NORTH-WEST MERCIA

A.D. 871–924

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DURING the half-century which is covered by the reigns of Alfred the Great (871–899) and Edward the Elder (899–924) there occurred a terrible calamity, the Scandinavian invasions, which exercised a profound and permanent influence upon the history and racial composition of Britain. The outline of events is reasonably clear, for we possess a contemporary account in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. Unfortunately, the *Chronicle* scribes, interested primarily in the West Saxon angle of the story, were unwilling or unable to describe conditions or events remote from their central theme. Amongst those regions of which a fuller knowledge would be especially welcome we must include North-west Mercia, that is to say modern Cheshire and parts of adjoining counties. The present paper attempts a popular survey of this area. It should be remembered that the story of Cheshire can be understood only when, in its proper setting, it is co-ordinated with the story of England. This, no less than the paucity and inferential nature of the evidence, demands that Cheshire be regarded as part of the kingdom of Mercia which was, in its turn, faced with a menace common to all the English states.

In all probability the main Scandinavian settlements in Cheshire occurred during the reigns of Alfred and his son. It is extremely unlikely that any Scandinavians had settled in Cheshire before Alfred's accession, and we have no reason to suppose that such settlers were numerous after Edward's death. Indeed, it is a fairly safe assumption that most of the Scandinavian settlements in Cheshire were made between 871 and 924. Thus these fifty years are years of tremendous importance. Moreover, there is evidence which suggests that this area, North-west Mercia, played

[1] This article was read as a paper under the title of "The Scandinavians in Cheshire." A change in title was considered desirable in order to permit the inclusion of additional matter.

a vital part in the campaigns which led to Edward's destruction of the immediate Scandinavian menace.

We have no direct evidence of conditions in Cheshire in A.D. 871. It formed part of Mercia, but the Mercian kingdom was clearly on the eve of dissolution. Since the death of Offa the glories of Mercian supremacy had vanished. Between 820 and 830 it would appear that Egbert's spectacular victories had transferred the ascendancy to Wessex together with the overlordship of all Southern England.[1] Even Northumbria felt compelled to admit some kind of nominal West Saxon sovereignty.[2] Yet it is easy to over-estimate the reality and permanence of Egbert's power and it is easy to exaggerate the decadence of Mercia. It may be noted that London remained a Mercian city in spite of Egbert's ascendancy, and there is no doubt that Cheshire remained part of Mercia after the disasters of 825 and 829. But the vitality had gone from the Mercian central government and the control exercised by the Mercian kings can have been little more than a fiction. The last rulers of Mercia are shrouded in obscurity, notable only for their impotence and for their insecurity. After Coenwulf (796–821) died, his brother Ceolwulf was deprived of the kingdom in 823.[3] Henceforward the Mercian throne seems to have become the prize of the most powerful claimant, irrespective of his connexion with the royal house. Each in turn was slain or expelled, a fact which, in Mercia as in Northumbria, illustrates the instability of the central power.

The Danish raids provide a demonstration rather than a cause of Mercian weakness. It is interesting to contrast the puny and ineffective resistance of Mercia with the determined and strenuous resistance of Wessex. In 842[4] there was "great slaughter" at London, a Mercian city, as well as at Rochester and Quentavic. Some ten years later[5] a more terrible blow befell Mercia: the *Chronicle* records that Canterbury and London were stormed and that the Danes "put to flight" Beorhtwulf, King of the Mercians, and his fyrd. It is significant that, on advancing into Surrey,

[1] Kent, Surrey, Sussex, Essex and East Anglia submitted to Egbert. For a short time he apparently ruled Mercia directly, as Oswald of Northumbria had done before him, but Wiglaf, on his restoration to the Mercian throne, seems to have been quite independent of West Saxon overlordship.

[2] There is no evidence that the Northumbrian submission at Dore was more than a gesture.

[3] *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (ASC) *s.a.* 821. [4] ASC. *s.a.* 839. [5] ASC. *s.a.* 851.

the Danes were defeated by Ethelwulf, Ethelbald and the West Saxons at *Aclea*, a battle which inflicted far greater loss on the Danes than any they had yet suffered on English soil.[1] Burgred, Beorhtwulf's successor, realized his weakness and at once appealed for West Saxon assistance in the subjugation of the Welsh (*Norþ Walas*). Asser believed that this was no raid of conquest but a defensive action to restore Mercian control over rebels.[2] This seems to be the correct interpretation. In her weakness Mercia could not, unaided, maintain order within her own borders: it was not the time for territorial expansion. It is not known if Cheshire played any part in this Welsh revolt or its suppression for the trouble may have arisen in Central or South Wales.[3] At any rate, it shows the lack of security along the Welsh border and it shows that Mercia could not alone provide protection against raiders. The Angles in Cheshire would have to rely mainly upon their own resources. On this occasion Ethelwulf and the West Saxons crushed the rebels and restored Burgred's authority, but the whole incident is a remarkable confession of Mercia's weakness. It is clear, too, that Wessex no longer regarded Mercia as a rival to be feared but as a tottering ally to be strengthened in the face of the common Danish menace.

In the marriages which follow we see a West Saxon attempt to bolster up a crumbling Mercia. After Easter 853, "King Ethelwulf gave his daughter to King Burgred," a marriage which followed closely upon the Welsh campaign.[4] Asser records that in 868 Alfred was married to a Mercian lady of royal descent.[5] Their children, Edward and Æthelflæd, and Æthelflæd's Mercian husband, Ethelred, were destined to recover Mercia from Danish control, but the immediate effect of these marriages was slight, for Mercia was still unable to offer any effective resistance to the Danes.

At this point the "Great Army" of heathen Danes arrived to emphasize Mercia's weakness. The piratical raids which had

[1] Ibid.

[2] Asser, *De Rebus Gestis Alfredi*. cap. 7.

[3] It has been suggested to the author that the desolation of Chester, discussed below (p. 12), was perhaps due to a devastation at the hands of the Welsh during this revolt. It is an attractive theory and it is quite feasible, but no evidence can be quoted either for or against it.

[4] Both campaign and marriage are recorded under the annal for 853 in the *Chronicle*, but, since this probably covers the period September 852—September 853, it is possible that the Welsh revolt should be referred to the previous year.

[5] Asser, op. cit. cap. 29.

begun late in the eighth century now developed into a determined and dangerous attempt at conquest. In the autumn of 865 the Great Army landed in East Anglia, and for fifteen years it wandered almost at will in England. Of the English kingdoms only Wessex made any effective resistance: East Anglia, Northumbria and Mercia collapsed in turn before the onslaught. It is not necessary here to trace the progress of the Danish Army except in so far as it affected Mercia. Late in 867 the Danes moved from York and took up winter quarters in Nottingham. This was the first direct attack upon Mercia proper. Burgred appealed to Ethelred and Alfred for help, and the West Saxon fyrd marched to relieve Nottingham, but, runs the contemptuous entry in the West Saxon *Chronicle*, "there no serious battle took place, and the Mercians made peace with the Army." It was an ill-starred beginning. Henceforth the Danes traversed Mercia as they pleased, and submission availed little to avert devastation.[1] In 871, after the remarkable campaign in Wessex during which Alfred became king,[2] the Army moved to London for the winter of 871–872. The *Chronicle* records no resistance and contents itself with thə usual contemptuous comment that the Mercians made peace with the heathen army: *þa namon Mierce friþ wiþ þone here.* The evidence of a charter, however, throws light upon the nature of the Mercian peace; it shows that the Danes received money which was partly raised in Mercian lands remote from London.[3] It is possible that the men of Cheshire were called upon to make their contribution. In spite of such payments London remained firmly under Danish control and Halfdan struck coins there.[4]

Late in 872 the Army rode into Northumbria and then returned south to spend the winter at Torksey in Lindsey, and again *þa namon Mierce friþ wiþ þone here.* The next winter, 873–874, was passed at Repton, the real centre of Mercian power and deep in the heart of the kingdom. There was enacted the final scene

[1] It is recorded that in the autumn of 869 (ASC. *s.a.* 870) "the [Danish] Army rode across Mercia into East Anglia." The Peterborough version (Laud or E. MS.) of the *Chronicle* adds: "And they destroyed all the churches which they came to. And at the same time, when they came to Medeshamsted (Peterborough), they burnt it and battered it, and they slew the abbot and the monks and all that they found there. . . ."

[2] Probably towards the end of April, 871.

[3] Birch, *Cartularium Saxonicum.* 533. Werfrith, Bishop of Worcester, is seen granting land in Nuthurst, co. Warwick, in order to raise money *pro immenso tributo barbarorum eodem anno quo pagani sedebant in Lundonia.* cf. R. H. Hodgkin, *A History of the Anglo-Saxons*, II, p. 552.

[4] See, for example, G. C. Brooke, *English Coins*, Plate IX.

in the degradation of Mercia when the Danes " drove King Burgred over the sea about twenty-two years after he acquired the kingdom, and subdued the whole land. And he [Burgred] went to Rome, and remained there, and his body lies in St. Mary's church in the English quarter. And in that same year they gave the kingdom of the Mercians into the keeping of an unwise king's thegn." This was Ceolwulf II, a puppet king set up by the Danes, and the terms of his contract with the enemy reveal how complete was the humiliation of Mercia : by oaths and hostages he was bound to hold himself, his followers and the whole kingdom at the disposal of the Army.

Having secured full control of Mercia, the Danes now divided their forces. Halfdan, with one part, went northwards to ravage Northumbria, to raid among the Picts and Strathclyde Welsh and, finally, in 876 to attempt the permanent settlement of Northumbria, the first recorded Scandinavian settlement in England. Guthrum, with the other part of the Army, spent the winter of 874–875, and presumably the winter of 875–876, at Cambridge, and then made a second attempt to subdue Wessex. The story centres around Wareham and Exeter, where the Danes apparently remained until the summer of 877, when Alfred forced them to make peace and to surrender hostages. In August[1] 877 they departed into Mercia,[2] " and some of it they divided, and some of it they gave to Ceolwulf."[3] Thus the *Chronicle* records the second great Scandinavian settlement in England, that of Eastern Mercia. That Ceolwulf was allowed to continue as the ruler of Western Mercia proves his loyalty to his Danish masters and his adherence to the terms of 874. It may be that he helped to facilitate the Danish settlement, for the whole operation did not require much more than four months : the Danes left Exeter during the harvest of 877 and by the early days of January 878 they had returned to deliver a surprise attack on Wessex which compelled Alfred to seek a temporary refuge in the Somerset marshes and which almost culminated in final disaster. The settlement of Eastern Mercia, therefore, took place in the last months of 877. After Alfred's recovery at ***Ecgandun*** (Eddington, Wilts.) the Danes were forced to make peace, and they spent

[1] *On hærfæste.* ASC. *s.a.* 877.
[2] Ethelweard states that the Danes went to Gloucester which is thus clearly within Mercia. *Ethelwerdi Chronicorum*, Lib. IV, Cap. III.
[3] ASC. *s.a.* 877.

the winter of 878–879 at Cirencester, presumably in Ceolwulf's Mercia, before moving to East Anglia which was then divided and settled. With this third recorded Scandinavian settlement in England the history of the Great Army of 865 comes to an end.

Since 874 Cheshire had been part of Ceolwulf's kingdom and was, no doubt, under indirect Danish control. This, however, can hardly have been effective, and, as will be seen, there is some evidence that life in this area continued without much disturbance. When the division of Mercia took place in 877, the Danish settlement apparently reached westwards to include the counties of Derbyshire, Leicestershire and Northamptonshire. Ceolwulf was probably allowed to retain the area covered by the counties of Cheshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Herefordshire, Worcestershire, Warwickshire, Gloucestershire and Oxfordshire. It is not known whether he died, abdicated or was deposed: he vanishes from the pages of history, and we find Ealdorman Ethelred acting as the representative of the Mercian kings and as Alfred's subordinate partner. The problems of Ethelred's position and of his relation to King Alfred need not trouble us here. It was to Ethelred that Alfred gave London on its recapture from the Danes in 886 (or late 885).

At this point, the half-way mark of Alfred's reign, it is convenient to inquire what had been the effects of the Danish ravages. The Great Army of 865 had overwhelmed all the English kingdoms except Wessex, and had made settlements in three areas and on such a scale that half of England became permanently Scandinavianized. How far had Cheshire or North-west Mercia been affected by this date? There is no evidence that the Danes had yet penetrated into the extreme north-west of Mercia, and Cheshire had probably suffered less than might be imagined. It is clear that nothing could have prevented a Danish raid into Cheshire had the Army considered the attempt worth the effort. It is clear also that under Ceolwulf North-west Mercia fell into the Danish sphere of influence, but it is unlikely that this control was more than nominal. In fact, until the last years of Alfred's reign it is probable that North-west Mercia remained undisturbed by the Danish invasions except, possibly, for the levy of some such contribution to the Army as that mentioned by the Bishop of Worcester.

This conclusion is supported by the little that is known of conditions in Mercia under Ceolwulf II. The only available account of Ceolwulf's elevation to power is that found in the West Saxon *Chronicle,* and the West Saxons were obviously disgusted at such shameless treachery. It may be, however, that we do not know the full story, for it is a remarkable fact that during his short reign Ceolwulf seems to have been supported by the chief men in Mercia. Charters show that he was recognized by the Mercian bishops, Werfrith of Worcester, Eadbert of Lichfield and Deorlaf of Hereford. Men who had attended Burgred's court are found in attendance on Ceolwulf. One feels that the West Saxon version may require modification.

This impression is strengthened by the evidence of scholarship in Mercia. Asser tells us that Alfred summoned Werfrith, Plegmund and two learned priests, Athelstan and Werwulf, from Mercia to assist him in the revival of learning.[1] That Mercia could produce such men at a time when, according to Alfred, scholarship had almost vanished from the rest of England[2] is a very strong argument against any Danish devastation. It is almost certain that these scholars belong to Western Mercia: Werfrith was Bishop of Worcester, Plegmund is traditionally connected with Cheshire, and Lichfield seems to have been a cultural centre the importance of which is not sufficiently recognized. In short, we may well believe that Western Mercia under Ceolwulf had escaped the misery and disorganization consequent elsewhere upon the Danish invasions. It is noteworthy that there had yet been no serious raid into Western Mercia and that the Danes had never taken up winter quarters there.[3] It seems

[1] Asser, op. cit. cap. 77. "At tunc Deus quaedam solatia regiae benevolentiae, tam benevolam et iustissimam querelam illius diutius non ferens, veluti quaedam luminaria, transmisit Werfrithum, scilicet Wigernensis ecclesiae episcopum, in divina scilicet scriptura bene eruditum, qui, imperio regis, libros Dialogorum Gregorii papae et Petri sui discipuli de Latinitate primus in Saxonicam linguam, aliquando sensum ex sensu ponens, elucabratim et elegantissime interpretatus est; deinde Plegmundum, Mercium genere, Dorobernensis ecclesiae archiepiscopum, venerabilem scilicet virum, sapientia praeditum; Æthelstan quoque et Werwulfum, sacerdotes et capellanos, Mercios genere, eruditos."

