ESSEX c.700 - 1066

by Stephen Rippon

Introduction

This paper will consider Essex from c.700 to 1066. Though there is a wide range of evidence, and a number of important excavations on Middle to Late Saxon sites in the County, this is the first synthesis of the available material. Spatially, this paper will consider the old County of Essex, corresponding to the Late Saxon shire. London, the seat of the East Saxon Bishopric, will be referred to in passing, but its archaeology and history are adequately dealt with elsewhere (eg. Vince 1990).

The seventh century saw a number of important changes in Anglo-Saxon England including the crystallisation of stable kingdoms (Dumville 1989; Yorke 1990), increased social stratification reflected in the burial record (eg. Broomfield: Jones 1980, 89-90), and the gradual conversion to Christianity. There were also changes in the rural landscape, with fairly widespread evidence for a dislocation of settlement. The other chronological limit of this paper, the Norman conquest, was of great significance in terms of political history and landowning, but with regard to the wider landscape, forms a rather arbitrary division.

Firstly, this paper will identify the sources available for the period. Secondly, royal and other high status sites will be considered, including the emergence of early "central places", towns and the church. Thirdly, the impact of the Vikings will be questioned, and finally, the rural landscape will be examined and emphasised as the major area in which further research is required.

The Sources

The material available for this period though varied, is rather sparse compared to neighbouring areas such as Kent (eg. Brooks 1989; Everitt 1986) and East Anglia (eg. Newman 1992; Williamson 1993). Documentary sources such as the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle provide a skeleton political and ecclesiastical history, though there are no insular sources apart from a handful of charters (Bailey 1988; Dumville 1989; Hart 1993a; Yorke 1990). These are mainly late, most dating from the mid-tenth century, and lack detailed boundary descriptions (Hart 1971). Place-names should form an important source of information, though the main work (Reaney 1935) is now rather out of date, and apart from Margaret Gelling's (1976; 1988) work on the Mucking area, Essex lacks recent place-names scholarship (but see Gelling 1992 on Suffolk).

Archaeological sites of this period have proved difficult to locate, due to a lack of datable material culture. The conversion to Christianity meant that fewer grave goods were deposited, and scientific dating methods need to be more widely applied both on burials (eg. Huggins 1991a), occupation sites (eg. Gilman 1990, 132) and waterlogged wooden structures (eg. Crummy et al. 1982; Goodburn and Redknap 1988).

In Early Saxon Essex, sand-tempered pottery predominated, though during the seventh century, this was gradually replaced by grass-tempered wares (Cunningham 1982, 360; Hamerow 1987; 1993, 22-59). Cunningham (1982, 360) claims that the eighth and ninth centuries were largely aceramic in Essex, though the two sites usually cited as evidence for this are both churches (Asheldham: Drury and Rodwell 1978; Hadstock: Rodwell 1976a). In London (Redknap 1991, 356), Middlesex and Berkshire (Astill and Lobb 1989; Hodges 1981, Fig. 6.2; Vince 1984), grass-tempered pottery clearly continues into the ninth and possibly the tenth centuries, though with

reduced importance. The same appears to be true of Essex. At Barking, it formed 77% (by weight) of the pottery from a Middle Saxon quarry pit, sealed by a building whose pottery assemblage contained just 46% grass-tempered ware (Redknap 1991, 356); a coin of 845-55 was associated with the upper levels of this building. A wooden mill-leat, dated by dendrochronology to 770, produced an assemblage of 32% grass-tempered ware (Redknap 1991, 356).

The occurrence of Middle Saxon pottery imported from Ipswich, whose production appears to have started c.650 and ceased c.850 (Wade 1988, 93), is rather more widespread in Essex than has been previously thought, though it is still rare to find more than a few sherds on any one site (Fig. 1; cf. Wade 1988, fig. 54). Interestingly, field-walking in north-west Essex yielded several sites with Ipswich Ware sherds (Williamson 1986), suggesting that here at least, it was in use even on rural settlements.

From the ninth century, pottery becomes more common with the appearance of "Saxo-Norman" wares. Barking has "Late Saxon Shelly Ware", derived from the Upper Thames Valley (Redknap 1991), while elsewhere in Essex St. Neots Ware from Cambridgeshire and locally produced St. Neots-type shell-tempered wares predominate. St. Neots Ware is generally thought to have been produced from the late ninth century (Rodwell and Rodwell 1993, 78), though its appearance in Essex cannot be closely dated (the occurrence of St. Neots and Thetford Ware in association with ninth-century coins at Witham (Cottrill 1934) is erroneous; Rodwell 1993a, 102). There are also some imports of Thetford and Thetford-type Ware, the latter possibly produced in Ipswich. In Colchester at least, its use may have ceased by the mid-eleventh century (Crummy 1981, 40). During both the Middle and Late Saxon period there are also a limited number of high status sites with imports from the continent (Fig. 1). Therefore, during our period, a near continuous pottery sequence exists, though such material remains rare and is only found in any quantity on high status sites.

In addition to pottery, there is a limited amount of metalwork from several sites, and also a range of coins. The final class of evidence for this period is that of standing buildings. Apart from the church at Greensted, the only surviving structures appear to be of stone. A number of Late Saxon churches are known while excavations at several churches have revealed Late Saxon predecessors, of which no evidence survives above ground (see below).

The East Saxon Kingdom and Royal Estates

For much of the period covered by this paper, the archaeology and history of Essex is dominated by sites with high status associations, particularly with the Crown, but also the church. A unified East Saxon kingdom probably emerged in the late sixth century out of a series of smaller territories such as the Rodings and Dengie (Bailey 1988, 34), not unlike the early estates identified in Kent (Everitt 1986, 75-9). In the seventh century, the kingdom probably extended as far as Middlesex and Surrey (Dumville 1989; Yorke 1990). Around 700, Middlesex, Surrey and London were lost to Mercia, and though Essex itself appears to have been subject to limited Mercian overlordship thereafter, it remained an independent kingdom until around 820 when it was incorporated into Wessex (Dumville 1989, 135).

