

## A Theory of Everything to do with Loxley.

Loxley a small, rural, village in southern Warwickshire shows few outward signs that it has ever been important in the affairs of men or nations. There are, however, a series of apparently unlinked events that could have been connected to these fifteen hundred or so acres; the sources that have been examined include the records made by monks and the visible evidence in the local landscape and geography. The timeline is important in attempting to understand the events and, whilst it has been necessary to work back from the present to earlier times, wherever possible the sequence is presented in chronological order.

### 1. Britons<sup>1</sup> stop the Anglo-Saxon advance

Before the decline and fall of the Roman Empire in the late fourth to early fifth century, there was a Roman settlement at nearby Tiddington. Loxley is approximately half way along the shortest line from Tiddington to the Fosse Way. Old maps show that the road from Wellesbourne to Ettington passed to the east of Loxley church and joined a road on a northwest to southeast alignment past Oakham Farm (Red Hill was not a preferred route until the turnpike was built in the eighteenth century). This was probably the Roman road from Tiddington to the Fosse Way<sup>2</sup> – one coin from the time of Alectus (293 – 296 AD) has been found in Loxley but could have been brought here at any time.

At the close of the fifth century the advance of the Anglo-Saxons across the British Isles was halted when they lost the Battle of Mount Badon (Latin: *Mons Badonicus* or Welsh: *Mynydd Baddon*) to the Romano-British & Celts. The academic world has not been able to agree on a location for this battle except that it was in England, and etymologists accept that Badon was probably *Baþon* or *Badon* in the Anglo-Saxon language, which would have been pronounced Bathon, agreeing with the Welsh pronunciation, ‘dd’ being equivalent to ‘th’. Regrettably the writers of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle did not mention this battle and the only source is the record made by Gildas<sup>3</sup>, which was later copied by the Venerable Bede. In his 1849 translation of Gildas’ work<sup>4</sup>, John Allen Giles used this phrase: “*After this, sometimes our countrymen, sometimes the enemy, won the field, to the end that our Lord might this land try after his accustomed manner these his Israelites, whether they loved him or not, until the year of the siege of Bath-hill, when took place also the last almost, though not the least slaughter of our cruel foes*”.

Coincidentally, Bath Hill is the name of a piece of elongated ground just to the north of the point where the Romans from Tiddington would have joined the Fosse Way. At the foot of this hill we find the village of Wellesbourne. The ‘Welles’ root of this name comes from the Anglo-Saxon word *Wealh*<sup>5</sup> and ‘bourne’ from *burne*<sup>6</sup> implying it was a settlement of Britons by a river (the Dene). After this battle the invading Anglo-Saxons were confined to the east of a line from Christchurch, Hampshire to the river Trent – a line drawn from Christchurch to Burton on Trent passes very close to Bath Hill in Warwickshire. Wellesbourne was still known as Walesburn five hundred years later<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> **Briton** signifies the people who lived in the southern part of the British Isles when the Roman army left, certainly including Celts and the Roman citizens who chose to stay.

<sup>2</sup> The route of the Roman road south of Stratford to the Fosse Way has not been located apart from a section near the river bridge. Railway engineers who also like straight lines and low gradients, wanted to take the Northampton to Stratford upon Avon line to the north of Loxley and close to Tiddington but had to take the southerly route after local objections from Charlecote and Alveston.

<sup>3</sup> Gildas Bandonicus lived in the 6th century. In the 540s - in the most aggressive language - he set out to denounce the wickedness of his times. The Anglo-Saxons who started to arrive in the 470s, perhaps imported as soldiers as Gildas suggests, had control of most of what became 'England' by 600 AD, and the Celtic peoples were pushed to the hills of Wales and Scotland and across the English Channel to "Brittany".

