

Missing Pieces: A Consideration of the Evidence for Women in the Viking Incursions into Eastern England and Subsequent Settlement, with a Case Study of Leicestershire's Wreake Valley

Introduction

What do scholars and researchers do when the evidence they need is missing? There has long been considerable scholarly interest in the events surrounding Scandinavian migration to England in the ninth to eleventh centuries. Written documentation for the period is frustratingly scant, leaving researchers to turn to other kinds of evidence. As Abrams and Parsons articulate the situation, 'Students of the Viking Age have an especially blank canvas on which to sketch out their hypotheses about settlement and society in Anglo-Scandinavian England.'¹ Rather than offering the freedom this might appear to, this 'blank canvas' presents a unique kind of challenge.

With regards to the part women may have had in these events, the evidence is even more scarce than it is for men. What evidence does exist is problematic: conflicting, patchy or otherwise difficult to interpret. As a result, evidence pertaining to women is often dismissed or downplayed by some scholars, as can be noted in some of the examples in Chapters 2 and 3. At other times, researchers briefly comment that women were probably

¹ Lesley Abrams & David N. Parsons, 'Place-Names and the History of Scandinavian Settlement in England', in *Land, Sea and Home: Settlement in the Viking Period*, ed. by John Hines and others, (New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 380.

present in some way, and then return their attention to the generally-masculine world of Viking Age England (see the discussion of Torksey in Chapter 2). As a result, there are still many outstanding questions: when did Scandinavian women come to England? Were they involved in the early settlement phase at all, or is their participation confined to the later stages? Did they come over as part of warbands, perhaps to provide much-needed services to those fighting in the Viking 'Great Army'? Or did they travel over later as part of family units with the intention of setting up a farmstead somewhere in England? Could both of these scenarios be true for different women at different times? How many women came? Perhaps some of the most important questions are, how do we know? And, how useful are the types of evidence researchers traditionally consult when seeking answers to questions of this kind?

Certain disciplines are foregrounded in this debate. Abrams and Parsons have echoed Eric Christiansen's observation that historians 'have for quite some time been badgering specialist practitioners for answers' to their questions regarding Scandinavian settlement, with the understanding that name studies can provide some particular insight.² Another discipline regarded as integral to the debate is archaeology. For these reasons, archaeology and onomastics have been chosen as the primary sources of evidence informing the current research project and will provide at least the beginnings of answers to some of the questions outlined above. Much of this evidence will not fit together neatly. As a pre-emptive measure, I intend to foster an open-ended approach that allows for some gaps in the archaeological record. This approach acknowledges when datasets are small or when evidence conflicts but avoids dismissing evidence altogether when it fails to form a

² Abrams and Parsons, 'Place-Names and the History of Scandinavian Settlement in England', p. 380.

coherent picture. My methodology is based on interdisciplinary approaches and is also concerned with countering some of the biases, both personal and inherent in the evidence, that affect the disciplines under discussion. The nature of thousand-year-old evidence is that it is imperfect and incomplete. It is therefore necessary to develop a strategy for working with sources which are in less-than-ideal condition in order to move forward. This is particularly the case when attempting to piece together evidence for women in the early medieval period, given that its cultural output was characterized by a 'predominantly masculine' discourse, when references may be oblique and hard to find.³

This project sets out to examine both the archaeological and onomastic evidence for female Scandinavian settlers in the ninth to eleventh centuries. The prevailing assumptions surrounding Scandinavian women and their role in the various stages of colonisation will also be considered. The evidence itself will be held up to scrutiny. The discussion will culminate in a case study of the Wreake Valley in Leicestershire, chosen for having one of the most Scandinavianised onomastic profiles in the country – though quite why and how this came about has been the subject of scholarly debate.⁴

Before embarking on the main discussion, it is useful to define some terminology. Readers may believe terms like 'Scandinavian', 'Norse', 'Norwegian', 'Danish' and 'Viking' to be self-evident, but they are mainly modern constructions. It is almost certain that none of the women under discussion in these pages would have thought of themselves as 'Viking'.⁵ Old Norse *vikingr*, it has been suggested, may describe bands of seaborne pirates based originally out of the Oslofjord. It was also used as a verb, to go *viking* (i.e. raiding overseas,

³ Judith Jesch, *Women in the Viking Age* (Woodbridge: Boydell Brewer, 1991), p. 206.

⁴ Abrams and Parsons, 'Place-Names and the History of Scandinavian Settlement in England', p. 391.

⁵ Judith Jesch, *The Viking Diaspora* (New York: Routledge, 2015), p. 182.

for example). On Viking Age runestones, *Vikingr* is attested as a masculine personal name. In the former application, it is likely to have been used in most cases as a pejorative term and in the latter, in an exclusively male context. The nations of Norway and Denmark did not quite yet exist — at least, not in the modern sense. Therefore references to these can only pertain to the geographical regions which would eventually become modern Denmark and modern Norway. As for ‘Scandinavia’, this is another term which has taken on a different usage in modern parlance from the one it had previously. For the purposes of this discussion, the term ‘Scandinavian’ will refer to a person or object either originating from or with strong cultural links with one of the Scandinavian ‘homelands’: the geographical areas associated with modern Norway, Sweden, Denmark, but possibly also parts of the Netherlands and northern Germany. These links are usually discernible through burial traditions associated with human remains, art styles on objects or Old Norse language in place-names, for example. A similar principle holds true for terms relating to gender. Early medieval ideas about ‘masculinity’, ‘femininity’, ‘women’, ‘men’ and the degree to which gender was binary and exclusive may well have differed from our own. This is a subject which is discussed at greater length in Chapter 1, where a methodological approach is laid out in more detail.

Beyond attempting to find answers, it will also be asked, how useful is the evidence we rely on to provide those answers? The aim of this project is to investigate, not only the evidence for Scandinavian women, but approaches to the evidence. Though it will not be possible to find answers to all of the questions listed above, it will certainly be possible to find some clarity amongst the wide range of evidence from various disciplines. Over the course of the following chapters, this evidence will be considered both separately and in combination to attempt to bring the roles of Scandinavian women into sharper focus. I will

begin in Chapter 1 with an explanation of the methodological approach to the material and the reasons for choosing these strategies.

Chapter 1: Methods and Materials – an approach to problematic evidence

The research questions with which this project began related to Scandinavian women:

What role did women play in the Viking incursions into eastern England and the subsequent settlement of those areas?

In attempting to answer this question, I gathered archaeological publications relating to both human remains and artefacts as well as interpretation of the archaeological material.

The focus has been on remains identified as Scandinavian and female. In terms of artefactual evidence to include in this study, I have chosen to limit discussion to where a large body of evidence has been recovered and a considerable amount of research has been published on the subject. In practice: this has meant female dress fasteners. Since onomastic evidence is often central to scholarly conversations around Scandinavian settlement in England, this also forms an important part of the discussion in this dissertation, with an emphasis on place-names in particular. Although these two disciplines receive the most emphasis, with each having its own chapter, the methodological approach I have adopted here is an interdisciplinary one, which seeks to contextualise evidence as far as possible. This leads on to the second of the research questions:

How useful are the kinds of evidence scholars typically consult when attempting to answer such questions?

As will be seen in the chapter on onomastics and in the case study, a toponym (place-name) is capable of encoding a large amount of information. Methods developed by onomasts are what allow us to access this information. In an influential article, Lesley Abrams and David N.

Parsons quote Dawn Hadley: ‘...who has lately characterized past efforts to wring historical information from place-names as “tired” and “unsophisticated”.’⁶ Regarding the second of these comments, I would agree that place-name distribution maps may well be ‘too unsophisticated when used in isolation’, though I would suggest that all evidence requires context and I cannot recall an instance where even place-name scholars use evidence of distribution maps without any context.⁷ When Hadley describes place-name evidence as ‘tired’, she seems to be suggesting that the debates around the scale and location of Scandinavian settlement in England be put to bed, to extend her own metaphor.⁸ Scholars and researchers working within the onomastic disciplines, though able to reach a broad consensus, allow for multiple possibilities. Abrams’ and Parsons’ chapter continues to be essential reading for established scholars and students new to the topic. All this is to say that despite place-name evidence being subject to continual re-interpretation and despite many place-name scholars offering differing interpretations, place-name studies still offers a great deal of value to the debate on Scandinavian settlement in England, and many of its models and theories stand the test of time.

Nevertheless, evidence of all kinds is subject to limitations. As one example, women are infrequently mentioned in place-names. As for archaeology, burial evidence for women is scant. However, it is scant for men too. Despite the work of metal detectorists and finds liaison officers resulting in an exponential increase in recorded Scandinavian and Anglo-Scandinavian dress fastenings over the last thirty years, the data this work has generated is challenging to interpret. The picture presented by oval brooches presents a particular

⁶ Abrams and Parsons, ‘Place-Names and the History of Scandinavian Settlement in England’, pp. 378-80.

⁷ Dawn M. Hadley, *The Northern Danelaw: Its Social Structure, c.800-1100* (London: Bloomsbury, 2000), p. 21.

⁸ Hadley, *The Northern Danelaw*, pp. 329-30.

conundrum. Each of these issues will be discussed in their own respective chapters. It became clear early in the project that a methodology which would address problematic, scant and even absent evidence, without dismissing it, would be necessary. The overriding principles of this methodology are, more or less, the basic tenets of scholarly procedure, but particularly when conducting an interdisciplinary investigation, it is useful to be clear about the approach taken. They can be summarised as follows:

- Provide as much context as possible by drawing information together from across disciplines.
- Absence of evidence does not equal evidence of absence; consider the possibility that a negative result is a significant finding in itself.
- Consult different forms of evidence; some are more equivocal than others.
- Unless there are complicating factors, assume that the most straightforward explanation is the correct one. However...
- Avoid dismissing evidence that does not fit with the interpretation. Acknowledge it as a reservation.

The final two bullet-points are designed to combat any personal biases which might influence an interpretation. Since gender bias has played a noticeable part in the interpretation of evidence pertaining to women over the years, it was necessary to ensure some kind of countermeasure existed within the methodology.

Background and Methodological Connections

Marianne Moen has been one of the most recent scholars to write on the way modern concepts of gender are often projected backwards onto the Viking Age.⁹ By way of example, Moen explains how differently archaeologists treat boat burials based on perceptions of gender:

Firstly, they tend to be discussed in terms of being symbols of power when they are found to contain men, but in cases where they contain women, they are more often talked of as having a religious or ritual role. The significant point here is that nothing in the archaeological material would warrant such a discrepancy in interpretations (Aanestad & Glørstad 2017, 161), and so this must instead be attributable to those who formulate the theories.¹⁰

As I will demonstrate in the chapters below, the reflex whereby scholars and researchers seem to want to apply a different interpretive paradigm to male and female remains is not uncommon, as evidenced by a number of examples in Chapter 2. Sørensen warns against ‘views that represent the interwoven, and possibly inseparable, relationship between sex and gender in terms that assign it a strategic or essentialist quality.’¹¹ Individuals were buried with objects which represented their character, beloved possessions and things they used frequently, not specifically as markers of sex. Often, archaeologists can use these grave goods to make inferences about the individual with which they are buried. However,

⁹ Marianne Moen, ‘Ideas of Continuity: Gender and the illusion of the Viking Age as familiar’, in *Viking Encounters: Proceedings of the Eighteenth Viking Congress*, ed. by Anne Pedersen & Søren Sindbæk (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2020), pp .621-34.

¹⁰ Moen, ‘Ideas of Continuity’, p. 624.

¹¹ Marie Louise Stig Sørensen, ‘Gender, Material Culture, and Identity in the Viking Diaspora’, *Viking and Medieval Scandinavia*, 5 (2009), 253-269, (p. 255).

patterns which seem to emerge regarding the gender or sex of the individual need to be treated as indicators and placed within context provided by other evidence, not as providing certainty of sex in and of themselves.

Unfortunately, the idea that Scandinavian women in the early medieval period conformed largely to either Victorian or thirteenth-century Christian ideals (or both) has persisted. That the Viking Age was a time when power was largely concentrated in the hands of men is surely true, however, simply because a society was patriarchally dominated does not mean those inequalities will manifest themselves in the same ways in any two male-dominated cultures or historical moments. In the same way, the early medieval concept of gender is not likely to reflect modern binary ideas regarding gender. Moen advocates approaching gender in the Viking Age as something more 'fluid and contextual'.¹² It is built into this project's methodology to contextualize evidence wherever possible. Not only will this help create a more nuanced picture of early medieval gender roles but it will also create a sturdier base for other interpretations.

Bias can take many forms. The natural changes to the skull occurring in post-menopausal women that result in a greater number of skeletal remains being osteologically sexed 'male' or 'probably male' are not the product of personal bias.¹³ It is difficult for osteologists to know whether a skull is male or whether it is a female skull which has undergone changes associated with the menopause. The osteologist's determination must then rest upon other factors. They can look at pelvic and femoral bones, for example, which typically differ in males and females, but ultimately this is a matter of personal judgement

¹² Moen, 'Ideas of Continuity', p. 621.

¹³ Shane McLeod, 'Warriors and women: the sex ratio of Norse migrants to eastern England up to 900 AD', *Early Medieval Europe*, 19:3 (2011), 332-353 (p. 349).

on the part of the osteologist. Their final decision may also be influenced by personal bias as well, such as knowledge of where the bones came from or what kinds of grave goods are associated with them. To those who do not realise that judgement is involved in osteoanalysis, the osteological determination of gender can take on the solidity of scientific fact; something to be taken unquestioningly. In reality, osteological results can and should be questioned in many cases. To be clear, osteology is an invaluable addition to archaeology. It is more secure to infer the sex of a skeleton based on biological factors than to its proximity to a spindle whorl or sword (this will be discussed in more detail later). There are also biases affecting which evidence survives in the soil. The textile work associated with women is unlikely to survive in most soils, whereas metalwork and even wooden materials fare much better. This is almost entirely beyond the researcher's control. The point here is that bias—and not all bias is personal—can appear even in unexpected places and must be taken into account. Marianne Moen has called for a change in the way scholars 'talk' about gender in academic discourse relating to the Viking Age.¹⁴ I concur. There are instances in the ensuing discussion where it is clear that a more deliberate discourse around women in the evidence would pave the way to more accurate theories and interpretations.

Limitations

One of the strengths of this project is that it draws together a number of disciplines simultaneously. However, there are certain limitations to the scope of this discussion and these must be acknowledged. Given more time I would have brought in additional evidence from other disciplines, for example Anglo-Scandinavian stone sculpture. There are a number

¹⁴ Moen, 'Ideas of Continuity', p. 621.

of examples which would have been particularly pertinent to the Wreake Valley case study, including the ring-headed cross in St. Bartholomew's churchyard in Sproxton and the three fragments of Anglo-Scandinavian sculpture at All Saint's church in Asfordby.¹⁵

I will begin the main part of the discussion with the archaeological evidence. Though the archaeological record in England for the Viking Age is meagre, the evidence it provides is valuable. And though men undoubtedly outnumber women, women's presence and therefore influence, cannot be denied. The methodology outlined here will facilitate a thorough consideration of the evidence and what it can and cannot tell us about women who came to England from Scandinavia in the ninth to eleventh centuries.

¹⁵ Roderick Dale, *Viking Age Leicestershire* (Nottingham: Five Leaves Publications, 2020), pp. 71-2.

Chapter 2: Archaeology – Human Remains and Dress Fastenings

Evidence from the Viking ‘Great Army’s’ Winter Camp at Torksey

When many people think of the Viking incursions, they commonly imagine the earliest Lindisfarne-style raids: seaborne bands of Scandinavians carrying out hit-and-run robberies along England’s coast. However, the later raiding armies of the second half of the ninth century evinced a markedly different strategy. According to the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, a force known as the *micel here*, (or ‘Great Army’) snaked across England between the years 855 and 874.¹⁶ This army was different from the Viking raiders whose aggression the locals had experienced before. Not only were they greater in number than the smaller bands who had conducted coastal raids and skirmishes just a few decades previously, they also chose not to return home for the winter.¹⁷ Instead, they made camp in England. A number of these winter camps have been excavated. Torksey, in Lincolnshire has been partially archaeologically investigated. Though a test trench was dug, the finds came mainly from systematic metal detecting conducted on site under archaeological supervision. Field-walking and geoarchaeological and geophysical surveys were also carried out¹⁸. Of the 1,772 pieces of metalwork recovered at Torksey, 353 were weights (used for trade), there was also a balance to be used with weights. There were 352 coins, 26 ingots, 60 pieces of hack silver and even 12 pieces of the considerably rarer hack gold.¹⁹ All of this points to a diverse and

¹⁶ Michael Swanton, ed. and trans., *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles* (London: Orion, 1996), pp. 66-70.

¹⁷ Swanton, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*. In 833, 35 shiploads are reported to have fought against King Egbert at Carhampton; in 837, Ealdorman Wulfheard faced 33 shiploads at Southampton; in 840, 35 ships of ‘heathens’ are again said to have arrived at Carhampton. pp. 62-4.

¹⁸ Dawn M. Hadley and Julian D. Richards and others, ‘The Winter Camp of the Viking Great Army, AD 872-3, Torksey, Lincolnshire’, *The Antiquaries Journal*, 96 (2016), 23-67 (p. 30).

¹⁹ Hadley and Richards and others, ‘The Winter Camp of the Viking Great Army’, p. 39.

flourishing trading environment.²⁰ Perhaps it is surprising that the bulk of the finds at Torksey are reflective of trade and economic activity rather than military pursuits. The fact that the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle refers to this force as the *micel here*, may be explained by the fact that the Chronicle was written by those likely to be on the receiving end of, or at least witnesses to, much of its aggression. The term 'army', however, is something of a misnomer. Ben Raffield has posited that it is better to think of it more as a 'mobile society', self-contained and comprised of multiple warbands of varying sizes, all of which came together as a single unit.^{21,22} Based on the evidence recovered from Torksey, this travelling community was able to repair its own ships. Recovery of textile equipment points to the manufacture and repair of clothing and sails. There was also evidence of metalwork on site. As mentioned above, the most impressive category of artefact recovered from Torksey concerns trade.²³

It has been known for some time that Scandinavian women were active participants in trade.²⁴ In their original publication on the excavation at Torksey, Hadley and Richards are careful to refer to gender-neutral, 'individuals involved in trade', yet their discussion makes no direct mention of any possible female presence and the picture they paint is of an army which trades: an image which is male by default.²⁵ The only mention in the entire report of the possibility of female presence at Torksey is in connection with 'textile-working equipment'.²⁶ It is well-known that spindle whorls, needles, wool combs and other textile

²⁰ Hadley and Richards and others, 'The Winter Camp of the Viking Great Army', p. 49.

²¹ Ben Raffield, 'Bands of Brothers: a reappraisal of the Viking Great Army and its implications for the Scandinavian colonization of England', *Early Medieval Europe*, 24:3 (2016), 308-337 (p. 308).

²² Raffield, 'Bands of Brothers', p. 324.

²³ Hadley and Richards and others, 'The Winter Camp of the Viking Great Army', p. 49.

²⁴ Judith Jesch, *Women in the Viking Age* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1991), p. 36.

²⁵ Hadley and Richards and others, 'The Winter Camp of the Viking Great Army', p. 45-53.

²⁶ Hadley and Richards and others, 'The Winter Camp of the Viking Great Army', p. 54.

equipment is commonly found in female graves.²⁷ It seems, however, that Scandinavian women's role in trade is only acknowledged on the occasion that weights are recovered directly from female graves, as they commonly are in trading settlements east of the Baltic.²⁸ In the absence of other complicating factors, I suggest that when Scandinavian weights are found, it makes more sense to associate weights with mixed (male and female) trading activity, since it is well established that women were active in trade as well as men.

Torksey has, so far, yielded little in terms of human remains. Hadley and Richards throw their weight behind arguments in favour of the army numbering in the 'thousands rather than hundreds' based on the size of the camp at Torksey and other overwintering sites.²⁹ Nevertheless, physical evidence for the inhabitants themselves is lacking: 'Unfortunately, the human remains [at Torksey] were so fragmentary that a minimum number of only two adults, both probably male, could be confidently identified, aged 18-35 and 18-25 respectively.'³⁰ Were there any women at Torksey? Jane Kershaw has argued that, of all the metalwork found at Torksey, there is a notable absence of female dress fastenings; from a collection of over 1,500 items of metalwork, only three may have belonged to Scandinavian women.³¹

One reading of such distinct patterns must be that few female Scandinavian artefacts were in circulation at the camps. The presence of culturally undiagnostic lead spindle whorls, needles, punches and awls at Torksey may

²⁷ Hadley and Richards and others, 'The Winter Camp of the Viking Great Army', pp. 54-5.

²⁸ Jesch, *Women in the Viking Age*, p. 36.

