Hatcher 1943, 12). The evidence is somewhat confusing, as Musty and Rahtz have already pointed out (1964, 131-3), but the possibility should not be overlooked that this, or another of the several churches recorded as being in Old Sarum (ibid.), was the church of either (or both) the 9th- or the early 11th-century burh.[60]

Thirdly, it appears that there was a church placed over the east gate dedicated to the Holy Cross, which was observed by Leland in 1540 (Stone and Charlton 1935, 174). Though there are no references to it earlier than 1236 (Hill 1962, 60) it is highly probable that this is a further example of that group of churches which were placed over or by the sides of gates of Saxon burhs.[61] The late 9th- or early 10th-century origin of a similarly-placed chapel at Chisbury, argued above, at least suggests the possibility that the church at Old Sarum could have owed its origin to the period of fortress creation by King Alfred.

The historic core of Wilton is situated on a low spur of river gravels which is never more than 2-3m. above the rivers Wylye and Nadder which surround it on three sides.[62] It has been described as a 'promontory burh',[63] though its topography is by no means as marked as that of other promontory burhs such as Shaftesbury and Lydford. An earlier attempt by the writer to see parallels in its plan to those rectilinear burhs such as Cricklade (Haslam 1976, 67-9), must, in view of the discussion below, be considered inappropriate.[64]

For various reasons, it is likely that the historic core of the town lies around Kingsbury Square (Fig. 52), which contains an open 'market' area, space around this for houses, and St Mary's church. Evidence already set out suggests that this church is on the site of an early (presumably 7th-century) minster church, and a 9th- and early 10th-century nunnery. The present Kingsbury Square is, furthermore, adjacent to an area which is clearly shown on a plan of c. 1568 (James 1962, 28) as being a discrete area of enclosed land set in the central part of the spur between the rivers to the north and south. The association of this area with the 'Kingsbury' place-name, and the parallel to this arrangement at, for instance, Calne (discussed above, and further below), suggest that this area was the site of the royal palace, the 'king's burh', which has been suggested above was certainly in existence by c. 800 and very probably considerably earlier.

Converging on to this central area are two roads leading from the north-east and south-west over a succession of bridges. There is no reason to believe that these are not the direct successors of roads, probably constructed over causeways with frequent small bridges over the various branches of the rivers, which formed the original entry and exit points to this royal palace complex (Fig. 52). It seems quite likely, though it has yet to be demonstrated, that the areas on either side of these roadways could have been the site of early 'suburban' development, the proximity to flowing water facilitating industrial activities such as flax retting, cloth fulling, or tanning.[65]

ST MARY'S
CH

KINGSBURY
SQ

site of
Abbey

R Wylye

SOUTH ST

BULL BRIDGE

R Nadder

area of early 10th cent. burh

defences - bank and ditches

200 m

WILTON

JH

52. Wilton

To the north-west, along the low ridge of the spur, lies a wide street bounded to the north-west by bank and ditch defences,[66] which topographically forms an area separate from the royal palace complex described above. The courses of the roads approaching Wilton from the west and north-west (Fig. 52) are clearly determined by a gate at the centre of these defences. The boundaries of the properties still discernable along this street lie at right-angles to it, running back at least part way to the river channels on either side. It is uncertain whether any purpose-built defences were constructed at these sides (to the north-east and south-west of West Street); field-work suggests that a marked ditch to the south-west may have been a canalisation of the river for defensive purposes, but its date is uncertain.[67] The topographical evidence thus suggests that this area was a new urban development, laid out as a discrete unit next to the early palace complex and provided with new defences in a single operation.

No excavations have been undertaken in this area, and no dating evidence obtained in the two trenches cut across the defences. It is suggested, however, that in view of Wilton's inclusion as a fortress in the Burghal Hidage document, this defended area was added to the earlier undefended nucleus either in the period of Alfredian fortress and town building in the late 9th century, or else by Edward the Elder in the early years of the 10th century. Arguments already given suggesting that Old Sarum was used as the original Alfredian fortress implies that this defended area in Wilton was a new urban development of Edward the Elder, arguably before 911 when he began his Midland campaign. This conclusion also fits in with the pattern argued by the writer (in Chapter 8 below) for the development of Barnstaple, Totnes, Kingsbridge and Plympton (Devon) as fortified urban centres founded by Edward the Elder, to replace the Alfredian fortresses of Pilton and Halwell. Topographically, and also in the writer's view in the manner of its origin, this is a remarkable parallel for the town at Langport (Somerset), though the development along the long causeway there is secondary to an earlier hilltop fortress rather than to an undefended royal palace nucleus, as at Wilton.

It is clear that subsequent to the focus of Old Sarum as a tribal 'capital' in the 5th and/or 6th centuries, Wilton developed as the central settlement in both the area and the region, and as an important royal residence. Ideally sited for both regional and local trade, it cannot have failed to have become a relatively sizeable settlement which by the 9th century must have been at least proto-urban in character. It is thus unlikely that the creation of the Alfredian fortress at Old Sarum could have led to much if any urban development there—a conclusion borne out by the topographical evidence at Wilton of a phase of urban expansion in the early 10th century. Wilton must have developed rapidly as an urban centre throughout the 10th and 11th centuries, helped no doubt by the popularity of the nunnery in its midst. This seems to be confirmed by the mention in a charter of King Edmund in 940 of a *haga* in Wilton granted as an appurtenance of an estate at Wylye (Sawyer 1968, 469; Finberg 1954, No. 254)—the earliest mention of an urban *haga* in charters. A charter of Edgar, furthermore, grants to the monastery two hides of land 'juxta civitam sitas', which Regenweard the merchant formerly held, including also a mill, a church and 16 acres of pasture on the common meadow (Hoare 1825, 85). This again is one of the few direct pieces of evidence, firstly, for the existence in the 10th century of common fields attached to early urban communities, and, secondly, for the fact that these

fields must have been, as they clearly were in the medieval period in many places, divided up in some way between the burgesses and/or the occupiers of *hagae*. It also emphasises that these 'town fields' were owned by, and in the gift of, the king rather than the burgesses as a group, which is a reminder of the origin of the town as a royal foundation attached to a royal vill.

In itself the creation of an 'emergency burh' at Old Sarum in 1003, and the move there of the Wilton moneyers, does not necessarily imply either that urban activities ceased at Wilton (in spite of its recorded destruction) or that Old Sarum necessarily became an urban place. The fact that the moneyers stayed at Old Sarum rather than moving back to Wilton after the end of Aethelred's reign does, however, suggest that probably from this time some of the functions of royal administration centred at Wilton—in effect the residence of the shire reeve—were transferred to Old Sarum on a permanent basis. The continuation of the mint there throughout the 11th century can be seen at least in this case as more of a convenient administrative arrangement than a demonstration of its urban status. Such settlement as there was in the period up to the Norman Conquest need have consisted of no more than a small service population gathered around the hall of the shire reeve, inside the defences. Since archaeological evidence for settlement outside the east gate is only of the Norman period and later (Stone and Charlton 1935; Musty and Rahtz 1964), it must be concluded that any truly urban development at Old Sarum began in the 'suburbs' (i.e., outside the earlier burh) only as a consequence of the construction of the castle and cathedral inside the former burh from the Norman period onwards.[68] In contrast, the urban functions of Wilton can have been only momentarily disrupted by the destruction of the town in 1003. That new moneyers began working there from the beginning of the reign of Cnut even suggests the possibility that the new king pursued a policy of urban restoration and renewal. Wilton subsequently developed through the early medieval period to become by any standards an important town, until its urban functions (together with those of Old Sarum) were gradually usurped by New Salisbury from the early 13th century onwards.

*   *   *   *   *

There are two, possibly four, other places in Wiltshire which are not described in Domesday Book as having burgesses, mints or markets, but which yet have some claim to be regarded as urban places by the later Saxon period. The two most certain ones are Amesbury and Chippenham, and the two less certain are Westbury and Downton. Amesbury and Chippenham were both part of the royal demesne in Domesday, both paying the *firma unius noctis,* and can be considered, therefore, as being the head places of royal estates which were ancient by the time of Domesday.

Westbury had none of these characteristics except in being the central place of a large parish which was also a Domesday hundred. A little to the east of Westbury, and at the centre of this land unit, lies the Iron Age hill-fort of Bratton, a relationship apparently enshrined in the name 'Westbury'.[69] As with Amesbury, Bedwyn, Bradford, Warminster, and Wilton, it is possible to see Westbury as an early Saxon, possibly royal, estate centre, continuing by more or less direct succession the role formerly played by the hill-fort.[70] Although early- to mid-Saxon pottery has been found at Westbury (Fowler 1966), any urban or indeed proto-urban characteristics are difficult

to demonstrate before the 13th century—though probably more through the non-survival of relevant evidence than anything else.

Similarly, Downton was also the centre of a large royal estate which was probably given to the bishops of Winchester in the late 7th or early 8th centuries (Crowley 1980, 19-28). It has been suggested that Downton itself probably succeeded a large Roman villa as an estate settlement (*ibid.*, 23), a development which would certainly place in context the middle or late Saxon pottery found there (Rahtz 1964). However, without the stimulus of the royal presence after the 8th century, arguably of some importance in the special development of other settlements, it is uncertain whether this estate centre would have developed any recognisable proto-urban or urban characteristics.

