

**FURTHER NOTES ON THE ANGLIAN
AND SCANDINAVIAN SETTLEMENT
OF LEICESTERSHIRE**

BY W. G. HOSKINS

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THE purpose of the present article is to elaborate a number of points in connection with the early settlement of Leicestershire which could be touched on only briefly in my previous survey,¹ and to make certain corrections as a result of further knowledge, one of which at least is of considerable importance.² It is hoped, too, by going into the pre-conquest settlement of the county in more detail, and by furnishing more specific instances drawn from parishes all over the county, that others more closely acquainted with particular localities will be encouraged to investigate the subject upon their own territory. For too many village or parish histories still begin with the relevant extract from the Domesday Book, when the settlement was, perhaps, already four or five centuries old, and plunge immediately into the post-Conquest manorial history of a comparatively complex community of people, without pausing to examine origins or to give a possible date for the first human occupation of the district with which they are concerned.

The most important modification of my previous article is concerned with the place-name of Peatling, which I suggested was probably not a genuine folk-name of the *-ingas* type, but was possibly to be derived from the suffix *hlinc* (lynch), meaning "a bank, or rising ground". Ekwall, however, considers that it is a genuine example of the *-ingas* type, and therefore a very early settlement, perhaps as early as the latter part of the fifth century.³ This is supported in a most conclusive manner by the discovery of grave-gear, on a site close to the village of Peatling Magna,

¹*Transactions*, vol. XVIII, part II (1934-35), pp. 110-47.

²One slight correction is best made at this point. In a footnote to p. 130 (*loc. cit.*) Foston is referred to. This Foston is in Lincolnshire and is not the Leicestershire place of the same name, as I there implied.

³See *English Place-Names in -ing* (1923).

which is dated as belonging to the period before 500.⁴ A combination of a place-name ending in *-ing* and of very early grave-gear is comparatively infrequent, a fact which constitutes one of the puzzles of Anglo-Saxon archæology; and where it occurs it offers certainty in place of the probabilities with which the archæologist usually has to be satisfied. Peatling, then, represents the first Anglian settlement in Leicestershire, and most probably Peatling Magna is indicated rather than Peatling Parva, if the suffix *Magna* may be taken as evidence of priority of settlement.⁵

There is nothing very striking about the topographical situation of either of the Peatlings to suggest that they might have attracted the earliest Anglian settlement in the county. They lie near a stream which flows into the Sence (then called the *Glen*), in clay country about three hundred feet above sea-level, about mid-way between the Soar and the Welland, so that at first sight the district of the *Petlingas* might have been equally well approached by either river. But the same considerations which led us to suppose that the earliest Anglian settlers reached Leicestershire by way of the upper Welland valley hold good also for Peatling, which is much more accessible from this direction than by a long roundabout route through the Trent valley and up the Soar. It seems most probable that the first settlers pushed up the Welland valley as far as possible by water, and then crossed over the watershed, here only four miles wide, until they reached country which sloped downwards towards the Soar valley, across which they had a clear view over Leicester to the bold edge of Charnwood. To suppose that the Trent-Soar route was the earlier route to be used is to invite a number of unnecessary difficulties.

The topographical map makes clear why the first Anglian invaders of the midlands should have avoided the Soar valley for a century or more, and why they should have left the field open

⁴The site is marked on a small-scale map in Hodgkin: *A History of the Anglo-Saxons* (Oxford, 1935), facing p. 109; but I have been unable to discover fuller details from any local source.

⁵I should be glad to receive details of the exact site of the Peatling find from anyone who is acquainted with the circumstances of the discovery. This would enable the precise site of the first settlement to be determined more accurately.

for settlement from the south by way of the Welland. To push on up the wide valley of the upper Trent was obviously more inviting than to turn abruptly into the unknown and narrower valley of the Soar, with dense woods on either side; and the fact that the early Angles found it more attractive is indicated by the continuation of their cemeteries along the upper part of the Trent valley. For a long time, the opening of the Soar valley must have been passed by in favour of settlement further up the broad and more open Trent valley.

