HORNDON-ON-THE-HILL, ESSEX: A MORPHOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF THE LATE SAXON AND MEDIEVAL SETTLEMENT

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Introduction

Location and geographical context

Horndon-on-the-Hill (centring on TQ67058352), hereafter simply 'Horndon', is a former small medieval market town with suspected origins as a late Saxon fortified settlement (Rippon 1996, 121–22; Essex County Council 2006, 7–9, 21–22). It is situated in southern Essex, some 35 km east of London and just to the north of the Thames estuary (Fig. 1a). Horndon occupies one of a number of low hills which are isolated features in an otherwise flat landscape (Fig. 1b). The latter is part of the topographical zone or *pays* of the Lower Thames Terraces which form a distinct contrast with the hilly *pays* of the South Essex London Clay District to the north (Rippon *et al*. 2015, 125). Horndon is situated on a prominent crescentic or 'horn-shaped' hill from which it derives its name (Fig. 2). The hill is on the London Clay Formation (British Geological Survey 1996). Neighbouring parishes are Mucking to the south, Orsett to the west, Laindon Hills to the north and Stanford-le-Hope to the east, the last originating as the Domesday estate of Hassenbrook (Williams and Martin 2002, 986; Kemble 2015, 5). The latter takes its name from the stream dividing Horndon from Stanford.

Local historic environment

Horndon is located within Barstable hundred. That hundred and the neighbouring Chafford hundred to its west possibly once comprised a single earlier Saxon territory of *Fænn-ge* ('fen-district'), defined to the west by the River Ingrebourne, to the east by the Rayleigh Hills, and to the north by the boundary between the Domesday estates of Ingrave and Hutton (Rippon 2022, 101–5). The Roman road system in the area has been reconstructed by Holbrook (2010, 3), and an additional Roman road has been identified running from the recently excavated Roman saltworks at Stanford Wharf, Stanford-le-Hope through the Laindon Hills (Rippon *et al*. 2015, 156–57). Immediately south of Horndon is the site of the early Saxon settlement at Mucking (Hamerow 1993). At East Tilbury, the probable Roman road corresponds with a routeway leading to Lower Higham in Kent, where a ferry first documented in 1293 possibly replicates the location of a Roman crossing (Hirst 2011, 111–13). Bede recounted how St Cedd founded a minster at Tilbury in 653 in the process of converting the East Saxons (*HE* III, 22). Its location is uncertain, although East Tilbury is a more likely contender than West Tilbury (Hirst 2011, 115; Rippon 2022, 106). There is also evidence for a significant Anglo-Saxon minster at South Benfleet, and another – probably of no more than local importance – at Upminster (Rippon 2022, 103–7). To the south of the Thames, the church at Dartford was of minster status (Kent County Council 2004, 12).

This study

Horndon is of interest as the site of a short-lived late Saxon mint, as evidenced by a single coin of Edward the Confessor, and the presence of earthworks to the east of the High Road which have been interpreted as a defensive enclosure of late Saxon origin (Rippon 1996, 121–22; Essex County Council 2006, 7–8, 21). There have been some archaeological excavations at Horndon (Wallis 1992; Boden 1997; Godbold 1997; Roy 2003; Peachey 2005; Allen, in prep.). While these give some insight into medieval developments here, they need to be considered in the context of the settlement topography as a whole. The approach taken here is one of morphological interpretation based on cartography, combined with the recording of ditch profiles where this was practicable. The first element will inevitably involve a degree of conjecture, as did, for instance, the analysis of Little Wilbraham, Cambridgeshire, by the late Christopher Taylor (2010). Taylor proposed that the advantage of this method was that it would 'enable ideas, even if based on the flimsiest of evidence, to be developed and then left to be taken up or rejected by other scholars using different methods' (Taylor 2010, 40). This paper takes a similar approach. After outlining the documentary history of the settlement, the latter is placed in its broader landscape context before the focus shifts to Horndon itself. The methodology used here is one of regressive analysis. The form of the later medieval settlement can be confidently recovered from a combination of the existing topography, extant buildings, the 1873 First Edition six-inch Ordnance Survey map, and the recent excavations cited above. From the elimination of probable later elements, the

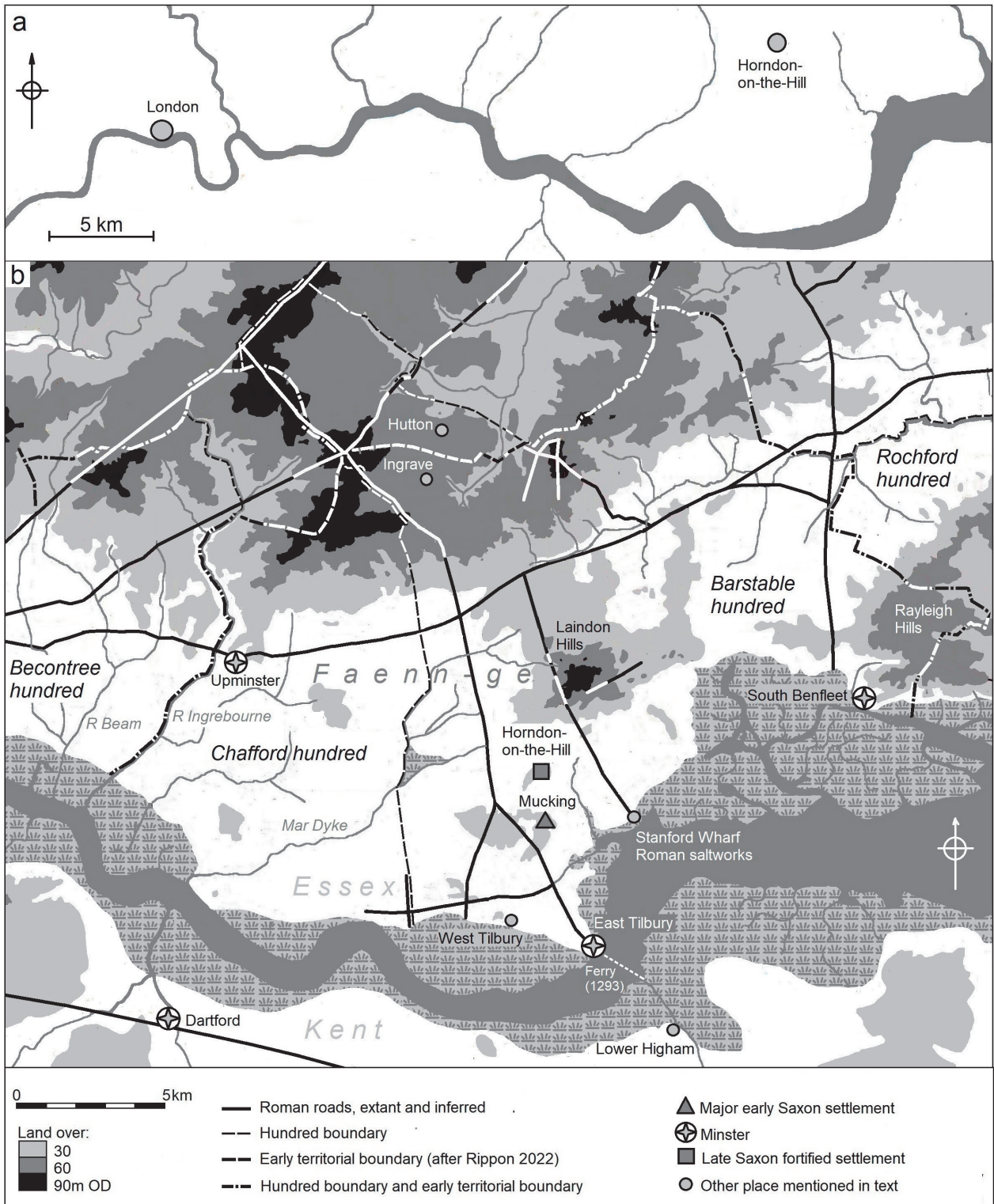[1] Waltham Cross, Hertfordshire. danseck@hotmail.co.uk

Figure 1   Horndon-on-the-Hill: (a) location in relation to London; (b) situation in relation to the Thames estuary, the Lower Thames Terraces and the South Essex London Clay District. Figure by D. Secker.

form of the earlier settlement can be deduced. It has been suggested that Horndon was grid-planned on a module of short perches of 4.57 m or fifteen feet (Blair *et al*. 2020, 226). This proposal is tested here. A tentative model for the development of the settlement is then offered, and Horndon placed in its military and economic context. Finally, it is concluded that while the recent excavations and this study have contributed to

our understanding of the early development of Horndon, there are many uncertainties which remain to be resolved by future fieldwork.

