Chapter 5
The Background of Brunanburh

JOHN McN DODGSON

Dodgson wrote this valuable paper long before The Place-Names of Cheshire *was published, but his research into the names was already bearing fruit. From the consideration of the probable location of the battle of* Brunanburh, *Dodgson proceeds to show that the Norse enclave of the Wirral was well-defined, with boundaries that were preserved in much later times. Sub-headings and material in square brackets are editorial.*

Brunanburh

One of the places which have been suggested as the site of the famous battle fought AD 937 *ymb Brunanburh*, is Bromborough on the Mersey shore of Wirral, in Cheshire.[1] As long ago as 1937, A. H. Smith[2] demonstrated that the place-name Bromborough must be derived from the OE form *Brunanburh* 'the stronghold of a man called *Bruna*'. Recent collections of place-name spellings for this district[3] have not produced any evidence to upset Smith's argument; indeed, two spellings which support it can be added to the examples he quoted then.[4] But, as Alistair Campbell pointed out at the time, the identity of place-name does not prove that this *Brunanburh* in Wirral is the same as that near which the battle took place.[5] There is no available information which would, in fact, make proof possible; there are no recorded place-names in the vicinity of Bromborough which would support any of the traditional alternative forms of name for the battlefield as listed by Campbell and Smith, and there is no further record of the sea-name *Dingesmere*[6] — the water over which the defeated Anlaf fled to Dublin.

---

[1] The proposed locations are listed in Alistair Campbell, *The Battle of Brunanburh* (London, 1938), pp. 57–80. Bromborough is marked on the map by the lower of the two crosses below the letter B on the Wirral shore of Mersey, see fig. 5.1 below.

[2] 'The site of the battle of Brunanburh', *London Mediæval Studies*, 1, part 1 (1937), 56–59. Bromborough was identified with *Brunanburh* by Gibson in his edition of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* in 1692, and by R. F. Weymouth in *Athenæum*, 15th August 1885, p. 207.

[3] Published in PN Ch **4**.

[4] *Bruneburgh* 1153 (1285) Cartulary of Chester Abbey, *Bronebur*' 1291 Eyre Roll.

[5] Campbell, *The Battle of Brunanburh*, p. 59, note.

[6] *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* 'A' and 'C' texts (ASC 'A', 'C') — altered to *Dinnesmere* in the Otho MS — *Dyngesmere* ASC 'B', *Dynigesmere* ASC 'D'. Agreement between 'A' and 'C' establishes *Dinges-* as the original form. [In his article, 'The English Arrival in Cheshire', *TLCHS* 119 (1967), 1–37, at p. 2, n. 11, Dodgson argues that this name is 'an *-ing*-suffix derivative of the river-name *Dee* . . ., so that *Dingesmere* would mean "the water of *Ding*" and *Ding* would mean "that which is named after or is associated with or which belongs to, R. Dee".']

The place-name Wargraves[7] in Bromborough parish, which marks the site of the battle in the six-inch Ordnance Survey Map, may be an old place-name of purely local usage but it may also be a name more recently inspired by local antiquarianism. There have been, as yet, no archaeological discoveries there which might lead to a certain identification.

In spite of the lack of conclusive evidence, however, it is possible to show that the place Bromborough, once bearing the name *Brunanburh,* is situated in a district likely to have been the scene of the battle. Bromborough lies on the edge of an area of Norse settlement, which was part of the larger territory of north-west England over-run by Norse immigrants from Ireland and Man in the early tenth century.[8] Details of this settlement in Wirral are available in two sources, documentary history,[9] and place-names.[10]

Documentary history

Apart from the Viking kingdom at York, the Wirral settlement is the only Norse movement into England that is documented. The prime document is *Annals of Ireland. Three Fragments,* which though of dubious tradition, is corroborated and supplemented by other Irish and by Welsh annals.[11]

The important features of this story are (a) the date — ranging from AD 902 to *c.*910 (a lost continuation of *Three Fragments* presumably dealt with later attacks by the Norsemen upon the English); (b) the character of the settlement — the creation, by arrangement with the Mercian government, of a Norse community in north-west Mercia, which, once established, was liable to be rebellious, and which had apparently been settled in second-rate land upon which it wished to improve; (c) the relationship of various peoples in the new community — a mixture of Norsemen and Irishmen, entering into warlike political arrangements with the Danes who were at that time the enemies of the English state.

