The origins of Leicestershire: churches, territories, and landscape

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Introduction

In the decades since our introduction to Glanville Jones's 'multiple estate' (Jones 1961) and John Blair's minster parish (Blair 1988),[1] attempts to identify Leicestershire's earliest churches and pre-hundredal structures have mainly concentrated on area studies.[2] Blair himself notes how some 'relatively settled' areas such as Leicestershire 'still seem very thin' in their number of minsters, asking 'whether the contrast is simply in the surviving sources' (Blair 2005, 152, 315-6). While the national and regional pictures remain incomplete,[3] uncertainty clings to the shape of religious provision before and after the Augustinian mission, the process of Christianisation, the extent of Danish colonisation, the impact of reforms, and the emergence of the parochial network. This ramifies back and forth with secular matters: cultural identity, nucleation, manorialisation, and here the existence of Leicestershire itself.

Locating pre-Conquest churches is not the issue. By the eleventh century few places were more than a reasonable if lengthy walk from a church (Parsons 1996, 11-35). The number looks similar to that of 'small hundreds' and *villae integrae* (taxation units) two centuries later. One persistent explanation for the deeper problem is that Danish incomers so disrupted and reorganised the territorial landscape that earlier arrangements are impossible to recover. Archaeology is now challenging this. Neat parcelling-out of the landscape need not be Danish. Like the open fields, it may be older.[4]

Rather than 'Where are the minsters?' better to ask 'What territories were served by minsters?' Can they be identified and their extents estimated?[5] Can they be categorised? Sub-kingdoms, provinces, folk territories, and *regiones* (Bassett 1993; Hooke 1998) are not easily distinguished from each other and from hundreds and wapentakes. Moreover, a network of minsters, monastic or secular, with neatly dovetailing *parochiæ*, will not alone reveal the ancient devotional landscape. Places of religious or ritual resort came in many guises. What became Leicestershire had a richly varied religious geography as this study shows, but we should expect it from continental evidence. In southern Germany, for example, churches were first built at fords or crossroads, hilltops, burial barrows, or springs for baptism, 'perhaps the pre-Christian centres of *gaue* or hundreds' (Wood 2005, 79-80).

Furthermore, the idea that lords' churches, *eigenkirchen*, emerged in England only in the century or so before the Norman Conquest looks increasingly vunerable. Numerous places in Leicestershire appear likely to have been furnished much earlier with churches, oratories or chapels supplementary to episcopal and 'proto-parochial', minster provision. Again, continental evidence supports this. Wilfrid, bishop in Leicester *circa* 692-706, spent time in Francia like many other English clerics, exposed to a pattern of church provision already two centuries in the making.

1 Jones 1961, 'Settlement Patterns in Anglo-Saxon England', was reassessed by Barnwell and Roberts 2011, alongside some of his seminal texts. See also Barrow's 'small shires' (Barrow 1973). Blair 1988 (ed), Minsters and Parish Churches: The Local Church in Transition, 950-1200, was reviewed by Cambridge and Rollason 1995, 87–104. For additional reading see Blair 2005.

2 Roffe 1996, 107-20; Foss 1996, 83-105; Phythian-Adams 1978 [on Claybrooke and district]; Bowman 2004, 105-36 [on south-east Leicestershire].

3 Comparative studies include Foard 1985, 185-222; Everitt 1986; Croom 1988; Hase 1988; Blair 1991; Pitt 1999; Hall 2000; Hadley 2000; Winchester 2008, 14-21.

4 See for example Oosthuizen 2006 and 2013, and her contribution and others' in Higham and Ryan 2010.

5 Bassett who discusses this issue (2007a, 115-42) has reconstructed early Midland *parochiæ* elsewhere, arguing for Romano-British diocesan origins in some cases. See also Bassett 1989, 225-56; 1991, 1-23; 1992a, 14-15; 1992b,13-40; 2000, 1-27. My matching conclusion about Worcester is in Jones 1996. Bassett's westernmost *parochiæ* can be fitted into a series of large early units along, and mostly spanning the Severn from Bristol to north-east Wales.

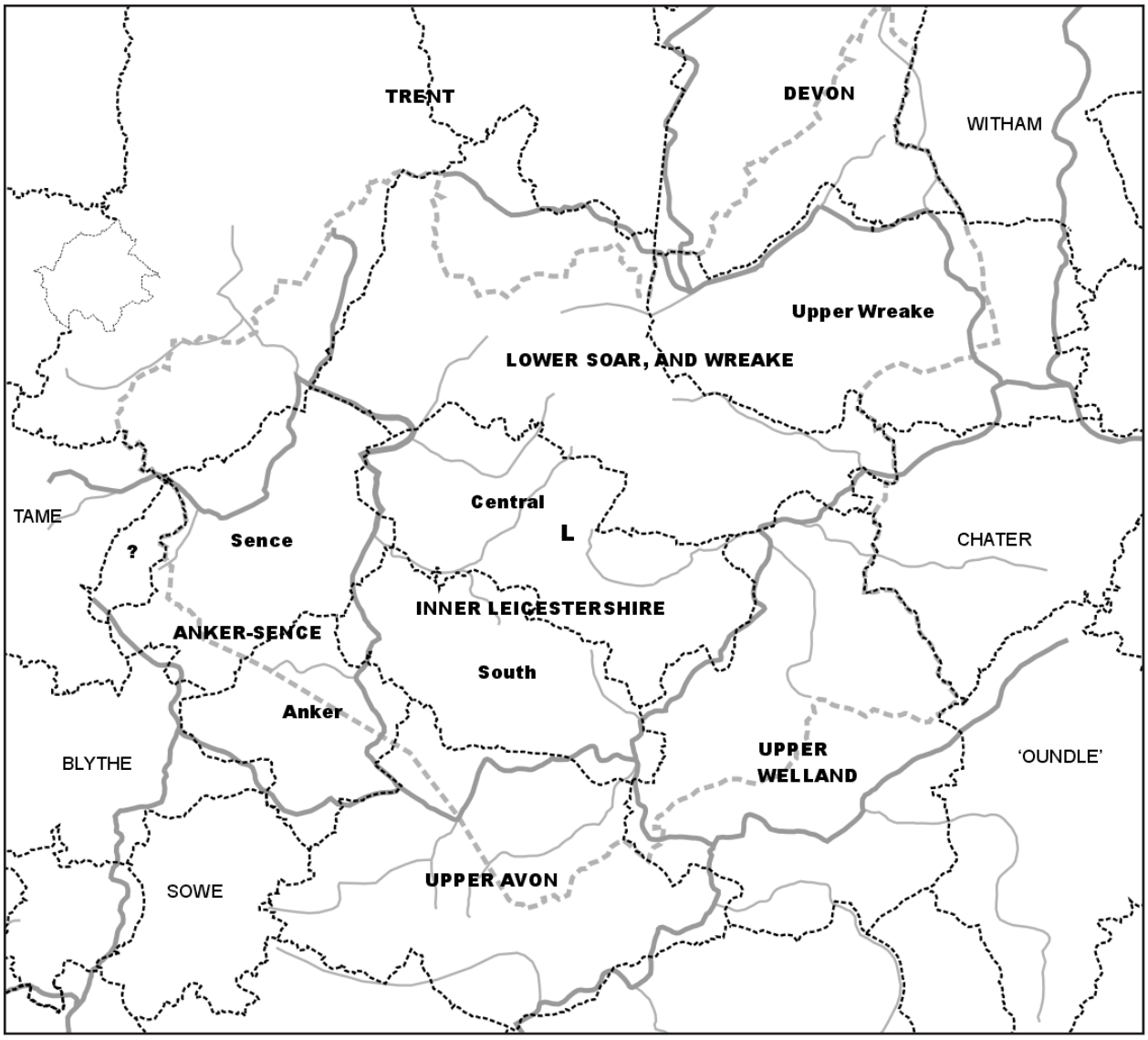

Figure 1: Hypothetical districts (broken black lines) mapped against principal and secondary watersheds south of the Trent (dark tint) and Leicestershire's county boundary (lighter, broken tint).

As Susan Wood describes, in Frankish cities (generally places with a Roman past, like Leicester) baptisms took place in the cathedral or an attendant baptistery; further basilicas, closely tied to the cathedral, housed honoured relics; others marked burial places – often of a revered bishop – outside the walls (Wood, *op. cit.*). In the country, the parish church serving a large area was normally in a *vicus*, a substantial rural settlement, often a pre-Christian cult centre; it had probably been built by order of the bishop or count (the English ealdorman's counterpart), and was staffed and maintained by the bishop. An increasing phenomenon was the private oratory, built by a landlord on his villa, probably for his own and his household's convenience rather than for his tenants. The household had to attend the cathedral or parish church for the great feasts and almost certainly for baptism.

The word *parochia* still meant primarily the bishop's territory, or a large, loosely defined region within it served by what was almost a subsidiary cathedral. However the Council of Orleans in 541 spoke of 'parishes constituted in the houses of powerful men' and of 'anyone having or asking to have a parish (*diocesim*) in his land'. Similarly, when Wilfrid visited Rome, he would have passed through a countryside where the beginnings of a 'growing swarm of small private churches' was adding to Italy's network of important baptismal churches (*plebes*, vernacular *pievi*) under episcopal control, with their own dependent oratories (Wood 2005, 66-67, 86). In Switzerland and Bavaria, 100 churches have been discovered to have origins *circa* 600-750. Local nobility were 'busy studding the landscape with proprietary churches in which they could receive lavish burial' (Burnell and Jones 1999, 83-106 at 88).

Recovering Leicestershire's pastoral centres and related territories is hampered by a county boundary which everywhere looks artificial, permeable, the result of arbitrary expansions or contractions. Though the geography of the Midland shires is thought likely to perpetuate aspects of 'military territories which surrounded the fortified settlements of the kingdom of Mercia' (Bassett 2007b, 53-85, fn 78), Leicestershire 'probably evolved in the tenth century', no earlier than Edward the Elder's conquest of the Danelaw *circa* 920, and with the use of Watling Street to divide English from Danish Mercia dated to 886-913 'in the course of unchronicled struggles and negotiation' (Stafford 1985, 137). Significantly, then, parish or township boundaries transgress both Watling Street (itself diverting from a natural feature, the Severn-Trent watershed)[6] and the Welland, and the shire boundary along the Soar arguably truncates a *regio*. The Eye Brook gives way to a 'weak' boundary across headwaters of the Chater. Neither Sewstern Lane nor the watershed of the Witham is respected. The boundary with Nottinghamshire intrudes into the Vale of Belvoir. Townships were shared with Derbyshire, and so on.

Paradoxically this strange boundary is a help, because it frees the observer to allow for earlier land-units – with central places served by major churches – which ignore it. Clues to such units include clustered place-names suggesting function, specialism or location, like Charlton, Hardwick, Norton.[7] Peter Sawyer argued that *tūn* names were intrinsically subsidiary by the mid-Anglo-Saxon period, *circa* 650-85 (Sawyer 1979), the 'long eighth century' which Stephen Rippon associates with large-scale investment in landscape management (Rippon 2010, 39-64). Place-names alluding to churches, e.g. Kirkby and Misterton, may occupy the same category, though they may pinpoint provisioning rather than church locations. Paul Cullen, Richard Jones and David Parsons have recently concluded that *býr* names represent pastoral colonisation and *thorps* arable (Cullen *et al*, 2011, 110-11, 127-32). Peripheries may be indicated by names in *-worth*, 'small, single homesteads, often in remote situations' (Smith 1970, 274; Hooke 1996, 85-87), though circumstance could promote their status, as at Market Bosworth and Tamworth.

