THE EARLY MEDIEVAL CONTEXT OF THE ROYAL FREE CHAPELS OF SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE

by

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SYNOPSIS

There was a high concentration of royal free chapels in south Staffordshire during the later medieval period. These were churches for which the Crown claimed complete freedom from all ordinary ecclesiastical jurisdiction. Following on from the work of D Styles and J H Denton, this thesis examines the origins of these churches, and the reasons for their special status and high concentration in south Staffordshire.

This study shows that the majority of the royal free chapels in south Staffordshire began life as conventional middle Saxon minster churches, whilst the remainder were lesser minsters, created at some time during the Anglo-Saxon period. Using multi-disciplinary techniques, the extent of the minster parishes surrounding these churches was determined; and the royal free chapels were shown to have been founded within an already well organised and ancient landscape.

It is argued here that this area around south Staffordshire may delimit the heartland of middle Saxon Mercia. It contains possibly the earliest family churches of Mercian royalty (ie the royal free chapels) and other major Mercian centres (eg Lichfield, Repton). The area was also of great significance in the West Saxon conquest of Mercia. These factors explain the high concentration of royal free chapels in this area, their status, and continuing importance to later medieval kings.

This thesis contains approximately 40 000 words.

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INTRODUCTION

The term 'royal free chapel' was increasingly used in England throughout the thirteenth century to describe each one of a small but distinct body of churches which enjoyed a special status.[1] These included churches at Gloucester (St Oswald's), Shrewsbury (St Mary's, St Michael's and St Juliana's), Derby (All Saints), Waltham and Wimborne Minster. The highest concentration was found in the south Staffordshire area with seven royal free chapels at Stafford, Penkridge, Gnosall, Tettenhall, Wolverhampton, Tamworth and Quatford.[2] During the later medieval period the Crown continually claimed that a number of their churches were completely free from all ordinary ecclesiastical jurisdiction.[3] The churches, it was said, had always been free; and were of ancient royal foundation, even pre-dating the ordination of bishops within England.[4]

The royal free chapels were staffed by clerks who were answerable directly to the king in all spiritual and secular matters. In effect, they formed royal peculiars, ie churches within a diocese which were exempt from the interference of the bishop, except in certain spiritual functions which only he could carry out.[5] Furthermore, whilst English kings often called upon the pope to support these claims of exemption, they did not recognise papal authority within the royal free chapels.[6] This led to the extraordinary situation whereby 'the medieval English king was not simply his own bishop ..., but his own pope as well'.[7]

The claims made by English royalty for these special churches are particularly significant given the rigorous ecclesiastical reform taking place during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The Gregorian Reform had placed emphasis upon curtailing secular ownership and control of churches. A great reduction was seen in the numbers of churches held by the laity, and in their rights within them.[8] This was found necessary because of the way in which most churches, particularly ordinary parish churches, had come into being. They had generally been founded as proprietary (ie private) churches by local lords, and as such were usually treated purely as an extension of the lord's demesne.[9] Bishops found this to be increasingly at odds with their administration of, and control over, their dioceses, which led to disputes between Crown and Church.[10]

These extraordinary circumstances have been discussed in depth by only a few scholars, particularly J H Denton and Dorothy Styles.[11] Their research traces the history of the royal free chapels from the tenth century, concentrating mainly upon their post-Conquest development. However, the problem of the origins of these churches and the royal rights within them has hardly been confronted at all. Therefore, a large part of this thesis will be concerned with exploring the origins of the royal free chapels and asking the question of why they took on their later medieval importance.

Dorothy Styles believed the royal free chapels of south Staffordshire to have been founded in the tenth century. She based this belief upon several inconclusive pieces of evidence. Later medieval tradition associates the churches at Tettenhall and Penkridge with king Edgar (959-975) and the latter also with king Eadred (946-955), which prompted her to assume the possible foundation of the churches by one or other of these kings.[12] A further assumption was that a grant of two bullocks to Pencric (presumably to a religious foundation there) by Wulfgeat of Donnington in c 1000 was made to a church of fairly recent origin.[13]

However, we may need to look beyond the tenth century in order to establish the origins of the royal free chapels. Denton suggested that these churches had originally been Anglo-Saxon minsters,[14] but did not then explore the date and circumstances of their foundation any further. Therefore, it is proposed to study here each of the south Staffordshire royal free chapels individually, in order to establish whether they were minster churches of the conventional sort. That is, to see whether they were the original rural 'mother churches' of the sort founded in England in the seventh and eighth centuries, from which missionary work was carried out by a community of priests, who preached to extended minster parishes or parochiae.[15] If so, the extent of their original parochiae will also be determined so far as is possible.

In order to discover minster status, numerous factors need to be examined. Whatever the circumstances of their foundation, most minster churches soon came to be staffed by secular clerks,[16] whose function was to serve a large parish belonging to the church. Indeed, communities of 'canons' following no particular religious rule were still evident in many old minsters by 1086.[17] The royal free chapels themselves were largely secular colleges in the later medieval period. That is, they too were staffed by communities of canons and served a parochia or decanatus.[18] Evidence for groups of clergy surviving in these churches will therefore be studied. Furthermore, the relationship between the royal free chapels and other churches in the area will be examined so that, where there is clear evidence of the royal churches having always been the senior ones, it can be argued that these were the most important and most ancient foundations in the south Staffordshire area.

If they were originally Anglo-Saxon minsters, the survival of these churches into the later medieval period as royal secular colleges shows that they did not undergo reformation along Benedictine lines during the tenth century. This was a time of monastic revival when many minsters were reorganised to lessen the grip of secular canons, and new churches were founded.[19] This begs the question of why, if these were middle Saxon minsters of the conventional sort, they took on their later importance so that by the tenth and eleventh centuries they were emerging as churches with a privileged status, a status which survived into the later medieval period. This question will also be tackled.

The origins of the south Staffordshire royal free chapels will therefore be examined both individually and as a group. Dorothy Styles believed them all to have been of contemporary foundation.[20] By a study of each church it may be possible to determine whether they were indeed all of much the same date and importance, or whether some were of later foundation than the others.

The question arises of what the significance is of establishing a middle Saxon rather than a tenth century foundation date for the royal free chapels, and of rediscovering their postulated minster parishes. Minster churches of this date were usually founded within pre-existing land units, which the minsters often used as their parochiae. These land units could have been large royal estates or even early tribal areas.[21] A study of early Anglo-Saxon charters has in fact shown that many of these 'estates' were well developed by the seventh century.[22] A growing body of scholars, such as Blair and Kemp, have carried out research in recent years into minster churches and the rediscovery of their parochiae.[23] This type of work provides us with a greater understanding of the establishment and organisation of minster churches. Furthermore, if minster parishes reflect the layout of earlier estates, then their rediscovery helps us to add a geographical dimension to our understanding of the tenurial organisation of middle Saxon England, for which contemporary documentary evidence us usually very slight.

A further point of wider historical significance to be considered is why the south Staffordshire area had such a concentration of royal free chapels, a concentration unseen elsewhere in England.[24] Two main possibilities will be considered. The first is that the special later status of the churches had something to do with the middle Saxon history of the area, not least its importance to the Mercian royal family. The second is that their importance may have derived from the circumstances of the area's take-over by the West Saxons in the tenth century.

It has, moreover, become increasingly apparent that the middle Saxon landscape was in many ways influenced by an earlier organisation. Research by scholars such as Finberg and Phythian-Adams has revealed various forms of landscape continuity between Roman Britain and Anglo-Saxon England.[25] They have shown that in many cases Romano-Brtiish field systems and boundaries may be broadly reflected in the Anglo-Saxon layout. It is possible that this is merely due to the re-use of an area soon after its desertion. However, it has also been demonstrated that some Romano-Britons were still in occupation of parts of Britain which were being settled by the Anglo-Saxons during the migration period. For example, at Claybrooke on the Leicestershire/Warwickshire border, the study of place-names and other evidence has shown a continuing British presence.[26] Such studies tend to suggest a degree of peaceful co-existence and gradual hybridisation between the remaining British population and the incoming settlers.

Evidence for the pre-Anglo-Saxon landscape and settlement patterns of south Staffordshire will therefore be looked at for any indications of such continuity. This will enable us to place the minster churches of south Staffordshire within their early medieval context. In other words, it can be determined to what extent the landscape in which minster churches were being founded was already well organised and ancient, and therefore what constraints the earlier layout may have placed upon them. Evidence of Romano-British Christianity in south Staffordshire will similarly be examined, in order to determine what sort of influence this may have had upon the incoming settlers.

As Phythian-Adams pointed out, when documentary sources are lacking, it is necessary to look at a wide range of evidence in order to reduce the gaps in our knowledge of a subject.[27] The above mentioned scholars therefore developed multi-disciplinary techniques in order to facilitate their study of the late Romano-British and Anglo-Saxon periods. These techniques include not only the use of written sources, but also a study of the whole landscape and its place-names and archaeology. Such a study can provide information about whole communities, and not just about major events and people which tend to dominate written material. Therefore, in addition to documentary evidence,place-names and archaeology will be examined here. Such evidence will not provide information about the antiquity of the royal free chapels themselves, or about the antiquity of the estates which they once served. However, as discussed above, it can be used to illustrate more fully the early medieval context within which these minster churches were being founded in south Staffordshire.

In order to maximise our understanding of the royal free chapels and of the early medieval landscape of south Staffordshire in which they stood, it is necessary to look at a variety of types of evidence. The advantages and disadvantages of the use of place-name and archaeological evidence in this study will be discussed in Chapters 3 and 4 respectively. The local topography will be looked at in Chapter 1. An examination of the natural landscape can reveal how attractive the area would appear to settlers in terms of the fertility of the soil, the nature of relief and drainage, and consequently, the possible types of land use. It can show whether the land covered by the south Staffordshire royal free chapels formed a topographically cohesive unit, or whether any major natural features divided the area. It must be remembered, however, that other factors influenced settlement patterns, such as pre-existing human activity.

Written sources are important to this study. However, it is necessary to be aware of some of the problems which can be encountered when using this type of evidence. Documents can contain a number of biases, which reflect the purpose for which they were written. They are often incomplete and over-emphasise the importance of a small minority of the population and certain events, whilst ignoring large sections of society. A further problem can be encountered in the shape of forged documents. For example, it seems to have been common practice for religious communities to produce their own charters to legitimise their rights to land. Whilst these claims may have had a basis in truth, it is necessary to be aware of forgeries so that the evidence contained within them is not relied upon too heavily.[28] Furthermore, it should not be assumed that because something is not recorded, it did not happen or exist. To illustrate this point it can be noted that although Domesday Book provides the first record of many settlements, their place-names and archaeological evidence often suggest a much earlier foundation.

More problems are encountered when looking at the written evidence for the study area. Anglo-Saxon charters would be of great value in providing records contemporary with the period in question. However, there is very little surviving pre-Conquest documentation for south Staffordshire. Wolverhampton church alone has an Anglo-Saxon charter specifically relating to it, but this is thought to be spurious.[29] One or two other Anglo-Saxon documents mention relevant places (for example, Pencric in the will of Wulfgeat), but none of them greatly advances our knowledge about the origins and status of the churches concerned.

Domesday Book was compiled as a record of the value of land and property throughout England and, consequently, of the taxes and dues owed to the king.[30] This means that many churches are included as part of a lord's demesne.

However, the recording of churches in Domesday Book is far from complete. Greater churches are often recorded in more detail due to their own potential value. On the other hand, royal minsters often received less attention than churches which had been granted out.[31] Nevertheless, if a church does appear in Domesday Book, certain information given there about it may be used to determine whether it had minster status. For example, the number of priests mentioned (if any), and the amount of land endowed can sometimes be indicators of a 'superior' church.[32]

Later medieval ecclesiastical documents are a valuable source of written evidence for this study. However, as these record the situation of churches as they were several centuries after the period being studied here, they must be interpreted with some care. Encapsulated within many of these documents are records of the disputes arising between old minster churches and chapels, in the latters' attempts to break free and become independent. These ancient parochial links come to light in the form of arguments over, for example, rights of burial or baptism.[33] A measure of independence was very often only gained by the payment of a pension by a former chapel to its mother church, sometimes the only hint of an original dependence. This type of evidence can facilitate the rediscovery of the original minster parish.

Pope Nicholas's _Taxatio Ecclesiastica_ of 1291 provides the first detailed list of English churches and their taxable value, recording both income and expenditure.[34] Sometimes the pensions payable from one church to another are recorded. However, certain problems in the interpretation of these records arise, as the payment of a pension does not necessarily indicate an ancient relationship. It may sometimes show appropriation, whereby a layman granted a church to a religious house so that the latter could take the revenues of the former and appoint a vicar to serve its needs.[35] Furthermore, the

Taxatio Ecclesiastica is far from being a complete record of later thirteenth century churches and their incomes. The types of information recorded varied from diocese to diocese, but frequently benefices which did not exceed six marks in value were omitted, as were certain spiritualities.[36]

A later, but more detailed, account of medieval churches is given in the Valor Ecclesiasticus of 1535. This was compiled when Parliament decided the Crown should take a tenth of the net incomes of all spiritual beneficies.[37] The cathedrals, parish churches and religious houses of each county were listed, along with their lands, buildings, tithes and other sources of income. As with the Taxatio Ecclesiastica, numerous problems arise when using the Valor to trace ancient parochial relationships. Although it is more detailed than the earlier document, it is difficult to determine whether the additional information provided reflects a situation which had arisen since 1291, or whether some of the pensions it records are indeed signs of an original dependence.

Within both documents, the former minster status of a few churches may be indicated by a list of their chapels. However, many chapels broke free from their mother churches very early on and left no visible signs of their original dependence in any records. Therefore, it cannot be assumed that, because the Taxatio Ecclesiastica and the Valor Ecclesiasticus do not mention links between particular churches, there was never any relationship between them. Therefore, these sources are valuable for some sorts of information which they provide, but generally they were compiled at too late a date to be relied upon entirely for establishing minster status and ancient parochial relationships. As discussed above, numerous sources need to be drawn upon to provide as complete a picture as possible.

1 A detailed discussion of the terminology used to describe royal churches of all kinds can be found in J H Denton, English Royal Free Chapels 1100-1300. A Constitutional Study, 1970, pp 1-14 and J H Denton, 'Royal supremacy in ancient demesne churches', Journal of Ecclesiastical History, 22, 1971, p 292

2 See Denton, Royal Free Chapels, map opposite p 174 and Chapter 2

3 ibid, p 15

4 Denton, Royal Free Chapels, pp 100-101 and appendix VI, pp 165-166

5 Denton, 'Royal supremacy in ancient demesne churches', p 300

6 ibid, pp 296-302

7 ibid, p 302

8 B R Kemp, 'Monastic possession of parish churches in the twelfth century', Journal of Ecclesiastical History, 31, 1980, p 134

9 C N L Brooke, 'Rural ecclesiastical institutions in England: The search for their origins', Settimane di Studio del Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo, 28, part 2, 1982, p 699

10 Denton, Royal Free Chapels, passim

11 The main authors on the subject are Denton and Styles. See ibid and Denton, 'Royal supremacy in ancient demesne churches', pp 289-302. D Styles, 'The early history of the king's chapels in Staffordshire', Transactions of the Birmingham Archaeological Society, 60, 1936, pp 56-95. D Styles, 'The early history of Penkridge church', Staffordshire Historical Collections, 1950-51, pp 3-52. Other works include, W R Jones, 'Patronage and administration: the king's free chapels in medieval England', Journal of British Studies, 9, 1969, pp 1-23

12 Styles,'The king's chapels in Staffordshire', pp 57-58

13 ibid, p 58 and D Whitelock, Anglo-Saxon Wills, 1930, p 54

14 Denton, Royal Free Chapels, p 23

15 Brooke, 'Rural ecclesiastical institutions in England', p 695. A more detailed discussion of minster churches and their parishes can be found in Chapter 2

16 G W O Addleshaw, The Beginnings of the Parochial System, 1953, p 12

17 W J Blair, 'Secular minster churches in Domesday Book', in ed P H Sawyer, Domesday Book: A Reassessment, 1985, p 124

18 Denton, Royal Free Chapels, p 2

19 For example, see C J Godfrey, The Church in Anglo-Saxon England, 1962, p 305 and F Barlow, The English Church 1000-1066, 1963, pp 137-153

20 Styles, 'The king's chapels in Staffordshire', p 57

21 S R Bassett, 'In search of the origins of Anglo-Saxon kingdoms', in ed S R Bassett, The Origins of Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms, 1989

22 P H Sawyer, 'Anglo-Saxon Settlement: The Documentary Evidence', in ed T Rowley, Anglo-Saxon Settlement and Landscape, B A R British Series, 6, 1974, pp 115-116

23 For example, see W J Blair, 'Parish versus village: the Bampton-Standlake tithe conflict of 1317-1319', Oxfordshire Local History, II.2, 1985 pp 34-37 and B R Kemp, 'The mother church of Thatcham', Berkshire Archaeological Journal, 63, 1967-68, pp 15-22. For a more detailed explanation of the fragmentation of land units and minster parishes see Chapter 2

24 Denton, Royal Free Chapels, see map opp p 174

25 H P R Finberg, 'Roman and Saxon Withington', in Lucerna, 1964, pp 21-65 and C Phythian-Adams, Continuity, Fields and Fission: The Making of a Midland Parish, 1978

26 Phythian-Adams, Continuity, Fields and Fission, pp 31-32

27 ibid, p 1

28 For example, see G R Elton, The Practice of History, pp 96-108

29 P H Sawyer, Anglo-Saxon Charters: An annotated list and bibliography, 1968, No 1380

30 Sawyer, 'Anglo-Saxon Settlement: The Documentary Evidence', p 110

31 Blair, 'Secular minster churches', p 106 and p 112

32 ibid, p 106

33 For example, see Blair, 'Parish versus village', pp 34-47

34 R Graham, English Ecclesiastical Studies, 1929, pp 271-301

35 F Barlow, The English Church 1066-1154, 1979, pp 51-53

36 Graham, English Ecclesiastical Studies, pp 298-299

37 J J Bagley, Historical Interpretations Volume I, 1972, p 247

CHAPTER ONE

THE TOPOGRAPHY OF THE SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE AREA

One of the main aims of this thesis is to establish early medieval settlement patterns within the south Staffordshire area, by using documentary, place-names and archaeological evidence. Firstly, however, a brief examination of the topography of the study area is necessary, so that these later findings can more readily be understood and placed within the natural context. The relief, drainage and soil fertility of a region will have helped to determine not only its initial penetration by incoming peoples, but also the siting of settlements, types of land use and size of population. A study of topography can therefore provide a greater understanding of the south Staffordshire area, and establish which parts might appear most attractive to settlers.

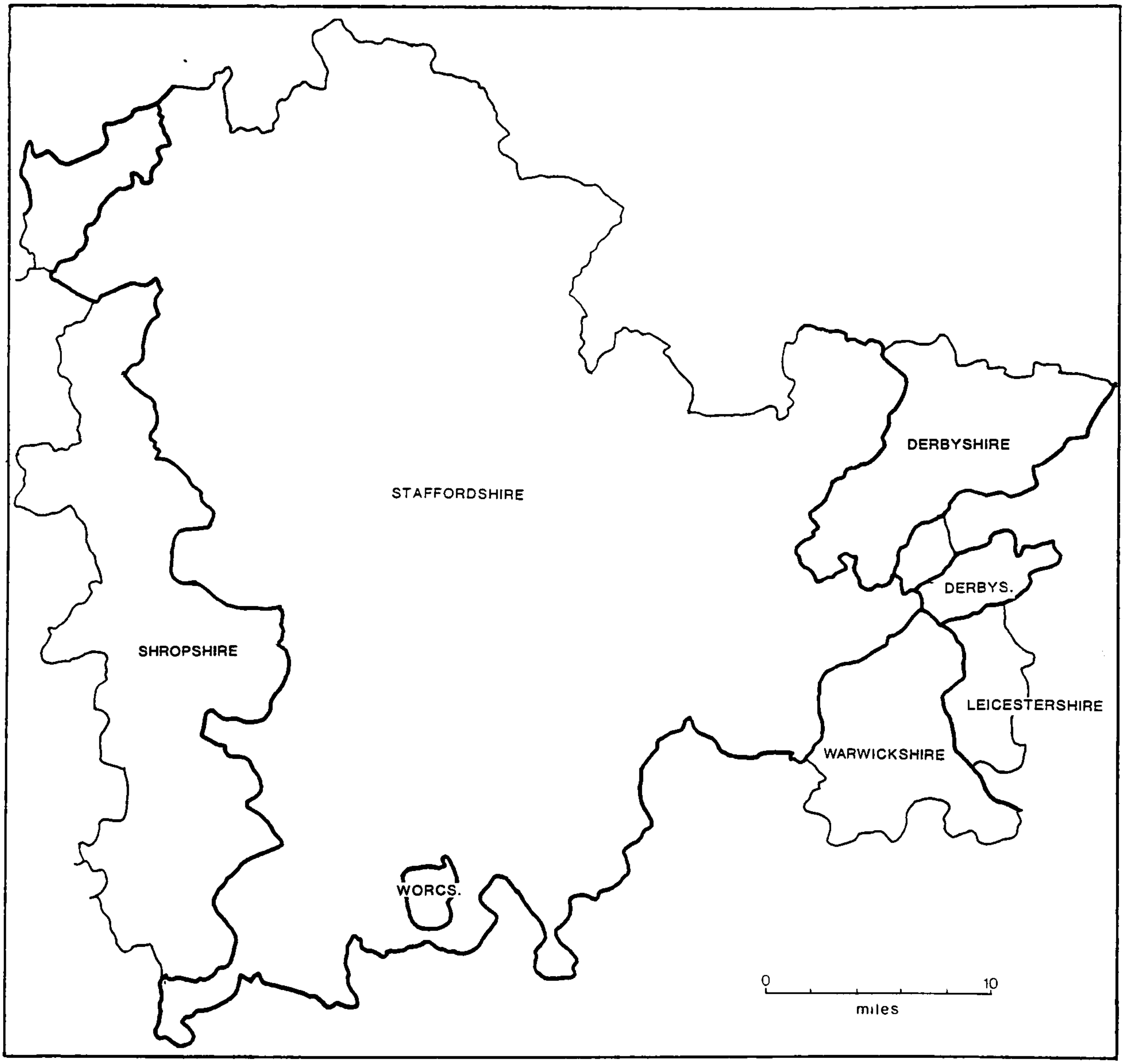
Relief and Drainage

The study area shows marked contrasts in relief. The north of Staffordshire and parts of the south are formed mainly by high ground. These areas are separated by a central lowland including parts of Staffordshire, Derbyshire and Shropshire (see Figure 2).

Ideally, land chosen for settlement should not be too high and exposed, nor should it be too low in case of a risk of flooding. The north and south of the study area would therefore not seem particularly attractive for settlement. North Staffordshire generally lies at around 550 feet above sea level (a s l),[1] with pockets of higher land sometimes reaching between 800 and 1000 feet. This upland is dissected in parts by valleys, such as that of the river Trent to the north of Stone, where the land lies between 200 and 400 feet a s l.

To the west of Lichfield is a region lying at around 400 to 500 feet,[2] with

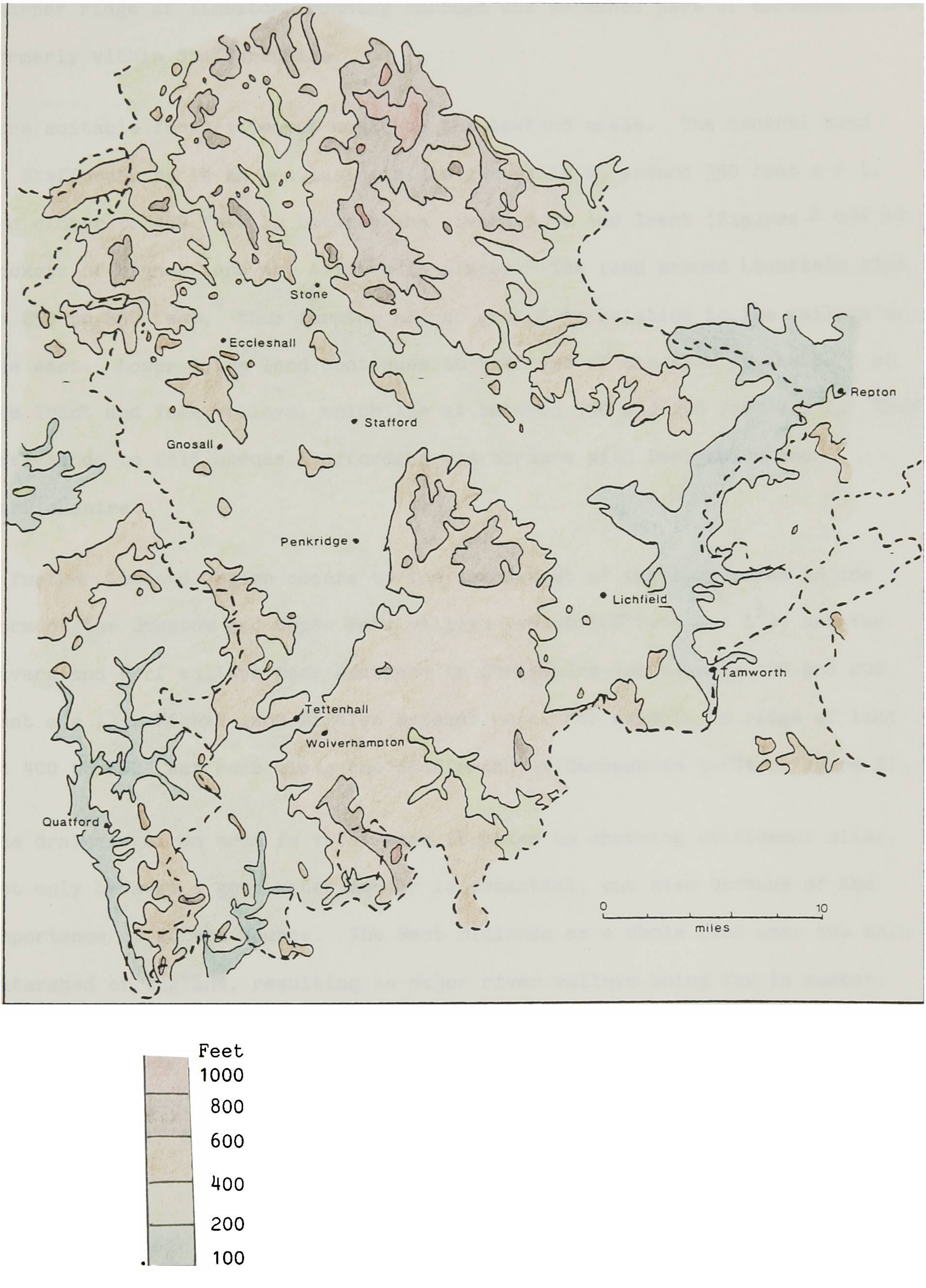
Figure 1: Outline of the study area



County boundary

Parish boundary

Figure 2: Relief



some much higher ground within it. The Cannock Hills to the east of Penkridge are over 600 feet a s l, reaching around 800 feet at their highest point, Castle Ring.[3] This area is a flat-topped plateau which contrasts with a sharper ridge of limestone running through the detached part of Worcestershire, formerly within Staffordshire.

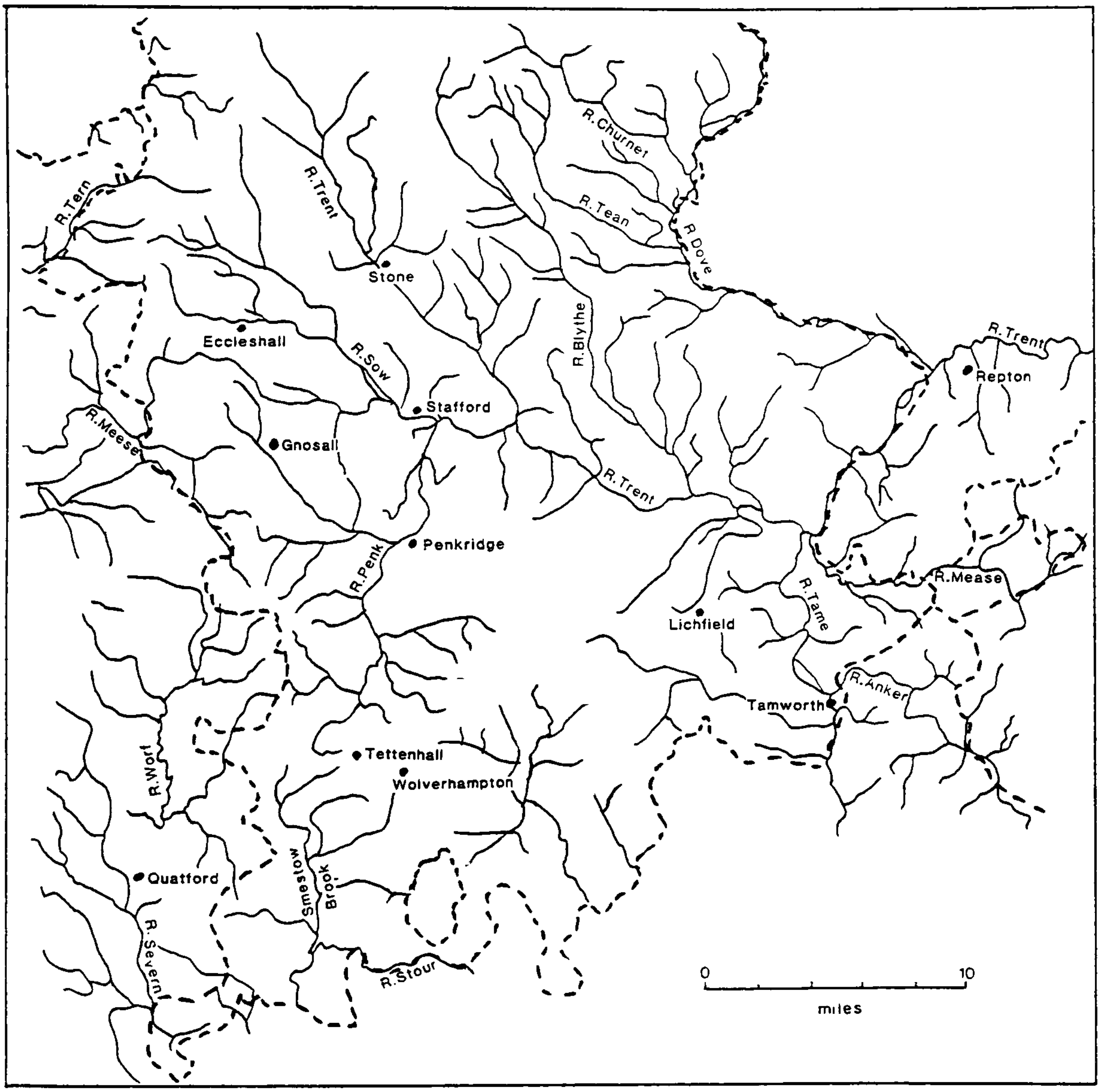
More suitable for settlement would be the lowland areas. The central band of Staffordshire is an undulating plain generally at around 350 feet a s l, and closer to 450 feet in between the rivers Dove and Trent (Figures 2 and 3). Pockets of higher land are evident in places. The land around Lichfield lies at 250 to 350 feet,[4] thus forming higher ground in relation to the valleys to the east. Lower lying land continues to the east of the area in the form of the Trent and Tame valleys, which lie at between 100 and 200 feet a s l. This area tends to fall across Staffordshire's borders with Derbyshire and Warwickshire.

A further lowland region occurs to the south-west of the study area in the form of the Smestow and Upper Penk valleys (about 300 feet a s l[5]), and the Severn and Worf valleys near Quatford in Shropshire (at between 100 and 200 feet a s l). Higher land is also evident here, for example, a ridge of land at 400 to 600 feet runs along the Staffordshire/Shropshire border (Figure 2).

The drainage of an area is vital when it comes to choosing settlement sites, not only because a good water supply is essential, but also because of the importance of access routes. The West Midlands as a whole lies near the main watershed of England, resulting in major river valleys being few in number. Two important exceptions are the Severn and Trent valleys,[6] both of which lie within the study area (Figures 2 and 3).

A large part of Staffordshire is covered by the catchment area of the Trent

Figure 3: Drainage



— — — — County boundary

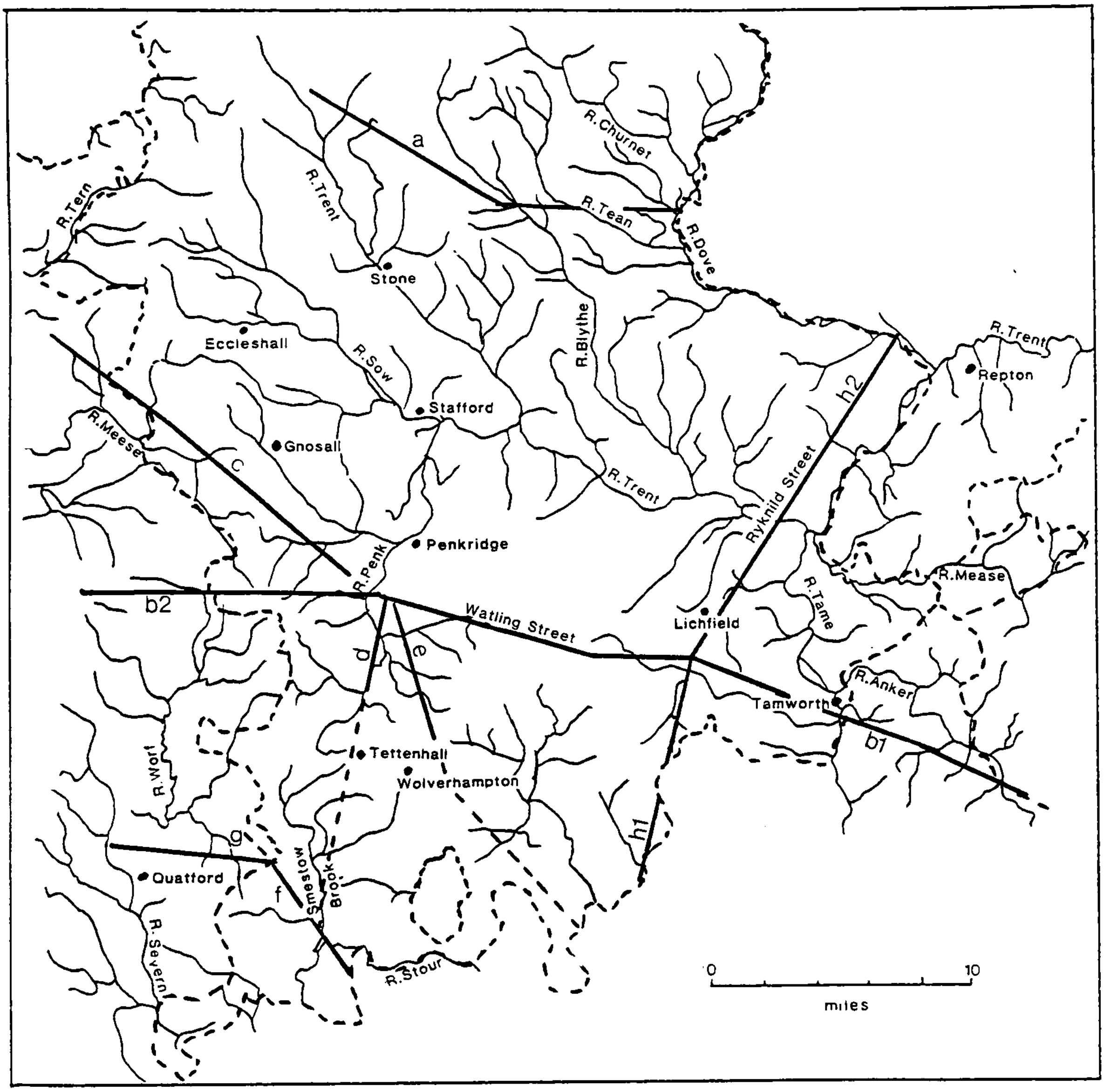
and its tributary rivers. The Trent's source is on Biddulph Moor in north Staffordshire.[7] The Meece Brook and Penk join the river Sow and enter the Trent near Great Haywood, whilst the Blythe joins it a little further downstream.[8] The Tame rises in south Staffordshire, flows south-eastwards and then northwards, passing Tamworth before joining the Trent east of Alrewas. Tamworth itself stands in the junction of the Anker from Warwickshire and the Tame. North-west Warwickshire is drained by the Tame-Blythe system of streams.[9] In the west of the area the Tern, Meese, Worf and Stour all flow into the river Severn.[10]

Figure 3 shows that most of the study area is provided with a good water supply. However, a central section corresponding with the higher land around the Cannock Hills is generally devoid of rivers or major tributary streams. This factor, and the height of the land, would seem to make the Cannock Hills unsuitable for settlement.

