The Origins of Early Mediaeval Settlement in North Devon

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Part 1: A Landscape Scale Approach

1. Introduction and Overview

The purpose of this study is to approach the question of the origins of settlements in north Devon in the Early Mediaeval (Anglo-Saxon) period from a landscape scale perspective. The landscape in question is the area that lies between the Bristol Channel and the northern edge of Dartmoor and between the River Exe in the east and the Cornish border in the west – which for brevity I am calling north Devon (to distinguish it from the modern local government units of North Devon and Torridge Districts). The study includes a brief historical synopsis and considers some general issues before taking a series of settlement case studies from across the area.

There is very little published archaeological material on the north Devon area covering the early mediaeval period. Outside of place name evidence, the Domesday Book, and some documentary sources for individual places and estates, understanding the origin of settlement in north Devon is a largely speculative exercise. However, the available evidence can be drawn together to suggest some lines of enquiry, at least.

The North Devon Landscape

What was the landscape of north Devon like before the period of Anglo-Saxon settlement? Clearly its structure was the same as now. The plateau landscape of the Culm measures, incised by major rivers such as the Exe, Taw, Torridge and upper Tamar and their tributaries, lies between the high ground of Dartmoor and Exmoor. Between Fyldon Common, almost 500m high on the south-western edge of Exmoor, and Cosdon Hill 550m high on the northern rampart of Dartmoor, the Culm plateau varies in height from 280m on Rackenford Moor in the north-east to a similar height at Broadbury to the south-west and about 230m on Bursdon Moor near Hartland. Further north the hillier landscape of the Devonian era extends the upland of Exmoor virtually as far as the north Devon coast, with the Estuary of the Taw and Torridge rivers as the other dominant landscape feature. Bordering the area, to the east and south, are the “red earth” lands of mid Devon, deriving their character from the underlying Permian sandstone.

What makes this landscape distinctive in Devon is that it drains through the Taw and Torridge river catchments northwards into Bideford Bay and the Atlantic. Only the Exe, to the east, and the Tamar, to the west, drain southwards to the English Channel.

In terms of the historical landscape, north Devon (along with the rest of Devon and Cornwall, Wales and much of the upland north of England) lies within the Highland Zone that was recognised by Rackham and others (Rackham 1986). The other zones are Predominantly Ancient Countryside, which borders the Highland Zone to the east and also characterises much of the south east of England. The third zone is Predominantly Planned Countryside, which encompasses much of the Midlands, East Anglia and the south of England. Significantly for this essay it is the last of these that is associated with nucleated settlements and communal systems of farming. The Highland Zone was characterised by dispersed settlement patterns.

North Devon in 2015 is still a sparsely populated area, with its main centres of population concentrated around the Taw and Torridge Estuary and along the Bristol Channel coast. The National Character Areas map published by Natural England divides the area into two: Exmoor to the north and east of Barnstaple and The Culm to the south and west. Natural England has published profiles for both areas (NE 2013).

The Profile for Exmoor (NCA 145) describes the area as "Predominantly a landscape of upland plateaux of Devonian sandstones and slates terminating in the north at the Bristol Channel with a spectacular cliff coastline. ….. To the west the area terminates at Barnstaple/Bideford Bay and the Taw and Torridge Estuary." It comments that "Signs of 8,000 years of human occupation can be found in the landscape of the Exmoor area. In combination with a wealth of wildlife and many surviving traditions, this is one of the country's most important cultural landscapes." The Profile recognises two distinct areas that are relevant to this study in the North Devon Plateau and Braunton and the Taw and Torridge Estuary.

The Profile for the Culm (NCA 149) describes the area as follows "The rolling ridges and plateaux of The Culm extend across north-west Devon and north-east Cornwall, reaching from the foot of Dartmoor in the south-west …. To the spectacular Atlantic coast of cliffs and sandy beaches in the north. ….. The open, often treeless, ridges are separated by an intricate pattern of small valleys forming the catchments of the Rivers Taw, Torridge and Mole. This is a largely remote and sparsely populated landscape." It comments that "The date and speed of Saxon occupation is uncertain, but was probably gradual. And the area was not finally 'pacified' until King Aethelstan drew the boundary between Devon and Cornwall in the 10th century."

Landscape Character Assessment

A Landscape Character Assessment of the whole area was carried out in 2010 and provides a robust framework for landscape scale considerations (LUC 2010). Landscape Character Assessment is a relatively recent discipline that has developed largely over the last twenty-five years. The assessment process takes into account a range of factors, based on a framework of landscape description units and landscape character types. These factors include: geology, topography, agricultural land classification, river catchments, habitats, landscape and wildlife designations, and historic landscape characterisation. In adopting this approach for the purposes of taking a landscape scale approach to the origin of settlements in that area, there is, therefore, inevitably an element of "testing" this as an appropriate framework for understanding and evaluating settlement development. The historic landscape characterisation for Devon also provides a context at the more local case study level.

The North Devon and Torridge assessment was based on seven landscape character areas of which five are particularly relevant to this study. They are further broken down into twenty-one landscape character types. The full list of these areas is contained in Appendix 1.

The impact of the coast on the landscape of north Devon is revealed in two landscape types of the western north coast: the Coastal Open Plateau type of the Hartland coast and the Coastal Undulating Farmland type from Clovelly to Bideford. The Coastal Slopes & Combes complete the picture on the north coast and there are a group of four landscape types around the Taw & Torridge Estuary: Estuaries, Marine Levels & Coastal Plains, Dunes and Inter-Tidal Sands.

Away from the coast inland north Devon is dominated by just three landscape types: Farmed Lowland Moorland & Culm Grassland, Upper Farmed & Wooded Valley Slopes and Inland Elevated Undulating Land. There are just two exceptions to this: the River Valley Slopes & Combes and Secluded Valleys of the Taw and Torridge and their tributaries and two blocks of Estate Wooded Farmland, one around Merton associated with the Clinton Estate and one around Chittlehampton associated with the Fortescue Estate. North of Barnstaple, however, the landscape types are distinctively different, consisting of Upland River Valleys and Secluded Valleys, Moorland Edge Slopes and Downland.

These landscape types therefore go beyond the underlying geology and resultant topography to include the influence of different types of farming practice and ones that have a long history. Five of them are particularly relevant to the history of settlement in the inland landscape that is at the core of this essay: Upper Farmed & Wooded Valley Slopes, Inland Elevated Undulating Land, Farmed Lowland Moorland & Culm Grassland, Moorland Edge Slopes and Downland. It is on these that the history of rural settlement in north Devon is written. Moorland, grassland and woodland dominate; each has been farmed in a particular way over the period. A brief summary of each of the five LCTs follows.

Farmed lowland moorland and Culm grassland: is distributed across Torridge District, stretching into the south and south-eastern corners of North Devon District. It covers the landscape's high open tracts of Culm grassland and "moors" which sit on the poorly drained soils and sandstone ridges of the Culm Measures.

Moorland edge slopes: forms the southern and western edges of Exmoor, providing an important setting and transition to the protected landscape.

Upper farmed and wooded valley slopes: comprises the upper catchments of the main river valleys, giving a gently rolling pastoral landscape of fields bounded by thick Devon hedges, crossed by a network of springs and tributary streams.

Inland elevated undulating land: covers areas of high and gently undulating farmland, mainly in Torridge District, with a small patch south-west of South Molton.

Downland: covers the North Devon Downs, including the elevated ridges between Combe Martin, Berrynarbor and Ilfracombe. It comprises an area of high open farmland with broad rounded ridges slowly dropping in altitude to the Taw-Torridge Estuary.

To these can be added the **Estuary** landscape type. This extends from the upper tidal limits of the Taw and Torridge, above Barnstaple and Bideford, down to the confluence of the rivers at Appledore and Instow. Several early mediaeval settlements were built beside the Estuary, including Fremington, Braunton and Northam.

Although the pattern of land ownership has changed markedly over the last two hundred years, the big estates having been broken up (often when land values and farm incomes were low), it is the contention of this study that the landscape still holds the clues to the extent to which land ownership and farm and woodland management shaped both landscape and settlement.

Case studies will look at the development of settlements in each of these landscape areas to see what information they hold about origins.

North Devon before the Anglo-Saxons

Two things seem to be clear about Roman Devon: that Exeter had a long and distinguished history, both military and civil, during the Roman period and that the Roman occupation made little long-term impact on north Devon.

Exeter was first colonised as a military site early in the 1st century. It later developed as a town with a significant civilian population. Defending it to the west was the military station at North Tawton, linked to Exeter by a road whose route is still evident in the mid Devon landscape. Beyond this there is very little evidence of Roman occupation in north Devon, apart from a possible marching camp near Alverdiscott, between Barnstaple and Bideford, and two to the west of North Tawton, at Okehampton and Broadbury Castle, (other than the signal stations on the Bristol Channel coast mentioned below). There was apparently little need for a permanent military presence (all of these sites were short-lived) and little attraction for Roman civilian settlement, unlike Somerset where there is a notable prevalence of villas.

Recent excavations at Ipplepen in south Devon have, however, demonstrated that Roman cultural influence was present well beyond Exeter (albeit to the south-west in this case) and that there was a significant continuity in the occupation of the Romano-British settlement being explored there, extending well into the post-Roman period (University of Exeter website, reported in CA 301, April 2015).

Along the north Devon coast there were two temporary signal stations, at Martinhoe and Countisbury. These were presumably part of a network that guarded the Bristol Channel, already an important route for commercial traffic and a source of threat from invasion. Hoskins (1959) suggests Berry Castle north-east of Witheridge as another signal station that would have linked Exeter (via Stoke Hill and Shoulsbury Castle) to the north coast stations. There would need to be others, however, to give inter-visibility. He also suggests "*There is no doubt that we shall find other Roman roads in the hilly country to the north and north-west of Exeter. We shall recognise them in small pieces at a time, and gradually build up a picture of the complete road system in the course of time*". There has been little inland archaeological site investigation since, other than in central Barnstaple where significant work was done in the 1980's. As Linda Blanchard, the archaeologist working on Barnstaple at the time, has said, "If the Romans were in Barnstaple, we would have found them" (pers comm).

55 years on from Hoskins the suggested roads north of Exeter have still not been found, although a couple of old ridge routes could be tentatively suggested. From Alverdiscott a route through Way Barton southwards, dividing at Ebberley Hill via Winkleigh Moor to North Tawton and via Copplestone to Exeter can be suggested. The Romano-British iron working on Exmoor and at Brayford must have had accessible routes along which to carry the heavy extracted ore. The principal markets for iron implements would have been farming throughout the area, but for military purposes presumably Exeter or South Wales. (However, on the basis of dating evidence for iron working at Brayford, the period when the military centre at Exeter was active would have been too early to provide such a market). Nearest available harbours on the north coast are Combe Martin and Ilfracombe, and on the Taw estuary at Barnstaple. There were older ridge routes that would have led to them, evidenced by the tumuli and standing stones still to be seen along them, for instance at Kentisbury Down. There were similar routes leading southwards, through what is now South Molton. The use of the Taw/Torridge Estuary for trade has not been evidenced by any finds,

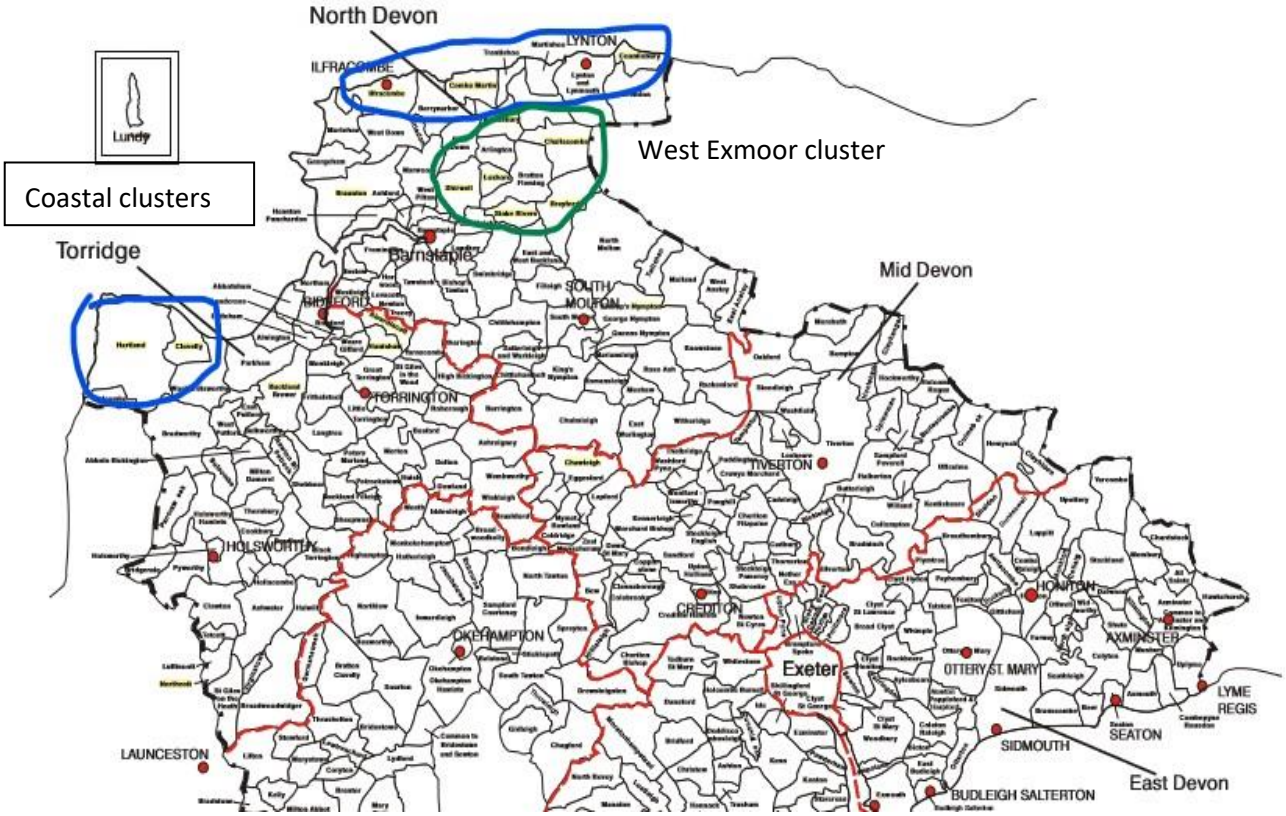
however; it can only be implied from finds coming from outside the area found on sites local to the Estuary.

It would appear that such settlement as there was in north Devon in the Roman period was a continuation of the Iron Age kingdom of the Dumnonii Celts. The evidence for this is in the number of hill settlements both along the coast and inland. Coastal sites include Wind Hill at Countisbury, Hillsborough in Ilfracombe, Clovelly Dykes, and Windbury and Embury Beacon on the Hartland coast. Inland sites include Kentisbury Down, Shoulsbarrow Common, Whitechapel Moor, Mockham Down, Stoke Rivers and Smythapark on the western and south-western Exmoor fringe, Roborough near Pilton, Knowle near Braunton and enclosures at Lee House, Marwood and Plaistow, Shirwell north of the Taw Estuary; further west are Berry Castle at Huntshaw, Hembury Castle and Buckland Wood in Buckland Brewer and, to the south, West Burridge near Chawleigh (Map 1 and Appendix 2).

Map 1

Parishes with Hill Enclosures in North Devon

(Highlighted)



Notably, these sites mainly lie in the north of the area, further south and inland there is little evidence of settlement in the Iron Age. The relative density of sites west of Exmoor could signify a more populous and organised society or a greater degree of conflict between elements of society, necessitating more defensive sites. Recent site investigations in north Cornwall, north Devon and west Dorset have revealed evidence of unenclosed roundhouses forming apparent Iron Age settlements (Russell M and Cheetham P, Finding Duropolis: A new kind of Iron Age settlement, CA

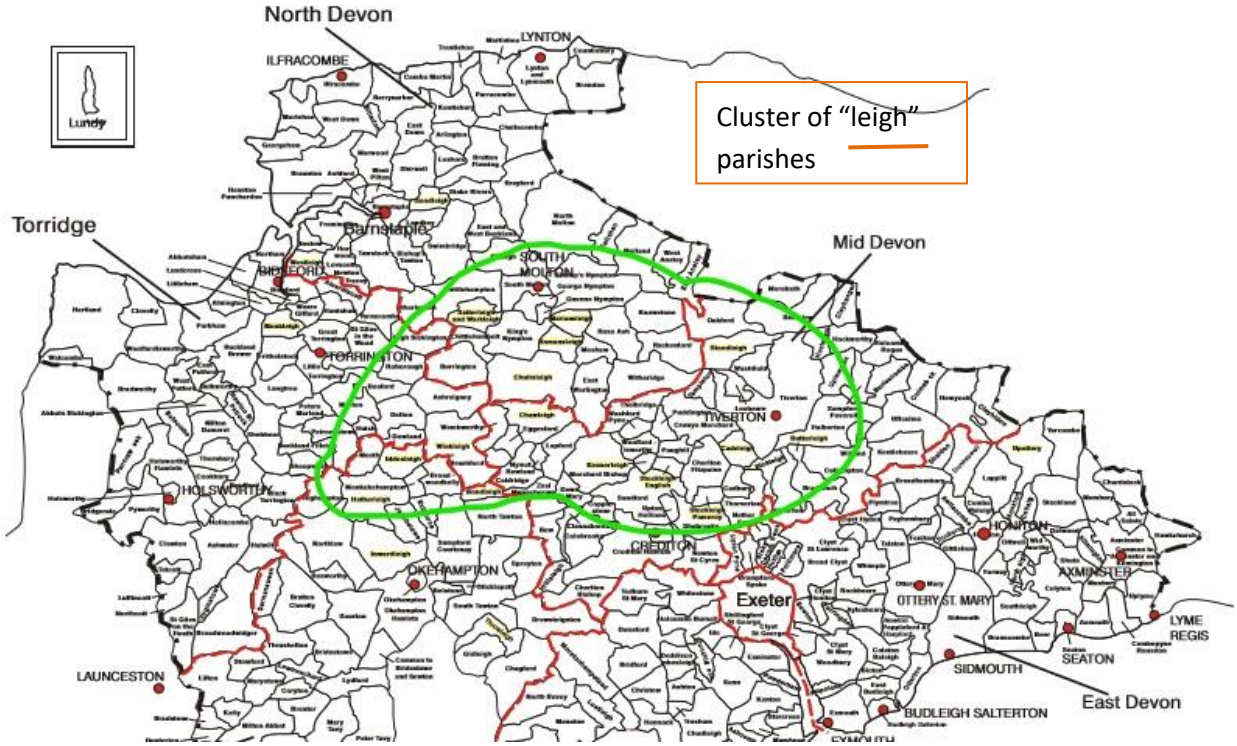
313, 2016 and Borlase, Pushing back boundaries: Iron Age open settlements in Cornwall, CA 309 Dec 2015). The main conclusion from these is that there are probably more such settlements to be discovered in the north Devon area!

This leaves the question of how north Devon's pattern of mediaeval settlement evolved. The initial evidence is largely to be found in place name studies.

Map 2

Parishes with "Leigh" place-name endings

(Highlighted)



Place Name Evidence (Appendix 3)

Place name evidence from later settlement suggests that the area of the central Culm may have been more wooded in this period (Mills A D, Dictionary of British Place Names, OUP 2003). Map 2 above shows the prevalence of "leigh" place name endings. With few exceptions these lie between Exmoor and Dartmoor and between the Exe and the Torridge. There are 24 parishes in this area whose names end in "leigh". It is an Old English term for a woodland clearing, although it evolved over the period, glade - clearing - wood pasture - meadow. Before the Anglo-Saxon settlement of the area in the 8th and 9th centuries, this suggests that the area was densely wooded and sparsely settled. Pollen evidence, however, suggests otherwise and there is a marked absence of woodland by the time of Domesday. The most compelling evidence for the wooded nature of the area is found in the names of two mid Devon parishes: Morchard Bishop and Cruwys Morchard. These parishes lie 5 miles apart, between Crediton and Tiverton on the low ridge between the rivers Dalch and Dart (both rivers bear Celtic names). Morchard is a Celtic term for great wood or forest. Their affixes are

manorial and post-date Domesday, but the fact that the earlier Celtic residents of the area named it thus indicates that the "great wood" of the mid Devon Culm may have existed for up to a thousand years before the Anglo-Saxons arrived (and possibly for much longer). Other place names that may support the existence of woodland have a beer/bear element, as in Shebbear and Stockbear (strictly coppice i.e. managed woodland), and nemeton, having the sense of "sacred grove", as in the "Nymptons" south of South Molton and the "Nymets" west of Crediton.

However, this is not the current view. Terry Green, in the report on the West Yeo archaeological investigations (NDAS, West Yeo Farm, 2013), summarises this as follows: "*This part of mid-Devon is not rich in recorded (pre-historic) archaeological sites. There is no intrinsic reason for this and the relative absence of evidence is likely to result from a lack of investigation rather than avoidance of the area by early populations. The old idea that mid-Devon was clad in wildwood until the arrival of Saxon farmers has long been abandoned, though it does seem that the area may have carried a considerable amount of (managed?) woodland in pre-English days, as suggested by numerous placenames, both of English and British-Celtic origin, containing a woodland element. Nevertheless, the presence of Neolithic standing stones, Bronze Age round barrows and Bronze Age/Iron Age enclosures and settlements suggests that the wildwood was long ago reduced to isolated stands. We do not know in fact what the natural post-glacial state of the vegetation was; it may well have been more park-like than jungle-like, which would account for the widespread occurrence of Mesolithic flint scatters, particularly on ridges and hillsides overlooking the potential hunting grounds of the river valleys."*

This view is reinforced by a more recent understanding of what the post-glacial landscape of southern Britain may have looked like and how it might have evolved. Landscape is constantly in transition; it is not a given condition. After the last Ice Age, around 11,000 years before the period of this essay, the transition is likely to have begun with birch wood, followed by the growth of other tree species and the arrival of large herbivores and their predators, over the land bridge then connecting Britain with mainland Europe. The theory of closed canopy forest being the climax habitat of post-glacial Britain is increasingly being challenged, on the grounds that it overlooks animal disturbance (Isabella Tree in her book *Wilding, Chapter 4, The Secret of Grazing Animals,* 2018*,* quoting Frans Vera).

The anthropocentric view of landscape formation that has prevailed until recently would have it that, certainly from the Neolithic period and possibly earlier, landscape change would have been driven by human intervention. That is now being challenged on two grounds. The first is the geographical distinctiveness that geology, topography, rainfall, river valleys, soil and aspect can give to habitats and landscape types. In the case of north Devon this is likely to have given rise to a mixed landscape ranging from open moorland to closed canopy woodland.

In addition to this it is increasingly being understood that the larger herbivores (wild ox, wild horse, bison, elk, wild boar and deer) as well as water managers such as beaver would, with their controlling predators such as wolf, bear and lynx, have had an earlier and greater impact on habitat and landscape change than the first farmers. It is known from fossil records that these animal species arrived in Britain 3000 years before the key tree species that we associate with closed canopy deciduous forest (oak, ash, lime, elm, field maple, beech and hornbeam). They also arrived before the first farmers. It is more likely therefore that, rather than a landscape dominated by closed canopy woodland (other than on steeper valley slopes or cleaves), a mosaic of open moorland and

lowland heath, woodland, wood pasture, mire, marsh and scrub would have characterised north Devon, depending on the physical characteristics listed above.

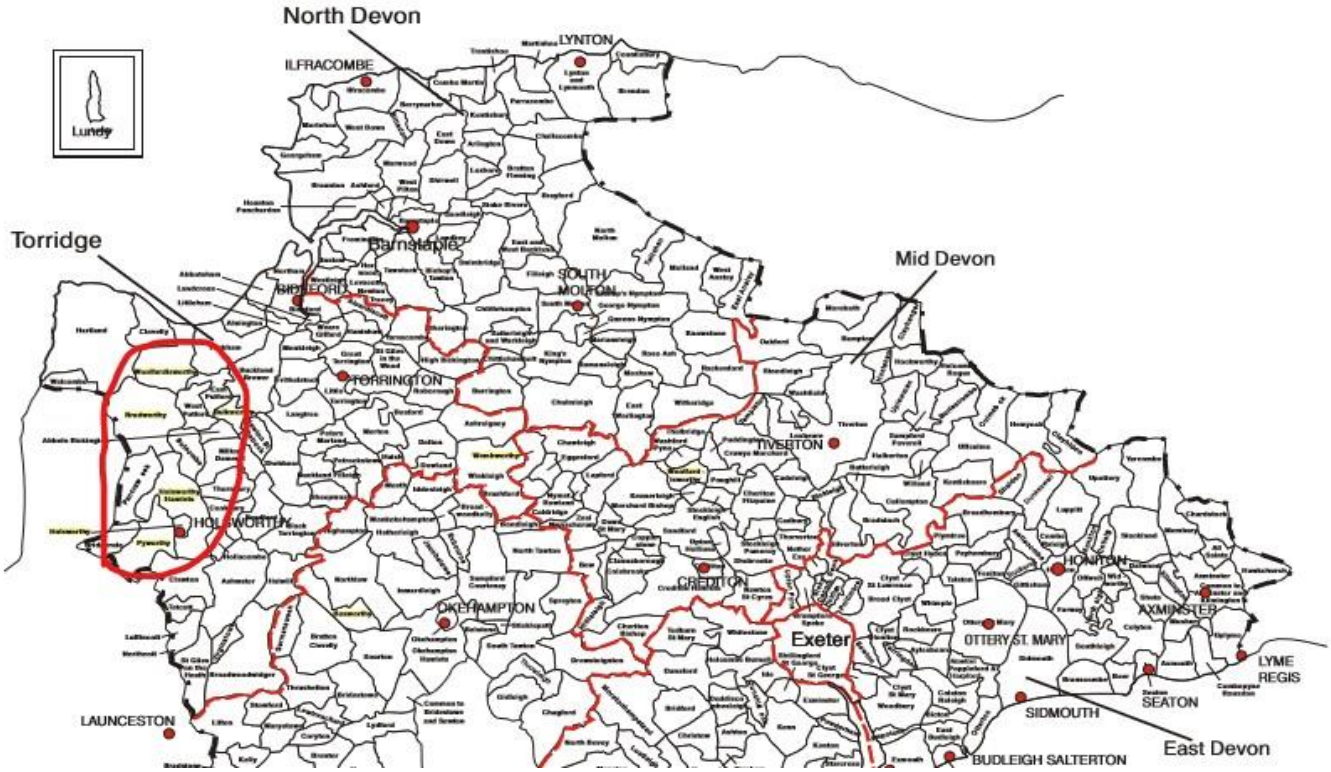
That this post-glacial process of grazing is likely to have influenced landscape creation in north Devon is illustrated by the fact that two of these large herbivore species remain in the wild in the area. Red deer and Exmoor ponies are iconic species associated, in particular, with upland Exmoor. Indeed, the Exmoor pony is regarded as the closest breed of horse we have to the original tarpan or wild horse. Their continued presence as wild animals demonstrates the continuity that herbivores have in shaping our landscape. In the absence of the large predators, humans have taken over the role of controlling populations of wild herbivores.

