IDENTIFYING THE EARLY MEDIEVAL TOWNS
OF SOMERSET

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INTRODUCTION

Somerset has been described as having a large number of towns in 1086 compared with other counties and it still contains many small towns and large villages today.[1] The Domesday survey is the only contemporary written source of information about early medieval towns and is thought to describe seven settlements as towns: Bath, Ilchester, Milborne Port, Bruton, Langport, Axbridge and Taunton.[2] Whether a number of other settlements namely Frome, Milverton, Yeovil and Watchet should also be classified as towns is a matter of debate. A major problem with the Domesday survey of towns is that it is not systematic and the collection of information about each place can only be described as erratic.[3] Currently there is no consensus on which settlements in Somerset should be described as early medieval towns, or how this might be achieved.[4] This difficulty is not peculiar to Somerset as there is no consensus on what criteria can appropriately be used to classify a settlement as an early medieval town.[5]

The aim of this article is to identify which settlements (excluding Bristol as this was largely in Gloucestershire) in the pre-1974 county of Somerset had significance during the early medieval period, 400 to 1066, and to propose a set of criteria by which some of them can be identified as towns in 1086.[6] By looking at the significance of these settlements from the 6th to the 11th centuries it is possible to demonstrate continuity at a number of settlements and then, having identified a set of appropriate criteria, propose a list of settlements that can be described as towns in 1086 (Fig. 1).

Having concluded that currently there is no consensus on how the early medieval towns of Somerset can be identified, detailed consideration needs to be given to the evidence that can be used to identify them. No one source, for example the Domesday survey, provides sufficient unequivocal evidence. Even when documentary, historical and archaeological evidence are brought together it is, for many settlements, still difficult to decide whether they had any urban characteristics,[7] and the same difficulty exists in identifying the early churches and minsters of Somerset.[8]

In order to develop a definitive list of early medieval towns it is essential to take a wide-ranging approach similar to that documented by Rippon with regard to historic landscapes.[9] Therefore eight strands of evidence have been explored: historical and documentary; place-names; mints; archaeology; churches; topography; morphology; and population.[10] Frequently when discussing early medieval towns there is a tendency to adopt a black and white approach, but we need to acknowledge that settlements change and their fortunes fluctuate over time. Town development in Somerset is characterised by a rise and fall in status and then in some cases a rise again; for example Williton, an important early medieval royal centre, had no significance again until the 19th century.[11]

IDENTIFYING EARLY MEDIEVAL TOWNS

To be defined as a town, settlements, regardless of whether they are large or small, must have a distinct

Settement Key

Ax – Axbridge
Br – Bruton
Ca – Carhampton
Ch – Cheddar
Cn – Cannington
Cr – Crewkerne
Fr – Frome
Gl – Glastonbury
Im – Ilminster
La – Langport
Ly – Lyng
Ma – Martock

Mi – Milverton
MP – Milborne Port
NP – North Petherton
SC – South Cadbury
So – Somerton
SP – South Petherton
Wa – Watchet
Wd – Wedmore
Wi – Williton
Wl – Wells
Ye – Yeovil

Key

● Large town

● Medium town

● Small town

• Insignificant centre of population

✝ Minster/church settlement
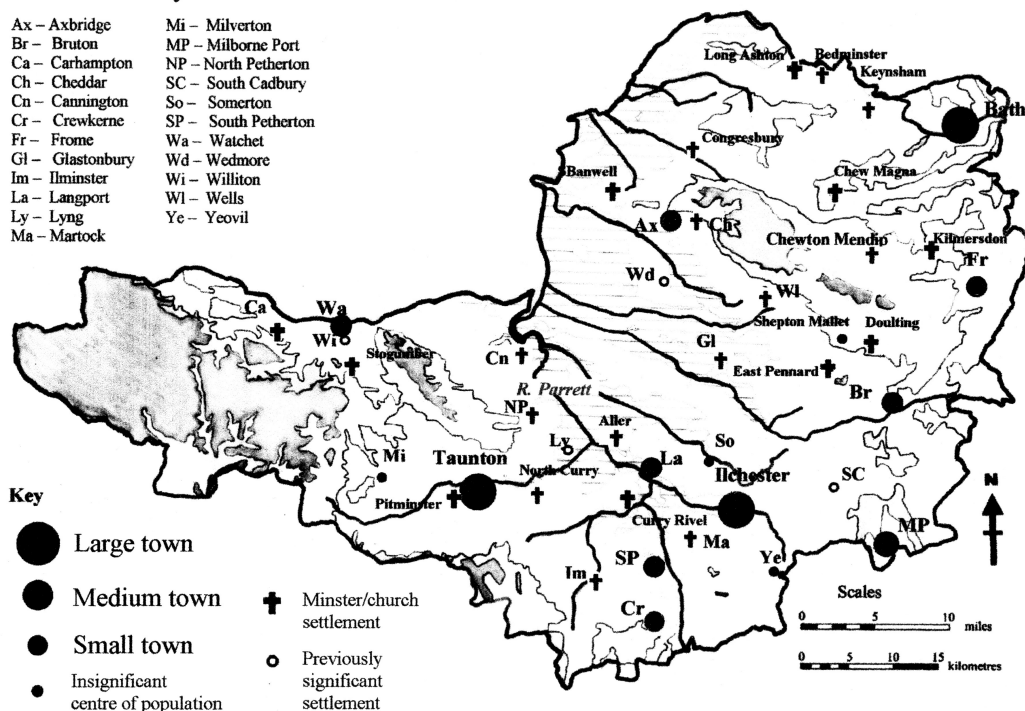
○ Previously significant settlement

Fig. 1 Towns and settlements of Somerset in 1086 (map based on Table 1)

identity in that they can be distinguished from their agricultural hinterland – they are not just large rural agricultural settlements. A town can be defined as: 'a relatively dense and permanent concentration of residents engaged in a multiplicity of activities, a substantial proportion of which are non-agrarian'.[12] If this definition is coupled with criteria appropriate to the period under discussion it is possible to agree a list of criteria to define urban settlements. So what criteria should be considered? In choosing to consider the significance of settlements over a 600-year period it is possible to determine how the importance of various criteria has changed over time. For example, one key attribute of many towns prior to 1000 is that they contained a mint. Since then, whether a town had a mint, or not, has been irrelevant, but for a while it was significant. Therefore when looking at whether Watchet was a town in 1086 is it relevant that as a burh (or defended settlement) it contained a mint between 979 and 1053?[13]