<sup>4</sup> *De Excidio Britanniae et Conquestu*

<sup>5</sup> Bosworth & Toller: **Wealh**, *foreigner* and **Wealas**; *gen. Weala, Walena, the British, the Welsh, or Wales*

<sup>6</sup> Bosworth & Toller: **Burne**, *an; f. Running water, a stream, brook, river; torrens, rivus*

<sup>7</sup> At about 9 a.m. on 11<sup>th</sup> May 1141 AD “at a town called Walesburn, distant one mile from Hampton, the bishop of Worcester’s town, a violent whirlwind and most dreadful darkness arose, reaching from heaven to earth, and striking the house of a priest named Leofrid, which it prostrated to the ground and shattered to atoms, together with its offices; and the roof of the church also was torn off and cast across the river Avon, and nearly fifty houses of the country people were in like manner thrown down and ruined. Hailstones of the bigness of a pigeon’s egg fell, by the blows of which one woman was killed. At this sight all present were struck with terror and dismay.” *The Chronicle of Florence of Worcester*, The Church Historians of England, Vol.II, Pt. 1, Rev. Joseph Stevenson, Seeleys, London, 1853.

and although most of the village seems to have been counted with the small village of Walton in the Domesday Book, there is a direct reference to Waleborne as an outlier of Kineton .

## 2. Tribes & Nations

King Offa, perhaps best remembered for building the dyke to keep the Welsh at bay, is known locally for giving Loxley to help finance the church, later the Cathedral, at Worcester some three hundred years before the Norman Conquest. The usual source given for this information is Sir William Dugdale in *The Antiquities of Warwickshire* under Loxley and *Monasticon Anglicanum* where he listed the estates that were owned by Worcester Cathedral. But the surviving Anglo-Saxon charters to back up his statements do not mention Loxley by name unless it was the place, whose location is otherwise unknown, variously mentioned as *Fæhha leag*, *Faccanlea*, and *Fæhha leage* which was near Tiddington in Alveston and was given to the church of St Peter, Worcester by Offa, king of Mercia, on 26 December 780 at Tamworth (now in Staffordshire). The estate was five hides which is precisely the size given for Loxley (and many other minor estates) in the Domesday Survey.

Offa had come to the throne of Mercia in 757 AD when his cousin, King Æthelbald, was murdered. He ruled from the Humber down to Wessex but chose the diocese of Worcester<sup>8</sup> as his base – at this time, and later, kings led itinerant lives so they could enjoy the produce of their estates<sup>9</sup>. The boundaries of the diocese of Worcester are thought to have been those of the territory of the Hwicce tribe and their assembly point was probably at Gild Beorh (Guildborough or Gildenberg) which was later the point where four shires met (Gloucestershire, Oxfordshire, Warwickshire, and Worcestershire)<sup>10</sup>. This point, a mile from the Fosse Way, is just thirteen miles from Loxley.

In 777 AD King Offa gave most of the estates around Gild Beorh to the church of St Mary at Evesham (the Abbey). The boundaries of these estates, Daylesford, Evenlode, Chastleton, Cornwell, Salford, Dornford, and Shipton on Cherwell, are not given but in 969 AD Oswald Bishop of Worcester leased eight hides at Evenlode to Ealhstan. The boundaries of the land are described from the River Bladene, later Evenlode, to *gild beorh* and back to the river. The authenticity of the ancient charters that ecclesiastical foundations claim to have copied may be dubious but it is clear that the place that was chosen for the four shires to meet was in the gift of Offa and later Worcester Cathedral.

Jumping forward three centuries from Offa, power had transferred to King Alfred of Wessex and the midland shires were under the control of shire reeves (sheriffs). Wulstan<sup>11</sup>, born twelve miles from

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<sup>8</sup> In 680 AD Pope Agatho had written to Æthelred king of Mercia and Theodore archbishop of Canterbury asking for a synod to be convened. The outcome of this synod was that Æthelred divided Mercia into five dioceses - Worcester, Lichfield, Hereford, Leicester, and Lincoln.

<sup>9</sup> In 794 Offa was at Villa Australis, which is usually identified with Sutton (South Town) 3 miles north of Hereford, some 45 miles to the east of Loxley. It is clear from surviving charters that he travelled extensively within his kingdom.

