

The Origins of East Anglian Towns:  
Coin Loss in the Landscape, AD 470-939

*by*

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# Abbreviations

ASC	<i>Anglo-Saxon Chronicle</i> G.N. Garmonsway, translator, (London, 1972, 3 <sup>rd</sup> Edition).
BM	British Museum
BNJ	<i>British Numismatic Journal</i>
BAR	<i>British Archaeological Reports</i>
DCMS	Department of Culture Media and Sport
EHDi	<i>English Historical Docs vol 1</i>
EMC	Early Medieval Coin Corpus
EHR	<i>English Historical Review</i>
HE	<i>Historia Ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum</i> , L. Sherley-Price, revised by R.E. Latham, (translators and eds.) <i>Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People</i> (London, 1990).
JBAA	<i>Journal of the British Archaeological Association</i>
MECi	P. Grierson and M. Blackburn, <i>Medieval European Coinage Vol. 1 – The Early Middle Ages (5th–10th centuries)</i> (Cambridge, 1986)
PPS	<i>Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society</i>
SCBI	Sylloge of Coins from the British Isles
T&Si	Metcalf, D.M., <i>Thrymsas and Sceattas in the Ashmolean Museum Oxford: Volumes 1</i> (Oxford, 1994).
T&Sii	Metcalf, D.M., <i>Thrymsas and Sceattas in the Ashmolean Museum Oxford: Volumes 2</i> (Oxford, 1994).
T&Siii	Metcalf, D.M., <i>Thrymsas and Sceattas in the Ashmolean Museum Oxford: Volumes 3</i> (Oxford, 1994).
XRF	X-Ray Fluorescence



# Abstract

This thesis examines the development of East Anglian Towns during the 5<sup>th</sup> through to the 10<sup>th</sup> centuries. In particular it looks at the relationship between coinage and towns at that time through an examination of the distribution of coinage in the landscape. The pattern of coin finds is correlated with an estate model of early medieval tenurial development, where estate centres can be identified on the basis of place-name and their coin finds. The relationship between these estate centres and later towns is then explored.

The coin data demonstrates a correlation between places with four or more coins and locations that have a *ham* place-name suffix. A strong correlation between places where Middle Saxon coinage is located in significant quantity and locations that later become towns can also be demonstrated. It is suggested that urban development in this region during the 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries was founded on administrative and taxation functions being situated differently in various places according to local custom or preference. Within certain locations these functions were dispersed, whilst in others they were more nucleated. The earliest urban nucleation occurred in the Sandlings area of Suffolk with the growth, during the first half of the 8<sup>th</sup> century, of Ipswich. Towards the end of the period being examined here nucleation became a more common strategy and this, in full or in part, led to the establishment and growth of several towns, in particular Norwich and Thetford. However, some locations still tended towards holding administrative units in a dispersed manner until much later, in some cases, such as King's Lynn, as late as the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> century.

It is argued that the complexity and reach of the East Anglian state can effectively be seen in its development of a strategy for coin distribution and use. The locations where significant numbers of coins have been found are notable, demonstrating that the landscape was well organised, and that government was effective and innovative in converting production from agrarian surplus, using the ancient estate as the means of surplus generation, into a more easily utilised form. At the same time more ancient forms of wealth aggregation continued to be used, such as food-rent. Here also, it is argued, there were innovations with Ipswich ware pottery

(manufactured within the *wic*) specifically used within the system of food-rent gathering. This too further increased the centralisation of the state and provided more impetus for the centralisation of administration within towns. The growth and development of towns can thus be examined in a new way, which when compared with their archaeological ‘records’ provides new insight into their relationships with the regional landscape.

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

There once many a man  
mood-glad, goldbright, of gleams garnished,  
flushed with wine-pride, flashing war-gear,  
gazed on wrought gemstones, on gold, on silver,  
on wealth held and hoarded, on light-filled amber,  
on this bright burg of broad dominion.  
(from *The Ruin* – Anonymous<sup>1</sup>)

When I began this study my principal aim was to understand a little more about the context for the development of towns in East Anglia during the period spanning the 7th to the 10th centuries. In particular, I was interested in the context of the development and growth of towns and how the relationship between town and country was articulated. I was also aware, at this early stage, that historical views on the origins of early medieval towns had a tendency to project historic models backwards from well-documented and understood periods to those less well documented. There can also sometimes be a tendency to separate towns and cities as places from their wider context and not consider them as parts of a coherent landscape.<sup>2</sup> In particular, legalistic definitions of what constitutes a town do not necessarily help when examining their early development, though given the relative paucity of documentary evidence for the period before the Norman Conquest this was not too much of a problem.<sup>3</sup> For the 7th to 10th centuries it is to archaeology that we must turn for an understanding of town development, with only glimpses and tantalising fragments provided by historical sources. The quantity of archaeological material now collected from East Anglia for this period, particularly by unsystematic surface collection, is prodigious, but there is also a large corpus of information from controlled investigations; a focused approach is, therefore, necessary in trying to make sense of the totality of this material. I therefore looked at the potential of a number of methods for studying early medieval urban development within East Anglia and, for reasons which will be discussed later at some length, decided to concentrate on the examination of coinage and the potential for that dataset to illuminate the economics behind urban growth and intensification. I

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<sup>1</sup> M. Alexander (translator) *The Earliest English Poems* (London, 1991, 3rd edn revised).

<sup>2</sup> For a discussion of this see S. Roskams, 'Urban transition in early medieval Britain: the case of York', in N. Christie and S.T. Loseby (eds), *Towns in Transition: Urban Evolution in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (London, 1996), 262–88.

<sup>3</sup> For a view of the establishment of medieval towns that relies on legal definitions see M. Beresford, *New Towns of the Middle Ages* (Gloucester, 1988).

was also interested in that other old archaeological standby, pottery, and what it might have to tell us about the development of the relationship between early medieval towns and their surrounding landscapes, and I soon learned that the Middle Saxon East Anglian pottery known as Ipswich ware was the subject of a large-scale study funded by English Heritage and due for publication (that was in 2001 and the study remains unpublished). I decided, therefore, to focus on coinage and its distribution; the subject of pottery is still touched upon, however, and hopefully the data complements that of the coinage.

At the beginning of the study the coin data led me to examine what can be learned of the period's settlement hierarchy from surface-collected material. A number of other students have also recently been involved in investigating this topic, and several publications discussing sites discovered as surface scatters in this way – known as 'productive' sites – have emerged.<sup>4</sup> The term 'productive site' dates from the late 1970s and derives from a 'shorthand' used by numismatic scholars to refer to places which produced a significant number of interesting coins. Subsequently this term has become more widely adopted and is now commonly used to describe materially rich sites of Middle Saxon date that are known only through the collection of material from the plough-zone by metal-detector users. These places are often otherwise functionally and historically enigmatic. A few excavations have helped to illuminate the nature of a few of these places, notably Brandon, Cottam and Flixborough,<sup>5</sup> but in general they remain largely uncharacterised by formal archaeological investigation. The concept of 'productive' sites, therefore, possesses limited interpretative value.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, it can be argued that the term misleads and in some ways obscures a better understanding of the period's settlement structure, partly because it is so completely ahistorical; terminology is important and poor terms can have an effect on how scholars examine material. It seems likely from the evidence examined here that this particular term represents a variety of site types potentially including: monasteries, courts, moots, fairs and possibly even towns. Some of these places, it will be suggested, were effectively urban in aggregate, if not actually individually. In some locations there was nucleation of 'urban' roles, such as large-scale production and minting, while in other places

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<sup>4</sup> T. Pestell and K. Ulmschneider (eds) *Markets in Early Medieval Europe: Trading and 'Productive' Sites, 650–850* (Macclesfield, 2003); K. Ulmschneider, *Markets, Minsters, and Metal-Detectors: The Archaeology of Middle Saxon Lincolnshire and Hampshire Compared* (Oxford, BAR Brit. Ser. 307, 2000); J. Naylor, *An Archaeology of Trade in Middle Saxon England* (Oxford, BAR Brit. Ser. 376, 2004); and A.R.J. Hutcheson, 'The origins of King's Lynn? Control of wealth on the Wash prior to the Norman Conquest', *Med Archaeol* 50 (2006), 71–104.

<sup>5</sup> R.D.Carr, A. Tester, & P. Murphy, 'The Middle-Saxon Settlement at Brandon', *Antiquity*, 62, (1988), 371–7; J.D. Richards, 'The Anglian and Anglo-Scandinavian Sites at Cottam, East Yorkshire', in Pestell and Ulmschneider, *Markets in Early Medieval Europe*, 155–66.; C. Loveluck, *Rural Settlement, lifestyles and social change in the later first millenium AD, Anglo-Saxon Flixborough and its wider context* (Oxford 2007).

<sup>6</sup> See, for instance, J.D. Richards, 'What's so special about "productive sites"? Middle Saxon settlements in Northumbria', in T. Dickinson and D. Griffiths (eds) *The Making of Kingdoms* (Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History 10, 1999), 71–80; and C. Loveluck, *Rural Settlement, Lifestyles and Social Change in the Later First Millennium AD: Anglo-Saxon Flixborough in its Wider Context* (Oxford, 2007).

these roles were dispersed among several sites. How these roles were manifested in the landscape alters over time and the sites may not always have been subject to a linear movement towards growth and intensification. Nucleation or dispersal can happen at different scales of landscape organisation; within a kingdom some areas became more ‘urban’ than others, but also within neighbouring estates there were both nucleated and dispersed functions. These issues are discussed in detail in Chapter 8.

The patterns thrown up by this initial part of the study led to an interest in how historical models, applied to archaeological data, may be utilised for understanding medieval landscape organisation: in particular, the ideas regarding earlier medieval estate forms and structures discussed by Jones and developed locally for East Anglia by Williamson.<sup>7</sup> My reading of Faith’s discussion on the development of English land tenure and social relationships was also influential on how this part of the thesis took shape.<sup>8</sup> The use of coinage to define some of these larger historical problems became a strong theme of the work. One of the key aspects of this research has been a recognition of the interconnected nature of several historical processes in this period: the growth of towns, the reintroduction of coinage, the development of new forms of state administration, experiments in taxation and land management through mechanisms such as book-land, inheritance by primogeniture and the policies and influence of the church. In most cases these were Europe-wide changes and both East Anglia, and England more generally, can thus act as case studies for more widespread phenomena.<sup>9</sup>

How the development of kingship influenced these trends also grew to be an increasingly crucial, if elusive, aspect of the study. For instance, it is clear that the power of kings was based on wealth derived from the exploitation of subjects, neighbours and enemies. However, the terminology of exploitation during this period is notoriously vague and difficult to define. Asser, for example, describes Alfred’s wealth as deriving from *census*, and also used the terms tribute, taxes, tolls and rents.<sup>10</sup> This probably refers to the recording of information for the purposes of carrying out the taxation, thus suggesting that a written record of such matters was maintained by administrators. It is almost impossible to define the difference between the

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<sup>7</sup> G.R.J. Jones, ‘Multiple estates and early settlement’, in P.H. Sawyer (ed.), *English Medieval Settlement* (London, 1979), 9–34; T. Williamson, *The Origins of Norfolk* (Manchester, 1993). The historical debate on the veracity of the multiple-estate model is a long-running and complex one. D.M. Hadley has usefully summarised the issues surrounding this argument specifically in terms of the northern Danelaw: ‘Multiple estates and the origins of the manorial structure of northern Danelaw’, *Journal of Historical Geography* 22 (1996), 3–15; *idem*, *The Vikings in England: Settlement, Society and Culture* (Manchester, 2006), 84–92.

<sup>8</sup> R. Faith, *The English Peasantry and the Growth of Lordship* (Leicester, 1997).

<sup>9</sup> Discussion along these lines has been published by numerous authors; particularly influential are R. Hodges, *Dark Age Economics: The Origins of Towns and Trade A.D. 600–1000* (London, 1982) and *The Anglo-Saxon Achievement* (London, 1989); J. Campbell, ‘The late Anglo-Saxon state: a maximum view’, in J. Campbell, *The Anglo-Saxon State* (London, 2000); and F.W. Maitland, *Domesday Book and Beyond*, reprinted with a forward by J.C. Holt (Cambridge, 1987).

<sup>10</sup> J.R. Maddicott, ‘Trade, industry and the wealth of King Alfred’, *Past and Present* 123 (1989), 3–51.

tribute demanded by a king from a subject population and that exacted from subject kingdoms,<sup>11</sup> but by the 8th century this distinction was probably beginning to break down, as over-kings subordinated collection of taxation in general to local sub-kings or ealdormen. Details of the system have been lost and what part coinage may have played in it is sometimes hinted at but never defined.

How the economic and military power of kings, and their attendant government apparatus, was centralised in particular locations, and how the wider landscape around such places may have been organised, leads back to the problem of urban genesis. Clearly economic power (by which specifically, in this case, I mean the collection of wealth through enforced obligation) was being centralised at specific sites in this period in a number of different ways and on a variety of scales. This led to the development of towns earlier in some locations (both within the kingdom of East Anglia and beyond) than in others. However, finance and the collection of obligations and their safeguarding, once acquired, are not the only reasons for the existence of a town. Political and military strategy and tactics also played a key role in where such places were planted and developed, and perhaps these were the most important factors ultimately in the development of Anglo-Saxon towns. This is most clear in relation to the *burhs* created under Alfred and Edward the Elder; towns as military and governmental strongholds were central to their policies, as demonstrated in the document that F.W. Maitland came to refer to as the Burghal Hidage.<sup>12</sup> The original of this record is thought to have been produced by either Alfred or perhaps, more probably, Edward the Elder.<sup>13</sup> I became interested in whether places known in the numismatic and archaeological literature as ‘productive’ sites may have, in certain cases, later developed into these *burhs*. This led to the question of the relationship between late-7th- and 8th-century *wics* (or what Bede refers to in the case of *Lundenwic* as an *emporium* or *metropolis*) and their surrounding landscapes, and other types of economically active sites.<sup>14</sup> The literature on *wics* is discussed in detail in Chapter 2. The functions and roles associated with these places have often been discussed in isolation or, more commonly, at the macro-scale.<sup>15</sup> The approach followed here was to view them in their immediate contexts, in terms of how they articulated with other elements of the settlement pattern.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> For a discussion of this see W. Davies, *Wales in the Early Middle Ages* (Leicester, 1982), 129.

<sup>12</sup> For a discussion of the manuscript evidence see A.R. Rumble, ‘The known manuscripts of the Burghal Hidage’, in D. Hill and A.R. Rumble (eds), *The Defence of Wessex: The Burghal Hidage and Anglo-Saxon Fortifications* (Manchester, 1996), 36–59.

<sup>13</sup> N.P. Brooks, ‘The administrative background to the Burghal Hidage’, in Hill and Rumble, *The Defence of Wessex*, 128–50.

<sup>14</sup> *Historia Ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, L. Sherley-Price, revised by R.E. Latham, (translators and eds.) *Bede’s Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (London, 1990), II, 3.

<sup>15</sup> The classic macro-scale view of *wics* is of course Hodges, *Dark Age Economics*.

<sup>16</sup> In this I was following a call made for better integration of towns and landscape as espoused in D. Perring, *Town and Country in England: Frameworks for Archaeological Research*, CBA Res. Rep. 134 (York, 2002).

East Anglia is fertile ground for such studies if one is unworried by the lack of documents to help illuminate the way. The material that has been collected from the ploughsoil, mainly over the last twenty years, is impressively rich and a testament to the relationship between metal detectorists and archaeologists. Recognition of this has been slow, however, and it is only relatively recently that research has concentrated on this resource.<sup>17</sup> The implication of so much archaeological material appearing within the ploughsoil of East Anglia is nevertheless depressing: local success in metal-detected find liaison and reporting, so vaunted by the Portable Antiquity Scheme, is the surface manifestation of an intensive agricultural regime's eradication of the archaeological record. Little systematic work has yet been carried out on this problem, mainly, it would seem, owing to political indifference.<sup>18</sup> Methodological issues arising from the problems associated with studying this material are discussed in more depth in Chapter 3, but are not a major focus of this study and are only discussed in so far as they relate to potential biases in the evidence.<sup>19</sup>

It is suggested here that the large number of coin finds from the East Anglian landscape, and their clear concentration in a restricted number of locations, is in part a reflection of a tax-collection system. This distribution was married to a loose 'multiple estate' model in the pilot study for this thesis to test for further historical patterns.<sup>20</sup> The idea was developed that some 'productive' sites represented a dispersed set of urban functions and *wics* conversely represented a nucleated aspect of the same general phenomena: namely, an increasingly intensive administration of wealth extraction and the conversion of wealth from an agrarian form into forms that were more readily utilised for political and military ends.<sup>21</sup> It was also tacitly suggested that the largest 'productive' site in north-west East Anglia, Bawsey, may have, in conjunction with the ecclesiastical proto-manor at Gaywood, formed the most significant of these earlier centres, and that Bawsey may ultimately have become a minor *burh*.<sup>22</sup> These latter aspects were not fleshed out in that published article,<sup>23</sup> and are here explored in greater depth. In particular, the reasons why so few of these once significant central places appear as places of

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<sup>17</sup> Recent PhDs based on metal-detected information collected within East Anglia include: N.C.G. Hutcheson, *Later Iron Age Norfolk: Metalwork, Landscape and Society* (Oxford, BAR Brit. Ser. 361, 2004); R.S. Hoggett, 'Changing Beliefs: The Archaeology of East Anglian Conversion' (unpublished PhD, University of East Anglia, 2007); M.E. Chester-Kadwell, *Early Anglo-Saxon Communities in the Landscape of Norfolk: Cemeteries and Metal-Detector Finds in Context*, BAR Brit. Ser. 481 (2009).

<sup>18</sup> Defra has funded a study: Oxford Archaeology, *The Management of Archaeological Sites in Arable Landscapes*, Defra Science and Research (London, 2002).

<sup>19</sup> Chester-Kadwell, 'Early Anglo-Saxon Communities', is currently the state of the art in terms of the explanation and assessment of the potential bias that results from the recording of metal-detector finds; also see D. Gurney, 'A note on the distribution of metal-detecting in Norfolk', *Norfolk Archaeol.* 42 (1997), 528–32.

<sup>20</sup> The pilot study is published: Hutcheson, 'The origins of King's Lynn?'.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

administrative or political importance in Domesday Book was a conundrum for which I have only recently found a probable explanation.

This study's starting point is the nature of urbanisation and the relationship between towns and coinage. It begins with an examination of the distribution of coinage from the 5th through to the late 7th century in order to provide a background to the situation in the period from the 7th to the 10th century. It is suggested that the roles and functions represented by the distribution of these objects form the origins for developments that culminated in the re-establishment of towns and the minting of wholly state-controlled coinage. At the other end of the chronological spectrum, the decision was made to end the study in AD 939, with the death of King Athelstan, an individual whose actions and laws clearly set the stage for the later economic developments of the medieval period. By this time towns were being established legally, economically, politically, militarily and practically in a way that essentially laid the foundations for urban development throughout the Middle Ages. There are still many archaeological and historical questions that cannot yet be effectively investigated, most importantly the topographic and built nature of early medieval towns, as discussed in Chapters 2 and 8. However, we can see archaeologically that they existed as places that hold many aspects in common with towns in the medieval period.

### **The East Anglian landscape**

Much has been written on the East Anglian landscape and it is certainly not worthwhile re-examining that literature in depth as an element of a thesis on coinage and urbanism.<sup>24</sup> That said, there is a strong case to be made for examining the historical processes of state development, town growth and intensification of coin control through the lens of geography. How and why the landscape becomes organised in a particular way at a point in time is a crucial 'document' relating to that society. In East Anglian terms it is one of the few surviving documents for the Anglo-Saxon period and, it can be argued, the most informative and perhaps objective source of information on the period.

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<sup>24</sup> See, for instance, D. Dymond, *The Norfolk Landscape* (Ipswich, 1985) and Williamson, *Origins of Norfolk*.





**Fig. 1.** Map of East Anglia showing land under 5m OD.

### *Geology, soils and topography*

The area of this study is the modern counties of Norfolk and Suffolk. They are effectively bounded by water on three sides, with the North Sea making up the most significant boundary. The Fens form the western boundary and, like the North Sea, were both a border and a highway. It is often colloquially said that East Anglia has its back to the sea, but this is an essentially modern notion, born of an era in which rail and road transport dominate the geographical mindset. In the past the sea and waterways were opportunities for contact and communication. East Anglia's connections in the past were as much with the landscapes of the North Sea littoral as with the interior of England. The coast of East Anglia is encrusted with ports, many of which are now pale reflections of their former selves.<sup>25</sup>

Most of the region overlies chalk, but over much of the east of the region this lies buried beneath substantial deposits of Pliocene and Pleistocene clays, gravels and sands known collectively as Norwich Crag. This deposit reaches its greatest depth near the east coast, where

<sup>25</sup> E. Rutledge, 'Medieval and later ports, trade and fishing, up to 1600', in T. Ashwin and A. Davison (eds), *An Historical Atlas of Norfolk* (Chichester, 2004), 78–9.

in some locations the chalk lies 100m below the present surface. As with the rest of south-eastern England the chalk is banded into three main bands: Lower, Middle and Upper. The chalkland is bounded to the south by the so-called Thanet beds and to the north-west by Upper and Lower Greensand outcroppings and a thin strip of the Kimmeridge Clay formation.

The overlying deposits, dating from the Ice Age, consist for the most part of a central band of chalky till known as boulder clay, with areas of sands and gravels at the peripheries. The Devensian period river-terrace formations laid down by the once-gigantic river system that outflowed across East Anglia and beyond through the North Sea plain form the basis for much of the landscape of the central and southern parts of the region. These formations are the basis for the region's soils, now forming a predominantly arable landscape but with a few large areas, including significant parts of the sandy Brecklands, not under arable cultivation.

Even by the standards of southern England, East Anglia is low-lying (Fig. 1). Most of the landscape lies below 60mOD and only small areas of either Norfolk or Suffolk rise to above 90m. Tracts of the East Anglian Fenland lie below sea level. During the Roman and Anglo-Saxon periods the coast was quite different from today; in particular, the Wash was wider and most of the Fens were wetland; this situation has in fact changed only relatively recently, within the last 300 years.<sup>26</sup> On the eastern side of the region was a large estuary, fed by the Yare, which has shrunk greatly since the early Middle Ages.<sup>27</sup> Much of the east coast of the region has suffered from erosion, as can be seen in the number of settlements that have disappeared into the sea; examples include Walton Castle and Dunwich in Suffolk and Eccles in Norfolk.

#### *Later prehistoric and Romano-British settlement patterns in East Anglia*

The precursor to any study of urban and state origins in the Anglo-Saxon period must be the preceding Roman period. The shadow cast by the Roman Empire was clearly a huge influence on the Anglo-Saxons, and is discussed in some detail below, particularly in terms of coin styles and the intentions behind the production of coinage and, more ephemerally, behind the creation and maintenance of towns. Care is required in examining the influence of Roman culture on the Anglo-Saxons, as knowledge of the Roman Empire may have resulted in artefacts and structures that bear a strong similarity to Roman ones but lack a direct and continuous link.<sup>28</sup> Nonetheless, the location and nature of Roman sites and infrastructure clearly influenced decisions on where to settle throughout the subsequent period. In particular, the road system, in conjunction with waterways, was a basis for subsequent communication routes and forms the backbone to the

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<sup>26</sup> D. Hall and J. Coles, *Fenland Survey: An Essay in Landscape and Persistence* (London, 1994).

<sup>27</sup> B.P.L. Coles and B.M. Funnell, 'Holocene palaeoenvironments of Broadland, England' in S.-D. Nio, R.T.E. Shuttenhelm and Tj.C.E. van Weering (eds), *Holocene Marine Sedimentation in the North Sea Basin* (Special Publication of the International Association of Sedimentologists, 1981).

<sup>28</sup> For a discussion of Roman influence on conversion-period Anglo-Saxon culture see H. Geake, *The Use of Grave-Goods in Conversion-Period England c.600–c.850* (Oxford, BAR Brit. Ser. 261, 1997).

settlement pattern during the Anglo-Saxon period. This raises the question of the antiquity of some patterns of socially constructed landscape divisions: is there some form of continuity in the location of territorial divisions and in the position of central places? And to what extent were these determined or ordained by the geological, hydrological and sedimentological base? What, in other words, are the various contributions made by, on one hand, the natural, and on the other, the cultural contexts? These questions are basic to an understanding of the development of a centralising and monopolistic state that controls resources through a series of institutional mechanisms, with the town or city at its forefront.

The organisation of the landscape in later prehistory is a topic that was not well understood until recently. Archaeology has tended to be largely site-specific in its investigations, but the large-scale collection and analysis of artefacts found on the surface and within the ploughsoil, particularly in recent times, has begun to alter this situation, and mapped information such as the distribution of certain sorts of monuments – for example, barrows – has for a long time indicated that the region supported a large, and by the later Neolithic or early Bronze Age at least, a fairly well-organised population.<sup>29</sup>

Recent work on the distribution of later prehistoric cropmarks across the north of the region, carried out by the National Mapping Programme, has demonstrated that field systems, in some cases stretching back into the later Bronze Age, were extensive. In addition, indications of political and administrative structures located at central places within the landscape can be traced effectively back to the Iron Age; these can be deduced from both the historical sources for the period and the material-culture distribution collected through archaeological means.<sup>30</sup>

The founding of central places during the later prehistoric period has held a certain amount of fascination for archaeologists, and has led to a debate on the presence or absence of *oppida* in the region's later Iron Age.<sup>31</sup> *Oppida* was a term used by Caesar to describe fortified places in Gaul and has become associated, particularly by cultural-historical and processualist scholars of European development, with urban or 'proto'-urban early town-like centres.<sup>32</sup> The idea has gone out of fashion more recently, however.<sup>33</sup> A recent geophysical survey of the area of the former Roman town of *Venta Icenorum* (Caistor St Edmund, Norfolk, 5km south of Norwich) has indicated a number of circular and sub-circular gullies which suggest that there were Iron Age

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<sup>29</sup> T. Ashwin, 'Neolithic and Bronze Age Norfolk', *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society* 62 (1996), 41–62.

<sup>30</sup> J.A. Davies, 'Where eagles dare: the Iron Age of Norfolk', *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society* 62 (1996), 63–92; Hutcheson, *Later Iron Age Norfolk*.

<sup>31</sup> J.A. Davies, *Venta Icenorum* (Norwich, 2001).

<sup>32</sup> This is not to denigrate important work on the subject such as J. Collis, *Oppida: Earliest Towns North of the Alps* (Sheffield, 1984).

<sup>33</sup> For a deconstructive view of *oppida* see G. Woolf, 'Rethinking the Oppida', *Oxford Journal of Archaeology* 12:2 (1993), 223–34.

structures beneath the later Roman town.<sup>34</sup> This correlates well with the significant assemblage of Iron Age coinage from the area of the town and provides a degree of credence to the idea that it did indeed have a later prehistoric precursor. Whether such a precursor falls into the category of an *oppidum* is at present a moot point.

Roads, whether created in the Roman period or originating earlier, played a key role in the settlement pattern of the earlier medieval period. We can see this, for instance, in their reuse as boundaries and their retention as named routes in later periods. In later chapters we will see that places that produce significant numbers of coins tend to be located along the pre-existing communication network and, in many cases, are found at the junctions of several routes, be they roadways or rivers. The question of continuity between the Roman and Anglo-Saxon periods is a contentious and heated debate, but one that is some extent simplified in East Anglia, where there is a stark difference between the material cultures of the two ages.

### **Roman towns and forts in East Anglia: the urban precursors to Anglo-Saxon towns?**

The topic of continuity in settlement, both urban and non-urban, between the Roman and Anglo-Saxon period is complex, and it is fair to say that there are few in the way of strong correlations between the settlements of the Roman and Early Saxon periods. The dataset from excavation is small and the surface collection evidence, although much larger, is not easily interpreted; however, the same places crop up again and again when the analysis turns to concentrations of portable wealth, particularly coinage from all periods from the later Iron Age to the Anglo-Saxon (the reasons for which are explored in detail in Chapter 8). Britain is unlike much of the rest of Europe at this time, certainly compared to other post-Imperial areas, in that gold coinage was scarce in this country.<sup>35</sup> This may be a simple matter of isolation, but the preponderance of other artefacts from the Mediterranean suggests that that may not be the full story.<sup>36</sup>

#### *Caistor St Edmund – Venta Icenorum – Roman town*

*Venta Icenorum*, the only major Roman town within the region, was the *civitas* capital and thus its principal administrative centre. The town's name may indicate that it was established prior to the Boudican rebellion in AD 63, during the period when the local tribal polity, the Iceni, was still a client kingdom of Rome. Located within the valley of the river Tas, which flows into the Yare, its site is now an open field.<sup>37</sup> As already noted, recent geophysical work by David Bescoby at UEA has identified circular structures, indicative of Iron Age or early Roman

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<sup>34</sup> W. Bowden, *Caistor Roman Town Project Newsletter November 2007*, at [http://www.south-norfolk.gov.uk/leisure/media/Caistor\\_newsletter\\_Nov07.pdf](http://www.south-norfolk.gov.uk/leisure/media/Caistor_newsletter_Nov07.pdf) (accessed 4 November 2009).

<sup>35</sup> A. Harris, *Byzantium, Britain and the West* (Stroud, 2003), 95.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> B. Ayers, *Norwich: A Fine City* (Stroud, 2003), 19.

dwellings, within the area of the 3rd-century walled town.<sup>38</sup> Some evidence exists for the town's continued occupation through to the beginning of the 5th century, although the precise character of that occupation remains elusive.<sup>39</sup>



**Fig. 2.** Cropmark evidence at *Venta Icenorum*, Caistor St Edmund. © MOD

Two *insula* and the forum area were investigated through excavation in the 1930s, but no publication was forthcoming.<sup>40</sup> For the most part the town remains uninvestigated except through aerial survey (Fig. 2) and the recent campaign of geophysical work. Its immediate environs have been subject to extensive, generally unsystematic, survey through surface collection and metal-detecting, which has yielded a significant assemblage of material relating to the period of interest here. The nature of the pre-Anglian 5th-century occupation is debatable and not of direct relevance to this thesis. What is notable, however, is that the remains of the town became a focus for activity in the subsequent period, and may have formed a focus for a small polity.<sup>41</sup> Two Early Anglo-Saxon cemeteries have been discovered in the nearby environs; the first of these was found as long ago as the late 18th century and explored through excavation in the 19th century, in the 1930s and again in the 1940s. This cemetery, which is located within Caistor St Edmund parish at Markshall, possessed around 100 cremations of the 5th to the 7th century, while work at a separate cemetery, also within the parish, revealed several hundred

<sup>38</sup> Bowden, *Caistor Roman Town*, note 21.

<sup>39</sup> Davies, *Venta Icenorum*, 26.

<sup>40</sup> Bowden, *Caistor Roman Town*.

<sup>41</sup> K. Penn, *Excavations on the Norwich Southern Bypass, 1989–91. Part II: The Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Harford Farm, Caistor St Edmund, Norfolk* (East Anglian Archaeology 92, 2000).

cremations dating from the 5th to the 7th century, along with some sixty inhumations of the 6th and early 7th centuries.<sup>42</sup> By the late 7th century burial had moved away from the area of the town, perhaps to the late-7th-century cemetery at Harford Farm, to the north-west; one of the so-called ‘Final Phase’ graves at Harford contained two Series B *sceattas*, the first a B1b sub-type dating to AD 685–95 and the second a B1c type dating from slightly later, around AD 695–700.<sup>43</sup>



**Fig. 3.** *Venta Icenorum*, illustrating the church in the foreground within the walls of the Roman town. © Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service

The date for the establishment of the church within the walls of the Roman town (Fig. 3) is unclear. It is possible that the disuse of the pagan-period cemeteries on the hillside might indicate that burial moved to an ecclesiastical site, perhaps here within the walls. The church must therefore be a potential location for an 8th-century cemetery and perhaps an ecclesiastical focus for the area. Notably, a burial group was discovered within the town. This was interpreted originally as the result of a Roman-period massacre, but it has been argued more recently that this may in fact have been a disturbed early Christian cemetery.<sup>44</sup> The location of the church at

<sup>42</sup> J. Myers and B. Green, *The Anglo-Saxon Cemeteries of Caistor-by-Norwich and Markshall*, Rep. Res. Comm. Soc. Antiq. London 30 (London, 1973), 209–10.

<sup>43</sup> Penn, *Excavations on the Norwich Southern Bypass*.

<sup>44</sup> M. Darling, ‘The Caistor-by-Norwich ‘massacre’ reconsidered’, *Britannia* 18 (1987), 263–72; Hoggett, ‘Changing Beliefs’, 103.

the south-east corner of the walled area has parallels with *mynster* churches elsewhere.<sup>45</sup> The town was still clearly a central place in terms of coin loss, and the loss of other materials, and may have held a special administrative status until superseded by Norwich. Unlike other walled Roman towns in England Caistor did not become a major ecclesiastical centre for the region.

*Litus Saxonicum in the Notitia Dignitatum – ‘Saxon Shore’ late Roman forts of East Anglia*

The *Litus Saxonicum* translates literally as the ‘Saxon Shore’ (Fig. 5). This name derives from a 4th-century document known as the *Notitia Dignitatum*, which lists military and civilian establishments. Only medieval copies survive, the earliest of which dates from 1436 and is in the Bodleian Library at Oxford. Known late Roman military sites correlate, for the most part, with a list of sites under the control of the Count of the ‘Saxon Shore’ (*Litus Saxonicum*) discussed in this document.



**Fig. 4.** Cover of a medieval copy of *Notitia Dignitatum* (*Codex Spirensis*, copy by Pietro Donato, dated 1436).

The *Notitia* lists nine forts: *Branoduno* (Brancaster), *Gariannonor* (either Caister-on-Sea or Burgh Castle), *Othonae* (Bradwell), *Regulbio* (Reculver), *Rutupis* (Richborough), *Anderidos* (Pevensey) and *Portum Adurni* (Porchester). However, eleven late Roman coastal forts are known.<sup>46</sup> It had often been assumed that Burgh Castle was the fort referred to as *Gariannonor*,<sup>47</sup>

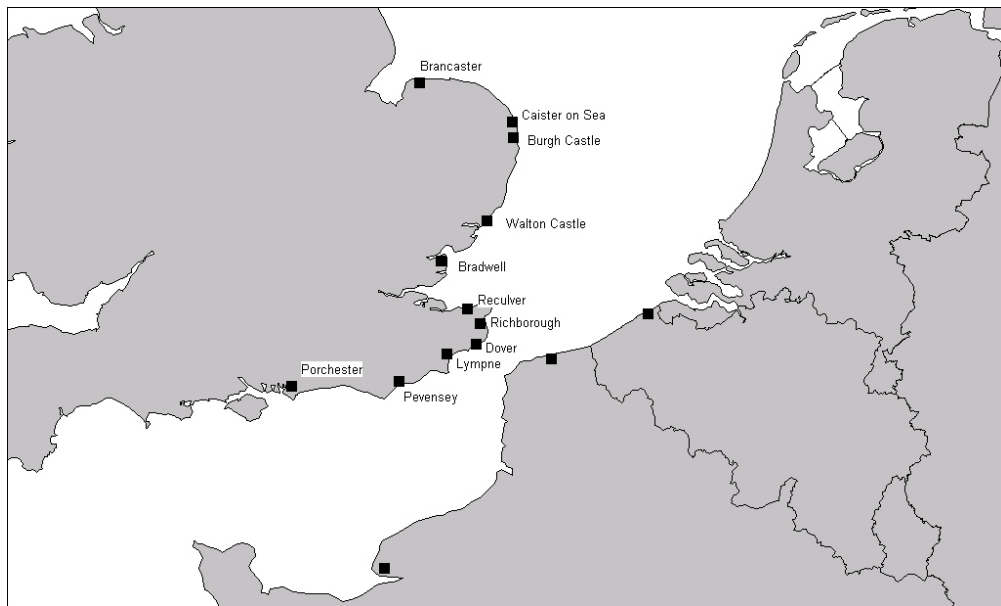
<sup>45</sup> J. Blair, ‘Anglo-Saxon minsters: a topographic review’, in J. Blair and R. Sharpe (eds) *Pastoral Care Before the Parish* (Leicester, 1992), 235–46; also see T. Pestell, ‘The afterlife of “productive” sites in East Anglia’, in Pestell and Ulmschneider, *Markets*, 122–36.

<sup>46</sup> M. Hassall, ‘The historical background and military units of the Saxon Shore’, in D. Johnston (ed.) *The Saxon Shore*, CBA Res. Rep. 18 (London, 1977), 7–10.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*



but this is perhaps not so certain now that Caister has been identified as a late fort as well. It is possible that Caister, being the earlier of the two (it was built at the beginning of the 3rd century AD) was referred to by that name, and that when the system was added to and Burgh Castle constructed at the end of the 3rd century, this was referred to by the same name.<sup>48</sup> The *Notitia* also appears to omit Walton Castle near Felixstowe in Suffolk, known from antiquarian drawings to have looked similar to Burgh Castle, and now lost through coastal erosion.<sup>49</sup>



**Fig. 5.** The 'Saxon Shore'.

Caister originated as a fortified town and harbour regulating sea trade on the coastline, probably in the late 2nd or early 3rd century, and was perhaps associated initially with the *Classis Britannica* supply system. In style the fort bears a strong resemblance to Brancaster in Norfolk and Reculver in Kent, the construction of which also dates from a period of naval and military reorganisation. It has been argued, alternatively, that Caister originated as a civilian port, but this seems unlikely on a number of grounds.<sup>50</sup> Many of these forts are still in some form extant today and must therefore have been impressive features in the Anglo-Saxon landscape. Indeed, several are known to have become centres in the Middle Saxon period and are discussed below. Both Burgh Castle and Caister-on-Sea are thought to be early Christian sites, and the large cemeteries excavated at both appear to substantiate this claim.<sup>51</sup> In addition to the burial evidence, as discussed below, there are large quantities of metal-detected artefacts,

<sup>48</sup> J. Darling and D. Gurney, *Caister-on-Sea: Excavations by Charles Green, 1951–1955* (East Anglian Archaeology 60, 1993).

<sup>49</sup> Hoggett, 'Changing Beliefs', 103.

<sup>50</sup> Darling and Gurney, *Caister-on-Sea*, 240.

<sup>51</sup> Hoggett, 'Changing Beliefs', 287.



including significant assemblages of coins, indicating that these were also economically active sites during the 8th century.<sup>52</sup>

### **The kingdom of the East Angles**

The kingdom of the East Angles was one of only four kingdoms that still remained as independent political entities when the Viking army invaded in AD 865, but, unlike the other kingdoms of Northumbria, Mercia and Wessex, few documents relating to its history survive.<sup>53</sup> What we know of the geography of 5th- to 8th-century England is largely taken from a framework provided by the period's greatest writer, Bede. Bede provides a narrative for the colonisation of England by Germanic tribes that he refers to collectively as belonging to three main 'peoples': the Jutes, who he states settled in Kent and the Isle of Wight, the Saxons, who took over the areas that became Essex, Sussex and Wessex, and the Angles, who established themselves in Northumbria, Mercia and East Anglia. All these places reflect the tribal names of the peoples or *folk* who settled and later controlled them. The fact that these regional place-names still exist in both conceptual and, in a few cases, governmental terms, attests to Bede's powerful hold over the historical imagination. East Anglia was then one of a collection of seven major kingdoms known collectively as the Heptarchy. Essentially this is a useful simplification made by modern historians of Bede's description of the tribal origins and political structure extant among the Anglo-Saxons when he was writing.<sup>54</sup> As the historical reality at this time was much more fluid than this scheme actually suggests, the detail of the Heptarchy is a matter for constant refinement and academic argument. What is true in general is also true specifically for the region with which this study is concerned: it was a thing with fluid boundaries that altered and changed over the period until it became part of the 'unified' England in a process of polity interaction and absorption that has been discussed by Bassett in terms of a knock-out tournament.<sup>55</sup> There is a clear connection between the changing geopolitical landscape of the period and the developing and intensifying role of kingship. In turn, the machinery of government changes and develops throughout this time, culminating in the familiar governmental structures of the 11th century and beyond.

Stenton attempted to define the kingdom of the East Angles by providing a simple and elegant starting point. He made the case that much of the area during the 5th century possessed a striking set of archaeologically distinctive evidence for settlement and (it has often been assumed) colonisation by Germanic migrants, contrasting with other parts of 5th-century

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<sup>52</sup> Pestell, 'Afterlife'.

<sup>53</sup> B. Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo-Saxon England* (London, 1990), 58.

<sup>54</sup> M. Lapidge, J. Blair, S. Keynes and D. Scragg (eds), *Encyclopaedia of Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford, 1999), 233.

<sup>55</sup> S.J. Bassett, 'In search of the origins of Anglo-Saxon kingdoms', in S.J. Bassett (ed.), *The Origins of Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms* (Leicester, 1989), 3–27.

England. He supported this by pointing out the large number of early place-names in the region, with elements of personal names that are not found anywhere else, which suggested to him a self-contained people.<sup>56</sup> Stenton makes this point particularly in connection with *ingas* containing place-names which also contain an element interpreted as belonging to either a people or an early individual.<sup>57</sup> Recent re-thinking of place-name chronology and the indicative status of certain types of place-names has revised this concept, with *hām* names now being suggested as some of the earliest, as well as being associated with locations of prime agricultural land.<sup>58</sup> However, place-names which contain personal names, the *ingas* and the *hām* elements may well conform to Stenton's original point.

The geographical 'boundedness' of the area is therefore largely a moot point, as we are in effect talking about the land of a *folk*, its boundaries follow the fortunes of that group and their leaders. As already noted, the region is bounded to the west by the Fens, a massive drainage basin that is now very much an arable landscape. Fenland in the past was a marshland wilderness of tributaries and channels, lagoons and islands, but also a communication corridor between different regions, representing one of the main routes into the southern interior of England. It effectively forms a sub-region that East Anglia shared with its Middle Anglian and Mercian neighbours.

To the south, Suffolk blends into Essex and there is no real discernable major barrier or change between the two besides the river Stour. The division between the southern and northern parts of East Anglia in the past seem more fundamentally based on a set of cultural discontinuities that resolve at the rivers Lark and Gipping.

### Historical sources

For East Anglia the documentary sources consist of Bede, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and a handful of *vita* sources. Without Bede it would be impossible to understand anything of the earlier history of Anglo-Saxon East Anglia. The lack of earlier Anglo-Saxon East Anglian documents may be attributed to unknown events during the Viking wars, which might have destroyed the archives of most of the East Anglian monasteries and the two episcopal sees.<sup>59</sup> The earliest charter for Suffolk dates from AD 895 and details the gifting of lands at Freckenham by Alfred to Bishop Burric of Rochester. The charter states that Freckenham is in Suffolk, and has been used to argue for the division of Norfolk and Suffolk by this time.<sup>60</sup> In Norfolk, the

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<sup>56</sup> F.M. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford, 1992, 3rd edn), 52–3.

<sup>57</sup> F.M. Stenton, 'The English Occupation of Southern England' in D.M. Stenton (ed.), *Preparatory to Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford, 1970), 265–80.

<sup>58</sup> M. Gelling, 'A Chronology for Suffolk Place-Names', in M.O.H. Carver (ed.), *The Age of Sutton Hoo*, 53–64; T. Williamson, 'Place-name Patterns' in T. Ashwin and A. Davison (eds.), *An Historical Atlas of Norfolk*, 34–5.

<sup>59</sup> Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*.

<sup>60</sup> C.R. Hart, *The Early Charters of Eastern England* (1966, Leicester), 53.

earliest charter, a will of Theodred (Bishop of London), dates from AD 942 × 957: it bequeaths *Illyntone* (Illington) to the king as part of his heriot and *Suthereye* (Southrey) with fishing that belongs to it to the community at St Paul's church (London), while the men are freed.<sup>61</sup> The charter evidence generally, although later than the period being examined here, provides a crucial set of insights into the political and administrative divisions of the landscape, but lacks consistency. In historical terms by far the most useful source is Domesday Book (1086). As scholars such as Round, Maitland and, latterly, Campbell and Roffe have demonstrated, Domesday provides the basis for understanding the administrative system of England at the end of the Anglo-Saxon period; and, although it is, again, late, it illustrates a situation with demonstrably deep roots in the past.<sup>62</sup> Indeed, if one follows Campbell's logic, a more optimistic assessment of the current state of historical knowledge for the period to be examined here is achievable than many have suggested. Most archaeologists would be unhappy with some of Campbell's more speculative assertions, such as the existence of an Indo-European grammar of government common to local administration over much of Europe, and over very long periods, but becoming documented only in the early medieval period. His speculation that some of these administrative elements go back to the Iron Age is one matter, but the idea that they could extend as far into the depths of prehistory as the Neolithic are less plausible and no doubt detract from the more serious point being made.<sup>63</sup> The realm of prehistory is perhaps best left to prehistorians. But it is within this area of study, caught between the complete absence of relevant historical sources and the full picture that documents provide to scholars of the later medieval period, that this study lies. Thus a degree of interpretation is necessary just to reconstruct the basic structures of social life. Rigour is necessary, and comparative work across disciplines is of supreme importance. If correlations can be made between the material remains and the later, historically documented, situation, then a prehistory, in literal terms, is possible.

Bede relied on a number of sources, including Albinus, Nothhelm and the *Life of St Fursa*, and perhaps on oral traditions for information on St Ætheldreda.<sup>64</sup> Crucially, he provides a list of East Anglian kings, but no information on the lengths of their reigns. It is thus upon post-Conquest historians that many writers have come to rely to fill in the gaps in contemporary sources: 'Florence of Worcester', William of Malmesbury, Roger of Wendover and Matthew Paris all provide some chronological information. These sources have been utilised to construct the history as it is now written, though there is no hard information to suggest that they had

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid, 79.

<sup>62</sup> J.H. Round, *Feudal England: Historical Studies on the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (London, 1964); J.H. Round, 'The Domesday manor', *EHR* 15 (1900), 293–302; Maitland, *Domesday Book and Beyond*; J. Campbell, *The Anglo-Saxon State* (London, 2000), xi; D. Roffe, *Decoding Domesday* (Woodbridge, 2007).

<sup>63</sup> Ibid, Campbell, xii.

<sup>64</sup> Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*.

access to information that we do not.<sup>65</sup> Coin information is also useful in constructing the basis for the history, as is discussed in detail in Chapter 7 as it relates to the late 8th and 9th centuries. Prior to the 8th century there were no coins from the kingdom that can be directly interpreted historically because they do not refer to the sponsor, producer or mint-place. The list of East Anglian kings provided below (Table 1) must, therefore, be viewed in this context. There is little to corroborate much of it, and it should be taken only as an indicative and interpretative tool.

In order to understand this period in East Anglia, therefore, archaeological data must be relied upon. However, a great deal of the information now collected from archaeological investigations remains largely unsynthesised. The concern here is to understand the background to early medieval East Anglian state expansion and its concomitant phenomena: urbanisation, ecclesiastical organisation, monetisation and taxation, and it is thus clearly necessary to examine in very general terms the immediately preceding organisation of society. Prior to the establishment of the *wic* at Ipswich there were no settlements in East Anglia post-dating Roman government that can be described as urban; hence, between AD 410 and *c.* AD 720, the region lacked towns. That is the short chronology for this period of small-scale settlement and lack of concomitant state apparatus. A longer chronology suggests itself if Faulkner's suggested time-scale for the demise of towns in the Roman period is followed. In that model Roman towns in Britain were largely abandoned after the late 3rd century in all important senses, with a rump of non-administrative and agriculturally focused activity remaining throughout the later Roman and into the Anglo-Saxon periods.<sup>66</sup> Dark disagrees with this hypothesis and argues for a continuing urban scene during most of this period.<sup>67</sup> The two interpretations are diametrically opposed and demonstrate a general lack of agreement among scholars of Roman and early medieval urbanism, not only on how to define a town but also how they may be recognised archaeologically. It is likely that the reality lies somewhere between these two views.

Raedwald	d by 627
Eorpwald	627/8
?Rigbert	627/8 - 630/1
Sigebert (St)	acc. 630/1
Ecgric	
Anna	d. 653/4
<u>Æthelhere</u>	653/4 - 655
<u>Æthelwald</u>	655–663

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> N. Faulkner, *The Decline and Fall of Roman Britain* (Stroud, 2000).

<sup>67</sup> K. Dark, *Civitas to Kingdom: British Political Continuity 300–800* (Leicester, 1994).

<u>Æ</u> ldwulf	664–713
<u>Æ</u> fwald	713–749
Beonna	acc.749
<u>Æ</u> thelred	
<u>Æ</u> thelbert (St)	?779–794
Eadwald	
Athelstan	
<u>Æ</u> helweard	
Edmund	855-869

**Table 1.** List of East Anglian kings after B Yorke 1990, 67: Table 6.

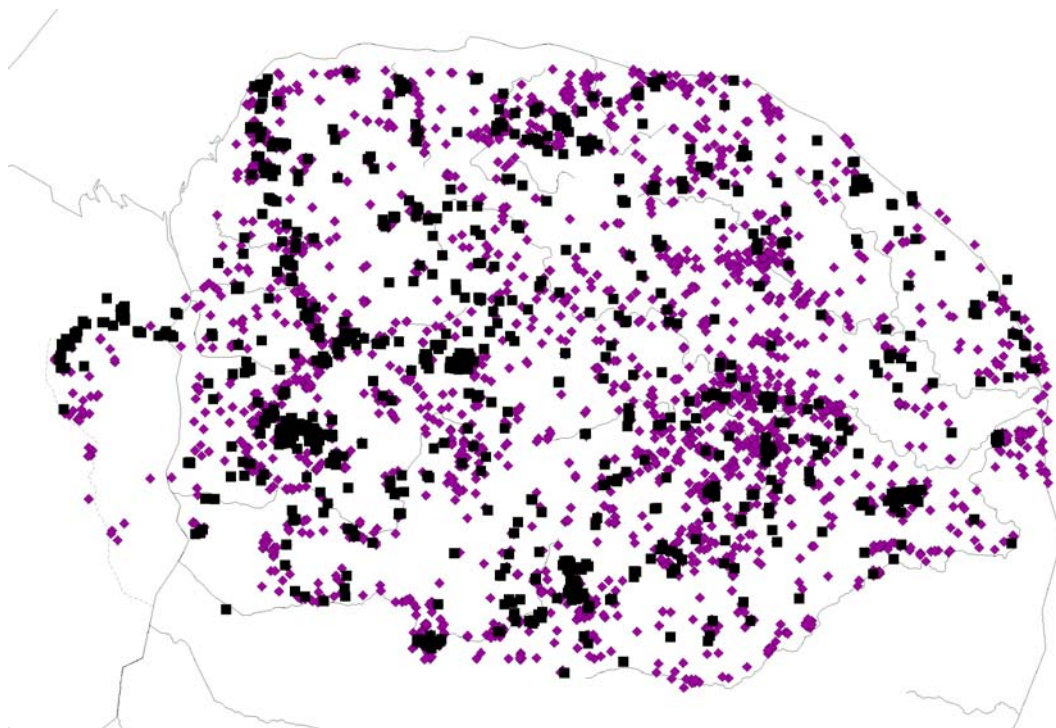
### **The settlement pattern in the 5th to mid 7th centuries**

Hamerow has recently suggested that approaches to understanding the social structure and social *topos* in the period during and after the Roman Empire have been hampered by a historical and particularly a Marxist view of non-classical societies, and that an alternative is to come to an understanding through archaeological data.<sup>68</sup> It could be argued that this reading of the historiography for the period is rather a bleak one, although to be fair there are many insights to be gained through combining historical and archaeological data. Hamerow makes the valid point that written sources become ubiquitous only after around AD 750, and that before this the material consists of only a few chroniclers, some literature and views of, in particular, Germanic society stretching back to Tacitus.<sup>69</sup> It is the conjunction of archaeological and historical information that is most likely to lead to a refinement of our sometimes sketchy understanding of social and landscape organisation in the earlier Anglo-Saxon period.

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<sup>68</sup> H. Hamerow, *Early Medieval Settlements* (Oxford, 2002), 2–4.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*



**Fig. 6.** Middle Saxon coins, pins and pottery (squares) against a background of Roman coinage finds (diamonds) from Norfolk. Plot from NHER

A detailed synthesis of Anglian settlement patterns for the earlier Anglo-Saxon period has as yet not taken place. There are serious difficulties in discovering such settlements, and much of what has been published comes from a few intensive surveys of particular areas.<sup>70</sup> However, with reference to the distribution of Middle Saxon coins, pins and pottery plotted across Norfolk (Fig. 6), it can be seen that there is apparently quite a full pattern of settlement, albeit one that is heavily clustered in the principal river valleys. The pattern can be compared with the distribution of Romano-British coins to illustrate that, although there almost certainly was a diminution in the overall amount of settlement and certainly in the mass of material culture, there is still significant and widespread utilisation of most landscapes. There seems to be a preference for certain soils and a reliance on, or possibly a preference for, communication by waterways. The differences and similarities are instructive here and require explanation. We may not be looking at as big a population difference, or settlement density, as has been assumed in many cases; the distribution of Roman coinage in Norfolk shows a very substantial spread of material scattered across most of the landscape, but there were no doubt significant differences

<sup>70</sup> K. Wade, 'The early Anglo-Saxon period', in A.J. Lawson (ed.) *The Archaeology of Witton, Near North Walsham* (East Anglian Archaeology 8, 1983), 50–69; A. Davison, *The Evolution of Settlement in Three Parishes in South-East Norfolk* (East Anglian Archaeology 49, 1990); A. Rogerson, A. Davison, D. Pritchard and R. Silvester, *Barton Bendish and Caldecote: Fieldwork in South-West Norfolk* (East Anglian Archaeology 80, 1997); A. Rogerson, 'Fransham: An Archaeological and Historical Study of a Parish on the Norfolk Boulder Clay' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of East Anglia, 1995).

in attitudes to material culture, with much smaller assemblages of material being incorporated in the fields during the 5th to 7th centuries than was the case at the height of the Roman period.

Recent work on the Early Saxon settlement pattern of Norfolk by Mary Chester-Kadwell, examining the spread of metal-detected objects, has concluded that it consisted of dispersed rural settlements in an overall environment very similar to the Roman period, including the size and status of sites, though clearly the urban situation must be excluded from this picture. Chester-Kadwell suggests that the Early Saxon landscape was not as sparsely populated as has often been assumed from the relative lack of well-defined settlement evidence, and that settlement in this period did not avoid difficult agricultural conditions, although Early Saxon metal finds become more rare away from river valleys and more pliable soils.<sup>71</sup> For the Early Saxon period a perceived settlement distribution is in itself an interpretative exercise, as there are few identified settlement sites; settlement patterns and political organisation have therefore been interpreted through the cemetery evidence. However, if the distribution patterns for metalwork are drawn upon, it can be seen that the resulting settlement pattern is fuller than that indicated by cemetery evidence alone.

#### *The distribution of Ipswich ware*

Besides the preponderance of coins and other metalwork of the period found at 'productive' sites across East Anglia, there is also a distinctive and easily recognisable Middle Saxon pottery type, Ipswich ware, that was widely utilised across the region. Unique within the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, this hard grey pottery was wheel-made and kiln-fired; it comes in a fairly large variety of styles and fabrics, and on current evidence was produced only within Ipswich.<sup>72</sup> Blinkhorn's work on Ipswich ware has recently refined Hurst and West's original dating of the type from AD 650–850 to *c.* AD 720–850.<sup>73</sup> As will be discussed, Ipswich's role as a production centre in many senses does not begin until the 720s, and the probable end date for its production (further discussed in Chapter 8) seems likely to be around 850, perhaps extending back slightly earlier to the 840s and the start of Viking raiding. At either end of the spectrum the dating is not particularly well defined, but these dates do accord, as will be discussed in Chapter 8, with the coin evidence.

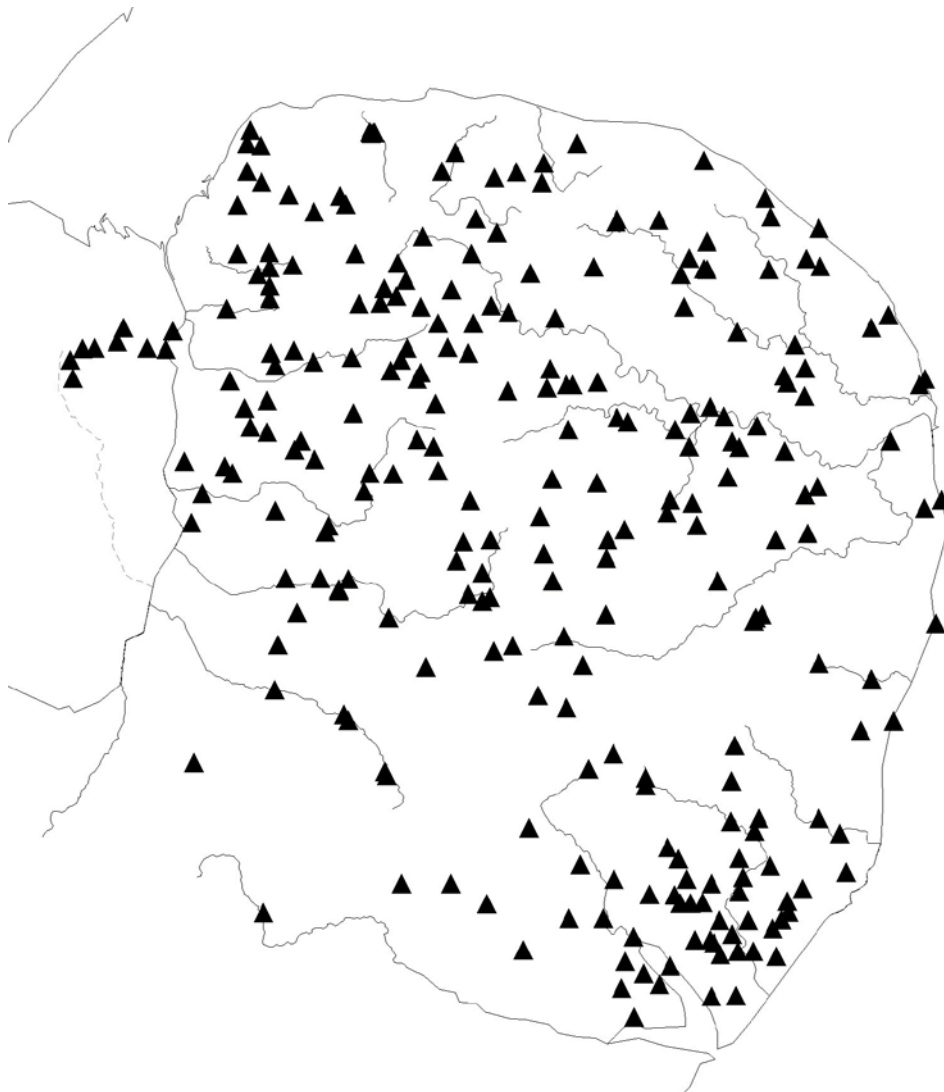
The distribution of Ipswich ware (see Fig. 7) provides a starting point for an examination of the settlement pattern of the region in the 8th century, particularly as it has not only provided good evidence in systematic surveys of the East Anglian region, but also proved so recognisable that it is found and brought to the attention of archaeologists by metal-detector hobbyists.

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<sup>71</sup> Chester-Kadwell, 'Early Anglo-Saxon Communities', 306.

<sup>72</sup> See, for instance, J. Hurst, 'The pottery', in D.M. Wilson (ed.), *The Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge, 1976), 283–347.

<sup>73</sup> P. Blinkhorn, 'Of cabbages and kings: production, trade, and consumption in middle-Saxon England', in M. Anderton (ed.), *Anglo-Saxon Trading Centres: Beyond the Emporia* (Glasgow, 1999), 4–23.



**Fig. 7.** Ipswich ware distribution across East Anglia.

### **Metal-detected information**

This section examines the nature of the data used in this research. Metal-detected data is sometimes controversial and should be treated with caution. It is often collected in a manner that produces inherent biases and these need to be identified and considered when interpreting this information from an archaeological perspective.

There are now a growing number of studies that have utilised metal-detected information to interpret settlement patterns and landscape interactions during the Middle Saxon and Viking period: notably the recently published VASLE project, which similarly to this thesis, examined data derived from two publically available online databases, the Portable Antiquity Scheme



(PAS) and the Early Medieval (coin) Corpus held by the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge.<sup>74</sup> This thesis utilised the latter of these and relied also on the Historic Environment Records (HERs) for Norfolk and Suffolk.

The EMC and the Norfolk and Suffolk HERs are particularly rich sources for metal-detected information on coins, and for metal artefacts more generally in the case of the latter two repositories. This has been noted in two previously published studies: one on Iron Age metalwork published by Hutcheson and the other on the topic of Early Anglo-Saxon landscapes by Chester-Kadwell, mentioned above. Both studies relied extensively on information held within the Norfolk HER and discuss the potential difficulties inherent in using data derived in this way.<sup>75</sup> Both studies note that the HER for Norfolk, formally the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR), has since the 1970s collected metal-detected information, beginning under the auspices of the late Tony Gregory, slightly later joined by Andrew Rogerson, who continues to direct liaison today. The systematic recording and the liaison pioneered by both these archaeologists has led to a rich source of data, but one not without its methodological difficulties. Gurney has discussed the potential interpretive problems suggesting specifically that Middle Saxon coinage may merely represent locations where metal-detecting has been undertaken.<sup>76</sup> However, since that study a much larger amount of data has been collected, growing since 1997 by a factor of nearly nine.<sup>77</sup> Importantly the manner in which the data has been collected more recently has altered with a greater precision in the recording of many locations by metal-detector users in turn being recorded within the HER. Much of the data is now subject to a programme of interpretation to better characterise and improve the dataset.<sup>78</sup> Suffolk's approach to data collection has undergone a very similar trajectory to that of Norfolk, but is less well discussed within the literature.

Chester-Kadwell has identified many of the potential biases that metal-detected data may have been subject to.<sup>79</sup> These issues are also discussed within the VASLE project publication, with a particular focus on major topographical constraints such as urban areas, rivers, forests

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<sup>74</sup> J.D. Richards, J. Naylor and C. Holas-Clarke, 'Anglo-Saxon Landscape and Economy: Using Portable Antiquities to Study Anglo-Saxon and Viking Age England', *Internet Archaeology*: Issue 25:- <http://intarch.ac.uk/journal/issue25/2/toc.html>. Specifically VASLE's objective two: *To characterise the finds assemblages of individual known sites, graphing percentages of coins and other object types in order to examine change through time and to derive 'fingerprints' that will help define a hierarchy of settlement types*, correlates well with the main objectives of this research, namely to explore the distribution of coinage in East Anglia, AD 470-939, in order to examine whether there was a connection between it and towns.

N.B. The VASLE project was published after this thesis had been completed in draft form and has therefore only been referenced in a limited manner.

<sup>75</sup> Hutcheson, *Later Iron Age Metalwork*, 12-22; Chester-Kadwell, *Early Anglo-Saxon Communities*, 62-90.

<sup>76</sup> Gurney, 'A Note on Distribution'.

<sup>77</sup> Hutcheson, 'The origins of King's Lynn?', 82.

<sup>78</sup> Chester-Kadwell, *op cit* note 74, 62.

<sup>79</sup> Chester-Kadwell, 67-69.

and military bases.<sup>80</sup> The amount of arable land in a study area in relation to the proportion of pasture is another significant constraint on the likelihood for finding metal-detected information. It is notable that metal-detector users will tend to focus on particular types of object, thus creating a bias against other object types; value systems have a significant part to play in what ends up being collected also, but this may not be so relevant a bias if the study is focusing on coinage. There are also potential biases that may result from tillage systems, particularly the use of deep-ploughing and sub-soiling techniques, which can reveal new artefacts through disturbing their archaeological context.<sup>81</sup> However, the largest and most significant bias almost certainly arises through the geographical differences in the relationship between metal-detector users and archaeologists and numismatists working for SMR/HERs or museums. Thus the Norfolk and Suffolk traditions of good metal-detector user liaison, stretching back forty years, needs to be accounted for when comparing assemblages from these counties with other places where liaison programmes are much more recent. This point is also salient when looking at material from Cambridge, Essex and Hertfordshire, which are in close proximity to the Fitzwilliam Museum and hence have been subject to the liaison programmes of that museum that also have been established for some twenty years. Hence much material for the southern parts of the region has been recorded by the EMC. Therefore, and as also concluded by Richards et al, the East of England as a region has a concomitantly richer dataset than most other parts of the country (making up 24.2% of the national total held within the PAS database, despite a limited number of metal-detected finds from Norfolk having been entered into that system by the point in time when the VASLE research was being undertaken). The East Midlands (which make up a total of 25.2% of the national total) has a rich assemblage for similar reasons and this must be remembered when comparisons are made between data from other parts of England.<sup>82</sup> A levelling of this bias has been underway for some years and there are similarly 'productive' parts of the country emerging now, such as the south-east, particularly the county of Kent.<sup>83</sup>

A number of systematic searches of the three data sets used in the study were made between 2000 and 2008. Information on all coins from the 5<sup>th</sup> through to 11<sup>th</sup> centuries was collected and placed on a database. This data has demonstrated that there is a large overlap between the data held by the EMC and that held by the two HERs. Latterly there has been a systematic presentation of data by HERs to the EMC. Importantly though, there is information that is held on the EMC which does not appear on the HERs and the obverse is also true. A full and

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<sup>80</sup> Richards et.al., *Anglo-Saxon Landscape and Economy*, section 2.4

<sup>81</sup> Chester-Kadwell, 66; J. Taylor, 'Cultural deposition processes and post-depositional problems' in R. Francovich, H Patterson and G. Barker (eds.), *The Archaeology of Mediterranean Landscapes 5* (Oxford: Oxbow, 2000) 16-26.

<sup>82</sup> Richards, et al, Section 2.4.2.4.

<sup>83</sup> Richards et al, Section 2.4.2.5.

systematic correlation of the datasets has not yet been attempted. Care has been taken to maintain secrecy of spatial information in order not to reveal the location of protected and rich sites.

Within this thesis the parish has been used as the unit of study for examining the distribution of the coins and a centre point for the parish has been utilised to draw distribution maps. Much of the information on metal-detected information held within both the EMC and the HERs has restricted and limited geographical location information, this has in turn has also restricted the specificity of the grid references utilised in this thesis.

In some cases the provenance of coins was thought to be too poor to include the information. Many coins have been very generally provided with a provenance by the metal-detector user who found them and some discretion has therefore been necessary in including those coins. The last update of information was in February 2008. Much information has been collected subsequently that has not been included in this study.

A decision was taken near the beginning of this research to not utilise the PAS database for two reasons, from the regional perspective the Norfolk HER did not start to migrate its dataset for metal-detected finds to that database until 2006; and in national terms the EMC was deemed at the time to hold a more comprehensive database of coin finds than the PAS, and hence provided a more representative sample of the national totals; although it is acknowledged that the PAS is now probably the primary recorder of coin finds.<sup>84</sup>

The dataset of metal-detected information for both Norfolk and Suffolk hence provide a great deal of insight into the landscape of this period. However, because of the collection and recording biases that make this so useful a study area, care must be taken when comparing this region with other parts of the country where liaison between metal-detector users and archaeologists is a much more recent phenomenon. Care also must be exercised when examining parts of the landscape that may be more conducive to detecting than others; in particular in terms of this research there is a significant bias against finding coins in urban areas apart from during controlled archaeological investigations. The relative numbers of coins found at 'productive' sites located on arable land and detected over a number of years compared with for instance small market towns, where little or no archaeological investigation has taken place, must be thought through. In time this situation may be specifically addressed through further targeted research to examine these statistical problems.

Following the general aims of this thesis, namely to explore the process of urban development in Anglo-Saxon East Anglia, this chapter has sought to review the underlying structures that may have existed in the preceding periods and introduce the data collection methods used

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<sup>84</sup> C.f. *ibid*, Section 2.1.2.

during the study. In particular, it is important to note that although points in the Roman landscape such as Caistor St Edmund and Burgh Castle possess evidence of coin use and perhaps administrative structures perhaps as early as the 6th century, they do not seem to represent continuity of process between the two periods. The Roman and prehistoric landscape provide a backdrop physically, politically and perhaps to some extent culturally to structures that emerge in the Anglo-Saxon period. They do not, however, provide a continuing cultural framework within which to interpret the Anglo-Saxon evidence. It does seem that political structures were relative fluid during the Early–Middle Saxon period, but one of the overarching aspects of the period focused on in this thesis is that it is largely ‘prehistoric’ and therefore any interpretations necessarily need to emerge from the archaeological evidence. As briefly commented on, there is a growing quantity of archaeological data recovered mainly from the ploughsoil, including coins, metalwork and pottery, that now enables a detailed analysis of settlement patterns across the region, and it is the coin data that will form the basis of this thesis. Before exploring patterns in the material-culture assemblage of Anglo-Saxon East Anglia, however, the next chapter will examine the historiography of the study of urbanism during the early medieval period.

## Chapter 2

### Theories of the origins of pre-Viking and post-Viking urbanisation (AD 600–950)

The historiography of state formation in the early medieval period is strongly linked to the development of urban places. By the 12th century a real and significant division had begun to emerge between the inhabitants of towns and those of the countryside, but the origins of this trajectory are less clear. A regional investigation of the socio-political context for the early medieval development of towns has often been called for, but few regional studies have been undertaken. For the past few decades it has been suggested that the study of towns should be articulated with that of their hinterlands,<sup>1</sup> not only because it is desirable to understand the symbiosis between town and countryside, but also in order to resolve the unique local imperatives for constructing a town and provisioning it with food and raw materials. Who made these decisions and where did they live? Are the reasons the same from one generation to the next? And are the reasons the same everywhere? Such questions seem particularly pertinent in terms of analysis in the 7th, 8th and 9th centuries, at least on the face of it, simply because there was no immediate tradition of towns in much of western Europe during the preceding two and a half to three centuries. The period therefore seems to provide an opportunity for studying a birth, or at least a rebirth, of the urge to create urban places.<sup>2</sup>

More generally, the early medieval period has been widely characterised as the seedbed of a number of important historical structures: not only the rebirth of towns but also the formation of the nation state and the first developments leading to a market-based economy.<sup>3</sup> Both the historical and archaeological studies of this period are intrinsically concerned with the end of antiquity and the beginning of the medieval period.<sup>4</sup> The quantity of literature on this problem is nothing short of huge, and it is well beyond the scope of this thesis to examine this issue critically. Marx and Engels loom large, and the writings of their followers and critics fill libraries.<sup>5</sup> These differences of state structure between these two great historical periods – the

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<sup>1</sup> See, for instance, Roskams, 'Urban Transition', 262–88; Perring, *Town and Country*, 9–27.

<sup>2</sup> Hodges, *Dark Age Economics and The Anglo-Saxon Achievement*; and R. Hodges, *Towns and Trade in the Age of Charlemagne* (London, 2000).

<sup>3</sup> H. Pirenne, *Mohammed and Charlemagne* (London, 1939); also the early chapters of H. Pirenne, *Medieval Cities: Their Origins and the Revival of Trade* (Princeton, 1925); *Annales* scholars such as G. Duby (*The Early Growth of the European Economy* (London, 1974)) take a very different view.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*; and for a discussion of archaeological studies demonstrating this tendency see M.O.H. Carver, *Arguments in Stone: Archaeological Research and the European Town in the First Millennium* (Oxford, 1993).

<sup>5</sup> For a concise discussion of this topic see C. Wickham, 'The other transition: from the ancient world to feudalism', *Past and Present* 103 (1984), 3–36, particularly pp. 3–4.

Roman Empire and medieval nations – are important to the theme to be explored here in this thesis, however. The Roman government needed towns in the north-western corner of the empire as a prerequisite for state control and what existed was not fit for that purpose; and although there were in some senses the foundations for both state development and the beginnings of town-like places within the societies that were conquered, Roman state administration shaped the situation in a particular manner that can be viewed as an artificial imposition of state mechanisms onto distinctly different cultures.<sup>6</sup> Consequently, the breakdown in urban life is again explicable in these general terms. In detail the picture is much more complicated and the Roman Empire had a very long reach in space and time; recent systematic work on the Byzantine influence in the west indicates that *Romanitas*, albeit in an altered guise, continued to sway the minds of people in Britain into the 7th century.<sup>7</sup>

Prior to the 1970s, much of the literature discussing the development of early medieval towns took a legal or constitutional perspective; this school of thought posited that towns in early medieval north-west Europe developed in the Carolingian heartland between the Seine and Rhine around the 11th century and spread from there.<sup>8</sup> One of the most influential thinkers to comment on this period was Henri Pirenne, whose classic texts *Mohammed and Charlemagne* and *Medieval Cities* attribute the rebirth of towns to the development of market places as institutions.<sup>9</sup> Hodges has summarised the ‘Pirenne Thesis’, as the model has come to be known:

- Roman towns and civic life were broken by the Arab, not the Germanic, invasions;
- The merchant class and the movement of goods led to the establishment of permanent trading places and ultimately to towns

A revival in trade was ascribed by Pirenne to two hubs of economic activity:

- Venice and southern Italy
- the North Sea littoral

These phenomena led to a new social class of professional merchants. Lastly, Pirenne suggested three concepts for the origins of medieval Europe:

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 14; for a discussion of how culturally different Iron Age Britain was from the classical world see J.D. Hill, ‘Can we recognise a different European past? A contrastive archaeology of later prehistoric settlement in southern England’, *Journ. European Arch.* 1 (1993), 57–75.

<sup>7</sup> See, for instance, Dark, *Civitas to Kingdom*, 209–11; for a comprehensive review of the subject see Harris, *Byzantium, Britain and the West*.

<sup>8</sup> D. Hill, ‘150 years of the study of *wics*: 1841–1991’, in D. Hill and R. Cowie (eds), *Wics: The Early Medieval Trading Centres of Northern Europe* (Sheffield, 2001), 3–6, see p. 3.

<sup>9</sup> Pirenne, *Mohammed and Charlemagne*, 3.

- the Seine-Rhine region was the heartland of European civilisation by AD 800
- much of the rest of Latin Christendom consisted of a mosaic of restricted economies loosely connected by a largely inconsequential flow of precious commodities
- the papacy was allied with the Carolingian kings from the 8th century, having abandoned its former ties with the Byzantine empire<sup>10</sup>

The central concept in Pirenne's thesis is that urbanisation was pivotal in the process of European political development. Within his formulation of events, urbanisation is closely linked to commercial activity. Interestingly, feudalism is separated from the commercial in his view; rather, he postulates that Scandinavian economies were founded on a different basis from those of the Carolingian world. The former operated a commercial system, without coinage, and the latter were agrarian and land-based, forming the building blocks of the feudal world that was to come. Pirenne downplays Carolingian urbanisation as unimportant. Much of the impetus for commercial activity in the North Sea area is attributed to the Scandinavian and Anglo-Saxon societies of the 8th and 9th centuries.

Pirenne refutes that there were *real* urban centres within the Carolingian Empire, at least within his definition, which was firmly based on a concept of *commercial* centres (as we shall see, his definition of 'commercial' was highly formalist in character). The ports of *Quentovic* and *Dorestad*, where he notes that the Merovingian monarchy traded with England and Denmark through Frisian middlemen, are dismissed as not proper commercial centres. Rather, their role was the exchange of 'indispensable' commodities such as wine, salt and the occasional slave. But there was no '... regular and normal commercial activity of steady trading carried on by a class of professional merchants, in short, of all that constitutes the very essence of an economy of exchange worthy of the name'.<sup>11</sup> Pirenne's dismissal of the entire concept of north-western European international commerce during the 8th and 9th centuries is strange, given the rest of his argument focuses on the economic basis of early medieval society.<sup>12</sup> Pirenne viewed the breakdown of the Mediterranean economy as being a direct result of the Islamic takeover during the 7th and 8th centuries. More recent scholarship has seen Islamic advances during the period as a *symptom* of the decline of Roman government rather than the cause of breakdown, but the decline in Mediterranean trade around AD 700 is undeniable.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Hodges, *Towns and Trade*, 21–2.

<sup>11</sup> Pirenne, *Medieval Cities*.

<sup>12</sup> R. Hodges and D. Whitehouse, *Mohammed, Charlemagne and the Origins of Europe* (London, 1983), 77

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 52

### **Was the development of towns a result of the consequences of economic imperatives?**

In essence, there are two later-20th-century schools of thought on the subject of ‘early’ or ‘primitive’ economies: formalists and substantivists. The latter school derives from anthropology, with pedigrees that can be traced back to Auguste Comte through Marx, Durkheim and Weber. The formalists believe that economics is economics and that old or non-western societies are merely more simple forms of modern situations. Substantivists, on the other hand, believe that exchange is a socially situated behaviour. Simplistically, formalists can be characterised as historical in method and substantivists as synchronic. Malinowski, one of the original substantivists, has been credited as having first fully theorised non-western exchange;<sup>14</sup> he and Mauss, both now subjects of a large body of critical literature, have been hugely influential within anthropology and more generally in the social sciences, from archaeology and history through to art history and sociology.<sup>15</sup> The later but still influential substantivist theoretician Marshall Sahlins has not been so widely discussed by early medieval historians. However, in terms of fleshing out a theory of exchange, his work is perhaps the most useful. His discussion of the social relationships involved in most non-western/modern exchange is particularly apposite for understanding the period.<sup>16</sup>

How exchanges were governed in early medieval Europe can be examined, analogously, through anthropological models, but this must be done within a critical and historical framework. Such a study brings together the tensions between the historical approach and the synchronic – i.e. the formalist and substantivist. Arguably, these two sides of the socio-analytic canon are best utilised in a dialectical manner. John Moreland has recently summarised the use of substantivist economic theory relating to the early medieval period and has suggested that an essentially dialectical approach to archaeological and historical sources can provide insights: for example, the idea that gift exchange such as ring-giving or feasting had a direct relationship to violence is perhaps exemplified by the heroic literature of the period.<sup>17</sup> Reciprocity with concomitant violence, Ross Samson argues, was the foundation of exchange within the early medieval period.<sup>18</sup> Moreland discusses formalist scholars as the creators of *Same* commercial histories, with substantivists cast as writers of *Other* histories and, against a background of anthropological criticism of Mauss, warns against a romanticism of the *Other*, or the ‘ideology

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<sup>14</sup> Hodges, *Dark Age Economics*, 13.

<sup>15</sup> B. Malinowski, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (London, 1932); M. Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies* (London, 1990).

<sup>16</sup> M. Sahlins, *Stone Age Economics* (New York, 1972), in particular chapter 5, on the sociology of primitive exchange: 185–230; R. Samson, ‘Illusory emporia and economic theories’, in M. Anderton (ed.), *Anglo-Saxon Trading Centres*, 76–90, see p. 87.

<sup>17</sup> J. Moreland, ‘Concepts of the early medieval economy’, in I. Lyse Hansen and C. Wickham (eds), *The Long Eighth Century: Production, Distribution and Demand* (Leiden, 2000), 1–34, see p. 17.

<sup>18</sup> R. Samson, ‘Economic anthropology and Vikings’, in R. Samson (ed.), *Social Approaches to Viking Studies* (Glasgow, 1991), 87–96, see pp. 91–3.



of primitivism'.<sup>19</sup> Archaeologists from the 1960s onwards, particularly those influenced by the New Archaeology emanating from America, where the institutional relationship between anthropology and archaeology was much stronger (with both often being housed in the same departments) have been keen to interpret the past through analogy with the 'primitive', *Other* or non-European present. Anthropologists such as Radcliffe-Brown and Malinowski dispensed with evolutionary and historical interpretations of ethnographic situations and argued for a comparative study of social structure.<sup>20</sup> The opposite end of the spectrum to this synchronic methodology encompasses a much wider set of approaches which utilise historical narrative to understand the range of human experience, past and present. Within archaeological frameworks, which have recently espoused a broadly anthropological approach to the interpretation of the past, generalisation first entered into favour with the so-called processual school of archaeology, and then fell from grace through the critical examination of the more positivist aspects by theoreticians from the 1980s, often collectively referred to as 'post-processualists'. This latter school of thought can perhaps now be better understood as using a hermeneutic approach, as its protagonists/members became more interested in studying ideas and meanings.<sup>21</sup> These topics will be returned to in other parts of the thesis, in particular the discussion of the role of early medieval exchange and the nature of coinage in Chapter 3. The point of this discussion has been to set out the academic context for the trajectory of early medieval urban studies. Exchange has dominated studies of early medieval towns and there has been much less emphasis on discussing the means of production.<sup>22</sup> This thesis will explore the idea that control of production is key to understanding the economic history of this period (7th–10th century), rather than placing an emphasis on trade and exchange.

### ***Wics* – original towns?**

Large and artefact-rich settlements of the late 7th to mid 9th centuries around the North Sea littoral and the Baltic are known in the period jargon by a variety of terms: *emporia* (as Bede referred to London), *entropots*, *portus* and *wics*. The last of these refers to the suffix found in the place-names associated with many of these places. Sites described in any of the above terms (the distribution of which is shown on Fig. 8) are actually quite diverse in their attributes. The term *wics* is used here for the North Sea littoral sites, and this place-name derives from the Latin term *vicus*, meaning a row of houses, a street, a city district, or merely a group of dwellings.

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<sup>19</sup> Moreland, 'Early medieval economy', 22–31.

<sup>20</sup> B. Trigger, *A History of Archaeological Thought* (Cambridge, 1989), 246.

<sup>21</sup> A useful discussion of this concept is in M. Johnson, *Archaeological Theory: An Introduction* (Oxford, 1999), 102–3.

<sup>22</sup> This issue of control over production is discussed by J. Moreland, 'The significance of production in eighth century England', in Lyse Hansen and Wickham, *The Long Eighth Century*, 69–104, in particular see p.102 and C. Wickham, 'Overview: production, distribution and demand, II', in same volume, 345–77, see p. 348; for a discussion of landscape history and its concerns in recent times see C. Dyer, 'The past, the present and the future in medieval rural history', *Rural History* 1:1 (1990), 37–49.

Exploration of the etymology of the term *vicus* can help us to understand the flexibility of the ancient definitions: it is related, etymologically, to the word *villa*, and was ‘borrowed’ by Indo-Germanic languages, taking the form of *ueik*-, *uik*-, or *uoiko*-, meaning variously ‘house’ and/or ‘settlement’.<sup>23</sup> Modern scholars have a particular fixation with well-defined terminology that contemporary writer of the early Middle Ages did not necessarily share, so when Bede refers to an *emporium*, for instance, we will not be receiving a considered socio-economic definition, but may rather be reading a boast, or perhaps a wish, about the status of the place; there appears in this period to be a gap between the concept or ideology of towns, and their actual reality. The status of a location and its definition as urban may have been inextricably linked. The church was concerned with concepts of the city in this period and may have therefore had a rhetorical position to uphold in arguing for the existence of major towns. The contemporary early-medieval conceptualisation of a town may have been a complex construct based on the ecclesiastic ideal of a city, perhaps in part on ideas expressed within Augustine’s *City of God*; the reality was more prosaic.<sup>24</sup> Early medieval Latin words for larger settlements or politically important locations are ambiguous for these reasons. In addition, we have little in terms of documentary references to explore and know relatively little about many of these places archaeologically. What documents there are tend to point towards the collection of taxation as one of the defining roles for these places. For instance, tolls are recorded on the continent as being collected at *civitates*, *castella* and *portus*, with the latter term probably referring to the same sort of settlement as is here being referred to as *wic*.<sup>25</sup> It has been argued that many of the difficulties in understanding what larger settlements were actually for in the early medieval period stem from unclear definitions,<sup>26</sup> but this lack of clarity may in itself be informative.

What *wic* sites actually represented is, therefore, a matter of some contention. Scholars of the period have often found the convenience of a ready-made term useful to explain a large range of sites while at the same time recognising that great diversity is contained within the definition.<sup>27</sup> Opinion differs as to which places should be included within the category, but there is some agreement regarding the similarities of the larger sites around the coast of the North Sea, the Channel, and the Baltic; the majority of scholars studying these settlements from different perspectives will agree that they represent commercial centres pre-Viking in date and associated

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<sup>23</sup> A.R. Rumble, ‘Notes on the linguistic and onomastic characterisation of Old English *Wic*’, in D. Hill and R. Cowie (eds) *Wics: The Early Medieval Trading Centres of Northern Europe* (Sheffield, 2001), 1–2; it is also notable that the term can also be translated as grazing farm, perhaps making the connection between cattle and wealth?

<sup>24</sup> Hodges, *Towns and Trade*, 69–70.

<sup>25</sup> A. Verhulst, ‘The Origins of Towns in the Low Countries and the Pirenne Thesis’, *Past and Present* 122 (1989), 3–35, see 11–12.

<sup>26</sup> Samson, ‘Illusory emporia’, 76–7.

<sup>27</sup> Hodges, *Dark Age Economics*.

with a harbour.<sup>28</sup> This generally agreed list includes: *Quentovic*, Domburg, Birka, Dorestad, Hedeby, *Hamwic*, Ipswich, London and York.

In order to discuss these places adequately it is necessary to examine the classification and assess the definitions created for these settlements. For the purposes of this investigation a polythetic set of attributes has been formulated (below). This set is a definition with elastic parameters: all the defined attributes are not necessary to form the definition and, instead, a number of attributes are looked for.

- Coin production: several wics, such as Dorestad, *Quentovic* and London, were mint locations
- Quayside or port: again, there are several instances where harbour structures have been archaeologically identified, most famously at Dorestad, but Ipswich's harbour has also been examined recently<sup>29</sup>
- Industrial production: many of the wics have produced evidence for craft production; this is best understood at *Hamwic*<sup>30</sup>
- Evidence of imports: the evidence for imported pottery from *Hamwic* has been a cornerstone of the concepts of how and why *wics* developed. Ipswich also has produced good evidence for imported materials<sup>31</sup>
- Presence of a church
- Place-name: *wic* as a suffix
- Historical reference to an urban style of place, i.e. emporium, metropolis, mercimonium, portus, etc.
- Fortification, or an association with a nearby defensive place
- A direct connection with state (royal) administration structures

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<sup>28</sup> Rumble, 'Old English *Wic*', in Hill and Cowie, *Wics*.

<sup>29</sup> W.A. van Es and W.J.H. Verwers, *Excavations at Dorestad 1: The Harbour: Hoogstraat 1* (Amersfoort, Nederlandse Oudenheden 9, 1980); K. Wade *pers. comm.*

<sup>30</sup> D.A. Hinton, *The Gold, Silver and Other Non-Ferrous Metal Objects from Hamwic* (Southampton, 1996).

<sup>31</sup> R. Hodges and J. Cherry, *The Hamwic Pottery: The Local and Imported Wares from 30 Years' Excavations at Middle Saxon Southampton and their European Context* (York, CBA Res. Rep. 37, 1981).



Fig. 8. North Sea and Baltic 7th- to 10th-century places that have been characterised as *wics*.

### Settlement status in the 7th and 8th centuries: a question of perception?

Therefore, in order to understand what *wics* may have been, there is a need to examine in more detail what towns were and how early medieval cultures viewed them. There has been a certain amount of ambiguity in the definition of what comprises a town. It may, therefore, be worthwhile to consider here a working definition for the study that follows. Susan Reynolds has provided a simple yet useful working classification: ‘a town is a permanent and concentrated human settlement in which a significant proportion of the population is engaged in non-agricultural activity.’ ‘A town, therefore, normally lives, at least in part, off food produced by people who live outside it.’<sup>32</sup> Often the evidence for early medieval towns is discussed with little examination of the archaeological nature of a particular settlement,<sup>33</sup> however, the assessment of a place’s urban status sometimes being based on a contemporary description of it as, for instance, a *vicus* or a *portus*.<sup>34</sup> However, early medieval concepts of what a town was were conflated with ideology, as mentioned above, and may not present particularly useful evidence for the discussion of urban origins. This point is discussed further below and is worth emphasising. In order to understand the formation of urban structures, over a wide geographical area, we must have a working definition that can be used to assess different sorts of sites. Reynold’s definition (above) is useful in its simplicity and can be assessed using both archaeological and historical data either singularly or in complement.

<sup>32</sup> S. Reynolds, ‘The writing of medieval urban history in England’, *Theoretische Gesschiedenis* 19 (1992), 49–50.

<sup>33</sup> As an example of this see Hodge’s discussion of emporia in *Dark Age Economics*.

<sup>34</sup> K. Randsborg, *The Viking Age in Denmark* (1980), 71–5.

In England there appears to be one large-scale *wic* site per major polity on the east and south coasts, although not all polities have them: Northumbria has *Eoforwic* (York), East Anglia has *Gipeswic* (Ipswich), Essex/Mercia has *Lundenwic* (London) and Wessex has *Hamwic* (Southampton). The polities that did not possess a *wic* were small and their lack can to some extent be explained by the domination of the larger kingdoms. The situation in Kent is complex and perhaps is atypical for the east and south coasts as a whole; the importance of Canterbury and the proximity to the continent may have altered the pattern there. It is also possible that Frankia exercised some dominion over Kent, which may have altered the administrative organisation and thus the trajectory of development of that kingdom compared with other English kingdoms of the pre-Viking period.<sup>35</sup>

Whether these sites represent the rebirth of towns is a question open to debate. Dark has suggested that some form of sub-Roman urban life continued in Britain into the 6th century.<sup>36</sup> However, he sees urban life in ‘dark earth’ deposits and suggests that large-scale deposits of ‘dark earth’, as seen in some Scandinavian settlements, represent the decay of earth-built buildings.<sup>37</sup> Certainly, the 7ha spread of ‘dark earth’ and the 13ha area of high phosphate concentrations at Birka, along with the relatively large number of artefacts and animal bone from the small excavated sample do indicate intense occupation.<sup>38</sup> But the salient fact here is that Birka was no more than 13ha in size and probably at any one time significantly smaller than that; this should be compared to the size of the English *wics*, which, on average, were more than 50ha. However, this relatively small size need not disqualify Birka from being a town if it meets the criteria suggested above, which it does.<sup>39</sup> Analysis of ‘dark earth’ deposits in England suggests that the soils represent a build-up of manure.<sup>40</sup> The missing element in the late Roman and early Anglo-Saxon situation is direct evidence for a non-agrarian aspect to these places, making Dark’s assertion difficult to sustain. The presence of ‘dark earth’ in itself does not qualify as an urban indicator, therefore, but it does perhaps suggest that large numbers of livestock have been brought to the place, which in turn may be viewed as a kind of pre-urban situation, perhaps indicating that cattle wealth was being collected together. From a study of 1,361 Roman buildings in Romano-British urban centres, Faulkner has conversely argued for the decline of Romano-British towns from the 4th century and their complete disuse by the

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<sup>35</sup> T. Tatton-Brown, ‘Canterbury and the early medieval towns of Kent’, in P.E. Leach (ed.), *Archaeology in Kent to AD 1500* (York, CBA Res. Rep. 48, 1982), 79–83.

<sup>36</sup> Dark, *Civitas to Kingdom*, 15–17.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> See B. Ambrosiani, ‘The prehistory of towns in Sweden’, in R. Hodges and B. Hobley, *The Rebirth of Towns in the West AD 700–1050*, CBA Res Rep 68 (London, 1988), 63–8, see pp. 64–5; and H. Clarke and B. Ambrosiani, *Towns in the Viking Age* (Leicester, 1991), 71–7.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> See, for instance, H. Dalwood, ‘The use of soil micromorphology for investigating site formation processes’, in K. Steane, *Interpretation of Stratigraphy 1* (Lincoln, 1992), 3–6.

middle of the 5th century.<sup>41</sup> The survival of towns, as defined above, during the period after the collapse of the Roman Empire is hence a matter of debate. Certainly the Church was often interested in focusing ecclesiastical sites within former Roman cities and towns, and royal administration was also often concentrated on these former towns. With minting revived in some Western European former Roman towns from the middle of the 6th century these places gradually grew in status and were centres for other types of industrial production.<sup>42</sup> Whether minting and church building represents continuity of urban life, as Pirenne argued for Merovingia and Italy, is surprisingly difficult to assess, but there does seem to have been a hiatus in the operation of most towns during the 5th century, at the very least, throughout most of Western Europe.<sup>43</sup> Hodges and Whitehouse give stark statistics for the population of Rome itself during the period, showing that from a height of around 1 million in the 1st century AD it eventually fell to a low of 30,000 in the 10th century, with Procopius stating that the city was abandoned altogether during the Gothic wars.<sup>44</sup>

The concept that early medieval towns were not a development in a social-evolutionary sense, but rather were an expression of a renewed urge on the part of the élite to be seen as connected to the Roman past, has gained in currency in recent years in discourses on the subject.<sup>45</sup> What we view as the necessary attributes of a town have been questioned in the literature fairly extensively.<sup>46</sup> In the 1970s Biddle outlined a polythetic set of parameters for the definition of towns.<sup>47</sup> His work was mainly concerned with Winchester and more generally with the rise of the *burhs* of Wessex and their subsequent spread, but in any case the definition has proved influential and was adopted by English Heritage's Monument Protection Programme for defining urban places as monuments. Biddle's set of criteria is:

- legal status
- internal street pattern
- mint
- relative population size/density
- public buildings
- economic diversity/industry

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<sup>41</sup> N. Faulkner, 'The debate about the end: a review of evidence and methods', *Archaeological Journal* 159 (2002), 59–76, see pp. 66–8.

<sup>42</sup> A. Verhulst, 'Roman cities, *emporia* and new towns', in I. Lyse Hansen and C. Wickham (eds), *The Long Eighth Century: Production, Distribution and Demand* (Leiden, 2000), 105–20, particularly p. 106.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> Hodges and Whitehouse, *Mohammed, Charlemagne*, 50–52.

<sup>45</sup> Carver, *Arguments in Stone*.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> M. Biddle, 'Towns', in D.M. Wilson (ed.), *The Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England* (London, 1976), 100; for a discussion of the concept of a polythetic set in relation to archaeology see D.L. Clarke, *Analytical Archaeology* (London, 1978, 2nd edn), 182.

- urban defences
- administrative centre
- urban buildings
- castle/fort
- communications focus
- religious organisation
- church
- market

It can be seen from these criteria that much of the definition relies on knowledge accruing from documentary evidence. For periods prior to the late 9th century this is a problem. A more anthropological definition has been suggested by Clarke and Ambrosiani after Reynolds:

A permanent human settlement ... in which a significant proportion of its population lives off trade, industry, administration and other non-agricultural occupations. ... It forms a social unit more or less distinct from the surrounding countryside.<sup>48</sup>

Some archaeologists have seen such a discrepancy between the legal and the anthropological definitions for a town as a stumbling block to understanding.<sup>49</sup> This lack of conformity with scholarly expectations that towns exhibit may, however, be at the nub of the issue: early medieval societies were not themselves decided on what a town was going to be and were, in effect, experimenting with a number of possible administrative configurations.

### *Hodges' model*

As discussed earlier in this chapter, theories of urbanisation took an anthropological turn from the 1960s. New Archaeology, following the New Geography, adopted a more positivist or scientific approach to analysis and interpretation. Starting with near eastern and Mediterranean state and urban formation and influenced by American studies of Meso-American state formation, English archaeologists began to take an objective approach to prehistoric, proto-

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<sup>48</sup> See Clarke and Ambrosiani, *Towns in the Viking Age*, 3; and S. Reynolds *An Introduction to the History of English Medieval Towns* (Oxford, 1977).

<sup>49</sup> See, for instance, H. Clarke and A. Simms, 'Towards a comparative history of urban origins', in H. Clarke and A. Simms (eds), *The Comparative History of Urban Origins in Non-Roman Europe* (Oxford, BAR S255, 1985), 671–714; more recently, see C. Scull, 'Urban centres in pre-Viking England?', in J. Hines (ed.), *The Anglo-Saxons From the Migration Period to the Eighth Century: An Ethnographic Perspective* (Woodbridge, 1997), 269–310.

historic and eventually medieval state formation and development.<sup>50</sup> This schema was essentially based on a cross-cultural view of social evolution, which in its earliest forms was functionalist and ahistorical.

In the late 1970s and 80s Richard Hodges took Pirenne's theories and applied archaeological evidence and an anthropological model to the origins of towns. This work conceptually follows that of the numismatic historian Philip Grierson, who, possibly influenced by the *Annales* scholars, looked to anthropology for a new way of conceptualising the early Middle Ages.<sup>51</sup> Hodges employed a model first formulated by Carol Smith for regional agrarian market town hierarchy viewed in a cross-cultural and hence fairly positivist manner. Smith identifies several modes of distribution in a classical Marxist model albeit with a strong empirical functionalist viewpoint; the mode of exchange is seen as the crucial aspect of the relations of production. She examines colonial and neo-colonial stratified societies where both land and the means of production are not alienated from the peasantry, but 'surplus value' was nonetheless being extracted,<sup>52</sup> and notes that distribution systems seem to be critical in how stratification expresses itself. Peasants tend to be distributed across the cultivatable land. Élites, however, have more options, not being restricted in their location, and tend to congregate in market towns and other urban centres.

