# Husebyer – status quo, open questions and perspectives

*Papers from a workshop at the National Museum Copenhagen 19–20 March 2014*

**Edited by Lisbeth Eilersgaard Christensen, Thorsten Lemm & Anne Pedersen**

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Drawing adapted from the seal from the Husby-Harde in the Stadtarchiv Flensburg (after H. Hinz, Stabkirchen im Landesteil Schleswig, Offa 38, 1981).

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# SCALE CHANGE

## *Kingstons and royal power in the middle Anglo-Saxon England,* c. *AD 650-850*

Several questions surrounding the origin and function of Husebyer are familiar to students of Anglo-Saxon England. Here too, there is evidence that the power of kings became, over the course of the early medieval period, increasingly territorial in character. Controls over movement, the diversification and extension of royal institutions, the tightening of systems of taxation and administration – all facets addressed by Huseby research – find parallels in England, particularly during the period c. AD 650-850. Some of these developments appear to be driven by kings, or the church; many others would seem to have emerged from the class of lesser nobles. Several recent works have addressed aspects of these processes at great length (e.g. Astill 2000; Hanson & Wickham 2000; Wickham 2005; Rippon 2010; Loveluck 2013), so they need not be given more than cursory treatment here. Instead, I would like to use this paper to discuss an interesting category of site in Anglo-Saxon England, places named Kingston that – though not identical to Husebyer – would seem similarly to encapsulate some of the broader processes of territorialisation.

## Scale change in middle Anglo-Saxon society

Over the course of the second half of the first millennium AD, the polities of Anglo-Saxon England underwent a series of significant scale changes in social and spatial organisation. During the fifth and sixth centuries the successor polities to Roman Britannia were characteristically highly fragmented, small-scale, and of somewhat diminished social complexity, certainly in comparison to what had preceded them. Despite some Roman inheritance – the precise nature of which is debated (see most recently two slightly different views on this issue by Halsall 2013; Harrington & Welch 2014) – the first Anglo-Saxon polities to emerge from this situation during the later sixth and seventh centuries, were not 'post-collapse' societies akin to other parts of the former Roman empire, but 'pre-state systems', to use Chris Wickham's terminology (2005, 56-7), or 'centralized stratified societies' to use Kristian Kristiansen's (1991, 21-6), more closely comparable to what we see elsewhere in northern Europe.

However, over the course of the seventh to ninth centuries, many of these polities began to develop more complex forms of socio-political organisation. The most important kings, such as those of Kent, Northumbria, Wessex, or Mercia, began to claim more extensive territorial powers; wherever possible,

extending their rule over the kings of neighbouring polities. Aptly entitled the 'FA Cup model' since Stephen Bassett's important account of this process (1989, 26-7), this involved the gradual absorption of smaller kingdoms by larger, more dominant, ones, in effect, concentrating greater territorial power in the hands of fewer and fewer powerful dynasties.

As discussed by Christopher Scull (1993, 72-78; 1999, 19-23), this extension of power over larger territories involved changes at the higher, but not necessarily, at the lower, levels of society. In early small-scale polities, local chiefs, or 'kings', maintained a direct personal link with their kingdom; tribute and allegiance were made directly to the king, and the king's rule was formalised through a range of public rituals. One of these rituals – encapsulated by the concept of 'hall culture' – was the public consumption of food renders (*feorm*); another was political assemblies, where aristocrats and freemen (or representatives thereof) participated in procedures legitimating the ruler's power.

The emergence in this period of 'high kings' at the head of paramount dynasties wielding supra-regional power, was primarily the result of peer-polity competition between these kings. Reflecting their origins, 'high kings' continued to exercise direct control over their own core lands, however, this rule was now combined with territorial powers extending beyond the core. This power depended, on the one hand, on the physical display of force, enabled by a retinue of aristocratic warriors, and on the other, on their ability to gain recognition from those sub-kings who exercised control over local areas. The important observation to draw is that the power-base of local chiefs remained largely unaltered, deriving from the representational role they played for the small political communities who granted them legitimacy (Escalona et al. in press). The power of high kings, by contrast, rested on maintaining their authority over sub-kings and other nobles, and was accordingly, highly volatile. Socially and politically, therefore, the process of scale change progressed along different paths. Wendy Davies' description of a similar situation in early medieval Wales makes this distinction clear: "although this carries no necessary implications of *social* chaos or *social* instability, this is very close to political chaos" (Davies 1990, 6).