Amesbury

Amesbury has been well served by several recent historical studies (Pugh 1947-8; Pugh 1956; Chandler 1978-9; Chandler and Goodhaugh 1979; Hinton 1979), which have dealt with most aspects of its development. Although Domesday Book gives no indication of any recognisable urban characteristics, there are some grounds for suggesting that it developed at an early date as an important proto-urban settlement, and that by the end of the Saxon period it would have been as 'urban' as any of the smaller places so far considered.
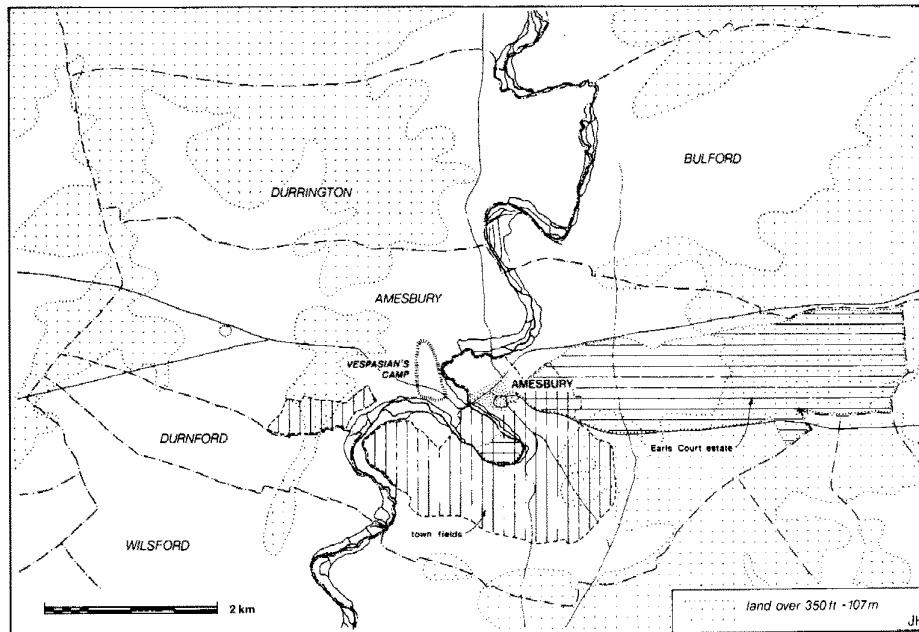

53. Amesbury area

It seems clear that Amesbury's early significance was due to its role as a central place from the Iron Age if not rather earlier. It is first mentioned as *Ambresbyrig* in King Alfred's will (P-N Wilts, 358-9), from which fact two important points emerge. Firstly, as the central settlement in a royal estate, Amesbury was an administrative, judicial and economic centre, the site of a *villa regalis* and very probably a minster church. The area administered by this estate centre, in both secular and ecclesiastical matters, was probably the whole of the Domesday hundred (Hinton 1979, 27), though the royal demesne by the time of Domesday probably covered only the area of the parish itself with that of Durrington to its north (Fig. 53). The royal estate also included a large area of woodland to the south and south-east (Pugh 1947-8, 101-2).[71] It has also been suggested (Hinton 1979, 27) that the existence of an early minster church was responsible for the stories recorded by Geoffrey of Monmouth of an early monastery at Amesbury (Chandler 1978-9, 6).

Secondly, the name *Ambresbyrig* shows with little doubt that the settlement at Amesbury was in some way connected with the hill-fort ('Vespasians camp') immediately to its west. The development of royal administrative centres in direct and arguably casual relationship to hill-forts shown at, for instance Wilton/Old Sarum, Warminster/Battlesbury, Bradford/Budbury, and Brokenborough/Malmesbury, suggests that a similar process could well have operated in the case of Amesbury and 'Vespasian's camp', and that the hill-fort itself would in the early Saxon period have been re-used as some sort of military and/or territorial tribal focus. The wider incidence of this pattern of development lends some support to suggestions (admittedly somewhat speculative) that the hill-fort was re-occupied as one of a number of permanent garrison points of the forces of Ambrosius Aurelianus, the commander of British forces in the 460s and 470s (Morris 1973, 100).[72]

The royal vill at Amesbury is thus seen as developing in probably the 7th or possibly even the 6th century at a convenient river crossing near the formerly garrisoned and possibly re-defended hill-fort, as the central settlement of a territory which was probably at that time already well established. Its gradual acquisition throughout the Saxon period of economic, administrative, ecclesiastical and ceremonial functions must have given rise eventually to a proto-urban and latterly a truly urban place, even though its administrative and to some extent economic roles would always have been overshadowed by Wilton to the south. It is likely therefore that (as Hinton has suggested, 1979, 28) both the royal palace, probably surrounded by its own ditch and bank, and the early minster church would have been sited around the bridgehead and the present parish church, with any associated settlement grouped around this focus along the road approaching from the east. There are, however, no clear topographical indications of the lay-out of this early settlement complex such as can be postulated for instance at Wilton, Calne and Chippenham.

It is in relation to this pattern from the abbey, founded in 979 shortly after the assassination of King Edward (Pugh 1956; Hinton 1979), must be placed. There has been considerable controversy over its precise location, which is even now unresolved. On the one hand, Hinton argues (1979, 24-5) that since the monastery was not an integral part of the community into which it was placed, it lay some distance from the present church on the later abbey site (to the north-east), and quotes as a parallel the separation of the monastery at Bradford from the parish church (see above). This
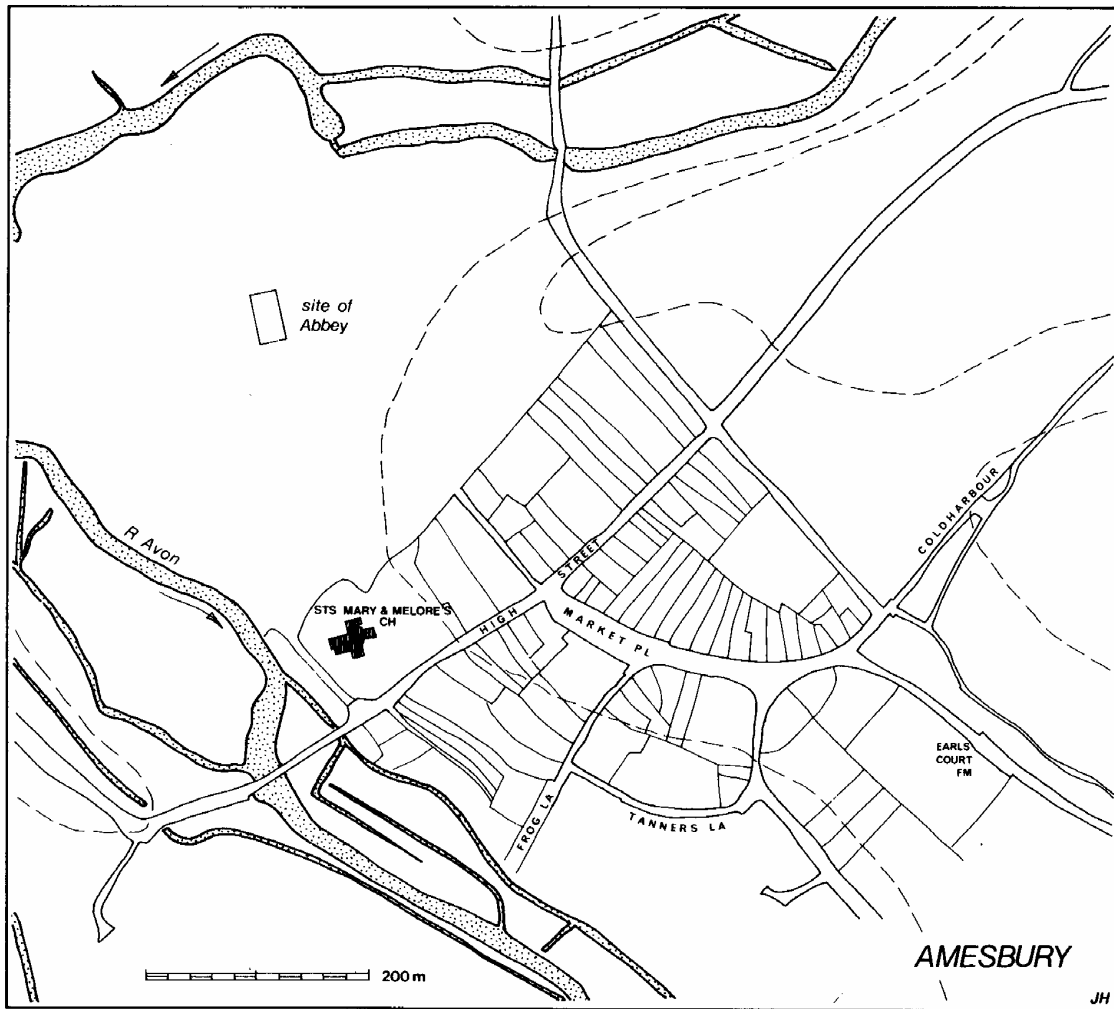
54. Amesbury, with boundaries and names from map by T. Flitcroft, 1726

view is perhaps given some support by the suggestion made above in the case of Wilton for the move of the monastic house from its original position in close association with the royal palace and earlier minster church to a new site, either in the early 10th century or more probably during the reforms of Edgar and Dunstan in the 970s. However, Chandler has argued (1979, 14) that the original monastic church and conventual buildings were grouped around the present parish church (near the presumed site of the royal palace), and that on the re-foundation of the nunnery in 1177 new buildings

were constructed on another site, the old buildings on the original site being rebuilt to accommodate a house of male religious, who had moved in by 1189.