A study of topography can show us the most likely routes of entry into an area by settlers. The river Trent provides an obvious and important routeway into Staffordshire, as perhaps do a couple of major Roman roads. The Trent passes to the north of Repton, Stafford and Stone (Figure 3), whilst its tributary rivers flow past Penkridge, Tamworth and Stafford. These routeways therefore feed the whole study area, including the central lowland.

Major Roman roads also cross the area (Figure 4). Watling Street enters Staffordshire from the south-east, having started its course on the south-east coast of England and before continuing to the Roman site of Viroconium (Wroxeter) in Shropshire.[11] This road passes through the later parishes of Tamworth, Lichfield and Penkridge, whilst a branch shoots north-west through Gnosall. Ryknild Street runs northwards from Alcester in Worcestershire

Figure 4: Major Roman Roads



Course certain

Course uncertain

towards Wall, where it crosses Watling Street before continuing into Derbyshire.[12] Therefore, major natural and man-made routes provide fairly easy access into this area by people moving from the east. It is possible that the earliest Anglo-Saxon settlements will be found close to these rivers and roads, with a later movement away to outlying areas.

Geology and Soils

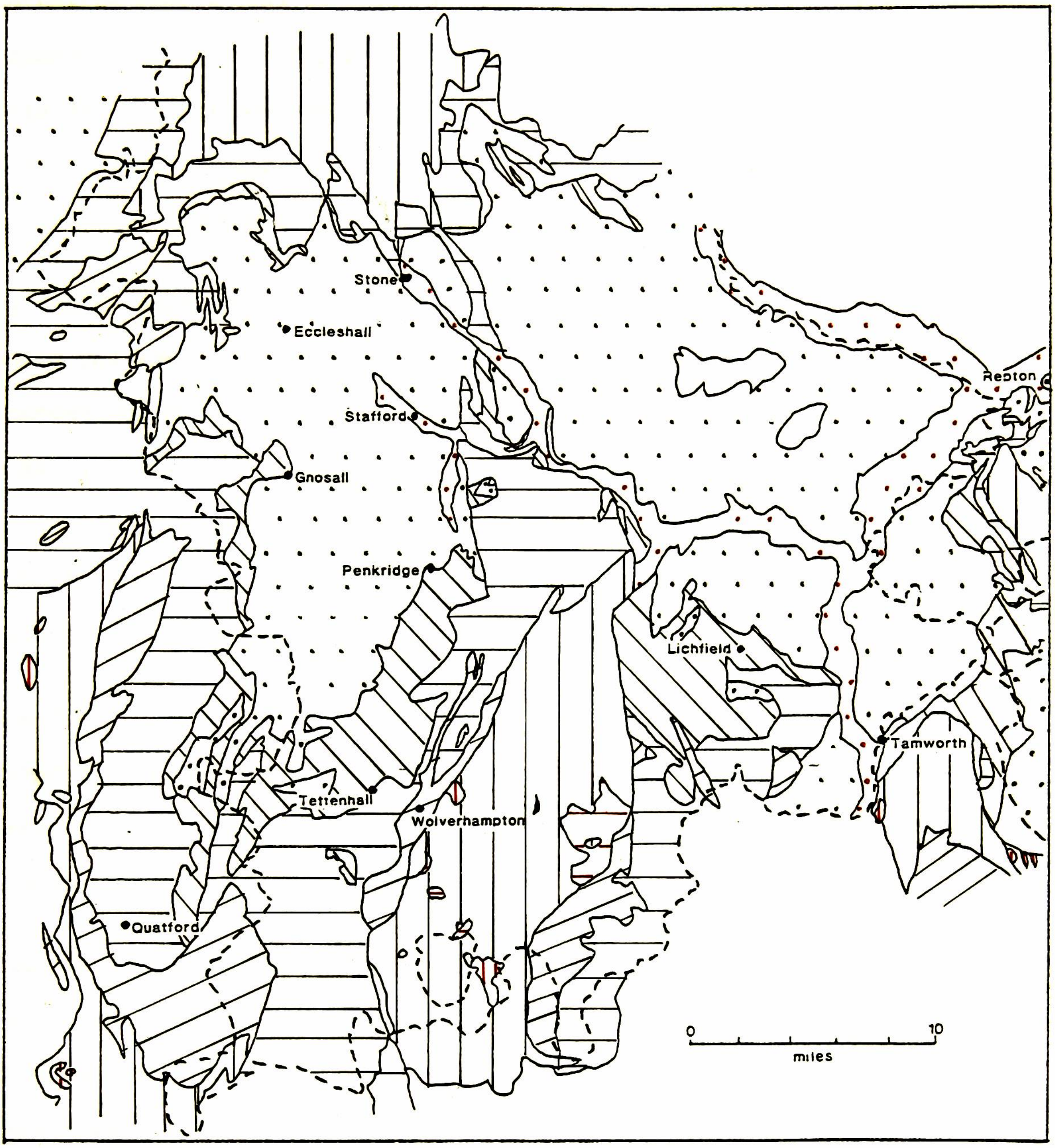
The quality and variety of soil types will be major factors influencing settlement patterns and land use. Soil type is determined by numerous factors, some of the most important being surface deposits (glacial or river) and the underlying solid geology (Figure 5).[13] The area under study displays a wide variety of soil and rock types.

Parts of Staffordshire have poor soils which would not be conducive to agriculture and therefore early settlement. The north of the county, corresponding with the upland area, generally has infertile soils which in the east have been derived from limestone, shale and grit, and in the west from clay, marls and sandstone.[14]

Associated with the high ground to the west of Lichfield is a considerable extent of coal measure with surface outcrops of boulder clay. This gives rise to heavy and sometimes badly drained soils,[15] and is also evident in places to the south-west of the area. Poor stony soils related to Hopwas Breccia are also found in places around Tamworth.[16]

The Cannock Hills are covered in bunter pebble beds which produce poor, stony and infertile soils.[17] These tend to form dry heathland habitats of little value for arable farming, and which today are often used for the production of coniferous woodland.

Figure 5: Geology



Keuper Marl

Bunter Sandstone and Conglomerates

Coal Measures

Keuper Sandstone

Breccia and Sandstone

Alluvium

Wenlock Beds

Basalt and Dolerite

Others

Poor soils in the study area tend to correspond with high ground. Such places would seem very unattractive for settlement to people moving into the area. However, they may not be completely without their uses. The infertile land around Cannock and Rugeley is surrounded by relatively valuable agricultural land (discussed below). In the later medieval period this area formed part of the Royal Forest of Cannock created by William I for hunting purposes.[18] It could well have had a similar use at an earlier period, for sport and to supplement diet.

By way of contrast, the lowlands of Staffordshire have relatively fertile soils and are quite valuable for agriculture. The central belt of land is composed mainly of Keuper Marl (Figure 5). This produces strong clay or clay-loam soils.[19] These are fertile, but difficult to work and tend to produce good grassland for dairying. They can also produce rich arable land.[20] Keuper Marl is also present in the parts of Derbyshire and Leicestershire falling within the study area.

The Trent and Tame valleys are covered in fine, fertile soils derived from river deposits.[21] River alluvium such as this is good for the production of cereal crops, particularly where the risk of flooding is low. It can also provide rich grassland for stock-rearing.

Lichfield sits astride a region of Triassic sandstones which have produced light, well-drained, loamy soils.[22] Again, these are good for the production of grassland and cereals. Triassic sandstones can also be found in the Severn valley, producing similar conditions.[23]

This central belt of the study area is therefore suitable for mixed farming. That is, it provides a combination of soil types ideally suited to stock-rearing and arable farming. Incoming peoples looking to settle in and farm

Staffordshire would therefore be most attracted to this part of the county. It is interesting to note that settlements such as Penkridge, Gnosall, Repton, Tettenhall and Tamworth - all of importance to this study - lie astride different soil regions (Figure 5). Any land units surrounding them would thus be suitable for a variety of agricultural purposes.

The question arises, how large a population could the area support during this period? The central lowland of Staffordshire could probably sustain a fairly sizeable population per square mile. However, it is limited in its extent by poorer land to the north and south, which could not accommodate so many people. Furthermore, although the central area is fertile, it is not the best quality agricultural land in the country. For example, parts of East Anglia are far more valuable for agriculture than Staffordshire.[24] Land units in the study area would therefore need to be larger than those in more fertile parts, if they were to grow the same amount of produce.

It is notable that by the time of Domesday, the central lowland of Staffordshire was indeed the most densely populated part of the county, having between three and five people per square mile.[25] The Cannock area contained only about 0.3 people per square mile.[26] However, this population level contrasts quite markedly with the neighbouring counties of Warwickshire and Worcestershire. In parts, these counties contained up to twelve and ten people per square mile respectively, by the late eleventh century.[27] Generally, therefore, whilst not being the most fertile or hospitable of regions, the south Staffordshire area would have offered some attractions to settlers. Furthermore, it may be significant that the royal free chapel parishes, which are the main concern of this study, are all situated within the fertile central lowland zone.

1 ed H C Darby and I B Terrett, The Domesday Geography of Midland England, 2nd edition, 1971, p 210

2 ed L Dudley Stamp, The Land of Britain: The Report of the Land Utilisation Survey of Britain, 1945, p 571

3 R Millward and A Robinson, The West Midlands, 1971, p 15

4 Darby and Terrett, The Domesday Geography of Midland England, p 214

5 ibid

6 Millward and Robinson, The West Midlands, p 16

7 Stamp, The Land of Britain, p 573

8 ibid, p 572

9 Darby and Terrett, The Domesday Geography of Midland England, p 310

10 Stamp, The Land of Britain, p 572

11 I D Margary, Roman Roads in Britain, 3rd edition, 1973, p 279 (Margary number 1g)

12 ibid, pp 284-6 and pp 305-6

13 Millward and Robinson, The West Midlands, p 25

14 Darby and Terrett, The Domesday Geography of Midland England, p 212

15 ibid, p 214

16 Millward and Robinson, The West Midlands, p 28

17 ibid, p 15

18 For example see J Gould, 'Food, Foresters, Fines and Felons: A History of Cannock Forest (1086-1300)', South Staffordshire Archaeological and Historical Society Transactions, 7, 1965-66, p 21

19 Darby and Terrett, The Domesday Geography of Midland England, pp 212-213

20 Stamp, The Land of Britain, p 573

21 Darby and Terrett, The Domesday Geography of Midland England, p 213

22 ibid, p 215

23 ibid, p 157

24 ibid, p 213

25 ibid, p 188

26 ibid

27 ibid, p 284 and p 242

CHAPTER TWO

THE ROYAL FREE CHAPELS AND OTHER MAJOR CHURCHES OF SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE

Estate and parish development

One of the main purposes of this study is to determine whether or not the royal free chapels were the original minster churches within south Staffordshire, and if so, to discover the extent of their *parochiae*. This in turn may reveal the extent of secular land units, probably royal ones, in the area. As discussed in the Introduction, it is believed that minster churches were founded in the seventh and eighth centuries at the administrative centres of large royal estates or early tribal areas, with which the *parochiae* of the churches often came to be coterminous.[1] The centres of the land units where the minster churches were established were often royal vills,[2] which were the foci through which services were rendered to the king. Indeed, the land units and their centres provided the basic organisational framework for the administration of a middle Saxon kingdom.[3]

During the later Saxon period a number of different factors caused the eventual fragmentation of many secular land units into smaller estates. For example, the system of partible inheritance was practised whereby land was divided amongst a number of heirs; and grants of land were increasingly made by kings or aristocrats to the church and lesser nobility.[4] The land unit might therefore disintegrate into a number of smaller estates, whilst remaining one *parochia*, still dependent upon the mother church.

However, this break up also gradually helped to bring about the fragmentation of the *parochia* itself into a number of smaller parishes. The early system of minster churches was added to during the middle and later Saxon periods by the foundation of lesser minsters by the king or bishops or by already established churches.[5] The framework became further complicated when, from about the ninth century onwards, chapels dependent upon the mother church were established in outlying parts of the parochia. These could have been set up by the church itself, or more commonly by a lord, whose estate the chapel served. These proprietary or private churches were treated as the lord's property and he was responsible for their endowments and the appointment of the priest.[6] Although the mother churches sought to hold on to their rights over chapels, the latter often tried to gain, and gradually achieved, parochial independence.[7] The creation of new parishes continued in this way into the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, although parish boundaries tended to have stabilized by about 1200 when Church reforms made alterations in parochial rights and structure more difficult.[8]

Penkridge

The importance of Penkridge during the Anglo-Saxon period is first suggested by a charter signed there in 958, which described it as 'a famous place'.[9] This may show that by this date it was an important royal centre. The first written indication of the existence of a church at Penkridge occurs in *circa* 1000, when Wulfgeat of Donnington willed two bullocks to *Pencric*, presumably to a religious foundation there.[10]

Evidence for the former minster status of the later medieval royal free chapel of St Michael's at Penkridge can be found in Domesday Book. In this document it is stated that nine clerics held one hide from the king in Penkridge.[11] As discussed in the Introduction, this shows there to have been a community of priests at Penkridge in the late eleventh century, which can be taken as an indication that it was founded as a mother church.

There is a problem with the interpretation of this Domesday Book entry, as it is in fact recorded under the heading 'Land of the Clergy of Wolverhampton', which would seem to suggest that Wolverhampton church was holding land at Penkridge. Indeed, this may have been the case given the fluctuating fortunes of many churches during the early medieval period. The development of a type of 'ecclesiastical imperialism', whereby some favoured churches increased in stature to take over the rights formerly held by other churches, may have brought about the relationship apparently recorded in Domesday Book between Wolverhampton and Penkridge.[11a] The fact that Wolverhampton church had been granted to Samson, later Bishop of Worcester, would seem to reinforce the possibility of that church's growing importance during this period.

However, on examination of the text it appears likely that an error was made in the headings of this part of Domesday Book, which would significantly alter the interpretation in relation to the status of Penkridge church. C F Slade recognised that the three entries preceding that of Penkridge were incorrect.[12] In fact, it seems likely that a complete sub-heading along the lines of 'Land of the Clergy of Penkridge' has been omitted. For example, the wording used to describe the religious communities at the two places differs, which suggests that the two sets of churchmen referred to were not the same. The term 'canons' is used to describe the clergy of Wolverhampton,[13] whilst at Penkridge they are called 'clerics'. The number of clerics is stated at Penkridge (nine), but not at Wolverhampton. Furthermore, the heading 'In Cuttlestone Hundred' is repeated unnecessarily immediately before the Penkridge entry.[13a] This would suggest that there was some change in subject at this point (ie a new landholder's name) and that clarification of the hundred was needed. As stated in Domesday Book itself, therefore, the clerics at Penkridge were probably holding their land directly from the king.

St Michael's retained its community of priests throughout the later medieval period. The church became a secular college, and each clerk was supported by a prebend.[14] That is, they were allocated an income out of the church's property: from its estates or churches, which were then run by the canon.[15] As will be discussed below, many of Penkridge's prebends were in fact formed out of parts of its original minster parish.

A study of later medieval documentation has shown that Penkridge's ecclesiastical jurisdiction once encompassed an area far larger than its own parish (see Figure 6). To the east of Penkridge lies the large parish of Cannock. Cannock church was the subject of a lively and protracted dispute between churches of Penkridge and Lichfield from the twelfth to the fourteenth century. In 1261 an inquisition ordered by the king stated that the chapel at Cannock was dependent upon Penkridge.[16] However, a dispute over the chapel had begun well before this date. In 1190 Richard I sold the vills and churches of Cannock and Rugeley (a parish to the north of Cannock) to Hugh de Nonant, the bishop of Lichfield, for twenty five marks.[17] Although the sale was confirmed by the pope in 1191, Penkridge church was evidently unhappy about the state of affairs, for when the bishop gave the churches of Cannock and Rugeley to the common funds of the canons of Lichfield in 1192, he also granted an annual payment to Penkridge of four shillings for this privilege. It is likely that this was in recognition of Penkridge's ancient rights over Cannock.[18] It may also indicate that the church at Rugeley once belonged to Penkridge, but as it is not mentioned in any subsequent documentation concerning this matter, the payment may have related to Cannock alone.

This was not the end of the controversy by any means. The bishop's grant of four shillings had not taken into account the fact that deceased parishioners of Cannock were buried in Penkridge's cemetery, and that mortuary fees were due to the latter church because of this. In 1207 a papal commission sat to hear the case between Penkridge and the dean and chapter of Lichfield. It was decided that Lichfield should pay one mark annually through Cannock to Penkridge and that Penkridge should have the mortuary fees of Cannock parishioners buried in its cemetery.[19]

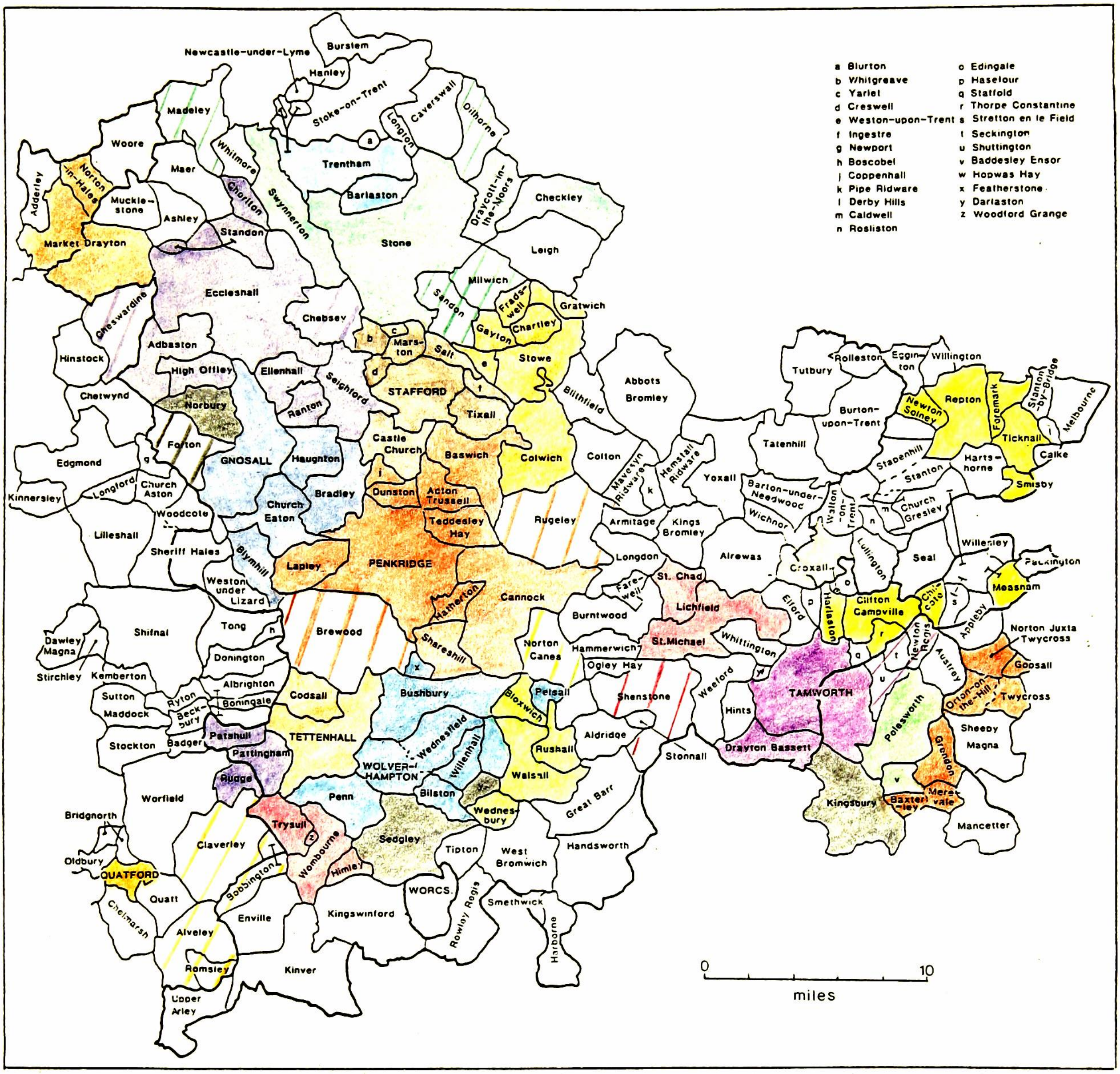
Even this ruling did not settle the matter between Penkridge and Lichfield. Indeed, as mentioned above, in 1261 Cannock was confirmed as a chapel of Penkridge. Cannock was also recorded as being a prebend of Penkridge at this time, and again in 1313, although it was not listed with Penkridge's other prebends in the Taxatio Ecclesiastica of 1291.[20] In fact, Cannock church was not recorded at all in this document, which may have been due to uncertainty concerning its status at the time. The dispute continued into the fourteenth century when Lichfield lost a claim to a portion of the mortuary fees being paid to Penkridge. By 1535, however, Lichfield was completely successful in its claim, as the Valor Ecclesiasticus records it as holding the churches at Cannock and Rugeley. Cannock had evidently achieved full parochial status as it was described as an ecclesia or rectory, as was the church at Rugeley.[21] The above events clearly indicate that Cannock church, if not Rugeley, was once part of the larger parochia of Penkridge.

The church at Shareshill, like Cannock, was probably one of the chapels described as dependent upon Penkridge in 1261.[22] The chapel was evidently attempting to gain some independence for itself in the thirteenth century, as it had a cemetery by c 1300. However, before it could achieve full parochial status, the right of burial had to be released to it by the lay rectors and vicar of Penkridge. This took place in 1551.[23]

The former dependence of the chapels at Coppenhall and Stretton upon the mother church at Penkridge can also be demonstrated. Coppenhall parish is situated to the north of Penkridge, whilst Stretton still lies within the latter parish, near its border with Brewood. At the dissolution, these two chapels both had their priests appointed by a canon of Penkridge. The priest at Stretton had all vicarial rights except those of marriage and burial, and at Coppenhall the priest had no right of burial.[24] Presumably marriage and burial were supposed to take place at Penkridge church. These two chapels did not achieve full independence from Penkridge until the nineteenth century.[25]

Dunston was described as 'a member of Penkridge church' as late as 1784. In 1445 the dean of Penkridge was responsible for confirming the dedication of Dunston chapel to St Leonard, and he granted an indulgence of one hundred days to all who visited the chapel and made a contribution towards it.[26] Dunston would therefore also appear to have been created as a chapel within the minster parish of Penkridge.

Figure 6: The extent of some minster parishes in the study area



Ancient parochial connection possible

County boundaries

Parish boundaries

In 1291 Penkridge church possessed the prebends of Coppenhall, Stretton, Dunston, Shareshill, Penkridge, Congreve and Longridge.[27]

Congreve and Longridge lie within the present parish of Penkridge. It is interesting to note that the prebends of the royal free chapel appear to have been chapelries which once formed part of the ancient minster parish. During the medieval period the first four of these prebends formed an area of royal peculiar jurisdiction together with Penkridge church.[28] The importance of this core area of the minster parish to the king was therefore recognised and maintained even at this late date.

The church of Lapley, to the west of Penkridge, was an independent parish church in 1291,[29] but several pieces of evidence show that it was once dependent upon Penkridge. A thirteenth century document claimed that Lapley church had once belonged to Penkridge but, due to the neglect of the latter church's canons, it had passed into the hands of the abbey of St Rémy at Rheims.[30] The actual vill of Lapley had in fact been granted to the abbey in c 1060 by Earl Aelfgar,[31] and the abbey held three hides there in 1086.[32] Furthermore, the thirteenth century document stated that the deceased of Lapley were buried at Penkridge, which showed a recognition of the minster church's ancient rights. Lapley church was described as a vicarage in the *Valor*,[33] probably due to its appropriation to the abbey. The church had its own chapel at Wheaton Aston by the fourteenth century.[34]

The two parishes of Baswich and Acton Trussell are situated to the north-east of Penkridge. Baswich had a church in 1086,[35] and Acton was later a chapelry of it.[36] Baswich was taking four shillings for corn tithes from Acton and Bednall between 1547 and 1551, and in 1604 Acton was described as a chapel in Baswich. Acton formed a separate parish by 1671 at least, within which was the chapel of Bednall. A further chapel existed at Brocton by 1549.[37]

In the medieval period Baswich, Bednall and Acton Trussell together formed the peculiar jurisdiction of the prebend of Whittington and Baswich and the dean and chapter of Lichfield.[38] Indeed, the bishop of Chester held Baswich in 1086, and the church at Lichfield had held it before the Conquest. It was a five hide manor of which Walton-on-the-Hill, Brocton and Bednall were members.[39]

These parishes therefore appear once to have formed an estate which was dependent upon the church of Lichfield. However, one piece of evidence suggests that they could originally have formed part of Penkridge's parochia. Bednall, the chapel in Acton Trussell parish, was described in the mid sixteenth century as a chapel in Cannock parish, which has been shown to have been part of Penkridge.[40] This whole area may therefore once have been dependent upon Penkridge. Bednall does in fact border Penkridge minster parish, as Teddesley Hay was described in the thirteenth century as part of the royal free chapel of Penkridge.[41]

There were other chapels belonging to Penkridge situated within the parish itself. A chapel at Pillaton is mentioned in 1272;[42] a dependent chapel at Levedale is recorded in 1552 and 1553 which had become disused by 1563; and there was a chapel at Bickford by the mid sixteenth century.[43]

Two other areas in particular present problems when rediscovering Penkridge's original minster parish. Hatherton, to the south-east of Penkridge, was recorded as being held from Samson by two priests in 1086.[43a] Taken at face value, it seems that the church there originated as a minster holding Kinvaston, Hilton and Featherstone (lands recorded with it in Domesday Book). However, Hilton church shows no other signs of being an old minster, and is situated uncomfortably close to Penkridge church. Although no documentary evidence survives to connect Hatherton with Penkridge at any time, it is surrounded entirely by areas of Penkridge's original *parochia*. As a *parochia* was a cohesive block of land preached to by missionaries from the mother church, it is unlikely that an area such as this would be omitted. Its position suggests that it once belonged to Penkridge (see Figure 6). St Mary's at Wolverhampton held Hatherton and Kinvaston before 1066,[43b] which may reflect the growing fortunes of this church after it had been granted to Samson, and its ability to usurp the rights of other major churches in the area.

The large parish of Brewood displays no ancient parochial links with any other church. There was a church there by the time of the Domesday survey, when the estate belonged to the bishop of Chester, as it had before the Conquest.[44] Brewood was a prebend of Lichfield in 1291[45] and a peculiar of the dean of Lichfield in the medieval period.[46] It therefore appears that the church at Brewood gained its independence from a neighbouring mother church at an early stage, leaving no traces of its former connections. If so, that mother church may have been Penkridge. As will be discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, place-name and archaeological evidence suggest that a Romano-British estate centred on Pennocrucium was influential in some way in the siting and layout of Penkridge. Pennocrucium was situated at Stretton, a short distance to the north of Watling Street, which creates the northern boundary of Brewood parish. The Romano-British estate may therefore have included part or all of the land covered by Brewood which could have been incorporated in the later Penkridge. However, this is a tenuous link and no ecclesiastical relationship can now be shown between the two churches.

The north-eastern limit of Penkridge's parochia may be defined by an examination of the separate parishes of Colwich, Stowe, Weston-on-Trent, Gayton, Fradswell, Gratwich, and Chartley. All of these areas appear to have early connections with one another, either parochially or tenurially, or both.

An anonymous late nineteenth century antiquarian alleged that Colwich, including Hixon and Fradswell, had been granted to St Chad by Wulfhere, and that Colwich church had been erected between 560 and 600 AD,[47] though there seems to be no evidence to support his sweeping statement. However, a later connection with the church of Lichfield is evident. In the medieval period Colwich church and its chapel of Fradswell formed an area of peculiar jurisdiction of the prebend of Colwich and the dean and chapter of Lichfield.[48] Fradswell was a chapel of Colwich earlier than this; for example, it was mentioned as such in 1276.[49]

A long finger of land from Colwich projects into Stowe parish. The place-name Stowe is of particular importance. It can refer to a 'venue for a specific activity, meeting place', a meaning which developed into 'Christian holy place'.[50] Whilst not attributing to this Stowe a necessarily religious meaning, Margaret Gelling has stated that it could have served surrounding settlements in some way[51] (see Chapter 3). Stowe was not mentioned in Domesday Book, but Chartley was recorded. In 1679 the antiquarian Walter Chetwynd wrote that the manor of Chartley contained Weston and the hamlets of Stowe, Amerton, Drointon and Grenley, with part of Hixon and Haywood, which were then all within the parish of Stowe.[52] Stowe may then have been the original ecclesiastical centre of the parish.

A number of links occur between Colwich and Stowe. Haywood was partly in Stowe parish, and was also connected in 1086 with manors in Colwich parish such as Fradswell.[53] Fradswell, furthermore, is situated some distance from Colwich, to the north of Stowe. By 1291 Stowe church had been appropriated to the priory of St Thomas at Stafford,[54] and was described as *ecclesia* in the sixteenth century.[55]

Weston-on-Trent, which lies to the west of Stowe, has a place-name which suggests that it was originally a dependency of Stowe (see Figure 6). The church there was also appropriated to St Thomas's by 1535, as was the church of Gayton. Both of these were described as rectories at this time.[56] Gayton and Amerton were recorded together in Domesday Book; as Amerton was in Stowe parish, Gayton might once also have been connected to it.[57]

Therefore, it appears that these parishes may once have formed one land unit, centred perhaps on Colwich church or even Stowe if the place-name had religious connotations.

Gnosall

The church of Gnosall apparently had a less successful career as a royal free chapel than some of its neighbours. Its wealth and status fell in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, during which time it was given to the bishop of Coventry and Lichfield, and its position as a royal free chapel was in danger of being lost.[58] However, it was obviously considered important enough to be retained by the Crown, as Edward I tried to regain patronage of the church which was described as a royal free chapel in his reign.[59] The status of this church has been called into question by A H Thompson, who stated that it was a church of portioners rather than a prebendal college like the others in the area.[60] He described portioners as 'those who serve a benefice with others, each with their portion of the profits of the living'.[61] However, this did not appear to affect its earlier development in relation to the other churches, and in fact Thompson himself says that practically speaking there was no difference at Gnosall between there being non-resident portioners and non-resident canons,[62] and that Gnosall was originally a minster church with a community of priests.[63]

Minster churches may in fact have been churches of portioners,[64] and at Gnosall we could have the stagnation of the original system rather than a decay from the prebendal system which the other Staffordshire colleges developed after the Conquest. The possible reasons for Gnosall's apparent lack of development in comparison with the other royal free chapels, which led to its later donation to the bishop and status as a peculiar of the bishop during the medieval period [65] will be discussed below.

Nevertheless, Gnosall does appear to have originated as an important royal minster church. A lawsuit of 1395 stated that it was a mother church and had been founded as a free chapel which always had the choice of mortuary offerings after deaths in its parish. The church was described as 'of ancient demesne of the Crown of England' and 'founded and endowed by (the king's) progenitors'.[66] This same document may also point towards an early foundation. The dedication of Gnosall church was to St Laurence in the early fourteenth century, as it is today, but in 1395 Roger de Peshale, lord of Knightley, stated that his body was to be buried in the church of 'the Blessed Peter and Paul of Gnosall'.[67] This could be a reference to a much earlier dedication of Gnosall church, still remembered in the fourteenth century. The dedication to St Peter and St Paul can be very early, as Bede records that Aethelberht, encouraged by Augustine, gave the church at Canterbury this dedication.[68]

The parish of Gnosall now consists of a number of villages and hamlets which are Gnosall itself with Audmore and Gnosall Heath, Plardiwick, Coton, Cowley, Beffcote, Wilbrighton, Moreton, Knightley, Knightley Dale, Great Chatwell, Alstone and Apeton.[69] When the bishop acquired the church of Gnosall, he gained the tithes in these places and also a fifteenth at Walton Grange.

A number of parishes adjacent to Gnosall display certain connections with the church there, which show them to have been a part of its postulated minster parish. The church of Bradley, to the east of Gnosall, was probably granted by the Stafford family to the priory of Stone. The grant was confirmed by pope Alexander in the mid twelfth century.[70] However, this was by no means a straightforward arrangement, as Bradley church was claimed to be appurtenant to the church of Gnosall. The claim was dropped in c 1165, but the priory had to share Bradley's revenues with the chapter of Lichfield, to which Gnosall belonged at the time.[71] This points towards an early association between

Gnosall and Bradley. Furthermore, two detached portions of Gnosall parish once lay in the north-west of Bradley. These were parts of Apeton and Alstone.[72] It seems that even though Bradley gained its independence from Gnosall, these two places were considered important enough to the church to be maintained as part of Gnosall's parish, although they were included in the manor of Bradley in Domesday Book.[73]

The church at Blymhill had its independence by the late thirteenth century, as it was described as ecclesia in 1291.[74] However, some slight evidence exists which suggests that it was once part of Gnosall. At the end of the twelfth century the right of presentation to Blymhill church was given to William Bagot and his heirs by the canons of Gnosall in return for an annual pension from the church of one mark.[75] Furthermore, Great Chatwell in Gnosall had its own chapel which was still in existence in the mid sixteenth century, but shortly after this it became disused and the inhabitants used Blymhill church for christenings and burials, as it was closer than Gnosall.[76]

The church at Haughton may also once have been subject to Gnosall. Gnosall canons made the first recorded presentation to the rectory at Haughton in 1306, which indicates that the church belonged to them.[77] Haughton is also 'sandwiched' between Bradley and Gnosall, which suggests that it was once part of the same parochia as these two parishes.

The parish of Church Eaton is also likely to have been part of Gnosall's minster parish, although no direct evidence survives. The church there, mentioned in Domesday,[78] appears in the Taxatio as an independent parish church.[79] Geographically, however, it is situated between Gnosall, Bradley, Blymhill and Haughton, which again points towards it having formed part of the larger parochia belonging to the mother church at Gnosall.

To the west of Blymhill lies the parish of Weston-under-Lizard (Figure 6). The place-name Weston means 'west _tūn_', which suggests that it was a settlement dependent upon a place to its east.[80] There is no surviving documentary evidence to link Weston with any other place, although a number of suggestions can be made. For example, it lies to the west of Penkridge, but the parish of Blymhill divides it from the rest of the former's _parochia_. It may therefore be the western _tūn_ of Blymhill itself, and consequently once part of the larger area centred on Gnosall.

The original minster parish of Gnosall may be delimited in the north-west by the possible existence of another minster church at Norbury. In 1086 Norbury had two priests,[81] which suggests that it was founded as a mother church. To the south of Norbury lies the parish of Forton. No ecclesiastical links survive to connect these two parishes, or indeed, to connect Forton with any other church. It is possible that Forton was once part of Norbury's _parochia_.

There is just one entry relating to Gnosall in Domesday Book.[82] This follows on directly from the entry concerning Penkridge church, and is of particular interest as it may throw light upon the origins and later status of Gnosall church. The entry states that the clerics, ie apparently the nine Penkridge clerics, held two hides and three virgates of land themselves at Gnosall. Other links between Penkridge and Gnosall existed in the eleventh century. The king's manor of Penkridge was composed of a number of members, including one and a half hides of land at Cowley and Beffcote.[83] It is notable that these two vills actually lie just to the south of Gnosall, within its parish. Indeed, a dispute arose in 1395 because parishioners at Cowley had not allowed Gnosall church to have its mortuary offerings.[84] This suggests that although part of Penkridge tenurially, Cowley at least was dependent parochially upon Gnosall. Furthermore, in 1086 the manor of Bradley included a dependency of two hides in Mitton.[85] Mitton in fact lay in Penkridge parish which shows a further connection between the latter place and Gnosall.