She argues that commercialisation, in this 'system', is a continuous variable, which she divides into three levels:

- direct or non-market exchange
- non-competitive or controlled market exchange
- competitive market exchange<sup>53</sup>

Hodges' anthropological framework was the fashion of that time. Many archaeologists were adapting such models, mainly from American anthropology. Like many, if not most, of the archaeologists trained after the 1970s in Britain, Hodges was influenced by what Trigger defines as neo-evolutionism, more commonly referred to as cultural or social evolution. The ethnologists who developed this schema did so within the context of 1950s American academia.

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<sup>50</sup> The intellectual development of archaeological theory has been usefully summarised recently by Johnson (*Archaeological Theory*); a more in-depth assessment of the adoption of various schools of social theory has also been made by B. Trigger (*A History of Archaeological Thought* (Cambridge, 1989)).

<sup>51</sup> P. Grierson, 'Commerce in the Dark Ages: a critique of the evidence', *Transaction of the Royal Historical Society* 23 (1959), 71–112. Specifically, Grierson's economic ideas were influenced by Malinowski's *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* and, subsequently, M. Mauss *The Gift*.<sup>52</sup> C.A. Smith, 'Exchange systems and the spatial distribution of élite: the organisation of stratification in agrarian societies', in C.A. Smith (ed.), *Regional Analysis: Volume II, Social Systems* (New York, 1976) 309–38.

<sup>52</sup> C.A. Smith, 'Exchange systems and the spatial distribution of élite: the organisation of stratification in agrarian societies', in C.A. Smith (ed.), *Regional Analysis: Volume II, Social Systems* (New York, 1976) 309–38.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 313–14.



For instance, White and Steward rejected the ‘historical particularism’, psychological reductionism and the concept of agency they associated with Boasian anthropology. Both, followed by the more influential writings of Friedman and Service, believed that all cultures advance through a series of stages. Within this framework technology was given a primary role in cultural development.<sup>54</sup> Ironically, Soviet archaeological theorists, who had influenced British archaeological thinking during the 1940s and 50s through Childe, shared this attribute with the American School. Both schools of thought, although politically at ends of a spectrum, were strongly materialist in their vision of history,<sup>55</sup> the same intellectual strand permeating both traditions. Both Colin Renfrew and David Clarke were interested in using a systems approach to refine a cultural evolutionary schema:<sup>56</sup> Renfrew drew much inspiration from the work of Lewis Binford, whereas Clarke was more original in his thinking, his inspiration largely coming out of the developing school of New Geography at Cambridge.<sup>57</sup> Both were hugely influential in the late 1970s and early 1980s in this country. Hodges’ impetus for investigating through a systems model and utilising a cultural-evolutionary paradigm thus derives directly from the influential archaeological theorists of the day.

Schematically, Hodges’ model of North Sea urban development between AD 600 and 900 is as follows:

5th/6th century	Domestic mode of production, restricted circulation of prestige items, which end up in a mortuary rite – no urban settlements
6th/7th century	Type A emporia (beach markets), palaces, churches, regional distribution of prestige goods – some still ending up in a mortuary rite (Sutton Hoo)
Late 7th century	Type B emporia ( <i>wic</i> ) at <i>Hamwic</i> only in this country – also Dorestad and <i>Quentovic</i> – with a street grid. Dorestad ← Trade → <i>Hamwic</i> Pepin III ← Trade/competition → Ine

<sup>54</sup> Trigger, *History of Archaeological Thought*, 289–91.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 326, and see V. Gordon Childe, *The Dawn of European Civilization* (London, 1957, 6th revised edn).

<sup>56</sup> See, for instance, C. Renfrew, ‘Alternative models for exchange and spatial distribution’, in T. Earle and J. Ericson (eds), *Exchange Systems in Prehistory* (London, 1977), 71–90; and D.L. Clarke, *Analytical Archaeology* (London, 1978, 2nd revised edn).

<sup>57</sup> Trigger, *History of Archaeological Thought*, 303.

Energetic kingship is an important aspect of the model. Much evidence of craft production at these site, artisans and coinage.

Late 8th/9th century	Type B emporia develop at London, Ipswich and possibly York. There are changes in the form of both royal and monastic sites, planned villages with storage facilities, beginning of open-field systems, ‘mass’ production of pottery and iron probably at the <i>wics</i> . Strong Carolingian influence on the political aspirations of the English kings Charlemagne ← Trade/competition → Offa
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c.870	Type B emporia, from dating based on excavations at <i>Hamwic</i> , in decline prior to Viking attacks. Political power concentrating in the hands of a few families (Alfredian dynasty).
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870–early 10th century	first English industrial revolution. Competitive markets, commodity production and regional distribution, parish churches, manors – i.e., the whole medieval package. <sup>58</sup>
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This model has met with criticism lately from a number of perspectives, mainly because of its overt positivisim, an aspect upon which Hodges has himself also recently made comment.<sup>59</sup> However, it represented a step forward in terms of both synthesis and, importantly, explanation; it is based on the premise that urbanisation in and around the North Sea littoral is intimately linked with the rise of the central individual and kingship and emphasises, in particular, the development of chiefdom societies into states through the growth of kingship. This growth was, in the model, fuelled by the control over the production and trade of ‘prestige’ goods. Although Johnson has recently characterised Hodges as being a systemic scholar,<sup>60</sup> the model is in fact mono-causal. The control of ‘prestige’ artefacts was the engine for the development of both the state and towns.

One of the most serious factual problem with the model is the recent discovery in Denmark and Sweden of what may be described using Hodges’ terminology as a ‘Type A emporia’ dating

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<sup>58</sup> R. Hodges, ‘The rebirth of towns in the early Middle Ages’, in Hodges and Hobley, *Rebirth of Towns*, 1–7.

<sup>59</sup> Hodges, *Towns and Trade*, 7–8.

<sup>60</sup> Johnson, *Archaeological Theory*, 70–71.

from the 5th century port site at Lundeberg on the island of Fyn.<sup>61</sup> This site was probably situated socially within a simple tribal-type structure with little social complexity and certainly no kingship, and was not Christian.<sup>62</sup> Additionally, evidence from Huy (Belgium) illustrates industrial, settlement and administrative zoning from the 5th/6th centuries.<sup>63</sup> Klavs Ransborg recognised this discrepancy from his knowledge of Scandinavian early medieval towns in 1980; he notes that ‘town-like’ settlements precede the development of the state in Denmark, but also observes that some ethnographically known states do not possess towns, particularly where trade is not important.<sup>64</sup>

Recently, it has been observed by Gardiner *et al.* that Hodges’ model is not comprehensive, and applies only to the English Channel, the Baltic and the North Sea between AD 700 and 900.<sup>65</sup> Scull has pointed out a further flaw in Hodges’ early conceptualisation of the origins of early medieval urbanisation: specifically, he emphasises that the notion of a proto-urban situation is teleological.<sup>66</sup> This observation is central to the main concern here, in that it points to the basic normative conceptual problem: namely, that these settlements are being viewed not in their social context but rather as embryonic forms of mercantile towns. Verhulst, too, has criticised the ahistorical nature of Hodges’ model, pointing out that although the historical sources are meagre, they do nonetheless supply context and a dialectic.<sup>67</sup>

In Pirenne’s thesis *Romanitas* continues into the 7th century in Western Europe with very little alteration in the modes of settlement.<sup>68</sup> The collapse, when it came, is attributed to Islamic raiding of the north Mediterranean shore during the mid–late 7th century. Pirenne draws on a number of sources, such as Gregory of Tours, to make his case. Hodges and Whitehouse, looking at the archaeological evidence in the Mediterranean, demonstrate that urban centres were in deep decline in many cases from the mid 5th century. In the case of Rome itself this was particularly true, and it is also indicated by evidence from Carthage and Luni. These centres continued to decline throughout the 6th and 7th centuries, further suggesting that the Arab military advances from AD 630 were a symptom of the breakdown of Roman military and political authority, not its cause.<sup>69</sup> Towns were not expressions of a civilisation’s evolution, rather being expressions of a particular social system; to understand them, the ideas behind their

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<sup>61</sup> Carver, *Arguments in Stone*.

<sup>62</sup> Roskams, ‘Urban Transition’.

<sup>63</sup> Verhulst, ‘The origins of towns’, 3–35.

<sup>64</sup> K. Ransborg, *The Viking Age in Denmark* (London, 1980)

<sup>65</sup> M. Gardiner, R. Cross, N. MacPherson-Grant and I. Riddler, ‘Continental trade and non-urban ports in mid-Anglo-Saxon England: excavations at Sandtun, West Hythe, Kent’, *Archaeology Journal* 158, 161–290.

<sup>66</sup> Scull, ‘Urban centres in pre-Viking England?’

<sup>67</sup> A. Verhulst, ‘The origins and early development of medieval towns in northern Europe’, *The Economic History Review* 47 (1994), 362–73, see p. 367.

<sup>68</sup> Pirenne, *Mohammed and Charlemagne*.

<sup>69</sup> Hodges and Whitehouse, *Mohammed, Charlemagne*.

founding and maintenance need to be explored.<sup>70</sup> However, at the same time model-building is a useful heuristic device for analysing the interplay of institutions, as long as the models are not viewed as an explanation in their own right.

One of the interesting gaps in Hodges' model is the lack of causality attributed to the church: the introduction of Christianity and the long-distance contacts it opened up were not strong factors in the development of the model. These contingent aspects were understated in his *Dark Age Economics*, the role played by the church in the transfer of ideas being subjugated to the mechanism of trade in fine goods. Hodges incorporates the role of the church into his model later, where it is seen as causing 'prestige goods' inflation, fuelling the funerary ritual in the later 6th and early 7th centuries. This is viewed as 'climaxing' at Sutton Hoo, Broomfield and Taplow.<sup>71</sup> We can see in the *Anglo-Saxon Achievement* the beginning of a shift in Hodges' theoretical basis. The work of Anthony Giddens is discussed, although the ideas of structuration and agency are not explored. The church is further seen as having influenced the application of writing to administration, resulting in documents such as land charters and the Tribal Hidage.<sup>72</sup> The cultural evolutionary paradigm was still in place but there was a hint that the complexity of the data was overwhelming the systems model. His writing touched on structuralism, hermeneutics and contextual viewpoints.<sup>73</sup> However, it continues to be the systems model which is most discussed even today.<sup>74</sup>

To some extent Hodges has moved away from the concept of towns in this period as gateways for long-distance trade and has recently emphasised the local production and distribution functions of the *wics*. He does, however, maintain the gateway role of 'Type A' *emporia* and his contention that 'Type B' *emporia* were monopolistic and hence not commercial, now suggesting that regional markets did not develop until the 9th century.<sup>75</sup> Despite some of the epistemological flaws and the problems with dating of towns in northern Europe the model is useful and it is for this reason that it endures. Hodges is now a less positivist scholar than he was, but is still a cultural scientist, as the following quote from *Towns and Trade in the Age of Charlemagne* demonstrates:

The debate about the origins of towns and particularly about their physical form in the 9th century will continue to absorb the interest of archaeologists and historians until the database is sufficiently ample and incontrovertible.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Roskams, 'Urban Transition'; Carver, *Arguments in Stone*.

<sup>71</sup> Hodges, *The Anglo-Saxon Achievement*, 46.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

<sup>73</sup> Hodges, *Towns and Trade*, *passim*.

<sup>74</sup> Johnson, *Archaeological Theory*, and Scull, 'Urban centres in pre-Viking England?'

<sup>75</sup> Hodges, *Towns and Trade*.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 119.

Within this refined scheme the settlements of Dorestad, *Quentovic*, *Hamwic* and Ipswich are, therefore, less the innovations of an energetic king and more an attempt to control and develop pre-existing communications and prestige-goods pathways.<sup>77</sup> This is an important revision because it removes the formalist concept of economic origins, now shown through discoveries in Denmark at Gudme to be dubious, and replaces it with long-term developing contacts. It also places a dialectic within the development.

There is little in terms of a detailed documentary record for the 7th and 8th centuries (and certainly there is almost nothing for East Anglia) with which to consider the specificity of these issues. Archaeology is the primary form of evidence for understanding towns during this period. Much archaeological work has been undertaken within early medieval towns over the last 60 years and particularly over the last 25. Pirenne was impressed by and drew attention to Halwerda's early excavation at Dorestad and, towards the end of his life, may have been familiar with Jankuhn's work at Haithabu (Germany).<sup>78</sup> A great deal of published information has now been produced on towns of the early Middle Ages, but given the amount of effort and the size of the literature, it is remarkable how little we know of their physical appearance.<sup>79</sup>

There has also been little work done on correlating the surrounding landscape with patterns of material culture within these settlements, although recent work on animal bone has gone some way to addressing this deficiency by illustrating a tributary economy.<sup>80</sup> In essence, much of the work on understanding the character of towns prior to the late 9th century has examined the trade within the landscape from a top-down perspective, starting with the pan-polity view and focusing down to a 'hinterland', this approach by, for instance Blackburn, has recently begun to look at issues such as trade and the use of currency in the rural situation. Prior to recent work, trade was looked at as a pan-European 'driver' for the development of urban places.<sup>81</sup> Arguably this paradigm is based on a normative conceptualisation of the decline of Antiquity and the origins of the medieval world, and is founded on the premise of civilisation being the desirable condition, with barbarism being a primitive and poor substitute. Such an epistemological structure requires that information be discussed in particular terms of discourse which do not, for instance, touch on the survival of prehistoric social behaviour or patterns of material deposition.<sup>82</sup> Rather, discussion has focused on a number of themes: first politics, then economics and the history of western thought, and lastly a conflation of economics with

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<sup>77</sup> Roskams, 'Urban transition'.

<sup>78</sup> Hodges, *Dark Age Economics*.

<sup>79</sup> Clarke and Ambrosiani, *Towns in the Viking Age*; Hodges, *Towns and Trade*, 15.

<sup>80</sup> T.P. O'Connor, 'On the interpretation of animal bone assemblages from wics', in Hill and Cowie, *Wics*, 54–60.

<sup>81</sup> M. Blackburn, "'Productive" sites and the pattern of coin loss in England, 600–1180', in Ulmschneider and Pestell, *Markets*, 20–36.

<sup>82</sup> See, for instance, R. Bradley, *An Archaeology of Natural Places* (London, 2000), for a discussion of the types of behaviour that have an extremely long span in prehistoric and historic Europe.

anthropological models. These three themes were in fact how Pirenne's thesis was organised.<sup>83</sup> A concentration on the larger questions of how and why the Roman Empire declined and what caused the re-emergence of mercantile life and, particularly, towns means we may not be asking the relevant questions of the data at the regional and local level.<sup>84</sup>

### **East Anglia – the context of towns in the 7th–late 10th centuries?**

There is now a record of well-provenanced metal-detected material from many parts of the countryside within East Anglia. This, coupled with an easily recognised type of regionally produced pottery relating to the period *c.* AD 650–850, means that there is here a currently unparalleled potential for looking at the hierarchy of early medieval settlement structure. The metal-detector collected material allows the Ipswich ware to be placed within a comparative context. Such analysis is now beginning to demonstrate a range of artefact-rich sites now often referred to as 'productive' sites, as mentioned above and discussed for East Anglia in detail in Chapter 8. Scholars have been quick to grasp the potential for understanding settlement structure offered by this new dataset and a number of studies have recently been published that seek to place the 'productive' site within a developmental context.<sup>85</sup> The concept has proved controversial, too, possibly because of limited data consisting largely of materials collected from the ploughsoil, often unsystematically, for instance, Julian Richards has argued that 'productive' sites were nothing more than average settlements of the period.<sup>86</sup> There is certainly truth in the contention that we do not know what these sites were in most cases. Some 'productive' sites have produced a variety of material, including coins, metalwork and pottery, whereas others have produced only coins (that we know about). One of the major flaws in the collection of this data is that it is highly selective: few sites have been excavated in any detail and even fewer usefully published. In addition, much of the work carried out by archaeologists has not been concerned with placing these sites into an historical context, although exceptions to this rule exist, such as Pestell's work on the relationship between later monastic establishments and their claimed 'productive' site antecedents.<sup>87</sup> Work on Continental sites is less easily assessed but the results of efforts in Scandinavia seem to be suggesting that similar patterns will emerge there: some settlement sites becoming distinctive on the basis of the types of finds that can be identified from the ploughsoil, with this data fleshed out occasionally by a detailed archaeological investigation.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Pirenne, *Mohammed and Charlemagne*.

<sup>84</sup> Hodges, *Towns and Trade*, particularly the concluding chapter.

<sup>85</sup> See, for example, Ulmschneider and Pestell, *Markets*.

<sup>86</sup> Richards, 'What's so special about "productive sites"?', 71–80.

<sup>87</sup> Pestell, 'Afterlife'.

<sup>88</sup> L. Jørgensen, 'Manor and market at Lake Tissø in the sixth to eleventh centuries: the Danish productive sites', in Ulmschneider and Pestell, *Markets*, 175–207.

The only generally agreed East Anglian example of an *wic* is at Ipswich; it will be discussed in detail in Chapter 8. To draw further on the Hodges schema, Ipswich began around the 650s, earlier than any other English site, as a Type A emporia (although recent discoveries at *Hamwic* (Saxon Southampton) indicate an earlier precursor to the great 8th-century *wic* there too).<sup>89</sup> We know also that London was a coin-minting site by the early 7th century, which may suggest a genesis for the *wic* there at around the same point in time, but excavated evidence seems to suggest that the early 8th century was more urban in character than previous phases, with more settlement and industry evident through archaeological investigations at that time.<sup>90</sup> Unfortunately, for scholars of early medieval urbanisation in general, and for those studying East Anglia in particular, little has been published on a large campaign of excavations at Ipswich during the 1970s and 80s<sup>91</sup> other than a few synthetic papers. The most thoroughly investigated *wics* are *Hamwic*, Dorestad and, to a lesser extent, London and York. All are well published and much of the understanding of Ipswich now derives from comparisons with these sites.<sup>92</sup>

The term hinterland, as used in archaeological studies of medieval urban places, is telling, as within the formulation of this view it is clearly the town that is of primary importance, with the surrounding landscape apparently being regarded as present merely to service this leap forward in social development. Within the sub-discipline of Middle Saxon studies there is a larger archive from archaeological investigations within towns than there is relating to other types of settlement within the landscape, where we know the vast majority of the population dwelt. Andrews articulated an extreme example of this bias in 1992 for Hampshire and the predominance of information on the Middle Saxon period from *Hamwic*, at the time comparing that with the more balanced rural/urban information available for the period in Norfolk.<sup>93</sup> At that time not a single settlement of the Middle Saxon period was known from within a 10km radius of that town, which was possibly the largest settlement in England during the 8th century.

Hurst recognised in the 1960s that East Anglia, almost uniquely in southern England, possessed the means for exploring Middle Saxon settlements and connecting these with the

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<sup>89</sup> V. Birbeck, R.J.C. Smith, P. Andrews and N. Stoodley, *The Origins of Mid-Saxon Southampton: Excavations at the Friends Providence St Mary's Stadium 1998–2000* (Salisbury, 2005).

<sup>90</sup> G. Malcolm, D. Bowsher and R. Cowie, *Middle Saxon London: Excavations at the Royal Opera House 1989–99* (MOLAS monograph 15, 2003), 141–3.

<sup>91</sup> K. Wade, 'Ipswich', in Hodges and Hobley, *Rebirth of Towns*, 93–100, gives a review of the unpublished information to 1988.

<sup>92</sup> P.E. Holdsworth, *Excavations at Melbourne Street, Southampton, 1971–76*, CBA Res. Rep. 33 (London, 1980); A.D. Morton (ed.), *Excavations at Hamwic: Volume 1: excavations 1946–83 excluding Six Dials and Melbourne Street*, CBA Res. Rep. 84 (London, 1992); P. Andrews, *Excavations at Hamwic: Volume 2: Excavations at Six Dials*, CBA Res. Rep. 107 (York, 1997); van Es and Verwers, *Excavations at Dorestad I*; Malcolm *et al.*, *Middle Saxon London*.

<sup>93</sup> P. Andrews, 'Middle Saxon Norfolk: evidence of settlement 650–850', *The Annual* (Norfolk Archaeological Research Group, 1992), 13–28.

major town in the region, Ipswich:<sup>94</sup> Ipswich ware. Subsequent to its initial discovery in the town, this ware has been found across the region and beyond. In East Anglia there are a few excavated 7th- to 9th-century sites with which to compare Ipswich; most of those that have been systematically investigated are in Suffolk. Apart from Ipswich, the most impressive and famous of these is the royal burial site of Sutton Hoo, which lies in the Sandlings in south-east Suffolk. Sutton Hoo gives a snapshot of early kingship and a tantalising glimpse of long-distance communications, demonstrating strong connections with Scandinavia in terms of material culture and perhaps identity just on the eve of the Christian conversion. A basic incongruity exists in the contrast between the material wealth resulting from the funerary rite, with conspicuous consumption as its central premise, and the relative material poverty found nationally at excavated settlement sites, as at the Northumbrian *royal* site at Yeavering. This was probably the site Bede referred to as *Ad Geffrin*. Although there are clear signs of status in the buildings, which include a large hall and an intriguing triangular structure interpreted by the excavator Brian Hope-Taylor as an amphitheatre, perhaps specifically for the court meetings of the Northumbrian king, there are few excavated artefacts.<sup>95</sup> The East Anglian royal settlement of the same period at Rendlesham, also discussed by Bede, was fieldwalked in 1981–2 as part of the Sutton Hoo environs project, and an Ipswich ware scatter was discovered within an area predicted by Bruce-Mitford in 1948 as the likely spot for the royal settlement. This spread covered some 15ha on a spur above the river Deben, just to the north of St Gregory’s church, and was the largest scatter of Middle Saxon pottery found during the survey by a factor of three. The next largest was in Sutton parish and measured c.5.5ha; the majority measured between 1ha and 3ha. A small (300m<sup>2</sup>) excavation within the area of the scatter undertaken during 1982 revealed two Middle Saxon ditches. One of these contained a copper-alloy sheet with repoussé decoration which was strikingly similar to another found at Sutton Hoo. In general the survey was able to recover, mainly through pottery scatters, a spectrum of different-sized Middle Saxon sites, with the royal site correlated with the largest scatter. Interestingly, none of these sites correlate with ‘productive’ sites discussed in Chapter 8.<sup>96</sup>

Sutton Hoo probably just pre-dates the earliest incarnation of Ipswich, which seems to have begun a few decades after the burial, and the two sites make for a very interesting social model. However, missing here is the general picture of social relations within the landscape. We have a king and a counting house but relatively little of the subjects and their world. What was the social context of the *wic*? How can we move from a discussion of the material culture spread

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<sup>94</sup> J.G. Hurst and S.E. West, ‘Ipswich ware’, in J.G. Hurst, ‘Saxo-Norman pottery in East Anglia II’, *Proceedings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society* (1957), 29–60.

<sup>95</sup> B. Hope-Taylor, *Yeavering: An Anglo-British Centre of Early Northumbria* (London, 1977).

<sup>96</sup> J. Newman, ‘The late Roman and Anglo-Saxon settlement pattern in the Sandlings of Suffolk’, in M.O.H. Carver (ed.), *The Age of Sutton Hoo* (Woodbridge, 1992), 25–38.



around the landscape to a view of the way the people of 7th-century East Anglia understood their own settlement structure? These questions are addressed in Chapters 4 to 8.

### **Theories of Viking and post-Viking urbanisation AD 869–939**

In the aftermath of the Viking wars and the annexation of East Anglia into the territory of the Danelaw a more generalised growth in town building began in earnest, according to the present models. The evidence from East Anglia is discussed further in Chapter 8 but it is useful to note at this point that it appears that town development had progressed further by the mid 9th century in Eastern England than in the rest of the country. As discussed above, there appear to have been very early and complex urban places within the Scandinavian world; indeed, it might be argued that an urban model, later adopted by Wessex under Alfred, may have been developed by Scandinavian groups. Unfortunately the chronological resolution afforded by archaeological data is such that we cannot often tell the difference between Danish rule and the subsequent conquest by Edward the Elder: whether places such as Norwich and Thetford became towns during or after the Danelaw is at present largely a matter of supposition. However, this is not the case if the coinage from their surrounding environs and likely hinterlands is looked at in aggregate, as will be discussed in Chapters 7 and 8.

During the concerted Viking attacks on coastal and riverside locations at the end of the 8th century and intensifying in the middle of the 9th century, East Anglian and to some extent more generally Anglo-Saxon state development may be imagined to have been driven by a focus on external threats. Many *wics* contain evidence of their quick decline and in the case of London there is clear evidence that the *wic* was fortified in the mid 9th century.<sup>97</sup> A Scandinavian focus on these centres as rich locations for plunder may explain developments seen archaeologically – by the 840s it may have been the case that the Vikings saw strategic value in disrupting the administration of resources and attacking the large centres.<sup>98</sup> How Anglo-Saxon kingdoms reacted to this threat seems to have driven much political and military policy.

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<sup>97</sup> Malcolm *et al.*, *Middle Saxon London*.

<sup>98</sup> G.N. Garmonsway, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (London, 1992, 3rd edn.), note 4, 46–7.



**Fig. 9.** Portchester Castle – the Watergate; the arch is thought to be Alfredian (late-9th-century) in date.

With the conquest of East Anglia and the subsequent advent of the Danelaw, England was split between two separate polities with different cultural backgrounds. In this context urbanisation took on new and diverse trajectories. Disentangling the various elements which went into creating the conditions for urban growth is thus a complicated task and one which has been a focus of both archaeological and historical interest. In East Anglia, the question of how to attribute the causes for the 9th-century emergence of a number of new towns is made slightly more complex still because of the short duration of the Danelaw.

Before discussing the detail of the archaeological and historical evidence it may be useful to look back at the historical background and itemise the main trends in order to contextualise the discussion. This short summary of the main issues relevant to state development and urbanisation will be followed by a discussion of the main themes of the current academic discourse on these issues. By necessity this will focus more on archaeological information, but it will also examine some of the current discussion by historians of the period.

It is worth examining just what, historically and archaeologically, a town is thought to consist of by during the last centuries of the first millennium AD. Documentation for this period is relatively sparse, and much of it is difficult to interpret on the question of urban life. Domesday Book, for example, provides particularly challenging evidence which is imprecise on the nature of towns, with both London and Winchester excluded altogether.<sup>99</sup> Much earlier the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* records an entity called a *burh* but does not provide details. Indeed, the meaning of the word seems mutable,<sup>100</sup> as seems to be the case with many Anglo-Saxon geographical terms (the term *wic*, already discussed above, is another case in point). Indeed, it was not just the Anglo-Saxons that seem to have less than precise terms for settlement types; the Roman terms for towns are also vague and demonstrate a mixed set of ideas that focus around the concept of a town but also refer to other factors such as its military nature. An example of this is the term *castra*, a term which associated with some towns because of the duality of the early medieval terminology for fortifications and towns. Pirenne thought that this duality was a defining aspect of early medieval towns, taking as his inspiration the fortifications with outer settlements built in coastal parts of France and Belgium in the 9th century as a response to Viking attacks, a type that he regarded as having its roots in the purely military rather than economic necessity. Merchants involved in international trade were attracted to the *castrum* for protection. These were the important people: Pirenne did not consider the soldiers, clerics and supporters as having an economically significant role.<sup>101</sup> The scribes writing the Domesday Book described the 120 or so urban settlements mentioned in a number of ways; fifteen were named *civitas*, with the rest called *burgus* – either implicitly, as they possessed inhabitants recorded as burgesses, or explicitly.<sup>102</sup>

### *Burhs*

In England the Viking period similarly brought about a conflation of the term for a defended area with an economically important centre that we now think of as being a town. The military nature of the term, *burh*, is clear. Defence was the most significant reason for the establishment and maintenance of these settlements, albeit that the spectrum of settlement types to which the term can be applied does seem to be very wide. For instance, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* reports that in AD 755 Cyneheard and Conewulf had a battle after the latter visited his mistress in the *byrig of Meratune*, which consisted of a small defended enclosure with a hall and a few outbuildings.<sup>103</sup> In essence, therefore, a *Burh* refers to an enclosing wall, or more commonly an

<sup>99</sup> G. Martin and A. Williams, *Domesday Book: a complete translation* (London, 2003).

<sup>100</sup> M.O.H. Carver, *Underneath English Towns* (London, 1987), 47.

<sup>101</sup> Verhulst, 'The origins of towns', 3–35.

<sup>102</sup> Roffe, *Decoding Domesday*, 109.

<sup>103</sup> Cited in Carver, *Underneath English Towns*, 47.

earthwork with rampart.<sup>104</sup> If we compare that to some of the larger *burhs* established by Alfred and his descendants it can clearly be seen that either there is a change in the use of the term through the course of the period, or it was always mutable in its meaning, the common thread being the military or fortified character of the place described. Given Alfred's and later Edward's concerns it is hardly surprising that they were most focused on the military aspects of these places.<sup>105</sup> This military aspect of the town has early roots, with large central places such as hillforts forming the earliest examples of town-like places in both this country and western Europe generally. Roman towns were often fortified, whether for real military reasons or as an indication of status. The character of Roman towns still surviving in the Anglo-Saxon landscape may have had a strong influence on how Anglo-Saxon authority viewed the concept of a town.<sup>106</sup> These large and ruinous places must have communicated a clear military purpose to the Anglo-Saxon mind. In the cases of both the Anglian Tower in York, where it appears that the Roman defences were repaired, and the Watergate at Portchester, thought to have been rebuilt by Alfred in the late 9th century, there was a clear reuse of Roman places as fortifications.<sup>107</sup> The concept of town with fortification was well thus established by the time that Alfred began to build new versions in the late 9th century.

Schofield and Vince, following Herrmann, have made a case for considering medieval Anglo-Saxon urban genesis and development in terms of general European historical trends.<sup>108</sup> Three zones with different urban trajectories are identified: an inner zone comprising the Mediterranean classical world of Spain, southern France, Italy, Greece and Turkey; a middle zone centred on the Rhine and Danube and extending to the *limes* of the former Roman Empire, and including most of Britain apart from the 'Celtic fringe' of Scotland, Wales and Cornwall; and an outer zone, beyond the edge of the Roman Empire and thus, crucially, there were no Roman towns to act as models for later developments. According to this model, Anglo-Saxon England's development should thus be most closely comparable to that in the Low Countries, southern Germany and Austria. Schofield and Vince argue that the character of town development within this Middle Zone was predicated to some extent on the reuse of Roman towns, and clearly in Anglo-Saxon England this is true: many medieval towns are placed on the

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<sup>104</sup> ASC, see for 840s.

<sup>105</sup> This topic is returned to in Chapter 8.

<sup>106</sup> Dark's argument for continuity in *Civitas to Kingdom* does seem to work at this level of analysis. The accumulation of 'dark earth' and its likely explanation, 'where large numbers of animal were penned in former Roman towns in the earlier Anglo-Saxon period', suggests that Roman towns were perhaps acting as centres for obligation collection. The cattle being brought to these towns may have been tribute. However, by this time these places do not seem in any other way to have supported town life in the sense that they did before and later.

<sup>107</sup> R. Hall, *English Heritage Book of York* (London, 1996); B. Cunliffe, *Excavations at Portchester Castle. Vol 2: Saxon* (Society of Antiquaries monograph, 1976).

<sup>108</sup> J. Schofield and A. Vince, *Medieval Towns* (London, 1994), 12–16; J. Herrmann, 'Siedlungsgeschichtliche Grundlagen und geschichtliche Voraussetzungen für die Entwicklung Berlins', in H. Brachmann and J. Herrmann (eds), *Frühgeschichte der europäischen Stadt* (Berlin, 1991), 7–18.

remains of Roman towns. In addition, they point to a second case for town genesis, where a stronghold or fortified location is coupled with a suburb, a situation which became common from the 10th century across this Middle Zone. A third type of place – the port or coastal trading town – is also identified as beginning in earnest in the 8th century within this zone. The similarities across this area are striking and suggest that very similar concepts of a town are present right across this northern part of the former Roman Empire. This can be explained to some extent by the ease of communication across this area; the copious literature discussing so-called ‘international trade’ at this time is testament to the ubiquity of this communication.<sup>109</sup> If the Anglo-Saxon experience is representative of north-west European growth of towns generally, then *burhs* may have developed in an early form as a generalised response to local military conditions, a result, at least in part, of a strategy by growing states to provide nodes in a military network.<sup>110</sup> Thus Viking expansion increased their numbers, and may have caused their origin, at least in the Anglo-Saxon and Carolingian contexts, where they seem to develop from the end of the 8th century within the reigns of Offa of Mercia and Charlemagne.<sup>111</sup> In both cases fortified or at least enclosed high-status settlement was often twinned with an artisanal suburb. This is seen also at monastic centres such as St Denys, Münstair and San Vincenzo al Volturno, where the archaeological evidence suggests a genesis around AD 800, well within the reign of Charlemagne.<sup>112</sup> The coincidence of these sorts of urban-style place appearing both in the Carolingian Empire and in Mercia at around the same time is intriguing. We know that communication between the two rulers – Charlemagne and Offa – famously took place on the topic of luxury goods; it may also be that concepts of how to go about organising a nodal military network and supply chain were also communicated between the two kings. Other types of innovation common to both the Carolingian Empire and the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms were also taking place at the end of the 8th century, including nucleated villages, use of a new silver coinage, open-field systems and a manorial or demesne land system.<sup>113</sup>

### *The Burghal Hidage*

A casual examination of the list of places mentioned in what Maitland coined the Burghal Hidage provides the historian with some perplexing questions. While on the face of it the kingdom of Wessex’s policy of provisioning and garrisoning fortified places in the aftermath of the Viking invasion seems to make a great deal of sense and is perfectly explicable, there are

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<sup>109</sup> See, for instance, Hodges, *Dark Age Economics*.

<sup>110</sup> D. Hill and A.R. Rumble (eds), *The Defence of Wessex: The Burghal Hidage and Anglo-Saxon Fortifications* (Manchester, 1996).

<sup>111</sup> J. Haslam, ‘Market and fortress in England in the reign of Offa’, *World Archaeology* 19:1 (1987), 76–93.

<sup>112</sup> Hodges, *Towns and Trade*, 100.

<sup>113</sup> See A. Verhulst, *The Carolingian Economy* (Cambridge, 2002), for a discussion of the Carolingian situation.

few precedents for the scale of the administrative system put into place at this time that can be read in the historical sources. If one follows Haslam's hypothesis that Mercian *burhs* were created by King Offa during the late 8th century, then perhaps the Mercian fortified places formed the template for the system described in the Burghal Hidage.<sup>114</sup> As will be discussed later, the types of place existing in eastern England during the later 7th and 8th centuries that archaeologists and numismatists term 'productive' sites might in some senses foreshadow this systems of *burhs*. The omissions from the Burghal Hidage, if it is in fact Alfredian or a product of the reign of Edward the Elder, are also strange: London is not discussed and there are no Kentish sites mentioned. Hill argues that these omissions are due to differences in assessment technique, with Kent being assessed in *sulungs* and London being a special case.<sup>115</sup> This may be plausible; Domesday also contains similar omissions and anomalies that are equally perplexing.

By the time of the Domesday survey the legal status of towns becomes implicit in the manner in which the entries were written, it is clear from the account that the surveyors knew a town when they saw it. For Maitland the important difference between a town and most other entries was their diversity of holdings, although they were dominated by the king, no other lord held a monopoly over a town.<sup>116</sup> Towns were not easily described in the language of the Domesday compilers and their approach was hence idiosyncratic.<sup>117</sup> Flemming has argued that a preoccupation with the geographical aspects of towns has led to a situation where their importance as stages for political events has been ignored;<sup>118</sup> essentially he seems to be resurrecting and reconfiguring an improved version of the garrison theory, put forward by Maitland and refuted by Tait, which emphasises the obligatory relationship between lords and the military maintenance of *burhs*.<sup>119</sup> The point is useful and well made that towns by the 11th century became the centre for government and thus even relatively small and unimportant lords required a holding within a major town to fulfil their duties and obligations and take part in politics.

## Conclusion

To conclude, a number of models have been proposed for the urbanisation of north-west Europe between the years AD 600 and 950. What is clear from this work is that there has been a tendency to take a 'top-down' approach to the evidence and apply theory to a relatively sparse and ambiguous dataset. The difficulty with this is that inevitably the top-down model draws,

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<sup>114</sup> Haslam, 'Market and fortress'.

<sup>115</sup> D. Hill, 'The figures', in D. Hill and A.R. Rumble (eds), *The Defence of Wessex: The Burghal Hidage and Anglo-Saxon Fortifications* (Manchester, 1996), 74–87.

<sup>116</sup> Maitland, *Domesday and Beyond*; and in F.W. Maitland, *Township and Borough* (Cambridge, 1898).

<sup>117</sup> Roffe, *Decoding Domesday*, 111.

<sup>118</sup> R. Flemming, 'Rural elites and urban communities in late Anglo-Saxon England', *Past and Present* 141 (1993), 3–37.

<sup>119</sup> Maitland, *Domesday Book and Beyond*; J. Tait, 'Review of F.W. Maitland, *Domesday Book and Beyond*', *English Historical Review* 12 (1897), 768–77.

inadvertently in most cases, on modern perceptions of what a town comprises. As we can see from Bede, and others, the terminology of the period suggests that the idea of a town was a fairly moveable feast and that the underlying structures were flexible. This thesis will approach an analysis of the origins of towns in East Anglia through a ‘bottom-up’ examination of the data, looking at the forms and patterns that the data relating to coinage exhibit. Therefore the next chapter will focus on developing a methodology for exploring East Anglian urbanisation in the period AD 600–950 through analysing the distribution of coins within the landscape. In so doing, the relationship between kingship, coinage and towns will be teased out.

## Chapter 3

# State formation, money and towns: towards a methodology for an archaeological understanding of the role of towns in the economy and the development of the East Anglian state

Several chapters within this thesis are entirely devoted to interrogating the evidence for coinage in the East Anglian landscape, and some readers may be perplexed as to why so much of a regional study on state development and the origins of towns consists of such an examination. The short answer is that in an area and period with sparse and ambiguous early documentary evidence coins provide an insight into the economic and social organisation of the landscape in a way that no other material does. Although other artefact types are examined within this study, such as pottery, the understanding of the socio-political landscape can be read in a very particular way through the use of coinage. In addition, there is a later strong link between minting and urban places which may have its origins in the period from the 5th to the 10th century. This is certainly attested in the historical record by the early 10th century, for instance in Athelstan's decree on restricting minting to *burhs*. It is hence somewhat axiomatic that coinage is one of the mediums for understanding why urban places arose and were flourishing by the late 10th century. It is no coincidence that the use of coinage and the rebirth of towns coincide in general terms in the early medieval period. Both represent the rebirth of the state and an attempt to control the benefits of surplus in the growing agrarian economy of the period. These processes for both towns and coins were not simply linear; much experimentation appears to have taken place. In many ways the East Anglian institutions that were attempting to control the economy were highly innovative and utilised a variety of tools.

The connection between towns and trade appears in some of the earliest Anglo-Saxon documents, the laws of Hlothere and Eadric (AD 672–85), which state:

If a man of Kent buys property in London, he is to have then two of three honest ceorls, or the king's town-reeve as witness.

If then it is attached in the possession of the man in Kent, he is to vouch to warrant that man who sold it to him, at the king's hall in the town, if he knows him and can produce him at that vouching to warranty.



If he cannot do that, he is then to declare at the alter with one of his witnesses or with the king's town-reeve, that he bought that property openly by a public transaction in the town, and he is then to be given back his price.

If, then, he cannot declare that with proper exculpation, he is to relinquish it, and the owner to succeed to it.<sup>1</sup>

Contemporaneously, in Wessex, a related set of statements are made in the laws of Ine (AD 688–94), which suggest implicitly the idea of the town by pointing to its opposite, the countryside, and discussing how trading might be achieved in the absence of a town:

If a trader buys among the people in the countryside, he is to do it before witnesses.<sup>2</sup>

Given that references to towns then increase substantially in later codes, famously in Athelstan's Grately decrees and within Edward the Elder's laws, can we perhaps be confident, as Wormald suggests, that we are in fact seeing the tip of the documentary iceberg with the surviving documents relating to trading in towns and, more specifically in the later Saxon period, *burhs*?<sup>3</sup> The use of controls to encourage and legalise exchange and restrict it to towns thus has a long pedigree in Anglo-Saxon legal writing. The intention may have been in part to provide judicial context and avoid conflict but perhaps a stronger motivation was the need to control exchanges so that they could be appropriately taxed.

The role that kingship and religion played in the development of laws on coinage must not be overlooked and provides a context for the archaeological situation. Coinage was clearly associated with the nature of Christian kingship and this also factors into the idea that to pass laws was a royal Christian activity.<sup>4</sup> This is also notable in the iconography that appears on the coinage; from the earliest use of gold coins the Church and royal persona are clearly and often referred to.<sup>5</sup> The symbolism seen on the coinage was a strong way of communicating the dissemination of Christian ideals, coupled with royal legality and governmental authority, to diverse local audiences,<sup>6</sup> while the royal portraiture on Anglo-Saxon coinage was firmly planted

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<sup>1</sup> D. Whitlock (ed.), *English Historical Documents Vol. 1, c. 500–1042* (London, 1968) (hereafter *EHDi*), 30, 361, 16, 16.1, 16.2, 16.3.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 32, 367, 25.

<sup>3</sup> P. Wormald, *The Making of English Law: King Alfred to the Twelfth Century. Volume I. Legislation and its Limits* (Oxford, 1999).

<sup>4</sup> E. Screen, 'Anglo-Saxon law and numismatics: a reassessment in the light of Patrick Wormald's *The Making of English Law*', *BNJ* 77 (2007), 150–72.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* and also A. Gannon, *The Iconography of Early Anglo-Saxon Coinage: Sixth to Eighth Centuries* (Oxford, 2003).

<sup>6</sup> The Carolingian use of symbols is explored in I. Garispzanov, 'Metamorphoses of the early medieval *signum* of a ruler in the Carolingian world', *Early Medieval Europe* 14:4 (2006), 419–64.

within a historical tradition of both imperial and Christian authority; a message of kingly legitimacy linked to God was likely to have been understood by most of the population in some form.<sup>7</sup>

Within the legal documents of the 8th, 9th and 10th centuries coinage is often referred to as *Feoh*, or *feorm*. The term appears to have been interchangeable with tribute and with the concept of property and is sometimes specifically used to discuss cattle as property.<sup>8</sup> The use of the term may therefore suggest that the royal intention was to control the exchange of any property, *feorm* thus being defined in legal terms as a royal prerogative.<sup>9</sup> Defining all exchange as potentially belonging in whole or in part to the king was a way of creating a taxable situation without the need to define the exact amount owed to the state. The jurisdictional aspect and the possibility of legal judgement no doubt also provided another opportunity to extract fines and thus bolster revenue. All these connections can be seen in a law of Edmund (AD 939–46) stating:

And no-one shall make a purchase or receive strange cattle unless he has as witness the high-reeve, or the priest, or the treasurer, or town-reeve.<sup>10</sup>

The coin data used here derives almost entirely from the labours of metal-detector users and has been recorded through liaison schemes by archaeologists, numismatists and historians. Much of the information has come from the Early Medieval Coin Corpus (EMC) supplied online by the Fitzwilliam Museum.<sup>11</sup> In other instances, data has derived from the Historic Environment Record or Sites and Monuments Record for either Norfolk or Suffolk. All these sources are dynamic and constantly being updated. More discoveries, both in terms of individual finds and sites, have been made since the compilation of the database used here was completed; where these have come to the attention of the author they have been incorporated, but a new set of searches has not been made. This interpretation therefore represents a ‘snapshot’ of the state of local knowledge in early 2008.

Metal-detecting is often undertaken in an unsystematic manner and there are problems and biases in the data as collected. In particular, the number of specific metal-detecting events needs to be examined geographically in order to decide whether an artefact distribution has interpretative validity or whether it merely represents where metal-detecting has taken place. Gurney’s work on the distribution of metal-detected find-spots within Norfolk points to some interesting patterns which illustrate that care must be exercised when interpreting distributions

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<sup>7</sup> Screen, ‘Law and numismatics’, 157.

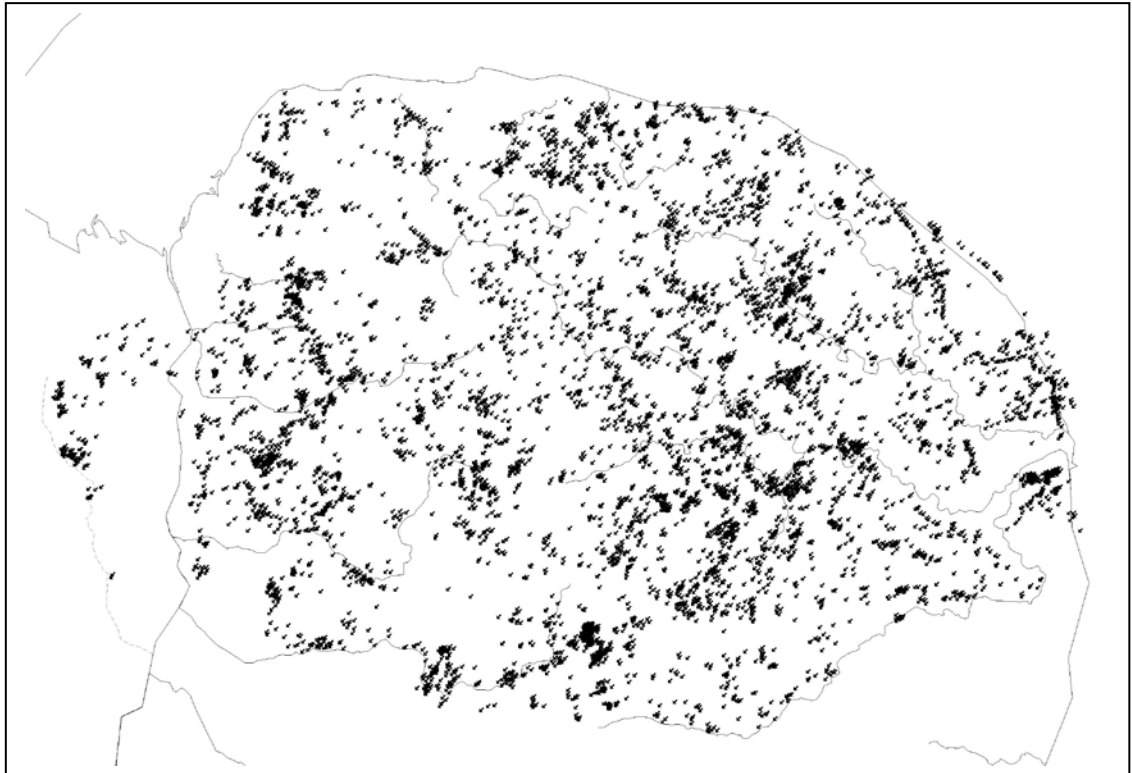
<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> *EHDi*, 38, 392.

<sup>11</sup> EMC: <http://www-cm.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/emc/> (accessed 4 November 2009).

of metalwork within the county.<sup>12</sup> He discusses the example of metal-detected coins from the 7th to late 8th century, suggesting that, by and large, the distribution of these coins mirrors the distribution of metal-detecting events across Norfolk. That picture has subsequently changed a great deal. The data Gurney used at the end of 1997 consisted of around 1,250 recorded events on the Norfolk Historic Environment Record (NHER) relating to metal-detector use. Now there are over 9,000 events or instances of the same activity. In the analysis of the silver coinage from the 7th and 8th centuries related below, the distribution of the coinage is compared to the record of known metal-detecting ‘events’ recorded on the NHER (see Fig. 10). It can clearly be demonstrated that the coinage finds are not present in all the places where metal-detecting has been common, but are restricted instead to a proportion of the places which have recorded detecting events. Ulmschneider has demonstrated the value of metal-detected information for studying early medieval central places and has shown that there are problems in correlating it with excavated sites.<sup>13</sup>



**Fig. 10.** Plot of metal-detecting ‘events’ recorded within the NHER.

The distribution of metal-detected coinage must also be considered against other factors, such as archaeological fieldwork and the pattern and rough chronology of Anglo-Saxon place-names, in order to attempt to qualify the inherent skewed nature of the data. Perhaps most significantly, however, there is a clear bias within the landscape towards arable fields, which

<sup>12</sup> Gurney, ‘Metal-detecting in Norfolk’.

<sup>13</sup> Ulmschneider, *Markets, Minsters, and Metal-Detectors*, 107.

determines where metal-detecting can be carried out; and, owing to the lack of arable fields within modern urban agglomerations, there are few detected finds from these places. Ironically, as far as the aims of this thesis are concerned, the places most likely to produce concentrated Middle Saxon coinage assemblages through metal-detection are rural and thus probably represent the failed, or at least the shorter-lived, centres where coin-related transactions were carried out. Urban or town situations will by definition fail to produce such evidence, although, as discussed in later chapters of this thesis, they provide other insights into the ways that various early medieval settlements articulated. It is also worth pointing out that material collected by metal-detection lacks a detailed archaeological context, apart from its geographical position and its relationship with other materials recovered from the immediate vicinity or from the area. It is therefore unknown what types of site or feature (e.g., structure, pit or ditch) the finds derive from, and we are left with the geographical position to help us in achieving an understanding of the finds' potential meaning.<sup>14</sup> An attempt to understand the landscape context of coin finds detailed in this chapter is the subject of Chapter 8.

In Norfolk and Suffolk the relationship between metal-detector users and archaeologists has been developed since the 1970s, and the corpus of material from both counties is now considerable. A review of recent annual reports on the results of the Portable Antiquities Scheme shows that Norfolk accounts for a third of the artefacts nationally recorded through the scheme. Suffolk contributes around one-sixth of the national total.<sup>15</sup>

Within Norfolk, then, and to a lesser extent Suffolk, Lincolnshire and (least of all) Cambridgeshire, the landscape is well, though problematically, sampled in terms of reported metal-detected finds and, in specific cases, ceramics. Many of the Norfolk detectorists spot Ipswich ware in the ploughzone while carrying out metal-detecting. In addition, there are several systematic fieldwalking surveys, of various sizes, from Norfolk and Suffolk, which provide further contextual information in certain areas. The largest of these is Silvester's work on the Norfolk Fenland, but there are also Rogerson's surveys of Barton Bendish and Fransham parishes, Davison's studies of a number of parishes (most notably Hales, Heckingham and Loddon), Wade-Martins' investigation of the Launditch Hundred and Lawson and Wade's study of Witton parish. In Suffolk, there is Newman's work on the Sutton Hoo environs survey.<sup>16</sup> These systematic surveys, in conjunction with more casually collected information, provide a largely complete coverage of Norfolk with a lesser sample for the adjacent counties. Cambridgeshire also now possesses a useful dataset but this tends to be biased towards coins, as

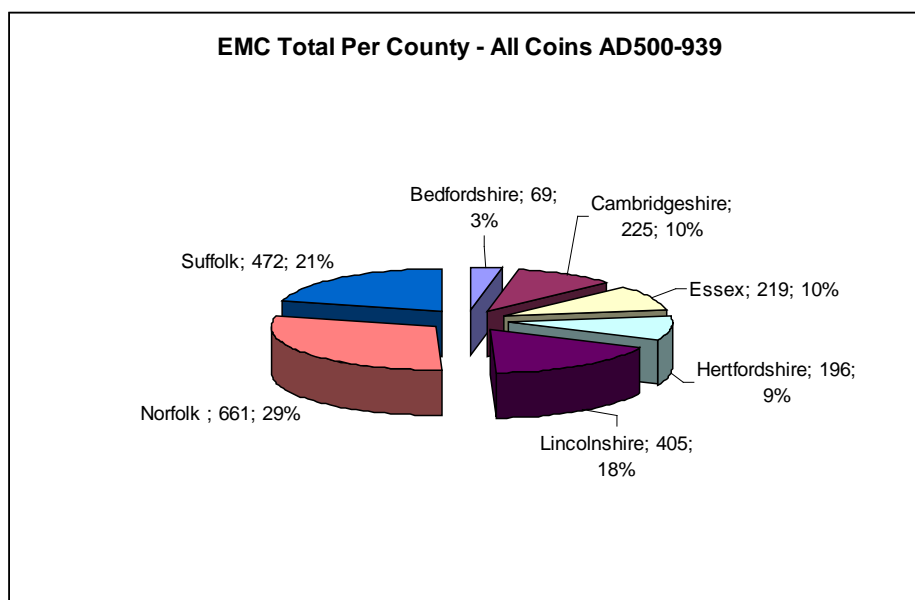
<sup>14</sup> Hutcheson, *Later Iron Age Norfolk*, 36–7.

<sup>15</sup> Portable Antiquities Scheme Annual reports 1998–9 and 2000–1.

<sup>16</sup> R. Silvester, *The Fenland Project, No. 3: Norfolk Survey, Marshland & Nar Valley* (East Anglian Archaeology. 45, 1988), 158.; A. Rogerson, *Fransham: An Archaeological and Historical Study of a Parish on the Norfolk Boulder Clay*. (Unpublished doctoral thesis. UEA, 1995).; A. Davison *The Evolution of Settlement in Three Parishes in South-East Norfolk*. (East Anglian Archaeology 49, 1990).; P. Wade-Martins, *Village Sites in the Launditch Hundred* (East Anglian Archaeology 10, 1980).

the main liaison for metal-detectorists there has until recently been the Coins and Medals Department of the Fitzwilliam Museum.<sup>17</sup> A search of the EMC database for coins dating between AD 500 and 900 within the counties around the Wash produced the results detailed in Fig. 11.

Coinage is viewed in the literature as a crucial source of information for understanding the development of both the state and urban structures.<sup>18</sup> However, the impetus or motivation for the issuing of coins within different periods remains a matter of heated debate, with little consensus particularly between pre-classical scholars and those studying the classical and medieval periods. The study of coinage has developed independently for different periods and often with little anthropological understanding,<sup>19</sup> and in order to understand the relationships between town and hinterland, or state control and the landscape, it is necessary to formulate a clear model of the interrelations between production, exchange and consumption, and of the nature of the social forms and state mechanisms that structure these.<sup>20</sup>



**Fig. 11.** Chart illustrating the proportion of coin finds per county in the East of England (including Lincolnshire).

Coins dating from between c.675 and 1065 are now a relatively common find from the East Anglian landscape and have the advantage over other forms of archaeologically recovered data in being relatively well understood. Dates of production and loss (although it will be argued that their use is a problematic concept when discussing this period) are often well discussed in the

<sup>17</sup> See EMC: <http://www-cm.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/emc/>.

<sup>18</sup> Perring, *Town and Country*; although the role of coinage has been downplayed by Hodges in *Dark Age Economics*.

<sup>19</sup> M. Whyman and D. Perring, 'Classes of evidence and their potential', in Perring, *Town and country*, 34–64, see p. 51.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

specialist numismatic literature, with, in many cases, particularly later in the period, their place of production also identifiable. During the 7th to 11th centuries (and later) coin production in England was closely associated with towns: the link between the development of complex coinage and urbanisation is well established. *Sceattas* in particular have both distinctive designs and distributions which allow for some correlation between the distribution pattern and the extent of an issuing authority's territory.<sup>21</sup> This is not an exact science, as will be discussed later; in particular, there is a danger in examining the distribution of the rarer forms of *sceatta* as the numbers involved are so small that statistics become invalidated.

The switch from gold to silver coinage in the later 7th century marks an important juncture that has been interpreted in a variety of ways. In historiographic terms it is a point in the development of post-Roman Europe that is associated with other significant changes, such as the redevelopment of towns, and with such concomitant institutions as kingship, lordship, the Church and feudalism.<sup>22</sup> Most famously, Pirenne argued that this change marked the overthrow of an essentially Roman (latterly Byzantine) monetary system by that of Islam.<sup>23</sup> This, for Pirenne, marked the moment between the classical and medieval worlds. The concern of this chapter is not the general European economic system and explanations for its alteration or demise, however, but the more mundane question of what a relatively sudden appearance of silver coins within the East Anglian region during the 7th and 8th centuries might represent. As will be explored below, from the end of the ubiquitous use of Roman coinage through to the appearance of the first silver coins at the end of the 7th century the number of coins from the whole of the region amounts to a handful: 34 post-Roman and pre-AD 675 coins, discounting those found in hoards. This compares with around 643 coins of Middle Saxon date (c. AD 675–850). It is arguable that the introduction of silver units represents a massive change in the way social relations were conducted.

### **What were coins used for?**

Blackburn has recently commented on the nature of coin use and pointed out that more coin appears to have been in circulation during the 8th century than at any other point in the post-Roman period prior to the 12th century. He goes on to suggest, following Metcalf, that the subsequent relative rarity of late-8th- and 9th-century coin finds reflects a general European contraction in the silver supply:<sup>24</sup> therefore, a penny in the 9th century may have been worth

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., note 2, 52.

<sup>22</sup> Hodges, *The Anglo-Saxon Achievement*; Verhulst, *The Carolingian Economy*.

<sup>23</sup> Pirenne *Mohammed and Charlemagne*, 107–17; see also Hodges and Whitehead, *Mohammed, Charlemagne*, 170–76, and P. Grierson and M. Blackburn, *Medieval European Coinage Vol. 1 – The Early Middle Ages (5th–10th centuries)* (Cambridge, 1986) (hereafter *MECi*), 1–2.

<sup>24</sup> Blackburn, “‘Productive’ sites”, 20–36; D.M. Metcalf, ‘Monetary expansion and recession: interpreting the distribution patterns in 7th- and 8th-century coins’, in J. Casey and R. Reece (eds), *Coins and the Archaeologist* (Oxford, BAR Brit. Ser. 4, 1974), 206–23.

more than a *sceatta* from, say, the middle of the 8th century.<sup>25</sup> The inference that is read into the late-8th-century collapse is that it indicates a process of breakdown in the nascent English and Western European ‘economy’ which resulted in a less market-orientated approach to commerce.<sup>26</sup> In addition, Blackburn argues that the subsequent relative rarity of coins in the later 8th and 9th centuries leads to a collapse in confidence in the medium of coinage, rather than deflation as in later periods. Conversely, it can be argued that this relative rarity marks a reform in the standards and perhaps the use of coinage in this period. This reform coinage was effectively, therefore, part of the process of greater economic complexity and the increasing reach of kingship and the mechanisms of the state. The fact that this growth in the rest of the economy and in state complexity was linked to fewer coins in circulation militates against the concept of widespread markets. A closer and more effective hold on the production of coinage would be an important pillar of state control of trade and this intensification, somewhat counter-intuitively, may have resulted in fewer but more standardised coins being circulated.

Some numismatists specialising in early medieval coinage see patterns of coin loss as a direct reflection of commercial activity. Metcalf, for instance, asserts that coinage in the landscape during the 8th century represents stray loss and indicates an integrated monetary economy.<sup>27</sup> Archaeologists also often use the concept of the market when explaining concentrations of coin loss, but do not define what they mean by such an entity.<sup>28</sup> Coins in the landscape may represent other activities apart from cash commerce, such as tax collection, potentially reflecting (to stretch the economic analogies) a command rather than a demand economy. If that were the case it could be that ‘productive’ sites rich in coin finds in East Anglia are not all markets, although it is certainly true that a number may have been, but were rather estate or administrative centres for the collection of obligations. Trade at this time – such that can be seen – is often, similarly, poorly defined. Much trade may still have been confined to direct transactions, as is suggested in Charlemagne’s letter to Offa referring to a trade in coats and black stone, for instance; such trade was in fact gift-exchange and was part of the symbolism of creating political and military obligations.<sup>29</sup> The modern ‘economic’ historian may have a great deal to contribute in this case to correct the unproblematic manner in which some numismatists, particularly, but also archaeologists, have conceptualised the social use of coin in the early medieval period. For instance, Reed has investigated the actual prevalence of a

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.; this view mirrors to some extent that of Pirenne (*Mohammed and Charlemagne* and the early chapters of *Medieval Cities*); later reworked by Hodges and Whitehouse, *Mohammed, Charlemagne*.

<sup>27</sup> M. Metcalf, ‘Coins from *wics*’, in Hill and Cowie, *Wics*, 50–53, esp. p. 50.

<sup>28</sup> See, for example, K. Ulmschneider and T. Pestell, ‘Introduction: early markets and “productive” sites’, in Pestell and Ulmschneider, *Markets*, 1–10.

<sup>29</sup> *EHDi*, no. 197, 781–2.

money economy in 19th-century rural England, effectively demonstrating that a huge proportion of economic relationships did not involve cash exchanges.<sup>30</sup>

Within the literature written by numismatic scholars specialising in the early medieval period there is also something of a difference of opinion on the nature of early money. As long ago as the 1950s Grierson made a strong case for the embedded aspect of wealth in the Anglo-Saxon *weltanschauung*.<sup>31</sup> In contrast, as recently as 2003 Blackburn has written about the use of *sceatta* coinage with a tacit unproblematic supposition that these coins were used in a cash-based market-exchange system.<sup>32</sup> Clearly, for Blackburn, if not for most numismatic scholars of the period, the formalist philosophical foundations of the study are so implicitly obvious and based on ‘common sense’ that there is no need to discuss the possibility that money, as a concept, may have been different in the past.

Money *is* a concept, however, and coins are artefacts, a distinction that is not often discussed in the study of this period. Coinage may not therefore have been money in a modern sense. What the ‘biography’ of these artefacts was during this period is not as clear as it is often presented as being.<sup>33</sup> Clearly they were used for transactions, but what type of transaction? This distinction is important in the implications that it has for the type of society reflected in the distribution of the coinage. The distribution that we can see in East Anglia suggests that coinage was not being used exclusively for long-distance trade. Hodges, rightly in my view, has suggested that *sceattas* were ‘primitive money’, following from Polanyi’s definition of ‘special-purpose’ money, regarding them as primarily for long-distance trade.<sup>34</sup> At that time the distribution was not as well understood as now, and seemed to be concentrated predominantly within *wics*. This is still the case with certain issues, such as the H series, which is almost exclusively found at *Hamwic*.<sup>35</sup> However, the lack of Series H from the rest of Wessex may be a consequence of sampling bias, and the East Anglian distribution strongly suggests that coinage was used in many different locations and therefore was not specific to long-distance trade. The hypothesis presented here is that many of these sites were located at important or significant parts of the tenorial landscape: places, it is postulated, where obligations were due. Trade, represented by the coinage, was therefore what can be termed socially embedded, in that it was

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<sup>30</sup> M. Reed, “‘Gnawing it out’: a new look at economic relations in nineteenth-century rural England”, *Rural History* 1:1 (1990) 83–94.

<sup>31</sup> Grierson, ‘Commerce in the Dark Ages’, 123–40.

<sup>32</sup> Blackburn, “‘Productive’ Sites”, 23.

<sup>33</sup> For a discussion of the concept of artefact biographies see I. Kopytoff, ‘The cultural biography of things: commoditization as process’, in A. Appadurai (ed.), *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge, 1986), 64–91.

<sup>34</sup> Hodges, *Dark Age Economics*, 105–12; K. Polanyi, ‘The economy as instituted process’, in K. Polanyi, C. Arensburg and H.W. Pearson (eds), *Trade and Markets in Early Empires* (Glencoe, IL, 1957), 243–70.

<sup>35</sup> M. Metcalf, *Thrymsas and Sceattas in the Ashmolean Museum Oxford*, vol. 3 (Oxford, 1994) (hereafter *T&Siii*), 321–2.



specifically a medium for facilitating taxation and does not represent cash exchanges in an open market.

Scholars studying prehistoric British coinage are also divided on the meaning of coin production and use. The argument is largely between a formalist monetary view as expounded by, among many others, Van Arsdell, and the more substantivist view articulated by, for instance, Haselgrove, which sees coinage embedded in the social obligations between elites.<sup>36</sup> Haselgrove makes the point that too few numismatists and archaeologists studying the Iron Age are interested in why coinage was produced, what it was used for and what it might tell us about the social relations of that period; particularly given that within neither the Greek world nor the Roman Republic was the primary purpose of minting coinage to provide a medium of exchange.<sup>37</sup> Van Arsdell counters that typology, metallurgy and metrology all demonstrate that coins were money. He suggests that Iron Age coins were produced by specialised mints under centralised control, and must have been used as a generalised medium for exchange because they were carefully manufactured to specific standards and to a known intrinsic value. Further, they were marked so that the intrinsic value could be judged by sight, and were used by the population at large, as illustrated by the fact that they were counterfeited.<sup>38</sup> Nash, taking a different view, has suggested that Iron Age inscribed dynastic coinage may have been used to fulfil obligations of clientage, which she sees as an effective prototype for tax.<sup>39</sup> She makes this distinction for a specific sub-group of Iron Age coinage but it is probably reasonable to extend this view to suggest that all coinage in the Iron Age was utilised in the payment of specific types of obligations, such as judicial payments, dowry and tribute.

The debate between substantivist and formalist views of coinage during this period has a long and distinguished history.<sup>40</sup> I would argue that a substantivist conceptualisation of the archaeological evidence fits better with historical interpretations. Following on from this line of thought, and again considering their distribution, it is equally possible that *sceattas* were primarily utilised in the payment of obligations. For instance, there may be a flow of coinage from the king and his thegns to retainers as compensation for military service. This would explain their distribution in *wics* and estate centres, as these are locations where groups may gather for a variety of reasons. This potentially helps further to illuminate the development of putative simple markets as a method of converting coins back into tangible wealth; this conversion may have been undertaken at particular locations and some of these are now being

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<sup>36</sup> R.D. Van Arsdell, *Celtic Coinage of Britain* (London, 1989); C. Haselgrove, *Iron Age Coinage of South-East England: The Archaeological Context* (Oxford, BAR Brit. Ser. 174, 1987).

<sup>37</sup> C. Haselgrove, 'Iron Age coins and archaeology', in M. Mays (ed.), *Celtic Coinage: Britain and Beyond: The 11th Oxford Symposium on Coinage and Monetary History* (Oxford, BAR Brit. Ser. 222, 1992), 123–38, esp. pp. 123–4.

<sup>38</sup> R.D. Van Arsdell, 'Money supply and credit in Iron Age Britain', in Mays, *Celtic Coinage*, 139–50.

<sup>39</sup> D.E.M. Nash, *Coinage in the Celtic World* (London, 1987), 40.

<sup>40</sup> Naylor, *An Archaeology of Trade*, 3–10.

rediscovered as ‘productive’ sites. Further, it is plausible that these locations for both the conversion and collection of wealth through obligations are tied in with territorial divisions, which can be thought of as ‘multiple estates’. So we are not seeing a monetised economy reflected at ‘productive’ sites, but rather a part of the agrarian economy that is specifically turning goods into coin for the specific purpose of paying tax and fulfilling other types of obligation. The suggestion is that ‘productive’ sites were the central place for a multiple estate or *sokeland*, as some of these estates seem to have become by the 11th century.<sup>41</sup> ‘Productive sites and *wics* were also locations where industrial production was undertaken. If enough coinage was distributed by the king and other significant holders of obligation though payment for additional military services, the coin would eventually begin to find its way back to the state as tax payments. Charles-Edwards has discussed the various mechanisms that early medieval kings used to collect wealth and draws a possible distinction between tribute and food renders. Prior to around AD 700 there is every likelihood that both tribute and food renders were collected in the traditional manner, with, in the case of renders, the royal household travelling to consume them, or, in the case of tribute, the cattle or precious goods being brought to a point of collection.<sup>42</sup> As the kingdom grows in size the system of collection becomes more complex and it becomes desirable to convert, for instance, the cattle and possibly some of the render into coin. This in turn made the use of the coin by the state for military and political purposes more possible. We can assume that a relatively large amount of *sceattas* would be required for this system to work effectively.<sup>43</sup> How many were actually in circulation, however, remains a matter of guesswork.

Wood, in her exploration of medieval economic thought, explores how the ancients and the people of the medieval period may have conceptualised money. Her starting point is Aristotle’s writings on the subject, in which he theorises on the dual nature of money. In his *Ethics* he provides an explanation as to why money is necessary: essentially, it provides a medium through which all things can be provided with a standard value. Interestingly, from the perspective of the current study, he also makes a passing note that the Greek words for law, *nomos*, and for money, *nomisma*, share a common etymology.<sup>44</sup> In his *Politics*, he makes a connection between the means of exchange and the *polis*, or city state. He was interested in the

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<sup>41</sup> Hadley, ‘Multiple estates’, 3–15; *idem*, *The Vikings in England*, 84–92.

<sup>42</sup> T. Charles-Edwards, ‘Early medieval kingships in the British Isles’, in S. Bassett (ed.), *The Origins of Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms* (Leicester, 1989), 28–39.

<sup>43</sup> Little has been written recently on the possible size of the Anglo-Saxon currency in the 8th century; D.M. Metcalf, in ‘How large was the Anglo-Saxon currency?’, *Economic History Review* 18:3 (1965), 475–82, considers the problem from the perspective of estimations of later medieval coin numbers but requires significant assumptions to be made, particularly in estimates of die numbers; more recently, G. Williams has also tried to address this issue for early gold coinage but uses historical and archaeological arguments rather than attempting to estimate die numbers: ‘The circulation and function of coinage in conversion-period England, c. AD 580–675’, in B. Cook and G. Williams (eds), *Coinage and History in the North Sea World c. 500–1250* (London, 2006), 145–96.

<sup>44</sup> D. Wood, *Medieval Economic Thought* (Cambridge, 2002), 71–2.

stages through which a society developed – from household, to village and city – and how at these various stages new means of exchange were required. He identified the significant change as appearing to come at the transition between household and village economic life. Barter became a potent but limited means of exchange and opened the way for more universal exchange.<sup>45</sup> He formulated a paradox at the heart of the concept of money: is it an artificial measure of the value of commodities provided with legal status by the power of the state, or is it an intrinsic system with a value of its own provided through the nature of the medium?<sup>46</sup> These two differing views resonated throughout the Middle Ages and are worthy of historical discussion even today.

This difference between the standard valuation, as opposed to the actual use of coinage, can be construed within the laws of Æthelbert, king of Kent (written c.602–3), which provide a statement on the value of a number of transgressions, mostly described in shillings: ‘If anyone kills a man on the king’s estate, he is to pay 50 shillings compensation.’<sup>47</sup> Or: ‘If hair-pulling occur, 50 *sceattas* (are to be paid) as compensation.’<sup>48</sup> As the silver coinage representing a *sceatta* or penny did not exist until around eighty years after this code was written, clearly the standard was being utilised before the actual circulation and exchange of coinage. The pre-coinage nature of the payment system at this time is effectively articulated through in-kind but also symbolic payments, with the term *lord-ring* being used to describe a medium of payment.<sup>49</sup> Whether this was in bullion according to a set of standards is unknown, but the possession and gift of rings does seem to be strongly associated with early kingship. These compensations, fines, *wergilds* and bride-prices appear in some cases also to have been paid in bullion measured in *scillings*, and this may be connected with rings and their given value.

Indeed, so little gold coinage (equating roughly here to a shilling) existed at the time that it seems highly unlikely that anyone, with the possible exception of a member of a royal house or perhaps senior members of the Church, would be able to accumulate the necessary quantity of gold coinage to make such a payment. The standard valuation being articulated must therefore have been understood in terms of either bullion or other values, such as, for instance, cattle, sheep or corn. By the time of the laws of Hlothre and Eadric of Kent (c.673–85) the price payable for taking a nobleman’s life, and that of a freeman, described as *wergild*, had inflated to 300 and 100 shillings respectively.<sup>50</sup> These are undoubtedly colossal sums and may in fact be what coinage was for in this period.

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 72.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 73.

<sup>47</sup> *EHDi*, no. 29:5, 357.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., no. 29:33, 359.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., no. 6, 357.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 30:1 & 3, 360.

With the laws of Ine, king of the West Saxons (written c.688–94), we get a hint that *wergild* was not only the price for killing an individual according to their value or rank, but may actually in some cases have reflected the individual's taxable value: 'a king's geneat [possibly a member of the royal family or household], if his wergild is 1200 shillings, may, if he is communicant, swear for 60 hides.'<sup>51</sup> This passage suggests a connection between *wergild*, hidage and taxation by the late 7th century. The term communicant here is also interesting, perhaps providing an indication as to the legal power and infiltration of the Church into royal affairs already by the end of the 7th century. A similar insight is provided by another of Ine's laws, which states: 'A child is to be baptized within 30 days; if not, 30 shillings compensation is to be paid.'<sup>52</sup> We know so little about taxation within the period that it is difficult to be certain, but it seems that some of these judicial payments must have accumulated large quantities of obligation, if not actual cash. Given the large amounts involved in some judicial fines, the possibility of a cash payment seems unlikely; imbursement may instead have been made through landholdings or other property being defaulted, perhaps even by the convicted individual becoming a slave. The sums here seem large and, as is discussed below, some historians believe these to be a straightforward and unproblematic reflection of the contemporary reality. Here, however, it is suggested that the laws may be providing maximum, extremely punitive, and thus highly inflated values for fines. Potentially the deterrent value of these sums was to some extent useful, and they may also have provided a basis for judicial plea-bargaining that perhaps in reality would have resulted in much smaller fines being imposed.

By the 10th century and the Hundred Ordinance (AD 939–c.961) there is a clear difference in the level of fines being levied: sums of thirty pence and sixty pence were exacted for a second offence of neglecting or opposing the decision of the hundred, with the fines payable to the hundred (presumably the person of the king) and to the lord. A third infraction resulted in a steep rise to one pound, and the fourth in forfeiture of all property.<sup>53</sup> It seems that these fines must be aimed at the wealthiest level of society.

These early statements of law make the connection between royal authority and value specifically.<sup>54</sup> There is, it would seem, a strong connection between the practice of justice and the setting of standard values which may later correlate directly with the creation and the use of coinage. There may have been a longstanding and perhaps even semi-spiritual relationship between the idea of coinage and royal authority which can, in the case of some early gold coinage and pseudo-coinage such as bracteates, be in turn related to iconography and its use in social discourses at, for example, a magical and amulitic level.<sup>55</sup> The role of the king in gift-

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 32:19, 366.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 32:2, 364.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 39, 3 & 3.1, 394.

<sup>54</sup> For a complete set of laws referring to coins see Screen, 'Law and numismatics', appendix 1.

<sup>55</sup> Williams, 'The circulation and function of coinage'; see also Gannon, *Iconography*.

giving and justice seems to form a coherent backdrop for the development of coinage in these terms, and with the other major economic and social changes taking place in the 7th and 8th centuries the production of coinage intensified to fulfil other needs. By extension, the use of the coinage represents a development of its earlier social role, and we can make a probable connection between roles such as tribute and payment for some military obligation now transferable into this new and easily used medium of exchange. The role of the Church in these developments should not be underestimated, and the relationship between the established Church and dynastic developments in royal houses is a topic which has been discussed elsewhere:<sup>56</sup> the same social elite was providing both members of the royal houses and leadership of the Church.

The relationship between Church and state in the administrative and economic innovations of the 7th and 8th centuries, however, is one that has been often alluded to but not often discussed in depth. Hodges briefly points out the difference between the Continental and the Anglo-Saxon Churches and suggests that the latter was more embedded within secular society.<sup>57</sup> This may be further demonstrated by the pairing of ecclesiastical and secular taxation within the period. Stenton suggests that a conjunction between Church and state finances can be demonstrated within an ordinance of King Æthelstan which orders administrators to monitor that the Church receive its plough-alms, *cyrlic-sceat* and *sawol-sceat*; these later become the church-scot and soul-scot. Soul-scot may have been an earlier custom, he postulates, later adapted to Christian use. By the 11th century the term had become synonymous with all property devoted by a testator to the Church and, crucially, represents a voluntary gift. Church-scot and plough-alms, in contrast, were taxes imposed by authority which could represent a substantial burden. Ine's laws dictate that the sums shall be payable at Martinmas and that a defaulter shall be fined sixty shillings, plus twelve times the original sum payable to the king. These were payments made through labour or in food/goods.<sup>58</sup> However, they may, in a more monetised time and place, have been commuted into payment in coin and we must assume that this is the case in Eastern England where, compared with Wessex and south Mercia, there was in the 8th century much more coin loss.

Later, tithe also became a legal obligation. As early as AD 796, at the legatine council of *Clovesho*, the secular authorities were enjoined to make the payment of tithe an obligation for all men (presumably all freemen), although there is no surviving evidence that the injunction was turned into law.<sup>59</sup> It may be worth considering that tithe obligation may have been law in some Anglo-Saxon kingdoms at this time, but that these laws do not now survive, in which case

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<sup>56</sup> J. Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society* (Oxford, 2005).

<sup>57</sup> R. Hodges, 'Society, power and the first English Industrial Revolution', in R. Hodges, *Goodbye to the Vikings? Re-reading Early Medieval Archaeology* (London, 2006), 165.

<sup>58</sup> Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 153–5.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 155.

the council may have been taking a lead from an existing example of progressive and innovative practice and attempting to influence less enlightened kingdoms. Tithe was within the Mosaic law of Alfred but does not appear to have been enforced.<sup>60</sup>

As early as Æthelberht's (Kent, ?AD 602–3) Laws we can see the Church being factored into the legal and administrative system with the statement:

The property of God and the Church (is to be paid for) with a twelve-fold compensation; a bishop's property with an eleven-fold compensation; a priest's property with a nine-fold compensation; a deacon's property with a six-fold compensation; a cleric's property with a three-fold compensation; the peace of the Church with a two-fold compensation; the peace of a meeting with a two-fold compensation.<sup>61</sup>

In the reign of Wihtred (Kent, r. AD 690–725) a simple statement exempting the Church from taxation is made.<sup>62</sup> Many of the following statements in his laws also concern the Church and its rights, which seem to be parallel to those of the king, thus demonstrating the influence and power of the Church by this time in matters of state. It seems to be no accident that from the latter decades of the 7th century through to the later 8th century both the Church and the economy were growing, with numerous monastic houses clearly being established.<sup>63</sup> Blair argues that these two aspects are intimately linked and suggests that the establishment of monastic houses may have been one of the driving factors behind the changes in the economic basis of Anglo-Saxon kingdoms.<sup>64</sup>

Campbell, in his discussion of the Sutton Hoo discovery's impact on the study of Anglo-Saxon history, examines the concepts of value and the worth of both coinage and rich objects.<sup>65</sup> In this he follows Wallace-Hadrill's argument – that there is no reason to suppose the individual within Mound 1 at Sutton Hoo was a member of the royal family but may rather have been a retainer or some kind of official – to some extent.<sup>66</sup> Furthermore, Campbell then makes a connection between the archaeologically attestable 'wealth' of the tomb and treasures described in the contemporary literature of the period. His conclusion, if correct, is of huge significance to both the study of archaeology and the interpretation of source material from this period.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> *EHDi*, no. 1, 357.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., no. 1, 362.

<sup>63</sup> Blair, *The Church*, 84.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., chapter 2.

<sup>65</sup> J. Campbell, 'The impact of the Sutton Hoo discovery', in J. Campbell, *The Anglo-Saxon State* (London, 2000), 55–83.

<sup>66</sup> J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, 'The graves of kings: an historical note on some archaeological evidence' (1960 originally), reprinted in J.M Wallace-Hadrill, *Early Medieval History* (Oxford, 1980), 39–59.

<sup>67</sup> Campbell, 'The impact of the Sutton Hoo discovery', 55-83..

Potentially hyperbolic claims within the documentary sources need to be compared with the known archaeological situation and the difference between these may then effectively be interpreted as a sampling or resolution problem: the massive sums discussed within the contemporary and slightly later documentary literature bear no resemblance to the archaeological reality. Campbell's argument, that much more wealth was in circulation than becomes incorporated within the archaeological record, perhaps now does not stand up in the light of the findings that have been accrued through metal-detecting when compared to other periods. For example, Alfred's will from the 880s describes vast wealth, mentioning a sum of around £2,000, or four-fifths of a ton, in silver. If the calculations of what proportion a penny was of a pound hold true then this was the equivalent of 486,000 pennies.<sup>68</sup> Putting these figures in some sort of archaeological context, there are now some 2,500 known *sceatta* finds from England, not including hoards. As discussed, little statistical analysis has been undertaken to examine what this means in terms of the numbers of coins circulating at any point during the period being examined here; Metcalf's work on the size of the currency is now more than 40 years old.<sup>69</sup> In that paper he utilises a formula to calculate the numbers of circulating coins which makes an assumption that die-duplicates can be calculated against a known sample total to provide the total original number of dies. Using mint records from the 13th and 14th centuries, he then correlates this number with the numbers of coins produced from a die during the high medieval period to make an estimate of the numbers of coins produced during the Anglo-Saxon period. In the 14th century a die was used to produce as many as 10,000 coins. By extrapolation he therefore calculates that there were as many as a million *Pada*-type *sceattas* and 2.5 to 3 million primary period *sceattas*. In Offa's reign he estimates a colossal 10 to 30 million coins.<sup>70</sup> Metcalf clearly overestimates the amount of coinage circulating during the latter part of the 8th century, as can now be established given the decline in the numbers of later 8<sup>th</sup> century pennies compared to the numbers of *sceattas* that can be seen in the archaeological record; this is discussed in detail in Chapter 7. One of the major problems with this methodology is the process of identifying die-duplicates, which does not always seem to be a straightforward or objective process. Clearly, further study is required to reinvestigate the possibility of using die-links in determining actual numbers.

The extent that hyperbole was involved in the contemporary discussion of wealth, particularly as it related to kings, in the literature of the early Middle Ages, is difficult to know; certainly, the sources are very difficult to correlate with the archaeological record. If a straight correlation between a shilling, as described in the early laws, and a gold solidus is made then vast numbers of these items might be expected within the archaeological record. The lowest fine

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<sup>68</sup> Maddicott, 'The wealth of King Alfred'.

<sup>69</sup> Metcalf, 'How large was the Anglo-Saxon currency?'.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

in the law code of Æthelberht for the nail of a toe is half a shilling or ten pennies; the value of a slave is suggested at between fifty and seventy shillings; the value of the fine for stealing an ewe with lamb described as worth one shilling.<sup>71</sup> Thus the coins from the Sutton Hoo purse would not have been enough to buy a single slave.<sup>72</sup> There does seem to be a consensus between many historians and numismatists that the archaeological record is woefully inadequate for understanding the scale of the economy during the period. But where does this leave us in our attempt to understand the meaning of the concentration and distribution of coinage during the period? It remains problematic that there are few clear archaeological indicators of the accumulation of vast wealth in any hands at the time.

The following chapters will describe where coinage is being found now, and will draw straightforward geographical inferences from the locations. The argument, that bias makes the archaeological record unusable, is ultimately a counsel of despair and falls into the realms of belief: there is no evidence to gauge how representative the archaeological record may or may not be for this or any other period. Rather it is contingent on archaeologists to attempt to recognise the potential bias in the archaeological 'record' and suggest mechanisms through which it can be connected to the historical record.

### **Tribute and taxation: historical evidence**

Domesday Book appears to make a connection between taxation or geld, landholding and military service. The context of the survey seems to have been the threat of imminent Scandinavian invasion and the work was undertaken in order to provide for a fighting force of 60,000 knights.<sup>73</sup> However, Domesday Book is a late addition to the corpus of sources we have for the Anglo-Saxon period and it might be argued that it cannot therefore be utilised for understanding of the situation 400 years prior to its compilation. Nevertheless, the connection between the military and the fiscal can perhaps also be seen in the much earlier and much less detailed *Senchus fer nAlban*, which provides a genealogical list with assessments of the contemporary fighting strength of the peoples of *Dál Ráida*, in what is now western Scotland, in the late 7th and early 8th century. The assessment of land (given in the term 'houses') and the numbers of fighting men commanded by a particular lord were related to the over- kingship or rule of a single provincial king.<sup>74</sup> The mixing of genealogy with an assessment is in itself an interesting occurrence and may reflect the nature of landholding at the time in that part of the world, which could perhaps relate to similar contemporary arrangements in other parts of

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<sup>71</sup> Campbell, 'Sutton Hoo', 69.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>73</sup> N. Higham, 'The Domesday survey: context and purpose', *History* 78 (1993), 11–16; Roffe, *Decoding Domesday*, 10, quotes John of Worcester on the important question behind the survey being '*quot feudatos milites?*' – 'how many enfeoffed knights?'

<sup>74</sup> M.O. Anderson, *Kings and Kingship in Early Scotland* (London, 1973), 158–65.



Britain. Perhaps there is a natural and necessary mix here of what later became two separate considerations: tribute and military obligation. The clear mixing of these aspects may provide a useful parallel to the situation explored in this thesis, as although the assessment of the *DálRaita* does not include a valuation as such, we may assume that a value was indicated by the terms used.

Asser spends much of his life of Alfred examining the king's wealth and in some instances suggesting how it was accumulated.<sup>75</sup> It was clearly a major preoccupation for king's by the end of the 9<sup>th</sup> century. We may therefore assume that this was also the case in the preceding centuries. Maddicott points to a section in Alfred's translation of Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy*<sup>76</sup> in which the king writes:

No one can make known any skill, nor direct and guide any authority, without tools and resources; a man cannot work on any enterprise without resources. In the case of the king, the resources and tools with which to rule are that he have his lands fully manned: he must have praying men, fighting men and working men. You know also that without these tools, no king may make his ability known. Another aspect of his resources is that he must have the means of support for his tools, the three classes of men. These, then, are their means of support: land to live on, gifts, weapons, food, ale, clothing, and whatever else is necessary for the three classes of men. Without these things he cannot maintain the tools, nor without the tools can he accomplish any of the things he was commanded to do.<sup>77</sup>

and goes on to suggest that Alfred's rule was a continuation of a Germanic form of kingship that had its roots in the world described in Beowulf. The clear references by Asser, in his life of Alfred, to Alfred as 'ring-giver' and 'treasure-giver' certainly hark back to a previous age. Alfred's use of these devices is much modified, however, by a clear understanding of the importance of resources in the rule of the kingdom and it is likely that such was also the case during the 8th century in East Anglia under the rule of Aeldwulf (r. AD 664–713) and Aelfwald (r. AD 713–49).

In parallel with Alfred's and Edward the Elder's policies on the fortification and supplying of *burhs*, it has been argued by Blackburn that there also was an unsurprising emphasis on

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<sup>75</sup> J. Campbell, 'Asser's Life of Alfred', in Campbell, *The Anglo-Saxon State*; Maddicott, 'The wealth of King Alfred', 3–51; S. Keynes and M. Lapidge (eds), *Alfred the Great: Asser's Life of King Alfred and Other Contemporary Sources* (Harmondsworth, 1989)

<sup>76</sup> J.R. Maddicott, 'Reply', *Past and Present* 135 (1992), 164–88.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, and to be found in Keynes and Lapidge, *Alfred the Great*, 132.

minting within these locations.<sup>78</sup> Although it was rare for the mint-place to be stated on a coin of either Alfred or Edward the Elder, by the reign of Æthelstan the practice had become commonplace<sup>79</sup> and, given the decrees made in Æthelstan's reign at Grately describing the necessity for minting coinage only within a *burh*, we can infer that this was the culmination of a developing policy on the nature and use of *burhs* by the royal house of Wessex. Much of their military success appears in large part to be accounted for by their development of fortified, provisioned and garrisoned *burhs* in strategic locations. This does seem to have been a development of existing an existing situation, not only was there a history of towns being utilised for military purposes in England but also in Scandinavia. In particular, the development of sophisticated taxation systems within these places was aimed at providing the wealth necessary to pursue war and may have been the prime mover in the establishment of the towns.<sup>80</sup> The practice of creating a localised base that with neighbours formed an interconnected network and using the countryside to provision it adequately seems to have been the particular innovation that separated the royal house of Wessex from others during the period and explains to some extent their success.<sup>81</sup> Extending this system to include the minting of coins was a logical conclusion and may have been a crucial aspect of the success of the network. Clearly, moving coins around the countryside in times of war was dangerous, and the loyalty of far-flung elements of the army may have been difficult to maintain without a way of making payments locally. Compared with the numbers of single coins lost during the early and middle of the 8th century, the late 9<sup>th</sup> century seems to show a dramatic fall-off in coin numbers.<sup>82</sup>

There was a close link between towns and coin production during the 8th and 9th centuries, which also seems to have been the case for some 'productive' sites.<sup>83</sup> There was also a strong relationship between towns and taxation, which has been shown to be a legal link related to the authority that a town held over its hinterland. This seems to have been a facet of the military provisioning that can be seen later, within Domesday, with landholdings forming the basis for

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<sup>78</sup> M. Blackburn, 'Mints, *burhs*, and the Grately code, cap. 14.2', in Hill and Rumble, *The Defence of Wessex*, 160–75.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 160–61.

<sup>80</sup> There is a large secondary literature on various aspects of this subject, much generated by the study and reinterpretation of *Domesday*: Maitland's *Domesday Book and Beyond* built on J.H. Round's discussion of the survey as a tax or geld assessment (*Feudal England* (London, 1895)). V.H. Galbraith, in *The Making of Domesday Book* (London, 1961), argues against *Domesday* representing a taxation book but rather plumps for the idea that it was a tenorial record detailing title and thus by extension obligation in military service. Roffe, in *Decoding Domesday*, provides a full historiographic background. Crucially, Roffe argues persuasively for the military and thus tenorial basis for the record, helping to clearly link towns, coinage and taxation with the main expenditure concerns of administrations at the time. Perhaps the over-emphasis on tenorial, as opposed to geld, considerations behind the survey overshadows the main point, that all these aspects signify a growing and expansive state and hence military apparatus.

<sup>81</sup> Hill and Rumble, *The Defence of Wessex*.

<sup>82</sup> Blackburn, "'Productive' sites".

<sup>83</sup> Ulmschneider, *Markets, Minsters, and Metal-Detectors*.

collection of obligations and government articulated through towns.<sup>84</sup> We can see this authority in action within the Burghal Hidage, a document that probably dates from the reign of Edward the Elder.<sup>85</sup> We can perhaps also extrapolate this kind of relationship to places that we now term ‘productive’ but which did not become established as towns in the long run. Further to this relationship is the *legal* connection by the early 10th century between coin production and towns, which is fundamental to the topic being discussed. Such a relationship is clearly articulated in the laws of Athelstan,<sup>86</sup> and it seems likely that the relationship may pre-date these. This will be explored in the next three chapters. The connection between towns, coinage, military obligations and taxation has, as discussed, being the subject of much debate. What is new here, within this thesis, is the archaeological correlation of coin loss with places established as legally being ‘towns’ only much later in the medieval period. The focus of this study is the conclusions that can be arrived at through an examination of the geographical patterns thrown up by coin loss.

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<sup>84</sup> Roffe, *Decoding Domesday*, 109–39; Fleming, ‘Rural elites and urban communities’, 3–4.

<sup>85</sup> See Chapter 2 and Rumble, ‘Burghal Hidage’, in Hill and Rumble, *The Defence of Wessex*, 36–59.

<sup>86</sup> *EHDi*, 35 and 36, 381–7.

## Chapter 4

### Coinage in the East Anglian landscape AD 470–670

The overall aim of this chapter is to explore how the concept of coinage developed during the Early Anglo-Saxon period. As part of this discussion the evidence for and debates around the nature of the economy at this time will be examined. The use of early coins and pseudo-coins in gift-giving and payment of obligations will also be discussed. In order to achieve this, this chapter will describe the results of a study of the distribution of gold coins across Norfolk and Suffolk prior to the time of great state expansion exemplified by the use of silver coinage and the development of the large craft and trading centres collectively described as *wics*.

During the 6th and earlier 7th centuries the evidence for coin use is sparse. However, in looking at the regional distribution of this early coinage, the intention is to build a picture of the settlement pattern and to explore its social context. Although the dataset is relatively small, this aspect of the research informs the study of the use of coin in the late 7th century (see Chapter 5).

#### **Embedded economy or market economy?**

Most of the discussion regarding the use of Early Anglo-Saxon coinage centres on material that has been found in groups or hoards. Nationally, fourteen coin hoards that were deposited in the period between AD 470 and 670 are known.<sup>1</sup> Two of these were recovered in East Anglia: the Oxborough hoard, and the coins from Mound 1 at Sutton Hoo. The earliest of the two hoards that is from Oxborough (Norfolk), which dates to *c.* AD 475 and consists of:

- Three coin pendants: one Roman base-silver, two pseudo-imperial Gallic ‘Visigothic’ gold
- A silver fragment
- A base-silver *denarius* of Severus Alexander (AD 222–35), pierced
- A gold *solidus* imitating the *Victoria Augg* type of Serverus III (AD 461–5), also converted to a pendant

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<sup>1</sup> *Checklist of Coin Hoards from the British Isles c. 450–1180* at <http://www-cm.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/dept/coins/projects/hoards/index.list.html> (accessed 4 November 2009); R. Abdy and G. Williams, ‘A catalogue of hoards and single finds from the British Isles, *c.* 410–675’ in Cook and Williams, *Coinage and History*, 11–73.

- A gold *tremissis*, imitation of the ‘cross & wreath’ of Julius Nepos (AD 474–5 and 477–80).<sup>2</sup>

As discussed in more detail towards the end of this chapter, the coins from this hoard can be interpreted as embedded within a gift-giving economical system, rather than as having functioned within a monetary economy.

The purse hoard found within Mound 1 at Sutton Hoo has probably received more academic attention than any other group of Anglo-Saxon coinage. Kent’s dating<sup>3</sup> of the group to AD 620–25 proved crucial to the historical interpretation of the burial, but recent work has suggested that this should be revised, giving a wider date range for deposition of AD 600–640,<sup>4</sup> although Kent’s dating falls approximately at the central point in the new date range. The hoard contains 37 Merovingian *tremisses*, 3 coin-shaped gold blanks and 2 gold ingots, all within an ornate inlaid decorated purse.<sup>5</sup> Grierson based his substantivist analysis of coinage in this period in part on the Sutton Hoo find, with the Crondall hoard (Hampshire) providing the other plank in his interpretation. He suggested that the Sutton Hoo hoard represented a ‘Charon’s Obol’, or payment of a ghost crew to take the dead king to the afterlife, citing the correspondence between the number of coins and the probable number of oarsmen that the ship would have required.<sup>6</sup> This view has recently been questioned by Williams, mainly, it would seem, on the basis that coins were not quite as rare in this period as Grierson had assumed. This group had a monetary value equivalent to sixteen *solidi*, including the weight of the ingots, which Grierson had left out of his interpretation. Williams concludes that although it cannot be ruled out that either of Sutton Hoo or Crondall may have held a symbolic meaning beyond the purely monetary, there is no necessary reason to believe that they did.<sup>7</sup> The lack of anthropological or archaeological context to Williams’ argument is notable, however; in essence, he argues that the greatly increased number of coins now known from the pre-*sceatta* period (through ongoing surface collection by metal-detector users) is in itself evidence of a monetary economy. As discussed elsewhere in this thesis, there is little historical data to back this view and, indeed, it seems to run counter to what we know about contemporary society. Surely if there were a monetary economy in existence then we would have references to markets in the historical sources, and would see something more akin to urban places with concomitant craft

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<sup>2</sup> Abdy and Williams, ‘A catalogue’, 14.

<sup>3</sup> J.P.C. Kent, ‘The date of the Sutton Hoo hoard’ and ‘Catalogue of the Sutton Hoo coin blanks and billets’, in R.L.S. Bruce-Mitford (ed.), *The Sutton Hoo Ship Burial*, vol. 1 (London, 1975), 588–647.

<sup>4</sup> Abdy and Williams, ‘A catalogue’, 18.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> P. Grierson, ‘The purpose of the Sutton Hoo coins’, *Antiquity* 44 (1970), 14–18.

<sup>7</sup> Williams, ‘The circulation and function of coinage’, 145–92, esp. p. 181.

production in the archaeological record. In other words, there would be evidence of a demand economy.

The Crondall hoard is discussed in detail by Metcalf<sup>8</sup> and, along with the Sutton Hoo coins, forms the basis for much of the numismatic understanding of the use of coinage in the 7th century. The hoard was, like the coins from Sutton Hoo, viewed by Grierson in terms of an ‘embedded’ rather than a monetary economy.<sup>9</sup> He suggested that the total of some 101 coins and pseudo-coins (1 Byzantine *phocas*, 24 Merovingian or Frisian *tremissis*, 69 Anglo-Saxon *thrymsas* and 7 others)<sup>10</sup> represents a payment of *wergild* consisting of a sum totalling 100 shillings, which we know from Kentish law was the price for a man’s life.<sup>11</sup> Williams has criticised this interpretation on the basis that the hoard comes from Hampshire, and therefore Kentish law would not have applied.<sup>12</sup> Given the clear cultural similarities and practices throughout the Anglo-Saxon world by the middle of the 7th century this argument seems to be weak.



**Fig. 12.** Wilton Cross, Hockwold cum Wilton, Norfolk ( NHER 5303).

Williams does concede that coinage in the period was frequently converted to jewellery and worn, suggesting that it was probably of symbolic value. Following Geake, he suggests that it may thus have held a religious or amuletic function, and that this may suggest a similar purpose to the

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<sup>8</sup> *T&Siii*.