Fragmented mother parishes are evidenced by former chapelries (Phillimore 1912; VCH 1905-64; Nichols 1795-1811; Humphery-Smith 1984), payments in lieu of lost income, and two-and three-fold geographical separation[8] of central-place or proto-urban functions: court, church, and market. The latter often evolved from king's *tūns*, collection centres for food rents or renders, often the reeve's vill rather than the king's (Sawyer 1983, 273-99). Sunday markets, originally in the churchyard and archaic in the twelfth century, may be diagnostic. Parishes spanning rivers where this is not the norm may survive from trans-riverine units. Boundaries can be eloquent (Winchester 2000; Richardson 1996): whether weak and meandering, strongly fixed, e.g. on watercourses and ridges, or suggestive of partition – zig-zagging as through open-field furlongs, coming close to the church, panhandled, etc.[9] In areas of gentle topography, curvilinear churchyards seem diagnostic of older managed landscapes than the rectilinearly planned, nucleated villages of Midland England. Hilltop, spring-head, riverside and isolated churches also speak differently to those slotted into planned villages. Those with floors level with, or raised above, their yards may have different origins (on man-made mounds, for example?) from those which are sunken.

Hundreds and wapentakes may preserve ancient entities, but their quartering of Leicestershire looks like a consequence of shiring. Wariness is also needed when using Domesday (Morris 1976-79). Cadastral architecture – the mathematical relationship

6 Examples of such boundary transgressions are reviewed by Williamson 2012, 94-97.

7 Place-name interpretations rely on Cox, 1998-2009, The Place-Names of Leicestershire, English Place-Names Survey 75, 78, 81, 84, and Cox 2005, A Dictionary of Leicestershire and Rutland Place-Names; also on Ekwall 1960; Watts 2004. On relational names, Finberg 1964, 144-50.

8 The late Mick Aston's term was 'dispersal' (Aston 1985).

9 For a map view of this see Roger Kain and Richard Oliver (2001), 'Historic Parishes of England and Wales: an Electronic Map of Boundaries before 1850 with a Gazetteer and Metadata', held online at the UK Data Archive http://discover.ukdataservice.ac.uk/ - access at subscribing institutions or registration required for use. Large-scale nineteenth-century Ordnance Survey mapping is on-line at the University of Edinburgh Edina archive and can be accessed at subscribing institutions via http://edina.ac.uk/.

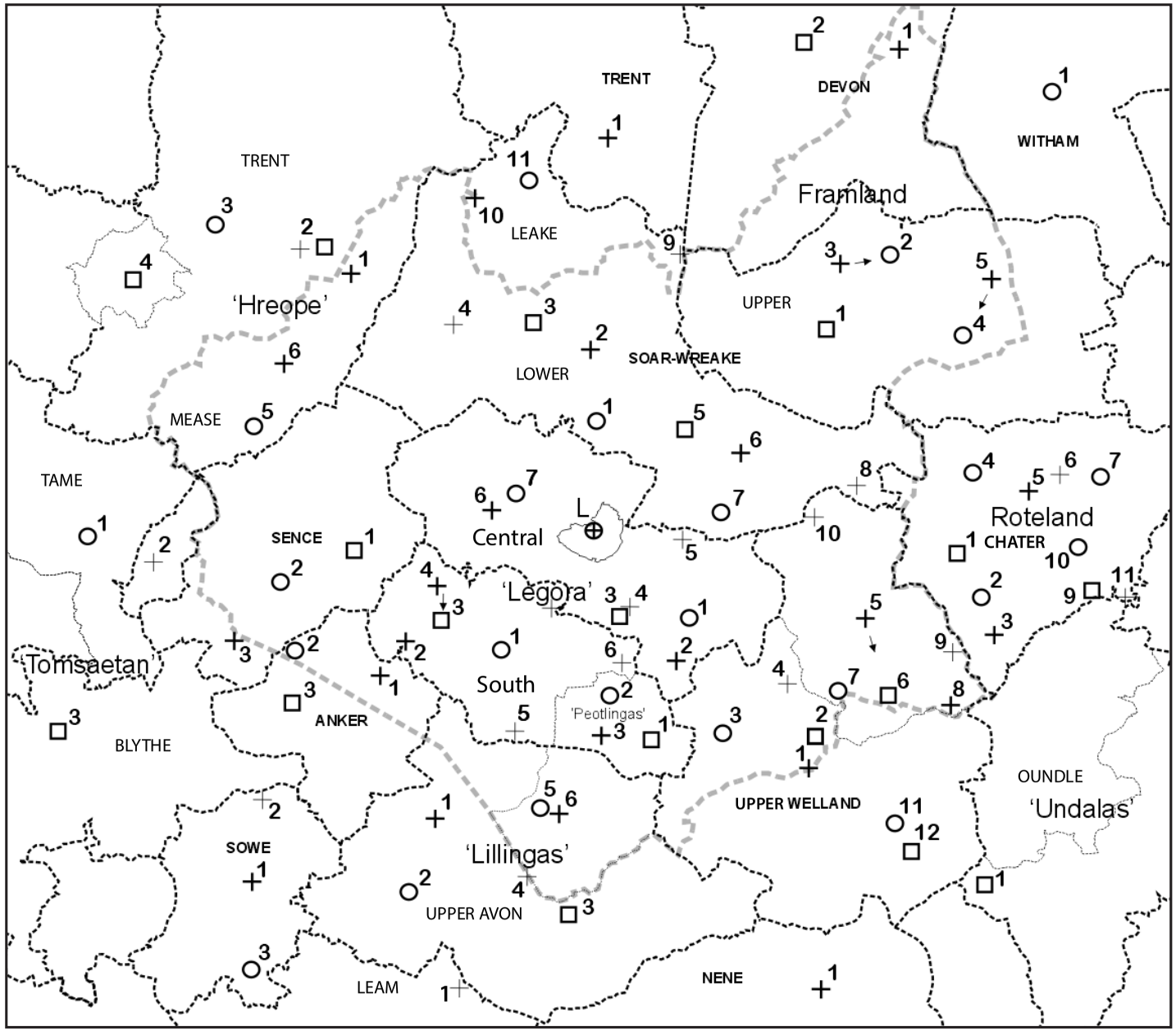

Figure 2: Early churches and hypothetical districts based on mother church parishes and other evidence: a framework for future investigation. Boundaries are provisional, problematic, intuitive, and in places doubtless the result of misinterpretation. No contemporaneity or permanence is implied. Districts are labelled by major river(s) and by folk or kin name. Church-site classifications are similarly provisional, some certain but others intuitive. This is not a definitive list.

Squares □= administrative centres

Circles ○= hall places

Bold crosses ✚ = mother churches

Arrows ➔ = relationships at a sub-district level.

Light crosses ┼ = churches with potentially significant non-parochial origins.

External Ring of Primary Churches

Tame/ Blythe/'Tomsaetan'

1 Tamworth ○
2 Polesworth +
3 Coleshill □
Not shown: Lichfield ✚

Coventry/'Sowe'

1 Coventry ✚
2 Exhall +
3 Stoneleigh ○

Leam

1 Offcurch

Nene

1 Brixworth ✚
Not shown: 1 Daventry +

Oundle/'Undalas'

1 Kettering □
Not shown: Oundle ✚

Peterborough

Not shown: Peterborough ✚

Chater/'Roteland'

1 Ridlington □
2 Uppingham ○
3 Lyddington ✚
4 Oakham ○
5 Hambleton ✚
6 Whitwell +
7 Empingham ○
8 Stamford □
9 Barrowden □
10 North Luffenham ○
11 Tixover +

Witham

1 Grantham ○

Outer Leicestershire

Trent Valley/'Hreope'

1 Breedon ✚
2 Melbourne +□
3 Repton ○
4 Burton on Trent □
5 Measham ○
6 Ashby-de-la-Zouch ✚
Not shown: Southwell ✚

Sence

1 Market Bosworth □
2 Sibson ○
3 Mancetter ✚

Anker

1 Hinckley ✚
2 Higham-on-the-Hill ○
3 Nuneaton □

Upper Avon/'Lillingas'

1 Monks Kirby ✚
2 Newnham ○
3 Lilbourne □
4 Holywell (Caves Inn, Tripontium) +
5 Lutterworth ○
6 Misterton ✚

Upper Welland

1 Market Harborough (St Mary in Arden) ✚
2 Great Bowden □
3 Gumley ○
4 Church Langton +
5 Hallaton ✚
6 Medbourne □
7 Welham ○
8 Bringhurst ✚
9 Holyoaks (Mirabel) +
10 Tilton +
11 Desborough ○
12 Rothwell □

Northern Leicestershire

Upper Wreake (Eye)/ Framland

1 Melton Mowbray □
2 Waltham-on-the-Wolds ○
3 Scalford ✚
4 Wymondham ○
5 Buckminster ✚

Devon

1 Bottesford ✚
2 Orston □

Lower Soar and lower Wreake

1 Rothley ○
2 Barrow-upon-Soar ✚
3 Loughborough □
4 Shepshed +
5 Queniborough □
6 South Croxton ✚
7 Keyham ○
8 Owston +
9 Willoughby-on-the-Wolds (Vernemeton) +
10 Ratcliffe-on-Soar ✚
11 Gotham ○

Trent

1 Flawforth ✚

Inner Leicestershire/ Legora

South

1 Croft ○
2 Barwell ✚
3 Earl Shilton □
4 Kirkby Mallory ✚
5 Leire +
6 Foston +

Lower Sence/ 'Peotlingas'

1 Knaptoft □
2 Peatling Magna ○
3 Peatling Parva ✚

Central Sector

1 Great Glen ○
2 Wistow ✚
3 Wigston Magna (All Saints) □
4 Wigston Magna (St Wigstan) +
5 Thurnby +
6 Ratby ✚
7 Groby ○

Leicester (L)

'St Nicholas'
St Mary in Castro
St Margaret

of fiscal obligations to tenurial and other land-units - is another useful technique (Hart 1992; 1968, 55-66; 1970; 1974). It nevertheless carries a caveat about mistaking eleventh-century conditions for something older. Large districts, multiple estates, and landed units approximating to minster parishes share similarities which make them difficult to differentiate: heavily exploited cores and a generally upland, pastoral periphery. Often high-status functions survived around the estate caput; and sometimes archaic tenures involving renders and obligations to kings or earls (the latter succeeding sub-kings in the west Midlands and wielding regal power in palatine counties). Smaller sub-hundredal groupings of vills included land booked out to ministers and clerics, while on smaller estates everywhere upland and lowland settlements were linked by common lordship. In the background are Romano-British estates, corresponding with the Merovingian 'villa-region' in which the *mansus* was the basic unit of settlement (Halsall 2007, 221). Conflating evidence is a continual risk, but only by bringing data together can threads be disentangled.

Scientific study of church and other religious dedications shows that they carried specific associations (Jones 2007)[10] and that superior centres generally adopted superior cults: Peter and Paul, representing *Romanitas*, civic (royal) authority; Michael, captain of heavenly hosts (hilltops), angel of death (cemeteries) and baptism/healing (riversides, pools); Andrew, mission and baptism (revered by Augustine's master, Gregory the Great, and by Wilfrid); John the Baptist, baptism, wood-pasture; and Mary at the earliest periods, associated with arable and harvest (Assumption, August 15, and Nativity, September 9) as well as the motherhood of Christ. Especially significant are the apostle Bartholomew, legendary appropriator of temples for Christian worship, and Helen, mother of Constantine. She represents ideal monarchy (her portrait was imitated on coins for Offa's consort Cynethryth, unique in Anglo-Saxon England) and perhaps pastoral wealth. St Helen's-Day-in-the-Spring, May 3, began annual Pennine migration with cattle to high summer pastures, and followed Beltaine – May Day in Celtic-speaking lands, when pre-Norman cattle renders, 'Beltancu' in Lancashire, *treth calan mai* in Wales, and elsewhere 'cornage' or 'noutgeld', were due to the king's reeves.