This latter suggestion fits with other topographical and historical observations. The abbey held no land of its own in the town, and seems likely therefore to have originated in close association with the royal palace and presumed minster church. The suggested move in 1177 to the new site can, furthermore, be associated with the growth of the town to the south, with the lay-out of a new market area whose northern approach lay directly opposite the gate or lane leading to the new nunnery.[73] Though this development cannot be dated, it is not unreasonable to suggest that it would have been consequential upon this move of the nunnery, and not unconnected with the acquisition of the whole of the royal estate by the earls of Salisbury by the end of the 12th century (Pugh 1947-8, 74-5).

Chippenham

The suggestion in the evidence from Domesday that Chippenham was the head place of an early royal estate is reinforced by earlier evidence. Asser describes the place of marriage of King Alfred's sister to Burgred, king of Mercia (which event was recorded in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* in 853) as being 'in the *villa regia* which is called Chippenham (*Cippanhamme*)' (Whitelock 1979, 189 and n. 8). He describes Chippenham in a similar way when it was taken over in 878 by the Danish army (*ibid.*, 195, n. 10). Indeed, the account of this occupation suggests that Chippenham was a favourite residence of the king and his family, and of some strategic importance in the royal control of most of Wessex—factors which no doubt singled it out as being a desirable winter camp for the Danish army.

Although there are no earlier references to it, it is clear that from early in the Saxon period Chippenham must have formed the centre of a large royal estate which included the royal Forest of Chippenham and Melksham (Fig. 55). This forest, which extends southwards from Chippenham to include Roman *Verlucio* as well as the western parts of the royal estate of Calne (Grant 1959, 407-14, 446-7), occupies an area of former Roman villa estates centred on *Verlucio* (Bonney 1972, 178). As has already been suggested (above) in relation to Calne, there is thus some reason for at least advancing the hypothesis that the later royal forest developed by the regeneration of waste and woodland on the abandonment of these estates after the Roman period, and that the royal estates around both Chippenham and Calne therefore remained as workable estates (with a shift of estate centre to new sites) in possibly direct continuity from a situation existing in the Roman period. These places would thus have taken over the role of *Verlucio* as regional administrative centres at an early date, in the same manner as has been suggested for Bedwyn and Ramsbury in relation to Roman *Cunetio* (Haslam 1980, 58-64) and as can also be suggested between Roman White Walls and Brokenborough.

This seems to be supported by the topography of the estate appurtenant to Chippenham. The Domesday manor occupied a tract of land mainly to the west of Chippenham (Ford 1976) (Fig. 55). To the north of this lie the manors of Kingston St Michael and Kingston Langley,[74] whose names suggest that they formed part of the ancient royal estate centred on Chippenham.[75] This whole area, together with the

present parish of Langley Burrell, was known at the time of Domesday as *Lang-leah* (Ford 1976; Jackson 1858, 38), its extent coinciding with an area of lighter soils on the Kellaways sands and surrounded by Oxford clays (Ford 1976).

Chippenham itself must thus have acted as an early estate centre and, by inference from its later role as the centre of a hundred, the administrative centre of a large area. The details of its relationship with surrounding places has indeed suggested to Ford (*ibid.*, 15) that it 'was not sited on any known medieval agricultural settlement and had no appurtenant field systems of its own'. While there is no positive evidence of an early minster church (the royal marriage recorded in 853 could have been held in a separate palace chapel), its presence at Chippenham can be regarded as likely.

That Chippenham may have originated as an early 'planted' settlement is reinforced by its distinctive topography. Its site on a pronounced spur of land, surrounded by the River Avon on three sides (Fig. 56), is in many significant respects similar to the sites of other royal vills discussed in this chapter such as Bradford, Calne, and Wilton. As in the case of these other places it is approached by a route along the crest of the
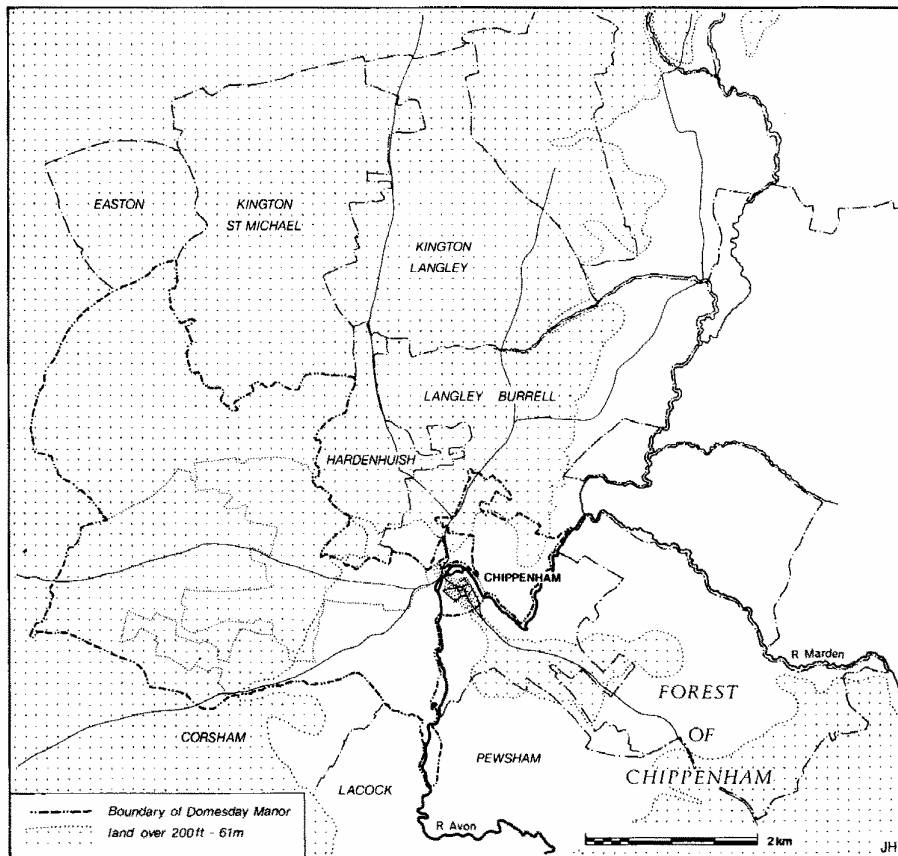
55. Chippenham area
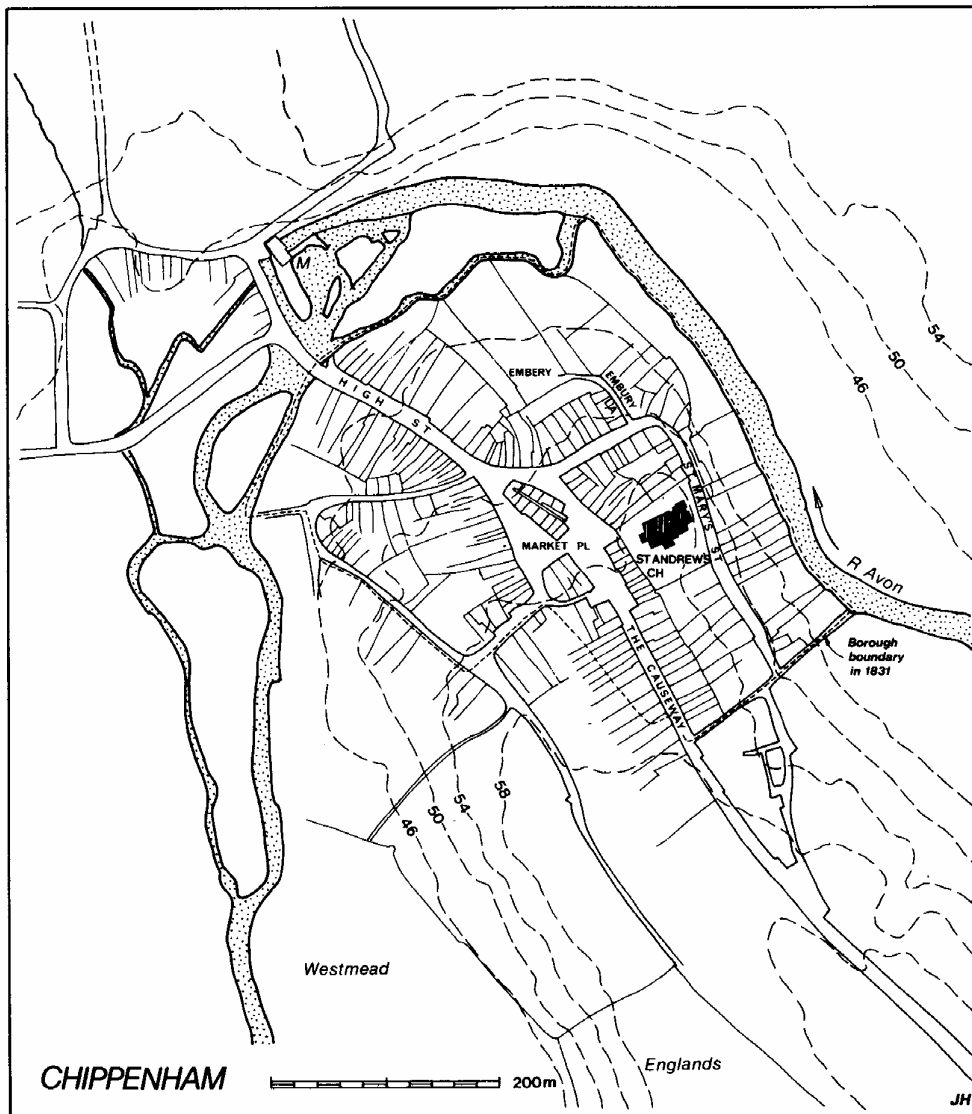
56. Chippenham, with boundaries from map by T. Powell, 1784