The characteristics and the distribution of the Norse element in the place-names of Wirral and district bear this analysis out, as the following survey will show.

---

[7] *Wargraves* does not appear in old records, so there are no early spellings for it. It may derive from ME **werre** (OF **werre**) 'war, battle' and ME **grave** (OE **græf**) 'a trench, a pit, an earthwork'. [However, Dodgson adjusted his view in PN Ch 4 242, where he writes, 'The first el. is probably ME **werre** . . . "worse, the less valuable". . . . The name is not evidence for a battlefield.']

[8] Eilert Ekwall, *Scandinavians and Celts in the North-West of England* (Lund, 1918); F. T. Wainwright, 'The Scandinavians in Lancashire', *TLCAS* 58 (1945–6), 71–116.

[9] F. T. Wainwright, 'North-west Mercia, AD 871–924', *THSLC* 94 (1942), 3–55 (above, chapter 3); and 'Ingimund's invasion', *English Historical Review* 63 (1948), 145–169 (above, chapter 4).

[10] The Scandinavian settlements in Cheshire, as illustrated by place-names, lie in defined areas, Danish east of R. Weaver, Norse in Wirral and district; see G. Barnes, 'The evidence of place-names for the Scandinavian settlements in Cheshire', *TLCAS* 63 (1952–3), 131–155; and S. Potter, 'Cheshire place-names', *THSLC* 106 (1955), 16–20 with map (fig. 3).

[11] [The details of the manuscript, the story of Ingimund and associated problems are treated in detail in chapters 3 and 4 above; Dodgson's recapitulation of this material is therefore omitted here.]

Place-names

The place-names Noctorum ('the dry hillock', OIr **cnocc** 'hillock', OIr **tírim** adj., 'dry') and Irby ('the farmstead of the Irish' ON *Íra-býr*) indicate, respectively, the location of Irish-speaking inhabitants and of the habitation of a community from Ireland.[12] In the place-name Irby, as in Greasby and Whitby, there is an exchange of ON **býr** 'farmstead' and OE **byrig**, dative singular of OE **burh** 'stronghold, fortified house'.[13] In Gayton, ON **geit** 'a goat' rather than OE **gāt** 'a goat' is the first element.[14] Gayton is one of a number of place-names in Wirral where a Norse first element is combined with the ending *-ton*.[15] This ending may represent either OE **tūn** 'enclosure, farmstead' or ON **tún** 'farmstead, farm enclosure, enclosed in-field', which cannot be distinguished from each other formally.[16]

These place-names may safely be regarded as the creation of a mixed Anglo-Norse community predominantly Norse in speech; some of them may as well be purely Norse. Place-names which are assuredly Norse are Meols (ON **melr** 'sandbank'), Tranmere ('the crane-frequented sandbank', ON **trani** 'a crane, a heron', ON **melr** 'sandbank'), Thingwall (ON **þing-vǫllr** 'field where the Thing meets'), and certain other place-names, which end in *-by* (ON **býr**). West Kirby and *Kirby in Waley* (the old name for Wallasey village as distinct from the parish of Wallasey in which it lay) are derived from ON **kirkju-býr** 'the church hamlet'; Pensby contains Welsh **pen-** (British *penno-) 'a hill'; Frankby is 'the Frenchman's farmstead';[17] Raby is 'the boundary farmstead' (ON **rá** 'boundary mark'); Helsby (outside Wirral, on the south side of Mersey in Eddisbury Hundred) is 'the farmstead on the ledge' (ON **hjalli** 'a ledge') and lies on the side of a steep and prominent hill overlooking the Mersey estuary.

[12] ON *Íri* as a by-name usually denotes a man who has sojourned in Ireland.

[13] Irby is *Erberia, Irreby* c.1100 (1280) Chester Cartulary, where OE **byrig** is an occasional substitution for original ON **býr**. Greasby is *Gravesberie* 1086 DB, *Grauesbyri, -biri, -beri* c.1100 (1150 and 1280) Chester Cartulary, *Grauisby* c.1100 (1280), c.1153 (1280) ibid, and Whitby is *Witeberia* c.1100 (1150), 1150, *Witebia* c.1100 (1280), *Witebi* c.1190 (14th) ibid; in these two place-names original OE **byrig** is replaced by ON **býr**.