[2] In the preface to his translation of Pope Gregory's *Pastoral Care*, Alfred, in a frequently quoted passage, declares that he cannot think of a single Latin scholar south of the Thames at the time of his accession and that there were very few south of the Humber.

[3] Apart from the 878–879 winter which the Danes spent at Cirencester on the borders of Wessex and Mercia. On this occasion, however, Guthrum and his Army must have been temporarily exhausted by the severe defeat inflicted on them by Alfred. This wintering of a chastened Army on the fringes of Mercia cannot be compared with the triumphant occupation of York, Nottingham and Repton a few years earlier.

safe to say that in 886 Cheshire was still unscathed by the troubles which had come upon England.

This immunity from serious raids came to a sudden end, and during the last seven years of Alfred's reign the men of Cheshire were destined to experience directly the full force of the Danish attacks. North-western Mercia became for two or three years the scene of important operations. Briefly, the danger arose from two Danish armies which arrived in Kent late in 892. One, a force with 250 ships, built a fort at Appledore ; the other, Hæsten with eighty ships, built a fort at Milton. Alfred's hasty attempts to ward off disaster by negotiation failed. Hæsten, whose sons were baptized, apparently assented to some arrangement but, nevertheless, in the spring of 893[1] he slipped away to Benfleet, Essex, which became the base for his raiding expeditions. Equally futile were Alfred's efforts to ensure that the Danes already settled in England remained quiet and to prevent them from joining forces with the invaders. The sequence of events is not clear but it seems that in November 892[2] Alfred demanded and received hostages from the Danes of East Anglia as well as pledges from them and from the Northumbrian Danes. This manœuvre was of no avail, for, whenever the Appledore and Milton Armies went raiding, the East Angles and the Northumbrians "went out either with them or on their own account."[3] Later, after Hæsten had gone to Benfleet, the Danes of East Anglia and Northumbria made dangerous naval attacks upon the north and south coasts of Devon which necessitated Alfred's presence and seriously hampered English operations in south-eastern England. To understand the campaigns of the last years of the ninth century it is essential to emphasize the part played by the remnants of the 865 Great Army. In 892 the Danes could rely upon powerful support from their kindred who were settled in England. For Cheshire the outlook was especially gloomy. A glance at a map will show the insecurity of North-west Mercia if the Danes decided to attack in that area. East of Watling Street was friendly territory,

[1] Probably before Easter (April 8th). Hæsten's move preceded that of the Appledore Army which, according to Ethelweard (op. cit.), occurred about Easter.

[2] i.e. as soon as the arrival of the Danes created a crisis.

[3] ASC. *s.a.* 894. *swa oft swa þa oþre hergas mid ealle herige ut foron þonne foron hie oþþe mid oþþe on heora healfe.* For a slightly different interpretation of this passage see R. H. Hodgkin, *A History of the Anglo-Saxons*, II, p. 659.

a refuge from punitive expeditions and a reservoir of reinforcements. It is obvious that the West Saxons could not effectively defend North-west Mercia while the older generation of Danish settlers remained unsubdued and hostile.

Meanwhile the Appledore Danes, after suffering a severe defeat at Farnham, straggled into Hæsten's base at Benfleet. Edward captured and destroyed this fortress during Hæsten's absence, and the Danes moved to Shoebury. From Shoebury and, later, from Mersea Island, there were launched three spectacular raids into Western Mercia, the vulnerability of which was probably no less obvious to the Danes than it is to us. It has been suggested that these three raids were a deliberate attempt to annex Western Mercia to Danish Mercia.[1] In any case, Cheshire now comes into the centre of the picture. In the summer of 893[2] the two Danish Armies, supported by considerable reinforcements from the East Anglian and Northumbrian Danes, moved from Shoebury " up along the Thames until they came to the Severn [and] then up along the Severn."[3] This created a crisis, especially as the East Anglian and Northumbrian Danes had actively joined the expedition in great numbers. For the first time Alfred had to face a coalition of all the Danes in England, and the struggle was to be waged in remote North-west Mercia, far from his own bases and reserves. Against this formidable host was mustered a force composed of West Saxons, Mercians and even Welshmen. It is noteworthy that, under the able leadership of Ealdorman

[1] R. H. Hodgkin, op. cit., II, p. 666.

[2] By taking into account the other events of this crowded year it is possible to place this first raid on Western Mercia in the summer, probably the early summer, of 893. It was, according to Ethelweard (op. cit. Lib. IV, cap. III), about Easter (i.e. early April) that the Appledore Army attempted to reach East Anglia. There followed the Battle of Farnham, the escape via Thorney to Benfleet, Edward's recruiting of additional help from London, the successful English attack on Benfleet, and the Danes' move into new quarters at Shoebury. It would be some time before the Danes, having obtained help from the East Angles and Northumbrians, were able to undertake a full scale raid into Western Mercia. It can hardly have been possible before the end of May. On their arrival at Buttington they were, says the *Chronicle*, besieged for " many weeks." It is unlikely that they returned to Shoebury much before the early days of August. Perhaps a month was spent in preparations for a second raid: they gathered a great army from among the East Angles and the Northumbrians, and they made safe their wives, their ships and their goods. Then they made a quick dash to Chester which they reached well before the end of the year—" about twelve months after they previously came hither over the sea." It may be remarked that the language of the *Chronicle* suggests that the Danish movements were hurried by the approach of winter. They had collected their army " ***onforan winter***," and then, on the journey to Chester, " they went continuously by day and night," perhaps to avoid the English fyrd but perhaps also because the campaigning season was at an end and because it was desirable to find winter quarters at once.

[3] ASC. *s.a.* 894.

Ethelred, the Mercians now make their full contribution to the English resistance. There is complete accord between Wessex and Mercia, and the latter, although clearly the subordinate partner, is far more effective under Ethelred and Alfred than under Burgred and the last Mercian kings.

The mixed horde of Danes followed the Severn until they were overtaken by the English forces *æt Buttingtune* (Buttington, near Welshpool, Montgomery).[1] Here they were besieged for many weeks until, having been driven to kill some of their horses for food, they decided to make a dash for their base in Essex. They were severely mauled by the waiting English but finally escaped and reached Shoebury. Thus ended the first great raid on Western Mercia. It seems to have been more serious than is implied by the *Chronicle ;* perhaps the scribe minimized the danger because Wessex was not directly threatened. At once preparations were made for a second raid, and late in 893[2] the Danes moved rapidly to "a desolate town in Wirral which is called Chester."[3] Here they were pursued by the English who adopted a "scorched earth" policy which compelled the Danes to depart into Wales. The *Chronicle* and most modern scholars dismiss this Welsh campaign very briefly and very inadequately.[4] The Welsh chronicles record an important

[1] This identification is disputed; Buttington near Chepstow has also been suggested (cf. E. Ekwall, *Dictionary of English Place-names*, p. 75). Philologically the form may belong to either place-name, and, archaeologically, no decisive evidence has come to light. On general grounds, however, Buttington near Welshpool seems to be the more likely site of the Danish camp because its position is very suitable and because the *Chronicle* states that the Danes went "up along the Severn." An expedition towards South Wales would be difficult to explain, but an expedition towards the North-west falls into line with the two later expeditions, to Chester and to Bridgnorth.

[2] See p. 11, note 2.

[3] Notice that Chester at this date was in a desolate or wasted condition. How long had this been so ? Speculation upon this point is interesting but not very fruitful. It has been suggested that the desolation dates from the Battle of Chester. This would mean that for 280 years, the seventh, eighth and ninth centuries, the town of Chester has no history worth the name. It may be, however, that the desolation was more recent : it may have been due to some raid of the Norsemen who had been plundering along the Irish and Welsh coasts for years. Chester, if it had recovered from Ethelfrith's campaign, was not likely to have escaped the attention of these ubiquitous sea-rovers. See below, p. 16, note 8. For another possibility see above, p. 5, note 3.

[4] e.g. R. H. Hodgkin, op. cit. II, p. 665, writes : "The Danes then broke out of Chester, for a time ravaged in North Wales, and returned to Essex through Northumbria and East Anglia." This limitation of the campaign to North Wales is not justifiable for, although the *Chronicle* speaks of the "North Welsh" (*Norð Wealas*), the name North Wales was then applied to the whole of modern Wales as distinct from West Wales (Devon and Cornwall). Yet the brief mention of the campaign in the *Chronicle* is equally unsatisfactory. It reads (*s.a.* 895) : "And then soon after that in this year the Army went from Wirral among the Welsh (*Norð Wealas*) . . ." This annal for 895 is very short : it leaves one with the impression that it is an outline and that much has been left unsaid. This would perhaps be natural, for a raid into Wales would not be of great interest to an English chronicler.

raid which reached into South Wales as far as Monmouthshire and Glamorganshire.[1] It is probable that this is the raid of the Danes who were forced to leave Chester; it seems to have filled most of the year 894. We cannot be certain that the Danes wintered in Chester before attempting the Welsh campaign, but such a reconstruction of the Army's movements is most reasonable. To argue that the Danes left Chester almost immediately after their arrival late in 893 seems to be unduly hastening the sequence of events: the probability is that the winter of 893-894 was spent in Chester. After their raid into Wales the Danes may well have returned to Chester again, for they reached their new base at Mersea by travelling "over the land of the Northumbrians and East Angles so that the [English] fyrd could not overtake them." They were obviously unwilling to cross hostile country when the friendly territory east of Watling Street offered a safe passage. The third and last great raid began in the autumn of 895 when the Danes, after Alfred had so blocked the River Lea that they could not remove their ships, rode to the neighbourhood of Bridgnorth on the Severn where they passed the winter. While the Londoners dealt effectively with the abandoned ships, the fyrd followed the Danes to Bridgnorth. In the summer of 896, after almost four years in England, this second Great Army of Danes dispersed, "some to East Anglia and some to Northumbria, and those who were without property obtained ships there and went southwards over the sea to the Seine." The *Chronicle* breathes the general relief: "By the mercy of God, the Army had not utterly crushed the English people."

Alfred died three years later, on 26 October, 899, and it may be convenient to summarize conditions at the end of his reign. With the dispersal of the Danish armies in the summer of 896 the immediate menace to England in general and to North-west Mercia in particular had been removed; yet it would be a mistake to imagine Alfred's last years as quiet and untroubled, an impression conveyed by the *Chronicle*. The dangerous settlers in East Anglia and Mercia were unsubdued: they sent

[1] *Annales Cambriae.* (*s.a.* 895): Nordmani venerunt et vastaverunt Loyer et Bricheniaue et Guent et Guinnligiauc. *Brut y Tywysogion.* (*s.a.* 894): And then the Northmen devastated England, Brecheiniog, Morganwy, Gwent, Buallt and Gwenllwg. (translation.)

ships to harass the south coast of Wessex, and it was probably in Poole Harbour that the complicated action, recorded in the *Chronicle*, was fought. Ethelweard gives other details of serious disturbances in Northumbria.[1] In fact, it is clear that Alfred's last years were full of trouble. The immediate menace from over the sea had been removed, but there remained a far greater menace, the Danes in England. Alfred had not been able to gain control over East Anglia, Northumbria and East Mercia, and, as cannot be too much emphasized, the Danish settlers of these regions constituted a grave threat to the English, and especially to North-west Mercia, the least defensible of the areas under West Saxon control. The removal of this most serious of threats was to be the work of Alfred's son, Edward, who had already perhaps played a more conspicuous part than his father in the operations of 892-896. In his efforts to drive back the Danes he had able assistants in his sister, Æthelflæd, and her husband, Ealdorman Ethelred. Without detracting from the achievements of Alfred, it is well to remember that it was Edward who reconquered the Danish Midlands and gave England nearly a century of respite from serious Danish attacks.

Before describing the English recovery under Edward it is necessary to examine a movement of far greater importance to Cheshire than the isolated Danish raids discussed above. Place-names (see below) have long made it obvious that there occurred at some date a considerable influx of Scandinavians into Wirral. They were Norsemen from Ireland and they settled in such numbers that Wirral became a densely populated Norse colony. The Danish influence on Cheshire is, by comparison, almost insignificant. Unfortunately this movement escaped the notice of English chroniclers, probably because it did not take the form of an organized army intent upon an attack on Wessex or upon the conquest of the whole country. It seems to have been a steady flow of men who were settlers by instinct and desire, warriors only by necessity. Irish traditions preserve a most interesting account of the arrival of one group of settlers and of their subsequent behaviour. Occasionally reference has been made to this account, especially by Scandinavian scholars, but it has never been quoted in any

[1] op. cit., Lib. IV, cap. III.

detail and it has never been given the attention which it merits. The only printed edition[1] in which it occurs is now very rare, and for this reason it has been thought desirable to print in full the translation of such parts as concern the present survey.

First, however, it is necessary to add a few notes regarding the reliability of this Irish account. The MS. which was edited over eighty years ago by O'Donovan is a copy of a copy made in 1643 by the famous Dubhaltach Mac Firbisigh from a certain vellum MS. This latter was then in the possession of Nehemias Mac Egan but has since been lost. Thus it is not possible to trace the descent of the MS. beyond the seventeenth century! Also the orthography is frequently modernized. Therefore modern specialists are unable to pronounce the tradition ancient. In fact, the best modern opinion, so far available, tends to regard the *Three Fragments* as untrustworthy. I am very incompetent to deal with the Irish sources but, at present, I am inclined to believe that the account of the Norse invasion of Wirral represents a genuine tradition of great antiquity. While it is impossible to prove the existence of an ancient MS. behind the copy of Mac Firbisigh, it seems equally impossible to disprove it; the insertion or removal of archaisms by later scribes is a common occurrence. There is much which seems to be of a legendary and romantic character, but, on the other hand, one feels that the general structure and tone of the story are ancient. Moreover, the same leader, Ingimund, appears at this time in the Welsh Chronicles,[2] a fact which may be considered as some kind of corroboration since it has not yet been possible to trace any connexion between the *Three Fragments* and the English and Welsh annalists. It has been pointed out that place-names prove a Norse settlement in Wirral, and, on the whole, the story preserved in the Irish source is very probable. Since communication was no doubt maintained with the Norsemen of Ireland from the moment of settlement, it is not surprising that the story should find its way into Irish annals. One is unable to say more at the present stage, but it is vital that this question of reliability should be settled, for important material

[1] *Annals of Ireland. Three Fragments*, edited by John O'Donovan, *Irish Archaeological and Celtic Society*. Dublin 1860.

[2] *Annales Cambriae. s.a.* 902. Igmunt. *Brut y Tywysogion, s.a.* 900. Igmond.

lies buried in the *Three Fragments*. For example, there is evidence of a hitherto unnoticed alliance of Æthelflæd and the Celts against the Scandinavians, which is, if reliable, a momentous addition to our knowledge of the reign of Edward the Elder.

To postpone further comment, there follows the story as quaintly printed in O'Donovan's text :

We have related before now, i.e. in the fourth year before us,[1] how the Lochlann hordes were expelled from Erin through the merits of the fasting and prayers of the holy man, Cele-Dabhaill, for he was a holy and pious man . . . The Lochlanns went away from Erin, as we have said, under the conduct of Hingamund,[2] their chieftain, and where they went to was to the island of Britain. The King of Britain at this time was the son[3] of Cadell, son of Roderick. The Britains (sic) assembled against them, and a hard and spirited battle was given them, and they were forcibly driven from the territories of the Britons.

