NEW BUCKENHAM IN 1542

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SUMMARY

New Buckenham, a planned town of the mid–12th century, was inserted into an already heavily settled landscape by its lord William d'Albini. Surviving documentary sources allow something to be reconstructed of the topography of the medieval and post-medieval townscape. New Buckenham is described in particular detail in a rental of 1542, a translation of which is published here.

INTRODUCTION

New Buckenham is a small, almost miniature, medieval planned town and borough whose gridded layout has survived almost unchanged.[1] Documents pertaining to New Buckenham are sparse for the medieval period and much has to be deduced from post-1540 evidence. Surviving medieval documents include texts of borough charters, one of between 1176 and 1193 and the other between 1193 and 1221, the latter reissued in 1493.[2] Landgable rentals of 1306 and 1308 also survive.[3] Much evidence has recently been revealed by historic building surveys and dendrochronological work conducted within the town.[4] Relevant post-medieval sources include landgable rentals of 1542 and 1634, the former of which is translated below.[5] Borough court books also survive, registering changes in house ownership from the 1550s to the 1870s.[6]

HOW NEW IS NEW BUCKENHAM?

Charter evidence indicates that New Buckenham was established by the first Earl William d'Albini or Daubigny at the gate of his new castle between *c.*1146 and his death in 1176. The castle, set on a small promontory in the south-east corner of his Buckenham estate, was ready for habitation about 1146, when William abandoned to the Augustinian canons the site of his older stronghold in the middle of Buckenham.[7] William obliquely acknowledged the existence of the borough in a notification (undated, but between 1138 and 1151) to Bishop Turbe. The notification carried confirmation to Wymondham Priory of William's father's and his own grants 'in lands and men ... in wood and in plain, in borough and vill, in meadows and feedings and other places'.[8] A charter of William's

son, the second Earl William, again undated, but between 1176 and 1193, confirmed to the burgesses of the new town 'the common pasture (belonging) to my borough of Buckenham beyond my parks and closes that they had in my father's time'.[9] The immediate need of a marketplace and craft centre to supply the new castle household should put the founding of the borough very near to 1146.

THE TOPOGRAPHY OF THE TOWN

In an already heavily settled landscape, there was little room for a new town and William was unwilling to sacrifice his parks and closes. The town within its town ditch or moat and the common that funnelled out from it were squeezed in between the d'Albinis' great park to the north, the new castle bailey to the west, Carleton Rode common to the east, and a large oval enclosure called the Haugh (from OE *haga*, a hedged enclosure) that was an outlier of the bishop's manor of Eccles four miles to the south-west (Plate 1). The eastern boundary was challenged by the men of Carleton Rode, who claimed intercommon from at least the early 15th until the late 18th centuries.[10] The bishop was more amenable. The Old Buckenham Priory foundation charter of *c.*1146 states that it was by the prompting of William Turbe, bishop of Norwich 1146–73, that d'Albini established the priory. It seems likely that it was at this time that, as a douceur, the bishop offered the Haugh as a town field, a further indication that the town is roughly coeval with the castle and the priory.[11] Turbe saw to it, however, that the Haugh, though cultivated by the burgesses, remained parochially and manorially part of Eccles.[12] The Haugh is described in 1329 as the *cultura* called Bischopeshaugh in New Buckenham and Eccles.[13] The new town, flanked by