Given this state of 'political chaos' we can recognise in England several ways in which kings over the course of the later first millennium began to negotiate these volatile relationships with the aristocracy.

One, much discussed concession, was the introduction from the seventh century of permanently alienated land, commonly referred to as 'bookland' from the royal charters which established them (John 1964; Abels 1988, 43-57; Saunders 1995). The earliest of these grants were exclusively concerned with church property, but by the ninth and tenth centuries most had come to describe the conveyance of secular holdings. In effect, charters document the royal concession of land to lesser landholders, thereby solidifying the legal and economic rights these landowners had over their property. Such concessions came with strings attached. Whilst it is not known in the first instance under what obligations this land was held, it is clear that by the late eighth century they were bundled with more stringent forms of military service, as witnessed in the inclusion of charter clauses listing 'three common burdens' (*trinoda necessitas*), first in Mercia and Kent, and by the ninth century, Wessex (Stevenson 1914; Brooks 1971).

The outcome of this process was to concentrate greater coercive powers in the hands of kings, even if some rights over economic resources were lost in the bargain. Crucially too, it enabled kings to quantify more precisely, what military power was at their disposal. This pervasive accounting of resources – the counting, quantifying, and standardizing of subjects and land – is a central theme that leaps from our written sources of later Anglo-Saxon England, underpinning the massive mobilisation of military resources in the ninth century as witnessed in the Burghal Hidage text (Baker & Brookes 2013), as well as the Domesday survey in the eleventh (Williams & Martin 1992). Although we have no direct evidence for how the management and policing of bookland obligations was carried out, it seems highly likely that these developments required new administrative institutions of one kind or another, along with (presumably) ecclesiastical scribes.

A second area of royal innovation has been discussed recently at some length by Andrew Reynolds (2009a; 2009b; 2013), namely the manipulation and regularisation of judicial practice. From the earliest

lawcodes it is clear that public assemblies existed for the settlement of matters of local import. Seventh-century law codes stipulate that charges could be brought at a *mæþel* or *þing* (Hlothhere and Eadric 8-10; Ine 8) with judgements delivered by the judges (*deman*). This form of customary law appears to pre-figure that more widely formalised in the Hundred Ordinance of the tenth century, where each free-man was expected 'to do justice to another' (trans. Whitelock 1979, 393). It is clear from these lawcodes that a king had no authority to pass judgement on the dispute or to impose a settlement; he was just a mediator used by the parties to reach a compromise. For this reason it is likely that the legal process of dispute settlement has some antiquity, as it pre-cluded – and therefore potentially predates – kings.

The innovation of kings was the institutionalisation of apparatus aimed at regulating the dispute settlement process and militating against the escalation of violence. They did so firstly, by formalising a system of justice perceived to be impartial, and secondly, by demonstrating the superior power of the state (cf. Diamond 2012, 97-98). With regard to the latter, execution sites, strategically located in peripheral locations at nodal points of the communications network, demonstrated physically and very visibly the long arm of the state in the localities (Reynolds 2009a). Significantly the earliest known of these execution sites (of late seventh and eighth-century date) are found at the borders of kingdoms, but not within them (Reynolds 2009a); only in the tenth century did they become commonplace within kingdoms on the boundaries between shires and hundreds (Reynolds 2009b, 155-6, table 24). This change through time in the location of the symbols of state can be suggested to be a function both of the increasing social distance between rulers and the ruled, and of the increasing imposition, down to the localities, of state-sanctioned judicial killing (Reynolds 2013).

This development was accompanied by an en-hancement of judicial procedures themselves, to include public trial, ordeal, and punishment, usually at different places in landscape, thereby formalising an effective and transparent system of justice in which people could trust. It is likely that the greater vis-ibility of legal procedure developed alongside other encouragements aimed at reducing blood feud (e.g.

II Edmund). The overall effect was the greater pen-etration of officialdom in local social practice, not a radical reshaping; both these innovations can be regarded as additions to, rather than replacements of, existing practice.