Farming would have altered and added detail to this mosaic of habitats, by clearance and enclosure. As evidence of this, further west, beyond the Torridge, there is a cluster of settlements with "worthy" endings (Map 3 below). This is an Old English term for enclosure, suggesting a more open landscape where the emphasis was on enclosing rather than clearing. Not only are there several of these settlements on the ridges between Holsworthy and Woolfardisworthy, there are many farmsteads also carrying "worthy" elements in this area. In just one parish, Bradworthy, there are nine: Atworthy, Hardisworthy, Dinworthy, Trentworthy, Brexworthy, Alfardisworthy, Kimworthy, Wrangworthy and Silworthy. There are, of course, "worthy" place names at farms throughout the North Devon area, illustrating the longevity of farmsteads here, but it is the clustering in the west of the area that may be significant. Here caveats must also be sounded. Firstly, the term evolved from denoting enclosure to farmstead. Secondly the clustering may simply represent the survival of this term in the area, where in other places it was superseded by place name elements such as "ington".

Map 3

Parishes with "Worthy" place-name endings (highlighted)

Showing West Torridge cluster



There are a few place names having an earlier origin; those that exist are either related to rivers: Exe, Dart, Dalch, Taw, Nymet, Okement, Torridge and Tamar are all Celtic in origin, or to religious settlement: Landkey (Kea), Braunton (Brannoc - possibly) and Petrockstow (Petroc) all being named after Celtic "saints". A few have other origins: Clovelly and Charles being two examples. (It should be noted that I use the term "Celtic" in this essay for ease, although it has been known for some while that there is no single Celtic population grouping. The Devon and Cornwall Celts were part of the Brythonic-speaking Celtic group, but very recent study has shown that even these were distinct from their Welsh neighbours to the north.)

Clearly the British settlement pattern that preceded the Anglo-Saxons owed something to continuity from the Iron Age, a lot to the rivers that drained the catchment and created a sense of the sacredness of water, a few older ridge routes that gave a measure of accessibility through the wooded or moorland interior and something to the British missionaries, mainly from Wales, who established cells in the area in the 6th and 7th centuries. There were no nucleated settlements; the enclosed or fortified places may have been settlements, defensive sites or gathering places for specific events. Unenclosed clusters of dwellings, if they existed in the area, are only just beginning to be discovered.

Mapping place name distribution against landscape character areas does not give direct correlations, suggesting that later development of the landscape may have overtaken any original patterns of distribution. "Worthy" place names are, however, largely associated with the Inland Elevated Undulating Land Character Area and the adjoining Farmed Lowland Moorland and Culm Grassland of western Torridge, suggesting that these landscapes may have been influential in shaping settlement form and pattern in these areas.

The Arrival of the Anglo-Saxons

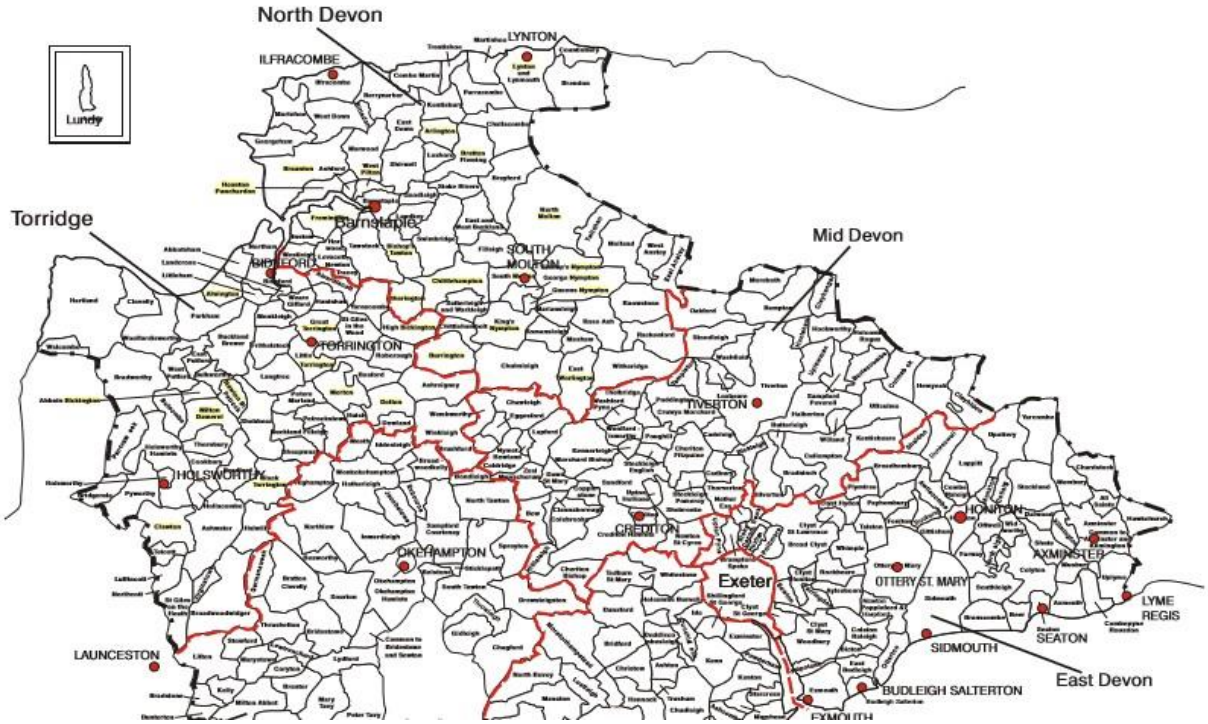
The colonisation of north Devon by Anglo-Saxon settlers happened late, even by Devon terms. Whereas there are clearly documented events in the 7th century involving invasion and battle, these are mainly in the east and mid Devon areas; three battles are recorded in east Devon, Exeter and mid Devon between 614 and 661. In 682 the West Saxon king Centwine fought the British somewhere in mid Devon and drove them "as far as the sea", presumably meaning the Atlantic coast (Hoskins 1959). The colonisation of north Devon probably didn't begin much before 700AD, but was virtually complete 200 years later, by which time the first town in north Devon had been founded, at Barnstaple.

Nearly all the parish names and most of the other place names recorded in Domesday Book are Old English in origin and many have a personal name origin that suggests either the identity of the founder or owner of the settlement, be it by clearing or enclosure, or of the changing pattern of land tenure particularly during the period of significant change of estate formation in the mid Saxon period (see Appendix 3).

Besides the "leigh" and "worthy" endings noted above, there are many of the more common "ton" (farmstead) and "ington" (estate) endings found throughout Anglo-Saxon England, with different origins relating to the re-ordering of land holdings (Map 4 below) ("ton" endings were often added to early Celtic sub-regional names e.g. Crediton). Other villages have topographical endings ("combe", "hoe", "down" or "ford"), or refer to other landscape features ("ash", "bury").

Map 4

Parishes with "Ton" and "Ington" place-name endings (highlighted)



"Ham" is another element with a distinctive origin, again denoting enclosure. There is a cluster of "hams" around Bideford: Northam, Abbotsham, Littleham and Parkham, suggesting a relationship between them. Northam originally had a detached part south of Bideford, suggesting that the ford settlement established there came later. The sequence is interrupted by Alwington, which might also imply a later estate reorganisation, resulting from a subdivision – it has a typically dispersed form, with the church and town farm together but the rest of the parish comprising scattered farms even now. Parkham Ash still retains evidence of the strip fields that might have been part of an earlier infield. (Green T. in The Heritage Handbook, NDAS 2015). Littleham may have achieved an elevated status from its origin as a minor settlement.

The prevalence of personal names is the most common and distinctive feature, however. A quarter of all parishes in the wider north Devon area have them. Together these place name elements give some clues to the where and even who of settlement, but do not answer the when, why and how. None of the personal names is repeated in the area, suggesting that they derive from the foundation rather than the reorganisation stage of settlement.

Yet by the time of Domesday Book there were over one hundred and twenty named settlements at the centre of parishes and many smaller settlements. North Devon's urban and rural settlement pattern had pretty much been established; it would grow and change over the next thousand years, but all the significant places had been founded.

As Robert Higham comments, place-name scholars have differed in their views of what level of English immigration led to Devon's English place-name pattern (Higham, Making Anglo-Saxon Devon 2008). He refers to how the "*appreciation of a source-based distinction between the place-name evidence of the two counties, largely promoted by Oliver Padel, gradually replaced older ideas of a mass English immigration into a landscape made empty by equally mass British emigration to Brittany. Even so, grasping the reality of early Devonian history through its place-names remains difficult: Oliver Padel's most recent published view re-iterates a fairly traditional approach, stressing the much more "English" experience of Devon in comparison with Cornwall, and insisting on significant rural immigration as an explanation of English place-name formation for so many small settlements."* It may, of course, be the case that the more "traditional" approach better fits the reality (to the extent that we know it) of a more sparsely settled north Devon and that, until further evidence is brought forward to challenge it, this approach can be retained for the area.

Defence against the Vikings

There is very little place name evidence to suggest significant Viking settlement in north Devon, despite their known presence across the Bristol Channel in South Wales and the Norse name of Lundy (Puffin Island). There is a record of a battle on the north Devon coast in about 877 at Arx Cynuit, variously attributed to Northam, Countisbury Hill, Cannington and (most recently) to a site near Beaford. Northam lays claim to the site by virtue of the Kenwith, Bloody Corner and Hubbastone place names (after Hubba the Dane, according to legend), but current thinking is that Cannington is the most likely location. The Danes had crossed from South Wales with twenty-three ships; they were met and defeated by Odda and his army.

However, the threat was clearly sufficient to justify Pilton near Barnstaple, being established as one of the four Devon Anglo-Saxon "burghs". Pilton is on a low hill commanding the lowest fording place on the Taw. In 893 a fleet of forty ships besieged a fort somewhere in north Devon; Hoskins considers this was probably Pilton. By the time Alfred approached with his army the Danes had retreated, however (Hoskins 1959). The site of the burgh has been tentatively suggested at Burridge Hill Camp a mile to the east of Pilton. However, there has been no archaeological investigation to examine that identification and there are some logistical arguments for it not being there but nearer the Taw Estuary. Pilton could be the name of an estate that included the manor of Pilland but also Barnstaple. A hundred years later, in the reign of Ethelred II (979-1016) Barnstaple was minting its own coins. Clearly it had been established as a commercial and administrative centre over the intervening period.

By this time therefore the area was obviously worth defending. This remained the case after the Norman Conquest, when Judhael of Totnes, who was given land in the area, fortified Barnstaple and built the motte and bailey the mound of which is still a feature of the place (and which partly buried an Anglo-Saxon cemetery).

Approaching the Issue

It is impossible to approach historic landscape issues in north Devon without referring to the work of W. G. Hoskins. Francis Pryor, in the Preface to The Making of the British Landscape (Pryor 2010), refers to Hoskins' classic, The Making of the English Landscape, which was published in 1955. The point he makes about it is worth quoting in full, as it informs my approach to the subject in this essay: "*At that time scholars believed they knew rather more than was actually the case. In the middle of the twentieth century, it was also still possible to paint a convincing picture with a broad brush. However, in the subsequent decades research has revealed a great deal more, and as a consequence we now realise how little we do in fact understand about the achievements of our ancestors. Broad brushstrokes are fine in their way, but there is a very great danger that they might paint out and obscure the real picture."*

The anthropologist Clifford Geertz, writing in the 1970's, suggested a typology of study that referred to "models of" and "models for" reality (The Interpretation of Cultures 1973). Models of reality start from the symbols of society but then try to build explanations from them of what reality they might be showing. For Geertz religion was a classic example of models of reality. Models for reality start from the evidence of how the world is and construct from that appropriate symbols, whether scientific or social, of how these realities can be replicated. This typology is as applicable to the study of history and archaeology as to any other of the humanities. The Whig view of history, which constructed its view on a "model of reality" that assumed an uninterrupted progress in western society from chaos and ignorance to order and the sunlit uplands of the Enlightenment and beyond, prevailed throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and well into the twentieth. Indeed, probably its most eloquent exponent was G. M. Trevelyan, writing in the first half of the twentieth century (Trevelyan G M, English Social History, 1942). Hoskins wrote in this tradition. Pryor is acknowledging, but ultimately repudiating, this Whig tradition in Hoskins work, whilst affirming Hoskins' commitment to observation of the landscape and its elements.

Of course, writers have been producing narratives of history for as long as there have been historians; Gildas, Nennius and the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle all constructed models of the history of their society, as much as did the Whig historians whose enlightenment view became overlain by a late Victorian imperialist narrative of change through conquest. Robert Higham acknowledges this in the Introduction to his Making of Anglo-Saxon Devon (2008). This is not a problem as long as we do not confuse the models with the reality! Indeed, in a subject area with as little evidence as the one under discussion, this is an inevitable part of the process of testing ideas.

An example of this, relevant to this essay, is the concept that prevailed relatively unchallenged until recently, that variations in settlement pattern and practice were the result of social rather than environmental influences. Tom Williamson characterises this approach as coming from a postmodern and post-processual approach. He has challenged this approach in his essay The Environmental Contexts of Anglo-Saxon Settlements in Landscape Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England (Higham and Ryan (eds), 2010). He argues instead that many of the spatial patterns apparent in Anglo-Saxon England were, in fact, structured by environmental and topographical influences. This argument is taken up and developed by Mark McKerracher in his book Farming Transformed in Anglo-Saxon England: Agriculture in the Long Eighth Century (McKerracher 2018). I will return to this discussion later in this study.

Inevitably when writing at a landscape scale in an area where there has been little archaeological evidence for the period under consideration, creating a model for reality is fraught with risk. If not episodic conquest of a primitive society but gradual cultural dominance of a more civilised one, what evidence is there for a different model of transition? There are broad brushstrokes in this essay, but they are intended to be posed as questions, rather than assertions. We know even less about the early mediaeval period in north Devon than in many areas of England, even given the greater access to the “grey literature” of archaeological investigation in the area. Very few of the investigations that have taken place have covered the period.

The purpose of this study, therefore, is to identify some possible avenues of thought and investigation, as a framework on which to hang the more detailed results of further research. Inevitably the framework will need to be modified, and indeed eventually discarded, as more evidence comes to light. It will explore the themes through a series of case studies, in an attempt to move from broad brush generalisations to specific examples of different settlement origins and types, in distinctive landscapes.

Before that, however, I need to explore one particular issue: whether the colonisation of north Devon proceeded by conquest and the superimposition of new patterns of settlement, or by assimilation in what was essentially a continuing of existing settlement patterns. This entails a consideration of the potential drivers of change.

2. Continuity or Conflict

Until about 700 AD north Devon was still part of the kingdom of Dumnonia, the area that is largely today's Devon & Cornwall. This had been the case since the withdrawal of the Roman army from Britain and before the advent in Devon of the early Anglo-Saxons, a period of over 250 years. There was movement during this period, including across the English Channel to what became known as Brittany, but also around the Celtic Seas. In the deteriorating political climate of the 6th century there is evidence of significant movement from Dumnonia to Armorica. However, there was a measure of continuity and identity amongst the British. Language and trade were established, coastal and estuarine routes were in use. The population may have been sparse, particularly inland, but it was known. The meteorological climate was, in fact, improving. In the centuries after 400AD, Europe's average temperature was 1 degree warmer than we have today, and in Britain grapes could be grown as far north as Tyneside. Warmer summers meant better crops and a rise in population in the countries of northern Europe. There were fluctuations in this overall picture and some suggestion of a climatic deterioration between 500-600 and again between 700-900, before a further improvement. Nevertheless, the pressure for space in Western Europe that resulted from climate change was a driver of the movement of peoples.

There is also evidence of the influence of the Bristol Channel coast on the development of pre-Saxon Somerset. In Bruce Eagles' book From Roman Civitas to Anglo-Saxon Shire - topographical studies on the formation of Wessex (Eagles 2018), he states that "*Excavations in the civitas Durotrigum Lendeniensium have revealed the significance of hill-fort reoccupation and the wide contacts of the elite in the fifth and sixth centuries. The western trading network in which the northern Durotriges played a significant role, however, was not shared by their southern neighbours*." There is scope to investigate whether this influence also prevailed in north Devon.

Before looking at particular settlements, however, a series of questions needs consideration. These include:

- Where was the evidence for previous settlement?
- How were the resources offered by the environment exploited?
- What was the relationship between farming and settlement?
- Was the farmstead, the hamlet or the nucleated village the basic form of settlement?
- What type of buildings might we expect to find from the period?
- How densely wooded was the area?
- What were the pressures for change?
- How were the defence, colonisation and settlement of the area organised?
- To what extent was the British population replaced or outnumbered by the incoming population of Anglo-Saxons?
- By whom was the area subsequently owned and administered?
- How significant was the role of the church?
- To what extent was trade carried out within and from north Devon?

Pre-historic settlement in Devon

Much work has been done on the Bronze Age settlements of Dartmoor and Exmoor. A milder climate made the high moors more suited to farming and there is comparatively abundant evidence of this still (albeit mainly through burial mounds in the case of Exmoor). However, as the Iron Age progressed the climate became wetter and cooler and the high moors less favourable for farming, particularly arable. The evidence suggests that the moors were abandoned for the lower lands of Devon. Most of the Iron Age enclosed sites are on these lands, although there are exceptions such as Holworthy on Exmoor. However, the evidence of settlement and farming is much less visible.

There is some evidence for earlier settlement on the lowlands of north Devon and it comes mainly in five forms: burial sites, standing stones, flint scatters, roundhouses and hill enclosures ("hillforts").

The evidence for burial is provided in the many barrows and tumuli recorded across the landscape. There is a pattern to such sites; they tend to be on higher ground and seem to be associated with ridge routes. Examples can be seen at Berry Down near Berrynarbor, Burrow Cross near Meshaw, Darracott Moor near Great Torrington, Burrington Moor Cross, Horridge Moor near Chulmleigh, Wrangworthy Cross and Common Moor near East Putford, Beaford Moor and Riddlecombe Moor near Dolton and Bursdon and Welford Moors in Hartland parish. The largest cluster in North Devon is on Fyldon Common. All of these clusters, except Horridge Moor, appear to be associated with ridge routes and with crossroads on those routes. Whatever their origin, they were clearly meant to be seen.

Standing stones are more commonly associated with the high moors and there are a number on Exmoor. Other examples are found closer to the coast, for instance at Damage and Lee near Mortehoe and on the ridge routes, such as at Kentisbury Down and at Stone in East Worlington. There is also a stone row on the Taw at Yelland and a long stone in Pilton.

Flint scatters are fairly random in distribution across the area. A recent example is at the site of the NDAS dig in 2009/12, at West Yeo, East Worlington (NDAS 2013). Here flint material has been identified from the Mesolithic through the Neolithic to the Bronze Age. This is fairly typical of such finds and is evidence of the continuity of occupation.

What is clear, however, is that nucleated villages were not the practice; instead, it was a landscape of scattered farmsteads, with occasional defensive or memorial sites which may have been the focus for communal gatherings. The recent report of the excavation of an unenclosed Iron Age roundhouse and other structures, on a site at Middle Burrow near East Worlington closely associated with Bronze Age burial mounds, suggests that there is still much evidence of this form of settlement to be discovered in the north Devon landscape (SWARCH 2011). An even more recent excavation at Tews Lane, near Fremington Pill, revealed late Iron Age structures whose purpose has not yet been identified for certain. Of greater significance were the sherds of pottery that were found on the site. These were identified as having their origin from sites across the south west, extending from The Lizard to Poole and the Mendips, implying a significant coastal trade. There were also some sherds of pottery made from the local Fremington clay. Thus, there was both trade and manufacture taking place close to the site, possibly using Fremington Pill and the Taw Estuary (ACE 2017 unpublished).

The recent excavation of a substantial unenclosed Iron Age settlement, comprising roundhouses and other structures, at Winterbourne Kingston in Dorset, suggests that our assumptions about settlement patterns in the south west may not be correct (Russell & Cheetham, CA 313). This example demonstrates a large settlement away from any associated hillfort.

The functions of the hillforts are still being debated. Pryor considers that "we can only ever explain the existence of hillforts if we study them in their landscape setting. Hillforts required a prosperous population to construct and then to support them" (Pryor 2010). The coastal sites in North Devon are in good defensive locations but largely unsuited to permanent living – high, steep-sided and lacking in a supply of fresh water. Some of the West Exmoor sites are closer to rivers and streams: the notable concentration of them between Brayford, Stoke Rivers and Loxhore parishes suggests a greater population density and activity there (and possibly a greater degree of social organisation) than in the rest of inland north Devon. On the Devon Historic Environment Record two of these sites are identified as enclosed settlements, rather than hillforts; these are at Kentisbury Down and Shoulsbarrow, both hill slope enclosures. The sites at Lee, Marwood and Plaistow, Shirwell may be similar.

There has been very little archaeological investigation of the inland sites. Their identification as hill forts of the Iron Age period may therefore be a matter of what we have come to expect from the landform. They may have been enclosed settlements occupied later into the Romano-British period. We are only now beginning to recognise unenclosed settlements of the same period. The danger is that our view is governed by what has survived.

Exploiting the natural resources of the area

Without exception areas are settled because they offer resources to be exploited: water, soil and minerals at the most basic level. The biomass element of these natural resources: trees, grass, other plants and the animals that feed off them are what first characterise the opportunities for settlement. North Devon, by virtue of its geology, climate and location has an abundance of such biomass and wildlife. Whether managed (woodland and grassland) or cultivated (grains, peas and beans), native wildlife (ox, horse, deer, beaver and wild boar) or introduced/farmed animals (rabbits, sheep, pigs and cattle), all would have played a part in the resource exploitation of the period, mainly for food and clothing, but also to support the farm economy. Susan Pearce (2004) points out that "Local stands of trees yielded firing, building timber, hazel, coppiced and cropped to grow rods for hurdles, and materials for a wide range of containers, tool handles and equipment…".

However, the absence of markets within reasonable trading distance of north Devon would suggest that farming of these resources was, throughout most of the early mediaeval period, for own local, and usually on-site, consumption; in other words, it was subsistence farming. This is, of course, an assumption; but until we find evidence of trading in the area during the period, it is probably a reasonable one to make in the light of what we know about population levels and economic opportunities.

This basis for the exploitation of the area's resources would have profoundly influenced the pattern of settlement, initially and for some time. There was little need for nucleation that derived from collective activity. Specialisation and urbanisation (they tend to go together) came much later to

north Devon. The re-ordering of land into estates that came later in the early mediaeval period may have been as much about the transfer of wealth and power as the effective management of resources.

However, there is evidence of a change in farming practice in the eighth century in north Devon. This comes from palaeo-environmental studies in the Rackenford and southern Exmoor fringe areas (and elsewhere in East Devon), recorded by Stephen Rippon in Landscape Change During the 'Long Eighth Century' (in Landscape Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England, ed Higham and Ryan, 2010). This shows that, after a period of stability from the fourth to the sixth centuries in a largely pastoral landscape, there is evidence for change with an increase in cereals, herbaceous taxa associated with arable cultivation and improved pasture. This implies that around the eighth century there was a significant and widespread intensification in land use, which elsewhere has been argued as related to a new form of rotational agriculture known as convertible husbandry. Rippon concludes that "There is no evidence that this region ever saw the transformation of the landscape seen in England's central zone – where villages and open fields were created – yet there was still a significant change in how the landscape was exploited". Apart from anything else, the increasing amount of arable may well have demanded the introduction of the heavy plough developed from the eighth century onwards. Williamson notes that ploughs and plough teams were expensive pieces of equipment which were only used at certain times of the year. This may well have led to the sharing of ploughs and to the clustering of farms. His reasoning is that "Proximity of farmsteads allowed rapid mobilisation of shared ploughs and teams, while intermingled holdings, scattered across land of varying aspect and drainage potential, allowed each cultivator a reasonable chance of getting their holding ploughed in time for seeding" (in Higham and Ryan eds., 2010, op cit).

McKerracher, writing in the context of case studies of central and eastern England, refers to Williamson's work (McKerracher 2018). He contends that "*Rural communities must work with whatever nature has provided, and, if nature's provision is inadequate for their purposes, then they must work all the harder to make good these shortcomings. Either way, their activities and choices are constrained."* This will surely be even more true for a landscape set in western England close to the Atlantic, with all that implies for climate, geology, topography and soil.

The mineral resources of north Devon, whilst relatively small compared to other regions, were significant enough to be exploited from the Iron Age onwards. This particularly involved iron ore extraction, principally from the area of south-west Exmoor. Indeed, there is an argument that, if an era is defined by its technology, rather than its culture, the Iron Age in north Devon continued throughout the Romano-British period and beyond. No other technology replaced it and the period was largely aceramic, meaning that the clay deposits, used so significantly in north Devon from the later mediaeval period onwards, were not exploited during this period (although the discovery of local late Iron Age pottery sherds at Tews Lane near Fremington may imply otherwise – AC Archaeology 2017).

Whether timber, stone, slate, clay or reed were used for dwellings and ancillary buildings will only become known when we discover more domestic sites from the period between 0 and 1000 AD.