spur (from the south-east), and by several routes from the north which converge at the
northern end of the river crossing at the head of the spur.[76] The built topography of
the centre of Chippenham is closely comparable in particular to Calne and Wilton.
In Chippenham, as at these other places, the principal church is associated with an
open area or market-place, together with a discrete area to the north of the church,
surrounded by streets. By analogy with similar areas at Calne and Wilton which
are probably the sites of royal palaces (both being associated with a Kingsbury
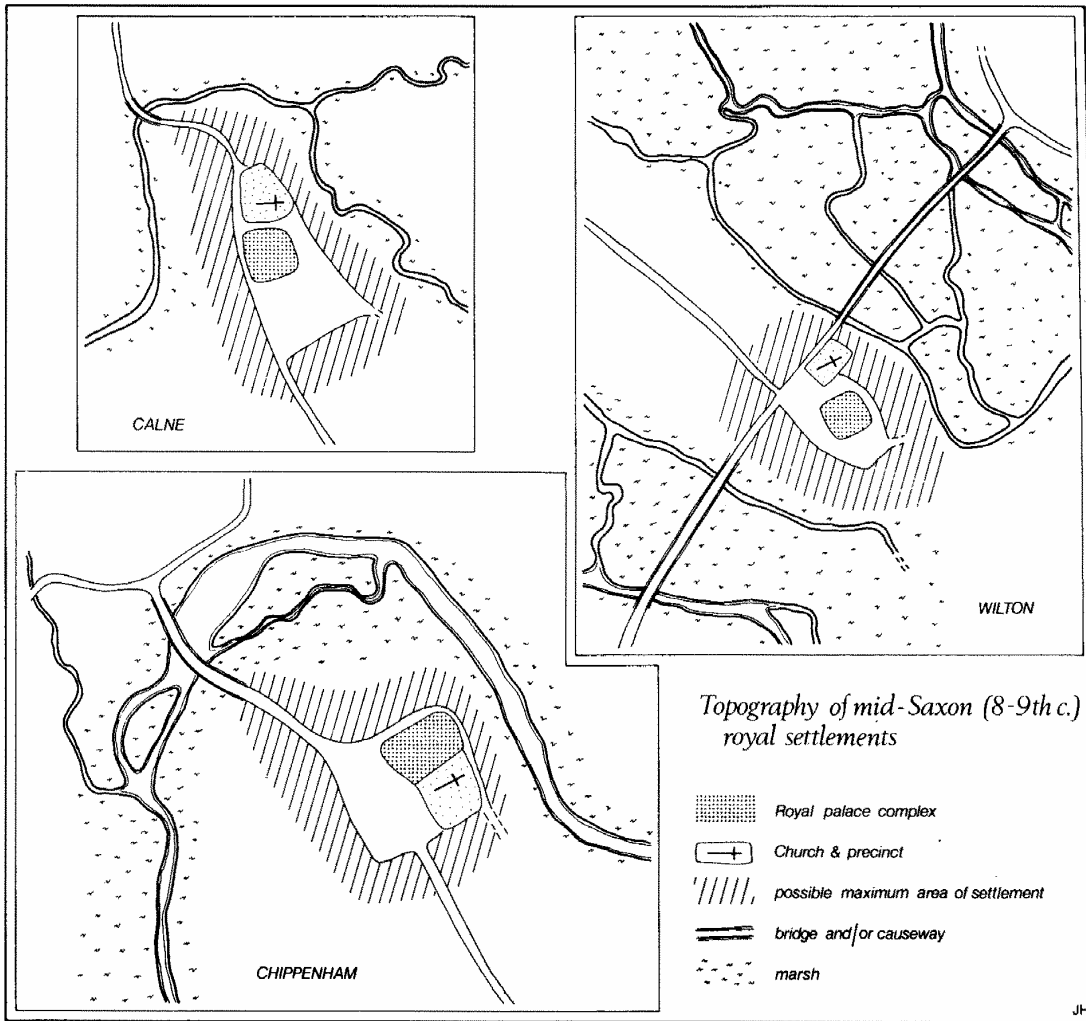
57. Conjectural topography of 8th- and 9th-century royal settlements.

place-name), this area in Chippenham was possibly also occupied by the royal palace. This was certainly in existence by the mid 9th century, which suggests (again by analogy especially with Wilton) that all these features were, together with areas of occupation surrounding them on the north and west sides (Fig. 57), probably established by this time if not rather earlier. The existence of this royal 'burh'—consisting as at Cheddar probably of a hall and ancillary buildings surrounded by a bank and ditch defence—is supported by the description of an area east of St Mary's Street

as abutting on to 'the ditch of *Imburi*' in an early-13th-century deed of Stanley abbey (Ford 1976, 16). 'Imburi' or 'Ymburi' in Old English is suggested by Ford (*ibid.*) as meaning 'around the burh'. A field also called Imburi, later Emery, also lay to the rear (north) of the burgages on the northern side of Cook Street. In view of the arguments given below suggesting that there were neither Danish nor Saxon 'public-burh' defences around Chippenham in this area, it seems likely that these references to Imburi refer to defences of the royal 'palace-burh', and can be taken as being equivalent to the 'Kingsbury' place-names surviving at, for instance, Wilton and Calne.

The Danish army which occupied Chippenham in 878 must have been attracted not only by the administrative importance of this settlement, but also by the relative inaccessibility of the site and by its status as the central place within a presumably prosperous estate. The brevity of their stay, from 878 to 879, suggests that any tangible effect of their occupation would have been limited to the addition of hastily dug defences either around the settlement nucleus or across the spur to the south of the church. In view of the defensive potential of the river itself on three sides of the settlement, the latter seems to be the most likely alternative. There is little indication in the present topography to suggest a course for these defences, though a line marked by the southern edge of both the market area and the churchyard seems the most probable.[77]

Both the fate of these defences and the history of the town in the 10th century are ill-documented. What seems certain, however, is that Chippenham is unlikely to have become a Saxon burh, in the sense of a public or communal urban fortified place set up by the king. Attempts to see a 'grid pattern' in the street plan (Ford 1976, 16) are quite unconvincing. Any observable regularities are suggested here as being the result of a 'lay-out' which was established well before the time of Alfred. Urban growth during the 10th and succeeding centuries would (in spite of the silence of Domesday Book) have been a natural result of its central position in relation·both to a large estate and to a probably developed regional route system. The growth of the settlement at this time is, furthermore, probably reflected in the acquisition of the town fields, called Westmead and Englands, on the southern side of the town. They were assarted from the area of the royal forest (Ford 1976), the name Englands being derived from the Saxon word 'Inland' ('Hinlond' in the 13th century) meaning 'home ground' (Jackson 1857, 34). Their existence must reflect the growth of the community from its probably original status as a specialised royal settlement.

<p style="text-align:center">*   *   *   *   *</p>

Discussion

The 11 places discussed in this chapter which show some evidence for the development of urban functions before the end of the 11th century form a sufficiently large sample to enable some preliminary conclusions to be drawn about the development of urbanism in the Saxon period. It has been the intention to show that it is only through the detection of patterns that it is possible to construct developmental models to explain all the observed phenomena.

The development of urbanism in this period can best be categorised by suggesting five different stages. Whether they represent real stages in the organisation of society as a whole or of urban places in general, or whether the changes between the stages

merely reflect convenient breaks in the surviving evidence, is a matter for continuing discussion.[78]

1. Primary phase: 7th–later 9th century.
   (a) Proto-urban development around royal *villae*, which acted as re-distributive and administrative centres; as loci for industrial activity (e.g., Ramsbury); as ceremonial ecclesiastical centres (with early minster churches and/or monastic establishments).
   Amesbury, Bedwyn, Bradford, Calne, Chippenham, ? Downton, Ramsbury, Tilshead, Warminster, ? Westbury, Wilton.
   (b) Proto-urban development around monastic centre of Malmesbury, though this itself developed in close relationship to *villa regales* at Brokenborough).
   Wilton possibly combines both (a) and (b).

