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# **Landscape, Settlement and Society: Wiltshire in the First Millennium AD**

VOLUME 1 (OF 2)

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By

Simon Andrew Draper

Submitted in 2004 for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
at the University of Durham, following research conducted  
in the Department of Archaeology



21 JUN 2005

# **Landscape, Settlement and Society: Wiltshire in the First Millennium AD**

By Simon Andrew Draper

## **ABSTRACT**

This is a study of the county of Wiltshire from the Roman period to c. 1100 AD, focusing on the key themes of landscape, settlement and society and using a combination of archaeological, topographical and historical evidence. Particular emphasis is given to place-names, which, it is argued, can help us to locate Romano-British settlements and inform us about the British survival in the post-Roman period. Early chapters tackle the transition between the Roman and Early Saxon periods, challenging current theories on the decline of Roman Britain and the Anglo-Saxon *adventus*. Subsequent chapters examine the evidence for early medieval territorial and ecclesiastical structure in Wiltshire, in addition to the Anglo-Saxon farming landscape. There is also detailed consideration of the origins of the medieval settlement pattern and a discussion of the relationship between settlements and the ranks of Anglo-Saxon society.

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## Dedication, Acknowledgements and Abbreviations

This thesis is dedicated to my wife, Juliet.

There are a number of people and institutions that I would like to thank for their time and assistance. I am extremely grateful to my two supervisors at Durham, Professor Matthew Johnson and Dr Chris Gerrard, for all their words of wisdom over the past four years, in addition to my two examiners, Professor Mick Aston and Professor Jenny Price, whose comments and suggestions for improvement were incisive. I should also like to acknowledge the financial assistance of the Arts and Humanities Research Board, who generously funded my studies in Durham.

In Trowbridge, I am particularly indebted to Roy Canham and the staff of Wiltshire County Council's Archaeology Section, in addition to various members of staff in the Wiltshire and Swindon Record Office and the Wiltshire Local Studies Library. A number of scholars met with me during my period of research and I owe all of them a debt of gratitude for the useful information and advice that they gave – Mick Aston, Graham Brown, John Chandler, Bob Clarke, Mark Corney, Michael Costen, Bruce Eagles, Peter Fowler, Carezza Lewis, Sam Lucy, Andrew Reynolds and Brian Roberts.

Last, but not least, I would like to thank all members of my family for being extremely supportive and patient. In particular, I should acknowledge the help of my mother-in-law, Barbara Luck, who improved my grammar and punctuation no end!

### ABBREVIATIONS

S	Sawyer 1968
SMR	Wiltshire Sites and Monuments Record (Trowbridge)
VCH	<i>Victoria County History</i>
WAM	<i>Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Magazine</i>
WRO	Wiltshire and Swindon Record Office (Trowbridge).

## CHAPTER 1

### Introduction

This is a study of the landscape, settlement and society of Wiltshire in the Roman and Anglo-Saxon periods. For historical convenience, the cut-off date will be 1100, following the compilation of the Domesday Survey, whilst the modern county of Wiltshire – including Swindon – will form the basic area of study (Fig. 1). I will at times, however, make reference to those parishes formerly in Wiltshire that have since been lost to neighbouring Gloucestershire, Somerset and Hampshire. The main sources of evidence employed will be archaeological remains, historical documents, place-names and the physical and human landscape itself.

Why study the first millennium AD? Why study Wiltshire? In response to the first of these questions, it is necessary to appreciate that the so-called ‘Dark Ages’, from the ending of Roman rule to the Norman Conquest, is one of the least understood periods in English landscape history; yet it is one during which many of our modern institutions – villages, towns, churches, shires and parishes, for example – were established. Countless historians and, more recently, archaeologists have struggled to uncover the origins of these institutions, but they remain subject to ongoing debate. Further research is undoubtedly needed into this still mysterious chapter of England’s past. However, three important lessons on the form that this research should take have been learnt in recent years.

Firstly, it is important that any research conducted should be as ‘multi-disciplinary’ as possible, taking into account all forms of available evidence: this is where early studies by social and legal historians, such as Frederick Maitland (1897) and Paul Vinogradoff (1904), have their main weaknesses. Secondly, it is evident that, in order to understand the processes taking place in the immediate post-Roman period, it is necessary also to understand those happening during the Roman period itself: realisation of this fact has recently spawned the paradigm of ‘Late Antiquity’, which aims to integrate study of the period from 300 to 700 (see Chapter 4). Thirdly, rather than attempting to study the first millennium AD from a national point of view – an approach that typically results in broad-brush generalisations and over-simplifications – it is important to obtain a more regional perspective, but one that is also firmly rooted in wider debates. As Dawn Hadley has recently observed (2000, 342), ‘the early medieval

period was not a simple and ordered world, in which everyone normally followed the same rules; rather than trying to reconstruct such a world – which has been a feature of research in recent decades – we must strive to identify the locally divergent, inconsistent and changing features of given societies'. Such is the virtue of local studies.

The importance of local and regional studies brings me neatly to the second of the two questions posed above – why study Wiltshire? Apart from purely selfish interests – it being my native county – Wiltshire makes an excellent study area for two academic reasons. Firstly, the county spans the fundamental topographical divide between what Oliver Rackham (1986, 5, 17) has termed the 'planned' and the 'ancient' landscapes of England, and what other authors before him have described as 'champion' and 'woodland' country (see Roberts and Wrathmell 2002, 1-3; Williamson 2003, 1-8, for recent discussions). Within Wiltshire, these two landscapes are known as 'Chalk' and 'Cheese', for reasons that will be made apparent below. By studying them equally, it will be possible to see the influences of regional variation at work and to address the important question of how far back in time this topographical divide left its impression on the structure of local landscapes, settlement and society.

Secondly, Wiltshire forms an excellent study area as – despite possessing much relevant pre-Conquest documentary evidence, a well-kept and up-to-date Sites and Monuments Record, a county place-names survey and an advanced *Victoria County History* series – it remains a neglected county when it comes to its Roman and early medieval landscapes. Much attention has been laboured on the prehistoric 'ceremonial landscapes' of Avebury and Stonehenge, but it is only recently that authors such as Andrew Reynolds (see Pollard and Reynolds 2002) have stopped to consider the same areas in later periods. We should not pretend, however, that valuable local landscape research has not been undertaken: indeed, we should perhaps single out the Fyfield and Overton Downs project (Fowler 2000a), the Compton Bassett Area Research Project (Reynolds 1994; 1995, ongoing) and the former Royal Commission's landscape projects in South Wiltshire (English Heritage forthcoming) and the Salisbury Plain Training Area (McOmish *et al.* 2002) for special mention. Nevertheless, no county-wide synthesis has yet been undertaken, whilst a recent edited volume on Roman Wiltshire (Ellis 2001) – the most comprehensive survey of the subject to have emerged in recent decades – is notable for its lack of content on the Romano-British settlement pattern and agricultural landscape of the county.

As we shall see, there is currently no shortage of relevant evidence pertaining to Roman and early medieval Wiltshire and it is high time that a synthesis was written for the county. As Peter Salway has observed (2000, ix), 'there comes a time in research when the accumulation of data that had seemed too sparse to allow any generalisations suddenly reaches a point at which a coherent picture begins to emerge'. This has undoubtedly happened with Roman and Anglo-Saxon Wiltshire.

### *Aims and Methods*

This present work sets out with three core aims to fulfil: firstly, to find answers to some of the central questions surrounding the Roman/Saxon transition in Wiltshire; secondly, to investigate the origins of medieval territories and their boundaries within the county; and thirdly, to explore the origins and Roman/early medieval development of Wiltshire's present pattern of settlements and fields.

The methods employed over a period of three years in order to tackle these issues were many and varied. Original research was carried out on place- and field-names, using a large number of the nineteenth-century tithe maps and apportionments housed in the Wiltshire Record Office. Furthermore, a detailed consideration of the patterning and distribution of archaeological evidence listed and mapped in the Wiltshire Sites and Monuments Record enabled me to make new connections between sites and artefacts and to develop new approaches towards their interpretation.

A necessary and rewarding part of the research process was the creation of the two archaeological gazetteers included here as Appendices 1 and 2. In Appendix 1, I have listed and attempted to classify all locations in Wiltshire where Romano-British structural remains are either known or are strongly implied by archaeological material. The compilation of this gazetteer allows us for the first time to gain a general impression of the density and distribution of Roman settlements in the county. In Appendix 2, meanwhile, I have brought together basic details on all the excavations, single finds and architectural material dating to the period c. 420-1066 in Wiltshire known to me before the summer of 2004, using the Sites and Monuments Record and various other secondary sources. As far as I am aware, no similar gazetteer currently exists for the county and its creation may be regarded as a necessary first step towards

understanding the early medieval landscape history of Wiltshire on a parish-by-parish basis.

As with any landscape study, maps – both old and new – proved to be vital research tools and extensive use was made of both the current Ordnance Survey 1:25000 series, as well as the Ordnance Survey First Edition 6 inch: 1 mile maps held in the Wiltshire Record Office. Much time was also spent in the Wiltshire Local Studies Library in Trowbridge, researching the considerable volume of secondary written material – particularly excavation reports and local histories – pertaining to the county. A significant element in the process of research was talking to a number of other archaeologists and historians with research interests in Wiltshire. Their names have been listed in the Acknowledgements and to them I owe a great debt of gratitude.

Finally, I should explain the absence of certain methods and potential sources of evidence in this study. No dedicated archaeological excavation or fieldwork was undertaken, whilst I did not examine the extensive collection of aerial photographs for the county held at the National Monuments Record in Swindon. Whilst the use of both of these techniques would undoubtedly have provided further evidence relevant to the themes discussed in the following chapters, I reasoned early in the research period that the task of interpreting the *existing* archaeological material known from Roman and early medieval Wiltshire was already great, without actively seeking more. Wiltshire is fortunate in already possessing an active programme of field archaeology and new discoveries in future years will undoubtedly add greatly to the sum of knowledge.

One additional avenue of research that I did not directly pursue in this study is palaeoenvironmental archaeology. Although valuable information on past climate, vegetation and land-use is increasingly being gathered from faunal and botanical remains preserved at various sites across the county – notably the Upper Kennet valley (Evans *et al.* 1993) – the cumulative evidence for Wiltshire is still at best patchy and difficult to interpret, especially for the early medieval period. Significantly, Wiltshire lacks the areas of blanket peat and marsh deposits that have yielded informative pollen sequences in other areas of South West England (see Fyfe and Rippon 2004 for a synthesis of research) and we are largely reliant instead on macroscopic plant remains and animal bones – in addition to place-names and charter evidence in the Late Saxon period – for our understanding of the environment in the first millennium AD (see Chapters 2 & 7).

In summary, this study is founded on three years of primary research into the place-names, landscape and material culture of Wiltshire. Important questions have been asked of the 'received wisdom' and a new synthesis has been written, using the most comprehensive set of data so far assembled for the county during the first millennium AD. As such, it represents an original contribution to academic study and aims to inspire future research, not only in Wiltshire but also more widely in southern England.

### *The Structure of This Study*

This study comprises seven 'body' chapters sandwiched between the Introduction and Conclusion and it is now necessary to guide the reader through each chapter, pointing out the themes and sub-themes to be discussed along the way.

Chapter 2 takes as its subject the settlements and landscape of Roman Wiltshire to 350. As I have already mentioned above, it is important to gain an insight into the Roman *status quo* before the degree of continuity and change into the early medieval period can reliably be assessed. My gazetteer of Roman settlements in Wiltshire (Appendix 1) should be considered alongside this chapter, as it provides the raw data for the discussion of settlement pattern and forms. Also examined in Chapter 2 is the hitherto little-considered place-name evidence relating to Roman settlements and landscape features in Wiltshire, in addition to the varied evidence – such that it is – for land-use, communications and estates.

Chapters 3 and 4 are best read in tandem, for they both examine the period known as the Roman/Saxon transition, lasting from c. 350 to c. 700. Chapter 3 approaches the subject from a Romanist's point of view, focusing heavily on the picture presented by the Late Roman archaeological evidence and the numerous problems associated with its interpretation. In particular, I aim to mediate between two currently-held views of the ending of Roman Britain, which state, on the one hand, that the later fourth and early fifth centuries saw a rapid collapse of Roman society, culture and economic stability and, on the other hand, that there was no sudden cataclysm, but instead a gradual winding down of Roman life over several decades and even centuries. The real state of affairs, I suggest, lies somewhere in between and this is reflected in Chapter 4. Here, the transition is examined working back from a Medievalist's point of view, looking at the relationships between Britons and Saxons suggested by the

evidence from history, archaeology and place-names. Until recently, many scholars have been fixated by the notion that *either* Germanic ‘invaders’ from overseas caused an abrupt end to British life as it then was, *or* that large sections of ‘sub-Roman’ British society essentially functioned as normal into the early medieval period, despite the changes taking place around them. Again, I suggest that this is an unrealistic dichotomy, which mainly stems from a misreading of historical and archaeological evidence. A key resource for this chapter and those following is the gazetteer of Anglo-Saxon archaeology (Appendix 2).

Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8 are thematic in their structure and all examine aspects of Anglo-Saxon Wiltshire, which, for the purposes of discussion, I have divided into three sub-periods – Early Saxon (c. 400-650), Middle Saxon (c. 650-850) and Late Saxon (c. 850-1100) – although a degree of overlap must be allowed for. Chapter 5 takes as its subject the secular territorial structure of Wiltshire, using a combination of archaeological, historical and place-name evidence to assess the origins and form of territorial units on three levels – ‘primary’ (kingdoms, sub-kingdoms and the shire), ‘secondary’ (great estates and hundreds) and ‘small estates’ (manors and villas). A particular focus for attention will be the antiquity of these land-units and their boundaries. Some scholars have proposed Roman or even prehistoric dates for their origins, whilst others maintain that they are the result of Anglo-Saxon planning. I will argue primarily for the latter view.

In Chapter 6, the origins of the Christian Church in Wiltshire are examined, with particular emphases on church-building and ecclesiastical territories – *parochiae* and parishes. This subject has received recent attention from Jonathan Pitt (1999; 2003) and it is not my intention merely to repeat his findings. For the purposes of this study, interest in Anglo-Saxon ecclesiastical history in Wiltshire is confined to the impact of Christianity and the Church on the landscape, settlement and society – be it in the form of burial rites, church construction, land tenure or territorial influence.

The subject of Chapter 7 is the landscape of early medieval Wiltshire. A surprising number of landscape studies conducted in England during the past few decades have underplayed the fundamental rôle played by agriculture and land-use in shaping early medieval societies and, as Tom Williamson (2003) has suggested, it is perhaps time that the ‘cow and plough’ approach was reinstated. In this chapter, I focus particularly on the regional contrasts between Late Saxon farming patterns in Wiltshire revealed by a combination of place-names, documentary and archaeological evidence.

A glimpse of earlier Anglo-Saxon land-use, however, is revealed by fragments of ‘ancient landscapes’ in the county, where Roman and even prehistoric field patterns are preserved to the present day in the modern agricultural landscape.

Lastly, before the Conclusion in Chapter 9, Chapter 8 takes as its twin topics the second and third central themes of this study – settlement and society – in the Anglo-Saxon period. Much effort has been focused in recent decades on determining the origins of villages in England, but rather less attention has been given to dispersed settlement forms, Early and Middle Saxon settlements and the importance of regional variation. In this chapter, therefore, I aim to rectify the situation with regard to Wiltshire, although I do not shy away from tackling village origins, looking in particular at the parts played by lords – including the King and the Church in the Middle Saxon period – and also the introduction of the open-field farming system in shaping village morphology. As a means of ‘peopling’ the settlements of Anglo-Saxon Wiltshire, I go on to examine the evidence available for the ownership and occupation of settlements in the county by different ranks of society. Under the influence of West Saxon kings in particular, a small number of settlements in Wiltshire took on urban characteristics in the Late Saxon period and the rise of these medieval towns is also given due attention.

Read together, the chapters in this study aim to present a rich and nuanced view of the landscape, settlement and society of Wiltshire in the first millennium AD, stressing the inter-dependence of these three themes and the need to avoid simplistic explanations. It is my intention that this work should stand as a ‘biography’ of Wiltshire during this period, setting out to reveal its own peculiar character traits, whilst also striving to draw out its similarities with the wider world around.

### *The County of Wiltshire: Its Physical Landscape*

As I have already mentioned above, Wiltshire spans the topographical divide between the dissected chalk downlands of the south and east – the ‘planned’ or ‘champion’ landscape – and the more open predominantly clayland country of the north and west, identified with the ‘ancient’ or ‘woodland’ landscape. In Wiltshire, this division is referred to as ‘Chalk’ and ‘Cheese’, for it was in the clay vales of lowland Wiltshire that dairy farming and cheese production took place in the medieval and post-medieval periods.

As early as the sixteenth century, the distinction between the two landscapes in Wiltshire was observed by John Speed and William Camden, although it was left to John Aubrey to describe the regional contrasts in some detail in his *Natural History of Wiltshire* of 1685: 'on the downs, *sc.* the south part, where 'tis all upon tillage, and where the shepherds labour hard, their flesh is hard, their bodies strong: being weary after hard labour, they have not leisure to read or contemplate religion'. Compare this description, however, with the 'dirty clayey country' to the north. Here, the people 'speak drawling: they are phlegmatic, skins pale and livid, slow and dull, heavy of spirit; hereabout is but little tillage or hard labour, they only milk the cows and make cheese; they feed chiefly on milk meats, which cools their brains too much, and hurts their inventions' (John Aubrey in Underdown 1985, 73). Evidently, Aubrey was well aware of the 'Chalk' and 'Cheese' divide and, to him, it went far beyond mere topography, affecting agriculture and even society itself.

In fact, the physical geography of Wiltshire is far subtler than the simple 'Chalk' and 'Cheese' dichotomy might lead us to believe. Dissecting the high chalk plateaux of Salisbury Plain and the Marlborough Downs are deep river valleys, such as those of the Wylye, Ebbles, Kennet and Salisbury Avon, whilst in the northwest of the county, the Jurassic limestone hills of the Cotswolds pass through on their course from Bath northwards into Gloucestershire (Figs 2 & 3). In fact, it is apparent from Figures 2 and 3 that there are no fewer than eight broad geological and topographical zones in Wiltshire, each of which will now be summarised in turn.

## THE COTSWOLDS

The eastern fringe of the Cotswold limestone plateau passes from Bradford-on-Avon in the south to Malmesbury and Crudwell in the north. It consists of Jurassic Great Oolite – the renowned 'Bath stone' – with outcrops of Cornbrash (weathered limestones), Forest Marble (calcareous clay with limestones) and Fullers Earth (calcareous clay). The region is characterised by low flat-topped hills, which commonly rise to between 80 and 180m OD. In the south, the plateau is dissected by the deeply cut and wooded valleys of the River Bybrook and its tributaries. In the north, however, the landscape is gentler, with a lower plateau drained in open shallow valleys by the upper reaches of the Bristol Avon and its tributaries. Apart from patches of woodland – mainly in the valleys – the bulk of the landscape is open and is currently used for arable agriculture,

although some sheep farming and dairying is also practised. The importance of quarrying in Box and Corsham parishes in particular should also be noted. Due to the presence of a number of wells and springs, settlements are just as common on the plateau as in the river valleys.

#### THE NORTHERN CLAY VALE

The Northern Clay Vale is the archetypical 'Cheese' country of Wiltshire, consisting of a belt of heavy Oxford and Kimmeridge Clays, interspersed with river gravels and patches of silty Kellaways Sand. This region extends from Westbury in the south to Cricklade in the north and is drained by the Bristol Avon and its tributaries in the south and the upper reaches of the River Thames in the north. Although low-lying – typically between 40 and 100m OD – and frequently marshy, this landscape was almost certainly not as hostile to settlement and farming in antiquity as has previously been thought (see Chapter 2). Woodland was extensive in this region in the past and much of it lay within the bounds of medieval royal forests (Fig. 3). Today, the region is characterised by woodland, pasture and some arable, with significant stretches of river meadow in the Avon and Thames valleys. Ridge and furrow earthworks attest the more extensive presence of arable agriculture here in the medieval period (Lewis 1994, 173).

#### THE CORALLIAN-GAULT-GREENSAND BELT

This narrow landscape zone is characterised by a mix of Corallian limestones and sandstones, Gault Clay, Kimmeridge Clay and Upper and Lower Greensand. It spans the eastern watershed of the Bristol Avon and the southern watershed of the River Thames and extends from Mere in the south to Highworth in the north. The Corallian Beds form a low range of hills, which are typically between 120 and 180m OD, whilst both the Clay and Greensand areas are only fractionally lower at 100-140m OD. In terms of land-use and vegetation, this landscape zone is diverse, with tracts of woodland – primarily around Calne and Warminster – contrasting with areas of arable and pasture. Where the Upper Greensand and Gault Clay meet the Chalk escarpment, reliable springs may be found, providing the setting for a number of spring-line settlements (see Chapter 8).

## THE MARLBOROUGH DOWNS

This upland area of undulating Chalk stretches from Chiseldon in the north to All Cannings in the south and is drained by the River Kennet and its tributaries. Two distinct areas of topography are discernable. To the north and west of Marlborough lies the 'summit' area of high Chalk, where elevations of 200-280m OD are frequently reached. Surrounding this is a lower plateau of Chalk, where elevations of 150-200m OD are more common. Capping the high Chalk summits is a stony layer of Clay-with-Flints, which is mainly given over to woodland: indeed, much of it lay within the royal forest of Savernake in the medieval period (Fig. 3). Elsewhere, the landscape is predominantly characterised by a mixture of grassland – typically used for sheep pastures – and free-draining arable soils. Some man-made dew ponds provide valuable surface water on the downs.

## THE VALE OF PEWSEY

Dividing the Marlborough Downs from Salisbury Plain and the South Wiltshire Downs is a low-lying finger of Upper Greensand, which extends eastwards from Devizes towards Burbage. It is drained to the south by the upper reaches of the Salisbury Avon. To the east, outcrops of London Clay and Reading Sands in the vicinity of Great and Little Bedwyn denote the western edge of the London Basin. Whilst the floor of the Vale of Pewsey typically lies between 100 and 150m OD, it is bounded to the north and south by steep chalk escarpments, which rise to 295m OD at Milk Hill in Stanton St Bernard – the highest point in Wiltshire. The Upper Greensand is characterised by a mixture of woodland, arable and pasture and has been highly favoured for settlement and agriculture over the centuries. Natural springs are abundant.

## THE SOUTH WILTSHIRE DOWNS

Upland Chalk dominates the landscape of southern Wiltshire and has come to typify many people's perception of the county as a whole: this is, after all, the landscape of Stonehenge. This large topographical zone is often divided into three smaller landscape areas – Salisbury Plain in the north, the West Wiltshire Downs in the west and Cranborne Chase in the south – although it is geologically the same. Dissecting the

Chalk plateau is a series of narrow river valleys – the Salisbury Avon, Wylye, Nadder, Ebble and Bourne – which all converge just to the south of Salisbury and flow southwards towards the English Channel. These valleys contain river deposits of gravel and alluvium. Dry valleys, which occasionally flow with temporary ‘bourne’ streams, may also be seen on the Chalk, whilst man-made dew ponds are scattered across the downs. Shallow layers of Clay-with-Flints cap a number of the higher hills, again providing cores for extensive areas of woodland (Figs 2 & 3). The majority of downland is given over to a mixture of pasture and arable, whilst areas of meadow and water meadow may be found in the river valleys. Elevations of 100-200m OD are common across the downs, although 277m OD is reached at Win Green in Donhead St Mary.

#### THE VALE OF WARDOUR

This wedge-shaped vale extends from Barford St Martin in the east to Sedgemoor and Donhead St Mary in the west and is drained by the River Nadder and its tributaries. The geology of this region is complex, consisting of bands of Kimmeridge Clay, Upper Greensand, Gault Clay and Wealden, Purbeck and Portland Beds. These latter Beds comprise a mixture of limestones, sandstones and clays, whilst the Portland limestone is quarried for building stone at Chilmark and Chicks Grove in Tisbury. The topography of the Vale of Wardour is characterised by a series of low-lying hills – typically 120-200m OD – that are divided by a network of narrow wooded valleys. Many of these valleys contain streams originating from springs. Woodland is common on the areas of Kimmeridge and Gault clay and parishes in the west of the region in particular are characterised by a landscape of woodland and pasture. Further east, woodland is still common, although mixed farming is also practised. A series of spring-line settlements may be found along the junction between the Gault Clay and the Upper Greensand/Chalk.

#### THE TERTIARY GRAVELS

Tertiary gravels outcrop in the southeastern corner of Wiltshire, to the north and south of a Chalk ridge known as the Dean Hill Anticline. To the north of this ridge is an area of London Clay and Bagshot Sands extending from Alderbury in the west to West Dean

in the east. The land here typically lies between 50 and 100m OD and is drained to the east by the River Dun – a tributary of the Hampshire Test. Large areas of woodland may be found here, corresponding with the medieval royal forest of Clarendon (Fig. 3), although some pastoral agriculture is also practised. To the south of the Dean Hill Anticline, London Clay and Bagshot Sands once again outcrop, although there are also Bracklesham sands and clays in Redlynch parish. The land here is drained by the River Blackwater – another tributary of the River Test – and typically lies between 20 and 60m OD. The Bracklesham Beds are characterised by acidic heathland, lying at the northern edge of the New Forest. Elsewhere – in Redlynch, Landford and Whiteparish parishes – woodland predominates, coinciding with land within the medieval royal forest of Melchet.

## CHAPTER 2

### Roman Wiltshire to 350

#### Introduction

This chapter will focus on just two themes – settlement and landscape in Roman Wiltshire. A number of research projects within the county in recent decades have brought to light important new details concerning Wiltshire's landscape history during the Roman period, but no general survey spanning the whole county – 'Chalk' and 'Cheese' – has been undertaken since Barry Cunliffe's discussion thirty years ago in the *Victoria County History* (Cunliffe 1973a). In addition, no recent attempt has been made to consider small towns and villages alongside villas and small non-villa settlements in their landscape contexts. Valuable place-name evidence helping us to locate further Roman settlements has also been overlooked. Such topics will be considered for the first time together below, thereby shedding new light on Wiltshire's Romano-British past, whilst also providing a springboard for discussion of the region's early medieval landscape history in subsequent chapters.

In order to present readers with an up-to-date survey of Roman settlements in Wiltshire, a gazetteer has been created (Appendix 1) listing those sites recorded in the Wiltshire Sites and Monuments Record where Roman occupation is either known or strongly suggested by archaeological remains. Such a list does not claim to be fully comprehensive, but it does at least provide a sound basis for consideration of the pattern, forms and factors affecting Roman settlement in the county. At the first mention of a particular site in each chapter, a reference will be given in the form [1:24], 1 being the Appendix number and 24 being the number of the relevant entry.

#### Roman Settlements: The Pattern

Figure 4 presents a location map of all the Roman settlements listed in Appendix 1, shown in relation to the major rivers and Roman roads. The most striking feature to emerge is the frequency of known settlements on the high chalk downs of Salisbury Plain when compared to the Bristol Avon valley to the north, where they are notably

few in number. This distribution is in stark contrast to the post-medieval pattern of settlement (Fig. 51). Here, occupation is all but absent on the waterless chalk hills, concentrating instead in the nearby river valleys, whilst the Bristol Avon valley is densely settled, containing a number of important local market towns. The first question that we must ask ourselves is whether this represents a real contrast, or whether it is a product of our patchy knowledge of Roman settlement in the county. Clearly, the movement of settlement away from the high downlands in the post-Roman period is a genuine phenomenon, which will be discussed later in Chapter 8, but the apparent absence of settlement from much of the clayland region of northern Wiltshire may be due, in part, to the absence of detailed archaeological research in this part of the county. A number of cropmark settlement complexes in this region have been identified from aerial photographs in recent years – for example, in Sutton Benger and Grittleton parishes [1:90, 220] – but as yet they remain undated due to a lack of archaeological investigation. Heavy soils and woodland cover may, as Desmond Bonney has suggested (Bonney 1968), have dissuaded Roman and Iron Age farmers from settling here, but this is evidently only half the story. Future research may radically alter our view of lowland settlement and land-use in Wiltshire. A series of projects in the Upper Thames valley to the north has transformed our understanding of Roman settlement patterns here (*e.g.* Miles 1984; 1988) and it is pertinent to note that a density of one settlement per 1-1.5km has been proposed to the west of Dorchester-on-Thames (Young 1986, 60).

Another truism that has already been shown to be false by recent research is the notion that the chalklands of Wiltshire were dominated by an upland settlement pattern with the river valleys lying mostly empty, ‘except possibly on the line of a Roman road’ (Crawford 1924, 11). In 1966, Bowen and Fowler expressed their profound scepticism of such a view, commenting that evidence for a valley settlement pattern ‘will ... surely be found in time’ (Bowen and Fowler 1966, 55). Evidence for such a pattern has indeed now been found, notably in the Kennet and Salisbury Avon valleys (Fig. 4), and it is apparent from place- and field-names (see below) that more Roman settlements await discovery in riverine locations, perhaps underneath medieval and later farms and villages.

Many of the valley-based settlements that have recently been revealed in the Avon valley as part of the Salisbury Plain Training Area Survey are villas (McOmish *et al.* 2002, 104-7; see below) and this changes another commonly held perception

concerning the Roman settlement pattern in this part of the county. Until recently, Salisbury Plain has been regarded as a region of non-villa settlement, characterised by villages and other lesser farming settlements (Hingley 1989, 124, fig. 68): indeed, this has even led some scholars to propose the existence of an imperial estate here, owned by the emperor and managed by specially appointed imperial officials (Collingwood and Myres 1937, 209-10). Clearly, the presence of a number of villas here makes this proposition unlikely and it now appears instead that both valley pastures and downland were divided amongst a series of villa estates in private hands (see below). Further villas await discovery in the valleys of southern Wiltshire and this is certainly a prospect raised by the seventeenth-century field-name 'Stanch Chester' in Bishopstone (S) parish, the potential significance of which will be considered later in this chapter.

One final observation that presents itself from an analysis of Figure 4 concerns the relationship between rural settlements in Wiltshire and the network of major roads and small towns. Some villas show a clear tendency to congregate around towns and this is particularly visible around *Aquae Sulis* (Bath), *Verlucio*, *Cunetio* and *Durocornovium*. This is a trend that has been observed more widely in Britain (Rivet 1969; Branigan 1977a, 27-9; Hodder and Millett 1980) and it is often explained in terms of easy access to local markets, although the possibility that some villas were the country dwellings of urban officials should also be considered (see Davenport 1994, 16, for a discussion of those around Bath). Some villas, however, were located at great distances from roads and/or market centres and we may note the example of Tockenham [1:114], which is more than 10km from both. Although our lack of knowledge concerning the secondary road network in Roman Wiltshire must be conceded, such instances do suggest that we should not place too heavy emphasis on the relationship between villas and roads (see Hostetter and Howe 1997, 61-8, for a study of villa siting around *Cunetio*). Conversely, we should not think of village settlements as remote communities with few links to the wider trading network. From Figure 4, it is apparent that the road leading west from *Sorviodunum* was a valuable asset for settlements on the Grovely Ridge, where no fewer than three large villages lay within 2km of the route.

In summary, Roman settlements are found in almost every area of Wiltshire, from the high chalk downs to the low clay vales. Until recently, our knowledge of the settlement pattern was skewed by the lack of archaeological information pertaining to the claylands and the river valleys, but ongoing fieldwork and survey is beginning to rectify the situation. Clearly, our view will improve as gaps in the distribution are

gradually filled in, but it is nevertheless apparent that very few parts of the county – even those areas covered today by dense woodland – can be thought of as uninhabited in the Roman period, in stark contrast to the chalk downs in the medieval period and beyond (see Chapter 8).

## Roman Settlements: The Forms

### *Small Towns*

Wiltshire does not boast a Roman town of *civitas* status or higher, although some northern and western parts of the county lay within the immediate hinterlands of Bath (*Aquae Sulis*) and Cirencester (*Corinium Dobunorum*) (Davenport 1994; Holbrook 1994). Instead, Wiltshire contains eight settlements that fall into the loose category variously termed ‘small towns’ (Burnham and Wachter 1990), ‘local centres’ (Hingley 1989, 25) or ‘*vici*’ (Todd 1976). Although there is no easy definition, it may be useful to think of these communities as ‘essentially large roadside settlements that provided a range of specialist services to road users while, at the same time, utilising their position near to road (or waterway) systems to facilitate the distribution of local industrial and agricultural products’ (Hanley 1987, 43). Some small towns, including *Cunetio* [1:4] in Wiltshire, appear to have had particular administrative and/or military functions, whilst others, such as Nettleton Shrub [1:5] and possibly Silbury Hill [1:1], served primarily as local religious centres. Clearly, such settlements were highly varied in their size, composition and purpose and we should not even assume that all were in any real sense urban in character – although some of the larger examples with their public buildings, planned layouts, walled circuits and flourishing markets undoubtedly were (Hingley 1989, 25-9).

In Wiltshire, small towns have received increasing academic attention in recent years and it is not my purpose to repeat information already presented by Mark Corney (2001) and by Burnham and Wachter (1990). It is, however, worthy of note that seven of the eight examples so far known in the county are situated upon the known or conjectured Roman road network, whilst Tom Moorhead has recently suggested that the eighth – The Ham in Westbury [1:8] – lies on the course of the road from Cold Kitchen Hill to Bath (Moorhead 2001, 101). Furthermore, three – *Durocornovium*

(Wanborough) [1:7], *Cunetio* (Mildenhall) and *Sorviodunum* (Old Sarum/Stratford-sub-Castle) [1:6] – lie at nodal points where two or more roads converge (Fig. 4).

*Durocornovium* and *Cunetio* both possess regular street plans and public buildings, including probable *mansiones* (inns for travelling officials), and it is likely that both settlements served as administrative centres, perhaps for local tribal divisions known as *pagi* (Figs 5 & 6; Anderson and Wachter 2001; Corney 2001, 10-12). The function and layout of *Sorviodunum* is still little understood, although it is evident that a major roadside settlement at Stratford-sub-Castle on the River Avon was supplemented by occupation within the nearby Iron Age hillfort at Old Sarum and a sprawling ‘suburb’ on Bishopdown to the southeast (James 2002). Future excavations and aerial photograph interpretation may yet confirm Mark Corney’s suspicion that *Sorviodunum* (*i.e.* Stratford-sub-Castle) too was a planned settlement with an administrative function and public buildings, including a *mansio* (Corney 2001, 18-23).

Other small towns in Wiltshire almost certainly developed as secondary settlements along pre-existing roads. *Verlucio* [1:2] lies at the mid-point on the road between Bath and Mildenhall, whilst the roadside settlement at ‘White Walls’ in Easton Grey [1:3] is situated close to the halfway mark between Bath and Cirencester at the crossing point of the Fosse Way over the Sherston branch of the Bristol Avon. Both settlements no doubt grew up as staging posts for travellers and it is possible that *Verlucio* also possessed a *mansio* (Corney 2001, 29). The small towns at Nettleton Shrub and Silbury Hill may also have provided services for passing travellers, but it is clear that their primary functions were religious. A large ritual complex, featuring an octagonal temple of Apollo Cunomaglos, has been excavated at Nettleton Shrub (Fig. 7; Wedlake 1982), whilst a series of Romano-British ‘wells’ in an arc around the base of the Neolithic monument of Silbury Hill itself have been interpreted as ritual shafts (Corney 2001, 29; Pollard and Reynolds 2002, 178-9). The site at The Ham in Westbury is only known from antiquarian reports and chance finds, but it is possible that it developed as a roadside industrial and market settlement. Evidence for tanning, weaving, shoemaking, iron-working, potting and lime production has been recorded from a site 2.5km away at Wellhead [1:39] and it is a reasonable supposition that products manufactured here were distributed via a regional market centre at The Ham. A religious dimension to the settlement at The Ham is also suggested by a number of intriguing artefacts, including a pottery cult figure of a female goddess and a bronze figurine of an eagle (Robinson 2001, 161).

In relation to the chronological development of small towns in Wiltshire, it is apparent from finds of coins and other artefacts that most were occupied throughout much of the Roman period, with a focus in the second, third and fourth centuries (Moorhead 2001, table 1). Evidence for pre-Conquest activity is particularly strong at *Cunetio*, where Late Iron Age coins and pottery from nearby Forest Hill suggest that the presence of a major pre-Roman regional centre – perhaps an *oppidum* – whilst Iron Age occupation in the vicinity of *Sorviodunum* is also dense (Corney 2001, 13-14, 19). The first buildings at *Durocornovium* and *Sorviodunum* may be contemporary with the construction of Roman roads here in the mid- to late first century (Corney 2001, 11, 21), whilst *Cunetio* and Nettleton Shrub have also produced notable quantities of first-century material. Construction of the temple at Nettleton Shrub has been dated to the late first century by its excavator (Wedlake 1982, 121), although Burnham and Wachter (1990, 190) have proposed a date as late as 180. Evidence relating to the decline and abandonment of small towns in Wiltshire is difficult to interpret, but it is clear that three sites in particular – *Cunetio*, Nettleton Shrub and Silbury Hill – saw activity continuing into the early fifth century. The evidence relating to small towns in the county after 350 will be examined in closer detail in the next chapter, but it is worthy of note that *Cunetio* saw a concentrated period of building activity shortly after *c.* 360, when it acquired a substantial walled circuit (Fig. 6; Corney 1997).

### *Villages*

As with the term ‘small town’, there is also no strict definition of the word ‘village’ when applied to Romano-British settlements. Whilst some have been keen to distinguish between ‘hamlets’ and ‘villages’, both large and small (Hingley 1989, 75-80), Robin Hanley is of the opinion that ‘the term is probably best used as a generalisation rather than as a specific category with a long list of attendant criteria’ (Hanley 1987, 7). A working definition might be a rural population centre, containing a number of distinct homesteads or family units, which served as a centre for agricultural and sometimes also industrial production and distribution.

Many of the known Romano-British village sites in Wiltshire lie in the high chalk downland regions of Salisbury Plain and the Marlborough Downs, where they escaped destruction by the medieval plough and are consequently visible as extensive earthwork complexes. The Salisbury Plain Training Area contains eleven such sites, the

largest of which is Charlton Down [1:16], consisting of more than two hundred potential building platforms and covering over 26 hectares (McOmish *et al.* 2002, 88-100).

Among the eleven sites, two basic settlement plans may be discerned – compact and linear. Compact plans, which are best exemplified by the villages on Charlton Down and Upavon Down [1:35] (Fig. 8), tend to be set within pre-existing field patterns and are often focused around a meeting point of trackways or, in the case of Knook Down West [1:36], a large pond (McOmish *et al.* 2002, 95). Linear villages, such as Chisenbury Warren [1:24] (Fig. 9) and Church Pits [1:32], however, are strung out along a principal village street, which at Chapperton Down [1:19] may have originated as a reused prehistoric linear boundary ditch (McOmish *et al.* 2002, 98).

In both types of plan, building platforms are sub-rectangular and are often situated within rectilinear enclosures, suggesting a degree of planning and organisation, although in no instance has it been possible to identify higher status elements within the villages themselves (McOmish *et al.* 2002, 88). Planning from above is also suggested by elaborate systems of water management, including the creation of reservoirs by damming valley heads (Field 1999). Indications of the agricultural basis of these settlements are provided by finds of farming implements and querns, whilst specialist tools, such as the blacksmith's tongs and carpenter's dividers from the largely unpublished excavations on Charlton Down (McOmish *et al.* 2002, 93), hint at the wide range of crafts practised. Unfortunately, the lack of modern excavations at many village sites prevents us from accurately dating the lifespan of these settlements. However, pottery from Charlton Down and Church Pits in both cases covers the period from the first to the fourth centuries (McOmish *et al.* 2002, 93, 98), whilst recent excavations at Chisenbury Warren and Coombe Down [1:26] have yielded evidence for settlement from the Late Iron Age through to the Late Roman period (Entwistle *et al.* 1994, 10-24). Only Coombe Down – and *not* Chisenbury Warren (*contra* Dark 2000, 113; Fowler 2000a, 229) – has produced conclusive evidence for post-Roman occupation (Entwistle *et al.* 1993, 14; McOmish *et al.* 2002, 100; see Chapter 4).

On the Marlborough Downs, survey work and excavation directed by Peter Fowler in West Overton parish has revealed a village settlement, which, although smaller than many of its counterparts on Salisbury Plain, displays a high degree of regularity in its layout (Bowen and Fowler 1966, 56-7; Fowler 2000a, 228-9). Known by the site name Overton Down South [1:40] (Fig. 10), this set of earthworks is similar in plan to those of the regular medieval 'single row' villages found in the valleys of

south Wiltshire and north Dorset (*cf.* Taylor 1994, fig. 10.4). Overton Down South, however, has yielded a quantity of Roman pottery from its surface, whilst two other confirmed Romano-British settlement sites – OD XII and OD XIII [1:247-8] – are located in its immediate vicinity. It is tempting to see all three settlements as components of one large contemporary complex. However, this is considered unlikely as the excavated artefacts from OD XII significantly post-date those from the other two settlements: in fact, it has been suggested that occupation here began in *c.* 340 and continued into the fifth century (see Chapter 3). Nevertheless, it is clear from the objects found during the excavation of OD XII that the residents of Overton Down were engaged in both arable and sheep farming and made the best use of their location close to the meeting point of the Great Ridgeway and the Roman road to Bath and Mildenhall (Fowler 2000a, 229).

The third area of the county where Romano-British villages are well known is the Grovely Ridge, which forms the watershed between the Wylde and Nadder valleys. Here, three particularly large nucleated settlements – Ebsbury [1:13], Hamshill Ditches [1:14] (Fig. 11) and Stockton Earthworks [1:34] – are situated within 2km of the Roman road linking Old Sarum with Charterhouse-on-Mendip in Somerset. Each settlement had its origins in the middle or later Iron Age and the areas covered by the Roman-period settlements are 29, 25 and 32 hectares respectively (Corney 1989, 116-7). Whilst very little excavation work has been carried out, surface finds from all three sites indicate that occupation extended into the late fourth or even early fifth century (Hill 1907; Nan Kivell 1926; Bonney and Moore 1967). A likely agricultural basis for these settlements is indicated by the discovery of a corn-drying kiln at Hamshill Ditches, whilst a rectangular mound with rubble, also at Hamshill, has tentatively been identified as a temple (SMR). The widely held belief that many of the Wiltshire downland villages were linked tenurially with nearby villas (Corney 2000, 35; McOmish *et al.* 2002, 88) is perhaps also supported by a putative villa, which is represented by soilmarks to the northeast of the village settlement at Stockton Earthworks [1:110]. The idea that villas and villages were often found ‘medieval-style, in close association’ (Faulkner 2000, 139) is certainly an attractive one and it is a subject that we shall return to later in the chapter.

Away from the chalk downlands, Romano-British village settlements are relatively unknown, but this does not mean that they did not once exist. The fact that so few are recorded to date may have more to do with the clay geology, woodland cover

and intensive medieval and modern land-use of lowland Wiltshire, rather than any real historical distribution. One area of the county where light gravel soils have resulted in the recent detection of village settlements via aerial photography is the Thames valley. Two cropmark sites in Ashton Keynes and Latton parishes [1:12, 30] have been subject to recent fieldwork and both are characterised by a number of buildings and enclosures linked by trackways and surrounded by field systems. In this way, they parallel the rural villages known from cropmarks further east along the Thames valley in Oxfordshire at Standlake, Stanford in the Vale and Cote (Henig and Booth 2000, 92-110).

A possible village site beside the River Thames at Cricklade has also been subject to archaeological investigation. A large area surrounding the river crossing at High Bridge [1:21] has produced first- to fourth-century pottery, coins and building material and the suggestion has been made that a settlement here originated as a staging post close to Ermin Street, half way between Cirencester and Wanborough (Wainwright 1960; Haslam 2003). Two other possible villages located away from the Chalk in Wiltshire may be found in Monkton Farleigh and Westbury parishes. At Warleigh Wood [1:31] on the Cotswold limestone near Bath, a sprawling settlement with visible hut sites is associated with an extensive field system (Underwood 1946), whilst at Wellhead in Westbury, which is situated beside a group of springs on an Upper Greensand terrace, surface finds have provided evidence for a substantial and long-lived settlement engaged in industrial activities (Rogers and Roddham 1991, 52).

This brief survey has served to highlight some of the more important village settlements in Roman Wiltshire. Our knowledge of this class of settlement is clearly biased at present towards those larger and better-preserved examples on the chalk downlands, but it is envisaged that future fieldwork, excavation and survey will enable us to reveal more about those examples gradually emerging in lowland situations. One particular aspect of Romano-British village life in Wiltshire that requires future attention is the range of activities and services conducted within these settlements. Hitherto, villages have been regarded primarily as agricultural establishments (Hingley 1991, 76), but it clear from Westbury in particular and possibly also Cricklade that such settlements – neither small towns nor ‘typical’ rural settlements – could occasionally have a specialised industrial or commercial function. Furthermore, some, such as Hamshill Ditches and Charlton Down (see Robinson 2001), appear to have possessed

temples and it is conceivable that a religious function for such settlements may have been more important than has so far been allowed for.

### *Villas*

Villas are undoubtedly the most excavated and most researched settlements in Roman Britain, yet their study is overshadowed by two fundamental problems. Firstly, villas are often treated as a single phenomenon, distinct from other types of rural settlement. Understandably, antiquarians and archaeologists alike have often been far more interested in excavating stone buildings with mosaic floors, bath houses and hypocaust systems than simple wooden huts or round houses with little obvious material wealth. Villas, however, need to be understood in their wider landscape context and it is for this reason that Ken and Petra Dark have coined the term ‘villa landscape’, which includes not only the villas themselves, but also farms, fields and villages (Dark and Dark 1997, 43-75).

The second problem concerns the definition and use of the term ‘villa’. Some scholars have attempted to define it in historical terms, citing the classical writings of Varro, Virgil and Columella (*e.g.* Rivet 1969). Others, however, have taken a more archaeological approach, pointing to indicators of surplus wealth, such as mosaics, hypocausts, baths, painted wall plaster and window glass (*e.g.* Scott 1993, 1-8; Hostetter and Howe 1997, 398-401). The truth is that no one definition of a villa will suffice and it is perhaps safest to heed John Percival’s advice that we should not be too precise when using the term (Percival 1976, 15). ‘A high-status Roman-period home constructed in a recognisably romanised form’ might suffice as a simple gloss.

Although it is tempting to think of villas as a relatively uniform class of Roman rural settlement, an enormous variety of form and status is displayed amongst the forty-eight confirmed and thirty-four suspected examples in Wiltshire listed in Appendix 1. At the top of the social scale was Castle Copse in Great Bedwyn [1:88] (Fig. 12). This villa was almost palatial in size and quality, comprising a courtyard complex, whose two residential wings were furnished with expensive mosaic floors, underfloor heating, imported Bath stone capitals, a possible plunge bath, brightly painted walls and glazed windows (Hostetter and Howe 1997). Castle Copse certainly ranks among the largest villas so far known in Roman Britain and it is possibly Wiltshire’s only true courtyard villa – *i.e.* one where all four sides were surrounded by continuous ranges of buildings –

therefore placing it in the same league as North Leigh in Oxfordshire, Chedworth in Gloucestershire and Bignor in West Sussex (Hingley 1989, 51-4). Richard Hingley considers courtyard villas to have been occupied by members of the British élite (Hingley 1989, 53) and it is therefore likely that Castle Copse served as a grand country residence for a regional government official and his extended family (Faulkner 2000, 130-2; Walters 2001, 131).

Other villas in Wiltshire that may have functioned primarily as luxurious residences for ruling aristocratic families are Badbury [1:67], Draycot Foliat [1:66], Box [1:53] and perhaps also Bradford-on-Avon [1:55]. Badbury and Draycot Foliat are both situated beside a Roman road only a short distance from *Durocornovium*, whilst Box and Bradford are within easy reach of Bath. The idea must be entertained that these were the homes of urban officials. The villa complex at Badbury is only partly known from rescue excavations carried out at the time of its destruction in order to make way for the M4 motorway (Fowler and Walters 1981). At least four residential buildings were identified, however, producing evidence for mosaic floors, hypocausts, decorated walls and two bath suites (Fig. 13). Significantly, no evidence was found for agricultural activity, perhaps supporting the 'grand residence' theory (Walters 2001, 131). The Draycot Foliat complex similarly consists of a number of detached residential buildings, including two winged corridor houses set only 300m apart (Walters 2001, 132). Two adjacent villa houses have also been found at Bradford-on-Avon, one of which included a striking fourth-century mosaic floor with a design of dolphins and a cantharus (Corney 2003), whilst Box villa is also notable for its mosaic floors, remains of which have been found in twenty rooms, thus equalling the known total for Woodchester in Gloucestershire (Hurst 1987, 23). The full plan of Box villa was not revealed in excavations conducted in the 1960s, but it is thought that a large winged corridor house was supplemented by additional buildings set around two courtyards in the fourth century (Fig. 14).

Moving down the social ladder, a number of villas in Wiltshire, many with winged corridor or simpler corridor houses, sat at the head of agricultural estates. Whilst still retaining luxury features in their residential quarters, such as mosaics, painted walls and hypocaust heating, they also possessed barns, granaries and other outbuildings where agricultural activities could be carried out. At Atworth [1:48], Downton [1:75] and Littlecote [1:105], for example, fine examples of 'corn driers' have been found, hinting at the processing of cereals and perhaps also the brewing of beer on

site (Rahtz 1963, 304; Walters 2001, 134-7). A number of villas, including Tockenham, Russley Park [1:51] and Upper Upham [1:42], have also been shown to lie at the centre of extensive field systems and Bryn Walters has suggested that many such villas in the county were involved in the commercial production of grain for export to the Western Roman Empire (Walters 2001, 130). Certainly, several villas on the fringes of Salisbury Plain – at Charlton (S) [1:63], Enford [1:81-3] and Netheravon [1:99-100], for example – were ideally placed to exploit the extensive arable field systems located high on the chalk downs and the theory that these villas sat at the head of extensive grain-producing estates, similar in layout to the ‘strip’ tithings and parishes of today, has a number of current advocates (*e.g.* Corney 2000, 35; McOmish *et al.* 2002, 157; see below). Agricultural activity associated with villas, however, was not confined to grain production. The rearing of both pigs and cattle on a profitable scale is archaeologically attested at North Wraxall [1:101], whilst sheep farming may have been the primary economic basis for the villa at Aldbourne Gorse [1:41], in addition to a number of other downland or Cotswold villas (Branigan 1977a, 72; Walters 2001, 130, 133).

Some villas in Wiltshire were actively linked with industrial activities, such as pottery production, metalworking and perhaps also stone quarrying. The wooded areas of Braydon and Savernake were important centres of pottery manufacture in the Roman period (Fig. 20; Anderson 1979; Timby 2001) and there is some evidence to suggest that villa-owners were quick to tap into this local source of business. Pottery and tile kilns have been found in association with villas at Tottenham [1:87] and Dogridge [1:104] (Anderson 1980; Hostetter 1997, 44), whilst it should also be noted that the possible villa at Westlecott in Swindon [1:113] lies within an area that is particularly rich in excavated kiln sites (Anderson 1979). The production and working of metals on villa sites – notably iron – is relatively common elsewhere in the West Country (Branigan 1977a, 84), but, whilst Roman-period iron smelting is suspected at Wellhead in Westbury (Rogers and Roddham 1991, 52), there is no definitive evidence so far to suggest that local villas were involved in the industry. The only notable evidence for metalworking of any sort on villa sites in the county comes from Littlecote, where three possible bronze-working furnaces were observed in the west wing (Walters and Philips *n.d.*, 10), and from Castle Copse, where a clay mould for a die-stamp in order to decorate metal (now lost) was reportedly discovered within the villa (Hostetter and Howe 1997, 260-4). Stone quarrying associated with villas in Wiltshire cannot be directly attested, but it is possible that the extraordinary profusion of villas in Box and

Colerne parishes – three in Box [1:52-4] and two in Colerne [1:70-1] – may in part be explained by the location of profitable Bath stone quarries here. The large villa at Box church was itself constructed from Bath stone quarried from Box Hill (Geddes 2000, 71) and it is perhaps reasonable to suppose that many of the local quarries were run as part of villa estates, helping to create significant wealth in the area.

The vast majority of the Wiltshire villas discussed so far, whether grand country residences or working estates, reached their zenith in the fourth century. This is a time when the West Country as a whole, focused on Cirencester, was becoming increasingly wealthy, largely on the back of profits from grain and wool production (Moorhead 2001, 94). Some villas in the county, however, can be shown to have much earlier origins. Castle Copse, Littlecote and Box villas, for example, each had a series of timber and/or masonry predecessors. Castle Copse gained a cluster of wooden buildings shortly after the Roman Conquest, which were adapted and added to in the second century before being replaced in stone in the third century (Hostetter and Howe 1997, 139-40). At Littlecote, circular huts were replaced in the later first century by two large wooden rectangular chalk-floored buildings, before these were replaced in turn by a stone corridor villa and flint-walled barn in *c.* 170 (Walters and Philips *n.d.*). A small stone building at Box had been erected at the northeast corner of the main villa site by *c.* 150 (Hurst 1987, 22). At what point in time these early buildings and settlements became true villas is hard to assess, but it may be that, whilst some acquired visibly romanised features at a relatively early date, in the first or second centuries, others were rebuilt or adapted only in the third or fourth centuries, perhaps when the profits of farming or industry allowed or when their British owners made a conscious decision to adopt the trappings of a Roman identity.