Metcalf (1978; 1993, 21) has shown how eighth-century "Series S" sceattas were issued by the East Saxon kings, probably as an expression of independence from their political overlords. Coins of Mercia were copied, but the
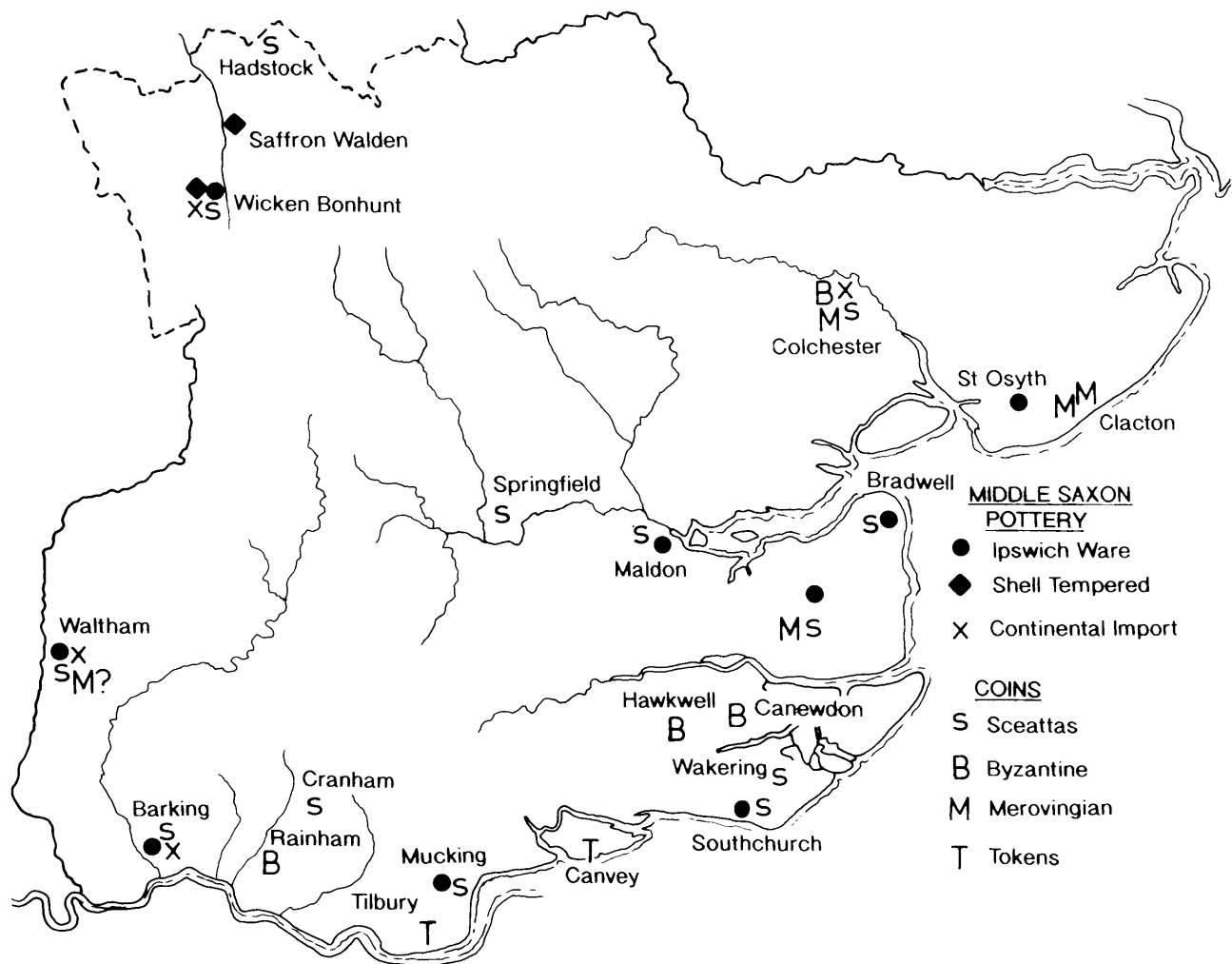
Fig.1 Middle Saxon Essex: Imported Material

king's head was replaced by a sphinx, perhaps recalling past classical glories of Colchester (Metcalf 1978; 1984, 34). Early eighth-century "Series B" sceattas may also be derived from Essex (Metcalf 1993, 94-104).

The kingdom would have been administered through a series of royal vills. The location of various possible *villae regales* can be postulated through documentary, place-name and archaeological evidence, though care must be taken to avoid regarding every "high status" settlement as a royal vill (Sawyer 1983, 283). Too much emphasis should not be placed upon back-projecting evidence from Domesday, as the 1086 survey lists the ancient royal demesne along with the holdings of Harold (Boyden 1986, 71).

The major Royal holdings of middle to late Saxon Essex are shown on figure 2 and listed in Table 1. This is not an attempt to provide a definitive guide to royal vills as some may have passed into secular or ecclesiastical hands without record. It clearly shows a correlation with major Roman sites, and Roman roads that must have survived throughout the period as they are still in use today. In

central and northern Essex there also appears to be a correlation with Early Saxon cemeteries. This use by the Saxon elite of pre-existing monuments (also Springfield Lyons: Buckley and Hedges 1987), seen elsewhere in southern England (Harke 1994) must surely be some form of legitimisation. The same can be seen in the East Anglian Wuffing dynasty lineage which includes Caesar (Scull 1992, 14).

Many royal vills later became hundred centres possibly from the time of Edward the Elder (Boyden 1986, 178), while several saw the construction of *burhs* and went onto to become towns with market and mint functions (see below). Britnell (1978) has suggested that the right of holding hundredal markets may date to the Late Saxon period and these also show a strong correlation with royal centres, as do hundred moots (Christy 1928). Clearly, these royal vills were important "central places", with administrative, economic, and ecclesiastical functions which, if not in the same location, were at least in close proximity.
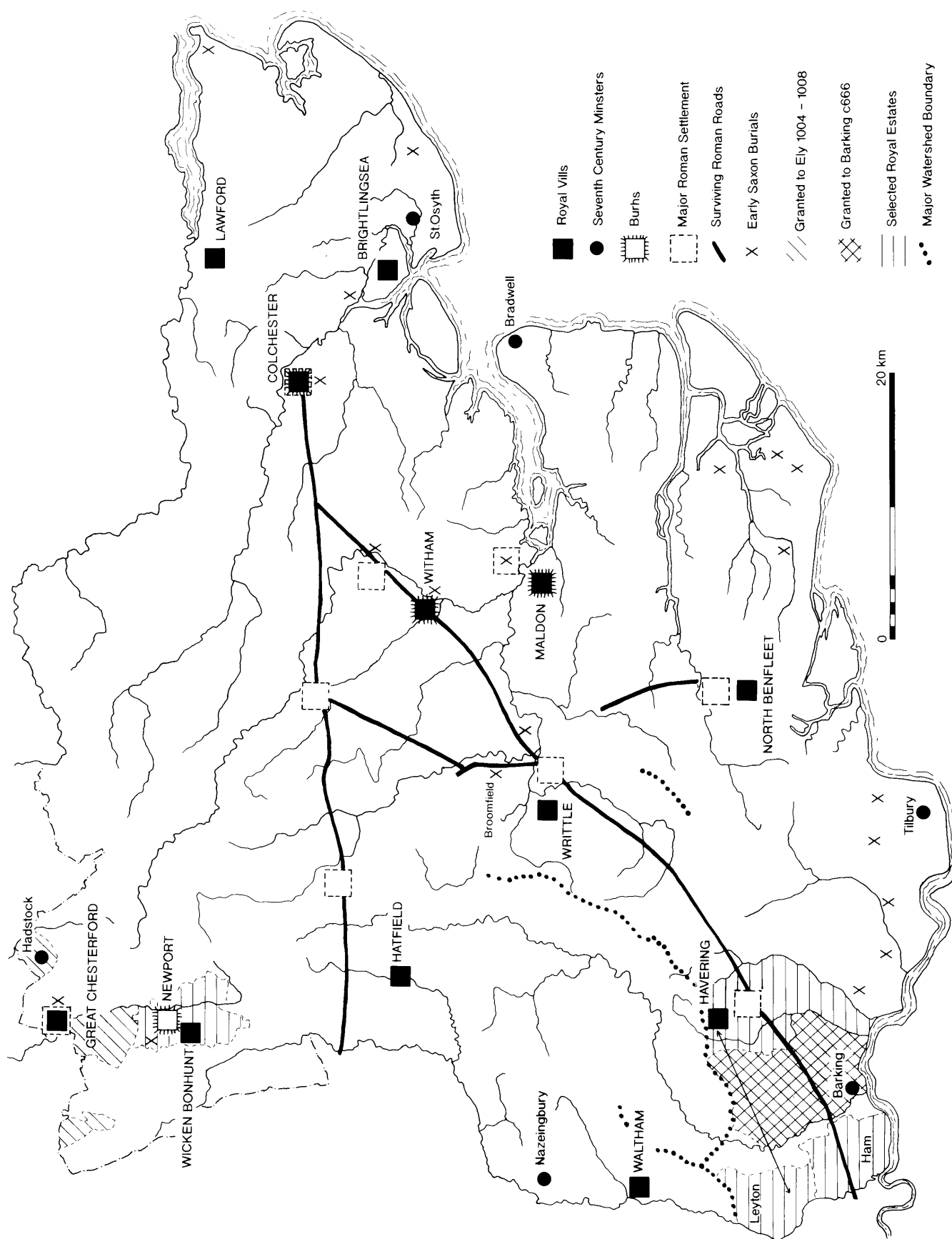
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Fig. 2 Royal Estates in Essex