²⁹ Hadley and Richards and others, 'The Winter Camp of the Viking Great Army', pp. 25-26.

³⁰ Hadley and Richards and others, 'The Winter Camp of the Viking Great Army', p. 57.

³¹ Jane Kershaw, 'Women as bearers of cultural tradition in Viking-Age England', in *Vikings Across Boundaries: Viking Age Transformations – Volume II*, ed. by Hanne Lovise Aannestad and others (London: Routledge, 2021), p. 103.

indicate the presence of women of indeterminate background involved in textile production...but cannot be linked to Scandinavian textile traditions specifically.³²

Kershaw is perfectly correct in her assertion that an absence of female Scandinavian-type brooches at Torksey may be taken to reflect an absence of Scandinavian females. That, at face-value, appears to be the most straightforward interpretation and, therefore, must be one that is taken into consideration— though the presence of women of some kind seems likely due to the culturally non-specific textile equipment. The women who used these artefacts may have joined the group at some point during its travels on the continent or have been taken as slaves. Perhaps there were few, if any, culturally Scandinavian women at Torksey. However, if we apply the same reasoning to other evidence, things seem less clear. Of the 1,500+ finds only four were connected with military activity: two iron spearheads, one iron sword and one arrowhead, yet the military aspect of the 'Great Army' is beyond question — it seems this may be due to an overreliance on the textual evidence which mentions armies but only seldom women.

Isotopic and radiocarbon analysis of bones from the Repton charnel

Another overwintering site of the 'Great Army' which has been excavated is Repton in Derbyshire. Repton is believed to be roughly contemporary with Torksey (Repton is AD 873-4³³ and Torksey is AD 872-3³⁴). It is a site of some complexity, so it is useful to summarise some of its history and some of the discoveries within its environs. Founded as a double house monastery at the close of the seventh century, St. Wystan's church was an important

³² Kershaw, 'Women as bearers of cultural tradition', p. 103.

³³ Swanton, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*, p. 73.

³⁴ Swanton, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*, p. 72.

ecclesiastical location and housed the mausoleum of the Mercian royal family.³⁵ The Viking 'Great Army' drove the Mercian king into exile and set up winter quarters at Repton. They created a D-shaped compound, with the church building as a kind of gatehouse at the front and the River Trent abutting the long, straight edge of the compound at the back.³⁶ Within and around this compound, a number of Scandinavian style burials have been discovered. Numismatic evidence found within the graves dated them to 872-5, but radiocarbon dating of bone collagen from the charnel deposit was difficult to reconcile, showing that those bones may have been traceable to varying dates of deposition.³⁷ The charnel mound was located just outside of the main enclosure and was found to contain the disarticulated bones of more than 267 individuals.³⁸ Of these, only around 48 are likely to be female.³⁹ Only two sets of female remains were subjected to isotope analysis, along with six males and five juveniles (a further four bone samples were also tested but their age/sex could not be determined).⁴⁰

According to Jarman, the original testing in 1995:

...resulted in dates that, in many cases were either inconsistent with the archaeological evidence or yielded imprecise calibrated ranges. Notably, dated bones from the charnel appear to fall into two separate groups...One

³⁵ Catrine L. Jarman and others, 'The Viking Great Army in England: new dates from the Repton Charnel', *Antiquity*, 92:361 (2018), 183-199 (p. 185).

³⁶ Jarman and others, 'The Viking Great Army in England', p. 184.

³⁷ Jarman and others, 'The Viking Great Army in England', p. 184.

³⁸ Jarman and others, 'The Viking Great Army in England', p. 185.

³⁹ Martin Biddle & Birthe Kjølbye-Biddle, *Repton and the 'great heathen army' 873-874* (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2001), p. 74.

⁴⁰ Jarman and others, 'The Viking Great Army in England', p. 190

group of at least four individuals seemed to date from as early as the seventh or eighth century, with the remainder fitting with a ninth-century date.⁴¹

For around twenty years, scholars struggled to make sense of this apparent puzzle. Julian D. Richards proposed that some of the bones were from an older cemetery at St. Wystan's church and had been reinterred in the charnel.⁴² In 2018, however, Jarman et al., published updated research regarding the testing of the bones of the Repton charnel. Jarman re-tested the bones, this time calibrating for MREs, that is 'marine reservoir effects'. In plain English, if an individual eats a diet high in fish and seafood, this will impact on their isotope ratios and radiocarbon dating. Taking MREs into consideration, Jarman et al.'s 'calibrations were able to show that the [charnel] deposit is fully consistent with a single event dating to the late ninth century AD...Importantly, the very narrow date range of AD 872-885 for the juvenile grave helps support a Viking association for the charnel.'⁴³

The fact that the dating of Repton's charnel presented a mystery for so long serves as a reminder that evidence which does not fit the proposed narrative should not be dismissed. If it had not been for the numismatic evidence and dates associated with other grave goods, it is unlikely that Biddle and Kjølbye-Biddle and subsequently Jarman et al. would have thought to question the radiocarbon dates. Though of course, advances in the science and an increased understanding of MREs has made this work possible. Our view of the past is partial; the nature of scholarly research is that evidence is compiled in a meticulous — and therefore necessarily fairly gradual — manner. This means that the

⁴¹ Jarman and others, 'The Viking Great Army in England', p. 186-8.

⁴² Julian D. Richards and others, 'Excavations at the Viking Barrow Cemetery at Heath Wood, Ingleby, Derbyshire', *The Antiquaries Journal*, 84 (2004), 23-116 (p. 102).

⁴³ Jarman and others, 'The Great Viking Army in England', p. 197.

picture that is pieced together grows very incrementally and can, at times, seem patchy.

This is what makes context all-important when it comes to interpreting evidence.

Did Scandinavian women ever have weapons? Heath Wood, Mound 50

Torksey, Repton and Heathwood are all situated in relatively close proximity to one another (between 40 and 60 miles at the most, with Repton and Heathwood only around 3 miles apart as the crow flies). Heath Wood is not an overwintering site. There was no camp here. Rather, this is a place where the dead were interred in a distinctly pagan Scandinavian style.⁴⁴ Repton was so close by that it may even have been visible from Heath Wood.⁴⁵ Though it has been suggested that there are clear links with Repton, this assertion is problematic. Despite the proximity of the two sites, Repton is characterised by inhumations rather than cremations. The burials at Repton seem to combine Christian practice with pagan tradition (the graves were aligned east to west in the Christian fashion but the graves were found to contain Thor's hammer amulets, a wild boar's tusk and in one case a jackdaw bone thought to be of ritualistic significance); by contrast, those at Heath Wood were overtly pagan.⁴⁶ Richards theorises that some of the 'cenotaph' mounds at Heath Wood were erected to honour members of the 'Great Army' given a more Christian-style burial at Repton.⁴⁷ Whilst this is a possibility, and some kind of link with Repton and the 'Great Army' seems likely, Heath Wood may well have served as a pagan cemetery for more than the one or two seasons represented by the nearby site at Repton. It should be remembered that this site too has only been partially excavated. So far, only about a third of the fifty-eight barrows at Heath Wood cremation cemetery have been opened.⁴⁸ Three of the remains are

⁴⁴ Richards and others, 'Excavations at the Viking Barrow Cemetery', p. 65-6.

⁴⁵ Richards and others, 'Excavations at the Viking Barrow Cemetery', p. 52.

⁴⁶ Richards and others, 'Excavations at the Viking Barrow Cemetery', p. 66.

⁴⁷ Richards and others, 'Excavations at the Viking Barrow Cemetery', p. 66.

⁴⁸ Richards and others, 'Excavations at the Viking Barrow Cemetery', p. 23.

thought to be female. Two of these have been proposed to be female based on the fact that what appear to be oval brooches have been found among their grave goods.⁴⁹

Mound 50 contains the remains of an adult, osteologically determined to be 'probably female' and those of a juvenile, sex undetermined.⁵⁰ The grave goods include a small knife, of the kind used for domestic tasks or in crafting; fragments of a sword; a collection of metal nails (these may have been from a chest or casket buried with her or the nails may have been in the wood used for her funeral pyre) and several fragments of iron clamps most likely from a shield.⁵¹ In most cases, cremation destroys oxygen isotopes which makes determining this woman's place of upbringing difficult.⁵² However, she was buried in what has been described as a 'culturally Norse manner,' perhaps even in a cemetery reserved mainly for elite warriors where some 'token ship burials' may have been performed.^{53,54} In his discussion of Mound 50, Ben Raffield opens with the following comments:

Although it must be recognized that the skeletal material and weapons may have been misidentified, or that the weapons reflect the status of the child buried with her, the possibility that the weapons were "tools" belonging to the woman also cannot be arbitrarily dismissed.⁵⁵

⁴⁹ Richards and others, 'Excavations at the Viking Barrow Cemetery', p. 91.

⁵⁰ Richards and others, 'Excavations at the Viking Barrow Cemetery', pp. 57-68.

⁵¹ J. D. Richards and others, 'Excavations at the Viking Barrow Cemetery', pp. 57-68.

⁵² Mark Jobling and Andrew Millard, 'Isotopic and Genetic Evidence for Medieval Migration', in *Migrants in Medieval England c.500 – c.1500*, ed. by W. Mark Ormrod, Joanna Story and Elizabeth M. Tyler (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), p. 20.

⁵³ McLeod, 'Warriors and Women', p. 342.

⁵⁴ Julian D. Richards and others, 'The Viking Barrow Cemetery at Heath Wood, Ingleby, Derbyshire' *Medieval archaeology*, 39:1 (1995), 51-70 (pp. 62-5).

⁵⁵ Raffield, 'Bands of Brothers', p. 316.

It is revealing of the prevailing attitudes towards Viking Age women that when a sword is found among their grave goods, the modern response is that the skeleton must have been sexed incorrectly or that the sword was not used as a weapon at all. In making these comments, Raffield cites Julian D. Richards in Richards' publication based on the excavation of the barrows at Heath Wood.⁵⁶ Richards points out that the osteological determination of the bones in that barrow are 'probably female'. His view is that the presence of a juvenile in the grave further supports this determination since, 'children are more likely to be buried with females' though he does not present any evidence to support this statement. He does later, however, quote Holck who has pointed out that, 'because of their lower body fat ratio, children take much longer to cremate than adults...' thereby needing to share the pyre of an adult in order to be fully cremated.⁵⁷ It is therefore possible that the juvenile and 'probably female' adult in this grave are not related. Whilst it is far from commonplace to find Scandinavian females buried with weapons, there is little remaining doubt that some were.⁵⁸ What this means is that, upon discovering an osteologically 'female' or 'probably female' grave which includes weapons, the first and most straightforward interpretation may simply be that the weapons were hers. Though of course it is wise to remain open to other possibilities, this explanation is perhaps even more probable in the case of Mound 50 given that this particular woman likely has some association with the Viking 'Great Army' and was likely travelling with the group for at least part of her life. Further to this, Ben Raffield points out that women travelling with Viking armies must have felt the need to defend themselves at times. By way of example, he invokes the storming of Benfleet in 893.

⁵⁶ Richards and others, 'Excavations at the Viking Barrow Cemetery', pp. 51-70.

⁵⁷ Per Holck, *Cremated Bones: A Medical Anthropological Study of an Archaeological Material on Cremation Burials* (Oslo: Anthropologiske skrifter nr.1b, 1996), pp. 116-19.

⁵⁸ Moen, 'Ideas of Continuity', p. 625-6.

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle recorded the presence of women and children there. Raffield suggests women were likely to fight back when faced with the prospect of 'enduring sexual assault, enslavement or death at the hands of the victors.'⁵⁹ The weapons these women laid their hands on in this situation need not have been swords; indeed, swords were expensive. In Anglo-Saxon as well as Scandinavian society, all but the highest echelons of the military elite would use spears, axes or whatever else suggested itself as an appropriate weapon when called upon to fight. Jesch is more cautious, 'It is difficult to tell how much men, living in a violent age such as the Viking Age, would refrain from letting that violence affect women.'⁶⁰ What is fairly probable is that women travelling with an ostensibly military force found themselves called upon to fight off attackers on a number of occasions. Whilst evidence for Scandinavian elite female warriors is, in the truest sense of the term, vanishingly rare, I do feel that it is plausible that, as an increasing number of the men fell in raids and skirmishes or any of the ongoing battles the 'Great Army' was engaged in, at least a small number of the men's swords may have been passed to the women in the group, particularly if they were relatives or members of an extended kinship group. Both women and men travelling with the 'Great Army' are likely to have undergone social and cultural changes, both on the journey and as part of the process of settling in a new land. This may have affected gender roles and cultural norms. For this reason, female Scandinavian settlers in Britain may have learned habits of dress, behaviour and even communication quite different from Scandinavian women who never left their home regions. This may make female settlers more difficult to identify in the historical or archaeological record.

⁵⁹ Raffield, 'Bands of Brothers', p. 317.

⁶⁰ Jesch, *Women in the Viking Age*, p. 208.

Putting together evidence from the isolated burial of a woman at Adwick-le-Street

Adwick-le-Street, near Doncaster in South Yorkshire, is remote in comparison to Torksey, Repton and Heathwood. This grave also dates from considerably later and appears to be an isolated burial.⁶¹ On balance, it seems most likely that the remains are female: the bones were osteologically sexed 'probably female'; a pair of characteristically Scandinavian (and characteristically female) oval brooches were found still in position on either side of the chest and the grave goods were typologically female, including a latch-lifter or key, a bowl and knife.⁶² Though one cannot rely on grave goods alone for a secure determination of sex, the fact that all the other evidence points in the same direction is persuasive.

There is less certainty expressed about the woman's place of upbringing and cultural background. In Greg Speed's and Penelope Walton Rogers' 2004 publication, the section on isotope analysis is written by a specialist in that field (Paul Budd, Dept. Archaeology, University of Durham). Budd states here, very plainly that the oxygen isotope ratio in the woman's teeth matches that in Yorkshire, Lincolnshire or an area of northeast Scotland and that the isotope ratio is also 'characteristic of coastal Norway around the Trondheim area.'⁶³ Notably, he does not suggest that one of these is more likely than the other, at least not based on the isotopic evidence. However, in Janet Montgomery et al.'s influential article, she states that, the female grave at Adwick-le-Street and graves X17 (female) and 529 (male), at Repton all share almost identical isotope ratios. She goes on to assert, '...and

⁶¹ Greg Speed and Penelope Walton Rogers and others, 'A Burial of a Viking Woman at Adwick-le-Street, South Yorkshire', *Medieval Archaeology*, 48:1 (2004), 51-90 (p. 51).

⁶² Speed and Walton Rogers and others, 'A Burial of a Viking Woman', pp. 59-60.

⁶³ Speed and Walton Rogers and others, 'A Burial of a Viking Woman', p. 62.

while it is tempting to assign foreign origins, neither their strontium nor oxygen isotopes can place them securely beyond the shores of north-eastern England.⁶⁴ This is reiterated more recently by Jobling and Millard who closely echo Montgomery's sentiment: "neither their strontium nor oxygen isotopes can place them securely beyond the shores of north-eastern England", including the Pennines and Peak District.⁶⁵ Certainly in the case of Adwick-le-Street, in the initial publication, Paul Budd, the author of the isotope analysis, gives equal weight to both local and non-local origins. If the isotope ratio is the same for the two females at Repton, then it is just as well to point out that we cannot place these individuals securely within the shores of north-eastern England either. The phrasing used by Montgomery et al. and subsequently by Jobling and Millard implies that it is more likely that these individuals were of local origin. It also implies that there was some sort of directive to prove they were non-local. Perhaps a more useful way of handling equivocal isotope evidence would be to provide it with context. For example, in the case of Adwick-le-Street, the woman was given a Scandinavian style burial complete with grave goods. Most compellingly, she is wearing characteristically Scandinavian dress fastenings, with fabric still attached at the back. Oval brooches are associated only with Scandinavian women wearing traditional native dress. It is better to think of these items more as fastenings than brooches since they act as closures for the distinctive straps of the Scandinavian overdress⁶⁶. Given that so much evidence points in the direction of a Scandinavian cultural background, I would suggest that it is more likely that she was brought up in Norway than Britain. With this in mind, if the women buried in the Repton charnel have identical isotope ratios to the woman

⁶⁴ Janet Montgomery and others, 'Finding Vikings with Isotope Analysis', *Journal of the North Atlantic*, 7:Sp7 (2014), 54-70 (p. 65).

⁶⁵ Jobling and Millard, 'Isotopic and Genetic Evidence for Medieval Migration', p. 38.

⁶⁶ Jesch, *The Viking Diaspora*, p. 95.

buried at Adwick-le-Street, as Montgomery et al., Jobling and Millard argue, then I would suggest it is at least a possibility that they grew up in Norway too. Examples from Torksey, Repton and Adwick-le-Street show that there is a pattern of downplaying evidence for the presence of Scandinavian women, where similar evidence for men would be acknowledged with the necessary caveats. To be clear: the isotope evidence alone is not conclusive either way. When placed in the context of other evidence from the burials, it seems more likely on balance that these women were culturally Scandinavian and their isotope ratios allow that there is an equal chance they may have been raised in that region too.

McLeod has sifted through the archaeological data and separated human remains by the manner in which their sex was determined.⁶⁷ McLeod presents two tables: Table 1 shows seven burials, all sexed by grave goods, all identified as 'Norse' and dated to roughly pre-900.⁶⁸ Against the remains marked 'male' are swords, spears, knives, in one case a whetstone and in another, a sickle. In the case of the single female shown in this table, she was identified as such by the presence of oval brooches.

All of the osteologically sexed burials are collected in Table 2. Of the fourteen individuals represented here, six are female. The grave goods are given here too. Even a cursory glance at this table makes clear the problematic nature of sexing human remains by grave goods. The osteologically 'probably female' skeleton from Mound 50 at Heath Wood would have been determined to be male by virtue of the sword and shield found in the grave with her. That is not the only problem highlighted by McLeod's strategy. There is also a clear disparity in the sex ratio of the two tables. McLeod flags up this disparity and has a

⁶⁷ Shane McLeod, *The Beginning of Scandinavian Settlement in England: The Viking Great Army and Early Settlers, c.865-900* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014), and 'Warriors and Women' *ibid*¹

⁶⁸ McLeod, 'Warriors and Women', p. 342.

very enthusiastic reading. In his view, ‘...it suggests that the female migration may have been as significant as male...’, he proposes, ‘...somewhere between a third to roughly equal’ that of males.⁶⁹

McLeod’s approach has much potential to stimulate new conversation in the debate regarding the proportion of female Scandinavian settlers, particularly in the early period. However, a dataset of 21, let alone 14 individuals is far too small a sample from which to extrapolate. Unfortunately, the current burial evidence amounts to so little that it cannot be taken to represent the whole.

When it comes to burials, nearly all the identified Scandinavian burials currently known date from the early period (pre-900 or early tenth-century). At some point after arriving in England, Scandinavian settlers converted to Christianity, gradually adopting more minimalist Christian burial practices and ceasing identifiably Scandinavian burial traditions such as including grave goods and other ritual items.⁷⁰ This makes modern archaeologists’ job difficult as, after the point at which Scandinavian migrants begin receiving Christian burials, it is nearly impossible to tell the remains of the newcomers apart from those of local inhabitants. This explains why almost all of the graves which can be confidently identified as Scandinavian date from the early period.

It is not my contention that women played a significant role in the earliest phase of Scandinavian settlement in England. There is insufficient evidence, at present at least, to support such a view. However, it does bear reiterating that the physical evidence we currently *do* have for the physical presence of Scandinavian women in England dates from

⁶⁹ McLeod, ‘Warriors and Women’, p. 332 and 353.

⁷⁰ Jesch, *Women in the Viking Age*, p. 36.

this early period. And though the current evidence remains an inadequate foundation from which to draw conclusions about the demographics of the migrant community as a whole, it cannot be entirely insignificant that almost half of the remains that have been found and securely identified from this period are female. Certainly it does not support the default-to-male approach that can be seen across disciplines. It is also at odds with the general consensus that, if women were part of the Scandinavian migrations at all, then it must have been in the second phase of migration.⁷¹

However, it should be remembered that McLeod had to tease these statistics out of the data and acknowledges that typologically sexed and osteologically sexed remains are always presented together, with no distinction made as to how each was sexed.⁷² Even when this is the case, though, McLeod points out that, 'Even if burials sexed by grave-goods in Table 1 are accepted as accurate and the results of both tables are combined, women make up six or possibly seven of the nineteen or twenty adults recorded, a not insubstantial proportion of approximately one-third of sexed Norse burials.'⁷³ The fields of place-names and female dress fastenings have been instrumental in creating a compelling case for Scandinavian women in northern and eastern England in the tenth and eleventh centuries. The latter is discussed below.