2. Late 9th century.
   (a) Phase of Alfredian fortification and urban creation:
   Cricklade: functioned as a defended frontier town; on a royal estate but probably not at estate centre. The only Alfredian 'new town' in Wiltshire.
   Malmesbury: re-fortification of old defences, and formal structure given to earlier proto-urban settlement.
   Old Sarum; Chisbury: non-urban hill-forts near *villae regalis* (Wilton and Bedwyn).
   (b) Possible temporary Danish fortification at Chippenham.

3. Early 10th century (Edward the Elder, between 899–910).
   (a) Foundation of possible fortified new urban centre at Marlborough, concurrent with ecclesiastical development at Ramsbury (*c.* 909). Disuse of Chisbury as fortress.
   (b) Planned and fortified urban development at Wilton, or extension of earlier nucleus.

4. 10th century.
   (a) Growth and consolidation of all the above urban centres. Formation of mints at many places.
   Probable reformation of monasteries at Wilton and Malmesbury (*temp.* King Edgar), encouraging growth as pilgrimage centres; creation of of Amesbury monastery, having similar effect.
   (b) Possible special status of Old Sarum as non-urban administrative centre.

5. Early 11th century.
   Programme of re-fortification by Aethelred, affecting Cricklade and Old Sarum (possibly also other places such as Chisbury, Caesar's Camp (Amesbury), Malmesbury. Destruction of defences, certainly at Cricklade, by Cnut. General effects of these events on urban development uncertain, but possible phase of urban renewal by Cnut (e.g., Wilton).

The places of group 1, suggested as having proto-urban characteristics at an early date, must be considered further. The evidence already summarised for each of these settlements makes possible the construction of a model describing the general development of proto-urban and urban places which appears to embrace all the observations

and relationships already made. In the early post-Roman period it can be suggested that in the break-up of the Roman administrative system in the 4th and/or 5th centuries, and with the emergence of the Saxons as the dominant force, the Roman administrative centres were replaced by large self-sufficient agricultural estates ('multiple estates'), with administrative centres on new sites which took over the local and regional administrative roles of the former Roman settlements. For instance, it has already been suggested that *Sorviodunum* gave place to Wilton, *Cunetio* to Ramsbury and/or Bedwyn, *Verlucio* to Calne and Chippenham, White Walls to Brokenborough, and Bradford villa to Bradford itself. Most, if not all, of these Saxon settlements were on new sites, some closer to their 'parents' than others. The precise period when they originated after the 5th century is unclear, but they had probably formed as *villae regales*, or royal administrative centres, by the consolidation of the West Saxon kingdom in the 7th century.

The role of the church must have been of some importance in the later stages of this process. The fact that all known early minster churches in the county were sited at these royal centres suggests a deliberate policy of moulding the ecclesiastical administration around a framework of royal administration which was already securely established by *c.* 700. As has been pointed out by D. Hinton (1979, 27), the fact that King Ine's late-7th-century laws made provision for the payment of an annual tax to the church suggests that 'the church at which this payment was made was likely to be attached to the royal residence where the secular taxes were paid'.

It can also be suggested that these places were from the beginning specialised non-agricultural centres, which in some cases (such as at Wilton and Chippenham) were fitted into an already existing, and probably ancient, agricultural system consisting of villages surrounded by their appurtenant fields. This conclusion appears to be strengthened by the fact that many of these places were sited in distinctive topographical positions on relatively inaccessible spur sites, themselves surrounded by rivers and originally marshy valleys (in particular, Bradford, Calne, Chippenham, Warminster, and Wilton), and commanding crossing places of these rivers.

These settlements may be described as 'proto-urban' not only because they developed (at least in Wiltshire) into truly urban places in the later Saxon period, but also because even at an early date (before the 9th century) it can be suggested that they had—or their inhabitants performed—distinctive functions which were essentially non-agricultural. As sites of royal palaces and minster churches they must have been centres of high levels of both consumption and production, both, for instance, documented archaeologically in the large iron-smelting site of the early 9th century at Ramsbury (Haslam 1980), which was associated with imported lava querns.[79] Given the high level of agricultural production on royal estates from an early date (argued by Sawyer 1978, 144-49), they must have been centres through which the proper utilisation of the resources of the estates were organised. They were the focal points for the creation and collection of the real wealth of the ruling power: agricultural production. They were the places from which surpluses were distributed and to which dues and food rents were paid, thus naturally becoming the centres of lines of communication—a situation which their often close relationship with Iron Age or Roman centres suggests was no new development in the early Saxon

period. The development of centralised administrative and economic functions at these places would certainly have been enhanced by the siting of minster churches at them from c. 700 onwards.

The evidence thus suggests that these *villae regales* were, from early in the Saxon period, the foci for non-agricultural population concentrations: they were administrative, fiscal, and religious and ceremonial centres. It also seems likely that they would have been the centres at which the increasing royal control of trading transactions, involving as it did the provision of witnesses, was to be concentrated. These places thus fall into that class of proto-urban settlements 'whose function and inhabitants exhibit traits, be they cultural, religious, administrative or ceremonial, sufficiently distinctive to distinguish them from predominantly "rural" forms of settlement and occupation' (Butlin 1977, 13). A similar development of proto-urban settlements, some of them around royal sites, has been recognised in Ireland (*ibid.*).

A parallel course of development in the period up to the end of the 9th century can be seen at Malmesbury. It has been suggested above that the rapid rise in importance of the monastery from the mid-7th century was due in large measure to its origins as a royal foundation, placed on the borders of the West Saxon and Mercian kingdoms in close relation to a *villa regalis* (Brokenborough), and fostered during the later 7th and succeeding centuries by royal gifts of land. Though there is little concrete evidence, either of the economy of the monastic establishment or its size at any period, it must be considered as the point around which a sizeable settlement must have been attracted, and which must have functioned not only as a religious, but also as a nascent urban community, having economic links with a wide area of northern Wiltshire and southern Gloucestershire. There is every reason for believing that Malmesbury would have developed in similar ways to contemporary Irish monasteries, whose rapid growth in the 7th and 8th centuries produced some sites which became proto-urban settlements, if not actual urban communities, situated at regionally accessible places (Butlin 1977, 20-25; Norman and St Joseph 1969, 97-8; Hughes and Hamlin 1977, 19-36). Some of these developed, furthermore, out of royal sites (Butlin 1977, 20-21).

As has been described above, a significant feature of some of these places (most clearly shown at Wilton, Calne and Chippenham) is the preservation in the present topography of a lay-out which is arguably as early as the beginning of the development of these settlements. This consists of the close association of a church, an open 'market' area, and a discrete area whose proximity in Wilton and Calne with the place-name Kingsbury suggests was an area occupied by the royal palace, around which is space for further settlement—the whole complex centrally placed on a raised spur of land bounded by a river or rivers (*see* Fig. 57). There is no evidence that these places were defended with the kind of public work so characteristic of later Saxon burhs,[80] although it is very likely that the palace complexes would have been provided with their own defences. The early association, for instance, of the palace and minster church at Wilton, both in existence by c. 800, suggests that these topographical survivals could preserve the form of these settlements from the 8th, if not even from the later 7th century.

From the late 9th century onwards, this pattern of the comparatively straight-forward development of proto-urban settlements around royal and ecclesiastical

centres is disrupted by the imposition of new patterns which involved the creation
of new towns on new sites. These are represented in Wiltshire by the large burh at
Cricklade, with Malmesbury refounded on an earlier proto-urban site, both in the
late 9th century. New towns were founded at Marlborough and Wilton in the early
10th century, both probably provided with defences, the latter as an extension to
an earlier royal centre. It has been suggested above that Marlborough developed in
parallel with the henceforward non-urban high-order ecclesiastical site at Ramsbury,
the combined functions of both these places—of defence and economic and religious
activity—overshadowing similar functions formerly shown at Bedwyn and Chisbury.
It is of some significance that the high-order religious and economic functions were
probably combined in one place at Wells, Somerset (Haslam 1981). The growth of the
earlier proto-urban centres which were not directly affected by these developments
was encouraged not only by the increase in the size and complexity of later Anglo-
Saxon society in general, but also by such purely historical forces as the attempts
by the 10th-century kings in particular to control and augment their revenue, and to
enforce the 'king's peace' by the suppression of fraud through the limitation of trading
transactions to boroughs, by the production of coinage and the control of mints, and
by the promotion of legislation requiring trading transactions to be vouched by
witnesses (Loyn 1961, 128-9).

It has, however, recently been suggested by D. Hill that the development of these
small towns in Somerset and Wiltshire, all of them on royal estates, is the result of the
deliberate setting-up of a market and/or mint on the royal estates by the king 'as a
form of improvement to increase his limited revenues' (Hill 1978, 217-22). While this
may be true for those new urban foundations at Cricklade, Wilton, or Marlborough, the
evidence already adduced suggests that with these exceptions the towns at least in
Wiltshire were not new 'foundations', but rather places whose development was
characterised by an organic, though not necessarily even, growth from proto-urban
into urban status over a considerable period. The difficulties in attempting to point
to particular 'urban' attributes in such places as Amesbury, Bedwyn, Bradford, Calne,
Chippenham, Tilshead, or Warminster at any particular period before the time of
Domesday must militate against the idea that, with those few clear exceptions apart,
the origin of any of the Wiltshire towns lies in an episode of deliberate 'urban'
formation.