[14] *Gaitone* 1086 DB, *Geytona* 1238 Pipe Roll; there is no record of a ME form *Gatton* that would be expected from OE *gāt-tūn*.

[15] Claughton (ON **klakkr** 'a hill'), Storeton (ON **stórr** adj., 'great'), Larton (ON **leirr** 'clay'), and possibly Neston (? ON **nes** 'headland', though ME spellings in *Nas-* indicate OE Mercian **næss** (OE **ness**) 'a headland'). Thurstaston contains the ON personal-name Þorsteinn, spelt in the English fashion Thurstan; Barnston probably contains the personal-name ON Bjǫrnúlfr or OE Beornwulf as mediaeval spellings show.

[16] See A. H. Smith, *English Place-Name Elements*, EPNS 26 (1956), s.v. **tūn** OE, para. 10.

[17] From ME Frank (OE **Franca**) 'a Frenchman'. In Domesday Book, fo 264b, in the entry for Caldy, is the note *et unus Francigena cum uno serviente habet duas carucas*. This Frenchman held an estate worth noticing as a separate item for taxation purposes, but the place had no separate name. The place-name emerges as *Frankeby*, 1230 *Harl. MS*, 1304 Chester Fines. This place-name obviously does not contain ON Frakki 'a Frenchman'. Danish Franki would be unexpected here; though the place-name Denhall in Ness parish might derive from both ON *Dena* (gen. pl.) and ON *Dana* (gen. pl.) 'of the Danes', with ON vǫllr (dat. sg. **velli**) 'field' confused with OE **wella, wælle** 'a spring, a stream'.
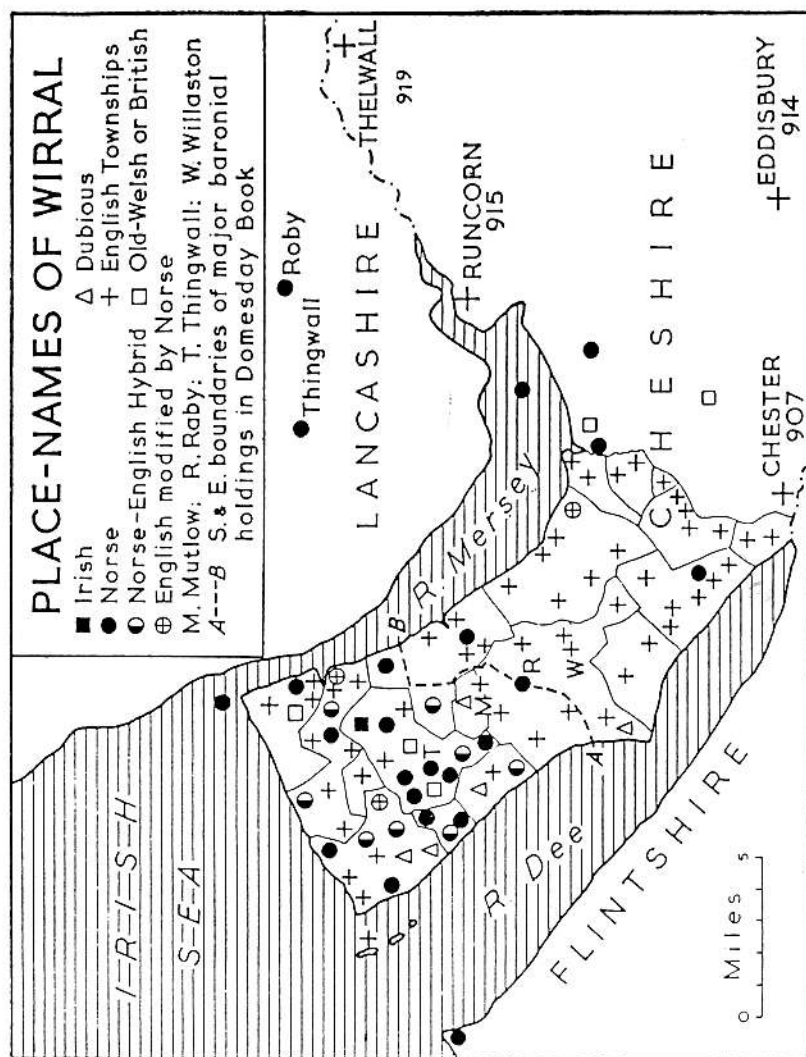
Fig. 5.1: Place-Names of Wirral.