Historical summary

The earliest evidence for the existence of Horndon-on-the-Hill is numismatic: a single coin of Edward the Confessor inscribed HORNINDVNE and issued by the

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Figure 2   Horndon-on-the-Hill: situation and post-medieval topography. Figure by D. Secker.

moneyer Dudinc, datable to 1056–59 (Metcalf and Lean 1993, 206, 223). In 1066, Horndon comprised five holdings held by four freemen, a further presumed freeman called Winge, and Ælfric the Priest (Table 1). The church was staffed by a deacon as well as by Ælfric. The latter had personally endowed a church, presumably that at Horndon, with half a hide and 30 acres of land, but his Norman successor, Swein of Essex, appropriated the endowment (Williams and Martin 2002, 1000). The freeman Wulfric held fifteen acres belonging to the church in alms while a deacon held 30 acres of land in the king's alms (ibid, 988, 1041). John Blair (1996, 27) has suggested that the endowments represent a fragmented minster estate, but an alternative interpretation is that the church was a recent collegiate foundation in which the benefactors
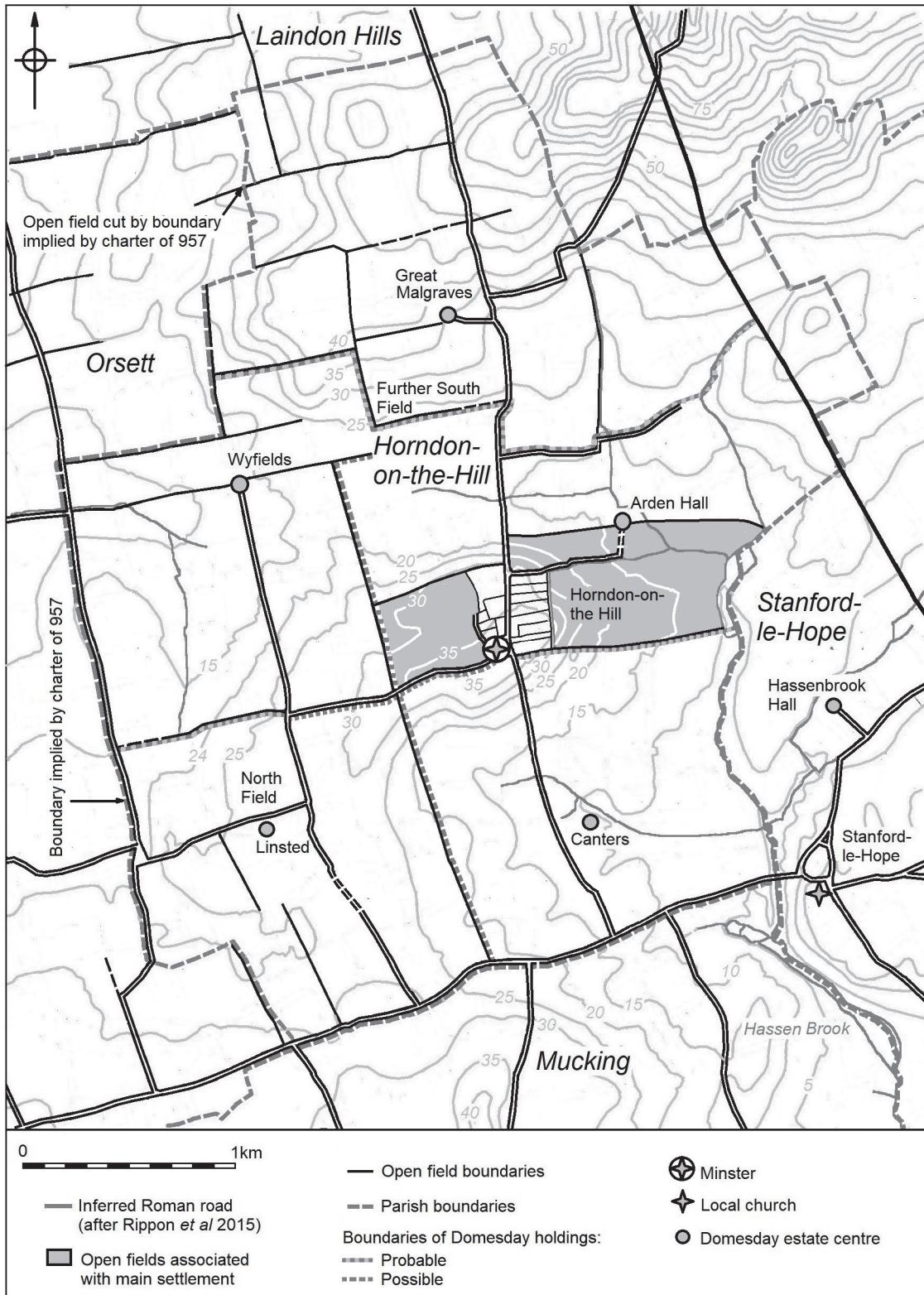
Figure 3   Horndon-on-the-Hill: reconstructed medieval topography. Figure by D. Secker.

mentioned in Domesday had a stake. That the church's endowment was greatly reduced after the Conquest may imply its transformation into a proprietary church. Between the time of the Conquest and the Domesday survey, a certain Godwine Woodhen appropriated two *mansiones* from Winge (Williams and Martin 2002, 1040). It has been suggested that these were houses

rather than hides (Rippon 1996, 122, citing Boyden 1986, 280). An interpretation proposed here is that they were *hagae* or tenement plots (for a discussion of *hagae*, see Blair 2018, 342–47). Although Horndon was largely in the hands of freemen by 1066, the fact that the church was held in the king's alms in 1066 and the existence of the short-lived mint together suggest a

close royal interest in the place. Moreover, in 957, King Eadwig granted neighbouring Orsett to Brihthelm, Bishop of London (Sawyer 1968, No. 1794). This suggests that Orsett was carved out of a larger royal estate which included Horndon.

By 1086, two of the holdings had passed to subtenants of two of the most important lay barons of Essex, Eustace of Boulogne and Swein of Essex, while another was held by a subtenant of the Bishop of London (Table 2). The remaining two holdings were held by minor tenants-in-chief. Of the five Domesday holdings, three are directly relatable to later and post-medieval sub-manors while there is more circumstantial evidence that two other places in Horndon originated as Domesday holdings (Table 3). The Bishop of London's estate, later that of Canters, was still held of the bishop in 1634 (Morant 1768, 219). Eustace's holding was held by Arnulph Malgreffe for the Honour of Boulogne in *c*. 1200, and became known as Malgraves or Great Malgraves (Morant 1768, 218). Swein's holding became that of Wyfields and was held by his descendants' Honour of Rayleigh. While the holding of Edmund son of Algot apparently disappears without trace, it is notable that among his tenants was the deacon holding 30 acres of land. Very soon after Domesday, the manor of Ardern (later Arden Hall) emerged. Thomas Ardern was mentioned in 1122 when he granted tithes of corn to Bermondsey Priory (Morant 1768, 216). That Thomas held a right of tithe suggests that his predecessor had an interest in the church. It might thus be postulated that the predecessor in question was Edmund son of Algot, whose tenants included the deacon. Hugh de St Quentin's holding is obscure, but was likely to have been at or near Linsted Farm in the south-western part of the parish, since this area is not accounted for by other Domesday holdings.

Farms of non-manorial status are recorded in the late medieval and early post-medieval periods. Rands Barn takes its name from William son of John Rande mentioned in 1485; Saffron Garden is mentioned in 1594; Gore Ox Farm was *Goreoke* in 1479; and Rucks is named after John Rukke documented in 1319–32 (Kemble 2014, 6, 10, 12–13). Cholleys, Linsted and Wrens Park are documented in the 1839 Tithe Awards (Kemble 2014, 7–8, 13). Horndon House was held of Arden Hall when it was documented in 1555 (Morant 1768, 219). Its location immediately adjacent to the manor house of Canters, however, suggests that it was originally carved out of the Bishop of London's estate. Some of the Domesday holdings and non-manorial farms perhaps originated as dispersed settlement foci pre-dating the creation of the nucleated settlement which, it is argued below, was founded in the late tenth or early eleventh century.

The church is apparently not documented between Domesday and 1291 when, in the *Taxatio* of Pope Nicholas IV, it was a possession of Barking Abbey and worth £20 6s 8d, while portions worth £2 and £1 13s 4d were then held by St John's Abbey, Colchester and Bermondsey Priory respectively (Denton 2014). The last portion presumably originated as the grant of Thomas Ardern made in 1122.

A market was first recorded in 1280, when a moiety was held by Robert Giffard of Wyfields (Letters 2013). This market was prescriptive – in other words, one which never received a formal charter and was of uncertain age when first documented. A further quarter of the market was held by Thomas Peverel of Arderns in 1353, the other quarter being held by John Malegreff of Malgraves in 1286 (Morant 1768, 217–18).

Landscape context

Horndon is situated within a landscape of co-axial fields covering southern Essex, which have been discussed elsewhere (for example: Drury and Rodwell 1980; Rippon 1991). The field system around Horndon, which has been termed the 'Basildon' system, appears to have Roman origins (Rippon *et al*. 2015, 143). Key to the dating of the skeleton of the system is the complex at Orsett Cock, where a late Iron Age and early Roman enclosure was superseded in the second century by pottery kilns and NNW–SSE field boundaries (Carter 1998, 56–62). The boundaries are aligned on many extant field boundaries and roads which may have originated as Roman-period droveways (Rippon *et al*. 2015, 160–61). If the latter interpretation is accurate, it is notable that the boundaries terminate to the south at the road adjacent to Orsett Cock, running east to Stanford-le-Hope, suggesting that this route too is of Roman origin. The latter might have once joined the recently identified Roman road which ran NNW from the Roman saltworks at Stanford Wharf (Rippon *et al*. 2015, 156–57).