NOTES

1. I am grateful to a number of people for help of various kinds in the writing of this chapter.
Bob Smith and John Chandler have provided information on Warminster and Amesbury respectively,
and the latter has given other assistance with references. Desmond Bonney has provided information
concerning *Sorviodunum*. My wife has also spent long hours typing a much-corrected manuscript.

2. This evidence is described and tabulated by Darby (1977) and further discussed by Darlington
(1955).

3. A complete list of mints and moneyers is given in Shortt 1947 and 1948. Further reference to
mints in this chapter are to these papers, unless otherwise stated.

4. The villa was excavated by Wiltshire County Council (monograph forthcoming), and earlier
finds reported in *V.C.H.* (Wilts.) ii (1957), 45, and *W.A.M.* 53 (1950), 137-8; 56 (1956), 390-1;
61 (1966), 95-6. The nearest villa is at Atworth.

5. The charter is printed and translated by Paffard (1952).

6. The association of these places has been commented on as a phenomenon by Aston and Bond (1976, 60), but not explored in any detail.

7. Arguments showing that the Alfredian system of fortresses was superseded by a new system created in the early 10th century by Edward the Elder are given in Chapter 8.

8. Examples of other churches near or over gates or burhs—St Mary's church, Cricklade, and the church of the Holy Cross, Old Sarum—are discussed below.

9. This process is in many ways similar to the shift from *Sorviodunum* to Wilton, and from White Walls to Brokenborough, discussed below.

10. Translated in Whitelock 1979, 605-6.

11. It is intended to discuss the evidence for the development of the town in some detail at a later date.

12. This new parish, itself carved out of Preshute, was amalgamated with the older St Mary's parish in 1565 (Brentnall 1950, 302). It is not clear, therefore, where the eastern boundary of the latter would originally have been drawn.

13. The moneyer working at Bedwyn in the 1060s was transferred to Marlborough after the Norman Conquest.

14. *Cf.* n. 41 below on the origin of the town fields of Malmesbury.

15. Susan Pearce has shown how those churches with large land holdings in Domesday Book are likely to represent early minster churches (1978, 93-121).

16. Both Canon Jackson (1853, 172) and Marsh (1903, 11) (following Jackson) have suggested that the site of the royal residence is to be identified with that of the castle on the western side of the town. The arguments against this are precisely those supporting the arguments suggested here.

17. It is perhaps of some significance that the limits of the latter are marked by the borough boundary.

18. The others, Wareham and Wallingford, are considered elsewhere in this volume.

19. The historical aspects of the town, in both their local and national setting, have been well served in recent studies (Thomson 1961; Loyn 1963). Earlier excavations are described by Radford (1972). An interim report of the 1975 excavations is published in Schofield and Palliser (eds.) 1981, 28-30.

20. In his discussion of the royal connections of late Saxon towns in Wiltshire and Somerset, Hill suggests (1978, 217-22) it is one of the few burhs not founded on ancient royal demesne.

21. Thirty manentes in Purton were given by Cadwalla of Wessex to Malmesbury in 688 (Finberg 1964, 69, No. 185). This was taken away by Offa in the late 8th century, but sold back to Malmesbury by his son, Ecgfrith (*ibid.*, 72, No. 196), and confirmed by later kings (*ibid.*, 74, No. 204).

22. Wiltshire County Council Libraries and Museums Service, *Cricklade and Purton District Plan, a report on Archaeology*, November 1979, p. 10.

23. I am grateful to M. Stone for this information. The existence of a cemetery just outside the western defences suggested by Radford and hailed as the 'most important contribution made by the present series of excavations' (1972, 95) must be discounted. The burials are, in fact, cut into the upper filling of a Saxon ditch and through layers containing 12th-century pottery (*ibid.*, 87-8 and 86, Fig. 10).

24. Publication forthcoming in *W.A.M.*

25. It has, however, been consistently misinterpreted in Radford's report as a 'wall' or 'revetment' to the rear of the bank. His further regards the intra-mural street as being a scatter of stones at the rear of the the bank, a feature which can, however, be more satisfactorily regarded as the tumbled remains of a rear wall destroyed in period 3 (see below).

26. The necessity for this programme is suggested for instance by the inadequacy of the defences of Shaftesbury in the late 10th to early 11th centuries, which can be inferred from the grant of Bradford to the nuns in 1001 as a refuge from the Danes, and by the ease with which Wilton was sacked in 1003.

27. The destruction deposits of the rear wall have been interpreted (Radford, 1972) as the metalling of the intra-mural street; those of the front wall have also been represented as 'deliberate settings of stones' on the berm.

28. See the suggestion made in relation to Wilton, below, that Cnut was indeed responsible for a phase of urban restoration after 1016 (see p. 128).

29. This evidence will be discussed in the forthcoming excavation report.

30. This is published in the Rolls Series 1857, i, 225, and quoted and discussed by Gomme (1887, 423), though more to prove his theory of the Celtic origin of Malmesbury corporation than to establish the facts of settlement history.

31. The shift of centres of authority suggested here is completed by including White Walls, a Roman small town situated some 4km. west of Malmesbury in a position on the Fosse Way midway between Bath and Cirencester, a position similar to *Verlucio* which is midway between Bath and *Cunetio*. Archaeological evidence from White Walls is lacking, but field evidence indicates a sizeable settlement. The local shifts of foci of authority from Malmesbury (Iron Age) to White Walls (Roman) to Brokenborough (early Saxon) to Malmesbury (late Saxon) is remarkably similar to the shifts shown around *Cunetio, Sorviodunum* or (for the Roman and Saxon periods) *Verlucio*.

32. There is a need for more work on the bounds and early relationships of the constituent parts of this estate.

33. *de Gestis Pontificum Anglorum* (Rolls Ser.), 334, quoted in Watkin 1956, 210.

34. A conclusion also suggested by Darlington (1955, 25).

35. Among other examples Alcock has suggested (1971, 219) that the Iron Age and early post-Roman hill-fort at Cadbury-Congresbury was also the site of a monastery founded by Congar in the 6th century.

36. Some of these themes have been discussed by Rahtz (1973) and by Campbell (1979, 121). The absence of any archaeological excavation at Malmesbury makes these possibilities somewhat hypothetical, though they are suggested by the more concrete evidence from other monastic settlements of the period.

37. St Mary Westport was certainly in existence by 1177 (Watkin 1956, 218), and there is a possibility that the suburb of which it is the parish church began to develop in the pre-Conquest period around an extra-mural market area, perhaps significantly now called Horsefair.

38. The Tithe Award states, though, that Brokenborough, Charlton and St Mary Westport parishes formed one entire parish before the statute of 13 and 14 Charles II, forming a single district for the paying of tithes. However, St Mary Westport must have had a parish of its own before the 17th century, and there is no reason to reject the conclusion that it is early.

39. *Registrum Malmesburiense* (ed. J. S. Brewer and C. T. Martin 1880). The topography of these fields requires further elucidation. The area of the town fields in existence in the 19th century (*see* Fig. 46) is probably only a fraction of their original extent.

40. This conclusion is supported by the occurrence of the Portfield at Marlborough, suggested below as being the fields originally made over for the use of the inhabitants of the early 10th-century town. Similar names occur as Portmanneit (later Portmeadow), Oxford (Salter 1936, 26, 35-6), and Portfield, Stamford, comprising the major part of the parish of the main town church (Pythian-Adams 1977, 70-71). Charter evidence from Wilton (below) shows that the 'town fields' there were in existence in the 10th century.

41. The coincidence of the area of the town fields—i.e., that area used exclusively by the burgesses—with the parish of the main church has been seen hitherto as typically a Midlands phenomenon (Rogers 1972), though is shown for instance by both Southampton and Exeter. The writer has suggested (Haslam, forthcoming, a) that the creation of the double field system at Cambridge is the result of the reservation of parts of a larger royal estate by the king as the 'town fields' on the formation of burhs on the north and south banks of the river, the first by Offa in the late 8th century, the second by Edward the Elder in the early 10th century, by processes analogous if not entirely similar to those shown at Malmesbury.

42. These aspects are discussed more fully in Rogers (1965, 13, 47, 55, 78-9).

43. Described in *V.C.H. (Wilts.)* 1, i (1957), 118 and 270, and *W.A.M.* 42 (1923), 368-73; 43 (1926), 400; 47 (1935), 285; 52 (1948), 218.

44. *Gesta Pontificum Anglorum*, Rolls Series (1870), 304-5. Its name is said to derive from the miraculous growth of ash trees from his pastoral staff (*P-N Wilts.*, 151).

45. Finds of foundations and burials in a field about 100m. west of this church have led to undemonstrable speculations that this is the site of an 'earlier church built by the Saxon kings' (Daniel 1879, 152).

46. The royal residence was certainly in existence in the early 10th century, and as argued above, probably on this site from the early Saxon period (Rogers 1965).

47. Called Back Lane in a map of the town of 1783.

48. Information kindly made available by the excavator, Bob Smith.

49. This evidence modifies considerably the hypothesis of a 12th-century origin for this area put forward earlier by the writer (1976, 63).