Many of these places were not of sufficient importance to be entered in Domesday Book by name. If we subtract those place-names which show hybrid characteristics, from the place-names which do appear there,[18] there remain only Meols, Thingwall, Raby and Helsby that point decisively to Norse settlement, with Noctorum indicating an associated Irish settlement. Of these only Raby and Helsby are habitative names. The minor character of the Norse habitative place-names in Wirral is shown by place-names in -*by*, many of which only appear in late records, while some are, so far, only known from nineteenth-century Tithe Award field-names which preserve the memory of their location — Syllaby (Great Saughall), Haby (Barnston), Hesby (Bidston), Stromby (Thurstaston), Kiln Walby (Upton near Woodchurch; *Gildewalleby* 1321 *Cheshire Sheaf* series 3, no. 24, p. 40). Another Norse place-name for a minor settlement is Arrowe, which also appears late in record (*Arwe* c.1245 Chester), and derives from ON **erg** 'shieling', a word borrowed from MIr **airge**, Gaelic **airigh**.[19]

This word **erg** also appears in field-names, especially in Arrowe parish itself. Norse elements in the field-names of the area are widespread and pervasive.[20] Furthermore, there is a good number of Norse names of natural features in the area, e.g. ON **dalr** 'valley' in Crowsdale (ON **kross**), Lingdale (ON **lyng**), and *Steyncolesdale* (1298 Plea Roll, in Thurstaston parish; containing the ON personal-name Steinkell), and ON **sker** 'reef, sandbank' in Score Bank in the Mersey Estuary (called *Swarteskere* 1308 Black Prince's Register, 'the black reef'), and a lost *Le Skere* (1275 Cheshire Sheaf) off Wallasey.

The Norse settlement

The conclusions to be derived from this place-name evidence are, that Norse village-names begin as the names of minor and insignificant farmsteads that are subsidiary settlements in hitherto unused land within the framework of English townships and parishes; that the nature and distribution of Anglo-Norse hybrid place-names (see fig. 5.1) as compared with the distribution of English place-names, indicates a Norse settlement beginning in north-west Wirral and spreading south and east across the peninsula from more exposed to more fertile and developed country; and that the prevalence and persistence of Norse field- and minor-names throughout the peninsula, and, at the same time, the persistence of English parish-, township-, field- and minor-names even in the Norse northern area of it, bespeak a deliberate and non-disruptive integration of Norse and English people into one Anglo-Norse community.

The Norse element must have remained dominant for some time; at least long enough to impress its consciousness of identity upon the pattern of regional government over and above the parochial level, as the distribution of certain

[18] Noctorum, Greasby, Gayton, Storeton, Neston (and Ness), Thurstaston, Barnston, Meols, Thingwall, Raby, Helsby.

[19] On the possibility of this place-name's derivation directly from MIr **airge**, rather than from ON **erg**, see Christian Matras, 'Gammelfærosk *ærgi*, n., og dermed beslægtede ord', *Namn och Bygd* 44 (1956), 51–67. Also A. H. Smith, *English Place-Name Elements*, EPNS 25 (1956), s.v. **erg** ON.

[20] See F. T. Wainwright, 'Field-names', *Antiquity* 17 (1943), 57–66 (chapter 8 below); also 'Ingimund's invasion', (chapter 4 above).

place-names in Wirral indicates. The place Thingwall is in the Norse northern end of the peninsula, and can only be the meeting-place of a Norse organization. In Domesday Book, what is now the Hundred of Wirrall was known as the Hundred of *Wilaveston* (OE *Wīglāfes-tūn* 'Wiglaf's farmstead') which met at Willaston. Half-way between Thingwall and Willaston is Raby, 'the farmstead at the boundary-mark'. It looks as though the Norse colony had a defined boundary, within which it owned its own jurisdiction.