It has previously been suggested that the north-south road through Horndon is of prehistoric origin (Hirst 2011, 105–6, 112). While this is debatable, the road was probably the *herestrete* ('army-road') documented in *c*. 1350 (Reaney 1935, 118; Baker and Brookes 2013, 289). It possibly originated as one of the Roman-period droveways posited by Rippon, since small amounts of Roman pottery have been found in Horndon (see below). There is evidence that the present landscape of rectilinear fields has Roman origins, but that the Roman precursors evolved into small medieval open fields before being enclosed in the early post-medieval period, the last being evident in recent cartography (Rippon *et al*. 2015, 164). If probable post-medieval enclosed fields are eliminated, the medieval field system can be deduced (Fig. 3). It has been seen that in 957, King Eadwig granted Orsett to Brihthelm, Bishop of London (Sawyer 1968, No. 1794), Orsett being carved out of a royal estate which included both the former and Horndon. Notably, the medieval parish boundary between Horndon and Orsett cuts through that of a probable open field. This suggests that the field system pre-dated the grant of 957. Two exceptions are the fields adjacent to Horndon itself, which appear to be later and specifically related to that settlement.

Some of the boundaries of the Domesday holdings are identifiable from the later extent of their lands as recorded in the 1839 Tithe Awards (Kemble 2014, 6–16). That between Wyfields and Malgraves presumably preserves the eleventh-century boundary. It has been seen that the Bishop of London's Domesday holding probably originally included that of late medieval Horndon House, whose lands bordered the southern boundary of the probable eastern open field serving Horndon. The field itself and the land to its immediate north were held by Arden Hall, which apparently originated as the land of Edmund son of Algot (Table 3). The vast majority of field names relate to post-medieval enclosures, but two directional names

Table 1   Owners of Horndon-on-the-Hill in 1066. Table by D. Secker.

Estate	Owner	H	V	A	Vi	B	S	Glebe	Value	Ref
1	Godwine, a freeman	1	2	-	-	4	1	-	£1	977
2	Wulfric, a freeman	2	1	20	2	7	2	15 acres	£3	988
3	Ælfric the Priest	2	1	-	-	11	3	90 acres	30s	1000
4	Winge	1	2	-	-	3	-	-	£1	1040
5	2 freemen	2	2	15	1	14	3	Deacon with 30 acres (¼ of church)	50s	1041
Total	-	10	-	35	3	39	9	1 hide, 15 acres	£9	-

Key: H: hides; V: virgates; A: acres; Vi: villeins; B: Bordars; S: slaves; Ref: reference to pages in Williams and Martin 2002.

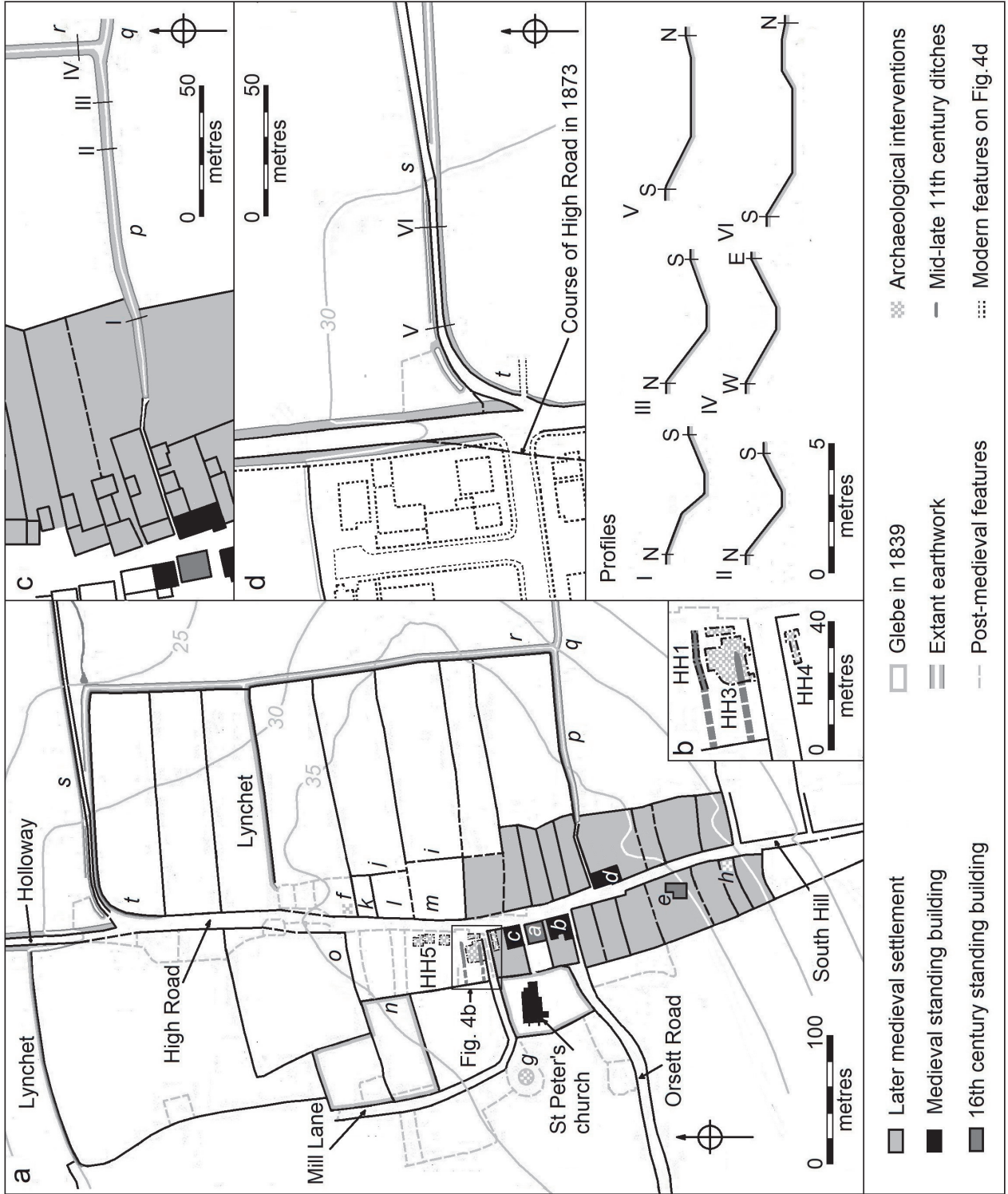*Table 2   Owners of Horndon-on-the-Hill in 1086. Table by D. Secker.*

Estate	Owner	H	V	A	Vi	B	S	Glebe	Value	Ref
1	William for Bishop of London	1	2	-	-	4	1	-	£1	977
2	Warner for Eustace of Boulogne	2	1	20	2	7	2	15 acres	£3	988
3	Pain for Swein of Essex	2	1	-	-	11	3	Appropriated by Swein of Essex	30s	1000
4	Hugh de St Quentin	1	2	-	-	3	-	-	£1	1040
5	Edmund son of Algot	2	2	15	1	14	3	Deacon with 30 acres (¼ of church)	50s	1041
Total	-	10	-	35	3	39	9	1 hide, 15 acres	£9	-

Key: H: hides; V: virgates; A: acres; Vi: villeins; B: Bordars; S: slaves; Ref: reference to pages in Williams and Martin 2002.

Table 3   Medieval manors at Horndon-on-the-Hill and their origins. Table by Patrick Allen.

Modern name	Medieval or 16th-century	Earliest known	Owner in 1086
Great Malgraves	Margraves 1486 (Court Roll)	Adulf de Malgreffe 1198 (Curia Regis Roll)	Eustace of Boulogne
Wyfield	Wythefeld 1240 (Feet of Fines)		Swein of Essex
Arden Hall	Ardenhalle 1338 (Feet of Fines)	Thomas de Ardern 1122 (Morant 1768, 216)	Edmund son of Algot?
Canters and Shaw	Cantesmylne 1555 (Court Roll)	William le Kenteys 1235 (Feet of Fines)	Bishop of London
Linsted/Linstead	Not known		Hugh de St Quentin?

Figure 4 Horndon-on-the-Hill: (a) later medieval settlement; (b) inset detail of Village Hall excavations, phase 1; (c) southern ditch; (d) northern holloway and ditch converted to road. Figure by D. Secker; Figure 4b adapted from Allen, in prep.

Legend:
- Later medieval settlement
- Medieval standing building
- 16th century standing building
- Glebe in 1839
- Extant earthwork
- Post-medieval features
- Archaeological interventions
- Mid-late 11th century ditches
- Modern features on Fig. 4d

Course of High Road in 1873

Profiles

St Peter's church, Mill Lane, High Road, Holloway, Lynchet, Orsett Road, South Hill

probably recall former open fields. A Further South Field relates to Malgraves manor (Kemble 2014, 13), while a North Field – held by the post-medieval farm of Linsted – occurs in the south-west of the parish (Kemble 2014, 8). The seemingly incongruous directional name of this field perhaps implies that it was originally the north field of a lost medieval landholding in the south-west of the parish later known as Linsted. This would support the theory that Linsted originated as the medieval Domesday holding of Hugh de St Quentin, which is otherwise unaccounted for (Table 3).