Dress Fastenings and Migration Theory

Perhaps the two most compelling bodies of evidence pointing to women's significant participation in secondary waves of migration are place-names and dress fastenings. Place-

⁷¹ Jesch, *Women in the Viking Age*, pp. 77-8; McLeod, *The Beginning of Scandinavian Settlement in England*, p. 94; Kershaw, 'Women as bearers of cultural tradition', p. 104.

⁷² McLeod, 'Warriors and Women', p. 342.

⁷³ McLeod, 'Warriors and Women', p. 350.

name evidence will be considered in further detail in Chapter 3. Jane Kershaw has pioneered the work on female dress fastenings recovered from the English ploughzone, particularly those recorded in the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) database.⁷⁴ Kershaw has demonstrated the link between Scandinavian style dress fastenings and the expression of a uniquely Scandinavian identity.⁷⁵ Scandinavian dress fastenings retained functional designs and pin fittings which show that they were intended for use with traditional Scandinavian dress. Whilst Anglo-Scandinavian dress fastenings reveal that local Anglo-Saxon women certainly developed a taste for dress-fastenings made and decorated in the Scandinavian style, the differing 'layout of the pin-lug and catchplate on Scandinavian and Anglo-Scandinavian dress fastenings suggests that these items were attached to clothing in different ways from each other.'⁷⁶ It seems that local English women who wished to adopt Scandinavian fashions found it necessary to have the fittings adapted to their own native costume. This means that when archaeologists examine Scandinavian style dress fastenings recovered from this period, they can often be fairly confident that the wearer was culturally Scandinavian.

Kershaw compiled and studied a corpus of more than 500 Scandinavian and Anglo-Scandinavian dress fastenings, mainly recovered by metal detectorists since the launch of the Portable Antiquities Scheme – according to Kershaw, this represented a twenty-five-fold increase over the last thirty years.⁷⁷ Three decades ago, this evidence did not exist in the way it does now. Kershaw's investigations also showed that all the main types of Scandinavian dress fastening, such as lozenge, trefoil and domed disc, are represented

⁷⁴ Jane F. Kershaw, *Viking Identities: Scandinavian Jewellery in England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

⁷⁵ Kershaw, *Viking Identities*, p. 216.

⁷⁶ Kershaw, *Viking Identities*, p. 178.

⁷⁷ Kershaw, *Viking Identities*, p. 6.

among English finds.⁷⁸ Even rare types such as Jellinge Types I B2 and I C and Borre Style II A2 have been recovered in England, 'despite the small tally of such items within Scandinavia.'⁷⁹ In short, Kershaw believes her study offers, 'the first tangible archaeological evidence for a significant female population in Viking Age England.'⁸⁰ Another strength of Kershaw's research is her effort to contextualise her analysis of artefactual evidence with discussions of place-name evidence and art historical evidence.^{81,82} She also turns to migration theory and adapts its tenets to the events of the ninth to eleventh centuries.⁸³

Kershaw is not the first to look to migration theory to provide context for the subject of Scandinavian migrants to England, but her approach is the most tailored to female migrants in particular. Shane McLeod attempted to adapt Ravenstein's original work on eighteenth and nineteenth-century migrations and apply it to the Scandinavian migrations to England during the early medieval period.⁸⁴ McLeod's results were mixed, showing that some tenets were applicable whilst others were not. This seemed to limit the usefulness of migration theory.

However, Kershaw took a different approach. Her adoption of migration theory focused more specifically on researchers working on the roles of women in migration. Kershaw still faces the same challenges and limitations as McLeod, such as the fact that migration theory itself was first based on nineteenth-century British census data and has been developed based on statistics from eighteenth and nineteenth-century migrations.⁸⁵

⁷⁸ Kershaw, *Viking Identities*, p. 216.

⁷⁹ Kershaw, *Viking Identities*, p. 222.

⁸⁰ Kershaw, *Viking Identities*, p. 246.

⁸¹ Kershaw, 'Women as bearers of cultural tradition', p. 105.

⁸² Kershaw, *Viking Identities*, pp. 25-35.

⁸³ Kershaw, 'Women as bearers of cultural tradition', pp. 100-102.

⁸⁴ McLeod, *The Beginning of Scandinavian Settlement in England*, pp. 43-108.

⁸⁵ McLeod, *The Beginning of Scandinavian Settlement in England*, pp. 48.

Nevertheless, Kershaw's adapted tenets of migration theory are specific and easy to test against evidence from the early medieval period. They are reproduced here in abridged form:

1. Women are rarely present in significant numbers in the first ("pioneering") wave of migrants, which tends to be dominated by men...
2. ...[Women] are almost always present once the feasibility of the migration has been demonstrated. Women routinely make up 40-45 per cent of new settler farming communities...Indeed, the productive and reproductive input of women is vital for the economic success of new farmsteads...
3. The majority of women migrants emigrate with male relatives in family groups...Moreover, women are less likely than men to return to their country of origin...
4. Female migrants who share a common culture with men have a decisive role in preserving that culture in new settings (Harzing, 2001: 21)... It is women, more than men, who pass on religious customs, cultural knowledge and language to children.⁸⁶

These four principles are useful to bear in mind in the coming conversations relating to place-name evidence and discussions about Scandinavian speakers in England in Chapter 3: Onomastics.

Kershaw suggests that the evidence for Scandinavian women in the first wave of settlers is 'weak'. Perhaps it is more accurately described as insufficient or incomplete; otherwise, there is a risk of equating absence of evidence with evidence of absence. I

⁸⁶ Kershaw, 'Women as bearers of cultural tradition', p. 101-102.

second the caution with which she reads both Raffield's and McLeod's conclusion about the proportions of women in the early phases of settlement.⁸⁷ Kershaw does not address McLeod's comments regarding the almost equal sex ratio of osteologically sexed Scandinavian burials, which is unfortunate.⁸⁸ Though McLeod's claims regarding the proportion of female migrants are not supported by the small amount of evidence, the statistical portion of McLeod's research deserves comment, something I have tried to provide to some degree above.

To support her stance that women were not a 'significant' part of the early pioneering phase of Scandinavian migration to England, Kershaw turns to place-name evidence. She points to Carole Hough's observation that female Scandinavian personal names are never compounded with *-tūn* in Grimston-hybrids.⁸⁹ However, plausible alternative explanations are discussed in the next chapter. Grimston-hybrids are a problematic class of name traditionally associated with the earliest phase of Scandinavian settlement.⁹⁰ Being a tricky name-type and also part of a model of settlement chronology which has been subject to continual revision and refinement since it was first proposed by Kenneth Cameron in the nineteen-sixties, means this subject deserves to be explored at greater length.

⁸⁷ Kershaw, 'Women as bearers of cultural tradition', p. 102.

⁸⁸ Kershaw, 'Women as bearers of cultural tradition', p. 102.

⁸⁹ Kershaw, 'Women as bearers of cultural tradition', pp. 104-5.

⁹⁰ Margaret Gelling, *Signposts to the Past* 3rd edn (Chichester: Phillimore, 2010), pp. 234-326. Margaret Gelling points out that 'Grimston' is a less than ideal choice to represent the name-class as most of the Grimston-hybrids occurring in the northeast 'have quite different histories from those of the unfortunate Grimstons' – another, earlier name-type which appears identical from the modern spelling alone.

Chapter 3: Onomastics - place-names, women and Scandinavian

settlement

Place-names and Scandinavian settlement in England

Kenneth Cameron first suggested the three-part model which has dominated onomastic scholarship on the distribution and chronology of Scandinavian settlement in the 1960s. The paradigm is summarised in brief here:

<p>Earliest layer of Scandinavian settlement:</p>	<p>Grimston-hybrids: where an Old Norse (usually Old Danish) masculine personal name is compounded with Old English <i>-tūn</i>. This is thought to represent the members of the <i>micel here</i>, also known as the 'Great Viking Army', taking over the estates of English thegns after disbanding in 877.</p>
<p>Secondary layer of Scandinavian settlement:</p>	<p>Place-names in Old Norse <i>bý</i>, frequently compounded with an Old Norse personal name (usually masculine but can be feminine). These settlements tend to be less central than Grimston-hybrids and lie on less desirable land. The theory is that they represent 'colonisers' who came to England after the first wave of 'Grimston' settlers.</p>

Later settlers:	<i>þorp/thorp</i> -names are thought to represent the later stages of Scandinavian colonisation. These settlements lie at a distance from the first two kinds of settlements and present as outlying, subsequent additions. According to Cameron's theory these are sited on the poorest quality land. Some <i>thorp</i> -names are dated post-Conquest and so are not part of the main Scandinavian migration to England.
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Over the years, Cameron's model has been subject to much revision and modification, both by himself and later scholars. Much has been added to the research on *bý*-names since Cameron's time, some of which will be discussed shortly. Combined research by Cullen, Jones and Parsons has more recently transformed the scholarly approach to *thorp*-names whilst also providing new insights into the early medieval landscape and some of the peoples who populated it.⁹¹

At the end of the previous chapter, we saw that Kershaw interprets the fact that Grimston-hybrids are never compounded with feminine personal names as evidence that women were not among the earliest settlement group. This, however, is another instance

⁹¹ Paul Cullen, Richard Jones and David N. Parsons, *Thorps in a Changing Landscape* (Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2011).

where absence of evidence is being equated with evidence of absence. Grimston-hybrids are, in the main, thought to be ‘ancient English settlements taken over and partly renamed by the Danes.’⁹² Grimston-hybrids comprise a Scandinavian masculine personal name, such as *Þormóðr*, compounded with the Old English habitative element *tūn* — *tūn* generally means farmstead or village. Cameron suggested that the Scandinavians who took over these settlements were retired soldiers from the disbanded army of 865.⁹³ According to Cameron’s model, the only demographic represented in the Grimston-hybrids are a military elite. Not only are women not represented, but neither are farmers, for example. If it has been the contention of some scholars in the past that only a small number of elite soldiers were present in the first wave of migration, the presence of female and juvenile skeletal remains at Torksey, Repton and Heath Wood, among other sites, undermines this position. If Grimston-hybrids are the main onomastic evidence associated with the earliest phase of Scandinavian settlement in England, then it is not expected that women would be reflected in this class of names. There is no way of inferring their presence or absence from this evidence.

The next class of names to appear in the traditionally suggested chronology are *bý*-names. *Bý*-names are a diverse class. They are usually Scandinavian, but can be hybrid. In many cases, they compound a personal name with the Norse habitative element, *bý*, with a meaning similar to that of Old English *tūn*. The vast majority of personal names compounded with the element *bý* are masculine. However, Scandinavian women’s personal names are found preserved in *bý*-names, it is just that they are rare.⁹⁴

⁹² Gelling, *Signposts to the Past*, p. 234.

⁹³ Gelling, *Signposts to the Past*, p. 234.

⁹⁴ Carole Hough, ‘Women in English Place-Names’, in *Lastworda Betst*, ed. by Carole Hough and Kathryn A. Lowe (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2002), p. 65 and Judith Jesch, ‘Scandinavian women’s names in English place-

With regards to *bý*-names, Abrams and Parsons set out what they describe as “the bottom line”, produced by a cautious analysis of the names.⁹⁵

1. the *bý*-names were in general coined by speakers of Old Norse;
2. there were sizeable communities of Old Norse speakers in parts of England;
3. the *bý*-names imply a significant role for Scandinavian-speaking individuals in the holding of land in parts of England;
4. many of these land-holdings can be characterized as relatively marginal or low in status;
5. there is some reason to suspect that the majority of *bý*-names were coined before the 11th century⁹⁶

The earlier a name is coined the more likely it is to have belonged to a Scandinavian migrant or their direct descendent. In this case, *bý*-names which contain women’s personal names, though few, are an important source of information about female settlers. Evidence for women, if it is to be found at all, may be indirect. Points 1-3 above imply that women may have been present around the time that these names were coined. Judith Jesch has maintained the link between a concentration of early-attested, Scandinavian names:

If, as Abrams and Parsons have argued (2004:422), place-names provide “evidence for Norse-speaking communities and a relatively large number of settlers”, it would follow that such communities included a relatively large

names’, in *A Commodity of Good Names: Essays in Honour of Margaret Gelling*, ed. by O. J. Padel and David N. Parsons (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2008), p. 159; Hough and Jesch together have found only two secure instances of an ON Scand. fem. pers.n. compounded with *bý*. However, the EPNS survey for many counties is still far from complete, so this picture may change.

⁹⁵ Abrams and Parsons, ‘Place-Names and the History of Scandinavian Settlement in England’, p. 404.

⁹⁶ Abrams and Parsons, ‘Place-Names and the History of Scandinavian Settlement in England’, p. 404.

number of Scandinavian-speaking women. It is not for nothing that one's first language is called "the mother tongue", and a prerequisite for Scandinavian-speaking communities would have been a substantial number of Scandinavian-speaking females.⁹⁷

The place-name corpus and analysis undertaken as part of the case study in Chapter Four will give a clearer idea of what the place-name profile of a predominantly Scandinavian-speaking community may have looked like and how the onomastic evidence can be interrogated.

The final name-class featured in the settlement model, *thorp*-names are traditionally associated with later stages of settlement, but they are not a straightforward prospect. In the words of Abrams and Parsons, 'The *thorp*-names have always been problematic, both because of uncertainty about the extent of influence from an Old English equivalent, and because — almost everyone has agreed — *thorp* denotes a secondary, dependent settlement, which by implication takes us at least one step away from the initial impact of Scandinavian arrival.'⁹⁸ However, more recent research undertaken by Cullen, Jones and Parsons sets out to answer some of the outstanding questions relating to *thorp*-names. As part of this research, they attempted to recreate and test Cameron's soil quality hypothesis with specific attention to the land on which *thorp*-names were sited.⁹⁹ They drew on T. Williamsons' 2007 work, *Shaping the Medieval Landscape*, and the qualitative 1-5 grading system for soil quality designed by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries: with 1 being the best and 5 being the poorest.

⁹⁷ Jesch, 'Scandinavian women's names', p. 154.

⁹⁸ Abrams and Parsons, 'Place-Names and the History of Scandinavian Settlement in England', p. 394.

⁹⁹ Cullen, Jones and Parsons, *Thorps in a Changing Landscape*, pp. 117-8.

Cullen, Jones and Parsons showed that *thorp*-settlements tend to fall on Grade 3 soils, which are actually moderate-to-good, rather than the poorest soils hypothesised by Cameron.¹⁰⁰ Furthermore, they found that *bý*-settlements were frequently found to be on land of the same quality, which undermines the long-standing theory of chronology which held that the best quality land was taken first and the next settlers to arrive took the next best land available and so on.¹⁰¹ Their research also provided some insights into the nature of the communities who coined those names. Agricultural specialisation was found to lie behind the siting of *bý*-settlements and *thorp*-settlements. Research based on soil quality suggested that *bý*-settlements were polyfocal, larger than *thorps*, associated with pastoral types of farming, such as livestock grazing and dairying. They were also more sprawling, needing more outbuildings for barns and byres.¹⁰² By contrast, the smaller, more dependent *thorp*-settlements were nucleated and focused on arable types of farming. Cullen, Jones and Parsons found that *thorps* were dependent on a nearby mill in order to process the grain from their harvest.¹⁰³ This is persuasive evidence of Norse-speaking farming communities living across northern and eastern England and coining *bý-names* and *thorp-names* from the tenth century. The fact of so many Scandinavian place-names having survived to the present day is an indication of the sheer number of Norse-speakers that must have been resident in England and is therefore indirect evidence of women in itself (see Jesch's comment above, *ibid*⁷).

It has long been acknowledged that a Scandinavian name, whether it belongs to a place or a person, does not necessarily signify a culturally Scandinavian individual.¹⁰⁴ But, as

¹⁰⁰ Cullen, Jones and Parsons, *Thorps in a Changing Landscape*, pp. 118.

¹⁰¹ Cullen, Jones and Parsons, *Thorps in a Changing Landscape*, pp. 118.

¹⁰² Cullen, Jones and Parsons, *Thorps in a Changing Landscape*, pp. 136-7.

¹⁰³ Cullen, Jones and Parsons, *Thorps in a Changing Landscape*, pp.136-7.

¹⁰⁴ Abrams and Parsons, 'Place-Names and the History of Scandinavian Settlement in England', p. 384.

Jesch argues, when provided with context and, in this case, a large number of Scandinavian place-names to work with, onomastic analysis always provides valuable information, 'such as when we do find a large number of Scandinavian names in a particular area where we have other evidence of Scandinavian influence, we can at least assume that such names are the result of immigration.'¹⁰⁵ This is particularly true when the names have early first attestation dates, such as Domesday Book, compiled in 1086, or earlier.

It is useful at this juncture to return to Jane Kershaw's work on migration theory. Kershaw's first tenet suggests that female labour was vital to migrant farming communities. This being the case, the high incidence of Scandinavian place-names associated with arable and pastoral farming (*bý* and *thorp*) should prompt researchers to check for evidence of women. Sørensen builds on Anne-Sofie Gräslund's work which goes back to Scandinavian society in the Iron Age and which describes 'complex social and economic relationships between men and women at the level of family as well as the community.'¹⁰⁶ Jesch has described the sphere of influence of a Scandinavian woman, frequently termed *innanstokks* or 'within the threshold': this encompassed both domestic and indoor tasks as well as more laborious work on the family farm including leatherwork and carpentry.¹⁰⁷ However, the term can be misleading; women were known to have wielded influence far beyond the 'threshold'. As Jesch also points out, many types of work often associated with women, such as childrearing leave no trace on the archaeological record. This is an important reason to look for clues as to a female presence when overt evidence is missing. This relates back to Kershaw's fifth tenet, highlighting both the symbiotic nature of migrant farming

¹⁰⁵ Jesch, *Women in the Viking Age*, p. 75.

¹⁰⁶ Sørensen, 'Gender, Material Culture and Identity', p. 260.

¹⁰⁷ Jesch, *Women in the Viking Age*, p. 22.

communities and also women's role in the transmission of culture and language. A concentration of Scandinavian and Scandinavianised place-names is a strong indicator that Norse is being spoken in the home — and the community— and learnt by children as a 'mother tongue'; thus indirectly but compellingly signalling the presence of Norse-speaking women.

Chapter 4: Case Study – The Wreake Valley

Introduction: Aims, Methods and Approach

When choosing an area for the case study, the Wreake Valley stood out for several reasons. It is geographically situated close to both Repton and Heathwood, within the area which would later come to be known as the Danelaw. It also has one of the most highly Scandinavianised onomastic profiles in England. Since Leicestershire's EPNS volumes were not complete until the 2010s, Kenneth Cameron did not have an opportunity to apply his settlement model here. When I began compiling the place-name corpus, I started by looking at place-names in the parishes closest to the banks of the River Wreake and expanded outwards from there. By the time the corpus was complete, it covered most of the Wreake Valley and eventually included parishes around the Rivers Soar and Eye. This process occurred in three phases. In the first phase of the investigation, the corpus was confined to nine parishes in East Goscote Hundred: Asfordby; Cossington; Frisby and Kirby; Queniborough; Ratcliffe on the Wreake; Rearsby; Rotherby and Hoby; Syston and Thrussington. In the second phase, the corpus was extended to encompass an additional five parishes in East Goscote. In the third and final phase, onomastic data was collected from further along the river in both directions: in the north-west where the Soar flows into the Trent and in the east where the Wreake becomes the Eye, splitting north-east to Sproxtton and south-east to Whissendine. This third phase brought in parishes belonging to a further four hundreds West Goscote (Lei); Framland (Lei); Alstoe (Ru); Rushcliffe (Nt). Both major settlement names and minor names were collected, but both were limited to early-attested examples (those recorded prior to 1200). Though there is no way to be certain, limiting the corpus to names attested before 1200 increases the likelihood that these names

were coined sometime during the Viking Age in England. The analysis of these names has provided the backbone of this case study. Despite the main focus of the case study being onomastic, evidence from multiple sources has been brought in to provide context and to avoid overburdening the name evidence. In terms of the names themselves, so as not to rest the analysis on a single place-name scholar's interpretation, a number of sources have been consulted on toponyms and their elements. Cox's etymologies from the EPNS volumes for Leicestershire have been cross-referenced with A.H. Smith's, A.D. Mills' and Eilert Ekwall's definitions of the same elements.¹⁰⁸ Just as it is vital to take care not to stretch name evidence past the point beyond which it will reasonably extend, it is also important to be as clear as possible about what can and cannot be inferred from place-names.