Territorial boundaries often shadowed watersheds and Figure 1 shows hypothetical districts mapped against principal and secondary watersheds. Pre-industrial communities were self-resourcing, accessing river-meadows and high pastures and benefiting from secure, shared river routes with optimally organised market hinterlands. They are primary building blocks for the cultural provinces or regional societies argued by Charles Phythian-Adams (1993, 2007). This survey is therefore organised around drainages. Figure 2 locates churches within these drainages and should be referred to for locations in the survey that follows.

After detailing the ring of primary churches outside the county, the survey first examines 'Outer Leicestershire': the Trent drainage (including Breedon and Ashby-de-la-Zouch districts), the Market Bosworth and Hinckley/Nuneaton districts in the Anker and Sence drainage, the Lutterworth district on the upper Avon, and Market Harborough's on the upper Welland. It then addresses those areas drained by the Soar and Wreake: 'Northern Leicestershire' on the Wreake and lower Soar (plus Bottesford and other vills in the Vale of Belvoir), and finally 'Inner Leicestershire' on the upper Soar and including Leicester itself.

The external ring of 'primary' churches

Tame-Blythe/'Tomsaetan'

Beyond Leicestershire lay a ring of large pre-Conquest units served by major churches (for overview see Parsons 2001, 50ff). **Lichfield**, where St Michael's pre-dated Chad's cathedral of *circa* 670 (Mary, then Peter) (Bassett 1992b), had Tamworth as its corresponding royal vill with a secondary minster, originally St Edith's nunnery, at **Polesworth**. Facing across the Tame-Blythe confluence are **Coleshill** (Peter and Paul), centre of a royal estate and large parish with a Sunday market, and Curdworth to the north (not shown on map), whose name echoes that of Penda's grandfather Creoda.

10 For the dedications cited in this study see the on-line datasets of TASC, the project for a Transnational Database and Atlas of Saints' Cults, at Leicester University: http://www.le.ac.uk/users/grj1/tasc.html; and the UK Data Service, deposit 4975.

Sowe

Coventry's minster was perhaps of eighth/ninth-century date (*op. cit.*), though Exhall, on its *parochia*'s northern edge, 'angle of land pertaining to an *ecclesia*', looks older. Stoneleigh, to the south of Coventry, is the matching royal estate. Lichfield and Coventry were country places in landscapes with ritual potential: 'open field/veldt in a grey forest' (Letocetum, modern Wall on Watling Street), and Cofa's tree, both on hills with adjacent pools and Michael churches.

Leam

Offa's name marks **Offchurch**, overlooking the Fosse west of Southam. St Gregory's was linked to the cult of Offa's supposed son Fremund. Dunchurch (Peter) on Dunsmore, just south of Rugby, is the other place in the Leam valley defined by religious activity.

Nene

On the Nene side of its watershed with the Leam is **Daventry**. Holy Cross stood in a strikingly curvilinear yard off the main thoroughfare, west of a large Iron-Age enclosure overlooking Romano-British Bannaventa on Watling Street. However, Fawley was the hundredal mother church and Weedon, *wēoh dūn* (Peter and Paul), the royal vill – given to Penda's granddaughter St Wærburh, with her disciple Alnoth enshrined at adjacent Stowe.

Chapelries, place-names, and boundary patterns suggest **Brixworth**'s *parochia* marched on the east with that of **Kettering** (Peter and Paul). Northampton itself might once have been served from Brixworth, with St Peter's as a royal chapel. Visible for miles, Brixworth church sits on a ridge above a pool. Its patronal cult, All Saints, was promoted at Rome *circa* 800. Had it once honoured Michael?

Oundle ('Undalas')/Peterborough

Oundle (Peter and Paul), with a Sunday market and eight hundreds, doubtless the *provincia* reported by Bede, was one of Wilfrid's federated monasteries. Across the Nene was a Romano-British settlement.

Peterborough minster (Peter and Paul, probably Andrew earlier) was founded at Medehamstede by king Peada in 655. Nearby on the Welland is Flag Fen, a prehistoric ritual complex. Peterborough, a soke centre, lay downstream from Romano-British **Castor**, Cyneburh's monastery.

Roteland/Chater

Rutland is divided by a major watershed. Its northern streams feed the Wreake, so Alstoe hundred is considered with Leicestershire. In the south, *Roteland*, dowry of English queen-consorts (Phythian-Adams, 1977, 63-84), the Chater and tributaries converge with the Welland. Uppingham, '*hām* of the upland dwellers' (Peter and Paul) with 'Thor's *leāh*' to the west, had pilgrimages to St Mary's spring and a church image of Michael. It formed a church-manor pair with its chapelry, Queen Edith's soke-centre of Ridlington (Andrew). However, adjacent Preston's name suggests an early church-place also, and immediately south of Uppingham is the Bishop of Lincoln's manor of Lyddington (Andrew) (see also Upper Welland).

Edith's manors of Oakham and Hambleton look like poles of a Vale of Catmose estate divided off from a larger territory dependent on the king's manor of Empingham, pivotal to *Roteland* and where St Peter's churchyard lies on the south of a playing-card shaped settlement core, with 'Old Prebendal House' sandwiched between the church and a chapel of St Botolph. Oakham had fairs of John the Baptist and the Invention of the Holy Cross ('St Helen's-in-the-Spring'. Helen was patron of a pilgrimage chapel at nearby Langham). Oakham and Hambleton's churches were Domesday possessions of a King's Clerk, Albert of Lorraine. This marks minster status for one of them, probably **Hambleton** (Andrew), mother church of the royal chapel of St Peter at Stamford and probably also once of Whitwell, named after the spring which flowed under its hilltop church of Michael.

Parochial topography around **Stamford** clearly predates its attachment to Lincolnshire. The boundaries of St Michael's, one of fourteen medieval parishes, make sense in relation to those of the Castertons (Peter and Paul at Great Casterton, a Romano-British walled settlement) and Ryhall, with its local saint Tybba. St Michael's also spans the Welland, extending into, and thus again predating the soke of Peterborough, as far as Wittering, named from the Witheringas, a people of the Tribal Hidage.

A further folk-name, the Hwicce, was preserved in Witchley Hundred, chiefly along the Welland between Stamford and the Eye Brook. **Barrowden** ('tumuli *dūn*') (Peter)

was the Domesday royal soke centre. North Luffenham (John Baptist) belonged to the Queen. Here the advowson went with Oakham Castle, while a churchyard-chapel of Mary had its own burial ground. Tixover's isolated church beside the Welland – a chapel of Ketton, first-named royal Domesday manor of Northamptonshire and Rutland – has an extremely rare patron, St Faith.

East and north of Rutland, extensive districts were served by the churches of **Bourne** (Peter and Paul), supposedly patrimony of Hereward the Wake, and **Grantham**, another possession of Queen Edith. Its enshrined patron Wulfram arrived in the tenth century: the church had a rare chantry of Peter, and another of John the Baptist (see Bottesford, below). A number of seventh-century *parochiæ* along the Trent complete the circle, beginning with the minster parish of **Southwell** (Mary), supposedly founded by Paulinus, *circa* 627. The others follow.

1. 'Outer Leicestershire'

Trent Valley/'Hreope'

Leicestershire's best-known early church, **Breedon**'s hilltop minster founded in an Iron-Age fort by the *princeps* Frithuric *circa* 700 (Stenton 1970, 158; Foot 2006, 275), associates more easily with Derbyshire. A strong boundary divided its medieval parish from those of the lower Soar, and significantly coincides with the watershed which also encloses its western, Derbyshire neighbour Melbourne (Michael). A royal demesne manor in 1066, Melbourne had extensive berewicks on the opposite side of the Trent which interlocked with outlying portions of **Derby**'s parishes of Michael and Peter (two of six churches there in 1086). Derby's earlier name, Northworthy, locates it more easily within the Melbourne estate than in relation to Tamworth, a presumption based on Breedon's foundation by a prince of the Tomsaetan, 'dwellers on the Tame'.

Westward there is no clear demarcation between Melbourne's estate and the large area linked manorially and ecclesiastically to **Repton** (Wi[g]stan), five miles away. (Was Leicestershire's boundary drawn to separate Breedon's 20 hides, previously joined to Repton's 30?) Repton's minster was operating by *circa* 600 (according to tradition), or *circa* 700 from a further land-grant by Frithuric, and became a royal mausoleum (Biddle 1992) – Wigstan was enshrined there. Its assets included lead mines in the Peak, and its *parochia* appears to have included another minster at **Burton-on-Trent** (Tringham 2003, 3-5, 48-53). Here too the Trent is spanned, and Burton's ancient parish, pushing into Needwood, comes tantalisingly close to that of **Hanbury**. The latter, on a major Trent tributary, the Derwent, was Wærburh's first burial-place. Together with nearby Tetbury it is best seen in the context of a Mercian royal territory.

Burton, like neighbouring Newton, Barton, Walton, Stretton, and Stanton, has a name indicating subsidiarity; a reeve's *tūn*, perhaps? Repton's name hints at territorial identity: 'hill of the people called Hreope or Hrype'. How they related to the 'dwellers on the Tame' is difficult to assess. Their name is Germanic, while '*saetan*' peoples have been characterised as occupying land where British populations remained an important part of the social mix.

Breedon's patrons are Mary and a prince Hardwulf, one of four saints venerated there. The others were Fretheric (Frithuric), Cotta, and Benna. Beonna (another form of the shortened name), ruler of East Anglia *circa* 758, may be Beornred, briefly ruler of Mercia in 757 after the murder at Seckington of king Æthelbald (Archibald, Fenwick and Cowell 1996, 1-19). However, Breedon's original patron was probably Andrew, as at Burton and also Peterborough, whose monks established the minster (one of Breedon's townships was Andreskirk). A shared association with 'Celtic' saints is striking: David at Repton, Modwen at Burton, Brigid at Stanton on a principal approach to Breedon (whose name is a British-Anglian hybrid). Margery Tranter has pointed out the place-names Walton, Bretby and Ingleby (Tranter 2003). An intriguing Welsh tradition described Guthlac, alumnus of Repton and son of Penwalh ('chief of the British speakers'), sojourning at Llangollen in Powys, perhaps in exile.

Mease valley

Repton's *parochia* included places in the catchment of the Mease, which flows into the Trent less than a mile downstream from the confluence with the Tame. Here are the Seals (Netherseal, Overseal), townships complicatedly divided between Derbyshire and Leicestershire and interdigitating with the large parish of **Ashby de la Zouch** (Helen).

Together they make a compact unit, a further such unit including Measham in Derbyshire, a royal Domesday manor, and bordering Ashby's southern neighbour Packington in Leicestershire (Helen also). The 'ash-tree place' had a St Anne's well and the local place-name Prestop, (?)'priest's valley'. Were Ashby and Measham a church-manor pair?

Anker-Sence drainage

Sence

The southernmost vills of the Mease group link more easily with a royal estate dominating the basin of the Sence, chief tributary of the Anker, itself a tributary of the Tame. (Appleby, problematically, divides between this group and Measham's.) The administrative centre, **Market Bosworth**, 'of the Queen's Holding' in 1086, was surrounded by clustered chapelries and relational and specialist vills. They include Congerstone ('king's *tūn*'), Carlton, Barton, Shenton, '*tūn* on the Sence', and the 'new hall', Newbold Verdon. (Angus Winchester has linked *boðl* names to bode-service - watching duty (Winchester 2008, 18-19). Newbold is on a three-way watershed at the district's edge.) Bosworth church (Peter and Paul) had long-surviving collegiality (a priest and deacon in 1086), a curvilinear yard, and a nearby spring. Sibson, 'Sigeberht's *dūn*' (Botolph), on the Sence looks a likely secular counterpart, with adjacent Wellsborough, 'the wheel hill', as a hypothetical place of assembly and ritual – around a henge? Sibson's parish reached **Mancetter** (Manduesseum) on Watling Street, where the walled settlement has produced a mid-fifth century coin, while St Peter's and the manor house stand within a related fort. Sheepy parish, from which Sibson may have separated, spanned the road, the Anker, and the shire boundary, pre-dating it therefore. Mancetter and its chapelries Atherstone (Æthelred's *tūn*) and Oldbury (named from a hillfort), all in Warwickshire, complete a coherent territory and offer a plausible narrative: a Romano-British Christian presence relocated to Mancetter's fort but eclipsed as secular power moved to Atherstone and then Bosworth. If Æthelred is the Mercian ruler who agreed a boundary with the Danes and married Alfred's daughter Æthelflæd, both Atherstone's preservation within English Mercia and Bosworth's membership of the Queen's Holding make sense. Eight miles up Watling Street at the Anker's confluence with the Tame is Tamworth, the Mercian royal vill to which Bosworth/Mancetter may ultimately have looked. Edith, sainted princess-abbess of Polesworth upstream from Tamworth, is the noteworthy patron of Orton-on-the-Hill, another major early parish. Possibly Polesworth should be considered part of the Bosworth/Mancetter entity.