A small number of villas in Wiltshire show a clear development from Iron Age settlements, either on the same site or close by. At Netheravon, a geophysical survey carried out in 1993 revealed that a small corridor villa [1:100] lay within a Late Iron Age enclosed settlement that continued into the Romano-British period (Fig. 15; McOmish *et al.* 2002, 85, 104-5), whilst at Allington [1:45], another corridor villa was found to overlie an Iron Age settlement enclosure (Algar 1971). A similar relationship can also be clearly demonstrated at Rixon's Gate in Ashton Keynes [1:47] (Anon. 1994, 149-50), whilst at Forest Hill in Mildenhall [1:97], a winged corridor villa is situated within the earthwork enclosure of the large Iron Age nucleated settlement discussed above (Corney 2001, 14). Although direct continuity of settlement from the Iron Age

into the Roman period cannot be conclusively demonstrated in these cases, it is at least clear that villas form just as much a part of the long 'native' settlement tradition in Wiltshire as they do the Roman pattern.

In summary, villas are increasingly being found in all areas of Wiltshire, from the heights of the chalk downs to the depths of the clay vales. Whilst, in many cases, it is difficult to gauge the exact status and rôle of these settlements, it is likely that most represented the homes of prosperous British land-owners, who sought to express their wealth by replacing their ancestral dwellings with fashionable Roman-style houses, often complete with agricultural or industrial outbuildings. Others, however, (perhaps five or six in the county) were the grand country residences of an urban élite, who represented the governing classes of Roman Britain.

### *Small Non-Villa Settlements*

This heterogeneous group mainly consists of settlements termed 'single farms' or 'hamlets' by Richard Hingley (1989, 76). In simple terms, they are small low-status agricultural settlements inhabited by one or a few family units. As with other settlement categories discussed above, however, these terms are often difficult to apply practically; for example, when does a wealthy farm become a villa and when can a large hamlet be termed a small village? Such questions are hard to answer archaeologically and it must be acknowledged that settlement classification is, after all, a subjective business.

Turning to the Wiltshire evidence for hamlets and farmsteads, perhaps the best-known examples are those preserved as upstanding earthworks on unploughed downland. The settlement at Berwick Down in Tollard Royal [1:234] consists of perhaps five or six farmsteads within a roughly oval enclosure, which is bisected by a road or track (Fig. 16). Significantly, this settlement is located only 100m north (upslope) of an excavated enclosed Late Iron Age farmstead, represented by a large roundhouse and several storage pits (Wainwright 1968). A similar relationship with Late Iron Age occupation may be seen at Rotherley [1:134] in the neighbouring parish of Berwick St John, where a farmstead in use until the end of the third century lies within a settlement enclosure dating to the first century BC (Pitt-Rivers 1888; Bowen and Fowler 1966, 46; Cunliffe 1973, 442). Although the available evidence at both of these sites is insufficient to say whether occupation continued without a break between the Iron Age and Romano-British periods, it is at least clear that there was continuity of

settlement location. Indeed, this phenomenon seems to have been widespread amongst other downland hamlets and farms in the county. On Overton Down, Peter Fowler has discovered that Romano-British farming settlements at OD XII and OD XIII were preceded by an enclosed Iron Age settlement (OD XI), located only 200-300m to the north (Fowler 2000a, 86-91) and artefactual evidence for Iron Age and Romano-British settlements existing in close proximity may be found at a number of sites, including Boscombe Down West [1:124], Knap Hill [1:127], Rushmore Park [1:135] and Camp Hill [1:217], to name but a few.

The story of small downland farming settlements in Wiltshire appears to have been one of relatively little change between the Late Iron Age and Romano-British periods. Indeed, this picture is supported by research in the chalk areas of neighbouring counties, such as Hampshire (Oliver and Applin 1978), Dorset (Bowen and Fowler 1966) and Berkshire (Tingle 1991). However, was there a similar continuity in the rest of Wiltshire away from the Chalk? Although the evidence here is less visible, there are a number of recently excavated sites where Iron Age and Roman-period settlements occurs close together. At Cleveland Farm in Ashton Keynes [1:130], for example, a sequence of occupation on a farmstead site has been established from the Late Iron Age into the Late Roman or early post-Roman period (Fig. 17; Coe *et al.* 1991). Furthermore, at nearby Latton, there are good grounds for proposing continuity between Iron Age and Romano-British dwellings at Field Barn [1:191] (Mudd *et al.* 1999, 523), whilst on Hampton Hill in Highworth [1:184], an excavated Iron Age settlement was covered by a layer containing much second- to fourth-century pottery, tiles and building stone (Anon. 1977-8, 204-5). Recent excavations at Wayside Farm in Devizes [1:161] have also confirmed the presence of both Late Iron Age and Romano-British agricultural settlements (Valentin and Robinson 2002).

Recovering and interpreting structural evidence at small non-villa settlements is not always easy, mainly due to the scarcity of durable building materials and foundations when compared to villa sites. Where individual buildings are known, however, it is apparent that most were of a simple rectangular form, built of either stone or timber or a combination of the two (see Hingley 1989, 35-7), although some round houses continued to be built, as at a site just to the west of Blunsdon St Andrew [1:141]. Five buildings of rectangular type have been excavated at the Late Roman farming settlement known as OD XII on Overton Down (Fig. 18; Fowler 2000a, 106-12, 228-9; 2000b). Here, the earliest structures, dated to c. 300, were entirely of timber-post

construction, but these were replaced between c. 335 and 370 by three wooden buildings resting on stone dwarf-walls. A fourth building (Building 4a) had two timber post-built phases before gaining stone footings perhaps in the early fifth century, whilst an even later fifth structure (Building 4b/c) appears to have had sarsen walls and an apsidal east end. Building 2 – the largest at 10m x 8m – surely represents the principal dwelling, as it was found to contain numerous artefacts characteristic of domestic occupation. Buildings 1, 3 and 4a have been interpreted as outbuildings – perhaps a milling shed, workshop and barn respectively. Building 4b/c may have housed a ‘corn drier’. These features became increasingly common on farming settlements in Wiltshire as the Roman period wore on and examples from small non-villa settlements elsewhere in the county include those at Baydon Overbridge [1:133], Clay Pit Clump [1:157] and Eyewell Farm [1:153]. Whether they are interpreted as grain dryers or malting kilns for beer production is open to debate (see Walters 2001, 135), but it is clear that they are representative of the increasing prosperity to be gained from arable agriculture in the region in the third and fourth centuries in particular.

One last aspect of small non-villa settlements in Wiltshire that merits discussion is their potential relationship to other settlements in the landscape, particularly villas. Whether villa estate workers most frequently lived in quasi-feudal bond settlements under the watchful gaze of a bailiff (Faulkner 2000, 143) or in satellite farms, each one having a measured degree of independence (Pollard and Reynolds 2002, 165-6), is uncertain (see below), but it is clear that several small non-villa settlements in Wiltshire may be found in close proximity to known villas. At Tockenham, for example, four pottery scatters identified through fieldwalking at a distance of c. 1km from the main villa may perhaps represent dependent settlements (Harding and Lewis 1997, 38-9), whilst on Overton Down, Peter Fowler has suggested that OD XII was ‘related in some way’ to the putative ‘Headlands’ villa [1:118], located only 1.5km to the south (Fowler 2000a, 228). Furthermore, at Downton, a recently identified non-villa settlement at New Court Farm [1:164] lies just across the River Avon from the excavated Downton villa, whilst the Russley Park villa in Bishopstone (N) parish is located only a few hundred metres from a farmstead in Botley Copse (now in Oxfordshire), which has yielded an iron carding comb used in wool production and a ‘corn drier’ (Walters 2001, 133-4, 136). The possibility that some *wīc* place-names in Wiltshire may also represent small non-villa settlements dependent on villas will receive attention below.

Whether small non-villa settlements operated as independent units or integral parts of larger villa estates, it is clear from the archaeological record that they were the commonest form of settlement in the rural landscape and that most were agricultural in economic basis and were therefore associated with fields or paddocks linked together by trackways. Furthermore, whilst many of these settlements were direct successors of earlier Iron Age farming settlements, others were established anew as both the population and the area of land under cultivation expanded. Such settlements are still, for the most part, unexplored archaeologically and their excavation and interpretation must form a priority for future research.

### **Roman Settlements: The Place-Name Evidence**

One important body of evidence for Roman settlements in Wiltshire that has so far received little academic attention is place-names. Whilst not actually dating from the Roman period, except in the cases of the four small towns known from the Antonine Itinerary and the Ravenna Cosmography – *Cunetio*, *Durocornovium*, *Sorviodunum* and *Verlucio* (Gelling 1997, 30-62) – possibly in addition to some of the Brittonic names identified by Richard Coates and Andrew Breeze (Coates and Breeze 2000; see Chapter 4), a number of place- and field-names in the county can be directly linked with Roman occupation and may be used, therefore, to guide archaeologists to hitherto undiscovered settlements. Some may record Romano-British sites that continued to be inhabited into the early medieval period and beyond (see *wīc*, *funta* and *ceaster* below), whilst others may simply denote locations where building remains and other settlement features were visible to early medieval farmers. What is clear, however, is that the Wiltshire landscape contains an important linguistic record of Romano-British and even post-Roman settlement, the full potential of which is presently untapped.

#### *Latin-Derived Indicators*

The first category of potential Roman settlement indicators to be examined here comprises those place-names containing one of three elements that are known to have been adopted into Old English from Latin at a very early date, probably in the fifth or sixth centuries (see Gelling 1997, 63-86). Place-names containing either *wīc*, *ceaster* or

*funta* have elsewhere shown a strong affinity with Roman settlement remains and it is reasonable to assume that place-names in Wiltshire containing these elements will similarly denote Romano-British archaeological features. The element *wīc*, which most often survives today in the forms ‘Wick’, ‘Wyke’ and ‘Week’, preserves the Latin term *vicus*, which, according to Margaret Gelling (1997, 70), ‘was the term for the smallest unit of self-government in the Roman provinces’, although Stephen Johnson has concluded that ‘by the fourth century we can be fairly certain that *vicus* had come to mean as much or as little as our term “village”’ (Johnson in Gelling 1997, 71). A full survey of fifty-four *wīc* place-names in Wiltshire has recently been undertaken by the present author (Draper 2002), whilst the post-Roman significance of these names will be discussed in Chapter 4. For now, however, it is sufficient to illustrate the correlation between a number of *wīc* names and Roman settlements with a few examples.

Perhaps the clearest coincidences between *wīc* place-names in Wiltshire and Romano-British settlements may be seen at the two small towns of Nettleton Shrub and *Verlucio*. Only 500m from these major settlements are West Kington Wick and Heddington Wick respectively and the link with Roman settlement at Heddington is made even more explicit by John Aubrey’s record of the discovery here ‘in Weeke field’ in March 1653 of ‘foundations of howses and coales, for at least a quarter of a mile long, and a great quantity of Roman money’ (Jackson 1862, 45). Aubrey similarly reports ‘a quantity of Roman coin’ in ‘Wick Field’ in Lacock and it is possible that that this site is associated with a ‘lost’ villa, traces of which were last reported in the early twentieth century (Jackson 1862, 95; Scott 1993, 203). Wick Farm in Lacock is itself located only 500m from the Roman road between Bath and Mildenhall and it is striking that seven other *wīc* place-names in the county are located within 1km of a major Roman road – Wadswick in Box, Badbury Wick in Chiseldon, Liddington Wick in Swindon, Cerney Wick on the Latton county boundary, Heddington Wick in Heddington, West Kington Wick in Nettleton and Wick Wood in Dinton (Fig. 19; Draper 2002).

Further *wīc* place-names occur close to (but not at) villa sites, perhaps suggesting that they record the presence of small non-villa settlements housing estate workers – a scenario also proposed recently by Nick Corcos, working in Somerset (Corcos 2002, 8-9). Such a situation may clearly be seen at Downton, where the recently identified New Court Farm settlement in the hamlet of Wick is situated less than 1km across the River Avon from the villa at Downton, which was excavated by

Philip Rahtz in the 1950s (Rahtz 1963). Badbury Wick similarly lies only 750m from the extensive Badbury villa (see above), whilst similar juxtapositions may be found at Tockenham Wick in Tockenham (Fig. 49), Hannington Wick in Hannington, Pantawick in Savernake and Cuffs Corner in Clyffe Pypard, where there is a field named 'Wicks Piece' on the 1840 Clyffe Pypard tithe map (WRO Tithe Map).

One specialised form of *wīc* place-name that Margaret Gelling (1967) has convincingly associated with Roman settlement is the compound *wīchām*. The only Wiltshire example of such a place-name cited by Gelling is Wickham Green in Urchfont, which is first recorded in 1237 (Gover *et al.* 1939, 316; Gelling 1967, 92). So far, no significant remains have been found here (SMR). It is notable, however, that a 'Wickhams Close' appears adjacent to Blackland Moat in Calne Without parish on the Blackland tithe map of 1845 (WRO Tithe Map). This is located only 500m from a putative Romano-British temple site at Black Furlong [1:257]. A 'Wickham' field in Grafton parish (see Eagles 1997, 389; Chandler 2001, 113) may simply refer to a William Wickham, who held land here in 1792 (WRO 9/1/105).

Place-names containing the Old English element *ceaster* – a borrowing of the Latin term *castra*, 'a camp' – have long been known to indicate Roman settlements, especially when they occur in connection with known Roman towns and forts, such as Dorchester in Dorset or Binchester in County Durham (Gelling 1997, 151-3). Less well known is the occasional correlation between *ceaster* place-names and Roman villa sites, as in the Gloucestershire villages of Woodchester and Frocester (Price 2000, 3-4) and various fields named 'Stanchester', for example in Chilton Candover in Hampshire and Pitchford in Shropshire (Scott 1993, 83, 164). In Wiltshire, a villa has been recorded in Stanchester field in Wilcot parish [1:120] (Young 1930) and there is every reason to believe that a villa will one day be found in connection with the seventeenth-century field-name 'Stanch Chester', which is recorded in Bishopstone (S) parish (Hobbs 2003, 38). Other potential villa sites in Wiltshire that may in the future be identified via *ceaster* field-names are 'Bechester' in Crudwell, 'Vinchester' in Sutton Benger and 'Cornchester' in Grittleton (Young 1930, 505; Hobbs 2003, 125, 414). Such references clearly merit further archaeological and documentary research.

One final Latin-derived place-name element that has elsewhere been linked with Roman settlement is *funta*, from the Latin word *fontāna*, 'spring, fountain' (Gelling 1997, 83-6; Gelling and Cole 2000, 17-19). *Funta* is only found in twenty-two place-names nationally, of which four occur in Wiltshire – Fonthill, Fovant, Teffont and

Urchfont. Significantly, all these places are both villages and parishes in their own right and, although the word *funta* does not obviously refer to settlement, place-names containing the element should perhaps be seen as ‘quasi-habitative’, denoting both water-source and associated settlement. Both Margaret Gelling (1977, 9-10) and Ann Cole (1985, 16) have suggested that springs referred to by the earliest English-speakers by the term *funta* were characterised by Roman building work, perhaps in association with a shrine or a settlement. In Wiltshire, the archaeological evidence is certainly suggestive, if not conclusive. In Urchfont parish, an important ritual site has been inferred from quantities of Iron Age and Romano-British coins and metal finds (SMR), whilst in Teffont parish, a Romano-British cemetery containing at least thirty burials has been excavated at Black Furlong and 225 Roman coins have been discovered on the floor of a Romano-British building at Upper Holt [1:259], which may be a shrine (Eagles 2001, 213; Moorhead 2001, 89, 99). Again, more research is needed, but the potential of *funta* names to predict Roman spring-line settlements should not be overlooked.

#### *Other Potential Settlement Indicators*

A second category of potential Roman settlement indicators comprises those wholly English place-names – mostly minor and field-names – that appear to have been applied to certain locations in recognition of building remains and other associated settlement features still visible in the Anglo-Saxon and medieval periods. The Romano-British significance of some such names – particularly those of the ‘black’ and *ceastel* types (see below) – is well known and fields bearing these names have sometimes been targeted for archaeological work, as at Shapwick in Somerset (Aston and Gerrard 1999). Other potential indicators are less well known and it is hoped that the evidence presented below will encourage further research to be undertaken elsewhere.

A sample of the evidence available from Wiltshire for the link between each potential indicator and Roman archaeological features is presented in Table 1. The first element, Old English *hām*, ‘homestead’, is common in settlement-names in parts of East Anglia and the South East (see Gelling 1997, fig. 8), but is rare in Wiltshire, although its identification in place-names is hampered by confusion with the element *hamm*, ‘river-meadow’ (see Gelling 1997, 113-15 for a summary of the difficulties involved). Two papers by Barry Cox (1977) and John McNeal Dodgson (1973) have helped to establish

a link between this element and Roman settlements, notably villas, whilst Gillian Fellows Jensen has noted of German *haim* place-names that they too can often be tied to settlements in Roman contexts (Fellows Jensen 1979, 14-15). In Wiltshire, only two place-names can be derived from *hām*, rather than *hamm*, with reasonable certainty (Gelling 1976, 817) and it is surely no coincidence that both are known Roman villa sites (Table 1).

The next two indicators listed in Table 1 are both common in Wiltshire minor and field-names. The element 'black' occurs at least twenty-five times in field-names recorded on nineteenth-century tithe maps for the county, over half of which are in the form 'blackland(s)' (*ex inf.* Michael Costen). It is thought that the term refers to the characteristic dark phosphate-rich soil that is produced as a result of prolonged human occupation (Field 1993, 212). The Old English element *ceastel*, 'heap (of stones)', is similarly well represented in Wiltshire, making an appearance in upwards of thirty field-names, most of which are in the forms 'Chestle(s)', 'Cheswell(s)', 'Chessell(s)' or 'Castle(s)' (Gover *et al.* 1939, 426; *ex inf.* Michael Costen). In Somerset, *ceastel* field-names are directly associated with Roman villa or settlement sites in at least six separate instances (Scott 1993, 167-72; Aston and Gerrard 1999, 17) and it is believed that the term describes the crumbling ruins of Roman buildings, which would have provided a ready source of building materials for churches in particular during the Anglo-Saxon period (Field 1993, 213; Gelling 1997, 153). Five examples of names containing both elements in Wiltshire are presented in Table 1 and it is clear that others in the county should be targeted for future archaeological research into the Roman settlement pattern.

Some place-names containing the word *stān*, 'stone', may too record the re-use of building stone from nearby crumbling Roman buildings at an early date. In Kent, Alan Everitt (1986, 113-16) has discussed a number of settlement-names containing the element where a correlation with Roman structures is readily apparent, whilst a link with Roman building stone is also supported by Ann Cole, who has concluded that '*stān* refers to stone that has, or could be, used' (Cole 1999, 25). It is certainly striking that two out of the three 'Stanton' place-names in Wiltshire are directly associated with villas and their appurtenant settlements (Table 1). Stanton St Bernard may perhaps be so named due to the presence of sarsen stones in the parish (Cole 1999, 26).

'Church' place-names in Wiltshire represent something of a mystery. Whilst some obviously refer to Anglo-Saxon and medieval churches, others are clearly associated with Roman remains. Church Pits and Church Ditches – both high on

Salisbury Plain – are very unlikely locations for churches and it is no surprise that they are associated with Romano-British village settlements (McOmish *et al.* 2002, 88-100; Table 1). One view is that Roman ruins acquired the name ‘church’ in the Anglo-Saxon or medieval period in recognition of the fact that they were stone structures at a time when few buildings in the rural landscape were of masonry construction other than churches. Another view holds that such names are an adaptation of the Brittonic word *crüg*, ‘hill, mound’, which may have gained an extended meaning of ‘earthwork’ (Gelling 1997, 138-40).

The last set of potential indicators presented in Table 1 occurs infrequently in Wiltshire field-names and appears to refer to specific aspects of Romano-British occupation – *crocc*, ‘pottery’, *flöre*, ‘tessellated floor’, and *cinder*, ‘iron slag, industrial remains’. Some *crocc* place-names may refer to medieval pottery production, as at Crockerton in Longbridge Deverill and possibly also Cock-a-Troop in Mildenhall (Gover *et al.* 1939, 166, 301), but others almost certainly refer to concentrations of Roman pottery. In Somerset, the site of a villa at Kingsdon is marked by the field-name ‘Crocklands’ (Costen 1993, 94), whilst in Gloucestershire, Roman pottery has been found on or near the thirteenth-century *Crockemedede* in Brockworth parish (Field 1993, 212, 218). The nineteenth-century field-names ‘Crockle’ in Highworth and ‘Crockford’ in Grimstead would certainly repay further study. *Flöre* is known in connection with Roman tessellated or mosaic floors at Fawler (x2) in Oxfordshire and also Flower Farm in Godstone in Surrey (Gelling 1997, 153-4) and it is striking that the West Dean villa [1:117] on the Wiltshire/Hampshire border was found in ‘Hoolyflower’ field (Scott 1993, 208). *Cinder* names, it has been suggested, may refer to iron slag and other industrial debris dating to the Roman period (Taylor 1996, 482-3) and a link with Romano-British activity is certainly implied at ‘Cinderhill’ in Nettleton (Table 1).

A number of further place-name elements have been claimed as potential indicators of Roman settlement in recent years, including *box*, ‘box-bush’ (Coates 1999), *mere*, ‘pond’ (Cole 1992; 1993) and *netel*, ‘nettle’ (Cole 2003), and it remains to be seen whether all such-named places yield Roman remains in the future. It is nevertheless apparent that not only is this a valuable field of research, but also our current view of the Roman settlement pattern in Wiltshire can be greatly enhanced through the further detailed study of place-names and their archaeological connections.

## Settlements in the Landscape

### *Fields, Farming and Woods*

Having examined the Wiltshire evidence for Roman settlements (as settlements), it is necessary to set them within their wider landscape context by looking at the evidence for land-use and the environment in the Roman period. Agriculture then, as now, was of prime importance and the high intensity of arable cultivation on the light and well-drained soils of the chalk downs throughout the prehistoric and Roman periods is one aspect of Wiltshire's landscape history that has been amply revealed by a number of recent research projects (*e.g.* Gingell 1992; Fowler 2000a; McOmish *et al.* 2002). Less well documented is the mixed agriculture, with an emphasis on sheep and cattle farming, that was practised elsewhere in Wiltshire, although animal bones and/or plant remains from recent excavations at Wayside Farm in Devizes (Valentin and Robinson 2002), Tockenham (Harding and Lewis 1997), Calne (Anon. 2002, 281-2), Corsham (Anon. 2002, 283) and a variety of sites in the Thames valley (Mudd *et al.* 1999, 468) are beginning to elucidate the pattern of farming in the non-chalk regions of the county. The extent of woodland in Wiltshire during the Roman period is another factor that needs to be taken into account, along with its use for industrial processes, such as pottery production and iron smelting.

In Wiltshire, as elsewhere in southern England (Dark and Dark 1997, 93-113), the Roman period was characterised by a marked agricultural intensification and nowhere can this be seen more clearly than on the chalk downs. At Chisenbury Warren in Enford, new fields were laid out around the growing village settlement during the first and second centuries and there is clear evidence for an increase in arable production later on in the Roman period (Entwistle *et al.* 1994, 10-17; Dark and Dark 1997, 95). Striking rectilinear or 'brickwork' fields of Roman date – here overlying earlier 'Celtic' field patterns – also surround the village at Knook Down East [1:37] (McOmish *et al.* 2002, 96-7), whilst 'brickwork' fields have also been photographed and planned on Overton Down in West Overton, close to an area where fields last tilled in the fifth century BC were brought back into cultivation in the first and second centuries AD (Fowler 2000a, 26, 92; see Chapter 7). Elsewhere on the Chalk, numerous field systems are preserved as earthworks and, whilst most cannot be reliably dated,

some, such as those on Preshute Down (SMR), have yielded finds of Roman pottery in their field banks, thereby strongly suggesting the manuring of these fields during the Roman period. The range of crops grown on the downs was dominated by wheat and barley, if plant remains from Silbury Hill in Avebury (Powell *et al.* 1996, 83) and Castle Copse in Great Bedwyn (Hostetter and Howe 1997, 345-58) are at all indicative, although the presence of more exotic species, such as vines, should perhaps not be ruled out, especially on some of the sunnier valley slopes (McOmish *et al.* 2002, 103).

Agriculture on the Chalk was not confined to arable farming. It is likely that many of the extensive field systems discussed above contained some pasture (Dark and Dark 1997, 106) and it is even possible that the separation between domestic, pastoral and arable land operated on the same basis as the 'infield-outfield' agricultural systems known from medieval contexts (McOmish *et al.* 2002, 103). Although animal bones do not survive well in chalky soils, sheep undoubtedly formed the basis of the downland pastoral economy, whilst cattle were probably farmed in the wetter valley pastures. Faunal remains from OD XII in West Overton suggest that sheep were kept here in number in the later fourth century, perhaps replacing arable fields (Fowler 2000a, 229), whilst both sheep and cattle bones were numerous in Late Roman contexts at Castle Copse in Great Bedwyn and Butterfield Down in Amesbury [1:11] (Rawlings and Fitzpatrick 1996; Hostetter and Howe 1997, 322-44). British woollen products especially were sought-after throughout the Western Roman Empire in the fourth century (Walters 2001, 130) and it is likely that Late Roman landowners simply responded to changing demand for their products. There is no real evidence that the apparent late Roman shift from arable to pastoral farming on the Marlborough Downs should be seen as a reaction to economic decline and increasing social instability (*pace* Fowler and Blackwell 1998, 133).

Away from the Chalk, the legacy of Roman agriculture is far less apparent, mainly due to the intensive exploitation of this landscape in historic and modern times. Field systems rarely survive as earthworks, although we should note the extensive example in Monkton Farleigh parish (SMR), and they only show up as cropmarks on certain soils. Some of the best cropmarks in the county occur on the gravel terraces of the Thames valley. Further east along the Thames in Oxfordshire, entire relict landscapes have been revealed through cropmarks at Farmoor, Yarnton and Appleford, presenting us with a picture of mixed farming with areas of settlements and arable fields interspersed with paddocks and droveways for cattle (Henig and Booth 2000, 96-9).

Similar cropmark complexes are visible in Wiltshire in Latton, Marston Meysey and Ashton Keynes parishes. Here, small farms and larger village settlements are surrounded by extensive field systems with ditched enclosures (SMR). Elsewhere in the north and west of the county, elements of the prehistoric and Roman agricultural landscape are occasionally visible in the boundaries and routeways of the present day and the survival of such 'ancient' landscapes will form a topic for discussion in Chapter 7.

A detailed snapshot of Roman agricultural practice in the non-chalk zone of Wiltshire has recently been gained from the excavated faunal and botanical assemblages from Wayside Farm in Devizes (Valentin and Robinson 2002). Here, charred and mineralised plant remains indicate that both Late Iron Age and Early Roman crop production was dominated by emmer/spelt wheat and barley, whilst similarly dated animal bones point towards the farming of sheep and/or goats. Towards the end of the Roman period, there are strong indications that arable farming on this site was largely replaced by the rearing of cattle for beef – a trend that is paralleled at other Wiltshire sites, including Manor Farm in Figheldean [1:173] and Silbury Hill (Powell *et al.* 1996, 83; Valentin and Robinson 2002, 201). Cattle, however, did not completely dominate the Late Roman pastoral economy in Wiltshire. Sheep are well represented on a number of third- and fourth-century sites, notably Cotswold villas (Branigan 1977a, 72), whilst pig farming is also attested at Wayside Farm and the Truckle Hill villa in North Wraxall (Branigan 1977a, 72; Valentin and Robinson 2002, 196, 201).

In the thirteenth century, Wiltshire possessed nine principal areas of woodland and wood pasture, corresponding with the royal forests of Braydon, Pewsham, Melksham, Selwood, Grovely, Melchet, Clarendon, Chute and Savernake (Fig. 3; Bond 1994). However, was the same true one thousand years earlier? Which areas of Wiltshire were wooded in the Roman period and which were largely open? Turning first to the chalk downlands, it is clear from the extent and density of preserved settlements and field systems that woodland then, as now, was a scarce resource. It is reasonable to assume, however, that slopes too steep for cultivation were sometimes wooded, whilst occasionally, areas devoid of cultivation remains and bounded by linear ditches may be encountered, which it is tempting to interpret as managed copses associated with nearby settlements. Such an area – approximately 9ha – may be seen northwest of the village at Knook Down East (McOmish *et al.* 2002, 97). Many of the Clay-with-Flints ridges that cap the higher chalk hills may also have been wooded, as

archaeobotanical evidence from Castle Copse tends to suggest (Hostetter and Howe 1997, 347), but the areas of woodland here were probably not as extensive as in the later Anglo-Saxon and medieval periods. Many of the large agricultural village settlements along the Wylve/Nadder watershed lie within the area now covered by Grovely Wood, whilst recent fieldwork within Clarendon Park has also located several Roman farming settlements, each surrounded by field systems [1:20, 68, 156].

One of the best guides to the extent of woodland in Roman Wiltshire is the distribution of pottery and tile kilns (Fig. 20). The locations of such kilns were determined by a range of factors, including the availability of clay and sand and access to markets and distribution centres (Jones and Mattingly 1990, 205), but the most important was undoubtedly access to a plentiful supply of firewood and charcoal. Looking at Figure 20, it is clear that the distribution of kilns in Wiltshire mirrors to a large extent the coverage of later medieval royal forests in the clayland regions of the west and north. Two areas of particular activity were Braydon/West Swindon and Savernake. Minety in Braydon Forest is known to have played host to a major Roman tiler, perhaps serving Cirencester to the north (Jones and Mattingly 1990, 217-8), whilst the West Swindon and Savernake pottery industries are well documented by recent research (Anderson 1979; Timby 2001). A hitherto little-known 'Selwood' pottery industry is perhaps suggested by putative kiln sites at Emmetts Piece in Chapmanslade and Clear Wood in Upton Scudamore (SMR), in addition to finds of kiln furniture at Wellhead in Westbury (Rogers and Roddham 1991).

One area where evidence for pottery production is visibly lacking is in the vicinity of Melksham and Chippenham Forests. This is perhaps not surprising when one considers the density of known Roman settlements in the vicinity of *Verlucio* (Fig. 4). Evidently, this part of the county was much more densely settled and farmed during the Roman period than it is now and it is possible that woodland regeneration only followed in the immediate post-Roman centuries (see Chapter 7). We should note, however, that iron smelting – another industry requiring plentiful supplies of wood – has been posited to the south of *Verlucio* around Bromham and Seend (Cunliffe 1973a, 451) and, if this was indeed the case, managed woodland must not have been far away. Romano-British iron smelting is also suspected at The Ham in Westbury, where substantial deposits of iron ore can be found (Corney 2001, 35), and this may be another indicator that the heart of what was to become Selwood Forest was well wooded in the Roman period, as it still is today.

Read as a whole, the landscape of Roman Wiltshire can be interpreted as one of widespread intensive agriculture, interspersed with tracts of woodland on the more marginal clay soils, where pottery production and metalworking were pursued. The light and well-drained soils of Salisbury Plain in particular quickly became an area of intensive grain production, whilst elsewhere a more mixed agricultural regime predominated, with some farms and villas specialising increasingly in sheep and cattle husbandry as the Roman period wore on.

### *Communications*

The importance of roads, tracks and waterways for the location and distribution of settlements in Roman Wiltshire has already been touched upon, but it is here necessary to outline our present state of knowledge concerning the origins and development of these communications. Unsurprisingly, the bulk of past research has focused on the principal network of Roman roads (Margary 1955; Davis 2002), although it is perhaps surprising to learn that the courses followed by some sections of road in Wiltshire are conjectural. Little is known of the route of the road from Badbury Rings in Dorset to Bath, for example, whilst the path taken by the Old Sarum to Charterhouse-on-Mendip road is still largely unknown for a distance of 11 miles near Maiden Bradley (Margary 1955, 93, 99; although see Rawlings 1995). The formal existence of a road linking Mildenhall with Old Sarum is also open to question, although it is notable that the villages at Chisenbury Warren and Coombe Down both lie within 3km of such a route. Excavations of Roman road sections at Latton (Mudd *et al.* 1999, 273), Wanborough (Burnham and Wachter 1990, 162) and Stratford-sub-Castle in Salisbury (James 2002, 19) have at least revealed a mid- to late first-century date for their construction here and it is clear that such roads were an early priority for the Roman army, greatly influencing the subsequent development of settlements at all levels, although most obviously small towns and some villas (Fig. 4).

Whilst metalled Roman roads represented the official highways of the Roman period, it must be remembered that they were laid out in a landscape that was already criss-crossed by a network of both major and minor trackways. The most well known of these tracks in Wiltshire is the route known simply as the 'Ridgeway' or the 'Great Ridgeway', which enters the county from the east at Bishopstone (N) and runs across

the Marlborough Downs towards Avebury and possibly beyond. This route has long attracted an aura of antiquity that has ultimately led to its appellation as ‘the oldest road’ (Anderson and Godwin 1982): indeed, it has recently been dubbed ‘the “safest” of Neolithic routeways’ (Muir 2000, 96-7). Recently, however, the notion that the Ridgeway was a single primal entity has come under attack from Peter Fowler, who sees it instead as ‘one of the more recent features to have appeared in our contemporary landscape’, adding that it was ‘simply not there in the second or first millennium BC, nor in the early centuries AD’ (Fowler 1998, 31). Such comments do not imply that sections of the later route are not prehistoric in origin, but it is clear in West Overton at least that certain trackways and field boundaries underlie the Ridgeway itself, therefore implying that they are earlier in date (Fig. 21).

On Overton Down, as in the rest of chalkland Wiltshire, most short-distance trackways tend to lie across the natural ‘grain’ of the landscape, running from river valleys upslope to areas of high downland. This is a hallmark of a transhumant pastoral economy, as droveways were needed to move livestock between high and low pastures according to the season (Betty 2000). In time, these droveways would help to define the characteristic ‘strip’ parishes visible on the downs (see Chapter 5), but, as to their origins, we may be reasonably certain from their relationships with known settlement sites and field systems that most, if not all, were prehistoric in origin: ‘these lengths of downland track were part of the working Romano-British countryside, forming elements of a network that was already old, and which had persisted’ (Fowler 2000a, 256). Evidently, such features significantly influenced the location of downland settlements. The prehistoric Old Nursery Ditch, for example, served as a routeway linking the villages on Charlton Down and Upavon Down to the Salisbury Avon at Netheravon (McOmish *et al.* 2002, 107-8), whilst it is clear that both Iron Age and Romano-British settlements on Overton Down clustered around a cross-roads of two important north-south routes – a ‘nodal point’ in the local landscape (Fowler 2000a, fig. 16.8).

Away from the chalk, the antiquity of trackways is much harder to establish, mainly due to the scarcity of direct archaeological evidence for the layout of prehistoric and Roman fields and boundaries. Nevertheless, there are some indications that many current routes have prehistoric origins and that they influenced the location of settlements during the Roman period. At Tockenham, the recently excavated villa complex has been found to sit beside a cross-roads of tracks within a contemporary or

pre-existing agricultural landscape on a northwest-southeast alignment, the boundaries of which have largely persisted into the modern landscape (Fig. 49; Harding and Lewis 1997, 38-40). Furthermore, it is striking that many other areas of northern Wiltshire preserve a northwest-southeast 'grain' to their contemporary landscapes, which it is reasonable to assume is prehistoric in origin (see Chapter 7).

Having discussed overland communications in Roman Wiltshire, it is necessary to add a final note concerning waterborne transport, whose importance in past societies is often underestimated. Recently, however, the frequent proximity of a number of Wiltshire villas to navigable streams and rivers has been noted by Bryn Walters, who concludes that 'streams and rivers were probably maintained by the villa estates as a form of vital communication to transit centres' (Walters 2001, 140). At Littlecote in Ramsbury, there is certainly tantalising evidence for wharves, in the form of water-filled dykes cut at right angles to the River Kennet, which may have accommodated narrow river barges (Walters 2001, 137). Furthermore, it is necessary to bear in mind the important suggestion that Cricklade on the River Thames was once a river port, perhaps serving Cirencester to the north (Thomson 1971). No definitive evidence for such a function has yet been found, but there was undoubtedly considerable activity in the area surrounding High Bridge in the Roman period. Waterborne transport, therefore, was just as important as overland communications in Roman Wiltshire and each routeway, whether major or minor, exercised a considerable degree of influence on the hierarchy and siting of settlements in the Roman period.

### *Boundaries and Estates*

The issue of reconstructing estates and boundaries associated with Romano-British settlements, most notably villas, is one of the most contentious in British landscape history. Whilst Richard Hingley (1989, 102) and Della Hooke (1998, 63, 65) are right to point out that there is a lack of direct evidence for the extent or existence of even one Roman villa estate in Britain, this does not mean that such land-units were not a common feature of the Romano-British landscape. A number of Roman authors, including Cicero, describe the workings of villa estates in Italy and convincing evidence has been presented for the existence of villa estates in parts of Gaul and Belgium (Applebaum 1963, 2-3; Percival 1976, 31-2, 123-4; 1997). Furthermore, spatial

relationships exist between villa and non-villa settlements in Britain that are perhaps best attributed to tenurial relationships within estates. Whether such estates persisted as functioning land-units into the post-Roman period is another matter altogether and it will receive attention in Chapter 5.

Many approaches have been taken towards the reconstruction of villa estates in Britain, but each one has its own set of problems. Those authors who argue for Roman estates coinciding with medieval tithings or parishes (*e.g.* Finberg 1955; Bonney 1972; Fowler 1975) rely perhaps too heavily on the notion of tenurial continuity between the Roman and post-Roman periods (see Rippon 2000, 51), whilst those using geographical models, such as Thiessen polygons (*e.g.* Gaffney and Tingle 1989, fig. 13.9) or Fowler's 'replacement' models (Fowler 1976, fig. 1.8), run the risk of oversimplifying a complex situation. Furthermore, those authors who have used local topography to suggest villa estate boundaries (*e.g.* Branigan 1977b) face awkward decisions assigning dependent settlements to one estate rather than the next. In fact, whilst this process may be comparatively easy in parts of Gaul, where ranges of mountains and hills provide prominent natural boundaries (Percival 1976, 123-4), the gentle topography of southern England does not lend itself to this sort of analysis. Often, the boundaries between English medieval estates were little more than imaginary lines between marker stones and there is no reason to believe that Roman estates were differently bounded.

A further obstacle to villa estate reconstruction is our lack of knowledge as to how such estates functioned. Most attempts to discern the extent of individual villa estates have been concerned with the task of relating subsidiary settlements to a single estate centre, or *caput*. However, this relationship may have operated on a number of different levels. One possible scenario involves a simple two-tier hierarchy, whereby the central villa, occupied by the landowner, was surrounded by dependent non-villa settlements – 'satellites' – inhabited by agricultural servants or slaves. In this situation, the occupants of the non-villa settlements were totally dependent on the villa centre, much as Keith Branigan has suggested at Gatcombe in Gloucestershire (Fig. 22; Branigan 1977b). Alternatively, as Shimon Applebaum (1963) has suggested, a three-tier hierarchy may have operated, involving a middle tier of tenants, who occupied smaller and less luxurious villas, each of which was dependent on the central villa, whilst also possessing further dependent non-villa settlements. A third and even more complex scenario has been proposed by Richard Hingley with the Grim's Ditch area of Oxfordshire in mind, whereby three wealthy villas sat together at the core of one single

large estate (Hingley 1989, 107-9). Clearly, estate structure in Roman Britain could be varied and it is frequently not possible to decide between the various models proposed, given the paucity of the evidence available.

In light of the seemingly insurmountable problems associated with the study of Romano-British estates, it might appear almost impossible to say anything useful concerning territorial organisation in Roman Wiltshire. However, this would be to ignore an important body of evidence that has steadily been accumulating from the Salisbury Avon valley in recent years. Whilst it was once thought that most of Salisbury Plain was a Roman imperial estate due to its perceived absence of villa estate centres (see Collingwood and Myres 1937, 224; Hingley 1989, 124, 127-8), such a view has now been dismissed as a result of the discovery in recent years of a string of villas on the fringe of the Plain, from Edington in the north to Enford and Netheravon in the south (Corney 2000, 35; McOmish *et al.* 2002, 106-7). Many such villas appear to be linked by trackways to village settlements situated close by on the downs (*e.g.* Enford Farm and Charlton Down, Littlecott Farm and Coombe Down/Chisenbury Warren) and the situation may also be repeated further north at West Overton, where the putative 'Headlands' villa lies only 1km south of the village at Overton Down South (Fowler 2000a, 228).

As I have hinted earlier (see the discussion of settlement types above), it now looks increasingly likely that valley-based villas and downland villages in Wiltshire were often linked tenurially and further supporting evidence may come from a quernstone inscribed with the numeral *XXIII* found at Charlton Down, which, it has been suggested, refers to an inventory of equipment held on a villa estate (McOmish *et al.* 2002, 107). Whilst some sort of 'strip' estate system may have operated in the Avon valley in the Roman period, to propose a direct link with the medieval tithings and parishes here, as Mark Corney has done (2000, 35), in my opinion exceeds the present limitations of the evidence available, particularly in the light of the fact that parish and tithing boundaries on some of the higher chalk downs are known to have remained undefined until the thirteenth or fourteenth centuries (McOmish *et al.* 2002, 113; Carenza Lewis *pers. comm.*). Elsewhere in the county, tenorial relations between settlements are harder to identify, but, as I have already suggested above, it may be that some *wīc* place-names preserve a linguistic record of dependent non-villa settlements housing villa estate workers.

In summary, a combination of evidence points to the existence of agricultural villa estates in Wiltshire, incorporating dependent village and non-villa settlements. Whilst we are not currently in a position to reconstruct the bounds or extent of any such estate, it may be that most points within the county – perhaps with the exception of some of the more extensively wooded areas – were included within one. As Richard Hingley has stated, ‘the whole landscape of southern England was intensively settled and exploited and in many areas there were probably no unoccupied areas between estates’ (Hingley 1989, 105). Such a scenario is certainly possible in Wiltshire, where villas, villages and *wīc* place-names are all numerous.

## Conclusion

The twin emphases of this chapter have been the sheer density of settlement and the intensity of land-use in Wiltshire during the Roman period. Our knowledge of both has increased dramatically in recent years as earthworks have been recorded, cropmarks planned and settlements investigated archaeologically. There is still a notable bias in the amount of information known towards the chalk regions of the county, where the landscape has, on the whole, escaped the worst ravages of recent development and deep ploughing. Aerial photography, however, has made a real difference on the gravel terraces of the Thames and the Bristol Avon, whilst occupation on the lowland clays is also being brought to light through excavation and field survey. The potential of place-names to inform our understanding of the Roman landscape, however, has not yet been fully realised and this is clearly an important area for future research.

As to the landscape history of Roman Wiltshire itself, on the one hand, there was a significant degree of continuity in the countryside from the Iron Age to the Roman period, as numerous settlements persisted and fields continued to be farmed. On the other hand, however, there was also a number of changes that took place, including the relaying and expansion of field systems, the development of a formal road network, the increasing hierarchy of settlements and society and the widespread participation of agricultural estates and industrial workshops in a cash-based economy. As the Roman period wore on, elements of Wiltshire society prospered significantly from the profits of agriculture and this newfound wealth was channelled most obviously into the construction of opulent villas, which reached their zenith in the early to mid-fourth

century. What happened after 350, however, is less clear and it is to this fiercely debated period of Wiltshire's past that we turn next.

## CHAPTER 3

### **The Ending of Roman Wiltshire: 350 and Beyond**

#### **Introduction**

350 is a convenient starting point for discussion of what is perhaps the most keenly debated period in British landscape history. Many recent books and articles have contested the speed and extent to which the material trappings and culture of Roman Britain ebbed away. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a balanced regional view from Wiltshire. Study of the period, however, is blighted by problems of interpretation, caused in part by the uncertainties attached to historical evidence, but mainly by the inability of artefacts, such as coins and pottery, to provide fixed dates for archaeological stratigraphy, particularly after the cessation of pottery production and widespread coin use in the early fifth century. Before the details of the archaeological evidence from Wiltshire are considered, it is necessary to examine the nature of these problems and how they impact on current research.

#### **Debating the End of Roman Britain**

The story of the final decades of Roman rule in Britain is often recounted in terms of documented historical events. The 'barbarian conspiracy' of 367, during which much of Britain was reportedly thrown into turmoil by raiding Irish and Pictish pirates, is frequently regarded as a turning point and features prominently in a number of accounts (*e.g.* Frere 1967, 347-59; Faulkner 2000, 158-164). Furthermore, a number of writers have attached particular significance to later events, including the Theodosian restoration (367-369), the revolt under Magnus Maximus (383-388) and the 'British rebellion' recorded by the Greek historian Zosimus in 409 (see Cunliffe 1993, 268-75; Faulkner 2000, 158-80). The rôle of archaeology in the majority of such accounts has largely been to support the historical narrative. Barbarian raids during the 360s have often been cited as the cause of destruction layers found in West Country villas and forts along Hadrian's Wall (Branigan 1976; 1977a, 93-108; Rance 2001, 257), whilst

the appearance of wall circuits around a number of small towns has frequently been seen as part of Count Theodosius' campaign to refortify British sites against further hostile raids (Frere 1967, 357-9; Cunliffe 1993, 270-3; Faulkner 2000, 166).

Furthermore, the reoccupation of a number of Wessex hillforts, such as South Cadbury and Maiden Castle, has been ascribed to this 'time of insecurity' (Cunliffe 1993, 272), whilst the presence of Germanic soldiers, who were supposed to have settled in Britain in order to aid defence of the 'Saxon shore', has been claimed on the basis of both military belt buckles and 'Romano-Saxon' pottery (Myres 1956; Hawkes and Dunning 1961).

Although it would be foolish to deny that the political events described by the Roman historians did influence daily life – and, therefore, the archaeological record – it is, nevertheless, dangerous to use literary narratives as a framework for the discussion of archaeological evidence (see Scull 1995, 71, for a criticism of the historical approach). Significantly, all the theories described in the preceding paragraph have been challenged in recent years, whilst the validity of the late Roman historical sources has also been called into question (Esmonde Cleary 1989, 136-9). Given the difficulties associated with interpreting both forms of evidence, it is becoming increasingly apparent that the archaeology and history of the period cannot simply be interwoven. As Martin Millett comments; 'from the final quarter of the fourth century, the archaeological evidence must be treated as essentially prehistoric, since there can be no reliance on direct correlations between the historical and archaeological sources' (Millett 1990, 219). The conclusion that we must draw, therefore, is that archaeological evidence is best used when it is interpreted from an archaeological perspective.

In recent years, two major studies of the end of Roman Britain have emerged that have given due prominence to the archaeological evidence, although both have reached startlingly different conclusions. In Simon Esmonde Cleary's opinion, the ending of Roman Britain was 'a relatively short, fairly sharp shock', with the trappings of Roman life passing out of use by *c.* 430 (Esmonde Cleary 1989, 140). Ken Dark, on the other hand, expresses the view that Romano-British life did not end abruptly in the fifth century, but 'gradually wound down over centuries' (Dark 2000, 228). In this latter view, Dark has been joined by Martin Henig (2002; 2004), whilst Neil Faulkner has added his voice to Esmonde Cleary's, calling for a 'short chronology' view of Roman Britain (Faulkner 2000; 2004). Given the overlap in the subject matter considered by both camps, it is perhaps worth considering how two diametrically

opposed interpretations have been reached. The answer to this question must surely lie in the nature of the archaeological evidence and the problems associated with its use.

### *Some Archaeological Problems*

From the second half of the fourth century, the interpretation of archaeological evidence from sites in Britain becomes increasingly difficult. The importance of coins and pottery for Romano-British archaeology is paramount; they are vital both in dating archaeological features associated with them and, also, in providing an idea of the duration of site-related activity. Unfortunately for archaeologists, however, the supply of imperial coinage all but dried up at the beginning of the fifth century, when the last consignments of bronze coinage reached Britain. Furthermore, of the few pottery industries that continued in production beyond 400, few fabrics can be dated closely: 'theoretically, a pottery assemblage of 370 could be virtually indistinguishable from one from the end of the pottery industries somewhere in the early fifth centuries' (Esmonde Cleary 1989, 142). When excavated, therefore, coins and pottery sherds can only afford us a *terminus post quem* for deposition and, consequently, the accurate dating of subsequent archaeological layers no longer becomes possible. As we shall discover in the next chapter, this problem is exacerbated by the inadequacies associated with the dating of Early Saxon material remains.

In addition to the problems caused by the scarcity of late Roman coinage and the winding down of the Romano-British pottery industries, further complexities are encountered in the form of residuality, re-use and hoarding of artefacts. An object is said to be residual when it is found in an archaeological context that was formed long after the item's manufacture; thus, a coin that was minted in 402 may occur in a stratigraphic layer that was, in fact, deposited one hundred years later. The particular dangers of residuality for the archaeology of the later and post-Roman periods are demonstrated by a recent example from the Cheddar Showground in Somerset, where a ditch that might otherwise have been dated to the later prehistoric or Roman period, due to finds of abraded Roman pottery in a later re-cut, yielded an animal bone in its upper fill that was assigned a radiocarbon date of  $1600 \pm 45$  BP (cal. AD 346-557) (Rippon 2000, 52). In this case, the Roman pottery was residual, thereby masking the true post-Roman context for the ditch.

Residuality is often linked to the re-use or retention of artefacts. The hypothetical coin of 402 mentioned in the previous paragraph, for example, may have either been kept as a keepsake or treasured as an item of jewellery for a hundred years, before being deposited in 502. Indeed, the continued use of Roman artefacts in the fifth and sixth centuries is something that is very difficult to discern archaeologically, but, as Stephen Rippon (2000, 52) has recently asked, 'why should people stop using existing artefacts simply because manufacturing had ceased'? Roger White has recently argued that Roman material – especially pottery vessels – found in Anglo-Saxon graves represents 'objects carefully retained after the collapse of the Romano-British economy at the end of the fourth century as there were no replacements' (White 1990, 146), whilst the worn condition of late fourth-century coins at a number of sites has led some to postulate the continuation of money-based exchange for several decades into the fifth century (Rippon 2000, 52).

The issue of when Roman coins in Britain ceased to circulate is a topic of particularly heated debate, with dates ranging from the early fifth century (Esmonde Cleary 1989, 141; Reece 2002, 63-6) to the late fifth century or even beyond (Dark 2000, 54-5): a date shortly after 420 for silver coinage is, however, more typical (Guest 1997, 415). The matter is complicated by the practice of 'clipping', which was an easy method of obtaining metal from gold and silver coins still in circulation. This phenomenon is so far undated, although a date between 410 and 420 appears likely (Burnett 1984; Guest 1997, 413). Some Roman coins, then, were in circulation long after 400, but, as Peter Guest writes, 'this does not infer that coins were being used during the course of economic exchange during the fifth century, simply that the population would have recognised and used coins in some fashion for several years, possibly decades after it is believed the Roman administration collapsed in Britain' (Guest 1997, 415).

Similarly, it is highly possible that Roman pottery could have remained in use long after production had ceased. The presence of Roman vessels in Anglo-Saxon cemeteries has already been mentioned, but late Roman pottery has also occurred in a number of ostensibly Anglo-Saxon settlement contexts, mainly in eastern England (Dark 2000, 102-3; Corcos 2002, 45). This has led Nick Corcos to conclude that 'Roman pottery could be somehow "inherited" by English incomers and could remain in practical use for some three centuries after manufacture' (Corcos 2002, 45). Furthermore, a study of the pottery containers for coin hoards in Roman Britain has

revealed that many predate the latest coin found within by several decades (Robertson 2000, xx-xxi), the implication being that the pots were often carefully curated for many years before being deposited in the ground.

The hoarding of coins and other metal artefacts presents a further set of complications to the archaeologist studying the end of the Roman period. Not only are hoards plagued by the same problems of dating described above, but also their reasons for deposition are far from clear. One popular explanation for the many early fifth-century hoards known from Britain is that they 'reflect faithfully the havoc wrought on life and property by the Saxons landing on the south and east coasts of England' (Robertson 2000, xxviii): indeed, 'to many people hoards equal hordes' (Reece 2002, 69). However, it is clear that this interpretation is simplistic, covering a host of other possible causes, including economic factors, such as the reduction in the use and availability of silver coinage (Guest 1997, 414), religious factors, such as the 'structured' deposition of material in wells and pits (Poulton and Scott 1993; Esmonde Cleary 2000, 134-5), and the simple non-recovery of valuables hoarded by their owners for temporary safe-keeping (Reece 2002, 75-6). Late Roman hoards, therefore, represent valuable indicators of fourth- and fifth-century activity in Britain, but their ability to inform on a wider scale is often limited by our lack of knowledge as to who concealed them, when they were concealed and why they were not subsequently recovered.