Many scholars have looked at particular indicators of town status, and have concluded that there is a clear relationship between mints, burhs and towns,[14]

and indeed a key source of verifiable evidence of town or borough status is whether a settlement contained a mint,[15] but there is a mismatch between places that were boroughs in 1086 and those that had mints.[16] For example, South Cadbury contained a mint from 1009 until 1017, but by 1066/86 the king no longer held it and no significant urban function can be identified from its Domesday Book entry.[17] In Somerset the case for mints always being sited in defended settlements is less clear,[18] but all the places which contained mints can be identified as early medieval towns, with the exception of South Cadbury.[19]

A number of scholars have proposed lists of criteria that could be used to distinguish early medieval towns from other settlements, but one of the difficulties of such lists is the underlying assumption that once a settlement became significant it remained so, and, similarly, as a place began to develop urban characteristics it would become a town.[20] Some of the proposed criteria are concerned with why a town should develop in a specific place: topography; being in a place central to the local agricultural economy; at the centre of

TABLE 1: RATING FOR SIGNIFICANCE FROM 6TH CENTURY TO 1086

Settlements WEST of Parrett (+ church status)	6th – 8th C		9th C		10th – 11th C		1086		Settlements EAST of Parrett (+ church status)
	Total points	RANKING	Total points	RANKING	Total points	RANKING	Total points	RANKING	
	1.5	=8	3	=5	1	=8	-	=8	Aller (?M)
	4	=6	3	=5	3 +?	=5	16	=5	AXBRIDGE
	6	=4	2	=6	0	=8	-	=8	Banwell (EM)
	8.5	=1	6	=2	7+?	1	30	1	BATH (EM)
	0.5	=8	4	=4	1	=8	5.5	=7	Bedminster (M)
	5.5	=4	1	=7	1	=8	-	=8	Brent (E)
	7	=3	5	=3	5 +?	=3	17.5	=5	BRUTON (EM)
Cannington (EM)	8	=2	5	=3	2 +?	=7	-	=8	
Carhampton (EM)	6.5	=3	7	1	2 +?	=7	-	=8	
	7.5	=2	5	=3	2 +?	=7	6	=7	Cheddar (EM)
	2.5	=7	2	=6	1	=8	-	=8	Chew Magna (?M)
	3	=7	5	=3	3 +?	=5	6	=7	Chewton Mendip (EM)
	7	=3	4	=4	1	=8	6	=7	Congresbury (EM)
CREWKERNE (EM)	5.5	=4	6	2	4	=5	17	=5	
Curry Rivel (?M)	4.5	=5	4	=4	1	=8	-	=8	
	6.5	=3	2	=6	1	=8	-	=8	Doulting (?M)
	3	=7	2	=6	1	=8	-	=8	E. Pennard (M)
	4.5	=5	5	=3	6	=2	16.5	=5	FROME (EM)
	7.5	=2	3	=5	3 +?	=5	6.5	=7	Glastonbury (EM)
ILCHESTER (EM)	9	=1	4	=4	6	=2	26	2	
Ilminster (EM)	3.5	=6	2	=6	27	=7	10.5	=6	
	1	=8	3	=5	1	=8	7	=7	Keynsham (EM)
	5	=5	1	=7	2 +?	=7	-	=8	Kilmersdon (M)
LANGPORT	3	=7	3	=5	4 +??	=4	16.5	=5	
	1.5	=8	2	=6	1	=8	-	=8	Long Ashton (M)
Lyng	2.5	=7	3	=5	1	=8	-	=8	
Martock (M)	1.5	=8	4	=4	1	=8	-	=8	
	5.5	=4	4	=4	6	=2	22	=4	MILBORNE PORT (EM)
Milverton	5	=5	1	=7	4 +?	=4	10	=6	
North Curry (EM)	3	=7	3	=5	1	=8	6.5	=7	
North Petherton (EM)	5	=5	4	=4	4 +?	=4	5.5	=7	
Pitminster (M)	4.5	=5	3	=5	1	=8	-	=8	
	5	=5	2	=6	1	=8	-	=8	Shapwick (E)
	5	=5	0	8	1	=8	5.5	=7	Shepton Mallet (?E)
	5	=5	6	=2	2 +??	6	6	=7	Somerton (?)
	6	=4	1	=7	2	=7	-	=8	South Cadbury
SOUTH PETHERTON (EM)	7	=3	5	=3	2 +?	=7	16	=5	
Stogumber (M)	4.5	=5	1	=7	1	=8	-	=8	
TAUNTON (EM)	8.5	=1	5	=3	5	=3	24	3	
WATCHET (E?M)	2	=7	2	=6	4 +?	=4	16.5	=5	
	4.5	=5	5	=3	1	=8	-	=8	Wedmore
	7.5	=2	4	=4	2 +?	=7	11	=6	Wells (EM)
Williton (E?M)	5	=5	5	=3	2 +?	=7	-	=8	
	6	=4	1	=7	2	=7	11	=6	Yeovil

Notes

HIGHLIGHTED SETTLEMENT = early medieval town in 1086 (see Table 2)
?E = possible early church; E = early church; ?M = possible minster;
M = Minster or probable minster

road or water networks; showing a clear relationship to earlier settlement sites – for example an Iron Age site or a Roman villa; being the site of a battle; and being the central point within an early estate, or a later hundred. Other criteria reflect the functions of a town: being a defended settlement; containing a market or mint; being a judicial centre; containing a minster church and having a significant ecclesiastical function. Further criteria are concerned with the physical attributes of towns: does it have a large and dense population; a diversified economic base; does it contain plots and houses which have urban

rather than agricultural characteristics? The major difficulty in using many of these criteria is a lack of evidence. We know whether a mint was in existence because we have the coins minted by it, but in Somerset we have no way of knowing whether settlements had a market or not,[21] or whether they had a diversified economic base.[22] Aston has reviewed Somerset's towns in the light of one set of criteria and concluded that they did not assist in identifying the early medieval towns of Somerset,[23] and Costen has stated that: 'the criteria used to define towns [in Somerset] in the 10th century cannot be uniformly applied since very few places could meet them all'.[24] The current view is that the 'bundle of criteria' approach put forward by several scholars excludes 'valid questions involving change over time', which is a significant issue in relation to the towns of Somerset,[25] and therefore, as Aston and Costen have concluded, the traditional 'bundle of criteria' approach is unable to identify the early medieval towns of Somerset.