After this Hingamund and his forces came to Ethelfrida,[4] Queen[5] of the Saxons, for her husband was at that time in a disease, i.e. Ethelfrid.[6] (Let no one criticise me, because I have mentioned the death of Ethelfrid before, for this [fact, which I now relate,] was before the death of Ethelfrid, and it was of this disease he died, but I did not like to leave unwritten all that the Lochlanns did after leaving Erin.) Hingamund was asking lands of the queen, in which he would settle, and on which he would erect stalls and houses, for he was at this time wearied of war. Ethelfrida afterwards gave him lands near Chester,[7] and he remained there for some time. What resulted from this was: as he saw the city was very wealthy,[8] and the land around it was choice, he coveted to appropriate them. After this, Hingamund came to meet the chieftains of the Lochlanns and Danes ; he made great complaints before them, and said that they were not well

[1] Parts of this " Fragment " are obviously missing for no account of the expulsion of the Norsemen appears. In 902 [*Annals of Ulster* and *Chronicon Scotorum*] the Scandinavians were driven out of Dublin. Although it is fairly safe to assume that this is the event to which reference is made, yet it does not help to solve the chronology of the passage. The scribe has apparently reached a point beyond 905–906 (he has just mentioned the death of Cadell for which see below note 3) and is telling a retrospective story.

[2] Hingamund is a good form of ON. *Ingimundr* [ODan. *Ingimund*, OSw. *Ingemund*].

[3] This genealogy is correct. One of the six sons of Rhodri Mawr was Cadell whose sons were Hywel and Clydog. The chronology is, however, awkward, for Cadell apparently was alive until about 909 (cf. J. E. Lloyd, *A History of Wales*, I, p. 332).

[4] i.e. Æthelflæd, Lady of the Mercians.

[5] The titles, King and Queen, given to Ethelred and Æthelflæd may not be used as evidence of their position and power. Such titles were applied loosely in Ireland. Also one does not expect a distinction to be made between Mercians (Angles) and Saxons. Such details suggest that these fragments of annals are quite independent of any English source.

[6] Ethelred, Ealdorman of the Mercians.

[7] *Castra*.

[8] Compare this with the statement that Chester was desolate in 893 (See above p. 12 and note). If one can believe that Ingimund found the city wealthy and desirable, the suggestion offered above, that the desolation was temporary and due to recent Norse raids, gains a little weight.

off without having good lands, and that they all ought to come to take Chester, and to possess themselves of its wealth and lands. From this many and great battles and wars arose. What he said was: Let us ask and implore themselves at first, and if we do not obtain this by their will, let us contend for them by force. All the chiefs of the Lochlanns and Danes approved of this. Hingamund afterwards returned to his house, a host having followed after him. Though they held this consultation secretly, the queen received intelligence of it. The queen collected great hosts about her from every direction, and the city of Chester was filled with her hosts.

. . .

The hosts of the Danes and the Lochlanns collected to Chester, and when they did not get themselves complied with by entreaty or supplication, they proclaimed battle on a certain day. On that day they came to attack the city, and there was a large host, with many nobles, in the city to meet them. When the hosts, who were within the city, saw, from the wall of the city, the many hosts of the Danes and Lochlanns [coming] to attack them, they sent messengers to the King of the Saxons, who was in a disease, and on the point of death at that time, to ask his advice, and the advice of his queen. The advice which he gave was, to give battle near the city outside, and to keep the gate of the city wide open, and to select a body of knights, and have them hidden on the inside; and if the people of the city should not be triumphant in the battle, to fly back into the city, as if in defeat, and when the greater number of the forces of the Lochlanns should come inside the gate of the city, that the hosts who were in ambuscade should close the gate of the city after this party, and not to pretend to anymore, but to attack the party who should come into the city, and kill them all. This was all done accordingly, and a red slaughter was accordingly made of the Danes and Lochlanns. Great, however, as was that slaughter, the Lochlanns did not abandon the city, for they were hardy and fierce, but they all said that they should make many hurdles, and that posts should be placed under them, and that they should perforate the wall under [the shelter of] them. This project was not deferred; the hurdles were made, and hosts were [placed] under them to pierce the wall, for they were covetous to take the city, and to avenge their people.

Then the king, who was on the point of death, and the queen sent ambassadors to the Gaeidhil[1] who were among the Pagans (for the

[1] Normally the term *Gaedhil* is reserved for natives as distinct from *Gaill*, strangers or foreigners, but in this case we are clearly dealing with a group of Irishmen (or Irish-Norsemen) who had given up their Christianity and had taken to plundering with the heathen. They may have been Scandinavians who had accepted Christianity and later relapsed into heathenism, but it is more likely that they were Irishmen turned pagan for profit. As might be expected, they were especially hated. In this chronicle they are kept distinct from the true Norsemen and are sometimes called *Gaill-Gaedhil*. Earlier in the fragment (p. 138) this term is explained: "*they were a people who had renounced their baptism, and they were usually called Northmen, for they had the customs of the Northmen, and had been fostered by them, and though the original Northmen were bad to the churches, these were by far worse, in whatever part of Erin they used to be.*"

Lochlanns, then Pagans, had many a Gadelian foster-son), to say to the Gaeidhil: " Life and health from the King of the Saxons, who is in disease, and from his Queen, who has sway over all the Saxons, to you, and they are certain that you are true and faithful friends to them. It is therefore meet that you should adhere to them, for they gave to every Gadelian soldier and clergyman who had come to them out of Erin, as much honour as they did to any Saxon soldier or clergyman, for this inimical race of Pagans is equally hostile to you both. It then behoves you, as ye are faithful friends, to relieve them on this occasion." This was the same as if it was said to them: We have come from faithful friends of yours to address you, [to request] that ye should ask the Danes, what gifts in lands and chattels they would give to those who would betray the city to them. If they would consent to this, to bring them to swear, to a place where there would be a facility of killing them; and when they shall be swearing on their swords, and on their shields, as is their wont, they will put away all kinds of missile weapons. They all did accordingly, and they put away their arms; and the reason that the Gaeidhil acted so towards the Danes was, because they were less friends to them than to the Lochlanns. Many of them were killed in this manner, for large rocks and large beams were hurled down upon their heads. Great numbers also were killed by darts and javelins, and by every other kind of apparatus for killing men.

The other hosts, however, were under the hurdles, piercing the walls. What the Saxons and the Gaeidhil who were among them did, was to throw down large rocks, by which they broke down the hurdles over their heads. What the others did to check this was, to place large posts under the hurdles. What the Saxons did next, was to put all the beer and water of the town into the cauldrons of the town, to boil them, and spill them down upon those who were under the hurdles, so that their skins were peeled off. The remedy which the Lochlanns applied to this was to place hides outside on the hurdles. What the Saxons did next was, to throw down all the beehives in the town upon the besiegers, which prevented them from moving their hands or legs from the number of bees which stung them. They afterwards desisted and left the city. It was not long, however, until they came to fight again.

Thus is the story told in the third of the *Three Fragments*. Even if one can accept the source as trustworthy, the account, as it stands, still bristles with difficulties. We cannot have much confidence in the accuracy of the details: the measures and countermeasures taken by the opposing sides during the attack on Chester (rocks, posts, boiling liquid, hides and bees) have a distinct legendary flavour. There are many other difficulties, some of which have been already mentioned in the footnotes, but our distrust of these superfluities and questionable data

need not destroy our faith in the whole story. Much of it appears to be sound enough and much of it rings true, as, for example, the last sentence with all its ominous significance: *It was not long, however, until they came to fight again.* Interesting evidence is provided on some obscure points. The almost ridiculous emphasis laid on Ethelred's illness gives support to the view that he was incapacitated for some time before his death, although it is not easy to believe that he was an invalid for so long as is implied, unless he suffered from a recurrent disease, such as that mysterious malady which afflicted his father-in-law, Alfred.

Not the least of the difficulties is that of chronology. The text supplies but a few inaccurate dates, and none at all in the present passage. The scribe moves easily and without order over a period of years, equating in time some events with others, from which they must, in reality, be separated, often by ten years or more. It is hopeless to attempt to evolve a satisfactory chronological structure from the confused evidence of the source itself. Other sources must be used, and, even so, the resulting structure lacks precision. Briefly, it appears, the Scandinavians were expelled from Ireland, failed to gain a foothold in Wales, and then approached Æthelflæd who granted them lands near Chester. After a period of peaceful settlement the colonists became aggressive; Æthelflæd installed a considerable garrison in Chester, and there followed the struggle for the city. The expulsion of the Norsemen from Dublin occurred in 902.[1] *Annales Cambriae* and *Brut y Tywysogion* record the attempt on Wales which was frustrated. This probably occurred in or soon after 902.[2] Then, according to the *Three Fragments*, the Norsemen came to settle near Chester. In 907 Æthelflæd restored Chester.[3] It was an admirable base against the Danes of Northumbria and the Midlands. Another reason for its fortification may well be that suggested in the *Three Fragments*, i.e. to control the Norse colonists in Wirral. It is clear that they were becoming numerous and dangerous. Collaboration between Danes and Norsemen on a large scale was not unlikely, and the result would have been disastrous. If the introduction of Æthelflæd's hosts into Chester (*Three Fragments*) can be identified

[1] See above, p. 16, note 1.
[2] See above p. 15, note 2.
[3] ASC. (*Mercian Register*) *s.a.* 907.

with the restoration of that city in 907 (*Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*), a most reasonable assumption, we then have a fixed date. The attack on Chester, described in such detail, followed the fortification and took place in or soon after 907, or at least before Ethelred's death in 911. It is, indeed, highly probable that Chester was endangered by recurrent attacks between 907 and 911, for this area was not free from trouble for many years.[1] These problems of chronology are fascinating and it ought to be possible to establish, for the late ninth and early tenth centuries, a corrected dating of events in the *Annales Cambriae* and *Brut y Tywysogion* which seem less complicated than many parts of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. This need not concern us here; it is sufficient to assume that Ingimund's settlement in Wirral fell in the early years of the tenth century and that by 907, or within five years of his arrival, he was able to lead an attack on the recently fortified Chester.

Perhaps more important is the inference, from the *Three Fragments*, that before 907 the number of Norse settlements in Wirral was formidable. It will have been noticed that when Ingimund coveted Chester he made contact with other leaders and explained their common position. To his plan "all the chiefs of the Lochlanns and Danes" agreed, a statement which suggests a considerable number of settlers. It might be argued that this consultation was held in Ireland and that Ingimund had returned for reinforcements. The wording of the passage makes it very clear that the meeting took place in England: efforts were made to keep the gathering secret, an unnecessary precaution if it had been held in Ireland, but knowledge of it reached Æthelflæd, Ingimund was able to present the lack of Chester and good lands as a grievance common to all the leaders, and he "afterwards returned to his house, a host having followed after him." It is obvious that these leaders and their followers were already settled in England. Indeed, the possibility of any other interpretation need not have been mentioned, if it were not imperative to examine carefully the very important deductions possible from these few sentences. We have here irect evidence that there were many colonies of Scandinavians,

[1] William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum* (Rolls Series. I. p. 144), tells of trouble at Chester immediately before Edward's death in 924. In this affair the Britons played some part. The whole question will be discussed elsewhere.

each under its own leader, settled in this region. Ingimund's invasion was not an isolated one: the movement had already reached serious proportions before the attack on Chester.

It is interesting also to notice the racial composition of the new settlers in Wirral. Undoubtedly the Norsemen [Lochlanns] preponderate, but among them we find Danes and even native Irish, if the *Gaill-Gaedhil* were men of Irish birth and blood. Such a racial mixture in the Norse settlement of North-west England has never been stressed, but that it characterized the movement is *prima facie* a reasonable supposition. We should certainly expect to find Danes and other sea-faring adventurers among the Norsemen, for there must have been many smaller expeditions than those which have been recorded in the chronicles. It is known that Danes had long preyed upon Ireland, for the Irish annalists distinguish between Norwegians [*Finngaill*, "Fair Foreigners"] and Danes [*Dubhgaill*, "Dark Foreigners"].[1] English sources seldom make such a distinction: they are content to describe all raiders as "heathen," or they use the terms "Danes" and "Northmen" of any band of Scandinavians, generally without discrimination. From Irish and Welsh chronicles we know that Danes had previously visited this region. Under the year 855 the *Annals of Ulster* record that a certain Orm, "leader of the Black Gentiles" [*Dubgennti*, i.e. Dark Foreigners or *Dubhgaill*], was slain by Rhodri Mawr. This episode may be related to the devastation of Anglesey by the "Black Gentiles" [*Annales Cambriae* and *Brut y Tywysogion*, *s.a.* 853]. From a charter[2] of 855, "quando fuerunt pagani in Þreocensetun,"[3] it has been suggested that Orm's expedition had penetrated into the West Midlands. Whatever may have been the extent of Orm's raid, the Danes continued to afflict the country between Caernarvon and the Dee [*Annales Cambriae* and *Brut y Tywysogion*]. Thus one is not surprised to learn that the Scandinavian settlers in Wirral included Danes among their numbers.[4]

This lengthy discussion of Ingimund's settlement in Cheshire

[1] A distinction which was not, of course, based on physical characteristics.
[2] Birch, *Cart. Sax.*, 487.
[3] Þreocensetun. The *Wreocensætan* originally occupied the country around Shrewsbury (i.e. Wroxeter and The Wrekin).
[4] See below, pp. 46–47 for the place-name evidence.

has been deliberate. For Cheshire the Norse immigration is of such great consequence that a brief reference is insufficient to preserve the balance between the highly important but obscure Norse settlement and the well-documented but relatively insignificant Danish raids from the east. It is now possible to outline the course of the English recovery under Edward before attempting a summary of the Scandinavian settlement in this area.

When Edward became King of the West Saxons the Danish menace was already declining. Indeed, the operations of the 890's, in which Western Mercia had played so spectacular a part, reveal a growing English strength and a diminishing Danish effectiveness. Cheshire had escaped attack while the invader's power was at its height. To contemporaries, no doubt, the outlook in A.D. 900 was as dark and threatening as ever, but we, who are perhaps better qualified to judge, can see clearly that during the last years of Alfred's reign the English had gained greatly in experience and organization and that the Danes had lost their earlier cohesion. Whatever contemporaries believed, it is certain that by A.D. 900 the tide had turned and the fury was dying away. To Edward and his associates, however, must be given the credit for the ultimate English recovery. In A.D. 900 the western limits of effective Danish control were marked by the forts of Derby, Leicester and Bedford. Before Edward died his power was secure everywhere south of the Humber: Danish rule in East Anglia and the Midlands (i.e. Eastern Mercia) was ended. It is the story of North-west Mercia which holds our immediate attention, but the manœuvres in this area formed only part of the general campaign which we cannot doubt was inspired by Edward himself. He found brilliant partners in Ethelred and Æthelflæd for without their energetic co-operation his task might well have proved impossible.