<sup>10</sup> For a period of some 10 years five shires met at this point. These shires were probably formed to make the tax raising process more efficient. It is claimed that in 1007 AD Winchcombeshire was the fifth shire but it appears to have been absorbed into Gloucestershire ten years later when Cnut became king of all England. Thomas of Marlborough writing his History of the Abbey of Evesham describes how Odo, bishop of Bayeux, seized twenty eight estates from the Abbey “Protinus ergo quasi lupus consilia malignantium in loco qui dicitur Gildenebeorge iubet congregari, quinque uidelicet sciras, ibique plus per suam iniquam potentiam quam recto iure ex triginta sex terris quas abbas Ageluuus per dignam pecuniam ecclesie adquisiuit, uiginti octo uillas fecit eidem abiurari et suo iniquo dominio usurpari.” [So, like a ravening wolf, he straightway summoned from the five shire councils of men hostile to us, to gather in a place called Gildenebeorge. There, more by his own evil influence than by legitimate means, he had this abbey deprived of twenty-eight villas from the thirty-six territories which Abbot Æthelwig acquired for the church by his honest money, and seized them for his own unjust lordship.]

<sup>11</sup> **St. Wulstan** (sometimes St. Wulfstan II, also known as Wolstan, Wulfstan and Ulfstan), Bishop of Worcester.

His denomination as Wulfstan II is to denote that he is the second Bishop Wulstan of Worcester. The first Bishop Wulstan is also sometimes called Wulstan II to denote that he was the second Archbishop of York called Wulstan. To make matters worse, Wulfstan II, Archbishop of York, is the mother's brother of the second Wulstan, Bishop of Worcester.

Wulstan was born in 1008 at Long Itchington, Warwickshire, England. He was probably named after his uncle, Wulstan II, Archbishop of York. Through his uncle's influence, he studied at monasteries in Evesham and Peterborough, before becoming a clerk at Worcester. During this time, his superiors, noting his reputation for dedication and chastity, urged him to join the priesthood. Wulstan was ordained shortly thereafter, in 1038, and soon joined a monastery of Benedictines at Worcester. After serving as treasurer and then prior of his monastery, Wulstan was named Bishop of Worcester on September 8, 1062. Something of a social reformer, Wulstan struggled to bridge the gap between the old and new regimes, and to alleviate the suffering of the poor.

In 1075, Wulstan and the Worcestershire levy put down the rebellion of Ralph de Gauder, Earl of Norfolk, Roger FitzOsbern, Earl of Hereford and the Saxon Waltheof known as 'The Bridal of Norwich' against William the Conqueror.

He is responsible for the founding of Great Malvern Priory, and undertook much large scale rebuilding work including Worcester Cathedral, Hereford Cathedral, Tewkesbury Abbey, and many other churches in the Worcester, Hereford and Gloucester areas.

Loxley, became bishop of Worcester in 1062 and in 1066 assisted at the coronation of William the Conqueror. He was the only English bishop to retain his office after the arrival of William the Conqueror and was brave enough, and sure enough of his position, to “establish his claim to Alveston before Queen Matilda [William’s wife] in the presence of the four shireffdoms”. The meeting point of the four shires retained its importance and the king’s half brother, Bishop Odo of Kent, in seizing many of the estates belonging to the Diocese of Worcester included Evenlode where the *gild beorh*, or Four Shire Stone as it was now known, was a boundary marker<sup>12</sup>.

### 3 Trouble and Strife

The world did not end, as had been widely expected, at the close of first millennium and the second millennium saw the start of the sequence of events that led to the Norman invasion in 1066. King Ethelred “The Unready” unable to stop the Viking raids which had devastated Devon decided to make a treaty with the Danes, and to give them a stipend and pay a tribute by way of appeasing them. Shortly afterwards, twenty four thousand pounds were paid to them. Ethelred then married Emma, daughter of Richard, duke of Normandy and she brought Norman earls to fill posts in England. Later in the year the king ordered all the Danes who were in England, both great and small, of either sex, to be slain. This took place on the thirteenth of November 1002 AD<sup>13</sup> and is known as the St. Brice’s Day Massacre.