<sup>9</sup> Grierson, ‘The purpose of the Sutton Hoo coins’.

<sup>10</sup> Abdy and Williams, ‘A catalogue’, 18

<sup>11</sup> Grierson, ‘The purpose of the Sutton Hoo coins’, 15.

<sup>12</sup> Williams, ‘The circulation and function of coinage’, 174.

use of German mythological scenes on the bracteate pseudo-coinage; and he notes that coins converted to jewellery appear commonly in graves of the period.<sup>13</sup> He further makes the connection between this possible religious symbolism inherent in the coins themselves and the Wilton Cross (Fig. 12), an ornate coin pendant, which contains a Byzantine *solidus* of Heraclius (AD 610–41); the coin itself can be dated to AD 613–630. The garnet *cloisonné* decoration found in mushroom-shaped cells within the flaring arms of the cross directly compares with the Sutton Hoo grave finds, and may have originated from the same workshop in the early 7th century.<sup>14</sup> This possible amuletic aspect has implications for how coins may have come to be used in the next period, a matter discussed in subsequent chapters. It seems that the Church and the king may have utilised this folklore attachment, bending the coinage to becoming an emblematic medium for the extraction of tax and obligations (see below).

The possibility that coins may also have been symbolic of authority, specifically kingly authority, is also discussed by Williams, who draws a connection between this later aspect of coins and the re-utilisation of Roman iconography in the period to emphasise the ruler's authority, a phenomena that can be witnessed in other ways at Sutton Hoo, and later through the conscious association of kings like Charlemagne and Offa with a Roman Imperial past.<sup>15</sup>

Something of a consensus has existed among numismatists since the 1960s that coins in this period do not represent a monetary economy. Particularly influential in the development of this view was Grierson's anthropologically inspired work on the coinage of the 7th century, which, as already noted, is essentially a substantivist view of the use of the medium in particular types of social exchange, and as a mechanism for symbolising such exchanges.<sup>16</sup> Williams, against this tide, has readvoked a monetary economy for the period AD 470–670. Much of the explanation for his argument rests on the concepts espoused by Higham and more extremely by Dark: that there is a significant degree of cultural continuity between the end of Roman government and the rise of the Anglo-Saxon state in the later 7th and 8th centuries.<sup>17</sup> Williams points out several phenomena which he interprets as indicative of continuing coin use in a market economy:

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 166; Geake, *Grave-Goods in Conversion-Period England*.

<sup>14</sup> L. Webster and J. Blackhouse, *The Making of England: Anglo-Saxon Art and Culture AD 600–900* (London, 1991).

<sup>15</sup> Williams, 'The circulation and function of coinage'.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> For these arguments see, for instance, N. Higham, *Britain, Rome and the Anglo-Saxons* (London, 1992); and Dark, *Civitas to Kingdom*.

1. Coins continued to enter Britain from the Continent, albeit in vastly reduced numbers, which he believes suggests that coins were still circulating and being used as a means of exchange;
2. Roman coins, including bronze ones, are commonly found in post-urban contexts, which must represent their continued use in exchange;
3. So much base-silver and bronze coinage of the Roman period is found in the countryside that some of it may well have been deposited long after it was minted; he regards this as evidence for its continued use in exchange;
4. Anglo-Saxon coin designs display an influence deriving from Roman coinage.<sup>18</sup>

As with all fundamentally polarised debates it is difficult to refute some of these arguments, as they are based on an alternative philosophical basis. However, there are a series of counter-arguments to each point:

1. The amounts of this coinage are so small that it is difficult to see how an exchange system might have been based on this medium. In particular, the high-denomination coinage would presumably have been too valuable and the bronze and very base-silver coins still in existence from the Roman period would not have had an established value, as there is little evidence for their continued use beyond the Roman period and were no longer being manufactured outside the Byzantine Empire.<sup>19</sup> As individual objects they may have held some fascination, explaining why they continue to have a 'biography' in this later context.<sup>20</sup> My view is that there is unlikely to be a monetary economy, in any guise, without a state authority to produce the material and provide a guide to its value.
2. The 'urban' contexts in this period were no longer heavily populated and may perhaps best be categorised after the late 4th century as rural, perhaps with some estate centre functions.<sup>21</sup> There was certainly some reworking of the deposits within these settlements, which would have uncovered buried coinage, so any coins of low

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<sup>18</sup> Williams, 'The circulation and function of coinage'.

<sup>19</sup> *MECi*.

<sup>20</sup> Kopytoff, 'The cultural biography of things', 64–94.

<sup>21</sup> There is debate on the continuity of population within Roman towns in this period, as discussed in Chapter 1; Dark, *Civitas to Kingdom*, provides one side of the debate and Faulkner, *The Decline and Fall of Roman Britain*, the other. For instance, there is good evidence for 5th-century continuity of sorts from Canterbury: K. Blockley, *Excavations in the Marlowe Car Park and Surrounding Areas, Canterbury Archaeology Monograph Vol 5* (Canterbury, 1995), and from Verulamium: S.S. Frere, *Verulamium Excavations* (London, 1972).



denomination in these later contexts can be easily explained in the same way as Roman pottery and other objects from later deposits: they are residual. While the reuse of Roman objects in this period is well attested<sup>22</sup> residuality, particularly in former Roman towns, is clearly common: any movement of the earth at the appropriate depth will produce Roman objects. With this in mind, we can question whether coinage was actually being used in the same culturally constituted manner as it had been several hundred years previously. It is not likely, for example, that pottery or masonry would be discussed in the same way.

3. It is certainly true that huge amounts of base-silver and bronze Roman coinage have been recovered from the English countryside. The simplest explanation for this material is that there was a monetary economy operating in the Roman period. As the material ceases to be datable in any sense after this, its use cannot be interpreted either. If coins were being re-utilised in some way, then the same argument as that outlined above, that this it may be that these items were being collected from Roman sites and transformed into new objects, as seems to have been the case with pottery.

4. In some ways the design influence argument is most difficult part of Williams' contentions to counter: clearly there *was* continuity in art historical terms between the two periods.<sup>23</sup> Much of this influence can be explained, however, through contemporary contacts with elements of the Continental post-Imperial world, such as the Merovingian state.

The 'embedded' economy *versus* 'continuity of market economy' argument will no doubt continue, but in respect of the period from the 5th to the mid 7th century it seems highly unlikely that there was a monetary economy in operation. Williams' arguments could be characterised, perhaps, as special pleading. There is also, even in non-relativist normative terms, little upon which to hang this argument philosophically. Even if one believes in 5th- and 6th-century *civitas* groupings these must have been small-scale entities and the lack of minting and the very limited importation of foreign coinage will have militated strongly against anything but the most embedded of exchanges. It seems likely, given what we know about the organisation of these societies, that much exchange was in the form of gift-giving and particular kinds of obligation. This is discussed further below.

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<sup>22</sup> H. Eckhart and H. Williams, 'Objects without a past? The use of Roman objects in early Anglo-Saxon graves', in H. Williams (ed.), *Archaeologies of Remembrance: Death and Memory in Past Societies* (London, 2003), 141–70.

<sup>23</sup> Gannon, *Iconography*.

### **Gift giving and obligation**

As well as coins, there are a number of related artefact types found during this early part of the period which may have been viewed in similar ways to coin. Unlike that pertaining to coins, however, much of the literature relating to these objects has been written within the archaeological, as opposed to the numismatic, community. Therefore, the discussions surrounding these objects, although relevant to the questions pertaining to the nature of the Early Anglo-Saxon economy, do not generally take place in direct relation or comparison to coinage. In order to address this, this section of this chapter explores the nature and function of ‘pseudo-coins’ specifically. The concluding comments in this chapter will then bring both the coin and the pseudo-coin datasets together.

#### *‘Special purpose money’*

Gaimster has written on the nature of ‘proto-cash’ in early medieval Scandinavian society and, by extension, groups resident in Britain stemming from the same cultural background. She suggests that the use of ‘special purpose money’, which had a social as well as an economic function, provides an explanation for certain types of objects in circulation in this period, such as coin pendants and bracteates. ‘Early cash’ may have been used in, for instance, politically motivated transactions such as gifts of loyalty, in bride-wealth or in judicially punitive payments such as *wergeld*. Coins were viewed in a particular way at this time, and treated with a certain degree of reverence; this can be seen in, for instance, the fact that clipping rarely affects the portrait on Imperial coins found in Anglo-Saxon contexts. Coins in small quantities and in all denominations continued to circulate, as can be seen from their inclusion within graves; however, their meaning has changed, as they have been physically transformed in most cases into jewellery.<sup>24</sup> Gaimster further suggests that in these societies Roman coinage also operated as special purpose money, circulating as both administrative and status currency. Hoards of coin are commonly known from late Roman Britain, which until the 4th century were almost exclusively made up of coins, but from AD 350 took on new features, becoming less fixed on currency and containing more material which may have had a bullion value. Hacksilver (effectively silver bullion which is comprised of material

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<sup>24</sup> M. Gaimster, ‘Scandinavian gold bracteates in Britain. Money and media in the Dark Ages’, *Med. Archaeol.* 36 (1992), 1–28; see also G. Dalton, ‘Aboriginal economies in stateless societies’, in T.K. Earle and J.E. Ericsson (eds) *Exchange Systems in Prehistory* (New York, 1977); M. Thurborg (now Gaimster), ‘Regional economic structures; an analysis of the Viking Age silver hoards from Oland, Sweden’, in *World Archaeology* 20:2 (1988), 302–24; and M. Gaimster, ‘Money and media in Viking Age Scandinavia’, in R. Samson (ed.), *Social Approches to Viking Studies*, (Glasgow, 1991), 113–22.

that has previously had another use, including foreign coinage) becomes a component, as does jewellery, of hoards.<sup>25</sup>

The use of coins and bullion in social payments such as *wergeld* and other compensations can be compared with the Viking-period function of rings discussed in relation to the term *Baugatal*, the Old Icelandic law on blood money, where the number and weight of rings is carefully stated, along with supplementary weights.<sup>26</sup> These laws were possibly referring to the smaller rings sometimes supplemented by folded coins that are attached to some Viking armrings. A similar use of bullion may be reflected in the earliest Anglo-Saxon laws, as the values and quantities referred to as *sceattas* and *scillings* pre-date a domestic coinage and may therefore relate to bullion as well as other materials such as cattle and foodstuffs. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Aethelbert of Kent records in c. AD 603 an impressive list of compensations, fines, *wergelds* and bride-prices to be paid in bullion measured in *scillings*. The element *sceat* incorporated in medieval food rents may originate from OE *sceatt* – in that context, it may preserve its early use as tribute or tax.<sup>27</sup> With the idea of ‘special purpose money’ in mind, the next section will examine a range of coin-related artefacts.

### *Coin pendants*

A range of pendants made from coins dating from the 5th, 6th and early 7th centuries have been found in East Anglia. Many examples were made from modified Roman coins. One example from Oxborough made use of a coin struck in the 1st or 2nd century, but more commonly these items were made from 3rd and early 4th century coins. Many of these items seem to have a female link, which may hint at the special nature of coin during this period and its association with, in these cases, bride-wealth. In Geake’s study, for example, of the 23 graves examined which contained coins, 13 also contained other female-linked objects, with 1 deemed female from osteological evidence. Those suggested as male within this group totalled 4, and 5 were of undetermined gender. Of the female-linked graves, 7 contained pierced or looped coins, suggesting that coins found in graves had a link to jewellery; none of the possible male graves contained such items.<sup>28</sup> A coin pendant from the excavated 6th-century cemetery at Icklingham (Suffolk SMR: IKL026) belongs to a strongly female-linked grave assemblage.<sup>29</sup> This correlation between coins, coin pendants and

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<sup>25</sup> Gaimster, ‘Scandinavian gold bracteates’, 5–6.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 22; and Gaimster, ‘Money and media in Viking Age Scandinavia’; also cf. Faith, *The English Peasantry*, 111.

<sup>28</sup> Geake, *Grave-Goods in Conversion-Period England*, 32; Gaimster, ‘Money and media in Viking Age Scandinavia’.

<sup>29</sup> S.E. West, *A Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Material from Suffolk* (East Anglian Archaeology 84, 1998), 46.

females suggests that the role of artefacts was socially embedded; in anthropological terms, the data potentially points to obligations or 'payments' such as dowries or bride-prices.

At Oxborough the pendants made from Roman coins were recovered from the ploughsoil and almost certainly represent disturbed graves. The cemetery there has only been partially explored<sup>30</sup> but Oxborough's mortuary landscape during this period was vast, comparable to the large mortuary landscape at Eriswell (Suffolk).<sup>31</sup> A concentration of Roman coinage has also been found as a result of metal-detecting at the site. This suggests that there was a significant Roman site here from which objects were apparently collected during the Early Anglo-Saxon period. Materials recovered then seem to have been reused by the Anglo-Saxon population, although it is possible that these perforated coins represent the survival of Romano-British heirlooms.

Oxborough has also yielded up two perforated 5th-century coins, and both the cemeteries at Oxborough and Icklingham have evidence of the reuse of Bronze Age ring-ditches. This is a phenomenon that may be in some ways analogous to the reuse of Roman coinage; both practices may represent the appropriation of the past to justify the acquisition of power in the present. Similarly, two 4th-century coins made into pendants have been found at Flixton (Suffolk SMR: FLN 008) in the infilling of a ring-ditch. The (re)deposition of these 4th-century coins has been dated through association with a burial also found within the same ring-ditch to the 6th century.<sup>32</sup>

A single coin pendant was found in 1851 within a chalk extraction pit in the parish of Mildenhall (Suffolk SMR: MNL084), associated with 6th-century material and Romano-British pottery.<sup>33</sup> The presence of the pottery perhaps suggests that not only coins but also other, more mundane, types of material were being re-utilised. A similar reuse of both prehistoric and Romano-British artefacts and monuments during the Anglo-Saxon period has been well attested in the archaeological literature.<sup>34</sup> Of particular interest in terms of the reuse of coins is the work undertaken by Geake on the re-emergence of Roman styles and forms of artefacts in grave assemblages of the 7th and 8th centuries, in which she discusses the transferral and appropriation of symbolism between the Roman and Anglo-Saxon periods. Coins may have held many symbolic associations during the 6th century, and their re-emergence in the later 7th and 8th centuries may in part have been assisted by the existing association of coinage with an imperial past and the subsequent use and altering of its meaning by the pre-Christian 5th-, 6th- and earlier 7th-century population of the region. It can be

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<sup>30</sup> K. Penn, *An Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Oxborough, West Norfolk: Excavations in 1990* (East Anglian Archaeology Occ. Pap. 5, 1998).

<sup>31</sup> Chester-Kadwell, 'Early Anglo-Saxon Communities', 272–4.

<sup>32</sup> West, *Corpus*, 39.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

<sup>34</sup> H. Williams, 'The past in the past: the reuse of ancient monuments', *World Archaeology* 30:1 (1998), 90–108.

argued that there was a pre-existing affinity for the idea of coins. Indeed, there was a pre-existing interest in the Roman past that included also an interest in the concept of towns, and potentially there was also a folk memory within British parts of the population for the use of coinage in many transactions that made it a more readily embraced form of exchange; spoken language seems to have contained terms for both coins and towns that were still in common usage despite the lack of the actual things themselves in the society's everyday life.<sup>35</sup> It could be suggested, therefore, that coin pendants fashioned from Roman coins during the Anglo-Saxon period can be contextualised within historical concepts of coinage.

Suffolk has produced, in addition to Early Saxon pendants using coins from the Roman period, a few which were made from coins of either Merovingian or Byzantine date, including examples from Gisleham of a Chlotar II (584–629) *solidus* pendant (GSE010) and from Bromeswell of a coin pendant of Honorius (BML009).<sup>36</sup> Norfolk, too, has produced examples of coin pendants of this period, including two made from 6th-century gold Byzantine coins: one from Northwold with a looped pendant (NHER1564), another from Bacton and minted in the reign of Mauricius Tiberius (AD 582–602) held within a style 2 *cloisonné* double-headed biting 'snake' which Speake felt was so directly related to elements of the decoration employed on artefacts from Sutton Hoo that it probably came from the same workshop.<sup>37</sup> The Wilton Cross coin pendant is also closely related to the Sutton Hoo material, as it is executed in the same decorative style. It is possible that it derives from the same workshop. Both are paralleled by Merovingian examples from Walsingham (Fig. 13), with an added suspension loop, and from Old Buckenham, with a piercing. More unusually, the example from Sedgford appears to be an Anglo-Saxon gilt-silver *thrymsa*, also with a piercing.



**Fig. 13.** NHER 37715: 6th-century Merovingian *tremissis* with gold suspension loop, EMC No. 2003.0001, from Walsingham, Norfolk.

<sup>35</sup> This was discussed in the previous chapter, and can be seen in the early laws through terms like *sceat*, used, for instance, in the laws of Æthelbert (written c.602/3): *EHDi*, no. 29:5, 357. There are also salient early references to towns prior to their widespread re-emergence, for instance in the laws of Hlothere and Eadric (672–85): *EDH I*, no. 30, 361, 16, 16.1, 16.2, 16.3.

<sup>36</sup> West, *Corpus*, 37

<sup>37</sup> G. Speake, 'A seventh-century coin pendant from Bacton, Norfolk and its ornament', *Medieval Archaeol.* 14 (1970), 1–16.

### *Bracteates*

These objects are often referred to as ‘pseudo-coins’ and derive from the Scandinavian world. The earliest examples developed from sheet-metal imitations of late Roman Imperial coins in the late 5th and first half of the 6th century, a fine example of which is the Undley Common Bracteate from Lakenheath in Suffolk (Fig. 14). Bracteates continue to be produced into the 7th century, later becoming more iconographically stylised and often using runic inscriptions. Foreign coins were also commonly framed and provided with a suspension loop.

In total, around AD 900 bracteates struck from around 500 different dies are known from across Britain, Scandinavia and the Low Countries. Their probable date range is 5th-/6th-century and into the 7th, with a distribution throughout Scandinavia, England, Northern France and Germany.<sup>38</sup> Bracteates are uniaxially struck with a single die to create a reverse image, a technique known commonly as *repoussé* and in German as *pressblech*. They have been categorised into a typological progression, all within Style 1, comprising A, B, C, D, E, F and M types. Although there are stylistic links between the types it is clear that they do not represent a uniform typological development. Scandinavian bracteates were produced in a particular and unique style which may have communicated a particular significance in terms of their use: for instance, they may typically have been used as bride-wealth; and many of the examples possess iconography that refers to Scandinavian mythology, suggesting an amuletic function.<sup>39</sup> In England bracteates are commonly found in graves, particularly in Kent, but in Scandinavia they tend to have been deposited in hoards and are occasionally found on settlement sites.<sup>40</sup>

Axboe has suggested that most bracteates were produced within a short period that perhaps lasted as little as two or three generations and was characterised by largely overlapping stylistic phases.<sup>41</sup> Their distribution maps closely to the north-sea littoral area where *sceatta* coinage is later used. Scandinavian bracteates appear in English graves mostly from Kent and East Anglia at the same time as Continental gold coins.<sup>42</sup> As discussed above, these objects often follow late Roman Imperial stylistic conventions but branch out into Germanic styles of art following mythology originating from that cultural sphere as well as incorporating some Roman iconography, as in the case of the Undley bracteate (discussed below). They also employ runic letters, which may be

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<sup>38</sup> Gaimster, ‘Scandinavian gold bracteates’, 2–5.

<sup>39</sup> J. Hines, *The Scandinavian Character of Anglian England in the Pre-Viking Period* (Oxford, BAR Brit. Ser. 124, 1984).

<sup>40</sup> J. Hines, ‘Ritual hoarding in Migration-period Scandinavia: a review of recent interpretations’, *Proc. Prehist. Soc.* 55 (1989), 193–205.

<sup>41</sup> M. Axboe, ‘The chronology of the Scandinavian gold bracteates’, in J. Hines, K. Hoiland Nielsen and F. Siegmund (eds), *The Pace of Change: Studies in Early-Medieval Chronology* (Oxford, 1999), 126–47.

<sup>42</sup> Hines, *The Scandinavian Character of Anglian England*, 8.

construed as further suggesting an amuletic nature, and this is another aspect that connects them to much of the later *sceatta* coinage.

Only six bracteates are recorded from East Anglia: five from Norfolk and the Undley Common example from Lakenheath in Suffolk (Fig. 14), which shows a helmeted classical head and a she-wolf suckling two children. This example is dated to c. AD 475 and is thought to have originated in Southern Scandinavia, perhaps Schleswig-Holstein; the runic text has been translated as: '[This is] a she-wolf. Reward to a relative [?kinswoman]'.<sup>43</sup> We can easily fit this particular runic inscription into embedded gift-exchange practices. The fact that, like this object, much of the corpus of coins from this Early Anglo-Saxon phase shows suspended loops for wearing is also evidence that the medium was utilised in a particular way.

The Type 'B' bracteate from Binham, Norfolk (Fig. 15), shows a sword-wielding warrior dispatching a magical animal which seems to be a cross between a bird and some sort of mammal. The surrounding chevron with annulet decoration gives the impression of an audience surrounding the scene. Above the warrior's left hand are four runes that are damaged and illegible. The scene appears to be a mythological one and the use of runic script may here emphasise the magical nature of the iconography.

Two near-identical bracteates were found within Grave 80 at Morningthorpe, both of Type 'C' style, or the so-called 'horse and rider' type, although these examples have been damaged and the human bust is not discernable on either example (Fig. 16). The grave itself may have been a double burial; it contained female-style materials including wrist clasps, a knife with horn handle, annular brooches, a 'scutiform' pendant, a cruciform brooch and a Roman pottery vessel. Penn and Brugmann assign the grave to their FA2b phase, dating from between AD 500 and 530/50.<sup>44</sup> The presence of a scutiform pendant here is notable, for Gaimster has suggested that these aretifacts were also a form of Scandinavian 'special purpose money' and notes that they were, like bracteates, treated as bullion and clipped in some Scandinavian hoards.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> J. Hines, 'The Undley bracteate and its runic inscription', *Studien zur Sachsenforschung*, Band 6, 73–94.

<sup>44</sup> K. Penn and B. Brugmann, *Aspects of Anglo-Saxon Inhumation Burial: Morning Thorpe, Spong Hill, Bergh Apton and West Garth Gardens* (East Anglian Archaeology 119, 2007), 43.

<sup>45</sup> Gaimster, 'Scandinavian gold bracteates', 21.



**Fig. 14.** (left) Gold ‘A’ bracteate SMR: LKH 077, from Lakenheath, Suffolk, West 1998, 74.

**Fig. 15.** (right) Gold Bracteate Type ‘B’ HER 40776, Treasure Report 2004, No 109, from Binham, Norfolk.

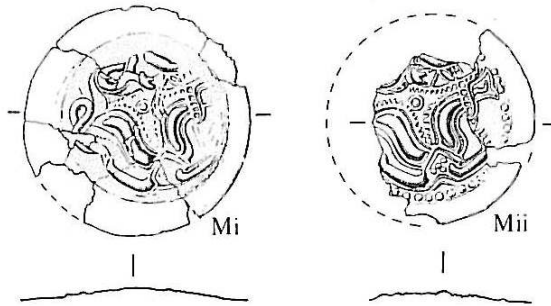
Recently another bracteate has been discovered at Blakeney; this can be defined as a Type ‘D’ example displaying a Style 1 ribbon-shaped animal with the eye close to the loop and with unidentifiable limbs wound around a central loop; this central motif is enclosed by three concentric rings of punched decoration with the loop pinched over the edge of the decoration (Fig. 17). The closest English parallel to this object comes from Grave 90 at Sarre, Kent, and there is also a good fit with an example from Nebenstedt in Lower Saxony.<sup>46</sup> Type ‘D’ represents the last phase of Style 1 art and, as such, is of more general interest from a typological and archaeological perspective. This style, along with Type F and unlike Types A–C, which contain classically derived representations on human busts, uses only highly stylised animal forms.<sup>47</sup> Whether the Blakeney example is Scandinavian or Kentish in origin is unknown, but its location on the northern coast of East Anglia suggests the former.

The distribution of these objects shows two concentrations, if such a small dataset can be interpreted in this way: one along the fen-edge and another mid-way along the north Norfolk coast. The Morningthorpe example is clearly an outlier in this current distribution but little can be said about this on the basis of so few finds.

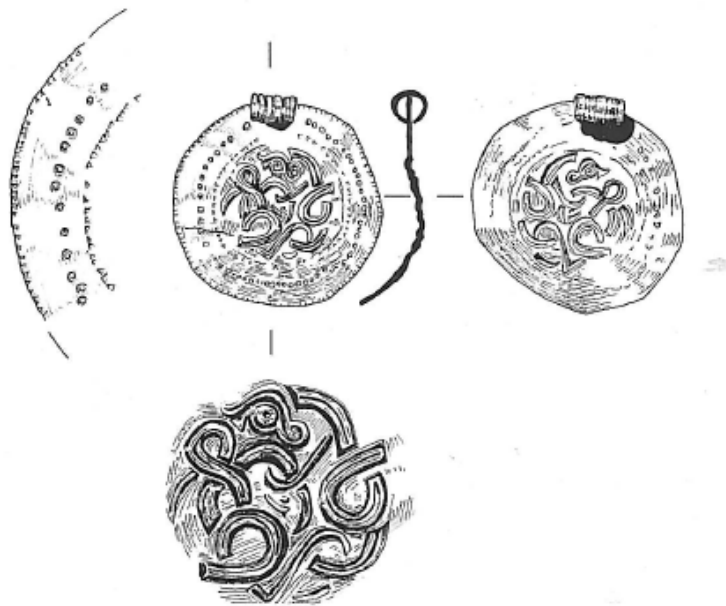
<sup>46</sup> K. Penn, ‘The bracteate’, in C. Birks, *Report on an Archaeological Evaluation at Blakeney Freshes, Cley next the Sea* (NAU Report No. 808 (revised), 2003), 25–7.

<sup>47</sup> Axboe, ‘Scandinavian gold bracteates’.





**Fig. 16.** Two Ae bracteates Type 'C' from Morning Thorpe, Norfolk, Grave 80, Green *et al.* 1987.



**Fig. 17.** Gold Bracteate Type 'D' NHER 37793, from Blakeney, Norfolk, C. Birks NAU 2003 unpublished, .



**Fig. 18.** Continental *tremissis* distribution in East Anglia not including Sutton Hoo hoard.

## Gold coinage

### *Continental tremisses*

Early medieval European gold coinage is a large subject and not one that can be explored fully in the context of this thesis. However, there are some good reasons to briefly discuss the character of this coinage; firstly, it provides a background to gold coinage of the same period found in England; and, secondly, there is a small but interesting distribution of early Continental coins across the East Anglia.

Twenty-one coins of this type have been discovered in Norfolk and Suffolk as single finds, not including the hoard found with the tomb at Sutton Hoo (discussed above), split fairly evenly between the two counties. As can be seen from Fig. 18, four of these come from Coddanham, with two coming from Akenham and two from Watton. Both the Coddanham and Akenham sites also produced significant numbers of Middle Saxon period coinage. Three of the Coddanham coins can

be securely attributed to the 5th or 6th century, suggesting that the nature of the Middle Saxon 'productive' site here may potentially date back to this earlier period.

Gold coins do not appear to have been minted in England until the 7th century. Much of the numismatic work on these is derived from studies of the Crondall hoard. Nationally far fewer single finds are known than for the silver coinage that superseded them in the later 7th and 8th centuries.<sup>48</sup> Dating is difficult and to some extent reliant on a progressive debasement of the coinage, but most experts place the Crondall find in the second quarter of the 7th century.<sup>49</sup> Grierson and Blackburn suggest a date of around AD 650, or a little earlier, whereas Metcalf suggests that the hoard was deposited sometime around *c.* AD 635 × *c.* AD 645 and argues that it effectively gives a fairly representative sample of English coinage used south of the Thames from the origins of minting in England, probably in the middle of the 620s.<sup>50</sup> *Thrymsas*<sup>51</sup> are a poorly defined group in terms of their denomination. Traditionally, numismatists have described them as *thrymsas* or *tremissis* but there is some debate as to whether they were in fact valued at one third of a solidus. Grierson and Blackburn draw out the connection between this coinage and issues circulating at around this time on the Continent. For the purpose of the discussion here they have been split into *solidi* and shillings, following the practice used for the catalogue held by the Early Medieval Coin Corpus.<sup>52</sup> *Solidi* are larger than shillings, weigh more and are extremely rare. There are only four known from England, two of which were found in Norfolk, at Markshall and at Merton,<sup>53</sup> the other two coming from Canterbury and Manchester. The Merton example is pierced and the Markshall find was discovered adjacent to a cemetery, the piercing and context perhaps indicating that both examples derived from graves. Piercing seems to be relatively common, representing multiple uses, both as a specifically defined payment of some guaranteed value and as an object of jewellery, and perhaps a possession of some distinct symbolism.

Metcalf has discussed the Crondall hoard in detail.<sup>54</sup> The hoard was discovered on heathland near the present boundary between Surrey and Hampshire in 1823 and consists of 101 coins. It is often thought of as a hoard of Anglo-Saxon coins because two-thirds of its contents are English, but 24 coins are of Merovingian or Frisian origin and 4 are unattributed. It has been suggested that this was a 'purse' hoard probably representing a single payment, although no trace of any container has

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<sup>48</sup> D.M. Metcalf, *Thrymsas and Sceattas in the Ashmolean Museum Oxford*, vol. 1 (Oxford, 1993) (hereafter *T&Si*), 2.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid; *MECi*, 161.

<sup>50</sup> *T&Si*, 31.

<sup>51</sup> OE equivalent to *tremissis*, later used as a description for the sum of four pennies (*T&Si*, 29).

<sup>52</sup> EMC: <http://www-cm.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/emc/>.

<sup>53</sup> C.H.V. Sutherland, *Anglo-Saxon Gold Coinage in the Light of the Crondall Hoard* (London, 1948), coin nos 20a and 21a; and the EMC: <http://www-cm.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/emc/>.

<sup>54</sup> *T&Si*, 29–62.

been found. Some have further extrapolated that it was a *wergeld* payment of 100 Anglo-Saxon shillings, that total being reached with the inclusion of several coin blanks or botched strikings of the correct weight. Just over one-quarter of the 24 Frankish coins in the hoard were minted at *Quentovic*, with another one from the nearby mint at Amiens. A smaller proportion originated in either the Meuse valley or the lower Rhineland.<sup>55</sup> It is the total of 73 Anglo-Saxon minted coins that makes this hoard such a foundation for our understanding of this nascent period of minting here, however. These coins were categorised first by Sutherland and later refined by Metcalf and others into the twelve types listed in Table 2.<sup>56</sup>

1	'Witmen monita'	Cr. 69–89	(21)
2	'London-derived'	Cr. 60–8	(9)
3	'Licinius'	Cr. 44–52	(9)
4	' <b>LEMC</b> '	Cr. 26–33	(8)
5	' <b>LONDEVNIV</b> '	Cr. 53–9	(7)
6	Cross/cross	Cr. 39–43	(5)
7	' <b>EAN</b> '	Cr. 91–4	(4)
8	'Cross on steps'	Cr. 34–5	(2)
9	'Bust/cross'	Cr. 37–8	(2)
10	'Bust/ <b>LOND</b> '	Cr. 36	(1)
11	'Audvarlth/ <b>LONDEV</b> '	Cr. 90	(1)
12	'Abbo'	Cr. 25	(1)

**Table 2.** Anglo-Saxon gold coins from the Crondall hoard

Seven types account for 90% of the material. In total, the hoard's components probably represent the use of around sixty upper dies, which is, according to Metcalf, a modest total when compared to the silver coinage of the late 7th and 8th centuries.<sup>57</sup> The largest group within the hoard possesses the proclamation **WITMEN MONITA**; a title like this is not found on English coinage again until the 9th century.<sup>58</sup> The inscription on Type 5, as listed in the above table 2, coins directly mentions London and it can therefore be reasonably suggested that these were minted or issued from the early *wic* on the Strand, or perhaps from the confines of the Roman walls, and thus potentially relate either to an unknown royal centre there or possibly to the diocese. Metcalf suggests that there were probably at least six mints represented by the Anglo-Saxon elements of the hoard, but apart from London none of these can be identified with any certainty. Grierson and Metcalf make the point that this emphasis on the place-name, alongside Bede's description of London, serves to consolidate our interpretation of that place as an important international centre: what Bede describes as 'an

<sup>55</sup> *MECi*, 126.

<sup>56</sup> Type table after *T&Si*, 30.

<sup>57</sup> *T&Si*, 31.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

emporium of many nations'.<sup>59</sup> The question still remains, however, as to what contemporary London institution was represented by this coinage. Was it the port on the Strand, or the royal or ecclesiastical authority, which needed to raise revenue? Even from the 8th century there is no clear evidence that minting was taking place within the *wics* (see Chapters 6, 7 and 8).

Apart from those coins directly attributable to London because of the legend that they bear contained within the hoard, there is nothing else besides their known distribution to tie the Crondall hoard coins to England, although most differ from their Merovingian counterparts in, for instance, not usually bearing the name of moneyers. Such coins are not found on the Continent, a fact which seems to pin their origin firmly to this country and, along with the occasional use of runes on some of the coinage, defines them as essentially different from the coinage of the Frankish and Byzantine spheres.

The small scale of the issues, as estimated from the small number of dies represented by the coins in the hoard correlated with the numbers of single finds, has been taken by Stuart to indicate that they were not used as currency in a money economy.<sup>60</sup> Metcalf disagrees with this analysis, suggesting that commonly the analysis of later medieval coin hoards provides an underestimate of the number of dies.<sup>61</sup> The value of these coins, as Metcalf discusses, has led many interpreters to the conclusion that they did not have a monetary function but rather were used within a primarily barter economy by the rich for unilateral payments such as gifts, fines, dowries and judicial obligations (as discussed in more general terms in Chapter 3).<sup>62</sup> Metcalf goes on to argue that the metrology of the *thrymsas* (i.e. the combination of their weight and fineness) suggest that the moneyers were interested in the intrinsic value and hence the potential acceptance of the coinage by a trading group, further suggesting that their production was governed at least in part by commercial rather than prestige considerations.<sup>63</sup> This debate has distinct echoes of that held between scholars examining the coinage of the later Iron Age, as discussed in the previous chapter. The salient point here is that careful controls on the weight and uniformity of the alloys by moneyers may also represent a decree by authority for trustworthiness to enable taxation, and need not necessarily indicate the use of these items in currency-led exchange, tolls could be levied on goods passing into a jurisdiction. In fact, there is little indication within the historical sources for the use of money in a market exchange system. Indeed, the only evidence that exists for contemporary value of the coinage is derived from documentary sources which discuss terms such as shilling in terms of

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<sup>59</sup> *MECi*, 162.

<sup>60</sup> I. Stewart, 'Anglo-Saxon gold coins', in R.A.G. Carson and C.M. Kraay (eds), *Scripta Nummaria Romana. Essays Presented to Humphrey Sutherland* (London, 1978), 143–72, see particularly p. 144.

<sup>61</sup> *T&Si*, 36.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 38–40.

taxation and not exchange. An increasing debasement of this coinage throughout the 7th century can be demonstrated by studies of the ratio of gold in various issues which is mirrored in the contemporary Continental gold coinage.<sup>64</sup> There is another possible explanation for debasement of the coinage, or rather the variability in the amount of gold within that alloy, however: the colour of the coin may have been an important component in terms of what it communicated about the issuing authority. Creighton examined the potential meaning of colour in gold objects of the middle to later Iron Age and suggested that it was in itself a signifying attribute of the object and conveyed a supernatural or spiritually meaningful message associated directly with the object.<sup>65</sup> Numismatists have long made the rather normative assumption that alloy equates directly with value and that variations in composition therefore relate to the potential debasement of the coinage. Indeed, much of the chronology is based on such assumptions. However, it is possible that the alloy composition was not a direct attribute of the value, but rather was used to communicate other messages.

A start date for the minting of gold coinage in East Anglia is not easily ascertained. Sutton Hoo provides a convenient starting point, as the ornate purse hoard in that grave consists of 37 Merovingian coins, 3 blanks and 2 ingots. While this may be evidence that little Anglo-Saxon coinage was in circulation at the time of the burial, it is also possible that the group represents a symbolic assemblage, as suggested by Grierson.<sup>66</sup> The absence of Anglo-Saxon coins from the grave assemblage may not represent its absence from circulation, therefore, but rather the fact that the Sutton Hoo purse hoard was symbolic of foreign connections. In addition, it seems likely that the group was collected together on the Continent.<sup>67</sup> If that was the case then the group may represent a diplomatic gift, or perhaps a payment of some kind. Each coin appears to have derived from a different mint-place,<sup>68</sup> providing further weight to the suggestion that the hoard was assembled for symbolic or gift-giving reasons; however, Metcalf has argued that the 37 coins are from a strange ‘miscellany’ of mints, and suggests that the coins were those left at the base of a chest after the other more familiar specimens were removed to make up payment sums – what was left was serviceable for burial.<sup>69</sup> If the burial does in fact pre-date the use of coins then it cannot be by very long, as the Merovingian coinage seems to suggest a mid-620s date for the burial, hence the attribution of Redwald (d. c. AD 627) as the most likely candidate for the identity of the buried king.

Metcalf noted in 1994 that the East Anglian distribution of *thrymsas* was confined, all found to the south of Coddanham. This is no longer the case (Fig. 19). However, the vast majority of Anglo-

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 40–41.

<sup>65</sup> J. Creighton, *Coins and Power in Late Iron Age Britain* (Cambridge, 2000), 41.

<sup>66</sup> P. Grierson, ‘The purpose of the Sutton Hoo coins’, 14–18.

<sup>67</sup> *MECi*, 160.

<sup>68</sup> M.O.H. Carver, *Sutton Hoo: Burial Ground of Kings?* (London, 1998), 169.

<sup>69</sup> *T&Si*, 53.

Saxon gold coinage found in East Anglia does come from the site of Coddensham (seven coins), emphasising the location's early importance. Also in Suffolk there is an example from Eyke, and there are six more finds from Norfolk, from Bawsey, Billockby, North Walsham, Stradsett and Saham Toney. The Bawsey example does not have a good provenance, the attribution deriving from a description supplied by a potentially less than reliable source. However, the location, as we shall see later, is completely plausible. A shilling from North Walsham is also interesting, as it too is a plausible location, albeit for different reasons which are discussed in Chapter 7. Similarly, the find of a *thrymsa* from Stradsett needs to be examined against the evidence from neighbouring Fincham, which has produced four later *sceattas*.

In essence, the meagre 12 or 13 examples currently known reaffirm Metcalf's assertion that there was no domestic coinage circulating within East Anglia at this time.<sup>70</sup> However, it is notable that the national total of these coins amounts to 24 examples, which means that much of the coinage being lost in Anglo-Saxon kingdoms at this time was being lost in East Anglia.

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<sup>70</sup> *T&Si*, 33.



**Fig. 19.** Anglo-Saxon gold *thrymsas* distribution in East Anglia

## Conclusion

It is notable that the earliest forms of money circulating in East Anglia have strong connections with jewellery, often being made into items of dress by either simply being pierced or being subject to a more thorough transformation, as in the case of the Byzantine *solidus* incorporated as the centrepiece of the Wilton Cross. The use of runic script found on bracteates and some of the Early Anglo-Saxon gold coinage is particularly interesting, suggesting that they may have had a ‘magical’ role and perhaps are indicative of gift-giving within an embedded economy. Bracteates and runic script both have a strong connection with the Scandinavian world. Page and Blackburn have argued that a Sutherland II.ii.type shilling found at Billockby (Norfolk) (Fig. 20) represents the earliest



known East Anglian indigenous Anglo-Saxon coinage; this dates from the mid to late 7th century.<sup>71</sup> Their dating is based to a large extent on the type's absence from the Crondall hoard and its relative fineness, although neither of these factors provides a particularly precise measure of date. What is particularly noteworthy, though, is the use of runes on this coin. Runic inscription are also a feature of the Sutherland II.iii type coins, which are dated to between AD 650 and 670, several of which have been found in East Anglia. As will be seen in the following chapters this use of runes continues to be a theme of the later silver coinage produced in East Anglia, providing a strong supporting case for the idea that East Anglia had a particular identity that was focused to some extent on North Sea connections.<sup>72</sup>



**Fig. 20.** Sutherland II.ii shilling, EMC. No. 1998.0081, Billockby, Norfolk – Runic.

Another notable aspect of the distribution of this Early Anglo-Saxon coinage is that it appears in several locations that later become important centres for coin loss, such as Bawsey and Coddanham (see Chapter 5 and 6). The numbers are small but, when correlated with the Merovingian and Byzantine evidence, we can see that there are two major centres of coin loss within East Anglia: the area around Bawsey, and the Gipping Valley. This directly presages the situation in the late 7th and 8th centuries and suggest (as will be further discussed in Chapter 8) that these were the main centres for converting agrarian wealth into coin, even at this early point in time. As discussed in the previous chapter, we do not have a clear concept of the amounts of gold coinage in circulation at this time: clearly the circulating assemblage was smaller than was the case in the following silver coinage phase, but the relatively small numbers should not, given the later evidence, dissuade us from pushing the pattern back in time and making conclusions about the geography of coin use in the mid 7th century. It seems highly likely that the same important centres that can be seen more clearly later were operating also at this time in a similar manner, converting wealth into forms that made it more applicable to political and military use.

<sup>71</sup> R.I. Page and M. Blackburn, 'A new runic coin type from Norfolk, England', *Nytt om Runer: Meldingsblad om runeforskning* 133 (1998), 12–13.

<sup>72</sup> Hines, *The Scandinavian Character of Anglian England*.

The aim of this chapter has been to explore how the concept of coinage developed during the Early Anglo-Saxon period. Very broadly, what has been shown is that the evidence for coins and pseudo-coins representing a money economy is not secure. Instead, the evidence suggests that coins and pseudo-coins retained their role in exchange, but that the organisation of exchange was embedded within various social and cultural practices such as gift-giving and obligations. In essence, coins and pseudo-coins were valued, but did not necessarily represent notional values for other materials.

## Chapter 5

### Coins in the East Anglian landscape 670–710: the Primary *sceatta* phase

As discussed in the preceding chapter, the chronology of coin production in the mid–late 7th century is not particularly well understood, and the implications of this are discussed below. Suffice it to say that within a 50-year period there was a massive increase in the need for, and use of, first gold and then silver coinage that has left a strong and indelible mark on the archaeological record. This explosion of coin use has only recently been understood from a geographical perspective, as a consequence of the large numbers of new coin finds reported by metal-detector users, and the reasons for it are, therefore, not currently well understood. Only through mapping the locations of coins concentrations can we understand what this enormous increase in coin use represents. Until recently it was thought that the *sceatta* coinage was intimately associated with *wics* and formed the basis of trade within these places.<sup>1</sup> We can now see that this was far from the case, but the argument does hold a grain of truth: coins do seem to be associated with places that go on, in some form, to become urban.

#### **Transitional coinage: gold/silver, mid–late 7th century**

*Pada and Vanimundus Series – the precursors to sceatta coinage (Fig. 21)*

Two debased gold series of *thrymsas*, which have respectively the names *Pada* in runes and *Vanimundus* in Latin, pre-date the appearance of Anglo-Saxon *sceattas*. They represent a transition from gold to silver coinage and hence the prototype for *sceattas*. Both these types contained, along with silver, significant quantities of gold: up to 30% in the case of the *Pada* type.<sup>2</sup> More commonly, the proportion of gold is closer to 20%, while at the lower end of the spectrum the gold content can be as low as 10%.<sup>3</sup> Some numismatists have made a connection between the name ‘*Pada*’ and the Mercian King Peada (d. 656), but the more recent consensus is that it was the name of a moneyer.<sup>4</sup> Both the *Pada* and the *Vanimundus* issues were modelled on 4th-century types, the latter probably being a copy based on a pale gold *tremissis* of the moneyer *Warimundus* issued from the Austrasian

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<sup>1</sup> See Hodges, *Dark Age Economics* (1989); as recently as 2004 Naylor was arguing that *sceattas* were restricted to a coastal distribution: Naylor, *An Archaeology of Trade*.

<sup>2</sup> *MECi*, 163–4.

<sup>3</sup> *T&Si*, 74.

mint at *Matrico* (possibly Mairy or Meurthe-et-Moselle).<sup>5</sup> Both general types date from around AD 670–80. Given that runic script was not likely to have been employed at this time within Merovingian-influenced Kent, it is likely that the *Pada* series was produced somewhere north of the Thames.<sup>6</sup> However, the distribution of *Padas* is of little help in this regard, with most of the coins coming from the area of Kent, London or Essex (see Fig. 22).<sup>7</sup> These coins seem to have been issued over a fairly long period between around AD 655 and 680.<sup>8</sup> Most numismatists follow Rigold and class them as primary *sceattas* which constitute the stylistic basis for the silver coinage that follows closely in time.<sup>9</sup> This is reflected in Rigold's scheme (still in use though now increasingly modified), in which the primary phases of the pennies are divided into Series A, B and C, with Series Pa and Va forming a preliminary stage.<sup>10</sup> Often these coins are discussed as representing a transition from gold shillings to silver pennies thought by some scholars to correspond to inflationary pressures on the gold coinage which, it is considered, can be correlated with documentary sources. For example, in early-7th-century Kentish law a *wergeld* for a freeman was measured at 100 shillings, but in later West Saxon and Mercian law the figure is 200 shillings.<sup>11</sup> This evolution from gold to silver was thought to have taken place in the early 690s by Grierson and Blackburn and in the mid 670s by Metcalf.

Both the *Pada* and *Vanimundus* coins utilise a profile bust on their obverse sides with a diadem headdress which derives ultimately from the Greek fillet used for rewarding victorious athletes.<sup>12</sup> The *Pada* coins bear a 'standard' in reverse with the letters TOT XX within a square, and were the first of many Anglo-Saxon coins to use this convention. In some cases *Pada* replaces the TOT XX in runes. Again, this motif has classical origins; the TOT legend may be derived from a degradation of VOT, perhaps indicative of VICTORIAE LAETAE or VERTIVS EXERCIT; another possibility is presented on a Roman ring found in Britain which bears the legend TOT, thought to represent the name Toutatis, the principal Celtic deity in Gaul and Britain; alternatively, the T may represent a Tau cross.<sup>13</sup>

There are only nine of the *Pada* type coins known from East Anglia and three of these are from the remarkably rich site at Coddanham (Suffolk), with another three from graves found at the

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<sup>4</sup> I. Stewart, 'The English denarial coinage, c. 680– c. 570', in D. Hill and D.M. Metcalf (eds), *Sceattas in England and on the Continent* (Oxford, BAR Brit. Series 128, 1984), 1–26; *MECi*, 163–4.

<sup>5</sup> *MECi*, 164.

<sup>6</sup> Stewart, 'English denarial coinage', 1.

<sup>7</sup> EMC: <http://www-cm.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/emc/>.

<sup>8</sup> *T&Si*, 73.

<sup>9</sup> T. Abramson, *Sceattas: An Illustrated Guide* (Great Dunham, 2006), 4.

<sup>10</sup> S.E. Rigold, 'The principal series of English sceattas', *BNJ* 47 (1977), 21–30.

<sup>11</sup> *MECi*, 165; *EHDi*, 52–3.

<sup>12</sup> Gannon, *Iconography*, 45.

Buttermarket excavations in Ipswich, the other three are from Norwich, Long Stratton (Norfolk) and Woodbridge (Suffolk).<sup>14</sup> Interpreting the distribution of such a small assemblage is difficult. The fact that Coddtenham features so prominently suggests that these may be a group deposited as a result of one event, such as a burial or perhaps a purse loss. Coddtenham is also significantly productive in coins of other series. The *Pada* from Norwich is recorded on the EMC but lacks a solid provenance. In addition to these examples, Metcalf records an example from Barham of sub-type PA III, the sub-type was struck in both silver and gold, which does not appear on the EMC.<sup>15</sup> West records that two *Padas* were found at Barham (SHER BRH 016, 018).<sup>16</sup>

The use of the ‘standard’ design on the reverse of the *Pada* coins type is intriguing and may suggest the early use and dissemination of the concept of a standard: the TOT XX latinate lettering that becomes increasingly degraded on the later secondary *sceattas* may refer to the value of the coin in standard terms. By the time the words are reused in an Anglo-Saxon context they may have become a motif, one that no longer actually spells out the value, but represents it iconographically. Presumably the original value was one shilling, but this seems to decrease over time. The *sceattas* were probably valued at one-twelfth of a shilling, one penny, and thus the nominal value on the coin may have been completely incorrect, but perhaps this did not matter: as the symbolism changed and transformed it was no longer understood literally. It is notable that much of this coinage has been found at the two places with *wic* elements in their place-names: namely Ipswich and Norwich. Three of these coins were found in graves at the Buttermarket in Ipswich.<sup>17</sup> Several are thought to be ‘forgeries’, although whether that term is anachronistic in this period is debatable. Two of these grave finds (from Grave context 4275) formed part of a necklace with biconical silver wire beads, silver ‘bulla’ pendants and knotted silver wire rings.<sup>18</sup> We already know that there was an important centre at Ipswich by the mid–late 7th century, as evinced by the spread of imported pottery within the area of the later town, and the recent re-dating of the Buttermarket cemetery.<sup>19</sup>

Coins of *Vadimundus* are even rarer in East Anglia, with only four examples: one from Burnham Market (Norfolk), another from Eye (Suffolk), one from Aldeby (Norfolk); and the last from the Fishergate excavations, from Norwich. Until 2005 there were no transitional or primary series coins

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 171–2.

<sup>14</sup> C. Scull and A. Bayliss, ‘Dating burials of the seventh and eighth centuries: a case study from Ipswich’, in J. Hines, K. Hoiland Nielson and F. Siegmund (eds), *The Pace of Change: Studies in Early-Medieval Chronology* (1999), 80–88.

<sup>15</sup> *T&Si*, 74.

<sup>16</sup> West, *Corpus*, 6.

<sup>17</sup> Scull and Bayliss, ‘Dating burials of the seventh and eighth centuries’.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

known from Norwich but now we have, through the excavation at Fishergate, six examples, of which two are transitional and one is a Series Va coin. One example of the Va type was found at Burnham Market; again, this is a location where a later concentration of *sceattas* accumulated.



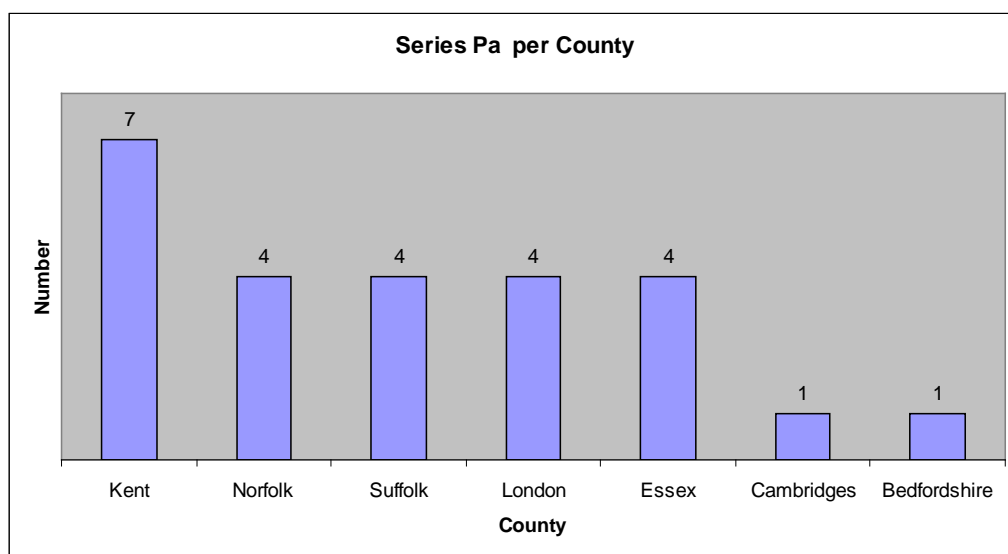
**Fig. 21.** Series Pa and Va.

The *Pada* type utilises runic script, which was, as asserted by Stewart, typically used in the manufacture of coinage north of the Thames. Stewart's assertion can be seen to be stronger now than it was at the time.<sup>20</sup> However, the case for the *Pada* type being a northern aspect of the coinage rests on the runic element, as the currently known distribution is inconclusive. Clearly, of all the

<sup>19</sup> Wade, 'Ipswich'; Scull and Bayliss, 'Dating burials of the seventh and eighth centuries' and C. Scull, *Early Medieval (Late 5<sup>th</sup> – Early 8<sup>th</sup> Centuries AD) Cemeteries at Boss Hall and Buttermarket, Ipswich, Suffolk* (Med .Archaeol. Monograph 27).

<sup>20</sup> Stewart, 'English denarial coinage', note 6.

places that Series Pa was circulating, East Anglia, here defined as the modern counties of Norfolk and Suffolk, has collectively produced the largest number of lost coins. Given the suggestion that they could have been minted north of the Thames, it may be that the Kentish and London assemblages are explicable in terms of trade. The *Vadimundus* type was thought to originate south of the Thames, but, based on the current evidence, would seem to have been lost most commonly in East Anglia (Fig. 25).



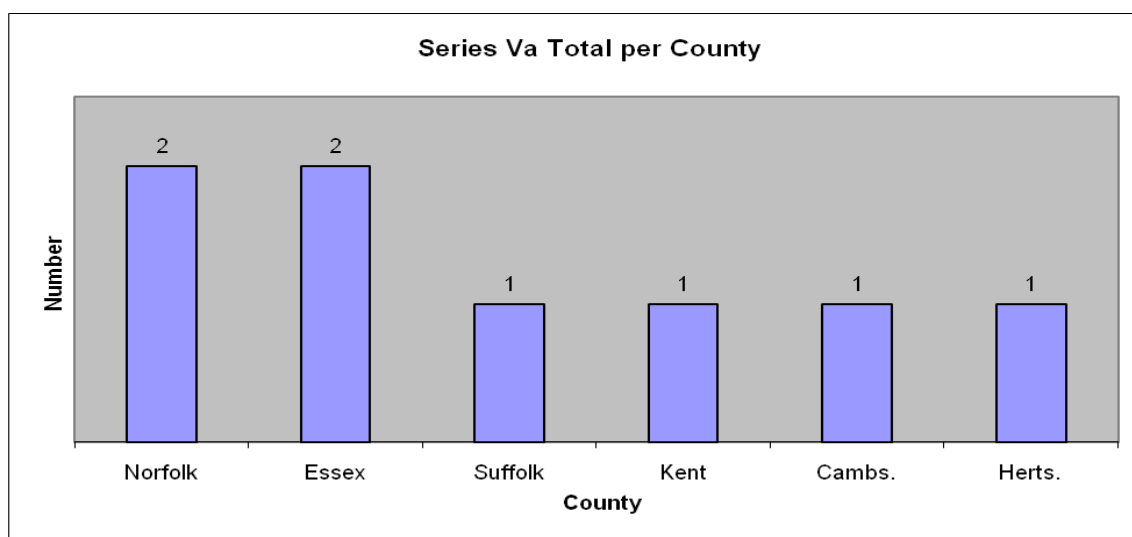
**Fig. 22.** Chart of Series Pa per county – England.



**Fig. 23.** Series Pa Ia (N151), 665–680, EMC No.1990.1287, from Coddtenham, Suffolk.



**Fig. 24.** Series Va B II (N 12.2), EMC No. 1996.0116, Burnham Market/Overy, Norfolk.



**Fig. 25.** Chart of Series Va per county – England.

### Silver coinage AD 685–710

The silver coinage of the latest decades of the 7th and the early 8th centuries represents an important change in the quantity of coins in circulation. Understanding the value of this coinage is fraught with difficulty, as has been discussed in Chapter 3: whether a silver penny bought a horse or a loaf of bread is currently unknown<sup>21</sup>. We can surmise from the lack of die-interlinks and the numbers of lost coins that it was a large coinage.<sup>22</sup> This does help to clarify the value: a penny was probably not worth a very large amount but whether it represented the labour of a day, a week or more is not understood. What we can see is that coin loss does have a pattern (as will be demonstrated for East Anglia), which suggests that it is associated with particular sorts of places.

<sup>21</sup> Although some of Æthelbert's of Kent Laws stipulate fines in *sceattas*, *EHD* I, 33.

<sup>22</sup> *T&Si*.



It is also unclear who was responsible for producing this coinage. Some scholars, such as Metcalf, make the case for its being predominantly controlled by the king, basing this assertion on laws from the 10th century which clearly show royal control over who produces coinage and where that production takes place.<sup>23</sup> Alternatively, Grierson and Blackburn suggest that enterprising individuals began the production and were later regulated by the royal interests.<sup>24</sup> My interest in this thesis is predominantly in where the coins were being lost; conclusions on these issues are drawn in Chapters 8 and 9.

Where *sceattas* were minted is another mystery, as no mint-places are provided on the inscriptions. This has not limited speculation, however, and the proximity of coin loss to a place assumed for historical or archaeological reasons to have been a likely mint-place tends to be the main form of argument.<sup>25</sup> We can see from Athelstan's Grately decree that by the 10th century only *burhs* were ruled as being appropriate places for minting, which strongly indicates that royal interest in coin production was being exercised in a planned and intentional manner. As will be discussed in Chapter 8, it seems likely that this was also the case in the later 7th and 8th centuries.

### *Classification*

There are several competing frameworks for *sceatta* typologies and chronologies. An early attempt at a classificatory system was made by Keary at the British Museum and this is still to some extent utilised as BMC types; this has subsequently been modified and expanded.<sup>26</sup> Most numismatists now studying the coinage utilise, at least as a basis, Rigold's system. This divides the coinage chronologically into Primary, Intermediate and Secondary, and then subdivides these blocks into series with a mnemonic letter, such as L for London, although many of these attributions have now been proven incorrect.<sup>27</sup> This system has been adopted here because of its general acceptance elsewhere. North has also produced a separate classification for the *sceatta* coinage.<sup>28</sup> The standard text now for the study of this coinage must be, however, Metcalf's comprehensive catalogue of the coins held in the Ashmolean Museum.<sup>29</sup> Blackburn has refined and adapted the classification in

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<sup>23</sup> *T&Si*, 12; for a useful summary of the issues see Gannon, *Iconography*.

<sup>24</sup> *MECi*, 79.

<sup>25</sup> Metcalf has attempted to refine this method by utilising regression analysis: D.M. Metcalf, 'Determining the mint-attribution of East Anglian *sceattas* through regression analysis', *BNJ* 70 (2000), 1–11.

<sup>26</sup> C.F. Keary, *A Catalogue of English Coins in the British Museum, Anglo-Saxon Series*, vol. 1 (London, 1887); P.V. Hill, 'Uncatalogued *Sceattas* in the National and Other Collections', *Numismatic Chronicle* 13 (1953), 92–114; Stewart, 'The early English denarial coinage' 5–25.

<sup>27</sup> S.E. Rigold, 'The two primary series of English *sceattas*', *BNJ* 30 (1960), 6–53, and 'The principal series of English *sceattas*'.

<sup>28</sup> J.J. North, *English Hammered Coinage*, vol. 1 (London, 1980).

<sup>29</sup> D.M. Metcalf, *Thrymsas and Sceattas in the Ashmolean Museum Oxford*, 3 vols (Oxford, 1993–4).

order to better understand the chronology,<sup>30</sup> and the system continues to be refined and expanded online.<sup>31</sup>

*Merovingian deniers (Figs 26 and 27)*

Silver *deniers* of the end of the Merovingian period seem to have begun as a standard issue and not as a kind of debased *tremissis*.<sup>32</sup> However, the style of the early silver coinage is similar to some *tremisses* designs. Frisian coins tend to utilise fewer classical motifs and more Germanic stylistic devices, and most Merovingian coins bear some sort of legend, unlike the more naturalistic Anglo-Saxon and Frisian types. However, royal names, unlike on gold coinage, are rare on the Merovingian *denier*.<sup>33</sup> There is an expansion in ecclesiastical minting, which may explain the lack of kings' names on the legends of this coinage, and is possibly associated with the use of this coinage for transactions related to Church estates.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> M. Blackburn, 'A chronology for the sceattas', in Hill and Metcalf, *Sceattas in England and on the Continent*, 165–74.

<sup>31</sup> EMC: <http://www-cm.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/emc/>.

<sup>32</sup> *MECi*, 138.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 139.

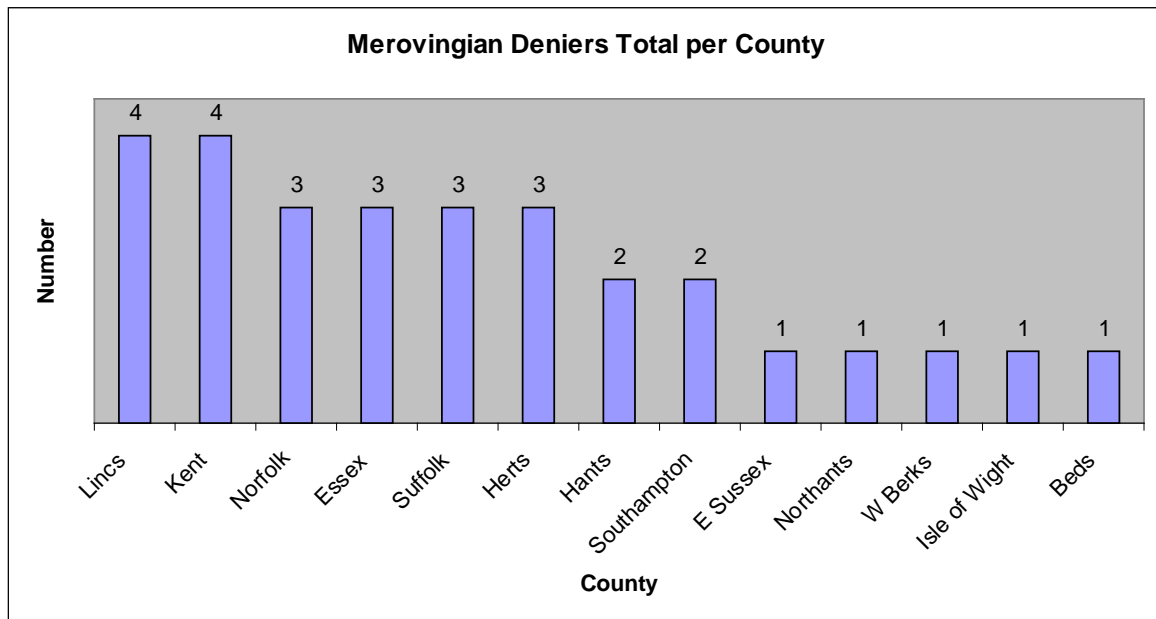


**Fig. 26.** Map of Merovingian *deniers* – East Anglia.

Merovingian *deniers* are rare in England, with only 30 known,<sup>35</sup> and, indeed, they are rare in East Anglia. The few examples known from the region come from Congham, Eyke, Oxborough, Badingham, Old Buckenham (may in fact be a copy or imitation), Caistor St Edmund (×2), Thetford and Ipswich (×4). These three locations establish the connection between this traded coin type and places that either were or were to become places defined as towns.

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 150.



**Fig. 27.** Chart of Merovingian *deniers* per county – England.

#### *Frisian sceattas*

The silver coinage of the Low Countries or Frisia is, like the English silver coinage of the late 7th and 8th centuries, known to numismatists as ‘*sceattas*’. Somewhat confusingly, the majority of Frisian silver coinage of this period is discussed within the English classificatory system, devised by Rigold, as the Intermediate Series was, as the term suggests, chronologically sandwiched between the Primary and Secondary *sceattas* types. The sequencing of the coinage devised by Rigold now appears in places unlikely, but the assumption is still being at least partially upheld in the chronological gap between the English primary and secondary series (discussed below). As it is beyond the scope of this thesis to re-examine the assumptions that numismatists have constructed over generations, the roughly alpha-numeric classification will here be used in the discussion that follows. As a result of this classification system, many of the imported Frisian coins will be discussed between the Anglo-Saxon primary and secondary series. It remains possible, however, that some of these types attributed to Frisia were in fact produced in England.

#### *Anglo-Saxon Primary Series sceattas*

Before looking at the statistics for East Anglia and discussing the distribution of the various *sceatta* types across the region’s landscape, it is worth beginning this section with a discussion of the current understanding of these enigmatic items. Some of these aspects have been touched on in the previous sections of this chapter but it is worth reiterating here that this was the first widespread

coinage to be utilised in this region, and in the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms generally, since the collapse of the Roman government and economy. This coinage was not a direct continuation of a tradition but, rather, was a new beginning after a hiatus of two centuries. The reasons for this sudden explosion in the use of silver coinage tie into debates regarding and interpretations of the changes to be found in other aspects of society at this time, including the growth of urban places and the developing role of the state and Church. One of the more enigmatic aspects of this coinage is the lack of information it provides regarding at whose behest the particular examples were struck. In this respect these coins are not open to conventional numismatic analysis, and have more in common with prehistoric coinage than with the later issues of the medieval period. Unlike the situation at the end of the 8th century, when the underlying institutional structures and attribution of the power behind the minting are unambiguous owing to the currency reforms carried out by Offa, the motivation and patronage behind the *sceatta* coinage are extremely difficult to tease out.<sup>36</sup>

What seems likely is that the stylistic aspects of this currency had a meaning, which should in theory lead us back to the impetus behind their production. In particular, it seems likely, although not certain, that the designs communicated some meaning about the economic credibility of the issuer.<sup>37</sup> There are also other ways in which that the imagery may have functioned; for example, classical propaganda was often distributed through the medium of coinage and it is possible that this was also an aspect of the Anglo-Saxon issues: some of the imagery may have been involved with the dissemination of the Christian message.<sup>38</sup> The variety of designs, however, suggests that many different intentions were behind the striking and distribution of these coins. One of the potential messages of the medium may have been identity or affiliation. The use of runic script, as opposed to Latin, on many of the coins is interesting in this respect; those employing the former were apparently manufactured north of the Thames<sup>39</sup> and the use of runic script might indicate a more Scandinavian-leaning identity for those places – such as Northumbria and East Anglia – where runic coinage was popular, which correlates well with other contemporary artefact types.<sup>40</sup> In contrast, the use of Latin seems to be more common in the southern Saxon kingdoms, and might therefore suggest a tendency to affiliation with the Frankish kingdom.<sup>41</sup> However, any scheme based on such an assumption is in danger of deriving too much from a simplistic observation; clearly Frankish influence was strong in East Anglia too. It is nevertheless an intriguing potential

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<sup>36</sup> *T&Si*, 11-2.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Gannon, *Iconography*, 2.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> Stewart, 'English denarial coinage', 1.

<sup>40</sup> Hines, *The Scandinavian character of Anglian England*.

<sup>41</sup> The connection between the Frankish world and the kingdoms of southern England is discussed in Geake, *Grave-Goods in Conversion-Period England*, and in Harris, *Byzantium, Britain and the West*.

correlation that does seem to agree with Bede's description of where the Angles and Saxons variously settled.

Many of the series possess busts in the classical style or, more accurately, an approximation of the classical style. This seems to suggest that the authority was, if not a king, an individual with authority associated with the king: a reeve, perhaps; the crown as a motif is common and a clear indicator of royal authority. Some examples may represent saints, bishops or Christ, as crosses are also a common theme on many of the coins and the visual culture utilised by the Church is echoed in many of the other motifs. Whether this is a representation of a general enthusiasm on the part of royal authority for the Church, or suggests minting of the coin by Church authorities themselves, is unclear. Metcalf examines both possibilities, first recounting the argument of comparison with gold coinage in Merovingian Gaul: some analysts have suggested that little royal control was exercised over the numerous mints that existed throughout that area. Then, during the later 7th and 8th centuries, the royal house took more interest, and uniformity was imposed on the coinage, culminating in the reforms of Pepin in AD 755.<sup>42</sup> The argument follows that Pepin's reforms were the impetus for Offa's a generation or so later. However, Metcalf later criticises this argument on the grounds that it attaches too much significance to the outward similarities of these coinages, that it relies on a few strands of evidence, and that – as most of the coin-using population was probably illiterate at this time – coin-users may have responded better to iconography than to written words. Metcalf also makes the point that although sceattas are not obviously a royal coinage this does not equate to sceattas are not royal coinage.<sup>43</sup> The mass production of these coins, utilising scores of dies with the same design, strongly argues against the concept of this being an enterprise carried out on a small-scale or craft-shop basis. Thus the scale of the issues of, for example, Series R (see below) argues that the exercise was one carried out by big institutions (Series R represents a greater production volume than took place in East Anglia under Offa and later Saxon kings). Metcalf further argues that these kingdoms were closely governed by this time; it follows that it was likely that royal powers would have been very interested in controlling closely the issue of coinage, given the archaeological and historical evidence for close control of the means of production within large sectors of the economy and the demonstrable interest in taxation and judicial fines. The idea espoused by Blackburn and Grierson that Middle Saxon silver coinage began as a craft industry under the control of small entrepreneurs does not fit well with the character of the evidence.<sup>44</sup> Several kings did put their names on coinage prior to Offa: local examples include the pennies of Beonna *c.* AD 749, while in Northumbria Aldfrith's name was inscribed on coinage before

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<sup>42</sup> *T&Si*, 11.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

AD 704.<sup>45</sup> Metcalf argues that this might be attributed to Aldfrith's standing as a scholar and his patronage of the Church, reflecting the general flowering of the Church in that kingdom in the early 8th century.<sup>46</sup> Pictorially, as already noted, many coins may also have referred directly to royalty; we lack the visual clues in some cases to make a definitive attribution.

Offa had a close partnership in the production of coins with his archbishop, as did Eadberht in Northumbria. Notably Ecgberht, Archbishop of York, struck *sceattas* before Offa's reforms. This may in turn mean that there are iconographic clues to be found on the coinage that indicate minting under ecclesiastical control; Metcalf, for instance, points to a particular Series K find which displays a hand raised in blessing in the standard Trinitarian version of the gesture. This is a type thought for other reasons to originate in Canterbury. Notably the much later, early-10th-century, decree of Grately states that in Canterbury there were seven moneyers, four belonging to the king, two to the bishop and one to the abbot. It is not until Domesday that there are details of the mechanisms for royal control over moneyers and the harsh penalties for transgression,<sup>47</sup> and Blackburn and Grierson do not believe that *sceattas* were minted under royal control, on the basis that the iconography is not readily interpretable as royal and the personal names found on the coinage are not royal ones but rather those of moneyers.<sup>48</sup> Metcalf counters this argument, however, with the suggestion that the derivation of the die designs is not well enough understood to attribute the personal names to moneyers throughout all the series derivations. There may be particular messages communicated through the continued use of some personal moneyer's names long after it becomes unlikely that they were issuing the derivations: thus Series C and, later, R utilise the name 'Æpa', but the design, including the name, is derived from Series A.<sup>49</sup> It may be that particular minters acquire a legendary reputation for honesty which continues to be utilised after the minter himself has stopped producing. A modern analogy might be that of a well-regarded brandname.

Gannon has discussed the nature of the iconography utilised on this coinage and demonstrated that the visual culture expressed was embedded in the wider artistic situation.<sup>50</sup> The animals that are commonly represented on the coinage may map directly on to the iconography of saints and may have constituted a message more familiar to the Middle Saxon mind than statements in Latin. This provides an interpretative platform for understanding the probable sorts of messages being communicated by the authorities producing the coins, if not the exact role of the coinage in the

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<sup>44</sup> *MECi*, 98.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 13–16.

<sup>48</sup> *MECi*, 158.

<sup>49</sup> *T&Si*, 17.

<sup>50</sup> Gannon, *Iconography*, 2.

social relations of the day. The visual culture which represents the mindset producing some of the coins is various and runs a gamut of object types. A particularly interesting example is the assertion that the Undley bracteate, discussed above, with its use of both runic and Latin scripts, was understood by the contemporary observer as a three-dimensional object translated onto a two-dimensional surface dense with meaning.<sup>51</sup> With regard to coinage, Gannon makes the point that the variety and vitality of the portraits on the 7th-century gold coins, as displayed even at the medium's first flowering within, for instance, the Crondall hoard, demonstrates in some cases a conceptual link to media such as illuminated books. Much of the art of the period demonstrates a strong interest in Roman styles, probably largely due to the expanding influence of the Christian Church. The bird-on-cross motif found on the reverse of Series B (probably minted in East Anglia, see below), and its consistently clear execution, contrasts with the rather confused variety of portraits found on the obverse of the coins, and is testament to the religious message of the coinage, these iconographic messages may in turn derive from other objects such as church lamps of Byzantine origin. Gannon argues that the coinage displays a common message of the promise of salvation, and that it is apparent throughout the vast variety of motifs and themes.<sup>52</sup> Clearly, then, the main motive of whoever was producing the coins was a relatively simple Christian message, and at first sight this might put the Church in the frame. However, we can be fairly sure that state and Church were commonly bound in many matters at this time. Indeed, the question is in some senses moot, as the growth of coinage, as with many of the concomitant changes evident in the historical and archaeological records at this time, suggests a growing control over the means of wealth production exercised by a consortium of institutions concerned with creating machinery of state. It would seem that the Church was particularly interested in the models it perhaps knew best, those of the Roman Empire and its various successors, but elements of this model needed to be mediated through the local political authority, which required a modification of the tools and flexibility of approach, if not of intention. The interplay between the local warlord and the Christian institution is discussed in detail later in this thesis.

In this discussion, types of *sceattas* that are not present within East Anglia may be mentioned but are not considered in detail, as the priority of this work is to examine the economic hinterland of urban and pre-urban places in the former kingdom.

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 183.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 183–4.



*Series A: East Anglian distribution (Figs 28–30)*<sup>53</sup>

Metcalf views Rigold's Primary Series A as a 'reform' coinage and attributes it to the Kentish mint(s) of King Wihtred (AD 686–725), suggesting that it was probably introduced around AD 694 to replace the *Pada* issue.<sup>54</sup> Metcalf, however, with the Cimiez hoard in mind, has suggested that this dating is too late and a more plausible date for the start of Series A is within the reign of King Hlothre (AD 673–85). The Series was minted in high-purity standard silver with the exception of one example, which was struck in a very pale gold and may thus directly represent the change from silver to gold, also seen roughly contemporaneously in the Series Pa III. Hence it may, by extension, be surmised that these initial examples of silver coins may represent shillings rather than pennies.<sup>55</sup>



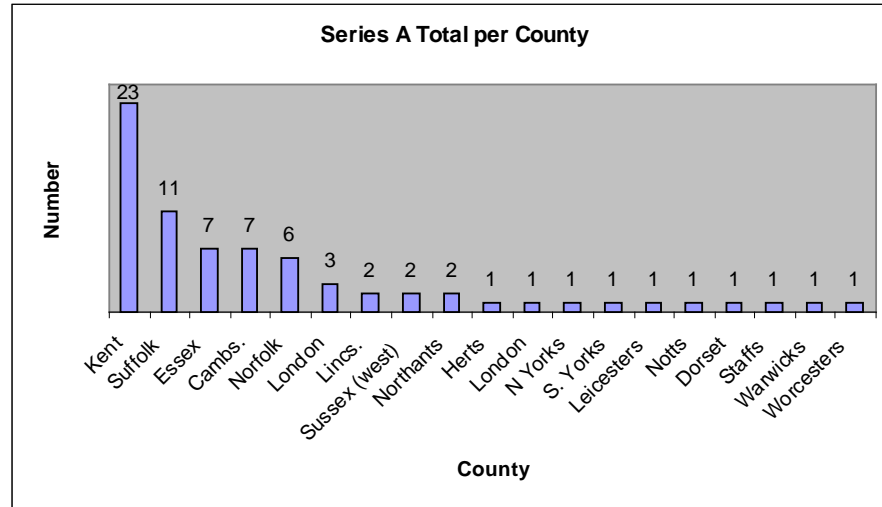
**Fig. 28.** Series A3 (Type 2a) (N 40), EMC No. 1993.9095, Caistor St Edmund, Norfolk.

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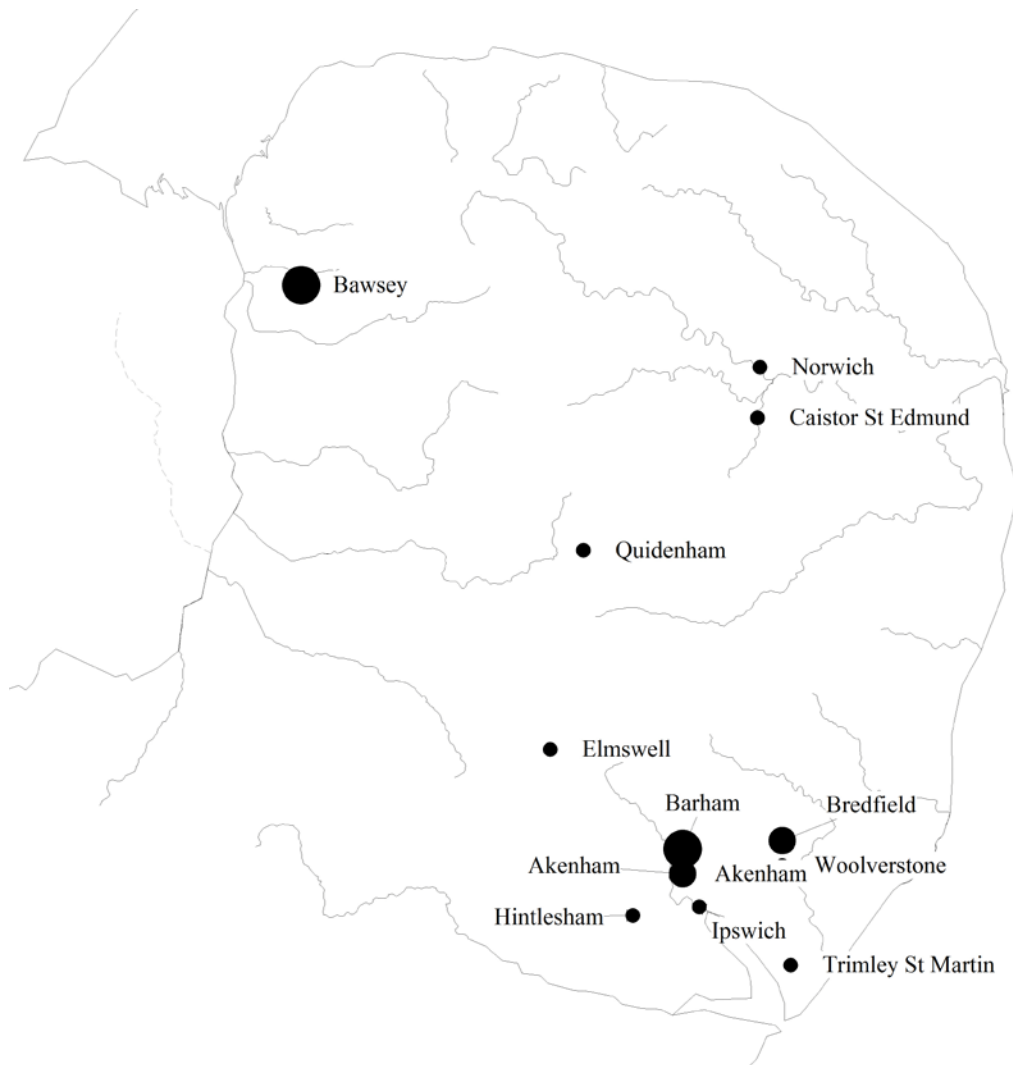
<sup>53</sup> Throughout this section much of the background information is derived from *T&Si*.

<sup>54</sup> Rigold, 'The principal series of English sceattas'.

<sup>55</sup> *T&Si*, 85.



**Fig. 29.** Chart of Series A per county – England.



**Fig. 30.** Map of Series A sceattas – East Anglia.

Approximately three times more Series A than Series Pa III coins are known from the country,<sup>56</sup> suggesting that the former represent the beginning of a rise in the numbers of coins in circulation. This series is also the prototype for the subsequent Series C and R, both of which had larger circulations. Metcalf estimates that altogether the series utilised between 50 and 60 obverse dies.<sup>57</sup> A profile bust motif with radiate crown defines the Series' obverse side and derives from a Roman *Concordia Militum* type.<sup>58</sup> The reverse side of the coins uses a standard motif with the Latin-inspired TOT XX lettering.

According to the EMC there is a total of 72 find-spots of Series A coins. Others can be added to this total, and further examples have been added here for East Anglia that do not appear on the EMC. Although the distribution of the type has altered since Metcalf suggested that the Series originates in Kent, the substance of the claim still seems to be true, with some 23 of the known single finds coming from that county, along with a couple of major hoards (from Hougham and Milton Regis). However, the next largest group comes from East Anglia (Fig. 29). We can see from Fig. 30 that this collection is concentrated in the Gipping valley, with a further five find-spots in Norfolk, including examples from Bawsey, Caistor St Edmund and Norwich. Essex has produced seven find-spots, primarily from the north of the county, although one of the two examples from London comes from Wapping and hence represents a southern Essex element of the distribution (the other London example comes from the City). Cambridgeshire contains four Series A find-spots. A single Series A2, probably of sub-type 2b,<sup>59</sup> was discovered at the Fishergate excavations in Norwich in a possible 'purse' hoard, along with three Series B coins and a very unusual gold-plated copper-alloy *thrymsa* forgery. A single Series A coin was discovered within a grave at the Buttermarket excavation in Ipswich (Suffolk SMR IAS3104). Few other primary *sceattas* have been discovered in the town.

#### *Series B (Figs 31–35)*<sup>60</sup>

Series B has a number of sub-types defined by Rigold and subsequently refined by Metcalf.<sup>61</sup> Rigold's BIIIB was later defined by Metcalf as making up a component of the Secondary Series J on the basis that it is not represented in the Aston Rowant Hoard of c. AD 705–10.<sup>62</sup> Metcalf's

<sup>56</sup> EMC: <http://www-cm.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/emc/>.

<sup>57</sup> *T&Si*, 86.

<sup>58</sup> Gannon, *Iconography*, 45.

<sup>59</sup> *T&Si*, Plate 4, 89, although the Fishergate specimen differs from this example in that the flan is exposed slightly differently.

<sup>60</sup> Throughout this section much of the background information is derived from *T&Si*. Also see Rigold, 'The two primary series of English *sceattas*', and Gannon, *Iconography*.

<sup>61</sup> *T&Si* and *T&Siii*, and Rigold, 'The two primary series of English *sceattas*'.

<sup>62</sup> *T&Si*, 94 and *T&Siii*, 342.

definition has been used here; it defines four main sub-types for the series: BX, BIA/C, BIB and BII. BIA and BIB were both found in the West Hougham hoard, with specimens from Series A2, and thus probably date from around AD 685–90.<sup>63</sup>

A bust with diadem and spiky hair, sometimes with a cross shown in front, make up the bulk of Series B obverse sides. Series BZ, which Metcalf has argued should be seen as a separate, though still a primary, issue, differs in showing a much-stylised facing head, with a beard and long hair, surrounded by crosses.<sup>64</sup> Gannon suggests that this style of face has its closest parallels on such objects as the Hexham plaque (Fig. 33) and, less convincingly, on the haunch of the bird mounts on the Sutton Hoo shield. It can also be seen on the ‘York Group’ of pale gold shillings, which puts the style in the tradition of royal metalwork in both Northumbria and East Anglia.<sup>65</sup> The profile bust with diadem, spiky hair and an encircling of pellets is found on the rest of the Series B obverses and derives from Merovingian coins, and can also be seen on the earlier Anglo Saxon gold coinage, as well as on the Pa Series.<sup>66</sup>



**Fig. 31.** Series BX (Type 26) (N 124 (680–685)), EMC No. 2008.0039, Nr King’s Lynn, Norfolk.



**Fig. 32.** Series BZ (Type 29a) (N 130)(690-710), EMC No. 1993.9138, Nr King’s Lynn, Norfolk

The reverse of Series B illustrates birds, probably doves, with crosses: this is a motif not used in the earlier gold coinage, where the cross is used singly at the centre of the coin. All Series B coins show the bird mounted on a cross, sometimes with legends which are generally unreadable but

<sup>63</sup> This is the dating now used by the EMC: <http://www-cm.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/emc/>.

<sup>64</sup> *T&Si*, 133–9.

<sup>65</sup> Gannon, *Iconography*, 26–7.

derived from Latin and, in the case of the BX type, appear to attempt to copy the VANIMUNDUS legend, and often with a torque of pellets, occasionally snake-headed. Type BX, which is argued by Metcalf to be the earliest in the series,<sup>67</sup> shows the cross on the reverse on steps, perhaps alluding to a hill, presumably Calvary. The legend becomes unclear on the BII types, whereas on the BX and BI some of the letters can be discerned. Rigold suggested that the iconography used on Type B was Anglo-Saxon, with no Merovingian numismatic forebear, although one coin discussed by Prou seems to carry a similar motif.<sup>68</sup> Gannon proposes that the bird motif represents a dove symbolising the Holy Spirit, which may have Coptic origins, and is also found on items such as a 4th–6th century bronze lamp. It can be seen, too, on contemporary insular Anglo-Saxon art, including the Franks casket and the Lindisfarne Gospels.<sup>69</sup> Gannon goes on to reproduce a drawing of a bracteate from Winkel, Hessen, in southern Germany, which clearly shows almost exactly the same bird-on-cross motif with a more Germanic rendering of the animal form.<sup>70</sup> This object is roughly contemporary with the Series B coins and may indeed reflect their influence, although Series B is a rare find on the Continent.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 34, 45–51.

<sup>67</sup> *T&Si*, 96.

<sup>68</sup> Rigold, 'The two primary series of English sceattas', 11; M. Prou, *Les Monnaies mérovingiennes*, Catalogue des monnaies françaises de la Bibliothèque National (Paris, 1892), 1051; and discussed further in Gannon, *Iconography*, 108.

<sup>69</sup> Gannon, *Iconography*, 108–9.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 112, fig. 4.4.

<sup>71</sup> *T&Si*, 104.



**Fig. 33.** Te Hexham Plaque.

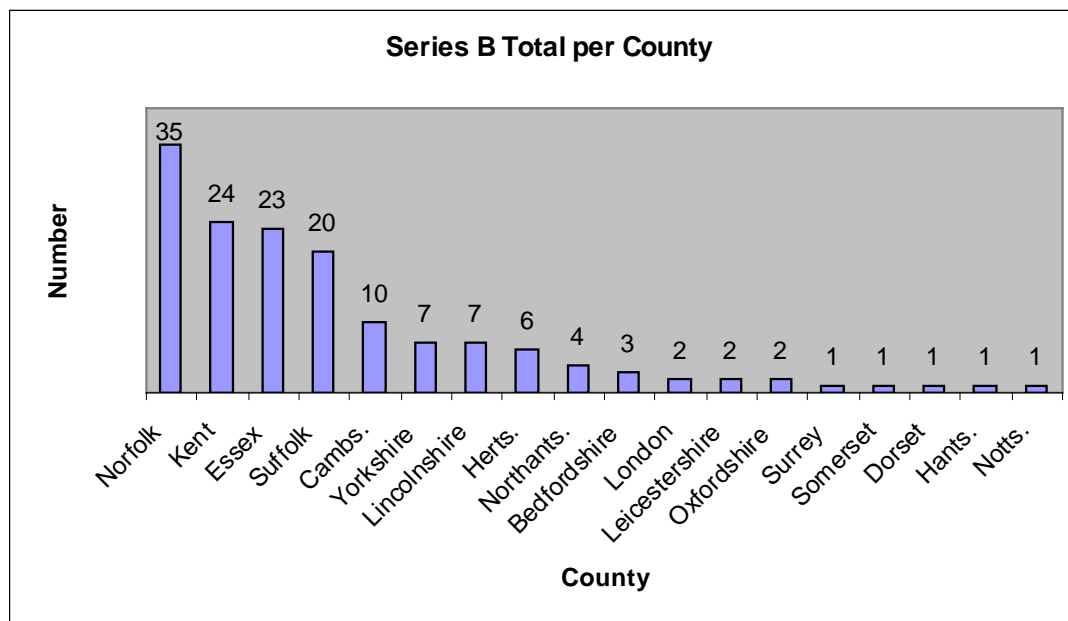
Metcalf counted, prior to 1994, some 59 obverse and 80 reverse dies for the series derived from Rigold's corpus. He further estimates that there were 146 obverse dies and a huge total of *c.*270 reverse dies, though the lack of non-singletons makes this figure statistically unreliable.<sup>72</sup> Electron probe microanalysis has established that BX and BI are both near-pure silver (*c.*94–6%), with BII only a few percentage points lower; their weight also shows a high degree of control, with most of the specimens conforming to a tight spectrum of weights; BII is less well ordered.<sup>73</sup>

The national distribution of Series B comprises some 165 items, a few of which have poor provenance. Fig. 34 shows the distribution by county of those that can be accurately given a provenance (note that one specimen is attributed only to 'East Anglia').

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<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 99–100.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 100–101.



**Fig. 34.** Chart of Series B per county – England

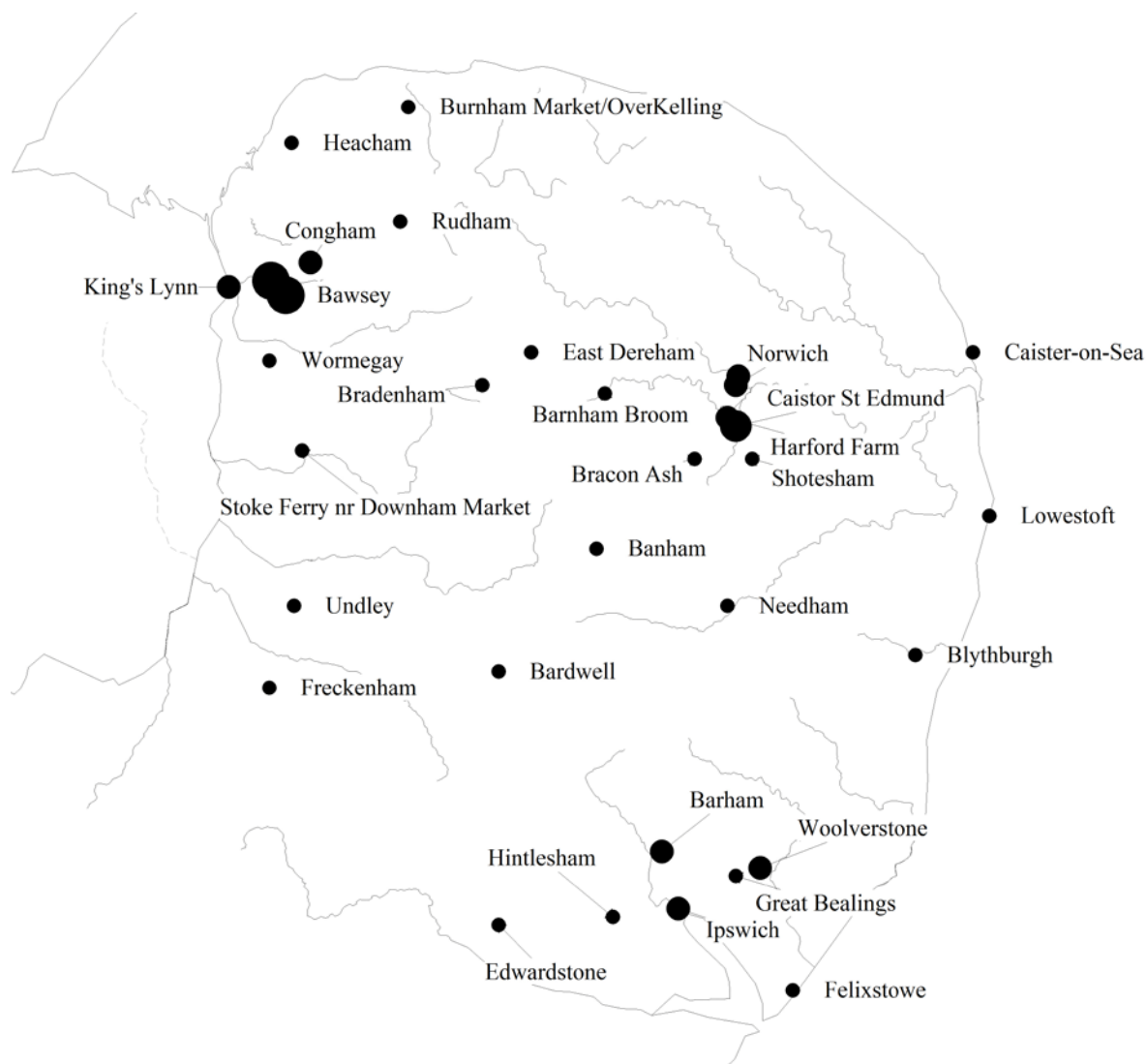
The BZ coinage known from East Anglia numbers 55 items; the bulk of these come from Norfolk, which county has produced more Series B coins than any other; but significant numbers have also come from Kent and Essex. Metcalf's analysis concludes that Series B was probably minted in either the East Saxon or East Anglian kingdoms, and that it certainly belongs to a polity north of the Thames.<sup>74</sup> The distribution is now such that it seems more likely that the Series was an East Anglian coinage. However, the 24 coins in Essex, plus those found in London, are significant, and the possibility that there is a massive sampling bias between metal-detecting in East Anglia, particularly Norfolk, and in Essex must also be taken into account. Such a bias is not easily defined, as the Portable Antiquity Scheme statistics are unsuitable for making such comparisons owing to differences in information recording. Norfolk does have many more metal-detected finds than Essex, however, and this may be a result of bias and may potentially result in an overemphasis of the number of this type found in northern East Anglia. It must remain, therefore, something of a moot point as to which kingdom the coinage belongs to.

The differences in the iconography employed for Series A and B are perhaps salient. This issue is discussed later in this chapter, but it is worth pointing out here that Series B employs more Christian images than Series A (and its subsequent copies). The diadem bust on the obverse of Series B may be distinguished from the crown bust on Series A. Moreover, the 'bird with cross on steps' reverse on Series B can be compared with the standard reverse on Series A. These differences

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 104.

can be interpreted as pointing to the ecclesiastical control of Series B production, and perhaps a royal control over the production of Series A.

The East Anglian distribution (Fig. 35) of Series B is different from that of Series A. The former is much more evenly spread throughout the former kingdom and is represented at most of the 'productive' locations, whereas Series A appears only in a few select locations which, interestingly, were at the time or slightly later became the towns.



**Fig. 35.** Map of Series B – East Anglia

#### *Series BZ (Figs 36–38)*

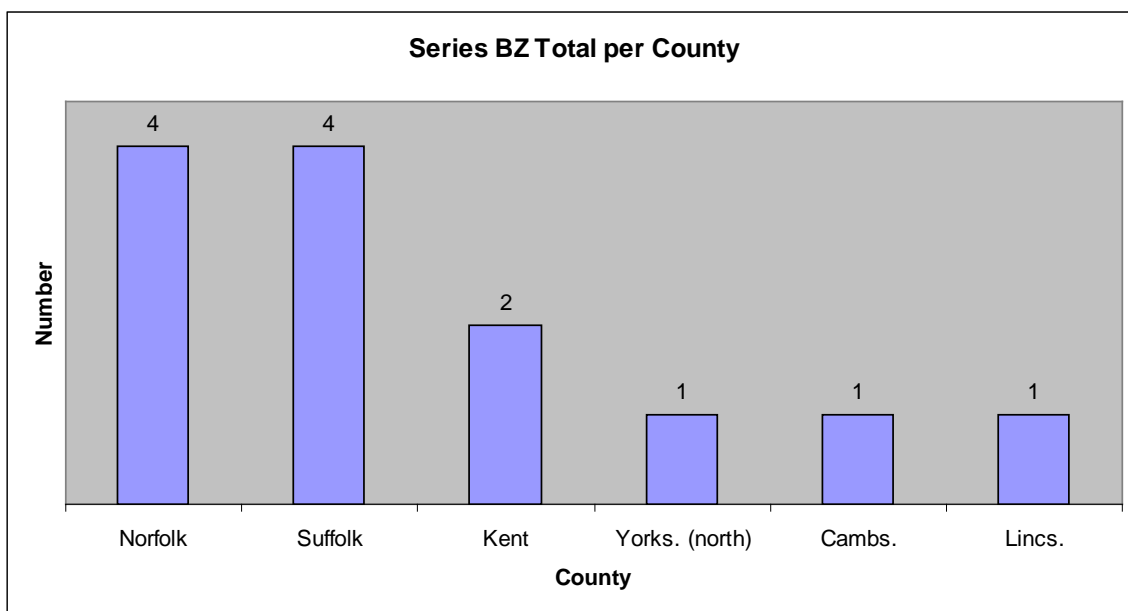
Some 15 single finds of this series are now known. Of these, 7 come from East Anglia and possess relatively accurate provenance, with a further one attributed simply to 'Suffolk'.



The sub-Woden monster style obverse is extremely stylised on this type and, although there is a hint of a beard or moustache, the overall effect is androgynous. The reverse is typical of Series B, with a bird over a cross.