The extent of the Domesday holdings was disrupted by substantial changes in landholding patterns made between 1086 and the 1839 Tithe Award. The long linear NNW–SSE boundary dividing the southern part of Horndon in two may, however, be significant. It is postulated here that this was the original boundary between the lands of Hugh de St Quentin (Linsted?) and the Bishop of London (Canters), as well as that between Swein of Essex (Wyfields) and Edmund son of Algot (Arden Hall?).

Settlement

Horndon was a minor medieval market town and this is evident in the topography (Essex County Council 2006, 8–9, 22). The western part of the settlement has been largely obliterated by twentieth-century development, but its form can be recovered from the 1873 Ordnance Survey map (Fig. 4a). The church of SS Peter and Paul was known simply as St Peter's in the eighteenth century (Morant 1768, 219). The church, which incorporates some re-used Roman brick in its fabric, is largely of thirteenth-century and later date (RCHME 1923, 74–75). Two partly blocked early Romanesque windows survive, however, in the nave north wall (author's observation). The Market Hall (marked *a* in Fig. 4) dates from *c.* 1600, an earlier postulated fourteenth-century date being erroneous (Essex County Council 2006, 6). Of genuine late medieval date is an early fifteenth-century half-timbered and jettied house (*b*) to the south of the Market Hall (ibid, 7). Oxley House (*c*) originated as a jettied two-storey timber-framed building with an open floor, dating from *c.* 1400, which now has an eighteenth-century façade (Watkin 1998; Thurrock Council 2007, 5). These buildings indicate that the marketplace was being infilled by the late medieval period. The Bell Inn (*d*) is of late fourteenth-century origin (Essex County Council 2006, 6–7). To the south of the medieval town, Old House (*e*) is of sixteenth-century date (Thurrock Council 2007, 6–7).

A watching brief at Mayfield Cottage (*f*) revealed a pit producing only post-medieval finds (Austin 1994), but the small scale of the intervention means that the possibility of earlier occupation cannot be ruled out. Excavations at a post-medieval windmill site (*g*) produced some Roman pottery and possible human remains (Roy 2003, 5–6). This and the re-used Roman brick in the church raise the possibility that a Roman structure existed in the vicinity. Further excavations at 1 South Hill (*h*) indicated the site of a building of fourteenth- to fifteenth-century date (Essex County Council 2006, 9).

The most informative excavations at Horndon occurred on the Village Hall site to the west of the High Road, on the corner with Mill Lane, which were initially published as short notes (Wallis 1992; Boden 1997; Godbold 1997). A more detailed assessment of the results is, however, now in progress (Allen, in prep.). The following account summarises the draft report. The main excavated area (Site HH3) measured 17 x 14 m (Fig. 4b). The earliest feature (in Phase 1) was a west–east boundary ditch fronting Mill Lane which was 2.0 m wide and 0.7 m deep. The ditch fill produced pottery mainly comprising shell-tempered ware but also including small amounts of Thetford-type ware and sandy early medieval ware, suggesting use in the twelfth century. The ditches may thus have been initially cut early in that century. A large amount of cattle bone, much of it showing evidence for butchery, was also recovered. At a point 11.5 m to the north of that ditch, a trial-trench (Site HH1) indicated a further west–east ditch of similar proportions to that described above.

There were five subsequent phases (not illustrated). Phase 2, spanning the early to mid-thirteenth centuries, comprised the recutting of the ditches, the digging of a southwest–northeast drainage ditch, and the construction of a post-built structure fronting the High Road. In the late thirteenth to late fourteenth centuries (Phase 3), the ephemeral post-built structure was replaced by a more substantial timber strip-building of post-in-trench construction. At this time, the marketplace to the south received a clay-and-gravel surface, a feature also evidenced at the Hudson House excavations to the south (Site HH4; Peachey 2005, 4–6, 27). In the late fourteenth to late fifteenth centuries (Phase 4), the marketplace was given a flint-cobbled surface, while the Hudson House site to the south was built over. A flint dwarf-wall to the north of the latter site defined Mill Lane, first evidenced at this time. The lane's northern limit was marked by the strip-building which was reconstructed during this phase. Phase 5, spanning the sixteenth to seventeenth centuries, saw the replacement of the Phase 4 building by one with brick dwarf-walls. In the final Phase 6 (*c.* 1700 and later), that building was replaced by two cottages which survived until the late nineteenth century.

To the north of the Village Hall site (Fig. 4a), three house plots (Site HH5) were excavated in advance of development (Roy 2003, 5). Medieval features were confined to three pits and two postholes (Roy 2003, 9–16). Two of the pits and one posthole produced shell-tempered pottery of twelfth-century date (Walker 2003). While the medieval postholes possibly relate to a truncated structure of twelfth- to thirteenth-century date, it is probable that this area remained open until timber structures represented by postholes and beam-slots were constructed along the High Road in the late fifteenth or early sixteenth centuries (Roy 2003, 21). This area has been previously interpreted as part of the medieval settlement (Essex County Council 2006, 22). The above excavations show, however, that it was only developed after *c.* 1500. Before this, it was an open area, almost certainly the northern part of the marketplace.

Cartographic evidence indicates that the area to the east of the High Road at this point was unoccupied in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Chapman and André 1777; Ordnance Survey 1st Edition six-inch map 1873). Some earlier twentieth-century housing is now present. The 1873 map, however, indicates a north-running boundary (marked *i* on Fig. 4a). North of this and staggered to the west is a further north-running

Figure 5   Horndon-on-the-Hill: (a) southern arm of enclosure ditch, looking west; (b) holloway approaching settlement from north, looking south-west. Photographs by D. Secker.

boundary (*j*) which is joined by a transverse boundary connecting with the High Road to form a small plot (*k*). This was possibly the northernmost of a group of abandoned medieval tenement plots (*k–m*). This proposal remains to be archaeologically tested, but in the light of the above, the plan of later medieval Horndon must be revised. It would appear that the early marketplace was much larger than previously thought. Settlement was concentrated in irregular tenement plots to the east of the marketplace and extended southwards, as represented by the extant Bell Inn (*c*) and the 1 South Hill site (*h*) . Both occupy regular tenement plots which extend as far south as the plot to the south of 1 South Hill on the western side and a side-lane on the eastern side.

The extant medieval settlement, the possible former medieval tenement plots and the features revealed by excavation need to be understood in the context of the overall settlement topography. Running parallel to the excavated areas to the north of the Village Hall site is a north–south boundary (*n*) axially aligned on the eastern boundary of the churchyard and terminating in a west–east boundary at the northern end of the former marketplace (*o*). The early twelfth-century ditches thus represent the marketplace's partition. Why this might have occurred is discussed in the latter part of this paper. The observation that these ditches are secondary features in relation to boundaries (*n*) and (*o*) provides a *terminus ante quem* for the establishment of the settlement. The eastern part of Horndon is bounded by a ditch, profiles of which were recorded by the author. To the south (*p*), the western termination is only 2.1 m wide, but to the east, it is 4.3–4.6 m wide, 1.5 m deep to the north, and 0.6 m deep to the south (Fig. 4c and Profiles I–III; Fig. 5a). A further ditch (*q*) is also 4.6 m wide, being 1.2 m deep to the north and 0.6 m deep to the south (Fig. 4a). This runs east for some 500 m. The eastern part of the ditch has been obliterated, but it probably extended as far as Hassen Brook (Fig. 3). The southern part of the eastern settlement ditch (Fig. 4a, *r*) is 4.8 m wide and 1.6 m deep (Profile IV). The road entering the settlement from the north runs through a substantial holloway (Fig. 5b). This is generally 1.2–1.5 m deep, but up to 2.5 m deep to the west, at a point

where it is joined by a lateral west-running lynchet about 1 m high, now revetted by modern garden walls (Figs 4a, 4d). The southern end of the western bank of the holloway represents, however, a modern deepening, since the road widened to the west at this point in 1873 (Fig. 4d). From the south-eastern end of the holloway, a lane (*s*) leads to Arden Hall, where it overlies the former ditch. The lane is generally 3.0–5.3 m wide and is bounded by a southern bank 0.9–1.2 m high with a slight counterscarp bank to its north (Profiles V–VI). Further east of this, the lane diverges ENE towards Arden Hall, where it is bounded to the north by a lynchet about 0.9 m high. To the east of this, the ditch is overgrown and inaccessible, but LiDAR suggests it is about 4.0 m wide (Fig 4a). The western end of the lane to Arden Hall terminates in a curving bank 0.6 m high, which joins the High Road (*t*).

Within the area enclosed by the ditch are a number of subdivisions which appear to represent former plots. The third of these from the north is particularly prominent, being defined by a north-facing lynchet some 0.9 m high. To the west of the High Road, the 1873 Ordnance Survey map indicates further boundaries which have been obliterated or obscured by modern development. Two fields to the north-west of the later medieval settlement were glebe in 1839, owned by the Dean and Chapter of St Paul's and the then vicar respectively (Kemble 2014, 12).