The Danes continued to ravage Devon, Wiltshire and Hampshire and in 1007 Ethelred offered to keep them in provisions and pay a further tribute if they would refrain from pillage and keep peace with him<sup>14</sup>. They agreed and set the tribute at thirty six thousand pounds. The raids continued and by 1012 AD East Anglia, Essex, Middlesex, Hertfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, half of Huntingdonshire, most of Northamptonshire, Kent, Surrey, Sussex, Hampshire, Wiltshire and Berkshire were utterly wasted by sword and fire. The tribute was set at forty eight thousand pounds for the year and one result was that virtually all of the plate and ornaments of Worcester Cathedral were taken away in payment<sup>15</sup>. In 1013 AD all the people who lived north of Watling Street swore fealty to Swein King of the Danes and he returned to Denmark leaving his son Cnut to subdue southern England.

King Swein died in 1014 AD and a tussle began between Cnut and Ethelred. In 1016 AD Cnut led an army through Cricklade into Warwickshire where they “devastated and burned many villages and slew everybody they met”<sup>16</sup>. Edmund Ironside, son of Ethelred, gathered an army to attack the Danes but the Mercians would not proceed unless the men of London joined them. On 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1016 AD King Ethelred died at London. The citizens of London and some nobles who were in London chose Edmund to be the next king. Canute marched his army into Wessex but they were repulsed by Edmund’s men. After four indecisive battles Edmund agreed to make peace with Cnut. Wessex, East Anglia, Essex, and London were allotted to Cnut with the remainder of England to fall under the supremacy of Edmund. But at the end of November, King Edmund died at London.

The opposition ended and Cnut became King of England in 1017 AD personally controlling Wessex but placing East Anglia under Earl Turkill, Mercia under Edric, and Northumbria under Earl Irc. Edric did not last long because on Christmas Day that year Cnut ordered his death – by being thrown from the Tower of London and left unburied. Along with Edric, Northman, the brother of Earl Leofric of Mercia, was killed and Leofric was promoted to take Edric’s place as Ealdorman.

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Wulstan died in 1095, allegedly while engaged in his daily ritual of washing of the feet of a dozen poor men. After his death, he had an altar dedicated to him in Great Malvern Priory alongside Cantilupe of Hereford and King Edward the Confessor.

In Easter of 1158, Henry II and his wife Eleanor of Aquitaine visited Worcester Cathedral and placed their crowns on the shrine of Wulstan, vowing not to wear them again.

Wulstan was canonized in 1203 by Pope Innocent III. One of the miracles attributed to Wulstan was the curing of King Harold's daughter.

<sup>12</sup> See above.

<sup>13</sup> The name *St. Brice* apparently refers to bishop Bricius of Tours, whose memorial day is November 13.

<sup>14</sup> Rev. J. Stevenson, *The Chronicle of Florence of Worcester*, The Church Historians of England, Vol..II, Pt. 1, Seeleys, London, 1853.

<sup>15</sup> “the tables of the altars, both of gold and silver, the ornaments of books, chalices, and crucifixes were melted down”, *Monasticon Anglicanum: a History of the Abbies and other Monasteries, Hospitals, Frieries, and Cathedral and Collegiate Churches, with their Dependencies, in England and Wales* Dugdale, William, Sir (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme & Brown, 1817-1830).

<sup>16</sup> Rev. J. Stevenson, *The Chronicle of Florence of Worcester*, The Church Historians of England, Vol..II, Pt. 1, Seeleys, London, 1853.

Leofric's family were to have a profound influence on events that directly impacted on Loxley and other places in south Warwickshire.

Cnut died 12<sup>th</sup> November 1035 AD and Harold seized the throne, although Hardecanute probably had a better claim to it. Harold eventually agreed to govern the northern part and Hardecanute the southern part of England. By 1037 AD Hardecanute had retired to Denmark and Harold ruled the whole country. The Welsh saw their opportunity to influence events from the west side of Offa's Dyke. In 1039 AD Gruffydd ap Llywelyn defeated a Mercian army at Rhyd y Groes, near Welshpool, and killed its leader Edwin, another of Leofric's brothers. The next year Harold died at London and Hardecanute became king. Resentful of his previous treatment he had Harold's body dug up, thrown into a sewer, and then into the Thames. He then imposed heavy taxes to fund his lifestyle. In 1041 AD the citizens of Worcester and the men of Worcestershire rebelled against the taxes and killed two of the king's collectors. The king sent a force which included Earl Leofric of Mercia to seek revenge by death and destruction which lasted for four days. Most of the citizens had anticipated the attack and had fled to an island in the Severn. The next year Hardecanute collapsed at a wedding party and died on the 8<sup>th</sup> of June. Edward son of Ethelred was declared king. Earl Leofric established himself as a loyal supporter and travelled with the new king from Gloucester to Winchester in November 1043 AD.