On the other hand, the Angles who were pushing up the Welland, at the same time, reached the headwaters of the river much sooner than those who followed the Trent, and had no alternative but to cross the low, forested watershed into the valley of the upper Avon or the headstreams of the Soar.

There is, however, one difficulty in the way of accepting this hypothesis. This is the fact that at Leicester, and almost certainly at Oadby also, there are traces of cremation,⁶ and where we find this "we may be sure . . . that we have to do with invaders who were either newly arrived from Germany or else conservative in their customs".⁷ Unless we allow that the Angles who reached Leicester and Oadby were more conservative than their fellows, and practised cremation for some considerable time after it had been abandoned elsewhere in favour of inhumation, we have to admit that these two places were occupied very early in the Anglo-Saxon period, probably in the early part of the sixth century. The comparatively early find at Glen Parva (which has been dated as 500-550) may represent another piece of evidence of a similar nature, although the dating is too wide to be of great value. It may be that the important centre of Leicester was occupied for strategic reasons by the Angles using the Trent-Soar route, and that both Oadby and Glen Parva were settled a little later from Leicester itself. On the other hand, if Peatling had been occupied as early as the year 500, as the grave-gear would indicate, then it may well be that Leicester was first approached from this direction rather than from the north; and that settlements were made *en route* at Oadby and Glen Parva.

⁶For the evidence of cremation at Oadby, see footnote to p. 121, *Transactions*, 1934-35.

⁷Hodgkin, *op. cit.* I, p. 85.

The question is a difficult one. All that we can say of Leicester, in the century that elapsed after the withdrawal of the Romans, is that it would seem to have been re-occupied by the Angles about the year 500, or shortly afterwards, not as part of a widespread movement of colonisation, but as an isolated point of strategic importance; and that, though it might have been approached in the first place either from the north or from the south, we should perhaps attach rather more weight to the hypothesis that it was approached from the Welland, in view of the position of the very early site of Peatling. This would not, of course, preclude an almost contemporary movement up the Soar valley from the Trent. But it must be left at this point as an open question; though future discoveries may lead us to attach more weight to one or other of the alternative routes suggested above.

It may not be out of place to emphasise here the difficulties involved in deductions based on the dating of grave-gear and other finds, or on the nature of the burials (whether cremation or inhumation, or both), or on place-name types. Though this may seem to introduce complications into a subject already sufficiently obscure, we must be aware of the fact that argument from the dates of objects and place-names is open to a fairly generous margin of error. Hodgkin, in *A History of the Anglo-Saxons*, observes that not only may the date of cremations be later than that usually allowed, by reason of the conservatism of the settlers in the more remote parts of the country, away from the main currents of change; but also that the dating of particular pieces of grave-gear, such as brooches, may be open to the same modification. When we date the Billesdon brooch, for example, as about the year 550, we are assuming that the people of that district were not behind the current fashion in brooch-types. It may possibly be that, through remoteness, they were a generation behind the prevailing fashion. Such a difficulty as this can only be discussed by bearing in mind the comparative ease or difficulty with which the particular locality could maintain contact with the main stream of development.

The same difficulty applies to place-name types. Though Ekwall, in *English Place-Names in -ing*, suggested that *-ingas* names as a whole are not much later than c. 500, belonging for

the greater part to the latter years of the fifth century, Myres⁸ observes that this dating has met with no general assent. He would say that most *-ingas* names were formed in the fifth and sixth centuries, a few after 600, and none after 700; and that an early dating of a place-name would need to be supported by other evidence, such as that of grave-gear. In the case of Peatling, fortunately, we have this evidence that the site was occupied by the year 500, approximately.