Topographical interpretation

It is evident that the later medieval market town (Fig. 4a) straddles the southern part of an earlier settlement (Fig. 6a). The latter's northern extent is defined by a lynchet to the west of the holloway. The sinuous western boundary of the settlement to the north of Mill Lane appears to be a later modification. The original boundary probably ran straight from the western end of the northern lynchet to the northern termination of Mill Lane (Fig. 6a, *a*). The eastern side of the western arm of Mill Lane is axially aligned on the southern part of the western boundary of the churchyard (*b*). This is interpreted here as being an early boundary which the lane followed. Likewise, the southern arm of Mill Lane probably respected a pre-existing churchyard boundary

Figure 6   Horndon-on-the-Hill: (a) interpretation of earlier medieval settlement; (b) metrology, with grid of four square short perches superimposed. Figure by D. Secker.
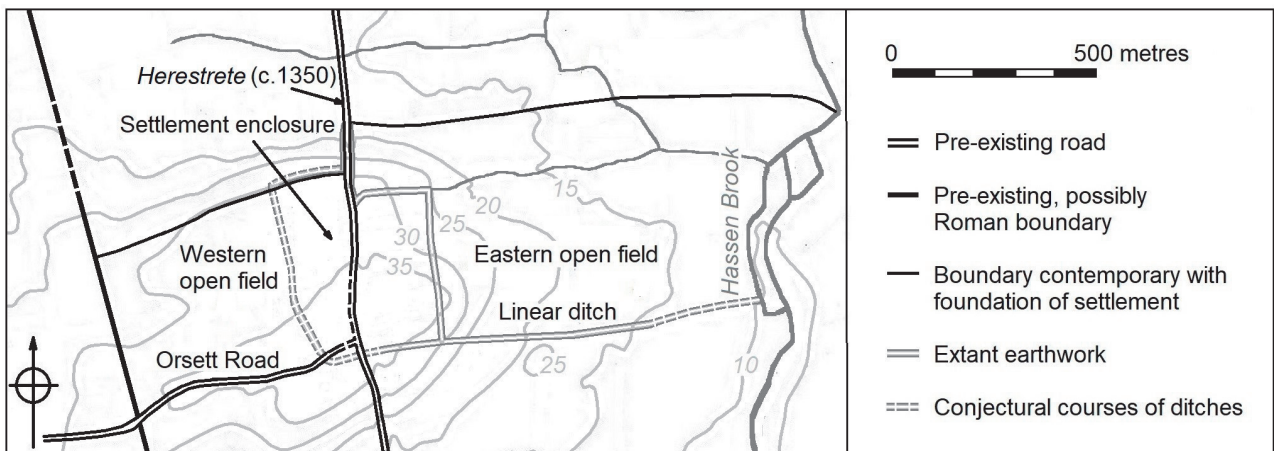

Figure 7   Horndon-on-the-Hill: relationship of primary settlement to pre-existing boundary and roads and contemporary open fields. Figure by D. Secker.

(*c*). The putative western settlement boundary terminates at Orsett Road, which veers markedly north-eastwards here, perhaps because it pre-dated the foundation of the settlement. The reconstructed boundary of the western part of the settlement may once have been fronted by a ditch of similar proportions to the extant eastern one. To the south of the churchyard, any former ditch would have turned a corner just south of Orsett Road before following the line of a later medieval tenement plot (*d*). The latter is axially aligned on the denuded western end of the south arm of the ditch surrounding the eastern part of the settlement (*e*). That ditch presumably once extended as far as the High Road (*f*).

The block forming the eastern part of the settlement is subdivided into eight plots, the third from the north being defined by a north-facing lynchet which probably represents an early division. The anomalously narrow second plot to the south (*g*) may be a later modification, having been carved out of the plot to its north.

To the west of the High Road, it has been noted above that the marketplace was much larger than previously thought and was subdivided by the early twelfth-century ditches (*h*). A boundary to the west of the marketplace is possibly later medieval (*i*). North of the former open area, further boundaries suggest that there were two plots (*j–k*) corresponding to the central plots in the eastern settlement, but that the former were amalgamated in the late medieval or post-medieval period. There is no evidence of plots to the north of this, the area being meadow by 1839 (Kemble 2014, 12). While it is possible that there were once western plots here which mirrored those on the east, it is perhaps safest to assume that this was an open area which was never developed.

Metrology

It has been proposed by John Blair that certain Anglo-Saxon settlements were planned on modules of short perches of 4.57 m or fifteen feet (Blair 2013, 18–21) and that, in the late Saxon period, these were grouped into modules of four short perches of 18.28 m or 60 feet (Blair 2018, 317). Although the theory has inevitably encountered some scepticism, it is supported by an increasing body of circumstantial evidence (Blair *et al*. 2020, xiv).

Horndon has been proposed as a candidate for a potentially grid-planned settlement on a short perch module, although there is some uncertainty over this (Blair *et al*. 2020, 226). Here, I have attempted to test the hypothesis (Fig. 6b). Baselines (*x–y*) were plotted on the most regular part of the settlement plan, namely its north-eastern part, using a datum point (*da*) near the junction of the holloway and the road to Arden Hall. The results indicate that, overall, there is a good conformity to the short perch and the four-perch module to the east of the road. The ditches enclose an area approximately equivalent to two 'short furlongs' of 40 square short perches each. To the north, there is a boundary eight short perches north of the lynchet, with a further boundary nine short perches north of this. South of this, the plot boundaries do not conform to the grid. To the north of the lynchet, the western boundary aligns on the grid, but to the south, the boundary bulges out to the west. While this might be partly due to the encroachment of late medieval properties on the earlier

road, the bulge begins north of the point where late medieval settlement is evident. The only feature which conforms to the grid in the settlement west of the High Road is the church.

The results suggest that the eastern element of the settlement was grid-planned but that the western part was not. The most tightly planned zone is that north of the lynchet, which largely conforms to an area of 40 x 28 short perches. South of this, there is the westward bulge of the High Road mentioned above, but also an eastward skew in the boundary ditch. The easternmost part of the southern ditch is at the south-east corner of the southern 'square short furlong', but it then veers southwards. There may be two explanations for these deviations. First, it has been suggested that surveyed grids acted only as guidance for subsequent developments, which did not necessarily follow them (Blair *et al*. 2020, 192). Second, the grid could have been partly laid out over, or respected, pre-existing features. Both explanations may, at least in part, be applicable. If the western curvature of the High Road already existed, there could have been no particular need to alter this. On the other hand, the deviation of the eastern part of the southern ditch, and the slight eastward skew of the east ditch south of the lynchet from the grid, may reflect the fact that the grid-plan was not strictly adhered to.

Date, form, function and agency

Dating of the primary settlement relies on indirect evidence: firstly, the ditches representing the partition of the marketplace in the centre of the settlement can be dated to the early twelfth century; and secondly, the north ditch of the eastern part of the settlement is partly oversailed by the lane to Arden Hall, probably in existence by 1086 x 1122 and possibly in 1066 x 86 (see above). The eastern part of the settlement exhibits a combination of grid- and row-planning, an exclusively late tenth- or eleventh-century phenomenon encountered in only a few places such as West Cotton in Northamptonshire and Sompting in West Sussex (Blair *et al*. 2020, 193, 196–97). Based on analogy with these two examples, the settlement at Horndon is unlikely to be earlier than the last decade of the tenth century. Conversely, a *terminus ante quem* is provided by the probably later eleventh-century lane to Arden Hall. The above evidence suggests that the settlement was founded at some time between the late tenth and mid-eleventh centuries.

Grid-planned settlements based on the short perch unit in Anglo-Saxon England occur in two periods: *c*. 590–800 and *c*. 940–1050 (Blair *et al*. 2020, 203–7). Horndon obviously belongs to the second of these. It has been suggested that this phase was associated with the contemporary monastic revival and that grid-planning was absent on the royal demesne (Blair *et al*. 2020, 144–47, 171). There is, however, at least one exception, in that grid-planning is evidenced at Isleham, Cambridgeshire (Blair *et al*. 2020, 12–14, 261–63). In 1066, Isleham was jointly held by the king, his sheriff Ordgar, his huntsman Wulfwine and fourteen sokemen (Williams and Martin 2002, 520, 522–23, 542). Given the apparent royal interest in Horndon (see above), the grid-planning here could have been a royal initiative. Unlike Isleham, Horndon was not – at least by 1066 – royal demesne. It may once have been, however, since it

has been seen that King Eadwig's grant of Orsett to the Bishop of London was probably out of royal land which included Horndon.

An unusual feature at Horndon is that its eastern portion exhibits evidence of grid-planning, but the western portion does not, apart from the church. Moreover, the grid-planned element is unlikely to be of a different date since, as discussed below, the first phase of the settlement appears to have been planned as a single episode. How can this anomaly be explained? To some extent, topography is a factor. On the north-western flank of the settlement, it would have been desirable for the boundary to respect the break of slope on the 30 m contour. This would not, however, explain why the western boundary of the settlement does not follow the grid. One explanation for the discrepancy is that the planning of the western and eastern halves of the settlement were directed by different agencies. It has been seen at the beginning of this paper that while Horndon was held by five freemen and a landholding priest in 1066 (Table 1), there was a strong royal interest in the place, hence the church being held in the king's alms and the existence of a mint. In the half-century or so before the Conquest, it may have been the case that some of the estate was held by freemen, but that there was a portion of royal demesne which was subsequently alienated. If ownership of Horndon was divided between king and freemen at the time of the settlement's inception, they could have jointly founded the latter. One scenario is that the king's agents who were responsible for the eastern part of the settlement employed surveyors while the freemen who raised the western half did not.

