

THE PLACE OF BASING IN MID SAXON HISTORY

The centenary year of the Hampshire Field Club and Archaeological Society provides an appropriate opportunity to stress the probable importance of the area around Basingstoke in the history of southern England in the period when the shires were emerging as recognizable territorial units. Hampshire's origins and formation have been studied in recent work by Aldsworth (1973/74), Biddle (1976) and Hinton (1981), and later settlement has been discussed by Hughes (1984), who summarised the evidence for the Basingstoke area's royal connections and its link with London, still recorded in the name Basinghall Street (*ibid* 75).

The excavation by Millett at Cowdery's Down, near Basingstoke, has been an outstanding contribution to our knowledge of a major Saxon-period site centering in date on the seventh century (1983, 197–98). Millett is rightly careful not to claim that the building complex represents a royal palace rather than some other form of 'high status centre' (*ibid* 249). There is another piece of archaeological evidence for an élitist presence in the area, at least aristocratic if not princely: at West Ham, about two miles south-west of Cowdery's Down, a single skeleton was found in 1899, accompanied by a copper-alloy hanging-bowl, bone gaming-pieces, and iron spears and a knife (Smith 1907/08, 79–84; Youngs 1983, 874). The first two of these finds in particular are associated with the richest, usually isolated, seventh-century graves. The West Ham grave is of the same status as that from Oliver's Battery, outside Winchester, and the archaeological evidence clearly points to the Basing area as a focus of upper-class attention in the seventh century.

The documentary evidence about the area's role at this early date is more problematic. Hughes referred to Ekwall's claim that King Caedwal's late seventh-century charter which endowed a monastery with estates at *Fearnham* and elsewhere was signed at Basingstoke, although the name in the *Codex Wintoniensis* is *Besingahearh* (*be singa hearh* in another version (1984, 76). This attribution was not discussed

by Gelling, however, who suggested that it is an unlocated place in Surrey, part of a group of 'place-names referring to heathen sanctuaries' (1979, 151), which seems more likely in the context of the charter. Basing was certainly, however, the site of a battle in 871 when King Ethelred and Alfred fought the Danes *aet Basengum* (Hughes 1984, 76): this would not have been an accidental encounter between the two armies, but a fight for an important royal centre, a source of food supplies, like Reading and Wilton which were also fought over in that year (Sawyer 1984, 283). Land at Basing is mentioned in the will of King Eadred 951–55 (Sawyer 1968, no 1515). By 1086, primacy in the area seems to have passed to Basingstoke, a royal manor giving its name to a hundred and paying the ancient *feorm* levy, while Basing was held by Hugh de Port (*VCH Hants I*, 456, 479). Later, Basingstoke is recorded as having three hundreds dependent upon it (Baigent & Millard 1889, xxiii).

These are indications of ancient royal status, which may well go back at least as far as the seventh century. Whether the three hundreds were a relic of a time when the Basing area was an almost independent unit, analogous to Berkshire's Sonning (Gelling 1974/76, 840–43), or a later grouping for ship-soke purposes (John 1982, 173), is uncertain. The picture is confused by the evidence in the northern part of the area about the estates named Stratfield, which occur in both Berkshire and Hampshire, and which together produce a total assessed value of thirty hides, suggesting a unit older than the county boundary (*VCH Berks I*, 319). Their taxation arrangements by the fourteenth century were divided between the two shires in a very complex way (Glasscock 1975, 8, 117), with numerous tithings, some of which could conceal earlier arrangements (Pile 1985).