METHODOLOGY

It will now be clear that the task of identifying the early medieval towns of Somerset is exceedingly problematical. An initial review of possible evidence-based criteria enabled the following to be identified from the Domesday survey or documentary sources such as the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*: site of battle; defended and/or a burh; contained a mint; provided a night's revenue;[26] had a church or monastery; had two or more churches; was called a *villa regale* or similar;[27] hosted a royal event or was mentioned in King Alfred's will; hosted a *witan*;[28] gave its name to a hundred;[29] received customary dues;[30] held by the king or queen in the 10th and 11th centuries; paid the 'third penny' to the earl;[31] a borough or there were indications it was a borough; and had a market or there were indications it had a market. These criteria initially appear to 'prove' the significance of certain settlements, but after further consideration two problems become apparent. The first is the difficulty of assuming that because an important event happened at a settlement in the past the settlement was significant in 1086; this has already been illustrated with regard to mints. A further example is whether a settlement was the site of a battle; Somerton was in 733, but by 1086 the indications are that it was not a significant settlement and certainly not a town. The second difficulty runs parallel to this. Because the criteria

relate to different periods of time they conflate the significance of settlements over time, and the reality that the significance of places changed is ignored. For example, can the significance of Somerton being the site of a battle in 733 be considered equal to the significance of Wedmore hosting a *witan* in 878, or Cheddar hosting three royal events in the mid 10th century? In fact none of these places can be described as a town in 1086 so the relevance of events such as these in relation to identifying early medieval towns has to be questioned.

It is for these reasons that a decision was made to look at the significance of settlements over time; this enabled a fluctuating pattern of significance to be seen and showed clearly why it was inappropriate to use some of the criteria to identify early medieval towns. This enabled a decision to be reached as to the appropriate criteria and, having identified the most significant settlements in the 10th to 11th century, to propose which of them could be described as early medieval towns (Table 1).

In order to be able to rate the relative importance of places a score (proportional to its significance) was applied to each criterion and the settlements then ranked on their cumulative score, thereby giving the relative significance of settlements and enabling it to be plotted from the 6th to 11th centuries.[32] In developing the lists of criteria it became apparent that some were applicable to settlements west of the Parrett, and not to those east of it, and *vice versa*. In order to explore this the settlements either side of the Parrett were looked at separately, but to provide an overall understanding of significance, settlements have been ranked according to the points accrued across the tables for both west and east of the Parrett.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The reasons for this disparity may be because from at least the Iron Age until the early 9th century Somerset was at times politically divided. In the 4th century Somerset formed part of the Iron Age tribal territories of the *Dumnonii*, the *Dobunni* and perhaps the *Durotriges*.[33] It has been argued that 'in the late 2nd century imperial reorganisation a new administrative area [*Dumnonia*] was created, centred on Ilchester' which stretched as far as the river Avon.[34] The proposition that the Avon formed the northern boundary of post-Roman *Dumnonia* is supported by finds of Mediterranean coinage, and archaeological evidence of trade in Mediterranean

and North African pottery which is only found in Cornwall, Devon and Somerset; none has been found in Dorset, Gloucestershire or Wiltshire.[35] In 577 the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* records the takeover from the British of Gloucester, Cirencester and Bath, all to the north of the river Avon which continued as the northern boundary of *Dumnonia*.[36]

In 658 when Cenwalh drove the British as far as the river Parrett,[37] the West Saxons took control of eastern Somerset.[38] Then in 733 King Aethelbald of Mercia captured Somerton,[39] but by the mid 9th century Wessex was fully in control of Somerset (although Bath was still part of Mercia).[40] Therefore from the mid 7th century until the early 9th century eastern Somerset was controlled by first Wessex and then Mercia, while western Somerset continued to be controlled by *Dumnonia*. By looking at the significance of settlements either side of the Parrett it appears that the political division of Somerset did have an impact on their development.

EVIDENCE

Some types of evidence have proved to be more useful than others as the basis for criteria. For example in Somerset there are no existing charters for many of the settlements which later became towns, while the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* provides information about key battles and royal events.[41] Some sources provide guidance rather than definitive information. For example place-names provide an understanding of when a settlement was named, not necessarily when it was established, but are helpful in providing insights into the early history of settlements.

Historical and documentary evidence

Unfortunately the Domesday survey is not always helpful in relation to towns,[42] as the data for each place is not identical and is probably incomplete.[43] It is possible to rank settlements on the information included in the survey, but depending on the criteria the ranking varies, although Bath and Ilchester are consistently the most successful. It is also accepted that the Domesday survey does not provide a complete list of churches or clergy. For example the entry for Bradford-on-Avon (Wiltshire) makes no mention of there being a church, and yet it contains a well-preserved example of an early medieval church.[44] In Dorset it is possible to use incidences of settlements paying a night's revenue (as detailed in the Domesday survey) to identify minsters, as the 'majority of Dorset minsters were founded at the centre of the large royal estates that formed the 'night's farms' at Domesday'.[45] The survey also names some places as 'a *civitas* or *burgus*, possessing burgesses or burgage plots or making the payment known as the 'third penny'', all of which it has been argued indicate urban status,[46] but others take a different view and there is no clear consensus how these survey statements should be interpreted.[47]

Place-names

Dissecting the etymology of place-names and the names of rivers is a prerequisite for developing an understanding of the early medieval period.[48] It has been proposed that river names utilised as place-names were 'formed in pre-English times', for example Taunton,[49] and that in Somerset both large and smaller rivers have early names, which is not the case elsewhere.[50] There is wide agreement that many of the names in Somerset are derived from British words.[51] A number of settlements in Somerset have place-names derived from *tun* and the name of the nearby river, for example Bruton, and it has been argued that in Dorset place-name evidence 'presents a broad outline of settlement chronology'.[52]

Mints

From about 878 King Alfred set up a system of defended settlements or burhs, some of which were no more than a place of refuge, or muster point, from which access routes could be defended, such as Lyng.[53] Others covered a much larger area and were planned with the intention that they would develop into market centres, such as Wareham (Dorset).[54] In Somerset the burhs protected the settlements and river mouths in Somerset, which were most often attacked by Viking raiders.[55] Frequently it was in these burhs that mints were established;[56] but they were also established in other settlements. The only mints operating in 1086 were in Bath, paying £4 20s, and Taunton, paying £2 10s.[57]

Archaeology

The archaeological evidence for the early medieval period in Somerset is very elusive, and is not good

at demonstrating urbanism.[58] Even so, archaeology can be a major source of evidence for the early history of towns, but any discussion of Somerset settlements based on archaeological information has to be constrained as many have not been excavated at all, or only to a very limited extent.[59] Indeed many towns in Somerset are still structured around the street plan that developed during the early-medieval period.[60] It is therefore only in a handful of Somerset towns, such as Glastonbury and Ilchester, that the results of archaeological excavation can assist to any extent in identifying early medieval features. In some towns excavations have not revealed any definitive information. Taunton, for example, was a substantial and important early-medieval borough with a large market, but extensive excavations have failed to identify the boundaries of the early settlement, or evidence of its market.[61]