Anker

A second group of parishes occupies the Anker's headwater basin, flanked by the parochiæ of Coventry, Monks Kirby, and Barwell. Like Sheepy, Hinckley parish (Mary) overlapped Watling Street. Hinckley's chapelries interlocked with those of Higham on the Hill (Peter and Paul), making a religious/lay pair. Higham's boundaries in turn continue those of Nuneaton (earlier Eaton, 'river *tūn*') in Warwickshire, which with Hinckley belonged in 1066 to Harding, Butler to Queen Emma in 1062 and son of another royal minister, Eadnoth the Staller. Nuneaton's dedication (Nicholas) looks late; its twelfth-century fair, on Holy Cross day, May 3, suggests Helen, but the nunnery commemorated Mary. Boundary evidence supports the further inclusion in this territory of Bulkington and Wolvey in Warwickshire, plus in Leicestershire another church/manor pair, Burbage ('ridgetop *burh*', a Domesday manor of Coventry Abbey, probably given by Earl Leofric or Godiva) and Aston Flamville.

Half-way between Mancetter and Venonae (High Cross), Watling Street is crossed by the Harrow stream. The *hærg* or 'shrine', a tribal meeting place, probably lay near one of the head-springs west of Hinckley, perhaps at Hollycroft or Wyken. The latter, like Higham, stands on the spur dividing the Bosworth and Hinckley districts. Possibly these were two parts of a single territory, served by churches of Peter and Paul, and Mary respectively.

Upper Avon/'Lillingas'

Misterton is on everyone's list of minster candidates. Testing its claims necessitates a preliminary look at a minster in Warwickshire. They lay in adjoining compartments of the complex topography of the upper Avon, which was overridden by two large estates and their suspected *parochiæ*. These in turn ignored and therefore probably predate the shire boundaries. On the Avon itself was Newnham, one of the 'new-steads' assigned to the villa-replacement phase of English settlement. Its religious pair was the minster

at **Monks Kirby**, earlier Kirkbury (Mary), rebuilt in 1077 with two priests, and Giles added to its dedication. Chapelries known or inferred included Smite, named after the Avon tributary which Kirkbury overlooked. Smite, in turn, had its own chapelry – Brinklow, its church on the hill whose summit, a suitable pre-Christian devotional focus, provided a sight-line for the Fosse. The interlinked estate and parish probably extended ten miles north to south, reaching to the Dunsmore ridge and the outskirts of Rugby. At the northern end the ancient parish took in some – probably once all – of the vills around Claybrooke on the Leicestershire side of the Avon/Soar watershed, the hypothesised *territorium* of Venonae where the Fosse crosses Watling Street (Phythian-Adams 1978). Northernmost was Sharnford. Here royal lordship survived in 1086 as king's alms-land enjoyed by Aelfric the Priest, with another manor in the hands of the bishop. Newnham's owners on the eve of the Conquest were likely relatives of Earl Leofric, their lands delimited in the east by an Avon tributary, the Swift. Lutterworth lies on its upper reaches, but the Leofricings' lands ended at Watling Street.

Misterton's name, *tūn* with, or provisioning a minster, is much discussed, but rarely in its local context. Lutterworth, facing Misterton across the valley, looks like the central place of a district whose antiquity it evidenced by place-names like Walton and Walcote, *tūn* and *cot* of British-speakers (the latter three-quarters of a mile from Misterton), Wakeley, 'watchers' burial-mound', and Misterton itself.

Misterton church is small but its medieval patron was Andrew. Some curvature in the churchyard perimeter could be residual in a replanned landscape. Misterton Hall's lake draws attention to the volume of water entering the Swift here; Andrew's baptismal association could be relevant. A similar point may be made about John the Baptist's patronage of the riverside hospital below Lutterworth which had springs within its curtilege – the spot where, at the end of the Middle Ages, John Wyclif's bones were cast into the river.

Six of the diocesan bishop's 14 Domesday lands in Leicestershire were in Misterton parish (at Poultney, Cotes de Val, and Misterton itself) or adjoining it (Walcote, Kimcote, and Swinford), 27.25 carucates in all (half, 13.5 carucates, at Kimcote) – the endowment of a decayed minster? A round 30 carucates is achieved by adding in the two-and-a-half carucates of king's alms-land which Arnbern the Priest held at Swinford. The Misterton lands were all held by a Godric, otherwise unknown in Leicestershire. If he and Arnbern held former collegiate land, this might explain the two medieval rectories at Misterton, a feature shared with Hallaton and Sheepy.

Misterton lacks Lutterworth's imposing site just across the valley, its church (Mary) opening onto a large yard. Maybe that was the minster, provisioned by Misterton. The jury is out, especially now Google Earth shows cropmarks on the hill between Misterton and Walcote. Also Lutterworth's 13 carucates, with two each at Misterton and Catthorpe, were held by Earl Ralph, perhaps by gift of his uncle King Edward or by right of his wife Gytha. Another secular-ecclesiastical pairing seems more plausible, serving a block of interlocked vills from Lutterworth to the Avon and from Watling Street to the Swift/Soar watershed.

Much commends a larger territory occupying the whole upper Avon drainage as far as Crick, Naseby, and Husbands Bosworth, where a henge points to the antiquity of the watershed as a boundary. The rising lands south of the Avon could be characterised as the pastoral counterpart of more arable country around Lutterworth. Crossing points at Stanford and Swinford (the latter indicating stock movements) strengthen the idea. Just south of the Avon is Lilbourne, which together with land on the west of Watling Street was held after 1066 by Earl Aubrey, perhaps the vestige of a royal manor. Lilbourne had a castle and a Sunday market, and was one of the few places where foreign merchants could buy wool through the Leicester market. The sheep probably grazed the slopes below Crick, whose simplex name (Old Welsh creic) describes the hill crowned by its church (and largely curvilinear yard) of Margaret, the shepherdess saint. Lilbourne looks plausible as such a territory's administrative centre, forming a lordship/church pair with Crick but with another devotional *locus* closer to hand. This is Holywell within the defences of Romano-British Tripontium. Holywell chapel, fronting Watling Street, vanished before the Reformation, the site occupied by Caves Inn, now Coton Farm.

A possible pre-Conquest religious presence at Tripontium, suggested to me by Peter Liddle, prompts comparisons with Mancetter. Like Mancetter and the Sence, Tripontium ('Three Bridges') seems the natural fulcrum for an upper Avon entity which included the town's *territorium*. Lilbourne's name shares its first element with 'Lilling', known from the Claybrooke estate. Perhaps the 'Lillingas' – ancestors of Leofric's cousins at Newnham, even – acquired a post-Roman lordship spanning Watling Street as well as the Avon.

A further scenario sees the Kirkbury parochia taking in the vills around Venonæ as a result of the Leofric family's ancestors pushing their power northwards at the expense of the lords of Croft (see under 'Inner Leicestershire'). Leofric's father was Earl of the Hwicce, the Severn/Avon people whose bishop-seat was Worcester. Lichfield diocese's medieval salient across north-eastern Warwickshire has a strange shape, with the rest of the county in the Worcester diocese. Leofric is chiefly associated with Coventry, but his home ground may have lain more centrally within the Avon's catchment area. The northern boundary of the Hwicce's British predecessors, the Dobunni, may have lain further north than conventionally understood, making them neighbours of the Corieltauvi.

Upper Welland

Parishes and lordships spanning the Welland suggest a further territory predating the shire (Roffe 1996, 107-20). Neighbouring Theddingworth and Lubenham, Leicestershire, had daughter settlements in Northamptonshire (Hothorpe and Thorpe Lubenham). Lubenham's looks like a detachment from East Farndon. That in turn has wider implications for lordship since Lubenham's boundary with Great Bowden on the Leicestershire bank carries across the Welland as Thorpe Lubenham's boundary with Little Bowden. Little Bowden's scarp-slope chapelry of Little Oxendon (Helen) fits between Farndon and Great Oxendon, the latter's eastern boundary continuing that of Little Bowden. A relationship between Lubenham and Bowden is significant because Great Bowden (Peter and Paul) was a royal vill in 1086 and head of a soke, while Lubenham's topographically linked northern neighbours included Gumley, a Mercian council meeting place in the reign of Offa.

Godmund's *lēah* (Helen) would fit a hunting lodge, with the royal residence within easy reach – at Lubba's *hoh* perhaps, or even what became Market Harborough. **St Mary in Arden**, Harborough's now redundant mother church, belonged *circa* 1200 to the rector of Great Bowden (Peter and Paul), within which Harborough lay. Though clerks were uncertain whether it was *capella* or *ecclesia*, it was actually the Pentecostal pilgrimage church for communities as far away as Kibworth in the thirteenth century ('as is the custom of the country') and as late as the fifteenth it was regarded as Kibworth's 'mother church'.[11] Much points to a minster on a pre-Christian sacred site. Its large, curvilinear yard overlooks the Welland which divided Great from Little Bowden. Eighteenth-century excavation for a family grave within the outline of the vanished medieval church nave unearthed quantities of cremation material, Romano-British or prehistoric. A short distance north, many Roman coins (but very little building material) have been found in gardens along The Ridgeway, leading to the hilltop overlooking Harborough, an area dotted with springs. The coins may mark a Romano-British religious site, possibly later occupied by a periodic rural fair, given finds of Anglo-Saxon metalwork. 'Arden' is from a British/Gaulish word meaning 'high' (*cf*. the Ardennes and Arden forest), suggesting Ardwinna as the deity venerated. Harborough's medieval street fairs were notable. Harborough's patron, Denis, is a fair saint from his cult at Paris. However, Denis was martyred on Montmartre and it is conceivable that Harborough's foundation brought a hilltop fair down to the Welland crossing.

The extent of Bowden soke's 300 hides, largely corresponding to Gartree Hundred, is closely matched south of the Welland by three hundreds of Northamptonshire. One was attached to **Rothwell** (Holy Trinity) – named from a (?red) spring and like Harborough an important fair place. It was the soke centre to Desborough's royal hall. Rothwell hundred occupied much of the long, thin, east-west upper drainage of the Ise, a tributary of the Nene which separates the Welland valley from the fan-shaped basin surrounding Brixworth. Overlooking the Ise from the south are the intriguingly named Maidwell and Lamport ('long market').

11 Michael Wood kindly alerted me to this from his research for his television series 'Story of England'.

Several other churches in Gartree Hundred had dependent chapels. Notwithstanding Kibworth Harcourt's relationship to Mary in Arden, its dedication (Wilfrid) hints at landholding by bishops of Leicester attending the king at Gumley and Great Glen (see under 'Inner Leicestershire'). Conceivably Kibworth was exchanged for Knighton (see below). Church Langton (Peter), hilltop mother church of the Langton settlements, is highly visible, close to a prehistoric circle (if that explains Whirlygig field) and a St Anne's well, and a mile from the transitional villa/early-Anglian site on the Langton Brook. Billesdon's curvilinear yard, its parish's position abutting the ridgeway (marked by Coplow), and its midsummer dedication (John the Baptist) hint likewise at an older ritual *locus*. Billesdon's name links it to a lost Bilton in Hallaton (see below) and suits seasonal stock movement.