Plate 1 Aerial photograph showing Buckenham castle with the planned town and common beyond, viewed from the west. (© Norfolk Museums & Archaeology Service. TM0890/E/AEY12. Photograph by Derek A. Edwards 1976.)
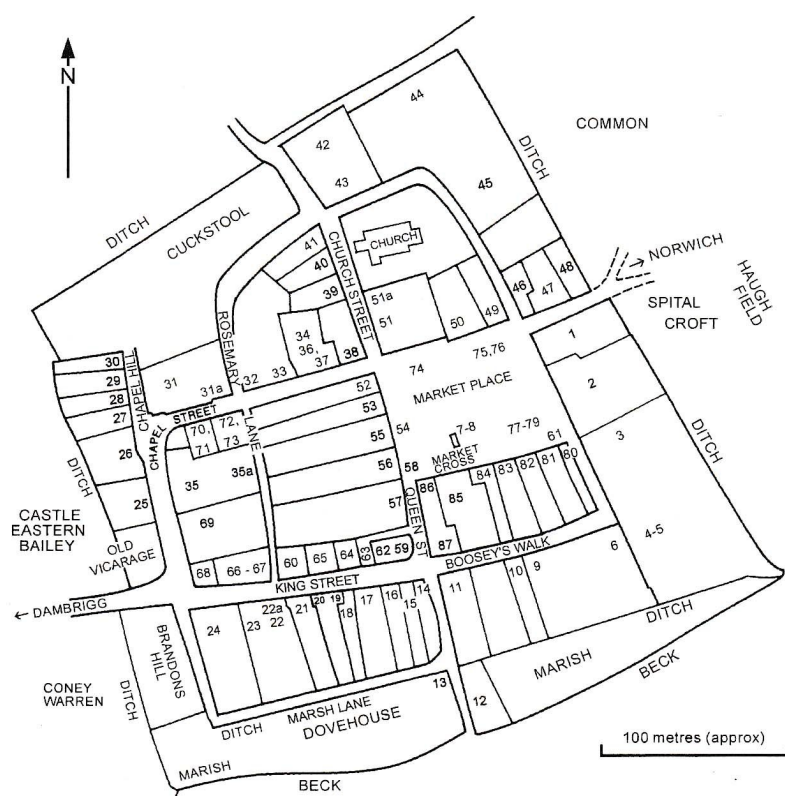
Fig. 1   New Buckenham planned town showing features referred to in the text and modern street names. The R (Reconstruction) numbers are in the sequence followed by the landgable collectors in 1634.

the lord's dove house and rabbit warren, was part of a specially-created seignorial landscape.[14] The main road from Norwich was diverted through the town and then ran across the marsh that lay below the castle by means of a causeway called in 1597, as now, the Dambrigg,[15] There is a hint in the name Spittle (Spital) Croft of an otherwise undocumented medieval hospital, prominently placed just outside the main (Norwich) gate of the planned town. Its likely founder is Queen Adela of Louvain, the widow of Henry I, who married William d'Albini in 1138 and died in 1151. She was a notable begetter of leper houses.[16] In 1284–5, there was also a tollhouse and prison, a weekly market and a fair at Martinmas.[17] The whole area, including the Haugh, was no more than 360 acres.

New Buckenham's eastern boundary predates the town and both the earl's and the bishop's vast enclosures. It was also the boundary between Shropham Hundred, in which New Buckenham lay, and Depwade Hundred. This boundary figures in over 200 years of disputes between New Buckenham and Carleton Rode which, as stated above, claimed intercommon across

it.[18] The boundary ran along a way, called Greengate in 1329 and the 'green way' in 1595.[19] In 1597, this way is described as running north–south from Ostroke, by way of Goldelockes Corner and Sheepemere, to the Haughe Heade (the rounded top of the Haugh). In 1595, Sheepemere was located beside a knoll on which the Hundred Court was kept and where the hundreders 'have done theire suites and payd theire dutyes'. This knoll was probably a prehistoric burial mound and it must have been at the point where the bounds of Shropham, Depwade and Guiltcross Hundreds met. In 1411/25 it was said that the three Hundred courts met in small space at Sheepemere. Ostroke is located on the Carleton Rode Inclosure Award of 1779.[20] It must take its name from a prominent boundary oak and Sheepemere was a watering place. Goldelockes is perhaps another oak name.

The town of New Buckenham, 200 yards square and slightly rhomboid in plan, was set within a stream-fed moat up to 9m wide and fortified with an internal bank. The northern section of the moat survives as a wet ditch, at the north-eastern angle to something

like its full width, and on the other sides it is marked by narrow ditches, shallow depressions and property boundaries. In places, the ditch has been revealed by archaeological investigation.[21] The roads that cross the ditch must have been carried by gated bridges; that to the north was called the Coole Gate in a document of 1595 and the same document also records stonework, perhaps the remains of a stone gate, on the eastern (Norwich) side of the town.[22] A few acres of much-subdivided marsh, called the Marish, lay outside the moat along the beck that skirted the town to the south. In 1542 the marsh was divided into fourteen lots.