According to Florence of Worcester, after a few quiet years, thirty ships manned by Irish pirates entered the river Severn, landed at Wylesceaxan (the Welsh Usk), joined forces with Gruffydd, "king of the South Britons"<sup>17</sup> and plundered the neighbourhood in August 1049 AD. They then crossed the river Weage, burned Dymedham, and put to death every one they found therein. An army led by Aldred, bishop of Worcester, with a few men from Gloucestershire and Herefordshire, plus a number of Welsh who had promised to be faithful, opposed them. The Welsh broke their promise and sent messengers to Gruffydd telling him to attack - which he did with great success. The bishop of Dorchester and the Abbots of Thorney and Westminster were among the dead. In 1053 AD King Edward ordered Res, brother of Gruffydd, to be put to death for his frequent incursions into England.

Earl Godwin died the same year and was succeeded by his son Harold but his earldom was given to Leofric's son Ælfgar. In 1055 AD King Edward outlawed Ælfgar although he had committed no crime. He responded by going to Ireland and on returning with eighteen pirate ships requested the assistance of Gruffydd against King Edward. They attacked Hereford and defeated the king's nephew, Ralph the Timid, Earl of Hereford<sup>18</sup>. Earl Harold Godwinson was sent to counter attack but could not prevail. A peace treaty was negotiated by messengers who went to and fro and eventually Gruffydd, Ælfgar and Harold met at Biligesleagea<sup>19</sup> and agreed to become firm friends. Ælfgar returned as Earl of East Anglia and Gruffydd swore fealty to King Edward the Confessor. Gruffydd then married Ælfgar's daughter Ealdgyth. In 1056 AD Aldred bishop of Worcester, with earl Leofric, who died the next year, and earl Harold mediated a peace between king Edward and Gruffydd, king of the Welsh. The peace did not last long and in 1058 AD Ælfgar, earl of the Mercians was outlawed again and again recovered his earldom with Gruffydd's help. Patience finally ran out and in 1063 AD king Edward commanded Harold Godwinson to take a small troop of horsemen, from Gloucester, to find Gruffydd. But Gruffydd escaped from Ruuddlan by sea. At the end of May Harold sailed from Bristol to North Wales where he met up with his brother Tostig and began to lay the countryside waste. The Welsh submitted and gave hostages to secure peace and outlawed Gruffydd who was then murdered by his own people on 5<sup>th</sup> August 1064 AD. Harold died two years later at Hastings.

In this turbulent period, between 1023 and 1033 AD, Worcester Cathedral failed to pay the Dane Geld that was due on three hides at Loxley and on the nearby estates at Luddington and Drayton in the parish of Stratford upon Avon, Lapworth and Milcote. Under the laws that had been introduced by King Cnut (Canute) anyone else who made the payment within thirty days could take possession of such estates. Bishop Wulstan's uncle Wulstan<sup>20</sup> was promoted from Prior to Bishop of Worcester

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<sup>17</sup> Gwynedd.

<sup>18</sup> **Hereford, Earl Ralph of** - Also called Ralph the Timid. Son of Count Drogo of Mantes and Goda, Edward the Confessor's sister. Earl of Hereford 1053-57; disgraced in 1055 for cowardice against the Welsh.

<sup>19</sup> Billingsley in Bolstone parish - on the border between Welsh Archenfield and English Herefordshire

<sup>20</sup> **Wulstan**, Archbishop of York, Bishop of London, Bishop of Worcester. Died May 28, 1023 at Ely.

just before the St. Brice's Day Massacre. He held the office of Archbishop of York at the same time and there was considerable confusion about the ownership of estates that he held by right of office and personally. His death in 1023 AD may have contributed to the confusion about who was to pay the tribute that was due on these estates. Their loss and the later allocation of estates to the Conqueror's supporters has resulted in a gap in the ownership records for most of Loxley. The Domesday Book says that one hide was owned by the Bishop of Worcester, four hides less one virgate that had been owned by Ælstan<sup>21</sup> were held by Hugh from the Earl of Meulan, and the remaining virgate had been owned by Manegot was held by Hugh son of Constantine from Hugh of Grandmesnil. Ælstan, who held most of the land in king Edward's time, is only known to us through these entries.