**Fig. 36.** Series BZ (Type 29a; N 130), EMC No. 1998.0051, Norwich, Norfolk.



**Fig. 37.** Chart of Series BZ per county – England

Because very few coins of this series have been recorded it is difficult to say anything substantive about their distribution. Indeed, this is a problem for a number of *sceatta* series. The distribution is predominantly East Anglian, but the intraregional distribution is interesting: three of the seven coins come from Bawsey and another coin derives from somewhere near King's Lynn. Bawsey and King's Lynn are 4km apart and therefore the majority of this coinage within East Anglia has been found within a very small area. It is reasonable, therefore, to place the likely production centre for this coinage at Bawsey. Much more speculatively, 13 of the 55 East Anglian coins attributed to Series B come from Bawsey and this may indicate that Bawsey should also be

examined more closely as a likely production centre for that group of coins. We know from other coin evidence, discussed throughout this thesis, that Bawsey was a major centre of coin loss, and there is also good evidence, discussed in detail in Chapter 8, that Bawsey was a centre for industrial production. The evidence from Series BZ and the preponderance of other Series B coins from the site suggests that it may have been the mint-place for some of this series.



**Fig. 38.** Map of Series BZ – East Anglia

*Series C and CZ (Figs 39–41)*<sup>75</sup>

Series C is a copy of Series A with the Latin TIC substituted for a runic legend on the front of the face. The series is absent from the West Hougham hoard and no examples appear as finds in Kentish graves; its date is thus later than A2/3 and BI. It is common in the Aston Rowant hoard (c. AD 710) and in the Southend grave hoard (c. AD 710). The series' close relatedness to Series R1 was identified by Rigold;<sup>76</sup> essentially, the sequence of the related series runs A–C–R1, and moves geographically from Kent to East Anglia. When the transitions between the series occur is currently unclear.

The runic legends on Series C read either *æpa* or *epa* and these were chronologically distinctive, with the latter just antedating the Aston Rowant hoard. The former, *æpa*, dates from five to ten years earlier, to c. AD 705–10, and is well represented in all its range of styles within the hoard. Metcalf argues that there is a case to be made for incorporating Series R1 into Series C, and refers to them as C1 and C2. He splits the Series on the basis of the *æpa* or *epa* name forms, with the former being attributed to Series C and the latter Series R. Thus, in Metcalf's scheme, Series C is a simple series consisting of two varieties, C1 and C2.

There is little appreciable stylistic difference between Series A and C except for the runic substitution. The iconography is essentially identical, with a radiate crown on the obverse side deriving from a Roman *Concordia Militum* type<sup>77</sup> and a reverse with a standard motif still utilising the Latin inspired TOT XX lettering.



**Fig. 39.** Series C (Metcalf C1: Blackburn A) (695–700), EMC No. 1987.047, Cavendish, Suffolk.

In general, the weight seems to be on a par with that of Series A, particularly Type A3. The alloy is of high silver content, at around 94%.<sup>78</sup> The Series was much counterfeited, according to Metcalf, much more so than its predecessor Series A. Counterfeit copies seem to outnumber the official issue

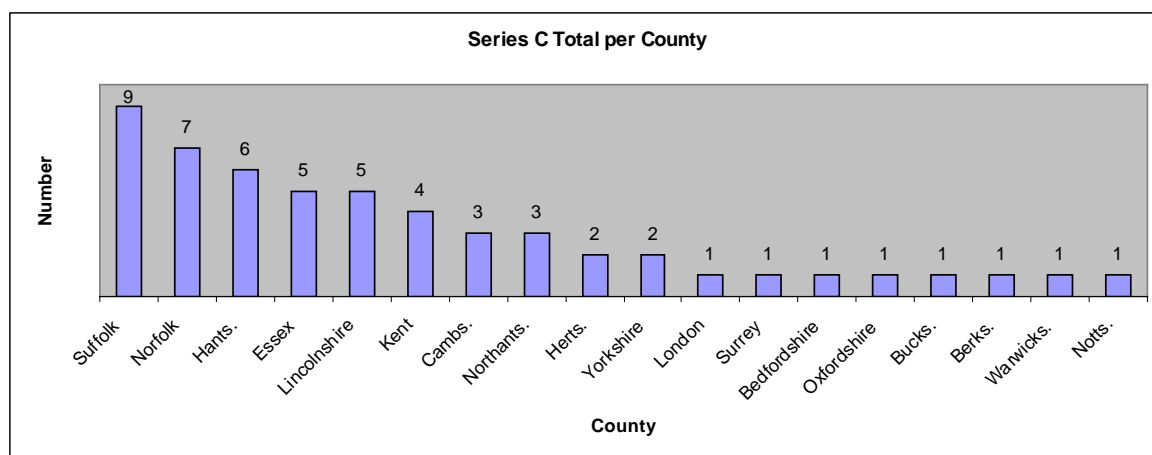
<sup>75</sup> Section based on *T&Si*, 106–16.

<sup>76</sup> Rigold, 'The two primary series of English sceattas'.

<sup>77</sup> Gannon, *Iconography*, 45.

and Metcalf charted a different distribution for these in 1994.<sup>79</sup> It is hence crucial to attempt to separate the official issue from the copies when plotting a new distribution. Here the source used has been the EMC, which provides a refined description of the sub-type, making it possible to discern to some extent between the originals and the copies; this may be a fool's errand, however, in that the copies may be telling us something at least as interesting as the original coinage.<sup>80</sup> Indeed, as will be discussed in the next chapter, the whole of Series R is effectively a copy of this Series, which in turn was based largely on the design of Series A.

There are 126 Series C specimens known from the country, as recorded on the EMC.<sup>81</sup> Following Metcalf, many of these are excluded from the official issue and are either mules (non-official copies) or are redefined as Series R; this leaves 52 examples from the country (Fig. 40). Their distribution may suggest an East Anglian provenance for Series C: there are 19 single finds in the region, if Cambridgeshire is included. There is also a strong Essex aspect to the distribution, particularly if a 'Greater Essex' is counted (including Hertfordshire and London). This pattern in Essex can be viewed as a result of its proximity to the East Anglian source of issue, something which also explains the relatively large numbers in Lincolnshire.



**Fig. 40.** Chart of Series C per county – England.

Coins appear in this period to travel along coastal routes. Series C particularly seems to disperse to Hampshire, including *Hamwic*. Far fewer Series C are found in Kent than was the case for either Series A or B. Blackburn, in his discussion of examples found within the EMC, attributes the series

<sup>76</sup> *T&Si*, 115.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> EMC: <http://www-cm.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/emc/>.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

to Kent, but on the evidence from the present national distribution this is difficult to justify.<sup>82</sup> Metcalf is more circumspect, suggesting a continuum of possible issue centres but in the end suggesting that the most likely option lies in the middle, somewhere in the East Saxon kingdom.<sup>83</sup> With only five examples from Essex, two from Hertfordshire and one from London, this also now seems difficult to defend. The distribution of single coin losses strongly argues for an East Anglian origin for Series C. This does raise the question, once again, of whether there may be a bias in the collection of the evidence, with more of the material being found in East Anglia because metal-detecting is a more popular hobby here than elsewhere. However, the numbers of Series A coins found in Kent seem to militate against this interpretation.



**Fig. 41.** Map of Series C – East Anglia.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

As this is the first runic issue since the *Pada* coinage, the distribution may tell something about the cultural affiliations of the institutions making the coinage. The fact that Series A has a predominantly Kentish distribution and was hence almost certainly issued from there perhaps suggests that the Latin legends represent a connection with the Frankish Kingdom. The East Anglian substitution of the runic script with the same iconography in Series C may speak of a different affiliation, one with the Scandinavian world.<sup>84</sup>

Within the former kingdom of East Anglia there are 13 Series C coins with good provenances. Their distribution is weighted slightly to Norfolk, which has seven of the total. There is a slight concentration towards the fen-edge, but with a small sample this may be misleading. One Series C (R1) comes from the Buttermarket excavation (Ipswich), and one Series C coin is recorded on the EMC as coming from close to Norwich. Five coins of this series have been found in the ploughsoil at Bawsey. There are also a number of ‘productive’ site finds that cluster close to Thetford.

*Series F (Figs 42–44)*<sup>85</sup>

Series F seems to relate to a Merovingian coin type minted in Auxerre and dated to the 670s. Both occur in pale gold and silver varieties, although there is only a single known pale gold find from England (from the Bedford ‘productive’ site – EMC No. 1990.5007).<sup>86</sup> Metcalf attributes Series F to the Primary phase, whereas Rigold places it in his Intermediate Series, suggesting that it was minted either in Frisia or north-east Frankia.<sup>87</sup> The legends on the Merovingian coinage read:

+ΛVDO MONET

+ADEONE MONET

---

<sup>83</sup> *T&Si*, 116.

<sup>84</sup> This fact of Series C distribution, compared to that of Series A, hence bears comparison with other contemporary material, specifically glass vessels and dress-related metalwork, and earlier material of 5th- and 6th-century date including: bracteates, scutiform pendants, as well as less related objects such as brooches and wrist-clasps as discussed by Hines in *The Scandinavian character of Anglian England*; J. Hines, ‘The Scandinavian character of Anglian England: an update’, in Carver, *The Age of Sutton Hoo*, 315–30. Hines notes in the latter that the continuity of a Norwegian–Anglian English link demonstrably dates back to the later 5th century (p. 316). Also salient is the statement that the distribution of wrist-clasps emanates from bridgeheads in the Humber and Norfolk and demonstrates a clear boundary with the south that is contiguous with the historical record for the limits of the Anglian kingdoms (p. 317). Hines also notes that art-style similarities between Anglian England and Scandinavia were noted for the 7th and 8th centuries in the work of M. Ørnes during the 1960s and 70s.

<sup>85</sup> *T&Si*.

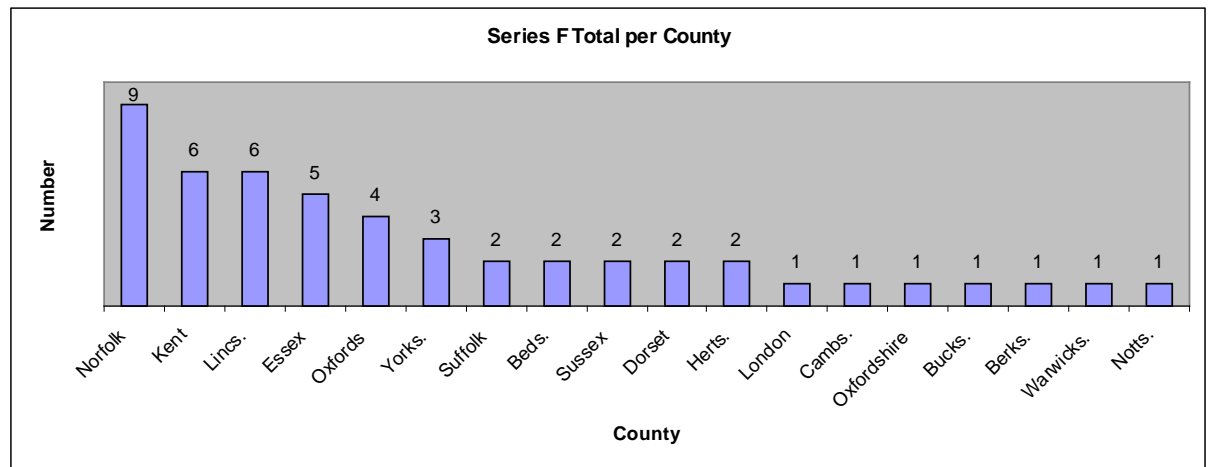
<sup>86</sup> *T&Si*, 126–7; EMC: <http://www-cm.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/emc/>.

<sup>87</sup> Rigold, ‘The principal series of English sceattas’.

The legends on the Anglo-Saxon coinage are mangled and nonsensical, perhaps indicating either that the moneyers responsible were illiterate and viewed the legends merely as design components, and/or that there was little interest in the Latin aspect of the coinage.

Metcalf was wary of attributing Series F to any particular Anglo-Saxon kingdom. In 1994, when the three volumes of *Thrymsas and Sceattas* were published, there were relatively few finds and the distribution was inconclusive. He did suggest that a Lincolnshire origin for the type was likely from the distribution and signalled that a kingdom bordering the Wash may have been the most likely candidate.

There are at the time of writing only 45 single finds of Series F type from the country as a whole according to the EMC, although there are a further 25 Series F coins within the Aston Rowant hoard (Fig. 42). Indeed, it can be argued that this Series is over-represented, in terms of the number found through metal-detecting, within the hoard; its preponderance suggests that the bulk of the issue may have been confined to a small time-span around the time of the deposition of the hoard (c. AD 710).<sup>88</sup>



**Fig. 42.** Chart of Series F per county – England

In numerical terms Series F is most closely comparable to both Series A and Series C (45/61/55 specimens). In terms of its distribution, it seems the least concentrated of the earlier *sceattas*. It can be seen in Fig. 42 that, in common with the other primary series, it has a strongly eastern bias, mainly north of the Thames. Since the publication of *Thrymsas and Sceattas* the distribution has

<sup>88</sup> *T&Si*, 127.

changed, and there are now six specimens known from Kent, counter to Metcalf's suggestion that it was more northern in its use. The East Anglian finds again outnumber those from Greater Essex. The distribution lends itself to the suggestion of a Middle Anglian origin for the series, and in that respect nothing has changed between Metcalf's analysis and now.<sup>89</sup> However, two factors limit this interpretation at present: an examination of the coinage shows a great deal of variety in the quality of image rendering, which suggests a number of separate producers; and there are few locations that produce more than one example of the series and none on the Wash, although there are several individual finds from southern Lincolnshire.

As Metcalf points out, there are several specimens from near Bedford, and the relatively large numbers within the Aston Rowant hoard may best be explained by its proximity to the possible mint-place. He also recognises that there is only one Series F find from the massive assemblage of *sceattas* found at Royston, and suggests that this is not surprising as no English Primary Series coins, besides the one Series F, have been found at this site. This is no longer the case, however; recent years have seen a number of Primary *sceattas* uncovered at this 'productive' site.



**Fig. 43.** Series F (Metcalf b.i) (Type 24b) (N62) (695–705), EMC. No. 2006.0264, South Lincolnshire.

The iconography is particularly flamboyant on the obverse bust, featuring a possibly elongated diadem, according to Gannon.<sup>90</sup> This putative diadem, or at least the lack of a clear crown, on the obverse, combined with the cross found on the reverse, suggests that, like Series B, this issue may have been ecclesiastically controlled. Metcalf's analysis of the varieties leads to the conclusion that there is little to be gained from attempting to place them into a chronological order based on typology, as there is much variation present within the Aston Rowant hoard and all appear to be contemporary.<sup>91</sup> Nonetheless, he divides them into four types (a–d), mainly based on variations of the reverse, which also seem to correlate with the poverty of execution of the bust on the obverse.

<sup>89</sup> Cf. *T&Si*, 128.

<sup>90</sup> Gannon, *Iconography*, 49.

<sup>91</sup> *T&Si*, 130.



Both the chemical composition – on average 94–5% silver – and the average weight of the coins (c.1.25g) fall within the expected range for the Primary Series of coins.<sup>92</sup> Although the expression of the iconography is variable and often poorly executed it seems that the other standards were upheld, suggesting that the institution(s) controlling the production of this Series were exercising a strong influence over the moneyers carrying out the work.



**Fig. 44.** Map of Series F – East Anglia.

The East Anglian distribution of Series F is peculiar. Burnham Market (three examples) and Burgh Castle (two) are the only significant ‘productive’ sites where it has been found (for a full list of ‘productive’ sites, see Fig. 194). There is also a strong Norfolk aspect to this distribution,

<sup>92</sup> *T&Si*, 130–31.

although this once again raises the spectre of metal-detecting bias discussed elsewhere. If we accept the figures as a fairly accurate portrayal of use, then once again Norfolk seems to be attracting the most coinage in England. If Metcalf is correct in his suggestion that the mint-site(s) was located somewhere in the southern Wash, then this mostly easterly distribution for Norfolk is also difficult to explain. The lack of an example from Bawsey is particularly interesting in this respect. The South Lincolnshire ‘productive’ site has produced a single specimen. The rest of the distribution within Lincolnshire is broadly supportive of the Wash mint-place hypothesis, but this needs to be measured against the East Anglian distribution, which avoids the Wash and is more northern and easterly in character. For the moment, therefore, the distribution remains unhelpful in pointing to a mint-place. The East Anglian finds come predominantly from non-‘productive’ sites, albeit that 5 of the 11 coins come from Burgh Castle and Burnham Market. Burnham Market is the English location with the highest number of Series F finds, but as this is only three items this may not be significant.

*Series Z (Figs 45–47)*

Only 16 single-find examples of this small series are known nationally; 4 of these come from East Anglia. The intraregional pattern is largely northern in its weighting, with Bardwell, near Bury St Edmunds, the most southerly of the East Anglian find-spots. This distribution suggests that the Series may be East Anglian in origin.

The type bears a strong resemblance to the secondary phase Series Q Type 59. Gannon has suggested that the reverse design of this type may represent a wolf, and may thus reflect the Iron Age Wolf Stater coinage of the region.<sup>93</sup> On balance, however, it seems more likely that these motifs are variations on the lion emblem, and thus represent St Mark. Alternatively, the head bent down to the ground may represent a grazing animal. The obverse of sub-Type 66 is a front-facing bust with ‘bell’-shaped hair akin to the Woden monster obverse. Gannon suggests that these may derive from a classical motif, perhaps of the Medusa.<sup>94</sup> It is also possible to look for a specifically Christian meaning to the coinage in which the bust represents a saint or Christ.

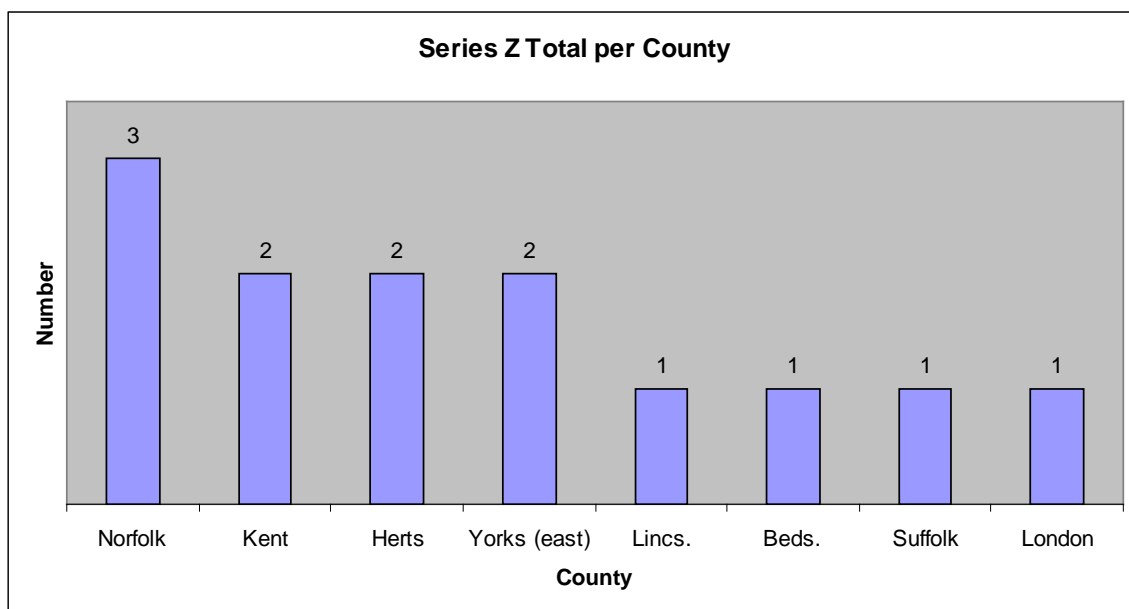
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<sup>93</sup> Gannon, *Iconography*, 128–9.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.



**Fig. 45.** Series Z (Type 66, N 145 Beast Right), EMC No. 1986.5031, Caistor St Edmund, Norfolk.



**Fig. 46.** Chart of Series Z per county – England.



**Fig. 47.** Map of Series Z – East Anglia.

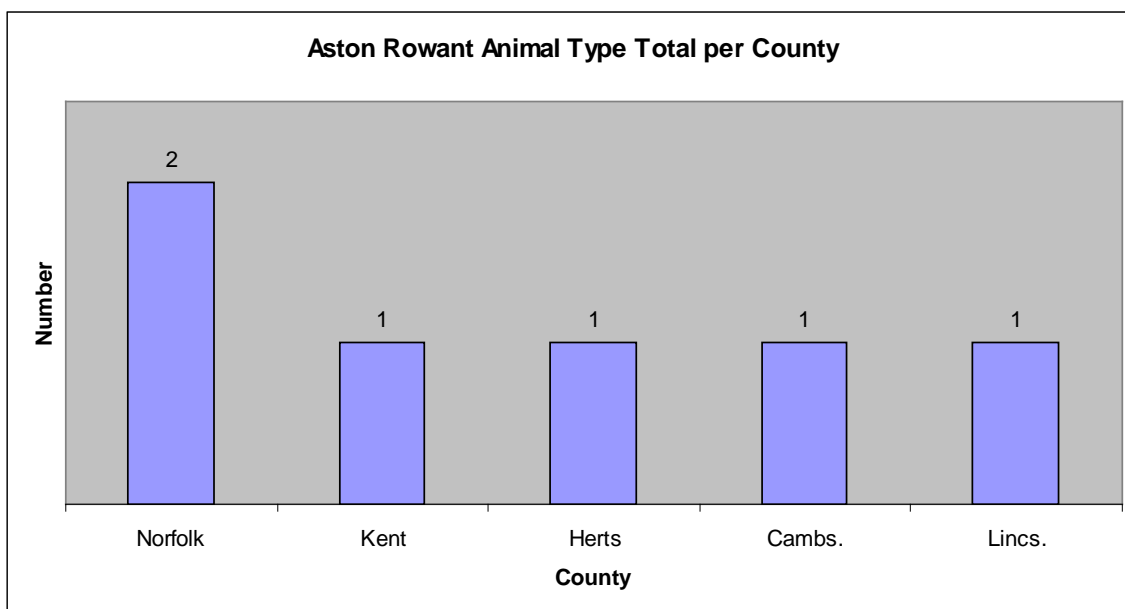
*Aston Rowant Animal Type AD 705–715 (Figs 48–49)*

This type consists of only six known single finds. Metcalf had placed it within the spectrum of Series Z but the EMC does not now follow this attribution. Of the two known East Anglian examples, one possesses an accurate provenance, having been found at Methwold (Norfolk). The other is more generally defined as having come from west Norfolk. In terms of its regional distribution, although there are only two examples, this rare type does seem to fit with Series Z.

The highly stylised animal, in this case found on the obverse, is reminiscent of the Series Z reverse and the same sorts of argument apply to its interpretation (see Series Z above).



**Fig. 48.** Aston Rowant Animal/ cross crosslet type, EMC no. 1985.0047, Methwold, Norfolk.



**Fig. 49.** Chart of Aston Rowant Animal Type per county – England.

*Coinage of King Aldfrith, Northumbria r. AD 685–704 (Figs 50–51)*

Only two examples of this series have been found in East Anglia, one from Bradenham in Norfolk and another with the non-specific provenance of ‘Suffolk’. The coins in this series are unlike other *sceattas*, being described by Metcalf as consisting of a ‘dumpy’ fabric.<sup>95</sup> The obverse contains the king’s name written as:

+ÆLƿFRIDUƿ

The reverse consists of a left-facing animal with a three-pronged tail and a beak-like nose. This motif is seen again on Series Q coinage later in the Secondary phase. We know from Bede that

<sup>95</sup> *T&Si*, 117.

Aldfrith was (in Bede's terms) a praiseworthy noble of scholarly persuasion. Perhaps this in itself provides some explanation for the literate obverse on this coinage? Gannon has suggested that the beast on the reverse is in fact a *lion courant*, the design possessing parallels in Roman art and notably in other Anglo-Saxon media such as the Echternach Gospels, which are of Northumbrian origin and were created at Lindisfarne c. AD 720.<sup>96</sup> The lion in this context may be a reference to Saint Mark, although Gannon plumps for its being a heraldic badge and goes so far as to suggest that it may represent a sort of early heraldic image.<sup>97</sup>



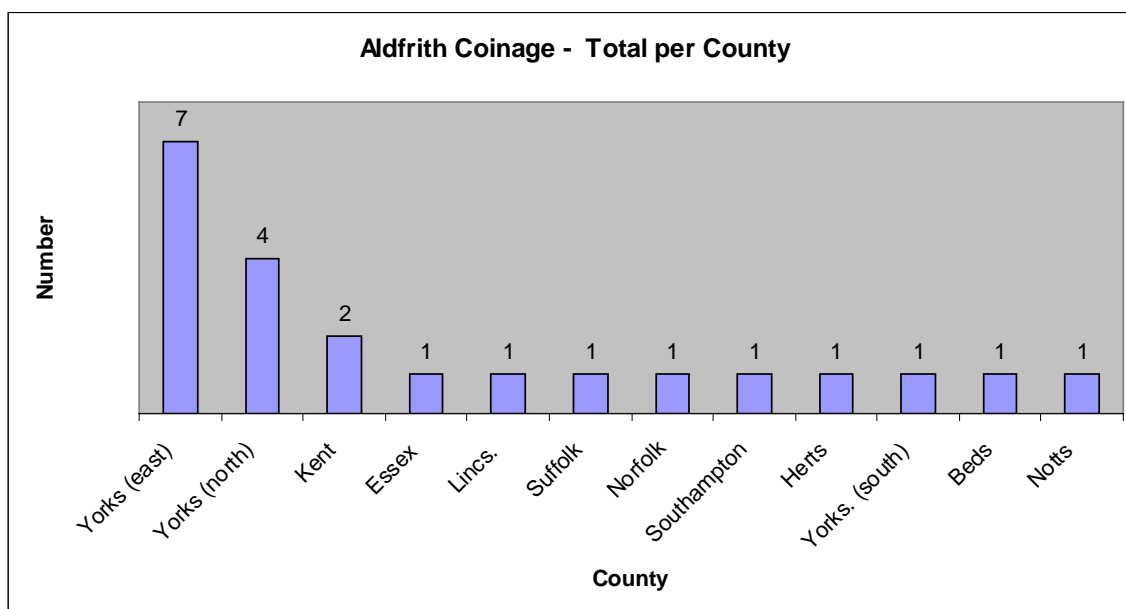
**Fig. 50.** Aldfrith, EMC No. 1995.0112, Bradenham, Norfolk.

Twenty-two examples of the type are now known nationally, the distribution clearly confirming the Northumbrian production centre for this coinage. There has been some debate over whether the king and kingdom represented by the coinage was Aldfrith of Lindsey, which would date the coinage to the last decades of the 8th century; in stylistic terms this is an attractive prospect, given the other literate coinage of that period. However, both the distribution and the context of the coin from *Hamwic* (Southampton) militate against this later attribution. The *Hamwic* example was found in a burnt deposit within a structure dated to c. AD 720–25, and in association with a well containing a plank dated dendrochronologically to AD 710.<sup>98</sup>

<sup>96</sup> Gannon, *Iconography*, 125–7.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*; St Mark is often shown associated with a lion in the desert.

<sup>98</sup> D.M. Metcalf, 'The coins', in P. Andrews (ed.), *The Coins and Pottery from Hamwic* (Southampton, 1988), 51–2; *T&Si*, 117.



**Fig. 51.** Chart of Aldfrith type per county – England.

#### *The VER Groups (Figs 52–56)*

Only seventeen coins of this type are known from England; the distribution makes it clear that it was used predominantly in East Anglia, from where there are seven examples concentrated to some extent in the Gipping valley. This slight concentration is not particularly interpretable, and besides there being a bias to East Anglia, it is difficult to be more specific. Metcalf does raise the possibility that it may be a Continental type, as there was a single coin of the type present in the Remmerden hoard, but dismisses it.<sup>99</sup>

The obverse of the type begins, according to Metcalf, with a sort of ‘plumed bird’ motif and develops towards a radiate crown; but he recognises that this is counter-intuitive. It would seem to make more sense that the ‘mutation’ should be from radiate crown to ‘plumed bird’,<sup>100</sup> and indeed other analysts have argued that the obverse does follow this opposite evolution.<sup>101</sup> The reverse design consistently utilises a standard.

<sup>99</sup> *T&Si*, 140–41.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 142–3.

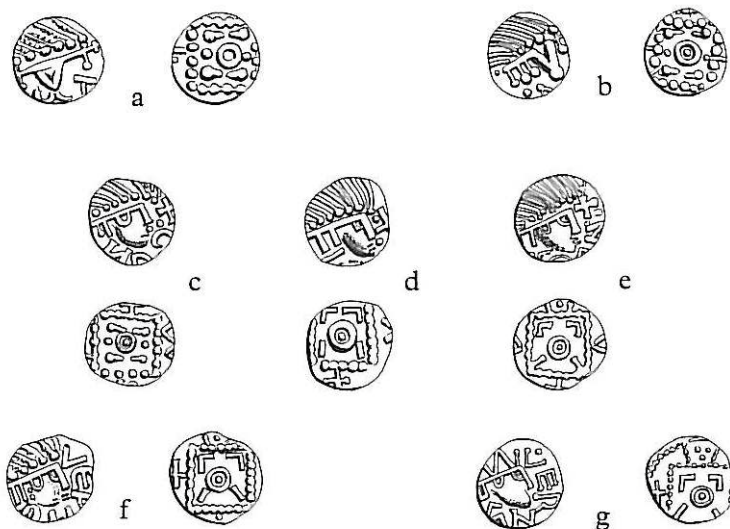
<sup>101</sup> Gannon, *Iconography*, 48–9 and note 173; M. Blackburn and M. Bonser, ‘A derivative of the VER group of intermediate sceattas found at Springfield, Essex’, in Hill and Metcalf, *Sceattas in England and on the Continent*, 229–31.



**Fig. 52.** VER Group One (Type 3b), EMC 2004.0074, Watton, Norfolk.

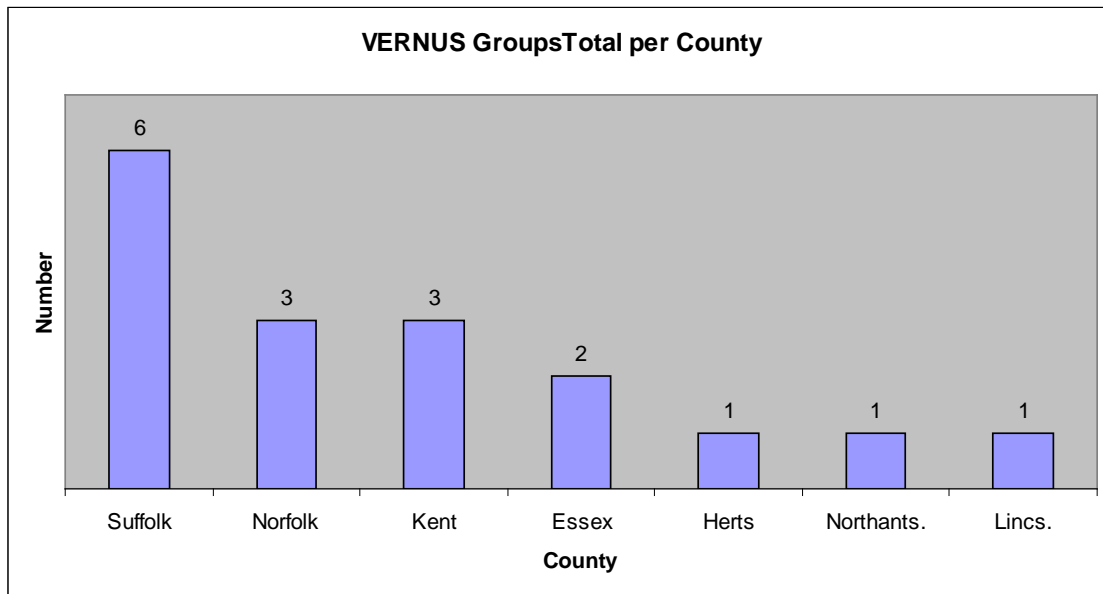


**Fig. 53.** VER Group Two (Type 91), EMC No.2004.0075, Watton, Norfolk.



**Fig. 54.** Postulated development of the VER group after Metcalf, *T&Si*, 142–3.





**Fig. 55.** Chart of VER Group per county – England.

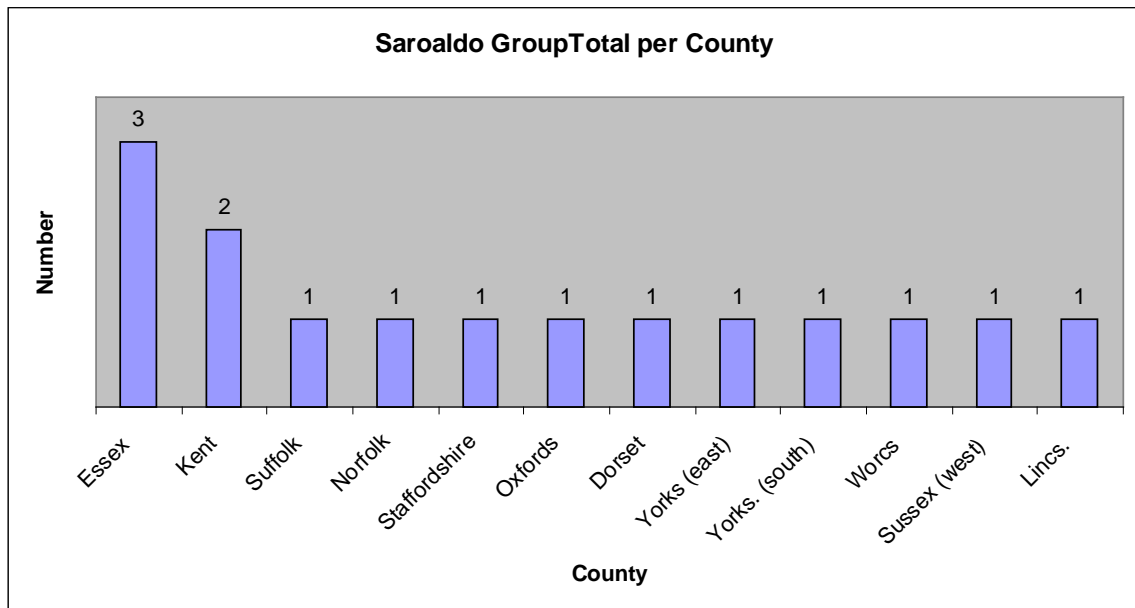


**Fig. 56.** Map of VER Group – East Anglia.

*The SAROALDO Group (Figs 57 and 58; three East Anglian provenances, one specific only to the region)*

As can be seen from Fig. 57, this is a small group consisting of 17 individual finds nationally. With such a small number of coins accuracy in determining concentrations is impossible; however, the distribution of this coinage seems to be densest on both side of the mouth of the Thames, with an eclectic scatter elsewhere, including the east coast and areas reached through the upper Thames. Metcalf wondered whether the type may have its centre in East Anglia, but this now seems unlikely.<sup>102</sup> The intraregional distribution is also difficult to pin down as anything but concentrations in two of the strongest areas of coin finds: the north-west and the south-east, with one find coming from Great Bircham, Norfolk, and the other from Braiseworth in Suffolk.

Metcalf suggests that the type, which consists of a spiky-haired obverse and a standard reverse, is based on a Merovingian prototype.<sup>103</sup> He also suggests that further finds come from Barham, Bawsey and near Norwich, but these are unrecorded on either the EMC or the NHER.<sup>104</sup> Taking these examples into account would increase the likelihood that production of this coinage was East Anglian. Gannon discusses the use of spiky hair as a motif and concludes that it derives from the crown and is a symbol of authority.<sup>105</sup>



**Fig. 57.** Chart of Saroaldo Group per county – England.

<sup>102</sup> *T&Si*, 148.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 150.

<sup>105</sup> Gannon, *Iconography*, 49.



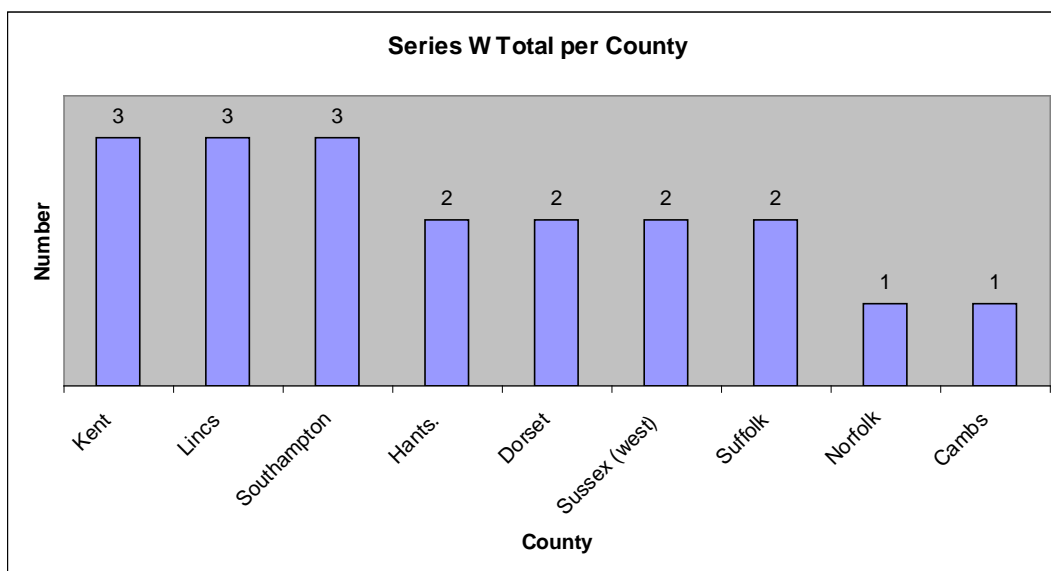
**Fig. 58.** Saroaldo Group, EMC No. 1986.0098, Great Bircham, Norfolk.

*Series W (Figs 59–61)*

A total of 19 find-spots of this type are known nationally; again, this is not enough to make any good judgements on its distribution. With that proviso in mind this type does concentrate on the Hampshire and Dorset coasts, with three finds deriving from *Hamwic*. The East Anglian distribution, of three coins, from Bentley, Thelnetham and Fakenham, cannot readily be interpreted in isolation but conforms overall to the zones of coin loss that are discussed here and in Chapter 8.



**Fig. 59.** Series W ( N 148), EMC No 2005.0262, Nr Fakenham, Norfolk.



**Fig. 60.** Chart of Series W per county – England.



**Fig. 61.** Map of Series W – East Anglia.

## Conclusion

Within the current numismatic models for *sceatta* production, East Anglia has no Primary phase coinage of its own. However, the evidence presented here clearly suggests otherwise. With the exception of the early transitional Pa and Va series, Series A and a couple of the more minor series, the other major issues of this period seem to be lost predominantly within East Anglia. This may merely indicate, as discussed, that there is much more metal-detecting being undertaken in East Anglia than elsewhere and that the system for recording the finds is more refined. Such an assertion must, however, be viewed with caution. The data may be biased but we cannot assume this to be the case, and ignore the collected evidence. Little statistical work has been carried out on the nature of metal-detected evidence, but the way that the data is accumulating seems to argue against a strong regional bias in modern collection. For instance, as already mentioned, the predominance of Series A in Kent argues that the other types of *sceattas* are unlikely to be biased through detecting practice. It seems reasonable to infer from the data, therefore, that much of the economic activity during the Primary *sceatta* phase was happening within East Anglia. Furthermore, the East Anglian economy seems to have been responsible for the production of much of this coinage. It thus seems to be the case that the administrative structures in East Anglia were more advanced during the late 7th century than in other parts of the Anglo-Saxon realm.

We can see that Ipswich, Bawsey (and by extension King's Lynn), Norwich and Thetford lie in areas of dense Primary phase *sceatta* loss (see Fig. 194, Chapter 8). This is difficult to understand, as these places were not necessarily structurally urban at this time, but worth stressing. It is also worth postulating preliminarily that these places lie at the heart of clusters of 'productive' sites. Even at its most centralised, in the area of Ipswich, the concentration was additionally spread through several additional nearby sites: Barham, Coddensham and Akenham. This is also the case for Bawsey, Norwich and Thetford. This preludes the fundamental concern of this thesis, that clustering of coinage in association with towns can be seen at this early stage in coin production. Hence in the late 7th century there were few places that could be technically described as a town, but functions were beginning to crystallise around certain geographical locations. In the next two chapters it will be demonstrated that this seemingly fluid situation solidifies within a few decades into a clear association between the density of coin loss and the locations of major towns. It is arguable that in the Primary phase of coin loss we are seeing the beginning of these places functioning, perhaps in part, as towns.

## The Chapter 6

### Coinage in the East Anglian landscape AD 700–765: Intermediate and Secondary *sceatta* phases, and the coinage of Beonna

#### **Continental Series: so-called Intermediate Series**

Rigold believed that much of the later 7th- and 8th-century coinage found in England originated from the Continent. He termed most of this coinage ‘Intermediate’ in terms of its date, but this categorisation has subsequently been modified by further analysis and by the availability of a greater amount of data. For the purposes of distinguishing between those issues originating on the Continent and coinage minted in the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, several major series have been generally adopted and these have been discussed in detail by Metcalf.<sup>1</sup> Much of the non-English *sceatta* coinage is Frisian in derivation. Large quantities of this coinage made its way to England; indeed, there was, during the 8th century, a net inflow of coins from the area of the Rhine mouth into eastern England, and into East Anglia in particular.<sup>2</sup> Rigold defined the main types of these issues as Series D, E, and F.<sup>3</sup> Metcalf was convinced that a Continental origin for F is incorrect although, as already discussed, it may be unwise, given its rather odd distribution, to completely write off a Frisian origin for this type. Metcalf does admit that the English distribution of Series F accords well with those of the much more abundant Series D and E, as we will see below, but he is clear that the series cannot belong to the Rhine area.<sup>4</sup>

Metcalf has more recently refined, therefore, the series of Continentally derived *sceattas* to Series D, E, G and X, with a number of smaller issues which were ignored in Rigold’s original synthesis. Because so much of the coinage on both sides of the North Sea is anepigraphic and hence lacks a concrete means of attributing it to a region, numismatists have identified coinage of Continental origin largely on the basis of distributions and the proportions of total assemblages that a particular type comprises. So, for instance, Series E, which is widely distributed both in England and in the former Frisian areas, makes up 50% of the finds in the Rhine area and only 20% of the

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<sup>1</sup> D.M. Metcalf, *Thrymsas and Sceattas in the Ashmolean Museum Oxford*, vol. 2 (Oxford, 1994). Hereafter *T&Sii*.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 170.

<sup>3</sup> Rigold, ‘The principal series of English *sceattas*’.

<sup>4</sup> *T&Si*, 127.

contemporary coinage in England.<sup>5</sup> And a significant factor in the attribution of both Series D and E to Continental mints is their predominance in hoards around the Rhine mouth. This analysis is much more dependent on hoards in the case of the Continental evidence than it is in the case of the English, where there are many more single finds.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, there is, perhaps, much more room for misunderstanding the meaning of these issues in the Continental economy, and this should be borne in mind when considering the likely origin of the coinage. There is also, perhaps, a tacit assumption that the economic engine driving trade between the two sides of the North Sea was biased towards the Frisian side.<sup>7</sup> This assumption needs to be rescrutinised, as there is clear evidence for an inventive and thriving Anglo-Saxon economy during the later 7th and early 8th centuries; which side was driving the invention and interplay, however, is not easily established.

Both the predominant Continental types, Series D and E, can be seen from the Remmerden and Aston Rowant hoards to begin sometime around AD 695,<sup>8</sup> at the same time as most of the Anglo-Saxon Primary phase coinage, but post-dating the very earliest issues such as the Pa, Va and the earlier versions of Series A and B. There is thus clear evidence that the coinage began in the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms and quickly disseminated to Frisia and the Rhine mouth. Series X's presence in the Hallum hoard indicates that it begins *c.* AD 710.<sup>9</sup> Series G is found in both the Garton-on-the-Wolds grave find and in the Hallum hoard, thus suggesting an original date of *c.* AD 710–15.<sup>10</sup> Metcalf provides no dates for the demise of these types, but it is assumed that the Carolingian coinage reforms under Pepin the Short (r. AD 751–68) finished the production of so-called *sceattas* in the Frisian region. Series E continued through to the end of the *sceatta* phase.

Two grave hoards suggest that the two series were contemporary with the Primary series in England. A group found in a grave at Birchington (Kent) contained both Series C and D;<sup>11</sup> more usefully, a group of 20 coins, reputedly from the King's Lynn area, bought as part of a group of 21 from a dealer in the early 1990s, contained the following types: A (1), B (3), C (5), D (3), E (4), BZ (1), Z (1), F (1) and an early variety of R (1).<sup>12</sup> This was a crucial find both numismatically and in archaeological terms more generally, and the fact that the finder was willing to provide a partial provenance provides us with at least some clues as to where this group was found.

Series D is considered by both Metcalf and Rigold to be intermediate in date (*c.* AD 700–15) and Metcalf suggests that Series E also began in this period, as it too makes up part of the Aston Rowant

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<sup>5</sup> *T&Sii*, 170–71.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 172.

<sup>7</sup> Hodges, *Dark Age Economics*.

<sup>8</sup> *T&Sii*, 173.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> Rigold, 'The two primary series of *sceattas*'; *T&Sii*, 176.

Hoard (sub-types G1[2], G2 [2], G3 [3] and G4 are all present in the hoard), which is thought to have been deposited around AD 710, further suggesting that Series D could be pushed back another five years in its earliest forms. This dating has subsequently been further refined by the numismatic team of the EMC, with type G1 now being given dates of AD 695–700, thus indicating that the various sub-types of Series E span almost the entire period of *sceatta* production, from AD 695 to 750.

Domburg has produced some 1,000 *sceattas* and it is mainly on this basis that the Rhine mouth has been identified as the likely production location for Series D and E coins. There are a relatively unconvincing 60 coins from the *wic* at Dorestad itself, which seems to militate against its attribution as the likely mint, for Series E at least.<sup>13</sup> Metcalf is of the opinion that Series D was possibly minted at Domburg, as it makes up a larger proportion of the large assemblage from the site than it does of the relatively small one from Dorestad (21% as against 7%); notably, both sites have approximately the same proportion of Series E coins (47%).<sup>14</sup> However, the proportions of Series D coins within groups found further west into Belgium and northern France are higher still and this may counter the Domburg argument.<sup>15</sup>

#### *Madelinus denarii (Series Ma)*

Only three examples of this coinage are known from England, two from Caistor St Edmund and the other from Congham; in fact it is less common than the *tremissis* bearing the name of the same moneyer, discussed in Chapter 4. Little worthwhile can therefore be said of its distribution apart from the fact that it is likely to indicate a direct connection between Dorestad and Norfolk. To stretch Rigold's terminology, this is the only Primary phase Frisian *sceatta* coinage; this type is thought to have been minted in Dorestad, and, as an issue of that town, follows on from the gold coinage also of the moneyer *Madelinus*, dating from the last quarter or perhaps 20 years of the 7th century.<sup>16</sup>



**Fig. 62.** Series Ma (*Madelinus denier*) (670–90), EMC No. 1995.63, from Congham, Norfolk.

<sup>12</sup> *T&Sii*, 176.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 175–6.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 176.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 178.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 151.



*Series D (Figs 63–68)*<sup>17</sup>

The designs on Series D, which is also known as the Continental runic series, are clearly influenced by the contemporary English coinage of the period, in particular Series A, C and later R. A date span for this coinage, as already stated, is relatively poorly defined but is generally considered to be AD 700–715. Stylistic influence also flowed in the opposite direction, with at least one English series, BMC Type 50, copying Series D.<sup>18</sup>

Series D as a category consists of BMC Types 2c and 8, which both share the reverse design consisting of a cross *pomme* with pellets in the angles surrounded by pseudo-letters. This reverse design bears some similarity to that of Series F. Type 2c has an obverse with a crowned bust that appears to be based on Series A/C/R.



**Fig. 63.** Series D (BMC Type 2c) N 169: var. bust left, EMC 1993.9181, from Bawsey, Norfolk.



**Fig. 64.** Series D (BMC Type 2c) (N 163/N 168), from Freckenham, Suffolk.



**Fig. 65.** Series D (Type 2c) (N 163/N 168), from Fakenham, Norfolk EMC No 1996.0076.

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 174–95.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 182.

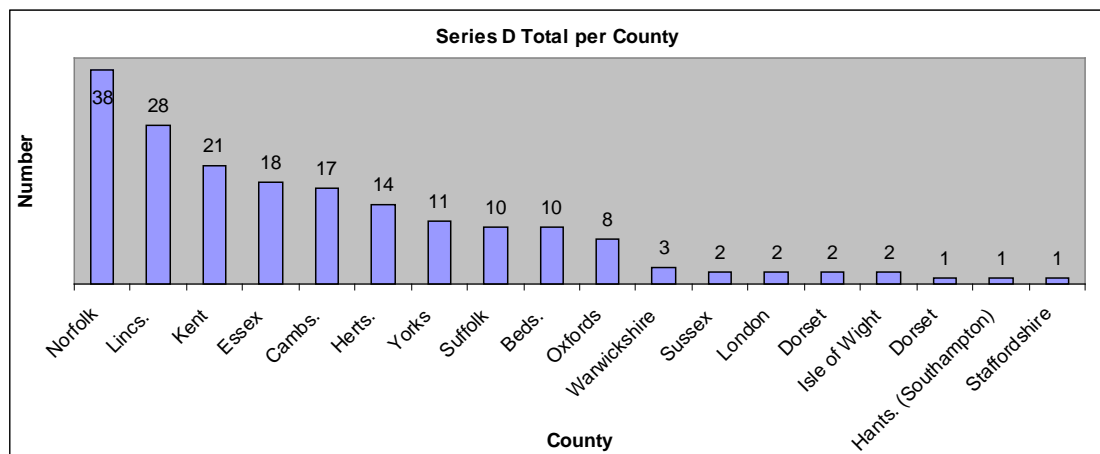
Type 2c is very variable in design, to some extent this variability suggests multiple sources for the coinage and militates against a single mint source for the entire series. We can see this in the three East Anglian finds illustrated above. The last of these, EMC No. 1996.0076 (Fig. 65), has an obverse so degraded that it is no longer recognisable as a bust and has become an abstract pattern. BMC Type 2c may derive from Series C as, when it can be read, it has the same runic *æpa*. It does not utilise the inverted *epa* employed on the earliest of the Series R types.<sup>19</sup>

The extent of variation exhibited by the design of both the obverse and reverse suggest a time-span of some duration, but this is not reflected in the standard interpretation of the series as Intermediate, and thus dating to *c.* AD 700–715; Type 8 particularly, with its rather degraded obverse with ‘standard’ design, suggests a date leading into the second quarter of the 8th century if compared to some of the later Series R standard obverses (see below).

Nationally there are 199 single finds of Series D, with a wide distribution concentrated almost exclusively within eastern England, and with a strong concentration in East Anglia. Fig. 67 shows the numbers of coins of the of Series found in each county (some of the 199 finds are not attributed to a county and therefore the list does not add up to the national total).



**Fig. 66.** Series D (Type 8) (N 50), EMC No. 1986.0093, from Great Bircham, Norfolk.



**Fig. 67.** Chart of Series D per county – England.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 185.



**Fig. 68.** Map of Series D – East Anglia.

Within East Anglia the vast majority of finds have been made in Norfolk – 38 (19%) of the national total of 199. There are two Series D coins known from Norwich and another two from Caistor St Edmund. Two examples have also come from Thetford. Few coins of this type have been found in the Gipping valley. Within Norfolk there is a noticeable concentration in the north-west, centred on Bawsey, where eight coins (the largest number of Series D within the former kingdom in one place) have been found spread between two sites close to one another within the parish. Overall, the distribution appears peculiar if this coinage really was of Frisian origin. Its complete absence from Ipswich and the low numbers from the Gipping valley (6 out of 38) are particularly strange in this regard and the preponderance within Norfolk suggest that these coins were not merely foreign trade items, but rather were being used in the same manner that coins from the other large *sceatta* series were, as currency within particular political zones.

*Series E (Figs 69–74)*<sup>20</sup>

Series E makes up the vast majority of Continentally derived late 7th- and 8th-century coinage found in England. Several thousand individual finds are known from England, Frisia, Francia, Germany and Scandinavia. It is colloquially known as the ‘porcupine type’, a term that refers to the characteristic quills found on the obverse of the coinage and was invented by Sutherland in 1942 in order – ironically, given the debate surrounding the symbol’s meaning – ‘to avoid controversial alternatives’.<sup>21</sup> Its ubiquity has been interpreted as an indication of a ‘common market’ along the North Sea littoral by the end of the 7th century.<sup>22</sup> The crudeness of both Series D and E, compared with the relatively highly executed designs found on the English coinage, might be an indication that Frisian producers were less interested in the artistic message relayed by the coins and more concerned with their value,<sup>23</sup> as might the lack of substantive variety in the iconography.

The series has a long duration, probably beginning around AD 695. Metcalf first separated the series into a dozen sub-types in 1966, based on differences in the style of obverses with reverse designs; these he termed varieties A–M, with a further identified subtype apparently carrying the letters VOIC or VICO within the ‘standard’ design on the coin reverse, which was not provided with an alphabetic identifier within the original scheme.<sup>24</sup> Metcalf discussed the possible mint-place for the series at length,<sup>25</sup> and seemingly reluctantly plumed for Dorestad. He admitted that it is possible that the series may have originated in England, but the patterning of single finds – in 1994, at the time of writing – did not indicate this.<sup>26</sup> Essentially, Metcalf’s assertion that Series E coins are of Continental origin relies on the proposition that they, like Series D, appear in great numbers within Continental hoards, such as that from Remmerden, near Utrecht, and that the pattern of single coin loss in England is very widespread and therefore does not indicate one of the kingdoms, or *wics*, as being a likely English minting site.<sup>27</sup> Of course, this begins to appear rather shaky if an alternative presumption is substituted: that the coinage possessed more than one mint-place, a proposition that seems quite appealing given the variety exhibited in the coinage and the ubiquity of locations in which it appears. The obverse, porcupine, design was copied on several issues of

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 196–247.

<sup>21</sup> C.H.V. Sutherland, ‘Anglo-Saxon sceattas in England: their origin, chronology and distribution’, *Numismatic Chronicle* 2 (1942), 42–70; Gannon, *Iconography*, 177.

<sup>22</sup> *T&Sii*, 170; Gannon, *Iconography*, 177.

<sup>23</sup> Gannon, *Iconography*, 177.

<sup>24</sup> *T&Sii*, 196–8.

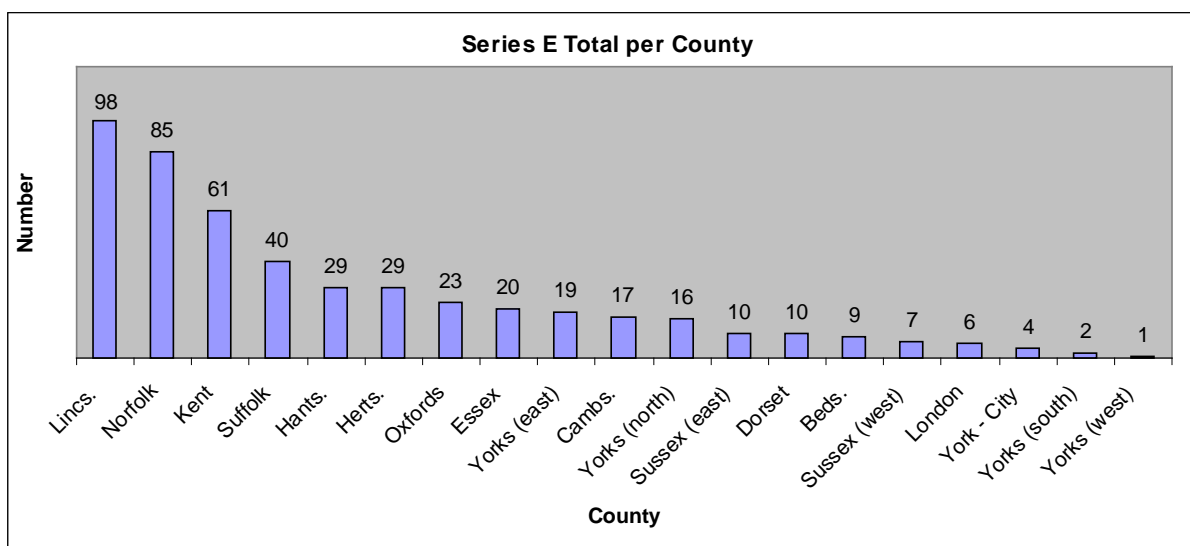
<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 174–83.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 199.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., *passim*.

English origin – Series T, for example<sup>28</sup> – which may indicate that it was a design that held meaning in the Anglo-Saxon realms beyond its mere association with the main series. The porcupine design is also closely allied to the plumed birds and radiate crowns of other series, particularly the Vernus group, which was shown in the last chapter to potentially originate in East Anglia.

A total of 554 known coins is recorded for England on the EMC database. The distribution, as Metcalf described (with far fewer finds) in 1994,<sup>29</sup> is well spread across the east of England with no discernable marked concentration within one area, although the pattern clearly does demonstrate that East Anglia and Lincolnshire are where the bulk of the coinage was lost, if detecting bias can be removed from the equation (Fig. 74). Although the distribution is very much concentrated within eastern England, in line with the general pattern of *sceatta* coinage, it cannot be described as coastal and the concept that this is a Frisian coinage that was being utilised in coastal trade is thus hard to sustain. An examination of the East Anglian distribution shows that there are examples found as far inland as Shipdham, c.40km from the coast. Clearly, then, this coinage was not just being utilised by Frisian traders to buy goods at localised *entropots*.



**Fig. 69.** Chart of Series E per county – England.

In addition to the eastern finds, there are fairly significant assemblages of Series E coins from both Mercia and Wessex. There are, for instance, 17 Series E finds from Southampton recorded on

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 182.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

the EMC and a further 12 from Hampshire more generally.<sup>30</sup> This is significant if account is taken of the fact that a mere 6 Series H coins have been discovered outside *Hamwic* within the county.

Given the character of the national and regional distribution, the large number of sub-types, and the lack of a clear mint-place for this series, it seems likely that Series E was produced in a number of different locations, potentially both Continental and English. This raises the question of why this particular iconography was used: what the ‘porcupine’ actually represents is a matter of some debate among scholars as far back as Dirks, writing in 1870. He suggested that the pictograph was derived from the degeneration of the she-wolf twins design of Roman origin.<sup>31</sup> Variety G4 (Fig. 70) has been suggested as a possible intermediate stage in the degradation of the design, with the wolf still (with the eye of faith) visible, and twins possibly represented by a ‘uu’ pattern, but the consensus now seems to be that this type is a relatively late variety of the G sub-type and the ‘twins’ are a ‘pseudo-runic’ inscription.<sup>32</sup>

Dirks also made the more interesting suggestion that the obverse picture, if viewed from a different perspective, may represent a galley at sea.<sup>33</sup> This seems an altogether more Frisian motif. It is worth mentioning here that a specimen identified on the EMC as sub-type D from Narborough, Norfolk, appears to have an anchor motif on its reverse, unlike others of the same group (Fig. 73). Might this be a further nautical allusion? Gannon suggests, however, that a more generally accepted interpretation is that the motif is a degraded bust with spiky hair, akin to certain types of Gallo-Belgic staters from the other side of the Roman period, by extension suggesting that Anglo-Saxon *sceattas* also seem to imitate some late Iron Age coinage.<sup>34</sup>

The regional distribution of Series E is widespread and most of the ‘productive’ sites are represented. The most ‘productive’ of these in terms of Series E is Bawsey with fifteen examples. A further sixteen of these coins come from three sites within the Gipping valley: Barham (9), Ipswich (5), Coddensham (2) and Akenham (2). There are also eight from Caistor St Edmund and one from Norwich; a further five examples can be found in the Thetford area with three from Quidensham, and one each from Hockwold and Thetford.

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<sup>30</sup> EMC: <http://www-cm.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/emc/>.

<sup>31</sup> J. Dirks, *Les Anglo-Saxons et leur petits deniers, dits sceattas: Essai historique et numismatique* (Brussels, 1870); Gannon, *Iconography*, 177.

<sup>32</sup> Gannon, *Iconography*, 177.

<sup>33</sup> Dirks, *Les Anglo-Saxons et leur petits deniers, dits sceattas*; Gannon, *Iconography*, 178.

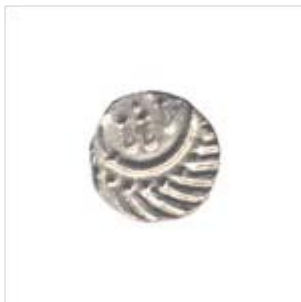
<sup>34</sup> Gannon, *Iconography*, 178.



**Fig. 70.** Series E (Variety G4) (Type 4) (N 45), EMC No. 2002.0261, from Blythburgh, Suffolk.



**Fig. 71.** Series E (Secondary) (Type 4) (715–735), EMC no. 2006.0185, from Quidenham, Norfolk.



**Fig. 72.** ‘Porcupine’ orientated through 90 degrees.



**Fig. 73.** Series E (Type D) (Type 4) (700–735), EMC No. 1994.0146, obverse from Narborough, Norfolk, with ‘anchor’ motif.



**Fig. 74.** Map of Series E – East Anglia.

#### Series E Sub-type – *Æthileræd* (Figs 75–77)

One early ‘porcupine’ variety, Type 105, the runic *Æthileræd*, clearly seems to have been minted in England, Metcalf arguing that the probability was balanced just towards an English origin when examining the five known English examples in 1994 against the three coins from Domburg.<sup>35</sup> Whether the name represents the Mercian king (r. AD 675–704) or a moneyer is currently debated. It is a rare issue and hence its absence from the assemblage of finds from Mercia does not necessarily negate its association with the king. Since Metcalf wrote the corpus of English examples of this sub-type has grown to 26.

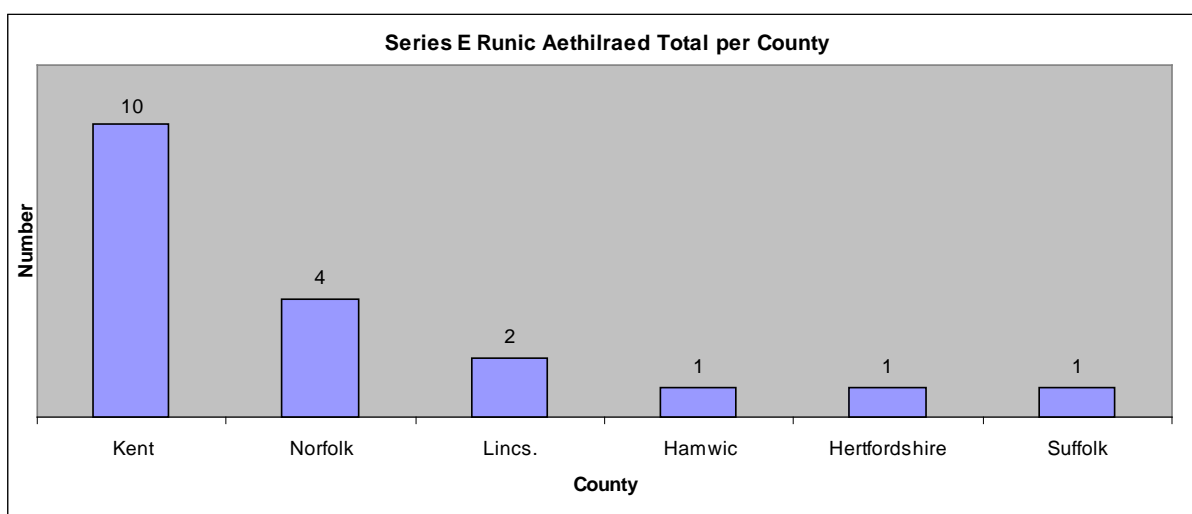
Fig. 76 shows the current national distribution of this coinage, particularly the clear concentration in Kent. The dating of the sub-type is somewhat problematic as the coinage is missing



from the Aston Rowant hoard; Metcalf suggests a date of *c.* AD 700 for the series and a mint-place somewhere in Kent; the EMC now dates the type to between AD 700 and 710.<sup>36</sup>



**Fig. 75.** Series E (runic *Æthiliræd*) (Type 105) (N 155–156), EMC No. 1986.0095, from Great Bircham, Norfolk.



**Fig. 76.** Chart of Series E (runic *Æthiliræd*) per county – England.

<sup>35</sup> *T&Si*, 120.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 122; EMC: <http://www-cm.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/emc/>.



**Fig. 77.** Map of Series E (runic *Æthiliræd*) – East Anglia.

*Series G (Figs 78–80)*

Until very recently Series G was entirely absent from the East Anglian corpus of *sceattas*, and it is still rare in the region when compared with its national distribution, with only seven specimens known from the counties of Norfolk and Suffolk. This compares with 65 examples from the country as a whole (see Fig. 79). Metcalf has demonstrated that the majority of Series G consists of a single type, previously defined by the BM as BMC Type 3a, which within this classification varies little. He dates the origins of the series to after *c.* AD 710 on the basis of its absence from the Aston Rowant and Bais hoards, and suggests that it must date from earlier than *c.* AD 720–25, given its

presence within the Garton-on-the-Wolds grave ‘purse-hoard’ and the Hallum (c. AD 715–20) and Cimiez hoards.<sup>37</sup>

The obverse consists of a bust wearing a diadem, together with a cross, and may therefore be compared in substance, if not in detail, with Series B’s bust motifs. The reverse is a standard which has lost any hint of the lettering apparent on the earlier varieties.

The type is now thought to be of Continental origin, although for a time it was attributed to Sussex. Metcalf suggests that Quentovic seems a likely location for its mint-place as it makes up an insignificant proportion of the finds from the Rhine mouth area. It is fairly liberally distributed throughout much of eastern England, but there are high densities in the East Midlands and Lincolnshire, places that might be accessed through the river Humber from northern France.<sup>38</sup> Metcalf admits that there is little normally to connect the Humber mouth with northern France, particularly given the relative absence of this type of coinage in East Anglia, and thus his explanation involves a tortuous route of middle-man trading through Frisia then crossing to Lincolnshire. He points out, in addition, that some of the finds suggest that the coinage was also moving by inland routes; in particular, there is something of a concentration along the line of the Fosse Way.<sup>39</sup>

The regional distribution of Series G consists of only six coins and is not, therefore, usefully interpretable. Most are from Fenland or the fen-edge, with a single south-east coastal find from Sudbourne (Suffolk).



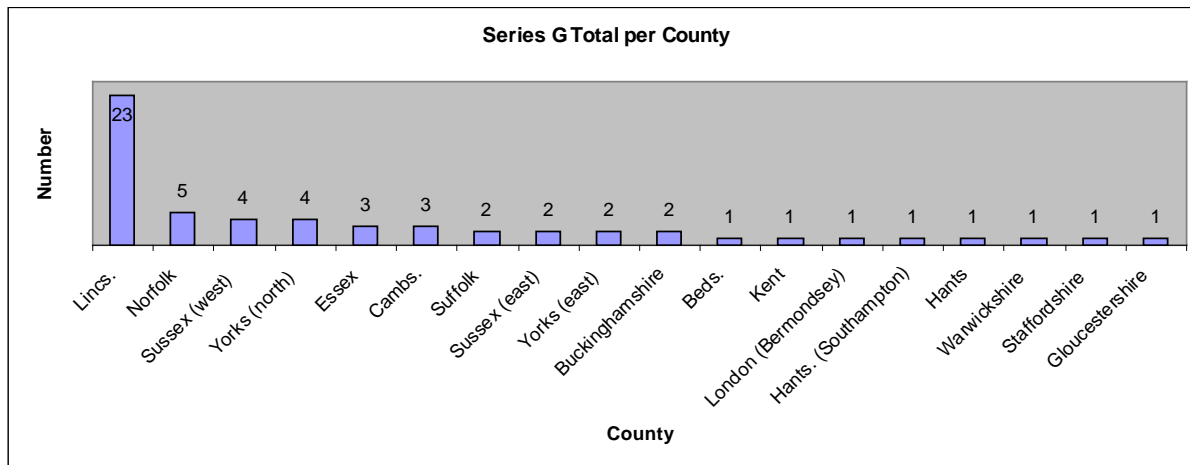
**Fig. 78.** Series G (Type 3a) (N 43) (710–720), EMC No. 2001.0738, from the East Riding of Yorkshire.

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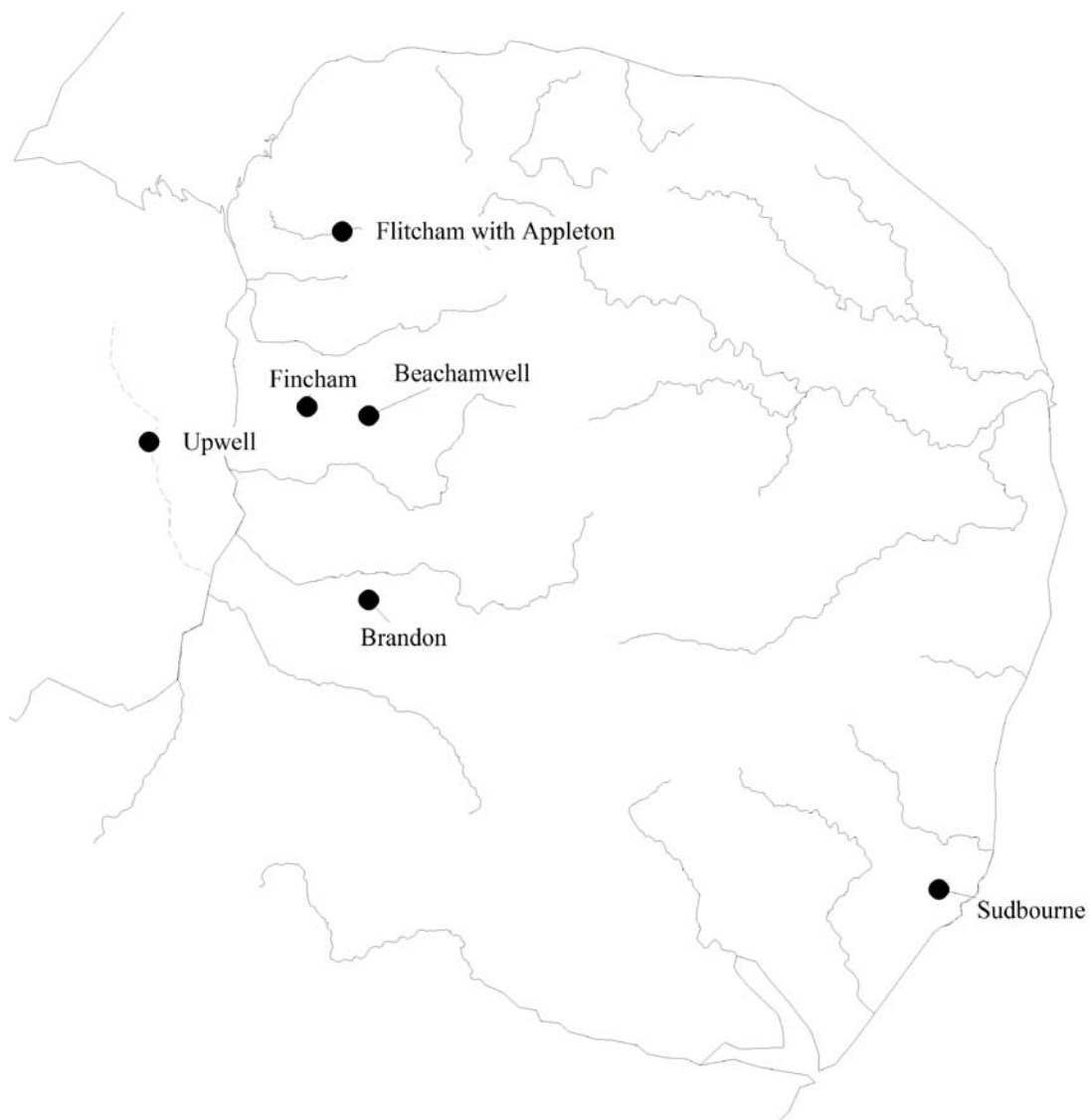
<sup>37</sup> *T&Sii*, 266.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 267–8.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 269.



**Fig. 79.** Chart of Series G per county – England.



**Fig. 80.** Map of Series G – East Anglia.

*Series X (Figs 81–83)*

Otherwise known as the ‘Wodan/monster’, this type consists of a reverse with a ‘facing head’ and an obverse with a backwards-facing monster.<sup>40</sup> Series X was a common currency on both sides of the North Sea, as illustrated by the 172 specimens found within the Hallum hoard (c. AD 715–20).<sup>41</sup> Metcalf suggests that it was produced in large numbers, basing this on his estimation that there were at least 600 reverse dies, which he termed varieties a–h and described as including both official issues and a number of imitations.<sup>42</sup>

A number of Continental hoards also contain substantial numbers of this coinage: 173 came from Hallum, 120 from the Domburg assemblage, and 161 from the Terwispel hoard.<sup>43</sup> A large number of stray finds are also known from Frisia and Ribe, Jutland, where the total exceeds 100 specimens and makes up c.85% of the total *sceatta*-period coinage found there.<sup>44</sup> The issues of this Series, Metcalf argues, were well controlled, unlike, for instance, the later porcupines or the Continental runic series, which suggest that a royal power was responsible for minting it.<sup>45</sup> On balance it seems likely that the mint-place was within the area of Jutland, and was probably the *wic* at Ribe. A number of gold *tremisses* have been found at Dankirke, not far from Ribe, providing further evidence that there was a time-depth to coin loss at that site. Metcalf suggests that this may represent an earlier estate centre, with Ribe developing later in the 8th century as the commercial focus.<sup>46</sup>

Metcalf, following Salin, argues that the iconography derives from commonly utilised Merovingian motifs, the obverse representing ‘le masque humain’ and the reverse ‘le monster regardant en arrière’.<sup>47</sup> Gannon contends that the ultimate source of the backward-facing animal motif was the art of the Steppe nomads, as with much Germanic art.<sup>48</sup> In terms of the reverse, Gannon also suggests that the derivation of the ‘facing head’ motif has Merovingian and probably, ultimately, classical origins, making a connection between the so-called Woden reverse and images of Medusa used as good-luck charms in the Roman world. The motif becomes blurred or misunderstood through time and transforms to a W pattern, and eventually into a beard.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 275.

<sup>41</sup> Gannon, *Iconography*, 148.

<sup>42</sup> *T&Sii*, 276 and 283–4.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 275.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 275–6.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 278.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.; E. Salin, *La civilisation mérovingienne*, vol 4 (Paris, 1959), 220–21, 272 and 277.

<sup>48</sup> Gannon, *Iconography*, 148–9.

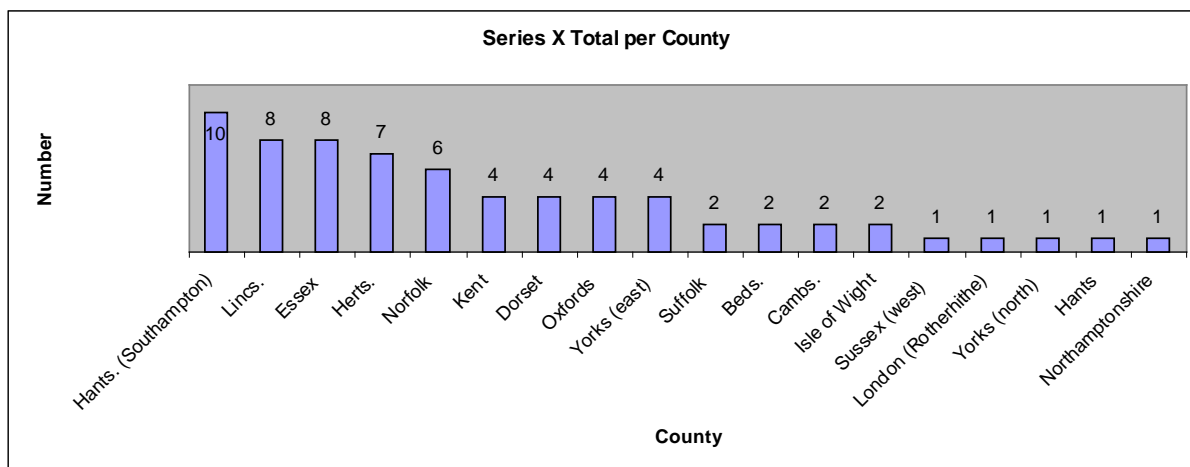
<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 29–30.

The national distribution of this coinage, as for most of the series thought to be of Continental derivation, shows a strong eastern bias and suggests that no one ‘English’ kingdom was responsible for its control and distribution. Provided that Metcalf’s attribution is correct and that the bulk of this series was minted under strict controls in Ribe then it seems that this coinage was making its way to fairly specific locations, suggesting perhaps direct communication between the Ribe polity and Wessex, and perhaps also with power/commercial bases lying in the area of north Essex and within Hertfordshire around Royston.

The distribution of the East Anglian assemblage of Series X certainly seems to avoid the north and east coasts, with a concentration in and around parts of the Wash, or places accessed through it. This correlates with the nationally significant densities discussed above in Essex and Hertfordshire, suggesting that the coinage was coming in via the Wash but directed, it would appear, at the south end of the Great Ouse river system. The fact that two coins have been found at Bawsey is notable in this context, as is the example from Thetford.



**Fig. 81.** Series X (Type 31) (N 116/N 117) (710–750), EMC No.1993.9280, from Briston, Norfolk.



**Fig. 82.** Chart of Series X per county – England.



**Fig. 83.** Map of Series X – East Anglia.

### **Secondary Series of *sceattas* AD 710–60**

The numismatic view of the Secondary Series interprets it as indicating an expansion, or further expansion, from the core areas of ‘monetisation’ in Essex and Kent out to the more peripheral areas of Wessex, the East Midlands, Northumbria and East Anglia.<sup>50</sup> This interpretation does not now stand up to scrutiny, considering the evidence of the distribution of the Primary Series discussed above. No mints for Secondary phase *sceattas* have been recognised, either historically or archaeologically, and there is hence little reason to consider their location. Effort is perhaps better utilised in looking at the use of coinage and examining where this has occurred – that is, examining

the pattern of single coin loss. The Secondary phase begins after the deposition of the Aston Rowant hoard (c. AD 705–10), possibly very soon after – as, confusingly, Aston Rowant contains the start of Series R, with specimens of R1, effectively placing the beginning of that East Anglian series within the time frame of the hoard. The end of the phase can be dated, again in East Anglia, to c. AD 755–60.<sup>51</sup>

What is clear, and will be examined in this section, is that the use of particular types of coinage in this period becomes more regionalised.<sup>52</sup> There is also a trend for the coinage to become more debased through time, with the silver content declining from c.90%, then apparently pausing at 80–70%, then going down to 50%, again dropping to 30–20% and finally reaching a nadir of c.15%. This progressive debasement has been utilised as an argument for a relative chronology. However, Northover’s chemical analysis of a substantial sample of the coinage casts doubt on this thinking; it is a trend, but cannot in itself be used as a chronological marker. The same can be said to some extent of the associated degradation of designs as the copying becomes less accurate.<sup>53</sup>

Much of our current understanding of the Secondary phase derives from the analysis of eight hoards. The early elements can be viewed through two Northumbrian hoards found at Garton-on-the-Wolds (North Humberside) and Fishergate, York, along with two, probably marginally later, Continental hoards found at Hallum (Denmark) and Cimiez (southern France). Hoards at Cambridge, London and Southampton provide information on the middle to later parts of the phase and the hoard found at Middle Harling provides insight into the final phase of the *sceatta* coinage and, together along with the Cambridge hoard (which contained nine coins of Series Q and R), provides a particularly useful insight into the East Anglian situation at this time. These are discussed at the end of this section.<sup>54</sup>

Notably, the vast majority of the coinage that has been recovered from *wics* is from this phase and suggests that their development is possibly in some way tied to the use, if not the production, of *sceattas*. An interpretation of the use of the coinage within the landscape is provided in Chapter 8.

#### *Series H (Fig. 84)*

Although there are no examples of this series from the study area, it is an important type in illustrating the connection between Secondary *sceattas* and *wics*. Fig. 84 demonstrates the close-knit relationship between this type and *Hamwic*.

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<sup>50</sup> *MECi*, 168–9; *T&Siii*, 297–8; Gannon, *Iconography*, 12.

<sup>51</sup> *T&Siii*, 307.

<sup>52</sup> *MECi*, 169.

<sup>53</sup> *T&Siii*, 301.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 302–8.



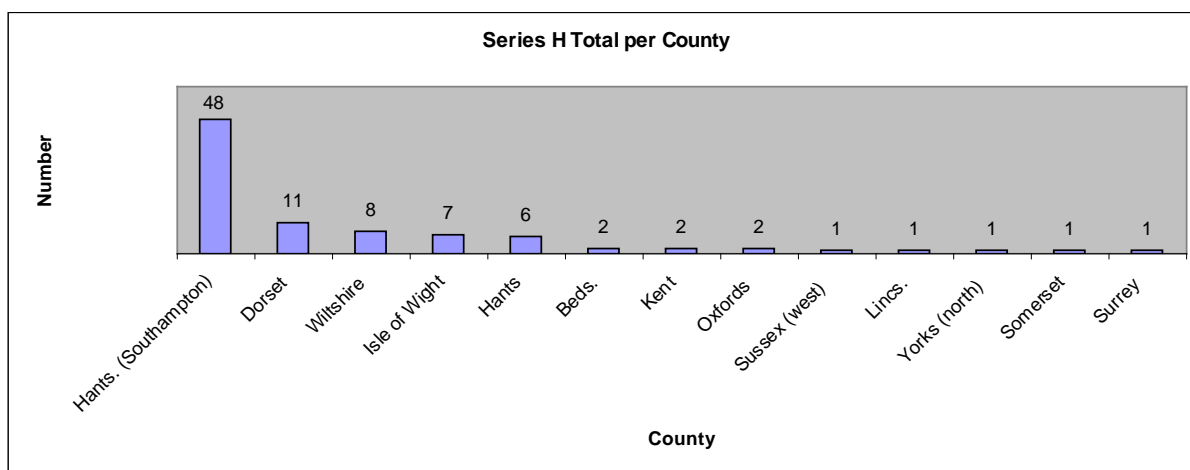


Fig. 84. Chart of Series H per county – England.

Fifty-six *sceattas* are recorded on the EMC as having been found in Southampton; however, Metcalf states that more than 150 had been found, Blackburn and Grierson suggest some 200 specimens, and Andrews maintains that there are 127 *sceattas* from *Hamwic*, not counting the 23 found in the Kingsland hoard.<sup>55</sup> To that latter total we must now add a further 18 *sceattas* that were discovered during the recent St Mary's Stadium excavations.<sup>56</sup> A significant number of these belong to Series H, which displays a very strong relationship with Wessex and the *wic* in particular; only a very few specimens have been discovered outside of that kingdom. The presence of a single example at Whitby, North Yorkshire, is interesting given the lack of other east-coast finds of Series H apart from one item from Alford, Lincolnshire.

There are three main sub-types of Series H. Two of these, 39 and 49, possess a compact distribution that is concentrated on *Hamwic* and does not venture beyond greater Wessex. The third, sub-type 48, shows a slightly more diverse distribution which includes the 'outliers' already mentioned in Yorkshire and Lincolnshire, as well as a couple of finds from Bedfordshire. Overall, as already intimated, the largest proportion of Series H coins has been found in Wessex.

#### *Series J (Figs 85–90)*

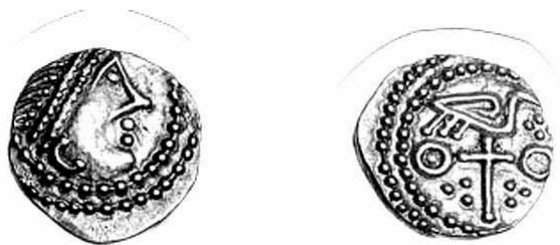
Unlike most of the Primary phase coinage, Series J is something of a hybrid category, as indeed are many of those within the Secondary Series. Within Metcalf's scheme there are essentially five sub-types of Series J: 85, 37, 60, 72 and 36.<sup>57</sup> Series J follows Series B stylistically, with some variants

<sup>55</sup> EMC: <http://www-cm.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/emc/>; *T&Siii*, 321; *MECi*, 168; P. Andrews, *The Coins and Pottery from Hamwic* (Southampton, 1988), 17.

<sup>56</sup> D.M. Metcalf, 'The coins', in Birbeck *et al.*, *The Origins of Mid-Saxon Southampton*, 130–35.

<sup>57</sup> *T&Siii*, 343.

possessing the same diadem bust obverse and ‘bird-on-cross’ reverse. This is termed by Metcalf Sub-Type 85, but in Rigold’s classification is BIIIb; the BM classes it as BMC 27b.<sup>58</sup> There are also several other variants, the most common of which, after sub-type 85, is sub-type 37. This is quite different from 85 and its relationship to the Series B iconography is less obvious: while the obverse shows a double-facing diademed bust, both reminiscent of that found on sub-type 85, the reverse is quite different, with four birds around a cross.



**Fig. 85.** Series J (Type 85 [Rigold BIIIb]) (N 128), EMC No. 1999.0007, from Humberside.



**Fig. 86.** Series J (Type 37) (N 135), EMC No 2005.0231, from Great Shelford, Cambridgeshire.

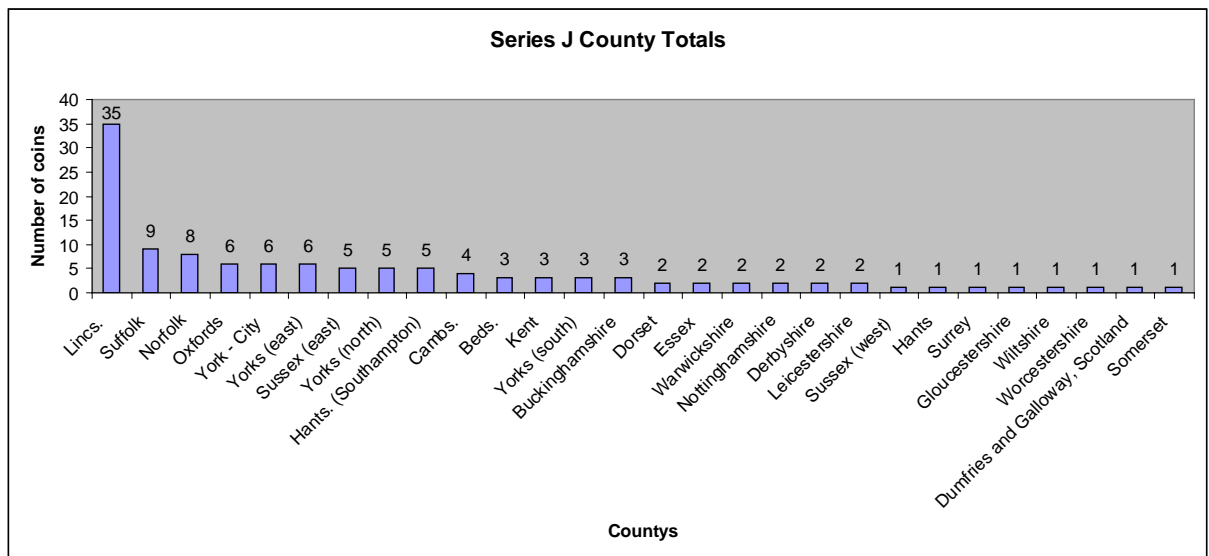


**Fig. 87.** Series J (Type 36) (N 134), EMC No. 2001.0543, from ‘East Anglia’.

<sup>58</sup> *T&Siii*, 343, *MECi*, 178.



**Fig. 88.** Series J (Type 72) (N 141), EMC No. 1987.0083, from Lakenheath, Suffolk.



**Fig. 89.** Chart of Series J per county – England.

When Metcalf wrote in 1994 only two examples of sub-type 60 were known, and this remains the case, with only one unprovenanced example recorded within the EMC or SCBI databases.<sup>59</sup> This sub-type can effectively therefore be discounted from the distribution analysis.

Metcalf begins the section on Series J in the third volume of *Thrymsas and Sceattas* with the statement ‘York is the home of Series J.’ In 1966 he had thought that Series J was a Mercian issue out of an Upper Thames mint; and the argument between its being from that kingdom or from Northumbria is finely balanced.<sup>60</sup> An examination of the distribution shows that, wherever this coinage was being produced, it was mainly being lost in northern Lincolnshire, south of the river Swale, within the area that had been the small kingdom of Lindsey and which by the early 8th

<sup>59</sup> *T&Siii*, 354; Sylloge of Coins from the British Isles (Hereafter SCBI) – Ref: SCBI 2 – Glasgow: 100: <http://www-cm.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/coins/emc/>.

<sup>60</sup> *T&Siii*, 341.

century was under Mercian control.<sup>61</sup> Metcalf thought that the coinage was Mercian before later deciding on a Northumbrian attribution.<sup>62</sup>

Another substantial proportion of the finds of this coinage come from what was Northumbria; large amounts of it were also lost in the East Midlands, particularly in Lincolnshire. This now seems likely from the distribution, which is concentrated in the area of Lindsey. If Lindsey was under Mercian dominance at the time, but was still producing its own coinage, it may be an analogous situation to that of East Anglia in the early 9<sup>th</sup> century, which was also under Mercian control (see the sections discussing East Anglian coinage below). Perhaps, although paying tribute to the militarily more powerful Mercian hegemony, Lindsey was able to continue along a distinct developmental path. Yorke has stated that an independent royal line for Lindsey, as opposed to members of the Mercian royal family being placed in charge, might be supposed from the mention of a King Aldfrith during the reign of Offa, whose genealogy appears in the Anglian collection.<sup>63</sup>

Both the national and the regional distribution of Series J (discounting the finds in the East Midlands) are dispersed, with only a few coins found in any one location. The East Anglian distribution of coins is, unusually, split evenly between Norfolk and Suffolk, and shows a pattern across the kingdom that seems to suggest two concentrations, one in the north-west and another centred on the Gipping valley, with only one coin in the north-east, at Caister-on-Sea (Fig. 90). This may provide some support for the idea that this particular coinage was coming into the region through trade, but as this is based on a dataset of only 14 specimens any interpretation must be treated with caution. These two concentrations, north-west and south-east, are mirrored in a number of other *sceatta* patterns, and it seems that the entrances to the Wash and the Gipping valley were areas of significant activity. Most of the find-spots are 'productive' sites to some degree, but Bawsey is notably missing from this distribution, which is a little surprising given that examples have been found at Norwich (1), Ipswich (3) and Thetford.

The Series J coinage is currently dated by the EMC to a 15-year period (AD 710–25); the distribution seems to suggest a relatively short-lived but widespread coinage minted and perhaps distributed under Mercian control but, as discussed above, geographically specific to the East Midlands. The eastern bias to the pattern is clear, and the fact that there was a Mercian-controlled mint in the East Midlands perhaps reflects only that coinage was more commonly utilised as a transaction medium in eastern parts of the Anglo-Saxon realms than within other parts of Anglo-Saxon England at the time. Within East Anglia, if the pattern of loss for this coinage is examined alongside that of other more ubiquitous *sceatta* types, a layered use of different coinages can

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<sup>61</sup> EMC: <http://www-cm.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/emc/>.

<sup>62</sup> *T&Siii*, 343.

<sup>63</sup> Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, 108 and 113.

perhaps be discerned. Effectively, economic control of the area may also then be viewed as layered, with the ‘client’ kingdom retaining much economic control and a rather more tenuous dominance exercised by the ‘over’ kingdom of Mercia.



**Fig. 90.** Map of Series J – East Anglia.

#### *Series K (Figs 91–93)*

Series K is attributed to an unknown mint-place in east Kent, possibly Canterbury, which was the nationally dominant mint for pennies during the 9th century.<sup>64</sup> However, there is some evidence to suggest that the actual mint location lay on the Wantsum Channel, or on the rivers Stour or Wantsum, at one of the putative though unproven *wics* thought to be located there but which remain stubbornly undiscovered.<sup>65</sup> Possibilities for the site of this elusive postulated *wic* include Reculver,

<sup>64</sup> *T&Siii*, 368.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 369.

Minster, Sarre, Fordwich and Sandwich.<sup>66</sup> However, the strong concentration of Series K types in Hertfordshire, particularly at the ‘productive’ site at Royston, seems to call the attribution of the series to Kent into some question. At the time that Metcalf was publishing *Thrymsas and Sceattas* (1994) 8 Series K specimens were known from Royston, as opposed to 10 Series L examples; that picture has now changed significantly, with 23 Series K and 12 Series L known from the site. Leaving mint-attribution to one side, we can more effectively examine the distribution pattern of coin loss. Series K, stylistically and in its distribution pattern, blends with and is difficult to differentiate from Series L; the two might most usefully be viewed as a single, if diverse, type. As so few of these coins are actually distributed within the area under investigation, this thesis will not discuss the multiplicity of sub-types. Both K, L and the rarer groups mentioned above tend to possess an obverse consisting commonly of a bust with a hand holding a cross, cup or sprig (or sometimes a cup and a cross) which ultimately may derive from the ‘Constantine’-type shilling dating from the mid–late 7th century.<sup>67</sup> Gannon suggests that the hand holding a cup motif may be secular in origin, denoting the hospitality and generosity associated with kingship, but concedes that it may also reflect/incorporate Christian symbolism, perhaps referencing the Eucharist.<sup>68</sup> The sprig motif as seen on Series K sub-type 42 may, Gannon suggests, represent a borrowing from Coptic and ultimately classical images of Bacchus holding his *thyrsus*, which can also be seen on some contemporary gems.



**Fig. 91.** Series K (Type 330 (N 93: wolf’s {or Panther’s} head right) (720–740), EMC No. 1988.6001, from nr Reculver, Kent.

The design on the reverse of Series K often take the form of a carnivorous animal, described by Metcalf as a ‘wolf’ but argued by Gannon to be a panther. Sub-types 32, 33 and 42 particularly carry this image, with 32a combining the carnivorous mammal head with the body of a snake. Gannon suggests that the panther image had its roots in classical representations and ultimately found its way into Celtic–Christian art, for instance in the Book of Kells. Fourth-century *Dignitas*

<sup>66</sup> Tatton-Brown, ‘Canterbury’.

<sup>67</sup> Gannon, *Iconography*, 66.

*Amicorum* goldwork on glass also utilises this motif, with a serrated pelleted border containing the panther image, and this too is copied on some of the coinage.<sup>69</sup> On both the coins and the gospel books the motif was perhaps inspired by the panther images of the classical world, but was intended to represent a lion, and thus the image may well be a Christian allegoric symbol.<sup>70</sup> The *thyrsus* motif was also probably an appropriation of the Bacchic iconographic portfolio into christian symbolism and, as it was paired with the animal motif, may be akin to the eucharistic images of animals consuming a vine-scroll seen in a number of Christian artistic contexts.<sup>71</sup>

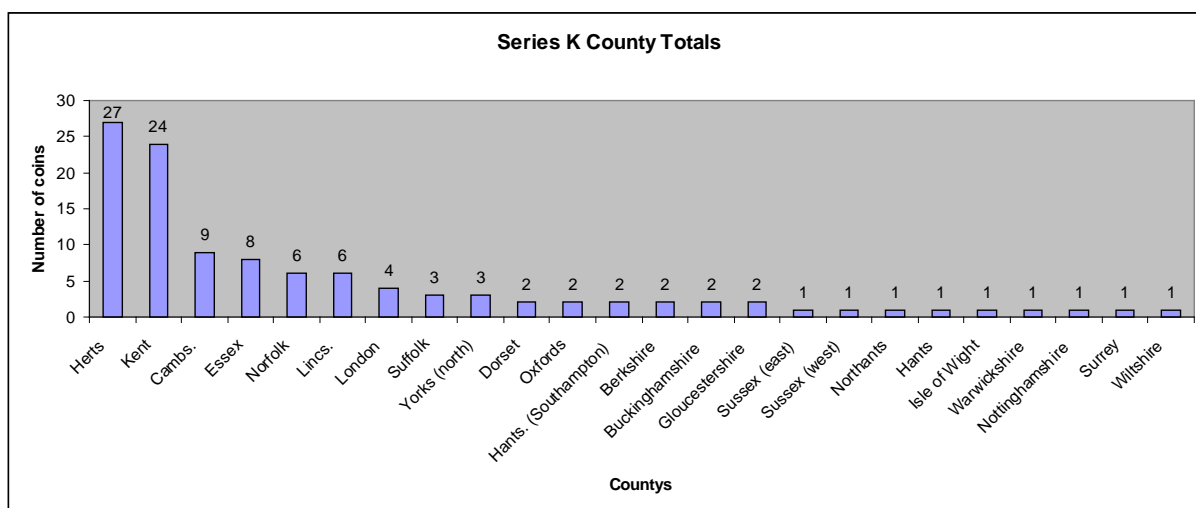


Fig. 92. Chart of Series K per county – England.