MEDIEVAL NEW BUCKENHAM

The texts of two borough charters survive. The first, of 1176x1193, confirmed pasture rights and allowed the burgesses to sell and bequeath their lands, and gave them the privileges of the burgesses of Norwich. The third Earl's charter of 1193x1221 confirmed his predecessors' grants, permitted the burgesses to hold their own courts and exacted 'yearly from each complete messuage one halfpenny….and so more according to more and less according to less'. Both charters, mindful perhaps of the fledgling state of the new town, prohibit the removal of houses or the making of waste. The reference to rents greater and smaller than one halfpenny indicate that plots divisible or multiple of the standard size had been granted originally or that subdivision and amalgamation had already begun to take place. Sherds of a sooted cooking pot probably of 12th-century date from a rubbish pit south-west of the market place (at the rear of plot R85, Fig. 1) help to confirm pre-1200 occupation.[23]

An idea of the ranking and size of the town in the early 14th century can be gained from the two landgable rentals and the lay subsidy of 1334.[24] In the latter, personalty-based tax New Buckenham is rated at £6.3s., as against the average assessment for parishes within the adjacent Hundreds of Shropham and Depwade of £4.5s. It is assumed that each landgable rent represents one property, but the lists are not easy to interpret. That of 1306 occurs in an assignment of dower to Joan de Tateshale and that of 1308 in partitions of the remainder of the Tateshale inheritance. In 1306, there are 50 rents, some paid jointly, so that 79 persons are named. In 1308, there are 53 rents and 75 persons. There are respectively 11 and 12 high and/or joint payments by up to five persons, a scatter of them women, which might represent selds, permanent market stalls, perhaps with shared access to upper rooms.[25] These totals leave perhaps 39 house plots

in the 1306 list and 41 in that of 1308, a total of 80 house plots. Thirteen names appear in both lists, their owners evidently having two plots. Halfpenny rents as specified in the second charter are paid in 12 cases in 1306 and 13 in 1308. Farthing rents, indicating half-size plots, are paid in six and nine cases and rents of three farthings or one penny in 13 and six. Some of the larger rents, which run up to 10½d., may reflect added payments for purprestures, encroachments onto waste ground or the highway.

Occupational by-names in the landgable lists and in the subsidy assessments of 1327 and 1332 show a diverse community, perhaps with a bias as in the immediately post-medieval period towards cloth-finishing and sale and metal- and leather-working.[26] The listed occupations are: baker 1332; botiller (leather bottle maker) 1327; carpenter 1306; chaplain 1306 and 1332; chapman 1306 and 1308; colman (charcoal-burner) 1332; corour (currier) 1308 and 1332; cupere (cooper) 1308 and 1332; cutel (cutler) 1306; le fevre 1306, le ferrour 1332, faber 1332 (smith); forister 1332; honester (sharpener of tools) 1308; inkemaker (perhaps maker of incle or linen tape) 1308; loksmyth 1308; lolimer (lorimer, harness-maker) 1306; lytestere (dyer) 1306; markaunde 1308, mercator 1327 (merchant); mendeware (?tinker) 1308; reder (reed-thatcher) 1306; shoppe 1308, atte shoppe 1332; sutere (shoemaker) 1306 and 1308; taillur 1306 and 1308; and webbestere (weaver) 1308.

That cloth was made, finished or sold in New Buckenham is implied by the theft there of five ells of russet cloth and ten of blue cloth in 1285–6.[27] The very sparse late-medieval evidence includes John Coleman, tailor, in 1381–2,[28] and Nicholas Petybon, tailor, and John Mathew, glover, in 1515.[29] Aliens who may have taken occupational surnames are Hugh Shoemaker and Peter Tayllor in 1455.[30] In 1487–8, Peter Shawe supplied the canons of Old Buckenham with blanket for servants' liveries and candle.[31]

In the 16th century the ground within the town ditch was known as the burgage.[32] That the land was not all taken up immediately is indicated by the fact that the church was built before 1254 on what may have been an undeveloped area in the northern part of the town.[33] The community was originally served by a large, partly surviving, 12th-century chapel outside the borough and beside the castle. The builder of the church is traditionally Robert de Tateshale, lord of Buckenham 1243–48, but nothing in the present structure seems as early as the mid-13th century.[34] Despite a church of some grandeur, New Buckenham remained a chapelry within the parish of Old Buckenham until the 19th century. Settlement was certainly looser and more fugi-

tive in the whole northern sector of the town. Wasted tenements are recorded in the north-eastern angle in 1493 and 1562, and in the north-western corner a messuage, named from and presumably owned by one John de Stradeshull who flourished in the early 15th century, decayed.[35] The uninhabited north-western corner of the town then fell back into the mother parish of Old Buckenham, where it remained until the late 20th century.[36]