A third area of royal innovation was in the for-malisation of trade. In Richard Hodges' influential discussion of the North Sea emporia (1982), these are regarded as important adjuncts to royal power, providing a lucrative source of exotica which could be used in gelling status and power relationships. Whilst more recent scholars have tended to down-play the role that kings took in founding these em-poria and the significance of the exotica flowing through them (Loveluck & Tys 2006; Pestell 2011), it seems nevertheless clear that kings were keen to control them from an early date. Lawcodes, such as that issued by Hlothere and Eadric of Kent in AD 673-85 (16; Attenborough 1922, 22-3), along with some charters from the eighth century, pro-vide evidence for the royal control and taxation of maritime trade flowing through the emporia (e.g. Sawyer 1968, catalogue nos. 86-8, 91, 168; cf. Kelly 1992). The archaeological evidence for the rapid de-velopment of the largest emporia likewise suggests high-level investment (Scull 1997, 280-9; Cowie & Blackmore 2012, 202-3).

A similar link between infrastructural investment and royal control has been suggested by Julie Wile-man (2003) to explain the construction and use of large-scale linear earthworks during this period. She speculates that these earthworks may have been primarily trade or economic barriers associated with fiscal control points. Taking this idea further, these large territorial boundaries can be conceived as a com-plementary development to the controlled market places, managing the movement of staple in the way the emporia controlled wealth (cf. Brookes 2007a).

All these changes evidently did not occur in iso-lation. It seems certain that some of the emerging states of Anglo-Saxon England were actively imitat-ing Carolingian forms of governance. The adoption of Christianity, and with it notions of hierarchy, concepts of power and legal tradition, are also likely to have played a part in transforming the ways these states conceptualised themselves, whilst also pro-viding new mechanisms for socio-territorial control (Wormald 2001; Gameson 1999). Nevertheless,

there are clear trajectories which emerge from this brief summary.

Firstly, the scale change in royal power witnessed over the seventh to ninth centuries created greater social distance between people and their ruler. Whilst local and personal connections remained between freemen and their chiefs, the evolving concept of high-kings existed at another level of social and political relationships. In order for kings to retain some link with localities they were forced to invent royal agents, such as reeves and ealdormen, tasked with carrying out these innovations of the emerging state. At first – especially in the case of ealdormen – these officials may not in practice have been different from the local chiefs they supplemented, but by degrees the roles increasingly became synonymous with service to the king (Stafford 1999, 152).

Secondly, the establishment of royal agents was accompanied by the greater visibility of royal practice. It is noticeable that many of the innovations outlined above – the granting of land at royal assemblies, the dispersed nature of legal procedures, the funneling and control of wealth and staple through key sites – were highly visible and public acts which reinforced the cultural role of kings. As part of this trend, travel, procession, and open-air gathering were all facets of the way in which power was communicated and legitimated. To fully understand these requires a contextualized landscape approach (e.g. Semple 2013; Baker & Brookes 2015a).

Thirdly, following on from the first two, there were, increasing through time, a greater number of state-level institutions, although this was clearly very regionally variable. The German historiographical concept of *Kerngebiet* is relevant here (cf. e.g. Rollason 2003, 22-24). These were the areas where royal power was most concentrated, beyond which lay an intermediate zone of less intensive rule. Some state-level innovations, such as execution cemeteries, or frontier defences, may have been more visible outside the core in these areas of more mixed loyalties, whilst the effects of others – controls over staple, intensive agricultural exploitation, for example – might be more visible within the core (cf. Rippon 2010; Astill in press).

In the remainder of this piece I would like to consider how these factors impact on the issue of King-stons. Given their probable role as royal holdings of some kind, places of the Kingston type, illustrate further areas, I believe, through which this territorialisation of royal power took place. It is hoped that an understanding of this process in an English context may help in turn to identify similar practices in Scandinavia and beyond.

## Kingstons

Places named Kingston have been the subject of a recent detailed analysis by Jill Bourne (2011). In an illuminating study she discusses some of the main characteristics of these sites, which the following summarises here. Whilst I do not disagree with any of the important conclusions Bourne draws, my purpose is to link these more closely to the other developments sketched out above.

'Kingston' derives from the OE *cyninges* 'king's' and *tūn* 'enclosure, farmstead, estate, village'; so a definition akin to that suggested for OS *husaby* 'a royal farm or hamlet' (Brink 2000) seems appropriate. In total sixty-eight place-names in Kingston are known, with a distribution heavily biased towards southern England (Fig. 1). Around 34% of all Kingston are located in the core territories of the kingdom of the West Saxons before AD 726, with a further 20% in those areas associated with Wessex by this date. 26% are in the West Midlands, and the remainder thinly spread further east and north (Bourne 2011, 35-6).