Early churches and minsters

It is widely accepted that minsters played a key role in town development by providing a nucleus for urbanisation,[62] but currently there is no consensus on which Somerset churches were in existence before 750 and which should be described as minsters, other than Glastonbury, Muchelney and Wells.[63] Therefore, in order to facilitate discussion of significant settlements in Somerset a pragmatic approach was adopted by producing a synthesis of opinion on the identification of early churches and minsters. It is dependent on my interpretation of how other scholars have described early ecclesiastical sites, and their descriptions are dependent on how they have interpreted the limited evidence that is available, hence their differences of opinion.[64]

Topography and morphology

In order to explore the usefulness of topography and morphology as a source of evidence 26 key settlements were assessed. These field observations appeared to show a correlation between the topographical setting of a settlement and its likely origins. The evidence provided by topography is apparently unambiguous and able to provide insights into when a settlement was established, but of itself tells us very little about the development of particular places. It was therefore not used to determine the significance of settlements.[65]

Analysing the morphology of settlements can provide crucial insights into how they developed,[66] as relationships between streets and blocks of land do not exist in isolation but are interconnected because each element affects subsequent elements, not just when a street is created or a building erected, but also in the future. In this way the development of a town has a continuing dynamic which affects its future layout.[67] Unfortunately for most of the significant settlements in Somerset it is impossible to propose more than a rudimentary plan analysis, and for some even this is impossible.

In order to explore the morphology of significant settlements an attempt was made to identify the early medieval road network within them.[68] Each settlement was identified as currently being represented by one of the following criteria: probable early medieval roads can be identified around or past the settlement; limited evidence of early medieval street layout; clear evidence of early medieval street layout. Each of the above criteria was then subdivided by identifying how the early medieval settlement was represented in about 1811:[69] by a farm or hamlet; by a village if the settlement was not in the top 32 towns in 1327 and 1811,[70] or by a town if it was.[71] This morphological analysis is shown in Figure 2.

It is notable that the settlements which apparently did not have appreciable urban characteristics in 1086 and did not develop into towns by 1327, or 1811, were royal centres with an associated early church or monastery, and two burhs. Of these only one royal centre, Milverton, had any urban characteristics in 1086, albeit limited. Although it shows clear evidence of its early medieval street layout it was not a town in 1086 (Table 2). Three other settlements show evidence of an early street layout, Ilminster, Yeovil and Wells, but in 1086 cannot be described as towns. North Petherton and Somerton are the only settlements which were towns in 1327 and 1811, in which only early medieval roads around, or past them can be identified, but in 1086 they apparently had no urban characteristics (Table 2).[72]

Population

A town can be defined as having a 'dense and permanent concentration of residents',[73] and levels of population are a useful means of ranking settlements as it facilitates comparisons between them.[74] Detailed information about population is included in the Domesday survey, although it does

- **Clear evidence of early medieval street layout, represented by:**

  town in 1327/1811: **Bath** (RT), **Crewkerne** (EC), **Frome** (EC), **Ilminster** (EC), **Milverton** (RC), **Taunton** (EC), **Wells** (MI/MO), **Yeovil** (RC)

- **Limited evidence of early medieval street layout, represented by:**

  farm or hamlet: **Lyng** (DS)
  village: **Cannington** (EC), **Cheddar** (MI/MO)

  town in 1327/1811: **Axbridge** (DS), **Bruton** (EC), **Ilchester** (RT) – modern town is elsewhere, **Langport** (DS), **Milborne Port** (EC), **South Petherton** (EC), **Watchet** (RC/ DS)

  town in 1811: **Glastonbury** (MI/MO)

- **Roads can be identified around or past settlement, represented by:**

  farm or hamlet: **South Cadbury** (RC/DS), **St. Decumans, Watchet** (EC), **Williton** (RC) – modern town elsewhere,

  village: **Carhampton** (EC), **Martock** (RC/MI) **Wedmore** (RC)

  town in 1327/1811: **North Petherton** (EC), **Somerton** (RC/?MI)

  KEY: Likely origins of settlements:

DS -	Defensive Settlement (burh)	MI -	Minster Settlement	MO -	Monastic Settlement
EC -	Church prior to A.D. 750	RC -	Royal Settlement	RT -	Roman town

Fig. 2 Morphological analysis

not tell us where people lived, only the overall population within specific areas, so any use of this information can only be tentative.[75] Ranking settlements only by population is not an adequate criterion of urbanisation as can be seen in Table 2; the majority of settlements are ranked between nos 5 and 7.

DISCUSSION

In exploring the eight strands of evidence it has been possible to begin the process of identifying the criteria by which the early medieval towns of Somerset could be identified, for example that evidence of early medieval roads is a strong indicator of early medieval towns. It is also clear that despite a detailed examination of the available evidence, none of the sources on their own can be utilised in a meaningful way across all the settlements under consideration, particularly as the data is frequently incomplete. In looking at the 6th to 8th centuries it is easy to see how, if more archaeological evidence was available, it might change the significance of some settlements.[76] Six criteria have been used to look at this period;[77] this is identical for both sides of the county. Nine criteria were used to look at settlements in the 9th century.[78] No battles are recorded on the eastern side of the county, but a large number of royal events were, whereas on the western side no royal events are recorded. The Domesday survey indicates that several places received customary dues, but none were received east of the Parrett. Eight criteria were

TABLE 2: IDENTIFYING THE EARLY MEDIEVAL TOWNS OF SOMERSET

	Possible population[1] No rural population[2] + 2 pts	Points	Ranking based on possible population	Evidence E.M. streets + town in 1327 = 5 pts	Minster / Church = 5 pts	Site of Mint = 5 pts	No. of Burgesses[3]	Points including points for population	Overall ranking to identify early medieval towns
BATH	740	5+2=7	1	✓	✓	✓	(178-192)	30	1
ILCHESTER	430	3+2=5	2	✓ ltd	✓	✓	(108)	26	2
TAUNTON	645	4	3	✓	✓	✓	(64)	24	3
MILBORNE PORT	345	2	5	✓ ltd	✓	✓	(67)	22	4
BRUTON	185	1.5	6	✓ ltd	✓	✓	(17)	17.5	5
CREWKERNE	280	2	5	✓	✓	✓		17	5
FROME	165	1.5	6	✓	✓	✓		16.5	5
LANGPORT	160	1.5+2=3.5	4	✓ ltd	? church	✓	(39)	16.5	5
WATCHET	165	1.5	6	✓ ltd	✓ St Decumans[4]	✓		16.5	5
AXBRIDGE	125	1+2=3	4	✓ ltd	?	✓	(32)	16	5
S. PETHERTON	145	1	6	✓ ltd	✓	✓		16	5
Wells	100	1	6	✓	✓			11	6
Yeovil	140	1	6	✓	✓ church			11	6
Ilminster	85	0.5	7	✓	✓			10.5	6
Milverton	40	0	8	✓	✓ church		(1)	10	6
Keynsham	260	2	5		✓			7	7
Glastonbury	160	1.5	6	[5]	✓			6.5	7
North Curry	150	1.5	6		✓			6.5	7
Cheddar	110	1	6		✓			6	7
Chewton Mendip	140	1	6		✓			6	7
Congresbury	140	1	6		✓			6	7
Somerton	110	1	6		✓ chapel			6	7
Bedminster	85	0.5	7		✓			5.5	7
N. Petherton	75	0.5	7		✓			5.5	7
Shepton Mallet	75	0.5	7		✓ church			5.5	7

[1] Scoring for population: 700 + = 5 pts; 600 + = 4 pts; 400 + = 3 pts; 200 + = 2 pts; 150 + = 1.5 pts; 100 + = 1 pt ; 50 + = 0.5pts. Possible population = population x 4 and rounded down, see Finn & Wheatley 1969, p. 161; included are bordars, cottars, freedmen, smiths, and garbatores (rent-payers); freedmen have also been included as Finn and Wheatley describe freedmen as inferior to bordars and cottars, see Finn & Wheatley 1969, p. 164.