## 4 How old is Loxley Church?

The earliest written reference to a church at Loxley occurs in the Register of Kenilworth when it was given by Robert Fitz Odo to Kenilworth Priory. Robert was dead by 1179 and his daughter, Basilia, confirmed the gift in 1199. There is other evidence that the church existed much earlier than this.

Firstly, the Domesday survey records that there was a priest at Loxley in 1086 and that the church at Worcester held one hide there with a plough, together with four villagers with a second plough. The church held sufficient land for three ploughs, more than enough to support the priest and his family. Dugdale<sup>22</sup> says there was a church at Loxley and John Blair<sup>23</sup> says that the Domesday inquisitors did not generally record the presence of churches because they were not taxable assets but the presence of a priest supported by a hide was a good indication that a church existed.

The supporting evidence is compelling. On 7<sup>th</sup> July 1286 Godfrey Gifford, Bishop of Worcester, came to Loxley to consecrate the re-built church. The red sandstone used in the reconstruction of the building has been described as Kenilworth sandstone and it has the colour and texture of the stone used at Kenilworth Castle. This distinctive stone, which was laid down about three hundred million years ago, probably came from the Castle Quarry at Kenilworth and the building work would have been carried out by masons from Kenilworth Priory. Stoneleigh Abbey and Cubbington Church have similar stone and craftsmanship.

The southeast corner of the sandstone part of the chancel wall can be seen, from the churchyard, resting on a foundation of white-ish stone. The churchyard is held back from the church by a brick retaining wall allowing the foundation level to be clearly seen two feet below current ground level. Looking west along the wall from this corner multiple phases of repair and restoration are evident. Some of the herring-bone stonework that is built directly on the old foundation can be seen near the east wall of the vestry that was added in the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century. More herring-bone stonework can be seen inside and outside the north wall of the chancel. Nicholas Pevsner<sup>24</sup> suggested that this may have been added during the 18<sup>th</sup> restoration but this seems unlikely because the Vicar of Loxley, writing in 1923, said "herring-bone work concealed beneath the wall-plaster – which the late squire Cove-Jones use to pick away with his fingers in order to exhibit the masonry – is of scarcely so great an antiquity, although it is probably a fragment of the church in which 'one priest' recorded in Domesday Book, ministered to the villeins and bordars with whom he is grouped". James Cove-Jones lived at Loxley Hall in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and there is no evidence that 'a feature' added in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century was plastered over in the next century. In saying that the herring-bone work was

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Wulstan, with Ælfric of Eynsham, is one of the two major writers of the Benedictine reform period in England. In a series of homilies begun during his tenure as Bishop of London (996-1002) Wulstan attains a high degree of competence in rhetorical prose, working with a distinctive rhythmical system based around alliterative pairings. Wulstan wrote numerous works in Old English, the vernacular. His best known is *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos*. In *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos* (Sermon of the Wolf to the English), he proclaims the depredations of the "Danes" a scourge from God to lash the English for their sins. He calls upon them to repent their sinful ways, and also composes numerous homilies relating to the Last Days and the coming of Antichrist. Wulstan was also the author of the "Institutes of Polity", a treatise dealing with the proper order of society. Wulstan was very involved in the reform of the English church, and was a powerful force for setting up the power of the bishopric of York, in particular. In addition to his religious and literary career, Wulstan also enjoyed a lengthy and fruitful career as one of England's premier statesmen. Wulstan was primarily responsible, under both Æthelred and Cnut, for the drafting of English law codes relating to both secular and ecclesiastical affairs, and seems to have held a prominent and influential position at court.

<sup>21</sup> Ælstan had also held three hides in Milcote with Bishop Wulstan, which passed to Stephen who may have been a naval officer.