It appears, therefore, that Penkridge and Gnosall were linked in several ways by the late eleventh century at least. This relationship may have originated at some time in the tenth or eleventh centuries, reflecting the growth of religious imperialism in evidence during this period. Alternatively, the links may be the last remnants of a much earlier relationship between the two churches. As discussed above, the network of minster churches established in the seventh and eighth centuries was modified throughout the middle Saxon period by the foundation of lesser minsters. It could be that Gnosall church was in fact originally founded as a lesser minster within the larger and more ancient parochia of Penkridge. This would explain why parts of Gnosall were within the king's Domesday manor of Penkridge and also why Penkridge church had claims to land there. It is easy to see why it would have been necessary to found another mother church in this area. Figure 6 shows that Penkridge's parochia was very large, and if it had once also included the area belonging to Gnosall, it may have proved too great for efficient administration by a minster centred at Penkridge.

The apparent stagnation of Gnosall church as a church of portioners, in comparison with the development of the other later royal free chapels into prebendal colleges, may have been due to a surviving memory of its origins as a lesser minster. Gnosall may always have been overshadowed by its neighbour Penkridge. However, in the later medieval period it was remembered as being a royally founded mother church which, together with its links with Penkridge, would have led to claims for its royal free chapel status.

Stafford

The later medieval royal free chapel at Stafford was the church dedicated to St Mary. However, an excavation carried out in the 1950s uncovered the remains of another early church just to the west of St Mary's.[86] This was the church dedicated to St Bertelin, and before any discussion of minster status can be carried out, the relationship between these two churches needs to be examined.

The excavators suggested that the site first consisted of a middle Saxon wooden preaching cross surrounded by associated burials. During the tenth century the 'cross' had been buried and a wooden church built around it, to be replaced by a stone church no later than the eleventh century.[87] However, a recent reinterpretation of the excavation report has suggested that the site in fact consisted of a pre-Conquest timber church, replaced after the Conquest by a stone church associated with wooden coffins. The 'cross' had a radiocarbon date of 1180±78, and appears not to have been a cross at all, but rather the bed of a high status charcoal burial.[88] M Biddle suggests that this may have been the grave of St Berthelm (Bertelin) himself, although the exact identity of the saint after whom this church was dedicated remains obscure.[89]

Although not of contemporary foundation, the two churches of St Mary and St Bertelin seemed to have been in simultaneous use during the lifetime of the latter church. The alignment of the south aisle wall of St Mary's (of late thirteenth century or early fourteenth century date) is different to the alignment of the rest of the church, apparently to take account of the position of St Bertelin's. There is also a blocked doorway in this wall, perhaps for access to the other church.[90]

The existence of two early churches on the same site has parallels elsewhere within the Midlands. For example, in the mid eleventh century there were two churches situated close to each other at Winchcombe in Gloucestershire. One was the abbey church and the other was dedicated to St Peter.[91] S R Bassett suggests that when the church at Winchcombe, along with other churches in the diocese of Worcester, was refounded in c 969, the monks may have found that the existing church no longer met their needs. This necessitated the building of another church nearby, whilst the old one was retained for other functions. The parishioners of Winchcombe would eventually have been able to take one of these churches over for their own use.[92] A similar course of events took place at Worcester, where bishop Oswald founded a new church near the ancient cathedral.[93]

As discussed below,[94] the survival of the royal free chapels into the later medieval period as secular colleges shows that they were not reformed along Benedictine lines during the tenth century. Stafford is no exception in this. However, it is likely that some of these churches were patronised and possibly re-endowed by West Saxon kings during the tenth century. This may have occurred at Stafford sometime after the building of a burh there in 913.[95] This could have been the period when the new church, St Bertelin's, was built next to the existing one, St Mary's, for similar reasons to those described at Winchcombe. That St Mary's was the more ancient and important foundation is shown by late medieval documentation. In 1428 a Stafford jury stated that although a number of chapels belonging to St Mary's buried their dead not at that church, but in the cemetery of St Bertelin's 'by ancient custom', they still recognised St Mary's as their mother church.[96] This shows that although St Mary's was the mother church, its parishioners may have taken over St Bertelin's for their own uses at an early date, as happened at Winchcombe.

Further evidence exists which shows that the church at Stafford originally had minster status. In Domesday Book it is recorded that the king had thirteen prebendary canons at Stafford, who held three hides of land from him.[97] The number of priests and the amount of land with which they were endowed marks the church at Stafford as having had a 'superior' status.[98]

There is some detailed evidence surviving for the extent of Stafford's original parochia, mainly because Henry III supported the dean and chapter in the church's claim to dependent chapels. To the east of Stafford lies the parish of Tixall. In 1247 Henry III supported St Mary's right to bury the parishioners of the chapel of Tixall.[99] The above mentioned document of 1428 stated that the chapels of Tixall, Ingestre and Creswell and other prebendal chapels belonging to St Mary's outside the town of Stafford, although burying their dead at St Bertelin's, recognised the former as their mother church.[100] Furthermore, in 1535 St Mary's was receiving annual pensions from the parish churches of Tixall and Ingestre and Creswell, which was also a prebend.[101]

Included amongst the list of parishioners who recognised St Mary's as their mother church in 1428 were those from Coton (in Stafford parish), Salt, Marston and Whitgreave. The first three places in this list were also prebends of St Mary's in 1535 and paid annual pensions to the dean.[102] Nine other separate prebends were recorded in the Valor, which had previously been known collectively as Whitgreave.[103] These were Swetnam, Blurton, Hervey, Walsall, Sandall, Orberton, Denston, Potrell and Croft. It is possible that these were personal names rather than place-names. In the early thirteenth century land at Whitgreave was being rented out by St Mary's church.[104] The above mentioned places can therefore all be placed within the original minster parish of Stafford (see Figure 6).

A further chapel existed at Hopton in Stafford parish by the mid thirteenth century. It was claimed in 1258 that a chapel in Oxfordshire (at Middle Aston) was a dependency of Hopton church, and Henry III sued for the advowson of the former church on behalf of St Mary's.[105] Hopton was therefore a chapel founded from St Mary's and it was recorded as a prebend of that church in 1535.[106]

Castle Church is a large parish situated to the south of Stafford. It too displays links with St Mary's, which show that it was once part of the original parochia. In the mid sixteenth century the rights of burial of Castle Church's parishioners was still held by St Mary's.[107] In 1535, the dean of St Mary's received a spiritual income from the church 'under the castle' at Stafford,[108] which along with the free chapel of St Leonard's Hospital and St John's Hospital, both in Forebridge,[109] was within the parish of Castle Church. The first actual reference to the church in the castle was in 1252, when it was claimed that the church had been in existence since the Conquest, and that its advowson belonged to the royal free chapel of St Mary's.[110] Castle Church had not been recorded with St Mary's in 1291, even though the dean owned the advowson, tithes and lands there. The dean possibly kept Castle Church for his own income which means that it may have been included in the assets of the deanery.[111]

Tettenhall and Wolverhampton

The churches at Tettenhall and Wolverhampton were both collegiate churches with royal free chapel status in the later medieval period. They will therefore be examined individually at first, in order to discover whether they originated as minster churches. However, as will become increasingly apparent, their early histories were closely linked and some joint discussion of these churches is necessary.

A community of priests was resident at Tettenhall by 1086.[112] The entry in Domesday Book is actually recorded under the heading 'Land of the Clergy of Wolverhampton'. It states that the canons of Wolverhampton had one hide of land in Tettenhall. This was qualified by the statement that the land did not belong to Wolverhampton, but was the king's alms to the church at Tettenhall. The priests at Tettenhall (the entry does not indicate how many) also held one hide of land in Bilbrook from the king.[113] Therefore, the existence of a community of priests at Tettenhall holding two hides of land indicates that this church originated as a minster.[114]

During the later medieval period St Michael's church at Tettenhall had a dependent chapel at Codsall (Figure 6). This was in existence by the twelfth century and in the thirteenth century the rector of Codsall was a canon from Tettenhall. Furthermore, in the early 1550s a curate of Codsall presented himself at the mother church during Whitsun, in apparent recognition of Codsall's earlier dependence.[115] The manor of Codsall formed a prebend of Tettenhall college by the mid thirteenth century,[116] and was still a prebend in 1535.[117] During the medieval period, Tettenhall and Codsall together formed a royal peculiar in which the bishop had no powers of jurisdiction.[118]

The remainder of Tettenhall's spiritual jurisdiction, during the later medieval period at least, seems to have been confined to its own large parish. A chapel was apparently in existence by the late thirteenth century at Wrottesley, as a graveyard was recorded there in 1294.[119] The manor of Wrottesley was also a prebend of the college by the mid thirteenth century, together with Codsall, Tettenhall (later Tettenhall and Compton), Pendeford and Perton.[120] By 1535 the prebends of Tettenhall also included Bovenhull.[121] These places all lay within Tettenhall parish.

The original minster parish of Tettenhall church therefore seems to have consisted mainly of Tettenhall itself and Codsall. However, it is possible that it was once more extensive than this, as will be discussed below.

Unlike the other royal free chapels, a document exists purporting to be the foundation charter of the collegiate church at Wolverhampton. It states that in 995, Wulfrun granted thirty hides of land to the church at Hampton. These lands were at Upper Arley, Ashwood, Bilston, Willenhall, Wednesfield, Ogley Hay, Hilton (near Ogley), Hatherton, Kinvaston, 'the other Hilton' (near Featherstone) and Featherstone.[122] However, the charter has been shown to be a later medieval forgery, but one based upon an authentic document of the 990s. Although it is dated 995, the inclusion in the witness list of archbishop Sigeric places the witness list at least to before October 994.[123] It is interesting to note that the lands in the charter are listed in the same order as they are in Domesday Book. Wulfrun had herself been given ten cassati of land at Wolverhampton and Trescott by king Aethelred in 958, which possibly formed the basis of lands later granted to Wolverhampton church.[124] Wulfrun therefore seems to have been a major benefactor of this church.

Whether the charter is a forgery or not, the canons of Wolverhampton were in possession of most of the above mentioned lands in 1086. The church of Wolverhampton was given by William I to Sampson his chaplain (and later bishop of Worcester), and the canons held one hide in Wolverhampton of him.[125] Sampson himself appears to have held in demesne Hatherton and Kinvaston, which had been held by the college before the Conquest. He also held Hilton and Featherstone within Wolverhampton parish.[126]

In 1086 the canons of Wolverhampton held one hide in Tettenhall (which belonged to Tettenhall church) and one virgate in Trescott (in Tettenhall).[127] They were also in possession of many other lands surrounding Wolverhampton and also at a distance from it. They held part of Bushbury, Ashwood, Hilton (in Wolverhampton) and also lands at Wednesfield, Willenhall and Pelsall.[128]

As will be discussed below, these lands could have formed part of the original parochia of Wolverhampton (or Tettenhall) church. Other lands belonging to the canons of Wolverhampton in 1086 were Hilton and Ogley, which were part of Shenstone.[129] This may have originally belonged to Lichfield.[130] In the south-west of Staffordshire, Upper Arley was also held by the canons.[131] This, together with Hilton, had been included in Wulfrun's grant, and had earlier been given by king Edgar to Wulfgeat in 963. Wulfgeat was possibly a relative of Wulfrun, which would explain how she came to own the land.[132]

Chapels at Pelsall, Willenhall and Bilston were all once dependent upon Wolverhampton church (see Figure 6). The chapel at Pelsall was in existence by 1311 when it was endowed with a curate;[133] the chapel at Willenhall was documented in 1328, and in the sixteenth century it was paying rent to the dean of Wolverhampton (although this could merely have been due to its status of chantry chapel);[134] and in 1447 land and rent were given by Sir Thomas Erdington to support a curate in Wolverhampton's dependent chapel of Bilston.[135]

In 1291 Wolverhampton church was said to have a number of members. These were the prebends of Featherstone, Willenhall, Wobaston, Hilton and Monmore (in Wolverhampton), Kinvaston and St Mary's Hatherton.[136] During the medieval period the college was described as a royal peculiar which included the perpetual curacies of St John's church (in Wolverhampton parish), Willenhall, Wednesfield, Bilston and Pelsall.[137] These places therefore all appear to have been under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of Wolverhampton church, at least during the later medieval period, as most of them had been tenurially since the time of the Domesday survey at the latest.

Two further parishes may once have been dependent upon Wolverhampton. The priests of Wolverhampton served the cure at Bushbury church during the later medieval period.[138] This suggests a former dependence upon the collegiate church. The parish of Penn may also have had some connection with both Tettenhall and Wolverhampton. Penn includes part of Trescott, which was otherwise in Tettenhall and belonged to the church at Wolverhampton in 1086.[139]

In order to delimit further the boundaries of the parochiae of Tettenhall and Wolverhampton it is necessary to examine briefly some of the neighbouring churches. As these churches are not the main concern of this thesis, they will be looked at in less detail than the royal free chapels.

Walsall is a large parish lying to the east of Wolverhampton. The church there had chapels at Rushall and Wednesbury, which would therefore once have formed part of its parish, by the mid fourteenth century.[140] A further chapel dependent upon Walsall was built at Bloxwich in the early fifteenth century.[141] Norton Canes lies to the north of Walsall. Whilst no parochial links now exist between these two places, the place-name Norton (north tūn) shows a former dependence upon a settlement to the south. This could conceivably have been Walsall. The church at Walsall could therefore have been a minster church in its own right. Alternatively, it may have been a chapel which broke free from its mother church and created chapels of its own. If the latter were the case, the mother church could have been Lichfield.[142]

A church was recorded at Pattingham in 1086.[143] This, too, had dependent chapelries in the later medieval period - at Patshull and Rudge.[144] Again, Pattingham may have been a minster church or it may once have been a chapel of another church. If it were a chapel, Tettenhall would seem to be the ideal candidate for its original mother church (see Figure 6). Pattingham church was in fact recorded as a chapel with a vicar in the Valor.[145] However, this was probably due to its appropriation to Launde Priory by the bishop of Coventry and Lichfield in 1342.[146]

The church at Wombourne may also have had minster status. Its dedication to St Benedict Biscop suggests an early foundation, and indeed the presence of a church there is recorded in Domesday Book.[147] Wombourne had a number of parochial dependencies. Trysull was a chapelry of Wombourne until the late nineteenth century, and the parish contained the chapel of Seisdon, which was in existence by the late twelfth century.[148] Indeed, Trysull and Wombourne were recorded as the '<u>ecclesie</u> de Omburn and Tresel' in 1535.[149] Woodford Grange also belonged to Trysull church.[150] Wombourne received part of the tithes of corn and mortuary from Himley church in the thirteenth century, and so this parish may also have been a part of Wombourne.[151] Therefore, Wombourne could have been a minster church, or it might have been a chapel which broke free early on, and formed its own dependencies.

The church at Sedgley, to the south of Wolverhampton, may have had similar origins to the churches of Pattingham and Wombourne. It was recorded as an independent parish church in 1291,[152] and it had a dependent chapel at Darlaston during the later middle ages.[153]

At first examination, it seems that the churches of Tettenhall and Wolverhampton both originated as conventional middle Saxon minsters, and that Wolverhampton church was shown special favour during the later Saxon period. However, there is evidence to suggest that Wolverhampton church was in fact founded as a lesser minster, dependent upon Tettenhall.

The links between the two places are clear. For example, the canons of Wolverhampton held large amounts of land in Tettenhall parish, at Tettenhall itself and also Trescott. The churches at Tettenhall and Wolverhampton are situated only about one and a half miles apart. There would seem to be little reason for such close proximity between two old minster churches with no major natural boundary between them. Tettenhall church also lies on the very eastern edge of its parish. Although this is not conclusive, it may indicate that the church once controlled land further to its east.

Place-name evidence is also relevant here. Tettenhall is a name in halh. This is a topographical element which often denotes early settlement. Wolverhampton, on the other hand, is a name in tūn, which characteristically belongs to areas of secondary colonisation.[154] Such evidence does indeed suggest that Wolverhampton's parochia was carved out of land once belonging to Tettenhall.

Wolverhampton church was evidently in receipt of considerable royal favour in the later Saxon period. This is shown by the fact that the church had been granted lands which were originally part of other minster parishes, for example, Hatherton in Penkridge and areas of Tettenhall. The questions of why Wolverhampton church was founded and why it was patronised by the Crown during the later Saxon period therefore arise.

The answers to these questions may lie in Wolverhampton's military importance. T Slater has used topographical analysis to show the position of a roughly circular earthwork at Wolverhampton, which is fossilised in property boundaries marked on eighteenth century maps.[155] He suggests that this earthwork was of Iron Age date. However, it is more likely to represent the remains of a late Saxon burh,[156] one of several constructed at that time in this area. This would explain why Wolverhampton was of particular importance to West Saxon royalty, and why the church was founded there, at some time after the late ninth century. Again, this reflects the fluctuating fortunes of churches during the early medieval period.

Tamworth

The college of St Editha at Tamworth was first described as a royal free chapel in the late fourteenth century. However, it differed in several ways from the other Staffordshire churches under discussion, which might be indicative of the different origins of this church (discussed below). According to Denton, Tamworth was one of the three English royal free chapels newly created at this time which did not have an exempt deanery. The other two were St George's Windsor and St Stephen's Westminster. Tamworth church, although a royal college, was not a royal peculiar. It was the bishop of Coventry and Lichfield, and not the king, who instituted to the deanship and prebends.[157]

No mention of Tamworth church is given in Domesday Book. Indeed, Tamworth itself is only mentioned incidentally under other manors.[158] Nevertheless, it is likely that St Editha's originated as a minster church. A community at the church there was first recorded in c 1002-1004 in the will of Wulfric Spot. He granted an estate at Longdon (north-west of Lichfield) to the church at Tamworth 'just as they have left it to me'.[159] This hints at the prior ownership of Longdon by Tamworth church, and shows the latter to have been established at some time before this date.

The differing later medieval status of Tamworth church, in comparison with other royal free chapels, suggests that the Crown was not able to assert the same authority over it as over, for example, Penkridge and Tettenhall churches. There seems to be no reason for this later status if Tamworth originated as an old minster. It therefore seems quite likely that St Editha's was founded as a lesser minster.

The origins of the church at Tamworth may be sought in connection with the significance of the place during the middle Saxon period. Tamworth was a Mercian royal centre of the first importance and contained a royal palace in the middle Saxon period.[160] Royal charters were signed here, beginning under Offa. For example, a charter of 781 issued by Offa mentions 'the royal palace at Tamworth'.[161] It is likely that Tamworth church was established at some time during this period in order to serve the royal settlement, and so it may have been founded within the parochia of an already existing church.

Tamworth was also strategically important in the later Saxon period to the West Saxons in their conquest of Mercia. It was one of the places at which a burh was built (or rather rebuilt) by Aethelflaed in 913.[162] On her death in 918 Tamworth was taken over by Edward the Elder.[163] Tamworth church could therefore have been considered to be a royal free chapel due to this later Saxon importance. It is likely to have been patronised by the West Saxons as part of their policy to consolidate their hold over Mercia. Indeed, king Edgar was claimed to be its founder in the later medieval period. Although it is unlikely that he founded the church, he may have re-endowed it with land and other wealth.[164]

The minster parish of Tamworth church is very difficult to trace using later medieval documentation, but appears to have consisted mainly of the large parish of Tamworth itself and Drayton Bassett to its south. The earlier dependence of Drayton Bassett church upon Tamworth is suggested by the fact that the canons of the latter church were presenting a clerk to the former by 1300. In 1318 this was described as a 'customary procedure'.[165]

The collegiate church of Tamworth was described as prebendal in 1291.[166] The prebends were listed in 1535 as Syerscote, Wilnecote, Coton, Bonehill, Wiggington.[167] The dean also held the prebend of Amington from which tithes of mills belonged to the canons at Tamworth.[168] All of the above places lay within the parish of Tamworth itself, again showing that the prebends of the royal free chapels were often created out of their original parochiae.

In the mid thirteenth century Hopwas, to the west of Tamworth, was described as a member of Wiggington.[169] As Wiggington was a chapel dependent upon Tamworth, there may have been a connection between Hopwas and Tamworth at an early stage. However, an ecclesiastical link is not proven.

There may have been some link between Tamworth and the three parishes of Seckington, Shuttington and Newton Regis to the north-east. However, it has to be admitted that this link is tenuous, and is tenurial rather than parochial. The church at Newton Regis was described as a chapel belonging to Seckington during the reign of Henry II.[170] In the early thirteenth century Stonydelph was the name of an assart in Wilnecote, which in turn was a chapel of ease within Tamworth parish.[171] Stonydelph was also known as Kingswood, and in 1800 it was said that 'from early times' Kingswood had been part of the manor of Newton Regis.[172] A link therefore exists, tenurially if not parochially, between Newton Regis, and through it Seckington, and Tamworth.

The proximity of Shuttington to Tamworth suggests that it may once have been part of the minster parish, particularly as it is sandwiched between Tamworth and Seckington. Shuttington church was given to Malvern Priory in 1159 on the condition that they should send two monks to establish and serve the priory of Alvecote, which was part of Seckington.[173]

In order to define more fully the limits of Tamworth's parochia it is necessary to determine the extent of other surrounding minster parishes. Lands to the north and west of Tamworth will be examined within the sections on Lichfield and Repton (see below).

Kingsbury, to the south of Tamworth, may have been an old minster church. This is indicated by the existence of two priests there in 1086.[174] Alternatively, it may have originated as a lesser minster in an old minster's parish.

To the east of Tamworth lies the large parish of Polesworth. The church there may have been of early foundation, because Polesworth was recorded as the burial place of St Edith in the Secgan. This is a list of English saints' resting places which survives in an eleventh century copy. The entry concerning St Edith occurs in the part of the list thought to have been compiled before the Viking era.[175] However, St Edith's identity and the exact period in which she lived remain unknown.[176] Various theories exist as to who she was. These include the belief that she was the sister of king Aethelstan who married Sihtric, king of the Northumbrians;[177] and also that she was the sister of king Aethelwulf.[178] However, none of these theories are convincing and it really has to be admitted that the true identity of St Edith is unknown.[179]

The churches at both Polesworth and Tamworth are dedicated to St Edith, which might suggest an early link between them. However, Tamworth church probably acquired this dedication during the Norman period under the patronage of the Marmion family, who were closely associated with Polesworth.[180] Therefore, no early connection between these two churches can be shown.

Polesworth was probably a minster church in its own right. It had a dependent chapel at Baddesley Ensor. This chapel belonged to Polesworth nunnery during the later medieval period, and tithes from Baddesley belonged to the rector at Polesworth.[181]

The postulated parochia of Polesworth is itself delimited by chapelries dependent upon Orton-on-the-Hill in Leicestershire. A monastery was founded at Merevale during the reign of king Stephen, which was part of Grendon parish.[182] This monastery was later granted the church of Orton with its chapels of Grendon, Twycross, Gopshull and Baxterley.[183] Therefore, if Orton was a minster with a number of later dependent chapels, Polesworth parish is delimited by them. However, it must be noted that the church at Orton was also dedicated to St Edith.[184]

Quatford

Although it is now situated within the county of Shropshire, the secular college at Quatford can be added to the list of royal free chapels of Staffordshire. Shropshire's eastern boundary with Staffordshire altered quite dramatically during the later middle ages, largely through the work of Roger de Montgomery (earl of Shrewsbury) and his sons. Between 1086 and 1102 they transferred eleven Staffordshire manors into Shropshire. It is likely that the river Severn formed part of the county boundary in 1086, and that Alveley, Claverley, Kingsnordley and Worfield, together with Quatt, Romsley, Rudge and Shipley were removed from Staffordshire and assigned to Shropshire.[185]

In 1098 Roger de Montgomery's son, Robert of Belesme, transferred the collegiate church of Quatford to Bridgnorth, where it became the chapel of St Mary Magdalene in the castle there.[186] This transfer has meant that it is more difficult to trace the early history of Quatford than the other royal free chapels. The problems encountered are similar to those presented by Tamworth church, in that it is difficult to rediscover the parochia of Quatford, or even to tell if the church was of middle Saxon origin.

In 912 Aethelflaed constructed a burh in the area around Quatford at a place called Bricge.[187] Several attempts have been made to identify this place with Bridgnorth, mainly based upon the place-name evidence.[188] However, in the period 895-96 a group of Danes camped at Cwatbrycge in this area.[189] This place-name could just as easily be identified with Quatford. This shows the confusion over place-names in the area and makes it difficult to firmly equate Bricge with Bridgnorth. Moreover, in 1086 a burh was recorded at

Quatford,[190] which could therefore have been Aethelflaed's burh. Indeed, Quatford, as the second element of the place-name suggests, stands at a ford or major crossing of the river Severn - an obvious place for the siting of a fortification. Furthermore, J F A Mason argued that his postulated bridge at Bridgnorth (and also the settlement) had disappeared by the time of the Norman Conquest, which explained why the earl of Shrewsbury developed Quatford rather than Bridgnorth (see below).[191] If Quatford already contained a burh, however, this might explain the earl's further development of that place.

The question therefore arises of whether Quatford was made a burh, which then had a church added to it in the tenth century, or whether there was a middle Saxon church at Quatford already, to which the burh was later added. This problem is seemingly insoluble, but certain analogies can be made with other places which might suggest that Quatford church was of middle Saxon origin. There are numerous other settlements in England which are located close to major river crossings (indicated by the element OE ford in their place-names)[192] and which contained middle Saxon minster churches. For example, Stafford,[193] Salford Priors,[194] and Stratford-upon-Avon.[195]

A thirteenth century transcript exists of a 'foundation' charter for the church at Quatford. It is believed that the original document related to the period 1085-86, and it stated that the church was founded by the earl of Shrewsbury who granted to it the manor of Eardington; the churches of Claverley and Alveley; tithes of Kingsnordley, Bobbington and Laitonia; and a third of the tithes of Morville, Chetton, Stottesden, Corfham, Culmington and Siefton. Provision was made for six canons. Burcote in Worfield was also given to the church by the earl's sons.[196] However, if this was really the time at which Quatford church was founded, it is difficult to see why it became a royal free chapel.

It is far more likely that this charter represents the re-endowment of the church by the earl. It has been suggested that in removing a number of manors from Staffordshire to Shropshire, earl Roger and his sons were trying to create a 'semi-kingdom' based upon Morville, Eardington, and the towns and castles at Quatford and Bridgnorth.[197] However, by 1086 the earl held the vast majority of Shropshire, and so it would seem to have been unnecessary to consolidate his power by transferring the Quatford area to Shropshire, and founding a new church there. The earl was already in possession of major collegiate churches in the area, such as Morville. This suggests that he would not need to found further churches, and makes a re-endowment rather than the establishment of Quatford church by him more likely. Earl Roger possibly saw Quatford church, with its extraordinary rights and immunity from interference by bishops, as an ideal base from which to control the south-eastern part of his county.

As mentioned above, Quatford's minster parish is now very difficult to trace. It is possible that the churches 'granted' to Quatford in the charter of 1085-86 were once part of its original endowment, as they lie immediately adjacent to it (ie Claverley and Alveley). In the medieval period, Claverley, Alveley, Bridgnorth and Bobbington formed part of the royal peculiar of Bridgnorth.[198] A chapel at Bobbington had been created within Claverley parish by the twelfth century.[199] Tithes from Bobbington were granted to Quatford in 1086. The issue is confused by a document of 1553 which states that Bobbington was a chapel in Kinver parish.[200] Whilst this may be an error, it could indicate that Bobbington, and consequently Claverley, were once dependent upon Kinver.

The churches at Worfield and Alveley both had chapels of their own by the later medieval period. Worfield had a church by the time of Domesday at the latest,[201] which had chapels at Chesterton and Roughton (in Worfield) by 1535.[202] Alveley had a chapel at Romsley, which was said to be subject to the prebend of St Mary Madgalene to which its mother church belonged.[203]

If the parishes surrounding Quatford had once formed part of its original endowment, they seem to have gained their independence at an early stage, which enabled them to form chapels of their own. If this were the case, traces of a former dependence upon the original mother church are less likely to have survived. This, together with Quatford's transfer to Bridgnorth, makes the rediscovery of Quatford's parochia very difficult.

The majority of the royal free chapels of Staffordshire therefore appear to have originated as middle Saxon minster churches of the conventional type. It is interesting to note that the churches of Tettenhall and Penkridge both have later medieval legends relating to them, which attribute their foundation to West Saxon kings. In 1401 the foundation and endowment of St Michael's at Tettenhall was ascribed to king Edgar (957-75).[204] This same king was said to have founded Penkridge church.[205] However, a note in the sixteenth century register of the archbishop of Dublin (who was also dean of Penkridge) attributed the foundation of this church to king Eadred (946-55).[206]

Such traditions may contain a faint echo of the former situation. The royal free chapels escaped reformation along Benedictine lines during the tenth century. However, this does not necessarily mean that they missed out on some of the benefits of this period. It is possible that the latest Mercian kings had been taking lands away from their royal free chapels for administrative purposes, and that the West Saxon kings re-endowed them with land or wealth, or both, once they had taken over Mercia in the later tenth century.

In order to provide a greater understanding of this area during the middle Saxon and later periods, it is necessary to examine or or two other centres which were of early importance to the kingdom of Mercia.

Lichfield

Lichfield was a centre of great importance within Mercia. According to 'Eddius' Stephanus (who wrote his Life of Wilfrid in the early eighth century)[207] Lichfield had been given to Wilfrid by king Wulfhere. Wilfrid believed the place to be suitable for the siting of an episcopal see, and gave Lichfield to Chad for this purpose.[208] Bede relates that in c 669 Chad was made bishop of the Mercians and established his episcopal see at Lichfield.[209] However, this episode was not the beginning of Christianity in the Lichfield area.

The existence of Christianity around Lichfield long before the arrival of Chad is indicated by several pieces of evidence. For example, in 1922 a bronze bowl inscribed with the Christian chi-rho symbol was found at Wall (Letocetum).[210] A further piece of archaeological evidence was the discovery of a possible early Christian gypsum burial under the cathedral floor.[211] Documentary evidence also exists. The ninth century poems concerning the seventh century prince of Powys, Cynddylan, refer to a raid upon a district identified as Lichfield and allude to a community of monks there. The date of the raid could have been between 650 and 655.[212] Furthermore, Bede states that Chad built himself a dwelling near the church at Lichfield, but does not record the building of the church itself. J Gould believes that this was because a church was already existing there, and that Chad, following in the tradition of Aidan and Cuthbert, built a small monastery next to a pre-existing church.[213]

Whilst none of these factors are conclusive, the idea that Lichfield was a British Christian centre is highly plausible. It is likely that Christianity would have continued in the area during the migration period. This is suggested by a study of place-names which show a continuing British presence throughout the area. Indeed, the place-name Eccleshall may even point towards the survival of a British church in Staffordshire.[214]

The question arises as to why Lichfield was chosen as the centre for the see, rather than the nearby Roman settlement of Letocetum. Letocetum had probably not recovered from the Welsh raids which occurred a couple of decades prior to the establishment of the see, which may have meant that Lichfield was a more suitable site.[215] A tradition of Christianity at Lichfield may also have influenced the siting of the Mercian see there, as opposed to other important centres nearby, such as Tamworth.[216]

A number of problems are involved when studying the early history of the church at Lichfield. The main one of these is the difficulty of establishing the identity of the first church. By the later medieval period there were four churches at Lichfield: the cathedral itself, St Michael's, St Chad's and St Mary's. The latter church was founded for the benefit of the new twelfth century borough at Lichfield, as a dependent chapel of St Michael's, in whose parish the borough stood.[217]

Middle Saxon sources such as Bede refer to several churches at Lichfield and evidence which might suggest other sites of religious significance.[218] However, there is now no way of equating the churches in the sources with existing churches. Both St Michael's and St Chad's appear to be of pre-Conquest foundation. It has been shown that the cult of the archangel Michael was of special significance to the Celtic Church, and that dedication to him can often indicate a place with ancient Christian associations.[219]

Finberg pointed out that the late seventh century bishop of Hexham, St John of Beverley, would retreat to a mansio secretior which had a cemetery dedicated to St Michael. By analogy, he suggested that the oratory to which Chad would retire with 'seven or eight' of his brothers was at St Michael's.[220] This church is now situated above the present cathedral site, on a hill summit. Furthermore, St Michael's has a very large cemetery - the principal cemetery of Lichfield - and its parish also contained (until early twentieth century boundary reorganisation) the site of Letocetum.[221] St Michael's would thus seem to have been a church of early foundation and importance, and so it may have been the minster church.

However, there are also sure signs that St Chad's was a church of early foundation, not least the fact that the extra-parochial Cathedral Close had been formed out of the parish of St Chad.[222] It has been suggested that St Chad's was the church originally dedicated to St Mary, which is named by Bede as the place near to which Chad was first buried.[223] According to Bede, Chad's relics were translated later to St Peter's (probably the cathedral church) when it was built.[224] This is the only reference to the dedication St Peter, the cathedral later being called St Chad's. It is believed that this new cathedral was built in c 700 by bishop Headda,[225] and the fourteenth century Lichfield Chronicle relates that in 822, bishop Aethelweald introduced twenty canons to the cathedral who were the first canons at Lichfield.[226] The fact that there are two churches dedicated to St Chad in the same parish may suggest that the cathedral was in fact a refoundation of the original St Chad's church.

The original minster church at Lichfield could therefore have been either St Michael's or (the original) St Chad's. However, the situation appears superficially analogous to that at Worcester. If St Michael's really does represent a site of Celtic Christian importance, as its dedication may suggest, the church looks similar to that of St Helen's in Worcester, which appears to have had a British origin.[227] Such an argument would seem to be supported by the presence of the Roman site of Letocetum within St Michael's parish. St Chad's may therefore have been the middle Saxon minster church, refounded in the cathedral.

A further problem arises when discussing Lichfield, which is the difficulty of rediscovering the original extent of the minster parish. This is because the sources which survive do not allow one to disentangle the interests of the church with the interests of the diocese. As will be discussed below, the church at Lichfield held many detached areas, some from an early period. This is because, as the head of the see, it attracted pious donations as did other cathedral churches, such as Worcester.[228]

There are one or two surviving pieces of evidence which may link nearby churches with Lichfield parochially. For example, in 1255, at the request of the dean and chapter, Roger de Weseham confirmed to the church of Lichfield a pension of ten shillings from Shenstone.[229] Eighty years earlier the dean and chapter had complained that they had been deprived of the church of Shenstone by the canons of Oseney in Oxfordshire.[230] Indeed, by 1291 Shenstone had been appropriated to Oseney.[231] In 1535 the appropriation was recorded again.[232] It is not clear to what the original payment of ten shillings related, but it could have been in recognition of an ancient relationship between the two churches, or alternatively, a payment in compensation for Shenstone's appropriation.

The church of Walsall (discussed with Wolverhampton) was shown to be a minster church with a number of once dependent chapels. However, there is some evidence which may suggest that it was a lesser minster once dependent upon Lichfield. In the early thirteenth century Walsall church was granted to Halesowen Abbey, but in 1248 it was stated that the abbey should pay a pension to Lichfield Cathedral, due to certain rights the latter had in the church. Unfortunately, the nature of the rights was not specified. The abbey was later released from this agreement, but in 1489 it was paying an annual pension from Walsall church and Wednesbury chapel to support choristers at the cathedral.[233]

The evidence contained within Domesday Book may be of value when looking at the land originally endowed to the church of Lichfield. In 1086 Lichfield was a large manor held by the bishop of Chester, which the cathedral church at Lichfield had held prior to the Conquest. It consisted of 25½ hides, which included land adjacent to Lichfield and at a distance from it. These lands were at Packington (in Weeford), the two Hammerwiches, Stychbrook, Norton Canes, Wyrley, Rowley (in Hamstall Ridware), Tamhorn, Handsacre (in Armitage), Hints, Yoxall, Pipe Ridware, Weeford, Freeford, and the unidentified Horton, Burweston and Littlebeech. The manor also included Harborne, Smethwick and Tipton.[235] Some of these lands, for example, the latter three places, may have come into the possession of the church of Lichfield by pious donation because they lie at some distance from Lichfield. It is possible that those lands held by the church in 1086, and adjacent to it, may have formed part of its early endowment. However, no direct parochial evidence now survives.

There was a tradition extant in the thirteenth century, to the effect that the holders of five Lichfield prebends had special duties in ministering to the High Altar. These were named in the sixteenth century as Freeford, Stotfold, Handsacre, Longdon and Weeford.[236] These were said to be early prebends and had been created out of the above mentioned lands which belonged to Lichfield church prior to the Conquest.[237] Indeed, many of the areas adjacent to Lichfield formed prebends and peculiars of the cathedral in the medieval period Norton Canes, Hammerwich, Weeford, Hints, Farewell, Longdon and Whittington were all so described.[238] However, connections such as this cannot necessarily be shown to be early ecclesiastical ones, and may originate from Lichfield's status as centre of a see.