This brings us to another point which was touched upon in my earlier article (see pp. 121-22), and that is the fact that while nineteen burial-places have been recorded in Leicestershire (adding Peatling and Oadby to the sites shown on the map there given),⁹ only one of these is associated with a place-name of an early type. This, of course, is Peatling, which has already been discussed at length. This curious divergence between *-ingas* sites and pagan cemetery sites is noticeable all over the eastern part of England. Myres cites the two extreme cases of Cambridgeshire, with cemeteries and no *-ingas* names, and Essex with *-ingas* names but almost no pagan cemeteries.

The disparity is puzzling, and on page 122 of my first article the explanation was offered that early place-names were in a fluid state, and that old names might have been lost and new ones given, especially when a village changed its overlord. Myres suggests, more plausibly, the way in which such changes might have taken place, and his explanation throws new light upon some of our Leicestershire villages. He suggests that where we have a heathen cemetery and a late place-name, we have to remember the disturbances of the sixth and the seventh centuries, when many settlements already existing were destroyed. And if the habit of giving *-ingas* names had been lost by 700, the resuscitated village would receive another name of a later type.

In Oadby and Wigston we have two most interesting examples of this possibility, though here we have to do, not with the disturbances of the sixth and seventh centuries, but with the destruction of the Danish conquests in the latter part of the ninth and the early part of the tenth centuries. It seems most probable that these villages, both with cemeteries of the heathen period and possessing, we must presume, Anglian names of an

⁸*Antiquity*, Dec., 1935.

⁹*Transactions*, vol. cit, facing p. 113.

early type, were wiped out in the Danish manoeuvres in Mercia, perhaps at the time that Leicester was occupied.¹⁰ When they were resuscitated, upon the establishment of more settled conditions later in the century, they would naturally receive names with Scandinavian associations. Nothing could be more natural, in the case of Oadby, that that it should have been given a name which commemorated the fact of an earlier settlement (*Oldebi*, "the old farm") and that Wigston should be named from the Dane who refounded it (*Wichingestone*, "Viking's farm").¹¹ The majority of the pagan cemetery sites in Leicestershire are associated with Danish place-names, to which the same theory may equally well apply.

Where we have, on the other hand, an early place-name but no trace of a pagan cemetery, there is another simple explanation. On a site which has been continuously occupied since pagan times, the church has often, if not usually, been built on the site of pagan worship. There are many well-known examples of this continuity from all over the country. But where this has happened there is every possibility that "the ceaseless and necessary routine of the village sexton", as Myres puts it, may have disturbed heathen remains and lost them to us for ever. Just as the village sexton of recent years, in crowded churchyards, often disturbed medieval bones, so his medieval predecessor must have thrown up the bones and gear of pagan Anglo-Saxons.

In Leicestershire we have no such example of an early place-name without a cemetery, and the question may therefore seem to have no relevance for us. It may, however, have some considerable relevance, though the argument can be at this stage only tentative; for, by going beyond the evidence of place-names and of pagan cemeteries, we are perhaps opening the door to that idle speculation which is so often a substitute for genuine knowledge.

¹⁰Though the Saxon Chronicle records, under the year 868, that "there was no heavy fight, for the Mercians made peace with the [Danish] army", this does not preclude the possibility of several villages being destroyed.

¹¹In the *Wyggeston Hospital Records* (1933) it is interesting to discover a John Wykyng in 1272-3 and again in 1324 (Grants Nos. 889, 944). It is not improbable that we have a direct descendant of the original *Vikingr* of the tenth century. The name seems to have disappeared, however, in the fourteenth century.

It may seem, and undoubtedly is, dangerous to abandon these concrete tests of early settlement, however imperfect they may be, and to offer another where these are lacking. But the evidence of the topographical map, supported by our knowledge of pre-Roman trackways, is not to be ignored, if we are to advance our knowledge of this period beyond its present limitations.