Legend:
- ■ Royal Vills
- ● Seventh Century Minsters
- ⊡ Burhs
- ⬚ Major Roman Settlement
- Surviving Roman Roads
- X Early Saxon Burials
- Granted to Ely 1004 – 1008
- Granted to Barking c666
- Selected Royal Estates
- Major Watershed Boundary

Map labels: LAWFORD, BRIGHTLINGSEA, StOsyth, COLCHESTER, Bradwell, WITHAM, MALDON, NORTH BENFLEET, Broomfield, WRITTLE, Tilbury, Hadstock, GREAT CHESTERFORD, NEWPORT, WICKEN BONHUNT, HATFIELD, HAVERING, Barking, Ham, Leyton, Nazeingbury, WALTHAM

20 km

TABLE 1 : ROYAL VILLS

Royal Demesne (Domesday)	Roman Road	Roman Town	Pagan Cemetery	Hundred Moot	Hundred Market ?	Ferm ** Payments
Brightlingsea			Alresford			X
Chesterford		(Chesterford)	Chesterford			
Colchester	X	*Camulodunum*	Colchester	Lexden		
Lawford						X
Havering	X	*Durolitium*		Dagenham		
Hatfield					X	
Maldon		(Heybridge)	Heybridge			
N. Benfleet	X	(Wickford)				
Waltham				Waltham	X	
Witham	X	(Ivy Chimneys)*	L. Braxted	Witham		
Wicken/Newport		Wendens	Wendens		X	
Writtle	X	*Caesaromagus*	Broomfield, Springfield	Writtle	X	X

* Temple/Church site
**provisions to maintain the king's household

Each of the major sites will now be described in turn, demonstrating how a wide range of evidence is both necessary and desirable in order to understand the development of these centres.

Colchester

The former classical grandeur of Colchester provides an obvious location for a royal vill, its reuse legitimising East Saxon power. Tentative support for this hypothesis comes from the late seventh-century "Vanimundus" sceattas probably minted in Essex (Metcalf 1993, 80-1). They are copied from Merovingian coins, and a specimen from Colchester includes the letters "CA". It is intriguing to think that a particular Merovingian coin may have been selected for copying as it contained these two letters, actually referring to *Cabilonnum*, because they were the first two letters of *Camulodunum* (Metcalf 1993, 80-1).

Roman Colchester appears to have been virtually abandoned in the early fifth century, and the scatter of Early Saxon huts does not suggest any degree of continued urban life (Crummy 1981; 1984, 73-5; 1992, 118-20, 333). Several Roman extra-mural cemeteries saw continued burial in the fifth to seventh centuries (Crummy 1981, 6-21), though they may have served a wider areas than just the town itself.

There is almost no evidence for occupation between the eighth and ninth centuries (Crummy 1981, 23; 1992, 34), and the sparsity of Middle Saxon grass-tempered pottery and total absence of Ipswich Ware may suggest a genuine hiatus of occupation (the Ipswich Ware sherd shown by Wade 1988, fig. 54. is erroneous; Wade pers. comm.). Several east-west burials just to the west of the later castle may date to the Middle Saxon period (Drury 1982, 386), though no absolute dates have been determined; a Late Saxon date is quite plausible.

A potentially important site, called Old Heath derived from Old English for "old landing place" (Reaney 1935, 376-7), lies beside the River Colne around 3 km to the south east of the Roman town. A seventh-century Merovingian vessel has been discovered there (Crummy 1981, 21-2). Thus, the situation in Colchester may be similar to that in London, where a trading settlement lay outside the Roman walls, whereas the royal vill was inside (Hobley 1988, 73; Vince 1990).

Therefore, evidence for a *villa regalis* at Colchester in the eighth and ninth centuries is tentative. However, a royal vill was certainly established within the walls sometime after the early tenth century, in the area later occupied by the Norman castle (Drury 1982). In 916, Edward the Elder lay siege to Colchester, expelled the Danish army and established a *burh* (Crummy 1981, 24; Dodgson 1991). Morphological and metrical analysis of the field- and property-boundary pattern suggests that much of the intra-mural area was replanned using a module of four poles (22 yards) (Crummy 1981, 50-1). This event is undated, but the early tenth century is the obvious context (Crummy 1981, 72). Thetford Ware has been found in a number of sites within the intra-mural area, especially along the High Street, but only from the late tenth century, when Colchester also became a mint (Crummy 1981, 32-40, 70).

Maldon

The Roman small town at Heybridge declined in the fourth century, though fifth century occupation is testified by several Saxon "sunken-featured buildings" and pagan Saxon burials in the Roman cemetery (Drury and Wickenden 1982). In the Middle Saxon period, the focus of occupation appears to have shifted across the river, to the hill at Maldon. A sherd of Ipswich Ware from close to the later church (Webster and Cherry 1973, 140-1), and an early eighth-century sceatta (Rigold and Metcalf 1984, 257) are the earliest indications of occupation. The place-name "Maldon" means "hill marked by a cross" (Reaney 1935, 218), and Cooper (1993b, ix) has recently suggested that this might imply the presence of an early religious site, perhaps a minster in a royal vill.

In 912, Maldon was used as a forward base during the campaign of Edward the Elder, implying it was a royal estate, and during 916 Maldon was chosen as a site for a *burh* (Dodgson 1991, 170). A plausible location of this has recently been established (Bedwin 1992, 21), though there is little evidence for contemporary occupation within its defences (Webster and Cherry 1973, 140-1). Rather, tenth century and later occupation appears to have been focused just to the east, around the site of the medieval church and market place (Bedwin 1992, 21; Bennett and Gilman 1989, 151).