Towards the eastern end of Gartree hundred, Medbourne's curvilinear yard stands at a convergence of routeways, including a side-road from Port Hill on the Gartree Road where an Anglian cemetery in 'The Old Churchyard' followed a Romano-British settlement. Weston and Sutton, south of the Welland, may have names relating to Medbourne. The king kept Medbourne's advowson, having granted the manor away, but the church lacked the status of St Michael's, **Hallaton**. The parishes intermixed in a probable lay-clerical pair. Hallaton had two rectories, high-status burials (a pre-Conquest grave slab is in the north aisle), and a local saint Morrell whose hilltop chapel and cemetery site overlooking his spring is the starting point of the annual bottle-kicking and hare-pie scramble. It overlay a buried rectilinear feature reminiscent of a small rural Romano-British shrine. It is also close to an Iron Age temple site where ritual feasting and deposition of coins and fine metalwork was practised (even then a long-standing custom, judging by a broken Bronze Age rapier found nearby). Hallaton's likely minster status is underlined by tenurial links to the north and the Bilton-Billesdon connection. Also within Hallaton's putative orbit was Welham on the Welland (Andrew), together with its chapels. Its name may contain the term *wēoh*, or shrine, and *hām* suggests this was the hall site for a territorial unit bounded by the Welland and the Langton and Eye Brooks, administered from Medbourne.

Alternatively, this unit should be associated with Rutland. The queen's hilltop manor of Whatborough, just east of Tilton and at the source of the Chater, hints at this. One of the Eye Brook's sources is a spring just south of St Peter's, Tilton, where the Humber/Wash watershed is crossed by a ridgeway. Hallaton looks like the mother church for the district – except that in the south-east angle is **Bringhurst**, whose hilltop church has a curvilinear yard around which the village's houses are grouped. Peter Liddle may be right in suggesting it represents an early monastic site. Its dedicatee by 1754, Nicholas, hardly supports that – unless he replaced a more important patron. Bringhurst's chapelry of Easton Magna has Andrew, and that aligns Bringhurst (and Welham) with the Andrew dedications in Rutland. They begin immediately on the other side of the Eye Brook with the episcopal palace church of Lyddington and its probable former chapelry Stoke Dry (east bank) and Stoke's west bank hamlet Holyoaks. These are among a string of religiously significant places along the Eye valley. Others are Prestley Hill, Prestgrave, Priest Hill, *Thor's leāh* below Uppingham, and Bradley Priory Holy Well. Two hoards of Late Roman coins are recorded in Holyoaks Wood, adjoining Mirabel hermitage. Re-use of a shrine-site might be suspected.

2. Northern Leicestershire

Upper Wreake (Eye)/Framland

Melton Mowbray (Mary) had several large chapelries and probably others which had gained parochial status by the thirteenth century. The parish overlapped substantially with a multiple estate acquired by Geoffrey de la Guerche from his Leofricing father-in-law (see Newnham, above). The 'middle *tūn*' indicates a central place, effectively the equivalent of a 'king's *tūn*', an administrative and market centre. Melton may have attracted a pre-Conquest mint. It had a Burton (Lazars) and a church *tūn*, Kirby Bellars, whose name, location at a Romano-British settlement site, and dedication, Peter and Paul, point to some significant status within the estate.

Another candidate religious centre to partner Melton's secular *caput* interposes between Melton and its detached members Eastwell and Goadby Marwood. This is **Scalford**, which on one interpretation of a tenth-century list of pilgrimage places had its own saint, Egelwin.

A copious spring, a source of the Wreake, flowed from just below the churchyard (?at the 'shallow ford') – a potential focus of devotion and/or baptism. Martin was patron saint by 1754, and there was a Michaelmas fair, but there was also a medieval devotional image of Peter and Paul. One of William I's servants had a small manor here, a likely last vestige of royal lordship; most of the parish had been Earl Waltheof's.

A royal hall site offers itself at Waltham-on the-Wolds. Barry Cox interpets '*wald hām*' as a hunting lodge (Cox 2001), and between it and Scalford are Chadwell and Wycomb, Domesday members of the king's Rothley manor. Wycomb is one of several places named '*wīc* (?for *vicus*) *hām*' associated with Romano-British administrative units and adjoins Goadby Marwood, a small Romano-British town. The vills of the Upper Wreak divide neatly east and west, with Melton and Waltham in the western half. Maybe Waltham was the summer hall and the permanent hall should be sought elsewhere, say Wymondham, which lies centrally in the eastern half.

The drainage of the Wreake (known as the Eye above Melton) extends east to Market Overton/Thistleton, thus including northernmost Rutland. Overton's church lies within the Romano-British enceinte associated with a temple of Veteris (?The Old One) at a source of the Witham, and its locational name best relates to Wymondham. Both had Peter and Paul as patrons. (Elsewhere in Wymondham was Burrowchurch chapel, perhaps identical with St Peter's chapel at 'Burgh'.) Wymondham with Stapleford constituted a substantial, 48-carucate estate of Henry of Ferrers in 1086. Its major northern neighbour is **Buckminster** (John Baptist), probably its ecclesiastical pair, a Domesday possession of the Bishop of Lincoln. Bucca's church is built into a westward slope with a modern east-end crypt extension which just might have developed an existing burial place. Like the other east Framland parishes, Buckminster's boundary runs along the Witham side of the watershed, following Sewstern Lane. The point where the watershed turns to divide the Wreake from the Devon is linked to the lane at Wyville, '*wēoh* stream', by King Lud's Entrenchments. The boundary line is then followed eastward across the Witham valley north of Skillington, so that it is tempting to see Buckminster as the one-time mother church of an area split later between Leicestershire and Lincolnshire.

Upper Devon and related drainages

Northernmost Framland sits oddly on the headwaters of the south-flowing Devon. **Bottesford** (Mary), the 'palace ford', sits between two major Domesday manors: Orston, a royal soke centre a mile or so east of Romano-British Margidunum near the Trent, with a boundary linked to Bottesford's, and Grantham, centre of an estate of Queen Edith (see 'External Ring' above). Bottesford and its dependencies form the northern end of a string of parishes carved from an existing arable landscape, judging by their boundaries. On one side the scarp of the Wolds, ending at Belvoir, cuts them off from the rest of Leicestershire; on the other they face a similar block in Nottinghamshire, grouped around Orston. Despite Orston's two Domesday priests, the more impressive church is Bottesford's, in a curvilinear yard half-enclosed by the Devon, its west door beside the 'palace ford' and its rectory in similarly large grounds on the other bank.

The regularity of these parishes and townships – possibly a result of Danish re-planning, ends where Long Clawson meets the upper Smite. From there the wedge of townships northwards as far as the Cropwells, and west to the Fosse, has an integrity. One of the Cropwell manors was a Domesday possession of the Archbishop of York (representing the canons of Southwell minster), with detached wold-land at Hickling. Old Dalby may not fit this block easily, but its church of John the Baptist attracts notice for its curvilinear yard, and as the nearest to the summit where the wold scarp meets the watersheds of the Smite, Fairham and Leake. The site of Vernemeton is close by (see below).

Lower Wreake and lower Soar

A striking feature of the medieval geography of the district along the lower Soar and lower Wreake, extending into High Leicestershire as far as the Humber/Wash watershed, was the complex interlinking of places subject manorially or ecclesiastically to Barrow, Rothley, and Loughborough. Several were shared between Barrow and Rothley or between Barrow and Loughborough, sometimes with third-party tenants. A handful of Rothley chapelries beyond the watershed

may have resulted from land acquisitions, but in general it is hard to avoid the conclusion that behind this network lies a single territorial entity with the three neighbouring *capite* at its core.

All enjoyed high-status in 1086: Rothley was a royal manor, Barrow-on-Soar had been assigned to Earl Hugh of Chester as successor to 'Earl' Harold, and the manor of Loughborough was also in Hugh's possession, having previously been shared by 'five thegns' (conceivably servants of Edward the Confessor). As well as their widespread sokes and chapelries to the east, both Rothley and Barrow had home parishes which extended into Charnwood. Since Harold was in fact king (though never recognised as such by William) it is not unreasonable to see Barrow and Rothley as two components of a royal estate, the first hived off to create a stopping place for Hugh en route to and from his palatine shire of Chester via his castle at Tutbury. Rothley is reminiscent of Gumley, well-placed to have been a royal hunting lodge on the edge of Charnwood. Barrow, 'at the glade', on its hill overlooking the Soar, is an intuitive focus for ritual, perhaps associated with a royal hall. Its titular cult, Holy Trinity, possibly represents a development of, or parallel to Christ Church, a frequent naming in the Conversion period. However, by 1086 **Rothley** (Mary) appears the more important ecclesiastical centre, with its Anglian churchyard cross and a chapel of the murdered Mercian prince Wigstan ('the churchyard of St Wystane in the temple of Rothley', Lloyd 1973, 41). Loughborough, 'Luhheda's *burh*', destined to become the district's market town, had the smallest soke of the three, but like the others it spanned the Soar. Its *burh* ('defended enclosure') is perhaps to be associated with the church's large curvilinear yard, not impossibly enclosing an early monastery. The local name Prestwold may point in the same direction. Nevertheless, with its patron saints Peter and Paul, Loughborough looks equally suitable as the reeve's vill and trading-place relative to a king's hall at Barrow and its attendant minster at Rothley. Boundaries support a further or alternative relationship with **Shepshed**, royally owned and still hidated in 1086, whose church (Botolph) occupies a spur site on the eastern parish margin approached by Butthole Lane. Shepshed's boundaries are continued by those of Belton (John Baptist), whose rectilinear yard faces a large marketplace. At nearby Hathern, Harrow (*hærg*?) Lane leads off towards the 'Sheep's Head'. Christianisation of a sacred place makes better topographical sense of Shepshed than 'sheep's headland'.

The sokes of Loughborough, Barrow, and Rothley, like that of Gartree, may have brought together more than one earlier entity, but their components fit together too neatly to ignore the existence of an underlying territory. For example, the townships east of the Soar and south of the Wreake fall into two blocks, divided by Ridgemere Lane (mere = boundary) from the Wreake to Billesdon Coplow on the Soar/Welland watershed. At the Wreake end of the northern block is Queniborough (Mary), 'the queen's *burh*', with its probable manor/church partner, **South Croxton**, where the Bishop of Lincoln held one of the two manors. Croxton's hilltop church (John Baptist) contains a possible fragment of Anglo-Saxon sculptured stone. Other probable early churches are Gaddesby (Michael) and Owston (Andrew). On the upland margin is Burrough hillfort, locale of the Whitsun festivities recorded by Leland circa 1540 and difficult to contextualise without a religious element. Like Halstead ('holding place'), it was a natural corralling point for cattle driven from lowland vills to summer pastures. Immediately east of Burrough-on-the-Hill is Somerby. Harold Fox saw this as a natural transhumance landscape.

Tucked beside Queniborough but divided from it by the Ridgemere is Syston (Peter and Paul), which with its probable dependencies occupies the lower end of the southern block. The upper-end is taken up by Keyham, High Leicestershire's only *hām*; Beeby (Guthlac), 'bee-keepers' *býr*; Leofric's manor of Scraptoft and its ancient mother church Humberstone, 'Hunbeorht's stone' (Peter and Paul); and, surrounding Keyham on three sides, Hungarton (Botolph) with its chapelries Ingarsby and Quenby, 'the queen's or women's *býr*'. Keyham, sole member of Barrow and Rothley in the southern block, shared parochial rights with Hungarton in Baggrave – significant because Baggrave is on the far side of Ridgemere, apparently carved out of Croxton.