The semantically related terms *æðel* and *þengel* 'prince' also occur in place-names, some of which are potentially very interesting sites (e.g. Athelney 'the island of the princes', site of Alfred the Great's stronghold in 878; *Æthelingadene* 'the valley of the princes' (surviving as Ellingsdean (Sussex), site of a battle with the Vikings in 1001; Finglesham (Kent), location of an important early Anglo-Saxon cemetery)(Hawkes & Pollard 1981, 330; Parsons 2013, 57-63). Æthel is compounded with *tūn* in about half a dozen places-names as Allington, Athelington, and Elton (Probert 2008, 12), however, Æthel is a well attested personal name (or prototheme in personal names), and no examples of the expected equivalent formation to *cyninges-tūn* – *æðelinga-tūn* or *þengela-*
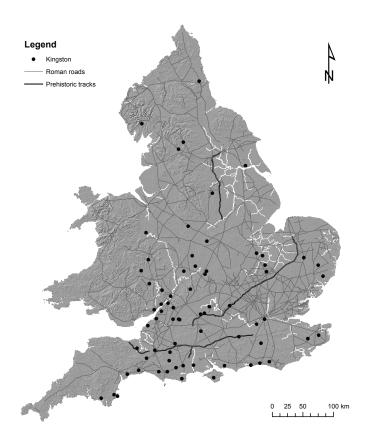
*Fig. 1.* Kingston place-names in England, plotted from data provided by Jill Bourne.

*tūn* – are known (Parsons 2013, 62). They are, therefore, not included in the following discussion.

The overall distribution of Kingstons is complemented by a second, more localised, pattern. Over 70% are found on or within 1.6km of major long-distance routeways, particularly Roman roads, often forming 'strings' of equidistant places along these roads, sited between 14 and 16km apart (Bourne 2011, 34-118). Evidently, the function of Kingstons was closely related to the movement of goods and people, perhaps as check-points used to monitor and regulate travellers (ibid. 198).

In some ways the more interesting finding to come out of Bourne's detailed analysis is the absence of any meaningful association between Kingstons and other more obvious sites of royal power. With the notable exception of Kingston-upon-Thames (Surrey) none of these places were sites of royal vills. They were not places from which charters were issued, nor were they sites of mother churches, or places of execution (Bourne 2011, 194-5). Whatever their original function, she concludes, multiple reorganisations as part of the amalgamation processes as kingdoms expanded have obscured the connections.

Despite these difficulties, two probable origins for these places are suggested. Some may have originated in close relation to "royal centres of some kind – estate centres, or even the central places of small, early kingdoms" (Bourne 2011, 180). In these cases their earlier function may have been fossilised and repurposed as part of the processes of kingdom expansion and the stabilisation of higher levels of political power. In these instances the territories and estate centres of earlier petty kings became ready-made administrative units incorporated within the larger state, with sub-kings devolved to the status of ealdormen in the service of an overlord (cf. Chadwick 1905, 288; Yorke 1995, 90-1; Yorke 1999). An example of this process might be seen in the *regio* of the Anglo-Saxon group known as the *Stoppingas* in Warwickshire, investigated by Bassett (1989), which evolved into the minster *parochia* of Wootton Wawen, and by the time of Domesday Book, a multiple estate belonging to a wealthy Scandinavian landowner named Vagn (Faith 2008, 12). Although the territorial continuity of this small early tribal region is well established, Kington Grange, located near the centre of the region, appears always to have been a minor settlement: it was a daughter of the
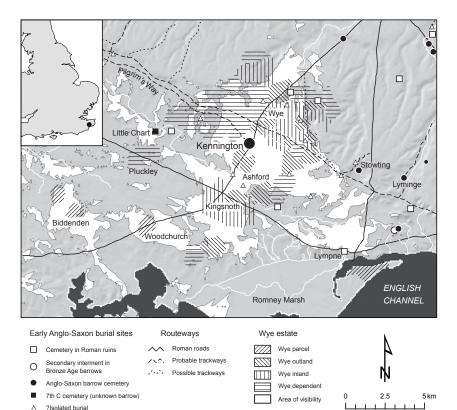
*Fig. 2.* Kennington and the royal estate of Wye, Kent. The heartlands of the 'small shire' of Wye are essentially co-areal with the viewshed (in white) from Wye.

more important church of Claverdon 2km to the east, and was also attached to the estate centre located there (Bourne 2011, 102). Nevertheless, Bassett (2007) supposed it may once have been a more significant place, and was so-named because it was the last part of the district to remain in royal hands. A very similar example of this type is found in Kent, where Kennington formed a small dependent settlement to a larger, more significant place, the royal vill of Wye, 2km to the northeast, which served as the *caput* for an apparently early administrative district (Jolliffe 1933; Brookes 2011) (Fig. 2).