Passing over the early years of the reign we may pick up the threads of the story of recovery in A.D. 910. In that year the Northumbrian Danes, harried and subdued in 909, broke the imposed peace and raided extensively in Mercia, taking advantage of Edward's preoccupation with the fleet in the south-east. A force of West Saxons and Mercians was sent against them,

and they were overtaken on their *homeward* journey at Tettenhall (or Wednesfield) in North-west Mercia. Here the English won a decisive victory, one of the most significant events of the reign. Ethelweard places this battle on 5 August, and, more important, he gives us valuable information concerning the extent of the Danish ravages.[1] Apparently the enemy harried all English Mercia as far south as the Bristol Avon and even penetrated west of the Severn. They were returning home, as the *Chronicle* states, through English Mercia when they were overtaken at Tettenhall. It would be difficult to exaggerate the calamity suffered by the Danish power at Tettenhall: three kings[2] were slain and "many thousands" of their followers. From this point the progress of the English recovery is unhindered. After Tettenhall the initiative lies with Edward as may clearly be seen from the *Chronicle* account. Ethelred died during the first half of 911, and the more spectacular stages of the English advance seem to have been the work of Edward and Æthelflæd.

The campaign began before the end of 911. While Edward was building a series of forts in the southern midlands (at Hertford, Witham, Buckingham, etc.), Æthelflæd was developing a parallel programme in Western Mercia. Chester had been restored in 907, and a fort at *Bremesbyrig* was built in 910, probably after the raid which culminated in the Battle of Tettenhall had further emphasized Western Mercia's vulnerability to sudden Danish attacks. There followed fortresses at *Scergeate* (May, 912), Bridgnorth (summer, 912), Tamworth (early summer, 913), Stafford (July, 913), Eddisbury (early summer, 914), Warwick (probably first or second week in September, 914), Chirbury (probably January, 915), *Weardbyrig* (early 915) and Runcorn (late in 915, probably December).

Some of Æthelflæd's forts have not yet been satisfactorily identified although suggestions have been made from time to time. Their general purpose is, however, fairly clear. In the first place, they were convenient bases for either offensive or defensive action. The Danes had often demonstrated the military value of fortified positions, and the English under Alfred had learned the lesson. Fortification, however temporary or rudi-

[1] *Ethelwerdi Chronicorum*, Lib. IV, Cap. IV.
[2] Ethelweard, op. cit., adds a third to the two kings mentioned in the *Chronicle*.

mentary, held a prominent place in the strategy of the Anglo-Danish wars, and the series of forts formed an important part of the English military organization. Secondly, these forts were the only effective counter-measure to the sudden and devastating Danish raids. Vulnerable areas were thus protected: it would be hazardous for any Danish force to penetrate English territory leaving unreduced fortresses in its rear to cut off retreat. The fort-system provided a permanent defence, and undoubtedly it was more effective than a standing army alone even if the difficulties of maintaining in the field a large permanent and mobile force had not again and again proved insuperable. Stafford, Tamworth and Warwick protected the Mercian border against the line of Danish armies holding Derby, Leicester and Northampton.[1] Chester, Runcorn and Eddisbury guarded the estuaries of the Dee and the Mersey, strengthened the northern frontier and probably served to awe the Norsemen in Wirral. Chirbury stood on the Welsh border[2] and Bridgnorth controlled an important Severn crossing much favoured by the Danes. Thus did Æthelflæd's forts increase the security of North-west Mercia, the vulnerability of which had hitherto been most dangerous. Thirdly, the fort-system of North-west Mercia probably had another object—to erect a barrier between the Danes and the West. It was obviously desirable that an impenetrable wedge should be thrust between the large and restless Scandinavian population in Wirral and the Scandinavians in Eastern England. To increase the menace of the Danish hordes in the Midlands and Northumbria, Norsemen from Ireland were now arriving in the North. In or about 919 Ragnald captured York and set himself up as king, but he had gained possession of parts of Northumbria some five or six years before this date, as is shown by the details preserved by the anonymous writer of the *Historia*

[1] It is perhaps worthy of notice that the forts at Stafford and Tamworth were built within a few months of one of the few Danish expeditions which the *Chronicle* at this date considers important enough to be recorded. It was an expedition, really two expeditions, of the combined armies of Leicester and Northampton and it probably occurred in April, 913. cf. ASC. *MS.A. s.a.* 917. This significant juxtaposition of dates has been overlooked because of the chronological confusion of Edward's reign. The present chronology is, in general, that suggested by W. S. Angus (*English Historical Review*, LIII, p. 194), who has cleared away many problems which have long delayed a close study of the reign of Edward the Elder.

[2] It would seem that relations between Mercia and the Welsh were not good, at least during the period under review. Chirbury was built apparently in anticipation of trouble from Wales.

de Sancto Cuthberto.[1] It was highly likely that the estuaries of the Dee and the Mersey would become the main lines of communication between Ireland and the Norsemen in Northern England, and the building of forts at Eddisbury in the early summer of 914 and at Runcorn in the winter of 915 no doubt closely followed the arrival of Ragnald and the Norsemen in Northumbria. These two new forts, aided by Chester, helped not only to safeguard the northern frontiers of North-west Mercia but also to bar the route from Ireland via the two western rivers. They were later, in 919, reinforced by another fort at Thelwall and by the restoration of the defences at Manchester, probably after Ragnald's position had become more secure and, consequently, more dangerous to the English. Indeed, one cannot doubt that this series of forts in North-west Mercia was primarily intended to interrupt the Scandinavian lines of communication through Cheshire. Without these strongholds the Dee and the Mersey might have become mere channels for Scandinavian reinforcements, and Wirral might have become an alien recruiting ground and a " second front " against Mercia.

Having made these elaborate preparations, Edward and his sister were strong enough to make the grand attack. It followed a co-ordinated plan, directed no doubt by Edward. While he advanced in the south—the complicated campaign which began before Easter, 917, and centred around Towcester, *Wigingamere* and Tempsford—Æthelflæd also moved against the Danes. She captured Derby in July, 917. Her action seems to have coincided with Edward's storming of Tempsford in July or early August, and was probably planned to divide the Danish forces. The manœuvre was highly successful and the result was a major disaster for the Danes at Tempsford. The English were able to gain possession of Colchester and to resist a Danish attempt to recover Maldon.[2] Edward moved to Passenham, Northamptonshire, where the Army of Northampton submitted to him. Before 10 November the Army of East Anglia and the Army of Cambridge had also submitted.

What appears to be a similarly co-ordinated operation seems

[1] *Symeon of Durham*, I, pp. 196–214 (Rolls Series). cf. F. M. Stenton, *The Danes in England*, pp. 4–5.

[2] Edward had advanced to Maldon and built a fort there in the summer, probably mid-June, of 916.

to have been planned for 918. Æthelflæd obtained Leicester, and the greater part of the Army of Leicester submitted to her. The men of the York district also agreed to accept her rule, an undertaking emphasized by pledges and oaths.[1] In May and early June, 918, and probably at the same time as Æthelflæd's advance to Leicester, Edward began the campaign against the three remaining Danish boroughs, Stamford, Nottingham and Lincoln. He moved to Stamford and there, on the south side of the river, he built a fortress which so awed the neighbourhood that all the people controlled by the Danish fortress changed their allegiance and sought Edward as their lord. Only Nottingham and Lincoln remained and, with the occupation of Stamford, the way was now open for a final advance. The death of Æthelflæd at Tamworth on 12 June, however, intervened and precipitated a political crisis. Edward interrupted his Stamford campaign and at once rode to Tamworth to ensure his control of Mercia.

The position in Mercia was doubtful. Wessex had been able to exert a vague superiority or overlordship mainly because Ethelred had chosen a policy of close collaboration with Alfred and Edward. This policy was continued by Æthelflæd, but with her death the personal bonds, upon which so much depended, were broken. Moreover, the waning of the Danish menace and the contemporaneous rejuvenation of Mercia had made West Saxon protection less urgent. It was uncertain what course the Mercian leaders would adopt, and we can well understand that Edward should consider it necessary to break off his midland campaign in order to establish his personal control of Mercia. We do not know whether any action, beyond his presence, was necessary, but he was able to secure recognition of himself as ruler. As the *Chronicle* states,[2] all the people of Mercia, previously subject to Æthelflæd, submitted to Edward. The immediate crisis was over. Perhaps as a conciliatory compromise, he left his niece, Ælfwyn, in some official position, but in December she was snatched away to Wessex. That section of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* which is known as the *Mercian Register* records the removal of Ælfwyn in a way which may suggest that Edward's

[1] These men of York (*Eoforwicingas*) were not Ragnald's Norsemen. They were probably driven to seek Æthelflæd's protection against Ragnald's increasing power.

[2] *s.a.* 922.

action aroused considerable feeling in Mercia.[1] Whatever the Mercians thought about it, the inevitable had happened. Mercia and Wessex were united, and Mercia no longer exists as a separate state.

In the middle of June 918, when Edward replaced Æthelflæd as the effective ruler of Mercia, certain Welsh princes also offered their allegiance: the *Chronicle* records that "the kings of the North Welsh, *Howel*, *Cledauc* and *Ieopwel*, and all the North Welsh people sought him for their lord." "North Wales," of course, means the whole of modern Wales as distinct from "West Wales," and indeed Clydog and his brother, Hywel, seem to have ruled in South Wales.[2] It is not unlikely that, as the *Chronicle* states, the whole of Wales submitted, the lesser chieftains as well as the three named princes. In any case, Cheshire and the other border counties probably felt some relief, for relations between the Mercians and the Welsh had not been easy. Welsh raids no doubt continued, but it is not unreasonable to suppose that for a time they were less frequent and less vicious.

Cheshire and all Western Mercia now formed part of Edward's kingdom. The task of destroying the Danish power in Eastern Mercia, much weakened by the English system of fortresses, was almost complete. Edward was able to return to the campaign interrupted by Æthelflæd's death. Late in 918 he advanced to Nottingham and ordered the "burh" to be repaired and occupied by Englishmen and Danes. There followed a general submission: "and all the people who were settled in Mercia, both Danish and English, submitted to him."[3] This no doubt included the submission of Lincoln, the occupation of which is not specifically mentioned. Probably it also included the removal of Ælfwyn from her position of nominal authority.[4] At any rate, the decision is final: Mercia is freed from the Danish menace and Edward becomes the direct ruler of all England south of the Humber.

Late in the harvest, probably in September, of 919 Edward

[1] ASC. *MSS. B.C.* and *D. s.a.* 919. "In this year also the daughter of Ethelred, Lord of the Mercians, was deprived of all authority among the Mercians and was borne away into Wessex three weeks before midwinter. She was called Ælfwyn."

[2] cf. J. E. Lloyd, *A History of Wales*, I, p. 333.

[3] ASC. *MS. A. s.a.* 922.

[4] For the date of Ælfwyn's removal to Wessex see note at end of this article.

went with the fyrd to Thelwall, Cheshire, and built a fort there. Meanwhile he ordered another fyrd, "also of Mercians," to occupy Manchester "in Northumbria." These two forts strengthened the barrier (existing in Chester, Eddisbury and Runcorn) between the Norse in Wirral and Ireland and the Norse kingdom of York. The possibility of co-operation between the Danes and the Wirral Norsemen had been a nightmare to Æthelflæd; the possibility of co-operation between the Wirral Norsemen and the York Norsemen remained a nightmare to Edward. While the Norse were powerful in Northumbria Edward's northern frontier was insecure. Sihtric's raid as far as Davenport in Cheshire[1] emphasized the reality of this danger.

This general threat from Northumbria, and perhaps this particular raid, probably drove Edward to undertake a final campaign. Such a reason is rendered likely not so much by the recorded extent of Edward's action, which appears to have been confined to the Midlands, as by its far-reaching results. These results, which affect the remote north, may be considered surprising if the campaign was in actual fact limited to manœuvres in Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire. In June[2] 920 Edward went with the fyrd to Nottingham and built a second fortress there. Then he went into Derbyshire and built a fortress near Bakewell. The *Chronicle* does not record an advance further north, although, as has been suggested above, such an extension of the campaign is perhaps not unlikely. There follows a remarkable list of submissions: "the King of the Scots and all the Scottish people; Ragnald, the sons of Eadulf and all those who dwell in Northumbria, English, Danes, Norsemen and others; the King of the Strathclyde Welsh and all the Strathclyde Welshmen." Whatever these submissions were worth—little enough in some cases—they mark the climax of the reign. About four years later, *circa* 18 August, 924, Edward died at Farndon, in Cheshire.

The English recovery had been brilliant. Danish control of Eastern England was ended; Mercia had been regained and joined to Wessex. England was gradually assuming an appearance of unity. During these years Cheshire had suffered some

[1] *Rex Sihtricus infregit Devennport. Historia Regum, Symeon of Durham*, II, p. 93. *sub anno* 920. Rolls Series.

[2] *foran to middum sumera* (June 24th) ASC. *A. s.a.* 924.

Danish raids and had acquired a considerable Norse population, but was definitely restored to English control. In fact, between 871 and 924 Cheshire ceased to be a remote province of a decadent Mercia and became an integral part of the dawning English state.

Such is the story of North-west Mercia during the reigns of Alfred and Edward. It remains only to estimate the extent and importance of Scandinavian influence upon this region. The documentary evidence is, as we have seen, fragmentary and difficult to interpret. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, on which we may safely rely, tells only of two or three desperate Danish raids, the effects of which seem to have been ephemeral: there is no hint of permanent settlement. Otherwise we are almost reduced to following an Irish tradition of doubtful authority. This Irish account at first glance appears to be very complete but, after cutting away the legendary details such as those which adorn the attack on Chester and which are of little historical value whether true or false, we find ourselves left with the meagre information that a group of Scandinavians from Ireland had settled in the neighbourhood of Chester. The rest, the theories of mass-migrations and thickly populated colonies, is mere inference. It is desirable, therefore, to produce other support for these inferences before insisting on their acceptance. If great numbers of Scandinavians settled in Cheshire—for practical purposes the following survey is limited to Cheshire—we should expect to find traces of them at a later date. They certainly left their mark, but this mark has many facets, each requiring for its interpretation a close and specialized study. At present it is impossible to do more than suggest where traces of Scandinavian influence may be found.

Many archæological remains have survived and are available for study. No attempt is here made to deal adequately with the archæological evidence because, first, most of the material seems to be of a date considerably later than the limit of our chosen period, and, secondly, because the subject requires a more complete and a more specialized treatment than is possible here. It is to be hoped that the whole question of Scandinavian stone monuments in Cheshire will be fully dealt with elsewhere. Here it must suffice to note that the Scandinavian settlement, especially

in Wirral, was so intense that it has coloured the development of sculpture and art-forms in the area and has left abundant evidence for the archæologist.