Farming and settlement

It is impossible to explain the evolution of settlement without understanding the role and type of farming in the area at the period. This is partly because farming is the first activity that is likely to have impacted the landscape (other than ritual) and partly because villages and hamlets are not necessary to farming on an individual basis, but are to farming on a collective or organised estate basis. Additionally, farming produces the most ubiquitous and enduring of all artefacts, the field boundary.

The hedgebank, the prevailing form of field boundary in north Devon, takes a lot of effort to construct and quite a bit to maintain. Composed of a stone and turf bank at the base and hedge planting above, it is a form that lies between the stone walls of Cornwall or Dartmoor and the hedges of the south-east (or of later enclosures). Once constructed it takes almost as much effort to remove. For this reason alone, early hedgebanks are likely to have been enduring features of the landscape, at least until the mechanisation of farming made significant change to farm landscapes easier.

If, therefore, the assumption, stated in both Rackham and Pryor, that the British landscape was fully farmed and scarcely abandoned but adapted after the end of the Roman period, is followed, it must also follow that the north Devon landscape before the arrival of the Anglo-Saxons was already characterised by the small fields of Celtic farming in areas that were actively farmed, interspersed through areas of open downland or moorland. To what extent these fields were associated with the hill forts or enclosed settlements that had been constructed in the Iron Age is not well known. As stated previously, Pryor suggests that to understand the functions of hill forts they must be examined in the context of the surrounding landscape and its uses at the time.

Terry Green has done a lot of work on field patterns that suggest early establishment of farmsteads in the area: it is a subject all on its own. It may well prove to be the one area of study that can reveal the nature of the development of farming and settlement in the transition between the British and Anglo-Saxon periods, in the absence of other available evidence. One element of this is the use of "infield/outfield" practices for livestock, as well as summer grazing on downs, moors and marshes.

Early farming provides one other form of evidence in the landscape: cultivation terraces. More commonly found on the chalk downs of Dorset and Hampshire, where they are known as strip lynchets, these are occasionally evident on hillsides in north Devon, notably on the southern flank of Saunton Down and at Mortehoe.

Hamerow (2012) is of the view that the south-west appears to have seen little change in land use between the fourth and sixth centuries and quotes Rippon (in The Landscape Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England, ed. N. Higham and M Ryan, 2010) as "*suggesting continuity at the end of the Roman Period in an essentially pastoral landscape*" (see above). If anything, this is even more likely to have been the case in the relatively non-Romanised world of Dumnonian north Devon. One other element of pastoral farming at this time that has been recognised more recently is the practice of "transhumance", the seasonal movement of cattle between lowland farms and the uplands of Devon – predominantly Dartmoor and Exmoor. This is likely to have had a profound effect on the social organisation of farming and the social customs of the people of Devon (Pearce 2004).

In summary, therefore, it would appear that farming in north Devon evolved with the development of the manorial estate system from agriculture that was largely based on livestock grazing with some arable, in small Celtic fields, to an arable-based open field system (though largely in hamlets with "mini" field systems – Finberg 1953) by the time of Domesday, albeit one where arable land was cultivated on a rotation basis with maybe only a third of arable land under cultivation at any one time, and considerable areas of manorial waste. The extent to which this process of development was driven by the changing relationship between production and exchange and, in particular, the gradual growth of urbanisation, in north Devon (as Hamerow suggests was happening elsewhere in southern England) remains to be seen. A more immediate question is the extent to which it influenced the development of rural settlements.

Farmstead, hamlet or nucleated village?

In her book Rural Settlements and Society in Anglo-Saxon England (2012) Helena Hamerow states "*it is clear that the Mid Saxon period saw the emergence – at least in eastern England – of settlements characterised by systems of ditched enclosures*." She also points to the growing evidence for the existence of informally regular plots associated with settlements of the Mid Saxon period. Since this is the earliest that settlements could have been established in north Devon it might provide an indicator of what type of settlements we might be looking for.

Even a glance at the OS maps of north Devon at the beginning of the 21st century will reveal a settlement pattern which has not changed much in a thousand years, except in scale and in a few coastal locations. The coastal exceptions relate to the later development of fishing communities and tourist resorts. For the rest the pattern is of a very small number of towns, a few nucleated settlements in the larger villages of the area and a large number of hamlets and farmsteads.

The early history of settlement in north Devon suggests a dispersed pattern based on hamlets and farmsteads, many of which are still extant. Few parishes, even today, have a central nucleated village and a significant proportion of those appear to be later developments of the original farmsteads and hamlets. Many still show signs of the manor house, town farm or barton, and adjoining church surrounded by the remnants of open fields, marked by the curvilinear shape of their field boundaries, but without the development of a nucleated settlement. A good example of this that has recently been studied is East Worlington (Report on East Worlington House, SWARCH, 2012, from ADS website). The overall development of rural settlements is well summarised by Terry Green in The Heritage Handbook (Green T, Rural Settlement in The Heritage Handbook, NDAS, 2015).

In his essay *Cornish Strip Fields* in *Mediaeval Devon and Cornwall (Sam Turner ed.* 2006), Peter Herring suggests the revision of a settled landscape with substantially built field boundaries into a new pattern with larger open fields divided into strips occurring around the sixth and seventh centuries. He considers that that the new early mediaeval settlements were still hamlets. He suggests that this arrangement of communally farmed land allowed both lord and landholder to have closer control of allotment or shareholding. The same argument could equally be applied to settlement in north Devon in the same period.

Hamerow comments on the "*need to understand why it remains so difficult to identify rural settlements for so much of this period in the south-west and north-west of England"* and asks whether "*the near-absence of settlements readily dateable to the Anglo-Saxon period in the northwest and south-west could be due to the continuing persistence in these regions of essentially Iron Age architectural forms well into the post-Roman centuries?"* She considers it possible that the small, dispersed farmsteads and settlements of these regions reflect many centuries of less specialised, more self-sufficient forms of land management.

This suggests that the study of individual nucleated settlements, even those that appear to have been established relatively early, should look at them in the context of the hamlets that are dispersed through the surrounding landscape in order to understand the processes in play, irrespective of their location and type. This principle will be adopted in the case studies that follow.

Romano-British and Anglo-Saxon Domestic Buildings

Hamerow (2010) usefully examines and summarises the results of excavations of Anglo-Saxon dwellings and ancillary buildings, particularly those undertaken over the last forty years. She identifies how dwelling design evolved through the Early, Middle and Late Saxon periods, from small single-room rectangular buildings to larger sub-divided dwellings and to a greater variation in building types as time passed. The Anglo-Saxons followed the Germanic tradition of building in timber rather than stone. Their buildings were almost always rectangular, with larger hall houses having an extended outline with slightly bulging walls at the long sides. The traditional Devon longhouse seems, elsewhere in England, to have been a later mediaeval development.

Hamerow (2012) states" In *Devon and Cornwall a distinctive building tradition is apparent even in the Late Saxon period, by which time the region was at least nominally under Anglo-Saxon rule. Groups of buildings excavated at Mawgan Porth, near the north Cornish coast, occupied between the mid ninth and mid eleventh centuries, provide some of the clearest evidence of this tradition (Bruce Mitford 1997). Three rectangular 'courtyard' houses were excavated, each with a byre at one end and several smaller rooms around the other sides of the yard. The walls were made up of stone facing filled with a mixture of broken-up slate and earth."*

As Anglo-Saxon settlement in north Devon did not begin until well into the Middle Saxon period, it might be thought that any dwellings excavated in the area might either follow the form that had evolved by then in the rest of Wessex, or the local tradition that Hamerow suggests. The truth is we simply do not know, because none has yet been discovered and excavated. This difficulty is exacerbated by the fact that, although Iron Age roundhouses are known in the area, no later dwellings have yet been discovered that post-date the Roman occupation. Added to this there is no evidence of villa-building in the area either.

Put simply, we have no evidence of dwelling types and construction in north Devon for the thousand years from the end of the Iron Age until the Norman occupation (and beyond). Any discussion is therefore speculative. Was there a continuity of roundhouse building and occupation well into the Anglo-Saxon period (as might seem probable from the absence of any known villa sites), or was there a gradual adoption of rectangular building forms after 700? (Or indeed was there an overlap of both building types?) Unless every Anglo-Saxon dwelling in the area was subsequently replaced in

situ by later mediaeval buildings, there must be evidence to be found, even though the acidic nature of the soils in the area makes evidence of timber structures very hard to find. If, however, they follow the Devon and Cornwall "tradition" identified by Hamerow, then stone foundations might be easier to locate.

Woodland North Devon

The extent of woodland in north Devon depends on three natural elements, climate, topography and soils; to this can be added the influence of woodland management.

Primarily the climate of the area is mild and damp, with a strong maritime influence. Prior to the period under question the climate had become wetter and cooler, resulting in the abandonment of farming and settlement on the high moors and a migration to lower levels. Such a climate is ideal for growing grass and trees and both would have flourished in a cool temperate climate. In post-Roman Britain (and across northern Europe) however, a warming climate would have made arable farming more viable again in Devon, albeit with periods of poor harvest resulting from short-term fluctuations.

Topography is responsible for the micro-climates in the region: not only the rainfall differential between the high moors and the lowland areas, but also the more localised influences of valley sides, plateaux and aspect. The plateau landscape of the Culm across the central area of north Devon is bisected by the deep flat-bottomed valleys of the Taw and Torridge and their major tributaries, the Waldon, Okement, Mole and Bray. Further north the more deeply incised downlands of the Devonian Exmoor give a more varied topography with narrow steep sided valleys. Finally, the estuary of the Taw and Torridge gives a flat lowland landscape with some of the best arable growing conditions in the area.

Both the Culm and the Devonian are comprised mainly of sandstones and shales, with a clay basin north of Meeth and alluvial soils around the estuary. The main distinction is that the Culm soils tend to be more poorly drained and lead to distinctive unimproved grassland vegetation. Although Culm Grassland owes its existence to a combination of geology, topography and rainfall, in its current form it is largely a post-mediaeval phenomenon, resulting from a decrease in ploughing following the enclosure of poorer arable land for more specialist pastoral farming in the nineteenth century. On the poorly drained Culm the resulting unbroken water-retaining sward, visible in the yellow grasses that are so distinctive from the sown rye grass commonly seen in the area, would have begun to predominate. Field drainage and a return to more intensive farming, driven in particular by mid twentieth century farm policy, during and after the Second World War, was responsible for the loss of much of the Culm Grassland. (For a more detailed historical account of the development of Culm Grassland, see "Culm Country: An historical introduction" by John Bradbeer, in Culm Grassland: An Assessment of Recent Historic Change, Devon Wildlife Trust, 2014. He makes the point that the heyday of Culm Grassland was probably between 1880 and 1950). The early mediaeval agricultural landscape may not have looked much like either, but been more of a managed patchwork of arable and pastoral farming.

The original succession woodland in Devon was either oak or hazel depending on soil, topography and aspect, hazel predominated on the better soils and oak on valley sides and wetter areas. Ash, elm and willow, with many other species, were found throughout. Beech was a later introduction. (Rackham 1986)

Woodland management, whether clearing, coppicing or timber harvesting may have been practiced in the area for a thousand years before the Saxons arrived. Place name evidence suggests that there were still some substantial wooded areas: Morchard and Broadwood being two indicators. The residual significance of woodland as a location for worship is retained in the “nemeton” (sacred grove) place names that are found between Crediton and South Molton, in broadly the same location as the “leigh” and “morchard” names.

North Devon now is known as a pastoral landscape, with a predominance of sheep on the uplands, beef on the Devonian and dairying on the Culm. Evidence from Domesday and other sources suggests a more mixed and less specialised farm economy certainly up to the period of the enclosures. By Domesday, Devon only had about 4% woodland cover, one of the lowest proportions in England, with half the County’s woods smaller than 17 acres. This low proportion is consistent with the (in)frequency of mentions of woodland in Anglo-Saxon charters in Devon (although it should be noted that there are no charters for the coastal north and west of the County) (Rackham 1986). At the same time the balance had shifted, so that there was twice as much arable land (43.3%) as pasture (20.3%). Nevertheless about 30% of land was waste, although it was not always recorded as such (Bradbeer J. in The Heritage Handbook, NDAS, 2015). Manorial waste, basically unworked land, is likely to have had a higher proportion of scrub woodland.

Armies and urban centres create a demand for grain. In the absence of either the area is unlikely to have been a significant grain provider for the Roman urban economy but there would probably have been more arable than we see now, primarily for on-farm or local consumption. Either way there is likely to have been substantial woodland clearance by the time the Saxons arrived.

However, there is also likely to have been a significant hiatus in woodland management in the two hundred years before this, for reasons that will be explored in the next section. This implies that the clearance suggested by place name evidence may have been as much about scrub woodland as high succession woodland or wildwood. Absence of farming for a period of fifty years, in most north Devon landscapes would produce fairly dense scrub woodland of hazel, thorn and willow, leading to ash and oak over time, depending on soil conditions and slope. Place name evidence suggests these species were well-represented in the area.

Finally, it should be borne in mind that elsewhere in England the Anglo-Saxons built in timber throughout the period and that this implies a sufficient supply of raw material of the right species to sustain the construction of dwellings and ancillary buildings – unless of course they were using cob, thatch and stone in north Devon.

Pressures for change

There is no doubt that in the post-Roman period a sort of balkanisation of the previous occupied territories of Britain took place, resulting in many competing tribes and small kingdoms. At the same time there was a period of increasing incursion from the east, in the case of the east coast, and from the west, in Wales and western Britain. This period is summarised by Barry Cunliffe in *Britain Begins* as follows: "*The time from 350 to 650 was, by any standards, a period of dramatic change. A child born in the 340s, in old age would have looked back on a lifetime of increasing turmoil, culminating in the total collapse of order and government, inextricably bound up with the incursion of aliens on an unprecedented scale…..The rate of change exacerbated the sense of dislocation, and with it came a resort to mobility…. Others, occupying the overcrowded south-western peninsula of Britain, left to seek a new life in Armorica*." (Cunliffe 2013).

The evidence of incursion from the west, particularly from Ireland, is found in the memorial stones using Ogham script found in Cornwall, West Wales and on Lundy. There is also place name evidence in south-west Wales. Evidence of trade along the Atlantic routes and into the Bristol Channel is found in imported Mediterranean pottery in Cornwall, Somerset and South Wales. The only place lacking in evidence is north Devon. This raises the usual question – is absence of evidence, evidence of absence? Was north Devon a remote and low-populated exception to the "overcrowded southwest"? Its coast was as accessible as anywhere on the northern side of the peninsula and a British population is evident from the remnant hill forts and enclosures.

If migration did indeed take place from Dumnonia to Armorica, in part in response to these pressures, it would have resulted in a degree of abandonment of farming, especially in the areas of less favoured soils, such as the poorly drained Culm.

There must have been a significant population, known in southern Ireland and West Wales, to explain the arrival of Christian missionaries from there into Cornwall and Devon, as evidenced by the parish attributions to Celtic "Saints". The form this "Christianisation" took was that of monastic communities, often in isolated locations. Some, however, saw it as their duty to travel among communities to spread their beliefs and practices (Cunliffe 2013). Robert Higham (2008) makes the point that only the north of the county bears the clear mark of early Celtic saints: Brannoc (at Braunton), Nectan (at Hartland), and Kea (at Landkey).

Colonisation from the east would have added to these pressures. As the Anglo-Saxons advanced across southern England, reaching Wiltshire, Dorset and Somerset by the end of the 6th century (eventually to form the kingdom of Wessex), there is likely to have been a westward movement of native Celts, pressing into Dumnonia. It was some time, however, before this resulted in direct conflict between the British and the Anglo-Saxon incomers, in Devon.

The organisation of colonisation

Defence and attack

By AD 600, according to Barry Cunliffe, "*the West Saxons, having overcome the resistance of Somerset, now confronted the kingdom of Dumnonia, which still retained its freedom in the southwest peninsula*". By 700 the influence of Wessex had spread westwards to the borders of

Cornwall. How this happened is described by Hoskins and others. There are four recorded battles for the control of Dumnonia, found chiefly in the writings of the victors (as is usually the case). The first was at Bindon above Axmouth where the British were defeated, with over two thousand dead. Hoskins considered this to be a large battle for those days. If that is the case it implies a leadership of the kingdom of Dumnonia that was able to command considerable military resources and to sustain such heavy losses. The defeat seems to have resulted only in the extension of the kingdom of Wessex as far as the River Otter.

It was another forty years before the next recorded battle, at Peonnan in 658. Hoskins considers this to have taken place at Pinhoe. Again, the British were defeated and Wessex gained control of Exeter and the Exe Valley. An alternative view, which is now the prevailing opinion, is that this battle was fought at Penselwood on the Wiltshire/Somerset border, in which case the new western boundary of the kingdom of Wessex is more likely to have been the River Parrett in Somerset. (This accords with Robert Higham's view that for most of this period West Somerset, including the whole of Exmoor, was part of the kingdom of Dumnonia.) Three years later Cenwalh, king of Wessex, fought the British at Posbury, south-west of Crediton, extending his kingdom further west and south, but not yet into the north of the county. The impetus for this advance may have been the loss of territory by Wessex to the expanding kingdom of Mercia, which created another pressure for change.

In the year 682 there is a record of another great battle, at an unknown location possibly in mid Devon, as a result of which Centwine drove the British "as far as the sea" and extended his kingdom of Wessex to the Atlantic coast and the Tamar. The remnant kingdom of Dumnonia occupied what is now Cornwall. The next stage of Anglo-Saxon control came in 710 when King Ine defeated Geraint, the last Dumnonian king, and gave Wessex influence in Cornwall. Further conflicts are recorded, however, led by King Ecgberht of Wessex between 813 and 822, and the completion of Anglo-Saxon control of Devon (and Cornwall) may have taken until the reign of Aethelstan, a hundred years later. It is likely that a significant British population continued to farm Devon in isolated farmsteads, under negotiated terms. The Anglo-Saxon pattern of settlement that accompanied the slow colonisation of the area took a different form to its British predecessors only in some parishes, where later reorganisation into estates produced a small number of classic nucleated villages.

Colonisation and settlement

It may be assumed from this sequence of battles between well-organised kingdoms that the colonisation and settlement of north Devon was carried out in an organised manner, through conquest, under the authority of the kingdom of Wessex. If this is the case it might be expected to show both in the settlement pattern and in the type of settlements that were established from 700 onwards.

What is immediately apparent is that the Iron Age hill forts do not seem to have been adopted as settlement sites. Many of the new settlements were established on existing ridge routes or on river crossings, but away from the old defensive sites. The only place names that suggest association with earlier fortified sites are Cookbury, Thornbury and Roborough in modern Torridge, and possibly Berrynarbor on the north Devon coast. However, in each case there is no evidence of the earlier "bury" site.

Whether they replaced existing British farmsteads is not known, but it would appear that the earlier Anglo-Saxon settlements were mainly hamlets while later, in some cases, larger villages in a nucleated settlement form were established in a pattern that was previously unknown, outside of the enclosed settlements of the British. Whether this was for defensive reasons or due to land ownership needs, or both, the classic Saxon nucleated settlement of the Midlands seems to have consisted of a central space surrounded by the village farmsteads and an open field system and common land beyond. In north Devon Bradworthy is an unusual but good example of this form. Higham suggests that such settlements may have not been established until the 10th century, as power accumulated in fewer hands (2008). Later, individual farmsteads may have been established remote from the village as enclosure took place, although this may have included some British farmsteads that were taken over or resettled. Place name evidence suggests both may have occurred. "Worthy" farm names predominate in Bradworthy parish and "Cott" names elsewhere, particularly around Fremington and on the Cornish border. Farms with the name Yelland or Yellaton suggest "old land or farm" that was previously occupied. Fremington also contains an example of this.

To what extent the classic "Midland" form of village was adopted in Devon is debated. Despite the presence of an extant open field at Braunton (one of only two still worked on a strip system in England) the open field may not have been universally used in the area. There are other indicators of Saxon village form, including a grid layout as described at Sedgeford in Norfolk (Faulkner, CA Feb 2015, describing the work of Andrew Reynolds on Anglo-Saxon boundaries and John Blair on Anglo-Saxon settlement layouts). "*Reynolds sees the development of boundaries within settlements from the later 6th century AD, especially in the 7th and 8th centuries, as a reflection of a changing social order increasingly preoccupied with defining individual responsibilities. This in turn, he suggests, should be viewed in the context of 'the growth and consolidation of the early English kingdoms, whose increasing geographical extent, at the expense of each other, required new forms of social organisation'".* The changing social order he describes is certainly likely to have pertained in north Devon in the 8th century.

Faulkner continues: *"Blair has not only found consistent evidence for rectangular grid-planning over a large swathe of Middle and Late Anglo-Saxon England, but also clear indications of the repeated use of multiples of standardised measure, the short perch of approximately 4.6m. The implication is that some centralised authority was at work, and Blair speculates that Church surveyors may have been marking out the landscape in late 8th- or early 9th century England much as Roman mensores surely were in 2nd century Britannia."* There are some interesting possibilities here for both measuring possible grid layouts and examining the role of the Church in the layout of Anglo-Saxon villages in north Devon.

Besides its extant open field, Braunton also has a street layout that is suggestive of such a grid, albeit rather irregular in shape. However, the steeper topography of the surrounding area, particularly on the Devonian of west Exmoor may have prevented such a regular form being used more widely.

One argument for the prevalence of the open field in Devon may support the place name evidence for woodland clearing. If open fields replaced an older system of small fields enclosed by hedgebanks, particularly if such fields had been abandoned and become overgrown with scrub woodland, the task of creating an open field system would indeed have been one of "woodland clearing", albeit not of wildwood but of scrub and of field boundaries.

Not all nucleated villages had grid or central space patterns. Some developed later as mediaeval boroughs (not always successfully, as at Winkleigh); some were linear, having been established along a ridge route and not having extended into a grid pattern until much later. Bratton Fleming appears to be an example of such a linear village. In others the central enclosure may have had a more irregular shape or been infilled early on. Winkleigh may be an example of this.

All these elements suggest a degree of increasing central control or planning, by the principal landowner, who may often have been the king, or by his agents. They also suggest that there was less continuity in terms of settlement pattern between the British kingdom of Dumnonia and the newly extended Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Wessex, than might be expected, certainly less than in the era of the kingdom of Dumnonia, which had successfully straddled the Roman period and continued for over one thousand years, three hundred of which post-dated the Roman period. There may indeed have been more continuity between Anglo-Saxon and Norman settlement (in form not ownership) than between British and Anglo-Saxon. The degree to which British farmsteads and their populations were assimilated into the new settlement patterns of the Anglo-Saxons is hard now to discern.

One recent significant piece of evidence for the continuity of British occupation well into the Anglo-Saxon era is provided by the West Down Inscribed Stone, discovered in 2012 and documented in 2014 (Green & Padel, PDAS 2014). The attribution of this stone to a named British leader, Gwerngen, in the 8th century, the stone being probably located originally on the edge of the cultivated land between Braunton and West Down and relocated to the village sometime later, provides evidence of the survival of British social leadership locally to a later date than previously thought: an argument for assimilation rather than conquest.

Many Anglo-Saxon parishes in north Devon never developed the nucleated settlement pattern that is considered to be typical elsewhere; Marwood and Tawstock, both near Barnstaple, are two examples. The great swathe of Culm stretching from Rackenford in the east to Pancrasweek in the west contains very few larger nucleated villages but many small hamlets that seem to have been the basis, in some cases, for manorial estates. Whether they retain elements of an earlier settlement pattern is a subject for further study. Apart from anything else we would need to know much more about British settlement in this part of Dumnonia, which we don't. This poses the question of whether the hamlet is the base pattern for settlement and the larger nucleated village a later manorial imposition (discussed above).

There was certainly conflict between the old and new kingdoms, at least initially, but change was driven as much by different land ownership and social patterns. Robert Higham sees a basic sequence of grant of land (generally by the king to a thegn or a church), formation of an estate, construction of a private church and definition of a parish in the evolution of settlements in the period (Higham 2008). The "ingtons" reflect this process of consolidation.

Hamerow (2012), in considering the assumption that the earlier planned layouts and systems of enclosure associated with Mid Saxon settlements were also reflections of lordship has the following to say: "*The question of the role of lordship in the organisation of individual settlements is linked to a much wider debate concerning whether the creation of common fields was a gradual, drawn-out process … or involved a dramatic restructuring of the landscape overseen by lords who replaced small, scattered farms with nucleated villages."* The comparative scarcity of nucleated villages in

north Devon may also have something to say about the extent to which lordship was a determining influence in the nature of settlements in the area.

This brings us to the hierarchy of land ownership and administration in Anglo-Saxon Devon, the subject of the next chapter, but first a more fundamental question has to be considered – to what extent was the British population replaced or outnumbered by the incoming Anglo-Saxons. Was it overwhelmed, driven out or merely newly administered?

The balance of population between British and Anglo-Saxon

Recent DNA studies are beginning to shed light on the residual evidence for populations across the United Kingdom. Research undertaken at the University of Oxford, based on the analysis of DNA from people whose grandparents lived in the same place as them, reveals that Cornwall and Devon remain genetically distinctive from each other. In fact, the genetic differences between Cornwall and Devon are comparable to or greater than those between northern English and Scottish samples. However, Devon is also distinctive when compared to the remainder of England (Leslie S, People of the British Isles Project, University of Oxford, published in Nature 19 March 2015). These differences are remarkably closely aligned with the county boundaries of Devon with Cornwall and with the counties of Somerset and Dorset to the east.

Robert Higham, in the Epilogue to his book, poses a series of questions, one of which is "How many people of more-or-less-Germanic background settled in Devon in the late seventh and eighth centuries?" He comments "Although impossible to quantify, there must also be biological links between the early and modern populations of Devon" (Higham 2008). Only ten years on from the publication of his book, we are closer to answering this question, at least in terms of the proportions of the early mediaeval population having different genetic and geographical origins.