Series K and L make up a stylistic and typological continuum with other rarer types such as the CARIP, ‘Triquetras’, ‘Celtic Cross with Rosettes’, ‘Rosettes’, MONITASCORUM or SCORVM and ‘Victory’ types, as well as various ‘mule’ types (using dies copied from two series that were then combined). A plethora of forms and sub-series can be distinguished, but it may be more useful to examine these groups as a spectrum and treat them as a set.<sup>72</sup> The distributions of both these series now appear to have quite similar and overlapping concentrations in south-east England. The iconography on both is very clearly Christian and where lettering does appear it is in Latin script; this contrasts with the East Anglian-derived coinage, which carries largely runic inscriptions, as will be discussed below. If Series K is in fact from Kent, and Series L is derived from a London-based

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 67.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 131–2.

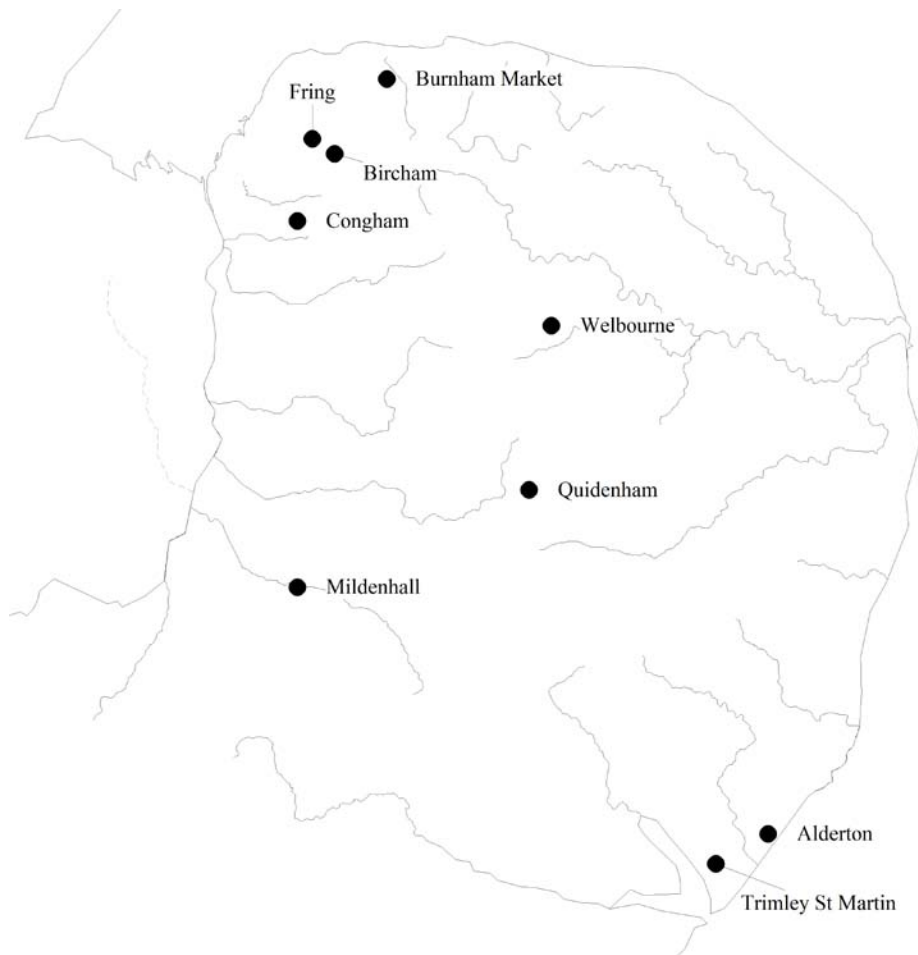
<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 132–3.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 133–4.

<sup>72</sup> Clarke, *Analytical Archaeology*, discusses the use of set theory in archaeology; in his terms this type of set would be described as open, thus forming diffuse boundaries with neighbouring types.

mint, then it is very tempting to attribute the coinage to the two bishoprics of Canterbury and London.

The East Anglian total of this series consists of a relatively insignificant nine coins and is thus to be viewed with some caution. That said, there does again seem to be a concentration in the north-west part of Norfolk and another in the south-west close to Ipswich (but not including it) at the mouths of the Orwell and Deben. A further find is located down the Wash at Mildenhall and this conforms to a strong distribution within the lower parts of the Wash river system, particularly in Hertfordshire. This distribution supports the suggestion that much of this particular coinage entered the region through inter-regional trade of some kind, although the nature of this trade remains elusive. The fact that there are no finds from either Ipswich or Bawsey should not necessarily detract from this picture, as the coins found at Congham (in the case of Bawsey) and Alderton and Trimley St Martin (in the case of Ipswich) could be considered as coming from the immediate hinterlands of much more productive sites and therefore may have been connected in a sub-regional hierarchy of such places.



**Fig. 93.** Map of Series K – East Anglia.



*Series L (Figs 94–96)*

Stylistically, as discussed above, Series L has much in common with Series K. Together with some smaller groups both series form a continuum; in terms of their geographical distribution, they overlap significantly. There are, in total, 97 specimens defined as belonging to Series L, compared with the 115 known specimens belonging to Series K. It was once thought that Series L was Hwiccian (a kingdom that conformed roughly in area to the diocese of Worcester) in origin, but it is now considered to have been minted in London.<sup>73</sup>



**Fig. 94.** Series L (Type 15a) (N 68) (730–760), EMC No. 2005.0256, from Cambridge, Cambridgeshire.

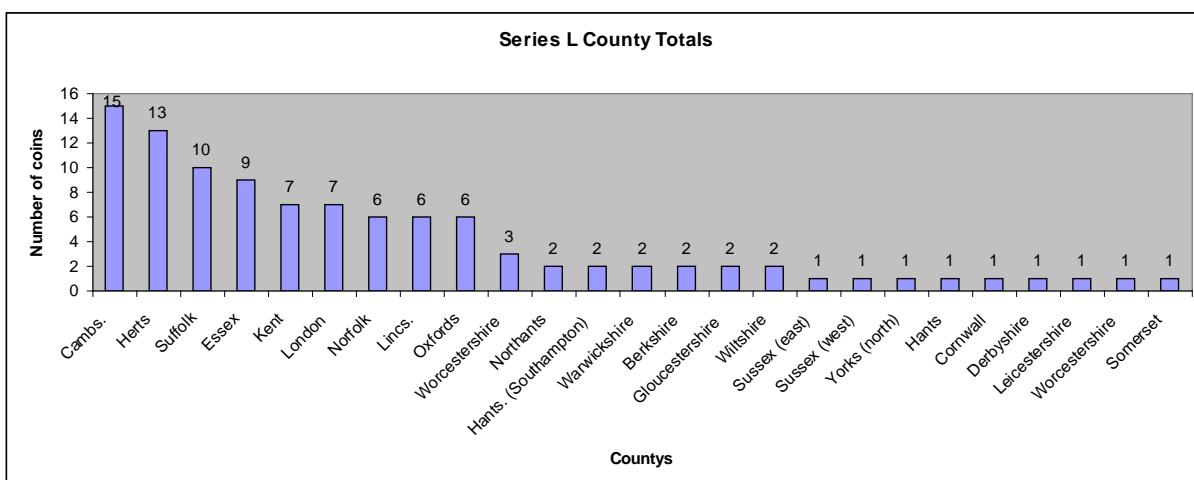
Much of Series L carries a design with a bust similar in style to that seen on Series K, but without a hand holding a sprig. The reverses commonly show a standing figure, usually with crosses on either side, sometimes with only one cross. Most of these figures appear to be wearing a skirt or a dress, suggesting ecclesiastic vestments. Some also appear to be wearing a helmet. One type has the figure apparently standing on a boat.

Both sub-types 12 and the rare sub-type 13 have an often blundered inscription meant to read LVNDONIA+. <sup>74</sup> Type 18 seems to have a predominantly eastern distribution, with several coins from Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire. In national terms, the distribution of this coinage suggests that it was a Mercian issue, but with a certain bias to the south-east, particularly Cambridgeshire, Hertfordshire and Essex.

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<sup>73</sup> *T&Siii*, 406.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 409.



**Fig. 95.** Chart of Series L per county – England.



**Fig. 96.** Map of Series L – East Anglia.

The East Anglian distribution is predominately within Suffolk and particularly Ipswich, suggesting that much of this series was entering the region through the *wic*. The finds from Barham support this. Only two of the finds come from near the Wash and the series is completely absent from the finds within from ‘productive’ sites in the north-west of the region. The two specimens recently found at Aylsham and recorded on the EMC are interesting, as they are the only two *sceattas* found from the parish; there are, however, two pennies known from the area, issues of Aethelstan and Edward the Elder. The fact that Series L is rare in East Anglia and these are the only *sceattas* suggests that they may be part of a hoard. Again, the possibility that these coins found their way into the kingdom for a particular reason can be posited. With provisos and caveats considered, it does seem reasonable to suppose that Series L originated within London, or was counterfeiting coinage that came from there. The iconography suggests an ecclesiastical affiliation and the national distribution, although perhaps slightly skewed to the areas of Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire, is not inconsistent with a London mint. The dating of the series is fairly late, currently being placed in the period between AD 730 and 760, with greater resolution for some sub-types within this range. It may be that, for instance, this coinage was specific either to a bishopric or a monastic house. The inference then can be drawn from this that the distribution may be connected to landholdings.

#### *C ARIP (BMC Type 63)*

There are only ten examples of this type nationally; the distribution is similar to Series L. The one East Anglian example comes from Quidenham.

#### *Celtic Cross with Rosettes Type*

There are 26 finds of this type nationally, with concentrations of find-spots along the Thames and the south coast, a few examples in Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire and only one in East Anglia, from Burrow Hill (Suffolk). This type again fits into the continuum of Series K and L sub-issue typology, and its geographical distribution is similar. In terms of dating, it is not currently closely dated on the EMC but given a range of between AD 720 and 750. The design looks very much like some of Offa’s pennies, with a Celtic cross on the reverse.

#### *MONITASCORVM Group (Fig. 97)*

Only nine examples of this type are known nationally, one of which is from Oxborough. The type is currently dated by the EMC to between AD 715 and 750.



**Fig. 97.** MONITASCORVM Group, EMC No. 2007.0280, from Oxborough.

*Victory Group (Fig. 98)*

Nine of these coins have been found nationally, with most coming from either Essex or Hertfordshire. One coin originates from Bawsey. The obverse of most examples contains a winged figure that seems to have its origins in the Roman design of Victory advancing.<sup>75</sup> There are a further two coins, one each from Norfolk and Suffolk, that do not have precise locations. If these attributions can be trusted then the coinage has a much more East Anglian flavour.



**Fig. 98.** Victory Group, EMC No 1986.00301, from Bawsey.

*'Animal Mask' Group (Fig. 99)*

A mere seven of these coins are known in total, with one find coming from Caldecote (Norfolk). The type, like many of these smaller Secondary phase issues, is eclectic in its use of reverse designs, which consist of a variety of backward-looking animals, a figure with cross and bird, another with only a cross and bird and some with just a cross. Its geographical distribution takes in Cambridgeshire and Essex.

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 440.



**Fig. 99.** 'Animal Mask' Group, EMC No. 1993.9354, from Caldecote, Norfolk.

*Series M*

None of the 18 known examples of this series have been found in East Anglia. Its distribution seems to be restricted to the Thames and its tributaries.

*Series N (Figs 100–103)*

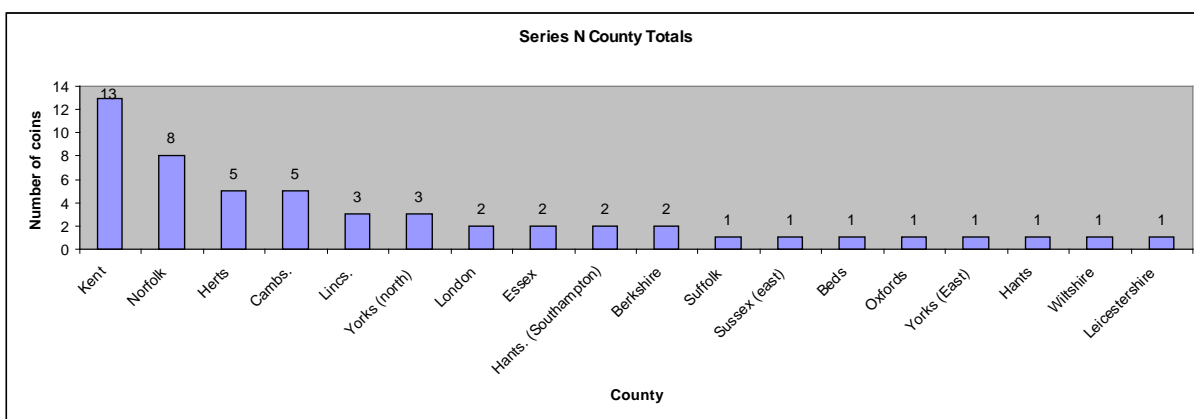
Series N has a widespread geographical distribution in national terms. Metcalf describes the series as consisting of three sub-types: 41b, 41a and 41b/41a. The design on each of these is consistent, with a couple of standing figures holding between one and three long crosses on the obverse and a backward-looking beast on the reverse. Despite the difficulties in attribution, the series is well dated by the EMC to between AD 715 and 720. A total of around 54 specimens are known nationally, of which 9 have been found in East Anglia.



**Fig. 100.** Series N (Type 41a), EMC No. 1988.0133, from Binham, Norfolk.



**Fig. 101.** Series N (Type 41b), EMC No. 1986.0096, from Great Bircham, Norfolk.



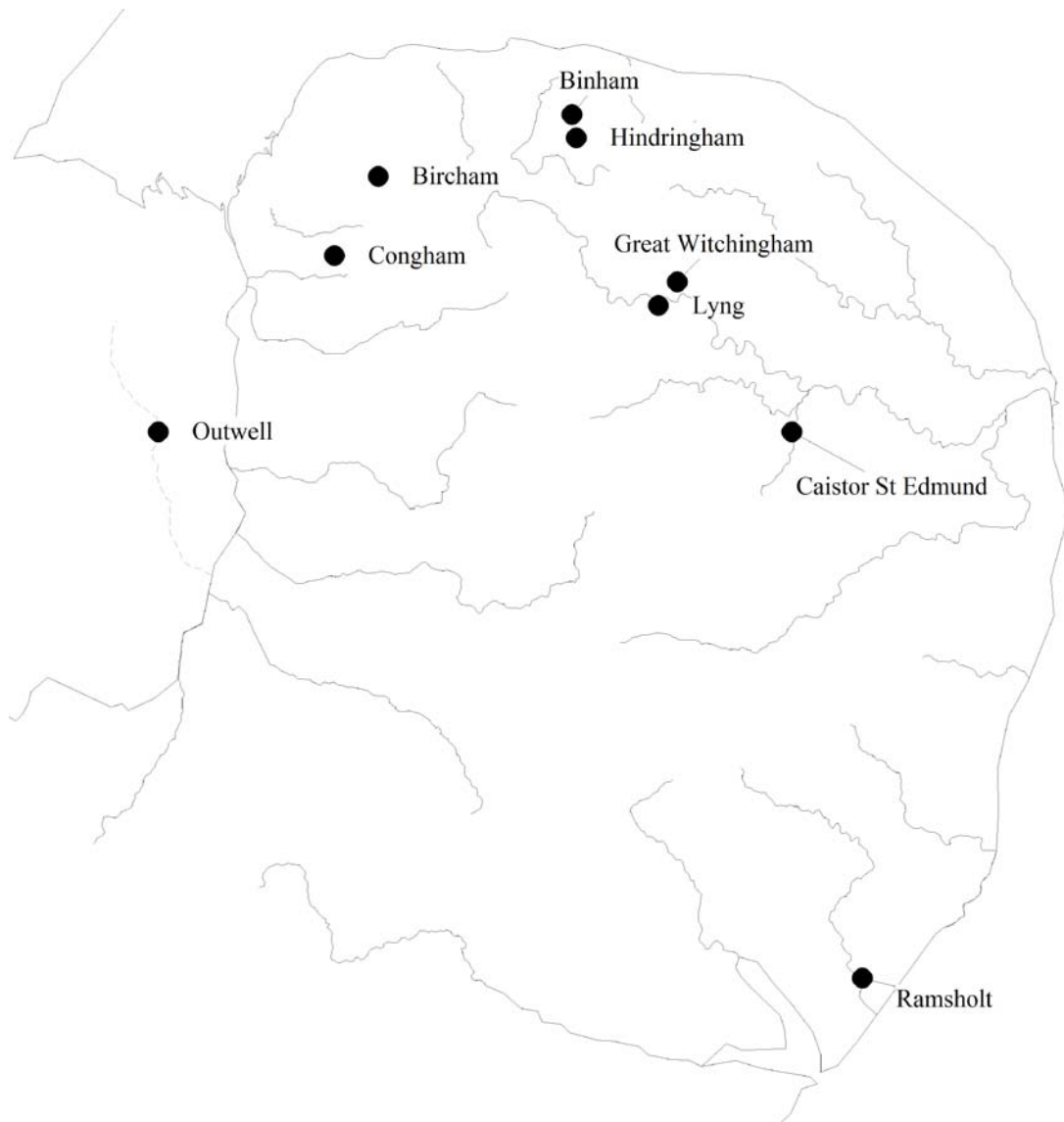
**Fig. 102.** Chart of Series N per county – England.

Metcalf suggested a London mint-place for the series.<sup>76</sup> From the distribution available currently on the EMC it seems more likely that this is a Kentish coinage and that it may have ecclesiastical importance, perhaps an association with the archbishop, which might explain its widespread distribution – the archbishop would have held land widely during the period and may also have held obligations for various payments over several kingdoms. We can see from the following early-9th-century charter that Archbishop Wulfred came to possess land in places far-flung from Canterbury, in this case Hereford:

A.D. 811 (Canterbury, 21 April). Wulfred, archbishop, to Christ Church; grant of 3 sulungs (aratra) at Folcwinning lond in the district of Eastry, 1 at Liminum and 1 at Dunwaling lond, Kent, in exchange for 4 sulungs at Bishopsbourne, Kent. The land at Liminum had been granted to Wulfred by Coenwulf, king of Mercia, in exchange for land at Yarkhill, Herefords., which Wulfred had obtained from Queen Cynethryth. The land at Bishopsbourne had been given to Christ Church by Aldhun, confiscated by King Offa, and then restored. (trans.)<sup>77</sup>

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 465.

<sup>77</sup> P.H. Sawyer (ed.), *Anglo-Saxon Charters: An Annotated List and Bibliography*, Royal Historical Society (London, 1968), S 1264.



**Fig. 103.** Map of Series N – East Anglia.

The East Anglian distribution is, with the exception of one item from Ramsholt, restricted to Norfolk and spread widely across the county, given the small numbers involved. It also avoids the larger ‘productive’ sites and is absent from Ipswich; the contrast with Series L is interesting in this regard.

#### *Series O*

There are two provenanced examples of this type from East Anglia: one from Fring, Norfolk, and another from Framlingham in Suffolk. The former is an unusual mule and not representative of the

main bulk of the type, and the other is of Type 40, which has more connection, if one follows Metcalf, with Series N. Both series now appear to originate from Kent.<sup>78</sup>

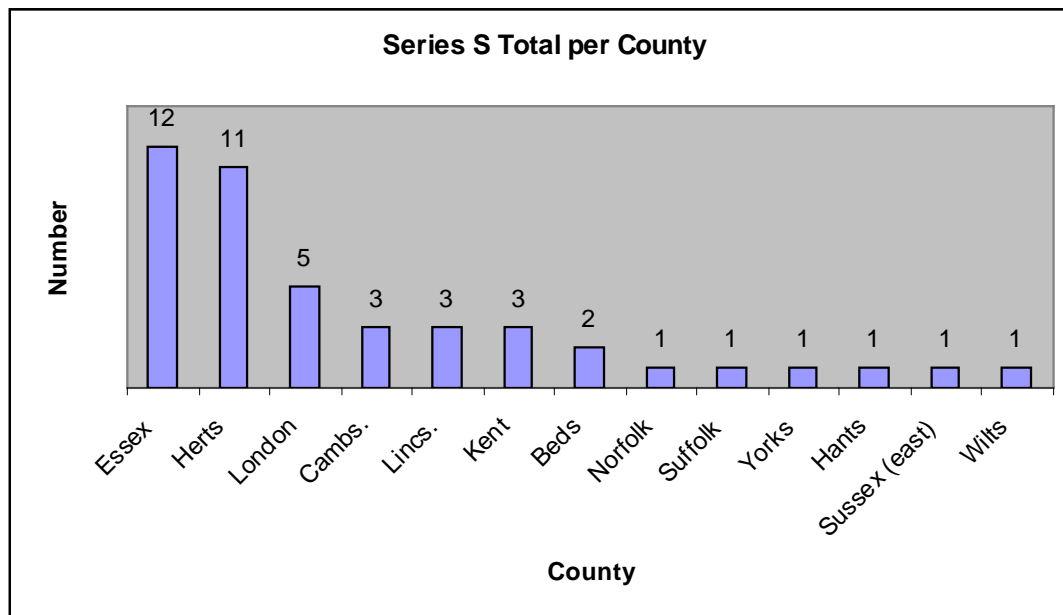
*Series S (Figs 104 & 105)*

The obverse of this coin is perhaps, to modern eyes, the strangest motif depicted on *sceatta* coinage. Formerly thought to represent a sphinx (hence Rigold's mnemonic S), it is now characterised as a female, probably winged, centaur.<sup>79</sup>

Gannon points out that the female centaur has parallels in other Anglo-Saxon art forms; one is depicted on a frieze at Breedon-on-the Hill (Leicestershire). She suggests that the motif ultimately derives from classical and perhaps Middle Eastern images.<sup>80</sup>



**Fig. 104.** Series S, EMC no. 2006.0006, from 'Suffolk'.



**Fig. 105.** Chart of Series S per county – England.

<sup>78</sup> *T&Siii*, 526.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 537.

<sup>80</sup> Gannon, *Iconography*, 152–3.



Three specimens are known from East Anglia. One is from Thetford; the others lack a provenance more detailed than 'East Anglia' in one case and 'Suffolk' in the other. A national total of some 51 coins is known from both the EMC and SCBI, many without good locational information. Metcalf suggests that the type was East Saxon in origin and the distribution of examples as currently known seems to support this hypothesis. Relatively large numbers have been found at the productive site at Tilbury (Essex) and also at Royston (Herts.). The EMC now places the date range for this type within the decade AD 730–40.

#### *Series T*

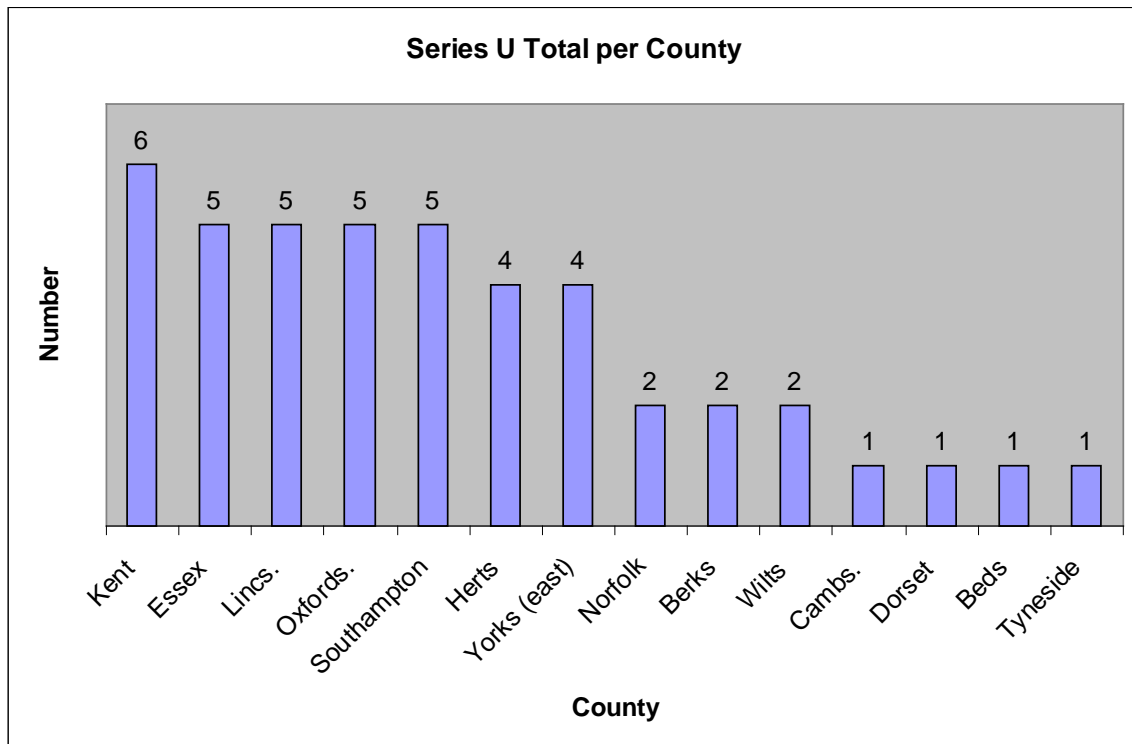
It is worth noting that no examples of this probably London-based type have yet been found within East Anglia. Only 19 examples are known and these have a fairly wide and uninformative distribution.

#### *Series U (Figs 106–108)*

Sometimes referred to as the 'Archer' type, Series U possesses clear connections with Series L in design terms, although no example has yet been found in London. In all known examples the obverse features a standing figure holding two crosses; in the case of Type 23d the figure is stood on what appears to be a boat. The reverse in most examples is a pecking bird figure. Mules with designs found on Series K and L are also known. One coin of this series is recorded by the EMC with a location within East Anglia.



**Fig. 106.** Series U (Type 23b), EMC No. 2005.0035, from Diss, Norfolk.



**Fig. 107.** Chart of Series U per county – England.

In national terms the series has a clear southern and eastern distribution and is strongly associated with the Thames, the Solent and the north-east. It is difficult to explain why it has a rather weak distribution in East Anglia given the full east-coast range of the series otherwise known, but this may again relate to the distribution of particular landholdings, as mentioned above in connection with Series L.



**Fig. 108.** Map of Series U – East Anglia.

*Series V*

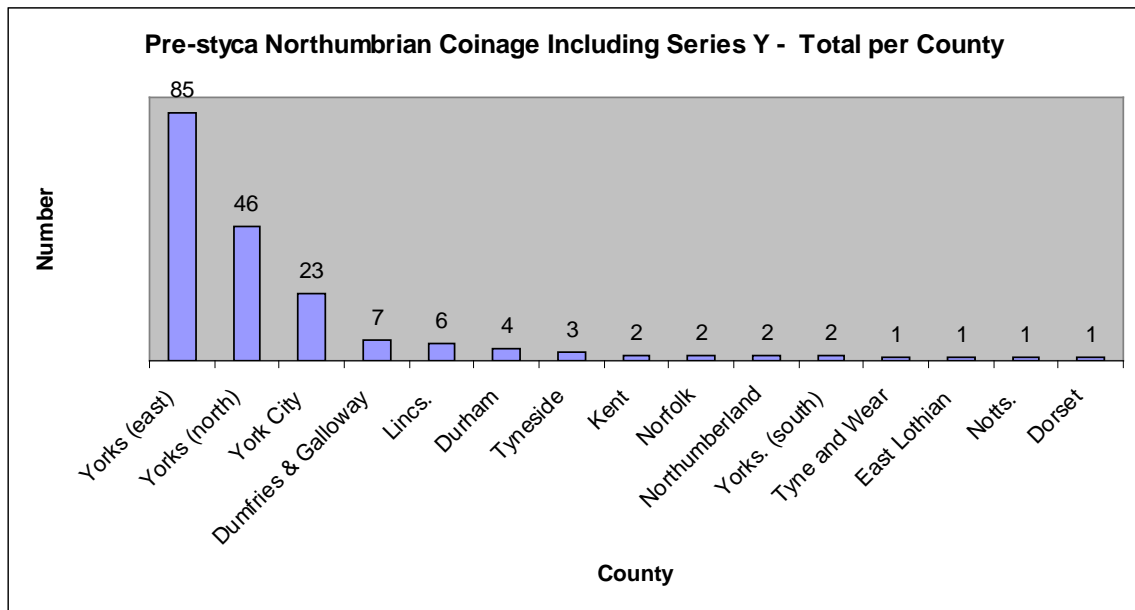
No examples are currently known from East Anglia.

*Series Y Northumbrian coinage 710–789 (Fig. 109)*

The history and intricacies of Northumbrian coinage within this period is a fascinating and complex subject, but one that is outside the scope of this study. Unlike other minting authorities of this period the Northumbrian royal house had the king's name spelled on the obverse of the coin. This practice stretches back to the Primary period coinage of King Aldfrith (AD 685–705) (see Chapter 5). Moreover, in contrast to most other Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, Northumbria did not undergo a major coinage reform until the 790s. Prior to this little minting seems to have taken place in the former kingdom until the reign of Eadberht (AD 737–58) and the practice then continued through until the second reign of Æthelred I (AD 790–96), when the production was reformed and the so-

called ‘styca’ series, unique to Northumbria, begins.<sup>81</sup> The pre-790s Northumbrian coinage is thus included in this chapter, whereas the contemporary Offan and later Mercian coinage is discussed in the following chapter of this thesis, this follows Perie’s suggestion that the pre-790s coinage should be viewed alongside *sceattas*. Although the coinage of Æthelred’s I first reign (AD 774–8) is not defined by the EMC as belonging to Series Y, it has been included here because Perie recommends viewing it as part of that continuum.<sup>82</sup>

Of the some 190 Series Y coins found nationally, only two examples have been found in East Anglia: at Caister-on-Sea, a N177 type Eadberht (AD 737–58), and from Thetford, an Æthelred I (1st reign AD 774–8), which was found at the St Barnabas Hospital site (NHER 1092).



**Fig. 109.** Chart of ‘pre-styca’ Northumbrian *sceattas* per county – England.

We can see from Fig. 109 that the vast majority of the coinage remained in Northumbria, with particular concentrations at the city of York, Whitby Abbey and Sancton in the East Riding of Yorkshire.

<sup>81</sup> E. Perie, ‘The coinage of Northumbria c. 670–876’, in Cook and Williams (eds.) *Coinage and History*, 211–40.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

## East Anglian coinage

### *Series Q (Figs 110–116)*

In design terms Series Q is hugely diverse, but within a relatively constant theme consisting of a quadruped or bird on the reverse and a standing figure(s) or bust on the obverse. Metcalf has organised the series into five main sub-types, I–IV and a type that combines the attributes of both Series Q and R, Type Q(R).<sup>83</sup> There are more than 20 variants on these types, all of which are represented within the 68 examples discussed in the SCIB and the EMC;<sup>84</sup> although Metcalf's division suggests there may be more types elsewhere. In this diversity Series Q is thus quite unlike Series R, the other series thought to originate in East Anglia. Some examples, however, feature runic script, and the two series are thus also linked in this sense, even if their design shows little else in common. Series Q is also certainly Anglo-Saxon in its origins, with only two coins known (from Domburg, the Netherlands) outside England. Like Series R, it developed over almost the whole of the Secondary period.<sup>85</sup> These two East Anglian series were often to join together to form a Q/R mule. This mule is so common that it effectively forms a sub-type has here been classed with Series Q, but could just as reasonably be affiliated with Series R. The runes observable on these coins are always a retrograde *er*.<sup>86</sup>



**Fig. 110.** Series Q I g (Type 59) (725–745) EMC No. 1998.1062, from Lincolnshire.

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<sup>83</sup> *T&Siii*, 483–501.

<sup>84</sup> EMC: [http://www-cm.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/coins/emc/emc\\_search.php](http://www-cm.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/coins/emc/emc_search.php)

<sup>85</sup> *T&Siii*, 483–4.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 484.



**Fig. 111.** Series QIb (725–45), EMC No. 2004.0174, from Norfolk.



**Fig. 112.** Series QIVa (725–45), EMC No. 1990.0191, from Alderton, Suffolk.



**Fig. 113.** Series Q(R), EMC No. 1993.9388, from Bawsey, Norfolk.



**Fig. 114.** Series QIIIa (725–45), EMC No. 1987.0084, from Bere Regis, Dorset.

Metcalf suggests that the mint for Series Q probably lay somewhere in west Norfolk, basing his interpretation on the distribution of the find-spots which were known at the time (1994).<sup>87</sup> He noted that it was difficult to understand why, assuming that the coinage was a royal prerogative, there were two East Anglian series. Several possible mint-places are postulated by Metcalf; he does not recommend one in particular, but suggests Wisbech, Lynn, Castle Rising and Ely as possibilities. Newman has taken these as a starting point and came down more strongly in favour of Ely as a likely location for the minting of Series Q.<sup>88</sup>

The use of iconography on Series Q is eclectic and is similar to Series N and O/Type 40. Indeed, Metcalf postulates that this series derives from an imitation of Series N, which, as has been discussed above, is probably best attributed to Kent, although there are reasonable numbers of coins found within East Anglia also. Another possibility is that Series N and O/Type 40 were both associated with the archbishopric. The reverse motif on some examples of Series Q is a quadruped; in some cases this is a left-facing animal reminiscent of the design on the reverse of the Aldfrith coins (see Chapter 5). Gannon believes these beasts should be seen as lions.<sup>89</sup> As is the case with the Aldfrith coinage design, the likely association for this motif seems St Mark. Gannon identifies it as being analogous to a heraldic device, but this seems unlikely given that the practice of heraldry does not begin until the 11th or 12th century,<sup>90</sup> although in the broadest sense a heraldic-type intent for the design may be correct, in that the icons may represent a family. The animal motif depicted on the reverse of Series Q may thus represent a wolf, and by extension be connected to the East Anglian ruling house, the *Wuffingas*.

A sub-type, QIG, notably possesses a unique motif on the obverse consisting of a front-facing motif (see Fig. 110) with bell-shaped hair. Gannon has suggested that this may represent a female figure, possibly an abbess; to stretch this point, if the Q series was minted in Ely, might this be a representation of the founder, Etheldreda?

There is a national total of 58 Series Q coins recorded on the EMC. A further 9 are known from the SCBI, none of which have known provenances.<sup>91</sup> Clearly the overall distribution continues to support Metcalf's assertion that this series belongs to East Anglia. Beyond that, the finds are too few to draw any conclusions, although there is an impression that the extraregional distribution is mainly within the south Mercian orbit and that some coastal trade with Northumbria is reflected.

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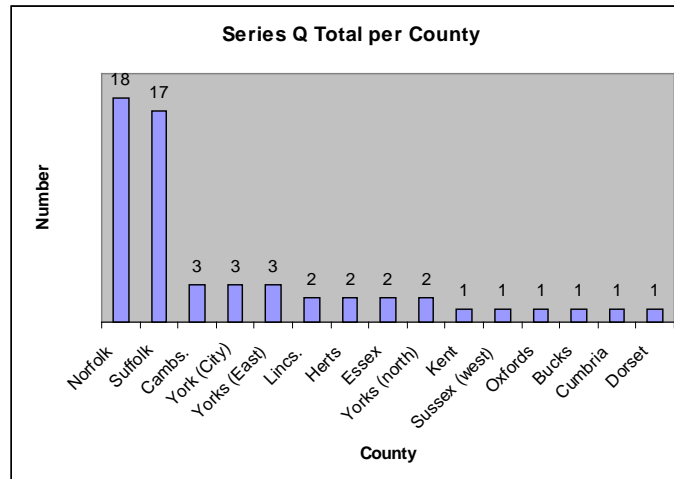
<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 483–5.

<sup>88</sup> J. Newman, 'Wics, trade, and the hinterland – the Ipswich region', in Anderton, *Anglo-Saxon Trading Centres*, 32–47.

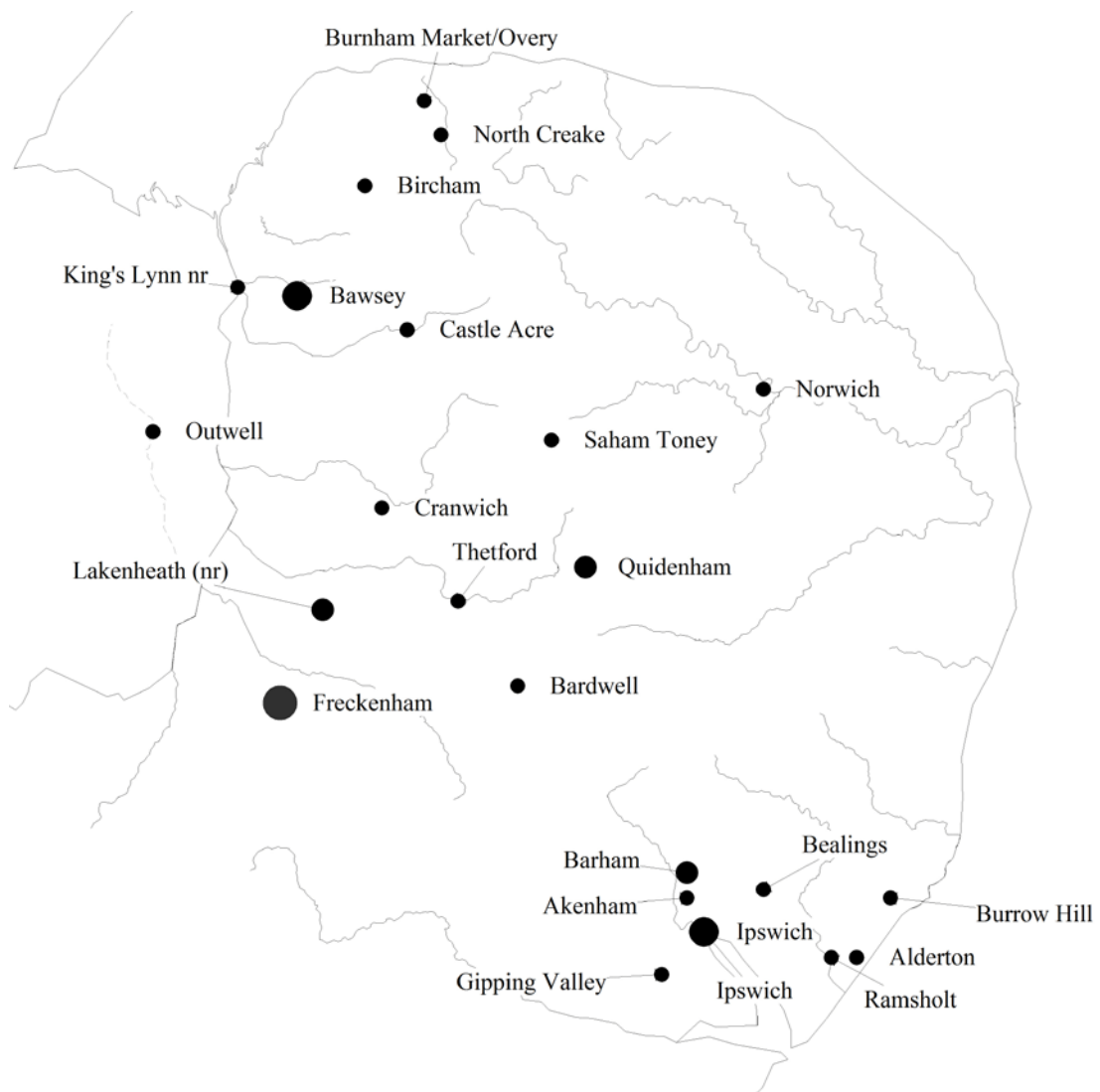
<sup>89</sup> Gannon, *Iconography*, 130.

<sup>90</sup> T. Woodcock and J. Robinson, *The Oxford Guide to Heraldry* (Oxford, 1988), 1.

<sup>91</sup> SCBI: <http://www-cm.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/coins/projects/scbi/index.html> (accessed 5 November 2009).



**Fig. 115.** Chart of Series Q per county – England.



**Fig. 116.** Map of Series Q – East Anglia.



The distribution of the coins within East Anglia has changed significantly since Metcalf carried out his analysis, and is no longer concentrated in the north-west of the region to the same extent. Rather, it suggests a wider circulation for this issue, perhaps questioning Metcalf's interpretation of the series as necessarily deriving from western Norfolk. Both Metcalf and Newman have suggested that some of the Series Q types may have been minted in Ely.<sup>92</sup> Given the distribution, this attribution may seem difficult to support. There are two main concentrations in the distribution pattern: the fen-edge and the area of the Gipping valley (Fig. 116). The Fens no longer dominate in this distribution, with other parts of the region, such as the Thetford and Norwich areas, equally well represented. With reference to later conclusions in this thesis, it is notable that all the places that go on to become urban centres are represented in the distribution of Series Q (see Chapter 8).

However, discounting Ely as the probable mint on the basis of a wider geographical distribution may be unwise. If the Series Q distribution is compared to the known landholdings of Ely in 1086 there is also a remarkable similarity.<sup>93</sup> Such chronologically disparate information must be treated with some caution, but perhaps here we are seeing an early reflection of this later landholding pattern? Weighing against this, however, is the presence of only a single Series Q type IV from Ely itself recorded on the EMC. In addition, the vast majority of this series was being lost in either Norfolk or Suffolk and relatively little of it in what became Cambridgeshire. The possibility that Ely is the mint-place for this coinage is attractive on a number of different levels, not least the potential ecclesiastical connection through its imitation of Series N and O/Type 40, and the postulated connection with the archbishopric at Canterbury. However, the connections become so tenuous at this point that drawing these inferences begins to border on the purely speculative.

#### *Series R (Figs 117–122)*



**Fig. 117.** Series R (Metcalf R8), EMC no. 1999.0006, from Thetford, Norfolk.

<sup>92</sup> Newman, 'Wics, trade, and the hinterland'; Metcalf, 'Determining the mint-attribution of East Anglian sceattas'.

The *sceatta* type known as Series R was named by Rigold, his mnemonic referring to the runic inscriptions found on both its obverse and reverse. The series derives ultimately from Series A via Series C. It possesses essentially the same motifs and as versions of the *Æpa*, later (or alternatively) *epa* runic, occasionally replaced with *spi* and more rarely (and incomprehensibly to runic scholars) *rhy*. As discussed in Chapter 5, the probably earlier elements of this type, R1, are closely related to Series C, forming a sort of continuum with it, and these are included by Metcalf in that series as Types C1 and C2. Thus Metcalf, in sticking with the attribution of Series C to Kent, sees the basic design develop over time from Series A through to Series C and then to Series R, and move during the period of this stylistic development from Kent to East Anglia. Compared with the other members of the Secondary Series, Series R was conservative in its design. Although there are a great many sub-types, they all conform to the same essential iconography. It has also been found in the greatest numbers. Currently, there are some 205 known examples, although not all of these have a reliable provenance.

Metcalf separates the series into 14 sub-groupings and numbers these, following Rigold, according to their relative chronology. This scheme splits into two phases, the earlier variety with a higher silver content having a bust with a neck on the obverse, and a later and debased set on which only the head is defined. The silver content starts at around 95% and is reduced in the later coinage to around 40%; some coins, thought to be late examples, are debased to levels of around 2–3%.<sup>94</sup>

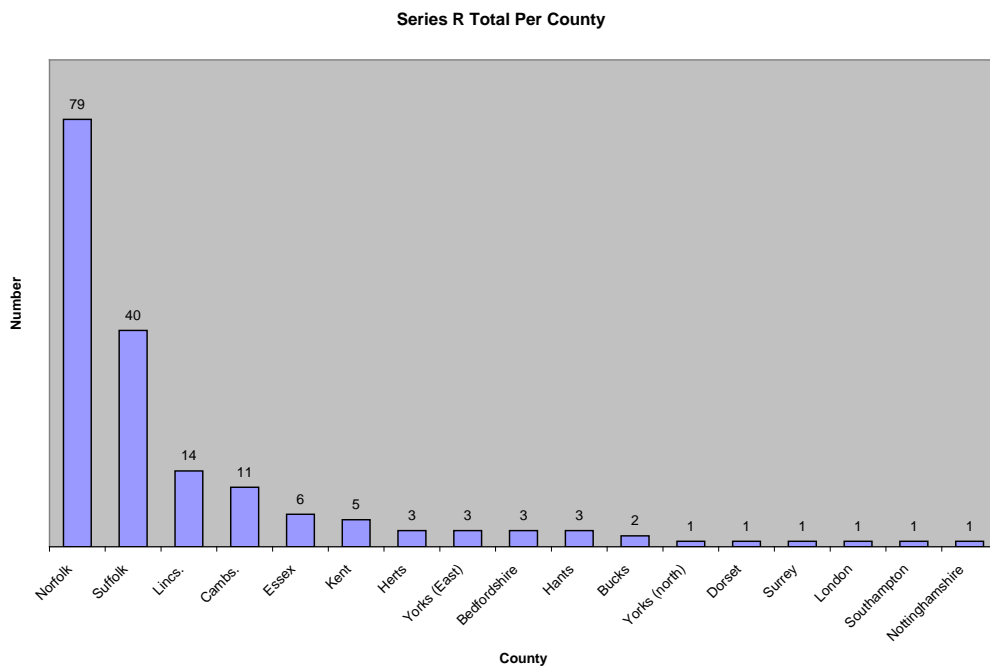
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<sup>93</sup> For a map illustrating the holdings of major Benedictine monasteries recorded in the Domesday Book see T. Pestell, *Landscapes of Monastic Foundation: The Establishment of Religious Houses in East Anglia, c. 650–1200* (Woodbridge, 2004), 111, fig. 24.

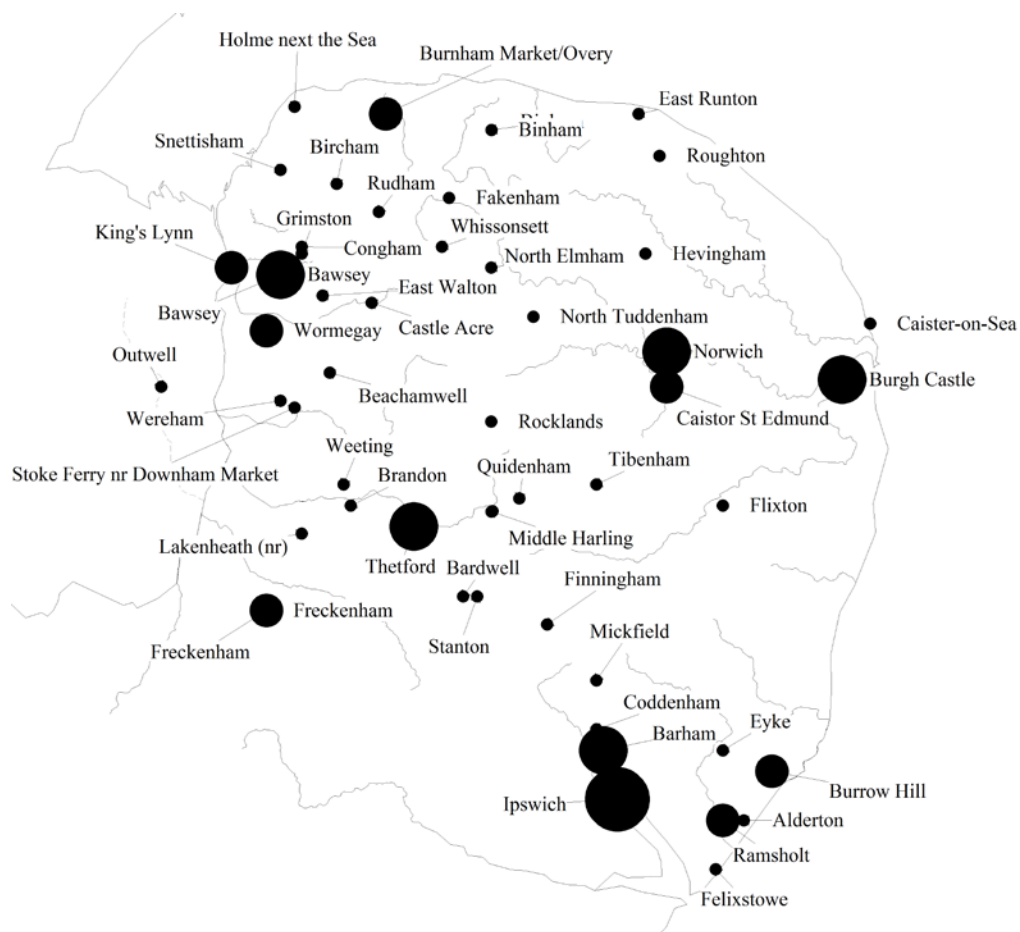
<sup>94</sup> *T&Siii*, 503–4.

	<i>Rigold type</i>	<i>Runes</i>		<i>'Silver'</i>	<i>Weight</i>
1	Rigold –	𐌚 𐌛 𐌜	( <i>epa</i> outwards, retrograde)	91–95%	1.20–1.25 g
2	R1x	𐌛 𐌚 𐌛 𐌜	(similar)	88–96%	1.15–1.20 g
3	R1z	𐌘 𐌛 𐌛 𐌚	(substantive issue)	c. 90–c. 70%	1.05–1.15 g
4	R1z/R1b?	𐌛 𐌛 𐌚	(imitative? 𐌛 behind head)	90%	c. 0.70 g
5	R1x/R1b?	𐌛 𐌛 𐌚	or 𐌚 𐌛 𐌚 (Norfolk?)	60–75%	0.8–0.9 g
6	R1z copy	𐌚 𐌛	(bold style; lateral reversal)	c. 45%	c. 0.9g?
7–12. <i>Head, with no neck</i>					
7	R2/R1z copy	𐌚 𐌛 𐌚	( <i>rhy</i> or similar)	c. 50%	0.8–1.1 g
7x	Gp. 7/type 70		(similar; also laterally reversed)		
8	R2	𐌚 𐌛	(substantive issue)	c. 38– c. 24%	0.7–0.9 g
8R	"	"	(laterally reversed)	"	"
9	R2	𐌚 𐌛 𐌚	( <i>spi</i> )	c. 35%	0. 7–0.9 g
10	R2, late	𐌚 𐌛 𐌚 𐌛 𐌚	( <i>wigræd</i> )	c. 13%	0.7–0.9 g
10R	"	"	(laterally reversed)	"	0.7–0.9 g
11	R2, late	𐌚 𐌛 𐌚 𐌛 𐌚 𐌚	( <i>tilbeorht</i> )	c. 11–7%	
12	Very late phase, continuing 10 and 11, but even more debased?				

Fig. 118. Series R classification, after Metcalf 1994.



**Fig. 119.** Chart of Series R per county – England.



**Fig. 120.** Map of Series R – East Anglia.

Metcalf thought that this group of coins was minted in East Anglia and represented the principal coinage of the kingdom.<sup>95</sup> We can see from the county totals that it is certainly true that the vast majority of the coins of this type were being lost, and hence used, across much of the former kingdom throughout the Secondary *sceatta* period. The distribution of find locations within Norfolk and Suffolk shows the widespread nature of coin loss across the two counties, with clear concentrations across Norfolk and another in the south-east in the Gipping valley and Sandlings area. In addition, most of the remainder come from neighbouring counties. As stated elsewhere in this thesis, whether the coinage was minted here or not is almost a moot point, and until actual physical evidence of the mint-site is discovered the case for a mint-place can obscure other more important and more effectively examined issues.

The limited data on die-duplicates, Metcalf suggests, indicates that this series was minted at more than one location. Metcalf is certain that one of these, probably the most prolific, was in Ipswich, with less important mints near both Thetford and Norwich.<sup>96</sup> Twenty Series R examples are recorded from excavations in Ipswich and another three are recorded on the EMC.<sup>97</sup> For Thetford there are nine Series R coins recorded on the EMC. A single specimen is known from an excavation within Norwich at the Whitefriars Car Park,<sup>98</sup> with a further six having being found on the outskirts of Norwich. There is no real discord here, then, between Metcalf's assertion and the potential mint-places as indicated by the currently understood distribution pattern. Some further locations have several Series R finds, however: Bawsey, for instance, has 18, Barham 11, Burgh Castle 6, Caistor St Edmund 4 and Freckenham 4. Again we come to this issue of how best to interpret the evidence. It is the case that Ipswich has produced the most finds for any one place. However, Bawsey is not far behind and both Thetford and Norwich have good numbers of losses.

Within Ipswich the collected group of Series R coins span many of the sub-types. However, the bulk of well-identified Ipswich Series R coins lie well within the later span of the Series, between AD 730 and 760. The Series R coins found in Thetford are also mainly of the later varieties. Only one of the Norwich coins is from the earlier (AD 710–20) phase of the Series, and the coin found at Whitefriars Car Park was not closely definable beyond its identification as belonging to the series. However, Bawsey seems to have more of a balance between early and late Series R types. At Barham, half the coins are not definable beyond belonging to the Series, and the other half are late

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 502.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 504.

<sup>97</sup> I am grateful to Keith Wade for providing access to the lists of coin finds from excavations within the town; EMC: <http://www-cm.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/emc/>.

<sup>98</sup> B.S. Ayers and P. Murphy, *A Waterfront Excavation at Whitefriars Street Car Park, Norwich 1979*, (East Anglian Archaeology 17, 1983), 63, no. 2, plate XXIII.

sub-types. Why the earlier types are missing from the towns and larger ‘productive’ sites is not clear, but this may suggest that there was an increase in coin production and use later in the period. This raises the question of whether the towns really were the mint-places for Series R, particularly in the earlier phase. It is notable that with regard to Series A to C, finds from Ipswich are small in number. The numbers of Series R appearing in Ipswich also do not increase until the later phases of that Series. However, thirty-four coins that have been found during excavations within the town have been attributed simply to the Series and remain largely unanalysed. Perhaps some of these are earlier types yet to be identified.

In the later phases of Series R (Metcalf types R10 and R11) the names WIGRÆD and TILBEORHT appear on coins. These, according to their dating by both Metcalf and the EMC at AD 740–50, represent the final phase of Series R and foreshadow the use of moneyers’ names on the slightly later coinage of Beonna and the Mercian coinage of Offa which follows. There is no apparent distinctiveness in the distribution of either of these late Series R types but then there are only three known R11 types (Tilbeorht) from the region and the conclusions that can be drawn must be limited. In all, there are a mere 14 of these coins.



**Fig. 121.** Series R (Metcalf R10) (WIGRÆD), EMC no. 1980.98236, from Burgh Castle, Norfolk.



**Fig. 122.** Series R (Metcalf R11)(TILBEORHT), EMC no. 1993.0143, from Burgh Castle, Norfolk.

Metcalf suggests that Series R is likely to have been the royal coinage of King Ældwulf (AD 663/4–c.713) and his son and successor King Ælfwald (c. AD 713–49) and that there are a number of related, so-called eclectic varieties such as Types 30, 51 and 70 that were part of a

spectrum of royal designs. Alternatively, the eclectic types may be coinage that was struck by mints controlled by other authorities within the kingdom and tolerated by the king.<sup>99</sup>

There are, to summarise, at least two and probably three separate sequences of Series R types. Metcalf suggests that those coins with the *epa*, *X epa* or *gepa* inscriptions were predominantly minted at Ipswich or Woodbridge, and that those with *spi*, which may develop into the Tibeorht coinage, are probably from another mint location, perhaps in the north-west of the region. Metcalf suggests that a further small group with the runic inscription *rhy* may have been produced in the Norwich area in the Intermediate phase of production.<sup>100</sup> This aspect is discussed further elsewhere in this study; here it may suffice to say that there is little evidence to make such interpretative leaps and our understanding of the towns is limited. The evidence that exists for the eighth century within Norwich, for instance, is not sufficient to suggest coin production there; currently there is only a small amount of material from Fishergate that indicates antler and bone production.<sup>101</sup> The intensity of this production, as discovered to date, seems rather slight compared to sites such as Brandon, although the area excavated is small and the sampling bias perhaps makes such comparisons unwise. The case for coin production in Ipswich is much more substantial given the other evidence for industrial production there, but, as discussed, the early part of the Series R sequence is missing from the town.

#### *Type 30 (Figs 123–126)*

There is a total of only 18 known single finds of this type recorded on the EMC, and within East Anglia there are a meagre 4 known finds. As mentioned in the previous section, this Type may be considered as a variant of Series R, but the few East Anglian finds may militate against this view. The design on these coins consists of a front-facing bust with spike-like hair and a W-shaped moustache, known as the Wodan motif.<sup>102</sup> The connection here with Germanic and Scandinavian cultures is often emphasised in the literature but Gannon has pointed to the same iconography appeared in both the ‘Celtic’ and Roman palettes.<sup>103</sup> Metcalf makes the connection between the BZ series and this type and suggests that the ‘Wodan’ motif may have possessed some political significance within East Anglia.<sup>104</sup> It is worth re-emphasising the suggestion that the Series BZ coinage was minted in Bawsey, discussed in Chapter 5. The obverse of Type 30 can consist of one

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<sup>99</sup> *T&Siii*, 524–6.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 523.

<sup>101</sup> D. Adams, *Middle and Late Saxon Norwich: Recent Discoveries* (East Anglian Archaeology, in prep.).

<sup>102</sup> Gannon, *Iconography*, 29–30.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>104</sup> *T&Siii*, 527–8.

of a number of motifs seen above, such as the two standing figures seen on Series N, as well as standards and the 'Celtic'-style cross motifs.



**Fig. 123.** Type 30, SCBI no. 1016.0072, unprovenanced.

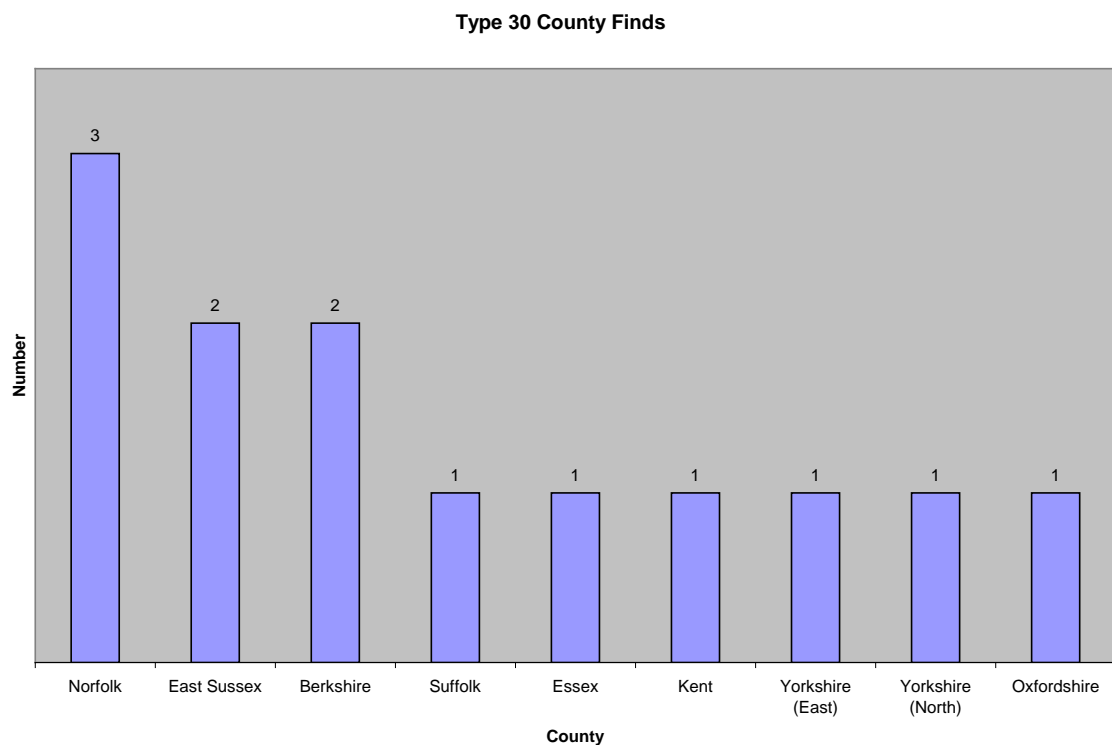


**Fig. 124.** Type 30, NHER No. 28254, EMC no 2002.0294, from Great Walsingham, Norfolk.



**Fig. 125.** Type 30b/8, NHER No. 9743, EMC no 1992.0243, from Stoke Holy Cross, Norfolk.





**Fig. 126.** Chart of Type 30 per county – England.

The debate on the mint location for this series is outlined in *Thrymsas and Sceattas*, but there is little value in this discussion given that there are so few actual specimens. If we concentrate on where coins were being lost we can see that most of this coinage was being lost in East Anglia, particularly in Norfolk. The three coins of this type with accurate provenance come from Great Walsingham and Stoke Holy Cross (both Norfolk), and ‘near’ Ipswich. The national locations suggest a wide circulation for the series.

#### *Type 51 and Saltire/Standard Type (Fig. 127–130)*

Despite potentially having been minted in the kingdom, only 2 of the 18 known specimens of this type come from East Anglia, both from Norfolk. This, like Type 30, is described as eclectic in the numismatic literature and carried designs consisting of a many different obverse and reverse motifs.<sup>105</sup> Within the EMC database it is connected to the saltire/standard type seen on Series A, C and R.<sup>106</sup> This type is also connected with double-cross *ancrée* types, which have been included in the list discussed here but for which there are no accurate East Anglian find-spots.<sup>107</sup>

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 548.

<sup>106</sup> EMC: <http://www-cm.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/emc/>.

<sup>107</sup> See also <http://www-cm.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/emc/>.

Type 51 utilises the two standing figure motifs with a saltire-standard design and thus makes a connection to both Series N and, probably, Series R.



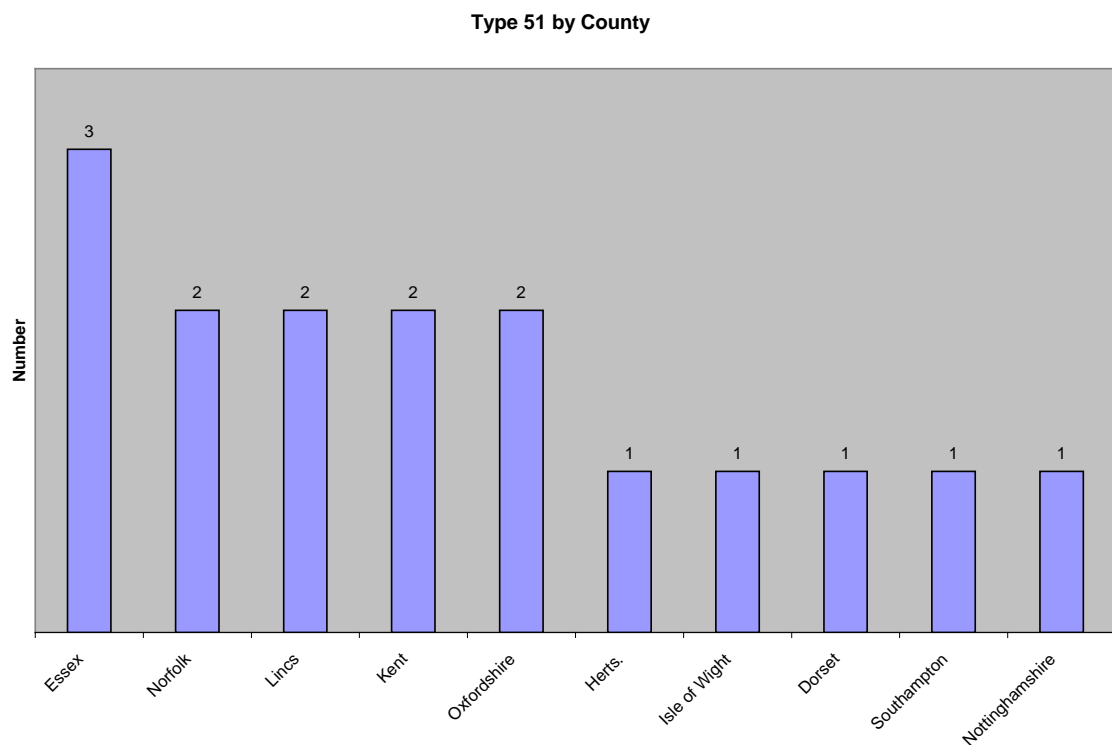
**Fig. 127.** Type 51, EMC 1993.9432, from the Thetford area, Norfolk.



**Fig. 128.** Series R/Type 51, EMC no. 2001.0549, from East Anglia.



**Fig. 129.** Saltire-standard/ double cross ancrée type, EMC no.1970.0231, from near 'productive' site Canterbury, Kent.



**Fig. 130.** Chart of Type 51 per county – England.

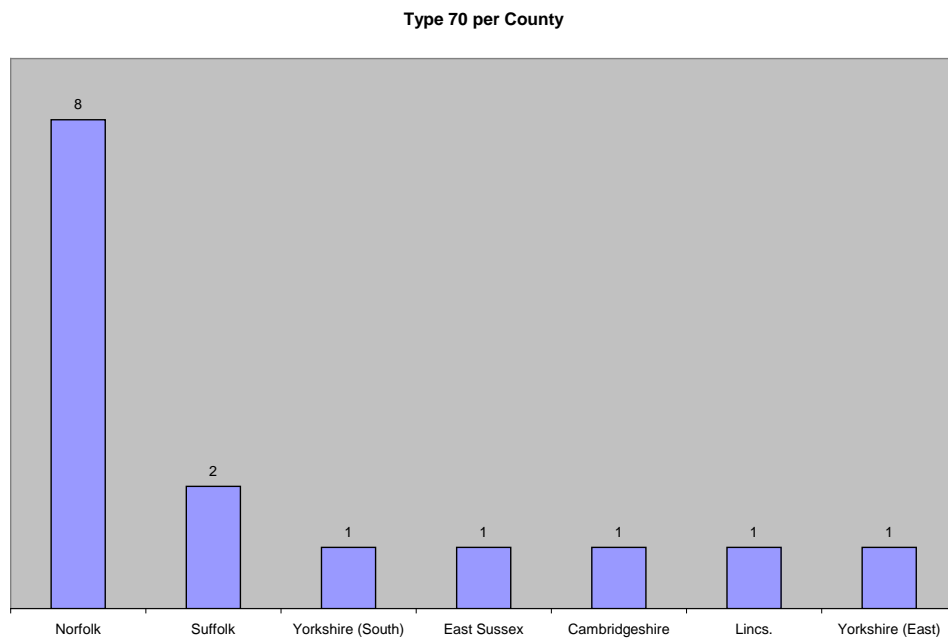
*Type 70 (Figs 131–133)*

This is the other main eclectic type that is to some extent connected with Series R. At the time of Metcalf's survey Type 70 was vanishingly rare, with most of the known examples lacking a provenance.<sup>108</sup> It is now clear, from the relatively small and localised dataset, that this type is strongly associated with Norfolk. Of the 15 known single find-spots, 10 are from East Anglia, 8 are from Norfolk and 6 from west Norfolk.



**Fig. 131.** Type 70, EMC no. 2006.0281, from near King's Lynn, Norfolk.

<sup>108</sup> *T&Siii*, 527.



**Fig. 132.** Chart of Type 70 per county – England.



**Fig. 133.** Map of Type 70 – East Anglia.

## Conclusions

There was clearly a much broader palette of motifs utilised for the Secondary Series of *sceattas*, and the eclectic use of these in new combinations is a phenomenon of the period. Gannon has discussed the stylistic art-historical aspects and made connections with the more general art of the period; clearly, the design found on the coinage was a product of this wider visual cultural milieu. A greater understanding of the motifs and their cultural antecedents, however, must lead to a more informed interpretation of the meaning both of the coin styles themselves and of the distribution of particular styles; in the absence of inscriptions on much of the *sceatta* coinage it is imagery that must be relied upon to supply the meaning behind the coin designs. It seems likely, as Metcalf has pointed out, that some of these motifs must have had a political significance.<sup>109</sup> Given the range and combination of the motifs present on obverse and reverse multiple and layered meanings may have been possible. One possibility is that the motifs represent adopted banners for particular individuals on whose behalf the coinage was being produced. Furthermore, some of the motifs may also have held additional dynastic meaning which would have not only connected the coinage to the person who was setting the standard for the coin, but also made the perhaps crucial historical justification for that claim to set a standard. It is worth noting that some of the late and debased *sceattas*, such as the later versions of Series R in this region, are thought to continue through to the early 760s in parallel with the early reformed coinage of Beonna (AD 749–60) and perhaps even with the Mercian coinage of Offa.<sup>110</sup> This overlap between *sceattas* and pennies might indicate that the late *sceattas* were being produced and circulated at the same time as the reformed regnal coinage. If true, this further suggests that these later *sceattas* were not produced under the auspices of the king but may represent illicit or alternative minting authority. The continued use, if not minting, of *sceattas* into the period of reform (examined in the next chapter) is demonstrated by the presence of late versions in the Middle Harling hoard.

A pattern found here that does not seem to have been noted before shows that Intermediate and Secondary *sceattas* seem to fall into two distinct camps: those that have a wide and fairly unconcentrated distribution, which can be described as dispersed types, and those exhibiting a highly localised or regionalised distribution with significant concentrations in particular ‘productive’ places, which may be described as nucleated types. Series R falls into the category of a nucleated series, whereas Series Q, Series K and L, for instance, and to some extent Series J, display a dispersed pattern (see Fig. 133b). This may provide some insight into the monetary situation at the time and suggests, as already noted, that there may have been a layered use of the

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<sup>109</sup> For instance, see *ibid.*, 527–8.

<sup>110</sup> See the dating of later *sceattas* on the EMC: <http://www-cm.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/emc/>.

coinage, with different institutions utilising and disseminating particular ‘brands’ of *sceatta*. For instance, it is possible that Series K and L were ecclesiastical coinage that had been produced on behalf of a bishopric and its diverse holdings, or a monastic house. Series R, in contrast, and by extension its precursors, may have been a state-produced coinage; both its distribution and its iconography provide credibility for this view. In terms of its distribution, Series Q also seems to have been a state-run coinage, but the iconography is more ecclesiastical in character. Potentially, then, Series Q may represent the coinage of either the East Anglian see or, referring back to the point made earlier about its potential connection to Ely, it may have been produced on behalf of the monastic house based there, the distribution demonstrating the extensive landholdings of that institution within the East Anglian kingdom.

Another aspect of the distributions, discussed extensively in Chapter 8, is the clear correlation between the pattern of coin loss and some places that later can be described as urban. Without pre-empting the forthcoming analysis too much, there are overwhelming concentrations within Ipswich and significant concentrations in Thetford, Norwich, Caistor St Edmund, Bawsey and both Caister and Burgh Castle. Not that all these places went on to become towns – the point is that they were, at this time, on a historical trajectory to later become a town; Ipswich may already have become one. To these can be added satellite ‘productive’ sites that, when aggregated into zones, provide a clear picture of geographical entities that were to develop into town and hinterland. These landscape foci suggest that during the 8th century the concept and practice of holding administrative functions within towns was developing, but was open to more various forms than was to become the case from the 10th century onwards, by which time the model of *burh* and shire had taken hold more ubiquitously. Thus, in the case of the Gipping valley or north-west Norfolk, by the 8th century the nucleation of these administrative structures had developed resulting in significant concentrations of coinage entering the archaeological record within Bawsey and Ipswich; whereas, in the case of Norwich and Thetford, the coins loss, and by extension the administrative functions, was more dispersed among a number of ‘productive’ sites.

## The Chapter 7

### Coinage in the East Anglian landscape c. AD 749–939: from Beonna through to the death of Athelstan

This chapter examines the distribution of post-*sceatta* coinage from the Beonna reform of East Anglian standards through to a unified coinage for England achieved by Athelstan. This was a period that coincided with the demise of the *wics* and the formation of a system of towns across the Anglo-Saxon realms, which proved in many cases to have a longevity that many, if not most, of the *wics* failed to achieve. Norwich, Thetford, Ipswich and some of the smaller towns arguably either began as or were redefined to become *burhs* in this period, and formed the basis of a new ‘shiring’ of East Anglia by the House of Wessex. By the end of the period we can see in documentary evidence the mints associated with particular towns and the legal framework within which these industries operated.<sup>1</sup> In particular, King Athelstan’s prescription within the Grately code that minting must take place within specific *burhs* cements the link between the coin-producing industries and defended urban settlements.<sup>2</sup> Historically, it is from this point that the relationship between minting and towns is clear; prior to this, much is speculative and based on archaeological data.

The coinage reforms undertaken by Beonna and Æthelberht I during the period between AD 749 and 760 in East Anglia mark a change in the character of coin production and probably dissemination, with a shift from the iconographically dependent *sceatta* types to a more literate format.<sup>3</sup> Metcalf does not attribute major monetary reform to the East Anglian royal house, rather favouring the higher silver reforms and more historically discussed changes of Offa, and making a distinction between the ‘debased’ lower silver content of the Beonna coinage and these later Merician reforms; he places the Beonna coinage within the *sceatta* spectrum of types, while admitting that the coinage does demonstrate a distinct change in coin-producing practice.<sup>4</sup> There is a clear and obvious distinction between the inscribed coins of Beonna and the greater part of the *sceatta* series. Historiographically, the impetus for reforming the *sceatta* coinage into something much more classical which utilised a literate basis for communicating its underlying standards and concepts is attributed to the reforms in the Carolingian sphere that began under Pepin the Short (r. AD 751–68).<sup>5</sup> This Continental innovation seems to have influenced the coinage reforms of the equally insightful and forward-thinking Offa, king of Mercia (r. AD 757–

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<sup>1</sup> Blackburn, ‘Mints, *burhs*’.

<sup>2</sup> *EHDi*, 35, 381.

<sup>3</sup> *T&Siii*, 601–4.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 601–7.

<sup>5</sup> *MECi*, 204–5.

96).<sup>6</sup> With both the Northumbrian coinage of Eadberht (AD 737–58)<sup>7</sup> and that of Beonna coming at the end of the *sceatta* series the influence of Pepin’s reforms is perhaps a less satisfactory explanation of the coinage reforms of the later 8th century than was previously the case; however, the reforms of Offa are compelling in terms of what they tell us about this clearly innovative period. The slightly earlier, although less often referred to, East Anglian and Northumbrian reforms were less influential, perhaps, but demonstrate the same trend towards maximising the state’s revenue gathering powers and the monarchy’s hold on defining standards and producing coinage. Whether the coinage of Eadberht (AD 737–58) pre-dates that of Beonna (c. AD 749–60) is presently undetermined but both mark a similar juncture in state development as that expressed by the later Offan reforms. The major difference is that both the East Anglian and Northumbrian coinages, though they were certainly major reforms, were also a continuation of the *sceatta* tradition, with the coins struck utilising the same fabric and essential styles; this demonstrates that, in East Anglia at least, there was no appreciable hiatus in minting, or presumably in coin use. Pepin’s, and by extension Offa’s, new coinage was quite radically different. With a higher silver content and broader flan, these coins represent a new set of standards for weights and measures based on the penny, which became the overwhelmingly dominant type in later Anglo-Saxon England.<sup>8</sup> In the course of this chapter it will be shown that East Anglian mints continued to produce coinage, apparently with little interruption, until the Viking conquest in AD 869.<sup>9</sup> The East Anglian mint(s?) responsible in the preceding *sceatta* period for coin production seem to have continued to be prolific and to have generally provided a stable platform on which to carry out the reformed minting after c. AD 760.

#### The coins of Beonna (Figs 134–136)



**Fig. 134.** Beonna EA, reformed (N 430), EMC No. 2006.0243, PAS SF-298063, from Wordwell, Suffolk.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 276–82.

<sup>7</sup> Following the classification of Metcalf and that adopted by the EMC, Eadberht’s coinage has been discussed under Series Y in the preceding chapter.

<sup>8</sup> *MECi*, 270.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 272–3.



Documents provide little insight into the coinage of Beonna. The name itself appears in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, but in connection with the Abbot of *Medeshamstede* (Peterborough) during the reign of Offa in AD 777.<sup>10</sup> Marion Archibald, in her study of the Middle Harling coins, suggests that the Beonna referred to was king of East Anglia at this time and therefore was a contemporary of Offa. As she points out, Geoffery of Monmouth recounts in his *Historia Regum* that, following Ælfwald's death in around AD 749, the kingdom was divided between 'Hunbeanna and Alberht'.<sup>11</sup> Chadwick suggested that this should be interpreted as Hun, Beanna and Alberht. Florence of Worcester's Chronicle provides a regnal list for East Anglia which places a Beorna between Ælfwald and Æthelred.<sup>12</sup> In a later passage the following statement is made:

During the reign of Offa, king of the Mercians, Beorna reigned in East-Anglia, and after him Ethelred ...<sup>13</sup>

Little chronological certainty can therefore be provided for the name, beyond its referring to a king who was on the East Anglian throne between the death of Ælfwald in AD 749 and the accession of Æthelred in *c.* AD 758. Archibald's dating for the series relies on the death of Æthelbald, the king of Mercia, in AD 757 as the opportunity for a reassertion of East Anglian political will,<sup>14</sup> and she suggests that the coinage was issued over a short period of time, probably coinciding with the death of Æthelbald of Mercia.<sup>15</sup> However, Metcalf asserts that the date for the beginning of the Beonna coinage must start no later than AD 749, on the basis that the coinage represented a reform of the by then seriously debased Series R.<sup>16</sup> In this regard the Beonna coins, if dated correctly, were one of the first reformed coinages, pre-dating Pepin's early Carolingian reforms by half a decade and falling a full decade before Offa's reform.<sup>17</sup>

The Middle Harling hoard is crucial to an understanding of the Beonna coinage and marks the transition from the use of mainly non-literate *sceatta* coinage to a literate royal coinage with king's and moneyer's names, and often with the mint name inscribed. In terms of our historical understanding of coinage (and urban places), this juncture rather conveniently marks a break

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<sup>10</sup> ASC, 52 ...and bishop Unwona (was concecrated), and abbot Beonna, and many other bishops and abbots.

<sup>11</sup> M.M. Archibald, 'The coinage of Beonna in the light of the Middle Harling hoard', *BNJ* 55 (1985), 10–54.

<sup>12</sup> Florence, John de Taxster, *The Chronicle of Florence of Worcester: With the Two Continuations; Comprising Annals of English History, from the Departure of the Romans to the Reign of Edward I*, trans. Thomas Forester (H.G. Bohn, 1854), 434.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 445.

<sup>14</sup> Archibald, 'The coinage of Beonna', 33.

<sup>15</sup> M.M. Archibald, 'A sceat of Ethelbert I of East Anglia and recent coins of Beonna', *BNJ* 65 (1995), 1–19.

<sup>16</sup> *T&Siii*, 602.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

between the poorly understood Middle Saxon period and the much better-documented later Saxon period. While the nature of the discussion within this study precludes an in-depth look at the hoard (as the focus here is on single coin finds and the light these shed upon the contemporary socio-economic geographical situation), it is worth briefly noting that Middle Harling also produced significant numbers of single finds and that the nature of the hoard is by no means well established archaeologically.<sup>18</sup> The hoard appears to consist of 57 coins and 2 blanks, all of which were thought by the excavator and the analyst to have been dispersed from a single deposit.<sup>19</sup> Fifty of the coins discovered were of the Beonna type; these were accompanied by 7 *sceattas*, 6 of Series R and 1 Series L. The Middle Harling find comes late in the sequence of *sceattas*, really on the eve of their demise. Discussion of this hoard, which is the only major hoard of *sceattas* from the region, has been provided by Archibald and expanded on by Metcalf.<sup>20</sup>

The name on the obverse of the Beonna coins is runic, or partly runic, and is probably a hypocoristic form of the name Beorn.<sup>21</sup> The names of three moneyers also appear on the coinage: Efe, Wærferth and Wilræd; but a number of the coins lack the name of a moneyer. Within the corpus of single finds the most common are the Efe type, which make up some 64% of the total, followed by Wilræd at 16% and Wærferth at 4%. These totals accord largely with the make-up of the Beonna component in the Middle Harling hoard, which contains 37 Efe type, 9 Wilræd and 1 Wærferth. At least two examples of the coins of Wærferth have a higher silver content than the rest, at 75%, which led Metcalf to suggest that they may have begun the series, as most of the remaining elements come in at between 53 and 54% silver with some dropping as low as *c.*25%.<sup>22</sup> Metcalf suggested further that there may have been two silver standards associated with this now well-analysed coinage.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Archibald (pp. 74, 46) and Rogerson (pp. 6–8) in Rogerson, *A Late Neolithic, Saxon and Medieval Site at Middle Harling*; Middle Harling is also discussed in more detail in Chapter 8 of this study.

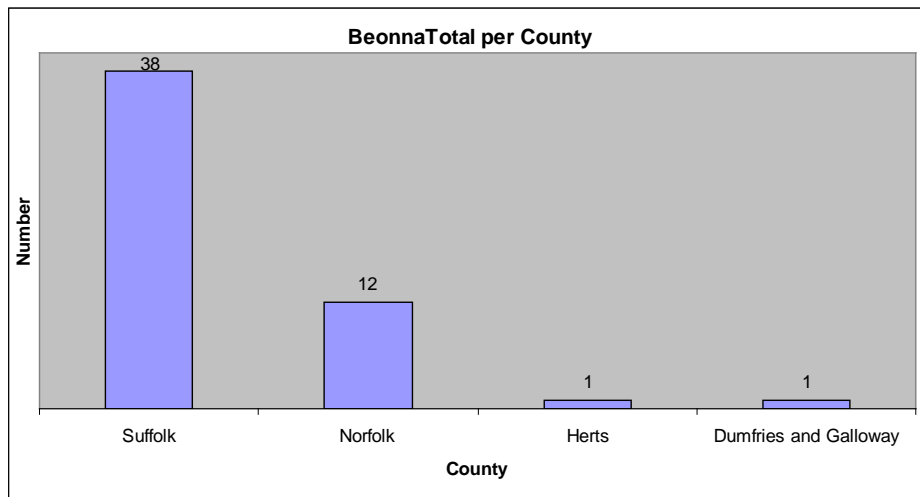
<sup>19</sup> See Archibald's discussion of the coins in A. Rogerson, *A Late Neolithic, Saxon and Medieval Site at Middle Harling, Norfolk* (East Anglian Archaeology 74, 1995), 48–53.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*; also M.M. Archibald, 'The coinage of Beonna'; M.M. Archibald, 'A Sceat of Ethelbert I'; *T&Siii*, 601–7.

<sup>21</sup> R.I. Page, 'The legends on the coins', in Archibald, 'A Sceat of Ethelbert I'; also discussed in *T&Siii*, 601.

<sup>22</sup> *T&Siii*, 602.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 604–5.



**Fig. 135.** Chart of Beonna Pennies per county – England.



**Fig. 136.** Map of Beonna Pennies – East Anglia.

A total of around 60 single coin finds of this type is known from East Anglia as a whole, although not all of these have certain provenances. Of these, 38 have good provenances within Suffolk, with a further 12 well provenanced examples coming from Norfolk. The distribution within Suffolk, and indeed regionally and nationally, centres heavily on the Gipping valley and

the Sandlings area of south-east Suffolk, with 11 coins found under controlled archaeological conditions in Ipswich. Archibald has suggested that the coinage was minted at two places, one in south Norfolk and the other in the Gipping valley, and concludes that Thetford and Ipswich are the strongest candidates; Metcalf also plumbs for two mint-places, one certainly centred in the Gipping valley, probably at Ipswich.<sup>24</sup> The distribution does indeed argue strongly for a Gipping valley mint location, but there is an absence of the type from the substantial corpus of single find coins from Thetford, although there have been relatively large quantities from sites close to the town, particularly from Middle and East Harling, but also from Brandon (Suffolk), Quidenham (Norfolk), Freckenham (Suffolk), Wordwell (Suffolk), Bardwell (Suffolk) and Packenham (Suffolk). All these places were arguably within the orbit of Thetford. The relative lack of coins from both the north-west and north-east parts of the region is interesting given the historical narrative of three sub-kings ruling in East Anglia at this time. In the north-west only a single coin has been found, at Bawsey. The paucity in the north-east is less marked, with finds from several places, including Caistor St Edmund and Bowthorpe, both close to Norwich. It is interesting that the distribution is found predominately within Suffolk and in this respect is diametrically opposed to the apparent circulation of Series R, which is predominantly found in Norfolk.

#### **Single coin of Æthelberht I (AD 749–60)**

The one known example of this coinage, which seems to have existed in parallel with the Beonna series, comes from the Burrow Hill (Suffolk) excavations, which also produced fourteen Beonna coins,<sup>25</sup> suggesting that the source of the group may have been a hoard that was dispersed prior to discovery. The coin is similar in style, in the morphology of the flan and in its chemical make-up to the Beonna coinage.

The existence of this coin provides further credence to the documented story of the three-way split of the East Anglian kingdom at the end of the Ælwald's reign in 749. Perhaps the split represented the creation of separate districts under Mercian overlordship and controlled by the East Anglia royal house as sub-kings?<sup>26</sup> Such a splitting of the kingdom into sub-regions ruled

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<sup>24</sup> Archibald, 'A Sceat of Ethelbert I', 1995, 5; *T&Siii*, 605–6.

<sup>25</sup> Archibald, 'A Sceat of Ethelbert I', 1.

<sup>26</sup> Faith, *The English Peasantry*, 7–14, describes a possible socio-economic process, based on the practice of warfare, for the localisation of authority, whilst kingship grew and centralised; and suggests that this was a crucial innovation by Anglo-Saxon kings which facilitated increases in the size and complexity of the state. S. Bassett ('In search of the origins of Anglo-Saxon kingdoms', in S. Bassett (ed.), *Origins of Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms* (Leicester, 1989), 3–27) outlines how the earlier situation develops from tribal structures to nascent states; in the same volume Charles-Edwards ('Early medieval kingships', 31–9) draws out the possible links between early tribute and the growth of the state, demonstrating how the local appropriation of cattle may have over time formed into a taxation system. The Hunn, Beonna and Æthelberht division discussed above is notable in this political context.

by East Anglians may have been helpful to the Mercians in controlling the region from a distance.



**Fig. 137.** Æthelberht EA, reformed (N 430.3), EMC No. 1995.6002, from Burrow Hill, Butley, Suffolk.

#### **Single coin find of Æthelberht II (East Anglia, r. AD 760–94)**



**Fig. 138.** Æthelberht EA, light penny (N 431); SCBI 16 – Norweb: 105.

This coin is said to have been found at the base of the walls of Tivoli, near Rome, in 1908. In type it is a light penny (see below, section on Offa's coinage) and thus follows Offa's coinage. How it in fact relates to the rule of Mercia is unclear. It may represent the brief resurgence of the East Anglian king, something which could help to explain its most remarkable aspect: the historical connections expressed in the iconography and the reverse clearly stating REX over a she-wolf suckling Romulus and Remus. The obverse has the king's name in runes and the moneyer's name Lul/Lulla (LVL) imprinted. The same moneyer (Lul/Lulla) also seems to have struck coins for Offa and went on to strike coins under Coenwulf (k. Mercia 796–821).<sup>27</sup> The use of runic lettering on the obverse of this coin is perhaps significant. This is characteristic of East Anglian coinage even when under the control of the Mercian royal house, and perhaps demonstrates continuing strong control exercised by locally by local leaders.

<sup>27</sup> SCBI No. 16: <http://www-cm.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/coins/projects/scbi/index.html>

### Offa's coinage (r. AD 757–96) (Figs 139–144)

Mercia's ascendancy to the position of the dominant power in England arguably begins with the campaigns of the redoubtable Penda, who was able to place his kingdom and subsequent dynasty at the forefront of English politics.<sup>28</sup> However, it was not until Æthelbald, who succeeded in AD 716, that this trend was firmly established. Æthelbald provided the platform for Offa and his successors to cement control over England in a way that later led to the establishment by Wessex of single English government. Æthelbald used the term *rex Britanniae* on charters<sup>29</sup> and, we may assume, was instrumental in the production of several different *sceatta* series. It is likely that London fell under the control of Mercia during his rule.<sup>30</sup> He ruled until his death in AD 757, when Offa succeeded.

Offa's achievements in government are well documented and much discussed in the secondary historical literature. His skills as a statesman and as a military commander can be inferred from the fact that he was able to build upon Æthelbald's successes to bring Mercia to overall predominance in England; the construction of Offa's dyke and his success at subduing Northumbria, Wessex and East Anglia demonstrate these skills.<sup>31</sup> They will not be itemised here, but it is probably correct to say that, historiographically, Offa has come to represent a great number of trends and innovations that must have in fact been adopted by him rather than invented. Offa was, in effect, the inheritor of a set of tools and mechanisms that for the first time made rule over all of England through one king achievable.<sup>32</sup> One of his most notable adoptions, and also one of the most studied, was the reform of the rather chaotic and, by the mid 8th century, poorly standardised coinage. Mercia's dominance was based on military might and the ambition of its rulers,<sup>33</sup> and not necessarily on the sophistication of its statecraft and economic infrastructure. Arguably East Anglia and Northumbria were pre-eminent in the latter aspects during the later 7th and 8th centuries, and may have provided the tools and intellectual inspiration for the growth of the Mercian state. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the coinage of the mid 8th century had in general become much reduced in silver content, to, in some cases, as little as 20%.<sup>34</sup> Offa's reforms of this situation did not take place immediately and it seems likely that there was a gap of almost a decade before the production of the first so-called 'light pennies' began.<sup>35</sup> In this hiatus there seems to have been continuing local

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<sup>28</sup> Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, 105, notes that Penda does not appear in Bede's list of significant overlords; this position can be inferred through Bede's reference to thirty *duces regii* fighting on Penda's behalf at the battle of *Winwæd*, *HE* III, XXIV.

<sup>29</sup> Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 203.

<sup>30</sup> Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, 113.

<sup>31</sup> H.R. Loyn, *The Governance of Anglo-Saxon England* (Stanford, CA, 1984), 25–7.

<sup>32</sup> The arguments discussed in note 26 apply here also: Offa was an extension of the process of localisation of authority being controlled by an overlord.

<sup>33</sup> Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 202–4.

<sup>34</sup> See, for instance, *MECi*, 271.

<sup>35</sup> *T&Siii*, 608.

production in East Anglia, both of Beonna pennies and of Series R *sceattas*. The contents of the Middle Harling hoard strongly suggests that this was the case; there are, notably, no stray coins of Offa found within that group. The one non-East Anglian coin in the group is a Series L type.

Offan coinage falls into two main phases: the ‘light’ and the ‘heavy’ coinage. The latter represented a redefinition of the silver penny, based on a larger flan and made heavier. For the purposes of this analysis the two types have not been separated when discussing their distribution. Chick has recently re-examined the dating of both styles and places the light coinage in a date range of *c.* AD 765 to 792/3, with the heavy, radically reformed, coinage probably restricted to the last three years of Offa’s reign, AD 792/3–96.<sup>36</sup> It is reasonably certain, in numismatic terms, that the broad flan heavy pennies were minted at three locations: in Kent (almost certainly at Canterbury), in London and in East Anglia (thought to be at Ipswich).<sup>37</sup> Nineteen moneyers producing this coinage can be identified. The light coinage of the earlier phase of Offa’s reign is less well understood, but five of the moneyers involved in their production also worked on the later coins, and the same mint-places were being utilised.<sup>38</sup>



**Fig. 139.** Offa penny (N 331.5) (light coinage, East Anglian; obv. cross on stepped base; rev. like CEB 71) (770–792), EMC no. 1992.0255, from Acle, Norfolk.



**Fig. 140.** N 302 (light coinage, Portrait; floriate cross with lozenge centre reverse) (765–792), EMC no. 1996.0167, from nr Ipswich, Suffolk.

<sup>36</sup> D. Chick, ‘Towards a chronology for Offa’s coinage: an interim study’, *Yorkshire Numismatist* 3, (1997), 47–64.

<sup>37</sup> *MECi*, 277–82.

<sup>38</sup> Chick, ‘Towards a chronology of Offa’s coinage’.



**Fig. 141.** Offa penny (N 334.1) (light coinage, East Anglian – runic ) (770–792), EMC no. 1993.0192, from Wenhaston, Suffolk.

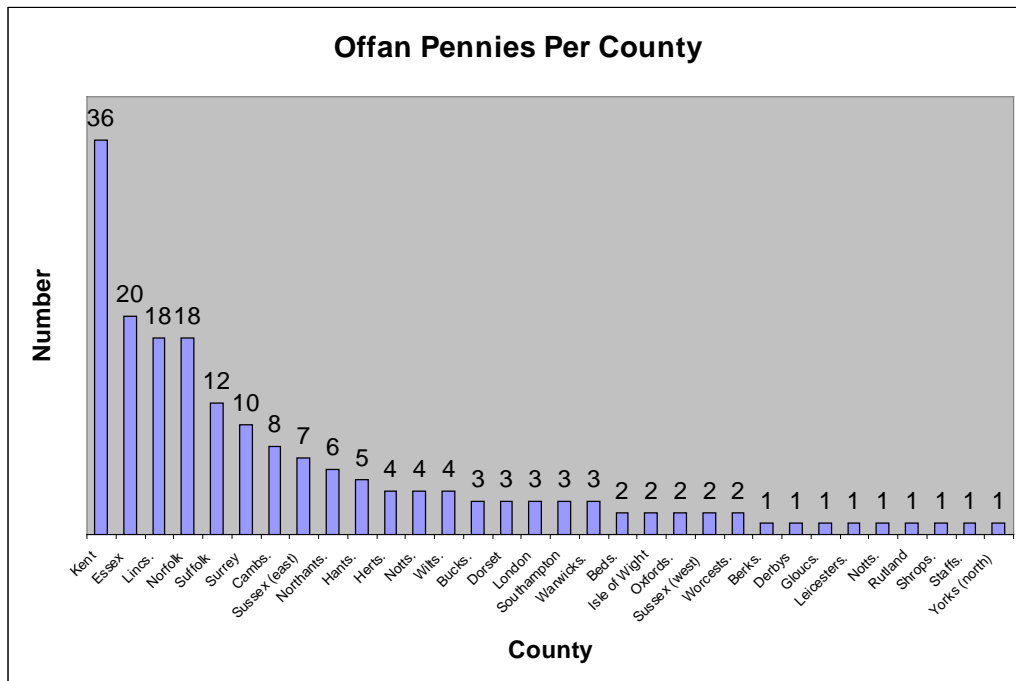


**Fig. 142.** Offa penny (N 337) (CEB 114) (heavy coinage, East Anglian) (792–796), SCBI no. 20, EMC. No. 1973.6573, from Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk.

Interestingly, the coins of Offa minted in East Anglia continued to utilise runic lettering in a furtherance of the *sceatta* tradition. What this may mean in terms of East Anglian identity is a pertinent question and will be addressed further in Chapter 8. Two of the known runic light-issue coins, found at Wenhaston and Holme-next-the-Sea, carry the name of the moneyer, Ecgbeald or Ecbald. Wenhaston has also produced a Series E *sceatta* but little else, whereas Holme is a reasonably ‘productive’ site (none of the Holme-next-the-Sea finds have been reported to the Norfolk Museum and Archaeology Service but are known from liaison with the Fitzwilliam Museum Department of Coins and Medals).

The moneyer Lul, or Lulla, continued to produce coinage under a variety of patron’s names throughout the reign of Offa, in both the light and heavy issue. Some of Lul/Lulla’s coins also utilise runic script.





**Fig. 143.** Chart of Offan pennies per county – England.



**Fig. 144.** Map of Offan pennies – East Anglia.

As Fig. 143 shows, Offan coinage was concentrated in certain parts of the country and, certainly, East Anglia figures prominently in this pattern. Kent was clearly an important area for coin production and loss, as were Essex and Lincolnshire. As a whole the south coast figures as a zone of significant coin loss, but the levels are much less than those found on the east coast, with the exception of Northumbria.

In previous chapters it has been argued that the important aspect of the distribution of coins in the landscape is that it demonstrates coin loss, a somewhat obvious statement perhaps, but worth remembering. The economic/social activity that this loss represents is a different issue, but one that must be tackled. One such activity is the location of minting, which represents a significant aspect of the numismatist's interests. Indeed, it is also a central concern of this work, as the connection between towns and coins and the suggestion that they represent aspects of the same set of historical processes is a key one within this study. However, it is the case that discerning the location of minting remains firmly in the sphere of the interpretive when viewing the Offan coin-loss data. We do not know the mint-places of the coinage because the coins do not state them; however, with some educated guesswork we can suggest that one location is more likely than another. The mint-place for the Kentish Offan pennies is thus deduced by the experts as Canterbury, because that is the location of ecclesiastical power and where many subsequent issues of coinage were produced.<sup>39</sup> The same sort of reasoning applied to the coinage thought to have been produced in London.<sup>40</sup> There are only two Offan pennies known from Ipswich, of which one is lacking a completely credible provenance and is described in the EMC as having been found 'near' Ipswich.<sup>41</sup> The other, a heavy-issue penny, was found in a grave at the St Stephen's Street, Buttermarket site (Suffolk SMR 3104), though is now thought to be intrusive.<sup>42</sup> There are good arguments for suggesting other locations for the East Anglian mint; Bawsey, for example, is an equally likely candidate. This is discussed further in Chapter 8.