To the north of Lichfield lies Alrewas, which may have had its own minster church. In 1291 it was described as a church with chapels.[239] In 1563 Edingale was a chapel appropriated to the prebend of Alrewas,[240] and so could have been one of the thirteenth century chapels, as could King's Bromley. King's Bromley was described as a chapel in 1535, and which might have been attached to Alrewas.[241] An ecclesiastical link exists between the church of Hamstall Ridware and King's Bromley. The former paid an annual sum to the latter due to a settlement of a dispute concerning the hallibread and 'other matters between the two churches'. This payment of 1249 may reflect an earlier relationship between these two churches.[242] As with cases discussed elsewhere in this chapter, if Alrewas was not a minster in its own right, it may have been a chapel which broke free early enough to form its own dependencies. The mother church may have been at Lichfield, of which Alrewas formed a prebend some time after a royal grant of the church to the cathedral in the 1190s.[243]

Repton

A further centre of particular importance to the Mercian kingdom lying within the study area is Repton. The church at Repton was a minster established in the middle Saxon period (see below), which had an extensive parochia.

Two priests were recorded at Repton in 1086,[244] indicating the presence of a religious community. In the mid twelfth century the church was granted to the Austin Canons of Calke by the widow of the fourth earl of Chester, on the condition that the canons should transfer to Repton.[245] In 1271 this priory at Repton was confirmed in its possession of the church there, and also Repton's eight chapels. These were names as Newton, Bretby, Milton, Foremark, Ingleby, Ticknall, Smisby and Measham. These chapels therefore formed part of the original parochia of Repton (Figure 6).[246] The northern boundaries of the parishes of Repton and Foremark probably delimit the northern boundary of the original minster parish of Repton, as they are both formed by a major natural feature, ie the river Trent.

The original parochia of Repton may have extended much further south. The church of Clifton Campville, to the north of Tamworth, possessed a number of chapels and dependent areas. In the mid sixteenth century Chilcote and Harlaston were described as chapels there.[247] In 1086 it was stated that Thorpe Constantine belonged to the king's farm at Clifton.[248] This area was connected with Repton manorially at this time, as Chilcote was said to belong not only to Clifton but also to Repton.[249] These connections may show that Clifton Campville was a lesser minster formed within the larger area of Repton.

However, as Clifton Campville and Repton are separated by some physical distance, the relationship could have been one which developed at any time during the pre-Conquest period. Repton also had later medieval connections with the nearby church of Croxall. In 1535 the former church was paying a pension to Tutbury for its possession of the latter.[250] Croxall church had been granted to the prior and convent of Repton in 1254, and this was confirmed in 1272.[251]

It is difficult to delimit further the minster parish of Repton. If the lands around Clifton Campville were indeed once part of Repton, then some of the land dividing the two areas (see Figure 6) may have been included in the parochia. However, no firm evidence for such parochial connections is now in existence.

The main importance of the minster church at Repton lies in its early royal connections. The church is dedicated to St Wystan (or Wigstan), a mid ninth century Mercian prince. Wigstan's burial at Repton is recorded in the pre-Viking section of the Secgan.[252] Wigstan was the son of Wigmund and the grandson of Wiglaf, both Mercian kings, who was apparently murdered during a struggle for royal power in Mercia.[253] His cult was later fostered on Mercian royalty, presumably in order to enhance the prestige of the family. Similar cults are evident at other Mercian religious centres, for example, the cult of Kenhelm at Winchcombe.[254]

Repton was evidently an extremely important burial site for Mercian royalty. Not only was Wigstan buried there, but also Wiglaf. The twelfth century writer Florence of Worcester, states that Wigstan was buried 'in the mausoleum of his grandfather Wiglaf'.[255] Furthermore, it was the burial place of king Aethelbald in 757,[256] and possibly also of Merewalh, king of the Magonsaetan and brother of Wulfhere.[257] The problem arises here as to why Répton did not become a royal free chapel, even though it was obviously of great and early importance to the Mercian royal family. Although beyond the scope of this study it can be suggested that Repton was removed from English royal ownership for long enough to reduce its strategic importance ie by its position close to the Danelaw boundary. The connections of Repton with royalty have been confirmed by archaeology. A number of free standing, high status, mausoleums have been excavated, along with other artefacts which indicate a wealthy and important presence there in the seventh or eighth centuries. This will be discussed more fully in Chapter 4

Eccleshall

Today Eccleshall is an extensive parish situated on the western border of central Staffordshire. The place-name Eccleshall incorporates a Latin loan word, OE eclēs, which may indicate the former presence of a Romano-British Christian community surviving into the migration period. This possibility will be discussed in Chapter 3. Numerous factors suggest that the present church at Eccleshall originated as a middle Saxon minster, serving a large land unit.

The manor of Eccleshall belonged to the bishop of Chester in 1086, and prior to the Conquest it had belonged to the church at Lichfield. It was well endowed with seven hides of land and a church.[258] Eccleshall had dependencies lying both inside and outside the modern parish. The latter included Flashbrook and Offley (later Bishop's Offley) in Adbaston parish and the two Chorltons.[259]

The parish of Adbaston may have been part of Eccleshall's original parochia. Its church was described as ecclesia in 1291,[260] but by the mid sixteenth century Eccleshall church had chapels at Bishop's Offley and Tunstall in Adbaston[261] (the former place having belonged manorially to Eccleshall in 1086).

To the south of Eccleshall lies the parish of High Offley. Although no direct link between their churches seems to exist, a number of other factors point towards High Offley's having been part of Eccleshall's more extensive parochia. In Domesday Book two manors were named as Offley - later Bishop's and High Offley.[262] Bishop's Offley, as described above, was a chapel of Eccleshall and a member of its manor. High Offley showed no connection with Eccleshall in 1086, but as the two places called Offley lie adjacent to one another, it is likely that they had once formed one estate which then fragmented.

The three separate parishes of Seighford, Ranton and Ellenhall form a geographically compact group lying to the south-east of Eccleshall. In the twelfth century a priory was founded at Ranton, endowed with the church of Seighford and its dependent chapels of Derrington, Ranton and Ellenhall.[263] It therefore appears that Seighford, described as an independent church appropriated to Ranton Priory in 1291,[264] was the mother church of three separate chapels. Two of these, Ranton and Ellenhall, formed their own parishes later on, whilst Derrington remained a chapel in Seighford. In 1086 Seighford, along with Aston and Doxey, Bridgeford and Coton Clanford (within Seighford) were described as belonging to Eccleshall.[265] Ellenhall was a member of Sugnall[266] which lies within Eccleshall parish. Therefore, manorial and indirect ecclesiastical links (via Sugnall) indicate that Seighford and its dependencies were part of the larger postulated parochia of Eccleshall.

The parish of Chebsey presents something of a problem when one attempts to assign it to a particular parochia, as no direct evidence exists to tie it to any one area. To complicate matters, Chebsey is bordered by three minster parishes: Eccleshall, Stafford and Stone (see Figure 6). The church at Chebsey was in existence by 1086[267] and it was described as independent in 1291.[268] However, some evidence suggests that it might have belonged to Eccleshall. Recorded in the Magnum Registrum Album of Lichfield in 1181 is a confirmation by the bishop of Chester, which states that Chebsey's mother church is free from interference by the archdeacon of Stafford regarding this church.[269] This suggests that Chebsey was related to Lichfield, and presumably therefore, to Eccleshall which was a prebend of Lichfield church.

Chorlton parish can be assigned with more confidence to this parochia. Chorlton, which belonged to the manor of Eccleshall in 1086, was involved in a dispute with Eccleshall in 1268. Controversy arose when the parson of Eccleshall claimed the right to present a priest to Chorlton chapel, which the latter apparently rejected.[270] The outcome is unknown, but such a course of events indicates an ancient ecclesiastical relationship between the two churches.

Situated between Chorlton and Eccleshall is the parish of Standon. Although no evidence now links Standon with Eccleshall, its geographical position (ie sandwiched between two parts of the minster parish) suggests that it once belonged to Eccleshall.[271] In Domesday Book Standon was recorded along with The Rudge as a two hide manor.[272] The Rudge is in fact a detached portion lying to the south of Ashley, next to Eccleshall. Therefore, through its physical position and connection with Standon, this area can probably be included within Eccleshall.

Cheswardine is now in Shropshire, but in 1086 it fell within the Staffordshire hundred of Pirehill,[273] as did the rest of Eccleshall's parochia. The transfer to Shropshire possibly occurred in the time of Henry II.[274] Domesday Book records Cheswardine and Chipnall (within the former's parish) together, which may mean that they were once part of the same manor. Godiva held two hides here before the Conquest, and paid two shillings for Chipnall to the church of Lichfield.[275] Therefore, these two manors may once have been part of Lichfield's holdings at Eccleshall,and as such, possibly once part of Eccleshall's original endowment.

Eccleshall church was therefore an old minster. It appears to have been either taken over by, or granted to, the church of Lichfield at an early date. By the late thirteenth century, Eccleshall was a prebend attached to

Lichfield.[276] Parallels can be drawn with similar occurrences in other sees. For example, the bishopric of Worcester had probably gained rights over minsters at Fladbury and Stratford-upon-Avon by the end of the seventh century.[277]

The western edge of Eccleshall's parochia may be delimited by the parish of Market Drayton, which is situated astride the modern borders of Shropshire and Staffordshire. In Domesday Book Drayton has two separate entries, one of which describes it as a berewick of two hides with a priest. This may refer to the part covered by the modern parish of Market Drayton.[278] The second Drayton, a one hide manor, may be Little Drayton which was once part of Market Drayton parish. Both Draytons were in the Shropshire hundred of Hodnet and were together called Drayton-in-Hales parish.[279]

The question arises as to which other place Drayton belonged as a berewick. Place-names may be of relevance here. It is possible that the major place-name in this area is Hales (situated at SJ 714 340) - an early topographical name and the plural of OE halh[280] - which is included within many other names in the area (see below). Hales was indeed an administrative area at an earlier period, as it contains the site of a Roman villa.[281] The name Drayton, on the other hand, denotes a place of secondary settlement. The later addition of 'Market' may suggest the post-Conquest development of this place as a borough which caused it to eclipse Hales, upon which it may have been dependent in 1086. An analogy can be made for such a place-name change. For example, the original land unit surrounding the minster church at Wootton Wawen would probably have been called something like Stoppingas. As Wootton Wawen grew in importance, the original name was almost entirely lost, and survives only in a charter of 716-37.[282]

A number of places were ecclesiastically linked with Drayton in the later medieval period such as Sutton-upon-Tern [283] and Betton-in-Hales.[285] Norton-in-Hales is now a separate parish, but its place-name and position to the north of Drayton, suggest that it was once associated with that manor.

Place-name evidence may therefore show that there was a land unit centred on Hales in this area. However, Drayton could have been a berewick of some other centre in 1086, in which case the nearby Eccleshall would be an obvious candidate.

Stone

Stone is a very large parish to the north of Stafford which seems to have contained one of the earliest minsters of Staffordshire. A priory was in existence at Stone by the twelfth century, which had been founded within the existing parish church.[286] A number of chapels belonging to the church existed within the parish itself at Burston, Tittensor and Fulford, the latter becoming a small parish in its own right.[287]

The narrow parish of Swynnerton to the west of Stone was part of the minster parish. Soon after its foundation, the priory of Stone claimed the church at Swynnerton, but this was disputed by two clerks resident there. However, in the late 1150s the clerks admitted the Swynnerton church was a parochial chapel of Stone, and liable to pay a pension to its mother church.[288] The payment of this pension was later recorded in both the Taxatio and the Valor.[289] The existence of two clerks at Swynnerton is also of note. They may have been the successors of clerks from the minster church sent out to serve an outlying chapel.

Unfortunately, Stone's other early connections are not so easily traced as this. Stone Priory was described in the mid twelfth century as a daughter house of Kenilworth Priory. Kenilworth claimed rights in the church of

Checkley in the late twelfth century,[290] but it is not clear whether this claim was made in respect of the former's interest in Stone. In 1291 the church of Checkley was paying a pension to Stone Priory,[291] which may mean that the latter had an early claim to the former, perhaps as its once dependent chapel. The church of Draycott, between Stone and Checkley, was described in the Taxatio as an independent church which paid a pension to the abbey of Comberne in Cheshire.[293] It may, however, have been connected with Stone through Checkley, since the latter church was receiving an annual pension from Draycott in the sixteenth century.[294]

Milwich church was given by Nicholas de Milwich to Stone Priory, and confirmed to them by Robert de Stafford between 1138 and 1147.[295] Considering the close proximity of Milwich to Stone, it may be that Nicholas de Milwich was rather regranting Stone's original possession. In 1291 the church of Milwich was recorded as part of the spiritual endowment of Stone Priory.[296] However, the connection could merely have resulted from Nicholas de Milwich's desire to do something spiritually beneficial, and Stone Priory was the nearest place to hand for a gift.

A similar grant was made by Ruald de Dilhorne who gave the church at Dilhorne to the canons of Stone in the twelfth century.[297] Therefore, this too might once have originally belonged to Stone, or it could have been a geniune pious donation.

Sandon, to the south-east of Stone, looks from its geographical position as if it were once part of Stone, as it intrudes quite substantially into that parish. However, no evidence pointing to a parochial connection now exists.

Stone Priory was also connected with the church at Madeley. The church there was paying a pension to Stone throughout the later middle ages, which is recorded in the *Taxatio*.[298] This suggests that Madeley was a detached portion of Stone's *parochia*. However, as is emphasised in the Introduction, the payment of a pension does not necessarily indicate an ancient relationship between churches, and could merely relate to later appropriation. Robert de Stafford was said to have given this church to the priory [299] and so the payment could represent this grant.

Stone's minster parish is delimited to the north by the existence of another minster at Trentham. Trentham church had claims over a number of other churches in the area. These included Barlaston as by the early thirteenth century Trentham church was providing a chaplain there, who was responsible for burials and baptisms.[300]

The church at Stone was therefore an old minster. One or two other pieces of information show that it could have been of early royal foundation.

The church in which Stone Priory was founded in the twelfth century was dedicated to St Wulflad. The identity of this saint is uncertain. Later medieval sources have identified Wulflad as a seventh century Mercian prince and son of king Wulfhere. An expanded fourteenth century Latin version of the *Secgan* states that Wulflad and his brother Rufinus were buried at Stone.[301] A *passio* for the two brothers exists in a twelfth century or later form. This states that Wulfhere killed his two sons because they were converted to Christianity, supposedly by St Chad who (as the legend goes) later converted Wulfhere himself.[302]

However, this tradition presents a number of problems, not least the late date of its first recording. For example, the association of Wulflad with Wulfhere may have arisen purely out of the shared first element of their names. Furthermore, whilst Wulflad is a credible name for the son of Wulfhere, Rufinus is an unlikely name for an Anglo-Saxon prince.[303]

Nevertheless, it is notable that such a dedication survives attached to an old minster church. As D W Rollason points out, the obscure dedication to a saint with an Anglo-Saxon name such as Wulflad is unlikely to have been invented in the post-Conquest period.[304] The survival of the dedication and the fact that legends were created about Wulflad might show that he was remembered as a person of some significance.

Furthermore, there is some slight suggestion that there were nuns at Stone in the Anglo-Saxon period. Stone was not mentioned by name in Domesday Book, but Walton within its parish was. This had been held by a freeman prior to the Conquest, who had given one carucate of this land to his sister.[305] It has been suggested that this land was given to a small community of nuns at Stone. The only other evidence for this is late medieval poetry which states that two nuns and one priest lived at Stone.[306] This is of note because, as Stenton points out, double monasteries were a normal part of the earliest English monasticism.[307] Stone could therefore have been a church of early foundation.

An examination of the churches of Eccleshall and Stone has been carried out not only to delimit the northern boundaries of the <u>parochiae</u> of Stafford and Gnosall, but also to demonstrate the difference between the royal free chapels and other minster churches. Both Eccleshall and Stone originated as old minsters, the former being taken over by, or granted to, the church of Lichfield at some time before the Norman Conquest. The church at Stone was possibly of royal foundation, like the royal free chapels. However, its status declined,as did that of many old minsters, so that by the later medieval period it had been reformed as an Augustinian priory. This contrasts with the royally founded churches, later to be called royal free chapels, which maintained a high degree of royal patronage and were protected from reformation both before and after 1066. This highlights the special circumstances within which the royal free chapels were founded, and suggests that there was something particularly important about them, and the land upon which they were founded, not only to Mercian royalty, but also to later kings.

An important point to note at this stage is that a great deal of the land included within the minster parishes of the royal free chapels was held by freemen prior to the Conquest. Taking Penkridge as an example, the manors of Stretton, Gailey, Water Eaton, Shareshill, Great Saredon, Otherton, Coppenhall and Levedale (all within its minster parish) were held freely before 1066.[308] This phenomenon occurs when looking at all of the royal free chapels. However, neither Eccleshall manor nor its members were held freely in the later Anglo-Saxon period. This is also true of many of the surrounding manors which lay within its parochia.

It is likely that land held freely in this way represents the ancient allodial land of the Crown, whereby there was no intervening lordship. At an early stage a land unit was probably held by the whole tribe. Eventually, leaders (kings) would emerge and the land would become subject to the king, who demanded dues and services from the people holding it.[309] Allodial land may have been the land kings had always held, rather than that which was granted out. It is interesting to note that generally, throughout the study area, lands previously held by freemen were granted to major post-Conquest land holders, whilst the remainder were often given to lesser thegns. This suggests that the previously free lands either had special status or remaining privileges in 1086, which it was felt ought to be granted to the higher aristocracy.

The land covered by the royal free chapels therefore seems to have been of particular royal importance from an early date. However, it should be noted that P H Sawyer has recently argued that people described as 'free' in Domesday Book were sometimes subject to unnamed lords and that their freedom was often limited to a certain extent.[310] Nevertheless, the large number of freemen in the vicinity of the royal free chapels prior to the Conquest, and the fact that their lands were often given to the greater nobility after 1066, does suggest that there was something of special importance about this area of Staffordshire.

1 See Introduction and Bassett, 'In search of the origins of Anglo-Saxon kingdoms'

2 P H Sawyer, The royal *tun* in pre-Conquest England', in ed P Wormald, *Ideal and Reality in Frankish and Anglo-Saxon Society*, 1983, pp 277-78

3 H R Loyn, 'The hundred in England in the tenth and early eleventh centuries', ed H Hearder and H R Loyn, *British Government and Administration*, 1974, pp 3-4 and Bassett, 'In search of the origins of Anglo-Saxon kingdoms'

4 T H Aston, 'The origins of the manor in England', in ed T H Aston, P R Coss *et al*, *Social Relations and Ideas*, 1983 pp 21-22, p 24 and pp 32-33

5 Brooke, 'Rural ecclesiastical institutions in England', pp 695-96 and J Blair, 'Introduction: from Minster to Parish Church', p 2 in J Blair, *Minsters and Parish Churches. The Local Church in Transition 950-1200*, Oxford University Committee for Archaeology Monograph no 17, 1988

6 Barlow, *The English Church 1000-1066*, p 186

7 Brooke, 'Rural ecclesiastical institutions in England', p 697

8 *ibid*, p 698

9 ed W de Gray Birch, *Cartularium Saxonicum*, vol 3, no 1041

10 Whitelock, *Anglo-Saxon Wills*, p 54

11 ed A Hawkins and A Rumble, *Domesday Book: Staffordshire*, Vol 24, 1976, 7.17

11a For example, see Blair, 'Introduction: from Minster to Parish Church' for discussion of ecclesiastical changes, particularly p 7 and note 40

12 ed L M Midgley, *Victoria County History for Staffordshire* (hereafter V C H), Vol 4, 1958, p 45

13 For example, Hawkins and Rumble, *Domesday Book: Staffordshire*, 7.6, 7.7

13a *ibid*, before 7.17 in Latin text

14 See A H Thompson, 'notes on colleges of secular canons in England', *Archaeological Journal*, 74, 1917, p 149 and p 182. Styles, 'The early history of Penkridge church'. Also see below

15 Thompson, 'Notes on colleges of secular canons', p 192 and J Barrow 'Cathedrals, provosts and prebends: A comparison of twelfth century German and English practice', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 37, no 4, 1986, p 538 and p 552

16 Styles, 'The early history of Penkridge church', citing P R O, Chancery Miscellanea, Bundle 9, no 4

17 *ibid*, p 7

18 ed H E Savage, *Magnum Registrum Album*, *Staffordshire Historical Collections* (hereafter S H C), New Series, 1924, p 359

19 *ibid*, p 140

20 Styles, 'The early history of Penkridge church', p 22

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CHAPTER THREE

PLACE-NAME EVIDENCE

Recent research into English place-names has shown that they can have a number of uses when studying early history and settlement patterns. This chapter sets out to examine in detail the various categories of place-names within south Staffordshire. Firstly, place-names which indicate a Romano-British presence will be studied to determine the degree to which there was peaceful coexistence between Romano-Britons and Anglo-Saxons in the area. As an extension to this, it can be seen whether or not the latter were moving into an already developed, managed agrarian landscape and thereby enable the royal free chapels to be placed within their early medieval context. A discussion of the general and specific meanings of some south Staffordshire place-names will also further our understanding of the area into which Anglo-Saxons were moving. The second main purpose of the chapter is to examine the chronology and hierarchy of place-name formation within this area by looking at whether certain categories of names are used for specific types of places. This can be used to test the basic models which have been put forward by place-name scholars.[1]

To begin with it is necessary to point out a few of the benefits and drawbacks of using this type of evidence in a regional study. Place-names are a valuable source of information because their formation is not subject to the possible bias of written documents or archaeological material. Instead, they are created spontaneously by people speaking their native language.[2] The study of an individual place-name can provide information about that one place as seen by the people who gave the name. Local topography is very often described and even social organisation can be hinted at. For example, Repton has been translated as 'the hill of the Hrype tribe'.[3]

However, certain problems arise when using place-names as a source of evidence. The only information to be directly derived from place-names is linguistic, from which historical conclusions have to be drawn.[4] Thus, the validity of the historical inference relies mainly upon the linguistic interpretation being correct.

In order to correctly interpret the meaning of a place-name it is necessary to study not only its present form, but also its earliest spellings, which may change through time. For example, at first glance Hatherton, a parish to the south-east of Penkridge, appears to have a place-name in tūn. However, early spellings such as the tenth century Hagenthorndun,[5] show that it is a topographical name containing OE dūn.

Most of the place-names of this area have been translated by specialists in the subject. Unfortunately, there is at the moment an English Place-Name Society volume for only one hundred of Staffordshire.[6] However, this does cover the eastern part of Cuttlestone hundred, a district of particular importance for this study. No such volumes are yet available for Shropshire, and the Warwickshire and Derbyshire studies were written prior to the introduction of recent ideas on place-names.[7] Nevertheless, various articles concerning types of place-names in the area are of great use.[8] Therefore, the early spellings of place-names in this area have generally been studied and interpreted by place-name scholars.

A further problem lies in the difficulty of knowing whether a place-name originally applied to the settlement to which it now refers. For example, tūn can refer to an estate, and not just a single settlement,[9] which must be remembered when interpreting such names.

For the purposes of this study, place-names have been collected and plotted on distribution maps according to various criteria. All parish names and other names recorded in Domesday Book and charters are included. The earliest spellings available in this area are very often those in Domesday Book, owing to the poor survival of Anglo-Saxon charters. This may present some problems as a result of the Normanisation of names. For example, Cannock is derived from OE cnocc meaning 'hill'. This was altered by Norman pronunciation to canoc,[10] which has led to attempts to give the name a British origin. Post-Domesday spellings are therefore relied on quite heavily. Place-names of late recording which have not become places of importance have not been included.

Studies are often made of field-names. However, although all field-names for east Cuttlestone hundred have been collected, no study has been carried out in the rest of Staffordshire. An examination of published field-names would therefore be greatly imbalanced in this area.

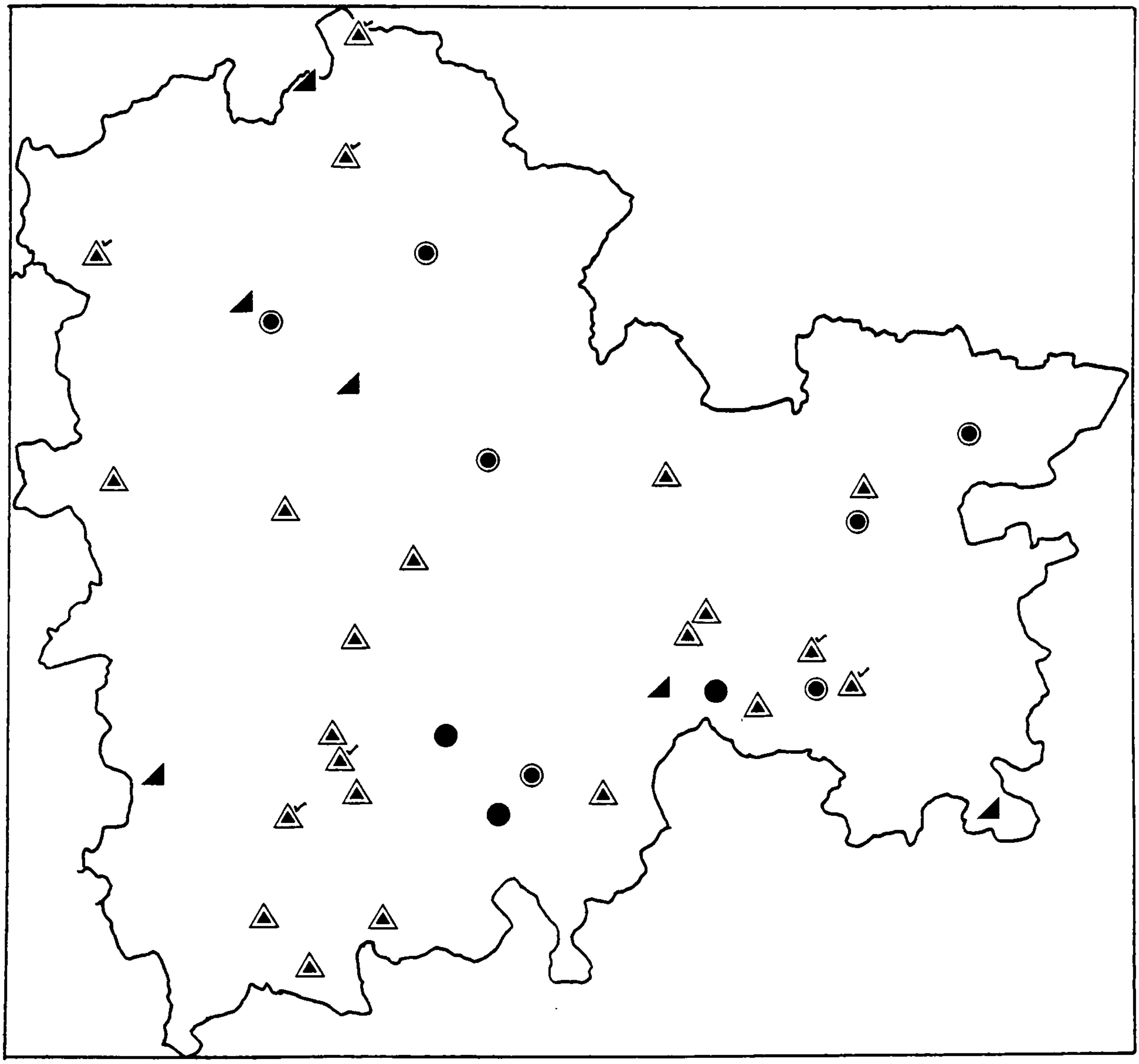
Owing to the large number of place-names involved, only those of particular significance will be discussed individually within the text. All the relevant names are plotted on the distribution maps. These are names incorporating Latin loan words and pre-English elements, and those showing the existence of British speakers; names in hām, ingahām, and inga; topographical place-names; and habitative place-names. Important elements within these categories, such as names in tūn, have been mapped separately. This has been done to show the distribution of names in relation to similar types, and also in relation to other categories of place-names.[11]

Pre-English Place-Names

Figure 7 shows the distribution of pre-English place-names in the study area. This category incorporates wholly British names and those containing a British element which may have been derived from a river name.

This is an important group for the study of the early history of an area, because it may throw light on the extent and nature of British survival in regions of Anglo-Saxon colonisation. The very fact that British place-names continued in use in a district of largely Old English names indicates a period of peaceful interaction between a proportion of the Britons and the Germanic immigrants.[12]

Figure 7: Pre-English place-names; place-names indicating British speakers; place-names incorporating Latin-loan words; pagan place-names



Pre-English

Latin-loan words

British speakers

Pagan place-names

Settlement with pre-English river or district name included

In a study of place-names in the Birmingham region, Margaret Gelling revealed a higher degree of British survival to the west and north compared with the south and east of the area. If not revealing more British survival to the west and north of Birmingham, she suggested that there may have been a greater length of time of co-existence between the two peoples.[13] More particularly, it was noted that Staffordshire has more British names than Warwickshire, although they are more widely spread than the Worcestershire examples. It is therefore interesting to note on Figure 7 that the greatest degree of clustering of pre-English place-names does indeed fall within the southern section of Staffordshire, nearest the Worcestershire border. Further north and west the examples are more widespread, mainly being formed from pre-English river names. A higher degree of British survival or co-existence can therefore be suggested for this southern region compared with the north. There is also a noticeable cluster of pre-English names around the Lichfield area, perhaps showing a high degree of British survival there too.

Generally, the survival of pre-English place-names in this district seems quite marked. Nearly 70 per cent of the pre-English names mapped refer to parishes and nearly six per cent of all the parishes mapped have a British element at least in their name. They often, therefore, belong to important settlements. Furthermore, some of the most important parish names in this area, including Penkridge and Lichfield (discussed below), are either wholly or partially British.

It is likely that in Britain, British settlement names were usually topographical, with habitative names coming into more general use slightly later than the first English settlements.[14] This seems to be borne out by a number of the purely British names in this region, for example, Penkridge. It is derived from two British words: penn meaning 'head, hill, end' or as an adjective 'chief',[15] and *crūg*, 'hill, mound, tumulus'.[16] The original form of the name was *Pennocrucium*, which referred to the Romano-British settlement near Watling Street and possibly also to a large estate in the area. It is now believed that the name means 'headland tumulus', possibly referring to a ploughed out tumulus at Rowley Hill Farm in Stretton.[17] However, it is difficult to see how the identification can be so exact, because if this tumulus has now been ploughed away, others may have suffered the same fate. Other possible translations of the name, such as 'hilly mound', are inappropriate given the topography of the area.[18]

The study of sound changes in such a name as Penkridge may throw light upon the date of its coining. Margaret Gelling points out that the form Penkridge from *crüg* was derived at a time when there was no similar sound in English to the Welsh *ṻ*, thus causing the use of *ī* in the name. In the seventh and early eighth centuries a rounded *u*, spelt *y*, was developed in Old English, which would have caused *crüg* to become *crȳc*, rather than the form in Penkridge. Accordingly, it seems that Penkridge was derived from *Pennocrucium* at an earlier date than this development.[19] The name Penkridge, therefore, suggests peaceful interaction between British and English speakers at a fairly early date. If this is so, it may even represent the taking over of a working Romano-British estate by incoming Anglo-Saxons.

Four other instances of purely topographical British place-names fall within the study area. Onn is the name of two Domesday manors lying within the present parish of Church Eaton. Ekwall believed that the meaning of this place-name was 'kiln' from the Welsh *odyn*.[20] However, a more likely derivation is from Welsh *onn*, 'ash trees', possibly from a local stream name.[21] Penn, a parish to the south of Tettenhall, takes its name from the British *penn* 'hill'.[22] The study area contains two examples of the name Barr from Welsh bar, 'top, summit'.[23] These are Great Barr, in the south-east of Staffordshire, and Barr near Walton-on-Trent in Derbyshire.[24] These names are in accordance with the idea that many British place-names were purely topographical, and in these cases they have been taken over in their complete form by Old English speakers.

Two further purely British names are evident. Morfe in Enville parish possibly comes from Primitive Welsh mor dref, 'big village'.[25] Hints near Lichfield derives from Primitive Welsh hynt, 'road'.[26] Spellings of the latter name may suggest that Primitive Welsh speech continued in the area around Lichfield until quite late. Primitive Welsh hynt comes from the British sento, and the change in the initial letter is dated to the second half of the sixth century, which suggests that the name was coined at some point after this.[27]

Compound place-names of British and Old English origin in this area also show a bias towards topographical words. For example, the second element of the name Lichfield is OE feld, 'open country'.[28] The first element comes from Lētocēton, a British name (translated as 'grey wood') from the predecessors of Modern Welsh llwyd and coed.[29] Lētocēton probably referred to the Roman settlement at Wall and was later transferred to the present settlement.[30] This apparent transfer may have been due to the original name once referring to a large estate encompassing both settlements, as at Penkridge.[31] The sound development of the name can give a rough guide to date. The Old English form of the name could be Lyccid from the Primitive Welsh Luitgę̄d. This suggests the development of Welsh ē to ui, dated around AD 675. It therefore appears that a British enclave continued in existence in this area for a while after the English settled nearby.[32] This may explain the concentration of pre-English place-names in the Lichfield area visible on Figure 7.

At least seven further place-names of probably British origin containing topographical elements can be added to the list. These include Pensnett in Kingswinford;[33] Brewood; Kinver;[34] Bilbrook in Tettenhall;[35] Ridware;[36] Longford in Shropshire;[37] and Leamonsley near Lichfield.[38]

It is common for pre-English names to refer to major topographical features in the landscape. This may be because a larger number of people knew of their existence and so the name survived.[39] This is true of the river names in the area, the vast majority of which (and some of the stream names) are either British or pre-British in origin. It is often uncertain whether a river name is British or pre-British, such as Anker, Sow and Tame. A number are definitely British, including Dove, Tean, Tern and Trent. The river name Penk is a back-formation from Penkridge.[40]

Smestow Brook in the south of Staffordshire was once known as the Tresel,[41] from Welsh tres meaning 'toil, labour'.[42] Although this became obsolete as a stream name, Tresel is to be found in two surviving settlement names: Trysull and Trescott, both near Tettenhall.[43] Other place-names contain river names as their first elements. Tame is embodied in Tamworth and Tamhorn, Tern in Tyrley, and Trent in Trentham. The problem with names such as these is knowing whether the river name or the settlement name came first. The former is probably the case in many instances, but these names have been included in Figure 7 and the distinction made clear.

Apart from river names, a British word was used for what seems to have been a district name in the north of the region. This is still recognisable in some place-names and a stream name. The word in Modern English is Lyme from the Welsh word for 'elm', llwyf. This occurs quite frequently as a forest name in a number of counties.[44] The name Lyme could therefore have referred to a wooded district. It survives in Lyme Brook;[45] and in the place-names Burslem 'fort guardian's estate at Lyme'[46] and Newcastle-under-Lyme.

Place-names indicating British speakers

Related to the place-names containing British elements in the type of historical information they convey are those showing the presence of British speaking peoples. Seven place-names in the study area have first elements which reveal the existence of surviving British settlements. Of these names, five contain the word OE walh or a derivative of it.

There has been much discussion about the precise meaning of walh and its historical significance. In literary Old English, the word could mean either 'Welshman' or 'slave'.[47] However, it is possible that walh meant a 'Briton' when the Anglo-Saxons settled in Britain in the fifth and sixth centuries, and the second meaning later developed from this. Nevertheless, the racial meaning seems to have continued in use, as is seen in the late seventh century Laws of Ine. The Old English term for slave, theow, is also hardly ever used in place-names although mentions of minority groups are fairly common.[48] There seems to be general agreement amongst place-name scholars that walh, when used in this context, referred to people of British origin.