In her analysis of the minor names of the Wirral, Eleanor Rye advocates circumspection in place-name analysis and models her approach on David Parsons' 2006 work, where he stated that his onomastic analysis was a "contribution to dialect study" and "linguistic or historical questions were strictly secondary".¹⁰⁹ Rye goes on to demonstrate, over the course of a number of examples, that over-interpretation of place-name evidence alone causes the researcher to be 'blinkered by preconceived ideas about what we expect to find.'¹¹⁰ This concern is echoed by Aliko Pantos who has found that current scholarship often relies on interpretations of onomastic evidence alone to identify and draw conclusions about assembly places. Pantos too demonstrates, at length and over a number of examples,

¹⁰⁸ Barrie Cox, *The Place-Names of Leicestershire: Parts 1,2,3 & 7* (Nottingham: English Place-Name Society, 1998-2019); A. H. Smith, *English Place-Name Elements* (London: Macmillan, 1956); A. D. Mills, *A Dictionary of British Place-Names* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Eilert Ekwall, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Place-Names*, 4th edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960).

¹⁰⁹ Eleanor Rye, 'A Fresh Look at Scandinavian Vocabulary in the Minor Place-Names of the Wirral', in *Viking Encounters: Proceedings of the Eighteenth Viking Congress*, ed. by Anne Pedersen and Søren Sindbæk (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2020), p. 595.

¹¹⁰ Rye, 'A Fresh Look at Scandinavian Vocabulary', p. 595.

the drawbacks of this approach.¹¹¹ It is clear that a more rounded and inclusive methodology is called for. An example of this more rounded approach is modelled by John Baker and Stuart Brookes in 'Identifying outdoor assembly sites in early medieval England'.¹¹² Their interdisciplinary approach shows how a variety of strands of evidence can provide a firm foundation for their onomastic arguments regarding assembly places. A fuller discussion of the Wreake Valley's possible assembly sites can be found below.

The Wreake Valley Place-Name Corpus

The place-name corpus has been arranged in the following tables. The head form (modern spelling) is in bold, with the hundred and the county next to it in light grey. This is followed by the date of the earliest attestation, some of the earliest recorded spellings of the name and, finally, some notes on the etymology. There is also a colour code on the left hand side of the table: red for Old English; blue for Old Norse; purple for Anglo-Norman; brown for Hybrid/Ambiguous place-names

Old English Place-Names	
Head Form [Hundred]	Barrow upon Soar East Goscote, Lei
Earliest Attestation	1086 DB
Elements	<i>b(e)aru [dative] +affix</i>
Earliest recorded form(s)	<i>Barhov; Barua; Barwa; Baroua; Barugh; Barow</i>
Etymology	'Place at the wood or grove' plus affix containing river name.
Head Form [Hundred]	Birstall West Goscote, Lei
Earliest Attestation	1086 DB
Elements	<i>burh + stall</i>
Earliest recorded form(s)	<i>Bustelle; Burstall; Burcstal; Burestal; Borestal; Birstal; Bristall</i>

¹¹¹ Aliko Pantos, 'The Location and Form of Anglo-Saxon Assembly Places: some "moot points"', in *Assembly Places and Practices in Medieval Europe*, ed. by Aliko Pantos and Sarah Semple (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2004).

¹¹² John Baker and Stuart Brookes, 'Identifying outdoor assembly sites in early medieval England', *Journal of Field Archaeology*, 40:1 (2015), 3-21.

Etymology	'The site of a stronghold or fort'. OE name typically sited overlooking major routes and riverways. Birstall forms part of a clutch of <i>Burh-</i> names in this area alongside Burton Lazars and Burton on the Wolds.
Head Form [Hundred] Earliest Attestation Elements Earliest recorded form(s)	Burton Lazars Framland, Lei 1086 DB <i>burh + tūn</i> + later addition of 'Lazars' <i>Burtone; Burgtun'; Borton; Brottun'; Bwrton</i>
Etymology	'Farmstead or village near a fortification' or 'farmstead with a palisade'. These <i>Burh-tūn</i> settlements are a common OE name-type representing places where settlements arose at or close to army mustering points or forts. They typically overlook major routes, such as the Fosse Way or the Trent and are evenly spaced from one another.
Head Form [Hundred] Earliest Attestation Elements Earliest recorded form(s)	Burton on the Wolds East Goscote, Lei 1086 DB <i>burh + tūn + wald</i> <i>Bvtone; Burtun; Bortone</i>
Etymology	'Farmstead or village near a fortification' or 'farmstead with a palisade'. The later affix: 'on the high open ground'. See entry for Burton Lazars.
Head Form [Hundred] Earliest Attestation Elements Earliest recorded form(s)	Cossington East Goscote, Lei 1086 DB <i>Cos(s)a/Cus(s)a + ingtūn</i> <i>Cosintone; Cosenton; Cosington; Cossyngton; Cousington; Cousintona; Cusenton; Cusington; Cussington;</i>
Etymology	'Village or estate associated with a man named <i>Cos(s)a</i> or <i>Cus(s)a</i> '.
Head Form [Hundred] Earliest Attestation Elements Earliest recorded form(s) Etymology	Cotes East Goscote, Lei 1066-1087 Nichols <i>cot</i> <i>Chotes; Cotes; Kotes; Cootes; Coates</i> 'Cottages or huts'.
Head Form [Hundred] Earliest Attestation Elements Earliest recorded form(s)	Diseworth West Goscote, Lei 967 (for 972) (m.13) Bu <i>Digoth + worð</i> <i>æt Digbeswyrþe; Divvort; Digaðeswrð; Digðeswrthia; Digesworth; Diggewrth; Dichesword; Didesworda; Dithesw(o)rth(e); Dyseworth(e); Diseworth; Disworth(e)</i>
Etymology	'Enclosure of a man named <i>Digoth</i> '. This pers.n. appears as a specific in Dishley in the same hundred to the south in Loughborough.
Head Form [Hundred] Earliest Attestation Elements Earliest recorded form(s)	Dishley West Goscote, Lei 1086 DB <i>Digoth + lēah</i> <i>Dislea; Dexleia; Dixeleia; Disselai(a); Dixl'; Dyxle; Dysshley; Dichley</i>

Etymology	'Woodland or woodland clearing of a man called Digoð'. See Diseworth above.
Head Form [Hundred] Earliest Attestation Elements Earliest recorded form(s) Etymology	Garendon West Goscote, Lei c.1130 LeicSurv <i>Gærwald + dūn</i> <i>Geroldon(e); Gerudonia; Gereudona; Geroudon(e); Gerewedona; Gerwedon; Gerowdon; Geradon; Garadon; Garrodon</i> 'Gærwald's hill'.
Head Form [Hundred] Earliest Attestation Elements Earliest recorded form(s) Etymology	Hathern West Goscote, Lei 1086 DB <i>hagu + þyrne</i> <i>Avederne; Hauthirn(e); Hauethirn(e); Hawethurn(e); Haghethirne; Hacthurne; Hawthern; Hatherne(e)</i> '(the place at) the hawthorn'.
Head Form [Hundred] Earliest Attestation Elements Earliest recorded form(s) Etymology	Hemington West Goscote, Lei c.1130 LeicSurv <i>Hemma/Hemmi + ingtūn</i> <i>Aminton; Heminton; Hemminton; Hemington</i> 'The estate called after Hemma or Hemmi'.
Head Form [Hundred] Earliest Attestation Elements Earliest recorded form(s) Etymology	Kegworth West Goscote, Lei 1086 DB <i>Cagga/Ceagga + worð</i> <i>Cacheuorde; Cogeworde; Caggworth; Cagewrdhe; Kagwrda; Ceggewrðe; Keggeworde; Keggworth(e);</i> 'Cægga's enclosure'. Though Ekwall suggests the Old Icelandic by-name <i>Kaggi</i> from 'ale cask', in DEPN; Mills suggests this is a masc. OE pers.n. and Cox suggests Cagga may be an unattested variant of the attested OE masc. name Cægga. The OE interpretations seem more likely here.
Head Form [Hundred] Earliest Attestation Elements Earliest recorded form(s) Etymology	Kingston on Soar Rushcliffe, Nt 1082 DST App iv <i>cyne + stān</i> <i>Cynestan; Kinestan; Kyneston; Kenestan; Kymston; Kyngeston</i> 'The royal stone'. In the EPNS entry for this place-name, Stenton and Mawer note that there is no such stone now known which might have given rise to this name but that the alluvial soils here are particularly rich and fertile.
Head Form [Hundred] Earliest Attestation Elements Earliest recorded form(s) Etymology	Lockington West Goscote, Lei c.1130 LeicSurv <i>Loc(a) + ingtūn</i> <i>Lokinton; Lokington; Lockington</i> Estate called after <i>Loc(a)</i> '. One of a number of settlements ending <i>-ingtūn</i> in western Leics.
Head Form [Hundred] Earliest Attestation Elements	Loughborough West Goscote, Lei c.1130 LeicSurv <i>Luhhede + burh</i>

Earliest recorded form(s)	<i>Lvctebvrne; Locteburne; Lucteb'; Luhteburht; Luteburc(h); Luttebur; Luchteburc; Lughteburgh; Lughteburgh; Lughtburgh;</i>
Etymology	'Fortified place of a man named Luhhede'. Another burh-name.
Head Form [Hundred]	Queniborough East Goscote, Lei
Earliest Attestation	1086 DB
Elements	<i>cwēn + burh</i>
Earliest recorded form(s)	<i>Cvinbvr̄g; Queniburg; Queneburhcht; Quenyburg; Quenburgh; Quenigburg; Queingburc; Queningburc; Quenesborgh</i>
Etymology	'The queen's fortified manor'.
Head Form [Hundred]	Quorndon West Goscote, Lei
Earliest Attestation	1154-1189 Dugd
Elements	<i>cweorn + dūn</i>
Earliest recorded form(s)	<i>Querendon(e); Querndon; Querdon(e); Quarndon; Quarendon; Quernedon; Quarnedon; Quornedon; Quarn(e); Querne; Quorn.</i>
Etymology	'Hill where mill-stones are obtained'. Note that the shortened form 'Quorn' does not occur until 16th century.
Head Form [Hundred]	Ratcliffe on Soar Rushcliffe, Ntt
Earliest Attestation	1086 DB
Elements	<i>rēad + clif + affix</i>
Earliest recorded form(s)	<i>Radeclive; Readcliue; Redcliva</i>
Etymology	'Red cliff, escarpment', with reference to the clay hills along the river Soar. Soar is a pre-English river name of uncertain etymology.
Head Form [Hundred]	Ratcliffe on the Wreake East Goscote, Lei
Earliest Attestation	1086 DB
Elements	<i>rēad + clif + affix</i>
Earliest recorded form(s)	<i>Radeclive; Radeclive; Radeclif('); Raddecliff('); Raddecliff('); Raddecliff('); Radclif(f); Radclyve; Ratcliff(e); Rotclefe;</i>
Etymology	'Red cliff or escarpment'. Later affix to include river name.
Head Form [Hundred]	Rothley West Goscote, Lei
Earliest Attestation	1086 DB
Elements	<i>Hrotha + lēah OR roth + lēah</i>
Earliest recorded form(s)	<i>Rodolei; Rodeley; Roelay; Rohelea; Rolea; Rothele; Rothley; Rowtheley</i>
Etymology	Either 'Hrotha's clearing' or 'wood with clearing'.
Head Form [Hundred]	Seagrave East Goscote, Lei
Earliest Attestation	1086 DB
Elements	<i>sēađ + grāf</i>
Earliest recorded form(s)	<i>Setgrauē; Sethgrava; Sedgrave; Satgrave; Sadgrave; Sagrave; Segrave; Seygrave; Seagraue</i>
Etymology	Possible 'grove/coppiced wood by the pit or pool'. Some uncertainty as to the first element.
Head Form [Hundred]	Six Hills East Goscote, Lei
Earliest Attestation	a.1118 (s.a.716)
Elements	<i>Seccge + wald</i>
Earliest recorded form(s)	<i>Seggeswalda; Segeswold; Segs Hill; Sixhill</i>

Etymology	'Secge's portion of the wolds district'
Head Form [Hundred]	Stanford on Soar Rushcliffe, Ntt
Earliest Attestation	1086 DB
Elements	<i>stān + ford</i>
Earliest recorded form(s)	<i>Stanford</i>
Etymology	'Stony ford', common name-type, marking a crossing place at a river or stream.
Head Form [Hundred]	Stapleford Framland, Lei
Earliest Attestation	1086 DB
Elements	<i>stapol + ford</i>
Earliest recorded form(s)	<i>Stapeford; Stapelford'; Estapleford; Stapilford; Stapulford; Stapleford; Stabul(l)forth</i>
Etymology	'Ford marked by a pole'.
Head Form [Hundred]	Sutton Bonington Rushcliffe, Ntt
Earliest Attestation	1086 DB and 1082 DST App iv respectively
Elements	<i>sūth + tūn + Buna + ingtūn</i>
Earliest recorded form(s)	<i>Sudtone (1086) Bunningtun (1082)</i>
Etymology	Parish formed by two formerly distinct villas of Sutton and Bonington. Bonington is interpreted as 'Buna's farm' and Sutton, 'south farm' lay, as one might expect, to the south of it.
Head Form [Hundred]	Syston East Goscote, Lei
Earliest Attestation	1086 DB
Elements	<i>Sigehæð/Sigefrið + tūn</i>
Earliest recorded form(s)	<i>Sitestone; Sithestun; Sithston; Sideston; Sieston; Siston; Sison</i>
Etymology	'Sigehæð/Sigefrið's farmstead or village'
Head Form [Hundred]	Walton on the Wolds East Goscote, Lei
Earliest Attestation	1086 DB
Elements	<i>walh + tūn</i>
Earliest recorded form(s)	<i>Waletone; Valetu'; Waltun'; Wauton'</i>
Etymology	'Farmstead or settlement of the British' here with 'wald' in its later sense as in 'high ground cleared of woodland'.
Head Form [Hundred]	Wanlip West Goscote, Lei
Earliest Attestation	1086 DB
Elements	<i>ānlipe</i>
Earliest recorded form(s)	<i>Anlep(e); Anelep(e); Haneleppe; Onlep(e); Onelep; Wanlep</i>
Etymology	'Lonely or solitary place'.
Head Form [Hundred]	Long Whatton West Goscote, Lei
Earliest Attestation	c.1130 LeicSurv
Elements	<i>wacu/hwæte + tūn</i>
Earliest recorded form(s)	<i>Wacton; Watona; Wattona; Whatton; Wotton; Quatton(e)</i>
Etymology	Most likely, 'farmstead where wheat is grown'.
Head Form [Hundred]	Whissendine Alstoe, Ru
Earliest Attestation	1086 DB
Elements	<i>Hwicce + denu</i>
Earliest recorded form(s)	<i>Wichingedene; Wy-, Wissingden(e); Wy- Wissenden(e); Wy- Wissinden'; Whittsonden; Why- Whissendyne</i>

Etymology	'The valley of the Hwiccingas' or 'the valley of the Hwicce'. Either an ethnonym or unrecorded OE pers.n derived from it. The name implies the Anglo-Saxon Hwicce, later based in Worcester, possibly had a presence here at some point, according to Cox. The village lies near a Roman road which ran westwards from the important Romano-British settlement at Thistleton to Syston (Lei) on Fosse Way.
Head Form [Hundred] Earliest Attestation Elements Earliest recorded form(s)	Willoughes East Goscote, Lei [Lost] 1086 DB <i>willig (wiligas nom.pl.)</i> <i>Wilges; Wilewes; Wiléés (sic); Wylhowe; Wilughes; Weloughes; Wilowes;</i>
Etymology	'The willows', by 1846 White, the name of the settlement survived as that of an estate in Ragdale. The original village lay between Ragdale and Hoby.

Old Norse Place-Names	
Head Form [Hundred] Earliest Attestation Elements Earliest recorded form(s) Etymology	Barkby East Goscote, Lei 1086 DB <i>Bqrkr/Barki + bý</i> <i>Barchebi; Barcheberie; Barkebia; Barkesby; Barkby; Berkeby</i> 'Bark's farmstead, village'.
Head Form [Hundred] Earliest Attestation Elements Earliest recorded form(s) Etymology	Bescaby Framland, Lei c.1130 LeicSurv. <i>Berg-Skáld + bý</i> <i>Berthaldebia; Berscaldeby; Berscaudebi; Berscoldebi; Berscoudebi; Bergaldebi; Besgaldebi; Bescaudeby; Bescoldeby</i> 'Berg-Skáld's farmstead, village'. By way of providing a precedent, Cox points to the known construction ON Skóg-Ketill in which a topographical term is prefixed to an independently recorded pers.n. Here, an otherwise unattested personal name, <i>Skáld</i> is compounded with a topographical term, 'Hill-Skald' or 'Skald-Hill'. Alternatively, the meaning may be, 'hill-poet'.
Head Form [Hundred] Earliest Attestation Elements Earliest recorded form(s) Etymology	Brooksby East Goscote, Lei 1086 DB <i>Brök + bý</i> <i>Brochesbi; Brokesbya; Brokeby; Broksby; Brookesbi</i> 'Brök's farmstead, village'. The genitive inflection here points to the common Old Norse by-name rather than the interpretation 'farmstead by the brook'.
Head Form [Hundred] Earliest Attestation	Eye Kettleby Framland, Lei 1086 DB

Elements	<i>Ketill + bý</i>
Earliest recorded form(s)	<i>Chitebie; Chetelbia; Ketelbi; Ketelebi; Kedlesby; Ketilby; Kettlebi; Kettleby</i>
Etymology	'Ketill's farmstead, settlement'. Only one form shows the genitive. Ketill is from the ON byname meaning 'cauldron, cauldron-shaped helmet'. As the affix suggests, the settlement stands on a tributary of the rivers Wreake and Eye.
Head Form [Hundred]	Freeby Framland, Lei
Earliest Attestation	c.1130 LeicSurv
Elements	<i>Fræthi + bý</i>
Earliest recorded form(s)	<i>Fredebi; Frethebi; Frithebi; Frethby; Freythby; Freyby; Freby</i>
Etymology	'Fræthi's farmstead or village', the personal name Fræthi (Frethi) is ODan.
Head Form [Hundred]	Gaddesby East Goscote, Lei
Earliest Attestation	1086 DB
Elements	<i>Gaddr + bý</i>
Earliest recorded form(s)	<i>Gadesbi; Gaddesbi; Gadesberi; Gatesbi; Gaddebi</i>
Etymology	'Gad's farmstead, village'. The ON pers.n. Gaddr is an original ON byname meaning 'a goad, a spur'. Fellows-Jensen has suggested that, in this instance, the first element may refer to a 'spur of land' (SSNEM 48), but Cox refutes this, maintaining that there is no such corresponding topographical feature in the area.
Head Form [Hundred]	Kirby Bellars East Goscote, Lei
Earliest Attestation	1086 DB
Elements	<i>kirkja + bý</i>
Earliest recorded form(s)	<i>Cherchebi; Chirchebi; Kirchebia; Kirkebi; Kerkebi; Kirkby; Kerkby; Kirby; Kerbie</i>
Etymology	'Settlement or farmstead with a church'. Common name-type. Affix added later.
Head Form [Hundred]	Rearsby East Goscote, Lei
Earliest Attestation	1086 DB
Elements	<i>Hreiðarr + bý</i>
Earliest recorded form(s)	<i>Redresbi; Reresbi; Resebi; Resby; Rearesby; Raresby; Rearsby</i>
Etymology	'Hreiðar's farmstead or village'. Compare with Rotherby below.
Head Form [Hundred]	Rotherby East Goscote, Lei
Earliest Attestation	1086 DB
Elements	<i>Hreiðarr + bý</i>
Earliest recorded form(s)	<i>Redebi; Rederbia; Reidebi; Retheresby; Retherby; Rotherby; Rotheby</i>
Etymology	'Hreiðar's farmstead or village'. Although these names clearly have different phonological developments, they are situated in neighbouring parishes and this means it is possible that the personal name references the same individual.
Head Form [Hundred]	Saxby Framland, Lei
Earliest Attestation	1086 DB

Elements	<i>Seaxe/Saxi + bý</i>
Earliest recorded form(s)	<i>Saxeby; Saxenebi; Sessebia; Sexeby; Saxby; Sawsby</i>
Etymology	Either 'the farmstead, village of the Saxons' or 'Saxi's farmstead, village'. Saxi/Saksi is a common ON/ODan pers.n. However, in view of the early forms in Saxenebi, the gen. pl. of the ethnonym S(e)axe (S(e)axna gen.pl.) is suggested as more likely by Cox. Cox points out that, at the date of coinage, the Danes would be unlikely to tell Angles apart from Saxons. The two terms may have been used interchangeably. However, the lack of pre-Conquest orthography surviving for this name means it is impossible to be quite certain of its original etymology. ¹¹³
Head Form [Hundred]	Saxelby(e) East Goscote, Lei
Earliest Attestation	1086 DB
Elements	<i>Saxulfr + bý</i>
Earliest recorded form(s)	<i>Saxelbie; Saxebia; Saxilbi; Saxulebi; Saxhilby; Sowcelby</i>
Etymology	'Saxulf's farmstead, village'
Head Form [Hundred]	Shoby East Goscote, Lei
Earliest Attestation	1086 DB
Elements	<i>Sigvaldr + bý</i>
Earliest recorded form(s)	<i>Seoldesberie; Siwaldebia; Siwoldebi; Siwaldbi; Siwolby; Sywouldeby; Shouldby; Shoulby(e); Showby</i>
Etymology	'Sigvaldr's farmstead or village'
Head Form [Hundred]	Sileby East Goscote, Lei
Earliest Attestation	1086 DB
Elements	<i>Sigulfr + bý</i>
Earliest recorded form(s)	<i>Siglesbie; Sigelebi; Silesbi; Silebi; Syleby; Silby</i>
Etymology	'Sigulf's farmstead or village'
Head Form [Hundred]	Sysonby Framland, Lei
Earliest Attestation	1086 DB
Elements	<i>Sigsteinn + bý</i>
Earliest recorded form(s)	<i>Sistenebi; Sixtenebi; Sixtenesbi; Sextenebi; Sixtenby; Sextenby; Sistonby</i>
Etymology	'Sigsteinn's farmstead, village'. The pers.n. Sigsteinn is Swedish and recorded in a number of runic inscriptions. ¹¹⁴
Head Form [Hundred]	Thorpe Acre West Goscote, Lei
Earliest Attestation	1086 DB
Elements	<i>þorp</i>
Earliest recorded form(s)	<i>Torp; Thorp(e);</i>

¹¹³ Jayne Carroll, 'Identifying Migrants: Place-Name Evidence', in *Migrants in Medieval England c.500-c.1500*, ed. by W. Mark Ormrod, Joanna Story and Elizabeth M. Tyler (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), pp. 90-119.