Development: a proposed model

The plan of Horndon was determined in part by pre-existing features (Fig. 7). To the settlement's west, a straight linear NNW–SSE boundary may be of Roman origin, while it has been suggested above that the north-south road may have originated as a Roman-period droveway. The latter was probably the *herestrete* of *c.* 1350 (Reaney 1935, 118; Baker and Brookes 2013, 289). Orsett Road might well been in existence by this time. It forms the southern boundary of the western of two open fields which appear to have been created at the same time as the settlement. The northern boundary of the western field continues as the lynchet defining the north-eastern boundary of Horndon. The southern boundary of the eastern field comprises a linear ditch which, where it survives, is 4.6 m wide and 1.2 m deep to the north (Figs 4a–b, Fig. 7). It is apparently contemporary with the settlement ditches and is of similar size. This ditch is somewhat too substantial to have been a mere field ditch and could have had some defensive potential in impeding the northward movement of an aggressive force.

The development of the settlement is here divided into four phases (Figs 8–9), three of which broadly coincide with the phases 1 to 4 of the Village Hall excavations summarised above. The exception is the settlement Phase 1, which pre-dates any substantial activity on the Village Hill site.

Phase 1: late tenth to later eleventh centuries

It is proposed here that the extant eastern ditch once extended around the entire settlement (Fig. 8a). That the lynchet subdividing its eastern part was a primary feature is evidenced by its alignment on the grid associated with the laying out of this part of the settlement, as discussed above. The south-eastern area, on the highest point of the site east of the road, might have originated as a high-status compound. If, as is suggested above, Horndon was partly royal demesne before being entirely alienated to freemen before 1066, this could represent a royal enclosure. That the plots to the north of the lynchet are primary is indicated by their alignment on the setting-out grid. The plot on the western side of the road, which mirrors the southernmost eastern plot and that immediately to the former's south, were probably also original features, likewise the marketplace. The earliest details of the church date to *c.* 1100 (see above). The fact that it is aligned on the grid, however, suggests that it occupies the site of the church implied in Domesday. The area to the north of the churchyard which was later glebe may have always been so, while the north-western quadrant was possibly a stock enclosure.

The archaeological and topographical evidence outlined above indicates that the settlement was planned sometime between *c.* 990 and *c.* 1050, while the historical context discussed below suggests that it was founded during the troubled reign of Æthelred II (978–1016). The hilltop location might suggest a defensive role for the settlement. Although the extant ditches do not represent particularly strong defences, their defensive value is enhanced by the site's hilltop location. Comparison can be made with the defences of the fortification raised by Edward the Elder in 912 at Maldon, which has ditches only 1.2 m deep, but which like Horndon is located on a prominent hilltop (Haslam 2015, 314–15). The staggered northern entrance at Horndon is most unusual, but might be explained by the topography of the site, the lynchet to the west of the holloway taking advantage of the break of slope here. The form of the entrance has a certain defensive logic. To borrow from the terminology of castle studies, the holloway could have acted as a 'barbican' which channelled and confined aggressors. The northward-projecting part of the settlement's circuit to the west of the holloway would have provided defenders with a vantage point from where any would-be intruder could be attacked with missiles at close quarters.

Phase 2: later eleventh to early thirteenth centuries

This phase (Fig. 8b) begins slightly before phase 1 of the sequence in the Village Hall excavations (Allen, in prep.). The mint was in existence by this time, as evidenced by the coin of 1056–59 (Metcalf and Lean 1993, 206, 223). Two of the plots in the settlement were presumably the 'places' or *mansiones* seized by Godwine Woodhen between 1066 and 1086 (Williams and Martin 2002, 1040). While these probably pertain to Phase 1, it is likely that the proposed high-status compound was being subdivided at this time. If this was indeed a royal enclosure, subdivision could have occurred following the possible alienation of royal demesne to freemen shortly before the Conquest. That the defences were already disused is evidenced by the conversion of part of the north ditch into the lane leading to Arden Hall, probably at some time between the Conquest and 1122 (see above). In any case, Horndon would have been redundant as a fortified

settlement following King Cnut's accession to the throne in 1017.

The most important excavated features from this phase are the two substantial parallel early twelfth-century ditches which subdivided the marketplace into northern and southern components. The documentary history of the settlement and marketplace may provide a clue as to why they were created. Before the Conquest, Horndon had been held by five freemen and a landholding priest (see above, Table 1). These people might have constituted a local oligarchy who co-operated in the administration of the place, including the market. Following the Conquest, ownership passed to subtenants of the Bishop of London, those of two important lay barons, and two minor tenants in chief (Table 2). When the prescriptive market was first recorded in the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, two quarter-shares were held by Thomas Peverel of Arden Hall and John Malegreff of Malgraves, while a moiety was held by Robert Giffard of Wyfields (Morant 1768, 217–218; Letters 2013). The Arden quarter-share may have been carved out of a moiety held by the owners of Malgraves. To back-project to the early twelfth century, the overlord of the later Malgraves portion of the market would have been Eustace III of Boulogne (1087–1125). The Wyfields portion could either have been held by Swein, Sheriff of Essex, or by his son Robert. Given the location of their estate centres around Horndon (Fig. 3), it is likely that Eustace held the northern part of the marketplace and Swein or Robert the southern (Fig. 8b). The ditches might therefore have been cut to define each baron's jurisdiction.

Phase 3: early to late thirteenth century

Phase 3 (Fig. 9a) is coeval with phase 2 of the Village Hall sequence (Allen, in prep.). At this time, the ditches partitioning the marketplace were recut and an ephemeral structure raised between them. It may have been at this time that in the eastern part of the settlement, the second southernmost eastern plot was subdivided. Although they have not been archaeologically investigated, there is some circumstantial evidence that the irregular tenement plots within the larger, earlier plots date from this time. In Phase 4, discussed below, there is evidence for a planned extension to the south of the settlement which cannot be later than the fourteenth century. This evidence thus provides a *terminus ante quem* for the irregular plots to the north. It has been suggested above that boundaries to the east of the northern part of the marketplace may represent abandoned medieval tenement plots (Fig. 4a, *i–m*). They are reconstructed as such on Fig. 9a.

Phase 4: late thirteenth to late fifteenth centuries

This long phase (Fig. 9b) conflates phases 3 and 4 at the Village Hall excavations (Allen, in prep.). It includes all activity prior to the infilling of the north marketplace which commenced at the close of the fifteenth century (Roy 2003, 17, 21). The earlier part of this phase saw alterations to the marketplace area in the form of the replacement of the ephemeral structure within the partition with a more permanent building, and the furnishing of the south marketplace with a gravel surface in the late thirteenth century before the area was infilled a century later (Allen, in prep.). There were two more fundamental alterations to the settlement topography in this time. First, there was the southward expansion of the settlement, which occurred no later than the fourteenth century, as evidenced by the surviving Bell Inn and the excavated building at 1 South Hill (Essex County Council 2006, 6–7, 9). The extension would have obliterated the central and western parts of the southern ditch, while the regularity of the former's plots suggests deliberate planning. Second, there is the creation of Mill Lane in the fifteenth century, the western arm of which overrode the long-redundant western defences.

The foundation of the fortified settlement at Horndon: historical and geographical context

It has been proposed above that the first phase of the settlement at Horndon stood within a defensible enclosure (Fig. 8a). The site enjoys extensive views over the Thames Estuary (Fig. 10). The latter was the scene of Viking activity in the late tenth and early eleventh centuries. In 994, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* records that Viking commanders Olaf Tryggvason and Swein Forkbeard attacked London but were repelled and proceeded to raid the Essex coast (Swanton 2000, 127–29). In 1009, the Vikings 'took winter quarters off the Thames, and lived off Essex and off the shires which were nearest on both sides of the Thames', before proceeding completely to overrun Essex in 1011 (Swanton 2000, 139–41). The attack on London and subsequent raiding of the Essex coast would have caused both local and national alarm, and it is plausible that fortifications were established at this time to counteract future threats.

Horndon would have been a suitable place for such an installation. The site overlooks a major bend in the Thames estuary known as the Hope, which separates the safely-navigable inner estuary from the treacherous outer one (Hirst and Clark 2009, 442). In the later eighteenth century, the Essex antiquary Philip Morant noted: 'Seamen have given it the name of Hope, because they find it a safe anchoring place after they are passed the dangers of the Goodwin and other sands near the Thames mouth, and can here safely cast their anchor' (Morant 1768, 237). What applied to eighteenth-century seamen equally applied to earlier Viking fleets. The low-lying land in this area is former marsh which was reclaimed in the late and post-medieval periods (Rippon and Wainwright 2011). While the marsh would have been a barrier to disembarkation, the creek at Mucking and the peninsula at East Tilbury would have provided potential landing-places. Horndon commands Mucking Creek and also would have blocked the path of any Viking army who made landfall at East Tilbury and wished to penetrate the interior of Essex. A hostile force might attempt to bypass Horndon to the east and gain access to the High Road – the *herestrete* mentioned in *c.* 1350 (Reaney 1935, 118; Baker and Brookes 2013, 289). They would, however, encounter the linear ditch which, while hardly an insurmountable barrier, might slow the aggressors down so that any force based at Horndon could mount a counter-attack.