In each of these cases Kingstons appear to have developed alongside, in close relationship with, settlements at the centre of early *regiones*: they were complementary to, rather than an essential part of, these primary territories. What, then, were they for? I think part of the answer lies in the fact that both these regions (Warwickshire and Kent respectively) were subsumed and incorporated into larger polities, suggesting that Kingstons may have been part of the process by which scale change was operationalised. With tribute and allegiance shifting from petty to higher-level kings, new sites emerged to formalise these new relations of power. Perhaps these were additional render-taking places, or took on other

functions of administration such as policing, tax collection, law keeping (cf. also Parsons 2013, 56).

A second, and complementary, possible origin for Kingstons may lie in administrative innovations introduced by the West Saxon king in the seventh century, notable under King Ine (688-726). More so than Kingstons elsewhere, examples in western parts of Wessex are notably regular in spacing and demonstrate great correlations with the main routes of communication. Bourne (2011) takes this distribution to reflect some systematic approach to the administration of a large kingdom, the political context of which may well be the reign of Ine, when other developments similarly demonstrate a concern with territorial control. Yorke (1995, 84-85) has suggested that the shires, or divisions of the kingdom, date to this period, and in Ine's lawcode (8) we hear for the first time of a king's shire-reeve, a sheriff (*scirman*), as the presiding officer over these districts. Perhaps significantly, the 'string' pattern is noticeably most pronounced in Dorset and the western shires of Wessex. Bourne (2011, 181) takes this pattern to reflect Ine's more efficient management of his 'home' shire, however, two aspects of the distribution suggest a different interpretation. Firstly, it is noticeable that there is a very similar patterning
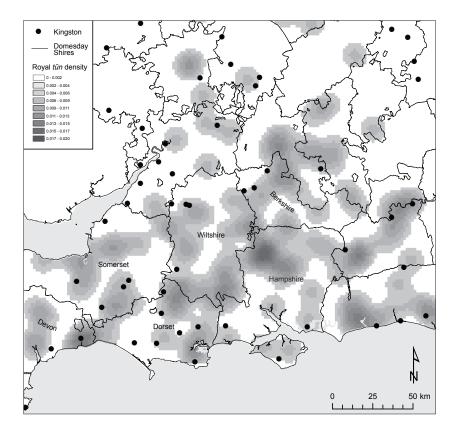
of Kingstons in Gloucestershire which never seems to have been part of early Wessex, but of the neighbouring kingdom of the Hwicce – which is usually seen to be part of the Mercian sphere of influence. Secondly, it is striking that there is a virtual absence of Kingstons in the eastern 'core' West Saxon shires of Hampshire, Wiltshire, and Berkshire. A kernel density plot of the royal tuns identified by Peter Sawyer (1983) show the main areas of royal landed power (Fig. 3). When set alongside that of Kingstons this pattern emphasises the complementary nature of the Kingston system operating primarily beyond the core lands. Yorke (1995, 84-93) has discussed the likely origin of Wessex from two districts; the eastern shires of Hampshire, Berkshire and Wiltshire as core West Saxon lands, and the western shires of Somerset, Dorset and Devon originating ultimately from territories still under British control in the early seventh century. Although both had been brought together by the seventh century, the density of Kingstons in the politically lesser sub-district of western Wessex, supports the idea that these were related to the governance of people beyond the core, rather than the control of dynastic territories. Of possible significance in this regard is the location of several Kingstons on the main routes leading through the

area of Selwood Forest on the Wiltshire-Somerset border – the traditional division between eastern and western Wessex.

## Scale changes and the function of Kingstons

In Bourne's two alternative models for the origins of Kingstons we can see different ways in which the scale change of the long eighth century manifested itself in the localities. In practice, the distinction between both models is considerably blurred. In both cases we can relate their appearance to the emergence of high kings, and in both cases their function seems to be related to the administration of a large kingdom, with a distribution very suggestive of a particular role outside the core, perhaps in linking regional districts to the king. The differences that exist relate to the types of districts that were being amalgamated. In some cases these were relatively new constructs, in other cases, these represented older, formerly independent 'small shires'.