Even when structural evidence for late fourth- or early fifth-century Roman settlement activity is discovered, there is disagreement over its implications. Many villas and town houses have yielded evidence for so-called 'squatter occupation', which is an outmoded term for the latest phase of habitation, often on a much-reduced scale. Whilst some regard this as evidence of continuing 'sub-Roman' settlement, perhaps extending into the later fifth century or beyond (Taylor 1983, 111-12; Dark and Dark 1997, 136-7; Dark 2000, 113-17), others see it as merely marking 'the last stages of a quick and total collapse' (Blair 1994, 3), associated with abandonment by 420 at the very latest (Esmonde Cleary 1989, 134-5; Faulkner 2000, 142-3). In the future, the increased use of scientific dating methods may help us to establish a clearer chronology for very late Roman settlement activity, but for now study of the subject is blighted by the problems of conventional dating methods, using coins and pottery.

## *Prospect*

The current academic debate over the ending of Roman Britain looks set to run for many years yet as scholars struggle to make sense of the seemingly conflicting messages presented by archaeology and history. At present, however, academic opinion appears to be polarised into two opposing camps - *either* lengthy continuity *or* swift decline – and there is little room for any ‘middle ground’. Such a dichotomy is, I suggest, both simplistic and unrealistic. It is partly caused by a general lack of understanding by ‘Romanists’ and ‘Medievalists’ of each other’s period, which has resulted in the setting of two conflicting agendas (see Corney 2000, 42), in addition to the widespread practice of ‘moulding’ evidence to fit a particular narrative. Future study of the ending of Roman Britain should, rather, make allowances for the problems and subtleties of archaeology and avoid the use of narratives driven by historical events or seemingly entrenched personal opinion. Furthermore, it should also be more responsive to regional variation, as Stephen Rippon (2000, 57-8) has recently suggested, and a strong case can be made for the closer study of individual regions, such as Wiltshire.

## **Roman Wiltshire After 350: The Evidence**

### *Settlements*

A small number of excavated Late Roman settlements in Wiltshire (mostly villas) have yielded structural evidence for occupation extending beyond 350, but interpreting this evidence has not proved easy. Often, authors have resorted to wider historical narratives to explain their own excavated remains and, consequently, our perception of the latest phases of occupation at these sites has become distorted.

A clear example of such distortion is Bill Wedlake’s claim that disarticulated human bones found at Nettleton Shrub [1:5] represent the remains of unsuspecting inhabitants, who were supposedly massacred during two devastating barbarian raids shortly after *c.* 370 (Wedlake 1982, 84-6). Such an interpretation echoes wider claims that buildings across the West Country were destroyed by raiding pirates during and after the so-called ‘barbarian conspiracy’ of 367 – an event known originally from

literary sources (see Faulkner 2000, 158-64, for the historical background). In Wiltshire, both Barry Cunliffe and Keith Branigan have explained episodes of burning at Box [1:53], North Wraxall [1:101] and Atworth [1:48] villas as the work of sea-borne Irish pirates sailing up the Bristol Avon (Cunliffe 1973a, 460-7; Branigan 1976, 136-41; 1977a, 93-108), whilst the dumping of three human skeletons in a well at North Wraxall has also been ascribed to raiders (Branigan 1977a, 137).

It goes without saying that such historical assertions fail to stand up to modern scrutiny. The first point to consider is that the various episodes of burning at Box, North Wraxall and Atworth cannot be accurately dated, let alone shown to be contemporary, whilst the presence of hearths and kilns for domestic and industrial use at these villas makes it likely that the fires were caused accidentally rather than by design. It is also pertinent to note that both Atworth and North Wraxall have produced stratigraphic evidence for continued occupation following these fires (Branigan 1977a, 97). The bodies in the well at North Wraxall, meanwhile, may be more sensibly explained as a ritual 'structured' deposition (Esmonde Cleary 2000, 134), whilst the supposed massacre at Nettleton may be ascribed to a misinterpretation of the stratigraphy. Given the fact that all the human bones here were found jumbled up in a layer of building debris, not only covering the temple building itself, but also overlying a layer of what may now be termed 'dark earth' (Wedlake 1982, 83-4; see also Macphail *et al.* 2003), it is evident that this material represents post-occupation dumping or general site clearance. Nettleton Shrub has yielded significant evidence for unaccompanied Late Roman cemetery burial (Wedlake 1982, 90-2) and it is possible that the human bones originated here, before being spread across the site at a potentially much later date.

Rather than suffering at the hands of pirates, structural evidence from some Wiltshire settlements indicates new phases of construction in the third quarter of the fourth century. At Littlecote [1:105], a costly mosaic depicting Orpheus was laid within a specially constructed triple-apsed room no earlier than 356 – a coin of Constantius II provides a *terminus post quem* – whilst there is similar dating evidence for the conversion and re-flooring of the *apodyterium* within the former bath house (Fig. 23; Walters and Philips n.d., 8-10). Similarly, at Castle Copse [1:88], the mid fourth century witnessed the subdivision of an aisled building in the north wing, which was subsequently (after 353) furnished with frescoes and mosaic floors (Fig. 12; Hostetter and Howe 1997, 80-3). Mosaic floors at some other Wiltshire villas may also be

ascribed to the decades either side of 350, including the 'hunting dog' panel from Cherhill [1:64] (Johnson and Walters 1988) and the newly discovered cantharus mosaic at Bradford-on-Avon [1:55] (Corney 2003). At *Cunetio* [1:4], meanwhile, numismatic evidence indicates a construction date after *c.* 360 – possibly as late as *c.* 380 (Corney 1997, 348) – for the massive stone defensive circuit surrounding the town and it is possible that other elements of the settlement underwent re-planning or reconstruction at a similar time (Fig. 6; Corney 1997; 2001, 16-18).

Whilst the finances and motivation for some new building works were clearly still available for a while after 350, the general tenor of the latest Roman structural evidence from Wiltshire is undoubtedly one of decline, both in investment and in living standards. Some villas, such as Downton [1:75] and Starveall Farm [1:50], were seemingly already abandoned by *c.* 370 (Rahtz 1963; Phillips 1981), whilst tentative evidence for continuing habitation on a much reduced scale – so-called 'squatter occupation' – is common elsewhere. At Nettleton Shrub, for example, a series of minor alterations to the temple building itself may indicate its conversion for use as a small farmstead (Wedlake 1982, 109), whilst at both Cherhill and Box, domestic hearths appear to have been established on mosaic floors (Brakspear 1904, 237; Johnson and Walters 1988, 79). Even at the extensive Castle Copse villa, the opulence of the early fourth-century lifestyle gradually ebbed away over the following decades. Running repairs to a mosaic in the west wing were made at some point after *c.* 350 using *tesserae* fashioned from roof-tiles, whilst at a similar date or later, another mosaic floor in the same wing was cut away and trenches and stakeholes for smithing operations inserted (Hostetter and Howe 1997, 140-1). By the early fifth century, domestic occupation was confined to only a few rooms, notably in the south wing, where sherds of post-350 forms of pottery (see below) and a coin of Arcadius (388-402) have been found sealed in a square-bottomed pit (Hostetter and Howe 1997, 98-9).

Only one rural non-villa settlement in Wiltshire has so far yielded significant structural evidence relating to the period after 350 and it appears to provide a contrast with the sites discussed above, flourishing in the late fourth and perhaps also the early fifth century (Fowler 2000a, 102-11; 2000b). The composition of the small farming settlement known as OD XII on Overton Down [1:247] (Fig. 18) has already been described in the previous chapter, but its importance lies in its artefactual evidence. Over three hundred coins were recovered, many of which were in stratified contexts. Of the 133 that could be identified to ruler and mint, thirty-nine were dated to the period

364-378 and fourteen to 388-402, thereby giving this site *per mills* – per thousands – values well over the national average for these periods (Moorhead 2001, table 1, 90-6). Furthermore, pottery from stratified contexts included some very late New Forest and Oxfordshire fine wares (see below), whilst a particularly surprising find was fragments of fine glass beakers and bowls (Cottam *et al.* in Fowler 2000b). In response to Peter Fowler's ambitious claims for building phases and occupation on the site until *c.* 440 (Fowler 2000a, 102-11; 2000b), it should be noted that no artefact – particularly the glass (Jenny Price *pers. comm.*) – can be firmly dated much beyond the final years of the fourth century. Nevertheless, in spite of the many questions that must now surround Fowler's dating and interpretation of the evidence, OD XII still provides stark evidence for a settled agricultural life on the Marlborough Downs at the very end of the period of Roman rule, if not beyond.

In order to set the few sites discussed so far into a wider context, it is necessary to consider the much larger group of settlements in Wiltshire where post-350 artefacts – mostly coins – have been found, with or without an association with structural remains. This category includes all eight small towns in the county, in addition to many villas, such as Euridge and Lucknam Lodge in Colerne [1:70-1], Stanton St Quintin [1:109], Bowood in Calne Without [1:61] and Mother Anthony's Well in Bromham [1:56] (Moorhead 2001, table 1). Of particular note are the 'ritual wells' at Silbury Hill in Avebury, one of which has been found to contain coins minted in the last quarter of the fourth century (Pollard and Reynolds 2002, 178-9). Further coins and pottery recovered during pipe-trench excavations at the adjacent small town [1:1] have led to the suggestion that occupation here extended by at least one generation into the fifth century (Powell *et al.* 1996, 48, 57). Also worthy of consideration is the high number of late fourth-century coins at a cluster of Fosse Way villas near Bath, including both examples in Colerne parish and that beside Box church. This has led Bryn Walters to suggest a functional conversion from villa to ritual centre at all three sites (Walters 2001, 143), although an alternative view may see such coin finds as evidence for the continuing prosperity of villa owners with links to the nearby urban centre at *Aquae Sulis*.

Richard Reece has warned us not to assume that agrarian settlements were necessarily participants in the monetary economy of Roman Britain, even in the fourth century (Reece 2002, 98). Nevertheless, a striking number of village settlements in Wiltshire have produced significant numbers of coins dating to the period after 350.

The villages at Butterfield Down in Amesbury [1:11], Stockton Earthworks [1:34] and Charlton Down [1:16] have all yielded above average *per mills* values for coins minted in the period 364-378, whilst Butterfield Down is particularly significant in that 9% of its identifiable coins dated from latest period of standard coin issue, between 388 and 402 (M. Corney in Rawlings and Fitzpatrick 1996, 20). Several of the Salisbury Plain villages display similar numismatic evidence, including Coombe Down in Enford [1:26], where bronze issues of both Arcadius (383-408) and Honorius (395-423) are known (Entwistle *et al.* 1993, 12). Of particular interest with regard to smaller non-villa settlements with post-350 occupation evidence is the recently excavated site at Wayside Farm in Devizes [1:161]. Here, of the forty-eight coins submitted for identification, all but two are of fourth-century date, including twenty-three from the period 364-378 and four from 388-402 (M. Corney in Valentin and Robinson 2002, 161-2). This again places Wayside Farm well above the national *per mills* averages for both periods and, coupled with important late ceramic evidence (see below), suggests that occupation continued here well into the early fifth century.

Considering the evidence for Romano-British settlement in Wiltshire after 350 as a whole, it is apparent that there are no grounds for postulating either the sudden disruption of habitation at the hands of marauding pirates, or for a business-as-usual continuation of daily life – particularly in villas – as Roman rule came to an end. Evidently, the opulence of villa life continued for a handful of landlords, perhaps until *c.* 375, but, thereafter, daily life became harder with more mundane functional activities taking the place of fine country living. Small towns seem to have fared marginally better, perhaps replacing trade with agriculture and, in some cases, religious specialisation. Evidence from *Cunetio*, however, suggests that the settlement here was singled out for late fourth-century official and/or military attention. The most stable settlements in Wiltshire after 350 were undoubtedly those non-villa farming communities. If the evidence from OD XII and many of the downland villages is at all typical, it would appear that profitable agriculture was maintained until at least *c.* 400 and probably also beyond. The related evidence for the persistence of Roman field patterns into the early medieval period will be examined in Chapter 7.

### *Coin Hoards*

Site finds of coins have already proved invaluable in our discussion of Late Roman settlement in Wiltshire, but of further significance are the twenty recorded coin hoards from the county whose latest coin post-dates 350 (Table 2). Wiltshire certainly contains more than its fair share of coin hoards from this period and, as Sam Moorhead (2001, table 3) has observed, it is particularly striking that three of the eleven British hoards containing more than one hundred Valentinianic (364-378) bronze coins were found within the county. Explaining why Wiltshire – and the West Country as a whole (see Robertson 2000, lviii) – contains so many late fourth- and early fifth-century hoards is not easy, but it is tempting to suggest that the pattern of hoarding in some way reflects continuing prosperity (at least for some) in the region at this time. We have already seen that farming provided an ongoing source of revenue and some, including Mark Corney (1997, 349) and Bryn Walters (2001), have suggested that the rural estates of Wiltshire became chief providers of grain to the military in the late fourth century via the *annona militaris* (grain tax).

The major farmers of the county are perhaps the most likely people to have accumulated wealth in the later fourth and early fifth centuries and it is not surprising, then, that many hoards in Wiltshire come from villages and likely farming villas. The Bishops Cannings hoard, for example, which has a *terminus post quem* of 402 – although the presence of numerous ‘clipped’ silver coins may indicate a depositional date as late as c. 420 – was reportedly found only a short distance from a building (Guest *et al.* 1997, 427, 430). Furthermore, the latest coin from the recently discovered Stanchester hoard is a gold *solidus* of Honorius minted in Ravenna in 405-6 (Abdy 2000), but the real importance of the find lies in its proximity to the excavated Stanchester villa site [1:120]. Other hoards with probable villa connections include Bishopstone (N), Bromham, Colerne and Preshute, whilst those found on or close to villages are Amesbury (x2), Barford St Martin, Great Wishford (x2) and Rushall. Both Amesbury hoards, the most recent of which can be assigned a deposition date of c. 405, come from the immediate vicinity of the excavated village on Butterfield Down (Rawlings and Fitzpatrick 1996, 19-20), whilst the Grovely Ridge villages of Hamshill Ditches [1:14] and Ebsbury [1:13] provide the context for the three hoards in Barford St Martin and Great Wishford parishes. It is interesting to note that both Ebsbury hoards came from the same find-spot – one of 947 bronze coins, deposited after c. 395, and the

other, consisting of 300 silver coins with six silver rings and bezels, which was probably concealed early in the fifth century (Grinsell 1957, 74). The Rushall hoard was found in the vicinity of Church Ditches – a possible temple site that is linked to the nearby village on Charlton Down by a trackway (Grinsell 1957, 100; McOmish *et al.* 2002, 90-1).

As we have already seen, it is difficult to speculate on the circumstances in which the Wiltshire coin hoards were concealed. One possibility that presents itself from Table 2, however, is that some were religious offerings. The religious function of the complex at Nettleton Shrub is well known and it is possible that shrines also existed at Butterfield Down, Hamshill Ditches and Church Ditches (Rawlings and Fitzpatrick 1996, 21, 40; McOmish *et al.* 2002, 90; see SMR for Hamshill). Both the Preshute and Bishops Cannings hoards were associated with caches of pewter vessels, the Preshute hoard being found beside a downland pond. The Romano-British ritual deposition of pewter, especially in association with water, is increasingly being attested (Poulton and Scott 1993, 130) and it is pertinent to note that a similar Wiltshire hoard of stacked pewter dishes was found beside the River Marden at Calstone Wellington near Calne, only a few hundred metres north of the presumed temple site at Black Furlong [1:257]. Finally, the *Cunetio* well hoard may also merit a ritual explanation. This collection of roughly one hundred silver and bronze coins was discovered mixed together with other items, including silver rings, a buckle, parts of a fibula and architectural fragments, in the fill of a well close to the walls of the small town. Although Sam Moorhead, who has recently reappraised the find (Moorhead 1997a), does not ascribe any particular religious significance to the deposit, it does, I believe, fit into a wider pattern of well deposits where material has been deliberately layered, perhaps marking a ‘ritual of termination’ associated with the formal closure of the structure (Esmonde Cleary 2000, 134-5; Fulford 2001, 213).

Whatever the circumstances surrounding the deposition of Late Roman coin hoards in Wiltshire, it is at least apparent that material wealth was still available to some – most probably landed farmers – up to and even beyond the cessation of widespread coin use in the early fifth century. Clearly, there was still money to be made, whilst the presence of ‘clipped’ coins in four of the latest Wiltshire hoards suggests that they continued in circulation for some years after they were struck, perhaps in some cases until c. 420 or later. Some of the hoards appear to have been deposited for ritual

reasons, hinting at the persistence of Romano-British religious practice into the fifth century.

### *Pottery*

Recently excavated late fourth- and early fifth-century assemblages of pottery from sites including Castle Copse in Great Bedwyn (Hostetter and Howe 1997), Wayside Farm in Devizes (Valentin and Robinson 2002), Butterfield Down in Amesbury (Rawlings and Fitzpatrick 1996) and OD XII in West Overton (Fowler 2000b) are important because they tell us not only that production continued at a limited number of centres outside the county long after 350, but also that Wiltshire formed part of a long-distance exchange network that was maintained at least until c. 400, if not beyond.

As far as Late Roman pottery production in Wiltshire is concerned, there is so far no definitive evidence for potting beyond 350. The Savernake industry tailed off after the middle of the second century (Timby 2001), whilst a terminal date for the West Swindon and Braydon kilns is so far unknown, except to say that some probably continued in production beyond 300 (Anderson 1979; Swan 1988, 37). Instead, people in Wiltshire turned increasingly to potteries some 50km or more distant for their supplies. Black Burnished ware from Dorset, Alice Holt/Farnham and Overwey/Tilford wares from Surrey and South Midlands shell-tempered ware possibly from Bedfordshire, in addition to fine wares from Oxfordshire and the New Forest, have all been found in late fourth-century Wiltshire contexts, and that they could still be procured in c. 400 is strongly suggested by two highly important assemblages from Castle Copse and Wayside Farm.

At Castle Copse, excavation within Sector C of the villa site yielded pottery sealed in a pit that was assigned a *terminus post quem* of 388 by a coin of Arcadius (Hostetter and Howe 1997, 282). This assemblage was dominated by Black Burnished ware (54% of the total number of vessels represented), although significant amounts of Overwey (8%) and South Midlands shell-tempered wares (8%) were also present (Hostetter and Howe 1997, table 13). Black Burnished (15%), Overwey/Tilford (3%) and South Midlands shell-tempered (1%) pottery was also found in an early fifth-century pit and midden deposit at Wayside Farm, although Oxford fine wares (41%) were particularly numerous (Valentin and Robinson 2002, table 6). Additional dating evidence here was provided by a number of coins, including six Valentinianic issues of

364-378 and a moderately worn coin of Arcadius, dated 392-402 (Valentin and Robinson 2002, 184).

It is striking in both these cases that a handful of fabrics accounts for the bulk of the pottery found in these late contexts – a fact that has led some to propose that these wares (particularly the South Midlands and Overwey/Tilford pottery), when found in association with each other, may be significant indicators of fifth-century activity (Dark 2000, 102; M. Corney in Valentin and Robinson 2002, 189). This suggestion is supported by evidence and observations from outside Wiltshire. The proposed late currency of Overwey/Tilford ware accords with the discovery of large quantities of the fabric in contexts associated with construction of the riverside defence wall in London, an event that cannot have begun before 388 (Parnell 1985, 30, 58). Furthermore, James Gerrard has recently argued from evidence across Somerset and Dorset that some forms of Dorset Black Burnished ware were still being distributed and perhaps even produced after 410 (Gerrard 2004). In addition, it is known that the Oxford industry was ‘still strong at the beginning of the fifth century’ (Young 1977, 240), although its demise may have followed soon after (Henig and Booth 2000, 179).

Evidently, more research is required into pottery production and distribution in southern England in the decades after 350. Nevertheless, assuming that a significant proportion of the pottery found in early fifth-century contexts in Wiltshire was of recent manufacture, it is clear that trading links – no doubt coin-based – with Surrey, Dorset, Hampshire and Bedfordshire at least had not collapsed by 400. For how long these contacts remained in place is uncertain, but the Wiltshire evidence does fit into a growing body of evidence indicating that ‘traditional’ chronologies concerning the cessation of industrial production and monetary trade need to be revised.

### *Portable Art and Burials*

Both portable art (mostly items of jewellery and metalwork) and burials have featured prominently in recent attempts by some authors to argue for the longevity of Roman fashions and culture – *Romanitas* – in Britain in the fifth century and even beyond (e.g. Dark 2000; Henig 2002; 2004). It is, therefore, necessary to include a brief discussion of such evidence in Wiltshire.

Wiltshire has produced a notable quantity and quality of Late Roman jewellery and metalwork dating to the period after 350 (Fig. 24); indeed, ‘several items ... would

be regarded as important wherever they were found' (Henig 2001, 122). One such item is the late fourth-century silver finger-ring inscribed with the Greek word *NIKH* (Victory) from Roundway Down, near Devizes. This suggests not only the presence in Wiltshire of an owner with substantial wealth and status, but also the existence of distant contacts with the Greek-speaking eastern Roman empire, where the ring is likely to have been made (Henig 2001, 122). Also of national significance are four other silver finger-rings from Wiltshire that appear to be in a 'native' style, suggesting manufacture in Britain. Three were found as part of the Long's Farm coin hoard (see above) in Amesbury parish (Henig 2001, 122-3), whilst a fourth was found in 1997 near Boyd's Farm in Corsham (Henig 1999). All may be dated with reasonable confidence to the early fifth century and, again, they indicate the presence of wealthy high-status individuals in Wiltshire at this time. Martin Henig has stated his belief that such items of jewellery were 'made and worn in the period after *c.* 409 when the central empire had lost its direct political control of Britain' (Henig 2001, 123).

Further indicators of wealth and rank in Wiltshire society may be the Late Roman 'military' belt-buckles that are infrequently found in the county: forty-one examples of mid-fourth- to early fifth-century date have so far been recorded (Griffiths 2001, 68; see also Corney and Griffiths forthcoming). Such items of metalwork were once thought to be Continental in manufacture, reflecting the presence of Germanic mercenaries, who were supposedly drafted in to protect military interests following the barbarian raids of 367 (Hawkes and Dunning 1961). Such an interpretation, however, has been wholeheartedly rejected and it is now believed that they were 'the standard insignia of late Roman civil as well as military officials, no matter what their ethnic origins' (Esmonde Cleary 1989, 191): most were probably manufactured in Britain. Whilst not all forty-one examples in Wiltshire necessarily correlate with soldiers or officials on the ground – indeed, they may have frequently passed into the hands of ordinary civilians (Blair 1994, 5) – they do, nevertheless, add to the growing evidence for a substantial 'official' presence in Wiltshire in the later decades of the fourth century (Griffiths 2001, 53). The single most important example from the county is undoubtedly the gold belt-buckle from Boyd's Farm in Corsham, which is of an exceptional high-status type that is only previously represented by the great gold buckle from the Thetford Treasure in Norfolk, dated to *c.* 390 (Henig 2001, 122). Presumably, this was owned by a soldier or official of the highest rank.

Turning to Late Roman burials, it is important to stress that nowhere in Wiltshire is there sufficient evidence to distinguish between pagan and Christian rites. Some authors, including Ken Dark (2000, 122), have mistakenly followed Bill Wedlake's lead in claiming that east-west cemetery burials on the south-eastern edge of the settlement at Nettleton Shrub were Christian, on account of 'the orientation of the stone-lined graves, and the complete lack of grave goods' (Wedlake 1982, 109). This is clearly erroneous, as it is now known that extended unfurnished inhumation burial, often on an east-west alignment, was almost universal in Britain by the last decades of the fourth century (Philpott 1991, 226). In fact, the material evidence for Christianity in Late Roman Wiltshire is very limited indeed, possibly being confined to only two strap-ends decorated with a peacock and a tree of life from Charlton Down and Monkton Deverill (Robinson 2001, 163; see also Chapter 6).

Some large unfurnished cemeteries, perhaps including that at Nettleton Shrub (Corney 2001, 34), may be fifth-century or later in date. In Dorset, Poundbury cemetery is known to have continued in use into the fifth century (Spary-Green 2004), whilst unfurnished cemeteries at Ulwell and Tolpuddle Ball have yielded radiocarbon dates between the fifth and eighth centuries (Cox 1988; Hearne and Birbeck 1999). Further possible Wiltshire examples include cemeteries of thirty individuals from Fargo Plantation in Durrington parish and nearly one hundred individuals from a location in Swindon, the remains of which have now unfortunately been lost (Foster 2001, 174). It is also worthy of note that two of the inhumations in a mixed inhumation and cremation cemetery on Winterbourne Down in Winterbourne parish have produced coins of Constantius II (337-61) and Valentinian I (364-75) (Foster 2001, 173-4).

To summarise, whilst Late Roman burials in Wiltshire do appear to indicate a continuity of Romano-British tradition into the fifth century and possibly beyond (see Chapter 4 for the post-Roman British perspective), they do not directly attest the 'Romano-Christian' culture that some have been keen to project on large parts of Britain in the late fourth and fifth centuries (*e.g.* Dark 2000). Of rather more interest are the items of post-350 jewellery and metalwork from Wiltshire, which not only corroborate the coin hoard evidence in suggesting the presence of some very wealthy and high-status individuals in the county, but also they fit with the ceramic evidence, implying that both craftsmanship and trading links were not dead in *c.* 400.

## Conclusion

Having examined the various sources of archaeological evidence available to us, it is clear that the story of the ending of Roman Wiltshire does not conform to a number of the long-held views concerning the end of Roman Britain in general.

The first point to be stressed is that there is no evidence for a catastrophe in the Late Roman countryside. No grounds have been found for the belief that various villas and small towns in Wiltshire were attacked by pirates during and after the 'barbarian conspiracy'. Furthermore, there is no justification for proposing a later fourth-century collapse in the rural economy, as Neil Faulkner (2000, 144-6) has done, supposedly brought on by a combination of soil exhaustion, plague, harvest failure, corruption and over-taxation. Rather than being *agri deserti*, 'abandoned land' – as Faulkner (2000, 144) claims up to 20% of land in some areas was – much of Wiltshire in the late fourth century was farmed as intensively as it had been in the preceding few decades. Indeed, the continued profitability of farming until at least 400 is illustrated clearly by the frequency of late fourth-century coins and ceramics on rural village and agricultural villa settlements. Both Wayside Farm and OD XII have also yielded important evidence not only for very late fourth or early fifth-century occupation, but also ongoing agricultural production at this time.

The second point to be emphasised is that elements of Wiltshire society were still wealthy in the late fourth and early fifth centuries: there is no evidence for the widespread social unrest resulting in a levelling of society that some have proposed (*e.g.* Faulkner 2000, 174-80). Both site finds and hoards of coins, in addition to the presence of exceptional items of jewellery and metalwork, combine to place Wiltshire into a wider context of regional prosperity, focused on the province of *Britannia Prima*, with its capital at Cirencester (Moorhead 2001, 94). Wiltshire, with Somerset and Gloucestershire in particular, lay at the heart of the wealthiest area in Late Roman Britain and it is clear that the county contained more than its fair share of grandees, who could afford luxuries such as the Roundway Down ring, the Boyd's Farm gold belt-buckle or the Long's Farm silver rings. It is also important to remember that the Bishops Cannings hoard is easily one of the largest and most important so far discovered in Britain.

Thirdly, it is evident in Wiltshire that there was no sudden and catastrophic fourth-century collapse in systems of manufacture and trade (*pace* Esmonde Cleary

1989, 157; Faulkner 2000, 147-8). The inhabitants of OD XII were evidently still able to acquire fine glass vessels, whilst a range of settlements across the county were kept supplied with pottery from production centres over 50km distant in the decades around 400. Furthermore, metalworking in Britain did not cease altogether at the end of the Roman period, as is clearly demonstrated by the Amesbury and Boyd's Farm rings, which mediate between the styles and techniques of Romano-British and post-Roman British artistic production.

Fourthly, it is important to appreciate that nowhere in Wiltshire is there evidence to support the kind of long-term or deep-seated continuity of Romano-British lifestyle or culture beyond 400 that some authors have proposed. Whilst there was no sudden rural economic collapse, it is also hard to ignore the evidence for a terminal decline in living standards in a number of villas from *c.* 370 onwards. Most, if not all, gradually fell into disrepair and were abandoned soon afterwards. Furthermore, whilst the manufacture and trade of Roman pottery did not cease entirely by 400, it is also apparent that such activities did not last beyond 450, after which locally made organic-tempered pottery became the only ceramics that were widely available (see Chapter 4). Finally, there is no convincing evidence from Wiltshire for the emergence of a Western British 'Romano-Christian' society, who supposedly retained many of their urban centres in the fifth century and converted various pagan temples and villas to Christian churches and monasteries (*pace* Pearce 1982; Dark 2000, 105-25). Roman – *i.e.* romanised – Wiltshire was over by 450 at the very latest, although its British inhabitants lived on. Soon, however, they would adopt and adapt a new material culture – that identified with the 'Anglo-Saxons'.

## CHAPTER 4

### **Britons and Saxons, c. 450-700: Debating the Post-Roman Transition**

#### **Introduction**

Academic study of the Early Saxon period, c. 450-700, is governed by the impact of the arrival of a new Germanic culture and the extent to which it was both adopted and adapted by the native population. Until recently, large numbers of invading immigrants were seen as the only way in which the new culture could be established, but new research is gradually beginning to challenge this historically-based view. This chapter seeks to examine the three main forms of evidence – historical, archaeological and linguistic – for both British and Anglo-Saxon culture and identity in the county. The nature and extent of relationships between the two ethnicities will then be discussed in the conclusion. Frequent reference – in the same format as those Roman settlements cited in Chapters 2 and 3, *e.g.* [2:15] – will be made to archaeological material listed and described in Appendix 2. In order to set the material from Wiltshire against its wider background, however, it is first necessary to examine the current and future status of research on what is now widely known as ‘the post-Roman transition’.

#### **Debating the Transition**

##### *Continuity and Discontinuity*

Any discussion of the British landscape in the period following the ending of Roman rule is inevitably governed by the issue of continuity. To what extent did elements of the prehistoric and Roman past influence the landscapes and societies of the early medieval period? The academic debate over this ‘single most important question in British history’ (Wood 1986, 44) is both long-running and heated: however, it is also full of potential pitfalls for the unwary. Continuity is a highly malleable concept, which is notoriously difficult both to define and to demonstrate. The very fact that continuity is so hard to identify has meant that archaeologists and historians have often gone to

extreme lengths to claim its presence: indeed, some have arguably gone too far (see Millett 1987 for a critique of the Rivenhall excavations in Essex). Very few scholars have gone to the same trouble to explain exactly what continuity is or how it should be defined. The fact of the matter is that continuity is a complex and multi-faceted concept whose detail is still little discussed and poorly understood.

If a reasoned and objective debate on continuity is to be conducted, it is necessary to grapple with the question of what the term actually means in the context of populations, settlements, agriculture and administration. How does it manifest itself in the archaeological and historical records and how is it articulated in the landscape? As Stephen Rippon has recently observed; ‘the problem with this often lively debate is that the various strands of evidence – settlements, estates, field systems, burials, linguistics, etc. – are all too often discussed in isolation. The contribution of landscape archaeology is to provide a conceptual, temporal and spatial framework into which the wide range of data relating to this period can be woven together and placed in context’ (Rippon 2000, 51). Indeed, it is only by rethinking past and present academic attitudes towards this debate that we can break the cycle of simplistic discussion – *i.e.* the mere ‘stamp collecting’ of sites with or without evidence for continuity. Only then can we move on to a fuller and more wide-ranging discussion of the processes involved.

A key feature of an enlightened approach to the study of continuity must be a realisation that the landscape operates as a system composed of a number of interdependent functioning elements – such as populations, settlements, agriculture, communications, administration and religion – all or none of which may exhibit evidence for continuity. All too often, continuity has been judged on the merits of individual factors alone and not the whole landscape itself. This treatment of the evidence, however, ignores the fact that continuity often operates on more than one level. ‘Take, for example, a farmstead established by Anglo-Saxon immigrants next to a Romano-British villa which had been abandoned for three months. This would entail demographic discontinuity, but functional continuity of the farmstead, as the three-month gap would have been of little practical significance in landscape exploitation’ (Rippon 2000, 51).

This example leads us to the next issue to be considered. How can continuity be demonstrated? This is perhaps the greatest problem to have dogged academic discussion of the subject so far. Returning to the hypothetical situation discussed above, it is highly unlikely that archaeologists could be anything other than uncertain as to

whether occupation had continued more or less uninterrupted between the villa and the farmstead or had been established *de novo* at the farmstead after a significant break in time: yet, it is precisely this question of chronology that is critical in deciding the difference between continuity and discontinuity.

The trouble is that the period from the fifth to the eleventh centuries is in theory historical, but it is often regarded as archaeologically 'prehistoric' (Brown and Foard 1998, 68). This is because many post-Roman artefacts do not survive well in the archaeological record and, hence, their dating and the dating of associated archaeological layers becomes much harder. Handmade pottery, for example, which is one of the most common artefacts recovered from post-Roman settlement sites, is both friable and often lacking distinctive decoration and forms, thereby preventing close dating. The re-use of Roman artefacts on some post-Roman sites confuses the matter still further (Rippon 2000, 52). Structural evidence, in the form of sunken-featured buildings and wooden 'halls', is also more likely than Roman material to pass unnoticed and unrecorded by archaeologists, due to its preservation mostly as post-holes and compacted floor layers, the wood having largely rotted away. Even burials are subject to misinterpretation due to a heavy reliance on select artefacts, such as brooches, for their dating and ethnic attribution. As a result, continuity in any meaningful sense beyond the mere geographical correlation of sites is often impossible to demonstrate.

Conversely, it should also be remembered that discontinuity is frequently just as hard to identify as continuity. Central to this discussion is Richard Reece's observation that 'demonstration of the absence of continuity on certain sites according to certain dating schemes is not the same as demonstration of discontinuity' (Reece 1989, 231). Indeed, there is a clear distinction between non-continuity and discontinuity. Discontinuity may only be claimed where there is positive evidence for a clear hiatus, be it in occupation, land-use or land ownership. However, given the nature of archaeological evidence for the fifth and sixth centuries, it is fair to say that where no such evidence for a hiatus occurs, it is impossible to rule out the possibility that some Romano-British settlements and fields remained in use: indeed, the very fact that stretches of Roman or pre-Roman landscapes commonly survive into the modern landscape must mean that people have consistently lived and worked here, thereby preserving the physical framework of their ancestral landscape (Esmonde Cleary 1989, 159; see Chapter 7). Such is the scarcity of securely datable archaeological evidence for the post-Roman period, however, that 'all we can confidently say is that many Romano-

British settlements were abandoned some time between the late fourth century and whenever durable and datable material culture was once again in use on rural sites' (Rippon 2000, 52). There may be a significant degree of truth in Reece's statement that 'an element of land-use-continuity is axiomatic for every acre of Britain' (Reece 1989, 231).

### *Prospect and the Framework of 'Late Antiquity'*

Continuity and discontinuity are concepts that are rarely proved or disproved outright: indeed, it is this fundamental problem that drives academic debate over the issue and ensures that it will run for many more years to come. Nevertheless, constructive debate, founded on a detailed consideration of all the available evidence, should not be regarded as anything other than healthy. If continuity and discontinuity are to be discussed in a truly meaningful sense, however, it is necessary to move away from site-, subject- and period-based studies of the problem and progress towards an integrated and more regional landscape-orientated approach.

A key feature of this new approach is a realisation of the importance of regional variation. This has been described as 'the key to understanding the post-Roman landscape' (Rippon 2000, 58) and it is clear that a series of detailed regional landscape studies is needed in order to understand the subtleties of how natives and newcomers interacted in different parts of fifth- and sixth-century Britain. Christopher Scull (1992, 8) has recently suggested that 'it may not be too fanciful to argue that each region or locality would have seen its own *adventus Saxonum*' and it is apparent that simplistic narratives of Germanic invasion and conquest belie a more complex period of coexistence between Britons and Saxons, during which 'British' and 'English' polities undoubtedly existed side-by-side (Gelling 1993; Bassett 2000; Dark 2000, 97-104; see Chapter 5).

Another key feature of the new approach, which I have already stressed in the preceding chapter, must be a greater understanding between Romanists and medievalists. As Mark Corney (2000, 42) has recently commented, 'the breakdown of period barriers and the development of an ongoing dialogue between these two areas of study is the great challenge over the next twenty-five years of landscape studies'. It is in this context, therefore, that we must view the calls of Ken Dark (2000, 24-6) and

Simon Esmonde Cleary (2001), amongst others, for a new academic discourse of 'Late Antiquity'. This covers the period c. 300-700 and aims to overcome perceived differences between Roman and medieval archaeology and history. It is clear that the changes taking place in the post-Roman period cannot be divorced from those already underway in the later stages of Roman rule. Furthermore, 'Late Antiquity' also sets out to re-integrate Britain with the Continent, examining wider changes taking place throughout the romanised world at this time. Whilst the 'Late Antiquity' paradigm has not been without its recent critics (see Faulkner 2004), it has received a cautious welcome from many archaeologists and historians and it promises to be a valuable aid to future research (Collins and Gerrard 2004).

## **Anglo-Saxon Identity and Culture in Wiltshire**

### *History*

For a chronology of the events that characterised the Anglo-Saxon *adventus* in Wiltshire, we are largely dependent on the annals of the ninth-century *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (hereafter referred to as the *Chronicle*). As the historians Barbara Yorke (1993; 1995, 32-4) and David Dumville (1985) have recently demonstrated, however, the events recorded before the middle of the seventh century do not always tie up with other archaeological and literary evidence. The presence of fifth-century Anglo-Saxon burials in southeast Wiltshire, for example, predates Cynric's supposed victory over the Britons at Old Sarum in 552 by at least fifty years (Yorke 1995, 32; see below), whilst the lengths of reigns of the sixth-century kings presented in the *Chronicle* disagree with those given in another ninth-century source, the West Saxon Regnal Table (Dumville 1985). Furthermore, it must be borne in mind that the *Chronicle* is a politically biased source, whose material was manipulated to suit the needs of the later kings of Wessex. In the words of Barbara Yorke, 'it is not safe to regard the *Chronicle* annals for events in Wessex in the fifth and sixth centuries as a reliable factual account of what occurred. That is not to say that they are complete fiction, but as "faction" any historical truth is very hard to untangle from its mythic undergrowth' (Yorke 1995, 34).

In broad terms, the sixth-century entries in the *Chronicle* describe a series of battles in which Saxon power was extended northwards from the Hampshire coast;

although there is some evidence to support Bede's reference to a Jutish kingdom covering the Isle of Wight and part of Hampshire at this time (Yorke 1995, 36-9). Wiltshire was seemingly entered via the Salisbury Avon valley and battles against the British, under the leadership of Cynric, are recorded at Old Sarum in 552 and Barbury Castle in 556. At the same time, a second group of Saxons – perhaps led by Ceawlin, who is recorded as fighting alongside Cynric at Barbury – may have moved westwards along the Thames valley. A battle is recorded at Dyrham in South Gloucestershire in 577 and among the towns reportedly captured at this time are Bath, Gloucester and Cirencester (Bonney 1973, 470; Yorke 1995, 34). It is possible that elements of these two groups of Saxons clashed at the battle of *Wodnesbeorg* – 'Adam's Grave' in Alton parish – in 592. The *Chronicle* fails to record the combatants at this battle, however, and it is difficult to fully establish the sequence of events at this time. What is apparent, however, is that by c. 600, parts of southern, eastern and northern Wiltshire had been directly influenced by the activities of the Gewisse – the early West Saxon royal house.

From the mid seventh century, the annals of the *Chronicle* become much more detailed and it is generally assumed that this reflects the incorporation, for the first time, of information originally documented at the time being discussed (Yorke 1995, 52). In 652, a battle is recorded at *Bradanforda*, which is commonly identified with Bradford-on-Avon, although the association is not certain. It is not known whether the Gewisse were here fighting against the British or other Saxons (Eagles 2001, 221). Similarly, the location of a battle at *Peonnum* in 658 is uncertain, although Penselwood, close to the meeting point of Wiltshire, Somerset and Dorset, is a likely possibility (Yorke 1995, 53). This battle marks the first clear Saxon advance into Somerset – presumably via parts of western Wiltshire – and the Britons were reportedly driven back as far as the River Parrett (Darlington 1955a, 3). Evidence for the subsequent consolidation of territory to the south and west is provided by the first reliable charter of Glastonbury Abbey in Somerset, which records a grant of land by Centwine in 682 (Edwards 1988, 10; Yorke 1995, 60). Furthermore, there is evidence to suggest that a religious community had been established at Tisbury in southwest Wiltshire before 700 (see Chapter 6).

From the second half of the seventh century, the rivalry between the Gewisse of Wessex and the Hwicce of Mercia to the north became increasingly bitter. Malmesbury Abbey, which had been founded in the mid seventh century, allegedly by the Irish hermit Maildub, became the subject of both Gewissan and Hwiccan patronage in the

years before 700 (Yorke 1995, 61). Shortly afterwards, northern Wiltshire became the front line in a series of conflicts, during which a number of estates, including both Tockenham and Purton, passed back and forth between West Saxon and Mercian control (Darlington 1955a, 4; Hooper 1989, 5). The political and archaeological consequences of this long-running dispute will be examined further in the next chapter. Nevertheless, by *c.* 700, historical evidence suggests that all of Wiltshire was under Anglo-Saxon political control.

## *Archaeology*

### BUILDINGS

In the period *c.* 450-700, excavated archaeological evidence suggests that two new forms of timber building emerged in England, both of which are widely seen as resulting from a greater or lesser degree of Germanic cultural influence. The rectangular post-built 'hall' is the commonest form of early Anglo-Saxon dwelling and current thinking regards it as a hybrid of British and Germanic building traditions (Dixon 1982; James *et al.* 1984; Powlesland 1997). The sunken-featured building or *grubenhäus*, meanwhile, was almost certainly used as an outbuilding rather than for housing and it is generally held to be a direct Continental import. Numerous examples are known in modern north Germany and its presence on an English settlement is frequently held to be a distinctively Germanic trait (Welch 1992, 34). Some archaeologists even believe that fifth- and sixth-century examples are best seen as having been constructed by immigrants or their immediate descendants (*e.g.* Hamerow 1997, 39).

In Wiltshire, one or both of the new building types are represented at a small number of settlement sites dating to the Early Saxon period, including Ashton Keynes [2:41], Avebury [2:44-5], Highworth [2:246], Liddington [2:285], Swindon [2:432-3, 435] and West Overton [2:493]. The most striking feature of these buildings is their proximity to former Romano-British dwellings. This surely raises a question mark over whether they are actually as reliable indicators of immigrant Germanic communities as some archaeologists regard them to be. At Avebury, for example, four sunken-featured buildings in the southern car park – the dating of which currently rests on a few sixth-

century glass beads – are situated only 200-300m north of the Roman small town beside Silbury Hill (Pollard and Reynolds 2002, 192-8), whilst at nearby ‘Headlands’ in West Overton, a series of cropmark timber ‘halls’ of likely fifth- to seventh-century date has been observed 100m from a proposed Romano-British villa (Fowler 2000a, 60; Pollard and Reynolds 2002, 216). At Priory Green in Highworth, a sunken-featured building was found not only to cut through the cleared floor of a fourth-century stone building, but also to partly re-use its superstructure (Collins 1986, 28-32). A similar relationship with a Roman structure is also attested to the rear of Lloyds Bank in Swindon’s Old Town, where one of a pair of sunken-featured buildings cut through the rubble of a fourth-century masonry building (Canham and Philips n.d., 36).

Whilst all of these associations with earlier structures may perhaps be ascribed to physical coincidence, entailing no functional or causative link between the two phases (Esmonde Cleary 1989, 188), an alternative possibility presents itself. Could it be that some of these ‘Anglo-Saxon’ timber buildings merely represent the adoption of new building techniques by British inhabitants, thereby continuing pre-existing Romano-British settlements? Certainly, this is a scenario that has been considered by Barry Cunliffe with Chalton in Hampshire in mind (Cunliffe 1973b), whilst it must also be considered likely in the case of Coombe Down in Enford parish [2:215]. Here, excavations undertaken in 1992 revealed the presence of a single sunken-featured building associated with both organic-tempered pottery and Roman artefacts on the edge of a large Romano-British village (Entwistle *et al.* 1993, 12). Whilst the possibility that this structure was built by a Germanic immigrant cannot be ruled out, it is surely more likely that it was constructed by fifth- or sixth-century Britons from Coombe Down, who simply emulated the new ‘Anglo-Saxon’ building style seen elsewhere in surrounding river valleys.

Although it is undoubtedly unsafe to assume functional and ethnic continuity between contiguous Romano-British and Early Saxon settlements in the absence of accurate dating evidence (see Rippon 2000, 53), it is similarly unsafe to claim a direct relationship between sunken-featured buildings and the presence of Germanic settlers – perhaps even in cases where they occur alongside Anglo-Saxon cemeteries containing late fifth- or early sixth-century burials. Such a trend of contemporary Early Saxon settlements and cemeteries occurring in conjunction is widely attested at sites throughout England, including West Heslerton in Yorkshire, Mucking in Essex and Bishopstone in Sussex (Welch 1992, 28, 32, 34). Two confirmed Wiltshire examples

are Market Lavington [2:305] and Collingbourne Ducis [2:163], although scatters of organic-tempered pottery found very close to the Petersfinger and Winterbourne Gunner cemeteries near Salisbury may represent further cases in point (Figs 25 & 29; see below).

At Market Lavington, three sunken-featured buildings have been tentatively dated to the fifth or sixth century on the basis of artefacts found within them (Williams and Newman 1998, 12), whilst a fragment of bone from Sunken-Featured Building 101 at Collingbourne Ducis has produced a calibrated radiocarbon date range of 430-660 (Fig. 26; Pine 2001, 114). Clearly, when combined with the fifth- and sixth-century artefactual evidence from the adjacent cemeteries, it is tempting to infer the presence of Germanic settlers: indeed, Bruce Eagles regards the Market Lavington settlement as an ‘immigrant community ... planted there, at the limit of territory newly acquired in the late fifth century, perhaps to mark its new “ownership”’ (Eagles 2001, 217). Clearly, this may have been the case, but current research indicates that this is not the only interpretation available to archaeologists. It is important to bear in mind Sam Lucy’s recent question (2002, 168); ‘just because pottery, some building types and some metalwork types change their form, does this have to imply changes in the populations using them’? The answer, I would suggest, is no. We cannot say whether the inhabitants of Market Lavington and Collingbourne Ducis were Germanic settlers, natives, or a mixture of both.

In conclusion, post-built ‘halls’ and sunken-featured buildings cannot be used by archaeologists to ‘read off’ the ethnicity of their builders or occupants. Nevertheless, such buildings do represent an indicator of Germanic influence in England – direct or indirect – and they often correlate with other Anglo-Saxon cultural markers, including burials, pottery and metalwork. In Wiltshire, there is reasonable evidence to suggest that the new building techniques were present in parts of the central chalklands at least, alongside the novel forms of burial, in the later fifth century. At present, the dating of sunken-featured building and ‘halls’ elsewhere in the county is imprecise, but, as Figure 25 suggests, it is possible that they became widespread in the east during the sixth and seventh centuries, whilst taking longer to appear in areas further west (see also Eagles 2001, 200-1). The east-west divide in early Anglo-Saxon material remains in Wiltshire is a subject that will receive further attention below.

## BROOCHES AND BURIALS

The above discussion of Early Saxon buildings in Wiltshire has drawn attention to the failings of 'simplistic' readings of material culture in relation to ethnicity. Just as a sunken-featured building or a post-built 'hall' does not automatically signal the presence of a Germanic settler, so a burial in an Anglo-Saxon cemetery accompanied by a 'Germanic' brooch, spearhead or shield boss should not be considered as the grave of a Continental immigrant. As Sam Lucy (2000, 172) has recently written; 'it may be that most of the people buried in Anglo-Saxon cemeteries were descendants of the indigenous population, and we should be asking a different kind of question: why did the people of eastern Britain in the fifth and sixth centuries choose to adopt these rites'. Acculturation – the adoption of alien fashions and cultural traits – appears to have been much more important in Early Saxon societies than many scholars have so far acknowledged and it falls to the current generation of researchers to 'unpick' the ethnic labels ascribed to burials on the basis of their associated grave goods – most often brooches or other jewellery.

There is a bewildering array of brooches and jewellery forms found across England in early Anglo-Saxon graves, each of which has its own terminology and each of which has its own proposed ethnic affiliation (see Lucy 2000, 25-47, for an overview of the different types). There is insufficient space here to discuss all the types found in Wiltshire, although it is worth briefly examining one style in particular whose ethnic origins have been fiercely contested. Much debate has surrounded the select group of metal artefacts whose naturalistic zoomorphic decoration has come to be known as the Quoit Brooch Style, after the characteristic type of brooch on which it is often found. Such artefacts are believed to be of late fifth- or very early sixth-century date and include belt-fittings, brooches, mounts and pendants (Suzuki 2000, 2-3). They are mainly found in the southeast of England (particularly Kent), although three examples occur in Wiltshire cemeteries. Two strap ends are known from Blacknall Field in Pewsey [2:352] and Winterbourne Gunner in Winterbourne [2:507], whilst a small quoit brooch was found in Grave 25 at Charlton Plantation in Downton [2:194] (Suzuki 2000, 9-10).

Past study of the Quoit Brooch Style has mainly been concerned with attributing an ethnic origin. Edward Leeds (1936, 7) regarded it as an insular British art form, but Sonia Chadwick Hawkes later argued that it was Jutish in origin and should be renamed

'Jutish Style A', being direct evidence for the Germanic settlement of southern England (Hawkes 1961). Vera Evison (1968), meanwhile, attributed the Quoit Brooch Style to Frankish craftsmen who had emigrated from Gaul to Britain, whilst Barry Ager (1985, 17-18) proposed a more general Germanic pedigree, seeing artefacts belonging to the style as creations of Germanic workmen. A recent study of the Quoit Brooch Style, however, concludes that it 'cannot be identified with the Franks, the Saxons, the Jutes or any conceivable ethnic group on the Continent': rather, 'the demonstrable insularity of the style means that we are faced with a new cultural identity in southern England, rather than the wholesale transfer of an established ethnicity from abroad' (Suzuki 2000, 108, 110). The Quoit Brooch Style, therefore, embodies a unique blend of influences in post-Roman Britain – an example of acculturation at work, as craftsmen seemingly 'borrowed' ideas from Romano-British, Germanic and Scandinavian metalwork (Suzuki 2000, 109). It serves as a potent warning that simplistic associations between artefacts and ethnicities are often likely to be misleading.

In light of this discussion, an analysis of the artefacts found in the early Anglo-Saxon burials of Wiltshire makes far more sense when seen in terms of an emergent, largely native, post-Roman society forging a new distinct cultural identity, rather than simply Germanic migrants settling in the region and importing their own Continental culture. This is particularly apparent in the excavated fifth- to seventh-century cemeteries (Figs 25 & 27). Whilst the majority of graves in these cemeteries was found to contain objects traditionally regarded as typically 'Saxon', such as saucer and button brooches, a number were also associated with artefacts usually seen as indicative of other ethnicities. At Blacknall Field, an 'Anglian' square-headed brooch was found in Grave 21, together with a pair of 'Saxon' saucer brooches (Eagles 2001, 218), whilst in Grave 102, a 'British' Class 1 penannular brooch was paired with another penannular brooch, perhaps suggesting its use in 'Germanic' fashion, holding together a untailored tubular garment known as a *peplos*-type gown (White 1990, 127). Another 'British' Type G penannular brooch in Grave 53 at Harnham Hill [2:395] was found paired with a 'Saxon' ansate brooch, again suggesting its use as a *peplos*-type gown fastening (Dickinson 1982, 52). Finally, in Grave 25 at Petersfinger [2:148], three 'Saxon' button brooches were associated with a local variant of a 'Frankish' bow brooch (Eagles 2001, 218).

Other unusual Early Saxon objects present in Wiltshire include a sixth-century Form B7 'Anglian' wrist-clasp from Baydon parish [2:64] – the only example found

outside the Anglian area in England (Hines 1996) – and part of the head-plate of a gilded ‘Kentish’ square-headed brooch from Shalbourne parish [2:409]. It should be noted, however, that both these artefacts are unstratified metal detector finds and it is unclear whether they originated from burial contexts.