As well as controlling access to inland Essex, Horndon could also have served as a refuge for local rural estuarine communities who would have been especially vulnerable to a Viking attack. In Domesday,
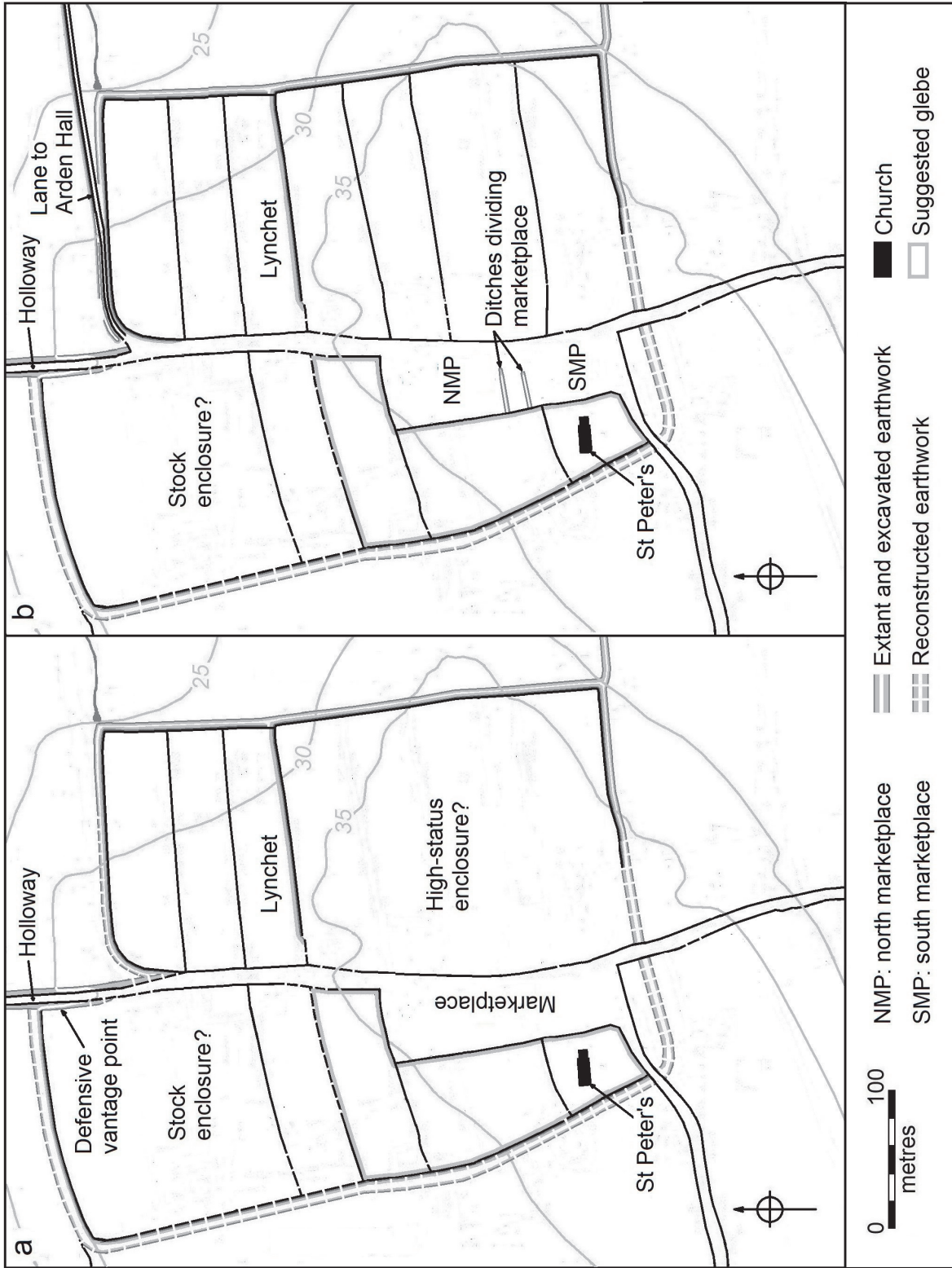
Figure 8   Horndon-on-the-Hill development: (a) Phase 1: late tenth to later eleventh centuries; (b) Phase 2: later eleventh to early thirteenth centuries. Figure by D. Secker.
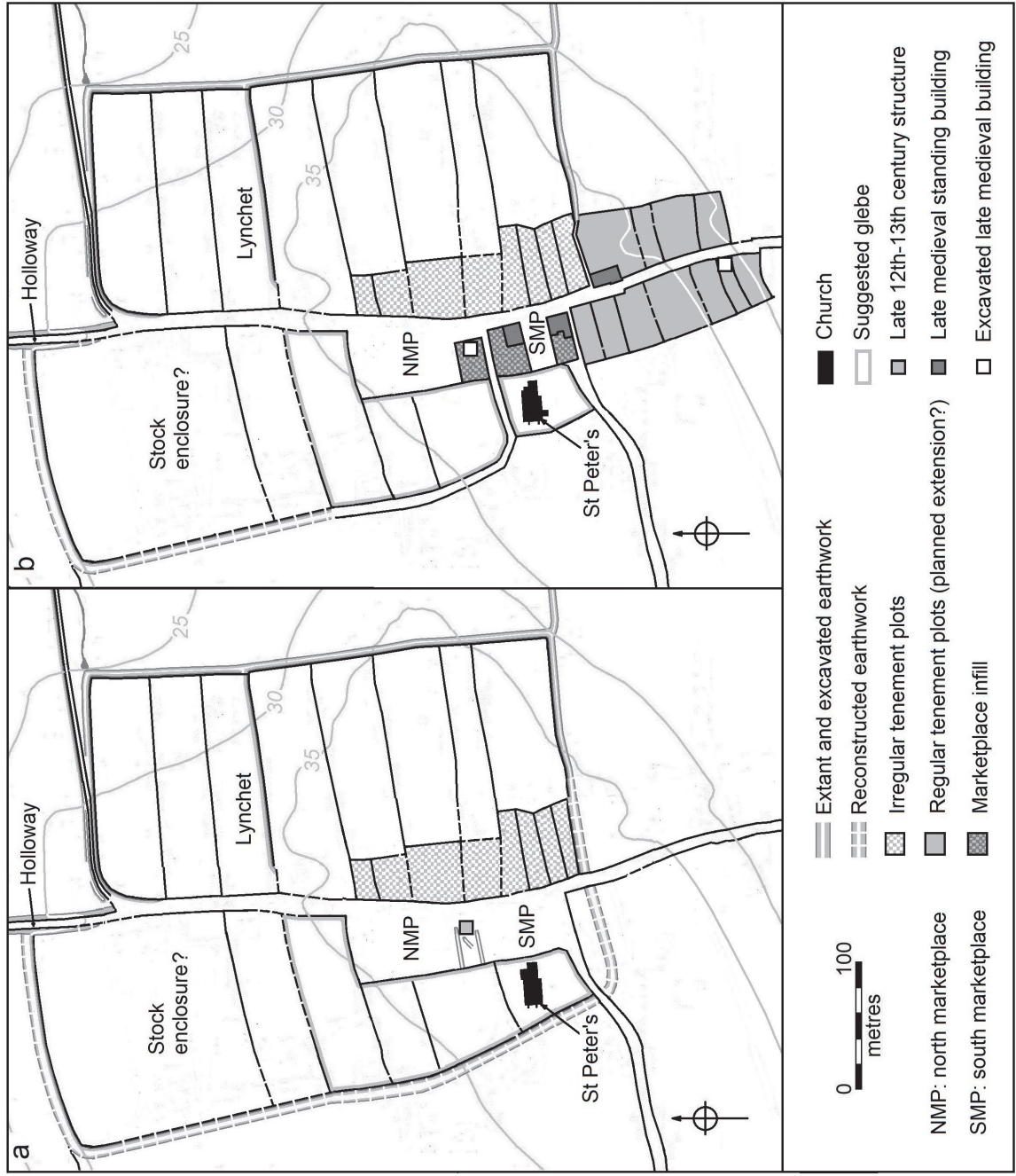
Within the figure:

a
Holloway
Defensive vantage point
Stock enclosure?
Lynchet
High-status enclosure?
Marketplace
St Peter's
25
30
35
0   100   metres

b
Holloway
Lane to Arden Hall
Stock enclosure?
Lynchet
Ditches dividing marketplace
NMP
SMP
St Peter's
25
30
35

NMP: north marketplace
SMP: south marketplace

Church
Suggested glebe
Extant and excavated earthwork
Reconstructed earthwork

Figure 9 Horndon-on-the-Hill development: (a) Phase 3: early to late thirteenth century; (b) Phase 4: late thirteenth to late fifteenth centuries. Figure by D. Secker.