The possibilities of this approach by way of the topographical map will be made more apparent if a specific example be chosen. Let us examine in some detail the village of Houghton-on-the-Hill, some six miles east of Leicester. The commanding position of the village first of all attracts attention, standing as it does upon a high, sharply-defined ridge of glacial sands and gravels, in front of, and an outpost for, the marlstone escarpment which is so marked a feature of the East Leicestershire landscape. In this position it commands a view of the Soar valley across to the hills of Charnwood, and it must have had a strategic importance at an early date.

Then we observe that it was the crossing-place of two ancient trade routes, one running roughly north and south and the other east and west. The older of these is the ridgeway which Peake seems to date as about the middle period of the Bronze Age.¹² This branched off from a larger and more important ridgeway at Tilton, passed around the northern slope of Billesdon Coplow, and reached Houghton by way of Palace Hill. From here it followed the general direction of the footpath to Bushby, and so to the lowest fordable point of the Soar, just below Leicester.¹³

The other road was of the Hillside type, of the period known as the Iron Age. From Gilmorton it ran by Peatling Magna and Foston to East Wigston. The subsequent course of the road is easily traced to Houghton by an almost continuous line of footpaths and bridle-roads, followed for most of the distance by parish boundaries, a certain indication of great antiquity. From Houghton the road seems to have continued by Ingarsby, Hungerton, and Twyford to the camp on Burrough Hill.¹⁴

For a short distance, along what is now the main street of Houghton, these two roads would seem to have fused, before

¹²*Memorials of Old Leicestershire* (1911), pp. 33-39.

¹³Peake, *loc. cit.* p. 38.

¹⁴*Ibid.* p. 42. This road may be identical with the Salt Ridgeway in, or at the edge of, the south field of Oadby. See grant No. 777 (*n.d.*) in *Wyggeston Hospital Records*.

parting company once more, one going due north and the other eastwards. It is very unlikely that such a meeting-place, high up on a well-defined ridge, looking across the whole width of the Soar valley, was not occupied at an early date by the Angles. Immediately to the north we have a pagan cemetery at Ingarsby, while between Keyham and Hungerton a spear-head and a clasp of Anglian pattern have been found. Southwards too, Houghton was connected directly with Peatling, the first settlement of the heathen period. If, therefore, one were invited to suggest the most probable site of early Anglian settlement (*i.e.* before 650), even in the absence of a discovered cemetery or an *-ingas* place-name, one would unhesitatingly say Houghton-on-the Hill. Here, more than anywhere else in Leicestershire, one might suspect the village churchyard of concealing Anglian remains of the pagan period.¹⁵

Let us now pass on to the Danish invasions and the subsequent colonisation. What has been said before¹⁶ of the Danish settlement in Leicester need not be repeated, but there are numerous additional pieces of evidence which may be set forth here. Each of the Danish armies was grouped around a fortified centre, a *burh*, of which Leicester was one; "but it is in the open country that the characteristic forms of Danish settlement are to be found".¹⁷ To the south and south-east of Leicester, especially, we find the place-name element of *burh* occurring again and again, usually in some significant position. A closer examination of these sites will add something not inconsiderable to our scanty knowledge of these years.

Beyond the village of Stoughton, it has already been observed,¹⁸ we have two such *burhs* compounded with Danish personal names: Kettlesborough and Swadborough. Both these names are now attached to spinneys which are of fairly modern origin, but the names themselves have almost certainly been taken from older field-names. The exact site of these *burhs*, too, is highly interesting. They lie on either side, and within a short

¹⁵The relationship of Houghton to the surrounding parishes, as revealed by a map of the parish boundaries, is also very suggestive of priority of settlement. See the map on p. 127 of the *Transactions*, *loc. cit.*

¹⁶*Transactions*, 1934-35, pp. 128-34.

¹⁷Stenton: *The Danes in England* (1927).