What this material tells us is that the upper echelons of early Anglo-Saxon society in Wiltshire, some of whom were undoubtedly of British descent, both adopted and adapted artefacts from a wide variety of cultures to suit their own needs. Consequently, there is no need to postulate ‘competing, perhaps short-lived, ethnicities among the élite’ (Eagles 2001, 219). Even Roman material was re-used in Anglo-Saxon graves. Some items were probably plundered on demand from local Romano-British sites (White 1990, 146) – presumably including the masonry used to line some of the seventh-century graves at Monkton Deverill [2:259] (Rawlings 1995). Other items, however, may have been heirlooms handed down over generations. The number of females in the Harnham Hill cemetery in Salisbury who wore Romano-British finger-rings and bracelets has received comment (N. Stoodley in Eagles 2001, 218), whilst in Grave 11 at Collingbourne Ducis [2:162], a repaired gilded disc brooch of Late Roman date was found being worn in ‘Roman’ fashion at the shoulder of a prone male (White 1990, 132). Evidently, such Romano-British items formed a small but significant element in the early Anglo-Saxon material culture of Wiltshire. In the words of Roger White, however, ‘the interest in the problem of the use of Roman objects in Anglo-Saxon graves lies not in the question of survival but in the demonstration of the ingenuity of a newly-formed society in re-using elements of an old way of life in new fashions’ (White 1990, 146).

Before the seventh-century practice of high-status barrow burial is examined, it is important to comment on the geographical distribution of early Anglo-Saxon burials in Wiltshire (Fig. 27). Much has been made of the concentration of fifth- and sixth-century cemeteries in the Salisbury Avon valley and the Marlborough Downs and the corresponding lack of contemporary Anglo-Saxon burials in areas to the west and northwest of Salisbury Plain (Eagles 1994, 13-17; 2001, 219). Furthermore, it is also clear that the Thames valley contains a notable cluster of early burials, including the solitary sixth-century inhumation at Castle Eaton [2:127] and the sixth-century burials just across the Gloucestershire border at Kemble (King *et al.* 1996). Whilst it is apparent that this broadly east-west split between those areas in the county with and without a fifth- and sixth-century Anglo-Saxon burial rite is real and demands

explanation, it would be simplistic to equate it with the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*'s bellicose account of Saxon conquest and expansion westwards across southern England. Rather than being a matter of strict ethnic and political division between Britons in the west and Saxons in the east, it may have been more a question of cultural preference, with those in the east of the county choosing to ally themselves with the Germanic 'North Sea' littoral, whilst those in the west remained part of the broader British 'Atlantic' sphere. What is clear is that we cannot simply correlate distribution maps of material culture with political or ethnic divisions (Jones 1997, 123).

A related point of debate concerns the cultural significance of seventh-century high-status barrow burials, some of which, including those on Roundway and Swallowcliffe Downs [2:386, 427], were very richly furnished, occasionally including carved wooden beds. From Figure 27, it is clear that such burials are most frequent in Wiltshire in the southwest of the county and Bruce Eagles has suggested that they are indicative of 'new Anglo-Saxon conquest', marking "'Anglo-Saxon" intrusion into new territory' (Eagles 2001, 223). This view, however, does pre-suppose that the occupants of the barrows were incomers to the region in which they were buried. An equally plausible interpretation has been put forward by Chris Loveluck with the Peak District in mind (Loveluck 1995). He suggests that some of these seventh-century burials should be associated with a local native élite, trying to maintain their status in the face of external pressures. Thus, high-ranking Britons on the fringes of Germanic cultural influence chose to adopt the fashions of Anglo-Saxon burial in order to assimilate themselves into the culture of the dominant ruling classes. In Wiltshire, it is not possible to discern one single factor explaining the growth of high-status barrow burial in the seventh century. As Sam Lucy (2000, 181) reminds us, however, it is possible for burial rites to change in the absence of incomers.

The subject of early Anglo-Saxon burials and their grave goods in Wiltshire is vast and discussion here can only hope to highlight a few of the trends visible from a brief analysis of the evidence. It is nevertheless apparent that, whilst reinforcing the cultural divide between east and west Wiltshire in the fifth and sixth centuries in particular, the archaeological evidence is no reliable guide to the racial mix of natives and newcomers in the region, as many scholars have supposed it to be.

*Language and Place-Names*

At present, it is estimated that only some thirty Old English words derive from Brittonic (Ward-Perkins 2000, 514). The speed and the extent to which Old English replaced the language of the native Britons is one of the most perplexing issues in Anglo-Saxon studies today. Some, including Margaret Gelling (1993, 51) and Heinrich Härke (2002, 146-50), believe that language change on this scale would not have been possible without the mass influx of a substantial number of Germanic peasant settlers. Others, such as Kenneth Jackson (1953, 241), have argued that such a change could have taken place over a few generations as Britons consciously learned the language of the ruling Saxon élite. Recently, however, Bryan Ward-Perkins has observed that, under the seventh-century law code of King Ine, Britons were valued less in society if they retained their outward indicators of 'Britishness'. As a result, many Britons in Wessex may have chosen to officially abandon their British ethnicity in order to become Anglo-Saxon. In so doing, 'they probably had to adopt, not only the name, but also the speech of the Saxons' (Ward-Perkins 2000, 524). This idea of acculturation of language as well as material culture certainly accords with the interpretation placed on the archaeological evidence above and one can easily imagine a situation where, publicly, ambitious members of British society in Early Saxon Wiltshire spoke in Old English, whilst in private they still retained their native Brittonic tongue (see Geary 1983, 20, for the idea that bilingualism was widespread amongst the élite in the early medieval period).

Turning to place-names, it is perhaps surprising just how few Brittonic names in percentage terms survive in English counties such as Wiltshire; although there are undoubtedly more than previous scholars have acknowledged (Coates and Breeze 2000, 10-12). In Devon, for example, the place-names had become more than 90% English by the mid tenth century (Gelling 1993, 55). Whilst this fact used to be explained in terms of 'swamping' of the British population by Anglo-Saxon settlers, Margaret Gelling has realised that it instead represents the result of a systematic process of renaming by Anglo-Saxon officials, whereby Brittonic settlement-names were replaced by Old English names, often of a 'directional' or 'possessive' type, such as Eastcot and Hannington (Gelling 1993, 55-6). Many Old English settlement-names in the county, therefore, may have been given to pre-existing native settlements with now-forgotten Brittonic names and we should not assume, as many previous scholars have done, that

they represent the pioneering homesteads of Germanic immigrants settling in the post-Roman wilderness (see Gelling 1997, 10-11).

Some of the most concentrated work in English place-name studies in the last century has focused on the problem of identifying those Old English settlement-names that date to the initial period of Germanic influence in the fifth and sixth centuries. Until the 1960s, it was widely accepted that place-names containing the elements *-ingas* and *-inga-* referred to groups of people settling 'at the time of the Anglo-Saxon invasion' (Ekwall 1923, 113). In 1966, however, this view was challenged by John Dodgson, who, using examples from southeast England, argued that *-ingas* and *-inga-* names were instead the result of a secondary phase of Anglo-Saxon name-giving in the sixth and seventh centuries, representing 'an epoch of territorial expansion and social consolidation' (Dodgson 1966, 20). Now, it is widely recognised that such place-names cannot be associated with the earliest Anglo-Saxon settlements (Cameron 1996, 66-72; Gelling 1997, 106-10; see Chapter 5 for a discussion of *-ingas/-inga-* place-names in Wiltshire).

Despite the publication of two influential papers in the 1970s, which saw the Old English element *hām*, 'homestead/estate', elevated to the former status occupied by the *-ingas* and *-inga-* names (Dodgson 1973; Cox 1977), it is now argued that many of the earliest Old English settlement-names coined in the fifth and sixth centuries were of a 'topographical' rather than a 'habitative' nature; in other words, they contained words referring to natural features, such as woods, hills and streams, rather than settlements *per se* (Gelling 1997, 118; Gelling and Cole 2000, xii-xxiv). Included within this category are names derived from *dūn*, 'hill', *ēg*, 'island/marsh', *mere*, 'pond/lake', *burna*, 'stream', *ford*, 'ford', *feld*, 'open land', *denu*, 'long narrow valley', and *cumb*, 'short wide valley'. It is important to understand, however, that these topographical names were used in a 'quasi-habitative' sense (Gelling and Cole 2000, xvii): thus, the 'pig hill' of Swindon and the 'gravel valley' of Chiseldon were not devoid of occupation when they were named. Rather, these place-names referred primarily to settlements by way of reference to prominent local landscape features. In Margaret Gelling's opinion, therefore, these topographical settlement-names 'record perceptions of the landscape and the situations of ancient settlements in the landscape which are those of the earliest Anglo-Saxon immigrants' and, as such, she suggests a date of origin for many in the fifth century (Gelling and Cole 2000, xix).

Some possible corroborating evidence for Gelling's hypothesis is provided by Barrie Cox's survey of English place-names recorded before 731, in which he notes more occurrences of the topographical terms *ēg*, *feld* and *ford* than many of the major habitative elements, such as *word*, *cot* and *tūn* (Cox 1976). Indeed, the poor showing of *tūn*, 'farm/village/estate', in addition to the topographical element *lēah*, 'wood/clearing', in this survey is commonly interpreted as an indication that place-names containing these two elements largely date from the period after *c.* 700 (Watts 1979, 127-30; Gelling and Cole 2000, 237). The relatively high occurrence of place-names in *-hām*, however, may help to strengthen claims noted above that this was an early habitative element.

In Wiltshire, a basic analysis of the place-name data contained in the English Place-Name Society's volume for the county (Gover *et al.* 1939) does appear to lend considerable support to the observations and theories discussed above. From Tables 3 and 4, it is apparent that Old English topographical settlement-names are much more likely, in percentage terms, to be recorded first in pre-Conquest documentary sources and the Domesday Survey than habitative names. Furthermore, it is notable that 46% of *tūn* place-names and 67% of *lēah* settlement-names only appear on record after 1086, helping to confirm their status as later Anglo-Saxon or even Norman name-forming elements. Over half the numbers of *ēg*, *burna* and *feld* settlement-names, however, were first documented before 1086 and this provides clear support for Barrie Cox's inclusion of these three terms in his list of elements 'important in the formation of English place-names during the period *c.* 400 to 730' (Cox 1976, 66).

Settlement-names containing the elements *ford*, *dūn* and *denu* also fare well and it is worthy of note that Stratford Tony, Britford, Downton, Garsdon in Lea and Cleverton and Standen in Chute are recorded in charters bearing the dates 672, *c.* 670, 672, 701 and 778 respectively (although see Edwards 1988 for concerns over their authenticity). Evidently, the prominent *ēg*, *burna* and *ford* settlement-names in the major river valleys of Wiltshire are testament to an early stratum of Old English name-giving, perhaps indeed 'at the earliest date of English speech' (Gelling and Cole 2000, 10). There is certainly good reason to believe that such names pre-date the numerous *tūns*, *hāmtūns* and *cots* that surround them.

In general, the place-names of Wiltshire provide sound supporting evidence for the hypothesis that topographical settlement-names – especially those including the

elements *ēg*, *burna* and *ford* – were among the earliest coined in the Old English language. Some habitative place-names, including those containing *hām*, *-ingas/ -inga-* and certain Latin loanwords (see below), may also be counted as ‘early’. Whilst none of these names can be dated outright, it appears likely that the majority originated in the period *c.* 450-700, thereby providing evidence for the currency of English speech in Wiltshire at this time. Additional evidence for the early (pre-700) dominance of English in the east of the county in particular is provided by the comparative scarcity of Brittonic place-names here in comparison to those areas further west (Fig. 28). The subject of British place-names will receive separate consideration below.

## British Identity and Culture in Wiltshire

### *History*

The best-known historical source that provides a British perspective on the events of fifth-century Wessex is Gildas’ *De Excidio Britanniae* (‘The Ruin of Britain’). Gildas was a British cleric, who may have been writing in Wiltshire or Dorset shortly before 500 (Higham 1994, 111-12, 136-8), although other suggestions have been made as to his location and time (Yorke 1995, 12-15). Like other documentary sources dating from this period, Gildas’ work should be treated as ‘faction’, rather than fact. It is necessary to bear in mind that *De Excidio* is primarily a religious sermon, rather than a work of history. The central message behind the text is that the fate that befell the fifth-century Britons was directly related to their failings as Christians: ‘Gildas’ audience were intended to take note and attend to their own sins lest comparable disasters befell them’ (Yorke 1995, 12).

In *De Excidio*, Gildas describes vividly how the Britons suffered at the hands of the Germanic invaders, enduring massacres, mass enslavement and the destruction of their settlements, in addition to a series of devastating plagues. So terrifying were these accounts that many nineteenth-century historians were convinced that the fifth-century British population had been exterminated, or at best driven to the margins of the island of Britain (*e.g.* Freeman 1888, 74, 76; see also Lucy 2000, 158-63). Gildas, however, also recounts how those Britons that were left following the onslaught began to fight back against the Saxons. It is out of his account that the legend of Ambrosius, and

ultimately perhaps that of King Arthur too, has emerged (Morris 1973, 116-7; Yorke 1995, 15). Ambrosius Aurelianus is the only fifth-century Briton named in *De Excidio*, but it is he who, according to Gildas, led the Britons to victory against the Saxons at the battle of Badon Hill, which is commonly ascribed a date in the 490s by many historians (Myres 1986, 222-3; Wood 1986, 73).

Whether Gildas' account of events in the fifth century contains the degree of historical credence ascribed to it by many notable scholars is open to some debate (see Lucy 2000, 157-8). It is interesting to note, however, that both the leadership of Ambrosius and the battle of Badon Hill have been ascribed a Wiltshire context by a number of influential historians. J.N.L. Myres, for example, has interpreted the place-name Amesbury as 'the stronghold of Ambrosius', commenting that 'no place in fact could be better suited to be the focus of Ambrosius' operations ... than the neighbourhood of Amesbury itself' (Myres 1986, 160-1; see also Morris 1973, 100). Myres has also made the connection between Badon Hill and the place-names Badbury (*i.e.* Liddington Castle) and the village of Baydon close by (Myres 1986, 158-60). In this interpretation, he has recently been joined by Peter Fowler (2001, 197). Barbara Yorke, however, has made the sensible observation that there are several Wessex place-names that might on etymological grounds be associated with Badon. Furthermore, of the Amesbury/Ambrosius connection, she comments that it is 'legend not history' (Yorke 1995, 15).

Whilst Gildas' *De Excidio* cannot be read at face value, it does at least suggest that there was some semblance of organised British society in the West Country in *c.* 500. Furthermore, the high quality of Gildas' Latin should not escape attention. If he was indeed writing in Dorset or Wiltshire, it shows that a 'Late Roman' education, characterised by Latin literacy with Roman terminology and symbolism, was still available to a handful of Britons in this region at this time (Dark 2000, 33).

### *Archaeology*

#### POTTERY AND SETTLEMENTS

In the absence of structural remains, the best archaeological evidence available for the study of settlements in Wiltshire during the period *c.* 450-700 is the occurrence of sherds of handmade organic-tempered pottery – a fabric that is also variously referred to

as grass-, vegetal- and chaff-tempered ware. Whilst it was once thought that this pottery was Germanic in origin and indicative of an Anglo-Saxon cultural presence, it has become clear that it is found just as readily in likely British cultural contexts, such as known Romano-British settlements devoid of characteristic Anglo-Saxon material culture (see Fowler 1966). As a result, many archaeologists now regard this artefact in such circumstances as an indicator of continuing British occupation on Romano-British settlement sites (Eagles 1994, 18; Rippon 2000, 52-3). Whether organic-tempered pottery was manufactured by both communities remains an unanswered question. Even if it was only made in the Anglo-Saxon cultural zone, however, it may have been obtained through exchange (Rippon 2000, 53).

The dating of organic-tempered pottery is highly problematic. It is believed that most pots in this fabric were manufactured on a household level of production in bonfire or clamp kilns that have left minimal traces for archaeologists. As a result, there are very few known production centres that can provide vital dating clues, whilst the process of creating a typological sequence is hampered still further by the longevity of vessel form, the homogeneity of the fabric and the rarity of elaborate decoration. Estimated date ranges for this pottery vary, but a period from the fifth to the ninth centuries is broadly accepted (Williams and Newman 1998, 85-7). Within Wiltshire, a small number of sherds from the cemetery at Collingbourne Ducis have been assigned a fifth-century date on the basis of associated metalwork (Gingell 1978), whilst a very small assemblage from Ramsbury [2:364] was found in a context that was radiocarbon dated broadly to the late eighth or early ninth century (Haslam 1980, 30). The two largest assemblages from the county – from Collingbourne Ducis and Market Lavington – are both associated with settlements that were occupied throughout the Early and Middle Saxon periods (Williams and Newman 1998, 87-9; Pine 2001, 99). Elsewhere in the country, it has been suggested that organic-tempered pottery was used alongside Romano-British pottery in a fifth-century context (see Lucy 2002, 158, for the example of St Mary Cray in Kent). This scenario is perhaps implied in Wiltshire at Collingbourne Ducis (Pine 2001, 114), Brickley Lane in Devizes [2:188] (Poore *et al.* 2002, 224) and Coombe Down in Enford (Entwistle *et al.* 1993, 12), where both types of pottery have been found together in the same contexts. The alternative possibility has to be considered, however, that the Roman pottery in these cases was merely residual, rather than deliberately curated.

Looking at the distribution of organic-tempered pottery in Wiltshire (Fig. 29), it is evident that it is found in a variety of contexts, including both settlements and burials. Most importantly, however, it is associated not only with excavated Anglo-Saxon settlements, such as Collingbourne Ducis and Market Lavington, but also a number of long-lived Romano-British settlements, where Anglo-Saxon material culture is otherwise absent. Included within this group of sites are fourth-century villas at South Farm in Chiseldon [2:144], Cuff's Corner in Clyffe Pypard [2:154], Kingshill in Cricklade [2:182], Castle Meadow in Downton [2:193], Compton in Enford [2:216] and Littlecote in Ramsbury [2:382]; in addition to further Late Roman settlements and buildings at Cleveland Farm in Ashton Keynes [2:42], Medbourne Lane in Chiseldon [2:146], Chisenbury Warren [2:218] and Coombe Down in Enford, Cloverlands in Haydon Wick [2:241], Street Farm in Latton [2:274], Round Hill Down in Ogbourne St George [2:345-7], Old Town in Swindon and Wellhead in Westbury [2:481].

Significantly, many of the above sites have yielded Roman pottery and coins suggestive of occupation beyond 350 (see Chapter 3), whilst the villa complex at Littlecote has produced possible early post-Roman structural evidence in the form of a timber structure, one post-pit of which cut through the courtyard wall (Walters and Philips n.d., 13). Similar post-Roman timber structures have been noted at a number of villas throughout England (Rippon 2000, 53), including most recently Frocester in Gloucestershire (Price 2000, 111-18; see below), and the possibility that they represent native British dwellings should not be overlooked.

Wellhead in Westbury is also worthy of particular comment in that it occurs in the far west of Wiltshire, 5-8km from the nearest fifth- or sixth-century Anglo-Saxon metal finds in Edington and Great Cheverell parishes [2:214, 237]. Clearly, given the longevity of organic-tempered pottery use in the county, a Middle or even Late Saxon date for the ceramic assemblage – now totalling in excess of ninety sherds – cannot be ruled out. Nevertheless, given its correlation with Late Roman material from what was obviously a notable industrial Romano-British settlement (Rogers and Roddham 1991), it is surely more likely to be of fifth- or sixth-century date (Fowler 1966, 35). Furthermore, given the high probability that Wellhead saw pottery manufacture during the Roman period (see Chapter 2), the possibility arises that organic-tempered pottery was produced here too, within a post-Roman British context. Unfortunately, despite two small-scale twentieth-century excavations, Wellhead remains a poorly understood

site, yet it is clear that it holds great potential for the study of the immediate post-Roman period.

From the Wiltshire evidence, it may be concluded that organic-tempered pottery was used and probably also made by both British and Saxon communities in the fifth, sixth and seventh centuries. Furthermore, it is reasonable to assume that many more Late Roman settlements continued to be occupied after *c.* 400 by people not using an Anglo-Saxon material culture than many archaeologists have previously acknowledged. Further research into the distribution and dating of organic-tempered pottery in Wiltshire is key to the future study of British culture and identity in the post-Roman county.

### BROOCHES AND BOWLS

In the same way that certain categories of metal artefact have often been directly associated with Germanic immigrants, so there is a small but significant body of metalwork that some scholars regard as diagnostic of British identity (*e.g.* Dark 2000, 132-3). Prominent in this corpus are penannular brooches and hanging bowls, examples of which have been found in Wiltshire. However, are we right to ascribe these artefacts a British cultural affinity?

Class 1 penannular brooches are characterised by their large size, zoomorphic decoration and cubic terminals and are commonly dated to between the fifth and seventh centuries (Youngs 1995). Their distribution extends across the whole of Britain and it is widely believed that they were made in Britain by native craftsmen (Youngs 1995, 129). Type G penannular brooches, meanwhile, are defined by their solid cast terminals and occasional dot decoration. They too are believed to be British in manufacture and date to this same early post-Roman period (Dickinson 1982). Their distribution is mainly, but not exclusively, confined to western Britain and Ireland and there is a notable concentration in Somerset and Gloucestershire (Fig. 30).

To date, three Class 1 penannular brooches are known from Wiltshire. The most recent find was made in 1992 by a metal detectorist operating 'near Calne' [2:124] and two others were recovered from Oldbury Castle near Calne in 1858 [2:119] and Grave 102 of the Blacknall Field cemetery in Pewsey parish [2:352]. The 'near Calne' brooch has been ascribed a date range of *c.* 450-550 by Susan Youngs (1995, 130). Only one Type G penannular brooch is recorded in Wiltshire, in Grave 53 at the Harnham Hill

cemetery in Salisbury [2:395]. It is associated with a sixth-century 'Saxon' ansate brooch (Dickinson 1982, 49, 58-9).

Both penannular brooch types are rare and important objects and their stylistic decoration, coupled with their distribution in Britain and Ireland, have led a number of scholars to propose an ethnic British affinity. Edward Leeds regarded the penannular brooch as an indicator of 'the survival of a native substratum in Anglo-Saxon culture' (Leeds 1936, 3) and, more recently, Ken Dark has used its strong presence in western Britain to argue for the persistence of a post-Roman British élite here (Dark 2000, 132-3). In Wiltshire, Bruce Eagles has commented that 'such brooches were worn by Celtic men and women' and, partly as a result of the Oldbury Castle find, he concludes that this hillfort 'may have been in British hands' at the start of the seventh century (Eagles 2001, 221-2).

Some doubts, however, have been raised as to the British credentials of the post-Roman penannular brooch. Susan Youngs, for example, has concluded of the Calne example that, 'given the number of Celtic artefacts that have been recorded from Anglo-Saxon pagan cemeteries and settlements', it may just as easily have been a possession of someone who professed an Anglo-Saxon identity, rather than a British one (Youngs 1995, 130). This observation is also supported by Roger White, who states that 'the penannular brooch must be seen as a small but consistent element of Germanic dress accessories in the fifth to seventh centuries' (White 1990, 131). Certainly, the presence of penannular brooches in graves at Blacknall Field and Harnham Hill, both paired with other brooches in typical Anglo-Saxon fashion, does suggest that the ethnic association of these artefacts cannot be read at face value: they may have been made in Britain by native craftsmen, but there is every indication that they were worn by people from both communities.

A similar problem is faced when considering the ethnic affiliations of bronze hanging bowls and their more common mounts or escutcheons. These vessels often bear zoomorphic or curvilinear decoration and are found across Britain and Ireland (Youngs 1998). It is widely believed that they were made in Britain during the late sixth and seventh centuries (Brenan 1991; Youngs 1998, 35), although earlier dates have been suggested (Dark 2000, 133). So far, evidence for their manufacture is restricted to Craig Phadrig in Scotland and possibly also Seagry in Wiltshire, where an 'unfinished' mount was recovered from the River Avon in 1979 [2:406] (Youngs 1998, 34, 38-9). Bruce Eagles has suggested that Seagry was the site of a 'Celtic' workshop

(B. Eagles in Youngs 1998, 40): however, does one partially cast mount constitute a production centre? Even if it does, Susan Youngs has suggested that hanging bowls may have been manufactured widely across Britain (S. Youngs in Dark 2000, 132) and we should perhaps not overestimate the significance of the Seagry find.

Wiltshire is particularly rich in hanging bowl finds. Apart from the Seagry mount, other mounts are known from Chilton Foliat [2:138], Avebury [2:56], Bishops Cannings [2:69] and possibly also Kington St Michael [2:269] (Youngs 1998). Complete hanging bowls have also been recovered from Kingsbury Square in Wilton [2:504] and Ford Down in Laverstock [2:283] (Youngs 1998, 39). The Ford Down bowl is particularly interesting in that it was included within a furnished male Anglo-Saxon barrow burial of late seventh- or early eighth-century date (Geake 1999, 7). Many hanging bowls have been found in similar burials across England and Helen Geake has concluded that their use in funerary contexts may be associated with a deliberate attempt by seventh-century Anglo-Saxons to signal a cultural association with the power of Rome (Geake 1999, 17).

Clearly, hanging bowls could be used by those professing an Anglo-Saxon identity, but were they adopted from British material culture? Hanging bowls, like penannular brooches, have long been associated with post-Roman British society and Susan Youngs has recently highlighted the Romano-Christian iconography present in the decoration of a number of mounts, commenting that they were made for 'the upper levels of society in the largely Christian territories outside the areas of Anglo-Saxon cultural domination' (Youngs 1998, 35). Whilst it is possible that they may have had an 'original' use within British societies – perhaps for Christian baptism, as it is hard to ignore the riverine contexts of many hanging bowl finds – Helen Geake also raises the possibility that some were made especially for seventh- and eighth-century Anglo-Saxon burials, using Romano-British objects, such as the Irchester-type bowls, as prototypes (Geake 1999, 16-17). Whatever their true origin, it is difficult to claim outright that hanging bowl finds – like penannular brooches – are indicative of the presence of a post-Roman British élite in any given region, especially Wiltshire.

## BURIALS

Having established that items of metalwork cannot be used as a reliable guide to British ethnicity, it is necessary to address the question of whether a distinctive British burial

rite can be identified in fifth- to seventh-century Wiltshire. In the previous chapter, I raised the prospect that the Late Roman practice of unfurnished cemetery burial may have continued into the seventh or eighth centuries among British communities in the West Country. Certainly, this appears to be the case at Ulwell and Tolpuddle Ball in Dorset (Cox 1988; Hearne and Birbeck 1999), whilst other excavated cemeteries that have been claimed as 'British' include Cannington, Wembdon and Banwell in Somerset (Eagles 1994, 20).

In Wiltshire, no such cemeteries have so far come to light, although an intriguing unfurnished single 'bog' burial from beside the River Avon in Wilsford cum Lake parish [2:502] has recently been assigned a calibrated radiocarbon date of AD 450-610 at the 95% confidence level (McKinley 2003). Here, the body of a young female was laid out prone and crude wooden planking was placed on top. Due to the burial's dissimilarities with contemporary Anglo-Saxon inhumations, Jacqueline McKinley ascribed a British ethnicity to the individual, commenting that 'she was carefully buried ... adjacent to the river, and on its western bank in what, at this time, is likely to have been territory predominantly occupied by the indigenous population' (McKinley 2003, 15). Whilst it is possible that this was a ritual watery burial in the 'Celtic' tradition, designed to emphasise the importance of the River Avon as a boundary between Britons and Saxons (McKinley 2003, 14, 16), we should not accept this interpretation without considering the alternatives. As McKinley rightly acknowledges (2003, 15), a number of scholars have regarded these supposed 'ritual' burials as merely victims of accidents or murder. Clearly, many more of these post-Roman 'bog burials' must be excavated first before we can safely regard them as part of a distinctive rite, let alone one with British, rather than Anglo-Saxon, connotations.

Ultimately, it may be misleading to look for a single British burial rite in Wiltshire. As has already been suggested in this chapter, many natives readily adopted aspects of Germanic burial practice in the fifth, sixth and seventh centuries and it may be that the two traditions fused into one archaeologically recognisable rite that is commonly termed 'Anglo-Saxon'. However, in some areas – particularly those beyond the supposed eastern limit of Anglo-Saxon cultural influence in the fifth and sixth centuries – cemetery inhumation in the Late Roman undoubtedly did continue into the post-Roman period. Such a cemetery may yet be found in the west or northwest of Wiltshire, although the dating of such burials must rest on scientific techniques in the absence of artefacts.

## *Language and Place-Names*

### THE LEGACY OF BRITTONIC

Much confusion has reigned in both past and present scholarship concerning the significance of British (sometimes called ‘Celtic’) place-names and the status of the native language – Brittonic – in the post-Roman period. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, emphasis was placed on the scarcity of British place-names in the English landscape, leading some notable academics to argue for Germanic colonisation ‘on a scale which can have left little room for British survival’ (Stenton 1971, 18). Over the course of the twentieth century, however, it gradually came to be realised that a number of British place-names had indeed survived the supposed Anglo-Saxon invasions and, in the 1939 introduction to *The Place-Names of Wiltshire*, it was noted; ‘names of British origin ... occur in every part of the county ... The mere fact of their survival points clearly enough to a period of peaceful intercourse between the Britons who had survived the first impact of the Saxon invasion and the new lords of their county’ (Gover *et al.* 1939, xv).

In Wiltshire, however, as elsewhere in England, it was noted; ‘the Britons seem to have transmitted few, if any, village names to their conquerors. It was by handing on the names of hills, woods and rivers that they left their impress on the local nomenclature of the shire’ (Gover *et al.* 1939, xv). This apparent lack of British settlement-names was commented on by a number of other scholars (*e.g.* Whitelock 1952, 18; Stenton 1970, 260; Myres 1986, 30-31), who then used the point to argue for significant discontinuity between the settlements and landscapes of the native Britons and the invading Anglo-Saxons. As Margaret Gelling has recently observed, however, ‘this is a false argument’ (Gelling 1993, 53). To search for the British equivalents of Old English habitative place-names is not only to ignore the corpus of settlement names that have survived from Roman Britain, in addition to those containing Latin-derived elements (see Chapter 2 and below), but also to misunderstand the ‘quasi-habitative’ nature of most British place-names (Gelling and Cole 2000, xvii). Just as Old English speakers often defined their settlements in terms of adjacent topographical features (see above), so many surviving British topographical settlement-names are likely to have had a continuous history as settlement-names, not just as topographical indicators.

Several Brittonic or partly Brittonic settlement-names in Wiltshire are undoubtedly quasi-habitative in their sense, recording the presence of post-Roman 'British' habitations (Fig. 28). Knook, for example, simply means 'hill', whilst Wylye is believed to be a river name corresponding with the Welsh *Gwili*. Other examples include Tollard, 'hollow hill' and Cheverell, 'small piece of land ploughed in common' (Coates and Breeze 2000, 112-16). The names Cherhill, Fonthill and Deverill each contain the Brittonic element *ial*, 'fertile upland', coupled with a word denoting a stream or spring (Gover *et al.* 1939, 261). No fewer than five adjacent settlements bear the name 'Deverill' in southwest Wiltshire and it is possible that they record the presence of an early post-Roman territorial unit (see Chapter 5).

Two British settlement-names of particular interest are Chitterne and Minety, both of which have received recent academic attention (Coates and Breeze 2000, 85-7, 114). Their special interest lies in the fact that each appears to be 'a rare linguistic fossil: a name having the sense "inhabited place"' (Coates and Breeze 2000, 86). Chitterne may be interpreted as the Brittonic equivalent of the Welsh *coetref*, 'woodland homestead', whilst Minety seems to contain the element *tīy*, 'house'. As British habitative names, their significance should not be underestimated. In the case of Chitterne, 'it implies that the village community was absorbed into English society without a break. Had this not been so, its name would have been lost, as happened to thousands of other Celtic place-names in fifth- and sixth-century Britain' (Coates and Breeze 2000, 86). The same must surely be said for Minety.

When the place-names of Wiltshire are considered as a whole, it not only becomes apparent that the county contains a relatively high percentage of Brittonic survivals in comparison to many other counties, such as Berkshire, Oxfordshire and Warwickshire (Gover *et al.* 1939, xv; Gelling 1997, 90), but also Wiltshire has sufficient 'late' Brittonic place-name formations to suggest 'a significant Brittonic-speaking presence in an area centred on modern north-west Wiltshire in the seventh century' (Coates and Breeze 2000, 115). The persistence of Brittonic in western parts of the county well into the Early Saxon period is undoubtedly significant in the context of the debate surrounding the survival of British culture and identity. It not only indicates that Brittonic and English speakers were coexisting peacefully in the sixth century – a conclusion also reached by Richard Coates on examining the eleven occurrences of the British name *Idover* in northwest Wiltshire (Fig. 28; Coates and Breeze 2000, 93-4) – but also, it has been used to suggest that large parts of the county,

especially in the west and north, remained under British rule at this time, perhaps as late as the middle of the seventh century (Eagles 2001, 212-14). The subject of whether or not there were clearly defined British territories within post-Roman Wiltshire will be discussed in Chapter 5. Nevertheless, it is important to bear in mind Richard Coates' opinion that the place-name evidence is indicative of 'something more than the mere persistence of a Brittonic population in lands conquered by the English' (Coates and Breeze 2000, 116).

#### OLD ENGLISH PLACE-NAMES AS INDICATORS OF BRITISH IDENTITY

In addition to those place-names discussed above that have survived into modern usage directly from the Brittonic language, there is a small number of Old English settlement- and place-names in Wiltshire that may preserve a record of British cultural identity in the fifth, sixth and seventh centuries. The most well known are those containing the elements *walh* and *cumbre*, both of which, it may be argued, were used to describe a person of British ethnicity. Some Latin-derived elements, however, may also have entered the English language via an early interaction between Britons and Saxons. The ability of place-names containing the elements *wīc*, *ceaster* and *funta* to 'predict' Romano-British settlement sites has already been discussed in Chapter 2, but their possible significance as indicators of post-Roman 'British' occupation also merits closer attention.

Much debate has surrounded the interpretation of place-names containing the element *walh* – e.g. Walton and Walcot – but it is now generally agreed that the sense 'Briton' is the one most often preserved, rather than 'slave', which only gained currency in the Middle and Late Saxon periods (Faull 1975; Cameron 1980). The majority of place-name scholars currently believe that *walh* place-names attest the presence of Brittonic-speaking communities, possibly as late as the mid to late eighth century (Cameron 1980, 33-4; Gelling 1993, 54). Furthermore, as Kenneth Cameron (1980) and Malcolm Todd (1980) have shown, *walh* place-names more often than not show an association with Romano-British settlements, perhaps indicating post-Roman continuity of British occupation.

In Wiltshire, place-names containing the element *walh* are recorded in eight parishes – Avebury, Downton, Grafton, Malmesbury, Potterne, Savernake, Swindon and Tisbury (Fig. 31; see also Draper 2002, 42-3). Both redundant Walton place-names in

Downton and Tisbury appear to lie very close to Romano-British settlements (SMR) and it is noticeable that they are also practically contiguous with places named Wick – a correlation to which we shall return below. It is perhaps also significant that *waelles mere*, ‘pond of the Briton(s)’, in the Bedwyn charter of 958 has been identified with Thornhill Pond in Savernake parish, which lies only 150m from a Roman road and at a point where Romano-British pottery has been found (Crawford 1921, pull-out map).

The frequent association of *walh* place-names with Romano-British features raises the twin prospects that, not only were such sites still in use by Britons in the Early Saxon period, but also that they remained so for long enough to acquire a linguistic record of their ethnic affiliation. Such may perhaps also be said for Cumberwell in South Wraxall parish, which, together with the nearby 1841 tithe field-name ‘Cumberland’ (Langdon 1976), appears to preserve the element *cumbre*, ‘Briton’ (Gover *et al.* 1939, 117). It is perhaps no mere coincidence, then, that ‘Cumberland’ lies only 300m north of the Bradford-on-Avon Late Roman villa complex, which is currently the subject of ongoing excavation (see Chapters 2 & 3).

The perceived correlation, alluded to above, between many *walh* place-names and others containing the Latin-derived element *wīc* is potentially one of great significance. From Figure 31, it is apparent that, in addition to the practically contiguous Walton and Wick place-names in Downton and Tisbury, Wallen Lane in Potterne lies only 2.5km west of Potterne Wick, whilst Walcot in Swindon is only 2km from Liddington Wick (see Draper 2002, 42-3, for further details). We should perhaps also note that just across the county boundary in Bath, Walcot and Bathwick lie only 500m apart, both on Roman roads into the city (Aston 1986, fig. 4), whilst in neighbouring Gloucestershire, the parishes of Deerhurst and Whittington both contain examples of ‘Wickham’ (*wīc-hām*) and ‘Walton’ (*walh-tūn*) names (Smith 1964, 185).

Could it be that both *wīc* and *walh* place-names record the presence of post-Roman British communities, sometimes co-existing alongside Anglo-Saxon ones? The proximity of *walh* place-names to major Middle and Late Saxon estate centres – including, in Wiltshire, Downton, Tisbury, Potterne, Avebury and Malmesbury – has long been recognised and, whilst some have claimed this in support of a meaning of ‘slave’ for *walh* (Faith 1997, 60-1), others have argued otherwise, seeing instead ‘a very close, indeed intimate, connection ... between the inhabitants of the English and those of the *Wale*-places [*i.e.* Britons]’ (Cameron 1980, 30). In my opinion, it is precisely this co-existence of British and Anglo-Saxon populations in close proximity that would

have led to ethnic differences being preserved in place-names. Similarly, many *wīc* place-names are situated just outside villages with English place-names – Hannington and Hannington Wick, for example – and it is possible that they represent places where Brittonic-speakers lived adjacent to those speaking Old English. As Margaret Gelling has suggested in the case of *wīchām* place-names, ‘the reference [*i.e.* *wīc*] could be to a *vicus* which was still occupied when English-speaking people first arrived in the area’ (Gelling 1967, 96). Furthermore, such a name would have been given to a settlement ‘by neighbouring Germanic communities in recognition of its non-Germanic characteristics’ (Gelling 1997, 71).

Following the same basic argument, it is possible to propose that the Latin-derived terms *ceaster* and *funta* were similarly applied to Romano-British settlements that continued to be occupied by British communities into the post-Roman period (Fig. 19). In Wiltshire, there is little direct evidence in support of such an assumption, but we should note Urchfont’s location at the heart of a notable cluster of Brittonic place-names, which has received comment from Bruce Eagles (2001, 210; Figs 19 & 28). Furthermore, the fifth-century context of the ‘Stanchester’ coin hoard from Wilcot parish should not escape attention (see Chapter 3). Some particularly interesting evidence comes from the excavated Roman villa complex at Frocester in neighbouring Gloucestershire. Here, post-Roman organic-tempered pottery has been found not only within the main villa building itself, but also within a series of timber structures – not of recognisably Anglo-Saxon construction – within the villa courtyard, one of which (Building E) has yielded from its floor an ox skull with a calibrated radiocarbon date range of AD 534-632 (Price 2000, 111-18, 185). Is this a sign of what we might expect to find at other Romano-British villa sites bearing *ceaster* place-names?

In summary, the Old English elements *walh*, *cumbre*, *wīc*, *ceaster* and *funta* all seem to indicate what Margaret Gelling (1993, 56) has termed an ‘extended peaceful coexistence’ between Britons and Anglo-Saxons in Wiltshire in the fifth, sixth and seventh centuries. Such place-names also suggest that the two communities often lived side-by-side in close proximity and that Brittonic speakers frequently continued to inhabit sites occupied by their Romano-British ancestors.

## Conclusion: Britons and Saxons in Post-Roman Wiltshire

Academics in recent decades have gradually moved away from the ‘clean sweep’ theory, which proposed almost total discontinuity between the landscapes and population of Roman Britain and Anglo-Saxon England, towards one which allows a great deal of continuity in both native settlements and society. Some scholars, however, have arguably gone too far in claiming continuity of British life and institutions and there is a sense that, for some authors, the thesis of (Romano-) British survival in the face of (or despite) Germanic ‘invasion’ is regarded as desirable. Clearly, such a belief was attractive to those English historians writing in the turbulent years of the 1930s and 1940s (see Lucy 1998, 14-15), but such a nationalistic bias should no longer be acceptable in modern academic circles.

All too often, the phrase ‘continuity’ has been associated with the post-Roman Britons, whilst the immigrant Saxons have been identified as the sole agents of change. In fact, as this chapter has illustrated, such a dichotomy is both simplistic and governed by ethnic interpretations of material culture. Evidently, life among the post-Roman Britons of Wiltshire could not and did not continue as if the imperial legions had never left. Villas were no longer places of sophisticated living and it is hard to ignore the late fourth- and early fifth-century decline of Romano-British systems of production and trade. Furthermore, Britons did not simply ignore the new Germanic culture that was steadily being established by the new political élite during the Early Saxon period. Acculturation by elements of the native population, who may have adopted the Old English language and Anglo-Saxon styles of dress for political and/or social reasons, was clearly an important factor in post-Roman life. It is important to remember that many of those who regarded themselves as Saxons were, in fact, British by lineage and birth. Today, we are used to associating nationality with ethnicity (Jones 1997, 43). However, just as high-ranking Romano-Britons would undoubtedly have regarded themselves as much Roman citizens as Britons, so native Anglo-Saxons too may have identified with the ethnicities of both their ancestors and their new political superiors (James *et al.* 1984, 206). Ethnicity, therefore, was (and still is) a fluid concept and we should not be too rigid in our interpretations (Jones 1997; Lucy 2000, 174-81).

Turning to Wiltshire between *c.* 450 and 700, it is apparent that stark divisions, based on material culture and historical tradition, between British and Anglo-Saxon – and, as a result, continuity and discontinuity – can no longer be sustained. We must

firstly remember that historical texts, such as the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* or Gildas' *De Excidio Britanniae*, are subject to a high degree of bias and are at best 'faction', combining elements of truth with a significant amount of myth and rhetoric. Such accounts, therefore, hardly provide a sound academic framework on which to pin the evidence of archaeology: as Sam Lucy has recently commented, 'archaeology has a lot more to offer the study of the early Anglo-Saxon period than this' (Lucy 2002, 169). Furthermore, it is hard to ignore the frequent occurrence of handmade organic-tempered pottery on Romano-British settlement sites in the county. Just because this fabric is often given the label 'Anglo-Saxon', this does not preclude its use amongst native communities as part of their British cultural repertoire. Increasingly, in Wiltshire, it is becoming apparent that organic-tempered pottery was used by both ethnic groups and it may be just as much an indicator of British as well as Anglo-Saxon occupation.

Similarly, just because settlements may be described as Anglo-Saxon, often on account of their house-types and associations with furnished cemeteries, this does not necessarily mean that they were established by fifth-century Germanic settlers. Numerous writers in the past have been reluctant to describe the spatial juxtaposition of Anglo-Saxon and Romano-British settlements as anything other than 'just physical coincidence' (Esmonde Cleary 1989, 188). Clearly, we cannot blindly ascribe all such correlations to 'continuity', but, given the strong likelihood that many of the people living in Anglo-Saxon settlements were themselves descended from Romano-Britons, the probability of more or less continuous occupation occurring must surely be regarded as high. Continuity of both settlement and population, therefore, may be more common than the discontinuities in building and artefact style and site location might otherwise suggest. As Carenza Lewis *et al.* (2001, 77) rightly observe, 'settlement shift involving the replacement of buildings by adjacent structures, or the migration of the population over a short distance, represents a form of continuity'.

Anglo-Saxon burials too, like Anglo-Saxon settlements, cannot be regarded as clear evidence for population change. Many of the people buried in Anglo-Saxon graves were descendants of Romano-Britons and it is possible that the lack of identifiably British post-Roman burials in Wiltshire in part reflects the eagerness with which new Continental burial rites were adopted by elements of the native population. In the past, it was thought that the Anglo-Saxons imported their burial customs and culture in entirety from the German homelands. A closer look at the use of grave goods in the fifth- and sixth-century cemeteries of Wiltshire, however, reveals that early

Anglo-Saxon burial tradition is, in fact, a unique blend of Continental and insular influences. Romano-British, Anglian, Saxon and Frankish artefacts are all present in Wiltshire graves and even those items of metalwork that are so closely guarded as British by some academics frequently appear in Anglo-Saxon funerary contexts.

Linguistically, also, it is not possible to regard the speed with which Old English replaced Brittonic in Wiltshire as evidence for massive population change. Instead, we must accept that some Britons actively learnt Old English to curry favour with their political masters. This linguistic acculturation, which went hand-in-hand with material acculturation, means that, just as we cannot regard the Scandinavian place-names of the Danelaw as a reliable guide to the intensity and extent of Viking settlement (Hadley 2000, 329-40), so it is not possible to associate 'early' English settlement-names in Wiltshire with newly founded immigrant communities. Conversely, however, it must be accepted from the evidence of Brittonic place-names in Wiltshire that many natives – especially in the west – continued to speak Brittonic into the seventh or eighth century. Such evidence, in addition to the handful of *walh* and *cumbre* names, points to the survival of British cultural identity at least until *c.* 700, during which time Brittonic and Old English speakers evidently co-existed side-by-side.

In conclusion, the transition from Romano-British to Anglo-Saxon Wiltshire was not achieved by successive waves of Continental conquerors imposing their foreign ways on a poor and unsuspecting native population. Rather, we must conclude that post-Roman Wiltshire was a place of social dynamism, where bilingualism and acculturation led to a melding of cultures and the birth of a new society. In the words of Simon Esmonde-Cleary, 'it was out of the fusion of post-Roman (not Roman) Briton and Anglo-Saxon that was to arise Anglo-Saxon England' (Esmonde Cleary 1989, 205).

## CHAPTER 5

### Early Medieval Territories

#### Introduction

How old are the boundaries and territorial units that define our landscape? This is the fundamental question that has fascinated firstly economic historians and, more recently, landscape historians and archaeologists. Some scholars have stressed the deep antiquity of boundaries. W.G. Hoskins, for example, regarded them as 'one of the most permanent and ancient features in the English landscape' (Hoskins 1974, 37). Others, however, have highlighted the fluidity of both boundaries and territories, especially at the level of minor agricultural estates. Andrew Reynolds has recently expressed his 'great confidence that the basic frame of much of the modern landscape was the product of Anglo-Saxon local and regional planning' (Reynolds 1999, 65).

It is with this academic debate in mind that I will examine the evidence for the origins and development of the territorial structure of Wiltshire in the early medieval period. For ease of discussion in this chapter, the various levels of administration will be dealt with in three sections, roughly corresponding with the relative chronology and political importance of the land-units in question. Firstly, the 'primary territories' comprise kingdoms, sub-kingdoms and the shire, the early origins of which are currently much debated. Secondly, the 'secondary territories' incorporate great or 'multiple' estates and hundreds, which appear to share much in common. Last to be discussed are the 'small estates' – the manors and vills – which were the basic feudal and agrarian divisions of medieval England. Ecclesiastical territories – minster *parochiae* and parishes – will be considered in the next chapter, although it will be necessary to discuss some parochial arrangements when examining the evidence pertaining to great estates.

## Primary Territories

### *Early Kingdoms*

Much recent research has focused on the origins and development of kingdoms and kingship in early medieval Britain. To a large extent, this is in response to Steven Bassett's hypothesis concerning Anglo-Saxon kingdom formation, which he himself has likened to a football knockout competition (Bassett 1989). According to Bassett, immigrant fifth- and sixth-century Anglo-Saxons in southern and eastern England organised themselves into a number of small-scale competing 'micro-kingdoms', which he equated with the *regiones* of Bede and the seventh-century *Tribal Hidage*. Such 'micro-kingdoms', Bassett claimed, were most often identified by names containing the elements *-ingas*, *-ware* and *-sæte*, all meaning 'people or dwellers of', and he cited the group of parishes known as the Rodings in Essex as an early *-ingas* example that could be reconstructed through historical and topographical analysis (Bassett 1989, 22). Over time, weak 'embryonic kingdoms', such as the *Woccingas* in Surrey and the *Cilternsæte* in Buckinghamshire, were gradually eliminated from the 'knockout competition' as they were absorbed by more powerful neighbours. The remaining kingdoms consequently grew larger, so that, eventually, the 'Cup Final' was a straight contest between Mercia and Wessex in the late eighth and early ninth centuries (Bassett 1989, 26-7).

In recent years, Bassett's football analogy has been subject to criticism on a number of fronts. Barbara Yorke (2000, 82-6) and Alex Woolf (2000) have doubted the assumption that all *regiones* listed in the *Tribal Hidage* were independent kingdoms in their own right, rather than merely sub-divisions of larger territorial units. Yorke has suggested that some – especially those with the suffix *-sæte* – in fact 'appear to postdate the formation of kingdoms and to have been created for purposes of administration and taxation' (Yorke 2000, 84). Woolf, meanwhile, proposes that we should interpret the *regiones* of the *Tribal Hidage* not as a patchwork of some thirty autonomous kingdoms, but in terms of a limited number of 'large, multi-regional provinces, some of which were surrounded by small, contested territories' (Woolf 2000, 99). Woolf has also questioned Bassett's notion that large Anglo-Saxon kingdoms necessarily sprang from small beginnings. He suggests, instead, that kingdoms and kingship only developed when a tribal grouping – perhaps consisting of several *regiones* – became so large or

populous that face-to-face contact between its leaders at regular folk assemblies could no longer be maintained. It was as a result of this breakdown in group-identity fostered by shared experience, Woolf argues, that individuals took charge, kingship emerged and tribal units became kingdoms.

Another failing of Bassett's football model is that it does not properly take into account existing British polities. In Bassett's view, post-Roman British territories were early casualties of the 'knockout competition', soon being absorbed by Anglo-Saxon kingdoms (Bassett 1989, 25). As Barbara Yorke (2000, 85-6), has recently highlighted, however, the names of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms of Kent and Lindsey are clearly derived from a former Romano-British *civitas* and *civitas* capital – *Cantium* and *Lindum Colonia* – whilst Bernicia and Deira may originally have been Brittonic district names. She concludes; 'this is but part of the evidence which could suggest that it is unnecessary to envisage the Roman provinces of eastern Britain dissipating to such an extent that it was necessary to begin the process of state-formation all over again, beginning with extended family networks. Rather, as is being increasingly accepted for western Britain, kingdoms may have emerged in the east of Britain based on the Roman infrastructure of *civitas* capitals and other significant sub-units of the Roman provinces' (Yorke 2000, 86).

Turning to Wiltshire, the *Tribal Hidage* is unfortunately tacit concerning the names of any seventh-century *regiones* within the area now occupied by the county. In neighbouring Berkshire and Hampshire, however, putative *regiones* of the *Readingas* and the *Basingas* have been proposed on the basis of Reading and Basing's *-ingas* place-names (Yorke 1995, 39-43). It is perhaps worth considering Wiltshire's three sets of *-ingas/-inga-* place-names in the same light. Cannings, Collingbourne and Manningford are situated in central eastern Wiltshire, which is an area of the county known for its fifth-century Anglo-Saxon cultural presence. Collingbourne Ducis has itself yielded a fifth-century cemetery and settlement, whilst the location of Blacknall Field cemetery only a few hundred metres from the parish boundary with Manningford should also not escape attention. Bishops Cannings parish has also produced a number of important Early and Middle Saxon finds, including an early seventh-century hanging bowl mount from Bourton, whilst the high-status seventh-century female barrow burial on Roundway Down to the west – formerly part of Bishops Cannings parish – is particularly noteworthy (see Chapter 4).

Although we can only speculate on the areas covered by the possible *Canningas*, *Collingas* and *Manningas regiones* in Wiltshire, it is nevertheless apparent that the parishes of Collingbourne Ducis and Collingbourne Kingston together form a topographically coherent valley-unit that is directly comparable in its arrangement to the Rodings in Essex (Bassett 1989). Other chalkland valleys in Wiltshire – the Og, Till and Upper Kennet, for example – may have formed discrete fifth- and sixth-century *regiones* that were then grouped together in the seventh century to form larger sub-kingdoms within the expanding kingdom of Wessex (see below). Whether such *regiones* formed discrete early ‘micro-kingdoms’ or merely family or tribal units within a larger territory must, for now, remain uncertain.

Further west in Wiltshire, similar fifth- and sixth-century valley territories or *regiones* may have existed, but under British rather than Anglo-Saxon control. The possibility that some may lie concealed in ‘distinctive later administrative groupings’ has been raised by Barbara Yorke (1995, 42), whilst in Hampshire, Eric Klingelhöfer (1992) has drawn attention to the territorial unity of the Micheldever valley. Like Micheldever, the stream-name Deverill in southwest Wiltshire contains the Brittonic element *dubr*, ‘water’ (Gover *et al.* 1939, 6), and it is striking that five adjacent settlements in three current parishes bear the name ‘Deverill’. On the basis of present archaeological evidence, Anglo-Saxon material culture only reached this valley in the seventh century [2:259]. Nevertheless, given the toponymic and administrative unity of the Deverill estates, it is perhaps easy to imagine that this river valley had previously formed a discrete British territorial unit, analogous to the Anglo-Saxon *regiones* further east. The western Nadder and Ebbles valleys may also be considered as possible candidates for valley-based British territories (see Eagles 2001, 213).