The element walh or w(e)ala in place-names is often reduced to Wal- as in Walton, thus introducing further problems of interpretation. Old English w(e)ald, 'wood or wald', w(e)all, 'wall', and (in the West Midlands) waelle, 'spring or stream',are also often reduced to Wal- in place-names.[49] Early forms of place-names are therefore essential in order to find the correct interpretation. This problem occurs in the area under study. Five Waltons are evident: one each in the parishes of Eccleshall, Stone and Baswich; Walton-on-Trent in Derbyshire; and Walton Grange in Gnosall. The first four all have the Domesday form Waletone, indicating that their first element is w(e)ala or walh.[50] However, Walton Grange was spelt Waltone in Domesday Book, suggesting either w(e)ald or w(e)all as its first element.[51] Walsall in south Staffordshire may also contain walh. The first element could be a personal name derived from this word, possibly suggesting British blood in the population.[52]

Two other place-names indicating a British presence lie within the area: Bretby, a chapelry of Repton, and Comberford in Tamworth. The first element of Bretby comes from OE brettas meaning 'Britons'.[53] Comberford contains cumbre, which is possibly a less derogatory term for 'Welshman' than walh.[54]

The importance of place-names such as these is that they were coined by English speakers referring to British settlements, which points towards a period of peaceful co-existence when the British population was allowed to maintain its own identity. The fact that these settlements were referred to by the nationality of their inhabitants shows them to have been exclusively British, whilst the surrounding population may have been mixed. In a study of such place-names, Margaret Faull showed that they were not usually sited on the poorest land in an area, although they were removed from other settlement.[55] Thus, when the Anglo-Saxons had chosen the best sites, the Britons were tolerated to settle on the next best areas.

This idea appears to be borne out in the Staffordshire area. Comberford, Bretby and the Waltons in Stone and Eccleshall lie within the parishes of major early medieval minster churches. They are therefore away from settlements of major early importance in the area, but not too far away. Baswich, the parish in which a further Walton lies, once belonged to Penkridge's larger land unit, thus following a similar pattern.

The secondary settlement elements used in many of these place-names seem to support this. Of the seven place-names being discussed here, five have names in tūn and by. The remaining two have possibly earlier topographical final elements in halh and ford. These settlements, on the whole,look like secondary ones adjacent to major places. Furthermore, only Walsall and Walton-on-Trent became parishes. By looking at final elements, Cameron believed that Walton place-names could be dated to the late seventh and eighth centuries, although they may be earlier.[56] The second element of Bretby is the Scandinavian word by, which would have been current in the late ninth century.[57] By this time the meaning of the first element was no longer necessarily a reflection of the contemporary racial composition of the place's inhabitants, showing the long survival of the name.

The name Comberford in Tamworth contains OE ford. This has been shown to be a potentially early topographical place-name element by Cox, who collected and analysed all place-names in authentic Old English documents dated before AD 731.[58] If in an early form, this case may show the early recognition of a British enclave. It could be significant that it is compounded with cumbre, a possibly more polite term for a Briton.

With reference to Figure 7 , place-names of this type are quite widely scattered across the area, showing pockets of British survival. Several of the middle Saxon land units appear to contain one such place-name, which suggests the collection together of Britons within each area. There are no such names in Shropshire, or in the south-west of the area, although a number of British place-name elements are evident there. The situation and second elements of these names do point towards the relationship between the Anglo-Saxon settlers and Britons as being one of the former's dominance over the latter. However, peaceful co-existence is also suggested, showing something of the nature of Anglo-Saxon settlement.

Place-names incorporating Latin loan words

Although never widely adopted as a spoken language in Britain, Latin was used for administration from around the middle of the first century AD until the mid fifth century. Nevertheless, some Latin words were used by British speakers and some were adopted by English speakers, either directly from Latin or via British. Latin place-names as such are not common, but there are a number of names in both British and Old English which include Latin words.[59]

Latin words were once thought to have been picked up by Anglo-Saxons on the Continent, but it is now believed that they may have been loaned due to early contact by Germanic soldiers and immigrants with members of the Romano-British governing classes. Place-names containing Latin loan words could therefore be amongst the earliest formed.[60] This may be of particular importance for the continuity of settlement from the Roman period to the Anglo-Saxon.

The area under discussion contains six place-names incorporating a Latin loan word, although only two such words are involved: OE ceaster (from Latin castra) and eccles. The Latin loan word ceaster was shown by Cox to be of potentially early significance in the formation of place-names[61] and it is fairly common in the south Staffordshire area. The name would have been taken directly from Latin into Old English.[62] Its meaning is 'walled town' - that is, it was a term used by Anglo-Saxons to describe a Roman town[63] - and so its use may indicate the existence of Roman remains at the site of a settlement so named. Furthermore, it shows Saxon recognition of such remains.

In this area the word ceaster appears four times as a first element and once as a final element. It appears in the form Chester in three instances: Chesterfield in Shenstone, and Chesterton in Newcastle-under-Lyme and in

Worfield. The latter two places both have Roman remains[64] and the former may refer to Letocetum. A further example of this type of name is Seighford, a parish near Eccleshall. The form in Domesday Book is Cesteforde,[65] and the modern name is probably a Normanised version of Chesterford.[66] It is interestering to note that the names Chesterfield and Seighford are compounds of ceaster with OE feld and ford respectively. All three words are considered to have been in potentially early use in the Anglo-Saxon settlement.[67]

On the very edge of the study area is Mancetter in Warwickshire, a place-name of particular interest. The first element is derived from its Roman name, Manduessedum. This comes from the British mandu, 'small horse', and essedo, 'war chariot'. The name is a reduction of this with ceaster added.[68] This may indicate continuity of settlement in the area.

There is one further possibility of a name in ceaster, although it is not certain enough to be mapped. W H Duignan in his work on Staffordshire place-names mentioned a thirteenth century deed in which Berry Hill, two miles north-west of Stone, was described as 'le buri in Wulfcestre'.[69] Unfortunately, no reference is given for this deed, but there may have been Roman remains in the area, which would explain the use of this word.

The name Eccleshall is derived from OE eclēs and halh. It is generally agreed that the first element originally comes from the Latin ecclesia which was borrowed to form the Primitive Welsh eglēs, 'a church'. This, in turn, became the OE eclēs.[70]

The implication of the use of this word is disputed. It was once thought that place-names in OE eclēs showed that here and there, British Christian churches continued in use into the sub-Roman period, and that they were permitted to do so by the incoming Anglo-Saxons.[71] The existence of an organised British centre of population was inferred, the name of which was recognised by Anglo-Saxon settlers.

C Thomas wrote that Eccles names denoted places which had their origins in sub-Roman British Christian communities dating to the sixth or possibly fifth century. These may have been distinguished by non-Christian British speakers using the word egl$\bar{e}$s. It is possible that such a church would have later become a minster in its own right.[72]

Margaret Gelling has made an important modification of some of the above ideas. She suggested that the three examples of the name Eccles, which are evident in the south-east of England, may in fact represent a very early and direct borrowing from Latin.[73] She still maintained that elsewhere the name was derived later from the Primitive Welsh form. It was unlikely to indicate Romano-British churches as recognised by Anglo-Saxon settlers because it was generally not found in places settled by them early in the migration period. Furthermore, names in ecl$\bar{e}$s are not found near known sites of Roman-British Christian archaeology.[74]

However, some of the westerly Eccles names may have been written off too quickly in this respect. Indeed, archaeological evidence in the Staffordshire area now shows that there could have been occupation here by the Anglo-Saxons at the end of the fifth century.[75] The name Eccleshall in Staffordshire could therefore have been formed at this early date, possibly being derived directly from a Latin loan word and referring to a Romano-British Christian community.

Alternatively, the Eccles alement in Eccleshall could refer to the Anglo-Saxon minster church, the name being coined when it was established. However, this would be unlikely if the incoming Anglo-Saxons had their own word for a church. This has been suggested by R Morris, who stated that the word 'church' stems from the Greek kuriakon, meaning 'of the Lord', often used for a place of Christian worship from the third century. This produced the form cirice in Germanic languages.[76] Linguistically, however, the derivation of cirice from kuriakon presents problems such as the loss of a and the change of u to i. If the derivation is correct, a very early oral borrowing is suggested.[77]

Therefore, the precise derivation and meaning of Eccleshall remains uncertain. Nevertheless, the name is significant. Many settlements with such names across the country had minster churches with wide ranging ecclesiastical jurisdiction, as did the Staffordshire example. Professor Barrow has pointed out many more examples, particularly in Lancashire and Kent.[78] Eccleshall in Staffordshire is a large parish whose church once had an even larger parochia, suggesting a major administrative function for this settlement.

It generally appears that the British presence in this district was quite marked during the Anglo-Saxon immigrations. A number of British enclaves evidently survived, usually as secondary settlements to English administrative centres. If place-name theories are correct, the early nature and importance of some of the settlements in this area may be stressed by the occurrence of place-names containing Latin loan words. Words such as ceaster, derived directly from the Latin, indicate a period of coexistence between the established inhabitants and Anglo-Saxon immigrants. The royal free chapels founded in the south Staffordshire area during the early medieval period were therefore established within an already developed and managed agrarian landscape. Consequently, this may have influenced the nature and extent of the areas which were to become the parochiae of these churches.

Pre-English names and Latin loan word names tend to coincide with areas of topographical place-names, for example, in the southern section. Topographical names may be of early formation in many cases, and the names on Figure 7 may be associated with these settlements. Names showing settlements of British speakers are generally away from topographical place-names. This could again be due to Anglo-Saxon settlers allowing British settlements away from their initial areas of colonisation. The settlements on Figure 7 tend to coincide generally with areas of names in tūn, which usually denotes a secondary settlement, but not with the habitative place-names marked on Figure 13, which may be of a later and less important type.

A number of other categories of place-names will now be examined in relation to the various theories and models which have been developed by place-name scholars. The historical and other information which they convey about south Staffordshire will be discussed to assist our understanding of the area within which the royal free chapels were established. The chronology and hierarchy of place-name formation in this area will also be used to test the models which have been put forward.

Pagan place-names

Three place-names with pagan elements are situated in the south of Staffordshire: Wednesbury,[79] Wednesfield[80] and Weeford.[81] Margaret Gelling noted that pagan sanctuaries would be totally lost in districts where the earliest Christian missionaries were supported by the local ruling house. Thus place-names denoting sanctuaries might represent those which continued in use because of their inaccessibility to missionaries. The fact that the sanctuaries were unusual would then give rise to their being recorded in place-names, perhaps by people who were then Christian.[83]

It was once held that places with elements denoting pagan worship in their names were coined during the first phase of Anglo-Saxon settlement, before the conversion to Christianity. This is now thought to be unlikely, as on archaeological grounds the names do not coincide with the earliest Anglo-Saxon settlements.[84] The occurrence of these names in Staffordshire is therefore interesting, as it may show the survival of pockets of paganism into the later seventh and early eighth centuries.

Place-names in hām, ingahām and inga

Place-name scholars used to believe that the earliest names were those in ingas, followed by those in ingahām with a personal name prefix; names suggesting a site used for pagan worship; and names which included words or personal names which were themselves of early Germanic type. However, none of these ideas stood up to closer scrutiny, particularly when the distribution of these place-names was compared with early Anglo-Saxon archaeology and found not to correspond. Consequently, since about 1960 new ideas have been formulated concerning the chronology of English place-names.[85]

The earliest stage of place-name formation is believed to have included the Old English habitative term hām, translated as 'a village, a village community, an estate, a manor, a homestead'.[86] In a study of the Midlands and East Anglia, Cox showed a high degree of coincidence between place-names in hām and many Romano-British settlements and roads. This suggested the early use of the word in naming places in the pagan Anglo-Saxon period.[87] Similar conclusions were reached by Dodgson in a study of three south-eastern counties, where he believed Anglo-Saxons to have been taking over land around areas developed during the Romano-British period.[88] Further reasons for accepting the early date of place-names in hām include its use in conjunction with monothematic personal names (which are older than dithematic ones), and the fact that it is never used with Old French personal names unlike later terms such as tūn.[89] Place-names in hām also formed the largest section of habitative elements in Cox's study of names appearing in documents before 731.[90] Generally, the term was used from the migration period up to the seventh century.[91]

Two place-names in _hām_ fall within the study area: Measham in Derbyshire and Trentham in the north of Staffordshire. Measham, '_hām_ on the river Mease',[92] appears to conform to the patterns described by Cox. In and around Leicestershire, names in _hām_ tend to lie no more than three miles from major Roman roads.[93] Cox points out that Measham is situated two miles from Stretton en le Field.[94] The name Stretton is derived from OE _strǣt_ _tūn_ meaning '_tūn_ on a Roman road',[95] which might refer to a road between Mancetter and Little Chester.

Cox mentions the existence of one possible _hām_ name in Staffordshire. Trentham lies three miles from a major Roman road but he concludes that its position near the river Trent suggests that it is in fact a name in _hamm_.[96] This highlights one of the major problems encountered when dealing with these names. OE _hamm_ is a topographical term with numerous translations including 'river meadow' and 'land in a river bend';[97] both _hām_ and _hamm_ in place-names are often reduced to the terminal element _ham_. This is a particular problem when _hām_ is used at a site which is also topographically suited to a _hamm_ name. Early spellings are not always very helpful, and the earliest version of Trentham is _Trenham_ in Domesday Book.[98] However, in a recent study of Staffordshire place-names, Margaret Gelling accepted Trentham as a name in _hām_.[99] The fact that this may have been a minster parish, and thus an important early site, shows that the conclusion reached through the study of the place-name is not unreasonable. Archaeological excavation at Catholme has revealed evidence of possibly late fifth or sixth century Saxon occupation in Staffordshire.[100] The theories of place-name scholars therefore fare quite well when compared with more reliable sources which show early Saxon settlement in this area.

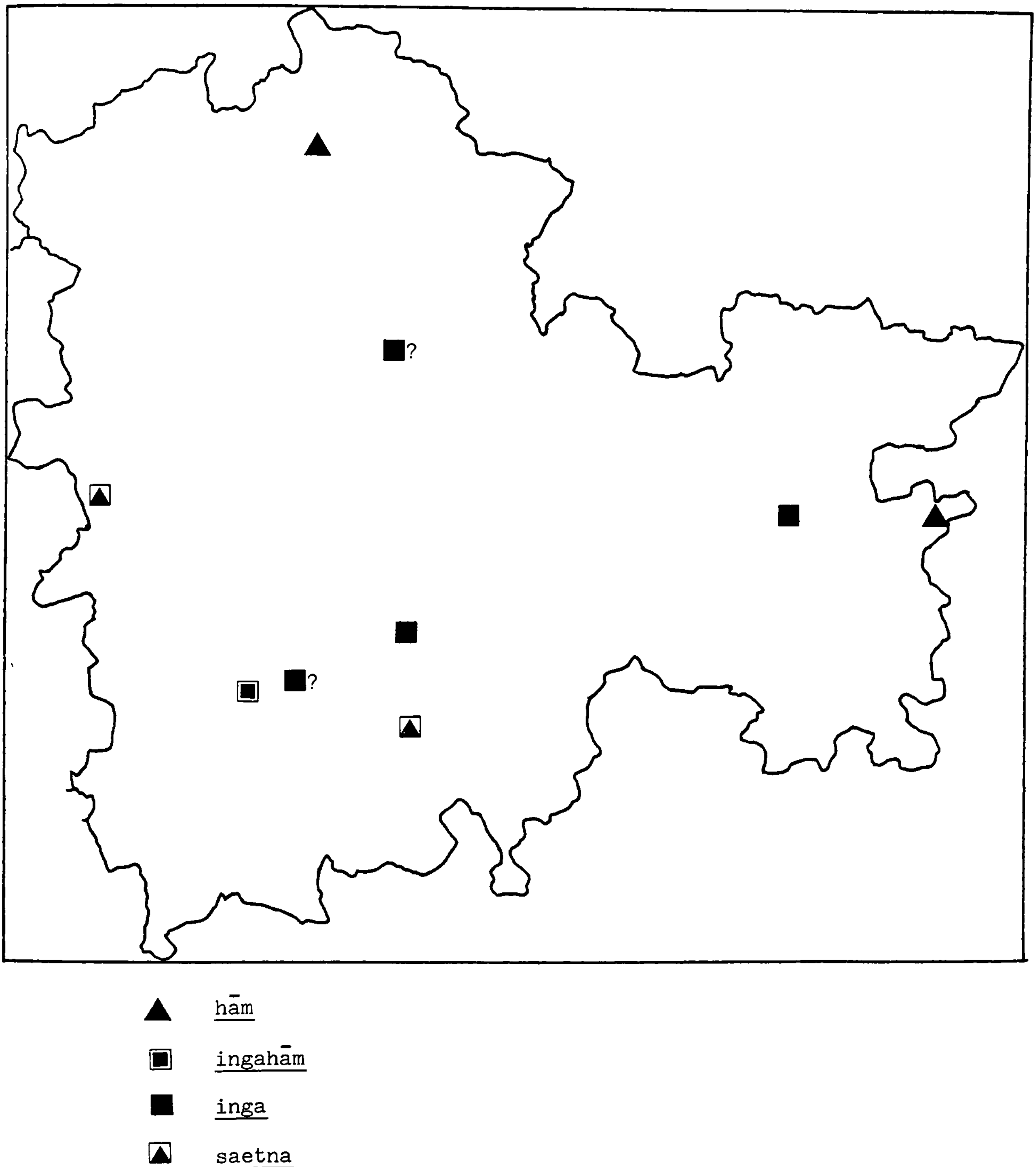
It has been suggested that a second stage in place-name formation is represented by names in ingahām. Cox believed that it may show the beginnings of expansion from the first settlement sites.[101] This place-name element was once thought to follow the ingas type of name in order of chronology. However, the inclusion of the word hām and the fact that places with names in ingahām lie in similar positions compared with Roman roads as places with names in hām, suggests that names in ingahām were later than those in hām, but earlier than ingas names.[102] However, the evidence for names in ingahām being later than those in hām does not seem to be conclusive.

There is just one place-name in ingahām in this area - Pattingham in south-west Staffordshire. This name means 'the hām of Peatta's people'.[103] It represents a parish whose church was a minster in the middle Saxon period or, possibly, a chapel which broke free early on.

Place-names in ingas and inga appear to belong to a third stage in the Anglo-Saxon colonisation, probably dating to the sixth century and beyond.[104] The element inga represents ingas in its compounded genitive plural case.[105] In a study of these names in south-east England, Dodgson showed that although their distribution coincided in general with pagan cemeteries, there were significant differences in specific detail.[106] The ingas and inga names with a personal name prefix appeared to represent a moving away from the initial areas of immigration and the setting up of new colonies, possibly before the conversion to Christianity.[107]

In his study of pre-730 sources, Cox showed that of the nine (plus two other possible) place-names formed from personal names with ingas, six were used for land units belonging to a group of people and were termed regio or provincia.[108] The personal name may refer to the true or imagined founder of the settlement. These names may therefore be the names of groups of

Figure 8: Place-names in <u>hām</u>, <u>ingahām</u>, <u>inga</u> and <u>saetna</u>



people used for reference to the areas they inhabited.[109] As in south-eastern England, names in _ingas_ and _inga_ in the Midlands generally lie away from the major Roman road system, reflecting a movement away from initial settlement areas.[110]

Staffordshire contains two certain and two possible names in _inga_. The two certain examples are Essington and Edingale.[111] Their earliest surviving forms containing _inga_ are _Esingetun_ and _Edeling(e)hale_ respectively.[112] Essington, translated as 'the _tūn_ of Esne's people',[113] is believed by Cox to show Mercian movement from the Trent. Edingale, 'the _halh_ of the people of Eden of Ēadwine'[114] is situated on high land around Cannock. Essington is situated in Bushbury, a parish which may once have been part of Tettenhall's _parochia_. These names may thus reflect the movement away from important early centres, established through documentary sources.

Tillington in the parish of Stafford is spelt in the 1236 Book of Fees as _Titlingeston_, which could mean 'the _tūn_ of Titel's people'.[115] A late tenth century document records the spelling of Ettingshall in Wolverhampton as _Ettingeshale_.[116] This has caused some problems in translation. Ekwall states that the first element may be an Old English personal name _Etting_, which is not independently recorded, or a derivative of OE _ettan_, 'grazing'.[117] Other scholars have described the first element as 'obscure'.[118] The early spellings of these two place-names may show that they, too, contain _inga_. Both places are situated away from major early settlements and all four _inga_ names tend to lie away from major Roman roads (see Figures 8 and 14).

Place-names suggesting social organisation

A number of place-names in the area may be suggestive of some form of early social organisation (two are marked on Figure 8). The word OE saetna appears to mean 'dwellers',[119] which suggests a group of people who are distinct from those giving the name. Two place-names contain this element: Bilston[120] near Wolverhampton and Lilleshall[121] in Shropshire. The element OE waru is found in the three adjacent Staffordshire parishes containing the word Ridware in their names. waru can also be translated as 'dwellers'.[122]

A similar type of sense may be found in the place-name Repton. The accepted meaning of this name is 'the hill of the Hrype or Hreope people', from the OE folk-name Hrype or Hreope with OE dūn. It has been argued that an earlier or alternative form of Repton may have been Hrepingas, recorded in charters of the seventh century. This may have been derived from the above folk-name plus the suffix ingas.[123]

These names show us a glimpse of the nature and hierarchical arrangement of early Anglo-Saxon society. As with the names in inga, they appear to refer to distinct and recognisable groups of people, which suggests social organisation in extended families. They also show recognition of these units by other peoples living nearby.

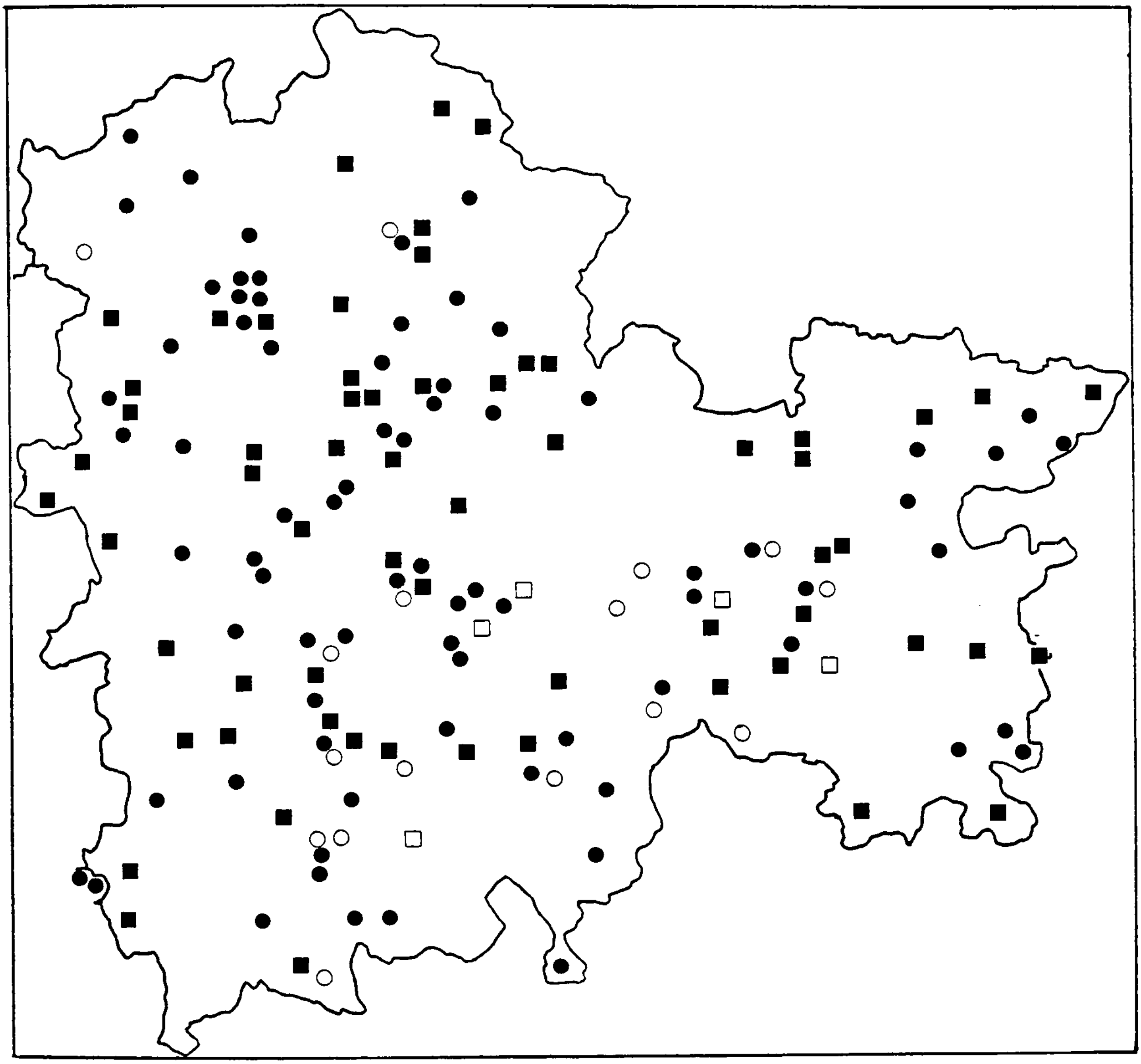
Topographical place-names

Topographical place-names are an important group because they tend to occur most frequently in regions where archaeology has demonstrated an early Anglo-Saxon presence.[124] Cox showed topographical place-names to represent 53 per cent of all names appearing in records before AD 731, which shows them to be an important early category.[125] As already discussed, British settlement names were usually of this type; and from regional studies so far produced, groups of topographical names may be indicative of either very early or very late Anglo-Saxon settlement. However, they should always be thought of as likely to be amongst the earliest names in any area.[126]

A purely topographical name is one which describes the landscape without showing any human involvement, such as Grendon, 'green hill'.[127] However, other types of topographical names have been included on Figure 9, such as those with a topographical second element. Figure 9 shows four symbols differentiating between purely and partially topographical names and the date of their first recording. Most of the topographical names were recorded in Domesday Book or earlier, but a few, such as the parish name Burntwood, were not recorded until after 1086. As Margaret Gelling believes that this type of name may show early or late settlement, the date of recording may be significant here. The first surviving record of a settlement provides a terminus ante quem for its establishment.

It is interesting to note the very high numbers of topographical place-names occurring in this area of the Midlands. Approximately 40 per cent of the parish names covered by the map are topographical. As these settlements form an importa nt category, they may have been of early rather than late creation, possibly confirming the early use of topographical place-names.

Figure 9: All topographical place-names



● Purely topographical recorded before 1087

○ " " " after 1086

■ Topographical terminal element recorded before 1087

□ " " " " after 1086

A number of the elements of potentially early importance discussed by Cox are present in significant proportions in the study area. OE ford, which retains its meaning in Modern English, is the second most frequently used topographical term in English place-names.[128] It is also one of the words discussed by Cox.[129] Margaret Gelling says that it is common, but not exceptionally so, in Staffordshire.[130] However, of all the topographical final elements under study, ford is the most common with fifteen examples, nine of which are parish names. Two of the seven royal free chapels in the area were situated in parishes with names in ford. This word forms the second part of the name Stafford.[131] Quatford seems to contain a personal name 'Cwatt' combined with ford. However, there is a slight possibility that the first element may rather refer to a small hill near the ford.[132] Three, possibly four, of the other names in ford are combined with another topographical element. For example, Elford east of Lichfield, may be derived from OE ellern ford, 'elder ford', although it may mean 'Ella's ford'.[133] Three names with significant first elements containing ford have already been examined: Comberford, Weeford and Seighford.

As common in this area as names in ford are names in OE dūn. This refers to a type of hill,[134] and is another name of potentially early significance.[135] About half of the names in dūn being studied refer to parishes. Eight of the fifteen names in dūn are purely topographical, with the first element describing a characteristic of the hill. For example, Saredon in Shareshill could come from OE sēar dūn, 'dry or barren hill'.[136] Repton, the minster centre, is a name in dūn, whilst four have personal names as their first element.

Place-names in OE feld are quite common in this area. In its modern sense 'field' the name would not be considered strictly topographical, as it suggests cultivated land and therefore man's interference. However, both Cox and Gelling include it amongst their topographical names. Margaret Gelling translates feld as 'unencumbered ground which offered free passage' in the sense of flat ground, as opposed to hills, or land without trees or buildings.[137] It is possible that it acquired its sense of cultivated or enclosed land with the onset of open field agriculture.[138] Another of Cox's potentially early elements,[139] the word names four parishes in this area, including Lichfield. The term may have been used for areas of common pasture which were included in settlement names when the feld was taken into new arable settlements.[140]

A further potentially early element, but not a very common one in the study area, is OE burna,[141] found in Harborne, Wombourne and Bourne Vale in Aldridge (a minor place-name not recorded on Figure 9). It is a word for a stream, but the most frequently used stream name in Staffordshire is OE brōc.OE burna is far more common in southern England and Northumbria.[142]

Settlements which were of major importance in the middle Saxon period often have place-names which have been shown by other studies to be of potentially early formation. Therefore, in this case, when the place-name theory is tested against more reliable sources, it is generally shown to conform. Nevertheless, it must be remembered that Cox's elements are only of possibly early significance, and not all place-names containing them will have been coined early on.

Place-names in OE hyll, 'hill', are numerous in this area. This word does not appear in names documented before AD 731, although it is q uite common after this date, suggesting fairly late usage.[143] The element is important in Staffordshire names, being the third most common terminal word recorded. As previously seen, dūn is another word for 'hill'. Both words are used because they refer to different types of hill. dūn describes a hill with a certain amount of even land on top, suitable for settlement. hyll, however, tends to be used for hills with more pronounced or pointed summits.[144] This would explain the earlier settlement of dūn sites and their use as centres of administration, in comparison with the less hospitable hyll positions.

It is appropriate to discuss the place-name Stone in this section, although here too the precise meaning is uncertain. The name Stone now refers to a settlement and parish in the north of the study area. The church at Stone was an old minster which once served an extensive parochia. The earliest record of the place-name is in the Pipe Rolls of 1187 where it is written as Stanes.[153] The root of this name appears to be OE stān or stānas meaning 'the stone or stones'. Although in this instance the nature of the stones referred to remains obscure, an interesting pattern emerges when names in stān are looked at across the country. It has been suggested that OE stān in place-names denoted the existence of a stone building, possibly Roman, and indicated that when the name was coined stone buildings were an unusual feature in the landscape.[154] Further suggestions for the possible usage of the element include natural rock outcrops, megaliths and paved Roman roads.[155]

In a study of over a dozen Kentish place-names containing the element stān, S E Rigold adduced that a significant proportion of these settlements and parishes contained important Roman work, often incorporated into the present church building.[156] For example, at Stone-by-Faversham excavations revealed a Romano-British masonry mausoleum of the fourth century which had been partially used in a later Saxon church.[157] Continuity of use may be demonstrated here, as pottery sherds of possible fifth or sixth century date were found outside the Roman structure.[158] At other places the element is compounded with a personal name or other word. For example, Folkestone means 'Folca's stone',[159] and the settlement contains an important Roman complex.[160]

However, it is necessary to inject a note of caution. A number of places with names in stān do contain Roman masonry remains, but this does not mean that all such place-names refer to them. Nevertheless, it may be possible to suggest that this is one explanation for the name Stone in Staffordshire. It would be backed up if the name Wulfcestre, apparently applied to Berry Hill two miles north-west of Stone, were in fact to contain OE ceaster meaning a Roman 'walled town'.

Certain names considered topographical by Margaret Gelling have not been included, as they are not topographical in the sense of untouched land. For example, Cooksland in Seighford means 'Cucu's newly cultivated land'.[161] The element land, therefore, does not refer to the natural landscape. Similarly, the word OE aecer, as in Handsacre, means 'a plot of cultivated land' and so is not strictly topographical.[162]

Topographical names are often used for the primary settlement in a large estate,[163] and this certainly seems to be the case in the study area. Penkridge, Gnosall, Stafford, Tettenhall, Repton, Eccleshall and Lichfield are all major administrative centres with a topographical name.

Figure 9 shows that topographical names are generally absent in peripheral areas of the region under study. These include the Market Drayton area; south of Shifnal; Sedgley; Burton and also the Polesworth area. Concentrations of purely topographical names are evident around Eccleshall, Penkridge and areas to its west, and there are also quite a few around Stone and around Tettenhall and Wolverhampton. If these topographical names show fairly early settlement, this may reflect the primary importance of these latter areas, with the peripheral ones being used later. However, it must be remembered that place-names can be changed and furthermore, not all of the earliest place-names were topographical ones.

There is very little coincidence between names in <u>lēah</u> (Figure 12) and those on Figure 9 . <u>lēah</u> is a topographical term (discussed below), but in general is not of particularly early usage. It is common in the south of the area around Upper Arley and Alveley where topographical terms are few, possibly indicating an area of woodland utilised fairly late in the Saxon period.

The topographical names in this area also coincide with the distribution of Latin loan word names. As the latter type is of early formation, the topographical names may also show early settlement.

<u>Place-names in ēg and halh</u>

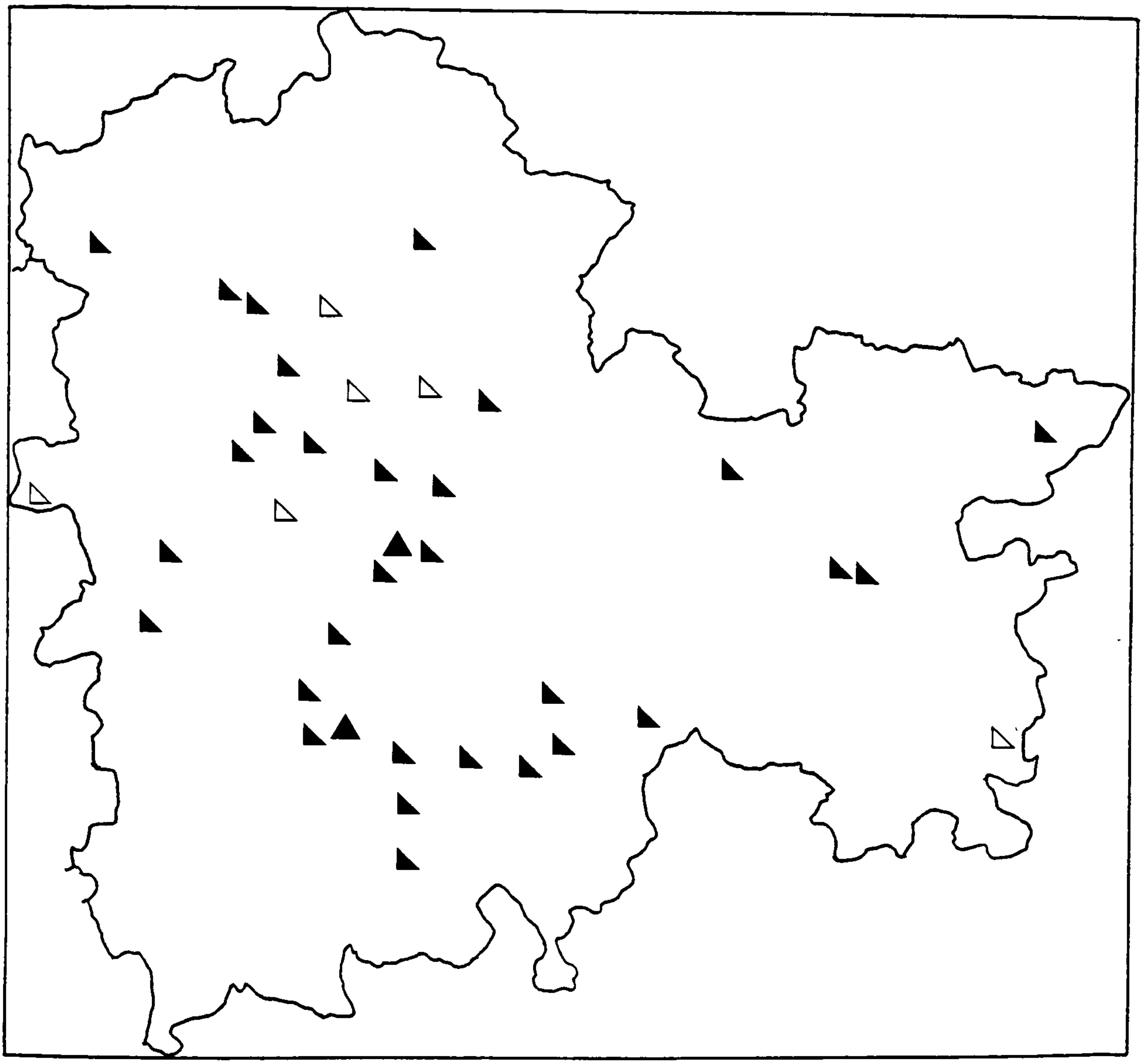
The Old English words <u>ēg</u> and <u>halh</u> are topographical, but they appear significant enough in this area to be worth studying separately.