¹⁸*Transactions*, *vol. cit.* p. 130.

distance of the Gartree road, which was in pre-Conquest times the main line of communication between Leicester and the Welland. And the Welland was, for a long time, virtually a frontier of Danish England, and therefore to be closely watched. Any road which led from it to the important *burh* of Leicester was therefore of great importance, and so I suggest that these two *burhs* represent small fortified outposts, under Ketill and Siwat, established immediately after the Danish occupation of Mercia; that is, soon after 877. Ketill's *burh* was on slightly rising ground, commanding a long stretch of the Gartree road, while Siwat's *burh* lay at the crossing of two ancient though smaller roads, besides being within half a mile of the Gartree road.

Another curious fact about these *burhs*, which applies to nearly every example in the county, is that they lie on a parish boundary. Indeed, it would be hard to find a *burh* which did not exhibit this peculiarity; and though the explanation of this fact is simple, it is not without value.

Generally speaking, the boundaries of ecclesiastical parishes over the greater part of the country were drawn after the time of the Scandinavian invasions; in many parts of England as late as the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. But whenever they were demarcated, they would naturally tend to move from one unmistakable landmark to another, in order to avoid territorial disputes as far as possible; and the existence of a *burh* would provide an admirable boundary mark in one direction at least.¹⁹ So we often find as many as three parishes meeting at such a *burh*, as at Tamborough Hill (actually in an extreme corner of Galby parish) where Galby, Frisby and Illston all meet.

The value of this simple explanation lies in the fact that where the site of the *burh* has been lost, and is preserved to us only in some medieval field-name, we can go some way towards recovering its actual site by following the boundaries of the parish to some commanding point; and there in all probability stood the ancient *burh*. In medieval Wigston, for example, we have this simple fact emphasised for us. In a grant of 1375-6²⁰

¹⁹In indeterminate country, presenting no marked features, boundary stones would have to be set up. Hence the frequency of such names as *harstan* in medieval grants of land. On the Leicester boundary of Evington, to-day, we find Horston Hill marked on the six-inch map, just to the north of the Leicester-Evington road.

²⁰Hamilton-Thompson: *Wyggeston Hospital Records*. Grant No. 966.

we hear of *Herburgh hull*, i.e. the hill of the boundary *burh*; which seems likely to have been somewhere on the southern boundary of the parish.

In the majority of cases, then, the village did not grow up beside the *burh*, but at some distance, usually a mile or two, from it; a very understandable precaution. The *burh* in most cases was the fortified outpost, behind which the village lay, at a distance which gave time for preparation against sudden attack. Where the village-name actually embodies the element of *burh*, as, for example, in Burton, Narborough, and Birstall (to choose a few examples at random) there is the possibility of the sites of village and *burh* being identical. This is a point which can be settled only by reference to medieval field-names, where they are known, and perhaps to local topographical peculiarities also. Even in these instances we shall probably find that the village lay at some distance from the *burh*, which gave its name to the village only because there was no other outstanding feature in the neighbourhood. Those who first named places were not, on the whole, very fertile in invention, and tended to follow precedent, and to imitate what others had done. Hence we must, generally speaking, look for the original *burh* somewhere beyond the village itself, where we are dealing with a place-name in which this element occurs, and in Leicestershire we shall have to look on the side of the village furthest from Leicester; that is, the side from which attack was most likely to come.

Another significant characteristic of the *burhs* of Leicestershire is worth attention. If we continue in an arc around the south-eastern side of Leicester from Ketill's *burh*, we come to the *crumb burh* which in medieval times lay in or near the east field of Oadby,²¹ probably again on the boundary of the field and of the parish. Its exact site cannot now be determined, unless by some happy chance the name survives, in a recognisable form, in a field-name.²² Indeed, Kettlesborough Spinney itself lies on the eastern boundary of Oadby parish, and we must not overlook

²¹*Wyggeston Hospital Records*, grant No. 777 (no date, but apparently late 14th century).

²²These field-names are, I understand, now being collected by school children as part of a comprehensive survey of the history and customs of villages in Leicestershire.

the possibility that Ketill's *burh* and the *crumb* ("crooked") *burh* may be identical.