50. Dūnon=fort; the Anglo-Saxon for Old Sarum was *Searoburh*: *Searo* being a descendant of British *Sorvio*, and *burh* a descendant of *dūnon* (Rivet 1970, 79). 'Salisbury' is a modification of the Saxon word, and 'Sarum' its medieval contracted form. The Roman town was probably sited at the river crossing to the south-west of the hill-fort. I am grateful to Desmond Bonney for this information.

51. See further examples discussed below.

52. The early boundaries of neighbouring villages, of the territory of the early town, and of the later monastic possessions, are somewhat obscure and require further elucidation. They are not, therefore, discussed in detail here.

53. That the present St Mary's church is the site of the earlier monastery is, however, largely inferred from its topographical proximity to the 'kings burh'. It only became the parish church in the 16th century, through amalgamation of several smaller urban parishes, though this in itself suggests its earlier importance.

54. Colt Hoare describes this as being taken from 'some ancient manuscripts in the Bodleian and Cotton Libraries', but gives no further reference. Later searches have failed to find a source for this document (Irving 1859, 296). It seems highly unlikely, however, that Hoare would have deliberately manufactured this evidence.

55. The assertion by the R.C.H.M. (1980, xxix) that Old Sarum was not settled before *c.* 972 at the earliest, on the basis of its non-mention in a charter referring to a road running past it, cannot in the writer's opinion be maintained, even though it may support the present arguments.

56. In Wiltshire this can be recognised at Chisbury, Bedwyn and Marlborough, and is discussed more fully by the writer with reference to Barnstaple, Totnes, Plympton, and Kingsbridge (Devon), in Chapter 8.

57. D. Hill has pointed out (1978, 223) that Old Sarum was thus a true 'fluchtburg', though, as will be argued below, his assumption that the burh church and 'town' were outside the walls at this time cannot be sustained.

58. See n. 26 above relating to Cricklade.

59. Montgomerie has suggested (1947, 134–5) that evidence recovered in 1914 demonstrated two periods of heightening of the original Iron Age fortifications before the Norman period. The detail of recording, however, does not allow an independent assessment of these conclusions. Rahtz and Musty have demonstrated a phase of pre-Norman and post-Roman strengthening of the defences, though here again there is no dating evidence (1960, 366, Fig. 9, layers 10 and 15–18 in trench B). This refurbishing could belong equally to the 5th to 6th centuries, the late 9th century, or the early 11th century.

60. This possibility (which requires closer examination) is increased by the more concrete example of the church provided for the Æthelredian burh at South Cadbury (Alcock 1972, 200).

61. The medieval references state that it is either over, beyond (*ultra*), or outside (*extra*) the east gate (R.C.H.M. 1980, 12), so the evidence is somewhat equivocal.

62. Observed by the writer in construction work near Kingsbury Square in 1976.

63. *W.A.M.* 67 (1972), 176.

64. Wilton is also described as a 'large *de novo* burh' by Hassall and Hill (1969, 189, Fig. 1), and the supposed rectilinear elements in its plan remarked on by Biddle and Hill (1965, 81). All of these descriptions give a misleading impression of both its site and its topographical and historical development.

65. See, for instance, the existence of flax retting near the late 8th-century causeway to the south of Oxford, described by Durham (1977, 200–1).

66. For short interim notes on excavations across these defences see *W.A.M.* 66 (1971), 191; 67 (1972), 175–6.

67. It is probable that it was constructed during the civil wars of the 12th century, during which Stephan built a 'castle' at Wilton in 1143. A similar episode of 'castle'-building at Cricklade in 1144 consisted of the construction of new defences around the whole of the earlier Saxon burh (Haslam 1976, 18).

68. This view is, however, contrary to that of the R.C.H.M., who have concluded (1980, xxix), in the face of a massive lack of evidence, that by the Norman Conquest Old Sarum was one of the 'most advanced trading centres' in the shire. The topography and course of development of this new royal borough is outside the scope of this chapter, but has been briefly discussed by Hill (1962, 63–5), and the R.C.H.M. (1980, 12–13).

69. 'West of the burh'. *P-N Wilts.* (149) derives its name from its proximity to the western border of the county. However, since Westbury is not a burh, it is difficult to accept this derivation.

70. This role may, however, have been performed by Edington, which lies almost directly underneath the hill-fort. This estate was mentioned in King Alfred's will (Whitelock 1979, 536), and was, as *Ethandum*, the scene of Alfred's victory over Guthrum.

71. At least one of the major components of the Domesday manor can be recognised in the later topography. The sheriff of Wiltshire (Edward of Salisbury, the progenitor of the earls of Salisbury) at that time held a small estate which was 'recently accumulated and probably compact' (Pugh 1947–8, 71–2). It can be suggested that this estate was that shown in the Tithe Award map as surrounding the suggestively-named Earl's Court Farm, shown on Figs. 53 and 54.

72. This question has recently been discussed by J. Chandler (1978–9) who has suggested that 'the appearance of Ambrosius (in Geoffrey of Monmouth's history) is doubtless an echo of an Amesbury legend based on the etymology of Ambresbury' (1979, 69). This, however, still begs the question of the origin of the name 'Ambre' or 'Ambri'.

73. I owe this suggestion to John Chandler.

74. By the 19th century these formed the single parish of Kingston St Michael.

75. Both of these were the subject of grants by the king in 934 and 940 (Sawyer 1968, No. 426; Finberg 1964, 86), the latter signed at Chippenham. Various other estates in the north-west and north-east were also the subject of royal grants: Grittleton in 940 (Finberg 1964, 85; Sawyer 1968, No. 472), and Christian Malford, also in 940 (Finberg 1964, 86; Sawyer 1968, No. 466). It is not certain whether these formed part of the earlier royal estate centred on Chippenham.

76. This area is now dominated by the railway, to whose construction may be attributed the creation of New Street. This latter street has clearly replaced the routeway to the north along Old Street. The suggestion that this New Street is the successor of 'le Newestrete' mentioned in 1406 (*P-N Wilts.*, 89; Haslam 1976,15) can therefore be discounted. This route, and the one to the west (Bath Road), both start on the 46m. contour, which also marks the outside limit of occupation on the southern side of the river.

77. Ford (1976, 16) has suggested that the Danish fortifications completely enclosed the central area on the top of the spur. However, his proposed course fits rather awkwardly with the present topography, and assumes furthermore that the Imburi place-names refer to these works.

78. An attempt was made by the writer (1976, 97–101) at a similar classification, but this must be considered inadequate. Its deficiences were due to the lack of appreciation, firstly, of the role that royal estate centres must have played in early proto-urban or urban development, and, secondly, of the importance of the distinction between the roles of King Alfred and his successor, Edward the Elder, a subject enlarged upon in Chapter 8.

79. The former is also well documented archaeologically at Wells, Somerset, in the finds of exotic imports of the 8th century and a Frisian coin (Rodwell 1980; Haslam 1981).

80. The postulation of the existence of defences at Bradford and Calne by the writer (Haslam 1976, 10 and 13) now seems unlikely.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abbreviations

P-N Wilts: The Place-Names of Wiltshire, by Gover, J. E. B., Mawer, A., and Stenton, F. M.,
  English Place-Name Society, Vol. XVI, 1970.
V.C.H.: Victoria County History.
W.A.M.: Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Magazine.