Place-names in *ēg* were shown to be of particular early importance by Cox.[164] This element proved to be the most common, appearing in nine per cent of those names recorded before AD 731. As with any study involving early documents, there may be a bias caused by the hit and miss nature of the survival of these records. Furthermore, Cox pointed out that Celtic monks preferred 'island' sites of the sort referred to by *ēg*, and that half of these names come from ecclesiastical sources, possibly injecting a further bias.[165] Nevertheless, the number recorded does seem significant. The type of land referred to by *ēg* - a dry site in a wet area - would be the most obvious and suitable place for early colonisation. Margaret Gelling goes as far as to suggest that these places may be prime sites for archaeologists to investigate for continuity of settlement through the migration period.[166]

The area under discussion contains five place-names in *ēg* still in use and one obsolete example. The definition of this word can vary slightly, but it is generally thought to refer to an island or area of slightly higher ground in marshy or wet surroundings. In counties south of Derbyshire it is mainly used of low lying settlements.[167] Generally the word is not in common use in the West Midlands, although Shropshire has seven examples, one of which will be discussed here. This makes their distribution within the study area more significant, with a definite cluster to the north (Figure 10).

Figure 10 reveals a concentration of three names in *ēg* in the northern section of the study area, with the other three examples being distributed more widely apart. Of the six *ēg* names plotted, four are modern parish names and Domesday manors: Chebsey and Church Eaton in Staffordshire; Kinnersley in Shropshire; and Sheepy Magna in Leicestershire. Doxey in the Staffordshire parish of Seighford was also a Domesday manor. A now obsolete district name, Brodeye, also existed in Stafford.[168] This perhaps reflects the early nature and

Figure 10: Topographical place-names in ēg, halh and cumb



◣ halh

▲ cumb

◺ ēg

importance of these names; and the sample here ties in with the nationwide pattern, which shows very few of these names referring to minor settlements or fields.[169]

The names Chebsey and Doxey include as their first elements monothematic masculine personal names ('Cebbi's island' and 'Docc's island' respectively).[170] This is consistent with their being of earlier rather than later Anglo-Saxon formation. Church Eaton (ēg tūn)[171] was once part of the minster parish of Gnosall. The element tūn is generally not of particularly early formation, which suggests that this may be a later name in ēg than the previous two examples. Kinnersley in Shropshire is one of a small number of these names with a prefix which is a dithematic personal name.[172] Like Church Eaton, this may be of slightly later formation. Sheepy in Leicestershire is from OE sceap ēg meaning 'sheep island'.[173] A comparison of Figure 10 with the Relief and Drainage maps shows the general coincidence of ēg names with low lying and possibly wet land, containing small pockets of higher ground. The place-names thus relate to the precise nature of the local topography.

The word halh is a further topographical element which appears to be of great significance in Staffordshire. Over eight per cent of all the parish names in the area under study contain halh, most frequently as a terminal element. Two of the parishes containing royal free chapels, Tettenhall and Gnosall, have names in halh. Eccleshall is also a halh name, as are the parishes containing possible minsters at Shifnal and Hales. These names thus seem to be of importance within the area, both numerically and for the type of place to which they refer.

It is difficult to define halh exactly as it has numerous meanings which vary from region to region. Generally, it is the most commonly used term for a valley in Staffordshire and is often described as a 'nook or corner' of land.[174] The term 'valley' applies to numerous names in the study area.[175] A further meaning of halh, 'dry ground in marsh', may be evident in the Shropshire name Hales.[176] The word can also have an administrative meaning. Margaret Gelling suggests 'piece of land projecting from, or detached from, the main area of its administrative unit'. However, she believes there to be none of these in Staffordshire.[177]

A combination of halh with inga occurs eight times throughout England. This may mean that halh was often used in the seventh to eighth centuries.[178] The study area displays one, possibly two, such names at Edingale and Ettingshall.

The large number of names in halh in Staffordshire is accompanied by a general lack of names displaying other valley terms such as OE cumb and denu (see Figure 10). This is likely to be due to the character of the natural landscape, rather than to any differences in regional dialect.[179] OE cumb tended to be used for 'bowl' shaped valleys which were broader and shorter valleys than those called denu. OE denu described 'long and sinuous' valleys.[180] Figures 2 and 3 show that generally valleys in the study area are not of the winding denu sort, whilst the short tributaries of major rivers may produce many small valleys of the halh type. The incidence of names in ēg and halh thus illustrates the precise way in which the Anglo-Saxons described their surroundings.

One or two of the place-names in <u>halh</u> cannot be translated in full. The first element of Gnosall is obscure. Ekwall suggested that it was a nick-name from OE <u>gnēaþ</u> meaning 'niggardly'.[181] This idea has recently been rejected, although some form of personal name seems a likely solution.[182]

Many of the names in <u>halh</u> in Staffordshire have a personal name as their first element. Tettenhall, for example, has been translated as 'Teotta's nook'.[183] These personal names are rarely dithematic. Therefore, names in <u>halh</u> may be of fairly early formation, and refer to a site suitable for habitation.[184]

A comparison of Figure 10 with Figures 11 and 12 shows that names in <u>ēg</u> do not generally coincide with names in <u>tūn</u> and lēah.[185] This may reflect the early nature of settlement represented by <u>ēg</u>, compared with the secondary use of names in <u>tūn</u> and <u>lēah</u>, which possibly show a movement away from areas of initial colonisation. There is also little coincidence between names in <u>halh</u> and <u>lēah</u>. For example, a line of <u>lēah</u> names runs from the parish of Checkley down to Rugeley, where names in <u>halh</u> are absent. This may just reflect the nature of the topography, or it may show minor places sited away from major administrative centres.

<u>Place-names in tūn and lēah</u>

One of the most common place-name elements in England is OE <u>tūn</u>. Comparatively few examples of this word appeared in Cox's survey, leading him to conclude that they were generally coined after 730.[186] The word <u>tūn</u> was defined by A H Smith as 'an enclosure, a farmstead, an estate, a village',[187] and would have referred not only to the single settlement but also to its surrounding land unit.

Place-names in <u>tūn</u> occur frequently throughout the study area, forming about 20 per cent of the parish names mapped. This may be significant as it possibly reflects the process of secondary settlements and their estates (referred to as *tūn*) forming the basis of later parishes. Place-names in *tūn* often illustrate a former dependence upon another settlement. For example, Norton-in-Hales means 'north *tūn*' and is situated to the north of Market Drayton, to which its church was once subordinate.

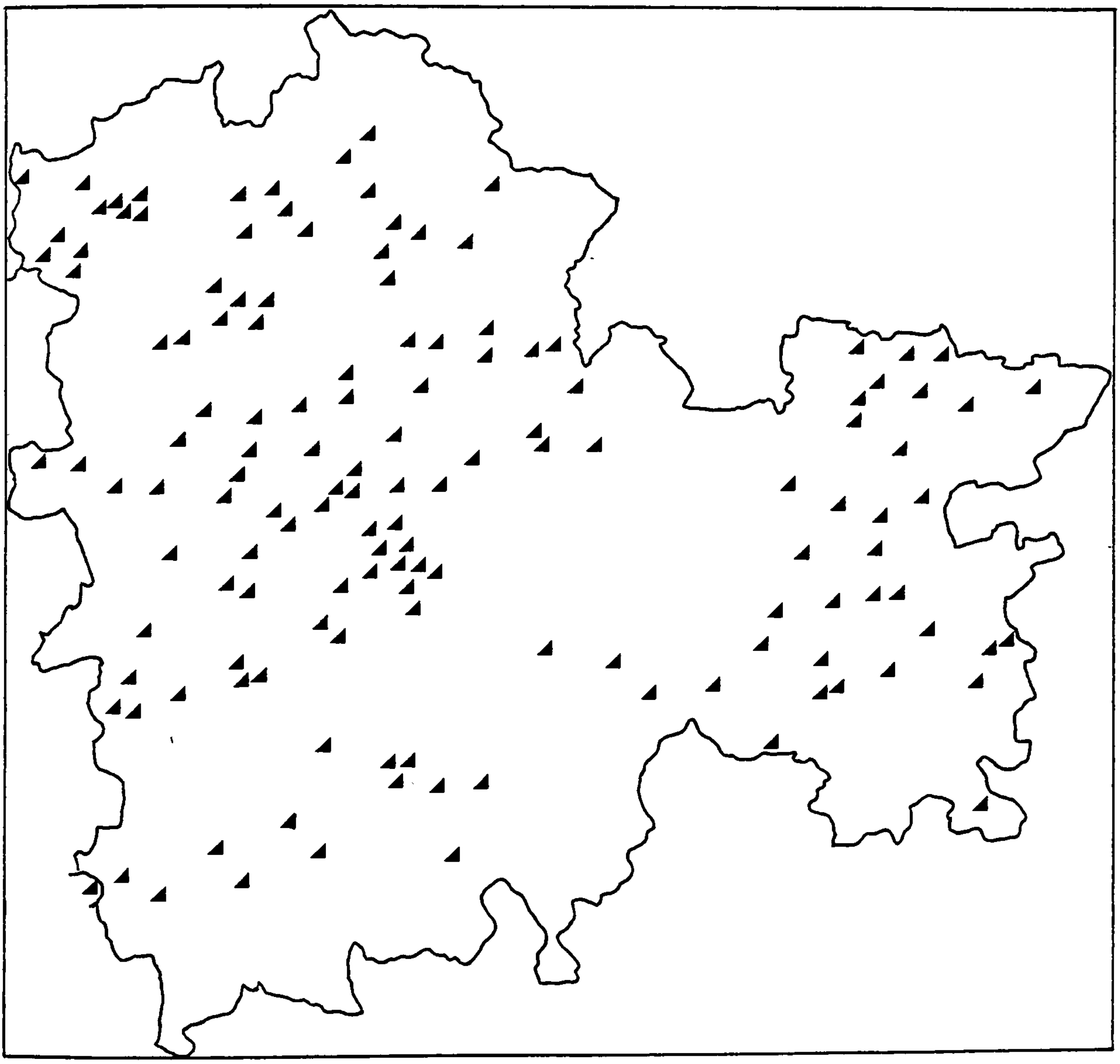
Nearly 40 per cent of *tūn* names in this area have OE personal name prefixes. For example, the parish name Dunston (near Penkridge) means 'Dunn's *tūn*'.[188] There are also a number of place-names in *ingtūn* with a personal name prefix, where *ing* is a connective particle. Most *ingtūn* names of this type mean 'estate connected with X'[189] - such as Bobbington, 'estate connected with Bubba'.

Topographical prefixes are also commonly used with *tūn*. For example, Moreton in Gnosall is OE *mōr tūn*, '*tūn* by a fen'.[190] In Warwickshire, personal name prefixes with *tūn* are outnumbered by topographical ones,[191] although the former type exhibits the greater number across the study area.

A few names in *tūn* deserve closer scrutiny, although some of significance have been discussed in detail elsewhere, such as Walton and Bilston. The name Tamworth means 'enclosed settlement by the river Tame'.[192] However, an earlier place-name for this settlement or area may have been *Tomtun*.[193] It is possible that *Tomtun* is a *tūn* name which referred to an estate, whilst Tamworth belonged to the settlement within that estate.

Wolverhampton shows early spellings in *Heantune*, suggesting OE *Hēantune* meaning 'high *tūn*'.[194] This indicates a name of secondary nature, compared with the names of the other royal free chapel parishes, which are largely topographical. Wolverhampton may therefore once have been dependent upon a nearby settlement, probably Tettenhall to which it displays other links. The personal name

Figure 11: Place-names in tūn



Wulfrun was later prefixed to Hēantune.

Several place-names in tūn in the study area represent social developments occurring much later than the migration period. For example, Knighton in Adbaston,[197] Chorlton near Eccleshall[198] and Drointon.[199] Such names must refer to manorial relationships which can only have developed at a relatively late date. They may show the continuing expansion of settlement in the area, or alternatively, they may be names replacing earlier types.

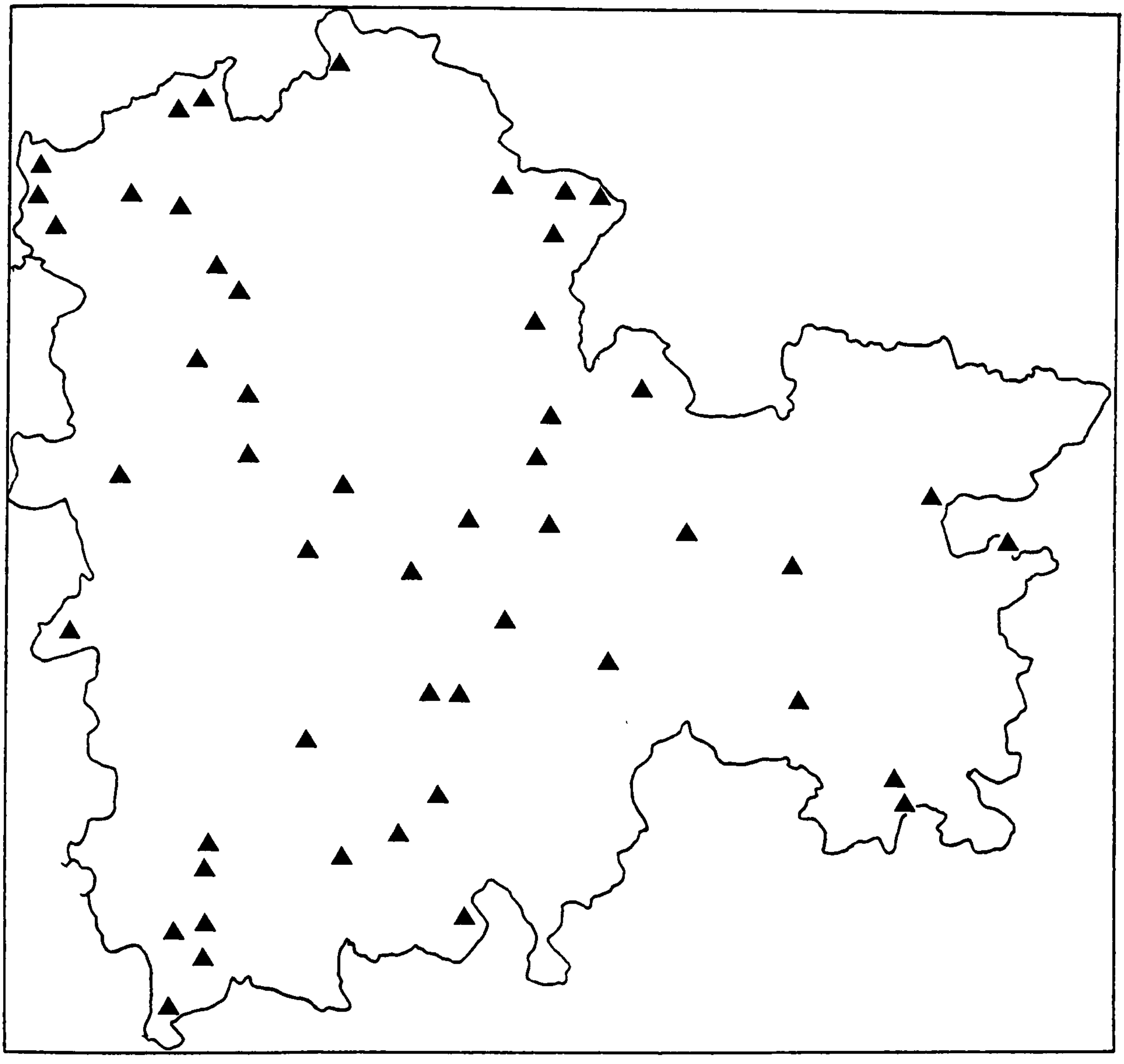
The word OE lēah is the most common topographical term in English place-names.[200] Relatively few such names occur before 731, which suggests more widespread use of the term after this date.[201] lēah is fairly common in this area, with the word forming over 12 per cent of the parish names. It is a term often used to describe a settlement in a wooded area, compared with tūn which implies open country.[202] Margaret Gelling believes lēah to mean 'a clearing' when found in a group of such names, and 'wood' or 'meadow' when it is on its own.[203] For example, a comparison of Figures 11 and 12 shows a number of tūn names in the Mucklestone area around the name Ashley. Ashley may therefore be translated as 'ash wood'.

lēah is usually found with a prefix, although occasionally it is in its simple form, such as in the parish of Leigh in the north-east of the study area. The prefix is sometimes a tree name, which begs the question of whether names such as Oakley, 'oak lēah', mean 'oak wood' or 'clearing in which there is an oak tree'.[204]

In some cases lēah refers to a settlement name in a wooded estate. This can be seen in Warwickshire in the three adjacent parishes of Baddesley Ensor, Baxterley and Bentley, which were all Domesday manors. It has been pointed out, moreover, that this type of settlement may have been thriving before the Anglo-Saxon settlement of Britain began. Margaret Gelling believes that clusters of <u>lēah</u> names such as the Warwickshire examples above have a habitative meaning. She argued that English speakers may have been using the term to describe settlements in woodland clearings which were already established when they arrived.[205]

In order fully to understand the significance of <u>tūn</u> and <u>lēah</u> place-names in an area, it is necessary to make a comparison of their distributions. In a study of the Birmingham district, including adjacent parts of Staffordshire, Margaret Gelling noted how frequently these terms occurred in place-names. She pointed out that, naturally enough considering their meanings, they tended not to coincide with each other.[207] Thus, natural topography is the key factor in determining distribution of these names. A comparison of Figures 11 and 12 shows names in <u>lēah</u> to be concentrated in the area around Upper Arley. To the north of this point, in the more open and easily settled areas, names in <u>tūn</u> are far more evident. There is a concentration of names in <u>tūn</u> to the east of the map, where only a few in <u>lēah</u> are situated. Place-names in <u>lēah</u> also run across the central east-west band which shows as a blank on Figure 11. There are also no names in <u>tūn</u> in the parishes of Checkley and Leigh, but there are some to the west of this point where names in <u>lēah</u> are absent. A particularly heavy concentration of names in <u>tūn</u> is noted in Penkridge parish, from which <u>lēah</u> names are virtually absent. Place-names in <u>tūn</u> and <u>lēah</u> probably represent the colonisation of outlying areas after the initial settlement period, showing a steady expansion.

Figure 12: Place-names in <u>lēah</u>



Other habitative place-names

A habitative place-name is one which includes a word for a settlement.[208] As previously mentioned, most British place-names tended to be topographical, with the habitative type of name becoming more common in the later migration period. The names included on Figure 13 are those which tend to denote minor settlements as opposed to the habitative terms hām and tūn discussed earlier. Even so, they are an important category in this study, forming over ten per cent of the parish names.

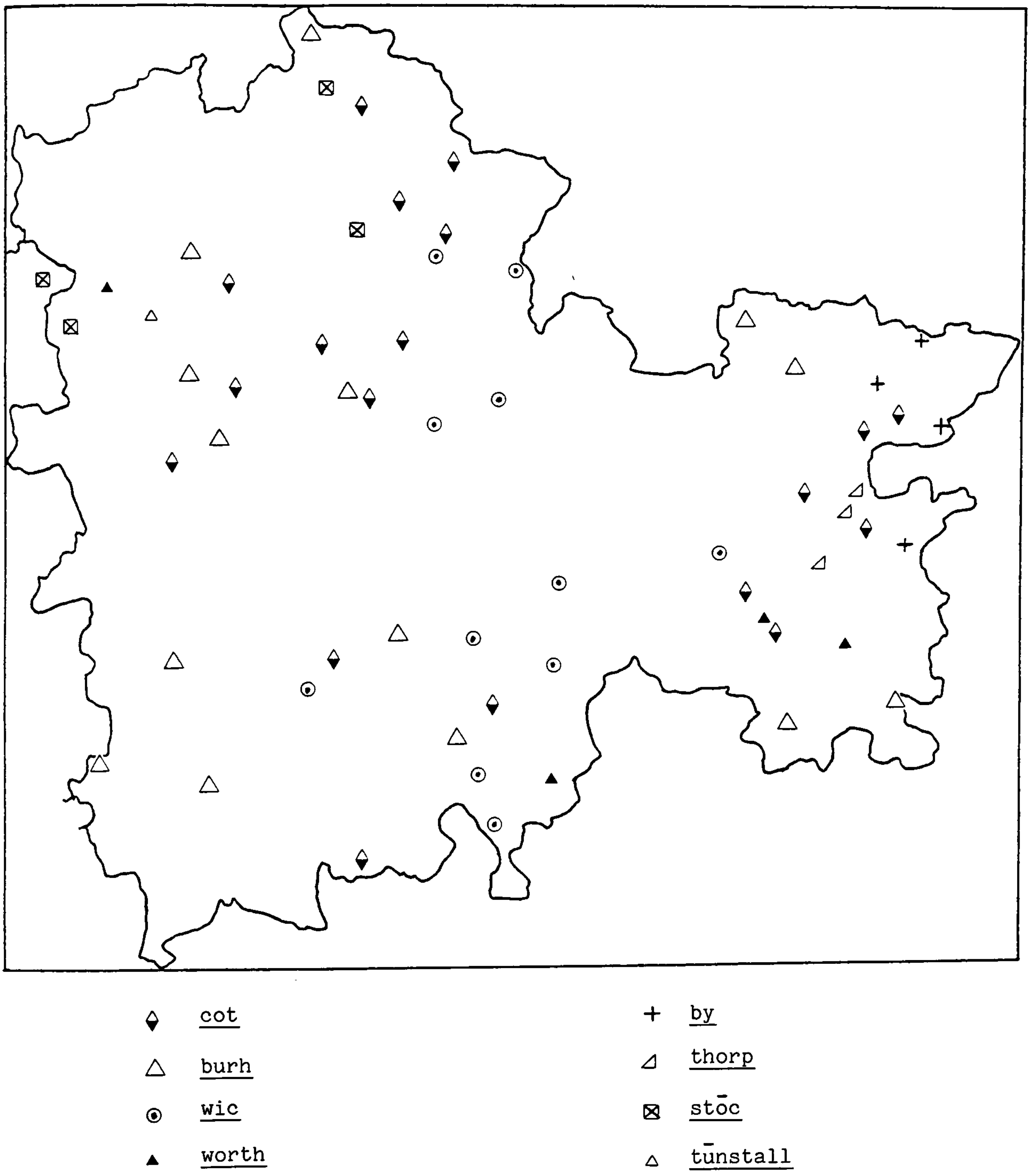
The most frequently occurring of these terms is OE cot. This is not found in any documents before 731, although as a minor name it may not have needed to be recorded in any charter.[209] cot means 'a cottage,a hut, a shelter, a den',[210] and it does seem to refer to minor settlements in this area. Out of the nineteen place-names containing the term, only one is a parish name. Chilcote, a former chapelry of Repton, is derived from OE cilda cot.[211] Nevertheless, all nineteen places were Domesday manors and so of some significance. The term is often used alone,[212] but also frequently has a personal name prefix.[213]

OE _wic_, ultimately derived from the Latin _vicus_, can have various meanings including 'dwelling, dwelling place, village, hamlet, town' and most commonly 'dairy farm'.[214] In this area there are eleven place-names with _wic_ as a terminal element. However, these settlements seem to have developed more than those with names in _cot_. Cox described _wic_ as of potentially early use, but generally thought it of 'minor importance'.[215] Out of the eleven names in _wic_ here, all but one are parish names. None of the names refers to parishes with minster churches. Instead, they are names of once dependent chapelries, such as Baswich, part of the early minster parish of Penkridge. If, as in many cases, names in _wic_ refer to productive dairy farms, then they may be of greater economic importance than places with names in _cot_, which explains their greater status. The first element of _wic_ names is often topographical, such as Hammerwich near Lichfield which means '_wic_ by a _hamor_ or hill'.[216] In the cases of Fisherwick and Smethwick, meaning 'fishermen's _wic_' and 'the smith's _wic_' respectively,[217] an occupation is included in the name. The translation 'dairy farm' is unlikely here; possibly 'dwelling' or 'hamlet' is more suitable.

Place-names in OE _worth_ and _worthign_ seem to date from the eighth century and generally mean an 'enclosure'.[218] Four examples fall within the study area, all parishes. Cheswardine in Shropshire has the meaning 'cheese farm'.[219] This suggests a settlement of economic importance dependent upon another place, which in this case is Eccleshall to which Cheswardine was linked manorially. The first element of the name Handsworth in the south of Staffordshire appears to be the personal name _Hūn_.[220]

However, two parishes of greater significance contain the term _worth_ or

Figure 13: Habitative place-names



worthign within their name. Tamworth has been translated as 'enclosed settlement by the river Tame',[221] but it is a parish with a royal free chapel and the centre of a larger land unit. As already discussed, the original name for the estate may have been Tomtun. The name Tamworth may have developed with the establishment of the burh at that site in 914.[222] It may be the case that worthig took on a meaning similar to burh early on in the settlement of the midlands, and came to be used of important sites.[223] Polesworth, meaning 'Poll's worth',[224] is also the centre of a land unit and so could have a connotation similar to that of Tamworth's name.

Four place-names with the habitative element OE stōc are included on Figure 13 These are Stoke-on-Trent, Stoke-on-Tern, Hinstock (all parishes), and the Domesday manor of Stoke in Stone. These are all simplex names except Hinstock, which was in fact written as Stoche in Domesday Book.

The word stōc is commonly used in English place-names. Its original meaning is 'place', and it later developed into the meaning 'hamlet' or 'farm dependent on a larger settlement'. This certainly seems to be the case in Stoke-on-Trent and Stoke in Stone. The former may once have been part of a minster parish at Trentham, whilst the latter lay within the larger land unit of Stone. Hinstock, a Shropshire parish,is stōc with OE hiwan added after 1086. The name means 'stōc of the monks' and so also sounds like a settlement once dependent upon another.

A religious meaning can be attributed to stōc in the sense of 'monastery, cell',[226] as a result of a number of prefixes occurring throughout the country which imply a place of worship. However, these do not seem to be statistically significant, and the first interpretation appears more likely.[227]

The word OE stōw occurs in its simplex form in two Staffordshire place-names.

One of these (Stow) lies within the parish of Lichfield, and the other (Stowe) is itself a parish to the north-east of Stafford. When used as a place-name this word may be of special significance.

The literary meaning of stōw was, like stōc, 'a place', but the word seems to have had other more specific connotations. 'Assembly place' is suggested by numerous compounds such as cēapstōw, 'market place', and legerstōw, 'cemetery'.[228] Margaret Gelling believes that this meaning of 'venue for a specific activity, meeting place' was the earliest, from which was derived a meaning of 'Christian holy place'.[229] Across the country, stōw is not often used in minor settlement or field names, being much more common as the name of a parish or Domesday manor. This perhaps shows something exceptional about a place given this name. After a study of all such names Margaret Gelling concluded that a place in stōw 'had some rare characteristic and was performing a special function in the life of a wide area'.[230]

Both of the place-names in stōw in Staffordshire appear to conform to this pattern. Stow in Lichfield clearly displays the sense 'Christian holy place', as it is traditionally held to be the site where St Chad founded his first church at Lichfield.[231]

The parish name Stowe is not first recorded until 1242.[232] Margaret Gelling believes that this particular stōw has the meaning 'central place' because of its position as a large parish within which lie several Domesday vills.[233] She only goes as far as to say that the village of Stowe might have been a focal point for these vills. However, it may be possible to take the argument a step further than this. It has already been seen that Stowe was linked manorially, if not ecclesiastically, to a number of surrounding parishes. Colwich and Gratwich are both names in wic which suggests dependent settlements.

Weston, with a name in tūn, is situated to the west of Stowe, and so could have been dependent upon that place. Chartley is derived from OE ceart lēah, 'lēah in a rough common',[234] another place of seemingly minor importance. If these places all once formed one land unit, then Stowe may not only have provided a central point, but may also have contained the mother church of the area. Therefore, the religious connotation of stōw may be in evidence here as well.

One example of OE tūnstall falls within the study area. This forms the name Tunstall within the parish of Adbaston. The term means 'site of a farm, farmstead',[235] which illustrates the secondary nature of many of these habitative terms.

A concentration of place-names in by and thorp, evident in the eastern part of the study area, may show the limit of Scandinavian influence. These names are significant for the later pre-Conquest history of the area. However, it does seem unlikely that some of the settlements with Scandinavian terminal elements were only created after the late ninth century. For example, Bretby, meaning 'by of the Britons', lies in the parish of Repton. Both its name and its position suggest a foundation at an earlier date. Such places may thus have been re-named.[236]

Place-names with the element burh as either a first or a second element, or with a derivative of burh, have been included on Figure 13 . This term can have any of several meanings. burh refers to a 'defended place'. Sometimes this is a hill fort or a defended manor house, the latter often being referred to in names ending in bury.[237] Of the fourteen names in burh discussed here, eight end in bury.[238] All of these, except Oldbury in Mancetter, are parish names, Kingsbury and Norbury being probable minster parishes. The names must therefore refer to manors important enough to become parish centres. The meaning of Bushbury, 'the bishop's manor',[239] may suggest an ecclesiastical estate within the larger royal land unit of Tettenhall. Brough Hall in Gnosall has also been translated as 'the manor'.[240]

Other names, which do not have burh as a final element, have been mapped as they could be of particular importance. Old English byrhtūn, 'tūn of the fort', is evident in Burton-upon-Trent, Burton in Castle Church and two Broughtons in Eccleshall and Claverley. Related to this word is OE Burhweard which literally means 'fort guardian', but may be a name applied to a person in charge of byrhtūn sites. Burslem, a parish in the north of the area, could mean 'an estate in the district called Lyme belonging to a fort guardian' or 'estate in the district called Lyme belonging to an individual named Burgweard'.[241]

Margaret Gelling believes byrhtūn to be an appellative of special significance, possibly denoting a series of defence posts used until the late ninth century. The term is most common in the kingdoms of Mercia and south Northumbria, with about two or three examples per county.[242]

Staffordshire has four, possibly five, places so named. If they do have a significance for defence in the middle Saxon period, it is worth noting their proximity to major estate centres at Stafford, Quatford (both royal free chapels) and Eccleshall. Cox showed burh to be a potentially early place-name forming type, but not as early as names in ēg, hām and ceaster.[243] If this applied to the appellative byrhtūn also, it may be as a result of defensive posts being set up after the initial colonisation of a region.

Possibly related to this idea is the place-name Norbury, 'northern burh'.[244] Oakden suggested that it was so called as it was north of Stafford castle.[245]

However, the church at Norbury had two priests recorded in Domesday Book, and so may have been an important early centre in its own right. If Norbury is north of anything local, it is more likely to be north of Gnosall. Alternatively, it may be positioned towards the north of a much larger region.

Figure 13 shows that the habitative place-names fall into three distinct groups across the area. They avoid a central band running through Penkridge and Lichfield; and they are absent from the extreme north-west and south-west. There is a general lack of coincidence between these names and names in _lēah_. As the latter denotes forested areas, they are probably not likely to coincide with terms such as _wic_, which suggest land suitable for dairy farming.

Place-names in the south Staffordshire area

In Chapter 2 a hierarchy of early medieval settlement within the south Staffordshire area was established. In other words, it was determined which places were the centres of minster parishes and therefore of large land units, and which places had developed as secondary settlements originally dependent upon one of these important centres. It is now proposed to look at each of these orders of settlement within the hierarchy, to see if any general patterns emerge concerning the types of place-names used in each case. The extent to which the models developed by place-name scholars stand up in this area can also be determined. A map of some of the minster centres and types of names given to places which formed later parishes can be found at Figure 13a. An analysis of the frequency of occurrence of various categories of place-names throughout the settlement hierarchy is at Table 1 (based upon minster centres illustrated at Figure 13a).

In most instances, the names given to the parishes of royal free chapels and other minsters, which once referred to large land units, may be assumed to be amongst the earliest and most important settlement names. Within this group topographical place-names feature largely (64 per cent - see Table 1). These include purely topographical names such as Penkridge and Lichfield, and names with a topographical second element like Eccleshall, Repton, Stafford and Quatford. Habitative second elements in these place-names are also in evidence, although they are not as numerous as topographical ones. The element hām is included in Trentham, whilst Tamworth and Wolverhampton contain the word worth and tūn respectively.[246]

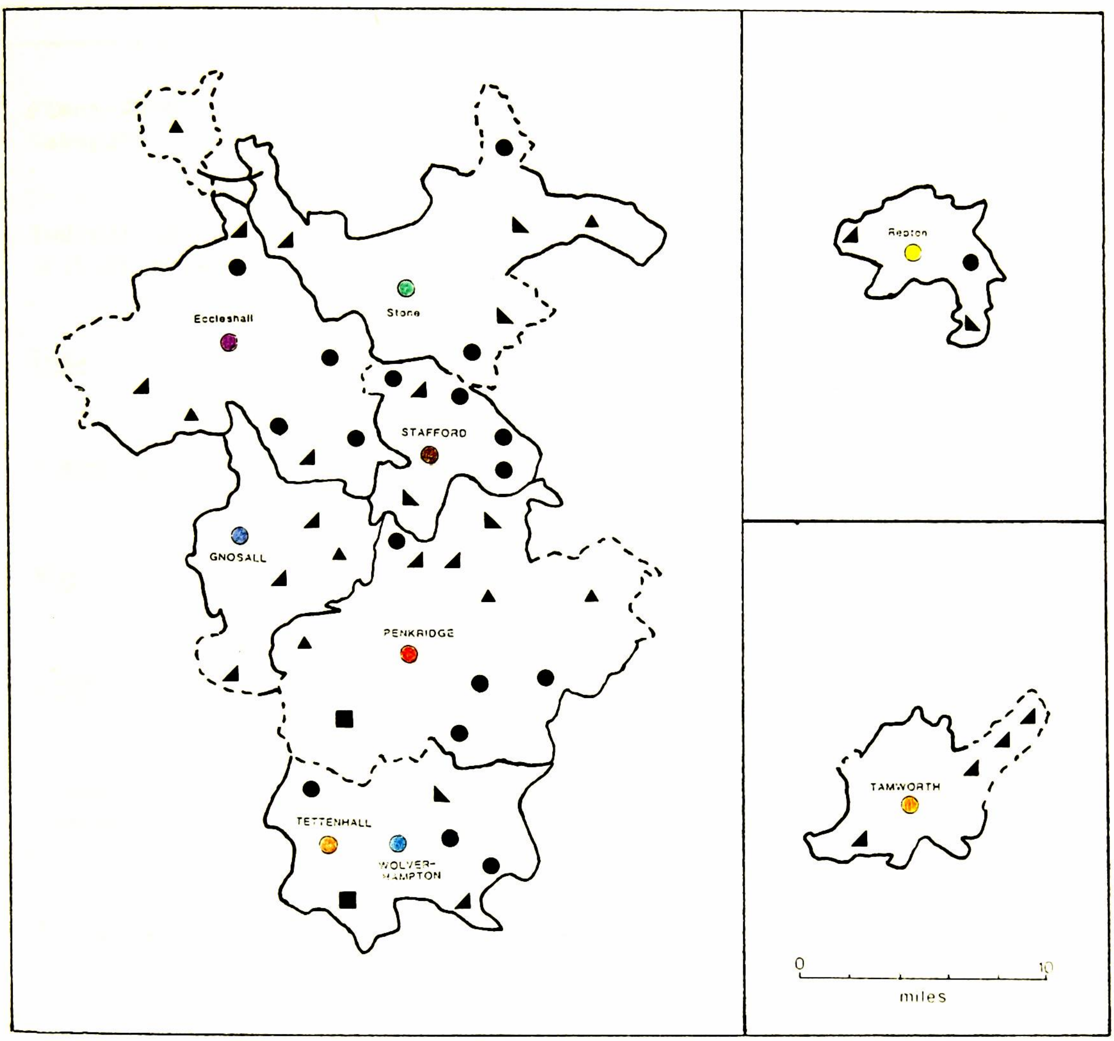
The study area contains a number of parishes which may once have had minster churches, or alternatively, have been those of chapels which broke free from a minster at a very early date, leaving no visible record of their former dependence. These parishes again have a number of topographical place-names, such as Wombourne, and also habitative terms such as burh in Norbury. The element ingahām is also included in Pattingham.[247]

A greater variation in the sort of place-names used can be seen in those referring to settlements whose churches were once dependent upon a mother church, but which broke free to form independent parishes. As with the previous category a substantial number of these names have topographical elements, and several are purely topographical (Table 1).