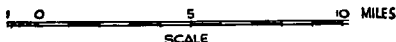
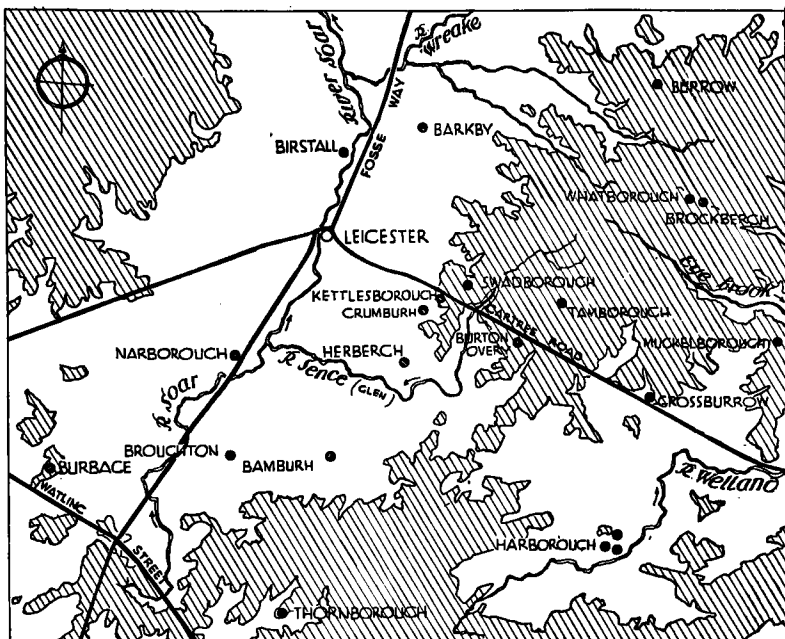
Herburgh in Wigston,²³ probably somewhere on the southern boundary of the parish, continues this ring of outposts around Leicester; but at this point our chain ceases, perhaps only because we have no sources of medieval field-names for the adjoining parishes, such as the Wyggeston Hospital records provide.²⁴ It may be that Narborough (the "north *burh*" in relation to Broughton) belongs to this chain also, while immediately to the north of Leicester we have Birstall and Barkby.²⁵ On the north-west Leicester was protected by the great Leicester Forest, in which fortified outposts would have been useless; but to the north-east of the town, between Swadborough on the east and Barkby on the north, there is a gap in the defences. The Ordnance Survey map does not help us in the least to fill this gap, for it yields no names embodying *burh*; but as so many of these names have now disappeared from the map this negative evidence proves nothing. It is pretty certain that if the medieval field-names of Evington, Humberstone, Thurnby, Bushby, Scraftoft and Thurmaston could be recovered, they would yield between them enough *burhs* to enable us to complete our circuit of Leicester. Here again is a task for the searcher with minute local knowledge of topography and old names, to fill in these gaps before it is too late.

It seems highly probable, then, that the Danish occupation of the county first took the form of a military occupation of Leicester, followed immediately by the establishment of a ring of smaller fortified outposts at a distance of a few miles, upon the higher ground. This *burh* organisation seems to have been strongest on the eastern and southern sides of Leicester, as we should expect when the Welland was virtually the frontier; but the apparent concentration on this side may well be due to the fact that for this district our information is most complete. A

²³Wyggeston Hospital Records, grant No. 966.

²⁴The six-inch Ordnance Survey Map (sheet 44 N.W.) does, however, reveal a Bambury Lane in the corner of Whetstone parish, the antiquity of which is indicated by the fact that it is followed by a parish boundary; while its continuation (on sheet 44 S.W.) is known as Mere Lane (? O.E. *maere*, "boundary") and is still followed by parish boundaries. Unless we are greatly deceived, then, we must add to our list a lost *Bamburh* (probably from the O.E. *beam*, hence "the *burh* fortified with beams").