It seems certain that, however taxation was managed in the early medieval period, this was likely to

be highly variable and unsystematic. Only in certain cases, such as royal demesne, did kings have any chance of having sufficient information about the yield of staple, or the circulation of wealth. The regular spacing of Kingstons outside the immediate core West Saxon lands may reflect something by way of acknowledgement of this reality: it was here that kings invested more in order to gain some administrative traction. In support of this view it is noticeable that hidage assessments as represented in Burghal Hidage and Domesday Book are more regular and substantial in core West Saxon territories in the east of the kingdom (Yorke 1995, 90). Whatever systems were in place here, they did not require Kingstons. Whether this represents some kind of division in function akin to that witnessed between *bona regalia* and *bona patrimonia* in parts of Scandinavia (Iversen 2011) is plausible, but difficult to demonstrate. It might even be possible to link Kingstons with the nature of the sub-kingdoms taken over. In this regard one could argue that both the Hwicce and the West Saxons were wrestling with the same scenario in taking-over British provinces, and so may have adopted similar solutions. Perhaps they even co-operated to ensure success, after all their British territories were all in the same late Roman province, in which case a shared terminology might seem more likely.

Of course, this shift in emphasis to administrative expedience, rather than radical state planning, weakens the case for Ine's putative role in the foundation of Kingstons in Wessex. The areas where the regular pattern of Kingstons is at its most visible are also the areas dominated by later West Saxon kings. If their naming was a reflection of their function within the kingdom, any member of the house of Cerdic from Ine onwards could have been responsible for their establishment.

Whatever their origins the pattern of Kingstons reveals a great concern with movement; a concern which is echoed in several seventh-century lawcodes (Brookes 2007b). Certainly some of these controls were likely aimed at checking nefarious activities. Ine's code (Ine 20) echoes that of Wihtred (Wihtred 28):

> If a man from afar, or a stranger, quits the road, and neither shouts, nor blows a horn, he shall be

*assumed to be a thief, [and as such] be either slain or put to ransom.*

A further function seems to have been the management of commercial traffic. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle's* account of the first encounter between the English and the Vikings in *c.* AD 789-93 makes clear that it was a duty of the local reeve, Beaduheard of Dorchester, to lead the – what he believed to be – traders to a royal market. Whilst the outcome of this engagement was unexpected (Beaduheard was killed) its context would seem to have been relatively commonplace. Interestingly, according to the *Annals of St Neots*, the Vikings landed at Portland (Dorset)(Dumville & Lapidge 1984). Any seabourne approach from the west to this location would have been visible from Kingston Russell but not from Dorchester, 16km further inland. The encounter at Portland may well have been precipitated by intelligence coming from Kingston.

Bourne makes the observation that the distance between Kingstons laid out in strings along routeways is uniformly around 14-16km, that is to say the average distance a horseman could travel in a day. This pattern also strongly resembles that of beacons, identified by the OE place-name elements *$*tōt$* and *weard*, the distribution of which in some cases can be supplemented by that of Kingstons (Baker 2011; Brookes 2013; Baker & Brookes 2013; 2015b). Elsewhere it has been argued that the function of beacons was strongly connected with the control of movement and the mobilisation of troops (Baker & Brookes 2013). Kingstons might similarly be seen in this light.

This connection with military functions is potentially very significant. From entries in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* it appears that one of the main roles of the ealdormen was to lead the shire forces to battle (Yorke 1995, 90). Whilst it is not clear how armies of this date were mobilised, it is clear that at least by the time of Domesday Book, and possibly as early as the eighth century, systems were in place linking directly the number of troops available for military expeditions and cadastral units of economic productivity (Abels 1988, 115). Specific places of muster are certain to have been part of this system (Baker & Brookes 2016), and so too, perhaps were Kingstons. Only a very small number of Anglo-Saxon mustering

sites are actually named in contemporary sources, and not all can be securely identified. Nevertheless, it is potentially significant that the two most famous musters at Egbert's Stone (*Ecgbrihtesstan*) and Iley Oak, both in AD 878, are located within 10km of a cluster of Kingstons. Were mustering sites, beacons and Kingstons essential components of the same military system? If this is the case, the reigns of Alfred the Great or Edward the Elder, when western Mercia was becoming incorporated into Wessex and common military policies were being adopted across southern England, might suggest an alternative 'moment' for the development of a regular Kingston system.