### **Cynethryth, Offa's queen (AD 757–96) (Figs 145 & 146)**

Only 21 Cynethryth pennies are known from the country and 7 of these do not possess a provenance. The only East Anglian find is from Whissonsett in mid Norfolk.

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<sup>39</sup> *MECi*, 281.

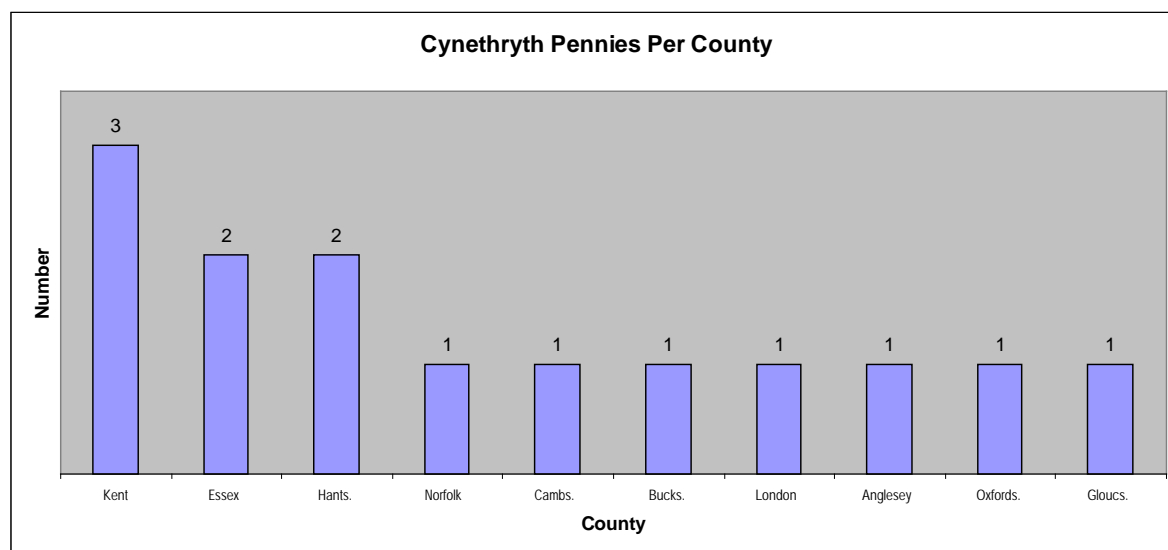
<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> EMC: <http://www-cm.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/emc/>.

<sup>42</sup> Scull and Bayliss, 'Dating burials of the seventh and eighth centuries', no. 103, 4152.



**Fig. 145.** N 340 Cynethryth non-portrait, EMC 2003.0043, from Whissonsett, Norfolk.



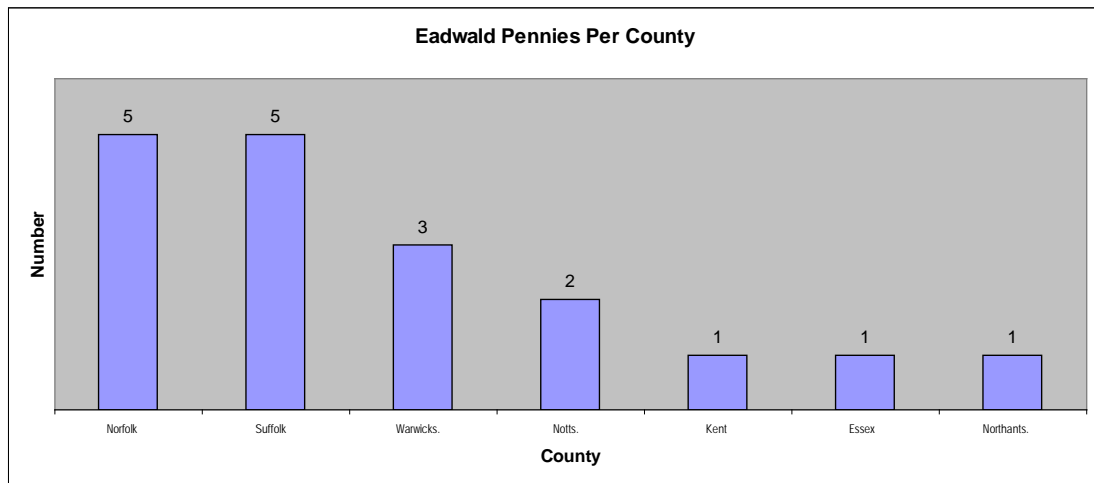
**Fig. 146.** Chart of Cynethryth pennies per county – England.

### **Eadwald (East Anglia r. AD 796–8) (Figs 147–149)**

The documentary record pertaining to this East Anglian king is virtually non-existent, and therefore his coinage is the only means we have for understanding his reign. Presumably he was authorising the production of this series between the death of Offa (AD 796) and the point in time when Offa's successor, Coenwulf, managed to take control of the East Anglian mint(s).

In total, 22 coins of this ruler are known nationally. Ten of the national total come from East Anglia, including one coin from the Buttermarket excavations, Ipswich (SMR IAS3104 Cat. No. 100). Four known moneyers, Wihtræd, Eadnoth, Botræd and Lulla, produced this type within East Anglia. Ten of the East Anglian total bear Eadnoth's name, while there are four bearing Lulla's, two Wihtræd's and just one of Botræd's.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>43</sup> EMC: <http://www-cm.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/emc/>.



**Fig. 147.** Chart of Eadwald pennies per county – England.



**Fig. 148.** Map of Eadwald (East Anglia) pennies – East Anglia. NB 'nr' suffix denotes an approximate provenance described in the EMC.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>44</sup> EMC: <http://www-cm.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/emc/>.



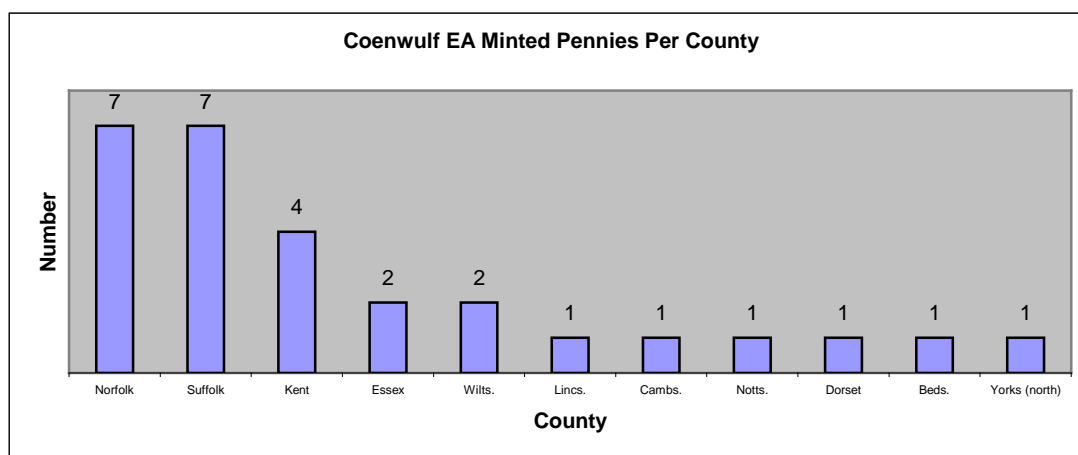
**Fig. 149.** Eadwald (East Anglia) heavy penny, EMC No. 1989.1001, from Brandon, Suffolk.

As discussed above, it is a notable feature of East Anglian minting during this period that the moneyers produced coinage minted under several rulers. Lulla is involved in the production of coins by both Mercian and East Anglian rulers, and it therefore seems possible that the East Anglia rulers may have been effectively minting under licence from their Mercian overlords. There is clear evidence that two archbishops minted coinage at the same time,<sup>45</sup> demonstrating that royal authority was delegated in this regard.

#### **Coenwulf (Mercia r. AD 796–821) (Figs 150–154)**

The national corpus of Coenwulf coinage finds is distributed very similarly to that of Offa's coinage. Here that national distribution is not re-examined; rather, the East Anglian distribution is considered. Because it directly pertains to the East Anglian production of coinage, however, the national distribution of those of Coenwulf's coins that were minted in East Anglia will be examined below.

Forty-nine coins thought to have been minted in East Anglia during Coenwulf's reign are known nationally, of which only 28 can be precisely located. Of these, 14 have been found in East Anglia. This compares with a total of 32 Coenwulf pennies found within the former kingdom (see Fig. 154), of which, in turn, 27 have accurate provenances.

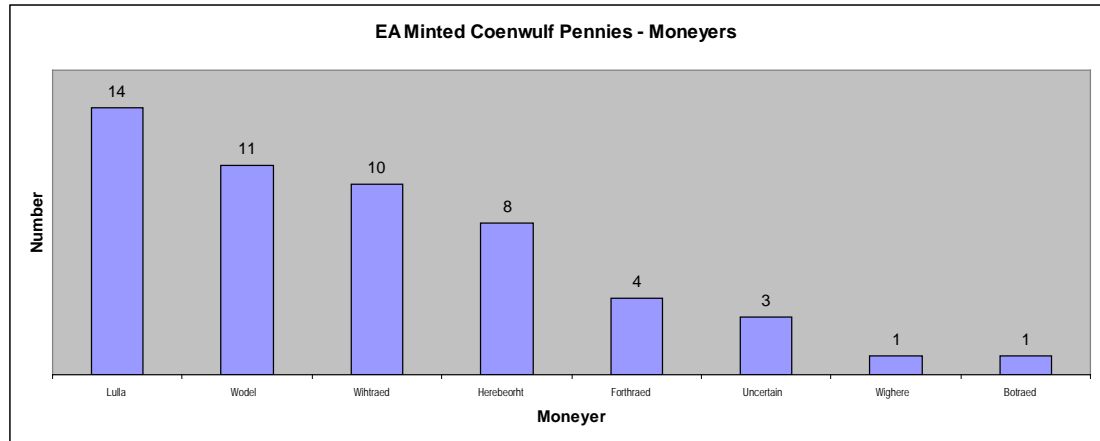


**Fig. 150.** Chart of Coenwulf's East Anglian minted pennies per county – England.

<sup>45</sup> *MECi*, 277.



**Fig. 151.** N 375 (Cn. 106) (798–821), EMC No. 2004.0055, from North Tuddenham, Norfolk.



**Fig. 152.** Chart of Coenwulf's East Anglian minted pennies – moneyers.

It is notable that, of the 11 pennies with a known named moneyer found and minted in East Anglia, Wodel's coins have been found at King's Lynn, Methwold, Oxborough and Thetford, perhaps suggesting that Thetford was central to the distribution and may thus have been the mint-place where that moneyer was producing. Although four coins have been found at Bawsey two of these were minted in Canterbury and the other two were produced by an uncertain mint and moneyer. Two coins of Wihtraed have been found at North Tuddenham and Bawburgh, too few for any validity, but perhaps suggesting a mint-place close to these places where that moneyer was located, possibly Norwich.



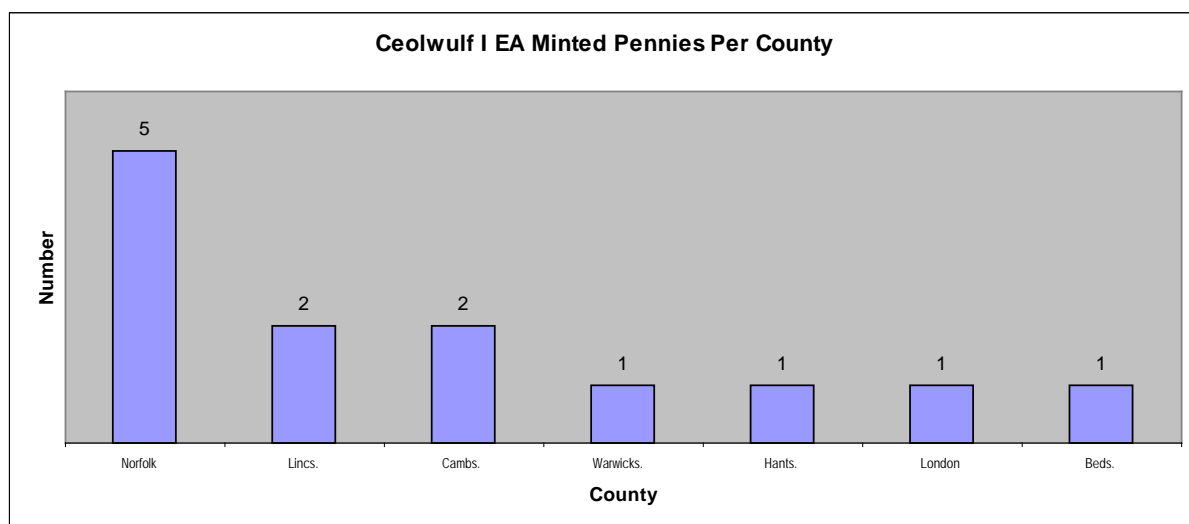
**Fig. 153.** Map of Coenwulf (Wessex) East Anglian minted pennies – East Anglia.

#### **Ceolwulf (Mercia r. AD 821–3) (Figs 154–157)**

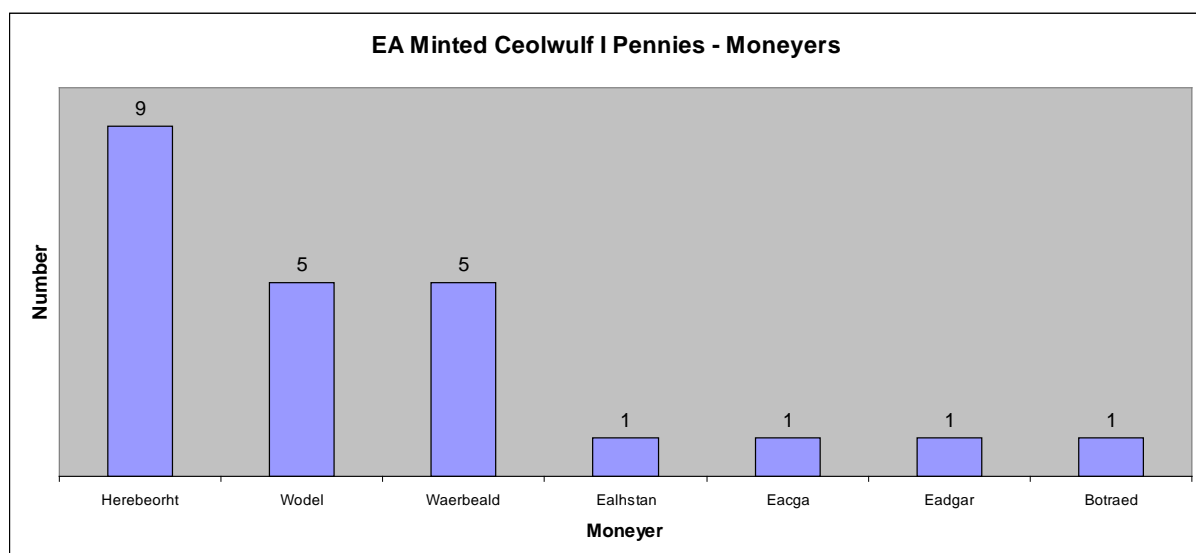
Ceolwulf inherited the throne of Mercia from his brother Coenwulf. Although he was on the throne for only a short period there is a fairly substantial coinage known from his reign, with a total of 43 coins nationally. Of this total, 23 were minted in East Anglia at an unidentified mint.



**Fig. 154.** Ceolwulf I penny (N 391) (Cl. 26) (821–823), EMC no. 2006.0359, from Foulton, Norfolk.



**Fig. 155.** Chart of Ceolwulf's EA minted pennies per county – England.



**Fig. 156.** Chart of Ceolwulf's EA minted pennies – moneyers.

The fact that there are no find-spots for East Anglian minted Ceolwulf pennies in Suffolk may be significant. It is possible that the mint-place held by the Mercian king at this time was in Norfolk and the Mercian overlordship extended only to Norfolk. Where this mint was is currently unclear, but both Bawsey and perhaps Thetford seem from the admittedly thin distribution to be candidates. In terms of non-East Anglian minted Ceolwulf coinage, there is a single find from Ipswich, but Norwich and its environs do not figure in the distribution.





**Fig. 157.** Map of Ceolwulf's EA minted pennies – East Anglia.

### **Beornwulf (Mercia r. AD 823–5) (Figs 158–161)**

The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* suggests that Beornwulf deposed Ceolwulf I. He was beaten at the battle of *Ellandun* near Wroughton (Wilts.) in AD 825 by the West Saxon king Egbert.<sup>46</sup> The East Anglian king Æthelstan took the opportunity to seize independence and, presumably, when Beornwulf invaded East Anglia he was slain by the East Anglian army a year later in AD 826.<sup>47</sup>

All of the known pennies minted under Beornwulf's reign, numbering 19 in total, are thought to have been produced in East Anglia. Although he shares some moneyers in common with Ceolwulf I and to a lesser extent with Coenwulf, many of the moneyers that had been operating within previous reigns do not appear in the Beornwulf assemblage. This may suggest that only some of the same mints were operating under Mercian control during Beornwulf's

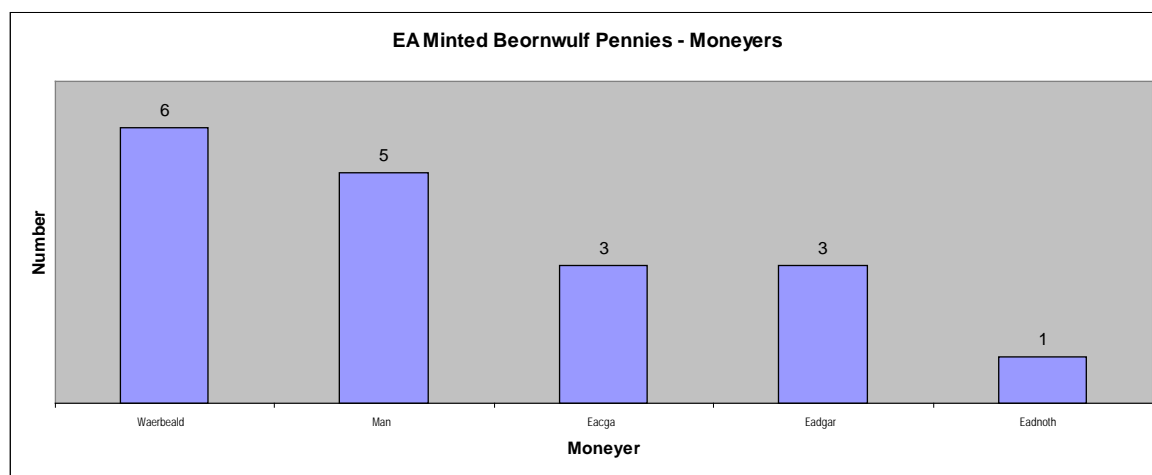
<sup>46</sup> ASC, 823.

<sup>47</sup> The chronicle records Beornwulf's death in 825 but Brooks has demonstrated that in fact he was still alive in 826: N. Brooks, *The Early History of the Church of Canterbury* (London, 1984), 136, and see Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, 122.

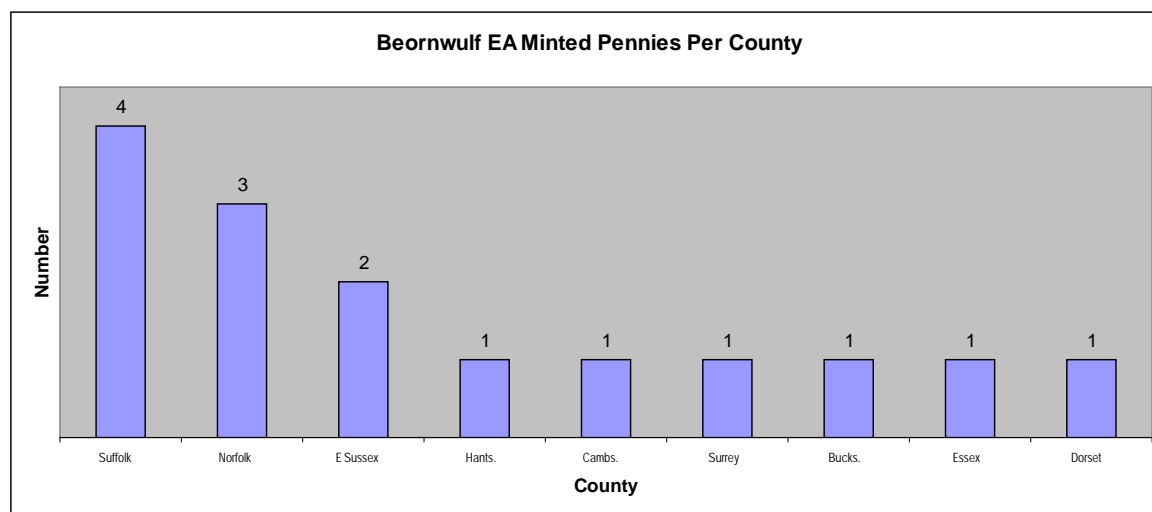
short reign and demonstrates the importance of East Anglian coinage within the national picture of minting at this time.



**Fig. 158.** Beornwulf Mercia penny (N 396) (Be. 5) (823–825), EMC No. 2004.0086, Nr Cromer, Norfolk.



**Fig. 159.** Chart of East Anglian moneyers who produced Beornwulf pennies.



**Fig. 160.** Chart of Beornwulf pennies minted in East Anglia per county – England.



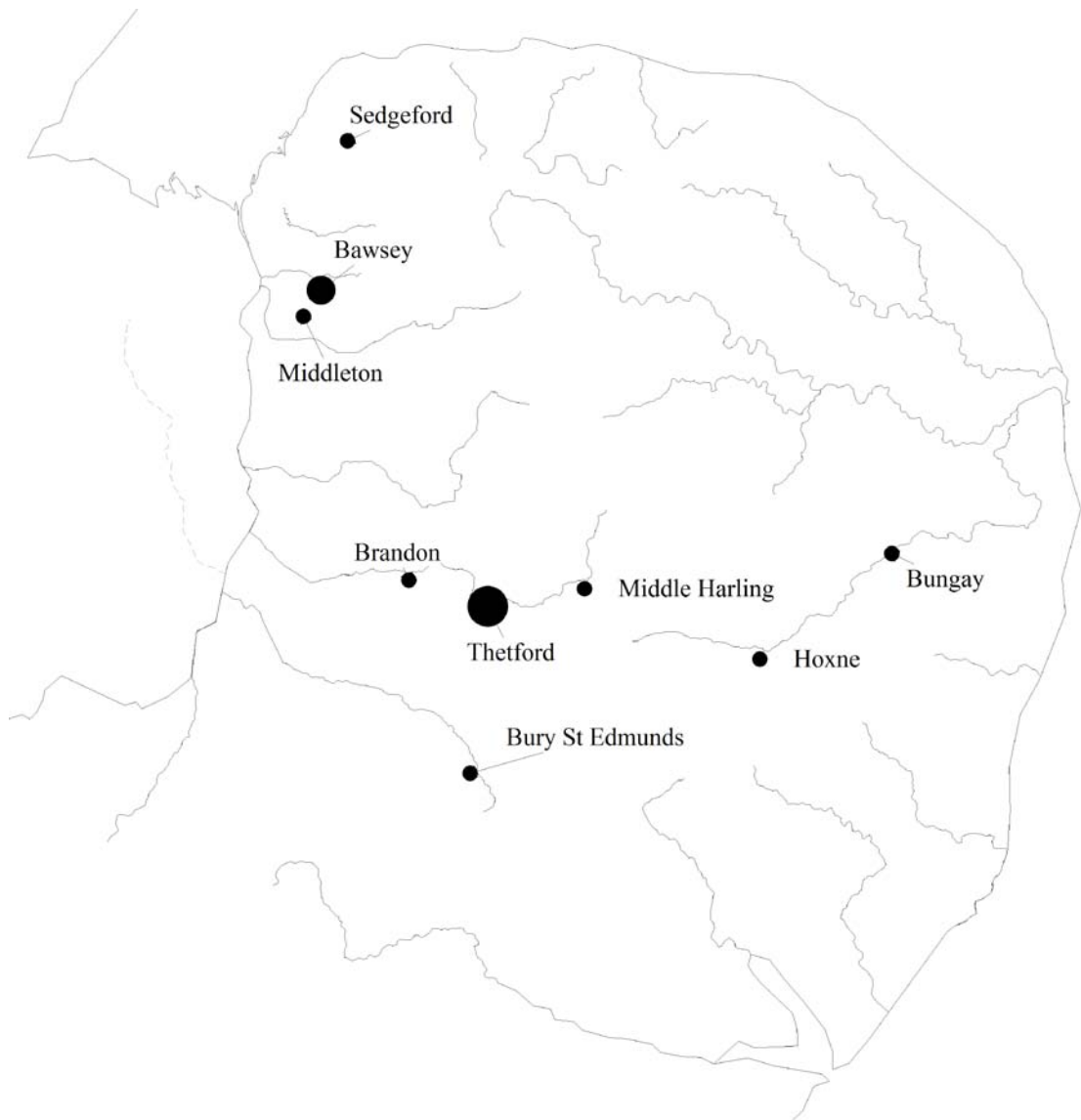
**Fig. 161.** Map of Beornwulf pennies – East Anglia.

#### **Ludeca (Mercia r. AD 826–7)**

Only two coins are known from this reign. Both were minted in East Anglia by the moneyer Wærbeald, who also minted under Beornwulf and Ceolwulf. One of these two comes from Bradenham (Norfolk) and the other is unprovenanced.

#### **Mercian minted coins AD 829–79 (Fig. 162)**

Twelve coins from the various Mercian rulers who reigned after East Anglia regained its independence have been found in East Anglia. We can see that, when this assemblage is combined with other coins of the 9th century, Thetford's growing importance becomes obvious in the numismatic evidence. Bawsey also features prominently in this distribution, but in this case Ipswich and Norwich are absent.



**Fig. 162.** Map of Mercian coins 829–79 not minted in East Anglia – Easy Anglia.

### **Wessex coins found in East Anglia AD 802–58 (Fig. 163)**

Only seven coins minted in Wessex in this period have been found in East Anglia.



**Fig. 163.** Map of Wessex coinage 802–58 – East Anglia.

### **Diocese of York 9th-century coins found in East Anglia (Fig. 164)**

Although only four coins minted under the authority of the archbishop of York have been found in East Anglia, all minted during Wigmund's term (AD 837–54), their distribution is interesting, with Thetford figuring again.



**Fig. 164.** Map Diocese of York coinage 837–54 minted during Wigmund's office – East Anglia.

**Diocese of Canterbury 8th- and 9th-century coins found in East Anglia (Fig. 165).**

Seven coins minted under the authority of the archbishop of Canterbury have been found in East Anglia, including one from Bawsey.

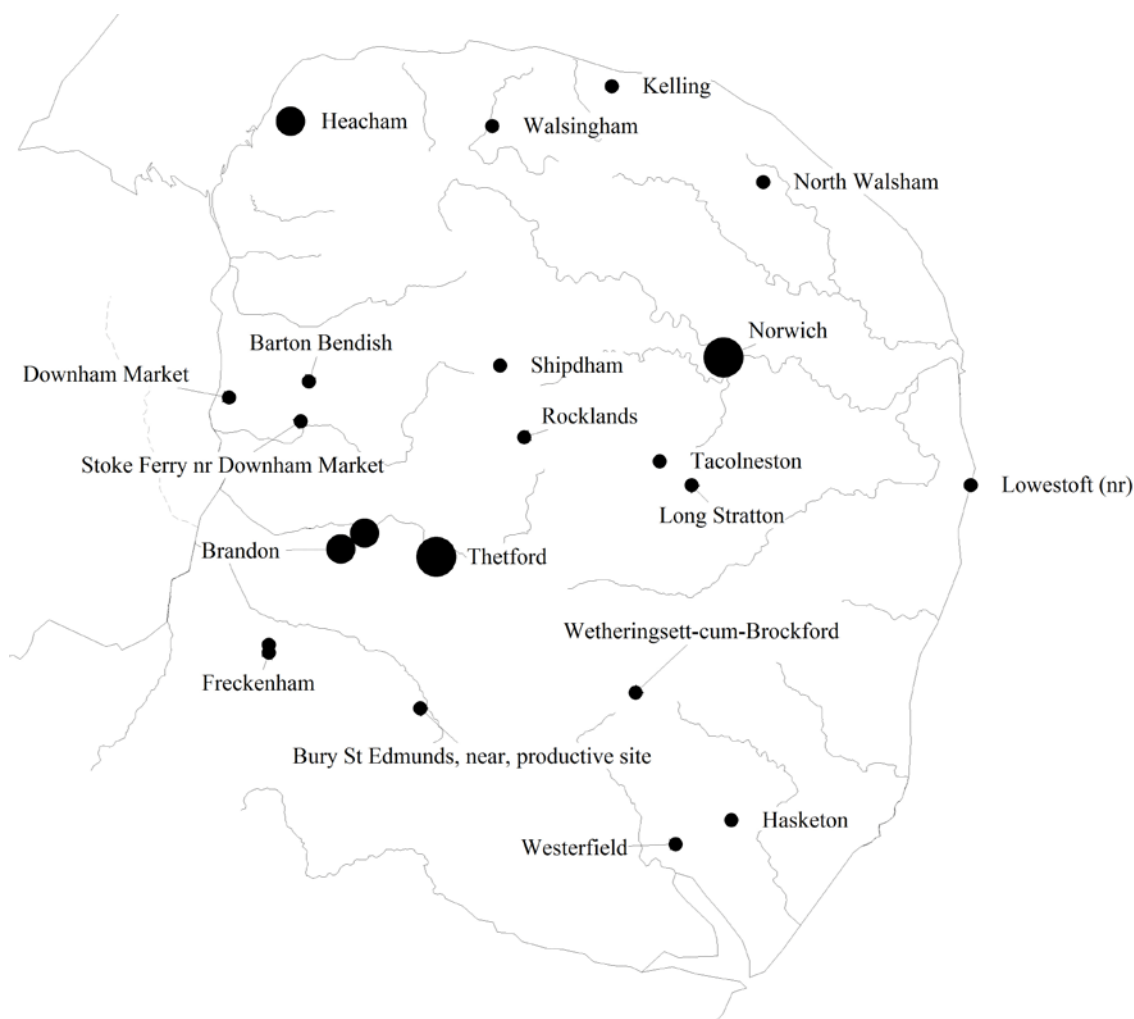


**Fig. 165.** Map of coinage minted under the Diocese of Canterbury in the 9th century – East Anglia.

**Northumbrian 9th-century coinage found in East Anglia (Fig. 166).**

A total of 48 coins minted in Northumbria during the 9th century have been found in East Anglia. This is out of a total of 921 known nationally. Hence, although a relatively large number of coins from this period have been found within the former kingdom, it is a small proportion of the total.

The increase in the numbers of these and other coins of this period found at both Norwich and Thetford, but most discernibly at Thetford, is interesting and will be discussed further in Chapter 8. Heacham seems to have produced a hoard of coins in this period and it may be that it was therefore not a ‘productive’ site in the sense of single coin losses.



**Fig. 166.** Map of Northumbrian coinage of the 9th century – East Anglia.

**Kentish coinage AD 764–825 found in East Anglia (Fig. 167).**

A total of 16 Kentish coins of this period have been found in East Anglia, 2 of which have only a county provenance and so do not appear on the map. It is notable that within this distribution there are three coins from Bawsey, two from Thetford and a coin from Ipswich. Most of the others were found at sites that can be defined as ‘productive’ Middle Saxon sites, with one or two slightly unusual additions, including one coin found at Hellesdon (Norfolk), which is just over 3km to the north of Norwich’s centre.





**Fig. 167.** Map of Kent coinage 764–825 – East Anglia.

#### **Æthelstan (East Anglia r. AD 825–45) (Figs 168–171)**

It has been suggested that Æthelstan was probably the un-named East Anglian king recorded in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* as having killed two Mercian rulers, Beornwulf (d. AD 826) and Ludeca (d. AD 827), the latter being the last Mercian king to mint coins in East Anglia.<sup>48</sup> This appears to have been the culmination of a programme of reassertion of power on the part of East Anglian rulers that probably began with the death of Coenwulf, during which East Anglia was able to reassert its independence and became one of the last three remaining powers in Anglo-Saxon England prior to the Viking wars.<sup>49</sup> At this time, and despite their relative historical obscurity, the East Anglians were obviously a power to be reckoned with. This may in no small part have been due to their economic power base, and was also probably in part a result of the significant population that appears to have been resident in the region at this time.

<sup>48</sup> Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, 64.

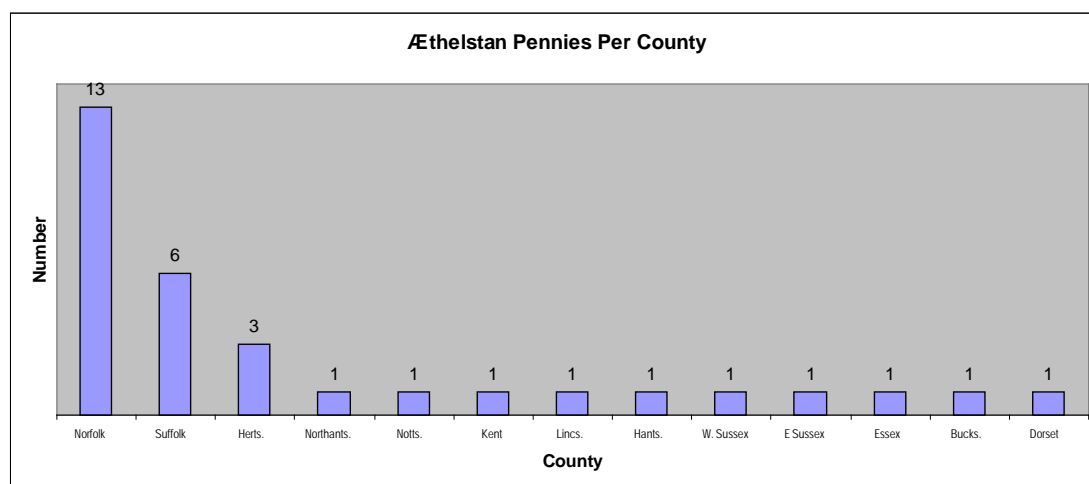
<sup>49</sup> Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 236.

A total of 52 coins of this type is known nationally. However, only 31 of these have an identified provenance and can be given a relatively accurate find-location. Of this latter total, 18 can be located within East Anglia and 2 of these are more accurately provenanced. An examination of the East Anglian distribution shows that the majority of the coinage comes from Norfolk, with a marked concentration in the Thetford area.

It is clear from Fig. 170 that a diverse group of moneyers was involved in producing this coinage, which may suggest there were multiple minting places. Given the concentration of finds in the Thetford area it is tempting to place one of these there.

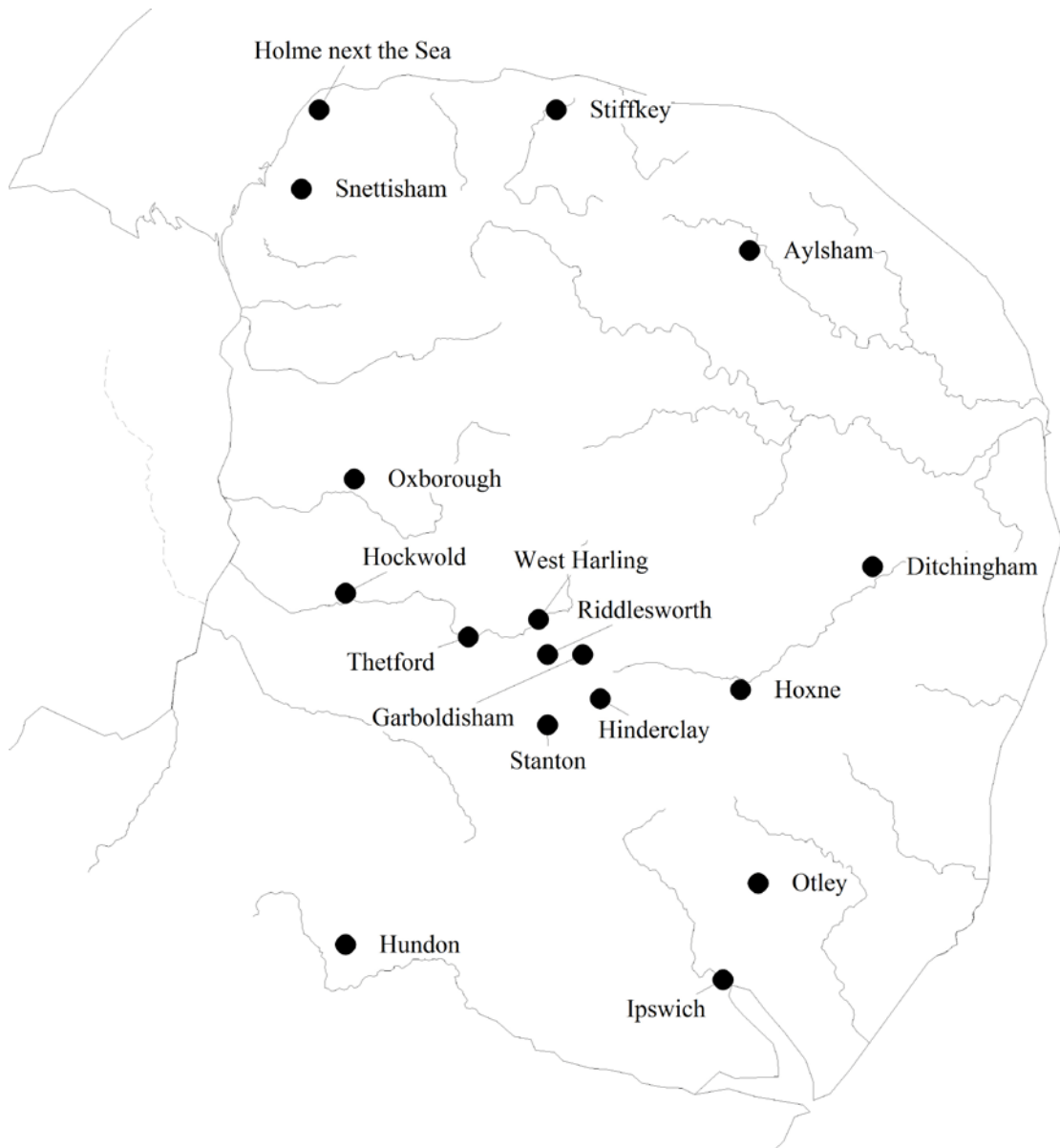


**Fig. 168.** N 440 (Æthelstan EA, non-portrait) (827–845), EMC. 1995.0141, from Ipswich, Suffolk.



**Fig. 169.** Chart of Æthelstan EA pennies per county – England.

**Fig. 170.** Chart of Æthelstand EA moneyers.



**Fig. 171.** Map of Æthelstan EA pennies – East Anglia.

### **Æthelweard (East Anglia r. AD 845–55) (Figs 172 & 173)**

Like that of his predecessor Æthelstan, Æthelweard's reign is virtually unrecorded in the documentary sources,<sup>50</sup> and thus it is really only through coinage that anything is known of him. It would seem that East Anglia retained its independence throughout this period and on until the death of Edmund at the hands of the Viking army.<sup>51</sup> The chronology of Æthelweard's reign is therefore not historically proven and is constructed numismatically.

Twenty-four Æthelweard pennies are known to exist. Of these, only six have established find-spots: two were found outside East Anglia, one in Ely (Cambs.) and the other in Dorking

<sup>50</sup> Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, 64.

<sup>51</sup> Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 236.

(Surrey); the remaining four were found at Bawsey, at a location somewhere near King's Lynn, at Foulden and at Ipswich.



**Fig. 172.** N 450 (Æthelweard EA) (845–855), EMC No. 2005.0246, from near King's Lynn, Norfolk.

Again, as with his predecessor, a variety of moneyer's names are known from the coinage of this poorly understood East Anglian king, perhaps suggesting that it was minted in a variety of locations. The fact that most of the known examples are scattered through collections might indicate that the bulk of these were found within a hoard that was subsequently broken up and dispersed. The earliest publication of one of these was in a sylloge published in 1958.<sup>52</sup> The fact that two of the known coins were found close to Bawsey is compelling.

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<sup>52</sup> P. Grierson, *Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge Part 1. Ancient British and Anglo-Saxon Coins*, Sylloge of Coins of the British Isles (London, 1958), coin no. 450.



**Fig. 173.** Map of Æthelweard EA pennies – East Anglia.

**Edmund (East Anglia r. AD 855–69) (Figs 174–178).**

Despite his later cult status, very little is known of the life of Edmund, king of East Anglia. He was born around AD 841 and thus inherited the kingdom when he was still only in his mid teens, although the generally quoted year of his succession, AD 855, is not well-established fact, being based on the tradition of the *Annals of St Neots*.<sup>53</sup> His death is well recorded, with the earliest source being the ‘Parker’ manuscript of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, which was probably compiled around AD 890.<sup>54</sup> For the year AD 870 it records:

<sup>53</sup> Pestell, *Landscapes of Monastic Foundation*, 66, note 8.

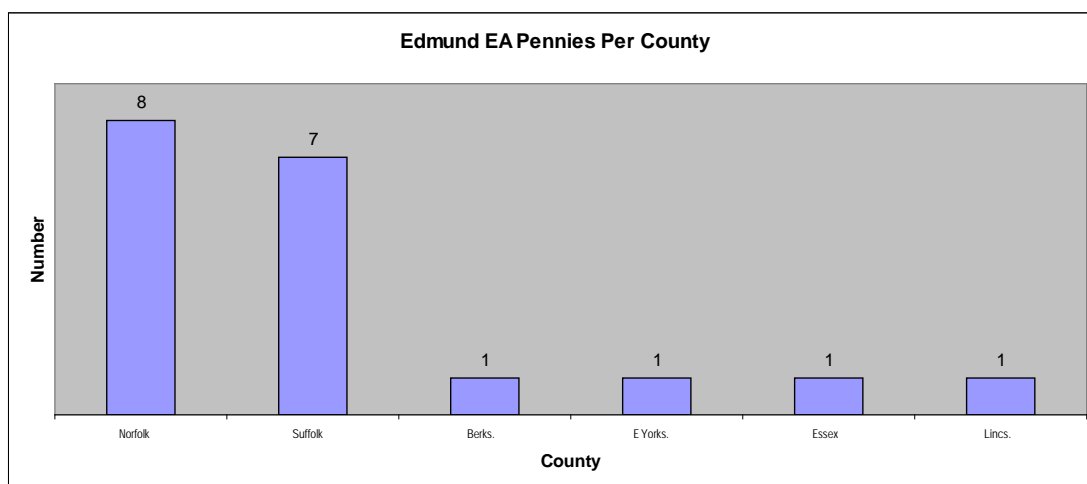
<sup>54</sup> See S.J. Ridyard, *The Royal Saints of Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge, 1988), 61–73, for a discussion of the sources and the later hagiographic reinterpretation.

In this year the raiding army rode across Mercia and East Anglia, and took up winter quarters at Thetford. And that winter King Edmund fought against them, and the Danes had the victory, and killed the king and conquered all the land.

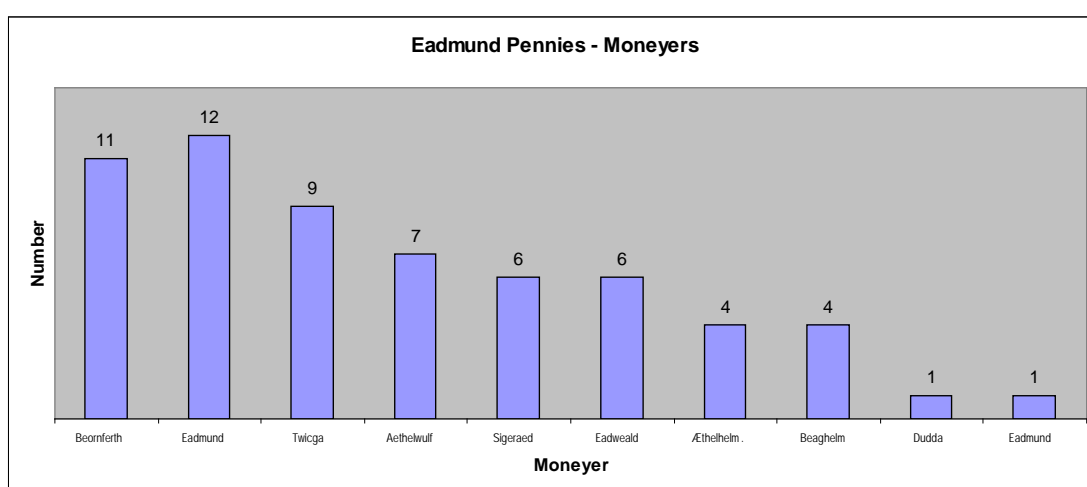


**Fig. 174.** Medieval image of St Edmund.

In total, 64 single finds of his coinage are known, of which 22 have some locational information associated with them. The remaining unprovenanced coins are now scattered through a number of collections and may, like the Æthelweard coins, have derived from a hoard that was split up and distributed to a number of collectors, although no clear record of this exists.



**Fig. 175.** Edmund EA pennies per county – England.



**Fig. 176.** Edmund EA pennies – moneyers.



**Fig. 177.** N 456 (Edmund EA) (855–869), EMC no. 2005.0097, from Quidenham, Norfolk.

Finds of Edmund's coinage are clearly concentrated in the area around Thetford and here again, as with the coinage of Æthelstan, this provides a strong argument for a concentration of economic activity here in the period of East Anglian independence – activity that may conceivably have included minting. This theme is taken up in Chapter 8 but it is worth stating that this concentration of minting in Thetford at this time may reflect that place's strategic character and its protected nature far within the confines of the kingdom. It is also notable that the production of wheel-thrown pottery seems also to have moved at around this time, with the

monopoly on the production of Ipswich ware appearing to end.<sup>55</sup> The lack of finds of this coinage from Ipswich is intriguing; this, too, is discussed in the next chapter, but it is worth emphasising here that there may have been a concerted move away from Ipswich in the 850s and 860s in response to increased Viking raiding, which was mentioned in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* as beginning to target East Anglia from the year 838.<sup>56</sup>



**Fig. 178.** Map of Edmund EA pennies – East Anglia.

<sup>55</sup> Hutcheson, 'The origins of King's Lynn?'.

<sup>56</sup> ASC, 838.



### **Æthelred (East Anglia AD 870–80)**

A single coin of this East Anglian puppet ruler was discovered in Kent in 1995,<sup>57</sup> demonstrating that some coinage was being produced during the period between the death of Edmund and the coinage of Guthrum, not counting forgeries. Blackburn has recently re-evaluated coin production under the Vikings and suggests that there appears to have been continuity in production, albeit that the written sources are silent on the situation during the decade between the ritual killing of Edmund and Guthrum's rule.<sup>58</sup> The gap in the continuity of production however, does remain essentially valid, in that there was certainly a vast diminution in the numbers of coins being lost dating from this period. The question of who was producing the forgeries and on what basis should not be discounted, though. Clearly the Danelaw rulers were experimenting with a number of approaches to controlling exchange and this was one element within a spectrum.

### **Viking coinage and bullion**

Blackburn has recently charted coin production in the East Anglia after the Viking invasion and takeover of East Anglia, essentially producing an update of Haigh's 1845 formulation of our modern understanding of the coinage, which remains largely accurate today.<sup>59</sup> During the first years after the takeover there is an imitative phase in which the coinage of neighbouring Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, primarily Wessex, was copied.<sup>60</sup> These imitations are mainly anonymous but a few carried the names of Viking kings.<sup>61</sup> Much of what is known numismatically about this phase results from the study of six hoards, with two large hoards providing the bulk of the evidence: the Cuerdale (Lancashire) hoard, found in 1840, contained over 8,000 coins and the Morley St Peter (Norfolk) hoard, discovered in 1958, possessed 883.<sup>62</sup> What is clearly different about the opening years of the Danelaw, compared with the 8<sup>th</sup> century and early 9<sup>th</sup>, is the mixed nature of the exchange system, with both coinage and bullion apparently being utilised. If anything, I would argue that there is a remarkable interest shown in replicating the coinage of the Anglo-Saxons and in utilising the systems of taxation and wealth control already in place. At first this consisted of copying the coinage of Wessex, but later it developed into the issuing

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<sup>57</sup> M.A.S. Blackburn, 'Expansion and control: aspects of Anglo-Scandinavian minting south of the Humber', in J. Graham-Campbell *et al.* (eds), *Vikings and the Danelaw. Selected papers from the Proceedings of the Thirteenth Viking Congress 1997* (Oxford, 2001) 125–42; *idem*, 'Currency under the Vikings 1: Guthrum and the earliest Danelaw coinages', *British Numismatic Journal* 75 (2005), 18–43, see p. 24.

<sup>58</sup> Blackburn, 'Currency under the Vikings 1', 23.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 24; D. Haigh, *An Essay on the Numismatic History of the Ancient Kingdom of the East Angles* (London, 1845).

<sup>60</sup> Blackburn, 'Currency under the Vikings 1', 20.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

of what was, in effect, a national coinage under the banner of St Edmund: a strange turn of events.<sup>63</sup>

It seems likely that many of the imported coinage of this period represents an element of this bullion economy,<sup>64</sup> and the presence at a number of ‘productive’ sites of ingots and imported coins suggests that these places continued to be utilised in much the same way as they had been in earlier periods during the pre-coinage phase of the Danelaw.

*Æthelstan/Guthrum (East Anglia AD 879–85?)*

Only nine coins are known nationally, four of which come from East Anglia. Only one specimen, from Freckenham (Suffolk), has been recorded as a single loss; the remaining three were contained within the Morley St Peter hoard. A lead striking found at Hoxne (Suffolk) in 1996, made from a die presumably also used to produce coinage, shows a temple with a double pediment surrounded by the inscription EDELSTAN REX and + DVNNO MOnorth-eastT; Blackburn has attributed this to Æthelstan/Guthrum, on the basis of the double pediment design stylistically linking to Carolingian designs dating from after AD 855.<sup>65</sup> Two coins from the Cuerdale hoard possess a similar design with the same name on the obverse side and, on the reverse, a highly literate engraving +QVVENTOVVICI or +QVVENTOVVCI, indicating that the mint-place was Quentovic, or more probably in this case, that moneyers working on this coinage were Frankish and reused designs that they held from previous employment for Carolingian rulers.<sup>66</sup>

*Vikings of the southern Danelaw, Alfred imitations AD 880–99 (Fig. 179)*

Sixteen of these forgeries have been discovered in East Anglia, compared with 73 coins known nationally. Most of the national coinage does not possess a known mint source, but quantities are thought to have been minted at *Ohrsnaforda*, an unidentified location thought to have been Oxford.<sup>67</sup> These forged coins do appear to be of a different standard to the coins being produced in Wessex at the time, but are of a well-controlled one nevertheless. The East Anglian coinage seems to have been produced to a similar weight as the late Mercian and late East Anglian pennies following the reforms of Offa and by extension Charlemagne, whereas Alfred reformed the Wessex coinage in the 880s to a higher standard weight.<sup>68</sup> It is significant that a number of these coins possess the names of moneyers not found on the official issues, apparently representing individuals working at Danelaw mints; several of these names have Continental

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<sup>63</sup> M.A.S. Blackburn, ‘Currency under the Vikings 2: The two Scandinavian kingdoms of the Danelaw, c. 895–954’, *British Numismatic Journal* 76 (2006), 204–26.

<sup>64</sup> Blackburn, ‘Expansion and control’, 128.

<sup>65</sup> Blackburn, ‘Currency under the Vikings 1’, 26.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>68</sup> Blackburn, ‘Expansion and control’ 132; *idem* ‘Currency under the Vikings 1’, 21.

origins, demonstrating that foreign craftsmen were working on coinage within the Danelaw in this initial phase of Viking rule.<sup>69</sup>

Notably, ten of these coins have been found during archaeological investigations within Ipswich. Single coins were found at Thetford and at Bawsey. However, despite there only being a single example from Norwich, it is from there that the bulk of our knowledge on this coinage derives, by extension due to the name appearing as early as 900 on the coinage of St Edmund and the archaeological evidence for minting in the city discussed below.



**Fig. 179.** Vikings of the Southern Danelaw, Alfred imitation pennies – East Anglia.

<sup>69</sup> Blackburn, 'Currency under the Vikings 1', 22.

### **Evidence for minting in Norwich**

The Norwich find of this issue was discovered at the Greyfriars excavation within a post-hole belonging to a so-called sunken-featured, or cellared, building (Building no. 10049), and has been studied by Blackburn.<sup>70</sup> Several crucible fragments of Stamford ware and Thetford ware, the former dated to the early 10th century, were also discovered within the infilling of this structure. Upon XRF analysis these fragments of crucible were shown to possess a high silver content, which Doonan suggests was indicative of the melting of silver and which was associated particularly with this SFB on the site.<sup>71</sup> Doonan also analysed litharge cakes from other parts of the site and found that these also had high silver concentrations, leading to the conclusion that they were associated with a silver-refining process termed cupellation, which is known to be a preliminary step in the process of silver bullion production.<sup>72</sup> Such bullion was utilised as a refined component in the alloying of metals for use in the minting of coinage. A lead disc bearing the copied devices of an Alfred penny of AD 871–90 (SF 281) was found close to some of the fragments of high-silver litharge cake. This has been identified by Archibald as a half-*eyrir*. The intrinsic weight coupled with the blundered moneyer's deutrotheme VALD on the reverse indicate this was a Viking die copied from an Alfred coin and was not an official product of an Alfredian mint; the closest parallel to the reverse is a coin from the Canterbury mint made by the moneyer Eadwald, a prolific producer with a number of coins represented in the Cuerdale hoard.<sup>73</sup> The combination of these materials all found close together is strongly indicative of the minting here of Alfred imitation coinage made prior to AD 895. This evidence, as suggested by Archibald, needs to be considered along with the St Edmund memorial coin possessing the NORDVICO name on it (see section on St Edmund coinage below).<sup>74</sup>

### **Edward imitations AD 899–924**

Only three imitations of King Edward's coinage have been found in East Anglia and only one of these, from East Harling, has an accurate location. This is presumably because the production of coinage in East Anglia had moved on by the reign of Edward and was no longer reliant on

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<sup>70</sup> P. Emery, *Norwich Greyfriars: Pre-Conquest Town and Medieval Friary* (East Anglian Archaeology 120, 2007), note by M. Blackburn, p. 147, states: 'Two other coins of this moneyer are known. One from the Morley St Peter hoard (SCBI 26, East Anglian Museums 59) is struck from the same obverse die, but a different reverse with three simple pellets across the centre. The second coin, described without illustration, from Carlyon Britton collection (Southerbys, 20 November 1916, lot 941) had similar decoration on the reverse to this piece. This class of coinage is well represented in the Ashdon hoard (Essex) deposited c. 895. The coin would have been produced in the period c. 880–895, and it would have been lost shortly after 895 at the latest with the introduction of the St Edmund coinage.'

<sup>71</sup> R. Goffin, 'The crucibles', in Emery, *Norwich Greyfriars*, 118–19, note 41; R.C.P. Doonan, 'Metallurgical analysis of the crucibles', in Emery, *Norwich Greyfriars*, 119–22.

<sup>72</sup> Doonan, 'Metallurgical analysis', 122

<sup>73</sup> M. Archibald, 'Half-*eyrir* lead weight' in Emery, *Norwich Greyfriars*, 148–9.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

forgeries of contemporary coinage, but, rather, ingeniously referenced a martyred king, St Edmund, as a method of instilling faith in the coinage.

**St Edmund Memorial pennies East Anglia AD 895–910 (Figs 181–184)**



**Fig. 180.** Depiction of St Edmund from the Wilton Diptych.

The use of Christian terms and imagery, and specifically the name of a martyred king, in the coin-producing phase of the Danelaw is an interesting adoption of Anglo-Saxon and perhaps also Carolingian mores and concepts of kingship by the now well-established Viking rulers. This can be seen not only in the coinage of East Anglia at this time, but also in the minting that was taking place in Mercia and at York, with coinage struck under the names of St Martin and St Peter respectively. From the mid 890s ‘national’ coinages were established within the two main Danelaw kingdoms; within East Anglia and the East Midlands the St Edmund coinage replaced Alfredian imitations.<sup>75</sup> Why there is not a more overt association with a Viking ruler is not clear, but it may have something to do with their relatively ambiguous adoption of the Christian religion and the clear problems that may have engendered in terms of producing a coinage for a Christian population. Having said this, Guthrum was baptised and adopted the name Æthelstan, there are a small number of coins attributed to him issued under his baptismal name and bearing a cross (see section on this coinage above).<sup>76</sup> This practice may, therefore, have been a compromise, with the saint encouraging the faithful to believe in the veracity of the

<sup>75</sup> Blackburn, ‘Currency under the Vikings 2’, 205.

<sup>76</sup> Blackburn, ‘Expansion and control.

coin while at the same time not stretching their credulity by placing a pagan ruler's name on it. Alternatively, as Hadley has suggested, it may simply be that the unrecorded rulers of East Anglia at this time were strong promoters of the church and this overtly and perhaps mystically Christian coinage is testament to their commitment to the religion, or that it was intended for an 'audience' of Christian Anglo-Saxon lords and as a method of attempting to persuade rulers of other realms that Viking rulers were part of a 'civilised' Christian community of nations.<sup>77</sup> Notably, the standard utilised both in this semi-official coinage and in the previous phase of forged coins suggests the use of skilled moneyers and serious regulation of the process by those who were politically controlling it.<sup>78</sup>

Until recently most of the understanding of this coinage was based on the Morley St Peter hoard, but this has now been supplemented by the discovery of five new hoards, two from East Anglia (Brantham, Suffolk, and Framlingham Earl, Norfolk) one from Manningtree (Essex), another from Thurcaston (Leicestershire) and a final hoard known as the 'Baldwin' parcel, the find location for which is currently unknown (see section on East Anglian hoards below).<sup>79</sup> Blunt believed that the St Edmund coinage was in fact first issued by Alfred from a mint in Canterbury, on the basis that a number of coins were produced from a die that has the moneyer's name replaced with the legend +AELFRED REX DO in a similar manner to some of Alfred's Canterbury coinage.<sup>80</sup> Blackburn disagrees with this interpretation, suggesting instead that the obverse is merely a copy of an Alfred Canterbury coin by a Viking-controlled mint. We now have the half-*eyrir* weight from the Greyfriars excavation (Norwich) to demonstrate that coinage produced in Canterbury was being copied within the town by at least AD 895. This must be considered against the literature suggesting that the St Edmund mint is unknown. A specimen struck from a die with the inscription NORDVICO strongly suggests that some, at least, of the coinage was minted in Norwich.<sup>81</sup> Notably only one St Edmund penny has been found in Norwich, but the city's Middle to Late Saxon deposits are not particularly well understood and seem from the evidence available to have been massively disturbed by groundworks in the later medieval period and beyond. In particular, the Greyfriars area, from where some of our best information comes for this period, was deeply buried by wetland reclamation associated with the construction of the friary in the 13th century.<sup>82</sup> Deeply buried deposits within the city have been reached only sporadically and often even at depth there is extensive medieval and later disturbance of earlier deposits. This aspect is discussed in Chapter 8, but it is notable that the spread of Ipswich ware across the city takes in an area of some 70ha but only a small number of

<sup>77</sup> Hadley, *The Vikings in England*, 36.

<sup>78</sup> Blackburn, 'Expansion and control', 128.

<sup>79</sup> Blackburn, 'Currency under the Vikings 2', 206.

<sup>80</sup> C.E. Blunt, 'The St Edmund Memorial coinage', *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology* 31 (1969) 234–55.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*; and see Blackburn, 'Expansion and control', 132.

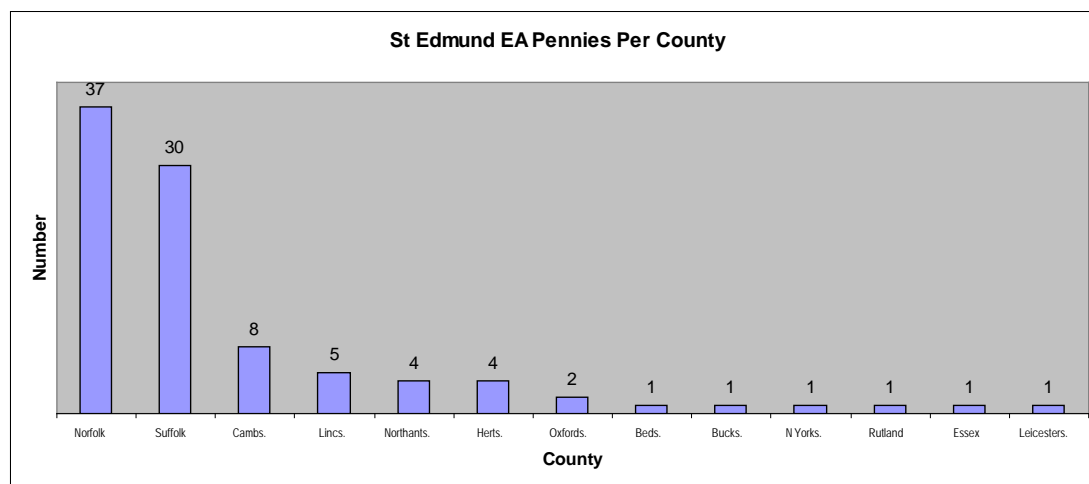
<sup>82</sup> Emery, *Norwich Greyfriars*, 79.

contemporary structures and archaeological features have been discovered to date. A vast quantity of this coinage is now known nationally, most apparently deriving from identified or unidentified hoards and now residing in large collections: some 475 coins are recorded, but of this total only 79 possess locations.



**Fig. 181.** St Edmund Memorial penny (N 483) (St Edmund) (895–918), EMC No. 2007.0257, from Bacton, Suffolk.

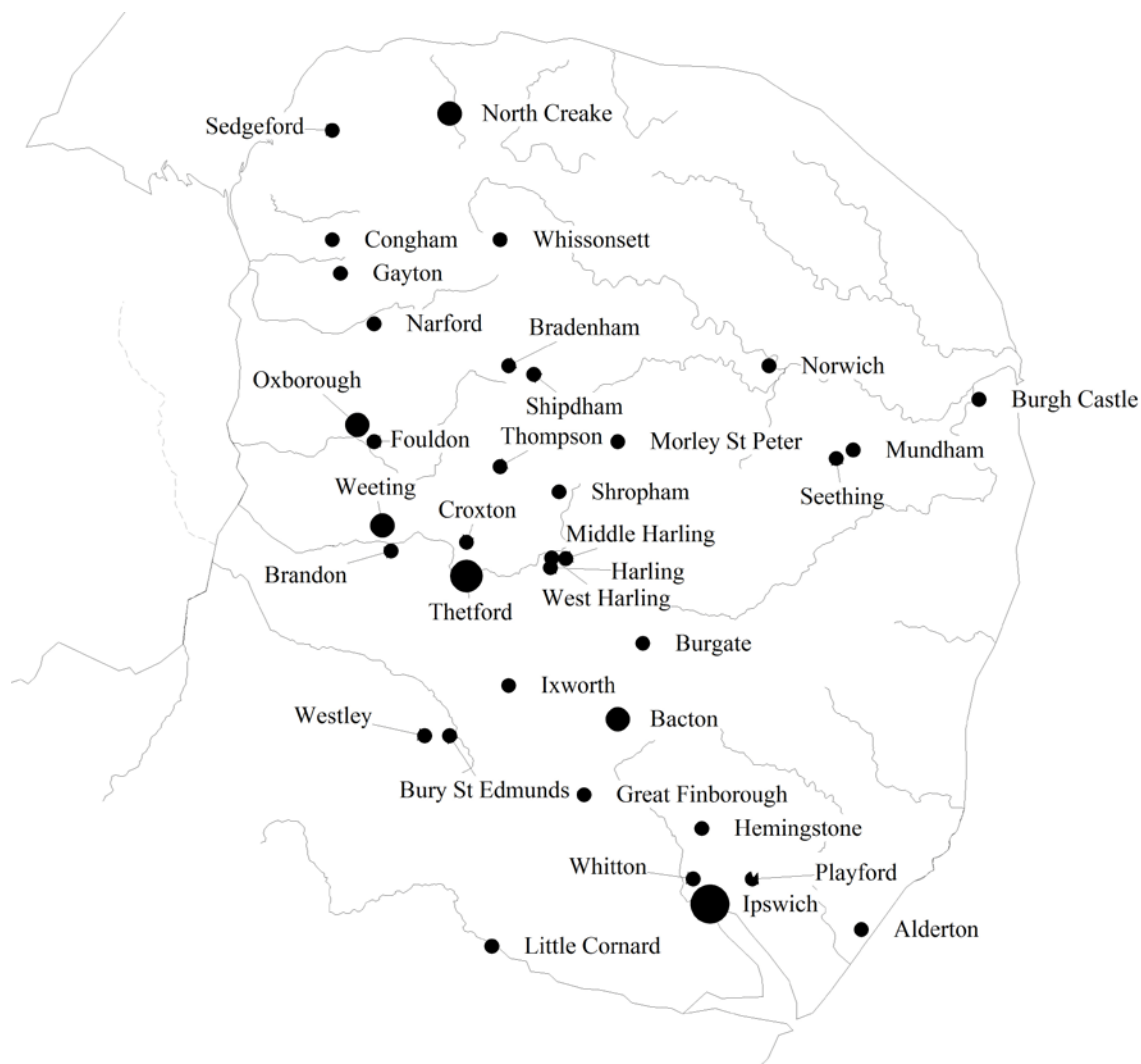
Four coins from North Creake look to be a dispersed hoard, as there are few other coins from the parish with which to corroborate this assemblage. The distribution and the quantities of coins found at particular sites demonstrate that Ipswich (with 17 coins) was reinvigorated during the Danelaw and that Thetford (10) was very much in the ascendant as a Viking central place, quite possibly a town (see Chapter 8). Norwich, as discussed, appears to have been a mint for this coinage but has not produced much contemporary lost coinage. There were 72 known moneyers producing this coinage, suggesting a significant industry.



**Fig. 182.** St Edmund Memorial pennies per county – England.

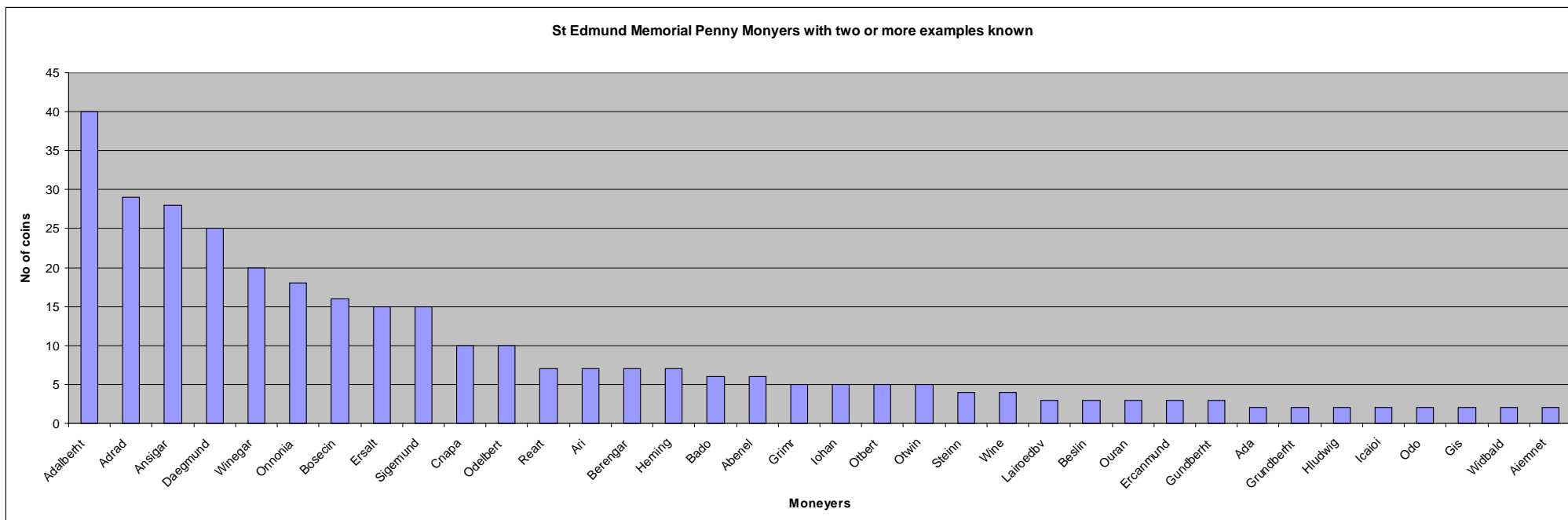
The totals shown in Fig. 182 illustrate that there was a strong aversion, unsurprisingly, to the use of this coinage in areas outside the Danelaw, but it also seems that there may have been an equally strong distinction between coinage used in the northern and southern Danelaw. Interestingly, Bawsey is completely absent from its distribution, which may be significant, possibly marking a hiatus in its fortunes during the late 9th and early 10th centuries, but within

the same area, as can be seen in Fig. 183, there are other ‘productive’ sites that do produce examples of St Edmund pennies.



**Fig. 183.** St Edmund Memorial pennies – East Anglia.





**Fig. 184.** St Edmund Memorial pennies – moneyers.

### **Northern Danelaw coinage**

Sixteen coins minted in the northern Danelaw, starting with the reign of Sihtric in AD 870 and ending with the end of the reign of Eric Bloodaxe in AD 954, have been found in the Morley St Peter hoard.<sup>83</sup> Besides that, only a single find of a St Peter (AD 905–27) (Danelaw) penny from West Rudham is known from East Anglia.

### **Ingots (Figs 185 & 186)**

Ingots were produced in copper alloy, silver and more rarely in gold, and are a component within Viking Age silver hoards.<sup>84</sup> They can be viewed as being a component of a bullion economy, in the same way that hack-silver may be. However, this view may be missing their actual purpose within the contemporary East Anglian economy. In a contrast with the situation in the northern Danelaw, there are no large hack-silver hoards known from East Anglia or the southern Danelaw more generally. This suggests that the ingots that are now commonly being found by metal detectorists and identified by archaeologists, particularly in Norfolk, may rather be a component within a coin-using economy, perhaps both used as bullion and as a necessary component of coin production. As discussed above, that refined ingots are used as a measure within the process of alloying of metals to be used in coin production (see section on Viking imitations of Alfred's coinage above). This does not preclude ingots having a value and being traded as bullion, of course, but the evidence of the contemporary situation within East Anglia, as discussed above and below, suggests an acute need for and the continuing production of coinage. It may be reasonably postulated, therefore, that there was an aversion to a system of exchange not based upon a coinage bearing the guarantee of a king.

Given that up until the early 1990s there were no known Viking-period ingots from East Anglia there have been a plethora of finds in the last few years, beginning with two found in the parishes of Hindringham and Ditchingham.<sup>85</sup> A variety of these objects have now been identified in both Norfolk (34) and Suffolk (3). Most are of copper alloy, though a significant proportion (15) are made of silver. Only three are made of gold. The comparative paucity of ingot finds from Suffolk compared with Norfolk appears to be potentially due to an identification bias. These objects are not being recognised in the same way everywhere, and thus making any statement on their distribution is flawed. However, there are several recent finds from outside Norfolk, within the northern part of the Danelaw, including an example from Driffield (Yorkshire) and one from Market Rasen (Lincolnshire).

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<sup>83</sup> T.H. Mck. Clough, *Museums in East Anglia, The Morley St Peter Hoard, Anglo-Saxon – Angevin coins and Later Norwich Coins: Sylloge of Coins of the British Isles* 26 (Oxford, 1980).

<sup>84</sup> S.E. Kruse, 'Ingots and weight units in Viking Age silver hoards', *World Archaeology* 20:2 (1988), 285–301.

<sup>85</sup> M. Blackburn and A. Rogerson, 'Two Viking-age silver ingots from Ditchingham and Hindringham, Norfolk: The first East Anglian ingot finds', *Medieval Archaeology* 37, 222–4.

The distribution of ingots should really be viewed only in Norfolk, therefore, to avoid biasing the interpretation; so, leaving aside Suffolk, it can be seen that the Norfolk finds conform well with the location of Middle Saxon ‘productive’ sites and with the location of towns. It is notable that both West and East Dereham have produced ingot finds, a gold example from the former and a silver from the latter. Unfortunately, this evidence does not help in deciding the argument regarding which of these places may be the site of Withburga’s (daughter of Anna) monastery, founded in AD 654.<sup>86</sup>



**Fig. 185.** Map of ingots (copper alloy, silver and gold) thought to be of Viking manufacture – East Anglia.

### **Evidence for gold-refining in Norwich**

Excavations at the Norwich Millennium site in 1998 (directed by the author) unearthed a Viking-period gold ingot (Fig. 186) within the floor of an 18th-century cellar, which was at the time one of only two such objects known from the country.<sup>87</sup> Quantities of residual Thetford

<sup>86</sup> N. Boston, *Dereham: The Biography of a Country Town* (Dereham, 1952).

<sup>87</sup> M. Blackburn, ‘Gold in England during the later Anglo-Saxon period (eighth–eleventh centuries)’

ware and Stamford ware crucible fragments came from a number of nearby medieval pits. Several of these fragments were analysed by Dr P. Budd using XRF and all were found to be associated with non-ferrous metalworking. Four fragments had gold adhering to their inner surfaces. As already stated, much of Norwich's early archaeological deposits have been disturbed by later activity. This location was on the frontage of Bethel Street (itself probably a Norman-period creation) and had been drastically affected by cellar and pit digging during the Norman, later medieval and modern periods; the Anglo-Scandinavian context for this find was effectively destroyed. It has been argued in the forthcoming site report that this evidence in fact belongs to the 13th or 14th century,<sup>88</sup> and that this was not a likely location for Viking period gold-working because it was not within the understood confines of the later Saxon town. This stretches the case too far. The ingot, along with the contemporary style of crucibles, forms a collection that cannot be transported into the high medieval period with credibility; rather, the lack of contemporary structural evidence from the site can be more credibly explained as a result of later destruction. The topography and layout of the Viking-period town are poorly understood and it is unwise to map the later confines back into this period without good reason. Although there is a lack of large quantities of pottery of the 8th and 9th century from the excavation, there is some.

This evidence can be added to that of the minting from the Greyfriars site discussed above, which establishes that Norwich was being used as a mint by the Vikings of the southern Danelaw; this helps to make the case for gold coinage being the intended purpose of the ingot. Unfortunately, because the eventual analyst of the Millennium Library excavations believed that this material was much later in date, and because of a lack of funds for scientific work, no further analysis has taken place that would assist in understanding this very important assemblage of evidence further.

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(forthcoming). There are now three gold ingots known from Norfolk: Norwich, Belton with Browston (near Great Yarmouth) and West Dereham.

<sup>88</sup> J. Percival, *Excavations within the French Borough, Norwich* (forthcoming East Anglian Archaeology).



**Fig. 186.** Gold ingot found at Norwich Millennium Library Site, 1998.

### **English coinage from Alfred to Athelstan**

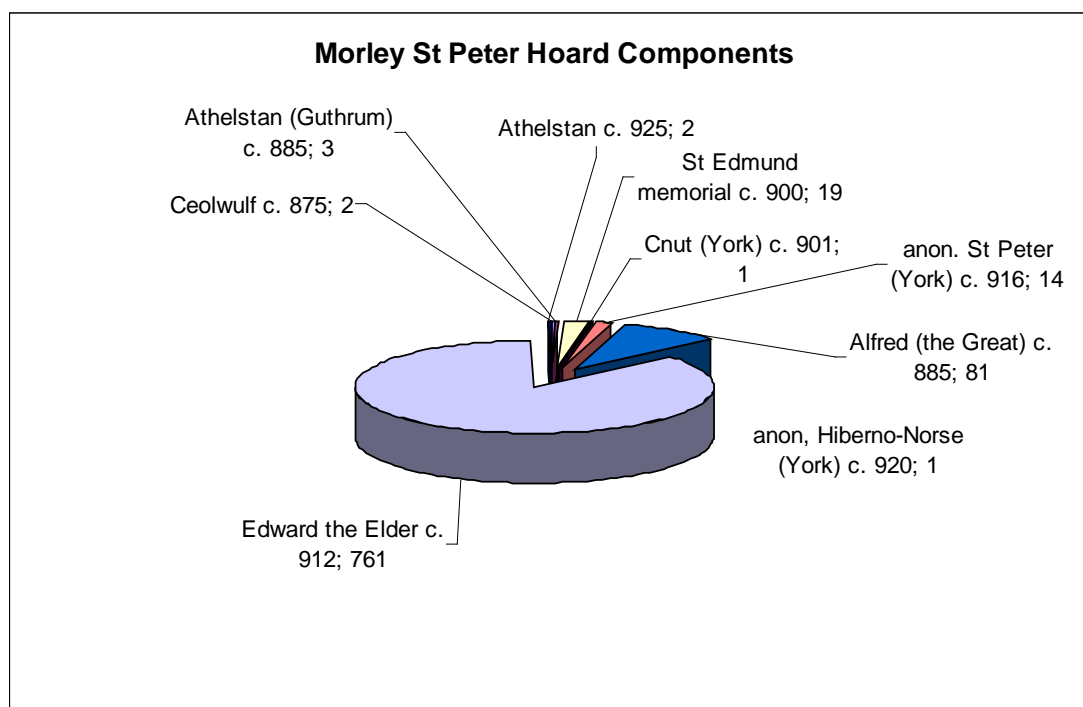
#### *East Anglian hoards of the early 10th century*

##### Morley St Peter hoard

The largest single assemblage of Late Saxon coins discovered in East Anglia, the Morley St Peter hoard, was found in 1958 and consists of some 884 coins that were held within a Thetford ware jar discovered within the grounds of Wymondham College. The context of the hoard was explored at the time of discovery and indicated that there was roughly contemporary occupation within the vicinity.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> R. Rainbird Clarke and R.H.M. Dolley, 'The Morley St Peter hoard', *Antiquity* 32 (1958), 100–103.



**Fig. 187.** Chart of chronology of the coinage within the Morley St Peter hoard.

The collection is overwhelmingly dominated by pennies minted in the reign of Edward the Elder, but also contains a significant number of Alfredian pennies and an assortment of Mercian coinage produced within the Danelaw. Many of the portrait coins of Edward the Elder were identified by the hoard's analyst as originating from East Anglia and not being the products of a formal mint; there is a total of 663 of these coins within the hoard.<sup>90</sup> Clough suggested that in stylistic terms these coins foreshadowed those of Athelstan known to have been minted in East Anglia, and went on to argue that the likely mint location for these coins was Norwich, but that the possibility that they were struck in Thetford must be equally considered.<sup>91</sup> The coins of Æthelstan, Clough suggests, date from around AD 925, the year of Æthelstan's coronation, and provide a *terminus post quem* for the deposition of the hoard.<sup>92</sup> The Edward the Elder portrait coins are extensively die-linked both within the hoard and with other hoards, suggesting that much of this issue can be seen within the existing known finds. The East Anglian coins are lighter than the other issues within the hoard and thus seem to have followed a different weight standard than was in use in other parts of southern England at the time.<sup>93</sup> However, although the coins were perhaps imitative, the moneyers producing this coinage were able to produce the items to a precise standard and were therefore highly skilled at the craft.<sup>94</sup> This may be further

<sup>90</sup> Clough, *The Morley St Peter Hoard*, 4.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>93</sup> H. Bertil A. Petersson, 'Weight relationships in the Morley St Peter hoard', in Clough, *The Morley St Peter Hoard*, 35, fig. 3

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

interpreted to suggest that these people may have been commissioned or employed by Edward the Elder to produce this coinage under licence and to a local standard. This suggests that Edward the Elder held control over minting in East Anglia, contrary to recent suggestions.<sup>95</sup> Which is also suggested by the fact that Æthelstan minted coins in Norwich which clearly bear the town's name.

#### Brantham hoard

The Brantham (Suffolk) hoard, discovered in 2003, is a much smaller assemblage dating, like the Morley St Peter hoard, to the early to mid 920s. It consists entirely of 90 Edward the Elder pennies from the later part of his reign (defined by Blackburn as Horizontal Midland North-East types), possibly suggesting a very quick replacement of the St Edmund Viking coinage.<sup>96</sup> However, it must be remembered that the Morley St Peter hoard comprised a mix of coins from Ceolwulf II (AD 874–9) through to Athelstan (AD 924–39), demonstrating that coins circulated for long durations in this period. Notably, three of the coins in the Brantham hoard possess the names of moneyers also found on the St Edmund coinage.<sup>97</sup> All are of the Two-line type (BMC ii; HT 1). All the coins apart from one thought to have been produced in Mercia appear to be ex-Danelaw and produced on a broad flan by the following twelve moneyers: Pitit (21), Badda (16), Willuf (12), Warmer (9), Gunter (10), Landuc (7), Winele (5), Winegar (2), Adaelberht (1), Domences (1), Harluin (1) and Magnard (1).<sup>98</sup>

#### Framlingham Earl hoard

Between 1994 and 1997 a dispersed hoard of 21 East Anglian coins was discovered by metal-detecting; all were Edward the Elder 'East Anglian portrait type' pennies.<sup>99</sup> The different composition of this group from that of the Brantham hoard suggested to Blackburn that this 'portrait type' was perhaps restricted in its circulation to northern East Anglia; notably, it was similar in many aspects to the St Edmund coinage.<sup>100</sup>

#### *Alfred (the Great) (Figs 188–189)*

Although there are 81 Alfredian pennies within the Morley St Peter hoard, only 8 coins have been recovered as single finds. Ipswich figures prominently with three, although one of these is questionable and may be a Viking imitation. One comes from Bawsey, and although Thetford

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<sup>95</sup> See L. Martens, 'The shiring of East Anglia: an alternative hypothesis', *Historical Research* 81:211, at <http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/journal/119408871/issue>; also Blackburn, 'Expansion and control.'

<sup>96</sup> Blackburn, 'Currency under the Vikings 2', 206–7.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> A. Gannon, 'Brantham, Suffolk: 90 Anglo-Saxon silver pennies (2003 T72)', *Treasure Report* 163:390 (DCMS, 2003).

<sup>99</sup> Blackburn, 'Currency under the Vikings 2', 208.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

has not produced one, there is an example from the satellite ‘productive’ site at Middle Harling. We can also begin to see the importance of Bury St Edmunds at this time, with a single item presaging its later, mainly 11th-century, importance.



**Fig. 188.** Alfred (the Great) (871–899) penny, Alfred, Two-Line (excluding DORO, N 635, 636, 637, 639) (880–899), mint uncertain, moneyer: Æthelræd (ÆÐERED), from Morley St Peter, Norfolk, England.



**Fig. 189.** Map of Alfred pennies – East Anglia.

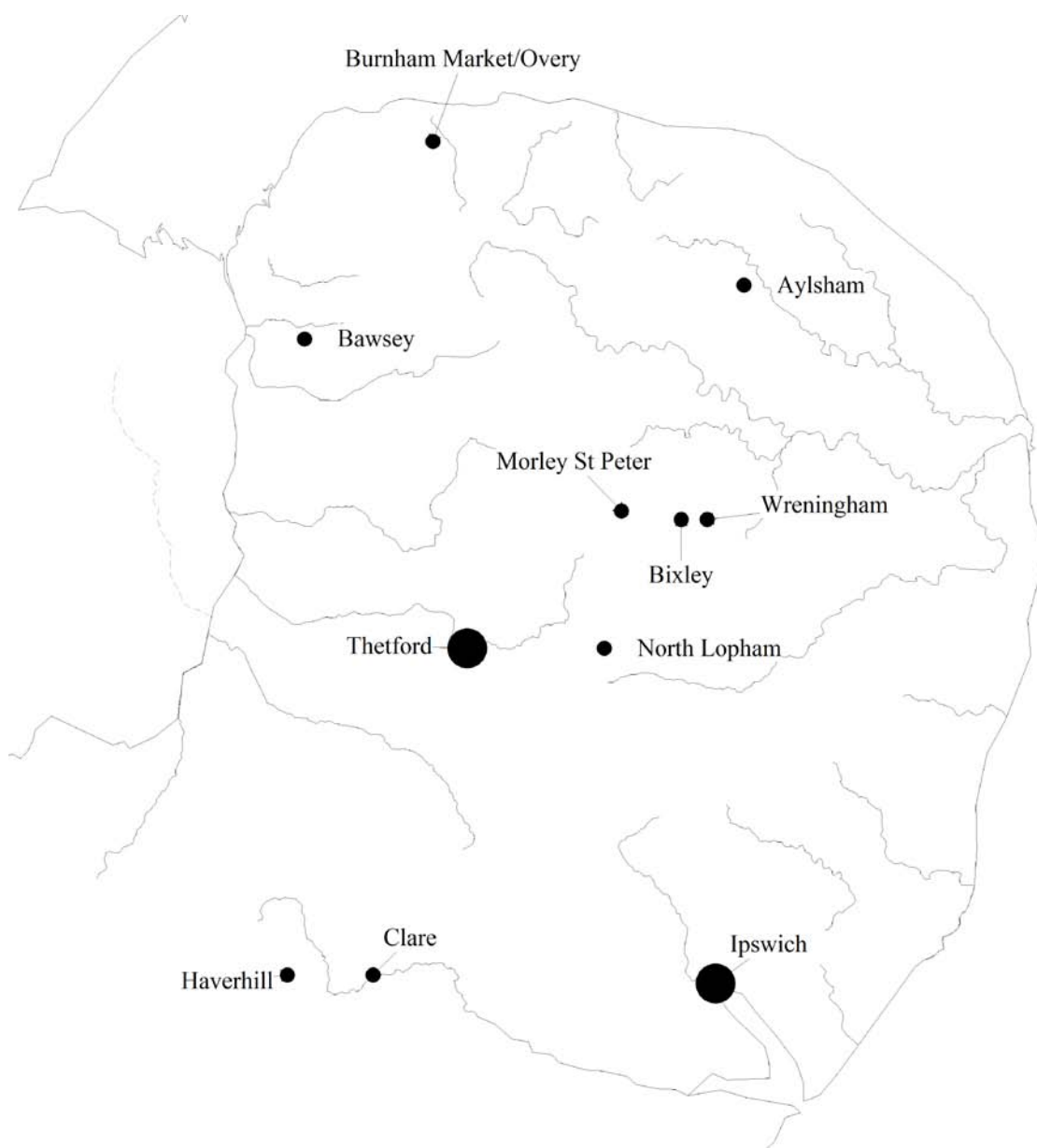


*Edward the Elder (AD 899–924) (Figs 190 & 191)*

While there are some 865 coins of Edward the Elder known from East Anglia, only 12 have been discovered outside of the Brantham, Framlingham Earl and Morley St Peter hoards (discussed above). The distribution shows that both Thetford and Ipswich figure well, with two each, and Bawsey also has one coin. The ‘productive’ site at Burham Market/Overy is also present in this small distribution.



**Fig. 190.** Edward the Elder (N 649), Two-Line (899–924), mint uncertain, Moneyer: Æthelwulf (ÆDELVLF), EMC no. 1001.0564, Morley St Peter hoard, Norfolk.



**Fig. 191.** Map of Edward the Elder pennies – East Anglia.

*Æthelstan (AD 924–39) (Figs 192 & 193)*

As far as we know the only mint operating in East Anglia under Æthelstan's reign was at Norwich. Twenty-eight coins inscribed with 'Norvic' or variations are known and eight moneyers producing this coinage within the town can be identified: Eadgar (3), Man (2), Bardel (8), Giongbeald (3), Manticen (5), Barbe (2), Leofsunu (1) and Secgge (1).

In total there are only ten known single find coins of Æthelstan from East Anglia. Two more coins of Athelstan were found within the Morley St Peter hoard. Three were found during excavations in Ipswich and two came from the Late Saxon 'productive' site at Bury St Edmunds. Thetford has also produced one of these coins.



**Fig. 192.** Æthelstan penny (N 675) (Bust Crowned, with mint) (927–939), mint Norwich, moneyer: Eadgar, EMC. No. 1996.0205, from Gunthorpe, Norfolk.



**Fig. 193.** Æthelstan pennies – East Anglia.

### Conclusion

The distribution of 9th-century coinage shows that the same places as in the late 7th and 8th centuries were experiencing coin loss. There are a few more locations added into the distribution, but the concentrations of the coinage in this later period can be seen to precede the

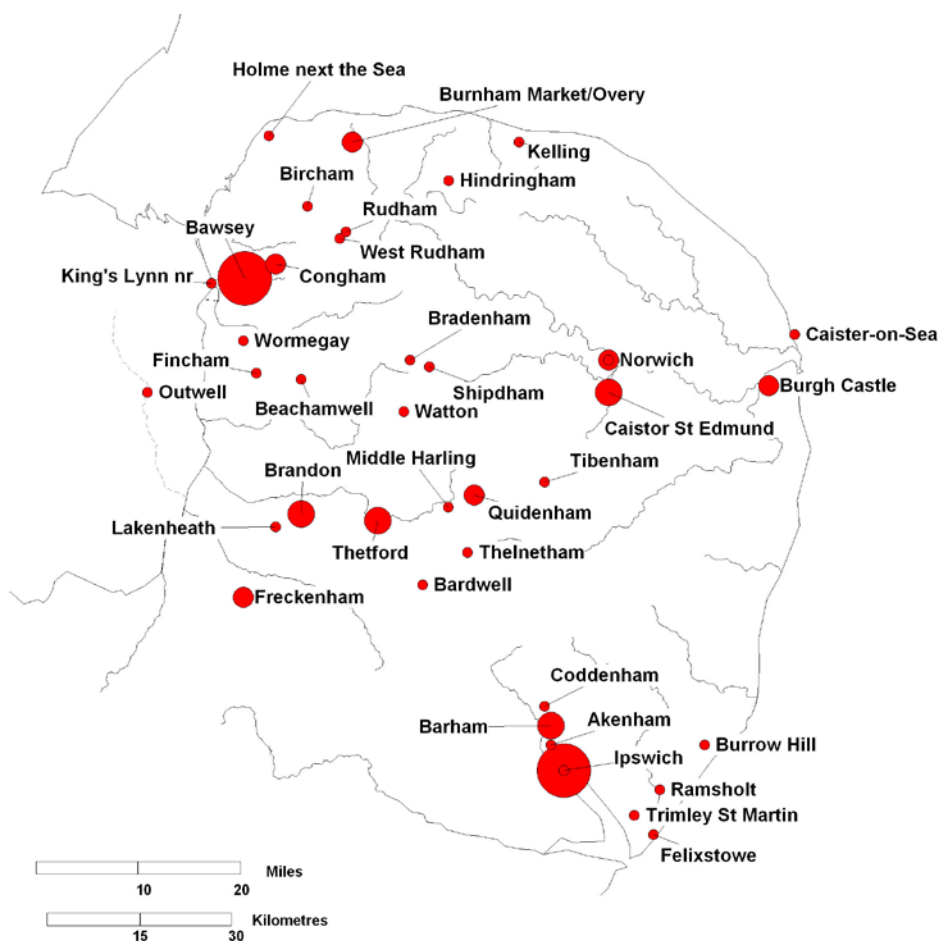
growth of urban places. The minting situation, although still not well understood, begins to crystallise in the 9th century and by the 10th century the combination of documentary and distribution evidence allows us to see the relationship between coins and towns more clearly. The case for Norwich being a major mint-place of the late 9th and early 10th centuries is particularly strong historically, numismatically and, increasingly, archaeologically, as discussed above with regard to the Greyfriars and Millennium Library sites. The Viking evidence from the latter is a revelation of sorts and helps to explain the early growth of Norwich in the absence of other strong archaeological details from that period. Such clear-cut archaeological evidence, in which a very strong correlation between artefacts and metal production evidence exists, is hard-won, but does yet not exist for minting at this time in Thetford or Ipswich. By extension, the evidence for minting at Bawsey is circumstantial at best but the associations are strong and the industrial nature of that place, coupled with the continuing coin loss, suggests that there may well have been coin production there also at this time.

The growth of the importance of Thetford can be seen graphically in the coin-loss situation both from surface finds on the periphery of the town and in excavation within the defended Late Saxon town. In the absence of good resolution archaeologically for the dating of structures and the defensive circuits possessed by both Norwich and Thetford, the combined growth of both towns seen in the coin distributions and in the archaeological evidence for minting helps to demonstrate that these places became urban during the late 9th century. Ipswich's continuing importance as a centre of production and coin loss is also clear, demonstrating that there was no long hiatus in the functioning of that place (see Chapter 8 – Fig.198), although there is a clear dip in coin numbers during the first half of the 9th century. That dip seems to coincide with a general shift away from the town as a centre for production and a move to other East Anglia locations for the production of pottery and, we can surmise, other materials, including coinage. The evidence is not yet strong, but it can be suggested that the growth of both Norwich and Thetford may date from this point in time, with a concerted move away from the *wic* which was increasingly vulnerable to raids.

## Chapter 8

### ‘Productive’ sites, *wics* and burghs: a prehistory of East Anglian towns

This chapter examines the conclusions of the evidence-based chapters. The model briefly sketched out in those chapters will be developed and a discussion of its implications will round off the thesis. In particular, the nature of Middle Saxon ‘productive’ sites, and how these might relate later to urban centres, will be explored and tested against the collected evidence. An historical narrative will be presented that accounts for changes in the settlement hierarchy and discusses the underlying economic structures. Despite the effective demise of the kingdom of East Anglia in the 8th century, first under Mercian domination, then, following a brief resurgence, through Viking attack and take-over in the mid–late 9th century, it will be argued that East Anglian organisation, administration and, by extension, lordship continued. It appears that the individuals and institutions controlling these structures were able to continue to adapt to the changing political conditions, and renewed and reinvigorated aspects of their control over resources.



**Fig. 194.** *Sceatta* density plot, places with four or more *sceattas* – East Anglia; the size of the circle is related to the number of coins found (logarithmically from smallest to largest circle: 4-10; 10-25; 25-50; 50-100).

Pestell's recent examination of East Anglian 'productive' sites looks at their possible tenorial continuity in the hands of monastic foundations of the post-Viking and Norman periods.<sup>1</sup> He, Rogerson and Newman have identified around 14 sites within the kingdom that they term 'productive'.<sup>2</sup> With the exception of Brandon, which has been excavated, these mainly consist of places that have produced, through metal-detecting, large metal assemblages of the 7th to 9th century.<sup>3</sup> The range of sites presented here (Fig. 194) is based on different criteria from those that Pestell, Rogerson and Newman used to define their list of 'productive' sites. This thesis, as has been stated earlier, is founded on an essentially more diffuse scale of enquiry than the other studies of

<sup>1</sup> Pestell, 'Afterlife'.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 123, fig. II.I; A. Rogerson, "'Productive' sites in west Norfolk", in Pestell and Ulmschneider, *Markets*, 110-21; and J. Newman, 'Exceptional finds, exceptional sites? Barham and Coddanham, Suffolk', in Pestell and Ulmschneider, *Markets*, 97-109.

<sup>3</sup> R.D. Carr, A. Tester and P. Murphy, 'The Middle Saxon settlement at Staunth Meadow, Brandon', *Antiquity* 62 (1988), 371-7.

mentioned; here, the examination area is the modern parish, looked at as a 'productive' land unit in an attempt to understand how the pattern of mainly metal-detected coin discoveries relates to the sorts of land unit that would have been present in the 8th, 9th and early 10th centuries; to understand this pattern, rightly or wrongly, historical models have been used.<sup>4</sup> The pattern of metal-detected coin discovery is here being interpreted as mirroring, in a denuded sense, the overall pattern of coin loss in the Middle and Late Anglo-Saxon periods. Clearly there are potential problems with such an assumption, not least of which is that the pattern of metal-detecting may introduce bias that alters or blurs the picture and fails to show actual coin losses. These issues were discussed in Chapter 3 and the representativeness of the pattern established as far as possible, but this is not to dismiss the issue, but rather to place it to one side. That said, there are certain places within the East Anglian landscape that have not appeared on Fig. 194 (which shows parishes in which four or more *sceattas* have been found) that bear scrutiny in their absence from this map as potential urban places. The Sandlings area within eastern Suffolk is particularly noticeable in its absence from this distribution, as is much of the east of Norfolk. The picture is a general one, with resolution described at the parish level, although in a number of cases there are multiple coin find sites within the parish. However, the parish is a convenient divisible unit for examining patterns at the regional scale of enquiry, with greater historic meaning and therefore interpretative possibility than an arbitrary metric unit of, say, 100 sq km, which was tested and rejected for the purposes of this study for that reason. There are a number of possible theoretical and organisational problems with utilising the modern parish but, as discussed, it is a unit that can be readily adapted to historical interpretations and it can be used to rebuild earlier landscape organisation units, such as estates, or, perhaps, in some situations, the term *scir* may be a better epithet.<sup>5</sup> Towns such as Ipswich and Norwich are discussed as single places although they later developed into places that contained many parishes. The number of these 'productive' areas amounts to 37, with 22 sites in Norfolk and 15 in Suffolk, including Ipswich. Following the definition used here, this section examines the productive parishes where four or more coins of Middle Saxon date have been found. In each case finds of earlier and later coinage are also discussed

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<sup>4</sup> See, for instance, Jones, 'Multiple estates and early settlement'; P.H. Sawyer, *From Roman Britain to Norman England* (London, 1978); G.W.S. Barrow, *The Kingdom of the Scots* (London, 1973); Bassett, 'The origins of Anglo-Saxon kingdoms'; F.M. Stenton, *Types of Manorial Structure in the Northern Danelaw* (Oxford, 1910); Williamson, *Origins of Norfolk*; Hadley, 'Multiple estates'; *idem*, *The Vikings in England*, 84–92; Faith, *The English Peasantry*, 11–14.