The significance of the Oxford study is that it reveals for the first time the extent to which the makeup of the population in these rural areas has remained remarkably consistent, but also the extent to which the influence of successive waves of immigration since the end of the last Ice Age has varied across the UK. In Devon the Anglo-Saxon component is more marked than in Cornwall, but less so than in Dorset and Somerset, suggesting a longer and slower process of assimilation, with a lower proportion of the population being of Anglo-Saxon origin. Consequently, there is a higher proportion originating from "Celtic" lands, northern France and Iberia in particular. This provides clues, but not yet answers, to the nature of the process. It suggests that more of the British population remained, albeit that their language was replaced by the emerging language of English and the administration of society took on distinctly Anglo-Saxon rather than post-Roman characteristics.

Might this also suggest that the dispersed pattern of Celtic farming, with a few enclosed settlements but many individual farmsteads, or farm hamlets, may have remained the distinctive basis for the subsequent settlement pattern in the area?

It should be borne in mind, however, that even by Domesday north Devon probably only had a population of between 10,000 and 15,000. This is a pretty small gene pool in which to fish!

3. Land ownership and administration: kingdoms, shires, hundreds, minsters, sees, parishes, burghs, and mints

What follows is a brief summary of a complex subject spanning about three hundred and fifty years.

The Kingdom of Wessex

From Centwine to Aethelstan, north Devon increasingly became part of the kingdom of Wessex. The consequence of this was that society was governed and regulated, and land owned, as part of that kingdom. This would have included the settlement of the area. Later decisions, particularly around the organisation of urban centres, were direct decisions of the king: for instance, the establishment of the burgh at Pilton and the mint at Barnstaple.

Although Wessex was not a centralised kingdom, in the sense that it had a geographical centre of administration, it was increasingly subject to central control and planning. This reached its apogee under Alfred, whose contributions to defence and to education in particular are well documented and whose legacy continued into the founding of the kingdom of England in 927.

One explanation for the naming of Anglo-Saxon settlements might be that in the earlier years of the kingdom society seems to have been more broadly ordered, enabling the ceorls, the free peasants, to provide the foundation for much early settlement activity. Thus it may well have been these whose individual names are recorded as founders in the personal name elements of settlements, particularly if they were founded in the 8th century; the later they were founded, into the 9th and 10th centuries, the more likely it is that the place names reflect the aggregation of land ownership into fewer hands. Later Anglo-Saxon society became more hierarchical, with power becoming concentrated in the hands of thegns, to whom ceorls began to owe both taxes and fealty. As power accumulated, manorial holdings began to be granted. The alternative view to this is that the degree of social organisation and co-operation needed in the communal farming activity that is implied in the creation of a village settlement (as compared to an individual farmstead or hamlet) makes it almost inevitable that the name of the settlement so established would reflect that of the social leader under whose authority that settlement was created.

The Shire of Defnscire

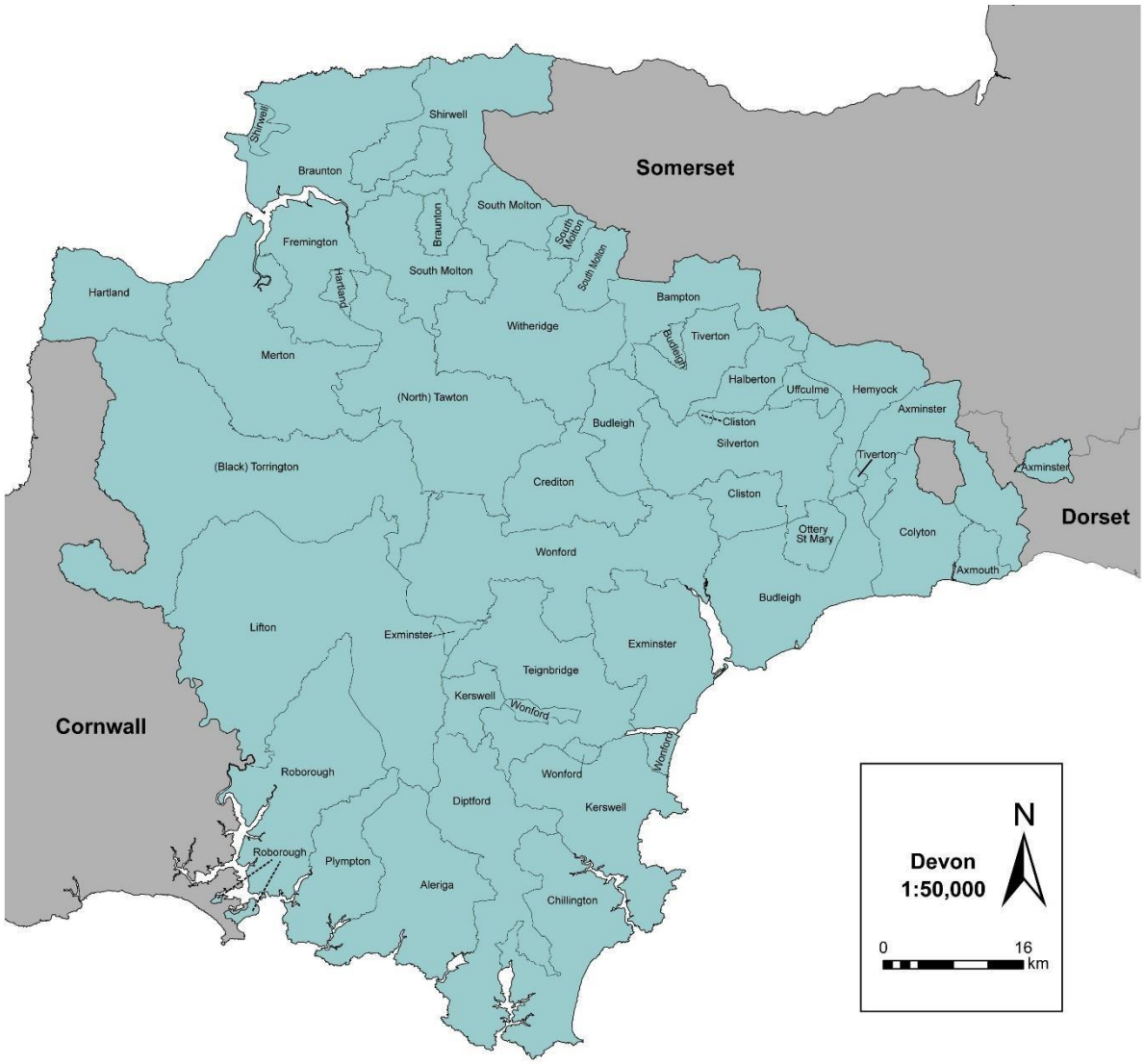
Local administration of defence and justice in the Saxon kingdoms was principally undertaken through the shires. The shire of Defnscire was probably created in 805 when the area was formally annexed into Wessex. It is first mentioned in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle in 823 (David Nash Ford, Britannia Gateway) and is referenced in documents subsequent to that. The ealdorman of Devon is mentioned in relation to defending the county against the Vikings; for instance, Odda is said to have defeated them at Arx Cynuit in 877 (possibly at Northam or at Cannington in Somerset).

Hundreds

Hundreds were a later mid tenth century administrative introduction, brought in principally for tax collection purposes, but also associated with the local administration of justice. There were thirty-two hundreds covering Devon, nine of which were in north Devon. These were: Black Torrington, Braunton, Fremington, Hartland, North Tawton and Winkleigh, Merton (Shebbear), Shirwell, South Molton and Witheridge (see Benjamin Donn's Map of Devonshire and Exeter, 1765 and the UCL Landscapes of Governance map of Domesday boundaries 2011 – Map 5).

Map 5

The Hundreds of Devon



There is some discussion over whether the hundreds that were established (or codified) by King Edgar were a recognition of practices that had already become established. Hundreds are generally associated with a manorial estate (and sometimes a minster church, as at Hartland, Braunton and South Molton) and often contain meeting places or moots, where justice was administered. Such meeting places were not always located in settlements, suggesting an older tradition of meeting (Turner 2000). They could be on estate boundaries, on distinctive landscape features, such as mounds or crossroads, or by significant trees. Brookes and Baker (2011) have done further work on meeting places in the hundreds of England under the UCL Landscapes of Governance project.

Turner has an interesting suggestion to make about these meeting places continuing the use of earlier pagan sites (2010). He suggests the place-name element “staple”, meaning post, as an indicator of such sites. This is interesting in north Devon in view of the origin of Barnstaple’s

placename: “the post of the battle-axe” (Mills). Barnstaple lies at the meeting point of four hundreds: Braunton, Shirwell, South Molton and Fremington, although it seems to have been within Braunton hundred. It later became a centre of administration for Anglo-Saxon north Devon. Might it originally have been a peripheral meeting-place for one or more of the hundreds that surrounded it, based on an earlier pagan site that is reflected in its name?

Most of the hundreds in north Devon had population centres that could be clearly identified, both then and now. The reasons for the boundaries of the more sparsely populated Black Torrington and Shirwell Hundreds are harder to identify. Black Torrington hundred extended from the Cornish border eastwards to beyond the Torridge, Shirwell from Roborough above Pilton to Countisbury. They are probably both estate- or manor-related, as the others are, but may reflect the sub-division of earlier territories.

Domesday Book is, of course, a principal source of information on the estates that comprise the hundreds towards the end of the 11th century, with some information on pre-Conquest ownership. Shirwell is a good example. The Hundred Map itself suggests a basis for the boundaries of the Shirwell Hundred, with the detached outlier in the Woolacombe area. The Hundred appears to cover the later mediaeval and post-mediaeval Chichester estate holdings of Woolacombe, Youlston and Arlington. Domesday refers to lands within the Hundred being held by William de Poilly, Baldwin de Meulles and Odo Fitz Gamelin. Pre-Conquest owners were Wulfwaerd, Beortmaer and Vitalis (who owned one small farm).

Additional evidence for the importance of Shirwell includes the location of the Deanery of Shirwell and the fact that the Archdeacon of Barnstaple (one of only four archdeaconries in Devon) traditionally lived in the village. This suggests a longstanding ecclesiastical significance, at least. At the western end of the Hundred sits the Burridge Hill Fort at Roborough; it also includes several of the cluster of other Iron Age hill enclosures west of Exmoor, including Plaistow whose meaning is “playing place” (possibly in the sense of performance). The Hundred also included the site of a motte and bailey at Holwell, Parracombe and the Roman signalling stations at Martinhoe and Countisbury. Altogether the Shirwell Hundred seems to have had greater strategic significance than might at first appear. However, the irregularity and disjointed nature of its boundaries suggest that it might have been carved out of an earlier administrative unit centred on Braunton.

Shirwell can be compared with Hartland Hundred. More research has been done there and it has been summarised well by Lucy Ryder (2013), in dealing with the “Hartland Moors” area (equivalent to the Hartland Hundred), as follows “*There has been significant historical research, in particular relating to the early manorial organisation of the Hartland region, undertaken by Robert Pearse Chope who lived in the Fatacott area of Hartland, H. S. A. Finberg, and in the 1980’s by Harold Fox (cf Pearse Chope 1902b; Fox 1986). Pearse Chope suggests that what is now Hartland parish was essentially an ecclesiastical unit and much of the land holdings are not recognised within Domesday accounts. A significant influence on the area and particularly on the parish was the church. Before the arrival of the Regular Canons of the order of St. Augustine of Hippo, there was a college of 12 secular canons at Hartland founded by Gytha, wife of Earl Godwin and mother of King Harold, at the site of the early mediaeval chapel (Gregory 1950). Gytha maintained the canons on the land which she dedicated to them.*” The early mediaeval chapel in this quote is identified by Ryder as being at South Hole.

Ryder identifies Stoke St Nectan as the centre of the Hartland manor. She goes on to comment "*It is possible to identify two influences occurring within the Hartland Moors study area. Finberg (1956) notes that the manor of Harton was a royal estate in the ninth century as in Domesday it is listed as an entity held before 1066 by Gytha …. Post-Conquest it belonged to King William, Harold's victor*." Hartland hundred thus illustrates the twin poles of church and king in its structure as a parish and a hundred. There is one anomaly in the Hundred of Hartland: it included as an outlier the parish of Yarnscombe about 15 miles to the east, south of Barnstaple, at the time of Domesday. Delley, in the parish, is known to have been an Anglo-Saxon estate. Presumably it belonged before the Conquest to either the manor or the abbey at Hartland. Pearce points out that "*The manor was held by the king and within it the holding of Stoke St Nectan was in the hands of twelve canons, and this seems to reflect the broad arrangements in existence when in about 881 Alfred bequeathed the estate to Edward, his eldest son."* She suggests that "*the firmly 'Celtic' name of the dedicatee, and the 'Celtic' orientated accounts of the history of the monastery …. suggest that the monastery was founded before c. 700 by Nectan".*

One "outlier" reference is the grant, by Aethelheard, King of Wessex, of 10 hides (* see below for the definition of a hide) in the Torridge valley to Glastonbury in 729 (referred to in later monastic records and mentioned by Higham, 2008). This is the earliest known West Saxon charter in Devon and Cornwall. The location, and significance, of this grant is not yet apparent, although Finberg suggests it may have consisted of Hatherleigh and Jacobstowe (Finberg 1953). Whether it may be related to the reference, in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, to Merton (Devon) as a defensible settlement in the 750s is not known (quoted by Higham in Higham & Ryan 2013). In a later charter dated from 802, King Egbert granted Sherborne Abbey 5 manentes by the River Torridge, with enfranchisement of the property acquired there by the Abbey in 729. Whether this is the same land is not known; Finberg suggests it may have been located at Petrockstowe.

The role of the church

Monasteries, Minsters and Sees

Cornwall is better known than Devon for its Irish and Welsh missionaries, who travelled round the interior. Kea and Petrock are mainly associated with Cornwall, although there are churches in north Devon that are dedicated to them. Brannoc is identified almost exclusively with Braunton and Hieritha (a later Christian martyr) with Chittlehampton, however. Nectan is the dedicated saint at Hartland and Welcombe and Rumon at Romansleigh. In any event the area was apparently worth the effort for the Welsh missionaries who came and left their legacy at least in the names of places they were associated with. The era of Christian missionary endeavour in the area probably started in the 6th century and lasted throughout the 7th century, by which time Brannoc's church at Braunton may have become the mother church for the surrounding area (but see below in the Braunton case study for an alternative view).

The arrival of the Anglo-Saxons brought a church that was organised on a more hierarchical basis. This was mainly the result of the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons to Christianity being a top-down affair, with kings being baptised first and their nobles. As an example (quoted by Nicholas Higham in The Anglo-Saxon World, Higham & Ryan, 2013, YUP) the last pagan Anglo-Saxon king – Caedwalla of the West Saxons – only received baptism at Rome in 688. Higham comments that "*In reality royal*

baptisms only started the process and Christianisation of the rest of society may have taken generations. The active suppression of paganism seems only to have begun late in the seventh century, and monastic foundation on a large scale likewise only took off about then."

It may well have been the case that a newly converted West Saxon kingship took on a more extensively converted British Christianity in north Devon and slowly imposed its new ecclesiastical structures on the area. If so, visible progress was not made for another hundred years.

The early 8th century grant by the king of land by the Torridge to Glastonbury Abbey is an isolated reference to ecclesiastical ownership in north Devon. The early 9th century appears to have marked a change from the monastic cell structure of British (and early Anglo-Saxon) Christianity in Devon to the more hierarchical structure of the institutional Anglo-Saxon church. There are a handful of charters granting land to the Abbeys of Sherborne and Glastonbury in the 9th and 10th centuries. (One other charter records the grant by King Eadred of 1 cassatum of land at Nywantune (considered to refer to Newton Tracey by Finberg) to St Petroc's Minster at Bodmin.) Initially the County was part of the Sherborne See, but in the 10th century a bishopric was established in the County, initially in Crediton in 912, until Leofric moved it to Exeter in 1050, shortly before the Norman Conquest.

According to Tristram Risdon's Survey of Devon, (1640), however "*Edward, sirnamed Senior, a nursefather of the church, finding these western parts to want ecclesiastical discipline, by the advice of Pleymond Archbishop of Canterbury, ordained a provincial synod and decreed that three new bishops should be consecrated, whereupon Edulph was appointed to Wells, Herstan to Cornwall and Werstan to Devon, who had here his see, where after him one only of his successors sat being hence removed to Crediton."* The location referred to is Bishops Tawton and the date is 905.

According to Joseph Chattaway in "An Historical Sketch of the Danmonii, or ancient Inhabitants of Devon and Cornwall", (1830) Werstan's successor, Bishop Putta (906-910), was murdered whilst travelling from his see at Bishops Tawton to visit the Saxon viceroy Uffa, whose residence was at Crediton. It is believed that the 10th century Copplestone Cross, a listed building and scheduled ancient monument that was first mentioned in a charter dated 947, was erected in commemoration of his murder (from the listing description in 1965, subsequently quoted but never updated by Historic England).

None of this is verifiable, albeit that Risdon was born in Winscott, St Giles in the Wood, and he does not quote his sources. Pearce notes that "*John Hooker of Exeter, who may have had access to now lost documents, writing in the second half of the sixteenth century records that 'Werstanus was the first who fixed the episcopal chair at Tawton, a small village about a mile and a half to the south of Barnstapel.'* The remainder of her marginal note quoting Hooker reinforces the account that Risdon recorded a few decades later. It does not explain the choice of Bishops Tawton for the first seat of the see. It does, however, provide a very good reason for relocating to Crediton, which also had the distinction of being the (alleged) birthplace of St Boniface or Winfrid (675-754). Bishops Tawton remained the site of one of the palaces of the Bishops of Exeter until the Tudor period (Pearce 2004).

The choice of site away from Exeter may suggest a degree of independence from the crown, but it may also be in part a response to the continuing British presence in Exeter and a desire to avoid a clash of Christian cultures. Crediton represented a "clean" start for the church; Bishops Tawton is harder to put in a context, although it may signify a desire by the church to make its mark on a

recently colonised area (or it may be a back-projection of the later history of episcopal ownership in order to reinforce a claim).

Minsters pre-dated sees, shires, hundreds and parishes and were eventually superseded by them. They were associated with the geography of the hundreds and the location of some of them, Hartland, South Molton and Braunton (Brannocmynster in a 9th century charter), for instance, can be identified in north Devon (Green T. in The Heritage Handbook, NDAS 2015)

Parishes

The system of parishes is believed to have grown out of the founding of new churches by the initiative of Anglo-Saxon landowners. The thegn who founded the church and held the land would appoint a priest to the church who then took over the religious duties from the priests at the minster church for the area. This change required the drawing up of the territories the churches served for taxation purposes. The churches received payments as tithes from those living within the administrative boundary of the parish. These were based on the boundaries of the estate of the founding noble. Robert Higham puts forward the view that, since it is recognised throughout England that parishes were commonly formed from secular estates, these estate-parishes, developing from the very late Anglo-Saxon period, may sometimes have been successors to estates of pre-English origin, preserving earlier boundaries of great antiquity (2008, p. 85). He cites Hartland and Braunton as possible examples.

Sam Turner in his essay *The Christian Landscape: Churches, Chapels and Crosses* comments that "*Despite half a century of work, it remains unclear how many church-sites genuinely date to the fifth and sixth centuries rather than the later Saxon period…..but based on our current understanding of the archaeological and historical evidence it seems likely that the majority of church sites first appeared between the seventh and tenth centuries, with some even later."* (Turner ed. 2006) Clearly there remains further work to be done on a site-by-site basis.

The power of the church

What seems to be apparent is that through the period the role of the church appears to have varied from instrument of the state (the monarchy) to alternative power (and wealth) base. The shifts in this role and relationship to secular power also had an influence on the reorganisation of land management and the evolution of settlements.

Urban settlement

The burgh of Pilton

At the end of the 9th century, Alfred, having overcome the Danes and completed the treaty of Wedmore in 878, established a system of fortified places throughout his kingdom, as a defence against invaders; four of them were in Devon, at Exeter, Halwill, Lydford and Pilton. The Burghal Hideage (913) refers to Pilton as opposite Barnstaple, possibly referring to its position on high ground on the opposite bank of the Yeo (Hoskins, 1959 and Reed, 1979).

The site of the fortified burgh is unknown; it may have been on the ridge where the church is located, at the head of the main street of the settlement, or at Burridge Hill Fort near Roborough.

Wood (1986) believes that the planners of Alfred's burghs often used existing forts, and cites Chisbury, Pilton and Halwell as sites where Iron Age defences were refurbished as short-term burghs. At least the Burghal Hideage document gives some indication of scale – Pilton is described as being supported by "400 hides less 40". On the basis that each hide supplied one man and that each pole (5½ yards) of wall required four men, this gives a circumference for the Pilton burgh of 450-500 yards, which is close to the circumference of Burridge Hill Fort. (This, incidentally, would make Pilton the second largest of the four burghs in Devon, after Exeter). The site at Burridge certainly commands an extensive view down the Taw estuary and northwards through the gap in the North Devon Downs created by the Bradiford Water, as well as south and eastwards, whatever its tactical disadvantages might have been.

Or the burgh could have been built south of the Yeo, in Barnstaple, the possible sacred site and early meeting-place suggested by Turner's work. Excavation in the Green Lanes area has suggested that the Saxon boundary of the town lay within the Green Lane area on the town side (Wessex Archaeology 2013); if that is the case the area enclosed would have been roughly equivalent to the dimensions of the Burghal Hideage.*

**A hide was a unit of taxable value rather than of area. Its definition seems to have varied both geographically and over time. Generally, however, it was considered to be the area of land that would sustain a household. In early Anglo-Saxon England, the hide was used as the basis for assessing the amount of food rent due from a village or estate, and it became the unit on which all public obligations were assessed. There was a general tendency throughout Domesday for a hide of land to be worth £1. In theory hundreds were based on 100 hides, although the redrawing of hundreds over the period meant this often ceased to be the case. In some instances, a hide was assumed to equate to 120 acres of land; there are various reasons for this definition no longer being regarded as tenable. Nevertheless, the grant of 10 hides, as in the 729, 867 and 973 charters granting land in north Devon to the church, was a significant area. (*Taken from Wikipedia, quoting multiple sources, updated 21 November 2018)

Trade and the mint at Barnstaple

Barnstaple is known, from the reference in the Burghal Hideage, from 913. By 979 it was producing coins. By this time the town was clearly an important trading centre, at the head of the Taw Estuary. Beyond that, its origins are unknown. There is believed to have been a defensive bank around the town and an Anglo-Saxon cemetery was excavated on Castle Green in the early 1970's. Recent carbon dating of a skeleton from the cemetery suggests an eighth century presence, significantly earlier than previously anticipated. Nothing more is known from the period, however.

The question arises, though, of how much trade was being carried out within and beyond north Devon in the Anglo-Saxon period. A profoundly agricultural economy may have produced surpluses; there were taxes to be paid to church and state, increasingly over the period. Food is unlikely to have been traded beyond north Devon and the area is not a natural exporter of grain. There was a mediaeval wool trade, but no evidence of this being an early activity.

Yet the Bristol Channel was a known trading route and north Devon has an extensive, albeit largely hostile, coastline. There are few natural harbours, Ilfracombe is the most obvious one, and the Taw and Torridge Estuary poses some hazards in crossing the Bar. Was there a north Devon equivalent to

Bantham in south Devon? So far, no evidence has been found of a continental trade, or even a Bristol Channel trade in this period.

No coins from the Barnstaple mint have been found in north Devon, but the presence of a mint may imply local trade of sufficient volume to warrant the production of coins locally. Nicholas Higham points out, however, that "*it would be a mistake to suppose that commerce and industry were the key drivers of urbanism around 900; rather, urbanism developed out of the need to bolster royal power, provide defences and re-energise resistance to the Vikings*." (Higham and Ryan 2013)

This is a likely explanation for the origin of Barnstaple, but much work would need to be done to verify it.

4. Summary

Some critical factors in the transition from Dumnonian Celtic to Anglo-Saxon settlement in north Devon can be set out. The area, in common with most of the rest of Devon, was settled by the Anglo-Saxons relatively late - post 700. It should be noted that Anglo-Saxon settlement in north Devon therefore post-dates the Early Saxon period in the rest of England and cannot commence until well into the Middle Saxon period, possibly towards the end of it (indeed the terms Early, Middle and Late Saxon may prove to have little relevance in considering the development of settlements in the area). This meant:

- There was a greater continuity of the Celtic population during and after settlement
- Kingship had already been established amongst the West Saxons
- Conversion to Christianity had already taken place in the West Saxon kingdom (just)

Nevertheless, culturally and politically the transition to an English-speaking Anglo-Saxon hegemony meant that both the language and the governance changed completely. The consequences for settlement pattern are likely to include the gifting of land by kings to thegns and to monasteries. The factors influencing the pattern of early mediaeval settlement in north Devon include topography and land use, church and manorial estate holdings, early pioneer farm clearance, later amalgamations and over-lordship, defence, law enforcement and taxation and a small debt to the British predecessors. We are dealing with a time of transition in a zone of transfer of power, where final conclusions on outcomes will inevitably remain speculative.

A tentative phasing, or at least broad sequence of events can, however, be proposed, as a hypothesis to be tested. Initially, after the withdrawal of the Roman administration, the independent kingdom of Dumnonia was (re)-established. There is little evidence of the re-occupation of the enclosed hill settlements and the population is likely to have continued to live in hamlets and farmsteads scattered throughout the area. Nevertheless, this was a fully-governed kingdom with its own structures of governance. This period lasted from about 450 to 700, during which time a number of monastic cells were established, largely by missionaries from South Wales.

After 700 the Devon part of the kingdom of Dumnonia came increasingly under the control of the kingdom of Wessex. During this period the rulers of Wessex would have given landed estates in the area to their followers and to the church. The settlement pattern would have remained dispersed. Later in the Anglo-Saxon period, from 850-950 say, a dual process of estate consolidation and

subdivision would have led to the establishment of individual manors and associated churches and, in a few cases, of nucleated villages. These would have been associated with open field systems and common land. The system of hundreds would have also been established in this period, to enforce justice. Increasing incursion by Viking forces led to defensive fortification and, ultimately, to the first urban settlement in the area.