Evidence of the importance of Basing and the area round it is perhaps borne out by the link with London to which Hughes drew attention (1984, 76), although it is possible to argue that this link can be attributed to the middle rather

than to the later part of the Anglo-Saxon period. Basinghall Street takes its name from Bassishaw ward, which in turn derives from *Basingahaga*, the *haga* of the Basings, and is recorded in the twelfth century. It is within the city just outside Cripplegate fort, close to St Mary Staining and *Staeningahaga*, the *haga* of the Staines people; Staines and Basing can be reached easily from London by the same road, the Roman route to Silchester and the south (Dyson & Schofield 1984, 306–07). A comparable London enclosure is Lothbury, the *burh* of Lotha, thought to be a corruption of the name of Hlothere, king of Kent 673–85, an important king in his day but one unlikely to have been remembered subsequently and whose laws refer to a *selde* of the men of Kent in London (Brooke & Keir 1975, 154). *Basingahaga* may well have been founded only a few years later, in the brief period when the

kings of Wessex Caedwal (685–88) and Ine (688–726) were able to legislate in Surrey and involve themselves in Kent, and when the latter king could refer to the bishop of London as ‘my bishop’ (Stenton 1943, 69, 72). These were kings who were in a position to provide themselves with a fortifiable enclosure like their Kentish rivals’, in a location within the Roman walls of the City convenient for overseeing any commercial activity taking place along the Strand, the area recently suggested as the likely site of London’s *wic* (Biddle 1984; Vince 1984). If this was the case, the most logical place for them to have chosen as the one to which their *haga* should be answerable would surely have been Basing, to take advantage of the existing overland communication route which led to the nearest royal *tun* securely in their own kingdom.

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EASTLEIGH: 'THE DEVELOPMENT OF A LATE VICTORIAN RAILWAY TOWN'. SOME COMMENTS

Bryan Luffman's recently published book traces the growth of Eastleigh in the late nineteenth century. It concentrates on the phase of development which began with the transfer of the London and South Western Railway's carriage works to the town from Nine Elms, London in 1890 and ended with the amalgamation of Eastleigh and Bishopstoke in 1898. It is perhaps a pity that the impact made by the transfer of the locomotive running sheds from Southampton in 1903 and the Locomotive Works from Nine Elms in 1910 is not also fully discussed, since in many respects 1910 marks the end of the first stage of the town's industrialisation. Nevertheless, Luffman's study of Eastleigh makes an interesting comparison with the larger railway towns of Swindon and Crewe, which were also developed on greenfield sites, but fifty years earlier. In retrospect, it is surprising how some of the deficiencies in planning and provision of services at Swindon and Crewe were repeated again at Eastleigh half a century later, despite much national legislation on the subject in the meantime. In view of the value and interest of this book, it is regrettable that there are several errors of fact and interpretation, which this paper seeks to correct.

It is misleading to suggest that the London and South Western railway company was unique in its desire to move the company's railway works from London to a rural site (Luffman n d, iv). In fact, the works of the South Eastern Railway were similarly moved from New Cross, London to the small market town of Ashford, Kent, in 1847 (White 1982, 32). Following the amalgamation of the South Eastern Railway with the London, Chatham and Dover Railway,

the latter's works in London were closed in 1913 and many of the staff moved to Ashford. The new satellite town of Alfred Town was built just outside the old market town for the railway workforce. To all intents and purposes this was a new railway town on a greenfield site as at Eastleigh.

Luffman correctly states that the London and South Western Railway built only a small proportion of the housing for the railway staff at Eastleigh. However it is misleading to suggest (Luffman n d, iv) that Eastleigh differed from other railway workshop towns in this respect. Detailed studies of other towns, for example Peck on Swindon and Chaloner on Crewe, clearly indicate that this was normal practice. A slightly higher proportion of houses was built by the company in Crewe than at Swindon or Eastleigh, but even in this case the proportion was still quite small (Peck 1983; Chaloner 1950). It was the usual practice for railway companies to leave the provision of most of the housing to private builders, although companies often laid down basic guidelines for street patterns and water supply.

Luffman points out that the Chamberlayne family were the principal landowners in the area and sold large amounts of land both to the railway company and private builders (Luffman n d, 2). It would have been worth mentioning that Thomas Chamberlayne was a director on the reconstituted board of the London and Southampton Railway Company in 1833 (Temple Patterson 1966, 169–70). Whether Thomas or his son Tankerville played any part in the running of the L S W R later in the century would certainly be worth further research. If it