In summary, this block looks like a bipartite estate of the Queen (reflecting that of the king across the Soar), with halls at Queniborough and Keyham, a church centre at Croxton, and the reeve at Syston. Belgrave's relationship

with the estate is discussed under Inner Leicestershire.

Lower Soar, Leake drainage

It is probable that the hypothesised Lower Soar territory spanned and therefore predated the shire boundary along the river. Harold held manors on both banks. Approaching the Trent, the Soar's left bank is occupied by townships and manors associated with Shepshed and Loughborough while on the right bank sit *Kings*ton-on-Soar (Wilfrid), its mother church Ratcliffe (Holy Trinity), and its 'Sutton'. The natural extent of the *regio* would take in the vills along the Leake, which joins the Trent at Kingston. These, including Leake itself, West (Helen) and East (Mary), interpose between the Soar (and almost immediately the Trent) and a group of vills at the valley's upper end which comprised the detached wold division of Nottinghamshire's Broxstowe hundred. They also face Leicestershire lands across the Fosse. The rest of the upper Leake valley is occupied by the large parish of Wymeswold (church, Mary; fair, Peter and Paul), which looks like a continuation of the Loughborough-related townships of Prestwold and Hoton.

A plausible hall-place for the Ratcliffe and Leake group is neighbouring Gotham (Lawrence), to which Barton and Clifton on the Trent seem related. These occupy the angle between the Leake watershed, the Trent and the Flawforth Brook. On the other bank of the stream is its eponymous, isolated and ruined church (Peter) at the junction of three parishes. Coming this close to Nottingham confronts the investigator with an inescapable challenge. Turning the map on its head, how far south would one construe a pre-shiring territory based on Nottingham?

The Lower Soar *regio*'s outer bounds must remain a matter for future research, but its possible post-Roman origins are clear. A Romano-British settlement developed at Quorn, on the opposite bank of the Soar from Barrow but in its parish, and Stanford-on-Soar's church was built over a villa, respecting its layout. Moreover, where the young Leake stream crosses the line of the Fosse (in the Nottinghamshire parish of Willoughby-on-the-Wolds which fills the narrow gap between the Fosse and Wymeswold parish) lay Vernemeton, 'the great grove', with its attendant settlement on the road itself.

St Bartholomew's, Quorndon, recalls a characteristic of English dedications honouring the temple-appropriating apostle: their statistically positive, geographical correlation with places whose names are indicative of non or pre-Christian ritual or worship. The b(e)aru of Barrow, Quorndon's mother church, might have functioned as a sacred grove overlooking the Soar. Further off, in Wymeswold parish, Barry Cox has identified two 'Harrow', *hærg* names, and two from *alh*, also meaning 'shrine' or 'temple' (Cox 2004). The *Alhfleot*, 'temple stream', must be the one which rises at Six Hills and forms Wymeswold's eastern boundary before passing Wysall, the *hōh* or 'spur' of the *wēoh* (*wīh* or *wīg*), yet another Old English term for a temple. At a stretch, all these names might have related to Vernemeton, whose site was indeed appropriated for Christian use, Bartholomew-fashion. After burials there with Germanic-style grave-goods came a chapel, on a hilltop known as The Wells, described in William Camden's Britannia. Peter Liddle tells me the site has yielded Anglo-Saxon metalwork of a type associated with clerical vestments. Moreover, land at Willoughby-on-the-Wolds was held in 1066 by Ernwy, probably the king's clerk of the same name who held decayed minsters elsewhere in England. This hints at a valuable chapel endowment – if not also an income from pilgrims – which survived into the eleventh century. One possible factor for the continuity of Vernemeton as a devotional place is the longevity in this district of communities whose Romano-British identity was recognised by landlords describing themselves as Anglian. They include Walton-on-the-Wolds, *Cumberdale* in Wymeswold, *Cumberlea* in Seagrave, and *Tralleswellehul* in Burton-on-the-Wolds.

Vernemeton stands at a transitional point on the Fosse, a meeting point for those among the Corieltauvi, 'peoples of the rivers', who inhabited the Trent and Soar valleys. A trading place is also plausible. Venonae and the temple at Market Overton would fit the same model – as might some as yet undetected pre-Christian structure beneath the church at Breedon.

3. Inner Leicestershire/'Legora' South/'Pēotlingas'

Another issue dogging any presumption of a territory centred on Barrow, Rothley and Loughborough is its relationship with early

medieval Leicester, whose post-Roman desertion is under re-examination – and the same applies south of Leicester, too. Here the starting place for reconstructing the territorial geography is **Croft**, probably the Mercian council assembly place in 836. Archangel Michael's church sits not on the summit of Croft's strikingly high and isolated hill, but by its stream.[12] Stephen Mitchell suggests the *cræft* ('machine') was a mill powered by a Roman lock feeding Leicester's aqueduct, the Raw Dyke (Mitchell 2009). Whatever royal estate supported the assembly's needs had been fragmented by 1066. Eleven carucates at Croft itself were almost equally divided between the antecessor of William I's castellan and sheriff, Hugh de Grandmesnil (possibly Earl Waltheof or his shire reeve), and the royal servant Harding, succeeded here as at Hinckley by Earl Aubrey of Northumbria. Detached parts of Harding's holding, associated in the 13th century by the advowson of St Michael's, lay in Broughton Astley at Sutton-in-the-Elms (the 'south *tūn*'). This transgresses the arbitrary boundary along the Fosse which divides parishes and townships from Monks Kirby to Narborough.

Other cross-Fosse, and more importantly, cross-Soar tenures linked Stoney Stanton and Leire, and Sapcote and Frolesworth, while parts of Croft's near-neighbour Huncote lay in Cosby – presumably the areas later known as detached parts of **Narborough** parish. In a further example of separated lay and religious functions, Narborough was a manorial constituent of Huncote while Huncote was a chapelry of Narborough (All Saints, but with a midsummer fair of John the Baptist). The 'northern enclosure' seems relative to Croft. Its inclusion with Huncote and Cosby in an earlier estate of Croft would also make sense of the otherwise odd egg-timer shape of Croft (with Broughton) and Thurlaston with Normanton, medieval parishes which paid their tithes to Croft. Since Thurlaston and Normanton reached, as Huncote and Narborough did, into the heart of Leicester's royal forest, it is easy to see Croft as a base for hunting like Rothley and Gumley (see below). Cosby's ancient patron Helen was the model of queenship (the church was part of the endowment of St Augustine's, Leicester, below), and on the Fosse where Cosby's parish meets Croft was the dynastically and supernaturally significant Guthlac stone where the men of Guthlaxton wapentake assembled. Bearing in mind the seemingly humble status of Huna's cot and the modest size of St Michael's, it is worth considering whether Narborough's *burh* might have surrounded an early monastic site, as suggested for Loughborough. The Bishop of Lincoln's Domesday manor at Leire also has interest because its name points to a spring, a source of the *Legra*, the river (otherwise the Soar) which gave its name to Leicester. Conceivably the spring had been sacred to the river-deity. However, the bishop's successors did not enjoy the advowson of the church, whose siting within the settlement looks conventional.

Fragmentation may have been accompanied by settlement shifts. A lost Domesday manor, Legham (presumably sharing the first element of its name with Leire), and a farm-name Langham, in Cosby, hint at earlier arrangements. Some slight survivals of royal rights persisted in Croft's neighbourhood. On its south-western flank is Stoney Stanton and the latter's probable daughter settlement, Sapcote; immediately west of Croft is Potters Marston, whose common boundary with Stoney Stanton is interdigitated. Potters and stone-cutters would be natural specialist communities on an important royal estate. Stoney Stanton and its outliers at Primethorpe and Sutton were held in 1086 by William I's Steward or Bursar, Robert Dispensator. The clincher was also at Sutton: land of the king's alms.

Further signs of fragmentation are the two oddly-shaped, dovetailing groups of settlements further west which coalesce around Barwell and Kirkby. Despite its proximity to Croft, Potters Marston, together with its western neighbour Elmesthorpe formed a long salient of the parish of **Barwell** (Mary), three-and-a-half miles to the west, of which they were both chapelries. However, Elmesthorpe's name and the shape and character of its northern boundary make it clear that it was a daughter settlement of Earl Shilton. Barwell's six miles wide parish surrounded Earl Shilton on three sides, but the latter was a chapelry of Barwell's northern neighbour **Kirkby Mallory**. The obvious conclusion is that Barwell and Kirkby, whose medieval parish was similar

12 Lloyd 1973 listed Croft's patron as Peter, which would suit the royal hall, but did not specify his source.

in extent, were two parts of an larger, earlier entity, whose coherent shape is demonstrated with the addition of Barwell's further chapelry of Stapleton and Peckleton, another chapelry of Kirkby.

This does not look like a straight-forward secular-religious pairing, however. Certainly Barwell, by its name and its gift to the canons of Coventry, appeals to an intuitive guess that it occupies an ancient site of worship or ritual. Kirkby, 'the church *býr*', looks more like a church's endowment than a secular *caput* or a church site in its own right. Neither its Anglo-Scandinavian name nor its location gives any obvious sign of antiquity as the present All Saints was built in 1220 on the lord's demesne (Dugdale 1693, 832). It is possible that it was chosen as the religious centre for a secular lordship based at Earl Shilton (Peter) at a time when that lordship obtained parochial rights independent of some previous ecclesiastical dependency on Barwell.

In 1174 Kirkby's demesne lord was constable of Leicester castle – possibly hereditary service tenure, since the Conqueror's castellan, Hugh de Grandmesnil, held the bulk of Kirkby, and also Shilton – which had its own castle. Shilton, whose church occupies a site consistent with the castle's bailey, is later found attached to Leicester castle and including a tenement tied to finding a keeper of the king's court there. Peckleton was associated with custody of part of Leicester Forest, so Kirkby parish as a whole related to royal administration.

Barwell and Kirkby look like two early parochial centres in a large but fragmenting 'multiple' estate, serving royal and reeve's *tūn* centres at Croft and Shilton respectively. Counter-intuitively, both are peripheral to their medieval parishes. Kirkby church looks like a component of a regular manorial village complex. Possibly an earlier (?pre-nucleation) church/chapel lay close to the Roman road linking Leicester and Mancetter. An appropriated roadside shrine site is conceivable – neighbouring Stapleton's name may refer to a *stapol* or post, sculpted to represent a cult figure, and intriguingly its patron is the shrine-destroying Martin. Barwell stands on the edge of an area once intercommoned with Hinckley, Burbage and Earl Shilton's daughter settlement, Elmsthorpe. Paul Bowman has suggested a pre-Conquest estate comprising three 'primary vills', Burbage, Barwell and Hinckley (Bowman 2004, 109-11). However, this could only be part of a much larger territory, one that by 1066 was dominated by three large landholdings: those of Coventry Abbey and previously Earl Leofric (Barwell, Burbage, Potters Marston, part of Kirkby Mallory); Harding (Croft, Hinckley, Nuneaton, Sapcote); and predecessors of Hugh de Grandmesnil (Shilton, Peckleton, and the rest of Kirkby).

Another explanation for Barwell's peripheral location is possible. An odd tongue of Hinckley, almost cut off from the rest of the parish, stretches to within 100 yards of Barwell church and is difficult to explain unless it relates to the geography of the intercommoned area. If so, Barwell church and the manorial core sat on the edge of, if not within, the intercommoned and conceivably once disputed area. They are isolated from a further settlement core further north where several roads and pathways meet at Goose Green. Barwell gives no evidence of being a major focal settlement, so there must have been good cause for the church's siting. It stands prominently atop a steep slope which is part of the Soar/Anker watershed. Just to the east is a chalybeate spring – the 'Boars Well' which gave Barwell its name? The partly-curved churchyard is offset from the rectilinear manorial precinct. A cremation urn was dug up in the close immediately to the north, and Romano-British roof tiles in the large rectory garden on the west, from a building which need not have been domestic. St Mary's potentially occupies an isolated ritual site of great antiquity, suitable for a tribal boundary meeting place like the Harrow brook hærg or 'shrine' only two miles away at Hinckley.