Native customs and institutions were also modified by Scandinavian innovations in areas where the alien settlers were numerous. This new influence may be seen most clearly in the Danelaw counties but the customs of Cheshire did not remain unaffected. It is probable that the *xii iudices ciuitatis*[1] of Chester were lawmen such as are found in the Danish boroughs. The term "lawman," *lagemannus*, is derived from ON. *lǫgmaðr* which means "skilled in law"; both the office and its name are Scandinavian. Lawmen or doomsmen appear more than a hundred years after Domesday in the *Magna Carta of Chester*[2] and again near the end of the thirteenth century in a charter of Abbot Simon.[3] It is perhaps noteworthy that the *Magna Carta of Chester* refers to the *iudices de Wich*;[4] this suggests that other towns in the neighbourhood had also adopted the Scandinavian institution of lawmen.[5] Another official whose name reveals Scandinavian influence is the *sacraber*.[6] This is the ON. *sakaráberi*, well recorded in Scandinavian law as a prosecutor or formal accuser.[7] The use of this word and the survival into the thirteenth century of ancient Scandinavian customs, not uncommon in Danelaw proper, show quite definitely that Cheshire did not escape Scandinavianization. In the *Magna Carta of Chester*[8] there also occurs the term *thwertnic*, "absolutely no," a formal denial of guilt by an accused person. Another form, *thwertutnay*, occurs in the Danish borough of Leicester. It is derived from ON. *þvert út nei*. A considerable number of Scandinavians must have been present to effect the introduction of new customs and terms into the native legal procedure. Scandinavian influence upon mediæval institutions in Cheshire seems to offer an interesting field for future research.

[1] *Domesday Book*, fol. 262b.
[2] *Chartulary of Chester Abbey*, I, pp. 102–107. ed. J. Tait, *Chetham Society*, Vols. 79 and 82.
[3] Ibid., II, p. 341.
[4] Ibid., I, p. 106. *et peticionem de misericordia iudicum de Wich triginta bullonibus salis.*
[5] They appear in some manorial rolls.
[6] *Chartulary of Chester Abbey*, op. cit., I, p. 103.
[7] cf. F. M. Stenton, *The Danes in England. Proceedings of the British Academy*, XIII, 1927, p. 35.
[8] op. cit., I, p. 103.

It is well known, however, that Scandinavian influence in Cheshire was not sufficient to change the bases of land assessment from hides to carucates. Cheshire, unlike the Danelaw counties, remained a hidated area, but one or two faint traces of the Scandinavian system are recognizable in the Domesday Survey. Handbridge, Chester—in the vicinity of which, it may be noted, tradition fixes Ingimund's settlement—is assessed in carucates, three in number. Professor Tait[1] has calculated that these three carucates are equivalent to one hide, an equation not evidenced elsewhere.[2] No other carucates appear in the Cheshire Domesday, but 15 bovates have been noticed and accepted as "evidence of Scandinavian influence upon the subdivision of the fiscal hide."[3] It may now be added that of these 15 bovates 4 (at Overpool) are found in the Norse area of Wirral and the remaining 11 (at Sutton by Middlewich, Over Tabley, Nether Tabley and Lower Peover) are found in the Danish area of East Cheshire as marked on the accompanying map.

It will have been noticed that the lawmen of Chester numbered twelve, that the three Handbridge carucates are said to equal one hide and that in Lancashire south of the Ribble the hide is equivalent to six carucates. This illustrates another Scandinavian characteristic, a preference for the duodecimal system of reckoning. The English counted in fives and tens whereas the Scandinavians preferred sixes, twelves and eighteens. It should be emphasized that this is a gross over-simplification of the question, and that in any case such evidence is often fanciful and coincidental. At the moment one may only suggest that a careful collection of evidence, compared with results from other areas, may perhaps give to this point a definition which it now lacks. The vague preference may often be no more than coincidence, but, at least, examples of duodecimal reckoning are common. H. J. Hewitt has shown[4] that during the fourteenth century the number of salt-pans or cauldrons in a Cheshire salt-house tended to be standardized. Twelve was the usual number, and smaller salt-houses with six pans were frequently called a "half wich-house" or a "half saltwork." Other examples are readily available

[1] J. Tait, *The Domesday Survey of Cheshire. Chetham Society*, vol. 75, p. 10.
[2] The "Lancashire" hide apparently contained six carucates.
[3] *The Domesday Survey of Cheshire*, op. cit., p. 13.
[4] *Mediaeval Cheshire*, p. 109. *Chetham Society*, Vol. 88.

but patient research is required before one can use such evidence as a positive indication of Scandinavian influence. It may be remarked, before leaving this point, that the ancient systems of land measurement in Cheshire seem to be a fruitful field for future investigation.

More definite is the system of monetary computation which in the Cheshire Domesday shows distinct traces of Scandinavian influence. The Scandinavians in Cheshire may not have been able to displace the hide in favour of the carucate in land values, but in money values there is ample evidence that the system was largely Scandinavian or Scandinavianized. The Scandinavian system revolved round the *ora* and greatly complicated the English practice.[1] Thus :

1 *ora* = 16 silver pennies.
10 *orae* = 1 mark (13/4).
120 *orae* = a long hundred of silver (£8).

The *ora* is mentioned by name only twice in the Cheshire Domesday—in the city fire-fine[2] and in the T.R.E. valuation of *Hurdingberie*[3]—but it seems to be at the root of many manorial valuations.[4] Cuddington, for example, is worth 16d. (i.e. 1 *ora*), and the bishop's manor of Wybunbury was worth 5s. 4d. T.R.E. (i.e. 4 *oræ*). It is not necessary to give a complete list of such instances : it is sufficient to notice that sums of money, fines and valuations frequently appear as multiples of the *ora* of 16 silver pennies. We find amounts like 1s. 4d., 5s. 4d., 6s. 8d., 9s. 4d., 10s. 8d., 13s. 4d. and 17s. 4d. which mean respectively 1, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10 and 13 *oræ*. In the above cases the awkward sums make our conclusion so definite that we may perhaps feel justified in regarding more common amounts as multiples of the *ora*, e.g. 4s., 8s., 12s., 16s., 20s. etc. may well represent 3, 6, 9, 12, 15 etc. *oræ*, while in £8 we may see the long hundred of silver (120 *oræ*).

To turn from money to moneyers we again find evidence of a Scandinavian settlement. Many of the Chester moneyers have Scandinavian names. Glancing through the lists one at once notices such names as Thurstan (*tempore* Æthelstan) which is

[1] cf. *The Danes in England*, op. cit., p. 37.
[2] *The Domesday Survey of Cheshire* ed. Tait op. cit., p. 82.
[3] Ibid., p. 120.
[4] Ibid., p. 44.

really ON. *Þorsteinn*. In the hundred years before the Norman Conquest we find names like Colben (ON. *Kolbeinn*), Colbrand (ON. *Kolbrandr*), Croc (ON. *Krókr*), Fargrim (ON. *Fargrímr*), Huscarl (ON. *Húskarl*), Sweartcol (ON. *Svartkollr*), Sweartinc (ON. *Svertingr*), Swegen (ON. *Sveinn*), Thorald (ON. *Þóraldr*) and Thurmod (ON. *Þormóðr*). This Scandinavian strain of personal nomenclature survived the Conquest, and among Chester moneyers in the century after 1066 we have Sunoulf (ON. *Sunnúlfr*), Ravenswart (ON. *Hrafnsvartr*), Thurbern (ON. *Þorbiǫrn*) and Unnulf (ON. *Hundólfr*). Even more interesting perhaps is the surprising number of Irish personal names among the Chester moneyers: Mældomen (*tempore* Æthelstan), Mælsuthan (*t.* Edgar), Macsuthan (*t.* Cnut), Gillicrist (*t.* Harold I and Harthacnut) and Gillemor (*t.* Henry I). There can be no doubt that the Norsemen who introduced these names had lived long in Ireland; perhaps also the Scandinavian hordes which settled in Wirral included many native Irish adventurers, as indeed is suggested by the *Three Fragments*.[1] The above lists are not complete: they are intended only to illustrate the strong Scandinavian element in Cheshire personal names.

The personal names of the pre-Conquest Domesday landholders give the same impression. A complete list[2] of such personal names in the Cheshire Domesday is given here because no such list is available elsewhere[3] and because it may be useful to Cheshire students of Domesday Book. From it we see how very powerful was the Scandinavian element in Cheshire personal nomenclature at the end of the Old English period. It will be noticed, incidentally, that some of the Chester moneyers appear in the list.

ON. Arngrímr, ODan. Arngrim. (DB. Haregrim, Aregrim).
ON. ODan. Arni, OSw. Arne. (DB. Erne, Erni).
ON. Arnkell, ODan. Arnketil. (DB. Archil).
ON. Ásgautr, ODan. OSw. Asgut, Asgot. (DB. Ansgot, Osgot).

[1] See above p. 17.

[2] To the list should be added ON. *Haraldr*, ODan. OSw. *Harald*, and OSw. *Morkar*. Although the king and the earl bear Scandinavian names it would be misleading to include them among the ordinary Cheshire landholders for our present purpose.

[3] Professor Tait has marked some, but not all, of the Scandinavian personal names by an asterisk in the index to his *Domesday Survey of Cheshire*. Notable omissions are the common Erne and Erni, Dedol, Hundulf and Bers. Further information should be sought in Olof von Feilitzen's *Pre-Conquest Personal Names in Domesday Book*, on which the present list is to a great extent based.

ODan. Auti. (DB. Outi).
OIr. Beollán. (DB. Belam).
ON. ODan. Bersi. (DB. Bers).
ON.*Frani. (DB. Fran).
ON. Gamall, ODan. OSw. Gamal. (DB. Gamel).
ON. Grímkell, ODan. Grimkel. (DB. Grinchel).
ON. Grímr, ODan. OSw. Grim. (DB. Grim).
ON.*Gunningr. (DB. Gunninc).
ON. Gunnarr, ODan. OSw. Gunnar. (DB. Gunner).
ON. Gunnvǫr, ODan. Gunwor. (DB. Gunnor).
ON. Guðleikr, OSw. Gudhlek. (DB. Gotlac).
ON. Hákun, Hákon, ODan. OSw. Hakun, Hakon. (DB. Hacon, Hacun).
ON. Hálfdan, ODan. OSw. Halfdan, Haldan. (DB. Halden, Alden).
ON. Hásteinn, ODan. OSw. Hasten. (DB. Hasten).
ON. Hrafn, ODan. Rawn. OSw. Rampn. (DB. Rauen(e)).
ON. Hrafnkell, OSw. Ramkel. (DB. Raue(n)chel, Rauecate).
ON. Hrafnsvartr. (DB. Rauesuar, Rauesue).
ON. Hundingr. (DB. Hunding, Hundin).
ON. Hundólfr. (DB. Hundulf).
ON. ODan. Karl(i), OSw. Karl(e). (DB. Carle).
ON. Ketill, ODan. Ketil, OSw. Kætil. (DB. Chetel).
ON. Kolbeinn, ODan. OSw. Kolben. (DB. Colben).
ON. Loðinn, ODan. Lothæn, OSw. Ludhin, Lodhin. (DB. Loten).
ON.*Morfari. (DB. Morfar).
ON. Ormr, ODan. OSw. Orm. (DB. Orme).
ON. Ragnaldr, ODan. Regnvald, OSw. Ragn(v)ald. (DB. Ragenal).
ON. Sigríðr, ODan, Sigrith, OSw. Sighridh. (DB. Segrid).
ON. Steinkell, ODan. OSw. Stenkil. (DB. Steinchetel).
ON. Steinn, ODan. OSw. Sten. (DB. Stein).
ON. Steinólfr, OSw. Stenulf. (DB. Stenulf).
ON. Þióðólfr, ODan. Thiuthulf, OSw. Thiudhulf. (DB. Dedol, Dedou).
ON. Þórðr, ODan. Thorth, OSw. Thordh. (DB. Toret, Toreth).
ON. Tóki, ODan. Toki, OSw. Toke. (DB. Tochi).
ASc.*Uhtbrand. (?) (DB. Ostebrand).
ON. Úlfkell, ODan. Ulfkil. (DB. Ulchel, Ulchetel).
ON. Úlfr, ODan. OSw. Ulf. (DB. Ulf).
ON. Vetrlíðr. (DB. Wintrelet).

To these some scholars might add :

ON. Biornulfr. (DB. Bernulf).
ON. Brúnn, ODan. OSw. Brun. (DB. Brun).

Bernulf and Brun, however, might have developed from OE. *Beornwulf* and OE. *Brun* respectively. The usual slight indications of origin, such as those for example which make us

prefer ON. *Guðleikr* to OE. *Guðlac* as the origin of the Cheshire Gotlac,[1] are absent. It is perhaps worthy of note that Domesday landholders with the names Bernulf and Brun occur only in Scandinavian areas.[2] Furthermore, the seven manors held by men called Bernulf and Brun in Cheshire are all, without exception, in " Hamestan Hundred," the most eastern and the most Danish part of the county. More troublesome is Dot, the name of a man who held some seventeen Cheshire manors. Feilitzen[3] favours a Scandinavian origin, but perhaps it is safer to leave this name out of our present calculations.

The Scandinavian personal names listed above represent a considerable proportion of the total number of pre-Conquest personal names in the Cheshire Domesday. Of the total of 96,[4] 45 are English and 41 are Scandinavian. To the latter may be added two, perhaps three, doubtful names. That is to say, we find roughly as many Scandinavian as English names among the TRE. landholders. This proportion is unexpectedly high for Cheshire, and it is, of course, a staggering proof of Scandinavian influence.

Beyond this point, however, it would be hazardous to draw any historical conclusions. For example, it would be unjustifiable to argue that equal numbers of Scandinavian and English names imply equal numbers of Scandinavians and Englishmen in the population. Apart from the fact that by 1066 A.D. 150 years of racial intermingling had occurred, we know that Scandinavian names showed a greater variety and a greater vitality than did native English names. Our above equal proportions, therefore, probably represent a preponderance of English blood. We are hampered by not knowing if a recurrent name belongs to the same individual. The likelihood that the same name covers more than one individual is greatly increased when we are dealing with the English element,[5] and any guesses

[1] Feilitzen, op. cit., p. 278, states that OE. Guðlac is not found after 824.

[2] i.e. Cheshire, Derbyshire, Lancashire, Nottinghamshire, Staffordshire, Suffolk and Yorkshire. Feilitzen, op. cit., pp. 200, 209.

[3] Op. cit., p. 226.

[4] Omitting Harold, Morcar, etc. Also 7 of the 96 names are Old Welsh or Old German. We are dealing only with the 89 English and Scandinavian names of smaller landholders.

[5] Not more than half-a-dozen of the Scandinavian names occur more than three times even if we include the common *Arni* (7) and *Toki* (6) and the doubtful *Brun* (5). By comparison the English names recur frequently, e.g. *Leofnoð* (15), *Godric* (13), *Godwine* (12), *Wulfgeat* (11), *Eadwine* (10), *Eadweard* (8), etc. It is rarely possible to decide

as to relative populations on a mere "name-for-name" basis would certainly exaggerate the Scandinavian element at the expense of the English element. Moreover, it would be quite impossible to transfer our data to a map.