<sup>22</sup> Sir William Dugdale, *The Antiquities of Warwickshire*, Thomas Warren, London, 1656.

<sup>23</sup> John Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, Oxford University Press 2005.

<sup>24</sup> Pevsner and Wedgewood

‘of scarcely so great antiquity’, Rev. A. Gordon Greenhalgh was referring to the possibility of a church on the site being ‘dedicated in the tempestuous dawn of Mercian Christianity’, i.e. in the time of king Offa.

The physical evidence is that the herring-bone wall is built directly on the ancient foundation layer. The archaeological evidence is that that this style of construction was used in late Anglo-Saxon times and certainly no later than 1100 AD. The documentary evidence that most of Loxley was ‘snatched’ from the church at Worcester between 1023 AD and 1033 AD and remained in lay hands until the 12<sup>th</sup> century. The diocese was unlikely to build here after that time and there is no evidence that a secular owner would have built a church without diocesan approval, so the stone church was probably here in the first quarter of the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Furthermore, as we have seen, the church at Worcester had become increasingly impoverished after 1002 AD and was unlikely to have invested in the construction of stone churches in the intervening years. The widespread expectation that the end of the millennium would mark the end of the World, pushes the likely construction date even further back. The technology to build in stone, with herring-bone work, was used in the Worcester diocese at this time – king Edmund “Ironside” met king Cnut (see page 3) in 1016 AD at Deerhurst Priory where fragments of similar herring-bone work can still be seen.

## 5 Neighbours.

There was very little contact between Loxley and its neighbours to the south because reaching them involved a long detour or climbing more than one hundred feet to the summit of Long Hill. Furthermore, just two miles to the southwest Three Shires Ash marks a point where Warwickshire met with Gloucestershire and Worcestershire and loyalties and affiliations lay further to the south. The communities that were seen as neighbours lay in a semi-circle on the northern side, such as Huncote, Hampton Lucy, Alveston, Tiddington, and Stratford upon Avon. Huncote was depopulated in mediaeval times and its size and importance are unclear. Hampton Lucy was occupied in Roman times, became a palace for the rulers of the Hwicce, and an important site for the bishops of Worcester. Alveston where the river Avon could be crossed to reach Hampton, was adjacent to the known Roman site at Tiddington, and also became an important site for the bishops of Worcester. Stratford upon Avon grew up at another point where the Avon could be forded and later became an asset that was granted to the religious foundations in the diocese of Worcester frequently in exchange for other key sites. There was clearly civil and religious activity in these places throughout the first two millennia. Loxley, although a lesser place than its neighbours, was also seen to be of sufficient importance to be given, taken away and then given again to leading religious institutions.

The first clear reference to Loxley in the surviving ancient charters is as a neighbour of Alveston. The charter describes in Anglo-Saxon how the boundary of the parish proceeds clockwise from the ford by the village along the river to King’s Brook<sup>25</sup> and along the brook to the ditch. The boundary then follows the ditch towards the ‘hlawe’ and then along the ‘way’ to the Loxley boundary. The ‘hlawe’ refers to a hill or mound<sup>26</sup>, which may have been a site for burials, and could have been the origin of the name Lowe Farm which lies near Huncote. The ‘way’ was the track, path, or road, from Tiddington and Alveston which met the Loxley boundary, at which point the parish boundary turned towards the Ridge Way and eventually back towards Alveston along the Banbury to Stratford road. The presumed route of the Roman road from Tiddington to the Fosse Way past Bath Hill has now become an estate boundary known as the ‘way’.

In later times neighbouring villages, such as Alveston, Wellesbourne, Ettington and Alderminster, grew more than Loxley but even this modest community was able to support seven farms, two shops, a blacksmith, a pub, a church and two chapels.

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(published posthumously)

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<sup>25</sup> The origins of this name are unknown but could it be a reference to Offa?

<sup>26</sup> hlæw m n ‘mound, hill, mountain’, np hlæwas – Margaret Gelling in *Signposts to the Past* (1978, pp 134-7 & 154-7), suggests this would indicate habitation before the mid-7<sup>th</sup> century.