[2] Finn & Wheatley 1969, p. 197; additional weighting to counterbalance likely inclusion of rural population in calculations for other settlements.

[3] Score for burgesses: 150 + = 8 pts; 100 + = 6 pts; 60 + = 5 pts; 30 + = 3 pts; 15 + = 1 pts.

[4] Present position of St Decumans part way between Williton and Watchet; both settlements in parish of St Decumans.

[5] Not a town in 1327.

used for the 10th to 11th centuries and again the only royal events recorded are east of the Parrett.[79] The tables on which this discussion is based only provide a glimpse of how the settlements might have developed, and due to the limited nature of the evidence the view they provide might be inaccurate, but it is possible to see changes over time in the relationship between certain settlements, and in the significance or not of a particular settlement at different points in time.

Identifying significant settlements

Sixth to 8th centuries

During the 6th to 8th centuries we know relatively little about how Somerset was administered, but one of the outcomes of the West Saxons taking control of eastern Somerset was the establishment of monasteries, around which in some cases towns developed, for example Glastonbury.[80] In looking at the significance of settlements in the 6th and earlier centuries it is important to consider place-name evidence as it is thought that places having river names were the primary settlements, followed by those with topographical names plus *tun*.[81] Looking at the differences in place-names between the two sides of the county it is noticeable that nearly 50% of those west of the Parrett are derived from British river names, while this is true of only about 25% east of the Parrett. To the west all the settlements named from rivers are thought to have had minsters, and apparently, with the exception of Curry Rivel, they all had early churches.[82] This is very different from the pattern on the eastern side of the county.[83] It is quite noticeable how the nine most significant settlements west of the Parrett, with the exception of Milverton, contained an early church and then a minster. Only Crewkerne has a name derived only from a topographical feature, with all the rest having either a name derived from a river, or from a topographical feature plus *tun*. East of the Parrett the pattern is more uneven, with several settlements ranked ninth or above which did not develop any urban characteristics before 1327,[84] namely Doulting, Congresbury, Banwell, Brent, and Chewton Mendip. All of these except Doulting had an early church. Bath and Ilchester are both ranked at no. 1 (Table 2). It is of note that both South Cadbury and Yeovil are ranked fourth due to the archaeological evidence indicating continuity of settlement. It is very clear that east of the Parrett there were more settlements with early churches that were significant at this time that did not develop into towns by 1086, for example Brent and Shapwick. This may be related to changes following the political takeover of eastern Somerset by either Wessex or Mercia.

A major component of the criteria used to distinguish sites in the 6th to 8th centuries is archaeological evidence of settlement from the Iron Age through to the post-Roman period. A number of settlements across the county show a high level of continuity, which is quite remarkable given the paucity of archaeological investigation in most of these settlements. More sites show continuity east of the Parrett, but this may reflect a higher level of archaeological investigation.

In summary, it would appear that differences can be seen between settlements either side of the river Parrett during the 6th to 8th centuries. It is of note that on the eastern side of the county some settlements with early churches show a strong pattern of continuity, for example Congresbury and Shepton Mallett neither of which were towns in 1086.[85]

Ninth century

Identifying what criteria can be used to distinguish significant settlements in the 9th century is relatively straightforward as it is possible to use documentary evidence, but most of this is drawn from relatively late sources such as the Domesday survey.[86] Consequently the ranking as shown in Table 1 cannot be considered as definitive, but it does enable the significance of settlements to be ranked. It is of note that it is only in the 9th century that Somerton has a high ranking at no. 2, while it is only in the same century that Ilchester has a comparatively low ranking at no. 4 (Table 1). By the early 9th century Somerset was fully controlled by Wessex, so presumably any differences that can be seen in the administrative arrangements either side of the Parrett must predate this. The criterion that appears to be most closely linked to the degree of significance is whether the estate was owned during the 10th and 11th centuries by either the king or queen, and whether the estate was taxed or not. The exceptions to this are Bath and Wedmore, which both paid tax. There is also a strong correlation between those settlements that had large rural estates attached to them and their level of significance, although defensive settlements such as Axbridge are an exception. In 1066/86 Axbridge was on the edge of the estate attached to Cheddar. Although certain criteria, such as whether it is a large estate owned by the king or queen, seem to convey significance on particular settlements, it is difficult to know the degree to which these criteria are important. What is obvious from Table 1 is that the settlements which were towns by 1086 are all ranked between nos 2 and 4, except for the three burhs, Axbridge, Langport, and Watchet which are all ranked at no. 5.

Tenth to 11th centuries

During the late 9th and early 10th centuries the king established defensive settlements or burhs in Somerset at Axbridge, Bath, Langport, Watchet, Lyng and South Cadbury. Table 1 shows the first four were all significant – Lyng and South Cadbury being the exceptions as neither had any urban characteristics by 1086. Bath, Ilchester and Taunton continue to be ranked between nos 1 and 3.

Where a market is mentioned in the Domesday survey, despite there frequently being no reference to traders or craftsmen, it seems unlikely that the manor to which it belonged was only an agricultural estate.[87] Frequently there is no mention of markets in settlements where it is hard to imagine that no market existed, for example in Bath. Following research into places with hundredal markets where there was no recorded existence of a market before the 12th century, the conclusion was reached that markets were frequently held by 'ancient prescriptive right',[88] but no regular system of marketing under the auspices of the state could be identified.[89] Therefore hundredal markets cannot be taken as the norm,[90] but the assumption is that if a market were appropriate to the needs of the local population it would be administered within the hundredal manor.[91] It is therefore important to ensure that equal weighting is given to settlements named as 'boroughs' and hundredal centres when considering a list of criteria that can be used to define towns, and that the possibility of hundredal settlements containing a market is recognized. Bath retained its pre-eminent position across the centuries, while Ilchester apparently became less significant in the 9th century, but had regained its pre-eminence by the 10th. All the other settlements, which were towns by 1086 are ranked between nos 2 and 5, with the exception of South Petherton which is ranked no. 7 (it was previously ranked no. 3). There is a close correlation between settlements that were boroughs (or there are indications that they were boroughs) and settlements that gave their name to a hundred, or were the centre of a hundred, and in addition had a church or minster. Most of these had also contained a mint at some time. There are, however, discrepancies that need to be considered, perhaps the most notable one being the relationship between the minster of St Decumans, Watchet and Williton. That the parish takes its name from the minster, rather than the royal centre of Williton, or from the defended settlement of Watchet, means it is perhaps a remnant of a large early estate.