Alcock, L. (1971), *Arthur's Britain.*
Alcock, L. (1972), *By South Cadbury, is that Camelot ...*
Alcock, L. (1977), 'Aspects of the warfare of Saxons and Britons', *Bulletin of Board of Celtic Studies* 27, 413-24.
Aston, M. and Bond, J. (1976), *The Landscape of Towns.*
Benson, R. and Hatcher, H. (1843), *Old and New Sarum or Salisbury.*
Biddle, M. (1976a), 'Towns', in Wilson, D. M. (ed.), *The Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England,* 99-150.
Biddle, M. (1976b), 'The evolution of towns: planned towns before 1066', in Barley, M. W. (ed.), *The Plans and Topography of Medieval Towns in England and Wales,* C.B.A. Research Report 14, 19-32.
Biddle, M. (ed.) (1976), *Winchester in the Early Middle Ages* (Winchester Studies, 1).
Biddle, M. and Hill, D. H. (1971), 'Late Saxon planned towns', *Antiquaries Journal* 51, 70-85.
Bonney, D. J. (1972), 'Early boundaries in Wessex', in Fowler, P. J. (ed.), *Archaeology and the Landscape,* 168-186.
Brenthall, H. C. (1950), 'The origins of the parish of Preshute', *W.A.M.* 53, 294-310.
Brooks, N. P. (1964), 'The unidentified forts of the Burghal Hidage', *Medieval Archaeology* 8, 74-90.
Butlin, R. A. (1977), 'Urban and proto-urban settlements in pre-Norman Ireland', in Butlin, R. A. (ed.), *The Development of the Irish Town.*
Campbell, J. (1979), 'The church in Anglo-Saxon towns', in Baker, D. (ed.), *The church in town and countryside,* (Studies in Church History 16), 119-35.
Chandler, J. (1978-9), 'Three Amesbury legends', *The Hatcher Review,* No. 6, 12-23.
Chandler, J. (ed.) (1979), *The Amesbury Millenium Lectures.*
Chandler, J. and Goodhaugh, P. (1979), *Amesbury: History and Description of a South Wiltshire Town.*
Crittal, E. (1956), 'Abbey of Wilton', *V.C.H. (Wilts.)* 6, 231-41.
Crowley, D. A. (1980), 'Downton hundred', *V.C.H. (Wilts.)* 11, 1-104.
Cunliffe, B. W. (1973), 'Iron Age and Roman periods', *V.C.H. (Wilts.)* 1, ii, 408-67.
Daniel, J. J. (1879), *The history of Warminster.*
Darby, H. C. (1977), *Domesday England.*
Darlington, R. R. (1955), 'Anglo-Saxon Wiltshire', in *V.C.H. (Wilts.)* 2, 1-34.
Dolley, R. H. M. (1954), 'The sack of Wilton in 1003 and the chronology of the "Long Cross" and "Helmut" types of Ethelred II', *Nordish Numismatisk Unions Medlensbled,* 152-6.
Durham, B. (1977), 'Archaeological investigations in St Aldate's Oxford', *Oxoniensia* 42, 84-203.
Finberg, H. P. R. (1964), *The early charters of Wessex.*
Ford, W. J. (1967), 'A survey of the archaeology of the Chippenham area', Wiltshire County Council Library and Museum Service (limited circulation).
Fowler, P. J. (1966), 'Two finds of domestic Saxon pottery in Wiltshire', *W.A.M.* 61, 31-7.
Fowler, P. J. (1971), 'Hillforts, A.D. 400-700', in Hill, D. and Jesson, M. (eds.), *The Iron Age and its Hillforts,* 203-213.
Gem, R. (1978), 'Church architecture in the reign of King Ethelred', in Hill, D. (ed.), *Ethelred the Unready,* B.A.R. 59.
Gomme, G. L. (1887), 'The history of Malmesbury as a village community', *Archaeologia* 50, 421-38.
Grant, R. (1959), 'Royal forests', *V.C.H. (Wilts.)* 4, 391-457.
Grundy, G. B. (1920), 'Saxon land charters of Wiltshire, 2nd series', *Archaeological Journal* 27, 137-47.
Haslam, J. (1976), *Wiltshire Towns, the Archaeological Potential* (Devizes Museum).

Haslam, J. (1980), 'A middle Saxon iron-smelting site at Ramsbury, Wilts', *Medieval Archaeology* 24, 1-68.

Haslam, J. (1981a), 'Wells and Ramsbury: a further look at urban origins', *Current Archaeology* VII, 188.

Haslam, J. (1981b), 'A "ward" of the burh of Cricklade', *W.A.M.* 76, 77-81.

Haslam, J., forthcoming (a), 'The origins and topography of Cambridge', *Proc. Cambs. Antiquarian Society*.

Haslam, J., forthcoming (b), 'Cnut and the defences of Wessex burhs'.

Hassall, J. M. and Hill, D. H. (1970), 'Pont de l'Arche: Frankish influence on the West Saxon burh?' *Archaeological Journal* 127, 188-95.

Hill, D. H. (1978), 'Trends in the development of towns during the reign of Ethelred II', in Hill, D. H. (ed.), *Ethelred the Unready*, B.A.R. 59, 213-26.

Hinton, D. (1977), *Alfred's Kingdom*.

Hinton, D. (1979), 'Amesbury and the early history of its abbey', in Chandler, J. H. (ed.), *The Amesbury Millenium Lectures* (Amesbury), 1979.

Hoare, R. C. (1812), *Ancient Wiltshire*.

Hoare, R. C. (1825), *History of modern Wiltshire*, 2, pt. 1.

Hughes, K. and Hamlin, A. (1977), *The modern traveller to the early Irish church*.

Hunter-Blair, P. (1956), *An introduction to Anglo-Saxon England*.

Irving, G. V. (1859), 'On the earthworks at Old Sarum', *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 15, 291-302.

Jackson, J. E. (1853), 'Calne', *W.A.M.* 24, 166-219.

Jackson, J. E. (1857), 'On the history of Chippenham', *W.A.M.* 3, 19-46.

James, M. K. (1962), 'The borough of Wilton', *V.C.H. (Wilts.)* 6, 1-36.

Jones, W. H. (1859), 'Bradford-on-Avon: general history of the parish', *W.A.M.* 5, 1-88.

Loyn, H. R. (1961), 'Boroughs and Mints, A.D. 900-1066', in Dolley, R. H. M. (ed.), *Anglo-Saxon Coins*.

Loyn, H. R. (1963), 'The origin and early development of the Saxon borough with special reference to Cricklade', *W.A.M.* 58, 7-15.

Major, A. (1913), *Early wars of Wessex* (reprinted as 2nd edn., 1978).

Marsh, A. E. W. (1903), *A history of the borough and town of Calne . . .*

Moffat, J. M. (1805), *History of the town of Malmesbury . . .*

Montgomerie, D. H. (1947), 'Old Sarum', *Archaeological Journal* 104, 129-43.

Morris, J. (1973), *The Age of Arthur*.

Musty, J. and Rahtz, P. A. (1964), 'The suburbs of Old Sarum', *W.A.M.* 59, 130-54.

Nightingale, J. E. (1906), *Memorials of Wilton*.

Oman, C. (1938), *England before the Norman Conquest* (8th edn.).

Ordnance Survey (1966), *Map of Britain in the Dark Ages*, 2nd edn.

Paffard, J. H. P. (1952), 'Bradford-on-Avon: The Saxon boundaries in Ethelred's charter of A.D. 1001', *W.A.M.* 54, 210-18, 372.

Pearce, S. M. (1978), *The kingdom of Dumnonia*.

Pugh, R. B. (1947-8), 'The early history of the manors of Amesbury', *W.A.M.* 52, 70-110.

Pugh, R. B. (1956), 'The Abbey, later Priory, of Amesbury', V.C.H. *(Wilts.)*, III, 242-59.

Phythian-Adams, C. (1977), 'Rutland reconsidered', in Dornier, A. (ed.), *Mercian Studies*, 63-86.

Radford, C. A. R. (1972), 'Excavations at Cricklade, 1948-63', *W.A.M.* 67, 61-111.

Rahtz, P. A. (1964), 'Saxon and medieval features at Downton, Salisbury', *W.A.M.* 59, 124-29.

Rahtz, P. A. (1974), 'Monasteries as settlements', *Scottish Archaeological Forum* 5, 125-35.

Riain, P.O. (1972), 'Boundary association in early Irish society', *Studia Celtica* 8, 12-29.

Rivet, A. L. F. (1970), 'The British section of the Antonine Itinerary', *Britannia* 1, 34-82.

Rodwell, W. J. (1980), 'Wells, the cathedral and city', *Current Archaeology* VII, No. 2.

Rogers, A. (1972), 'Parish boundaries and urban history: two case studies', *Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, 3rd series 35, 46-64.

Rogers, K. H. (1965), 'Warminster hundred and Warminster', *V.C.H. (Wilts.)* 8, 1-5, 91-135.

Royal Commission on Historical Monuments (and trs. after Rogers) (1980), *Ancient and historical monuments in the city of Salisbury* 1.

Salter, H. E. (1936), *Medieval Oxford* (Oxford Hist. Soc. Vol. 100).

Sawyer, P. H. (1968), *Anglo-Saxon Charters, an Annotated List and Bibliography*.

Sawyer, P. H. (1978), *From Roman Britain to Norman England*.

Schofield, J. and Palliser, D. (eds.) (1981), *Recent archaeological research in English towns* (C.B.A.).

Shortt, H. de S. (1947), 'The mints of Wiltshire, from Eadgar to Henry III', *Archaeological Journal* 104, 112-28.

Shortt, H. de S. (1948), 'The mints of Wiltshire', *Numismatic Chronicle* 6th ser. 8, 169-87.

Shortt, H. de S. (1965), *Old Sarum* (D. of E. guide)

Smith, A. H. (1956), *English Place-Name elements* (English Place-Name Society, 25 and 26).

Stone, J. F. S. and Charlton, J. (1935), 'Trial excavations in the east suburb of Old Sarum', *Antiquaries Journal* 15, 174-92.

Taylor, H. M. (1973), 'The Anglo-Saxon church at Bradford-on-Avon', *Archaeological Journal* 130, 141-71.

Thomson, T. R. (1953), *Bradon Forest* (Cricklade Historical Society).

Thomson, T. R. (ed.) (1961), *Materials for the History of Cricklade*.

Thomson, T. R. and Taylor, H. M. (1965) and (1966), 'St Mary's church, Cricklade', *W.A.M.* 60, 75-84; 61, 38-42.

Wainwright, F. T. (1960), 'Ermine Street at Cricklade', *W.A.M.* 57, 192-200.

Wainwright, G. J. (1970), 'An Iron Age promontory fort at Budbury, Bradford-on-Avon, Wiltshire', *W.A.M.* 65, 108-166.

Watkin, A. (1956), 'Abbey of Malmesbury', *V.C.H. (Wilts.)* 3, 210-30.

Whitelock, D. (ed.) (1979), *English Historical Documents* I (2nd edn.).

Young, G. M. (1942), 'Saxon Wiltshire', *W.A.M.* 59, 28-38.