However, the most common type of name within this group in the south Staffordshire area is that with a habitative second element. The most frequently occurring word is tūn, combined with different types of first element such as personal names (as in Adbaston[248]), or topographical words (as in Haughton[249]). The second element lēah is also commonly found in this sort of name, although it is not as common as tūn.

Other habitative terms include wic as in Baswich, worthign as in Cheswardine and cot as in Chilcote[250]. Some of the possible relationships between

Figure 13a: Some minster centres and dependent parish place-names



	———	Minster parish boundary (certain)
	- -	Minster parish boundary (uncertain)
a	◢	<u>tūn</u>
b	▲	<u>lēah</u>
c	●	topographical
d	■	indicating British presence
e	◣	other habitative
	○	minster centre

c

c and d

c

c

c and d

c

a

c

e

Table 1: Analysis of place-name categories*

Place-Name Category	Minster Centres (%)	Independent Parishes (%)	Settlements within Parishes (%)
Indicating British presence	18	4	9
<u>inga</u>	-	-	2
Topographical	64	35	21
<u>tūn</u>	9	33	39
<u>lēah</u>	-	15	9
Other Habitative	9	13	20

* Relates to minster parishes shown at Figure 13a

different types of name within the south Staffordshire area can be illustrated by the case of Clifton, a settlement whose church may once have been dependent upon Repton, but which broke free and formed its own parish. Clifton is a name in tūn, and the place to which it refers once had dependencies of its own at Harlaston, Thorpe Constantine and Chilcote.[251] These names include the elements tūn, thorp and cot respectively,[252] and so we have settlements with habitative elements in their names being secondary to a place in tūn. This in turn was once dependent upon Repton, a name which includes a topographical second element.

A further group of place-names worth studying are those referring to settlements which lie within parishes (Table 1). Again, topographical terms figure quite largely amongst this sort of place-name,such as at Coven in Brewood.[253] The most common final element is again tūn. Numerous examples fall within the parishes of Penkridge and Gnosall (see Figure 11), perhaps reflecting the expansion of settlement within an estate. The word lēah is also quite common in this group. Many of the 'lesser' habitative names recorded in the area fall within this category, for example, Tunstall in Adbaston.

Three of the four names in inga to be found within the study area name places within parishes: Tillington in Stafford; Essington in Bushbury and Ettingshall in Wolverhampton. In Staffordshire, names in inga thus represent the colonisation of places away from initial parish centres and, with the exception of Edingale, refer to places which did not form parishes themselves. However, they may have been the centres of estates, judging by the addition of the element tūn in Tillington and Essington.

Therefore, within the study area many of the different types of place-name elements are used in the naming of each category of settlement, from the centres of minster parishes down to dependent settlements within parishes. For example, topographical names form a part of each group. They dominate the names representing minster parishes and are still used, although relatively less frequently, when naming later dependent settlements.

Names in tūn and lēah are also frequently occurring. The former is particularly common within parish names and within names of settlements in parishes. It once occurs as part of the name of a royal free chapel parish - Wolverhampton. However, it is possible that Wolverhampton was once part of a larger land unit belonging to Tettenhall, and so the element tūn may denote a place of secondary importance.[254]

An early significance in this area can be argued for the elements hām and ingahām. These are included in the names Trentham and Pattingham, possibly belonging to minster centres, and would thus have been coined at an early date.

Other habitative terms occur in the place-names of most types of settlement. The minster centre Tamworth contains worth. However, it is possible that the original name for Tamworth was Tomtun and that the later name was coined when the burh was created in 913.[255] Habitative terms such as this are far more frequent in the naming of parishes and later dependent settlements.

There is thus some coincidence between the use of place-names in the south Staffordshire area and the models developed by place-name scholars. For example, topographical names and those containing the elements hām and ingahām are thought to be of generally early formation, which appears to be borne out by this study. Furthermore, names in tūn, whilst referring to important estate centres, are often believed not to be of the earliest coining, which again appears to be supported by this study.[256] However, it has also been highlighted that there are no hard and fast rules when it comes to the interpretation of place-names, and each case needs to be considered individually.

1 Place-name models are discussed in detail below

2 F T Wainwright, Archaeology and Place-Names and History, 1962, p 46

3 E Ekwall, The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Place-Names, 1985, p 385. See below for further discussion of the place-name Repton

4 Wainwright, Archaeology and Place-Names and History, p 43

5 Ekwall, Dictionary of English Place-Names, p 225

6 J P Oakden, 'The Place-Names of Staffordshire. Part 1: Cuttlestone Hundred', English Place-Name Society, 55, 1984

7 Place-names of Warwickshire in J E B Gover, A Mawer and F M Stenton, 'The Place-Names of Warwickshire', English Place-Name Society, 13, 1936. Derbyshire place-names in English Place-Name Society volumes 27, 28 and 29

8 For example, M Gelling, 'Some thoughts on Staffordshire place-names', North Staffordshire Journal of Field Studies, 21, 1981
M Gelling, 'Some notes on Warwickshire place-names', Transactions of the Birmingham and Warwickshire Archaeological Society. 86, 1974

9 Gelling, 'Warwickshire place-names', p 66

10 Oakden, 'The place-names of Staffordshire. Part 1', p 56

11 The distribution maps show all the place-names of relevance in the south Staffordshire area which are recorded in Anglo-Saxon charters, Domesday Book and parish maps. The meanings of the names included have all been verified by place-name scholars, such as Ekwall and Gelling, in the works mentioned in the footnotes

12 M Gelling, Signposts to the Past, 1978, p 88

13 Gelling, 'Warwickshire place-names', p 61

14 Gelling, Signposts to the Past, p 123

15 M Gelling, Place-Names in the Landscape, 1984, p 182

16 ibid, p 137

17 ibid, p 138

18 Gelling, Signposts to the Past, p 41

19 Gelling, Place-Names in the Landscape, pp 138-139

20 Ekwall, Dictionary of English Place-Names, p 350

21 Oakden, 'The place-names of Staffordshire. Part 1', pp 141-142

22 Ekwall, Dictionary of English Place-Names, p 362

23 ibid, p 28

24 Gelling, 'Warwickshire place-names', p 60, Fig 1

25 Ekwall, Dictionary of English Place-Names, p 331

26 ibid, p 241

27 Gelling, Signposts to the Past, p 101

28 Gelling, Place-Names in the Landscape, p 280

29 A L F Rivet and C Smith, The Place-Names of Roman Britain, 1979, pp 387-388

30 C C Taylor, 'The Origins of Lichfield, Staffs', South Staffordshire Archaeological and Historical Society Transactions, 10, 1968-69, pp 49-50

31 Gelling, Signposts to the Past, p 57

32 ibid, p 100

33 Contains British element penn. See Ekwall, Dictionary of English Place-Names, p 362

34 Both contain British bre, 'hill'. ibid, p 64 and p 279

35 First element is billers, 'water cress' which may be or British origin. ibid, p 42

36 Ridware may contain British rhyd, 'ford'. ibid, p 387 and discussed below

37 The second element of Longford could be OE ford, but this does not suit the topography. Instead, it may be British fford, 'road'. ibid, p 303

38 M Gelling, 'The Evidence of Place-Names', in ed P H Sawyer, Medieval Settlement: Continuity and Change, 1976, p 202

39 Gelling, Signposts to the Past, p 90

40 Oakden, 'The place-names of Staffordshire. Part 1', pp 4-27

41 ibid, p 18

42 Ekwall, Dictionary of English Place-Names, p 481

43 ibid

44 Gelling, Place-Names in the Landscape, p 189

45 Oakden, 'The place-names of Staffordshire. Part 1', p 13

46 Gelling, 'Some thoughts on Staffordshire place-names', p 19

47 Gelling, Signposts to the Past, p 93

48 K Cameron, 'The meaning and significance of Old English walh in English place-names', English Place-Name Society Journal, 12, 1980, pp 3-6

49 ibid, pp 7-8

50 Ekwall, Dictionary of English Place-Names, pp 494-495

51 Oakden, 'The place-names of Staffordshire. Part 1', p 157

52 Gelling, 'Warwickshire place-names', p 62

53 Ekwall, Dictionary of English Place-Names, p 63

54 Gelling, Signposts to the Past, p 96

55 M Faull, 'British survival in Anglo-Saxon Northumbria', ed L Laing, Studies in Celtic Survival, BAR British Series, 13, 1977, pp 12-13

56 Cameron, 'Old English walh in English place-names', p 33

57 Faull, 'British survival in Anglo-Saxon Northumbria', p 13

58 B Cox, 'The place-names of the earliest English records', English Place-Name Society Journal, 8, 1975-76, pp 12-66

59 Gelling, Signposts to the Past, pp 20-21

60 ibid, p 66

61 Cox, 'Place-names of the earliest English records', p 62

62 Gelling, Signposts to the Past, p 66

63 ibid, p 151

64 See Chapter 4

65 Hawkins and Rumble, Domesday Book: Staffordshire, 2.21

66 Ekwall, Dictionary of English Place-Names, p 411

67 Cox, 'Place-names of the earliest English records', pp 58-59

68 Rivet and Smith, The Place-Names of Roman Britain, p 411

69 W H Duignan, Notes on Staffordshire Place-Names, 1902, p 13

70 C Thomas, Christianity in Roman Britain to AD 500, 1981, p 262

71 K Cameron, 'Eccles in English Place-Names', ed K Cameron, Place-Name Evidence for the Anglo-Saxon Invasion and Scandinavian Settlements, 1977, pp 1-7

72 Thomas, Christianity in Roman Britain, pp 263-264

73 Gelling, Signposts to the Past, pp 82-83

74 ibid, and R Morris, The Church in British Archaeology, CBA RR, 47, 1983, p 45

75 See Chapter 4, section on Catholme

76 R Morris, 'The church in British archaeology', p 45

77 Pers comm to S R Bassett from Dr A R Faulks

78 G W S Barrow, The Kingdom of the Scots, 1973, pp 26-27

79 The first element of the name is derived from OE Woden see M Gelling, 'Place-Names and Anglo-Saxon Paganism', University of Birmingham Historical Journal, 8, 1961-62, p 10

80 ibid, pp 10-11

81 Possibly derived from weoh ford, 'heathen temple ford'. However, the early spellings do not confirm this interpretation and the exact meaning of the name is unclear. Ekwall, Dictionary of English Place-Names, p 503 M Gelling, 'Further thoughts on pagan place-names', in ed K Cameron, Place-Name Evidence for the Anglo-Saxon Invasion and Scandinavian Settlements, pp 101-102

83 ibid, p 104

84 Gelling, Signposts to the Past, p 110

85 ibid, pp 106-108

86 J McN Dodgson, 'Place-names from hām, distinguished from hamm names, in relation to the settlement of Kent, Surrey and Sussex', Anglo-Saxon England, 2, 1973, p 1

87 B Cox, 'The significance of the distribution of English place-names in hām in the Midlands and East Anglia', English Place-Name Society Journal, 5, 1973, p 15

88 Dodgson, 'Place-names from hām, pp 15-73

89 Cox, 'Significance of hām in the Midlands and East Anglia', p 15

90 Cox, 'Place-names of the earliest English records', p 61

91 ibid, p 57

92 Ekwall, Dictionary of English Place-Names, p 319

93 Cox, 'Significance of hām in the Midlands and East Anglia', p 18

94 ibid, p 29

95 Ekwall, Dictionary of English Place-Names, p 450

96 Cox, 'Significance of hām in the Midlands and East Anglia', p 37

97 Dodgson, 'Place-names from hām', p 6

98 Ekwall, Dictionary of English Place-Names, p 480

99 Gelling, 'Some thoughts on Staffordshire place-names', p 2

100 See Chapter 4

101 Cox, 'Significance of hām in the Midlands and East Anglia', p 18

102 ibid

103 Ekwall, Dictionary of English Place-Names, p 359

104 Cox, 'Place-names of the earliest English records', p 57

105 ibid, p 65

106 J McN.Dodgson, 'The significance of the distribution of the English place-names in ingas, inga in south-east England', in ed Cameron Place-Name Evidence for the Anglo-Saxon Invasion and Scandinavian Settlements, p 29

107 ibid, pp 39-40

108 Cox, 'Place-names of the earliest English records', pp 64-65

109 Dodgson, 'Significance of place-names in ingas, inga in south-east England', p 27

110 Cox, 'Significance of hām in the Midlands and East Anglia', pp 17-18

111 ibid, p 37

112 Ekwall, Dictionary of English Place-Names, p 169 and p 160

113 ibid, p 169

114 ibid, p 160

115 ibid, p 474

116 ibid, p 169

117 ibid

118 Gelling, Place-Names in the Landscape, p 272

119 Ekwall, Dictionary of English Place-Names, p 399

120 ibid, p43 In tenth century charters this name was recorded as Bilsetnatun and Bilsatena gemaero, translated as 'the tūn of the Bilsǣtan'. Bilsǣtan could mean 'dwellers at the Bil', which is possibly a hill name.

121 Lilleshall shows a similar form to Bilston in Lilsaetna gemaere. ibid, p 298

122 The three parishes are Hamstall Ridware, Mavesyn Ridware and Pipe Ridware, which indicates the early existence of one estate called Ridware. The first element of the name could be either PW rhyd or OE ride, both of which mean 'ford'. ibid p 387 and Gelling, Place-Names in the Landscape, pp 79-80

123 A Rumble, ''Hrepingas' Reconsidered', in ed A Dornier, Mercian Studies, 1977, pp 169-171. Also see Sawyer, Anglo-Saxon Charters, No 1805

124 Gelling, Place-Name in the Landscape, p 6

125 Cox, 'Place-names of the earliest English records', p 56

126 Gelling, Signposts to the Past, p 126

127 Ekwall, Dictionary of English Place-Names, p 204

128 Gelling, 'Some thoughts on Staffordshire place-names', p 8

129 Cox, 'Place-names of the earliest English records', p 59

130 Gelling, 'Some thoughts on Staffordshire place-names', p 8

131 The first element of Stafford is OE staeth, which is rarely found in place-names. In literary Old English staeth means 'river bank' or 'shore'. There is an Old Norse word cognate with it - stoth - which means 'landing place, jetty'. The problem is whether the OE word had a similar meaning. Smith thought not, but Margaret Gelling says that it would have the meaning 'river bank' in Stafford if there were no other connotation, as the name would not have been coined after the Danish immigrations. However, the translation 'river bank ford' is unsatisfactory. 'Landing place' could have been an early sense of OE staeth which was later forgotten, to be revived in Old Norse. The name indicates some river traffic at Stafford at an early date, but hȳth is the Old English word for an inland port, which suggests that the river traffic was not of great importance. If Stafford was a suitable place for dealing in river traffic of regional importance, this may have brought about its status as centre of a land unit. See Gelling, 'Some thoughts on Staffordshire place-names', p 8

132 Ekwall, Dictionary of English Place-Names, pp 376-77

133 ibid, p 163

134 Gelling, 'Some thoughts on Staffordshire place-names', pp 10-11

135 Cox, 'Place-names of the earliest English records', p 60

136 Oakden, 'The place-names of Staffordshire. Part 1', p 113

137 Gelling, 'Some thoughts onStaffordshire place-names', p 13

138 ibid, p 14

139 Cox, 'Place-names of the earliest English records', p 58

140 Gelling, 'Some thoughts on Staffordshire place-names', p 14

141 Cox, 'Place-names of the earliest English records', p 61

142 Gelling, 'Some thoughts on Staffordshire place-names', p 5

143 Cox, 'Place-names of the earliest English records', p 66

144 Gelling, 'Some thoughts on Staffordshire place-names', p 10

153 Ekwall, Dictionary of English Place-Names, p 446

154 K Cameron, English Place-Names, 1977, p 116

155 S E Rigold, 'Roman Folkestone Reconsidered', Archaeologia Cantiana. 87, 1977, p 38

156 ibid, pp 38-41

157 E Fletcher and G W Meates, 'The ruined church of Stone-by-Faversham', Antiquaries Journal, 49, 1969, pp 273-288

158 ibid, p 284

159 Ekwall, Dictionary of English Place-Names, p 183

160 See Rigold, 'Roman Folkestone Reconsidered'

161 Gelling, 'Some thoughts on Staffordshire place-names', p 2

162 Gelling, Place-Names in the Landscape, p 232

163 Gelling, Signposts to the Past, p 123

164 Cox, 'Place-names of the earliest English records', pp 58-59

165 ibid

166 Gelling, Place-Names in the Landscape, p 35

167 ibid, pp 34-36

168 Gelling, 'Some thoughts on Staffordshire place-names', p 6

169 Gelling, Place-Names in the Landscape, p 35

170 ibid, p 270 and p 277

171 Ekwall, Dictionary of English Place-Names, p 158

172 Gelling, Place-Names in the Landscape, pp 37-38

173 ibid, p 39

174 Gelling, 'Some thoughts on Staffordshire place-names', p 9

175 These are Ettingshall, Gornal, Pelsall, Walsall, Rushall, Willenhall, Stonnall, Tettenhall, Codsall, Bednall, Gnosall, Tixall, Moddershall, Yoxall and Bucknall. Gelling, Place-Names in the Landscape, p 105

176 Hales is the nominative plural of halh and may be a district name surviving in names such as Norton-in-Hales. Gelling, 'Some thoughts on Staffordshire place-names', p 9

177 ibid

178 Gelling, Place-Names in the Landscape, p 110

179 Gelling, 'Some thoughts on Staffordshire place-names', p 10
Examples of names in cumb at Compton and Congreve

180 Gelling, Place-Names in the Landscape, p 89 and p 97

181 Ekwall, Dictionary of English Place-Names, p 199

182 Oakden, 'The place-names of Staffordshire. Part 1', pp 153-154

183 Gelling, Place-Names in the Landscape, p 316

184 ibid, p 110

185 Except, obviously, in the case of Church Eaton

186 Cox, 'Place-names of the earliest English records', p 63

187 A H Smith, 'English Place-Name Elements: Part II', English Place-Name Society, 26, 1956, p 188

188 Ekwall, Dictionary of English Place-Names, p 154

189 Gelling, Signposts to the Past, pp 177-178

190 Ekwall, Dictionary of English Place-Names, p 331

191 Gelling, 'Warwickshire place-names', p 66

192 See habitative place-name section

193 Sawyer, Anglo-Saxon Charters, No 860 and for identification of Tomtun with Tamworth see C R Hart, The Early Charters of Eastern England, 1966, p 99

194 Ekwall, Dictionary of English Place-Names, p 529

197 The name is derived from OE cnihta tūn, 'The tūn of the knights'. Ekwall, Dictionary of English Place-Names, p 282

198 This name means 'tūn of the free peasants'. Gelling, Signposts to the Past, p 185

199 Drointon refers to the 'tūn of the drengs or free tenants'. Ekwall Dictionary of English Place-Names, p 151

200 Gelling, Place-Names in the Landscape, p 198

201 Cox, 'Place-names of the earliest English records', p 60

202 Gelling, Signposts to the Past, pp 126-128

203 ibid

204 Gelling, 'Warwickshire place-names', p 67

205 Gelling, Place-Names in the Landscape, p 199

207 Gelling, 'Warwickshire place-names', pp 65-67

208 Gelling, Signposts to the Past, p 118

209 Cox, 'Place-names of the earliest English records', p 66

210 A H Smith, 'English Place-Name Elements: Part I', English Place-Name Society, 25, 1956, p 108

211 Literally this means 'the children's cot', although OE cild can be used as the title of a young noble. Ekwall, Dictionary of English Place-Names, p 103

212 eg Cotes in Eccleshall and Coton - the OE dative form of cot. ibid, p 124

213 Seven names in cot in this area have a personal name prefix eg Swodlincote in Derbyshire. ibid, p 455

214 ibid, p 515

215 Cox, 'Place-names of the earliest English records', pp 63-64

216 Ekwall, Dictionary of English Place-Names, p 214

217 ibid, p 180 and p 427

218 ibid, p 535

219 ibid, p 101

220 ibid, p 216

221 Gelling, Place-Names in the Landscape, p 316

222 ed S Taylor, The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, vol 4, 1983, p 50

223 W F H Nicolaisen, M Gelling and M Richards, The Names of Towns and Cities in Britain, 1970, p 179

224 Ekwall, Dictionary of English Place-Names, p 370

225 Nicolaisen, Gelling and Richards, Names of Towns and Cities, p 176

226 For example, Ekwall, Dictionary of English Place-Names, p 443

227 M Gelling, 'Some meanings of stōw', B A R British Series, 102, 1982, pp 194-195

228 ibid, p 187

229 ibid, p 188

230 ibid, p 189

231 J Gould, 'Letocetum, Christianity and Lichfield', South Staffordshire Historical and Archaeological Society Transactions, 14, 1972-73, p 313

232 Ekwall, Dictionary of English Place-Names, p 448

233 Gelling, 'Some meanings of _stōw_', p 194

234 Ekwall, _Dictionary of English Place-Names_, p 97

235 _ibid_, p 482

236 Description of detailed arguments concerning Scandinavian place-names in G Fellows Jensen, 'Place-names and settlement history: a review', _Northern History_, 13, 1977

237 Gelling, _Signposts to the Past_, p 143

238 These are Beckbury, Bushbury, Kingsbury, Norbury, Wednesbury, Tutbury and two Oldburys

239 Ekwall, _Dictionary of English Place-Names_, p 78

240 Oakden, 'The place-names of Staffordshire. Part 1', p 155

241 Gelling, 'Some thoughts on Staffordshire place-names', pp 17-19

242 _ibid_ and map on p 16

243 Cox, 'Place-names of the earliest English records', pp62-63

244 Ekwall, _Dictionary of English Place-Names_, p 343

245 Oakden, 'The place-names of Staffordshire. Part 1', p 174

246 For Trentham see Gelling, 'Some thoughts on Staffordshire place-names', p 2. For Tamworth and Wolverhampton see Ekwall, _Dictionary of English Place-Names_, p 459 and p 529

247 _ibid_, p 530, p 343 and p 359

248 _ibid_, p 2

249 _ibid_, p 225

250 _ibid_, p 30, p 101 and p 103

251 See Chapter 2

252 Ekwall, Dictionary of English Place-Names, p 220 and p 469

253 Gelling, _Place-Names in the Landscape_, p 215

254 See above and Chapter 2

255 See above

256 For example, see Gelling, _Signposts to the Past_, pp 106-129

CHAPTER 4

THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT

The object of this chapter is to examine the relevant archaeological information for the study area. This can then be used in conjunction with the topographical, documentary and place-name evidence already discussed in order to provide as full a picture as possible of the early medieval settlement patterns of south Staffordshire.

For the purposes of this study, archaeological material relating to the late Roman period (that is, the third century onwards) and the early and middle Saxon periods will be concentrated upon. An attempt can then be made to determine how much settlement there was in the area during this period, where it was located and its date. There are various types of continuity which can be looked for at the same time. This includes the continued functioning of Romano-British field boundaries, which could be due to their reuse soon after the desertion of an area. Alternatively, it may point towards Romano-Britons continuing to live in, and farm, an area during the migration period, even if on a reduced scale. This might suggest a degree of peaceful coexistence between the Romano-Britons and Anglo-Saxons. Furthermore, an important point to note is that if the working landscape did go on in use, it is possible that some of the boundaries relating to minster parishes may reflect pre-Anglo-Saxon ones. As discussed in Chapter 3, place-name evidence in Staffordshire does suggest that the Romano-British population did survive to some degree in this area. Studies elsewhere in the country are increasingly showing continuity of settlement at this time, for example, as in the case of Chalton in Hampshire.[1]

It is necessary to determine exactly what is meant by continuity. A general definition has been given by Fowler as 'what existed in pre-Anglo-Saxon times (that) could have persisted, or at least be influential, in the Anglo-Saxon period as well.'[2] To be more specific, continuity of site suggests the continued use of a particular settlement, although a settlement could in fact move around within a given land unit. Continuity of community within a defined area is perhaps more important than site, but it is also more difficult to prove. This is because it is necessary to show one site to have been abandoned at the same time that a nearby settlement began. However, archaeological contiguity does not always mean continuity of community.[3] These points must be borne in mind when looking at the archaeological evidence.

The above discussion sets out the main aims and objectives to be achieved by looking at the archaeology of the south Staffordshire area. However, in reality the true value of the archaeological evidence of this area is dramatically reduced by its low quantity and generally poor quality. The distribution of excavation which has taken place across the county is fairly uneven, with a higher concentration of work along the eastern border of Staffordshire. A few major sites, mainly of Roman date, have attracted excavations such as Rocester, Greensforge and Wall. Towards the north and west of the county comparatively little work has taken place. This causes an imbalance in the evidence and may produce a false picture of settlement distribution and dating. It should be emphasised that the amount of archaeological work which has been carried out in Staffordshire is small, which does not enable us to piece together a detailed picture of settlement here.

The quality of many of the excavations which have taken place in Staffordshire is poor. Whilst some work has been carried out more recently, a substantial amount of the evidence available has come from excavations of the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries. In the later twentieth century techniques of excavation and methods of dating pottery have been developed and changed. Therefore, the conclusions drawn by these early excavators would not necessarily be the same as those arrived at today. Excavations of this date upon Roman sites in the area generally conclude that they went out of use during the fourth century or earlier. As the archaeological evidence and the excavators are no longer available for discussion, these dates have to be accepted to a certain degree. However, the dating of pottery may be incorrect and settlements need not have ceased in the fourth century. Indeed, it is noticeable that modern excavations at places such as Willington and Catholme (discussed below) have begun to show evidence of early Saxon settlement near to late Romano-British sites. As other evidence, such as that of place-names, leads us to believe there was activity in this area during the later fourth and fifth centuries, it is necessary to keep an open mind when using the archaeological information. The quantity and quality of archaeological investigation is thus too low to allow us to have a sufficiently well informed picture of what went on in the area in the late Roman and early medieval periods. Nevertheless, a study of the available archaeology used in conjunction with other forms of evidence, may still help us to answer the points made at the beginning of this chapter.

Before discussing the late Roman archaeology, it is important to note the existence and position of major Roman roads within the study area. These show us major routes of access into the Staffordshire area[4] and in some cases provide a _terminus post quem_ for parish boundaries. For example, the division between Penkridge and Brewood must have been formed after the laying out of Watling Street, which is used as a boundary. They may also help us to understand the distribution of settlement revealed through the archaeology.

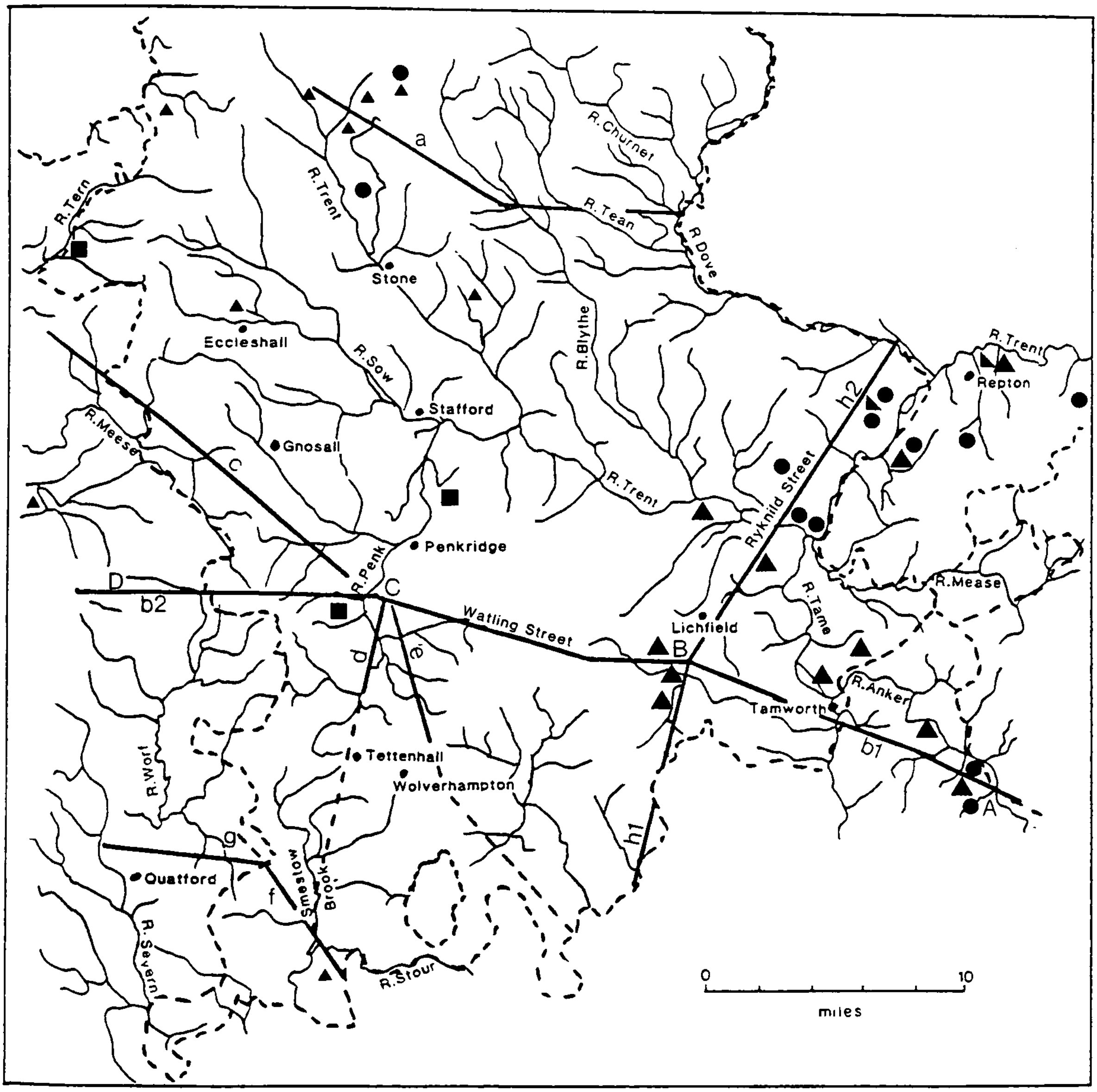
Figure 14 shows that major Roman roads cover the southern two-thirds of the study area quite comprehensively, whilst the north has fewer of these important routes. This phenomena may in fact owe more to the accident of survival and discovery than to the true ancient distribution of these roads. It is worth remembering that Figure 14 shows only the principal arterial roads and in reality, there would have been many miles of minor Roman roads and tracks across the county.[5]

Staffordshire is crossed by Watling Street which has its starting point on the south-east coast of England, from where it passes through London, eventually terminating at Wroxeter.[6] In Warwickshire, Watling Street passes through Mancetter before heading towards Wall in Staffordshire (both former Roman settlements), and then on to Pennocrucium (see b1 and b2, Figure14).[7] An off-shoot from Watling Street heads north-westwards from Stretton towards Chester (c, Figure 14), thus making it unnecessary to travel to Wroxeter before heading northwards.[8]

Following a course southwards from Pennocrucium, a further road (d, Figure 14) crosses the Penk and appears to head for the Roman settlement at Greensforge.[9] Road f[10] takes a course from Droitwich through Greensforge from where it heads into Wales. There is another possible route branching off from road f (marked g on Figure 14) which could be making for Chesterton, now in Worfield parish.[11] However, not all such roads were maintained throughout the Roman period and as the Greensforge forts were probably only occupied during the earlier centuries, the roads associated with them may have declined during the Roman period itself.[12]

Another route of great importance runs through Staffordshire. Ryknild Street heads northwards from Alcester towards Wall (h1) where it crosses Watling Street and continues north-eastwards towards Little Chester (h2).[13] In the

Figure 14: The archaeology of the study area



———	Course certain
- - - -	Course uncertain
A	<u>Manduessedum</u>
B	<u>Letocetum</u>
C	<u>Pennocrucium</u>
D	Red Hill

■	Roman villa
▲	" farmstead
▲	Other Roman sites/finds
◣	Saxon settlement
●	Saxon burials

north of the area a road heads from Little Chester through Rocester and towards Chesterton near Stoke-on-Trent (a, Figure 14).[14]

A substantial amount of work has been carried out upon Roman sites along Watling Street which appear to form a chain of fortified enclosures. Excavations have taken place at Mancetter, Wall, Penkridge and Red Hill in Shropshire.[15]

Mancetter in Warwickshire lies at the very south-east of the study area. Excavations have brought to light different types of occupation dating from the first to the fourth century, showing this to have been a place of some importance during the Roman period. In the mid 1950s archaeological work revealed that in the third or early fourth century a 'fort' had been erected with a stone wall and bank and an outer ditch.[16] This was confirmed by later excavations.[17] Late Roman activity was not purely of a military nature, as settlement was noted outside these defences. A number of kilns producing mortaria, rough cast beakers and other coarse wares have been found, with at least five of these dating to the third and fourth centuries.[18] Pottery produced in these kilns has been found at other Roman sites within the study area, such as at Acton Trussell.[19]

A system of roads has been shown to have served the kiln area during this period. Two of these roads sealed third century pottery which provides a *terminus post quem* for their construction.[20] 'Ribbon development' was noted along the south side of Watling Street, between the river Anker and *Manduessedum*. The excavation was never written up, but it was recorded that timber structures from the first to late fourth century were found.[21]

Towards the north of Mancetter parish, at Atherstone, trial excavations revealed two lines of post-holes representing a Roman timber structure.

A hollow with a 'charcoaly earthy filling' also contained pot sherds, pieces of tegula and imbrex and large stones. The pottery was of fourth century type. This appears, therefore, to represent some form of late Roman dwelling which lasted into the fourth century at least[22] (see Figure 14).

Much work has been carried out at the Roman site of Letocetum at Wall near Lichfield. Evidence has been found of military occupation in a series of first century fortifications.[23] Later Roman defences have been found in the shape of an enclosure with a turf bank and three defensive ditches. This straddled Watling Street, rather than following the hill top position of earlier fortifications. Late buildings were not found within the part of the enclosure to be excavated. This led the excavator to conclude that the site was a refuge for the surrounding population to move to when in danger. Fourth century pottery and coins were found on the site of the baths at Wall, and also within these defences.[24]

More recent excavations in the vicinity, to the south of Watling Street, have produced evidence of occupation which continued well into the fourth century.[25] Phase two of this occupation was represented by what appeared to be a road. This contained pottery dating from AD 100. One sherd of pottery was described by Katherine Hartley as a piece of Oxfordshire mortaria dating between AD 240 and AD 400 plus, which was unlikely to have been used at Wall before the fourth century.[26] Therefore, this could be dated to any time in the fourth century and does not necessarily have the fifth century date ascribed to it by the excavators.[27] Phase 3 was represented by a timber-post structure of uncertain character, over the remains of which a podsol layer had formed.[28] However, it is possible that the soil layer was dumped as it contains patches of other material.[29] The evidence for Phase four consisted of sandstone foundations and pads, although what these represent is again unclear.

Thus, the nature of the settlement itself is difficult to determine. The excavators suggested that as much of the debris of the earlier phase had been cleared away, it might have had a military use. If so, this would indicate the continued presence of a population in the area requiring protection. Alternatively, settlement throughout the period in question tended to be fluid,[30] which might explain the changing fortunes of this site. It could have housed structures built for agricultural purposes, and not necessarily dwellings.

The only conclusion which can safely be reached from this excavation is that fourth century occupation or use of some sort has been found upon this site. This seems to have continued well into that century (and possibly into the fifth century and beyond if the conclusions of the excavators are to be believed.)

Westwards along Watling Street at Stretton Bridge on the edge of Penkridge parish is the Roman site Pennocrucium, from which the parish derives its name. As at Mancetter and Wall, this is a defended site. According to J K St Joseph, who excavated in the 1950s, the site displays a multiple ditch system. Drainage channels are lacking and air-photographs show no gates in each of the longer sides, as would perhaps normally be expected if it were an early Roman fortification.[31] A military presence in the immediate vicinity is in evidence in the shape of first century forts at Kinvaston[32] and Stretton Mill.[33] The original excavations dated the development of Pennocrucium from the first to late third centuries. Further work largely confirmed these conclusions, showing that occupation of the site lasted from the final quarter of the first century until at least the early fourth century.[34] Small wattle and daub buildings had been laid out in a rectangular street plan along the line of the main road. There were also lightly cobbled lanes and rubbish pits. Fire destroyed many parts of the settlement in the late second century, but it did continue in some form represented by guttering and gratings. Excavators believed the latest datable evidence from Pennocrucium to be of the early fourth century, but if occupation continued in and around Letocetum after this date, there seems no particular reason why the site should have been abandoned completely. Pennocrucium appears to have been some form of small roadside town, perhaps serving travellers along Watling Street. The survival of the place-name in Penkridge[35] would suggest some continuity of settlement by Romano-Britons and Saxon settlers.