Elsewhere in Wiltshire, convincing evidence for British kingdoms or related territories is difficult to find. Some, including Bruce Eagles (2001, 199, 212-14) and Ken Dark (1994, 123-7), have postulated the post-Roman continuity of Romano-British *civitates*, but, in truth, so little is known about their configuration in Wiltshire that the meagre evidence – a handful of Brittonic ‘border’ place-names and the linear earthworks of Wansdyke and Bokerley Dyke – can almost be made to fit any theory. One historical tradition, however, that may just preserve a grain of truth is recorded in the fourteenth-century records of Malmesbury Abbey. The story goes that a seventh-century Irish monk named Maildub founded the forerunner to the Abbey at a fortified place called *Bladon*, which had been constructed by a British king and was once a

thriving 'city' (Haslam 1984, 111; Freeman 1991, 127). Furthermore, the residence of kings, both pagan and Christian, was said to lie near by at a place called in English *Brohamberg* – traditionally associated with Brokenborough – but known by the British as *Kairdurberg* (Gover *et al.* 1939, 54). Clearly, we should not read too much into what is essentially a medieval foundation myth, but we should also not be too hasty in discounting the possibility that it preserves the real folk memory of a seventh-century British kingdom centred on or close to present-day Malmesbury.

### *Sub-Kingdoms within Wessex*

'The seventh century was an age of amalgamation and absorption: of "tribal" *ingas*-type groups into local federations, and of local federations into over-kingdoms' (Blair 1994, 49). In Wiltshire, these 'local federations', as John Blair calls them, were sub-kingdoms within the larger kingdom of Wessex. These were governed by reliable deputies of the king, who were often extended family members and bore the title of 'sub-king' (*subregulus*). The creation of sub-kingdoms was necessitated by the territorial expansion of Wessex throughout the seventh century. By *c.* 650, it is likely that most of modern Wiltshire was divided between various West Saxon sub-kingdoms. Only in the north of the region, where an expanding Wessex met a similarly expanding Mercia, was the integrity of West Saxon overlordship put to the test (Yorke 1995, 61-4; see below). Evidence for the number and extent of seventh-century sub-kingdoms within Wiltshire is at best patchy. It is possible, however, to mount a case for two sub-kingdoms (at least) based in the vicinities of Malmesbury and Great Bedwyn.

Turning to Malmesbury first, we have already considered the possibility that a post-Roman British kingdom was based here or close by. During the reign of the West Saxon king Centwine (*c.* 676-686), however, charters provide evidence for a sub-king named Baldred operating in this area: it was Baldred, for example, who granted one hundred hides of land beside the River Avon at *Stercanlei* (Startley in Great Somerford) and *Cnebbanburg* (Nables Farm in Seagry) to Malmesbury Abbey in the 680s (S1170, believed authentic; Edwards 1988, 94-7). A number of other charters make it clear that Baldred's area of control extended far into Somerset (Edwards 1988, 11-17). Nevertheless, it is likely that the Malmesbury region provided a particular focus for attention, for it was here that Wessex bordered Mercia.

Assuming that Baldred, like his kinsman Cuthred further east (Yorke 1995, 83; see below), had been entrusted with an important border command by the West Saxon kings, one might expect there to have been a royal residence situated close to Malmesbury. A likely candidate for such a dwelling may be found at Cowage Farm in Norton parish [2:333], where the cropmarks of a number of early medieval timber buildings have been identified and partially investigated (Fig. 32; Hampton 1981; Hinchliffe 1986). Although suggestions have been made that this site constitutes the monastic community reputedly established by Maildub in the middle of the seventh century (Hinchliffe 1986, 253; Blair 1996), an alternative and perhaps more likely interpretation is that it represents a royal residential complex, comparable to Cowdery's Down in Hampshire and Yeavinger in Northumberland (Yorke 1995, 76-7). Many similarities in the structure and arrangement of the buildings at these three sites have been noted (Hinchliffe 1986, 76) and, although a chronological sequence has not yet been established for Cowage Farm, a calibrated radiocarbon date range of AD 555-660 has been obtained from a fragment of oak charcoal in the fill of a wall trench in Structure C (Hinchliffe 1986, 249). As Bruce Eagles (2001, 224) has recently observed, this date 'poses many questions, for it covers a period from the time when the area was certainly still in British hands to well after the Anglo-Saxon conquest'. A likely seventh-century construction date would nonetheless tie in with the hypothesis that it formed an important royal residence – a *villa regalis* – within Baldred's sub-kingdom.

Further east in Wiltshire, the prospect that a similar seventh-century sub-kingdom existed in the area around Great Bedwyn is raised by a narrative preserved in the twelfth- and thirteenth-century annals of Abingdon Abbey in Oxfordshire. According to the annals, the Abbey's reputed founder, Cissa, was a sub-king (*subregulus*) in the reign of Centwine, who supposedly ruled Wiltshire and the greater part of Berkshire from his 'city' (*urbs*) at Bedwyn (Darlington 1955a, 2; Eagles 1997, 384-5). Furthermore, it is said that Cissa built a 'castle' (*castellum*) within his kingdom at a place called *Cyssebui* – i.e. Chisbury hillfort in Little Bedwyn (Gover *et al.* 1939, 334-5).

Once again, we should not be tempted to read too much into a monastery's later medieval foundation myth. Nevertheless, there is no good reason to doubt that it preserves the genuine memory of a seventh-century West Saxon sub-kingdom based in the Bedwyn area. As we have seen, the reign of Centwine is exactly the time at which the sub-king Baldred was active further west, whilst the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (*sub*



*anno* 648) records that King Cenwalh gave three thousand hides of land near Ashdown to his kinsman Cuthred. Here, then, is the suggestion that a sub-kingdom was established in Berkshire during the later seventh century and it must be deduced from the very large hidage that part of north Wiltshire was included in the grant too (Blair 1994, 50; Yorke 1995, 89). The possibility must be borne in mind, therefore, that the legend of Cissa – probably a fictional name to explain the etymology of Chisbury (Crowley 1999, 53) – does indeed preserve the memory of a real successor to Cuthred as sub-king of a large tract of western Berkshire and eastern Wiltshire that included both Ashdown and Bedwyn. As we shall see below, Great Bedwyn certainly sat at the head of a royal estate in the ninth century and it is perhaps only reasonable to suppose that its Middle and Late Saxon royal significance had earlier origins.

### *Wiltshire (and Wansdyke)*

The *Wilsæte* – ‘dwellers on the (river) Wylve’ (Ekwall 1960, 497), or perhaps ‘dwellers administered from Wilton’ (Yorke 1995, 87; 2000, 84) – are first mentioned *sub anno* 802 in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, when ealdorman Weohstan led them into battle against the Mercians at Kempsford on the present border between Wiltshire and Gloucestershire. Although Wiltshire itself (*Wiltunscir*) is not explicitly mentioned until the annal for 878, it is likely that both terms, *Wilsæte* and *Wiltunscir*, were in regular use throughout the ninth century and probably also earlier (Darlington 1955a, 1; Yorke 1995, 84). Neighbouring Hampshire (*Hamtunscir*) received its first mention *sub anno* 755 in the *Chronicle* and ‘there would appear to be nothing significant in the fact that the term *scir* is applied to Hampshire, Berkshire and Devon before *Wiltunscir* is used’ (Darlington 1955a, 1).

Although it has been suggested that the *Wilsæte* originated as a small tribal *regio* based in the Wylve valley (Darlington 1955a, 2), it is perhaps more likely that the name post-dates the emergence of *regiones*; the *-sæte* element either indicating a former British territory newly subsumed within the expanding Wessex during the seventh century (Klingelhöfer 1992, 93-4; Dark 1994, 152-5), or simply an administrative unit devised by the West Saxon kings in the early eighth century (Yorke 2000, 84). The question of whether the *sæte* and the *scir* were contemporary creations in Wessex is a matter of some controversy. In Barbara Yorke’s opinion (2000, 84), the two elements were one and the same, representing ‘a reorganisation of territories which had come

under West Saxon control'. She, therefore, sees Wiltshire – more or less in its present form, although bearing in mind that the north of the county was still disputed with Mercia at this time – as one of three shires created during the reign of King Ine (688-726) (Yorke 1995, 89). Eric Klingelhöfer, meanwhile, regards the 'shiring' of Wessex as an event of the late ninth century, associated with King Alfred's attempts to defend the kingdom from Viking attack. Of Hampshire, he remarks; 'the reference to *Hamtunscir* in the mid eighth century has no apparent relationship to the ninth-century Wessex shires' (Klingelhöfer 1992, 100). He goes on to suggest that 'the *Hamtunscir* of 755 was most likely restricted to the area surrounding Southampton at the mouth of the Itchen' and he postulates an earlier existence for both the *sæte* and the *scir* as tribal or folk territories (Klingelhöfer 1992, 101, 103).

Returning to Wiltshire, it is impossible to be certain that *Wiltunscir* did exist as a territorial unit prior to 878. Nevertheless, on the basis of the discussion above, I favour a standpoint somewhere in between those of Yorke and Klingelhöfer. Whilst I agree with Yorke that the *Wilsæte* and *Wiltunscir* were essentially synonyms, describing an administrative unit based on Wilton that was, in all probability, created during the reign of Ine, I also accept Klingelhöfer's view that the Wessex shires of Alfred's reign were substantially different both in size and composition to their eighth-century counterparts. Whilst the ninth-century shires may have been formulated with the military threat of the Danes in mind, it is similarly possible that King Ine's shires were created in response to the growing tension with Mercia to the north. It is Ine who is known to have abolished the sub-kingdoms (Yorke 1995, 84-92) and it is logical to conclude that their replacements were the shires, perhaps including those of the *Sumorsæte* (Somerset) and the *Dornsæte* (Dorset), in addition to *Wiltunscir*, *Hamtunscir* and a short-lived shire centred on Winchester and Wallingford (Yorke 1995, 89).

These newly created shires were administered by ealdormen, the first reference to which occurs in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, *sub anno* 750, and it is noticeable that the activity with which they are most frequently associated in the annals of the *Chronicle* is leading their shire forces in battle (Yorke 1995, 90-1). Given the likely connection between military service and the shire unit (Yorke 1995, 91), could there be a link between the eighth-century *Wilsæte* and the north-facing defensive linear earthwork known as the East Wansdyke?

The origins of the East Wansdyke are fiercely contested. The majority of scholars favour an early post-Roman date, most likely in the late fifth century, regarding

it as an attempt by British political leaders both to consolidate territory along existing *civitas* boundaries and to resist Saxon penetration from the Thames valley to the north (see Dark 2000, 146-9; Eagles 2001, 215; Fowler 2001 for modern statements of this view). Alternatively, it has been suggested that Wiltshire Saxons constructed the earthwork during Ceawlin's reign in the late sixth century in order to defend against Cynric's Thames valley Saxons (Myres 1964; Bonney 1973, 478). In recent years, however, Andrew Reynolds has proposed a Middle Saxon context for Wansdyke, regarding it as 'Wessex's equivalent to Offa's Dyke' (Reynolds 1999, 85). In Reynolds' opinion, 'the earthworks known as east and west Wansdyke ... perhaps represent unfinished public works of Middle Anglo-Saxon date; the result of a short-lived settlement between the West Saxons and the Mercians in the late eighth or early ninth century' (Reynolds 1999, 85).

Clearly, the debate over the origins of both East and West Wansdyke, which are linked by the Roman road from Bath to Mildenhall (Fig. 27), looks set to run for many more years. However, I believe it is possible to propose a third hypothesis concerning their purpose and significance, which has so far not been considered. Assuming that the eighth-century territory of the *Wilsæte* was focused on Wilton and the Wylve valley, it is possible, following the reasoning of Klingelhöfer, that contemporary *Wiltunscir* was substantially smaller than its ninth-century successor. If this was so, might it be the case that the east-west line formed by the Bath-to-Mildenhall road and the East Wansdyke constituted the early shire's northern border (Fig. 27)?

Given that land to the north was subject to dispute throughout the late seventh and eighth centuries and frequently changed hands between West Saxon and Mercian control (Darlington 1955a, 3-5; Yorke 1995, 61-4), it can be argued that both Wansdyke earthworks were a necessary response by West Saxons to the Mercian threat from the north: indeed, they may have served the dual purpose of providing protection for the Wessex shires to the south, whilst also providing a launch pad for potential military expeditions into Mercian territory. Ascribing a date to the construction of these earthworks is not easy, but a late eighth-century context is perhaps most likely. A number of scholars, including most recently Peter Fowler (2001), have noted that both the East and West Wansdyke are essentially unfinished, with construction work seemingly abandoned. One event that may have caused this to occur is the battle of Kempsford in 802. With West Saxon power now restored to territory south of the Thames and Mercian power in rapid decline, both Wansdyke earthworks would have

become redundant almost overnight. Furthermore, *Wiltunscir*, it may be argued, could now be extended northwards to the Thames, creating as a result the Wiltshire of Domesday and beyond.

## Secondary Territories

### *Great Estates*

The most widely encountered narrative of territorial development in early medieval England focuses on the existence of large multi-vill estates in the Middle Saxon period and their subsequent fragmentation into smaller manorial units during the Late Saxon centuries (Jones 1979; Sawyer 1979; Faith 1997). These ‘multiple’ or ‘federative’ estates, as they are sometimes known (although I shall use the more neutral term ‘great estate’), are best defined as extensive administrative and agrarian land-units, often in royal ownership, comprising a number of settlements dependent on a single manorial centre – the *caput* or, on royal estates, the *villa regalis*. The core (*inland*) of the estate was held directly by the lord and was farmed by the lord’s tenants, whilst those dwelling on the peripheral *warland* possessed greater freedom, whilst still owing goods and services to the lord. Glanville Jones in particular has expressed his belief that these large federations of settlements could frequently be ascribed Romano-British or prehistoric origins (Jones 1971; 1979). Another widely held opinion amongst advocates of the ‘multiple’ estate model is that the constituent settlements only achieved a measure of independence and self-identity following the break-up of the estates in the Late Saxon period.

In recent years, a growing number of scholars have challenged this view of Anglo-Saxon territorial organisation, registering their unease not only with the ‘multiple’ estate model itself, but also with the simplistic assumption that small land-units necessarily sprang from earlier larger ones. Nicky Gregson, for example, has launched a scathing attack on the work of Glanville Jones, branding the ‘multiple’ estate model ‘self-confirming’ and ‘a classic example of a circular argument’ (Gregson 1985, 345; but see also Jones 1985). It is certainly a significant problem that much of the evidence used by Jones and others in order to reconstruct examples of ‘multiple’ estates is later medieval, rather than Anglo-Saxon, in date (Gregson 1985, 344-5; Faith 1997, 11-12). Furthermore, as Dawn Hadley has observed, it is doubtful that the ‘multiple’

estate model can be used to explain the territorial history of every part of England or Britain: 'a major flaw in many attempts to reconstruct early medieval estate structure lies in the underlying assumption that there was a point at which the landscape was uniformly divided into neatly segmented territories' (Hadley 1996, 11). Indeed, it is likely that the model conceals an infinite variety of variations that are consequently not fully appreciated (Hadley 1996; 2000, 85-6). One such variation worthy of special consideration is the differing antiquity of small 'manorial' holdings within large estates (see below).

An additional question mark hangs over the popular assumption that many great or 'multiple' estates were the direct successors of earlier prehistoric or Roman territories, arguably focused on Iron Age hillforts, Roman towns or villas (see Haslam 1984). John Blair in particular has argued strongly against this hypothesis, concluding that they are 'essentially a product of early Christian England' (Blair 1991, 27). This is not to say that such territories were not founded on a pre-existing organisational structure. Nevertheless, in many cases, a link may be identified between the arrangement of pre-Conquest great estates and the organisation of the fledgling Anglo-Saxon Church (see Chapter 6). The antiquity of both great estates and hundreds will be considered together later on in this chapter.

Turning to the great estates of Middle Saxon Wiltshire, it is clear that their reconstruction is not an easy task. Most of the information available for study comes from a period of fragmentation in the Late Saxon and post-Conquest periods, during which a number of great estates lost their identity, breaking up into much smaller privately held territories. The result of this process was significant territorial reorganisation and it is consequently very difficult to recover fully the administrative pattern that existed prior to these changes. Nevertheless, using evidence preserved in pre-Conquest charters, the Domesday Survey, monastic cartularies, ecclesiastical records and place-names, it is possible to identify a number of likely estate centres, together with all or some of their dependent territories. In many cases, a close relationship between large Domesday manors (especially those in royal ownership), likely Anglo-Saxon minster *parochiae* and Domesday hundreds may be discerned, providing the clearest hints of the early relationship between estate *caput*, minster church and hundred meeting-place (see below).

There is insufficient space here to set out all the evidence available for each potential great estate in Wiltshire. It is possible, however, to present a provisional map

of Middle Saxon estate centres in the county (Fig. 33). Most of these places are listed as important estates in the Domesday Survey and the majority possessed important Anglo-Saxon churches and became heads of hundreds. With the possible exception of the seventh- and eighth-century monastic estates attached to Malmesbury and Tisbury (see Chapter 6), there is good reason to believe that all started out in the Middle Saxon period in royal hands. Calne, Great Bedwyn, Amesbury, Warminster, Chippenham, Tilshead, Aldbourne, Melksham, Netheravon, Westbury, Upavon, Collingbourne Ducis, Highworth, Pewsey, Avebury, Heytesbury, Sherston and Marlborough were all still in royal ownership in 1086 (Thorn and Thorn 1979): indeed, the first six places named still paid the 'farm of one night' (*firma unius noctis*) – an ancient food render on large royal estates whose origin lay in the provisioning of the king's household in an age of peripatetic kingship (Darlington 1955b, 61).

Some estates, however, had been granted away by previous Late Saxon kings to various bishops and religious institutions. Ramsbury, Potterne and part of Cannings, for example, became property of the Bishops of Ramsbury in the tenth and eleventh centuries and, thereafter, the Bishops of Salisbury, whilst Downton was probably granted to the see of Winchester in 955 by King Eadred (S1515; Edwards 1988, 131-2; *pace* Crowley 1980, 27-8). Damerham (now in Hampshire), meanwhile, was 'booked' to Glastonbury Abbey by King Edmund in a charter of 944x946 (S513) and it has also been suggested that Westbury too passed to Glastonbury for a time in the late tenth century (Abrams 1996, 104-7, 242-4). Tisbury and Bradford-on-Avon became property of Shaftesbury Abbey in 984 and 1001 respectively (S850, S899; Kelly 1996, 107-22), whilst Chalke and parts of Wilton were granted to Wilton Abbey during the course of the tenth century (Hooper 1989, 16-17).

In order to understand the internal structure and composition of great estates in Wiltshire, it is useful to examine three examples – Great Bedwyn, Bradford-on-Avon and Calne – in closer detail.

#### GREAT BEDWYN

The Middle and Late Saxon royal estate at Great Bedwyn has already received attention in this chapter, but it should be noted that the collective evidence for its early existence and probable composition is particularly strong. Not only do we have the Anglo-Saxon charter evidence pertaining to Great and Little Bedwyn and Burbage (Crawford 1921),

in addition to the mention of the Bedwyn estate in King Alfred's will (Dumville 1992, 107-12) and the Domesday entry recording that the manor of Bedwyn was in royal hands (Thorn and Thorn 1979, 1:2), but also important clues may be gained from Great Bedwyn's ecclesiastical history and its position within Kinwardstone hundred.

The Domesday hundred of Kinwardstone was assessed at 196¼ hides and was, therefore, a 'double hundred' (see below), whose origins are likely to be in three Middle Saxon royal estates focused on Bedwyn, Collingbourne and Pewsey (Thorn 1989, 40; Feltham 1998, 241). That Great Bedwyn occupied an elevated status within the hundred is suggested by the location of the meeting-place – Kinwardstone, *i.e.* 'Cynweard's stone' (Gover *et al.* 1939, 331) – on the ancient parish boundary between Great Bedwyn and Burbage (Fig. 34), in addition to the fact that Great Bedwyn is recorded at the head of the hundred in 1281 (Cam 1944, 68; Eagles 1997, 386). In relation to Great Bedwyn's ecclesiastical history, it is reasonable to presume that a minster church was located here (Pitt 1999, 130-8). Not only is a church recorded in the Domesday Survey, endowed with 1½ hides of land and land for one plough (Thorn and Thorn 1979, 1:23j), but also a series of notes found within a ninth-century gospel-book, which is now preserved in Berne in Switzerland, appears to relate to tenth-century payments of tithes in support of *Godes þeowa æt Bedewindam*, 'God's servants at Bedwyn', thereby implying the presence of a small monastic community here (Dumville 1992, 79-82). In the fifteenth century, dependent chapelries of Great Bedwyn are known to have existed at Little Bedwyn, Chisbury, Marten, Grafton, Crofton and Wilton, further strengthening the case for an Anglo-Saxon minster *parochia* focused on Great Bedwyn and serving the Bedwyn royal estate (Fig. 34; Pitt 1999, 132).

Turning to place-name evidence, the 'functional' nature of the names Grafton – 'grove farm', Wilton – 'wool farm', and Wexcombe – 'wax valley', should be highlighted, possibly referring to the production of wood, wool and wax for the *villa regalis* at Great Bedwyn: such 'functional' place-names are a common feature of great estates (see Faith 1997, 12-13, for the example of Malpas in Cheshire). One other significant place-name, however, is Stock, which is now represented by Stokke Manor and may be the 'Stoke by Shalbourne' of a charter dated 904 (S373, S1286; Dumville 1992, 108; Crowley 1999, 15). Gover *et al.* (1939, 333) give the origin of this name as the Old English element *stocc*, 'tree stump', but it is becoming increasingly clear that many such names in Wiltshire, possibly including Stock in Calne and Stock in

Aldbourne (Gover *et al.* 1939, 258, 293), should instead be seen as examples of Old English *stoc*, ‘dependent settlement’. *Stoc* place-names are associated with probable Middle Saxon estates in Wiltshire at Bradford-on-Avon (Limpley Stoke), Melksham (Erlestoke), Westbury (‘Stoke’ *alias* Bratton), Tilshead (Winterbourne Stoke), and Broad Chalke (Stoke Farthing), and it is perhaps reasonable to suggest that such ‘stokes’ should be regarded as identical in function to ‘king(s)tons’ and ‘berewicks’ – dependent settlements whose original purpose was to supply the estate centre with food and other provisions (Faith 1997, 42; see below and Chapter 8).

#### BRADFORD-ON-AVON

Like Great Bedwyn, Bradford sat at the head of a large Anglo-Saxon estate, whose origins lay with the kings of Wessex (Haslam 1984, 90-4). In 1001, however, King Ethelred II granted the monastery (*cenobium*) of Bradford, together with its appurtenant lands, to Shaftesbury Abbey, which then held the estate until the Dissolution (S899; Pugh and Crittall 1953, 5-76; Kelly 1996, 114-22). This endowment apparently encompassed much of the later hundred of Bradford, including South Wraxall and Atworth in the north, Limpley Stoke and Westwood in the west, Wingfield and Trowle in the south and Holt in the east (Fig. 35; Pafford 1951; Harvey 1984).

Whilst some have concluded that the charter bounds were essentially coterminous with the Domesday hundred (*e.g.* Thorn 1989, 36), there are some important suggestions that this was not the case. Jonathan Pitt has recently noted the unusually high number of personal names attached to landmarks in the boundary clause – Æcci, Ælfwine, Brisnoth, Ælfweard, Leofwine, Ælfgar, Ælfwig, Ælfnoth and Æthelwine ‘the hoarder’ – in addition to the granting of an estate at Westwood in 987 to the royal huntsman Leofwine (S867; Pitt 1999, 149). This evidence would appear to indicate that small estates within the later hundred – particularly at Monkton Farleigh and Broughton Gifford (Kelly 1996, 121-2; Harvey 1998, 76) – were being granted out by the king to thegns and other royal servants prior to 1001. It is perhaps still likely, however, that the royal estate and the hundred were once coterminous before this episode of fragmentation, maybe prior to the mid tenth century (Pitt 1999, 149).

That the Anglo-Saxon royal estate, minster *parochia* and Domesday hundred were one and the same at Bradford is suggested by an examination of the region’s ecclesiastical history. Bradford-on-Avon was traditionally the site of an early royal

minster, founded by St Aldhelm before 705 (Pugh and Crittall 1953, 12). The first certain reference to a monastic community here, however, is in 1001, when the *cenobium* was granted to Shaftesbury Abbey as a refuge from the Danes for both the nuns themselves and also the bones of King Edward the Martyr (Kelly 1996, 118-20). The early status of Bradford's minster, which may have stood on the site of the present parish church rather than at the eleventh-century chapel of St Lawrence (Haslam 1984, 94), is best illustrated by its dependent chapelries and tithings, the majority of which, including Atworth (1884) and Holt, South Wraxall, Winsley and Limpley Stoke (1894), only became independent parishes in the nineteenth century (Pugh and Crittall 1953, 5). That this large parish of Bradford was an old arrangement is suggested by documents of 1535, 1349 and the twelfth century, whilst we may note that when Chalfield was transferred to the hundred from Melksham in the twelfth or thirteenth century, its two chapels appear never to have become linked to Bradford in any way (see Pitt 1999, 145-57, for a more detailed discussion of the documentary evidence). Whether Monkton Farleigh and Broughton Gifford churches were ever dependent on Bradford is unclear, but it is tempting indeed – and perhaps not unrealistic – to equate the Domesday hundred bounds with those of the Anglo-Saxon minster *parochia* (Pitt 1999, 157).

Looking at the toponymy of the Bradford estate, it is possible to observe categories of place-names found elsewhere on great estates (Fig. 35). Limpley Stoke, which was known before the sixteenth century as *Hanging Stoke* or simply *Stoke* (Gover *et al.* 1939, 121), is another of the *stoc* place-names discussed above, perhaps implying that it was a farm directly supplying the *villa regalis* at Bradford. Another similarly dependent farm may have been located at or close to Barton Farm in Bradford, whose name – *bere-tūn*, 'barley farm' – acquired a specialised meaning of a home farm or grange within the *inland* of a great estate (Faith 1997, 36-8). Barton Farm was certainly Bradford's demesne farm in the fourteenth century (Harvey and Harvey 1993, 120-3), whilst there are hints in the twelfth-century Shaftesbury Abbey customals that this was also the case at a much earlier date (Harvey 1998, 84). The place-names Bearfield in Bradford and Barley (now lost) in South Wraxall may also indicate where grain was grown for the estate centre (Gover *et al.* 1939, 118; Harvey 1998, 83). Woodland resources were clearly available at Westwood, which was so named in the tenth century (Gover *et al.* 1939, 122), and Holt – Old English *holt*, 'wood' – which probably appears as *wrindesholt* in 1001 (Kelly 1996, 121).

## CALNE

Calne, like Great Bedwyn, was held by the king and paid the 'farm of one night' in 1086 (Thorn and Thorn 1979, 1:1). A royal estate at Calne, however, is first documented in the reign of King Eadred (946-955), who devised it to the Old Minster at Winchester in his will. There is little evidence that the minster received the estate, however, and it was almost certainly in royal possession when the great council (*witan*) met here in 978 and 997 (Crowley 2002, 64). Calne later sat at the head of its own Domesday hundred and, from the reference in the Domesday Survey to a church holding six hides of land (Thorn and Thorn 1979, 1:1), it is apparent that a minster was sited at the centre of the estate too (Darlington 1955a, 32; Haslam 1984, 102-6). Calne church is known to have had rights over Berwick Bassett, Compton Bassett and Studley churches in the thirteenth century (Fig. 36; Pitt 1999, 78).

Although the bounds of the tenth-century Calne estate are nowhere recited, there is good reason to believe that it was mostly coterminous with both the early minster *parochia* and the Domesday hundred (Fig. 36; Pitt 1999, 78; Crowley 2002, 29). In 1086, the hundred of Calne comprised Berwick Bassett, Beversbrook (later in Hilmarton parish), Blackland, Bromham, Calstone Wellington, Cherhill, Compton Bassett, Heddington and Yatesbury, in addition to the royal borough (Crowley 2002, 3). Only Bromham, which was in the possession of Earl Harold before the Conquest, and possibly also Heddington, which lies to the south of the Roman road from Bath to Mildenhall, are likely to have been absent from the tenth-century royal estate. Even Berwick Bassett, which topographically forms part of the Upper Kennet valley to the east, thereby suggesting early associations outside the hundred, was almost certainly dependent on Calne by Domesday and had probably been incorporated within the royal estate even before c. 900 (Crowley 2002, 3, 27). Fragmentation of the estate was well advanced by 1086, as Compton Bassett, Beversbrook, Calstone Wellington, Yatesbury and Heddington all appear separately in the Domesday Survey, having been granted away previously (Crowley 2002, 29).

Calne hundred contains a wealth of place-name evidence in support of the existence of an extensive Anglo-Saxon royal estate. Calstone Wellington, which appears as *Calestone* in the Domesday Survey, has recently been interpreted as 'Calne east *tūn*', i.e. the east farm dependent on Calne (Crowley 2002, 123). Furthermore, the name 'berewick' – *bere-wīc*, 'barley farm' – is known to have been a general term, like

'barton', which described an outlying portion of *inland* on a great estate (Faith 1997, 42-7). It is likely, therefore, that Berwick Bassett originated as just such a remote dependency, providing supplies for the *villa regalis* at Calne. Closer to the estate centre, Calne also possessed a 'stoke' (see above). This was located in the vicinity of Stock Street Farm to the south of Calne and was described as *Stok juxta Calne* in 1289 (Gover *et al.* 1939, 258). Finally, a possible reference to some of the Anglo-Saxon *inland* tenants and workers of the Calne estate – the *geburs* (see Chapter 8) – is provided by the place-name Bore Hill in Compton Bassett, which surely corresponds with the 'bureland', *i.e.* land worked by the *geburs*, referred to in 1274 (Crowley 2002, 69).

### *Hundreds*

Hundreds were the principal administrative and judicial divisions of the medieval shires. However, their historical origins can only be traced back as far as the reign of King Edgar (957-975), when a legal tract setting out the requirements of the hundred courts, known as the *Hundred Ordinance*, was issued. This document appears to describe an administrative system that was already fully fledged (see Reynolds 1999, 75-6, for a full translation) and the earlier origins of the hundred have long remained obscure: W.E. Kapelle (1996, 166) has recently described the problem as 'one of the great unanswered questions of Anglo-Saxon history'. In a number of southern English counties, however, a strong coincidence between the boundaries of hundreds, great estates and also minster *parochiae* is apparent (see Klingelhöfer 1992; Hall 2000, 41-7). This tends to suggest that all three institutions shared the same origins in the Middle Saxon period, or perhaps even earlier (see below).

Leaving the question of the antiquity of hundreds temporarily on one side, it is necessary to investigate their form and function in Late Saxon Wiltshire. As is the case with other counties covered by the southwestern circuit of the Domesday Survey, hundredal information is not included within the Domesday entries referring to Wiltshire. Instead, the eleventh-century hundreds of the shire may be reconstructed using details provided in the roughly contemporary Geld Rolls, which are bound up with the text of the Exeter Domesday (Thorn 1989). The Geld Rolls provide the earliest record of the Wiltshire hundreds and, from Figure 37, it is apparent that many accounted for rather more or less than the one hundred hides often found in the regular

hundreds of midland counties, such as Herefordshire and Worcestershire (Thorn 1989, 39). Kinwardstone and Selkley hundreds, at 196¼ and 196⅞ hides respectively, are the largest and appear to constitute 'double hundreds', whilst Scipa at 80 hides and Dunley at 28 hides are clearly a long way short of the traditional hundred and 'half hundred' units. Frustfield hundred, at only 11⅞ hides, was the smallest Domesday hundred in the county (Thorn 1989, 42).

Whilst some scholars have argued that counties, such as Wiltshire, with irregular Domesday hundreds were once divided into uniform hundred-hide units (*e.g.* Chadwick 1905, 241-4), those who have attempted reconstructions of such 'regular' hundreds have at best met with inconclusive evidence (see Thorn 1989, 39-40, for Wiltshire). Clearly, if such an arrangement had existed, considerable changes would need to have taken place in the tenth and eleventh centuries. Whilst there is some evidence to suggest the reorganisation of hundreds at this time (Pitt 1999, 64, 76; see below), it is in my view unrealistic to propose that Wiltshire's complex pattern of Domesday hundreds did not gradually emerge over a lengthy period of time. Instead, it may be suggested that Wiltshire's irregular hundredal geography is in part a reflection of the 'natural evolution' of hundreds – in Wessex at least – from earlier administrative arrangements (Yorke 1995, 124; see Winchester 1990, 70-3, for the situation further north).

In Wiltshire, then, hundreds were never fixed hundred-hide units. Instead, they correspond most obviously with the core territories of the royal great estates discussed above, with a significant number taking royal *villae* as their focal points: these include Alderbury, Amesbury, Bradford, Calne, Chippenham, Damerham, Downton, Heytesbury, Highworth, Melksham, Mere, Ramsbury, Warminster and Westbury (Figs 33 & 37). In the cases of Bradford-on-Avon and Calne, as presented above, it is clear that the Domesday hundreds more or less coincided with their great estates and it is reasonable to conjecture that Dolesfield and Stowford hundreds were similarly representative of royal estates centred on Tilshead and Broad Chalke respectively. Some hundreds, however, evidently comprised sections of former great estates that had gained hundredal independence by Domesday. That Scipa hundred, for example, had once formed part of a Highworth royal estate is strongly suggested by the medieval ecclesiastical dependence of Broad and Little Blundson (in Scipa) on Highworth (Pitt 1999, 82). Other hundreds were amalgamations of two or more great estates. I have already raised the possibility that Kinwardstone hundred was formed from the three royal estates of Bedwyn, Collingbourne and Pewsey (see above), whilst it must be

considered likely that Selkley hundred comprised the formerly independent royal estates of Avebury and Preshute/Marlborough (Pollard and Reynolds 2002, 223; see below).

Moving on to the function of hundreds in Wiltshire, it is clear from the *Hundred Ordinance* that they fulfilled a number of legal, judicial, financial and social obligations, of which the most important was arresting wrongdoers and bringing them to justice (Reynolds 1999, 75-6). In order to achieve this, it was necessary to have a court of local elders in each hundred, who were presided over by a royal appointee, known as a hundred-reeve. The court was required by the *Ordinance* to meet at least every four weeks at an allotted meeting-place and it is often the name of this 'moot' site that lent itself to the wider hundred. Some hundred moots were within royal *villae* – at Amesbury, Calne and Chippenham, for example. Others, however, were in open-air sites away from habitation, which were sometimes marked by large stones (*e.g.* Kinwardstone, 'Cynweard's stone'), earthen mounds (*e.g.* Rowborough, 'rough mound'), river crossings (*e.g.* Stowford, 'stone ford') or simple wooden posts (*e.g.* Staple).

The most common form of open-air moot site was an earthen mound. Some hundred meeting-mounds may have been re-used prehistoric barrows, but others were certainly purpose-built (see Reynolds 1999, 78). The 'Swanborough' – Old English *swana-beorg*, 'mound of the peasants' – of Swanborough hundred still survives in Manningford parish (Semple and Langlands 2001) and it is surely significant that the name also occurs on current maps close to Hampton in Highworth parish, perhaps representing the ancient meeting-place of Highworth hundred. Other meeting-mounds are betrayed by the place-names containing the Old English compound *spelles-beorg*, 'speech mound'. At Dunworth in Tisbury is Spelsbury Farm, which surely represents the ancient meeting-place of Dunworth hundred (Crowley 1987, 201), whilst in Etchilhampton parish, a group of eight fields known as 'Spilsbury' presumably records the meeting-place of Cannings hundred (Gover *et al.* 1939, 198, 249). Close by in Etchilhampton parish is Tinkfield Farm – Old English *þing-feld*, 'assembly field' – and it is worthy of note that the place-name Thingley in Corsham may also preserve the late Old English word *þing* (Gover *et al.* 1939, 97, 313).

Some scholars have proposed that such 'traditional' meeting-places were often of considerable antiquity, originating in the pre-Christian Early Saxon period (Meaney 1997; Reynolds 1999, 76-8). In Wiltshire, however, there is no particular evidence either in support of or against this argument. The earliest specific evidence relating to

the existence of a hundred meeting-place is currently the charter reference to Swanborough Tump – *swanabeorh* – in 987 (S865; Semple and Langlands 2001, 240). What is clear, however, is that from the eighth and ninth centuries, hundred boundaries were being used for the execution and burial of criminals and social outcasts. In Wiltshire, Andrew Reynolds (1998; 2002) has related several charter marks to execution sites on hundred boundaries and it is particularly significant that *gabulos*, ‘gallows’, are recorded on the Kinwardstone boundary at Little Bedwyn as early as 778 (S264; A. Reynolds in Pitts *et al.* 2002, 141-2). Furthermore, excavated execution burials at Roche Court Down in Winterslow [2:523] are located only 500m from a hundred and county boundary (Reynolds 1998, 153), whilst ‘abnormal’ interments on hundred boundaries at Newtown Plantation in Heytesbury [2:243] and Ell Barrow in Wilsford [2:496] may similarly represent later Saxon execution burials (Draper 2004, 56). ‘The choice of hundred boundaries as a fitting repository for executed offenders’, Reynolds concludes, ‘probably reflects the desire to banish social outcasts to the geographical limits of local territories’ (Reynolds 1999, 109). Evidence is mounting, therefore, for the judicial role of hundreds long before the historical ‘threshold’ provided by the tenth-century *Hundred Ordinance*.

### *The Antiquity of Secondary Territories*

How old are the hundreds and great estates in Wiltshire and where do their ultimate territorial origins lie? Three possibilities immediately present themselves: either they were related to the patterns of Iron Age and Romano-British territories, most likely based on hillforts or small towns; or they emerged from the tribal *regiones* that characterised the Early Saxon landscape; or they were entirely a product of Middle Saxon administrative ingenuity.

Turning first to the thesis of Iron Age and Romano-British continuity, it is striking just how popular this option appears to be. In Gloucestershire, Sarah Wool has commented that ‘the jurisdiction of hundreds may have descended in unbroken continuity from the jurisdiction of Iron Age petty chieftains over the territory administered from and protected by hillforts’ (Wool 1982, 186). Furthermore, in East Anglia, Tom Williamson has recently suggested that ‘it is sometimes possible to discern a thread of continuity from late Roman administrative district or *pagus*, to early tribal territory, to middle Saxon “multiple estate”’ (Williamson 2003, 38). In Wiltshire,

meanwhile, Jeremy Haslam has concluded that most Anglo-Saxon great estates are 'directly related ... to estates and/or central settlement locations which can be taken back through the early Saxon to the Roman period, and in some cases back to the pre-Roman Iron Age' (Haslam 1984, 89).

Whilst the possibility that some great estates and hundreds in Wiltshire perpetuated Roman or even prehistoric territorial arrangements can neither be ignored or dismissed out of hand, it is, in my opinion, not likely for two main reasons. Firstly, we must heed Stephen Rippon's recent warning that 'the survival of tenurial systems is perhaps one of the landscape features least likely to survive a period of socio-economic disruption as seen at the end of the Roman period' (Rippon 2000, 51). Indeed, it is little short of a leap of faith to equate the proximity of a Middle Saxon *villa regalis* and/or a hundred *caput* to a Romano-British villa or Iron Age hillfort with administrative continuity of an entire territory, rather than the mere persistence of occupation at a nodal point in the landscape. We must also remember that we are ignorant as to the extent or composition of even one hillfort *territorium* or Romano-British *pagus* in Britain as a whole, let alone in Wiltshire.

Secondly, and most importantly, however, there is very little overall correlation between either the Iron Age hillforts or the Roman small towns of Wiltshire and the Anglo-Saxon secondary territories within the county. Many hillforts occupy marginal positions within both hundreds and great estates, whilst some, including Barbury Castle near Swindon, are actually bisected by their boundaries. In addition, very few Anglo-Saxon administrative centres – potentially only Old Sarum and Westbury – can be convincingly related to Roman small towns (*pace* Haslam 1984, 138). Significantly, the site of *Durocornovium* lay on or close to the meeting-point of three Domesday hundreds – Thornhill, Blagrove and Scipa – and several kilometres from the nearest *villa regalis*, whilst *Verlucio* is similarly notable for its liminal (*not* central) location, split between Calne, Cannings and Chippenham hundreds (Fig. 37). It appears very hard indeed to envisage the post-Roman existence of Roman administrative territories focused on these towns.

If a Roman or pre-Roman origin is unlikely for most hundreds and great estates in Wiltshire, is a 'late' – *i.e.* a seventh- or eighth-century – origin more appropriate? As John Blair (1991, 27) has concluded in Surrey and Eric Klingelhöfer (1992, 89) in Hampshire, it is likely that such territories were only formalised in the Middle Saxon period, 'after the Christian kings of Wessex had consolidated their power to a certain

degree' (Klingelhöfer 1992, 89). Nevertheless, it is clear that they did not emerge in a vacuum: 'the developing monarchy of Wessex used what was there already, the natural grouping of a farming population in discrete valley catchment zones, as the source of a regularised supply of tribute' (Klingelhöfer 1992, 118-19).

The correspondence between a number of hundreds and great estates in southern and central Wiltshire and valley catchment zones is striking – Stowford/Chalke and the Ebble valley, Dolesfield and the Till valley, and Elstub and the Avon valley, for example – and it is easy to imagine that both secondary territories owe much to the Early Saxon tribal *regiones* discussed earlier in the chapter. It is surely no coincidence, then, that the core territory of the putative *regio* of the *Canningas* became enshrined as both a Middle Saxon great estate and a hundred, prior to its division between the king and the Bishop of Ramsbury before 1086. Furthermore, it is possible to envisage an Early Saxon topographical *regio* based on the Upper Kennet valley being enshrined as a Middle Saxon royal estate based on Avebury, before its merger with the neighbouring royal estate of Preshute to form the Domesday hundred of Selkley (Fig. 38). Other credible Early Saxon valley territories may also be discerned along the Upper Wylve ('Deverill') and Lower Bourne ('Winterbourne') rivers, where parish boundaries closely follow watersheds. As Jonathan Pitt (1999, 60, 76) has recently suggested, it is possibly only due to 'Late Saxon modification' of hundred and estate boundaries that these valley *regiones* were not preserved intact as Domesday hundreds.

As in Hampshire, then, it is possible to detect a number of topographically-based 'archaic hundreds' in Wiltshire, representing 'a half-way stage between a unit of German tribal society and the territorial jurisdictions of the hundred, vill and manor' (Klingelhöfer 1992, 84). Such units belong primarily to the fifth and sixth centuries, seemingly ignoring Iron Age and Roman foci, and one can easily see how they not only spawned kingdoms, but also hundreds, great estates and ultimately minster *parochiae* (see Chapter 6). 'Archaic hundreds' are most visible in the chalkland regions of Wiltshire, where fifth- and sixth-century cemeteries in riverside locations clearly emphasise the Early Saxon importance of both rivers and their valleys for settlement and society (Fig. 25). Even in the clayland landscapes to the north and west, however, valley catchment zones evidently formed the backbone of Early Saxon territorial divisions. The Thames valley, for example, is notable for a concentration of fifth- and sixth-century Anglo-Saxon burials, including those at Castle Eaton and Kemble (Yorke 1995, 34-6; see Chapter 4), whilst it is surely significant that the overwhelming majority

of great estates and hundreds were focused on riverine settlements, such as Chippenham, Bradford-on-Avon and Calne. *Regiones* and 'archaic hundreds', then, were indeed 'the building-blocks of the early kingdoms' (Blair 1991, 24), but, more importantly, they were clearly fundamental to their subsequent regional administration in the form of hundreds and great estates.

## **Small Estates**

### *Manors and Villis: The Fragmentation of Great Estates*

The manor (the holding of a lord) and the vill (the settlement and lands of a farming community) were once considered by historians to be the primal building-blocks of English rural life, with roots lying in the Early Saxon or Romano-British past (Seebohm 1883; Maitland 1897). Now, they are more commonly regarded as products of the Late Saxon period and, more specifically, the result of the break-up of great estates. In Wiltshire, we have already noted how the process of fragmentation was well advanced at Calne and Bradford-on-Avon by 1086. Great Bedwyn, meanwhile, appears to have undergone a particularly complex series of reorganisations in the later Saxon centuries, with parcels of land passing into royal ownership, subsequently being alienated by the Crown, and then returning into royal hands by Domesday (Dumville 1992, 107-12). Evidently, the break-up of these large estates into smaller units was not always a simple linear process.

The fission of large pre-Conquest estates in Wiltshire is best illustrated, both in the landscape and in documents, by the proliferation of small estates, many of which were assessed in the Domesday Survey at five hides or multiples of five hides. The five-hide unit had a special significance in Late Saxon Wessex, as it was the minimum landholding required of someone holding the rank of *thegn* (see Chapter 8). The five-hide estate, therefore, was clearly a common result of 'manorialisation' – a process that Tom Williamson (1993, 121-5) has described as 'fission from above', as Anglo-Saxon kings granted out private estates to their aristocrats and retainers (see also Faith 1997, 154-5).

A glance through the Wiltshire entries in the Domesday Survey reveals sixty-two examples of five-hide manors (Hooper 1989, 9), two of which – Fyfield and Fifield

Bavant – took their names from their hidage (Gover *et al.* 1939, 207, 295). The frequency of such holdings leads to the conclusion, first put forward by J.H. Round (1895, 49), that the assessment was largely artificial and bore little relation to the agricultural resources of a vill (see also Welldon Finn 1967, 17). Three more ‘five-hide’ place-names in Wiltshire occur at Fiddington (*alias* ‘Fifede Lavinton’) in Market Lavington, Fifield in Enford and Fyfield in Milton Lilbourne (Gover *et al.* 1939, 240, 328, 349). In many cases, a close relationship is apparent between five-hide holdings and former great estates. Fifield Bavant, for example, evidently formed part of the Abbess of Wilton’s tenth-century estate of ‘Chalke’ (Crowley 1987, 60), whilst Chisbury and Yatesbury (both assessed at five hides in Domesday) were surely once dependent on Great Bedwyn and Calne respectively.

The proliferation of small estates resulting from the fragmentation of larger ones is also exemplified by the many place-names of the ‘personal name + *tūn*’ type in Wiltshire. The best-known example of such an estate that can convincingly be ascribed to tenth-century ‘booking’ – the grant of an estate by charter – is Aughton in Collingbourne Kingston (Bonney 1969, 60-4). Both Collingbournes (Kingston and Ducis) almost certainly constituted a single royal estate that may have been subsumed within the larger Bedwyn complex of royal holdings by c. 900 (Dumville 1992, 110-11). In the decades after 900, however, this estate fragmented and a charter records the purported grant by King Edward the Elder in 921 of ten hides *æt Colingburne* to his *thegn* Wulfgar (S379; see Dumville 1992, 111, n. 264). The charter bounds accurately describe the later manor of Aughton, which was a constituent tithing of Collingbourne Kingston. However, there is even more reason for associating this holding with Wulfgar’s estate. The place-name Aughton means ‘Æffe’s *tūn*’ (Gover *et al.* 1939, 344) and it is certainly no coincidence that the will of Wulfgar, which is variously dated to between 931 and 948 (S1533), begins; ‘I, Wulfgar, grant the estate at Collingbourne to Æffe for her lifetime’ (Gelling 1997, 124). Aughton, therefore, clearly represents the ten hides held first by Wulfgar and then by his widow Æffe. Although the place-name itself is not recorded before 1346 (Gover *et al.* 1939, 344), it must have arisen during the tenancy of Æffe in the mid tenth century.

The same process of estate division is attested by a number of other place-names of the ‘personal name + *tūn*’ type in Wiltshire. Alderstone in Whiteparish, Brigmerston in Milston and Brixton Deverill all take their names from their pre-Conquest landholders, as recorded in the Domesday Survey – Aldred, Bricmer and Brictric

(Gover *et al.* 1939, 418; Thorn and Thorn 1979, 67:35, 42:5, 17:1). Similarly, Faulston and Flamston in Bishopstone (S) and Gurston in Broad Chalke all recall the names of Norman landholders – Fallard, Flambard and Gerard – therefore suggesting that new estates were still being formed after 1066 (Gover *et al.* 1939, 420; see Cameron 1996, 93, for notable parallels in Devon, Dorset, Hampshire and Berkshire).

Perhaps the best evidence for Late Saxon estate fission in Wiltshire is provided by the numerous land charters, many of which have boundary clauses attached. The middle decades of the tenth century in particular saw a dramatic increase in the number of estates ‘booked’ (see Reynolds 1999, fig. 6) and it was not just *thegns* who benefited. The new monastic foundations of the late ninth and tenth centuries were granted significant landholdings by successive kings. Wilton Abbey, for example, gained North Newton and Oare in 933 (S424), Burcombe in 937 (S438), ‘Chalke’ in 955 (S582), South Newton, Baverstock, ‘Deverill’, Sherrington and ‘Frustfield’ in 968 (S766), part of Bemerton in 968 (S767) and Fovant in 994 (S881). By 1086, further estates had passed into monastic ownership as a result of gifts or acquisitions. The will of Wulfgar provided for the transmission of both Aughton in Collingbourne Kingston into the possession of the New Minster at Winchester and Ham into the possession of the Old Minster at Winchester upon the death of Wulfgar’s wife, Æffe (Finberg 1964a, no. 246).

The evidence from charters should not always be interpreted at face value, however. Occasionally, certain religious institutions saw fit to claim early dates for charters that were issued much later, often in order to establish ancient rights to particular landholdings, whilst some monasteries even forged documents in their entirety (Hooke 1998, 85). The charters relating to the possessions of Shaftesbury Abbey and Winchester Cathedral in southern Wiltshire illustrate this point particularly well. The forty-hide estate at Donhead, for example, was apparently bequeathed to Shaftesbury Abbey by King Eawig in 956 (S630); although later, in a charter probably forged after the Conquest (S357), the nuns claimed that Donhead had been granted by King Alfred in the 870s as part of his initial endowment to the abbey (Kelly 1996, 28-30, 88). The Bishop of Winchester’s holdings at Downton and Bishopstone in the Ebble valley, meanwhile, were claimed in a falsified charter attributed to the seventh century as ancient grants to the church in Winchester by King Cenwalh (S229). Some have suggested that this charter has its origins in a genuine grant of King Offa of Mercia between 793 and 796 (Finberg 1964a, 235-6; Crowley 1980, 27). Heather Edwards, however, has rejected this interpretation, stating her belief that the Downton estate ‘was

bequeathed to the see of Winchester by King Eadred, who died in 955' (Edwards 1988, 132). If, indeed, the Cenwalh charter and a series of subsequent charters relating to Downton and Bishopstone are all false, as Edwards claims, it appears that the cathedral community at Winchester went to enormous lengths to forge its 'ancient' title to this estate.

Leaving the problems of charter evidence to one side, it is evident from a number of sources that the process of fragmentation of great estates was well advanced in Wiltshire by 1086. The numerous royal estates in the county were divided up into smaller territories during the ninth, tenth and eleventh centuries and were held by royalty, nobility and religious houses. Many of these estates survived into the medieval and post-medieval periods as discrete manors: 'the noble became the lord, and the landholding became the manor' (Klingelhöfer 1992, 125). The course of manorialisation, however, did not always run smooth and we should bear in mind the fluidity of land tenure at this time. Just as in Middle Hampshire, where 'there was dissolution, amalgamation and re-dissolution before 1100' (Klingelhöfer 1992, 125), a similar degree of complexity is evident in Wiltshire. At Idmiston, for example, charter evidence suggests that a single estate had been divided into two five-hide estates during the mid tenth century (S530, S541), only to re-emerge as a unified ten-hide holding in 970 (S775), which then persisted until Domesday and beyond (Abrams 1996, 143-5). A similar process may also have taken place at Kington St Michael and Kington Langley (Abrams 1996, 149-52).

The emergence of the vill as a unit of taxation and administration may also be associated with the period of estate fission. The period *c.* 850-1200 has recently been dubbed 'the village moment', during which the nucleation of villages is most likely to have occurred (Lewis *et al.* 2001, 190-2; see Chapter 8). If the formation of Wiltshire village communities can indeed be ascribed to this period – no doubt encouraged by the proliferation of new seigneurial holdings (Faith 1997, 151-2) – then there may be a link between the reorganisation of settlement and the formal definition of the settlement's lands, *i.e.* the vill. What is clear is that, more often than not in Wiltshire, the manors and vills described in the pre-Conquest charters persisted as medieval and post-medieval parishes or tithings: Andrew Reynolds' example of Stanton St Bernard is a case in point (Fig. 39; Reynolds 1999, 82-4). Admittedly, G.B. Grundy has often been accused of over-emphasizing the degree of coincidence between charter bounds and later parish boundaries when he published his reconstructions of pre-Conquest Wiltshire

estates early in the last century (Grundy 1919; 1920) and one cannot overstate the importance of detailed and cautious scholarship in the ‘solving’ of charter bounds (see Hooke 1998, 84-102). Nevertheless, the degree of correlation between charter estates and later parishes and tithings is worthy of comment and, in many ways, it serves to underline the importance of later Saxon estate fragmentation for the development of both manors and vills.

### *Manors and Vills: Alternative Origins*

Whilst the fragmentation of great estates undoubtedly spawned the creation of numerous manors and vills in Wiltshire, we should not pretend that all such territories originated in this way. As Dawn Hadley (1996, 11) has recently commented, ‘although early charters commonly deal with large areas of land, we should not assume that such large “estates” were not interspersed with smaller “manorial” units of exploitation, and the properties of small free landowners’. The prospect of small independent manors existing *alongside* the great estates of the Middle and Late Saxon period is one also raised by John Blair in Surrey, who suggests that ‘the “federative” system [of estates] co-existed with small, self-contained manors over some centuries’ (Blair 1991, 30).