Witham

"Witham" was the site of another *burh*, constructed during King Edward's campaign of 912. The site of this *burh* has recently been considered in detail by Rodwell (1993a) in his excellent work on the landscape of Witham, and the arguments need not be repeated here. Suffice to say that a series of excavations have failed to produce any evidence for Late Saxon refortification of the Late Bronze Age/Iron Age hillfort at Chipping Hill and a more plausibe location is provided by a rectangular enclosure at "Burgate" in Rivenhall End or the D-shaped enclosure under the medieval new town of Witham (Rodwell and Rodwell 1986, 179-82; 1993, 176).

Either way, a remarkably similar sequence can be postulated to that at Maldon, with a royal estate centre, probable minster church and triangular market place (Rodwell 1993, Fig. 25, 67-71) adjacent to a substantial Roman site (the pagan temple and Christian church at Ivy Chimneys; Turner 1982), and a pagan Saxon cemetery at Little Braxted (Tyler 1992). Like Newport and possibly Horndon-on-the-Hill, Witham failed to develop into a true urban centre in the late Saxon period, until the creation of a twelfth-century "new town" (Rodwell 1993a, 87).

Wicken Bonhunt and Newport

The settlement excavated at Wicken Bonhunt was enclosed by a substantial ditch, and consisted of numerous timber-framed buildings beside an open area (Wade 1980). The material culture suggests a very high status settlement, with pottery imported from St. Neots, Ipswich and the continent. The bone assemblage showed a very high proportion of pig, which would also suggest high status consumption. An extensive cemetery lies close by (Atkinson 1993 and pers. comm.).

There is no known royal association with Wicken Bonhunt, but Rickling just to the south appears to be named after "Ricola", wife of the late sixth-century king Sledda of the East Saxons (Reaney 1935, 532), and it remained royal demesne until Domesday. A possible derivation of the neighbouring place-name Quendon is "Queens valley" (Reaney 1935, 53). The Royal connection is strengthened by the probable location of the Edwardian *burh* of "Wigingamere" at Newport, a parish that seems to have been carved out of Wicken and the neighbouring parish of Widdington (Haslam 1988, 29). The standing parish church at Newport is thirteenth century, but its cruciform plan may be suggestive of a former minster status (Rodwell and Rodwell 1977, 114). A link with Wicken Bonhunt is provided by a judgement, probably of the early twelfth century, stating that the chapel at Bonhunt formerly belonged to the church at Newport (Davis 1974, 17-18).

At Domesday, Newport paid 2 nights "ferm", the provisions to maintain the king's household, which suggests it was the last surviving element of a much larger royal estate (Round 1903, 31), one element of which appears to have been in Great Shelford, Cambridgeshire (Hart 1993a 13; Taylor 1974, 9). We can only speculate as to the other elements in this territory, though Rickling and Quendon form a physically discrete block of land assessed as 10 hides, and Wicken Bonhunt, Widdington, Newport and Wendens Ambo form another discrete unit of 30 hides.

Like Witham, Newport did not appear to have developed into a thriving town until the post-conquest period. There are no references to it having burgesses in Domesday, though its place-name does suggest a market (Reaney 1935, 531). The brief mint of "Nipeport" established under Edward the Confessor, traditionally located at Newport Pagnell, may have been at Newport in Essex (Boyden 1986, 260; Freeman 1985, 214-6).

Great Chesterford

Great Chesterford was held in 1066 by Earl Edgar, king Edward's nephew, while Little Chesterford was held by Queen Edith. The Royal estate was formerly more extensive, as Hadstock, Littlebury and Streetly Green were granted to Ely in the early eleventh century (Bentham 1771, 81; Hart 1971, Nos. 36, 41). Once again, this Royal vill was adjacent to an important Roman site which saw continued use in some form during the Early Saxon period. Saxon grass-tempered pottery is recorded from within the walled area (Rodwell 1976b, 238-9) and the northern Roman cemetery contains pagan Saxon burials (Evison 1969). The parish church lies on the edge of the southern cemetery, and its cruciform plan once again suggests a Saxon minster church (Rodwell 1980, 120).

Waltham Abbey

The place-name "Wealdham" is suggestive of a royal estate centre in a forest area (R. Huggins 1975), and recent excavations have revealed traces of a possible timber church associated with a burial radiocarbon dated to 560 ± 50 uncal, ad. (Huggins and Bascombe 1992, 334). A sceatta of c.715A.D. is recorded from just to the south (Huggins 1988a). Around the eighth century, the timber church was replaced by a stone structure (Huggins and Bascombe 1992) associated with a Middle Saxon settlement, indicated by finds including Ipswich Ware and continental pottery (Huggins 1970b; 1972; 1973; 1976; 1988a; 1988b; Musty 1978). Late Saxon occupation, including a possibly Norse-type turf-walled hall, also appears to have concentrated to the north of the church (Huggins 1988a, Fig. 1 with addition of 1992 site immediately to north of church in vicarage garden; Huggins pers. comm.). To the south of the church lies an enigmatic enclosure called "Eldeworth" (Huggins 1988b, Fig. 1). Dating of this is unclear, but does not preclude Late Saxon (Clarke et al. 1993).

Barking/Havering (Fig. 2)

Havering was another ancient royal manor at Domesday, including the vills of Romford and Hornchurch. It was assessed as ten hides, which seems rather low. The explanation is that the Havering hide was 480 acres, rather than the usual 120 (VCH Essex VII, 17); thus, Havering was in effect 40 hides. A variety of evidence suggests that much of the ancient Becontree Hundred, which included the later Havering Liberty, was formerly part of the royal estate. The 40 hide estate at Barking was granted by King Suidfred of Essex to Erkenwald c.666 (Hart 1971, No. 2), and thirty five hides were granted at Dagenham, Rainham and Ilford c.687 (Hart 1971, No. 4). Four hides and eight freemen in Leyton owed dues to the kings manor at Havering, and East and West Ham were royal land until 958 (Hart 1971, No. 15; VCH Essex VI, 8). When these various estates are plotted, they form a discrete block of territory covering the south-west corner of Essex, defined to the north by a major sinuous boundary which follows a watershed (Fig. 2).

Horndon-On-The-Hill

A Late Saxon mint was briefly established at Horndon, part of the royal policy of dispersing coin manufacture in a troubled time to ensure minimum disruption should any mint cease production (Eddy and Petchey 1983, 63; Freeman 1985; Metcalf and Lean 1993, 206). A large rectangular enclosure, c.800 m by 1500 m, can be defined by earthworks and the post-medieval field-boundary pattern, to the east of the High Street (Eddy 1980, 71-3). No excavations have been carried out within the enclosure, but Horndon's period as a mint is a plausible context for its construction.

The only other evidence for there having been a settlement here of urban character is a Domesday reference to "mansiones". Boyden (1986, 280) suggests these may be houses rather than hides. There are no known royal associations with Horndon, other than Domesday referring to several "invasions" against the king's property (Rumble 1983, 90). Recent excavations have produced a little tenth to eleventh-century pottery (Gilman 1992, 106; Wallis 1991), and a church is recorded in Domesday.