In all of this it has to be borne in mind, however, that we have very little evidence of the development of Anglo-Saxon settlements in north Devon from 700 to 1050 AD and even less for the forms of settlement in the area for the preceding 700 years!

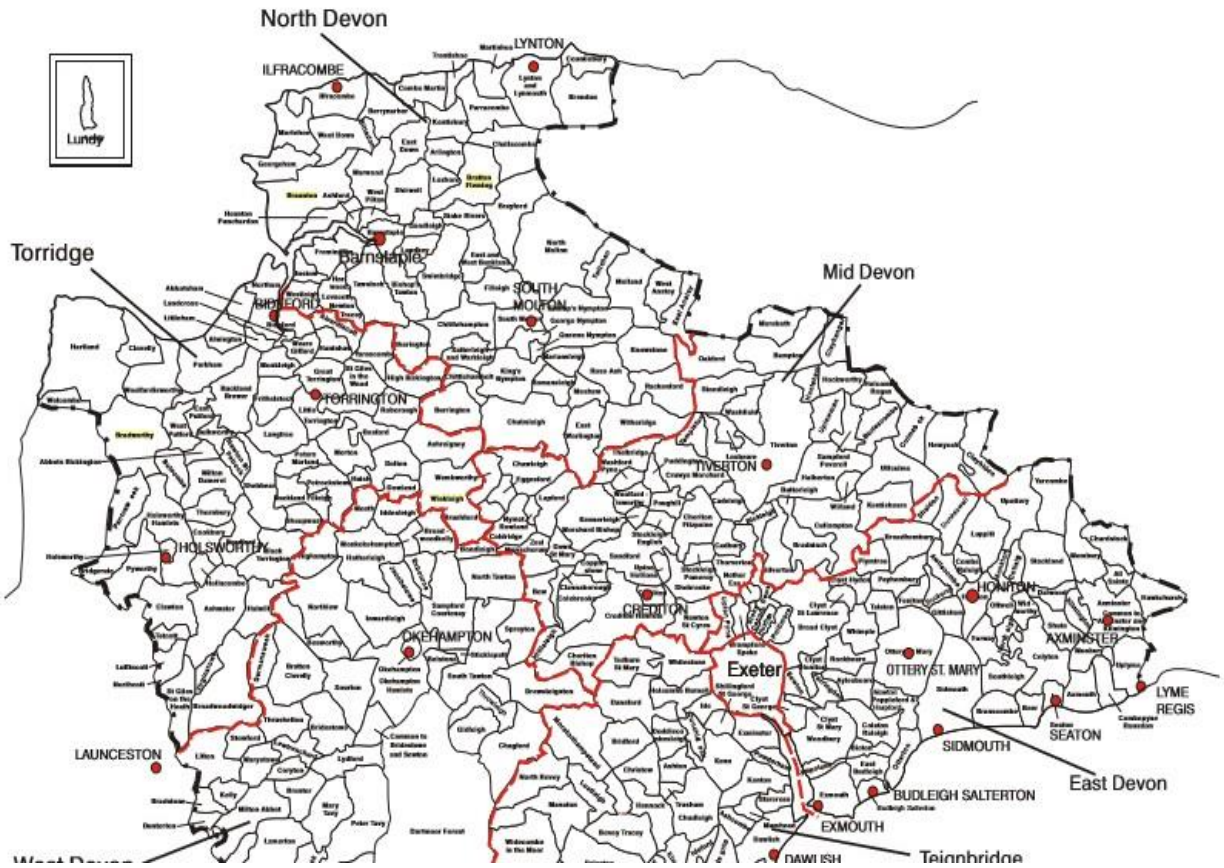
The case studies which follow in Part 2 will hopefully illustrate these factors to some extent. They have been selected to give a geographical range, place-name variety and therefore a sufficient degree of distinctiveness to make them worth selecting (given the general paucity of evidence) Map 6 below.

Map 6

The Case Study Parishes

Winkleigh, Bradworthy, Bratton Fleming & Braunton

(Highlighted)



They are:

Winkleigh – a “clearing” place-name in the south of the area

Bradworthy – an “enclosure” place-name in the north-west

Braunton – a “ton” place-name in the north, with a distinctive geography and history

Bratton Fleming – a “ton” place-name in the north-east in a moorland edge location.

Part 3 will attempt to draw out some conclusions for the adopted landscape scale approach to the origin of settlements.

Part 2

Case Studies

Winkleigh: Wineca's Clearing

Landscape Setting

The village of Winkleigh lies at the south-eastern extremity of Torridge District on a south-facing ridge between the Rivers Taw and Torridge at 170m (560 ft) AOD. This ridge overlooks the upper valleys of the Taw, Okement and their tributaries and the central Devon plain that comprises the softer sandstone of the Permian era, below the northern slope of Dartmoor. Ridge routes run east/west between Hatherleigh and Eggesford, north-south between Barnstaple and North Tawton and north-west-south-east between Great Torrington and Crediton, through the village. It is 12 miles from Great Torrington, 13 miles from Crediton and 21 miles from Exeter. The south-eastern boundary of the parish is formed by the Taw. The boundary of two Landscape Character Types runs east-west through the village, with the Upper Farmed and Wooded Valley Slopes LCT to the south and the Farmed Lowland Moorland and Culm Grassland LCT to the north.

Winkleigh Wood lies immediately east of the village. Wooded valley slopes are typical of the areas either side of the Taw and Torridge and their tributaries and woodland clearance is a probability in the forming of settlements in such a landscape.

Whilst the Culm Grassland of central and western north Devon may be a habitat and landscape type of more recent creation, the lowland moorland on which it is based is of longstanding, with its characteristic poorly drained plateau soils that are derived from the underlying geology. However, the distinction between moorland and woodland is not so precise, as the 1891 6" to the mile OS sheet for the area shows a significant area of moorland to the south of the village across the Bullow Brook, with field names such as Northern Moor, Great Vellow Moor, Little Vellow Moor, Summers Moor and East and West Long Moor.

Visually, however, the landscape to the south is dominated by the northern rampart of Dartmoor's granite moorland. The relationship that Winkleigh may have had with Dartmoor is explored in a later section.

Place Name Evidence

That this landscape distinction is of some longstanding is evidenced by the presence of a number of "leigh" place names to the south and west of the village – the parishes of Bondleigh, Iddesleigh, and Hatherleigh and hamlets of Goodleigh, Ingleigh Green, Fishleigh and East and West Leigh – plus Broadwoodkelly to the immediate south-west, whereas there are no "leigh" place names to the north on the moorland landscape of the Culm.

Map 7

Winkleigh OS 1891

Map 8

Winkleigh Tithe Map

Settlement Form

The 1891 OS map (Map 7) shows the village having an irregular form. The chief determinants of this appear to be the ridge routes that intersect at the village, which appears to infill the quadrant between the east-west route and the two roads linking north and south. To the east of the village lies the motte and bailey of Court Castle, with Court Barton adjoining it. These appear to be associated with the park and wood to the east again. One of the ridge routes appears in plan to have been diverted around Court Castle into the village.

Towards the western end of the village lies another, smaller motte and bailey called Croft Castle, near Townsend. Robert Higham considers that this may have been built in the 12th century as a siege work in opposition to Court Castle during the civil war between Stephen and Matilda (Higham R. A. The Castles of Mediaeval Devon, 1979). Colin Humphreys (see below) refers to the division of the manor a hundred years later, Croft Castle being part of Winkleigh Tracey manor, while Court Castle was within Winkleigh Keynes.

The parish church lies at the centre of the network of streets created out of this quadrant. To the north of the church is the principal street which appears from its width to have been the location for the former mediaeval market.

To the south of the village are some narrow fields that might suggest the enclosure of strips in the former open field. These are served by a number of named lanes: Farmer Frank's, Shute, and Beare Copse. There may have been other open fields to the west and north, while the village common lands would probably have lain beyond these on the moors.

The 1840 Tithe Map (Map 8) and apportionment show a very similar pattern of settlement as the 1891 OS map. It suggests that the form of the village had been well established for a long time, as had the outlying hamlets and farmsteads.

Of the settlements around Winkleigh, only Hatherleigh, Exbourne and North Tawton to the south and Dolton to the north appear to have a nucleated form. All the others are clearly manorial hamlets, principally comprising a church and barton or manor farm. Such settlements include Dowland, Ashreigney, Hollocombe, Wembworthy, Brushford, Bondleigh, Honeychurch, Sampford Courtenay, Broadwoodkelly, Monkokehampton and Iddesleigh.

Domesday Book Winkleigh

At the time of Domesday Wincheleia was in the North Tawton Hundred, which extended from southeast to north-west along the ridges between the Rivers Taw and Torridge/Okement as far north as High Bickington. There were 43 places mentioned in Domesday within the hundred, of which Winkleigh is the largest, both in population and in taxes paid. North Tawton is the second largest in population, but paid little tax. The separate Hundred of Winkleigh was created in post-Saxon times.

Winkleigh was described in Domesday Book as having 86 households, comprising 60 villagers, 10 slaves and 10 others. Its tax base was 5.5 geld units. There were 40 ploughlands with 8 lord's plough teams. Other resources included 2 acres of lord's lands, 80 acres of meadow, 1 league of pasture and

500 acres of woodland (park). Livestock comprised 38 cattle, 15 pigs and 160 sheep. There is mention of a park, which seems to be associated with the woodland, the boundary of which can still be clearly seen on the modern OS map and on the ground.

In 1066 the lord was Brictric of Gloucester, son of Algar, and in 1086 Gotshelm, brother of Walter of Clavelle, who held it from King William. Brictric held a number of Devon manors, particularly in the north of the County. These included Northlew, Halwill, Clovelly, Bideford, Littleham, Langtree, Iddesleigh, Winkleigh, Ashreigney, Lapford, High Bickington, Morchard Bishop, Holcombe Burnell, Halberton and Ashprington.

This makes Winkleigh a large and relatively valuable village, with the only park identified in Devon Domesday. It was clearly of some significance as an Anglo-Saxon settlement.

Manors mentioned in Domesday around Winkleigh include Loosedon to the west, which had 17 households and comprised 468 acres.

Devon HER

There are nearly 400 HER records for Winkleigh, the great majority of which relate to the Second World War Airfield. The earliest records relate to two Bronze Age finds near Court Castle and Shute Lane.

The first of these is a 19th century record of the find of a Bronze Age rapier in "perfect condition" in a barrow adjoining the Exeter to Bideford road near Court Castle (MDV 12567). The second find was recorded in a report of a watching brief carried out by SWARCH in 2006 of groundworks in a field under development off Shute Lane to the south of the village. An ovoid pit was found, the fill of which contained six sherds of Middle Bronze Age pottery.

The groundworks the subject of the 2006 watching brief also revealed a number of linear features running north-south, which were interpreted as evidence that the site was a mediaeval field system (MDV 74208). A desk assessment of the site carried out a year earlier stated that Shute Lane "comes from 'shutes', 'shuts' or 'shots' which were blocks of strips or 'selions' constituting the 'Great Field' of the mediaeval strip field system." (MDV 62467). Earlier reports include ACE Archaeology (2000), which states that "many of the fields shown on the 1846 Tithe Map exist today and are still under multiple ownership", and W Horner (2000) who states that they "appear to be part of a strip/arable field and common grazing/moor system… Block of modern inclosure landscape at Tree Moor, Great Vellow Moor, Northern Moor and Southern Moor probably represents former common grazing." (MDV62465)

Other Features

Several of the routes running southwards from the village lead directly to the northern slopes of Dartmoor, via South Tawton, Sticklepath, and Belstone. These routes could have as their origin the driving of livestock to and from the high moor in spring and autumn, a practice known as transhumance. The route linking the village to Crediton and Exeter and northwards towards Bideford

seems to have been diverted into the village from an older alignment, possibly in the 10th or 11th centuries, as it is interrupted both by the site of Court Castle and by a property to the south.

Discussion

Winkleigh's relationship to the key questions raised in Part 1 of this essay can now be explored.

Evidence of previous settlement

The evidence for pre-Saxon settlement is poor in the Winkleigh area. There are the two Bronze Age finds on the southern and eastern edges of the settlement, indicating a presence of some sort. However, the ridge routes through the village generally lack the evidence of burial sites, roundhouses and standing stones that are often associated with them. For these one has to look well to the north, on Riddlecombe Moor, Beaford Moor and Burrington Moor. There is nothing to the south until Dartmoor is reached. This suggests relatively late settlement of the area, with only a transient Bronze Age population. Until greater evidence of Iron Age settlement is discovered, it has to be assumed that this was a much more sparsely populated area of Devon.

Exploiting the area's resources

The place name evidence (and the paucity of other pre-Roman evidence) suggests that the area's resources were limited to the timber of remnant woodland and to summer grazing. If settlement came late to this part of north Devon, it was perhaps a result of the Anglo-Saxon colonisation. The evidence for strip fields and from Domesday suggests that this may have been substantial. The drove roads leading southwards to Dartmoor suggest that it may also have been well-organised on a seasonal farming basis.

In terms of field names in the Tithe Apportionment, park, close (mainly in arable use) and meadow are more common than moor or marsh, where the coarse pasture was generally located. This suggests a long history of enclosure and of arable use. Orchards were also common. In overall terms the agricultural resource appears to be rich.

Farming and settlement form

This would also suggest that the organisation of a substantial settlement occurred in the mid to late Saxon period, perhaps from the end of the eighth century, concurrently with the greater exploitation of farmed resources. The surrounding hamlets may also have been contemporaneous with the settlement of Winkleigh, rather than earlier forms.

Building types

This far south it may also be assumed, until evidence is discovered, that the form buildings took was the traditional timber built rectangular dwellings associated with the mid-Saxon period, rather than the Cornish stone-built forms that are found further west and nearer the coast. Timber is likely to have been in plentiful supply nearby.

Woodland Winkleigh

This is where the place name evidence is most compelling. Winkleigh lies in the central "belt" of north Devon where conditions were most favourable to woodland and where clearance may have been late. The area abounds in "leigh" place names. It still retained a 500-acre woodland park at the time of Domesday.

Here, as elsewhere in north Devon, it is important to draw the distinction between woodland pasture and dense high-succession woodland.

Pressures for change

The pressures for change may therefore have come late, other than the Roman military presence some 5 miles to the south near North Tawton. The Anglo-Saxon incursions in the late 7th century are likely to have been the first substantial pressures in the area, but change is likely to have followed relatively swiftly. Apart from anything else, this may have helped Winkleigh become a dominant settlement in the hundred of which it was to form part.

Defence, colonisation and settlement

There are three sources of evidence for the defence, colonisation and settlement of the Winkleigh area over the first thousand years CE. The first of these is the substantial Roman military presence to the south, on the Exeter-North Tawton-Okehampton axis. This does not appear to have led to substantial associated settlement. An equivalent to Ipplepen has yet to be discovered north of Dartmoor.

The second set of evidence is provided by the reference to 7th century battles between the kingdoms of Dumnonia and Wessex. At least one of these appears to have been in the landscape corridor west of Crediton and north of Dartmoor. This may have led to relatively early Anglo-Saxon settlement of the Winkleigh area, since it lies within a strategic corridor running west from Exeter and straddling routes to the north.

The final source is Domesday, which confirms the existence of a substantial and prestigious settlement centre at Winkleigh, forming part of a substantial manorial holding in north Devon by Brictric of Gloucester.

Ownership and administration

After Domesday the second source of information on land ownership is the Tithe Apportionment. In 1840 six major landowners held over 6,000 acres, two thirds of the 9118 acres in the parish. These were: John Hearle Tremayne (2,000 acres, including Croft), Newton Fellowes (1,600) acres, Revd Peter Johnson (1,000 acres, including Court), Lord Rolle (over 500 acres), Robert Luxton (nearly 500 acres) and Lady Bury (440 acres at Loosedon). The significance of these is that, to a degree, they seem to reflect much earlier manorial estates.

Dominant British or Anglo-Saxon population?

No conclusions can be drawn about the genetic make-up of the local population in the absence of more localised DNA evidence.

The role of the church

The church's land holdings in the village were, by the 19th century, divided in two. In the east, adjacent to Court Castle, is a sub-circular site occupied by the Parsonage, with the church occupying a site immediately to the south-west. At the western end of the village lies the Glebe, on land adjoining Croft Castle and in the separate manor of Winkleigh Tracey, occupied by a vicarage by the time of the 1891 OS survey. The church is dedicated to All Saints, but this may, as elsewhere, be a later mediaeval dedication.

Trade

By the 13th century the village had a market, occupying the triangular space in the street north of the church leading up to Court Castle. Winkleigh was clearly a significant enough trading entity to secure a market charter and to have the physical presence of a market represented in its urban form. Colin Humphreys states that in 1237 borough status was granted to the manor of Winkleigh Keynes and a charter of 1262 granted a weekly market and three annual fairs. He goes on to point out that the Black Death affected Winkleigh so badly that in 1349 no houses were paying rent (Humphreys C. Land between Shute Lane and Exeter Road, Winkleigh, SWARCH, 2005). It seems that the high point of the village's prosperity had come in the 13th century and was founded on exploitation of its strategic position during the two or three centuries immediately before that.

Conclusion

Until further evidence is available it is hard to draw anything other than tentative suggestions about the development of the Winkleigh area. The main assumption to be tested is that the area was subject to early Saxon colonisation, after a period of relative depopulation. Winkleigh itself may have been established as a significant manorial holding and settlement, becoming a centre for the area as holdings became consolidated. The most intriguing question may be whether the village was the site of an early manorial hall and, if so, where this might have been located. Whilst early Saxon settlements tended to be more scattered in nature, the process of consolidation is likely to have led to a more centralised or nucleated settlement pattern. The most probable site for a hall at the centre of the village would appear to be under or in the vicinity of the later site of Court Castle and the adjoining church land.

That Winkleigh was an important settlement by the time of Domesday is clearly evident. What is yet to be revealed is why this settlement, of all the Domesday settlements in Devon, has a 500-acre deer park. What was its significance based on? Was it geographically strategic or strategic in a different sense, perhaps in terms of land ownership? Is its significance down to Brictric and the position it accorded him in Devon? Was he the creator of the deer park or was it laid out earlier? Where was the hall or dwelling that would have been associated with the deer park? In other words, what happened between Wineca and Brictric? In the absence of documentary evidence there would have to be substantial on-site investigation, probably in and around Court Castle, in order to shed any light on these questions.

Bradworthy: Broad Enclosure

Landscape Setting

The village of Bradworthy lies at the western edge of Torridge District, on a south-facing ridge between the River Waldon to the west and a minor unnamed tributary stream to the east. The centre of the village is 182m (600 ft) AOD. It overlooks the valley of the Waldon as it flows south and eastwards. The village lies at the heart of the Culm and between the Torridge, which forms the northern boundary of the parish, and the Tamar, which forms the western boundary and also the Cornish border. Although no older ridge routes appear to run through the village, there is a network of roads linking the village to outlying farms and to Bideford to the east, Holsworthy to the south, Kilkhampton to the west and Hartland to the north-west. The village is 12 miles from Bideford, 7 miles from Holsworthy and 8 miles from Hartland.

The village sits at the boundary of two landscape character types (LCTs): Farmed Lowland Moorland and Culm Grassland to the east and Inland Elevated Undulating Land to the west and south. Both these LCTs are characteristically open landscapes with little tree cover and some poorly-drained unimproved grassland. This has influenced land use around the village, which still has evidence of open moorland on Bradworthy Common to the north of the village.

Place Name Evidence

The influence of this open landscape is shown in the place names of the parish which are dominated by “worthy” endings, denoting enclosure. These include Atworthy, Silworthy, Wrangworthy, Kimworthy, Alfardisworthy, Brexworthy, Trentworthy, Hardsworthy and Dinworthy. These “worthy” place names continue to the north, in Woolsery (Woolfardisworthy) and Clovelly parishes, and to the south in Holsworthy Hamlets and Pyworthy parishes, but rarely to the west across the Tamar (despite Anglo-Saxon place names dominating in this part of north Cornwall) and much less regularly in the parishes to the east.

Moorlands Farm and Heath Farm to the north of the village and close to Bradworthy Common imply the character of the nearby land use, while Instaple, south of the village, may signify a meeting place (cf Barnstaple).

Map 9

Bradworthy OS Map 1891

Map 10

Bradworthy Tithe Map

Settlement Form

Bradworthy is notable for its large rectangular central open space – the "broad enclosure" of its name – which is still extant and dominates the settlement form. It is unusual in Devon; indeed, it is reputed to be the largest village square in the West Country. It is more reminiscent of upland villages in the Pennines or similar northern moorlands. That this represents the early form of the village is evident from both the 1891 OS sheet (Map 9) and the 1840 Tithe Map (Map 10). The buildings at the centre of the village are set round the edge of and face onto this Square. Many of them are in commercial use, indicating the relative success of the village in continuing to attract trade from the surrounding area despite its remoteness. What is notable is the absence of the long burgage plots that are usually found behind mediaeval frontages in such a position. Where there are rear plots, mainly on the west side of The Square, they appear to be truncated. It is possible that these properties are the successors to the original farms that may have been sited around the Square, sharing its use and the use of the open fields and common land around the village.

On the east side, the church ground probably prevented the development of such farms. There is a secondary, triangular village green known as Broad Hill to the east of the Square. The parish church of St John the Baptist occupies a site in the south-eastern corner of The Square, behind the Bradworthy Inn, which may have had its origins in the church alehouse. St Peter's Well lies just to the east of the church.

Remnant strip fields are evident on all sides of the village and around Bradworthy Common to the north. They are also preserved in field boundaries around many of the outlying farms, particularly Wrangworthy, Kimworthy, Alfardisworthy, Brexworthy and Dinworthy.

In overall terms the location of the remnant strips around the village suggests that it was established with an open field that filled the whole of the ridge between the two rivers, with the farms that worked it located around the Square. Whether this was the original form of the village at its foundation or the result of a deliberate later reorganisation is an open question.

Domesday Book

Bradworthy lay in (Black) Torrington Hundred, that strange area that geographically looks more like the bits left over after everyone had had their choice of the estates of north Devon, than the deliberate mid-10th century administrative arrangement for collecting dues and administering justice that were its main functions! The Hundred extends from Broadwoodkelly east of the Torridge and adjacent to Winkleigh, southwards to Sampford Courtenay and westwards to the Tamar (but included Werrington and Boyton west of the Tamar). It covers most of the south bank of the middle and upper Torridge river valley, which provides a clear topographical boundary. Reichel (1932) comments that it contains a very large number of small manors, over 34 parishes, implying that this is unusual. Its overall value was assessed at 34 hides and 2 virgates. The hundred was named after the royal hundred manor of Totleigh Barton with Black Torrington, but may have been based on earlier administrative units associated with a meeting place (Higham R. 2008). There are few obvious candidates for this, although Cookbury and Thornbury lie in the centre of the Hundred and have place-names that may suggest earlier meeting places. There is no evidence of the presence of a minster church in the Hundred.

The manor of Bradworthy, assessed at 3 hides and 1 virgate, was one of the largest settlements in an otherwise very sparsely populated hundred. Only Hatherleigh, assessed at 3 hides, and Sampford Courtenay, assessed at 2 hides and 2 virgates, were comparable in size. By way of further comparison, whereas Bradworthy was the largest parish in the hundred, with a total of 9,586 acres of which 2,995 were assessed in Domesday, Holsworthy was a similar size (8,836 acres of which 2,982 were assessed) but yielded only I hide, 2 virgates and 2 furlongs.

In 1086 Bradworthy had 39 households, comprising 20 villagers, 10 smallholders and 9 slaves. This made it a very large settlement by the standard of the times. It comprised land for 12 ploughlands, including 3 lord's plough teams and 7 men's plough teams. Other resources included 1.25 (acres) of lord's land and 40 acres of meadow. Livestock comprised 40 cattle, 10 pigs, 120 sheep and 5 goats.

The taxable value of Bradworthy was 3.3 geld units, which made it only of medium size in value in Devon terms. Of the total of 3 hides and 1 virgate, 1 hide and 1 virgate was the assessment of the Lord's land and 2 hides was the villagers' land. In 1086 the value to the lord was £8; this had risen

from £5 in 1070. The lord at the time of Domesday was Ralph of Pomeroy, who was also the tenant-in-chief. In 1066 the lord had been Tovi. Whether this is a reference to the Dane, Tovi the Proud, who had been standard bearer to King Cnut until the king's death, or to a son, is not known.

There were several other sub-manors or estates in the parish that were named in Domesday, including Kimworthy (4 households, assessed at 1 virgate), Instaple (no households recorded, assessed at 2 furlongs), Brexworthy (4 households), Horton (2 households, 1 virgate), and Ash (East and West) (6 households, 1 virgate). There were therefore at least another 16 households in the parish.

Many of these estates were in different ownership to Bradworthy, both before and after the Norman Conquest. Before the Conquest Kimworthy was owned by Edwy, Instaple and Alfardisworthy by Godric, East Youlstone by Ledwy or Letwy, Hardsworthy by Alward, Horton by Osulf and Ash by Letmar or Leimar. After the Conquest ownership was principally by the Bishop of Coutances or Ralph de Pomeroy.

Devon & Dartmoor Historic Environment Record

There are 98 results for Bradworthy in the Devon HER. Several of these record the results of archaeological evaluations carried out in association with recent planning applications for wind farms around the village. Few of these revealed dateable features or finds. Others are of post mediaeval buildings. A few, however, record prehistoric features, particularly Bronze Age burial features in open countryside around Bradworthy. There are a few enigmatic references to a deserted settlement, including an early church site, at Chisley Walls on Scotworthy Lane to the east of the village.

Other Features

An older ridge route runs in a north-westerly direction west of and bypassing the village, on the watershed between the Waldon and the Tamar. There are some barrows associated with this route.

There are two groups of scheduled ancient monuments some distance from the village, to the northwest at Bursdon Moor, Hartland and to the east in Buckland Brewer parish (and surrounding parishes).

The nearest Iron Age settlement features are in Hartland and Buckland Brewer and, notably, at Clovelly Dykes, some 5 miles to the north.

From this it would appear that the village of Bradworthy was not associated with existing settlement but was situated in the broader context of a sparsely settled landscape.