²⁵For the derivation of Barkby see page 16.



THE BURHS OF EAST LEICESTERSHIRE IN RELATION TO THE ROMAN ROADS

REFERENCE , AREAS ABOVE 400 O.D. ARE CROSS HATCHED
 RIVERS ~~~~~ ROMAN ROADS — BURHS ●

fuller knowledge of the nomenclature of other parishes might show that Leicester was encircled by these outposts, except perhaps on the forested north-western side.

Beyond this inner ring, at a distance of a few miles from it, we find another line of *burhs* running in a long curve roughly parallel to the first. This line may be said to begin at Burrow Hill, and to run through Whatborough, Brockbergh,²⁶ Tamborough, Burton [Overy], Bamburgh (probably somewhere near Peatling Magna), Broughton [Astley] and Burbage. It is too much to suggest, perhaps, that this second curve of fortified points was deliberately planned as a further barrier between Leicester and the frontier, although its general direction seems to suggest this.

The great earthworks on Burrow Hill are, of course, far older than the Danish period, but they must have been used by the Danes and it is therefore proper to include them here. But all the other *burhs* were smaller, and have long since disappeared except as a name. It is probably safer to attribute their origin to this period of the Danish occupation of Mercia rather than to any earlier date, for they lie for the most part in low country untraversed by pre-Roman peoples. Such points could not have been of any strategic importance until the coming of the Angles and their clearing of the forested lowlands; and even in this period it is unlikely that such an elaborate system, if system it was, could have arisen until the Danish military occupation of the county.

As we approach the Welland we find further evidences of defensive measures, though our sources of information are very scanty. They are limited to the six-inch maps of the Ordnance Survey, and to the published records of Market Harborough,²⁷ which serve again to show that the map of to-day has preserved only a few of the ancient names.

²⁶Another lost place-name in the parish of Whatborough. It appears on a map of the manor of Whatborough dated 1620, printed in Tawney: *The Agrarian Problem in the Sixteenth Century*, facing p. 223. This would be the "badger burh" though there is the possibility, that it is derived from the O.E. *beorg*, "hill", rather than *burh*. On the common confusion, in place-names, between these two elements, see *The Chief Elements in English Place-Names*, pp. 4-5.

²⁷*Market Harborough Parish Records to A.D. 1530*, ed. by Stocks and Bragg (1890).

Just north of the Horninghold to Stockerston road, on the eastward-facing slope of Knob Hill, we find Muckelborough Plantation, five hundred feet above sea level. This "great *burh*" (muckel- being a dialect form of the O.E. *micel*, O.N. *mikill*, "great, large") commanded another dangerous line of approach from across the Welland and the Eye Brook, and, as its name signifies, must have been one of the larger and more important units in the defensive scheme. Another possible *burh* is Cross-burrow Hill [O.S. sheet 46 N.W.], about half a mile south of Glooston, on the ridge that runs behind Cranoe. This, too, would have covered the Welland valley to the wooded hills of Northamptonshire on the further side.

At Harborough we find some interesting material. The name means "the *burh* at the boundary", but it is not mentioned in the Domesday Survey. It does not appear as a distinct place from Bowden Magna until 1180, when, according to Nichols, Henry II "granted the manors of Bowden and Haverbergh to William de Mauduit, his Chamberlain".²⁸ Until this date only the royal manor of Bowden is known to have existed, and "though it would be hazardous to infer, from the silence of the record, that no such place as Harborough then existed"²⁹ it does seem highly probable that Harborough was actually the site of the *burh* guarding the Welland crossing and that Great Bowden was the site of the earliest settlement, a mile or so from the *burh*; just as, in the neighbourhood of Leicester, we saw that the *burh* and the village lay at some little distance from each other.