If some kind of a map is desired its basis must be the manor. If we mark each manor held by a man with a Scandinavian name and, by a different symbol, each manor held by a man with an English name, we shall have a distribution map of Scandinavian and English personal names. These results, still notoriously unreliable, will at least be less prejudicial to the English element of the population than a "name-for-name" argument. We shall learn nothing more about the relative numbers of Scandinavians and Englishmen in Cheshire,[1] and what we may learn of their distribution will be vague and inconclusive in the extreme. If there exists any justification for proceeding further with this design it must be that the results are interesting rather than useful.

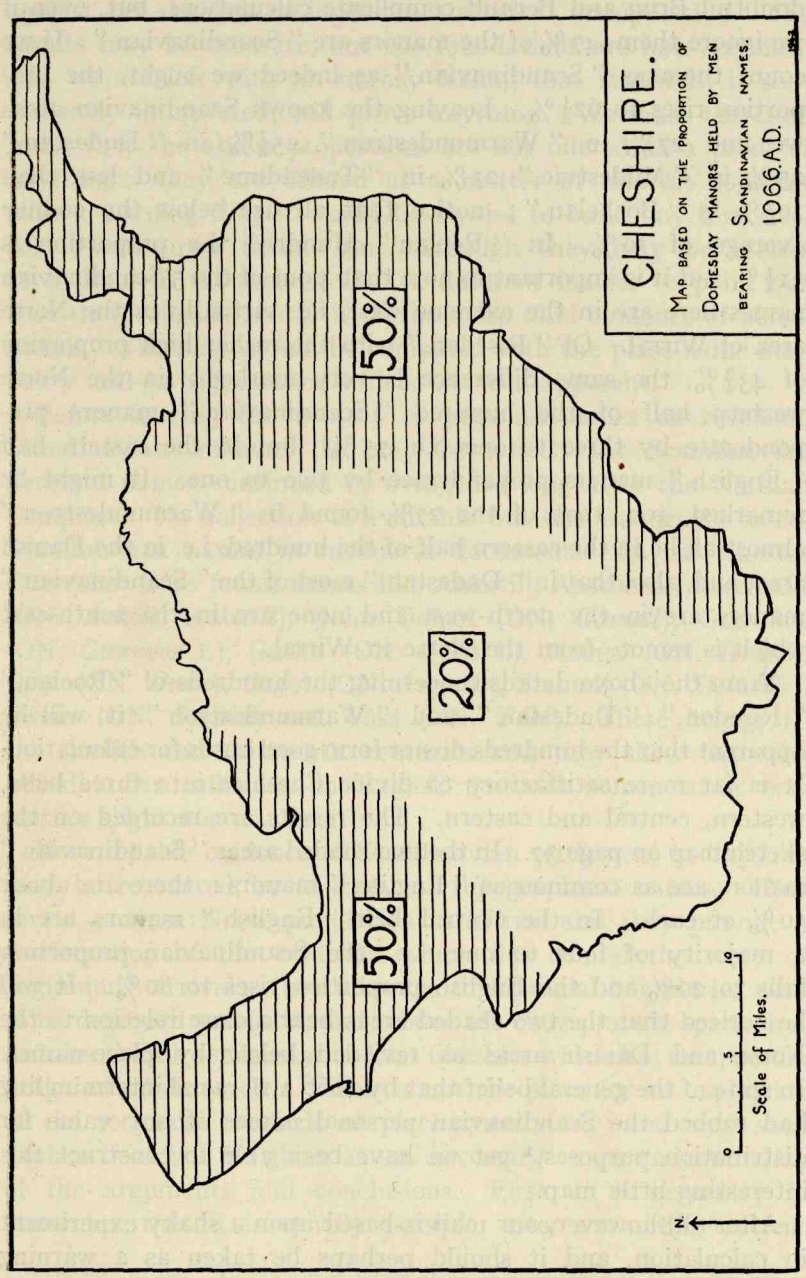
On counting the "English" and "Scandinavian" manors[2] we find that the proportion is seven to three, i.e. that 30% of them are held by men with Scandinavian names. This is the average for the whole county and it is interesting to see how the percentage of "Scandinavian" manors in each hundred compares with this average. In "Wilaveston" and "Cestre" Hundreds the Scandinavian proportion is somewhat over 45½%. This is to be expected since Wirral was heavily settled by Norsemen. "Hamestan" Hundred lies in the extreme east of Cheshire and in what we know from place-names[3] to have been a Danish area. It is therefore not surprising to find the highest proportion of Scandinavian names here. The seven manors of the

how many men shelter under each of these names; the common practice of transferring undivided all the lands of a TRE. holder to a single new tenant is of limited assistance to us. On the other hand OE. *Eadric*, which occurs four times, seems to cover at least two men: this is the impression conveyed by the entry that Broomhall was held by "Edric and Edric" (265b). Even here we should not ignore the possibility of a scribal error for we should expect some distinction to be made between two men of the same name and so closely associated.

[1] It is impossible to say more than that, as pointed out above, the unexpectedly high proportion of Scandinavian pre-Conquest personal names in Domesday Book proves that the Scandinavian influence had been very powerful.

[2] There were 272 manors TRE. in the hands of non-noble laymen with English or Scandinavian names. Of these the holders of 185 had English names and the holders of 80 had Scandinavian names. The remaining 7 manors were held by Brun and Bernulf which are probably Scandinavian names. Dot's manors are excluded from these figures.

[3] See below, p. 49ff.


CHESHIRE.
Map based on the proportion of Domesday manors held by men bearing Scandinavian names.
1066 A.D.
50%
20%
50%
0
5
10
Scale of Miles.
N.

doubtful Brun and Bernulf complicate calculations, but, even if we ignore them, 47% of the manors are "Scandinavian." If we count them as "Scandinavian," as indeed we ought, the proportion rises to 62½%. Leaving the known Scandinavian areas we find 27% in "Warmundestrou," 25½% in "Dudestan," 25% in "Mildestvic," 21% in "Tunendune" and less than 10½% in "Bochelau"; notice that all are below the county average of 30%. In "Roelau" Hundred the proportion is 31¼%, but it is important to note that 4 out of the 5 Scandinavian names here are in the extreme west, i.e. virtually in the Norse area of Wirral. Of "Risedon," with the rather high proportion of 43¾%, the same difference is very marked: in the Norse western half of the hundred "Scandinavian" manors preponderate by three to one (i.e. 75%), but in the eastern half "English" manors preponderate by two to one. It might be remarked, too, that of the 27% found in "Warmundestrou" almost all lie in the eastern half of the hundred, i.e. in the Danish area, and, also, that in "Dudestan" most of the "Scandinavian" manors are in the north-west and none are in the south-east which is remote from the Norse in Wirral.

From the above details concerning the hundreds of "Roelau," "Risedon," "Dudestan" and "Warmundestrou" it will be apparent that the hundreds do not form good bases for calculation. It is far more satisfactory to divide Cheshire into three belts, western, central and eastern. The results are recorded on the sketch map on page 37. In the two shaded areas "Scandinavian" manors are as common as "English" manors: there are about 50% of each. In the central belt "English" manors are in a majority of four to one, i.e. the Scandinavian proportion falls to 20% and the English proportion rises to 80%. It will be noticed that the two shaded areas bear a close relation to the Norse and Danish areas as revealed below by place-names. In spite of the general belief that by 1066 A.D. racial intermingling had robbed the Scandinavian personal names of any value for distribution purposes,[1] yet we have been able to construct this interesting little map.

After all, however, our map is based upon a shaky experiment in calculation, and it should perhaps be taken as a warning

[1] J. Tait, *Domesday Survey of Cheshire*, op. cit., p. xv.

against the dangers of ingenious statistical manipulation. The results may be accurate, but the foundations are not very firm and we are left with an uneasy feeling that statistics, if conveniently interpreted, will prove anything. We must therefore insist that the above proportions are not offered as a proof of anything: they are offered as a matter of interest together with a warning that it would be unwise to build any historical conclusions upon them. But, although they may be useless as a proof in themselves, it is a different matter to point out that they coincide neatly with the more solid evidence of place-names. The map should be compared with the place-name map below and its significance will be at once apparent.

Before leaving the subject of personal names as revealing Scandinavian influence, it may be noted that Scandinavian personal names continued in living use long after the Norman Conquest. No collection is available but one frequently meets Scandinavian names in mediæval documents. In the Chester Chartulary[1] are found names like Anketill, Anschetill, Ascchetill (ON. *Áskell, Asketill*), John Gamel (ON. *Gamall*), Gunwara (ON. *Gunnvǫr* f.), Gutha (ON. *Gyða* f.), Rauen (ON. *Hrafn*), Orm (ON. *Ormr*), Osgot (ON. *Ásgautr*), Steinolf (ON. *Steinólfr*), Swein (ON. *Sveinn*) and Toki (ON. *Tóki*). These belong to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and they show that the Scandinavian influence on English personal nomenclature was neither slight nor transient.

More reliable evidence of Scandinavian settlement in Cheshire may be recovered by a study of topographical names. They reveal a dense Norse population in Wirral and they provide a confirmation of the tradition which lies behind the story of Ingimund's arrival; they allow us to fix racial boundaries with some degree of precision, and, above all, they prove a sparse but definite Danish settlement in East Cheshire which has escaped the notice of all chroniclers. This is not the place for an exposition of the technical methods of place-name study, and only such explanations will be given as are necessary to an understanding of the arguments and conclusions. First, it is necessary to remember that it is usually possible, after examining ancient

[1] Op. cit., passim. All the names quoted above may be found in the index, except Gunwara (II. p. 275) which has been omitted.

spellings, to decide whether or not a place-name has been created by Scandinavians. If a place-name has been created by Scandinavians it will contain Scandinavian words or perhaps a Scandinavian personal name, and it may even preserve traces of Scandinavian grammatical inflexions. The detection of these clues need not concern us here. Sometimes it is possible to show that certain English place-names have been pronounced by Scandinavians and have therefore developed along different lines: Scandinavianization of English sounds is a common phenomenon. It will be agreed that such evidence presumes the existence of Scandinavians—many where a place-name has been wholly created by a Scandinavian-speaking people, and at least more than a few where the development of an English place-name has been modified by Scandinavian influence.

Furthermore, from certain language differences it is occasionally possible to decide whether a Scandinavian place-name is Danish or Norse. The whole question of what constitutes a safe Danish "test" is still unsettled, and many suggested criteria are controversial, but the distinction exists and, as will appear later, it is a vital distinction. There are other place-name formations which are half English and half Scandinavian. These "hybrids" have a special significance which will be explained below. The historical interpretation of many place-name types presents difficulties even when a philological explanation has been achieved. It should be emphasized, therefore, that certainty in these matters is seldom attainable.

The first difficulty is that we cannot be sure of the origin of certain place-names, e.g. Shotwick,[1] Ness, Neston[2] etc. Some names can be explained as either English or Scandinavian and some are not yet satisfactorily explicable at all. A few doubts will be removed when the place-names of Cheshire have been closely investigated and when a full body of forms is available for examination. Cheshire is, from the point of view of its

[1] Shotwick is a difficult name. Professor Ekwall (*Dictionary of English Place-names*, p. 466) suggests OE. *Sceothoh wic*, "the *wic* on the steep ridge," but this is perhaps not likely. The second element may well be ON. *vik*, "a bay or creek," a word which appears in Blowick and in certain minor names of the Southport district (See E. Ekwall's *Place-names of Lancashire*, pp. 124 and 126). The existence at Shotwick of a very clear inlet from the flat ground which used to be the Dee makes this theory very attractive. The first element may be an English word, or perhaps a Scandinavian word which has been Anglicized, but no convincing suggestion has yet been offered.

[2] Ness and Neston contain an element which may be either OE. *næss* or ON. *nes*.

place-names, virtually unexplored. At present one works in the dark and must continue to do so until ample collections are available. The need for these and for assistance in their accumulation cannot be overstressed for, although our opinions to-day may be correct in outline, they will be modified in detail. Any list of Scandinavian place-names now compiled is certain to undergo at least a few changes.

The number of Scandinavian place-names in Cheshire, while not inconsiderable, is not particularly impressive in itself. At present we cannot point to thirty definite examples, and their total will not be substantially increased by the inclusion of doubtful cases and by the additions of future research. Compared with the Danelaw counties Cheshire does not possess many Scandinavian place-names, but the location and nature of those which exist are of the highest historical value.

A map will immediately reveal a heavy concentration of Scandinavian place-names in Wirral. In fact, this is the only area where they are at all numerous. They are concrete evidence of a densely populated Scandinavian colony which extended across the Mersey into Lancashire[1] and across the Dee into North Wales, and as such they have long been recognized. We find the following fairly safe examples :—

Arrowe, ON. erg <Gael. airidh, " a shieling."
Caldy, Great and Little, ON. kald ey, " cold island."[2]
Claughton, ON. klakkr, " a lump, a hillock," and OE. tun.
Frankby, ODan. " Franki's by."
Helsby, ON. ?hellir,[3] " cave," and ON. b r.
Irby, ON. Irábyr, " the by of the Irishmen."
Kirby, West, ON. kirkja, " church," and ON. býr.
Larton, ON. leirr, " clay," and OE. tun.
Meols, Great and Little, ON. melr, " sandbank, sandhill."
Noctorum, OIr. cnocc, " hill," is the first element.
Pensby, ON. býr. The first element may be a personal name or, less likely, OW. pen(n).
Raby, ON. rá, " boundary," and ON. býr.

[1] e.g. Aigburth, Burscough, Crosby, Croxteth, Cunscough, West Derby, Formby, Kirkby, Kirkdale, Lathom, Litherland, Lunt, Ormskirk, Roby, Skelmersdale, Thingwall, Toxteth etc. A complete list may be compiled from Ekwall's *Place-names of Lancashire*. Many minor names are also Scandinavian; Professor Ekwall's work, although not complete in this respect, contains many examples. See *Place-names of Lancashire*, p. 250, et passim.

[2] Professor Ekwall has pointed out that the early forms in *-r* (DB. *Calders*; c. 1245, Chester Chartulary, *Caldera*) represent the plural *Kald eyiar*, " the (two) Caldys ".

[3] The first element is doubtful. This is Professor Ekwall's suggestion, *Dictionary of English Place-names*, p. 222.

SCANDINAVIAN SETTLEMENT IN NORTH-WEST MERCIA.
NORSE AREA.
DANISH AREA.
COUNTY BOUNDARY.
SCALE of MILES.
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Storeton, ON. stórr, " big," and OE. tun.
Thingwall, ON. þing vǫllr, " place of assembly."[1]
Thurstaston, ON. Þórsteinn, and OE. tun.
Tranmere, ON. trani, " crane," and ON. melr,[2] " sandbank."
Whitby, ON. Hvítabýr, " Hviti's by."

To these may be added certain English names which reveal Scandinavian influence. Greasby is a Scandinavianized form of an OE. place-name which appears in Domesday Book as *Gravesberie* (OE. *burh*). Gayton may be a hybrid (ON. *geit*, " goat," and OE. *tun*) but more probably it contains OE. *gat*, " goat," later influenced by ON. *geit*. It is not impossible that West Kirby arose as a Scandinavian translation of an earlier OE. *cirice*, " church," and *tun* or *burh*. Other possible examples might be found, e.g. Birkenhead,[3] but without complete series of forms it would be difficult to adduce adequate evidence in support of our assumptions.