Discussion

Bradworthy's relationship to the key questions raised in Part 1 of this essay can now be explored.

Evidence for previous settlement

There is scant evidence for previous settlement in the immediate vicinity of Bradworthy. The barrows around the village are mainly at some distance and none has been investigated or revealed datable finds. It can only be assumed, therefore, that the Bronze Age population of the area was sparse and possibly transient.

Subsequent Iron Age settlement sites are also at some distance from the village, namely the clifftop enclosures of Embury Beacon and Windbury on the Hartland peninsula, the hilltop enclosures of Hembury Castle and Buckland Wood in Buckland Brewer parish and, most notably, the multivallate enclosure at Clovelly Dykes. The last of these sites, although it has not been investigated until very recently, has the appearance of a high-status site that was used over a long period.

The most that can be said until further evidence emerges is that Bradworthy was a new settlement in the early mediaeval period. Hoskins (1954 and 1959) considers that it might have been founded early on, soon after 700. He suggests that, where large villages such as Bradworthy or Hartland are located, as an exception to the usual dispersed settlement pattern, "they look from their shape and size to have been founded by the Saxons as a method of protection in a hostile countryside" (Hoskins 1959).

An alternative view to Hoskins is provided in a report of an archaeological trench evaluation associated with a proposed windfarm, published in 2011, which states "The three principal villages of Bradworthy, Sutcombe and West Putford …… are likely to be late Saxon or mediaeval in origin." (AC Archaeology 2011). Neither Sutcombe nor West Putford is a nucleated settlement, however, and their grouping with Bradworthy may be misleading. Whilst Hoskins' overall views are now considered to be based more on a mid-twentieth century perception of how things should be than on evidence for how they were (see page 10 above), nevertheless the attested size and significance of Domesday Bradworthy does suggest a powerful and successful Saxon foundation; in other words, Hoskins may well have been right.

Exploiting the area's resources

The resources around Bradworthy would have been relatively slender when the village was founded: water and rough pasture being the predominant ones. The area's grazing resource was clearly being exploited by Domesday. Use of water power appears to be later; there are several mills on the Upper Tamar and Upper Torridge on the parish boundaries and two water mills on the Waldon close to the village. Wind power, the other abundant energy resource, doesn't seem to have been exploited until the 21st century! This suggests that the village's relatively large size, by Domesday, may represent a deliberate intent to open up an underused moorland area.

The relationship between farming and settlement: farmstead, hamlet or nucleated settlement?

"The Saxon farmers at first had their farmhouses in the village, probably grouped around an open space, now the village square, as at Bradworthy" (Hoskins 1959). The size of this central open space in the village may also be taken as evidence of "central planning" in a single event rather than of organic growth. The later outlying estates – particularly the "worthys" named in Domesday, may have been developed subsequently, as suggested by the roads radiating from the village which appear to at first have been intended to connect with these estates and only subsequently to more distant settlements. The needs of a group of farms that shared common land, and later open fields,

may have given rise to the form of the village. Such a large rectangular enclosure may have been required to house livestock safely in contested territory that was still being cleared (of predators as much as hostile neighbours!).

However, the Square, with its rectangular shape and entrances approaching from each corner, bears the typical form of mid-Saxon droveway and paddock identified by Mark McKerracher (McKerracher 2018). His view is that this arrangement was necessitated by the need to protect arable land from free-roaming livestock, which developed in the eighth century. This would suggest both an increase in arable farming in the area and a high degree of collective planning, whether by the community or its lord (if such a distinction can be made). If this is the case, it is more likely to have been surrounded by a ditch and fence than by more substantial earthworks. It would also suggest that it was not originally located and laid out to be surrounded by houses, although individual farms might have bordered the Square. The existence of 12 ploughlands, with the teams of oxen that entailed, implies the introduction in the long eighth century, as elsewhere, of the heavy plough. It would have been particularly necessary on the heavy soils of the Culm in the area. Mention in Domesday of the other livestock numbers, suggests a sufficient area of arable to need protection from free-roaming animals, by penning them centrally.

Bradworthy thus has the appearance of an early and locally unusual example of a nucleated Anglo-Saxon settlement. The absence of burgage plots suggests early rather than later mediaeval foundation. This may have been both a response to a hitherto unexploited resource and a desire to establish ownership and control over a disputed border location. The remnant kingdom of Dumnonia, which now lay over the Cornish border, would have given good reason for this. It was not incorporated into the Saxon kingdom of Wessex until the reign of Ecgbert in the ninth century (or possibly even Athelstan in the tenth). Defence, however, is a less probable explanation for the establishment of the settlement, given the lack of any evident defensive structures around the village. There is no evidence from field names in the Tithe apportionment of any former defensive structures, with the possible exception of Chisley Walls, which is more likely to refer to a former church site.

Building types

There is no evidence of building types at this period, but Bradworthy is close enough to the Cornish border to have possibly been influenced by the stone buildings recently discovered further west near the north coast. Certainly, there would have been a lack of abundant timber resources which may also have influenced building types. Until there is an opportunity to investigate sites around the edge of the Square, we will not know.

Woodland Bradworthy

There is slight place-name evidence for trees in the parish (Ash and nearby Whiteley, for instance, north of Bradworthy), but no other leigh place-names denoting clearance. The woodland resource in the area is likely to have been slender and confined to valley bottoms in an area dominated by open moorland and rough grazing.

Pressure for change: defence, colonisation and settlement

As suggested above, the pressure for change that led to the settling of the area may well have been that of an incoming group seeking to establish dominance, following invasion. There may have been a small residual Celtic population, whose presence may show in further DNA studies, but at present this is only conjectural. There is no extant Celtic place name evidence in the parish.

Ownership and administration

There are three sources of evidence for the ownership and administration of the area. The first is records of Black Torrington Hundred (see O J Reichel 1932) frequently quoted in the Devon HER; the second is Domesday. The Tithe Apportionment of 1840 gives a much later account of land ownership and occupation. By this time ownership was widely dispersed with no dominant landowner in the parish. Notable in the Tithe Apportionment is the number of fields with “marsh” or “moor” in their names – denoting the nature of much of the ground in the parish.

The role of the church

The church does not seem to have played a significant role in the development of the village; there are no records of ownership by the church in and around the village, until later in the mediaeval period. This is in marked contrast to the adjacent settlement of Hartland where the church, in various forms, was a main determinant of the form of settlement and of land ownership.

Trade and Bradworthy

The existence of such a large central space may imply an intention to trade and not merely enclose livestock. It is believed that Bradworthy had a market charter in later mediaeval times, as well as a fair. The first charter is believed to date from 1200 and the fair continued into the twentieth century. Access to a regular livestock market would have been important to a settlement founded on the grazing resource available in the area. The village is just on the usual distance for walking animals to and from market in a day (7 miles) from Holsworthy, which has long had a livestock market.

Conclusion

Bradworthy has the appearance of a large and deliberately planned settlement in an otherwise sparsely populated area. Whether it is an early 8th century Anglo-Saxon settlement, as suggested by Hoskins, or a later 10th century planned move to colonise a border land area, cannot be known until there is further archaeological evidence. Its size, form, early prosperity and the distinctive place name evidence along the east bank of the upper Tamar suggest an equally distinctive but atypical history of settlement, however.

In the absence of royal or significant ecclesiastical ownership (as at Hartland), or of a dominant or defended position in the Hundred, we need to look elsewhere for an explanation for the scale of the Square and the size of the Domesday population. This probably lies in a deliberate exploitation of a farming resource that was previously under-exploited, at a time when livestock needed to be controlled rather than left as free-roaming.

Bratton Fleming: Farmstead by newly cultivated ground

Landscape Setting

The parish of Bratton Fleming lies towards the north-eastern edge of North Devon District, just outside the Exmoor National Park boundary, on a west-facing ridge between two small steep-sided tributaries of the River Yeo which flows westward to meet the Taw in Barnstaple. The parish encompasses this narrow ridge and includes a large area of upland centred on Bratton Down and extending from Friendship Farm in the north to Mockham Down Gate in the south. The eastern boundary is formed by the narrow steep-sided upper reaches of the River Bray. The village lies between 180m (590 ft) and 260 m (850 ft) AOD. It is in a moorland edge location alongside the road running from Barnstaple towards Exmoor, and is 8 miles east of Barnstaple. The road through the village steepens perceptibly east of Button Hill. An older ridge route lies about a mile to the east of the village; it runs north-south between South Molton and the north coast at Combe Martin.

The ridge on which the village lies is notable for its far-reaching westward views across the Taw and Torridge Estuary and Bideford Bay towards Hartland Point and Lundy.

The village and wider parish lie largely within the Moorland Edge Slope Landscape Character Type (LCT), with Downland LCT down the ridge to the west and Secluded Valley and Upland River Valley LCTs adjoining it to the east, north and south. This gives a characteristically open landscape with little tree cover, other than on the steep valley slopes.

Place name evidence

The influence of this open landscape is shown in the place and topographical names of the parish, which include Haxton Down, Bratton Down and Summerland. Other hamlets in the parish include Chelfham, Benton, Leworthy, Kipscombe, Thorne, Stowford, Spreccot, Knightacott and Chumhill.

However, there is a geographical distribution to some of these names that has implications for the development of the settlement. The “ton” names all appear on the southern slope of the western ridge, except Button. The “cott” names are all found to the north of the village on the westward facing slope of Bratton Down. There is a single “worthy” on the eastern highest part of Bratton Down. Most of the remaining names are topographical, including “park”, “down”, “combe”, “ford”, “thorne” and “hill” names. There is a single “ham” name at the western end of the parish just above the Yeo Valley. The only “leigh” name lies further west, beyond the parish boundary, on lower ground at Goodleigh.

Charles Whybrow in his publication *A History of Bratton Fleming* (re-published 2010) suggests that the main road through the village is a Saxon “herepath” that links Exmoor and the Brendons with the ford over the Taw at Barnstaple, via Simonsbath, Bratton Town, Chelfham and Goodleigh. He cites place names such as Hearlake, Wallover and Leworthy in support of the early origin of this route.

Map 11

Bratton Fleming OS Map 1891

Map 12

Bratton Fleming Tithe Map

Settlement Form

On the 1891 OS 6" to 1 Mile sheet for Bratton Fleming (Map 11) the village has the appearance of a linear roadside settlement. The housing plots have little depth, there being no sign of the development of burgage plots running back from the road frontage. The domestic plots almost appear to have been carved out of the highway edge, as might be expected on formerly unenclosed downland. On the 1839 Tithe Map (Map 12) it becomes apparent that the settlement then consisted of two groups of houses. Bratton Town is the western group between Town Farm and the junction of Mill Lane with the main road through the village. The eastern group is near the church and the road junction with Button Hill (now Station Road) to the north and (Old) Rectory Lane to the south. This group included the school, the post office and the White Hart Inn.

It is clear from the Tithe Map that the wider landscape consisted of late enclosure regular sized fields with straight boundaries, many of which were rectangular shaped. There is little evidence of strip fields denoting enclosure of an earlier open field system, nor of common land. This implies that the late eighteenth/early nineteenth century enclosures obliterated any rights of common that may

have previously existed, as well as any earlier field systems. It might be assumed therefore that the early settlement was based on unenclosed moorland that was grazed more than ploughed.

There is, however, evidence of strip fields (and of mediaeval ridge and furrow) at Benton and of smaller earlier field systems at Beara and Knightacott, and possibly at Town Farm. Another area of mediaeval ridge and furrow has been identified north of Leworthy, with mediaeval strip lynchets observed nearby, east of Northland Corner.

Which of these is the "farmstead by newly cultivated ground" of the Bratton place name (AD Mills 2003) is not known. Since Haxton and Benton were named separately in Domesday, however, it is more likely to have been Bratton Town. The situation of this site, lower down the western ridge, south facing and partially sheltered from the prevailing winds, would have made it a more likely choice for an early farm settlement than the higher very exposed land to the east. There is evidence in the landscape and on the 1891 map of a leat providing a water supply to Town Farm from a small tributary of the Chelfham stream, which runs immediately to the south of the village.

The place name evidence may be another indicator. Significantly Town Farm lies just within the Downland LCT, rather than the Moorland Edge Slope LCT, suggesting that its location marks a transition to the more amenable landscape of the downland and was therefore a deliberate siting choice. Benton (220m AOD), Haxton (180m) and Town Farm (180m) all lie in a similar position on the lower and more sheltered south-facing slopes close to the water supply provided by the streams to the south of the settlement. These three "ton" place names were the manors identified in Domesday.

If this is the case, then the shift of the apparent centre of the settlement eastwards and upslope to the location of the church may reflect the later institutional dominance of the church, resulting in the choice of a more prominent location in the landscape setting. The church lies at 210m AOD and is slightly on the north side of the ridge, cut into the west-facing slope of the graveyard. It is believed to have origins in the 14th century, with a 16th century tower, but was largely rebuilt in the 18th and 19th centuries. It sits on the northern edge of a graveyard that may have predated it. It is in a central location to the three Domesday manors to the south and west and the cluster of "cott" hamlets to the north.

The presence on the Tithe Map (and all subsequent maps) of a long curving field boundary to the east of Button Hill and the reference to archaeological features and field name evidence in the same area (see below) may, however, indicate the presence of an earlier settlement feature that is more closely associated with the church.

Whybrow, however, considers that Bratton Fleming was "*a typical Saxon nucleated village around its village green".* In his view the triangular area encompassing the White Hart and churchyard formed the original village green. He suggests that the Saxon "hall" would have been built at the eastern end of this area and that the "platform fort" of Bratton Castle (see below) was the replacement Norman motte and bailey site.

Only further site investigation is likely to reveal whether there is any substance to these references.

Domesday Book

Bratton Fleming lay in the Braunton Hundred, albeit as an outlier surrounded by the Shirwell Hundred that includes the parishes to the north (Loxhore) and south (Stoke Rivers). The hundred is centred on Braunton and includes the coastal area to the west and north of that village. There is another outlier of the Braunton hundred to the south that includes the parishes of East and West Buckland.

In 1086 Bratton is recorded as having 34 households, making it quite a large village. The manor encompassed 1,124 acres, according to Reichel (OJ Reichel, The Hundred of Bratton Fleming, 1935). However, its value was assessed as 1.8 geld units, which was quite a small sum; this was owed to the Bishop of Coutances. The value to the lord was £9.1, which had risen from £8 in 1070. Clearly it was not a prosperous place. The households comprised 19 villagers, 4 smallholders and 11 slaves. The lord's domain was 2 virgates, as was the villagers' domain. The ploughlands comprised land for 19 ploughs, with 4 lord's plough teams and 15 men's teams. In addition, there were 12 acres of meadow, 150 acres of pasture and 70 acres of woodland. Livestock comprised 11 cattle, 40 pigs, 100 sheep and 35 goats.

In 1086 the lord was Erchenbald the Fleming, from whom the manor derived its suffix. The tenant-in-chief was Count Robert of Mortain. In 1066 the Lord had been Ordwulf of Tehidy, with two other thanes. These three thanes held 3 virgates, which in 1068 comprised 628 acres in total worth 3/-. According to Reichel this holding may have included (or been reduced to) Stowford, Honicot (Hunnacott) and Spreycott (Sprecott), at the northern end of the parish. Ordwulf had other holdings in north Devon, including Croyde, Alverdiscott, Frithelstock and Monkleigh.

Two other manors in the parish were named in Domesday; these were Haxton and Benton (Reichel appears to confuse Benton with Button). Haxton comprised 6 householders, all villagers, with a value of 0.5 geld units. Its value to the lord in 1086 was £1.3. It comprised 2 virgates and 402 acres, with land for 5 ploughs, of which 3 were men's plough teams. It also had 2 acres of meadow. The Lord in 1066 was Ordwulf and in 1086 was the Bishop of Exeter, who was also the tenant-in-chief.

Benton had one household, a villager, and a value of 0.3 geld units. It comprised 1 virgate and 160 acres with 2 ploughlands. It belonged to the manor of Haxton and had the same lord, the Bishop of Exeter, in 1086. In 1066 the lord was Ednoth.

Together these holdings totalled 2,314 acres, out of a total parish area of 5,845 acres today.

Devon Historic Environment Record

There are 275 records for Bratton Fleming in the Devon HER. Many of these relate to the numerous Bronze Age barrows found on the high ridge to the east of the village, associated with the north/south route along the ridge. There are also the remains of a reputed Bronze Age stone circle at Southcott near Knightacott. A Bronze Age axe-hammer was recorded as being found in a field near Grange Hill at the eastern end of the village.

The longevity of settlement in the area is shown by the discovery of half a Mesolithic mace head near Button Farm and a possible Neolithic long mortuary enclosure between Knightacott Cross and Copeland Farm on Bratton Down (Cotswold Archaeology 2013).

There are other, more enigmatic, records in the HER. Near the centre of the village and north of the road is a record of a double-ditched Anglo-Saxon mound to the east of the church that may have been a windmill platform or a modern excavation, and a possible motte and bailey site north-east of the church, in the vicinity of fields with "castle" (Castle Meadow, Castle Field) in their name in the Tithe Apportionment. The mound is still visible behind Castle House and sits within the curve of the adjacent field boundary. There was evidence of substantial earthworks when a new house and drive (Castle Gate) were built in the mid-1980s, but no artefacts were found (Malcolm Prowse – personal comment). Whybrow believes this to have been the location of the original Fleming Norman castle, until the family relocated to Chumhill (Chimwell) in the twelfth century.

There is a small sub-rectangular enclosure near Down Farm, called Great Castle Field and Little Castle Field in the Tithe Apportionment, and variously described as an Iron Age settlement, a Roman signalling station or a mediaeval site. There is also a prehistoric enclosure northeast of Benton, predating the overlying ridge and furrow and observed from aerial photography.

Other features

Besides the ridge route running north-south across Bratton Down, there are a number of prominent features in adjoining parishes, which may have significance for the development of Bratton Fleming. These include Shoulsbury Castle in Challacombe parish, about a mile east of the Bratton Fleming boundary, three Iron Age enclosed settlements in Stoke Rivers parish to the south, and two Iron Age enclosed settlements in Loxhore parish to the north.

The enclosed settlements all seem to have a close relationship with the Bratton Fleming boundary, being sited near the streams that mark the northern and southern boundaries of the parish. They appear to indicate a pattern of settlement quite distinct from that of Bratton Fleming. What their location denotes in terms of settlement in the area is not clear, but it may relate to the unusual shape of the hundreds of Shirwell and Braunton, whose boundaries here are also marked by the same streams.

One thing is clear, though, and that is that this was a fairly closely settled area in pre-Saxon times.

Discussion

Evidence for previous settlement

There is abundant evidence for earlier settlement in the wider parish and adjoining parishes, mainly from the Bronze and Iron Ages, suggesting that this open landscape of downland and moorland edge was relatively densely settled. No evidence has yet been found for dwellings, such as roundhouses, but there has been very little excavation or exploration of the area outside the National Park. There is much less evidence of settlement in the immediate vicinity of the village but the same caveat must apply; there has been very little investigation.

Exploiting the area's resources

Although by Domesday there were clearly established ploughlands in the records of the manors comprising the parish, the primary resource must have been its grazing. Other resources would have included timber from the wooded valley sides and water in the three streams forming the parish boundaries, and their tributaries. The extent to which the parish provided summer grazing for the wider hundred can only be inferred from place name and boundary evidence. Later experience suggests there may have been a link between upland and lowland farming in the hundred. Even at the end of the twentieth century lambs raised on Exmoor were being sold (through Blackmoor Gate market) to lowland farmers in Braunton for fattening (Peter Huntley EFLA, personal comment).

Slightly further afield is the Romano-British iron working around Brayford to the south, but this may have had little impact on Bratton Fleming, which would probably not have been on a direct route to market for the metal ore. Although a disused iron mine is marked on the 1891 OS map at Haxton Down, it is likely to have been 19th century in origin.

The relationship between farming and settlement: farmstead, hamlet or nucleated settlement

Bratton Fleming appears not to have developed into a nucleated settlement until the twentieth century. This suggests that the settlement in the early Anglo-Saxon period occurred as dispersed farmsteads, some of which later became manors. The church site appears to have been sited as an outlier to these. This would imply relatively late settlement (or consolidation) on the back of the exploitation of the area's summer grazing.

Building types

As with most of the rest of North Devon there is no evidence of building types in the Anglo-Saxon period and, in this part at least, little evidence of earlier dwelling forms such as round houses.

Woodland

The 70 acres of woodland mentioned in the Domesday description of the manor of Bratton Fleming suggest a substantial resource that was valued by the community. This at least would have had implications for building type, farming materials and domestic use, as the Anglo-Saxon period was predominantly aceramic. Wood (and iron) would have been the principal materials immediately at hand for domestic and agricultural purposes. There are numerous stone quarries shown on the 1891 OS map, but there doesn't appear to be evidence for building in stone (other for field boundaries) in the early mediaeval period in North Devon.

Pressure for change: defence, colonisation and settlement

There is little evidence in the Anglo-Saxon period of pressure for change, unlike the farming and defensive needs of the Iron Age. Such evidence as there is suggests the gradual colonisation and settlement of the area for its upland grazing resource, and its subsequent reorganisation into manors probably in the late Saxon period.

There remains, however, the question of the degree to which the area was settled when its Saxon colonisation began. In Whybrow's view, place names such as Wallover and Charles ("carn lis") suggest a pre-existing Celtic population. There may have been some continuity between that population and the Romano-British and even Iron Age population.

Whether Iron Age settlements were taken over, or deliberately avoided (Whybrow suggests the latter at least for the choice of the route of the "herepath"), the settlement pattern at least seems initially to have followed the probable dispersed pattern of previous cultures.

Ownership and administration

The principal early source of evidence for the ownership in the area is the records of Braunton Hundred (see Reichel), which are based on Domesday and later documents. Unlike other parts of the Hundred, particularly Braunton itself, the ownership pattern in Bratton Fleming was fairly straightforward and did not change greatly. After the initial flurry of assignments and re-assignments following the Conquest, ownership settled on the Fleming family. By the time of the 1332 Lay Subsidy the principal owners were Baldwin Flemyng, Richard de Chelfham and the parson, although there were a number of others who owned outlying farms and manors.

Place name evidence suggests that a number of small outlying subsidiary farms were established north of the village (Southcott, Knightacott, Narracott, Sprecott and Hunnacott). Two deserted mediaeval settlements at Kipscombe and North Thorne, suggest withdrawal from occupation of upland areas, perhaps associated with later enclosure or mediaeval depopulation. Leworthy is the only "worthy" place name, logically as it is the settlement furthest into open moorland, where enclosure would have been more likely to be a founding characteristic.

By the time of the Tithe Map ownership was principally in the hands of two long-established families: Acland and Chichester and of the church. The evidence, such as it is, suggests a relatively stable community in ownership terms.

The role of the church

The church does not seem to have played a significant role in the early settlement of the parish. It appears to have been a later addition. There are no records of the ownership of land by the church in the vicinity until later, although place name evidence is found in Rectory Farm (now Parsonage Farm).

In the Tithe Apportionment the glebe land is identified as Home Glebe, Castle Farm, Button and an allotment of Bratton Down (245 acres). This land is all located to the east or north of the church and is therefore on higher ground. However, the ownership by the church of the "castle" fields may indicate a deliberate attempt to centre the village in the vicinity.

Trade

With no market charter and lying just off the only obvious trade route, (north-south across Bratton Down), there is very little evidence that trade was significant in the establishment and development of the village. The link to Barnstaple would have suggested a drove route to market for livestock, possibly via Chelfham and Goodleigh, although Whybrow's posited "herepath" cannot be dismissed.

Conclusions

Bratton Fleming now has the appearance of a twentieth century commuter village serving Barnstaple. Earlier 19th century map evidence suggests a small downland/moorland edge postmediaeval settlement comprising roadside dwellings and cottages, with a small number of early manors based around hamlets at Bratton Town, Haxton and Benton, as well as Thorne, Leworthy

and Chumhill. However, the original settlement pattern seems to have been dispersed, with nucleation occurring late. That the village gained its name by reference to “newly cultivated ground” emphasises this upland location and might suggest a relatively late Saxon foundation date. Given the abundance of evidence of prehistoric occupation in the area, it is just possible that the dispersed farmsteads that originally characterised the parish are located where earlier settlements stood, for instance at Benton.

Braunton: Farmstead where broom grows or place of the raven?

Landscape Setting

The parish of Braunton lies on the north side of the Taw Estuary. It is bounded to the west by the Atlantic coast and to the north by the North Devon Downs. It is a very large parish with a number of smaller villages and hamlets within it. It extends some distance onto the Downs to the north-east, the highest point being Fullabrook Down at 170m (558ft). The village of Braunton straddles the River Caen which runs north to south through the Downs into the River Taw. The Caen meets the Knowl Water flowing from the east just to the south of the village before entering the Taw. It is a low-lying settlement, set in the gap in the Downs formed as the river passes through and is only 22m – 16m (68 ft – 50 Ft) AOD.

Due to its gap location, modern communications between Barnstaple and the coast, including the former railway line to Ilfracombe, run through the heart of Braunton and have shaped it.

The village lies at the junction of the Downland Landscape Character Type (LCT) to the north and the Marine Levels and Coastal Plains LCT to the south. The Caen and Knowl Water valleys are In the Secluded Valley LCT and the Taw to the south is an Estuary LCT. To the west, backing Saunton Sands on the coast, is the Braunton Burrows Dunes LCT. This combination of landscape types not only gives Braunton a spectacular landscape setting but also a wide range of soil types and farming opportunities which have shaped the settlement pattern and the village uniquely.

It is worth summarising these LCTs here, in order to emphasise the diversity of resource that makes the parish so distinctive. The Downland is based on well-drained slates and, in summer, gives good grazing land. Its exposure to westerly gales and rain makes it less suited to winter grazing. A clue to this is in some of the local names in the Downland area; these include Buttercombe Lane, extending from the village up onto the downs in a north-easterly direction, and Butterhills, which is just over the West Down parish boundary to the north. Buttercombe Barton and Wood and Buttermeade Farm are further to the north in West Down parish. All suggest the summer grazing of dairy cattle. To the west, the Downs are also suited to arable use, partly due to the underlying soil and strong but drying winds.