The Church

The development of the church in Essex was closely related to royal power. Two broad types of ecclesiastical institution emerged from the gradual seventh-century conversion; monasteries and minsters. We should not impose too rigid a division between the two, as documentary references can often be unclear as to what type of religious establishment existed (eg. White Notley: Taylor and Taylor 1965, 475). Sites may also have served as both monasteries and minsters at different times (eg. Hadstock: Rodwell 1976a).

Monastic sites were often characterised by their insularity, with coastal or riverside locations particularly favoured (Fig. 2). The early foundations were on royal lands, and concentrated around the periphery of the kingdom, a similar distribution to that in Kent (Brooks 1989, Fig. 4.2). At Barking, no evidence of the Saxon church itself has been discovered, but excavations in and around the precinct have revealed important evidence concerning the nature of this Middle to Late Saxon monastery. At the Barking Abbey Industrial Site, evidence of two buildings, wells and the leat of a mill have been excavated (MacGowan 1987). These and other excavations suggests a wealthy estate centre, scattered over a substantial area beside the River Roding, with evidence for iron, bronze and textile production. Most of the assemblage would fit happily with that from a contemporary trading port, with the exception of a small quantity of more specialised items such as styli, window glass and gold thread from woven braids, normally associated with monastic crafts (Redknap 1991, 359). Pottery was imported from Ipswich, North France/Belgium and the Rhineland with lava querns from the Eifel region (Redknap 1991, 359; 1992). The site's proximity to a tributary of the river Thames would certainly provide an ideal location for a port.

Barking appears to have been abandoned from c.870 to the early tenth century, though the community was certainly re-established by c.940 (MacGowan 1987, 35; Redknap 1991, 359). At Amberley Lane, part of an industrial complex has been excavated, including the base of a glass kiln, archaeomagnetically dated to 920±50; window, vessel and millifiore glass appear to have been produced (Gilman 1991, 150; K MacGowan pers. comm.). It is worth mentioning the contrast between the wealth of Barking, and austerity of other early monastic sites, such as Nazeingbury (Bascombe 1987; Huggins 1978).

The second type of ecclesiastical institution were minster churches, staffed by a group of priests who ministered to the local population (Blair 1988, 35; Morris 1989, 128-33). In the seventh and eighth centuries they were established by the Crown on its estates, and were often coterminous with the territory of the royal vill (Morris 1989, 128). One of the earliest such minsters in Essex was probably at Waltham Abbey (Huggins and Bascombe 1992).

From around the tenth century, secular lords began founding minster churches, while the final stage in the emergence of the medieval ecclesiastical structure of Essex was the fragmentation of the minster territories and provision of parish churches. The close correspondence of parish church and manorial hall in Essex is well known (Rodwell and Rodwell 1977, 92), and it is likely that many churches were initially built as estate chapels by the lord of the manor (eg. Ashingdon; Rodwell 1993b).

Unfortunately, the Essex Domesday paid little attention to churches; there are just 37 churches or priests recorded in Essex (Darby 1971, 257) compared to 345 in Suffolk (Rodwell 1980, 120). However, around Dunmow, a range of documentary and archaeological evidence suggests that out of 24 medieval parishes, 21 had churches by the mid-eleventh century (Rodwell and Rodwell 1977, 92). A similar density probably existed over most of the County, as where excavations have been on a fairly large scale, evidence of pre-Conquest structures are often found. At Cressing (Hope 1984), Rivenhall (Rodwell and Rodwell 1986) and West Bergholt (Turner 1984b), the remains of timber structures have been found under each of the Saxo-Norman stone churches. Another example may be Asheldham (Drury and Rodwell 1978), though recent excavations have cast doubt over the timber structure there (Andrews and Smoothy 1990). At Little Ilford, graves were cut by elements of a timber church probably of the eleventh century, replaced in stone during the mid-twelfth century (Redknap 1985). At Greensted, a timber church of the Saxon period actually survives to this day, though its dating is still uncertain (Christie et al. 1979).

Elsewhere, all that we can say is that the present medieval stone church was not the earliest on a site. For example, at Little Oakley (Corbishley 1984) and West Thurrock (Milton 1984) burials pre-date the early twelfth century stone churches. Taking documentary, architectural and archaeological evidence, we know of around 98 churches in Essex by the late eleventh century (Gilman 1989, 169-70; Redknap 1985; Rodwell 1980; Rodwell and Rodwell 1977; Taylor and Taylor 1965; Turner 1984a).

The Vikings

The Early Phase

In the late 860s, the Vikings began their conquest of eastern England, and during the 870s, East Anglia, Mercia and Essex fell (Crummy 1981, 92; Vince 1990, 18). Several Essex churches were destroyed in 870, such as St. Botolph's monastery at "Icanho" (possibly Hadstock : Rodwell 1976a, 69), and the Abbey at Barking (Hart 1993a, 117). There is certainly a hiatus in the occupation of Barking (Redknap 1991, 359), and the destruction of the excavated period 1 church at Hadstock may equate with this documented event, though there is no independent dating evidence (Rodwell 1976a, 70).

During the 880s the English recovered under Alfred and London was recaptured in 886, but the Vikings continued to be active in Essex, constructing encampments at Benfleet, Mersea, Shoebury and in the Lea Valley around 893/5 (Hart 1993a, 118, 501; Spurrell 1890). During the second decade of the tenth century, the English gradually recaptured Essex, building burhs at Witham in 912, Maldon in 916, and Newport in 917 (Bedwin 1992; Haslam 1988). Also in 917, the Danes were expelled from Colchester, and the fourth Essex burh established there (Crummy 1981). The only possible evidence for Danish activity at Colchester are "Viking Type" axe heads dredged from the River Colne, though they may actually date anywhere in the Late Saxon and Norman periods (Crummy 1981, 14). A "Viking Age" sword is recorded from Walthamstow (Richards 1991, 115), and a ninth-century "Danish-style throwing axe" from Asheldham (Laver 1930, 183-5).

Although Essex was part of Danelaw for several decades, there is in fact very little evidence for Viking settlement. A study of Domesday surnames in Colchester shows that Scandinavian names are no more significant that other ethnic groups (Crummy 1981, 24-5). Indeed, all the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle says is that Danes were expelled; it

is unclear whether they ever established a permanent settlement or merely a temporary encampment.

There are a number of possible Scandinavian place-names in Essex, notably "thorpe", concentrating in the north east (Hart 1993a, Fig. 3.1). There are also supposed "Viking" burials in the west of the County at Saffron Walden (Bassett 1982, 13) and Waltham Abbey (Huggins 1988a), but these simply represent individuals buried with pieces of Scandinavian metalwork. The presence of these exchangeable artefacts, such as a pin from Wicken Bonhunt (Musty *et al.* 1973), and plate/mount from Waltham (Huggins 1984; 1988a, 145-7) need not imply that they were worn by Scandinavian settlers. However, the burial(s) from close to the churchyard at Leigh-on-Sea, supposedly found with a sword, horse and small hoard of late ninth-century coins, is suggestive of a Viking warrior (Biddle 1987).

This hoard was deposited c.895-900, and consisted of English coins (Biddle 1987; Blackburn 1989). It contrasts with a contemporary hoard from Ashdon, near Hadstock, that was comprised of predominantly Viking issues, possibly suggesting the far north-west corner of Essex fell within the Danish East Anglian sphere of monetary circulation (Blackburn 1989, 27). This repeats the pattern seen in the distribution of Middle Saxon pottery imported from Cambridgeshire (Fig. 1), in suggesting this area to economically look north not south.