¹¹⁴ Gillian Fellows Jensen, *Scandinavian Personal Names in Lincolnshire and Yorkshire* (Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag, 1968), p. 235.

Etymology	'The outlying farmstead or hamlet'. Cox says the dominant affix is the ME occupational term <i>haveker</i> , <i>hauker</i> (from OE <i>hafocere</i>) 'one who hunts with a hawk' and 'one who trains and cares for a lord's hawks'. The affix was reanalysed as 'acre'.
Head Form [Hundred]	Welby East Goscote, Lei
Earliest Attestation	1086 DB
Elements	<i>Ali + bý</i>
Earliest recorded form(s)	<i>Alebi; Halebi; Oleby; Ouleby; Welby; Wolby alias dicta Welby</i>
Etymology	Ali's farmstead or village'.

Hybrid/Ambiguous Place-Names	
Head Form [Hundred]	Asfordby East Goscote, Lei
Earliest Attestation	1086 DB
Elements	<i>æsc</i> (OE) / <i>eski</i> (ON) + <i>ford</i> (OE) + <i>bý</i> (ON) <u>OR</u> <i>Ásfrøðr</i> (ON) + <i>bý</i> (ON)
Earliest recorded form(s)	<i>Esseberie; Osferdebie; Osferdebi; Asfordebi; Asseford(e)by; Aisfordeby; Esfordebi; Essefordebi; Assh(e)ford(e)by</i>
Etymology	It may be OE <i>æsc</i> 'ash-tree' (influenced by the ON cognate <i>eski</i> with the same meaning) OR ON personal name <i>Ásfrøðr</i> (ODan <i>Āsfrið</i>) possibly showing confusion with OE pers.n. <i>Ōsferð/Ōsfrið</i> .
Head Form [Hundred]	Ashby Folville East Goscote, Lei
Earliest Attestation	1086 DB
Elements	<i>æsc</i> (OE) + <i>bý</i> (ON)
Earliest recorded form(s)	<i>Ascebi; Essebia; Aessebi; Eisseby; Hesseby; Asseby; Assheby; Asshby; Ashby(e)</i>
Etymology	'The farmstead, village where ash trees grow'. The name is either hybrid OE/Scand or is the result of a Scandinavianisation of an earlier English name.
Head Form [Hundred]	Barsby East Goscote, Lei
Earliest Attestation	1086 DB
Elements	<i>Barn</i> (ON) + <i>bý</i> (ON)
Earliest recorded form(s)	<i>Barnesbi; Bernisby; Barneby; Baresby(e); Barsby</i>
Etymology	'Barn's farmstead, village' or 'farmstead or village of the child or young heir'. Alternatively, Fellows-Jensen suggests that the first element may simply refer to a 'barn' in the modern sense.
Head Form [Hundred]	Brentingby Framland, Lei
Earliest Attestation	1086 DB
Elements	<i>Branting/Brenting</i> (OE) + <i>bý</i> (ON)
Earliest recorded form(s)	<i>Brantingbia; Brantingebi; Brentingbi; Brentingebi</i>

Etymology	Problematic name. Either OE persn.n. 'Branting's farmstead, village' or 'the farmstead or village at the branting' where <i>branting</i> means 'steep place'.
Head Form [Hundred] Earliest Attestation Elements Earliest recorded form(s)	Coston Framland, Lei 1086 DB <i>Kátr</i> (ON) + <i>tūn</i> (OE) <i>Castone; Causton'; Coston('); Cooston'; Cosun; Coaston</i> Probably 'Kátr's farmstead, village'. This is a pers.n. from the ON by-name <i>kátr</i> , meaning 'glad'.
Etymology	
Head Form [Hundred] Earliest Attestation Elements Earliest recorded form(s)	(Great and Little) Dalby Framland, Lei 1086 DB <i>dalr</i> (ON) + <i>bý</i> (ON) <i>Dalbi; Daleby; Daubi</i> 'The farmstead, village in the valley'. Great Dalby lies at the head of a wide valley running north towards the R.Wreake. Little Dalby, two miles to the east, is also tucked into the head of a small valley which opens to the north. Though the second element is most likely Norse in this case, it is difficult to distinguish between ON <i>dalr</i> and OE <i>dæl</i> .
Etymology	
Head Form [Hundred] Earliest Attestation Elements Earliest recorded form(s)	Frisby on the Wreake East Goscote, Lei 1086 DB <i>Frīsa/Frēsa</i> (OE) + <i>bý</i> (ON) <i>Frisebie; Freseby; Frisby</i> Farmstead or village of the Frisians'. Frisia refers to a strip of land on the western coast of the Low Countries. Jayne Carroll has noted out that areas which saw a high level of Scandinavian settlement tend to have clusters of ethnonyms in their place-names. ¹¹⁵ In the current corpus, see also Saxby and Normanton on Soar.
Etymology	
Head Form [Hundred] Earliest Attestation Elements Earliest recorded form(s)	Garthorpe Framland, Lei c.1130 LeicSurv. <i>garðr</i> (ON) / <i>gāra</i> (OE) + <i>þorp</i> (ON) <i>Garthorp; Gartorp; Garetorp; Geretorp; Garsthorp; Gardethorp; Garthropp</i> 'Outlying farmstead within an enclosure' OR 'outlying triangular plot of land'. Cullen, Jones and Parsons have demonstrated that <i>þorp</i> -names are located on moderate-to-good soil types and are associated with arable farming and crop production. ¹¹⁶
Etymology	
Head Form [Hundred] Earliest Attestation Elements Earliest recorded form(s)	Grimston East Goscote, Lei 1086 DB <i>Grímr</i> (ON) + <i>tūn</i> (OE) <i>Grimstone; Grimston; Grymson</i>

¹¹⁵ Carroll, 'Identifying Migrants', pp. 90-119.

¹¹⁶ Cullen, Jones and Parsons, *Thorps in a Changing Landscape*, p. 118 and pp. 135-6.

	<p>Grīm's farmstead or village'. Though there are a number of places named 'Grimston' and they gave their name to the name-type scandinavian pers.n. + OE <i>tūn</i>, Fellows Jensen has raised the issue that they are far from an ideal candidate to represent this group of names. Firstly, in cases such as this one where the earliest attestation is from Domesday Book, it is impossible to tell whether the first element is a truly Scandinavian name or one which is actually post-Conquest Continental (though Scandinavian originally). In the latter case, it would not reflect Scandinavian settlement in the ninth or tenth centuries. A problem which is specific not just to this name-type but to the name Grimston in particular is the fact that <i>Grīm</i> was in current use among English speakers as a term referring to the Devil. Fellows Jensen suggests '...appellative Grīrestūn could be coined for a particularly depressing settlement.' However, Gelling explains, the latter interpretation should only be sought 'when there is something outstandingly poor about the situation of the place'.¹¹⁷</p>
<p>Etymology</p> <p>Head Form [Hundred]</p> <p>Earliest Attestation</p> <p>Elements</p> <p>Earliest recorded form(s)</p>	<p>Hoby East Goscote, Lei</p> <p>1086 DB</p> <p><i>hōh + bý</i></p> <p><i>Hobie; Houbia; Howby; Howeby;</i></p> <p>'farmstead, village at the headland'. The current settlement sits on a spur of land adjacent to the River Wreake.</p>
<p>Etymology</p> <p>Head Form [Hundred]</p> <p>Earliest Attestation</p> <p>Elements</p> <p>Earliest recorded form(s)</p>	<p>Normanton on Soar Rushcliffe, Ntt</p> <p>1086 (DB)</p> <p><i>Norðmannr</i> (OE) + <i>tūn</i> (OE)</p> <p><i>Normanton, -tune; Normaneston'; Normanton super Sore</i></p> <p>'Farmstead or village of the Northmen'. Jayne Carroll has demonstrated that the group of uninflected (<i>Norðmanton, tūne</i>) place-names of this type may have been bestowed by administrators during the reign of Edward the Elder when the region was under West Saxon control. Compare with other place-names in the corpus containing ethnonyms: Frisby on the Wreake and Saxby.</p>
<p>Etymology</p> <p>Head Form [Hundred]</p> <p>Earliest Attestation</p> <p>Elements</p> <p>Earliest recorded form(s)</p>	<p>Ragdale East Goscote, Lei</p> <p>1086 DB</p> <p><i>hraca</i> (OE) + <i>dæl</i> (OE)/<i>dalr</i> (ON)</p> <p><i>Ragendel(e); Rachendale; Rachedal; Raggedal(e); Ragdale</i></p> <p>Probably 'valley with the narrow pass'. Old English topographical names are frequently expressed in anatomical terms. Gulleys are typically visualised as 'throats' as here. Another example would be Rackheath (NFK), a wide but deep valley whose name shares the same first element as Ragdale.</p>
<p>Head Form [Hundred]</p>	<p>Saltby Framland, Lei</p>

¹¹⁷ Gelling, *Signposts to the Past*, pp. 235-36.

Earliest Attestation	1086 DB
Elements	<i>Salt/Saltr</i> (ON) + <i>bý</i> (ON)
Earliest recorded form(s)	<i>Saltebi; Sautebi; Saltby</i>
Etymology	'Farmstead or village with the salty spring or where salt is made'; possible but less likely that the first element contains the ON pers.n. <i>Saltr</i> .
Head Form [Hundred]	Sproxton Framland, Lei
Earliest Attestation	c.1130 LeicSurv
Elements	<i>Sprókr</i> (ON) + <i>tūn</i> (OE)
Earliest recorded form(s)	<i>Sprotone; Sproxcheston; Sproxton('); Sprochton'; Sprostona; Sprauston; Sprawson</i>
Etymology	'Sprok's village, estate' or even (though less likely) 'Sprógr's village, estate'. However, the latter pers.n. is elsewhere unattested.
Head Form [Hundred]	Stonesby Framland, Lei
Earliest Attestation	1086 DB
Elements	<i>stofn</i> (OE) + <i>bý</i> (ON)
Earliest recorded form(s)	<i>Stovenebi; Stouenesbia; Stounesby; Stownesby; Stounsby; Stonesby</i>
Etymology	'Farmstead or village at the tree stump'. Both Gillian Fellows-Jensen and Peter Sawyer agreed that pers.n.s compounded with <i>bý</i> were dateable to the tenth century. <i>Bý</i> -names combined with other elements, like this one, were likely to be even earlier, representing the initial Scandinavian settlement phase in England. ¹¹⁸ It is possible, therefore, that this is one of the earlier Scandinavianised names in the Wreake Valley.
Head Form [Hundred]	Thrussington East Goscote, Lei
Earliest Attestation	1086 DB
Elements	<i>Þorstein</i> (ON) + <i>tūn</i> (OE)
Earliest recorded form(s)	<i>Tvrstanestone; Tursteineston'; Tursteinton; Turstantone; Thursteinest'; Thursteinton; Thurstaneston(e); Thurstanton</i>
Etymology	'Þorstein's farmstead or village'. At first glance, this looks misleadingly like an -ingtūn-type name. However, a study of the early orthography shows it to be a Grimston-hybrid. See the entry for Grimston for a brief discussion of some of the problems surrounding this name class.
Head Form [Hundred]	Thurmaston East Goscote, Lei
Earliest Attestation	1086 DB
Elements	<i>Þormóðr</i> (ON) + <i>tūn</i> (OE)
Earliest recorded form(s)	<i>Tvmodestone; Tormodestuna; Turmundeston; Thormodeston; Thurmodeston; Thurmeston; Thormeston; Thurmenstone</i>

¹¹⁸ Abrams and Parsons, 'Place-Names and the History of Scandinavian Settlement in England', p. 384.

Etymology	'pormóðr's village, settlement'. Another Grimston-hybrid. The usual caution is advised where Domesday Book is the earliest attestation making it impossible to be sure whether the first element is truly a Scandinavian name or a post-Conquest Continental name of Scandinavian origin. See the entry for Grimston and Thrussington above.
Head Form [Hundred] Earliest Attestation Elements Earliest recorded form(s)	Wyfordby Framland, Lei 1086 DB <i>Wīg</i> (OE) + <i>ford</i> (OE) + <i>bý</i> (ON) <i>Wivordebie 1086; Wiuordeby m.13; Wyvordebi 1244; Wyfordebia 1130; Wivordesb' 1236; Wyuordby e.14</i>
Etymology	'Farmstead or settlement at Wigford'. This is an example of Scand. -bý added to an OE topographical name. 'Wigford' either means 'ford marked by the shrine' or 'place where the army or military force fords the river'. Since this is an unusual name, earliest recorded forms have been included along with dates.

Anglo-Norman Place-Names	
Head Form [Hundred] Earliest Attestation Elements Earliest recorded form(s) Etymology	Mountsorrel West Goscote, Lei 1152 (BM) <i>mont + sorel</i> <i>Munt Sorel; Munsorel; Mons Sorel; Montsorel(l); Monsorel(l); Mounsorel(l); Mountsorel(l); Mounstrell</i> OFr 'the sorrel-coloured hill'. Describes the pinkish brown colour of the granite of the hill on which the castle stands.

Overview of the Names: insights into the early medieval landscape

Perhaps it is natural enough that toponyms reflect the topographical features of the land to which they belong. What is often more surprising is the amount and variety of information encoded in place-names. The Wreake Valley's place-names place much emphasis on water-courses, for example; they signpost farms and fields — capturing the apparent owner's name in the process; they describe woods, hills and mounds, points at which the river can be crossed and routes for navigating the landscape. As mentioned previously, place-names

alluding to rivers are particularly numerous. There are eight place-names containing an affixed river-name: Barrow upon Soar, Eye Kettleby, Frisby on the Wreake, Kingston on Soar, Normanton on Soar, Ratcliffe on Soar, Ratcliffe on the Wreake and Stanford on Soar. Of course, these affixes postdate the other name elements. However, the survival of so many 'settlement-on-the-river' name types paints a vivid picture of the valley's distinctive topographical character. There are also references to a barrow and 'red cliffs'; a diverse community of Norsemen, Frisians and Saxons (though these terms are a little problematic, a point we will return to later), and a number of rocky crossing places: 'stony ford' occurs at least three times.

Stanford on Soar	'stony ford'
Stapleford	'ford marked by a pole'
Asfordby	Equivocal: 'ash tree ford'
Wyfordby	'shrine at the settlement by the ford' OR 'place where the army crosses the river near the settlement'.
<i>Staniford</i>	'stony ford'
<i>Stanwasbroc</i>	'brook with a stony ford'

The fact that many place-names preserve references to crossing places and fording points reflects the busy trade routes which criss-crossed the Wreake. Both field-names and major settlement names survive which helped travellers navigate the river via its 'stony' fords.

There are numerous mentions of springs and wells:

Saltby	'farmstead/village with the salty spring' or 'farmstead/village where salt is made'. There is also a chance that the first element is the ON pers.n. Saltr.
Dallewell	'D(e)alla's well or spring'
Wlfewel	'well or spring associated with wolves' or 'Wulf's well, spring'

The now lost Willoughes in Asfordby records the presence of willow trees, which would have served as a navigational marker to early medieval travellers, signalling the proximity of water. *Osebec* is a 'beck associated with blackbird (dialect "an ouzel") or an osier ("oyser")'. Though *Aspedic* has an uncertain first element, its second element, *dīc/dik* seems to describe a manmade watercourse. Even *Hoby* speaks of a settlement or farmstead situated on a headland projecting over water, in this case the River Wreake.

A group of names which speak to the effects of constant and sometimes violent political upheavals on the landscape are those containing elements describing fortresses or strongholds or lookouts.

Birstall	'the site of a stronghold'
Burton Lazars	'farmstead or village near a fortification' or 'farmstead with a palisade'

Burton on the Wolds	'farmstead, village near a fortification/with a palisade on the high, open ground'
Loughborough	'fortified place of a man name Luhhede'
Queniborough	'the queen's fortified manor'
Long Whatton	equivocal: 'lookout farmstead'

There are also a number of ethnonyms. Whissendine implies either that the Hwicce had some kind of presence in this region before moving up to Worcestershire or that there was an ethnically identifiable community of Hwicce here after the mid to late seventh century. As mentioned previously, British, Frisians, Saxons and Norsemen or possibly Norwegians are also encoded in the elements of these settlements.

Frisby on the Wreake	'farmstead or village of the Frisians'
Saxby	equivocal 'farmstead or village of the Saxons'
Normanton on Soar	'farmstead or village of the Norsemen'
Whissendine	'valley of the Hwicce'

Some of the names in the corpus suggest the importance of arable farming and livestock to subsistence during this period.

Quorndon	'hill where mill stones are obtained'
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Long Whatton	equivocal: 'farm where wheat is grown'
Saltby	'farmstead or settlement where there is a salt spring or where salt is made'
Thorpe Acre	'outlying farmstead, hamlet' + affix meaning 'one who hunts with a hawk' or 'one who trains and cares for a lord's hawks'
<i>Bradeslandes</i>	'broad selions'
<i>Haverwic</i>	'oat farm'
<i>Hauechestoft</i>	'curtilage of the "hawker"'
<i>Helagre</i>	'plot of arable land on a hill'
<i>Littlehag</i>	'small pasture'
<i>Suinhag</i>	'swine or pig enclosure' / 'message with pig'

We have already seen that these names reveal much about the landscape and the occupations of those who lived and worked there, but can the information encoded in these names bring us any closer to answering the research question: what part did women play? There are no feminine personal names here, no direct references to women. However, personal names are not the only allusion to people in place-names; there are also ethnonyms. Ethnonyms, that is, place-names containing an element describing a tribe or

cultural group inhabiting them, do not necessarily have straightforward etymologies. Jayne Carroll has pointed out that early medieval English scribes used *Norðmenn* 'Norwegians' and *Dene* 'Danes' interchangeably for any group of Scandinavians, therefore we should apply the same general principle when interpreting ethnonyms that are likely to have been coined by OE speakers.¹¹⁹ This means that the ethnonyms in the Wreake Valley corpus must not be interpreted too literally. Another point Carroll makes which is relevant here is that 'such names are usually interpreted as having arisen in the speech of neighbouring populations...as a "popular" record of perceptions of difference'¹²⁰ However, Carroll points out that the clutch of *Normantons* found in the East Midlands are likely to represent a group of 'functional appellatives' rather than having arisen in natural speech: 'These *Normantons* may have referred to administrative centres so-named by politically dominant English speakers within areas with significant numbers of Scandinavian dwellers.'¹²¹ Regardless of whether the name was coined as part of natural discourse or designated with forethought, it is by no means implied that these enclaves were male-only. The term 'men(n)' in Old English and the equivalent *maðr* in Old Norse, are gender neutral terms, closer to modern 'people'. Gender-specific terms were available, it is just that those coining these particular names chose a gender-neutral term. Just how significant it is that the Normanton name-type uses the gender neutral form is difficult to tell. At the very least, it implies that women may have been among the group. Place-names such as Saxby, on the other hand, are most likely coined by Norse speakers. If places are named for a recognisable or important feature, then the fact that this one is named for having been inhabited by Saxons implies that this was in some way unusual in the area. Furthermore, the fact that a) such a large proportion

¹¹⁹ Carroll, 'Identifying Migrants', p. 101.