It is now possible to compare the changes in significance over time (Table 1), and by doing so some interesting dynamics are revealed, for example the relationship between Ilchester, Langport and their neighbour Somerton, and between Carhampton, Watchet, and Williton, which are again all neighbouring settlements. These changing relationships can be clearly seen in Table 1 and show that as some settlements, namely Ilchester, Langport and Watchet became more significant in the 10th and 11th century, the neighbouring settlement – Somerton, Williton and Carhampton – became less important. It is of note that the rankings for many settlements that were towns in 1086 remain little changed from the 6th to the 11th centuries, for example Axbridge, Bath, Bruton, Crewkerne, Ilchester, Milborne Port and Taunton.

The importance of settlements including a minster is quite clear, but some settlements east of the Parrett that included a minster were not important, and there is an obvious pattern of early church and/ or minster settlements in eastern Somerset losing significance by the 11th century. This is also true of some settlements on the western side of the county, but it is not so pronounced. It is quite clear that regardless of how significant settlements were in the 6th to 9th century, having an early church and/ or a minster is not an indicator of later development into a town, even when they gained in significance during the 9th century, for example Bedminster, Chewton Mendip and North Curry. There are a large number of settlements with an early church and/ or minster that failed to develop into towns on the eastern side of Somerset, and it is unclear why.[92] Is it possible that this was connected to a large number of minsters being founded after Wessex took control of eastern Somerset in 658, or after Mercia took control in 733? However, it is probably impossible to say whether this was related to the fluctuating political control of eastern Somerset.

At the Domesday survey

As a result of considering all the possible criteria that could be used between the 6th and 11th centuries, it is clear that many of these cannot be used to rank settlements in 1086 at the time of the Domesday survey, and only seven of these criteria have been used to rate significance in the 10th to 11th centuries. These criteria indicate that the most significant 10th and 11th-century settlements in Somerset were:[93] Bath ranked first; Frome, Ilchester, and Milborne Port ranked second; Bruton, and

Taunton ranked third; Langport, Milverton, North Petherton, and Watchet ranked fourth; Axbridge, Chewton Mendip, Crewkerne, and Glastonbury ranked fifth, and Somerton ranked sixth. It is notable that Chewton Mendip, Glastonbury, Milverton, and North Petherton are ranked alongside settlements that were towns in 1086, and that South Petherton, which was a town, is only ranked at seventh for this period.

The significance of these settlements in the 10th and 11th centuries is largely based on the following criteria: being a burh; containing a mint; having a minster or church; giving its name to the hundred within which it sits; being a borough, or there being indications of borough status; having burgesses that belong to a rural manor; and hosting a royal event. So which of these criteria can be used to determine whether these settlements were towns? Whether or not a settlement was the site of a battle, or was a burh is not significant in identifying the most important places. Similarly, whether or not a settlement had a market cannot be used due to a lack of information. It is also clear that whether a settlement gave its name to a hundred, or was at the centre of a hundred, is not an indicator of urbanisation given that a number of settlements of which this is true have a low ranking in Table 1, for example Carhampton and Cannington to the west of the Parrett, and Somerton and Wells to the east. Nevertheless, the majority of early medieval towns identified in Table 2 either gave their name to a hundred, or in the case of Milborne Port were at the centre of a hundred which retained its early name.[94] The majority of these towns definitely or probably contained an early church which later, it appears, became a minster, the exceptions again being Axbridge and Langport.[95] It is only apparently to the east of the Parrett that royal events were held and therefore it would be misleading to use this as a criterion for urbanisation. Therefore the only criteria which can be used to indicate possible urban status in the 11th century are: having a minster or church; being the site of a mint; and being a borough or there being indications of borough status.

Having established that these three criteria are key to identifying early medieval towns, it is possible to consider two further criteria; the evidence provided by the morphological analysis of the settlements (Fig. 2), and the possible population of these settlements in 1086 (Table 2). A key difference between towns and rural settlements is that they contain areas of dense population and, as discussed previously, population is one of the most useful criteria that can be used to rank settlements because it enables comparisons to be made. The Domesday survey provides detailed information about population, although, as noted above, it does not tell us where people lived, only the overall population, so any use of this information can only be tentative.[96] Table 2 includes a possible ranking of settlements based on population, and except for the three most important towns, Bath, Ilchester and Taunton, there appears to be relatively little difference in the levels of population within settlements, for example Keynsham has a sizeable population and subsequently a high rank,[97] but scores badly against the other criteria. It would therefore appear that ranking settlements only by population is not an adequate criterion of urbanisation.[98]

Taking into account the earlier conclusion, that if a settlement today does not contain at least limited evidence of an early medieval layout, it is unlikely that it had any urban characteristics in either 1086, 1327 or 1811, and combining it with other criteria, including the number of possible urban dwellers,[99] it is feasible to make an assessment of town status in 1086 as shown in Table 2. The cut-off point on the table, above which the settlements can be described as towns, has been chosen because Langport, which is ranked at no. 5, is described as a town in the Domesday survey, whereas Yeovil, which is ranked at no. 6, is described as a *villa*, or village,[100] and critically the difference in population between those settlements ranked at no. 5 and those ranked at no. 6 is quite striking. Therefore eleven early medieval towns can be identified in Somerset,[101] the same number as potentially identified by Finn and Wheatley using the evidence contained within the Domesday survey, although they included Milverton and Yeovil, instead of Crewkerne and South Petherton.[102] Ten of these towns, the exception being Axbridge, are places at which at least two or three periods of settlement have been identified.[103] This demonstrates a high degree of continuity from significant Iron Age site to early medieval town and that possibly the settlement was already locally significant before the church was founded.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this article was to identify which settlements in the pre-1974 county of Somerset had significance during the early medieval period, 400 to 1066, and to propose a set of criteria by which some of them could be identified as towns. It is now

quite clear that it is impossible to list the significant early medieval settlements in Somerset as if they all had the same degree of significance throughout this period. It is therefore also impossible to have a 'bundle of criteria' that can be applied across the 660 years of the early medieval period. Having reached this conclusion it is easy to see why the lists of criteria developed by a number of scholars do not work with regard to identifying the early medieval towns of Somerset. It is therefore proposed that the early medieval towns of Somerset were in order of importance: Bath, Ilchester, Taunton, Milborne Port; then Axbridge, Bruton, Crewkerne, Frome, Langport, South Petherton and Watchet. The relevant criteria for identifying them were that: there is evidence of early medieval streets; it was a town in 1327; it had a minster or church; it was the site of a mint; it had a number of burgesses, and it had a comparatively large population. Whether these criteria are capable of defining early medieval towns in other counties requires further research.