The Second Phase
In the late tenth century, Essex once again became a battle ground, with conflicts at Maldon in 991 (Cooper 1993a; Hart 1993a, 533-543; Scragg 1991), and "Assandun", probably Ashdon not Ashingdon, in 1016 (Hart 1993a, 553-565; Rodwell 1993b). This period of Viking activity is not likely to have led to any folk settlement. However, at Waltham, King Canute's standard bearer Tovi is said to have had a hunting lodge (Huggins 1976, 75), and a hall claimed to be of a Norse tradition and dated on the basis of associated pottery to the late tenth/early eleventh century has been excavated just north of the church (Huggins 1976; cf. Graham-Campbell 1977). A burial was found nearby with a roughly contemporary metal plate of Late Saxon style; this may be the burial of "a member of Tovi's household, or a contemporary native with access to Viking equipment (Huggins 1984, 179).

Rural Settlement and the Landscape
By Domesday, Essex was extremely productive, and had a high density of population and ploughteams (Darby 1971; McDonald and Snooks 1985). Well organised estates certainly existed from the late seventh century, illustrated by the few early charters that survive for Essex (Hart 1971). The considerable resources that estate owners as early as c.700 could call upon is demonstrated by the Mersea causeway (Crummy *et al.* 1982) and other substantial timber structures possibly related to fishing in the Blackwater Estuary (Crump and Wallis 1992).

Estate Structure
The multiplicity of Domesday manors with the same name indicate that the mid-eleventh century estate structure had resulted from a long process of fragmentation. For example, there were seven Tolleshunts at Domesday. The place-name is interpreted as "*Toll's* spring" (Reaney 1935, 306). The two adjacent manors of Tollesbury also contain the personal-name "Toll", suggesting that together Tollesbury and Tolleshunt were part of one early territory. At Domesday these 12 manors amounted to 42 hides.

Another example of the fragmentation of an early estate is the Rodings (Bassett 1989b, Fig. 1.11), which had split

into 16 manors by Domesday. In the medieval period these were grouped into 8 parishes. Therefore, we can postulate an original territory, which at Domesday was assessed at 29 hides, that subsequently fragmented into at least 16 units, several of which were combined when the parochial structure was imposed. Where the extent of Middle Saxon estates can be determine, it is notable that many tend to be around thirty to forty hides; Barking 40; Havering 40; Rodings 29; Tollesbury 42; Waltham Holy Cross 40; Wicken 40. These estates tend to be centred on settlements in river valleys, with their boundaries up on the watersheds (eg. Fig. 2).

Settlement Patterns
In the medieval period, the landscape typical of Midland England, with a nucleated village clustered around a church and manor surrounded by open fields, is largely absent from Essex. Instead, settlement was more dispersed, often occurring as loose nucleations in the valleys, with several other manors and small hamlets scattered throughout the rest of a parish, each with its own fields. Though the origins of this settlement pattern are obscure, they must lie in the Saxon period.

There are some signs of a settlement contraction in the fifth and sixth century including the abandonment of many Roman sites, especially at the more Romanized end of the settlement hierarchy such as villas. On some sites, this decay appears to have begun as early as the fourth century. Pollen analysis from the Mar Dyke shows a slight woodland or scrub regeneration in the extreme south of the County during the immediate post-Roman period (Wilkinson 1988), though other evidence from Essex (Murphy this volume) and the much greater volume of data from Norfolk and Suffolk show no major regeneration (Williamson 1993).

Extensive fieldwalking in Norfolk and Suffolk has shown that the heaviest clays were abandoned in the Early Saxon period, while in the valleys, Saxon settlements tend to occur close to Roman sites (Newman 1992; Scull 1992, 10). More limited work in north west Essex shows a similar picture (Brooks and Bedwin 1989; Brooks and Wall 1988, 12; Medlycott 1990; Williamson 1984; 1986). For example around Stansted and along the A120, Roman settlement was abundant in all areas (Fig. 3), but just one Early Saxon site was uncovered, through excavation not fieldwalking. However, considering Williamson had to fieldwalk areas in extreme detail and under ideal conditions in order to find the handful of Saxon sherds, it is not clear whether this is valid negative evidence.

In broad terms, settlement was expanding in the Middle to Late Saxon period. This is shown by "leah"/"feld"/"hyrst" place-names representing Late Saxon assarts (Gelling 1978, 119-23; Reaney 1935, 568). Woodland clearance was continuing, reflected in the large number of vills with less woodland in 1086 than 1066 (Round 1903, 379). The critical period in the evolution of the medieval settlement pattern appears to have been during this period of expansion.

Most Early Saxon sites appear to have been abandoned by the late seventh century; they lack Middle Saxon grass-tempered pottery and Ipswich Ware. However, it must be borne in mind that the former may not always have been distinguished from Early Saxon grass-tempered pottery, and the Ipswich Ware does not appear to have circulated widely in rural areas (Vince 1984, 433; Hamerow 1991, 14). At Mucking, the latest evidence for occupation comes from a small group of coins dated to c.685 and a sherd of Ipswich Ware (Hamerow 1991, 14; 1993, 5-6, 22), though a recent metal-detector find may indicate occupation continuing into the early eighth century; unfortunately the provenance of this find is unclear (H. Hamerow and M. Metcalf pers. comm.).
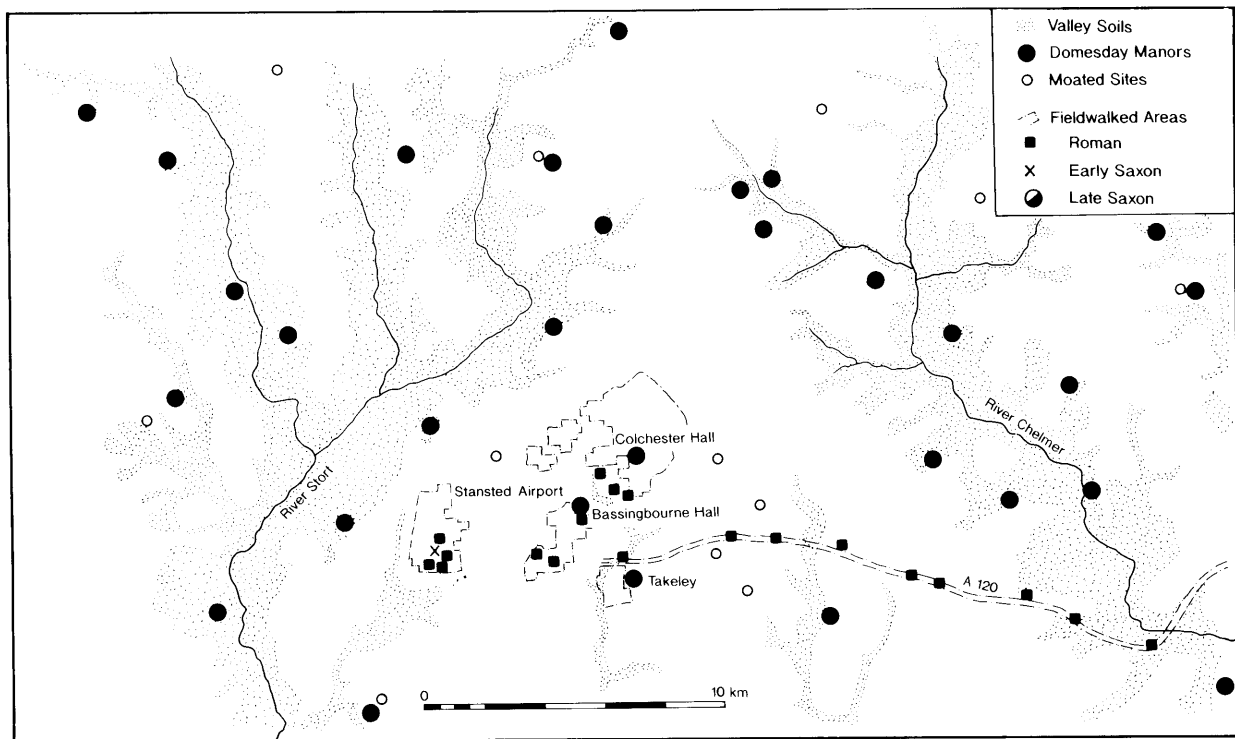
Fig. 3 The evolution of Late Saxon settlement around Stansted Airport