Lower Sence/'Pēotlingas'

Another cross-Soar parish linked Enderby with its chapelry Whetstone. On the west bank of the river at Aldeby stood St John-by-the-Water (so called in 1528), unusually a chapel with burial rights and not far from a Romano-British cemetery. Eindrithi's *býr* (Margaret) looks like the grazing hamlet of Narborough, while Whetstone's boundary zig-zags as if through Cosby's fields. Should Blaby and its daughter-settlement Countesthorpe join this group? Blaby could be Whetstone's *býr*, but they also make a coherent block with Foston, whose hilltop church overlooks them, with a chalybeate spring close by. Bartholomew, dedicatee by 1754, would suit an ancient ritual site, and Nichols reported a statue of the

apostle on the west wall of the tower, but two wills of 1527 call it St Edmund's.

The question is important because it is unclear how the suggested territorial unit around Croft related to the group of similarly sized, interlocking settlements on the headwaters of the Whetstone and Countesthorpe brooks, immediately south of Blaby-Countesthorpe-Foston. The group is bounded by a major tributary of the Soar, the Sence (or Glen), the estates or sokes centred on Great Glen and Great Bowden, and the Soar-Avon watershed. The focal settlements, the **Peatlings**, Magna and Parva, appear to preserve the name of a kin-group, the Pēotlingas. St Andrew's, Peatling Parva is set in a small, raised, hemispherical yard with its rectory in an adjoining rectilinear plot. Reorganisation is suggested not only by the townships' similar size and polygonal shapes, but also by boundaries which zig-zag as if through the strips of open fields, as between Peatling Magna and Arnesby. That the relatively late founding of daughter settlements was a cause is strongly hinted by the names Arnesby, Shearsby, Willoughby, Ashby, and Bruntingthorpe. A clue to underlying land-use is the series of roughly parallel routeways fossilised in lanes, boundaries and property lines linking the southern outskirts of Leicestershire and the higher ground along the Soar-Avon watershed. Seasonal stock movements, even transhumance come to mind, mirroring those suggested across High Leicestershire. A plausible solution is that this coherent group of settlements represents an area of intensive grazing on both high ground and meadows – the 'water leys' evidenced in the name Willoughby Waterlees – related to the Croft landed-unit.

There are traces of remaining royal lordship in this district in the form of 'king's alms land' at Peatling Magna (tenanted in 1086 by a royal clerk, Godwin) and at Shearsby. The latter was a probable chapelry of **Knaptoft**, whose name, prominent spur site and chapelries suggest a substantial residence. Bruntingthorpe, a likely daughter settlement of either Knaptoft or Peatling Parva, 'belonged to Leicester' in 1086 'with its customary dues' and had land archaically measured in hides. This pre-Danish survival, sometimes with carucates added to hides, is arguably an echo of royal or comital organisation on a large scale. Bruntingthorpe also had four socmen in Smeeton, a probable early chapelry of Saddington later taken into Kibworth parish, which paid Saddington a pension in consequence. Saddington belonged to the Queen's Fee, which is intriguing since the holder of Knaptoft and most of its chapelry at Shearsby was Harding, Queen Emma's Butler. Saddington's patron is Helen. Knaptoft's dedication (the church has long been ruined) may have been Peter, if not Peter and Paul, since Peter is patron of its pensionary daughter church at Arnesby, where his figure stands on the eastern gable.

An anomaly in Knaptoft's ecclesiastical geography is that its parish included part or all of its south-western neighbour Walton, which by the late middle ages was pastorally served by Kimcote in return for an annual payment from Knaptoft's rector. That gave rise to the combined civil parish of Kimcote and Walton, with 24 of its 84 yardlands attributed to the ecclesiastical parish of Knaptoft. Thus Knaptoft extended beyond the watershed into the area which otherwise neatly fits into the drainage of the Swift with Lutterworth and Misterton. A further anomaly is the inclusion in Kimcote parish of a detached portion, Cotes de Val (Domesday *Toniston*), in the far north-west corner of its western neighbour Gilmorton. The straightish line which shadows the Soar/Avon watershed and defines the southern edges of Bruntingthorpe, Peatling Parva, Ashby Magna, and Dunton Bassett, may not be the territorial boundary that at first sight it seems. It is more plausibly explained as the relict line of a road linking the Romano-British settlement on the Gartree Road at Port Hill, Medbourne, with Venonæ on Watling Street. If Kimcote and Gilmorton are added to the Peatling group of settlements, whose aggregated Domesday assessment was 108 carucates and 5 bovates, that total rises to 141 carucates and 5 bovates, close to Bowman's ideal 144. However, this transgresses the suggested integrity of the settlements around Lutterworth and Misterton, and threatens to mix the putative lands of the Peatlingas and Lillingas. What is certain is that Walton's name establishes a time horizon consonant with British speech, perhaps in the late sixth, early seventh century.[13]

13 Cf. Margaret Gelling's comments about Hints, on Watling Street near Lichfield (Gelling 1988, 101).

Central sector

There is a splendid symmetry to the tenurial and parochial geography of **Leicester** and its neighbourhood. Its longitudinal axis is the Soar, with the Roman and medieval walled town tilted to the diagonal in the river's meander. A lateral axis runs outwards from the town's north and south sides. Occupying the innermost segments of the respective quadrants were Leicester's East Field (in St Margaret's parish) and South Field (in St Mary de Castro) east of the river, and west of the river a part of St Mary's which included the lost Bromkinsthorpe plus friths and commons plausibly associated with Aylestone and Braunstone, and finally the area which included Beaumont Leys and the abbey of St Mary-in-the-Meadows, a Beaumont foundation. Moving outwards along the Soar, on its eastern bank north of Leicester lay the Beaumont manor of Belgrave; to the south Aylestone. Both parishes had chapelries on either bank. Extending the envelope west to the Rothley Brook, the south-west quadrant was completed by Glenfield parish, the north-west by Thurcaston. Across the brook, this entire sector faced the parish of Ratby and coterminous lordship of Groby – what Tom Cain (1990) has argued was the core of a royal estate. East of Leicester, the lateral axis follows the Roman Gartree Road, apparently slicing through another, equally large royal estate, probably the place of the Mercian council assembly 'at Glen' in 849. It included a retainers' *tūn*, Knighton, a probable reeve's vill at Wigston, and beyond them in the upper basin of the Sence the probable royal centre, Great Glen. The whole district is 17 miles across and eight miles wide.

The area's medieval dedications reveal striking symmetries, too: Belgrave's Peter and Paul (icons of *Romanitas*) and Aylestone's Andrew (Peter's brother); Ratby's ancient patron Gregory (apostle and first patron of the English, representative of the Roman church, died 604) and Great Glen's Cuthbert (abbot of Lindisfarne, patron of Northumbria, representative of the 'Celtic' church, died 687). Gregory and Cuthbert are mirrored in the dedications of the lost church immediately east of St Nicholas, 'under two roofs conjoined by medial columns': its patronal saint Augustine, disciple of Gregory (also died 604) – both often associated with royal churches – and the titular of the other half of the church, best interpreted as an aisle, Columba, teacher of Cuthbert (died 597).

The congruity of Leicester's outer suburbs comes into sharp focus as their topography and lordships are explored. Leicester's eastern suburb and East Field constituted the inner half of the Bishop of Lincoln's Domesday holdings, the so-called Bishop's Fee, the parish of St Margaret's. The outer half was St Margaret's chapelry, Knighton. Problematically, these lay like diagonally related squares on a chessboard, meeting only at their common corner. If the Bishop's Fee is treated as a detachment from the parish and lordship of Belgrave, as the symmetrical geography suggests, this allows Knighton to be associated with the neatly contiguous South Field, in St Mary's parish, and in the other direction with the equally neatly placed (and tenurially linked) Wigston Magna and Oadby. Possibly Knighton was received in exchange for Kibworth (see above). The bishop is an unlikely original holder of the *cnicht's tūn*, which provided the board of the junior household retainers of a royal or comital lord. The South Field, while including the burgesses' common (an echo of the retainers?), was part of the endowment of the Newarke College, presumably by Henry, Earl of Lancaster, and plausibly in descent from Robert Beaumont as Count of Meulan (holder of Aylestone) rather than as Earl of Leicester, supplanter of Hugh de Grandmesnil's son Ivo (holder of Belgrave). Interestingly, therefore, Knighton's boundary with Aylestone apparently zigs-zags through (?common) open fields.

St Cuthbert's, **Great Glen**, has an Anglo-Saxon sculptural fragment and was mother church of Great Stretton and probably the other relationally-named vills, Little Stretton, King's Norton, Burton Overy, and Carlton Curlieu, plus Gaulby and Illston. However, the advowson, as Jill Bourne has pointed out, lay in the twelfth century with the lordship of Wistow (Bourne 1996, 147-64). The 'holy place of Wigstan', reputed stream-side place of the king's assassination on June 1, 849 (quite possibly during the assembly at Glen), later had chapelries at Kilby, Fleckney, and Newton Harcourt, but may not then have had a church. **Wigston Magna**, on the other hand, had two Domesday churches, one of them doubtless St Wigstan's on the hill, potentially a pre-Christian *locus*, a likely resting-place

for the royal corpse on its way to Repton for burial, and still a pilgrimage centre in the sixteenth century. Wigston, demesne caput of Hugh de Grandmesnil as successor to the Confessor's nephew, Earl Ralph, was still then archaically assessed in hides. Though its daughter settlement Oadby was divided from Great Glen by the Old Mere, that may be a Romano-British relict, since it runs at right-angles from the Gartree Road. North of the road, Houghton-on-the-Hill, Evington, and Stoughton-Thurnby (another secular-religious pair) probably belonged to Glen: Evington is separated from Leicester's East Field by Spinney Lane ridgeway. Thurnby's hilltop church was anciently Holy Innocents, an exceptionally rare medieval example of this dedication. Some vaguely remembered multiple devotion, even martyrial or pre-Christian, is not impossible.

Wigston's boundary with **Aylestone** and its chapel Glen Parva also zig-zags as through furlongs, as it does with Newton Harcourt on the east. Was '*Æ*gel's *tūn*' also in the Glen estate? Glen Parva's name suggests so. In 1066 Aylestone was divided between *Æ*lfgifu, widow of *Æ*lfgar, Earl of Mercia after his father Leofric (her chief demesne in 1086) one Leofwin, and Saxi, a royal thegn, tenant-in-chief of Narborough/Huncote. His manor here became the *caput* demesne of Robert Beaumont, whose men obtained Leofwin's land, plus holdings in Blaby and Whetstone. St Andrew's beside the Soar occupies an appropriate site for communal baptism – its yard a quarter of the village core – and had a further chapelry at Lubbesthorpe. If Aylestone was part of Glen, the same must apply to the large parish of Glenfield ('clean, cleared', a different etymology), which included Braunstone, and with which Aylestone's lands interlocked.

Glenfield may once have been superior to Groby, which it faced across the Rothley Brook, and was part of the same estate in Cain's view (Cain 1990). Kirby Muxloe, a Glenfield chapelry, faced Ratby. Jurisdictional and other links bound Ratby/Groby to these and other vills from Desford to Glen Parva. Nevertheless, **Ratby**'s antiquity cannot be doubted and Peter Liddle has raised the possibility of an early church at **Groby**. Bury Camp is a probable Iron Age enclosure, and rights in Ratby of Bromkinsthorpe in the parish of St Mary's, Leicester, have been taken by Cain as evidence that Ratby was a royal estate centre (Cain *op. cit.*). St Bartholomew, Kirby, recalls the Christianising role of Gregory, whose church at Ratby stands in one corner of a large enclosure. Ratby's probable extent to the Soar/Anker watershed and the highest point of Charnwood is revealed by a pensionary payment from Markfield ('boundary veldt'), names, and topography.