How might we identify such early manorial estates? One avenue of enquiry is to search for place-names and land-units corresponding with Bede’s *terra unius familiae*, ‘land of one family’, *i.e.* the hide. In Somerset, Michael Costen has researched the significance of ‘hide’ (*hid*) and ‘huish’ (*hiwisc*) place-names, regarding them as ‘pioneering’ agricultural units of Early or Middle Saxon date that were ‘self-contained, if not self-sufficient’, pre-dating the introduction of open-field agriculture (Costen 1992b, 72-3, 81). The Old English term *hiwisc* appears to carry the same meaning as that of *hid* – ‘a measure of land that would support one family’ (Mills 1998, 190) – and many of the twenty-one examples of ‘huish’ and five of ‘hide’ identified by Costen in Somerset represent topographically distinct and unified holdings that occasionally survived as manors into modern times. The fact that these ‘huish’ place-names were more often than not found clustered together in single blocks of land, rather than scattered throughout the lands of larger units, carries one strong implication; that ‘a *hiwisc* must have been physically recognisable as a unit, not only when such units were first established ... but still in the tenth century’ (Costen 1992b, 73).

Whether these 'huishes' and 'hides' existed independently from the federative great estates or within them is a matter of some uncertainty. Rosamond Faith regards them as an integral part of the outer *warland* of great estates, constituting smallholdings of *ceorls* – 'a social class in which both peasant farmers and lesser landowners were to be found' (Faith 1997, 127, 137-40; see Chapter 8). John Blair and T.M. Charles-Edwards, meanwhile, stress the Early Saxon origins of the hide, which they see as rooted in a tribal-based society and, therefore, indicative of a network of 'hide farms' pre-dating the creation of the great estates themselves (Charles-Edwards 1972; Blair 1991, 28-9; 1994, 35). Barbara Yorke has commented that such 'huish' names 'could indicate the small, self-contained farms of West Saxon *ceorls* who settled in the three western shires after the Anglo-Saxon takeover and established themselves in a landscape already being worked by British peasants on established estates or smaller farmsteads' (Yorke 1995, 268). Whether these one-hide farms were part of the wider Anglo-Saxon territorial structure or not, one thing is certain: they represent distinct bounded pseudo-manorial units that existed long before the break-up of great estates had even begun. 'Huishes' and 'hides', it may be argued, are true antecedents of the Late Saxon manor.

Within Wiltshire, there are two Domesday manors bearing the place-name element *hiwisc* – Huish in the Vale of Pewsey and Hardenhuish, which now forms part of Chippenham. Huish may be associated with the manor of 1 hide 1½ virgates at *Iwis* held by Richard Sturmy in 1086 (Thorn and Thorn 1979, 68:3), whilst Hardenhuish not only occurs as a three-hide Domesday estate of Arnulf of Hesdin (Thorn and Thorn 1979, 25:25), but also is the subject of a spurious charter of 854, granting one hide of land at *heregeardingc hiwisc*, 'Heregeard's huish', to Wiferth the minister (S308; Gover *et al.* 1939, 99). Both 'huishes' constitute compact estates and one wonders how they survived intact as medieval and post-medieval parishes as other small farming units were no doubt subsumed by larger estates. One possible reason for Huish's survival is its marginal location, on the edge of Swanborough hundred and possibly also the Pewsey royal estate. Rosamond Faith has observed elsewhere that one-hide holdings are often found 'at the edge of the parishes in which they lie, and seem quite unrelated to any nucleated settlement' (Faith 1997, 139). Many of Wiltshire's 'hide' place-names too bear out this observation. Hyde in Wanborough, which is recorded as *Le Hyde* in 1233 (Gover *et al.* 1939, 497), is preserved in a group of five fields bordering Bishopstone (N) parish on the Wanborough tithe map of 1845 (WRO Tithe Map). Hyde

Farm in Blundson St Andrew, which was home to Thomas *de la Hyde* in 1255 (Gover *et al.* 1939, 32), also occupies a marginal location in the southeast corner of the parish, bordering Stanton Fitzwarren and Stratton St Margaret.

Another place-name element that may be indicative of semi-independent smallholdings in the Middle Saxon landscape is *word*/*wordig*, ‘worth/worthy’, which seems to have had the basic meaning ‘enclosure’ (Mills 1998, 407). In Somerset, Michael Costen has suggested of ‘worth’ names that they ‘probably bear witness to the many small individual farmsteads which existed in the seventh and eighth centuries’ (Costen 1992a, 93-4). Assuming that, like ‘hides’ and ‘huishes’, a number of ‘worths’ are representative of Early and Middle Saxon farming units, it is necessary to undertake a brief survey of place-names in Wiltshire containing the element.

Of the sixteen ‘worths’ in the county documented before 1600 (Table 3), a few, such as Hamptworth and Pensworth in Downton, may best be explained as woodland enclosures, representing a secondary use of *word* in connection with woodland that has been proposed by Della Hooke in the West Midlands (Hooke 1981, 294-5). Others – especially those with Anglo-Saxon personal names attached – equate more easily with the small pseudo-manorial farming units described above. Sopworth, ‘Soppa’s worth’, for example, forms a discrete manor and parish comparable in size and situation – on the edge of a hundred – to Huish. Atworth, ‘Ætta’s worth’, is similarly located on the edge of Bradford hundred and was mentioned in the bounds of Shaftesbury Abbey’s Bradford estate, granted in 1001 (Kelly 1996, 121). Chelworth, ‘Ceolla’s worth’, in Crudwell, meanwhile, appears to have had a particularly complex pre-Conquest history, becoming the subject of a number of forged Malmesbury Abbey charters (see Dumville 1992, 43-4). King Alfred’s lease of four hides here to the *thegn* Dudig for four lives with reversion to the abbey (S356, issued 871x899 and believed genuine) at least indicates that Chelworth was a discrete estate by the late ninth century. Tidworth, ‘Tuda’s worth’, and Highworth – simply *Wrde*, ‘worth’, in 1086 (Gover *et al.* 1939, 25) – have produced direct archaeological evidence for Early and Middle Saxon settlement [2:246, 448].

Place-names containing the elements *hid*, *hiwisc* and *word* are testament to the existence of small independent or semi-independent farming territories in the Anglo-Saxon landscape prior to the fragmentation of great estates in the Late Saxon period. Many of these would have originally equated to the ‘land of one family’ – the hide. Over time, however, they were subject to amalgamation or division. Some, such as

Sopworth, were 'promoted' to the status of a five-hide holding, appropriate for a *ceorl* who wished to become a thegn. Others persisted as one-hide holdings into the late eleventh century and beyond. As John Blair has commented, 'tenurially, they argue a high degree of traditional continuity in the fabric of local society ... Thus beneath the apparent comprehensiveness of manor, village and fields can be glimpsed an older, more cellular structure of compact units with defined boundaries' (Blair 1991, 28-9).

### *Burials on Boundaries: The Antiquity of Small Estates*

Given that a number of small estates existed both within and probably also outside Middle Saxon great estates in Wiltshire, this begs the question 'how old are these territories and their boundaries'? A number of scholars have argued that they are Romano-British or even prehistoric in origin. H.P.R. Finberg, for example, famously suggested that Withington in Gloucestershire constituted the intact survival of a Roman villa estate into the Anglo-Saxon and medieval periods (Finberg 1955), whilst in Surrey, John Blair has pointed towards the apparent persistence of Romano-British field-blocks at Ashtead and Leatherhead as evidence to suggest that 'boundaries connected with the Ashtead villa survived to delimit small land-units in the early Anglo-Saxon period' (Blair 1991, 29-30).

In Wiltshire, it is Desmond Bonney who has argued strongly for the prehistoric or Romano-British origin of small estates and their boundaries (Bonney 1966; 1972; 1979). Working on the valid assumption that the boundaries of nineteenth-century ecclesiastical parishes in the county often preserve those of early medieval manorial estates defined in the charters and listed in the Domesday Survey (see Chapter 6), he then used the incidence of 'pagan' Saxon burials – *i.e.* those believed to date from *c.* 400 to 700 – on parish boundaries to propose a pre-Saxon origin for both boundaries and estates. His argument ran as follows: because thirty out of sixty-nine 'pagan' Saxon burials studied in Wiltshire lay directly on or near – within 500ft/152m of – parish boundaries, this must 'surely indicate that those boundaries, as boundaries, were in being as early as the pagan Saxon period and they imply the existence of a settled landscape clearly divided among the settlements at a time prior to any documentary evidence for such' (Bonney 1966, 28).

My primary concerns over the evidential basis of Bonney's claims in Wiltshire have only recently been set out in print (Draper 2004) and it is not necessary to recite

them here in full. It is possible, however, to summarise them in three main points. Firstly, it is becoming increasingly clear that many of the burials listed as being ‘pagan’ Saxon in date, originally by Audrey Meaney (1964) and then by Desmond Bonney (1966, 28-9), are essentially unable to be dated due to a lack of grave goods and may in fact belong to either the prehistoric or Late Saxon periods. Secondly, some of the burials listed by Bonney only lie on or close to parish boundaries because the boundaries in question follow rivers and other watercourses. Clearly, a natural feature as prominent as a river would have made an obvious choice for a territorial marker at any point in time. Thirdly, Early Saxon burials in Wiltshire, as in many other counties, show a striking tendency to be located beside or within clear view of long-distance routeways, be they major rivers, Roman roads, valley through-routes, ridgeways or drove-roads. Howard Williams has observed that many seventh-century barrow burials in southern England are deliberately sited so as to be easily seen by passing travellers (Williams 1999, 75), whilst Andrew Reynolds has also stressed the connection between Late Saxon execution burials and trackways, which presumably served as a stark visual warning to passers-by (Reynolds 1999, 109). Given the primacy of these routeways in the landscape and their obvious attraction as a template for territorial boundaries, it is surely more likely that they attracted first ‘pagan’ Saxon burials and then estate boundaries, rather than the other way round.

When were the boundaries of minor estates in Wiltshire first laid out? Although none of the evidence discussed above rules out a degree of survival from prehistoric or Roman territories, none of it convincingly points to a pre-Saxon date for the boundaries of such land-units either. The same may also be said for Desmond Bonney’s additional claims concerning parishes crossed by various Roman roads and the East Wansdyke in the county (Bonney 1972, 173-85; Draper 2004, 60-3). Ultimately, there may be no single answer to the question posed above. Certainly, there is no body of evidence considerable enough to come down firmly on one side. In the wake of the above criticisms of Bonney’s hypothesis, however, it does seem that the academic case for prehistoric and Roman continuity of estates in Wiltshire is now fundamentally weak. Even the perceived ‘close correlation’ between the distribution of Roman villas and medieval parish and tithing boundaries in the river valleys of southern Wiltshire does not ‘add further support to the thesis proposed by Bonney’ (*pace* Corney 2000, 35). *Congruity* of Roman and medieval patterns of settlement does not equate with *continuity* of estate structure, especially, it may be argued, in a narrow chalkland river

valley, where topography is a strong governing factor of both settlement location and land-use. Clearly, elements of the prehistoric and Romano-British landscape must have exercised some influence over the geography of later manors and vills, but I see no clear reason to argue for a date earlier than the period *c.* 600-1100 for the creation and formalisation of these territories. Earlier, I discussed the important rôle of the Early and Middle Saxon hide farmers in establishing discrete minor estates and it is perhaps to these individuals that the intricate patchwork of Wiltshire manors and vills owes its greatest debt.

## Conclusion

Much of the material discussed in this chapter is hard to evaluate archaeologically and historically. Territorial boundaries in themselves are not readily datable: indeed, only a few were marked physically on the ground. Furthermore, the relevant documentary evidence for the most part pertains to a period of fragmentation and mutation of early medieval territories in the Late Saxon and Norman periods. Reaching back in time to a period when kingdoms, hundreds and manors were only just forming is very difficult indeed and requires the piecing together of many strands of evidence in order to create a larger picture.

Despite the problems involved with such work, it has been possible to discern the likely origins of most early medieval territories in Wiltshire, most of which, it now appears, lie firmly within the period *after c.* 450. Whilst indeed 'it is unlikely that early boundaries would not influence later ones' (Hooke 1998, 63), the level of prehistoric and Romano-British territorial continuity in the county, I would argue, has been significantly overemphasised, notably by Desmond Bonney (1966; 1972) and Jeremy Haslam (1984), but perhaps also by Bruce Eagles (2001). Clearly, the palimpsest of previous boundaries and estates would have been patently obvious to Early Saxon farmers and landholders, but nowhere in Wiltshire is there any credible evidence to support the continued early medieval administrative importance of any prehistoric or Roman land-unit, be it a hillfort *territorium*, a tribal *civitas* or *pagus*, or even a humble villa estate.

Instead, the bulk of the evidence discussed in this chapter serves to underline the fundamental importance of two Early and Middle Saxon forms of social organisation that, to a large extent, shaped the territorial framework of Domesday and beyond.

Firstly, the tribal *regiones* with their topographical boundaries not only spawned kingdoms, both large and small, but also gave rise to great estates, hundreds and even minster *parochiae* (see Chapter 6). At the most basic level in the landscape, however, the ‘land of one family’ – the hide – was the fundamental origin of the small estates. The hide later governed the system of how shires, hundreds and estates were organised. Nevertheless, it was in the manors and vills of the Late Saxon countryside that it left its most tangible legacy.

## CHAPTER 6

### Christianity and the Church

#### Introduction

Throughout the preceding chapter, readers will have become aware of the Church's central rôle in shaping the territories of early medieval Wiltshire, whilst, in Chapter 8, we shall examine the influence of church-building on the formation of villages in the county. The development of the organised Church, then, was a key factor in the both the social and landscape history of Wiltshire and it is important to give the subject due prominence. This said, however, this brief chapter does not pretend to offer a comprehensive account of either Church history or ecclesiastical organisation in the county: such a narrative would clearly lie beyond the scope of this work. Rather, it aims to concentrate on the wider rôle played by Christianity and the Church in developing the social and landscape institutions of Anglo-Saxon Wiltshire.

The structure of the chapter is bipartite. Firstly, the 'story' of early medieval Christianity in Wiltshire is presented, thereby enabling us to understand how the Church eventually came to exercise such power and influence in the county. Secondly, ecclesiastical organisation is considered, paying special attention to the arrangement of minster churches and their territories (*parochiae*), in addition to their subsequent devolution in favour of the present pattern of parishes and local churches.

As a final word of caution, it must be remembered that much of the evidence discussed is fragmentary and often difficult to interpret: indeed, the 'minster hypothesis', on which our interpretation of the structure of the Anglo-Saxon Church is largely based (see Blair 1995; Cambridge and Rollason 1995), is just that – a hypothesis. The ground becomes much more certain in the centuries after 1100, yet there is neither the space nor the scope to consider the detailed evidence here. Much of what is presented below is consequently offered as 'work in progress', building upon ongoing research in the field.

## The Spread of Christianity

### *Pagans and Christians*

The origins of Christianity in Wiltshire are shrouded in some obscurity. Whilst it is widely assumed that the religion was practised in the county during the Roman period, there is in fact very little material evidence of this period that may reliably be identified as 'Christian' (see Chapter 3). In particular, Bill Wedlake's claim (1982, 103-5) that the Romano-British temple at Nettleton Shrub was converted for Christian use in the later fourth century should be treated with extreme caution. Mark Corney has noted that 'there is no convincing evidence for this' (Corney 2001, 32), whilst Philip Rahtz has expressed his recent concern that 'the report needs a major re-working, going back to the site archives and finds, and especially to reconsider the series of religious structures and cemeteries' (Rahtz 2001, 152).

Moving into the Early Saxon period, we are still on uncertain ground. The suggestion made by a handful of researchers (*e.g.* Pearce 1982; Dark 2000, 116-17) that some West Country villas survived as monasteries into the fifth and sixth centuries to become minster churches by *c.* 700 is perhaps attractive, although lacking in significant supporting evidence. The reality is that, unlike in neighbouring Somerset and Dorset to the south and west (Hase 1994, 49-52; Yorke 1995, 155-60), there is no credible basis of evidence on which to postulate the existence of a 'sub-Roman' Church in Wiltshire before *c.* 620.

The only tangible evidence that we do have for religion in the fifth and sixth centuries is of an assuredly pagan nature. A study of Early Saxon burials within the county does not reveal the influence of Christian practice or symbolism until the so-called 'Final Phase' burials of the later seventh and early eighth centuries (see below), whilst Margaret Gelling has discussed the presence of a number of place-names that appear to reflect Germanic pagan worship (Fig. 40; Gelling 1975; 1997, 158-61). Among such names are those containing the Old English elements *wēoh* and *hearg*, 'pagan shrine or holy place', possible examples of which may be found at Waden Hill in Avebury, *Weoland* in Tockenham and Haradon Hill (*alias* Earl's Farm Down) in Amesbury (Gover *et al.* 1939, xiv, 359; see also Wilson 1985). Also of note is the apparent reference to the pagan god Thunor in the boundary mark *Thunresfeld* in the

Hardenhuish charter of 854 (S308; Gover *et al.* 1939, 431). The cluster of place-names referring to the god Woden in central Wiltshire – *wodnesdenu*, *wodnesbeorh* and *woddesgeat* in S449 and S272 and, of course, Wansdyke itself – is particularly striking, although it should be noted that they need not be of Early Saxon origin: Woden was regarded as a progenitor of the West Saxon royal house and he was ‘still a useful figure in the later Christian Anglo-Saxon period’ (Pollard and Reynolds 2002, 189).

The seventh century marked the start of the period of conversion, during which minster churches and monasteries were founded and burials gradually made the progression from barrows and wayside cemeteries into churchyards. Before the transition to unfurnished churchyard burial was complete – probably by *c.* 800 – there was a final flowering of high-status furnished burials with extensive assemblages of rich grave goods. These burials are often termed ‘Final Phase’, after the title of a chapter in a book by Edward Leeds (Geake 1997, 2), and their presence in Wiltshire is marked by three examples in particular at Swallowcliffe Down [2:427], Roundway Down [2:386] and Ford Down in Laverstock [2:283] (see Chapter 4). Whether such burials should be interpreted as inherently Christian (Yorke 1995, 175) or defiantly pagan (Geake 1992, 93), it is apparent that they incorporated artefacts whose contemporary cultural associations were not only with Classical Rome, but also the Roman Church. Such burials, therefore, must be seen as part of the conversion process within eastern Wessex and also as an indication that the Church and the social élite – both royalty and the aristocracy – would from now on remain intimately bound.

### *Monasteries and Minsters*

The first monastic institution in Wiltshire is believed to have been established at Malmesbury in the middle years of the seventh century (Freeman and Watkin 1999, 147). Others soon followed, however, at Tisbury (Crowley 1987, 195; Pitt 1999, 50) and possibly also at Bradford-on-Avon, which is traditionally regarded as a late seventh-century foundation of St Aldhelm, sometime Abbot of Malmesbury and Bishop of Sherborne (Kelly 1996, 120). These religious houses were not founded independently of royal power, but in conjunction with it. Both Tisbury and Bradford were almost certainly pre-existing royal estates, whilst Malmesbury was reputedly linked with the British royal seat of *Kairdurberg* (see Chapter 5). We should also not forget the proximity of the putative seventh-century royal *villa* at Cowage Farm in

Norton to Malmesbury. John Blair (1988, 35) has noted of early monastic churches that they often lay slightly removed from their counterpart royal *villae*, 'often in Roman enclosures with the *villae* outside on open ground'. Malmesbury Abbey itself is known to lie within an Iron Age hillfort (Hase 1994, 54), whilst traces of a Roman building were reputedly discovered close to Abbey House in 1887 [1:200].

Both Malmesbury and Tisbury monasteries soon acquired endowments of land in order to support their life and work. A series of charters bearing dates in the late seventh and early eighth centuries survives in the *Registrum Malmesburiense* – Malmesbury Abbey's cartulary – although many appear to be forgeries (Edwards 1988, 84-127). Perhaps the earliest genuine grant is King Ethelred of Mercia's gift of fifteen hides *iuxta Tettan monasterium*, 'near Tetbury minster', in 681 (S71). Other estates soon followed, however, granted by kings of both Wessex and Mercia, including Somerford Keynes (now in Gloucestershire) in 683 (S1169) and Garsdon, Corston and Rodbourne in 701 (S243). Tisbury's early landholdings are known from two documents, both believed authentic, which survive in the Shaftesbury Abbey cartulary (S1164, S1256; Kelly 1996, 3-10). The first is a charter of 670x676 that records a grant of thirty hides along the Fontmell Brook in northern Dorset to Abbot Bectun by King Coenred, whilst the second is a letter of 759 recording the settlement of a dispute by Cynheard, Bishop of Winchester, over land at Fontmell in favour of his community (*familia*) at Tisbury. If an early monastery did exist at Bradford-on-Avon, then a similar grant of land in support of the community might be expected, although no record of such survives.

In addition to these three monasteries, a number of other mother churches or 'minsters' – from the Latin word *monasterium* – was established by royal command at other *villae regales* throughout Wiltshire in the seventh and eighth centuries. Such churches had a staff of religious 'brethren' and each possessed a territorial parish, known as a *parochia*, in which they exercised pastoral care and encouraged ministry. It is likely that most, if not all, Middle Saxon *villae regales* in Wiltshire possessed such churches – sometimes known as 'old minsters' – and the documentary evidence relating to a number of them and their *parochiae* will be considered below.

Turning to the physical evidence for minsters in Wiltshire, one potential indicator of early ecclesiastical status that has been discussed in other counties, notably by John Blair (1992, 229, 231-5), is a curvilinear enclosure surrounding a church and churchyard. Some of these enclosures – perhaps known as *burhs* (see Chapter 8) – were

provided naturally by Iron Age hillfort defences, as at Malmesbury, but others were defined artificially. One possible example of an artificial curvilinear enclosure in Wiltshire that has so far escaped attention may be seen in the village of Bremhill, near Calne (Fig. 41). Like the minster enclosures discussed by John Blair at Bampton in Oxfordshire and Lambourn in Berkshire (Blair 1988, 49, 56), the Bremhill enclosure is approximately 200m in diameter. Furthermore, it contains a spring – perhaps a ‘holy well’ – where baptisms or even judicial ordeal may have taken place (see Reynolds 1999, 102). Most importantly, however, the present parish church of St Martin contains Late Saxon masonry [2:95], whilst a thirteenth-century document refers to ‘Bremhill church with all its chapels’, thereby suggesting that it had been a medieval ‘mother church’ and probably once also a minster (Pitt 2003, 82). Although Jonathan Pitt has recently seen Bremhill church as a tenth-century foundation by Malmesbury Abbey, which owned the estate in 1086 (Pitt 2003, 82), an alternative interpretation may be that it represents an earlier royal foundation, serving one or other – or even both – of the nearby *villae regales* at Calne and Chippenham. Perhaps Bremhill, then, was an example of an ‘old minster’ and *villa regalis* set apart, like Cowage Farm and Malmesbury (see above).

Another feature of church topography that is sometimes held to indicate an early ecclesiastical presence is the reuse of a Roman site, particularly that of a villa (see Hall 2000, 21-4, for a recent discussion of the phenomenon in neighbouring Dorset). Whilst some scholars have seized upon such relatively frequent juxtapositions as evidence for the Roman to early medieval continuity of Christian worship (*e.g.* Pearce 1982), a number of more plausible explanations have been made, including the Anglo-Saxon association of Christianity with all things Roman (*i.e.* *Romanitas*), the plundering of Roman buildings for building stone, the Christian appropriation of pagan sites and the convenience of re-using pre-existing Roman structures and enclosures (Blair 1992, 235-46; Bell 1998).

In Wiltshire, nineteen churches display a notable association with Roman material, either contained within the fabric of the churches themselves, or in relation to known Roman sites in the immediate proximity (Table 5). Most of these, however, are medieval parish churches with no evidence to support an Anglo-Saxon ecclesiastical presence. Only Britford, Malmesbury and Netheravon are known to have been pre-Conquest churches, but even here there are little grounds for postulating ‘continuity’. Malmesbury Abbey, it may be suggested, was sited principally for its prominent hilltop

location, surrounded on three sides by the River Avon – a common topographical trait of minster settlements (see Hall 2000, 49-78, for a discussion of Dorset examples). The position of Netheravon church, meanwhile, may possibly be explained by the constricted nature of settlement within the narrow chalkland valleys (see Chapter 8). The Anglo-Saxon masons of Britford church, meanwhile, may have incorporated Roman bricks into one of the nave arches both as a means of reusing a locally available building material and also as a way of adding a touch of *Romanitas* to their structure. It is perhaps not insignificant that many of the ninth-century carvings within the church appear to show influences from contemporary Italian work (Gem 1991, 185-8).

Turning to the Late Saxon period, the late ninth and tenth centuries in particular were characterised by a spirit of renewal, reform and redirection within the West Saxon Church (Yorke 1995, 192-239). A key element of this new dynamism was the promotion of a monastic way of life, particularly for royal daughters and other aristocratic women. The result was the foundation of a string of new nunneries, two of which were in Wiltshire. The exact origins of the abbey at Wilton are hard to pin down precisely (Darlington 1955a, 30-1), but it is most probable that it was established for the daughters of King Edward the Elder in the early years of the tenth century (Yorke 1995, 206). Certainly, the abbey received a number of estates in quick succession from 933 to 994, the largest of which was assessed at some one hundred hides at ‘Chalke’ in the Ebbles valley (S582; see Chapter 5). Amesbury Abbey, by contrast, was a poorly endowed house, with only a handful of small estates to its name in 1086 (Thorn and Thorn 1979, 16:1-7). It is traditionally believed to have been founded in 979 by Queen Ælfthryth in order to atone for her share in the murder of Edward the Martyr (Darlington 1955a, 31; Yorke 1995, 218). Both houses are listed in David Rollason’s *Lists of Saints’ Resting-Places* (Rollason 1978): Amesbury held relics of St Melor, whilst Wilton possessed those of St Iwi and St Edith.

### *Late Saxon Church Foundation*

A more lasting consequence of the Late Saxon renewal within the Church in Wessex was the foundation of more churches, both large and small. Following the lead of the ‘old minsters’, a number of ‘secondary minsters’ – or ‘pseudo-minsters’ as Teresa Hall has dubbed them (Hall 2000, 47) – were established in the ninth and tenth centuries in order to serve the spiritual needs of large monastic and episcopal estates. Malmesbury

Abbey was a keen founder of such minsters and Jonathan Pitt has recently made a convincing case for the tenth-century origins of churches on its estates at Crudwell and Purton (Pitt 2003; see also below). A similar origin may also be argued for churches on other monastic estates, including Christian Malford in the case of Glastonbury Abbey (Pitt 2003, 84-5) and perhaps South Newton in the case of Wilton Abbey (Pitt 1999, 105-7, 110).

A good example of an episcopal 'secondary minster' may be found at Potterne. Here, excavations in the centre of the village in the 1960s revealed the foundations of a Late Saxon – perhaps tenth-century – timber church with a baptistery (Davey 1964; 1990). In the pre-Conquest period, the estate of Potterne was held first by the bishops of Sherborne from the eighth century and then, after 909, by the bishops of Ramsbury (see Edwards 1988, 251, for the tenurial background). Following the creation of the Sarum diocese between 1075 and 1078, Potterne became a principal holding of the bishops of Salisbury and it was they who must have ordered the timber church to be replaced by a stone building, located only a short distance to the north, in the second half of the twelfth century (Davey 1964, 123).

The majority of churches established in the Late Saxon and Norman periods in Wiltshire were founded by lay landholders on their own private estates. These 'local', 'estate' or 'manorial' churches, as they are variously known (Everitt 1986, 206-15; Blair 1991, 109-33), later functioned as parish churches under the medieval parochial system, but initially they served as symbols of lordly status, along with a five-hide estate and a manorial enclosure (see Chapters 5 and 8). Their existence may be linked with two important contemporary social phenomena; firstly, the growth of small privately-held manors at the expense of the old great estates and, secondly, the decline of the minster system, which was also associated with the break-up of large *parochiae* into smaller parishes (see below).

Table 6 shows the cumulative evidence available for the existence of churches in Wiltshire in the pre-Conquest period. This evidence is mainly architectural and documentary. Occasionally, however, archaeology may be of assistance, as in the cases of Cowage Farm, Potterne and Trowbridge. Place-names too may lend some support. Chirton – Old English *cirice-tūn*, 'church farm' – is documented in 1086 and clearly indicates the presence of a pre-Conquest church (Gover *et al.* 1939, 312), as does the *chiricstede*, 'church site', of the West Overton charter of 972 (S784; Fowler 2000a, 142; Fig. 43). Warminster similarly contains the Old English element *mynster*, whilst it is

possible that the 'white' element in the place-names Whitchurch (Malmesbury) and Whiteparish – *la Whytechyrche* in 1278 (Gover *et al.* 1939, 387-8) – refers to the original appearance of churches that were built of bright or white-washed stone (Bell 1998, 6-7). Evidently, not all Anglo-Saxon churches in the county will be present in Table 6. Some Norman stone churches would have had Anglo-Saxon timber predecessors, as at Potterne, that consequently will have passed unrecorded, whilst it should be noted that the record of churches in the Wiltshire Domesday is by no means comprehensive: 'the bulk of the twenty-nine mentioned in the survey were on royal manors or were royal churches' (Hooper 1989, 19).

Turning to the contents of Table 6, it is clear that a significant number of both minsters and manorial churches were in existence in Wiltshire by 1086. Some of the best pre-Conquest ecclesiastical architecture and sculpture in the county may be found in St Lawrence's church in Bradford-on-Avon and St Peter's church in Britford. Bradford was a monastic church, built for the nuns of Shaftesbury Abbey shortly after 1000 (Taylor 1973). Britford, on the other hand, was most likely a royal foundation of the early ninth century (Chambers 1959). Late Saxon manorial church architecture is perhaps best represented at Alton Barnes, which has been hailed 'one of the most complete Saxon naves in England' (Thompson and Ross 1973, 75). Of particular note, however, are three churches in the Wylve valley – Codford St Peter, Steeple Langford and Knook – all of which contain pre-Conquest stonework and sculpture. The Codford St Peter cross-shaft is widely regarded as the finest in a series of ninth-century sculptures found throughout Wessex (Cramp 1992, 79-83), whilst the Steeple Langford cross-shaft – originally from Hanging Langford church – is also presumed to be ninth-century in date (Pevsner and Cherry 1975, 483). The Knook tympanum, meanwhile, probably dates to the early eleventh century (Taylor 1968). Such features could indicate the presence of manorial churches in the Wylve valley as early as the mid ninth century (Pitt 1999, 108), but it must be remembered that the mere presence of pre-Conquest sculpture in a church does not necessarily date the church itself. This *caveat* should also be borne in mind in the cases of Colerne, Littleton Drew and Teffont Magna churches, whose putative Anglo-Saxon existence rests solely on the presence of one or two cross-shaft fragments.

Included within Table 6 are a small number of churches whose earliest architectural features are frequently described as 'Anglo-Saxon' on stylistic grounds, although their actual dating remains uncertain. Richard Gem has argued for a 'great

rebuilding' in stone of churches spanning the period from the reign of Edward the Confessor (1042-1065) to c. 1150 and he has pointed towards the tendency at parochial level 'to retain old-fashioned traditions, long after these had been left behind in national and international circles' (Gem 1988, 29). Features that appear to be of pre-Conquest origin, then, may in fact be late eleventh- or early twelfth-century in date. In Wiltshire, Burcombe, Upton Scudamore and Froxfield churches in particular display features that might equally be ascribed to the Late Saxon or Early Norman periods and there are certainly grounds for believing that an 'Anglo-Saxon' building tradition continued here for some years after the Norman Conquest.

A rare documentary reference to the continuation of 'manorial' church foundation in the late eleventh century is provided by the Domesday mention of Edward of Salisbury's *ecclesia nova*, 'new church', at Wilcot (Thorn and Thorn 1979, 24:1). Clearly, the Norman Conquest did not disrupt the trend of church building on manorial estates and, if the high number of Wiltshire parish churches containing twelfth-century features is anything to judge by (Pevsner and Cherry 1975), it may actually have encouraged the process. William of Malmesbury was probably not far wrong when he wrote in c. 1125; 'you may now see, in every village, town and city, churches and monasteries rising in a new style of architecture' (Gem 1988, 21-2).

## **Ecclesiastical Organisation**

### *Minsters and Parochiae*

It is hard to underestimate the closeness of relations between Church and Crown in Middle Saxon Wessex. As I have intimated above and in the previous chapter, 'old minsters' were founded in connection with *villae regales* in Wiltshire and it now seems that their large territories – *parochiae* – were, for the most part, coterminous with the great estates that they served. This conclusion is supported by evidence from Hampshire and Dorset in particular (Hase 1988; Hall 2000), but it should not be taken as read. The onus is still on us to provide evidence for such an arrangement on an estate-by-estate basis in Wiltshire. The nature of the available evidence, however, is problematic and it is first necessary to discuss its limitations, before moving on to examine some putative *parochiae*.

The proposal of early minster status for a particular church depends on a wide range of evidence, which may or may not give a clear indication of Anglo-Saxon ecclesiastical prominence. A documentary mention of a religious community before c. 950 'almost certainly indicates a minster church' (Hall 2000, 4). Such references in Wiltshire are available only for Malmesbury, Tisbury, Amesbury, Wilton, Ramsbury and possibly also Damerham and Great Bedwyn (Pitt 1999; see Chapter 5 for Great Bedwyn). Otherwise, a balance of probability has to be established, taking account of a number of different factors. The mention of priests or a church – especially one with a high valuation and endowed with a significant amount of land – in the Domesday Survey is an important indicator (see Table 6), although the possibility that some churches represent manorial rather than minster foundations must be taken into account. Similarly, high valuations of churches in medieval tax records, such as the *Taxatio* of 1291 or the *Inquisitiones Nonarum* of 1341, may point towards the receipt of tithes from a number of contributory chapelries and, hence, suggest minster status. Occasionally, however, post-Conquest religious foundations may be held responsible for increased revenue, as at Heytesbury, where a secular college with four canons was established in the mid twelfth century (Pitt 1999, 61). Even a church's possession of dependent medieval chapels cannot be regarded as a sure indicator of Anglo-Saxon minster status, due to possible post-Conquest ecclesiastical reorganisation. Physical evidence, meanwhile, such as pre-Conquest sculpture and masonry, must always be interpreted with care: 'a single cross ... need not have been associated with a church at all' (Pitt 1999, 43). When it comes to reconstructing minster *parochiae*, we are largely reliant on medieval and post-medieval signs of ecclesiastical dependence surrounding a major church, such as chapelries and tithings, in addition to rights of burial being limited to some 'mother churches'.

In Wiltshire, Jonathan Pitt (1999) has recently undertaken a systematic survey of probable Anglo-Saxon minsters and their likely *parochiae* and it is not my intention here to repeat his findings (see Figure 33 for a provisional map of Anglo-Saxon minsters in the county). Instead, it is pertinent to discuss five examples, where evidence relating to both minster and *parochia* is strongest. Great Bedwyn, Bradford-on-Avon and Calne have already received attention in the previous chapter, but it is now the turn of Tisbury, Westbury, Sherston, Highworth and Avebury to be examined.

## TISBURY

Tisbury was the site of a late seventh- and eighth-century monastic church with land at Fontmell in Dorset (see above). By the reign of King Eadmund (939-945), however, the Tisbury community had been disbanded and a large estate at Tisbury now passed into the hands of Shaftesbury Abbey, who retained it until the Dissolution (Kelly 1996, 107-14). Tisbury's Anglo-Saxon minster status is not in doubt, yet it is interesting to note that the Domesday entry for Tisbury makes no mention of a church (Thorn and Thorn 1979, 12:2). The Shaftesbury Abbey cartulary, however, reveals that Tisbury church received tithes from a number of dependencies in c. 1120 – East and West Hatch, Linley, Nippard, Wick, Hazeldon, Bridzor, Apshill, Farnell and Berwick St Leonard (Pitt 1999, 52). Furthermore, Sedgehill remained a tithing and detached chapelry of Berwick St Leonard until the nineteenth century, whilst Berwick St Leonard church in turn was a medieval dependency of Tisbury, sending bodies for burial in Tisbury (Crowley 1987, 89, 103).

Based on this evidence, it would appear that Tisbury's Anglo-Saxon minster *parochia* consisted of Tisbury, West Tisbury, Berwick St Leonard and Sedgehill. This territory, with the exception of Chicklade, is believed to correspond with Shaftesbury Abbey's Tisbury estate (Jackson 1985). It is possible, however, that Chicklade, which is not recorded separately in the Domesday Survey and may be incorporated within the Tisbury entry (Crowley 1987, 106), was once also ecclesiastically dependent on Tisbury, although no record of such dependence is known.

## WESTBURY

Westbury is listed as a royal estate in the Domesday Survey, possessing a church endowed with 1½ hides of land and valued at 50s (Thorn and Thorn 1979, 1:16). Westbury parish was coterminous with Westbury hundred until the nineteenth century, with medieval chapels at Bratton, Dilton, Westbury Leigh and *Kinglande* (Pitt 1999, 77). Bratton only achieved ecclesiastical independence in 1845, whilst Dilton became a parish in 1894 (Crittall 1965, 139-92). Westbury's Anglo-Saxon minster status is not guaranteed, but it is surely strongly implied by its royal ownership, Domesday record of its church and large medieval parish covering a whole hundred.

## SHERSTON

A church at Sherston is listed in the hands of St Wandrille's Abbey in France, but under *Terra Regis*, 'Land of the King', in the Domesday Survey, possessing 3 virgates of land and valued at 28s (Thorn and Thorn 1979, 1:23g). Medieval chapelries at Alderton, Little Sherston and Easton Grey are confirmed by the *Taxatio* of 1291 and the *Inquisitiones Nonarum* of 1341, whilst Popes Innocent II (1130-43) and Eugenius III (1145-53) confirmed the gift of *ecclesiam de Sorestan cum capellis et decimis*, 'Sherston church with its chapels and tithes', to St Wandrille's (Pitt 2003, 80). Again, Sherston's Anglo-Saxon minster status is not assured, but it appears to have been the dominant church in its small Domesday hundred – Dunley – and Jonathan Pitt has raised the possibility that its *parochia* was co-extensive with the hundred (Pitt 2003, 80). The fact that Sherston's church was listed with other royal possessions in the Domesday Survey could also suggest that Sherston had once been a *villa regalis* with a minster serving its estate, possibly comprising all of Dunley hundred.

## HIGHWORTH

Highworth church is again listed under *Terra Regis* in the Domesday Survey, held by Ralph the priest and possessing 3 hides, land for two ploughs, six bordars and 10 acres of meadow (Thorn and Thorn 1979, 1:23a). Its Domesday valuation of 100s is high and would appear to indicate a church of some local standing. Significantly, in the 1291 *Taxatio*, Highworth church was valued at £100 – the highest of any church in Wiltshire (Pitt 1999, table 1). Fifteenth-century chapelries of Highworth are recorded at Broad Blunsdon, Little Blunsdon, Sevenhampton and South Marston (Pitt 1999, 82). Clearly, Highworth church served as a 'mother church' and, although its pre-Conquest minster status is not assured, it is strongly suggested by Highworth's royal ownership at Domesday – suggesting the earlier existence of a *villa regalis* – and its location at the head of a Domesday hundred. Highworth's *parochia*, however, does not appear to have been coterminous with its hundred. The Blunsdons were in Scipa hundred in 1086 (Fig. 37) and the possibility must be considered that Highworth minster served a *parochia* consisting of both Highworth and Scipa hundreds – perhaps the likeliest extent of an Anglo-Saxon Highworth royal estate.

## AVEBURY

A church at Avebury with 2 hides of land is listed under *Terra Regis* in the Domesday Survey, held by Reinbald the priest and valued at 40s (Thorn and Thorn 1979, 1:23d). In the fourteenth century, a chapel of Avebury existed at Beckhampton, whilst Avebury church also had medieval rights over chapels at West Kennett and Winterbourne Monkton (Pitt 1999, 87-8). These indicators alone are perhaps sufficient to suggest Avebury's pre-Conquest minster status, perhaps situated at a *villa regalis*. Study of the fabric of Avebury church, however, has revealed displaced items of sculpture of ninth- or tenth-century date, in addition to a number of architectural features – for example, megalithic quoins, single-splay windows and circular windows – believed to date from the tenth or eleventh centuries [2:43] (Taylor and Taylor 1965, 32-4; Pollard and Reynolds 2002, 235-7). Avebury church, then, was clearly an impressive structure in c. 1000 and its *parochia* may perhaps be reconstructed as comprising the western half of Selkley hundred, extending northwards along the Upper Kennet valley to Broad Hinton (Fig. 38; Pollard and Reynolds 2002, 223). This may also have been the extent of a putative Middle Saxon Avebury royal estate.

### *Hundreds and Minsters*

In the above discussions, it will have become apparent that putative minster *parochiae* are frequently coincident with Domesday hundreds (see also Chapter 5). In Wiltshire, this is particularly obvious at Westbury and Sherston, but strong correlations may also be seen at Bradford-on-Avon, Downton and Ramsbury. This raises the important question of whether, in the Late Saxon period, minsters were deliberately organised so as to serve hundreds, thereby becoming 'hundred minsters', to use Jonathan Pitt's terminology (Pitt 1999, 190; 2003).

In Wiltshire, Pitt has championed the belief that a minster should serve a hundred and he has recently expressed his 'confidence in the belief that our sources do reflect a true system and perhaps the result of a definite policy' (Pitt 2003, 77). Can a clear 'hundred-minster system' (Pitt 2003, 77) really be postulated for the county, however? Whilst I do not dispute the fact that some minsters are older than others – which, as Teresa Hall has commented, 'probably filled in the gaps between the large primary estates served by the *ealden* [old] minsters' (Hall 2000, 47) – I do question the

assumption that these ‘secondary’ or ‘pseudo-minsters’ (see above) represent a conscious policy of minster foundation along hundred lines, perhaps ‘associated with tenth-century administrative reorganisation’ (Pitt 2003, 77). It must be remembered that very few minster *parochiae* in Wiltshire can be reconstructed *in full* and it has perhaps been too easy to assume a coincidence of *parochiae* and hundreds in the absence of full documentary evidence for such. Furthermore, as Teresa Hall has concluded in Dorset, the superficial correlation between hundreds and *parochiae* may not be all that it seems: indeed, it is ‘incidental in that the *parochiae* and the hundreds are both based on royal estates’ (Hall 2000, 82). Such, then, might also be suggested for Wiltshire. Here, the evidence for the correlation of minster *parochiae* and great estates is arguably stronger than that for the link between *parochiae* and hundreds. Great Bedwyn and Tisbury minsters, for example, clearly served their own estates rather than their respective hundreds, as did Avebury and Preshute minsters – both in Selkley hundred (Fig. 38).

In conclusion, the case for a Late Saxon system of ‘hundred minsters’ is difficult to prove. In reality, there appears to be a far subtler link between ecclesiastical and hundredal organisation in Wiltshire, stemming from a common basis on the arrangement of Middle Saxon royal estates.

### *Parochia to Parish*

Just as great estates fragmented into smaller manorial landholdings during the Late Saxon and Norman periods (see Chapter 5), so large minster *parochiae* also broke up into smaller parishes at this time, giving us the parochial structure with which we are familiar today. Whilst many historians have implied that this process was rapid, resulting in an England of village churches and associated local parishes by 1100 (*e.g.* Miller and Hatcher 1978, 107), John Blair has reminded us that the churches of Domesday were in fact of varying status and function, whilst the process of church foundation itself was ‘far from over in 1086’ (Blair 1991, 109; see also Blair 1987). In Surrey, Blair concludes that ‘while the area was well-supplied with churches by 1066, the parochial system, as normally understood, was essentially a product of the twelfth century’ (Blair 1991, 109).

In Wiltshire, it is clear that the transition from *parochia* to parish could be achieved in a number of different ways and at a variety of paces. Already in this chapter, we have considered the Late Saxon foundation of ‘secondary’ or ‘pseudo-

minsters' by monastic and episcopal landholders, creating an intermediary level of ecclesiastical territory between the large Middle Saxon 'old minster' *parochiae* and the later local parishes. Such churches, which may include Crudwell, Purton and Bishops Cannings (Pitt 2003), often retained large parishes with dependent chapelries into the late medieval period. In the case of Bishops Cannings, a chapel at Horton is mentioned in a document of 1316, whilst it is even possible that Devizes' two Norman churches were at first chapels served by Bishops Cannings, before achieving ecclesiastical independence at some point after *c.* 1228 (Pitt 2003, 80).

Occasionally, however, some 'old minsters' in Wiltshire managed to retain all or most of their original *parochiae* as large parishes, often until the nineteenth century. As I have already indicated, this was the case at Bradford-on-Avon and Westbury, but Melksham too managed to retain two of its ancient dependencies – Erlestoke and Seend – as chapelries until 1877 and 1873 respectively (Pitt 1999, 78; see also Parker and Chandler 1993, 23). It is clear, then, that the parochial rights of minsters were not always relinquished easily during the process of fission. In the case of Bradford, it is likely that Shaftesbury Abbey kept a tight rein over ecclesiastical affairs, thereby paralleling the situation at Titchfield in Hampshire, as discussed by Patrick Hase (1994, 66-7), where the influence of lay landlordship was minimal.

In areas of Wiltshire where estates were in the hands of lay landholders in the two or three centuries either side of 1100 – many having been 'booked' in Anglo-Saxon charters (see Chapter 5) – survival of ancient *parochiae* was made much less likely by the foundation of new 'manorial' churches, which have already received attention above. In the majority of cases, the new parishes created for these churches coincided with the secular estates on which they were built and it is for this reason that so many of the small estates delimited in the bounds of Late Saxon charters reflect very closely ecclesiastical parishes shown on nineteenth-century maps (see the discussion of boundaries and burials in Chapter 5). On private estates, churches were usually founded adjacent to the manorial compound, creating a 'church-hall complex' or *curia* (see Faith 1997, 165-7). Such an arrangement is visible today at a large number of Wiltshire villages, including notably Luckington, Castle Eaton and Poulshot, whose church is mentioned in the Domesday Survey (Thorn and Thorn 1979, 1:11). Furthermore, it is attested archaeologically at Trowbridge in the tenth and eleventh centuries [2:453] (Fig. 55), which presumably at some point wrested ecclesiastical independence from the nearby minster at Melksham (Parker and Chandler 1993, 23).

In summary, what is most evident from Wiltshire is that local parish creation is neither consistent nor easy to follow. Furthermore, the process was also only in its infancy in 1100, with many churches and parishes yet to be established. Nevertheless, architectural, archaeological and documentary evidence reveals the presence of pre-Conquest 'field' churches (*i.e.* not minsters) in a handful of locations, notably at Wilcot and Alton Barnes (Table 6), and it is evident that these new foundations soon took on many of the local parochial duties previously carried out by the minsters.

## Conclusion

Throughout the discussion in this chapter, the high level of co-operation between Church and Crown in Anglo-Saxon Wiltshire has been made apparent. Middle Saxon minsters and larger monastic foundations were without exception established in conjunction with *villae regales* and there was evidently an intention that each royal estate should be served by a minster church. Both minster churches and minster *parochiae*, therefore, were key elements in the social and political landscape of early medieval Wiltshire, but they – and Christianity as a means of social identity – were also key instruments with which to assert royal and noble power. Even in the 'Final Phase' burials of the seventh century, it is clear that Christianity was intimately bound with status and authority, whilst it should also not be forgotten that many of the abbots, abbesses, bishops and priests active in Anglo-Saxon Wiltshire were either relatives of the king or, at the very least, trusted royal servants. If the Middle Saxon period can be characterised as the age of royal power, the Late Saxon period was the age of lordly power and it is clear that landlords, both institutional and private, used churches and local parishes as a means of displaying status and asserting authority in the landscape. Churches were destined to play a major rôle in shaping many of the medieval settlements in Wiltshire and it is to this aspect of the Church's impact in the county that we will return in Chapter 8.

## CHAPTER 7

### The Early Medieval Landscape

#### Introduction

What did the landscape of Anglo-Saxon Wiltshire look like? How did it change and develop between *c.* 400 and 1100? Understanding the development of the early medieval landscape is key to understanding not only how people lived and worked on a daily basis, but also where they chose to settle (Chapter 8) and also how territories and estates were organised and defined (Chapter 5).

Most of our available sources relate to the second half of the period under study. The Domesday Survey of 1086 provides a raft of valuable data, ranging from acreages of pasture, woodland and meadow held on each estate to the number of plough-teams available and even the occurrence of vineyards. The Anglo-Saxon charters add a finer level of detail to the picture, furnishing us with a wealth of information concerning Late Saxon land-use and vegetation cover in numerous locations along the boundaries of estates. Place-names too often preserve within them references to both landscape character and land-use at various stages throughout the early medieval period. Occasional material remains of both plants and animals from settlement sites allow us a rare glimpse into the agricultural routines of Anglo-Saxon daily life. In certain locations, it is possible to detect traces of pre-medieval arrangements of fields and trackways that have persisted into the modern landscape. Such 'ancient landscapes' must have been in constant use throughout the entire early medieval period.

Any discussion of the Wiltshire landscape cannot fail to take into account the fundamental topographical divide between the dissected upland chalk landscapes of the south and east of the county – the 'Chalk' – and the mainly clay lowland landscapes of the north and west, commonly referred to as the 'Cheese' (see Chapter 1). Admittedly, this simple division covers a number of subtler topographical and geological variations. Nevertheless, for the purposes of this discussion, it is a useful contrast to make.

## Regional Contrasts

### *The 'Chalk'*

From Figure 42, it is easy to see why this region of Wiltshire has traditionally been known for its mixed sheep and corn economy. Pasture is recorded for the overwhelming majority of chalkland settlements listed in the Domesday Survey and it is apparent that there was a particular concentration along the Salisbury Avon valley, where each estate extended far onto the high chalk downs. In case we are left in any doubt as to the animals grazing the downs, the Domesday entry for Porton in Idmiston refers specifically to *pastura l ovibus*, 'pasture for 50 sheep', whilst in the Exeter Domesday we are told that there were 300 sheep at Sutton Veny (Welldon Finn 1967, 60). The importance of sheep for the Anglo-Saxon downland economy is also reflected in various charter references. At East Overton, we find a *lamba pæth*, 'lambs' path', in the charter of 939 (S449; Fowler 2000a, 216; Fig. 43), whilst Michael Costen (1994, 102) has suggested that the stone wall, *stanwale*, of the Ditchampton charter of 1045 (S1010) may have been constructed in order to control sheep on the downs. Sheep bones, we should note, dominate the excavated Middle Saxon faunal assemblages at both Collingbourne Ducis and Tidworth (Pine 2001, 107-9; Godden *et al.* 2002, 246-7).

Sheep, however, were not the only animals farmed on the downs. At both Collingbourne Ducis and Tidworth, beef formed a significant component of the Anglo-Saxon diet, judging by the number and condition of the cattle bones found (Pine 2001, 104, 109; Godden *et al.* 2002, 246-7). Furthermore, although the Domesday Survey is largely tacit on the subject of cattle (Welldon Finn 1967, 60), the pre-Conquest charters contain a number of references to cattle farming in the 'Chalk' region of Wiltshire. At Swallowcliffe, for example, Choulden Lane is thought to be associated with the boundary mark *chealfa dune*, 'calves' down', in the Swallowcliffe charter of 940 (S469; Gover *et al.* 1939, 193), whilst an appendage to the East Overton charter of 939 (S449) describes a *feoh wicuna gemære*, 'cattle *wīc* boundary', which Peter Fowler places in the vicinity of Wroughton Copse on Fyfield Down (Fowler 2000a, 112-4, 216). The three occurrences of the place-name Netton should also be noted, in Shrewton, Durnford and Bishopstone (S) parishes (Gover *et al.* 1939, 236, 364, 393). Although all three were first documented either in the thirteenth or fourteenth century, it is possible that

they originated in the Late Saxon period as cattle farms; their names deriving from the Old English compound *nēata-tūn*, ‘cattle farm’ (although see Chapter 8).

Whilst cattle and sheep were both left to graze the high downlands during the summer, the valley floors were prized as meadow, producing the necessary hay to sustain the livestock through the winter, whilst also providing valuable sheltered pasture for pregnant animals and their new-born offspring. Looking at the distribution of Domesday meadow in Wiltshire (Fig. 42), whilst it is clear that the amounts recorded in the ‘Chalk’ region were generally small in comparison to those noted further to the north and west, it is also apparent that what little meadow there was beside the chalkland rivers was shared more or less evenly between the valley settlements. In the charters, boundary marks bearing the Old English place-name elements *mæd* and *hamm* betray the presence of meadow; thus, at Wylve we have reference to a *sidan hamme*, ‘wide meadow’, in a charter of 940 (S469), whilst a few miles downstream at Bemerton there is a *gemænan mæde*, ‘common meadow’, listed in a charter of 968 (S767; Gover *et al.* 1939, 433; Costen 1994, 101). Another shared area of meadowland may be the *tæsan mæde*, ‘meadow for general use’, referred to at Alton in a charter of 825 (S272). This boundary mark has given us the modern name Tawsmead, which is currently to be found in connection with a farm and a copse located in the south-eastern corner of Alton parish (Gover *et al.* 1939, 318).