Located on the Shropshire section of Watling Street at Red Hill in Lilleshall is another military structure of the first century. This was followed by buildings of clay and timber and much pottery of third century date was found nearby.[36] Later fieldwork on the site produced fourth century pottery.[37]

It is evident, therefore, that there were a number of fortified enclosures along Watling Street which were in use during the third and fourth centuries. Graham Webster describes these strong points as burgi and relates them to a period of unrest. In the late third century Britain had broken away from the empire under Carausius, and an attempt was made to regain control of the country in the early fourth century.[38] This begs the question, on whose behalf were such elaborate defensive schemes undertaken? They would surely only have been carried out if there was a substantial population around during the late Roman period requiring protection. It is now believed that when the Imperial army was withdrawn from Britain and centralised government removed, the majority of the native population carried on much as before, if in more difficult social and economic circumstances.[39] It therefore seems likely that occupation of the area continued throughout this period. As discussed above, the fact that the available archaeological evidence does not pick up on this continued occupation probably owes much to the quantity and quality of work carried out.

The above examples largely appear to be special types of settlement relating to defence and routeway. The study area also contains 'villa' sites and small farmsteads, some of which were functioning well into the late Roman period at least.

Three sites in particular have been termed 'villas' by their excavators. At Engleton in Brewood a villa, situated 500 yards south of Watling Street and overlooking the river Penk, was excavated in the 1930s. The villa and its bath wing apparently began life in the late second century, according to the earliest pottery finds. It continued in use throughout the third century and in the early fourth century it underwent several alterations.[40] The work uncovered no traces of outbuildings, although nearby quarrying had destroyed much of the area. The farmyard did not appear to have been walled, but a possibly contemporary boundary ditch was found.[41] Apart from the pottery, bronze and iron objects of the late third and fourth centuries were recovered, including brooches and other ornamental pieces.[42] This would therefore appear to have been a fairly wealthy establishment which continued well into the fourth century. As the excavation was carried out in the 1930s, the possibility exists that evidence of later occupation was overlooked.

A further possible villa site in Staffordshire was discovered this decade at Acton Trussell. Fieldwalking around St James' church produced a number of Roman artefacts which prompted excavation of the site.[43] A trench cut near the church exposed an <u>opus signinum</u> floor abutting the outside wall of a building.[44] Further work revealed a complex, about forty metres by fifty metres, which had a hypocaust system, mosaic floors and painted wall plaster.[45] It was therefore a structure of some sophistication. Pottery from the site included mortaria from the Mancetter kilns, plain samian and third to fourth century black and grey cooking wares.

At Hales in Market Drayton on the Staffordshire/Shropshire border, excavations revealed another villa on a site which may have had more or less continuous occupation from the late Bronze Age until the mid fourth century.[46] The villa had several phases of rebuilding, the latest of which appeared to have taken place in the third century,when a new furnace was constructed for the baths.[47] Charcoal layers in the stoke hole contained pottery of fourth century style. Other finds included glass, iron objects, mortaria and samian ware. Again, the excavators suggest that the site was abandoned during the fourth century. This conclusion is based partly upon the evidence contained within one of the wells. The latest artefacts excavated included a brass coin of Constantius (mid fourth century) and large quantities of pottery of a similar date.[48] It was concluded that this indicated the abandonment of the site, although it seems likely that occupation of the area could have continued in a poorer form. No archaeological evidence for later settlement exists for this area, but it is interesting to note that Hales was possibly the place chosen for the siting of a later minster church.[49]

These three villa sites are all located in very similar topographical situations. Figures 2-5 show that each site is near a good water supply, on relatively fertile Keuper Marl and lies between two and four hundred feet above sea level. The inhabitants therefore probably carried out similar agricultural practices.

Discoveries have been made in recent years of other settlements of this period, mainly in the eastern section of the study area (see Figure 14). Although the evidence from excavation is sometimes not conclusive, these sites appear to represent single farmsteads.

Several interesting sites lie near Letocetum. The parish of Shenstone contains one such settlement, lying just to the south of Watling Street. Archaeological investigation revealed four rectangular timber buildings of the first to early third centuries; a street along which were situated third century stone structures; and a further large rectangular timber building of the late third or early fourth century.[50] To the north of Shenstone, evidence of third or fourth century iron working was also found.[51]

A further Roman farm complex was discovered through the observation of cropmarks near Letocetum.[52] The site consisted of a first century 'native-type farm', superceded by a more 'Roman' style farmstead. Associated with this later phase were finds of window glass, tesserae and flue tiles. Pottery finds indicated use throughout the second and third centuries.[53] The nature of the farming carried out was possibly mixed, as a droveway formed by double ditches with a widening west end points towards the herding of animals. J Gould suggests that the change in character of the site from the early to later Roman period may reflect either the imposition of Roman authority upon native farmers or, more probably, the increasing Romanisation of successive occupants.[54]

Other features of the site include a series of Celtic fields which appear to have been laid out at the same time as the droveway. Crucibles and slabs of lead were also found in the area, possibly suggesting some form of local industry.[55]

The type of building and construction of a droveway implies that this was a well-organised and fairly wealthy farming venture. The question therefore arises, why did it apparently cease to function during the third century?

As already mentioned, settlement was not static during this period, and it is likely that occupation moved elsewhere. Indeed, it has already been demonstrated that the area around Letocetum was occupied throughout the later Roman period.

To the north of Lichfield lies the present parish of Kings Bromley in which has been found another Romano-British site. However, in this case the evidence is far from conclusive. Air-photography located what appeared to be three small oval enclosures, one mile south of the river Trent.[56] Although these features are clear on photographs, nothing substantial was found during excavation. The only datable find was a piece of a Mancetter mortarium of early second century style and very much worn when broken.[57] Therefore, this may have been a Roman farmstead, but the excavation did not prove this for certain.

One or two similar sites lie in the area of Tamworth. About five miles south of Tamworth at Fisherwick near the river Tame, a farmstead was discovered which again appears to have had stock-rearing as a main interest. In its most developed phase, the site consisted of a droveway, enclosures and pens. There was also evidence for three contemporary huts,[58] and a series of field boundaries.[59] The site generally lacked finds which led the excavators to conclude that the huts were inhabited seasonally by workers who were a part of a larger estate. This belief was reinforced by the poor construction of the huts compared with the well-made palisade enclosures.[60] The few finds of pottery made dated the farmstead into the third century.

Fisherwick is situated upon an area of Keuper Marl (Figure 5) which produces fertile but difficult to work soils, ideal for animal grazing.[61] It is therefore interesting to note that this was apparently the function of the area during the Roman period. Furthermore, the place-name Fisherwick contains the Old English element wic, the most common meaning of which is 'dairy farm'.[62] The land has obviously been used by successive inhabitants for the purpose for which it is most suited.

A large rectangular enclosure with double ditches along at least two sides was discovered through aerial photography, one mile to the west of Tamworth and one mile to the north of the river Tame. A mid first century bronze brooch was found in medieval soil sealing ditches. Part of a Roman leather boot was preserved in water-logged soil and about forty sherds of samian and grey ware pottery were found, some of third century date. Again, this was interpreted as a small farm.[63]

To the east of Burton-upon-Trent lies the parish of Stapenhill. During excavations to recover Saxon burials (discussed below) a ditch was found which contained a large quantity of late first to mid fourth century pottery.[64] The plan of the enclosure and type of ditch suggested a civilian settlement, probably a farmstead.[65]

At Willington, to the north of Repton in Derbyshire, a large site was excavated which produced evidence of intermittent occupation from the Neolithic period to early medieval times.[66] Evidence for Romano-British occupation was found across the site, but there were two concentrations of finds in particular - again interpreted as farmsteads. The first was of the late first century whilst the second was associated with third and fourth century pottery.[67] Roman strip fields had been re-used in the medieval period suggesting the continuity of land use at the very least. A Romano-British corn drying oven of the late third or early fourth century was also excavated.

Lying just outside the study area, but relevant in the present context is a site at Ravenstone to the east of Packington in Leicestershire. Several

Romano-British pottery kilns have been discovered, along with the stone footings of a circular building. The footings contained a late third century coin of Tetricus I. The majority of material turned up on the site was third and fourth century, including a coin of Valentinian I (AD 364 - 375). This looks like a pottery producing site which continued into the late fourth century at least.[68]

Two other sites worth noting are situated at Alrewas where ditched enclosures of two phases were associated with second and third century pottery;[69] and Polesworth, at Bramcote, where a Romano-British settlement was represented by finds of animal bones, pot and tile and pot boilers. However, the dating of the pottery for this site is uncertain.[70]

A small amount of evidence is forthcoming for late Roman occupation at some of the later minster centres. A potentially very important find was made beneath Lichfield cathedral floor in the mid eighteenth century.[71] This consisted of a lead coffin containing a partially decomposed skeleton and a 'dry friable substance'. The description given of this substance suggested that it may have been a gypsum or plaster burial. Significantly, such gypsum burials have been shown in many cases to represent late Roman Christian interments and a number of cases have been demonstrated upon the sites of later churches.[72] A few other late Roman finds have been made within the centre of Lichfield including some sherds of pottery and coins of Constantine (AD 307 - 337) and Constantine II (AD 337 - 340).[73] The question arises, what was the relationship between the area around the cathedral and _Letocetum_? The elaborate late Roman enclosure (or _burgus_, as Webster described it) at _Letocetum_ suggests that it was some sort of administrative centre for an area. As C C Taylor notes, this area may have included a number of settlements with the place-name Lichfield, possibly meaning 'open land of _Letocetum_'.[74]

Thus, the later cathedral site may have fulfilled some function within the greater territorium of Letocetum.

At Tamworth, building material and painted plaster of Roman type was discovered in a residual context during excavations of Saxon features in Bolebridge Street. An explanation for this could be the one-time presence of a Roman building nearby.[75] Excavations at St Mary's Grove in Stafford brought to light three four-poster structures which were interpreted as granaries. These features were sealed by a layer containing sherds of Romano-British pottery, suggesting activity in the area during this period.[76] No traces of late Roman settlement appear to have been found at other centres such as Tettenhall and Quatford, which may be due to the very small amount of archaeological work done in the area. Evidence of third and fourth century occupation exists at about ten other sites within the study area.[77]

As previously argued, the quality and quantity of archaeological evidence within the south Staffordshire area has been too poor to enable the construction of a sufficiently detailed account of Roman activity. Generally, excavators have concluded that settlements were largely abandoned during the fourth century. Indeed, in some cases this may be true. Settlement at this time was fluid and so the abandonment of a few sites would have been part of the natural process.[78] Occupation did continue in many parts of the country during this period, but in a poorer and different style not represented by substantial buildings or coin finds.[79] It seems likely, therefore, that earlier excavators in Staffordshire may have overlooked such evidence, or misinterpreted their findings.

The archaeological evidence does indicate agricultural activity and organisation within the study area during the Roman period (see Figure 14). The presence of villas and farmsteads and, in particular, the construction of defended enclosures along Watling Street in the late Roman period, suggests the existence of a population substantial enough to merit such schemes. At Letocetum, activity continuing well into the fourth century and possibly beyond has been demonstrated, whilst at Lichfield itself possible evidence of late Roman Christianity exists. This, combined with other types of evidence discussed elsewhere within this study does indicate a high degree of late Roman activity within south Staffordshire.

Archaeology relating to Saxon occupation of the study area will now be examined in order to determine what it can tell us about the date and siting of settlement, and also in order to make a comparison with late Roman activity.

Willington in Derbyshire has already been discussed in relation to Romano-British occupation, but the excavation which uncovered this also revealed a Saxon presence on the site. Just to the north of the first Romano-British farmstead, three sunken-featured buildings were discovered, as was a possible Saxon post-hole group.[80] The sunken-featured buildings were dated to the sixth century by a large quantity of pottery, including some fine wares. These may have been made by professional potters, suggesting that the inhabitants of the site were not impoverished.[81] The Romano-British site at Ravenstone also produced evidence of Saxon activity in the form of pottery from a few small features, although this was not dated in the report.[82]

By far the most important Saxon settlement site in Staffordshire is located at Catholme, half a mile east of Ryknild Street in Burton-upon-Trent. This, too, was preceded by evidence of Romano-British occupation. Aerial photographs showing what looked like a Romano-British farmstead were associated on the ground with large quantities of Romano-British pottery. The site was located in a field next to the Saxon settlement, but across a road which later became a parish boundary.[83] This could be because the incoming Saxons deliberately placed their settlement on the edge of a Romano-British estate. A ditch delimiting the northern end of this estate was still used in the Saxon period to form the eastern boundary of their settlement.[84] A series of east to west ditches upon which the earliest Saxon settlement was aligned were cut into by Saxon features and so pre-dated them. These factors suggest a degree of continuity of land use between the native Romano-British population and the incoming settlers.

The Saxon settlement itself was extensive. The ground plans of sixty-six timber halls were recovered, representing the gradual development of the site over a number of centuries. The buildings belonged to six or seven separate holdings,[85] each of which consisted of a group of timber halls around which were fences or ditches. Trackways ran between these holdings. The first phase of the site consisted of fifteen structures, three of them sunken-featured buildings, aligned with the previously mentioned ditch system. The second phase saw the addition of at least nine more units on a north-east to south-west alignment, and the extension of the central enclosure. Enclosed fields near the river were also extended and a new farm complex built. Extensions continued throughout the next phase, by the end of which the site's rigid layout had begun to break down.[86]

Few datable finds were made, the artefacts recovered being limited to a few sherds of plain hand-made pottery and a single undecorated bronze strap-end. Radiocarbon dating produced a maximum date range for the settlement's life of between AD 200 and 1120, but as nothing Romano-British was found within the Anglo-Saxon settlement, a date after the mid fifth century seems more likely.[87] S Losco-Bradley suggests that a sixth century date is more acceptable for the beginning of the site, as this coincides with the dating of the earliest

Anglo-Saxon cemeteries in the area.[88] However, earlier burials may yet be found. The latest date of occupation is probably no later than the early tenth century because the site produced no Stamford, Derby or 'Chester' wares.

Catholme therefore represents a potentially very early Anglo-Saxon settlement which displays a high degree of planning. It can be compared to a growing body of settlements found elsewhere in the country which have many similar characteristics. For example, at West Stow in Suffolk, excavation showed Saxon settlement of the fifth and sixth centuries to lie adjacent to a Romano-British site.[89] In Hampshire, fieldwalking recovered sherds of Saxon pottery upon the sites of Roman settlements at Chalton.[90] Excavation recovered two halls and traces of other buildings with fences. Occupation between the sixth and eighth centuries seems likely, after which the settlement moved elsewhere.[91] This places Catholme within a national framework of sites which show initial Saxon settlement adjacent to Roman sites; generally fluid settlement and occupation of sophisticated and well planned timber halls.

In addition to these Saxon settlements in the eastern part of the study area, a number of cemeteries of similar date have also been discovered (Figure 14). The quantity of cemeteries, however, may in fact suggest more extensive occupation than has been found to date.

At Stapenhill, to the east of Burton-upon-Trent, a cemetery has been located at the top of a ridge of hills above the river Trent. Nineteenth century excavators found thirty-six burials, of which thirty-four were inhumations and two were cremations.[92] A few grave goods were associated with the burials including an equal-armed brooch, girdle-hangers, buckles, knives and various weapons. A few sherds of Anglo-Saxon pottery were also found in 1953. The cemetery has been dated to the sixth century.[93] In this part of the country cremation was used throughout the Anglo-Saxon period and was not a purely early phenomenon.[94] Nearby, at Stretton, in the 1860s a number of cremation burials contained within urns were revealed by gravel workings,[95] and inhumations have been found at the same place.[96]

A further inhumation cemetery was located last century at Wichnor to the south-west of Burton. Two Anglo-Saxon urns came to light in a sand pit during railway construction. These allegedly did not contain human remains, but nearby were found various artefacts including iron shield-bosses and an iron knife. The urns themselves were in trenches about four feet deep, which could have been inhumation graves.[97] In the 1920s a brooch was found associated with the cemetery, and this has been dated to the late sixth or seventh century. Nearby at Brizlincote, a similar brooch was discovered.[98]

To the north of Wichnor, a possible cremation cemetery exists at Barton-under-Needwood.[99] This was again discovered during railway construction. Urns containing human bone were set three feet deep. One contained two iron knives in addition to burnt bone. Just to the west of Burton finds of a lead weight, sherds of brown pottery and animal bone were made. An iron spearhead was also associated with this site, which was thought to be Roman. However, it is now thought that this represents another Anglo-Saxon burial judging by the appearance of the pottery.[100]

An Anglo-Saxon cremation cemetery existed on the edge of the study area at Melbourne in Derbyshire, situated on the crest of a hill overlooking the river Trent. A number of urns were located throughout an area of around fifty square yards. The site produced no grave goods.[101]

Other burial sites in this area include up to three inhumations at Bretby to the south of Repton;[102] a secondary inhumation burial in a prehistoric barrow at Oldbury in Mancetter;[103] and a doubtful account of 'the bodies of a multitude of men' found in a trench in the nineteenth century near Tamworth.[104] This latter instance is not necessarily early Anglo-Saxon.

Occasional finds also made in Staffordshire include a small bowl decorated with two pairs of neck grooves separated by a 'horse-shoe' pattern. This was found at Drakelow in Burton, the design displaying a combination of Frisian and Anglian styles, and dating to the mid sixth century.[105]

Until this point, therefore, all evidence of Anglo-Saxon presence in the study area has been limited to the eastern section. However, there is some archaeological evidence for Saxon occupation elsewhere, although not in such a concentration.

At Barlaston to the north of Stone, an inhumation burial was found in the mid nineteenth century. The grave included a bronze bowl, iron knife and sword. No other burials were found in the area.[106] The bowl was decorated with three circular enamelled escutcheons, a bronze ring print and a strip around the shoulder. The date of the bowl was originally given as sixth century as it was unflanged, but it has millefiori glass escutcheons which first appeared in the seventh century, to which date the bowl is now assigned.[107]

An isolated find of a pendant was made in 1879 at Forsbrook near Stoke-on-Trent. Fashioned from a coin of Valentinian II (AD 357 - 392), the pendant was surrounded by garnets and could have come from a burial. This find was also dated to the seventh century.[108]

The distribution and dating of these cemeteries raises some very important issues concerning the nature of Anglo-Saxon immigration. The majority of graves discovered have been dated to the sixth century and these tend to be concentrated in the eastern part of the study area (Figure 14). It should be remembered, however, that the Staffordshire/Derbyshire border underwent a large amount of gravel working and railway construction during the nineteenth century, which may have caused an imbalance in archaeological discovery. Even so, very few graves relating to the seventh century have been excavated, with the exception of those further west at Barlaston and Forsbrook. What then does this mean? The evidence discussed elsewhere makes it extremely unlikely that people disappeared from the area during the seventh century and so an alternative explanation must be found.

As Christian graves would contain no grave goods, the archaeological evidence, or lack of it, suggests the conversion of immigrants whilst they were colonising the study area. A conversion at an early stage by the Romano-British population seems very possible, given the likelihood of the survival of Christianity in western Britain in the seventh century. For example, the survival of Christianity throughout this period has been demonstrated in areas adjacent to Staffordshire, such as Worcestershire.[109] Indeed, several factors point towards the existence of a church at Lichfield before the arrival of Chad in the late 660s. J Gould points out a number of these.[110] Place-names such as Walton (discussed in Chapter 3) show the continuation of British communities in the area. More specifically, the names Eccleshall and the two examples of Exhall in Warwickshire may show the presence of Romano-British Christian communities. Documentary evidence is also of value here. An elegy to a seventh century prince of Powys, Cynddylan, mentions monks at Lichfield during the raid which was likely to have taken place before Chad's arrival. Furthermore, Bede does not state that Chad built a church at Lichfield, possibly because there was already one there.[111] The plaster burial described above may also add weight to this argument.

The conversion of the Anglo-Saxons by Romano-Britons soon after they moved into the study area, and whilst they were colonising its more westerly parts, is therefore highly feasible. This is notable as it shows the surviving Romano-British population had some degree of influence over people moving into the area and reinforces the idea of continuity between the late Roman and migration periods.

The archaeological material relating to Saxon settlement available for the south Staffordshire area is thus fairly limited. This, again, may be due to the small amount of work which has taken place across the county and also the possible failure of early excavators to recognise Saxon remains.

Nevertheless, a comparison of the late Roman and early Anglo-Saxon archaeology is still of benefit. It shows that generally similar areas were inhabited. This may partly be due to the sympathetic nature of the topography in certain areas. In the district surrounding Burton-upon-Trent both Roman and Saxon sites are located near Roman roads and the river Trent, thus having good access and water supply. The land is generally low lying and has fertile soil, being composed mainly of alluvium or Keuper Marl (Figures 2-5). The area around Lichfield displays many similar characteristics, being at the junction of Ryknild Street and Watling Street and sited upon sandstones. These produce light, well-drained and loamy soils.[112]

Various forms of continuity of land use can be seen in the area. In some cases, Romano-British occupation sites were taken over by incoming Saxons after a period of time had elapsed. A case in point is Willington. Here, however, the Roman field system was re-used. This re-use has been demonstrated elsewhere. In the area around Lichfield, a topographical study showed that many field boundaries on nineteenth century maps pre-dated the Roman road system thus making them of either early Roman or pre-Roman origin.[113] The continued use of field boundaries may point towards Romano-Britons continuing to farm the area during the migration period, which explains the survival of these features in the landscape.

There is also a likelihood of a period of co-existence between native Romano-Britons and Saxons in the study area. At Catholme, early Saxon settlers were respectful of earlier alignments of settlement and boundaries, even to the point where they occupied an area just outside the Roman site. It is possible that this indicates the native population was still living there. A similar pattern is found on other sites like West Stow and Chalton. Although many settlements appear to have been abandoned in the fourth century, a continued occupation by Romano-Britons throughout the fourth century is evidenced at Lichfield, making this situation at Catholme not unlikely. This seems to show peaceful co-existence. Thus, speculation can also be made about the boundaries of Anglo-Saxon land units which became minster parishes. For example, if the defended enclosure at _Pennocrucium_ was established in the late Roman period because of a substantial surrounding population; and it is likely that Romano-Britons continued to live in the area throughout the migration period; then it does not seem unreasonable to suppose that the boundaries relating to _Pennocrucium_ may in some way be reflected in the later land unit surrounding Penkridge.

Some evidence has come to light of middle and late Saxon activity in the royal free chapel parishes and other important centres. This may tell us something of what was happening in the area during the time that minsters were becoming established. At Tamworth, excavation of the early tenth century Aethelflaedan _burh_ revealed evidence of earlier occupation of the site. A ditch immediately below the late Saxon ramparts contained many stake-holes at various angles which did not appear to relate to the later defences. It was suggested that this secured a barrier of thorns[114] and the lack of a substantial palisade pointed towards a defence against animals or the occasional robber, rather than against serious attack. This might represent the remains of a boundary, possibly related to the Mercian royal palace complex, thought to have existed at Tamworth during the middle Saxon period.[115]

The existence at Tamworth of a high status settlement was apparently confirmed by the discovery of a watermill in Bolebridge Street. This was a very sophisticated and well-fitted mill of horizontal type built in two phases.[116] Radiocarbon dating pointed towards the eighth century for its construction and use.[117] This early date, and the high quality of workmanship, led the excavators to suggest that the mill belonged to a wealthy settlement, probably the palace complex. This may still be so, but subsequent work on the dating of the structure has produced some new results. Dendrochronological dating of the mill's timbers at Belfast suggests that it was built during the period AD 855 $\pm$ 9. This corresponds with the main era of horizontal mill construction in Ireland, and so the mill at Tamworth may not be as unusual as first thought. However, it does correspond with the period when more charters were produced at Tamworth than at any other place in England.[118]

Excavations at Stafford have so far only produced evidence of late Saxon occupation. The work carried out in St Mary's Grove, which produced Romano-British material found evidence of grain storage and bread making, and in other areas specialised activities such as butchery. A new type of Saxon pottery was found, now known as 'Stafford ware'. Its date has not yet been fixed, but it may be late Saxon.[119]

Structural analysis of St Wystan's church at Repton and excavations around it have shown much evidence of middle Saxon presence. Various studies of the standing building, carried out in conjunction with evidence from documentary sources, have shown that the earliest section of the church probably relates to the eighth or ninth century, originating in a royal burial chamber and possibly also a baptistery.[120] Excavations at the side of the church have revealed numerous graves, one of which was cut right against the foundations of the north porticus. The grave contained five silver pennies of the 860s and 870s. This shows the north porticus at least to be pre-Viking.[121] However, it is possible that the building of the wall just cut the side of the grave, or that the coins were collected and buried at a later date. The crypt itself was constructed later than circa 715 as this is the date of a sceatta sealed beneath the building.[122]

Remains of a further building and a cemetery have been discovered on the site, which are earlier than the surviving fabric of St Wystan's. A short distance from the church a mass burial was excavated which was thought to belong to members of the Great Army which wintered at Repton in 873 to 874. Underneath this burial a two-celled stone building was discovered, which originally had a plastered floor. This had been well-worn and twice repaired. The plaster contained flecks of red tile, copying Roman opus signinum cement, which was frequently used in Anglo-Saxon ecclesiastical buildings. The structure itself was of some distinction and wealth as finds of coloured window glass and moulded stucco from the walls were made. Nearby a finely carved, gilded silver disc brooch of eighth century style was found.[123] The date of the building has been given as seventh or eighth century.[124] The wealth of this structure and the fact that it was sunken, suggests that it too may have been a royal mausoleum.[125] Other early burials around this site were excavated, including one containing a sceatta from circa 725.[126]

A further discovery was made in a pit just outside the eastern wall of St Wystan's crypt. This consisted of a broken and weathered stone which had originally been carved on its four sides. The stone was probably once the upper section of a cross. One of the carvings was of the figure of a man on horseback, whose style of dress and weaponry indicates a person of royal status. The carving displayed a mixture of Imperial and Germanic fashions which placed it in the second half of the seventh century at the earliest, and more likely the early eighth century. The cross may have been thrown down at the time of the Viking army's stay at Repton in the 870s and was later buried in the pit from which it was excavated some time after the Conquest.[127] The carving adds further weight to the belief that Repton was a middle Saxon site of some importance.

Therefore, at those centres where archaeological investigation has taken place, rewards are beginning to be reaped. The detailed work at Repton has shown that the site was of religious significance throughout the middle Saxon period. Furthermore, it seems to have been a place of particular importance to the Mercian royal family.[128] Burial chambers were expensively constructed as would be appropriate to the graves of a royal line. Excavations elsewhere, such as at Tamworth and Stafford, are beginning to produce evidence of middle Saxon occupation. However, the study is again hindered by the relatively small amount of work which has been carried out within Staffordshire.

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8 Margary No 19, ibid, p 293

9 Margary No 191

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11 Chesterton in Shropshire is at SO 786 973. The course of the possible road terminates at SO 832 932. Note also road e Figure 14 which appears to run towards Metchley in Birmingham. See Ordnance Survey Map of Roman Britain, 4th edition, 1978

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At Hanchurch in Swynnerton speculation also existed about the presence there of a Romano-British church. However, as the evidence for this consists of the place-name, an undated cemetery and one sherd of Romano-British pottery, this seems unlikely. SSMR reference numbers 557 and 3564

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CONCLUSIONS

The main aim of this thesis was to discover the origins of the royal free chapels of south Staffordshire and the reasons for their special status, which first became apparent in the tenth century and which continued into the later medieval period. Denton had suggested that they originated as Anglo-Saxon minster churches, although he expanded little upon this idea.[1] It was therefore decided to explore the possibility that the royal free chapels had begun life as conventional minster churches of the sort founded in England in the seventh and eighth centuries, and if they seemed to have done so, to discover the original extent of their parochiae.

The churches at Penkridge, Gnosall, Stafford, Tettenhall, Wolverhampton, Tamworth and Quatford were examined individually, and all indeed do appear to have been minster churches. Many factors suggested this status. In several instances there was evidence of the churches having been staffed by a community of clerks at an early stage. For example, thirteen prebendary canons were recorded at Stafford and nine clerics at Penkridge in Domesday Book.[2] Furthermore, they can all be shown to have survived as unreformed secular colleges into the later medieval period.

A study of later medieval ecclesiastical documentation showed that each of the royal free chapels had had varying numbers of dependent chapels at an early stage. Some chapels were still recorded as being dependent after the Norman Conquest, whilst in other cases pensions were paid to the former mother church apparently in recognition of an ancient relationship. This type of evidence allowed the rediscovery, as far as was possible, of extensive parochiae around each of the royal free chapels. In order to delimit further the area of ecclesiastical jurisdiction covered by these churches, it was also found necessary to look at other nearby churches. For example, those at Stone and Eccleshall were similarly found to be minster churches with their own parochiae. Moreover, no churches in the locality of the royal free chapels appear to have been superior to, or superseded by, them at any time. It can therefore be concluded that the royal free chapels, or most of them (see below), had been as ancient and important as any of the other minster churches in the area.

A qualification must be made to this. Although all the royal free chapels had minster status, they were not necessarily all of the same foundation date and importance. It has been shown that in England the original framework of minster churches was modified during the Anglo-Saxon period by the establishment of lesser minsters, either by the old minsters themselves or by bishops or the king.[3] Three likely examples of this phenomenon are the churches at Gnosall, Wolverhampton and Tamworth. Although all three churches had minster status by the end of the Anglo-Saxon period, they show clear signs of having originated as lesser minsters within larger parochiae. Gnosall and Wolverhampton churches display links with Penkridge and Tettenhall respectively. In the case of Tamworth, no evidence remains to show to which other church it may once have belonged. However, as Tamworth lies very close to the parish of Lichfield, the latter is an obvious candidate for its mother church. Furthermore, this study has highlighted the fact that lesser minsters could be founded for a variety of reasons. The churches at Gnosall, Wolverhampton and Tamworth apparently all had their origins in different periods and in differing local and national circumstances (discussed in Chapter 2).

The use of multidisciplinary techniques has led to a fuller understanding of the early medieval settlement patterns of the south Staffordshire area, and has provided the context within which the later royal free chapels were founded as minster churches. Place-names have provided the main source of evidence for the continuing settlement of the area by Britons throughout the migration period and also evidence for pre-Anglo-Saxon Christianity. Archaeological information has been used to the same effect, although in south Staffordshire the low quantity and often poor quality of excavation carried out have generally lessened its value. However, it has been possible to demonstrate a degree of settlement and land use continuity between the Romano-British and Anglo-Saxon periods. Evidence for Romano-British Christianity in the Lichfield area in particular suggests that the Anglo-Saxons were moving into an area where Christian enclaves survived. Indeed, it may have been the pre-Anglo-Saxon Christian importance of Lichfield which influenced the siting of the permanent see there, rather than for example, at nearby Tamworth or elsewhere.[4]

The Romano-British organisation may have influenced the siting of other early settlements. For example, the need for and establishment of the defended enclosure at Pennocrucium in the late Roman period suggests a substantial surrounding population, some of whom must have remained in the area during the migration period for the place-name to have survived in Penkridge.[5] The existence of Pennocrucium may therefore have been influential in some way in the siting and layout of Penkirdge itself. Therefore, it has been demonstrated that the majority of later medieval royal free chapels originated as middle Saxon minster churches which were founded within an already well organised and ancient landscape.

Two further issues were raised in the Introduction. These were the related questions of, firstly, why there was such a concentration of royal free chapels in south Staffordshire; and, secondly, why these churches took on such importance during the tenth century and thereafter, if they originated as conventional middle Saxon minster churches. The answers to these questions may well have a wider historical significance than for the study area alone.

This thesis has concentrated not only upon the royal free chapels, but also upon other, adjacent centres which were clearly of great importance to the kingdom of Mercia. Lichfield was a major early ecclesiastical centre - the seat of a bishopric; Repton, another minster centre, was also a favoured burial site for Mercian royalty; and Tamworth contained a middle Saxon palace complex and Mercian administrative centre.[6] The position of the churches, later called royal free chapels, immediately adjacent to these other major Mercian centres, so that together they formed a cohesive block of seemingly early royal land of both ecclesiastical and administrative importance, is therefore of great significance.

It is believed that the major middle Saxon kingdoms were mainly formed out of the fusing together of <u>regiones</u> or <u>provinciae</u>. These were large areas of land within which there was some form of administrative cohesion.[7] For example, it has been demonstrated that a substantial district around Winchcombe formed such a <u>regio</u>. It contained the most anciently held land of the Hwiccian royal family which they attempted to keep intact for as long as possible. This area probably formed the heartland of the kingdom of the Hwicce.[8] The area of central and southern Staffordshire seems to have been of similar importance within Mercia. The close proximity of so many major Mercian centres suggests that it may have contained the oldest family lands of the Mercian royal family. The royal free chapels may therefore have been their earliest family churches.

It is therefore possible that this block of land delimits the heartland of middle Saxon Mercia. The area itself is topographically well defined. It is a lowland area surrounded by natural borders of higher ground, and it provides the best agricultural land available in Staffordshire. Furthermore, it is well served by routes of access in the shape of major Roman roads and rivers. It would therefore appear to be very favourable to rapid penetration and settlement in the first medieval centuries.

It is quite possible that the extravagant claims made by later medieval kings, to the effect that their royal free chapels had a very early, even pre-episcopal, royal foundation, held some vestiges of truth in some instances - even if the precise significance had long been forgotten. The claims may have contained a faint echo of the past, remembering that some of the later royal free chapels were founded at a time when bishops were peripatetic, prior to the establishment of the Mercian see at Lichfield in 669.[9] This may throw light upon the way in which Christianity was first established in Mercia. Furthermore, the belief in a pre-episcopal, royal foundation, would explain why later medieval kings did not recognise the authority of bishops within the royal free chapels.

A further element can be added to the proper explanation of the special status of the royal free chapels in Staffordshire, and their continuing importance. The south Staffordshire area was of vital importance to the West Saxons in their bid to hold down and conquer Mercia. After Edward the Elder's victory over Northumbrian Vikings at Tettenhall in 910, he set about consolidating his hold over Mercia. His sister Aethelflaed continued building a series of <u>burhs</u> in the area, for example, those at Stafford and Tamworth were started in 913. Following her death in 918, Edward occupied Tamworth and continued his policy of <u>burh</u> building and subjugation.[10] It is interesting to note that <u>burhs</u> were built at Stafford and Tamworth - both places with royal free chapels - and conceivably also at Wolverhampton.[11] Furthermore, the alleged association of some of these churches with Edward's son Eadred, and also with

Edgar, could stem from the patronage they may have given these churches, in the form of land or other wealth and special protection, as part of their wider policy. The royal free chapels escaped reformation along Benedictine lines in the tenth century, but they may still have enjoyed the concomitant material benefits of refoundation.

Therefore, given the importance of the south Staffordshire area to both the Mercian and West Saxon royal families during the Anglo-Saxon period, it is not surprising that the royal free chapels were of such importance to later medieval kings. This study has also thrown light upon another aspect of the history of minster churches in general. The royal free chapels were the exception which proved the rule concerning the fortunes of Anglo-Saxon minsters. By the later medieval period most minster churches had declined, so that they were in most respects indistinguishable from ordinary parish churches or religious houses.[12] However, the status of the royal free chapels, far from having decayed, was in fact enhanced during the later medieval period, as a consequence of their exceptional early histories.

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2 Hawkins and Rumble, Domesday Book: Staffordshire, 6.1 and 7.17

3 Brooke, 'Rural ecclesiastical institutions in England', pp 695-96

4 For a fuller discussion of this see Bassett, 'Churches in Worcester before and after the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons'

5 See Chapter 3

6 See Chapters 2 and 4

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9 Colgrave and Mynors, Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People, iv.3 and Godfrey, The Church in Anglo-Saxon England, Chapter 5

10 ed J Campbell, The Anglo-Saxons, 1982, pp160-161

11 See Chapter 2

12 Blair, 'Secular minster churches', p 105

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

OE	Old English
OS	Old Scandinavian
PRO	Public Record Office
PW	Primitive Welsh
SHC	Staffordshire Historical Collections
SSMR	Staffordshire Sites and Monuments Record
VCH	Victoria County History
WSL	William Salt Library
WSMR	Warwickshire Sites and Monuments Record

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