In Norfolk and Suffolk, extensive fieldwalking shows a shift in settlement during the Middle Saxon period, with Ipswich Ware tending to concentrate around later churches, rather than in the areas of Early Saxon occupation (Davison 1990; Newman 1988; 1992; Wade-Martins 1980). In north-west Essex, more limited fieldwalking suggests the same pattern (Williamson 1986, 125). Around Stansted, Domesday settlement was clearly concentrated in the river valleys, though several manors occurred on the edges of the interfluvial areas, such as Takeley, Colchester Hall and Bassingbourne Hall (Fig. 3). Whether these sites represent a recolonization of this area in the Late Saxon period (note the "leah" place-name), or whether there had in fact been near continuous, but virtually aceramic, occupation in the vicinity of these sites is impossible to determined; considering the scarcity of Early Saxon material from the Stansted excavations, the former is favoured.

Excavations have shown the Middle to Late Saxon origin of several church-hall complexes (eg. Asheldham: Drury and Rodwell 1978; Pentlow Hall: Andrews 1991; Rivenhall: Rodwell and Rodwell 1986). However, it is not always clear whether these ever formed the basis for nucleated settlements. At Little Holland, the church/hall complex certainly appears to have been isolated (Andrews and Brooks 1989), while at North Shoebury, extensive excavations around the church, have revealed a ditched enclosure (c.100 x 70 m) possibly dug as early as the eleventh century, but with no trace of an associated nucleated settlement (K. Crowe pers. comm.; Wymer and Brown 1995).

A number of other church/hall complexes have produced Late Saxon finds (eg. pottery - Danbury: Morris and Buckley 1978, 14; Great Chesterford: Brooks and Wallis 1991, 39-40; Little Waltham: Drury 1978, 136; Pentlow: Andrews 1991; Strethall: Williamson 1986, 127; Witham: Dunning 1962. Coins - Castle Hedingham: Priddy 1991; Kelvedon: Eddy 1982, 20; Takeley: Medlycott 1990, 79). However, it is not clear whether these finds relate to the hall itself, or a surrounding settlement as in Suffolk and Norfolk.

The largest scale excavation is at Springfield Lyons (Buckley and Hedges 1987, 24-31). The small amount of pottery is dated to the tenth and eleventh centuries, and other finds included Rhenish lava quern fragments and possible Rhenish pottery. This, along with the number, range and size of structures does suggest this was a fairly high status settlement (Buckley and Hedges 1987, 38). However, as there are so few sites with which to compare Springfield, even outside Essex (Astill and Lobb 1989, 88-90), we cannot be sure that this is not the material culture that we should expect on an ordinary rural settlement. One of the few lesser status settlements to be discovered in Essex is at Chignall St. James, where a single post-built structure was been excavated beside a ditched trackway; its function is unclear (Brooks 1992).

Rural Resources

Domesday records a wide range of non-agricultural resources which formed an integral part of the rural economy. Settlements show a marked tendency to occur on the margins of geological and topographical zones in order to exploit a variety of environments (eg. Fig. 3), with parishes including areas of both light and heavy soil. Long, sinuous lanes often traverse the whole parish, linking settlements in the centre with the variety of resources that existed.

One of the most important resources was pasture. In the Saxon period, grazing on coastal saltmarshes was a communal right, and settlements far inland had "pasture for sheep" on the Thames marshes (Round 1903, 369-70). By Domesday, coastal marshes were also used for boiling sea water to produce salt (Darby 1971, 246-7). Fisheries are recorded along the whole coast, and recent aerial photography has revealed the remains of wooden fish-weirs at several locations around the Essex coast, notably off Bradwell and Mersea Island (Clarke 1993; Crump and Wallis 1992). At Collins Creek, these fishweirs have yielded radiocarbon dates of 640-75 and 882-957 A.D. It is tempting to see these structures as associated with the early monastic foundation at Bradwell.

Essex was a relatively well-wooded county (Darby 1971). Like the coastal marshes, upland heaths and woods were exploited through intercommoning (Rackham 1986, 14; Rippon 1991, 58). Woodland was used for fuel, building timber and grazing pigs. The work of Rackham (1986; 1993) has clearly illustrated the importance of woodland as resource, and it should not be regarded as waste land waiting to be converted to arable. Deer parks were generally a post-Norman creation, but at Ongar at least, an enclosure to retain deer existed in the Late Saxon period (Cantor and Hatherley 1979, 71).

Landscape Management
The field-boundary pattern in parts of Essex possesses a high degree of regularity, indicating that large areas were planned out in a single episode (Rippon 1991, Fig. 1; also Bassett 1982, Fig. 3; Rodwell 1993a, Fig. 36; Williamson 1984, Figs. 6.3, 6.6). Many areas of this planned landscape were laid out during the late Iron Age or very early Roman period (eg. Little Waltham : Drury 1978, Fig. 74). The survival of these relict Roman field-systems suggests that the landscape must have been continuously exploited, for arable or pasture, so as to prevent the regeneration of woodland.

A particularly extensive regular landscape exists in the south east of the County, consisting of a series of planned field-systems (Rippon 1991, Figs 1, 6; Rackham 1986; Rodwell 1978). When these landscapes were laid out is not entirely clear, but south of Wickford at least, a Roman date again seems likely (Rippon 1991). However, at Shoebury, a radial arrangement of roads is certainly post-Roman, for they overlay a Roman field-system on an entirely different orientation. A *terminus ante-quem* is certainly provided by the insertion of the eleventh century manorial enclosure at Shoebury, while the late ninth-century Viking fortress may either have been inserted into an existing landscape, or have been used as the point from which to plan the landscape; the former appears more likely. Thus, there appears to have been a major reorganisation of landed resources in the Middle to Late Saxon period. Unlike the Midlands, this does not appear to have been associated with the nucleation of settlement.