POST-MEDIEVAL NEW BUCKENHAM

The town comes into focus once more with the 1542 landgable rental. The word toft, house site, first documented in New Buckenham in 1530, is the basic unit of assessment in 1542.[37] Even Brandons Hill, hired by the town as an open space, was assessed in tofts in 1542. About 110 tofts are in 62 lots and there are about 18 other built properties variously listed as messuages, houses, stalls and shops, mostly lying within the market place. The non-toft owners paid rents varying from one penny to 21¾d., but the toft-assessed properties' rents range from ¼d. to 2½d., all halfpennies or divisions or low multiples of the halfpenny rent specified in the 1193x1221 charter. However, not all of these can be assumed to go back to the 12th century.[38] Numbers R80–86 were new-built on the southern part of the market place in the late 15th century; these were obviously assessed on the established principle. The other plots marked in Fig. 1, except numbers R7–8, R54, R58, R61 and R74–79, which are the encroachments and fixtures within the market place, and numbers R6, R9, R12, R13 and R25–30, which are post-1542 developments, are potentially part of the original settlement pattern. Strangely, the word toft is applied outside the 1542 rental only to numbers R38, R39, R41 and R43, all clustered in the same quarter of the town. Of the 62 house sites implied in 1542 perhaps 47 can be identified on the ground.

Despite this continuity, there were changes both before and after 1542 and post-Black Death decline and subsequent revival is very probable. On building evidence, the town enjoyed its most prosperous period in the century after 1450.[39] Under the influence of the Knyvett family at the castle the church was virtually rebuilt on a grand scale.[40] A big guildhall, its oak felled in the winter of 1450-1, was constructed on a prominent site at the western entrance to the town (there is what was probably a second, humbler, backyard guildhall on R35).[41] Much of the housing stock was renewed and there were small extensions of settlement. The new houses included at least one house of Wealden type (rare in Norfolk), a large courtyard house with a (surviving) gatehouse, and other houses that seem to have been designed for merchant storage.[42]

The size of the 12th-century house plots can be guessed at. Plots not known to have been radically altered, at least since 1542, or plots that have since subdivided, measure roughly 60 feet across. Examples are plots number R1, R11, R14–15, R17–18, R19–20 and R24. Such plots are generous enough to allow a front range parallel with the street, with, in some cases, ancillary buildings behind. In the more-or-less contemporary Newland in King's Lynn and in a late-12th century development in Norwich, 60 feet is suggested.[43] Two very different shapes of house-plot are found at New Buckenham: the long urban plots west of the market place and south of King Street and, badly preserved, south of Boosey's Walk, and the much squarer outer ranges on the east and north sides of the town. It may be that the outer ranges were occupied in a later phase or were taken by tradesmen, such as tanners and smiths, who needed greater space or a longer length of the town ditch.

There are several known alterations to the medieval settlement pattern.[44] In the late-15th century, the very large market place was narrowed by the building-over of a range on its south side (R80–86). These new buildings included high-quality and innovative houses, jettied, double-storeyed throughout, with oriel windows, tiled roofs and integral brick chimneys.[45] The oak timbers of R81 have a felling date of 1473 and R83 and R86 were in existence by 1478-9.[46] R83 and R86 were owned by Old Buckenham Priory and the Priory's arms were prominently displayed on R83's façade. It is possible that the Priory, showing unusual enterprise for a small, late-medieval religious house, was responsible for the whole development. The road pattern has altered a little. An eastward extension of Marsh Lane is documented, apparently going out of use, in 1602. It would have provided rear access to houses previously fronting the market place, but cut off from it when the market place was narrowed by numbers R80–86. Only two such plots, numbers R10 and R11, remained and R10 became the back yard of its successor across the road. There was later some pressure to recolonise this south side of the town. Plots number R6, R9, R12 and R13 are all first documented in the early 17th century, R12 and R13 being sited on plots in the Marish. Only R12 survives and the area immediately south of the town ditch was not redeveloped until the late 20th century.