The link between royal officials and Kingstons cannot be proved, but is highly suggestive. As part of the process of state formation, it may even have been expected. Fukuyama (2011, 247) suggests: "military organization and taxing authority arise naturally out of people's basic predatory instincts... Of all the components of contemporary states, effective legal institutions are perhaps the most difficult to construct." Yet, even in this domain a further putative function of Kingstons can be hypothesised. Ine's law (26.1) describes the penalty for one "who captures a thief or has a captured thief given into his custody, and allows him to escape...If he is an ealdorman he shall forfeit his 'shire' unless the king is willing to pardon him." The implication of this sub-clause is that the office of ealdorman included the confinement of wrongdoers at a secure place. This function is made explicit in the laws of King Alfred which state that one who breaks an oath will be imprisoned *on cyninges-tūn* for 40 days and undergo there whatever penance the bishop prescribes for him (Attenborough 1922, 35). On this basis a legal function for Kingstons, whether or not they can be linked to royal agents, seems assured. Certainly, by the ninth and tenth centuries, the role of prisons is well attested in lawcodes and saints' Lives, and is even depicted in manuscripts such as the early eleventh-century Harley Psalter (BL MS Harley 603, f. 54v). From his assessment of this earliest material, Reynolds (2009a, 12-8) concludes that prisons were maintained at the *cyninges-tūn* within the royal vill. Probert (2008) likewise, suggests that a *cyninges-tūn* had a particular role within the royal estate structure, though not necessarily a central one. Clearly such places of confinement were separate from, and

structurally different to, court sites. The latter tend to be temporary sites, or marked by several phases of short-lived occupation (Baker & Brookes 2015a), a characteristic which is incompatible with the function of imprisonment. Kingstons were surely more permanent physical places in landscape. If their functions were, as seems possible, the grubby business of policing and checking of the estate, and the confining of wrongdoers – the execution of law – it may not be surprising to find these places at a remove from the estate centre. In support of this idea, Carole Hough (2013) has recently suggested that the generic term *cyning* may have been used to signify a relationship with the office of kingship, not the king himself.

## Conclusions

The leading author Peter Ackroyd has written about the 'spirit of place', a *genius loci* in which associations are continuously affixed to places over time. The Kingston where I live, Kennington in London, displays something of this encoded influence of the past. Although the precise location of the king's *tūn* is unknown, it seems certain to have been located on the Roman road (Stane Street) from London to Chichester (still the busy Clapham Road), east of Kennington Cross, where Lambeth County Court stands today, opposite the site of the fourteenth-century royal palace of the Black Prince. As recently as the eighteenth century, a location just 300m to the south of this position was the site of one of London's most important gallows (Renier 2006, 57-8). As its Anglo-Saxon predecessor, early modern Kennington was a location powerfully associated with the operation of the state.

There is every reason to believe that similar state-level functions of places described as *cyninges-tūn* would have been understood by people during the later first millennium AD. Their first appearance in sources of the seventh to ninth centuries, along with a range of other royal innovations suggest their functions were closely related to the 'political chaos' of territorial expansion and consolidation. This territorialisation of power was expressed militarily, economically, but also legally, as governance became less

representational and increasingly institutionalised. This expansion of territorial power is marked by the appearance of dispersed administrative functions in which key institutions were deliberately ranged widely over regions; Kingstons would seem to have been part of this same process. Importantly, it is suggested here that there may have been several layers of Kingston creation, and periods and areas in which earlier arrangements were overhauled. As royal authority developed, so is it likely that the 'official' functions of royal sites changed also. Here, Kingstons provide an interesting parallel to Husebyer: were they all bestowed at the same time or in similar circumstances, or might one similarly expect a range of different expressions of kingly power? Whilst only excavation can demonstrate the precise signature of Kingstons, in light of the foregoing discussion it is probable that these places fulfilled a range of functions as part of this 'governmentalisation' of the state.[1]

## Note

1. I am very grateful to John Baker, John Blair, Barbara Yorke and an anonymous referee for reading a draft of this paper and making many helpful observations. I also wish to thank Jill Bourne for granting me access to her unpublished work on Kingstons. Any errors of judgement and interpretation are, of course, my own

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