This special jurisdiction is commemorated also in the feudal arrangement of north Wirral in post-Conquest times. In 1182 the Pipe Roll names a minor hundred in Wirral *Caldeihundredum* 'the Hundred of Caldy'. This minor hundred, attached to the manor of Gayton, survived until recently.[21] The origin of this jurisdiction lies in the Norman re-organization of the Anglo-Saxon shire of Cheshire. The feudal allocation of lands in Cheshire was made by the Earl of Chester to his own barons, whose baronies centred upon Halton, Mold (Flintshire), Rhuddlan (Flintshire), Malpas, Nantwich, Shipbrook, Dunham Massey, Kinderton and Stockport.[22]

In Domesday Book, Robert, baron of Rhuddlan in Flintshire, also held a block of lands in Wirral, which apart from Great and Little Mollington, all lay in the north and west of the hundred:[23] in Leighton, Thornton Hough, Gayton, Heswall, Thurstaston, Great and Little Meols, Newton, Larton, Wallasey, Neston, Hargrave, Hoose, West Kirby, Poulton and Seacombe. This estate is the origin of the minor hundred; it is approximately co-terminous with it. Apart from the Rhuddlan barony, the lands of north Wirral were held by the barons of Dunham Massy, Halton and Mold (Moreton, Claughton, Tranmere, Saughall Massey, Bidston; Barnston and half of Raby; Caldy; respectively). The greater part of the north of Wirral, therefore, was held in compact parcels by four of the most powerful Norman barons of Cheshire; by contrast, in the rest of Wirral the Domesday holdings are dispersed.

The treatment of this area of north Wirral, which is approximately co-terminous with the Norse settlement area, by the Norman administration, is paralleled elsewhere in Cheshire. The present Hundred of Bucklow, the northern hundred of Cheshire that marches with Lancashire along Mersey, was in Domesday Book two hundreds, *Tunendune,* the western one, meeting at an unidentified place, and *Bochelau,* the eastern one, whose name now applies to both, meeting at Bucklow Hill (OE *Buccan-hlāw* 'Bucca's mound') in Mere parish. In two medieval lists[24] of the vills and manors of the barony of Halton (the

---

[21] G. Ormerod, *History of Cheshire,* ed. T. Helsby (1882), II, 518, traces its feudal descent down to 1819 when some of its privileges were still observed. He lists the extent of the minor hundred as being then comprised of Thornton Hough, Leighton (in Neston), Gayton, Heswall, Thurstaston, West Kirby, Great and Little Meols, Hoose, Newton, Larton, and Poulton-cum-Seacombe.

[22] See Ormerod, *History of Cheshire,* ed. Helsby, I, 55; 56, 58 note; 520; 688; II, 245; 592; III, 187; 788, respectively.

[23] Ormerod, *History of Cheshire,* ed. Helsby, I, 55; II, 353.

[24] National Register of Archives (Historical Manuscripts Commission), Report No. 3636 *(Tabley Muniments),* entry no. 1063, a list of date *c.*1300 *temp.* Henry Lacy, baron of Halton; Ormerod, *History of Cheshire,* ed. Helsby, I, 704 and note, a list for a date *c.*1360 at the death of Henry duke of Lancaster, baron of Halton.

minor hundred called *Haltonshire* was its jurisdiction), it is apparent that this barony was co-terminous with the Domesday Book Hundred of *Tunendune*.[25] Nantwich Hundred,[26] at the other end of the county, was one hundred in Domesday Book, *Warmundestreu* (OE *Wǣrmundes-trēow* 'Wærmund's tree'), the meeting-place of which is unidentified. An inspeximus in 1438 of an inquisition made in 1342 lists the vills of the Nantwich barony held by William de Maubanc, baron of Nantwich,[27] and shows that this barony coincided rather with the Domesday Hundred of *Warmundestreu* than with the reformed Hundred of Nantwich. The townships of Church Minshull, Betchton, Hassall and Alsager were transferred from the Hundred of *Warmundestreu* (Nantwich) to that of Northwich (DB *Mildestuic* i.e. Middlewich), at some date in the twelfth century. Although they were then no longer in Nantwich Hundred, they remained in the Nantwich barony.

In these examples the Norman feudal estates with their own jurisdictions were based upon the Anglo-Saxon hundreds, and so preserved the shape of the old administrative pattern after the twelfth-century reorganization of the major hundreds. Since this happens in these other parts of Cheshire, it is not unreasonable to suppose the same process in Wirral, and to assume that the baronial minor Hundred of Caldy and the lesser block-holdings in north Wirral, represent a Norman adaptation of an administrative pattern that already existed when the Norman earls took over the shire. It looks as though the Norse enclave in Wirral was so politically distinctive that it justified a special feudal administration.