The other extension of settlement was on the western side of the town. It may have been crossed originally by a continuation of Chapel Street, leading west through the bailey towards the eastern gate of the

castle which is preserved beneath the heightened bank of the ringwork. Such a road would have gone out of use when the castle defences were turned around to face west in the early 13th century and the eastern bailey abandoned.[47] What must have been an open plain or marshalling area fronting the bailey was very gradually colonised, first by the guildhall in 1450–1 and then by houses number R25–29, all first documented in the 1560s and 1570s. The southern end, called Brandons Hill, is listed in 1542 as being hired by the town from the lord of the borough as a very small common area whose precise use is unknown. Almshouses were established there by bequests of 1491 and 1693 and, finally, a tin parish hall was added at the rear c. 1902.[48] As has already been stated, houses number R12 and R13 appeared outside the original town area and beyond the moat which was falling out of use in the early years of the 17th century.[49]

THE 1542 LANDGABLE RENTAL

The route taken by the collectors of the 1634 landgable rental is indicated by the Reconstruction numbers in Fig. 1, which have also been added to the translation below. By contrast, the 1542 list does not seem to be in an observable sequence, although numbers R77–85, buildings on and around the market place, are listed in order. Nevertheless, the document presents a detailed picture of one of Norfolk's handful of completely planned medieval towns that is also part of a major seigneurial landscape. That New Buckenham has largely retained its medieval shape and many of its 15th- and 16th-century buildings only adds to its value.

The rental (NRO MC 343/102 735x7), whose date is 2 October 1542, is written on one side of two parchment membranes sewn head to foot with a parchment wrapper. The rental is in Latin and a translation follows. The verso is in English and a transcription is given below.

New Buckenham. Rental there of the burgage called londgowleboke renewed at the portman court there on the Monday after Michaelmas in the 34th year of Henry the Eighth by the grace of God King of England, France and Ireland, Defender of the Faith and on earth Supreme Head of the English and Irish Church and in the year of Our Lord 1542

James Robardes holds in right of his wife 4½ tofts formerly John Agas's and renders yearly – 2¼d. [R56]

The same James holds 2½ tofts lately Thomas Undyrwode's and renders yearly – 1¼d. [R24]

John Tyndale holds 2½ tofts lately Henry Colby's and renders yearly – 1¼d. [R2]

The same John Tyndale holds one marsh lately Richard Petybon's near Heyfylde and renders yearly – 1d.[50]

Richard Banyarde gent. holds 2½ tofts lately John Hovell's and renders yearly – 1¼d. [R44]

Thomas Payne holds 2 tofts lately John Turnour's and renders yearly – 1d. [R60]

Henry Junnys holds 1½ tofts lately Thomas Proo's and renders yearly – ¾d

Thomas Deynys holds 2 tofts called Rychers lately Thomas Lynde's and renders yearly – 1d.

John Moor holds one toft lately Thomas Wellys's and renders yearly – ½d. [R31]

William Payne holds 3 tofts lately Richard Adams's and renders yearly – 1½d. [R11]

The same William Payne holds one toft lately John Newton's and renders yearly – ½d. [R11]

Robert Spede holds one toft lately Stephen Lyncolne's opposite the common shop and renders yearly – ½d. [R80]

The same Robert Spede holds half a toft lately the same Stephen Lyncolne's and renders yearly – ¼d.

Thomas Lamberd holds 2 tofts lately Thomas Wellys's and renders yearly – 1d. [R81]

Richard Longe holds 2 tofts and renders yearly – 1d. [R82]

William Bannok holds 3 tofts lately the Prior of Bokenham's and renders yearly – 1½d. [R83]

The same William Bannok holds one garden lately of the said prior and renders yearly – ½d.

The same William holds half a toft parcel of Rychers and renders yearly – ½d.

The same William holds one marsh lately Bartholomew Canne's and renders yearly – 3d.

The same William holds divers messuages with shops lately of Thomas Shardelowe gent. and renders yearly – 13½d. [?R77–9]

John Wardeyn holds 2 tofts lately Henry Aldon's and renders yearly – 1d. [R84]

John Eldrede[51] holds 3 tofts lately William Mason's and renders yearly – 1½d. [R85]