The Caen separates Braunton from West Down parish to the north and the Knowl Water from the parishes of Heanton Punchardon and Marwood to the south and east. Both are broad flat-bottomed secluded valleys with steep well-wooded sides. They give other farming options, as well as the best

supply of timber in the parish. Georgeham parish lies to the north-west, separated from Braunton by the ridge of Saunton Down, and extends the Downs to the coast.

The dune slacks of Braunton Burrows appear less likely as a farming resource, but behind the high dunes (and therefore relatively sheltered from the prevailing westerlies), lies a large area that dries in summer and gives a rich sward for grazing. Its potential for rabbit warrens is also indicated by the presence of Warren Farm to the north of the area.

Although grouped together in the Marine Levels LCT, Braunton Marsh, Horsey Island and Braunton Great Field have distinctive topographies that have resulted from historical interventions. Braunton Great Field, lying on a river terrace roughly on the 10m contour, was probably the first to be enclosed and its boundary hedge is still substantially intact. Braunton Marsh is lower lying and remains a freshwater marsh protected by an early nineteenth century dyke. Horsey Island was embanked in the mid-nineteenth century. Braunton Marsh provides rich grazing but is not suitable for arable use. The Great Field, however, is composed of rich well-drained alluvial soil and is capable of supporting three crops a year. It has been farmed as an open field for over one thousand years and is only one of two such areas still extant in England (the other being at Laxton in Nottinghamshire).

Finally, there is the Estuary itself, extending inland as far as Velator Quay just at the southern end of the village. The fishing resource that gave the parish is attested by the number of fish weirs recorded on the Estuary and by the charter of 857 in which King Aethelbald granted 10 hides to the Abbot of Glastonbury "for the taking of (freshwater) fish" (see Preece C, A Field Guide to the Archaeology of the Taw and Torridge Estuary, NDAS website 2018). Finberg also suggests that this charter should be dated to between 855 and 860 to match the known reign of Aethelbald. He lists a slightly earlier charter of 854 by which King Aethelwulf granted half a hide to the same abbey.

This sheer range and abundance of resources raises the question of whether any of them individually was the prime mover in the establishment of the settlement or whether it was the combination that made Braunton an early and major mid-Saxon settlement.

Place Name Evidence

The place names of the parish range from simple "ton" names such as Braunton and Saunton, to "bookland" places (Buckland, and possibly Beara Charter Barton), a "ham" (Winsham), Knowle (hilltop in Old English), Beara, Boode (curved wood) and Lobb (somewhere "lumpy"). These speak of the diversity of landscape types to be found in the parish, as do the "butter" names mentioned above.

If Mills is to be followed (A D Mills, 2003), the origin of the name Braunton "farmstead where broom grows" suggests it owes its location more to the downland setting than to the other topographical features of its location. There is, however, another side to this story. The mid-ninth century charter granting land in the settlement to Glastonbury Abbey refers to it as Brannocminster. The name would appear to derive from the sixth century Welsh missionary, Brannoc, who was said to have established a monastic cell on the north edge of the village, and to the village's subsequent status as a Minster church serving the wider area.

An alternative view is that the name Brannocminster is a back-projection to give more substance to the claim of the church over the estate (see below). This view may find reinforcement from the fact that the Caen is the only river in north Devon with a post-Conquest name (its derivation being fairly obvious). Terry Green has suggested that the original name of the river may have been Brannock – "raven stream" in a combination of Brittonic bran - raven or crow and ock (a regular Brittonic suffix cf Hemyock) (Green T. pers comm). This, at least, gives an alternative derivation for the later name of the village, *Brannocktun*, shortened by the time of Domesday. In support of this, there are later references, in the Geld Roll, to Branctone and Bractone. Given that, as Terry Green argues, "a place where broom grows" is a notably undistinctive name in an area where broom and gorse are ubiquitous, and that the name of St Brannoc does not occur anywhere else, the alternative explanation for the origin of the name begins to sound more plausible than the traditional explanations.

Map 13 Braunton OS Map1890

Map 14

Braunton Tithe Map (part)

Settlement Form

It is impossible to discern the original village form from standing in the middle of the village today! The A361 (Chaloners Road and Exeter Road) was driven through the heart of the village in the 1920s and 30s, and the London & South Western Railway from Barnstaple to Ilfracombe was constructed along the Caen Valley through the village in the 1870s (OS Map 1890 Map 13). To gain any appreciation of the early form of the village one has to go back to the 1841 Tithe Map (Map 14).

This reveals the earlier village form to have been a "ladder" shape, a feature commented on by, amongst others, Mick Aston (quoted in Pearce S, 2004) in comparing it with Shapwick in Somerset. The ladder consists, on the east side of the Caen, of Church Street in the vicinity of the parish church at the north end of the current village, southwards, along East Street, through Cross Tree and down South Street to Velator. On the west side of the Caen, the ladder consists of North Street, below West Hill, southwards via Chapel Street to Horderns Mill. The "rungs" of the ladder are formed by, from north to south, Church Street, Caen Street and Horderns Bridge, with a possible fourth rung where North Street turns east and faces Broadfield Manor. From the fact that the east "leg" of the ladder extends northwards and south-eastwards along routes accessing other settlements, whereas the west "leg" stops short at the north and south ends of the village, terminating in a "rung" of the ladder, suggests that the earliest origin of the village may lie on the eastern side of the Caen, near the parish church. Alternatively, these roads may outline the boundary of a minster close (see below).

Apart from the River Caen running through the heart of the village, three other features distinguish the village form. One is that there are remnant strip fields on every side of the village, on the Downs at West Hill, East Hill and Braunton Down, and on the lower ground east of the village along the roads towards Wrafton and Higher and Lower Park Roads which eventually lead to Ashford. These are in addition to the open field at the Great Field and suggest a very extensive and early organisation of farming in the whole village into an open field/strip field system.

The second distinctive feature is that, until late in the twentieth century, the farms that served these field systems still operated from the centre of the village. They included Town Farm, North Farm and Scur Farm on North Street, Cross Farm on Chapel Street, Broadfield Manor on Church Street and Score Farm on South Street. They not only had rights over the open field systems, but also grazing rights on Braunton Marsh. There were outlying farms, as revealed in the Domesday account, but essentially farming in the village had become centrally planned, possibly by the 10th century.

One other feature marks the village layout. The parish church is at the north end of the village, some distance from the current centre of the village at Cross Tree. The possible significance of this will be explored later.

Domesday Book

Braunton lay at the heart of its own Hundred at Domesday. It was a royal estate, with 100 households, divided into three manors, Braunton Abbots, Gorges and Dean. There were 48 ploughlands and 30 villagers' plough teams. In 1086 there were a total of 100 sheep, 40 acres of pasture, 80 acres of woodland and 2 acres of meadow. However, the total assessment was 3,282 acres demonstrating the extent of arable in the parish. In tax terms it was assessed at 1 hide, yielding

a tax return of 2.3 geld units. This low tax base undoubtedly owed its position to being a royal estate. In 1086 it mainly belonged to King William, and in 1066 to King Edward, although Brictric, son of Camm, held one of the manors of Braunton.

There were several other manors mentioned in Domesday. These included Ash Rogus (Esse), comprising 323 acres, Bere Charter (Bera), comprising 408 acres, Boode, for which no acreage is given, Braunton Dean, an ecclesiastical estate comprising 660 acres, Buckland Challons (Bochelant) an estate of 296 acres, Incledon (also known as Norcote) of 528 acres, Saunton, an independent manor assessed at 2 hides and comprising 876 acres, South Lobb consisting of 357 acres and Winsham, 762 acres.

Braunton Dean was given to the Saints-in-Alms, represented at the Conquest and subsequently by Algar the priest. It lay between Braunton parish church and Knowle. Braunton itself was separated into Braunton Abbot and Braunton Gorges, but is assessed jointly in Domesday, although there are entries for each of the three manors.

Adding all these manors together (and allowing for the absence of a figure for Boode) the total assessed acreage is only 7,492, compared to the present parish area of 11,983 acres.

Domesday Book also records that Braunton included the Honour of Barnstaple, which underlines its early pre-eminence, even though Barnstaple had become the main town for the area by the tenth century.

Devon Historic Environment Record (HER)

There are over 900 records relating to Braunton in the Devon HER. The majority of these relate to former World War 2 structures and many others to farming structures on Braunton Marsh, such as linhays, or to features associated with the former railway.

There are a few records of pre-historic finds and features. These include flint scatters on Saunton Down and sporadically at other locations on the Downs, a Neolithic or Bronze Age macehead found in earlier river gravels beneath Braunton Church cemetery and a Bronze Age axehead found at Middle Thorn in the Great Field. On Fullabrook Down two features were found that indicated a ring ditch with possible associated cremations and another ditch nearby. At Castle Hill, Knowle, just over a kilometre north of the parish church is a univallate Iron Age hill enclosure. In summary there is evidence for pre-historic occupation of the area, particularly on the Downs, but with two specific finds on sites within the village.

The remaining records of interest to the West Saxon history of Braunton relate to the granting of estates and the ecclesiastical history of the village. These include two charters, in the ninth and tenth centuries, granting lands in the parish to and from Glastonbury Abbey (see below), records of field systems and lynchets on the Downs to the east and west of the village, a reference to a possible Saxon cross relocated from the centre of the village at Cross Tree to the parish churchyard, and references to various manor farms associated with known estates in the parish, including Knowle, Broadgate, Town, Beara Charter and Buckland Manor. There are also a couple of records that discuss the possible location of St Brannoc's Monastery between the parish church and Buckland Manor in the vicinity of the modern Catholic Church and well.

Other Features

Perhaps the most surprising feature of the parish is the comparative paucity of sites associated with the Bronze and Iron Ages, particularly on the Downs. Further to the north and east there are multiple sites of barrows and standing stones, on the highest part of the Downs, associated with the ridge routes that ran along them. Just to the east of the parish boundary at Lee in Marwood is a small circular hillside enclosure that may be Iron Age.

The find of features in the Fullabrook/Halsinger/Beara Down area associated with the Fullabrook Wind Farm, comprising a ring ditch and cremations and other features suggests that there may be more to be found. It is possible that the lower south-facing areas of the Downs were more heavily farmed and that more features may have been ploughed out.

One other feature of considerable significance is the inscribed stone found in West Down but believed to have possibly been relocated there from a former estate boundary. It has been dated to the eighth century and bears a Celtic personal name, Gwerngen (see below).

Discussion

Evidence for previous settlement

Although the evidence for previous settlement in the parish area is slighter than other parts of north Devon, it is nevertheless present and indicates human presence from the Neolithic through to the Iron Age. The location of the macehead in the river gravels may well have been a deliberate deposit. The axehead found in the Great Field is more enigmatic in its location. There is no evidence of a Roman presence in the area, but the probability of continuity of Iron Age culture in the area through the Romano-British period is high.

The most significant feature is the early Iron Age univallate hilltop enclosure at Knowle. Although not large (4 acres in area), it is in a strategically significant location as it would have commanded the river valley and had a clear view southward to the Taw Estuary. A report of a community archaeology report in 2011 is summarised on the HER as follows "*Combination of the gradiometer and earth resistance survey has produced substantial results. Primarily, the form of the enclosure is now fully defined, with internal bank and external ditch, representing a univallate enclosure. The entranceway to the enclosure also has a clear definition and is seen to face into the enclosure, with small appendages at the ends of the banks, within the entrance interior. The morphology of enclosure entrance is also witnessed on the hillslope enclosures at Leyhill and Timberscombe on Exmoor. Anomaly 22 is the best candidate for an archaeological structure within the enclosure definable from the geophysical surveys. Whilst the form and dimensions are reasonable for the remains of a roundhouse, it is possible that this is a variation in the geology."* (Carey C. 2011)

Castle Hill enclosure may have been the fore-runner of the settlement in the valley at Braunton, even though its size in relation to its location is somewhat underwhelming! Unfortunately, we have no indication of what happened in the thousand years between building the hill enclosure and the

possible monastic cell in the valley below in the sixth century. If nothing else there would have been burials, whether by cremation or interment, but no evidence of them has been found.

Nevertheless, the subsequent development of the settlement has led Terry Green to suggest that Braunton may originally have been a pre-Saxon multiple estate centre, based on its extensive hundred (Green T. pers comm). As he says, if the name Braunton contains the name of the river, it places it into a class of names, such as Tawton, Torrington, Molton, Crediton, Cullompton and Plympton in Devon, with a river name plus "tun". The multiple estate theory identifies these as the centres or *capita* of large territories of probable pre-English origin, which later break down into manors and parishes and may form the nuclei of hundreds.

With its ample natural resources, Braunton is a prime candidate for a multiple estate centre. He continues "*How large the putative territory may have been is very hard to suggest, but the fact that the Braunton Hundred included the up-and-coming Barnstaple and, farther afield, a detached portion around Filleigh, might suggest a very big piece of real estate. Its neighbour might have been a territory based on Hartland (in which Clovelly Dykes might have been the early central place). Identifying an Iron Age or post-Roman antecedent settlement is very difficult at present – the hilltop enclosure at Knowle may be a candidate, but doesn't bear much comparison with Clovelly Dykes and doesn't really cut it as a hillfort."* He points out that we have no idea what the pastoral/agrarian balance in the local pre-English economy might have been, so we have no basis on which to develop a theory of pre-English settlement. He concludes that "*The Gwerngen stone must be telling us something, however, as must the Cavudus stone at Caffyns Heanton (near Lynton), namely that there were powerful individuals embedded in a culture in which the echoes of Romano-British literacy were still being heard".*

Exploiting the area's resources

The abundance of resources for farming in the area has already been described, for both pastoral and arable purposes, as well as the river for fishing and for sand (for spreading on heavier soils). This would have made it a favourable location for settlement and almost certainly contributed to its later prosperity and significance.

The relationship between farming and settlement: farmstead, hamlet or nucleated settlement

There are several reports in the Devon HER describing the relationship between farming and the settlement. Some of these accounts conflict; certainly, there was a considerable evolution in the relationship. The best way to approach and seek for patterns in the evolution is, initially, to take each account at face value and then test it against the evidence from others.

I will start with place names. If A D Mills' account of the origin of Braunton "farmstead where broom grows" is accepted, it implies nothing exceptional about the settlement. It would fit with the overall pattern of dispersed farms and hamlets that characterised north Devon. It also suggests that the location referred to is more likely to have been close to, or on the side slope of one of the downs through which the river runs. The other explanation, that Domesday Braunton is a late contraction of tenth century Brannocminster, seems less probable, given the significance of the settlement as a royal estate at (and before) Domesday. Many other "minster" towns in the south west retained the suffix; the fact that Braunton lost its suffix may suggest that it was not regarded as significant by the time of Domesday.

Assuming, therefore, that the origin of Braunton (as a settlement, rather than as a name) was a valley-side or riverside farmstead that may have existed before the arrival of the West Saxons, the next question would be where that farmstead might have been. The suggestion of an existing population in the area in the sixth century is given some credence by the establishment of a monastic cell in the valley. There was a pre-Saxon population to preach to (regardless of who the preacher may have been).

The location of the parish church in the valley bottom, just across the river from the reputed site of the monastic cell and within sight of Castle Hill, might also suggest that the original farmstead was at the north end of the village. The cluster of buildings shown in this location on the Tithe Map, is different in character to the "ladder" layout of the later planned village, so this also lends some credence to this hypothesis.

Assuming that the West Saxons arrived in the area from 700 on, what happened over the next 150 years is unclear. Aethelbald's grant of an estate of ten hides at Braunton to Glastonbury Abbey in 857 suggests, however, that the settlement had grown in size and significance. What is not clear is whether the re-planning of the village was an immediate or later consequence of this grant. Either way the Abbey would have wanted to maximise the value of its holding, both in cultural and economic terms. Susan Pearce (2004), discussing Braunton in the context of another Glastonbury estate, Shapwick, says "*In the 940s Glastonbury was refounded by Dunstan, the great reforming abbot …. Whether or not Dunstan was personally responsible for what happened at Shapwick, or how swift the changes may have been, other Glastonbury estates show signs of what looks like a calculated policy. In 973 King Edgar had acquired Braunton in north-east Devon from Glastonbury, an estate based on an ancient religious house which Glastonbury had acquired in the mid-ninth century. Braunton is unlikely to produce much evidence of Roman settlement and work so far has not yielded information about post-Roman settlement patterns, but the famously surviving open field layout, which still occupies some 142 ha to the south-west of the settlement, may have been laid out in the tenth century. Braunton Marsh and adjacent Horsey Island were also both carefully divided and managed, at a later date at least, as out-field pasture, which supplemented the excellent access to the Exmoor upland grazing*." She goes on to comment that the layout of Braunton village, with its ladder pattern bisected by the River Caen, bears considerable similarity to that of Shapwick.

It is time now to look at studies of the Great Field. Unsurprisingly the Great Field has been commented on by many notable historians, including Finberg (1949 and 1969) and Hoskins (1952 and 1954), and archaeologists, including Simon Timms, Frances Griffiths, Susan Pearce and Bill Horner (Devon HER Heritage Gateway website). The most comprehensive report was written by Exeter Museums Archaeological Field Unit (Braunton Great Field Management Study 1994, authored by Robin Stanes). The report was commissioned by North Devon District Council but never published. It cannot be quoted from or reproduced other than with the permission of the Council and the authors. Nevertheless, some facts and inferences may be drawn from the report, as they are in the public domain.

The Great Field is enclosed by a hedgebank that at least on the coastal side follows the mean high tide mark of spring tides and is probably original. Within the Great Field, there are 21 furlongs each of which is named. Use of the Field was, as with open fields of this type, rotated between arable and grazing, but such was the fertility of the land that the fallow period associated with open field systems does not appear to have been applied here. The strips were distributed between the

tenants of the manors of Braunton. These all lived in the village and it is said that in 1840 there were 47 farmhouses in the village with rights to farm strips not only on the Great Field but on the grazing lands at the Marsh and on Braunton Down. This made it a communal activity that survived into the nineteenth century and, in a much-reduced form, until the present day. Apart from the complex arrangement of the manors of Braunton, one other feature may have helped preserve the system and that is the practice of inheritance by cradle land or "Borough English", rather than the more usual primogeniture. The report makes no definitive conclusion on the age of the Great Field but considers the grant of land to Glastonbury Abbey in 855 to be very significant.

Whether the open field system was introduced at the start of the period when the Abbey owned it, after the reforms of Dunstan from 940, or when it was returned to the king in 973 (in exchange for land in Somerset), the consensus seems to be that the origin of the open field system in Braunton, and the consequent re-ordering of the rest of the village, date to the ninth or tenth centuries. That this has survived in an area not noted for nucleated settlements arranged within open field systems, along classic "Midland" lines, makes it all the more remarkable. Indeed, Braunton would appear to be the most extensively and deliberately nucleated village in north Devon, against type for the area.

There are some records of individual farms within the village and their relationship with the Great Field. Amongst these are Town Farm and Broadgate. Town Farm and its outbuildings are described in the listed building description as "the village farmstead in Braunton. It is a remarkable survival of a town farm in a nucleated settlement which still has its open field system." Broadgate is referred to by A H Slee (1941), Hoskins and the Exeter Museums report as the manor house of Gorges manor and to date from the fourteenth to fifteenth century, according to the listed building description.

Building types

As elsewhere in north Devon, there is no evidence of West Saxon building forms. However, there is still a notable use of cob and thatch in the village, which may prove to be a building material of some antiquity, bearing in mind the availability of the main construction materials locally.

Woodland

The figure of 80 acres of woodland is given in the Domesday account for Braunton, and it is probable from the characteristics of other secluded valleys in north Devon that the steeper valley sides had a significant woodland resource (as they do now).

Pressure for change: defence, colonisation and settlement

There is little evidence for pressure for change in the sense of defence and conflict. Colonisation seems to have followed the pattern elsewhere of assimilation through replacement of the previous culture, although at Braunton elements of the Celtic Christian culture were deliberately retained, possibly to strengthen the church's claims. The Celtic population may have retained ownership and a degree of power for longer than elsewhere if the Gwerngen stone was indeed originally an estate boundary marker from the eighth or ninth century. It would make its owner the second most important Welshman in Braunton and the first to have tangible evidence of his existence!

Ownership and administration

It is clear from the above that ownership and administration, both by the Church and the Crown, were key to the development of the village. Being both a Minster and a Hundred centre reinforced its power. The subsequent history of manorial exchanges served to reinforce the distinctiveness of the settlement.

The role of the church

Susan Pearce refers to a possible post-Roman monastic community, founded around the mid-sixth century by the British monk Brannoc. Aethelbald's charter of 857 granting a Brannocminster estate of ten hides to Glastonbury Abbey shows that there was already a monastic community named after Brannoc in existence. The saint's British name and his traditions suggest an early foundation (Pearce S M, The early church in the landscape: The evidence from North Devon (part), 1985 270-272).

Braunton seems to have developed as a minster church, either before or as a result of the grant of land to Glastonbury Abbey. This also made it the most probable candidate for being the centre of the hundred that it served (and controlled). Terry Green has suggested that the roads forming the core of the early settlement (Church Street, East Street, Caen Street and North Street) could mark the bounds of a minster precinct (see map 15 below, which is based on the Tithe Map). He compares Braunton to Crediton where he has identified a possible ecclesiastical precinct containing the church (an early minster) and formerly the houses of lay brethren. The area outlined here represents almost a continuous line of roads and lanes. Enclosing land on both sides of the river and including the church, this represents a possible minster precinct. The subsequent development into a planned settlement is provided with a ready template for laying out crofts and tofts along existing routeways.

Map 15 Possible ecclesiastical precinct

He comments that "*Close examination of the church fabric is rewarding, especially in what is now the vestry. We have a Saxon grave slab or cross shaft built in as a lintel over a tiny window and a piscina which looks distinctly Saxon in the way its arch is formed. And, of course, we have a 13th century dendro date for the spire. Everything below the spire must be earlier, especially the lowest part of the tower the stonework of which is very thick and different in character from that above it. It all points to the vestry representing the earliest church on the site, almost certainly pre-Conquest. In addition, the lateral location of the tower invites comparison with other North Devon churches with towers on*

the transept, e.g. Fremington, Mortehoe, Ilfracombe, High Bickington (originally), Abbotsham and others. This feature is predominantly found in North Devon.

The role of the church is also evidenced by the five chapels that were believed to exist later in the parish. These include St Michael's on Chapel Hill, St Brannock's Chapel, which was either located at St Brannock's Well near Buckland or near the site of the present church hall (the latter is preferred by the Ordnance Survey). There was also St Anne's Chapel at the southern end of Braunton Burrows and two others now lost (one is believed to have been called St Sylvester's).

Trade

Braunton's position on the Caen close to its confluence with the Taw may have made it a favourable location for sea-borne trade. Timber revetment quays were not introduced until after the Saxon period; before then ships tended to be drawn up on the foreshore. The Taw is heavily tidal, and the Caen below Velator was not straightened and improved for use by larger craft until the 19th century, but smaller vessels could have used the river at high tide. As usual there is a marked lack of evidence, however. In this case, South Street, with the lane leading to Velator, may be a sort of "wick" an extramural settlement or more probably a simple extension of East Street towards the river, where it joins the Knowl Water at the point where it becomes tidal (and possibly navigable, therefore).

Conclusions

Braunton is probably the most atypical rural settlement in north Devon, in terms of its layout and development. A unique combination of a strategic location, a rich variety of habitat and resources, a legend of a Celtic monastic cell, an early minster presence, possibly based on a pre-existing multiple estate centre, and longstanding ownership by both the Church and the Crown, may be sufficient to account for its distinctive West Saxon history. However, there is little evidence from prehistory that these advantages were previously recognised. Its development didn't start until the late British period. After that it grew rapidly.

If this is attributed, as is commonly believed, to the monastic presence it is curious that Brannoc, unlike other Welsh missionaries to the south west, is not mentioned anywhere else. Nor does it explain how the location of one reputed monastic cell prospered to such an extent when most of the others didn't. These are still unanswered questions. Perhaps it is evidence that none of these advantageous circumstances came into play until a powerful agency, whether Church or Crown, took the initiative to exploit them. Braunton's (relatively short-lived) status as a minster settlement, perhaps based on an earlier pre-Saxon multiple estate centre, may provide a more convincing explanation for its development than the monastic cell tradition.

As a consequence, in Late Saxon terms Braunton represents a centrally planned, distinctively ladder-shaped settlement whose farms had access to both arable and grazing resources on the Great Field, Downs and Marshes. It has all the appearance of a Midlands-type planned settlement in the wrong place, the Ancient Countryside of the remote south-west. Maybe it is the exception that proves the rule!

Part 3

Summary and Conclusions

Topography, Culture or Power: the determinants of settlement pattern

Introduction

This study started by asking whether landscape character assessment could assist in interpreting the development of settlements in early mediaeval north Devon. That is, inevitably, a question about whether topography and environment are a (if not the) determining force. There is a further underlying question which can be simply put: are we looking at settlement patterns or random arrangements in the development of north Devon? Or to put it another way, are there recognisable and evidenced factors that clearly explain the development of different forms of settlement in the area?

It is now time to attempt to answer that question, by applying the lessons learnt from the case studies.

Summary of Case Studies

A Comparison Table of the four case study settlements is set out below. It highlights some of the key characteristics at Domesday and enables comparisons to be made between them.