Discussion
This paper has reviewed the diverse evidence for Middle to Late Saxon Essex. Though both archaeological and documentary evidence is sparse, an interdisciplinary approach has been able to illuminate a number of themes. The available source material makes high status centres and in particular the closely related royal and ecclesiastical sites most evident. These institutions controlled considerable resources, and were able to participate in foreign trade and industrial production.

During both the Middle and Late Saxon periods, the greatest trading centre in the region was undoubtedly London, but from c.700 this was under Mercian control. It is tempting to argue that the East Saxon kings continued to conduct foreign trade themselves possibly via Colchester, while the finds from Barking suggest that monasteries also had contacts with the continent. Certainly the distribution of imported material and early trade tokens suggests the Essex estuaries were important axis' of trade in the Middle Saxon period (Fig. 1; based on Archibald 1991; Bispham 1986; Burnett 1987, 182; Rigold 1975). It should be stressed that there are many similarities in the cultural histories of south Essex and north Kent (eg. Brown, Sealey and Tyler this volume), illustrating that in a period when water transport was so important, estuaries served as major thoroughfares not as boundaries. In trading terms, Essex appears to have been largely eclipsed by London and Ipswich by the Late Saxon period (Metcalf and Lean 1993, 208).

In Essex, the church never came to dominate the landscape. It was a major landowner, but the estates of even the major religious houses tended to be dispersed (eg. St. Paul's: Hart 1993a, 205-20). Another characteristic of Essex is the limited power of the lay aristocracy. The originally extensive Middle Saxon royal estates fragmented to an extreme level, and the royal demesne shrunk considerably, but few lay magnates built up large estates. By Domesday most landholders held just one manor (Boyden 1986, 173).

Therefore, even into the Late Saxon period, it was the royal centres that were all important. Their role in local government is reflected in the fact that many went on to become hundred centres, and their economic importance is reflected in their development into the hundred markets and towns. In the case of Colchester, it was the intra-mural area that developed, whereas at Maldon, Newport and Witham, settlements grew up outside the defences around triangular market places and adjacent churches.

Domesday records burgesses at Colchester and Maldon, suggesting sizeable urban populations and at both sites, and archaeological evidence suggests fairly extensive settlements from the late tenth century. Maldon is the oldest mint in Essex, sporadically producing coins from the reign of Aethelstan (924-39) and a mint was established at Colchester under Aethelred (978-1016) (Blackburn 1991, 162; Metcalf and Lean 1993). Other mints were briefly established at Horndon and possibly Newport, but along with Witham, these "proto-urban" centres never appear to have been successful.

Conclusion: The Future
Essex in the eleventh century had a very varied landscape, agriculturally rich and with an abundance of natural resources. It should be remembered that the landscape of even an area the size of Essex was extremely varied, and the ways in which each different environment was exploited will show subtle variations (eg. Kent: Everitt 1986, 43-68). The Boulder Clay and terrace gravels have seen a series of large scale excavations, and even though there is scope for much greater work here, we should not overlook other distinctive environments such as the London Clay basin.

The settlement pattern, estate structure and church hierarchy that formed the basis of the medieval landscape, all appear to have emerged in the Middle to Late Saxon period. Compared to other parts of south-east England, documentary sources and archaeological evidence in Essex is poor, but this should only serve to encourage new approaches in order to overcome the deficiencies in our data.

Certain themes need more attention, and conventional archaeology must take the leading role. Large scale excavations of carefully selected sites are essential to address a number of issues. The development of towns is poorly understood in this period, and particular attention should be paid to the "proto-urban" centres such as Witham, Newport and Horndon. A fundamental academic question with a bearing on both the urban and rural landscape of Essex is the impact of London. An enigmatic class of site that also deserves more attention are the large possibly manorial enclosures such as Horndon and Waltham. Another possible Saxon rectangular enclosure at Ongar (c.400 x 250 m) pre-dates the Norman castle (Eddy and Petchey 1983, Fig. 19.1). Another example of a private defensive work may be at Clavering, where a castle is possibly referred to in 1052 (Pewsey and Brooks 1993, 22; Round 1903, 345). We also need large scale investigation of several church-manor complexes and their environs, particularly to determine their relationship to the wider settlement pattern.

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Essex has seen a considerable amount of church archaeology particularly in the 1970s, though there has been less research into the evolution of the ecclesiastical hierarchy as a whole. Important information continues to come from watching briefs, excavations (eg. Asheldham: Andrews and Smoothy 1990) and structural analysis (eg. Widdington: Gilman 1989, 169-70), but we must also consider documentary sources, place-names and dedications in order to identify the early hierarchy and the role of the church in the wider landscape.

However, it is in the countryside that most work needs to be done, in order to redress the bias towards high status sites. Here, the poor ceramic sequence means that we will never be able to trace the development of Saxon settlement in Essex as has been so successfully achieved in East Anglia (eg. Davison 1990; Newman 1992). This is why we need a new approach, one that is more interdisciplinary and holistic than current archaeological evaluations and excavation allows. In particular, we need to study the rural landscape as an entire system, rather than isolate individual components such as settlements and fields. Large-scale fieldwalking and selective excavation must play a part in understanding the genesis of the medieval settlement pattern. Such fieldwalking projects must take into account the poor visibility of Saxon pottery, and consider the approach adopted by Williamson (1986) of paying special attention to Roman and Saxo-Norman scatters, and church-hall complexes, in order to determine the presence or absence of Saxon occupation. Better relations with metal-detector users would also be beneficial, as recent survey results in south-east Suffolk have shown (Newman 1992).

There is a need for more palaeo-environmental research in this period, in order to understand changes in landscape exploitation. Pollen analysis in Norfolk and Suffolk has been very successful in illustrating the lack of forest regeneration in East Anglia, and indeed, indicating an expansion of arable in the Middle Saxon period (Williamson 1993, 110); similar data should be sought in Essex, particularly from valley peats.

Modern place-name scholarship has come a long way since Reaney's day, and a reassessment of Essex place-names is long overdue. This should concentrate not just on the chronology of settlement, but also its environmental/landscape context and tenurial relationships between settlements.

The technique that can bind all these other strands of evidence together, as well as providing invaluable information in itself, is the retrogressive analysis of the historic landscape, and especially field-boundary patterns. The value of this method has been shown in relation to planned landscapes (see above), but is equally appropriate in all other areas. A study of the whole of Essex would enable the surviving Roman field-systems to be quantified, and explanations for their distribution sought in terms of its relationship to the preceding and succeeding landscapes. These boundaries must, however, be subject to a programme of excavation to obtain dating evidence, as the Shoebury example has shown that not all regular landscapes need be Roman or earlier. Excavating boundaries still in use is pointless; rather, work should concentrate in areas where the regular landscape may have been abandoned relatively soon after its creation, and dating evidence should be undisturbed by later re-cutting. There is also a need for pollen analysis and extensive fieldwalking in areas with and without the survival of Roman field-systems, in order to examine whether this continuity in landuse is reflected in the settlement pattern. It is only through interdisciplinary studies of this kind, that the lack of direct evidence for the Middle to Later Saxon period will be overcome.

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