¹²⁰ Carroll, 'Identifying Migrants', p. 100.

¹²¹ Carroll, 'Identifying Migrants', p. 114.

of the region's names are Norse or Norse-influenced and, b) that Norse place-names continued to be coined for several generations are both compelling indications that Norse-speaking women were not just present in significant numbers but active in the community and part of everyday conversations.

Minor and Field-Names

Field-names are arranged in the same way as major settlement names. As per the EPNS practice, lost place-names are indicated with a (b) after their head form.

Old English Field-Names	
Head Form [Hundred] Earliest Attestation Elements Earliest recorded form(s) Etymology	Bradeslandes (b) (Welby f.ns) East Goscote, Lei l.12 GarCart <i>brād + land</i> <i>No other forms available</i> Probably 'broad selions'.
Head Form [Hundred] Earliest Attestation Elements Earliest recorded form(s) Etymology	Brocholes (Welby f.ns) East Goscote, Lei l.12 GarCart <i>brocc + hol</i> <i>No other forms available</i> 'Badger set'.
Head Form [Hundred] Earliest Attestation Elements Earliest recorded form(s) Etymology	Dallewell (b) (Stapleford f.ns) Framland, Lei 1199 FF <i>D(e)alla + wella</i> <i>No other forms available</i> 'D(e)alla's well, spring'.
Head Form [Hundred] Earliest Attestation Elements Earliest recorded form(s) Etymology	Eorlingeshill (Garendon f.ns) West Goscote, Lei 12th century <i>eorl + lyng + hyll</i> <i>No other forms available</i> <i>eorl'</i> is likely to allude to Robert le Bossu (1104-68), 2nd Earl of Leicester, who founded Garendon Abbey for Cistercian monks.
Head Form [Hundred] Earliest Attestation Elements Earliest recorded form(s) Etymology	Grahalega (b) (Cossington f.ns) East Goscote, Lei 1199 Cur <i>græg + leah</i> <i>No other forms available</i> Barrie Cox's only note for this field-name is "At this date græg poss. refers to the wolf rather than to the badger".
Head Form [Hundred]	Haverwic (b) (Quorndon f.ns) West Goscote, Lei

Earliest Attestation	1123(1147)
Elements	<i>hæfera + wīc</i>
Earliest recorded form(s)	<i>No other forms available</i>
Etymology	'Oat farm'
Head Form [Hundred]	Helagre (b) (Welby f.ns) East Goscote, Lei
Earliest Attestation	l.12 GarCart
Elements	<i>hyll + æcer</i>
Earliest recorded form(s)	<i>No other forms available</i>
Etymology	'Plot of arable land on a hill'
Head Form [Hundred]	Monifalgate (b) (Quorndon f.ns) West Goscote, Lei
Earliest Attestation	1123 (1147)
Elements	<i>manigfeald + gata</i>
Earliest recorded form(s)	<i>No other forms available</i>
Etymology	'Manifold/many gates'
Head Form [Hundred]	Staniford (b) (Garendon f.ns) West Goscote, Lei
Earliest Attestation	12th century
Elements	<i>stānig + ford</i>
Earliest recorded form(s)	<i>No other forms available</i>
Etymology	'Stony ford'
Head Form [Hundred]	Wifwel (b) (Garendon f.ns) West Goscote, Lei
Earliest Attestation	l.12 GarCart
Elements	<i>wulf + wella</i>
Earliest recorded form(s)	<i>No other forms available</i>
Etymology	'Well or spring associated with wolves'; it is also possible that this is the Old English pers.n. 'Wulf'.

Old Norse Field-Names	
Head Form [Hundred]	Hortereschol (b) (Diseworth f.ns) West Goscote, Lei
Earliest Attestation	c.1200
Elements	<i>Hjǫrter + hol</i>
Earliest recorded form(s)	<i>No other forms available</i>
Etymology	Hjǫrter's hollow or valley'
Head Form [Hundred]	Hundehoge (b) (Cossington f.ns) West Goscote, Lei
Earliest Attestation	1124 ASC E
Elements	<i>hund/ Hundi + haugr</i> <i>(Hundehoge 1124); (Hundehaug c.1285); (Hundaue 1325);</i> <i>(Hundauc 1332); (Hundauk 1464x84) (Hundie Hoole 1601)</i>
Earliest recorded form(s)	
Etymology	'Hundi's mound' or 'mound of the dog(s)'
Head Form [Hundred]	Tinghills (a) (Frisby on the Wreake f.ns) East Goscote, Lei
Earliest Attestation	c.1200 Dane
Elements	<i>þing + haugr</i>
Earliest recorded form(s)	<i>(Thingou c.1200); (Tyngge hill 1680) (Tinghills [surviving])</i>
Etymology	'Assembly site on the border with rotherby'

Head Form [Hundred]	Toftessike (b) (Frisby on the Wreake f.ns) East Goscote, Lei
Earliest Attestation	c.1200 Dane
Elements	<i>toft</i> (ON) + <i>sík</i> (ON)
Earliest recorded form(s)	<i>no early forms available</i>
Etymology	'Curtilage/enclosure attached to a dwelling with a ditch'

Hybrid/Ambiguous Field-Names	
Head Form [Hundred]	Bradedale (b) (Rotherby and Hoby f.ns) East Goscote, Lei
Earliest Attestation	1154-1189 Terrier
Elements	<i>brād</i> (OE) + <i>dalr</i> (ON)
Earliest recorded form(s)	<i>(Bradedale, Braddale l.Hy 2); (Braddadale Hy 2);</i>
Etymology	'Broad dale or valley'
Head Form [Hundred]	Brecchou (b) (Rotherby and Hoby f.ns) East Goscote, Lei
Earliest Attestation	c.1200 Dane
Elements	<i>Brēc</i> + <i>haugr</i>
Earliest recorded form(s)	<i>(Brecchou c.1200); (Braicho 1203 FF/Fine); (Breikehou a. 1250 [1404]); (Breychou p. 1250 [1404]); (longe Breychou p. 1250 [1404]); (Scortebreychou p.1250 [1404]); (Brechougrene m.13 [1404]); (Braychow(e) 1407); (Breychhow, Breychowe 1467-84); (Breychow 1467-84, 1477, e.16); (Schortbreyc(h)how 1467-84)</i>
Etymology	'Mound with the broken ground'
Head Form [Hundred]	Gredale (b) (Welby f.ns) East Goscote, Lei
Earliest Attestation	l.12 GarCart
Elements	<i>grēne</i> (OE) + <i>dalr</i> (ON)
Earliest recorded form(s)	<i>No other forms available</i>
Etymology	'Green valley'
Head Form [Hundred]	Hauchestoft (b) (Rothley f.ns) West Goscote, Lei
Earliest Attestation	1135 (1154)
Elements	<i>hafoc</i> + <i>toft</i>
Earliest recorded form(s)	<i>No other forms available</i>
Etymology	Either the OE masc. name <i>Hafoc</i> (>ME <i>Havoc</i>) or ' <i>hafoc</i> ' perh. used by metonymy for 'a hawker, one who cares for or breeds hawks'.
Head Form [Hundred]	Littlehag (b) (Quorndon f.ns) West Goscote, Lei
Earliest Attestation	1123 (1147)
Elements	<i>lȳtel</i> (OE) + <i>haga</i> (ON)
Earliest recorded form(s)	<i>No other forms available</i>
Etymology	'Haga' is either 'message, property' or 'enclosure, pasture for grazing'. So, 'small enclosure, small pasture'.
Head Form [Hundred]	Osebec (b) (Welby f.ns) East Goscote, Lei
Earliest Attestation	l.12 (GarCart)

Elements	<i>ōsle/oyser</i> (OE) + <i>bekkr</i> (ON)
Earliest recorded form(s)	<i>No other forms available</i>
Etymology	First element uncertain. Either 'an ouzel - a blackbird' or 'oyser 'an osier'
Head Form [Hundred]	Stanwasbroc (b) (Quorndon f.ns) West Goscote, Lei
Earliest Attestation	1123 (1147)
Elements	<i>stān</i> (OE) + <i>vað</i> (ON) + <i>brōk</i> (ON)
Earliest recorded form(s)	<i>No other forms available</i>
Etymology	'Brook with the stony ford'
Head Form [Hundred]	Suinhag (b) (Quorndon f.ns) West Goscote, Lei
Earliest Attestation	1123 (1147)
Elements	<i>swīn</i> (OE) + <i>haga</i> (ON)
Earliest recorded form(s)	<i>No other forms available</i>
Etymology	'Swine or pig enclosure'; 'message with a pig'
Head Form [Hundred]	Thre Howes (b) (Thrussington f.ns) East Goscote, Lei
Earliest Attestation	1154-1189 Terrier
Elements	<i>þrēo</i> (OE) + <i>haugr</i> (ON)
Earliest recorded form(s)	<i>(Thre Howes l. Hy 2) (Threhowes 13 Nichols); (the Thrawes 1601)</i>
Etymology	'Three mounds, three hills'

Problematic Field-Names	
Head Form [Hundred]	Aspedic (b) (Welby f.ns) East Goscote, Lei
Earliest Attestation	l.12 GarCart
Elements	<i>æspe/hæpse</i> + <i>dīc/dīk</i>
Earliest recorded form(s)	<i>No other forms available</i>
Etymology	First element: <i>æspe</i> meaning aspen tree or else <i>hæpse</i> meaning hinge; second element: 'ditch' for drainage or to create an artificial watercourse. Difficult to tell why this place might be named after a hasp or hinge. May refer to shape of the ditch? Therefore, perhaps an interpretation favouring aspen tree as the first element is more plausible.
Head Form [Hundred]	Brouningcroft (b) (Barsby f.ns) East Goscote, Lei
Earliest Attestation	1180 (1449 WoCart)
Elements	<i>Brouning</i> + <i>croft</i>
Earliest recorded form(s)	<i>No other forms available</i>
Etymology	Cox suggests 'Browning's Croft', 'Browning' being either the ME surname produced from the OE reflex of the pers.n. <i>Brouning</i> , or the name itself. The lack of further orthographical forms makes this particularly difficult to decipher.
Head Form [Hundred]	Dimsdale (a) (Asfordby f.ns) East Goscote, Lei
Earliest Attestation	l.12 GarCart
Elements	<i>dimming</i> + <i>dalr</i>

Earliest recorded form(s)	<i>(Diminggedale l.12); (dimingsdale 1601, 1602, 1605); (Diminsdale 1674, 1679); (diminsdaile, diminsdayle 1690); (short(t) diminsdale 1674, 1679); (Dimsdale 1777)</i>
Etymology	'Valley which darkens quickly at dusk'. Just as with <i>Brouningcroft</i> , it is impossible to determine whether this name is OE or ME.
Head Form [Hundred]	Luq'stoa (b) (Thurmaston f.ns) East Goscote, Lei
Earliest Attestation	1190x1205 (France)
Elements	<i>Luke + stōw</i>
Earliest recorded form(s)	<i>No other forms available</i>
Etymology	'Luke's place'. This may mark the place of a former church, but this is difficult to ascertain since the site cannot be pinpointed.

In general, I have not separated field-names from major place-names in my analysis, considering both alongside each other. However, I will briefly reflect on the notable features of the Wreake Valley's place-names here. The field-names in this corpus are more opaque than the major settlement names. Some twenty-two of them, the vast majority, are lost making them resistant to efforts to plot their locations on a map. The names allocated to the table labelled 'Problematic' pose particular difficulties which are detailed in the 'etymologies' section of each. Just like the major names, many of the field-names describe the landscape and ways in which it has been used: Haverwic 'oat farm'; Bradedale 'broad valley'; Toftessike 'enclosure attached to a dwelling with a ditch'. The Wreake Valley's field-names are more difficult to interpret than its major names since nearly all of them are equivocal, with two or more etymologies suggested as equally likely. A much smaller proportion of the field-names are Old Norse compared to the major settlement names. The majority are Old English (10), many are hybrid (8), only four have two elements which can confidently be identified as Old Norse. One characteristic which emerges upon reading the field-names is the possible frequent allusions to animals, both wild and domestic. Since the names are equivocal, other meanings are possible, but there are up to seven references to animals in the field-names:

Badger:	Brocholes
Blackbird:	Osebec
Dog:	Hundehoge
Hawk:	Hauechestoft
Pig/Swine:	Suinhag
Wolf:	Grahalega Wlfewel

The fact that there is a much greater number of possible allusions to animals in the field-names than in the major settlement names may reflect the lifestyles and occupations of those who coined them. Field-names are thought, in some cases, to be coined by those working closely with the land, such as various kinds of farm labourers.

How ‘Norse’ were the Hundreds of the Wreake Valley? A statistics-based approach

Each of the districts within the Wreake Valley possesses its own mix of place-names and could be described as ‘Norse’ to varying degrees. Domesday Book records four hundredal divisions in Leicestershire: Goscote (an expansive unit which was not divided into East and West until the fourteenth century), Guthlaxton, Gartree and Framland.¹²² Goscote (along with Framland, one of the two hundreds which encompasses the parishes around the River

¹²² Olof S. Andersen, *The English Hundred Names* (Lund: Lunds Universitets Arsskrift 30, 1934), p. 43.

Wreake) and Guthlaxton were about twice the size of Gartree and Framland. This may have been due to Charnwood Forest taking up quite a large portion of their land. Sparkenhoe, however, originated post-Conquest.

Goscote, now divided into two hundreds, East and West, is centrally positioned in the Wreake Valley and sited close to the river. Cox doubts that Goscote would be named after such a temporary structure as a shelter for geese, suggesting the Old English masculine personal name *Gōsa*: 'Gōsa's cottage'.¹²³ Andersen, however, favours the 'goose cote' interpretation over a personal name.¹²⁴ John Baker has demonstrated in his survey of hundredal names that it is by no means unusual to see hundreds named after animal enclosures.¹²⁵ In his discussion of East Goscote, Barrie Cox gives the proportions of Old English and Scandinavian names: 'Of the 56 major township names in current use in the hundred, 29 (i.e. 52% are Old English, 17 (plus two possible, i.e. 30% or 34 %) are Scandinavian, 8 (plus 2 possible, i.e. 14% or 18%) are hybrid Old English/Scandinavian.'¹²⁶ These figures take the entire modern Hundred of East Goscote into consideration; the corpus under discussion here does not. Rather, the collection of place-names has been gathered from the Wreake River Valley and the parishes on the banks of the Rivers Soar and Eye. If the proposed method of designating names and name-elements as Old English, Old Norse, Hybrid and so on, is accepted, then the following percentages are applicable to the major settlement names in the corpus:

TOTAL CORPUS

¹²³ Barrie Cox, *The Place-Names of Leicestershire: Part III*, p. 1.

¹²⁴ Andersen, *The English Hundred Names*, p. 43.

¹²⁵ John Baker, 'The Toponymy of Communal Activity: Anglo-Saxon Assembly Sites and their Functions', in *Els noms en la vida quotidiana. Actes des XXIV Congrès Internacional d'ICOS sobre Ciències Onomàstiques*. ICOS, (2014), 1494- 1509 (p. 1502-3).

¹²⁶ Cox, *The Place-Names of Leicestershire: Part III*, p. XIV.

Major Settlement Names	%
Old English (33 of 66)	50%
Old Norse (21 of 66)	31.82%
Anglo-Norman (1 of 66)	1.5%
Hybrid (11 of 66)	16.67%

The sample size is similar to Cox's (the major townships of East Goscote) and the proportions are also similar. However, there are trends within the data that would be easier to discern on a distribution map. If the focus is narrowed to only the names within the corpus that fall in East Goscote:

EAST GOSCOTE	
Major Settlement Names	%
Old English (10 of 30)	33%
Old Norse (12 of 30)	40%
Hybrid (7 of 30)	23%
Anglo-Norman (1 of 30)	<1%

By contrast, the parishes in neighbouring West Goscote show a much stronger trend towards Old English place-names.

WEST GOSCOTE	
Major Settlement Names	%
Old English (13 of 15)	86.6%
Old Norse (1 of 15)	6.6%

Hybrid (0 of 15)	0%
Anglo-Norman (1 of 15)	6.6%

It must be remembered that even a sample of sixty-six names is very small; breaking that corpus down further is unlikely to produce a reliable picture of Old Norse and English speaking settlers in the region. However, some of these trends are very noticeable over small areas and it may be valuable to investigate whether these trends are reflected in patterns of Portable Antiquities Scheme finds, for example, or with other kinds of physical evidence. It is interesting that there is a particularly high proportion of Old Norse names in Framland Hundred, this being the only hundred of those (in the sample area) recorded in Domesday Book of Old Norse derivation (*fránn* 'gleaming, flashing' or the Norse pers.n. *Frániwith lundr* meaning 'grove').^{127,128}

FRAMLAND	
Major Settlement Names	%
Old English (3 of 15)	20%
Old Norse (8 of 15)	53.3%
Hybrid (4 of 15)	26.6%
Anglo-Norman (0 of 15)	0%

When considered together, the names of Framland and East Goscote hundreds suggest a strong Norse linguistic influence in the immediate area of the River Wreake. This may

¹²⁷ Fellows Jensen, *SPNLY*, pp. 85-6.

¹²⁸ Andersen, *The English Hundred Names*, p. 43.

suggest more intensive Scandinavian settlement in these places, though it cannot be considered conclusive.

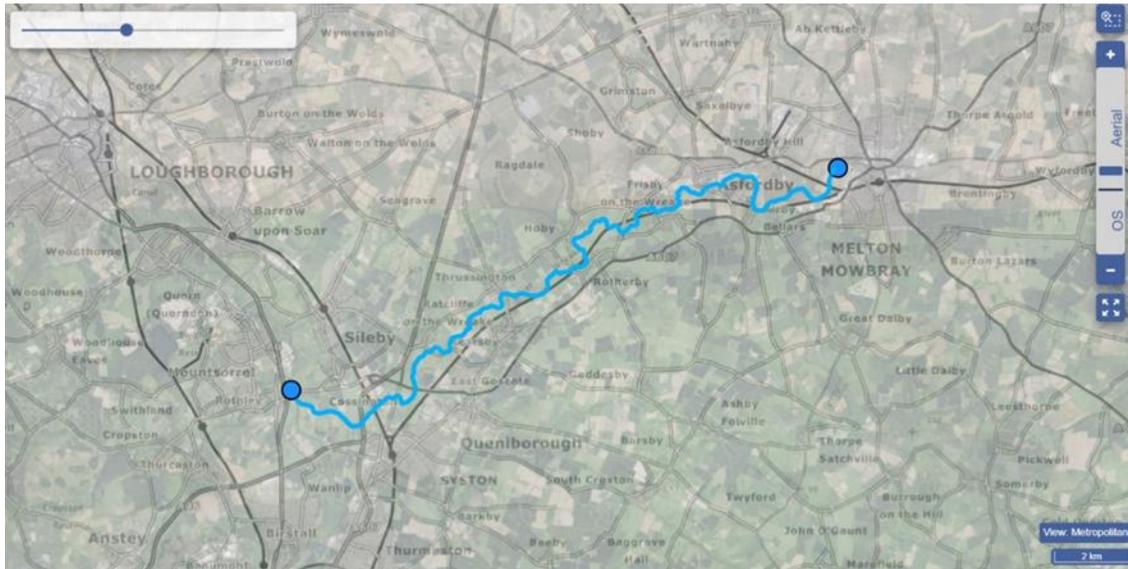
‘Winding’, ‘Wrathful’, or just ‘River’: The Wreake Valley’s River-Names

Some river-names preserve Brittonic or even pre-Brittonic nomenclature. In some cases, despite the names of settlements and landscape features changing around them, rivers are notably very slow to acquire new names. It can be understood as fairly exceptional then that the Wreake acquired a new name from the Norse-speaking settlers who made their homes along its banks. It is supposed that Viking raiders initially arrived in Leicestershire by river, sailing ‘down the Trent and Soar and then up the Wreake to Melton Mowbray’.^{129 130}

(Though the sailors would surely have had to navigate upstream against the current all the way). Roderick Dale points out the propensity of Viking armies to set up their camps next to rivers, as they are known to have done at Repton and Torksey – relying on them as a means of subsistence, transport and as a communications channel. In the Wreake Valley, a Norse-speaking community seems to have sprung up with the river at its centre, as evidenced by the clutch of *bý*-names. To list a few, Ashby Folville, Barkby and Barsby sit south of the Wreake on streams which feed north into it. Similarly, on the north of the Wreake, Saxelby and Shoby sit on small streams which run south into it. These settlements are particularly closely linked to the river.