Between the pasture of the high downlands and the meadow of the valley bottoms, the gentle valley slopes in particular were favoured for arable farming. Although no physical remains of field systems or lynchets here can definitively be ascribed to the Anglo-Saxon period, most Domesday settlements in the valleys of southern and eastern Wiltshire possessed plough-teams in 1086 (Fig. 42), whilst charred seeds from the Middle Saxon settlement at Collingbourne Ducis strongly suggest that both wheat and barley were grown near by (Pine 2001, 112-3). Furthermore, a number of Late Saxon charters covering chalkland estates contain references to features indicative of cultivation, such as *æker*, ‘acre, ploughed land’, *furh*, ‘furrow’, *furlang*, ‘furlong’, *gara*, ‘gore’, and *eorðland*, ‘earth land, ploughed strip’. Just a few examples one could mention are the *þreora æcra*, ‘three acres’, in the Collingbourne Kingston charter of 921 (S379), the *mær furh*, ‘boundary furrow’, in the Wylve charter of 940 (S469) and the two references to an *eorðland* in the South Newton charter of 943 (S492; Gover *et al.* 1939, 431; Costen 1994, 100). The place-name Whaddon in Alderbury parish, which is documented as *Watedene* in 1086, is also significant, preserving the

Old English compound *hwæte-denu*, ‘valley where wheat is grown’ (Gover *et al.* 1939, 375).

Of special note, however, is the passage in a charter of 962 referring to Avon Farm in Durnford parish (S706), which describes the arable land here as consisting of *singulis iugeribus mixtum in communi rure huc illacque dispersis*, ‘individual acres dispersed hither and thither mixed among the common land’ (Costen 1994, 100). This reference clearly describes the open-field or ‘Midland’ system of arable agriculture, with land being farmed in dispersed strip holdings situated in large common fields. The cryptic sentence *iugera iacent ad iugeribus*, ‘the acres lie by the acres’, in the Teffont charter of 964 (S730) may also point to such an arrangement of ploughlands (Kelly 1996, 101-2). There is good reason, then, to believe that open-field farming was already well established in parts of chalkland Wiltshire by the late tenth century and this conclusion, which is also reached by Della Hooke (1988; 1998, 121-7), echoes the findings of others in the Midlands, who have proposed a Middle Saxon origin for the open-field system (Williamson 2003, 66-7). David Hill in particular has linked its introduction with the advent of the mouldboard plough, which allowed cultivation of the heavier soils for the first time (Hill 2000).

Those parts of the chalkland landscape that were not suitable for either arable or pastoral agriculture in the Anglo-Saxon period were often managed as woodland. This was most common on the clay-with-flints soils that cap a number of the higher chalk downs – notably the Grovely Ridge and the Savernake Ridge – but large areas of woodland were also to be found in the south-eastern corner of the county, where the largely infertile Tertiary sands and clays outcrop (see Chapter 1 and Fig. 3). Looking at Figure 42, the known areas of later medieval woodland are not immediately reflected in the distribution of Domesday references to woodland in Wiltshire. Much of the ‘6 leagues by 4 leagues’ recorded for Amesbury, for example, (represented by the largest cross) probably lay in its woodland appurtenances in eastern Berkshire and the New Forest (Bond 1994, 123). Rights to ‘pasture for 80 swine, 80 cartloads of wood and wood for the repair of houses and fences’ *in silva Milchete*, ‘in Melchet wood’, noted for both South Newton and Washern manors, however, may point towards close links between Melchet Forest and the royal borough of Wilton in 1086 and before (Welldon Finn 1967, 36; Hooke 1998, 160). The woodland names Melchet and Chute are documented for the first time in the Domesday Survey, but it should be noted that both contain the Brittonic element *cēd*, ‘wood’, perhaps implying the existence of these

woods before *c.* 700, when Brittonic was still widely spoken (Gover *et al.* 1939, 12, 14; see Chapter 4).

Turning to the evidence for woodland from Anglo-Saxon charters, it is clear that its pre-Conquest distribution in southern and eastern Wiltshire largely mirrors that of Domesday and beyond. Of particular interest are references containing the terms *lēah* ‘wood, clearing’, *feld* ‘open land’, *wudu* ‘wood’, *graf* ‘grove, copse’, *sceaga* ‘small wood’, *hyrst* ‘wooded hill’ and *hangra* ‘wooded slope’, amongst others. *Lēah* is by far the commonest woodland element and its charter distribution corresponds well with the more general distribution map plotted by Gover *et al.* in 1939 (Fig. 44). This map shows clear concentrations within the later forest areas of Chute, Savernake, Selwood, Braydon and Melchet, as well as along the Grovely Ridge, which is itself recorded as *grafan lea*, perhaps ‘clearing of or in the grove’, in the Wylve charter of 940 (S469; Gover *et al.* 1939, 13). *Feld* is also an important gauge of pre-Conquest woodland, as it appears to carry the specific meaning of open or cleared land in direct contrast to adjacent areas of woodland (Roberts and Wrathmell 2002, 21-3). Two notable examples occurring within well-wooded areas are ‘Frustfield’ (*alias* Whiteparish), which is recorded as (*æt*) *Fyrstesfelda*, perhaps ‘open land covered with ferns’, in a charter of 943 (S492), and Froxfield, which appears in the form *Forscanfeld*, ‘open land frequented by frogs’, in a charter of 801x805 (S1263; Gover *et al.* 1939, 346, 386). A number of the other woodland terms are often found in close proximity, describing medium-sized or small wooded areas. Thus, within the current area of West Woods in West Overton parish, we find the *smalan leage*, ‘narrow clearing or wood’, *wuda*, ‘wood’, and *scyt hangran*, ‘corner wooded slope’, of the East Overton charter (S449, dated 939), in addition to the *langan sceagan*, ‘long small wood’, and *mere grafe*, ‘pond grove’, of the Kennett charter (Fig. 43; S784, dated 972).

As well as being used for timber and fuel, woodlands were also used as pasture for domestic pigs, in addition to hunting grounds for wild animals. Ramsbury’s location on the northern flank of Savernake Forest is reflected in the fact that pig bones formed an unusually high proportion (20%) of the domestic faunal assemblage recovered here during excavations of a Middle Saxon industrial settlement (Haslam 1980, 41-51). Among the wild animals present in the woods, however, was wild boar and we may note the Old English derivation of Everleigh’s place-name – *eofor-lēah*, ‘wild boar clearing or wood’ (Gover *et al.* 1939, 329). Both wild boar and deer are named in Anglo-Saxon literary sources as woodland animals prized for hunting and some,

including Della Hooke (1998, 154-60), have suggested that many of the *haga* features mentioned in the charters represent hedges or fences constructed in order to control deer, in effect creating early deer parks. Hooke has noted fourteen occurrences of the term *haga* in Wiltshire, five of which occur within the later Forest of Melchet and two of which are located on the southern margins of Savernake Forest (Fig. 44; Hooke 1998, 159). Both areas are known to have had links with nearby Anglo-Saxon royal estates and the possibility must be considered that these *hagas* were royal hunting reserves prior to the creation of royal forests in the Norman period (see also Bond 1994, 133; Beaumont-James and Gerrard forthcoming).

### *The 'Cheese'*

North and west Wiltshire – essentially the 'non-chalk' zone of the county – has traditionally been known for its dairy farming; hence the soubriquet 'Cheese'. Within this region, however, there is a wide variety of landscape types, ranging from the limestone hills of the Cotswolds to the open clay vales of the Bristol Avon and Thames rivers (Fig. 3). Furthermore, there is corresponding evidence for a diversity of vegetation cover and land-use throughout the Anglo-Saxon period, some of which differs markedly from that present today.

The Cotswold hills of northwest Wiltshire, for instance, have witnessed a number of important landscape changes in the past two millennia. In the later medieval period, this region was renowned for its sheep and corn husbandry, which was, in part, reflected in the boom of the woollen textile industry here in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries (Jennings 2000). Even today we associate the Cotswolds with large arable fields and extensive sheep pastures. In the Middle Saxon period, however, the landscape would have appeared very different: 'a stranger coming into a wold one evening in the seventh century or the eighth would have entered a wood-pasture ... a landscape dominated by those two types of land use rather than by ploughland' (Fox 2000, 51). Our word 'wold', it must be remembered, has its root in the Old English term *wald*, 'wood'.

There are several indications from place-names that Cotswold Wiltshire was once well wooded in the early medieval period. As Figure 44 shows, *lēah* settlement-names are frequent here, thus indicating the presence of woodland clearance in the Middle and Late Saxon centuries (Gelling and Cole 2000, 237-41): indeed, there is a

marked concentration in the vicinity of Bradford-on-Avon – Woolley, Leigh, Farleigh, Rowley, Winsley and Ashley, to name but a few (Gover *et al.* 1939, 115-26). These coincide with other Anglo-Saxon woodland settlement-names. Holt, which is perhaps to be associated with *wrindesholt* in the Bradford charter of 1001 (S899; Kelly 1996, 114-22), is derived from the Old English term *holt*, ‘wood’, whilst Westwood appears as *(to) Westwuda* in the Westwood charter of 987 (S867; Gover *et al.* 1939, 122). Importantly, there are also two *feld* settlement-names close by. Chalfield, ‘cold open land’, occurs as *Chaldfelde* in the Bradford charter (Kelly 1996, 116), whilst Wingfield, ‘Wina’s open land’, may possibly correlate with *wuntfeld* in the Ashton charter of 964 (S727; Grundy 1920, 73-4). Woodland animals mentioned in Bradford place-names include wolves, deer and pigs – Woolley, Hartley and Swansbrook (Gover *et al.* 1939, 118, 124, 125).

The presence of a number of Old English woodland names in Cotswold Wiltshire should not fool us into thinking that arable or pastoral agriculture was not practised here in the pre-Conquest period. Although Shipton Moyne lies just outside the county in Gloucestershire, its name preserves the Old English compound *scēap-tūn*, ‘sheep farm’ (Mills 1998, 311), whilst there is also a handful of place-names – in addition to those containing *lēah* – that appear to indicate Middle and Late Saxon land clearance both for settlement and agriculture. The two *feld* place-names close to Bradford-on-Avon have already been noted, but Bradfield in Hullavington parish, which is first recorded in the Domesday Survey, appears to represent ‘wide open land’ (Gover *et al.* 1939, 71), whilst the name *clinanfeld*, ‘bare open land’, occurs only a few miles further south at Langley Burrell in a charter of 940 (S473; Costen 1994, 102). That some of this cleared land was used for arable cultivation is confirmed by the presence of terms such as *æcer*, *furh* and *furlang* (see above) in Cotswold charters. At Norton, for example, a *mere acre*, ‘boundary acre’, *langevorlange*, ‘long furlong’, and *heved londe*, ‘headland’, are all to be found in the same undated set of bounds (S1585; Grundy 1919, 221-3). Evidently, the Late Saxon period witnessed a gradual move away from wood-pasture towards sheep and corn husbandry on the Cotswold hills and it may be no coincidence that a string of nucleated villages with strikingly regular plans had developed here by the later medieval centuries (Lewis 1994, 174; see Chapter 8).

Away from the Cotswold hills, the topography of north and west Wiltshire is dominated by a series of wide low-lying vales – Wardour, Pewsey, Warminster, Avon and Thames (Fig. 3). Today, this ‘Cheese’ landscape is characterised by a mixture of

woodland, pasture and arable and there is evidence to suggest that this was also the case before 1100. Turning first to the evidence for woodland, it is necessary to consider that four royal forests were located in the region under discussion in the later medieval period – Braydon, Chippenham, Melksham and Selwood (Fig. 3). None of these forests is mentioned by name in the Domesday Survey, but all are reflected indirectly in the large quantities of woodland entered for the manors of Purton, Chippenham, Melksham, Westbury and Warminster (Fig. 42). Four of these estates were held by the king in 1086 and it is clear that royal interest in the woodlands here dated back before the Norman Conquest. At Chippenham, for example, Edward the Confessor (1042-1065) is known to have hunted deer, boar and hares (Short 2000, 132). The presence of a *haga* (see above) at nearby Hardenhuish (S308, dated 854) should also not pass unnoticed (Grundy 1919, 171). That the later area of Chippenham and Melksham forests was already densely wooded by the seventh or eighth century is indicated by the place-name Chittoe in Bromham parish, which appears to preserve the Brittonic compound *ceđ-tew*, ‘thick wood’ (Coates and Breeze 2000, 88-9). It should be noted, however, that the density of Romano-British settlements here in the vicinity of *Verlucio* suggests that this had not always been the case (Chapter 2) and a certain amount of early post-Roman woodland regeneration seems to be implied.

Charter evidence and place-names lend further support to the supposition that large areas of the Wiltshire vales were well wooded in the Anglo-Saxon period. From Figure 44, it is apparent that *lēah* names are widely distributed throughout this region, whilst other Old English woodland terms are also common. Della Hooke’s study of the charter evidence relating to Braydon Forest has revealed the presence of no fewer than eleven *lēah* features, located mostly towards the fringes of the later royal forest, in addition to a *wodeweye*, ‘wood way’, and a *waldes forde*, ‘ford of the wood’, both of which lay in Charlton (N) parish (Fig. 45; Hooke 1994, 93-4). The presence of seasonal stock pastures within the woodland is suggested by the occurrence of two *faldes*, ‘folds’, at Grittenham in Brinkworth, one of which was described as a *rammesfold*, ‘rams’ fold’ (Hooke 1994, 94). Further evidence for the animals pastured in the wooded areas of the clay vales comes from the Domesday entry for Yarnfield (then in Somerset), which lists the presence of ‘2 cows, 25 swine and 134 sheep’ on the estate (Welldon Finn 1967, 60). We should also note that Shaftesbury Abbey claimed rights to a *bær*, ‘swine-pasture’, at Sedgehill in the Vale of Wardour in the tenth century (S850; Kelly 1996, 111), whilst swineherds (*porcarii*) were present on four large

Domesday manors in Wiltshire – Chippenham, Warminster, Westbury and Bradford-on-Avon (Welldon Finn 1967, 27).

Whilst woodland and wood-pasture was no doubt extensive in many of the Wiltshire vales, cow pastures and meadows were also to be found alongside the many rivers and streams. On the damp clay beside the River Avon just to the south of Malmesbury, Cole Park, which is the *Cusfalde* of a charter dated 1065 (S1038), takes its name from the Old English compound *cū-falod*, ‘cow fold’, whilst the three medieval occurrences of the compound *cū-wīc*, ‘cow farm’, in Calne, Hilmarton and Mere parishes should also be noted (Gover *et al.* 1939, 179, 260, 269). The strong presence of cattle bones in the assemblage from the Middle and Late Saxon occupation layers at Trowbridge further underlines the importance of dairy farming in the Biss and Avon valleys (Graham and Davies 1993, 127-36), whilst the frequency of the term *hamm*, ‘river-meadow’, especially in riverine settlement-names, such as Chippenham and Melksham, is particularly worthy of note (Gover *et al.* 1939, 408-9).

Looking at the distribution of Domesday meadow (Fig. 42), it is apparent that unusually large amounts were entered for a number of the Thames valley manors; for example, one hundred acres for Ashton Keynes, two hundred acres jointly for Latton and Eisey and one hundred acres for Castle Eaton (Welldon Finn 1967, 40). This concentration of meadow corresponds with a scarcity of Domesday woodland in the Thames valley (Fig. 42). Furthermore, the earlier Anglo-Saxon importance of meadow here is confirmed by a number of settlement-names, including Inglesham - ‘Ingen’s river-meadow’, Oaksey - ‘Wocc’s well-watered land’, and Marston Meysey - ‘marsh farm’ (Gover *et al.* 1939, 28, 29, 63).

The high densities of Domesday plough-teams in many of the Wiltshire vales (Fig. 42) may at first glance appear surprising in view of the corresponding evidence for extensive areas of woodland and meadow, but it should be remembered that along the Avon valley in particular are stretches of rich alluvial soil that are well suited to cultivation, whilst the Upper Greensand in the Vales of Pewsey, Wardour and Warminster produces ‘a good, light, neutral-calcareous humus-rich sandy loam which is excellent for agriculture’ (Geddes 2000, 89). Furthermore, with the introduction of the mouldboard plough in the Late Saxon period, it is likely that some of the heavier clay soils were also cultivated. Such a scenario is suggested in the vicinity of Trowbridge, where some of the arable weed species entering a cess-pit deposit of late eleventh- or

early twelfth-century date display a marked preference for heavy, damp soils (Graham and Davies 1993, 140).

The range of crops grown near Trowbridge appears to have included oats and bread/club wheat (Graham and Davies 1993, 138), but the presence of two further cultivated species in the Wiltshire vales is suggested by place-names. *Wād*, 'woad', is the first element in Whaddon in Hilpertton parish and Woodhill in Clyffe Pypard, both of which are documented in the Domesday Survey (Gover *et al.* 1939, 144, 267), in addition to the *wadleage* of the Pewsey charter (S470, dated 940; Grundy 1919, 251). Meanwhile, 'meadow or enclosure where flax is grown' – *līn-ham(m)* – is perhaps the best interpretation of Lyneham's place-name (Gover *et al.* 1939, 270). Both woad and flax were grown for their use as dyes, whilst sowing 'flax, and woad-seed as well' is listed among the annual duties that a 'good reeve must see to' in the late tenth- or early eleventh-century text known as *Gerefa* (Hooke 1998, 132-3). As in the rest of the county, charter references to arable land may be found in the vales of Wiltshire. Furlongs (*furlanges*) are mentioned at Brinkworth (S1576) and Moreton in Swindon (S705), whilst the *hevedakerende* of the undated Dauntsey bounds (S1580) is perhaps best interpreted as 'the headland at the end of a furlong' (Costen 1994, 100).

In summary, this brief account has only drawn together a fraction of the landscape references contained in Anglo-Saxon charters and place-names in Wiltshire, but it is nevertheless clear that both the 'Chalk' and 'Cheese' regions were characterised by a wide diversity of vegetation cover and land-use in the early medieval period. Woodland and pasture were clearly major elements in the 'Cheese' landscape, whilst the 'strip' territories of the 'Chalk' typically combined elements of downland arable and pasture with river valley meadow and small areas of woodland.

### **'Ancient Landscapes'**

In some parts of Wiltshire, there is evidence to suggest that the current pattern of field boundaries and trackways preserves elements of a pre-medieval landscape, originating in the later prehistoric or Romano-British periods. Over the past three decades, research by Warwick Rodwell (1978), Tom Williamson (1987) and Stephen Rippon (1991) in particular has helped to establish the presence of extensive 'co-axial' field-systems in East Anglia, of which the 'Scole-Dickleburgh' example in Norfolk is the best known and most debated (Fig. 46; Hinton 1997; Williamson 1998). The key features of these

systems are that their major axes tend to run perpendicular to the principal river valleys, often terminating at watersheds, whilst their minor axes consist of parallel ladder-like bundles of gently sinuous boundaries, giving the overall appearance of 'slightly wavy brickwork' (Williamson 2003, 40). Where such landscapes are crossed by Roman roads – such as the Pye Road in the case of 'Scole-Dickleburgh' (Fig. 46) – it is apparent that the roads often cut through the 'grain' of the landscape at an oblique angle, sometimes slicing through individual fields. The clear implication here is that the Roman roads came *after* the field boundaries, thereby confirming the latter's prehistoric or Early Roman origin.

In Wiltshire, medieval and modern changes to the landscape have all but obliterated traces of early field-systems. However, at a handful of locations in the north and west of the county, fragments of 'ancient landscapes' do survive, attesting their continuous use for two millennia or more. At three places in particular, the early origin of field boundaries and trackways is revealed by their relationship to Roman roads. In Crudwell parish, the county boundary with Gloucestershire is formed by the straight-running Fosse Way Roman road, but it is clear from Figure 47 that a number of landscape features here on a north-south axis 'underlie' the road and, therefore, pre-date it. Further south on the Fosse Way, a similar situation has been observed in a recent survey of cropmarks and earthworks in the vicinity of the small town at Easton Grey (Corney 2001, 23-6). To the east of Cricklade at Calcutt, meanwhile, the Roman Ermin Street again slices obliquely across a north-south field-system, apparently bisecting one field and leaving two triangular parcels of land (Fig. 48).

In the case of Calcutt, we may postulate that a rectilinear field-system here was directly associated with the known Romano-British villa site at Kingshill Farm [1:72], which has also yielded notable evidence for post-Roman occupation [2:182]. If this was so, it would parallel the situation known at Tockenham, where recent research has suggested that the present road running through the village preserves the northwest-southeast alignment of a rectilinear field-system contemporary with the partially excavated Romano-British villa here (Fig. 49; Harding and Lewis 1997, 38-40). A glance at a map of the adjacent parishes to the south and east reveals that Tockenham fits into a wider pattern of northwest-southeast boundaries and one wonders whether the pattern of fields and trackways in Clyffe Pypard and Broad Town parishes in particular are pre-medieval in origin. They certainly give the impression of 'slightly wavy brickwork' and may be a direct legacy of a 'co-axial' landscape based on the movement

of cattle and other livestock between woodlands to the north and downland pastures to the south (see Williamson 2003, 40-3).

One last area of the modern Wiltshire landscape that deserves particular attention lies to the south of Gastard in Corsham parish, adjacent to the Roman road running east-west between Bath and Mildenhall (Fig. 50). Again, the appearance of 'slightly wavy brickwork' is preserved in modern field boundaries, but, unlike in the examples above, the fields here do not 'underlie' the Roman road, but instead appear to be cast off at right angles to it. A similar scenario has been recorded by Peter Fowler on Overton Hill in West Overton, where a 'brickwork' field-system lying on the northern side of the same Roman road has been assigned a Roman date on the basis of its morphology (Fowler 2000a, 26). That the Gastard field system in Corsham is similarly Romano-British in date must now be regarded as probable and it is interesting to note the place-name Wick immediately to the east (Draper 2002, 40), in addition to Boyd's Farm immediately to the west, where a number of significant Roman and post-Roman finds have been made [2:174-6].

Interpreting 'ancient landscapes' is not without its difficulties. Andrew Fleming, for example, has discovered that field boundaries can sometimes be abandoned and then brought back into use at a later date (Fleming 1988, 28-9). As Stephen Rippon has concluded, however, 'it is unlikely that extensive areas of the landscape such as the Scole-Dickleburgh system in Norfolk ... would have been restored had it gone totally out of use and been enveloped by woodland. Rather, for these landscapes to have survived (albeit in a much altered form) implies that the area remained in some sort of agricultural use throughout their existence' (Rippon 2000, 49). Agricultural continuity through the post-Roman transition and beyond is, therefore, implied (see Chapter 4).

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, we found evidence for both continuity and change in the early medieval countryside. Some areas of Wiltshire, notably in the north and west, have yielded signs of prehistoric or Romano-British landscape survival. As Simon Esmonde Cleary has commented, 'the evidence that landscapes of Roman or pre-Roman origins were perpetuated into the post-medieval period must mean that in the fifth century there were still people living there and tilling the ground and raising their herds within the physical

framework of their ancestral landscape' (Esmonde Cleary 1989, 159). In other parts of the county, however, changes took place. In the area around Calne, for example, woodland took hold where previously there were settlements and fields. Furthermore, extensive Romano-British arable field systems on the high chalk downs were abandoned in favour of open sheep and cow pastures (see also Chapter 4).

Further changes took place in the Middle and Late Saxon periods. Woodland was gradually cleared for both arable and pasture in the Cotswolds, whilst arable farming was revolutionised across Wiltshire by the introduction of the mouldboard plough and the 'Midland' open-field system. By 1100, then, the fields, pastures, woods and meadows of Wiltshire were divided between a large number of small estates, each of which included the widest variety of landscape types possible in its local area. The layout of the Anglo-Saxon landscape evidently influenced the arrangement of territories, producing the characteristic 'strip' parishes of the chalkland valleys, and we can surmise that settlements too were not immune from agrarian influences. The pivotal rôle played by the landscape in shaping early medieval settlement in Wiltshire will now be made apparent in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER 8

### Early Medieval Settlement and Society

#### Introduction

Much has been written on the origins of English medieval settlements – particularly villages – in the past few decades. When, how and why they formed are questions that have dominated the research agenda. Most studies have tackled these ‘big questions’ either through national studies (*e.g.* Roberts 1977; 1987; Taylor 1983) or through regional surveys, mostly with a focus in the Midlands (*e.g.* Brown and Foard 1998; Lewis *et al.* 2001). The most recent works, however, stress the importance of regional variation (see Roberts and Wrathmell 2002; Williamson 2003).

In Wiltshire, it is important to examine the processes governing the pattern and form of early medieval settlement with one eye on research carried out elsewhere in England, but also looking to the local region for influential factors. The rôles played by both the local landscape and society in shaping settlements will receive particular attention, as we have already seen how they significantly affected the layout of territories in the county (Chapter 5 and 7). Our sources will once again be a combination of archaeology, place-names and documentary evidence. It must be appreciated, however, that the character of settlement before 1100 is very much more difficult to gauge than in the centuries following, when a plethora of manorial documents, settlement earthworks and some standing buildings aid our understanding. Nevertheless, some elements of existing settlements may occasionally, with care, be ascribed to the pre-Conquest period, whilst settlement-names and excavated settlement features offer tantalising glimpses of the wider pattern.

#### The Pattern of Settlement

##### *The ‘Chalk’*

Whilst it was once held that Early Saxon settlements in the chalklands of southern England were typically located in hilltop locations on well-drained and often poor soils (Arnold and Wardle 1981; but see Hamerow 1991), this was clearly not the case in

Wiltshire. Here, the bulk of the archaeological evidence relates to valley bottom sites, thus indicating the importance of both rivers and river-meadows to settlement at this time. This said, however, there is a handful of locations on the higher chalk downs where quantities of post-Roman organic-tempered pottery have been found – Chisenbury Warren [2:218] and Coombe Down [2:215] in Enford, Round Hill Downs in Ogbourne St George [2:345-7] and Little Down in Tidcombe & Fosbury [2:445], for example (Fig. 29). As I have previously suggested in Chapter 4, such sites are often situated on or close to known Roman settlements and they may represent continued post-Roman ‘British’ occupation. Whilst these sites are essentially unable to be dated, due to an absence of diagnostic artefacts, it is perhaps unlikely that any outlasted the eighth century, by which time the Anglo-Saxon cultural presence was firmly established throughout the county. The most likely scenario is that they were gradually abandoned during the Early Saxon period in favour of lowland sites. Such a course of action is paralleled elsewhere, including Chalton in Hampshire (Cunliffe 1972b), Bishopstone in Sussex (Bell 1977) and the Vale of the White Horse in Berkshire (Tingle 1991).

By *c.* 750, then, the scattered Romano-British settlement pattern of the chalklands had been replaced by the present riverine pattern, with settlements for the most part lining the valley bottoms (*cf.* Figs 4 & 51). However, this is not to say that the river valleys were not already densely occupied during the Roman and Early Saxon centuries. As we saw in Chapter 2, all of the major river valleys have yielded ample evidence for Roman settlement, notably in the form of villas along the Salisbury Avon and Kennet rivers. Furthermore, the positioning of six out of the eight known fifth-century Anglo-Saxon cemeteries in the county beside the Salisbury Avon and Bourne rivers confirms the continuing importance of these valley locations into the Early Saxon period (Fig. 25). We should also bear in mind the place-name evidence offered to us in settlement-names ending in the Old English element *burna*, ‘stream’. Margaret Gelling has assigned such names a fifth- or sixth-century origin (Gelling and Cole 2000, xix, 10; see Chapter 4) and it is unlikely to be mere coincidence that the overwhelming majority of ‘-bourne’ settlements in chalkland Wiltshire have produced archaeological evidence for Early and Middle Saxon activity – Aldbourne, Collingbourne (x2), Ogbourne (x2), Medbourne in Liddington, Shalbourne and Winterbourne, for example.

Where Early Saxon settlement sites are either known or suspected, evidence for both Romano-British and medieval habitation is often not far away. A certain amount of continuity of occupation in the valley bottoms from at least the Roman period to the

present day may be suspected, even if individual sites and structures seldom survived for more than a few generations at a time. Indeed, what the evidence from elsewhere in the country appears to be telling us is that Early and Middle Saxon settlements often shifted their locations gradually over time (Hamerow 1991). This process of settlement drift may be seen most clearly in Wiltshire at two sites in the Kennet valley.

At West Kennett Farm in Avebury parish [2:58], excavations carried out by Wessex Archaeology in 1989 and 1997 revealed enough evidence to suggest that settlement here has continued more or less unbroken from the Middle Saxon period through to the present day. Among the features revealed was a 'pre-Conquest' timber structure, in addition to an enclosure ditch containing limestone-tempered pottery dated to between the eighth and tenth centuries (Fig. 52; Pollard and Reynolds 2002, 217-8). Significantly, however, this site lies only 150m to the north of the prehistoric West Kennett Palisade Enclosure 2, where a large quantity of organic-tempered pottery sherds was recovered during excavations in 1992 [2:202]. Unfortunately, no further investigation into the depositional context of these sherds was carried out, but it remains a possibility that there was once an Early to Middle Saxon settlement here, thus making it the likely predecessor of West Kennett to the north.

A comparable drift of settlement is also visible at neighbouring Avebury. Here, a number of excavations during the past century have provided us with an unusually detailed understanding of settlement history over the last two millennia. From the Roman small town beside Silbury Hill [1:1], settlement migrated 200-300m northwards in the Early Saxon period to the southern car park, beside the River Kennet [2:44-5]. Then, towards the end of the Middle Saxon period, occupation drifted once again northwards towards the henge and the present village. Settlement deposits in Butler's Field [2:47] have yielded calibrated radiocarbon dates in a range from AD 800-1200, whilst the earliest features excavated at the village school site [2:52] have been assigned a date in the early ninth century (Fig. 53; Pollard and Reynolds 2002, 198-9).

In the narrower chalkland valleys, such as that of the River Bourne, space for settlement drift was more restricted and there appears to have been a greater degree of site continuity over time. At Cadley Road in Collingbourne Ducis [2:163], it has not been possible to detect a shifting pattern of Anglo-Saxon settlement at all. Calibrated radiocarbon dates derived from material in four of the ten sunken-featured buildings excavated suggest a lengthy period of occupation within the date range AD 430-990. Furthermore, a theoretically Early Saxon building (SFB 101) is situated only 30m from

one (SFB 106) that is provisionally dated to the ninth or tenth century (Fig. 26; Pine 2001, 88, 114). Further down the Bourne valley at North Tidworth, a similar situation appears to be implied on the Matthew Estate [2:448], where two sets of pits containing domestic waste are situated only 10m apart (Fig. 54). The western pit group has been assigned an Early Saxon date on account of its organic-tempered pottery, whilst the eastern pit group appears to be significantly later, judging by its limestone/chalk-tempered pottery, which would suit a date in the range 700-1000. Clearly, a settlement or farmstead was not far away in both periods and, as the excavators conclude, it is likely that such a settlement ‘persisted over several generations’ (Godden *et al.* 2002, 246).

Whether settlements drifted to a greater or lesser degree within the valley bottoms, evidence from both West Kennett and Avebury strongly points to a date towards the end of the Middle Saxon period, in around 800, for the ‘fixing’ of the settlements here in their later medieval and current locations. Whilst two sites alone are not enough to suggest a wider trend, it is significant that Helena Hamerow has talked of ‘a fundamental change from essentially mobile to essentially stable communities’ beginning in the late eighth or early ninth century (Hamerow 1991, 16-17). Hand-in-hand with this change came the partial transition from dispersed to nucleated settlement (see below) and it is worthy of note that Andrew Reynolds has described ninth-century Avebury as ‘a large settlement formed of curvilinear enclosures with an elliptical street plan at its core’ (Pollard and Reynolds 2002, 201). This interpretation is based partly on a set of earthworks within the village area that was surveyed in the 1980s (Pollard and Reynolds 2002, 198-9, plate 17). If these earthworks do indeed relate to the Middle Saxon settlement phase, as Reynolds claims, then they provide clear evidence that Avebury had already made the transition to a nucleated village.

Elsewhere in chalkland Wiltshire, evidence for the process of nucleation is hard to come by. One important point that has been raised by Carenza Lewis, however, is that, although the settlement pattern in the chalkland valleys at first appears to be nucleated in character, closer examination suggests that this is in fact a simplification. ‘The valley settlements’, she observes, ‘display an amazing aggregation. In many cases several named settlements are so closely packed that there is hardly a gap between them ... The apparent nucleation in the valleys appears to be an intensive occupation of the space suitable for settlement’ (Lewis 1992, 182-3). Shrewton is a classic example,

consisting of eight separate hamlets, five of which were recorded in 1086 (Aston 1985, 79-80).

That this process of expansion and infilling of the valley settlement pattern was still taking place after 1100 is demonstrated by place-names such as Faulston and Flamston in Bishopstone (S), which contain Norman personal names (see Chapter 5). However, that this same process was also happening in the Late Saxon period is suggested by a range of other place-names ending in the element *tūn*. In Figheldean parish, for example, we find Ablington – ‘Ealdbeald’s farm’, Alton – ‘Ælla’s farm’ and Choulston – ‘Ceolstan’s farm’, all of which were recorded in 1086 (Gover *et al.* 1939, 366). We should also not forget Aughton in Collingbourne Kingston, which was named after a tenth-century holder of the estate – Æffe – as recorded in a charter (see Chapter 5). Such farmsteads were established by a new generation of petty landlords, who vied for land in the valley bottoms as ‘manorialisation’ took place. It is clear, then, that this process had a profound effect on the settlement pattern of the ‘Chalk’, accounting for many of the smaller settlements that now jostled for position with older established nuclei.

### *The ‘Cheese’*

The current settlement pattern of the ‘Cheese’ region of Wiltshire is more varied than that of the ‘Chalk’, with villages in places co-existing with hamlets and a number of scattered farmsteads (Fig. 51). Settlements are also more evenly distributed across the landscape than in the chalklands, reflecting the wider availability of water. Determining the origins of this varied settlement pattern is made harder than in the ‘Chalk’ by the comparative scarcity of Early Saxon archaeological material, in addition to our lack of knowledge concerning the Romano-British settlement pattern on the heavier clay soils. Nevertheless, a few Anglo-Saxon settlement sites have been excavated ahead of development, whilst place-names and sporadic finds of pottery and metalwork all help to throw some light on the changing pattern of settlements in this region.

A basic assumption that underlies recent work on the settlement pattern of Wiltshire away from the ‘Chalk’ is that the predominantly dispersed character of settlement in this region was to a large extent established in the Roman period, with many of the same sites continuing to be occupied (Lewis 1994, 188-91). Clearly, there were changes and these will be discussed further below. Nevertheless, some locations

have always been attractive to settlement and we may be reasonably sure that these 'nodal places' continued to be inhabited throughout the early medieval period, thereby providing a basic frame for the medieval settlement pattern.

'Nodal places' in the 'Cheese' country of Wiltshire may be divided into three main topographical categories – spring sites, low hills above marshland and, thirdly, river crossings – each of which will be discussed in turn. A prime example of a spring-line location with a long record of settlement is Market Lavington, which sits below the northern chalk escarpment of Salisbury Plain. Here, excavations within the medieval core of the village at Grove Farm have not only recovered settlement features of Early, Middle and Late Saxon date, but also forty-two inhumations from an Anglo-Saxon cemetery of fifth- to seventh-century date that partly underlies the graveyard of the medieval parish church [2:305-6] (Williams and Newman 1998). It is important to note, however, that the presence of a substantial Roman building on or near the excavated site has been inferred from quantities of pottery, tiles and architectural fragments found, whilst cropmarks located only 200m to the west have been provisionally interpreted as a celled villa of possible first-century origin [1:95] (Williams and Newman 1998, 107).

Market Lavington is not alone among Wiltshire spring-line settlements with archaeological evidence for Anglo-Saxon and Romano-British antecedents. Appendix 2 shows us that Anglo-Saxon pottery of various descriptions has been found within the village areas of Bishopstone (N), Cherhill, Chiseldon, Compton Bassett, Swallowcliffe, Teffont, Wanborough and Wroughton, whilst concentrations of Early and Middle Saxon metalwork are known at Bishops Cannings, Edington and Great Cheverell. Romano-British habitation is also known or implied at a number of these locations, including Cherhill, where a villa partly underlies the parish church of St James [1:64], and Teffont, where a cemetery and possible temple site are recorded [1:259]. Although conclusive archaeological evidence is lacking, the suggestion is, nevertheless, that habitation has continued more or less unbroken at these locations over the past two thousand years at least. Settlements may have drifted, expanded or contracted during this time, but the springs always provided a natural focus for attention: indeed, their importance is reflected in settlement-names containing the elements *æwell*, *funta* and *wella*, such as Alton, Teffont and Crudwell (see Chapters 2 and 4 for *funta* place-names).

The importance to settlement of the second category of 'nodal place' – a low hill surrounded by marshland – is amply illustrated by three examples in the northeast of the

county. The medieval core of Swindon, known as Old Town, is prominently located atop an outlier of Portland limestone rising sharply above the surrounding Kimmeridge clay (Geddes 2000, 132). A series of excavations here in the vicinity of Market Square has not only located sunken-featured buildings of Early to Middle Saxon date [2:432-3], but also Romano-British stone buildings dated to the fourth century [1:226-7].

Highworth too is notable for its hilltop situation and there is clear evidence for both Roman and Early to Middle Saxon settlement at Priory Green [1:182 & 2:246]. Finally, the village of Purton shares its elevated location on a narrow limestone ridge overlooking the heavy clays of Braydon Forest with a sizeable Romano-British and Iron Age settlement [1:104]. Although direct evidence for early medieval settlement is not present, a seventh-century cemetery has been excavated at The Fox, only 600m to the east of the parish church [2:362].

Other medieval villages in prominent hilltop locations exist at a number of locations in central and northeast Wiltshire – for example, at Hannington, Brinkworth and Seend – and, whilst archaeological evidence for pre-medieval settlement is currently lacking, it must be regarded as unlikely that such geologically prominent sites were ignored. Supporting evidence for this supposition comes from the use of the Old English element *dūn*, ‘hill’, to describe a significant proportion of the settlements in such situations – Blunsdon, Clardon, Hannington, Haydon, Mannington, Moredon and Swindon, for example (Gover *et al.* 1939, 407). Margaret Gelling has repeatedly stressed the link between this element and Early Saxon settlement (Gelling 1984, 140-58; Gelling and Cole 2000, xix, 164-8) and she has recently stated; ‘where, as in the majority of instances, *dūn* is used of low hills in open country, it is obvious that the antecedents of most of the settlements must have been in these situations from prehistoric times’ (Gelling and Cole 2000, 165). Certainly, the longevity of settlement on the hilltop at Swindon is plain to see and there is indeed good reason to assert that such sites ‘cannot have been unoccupied when English speakers arrived’ (Gelling and Cole 2000, 165).

Just as in the chalklands to the south and east, the river valleys of the ‘Cheese’ region of Wiltshire have proved attractive to both Romano-British and early medieval settlement and it is noteworthy that the overwhelming majority of the principal minster settlements, estate centres and heads of hundreds of the Late Saxon period are situated beside river crossings (see Chapter 5). Bradford-on-Avon, Malmesbury and Tisbury are just three examples and each has yielded evidence for Romano-British and even Iron

Age occupation (Haslam 1984). Clearly, these locations had a long-established importance, but it is doubtful whether such evidence can be used to claim the prehistoric-to-medieval continuity of both settlements and estates (*pace* Haslam 1984). A more likely explanation is that, as ‘nodal places’, these regionally important river crossings were always likely to remain central to patterns of settlement and administration, whatever their form or character over time.

One riverine settlement where the archaeological evidence for its early medieval development is clearer than average is Trowbridge [2:453], which is situated on the River Biss – a tributary of the Bristol Avon. Here, excavations carried out in the town centre revealed several phases of pre-Conquest occupation underlying the medieval castle, cemetery and chapel (Fig. 55; Graham and Davies 1993). By *c.* 1000, the settlement had acquired a church and a manorial compound, but the earliest domestic features identified on the site comprised a complete sunken-featured building and parts of at least three others datable to between the seventh and ninth centuries. Although no Early Saxon activity was identified, Iron Age structures and a range of Romano-British finds indicate that settlements of these dates lay close by. Evidently, Middle Saxon ‘Trowbridge’ had not been established in a virgin location and, given the tendency (noted above) towards mobility of settlement in the period prior to *c.* 800, it is entirely possible that an Early Saxon phase of occupation awaits discovery only a short distance away. Admittedly, this is only speculation at present, but the suggestion should not be dismissed out of hand.

So far in this discussion, I have identified a number of locations where the settlement history of the past two thousand years is likely to have been characterised by broad continuity. As I have already hinted, however, this was not the case everywhere. The medieval royal forests of Chippenham and Braydon are cases in point. Chippenham Forest was evidently densely occupied and intensively farmed in the Roman period, when it contained the small town of *Verlucio* and a host of attendant villas and agricultural settlements (see Chapter 2). Rather than continuing as an important area of Anglo-Saxon settlement, however, depopulation and woodland regeneration followed the ending of Roman rule and the forest remained largely free of habitation until the post-medieval period. In contrast, Braydon Forest has so far yielded only very limited evidence for Roman activity. Only Minety, whose Brittonic place-name has already been noted in Chapter 4, appears to continue the site of a Romano-British settlement, which lay at the heart of a regional pottery and tile industry

(Lewis 1999, 95). As Carenza Lewis' recent study of Braydon has shown, the highly dispersed settlement pattern of this region is largely a creation of later medieval colonisation, as land was gradually disafforested in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries (Lewis 1999, fig. 36). Before this period, the tract of land between Purton in the east and Charlton in the west was largely uninhabited woodland, devoid of permanent settlements.

Elsewhere in the 'Cheese' region of Wiltshire there is evidence for settlement change. A number of Romano-British settlements have produced archaeological evidence for Early-Middle Saxon occupation, but only a few remained inhabited into the Late Saxon and Norman periods. One potential explanation for this phenomenon is that, as on the chalk downlands, some settlements were gradually abandoned in favour of others – especially those situated in 'nodal places'. It is even possible that this abandonment was also associated with settlement nucleation (see below). A likely example of this process in action may be seen at the Cotswold Community in Ashton Keynes [2:41]. Here, recent excavations have uncovered a large multi-period settlement with structures of Bronze Age, Iron Age, Romano-British and Early-Middle Saxon date. Significantly, however, no evidence for later medieval occupation has yet been reported and it seems probable that the settlement here was eclipsed by others situated near by on the Thames and Churn rivers. Ashton Keynes – located only 2km south-east – had evidently risen to prominence by *c.* 880, when it is mentioned as a royal estate in the will of Alfred the Great (S1507). It is not insignificant, then, that an eighth-century decorated bronze cover has been discovered close to Church Farm [2:40].

With the notable exception of Trowbridge, detailed archaeological evidence for the Late Saxon phases of rural settlements away from the 'Chalk' is lacking. What is evident, however, is that many settlement cores are likely to have been 'fixed' in their medieval and post-medieval locations by the ninth and tenth centuries, when some of them, like Trowbridge, gained churches and manorial enclosures. In addition, whilst settlement may have become more concentrated in the Middle Saxon period, with occupation focused in a limited number of favoured locations (see below), the period from the ninth to the twelfth centuries was characterised by an expansion and intensification of settlement, as new farmsteads and hamlets were established away from existing centres of population. Although this process is not exemplified in place-names as readily as in the chalkland valleys, there are nevertheless a few names of the 'personal name + *tūn*' type that certainly originated during this period – Thoulstone,

Crockerton and Bushton, for example (Gover *et al.* 1939, 156, 167, 266). The distribution of woodland settlement-names containing the element *lēah* should also not escape attention. Margaret Gelling has recently commented that most such names were coined between *c.* 750 and 950 and it is likely that many 'represent the breaking-in of new arable on the edges of ancient forest' (Gelling and Cole 2000, 237). Evidently, woodland colonisation was widespread across the region during this period and it is a process that can only have been encouraged by the growth of small estates.

### **Explaining Settlement Form**

So far in this discussion of Wiltshire settlement, I have put forward a number of possible explanations for the origins of the medieval settlement pattern in the county, but I have not yet addressed what a number of scholars see as the fundamental questions in settlement studies today: when, how and why did villages form and why did they only form in certain places, leaving a dispersed pattern of farms and hamlets elsewhere?

Before the specific evidence relating to settlement nucleation and dispersion in Wiltshire in the period before 1100 is discussed, it is necessary to consider briefly the impact of post-Conquest processes on settlement form in the county. Two issues deserve particular attention. The first concerns what I shall term 'nucleation by aggregation' – *i.e.* the simple merging together of two or more adjacent settlements. The end result of this process is commonly known as a 'polyfocal' village (Taylor 1977) and a recently studied example outside Wiltshire is Strethall in Essex, where 'ribbon' development in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries fused pre-existing settlement foci into a single sprawling village (Roberts and Wrathmell 1998, 112). Evidently, this is how a number of the chalk valley settlements in Wiltshire came to acquire their nucleated appearances (see above), but the process is also attested outside the 'Chalk' region. Mick Aston has drawn attention to the case of Biddestone on the Cotswold plateau, which 'originally consisted of two hamlets, each with a manor house and church, with an open common between' (Aston 1985, 78). The spring-line village of Bratton too consists of three formerly distinct medieval hamlets – Stoke, Melbourne and Bratton (Crittall 1965, 144). It serves us well to remember that settlement evolution and village formation was by no means complete in 1100.

The second issue worthy of consideration is settlement planning in the medieval period. Whilst there is some useful evidence from Wiltshire to suggest that settlements were occasionally regulated in the Anglo-Saxon centuries (see below), many of the compact linear row and grid plans that we see preserved in current villages – Charlton in the Vale of Pewsey (Smith 1999) and Luckington, Lacock and Hullavington in the Cotswold Fringe (Draper 2000), for example – can with reasonable confidence be ascribed to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, when such settlements were under tight seigneurial control. Carenza Lewis has pointed to the wholesale planning of Hindon on the Grovely Great Ridge as a ‘new town’ in the early thirteenth century by the Bishop of Winchester as a particularly graphic example of settlement regulation by later medieval lords. Furthermore, she suggests that many of the other linear row settlements in the chalk valleys of southern Wiltshire – Bishopstone, Norrington and Chilhampton included – were planned at a similar date, some representing entirely new settlements ‘founded to accommodate a rising population in a period of reorganisation and expansion’ (Lewis 1992, 183).

### *Village Origins and Planning*

Turning to the twin issues of settlement nucleation and village formation in Wiltshire in the pre-Conquest period, we are faced, unsurprisingly, with a comparative paucity of detailed evidence. Nevertheless, it is possible, I believe, to draw a number of important conclusions from the limited information available. The central point to emerge is that, whilst the period of village creation no doubt extended into the Late Saxon and post-Conquest periods, some villages in Wiltshire almost certainly came into existence in the Middle Saxon period, *i.e.* in the eighth and ninth centuries.

In the East Midlands, this conclusion has been reached via ceramic evidence recovered during a series of systematic fieldwalking surveys. ‘Classic’ nucleation, it seems, involving the desertion of numerous Early-Middle Saxon settlement sites, was complete before Late Saxon pottery types were introduced, ‘some time around 850’ (Brown and Foard 1998, 76; see also Williamson 2003, 66-7). In Wiltshire, early medieval ceramics are not as durable, distinctive or closely datable as those present in the Midlands. Nevertheless, it will not have escaped the reader’s attention during the preceding discussion that there is a small but significant number of sites where a long-lived sequence of settlement, often beginning in the prehistoric or Roman periods,

appears to have come to an end in the Middle Saxon centuries – ‘Headlands’ in West Overton [2:493] and the Cotswold Community in Ashton Keynes, to name just two. The motives for these desertions must remain obscure in the absence of more detailed evidence, but one possible explanation is that nucleation was already taking place; in other words, ‘a proportion of the scattered settlements of early Saxon times – farms and small hamlets – was abandoned and their inhabitants moved, or were moved, to a smaller number of surviving centres lying on, or close to, the sites of medieval villages’ (Williamson 2003, 67).

Corresponding evidence for Middle Saxon village creation in Wiltshire comes principally from Avebury, where, as we have already seen, Andrew Reynolds has interpreted both excavated and earthwork evidence in terms of a ninth-century nucleated settlement with an elliptical street plan, perhaps comparable with nearby Ramsbury and also Kintbury in Berkshire (Pollard and Reynolds 2002, 201, 203). Arguably the most important piece of evidence in favour of Middle Saxon nucleation at Avebury comes from the element *burh* in Avebury’s place-name, whose significance, I believe, is misunderstood by Reynolds (Pollard and Reynolds 2002, 204-5). Whilst it is indeed true that the element came to be used of fortified towns established by the West Saxon kings in the ninth and tenth centuries in response to the Viking threat, this is by no means the principal meaning of the term. As Margaret Gelling (1997, 143) advises us, “‘manor-house’ is the likeliest meaning in numerous settlement-names ending in -bury’, whilst a secondary and related meaning appears to be ‘minster’ (Blair 1992, 234). In essence, the root meaning of the Old English element *burh* is ‘enclosed place’ and, whether the term at Avebury refers to a manorial enclosure or a minster or both, it is almost certainly not the Late Saxon fortified settlement that Andrew Reynolds claims it is (see also Reynolds 2001).

The significance of Avebury’s place-name with respect to Middle Saxon village creation grows with an understanding that the manor or minster referred to by the term *burh* is most likely to be of seventh- to ninth-century date. Although Avebury itself is only documented for the first time in the Domesday Survey (Gover *et al.* 1939, 291), we should note with particular interest that Bibury in Gloucestershire records the name of a documented eighth-century owner – Beage (Gelling 1997, 182), whilst John Blair (1992, 234) observes that ‘the minster of St Paul’s in London was called *Paulesbiri* in the eighth century’. A similar Middle Saxon origin for Afa and his *burh* at Avebury does not seem out of the question; neither indeed does it for ‘Æpelwaru’s *burh*’ –

Aldbury, ‘Ambre’s *burh*’ – Amesbury, ‘Heahþryþ’s *burh*’ – Heytesbury, ‘Hræfn’s *burh*’ – Ramsbury, ‘Maeldub’s *burh*’ – Malmesbury, ‘Tyssi’s *burh*’ – Tisbury, and perhaps also the ‘westerly *burh*’ – Westbury (Mills 1998). The ‘Kingsbury’ street-names too, which have been noted by Jeremy Haslam (1984) in the centres of Marlborough, Calne and Wilton, may also refer directly to *villae regales* established during the Middle Saxon period (see also Hase 1994, 58).

All of these ‘-bury’ settlements in Wiltshire possessed Anglo-Saxon minster churches (Fig. 33; Pitt 1999) and most sat at the heads of Domesday hundreds (Fig. 37; Thorn 1989). More importantly, however, all are likely to have possessed royal residences at the centres of Middle Saxon great estates (see Chapter 5). As high-status foci, with manor and minster frequently in juxtaposition, they therefore emerge as prime locations for nucleated settlements to develop. Such a scenario with a Middle Saxon village being planted adjacent to a known ecclesiastical and administrative centre is attested archaeologically at North Elmham in Norfolk (Wade-Martins 1980). Furthermore, in Dorset, Teresa Hall has raised the possibility that rectilinear settlements were established around a number of minster sites ‘at the time of [their] foundation ... at the end of the seventh and beginning of the eighth centuries’ (Hall 2000, 77).

Both minsters and manorial compounds should not be underestimated as catalysts in village and town development (Blair 1988; Faith 1997, 163-77). Given their likely visual and social dominance in the Middle Saxon landscape, it is perhaps only natural that villages should soon flourish alongside, in much the same way that *vici* developed outside Roman forts. Rather than being a by-product of ‘manorialisation’ and the fragmentation of great estates, as is often assumed (Faith 1997, 168-77), the first nucleated settlements in Wiltshire surely developed *within* the framework of great estates, taking as their cue the administrative and ecclesiastical foci established at their cores. Both minsters and royal/seigneurial residences needed many agricultural workers, craftsmen and servants in order keep them running and nucleated settlements outside their gates, or occasionally elsewhere on their inlands (see the discussion of ‘Charlton’ place-names below), provided the perfect means of achieving both productivity and, at the same time, social control.