<sup>5</sup> This topic was examined in Chapter 3 and is usefully summarised by Hadley, 'Multiple estates'; *idem*, *The Vikings in England*, 84–92; Faith, *The English Peasantry*, 9–14 – Faith suggests that *scir* was a political unit, whereas an 'estate' was a unit of ownership or production.

### **Middle Saxon coinage concentrations – what do they mean?**

The patterns of Middle Saxon coin loss, detailed in the preceding chapters, seem to reflect a complex trade in *sceattas*, one that has yet to be fully explained. The theory adopted here is that this coin trade does not represent a free market economy. Historical precedents for the use of coinage in the early part of the Anglo-Saxon period and earlier still during the Iron Age suggest that coin was a medium for concentrating tribute into a more readily adaptable form.<sup>6</sup> Naylor's idea that much of the coin loss was either near the coast or near a navigable waterway is true, but not in itself surprising, as these were the communication routes of the period that any important place would need to be near. There were other salient constraints on where a central place might be located, such as existing institutions, the nature of the land locally, who owned the land and topographical factors.<sup>7</sup> A 'coastal' monetised zone within 15km of the coast, as Naylor suggests, may be an explanation for coin distributions in Yorkshire and Kent but not Norfolk, where significant numbers of coins have been found from places as far inland as it is possible to get, more than 30km from the coast. In addition, there are few historical references that point to the major use of organised market centres, apart possibly from those describing tolls.<sup>8</sup>

Taxation (here the term is used as a shorthand for different modes of surplus collection) can be discerned in early medieval written sources, as has been discussed in Chapter 3. Tax was levied and paid in different forms and collected through a variety of foci spread throughout the landscape. The development of tribute from its early forms has been described by Charles-Edwards.<sup>9</sup> How tribute related to the physical support system for small-scale rulers in the formalised delivery of supplies and renders to particular royal locations sometimes known as *feorm*, and how further obligations in terms of services due also overlaid onto these, has been examined to particular effect by Faith.<sup>10</sup> It is a central tenet of this study that some of these foci for the collecting of obligations are archaeologically visible – some as 'productive' sites, others as towns, some perhaps as both. These places seem to have had specific roles; some will have been monastic, some residential, some were courts, some may have been moots or other forms of governmental meeting place and some will have been linked to military or political assemblies at the level of the hundred or the shire.<sup>11</sup> Many

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<sup>6</sup> Gaimster, 'Scandinavian gold bracteates' and 'Money and media'; Dalton, 'Aboriginal economies'; Thurborg (now Gaimster), 'Regional economic structures'; see also for Iron Age views of coin use: Haselgrove, 'Iron Age coins and archaeology', esp. pp. 123–4; Van Arsdell, 'Money supply and credit'; Nash, *Coinage in the Celtic World*, 40.

<sup>7</sup> A. Everitt, 'Country, county and town: patterns of regional evolution in England', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* fifth series 29 (1979), 79–108.

<sup>8</sup> Naylor, *An Archaeology of Trade*, 116–34.

<sup>9</sup> T. Charles-Edwards, 'Early medieval kingships'.

<sup>10</sup> Faith, *The English Peasantry*.

<sup>11</sup> Hadley, *The Vikings in England*, 91.



may have had multiple and changeable roles.<sup>12</sup> All these types of place seem to have precedents within the documentary records for the period. More difficult to see in the historical sources for England are cash-based commodity ‘markets’.

A trend towards centralising administrative roles within a single location seems to be linked to the growth of government. This centralising of administration begins in the 8th century, which Fig. 194 refers to, and by the 10th century this process was well developed in some locations, resulting in several towns. However, in other places, such as north-west Norfolk, it seems that a more multi-focal set of central places continued without the development of a town. This is unlike southern and eastern Norfolk and the Gipping valley, where administration gravitated towards the larger central places at Norwich, Thetford and Ipswich.

*Sceattas*, and other forms of coinage found in East Anglia prior to the Viking period, may therefore represent an aspect of tributary social relations rather than a monetary unit in the modern sense. This distinction may be important in the implications that it has for the type of society reflected in the distribution of the coinage. Coinage concentrations, although scattered, as can be seen on the distribution density plot above, are also significantly clustered to such an extent that market function within an agrarian economy not possessing good communication routes seems an unlikely explanation. If coinage was being utilised in an agrarian economy like this we would expect to see an even spread across nodes at approximately equal distances throughout the region, but this is not the case; rather, the concentrations are more akin to what might be expected within an administrative system that concentrated wealth for the state for use primarily on the military. Perhaps the most analogous situation to the use of coinage in this period is its use in the later Iron Age. Scholars of that period are divided on the meaning of coin use, but the argument is polarised between a functionalist monetary view, as expounded by Van Arsdell, and the view articulated by Haselgrove, which sees coinage embedded in the social relations between elites (see Chapter 3).<sup>13</sup>

Clearly, whatever coinage was actually being used for, a great deal of that activity was taking place within particular locations within Norfolk and Suffolk. Whether this set of statistics actually represents the real coin distribution throughout these landscapes is open to debate, as discussed in previous chapters; there are obvious sampling difficulties in terms of how the material is obtained and reported, which will skew the results and limit the interpretations that can be based on this assemblage. However, these results do compare well to the Ipswich ware distribution (Fig. 195). One possible interpretation of this pattern is that the former kingdom can be seen as suppliers of

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<sup>12</sup> C. Loveluck, ‘Wealth, waste and conspicuous consumption: Flixborough and its importance for middle and late Saxon rural settlement’, in H. Hamerow and A. MacGregor (eds), *Image and Power in the Archaeology of Early Medieval Britain: Essays in Honour of Rosemary Cramp* (Oxford, 2000), 79–130.

<sup>13</sup> Van Arsdell, *Celtic Coinage of Britain*; Haselgrove, *Iron Age Coinage*.

*feorm* and other forms of tribute such as *gafol* to the Wuffingas and their successors.<sup>14</sup> In other words, in much of Norfolk and north-western Suffolk, royal control during the 7th to late 9th century was ceded, through bookland, to lords who then owed *feorm*, *wara*, *gafol*, *geld*, *soke* or service in some measure or combination to the king. The wealth of these individuals was largely by this time drawn from estates, some of which can still be seen as late as *Domesday*, where they are described as *sokes*.<sup>15</sup>

A different aspect of this collection system can perhaps be observed through the distribution of Ipswich ware, a pottery style that seems to have been produced under monopolistic conditions within the *wic* and then distributed widely across East Anglia and beyond.<sup>16</sup> Rather than just being a commodity for trade, the pottery may represent a medium for exchange. We know that kings in this period collected food rent. By extension we can surmise that the East Anglian kings at this time were producing the means for facilitating the correct collection of this rent. Ipswich ware may have been imbued with meanings in terms of the types of food to be sent to the royal house. Rather as cattle, as discussed, formed a major constituent of early forms of tribute,<sup>17</sup> this pottery may also have been a binding reminder of obligations to the king. Looking again at the distribution pattern, it seems likely that this was a system that was articulated through the larger ‘productive’ places, some of which later went on to become towns. However, the difference between the centres of coin loss and the Ipswich ware distribution is also clear (Fig. 195), and suggests that perhaps they represent different resource-gathering systems or strategies, perhaps tribute in the case of the coinage and *feorm* in the case of the pottery?

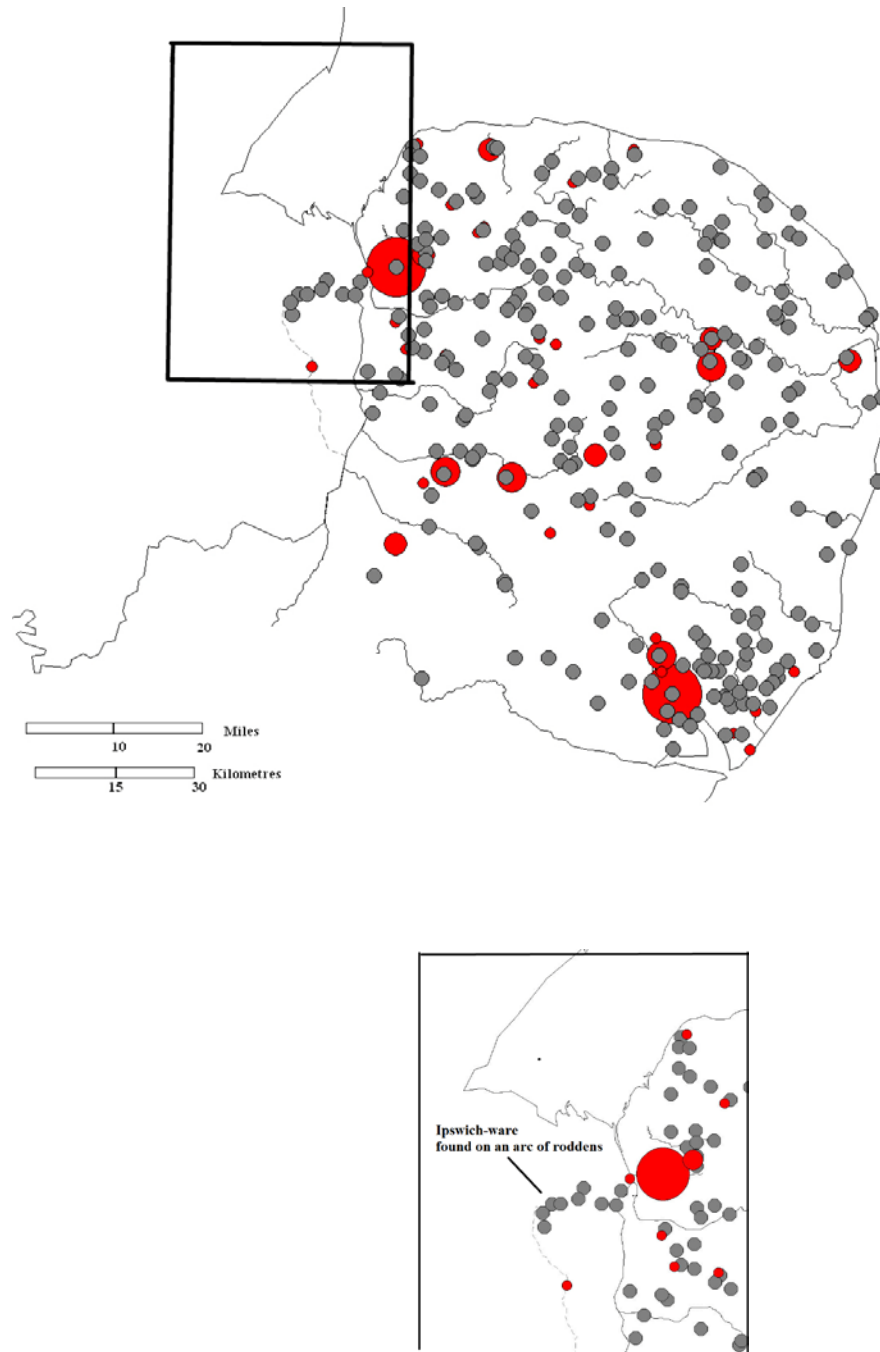
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<sup>14</sup> Such an interpretation is consistent with what can be derived from written sources explaining the development of political power in this period and the concentration of much of this in the hands of particular local families, described by Faith in *The English Peasantry* as extensive lordship.

<sup>15</sup> See Hadley, ‘Multiple estates’, 4.

<sup>16</sup> P. Blinkhorn, ‘Habitat, social identity and Anglo-Saxon pottery’, in C. Cumberpatch and P. Blinkhorn (eds), *Not So Much a Pot, More a Way of Life* (Oxford, 1997), 113–24; *idem*, ‘Of cabbages and kings’.

<sup>17</sup> Charles-Edwards, ‘Early medieval kingship’, 31–3.



**Fig. 195.** Ipswich ware distribution with *sceatta* density – places with four or more *sceattas* – East Anglia: red dots coinage, grey dots pottery – inset Ipswich-ware scatter on roddens in Fenland.

It may be useful at this juncture to return to the competing paradigms of market versus command economy. It has been argued throughout this thesis that both the historical and the archaeological data suggest that a market economy did not operate in the countryside in the Middle Saxon period; the evidence from *wics* is by no means clear on this point either with several studies concluding that

they were production focused places, particularly of pottery and perhaps animal carcass related products, rather than places of consumption.<sup>18</sup> However, if coins were not primarily a means of easing transactions, what were they for and how was the process of turning agrarian wealth into coin undertaken? This thesis has suggested that coinage was linked strongly to taxation and in particular to the development of tribute in an emerging 'state'. The following sections will explore the nodes in that system of tribute collection. These can, it is argued, be found in the landscape through the presence of coins along with other material culture, some of which may also have represented a similar social function to that of the coinage; for instance, pins may potentially have also been a form of portable wealth and styli can be viewed as indicative of some form of administration or learning. It is perhaps worth debating whether the term 'productive' site should be scrapped from the lexicon of acceptable terms, given that it does much to obfuscate.<sup>19</sup> Is it better to examine more of the evidence available and make a more historically meaningful conjecture as to the status of a particular settlement or collection of material found in the arable soil? The problem is that there are few archaeological and historical correlations easily made with regard to Middle Saxon settlement and 'productive' site has become a useful shorthand. Modelling artefact distributions and densities at a landscape level is relatively straightforward and seems to make geographical sense, particularly in terms of where coin rich sites are located within the landscape and their relationships with each other and with other known landscape units. There are anomalies, however (discussed later), in particular the relative lack of these 'productive' places in the east of Norfolk and Suffolk compared with the fen-edge. However, perhaps it is different aspects of tax that can be discerned in the distribution of coins and Ipswich ware; the tribute may not be flowing in from some parts of the landscape because they were still effectively held within the royal estates, what Faith terms the *inland*, and all that can be seen in tax terms at these locations is the collection of *feorm*.<sup>20</sup> Modelling the individual transactions which moved agrarian surplus held at the local level to the estate centre, as described in the 'multiple estate' model,<sup>21</sup> is more problematic archaeologically, but Ipswich ware seems to present a possible way of looking at a developed aspect of such a system. The time-depth to the estates in question is a different and more thorny question and not one that is going to be tackled in detail in this thesis. However, it seems from *Rectitudines singularum personarum*, probably written in the mid 10th century as a guide for new estate managers (*geneats*), that the development of lordship and perhaps the advent of bookland in the

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<sup>18</sup> D.A. Hinton, 'Metalwork and the emporia' in Anderton, *Anglo-Saxon Trading Centres*, 24-31.

<sup>19</sup> Ulmschneider and Pestell, 'Introduction'; Ulmschneider, *Markets, Minsters, and Metal-Detectors*; Naylor, *An Archaeology of Trade*; Richards, 'What's so special about "productive sites"?'; and Loveluck, *Rural settlement, Lifestyles and Social Change*.

<sup>20</sup> Faith, *The English Peasantry*, 15-55.

<sup>21</sup> Jones, 'Multiple estates and early settlement', 15-40.

Middle Anglo-Saxon period seems to have reinvigorated the methods of managing some estates.<sup>22</sup> It seems that the estate-management model articulated within *Rectitudes* may have been scalable, with kings perhaps utilising similar methodologies to organise much larger and more diverse holdings.

How the various levels of tax obligations were articulated with both lordship and the hierarchy of *soke*-based obligations within the Middle Saxon state is difficult to discern. This was a situation where the state was growing and the executive element was becoming more removed from the means of production.<sup>23</sup> With smaller polities becoming subsumed within a 'state', the tribute exacted through military conquest would have become steadily less easy to administer as, in the period up to the adoption of silver coinage, much of this must surely have been collected as produce, or perhaps consumed through peripatetic rulers moving between localised extended estate situations such as, presumably, *villa regali*. There may be some correlation between food-rent and tribute in this regard, as can be seen articulated in Ine's laws.<sup>24</sup> Given the genesis of this system, it is unsurprising that in many cases some estate centres took on new administrative and tax collection roles.

### **State administrative centralisation c. AD 650–869**

Fig. 195 shows all the 'productive' areas within East Anglia and its immediate environs. There is a clear concentration on the north and north-western coasts, extending to areas which are either on the Wash itself or in close proximity to waterways that drain into the Wash. There is another concentration in the Sandlings area of Suffolk, centred mainly on the river Gipping. A third, perhaps more modest, concentration is associated with the Yare–Wensum river system. If aggregated, these concentrations can be defined in terms of local 'urban' centres, albeit in some cases not yet nucleated. The aggregation around Thetford, for instance, was not as nucleated as those around Ipswich or Bawsey.

Figs 194 and 195 show some interesting trends: there is a bias towards *-ham* names;<sup>25</sup> the correlation between Ipswich ware sites found during the Sutton Hoo survey and coins finds is weak, although the overall distribution of coins and pottery in Norfolk matches well; the *wic* is clearly the most important centre for coin loss but is closely followed by the Bawsey area; and there are sub-regional patterns that seem to strongly predict the places where urban development later happened,

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<sup>22</sup> Faith, *The English Peasantry*, see 57 and 94–5; *Rectitudes* refers to a class of administrative peasant known as a *geneat*, whose role is described in the treatise; Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 473–6.

<sup>23</sup> For a discussion of this phenomenon see Bassett, 'The origins of Anglo-Saxon kingdoms'.

<sup>24</sup> *EHDi*, 32.

<sup>25</sup> The number of *ham* place-names in Norfolk totals 105 out of a general total in Parish place-names amounting to 740. Suffolk has 80 *ham* place-names out of a total of 521.

both in terms of the placement of *burhs* but also in terms of where secondary or small town developments later took place, such as the area near to where Great Yarmouth took hold in the later 11th century and perhaps also where Bury St Edmunds grew up, also in the 11th century.

With regard to the *-ham* place-names, they are generally thought from the charter evidence to represent early settlement, although there is debate as to their likely date;<sup>26</sup> *-tūn*, in contrast, comes into frequent usage only from the mid 8th century, the latter reflecting a more nucleated settlement pattern.<sup>27</sup> The results presented here suggest that the *-hams* date from at least the beginning of the 8th century (and arguably this situation should project back into the early 7th century, when we see the beginnings of coin use in these sorts of places – see Chapter 4). This correlates with what is generally supposed by historians but now we can see the development of these places from being the centres of estates to functioning as nodes of administration. The introduction of *-tun*, mentioned above, which perhaps reflects a change in estate management, seems to coincide with the end of the Middle Saxon period and the Viking take-over, and may potentially be seen archaeologically thorough the distribution of Late Saxon ingots (see Chapter 7), which date from a century or so after the end of *sceattas* production and are thought to be culturally specific to Scandinavian incomers. Although the place-names utilising the *tūn* element may well date from the mid 8th century or earlier, they are not places where silver coins are found in profusion, and it is not until the late 9th and early 10th centuries that we can see these places in the distributions being examined in this thesis. There is a case to be made for *-tūn* places being derived from specialised productive centres connected to the estate centre, also known as *berewicks*.<sup>28</sup> It is possible that the ingots represent a bullion economy, as suggested by their distribution: we can see that these objects are lost in locations which much more commonly have *-tūn* place-name endings than is the case for *sceattas*. Interestingly the same is *not* true of the St Edmund Memorial coinage, which dates from the same period as the ingots but appears in much the same locations as the *sceattas*. In other words, coins still appear at around AD 900 to be lost at the same places that they were being lost in the Middle Saxon period. It is tempting to suggest that the ingots therefore represent an entirely different system or one that may have been linked with the coin economy but satisfied administrative and economic functions at a different level. It is by extension also tempting to connect the presence of Scandinavian-linked objects with *-tūn* place-names and the presence of large numbers of *liberi*

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<sup>26</sup> See, for instance, M. Gelling, 'A chronology for Suffolk place-names', in Carver, *The Age of Sutton Hoo*, 53–64.

<sup>27</sup> D. Hooke, 'The Anglo-Saxons in England in the seventh and eighth centuries: aspects of location in space', in Hines, *The Anglo-Saxons*, 65–84.

<sup>28</sup> Faith, *The English Peasantry*, 42–7; Stenton, *Types of Manorial Structure*.

*homines* within the Danelaw.<sup>29</sup> The subsidiary *-tūn* locations would have been gifted by new Scandinavian lords to members of their retinue and the settlement hence became the property of a free man.

As discussed in previous chapters, many numismatists believe that the distribution of coinage during this period, particularly that of *sceattas*, reflects a monetary economy, or, at the very least, a monetary basis for a section of the economy.<sup>30</sup> Numismatic scholars and archaeologist thus by extension postulate that most of the so-called ‘productive’ sites represent fairs or markets, because they are the routes through which exchange is normally achieved in the modern context.<sup>31</sup> Indeed, following this logic to its conclusion, the *wics* were considered to be combined ports and markets, with some analysts further suggesting that they are also centres of production.<sup>32</sup> It has been suggested that these coins were used only within *wics* and that the market function at those sites was strictly controlled.<sup>33</sup> Hodges has also suggested that *Hamwic* does not seem to have property divisions or tenements, suggesting that there may be no individual properties within the settlement.<sup>34</sup> That now seems an overstatement and it is likely that there was a variety of tenement divisions within all *wics*; more recent publication is much more ambiguous on this point.<sup>35</sup> It can be shown that there were indeed divisions relating to single dwellings with associated buildings, but these were organised after the initial founding of the settlement.<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, there seem to be thriving craft industries in these locations, which may explain the use of the *wic* element within the place-name in many of these cases; effectively, they were connected to an estate centre in the same manner as any other *berewick*, and were thus viewed as specialist production centres. Hodges’ suggestion in the 1980s that coinage was restricted for the most part to *wics* and that these were therefore specialist trading centres has been proven not to be the case but the specialist and tied nature of these settlements remains a realistic hypothesis.<sup>37</sup> Trading was one element within the gamut of functions being undertaken both at *wics* and at ‘productive’ sites more generally. It was

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<sup>29</sup> F.M. Stenton, *The Free Peasantry of the Northern Danelaw* (Oxford, 1969); however, the concept of the Danelaw being different in terms of the numbers of free men has recently been dismissed to some extent by Roffe (*Decoding Domesday*, 153–4) as a misunderstanding of terminology, with freedom to alienate land also found in many other parts of England at this time.

<sup>30</sup> Blackburn, “‘Productive’ sites”.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> D.M. Metcalf, ‘The monetary economy of ninth-century England south of the Humber’, in M. Blackburn and D. Dumville (eds), *Kings, Currency and Alliances* (Woodbridge, 1999) 167–97.

<sup>33</sup> Scull, ‘Urban centres in pre-Viking England?’, 269–97.

<sup>34</sup> Hodges, *The Anglo-Saxon Achievement*.

<sup>35</sup> Andrews, *Excavations at Hamwic: Volume 2*.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 43, states that the two major north–south-aligned streets appear to be earlier than the east–west ones. All the apparent ‘property’ divisions front onto the latter.

<sup>37</sup> Hodges, *Dark Age Economics*.

not their reason for being; rather, wealth concentration was the prime driver behind the establishment of these places.

Some analysts of the urban character and nature of the Middle Saxon period point to Roman antecedents and the physical draw of Roman fortifications as being the prime mover in Middle Saxon urban development, and have drawn connections with the policies of the church.<sup>38</sup> Bede's reference to Sigbert's granting of a monastery for Fursa at *Cnobheresburg*, which he refers to as a *castrum*,<sup>39</sup> is one of the only documentary sources that we have for the founding of a significant Middle Saxon monastery within East Anglia. The location of *Cnobheresburg* can be debated at length on the basis of different readings of the text,<sup>40</sup> and numismatic 'productivity' may not be of great assistance in detecting the most likely location, as known significant royal and ecclesiastical centres such as Rendlesham and North Elmham, not to mention Yeavinger, do not produce coinage in great amounts. This is not surprising, as the coinage was a means to an end and not a representation of wealth and power in itself. Indeed, none of the putative diocesan centres in East Anglia produce large quantities of Middle Saxon coinage, although Felixstowe is notable in its total of four *sceattas*, two of the Primary and two of the Secondary period. If some coinage being found at the site is not necessary for identifying important ecclesiastical sites in East Anglia then perhaps we need to look for other indicators; the strong anecdotal case made by Hoggett that Walton Castle was the site of *Dommoc*, the diocesan centre granted by Sigberht to Felix in around AD 630 will be particularly difficult to investigate given that the site has eroded into the North Sea.<sup>41</sup>

Therefore, we cannot tell whether 'productive' sites were ecclesiastical in character in East Anglia from the coin loss patterns. There is a better case here to be made from coin losses in Northumbria, with sites such as Whitby producing significant coin numbers.<sup>42</sup> This may be an indication that in Northumbria there was more correlation between large ecclesiastical centres and places that later became towns. Although one of the largest East Anglian sites in terms of coin loss is Caistor St Edmund, most of the coins come from an area immediately beside the river Tas and not from within the town fortifications, where the present parish church is located. However, generally, large-scale Roman centres of the period figure largely in the collection of places that produce relatively large quantities of *sceattas*. Both Caister-on-Sea and Burgh Castle are in the top rank of 'productive' sites, with 22 and 10 coins respectively, although the sites that have produced

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<sup>38</sup> See, for instance, Hodges, *The Anglo-Saxon Achievement*, 49.

<sup>39</sup> *HE* III, 18 & 19.

<sup>40</sup> Hoggett, 'Changing Beliefs', 110–15.

<sup>41</sup> S. Rigold, 'The supposed see of Dunwich', *JBAA* 24 (1961), 55–9; *idem*, 'Further evidence about the site of "Dommoc"', *JBAA* 37 (1974), 97–102.

<sup>42</sup> J. Naylor, 'The circulation of early-medieval European coinage: a case study from Yorkshire, c.650–c.867', *Medieval Archaeology* 51 (2007), 41–61.



the greatest concentrations of this coinage do not have large-scale Roman antecedents. Ipswich is the most productive of the sites examined, with 93 coins found during archaeological excavations within the area of Middle Saxon occupation. The site at Bawsey, near King's Lynn, has also produced large numbers of coins: 70 *sceattas* in total. Both sites have also produced other material generally accepted as being indicative of status, such as styli and decorated silver pins, as well as evidence of industrial production.<sup>43</sup> Norwich and Brandon have also produced significant evidence for industry in this period. In several cases all of the town antecedents seem to have been centres of production, as well as being places where significant numbers of coins have been discovered. Unfortunately the evidence does not clarify the relationship between towns and ecclesiastical centres in this period and the religious or secular character of most 'productive' sites remains largely opaque in the light of the coin evidence, although there are indications that monastic sites may have utilised certain coinage in their estate centres, if not in their ecclesiastical centres.

Tim Pestell has recently explored the idea that the 'productive' sites may represent monastic sites or *minsters*. His thesis is based on the premise that many *minster* sites go on to become Norman monastic establishments or were themselves once owned by ecclesiastical estates. He points to Bawsey, the Burnhams, Rudham, Wormegay, Hindringham, Caistor St Edmund and the two eastern Shore Forts at Burgh Castle and Caister-on-Sea in Norfolk. In Suffolk there are fewer that comfortably fall within such a scheme: Brandon, Coddensham and Burrow Hill.<sup>44</sup> Tenurially, some of these connections seem tenuous, particularly if we accept that the Church was a major landowner from the 8th century; some of these sites were owned by the Church but others by the aristocracy. If the concept that they were 'proto' manors or estate centres is accepted, then these locations may have come under the ownership of various lords and indeed changed hands between lords.<sup>45</sup> Whether this is an argument that can be made from a limited and fairly uniform collection of artefact types is not clear, however. The situation between AD 650–900 was in a state of flux, with institutions that were later to become familiar still in a formative phase. Both the state and the Church were establishing themselves and inventing ways of controlling the population that was to become the peasantry. Other writers have recently argued against the fixing of historically loaded labels on to sites of which we have a poor understanding; while Loveluck, writing about the excavated 'productive' site at Flixborough in Lincolnshire, has suggested that many of the features previously assumed as indicative of Middle Saxon monastic sites were actually more widespread.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Ulmschneider, in *Markets, Minsters and Metal-Detectors*, has recently used these types of object to characterise productive sites in Lincolnshire and Hampshire.

<sup>44</sup> Pestell, 'Afterlife.'

<sup>45</sup> A point made effectively about Flixborough: Loveluck, *Rural settlement, Lifestyles and Social Change*.

<sup>46</sup> Loveluck, 'Wealth, waste and conspicuous consumption'.

Many of the models of the social geography of this period take both state formation and Christianity as their starting points, because that is where history later takes us. Is this teleological? As discussed above, the church as the necessary driving force for the origin of urban places has been criticised based on evidence from 5th-century Denmark,<sup>47</sup> and the evidence from East Anglia is also equivocal on this point. Are we thus perpetuating a mistake based on essentially normative historical assumptions? The models, such as that of Glanville-Jones, tend to be based on a conceptualisation founded on later medieval tenurial structure from around Domesday and later,<sup>48</sup> and to some extent the monastic sticker has been used more often than necessary, possibly because there are a number of well-understood Northumbrian sites with good historical pedigrees. The particular assemblage of artefacts produced by these sites is assumed to be a monothetic set belonging to monastic sites in general.

It may be useful to look at the assemblages in a landscape context, trying to reconstruct something of the landscape of the period. This approach is now possible with the evidence for other settlement locations and the level of coin loss at these sites for comparison. Some 'productive' sites may have been the Middle Saxon equivalent of a town but this view is essentially teleological, as towns seem to have developed from specialist production centres and places from where the aristocracy were provisioning the apparatus of the state, including and perhaps primarily in the form of the military and the Church.

There was during this period something of a concentration of 'productive' sites on the fen-edge, spread in an arc around the Wash (see Fig. 194 showing the East Anglian sites). On the other side of the Wash a site currently known as the South Lincolnshire 'productive' site, the location of which was for a time kept secret by detectorists, but is now revealed by the Portable Antiquities Liaison Scheme to be within the parish of Heckington.<sup>49</sup> Daubney suggests that this is interesting as the place-name suggests a *wic*;<sup>50</sup> this is, however, not a particularly plausible assertion, as Heckington seems rather to be a conflation of a personally derived fairly early place-name with a later *-tun* settlement. The coinage from the site is impressive, however, with a total of 46 *sceattas*, many of which are Frisian, and a handful of Merovingian gold *tremissis*.

On the East Anglian side, the site at West Walton lies close to where Wisbech developed, a settlement which, Pestell has pointed out, was owned by Ely.<sup>51</sup> In Cambridgeshire there is another

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<sup>47</sup> Roskams, 'Urban transition in early medieval Britain'; Perring, *Town and Country*, 9–27; Carver, *Arguments in Stone*.

<sup>48</sup> See Chapters 1 and 3.

<sup>49</sup> A. Daubney, 'Medieval Britain and Ireland, 2006', *Medieval Archaeology* 51 (2007), 221–2.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> T. Pestell, 'Monastic foundation strategies in the early Norman diocese of Norwich', *Anglo-Norman Studies* 23 (2001), 199–229.

site known as the 'Cambridge productive site'; unfortunately the detectorist in this case was unwilling to reveal its location. Further north within Cambridgeshire we have Ely itself, which has produced several *sceattas* and was an important monastery from the mid 7th century. We then have Brandon on the Suffolk/Norfolk border, the only excavated example of a 'productive' site in East Anglia. Also within Norfolk we have Wormegay, which has produced seven Middle Saxon coins as well as styli and silver pins.

This concentration of sites on the coast of the Wash suggests that during the 7th and 8th centuries this was an area where new economic expansion was possible. With land being utilised for perhaps the first time there was a rush to establish estates situated to exploit the potential of the area, both agrarian and perhaps also in terms of trade. Recent work has shown that there was expansion into Fenland during the Middle Saxon period which included the growing of new strains of wheat and the utilisation of the grazing potential of the area.<sup>52</sup> There is limited evidence for long-distance trade from the two best-understood of these sites, Bawsey and Brandon, besides the Frisian coins found at Bawsey, which may have made their way into the economy elsewhere. At Bawsey the Saxon pottery collected consists entirely of Ipswich and Thetford wares; there is the usual assortment of brooches, mounts, strap-ends, hooked tags and, more auspiciously, styli, but nothing particularly unusual. At Brandon there were small quantities of Continental and extraregional imported pots, including a small amount of Tating ware. Bawsey's coin assemblage does not consist of a significant proportion of non-English coinage if the Series D and E are discounted; both Continental *sceatta* series were lost in abundance there, but this is also true for many inland sites (see the distribution maps for Series D and E in Chapter 6).

In addition to these 'productive' sites we have, through Robert Silvester's survey work, a number of remarkable Ipswich ware concentrations situated on an arc of roddens (Fig. 195).<sup>53</sup> In particular, more than 1,000 sherds of Ipswich ware were collected at Hay Green. To put that in context, a probable site during the Sutton Hoo environs survey was defined as anything over 20 sherds of Ipswich ware. Here, as with other such Fenland sites, this massive concentration of Middle Saxon pottery was associated with equally astonishing quantities of animal bone, leading to the suggestion that these were specialist meat-salting sites.<sup>54</sup> The combination of now well-attested salt production with particularly rich pasture in the Fens may well have resulted in an abundance of agrarian resources that was collected at certain places. Sites like Hay Green were *berewicks* and the

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<sup>52</sup> A. Crowson, T. Lane, K. Penn and D. Trimble, *Anglo-Saxon Settlement on the Siltland of Eastern England* (Sleaford, 2006).

<sup>53</sup> R.J. Silvester, *The Fenland Project No. 3: Marshland and the Nar Valley, Norfolk* (East Anglian Archaeology 45, 1988).

<sup>54</sup> Andrews, 'Middle Saxon Norfolk'; A. Rogerson and R.J. Silvester, 'Middle Saxon occupation at Hay Green, Terrington St Clement', *Norfolk Archaeology* 39 (1986), 320–22.

wealth was concentrated at the estate centres such as Bawsey. This trade in both salt and animals may explain the particular abundance and wealth exhibited at the Fenland ‘productive’ sites; wealth on any scale requires conversion to a high-value medium in order to make it portable so that it can be used for political and military purposes. Indeed, as mentioned, a significant proportion of the coinage from Bawsey derives from the Continent, with another significant group from Kent; whether this represents direct trade is debatable and, without the concomitant trade goods such as Badorf wares, Tating wares and high-status metalwork, it is difficult to see the activity here as representing some sort of second level international trading centre. The sheer size of the coin assemblages from either side of the Wash, with the implied ability to concentrate resources, suggests perhaps royal estates. The large-scale specialist meat-salting site at Hay Green also recommends a royal estate connection. As mentioned, Bawsey’s coin assemblage from the period is around 90 coins and, on the other side of the Wash, the South Lincolnshire ‘productive’ site possesses an assemblage of around 50 coins of similar make-up to Bawsey, albeit with more and earlier Continental types. These sites may be viewed as having at least some functions which would in a later period be characterised as urban; in particular, they were converting agrarian wealth into portable wealth, probably through some form of commerce and taxation. Their connection to royalty is certainly speculative but it is compelling in terms of understanding how and why towns were established and grew during the Saxon period: they were inextricably connected with the growth of the state but at the same time their character in the settlement hierarchy was similar in some ways to a royal residence, albeit scaled-up and altered; the relationship between *burh* and royal residence and concomitant estate is a complex one to unpick, but can be viewed in Domesday.<sup>55</sup> Somehow, during the Middle and Late Saxon period, specialist production sites, estate centres and royal residences in some places were fused into towns. In other places the roles remained distinctive.

Given the coin loss, ‘productive’ sites are often interpreted as the sites of markets, as noted above; however, there is little evidence for markets within the historical literature for this period and while trade may have been an activity at these places there was also production of goods, perhaps, in some cases, possibly including coinage; therefore the character and basis of the trade needs to be better contextualised. We know that this latter role was by the 10th century firmly concentrated in the hands of the king.<sup>56</sup> As far as trade is concerned, the resolution does not yet exist to make claims about the level of market activity at these places and what sort of community

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<sup>55</sup> Roffe, *Decoding Domesday*, 142–3.

<sup>56</sup> In particular, King Athelstan’s prescription within the Grately code that minting must take place within specific *burhs* cements the link between the coin-producing industries and defended urban settlements: Blackburn, ‘Mints, *burhs*’.

these markets may have been serving. There must have been conversion of agrarian wealth into coinage but how and at what scale this was achieved, and by whom, is not currently understood. The point here is that the definition of all sites producing quantities of coinage as markets is an unjustified assumption given the evidence.<sup>57</sup>

The excavated 'productive' site Brandon's monastic status has recently been questioned by its excavator (R. Croft, pers. comm.), and Loveluck has also queried the same attribution for Flixborough as having been based on a direct analogy with Whitby at a time when it was the only 'productive' site that had been studied.<sup>58</sup> But that debate on the religious or secular character of these places, as discussed above p.9, to some extent masks a larger issue: were these sites equivalent to small towns? Ulmschneider has suggested that, in aggregate, 'productive' sites can be viewed as productive in the same way that later towns were, and that most 'productive' sites were involved in some form of trading; be it at a local, regional or international level, they all held a role in the economy.<sup>59</sup> The connection of 'productive' sites and large amounts of coin loss to a government administration is crucial in trying to understand what these places represent. Salient differences can be seen, for example, in the situations on the Wash and in the Gipping valley in the Middle Saxon period. 'Productivity', in terms of where coins were being lost, happens on a large scale in both of these locations, but seems to become more concentrated by the end of the first quarter of the 8th century in the Gipping valley, where these activities become increasingly concentrated within the *wic* of Ipswich. On the Wash there is a concentration at Bawsey but perhaps not to the same scale and there are a number of other significant sites possessing a density of coin loss throughout the 8th century; it seems, however, that the area of the Wash possessed a more dispersed form of economic administration than did the Gipping valley, where wealth extraction by this time had become more nucleated. Clearly there will be differences in where these locations fall in the settlement hierarchy, which relate to their status in administrative terms, but there may also be socio-environmental aspects to this pattern that might be worth considering.

As mentioned above, the area around the Wash was effectively a new landscape in the Middle Saxon period that was being opened to settlement and the production of livestock.<sup>60</sup> It seems that enough new wealth may have been generated to effectively supply the tribute requirements of the Wuffingas; and they may also have held estates that extended into the Fens, and thus were collecting both tribute and *feorm* from the area. It is worth noting, due to its lateness in the period of *sceatta* production, that the coin-loss profile for Ipswich demonstrates that the major period of loss

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<sup>57</sup> Ulmschneider, *Markets, Minsters, and Metal-Detectors*; Naylor, *An Archaeology of Trade*.

<sup>58</sup> Loveluck, 'Wealth, waste and conspicuous consumption'.

<sup>59</sup> Ulmschneider *Markets, Minsters, and Metal-Detectors*, 104–5.

<sup>60</sup> Crowson *et al.*, *Anglo-Saxon Settlement*.

coincides with the second and third quarters of the 8th century, although it may be that this is due in part to a sampling bias brought about by the location of archaeological investigations within the town. The other major site within East Anglia where we can see wealth concentration at Bawsey has a more steady coin-loss profile. At the same time a difference level of wealth concentration can be seen at the ‘productive’ sites of, Congham, Outwell, Wormegay, Fincham, Beachamwell, Brandon, Lakenheath and Freckenham. The growth of coin loss at Thetford from the time of the Viking take-over and later is also worth noting in this regard, as this location seems to supplant many of the Fenland ‘productive’ sites by this time. It seems reasonable that the reason for the secondary concentration of wealth outside the Gipping valley at this time was the new economic activity made possible by the opening of landscapes in the Fens. Wealth seems to become more concentrated at specific places within the landscape during the Viking period, during which coin loss becomes more strongly associated with Thetford, Norwich and continues to be so for Ipswich (this is discussed further below).

We know that the power of kings was based on wealth derived from the exploitation of subjects, neighbours and enemies.<sup>61</sup> The terminology for exploitation during the period is notoriously vague, however; Asser, for instance, describes Alfred’s wealth as coming from *census*, as well as using the terms tribute, taxes, tolls and rents.<sup>62</sup> It is difficult to define in historical terms the difference between a king’s overlord demands for tribute from subject kingdoms, as opposed to their own subject populations, between for example the king of Mericia and the kingdom of East Anglia, during Mericia’s overlordship, and Offa’s relationship with the peoples of Mericia itself.<sup>63</sup> It is possible that by the 8th century any distinction in these terms is beginning to alter to a more hierarchical structure of lordship beginning to morph into feudalism, as over-kings delegated collection to local kings or officials and landownership became increasingly complex, with the manor as the centre of tenurial structure. Collection of taxation within a kingdom in the form of render was in Wales by the 12th century, and perhaps from as early as the 8th century, organised by *commote* (half a *cantref* or, in English terms, a hundred).<sup>64</sup> The detail of this system has been lost and whether coin played any part in it is difficult to discern; it may be that all obligations were fulfilled without the use of coinage in some parts of Britain until quite late. However, here in East Anglia, given the large numbers of individual coin finds from the landscape and the clear concentrations in the distribution, coinage may represent, in part, an element within a tax collection system. Marrying up the distribution of coin with a loose ‘multiple estate’ model could provide

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<sup>61</sup> For a discussion of this in the context of 9th-century Wessex see Maddicott, ‘The wealth of King Alfred’.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 123; Keynes and Lapidge, *Alfred the Great*, 106, 108, 115, 193–4, 285–6, 341.

<sup>63</sup> Davies, *Wales in the Early Middle Ages*, 129.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 43, 129–30.

insight into the structure of the royal tax collection system, in that it is conceivable that the collection was organised at central places based within either a 'multiple estate' or some conglomeration of them.<sup>65</sup> The hypothesis here is that the obligations and administrative structures found at these early centres for the collection of wealth were later crystallised within the towns, with the old centres then becoming redundant. This concentration into particular centres can be discerned in Fig. 195. This may also in part explain, as we shall see later, why many of the west Norfolk 'productive' sites were recorded as being of little significance within Domesday;<sup>66</sup> by the late 11th century the situation had altered and the places where wealth was concentrated and administered at scale were what we now recognised as the region's major towns. In the north-west part of East Anglia this centralisation of administration was not the case and there was no town recorded for this part of the region in 1066 (see below; section on Bawsey). The concentration of resources within Norwich, King's Lynn and Great Yarmouth was by the end of the 11th century on a monumental scale, but carried on a trend that can be traced back into the more obscure past, certainly as far as the late 7th century. Effectively the role of collection and redistribution centres, which had been dispersed in the Middle Saxon period, became nucleated by the mid 9th century.

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<sup>65</sup> For an explanation of the term 'multiple estate' see Jones, 'Multiple estates and early settlement'.

<sup>66</sup> H.C. Darby, *The Domesday Geography of Eastern England* (1971).

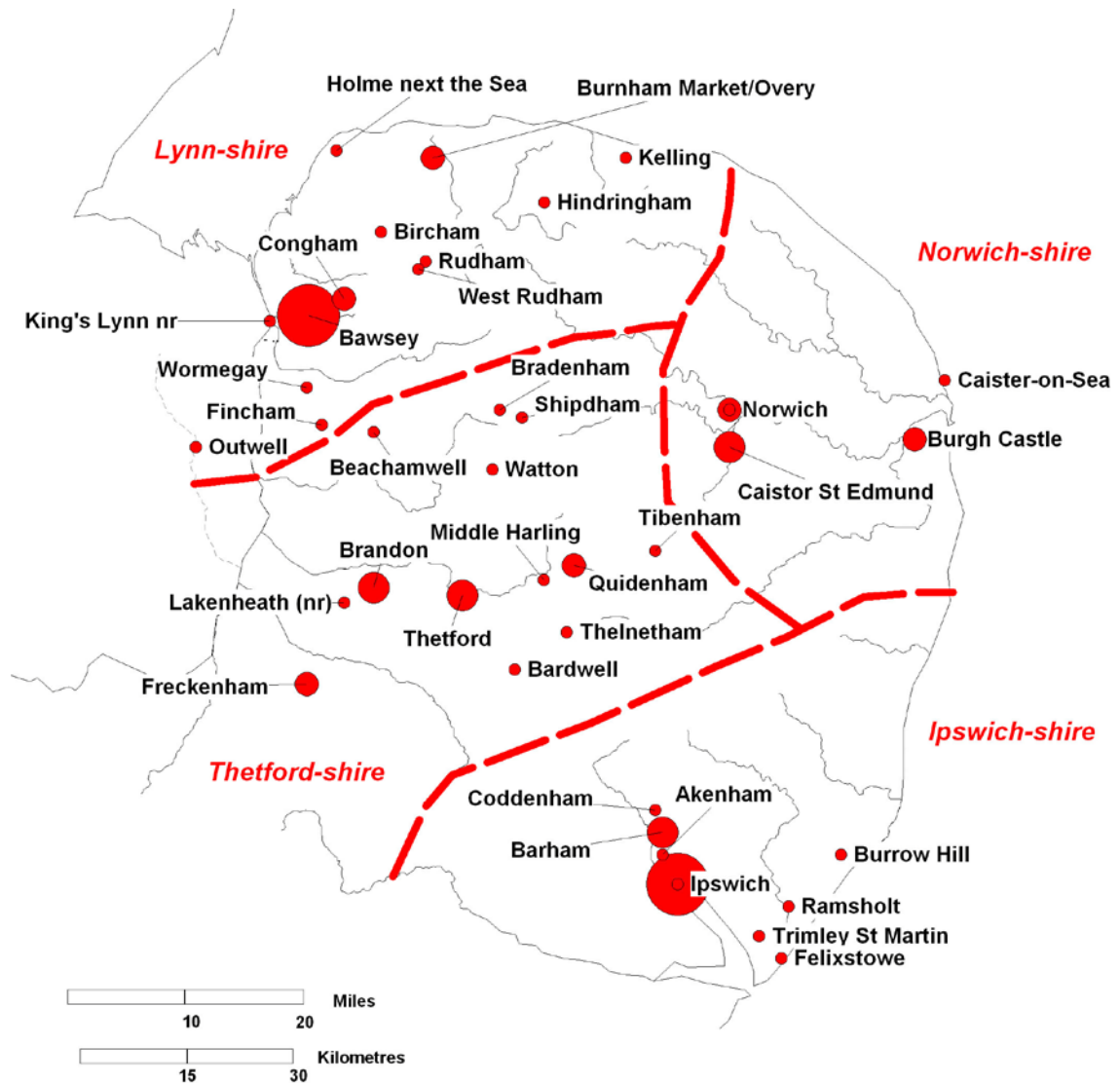


Fig. 196. Putative East Anglian 'shires'.

A 'dispersed versus nucleated' model for economic administration across East Anglia in the 7th and 8th century is presented in Fig. 196, which postulates shires or *scirs* for East Anglia in the Middle Saxon period. The nucleated coin-loss locations in some cases bear a strong correlation with the places where major towns were later established. Where there is a more dispersed situation we can also see that, later, these administrative functions aggregate into one central location. This is postulated for the area around Thetford, where functions that began as dispersed across several sites in the 7th and 8th centuries increasingly become nucleated within Thetford during the 9th and 10th centuries. In the north-west the situation looks to be more nucleated during the 7th and 8th centuries, with coin loss predominating in Bawsey; later, this nucleation was supplanted, probably



by Thetford, as mentioned, and by the late 11th century was transplanted to King's Lynn. The Gipping valley situation is similar, with a nucleation resulting from the growth of Ipswich in the 8th century. Geographically, zones of administration can be discerned with, in each zone, a town coming to the fore by the end of the 11th century. The trajectory of the growth of nucleated functions takes place at different times in all these places, and seems to be dependent on local factors. These zones have been defined, for the purposes of the discussion below, as 'shires', based on the town that eventually rises to prominence and remains the centre throughout the medieval period and beyond: hence in the north-west I have defined the zone of administration as 'Lynn-shire', with Bawsey as the centre during the 7th, 8th 9th and 10th centuries. For the Gipping valley there is 'Ipswich-shire', 'Norwich-shire' is in the north-east, and 'Thetford-shire' is in the central belt. These are terms coined for the purposes of discussion and do not have a historical or documentary reality in themselves. In some cases there were sub-shires, such as the north and east coasts, which later become parts of Lynn-shire or Norwich-shire.

How the conjectural picture drawn in Fig. 196 may have related to the historical reality can be examined through what is known of early East Anglian estates and judicial and administrative divisions. Hart notes that, although there is a significant literature on the administration of Anglo-Saxon East Anglia, there is a lack of documents prior to Little Domesday;<sup>67</sup> he concludes that there is little evidence for early estates and suggests that there may have been a Danish system of wapentakes, arguing that this structure would have been similar to the region's hundredal divisions, thought to have been imposed by the West Saxon rulers in the period following their East Anglian conquest around AD 917.<sup>68</sup> An examination of the region's hundreds shows that they do loosely fit into the divisions envisaged in Fig. 196, although it is probably unwise given the disparate nature of the evidence to try to shoe-horn the two together too closely. It may be the case that there was a 'palimpsest' of administrative divisions that operated at different levels, with some geographical inconsistency between, for instance, the hundredal divisions and the areas owing obligations to a

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<sup>67</sup> C. Hart, *The Danelaw* (London, 1992), 70–71.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 72; H.R. Loyn, 'The hundreds of England in the tenth and early eleventh centuries', in H. Hearder and H.R. Loyn (eds), *British Government and Administration: Studies Presented to S.B. Chrimes* (Cardiff, 1974), 1–15; J. Campbell, 'Hundreds and leets: a survey with suggestions', in C. Harper-Bill (ed.), *Medieval East Anglia* (Woodbridge, 2005), 151–67. W.J. Corbett, 'The Tribal Hidage', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 14 (1900), 210–15, sees the organisation of the hundreds as dating from the time that the Tribal Hidage was compiled. The geld system, which presumably the divisions were set up to administer, has further been suggested by Hart (*Danelaw*, 93) as dating from after Edward the Elder's conquest; see Campbell, 'Hundreds and leets', 160.

*burh*.<sup>69</sup> These differences may eventually help in assigning a chronology to the various systems, if the historical can effectively be correlated with the archaeological.

### **Ipswich, the Gipping valley and the Sandlings: 'Ipswich-shire'**

This section will examine the site of Ipswich and the concentration of Gipping valley sites in close proximity which have produced large quantities of Middle Saxon coinage (Barham and Coddanham). The combination of these three sites has produced a total of 137 *sceattas*, the largest concentration of Middle Saxon coinage of all the defined 'shires'. As discussed in Chapter 2, Ipswich was probably the only East Anglian *wic* and therefore is likely to have been the first place in the region to have developed urban characteristics after the Roman period.<sup>70</sup> It grew in what appears to have been, until that time, an uninhabited heathland on the northern bank of the river Orwell, close to its navigable limits.<sup>71</sup>

Since the 1950s, when Hurst and West first recognised that the unusual pottery collected from groundworks within the town, which they termed Ipswich ware, dated from between AD 650 and 850 (ascertained through associations with coins in other locations), the town's early origins began to be understood.<sup>72</sup> Because of the lack of more tangible evidence, particularly documents, the 7th-century origins of Ipswich were not easily argued and not really discussed beyond the confines of a small group of archaeological researchers. West's assertion that the origins of the town dated as far back as the 7th century was, in the context of the late 1950s and early 1960s, seen as fringe at best by most historians of the period.

Any study of the archaeological aspects of Ipswich is hampered by the lack of recent publication, although over 30 investigations have been undertaken. Indeed, much of the excavation archive remains largely unsynthesised. The largest excavation within the Middle Saxon town was undertaken at the Buttermarket in the 1980s. This late-7th- and early-8th-century cemetery has been the subject of a number of publications and is soon to be published in full.

Ipswich is a *de novo* settlement of the late 7th century, with the cemetery at the Buttermarket providing the earliest information on the origins of the settlement.<sup>73</sup> It appears to have no Romano-

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<sup>69</sup> Hadley, in 'Multiple estates', has suggested for the northern Danelaw that overlapping sokes appear to demonstrate that the administrative divisions were complex and multi-faceted; Campbell, in 'Hundreds and Leets', 58, suggests that leets were fiscal units and thus effectively had elastic boundaries, depending on requirements.

<sup>70</sup> Hart, *Danelaw*, 42.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

<sup>72</sup> J.G. Hurst and S.E. West, 'Ipswich ware', in J.G. Hurst, 'Saxo-Norman pottery in East Anglia II', *Proceedings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society* (1957), 29–60.

<sup>73</sup> For a discussion of the early cemetery found at the Buttermarket see Scull and Bayliss, 'Dating burials of the seventh and eighth centuries'.

British antecedents.<sup>74</sup> Wade, following the pioneering work of West carried out in the late 1950s and taking account of large-scale archaeological investigations undertaken during the 1980s, has defined the area of Middle Saxon occupation within the geography of the modern town on the basis of pottery distribution. In particular, the distribution of Frankish Black ware suggests that the settlement area prior to c. AD 720 extended to approximately 10ha.<sup>75</sup> From the 720s through to the 850s the Ipswich ware distribution can be used to suggest a site extending to some 50ha.<sup>76</sup> (It is perhaps notable that if the same criteria are used for Norwich the settlement there defined through the spread of Ipswich ware extends to some 70ha.<sup>77</sup>) Wade suggests that there was a street system, and although no roads have been directly investigated and dated to this period there is sufficient contextual information to verify that there was a grid of streets within the *wic*; analogous excavations in *Hamwic* confirm that this was the case in *de novo* towns of this period. Plots, or individual tenements (although this latter term is perhaps anachronistic), have also been identified both in Ipswich (K. Wade pers. comm.) and in *Hamwic* (see Chapter 2). Animal remains from the settlement have not yet been published and may provide more evidence towards the nature of the settlement; evidence from animal remains at other *wics* (see Chapter 2) has led to the suggestion that these places were provisioned from the surrounding estates and did *not* possess a system of markets. O'Connor has thus defined the animal consumption within York as representing a command rather than a demand economy.<sup>78</sup> It can thus be surmised that *wics* were being supplied through taxation. Food wealth was being utilised to generate craft production and thus, in a simple formula, agrarian wealth, probably collected as food rent, was being converted into other types of material wealth on a large scale at these locations.

Hart has suggested that a centre for the hundred of Wicklaw lay just to the north of the *wic* at the Thingstead, and further postulates that, as Warner and Davies have separately discussed, the five and a half hundreds of Wicklaw and the eight and a half hundreds of Thingoe, forming the modern 'shire' of West Suffolk, represent very early units of administration.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Some the other English *wics* do have Roman precursors, in particular London and York (see Chapter 2).

<sup>75</sup> This conforms with Hodges' type 1 *emporium* phase.

<sup>76</sup> Wade, 'Ipswich'; S.E. West, 'Excavations at Cox Lane 1958 and at the Town Defences, Shire Hall Yard, Ipswich 1959', *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology* 29:2, 233–303.

<sup>77</sup> This information was derived from the Norfolk Historic Environment Record, specifically those elements collected through the compilation of the now-incorporated Norwich Urban Archaeological Database.

<sup>78</sup> O'Connor, 'Animal bone assemblages from *wics*'; the exception to this view is D.J. Rackham, 'Economy and environment in Saxon London', in D.J. Rackham (ed.) *Environment and Economy in Anglo-Saxon England*, CBA Res. Rep. 89 (London, 1994), 126–35.

<sup>79</sup> Hart, *Danelaw*, 71; R.H.C. Davis (ed.), *The Kalendar of Abbot Samson of Bury St Edmunds*, Royal Historical Society Camden 3rd Series, 84 (London, 1954); P. Warner, 'Pre-Conquest territorial and administrative organisation in east Suffolk', in D. Hooke (ed.), *Anglo-Saxon Settlements* (Oxford, 1988), 9–34; P. Warner, *The Origins of Suffolk* (Manchester, 1996), 157–9.

### *Minting*

There is currently, as far as can be ascertained, no minting evidence from investigations within Middle Saxon Ipswich. Such evidence, however, may not be easily distinguished from other metal-working residues and, indeed, this practice may not have produced waste on a scale that would be easily detected archaeologically. Such evidence from both Greyfriars and the Millennium Library sites in Norwich, relating to the processing of both gold and silver between AD 850 and 917, was very hard to discern (see sections on Alfred imitations and ingots in Chapter 7). Unless a die is found, as one was at Greyfriars, there is no conclusive proof that *sceattas* were being minted within the *wic*. To date there is no evidence of bronze-working either; this, too, can be attributed to similar factors in the evidence. The date range of the coin loss suggests that any minting that may have taken place at the *wic*, on present evidence, did not begin until around AD 725.

Metcalf, as has been discussed in Chapter 6, attributes Series R and some of its derivatives to a mint within Ipswich, mainly on the grounds of proximity to many of the coin losses and historical assumptions regarding the connection between minting and towns, which is clearly seen during the 10th century.<sup>80</sup> His use of regression analysis to examine the distribution of these coins is a useful, if problematic, way of picturing the evidence.

### *Ipswich ware*

The *wic* housed a pottery industry during this period and much work has been undertaken collecting data both from the town itself and from tilled fields across the region (see Fig. 195).<sup>81</sup> Wade-Martins' study of the development of settlement in the Launditch Hundred utilised this information to recognise sites of the period and demonstrated that a strong connection was evident between scatters of Ipswich ware and some isolated village churches.<sup>82</sup> Indeed, all of the eight villages with *-ham* endings within Launditch that were archaeologically investigated produced Ipswich ware.<sup>83</sup> Subsequent landscape studies have benefited from this foundation work, and many parishes have now produced small collections. Blinkhorn's work on Ipswich ware has provided much refinement to this picture, tightening the production to *c.* AD 720–850. This correlates well with the coin evidence, both then suggesting an increasing level of production at the *wic* from about this time. The production-zone for the industry has been petrologically narrowed to Ipswich alone, suggesting

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<sup>80</sup> Metcalf, 'Determining the mint-attribution of East Anglian sceattas'.

<sup>81</sup> e.g. Silvester, *The Fenland Project No. 3*; Rogerson et al., *Barton Bendish and Caldecote*; Davison, *Evolution of Settlement*; Lawson, *Witton*.

<sup>82</sup> P. Wade-Martins, *Village Sites in the Launditch Hundred* (East Anglian Archaeology 10, 1980).

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

a very large and centralised ‘trading’ network unique in Middle Saxon England but with parallels in Germany and France.<sup>84</sup> It would seem that the ruling Wuffingas family, centred in the Sandlings area of Suffolk (at, among other places according to Bede, Rendlesham, a site that has produced a significant assemblage of Ipswich ware collected from the ploughsoil), practised a particularly archaeologically visible form of *feorm* collection.<sup>85</sup> It is interesting in the light of this to note that the often-cited relationship between *wic* and *villa regalis* in the case of *Hamwic* and Winchester may also apply to the East Anglian royal centres.<sup>86</sup> This, if true, would be unsurprising, given the model suggested earlier in this chapter – that the *wic* was essentially a very large specialised settlement forming part of the royal estate. The concentration of production in Ipswich is interesting, however, given the known geographical spread of the material, with the bulk of find-spots coming from Norfolk. Blinkhorn has discussed the possible trade network implications of this distribution.<sup>87</sup> As stated, this pattern may represent an incredibly elaborate and widespread *feorm* supply chain, directly feeding the royal administration.<sup>88</sup> The much-quoted section within Ine’s laws that state the expected render from a ten-hide estate in Wessex is a useful correlate to this proposal.<sup>89</sup> As much of the Ipswich ware distribution is located in Norfolk, this seems to represent the conversion, at a distance, of agrarian supplies into a medium that, although perhaps not portable, may have in its form and appearance communicated the type of ‘food rent’ that was to be sent to the king. The process of producing the pottery within Ipswich in certain types and then distributing these in effect may have been the means of disseminating the king’s ‘food rent’ requirements to an illiterate population. This appears from the regional evidence to be one of a number of the royal administration’s strategies for pulling in resources from a distance. This may have been a strategy for supplementing the situation where the king as peripatetically moving through the realm collecting food rent was in the process of being changed to a more centralising situation, where resources in the form of both commodities and coin were being converted at particular locations and the portable wealth then relayed back to a few central places.

The use of Ipswich ware in this system has not been identified yet; a container for certain types of foodstuff is a strong candidate. The exclusive production of this type of pottery within the

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<sup>84</sup> Blinkhorn, ‘Of cabbages and kings’.

<sup>85</sup> For information on fieldwork at Rendlesham see Newman, ‘The late Roman and Anglo-Saxon settlement pattern’, esp. pp. 36–8; Faith, *The English Peasantry*, 1–14, note 3, gives an account of a plausible model for this pattern.

<sup>86</sup> See Biddle, ‘Towns’, esp. p. 114. However, Morton has argued that *Hamwic* may, in the form of *Hamptun*, represent the ‘estate’ centre: Morton, *Excavations at Hamwic: Volume 1*, 28; and ‘Hamwic in its context’, in Anderton, *Anglo-Saxon Trading Centres*, 48–62, esp. p. 56.

<sup>87</sup> Blinkhorn, ‘Of cabbages and kings’, 21–2.

<sup>88</sup> Faith, *The English Peasantry*, 102–5, and T. Saunders, ‘Early medieval emporia and the tributary social function’, in Hill and Cowie, *Wics*, 7–13, esp. p. 10.

<sup>89</sup> Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 288; *EHDi*, no. 32, 364–72.

*wic* suggests a monopoly, and although it may have been a product in itself it is difficult to see that there would have been much scope, in the context of the likely nature of the early medieval economy, to make a significant profit from the sale of pottery vessels. It seems more likely that they served a different purpose, facilitating the transport of goods due through taxation, as well as possibly having affiliations with identity. Some incoming trade could also have been repackaged to express its origins at Ipswich. However, pottery is not a particularly easily transported material and this raises the question of why it was used, and for transporting what types of foodstuff. Little work has yet taken place on the residues within these vessels but it can be postulated that both salt and honey are likely candidates. It is also possible that wine was transhipped in Ipswich ware vessels, having been decanted from the amphora at the *wic*. The relative absence of Ipswich ware and coinage at certain locations, such as the likely diocesan centres, suggests that some ecclesiastic sites may have not been included in the system, probably because they did not owe obligations in the same way as the rest of the population.

As stated, work on animal bone assemblages from *emporia* in England and on the Continent suggests that these sites were provisioned from the countryside through redistribution and not commodity exchange.<sup>90</sup> Ipswich, therefore, seems to have become the foremost administrative hub for the royal house's geld system. As will be discussed further below, the minting of Type R *sceattas* in the earlier part of this period and their kingdom-wide distribution illustrate aspects of this extensive system, not only *feorm*, but also, potentially, tributary payment that may be referred to as *gafol*.<sup>91</sup> A further tier to this picture might also be discerned from the sub-regional distribution of Type Q *sceattas*.<sup>92</sup> Ipswich ware was more than likely a by-product of the trade, of no importance in its own right. The fact that it appears in isolation in many locations further suggests that it was a vehicle, with the actual 'product' probably either contained within or, in the case of some sites, soon to be added. The spread of coinage across the landscape provides a view on a different aspect of this extensive jurisdiction, one more easily explained as purely tributary.

A chart breaking down the loss dates of *sceattas* from the *wic* itself – mainly recovered through excavation – is provided in Fig. 197, and shows that the *wic* is at its most numismatically active during the second quarter of the 8th century. Coin loss is clearly at its height within the settlement in the last phase of the coinage, when debased Series R types dominate the assemblage and we see nine Beonna pennies also making up a significant proportion of this group. This peak in use comes,

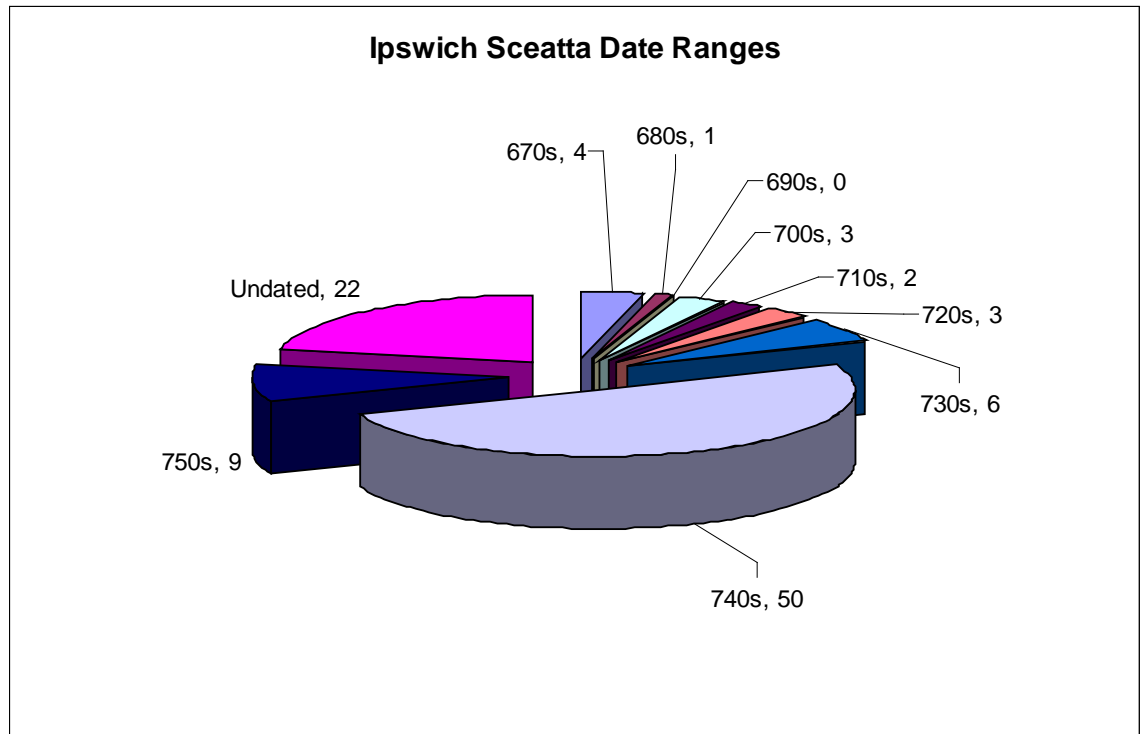
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<sup>90</sup> O'Connor, 'Animal bone assemblages from *wics*'; the exception to this view is Rackham, 'Economy and environment'.

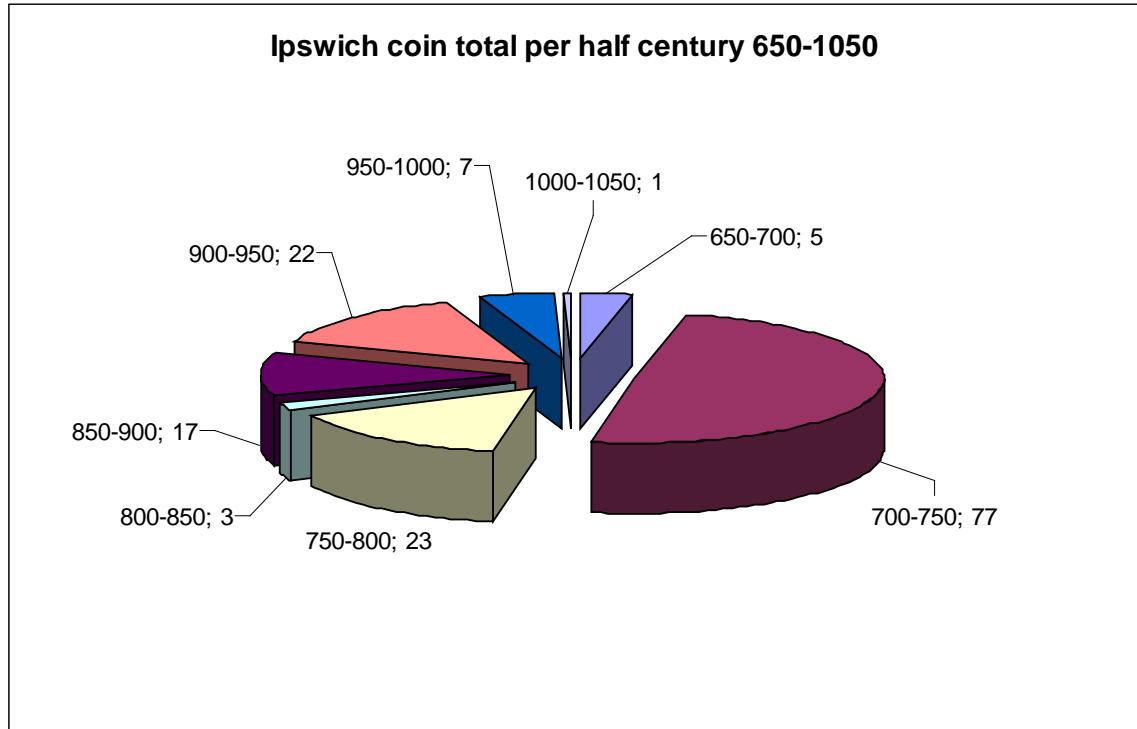
<sup>91</sup> Faith, *The English Peasantry*, 105–6.

<sup>92</sup> Metcalf, 'Determining the mint-attribution of East Anglian *sceattas*'.

after a very long period of stability, at the end of Aelfwald's (r. AD 713–49) 36-year rule, which in turn followed that of his father (we presume) Aeldwulf's (r. AD 664–713) 49-year reign.



**Fig. 197.** Chart of *sceatta* date ranges within Ipswich.



**Fig. 198.** Chart of coin chronology within Ipswich between AD 650–1050.

The chronological coin-loss profile shown in Fig. 198 is a fairly crude but nevertheless effective way of expressing the chronology of coin finds at Ipswich. It clearly shows, as was previously discussed, that the period of greatest coin loss was in the first half of the 8th century. However, the nadir in coin loss within the *wic*, contrary to historical models, comes right at the end of the Saxon period, in the first half of the 11th century. Another significant slump can be seen in the period AD 800–850, when a combination of, first, Mercia and then a politically resurgent East Anglian administration controlled the former kingdom. Interestingly, minting was still being carried out in East Anglia during this period, with some of the same moneyers working for both the Mercian and East Anglian royal houses. This suggests that between the reign of Coenwulf (Mercia r. AD 796–821) and the end of that of Æthelstan (East Anglia r. 825–845) there was a major change in the way that coinage was used within the *wic*, which may represent a change in the way that the settlement functioned at this time.

#### **Other major coin loss sites in the Gipping valley – Barham and Coddendam: ‘Ipswich-shire’**

Between them Barham and Coddendam, both upriver from Ipswich, have produced another 42 *sceattas*, with Barham being the third most productive place in the kingdom after Ipswich and Bawsey, with a total of 34 *sceattas*. Coddendam has produced 8 *sceattas* but also 11 pre-*sceatta* gold coins, 7 shillings and 4 *tremissis*, including a Byzantine coin of Anastasius (AD 491–518) and



another of Justinian (AD 527–65).<sup>93</sup> These sites, together with Ipswich, form a wealth centre of major national proportions, demonstrating the Wuffingas' ability to maintain their economic hold on East Anglia throughout the 6th, 7th and 8th centuries.

Both Barham and Coddtenham also contain evidence of Early Saxon activity; in particular, Coddtenham possesses a sequence of 6th-century, 7th-century and early 8<sup>th</sup>-century cemeteries.<sup>94</sup> Given the very early and unusual status of the Coddtenham coin finds it seems likely, even though they were metal-detected from the ploughsoil, that some of them were grave-goods; indeed, the conversion period cemetery at Coddtenham was excavated recently, which has produced evidence for 7th- and early-8th-century graves.<sup>95</sup> Settlement evidence has also been uncovered at Coddtenham, with a hall found in 2003 at Vickerage Farm thought to be 7th century in date.<sup>96</sup> Interestingly, both places were also centres of coin loss during the Iron Age<sup>97</sup> and important industrial centres in the later Iron Age and the Roman period.<sup>98</sup> This is also true of nearby Akenham, which has also produced a *tremissis*, six *sceattas* and two Offan pennies.<sup>99</sup>

### **Bawsey and the satellite 'productive' sites in the north-west of the region: 'Lynn-shire'**

The 'productive' site of Bawsey 4km to the east of King's Lynn. Its current situation is dominated by the largely Norman-period ruins of St Mary's church. The Channel 4 television programme *Time Team* carried out a series of investigations at the site over the August Bank Holiday in 1998, as part of which exercise Geophysical Surveys of Bradford carried out a magnetometry survey in the area

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<sup>93</sup> E.A. Martin, C. Pendleton, J. Plouviez, and D. Wreathall, Archaeology in Suffolk 1991, *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and History* XXXVII Part 4 (1992), 371-390.

<sup>94</sup> E.A. Martin, C. Pendleton, J. Plouviez, S. Holden, and D. Wreathall, Archaeology in Suffolk 1993. *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and History* XXXVIII Part 2 (1994), 199-226.; E.A. Martin, C. Pendleton, J. Plouviez, and D. Wreathall, Archaeology in Suffolk 1998. *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and History* XXXIX Part 3 (1995), 353-386.

<sup>95</sup> K. Penn, *Coddtenham Anglo-Saxon Cemetery, Suffolk* (forthcoming East Anglian Archaeology)

<sup>96</sup> E.A. Martin, C. Pendleton, J. Plouviez, and D. Wreathall, 'Archaeology in Suffolk 2003', *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and History* 40:4 (2004), 485-521.

<sup>97</sup> E.A. Martin, C. Pendleton, J. Plouviez, and D. Wreathall, 'Archaeology in Suffolk 1995', *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and History* 37:4 (1996), 457-485.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid; E.A. Martin, C. Pendleton, J. Plouviez, and D. Wreathall, 'Archaeology in Suffolk 2004', *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and History* 41:1 (2005), 103-30; E.A. Martin, C. Pendleton, J. Plouviez, and D. Wreathall, 'Archaeology in Suffolk 2005', *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and History* 40:2 (2006), 231-259.

<sup>99</sup> E.A. Martin, C. Pendleton, J. Plouviez, and D. Wreathall, 'Archaeology in Suffolk 1997', *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and History* 39:2, 209-243; Martin, et al 'Archaeology in Suffolk 2005'.

of an enclosure that had previously been noted on aerial photographs. The combined excavated and intensively surface collected information helped to flesh out the character of a site that had been known previously mainly through the metal-detected artefacts.



**Fig. 199.** Ruins of St Mary's church, Bawsey, Norfolk.

Iron Age evidence from the site, including a torc, is suggestive of a place of some ritual significance and possible settlement. There is also a fair amount of Romano-British evidence, again suggestive of a settlement site.<sup>100</sup> Elsewhere, in the south-west corner of the parish, there is some evidence of Roman industrial activity, possibly metal-working. Early Saxon activity at the site is indicated by a few metal-detected artefacts. Although intriguing, and demonstrating that the site had been a focus prior to the 7th century, the scale of the previous activity was not large. The site may have held some ritual significance, however, and this may in some way help to explain the development of a significant Middle Saxon settlement here.

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<sup>100</sup> Norfolk Historic Environment Record site 25962.



**Fig. 200.** Aerial photo of Bawsey enclosure.

Both the aerial photographic and the geophysical evidence (Figs 200 and 201) demonstrate the presence of a sub-rectangular ditched enclosure, within which the church is situated. A section of the enclosure ditch was excavated during *Time Team*'s investigations, but the base was not reached. Ipswich ware was found in the later infilling, but does not indicate a date for the ditch. Some surface collection of non-metallic materials has also been undertaken on a few separate occasions, and has recently been synthesised by Tim Pestell. This demonstrates that there are significant quantities of Ipswich ware within the ploughsoil (the site is now protected through scheduling and is part of a Defra scheme to take it out of cultivation). Indeed, a quarter of the pottery found during surface collection is Ipswich ware, with another eighth made up of Thetford ware.<sup>101</sup> The geophysical survey also detected areas of increased readings that are indicative of industrial activity (see Fig. 201).

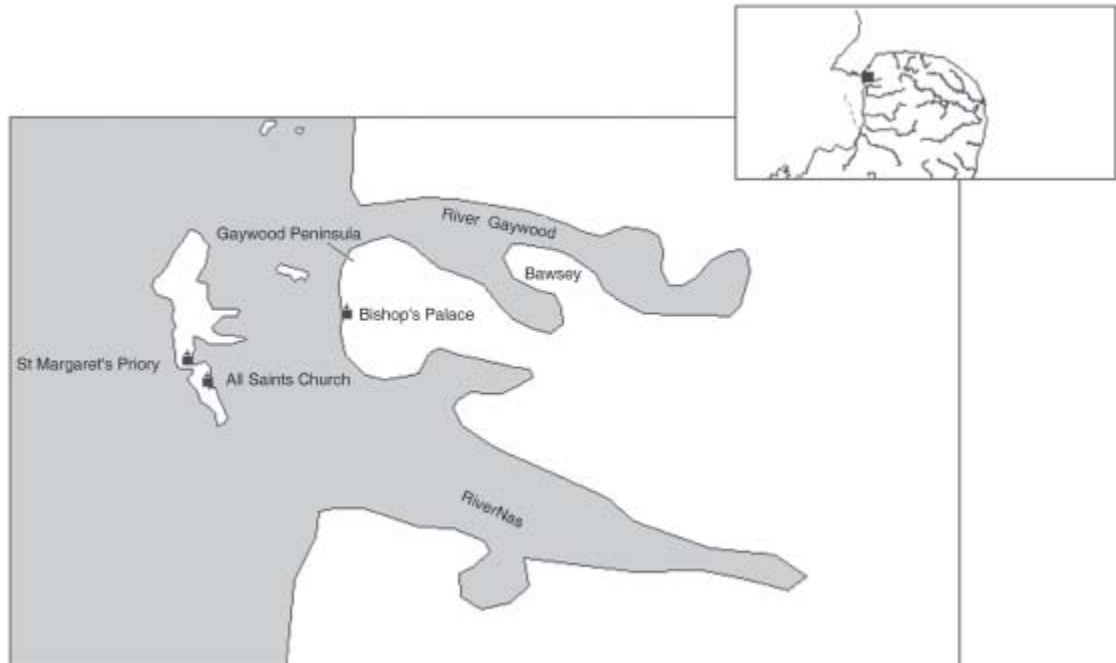
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<sup>101</sup> I am grateful to Tim Pestell for supplying this information.



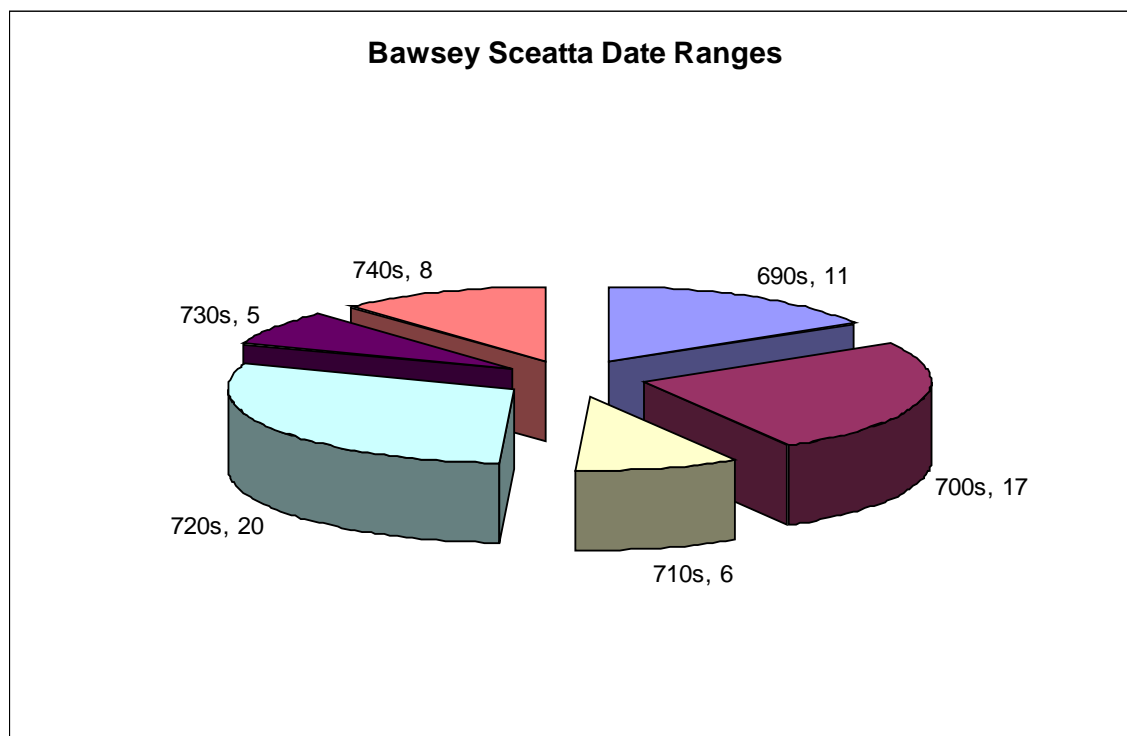
**Fig. 201.** Interpretation of magnetometry plot, after BSG 1999.

Bawsey has produced more coinage dated between AD 500 and 900 than any other site in East Anglia (123 coins), with the exception of Ipswich. With its close neighbours on the Wash it represents a remarkable hub of material culture between AD 650 and 850. The site itself lies on a promontory jutting out into the river Gay, a short distance east of the bishop's manor and later palace at Gaywood (Fig. 202). Importantly, the coin loss here continues into the 9th, 10th and 11th centuries. However, the Domesday record for the site suggests a place of minor importance. This is largely because the important administrative functions were by that time located at other sites, such as Snettisham (see below), prior to being moved to Lynn. This may have been because the estuary upon which Bawsey was situated became silted and difficult to navigate. The area is now farmland and is dominated by the ruins of St Mary's church, a Romanesque and Gothic structure, which probably overlies earlier churches.



**Fig. 202.** The Bawsey environs.

The early coinage from the site includes a Continental *tremissis* (AD 580–675) of unknown type and a 7th-century Kentish shilling, but is dominated by *sceattas*. The chronological spectrum of English *sceattas* is represented. Four of the coins are of unknown type. The earliest of the identified coins is an example of a Primary Series A3. Ten Intermediate (six Series B variants and four Intermediate Series C) types have been identified and five intermediate Continental-type Series D coins have to date been found. Nine Series R coins from East Anglia and a further two that may either be Series C or R represent the only established East Anglian minted group within the assemblage and two Series Q with another that may be series Q or R were minted in either East or Middle Anglia. Other final phase English *sceattas* include a Series X (or Woden Monster type), and a Victory Group type. A further nine Series E items and a coin that might be either Series E or D make up the final phase of 8th-century Continental coinage from the collection.



**Fig. 203.** Bawsey's *sceatta* chronology.

The chronological distribution within the *sceatta* site assemblage is quite different to that found at Ipswich, with a much more even spread of loss from the 690s through to the 740s. Over a longer time-frame it is notable that over half the coin losses at the site take place within the *sceatta* period, in the first half of the 8th century (Figs 203 and 204).

A high proportion of the coinage at Bawsey is English,; the 7th- and 8th-century collection as a whole exhibits significant differences from other large assemblages of the period in eastern England, such as the South Lincolnshire 'productive' site on the other side of the Wash, where the *c.* 70 coins are predominantly early and therefore Continental in origin. At Bawsey just under a third of the total appears to have been produced within the kingdom, although if some of the Series E coins are double-sided copies, the indigenous proportion could be larger. At the productive site near Royston (Herts.), one of the other largest assemblages in the country, the proportion of Continental coins is smaller again than that of the Bawsey assemblage, with only 39 of a total of 114 coins dating from the 7th and the first half of the 8th centuries originating on the Continent. Royston, like Bawsey, also has continuity of coin loss through the 9th, 10th and 11th centuries, although in much reduced numbers. At the Essex 'productive' site of Tilbury only 1 of the 29 coins comprising the AD 650–850 assemblage was Continental.

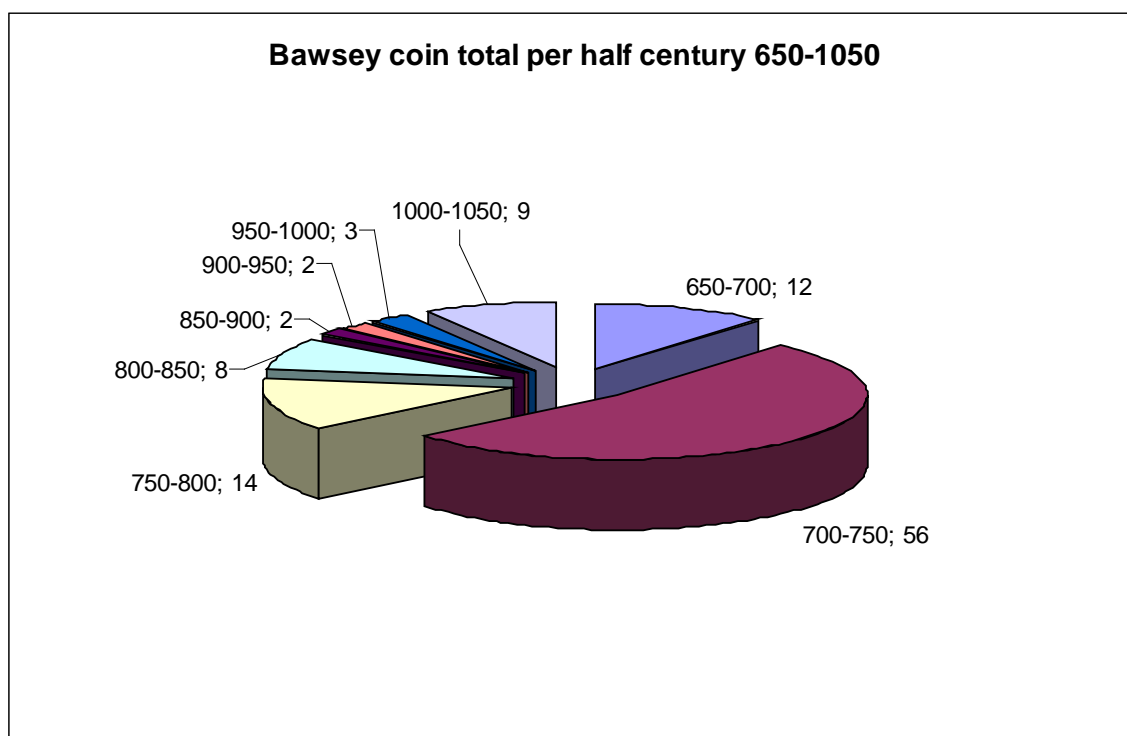
There are a number of styli from Bawsey. Pestell points to the historical connections that the church in the vicinity, such as the manorial situation at Mintyle and Gaywood as possible evidence for monastic origins.<sup>102</sup> Clearly Bawsey was an important centre, although whether its significance was secular or ecclesiastical is not presently known. Loveluck, as already mentioned, has recently questioned the correlation of certain artefact types with monastic life in this period.<sup>103</sup> Assuming the monastic status of a place on the basis of a single artefact type, particularly one such as styli, which does not necessarily directly point to anything other than writing and/or drawing, is dubious. The fact that there seem to be few differences between apparently secular and monastic sites is interesting in itself.

The coin loss at the site clearly continues into through in decreasing amounts through the later 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries, with one Beonna (k. East Anglia c. AD 749–60), six Offa (k. Mercia AD 757–96) pennies, five of Coenwulf (k. Merica AD 796–821), two coins of Eadberht Præn (k. Kent AD 796–8), one Wulfred (Archbishop of Canterbury AD 805–32), one Berhtwulf (k. Mercia AD 840–52), one penny of Æthelweard (k. East Anglia AD 845–55), one Alfred (k. Wessex AD 871–99), one Edward the Elder (k. Wessex and later England AD 899–924, East Anglian mint), one penny of Eadred (k. AD 946–55) two Æthelred II ('the Unready', k. 978–1016, one of the Thetford mint), two Cnut (k. 1016–35), one Harthacnut (k. 1035–42) and three Edward the Confessor (k. 1042–66) coins. Pestell has recently identified two hammered copper-alloy ingots found at the site as probably being Scandinavian in origin. But, as with the situation at Ipswich, the major period of loss is broadly within the first half of the 8th century.

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<sup>102</sup> Pestell, 'Afterlife'.

<sup>103</sup> Loveluck, 'Wealth, waste and conspicuous consumption.'



**Fig. 204.** Bawsey's coin chronology 650–1050.

Interestingly, there is a hiatus in coin loss at Bawsey between the Norman conquest and *c.*1135. From the reigns of Stephen (1135–54) and Henry II (1154–89) there are a further eight coins, suggesting that Bawsey may have acted as a stronghold during the Anarchy and then continued as a centre in the reign of Henry II. Why Bawsey's former importance is not reflected in Domesday Book is not easily explained; there are two entries: the first is a modest entry held by a free man prior to 1066 in conjunction with neighbouring Ashwicken, consisting of half a carucate, seven small holders, nine acres of meadow, half a plough, half a mill, and half salthouses; the second is for two manors held by Robert Malet after 1066, and which were also manors prior to that; they consist of one carucate, seven villigers, twelve small holders, three slaves, forty acres of meadow, one plough in lordship, two oxen, a mill, woodland for sixteen pigs, one and a half salthouses a cob thirty sheep and fifty goats; three freemen between them held a third manor consisting of a mere ten acres. Altogether the three manors were valued at 12d and 25s, a modest sum for three manorial holdings. This clear change in fortunes may be due to the rise of the large manorial centre nearby at Snettisham owned by Bishop, later Archbishop, Stigand.

The combination of metal-detected finds from the site and from this north-west corner of East Anglia, and the geophysical evidence for metal-working at the site, suggest that Bawsey was a production centre. A disc-shaped motif-piece appears to be an unfinished Trewiddle-style brooch.



Although such a conclusion is presently purely speculative, it may be that Bawsey is the major East Anglian Trewiddle-style metalwork workshop postulated by Webster and Blackhouse.<sup>104</sup> We can see from the coins found at Bawsey that it was a site where much coinage was lost. That is irrefutable; what is less easy to prove at this stage, although all the evidence seems to be consistent, is that it may also have been a mint for the BZ *sceatta* series and potentially also for Offan pennies. Six (perhaps eight) out of a total of 13 Offan pennies known from East Anglia were found at Bawsey.

Metcalf's work on *sceatta* ratios across East Anglia shows that Series Q types i–iii were centred on north-west Norfolk and make up c.16% of the coinage for the area. He postulates that there is a mint in the area and, further, that there is hence likely to be a *wic*. He suggests that the likely location for this was in the vicinity of Castle Rising. From examination of the records of finds from Castle Rising this seems unlikely; there are only two Middle Saxon objects known from the parish. Rather, the most likely location for the mint of Series Q i–iii on the basis of Middle Saxon activity, is, again, Bawsey.

If the coin loss statistics from Bawsey are compared with those from Ipswich, there are marked differences in the profiles of the two locations. Bawsey has a more evenly chronological distribution collection of *sceattas* and there was a less significant downturn at Bawsey during the period AD 800–850. But, following that, there is a perhaps a more significant reduction in coin loss at Bawsey during the period of the Danelaw when compared with Ipswich, and it is notable that there are no St Edmund Memorial pennies at Bawsey, contrasting with the 16 coins found at Ipswich. The totals for the 10th and 11th centuries are also relatively small for Bawsey, with a strange resurgence in the early 11th century that again seems to be at odds with the situation in Ipswich. The coin totals at Bawsey are clearly at odds with the documentary evidence, as Bawsey is virtually unmentioned in Domesday. The presence or absence of burgesses does not seem to have had a huge effect on the totals of coin loss here. Although there was a resurgence of loss in the 11th century, this may be misleading and perhaps represents a continuity here of some kind of fair or market, perhaps historically connected to the location's residual importance as an economic and administrative centre. This 10th-century downturn almost certainly marks the demise of Bawsey as an important administrative centre. During the hiatus that followed it seems there may have been a return to a dispersed form of administration for the north-west part of the region, perhaps with Thetford taking a role for this area too, as it was located on the same drainage system. Bawsey seems, from the available evidence, to limp on as a coin-loss centre of secondary importance and the administrative and central functions were later move downriver to King's Lynn, but this

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<sup>104</sup> Webster and Blackhouse, *The Making of England*, 231

relocation comes much later, perhaps suggesting that during the Viking period and throughout the 10th century and much of the 11th century the north-west was effectively without a large administrative centre.

It is known that Herbert de Losinga established the priory of St Margaret at Lynn in the late 1090s, along with a tied market, but why he did this is less clear. This establishment did not begin in a vacuum, however and Fig. 202 attempts to illustrate the proximity of important nearby sites. Study of Domesday and later documents by Owen and, latterly, Pestell have shown that the bishop's interest in the area had a tenurial history,<sup>105</sup> Owen discerning possible evidence for tolls and trade associated with Lynn prior to the establishment of the priory by Losinga. Notably, the priory held parochial responsibility for the land between the Purfleet, Millfleet and an area at South Lynn presumably centred on All Saints church. Soke on all the dwellings between the two fleets was also held, meaning that the tenants here owed judicial and perhaps military obligations to the priory. This suggests that there was a good-sized population here prior to the establishment of the priory. It is interesting to note that both St Margaret's and All Saints are situated on what appears, from a projection of the 5m contours for the area, to be an island making up the spine of the old town (see Fig. 202). At the initial establishment rights were awarded to the priory for profits relating to markets held on a Saturday and a fair held at the feast of St Margaret. It seems that these institutions were already in existence and not initiated by the grant of a charter.<sup>106</sup> An existing market was extended by Losinga with the creation of a Tuesday market.<sup>107</sup> A charter of Henry I to William d'Albini, which may be a dubious copy made in the 14th century, grants:

the manor of Snettisham with the two and a half hundred of Freebridge and Smithdon. With all wreck and apputences, besides all the mysteria of Lynn, with a mediety of the market, and toll and other customs, the port with its moorings for ships, lofcop [toll?], the way of the water and the passage, with all pleas ... all to be held with all free customs and liberties infra burgham et extra as it was given to him by William the king's brother in his lifetime.

The basis for such a grant is intriguing given what has been discussed above. The tolls may have been inherited during William Rufus' reign (1087–1100) from Odo, Bishop of Bayeux.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> D. Owen (ed.), *The Making of King's Lynn* (London, 1984); and Pestell, *Landscapes of Monastic Foundation*.

<sup>106</sup> Owen, *King's Lynn*, 9.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

The work of the King's Lynn Survey revealed little evidence for settlement within the area of the present town prior to the late 11th century. Some earlier pottery was recovered, including Thetford-type wares, Pingsdorf, Anndenne wares and a single sherd of Badorf ware.<sup>109</sup> The sample of the town examined archaeologically was, and remains, small, however, with few trenches reaching the base of the sequence and few within the areas likely to contain the oldest settlement locations. If Fig. 202 is considered in the light of the knowledge we now have of the archaeological deposits underlying King's Lynn, the most likely locations for early settlement foci become clear, as the area's true nature as a series of important and highly visible peninsulas is brought out. This opening into both the Gaywood and Nar rivers thus contained several foci of administration and communications. Bawsey appears within the archaeological record as the most 'productive' site on the Wash and, indeed, harbours the second largest collection of Middle Anglo-Saxon coins in the kingdom. In some senses it is analogous to Ipswich; it is the same sort of site in terms of being a centre for the control of wealth, but it is not a royal centre. Rather, it is the centre for a second tier of administration.

If we think in terms of landholdings instead purely of specific sites then the background to the King's Lynn foundation is clear. There are several large estate centres within the immediate area. The bishop of Thetford, previously of North Elmham, held a manor at Gaywood both prior to and after the Norman Conquest.<sup>110</sup> This was the Bishop's only manor within the hundred and a half of Freebridge but it was a valuable one, at £13 prior to the conquest and £18 10s after. This in itself may not mean much, but there are further correlations that suggest there may be the vestiges of an old 'estate' here. Gaywood now lies on the eastern fringe of the modern parish of King's Lynn. A medieval bishop's palace is at its centre. All the pre-AD 850 Saxon material recorded on the NHER within the parish of Lynn comes from the Gaywood area. This group includes a spearhead, an 8th- or 9th-century brooch associated with an undated cemetery and, most spectacularly, a Byzantine 40-numma coin of Herodius (AD 612–16), which comes from the same reign as the coin incorporated into the Wilton Cross.<sup>111</sup> North Lynn also contains evidence for 11th- to 12th-century pottery kilns found during investigations within the deserted medieval village centred on what is thought to be the church of St Edmund's.