It appears that periods of stability within the overall ranking of significant settlements were relatively rare between the 6th and 11th centuries, although there was considerably more stability in the significance of settlements that were towns by 1086. By looking at the significance of settlements, particularly those with early churches or minsters, either side of the Parrett it appears possible that the political division of Somerset did impact on their development, although the reasons for this require further research. By using the evidence that is directly relevant to the period under discussion to rank settlements it has been demonstrated that there is a high level of continuity in the significance of some settlements, and that the most important of these were towns by 1086, and critically were still towns in 1327 and 1811.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ENDNOTES

[1] Costen 1992, 139; Yorke 1995, 315 says, 'striking contrast between Somerset with its numerous small towns and Hampshire and Berkshire where one town dominated', but contrast not as marked when 'the second rank of lesser burhs and Domesday markets' is taken into account.

[2] Finn and Wheatley 1969, 196–205.

[3] Slater 2000, 594.

[4] Key to this debate are: Aston 1984, 167–201; Aston 1986, 49–77; Aston and Leech 1977; Costen 1992, 134–143.

[5] For an overall summary see Blair 2000, 245–58.

[6] This article is based on Lomas 2009. The tables in this article differ as some of the data has been revised.

[7] A good summary of the difficulties is to be found in Webster 2008b, 173–4.

[8] Several scholars have considered the early churches of Somerset, see Hase 1994, 47–81; Aston 1986, 75–6; Hill 1989, 155–7; Costen 1992, 143–57. Hase lists the early churches prior to 620, while Costen lists possible church sites prior to 750. A synthesis of the above sources is given in Lomas 2009.

[9] Rippon 2004, see p. 6 for a discussion on the usefulness of this approach to towns.

[10] Palliser 1976, 1–7.

[11] Gathercole 2003, 4 and 8, says, between the Saxon period and the 19th century it was 'a village of only moderate local significance' until the turnpike and railway arrived.

[12] Holt and Rosser 1990, 4.

[13] Hill 1989, 131–2.

[14] Cunliffe 1993, 323–6; Pearce 2003, 281–9.

[15] Loyn 1961, 122–35.

[16] Yorke 1995, 311–13.

[17] Hill 1989, 131–2; Martin 2003; South Cadbury was a mint from 1009 to 1022, but its *Domesday Book* entry (36,7) appears to be only for an agricultural estate. For all *Domesday Book* references see, Thorn and Thorn 1980.

[18] 'In the later tenth century attempts were made to throw some slight defences around a large number of small commercial centres', such as Crewkerne and Milborne Port, see Aston and Bond 2000, 71.

[19] Note 'Petherton' is almost certainly South Petherton, and not North Petherton.

[20] Different approaches explored in: Astill 1984, 53–69; Haslam 1984b; Hodges 1989b, 15–66;

Yorke 1995*, 309–24; Palliser 2000b, 3–16; Britnell 2000, 105–26; Slater 2000, 586–601; Blair 2005, 246–90; Biddle 1976, 99–100; Reynolds 1977, 60.

[21] No market is listed for Bath (entry 1,31) in the *Domesday Book* despite it being the largest town in Somerset.

[22] Taunton (entry 2,1–4) is the only Somerset town listed in the *Domesday Book* with a full list of financial payments.

[23] Aston 1984, 167–202; Aston 1986, 61.

[24] Costen 1992, 141.

[25] Blair 2005*, 263.

[26] Night's revenue was a tax initially paid in kind but by the 11th century paid in money. It equated to the cost of supporting the king and his retinue for 24 hours.

[27] Royal centre.

[28] King's Council.

[29] An administrative subdivision of the shire county which later contained several parishes.

[30] Traditional regular fixed payment for rent, service or percentage of tax paid; usually paid in kind rather than in money.

[31] The portion of dues, particularly judicial payments, that were paid to the Earl. The other two pence were paid to the king.

[32] The tables on which this discussion is based are to be found in Lomas 2009.

[33] Leach 2001, 123–4; Pearce 2003, 23.

[34] Pearce 2003, 23.

[35] Hodges 1989a, 32–3; Cunliffe 2001, fig. 10.29, 478. During March 2009 checks were made with all relevant County Archaeology Departments.

[36] *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* 577A, 18–19; the veracity of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* entry for the Battle of Dyrham in 577 has been questioned, see Bassett 2000, 111–12.

[37] *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle:* 658A.

[38] Yorke 1997, 155.

[39] *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle:* 733A.

[40] Yorke 1995, 124.

[41] Swanton 1997, xi–xxvi.

[42] For example, see *Domesday Book* entry 26,6 for Yeovil which includes the statement: 'To this manor have been added 22 plots of land which 22 men held jointly before 1066'; is it an indication of burgage plots?

[43] Bates 1986, 2; Martin 2003, 86–7, says, 'the lack of explicit reference to markets is one of the more surprising weaknesses [of the *Domesday Book* and]… point[s] to the … commissioners' brief [not containing]… the question 'Is there a market?' … Those in the towns were rather taken for granted'.

[44] Finn 1973, 68–70.

[45] Hall 2000, 79.

[46] Yorke 1995, 311; believed to be payable for Watchet, see *Domesday Book* entry 1,6, and Finn and Wheatley 1969, 198–9.

[47] Martin 1985, 144–63; Britnell 1978, 105–6 and 187; Reynolds has also argued against using the term 'borough', see Reynolds 1987, 295; Roffe 2007, 125 and 132.

[48] Gelling 1978, 11–17.

[49] Taunton means 'River Tone settlement', see place-name database maintained at Nottingham University, full address in bibliography.

[50] Ekwall 1928, Introduction. For a later interpretation see Coates and Breeze 2000; and also Gelling 1978, 88–90.

[51] Coates and Breeze 2000, 83–4, 90–2, 106–7 and 110–11; Gelling 1993, 10–32.

[52] Hall 2000, 26; see also Baker 2005, 50.

[53] Pearce 2003, 281; the fort of Athelney, on opposite side of the river to Lyng, was built in 878; Wood 2001, 119.

[54] Hodges 1989a*, 155–66; Wood 2001, 119–21.

[55] Hill 1989, 36–42 and 54–72.