Whilst some of these early villages no doubt possessed regular or semi-regular plans, replanning often followed in the Late Saxon period. This can be seen particularly well at Avebury, where, from an analysis of surviving earthworks and the current village plan, it is apparent that a new and highly regular layout consisting of two

parallel rectilinear rows succeeded the earlier elliptical street-plan proposed for the Middle Saxon settlement (Fig. 56). Andrew Reynolds has interpreted this phase of planning in terms of Avebury's reorganisation as a 'proto-urban' defensive settlement in the late ninth or early tenth century: indeed, he comments that 'settlement planning of this type is commonly found in the Burghal Hidage towns, such as Cricklade and Wallingford, but not in "normal" rural settlements' (Pollard and Reynolds 2002, 206). Whilst it would be wrong to deny the similarity in plan between Avebury and other Late Saxon towns in Wiltshire, such as Wilton and Marlborough (Pollard and Reynolds 2002, fig. 92), the assumption that Avebury was urban in character, rather than rural, is open to question. Ultimately, there is insufficient evidence from other rural settlements in the county to pass judgement on their Late Saxon forms. We should note, however, that Peter Fowler (2000a, 141-3) has made the suggestion that West Overton originated as two tenth-century planned rectilinear villages, although supporting archaeological evidence is conspicuous by its absence.

Elsewhere in England, a different story emerges. At Shapwick in Somerset, pottery recovered from a number of test-pits suggests a tenth-century origin for the regular 'ladder' plan of the present village (Aston and Gerrard 1999, 27-9), whilst at Raunds in Northamptonshire, excavation has shown how the village was comprehensively replanned in the tenth century, involving the laying out of tofts in a measured pattern (Brown and Foard 1998, 76; Williamson 2003, 70). Similarly, in Northamptonshire, Tony Brown and Glenn Foard (1998, 67) have suggested a 'great replanning' of the Late Saxon landscape, extending to both settlements and fields. Evidently, 'normal' rural settlements could be organised to a high degree of regularity in the pre-Conquest period and, in my opinion, there is no reason to doubt that some of the meticulous planning seen so clearly in both Cricklade and Great Bedwyn (Haslam 1984; 2003) could have been emulated in nucleated villages throughout Wiltshire: Bremhill is perhaps a case in point (Fig. 41; see Chapter 6). Needless to say, just because Avebury is regular in plan, it need not be regarded as an urban settlement of 'later ninth- or tenth- to early eleventh-century date' (Pollard and Reynolds 2002, 207), although I do support Andrew Reynolds' dating for this episode of replanning.

Inevitably, as the Late Saxon period wore on, more villages came into being and some would have taken on regular forms. Just as the minster churches and royal residences of the Middle Saxon period attracted nucleated settlements, so did the local churches and manorial enclosures of the Late Saxon period, many of which came into

being as a result of the break-up of larger territories and the granting out of 'bookland' estates. The excavations at Trowbridge offer us a glimpse of just such a manorial settlement (Fig. 55; Graham and Davies 1993). Here, a two-celled stone church and adjacent manorial enclosure were constructed during the tenth century on the site of the earlier Middle Saxon settlement. Although much of the associated Late Saxon occupation lay outside the excavated area, it is clear that the tenth-century reorganisations coincided with the establishment of a new settlement immediately to the north of the church and manor. Hints of a rectilinear western boundary ditch (Ditch 135) have been noted and it is tempting to envisage the presence of a regular or semi-regular row village.

Compared with the 'champion' landscapes of the Midlands to the north, it must be stressed that relatively few Wiltshire settlements emerged as nucleated villages before 1100. The majority of settlements, both in the 'Chalk' and the 'Cheese' regions, remained as dispersed hamlets and farmsteads and, as I have intimated above, their numbers almost certainly grew during the Late Saxon period. The reasons for the patchy nature of nucleation in Wiltshire are undoubtedly many and varied, but one factor that stands out as a likely primary cause is the lack of extensive pre-Conquest arable open fields in many parts of the county.

### *Villages, Fields and Dispersed Settlements*

For many years, academics have suspected a direct link between Late Saxon village creation and the introduction of the open-field system. To a large extent, recent work in the Midlands has provided support for this hypothesis (Lewis *et al.* 2001; Williamson 2003). The reasoning behind this theory is that reorganisation of a dispersed settlement pattern into nucleated villages was necessary for large open fields to be laid out: after all, 'how could an open field function if there were significant numbers of houses and enclosed fields still scattered over the village territory' (Lewis *et al.* 2001, 200-201)?

In Wiltshire, it is certainly the case that, away from the chalkland valleys and the chalk-edge spring lines, the most overtly nucleated patterns of settlement tend to occur in areas of the county with good agricultural soils, such as parts of the high Cotswold plateau and the Vale of Pewsey (Geddes 2000, 88-9). The compact north-south linearity of some of the Pewsey Vale villages – Milton Lilbourne, Easton and Burbage in particular – is especially worthy of note and it is surely no accident that each

possessed extensive eastern and western open fields until enclosure in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (Crowley 1999). A strikingly similar arrangement on the Polden Ridge in Somerset has recently been ascribed to the Late Saxon development of large open fields (Corcos 2002, 157; Chris Gerrard *pers. comm.*). Some of the Cotswold parishes too are notable for their dominance by nucleated row villages. Hullavington, for example, is entirely surrounded by its former open fields, which were worked exclusively from farms in the village street until the early twentieth century (Crowley 1991, 113).

Correspondingly, where woodland and pasture dominated the landscape in the Middle and Late Saxon periods, as in much of lowland Wiltshire, the settlement pattern away from the centres of the great estates remained largely dispersed in nature. Although we should not imagine that open-field farming was absent from the claylands – the Domesday density of plough-teams clearly shows that this was not the case (Fig. 42) – it is likely that the field systems here were more irregular and often smaller than their counterparts on lighter soils, being scattered amongst areas of woodland and pasture (see Williamson 2003, fig. 25, for the comparison of Thurleigh in Bedfordshire). Given the persistence of uncultivated areas of ‘waste’ around the fields, on which dwellings could freely be erected, there was seemingly much less of a pressing need to reorganise dispersed settlements into villages. Furthermore, the period of population growth and ‘manorialisation’ in the Late Saxon centuries led to expansion outwards from existing settlements and the foundation of many discrete farmsteads. Such a scenario is attested in the claylands of East Anglia, where a number of fieldwalking surveys have detected the pre-Conquest proliferation of dispersed settlements via the medium of pottery (Williamson 2003, 97-9).

In Wiltshire, the Late Saxon expansion of settlement into areas of woodland is clearly shown by the distribution of *lēah* place-names (Fig. 44), whilst the infilling of the chalkland valleys, which continued long into the Norman period, is reflected in the numerous settlement-names bearing the suffix *-tūn* (see above). Some greens, commons and common-edge hamlets may also have been established at this time. The creation of such features is often ascribed to the later medieval centuries, but recent research by Christopher Taylor (2002) and Susan Oosthuizen (2002) in Cambridgeshire has highlighted the likely Anglo-Saxon antiquity of both the enclosures themselves and the dispersed forms of settlement that frequently surrounded them. A number of these Cambridgeshire commons acquired the place-name ‘Offal’ or ‘Offil’ – Old English *eald*

+ *feld*, 'old open land' – and Oosthuizen has raised the interesting suggestion that the element *feld* itself often denoted large enclosures of Anglo-Saxon common pasture (Oosthuizen 2002, 79-80). In Wiltshire, it is apparent that a number of settlements with *-feld* place-names are even today arranged around greens and commons – Wingfield, Froxfield and Cowesfield in Whiteparish, for example – and an explanation of their origins as Anglo-Saxon common-edge hamlets seems very likely indeed. Some may, in fact, pre-date the Late Saxon period (Oosthuizen 2002, 80). Even so, it is evident that they formed part of a lengthy period of woodland colonisation – and, therefore, dispersed settlement formation – that reached its climax in the two or three centuries either side of the Norman Conquest.

### **Settlements and Society**

Having examined the evidence relating to the origins and distribution of early medieval settlements in Wiltshire, it is now worth considering their wider significance in relation to the people that occupied or owned them and the activities that took place within them during the early medieval period. Our prime source will be place-names, which often preserve records of associated Anglo-Saxon social classes within them. Occasionally, however, material remains of settlements may provide clues as to the status of their occupants and the activities performed there. Documentary sources also contain much important information. The Domesday Survey not only provides useful details for the study of trade and towns, but also it lists the Wiltshire landholders in and immediately before 1086, along with the ranks and numbers of peasants present on each estate. The undated – but probably tenth-century – *Rectitudines Singularum Personarum* similarly concerns itself with the ranks of the peasantry and the services owed by them to the lord. Of special relevance to this study, however, is the conclusion by Paul Harvey that it was originally written with one particular estate in mind, probably located in east Somerset or west Wiltshire (Harvey 1993, 19, 21). *Geþyncðo*, or 'promotion law', dates to the early eleventh century and provides specific information on the requirements for those seeking lordly status.

### *Settlements and Lords*

Beginning at the top of the social hierarchy with kings, we have already seen how the Middle Saxon kings of Wessex established *villae regales* at the heads of their estates, with manorial compounds – thus explaining the ‘Kingsbury’ street-names of Marlborough, Calne and Wilton (see above) – and minsters. However, it is also worth considering the status of settlements bearing the place-name ‘Kington’ or ‘Kingston’ – Old English *cyne/cyninges-tūn*, ‘royal/king’s farm or manor’. In Wiltshire, there are four examples at Kington St Michael, West Kington in Nettleton parish, Kingston Deverill and Collingbourne Kingston. Gover *et al.* (1939, 173, 342) have suggested that both Kingston Deverill and Collingbourne Kingston only gained their royal epithets in the post-Conquest period, but this may not be so, given that both almost certainly lay within Middle Saxon valley-based royal estates (see Chapter 5). ‘Kingston’ and ‘Kington’ names have often in the past been associated directly with Anglo-Saxon royal *villae* (Sawyer 1983, 278), but recent research has established that they should merely be interpreted as places supplying the king – *i.e.* inland farms within larger royal estates – similar to the ‘Berwicks’ discussed in Chapter 5 (Bourne 1988; Faith 1997, 42). Such settlements, then, had no inherent administrative importance and many passed out of royal ownership long before Domesday. This was certainly the case at Kington St Michael, which had presumably once served the *villa regalis* at Chippenham, although it passed to Glastonbury Abbey in a charter of 934 (S426; Abrams 1996, 149-52).

The impact of manorial lords on settlements in Wiltshire can be judged most clearly through a study of the *thegn* – the commonest rank of Anglo-Saxon nobility. In origin, *thegns* were servants of the king and they gained land and status through royal service. Such royal service was most often military in nature, but many other services were also rewarded. Towards the end of the Domesday Survey for Wiltshire, for example, we find that a certain Leofgeat was granted an estate in Knook in return for making ‘the King and Queen’s gold fringe’ (Thorn and Thorn 1979, 67:86). The place-name Bemerton (OE *bymera-tūn*) too may record tenure of an estate by another form of royal servant – trumpeters (Gover *et al.* 1939, 225). According to the ‘law relating to the *thegns*’, contained within the *Rectitudines*, superior *thegns* were expected to hold an estate by charter (Faith 1997, 94). Perhaps the earliest surviving grant of land to a West Saxon layman is the charter recording the conferral of thirteen hides at Little Bedwyn by King Cynewulf to Bica in 778 (S264; Yorke 1995, 246). Over the following two

centuries, however, many more estates were granted out to *thegns* as subsequent West Saxon kings chose to reward their loyal servants with land. Some of these estates may be represented by place-names containing the Old English word *cilda*, ‘young noblemen’, such as Chilhampton in South Newton, Chilton in Wroughton and Chilton Foliat: ‘it has been suggested that the word referred to the younger sons of a family to whom an estate had been given as a joint possession’ (Cameron 1996, 136).

By the early eleventh century, subtle changes had taken place in the way that *thegnly* status could be attained. The rank of *thegn* could now be inherited (Reynolds 1999, 60), whilst some of the higher ranks of peasantry – *ceorls* in particular – even had the chance to become *thegns* simply by accumulating lands and a specific set of attributes. In *Gepyncðo*, we read; ‘if a *ceorl* prospered so that he had fully five hides of his own land, [church and kitchen], bell [house] and *burh-geat*, seat and special office in the king’s hall, then was he thenceforward entitled to the rank of *thegn*’ (Yorke 1995, 250-1). *Burh-geat* was the name applied to the manorial enclosure of a *thegn* and it is pertinent to note that the term is recorded as a boundary mark in the West Overton charter of 972 (S784; Fowler 2000a, 142-3). Andrew Reynolds (1999, 63) also suspects that it is represented in reverse form in the place-name Yatesbury in Cherhill parish, although the philological grounds for such an assumption are by no means firm (cf. Yatesbury and Yattendon in Ekwall 1960, 543). The physical remains of such an enclosure have been excavated at Trowbridge (Graham and Davies 1993) and many more must have existed in Wiltshire as a whole. The minor names ‘Bury’, ‘Bourton’ or ‘Burton’ – exemplified at The Bury in Codford, Bourton in Shrewton and Burton in Nettleton – may record the presence of such manorial compounds (see Gelling 1997, 143-6). The incidence of the place-name ‘Fifield’ in Wiltshire, recording the five-hide holdings required by *Gepyncðo* for *thegnly* status, has earlier been considered in Chapter 5.

### *Settlements and the Peasantry*

Some of the highest-ranked peasants, who, as we have already seen, later aspired to become *thegns*, were the *ceorls*. Over the past few decades, there has been much academic debate over their exact status, but it is now generally accepted that *ceorls* were legally free peasants, who held their own land – often ‘hide farms’ (see Chapter 5) – in return for a variety of services either to the king or to other lords (Faith 1997, 126-

9; Hadley 2000, 72-80). The presence of *ceorls* on Wiltshire settlements is recorded in place-names. There are four examples of the compound *ceorla-tūn* – Charlton near Malmesbury, Charlton near Pewsey, Charlton in Donhead St Mary and Charlton in Downton – and we may also note the presence of a *ceorla-cot* (Charlcote) in Bremhill (Gover *et al.* 1939, 520).

Whilst a clear connection between ‘Charlton’ place-names and great estate centres has been observed throughout England, the old idea that they were planted villages of inland workers – ‘places where the king’s own husbandmen live’ (Finberg 1964b, 158) – is now treated with some scepticism. Rosamond Faith has instead proposed that most ‘Charltons’ were lordless villages, settled by largely free farmers ‘with a much more tenuous connection with an estate centre’ (Faith 1997, 151). We should, however, note Dawn Hadley’s concerns (2000, 78-80) that the freedom of the *ceorls* may have been overstated: in her words, ‘we should not expect to find a pattern of *either* free peasant communities knowing no lord, *or* dependent *ceorls* closely tied to manorial structures under close seigneurial supervision. Rather, we should expect to find elements of both’ (Hadley 2000, 84). Certainly, there is room for both interpretations of the status of *ceorls* in Wiltshire and we should perhaps be wary of trying to ‘pigeon-hole’ what was, after all, a multifarious social rank. It is perhaps significant, however, that all the ‘Charlton’ and ‘Charlcot’ settlements in Wiltshire display a nucleated and regular linear plan. Whether these settlements were established by lords or *ceorls*, a degree of conscious pre-Conquest settlement planning appears to be implied. The possibility that peasants as well as lords could sometimes be responsible for village planning is one that has been raised by Christopher Dyer (1985).

Along with the *ceorl*, another superior rank of Anglo-Saxon peasant was the *geneat*. The *geneat* was equivalent to the ‘free man’ (*liber homo*) of the Domesday Survey, although it should be noted that no such men were listed in the Wiltshire entries (Hooper 1989, 4; Yorke 1995, 257). According the *Rectitudines*, the *geneat* owed a money rent for his lands and performed a number of light services for his lord, including acting as guard, carrying messages, escorting strangers to the estate centre and building and fencing the lord’s manorial enclosure (Faith 1997, 94). In Wiltshire, the presence of *geneats* is not recorded in either charters or place-names, although it is tempting to speculate that some of the ‘Netton’ (OE *nēata-tūn*) settlements in the county, which are traditionally interpreted as cattle farms (Gover *et al.* 1939, 364; see Chapter 7), may in fact preserve the compound *geneata-tūn*, ‘farm of the *geneats*’.

Rosamond Faith has noted that a law of Edgar on tithes distinguishes between inland and *neatland* – i.e. land held by the *geneats* (Faith 1997, 94). A related compound that certainly was in use in Wiltshire is *cnihta-tūn*, ‘farm of the *cnihts*’, which may be found in the form ‘Knighton’ in Broad Chalke, Figheldean and Ramsbury parishes. The status of the *cnihts* – usually interpreted as household servants or retainers (Cameron 1996, 136) – is not certain, but it may be that most held the rank of either *ceorl* or *geneat*.

The bulk of the Anglo-Saxon peasantry is represented by the *geburs* and the *cotsetlas* of the *Rectitudines*, which were broadly equivalent to the *villani* (villeins) and *bordarii* (bordars) – a category that also included *coscez* (cotsets) – of the Wiltshire Domesday (Hooper 1989, 4; Yorke 1995, 256). Both ranks held some land and animals, but it is also clear from the *Rectitudines* that they owed a number of heavy labour services to their lord, including ploughing, reaping and sowing. *Cotsetlas* owed the most labour services, as they did not pay rent, whilst *geburas* were required to pay rent in both cash and in kind (Yorke 1995, 257; Faith 1997, 76-84). Both *geburs* and *cotsetlas* are well represented in Wiltshire field-names, including the frequent ‘Cotsetles’ or ‘Cossicles’ (Gover *et al.* 1939, 427) and various occurrences of the compound *gebur-land* (Gover *et al.* 1939, 424). Only in Bower Chalke, however, is *gebur* attested in a settlement-name, clearly representing the *geburs*’ settlement on the Chalke great estate. Even in 1570, the tenants of Chalke were required to pay certain grain rents called ‘bower corn’, which varied according to ‘bower custom’ (Gover *et al.* 1939, 204).

At the bottom of the Anglo-Saxon social ladder were slaves, who were not only owned by royalty and nobility, but also by *ceorls* (Hadley 2000, 83). In the Wiltshire Domesday, slaves (*servi*) were listed on many estates – particularly those in royal hands, where they formed almost one quarter of the population (Hooper 1989, 4). Evidence that they were occasionally manumitted is provided by the term *coliberti*, ‘freedmen’, of which half the total in the whole of the Domesday Survey is found in Somerset and Wiltshire (Hooper 1989, 4). Barbara Yorke (1995, 263), however, has noted that ‘slaves were not so much set free as set up as dependent peasants owing substantial labour services, but with enough land to support themselves’. During the later Anglo-Saxon period, the terms *theow* and *walh* were used of slaves in southern England. Whilst some scholars have argued vehemently that the many ‘Walton’ (*walh-tūn*) and ‘Walcot’ (*walh-cot*) settlement-names were essentially Middle or Late Saxon

slave colonies (*e.g.* Faith 1997, 60-1), it is perhaps more likely that they preserve the earlier sense ‘Briton’, *i.e.* a speaker of Brittonic (see Chapter 4).

### *Settlements, Trade and Manufacture: The Rise of Towns*

Whilst the Middle Saxon great estate centres of Wiltshire are not traditionally regarded as urban settlements, some, such as Ramsbury [2:364], possessed industries and probably also markets, whilst many went on to become Domesday boroughs and later medieval towns. The Late Saxon rise of these ‘proto-urban’ settlements to fully-fledged towns is not always easy to gauge, particularly in a county where only Salisbury grew beyond the category of ‘market town’ in the later medieval period. One certain indicator of pre-Conquest urban status, however, is possession of a mint; for, as a law of Athelstan (924-939) states, ‘no man shall mint money except in a *port* [town]’ (Darlington 1955a, 16).

In Wiltshire, Great Bedwyn, Cricklade, Malmesbury, Old Sarum, Warminster and Wilton are known from coin finds to have been later tenth- or eleventh-century minting places (Darlington 1955a, 16-18; Yorke 1995, 310-11). Further important indicators of urban status are contained within the Domesday Survey for Wiltshire, where ten settlements are variously described either as boroughs, having burgesses, possessing a market, or liable for the urban tax known as the ‘third penny’: these are Great Bedwyn, Bradford-on-Avon, Calne, Cricklade, Malmesbury, Marlborough, Old Sarum, Tilshead, Warminster and Wilton (Welldon Finn 1967, 50-60; Haslam 1984, 87). Of these ten places, all bar three – Cricklade, Marlborough and Old Sarum – had grown from Middle Saxon royal estate centres.

The ‘special cases’ of Cricklade, Marlborough and Old Sarum merit detailed consideration. Cricklade almost certainly owes its origins as a town to a distinct episode of urban creation in the late ninth and early tenth centuries, when Alfred the Great and his son Edward the Elder ordered the construction of fortified nucleated settlements, known as *burhs*, throughout Wessex in response to the threat of Viking attack (Yorke 1995, 112-23). The original late ninth-century rectilinear defences of the *burh* at Cricklade are visible to this day and have been investigated by a series of excavations over the past six decades [2:181] (Radford 1972; Haslam 2003). The town’s regular street pattern has also come under scrutiny and it now appears that it was

planned from the outset in 'grid-iron' fashion, complete with an intra-mural walkway and possibly a dedicated market area on the northern side of St Sampson's church (Haslam 2003, part 4).

The urban development of Marlborough has also been considered by Jeremy Haslam, who regards it as another planned creation of Edward the Elder (Haslam 1984, 98-101). The main argument in support of this theory rests on the observation that Marlborough's principal parish of St Mary appears to have been carved out of the earlier minster *parochia* of neighbouring Preshute: certainly, Preshute church is referred to as the 'mother church' of Marlborough even in post-Conquest documents with rights over the thirteenth-century church of St Martin in the borough (Pitt 1999, 87). It should be pointed out in reply, however, that a 'Kingsbury' street-name in Marlborough might indicate the presence of an earlier *villa regalis* (see above). Assuming that Marlborough was an early tenth-century royal 'new town', it may have been established for economic, rather than military, reasons. Marlborough lay on the main Roman road linking Bath with London and it appears to have profited in the years before the Norman Conquest, in sharp contrast to Ramsbury and Great Bedwyn, only a short distance to the east.

Old Sarum, in contrast, may only have become truly urban in the eleventh century, following the use of its Iron Age fortifications as an 'emergency *burh*' during renewed Viking attacks in the reign of Ethelred the Unready (978-1016) (Haslam 1984, 124-5; Yorke 1995). After nearby Wilton was sacked in 1003, Wilton's moneyers were moved to Old Sarum, where a new mint was established soon after (Dolley 1954). Old Sarum's urban status was confirmed later in the century, when it was chosen as the site for a new Norman castle and cathedral (Pevsner and Cherry 1975, 385-9).

Unfortunately, the lack of detailed archaeological excavations within the pre-Conquest cores of many of Wiltshire's Domesday towns means that we are largely unable to build up a clear picture of both urban life and urban topography in the shire during the Late Saxon period. Even recent excavations in Cricklade and Wilton [2:505] have focused mainly on the ninth- and tenth-century *burh* defences, rather than the ordinary streets and dwellings in the towns (Andrews *et al.* 2000; Haslam 2003). Only at Emwell Street in Warminster is there a glimpse of the small-scale industrial production that must have been taking place in most Wiltshire towns before the Conquest [2:478]. Finds made during excavations in 1979 point to iron smelting,

butchery and perhaps leatherwork and potting taking place here in the eleventh and twelfth centuries (Smith 1997).

Occasionally, street-names may aid our interpretation. One such that is particularly intriguing is 'Silver Street'. Emwell Street in Warminster appears to have developed as a back lane to properties in Silver Street, which, according to Jeremy Haslam, formed the nucleus of the pre-Conquest urban settlement (Haslam 1984, 121). Given the presence of archaeological evidence here for crafts and metalworking, is it possible that the name 'Silver Street' denotes an area of a Late Saxon town set aside for manufacture? Although few street-names in Wiltshire are documented before the thirteenth or fourteenth centuries (Gover *et al.* 1939), the theory is perhaps supported by the fact that the name occurs in connection with principal streets leading to market places in no fewer than five other Wiltshire Domesday boroughs – Bradford-on-Avon, Calne, Malmesbury, Marlborough and Wilton. Such sites may be reasonably suspected as having supported pre-Conquest occupation and it is interesting to note that a church close to the top of Silver Street in Bradford-on-Avon was once dedicated to St Olave – a popular saint in the mid eleventh century (Haslam 1984, 94).

By 1100, Wiltshire already possessed most of its medieval towns and it is clear from a variety of sources that they had already become urban in character, possessing markets, industries and occasionally mints, as well as planned central settlement elements – especially in the case of the defensive *burhs* – and organic 'ribbon' development along associated roads. Most had developed from Middle Saxon royal estate centres. The details of Wiltshire's Late Saxon towns are, for the most part, yet to be revealed by archaeology, but it is hoped that the 'Extensive Urban Survey' currently being prepared in the county (Roy Canham *pers. comm.*) will help to identify their archaeological and historical potential, as well as provide a platform for future research. The potential of street-names to inform our understanding of pre-Conquest urban topography should also not be underestimated.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, we have considered a wide range of evidence covering a lengthy period in Wiltshire's history – c. 400-1100. Nevertheless, it has been possible to identify a

high degree of inter-relation between the three key elements of landscape, settlement and society.

The links between the landscape and settlement have received recent national attention in two studies that stress the importance of regional variation and environmental factors in settlement history (Roberts and Wrathmell 2002; Williamson 2003). Wiltshire provides no exception and it is apparent that basic geographical considerations, such as soil type, gradient, vegetation cover and access to water, greatly influenced the pattern of settlement in the early medieval period. Riverine locations were highly favoured in both 'Chalk' and 'Cheese', whilst spring lines and shallow hills rising above damp ground also proved attractive. Where soils were particularly conducive to arable agriculture, as on the Upper Greensands of the Vale of Pewsey, nucleated linear villages were established in response to the introduction of open-field farming systems. Where dense woodland remained, as in parts of the north and west in particular, settlements were more likely to remain dispersed in character or be loosely grouped around irregular areas of common pasture. Settlements throughout the county did not simply disregard pre-existing occupation. Continuity of settlement sites – if not always their associated populations, territories or farming systems – was common from the Roman into the early medieval periods and should not be regarded as at all remarkable or unusual.

The relationships between settlement and society are no less fundamental. I have argued strongly for a close relationship between Middle Saxon *villae regales* – together with minster churches – and the first nucleated villages in Wiltshire. To me, it is apparent that the influence of both King and Church on the development of early nucleated settlements – many of which attracted markets and small-scale industry under royal and ecclesiastical patronage and subsequently became towns – cannot be overstressed. Furthermore, the rise in the power of the aristocracy in the Late Saxon period meant that lords now jostled for both territory and resources. Some planned or replanned villages around their manorial enclosures and estate churches, whilst others exploited woodland and chalkland valleys, establishing farmsteads, whose origins are often betrayed by *-tūn* place-names. The peasantry, meanwhile, predominantly settled where their lords allowed them to, but we should not underestimate the semi-independence of the *ceorls*. It was they who presumably established and occupied the 'hide farms' discussed in Chapter 5, whilst their possible hand in the nucleation and planning of the various 'Charltons' in Wiltshire must also be borne in mind.

## CHAPTER 9

### Conclusion

‘By reformulating our questions and adopting new approaches to evidence that has been discussed and debated many times, in addition to drawing on newly available bodies of evidence, we can continue to make important advances in our understanding of early medieval societies’ (Hadley 2000, 342). These words by Dawn Hadley at the end of her recent study of the Northern Danelaw encapsulate perfectly the spirit of enquiry that has governed this study of Wiltshire. On one level, I have offered a synthesis of material gathered from numerous sources. Such a task is laudable in itself: ‘it is as if paintings by a particular artist that normally reside in many different museums have been brought together in a single exhibition and – just because they are juxtaposed – suddenly illuminate the painter and his world in all sorts of unexpected ways’ (Salway 2000, ix). More importantly, however, I have brought new questions and fresh approaches to the data collected, thereby shedding new light on our understanding of Wiltshire and, it might be suggested, other areas of southern England too.

At all times throughout this study, I have been at pains to acknowledge the difficulties and limitations of the evidence discussed. Very few of the conclusions reached can be upheld with certainty and it must be realised that alternative interpretations are available. Nevertheless, it has been possible to create a cohesive narrative and this has been made possible by a ‘multi-disciplinary’ approach to the evidence, combining aspects of archaeology, history, geography and philology under one umbrella. All too often in the past, scholars have focused narrowly on the material relating to their own fields, without glancing sideways at what researchers with other specialisms are doing. In this study, however, I have aimed to weave together the various strands of evidence as fully as possible, thereby creating a ‘landscape history’ of Wiltshire in the widest sense of the term and according to the holistic ideals of the established ‘landscape history’ discipline (see Taylor 2000).

Particularly illuminating has been the integration of place- and field-name evidence with archaeological material. A significant number of major and minor names in the county contain elements that show a real correlation with Romano-British archaeological remains and their potential not only to act as ‘indicators’ of new sites,

but also to inform us about the post-Roman transition, has been clearly shown. Brittonic place-names too are now beginning to be taken seriously by the current generation of place-name scholars – notably Richard Coates and Andrew Breeze (2000) – and it is evident that their future study in conjunction with archaeology will help to reveal much more about the presently illusive post-Roman Britons. Many Old English settlement-names – both habitative and topographical – have also shown positive links with Anglo-Saxon archaeological remains and it is clear that they carry much important information pertaining to the chronology and character of early medieval settlement. The full value of place-names to landscape historians has, in my view, yet to be appreciated (see below).

Also informative has been the interpretation of historical sources *alongside* archaeology. For far too long, documentary accounts of political events have shaped our understanding of the past: archaeology has, by and large, played second fiddle. This has been all too obvious in our considerations of the Late Roman and Early Saxon periods in Wiltshire. Roman accounts of barbarian raids and a British rebellion in the years from c. 360 to c. 420 have been taken far too literally by archaeologists and historians alike. Nowhere can episodes of burning or destruction on settlements reliably be ascribed to such events. In all cases, alternative – and altogether more rational – explanations can be offered. Furthermore, just because Britain ceased to be *politically* Roman in 408-10, does this necessarily mean that her people stopped being *culturally* Roman at the same time? Archaeological evidence from Wiltshire, I believe, suggests not: archaeology and history evidently diverge.

The two sources of evidence also disagree markedly in the Early Saxon period. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and Gildas' *De Excidio Britanniae* would have us believe that southern England, including Wiltshire, was overrun by conquering bands of Germanic warriors, who fought their way across the territory in the fifth and sixth centuries, subjecting the Britons to death or slavery. Such a view has, until recently, dominated our view of Anglo-Saxon archaeology and some current authors are still tempted to use terms such as 'invaders' and 'settlers' – words that, in the opinion of Christopher Taylor (2000, 160), 'conjure up an outdated and deterministic view of early Anglo-Saxon England'. What has become strikingly apparent from this study of Wiltshire, however, is that our current historically-based understanding of ethnic identity and social relations in the immediate post-Roman centuries is flawed. Rather than concentrating on a perceived archaeological dichotomy between natives and

newcomers, we should instead focus on the process of acculturation, whereby ‘Germanic’ material culture was both adopted and adapted by British-born populations to signify a new Anglo-Saxon identity.

Another approach that I feel has been successful has been to integrate the landscape histories of the Romano-British and early medieval periods in Wiltshire. Most studies in the past have regarded the year 410 as either a cut-off point or a starting date and very few have attempted to bridge the divide. Part of the problem may be, as Mark Corney (2000, 42) has observed, that ‘relatively few workers in this sphere have a good working knowledge of both Romano-British and Anglo-Saxon archaeology. When this does occur, some extremely stimulating work can result’. Under the banner of ‘Late Antiquity’, we are increasingly being encouraged to study the two periods as one and, during the course of this study, it has emerged that an understanding of one greatly informs the other. Many aspects of the Romano-British settlement pattern and agricultural landscape, for example, were preserved into the early medieval period, whilst a number of early medieval place-names record settlements and other features current in the Roman landscape.

A final approach that I believe has yielded positive results is studying the modern county of Wiltshire as a whole. As a political unit, Wiltshire only came into being in the second half of our study period. Nevertheless, the area that it encompasses is significant as it incorporates a variety of landscape types, which may be broadly grouped together under the two categories ‘Chalk’ and ‘Cheese’. As John Aubrey suspected in the seventeenth century (see Chapter 1) and Brian Roberts and Stuart Wrathmell (2000; 2002) have recently confirmed, this divide was more than a mere topographical feature: it affected land-use, settlement and society at a fundamental level. Having studied these two landscape zones equally, it has been possible to detect regional variation in action.

Studying the county of Wiltshire as a whole has also allowed us to consider the landscape history of the region on a variety of scales, from individual settlements and their territories, to larger estates and tribal groupings, to kingdoms and the shire. Such a broad sweep, however, will understandably not pass without some criticism. I have not been able to examine some individual settlements and parishes in the detail that they deserve. Furthermore, by studying such a long period in Wiltshire’s history, I have had to pass over some topics that clearly demand a fuller investigation – the rôle of religion in the Romano-British landscape, early medieval communications and networks of

Anglo-Saxon production and trade, for example. Inevitably, I have had to make some difficult editorial choices and such topics will now have to wait for future study. Other suggestions for future research in Wiltshire will be presented below, but it is now necessary to summarise the main findings of this study.

### *Wiltshire in the First Millennium AD: A Summary of Themes*

The three main themes for this study – as defined in Chapter 1 – were the landscape, settlement and society of Wiltshire from Roman period until c. 1100. What has the research described above revealed about their development during this period and how did they each relate to one other?

#### LANDSCAPE

The most important observation to be made from this study is that a basic understanding of the physical landscape of a region – its geology, topography and land-use – is fundamental to understanding its settlement and society. This may sound obvious to many, but we are only now emerging from a period in landscape studies when it became almost fashionable to downplay environmental factors in favour of social and cultural explanations for change, for fear of being branded an adherent of ‘environmental determinism’. As Tom Williamson (2003, 23) has recently reaffirmed, however, ‘to a significant extent variations in the human landscape mirrored the patterns of soils, the urgings of topography. The boundaries of human, and natural, landscape regions often corresponded, and still to a large extent correspond’. When considering the development of the agricultural landscape in Wiltshire, two main themes dominate. First is the dependence of farming regimes in both the ‘Chalk’ and the ‘Cheese’ on environmental concerns. Second is the availability of evidence for both continuity and change throughout the period under study.

In the ‘Chalk’, it is hard to underestimate the importance of the light and well-drained downland soils for arable agriculture prior to the advent of the heavy mouldboard plough in the later Saxon period. This was clearly a major factor in accounting for the numerous field systems and farming settlements present on both Salisbury Plain and the Marlborough Downs during the Roman period. Such soils, however, quickly became infertile without the regular addition of animal manure and so

pastoralism was also a vital component of the downland economy. As we have seen from Overton Down in particular, in addition to many of the Late Saxon charters, sheep and cattle farming quickly took over from arable agriculture as the primary agrarian function of the downlands. Local topography dictated a system of seasonal transhumance, whereby animals were grazed on the high downs during the summer and moved down into the river valleys during the winter, where a degree of shelter was afforded and where they could be fed on hay harvested during the previous summer from valuable river meadows. The drove-ways leading up to the downs from the settlements in the river valleys provided the obvious boundaries for farms, estates and administrative units and the natural result was the 'strip parishes' that we still see today. Woodland was mostly confined to steep valley slopes or areas where clay-with-flints cappings on the higher chalk hills similarly prevented arable agriculture from taking place.

Away from the 'Chalk', the natural geology and topography bred a different agricultural regime. Whilst the lighter soils of the Cotswold plateau and the Corallian beds permitted a mixture of arable and pastoral farming during the Roman period – only to be replaced by wood-pasture during the early medieval period – much of the land elsewhere was low-lying and poorly drained, characterised by heavy clays. Here, woodland and pasture prevailed, with river meadows providing valuable winter hay. During the Late Saxon period, however, place-name evidence in particular records the increased clearance of some woodland in favour of both arable and pasture. Large irregular areas of common grazing land were created, whilst the introduction of the mouldboard plough allowed some of the heavier clay soils to be cultivated for the first time. The Upper Greensand of the Vale of Pewsey in particular was favoured for the establishment of open fields.

The agricultural story of first-millennium Wiltshire is primarily one of contrast between the 'Chalk' and 'Cheese' landscapes. However, it is also one of both continuity and change. Two key changes are, firstly, the shift away from arable agriculture towards pastoralism on the chalk downs at the end of the Roman period, which led to the abandonment of numerous upland field systems and farming settlements, and, secondly, the Late Saxon clearance of woodland in the Cotswolds and clay vales discussed above. It is important to remember, however, that some sections of the Wiltshire landscape remained essentially unchanged from the Roman period to the present day. Large areas of 'co-axial' field boundaries survive in the north and the west

of the county and we may regard this as important evidence for continuity of the agrarian regime through the period of transition, between c. 350 and 700.

## SETTLEMENT

Three main observations may be made concerning Wiltshire's settlement history in the first millennium AD. Firstly, long-term continuity of settlement was more likely to take place in certain 'nodal places', determined primarily by natural topography. Secondly, settlements rarely remained static for long periods before the Middle Saxon period and a degree of settlement mobility must be allowed for. Thirdly, the medieval pattern of nucleated and dispersed settlements began to emerge in the Middle and Late Saxon periods, when both lordship and agriculture greatly influenced settlement form.

Between the Roman and medieval/post-medieval settlement patterns of Wiltshire, it has been possible to identify a number of important differences. Whilst the Roman pattern was strongly influenced by the layout of Roman roads, access to small towns and also the pattern of farming within – we presume – a patchwork of villa estates, the medieval and post-medieval pattern was far more a reflection of environmental concerns, including access to water and access to important agricultural resources. Nevertheless, some locations have seen settlement from the prehistoric period to the present day and it is apparent that these 'nodal places' can usually be defined by one of three topographical characteristics – a river crossing, a natural spring or a low hill surrounded by marsh: Downton, Market Lavington and Swindon, where significant archaeological evidence for Roman, Saxon and medieval occupation has been found within a small area, are just three examples. Settlements in these 'nodal places' were often destined to rise to prominence in the early medieval period and it is surely no accident that all of Wiltshire's potential Middle Saxon *villae regales* can be assigned to one of these three topographical locations. Long-term continuity of settlement at a particular location, we may conclude, was largely dependent on the long-term importance and viability of its landscape setting.

By extension, it is reasonable to conclude that where settlements were situated in 'marginal' locations – *i.e.* away from 'nodal places' – their occupants were more likely to be mobile and to abandon one settlement site in favour of another. This is arguably what happened in Wiltshire during the Early Saxon period, when, in the absence of controlling villa-owners, the continued (Romano-) British farming settlements of the

high downlands were gradually abandoned in favour of sites in the neighbouring river valleys. By the Middle Saxon period, then, settlement in Wiltshire was focusing in on the 'nodal places' discussed above and it may be said that a form of nucleation was taking place. At the same time, the 'fixing' of settlements in their later medieval and present positions was also happening. As we have seen from examples at Avebury and West Kennett in particular, Romano-British and Early Saxon settlements at 'nodal places' often shifted their locations gradually over time, as buildings were replaced and different foci became important. In the eighth and ninth centuries, however, this settlement 'shuffle' ceased and occupation now became more or less static. The stabilisation and nucleation of settlements in 'nodal places', I would argue, were most often contemporary later Middle Saxon phenomena (see Williamson 2003, 68; *pace* Lewis *et al.* 2001).

When considering the reasons for stabilisation and nucleation, it is hard to underestimate the impact that churches and manors had on individual settlements. In the Middle Saxon period, the establishment of *villae regales* and minster churches side-by-side at a number of 'nodal places' provided clear focal points around which nucleated settlements – many of which later became towns – could form. Evidence from Avebury in particular suggests that we should not rule out the possibility of deliberate settlement planning at this date. In the Late Saxon period, it was the turn of the minor lords to follow suit. As the eleventh-century 'promotion law' (*Gepyncdo*) attests, *thegns* were expected to possess both a manorial compound (*burh-geat*) and a manorial church and it is reasonable to conclude that a nucleated village too – sometimes planned – was a natural result.

Occasionally in Wiltshire, there is the suggestion that agricultural practices also influenced the form of settlements. In the Pewsey Vale villages of Easton, Milton Lilbourne and Burbage, it is perhaps possible to glimpse the process so common in the Midlands, whereby linear villages were created as a direct result of open-field planning. Furthermore, we must not forget the impact of agriculture on dispersed settlements. In Wiltshire, there is tantalising evidence to suggest that a number of *-feld* settlement-names record the Anglo-Saxon creation of common pastures, providing foci for the loosely clustered common-edge villages and hamlets present in areas of wood-pasture. In addition, the advent of the mouldboard plough was a significant factor in the Late Saxon expansion of dispersed settlement into the woodlands of north and west Wiltshire.

## SOCIETY

Two important conclusions may be drawn from the evidence discussed in this study. Firstly, Anglo-Saxon society in Wiltshire was itself a fusion of both post-Roman British and Continental cultural elements. Secondly, the way that Anglo-Saxon society was organised not only impacted on the development of settlements (see above), but also, to a large extent, conditioned the framework of territories in the medieval landscape.

One of the main aims of this study has been to cut through the many myths surrounding the post-Roman transition in order to examine the real impacts for landscape, settlement and society. Regarding society in Wiltshire, the obvious question that springs to mind is whether there was essentially discontinuity, as the fabric of Romano-British society was torn apart, or broad continuity, as social institutions – including territories, government and religion – remained intact. The answer to this question, on the evidence presented above, is neither. In Wiltshire, I have found no convincing evidence for a large-scale replacement of the ‘native’ population at the end of the Roman period and it is evident that Brittonic was spoken in the county until at least 700, if not beyond. It has also become apparent that many people professing an Anglo-Saxon identity in Early Saxon Wiltshire were British-born themselves. Clearly, there was no social cataclysm in the fifth century, but there was also no long-term continuity of Romano-British social and cultural institutions either.

Whilst the possibility that some post-Roman polities or kingdoms preserved traces of *civitates* or *pagi* cannot be dismissed, it must be stressed that there is currently no credible evidence to suggest that any functioning Romano-British territorial unit survived intact into the early medieval period. In addition, when Christianity became established in Wiltshire during the seventh and eighth centuries, it did so with very little discernable connection to the Romano-British Christian institutions that many assume to have been present in the fourth and early fifth centuries. Essentially, the people of early medieval Wiltshire were social innovators and it is important to understand that, whether ethnic Britons or Anglo-Saxons, little of the Roman past was kept unchanged.

Similarly, there is good reason to believe that most, if not all, of the territorial institutions present in Anglo-Saxon and later medieval Wiltshire arose from post-Roman (*not* Roman or pre-Roman) origins. Not only kingdoms and shires, but also great estates, hundreds and minster *parochiae*, can all be traced back to the Early Saxon tribal *regio* or ‘archaic hundred’, whose boundaries – in the chalklands at least – were

strongly topographical, reflecting the arrangement of river valleys. Secondary territories – great estates, hundreds and *parochiae* – display particularly clear evidence for parallel development and it safe, I believe, to conclude that they were Middle Saxon phenomena, associated with the strengthening of royal and ecclesiastical power in Wessex. Outside the chalklands, the more open topography bred a more diverse and changeable pattern of territories, but, even here, river-valley territories are faintly discernable in the pattern of secondary territories.

Wiltshire as a distinct territorial entity probably originated in the early eighth century, but it probably only coincided with the administrative territory of the *Wilsæte*, which was centred on Wilton or the Wylve valley. Both East and West Wansdyke, I believe, were constructed in the later eighth century at the northern limits of the *Wilsæte* and the *Sumorsæte*, drawing the battle-lines with an aggressive Mercia to the north. Following the defeat of Mercia at the battle of Kemsford in 802, the Wansdyke frontier was no longer needed and both Wiltshire and Somerset took on their familiar extents.

Turning finally to the origins of small estates in Wiltshire, it has been possible to identify the hide – the ‘land of one family’ and the basic farming unit of Anglo-Saxon England – as the progenitor of the vill, the manor and ultimately also the local ecclesiastical parish. ‘Hides’, ‘huishes’ and ‘worths’ were established as family farms and defined territories in the Early and Middle Saxon period, whilst the five-hide land-unit formed the basis of a *thegn*’s holding – *i.e.* a manor – in the Late Saxon period, when the granting of ‘bookland’ carved from great estates led to an explosion in the number of manorial holdings. As lords founded churches on their private estates, so parishes too were carved from larger *parochiae*. These mostly took on the boundaries of the secular estates on which they sat.

### *The Wider Context*

It is important in this concluding chapter to stress the wider national context of the observations made in this study. In terms of land-use and the landscape itself, Wiltshire shares many of the experiences seen elsewhere in southern England during the first millennium AD. Alan Everitt’s study of the downland landscape in Kent (1986) provides an important parallel for the historic and prehistoric transhumant pastoral economy of the Wiltshire Chalk, whilst evidence for the broad continuity of land-use between the Romano-British and post-Roman periods witnessed in many locations

across both England and Britain as a whole is also present in Wiltshire (see Rippon 2000; Fyfe and Rippon 2004). In particular, the 'co-axial' field boundaries observed in parts of the north and the west of the county suggest that survivals of prehistoric and Roman agricultural landscapes are by no means confined to the boulder clays of East Anglia, on which much of the relevant academic literature is focused (see Chapter 7). Furthermore, it is clear from charter evidence that parts of Wiltshire had adopted the open-field farming system before the mid-tenth century. Such a Middle/Late Saxon date is broadly contemporary with evidence from Midland counties, such as Northamptonshire (Brown and Foard 1998; Williamson 2003, 66-7), but we must also consider the possibility that the transition to open-field farming in Wiltshire (and the South West generally?) was altogether more gradual and sporadic in nature. Like her western neighbours, Somerset and Devon, Wiltshire contains a notable number of *hiwisc* place-names and hide farms and it may be that these discrete smallholdings resisted agricultural change long into the Late Saxon period (Costen 1992b; Chapter 5).

Turning next to the subject of settlement, examples from Wiltshire do inform our wider understanding of issues such as continuity, mobility, nucleation and planning. As is the case in much of central and southern England (Brown and Foard 1998; Lewis *et al.* 2001), medieval continuity did not naturally follow for all Romano-British settlements in Wiltshire, but those in 'nodal' positions in the landscape saw a much greater chance of surviving as parish centres, royal estate centres or even medieval towns. In many ways, the experience of Market Lavington, for example, parallels that of Higham Ferrers in Northamptonshire, where Iron Age, Romano-British, Anglo-Saxon and medieval settlements all lie within 400m of one another (Shaw 1991). Meanwhile, the Middle Saxon settlement drift observed in Wiltshire from the high chalk downs into the narrow river valleys appears to be mirrored at Bishopstone in Sussex. Here, recent excavations close to the village church have added further weight to the notion that the present valley-based settlement flourished as a result of the demise of the nearby Rookery Hill site in the Middle Saxon centuries (Thomas 2005). Finally, the evidence from Avebury in particular for the Middle Saxon nucleation and subsequent Late Saxon replanning of the village should be seen as part of a wider realisation that village origins in England as a whole may sometimes pre-date the ninth- to thirteenth-century 'village moment' argued for by Carenza Lewis *et al.* (2001). This is particularly clear at sites such as North Elmham in Norfolk and Wicken Bonhunt in Essex (see Chapter 8), whilst even at Shapwick in Somerset, the possibility must be

entertained that a Middle or Late Saxon nucleated settlement existed close to the Old Church site, before the present regular village plan was established, probably in the tenth century (Aston and Gerrard 1999; Chris Gerrard *pers. comm.*).

Lastly, on the subject of society, there are a several observations made in this study of Wiltshire that have equal bearing outside the county. The linguistic legacy of the post-Roman British population, for example, may be found in place- and field-names across England (see Gelling 1997, 63-104) and they should be regarded as important evidence that the existing culture of Britain was not extinguished in the fifth and sixth centuries, even in the most heavily ‘Saxonised’ areas of the south and east. In Wiltshire, the Early Anglo-Saxon period is defined by the process of acculturation between Briton and Anglo-Saxon and the same is increasingly being found for other areas on the fringes of early Germanic influence, such as the West Midlands and the Derbyshire Peak District (Bassett 2000; Loveluck 1995). At the same time, the territorial units that would soon become the great estates, hundreds and minster *parochiae* of Wiltshire were being defined, often using ‘natural’ boundaries. Such ‘archaic hundreds’ are already well known on the chalk downs of Kent and Hampshire (Everitt 1986; Klingelhöfer 1992), but, on the evidence of the Wiltshire claylands, similar valley-based territories should perhaps be sought across the rest of lowland southern England and the Midlands: indeed, the Rodings in Essex are perhaps a case in point (Bassett 1989). Meanwhile, the antiquity of small land-units should not be overlooked. The observation in Wiltshire that the Early Anglo-Saxon hide farm was the primary antecedent of the Late Saxon manor accords with the findings of John Blair in Surrey (1991) and Michael Costen in Somerset (1992a; 1992b). More recently, Rosamund Faith (1998) has identified further hide farms surviving as discrete land-units in other counties of central and southern England and it is clear that much more research is waiting to be done in order to reveal the full importance of these landholdings.

### *Concluding Thoughts*

The first millennium AD truly marked a crossroads in English landscape history – the meeting-point of the ‘ancient’ and ‘modern’. The central debate in this study has been about where we draw the line between these two worlds. Some have taken the origins of the modern landscape back into the prehistoric and Roman periods, whilst others have argued strongly for the Middle and Late Saxon birth of the key rural institutions

that we see around us today – settlements, fields and territories. I believe I have shown elements of both approaches to be valid; in other words, there was no fundamental discontinuity between Roman and medieval England, but at the same time, important innovations took place in the post-Roman period that cannot be overlooked. It is a truism of landscape history – especially early medieval landscape history – that there are never any simple explanations to be had. This is certainly true of first-millennium Wiltshire, but it is the inconsistencies, contradictions and subtle regional variations that not only makes local studies worthwhile, but also makes the landscape a fascinating topic for study.

### *Epilogue: Priorities for Future Research*

My final task in this concluding chapter is to offer some brief suggestions for future research arising from the material and themes discussed in this study. One topic in which I see a great deal of unrealised potential is place-names. Wiltshire is more fortunate than her western neighbour, Somerset, in having an English Place-Name Society volume covering the county. Nevertheless, this volume was one of the earliest to be published by the society – in 1939 – and countless advances have been made in place-name studies since. Modern county studies conducted by the EPNS run to several volumes, including thorough analyses of field-names, and it is high time that Wiltshire's place-names were re-examined to this modern standard.

Not only should Wiltshire's place- and field-names receive renewed attention from place-name scholars, but also their archaeological and historical significance should be further investigated by landscape historians. I have already drawn attention to the potential of certain names – those containing *wic*, *funta* and *ceaster*, for example – to locate Roman and post-Roman settlements and the validity and frequency of these proposed correlations must now be tested further by archaeological research, involving both fieldwalking and targeted excavation. Additional place-name categories that would benefit from this kind of research include *hiwisc*, *hid* and *word* names, in addition to those *burh* minor names in medieval settlement locations – The Bury in Codford and Bourton in Winterbourne Stoke, for example – which may indicate Late Saxon manorial compounds.

In Wiltshire, all future excavation of Roman and Anglo-Saxon settlements will be very welcome indeed, but there are three sites in particular that I believe are particularly deserving of detailed archaeological fieldwork. Headlands in West Overton represents a downland site where cropmark evidence for both Romano-British and Early Saxon occupation is known, whilst an area of earthworks in nearby West Overton itself has been tentatively interpreted as a nucleated and planned village of Late Saxon date. Excavation at Headlands would not only offer the chance to study the relationship between Romano-British and Early Saxon phases of settlement, but also it would provide an opportunity to obtain a rough date for when this settlement – like so many others in downland situations across Wiltshire – was abandoned. Excavation at West Overton, meanwhile would offer a glimpse into Anglo-Saxon village creation and planning and, by comparing the results from both sites, we may even be able to trace the processes of settlement mobility and nucleation in action.

The third site that I believe to be especially worthy of in-depth archaeological exploration is Wellhead in Westbury. Wellhead is a Romano-British and Early Saxon site that has yielded a selection of post-Roman artefacts indicative of occupation, in addition to a significant quantity of organic-tempered pottery, yet no post-Roman structures have so far been identified. Although earlier efforts in 1964 to establish a stratigraphic relationship between the two phases failed [2:481], I believe that Early Saxon settlement features may yet be found and modern archaeological methods may improve our chances of finding them. Wellhead's particular importance, however, is that it lies in an area of Wiltshire that, at present, we believe to have remained largely free from Anglo-Saxon cultural influence until the seventh century. Excavations here, therefore, carry the added potential to challenge or support this interpretation.

In order to study the broad issues relating to landscape, settlement and society in Wiltshire in a more detailed local framework, it might also be profitable to carry out a long-term landscape research project in Wiltshire, focusing on two hundreds and/or great estates – one in the 'Chalk' region of the county and one in the 'Cheese' landscape zone. This would provide the opportunity to observe regional variation in Wiltshire on a much closer scale, whilst it would also allow detailed archaeological, documentary, toponymic and topographical studies of individual settlements and their territories. Other small-scale landscape projects have recently been carried out in Wiltshire – in the West Overton and Compton Bassett areas in particular – but none has tackled the regional contrast between 'Chalk' and 'Cheese' head on, and none has examined an

entire hundred or great estate. I believe there is potentially much to be gained from such an approach.

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BAR            British Archaeological Reports

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