Pestell has made the connection between the bishop's manor at Gaywood and the 'productive' site at Bawsey,<sup>112</sup> and has posited that Bawsey appears to be central to a grouping of parishes and may have been an estate centre comprising a core central unit with seven other adjacent parishes

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<sup>108</sup> Norfolk Historic Environment Record.

<sup>110</sup> P. Brown (ed.), *Domesday Book: Norfolk* (Chichester, 1984), 10,2.

<sup>111</sup> Webster and Backhouse, *The Making of England*, 27.

<sup>112</sup> Pestell, *Landscapes of Monastic Foundation*, 215.

including Gaywood and Mintyle, both of which belonged to the bishop at Domesday.<sup>113</sup> This picture can be fleshed out by looking at other holdings within the area belonging to Stigand prior to his losing office; he possessed manors at Lynn and Grimston, and Mintyle owed soke to him prior to his downfall. The manor at Grimston may be significant, as this, along with the site centred around the putative church of St Edmund's at what became North Lynn, was a production centre for pottery by the late 11th century. This may be additional 'fossilised' evidence for a secondary tier 7th- to 9th-century 'estate' here, as the pottery industry, although not as strictly controlled by the 11th century as it was in the 8th century, seems to have been subject to legal constraint and operated under licence. We can assume that this licence was from the crown and was bestowed on its closest secular and ecclesiastical servants; certainly, Stigand fitted this specification. Stigand also held a large and very valuable manor at Snettisham, which stretched beyond Freebridge and into the next hundred of Docking. Most of these holdings ended up in the hands of Odo, the Bishop of Bayeux. The grant of Henry I to William d'Albini discussed above gives us another level of insight into this situation: a parcel of rights and obligations which reflect an old and mainly by then defunct administrative unit seems to have passed into d'Albini's hands; such a unit may well conform with an early estate being reflected in the soke of a number of later manors.<sup>114</sup> This 'estate' echoed in Stigand's holdings and the Henry I grant seems to have had Bawsey at its centre. An older administrative unit for the area may also be reflected in the statement within the Ramsey chronicles that William II ordered a joint session of the three and a half hundreds, probably the hundreds of Freebridge, Smethdon and Docking.<sup>115</sup>

No one site within this estate land necessarily dominated for centuries. Rather, the varying importance of Gaywood, Bawsey and latterly King's Lynn may lie in their association with a particular landscape's obligations or soke. These obligations may have been concentrated on Bawsey in the Middle Saxon period but were later redirected throughout the 10th and much of the 11th century to other places such as perhaps Snettisham and were reinstated by de Losinga with the establishment of Lynn. The centre itself moves around with, we can only assume, the expediency of the period's micro-politics. Why, then, did these administrative centres on the Wash survive through the changes wrought by the turmoil of the late 9th century? We can surmise that the political situation here was different from that of the east and south of East Anglia. Perhaps the putative splitting of the East Anglian kingdom into three parts, each ruled respectively by Hun, Beonna and Alberht, which presumably took place around AD 749, gives us a clue. One of these parts may have become a sub-kingdom encompassing the fen-edge and the north-west of the

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<sup>113</sup> Pestell, 'Afterlife'.

<sup>114</sup> Jones, 'Multiple estates and early settlement'; Hadley, 'Multiple estates'.

<sup>115</sup> Williamson, *Origins of Norfolk*, 130.

kingdom. Yorke suggests that the territories were Norfolk, Suffolk and an area around Ely.<sup>116</sup> Such an administrative division may have lived on under a reunited but much weakened East Anglian monarchy and the earldoms that came subsequently. We can thus envisage that by the time of the treaty between Alfred and Guthrum (AD 886–90)<sup>117</sup> a separate administrative situation still pertained. Here in the north-west of East Anglia it was useful to Guthrum to move the existing system for extracting wealth from the landscape perhaps to the new centre at Thetford.

### **Congham: ‘Lynn-shire’**

Congham differs from many of the other ‘productive’ areas in that it is not actually on a navigable waterway. It is also the site of a probable Romano-British villa.<sup>118</sup> With the exception of the coin assemblage, the other materials from the parish are rather pedestrian.<sup>119</sup> There are two *tremissis*, one from *Quentovic* and the other from Belfort. The range of early English pennies includes two intermediate Series BII types, a Series K and an unidentified type. Continental pennies of the late 7th or early 8th century include single finds of Series D and Series E *sceattas*, and a Series M Madelinus *denier*. Later Saxon coinage includes a St Edmund Memorial penny (Danelaw AD 895–910), a Bust Crowned of Edgar (AD 959–75), three coins of Æthelred II (AD 978–1016) and a small flan of Edward the Confessor (AD 1042–66).

There is evidence for an earlier Saxon settlement and/or cemetery within the parish. Wade excavated a building measuring 5.5m by 4m with an unusual central line of post-holes which containing stratified Ipswich ware.<sup>120</sup> The potential for settlement continuity here from the Roman period onward is compelling, giving a rare insight into the development of a single central place throughout the historical period. The Domesday entry again, as with Bawsey, is modest: William d’Warene held two manors here, both through the soke of two free men each with a carucate and valued at 20s and 22s; a third manor was held by Berner the Crossbowman, again through the soke of a free man, valued at 10s. Possibly the historical vicissitudes of manorial changes shifted the centre of power elsewhere sometime before 1066, possibly to Snettisham, which appears to be part of the same ancient estate and was a massive manor at Domesday held by Stigand, Archbishop of Canterbury, prior to being ceded to Odo, Bishop of Bayeux and William the Conqueror’s brother.

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<sup>116</sup> Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, 69.

<sup>117</sup> *EHDi*, no. 34, 380–81.

<sup>118</sup> A. Rogerson, ‘Six middle Anglo-Saxon sites in west Norfolk’, in Pestell and Ulmschneider, *Markets*, 115–16.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>120</sup> L. Webster and J. Cherry, ‘Medieval Britain in 1971’, *Medieval Archaeol.* 16, 157, and Rogerson, ‘Six middle Anglo-Saxon sites’.

### Thetford and its satellite ‘productive’ sites: ‘Thetford-shire’

The earliest reference to Thetford is dated AD 870 in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (‘A’ text) and states that a Danish army that had been raiding Mercia took up residence at Thetford for the winter. It may be that the *burh* (although this term may not be applicable in the context) dates from this period, with the Danish administration utilising Thetford as a centre during their rule of East Anglia.<sup>121</sup> The 9th- to 11th-century town at Thetford is well documented and the coins and finds deriving from the many excavations conducted within the town will only be very summarily discussed here.<sup>122</sup> Thetford, prior to its development into a defended town of the early 10th century,<sup>123</sup> may also be viewed as a ‘productive’ area; indeed, one of the most productive of all East Anglian areas. A great many coins from the later 9th century through to the 11th century have been found within the town; they are well documented and will not be discussed here. What is not well understood is the earlier development of the area and, in particular, the 7th- to 9th-century situation.

Occupation of the 5th to 7th centuries was spread across the western expanse of the modern town and continued out to the west into Thetford Warren. The evidence for this includes three partially excavated inhumation cemeteries at London Road, Thetford Warren and Brunel Way. The settlement centres would seem to be at Redcastle and further to the west along the Little Ouse at Brandon Road.<sup>124</sup> It is here that a later settlement, dating to the 7th to 9th centuries, is also apparent.

Excavations within the Redcastle, on the west side of the town defences, and the area just to its east, have demonstrated that there was occupation of a significant density in the 8th and 9th centuries.<sup>125</sup> This evidence includes a sizeable assemblage of Ipswich ware and an excavated Series R type (AD 730–60) *sceatta*.<sup>126</sup> The earliest coin from the area of the present town is a Merovingian pseudo-imperial *tremissis* (AD 500–580). This is followed by a Byzantine coin of Focas (AD 602–10), minted at Nicomedia, and another Merovingian *tremissis* of Belfort type 1214 (AD 600–675). A Series L (Type 18, AD 725–50) was found during excavations at Brandon Road.<sup>127</sup> Besides the excavated and well-provenanced material there are four early Continental pennies recorded on the

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<sup>121</sup> Hart, *Danelaw*, 50. However, recent scientific dating using Optical Stimulated Luminescence suggests that the defences date from the conquest by Edward the Elder, providing a mean date of 917.

<sup>122</sup> See C. Dallas, *Excavations in Thetford by B.K. Davison between 1964 and 1970* (East Anglian Archaeology 62, 1993); P. Andrews, *Excavations at Redcastle Furze, Thetford, 1988–9* (East Anglian Archaeology 72, 1995) and P. Andrews and K. Penn, *Excavations in Thetford, North of the River, 1989–90* (East Anglian Archaeology 87, 1999).

<sup>123</sup> Recent work by the Norfolk Archaeological Unit, managed by the author, revealed a section through the late Saxon defences; OSL dates from the base of the ditch were obtained and initial analyses suggested a mean date of c.917 for the construction of the defences.

<sup>124</sup> Andrews, *Excavations at Redcastle Furze*; Andrews and Penn, *Excavations in Thetford*.

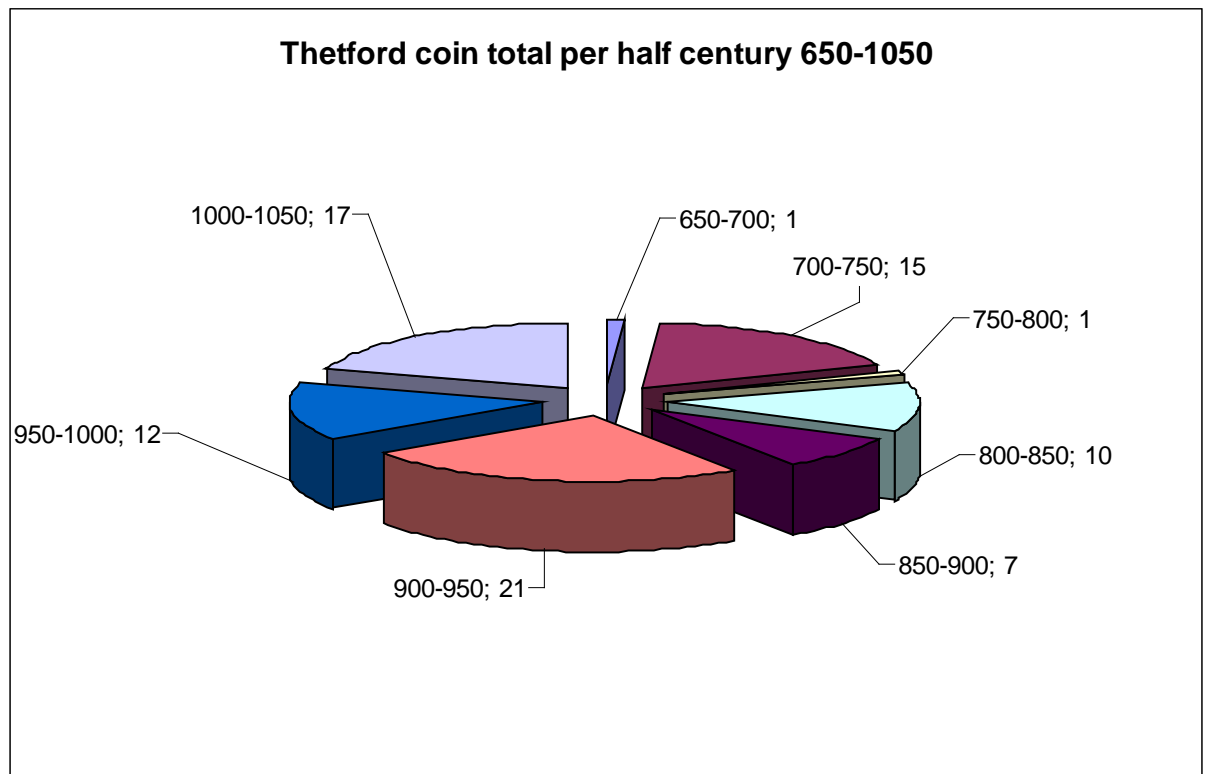
<sup>125</sup> Andrews, *Excavations at Redcastle Furze*.

<sup>126</sup> G.M. Knocker, ‘Excavations at Red Castle, Thetford’, *Norfolk Archaeol.* 34 (1967), 147–8; Andrews, *Excavations at Redcastle Furze*, 137.

<sup>127</sup> D.M. Metcalf, ‘Coins and jettons’, in Dallas, *Excavations in Thetford*, 95.

EMC, 2 Series D (both Type 2c, AD 700–715), a Series E (Type 53, AD 710–20) and a Series X (Type 31, AD 710–50). Early English coinage consists of eight Series R types (AD 730–50), a Series Q/R (Type 73, AD 725–45), a Type 51 (AD 710–35) and a Series S (Type 47, AD 730–40). It is notable that the majority of this assemblage is East Anglian in origin.

In terms of the 9th and early 10th centuries there are a number of coins from excavations within the town: a Carolingian *denier* of Lothar I (AD 840–55) dating from *c.* AD 850–55 was found during excavations at St Nicholas Street, north of the town.<sup>128</sup> Within the south-central part of the later town was an excavated group of four St Edmund Memorial pennies found at Sites 1 and 2 in the Newtown area during Knocker’s early investigative work and an Æthelraed of Northumbria *styca* dating from the 820s.<sup>129</sup> Another St Edmund Memorial penny was found during an evaluation at London Road, close to the ancient river crossing.



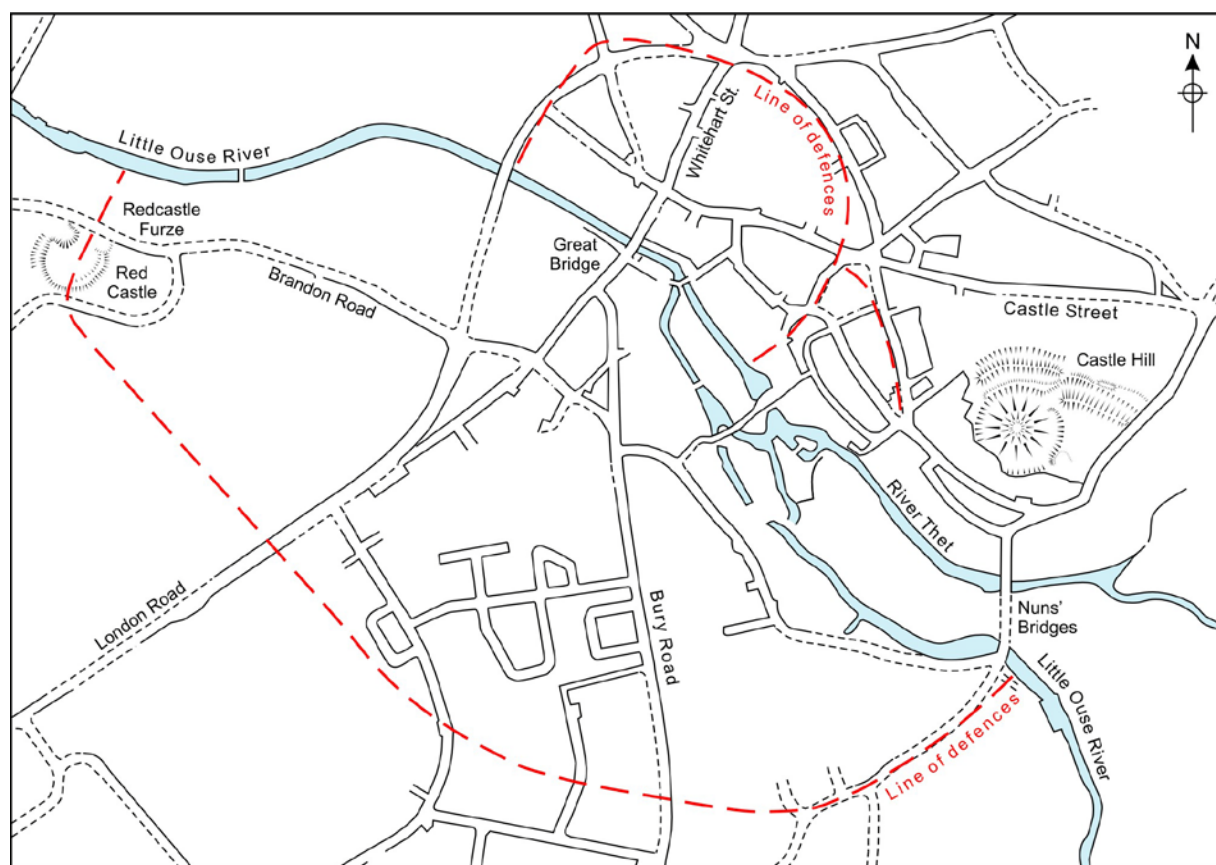
**Fig. 205.** Chart of Thetford’s coin chronology.

Fig. 205 shows that the chronological distribution of coin loss at Thetford is quite different from that of Ipswich and Bawsey. Here the majority of the losses took place within the 10th century,

<sup>128</sup> D. Gurney, M. Blackburn and J. Davies, ‘The coins’, in Andrews and Penn, *Excavations in Thetford*, 38.

<sup>129</sup> S.E. Rigold, ‘The coins’, in A. Rogerson and C. Dallas, *Excavations in Thetford 1948–59 and 1973–80* (East Anglian Archaeology 22, 1984), 67.

during Viking rule and the subsequent reconquest by the House of Wessex. Most of this coinage is in fact comprised of St Edmund Memorial pennies. This pattern clearly demonstrates the growth of Thetford from a reasonably important ‘productive’ place during the 8th century into a central place and then a defended *burh* during the late 9th and particularly the 10th century. As briefly discussed, the defences have been investigated recently and the mean date for their construction placed at AD 918. That date fits exactly with historical expectations for a bridge-head *burh* created by Edward the Elder; this is a type that is found throughout the country but which seems to have been particularly popular in eastern England. The preponderance of St Edmund memorial pennies within the area of the town and in the environs confirms Thetford’s status as a central place in numismatic terms in the period of Viking rule. This provides further insight into the historical situation recorded in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* that tells of Thetford being the location for the over-wintering of the Viking army in AD 870. Unlike Norwich, Thetford has not produced any archaeological evidence for minting during the Viking period, but it can be perhaps assumed from the quantities of coin loss. It did contain a mint by the reign of Edgar (r. AD 959–75).



**Fig. 206.** Map of Thetford’s early 10th-century defences.



### **Brandon: 'Thetford-shire'**

A site within this parish at Staunch Meadow is the only thoroughly investigated East Anglian 'rural' settlement of the 7th to 9th centuries. Its setting, on a sand island in the river Ouse with a causeway linking the site to the southern bank, is dramatic. The settlement evidence was very well preserved, unlike that of many 'productive' sites in East Anglia, which we can surmise have been severely plough-damaged. As a result, there is at Staunch Meadow a record of structural remains that is unique in the former kingdom and must be extremely rare nationally. A remarkable collection of artefacts was recovered during the excavations. In particular, an early-9th-century gold plaque depicting St John the Evangelist with the head of an eagle surrounded by a Latin inscription *SCS EVANGELISTA IOHANNIS*,<sup>130</sup> discovered in 1978 by fishermen, strongly suggests a religious site, possibly a monastic house; such a suggestion is supported by the holes that exist at each corner of the plaque, indicating that it may have been placed on a book cover.<sup>131</sup>

The site itself was deserted before the end of the 9th century.<sup>132</sup> The structural evidence included a three-cell timber church with an adjacent inhumation cemetery; a second cemetery was discovered on the edge of the excavation area, but its church was not identified. Other buildings number 35 in all, and split into two main types based on size: larger buildings measuring c.11m × 6m and smaller ones measuring c.8m × 5m. These were all plank-in-post-hole or plank-in-trench constructions. Ditches enclosed some buildings. Perhaps significantly, there were no sunken-featured buildings.<sup>133</sup>

The artefact assemblage is special both in terms of its range of types and the richness of materials used. It includes rare items such as a fragment of a 'Coptic bowl', window glass, decorated glass jars, claw beaker fragments, styli and Tating ware pottery imported from the Rhineland, as well as more ubiquitous items such as strap-ends, pins (both of high quality and some utilising precious materials) and Ipswich ware. There are a number of 6th-century brooch finds from the parish and a pair of 5th-century tweezers suggesting a modicum of earlier activity.<sup>134</sup> Brandon is clearly in the top flight of excavated settlements of the period, along with sites such as Jarrow (Tyne and Wear), Whitby (North Yorkshire), Flixborough (Lincolnshire) and Barking Abbey (Essex).

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<sup>130</sup> E. Okasha, 'A supplement to the handlist of Anglo-Saxon non-runic inscriptions', *Anglo-Saxon England* 11 (1983), no. 159.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 66 (a).

<sup>132</sup> R.D. Carr, 'The middle Saxon settlement at Staunch Meadow, Brandon', *Antiquity* 62:235 (1988), 371–7.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, and West, *Corpus*, 12.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*

Sixteen *sceattas* were recovered by the archaeological investigations, and another four Anglo-Saxon coins found. All are of the Secondary phase, most belonging to Series R, with a number of Series Q, a Q/R mule and a number of Beonna pennies.<sup>135</sup>

The area of Brandon beyond the Staunch Meadow site out to the limits of the parish can also be described as a 'productive' area; a significant assemblage of coinage has been recovered. Coin loss from the parish appears to continue through into the period of the Danelaw and beyond. This assemblage, unlike that from the investigated site, includes several earlier *sceattas*, including a Primary Series BZ. Loss in the Secondary phase was also not restricted to the investigated area, with two Intermediate Series G and Series R *sceattas* and a Beonna (k. East Anglia AD 749–60) coin found within the parish. Later coinage post-dating the *sceatta* phase includes a heavy penny of Eadwald (k. East Anglia AD 796–8), two *stycas* of Æthelred II (k. Northumbria AD 840–48), an unidentified *styca* of the mid 9th century, a coin of Burgred (k. Merica AD 852–74) which, unusually, is pierced and gold-plated, a St Edmund Memorial penny (Danelaw AD 895–910), two coins of Æthelred II (k. England AD 978–1016), a short cross penny of Cnut (AD 1016–35), and two pennies of Edward the Confessor (AD 1042–66). In addition, there are two imported coins: a Carolingian *denier* of Lothar I (AD 840–55) and a Capetian French coin of Hugh Capet (AD 987–96). The assemblage clearly illustrates the continuing importance of Brandon as the centre of an administrative area.

If Brandon had a role as a trading centre this may have effectively been superseded, or perhaps resurrected, by the establishment of a fair held at Brome Hill Priory. The rights for such a fair were granted to the priory in the reign of Henry III (1222–3) and became known as St Thomas' or Becket's Fair, after the priory's dedication. Records show that by the later Middle Ages the Cluniac brothers of Thetford bought a spectrum of imported goods including coal, salt, timber and iron. Stone was also imported here. It is no accident that these heavy commodities were landed here, as the topography alters just to the west and the fen changes to breckland Brandon was probably the furthest inland that larger boats could easily venture.<sup>136</sup>

### **Middle Harling: 'Thetford-shire'**

At Middle Harling a 1.3ha spread of Ipswich and Thetford wares surrounding the site of the former church of St Andrew was noted in 1980. This was soon followed by a find of a hoard of coins from the reign of Beonna (k. of East Anglia AD 749–60). The Norfolk Archaeological Unit, which uncovered a large assemblage of 8th-century coinage, carried out an excavation of a small part of

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<sup>135</sup> A. Tester *pers. comm.*; I am grateful for sight of this information, which awaits publication in full.

<sup>136</sup> D. Dymond, 'A misplaced Domesday vill: Otringhithe and Brome Hill', *Norfolk Archaeol.* 43:1 (1998), 161–8.

what is a large and long-lived settlement site.<sup>137</sup> The metalwork suggests that the settlement begins around the mid 8th century; no coins from the assemblage date from prior to *c.* AD 750.<sup>138</sup> The coin assemblage consists of both single loss and hoarded finds and spans the period between *c.* AD 750 to the Norman Conquest and beyond.<sup>139</sup> The hoard contained 60 coins from the 8th century including: one Series L and six Series R *sceattas*, 50 coins of Beonna – 37 of the moneyer Efe, 9 of the moneyer Wilred, 1 of the moneyer Werferth and 3 with no moneyer's name indicated. There were also two coin blanks within the hoard. In addition to the hoard, there were 9 other coins from the 8th century: 1 Series U and 2 Series R *sceattas*, and 6 more Beonnas. There are also 3 coins from the 9th century, 3 from the 10th century and 5 from the 11th century.<sup>140</sup>

Although there was abundant evidence for later Saxon and Norman occupation of the area north of the church, no excavated context could be ascribed with confidence to the Middle Saxon period; none of the Beonna coinage was recovered from Middle Saxon features and only one came from a closed context, which also produced Late Saxon-type pottery; it therefore appeared to the excavator that the main area of Middle Saxon occupation was probably to the south of the church in the area known as Church Clump.<sup>141</sup> An undisclosed quantity of Ipswich ware was recovered from the excavated area, with a distribution suggestive of some association with the hoard.<sup>142</sup> Much more unusually, there was a collection of imported pottery types, including several sherds of Tating ware and a small sherd of oxidised, probably Rhenish, pottery, both of the Carolingian period. The excavated area did, however, provide evidence of several buildings dated through association with mainly Thetford wares.

The excavator states that Middle Harling was not in the top rank of sites of this period (8th century), in terms of the metalwork assemblage (apart from its coins), when compared to sites such as Barham (Suffolk) and Bawsey.<sup>143</sup> Certainly, the assemblage is not as rich as those from Brandon and Flixborough, and its position is not as dramatic as those of these putative monastic sites. That said, the coins are a remarkable assemblage and the presence of the non-hoard assemblage is consistent with an administrative centre for the period.

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<sup>137</sup> Rogerson, *Middle Harling*.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

<sup>139</sup> M. Archibald, 'The coins', in Rogerson *et al.*, *Barton Bendish and Caldecote*, 46–53.

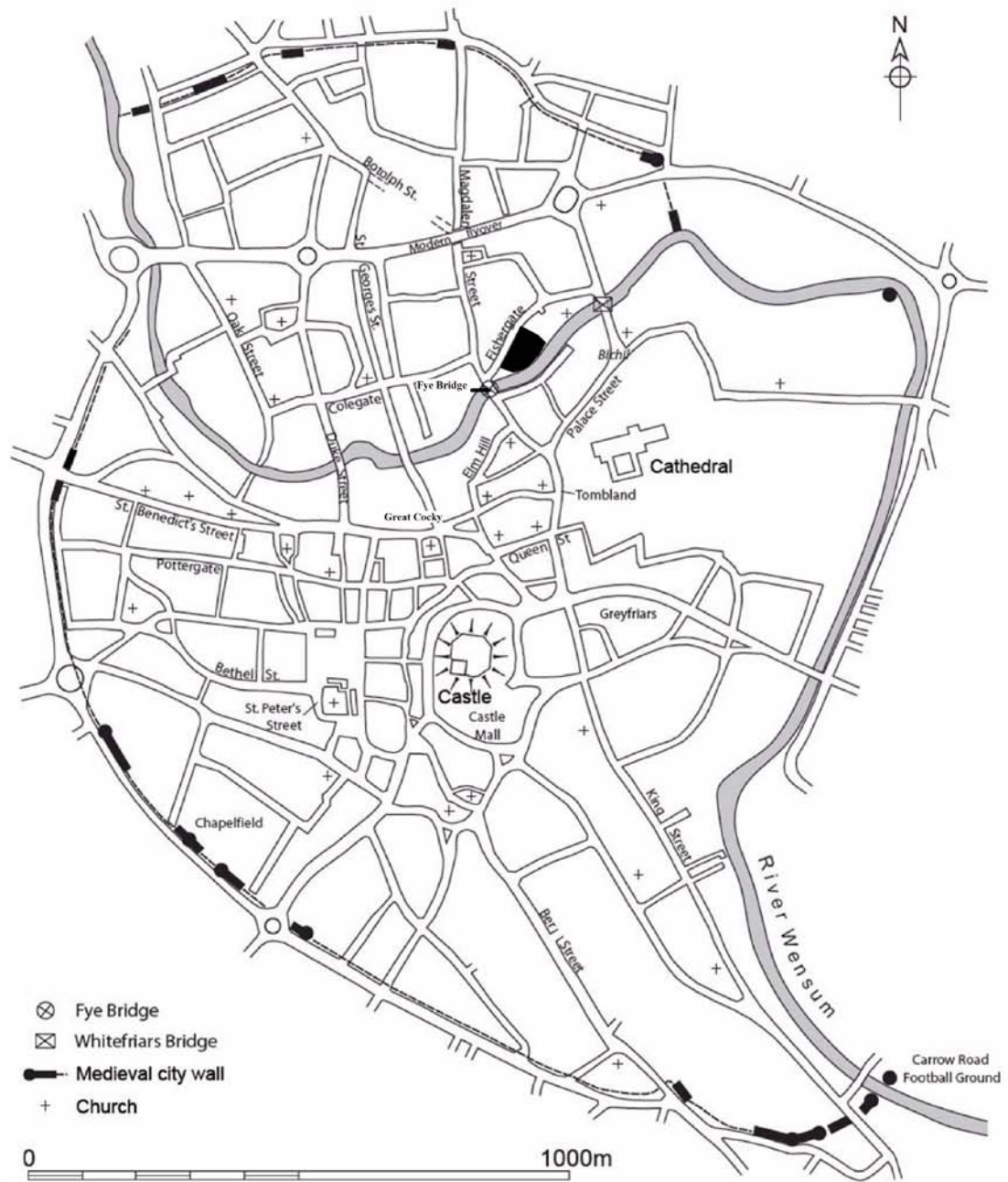
<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>141</sup> Rogerson, *Middle Harling*, 13–14.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, 13, fig. 9.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, 87–8.

## Norwich and its environs – ‘Norwich-shire’



**Fig. 207.** Map of Norwich's historic core

The town of Norwich grew within a meander of the river Wensum near to the confluence with the river Yare. Two escarpments border the medieval town: Mousehold Heath to the north and east, and

the Ber Street ridge to the south-west. Constriction of the river valley in this location led to a build-up of glacial deposits mainly comprised of sand and gravels during the Pliocene and Pleistocene; these are collectively referred to as Norwich Crag. The Crag is found on the higher points, with alluvium below in the river valley; the combination of well-drained terrace gravels and rich alluvial soils proved ideal for settlement.<sup>144</sup>

Smaller watercourses, now mainly canalised below the urban landscape, would also have been significant aspects of the pre-town landscape. Around eight streams, locally known as cockeys,<sup>145</sup> included the 'Great Cockey', which flowed off the Ber Street ridge towards the river, running in the position now occupied by All Saint's Green, Red Lion Street, White Lion Street, Little London Street and School Lane, with its outflow near St George's Bridge.<sup>146</sup> Five of the eight cockeys flowed northwards from the Ber Street ridge. These features would have been the dominant aspects of the early and the medieval townscape, particularly the Great Cockey, which seems to have formed an early boundary for the west side of the 10th-century town.

Archaeological work within the city has identified significant prehistoric activity stretching back to the late Pleistocene; work just to the south of the medieval city at Carrow Road football ground uncovered rare *in situ* evidence of a flint-working site dating from the end of the last Ice Age. Both the late glacial and early Holocene populations utilised the river valleys and artefacts from these periods are common within close confines of the valley and increasingly rare beyond.<sup>147</sup> Neolithic and Bronze Age monuments are found in numbers within these lower stretches of the Wensum valley, including the henge at Arminghall a few miles to the south of the city. The numbers of these monuments in the vicinity of the later town indicate a large population from the Neolithic onwards.<sup>148</sup>

The castle was sited on something of a peninsula that juts into a wide section of valley where the river meanders to the north-east: a likely spot for congregation in any period. A number of scholars have postulated that the site of the castle might be an Iron Age hillfort, William Worcestre's fanciful suggestion that the castle was originally an ancient British foundation which Julius Caesar later refortified being an early, medieval, claim; Henry Caius further suggested that Caesar built

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<sup>144</sup> Ayers, *Norwich*, 11.

<sup>145</sup> K.I. Sandred and B. Lindström, *The Place-Names of Norfolk Part 1: The Place-Names of the City of Norwich*, English Place-Name Society (Nottingham, 1989), 6–7.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, 13–14.

<sup>147</sup> See J. Wymer, 'Late glacial and Mesolithic hunters', in Ashwin and Davison, *Atlas*, 15–16.

<sup>148</sup> See, for instance, T. Ashwin, 'Late Neolithic and early Bronze Age Norfolk', in Ashwin and Davison, *Atlas*, 19–20; T. Ashwin and S. Bates, *Excavations on the Norwich Southern Bypass, 1989–91 part I: Excavations at Bixley, Caistor St Edmund and Trowse* (East Anglian Archaeology 91, 2000).

houses around the fortification. These are essentially mythological texts.<sup>149</sup> A much more credible and recent argument for later prehistoric defences on the site of the castle was made by Green and Roberts.<sup>150</sup> Excavation there in the later 1980s yielded little archaeological evidence to substantiate this claim, however.<sup>151</sup>

Discoveries of new information of prehistoric occupation within the area of the later town are made frequently but not often synthesised. Recent work at the Millennium Library, for instance, uncovered some evidence of Bronze Age activity in the form of a large ditch, and a significant Iron Age presence in the vicinity as indicated by a number of pits.<sup>152</sup> Recent work on the west side of Ber Street uncovered the remains of a Bronze Age ring-ditch, once a barrow.<sup>153</sup> Excavations on Palace Street nearer the river have also uncovered later Bronze Age activity, possibly the remains of a building. Taken together, these examples suggest a fairly busy and well-populated later prehistoric landscape and provide a glimpse of features that would still have dominated the town into the earlier stretches of the medieval period. The Ber Street ridge and the scarp above the Great Cockey, where the Library and City Hall now stand, are suggested as having been dotted with barrows. Although difficult to flesh out entirely, this is a tantalising glimpse of the topography of the early town, which consisted of dramatic scarps and valleys, with the remains of ancient activity potentially still visible along the ridges.

This landscape was altered in the Roman period to provide probably two routeways in both east–west and, possibly, north–south directions. Around the time of the establishment of *Venta Icenourm* (Caistor St Edmund) the road joining it with Colchester to the south was extended, connecting *Venta Icenorum* with the smaller town of Brampton to the north. Current evidence for the route of this road is inexact but it seems likely that it crossed the Wensum somewhere in the vicinity of the later town of Norwich. The Roman period finds within Norwich, as plotted by the NHER, suggest that this north–south route followed King Street and crossed the river at Fye Bridge. In contrast, Carter places the line of the north–south road at some distance to the east from the eventual position of Norwich.<sup>154</sup> The east–west road is more easily seen across the middle of the city; known as Holmstrete in 12th- and 13th-century documents,<sup>155</sup> it crosses the Wensum at Bishop’s Bridge and

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<sup>149</sup> A. Carter, ‘The Anglo-Saxon origins of Norwich: the problems and approaches’, *Anglo-Saxon England* 7 (1978), 175.

<sup>150</sup> E.B. Green and J.P. Roberts, ‘The background to the excavations – Conesford and the street pattern’, in A. Carter, ‘Excavations in Norwich 1973’, *Norfolk Archaeol.* 39 (1974), 63–5.

<sup>151</sup> E. Popescue-Shephard, *Excavations At Castle Mall* (forthcoming East Anglian Archaeology).

<sup>152</sup> A.R.J. Hutcheson, ‘The French borough’, *Current Archaeology* 170 (2000), 64–8.

<sup>153</sup> Emery, *Norwich Greyfriars*.

<sup>154</sup> Carter, ‘The Anglo-Saxon origins of Norwich’.

<sup>155</sup> B. Dodwell (ed.), *The Charters of Norwich Cathedral Priory* (London 1974, 1985, 2nd edn.); quoted in Sandred and Lindström, *The Place-Names of Norfolk Part 1*.

follows Bishopgate through to Westwick Street and then to the west by way of Dereham Road. At both Bowthorpe and Bawburgh it has been linked to cropmarks (NHER 5244). Hudson suggested that there was also a Roman north–south road following Ber Street, basing his conclusion on the fact that most of the city’s older roads contained the Scandinavian *-gata* suffix (for example, Fishergate and Pottergate), as opposed to the more Roman *strete*. He makes a cogent argument for this possibility, suggesting that the beaten-earth *-gata* routeways would have looked quite different to 12th-century Latin-writing clerks than the more substantial Roman streets.<sup>156</sup> This requires, of course, that the survival of the so-called streets was sufficient to make a distinction, but is not beyond the realms of plausibility. He then went on to suggest that when the road reached the area of Tombland it split to form the marketplace and rejoined to cross the Wensum at Fye Bridge; he further realised, rightly, that Fye Bridge formed the focal point of the later Saxon town’s routeways.<sup>157</sup> Carter rejected the notion that Ber Street was Roman and suggested, on the basis of the distribution of artefacts of Roman date, that there were two Romano-British settlements in the area: the largest to the east at Thorpe and another within the confines of the later town located close to the Magdalen Street Gates.<sup>158</sup> Until recently there has been little evidence for this north–south routeway. However, the distribution of Roman finds recorded on the NHER shows that there are some concentrations along King Street, and on this basis Penn has recently postulated in an unpublished report that in fact Ber Street is not particularly early and from its morphology was probably a Norman creation.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> W. Hudson, *How the City of Norwich Grew into Shape: Being an Attempt to Trace Out the Topographical History of the City* (Norwich, 1896).

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, 19–20.

<sup>158</sup> Carter, ‘The Anglo-Saxon origins of Norwich’, 190, note 28, fig. 6.

<sup>159</sup> K. Penn, *An Archaeological Desk Top Assessment on Lind BMW Ber Street sites, Ber Street, Norwich* (NAU unpublished report no. 1103, 2005), 2.



**Fig. 208.** The position of postulated Roman roads in the vicinity of Norwich; after Norwich City Council.



**Fig. 209.** Bishopgate: east-west Roman road.



Several finds point to how this landscape may have been reinhabited during the Early Saxon period. A cemetery at Eade Road was found during the cutting of a sewer in 1898; the collected evidence consisted of a few fragments of a cremation urn and a square-headed brooch suggesting a probable late-5th- or 6th-century date for the burial.<sup>160</sup> An urn of Early Saxon date was discovered in the churchyard of St Michael at Plea, situated overlooking the Bawburgh–Bishop Bridge road.<sup>161</sup> Several finds suggest that another pagan Saxon cemetery was located further to the west, in the area of the Sweet Briar industrial estate, again overlooking the same Roman road.

There is certainly a good amount of evidence from the pre-AD 650 period to suggest that the settlements in and around Norwich were growing in importance. Caistor St Edmund was still a very important centre in this earlier period, however, (the Middle Saxon comparison of these two locations is detailed below) and their joint existence may reflect two different but proximate estates with separate foci. It has often been suggested that early Norwich was somehow appropriating the urban aspects of Caistor, but that is a conflation of the evidence and a misrepresentation of the historical trajectories of the two places. It can be seen from Fig. 196 that both locations together provide a central focus for the area during the late 7th and 8th centuries, probably forming two different but proximate estates.

Alan Carter's paper of 1978 set out many of the issues that have subsequently occupied the research agenda of archaeological studies within Norwich. In particular, the model he proposed for the nature of settlement during the 7th and 8th centuries within the area that was later to become the town has survived to some extent until fairly recently.<sup>162</sup> This model suggested that Norwich originated from a number of neighbouring settlements.<sup>163</sup> Elements in the place-name evidence have been argued as demonstrating a polyfocal situation in the area of the later town.<sup>164</sup> Some of these early place-names are also suggestive of a royal or sub-royal presence in the locality; for instance, the term *Conesford*, translated as king's ford, may demonstrate a royal settlement with other outlying but related estate elements.

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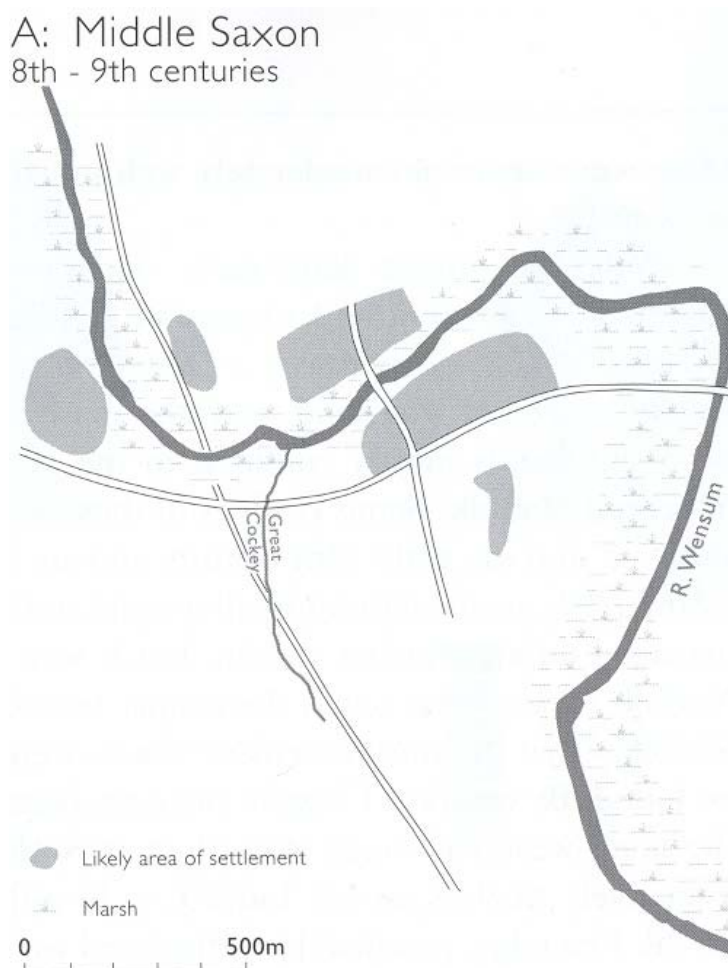
<sup>160</sup> Ayers, *Norwich*, 22.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

<sup>162</sup> Carter, 'The Anglo-Saxon origins of Norwich'; B. Ayers, 'The growth of an urban landscape: recent research in early medieval Norwich', *Journal of Early Medieval Europe* (forthcoming).

<sup>163</sup> Carter, 'The Anglo-Saxon origins of Norwich'.

<sup>164</sup> Ayers, *Norwich*.



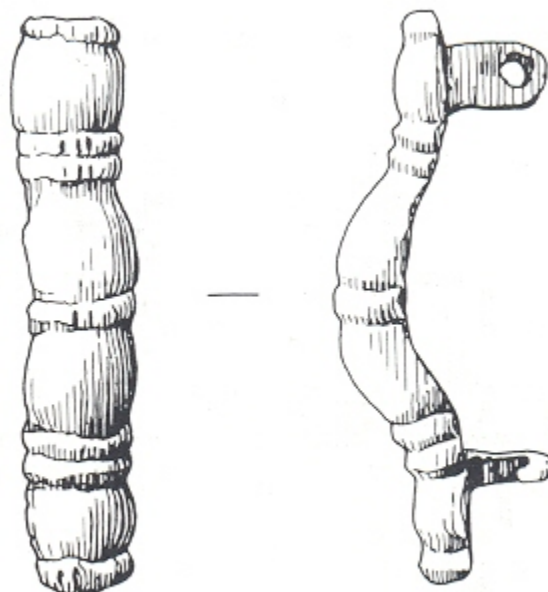
**Fig. 210.** Polyfocal settlement, postulated by Carter and later Ayers.

The recent excavations at Fishergate have built on Ayers' work there in the early 1980s, which demonstrated a Middle Saxon presence within the town to the east of Fye Bridge.<sup>165</sup> A significant concentration of Primary phase *sceattas* was uncovered during excavations directed by David Adams in 2004, along with evidence for antler- and bone-working associated with an *in situ* collection of Ipswich ware.<sup>166</sup> There were also a few sherds of Badorf ware both from this investigation and from the excavation carried out in the 1980s, the latter also uncovering a Series N *sceatta* and an anasate brooch. A number of investigations have now yielded evidence of 8th-century activity within the town, including at the Greyfriars site, where evidence comprised a Series R5 *sceatta* (AD 715–35), 19 sherds of Ipswich ware, some within the basal soil of the sequence, two dress pins and an openwork disc brooch of late 8th- or 9th-century date; all led the Emery to conclude that a small concentration of 8th-century houses was probably located close to a street

<sup>165</sup> D. Adams, *An Archaeological Assessment of Excavations at Fishergate 2006* (NAU unpublished report).

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*

now known as Rose Lane.<sup>167</sup> In addition, a 7th-/8th-century cemetery was discovered at Castle Mall. Collectively this evidence suggests that the polyfocal model, with much of the settlement places north of the river, is incorrect, and that the density of settlement was slight and spread widely. There may have been a focus on the south side of the river strung out along the east–west Roman road. Evidence from St Martin’s church, where a burial was radiocarbon dated to no later than the 8th century, suggests that there may be an early church there; other possible early churches include St Michael-at-Plea, St Michael at *Mostow* and St Gregory’s.<sup>168</sup> The distribution of Ipswich ware is problematic in defining the focus of settlement, however; Atkins and Evans suggest that this relates to the massive amount of soil movement within the medieval and later city,<sup>169</sup> much of which was associated with the creation of religious houses in the 13th century on marginal riverside land.



**Fig. 211.** 8th-century anseate brooch from Fishergate, Norwich.

<sup>167</sup> Emery, *Norwich Greyfriars*, 36

<sup>168</sup> Ayers, *Norwich*, 26

<sup>169</sup> M. Atkins and D.H. Evans, *Excavations in Norwich 1971–1978 Part III* (East Anglian Archaeology 100, 2002), 236.

Campbell has argued that Norwich's legal status dates back to its foundation as a *burh* by Edward the Elder in AD 917.<sup>170</sup> The most convincing archaeological evidence for an urban Scandinavian settlement at Norwich comes from a combination of archaeological finds, one of the most compelling of which is, as discussed in detail in Chapter 7, a St Edmund Memorial coin with an obverse inscription reading NORDVICO, which was almost certainly minted in Norwich c. AD 905.<sup>171</sup> This find can be compared with the evidence for minting discussed in Chapter 7 found at both Greyfriars and the Millennium Library.<sup>172</sup> Norwich was an established mint by the reign of Athelstan, but there are few documents referring to the town prior to Domesday.<sup>173</sup> The location of the gold-minting and -refining evidence on a hill overlooking the Great Cockey, well outside of the later Saxon defensive circuit, has meant that many students of Norwich's early history and archaeology have found it difficult to accept, and have pleaded for it to be written out of the story.<sup>174</sup> However, our understanding of the topography of the early medieval town has become less than conjectural only in the last five years with the establishment of the position of the southern Late Saxon defences through investigations at both Stepping Lane and Cinema City.<sup>175</sup> That evidence has been added to the pre-existing dating for the northern defensive circuit to demonstrate a bridge-head *burh* configuration much like those at both Thetford and Ipswich.<sup>176</sup> Given that the recent dating evidence from Thetford confirms it as having been excavated around AD 918, a similar date for Norwich's defences seems plausible also.

The nature of pottery production at this time has already been discussed in relation to Ipswich above, but a counter-argument might be made: Thetford Ware demonstrates the importing of probably Frankish potters in the late 9th century and this can also be seen in the styles of pottery then beginning to be produced at Torksey and Stamford.<sup>177</sup> The kiln evidence that has been investigated in Norwich all dates from a relatively late period of production<sup>178</sup> but there is a likelihood that pottery production may have begun during this period, concurrent with minting.

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<sup>170</sup> J. Campbell, *Norwich* (Atlas of Historic Towns fascicule, ed. M.D. Lobel, 1975), 3.

<sup>171</sup> Blunt, 'The St Edmund Memorial coinage'.

<sup>172</sup> Emery, *Norwich Greyfriars*, and Hutcheson, 'The French borough'.

<sup>173</sup> Campbell, *Norwich*, 3.

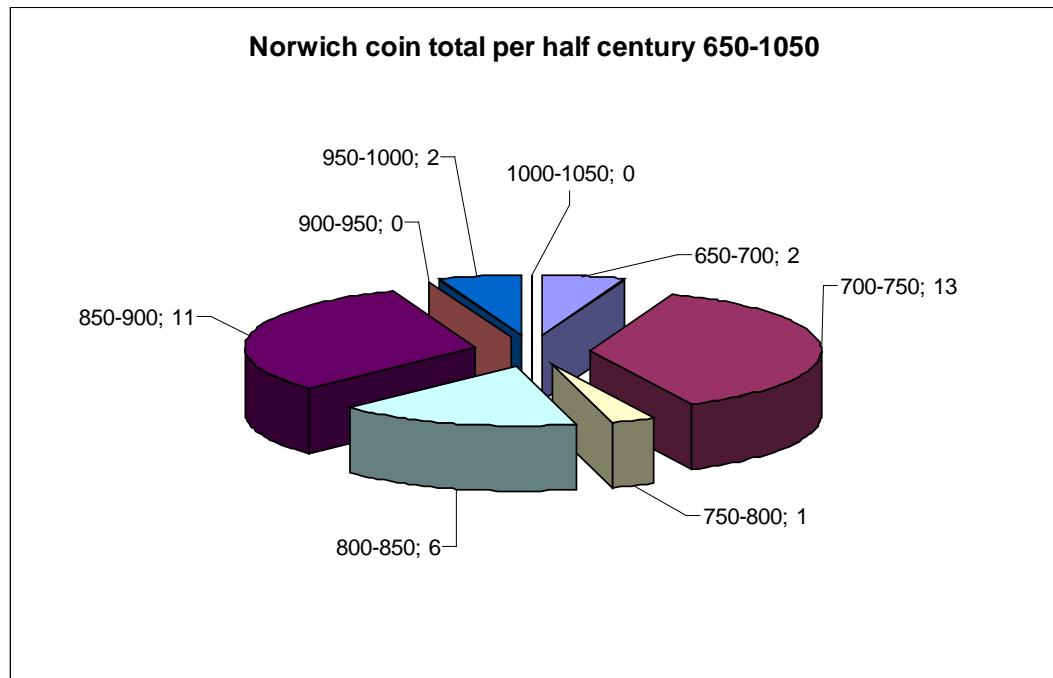
<sup>174</sup> See Percival, *Excavations in the French Borough*.

<sup>175</sup> Stepping Lane excavations were undertaken by the Northants Archaeological Unit, and those at Cinema City by the NAU: both remain unpublished.

<sup>176</sup> Ayers, *Norwich*, 29–31.

<sup>177</sup> P. Sawyer, *Anglo-Saxon Lincolnshire* (Lincoln, 1998).

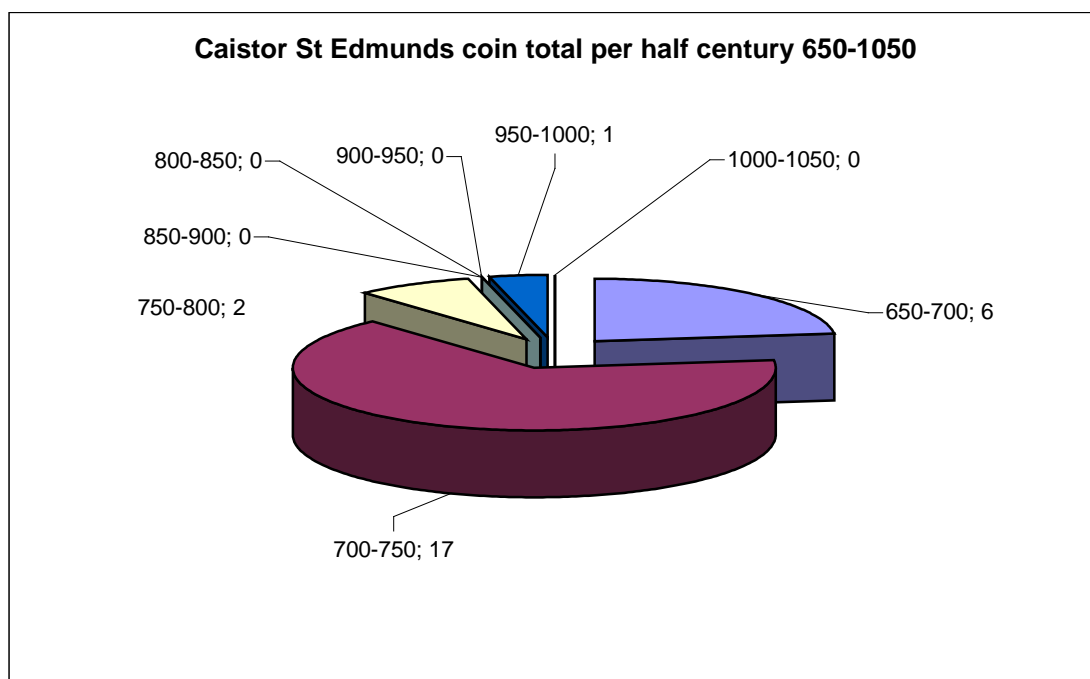
<sup>178</sup> B.S. Ayers, and P. Murphy, *A Waterfront Excavation at Whitefriars Street Car Park, Norwich 1979*, East Anglian Archaeology 17 (1983).



**Fig. 212.** Norwich's coin-loss chronology.

The coin-loss evidence for Norwich is plotted in Fig. 211 by half-century; in terms of overall numbers it is a smaller assemblage than the other centres but Norwich perhaps represents a unique situation, as, unlike at any of the others, a medieval city sits atop the Saxon town. Norwich seems to be biased in the relative lack of coinage compared to Ipswich; it has been established that Norwich had a mint during the late 9th and early 10th century (see Chapter 7), although there are no losses recorded for these coin types. This may be in part due to a sampling bias, however – the areas where Middle Saxon archaeological deposits are likely to survive well are now within the Cathedral precinct or in parts of the town that have not seen large-scale investigations, such as Tombland and Fishergate. Where investigations have taken place in these areas the keyhole glimpses have been intriguing and in a number of cases have demonstrated Middle Saxon features surviving. Where large-scale excavation has taken place, as at Castle Mall, Greyfriars and the Millennium Library, there has been evidence of significant activities, but these locations are likely to have been peripheral in the period being investigated here. At these sites early material survives in small islands of deposits which are surrounded by later destructive intrusions. Despite this, good evidence for Viking minting was uncovered at Greyfriars and convincing evidence also for minting from the Millennium Library.

## Caistor St Edmund: 'Norwich-shire'



**Fig. 213.** Caistor St Edmund coin-loss chronology.

Caistor St Edmund has 24 coins dating from between AD 675 and 850. Unlike any other 'productive' sites in East Anglia, Caistor was a Roman town. Indeed, it was the only major town in the region, being the *civitas* of the Iceni tribal area. We do not know how long *Venta Icenorum* may have continued after abandonment by the Roman administration, although recent work by Ken Dark on urban continuity has argued for the survival of some towns into the later 5th century in eastern England.<sup>179</sup> A pagan cemetery consisting mainly of cremations has been found c.300m to the east of the former Roman town, another was discovered at Markshall, within the parish of Caistor St Edmund, and a 7th- to 8th-century inhumation cemetery was revealed at Harford Farm, to the south; this has been recently published.<sup>180</sup> The 'productive' site itself is located on the western bank of the river Tas, on the opposite side to the town. How the town itself might have been utilised by this period will remain speculative unless more excavation is undertaken within its confines. Outside the 3<sup>rd</sup> century walls there were two Roman suburbs, and to the south of the town was an oval amphitheatre, discovered through aerial photograph and recently confirmed through geophysical

<sup>179</sup> Dark *Civitas to Kingdom*, 86.

<sup>180</sup> Myers and Green, *Anglo-Saxon Cemeteries*, Penn, *Excavations on the Norwich Southern Bypass*.

survey. A temple complex surrounded by a *temenos* lies c.1km to the north-east.<sup>181</sup> There is no evidence for use of the interior of the town after the 5th century, but this may be in part due to a lack of investigations. The landscape around the town must have been impressive, and the use of the amphitheatre as a focus of later activity is a particularly compelling idea. However, given that the finds concentration from the Middle Saxon period and the cemetery were both on the opposite side of the river, the settlement focus seems to be diffuse. The general area has, however, been a focus for monumental structures since the Neolithic; Arminghall Henge, for example, is located just to the north.

The coinage consists of a variety of Continental and English items. There are only two coins of definite later-8th-century date and an Æthelred II (AD 978–1016). The bulk of the material dates from the earlier 8th century, with six coins of the later 7th century, of both Continental and English origins. The lack of quantities of later coinage may suggest that activity ceased here in the later 8th century, perhaps shifting to Norwich. However, coinage in the late 8th and 9th centuries becomes much rarer nationally and its lack, compared with assemblages of the earlier 8th century, is not necessarily significant.<sup>182</sup> There is a good fit between the coin charts of Norwich and Caistor, suggesting that the latter began as the more important of the two centres and gave way slowly to Norwich.

### **The historical context for East Anglian urbanisation in the 8th to 10th centuries**

This section will discuss the evidence pertaining to early medieval towns in East Anglia. Few documents prior to Domesday Book refer to East Anglian urban life, so the archaeological record must form the basis of the discussion. Even here, however, the availability of information is variable and heavily biased towards the larger centres, where there have been more intense archaeological investigations. Ipswich, Norwich, Thetford, King's Lynn and, to a lesser extent, Bury St Edmunds and Great Yarmouth have all been subject to significant programmes of work, many of which remain unpublished. The availability of unpublished information is patchy and its quality can make drawing comparisons between results problematic.

Other sources from later periods will also be utilised in an attempt to tease out the early medieval mindset relating to towns. In many ways the evidence within Domesday Book for town life is ambiguous: in some cases towns are discussed at great length as towns, with the idea of a separate class of burgess clearly defined from other tied individuals. But towns are not discussed in the same way across the region and the number of places with burgesses seems to make no sense in

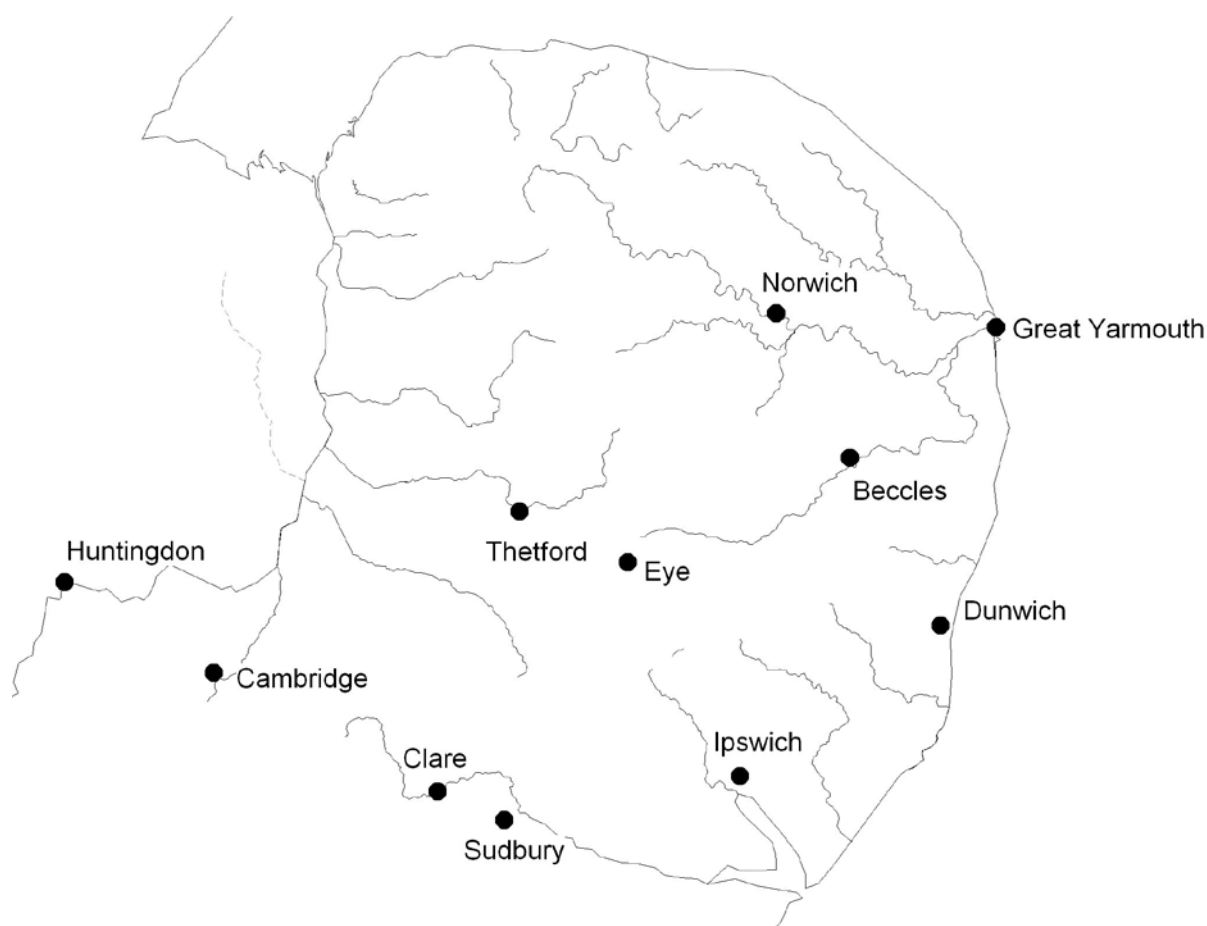
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<sup>181</sup> Norfolk Historic Environment Record.

<sup>182</sup> Blackburn, ““Productive” sites”.

terms of market locations. Markets discussed in Domesday will also be reviewed; their distribution is particularly perplexing, for the most part being restricted to Suffolk. Concepts of administrative exemption will be outlined and a model will be developed relating to the documentary materials.

Following the discussions in Chapter 3, this section returns to the theme of modern concepts of a town and their meaning in the context of Anglo-Saxon England. In particular, it will explore some of the problems relating to defining and discussing East Anglian towns during this period and will consider whether the 'town', as such, is a useful concept to apply to social structures of place during the period from the 7th to the 10th centuries.



**Fig. 214.** Places listed in Little Domesday as containing burghesses.

A map of East Anglian boroughs established by Domesday (Fig. 213) illustrates that there is a significant area of northern and north-western Norfolk that did not possess an urban centre in 1086. Often the inference drawn from this has been that the plantation of Bishop's Lynn was thus filling a



gap in the urban geography. Atkin has discussed the evidence for East Anglian urban places. His chronological hypothesis for urban genesis comprises three periods:

- Ipswich – 7th and 8th century
- Norwich, Thetford, Sudbury and Bury St Edmunds – 10th century
- Beccles, Clare, Dunwich and Eye – 11th century

Within this schema, according to Atkin, Ipswich is the only urban place in the kingdom prior to the tenth century.<sup>183</sup> Historical evidence for the location of mints in the 10th century is the basis for the identification of a place as a town.<sup>184</sup> The inclusion of Sudbury and Bury St Edmunds derives directly from the evidence for them being minor mints by the end of the 10th century.

The *Liber Eliensis* (compiled 1169 × 1174) contains a passage from the late 10th century implying a law that allowed free trading in land within the region only at Norwich, Ipswich, Cambridge and Thetford.<sup>185</sup> Domesday records only nine places with burgesses in Norfolk and Suffolk.<sup>186</sup> Three of these were in Norfolk (Norwich, Thetford and Great Yarmouth), and six in Suffolk (Ipswich, Dunwich, Eye, Beccles, Clare and Sudbury). Darby notes that the Domesday record for Norfolk is unsatisfactory in its discussion of urban life, suggesting that all three places must have had markets, yet none was recorded.

The markets of Domesday Norfolk were, therefore, in places not defined as towns; with records only for Dunham, Litcham and Holt.<sup>187</sup> Suffolk's 'urban' Domesday record seems to meet expectations better, in that it contains more boroughs but also more references to markets than any of the other eastern counties, with four correlations between the two types of information. There are nine entries for Suffolk markets: Beccles, Sudbury, Eye, Clare, Thorney, Blythburgh, *Caramhalla*, Haverhill and Hoxne.<sup>188</sup> For Suffolk, Darby adds Bury St Edmunds to the list of boroughs, although the entry makes no mention of burgesses and records the place as a vill. He goes on to relay that the account for Bury is fraught with difficulties, but testifies to the growth of a commercial centre.<sup>189</sup> It is salutary to note that what does and does not appear in Domesday is not always easily or simply

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<sup>183</sup> M. Atkin, 'The Anglo-Saxon urban landscape in East Anglia', *Landscape History* 7 (1985), 28; and K. Wade, 'The urbanisation of East Anglia: the Ipswich perspective', in J. Gardiner and T. Williamson (eds), *Flatlands and Wetlands: Current Themes in East Anglian Archaeology* (East Anglian Archaeology 50, 1994), 144.

<sup>184</sup> Atkin, 'The Anglo-Saxon urban landscape', 28.

<sup>185</sup> E.O. Blake (ed.), *Liber Eliensis* (London, 1962), 100. Also discussed in Ayers, *Norwich*, 35.

<sup>186</sup> Darby, *Domesday Geography of Eastern England*, 139–42 and 192–9.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*, 139.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*, 202.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*, 197–8.

correlated to some historical preconceptions, particularly with regards to the concept of a town. For instance, London is absent from the record, and so is much of Winchester from the Hampshire Domesday survey, although several manors do contain references for properties within Winchester.<sup>190</sup> In many cases such anomalies may represent *geld* exemptions linked to royal and ecclesiastical inland.

Commentators on the development of East Anglian urbanisation notably omit the Middle Anglian, i.e. modern Cambridgeshire, situation; for instance, both Wade and Atkin restrict their discussions to Norfolk and Suffolk.<sup>191</sup> However, there is good historical evidence for East Anglian control over at least part of Middle Anglia having been established through the marriage of King Anna's (d. AD 653/4) daughter Æthelthryth to Tondbert, the *princeps* of South Gyrwe. Æthelthryth went on to found the monastery at Ely in AD 673.<sup>192</sup> Whether such control lasted is not known. The distribution of Ipswich ware may be as good an indicator of East Anglian control as any other source, although its ubiquity in London cannot be explained in this way. This distribution extends into what are now Lincolnshire and Cambridgeshire and more dendritically into Northamptonshire.<sup>193</sup> (This is not to suggest that the status and role of Ipswich ware was the same for places outside the kingdom; its occurrence in relatively large quantities at London is indicative that it was also an interregional trade item or, perhaps more probably, contained or accompanied products that were the subject of inter-regional trade.<sup>194</sup>) By the mid 10th century Cambridgeshire and, more peculiarly, Northamptonshire were within the jurisdiction of Æthelwine, ealdorman of East Anglia.<sup>195</sup> While the Fens have often been seen as providing a strategic buffer zone between East Anglia and Mercia, probably hindering East Anglian expansion but also protecting it to an extent against Mercian take-over,<sup>196</sup> this is a modern conceptualisation; the reality at the time was that Fenland was a waterway from the Wash through to East Anglia, Middle Anglia and Mercia. It can be surmised, therefore, that the area may have shifted easily between the control of different kingdoms throughout the pre-Viking period.

Our knowledge of the urban situation in Middle Anglia by 1086 is perhaps even more murky than that for Norfolk. In southern Lincolnshire, Domesday records Stamford and Grantham as

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<sup>190</sup> A. Dyer, 'Appendix: ranking lists of English medieval towns', in D.M. Palliser (ed.), *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain: Vol 1, 600–1540* (Cambridge, 2000), 752; D. Hinton 'The towns of Hampshire', in J. Haslam (ed.) *Anglo-Saxon Towns in Southern England* (Southampton, 1984), 151.

<sup>191</sup> Wade, 'The urbanisation of East Anglia', 144–5.

<sup>192</sup> HE IV.19 and discussed in P. Courtney, 'The early Saxon fenland: a reconsideration', in D. Brown, J. Campbell and S.C. Hawkes (eds), *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History 2* (Oxford, 1981), 91–9; and Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, 63.

<sup>193</sup> Blinkhorn, 'Of cabbages and kings', 5–8.

<sup>194</sup> L. Blackmore, 'The pottery', in Malcolm *et al.*, *Middle Saxon London*, 234–5.

<sup>195</sup> D. Whitlock, 'Forward' in EHDi; Blake, *Liber Eliensis*, xiii.

<sup>196</sup> Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, 65.

containing burgesses.<sup>197</sup> A mention occurs of a market at Spalding (worth 40 shillings) but, again, there is no discussion of markets within any of the Lincolnshire boroughs.<sup>198</sup> Spalding also paid *taille* (a forced payment mainly taken from towns, and more commonly associated with Normandy) of £30.<sup>199</sup> For the whole of Cambridgeshire only the reference for Cambridge itself contains a mention of burgesses.<sup>200</sup> This consists of a single sentence reference to Count Alan having ten burgesses there.<sup>201</sup> There are no Domesday entries for markets within Cambridgeshire. Huntingdon is the only recorded borough in Huntingdonshire and it, too, is not recorded as having a market. Therefore, the documentary evidence for towns is brief. This must, in part, reflect the conceptualisation of what constitutes a place of note during the period. In essence, Domesday and the archaeological record complement one another, the archaeological record demonstrating that towns developed through an oscillating, changing landscape of central places playing different roles through time. As such, the apparent ‘gaps’ in Domesday can be reconciled by the realisation of the fact that it presents just a ‘snap-shot’ of this changing process at one particular point in time.

The coin evidence suggests that the development of towns was an uneven process that, until the high medieval period, waxed and waned, as attempts were made by centralising authorities to pull taxable income into central places. Thus in some cases there was a dispersed collection of places where taxable wealth was collected and brought under central control, such as the zone defined here for the 8th century as ‘Norwich-shire’. That situation was in contrast to the more nucleated Gipping valley and north-west Norfolk examples. By the late 9th century, with the advent of a new system of rulers, the conditions of government had changed, seeing the rise of two major central places, Thetford and Norwich, that previously had been of secondary importance. Ipswich appears to last through with a dip in productivity generally in the early 9th century that perhaps correlates with the beginning of Viking attacks, as discussed in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* for the 840s. At that time there may have been a shift in the industrial-scale production of artefacts important to governance, namely coins and pottery, to other centres at Thetford and perhaps also at Norwich, though there is little direct evidence for production at these places until later.

It is postulated that the administrative, tax-collecting and central-place functions of these places survives, on the basis of the continuing coin loss, through into the Viking period. The inference is, therefore, that most of the larger concentrations represent places that were in the context of the

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<sup>197</sup> Darby, *Domesday Geography of Eastern England*, 78–82.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid., 83. Besides Stamford and Grantham, Lincoln, Torksey and Louth have records of burgesses and there are reference to markets, besides Spalding, at Thealby, Derby, Burton upon Stather, Louth, Bollingbroke, Barton upon Humber, Partney and Threkingham.

<sup>199</sup> Faith, *The English Peasantry*, 102.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid., 310.

<sup>201</sup> A. Williams and G.H. Martin (eds), *Domesday Book: A Complete Translation* (London, 2002), 530.

period urban and that the relatively smaller locations, though probably more diverse, represent administrative centres largely based on a single estate. This is a working definition used for this purposes of this study. Most ‘productive’ sites, as discussed in the literature, have been identified through metal-detecting and thus are known only through metalwork. This is a slight overstatement, as many hobby detectorists will also often recognise pottery, so perhaps a more precise way of viewing these sites is that they are known through unsystematic surface collection. This thesis is concerned with coinage: its distribution, its production and the light that it can shed upon contemporary economic systems. But, as noted, most ‘productive’ sites produce other material apart from coinage, and sites such as Brandon (Suffolk) demonstrate what can be learned from these surface scatters if they are investigated thoroughly.<sup>202</sup> In addition, Loveluck’s work at Flixborough has been crucial in developing a detailed understanding of a non-urban site in possession of an industrial productive base.<sup>203</sup> Work there and at other locations, such as Bawsey (unpublished), has shown that the more significant of these sites are not only ‘productive’ numismatically, but were also industrial centres. Whether they were also monastic sites or were in some sense secondary to the *wic* sites is an ongoing debate. It may be worth repeating the definition of a town used here: Reynolds has suggested a working definition that may help to focus the issue, ‘a town is a permanent and concentrated human settlement in which a significant proportion of the population is engaged in non-agricultural activity.’ ‘A town therefore normally lives, at least in part, off food produced by people who live outside it’.<sup>204</sup> Based on this, then, we can separate the *wics* from the large rural industrial complexes, but only through detailed archaeological understanding. The loss and production of coinage tends to be linked intimately with other sorts of production. This can be seen both at sites such as Brandon and Flixborough as well as at the urban places such as London, Ipswich and *Hamwic*.

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<sup>202</sup> Carr, ‘Staunch Meadow, Brandon’.

<sup>203</sup> See, for instance, Loveluck, ‘Wealth, waste and conspicuous consumption’.

<sup>204</sup> S. Reynolds, ‘The writing of medieval urban history in England’, *Theoretische Geschiedenis* 19 (1992), 49–50.

## Chapter 9

### Conclusions

The aim of this thesis has been to examine the development of towns, state and economy in East Anglia from the 7th to the beginning of the 10th century. It has explored, archaeologically, the early relationship between towns and coinage which became explicit in law codes from the early 10th century, but is little discussed in sources prior to this.<sup>1</sup> The premise that has been concentrated on is that this relationship can also be seen during the period when silver coinage was first distributed. In essence, then, this thesis has sought to examine the development of Anglo-Saxon towns in East Anglia through a contextual study of one category of archaeological data; at the same time it has attempted to interpret this archaeological data by drawing on a range of evidence, principally contemporary written sources, but also anthropological and historical analogies.

The clear conclusion that can be drawn from this work is that the development of towns, and by extension the administration of the East Anglian state, was to some extent contextually specific during the early development phase in the 8th century. There is no one linear, ‘catch-all’ model of urban development, which may be due to the contemporary East Anglian landscape; although Williamson has dismissed the idea that East Anglia and the Midlands were organised in significantly different ways prior to the 10th century, it still remains true that the organisation of this landscape in the 5th, 6th and 7th centuries remains poorly understood.<sup>2</sup> For instance, at Ipswich the developmental trajectory from the later first quarter of the 8th century centred on the town, whereas in locations such as Norwich, Thetford, and Kings Lynn it appears that there were agglomerations of sites that fulfilled a range of town-like administrative functions and which only nucleated later, during the late 9th or early 10th centuries for Norwich and Thetford, and not until the end of the 11th century in the case of Kings Lynn. Eventually, one place within these agglomerations rises as a focus of activity to become ‘the town’. This happened more quickly in places where the king held and followed much later in some locations where eventually, particularly in the Norman period, a lord emulated this royal town

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<sup>1</sup> Blackburn, ‘Mints, burhs’, 160–75; Wormald, *The Making of English Law*; also see Chapter 3 of this thesis for a more detailed discussion of this relationship and its implications for examining the early development of towns.

<sup>2</sup> T. Williamson, ‘Explaining regional landscapes: East Anglia and the Midlands in the Middle Ages’, in C. Harper-Bill (ed.), *Medieval East Anglia* (Woodbridge, 2005), 11–32. Recent work by M. Chester-Kadwell, ‘Metal Detected Finds in Context: Early Anglo-Saxon Cemeteries in Breckland, Norfolk’ (unpublished MPhil thesis, 2008), has certainly helped to shed light on the pre-conversion settlement landscape.

establishment; usually it appears this was a political decision and not a necessary result of other geographical imperatives, such as the location of established trading links.<sup>3</sup>

### **The role of the state and the Church in the development of the economy and towns**

Blair argues that virtually any important monastic site might be termed a city by contemporaries during the later 7th and 8th centuries.<sup>4</sup> This is potentially important because it suggests the idea of urban places held a strong fascination for the elite and that we can assume that the Church's role in creating the mental landscape in which the aspiration to build towns developed may have been a significant one.<sup>5</sup>

In examining the issue of Church influence it is useful to focus on elements within what might overall be termed the state and discuss their role in the development of more centralised and coherent authority. It is clear that the Church plays a part in the organisation and inspiration for these developments and formed an influential establishment alongside the king, particularly, as well as other secular elites; the later complexity of all these institutions was in development at this time.<sup>6</sup> It is tempting to suggest that it was the Church that was probably responsible for much of the school of thought that brought about the reintroduction of coinage on a large scale, the growth of towns and the development of many of the state's administrative structures; from the 660s we can see royal land grants to the Church in increasing numbers, testifying to the crown's enthusiasm for incorporating the Church into the system of tenure and obligations, and to the Church's political ambitions and strategies for territorial acquisition; this correlates with a period of growth in the role of overlordship and increasing centralisation of authority into a few powerful kingdoms.<sup>7</sup> It seems no accident that the increasing role of the Church in territorial ownership and local political control should coincide with the growth of both coinage and towns. We can also see the influence of the Church strongly manifested in material culture at this time, particularly in the fashion for Merovingian- and Byzantine-influenced dress accessories within grave assemblages.<sup>8</sup> In East Anglia the tension between the Church's links to the Roman world and the secular elite's with Scandinavia can be seen most clearly in the material culture found in Mound I at Sutton Hoo.<sup>9</sup> The trend towards Roman styles of decoration can be seen clearly in the iconography utilised on first the gold then the silver coinage of the period between AD 600–850.<sup>10</sup> Several aspects of the distribution and development of coin loss in the East Anglian landscape point towards ecclesiastic control over

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. Hodges, *Dark Age Economics*, who effectively argues the same from a different set of evidence.

<sup>4</sup> Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon England*, 247.

<sup>5</sup> Hodges, *Towns and Trade*, 38–41.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 84–5.

<sup>7</sup> Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon England*, 87–9; B. Yorke, *The Conversion of Britain 600–800* (Harlow, 2006), 62.

<sup>8</sup> Geake, *Grave-Goods in Conversion-Period England*; Harris, *Byzantium, Britain and the West*.

<sup>9</sup> Carver, *Sutton Hoo: Burial Ground of Kings?*

<sup>10</sup> Gannon, *Iconography*.

at least a few of the types circulating in the late 7th and 8th centuries.<sup>11</sup> Gannon has argued specifically from the coin evidence that monastic and minster sites were responsible for much economic activity during the late 7th through to the 9th century.<sup>12</sup> Within East Anglia Gannon has suggested that Series Q sceats may have been under monastic and Series R under secular control.<sup>13</sup> This can then be more clearly seen in the later national coinages of the late 8th and 9th centuries, with widespread losses of coins being supplied by the archdiocese.<sup>14</sup> The establishment of religious houses by kings and the subsequent utilisation of these links have been fruitful topics of research for a number of key analysts and may provide further insight into the development of towns and the state.<sup>15</sup>

### **The specific role of kingship in the production of coinage and the development of towns**

Coinage from the early 10th century can clearly be seen to have been firmly controlled by the king. It can be argued that the royal symbolism seen on coins dating back to the late 6th century and earlier demonstrate that coins have long been associated with kingship.<sup>16</sup> Those locations where such coinage was lost have been discussed at length in this thesis and it has been suggested that these geographical patterns relate specifically to tenure and other types of landholdings, in the form of estates that were controlled by a social and economic elite, most especially the king.<sup>17</sup> Through the lens of place-names correlated with coin loss densities we can see that it is generally at the heart of large estates that coinage is being utilised and lost; in East Anglia these central settlements tend to have place-names with the ending *-ham*.<sup>18</sup> Analysts such as Ulmschneider and Pestell have argued that many of these estate centres are likely to represent monastic residences.<sup>19</sup> However, this should not distract from the fact that clearly these places had their roots in the kingship and social structures of the earlier Anglo-Saxon period.<sup>20</sup> The Church's role is important in the development of the settlement hierarchy but many of administrative roles and structures arguably already existed in the 6th century prior to the re-establishment of Christianity.

The development of coinage is related to the state's need to accrue portable and easily utilisable wealth and at the same time concentrate resources in defended and self-sufficient productive locations – towns. What the state is paying for with coinage can be guessed at

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<sup>11</sup> See Chapters 4, 5 6, what is difficult to explain, however, is the apparent decline in ecclesiastical coin production from the later 8th century.

<sup>12</sup> Gannon, *Iconography*, 189–91; Ulmschneider, *Markets, Minsters and Metal-detectors*.

<sup>13</sup> Gannon, *Iconography*, 191.

<sup>14</sup> See Chapter 7.

<sup>15</sup> Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon England*; Pestell, *Landscapes of Monastic Foundation*.

<sup>16</sup> Williams, 'The circulation and function of coinage', 167–8.

<sup>17</sup> Chapters 3 and 8 discuss the implications of the geographical pattern of coin loss.

<sup>18</sup> Williamson, *Origins of Norfolk*, 85–90; Hutcheson, 'The origins of Kings Lynn?', 71–104; and see Chapter 8.

<sup>19</sup> Pestell, *Landscapes of Monastic Foundation*; Ulmschneider, *Markets, Minsters, and Metal-detectors*.

<sup>20</sup> See Chapter 3 of this thesis.

through the historical sources.<sup>21</sup> It seems likely that inter-kingdom exchanges are being regulated and defined through the payment of obligations such as tribute, increasingly, we can surmise, through the use of coinage. It may be this aspect of exchange that is driving the development of not only the coinage but also the need to accrue and fix wealth in other ways also.

The pattern of coin loss and the distribution of other artefact types, particularly pottery, in East Anglia strongly suggest that production of these classes of material was centralised. This can be seen most particularly with Ipswich ware, which was produced solely within the *wic* at Ipswich and distributed throughout the realm and beyond as a trade item (or by-product of the trade of other items) to other parts of England and the Continent.<sup>22</sup> Ipswich ware is found in quantity in London, for instance, suggesting significant trade between the two *wics*.<sup>23</sup> A less centralised situation seems to have existed for coin production, for which the evidence of production is difficult to unpick until the late 9th century. Different degrees of centralisation of coin loss evident in the landscape have been characterised here as dispersed zones and nucleated zones. The two most nucleated zones were the Gipping valley, with centralisation of coin finds at Ipswich, and the north-west of the region, with much coin loss demonstrating more dispersed functions, perhaps with a focal point initially at Bawsey. The role of kings in this has been discussed throughout this thesis but specifically in Chapter 7 with the development of mass coinage and the connection between coins and towns appearing within contemporary law codes. During the 8th century it is tempting to see administrative centralisation as dynamic and in contention, the most significant location perhaps being Ipswich. It would follow that Ipswich was the king's primary economic administrative centre and most of the other significant locations where we find coins of this period are likely to be estate centres held by either ecclesiastical or secular lords. However, that is not the whole story and a separate structure overlying the estates exists, with places that later became *burhs* found in several locations. These may be interpreted, mainly through reference to the information on towns contained in Domesday, as an attempt by the king to gain further control over land and tenure through involving lords politically and economically (see Chapter 8, Fig. 196).<sup>24</sup> Thus there appears to be a two-tiered tenurial structure, with the estate and its centre forming the base and a second tier of royal *burhs* extracting wealth from these. Chronologically the estates came first, with the

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<sup>21</sup> See, for instance, Maddicott, 'The wealth of King Alfred', 3–51.

<sup>22</sup> Blinkhorn, 'Of cabbages and kings'.

<sup>23</sup> Blackmore, 'The pottery'.

<sup>24</sup> Roffe, *Decoding Domesday*, 110; G.H. Martin, 'The Domesday Book and boroughs', in P.H. Sawyer (ed.), *Domesday Book: A Reassessment* (London, 1985), 143–63.



*burh* structure overlaid piecemeal and incompletely. The important aspect of this is that all these structures appear to be in place in East Anglia by the middle of the 8th century.<sup>25</sup>

### **What role did the Vikings play in town development?**

Historians are divided on the role of towns and their importance in medieval society prior to c.1200. Some argue, for instance, that 11th-century towns were characterised by an absence of manufacturing and significant specialised activity.<sup>26</sup> Prior to the 12th century there is a paucity of economically indicative and easily interpreted information on the economic conditions other than archaeological data. As already discussed, Domesday is unclear and somewhat counter-intuitive in its discussion of towns, but what can be extracted is that they were intimately connected with tenure and wealth centralisation, as well as being a key element of the military infrastructure.<sup>27</sup> Ayers suggests that Norwich's growth into a town began during the period of the Danelaw.<sup>28</sup> Both he and, earlier, Carter do acknowledge the Middle Saxon origins to the place, if not the town itself.<sup>29</sup> The same sort of situation has also been argued by Andrews for Thetford.<sup>30</sup> It has been suggested in this thesis that the initial growth of these places can be seen in the coin assemblages from both to be earlier.<sup>31</sup> It has also been demonstrated in this thesis that both Norwich and Thetford were mints during the period of the Danelaw, with particularly strong evidence from Norwich. In apparently becoming significant towns in the Viking period they both also became fortified *burhs* after the conquest by Edward the Elder. Recent work on the defences of both towns has demonstrated that they had double sets of fortifications on both sides of their respective rivers, effectively fortifying the bridge crossings.<sup>32</sup> Rapid growth during the later 9th and 10th centuries can be seen particularly clearly at Thetford through both the coin assemblage associated with the town and the large archaeological body of work undertaken there from the 1940s; its archaeological remains have survived well compared with those of Norwich and are very much more easily accessed through open-area excavation within large green spaces in the modern town.<sup>33</sup> The combined set of coinage, pottery and settlement evidence for Norwich urges a more conservative assessment of its Middle Saxon size and

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<sup>25</sup> This pre-dates the establishment in Mercia of a system of *burhs* during the reign of Offa; Haslam, 'Market and fortress'.

<sup>26</sup> J. Campbell, 'Was it infancy in England?', in *idem*, *The Anglo-Saxon State*, 188–9.

<sup>27</sup> Roffe, *Decoding Domesday*, 109–12.

<sup>28</sup> Ayers, *Norwich*, 23–7.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*; Carter, 'The Anglo-Saxon origins of Norwich', 175–204, esp. 181, fig. 3.

<sup>30</sup> Andrews, *Excavations at Redcastle Furze*, 137; Andrews and Penn, *Excavations in Thetford*, 87.

<sup>31</sup> See Chapter 7.

<sup>32</sup> See Chapter 8.

<sup>33</sup> Dallas, *Excavations in Thetford*, 218–19, regarded the northern defences as being either Viking-period in date or related to the campaign of Edward the Elder; however, Dallas felt that the southern enclosure was later, probably as late as early–mid 11th century. New evidence discussed in Chapter 8 of this thesis, in the form of OSL dating of the southern enclosure, suggests that it dates from c. AD 918. It now therefore seems more likely that both sets of defences, north and south of the river, were built during the conquest of East Anglia by Edward the Elder.

importance than is currently the case for Thetford; its subsequent growth can be seen clearly but not charted as readily.

Social structure and Scandinavian influence within the southern Danelaw are perhaps more difficult to discern than in the historically better-understood north. The place-name differences between the north and south Danelaw are compelling, with far fewer Scandinavian endings in the south.<sup>34</sup> A dividing line between the two areas can be drawn approximately at the river Welland in southern Lincolnshire. Even a cursory glance at a map of the Wash illustrates that Grimston hybrid names and places-names ending in *-by* are much less dense in the south of the area. The concentration of Scandinavian place-names seems to be fairly even across much of the northern Danelaw, with some clustering to rivers. However, the East Anglian evidence coin evidence contrasts with Danish place-names found predominantly in the north-eastern part of the former kingdom.<sup>35</sup> The largest concentration is clustered in and around the former island of Flegg and Lothingland in east Norfolk and north-east Suffolk.<sup>36</sup> Notably, there are very few Scandinavian-derived place-names in west Norfolk and the Fens, in an area where arguably the East Anglian monarch held the least sway and lordship was most prolific and powerful; by extension, it may be assumed that the areas with the greatest numbers of freemen at Domesday should perhaps be located in the north-east and south of the region.<sup>37</sup> Predominantly that seems to have been the case, with the largest densities of freemen in Norfolk found in the east of the county, whereas the distribution of sokemen seems to have been scattered evenly across Norfolk.<sup>38</sup> Perhaps we can also see this Scandinavian influence in the locations of the places that grew into major towns during the 9th, 10th and 11th centuries (see Chapter 8, Fig. 213); by Domesday there were no towns in the north-west of the region but several in the south and, particularly, the east.

The demise of Ipswich ware is perhaps a useful case in point with which to examine this situation.<sup>39</sup> Historically, it makes sense that production of Ipswich ware ceased sometime during the period of Danish raiding or conquest. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* records that East Anglia, along with Lindsey and Kent, suffered particularly in AD 841.<sup>40</sup> Subsequently, Ivarr the Boneless and Halfdan led the great army which landed in East Anglia in AD 865 and 868, and which in AD 869 used Thetford as a base. The Danes defeated the East Anglian army reputedly at Hoxne, in Suffolk, martyring King Edmund in AD 869.<sup>41</sup> The choice of Thetford as a base is interesting, as while it is certainly situated in a strategic location it seems to have been

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<sup>34</sup> D.M. Hadley, *The Northern Danelaw: Its Social Structure* (Leicester, 2000), 17–22.

<sup>35</sup> Pestell, *Landscapes of Monastic Foundation*, 67.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, fig. 15, 68; Williamson, *Origins of Norfolk*, fig. 5.1, 109.

<sup>37</sup> See Chapter 8 for a discussion of the development of fen-edge estates.

<sup>38</sup> Williamson, *Origins of Norfolk*, 119–20, figs 5.5 and 5.6.

<sup>39</sup> Blinkhorn, 'Of cabbages and kings', 28–9; Hutcheson, 'The origins of Kings Lynn?'.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>40</sup> ASC, 64; Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 243; Ipswich itself is not mentioned in the chronicle until AD 991, and then again in 1010 (ASC, 126–7 and 140).

<sup>41</sup> Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 248.

subordinate to Ipswich in many ways. Why not Ipswich? It was the larger and, it must be assumed, the bigger prize but is not mentioned within the accounts at this time. It is possible that the *wic* at Ipswich ceased to be used, perhaps because of its vulnerable position, around AD 841; thus the production of Ipswich ware ceased. The East Anglian royal administration may at this time have moved inland to Thetford and perhaps to Norwich. Indeed, the appearance of Thetford-type wares at around this time may not be a coincidence. Stretching the point further, Thetford-type ware may be the administration's redevelopment of a necessary industry, essentially relocating and redefining the hub of the *feorm* and foot-rent network away from Ipswich to what appeared to be safer ground.<sup>42</sup> This network was then easily reutilised by the Danish. Guthrum's subsequent annexation of East Anglia and official sharing-out of lands may have been facilitated more easily here than in other parts of the Danelaw because of the efficient system of tributary collection which was already in place.

The archaeological evidence for Ipswich may provide some substance for this interpretation. Little coinage is found here from the later 8th through to the earlier 10th century, which was thought by Wade to indicate the *wic*'s decline under Mercian control.<sup>43</sup> This trend could as easily denote, first, Danish raiding, followed by movement of the administrative apparatus to other locations. Ipswich is fortified in the early 10th century and coinage appears to return.<sup>44</sup>

The lack of Danish place-names throughout much of East Anglia and in western Norfolk and the Wash in particular may represent a certain amount of East Anglian continuity in administration of these rich sub-regions. Perhaps in the north-west some Anglo-Saxon tenurial holdings remained relatively independent of the centre during the Danelaw. This is further suggested by the continuity of coin loss in some locations (see the previous section, above). It can be assumed from the nature of the materials being found archaeologically in these situations that these foci of coinage remained important and represent redistributive and taxation centres, which survive throughout the early medieval period.

It is notable that the largest assemblage of single finds of St Edmund Memorial pennies lies in Ipswich, but there is an absence of this type from Bawsey. Perhaps we can interpret this as reflecting different groups in control of these places at this point in time. As discussed, coinage is associated strongly with kingship and it may be salient that coinage is still being produced during the Viking rule under an East Anglian king's name.

### ***Burhs* and the importance of Athelstan's proclamation at Grately**

We see in the law code of Aethelstan for the first time the legal attempt, at least in writing, to regulate the administrative function of towns. A dynastic interest in the use of towns and their

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<sup>42</sup> Hutcheson, 'The origins of King's Lynn?', 71–104.

<sup>43</sup> Wade, 'Ipswich', note 39, 97.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

potential for provisioning and protecting the mechanisms of government can be clearly traced back to Alfred.<sup>45</sup> Some of the laws described by Aethelstan are no doubt based on the legal concepts and governmental philosophy of Alfred and Edward the Elder; for instance, the prohibition to purchase outside a town is a repetition of a regulation of Edward the Elder.<sup>46</sup>

Until quite recently the evidence for the creation of *burhs* in East Anglia during the reign of Edward the Elder was circumstantial; this is no longer the case, with recent work on the defensive circuits of both Thetford and Norwich. Work at Jubilee Close in Thetford and at a number of locations in Norwich, as discussed in Chapter 8, has helped to refine the dating and morphology of the defences at both places.<sup>47</sup> It can now be asserted with some certainty that they were both bridge-head *burhs* dating from the early 10th century, probably from around AD 918. We can see from the distribution of *sceattas* correlated with the location of later *burhs* that these were all important administrative locations as early as the first half of the 8th century. This is not a surprise in the case of Ipswich but does provide insight into the importance of Norwich, Thetford and Bawsey in the Anglian period.

### Conclusions looking forward

This research has demonstrated that there is now a body of archaeological material, much of which has been collected through metal-detecting activity, that can, through a contextual analysis, be utilised to investigate issues such as the development of towns and the state during the 7th to 9th centuries. There is now more data than ever, providing archaeologists and historians with the opportunity to thoroughly examine, or re-examine, the models and theories that have been developed in the past to understand this period. This thesis has attempted to deal with a particular set of information, namely coins; however, there is a range of other datasets and approaches that could have been utilised, and, like any piece of research, the ideas that have been formed lead to further questions and potential avenues of further research.

There are many threads that would be interesting to follow up, but foremost among these is the problem of Ipswich ware: what was it used for and why was it so centralised in its production?<sup>48</sup> Geo-analytical analysis may help to refine where the pottery was manufactured and whether the current assumptions that it was produced solely in Ipswich are true. As a corollary to this, it is crucial to know what was contained within the pottery as it made its way to the great variety of locations where it has been found. Lipid analysis may provide a route to

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<sup>45</sup> Brooks, 'The Burghal Hidage', 74–87.

<sup>46</sup> *EHDi*, 384, note 1; The pertinent laws themselves are discussed in Chapters 2 and 3 of this thesis.

<sup>47</sup> Recent work by the Norfolk Archaeological Unit, managed by the author, revealed a section through the Late Saxon defences; OSL dates from the base of the ditch were obtained and initial analyses suggested a mean date of c. AD 917 for the construction of the defences; Stepping Lane excavations were undertaken by the Northamptonshire Archaeological Unit and Cinema City by the NAU: both remain unpublished.

<sup>48</sup> Blinkhorn, 'Of cabbages and kings', 4–23.

understanding this and thus help in understanding whether the model suggested for the first time here, that it was a means for the state to collect *feorm*, has any real basis.

There are also a number of loose ends in terms of minting within the region, both for the 8th century and the late 9th century, as there is as yet no good evidence for *sceatta* minting in any location. Some simple correlation of the chemistry of individual issues would help in refining the picture and may point to clusters that currently are not clear from the typological identifications. Lastly, there is unfinished work to be undertaken in examining the archaeological evidence for Viking minting within Norwich. Due to the woefully under-funded nature of developer-led archaeological investigation, much less than is necessary has been undertaken in looking at the chemistry behind the processes resulting in the waste material that was found at both Greyfriars and the Millennium Library. Understanding the composition of the gold ingot and how it relates to the gold-containing crucible found nearby is a critical question. An understanding of where the gold and silver originated would provide insight into the trade of such materials at this time.

It is hoped that the work on understanding the development of state and towns from the 7th to 10th centuries undertaken in this thesis will provide some conceptual building blocks from which some of these other research questions may grow.



**Fig. 133b.** Comparative distributions of Series J, K, L, Q and R.

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## **Appendix 1**

The enclosed CD includes a database written in MS Access and tables containing location information that can be utilised in MapInfo.

The data held within this database was collected in a number of trawls through the EMC and the Norfolk and Suffolk HERs (formerly SMRs) between October 2001 and February 2008. It was not updated beyond that February and it is worth noting that there will have been significant changes subsequently. Given the number of subsequent alterations and the time lag inherent in data becoming available, significant 'productive' sites will have arisen that have not been examined in this thesis. Indeed, several sites have come been brought to my attention subsequent to the completion of the thesis. The picture provided here is hence a point-in-time view and has now been to some extent overtaken by the growing body of new data. Having stated this, it is reassuring to note that where the new accumulations of significant numbers of Middle Saxon coins have been recognised they conform to the model extended here.