Within the common fields of Great Bowden we find no fewer than three *burhs* mentioned in the Harborough records: *Mikelbergh* in a grant of 1463,³⁰ in the east field; *Lyttylbergh* in the same grant, also in the east field; and *Holebergh* in a grant of 1343,³¹ situated in the south field. *Mickelbergh* is "the great *burh*", *Lyttylbergh* "the little *burh*" and *Holebergh* is the *burh* in or near the hollow. The sites of these cannot now be determined exactly, but the fact that three are found in close proximity to one another indicates sufficiently the importance of the Welland

²⁸Market Harborough Parish Records, p. 8.

²⁹*Ibid.* p. 8.

³⁰*Ibid.* p. 179.

³¹*Ibid.* p. 161.

as a frontier at some time in the Danish occupation. The spelling of *Mickelbergh*, too, which suggests the O.N. *mikill* rather than the O.E. *micel*, may indicate that this "great burh" was the work of Danes rather than anyone else. An examination of the field-names of other parishes abutting on the Welland should show other examples of defensive works of this period.

Before we leave this subject of the *burhs* of Scandinavian origin, there is yet another point of caution. "In the Southern Danelaw, more especially in Northants and Leicestershire, this suffix [*burh*] in Domesday often alternates with *by* and there can be little doubt that many of the place-names which now end in *-by* once had the suffix *-byrig*".³² In other words, many place-names now masquerading as *-by* ("farm") are really derived from *burh*, the original name having been corrupted since the time of Domesday. Thus, in the vicinity of Leicester alone, we find that Barkby was *Barcheberie* in 1086 (probably from the O.E. *beorc*, "birch"; hence "the *burh* by the birch trees"); Quenby was *Queneberie*, and Ingarsby [*In*]gerberie.³³ Other examples of this modification from an original *-byrig* into *-by* can be found scattered all over the Domesday map of Leicestershire.

We come now to a final point in connection with the Scandinavian settlement of Leicestershire. It is now agreed that in intensively Scandinavianised districts we find a high proportion of sokemen enumerated in the subsequent Domesday Survey. This is what we certainly discover in Leicestershire as a whole, wherein 45 per cent. of the enumerated population are described as sokemen, a proportion exceeded, I believe, only by Lincolnshire and Suffolk. Though there is no very marked concentration of sokemen in any one part of the county,³⁴ there are remarkably wide variations in the proportion from village to village, even between villages with Scandinavian names. In the neighbourhood of Leicester, we find, for instance, that 45 of the enumerated

³²The *Chief Elements in English Place-Names*, p. 11.

³³The prefix *In-* was wrongly omitted by the Domesday scribe, giving us *Gerberie*, which means nothing. My own derivation of Ingarsby, in the Appendix on Place-Names (*loc. cit.*) should therefore be "*Inguarr's burh*" and not "*Inguarr's farm*".

³⁴If we take the great sokes of Melton and Rothley which, with their dependent manors, cover the greater part of the Wreake valley and the adjacent country—that is, the district generally regarded as the most intensively Scandinavianised of any in Leicestershire—we find just about 50 per cent. of the enumerated population are sokemen; not a very significant increase over the general average for the county.

population of 59 in Oadby at the time of the Domesday Survey were sokemen; that is, seventy-six per cent. of the whole. But in Wigston the sokemen are only 31 out of 86, or about thirty-six per cent. Other villages with a high percentage of sokemen were Blaby (76 per cent.), Humberstone (70 per cent.) and Stoughton, which included Bushby and Thurnby (54 per cent.). The example of Humberstone is remarkable, for here we have a village with a purely English name showing, by another test, a high degree of Scandinavian influence. Nothing could illustrate more clearly the necessity for caution in arguing from the evidence of place-names alone.

A safer guide, than the mere name of the village, to the extent of Scandinavian settlement lies in the field- and other minor names, and in the names of the early medieval inhabitants. By these tests both Oadby and Wigston, for example, and particularly the latter, show a high degree of Scandinavian influence; but this opens up another subject which can most conveniently be dealt with on another occasion.

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