There remain a few Wirral place-names of which the origins are doubtful. These may contain Scandinavian elements but, on the other hand, they may not. There is no need, however, to ignore them completely until a detailed analysis of yet uncollected material allows safer conclusions, for, taken together, they strengthen the impression of an intense Scandinavian settlement. Brimstage may preserve the ON. personal name *Brúnn*, and Crabwall may possibly represent ON. *krapp-vǫllr*, " narrow field," as was suggested by W. G. Collingwood.[4] ON. *nes* is in many ways more probable than OE. *næs* as the element which is found in Ness and Neston. It has also been declared that the first element of Oxton is Scandinavian.[5] Finally, a derivation of Shotwick from ON. *vík*, " a bay," is very strongly supported by a definite creek cutting inland from the old level of the Dee.

The above is the place-name evidence for Scandinavian settlement in Wirral,[6] and, as will have been seen, it varies greatly in reliability and in significance. The immediate task is to

[1] Probably marking, as has often been stated, the centre of the Wirral Norse settlement.
[2] Some of the early spellings of Tranmere contain *-mor* instead of the more usual *-mel*, *-mol* etc. The *-mor* forms have evidently developed into the modern *-mere*.
[3] The first element is OE. *biercen*, " birchen," but it has perhaps been influenced by ON. *birki*.
[4] *The Saga-Book of the Viking Club*, Vol. II, part II, p. 145.
[5] Ibid.
[6] The area described as Wirral in this article extends beyond the boundaries of Wirral Hundred to include the Frodsham-Helsby district.

translate this evidence into history. First, it may be pointed out that many place-names are strict Scandinavian creations, e.g. Arrowe, Caldy, Frankby, Helsby, Irby, West Kirby, Meols, ?Pensby, Raby, Thingwall, Tranmere and Whitby. These, being completely Scandinavian, were obviously formed by a Scandinavian-speaking people. They are incontrovertible proof that Scandinavians settled in great numbers in Wirral, an assertion which becomes more comprehensible when it is realized that a place-name usually originates in the speech of surrounding settlers rather than among the inhabitants of the place, and when it is realized that therefore a single strict Scandinavian place-name may imply that the whole of the neighbouring district was thickly peopled by Scandinavians. Including Greasby one may count 8 Cheshire place-names containing the popular and distinctive Scandinavian element *by*. This number may seem small when it is known that there are some 250 *-by* place-names in each of the counties of York and Lincoln and that Leicestershire can boast 66 examples.[1] It is very significant that all the Cheshire *-by* place-names are found in the comparatively small district of Wirral—there are only twice as many in the whole of Lancashire. It is very probable that the majority of *-by* place-names arose within a generation or two of 900 A.D., but whatever their date[2] it is certain that they are always found thick upon the ground in areas most thoroughly occupied by the Scandinavians, e.g. the Wreak valley in Leicestershire, and the land intersected by the tributaries of the Ouse in Yorkshire. Thus the location in Wirral of all the Cheshire *-by* place-names takes on a new significance.

Among the place-names listed above there will have been noticed a number of Anglo-Scandinavian hybrids: Claughton, Larton, Storeton, Thurstaston, Neston and perhaps others. The precise historical significance of these hybrids is not yet clear, but it seems certain that they point to racial intermingling

[1] Derbyshire, a Danelaw county, has like Cheshire only 8 *-by* place-names; Durham has 9.

[2] The word *-by* continued as a living place-name element in some areas for a very considerable time. For example, in Cumberland *-by* is often found in combination with French personal names, e.g. Aglionby (*Agyllun*), Allonby (*Aleyn*), Johnby (*John*), Moresby (*Maurice*) and Rickerby (*Richard*). This survival, however, does not appear to have been usual. We may believe that the majority of *-by* place-names arose in the first phase of Scandinavian settlement. An attempt to throw light upon the date of Scandinavian place-names is proceeding. This involves an investigation into the chronology of Scandinavian personal names found in place-names. Results are not yet complete, but general conclusions are becoming increasingly plain.

as well as to Scandinavian influence. Strictly, the final element *tun* reveals that the above examples are English place-names, possibly attached in the first place to pre-Scandinavian villages. One might argue that the English population was so Scandinavianized that it adopted Scandinavian words like *klakkr*, *leirr*, *stórr* and *nes*. On the other hand, it is perhaps more likely that the Scandinavians early accepted OE. place-name elements like *tun*.[1] From either argument, however, it follows that racial fusion occurred. Englishmen and Scandinavians were so closely related by race as well as by language that we may believe intermarriage and intermixture to have begun almost with the first alien settlements. An Anglo-Scandinavian language and an Anglo-Scandinavian personal nomenclature developed along with an Anglo-Scandinavian race. More must be written of hybrid place-names below,[2] after which their historical interpretation will still be far from complete. In the meantime we may safely use them to indicate Scandinavian influence and Anglo-Scandinavian fusion.

More interesting, perhaps, is the attempt to decide the racial composition of the Scandinavian settlers themselves. In this delicate problem our most reliable information is derived from place-names. Normally it is impossible to distinguish between Norse and Danish place-names, for the dialects were so closely related that the great bulk of words and personal names found in Scandinavian place-names may be either Danish or Norwegian. Occasionally it is possible to point to words or side-forms which are characteristic of only one branch of the Scandinavian language, and occasionally it is possible to point to personal names which appear, for example, in Old Danish but not in Old Norse.[3] Furthermore, the Norsemen arrived in England from Ireland where they had stayed long enough to adopt certain Irish words, Irish personal names and Irish methods of place-nomenclature.[4]

[1] *Tun* was used in Iceland. [2] p. 52.

[3] If a personal name is found in Danish sources but not in Norse sources it is fairly safe to regard the name as specifically Danish. The reverse, that a name appearing in Norse but not Danish sources is specifically Norse, is by no means a reliable assumption because the Danish material is comparatively scanty.

[4] Irish words like *airge* in Grimsargh and Goosnargh (Lancs.) etc.; Irish personal names like *Dubgall* in Duggleby (Yorks), *Dubán* in Dovenby (Cumberland), *Gusán* in Goosnargh etc. Irish methods of place-nomenclature were also adopted, in particular the Irish habit, later found among the Welsh, of inverting the usual order of elements in compound place-names, e.g. Kirkoswald, Kirkandrews, Kirkbride etc. in Cumberland. In English the defining element is placed first.

Such Irish influence may be taken legitimately to prove the existence of Norsemen. The whole work of building up reliable "tests" of this nature is highly technical and far from complete. Much remains controversial but here we can only avoid technicalities and interpret as well as we are able the material at our disposal.

As is to be expected, very few of the Scandinavian place-names of Wirral may be ascribed individually to a specifically Norse or Danish origin. They are just Scandinavian. One or two names are definitely of Norse origin and it must be emphasized that, in the absence of Danish equivalents, these are sufficient to persuade us that most of the other Scandinavian place-names in Wirral are Norse. Arrowe contains the element *erg* which was borrowed by the Norsemen from the Irish. Another adopted Irish word is *cnocc* which appears as the first element of Noctorum. Irby, "the *by* of the Irishmen," also points to an invasion from Ireland. Minor names offer some additional evidence.[1] Since there are no definite Danish place-names we are safe in stating that the Scandinavians in Wirral were mainly Norsemen who had spent a considerable time in Ireland. One need not emphasize that this evidence strongly supports the Ingimund tradition discussed above. Moreover, there may well have been native Irishmen among the alien settlers, as is suggested by the *Three Fragments*. Their presence would help to explain the easy adoption of Irish place-name characteristics by the Scandinavians.

It has been stated above that there are no certain examples of Danish "tests" or Danish place-names in Wirral. That is true, at the present stage of research, but there are one or two possible indications that Danes settled among the Norsemen, as was suggested, it will be remembered, by the *Three Fragments*. Thus Irby is a strict Scandinavian place-name meaning "the *by* of the Irishmen," and it might be reasonable to argue that such a name could have arisen only in the speech of non-Irish Scandinavians, that is to say, of Danes. Other explanations, however, are possible,[2] and it would be hazardous to build any

[1] See below, p. 49, and reference.

[2] Irby may contain the genitive singular, *Íri* perhaps used as an ordinary personal name for a man who had been to Ireland, or it may contain the genitive plural, *Íra*, as assumed above. Although it would seem natural that such a place-name was created

elaborate historical structure upon this name alone. It might be held that Thurstaston and Frankby also point to Danish influence. Thurstaston is an Anglo-Scandinavian hybrid containing the Old Norse personal name *Þórsteinn* but apparently in the Old Danish form *Thursten*. It should be compared with the identical place-name Thrussington which is found in the essentially Danish area of Leicestershire.[1] Likewise, Frankby possibly contains the Old Danish personal name *Franki*, as distinct from the Old Norse form of the same name which is *Frakki*.[2] Here, however, we are on dangerous ground, for Scandinavian personal names are still a field for investigation. The above indications of Danish influence may be very interesting but they are not yet definite enough to carry much conviction.

It is *a priori* very likely that some Danes settled in Wirral but it is not easy to produce concrete proof that this was the case. On the other hand, we are fairly safe in denying the existence of any considerable Danish element among the Wirral Scandinavians. It is very significant that the common Danish *thorp* does not occur.[3] In short, Danes must have been rare in Wirral or we should find clearer traces of them. In view of the tradition preserved in the *Three Fragments* one of the most useful tasks of future research will be to investigate the question of Danish settlements among the Wirral Norse—for there can be no doubt that Norsemen predominated.

J. H. Round, usually so meticulously accurate, blundered when he dismissed J. R. Green's suggestion of a "little group

by men who had not been to Ireland, this becomes less obvious if the first element is a personal name. Moreover, this particular place-name may have been created at a later date, perhaps by the second generation of Norse settlers, and applied to newcomers from Ireland. There are numerous other possibilities but it is not safe to demand an acceptance of any of them. It is only clear that it was created by a Scandinavian-speaking people and that, if it contains *Ira*, the "*by* of the Irishmen" was a name sufficiently distinctive in a Scandinavian area.

[1] The development of Thrussington may be seen from the following selected forms: 1086 *Turstanestone;* 12th c. 13th c. *Tursteineston, Thurstaneston, T(h)urstanton, Thurstainton;* 1299 *Thurstinton;* 1325 *Thurstington;* 1486 *Thursyngton;* 1498 *Thrusyngton;* 1502 *Thrussyngton, Thrussington.* Of identical origin also are Thurston (Suffolk) and Thrislington (Durham).

[2] The assimilation of *nk* to *kk* is considered to be a West Scandinavian development, cf. ON. *slakki*, Dan. *slank;* ON. *bakki*, Dan. *banke;* but *nk* forms cannot always be regarded as indicative of Danish origin because the assimilation occurred so late that early ON. words and names may well have the original *nk*.

[3] *Thorp* was rarely used by the Norwegians and it may be regarded as a Danish "test." A fairly common OE. *thorp* (*þorp, þrop*) exists to complicate the problem, but a Scandinavian *thorp* in England is almost certainly of Danish origin.

of northern villages " in Wirral with a curt " I cannot find them myself."[1] He added, " Raby is the one place I can there find in the peninsula with the ' bye ' termination." It is clear that Round was thinking only of Domesday Book from which Frankby, Irby, West Kirby, Pensby and Whitby are absent and in which Greasby appears in its English form, *Gravesberie*. Since inclusion in Domesday Book is a fair test of importance, the absence of these Scandinavian place-names may mean that many Scandinavian villages remained small and insignificant. They probably represent new Scandinavian settlements which did not rival in importance the earlier English villages. It is probable that the Scandinavians arrived peaceably and were content to create new settlements of their own, often in comparatively undesirable areas. The existing English villages often retained their English names, e.g. Eastham, Hooton, Ledsham, Leighton, Mollington, Prenton, Puddington, Sutton, Upton etc., and it may be that they were not molested.[2] Skirmishes, such as the traditional attack on Chester, may well have occurred, but in general it would appear that the Scandinavians quietly settled in uninhabited districts. They would easily find sufficient unclaimed land for their needs since the pre-Scandinavian settlers in Wirral cannot have been numerous. According to figures in Domesday Book about a quarter of the population of Domesday Cheshire was concentrated in Wirral, but this was a century and a half after the Scandinavian settlement, and there is no reason to believe that even the most favoured parts of Cheshire could support any very dense population. It has been said that Cheshire was " comparatively unproductive and comparatively thinly populated,"[3] and there can be no doubt that Wirral possessed its full share of forest and marsh. It seems likely that, before the Scandinavian settlement, this remote corner of England was but scantily peopled. Thus the Scandinavians would certainly find many areas unclaimed by the earlier English settlers. If they were generally content with uncultivated and unwanted lands they were a potential, but not an effective, obstacle to the schemes

[1] *Feudal England*, p. 86.
[2] Names like Thurstaston and Greasby may suggest sites adopted by the invaders.
[3] H. J. Hewitt, *Mediæval Cheshire*, op. cit., p. 6.

of Edward the Elder. Although the presence in Wirral of alien colonists may well have constituted a grave threat to the English of Mercia, we cannot readily believe that any such danger arose from the deliberate and intentional policy of the immigrants.

A close study of the minor names of this area will do much to confirm the impression of a very dense Scandinavian settlement. Although many of these names which were given to fields, woods, hills, streams etc. do not date from the tenth century, it will be obvious that the ultimate adoption of Scandinavian terms for insignificant fields and woods presumes a strong Scandinavian element in the local population and a mixed language which persisted for centuries. The collection of Cheshire field-names has hardly yet begun, but interesting results are already appearing. Among the minor names of Wirral we find such Scandinavian words as *holmr*, *kiarr*, *flǫt*, *þveit* etc. Further examples and details may be obtained elsewhere.[1] Even at the outset of a survey of Cheshire field-names it is abundantly clear that in Wirral "we are dealing with an alien population of mass-migration proportions and not with a few military conquerors who usurped the choicest sites." In passing it may be added that Wirral field-names contain some confirmatory evidence that the Scandinavian settlers were Norsemen from Ireland.[2]

To turn from the thorough Norse occupation of Wirral we find, by contrast, evidence of a less intensive but distinctly Danish penetration of East Cheshire. In this area, by a fortunate chance, the few place-names which alone preserve a record of Scandinavian settlement reveal clear evidence of Danish influence. The difficulties surrounding the recognition and application of "tests" have been discussed briefly above. In East Cheshire there are perhaps a dozen "Scandinavian"[3] place-names and of these the majority contain Danish "tests" or words which, under the circumstances, may be legitimately interpreted as Danish. One of the safest tests of Danish influence is a persistent *u* in the forms of *-hulme* place-names. The word *holm*

[1] F. T. Wainwright, *Field-names*. Antiquity, XVII. June 1943. The Cheshire material will be found mainly on pp. 59–60.

[2] Ibid.

[3] As will be seen, many of these are, strictly, English place-names which contain Scandinavian elements.