Case Study Settlements Comparison Table

Domesday Book Status

Domesday Book	Winkleigh	Bradworthy	Bratton Fleming	Braunton
Parish Acreage	9,118 (5,468 assessed)	9,586 (1,360 assessed)	5,845 (1,124 assessed)	11,983 (7,492 assessed)
Ploughlands	40	12	19	48
Woodland	500 (parkland)	0	70	80
Meadow	80	40	12	2
Population	86 households	39 households	34 households	100 households
Value	5.5 geld units	3.3 geld units	1.8 geld units	2.3 geld units
Ownership 1066	Brictric, son of Algar	Tovi	Ordwulf	Brictric, son of Camm/The King/Algar
Ownership 1086	Gotshelm (from William)	Ralph of Pomeroy	Erchenbald the Fleming	The King/Algar
Other manors & estates	1 (Loosedon – 468 acres)	5 (Kimworthy, Instaple, Brexworthy, Horton & Ash)	3 (Haxton – 402 acres, Benton – 160 acres and Thanes' lands – 628 acres)	9 (Ash Rogus, Bere Charter, Boode, Braunton Dean, Buckland, Incledon, Saunton, South

				Lobb, Winsham

From the Table, it can be seen that Winkleigh and Braunton share some common characteristics. They were relatively large settlements in strategic locations with distinctive and unique features for Devon settlements: the Deer Park in the case of Winkleigh and the Great Field in the case of Braunton. Only the value in geld units separates the two settlements, but this is probably accounted for by the extent of the exemptions from tax that prevailed in Braunton given the church and state land ownership. There is another intriguing possibility in the coincidence of the names Brictric and Algar as a possible common factor. The suggestion that Braunton developed from an earlier multi-estate centre may be worth exploring in the case of Winkleigh, although there were significantly fewer manors recorded there at Domesday. However, the factors that made Braunton attractive as a location for Brittonic residents do not seem to be evident in Winkleigh.

Bradworthy shows evidence of a co-ordinating decision-making capacity, in the layout of its central space. This either suggests collaborative farming or a single organising authority. Bratton Fleming appears to demonstrate the later development of a village from dispersed hamlets, that suggests a relationship with lowland estates, possibly based on transhumance or summer grazing.

Topography

The questions that have been pursued throughout this study that particularly relate to the issue of topography and environment are:

- Where was the evidence for previous settlement?
- How were the resources offered by the environment exploited?
- What was the relationship between farming and settlement?
- Was the farmstead, the hamlet or the nucleated village the basic form of settlement?
- What type of buildings might we expect to find from the period?
- How densely wooded was the area?

I will start this section with a geographical overview. North Devon is a distinctive territory in that, as well as belonging to the County of Devon (and the former kingdom of Dumnonia), it has at its core an extensive river system that flows north to the Bristol Channel. It is separated from South Devon by Dartmoor and from Somerset by Exmoor. To the east is the catchment of the River Exe, which rises on Exmoor, and to the west of the River Tamar, which rises near the Hartland coast and forms the boundary with Cornwall for much of its length; both of these rivers flow south into the English Channel.

North Devon has a long and inhospitable coastline, with few safe havens. The estuary of the Rivers Taw and Torridge provides the only natural refuge for ships, although even here entering the Estuary

across the Bar is hazardous. Some shelter is also provided along the Exmoor coast at Ilfracombe, Watermouth and Combe Martin, but there is little shelter for shipping along the Hartland coast.

This geographical distinctiveness is sufficient to enable the area to be defined as a territory in the sense suggested by Williamson (in Landscape Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England, 2010). This is not an argument for environmental determinism, but for the recognition that topographical distinctiveness and the environmental conditions that it creates can lead to distinctive cultural characteristics.

The significance of the Bristol Channel coast of north Devon is evidenced by the number of pre-Saxon sites found along it. These include Iron Age "promontory forts" such as Embury Beacon, Windbury and Hillsborough, significant hill forts near the coast, such as Clovelly Dykes and Wind Hill, Countisbury, and the two Roman signalling stations at Martinhoe and Countisbury. That we have yet to find evidence of coastal trading locations is probably more a reflection of the lack of investigation than of their absence. We do have evidence, however, that a coastal trade existed in Iron Age times from the finds of gabbroic pottery from Iron Age sites at Clovelly Dykes and Bickington. The source material (gabbro) is only found on The Lizard on the south coast of west Cornwall and, in all probability, arrived in north Devon by sea. It would be interesting to discover whether the north/south distinction identified by Eagles (2018) in Dorset and Somerset was true also in neighbouring Devon in this period.

The other feature of north Devon that is of geographical significance is its relative remoteness, in landward terms. The significant upland "buffers" of Exmoor and Dartmoor have meant that outside influence that relied on overland travel has been limited. This was particularly true during the Romano-British period, when the military and economic focus was on Exeter and the heavily settled villa culture of Somerset. There is still very little evidence of Roman development in north Devon and a view amongst archaeologists that, if it existed, it would have been found by now (with the obvious exception of the iron working at Brayford).

The implication of this is that there would have been significant continuity from the Iron Age into the post-Roman era (although there is as yet no material evidence of it). This would have given north Devon a distinctive Brittonic culture; one that lasted well into the eighth century. This is explored in the next section.

There is, however, a further topographical dimension. It would be a mistake to assume that north Devon was a single entity. As well as the different geology of the Culm to the south and Devonian to the north, there is also a different topography north of the geological boundary that suggests a distinctive territorial identity. This is reflected in both the pre-Saxon and Saxon history of the area.

The concentration of Bronze and Iron Age settlements and sites on Exmoor and the North Devon Downs suggests a territorial identity that continued long after the Roman period. It would appear that Brittonic or Celtic influence also continued in the area after the Saxon dominance began. The only two inscribed Celtic stones in north Devon were both found in the area, above Lynton and at West Down.

Further consideration of the West Saxon characteristics of the case study settlements suggest that the influence of this topographical distinctiveness can be traced in the development of the

settlements. Thus, Bratton Fleming and Braunton appear to be part of a multi-centre estate that was later associated with the hundreds of Braunton and Shirwell.

Similar arguments for topographical distinctiveness can be made for the Culm settlements such as Winkleigh and Bradworthy, although the former appears also to have been influenced by its proximity to the administrative centres of Crediton and Exeter while the latter equally by its remoteness from Exeter but proximity to the Cornish border.

It is less clear that the finer-grained landscape assessment provided by the Landscape Character Assessment approach can add much to our understanding of settlement pattern development. It may, however, be significant that all of the case study settlements straddle Landscape Character Type boundaries. This would at least have given them some diversity of soil conditions which in turn may have offered advantages in terms of agriculture, between drier or wetter winter grazing conditions, for instance, or suitability for arable farming. In particular, Braunton seems to have been very well-favoured with a wide diversity of topography and soils.

Place name spatial patterns may have more to offer in this respect. At the simplest there is the obvious distributional factor that the “leigh” place names tend to be found towards the south and east of the region, on the Upper Farmed and Wooded Valley Slopes LCT, and the “worthy” place names to the west, on the Culm and associated landscape types, indicating whether the characteristics of the landform in the foundational stage of settlement required clearance or enclosure as the primary activity.

We have now gone as far as possible in discussing the topographical distinctiveness of north Devon and must turn to cultural influences.

Culture

The relevant questions for culture are:

- What were the pressures for change?
- How was the defence, colonisation and settlement of the area organised?
- To what extent was the British population replaced or outnumbered by the incoming population of Anglo-Saxons?

Eagles (2018) suggests that Devon and Dorset have been considered to be the undivided successors of, respectively, major and distinct parts of the *civitas Dumnoniorum* and of the *civitas Durotrigum,* a continuity which did not apply in eastern Wessex. The intent of these Brittonic kingdoms would have been to safeguard the legacy of the Roman period, in terms of legal and administrative structures and customs, as well as the legacy of a Christianised Empire.

The period that intervened between the Roman occupation and the West Saxon invasion in Devon saw both a movement of population away from the kingdom, to the more congenial territory of Armorica, and an increasing monastic movement deriving from west Wales, particularly in Cornwall and north Devon. The numerous attributions of church dedications to such Celtic “saints” in that area is itself testimony to this influence. Clearly north Devon was seen as a still important part of a Brittonic Christian hegemony.

In settlement terms, the legacy of the Brittonic culture was to be found in dispersed farms, possibly relating to local "hill forts". Until we find evidence of continuity of use, however, this must remain as a hypothesis. Occasionally there would have been a greater cultural focus, such as at Braunton or Hartland/Clovelly. Interestingly these were both royal and monastic estates, which may account for their distinctive later identity. The latter has the great Iron Age multi-vallate enclosure, one of the most significant in Devon, recent investigation of which suggests a major cultural centre in this area.

The invasion/incursion/colonisation/assimilation of north Devon by the West Saxons happened late, effectively not until the mid-Saxon period, and apparently gradually.

This leads us to the last consideration: who wielded the power to decide what happened where?

Power

- By whom was the area subsequently owned and administered?
- How significant was the role of the church?
- To what extent was trade carried out within and from north Devon?
- What was the role of open fields in the organisation of farming?

It may all come down to who wielded power. There is no evidence in Devon for the formation of the "small shires" or *regiones* that Eagles (2018) identifies in Hampshire, between the departure of the Romans and the advent of the Saxon hundreds (although the evolution of the administration of the Braunton/Shirwell and Hartland/Clovelly areas may repay closer study). Administration, by the time of the West Saxon occupation of north Devon, is more likely to have been at the level of the kingdom of Wessex, with devolved power evolving through the formalisation of the hundreds. Exeter appears to have lost its role as the seat of either religious or secular power until towards the end of the Anglo-Saxon period.

Whilst some settlements, for example Winkleigh, evidence the identity of their founders in their names, by the time of Domesday, church, state and hierarchy seem to be the principal factors. This was certainly the case for Braunton, where royal and subsidiary church ownership clearly influenced the development of the village. It probably also influenced the development and dominance of Winkleigh with, by the time of Domesday, a powerful regional owner closely related to the king, who was able to develop an extensive deer park.

Conclusions

There remain, at the end of this study, two further questions. One is whether one factor is dominant in the development of settlement forms, or we should look to all the three factors working in combination? Almost inevitably I favour the combination of factors, all of which were powerful. The topographical distinctiveness of north Devon, with its northward-flowing river basin and Bristol Channel coast, the cultural legacy of the former Brittonic population, with its ties to West Wales, which remained significant in ownership terms into the eighth century and beyond, and the influential ownership by king and church of significant locations in the area all surely contributed to the development of settlements from the eighth century to the eleventh. It ensured that the settlement pattern of the area was well established by the time of the Normans and their assumption of control.

Where next?

The other outstanding question is whether more evidence can be brought to bear on these issues. This study has, inevitably, been a synthesis of available sources, largely document or map-based.

There has been no original research and there is, to date, little site investigation relevant to the period. I have been examining a largely aceramic and undocumented area and period, with little excavation and therefore next to no physical evidence! The challenge is to investigate the area in greater depth and detail to establish whether there is evidence to support, or refute, the approaches taken in this study. A starting point might be the questions raised on page 12 and repeated above and used throughout the case studies. To design and implement a research programme to find evidence on these issues would require very considerable resources, far exceeding the capacity of the organisations present in the area. A more modest starting point might be to explore further two physical aspects that have yielded some results: field boundaries and cemeteries. That would, however, have to be the subject of a separate piece of work.

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The maps were drawn from three sources. The parish maps used for the place names were obtained from the Devon County Council website. The 19th century OS sheet extracts were obtained from the Local Studies Library in Barnstaple. Its continuation, even on a reduced service basis, is vital to study in North Devon.

The Tithe Maps were extracted from the Devon Historic Environment Records and are reproduced by kind permission of Devon Archives & Local Studies,
DHC DEX/4/a/TM/Winkleigh.
DHC DEX/4/a/TM/Bradworthy.
DEX/4/a/TM/Bratton Fleming.
DHC DEX/4/a/TM/Braunton.

SP 9th May 2019

(minor revisions 18th – 23rd March, 20th – 23rd April 2020, 31st August 2021 and 6th March 2022)

Errata

On pages 33/34 I quote from Lucy Ryder (2013). Although her words are correctly quoted, their accuracy is disputed. On page 33 I quote her as referring to:

"significant historical research …. undertaken by Robert Pearse Chope who lived in the Fatacott area of Hartland". In fact, she is referring to Richard Pearce Chope who lived at Fosfelle, Hartland.

On page 34 I refer to her identification of the early mediaeval chapel as being at South Hole. This is disputed by others who consider it unlikely. If anywhere it was at Cheristow, but most settle on an area immediately east of the present church (now Butler's Cottage). South Hole was a separate holding pre-Domesday and continued to be so until amalgamated into Hartland in the 18th century.

I am indebted to Steve Hobbs of Hartland for identifying these errors.

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Appendix 1

Landscape Character Assessment of North Devon & Torridge

Landscape Character Areas and Types

LUC 2010

Plateaux and ridges

- Estate wooded ridges and hilltops
- Farmed lowland moorland and Culm grassland

Scarp slopes

- Steep open slopes
- Moorland edge slopes

Valleys

- Upper farmed and wooded valley slopes
- Sparsely settled farmed valley floors
- Upland river valleys
- River valley slopes and combes
- Secluded valleys

Coast

- Estuaries
- Marine levels and coastal plains
- Coastal slopes and combes with settlement
- Coastal slopes and combes
- Extensive inter-tidal sands
- Dunes
- Cliffs

Rolling hills

- Inland elevated undulating land
- Coastal undulating farmland
- Downland
- Estate wooded farmland

Appendix 2

Scheduled Iron Age Hill Forts and Enclosed Settlements in North Devon:

Summaries from the Devon HER

Embury Beacon

An Iron Age promontory fort with double defences, the inner work much reduced by cliff falls. Pottery found during excavation in the 70's was mainly late Glastonbury ware dated to the late Iron Age. Earthwork banks are visible in aerial photographs from the 1940's and on the ground.

Mound beyond the outer ramparts on the north east side … visible as an earthwork mound on aerial photographs and on the ground from 1956.

Windbury

Substantial earthworks define a sub-rectangular area adjacent to the cliff edge, interpreted as a prehistoric defended enclosure. The northern part may have been lost to erosion, but the southern ramparts have been surveyed and are visible as earthworks on aerial photographs between 1959 and 1999. The ramparts, external ditch and a possible outer bank and platform outside the entrance are visible on LIDAR-derived images which suggest that the rampart and ditch may have been breached or eroded in several places.

Clovelly Dykes

One of the largest and most impressive early Iron Age hillforts in Devon. It is a complex series of earthworks covering more than 8.09 hectares, forming four zones of outworks with restricted entry, suggesting segregation of the herds for milking, or for autumn slaughter. …. Ditches and banks immediately to the south of the hillfort are visible as cropmarks and earthworks on aerial photographs between 1947 and 1986, and may depict the original extent of the outer enclosures.

Hembury Castle

An Iron Age contour hillfort in Buckland Brewer parish.

Berry Castle, Huntshaw

The remains of an Iron Age hillfort in Huntshaw Wood.

Higher Kingdon, Alverdiscott

Roman marching camp of unusual layout, contiguous with a triple-ditched Iron Age enclosure.

Roborough, Pilton

Burridge Hill Fort, also known as Burridge Camp and Roborough Castle, an Iron Age hillfort with an outwork to the east which may have been the site of the Saxon burgh of Pilton.

The Castle, Knowle

Oval enclosure set on end of spur commanding valley route from north to Taw estuary. Defined by single rampart and trace of ditch remaining, probably an early Iron Age univallate hillfort.

Lee Wood, Marwood

A small Iron Age ring-work. Discovered in Lee Wood on the 400 ft contour but well below the highest point on the ridge.

Hillsborough

Iron Age promontory fort to the east of Ilfracombe. The rampart earthworks on the southern edge of the site can be seen on aerial photographs of the 1940's onwards and images derived from LIDAR data.

Kentisbury Down

A pre-historic hill-slope enclosure, on a south-east facing slope at Kentisbury Down, measuring approx. 90m by 70m and partly levelled by ploughing.

Wind Hill

An Iron Age univallate promontory fort on a west-facing spur between the sea cliff to the north and the East Lyn Valley to the south.

Shoulsbarrow Castle

A rectangular hill-slope enclosure of Iron Age or Roman date, covering 1.6 ha, on the slope of a southwest-projecting spur.

Mockham Down

Iron Age hillfort on Mockham Down to the east of the road.

Stoke Beara

Small univallate hillfort, with well-defined bank and ditch. Crossed by road east to west, which possibly passes through original entrance on west side.

Smythapark

Prehistoric multivallate hillfort on the end of a spur at Smythapark including an enclosure and linear earthworks.

Cunnilear Hillfort, Loxhore

Univallate hillfort above junction of River Yeo and Button Water.

Whitechapel Moor

Hillfort on Whitechapel Moors north-east of Garliford.

Burridge, Chawleigh

An Iron Age hillfort to the north-east of West Burridge Cross.

Northcott Hill Camp

This camp, the southerly of two in Northcott hamlet, is in an oak coppice and has probably never been meddled with. Flint core found on the surface. It is formed by a long irregular ditch which makes a bank some 1.8m high.

Appendix 3

Parish and other place names in North Devon

(from the Oxford Dictionary of British Place Names by A. D. Mills)

Parishes with Leigh endings: Woodland clearing (OE) (incl. some parishes in Mid and West Devon)

Goodleigh: "… of a man called Goda"

Westleigh: "westerly wood or clearing"

Filleigh: "… where hay is made"

Satterleigh: either "… of the robbers" or "… of hellebore"

Warkleigh: "spider wood clearing"

Mariansleigh: later addition of saint's name (diminutive form of Mary)

Romansleigh: later addition of the Celtic saint's name Rumon

Stoodleigh: "… where a herd of horses is kept"

Cadeleigh: "… of a man called Cada"

Kennerleigh: "… of a man called Cyneweard"

Stockleigh English: "… with tree stumps" followed by manorial affix

Stockleigh Pomeroy: see above

Butterleigh: "… with good pasture"

Bickleigh: "… on a pointed ridge"

Chulmleigh: "… of a man called Ceolmund"

Chawleigh: "… where calves are pastured"

Monkleigh: "… of the monks"

Winkleigh: "… of a man called Wineca"

Bondleigh: "… of a man called Bola"

Iddesleigh: "… of a man called Eadwig"

Hatherleigh: "hawthorn clearing"

Inwardleigh: "…of the man called Inwar" with manorial addition who held the manor in 1086
Hittisleigh: "… of a man called Hyttin"

Throwleigh: "… with or near a conduit"

Other villages with Leigh endings

Umberleigh: "possibly woodland clearing by the meadow stream" (OE)

Calverleigh: "clearing in the bare wood" (OE)

Withleigh: not identified, possibly clearing with willow trees

Parishes with other woodland elements (incl. some Mid and West Devon place names)

Marwood: "wood near a boundary" (OE)

Horwood: "grey or muddy wood" (OE)

Chittlehamholt: "wood of the dwellers in the valley" (OE)

Meshaw: "bad clearing" (Old French)

Huntshaw: not identified, but probably "Hunt's clearing" (OE)

St Giles in the Wood: previously Stow St Giles: "holy place of St Giles" 1330

Broadwoodkelly: "broad wood (OE) and manorial affix (13th century)"

Broadwoodwidger: as above

Cruwys Morchard: "great wood or forest" (Celtic) with manorial affix

Morchard Bishop: see above

Parishes with Worthy endings: enclosure (OE)

Wembworthy: "… of a man called Wemba"

Bulkworthy: "… of a man called Bulca" or "of the bullocks"

Woolfardisworthy (X2): "… of a man called Wulfheard"

Bradworthy: "broad enclosure"

Holsworthy: "… of a man called Heald"

Holsworthy Hamlets (includes Chilsworthy): as above; Chilsworthy: "… of a man called Ceol"
Pyworthy: "… infested with gnats"

Beaworthy: "… of a woman called Beage"

Parishes with "ton" endings Farmstead (OE)

Lynton: "farmstead on the River Lyn" (OE river name)

Braunton: "farmstead where broom grows"

Heanton Punchardon: "high (or chief) farm" with manorial affix

West Pilton: probably "farmstead by a stream"

Bratton Fleming: "farmstead by newly cultivated ground" with manorial affix

North Molton: "farmstead" possibly with a pre-English hill name (see Molland)

South Molton: see above; note that the name Mole is a back-formation from the place name

Bishops Tawton: "farmstead on the River Taw" Celtic river name, affix from ownership by the Bishop

Newton Tracey: "the new farmstead" with affix from ownership by the de Tracey family

Chittlehampton: "farmstead of the dwellers in the valley"

Dolton: "farmstead in the open country frequented by doves"

Merton: "farmstead by the pool"

Newton St Petrock: "the new farmstead" with affix from the church dedication

Milton Damerel: "middle farmstead" with affix from ownership by the Albemarle family Clawton:

"farmstead at the tongue of land"

Parishes with "ington" endings Estate OE

Arlington: "estate associated with a man called Aelffrith"

Fremington: "estate associated with a man called Fremi or Fremma"

East Worlington: "estate associated with a man called Wulfred"

Atherington: "estate associated with a man called Eadhere or Aethelhere"

Burrington: "estate associated with a man called Beorn"

High Bickington: "estate associated with a man called Beocca" on high ground

Alwington: possibly "estate associated with a man named Aelf"

Great Torrington: "farmstead or village on the River Torridge" Celtic river name

Little Torrington: as above

Black Torrington: as above, with affix indicating the dark colour of the river here

Abbots Bickington: as Bickington above, with affix from ownership by Hartland Abbey

Parishes with Combe elements Valley (OE)

Ilfracombe: “valley associated with a man called Aelfred”

Combe Martin: “the valley” with manorial affix

Parracombe: possibly “valley of the pedlars” or “valley of the enclosure”

Challacombe: “cold valley”

Yarnscombe: “valley of the eagle”

Welcombe: “valley with a spring”

Sutcombe: “valley of a man called Sutta”

Hollacombe: “deep or hollow valley”

Parishes with “ford” endings Ford (OE)

Brayford: unknown, possibly “ford on the river Bray”

Ashford: “ford where ash trees grow”

Rackenford: possibly “ford suitable for riding”

Bideford: possibly “ford at the stream called Byd” Celtic river name

Beaford: “ford infested with gadflies”

East and West Putford: “ford of a man called Putta, or one frequented by hawks”

Bradford: “place at the broad ford”

Parishes with “bury” elements Stronghold, fortification (OE)

Countisbury: “fort or stronghold of a man called Cynuit” Celtic personal name Kentisbury: “stronghold of a man called Centel”

Berrynarbor: “place at the fortification” with manorial affix

Cookbury: “fortification of a man called Cuca”

Thornbury: “fortified place where thorn trees grow”

Parishes with "ham" endings Enclosure, water meadow (OE)

Georgeham: "the well-watered valley" with church dedication

Northam: "northern enclosure"

Abbotsham: "enclosure" with later addition referring to ownership by the abbot of Tavistock

Littleham: "little enclosure or river-meadow"

Parkham: "enclosure with paddocks"

Parishes with "cott" endings Cottage (OE)

Lovacott: unknown

Alverdiscott: "cottage of a man called Alfred"

Tetcott: "cottage of a woman called Tette"

Luffincott: "cottage(s) of the family of a man called Luhha"

Northcott: possibly "northern cottage"

Parishes with "ash" elements Ash tree(s) (OE)

Ashford: see above

Ashreigney: "place at the ash trees" with manorial affix

Ashwater: "place at the ash trees" with manorial affix

Rose Ash: "place at the ash tree" with manorial affix

Parishes with "stock" elements Outlying farmstead (OE)

Stoke Rivers: "outlying farmstead" with manorial affix

Tawstock: "outlying farmstead on the river Taw"

Frithelstock: "outlying farmstead of a man called Frithulac"

Parishes with "stow" endings Holy place (OE)

Instow: "holy place of St John"

Petrockstow: “holy place of St Petrock”

Virginstow: “holy place of (St Bridget) the virgin”

Parishes with “Buckland” elements Charter land, with certain rights and privileges created by an Anglo-Saxon royal diploma (OE)

East & West Buckland: the east and west charter lands

Buckland Brewer: with manorial affix

Buckland Filleigh: with manorial affix (not woodland clearing)

Parishes with “hoe” endings Hill spur (OE)

Martinhoe: “hill-spur of the family of a man called Matta”

Trentishoe: “round hill-spur”

Mortehoe: “hill-spur called Mort or the stump”

Parishes with “down” ending Hill (OE)

Brendon: “hill where broom grows”

East Down: “place at the hill”

West Down: “as above”

Cheldon: “hill of a man called Ceadela”

Parishes with pre-Saxon elements

Church or saints’ names

Landkey: “Church site of St Ke” (Cornish)

Petrockstow: “Holy place of St Petrock” (OE and Cornish name)

Parishes with Nymet elements: holy place (Celtic)

Bishops Nympton: “farmstead near the river called Nymet (holy place), belonging to the bishop” from an early name for the Mole

Queensnympton: as above

Georgenympton: as above, with saint's name

Kingsnympton: as above

Nymet Rowland: holy place, with manorial affix

Nymet Tracey: holy place with manorial affix

Other Pre-English place names

Charles: "Rock court" (Cornish)

Clovelly: "earthworks associated with a man called Fele" (Cornish with personal name)

Other parishes

Bittadon: "valley of a man called Beotta" (OE)

Loxhore: "hillslope of a man called Locc" (OE)

Shirwell: "bright or clear spring or stream" (OE)

Barnstaple: "post or pillar of the battle-axe" (OE)

Swimbridge: "the bridge held by a man called Saewine" (OE)

Twitchen: "cross-roads" (OE)

Molland: "cultivated land, estate" (OE) with a pre-English hill name

East & West Anstey: "steep track" (OE)

Knowstone: "boundary stone of a man called Knutr" (OE, with Scandinavian name)

Witheridge: "willow-tree ridge" (OE)

Landcross: "long, narrow, buttock-shaped hill" (OE) or possibly "church by the fen" (Celtic)

Weare Giffard: "place at the weir or fishing enclosure" (OE) with manorial affix

Roborough: "rough hill" (OE)

Dowland: "estate in the open country frequented by doves" (OE)

Huish: "measure of land that would support a family" (OE)

Langtree: "tall tree" (OE)

Peters Marland: "cultivated land by a pool" (OE)

Shebbear: "grove where shafts or poles are got" (OE)

Sheepwash: “place where sheep are dipped” (OE)

Halwill: “holy spring” (OE)

St Giles on the Heath: dedication of church plus heath (ME)

Hartland: “farmstead or estate on the peninsula frequented by harts or stags” (OE)

Pancrasweek: “hamlet with a church dedicated to St Pancras” (OE)

Bridgerule: “place at the bridge held by a man called Ruald” (OE with O Scand personal name)