¹²⁹ Dale, *Viking Leicestershire*, p. 37.

¹³⁰ Dale, *Viking Leicestershire*, p. 37.



Map showing the course of the River Wreake

Cox tells us that the Wreake takes its name from the Scandinavian adjective *vreiðr*, meaning ‘winding, twisting’.¹³¹ This feature of the river’s course would likely have been acutely apparent to anyone attempting to sail a long, narrow vessel around its many hairpin bends – especially considering the Scandinavian settlers arriving by river would have been rowing against the flow.

This etymology may seem obvious enough, however the history of the term is somewhat complex. Eilert Ekwall points out that, in fact, at the time that this river name was likely to be coined, *vreiðr* had not yet developed its slightly later meaning of ‘winding, twisting’ and would have been much closer in meaning to its Old English cognate *wrāð*, meaning ‘wrathful, angry, hostile, cruel’.^{132,133} If this is a more accurate interpretation then

¹³¹ Cox, *The Place-Names of Leicestershire: Part III*, p. XIV.

¹³² Eilert Ekwall, *English River Names* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1929), pp. 472-3.

¹³³ Richard Marsden, *The Cambridge Old English Reader*, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 567.

one might wonder what transpired to cause the river to take on this aspect to those who named it.

If rivers are known to retain their names for centuries, then what caused this one to change? The belief that a river might have a consciousness or a will of its own, to be mollified or entreated for safe passage and protection for the local community might explain the Scandinavian (pagan) practice of ritual weapon deposition in rivers and other wetlands. To date, around 74 examples of Viking Age weapons have been recovered from England's lakes and rivers, appearing to have been 'ritually deposited'.¹³⁴ The Wreake, Soar and Eye have not been investigated for this type of artefact. It is impossible from this modern remove to understand the motivation behind the name. What is clear from the positioning and naming of settlements is that the Wreake was an important part of everyday life both for the English-speaking subsistence farmers and the pockets of Norse-speakers that came to join them in this region from the later ninth century onwards. Under the EPNS entry for Eye Kettleby, Cox explains, 'It is uncertain at what point R. Wreake was thought to become R. Eye and it may be that Eye (OE *ēa* 'river') was the pre-Scandinavian name for the entire river as far as its junction with the R. Soar.'¹³⁵ The river is still known as the Eye east of Sysonby Lodge. One possibility is that, after the disbanding of the Viking army in 877 and subsequent settlement in the Wreake Valley, the number of Old Norse speakers in the area between the Soar and Sysonby may have significantly outnumbered Old English speakers, resulting in the name change. If the river was in constant use as a means of transport and communication, or perhaps as a navigational point of reference, it

¹³⁴ Ben Raffield, 'A River of Knives and Swords: Ritually Deposited Weapons in English Watercourses and Wetlands During the Viking Age', *European Journal of Archaeology*, 17:4 (2014) 634-655.

¹³⁵ Cox, *The Place-Names of Leicestershire: Part II*, p. 189.

could have arisen frequently in local speech. Another possibility is that only Old Norse-speakers knew the river as ‘Wreake’ and that English-speakers continued to refer to it simply as *ēa* along its full course. It may just be that the Scandinavian name has stuck where Scandinavian speech, culture and/or settlement was densest.

There is also the question of why Scandinavian settlers came to the Wreake Valley? From their original ingress at the Humber Estuary, up the River Trent and to the Soar, it would have been necessary to sail or row against the flow of the river. Though members of the ‘Great Army’, those originally believed to have been responsible for the Grimston-hybrids (Coston, Sproxton, Syston, Thrussington, Thurmaston and, of course Grimston), may not have sailed this route all in one trip, it would certainly be a simple route to describe or for which to provide navigational directions to relations back home in Denmark or other parts of Scandinavia. (See Chapter 3 for a more detailed discussion of Grimston-hybrids.)

Personal Names from the Corpus: People of the Wreake Valley

Personal Names	
Head Form [Hundred]	Cossington East Goscote, Lei
Earliest Attestation	1086 DB
Elements	<i>Cos(s)a/Cus(s)a + ingtūn</i>
Earliest recorded form(s)	<i>Cosintone; Cosenton; Cosington; Cossyngton; Cousington; Cousintona; Cusenton; Cusington; Cussington;</i>
Etymology	'Village or estate associated with a man named Cos(s)a or Cus(s)a'
Head Form [Hundred]	Diseworth West Goscote, Lei
Earliest Attestation	967 (for 972) (m.13) Bu
Elements	<i>Digoth + worð</i>
Earliest recorded form(s)	<i>æt Digbeswyrþe; Divvort; Digaðeswrð; Digðeswrthia; Digesworth; Diggewrth; Dichesword; Didesworda</i>
Etymology	'Enclosure of a man named Digoth'. This pers.n. appears as a specific in Dishley in the same hundred to the south in Loughborough.

<p>Head Form [Hundred]</p> <p>Earliest Attestation</p> <p>Elements</p> <p>Earliest recorded form(s)</p> <p>Etymology</p>	<p>Dishley West Goscote, Lei</p> <p>1086 DB</p> <p><i>Digoth + lēah</i></p> <p><i>Dislea; Dexleia; Dixeleia; Disselai(a); Dixl'; Dyxle; Dysshley; Dichley</i></p> <p>'Woodland or woodland clearing of a man called Digoð'. See above.</p>
<p>Head Form [Hundred]</p> <p>Earliest Attestation</p> <p>Elements</p> <p>Earliest recorded form(s)</p> <p>Etymology</p>	<p>Garendon West Goscote, Lei</p> <p>c.1130 LeicSurv</p> <p><i>Gærwald + dūn</i></p> <p><i>Geroldon(e); Gerudonia; Gereudona; Geroudon(e); Gerewedona; Gerwedon; Gerowdon; Geradon; Garadon; Garrodon</i></p> <p>'Gærwald's hill'</p>
<p>Head Form [Hundred]</p> <p>Earliest Attestation</p> <p>Elements</p> <p>Earliest recorded form(s)</p> <p>Etymology</p>	<p>Hemington West Goscote, Lei</p> <p>c.1130 LeicSurv</p> <p><i>Hemma/Hemmi + ingtūn</i></p> <p><i>Aminton; Heminton; Hemminton; Hemington</i></p> <p>'The estate called after Hemma or Hemmi'</p>
<p>Head Form [Hundred]</p> <p>Earliest Attestation</p> <p>Elements</p> <p>Earliest recorded form(s)</p> <p>Etymology</p>	<p>Kegworth West Goscote Lei</p> <p>1086 DB</p> <p><i>Cagga/Ceagga + worð</i></p> <p><i>Cacheuorde; Cogeworde; Caggworth; Cagewrdhe; Kagwrdia; Ceggewrðe; Keggeworde; Keggworth(e);</i></p> <p>'Cægga's enclosure'. Though Ekwall suggests the Old Icelandic by-name <i>Kaggi</i> from 'ale cask', in DEPN; Mills suggests this is a masc. OE pers.n. and Cox suggests Cagga may be an unattested variant of the attested OE masc. name Cægga. The OE interpretations seem more likely here.</p>
<p>Head Form [Hundred]</p> <p>Earliest Attestation</p> <p>Elements</p> <p>Earliest recorded form(s)</p> <p>Etymology</p>	<p>Lockington West Goscote, Lei</p> <p>c.1130 LeicSurv</p> <p><i>Loc(a) + ingtūn</i></p> <p><i>Lokinton; Lokington; Lockington</i></p> <p>'Estate called after Loc(a)'. One of a number of settlements ending <i>-ingtūn</i> in western Leics.</p>
<p>Head Form [Hundred]</p> <p>Earliest Attestation</p> <p>Elements</p> <p>Earliest recorded form(s)</p> <p>Etymology</p>	<p>Loughborough West Goscote, Lei</p> <p>c.1130 LeicSurv</p> <p><i>Luhhede + burh</i></p> <p><i>Lvctebvrne; Locteburne; Lucteb'; Luhteburht; Luteburc(h); Luttebur; Luchteburc; Lughteburgh; Lughteburgh; Lughtburgh</i></p> <p>'Fortified place of a man named Luhhede'</p>
<p>Head Form [Hundred]</p> <p>Earliest Attestation</p> <p>Elements</p> <p>Earliest recorded form(s)</p> <p>Etymology</p>	<p>Rothley West Goscote, Lei</p> <p>1086 DB</p> <p><i>Hrotha + lēah OR roth + lēah</i></p> <p><i>Rodolei; Rodeley; Roelay; Rohelea; Rolea; Rothele; Rothley; Rowtheley</i></p> <p>Either 'Hrotha's clearing' or 'wood with clearing'.</p>

Head Form [Hundred] Earliest Attestation Elements Earliest recorded form(s) Etymology	Sproxton Framland, Lei c.1130 LeicSurv <i>Sprókr + tūn</i> <i>Sprotone; Sproxcheston; Sproxton('); Sprochton'; Sprostona; Sprauston; Sprawson</i> 'Sprok's village, estate' or even (though less likely) 'Sprógr's village, estate'. However, this pers.n. is elsewhere unattested.
Head Form [Hundred] Earliest Attestation Elements Earliest recorded form(s) Etymology	Six Hills East Goscote, Lei a.1118 (s.a.716) <i>Seccge + wald</i> <i>Seggeswalda; Segeswold; Segs Hill; Sixhill</i> 'Secge's portion of the wolds district'
Head Form [Hundred] Earliest Attestation Elements Earliest recorded form(s) Etymology	Syston East Goscote, Lei 1086 DB <i>Sigehæð/Sigefrið + tūn</i> <i>Sitestone; Sithestun; Sithston; Sideston; Sieston; Siston; Sison</i> 'Sigehæð/Sigefrið's farmstead or village'
Head Form [Hundred] Earliest Attestation Elements Earliest recorded form(s) Etymology	Barkby East Goscote, Lei 1086 DB <i>Bqrkr/Barki + bý</i> <i>Barchebi; Barcheberie; Barkebia; Barkesby; Barkby; Berkeby</i> 'Bark's farmstead, village'
Head Form [Hundred] Earliest Attestation Elements Earliest recorded form(s) Etymology	Barsby East Goscote, Lei 1086 DB <i>Barn + bý</i> <i>Barnesbi; Bernisby; Barneby; Baresby(e); Barsby</i> 'Barn's farmstead, village' or 'farmstead or village of the child or young heir'. Alternatively, Fellows-Jensen (SSNEM 35) suggests that the first element may simply refer to a 'barn' in the modern sense.
Head Form [Hundred] Earliest Attestation Elements Earliest recorded form(s) Etymology	Bescaby Framland, Lei c.1130 LeicSurv. <i>Berg-Skáld + bý</i> <i>Berthaldebia; Berscaldeby; Berscaudebi; Berscoldebi; Berscoudebi; Bergaldebi; Besgaldebi; Bescaudeby; Bescoldeby</i> 'Berg-Skáld's farmstead, village'. The unrecorded Scand. Pers.n. is parallel in construction with ON Skóg-Ketill, for example, in which a topographical term is prefixed to an independently recorded pers.n. Here, it means 'hill-poet'.
Head Form [Hundred] Earliest Attestation Elements Earliest recorded form(s) Etymology	Brooksby East Goscote, Lei 1086 DB <i>Brök + bý</i> <i>Brochesbi; Brokesbya; Brokeby; Broksby; Brookesbi</i> 'Brök's farmstead, village'. The genitive inflection here points to the common Old Norse by-name rather than the interpretation 'farmstead by the brook'.
Head Form [Hundred]	Eye Kettleby Framland, Lei

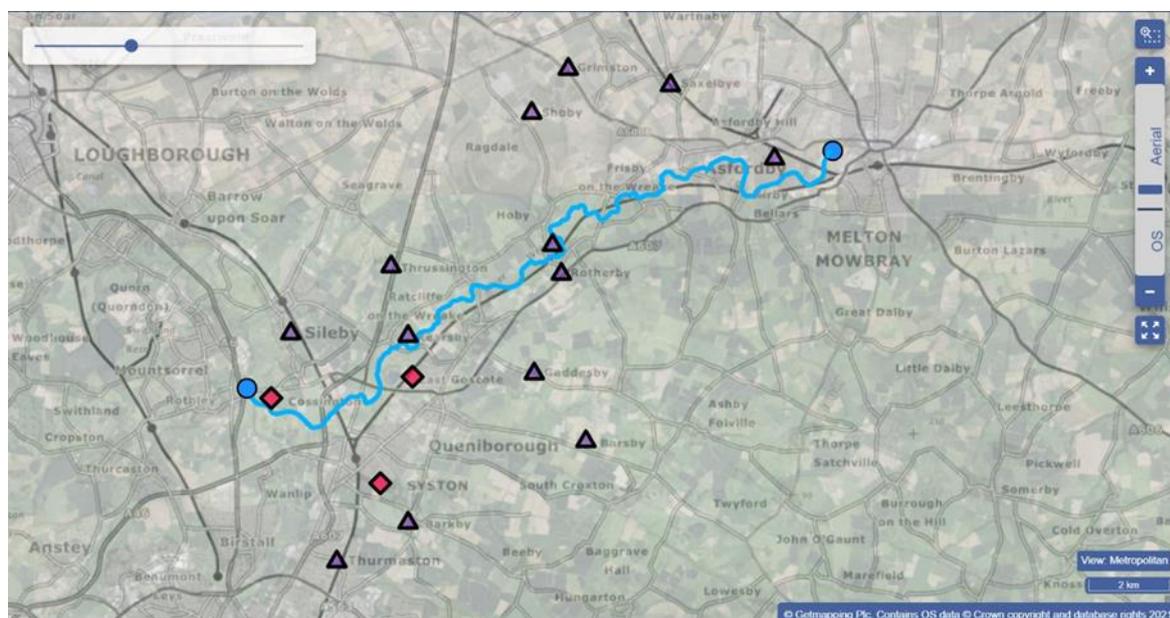
Earliest Attestation Elements	1086 DB <i>Ketill + bý</i>
Earliest recorded form(s)	<i>Chitebie; Chetelbia; Ketelbi; Ketelebi; Kedlesby; Ketilby; Ketelebi; Kettleby</i>
Etymology	'Ketill's farmstead, settlement'. Only one form shows the genitive. Ketill is a very common ON name. Cox suggests the ON byname meaning 'cauldron, cauldron-shaped helmet'. As the affix suggests, the settlement stands on a tributary of the rivers Wreake and Eye.
Head Form [Hundred]	Freeby Framland, Lei
Earliest Attestation Elements	c.1130 LeicSurv <i>Fræthi + bý</i>
Earliest recorded form(s)	<i>Fredebi; Frethebi; Frithebi; Frethby; Freythby; Freyby; Freby</i>
Etymology	'Fræthi's farmstead or village', the personal name Fræthi (Frethi) is ODan.
Head Form [Hundred]	Gaddesby East Goscote, Lei
Earliest Attestation Elements	1086 DB <i>Gad + bý</i>
Earliest recorded form(s)	<i>Gadesbi; Gaddesbi; Gadesberi; Gatesbi; Gaddebi</i>
Etymology	'Gad's farmstead, village'
Head Form [Hundred]	Rearsby East Goscote, Lei
Earliest Attestation Elements	1086 DB <i>Hreiðarr + bý</i>
Earliest recorded form(s)	<i>Redresbi; Reresbi; Resebi; Resby; Rearesby; Raresby; Rearsby</i>
Etymology	'Hreiðar's farmstead or village'
Head Form [Hundred]	Rotherby East Goscote, Lei
Earliest Attestation Elements	1086 DB <i>Hreiðarr + bý</i>
Earliest recorded form(s)	<i>Redebi; Rederbia; Reidebi; Retheresby; Retherby; Ratherby; Rotheby</i>
Etymology	'Hreiðar's farmstead or village'
Head Form [Hundred]	Saltby Framland, Lei
Earliest Attestation Elements	1086 DB <i>Salt/Saltr + bý</i>
Earliest recorded form(s)	<i>Saltebi; Sautebi; Saltby</i>
Etymology	'Farmstead or village with the salty spring or where salt is made'; possible but less likely that the first element contains the ON pers.n. Saltr.
Head Form [Hundred]	Saxby Framland, Lei
Earliest Attestation Elements	1086 DB <i>Seaxe/Saxi + bý</i>
Earliest recorded form(s)	<i>Saxeby; Saxenebi; Sessebia; Sexeby; Saxby; Sawsby</i>

Etymology	Either 'the farmstead, village of the Saxons' or 'Saxi's farmstead, village'. Saxi/Saksi is a common ON/ODan pers.n. However, in view of the early forms in Saxenebi, the gen. pl. of the ethnonym S(e)axe (S(e)axna gen.pl.) is suggested as more likely by Cox. Cox points out that, at the date of coinage, the Danes would be unlikely to tell Angles apart from Saxons. The two terms may have been used interchangeably.
Head Form [Hundred] Earliest Attestation Elements Earliest recorded form(s) Etymology	Saxelby(e) East Goscote, Lei 1086 DB <i>Saxulfr + bý</i> <i>Saxelbie; Saxebia; Saxilbi; Saxulebi; Saxhilby; Sowcelby</i> 'Saxulf's farmstead, village'
Head Form [Hundred] Earliest Attestation Elements Earliest recorded form(s) Etymology	Shoby East Goscote, Lei 1086 DB <i>Sigvaldr + bý</i> <i>Seoldesberie; Siwaldebia; Siwoldebi; Siwaldbi; Siwolby; Sywouldeby; Shouldby; Shoulby(e); Showby</i> 'Sigvaldr's farmstead or village'
Head Form [Hundred] Earliest Attestation Elements Earliest recorded form(s) Etymology	Sileby East Goscote, Lei 1086 DB <i>Sigulfr + bý</i> <i>Siglesbie; Sigelebi; Silesbi; Silebi; Syleby; Silby</i> 'Sigulf's farmstead or village'
Head Form [Hundred] Earliest Attestation Elements Earliest recorded form(s) Etymology	Sysonby Framland, Lei 1086 DB <i>Sigsteinn + bý</i> <i>Sistenebi; Sixtenebi; Sixtenesbi; Sextenebi; Sixtenby; Sextenby; Sistonby</i> 'Sigsteinn's farmstead, village'. The pers.n. Sigsteinn is Swedish and recorded in a number of Runic inscriptions.
Head Form [Hundred] Earliest Attestation Elements Earliest recorded form(s) Etymology	Welby East Goscote, Lei 1086 DB <i>Ali + bý</i> <i>Torp; Thorp(e);</i> 'Ali's farmstead or village'
Head Form [Hundred] Earliest Attestation Elements Earliest recorded form(s) Etymology	Asfordby East Goscote, Lei 1086 DB <i>æsc/eski + ford + bý OR Ásfrøðr + bý</i> <i>Barchebi; Barcheberie; Barkebia; Barkesby; Barkby; Berkeby</i> It may be OE <i>æsc</i> 'ash-tree' (influenced by the ON cognate <i>eski</i> with the same meaning) OR ON personal name <i>Ásfrøðr</i> (ODan <i>Āsfrið</i>) possibly showing confusion with OE pers.n. <i>Ōsferð/Ōsfrið</i> .
Head Form [Hundred] Earliest Attestation Elements Earliest recorded form(s)	Coston Framland, Lei 1086 DB <i>Kátr + tūn</i> <i>Castone; Causton'; Coston('); Cooston'; Cosun; Coaston</i>

Etymology	Probably 'Kátr's farmstead, village'. This is a pers.n. from the ON by-name kátr, meaning 'glad'.
Head Form [Hundred]	Grimston East Goscote, Lei
Earliest Attestation	1086 DB
Elements	<i>Grīmr + tūn</i>
Earliest recorded form(s)	<i>Grimestone; Grimston; Grymson</i>
Etymology	Grīm's farmstead or village'
Head Form [Hundred]	Thrussington East Goscote, Lei
Earliest Attestation	1086 DB
Elements	<i>Þorstein + tūn</i>
Earliest recorded form(s)	<i>Tvrstanestone; Tursteineston'; Tursteinton; Turstantone; Thursteinest'; Thursteinton; Thurstaneston(e); Thurstanton</i>
Etymology	'Þorstein's farmstead or village'
Head Form [Hundred]	Thurmaston East Goscote, Lei
Earliest Attestation	1086 DB
Elements	<i>Þormóðr + tūn</i>
Earliest recorded form(s)	<i>Tvmodestone; Tormodestuna; Turmundeston; Thormodeston; Thurmodeston; Thurmeston; Thormeston; Thurmenstone</i>
Etymology	'Þormóðr's village, settlement'
Head Form [Hundred]	Dallewell (b) (Stapleford f.ns) Framland, Lei
Earliest Attestation	1199 FF
Elements	<i>D(e)alla + wella</i>
Earliest recorded form(s)	<i>No other forms available</i>
Etymology	'D(e)alla's well, spring'
Head Form [Hundred]	Hauechestoft (b) (Rothley f.ns) West Goscote, Lei
Earliest Attestation	1135 (1154)
Elements	<i>hafoc + toft</i>
Earliest recorded form(s)	<i>no other forms available</i>
Etymology	Either the OE masc. name Hafoc (>ME Havoc) or 'hafoc' perh. Used by metonymy for 'a hawker, one who cares for or breeds hawks'.
Head Form [Hundred]	Wifwel (b) (Garendon f.ns) West Goscote, Lei
Earliest Attestation	l.12 GarCart
Elements	<i>wulf + wella</i>
Earliest recorded form(s)	<i>no other forms available</i>
Etymology	'Well or spring associated with wolves'; it is also possible that this is the Old English pers.n. 'Wulf'.
Head Form [Hundred]	Hortereschol (b) (Diseworth f.ns) West Goscote, Lei
Earliest Attestation	c.1200
Elements	<i>Hjqrter + hol</i>
Earliest recorded form(s)	<i>no other forms available</i>
Etymology	Hjqrter's hollow or valley'.
Head Form [Hundred]	Hundehoge (b) (Cossington f.ns) West Goscote, Lei
Earliest Attestation	1124 ASC E
Elements	<i>hund/ Hundi + haugr</i>
Earliest recorded form(s)	<i>(Hundehoge 1124); (Hundehaug c.1285); (Hundaue 1325); (Hundauc 1332); (Hundauc 1464x84) (Hundie Hoole 1601)</i>

Etymology	'Hundi's mound' or 'mound of the dog(s)'
Head Form [Hundred]	Brouningcroft (b) (Barsby f.ns) East Goscote, Lei
Earliest Attestation	1180 (1449 WoCart)
Elements	<i>Brouning + croft</i>
Earliest recorded form(s)	<i>no other forms available</i>
Etymology	Cox suggests 'Browning's Croft', 'Browning' being either the ME surname produced from the OE reflex of the pers.n. <i>Brouning</i> , or the name itself.
Head Form [Hundred]	Luq'stoa (b) (Thurmaston f.ns) East Goscote, Lei
Earliest Attestation	1190x1205 (France)
Elements	<i>Luke + stōw</i>
Earliest recorded form(s)	<i>no other forms available</i>
Etymology	'Luke's place'

It is clear to see, both from the high number of personal names compounded with the element *bý* and their wide distribution over the landscape, that men bearing Scandinavian names had left their mark on the Wreake Valley by the time Domesday Book was compiled in 1086.