Rather than two royal estates, the evidence demonstrates one. Glen's arable pole in the east complemented a pastoral pole reflected in the *bý* names Ratby, Groby, Kirby. Between the Soar and Rothley Brook was interposed *Herewode*, the 'army-' or 'people's-wood' which became Leicester Forest and in which the burgesses had timber and grazing rights. Eight townships met where the Roman road to Mancetter crossed high ground – known later as Kingstanding, where royal parties shot at game. Ratby/Groby's shared interests in Charnwood may indicate a relationship with the Barrow-Rothley-Loughborough entity, but nearer at hand is its relationship with **Belgrave**, earlier Merdegrave, 'wood with martens', suggesting a hunting lodge. Belgrave's parish (Peter and Paul) was extensive, including South Thurmaston and Birstall. The '*burh* place' overlooked the Soar – a desirable elite location. St James', anciently St John's, stands on an east-facing slope with evidence of an east-end crypt adduced by Steve Mitchell (Mitchell 2012, 11-14).

Belgrave's tenant in 1086 was Hugh de Grandmesnil, possibly in succession to Waltheof. Ulf, Edwardian holder of Ratby and Groby, may have been Waltheof's tenant; these lands too went to Hugh. An important anomaly in the geographical coherence of the Queniborough-Syston block of vills, discussed earlier, is its incompleteness without Belgrave. The latter's parish seems to have been carved out of an existing landscape sometime after 920, since it took in southern Thurmaston, a *tūn* acquired by someone with a Danish name. However, Leicester's East Field, also associated with Belgrave, may have been laid out at the time of the town's repopulation. The Humber Stone may give a clue, if it preserves the name of the east Midlands ealdorman Hunbeorht documented in 832 and 852. Humberstone shares Belgrave's dedication, Peter and Paul. A further possibility is that

Belgrave's parochial boundary adopted the surviving outline of one of Roman Leicester's fields, overriden by the settlement which became Thurmaston and where a large 'Anglo-Saxon' cemetery was established.

Leicester

All the foregoing suggests the booking out to regional ealdormen of royal land around Leicester, outlying Glen and other seminal vills – and the city itself – remaining in the hands of the king. The mother church of this large area is almost certain to have been in **Leicester**. Its *parochia* and assets were probably used to endow St Mary de Castro, whose name indicates association with the castle, like St Peter's, Stamford, and countless other castle chapels across Europe. St Mary's was perhaps built after the reconquest of the Danelaw. Soon after 1066 it became a secular college and subsequently its assets were transferred to the new abbey.

The early mother church's identity has puzzled scholars. There can be no doubt that Roman Ratae had a bishop, probably operating from a private house before Constantine made Christianity the state religion. Thereafter church building took place in the empire's cities alongside the transformation of temples, Bartholomew-style. In Leicester a colonnade found north of the tower of St Martin's has been architecturally assigned to that period and might be part of a basilican appropriation of a temple, since a pit filled with animal bones was found under the floor of the tower. St Martin's respects the Roman street alignment, not that of Guildhall Lane. Though St Michael's origins are obscure, burials in its probable cemetery respected a rectangular Romano-British building near which was found a curse plaque invoking a deity Maglus. St Margaret's appears to stand in an extra-mural Romano-British cemetery, conceivably over a Christian grave chapel. Why was this place chosen for the later (?post-Danish) suffragan cathedral (to which Pentecostal processions were directed from the intramural churches) and the East Field for the Bishop's Fee? Allen Chinery has supported the suggestion that the bishop was awarded part of the land of the Danish borough (Chinery 1986, 43-48) – land in Belgrave in fact.

What happened to the Mercian cathedral? Its continuing importance is confirmed by the line of Leicester's main medieval east-west street, direct from the East Gate to St Nicholas. Construction over, and in alignment with the entrance and exercise hall of the baths, and incorporation into its westwork (and property) of the baths' ceremonial and ritual entrance, the Jewry Wall, indicates foundation by high authority. Richard Morris' suggested baptistery in the baths (Morris 1991, 20, fn. 32) would have allowed it to function as an episcopal church, candidates gathering as was usual in a western narthex, processing to their baptism, and returning for the eucharist through an arch appropriately once embellished with a sculpture of Janus – 'dead in Christ, in Christ made alive'.

East of the baths stood the Forum and, directly east of this church, the Basilica. Later burials occurred near the basilica's western end, where St Augustine's must have stood – again with high authority. Were basilican walls appropriated? Did it form an axial pair with the episcopal church, like St Paul's and St Augustine's in London? In his 1098 account of its blind anchorite, Goscelin described St Augustine's, Leicester, as 'notable' and parochial (serving St Nicholas' parish?) (Goscelin 1688, 429-30, I, *cap* 8.53). In Alan Thacker's view, promotion of Augustine's cult began in the 730s, with the Council of Clovesho (very likely Brixworth) honouring him with Gregory and ordering observance of his feast (Thaker 1999, 383-84). Augustine was later revered by Edward the Elder's son Æthelstan (died 939) and Cnut. Columba's presence could have commemorated Wilfrid's Northern origins, Offa's bid for an archbishopric at Lichfield (founded by the Northerner Chad), peace between English and Danish Mercia, the Northerner Waltheof's earldom – or something else.

After Leicester's bishop decamped to Dorchester rather than submit to Danish authority, existing churches inevitably suffered neglect. The building of Mary de Castro and the gift of Cosby's church to St Augustine's may both have been part of ecclesiastical restoration. As manorialisation hastened the break-up of minster *parochiæ*, new parishes across the Glen estate reduced Leicester's parochia, arguably that of 'St Nicholas' (known as such only since 1220), to a rump. Even within Leicester's walls, there were four privately-owned churches in 1086. In 1107 'St Nicholas' was assigned to St Mary de

Castro, which could have acquired its extra-mural parish much earlier as part of its own endowment, perhaps by episcopal agreement in return for the site of St Margaret's and the Bishop's Fee.

Conclusion

Leicestershire's territorial building blocks, like tectonic plates, constantly shifted, overrode, fused and fractured. Nevertheless, helped by the resilience of ecclesiastical boundaries and sites, they resolve into a few essential groupings, variably influenced by landform and land-uses. The density of primary churches mirrors settlement. Thirty-one within Leicestershire lie east of the Fosse, where better soils are found, only 17 to the west. If we apply Roberts and Wrathmell's zone of heavy nucleation, which includes the south-west, (Roberts and Wrathmell 2000) the split becomes 39/9.

Leicester reveals itself as the hub of a large, coherent territorial unit. A royal villa estate balanced an arable, hidated economy in the east with extensive wood-pasture in the west. To the south was well-watered dairy land perhaps with seasonal herding. Its mixed-farming potential probably contributed to the complex breaking-up of one or possibly two underlying royal estates, followed by Danish reorganisation.

This is the land of the Legora, the people on the river which gave its name to Leire. The Leicester-folk sound British, like the Weogoran of Worcester. 'Inner' Leicestershire might preserve something of Ratae's *territorium* as Worcester's extramural parish of St Helen's appears to preserve that of Vertis. Barry Cox suggests that downstream from Leicester the Legor/Leire became the Soar – reinforced by the Lear legend recorded by Geoffrey of Monmouth. Again, the constituent units are coherent: arable lands along the Soar and Wreake, rising to the Wolds, wood-pasture in Charnwood, and grazing with strong likelihood of transhumance along the ridges and valleys of High Leicestershire. Frequently in this study, the model of two *hāms* in a landed unit, suggested to me by Charles Phythian-Adams, has looked promising – reminiscent of summer and winter residences, the Welsh hendref ('old steading') and hafod ('summer place'). At the local level, application of Cullen, Jones and Parsons' (2011) interpretation of *býs* as polyfocal, pastoral, and I would add daughter settlements, resolves numerous issues of how individual villages relate to their neighbours.

In summary, Leicestershire is essentially the valleys of the Soar and Wreake plus such large peripheral parts of other regions that one guesses at fossilised results of divide-and-rule. This would explain why its boundary slices through Belvoir Vale, and follows Watling Street, dividing Hinckley from Nuneaton and Lutterworth from Rugby. Fortunes of war played their part. That 'all the army that belonged to Northampton northward to the Welland' surrendered to Edward the Elder in 921 implies that north of the Welland there was part which did not. Playing off Danish and English Mercians may explain why still in the mid-eleventh century so much of Leicestershire was in the hands either of the Northumbrian earl, or of the Leofricings, descended from ealdormen of the Hwicce in the southwest Midlands.

From a century before the Danes' arrival, Offa's hand may well be visible in the parcelling out of the medieval open fields over large areas of Leicestershire, imposed on an essentially Iron Age landscape – long strip fields replacing areas enclosed by headlands.[14] Furthermore, hints in roads, pre-enclosure lanes, boundaries, and property lines along the Fosse, the Gartree Road, and other Romano-British routes leave one curious if Offa's predecessors inherited an imperial estate extending over parts of the later county and beyond it. Was it obtained from a king who was minting coins at Leicester – see the moulds found in Bath Lane – and meeting his peers at the shrine of the Hallaton hoard? Perhaps it passed into the fisc without conquest, bequeathed to Rome or the emperor by a client who knew them well. We may even know his name (or that of a close relative), and have part of his ceremonial uniform, thanks to the coins from Hallaton and the parade-ground helmet ritually buried with them.

Strong regal interests could explain why Leicester, Croft, Glen and Gumley constitute a unique cluster of Mercian council meeting places, why Peter (with or without Paul) and Helen were significantly more frequent here as dedicatees, why William I's sheriff Hugh de Grandmesnil acted without an earl, and why

14 As Oosthuizen (2006) is showing in Cambridgeshire. Suggestions of such headlands survive in the fields of Great Bowden, but may be geological.

holdings of, and place-name references to the queen and queens' courtiers are a running theme. Marc Anthony Meyer, discounting the concept of a 'queen's demesne', nevertheless noted certain estates 'held by successive [Anglo-Saxon] queens', and this of course includes Rutland (Meyer 1993, 75-113, at 104).

Royal assemblies required the presence and provisioning of the royal retinue and those of the earls, bishops and abbots who counselled the king and ratified decisions. This is one possible reason for Leicestershire's rich ecclesiastical geography. Early churches include basilicas, minsters (whose collegial or monastic organisation is largely lost to view), chapels and oratories – estate centre churches like Great Glen and Croft probably originated as chapels attached to notables' halls. Another pointer is that though vunerable to founders' fortunes, early churches often occupied sites of enduring emotional significance. This may partly explain the distance of so many parochial churches from the optimally-sited manorial and administrative centres – religious-secular pairings are a notable feature of this survey. Supernatural power routinely trumps its mortal counterpart, through fear but also attachment to family graves and memories of life-changing encounters. Some central places had large parochiæ but it is peripheral places, often suiting ritual, which equally arrest the eye. They include Barwell, Leire, Peatling Parva, Knaptoft, Thurnby, Billesdon, Tilton, Scalford, Buckminster, and former temple sites at Market Overton/Thistleton and Willoughby-on-the-Wolds – perhaps also Breedon and Burrough Hill. Isolated churches, those on river islands and promontaries, beside rivers, in enclosures, and at places with names redolent of pre-Christian religion, these too require further investigation. Re-use or development of religious loci at Romano-British settlement sites – Mancetter, Tripontium, Market Harborough, and Leicester – also demand attention. Are we to assume that the sixth-century inhabitants of the Waltons, Bretbys and Walcots were not at least nominally Christian, looking for episcopal baptism and pastoral care? The emerging picture is of a transformative society in which priests, kings and people were setting out the territorial and spiritual bounds and needs of their local worlds.

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