(ON. *holmr*) may be either Norwegian or Danish, but the side-form *hulm* is definitely Danish. It occurs in Cheadle Hulme, Church Hulme, Hulme Walfield, Hulme Hall and Kettleshulme. The frequent appearance of this distinctive side-form in East Cheshire is a happy coincidence, for it proves to us that the Scandinavians in this area were Danes. Likewise, Knutsford probably contains ON. *Knútr*, ODan. *Knut*, a personal name which is Danish rather than Norwegian.[1] The word *topt* or *toft* which appears in Toft, near Knutsford, may also be regarded as Danish.[2]

There remain one or two more place-names which reveal Scandinavian influence, e.g. Croxton (perhaps "the *tun* of Croc," i.e. ON. *Krókr*, ODan. *Krok*), Rostherne (ON. *Rauðr*) and perhaps Congleton[3] and Swanscoe.[4] When the minor names of East Cheshire have been collected and studied they will no doubt add some weight to the evidence of Scandinavian influence. On a modern map of this area may be seen such names as Drakecar (ON. *kiarr* > ME. *car*, "marsh"), Bowstonegate (ON. *gata*, "a road"), Chadkirk and Kirkleyditch (ON. *kirkja*, "a church," or a Scandinavianized form of OE. *cirice*, "a church"). It may be, also, that Scandinavian influence explains the modern form of Handforth with its final *d* replaced by a Scandinavian *th*.[5] In these examples we cannot discover any evidence of specifically Danish influence but the surprisingly

[1] *Knut* is fairly common in Danish areas. It occurs in Old Norse but then it is borrowed from Old Danish.(O.v. Feilitzen, *The Pre-Conquest Personal Names of Domesday Book*, p. 305. Uppsala, 1937)

[2] Toft place-names are very common in Scandinavian England, except in Cumberland, Westmorland, Lancashire, Northumberland and Durham where they are very rare. They are especially numerous in Lincolnshire, Yorkshire and Norfolk. [See Lindkvist, *Middle English Place-names of Scandinavian Origin*, p. 208 ff]. This distribution suggests Danish origin, but the fact that the word passed into Middle English prevents its use as a Danish "test" or even as a certain Scandinavian "test."

[3] Cf. E. Ekwall, *Dictionary of English Place-names*.

[4] No early forms are yet available.

[5] The Scandinavians regularly changed OE. *d* to *th*, presumably because the original sound was unfamiliar to them, e.g. Loud in Lancashire is the equivalent of the Scandinavianized Louth in Lincolnshire. Similar changes of *ch* to *k*, *sh* to *sk* etc. are well-known indications of Scandinavian influence.

When a final *d* is replaced by *th*, however, it is not always certain that the change is due to Scandinavian influence. The final *d* in *-ford* names is usually pronounced *th* in dialect speech even when the original *d* has officially survived. For example, Rainford (Lancashire) shows frequent late spellings in *th* (omitted by Ekwall in *Place-names of Lancashire, p.* 110), and the common dialect pronunciation is still "Rainforth" or "Rainfuth." The fact that such spellings are all late may argue against Scandinavian influence, and it has been said that they are "due to a regular phonetic development of final *rd* in an unstressed syllable" (*English Place-name Society Publications*, I, 2, p. 27). It might be added that ON. *vað*, "a ford," is not unlike the dialect pronunciation of *ford* in Lancashire.

high proportion of Danish "tests," quoted above, leaves no doubt that the Scandinavians in East Cheshire were Danes and not Norsemen.

There is, however, one single example of a Norse test-word, ON. *skáli*, "a hut", which may appear in Scholar Green.[1] It is just possible that we have here a small Norse-speaking colony in East Cheshire, but it is far more likely that the name is a late formation, for early spellings have not yet been found. It is probable, indeed, that the name did not arise until after the Norman Conquest for ON. *skáli* passed into Middle English as *scale*. Thus, in this case, it is perhaps not very reliable as an indication of Norwegian settlement. There is no doubt that East Cheshire is a Danish area, and the distinction between a Norse colonization of Wirral and a Danish colonization of East Cheshire is a significant fact.

It has been noticed that the Danish settlements in Cheshire extended northwards into Lancashire and southwards into Staffordshire.[2] In Lancashire, across the Mersey from Cheadle Hulme, there existed a populous Danish colony marked by such Danish place-names as Flixton, Urmston, Davyhulme, Hulme in Manchester, Levenshulme and Oldham in Withington (c. 1200 *Aldehulm*).[3] From the Mersey the Danes stretched thinly over East Cheshire, as explained above, and into Staffordshire where they are evidenced in the following place-names: Hulme End, Upper Hulme, Swinscoe, Croxall and Drointon in the east of the county, Hulme, Knutton and Normacot in the neighbourhood of Stoke-on-Trent, and perhaps further south in Croxton and Gunston both of which seem to contain Scandinavian personal names.[4] It is very reasonable to believe that this belt of

[1] *Dictionary of English Place-names*, p. 388.
[2] E. Ekwall, *The Scandinavian Settlement*, p. 150. *An Historical Geography of England before* 1800, ed. H. C. Darby, 1936.
[3] E. Ekwall, *Place-names of Lancashire*, p. 245 et passim.
[4] It should be emphasized that Staffordshire is, like Cheshire, an area of which the place-names have hardly yet been investigated. There are some forms in the admirable pioneer work, W. H. Duignan's *Notes on Staffordshire Place Names*, 1902, but interpretations are necessarily tentative. For example, the suggestion that Knutton perhaps means "Knut's *tun*" (*Dictionary of English Place-names*) is temporarily accepted although the absence of any trace of genitival inflexion among listed forms is a disturbing factor. The personal name *Knut* is combined with OE. *tun* in Knuston (Northants), with OE. *stan* in Knowstone (Devon) and with OE. *ford* in Knutsford (Cheshire), and in the forms of all these place-names genitival inflexions are prominent. If Knutton contains the personal name *Knut*, the development may have been: *Knutstun* > *Knuston* > *Knutton*, but probably a quite different origin ought to be sought.

superficial Danish settlement, stretching southwards from the Manchester region, marks the limit of Danish westward expansion from the land of the Five Boroughs.

On the other hand, it should be made quite clear that this Danish overlap was not heavily settled. No comparison should be made with the thickly populated Norse colonies in Wirral. There is a conspicuous lack of strict or true Scandinavian place-names which normally appear in areas of intensive Scandinavian settlement. It will have been noticed that not a single *-by*, commonest of Scandinavian elements, has been quoted. This is as true of Staffordshire and the Danish colony of Lancashire as of East Cheshire. Place-names in *-by* are characteristic of areas of heavy Danish settlement, and their absence here is noteworthy. Moreover, all types of strict Scandinavian place-names, which if numerous would imply an overwhelming Scandinavian population, are rare. In East Cheshire the only compound place-name which is certainly of Scandinavian creation is Kettleshulme (ON. *Ketill*, ODan. *Ketil*, and ODan. *hulm*), and this may be a late formation.[1] Rostherne (ON. *Rauðr* and ON. *þyrnir* or OE. *þyrne*) is the only other possible example. The other compound place-names are hybrids, while the Hulmes may be late creations for none appear in Domesday Book.

The problem of Anglo-Scandinavian hybrid place-names is by no means solved: we cannot yet be certain of the conditions under which they arose. The most interesting type is that which contains as first element a Scandinavian personal name and as second element OE. *tun*. In our area we have Flixton (ODan. *Flik*) and Urmston (ODan. *Urm*, *Orm*, ON. *Ormr*) in Lancashire, Croxton (ON. *Krókr*, ODan. *Krok*) in Cheshire, and Croxton (ON. *Krókr*), Drointon (ON. *Drengr* or *drengr*) and Gunston (ON. *Gunni* or some compound name) in Staffordshire. Knutsford (ON. *Knútr*, OE. *ford*) and the Staffordshire Croxall (ON. *Krókr*) fall into this class. From a study of the distribution of this hybrid type in other areas (Lincolnshire, Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire) it seems that such names are most conspicuous on the fringes of the main Scandinavian settlements. They may have arisen because

[1] Both the personal name and the second element continued in living use long after the Norman Conquest. The earliest form so far known is from 1285 (*Keteleshulm*, *Dictionary of English Place-names*).

their creators lived among a predominantly English population and they may be comparatively late formations, having become possible by racial intermingling. Whatever the conditions which governed their appearance, the fact that they normally occur outside the edges of the thickest Scandinavian settlements is significant. The Danish overlap which embraces East Cheshire was certainly on the remote fringe of the Danish half of England. Scandinavian settlement here may well have been late and it was quite definitely scanty.

Thus the evidence of these hybrids confirms the impression created by the paucity of strict Scandinavian place-names, and we now have good reason to believe that the line of sparse Danish settlements running southwards from the Manchester district through East Cheshire and Staffordshire forms the boundary of Scandinavian expansion towards the west. The stream of Danish settlers, powerful in Lincolnshire and Leicestershire, weaker in Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire, and faint in Warwickshire, trickled indistinctly into East Cheshire and then faded away completely. It is important for the history of this period to know roughly the extent of Danish penetration, which is not, of course, necessarily the same as the extent of effective Danish control.

In conclusion, therefore, place-names reveal an intensive Norse settlement in Wirral and a weak Danish penetration of East Cheshire, the former an invasion on the scale of a mass-migration and the latter a faint overlap from the Danish midlands. These facts are important and they must figure prominently in any attempt to estimate conditions in pre-Conquest Cheshire.

NOTE.

The Date of Ælfwyn's Deposition.

The date of Ælfwyn's removal to Wessex (see p. 27, n. 1.) is not so clear as might be desired. This event is recorded in the Mercian Register in MSS. B and C of ASC. The chronology of the Mercian Register is generally considered to be above reproach, and the Ælfwyn episode occurs under the year 919. This is the usually accepted date of Ælfwyn's removal.

It is possible, however, to argue that 918 is the correct date although, it should be noted, this involves the assumption that the year-number is

wrong, a fault from which the Mercian Register is otherwise free. In this note I have attempted to state the case for 918, but the question remains open.

The annal 919 begins with the words, " Her eac wearð Æþeredes dohtar Myrcna hlafordes ælces onwealdes on Myrcum benumen ond on Westsexe alæded." This may be translated either as " In this year *also* the daughter of Ethelred . . . was deprived of all power . . ." or as " In this year the daughter of Ethelred . . . was *also* deprived of all power. . . ." Which is the more likely is a matter of opinion. If the former is correct, it follows that the year-number 919 has been wrongly inserted and that the event rightly belongs to the previous annal, i.e. to 918. Incidentally, Ælfwyn's deposition, which occurred in early December, is the first and only event recorded under 919 and it could easily have formed the last part of annal 918 which, in its present state, does not record any event after midsummer 918. All really depends on the reliance one may place upon *eac* and upon what seems to be its obvious meaning.

It is most unlikely that *eac* is merely a scribal slip, for an examination of the Mercian Register suggests that the scribe was not altogether bound in his chronological arrangements by year-numbers. Comparison may be made with the annals for 910, 911, 912 and 913 where the Mercian Register commonly uses *Her, On þysum geare, þæs ilcan geare, þa oðres geares* and *þa þæs oþre geare* to express chronological sequence. Such examples forbid the assumption that *Her eac* in 919 is a meaningless slip.

If, indeed, this *eac* is strong enough to carry the annal back to 918, an explanation of the mistake would not be difficult. A later scribe might have inserted the year-number 919 on seeing *Her*, the usual indication of a new annal. This mistake would be possible because the two following annals (919 and 920) were blank in B and C. A similar error would be impossible in the previous cases where *Her* appeared half-way through an annal (quoted above) because no blanks followed those particular annals.

A further argument in favour of putting Ælfwyn's deposition in 918 is that the event then falls into line with the main chronicle, A. In 918 (A. *s.a.* 922) it is recorded that after Æthelflæd's death in mid-June the people, previously subject to her, submitted to Edward and so did certain Welsh chieftains. Later still Edward went to Nottingham, captured the fort and placed there a garrison of Englishmen and Danes. By this time the year 918 must have been well-advanced. The annal ends with the statement, " and all the people who were settled in Mercia, both Danish and English, submitted to him." This general statement embraces the submission of both Danish and English Mercia. The submission of English Mercia on the death of Æthelflæd has already been recorded and this final statement may well imply that in late 918, on the collapse of Danish Mercia, Edward assumed a stricter control over English Mercia than had been possible at Æthelflæd's death. In fact, this may be a vague West Saxon reference to Ælfwyn's removal which is not otherwise recorded in A. In short, Ælfwyn's deposition, specifically recorded in the Mercian Register, may have been casually included in the general

submission by the West Saxon $\overline{A}$. This argument gives powerful support to the view that Ælfwyn's deposition actually occurred in 918. If so, its value is clear : it brings the events of the two chronicles into agreement and thus enables us to date more closely events in $\overline{A}$. We may say that the general submission of Mercia occurred in, say, late November or early December 918, instead of leaving it vaguely in the second half of the year as hitherto. This argument would also provide an additional proof that the chronicle annals for Edward's reign begin the year at Christmas and not on September 24th, as under Alfred and earlier. (This is clearly suggested by the arrangement of other annals, cf. $\overline{A}$.*s.a.* 921, 918 and 919). Most important for our present purpose, however, is the fact that the events of the two chronicles fall into line ; this is a strong argument for believing that the Mercian Register annal 919 is misplaced by a year from 918.

Thirdly, it might be argued that political conditions seem to suggest late 918 rather than late 919 as the obvious time for Ælfwyn's removal. It will be remembered that in June 918 she was allowed to retain some nominal authority only because, as seems likely, the Mercians were loath to fall completely under West Saxon domination. From Edward's point of view it was clearly, as his future action shows, a temporary arrangement, a compromise to be ended at the first opportunity. What better opportunity for Edward than the moment when the last Danish resistance in Mercia had failed, and when, no doubt, his power and reputation were high ? Why should he postpone the step, clearly intended, for another whole year until late 919 ? Rhetorical questions are not arguments but they may sometimes stress a point. Conditions undoubtedly suggest late 918 as the most convenient time for Ælfwyn's removal. In the latter part of 919, on the other hand, Edward seems to have been occupied further north [" after harvest " he was with the *Mercian* fyrd fortifying Thelwall and Manchester].

In short, political conditions, so far as we can reconstruct them, favour the 918 date for Ælfwyn's removal. Secondly, the episode, if it occurred in late 918, falls into line with events in MS. $\overline{A}$ in a very satisfactory manner. Finally, there is *eac* which, although of doubtful significance, cannot be ignored.

Against this view the case may be stated briefly. First, one cannot feel safe in emphasizing the apparent meaning of *eac ;* alone it could hardly justify a re-dating of the 919 annal. More important is the fact that the new dating demands the assumption that the year-number 919 is a mistake. This in itself would not be surprising, for most of the year-numbers in the *Chronicle* account of this reign are wrong, but those in the Mercian Register are correct where they can be tested and consequently they must be treated with respect. It is not easy, therefore, to believe that the Mercian Register, apparently so accurate, has gone astray in this particular case. However, there is some reason to believe that this has happened, and the question must remain open. Unfortunately it is not at present possible to examine the manuscript, which may afford some clue.