[56] Hodges 1989a, 162–4.

[57] *Domesday Book* entries 1,31 and 2,1.

[58] Astill 2000, 36; Costen 1988, 45.

[59] The recent publication of the South West Archaeological Research Framework has highlighted this issue, see Webster 2008a, 169–71, 173–5 and 179–82.

[60] Aston and Leech 1977 and Aston 1984 both set out evidence for early medieval street plans in a number of settlements, as do the Extensive Urban Survey reports. For example, that on Frome states: 'It is likely that parts of the road pattern around Frome are of great antiquity' and that many of the roads within the town were in existence in the 'Saxon' period.

[61] Heritage Environment Record – Public Record Number (HER PRN) 44389 and 44397.

[62] Blair 2005, 287–90, 330–41.

[63] Blair 2005, 3–4 on difficulties of terminology. Minster means any religious community with a church, and although many of these early minsters became post-conquest 'parochial mother-churches', not all of them did.

[64] Several scholars have considered the early churches of Somerset, see Hase 1994, 47–81; Aston 1986, 75–6; Hill 1989, 155–7; Costen 1992, 143–57. All four scholars have viewed

the evidence in different ways and a pragmatic interpretation of their categorisation of the minsters has been necessary. In some cases a very different view has been taken, for example Hill does not list Bruton at all, but it is listed by the other three scholars. For a full account of this approach see Lomas 2009.

65 Lomas 2009.

66 Baker and Slater 1992, 43–54.

67 Conzen 1968, 117–18.

68 These assessments were made after studying all the available maps of the settlements prior to visiting them, this enabled the views expressed by others as to the likely early medieval layout to be placed into a visual context, prior to preparing a morphological map of each settlement. The main secondary sources for the early medieval layout of settlements in Somerset are listed below, but other sources have also been used; Aston and Leech 1997; Aston 1984; Ellison 1983; Aston and Bond 2000; Costen 1992; Hill and Rumble 1996.

69 Identified from 1st series OS maps.

70 For 1327 we have a set of Lay Subsidy returns for the towns of Somerset, and for 1811 we have a population census for the towns; this enables them to be ranked in 1327 and 1811.

71 Note Glastonbury was not in the top 32 towns in 1327, but was in 1811, so will be classed as a town.

72 *Domesday Book* 1,3; Somerton appears to be a rural estate. North Petherton was a relatively small town in 1327, but by 1811 it had the 11th highest population in Somerset – 2615 – but it should be noted that only seven towns had a population much in excess of 3000.

73 Holt and Rosser 1990, 4; Martin 1985, 144.

74 Large cottager communities often mark out proto-towns in the Domesday survey, see Blair 2000, 250. The numbers of cottars is generally not useful in Somerset for highlighting urbanisation of a settlement. *Cottars* are mainly only found in the south-west; in Somerset there are about 20 occurrences, all but one of these is east of the Parrett, see Thorn and Thorn 1980, 300.

75 For example, listed as being on the manor at Bruton are 29 *bordars*, 28 *villeins*, 4 freemen, 5 serfs and a swineherd, 'but we cannot say how many of these 67 people were in Bruton itself', see Finn and Wheatley 1969, 201.

76 Mick Aston (pers. comm.) feels this is highly debateable given the lack of pottery and other material evidence prior to 950.

77 Criteria: archaeological evidence of Iron Age, Romano-British and post-Roman settlement; derivation of name; site of battle; and early church and/or minster. Most of the criteria were allocated one point towards the overall ranking, but some were allocated less or more depending on the comparative significance of the criterion. Where this is so it is included in the detail of the table heading. The points accrued by each settlement are given and have then been used to rank them. This facilitates discussion of individual settlements over time as the number of criteria varies for each period. The same criteria were used for both sides of the county, but the tables as given below do not reflect this because for some criteria there was no evidence to use on one side of the county, which in itself is significant.

78 Criteria: defended/burh; minster or paid night's revenue; two or more churches; in King Alfred's will or called *Villa Regale*; held by King or Queen; centre of estate in 1066/86 with land for 20 or more ploughs; and not assessed for tax in the Domesday survey.

79 Criteria: site of battle or defended/burh; mint; minster or church; royal event or site of *witan*; name to hundred or centre of hundred; borough or indications of borough status and/or cottars present and/or 'third penny' paid; burgesses belonging to rural manors; and market or indications of market or possible hundredal market.

80 Bruton, Frome, Glastonbury, Ilminster (as it belonged to Muchelney Abbey), Wells, and possibly Cheddar. For information on the landholdings of Muchelney Abbey see Aston 2007 and Aston 2009. There are no extant charters for the probable monastery at Cheddar, and no indication of the date of its formation. It is likely to be in the 7th century, if not earlier, see Heritage Environment Record – Public Record Number (HER PRN) 11441.

81 Gelling states that settlements taking their names from rivers with British names had probably always done so, see Gelling 1993, 10; Hall 2000, 26; see also Baker 2005, 50.

82 A good summary of the difficulties in identifying early churches is set out in Calder 2003, 1–28.

83 Most of the early churches are in places which do not take their name from a river, except for Congresbury and Bruton which is the only one with a river name plus *tun*.

84 Were not in the top 32 settlements in 1327.

85 Whether Shepton Mallet had an early church is debateable as Hase (1994) and Aston (1986 and personal comment) disagree. It was ranked fourth on population in the county in 1327, but was not a town in 1086.

86 This is particularly the case with regard to the size of estates in 1066/86, when it is impossible to know, unless there is an extant charter, whether the size of estate given in the Domesday survey equates to the 9th-century estate.

87 Martin 2003, 154.

88 Britnell 1978, 185–6.

89 Britnell 1978.

90 Britnell 1978, 188–9.

91 Britnell 1978, 196; Britnell states: 'At all times from the tenth century onward, a considerable amount of rural trade was conducted informally. Producers would not travel considerable distances to market when there was no need for them to do so.'

92 See Blair 2005, 337–8 for a discussion of this process; he states that: 'more than half the known total [of minsters] failed as settlement nuclei'.

93 The ranking has been interpreted pragmatically given the lack of evidence for some criteria.

94 The exceptions being the four burhs.

95 See Tables 2 and 3.

96 See note 75.

97 Except for Glastonbury and Watchet these were all in the top 16 towns according to population in 1327.

98 See section on population.

99 'All three [*bordars, cottars and cotsets*] are also commonly associated with towns', see Erskine and Williams 2003, 259.

100 *Domesday Book* 1,1; 19, 83–4.

101 Except for Watchet these were all in the top twenty towns according to population in 1327.

102 Finn and Wheatley 1969, 197. One of their criteria was the 'Third Penny', or night's revenue and South Petherton did receive this.

103 Lomas 2009.

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