Figure 10   Horndon-on-the-Hill and environs in relation to the Thames estuary in the eleventh century. Figure by D. Secker.

such communities are evidenced at Corringham, Mucking, Hassenbrook, Fobbing, and West and East Tilbury (Williams and Martin 2002, 977, 981, 986, 995, 1000, 1014, 1043). It is likely that these places were in existence by the late tenth century. By the latter part of the eleventh century, Corringham and Fobbing had acquired masonry churches (RCHME 1923, 25–26, 44–46).

The place-names *here-stræt* ('army street') and the associated *here-pæð* ('army-path') denote Anglo-Saxon military roads (Baker and Brookes 2013, 140–52). That Horndon is at the southern end of *herestrete* supports the hypothesis that the settlement had a military role and was integrated into a pre-existing civil defence network (Fig. 11). Chapman and André's map (1777) indicates that the *here-stræt* terminated west of Little Burstead

(Fig. 11, *a*). It probably originally ran, however, towards Hutton (Fig. 11, *b*) to join the London–Colchester Roman Road, itself a *here-stræt* documented in 1344 (Baker and Brookes 2013, 289). The Roman road linked London, refortified by King Alfred in 886, with the *burhs* of Witham, Maldon and Colchester, founded by Edward the Elder in 912, 916 and 917 respectively (Swanton 2000, 80–81, 96, 100, 103). The *burhs* were in turn associated with the network of royal estate centres in Essex evidenced in Domesday (Rippon 1996, 117–22).

While defence may have been the main motivation behind the foundation of Horndon, there is also evidence for economic and ecclesiastical activity from the outset. Although the earliest evidence of a mint is the single coin of 1056–59 (Metcalf and Lean 1993,
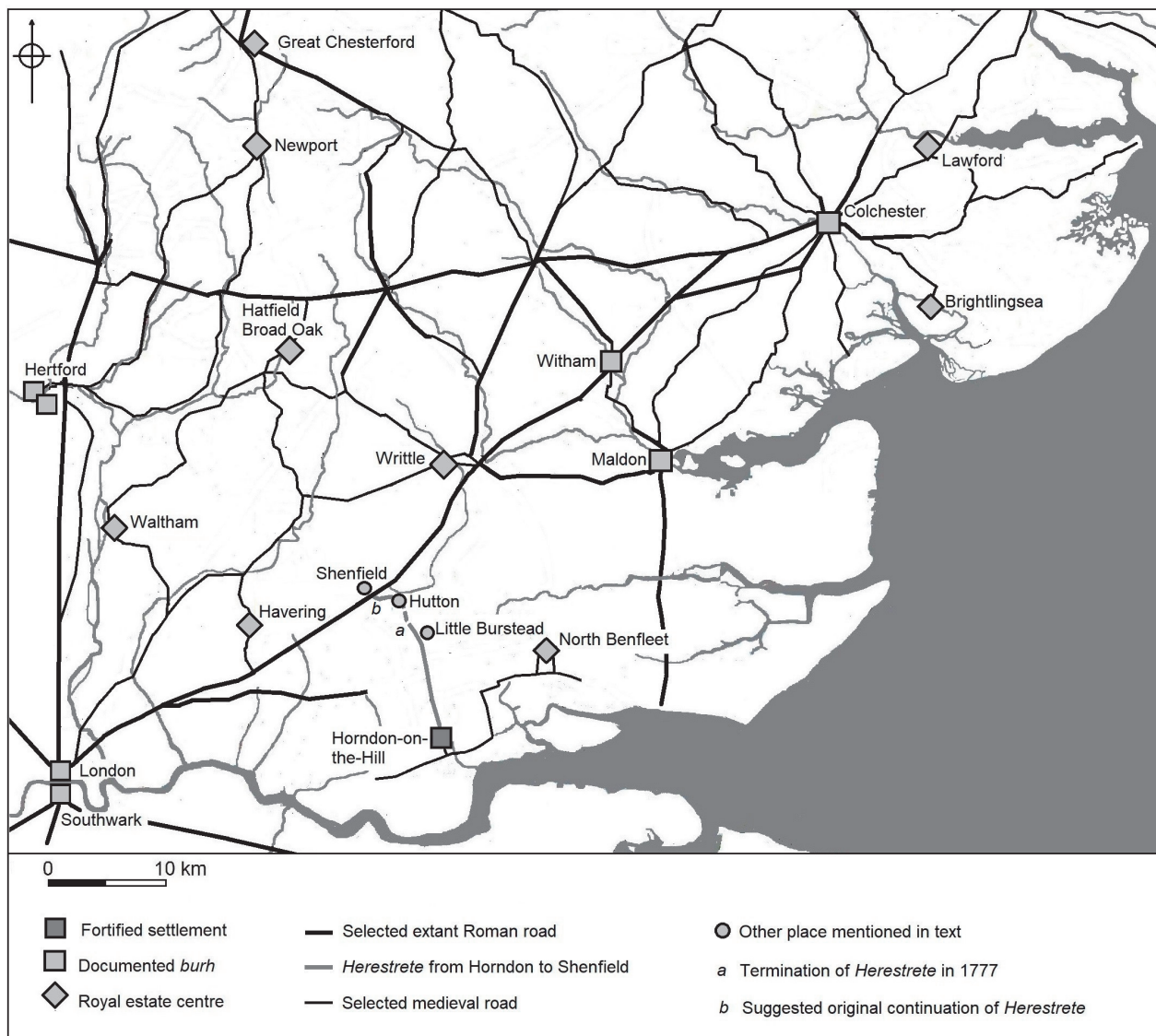
16

Figure 11   Horndon-on-the-Hill in relation to late Saxon burhs *and royal estate centres in Essex. Figure by D. Secker.*

206, 223), this only provides a *terminus ante quem* for its foundation. Topographical analysis indicates that the settlement had a marketplace from its inception. It was thus of ancient origin when first documented in 1280 (Letters 2013). A church whose staff included a landholding priest and a deacon was in existence before 1066 (Table 1). There is no evidence that it was an old foundation (*contra* Blair 1996, 27). It is more likely that a new collegiate minster was founded specifically to serve the settlement.

There remains the question of the agency involved in the early development of the settlement at Horndon. While the presence of a mint certainly indicates the king's patronage, and the grid-planning may have been a royal initiative, considerable influence may have rested with the freemen and landholding priest who held Horndon in 1066 (Table 1). The agency of higher-ranking freemen and sokemen is increasingly being suggested in the design of both some settlements and the churches that served them, Wharram Percy in North Yorkshire being a recently explored example (Everson

and Stocker 2012). In the above and other cases, this is suggested as being a result of weak overlordship, the sokemen being almost minor lords themselves (Everson and Stocker 2012, 13). At Horndon, a slightly different scenario is envisaged, in which there was a 'social contract' between the freemen and the king. As a fortified site, Horndon would have contributed to national defence, but those with the most to lose from Viking raids would have been local landowners. The freemen who held Horndon presumably profited from any market, but the dues from the latter and the mint also served the interests of the king.

Conclusion

That Horndon originated as a fortified settlement with quasi-urban characteristics, as has previously been proposed (Rippon 1996, 121–22; Essex County Council 2006, 7–9, 21–22), is supported by the evidence discussed in this paper. Horndon was probably founded at the turn of the tenth and eleventh centuries when Viking aggression in the Thames estuary became an

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increasing problem (Swanton 2000, 127–29). While its military role would have soon become obsolete, and the mint represented by a single coin was clearly short-lived, Horndon continued to develop as a market settlement. Topographical analysis demonstrates that the marketplace was a primary element of the plan. The prescriptive market first recorded in 1280 (Letters 2013) was by then already over two and a half centuries old.

Although excavations within Horndon have been on a small scale, their results are of the utmost importance in understanding the place's development. A crucial factor is the realisation that the Saxo-Norman pottery in the southern parallel ditch at the Village Hall excavations represents a primary fill and was not residual as was previously believed (Allen, in prep., *contra* Godbold 1997). That topographical analysis shows this ditch to be a secondary feature supports a late Saxon date for the settlement's foundation (Fig. 8a). In the excavations to the north of the Village Hall site, an equally important discovery was the general absence of medieval occupation (Roy 2003, 21). This indicates that the marketplace was much larger than previously thought and that the later medieval plan of Horndon must be redrawn (Fig. 9b, *contra* Essex County Council 2006, 22).

Despite these developments, our understanding of the origins and development of Horndon is far from complete and there are multiple avenues for further research. It has been suggested that the extant ditch surrounding the eastern part of the settlement once extended around the latter's entirety. The presence of such a ditch awaits archaeological confirmation. No excavations have taken place in the medieval settlement area on the eastern side of the marketplace (Fig. 4a). Given that the town has a medieval historic core and is a conservation area (Thurrock Council 2007), future development-led excavations are unlikely, but community-based fieldwork, for example, might test the theory proposed above that boundaries to the east of the northern part of the marketplace (Fig. 4a, *i–m*) represent former medieval tenement plots (cf. Lewis *et al.*, this volume). There is also scope for non-intrusive investigation regarding the later medieval town. There is evidence for a planned extension to the south of Horndon in the fourteenth century, or possibly earlier (Fig. 9b). This might benefit from a more detailed morphological analysis and research into its historical context.

Acknowledgements

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