A Norse colony

If the deductions made from place-names and from this excursion into Norman feudal history are added to those drawn from the historical account presented in *Three Fragments,* it becomes obvious that in Wirral there was throughout the tenth and eleventh centuries a recognized Norse colony, deliberately established in a definitely bounded area, and with a conscious identity sufficient to support and warrant a distinctive local administration. The situation was apparently repeated to some extent across Mersey in south-west Lancashire,[28] where there is another Thingwall (near Liverpool), the nucleus of a Norse enclave there whose inland boundary was likewise marked by a **rá-býr**, Roby. The Wirral colony began a programme of vigorous, and occasionally, armed, expansion almost immediately after its establishment, towards the better lands of the English districts to the south. It is therefore proper to suppose that at any date shortly after AD 902–910, there would exist on either shore of the Mersey estuary a community of Norse settlers upon whose sympathy, at least, any Norse expedition passing up or down that river would be able to rely. There was here a route by which a

---

[25] All the land of the present Bucklow hundred west of a line excluding Lymm, Grappenhall, High Legh, Mere, Tabley Superior, Pickmere and Marston.

[26] Ormerod, *History of Cheshire*, ed. Helsby, III, 421.

[27] Enrolled in Chester Recognizance Rolls, *Report of the Deputy Keeper of the Public Records*, no. 37, Appendix II, p. 478. The barony was divided in 1342 among the daughters of Wm. de Maubanc.

[28] See F. T. Wainwright, 'The Scandinavians in Lancashire', *TLCAS* 58 (1945–6), 71–116.

ship-borne attack could have been delivered far into the mainland of Mercia, a route flanked by the territory of Norsemen who were not themselves averse to attacking the English. It would have been attractive to any Viking adventurer. It may have been the route of Sihtric's raid in 920, to Davenport in south-east Cheshire, the market-place (OE **port** 'market') on the R. Dane (*Daven*) which served the Danish area of the county; it will be recalled that there is a record of disaffection towards the Danes on the part of the Irish element in the Wirral settlement, in the *Three Fragments* account.

Of the state of affairs near the Mersey estuary the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* has little to say in a direct fashion. The affairs of north-west Mercia tend to be overshadowed by the events leading to the re-conquest of the Danelaw. However, the 'Mercian Register' included in the 'B' and 'C' texts of the *Chronicle*[29] records the building, between 907 and 919 of a series of fortresses along the west and north frontiers of Mercia. In 907 it records the rebuilding of Chester (a probable reason for this has been alluded to). In 909 ('D' text) or 910 ('C' text) it records the building of *Bremesburh,* in 912 *Scergeat* — these are unidentified so their strategic purpose is unknown — and in 914 Eddisbury (Cheshire), presumably to support Chester in guarding against incursions from the north and the Mersey estuary. In 915, the Register informs us, the frontier with mid-Wales was secured by a fort at Chirbury (Salop), and the head of the Mersey estuary was guarded by a fort at Runcorn (Cheshire). It also records, in the same year, the building of the unidentified fort *Weardbyrig* (there is no place-name evidence to assure an identification with Warburton in north Cheshire, though such a location would be attractive). Finally, the 'Mercian Register' records Eadweard's building a fort at *Cledemuða* in 921 — probably at the mouth of the north Welsh River Clwyd, near Rhuddlan.[30] Meanwhile, according to another annal, not in the 'Mercian Register', he had fortified Thelwall (Cheshire) and Manchester in 919 (ASC 'A' *s.a.* 922). By 921 therefore, there was a line of five, possibly six, fortresses established to hold the frontier from north Wales to Manchester.

This great effort to secure the north-west frontier of Mercia was called forth by the steady build-up of Norse power in the north-country which culminated in the establishment of the York kingdom. The urgency of the need for fortification on this frontier cannot have been lessened by the existence upon the frontier itself of restless Norse colonies, whose territories would serve as excellent beach-heads for any expedition striking down into Mercia along a short, direct and strategic route from Mersey.