The red diamonds represent place-names containing Old English personal names; the purple triangles represent place-names containing Old Norse personal names. The blue dot on the left (southwest) marks the point at which the Wreake joins the Soar. The blue dot on the right (northeast) marks the point at which it becomes the Eye.

In East Goscote and Framland, the hundreds situated on the River Wreake, there are many more place-names containing Scandinavian personal names than English ones. It

should be remembered that a Scandinavian personal name does not necessarily signify a Scandinavian individual, nor does it necessarily date to the Viking Age in England. Naming fashions and influence on local speech and dialect meant that in the north and east Midlands, people continued to give their children Norse names, particularly during the reign of Cnut. Such fashions also persisted post-Conquest. With that said, Domesday Book tells us that all but one of the Old Norse place-names in the table above (marked 'Personal Names') were in place by 1086. The earlier a name is attested, the more likely it is to have been coined during the Viking settlement period. Alternatively, in the case of a personal name, the more likely the original bearer was Scandinavian.

To add a little more context, a further indication that the men who gave their names to these settlements were Scandinavian, rather than English with Scandinavian names, is that a good proportion of the personal name elements are at least reasonably uncommon. According to Fellows-Jensen, *Saxulfr* (Saxelby) is not a common name in England.¹³⁶ If Insley's assertion that *Saksi* (Saxby) could be a short form of *Saxulfr* is correct, then it is a possibility that the same individual gave his name to both locations.¹³⁷ However, there is no additional evidence to support this idea and the place-name could just as easily, if not more compellingly, derive from the Old English ethnonym *S(e)axe*. *Ali* (Welby), *Barn* (Barsby), *Bark* (Barkby), *Gad* (Gaddesby), *Hjqrter* (Hortereschol), *Hreiðarr* (Rearsby, Rotherby) and *Sigulfr* (Sileby) are all relatively uncommon in England. *Berg-Skáld* 'hill poet' of Bescaby is a particularly unusual byname. These names are unlikely to have entered the common name-stock and been adopted by Anglo-Saxon parents. There are some common names in the

¹³⁶ Fellows Jensen, *SPNLY* p. 227.

¹³⁷ John Insley, *Scandinavian Personal Names in Norfolk*, (Uppsala: Acta Academiae Regiae Gustavi Adolphi LXII, 1994), p. 323.

corpus, however. *Ketill* (Ab Kettleby) was particularly popular in Iceland and Norway during this time but also common throughout Denmark and Sweden, appearing in a number of runic inscriptions.¹³⁸ It is also found in many English place-names. *Sigefrið* (Syston) and *Þormóðr* (Thurmaston) are both commonly-attested.

Mounds, Meeting Places and Navigational Markers

Of the four hundredal names shown in the table below, only one is of Old Norse derivation: Framland. Framland and East Goscote both cover the Wreake Valley and both have a relatively high number of place-names with Norse elements within their boundaries. When considering, however, that Goscote was not split into two separate hundreds until the fourteenth century and that the western portion is dominated by Old English place-names, it is less surprising that the name for this hundred should be Old English.

Goscote (East and West) (Lei)	OE either 'shelter for geese' or 'Gōsa's cottage'
Framland (Lei)	ON 'flashing grove'
Alstoe (Ru)	OE 'Ælfnoð's place' / 'Ælfnoð's place of assembly'
Rushcliffe (Nt)	OE 'brushy cliff or steep slope'

¹³⁸ Fellows Jensen, *SPNLY* p. 169.

Women and Early Medieval Assemblies

There may be an absence of Scandinavian female personal names in the Wreake Valley but this does not mean that women were absent from this region. One feature of the Wreake Valley corpus is both major and minor names suggestive of meeting places and assembly sites. It is of value to address the subject of assemblies during the ninth to eleventh centuries in England, in particular in the sample area outlined for this study, not just because of the centrality of the assembly to law, administration and everyday life, but because there is a good chance that women, both Scandinavian and Anglo-Saxon, had a role to play within this sphere of influence.

John Baker has conducted extensive research on assembly places in early medieval England (fifth to eleventh centuries) and has pieced together an image of the assembly as an integral part of the fabric of day-to-day life. His research into the onomastic and physical evidence suggests a 'very busy landscape of assembly' with hundredal assemblies comprising just one part of a many-layered system with meetings taking place at various local levels.¹³⁹ Baker's research creates a picture of early medieval men and women existing 'within a very complex socio-economic administrative framework, attending a considerable variety of forums for negotiation, regulation and exchange.'¹⁴⁰ To apply this to the present discussion, this may mean that there were different implications for female attendance and/or participation depending on the kind of assembly in question. There may also have been different understandings of female social roles in Old Norse and Old English speaking communities. Baker explains, 'While ostensibly only freemen had a say at these events (and

¹³⁹ Baker, 'The Toponymy of Communal Activity', p. 1505.

¹⁴⁰ Baker, 'The Toponymy of Communal Activity', p. 1505.

perhaps often under the diktat of local lords), it is likely that the gatherings were sometimes attended by a much wider cross section of society'.¹⁴¹ This means, at the very least, we should understand that women could attend assemblies, if only as spectators. Indeed, the open air, open-format of outdoor assembly sites would make it difficult to enforce restrictions on who could attend.

To get a clearer idea as to how Scandinavian communities may have felt about female attendance and participation at assemblies, it is useful to examine practices in Scandinavia. According to Alexandra Sanmark, who has studied the earliest extant legal treatises regulating the Viking Age assemblies of Iceland and Norway, 'At least some women had full access to the assembly meetings, and many others may have participated on the margins.'¹⁴² Sanmark reminds us that, though in modern discourse we often use terms like 'freemen' and 'thingmen' to describe participants in Viking and Anglo-Saxon assemblies, the original Old Norse *maðr*, means 'person' rather than 'man' in many cases. Given the allowances for female participation she has found in the law codes relating to the Norwegian Gulathing and Frostathing, 'person' may well be its usage in this context. She has even found 'that the terms *karlmaðr* and *kona* or *kvennmaðr* are used when there was a need for the laws to be gender specific.'¹⁴³ Old English *man(n)* is also, in many cases gender-neutral, and best translated as 'person' unless the context dictates a specific gender, which means the same logic may be applicable to some of the Old English law codes governing assembly meets.

¹⁴¹ Baker, 'The Toponymy of Communal Activity', p. 1494.

¹⁴² Alexandra Sanmark, 'Women at the Thing', in *Kvinner i Vikingtid*, ed. by Nancy L. Coleman and Nanna Løkka (University of the Highlands and Islands: Scandinavian Academic Press, 2014), p. 89.

¹⁴³ Sanmark, 'Women at the Thing', p. 97.

Sanmark lays out the: ‘five groups of women who were allowed to participate actively in the *thing* meetings.’¹⁴⁴ (according to Norwegian law):

1. Widows could attend, or alternatively, could choose to send a male relative to the *thing* in their place.
2. ‘Ring Women’: unmarried women lacking any close male relatives who stood to inherit both land and portable wealth. These women could receive the proceeds of fines for murdered relatives and engage in transferrals of land ownership, both of which necessitated active participation at the assembly.
3. Women in disputes with other women.
4. ‘Women who maintain a household’: According to Sanmark, ‘The Law of the Frostathing stressed that at the *things* where the muster roll was prepared, this group of women had the same duty as men to attend and had to provide “good excuses” for sending a man in their place.’ According to *Grágás*, this also applied to married women whose husbands were ill or away from home.¹⁴⁵ These women were allowed to transact business deals and arrange marriages for their daughters.
5. Female witnesses. Even female slaves as young as eight were allowed to be witnesses at the Frostathing.¹⁴⁶

Sanmark explains that women in Iceland ‘had fewer opportunities to participate in the assembly than their Norwegian counterparts’.¹⁴⁷ We do not know as much about assembly practices in Denmark or the access to participation extended to women there. If the decisive

¹⁴⁴ Sanmark, ‘Women at the Thing’, p. 94.

¹⁴⁵ Sanmark, ‘Women at the Thing’, p. 95.

¹⁴⁶ Sanmark, ‘Women at the Thing’, p. 95.

¹⁴⁷ Sanmark, ‘Women at the Thing’, p. 96.

factor in limiting female access to the assembly in Iceland was ‘the Christian idea of marriage’ and a woman’s role within it, as Sanmark believes, then this is perhaps an influence that was felt by Scandinavians who settled in the Wreake Valley in the ninth to eleventh centuries as they found themselves in repeated contact with their Christian Anglo-Saxon neighbours.¹⁴⁸

In light of the foregoing discussion, there are two outstanding questions: a) How many of these laws and regulations applied to Scandinavian ‘thing’-type assemblies held in the Danelaw by settlers? b) What are the implications for women, particularly any Scandinavian women settlers in the Danelaw and their possible participation at local assemblies?

There are many place-names, particularly field-names, throughout the North of England and the East Midlands which attest to Scandinavian assemblies. Elements like *þing* (particularly when compounded with *-haugr* or *-vǫllr*), show that Norse speaking communities held assemblies across the landscape.

Just as in Norway and Iceland, hundredal assemblies acted as courts, where legal and judicial proceedings played out. One of the questions that remains unanswered regards the execution of criminals at assembly sites. According to Pantos the current evidence suggests that it was far more common, at least in the early medieval period, to try and sentence criminals at the assembly and execute and inter them elsewhere, usually at the hundredal boundary. Pantos does, however, point out some discrepancies. One of those discrepancies falls within Leicestershire. Not far away from the Wreake Valley, in Gartree Hundred, a group of inhumations were discovered close to Gartree Bush, the hundredal assembly

¹⁴⁸ Sanmark, ‘Women at the Thing’, p. 99.

marker. The skeletons uncovered here both appeared to have been decapitated, with one skull entirely missing and the other resting on the chest of the skeleton.¹⁴⁹ Pantos is quick to point out that the lack of archaeological evidence makes it tricky to ascertain just how anomalous this practice was.

Another assembly site reported to have been the venue for a mass execution is *Hundehoge*. Despite the site being lost, it is modestly renowned for the following grisly and tragic episode recorded in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle for the year 1124:

This same year, after the Feast of St. Andrew before Christmas [30th Nov], Ralph Basset [a prominent member of the King's court believed to be acting as an itinerant justiciar] and the king's thegns held a council at [Hundehoge] in Leicestershire, and there hanged many more thieves than ever were before, that was in a little while forty-four men in all; and despoiled six men of their eyes and of their stones. Numbers of honest men said that many were despoiled with great injustice there.¹⁵⁰

But how commonly did executions like this occur? Without further supporting evidence, it is impossible to tell whether the practice of executing, or indeed mutilating criminals on-site at the assembly is something that varied from region to region, possibly even being more common in Leicestershire or the Danelaw, or perhaps a practice that grew over time. The incident at *Hundehoge* took place in 1124; it is not possible to tell from the written records whether it was the first such execution at *Hundehoge's* assembly or whether

¹⁴⁹ Pantos, 'The Location and Form of Anglo-Saxon Assembly Places', p. 169.

¹⁵⁰ Swanton, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*, p. 254. Swanton uses a spelling for Hundehoge 'Hundehoh' which is not among any of the attested forms. See the Old Norse Field-Names Table on p. 61 where I have included all known forms under the entry for Hundehoge.

it was the customary venue for carrying out executions. Could this practice stretch back into the ninth and eighth centuries? At the very least, this entry in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle suggests that local residents used the site at *Hundehoge* as a meeting place and likely viewed it as an assembly of sufficient formality for judicial hearings to be held.

A number of peripheral activities would have taken place in the environs of the assembly, though not necessarily part of the main proceedings, and one of those was trade. A law code issued by Æthelstan in the 920s required that all transactions over 20d must be witnessed at a folk-moot.¹⁵¹ It is likely therefore that, in Anglo-Saxon society at least, the hundredal courts and assemblies were vital to the regulation of trade and mercantile activities at a local and county level. As explained in Chapter 2, Scandinavian women were likely to be involved in family trades and crafts and may have attended assemblies in related capacities. Considering the case that Pantos, Semple, Skinner and others have presented for a wide range of activities taking place at or in conjunction with the assembly, it is difficult to imagine even those Scandinavian women who might find themselves embedded in largely Christian Anglo-Saxon communities excluded entirely from their local assemblies.

Landownership is perhaps the most decisive factor in determining a woman's social standing (independent of her male relatives), and therefore her access to the assembly. In both Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian societies, women could own land in their own right. However, this was rare. The barriers to female property ownership are undoubtedly one of the reasons female personal names are so scarcely found in place-names, but this is not the only factor and the situation is more complex. . In Anglo-Saxon England, women sometimes owned land as part of a 'marriage portion'. In Scandinavia, a number of contingencies often

¹⁵¹ Pantos, 'The Location and Form of Anglo-Saxon Assembly Places', p. 166.

had to trigger before a woman could own land, such as being widowed and not having a son to take the inheritance. Sanmark turns to runestones to attempt to discover the ratio of male to female landowners in Scandinavia. These are a useful source of information since it is thought that landowners sponsored them. Results vary greatly between regions, but the average seems to be that 7% of runestones were sponsored by women, which gives us an estimate of 7% female landholders (Sawyer 2002). It could thus be suggested that perhaps up to 10% of the people who could legally participate in the assemblies were women in all the various capacities discussed above.¹⁵²

This is unlikely to represent the reality in ninth to eleventh century England, however. The common scholarly assumption seems to be that women who came to England from Scandinavia as settlers came with male relatives who intended to (or had already) set up a new steading for themselves. That means that there is likely to be some time lapse before any of the events are likely to occur which may result in a female settler inheriting land. This situation contrasts both with the pre-existing Anglo-Saxon communities and the Scandinavian communities they left behind where families had been living and dying for generations with property passing through various hands. It also contrasts with the situation in Iceland. Rather than having to negotiate for space with existing residents or adjust to the social norms and legal customs of new neighbours, the colonisers of Iceland had the freedom to divide up a previously unsettled island between themselves and create new legal codes, which provided more opportunities for women to claim land in their own names.

¹⁵² Sanmark, 'Women at the Thing', p. 98.

Conclusion

The subject of female Scandinavian migrants carries with it more than the usual amount of bias (as any gendered subject would). This, combined with patchy and conflicting evidence, often makes it difficult to discern where evidence ends and scholarly opinion begins. It is possible, and necessary, to keep the two separate. The picture that is pieced together, based on the evidence, is one that changes rapidly. In the prologue to their recently published book, *The Viking Great Army and the Making of England*, Hadley and Richards say their book could not have been written ten years ago.¹⁵³ Kershaw studied over 500 female dress brooches and fastenings recovered mostly by metal detectorists over the course of the last 30 years representing a twenty-five fold increase from pre-1900 sources.¹⁵⁴ The woman buried at Adwick-le-Street was excavated in 2001 and the Viking burials at Cumwhitton were found in 2004. These discoveries 'practically doubled the known burial evidence for Scandinavian women in England' in the space of three years.¹⁵⁵ As recently as 2018 Jarman et al. published the research which dated all human remains at Repton to the same deposition event, essentially linking them all to the Viking 'Great Army'.¹⁵⁶ In a field so prone to radical reappraisal, it is well to remain open minded.

To return to the original research questions, what part did women play in the Scandinavian migrations into north-eastern parts of England? What can the evidence tell us? What particular insights can archaeology and onomastics offer and what are their limitations? Human remains can be investigated to see if it is possible to tell where that

¹⁵³ Dawn M. Hadley and Julian D. Richards, *The Viking Great Army and the Making of England* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2021), p. 8.

¹⁵⁴ Kershaw, *Viking Identities*, p. 6.

¹⁵⁵ Jesch, 'Scandinavian women's names in English place-names', p. 154.

¹⁵⁶ Jarman and others, 'The Viking Great Army in England', pp. 183-9.

individual grew up. Unfortunately, the answer that comes back is frequently inscrutable. Isotopic evidence is, however, a rapidly advancing science and will no doubt continue to form an important part of archaeological study in the future. Even in its current state, isotope ratios, with all their caveats and equivocations, can be a useful strand of an interdisciplinary study. When they are placed in context, isotope ratios usually lean in a certain direction; alongside the other evidence, patterns often emerge — this can be seen with the woman buried at Adwick-le-Street. Onomastics is just as subject to caveats and equivocations as archaeology, it is just that they take a different form. The Wreake Valley's field-names can seldom be assigned a single clear etymology, for example. In the cases of both archaeology and onomastics, the evidence is not the most troublesome problem; it is that the researcher cannot place themselves, and their biases, to one side when analysing it. The methodology I have suggested is little more than basic scholarly protocol. Returning to this, I would suggest, is one of the first and best defences against bias.

Though there is little-to-no direct evidence for women in the place-names of the Wreake Valley, I hope to have made a case in Chapters 1-3 for the value of indirect evidence and to have argued for the wisdom of keeping an open mind with regards to absence of evidence. The high saturation of *bý*-names in the area paints a picture of a Norse-speaking farming community, coining place-names over successive generations. For Scandinavian and Scandinavian-influenced names to reach such proportions, and to survive to the present day, we can infer that Old Norse was spoken frequently, as part of everyday conversations and that Scandinavian women were part of those conversations: in the home where they raised children in their 'mother tongue' and in the local community where they contributed to coining major settlement names. However, they were also active in the fields and farmlands around the settlements where they were a part of coining minor names and field-

names containing Old Norse elements from agricultural, landscape and wildlife lexical fields. The influence of the Old Norse language even spread to areas known to be outside of direct Scandinavian influence.

Regarding the Wreake Valley, there is still much work to be done. A truly interdisciplinary investigation would bring in archaeological evidence and PAS finds from the region. It would also take into account examples of Anglo-Scandinavian stone sculpture and delve more deeply into documentary sources. This would build up a much clearer picture of life in the Wreake Valley in the early medieval period and the role of female migrants in that community. There is also huge scope for GIS analysis of this region. This was something I began but did not have time to continue with. It is hoped that my research and analysis will contribute to the debate regarding women's role in the Scandinavian migrations to England by encouraging a slightly different approach to the evidence; one which attempts to identify and guard against modern biases. The approach modelled here demonstrates that it is possible to be pragmatic about the difficulties attending the evidence for women without wishing to dismiss it out of hand and to appreciate that our understanding of the early medieval period is constantly changing and developing.

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