Traditions of *Brunanburh*

It is impossible to connect in any detailed way the facts known about *Brunanburh* with this context of political and geographical factors. The main tradition of the campaign derives from the Anglo-Saxon poem (ASC 'A', 'B', 'C', 'D'), William of Malmesbury's two accounts — his own twelfth-century report[31] and his

---

[29] J. Earle and C. Plummer, *Two of the Saxon Chronicles Parallel,* 2 vols (Oxford, 1892–9), I, 92, note 7.

[30] F. T. Wainwright, 'Cledemutha', *English Historical Review* 65 (1950), 203–212.

[31] W. Stubbs, ed., *De Gestis Regum Anglorum* (London, 1887–9), I, 142.

quotation of a mid-tenth-century Latin poem[32] — and from the account of Florence of Worcester,[33] also twelfth century. From these sources we learn that an alliance was made in the north-country[34] between Anlaf the Norseman and Constantine king of the Scots. They crossed the English frontier[35] or landed in the estuary of the Humber.[36] The English king gave way before them for a while according to plan[37] during which time they made great inroads and took much booty. Upon the king's taking the field against them, the enemy abandoned their booty and fled away towards their own country.[38] The English force of West Saxons and Mercians under Athelstan and Edmund his brother utterly routed them in a fight around *Brunanburh*, pursuing them[39] throughout the day.[40] After the battle, Anlaf and his surviving companions returned by ship to Dublin across *Dingesmere.*[41]

All that emerges from this, is that the invasion was planned in the north-country, and reached 'a long way' into England; the enemy was defeated by a combined West-Saxon and Mercian force; the survivors of the enemy's defeat went off home, some of them taking ship to Dublin. Although this sea-borne escape to Dublin need not imply a direct Irish Sea passage, the only evidence against the location of *Brunanburh* on the north-west coast that comes from the traditional accounts, is the statement of Florence of Worcester that the landings took place in Humber.[42] His source for this statement is not known, and its authority can neither be attacked nor defended.

---

[32] Ibid, I, 151.

[33] B. Thorpe, ed., *Chronicon ex Chronicis* (London, 1848–9), I, 132. [In more recent scholarship 'Florence' of Worcester has been identified as John of Worcester: see the text used in chapter 10, n. 13.]

[34] William of Malmesbury, Latin poem, lines 4–7; quoted by Campbell, *The Battle of Brunanburh*, p. 154.

[35] William of Malmesbury; *v.* Campbell, *The Battle of Brunanburh*, p. 152.

[36] Florence of Worcester; *v.* Campbell, *The Battle of Brunanburh*, p. 147.

[37] William of Malmesbury; *v.* Campbell, *The Battle of Brunanburh*, p. 152. The Latin poem, lines 11–18, (Campbell, p. 155), is more descriptive.

[38] William of Malmesbury, Latin poem, lines 26–33, *v.* Campbell, *The Battle of Brunanburh*, p. 155.

[39] Campbell's note (*The Battle of Brunanburh*, p. 104) on *on last legdun* in line 22 of his text of the Anglo-Saxon poem, is important. He interprets it 'they pressed on behind'. This indicates pursuit upon and from the battlefield, rather than a long chase; see note 40 below.

[40] The duration of the battle and its relevance to site of the battlefield is discussed by A. H. Smith, 'The site of the battle of Brunanburh', *London Mediæval Studies*, I, i (1937), p. 58. Note that William of Malmesbury parallels the OE poem's phrase *ondlongne dæg* (line 21, Campbell's edition) with *tota die usque ad vesperam* (Campbell, *The Battle of Brunanburh*, p. 153). If Bromborough be *Brunanburh*, we should have to assume that the battle took place after the invaders had withdrawn to the coast from their deep penetration inland. In that case, they may have begun to retreat as soon as the king turned out, as William of Malmesbury says (*v.* note 38 above), their retreat culminating in a day-long disaster in the battle.

[41] OE poem, Campbell's edition, lines 53–56.

[42] It might be pointed out that the point of exit after the defeat may not have been the point of entry at the beginning of the campaign. It is not known whether the ships Anlaf fled in were his own; nor whether he found them where he had left them.

Unless Florence's statement is to be considered dependent on reliable tradition (and the OE poem and the Latin poem do not elucidate this), Bromborough in Wirral would appear to be the most eligible place for the battlefield. In no other locality does the context of geography, politics and place-names accord so well with the few facts we possess concerning the battle.